Representation

Seminar Leader: Geoff Lehman
Times: Wednesday, 10:45 – 12:15
       Friday, 15:15 – 16:45
Location: Platanenstr. 98a. 09
Email: g.lehman@berlin.bard.edu
Concentration Seminar: Art and Aesthetics

Course Description

This course will focus on the problem of pictorial representation in painting, drawing, and photography, considering the (material, structural) conditions that make representation possible, the relationship between pictorial representation and its “model” (whether object or experience) in the world and, perhaps most importantly, the range of experiences arising from the encounter between pictures and their viewers. All the principal topics for the course are ones that are important both within art historical discourse and as larger problems of human experience and (self-)knowledge: originality, nature, space and time, mood, materiality. The course will be guided throughout by sustained discussion of a small number of individual artworks. Among the artists whose works we will examine are Raphael, Titian, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Rembrandt van Rijn, Diego Velázquez, Claude Monet, Eugène Atget, Pablo Picasso, Agnes Martin, and Cindy Sherman. Readings will focus on texts in art history and theory (Pater, Wölfflin, Riegl, Barthes, Krauss, Rosand), as well as primary sources (Hesiod, Castiglione, early writings on photography and on Impressionism, selected lyric poems). Visits to Berlin museums to experience works of art firsthand are an integral part of the course.

Requirements

For this class attendance is mandatory, and active participation in discussions will be an essential part of the course. Absences can only be excused if a medical note is submitted to the registrar’s office. Readings should be done in advance of the class for which they are assigned. There will be two visual analysis assignments: a midterm essay, 6-7 pages (2000-2300 words) in length, for which a choice of topics will be distributed in advance, and a final presentation, on a topic to be chosen in consultation with me. The final presentation assignment will also require an accompanying essay, 8-10 pages (2700-3300 words) in length, due at the end of the term. Please note the policy from the Student Handbook regarding late submission of essays.

Museum Visits

Five of our scheduled classes will be museum or gallery visits. Whenever possible these are planned to correspond with our regular class meeting time. The midterm essay assignment will also require you to visit a museum independently to study a work of art in person.
Grade Breakdown
Class participation: 30%
Midterm essay: 25%
Final presentation and essay: 45% (presentation: 15%; essay: 30%)

Schedule of Classes
Wednesday, January 29 - Introduction

I. ORIGINALITY
Friday, January 31 - Performance / Substitution
Visit to the Gemäldegalerie
Reading:
- Christopher Wood, Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape, pp. 54-65 (section: “Parergon”)
Suggested reading:

Wednesday, February 5 - The Hand of the Artist
Raphael
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
- Castiglione, The Courtier, Book 1, sections 24-28
- Vasari, Lives of the Artists, Preface to Book 3

Friday, February 7 - Painting as Language
Pablo Picasso
Reading:
Suggested reading:
- Clement Greenberg, Art and Culture, “Collage”
- Yve-Alain Bois, Painting as Model, “Kahnweiler’s Lesson”

Wednesday, February 12 - Untitled Film Stills
Cindy Sherman
Reading:
No class on Friday, February 14

II. NATURE
Wednesday, February 19 - Mimesis
Jan Van Eyck
Reading:

Friday, February 21 - Nature and Human Experience
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
- Hesiod, Works and Days, ll. 383-694 (Nelson trans., pp. 84-94)

Wednesday, February 26 - Painting and Photography I: London
Louis Daguerre, William Henry Fox Talbot, The Pre-Raphaelites
Reading:
- Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida, Chapters 1-3, 8-10, 18-20, and 35-36
- Suggested reading:
  - Louis Daguerre, “Daguerreotype”
  - Hubert Damisch, “Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image”

Friday, February 28 - Painting and Photography II: Paris
Visit to the Alte Nationalgalerie (Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne)
Reading:
- Edmond Duranty, The New Painting, selections
- Théodore Duret, The Impressionist Painters, selections
- Louis Leroy, "Exhibition of the Impressionists"
- Jules LaForgue, “Impressionism”
Suggested reading:

Wednesday, March 5 - Camera lucida
Islamic and Christian sacred architecture
Reading:
- Hans Belting, Florence and Baghdad, selections

III. SPACE AND TIME
Friday, March 7 - The Rationalization of Space
Piero della Francesca
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
- Erwin Panofsky, Perspective as Symbolic Form, section 1

Wednesday, March 12 - Coordination and Subordination
Rembrandt van Rijn
Reading:
  - Aloïs Riegl, “The Dutch Group Portrait,” pp.3-20, 25-31

Friday, March 14 - Windows
Visit to the Berggruen Museum (Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso)
Reading:
  - T. J. Clark, Picasso and Truth, Chapter 2: “Room,” selections
Midterm essay due: 23:59 on Saturday, March 15

SPRING BREAK

Wednesday, March 26 - Las Meninas, I
Velázquez, Las Meninas
Reading:
  - Leo Steinberg, “Velázquez’ ‘Las Meninas’”
  - Michel Foucault, The Order of Things, Chapter 1: “Las Meninas”

No class on Friday, March 28

Wednesday, April 2 - Las Meninas, II
Velázquez, Las Meninas
Visual assignment: group presentations

IV. MOOD
Friday, April 4 - “The Condition of Music”
Giorgione
Reading:
  - Walter Pater, The Renaissance, “The School of Giorgione”

Wednesday, April 9 - Modernism: An Alternative History
Francisco Goya y Lucientes, Kazimir Malevich, Mark Rothko
Visual assignment: group presentations

Friday, April 11 - Ut pictura poesis
Visit to the Scharf-Gerstenberg Museum
Reading:
  - Selected poems (contributed by the group)

Wednesday, April 16 - The Evocative
Agnes Martin
Reading:
  - Rosalind Krauss, Bachelors, “Agnes Martin: The /Cloud/”

No class on Friday, April 18
V. MATERIALITY

Wednesday, April 23 - Reflections, Traces, Commodities
Eugène Atget
Reading:

- Walter Benjamin, “A Short History of Photography”

Friday, April 25 - Base Materialism
Jackson Pollock
Reading:

- T. J. Clark, “In Defense of Abstract Expressionism”

Suggested reading:

- Leo Steinberg, Other Criteria, “The Flatbed Picture Plane”

Wednesday, April 30 - Land Art
Richard Serra, Walter de la Mare
Visual assignment: group presentations

Friday, May 2 - The Post-Medium Condition?
Visit to the Hamburger Bahnhof, or to contemporary art galleries in Berlin
Reading:

- Leo Steinberg, Other Criteria, “Jasper Johns: The First Seven Years of his Art”

Wednesday, May 7 - Artist, Artwork, Viewer
Titian, Albrecht Altdorfer, Sheng Mao, Guo Xi
Reading:

- David Rosand, The Invention of Painting in America, “Subjects of the Artist”

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Friday, May 9
Tuesday, May 13
Friday, May 16 (make-up class 10:45-12:15)

Final presentation essay due: 23:59 on Friday, May 23