

Art History 476
The Art of Walt Disney
Professor Vanessa Schwartz
Spring 2021

Via Zoom, Thursdays: 2-4:50pm PST
Join URL: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/95715809944>
Office hours: by appointment
vschwart@usc.edu



Course Description:

This course focuses on the most influential figure of the world of commercial art in the twentieth century: Walt Disney. It looks at the entire trajectory of his career, from his earliest films to Walt Disney World, with an emphasis on external artistic forces such as German expressionism (among many others) that shaped the art of the studio's animated features as well as an examination of how museums and the world of "high art" acknowledged and lauded the "genius" of Disney and his studio as innovators in the art of animation. It covers the entire period of Disney's life and also considers his creative ambitions at Disneyland and the World's Fairs and his persistent commitment to narrative in art. The course will thus introduce students to the work of the studio as well as Imagineering during his lifetime, but will also look at how such work circulated in places such as museums and venues of high culture and its impact on his reputation and success. Additionally, we may visit the Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco and Disneyland, pandemic permitting.

Texts: *denotes digital file available on Blackboard or via internet otherwise

Books:

- *Feild, Robert, *The Art of Walt Disney, (1942):*
<https://archive.org/details/artofwaltdisney0000feil/page/18/mode/2up>

PURCHASE:

- *The Walt Disney Film Archives:*
https://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/film/all/43911/facts.the_walt_disney_film_archives_the_animated_movies_19211968_40th_anniversary_edition.htm?change_user_country=US&gclid=EAlalQobChMI3-3stZnH7QIV9CCtBh2_Bg_cEAQYBCABEgLS0fD_BwE#images_gallery-2
- Christopher Finch, *The Art of Walt Disney: 1973 edition ONLY*; used copies for sale.
- Subscribe to Disney Plus for films.

Articles: See class Dropbox for readings, a library of related articles and resources. Also go to cartoonbrew.com.

Screenings: see by the week.

Assignments:

- **February 25:** Mid-Term Paper based on answering prompts (5 pages).
- **Individual Presentation:** 15-minute pre-recorded presentation. Students watch the presentation before seminar asynchronously. Must be posted on our Slack channel by 5pm Wednesday before class.
- **Presentations throughout the semester:** Some topics suggested in the appropriate week but students may also suggest a topic.
- **May 6:** Final research paper (15 pages) that will consist of original research in which students will study some aspect of the relation of Disney to questions of art and its history. Paper topics will need to be carefully chosen with an eye to online research at this time.

Grading:

Paper 1: 25%

Presentation: 25%

Final Paper: 35%

Participation in class and other activities: 15%

Weekly Schedule and Readings: Complete all readings and screenings before class on Thursday 2pm.

For each class students will select an image from readings or a clip sequence (with a timecode if you can't make a clip) from a film and post it on Slack and write a small summary of why this image is important to them based in the week's readings. This must be posted by noon on Thursday.

You must complete the readings and screenings in Week One for the first class.

Week One: January 21: Myths and Origins: On the formation of artistic reputation

Walt Disney Film Archives, Introduction

*Mikulak, "Disney and the Art World"

Screen: Walt Disney, *The American Experience*, 2 episodes. 4 hours.

Week Two: January 28: Modern Art: 1900-1930

*Troy, *The Afterlife of Piet Mondrian*, pp. 1-4 AND 169-228

Finch, *The Art of Walt Disney*. pp. 1-48

*Neumann, "Now Mickey Mouse Enters Art's Temple"

Walt Disney Film Archives, Ch. 1 "Laugh-O-grams" and Ch. 2 "From Alice to Mickey"

*Kauffman, "The Live Wire: Margaret Winkler and Animation History"

*Eggener, "An Amusing Lack of Knowledge" *Journal of American Art*

Screen: Alice comedies: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ptLDuxbbVM>

<https://thedissolve.com/news/2382-short-cuts-alices-wonderland-an-early-walt-disney/>

Week Three: February 4: Introducing Mickey

Finch, pp. 49-70

Walt Disney Film Archives, Ch. 3 "Hyperion Studios"

Selections from *The Mickey Mouse Reader*

*Carr, "The Only Unpaid Movie Star"

*Benjamin, "On Mickey Mouse"

*Seldes, "Mickey Mouse Maker"

*Leslie, "It's Mickey Mouse"

Screen: "Plane Crazy" and "Steamboat Willie" and "The Gallopin' Gaucho" and "Mickey's Rival"

Week Four: February 11: Technology as Art: The Silly Symphonies: On Color and Music

Finch, pp. 70-100

Walt Disney Film Archives, Ch. 4 "Silly Symphonies"

Screen: "Flowers and Trees" and "Three Little Pigs" and "Skeleton Dance" and "The Old Mill"

Week Five: February 18: Introducing Full Length Animated Features

From *Once Upon A Time Walt Disney*: Allan, "Disney's European Sources," pp. 99-170

