
AHIS 477 – Studies in Visual and Material Culture

Professor Daniela Bleichmar
E-mail: bleichma@usc.edu
Office Hours: Tues. 12.30-1.30pm, or by appointment
Office: VKC 368

Fall 2006
Tu./Th. 11am-12.20pm
VKC 258

Course description

This semester, the topic of the seminar will be: **“VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE.”** We will investigate the role of images and objects in Europe between 1500 and 1800, both in art and in everyday life. We will examine materials that are usually studied in art history courses, such as paintings; materials that have received less attention in the traditional curriculum, such as tapestries, furniture, home architecture, and clothing; and materials that are only rarely considered, such as food, ideas about the body, and the importance of hair (or lack of!). Overall, the goal will be two-fold: first, to approach both images and objects historically, that is, to examine them in the context in which they existed; second, to consider them as historical sources, investigating what they can tell us about the cultural, social, and intellectual life of the people who produced and consumed them.

The seminar is divided into three parts. The first part consists of a methodological introduction that will provide the foundations for the rest of the seminar by discussing what we mean by “visual culture” and “material culture,” particularly in contrast to “art history” as a category. We will discuss the importance of examining images and objects in the specific historical, geographical, cultural, and social context in which they function, as well as the unique possibilities for research that visual and material culture offer as primary sources.

In the second part we will examine the changing status of images and objects in early modern Europe. We will discuss the presence of new things and the idea of novelty, studying the birth of consumer societies and the influx of objects from the East and the New World into Europe. We will also look in depth at the process of making objects, the people who made them, the particular value placed on the skills of the craftsman, and the opportunities that different artisanal skills offered for patronage, trade, and social status.

The third and final part will concentrate on the visual and material culture of daily life in early modern Europe. We will discuss clothing, food, and ideas about the body as cultural and social indicators. We will conclude the class by examining daily life, particularly focusing on gender, in three distinct places and periods: Italy in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, and England in the eighteenth centuries.

The seminar will provide ample discussion of the methods and practices of historical study, and is designed to prepare students for independent research work. We will focus on the interpretation and analysis of documents and objects, the framing of historical questions, and the construction of narrative and historical explanation. Readings will include recent secondary sources and selected primary texts and images used as case studies. All readings will be in English.

Given the seminar’s focus on visual and material cultures, we will try to see first-hand as many images and objects from the period as we possibly can. PowerPoint presentations can not capture the impact of the object in real life, and so we will escape the classroom to visit several collections in the Los Angeles area. We will meet with curators and conservators to discuss both the collections and their methods of work. We will also attend an international conference of academic experts in a local institution. Given the time-slot this

class was given, it will not be possible to schedule visits during regular meeting hours, and we'll have to aim for special visit times when hopefully all of us can make it. I will appreciate your flexibility and cooperation to make these arrangements. To prevent an unfair over-burdening (i.e., to keep this class from taking over your life!), on weeks when a visit has been scheduled we will meet once instead of twice.

Prerequisites

A survey of western art is important, and some prior study of Renaissance, Baroque, or eighteenth-century art and architecture is recommended.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to submit their own original work for all assignments. Breaches of academic integrity include turning in a paper that has been written by anyone other than yourself or contains portions that have been written by someone other than yourself and copied into the paper from the internet, an electronic database, or a local source such as another student; as well as improper citation practices, such as copying exactly an author's words without using quotation marks and citing the source, paraphrasing in your own words an author's work without citing it, or faking a citation. The person who plagiarizes is stealing somebody else's words and also lying by claiming that they are their own. They show contempt not only for the author who they plagiarized but also for me as a professor, for other students who are fulfilling the assignment with honesty, and for the entire academic enterprise. Most importantly, they are cheating themselves of the very point of getting a college education, which is to learn valuable skills such as conducting research, thinking and analyzing, organizing, writing, planning, and managing time.

Any breach of academic integrity will be treated with the utmost seriousness and could result in failure of this course. If you have any questions about what is acceptable and unacceptable academic practice, please consult the Writing Center or come see me.

Academic integrity practices, especially citation and plagiarism, are discussed in helpful detail in "Trojan Integrity: A Guide Avoiding Plagiarism." This guide will be distributed in the first day of class; please read it carefully and ask me if you have any questions—I will be very happy to clarify information or discuss specific examples. The file is also available electronically:

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/docs/tig.pdf>

Other useful USC resources on these matters are:

"Trojan Integrity: A Guide to Understanding and Avoiding Academic Dishonesty"

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/docs/tio.pdf>

"Academic Integrity Overview"

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/docs/AcademicIntegrityOverview.pdf>

Requirements

Class participation: 15% of grade

The format of the course will be a discussion seminar, which means that we all need to show up to every session having studied all of the assigned materials (whether they be texts or images), having thought about them, and being ready to participate in the discussion. Come to class prepared to TALK, share IDEAS, and engage in FRIENDLY DEBATE. I can't emphasize this enough: simply being physically present in the room will not be acceptable. We cannot have a good discussion—and therefore a good seminar—if we are not all well prepared and willing discuss the assigned materials. An active engagement with the material will be necessary for the seminar to be effective and will be expected from all participants. PLEASE do not be the person who brings the seminar down to a lesser level because of ill-preparedness or unwillingness to participate.

