

Masaryk University
Faculty of Arts
Department of Art History
Spring Semester 2022

Image, Object, Text: Theories and Methods in Art History and Visual Studies

Code: DU1905 Credits: 8

SEMINAR TASKS

During the course you are required to prepare an oral presentation of about 15-20 minutes, based on one of the tasks and readings outlined below. The texts have been chosen because of the methodological and conceptual questions they raise. When preparing your presentation, please focus on this aspect of the text. Your presentation should be based on a PowerPoint, with images and examples to illustrate your arguments.

The presentation will **not** count towards the final assessment of the course, but it is an opportunity for you to undertake preliminary work for the course and to gain feedback on how well you understand the themes and ideas being explored in the course.

You will be given informal written feedback on your presentation.

24th February **ART HISTORY AS A "SCIENCE": OBSERVATION AND THE ROLE OF THEORY**

3rd March **CANON WARS: THE OBJECTS AND VALUES OF ART HISTORY**

Task 1: 'Any assault on the canon must therefore begin by unmasking this fetishized image of cultural sanctity and the fictitious creed of immaculate classification' (Christopher Steiner). What are Steiner's main criticisms of the idea of the art historical canon?

Reading: Christopher Steiner, 'Can the Canon Burst?' in Camille et al, 'Rethinking the Canon,' *Art Bulletin* 78.2 (1996) pp. 213-17.

Task 2: How far can Eisenman's criteria be defended / criticized?

Reading: Stephen Eisenman, 'Three criteria for inclusion in, or exclusion from a World History of Art,' in *World Art* 1.2 (2011) pp. 281-98.

24th March **THE MEANINGS OF 'STYLE': FORMALISM AND THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF ART**

Task 1: What makes the concept of style so questionable?

Reading: Robert Bagley, 'Style' in *Max Loehr and the Study of Chinese Bronzes: Style and Classification in the History of Art* (Ithaca, 2008) pp. 121-29.

Task 2: Consider Evelyn Welch's essay 'Art on the Edge: Hair and Hands in Renaissance Italy.' What are its core arguments and in what ways is it an example of the social history of art?

Reading: Evelyn Welch, 'Art on the Edge: Hair and Hands in Renaissance Italy,' *Renaissance Studies* 23.3 (2009) pp. 241-68.

7th April

CONCEPTS OF ICONOLOGY: FROM VISUAL LEXICON TO SOCIAL MEMORY

Task 1: Outline the main ideas presented by Aby Warburg in the Introduction to *Mnemosyne*.

Reading: Aby Warburg, 'The Absorption of the Expressive Values of the Past,' in *Art in Translation* 1.2 (2009) pp. 273-83.

Task 2: What is wrong, according to Craig Harbison, with Panofsky's theory of iconology in Early Netherlandish art?

Reading: Craig Harbison, 'Iconography and Iconology,' in Bernard Ridderbos et al, eds, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Rediscovery, Reception and Research* (Amsterdam, 2021) pp. 378-406.

21st April

HORIZONTAL ART HISTORY AND THE CENTRE / PERIPHERY PROBLEM

Task 1: In what sense is Lagos an artistic 'hub'? Why is it still on the periphery of global art, as Castellote and Okwuosa maintain?

Reading: Jess Castellote and Tobenna Okwuosa, 'Lagos Art World: The Emergence of an Artistic Hub on the Global Art Periphery,' *African Studies Review* 63.1 (2020) pp. 170-96.

Task 2: What does 'decentering' modernism mean?

Reading: Partha Mitter, 'Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery,' *Art Bulletin* 90.4 (2008) pp. 531-48.

5th May

GENDERING ART HISTORY

Task 1: Outline the arguments for the meaning of 'queer' art history in relation to medieval art.

Reading: Karl Whittington, 'Queer,' *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012) pp. 156-68.

Task 2: What is the visual pleasure in looking, according to Mulvey? How relevant is her discussion of film to art history?

Reading: Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (New York, 1999) pp. 833-44.

19th May

DECOLONIZING THE DISCIPLINE

Task 1: How might one describe the place of modern Asian art in Western histories of modern art? What are the issues?

Reading: Dirk Michel-Schertges, 'Contemporary Asian Art and Western Societies: Cultural "Universalism" or "Uniqueness" in Asian Modern Art,' *Asian Journal of German and European Studies* 4 (2019) n.p.

Task 2: Analyse the use of the concepts of the 'gaze,' 'otherness' and the 'exotic' in Czarnecka's study of ethnographic exhibitions.

Reading: Dominika Czarnecka, 'Black Female Bodies and the "White" View,' *East Central Europe* 47 (2020) pp. 285-312.