Finch, pp. 165-227

Walt Disney Film Archives, Ch. 5 "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and Ch. 6 "Pinocchio"

Screen: *Snow White* and *Pinocchio*

Week Six: February 25: The Concert Feature

Walt Disney Film Archives, Ch. 7 "Fantasia" and Ch. 9 "The Reluctant Dragon"

Screen: *Fantasia* and *The Reluctant Dragon*

First Paper Due by 2 pm

Week Seven: March 4: War and Politics at the Disney Studio

*Soloman, "The Disney Studios at War"

*Watts, "Walt Disney: Art and Politics" *JAH*

Walt Disney Film Archives, Ch. 12 "South of the Border"

Screen: *Saludos Amigos*, "Victory through Air Power" (Not on Disney Plus), *Make Mine Music*

Documentary: *Walt and El Grupo* (Disney Plus)

Week Eight: March 11: Advancing the Art and Making You Cry: Dumbo and Bambi

*Kracauer, "Dumbo"

Walt Disney Film Archives, Ch. 10 "Dumbo" and Ch. 11 "Bambi"

Screen: *Bambi* and *Dumbo*

Student Presentations:

1. "Song of the South" 1946

<http://www.youmustrememberthispodcast.com/episodes/2019/11/26/songofthesoutharchive>; <https://archive.org/details/SongoftheSouth1080pRestoration>

2. New "Dumbo"

3. Tyrus Wong

Week Nine: March 18: Live Action and the Limits of Animation

*Chris, Cynthia, "The Disneyfication of Nature."

Screen: *Seal Island* and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

Student Presentation:

Disney People and Places Series: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People %26 Places](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_%26_Places)

Week Ten: March 25: Animation in Three Dimensions: Disneyland

*Marling, from *The Architecture of Reassurance*, "Imagineering the Disney Theme Parks"

*Doss, "Making Imagination Safe"

O'Hagan, "The Happiness Project" (NYT)

Screen: *Disneyland* (The TV show; opening July 17, 1955)

Mickey Mouse Club, first episode; "Imagineering" Episode One (Disney Plus)

(People and Places: Disneyland):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tg3lAQ9pjlw>

Week Eleven: April 1: King of Disneyland...and the World: The Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow and Yesterday

Schwartz, from *Jet Age Aesthetic*, Ch. 2 (Yale Art and Architecture through USC library)

*<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-artist-made-disneys-sleeping-beauty-enchanting-impossible-animate>

Walt Disney Film Archives, Ch. 23 "Sleeping Beauty"

Dave Smith: "Trips to Tomorrowland" p. 486 Chapter 25, large format *Disney Archives*

Screen: *Sleeping Beauty* and *Mars and Beyond* (on YouTube)

Student Presentation:

New York World's Fair and Winter Olympics 1960

Week Twelve: April 8: Mary Blair: Modernism to Pop

*Apgar, *Mickey Mouse: Emblem of the American Spirit*, pp. 189-256

**Once Upon A Time: The Sources of the Art of the Disney Studios: Crawford, Disney and Pop Art*

**Walt Disney Film Archives*: Ch. 19 "Cinderella," Ch. 20 "Alice in Wonderland" and Ch. 21 "Peter Pan"

Screen: One or all three: *Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*

Field Trip to SF to the Walt Disney Family Museum: IF OPEN AND IF IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES ARE POSSIBLE

Week Thirteen: April 15: The Last Film Project: Mary Poppins

*<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/12/19/becoming-mary-poppins>

**Walt Disney Film Archives*: Ch. 26 "Mary Poppins"

Screen: *Mary Poppins* and *The Boys: The Sherman Brothers' Story*

Student Presentation:

The Jungle Book

Week Fourteen: April 22: Wellness Day: No USC Classes

Possible trip to Disneyland...a big if

Week Fifteen: April 29: Walt's Afterlife: Vision and Consecration

Finch, finish *The Art of Walt Disney*

Feild, **The Art of Walt Disney*, (1942) (finish):

<https://archive.org/details/artofwaltdisney0000feil/page/18/mode/2up>

Screen: *The Cal Arts Story* made by Disney Studios:

(<https://www.calarts.edu/about/institute/history>)

Final Research Projects Due: Thursday, May 6

Possible Topics for Research Papers:

The Creation of the Archives at the Walt Disney Studios

1937 Metropolitan Museum Show about Snow White

1942 Bambi Exhibition at MoMA

Song of the South, 1946

Re-makes (new vs. old, Dumbo)

Disney and Dali (*Destino*)

The Art of Mary Blair

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 - 24/7 on call
<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours - 24/7 on call

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/>

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086/Title IX - (213) 821-8298

<https://equity.usc.edu/>, <http://titleix.usc.edu/>

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

<http://dsp.usc.edu>

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

<https://uscsa.usc.edu/>

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

<https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

<http://dps.usc.edu/>, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

<http://dps.usc.edu>

Non-emergency assistance or information.