Attendance to the seminar is required, and a sign-up sheet will be distributed every meeting. If you know that you will have a conflict for any session, talk to me in advance so that we can prepare a make-up assignment. You will forfeit this portion of the grade if you miss more than one class without acceptable documentation (letter from physician, health center, or the Dean, etc.).

Oral presentations: 15% of grade

In addition to the regular oral participation as part of every class, there will be two oral presentations:

(1) On a previously scheduled date at one point during the semester, each student will serve as discussion leader for the meeting. Your duties as discussion leader will consist of (a) presenting a very brief (5-minute) overview of the readings for the session, focusing not in summarizing the content of each text but rather in addressing the main themes (“the author argues...” rather than “the author says...”); (b) presenting an overview of the seminar’s reaction to the readings, as expressed in students’ short written assignments (see below); and (c) posing a set of questions that will lead us into discussion, based on your own reactions to the readings and the other students’ short written assignments. These questions can address the main argument, the type of material discussed as evidence to make that argument, the issues it raises, anything that was unclear or problematic, etc. Since your role is to get us going, try to be exciting and provocative in order to arouse discussion.

(2) The last week of term will be entirely dedicated to discussion of the final research papers. Each student will give a short presentation describing the topic of their paper and share questions and findings from their research. All students will be responsible for circulating an abstract of their paper the prior week, reading their classmates’ abstracts, and giving feedback to each presenter.

Short written assignments: 20% of grade

For weeks two through fourteen, I will ask you to turn in EIGHT short written assignments, each consisting of a one-page thought-piece on the readings for that session. You must turn in these assignments at the beginning of class, since your comments will form the basis of discussion. In addition, you must post your assignments on Blackboard by 10pm the evening prior to class, so that the person responsible for leading class discussion that week can have access to them. The choice of weeks is entirely up to you, but it is your responsibility to keep track of your contributions so that you turn in the eight pieces. (You may find this chart useful for doing so.)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Midterm paper: 15% of grade

A short paper describing an image or object formally and analyzing it as it connects to larger themes of the seminar. The paper should be 5- to 8-pages long, and in addition to that length include an annotated bibliography of works consulted as well as footnotes. I will provide a list of potential topics and sources, or you may choose one yourself. If you discuss your topic with me ahead of time, I will be happy to help you find bibliographical sources. The due date will be agreed upon by the seminar as a group.

Final paper: 35% of grade

The capstone of your work in the seminar will be a research paper on an original topic related to the content of the class. The paper should be 12-15 pages long, and in addition to that length include an annotated bibliography of works consulted as well as footnotes. This paper will represent the culmination of our discussions and of your research this semester. You could center the paper around an artist, a genre, a medium, a place, a time, or a thematic issue. We will meet during the semester to discuss possible topics.

Since the paper will replace a final exam, it should be turned in at the Art History Department Office (VKC 351) by 5pm on the final exam date.

For this paper, you will be asked to analyze and interpret AT LEAST three primary sources—and you must initially consult at least five to narrow down those sources. Primary sources include (but are not limited to) visual images such as portraits and prints, music, material objects, architecture, published texts, and manuscript texts. Appropriate secondary sources are also required, and must go beyond the texts that we will read during the course of the semester. The bibliographies of our readings will help you locate appropriate secondary sources; I will also be glad to make suggestions.

Finding and selecting primary sources can be a challenge for early modern historians. We will be calling on the expertise of Ruth Wallach of Leavey Library who will highlight USC library collections that will be of use to you in your research paper, including online resources and special collections.

All written assignments should be well written and researched with appropriate documentation (footnotes, bibliography, reproductions of images). They should not be preliminary drafts but finished pieces of research and writing, with well-developed ideas, argument, structure, and tone, and demonstrate both independent thought and a thoughtful engagement with the materials and issues discussed throughout the seminar. Your work should always be spell-checked and proofread.

All written assignments must be printed in standard fonts and type size, double-spaced, on 8½" x 11" paper, with 1" margins. All written assignments must also be posted on Blackboard. Deadlines are firm. Deviating from these guidelines will adversely affect your grade. If you have any questions about paper format or methods, please let me know, and I will be very happy to review them with you.

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Readings

A Course Reader with most assignments is available for sale at Magic Machine.

The following books are not included in the Course Reader but are available for purchase at the Campus Bookstore.

Baxandall, Michael, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988)

Brown, Patricia Fortini, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004)

Buisseret, David, *The Mapmakers' Quest: Depicting New Worlds in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Jardine, Lisa and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000)

Muizelaar, Klaske and Derek Phillips, *Picturing Men and Women in the Dutch Golden Age: Paintings and People in Historical Perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003)

Smith, Pamela, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004)

OPTIONAL:

Sarti, Raffaella, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002)

Seminar schedule

----- 1. METHODOLOGY -----

WEEK 1: Introduction to the seminar

Tues. 08/22

Overview of course contents and mechanics. Discussion of assignments. Discussion of academic integrity.

Thurs. 08/24:

(CR) Bierman, Irene, "Material Culture: Images," from "World History Sources: Unpacking Evidence," <http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/unpacking/imagesmain.html>

(CR) Waugh, Daniel, "Material Culture: Objects," from "World History Sources: Unpacking Evidence," <http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/unpacking/objectsmain.html>

(CR) Seager, Joni, "Material Culture: Maps," from "World History Sources: Unpacking Evidence," <http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/unpacking/mapsmain.html>

(CR) Liebsohn, Dana, "Material Culture: Images," from "World History Sources: Analyzing Documents," <http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/analyzing/mcimages/analyzingimgintro.html>
[NOTE: Please visit website to see the two images in color.]

WEEK 2: Art history, visual culture, and material culture

Tues. 08/29:

(CR) Schlereth, Thomas J., "Material Culture and Cultural Research," in Thomas J. Schlereth (ed.), *Material Culture: A Research Guide* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1985), pp. 1-34

(CR) Prown, Jules, *Art as Evidence. Writings on Art and Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001)

- "Style as Evidence," pp. 52-68
- "Mind in Matter," pp. 69-95
- "In Pursuit of Culture. The Formal Language of Objects," pp. 254-6

Thurs. 08/31:

(CR) "Visual culture questionnaire," *October*, 77 (1996), pp. 25-70

Discussion Leader: _____

WEEK 3: Seeing in historical and cultural specificity

Tues. 09/05

Baxandall, Michael, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 1-108

- (CR) Geertz, Clifford, "Art as a Cultural System" (selections), in Keith Whitlock (ed.), *The Renaissance in Europe. A Reader* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 138-144
[Article originally appeared in *Modern Language Notes* vol. 91 no. 6 (Dec., 1976), pp. 1473-1499]

Discussion Leader: _____

Thurs. 09/07

| |
|--|
| Meeting with Ruth Wallach, Leavey Library, Room A (ground floor). Please meet there promptly at 11am. |
|--|

- (CR) Welch, Evelyn, *Art and Society in Italy, 1300-1500* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 204-7 ("Seeing in sequence")
- (CR) Randolph Starn, "Seeing Culture in a Room for an Renaissance Prince," in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 205-232

----- 2. THE NEW LIVES OF THINGS IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE -----

WEEK 4: A new status for objects in the early modern period

Tues. 09/12

- (CR) Jardine, Lisa, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 1996)
- "Prologue," pp. 3-34
 - "A Culture of Commodities," pp. 277-330
- (CR) Peter Burke, "Res et verba: conspicuous consumption in the early modern world," in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994): 148-161

Discussion Leader: _____

Thurs. 09/14

Brown, Patricia Fortini, "Theaters of the World," in *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 217-251

Discussion Leader: _____

WEEK 5: New objects in transit from East and West

Tues. 09/19

Jardine, Lisa and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 7-131

Discussion Leader: _____

Thurs. 09/21

- (CR) Smith, Woodruff D., *Consumption and the making of respectability, 1600-1800* (New York : Routledge, 2002), pp. 86-103

WEEK 6: The world on paper (print and manuscript)

Tues. 09/26

Buisseret, David, *The Mapmakers' Quest: Depicting New Worlds in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 29-112

Discussion Leader: _____

Thurs. 09/28

VISIT: Special Collections, Doheny Library, 2nd floor.
Meet in front of Doheny Circulation Desk at 11am.

- (CR) Eisenstein, Elizabeth L., "The Emergence of Print Culture in the West: 'Defining the Initial Shift'," in Keith Whitlock (ed.), *The Renaissance in Europe. A Reader* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 55-73
[Extract from her book, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 12-41]

WEEK 7: Worldly skills: expertise for sale

Tues. 10/03

- (CR) Grafton, Anthony, *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Renaissance* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000)
- "From New Technologies to Fine Arts: Alberti among the Engineers," pp. 71-109
 - "On Painting: Alberti and the Origins of Criticism," 112-149

Discussion Leader: _____

Thurs. 10/05

- (CR) Welch, Evelyn, "Materials and Methods," in *Art and Society in Italy, 1300-1500* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 37-77
- (CR) Cennino Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook*, translated by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (New York: Dover Publications [c1933], 1954), pp. xxi-xxvii, pp. 1-20

Discussion Leader: _____

WEEK 8: Object makers

Tues. 10/10: NO CLASS

Thurs. 10/12:

Smith, Pamela, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004), pp. 31-127

Discussion Leader: _____

Friday, 10/13: VISIT to Getty Museum. Details will be provided in class.

----- 3. THE VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE OF DAILY LIFE -----

WEEK 9: The early modern body: gestures, deportment, and food

Tues. 10/17

- (CR) Bremmer, Jan and Herman Roodenburg, *A Cultural History of Gesture*, with an introduction by Sir Keith Thomas (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991)
- Spicer, Joaneath, "The Renaissance Elbow," pp. 84-128
 - Muchembled, Robert, "The Order of Gestures: A Social History of Sensibilities under the Ancien Régime in France," pp. 129-151
 - Roodenburg, Herman, "The 'Hand of Friendship': Shaking Hands and Other Gestures in the Dutch Republic," pp. 152-189

Discussion Leader: _____ |

Thurs. 10/19

Guest Lecture

WEEK 10: Clothing

Tues. 10/24: No class

Thurs. 10/26

- (CR) Baumgarten, Linda, "The Myths and Meanings of Clothing," in *What clothes reveal: the language of clothing in colonial and federal America. The Colonial Williamsburg Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 52-75
- (CR) Neher, Gabriele and Rupert Shepherd (eds.), *Revaluing Renaissance Art* (Ashgate, 2000):
- Welch, Evelyn, "New, old and second-hand culture: the case of the Renaissance sleeve," pp. 101-119
 - Rogers, Mary, "Evaluating textiles in Renaissance Venice," pp. 121-136
 - Campbell, Caroline, "Revaluing dress in history paintings for quattrocento Florence," pp. 137-145
- (CR) Frick, Carole Collier, "Visualizing the Republic in Art. An Essay on Painted Clothes," in *Dressing Renaissance Florence. Families, Fortunes, & Fine Clothing* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 201-219

Optional reading:

Sarti, Raffaella, "Clothing," in *Europe at home: family and material culture, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 192-213

Discussion Leader: _____

| |
|--|
| Friday, 10/27: VISIT to LACMA, Costume and Textiles department. Details will be provided in class. |
|--|

WEEK 11: Case study 1: Italy in the sixteenth century

Tues. 10/31

- (CR) Welch, Evelyn, "The Domestic Setting," in *Art and Society in Italy, 1300-1500* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 277-311

Brown, Patricia Fortini, "Not Having the Name of *Palazzo*" and "To Live *Nobile*," in *Private lives in Renaissance Venice: art, architecture, and the family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 23-89

Discussion Leader: _____

Thurs. 11/02

Brown, Patricia Fortini, "The Mirror of Ancient Ladies" and "A Paradise of Venus," in *Private lives in Renaissance Venice: art, architecture, and the family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 90-121 and 158-187

Optional reading:

Sarti, Raffaella, "The Home," in *Europe at home: family and material culture, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 86-147

Discussion Leader: _____

WEEK 12: Case study 2: The Netherlands in the 17th century

Tues. 11/07:

Muizelaar, Klaske and Derek Phillips, *Picturing Men and Women in the Dutch Golden Age: Paintings and People in Historical Perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 1-85

Discussion Leader: _____

Thurs. 11/09

Muizelaar, Klaske and Derek Phillips, *Picturing Men and Women in the Dutch Golden Age: Paintings and People in Historical Perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 113-183

Discussion Leader: _____

| |
|--|
| Friday, 11/10: Conference on dress and decorative arts at the Huntington Library, San Marino |
|--|

WEEK 13: Case study 3: England in the 18th century

Tues. 11/14

(CR) Pointon, Marcia, "Dangerous Excrescences: Wigs, Hair and Masculinity," "Going Turkish in Eighteenth-Century London: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and her Portraits," and "The Conversation Piece: Generation, Gender and Genealogy," in *Hanging the head: portraiture and social formation in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 107-175

Discussion Leader: _____

Thurs. 11/16

(CR) Smith, Woodruff D., "Rational Masculinity," in *Consumption and the making of respectability, 1600-1800* (New York : Routledge, 2002), pp. 139-187

WEEK 14:

Tues. 11/21: NO CLASS

Post final paper abstracts and annotated bibliographies on Blackboard by 10pm

Thurs. 11/23: NO CLASS, Happy Thanksgiving!

WEEK 15: Oral presentations of final papers