

# AR311 Curatorial Practice, Past and Present

Seminar Leader: Prof. Dr. Aya Soika

Course Times: Wednesdays, 9:00 – 10:30, Fridays 9:45 – 12:30 (offsite visits every second week for a double session)

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Office Hours: by email appointment, Wednesday 12:30-14:00

## Course Description

Curatorial Practice involves a careful consideration of thematic, pedagogical, and aesthetic concerns. The course assesses the disclosure of such concerns in the structure of the exhibition form over time, drawing on a variety of museum collections and art spaces in Berlin. Our investigation begins with an exploration of some of the past, present and future challenges curators, conservators and archivists have faced on the Berlin Museum Island as well as at the Hamburger Bahnhof museum of contemporary art. We concentrate on the underlying debates concerning the complex dynamics between questions of display, the demands of conservation and the need for accessibility in the light of an increase in visitor numbers. The second part of the course is dedicated to smaller houses and art spaces as well as private collections and galleries. Here, we discuss in greater detail the process of framing: the relationship between individual works, the role of the spectator and the conceptual rationale of curatorial choice as well as the significance of different settings. Conversations with curators and critics, conservator-restorers and dealers will be part of the course. Readings include art-historical, essays in the field of museum studies, as well as recent interviews and selected websites/online sources.

## Requirements

### **Attendance**

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than one absence in the seminar (e. g. one double session) will significantly affect the grade for the course. Please also make sure you depart early in order to reach the museums and/or seminar room, and please lock in your coats and bags before the beginning of class. The itinerary can be checked on [www.bvg.de](http://www.bvg.de), but make sure you are also equipped with a city map, digital or on paper.

**Class Etiquette:** If absent, a short notification via email, if possible sent before the beginning of class, is appreciated. Please keep your bathroom breaks to a minimum and note that punctuality is essential. Also note that the use of smartphones and notebooks is not allowed during seminars on campus as well as in other locations. You should stay with the group at all times (do not wander off and explore the galleries on your own whilst the conversation is still going on) and please do your best to stay focused on the object of our discussion. This includes listening to students' presentations.

Students are advised to consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

### **Assessment**

The course assessment consists of the overall seminar work (occasional response papers, mini presentations and a visual quiz, in addition to class participation and preparation of individual tutorials), two essays and one presentation. See also "Grade Breakdown".

### **Writing Assignments**

There are two essays for this course, one shorter mid-term essay (ca. 1500-2000 words) and one long final essay (ca. 3500-4000 words). A range of prompts will be provided in advance.

The mid-term essay is due on, 12th March, midnight.

The final essay is due on 12th May, midnight.

Essays should include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your essays can be discussed in individual tutorials. Please note that prior consultation with the Bard in Berlin Writing Centre may be recommended in order to reflect upon writing and structure.

Grading Criteria: Line of argument with regard to essay question; Awareness of context and existing literature on the topic; Structure and Format (consistent use of annotations, bibliography & list of illustrations is desirable)

### **Presentation**

Students deliver a presentation of ca. ten minutes' length (the list of topics will be announced). Please make sure that you rehearse beforehand in order to avoid exceeding this timeframe. A one-page document with structured presentation notes (and, where applicable, a power point presentation) should be submitted via a shared document on google drive the evening before class.

### **Written Responses**

Responses should be of ca. 300-500 words' length, and posted via the google document on the google drive. Responses will be accessible to all participants of our class in order to encourage and stimulate our communal discussion.

Grading Criteria: Structure, Relevance to the topic; Awareness of context and scholarly debates, during the presentation and in the Q&A session afterwards; Timing; Relevance and structure of Presentation Notes

### **Quiz**

The session on 22nd March includes a quiz. You will be shown several objects/art works and provided with short texts related to the course contents (including works encountered during visits to museums and galleries or excerpts from our weekly readings).

Grading Criteria: correct identification of image (author, title, date, medium, location) / quote and relevant factual information, socio-historical / art historical contextualization and interpretative analysis including references to reception history and interpretations you have encountered in the readings or which have been discussed in the seminar; in the case of the text excerpt an analysis with view to the overall questions raised and arguments made should be provided.

### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Essays that are more than 24 hours late cannot receive a grade of higher than C (see also policy on late submission in the Bard College Berlin Student Handbook).

### **Grade Breakdown**

Listed below is the percentage grade allotted to each essay, and to classroom participation and assignments.

Seminar Grade = Attendance (Participation/Preparation of art works and texts, occasional responses/tasks and Presentation)

Seminar Grade: 30%

Quiz: 20 %

Essay 1: 20 %

Essay 2: 30 %

## Schedule

### Week 1

01.02.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

Introduction

**TASK:** Mini-Presentations of participants: Prepare a 5-minute presentation in which you analyze any exhibition, museum or collection you have recently visited, presenting ca. 1-3 photographs (ideally pictures you have taken upon your visit). You should briefly introduce the theme and structure of the show, object choices and methods of display and communication.

Please read the Syllabus carefully and familiarize yourself with the google drive. Feel free to bring any questions you may have along. Please send me your picture(s) for your mini-presentation by Tuesday afternoon, so that I can orchestrate the presentations.

Reading:

Maja Ciric and Isin Onol, "Can Curating be Taught?". In: *On curating: Institution as Medium. Curating as Institutional Critique?*, 13/12, pp. 32ff.

### Week 2

08.02.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

Definitions: The Curator; The Custodian; The Artist-Curator; The Curatorial; The Collection; The Private Collection; The Museum; The Private Collection in the Museum; The Exhibition

**TASK:** Mini-Presentations of participants (continued from Week 1) & take reading notes

Readings:

Kate Fowle, "Who cares? Understanding the role of the curator today";  
Anke te Heesen, "Exhibit, Exhibit, Exhibit". In: *Terms of Exhibition (A to Z)*, pp. 49-53

10.02.2017

"Alien matter" - Transmediale Visit, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (TBC)  
Or Berlinische Galerie

Readings:

“Curating/Curatorial. An Interview between Irit Rogoff and Beatrice von Bismarck”. In: *Cultures of the Curatorial*, Berlin: Sternberg Press 2012, pp. 21-37

### **Week 3**

15.02.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

The birth of the art public

**TASK:** Take reading notes; Mini-Presentations of participants (continued from Week 1,2)

Readings:

Dorothea von Hantelmann, “Affluence and Choice. The Social Significance of the Curatorial”. In: *Cultures of the Curatorial*, Berlin: Sternberg Press 2012, pp. 41-51;

(re-read): Kate Fowle, “Who cares? Understanding the role of the curator today”

### **Week 4**

22.02.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

The Emergence of the Museum of modern art

Overview, Altes Museum, Alte Nationalgalerie

Presentation: The fight over modern art: The Tschudi Affair

**TASK:** Think about the functions of the National Gallery since its formation, as well as the role of directors, sponsors and the state.

Readings:

Donald Preziosi (editor), “Glossary”. In: *The Art of Art History: A critical Anthology*, pp. 576-583 (Art History, Canon, Collection, Connoisseurship, Criticism, Culture, Exhibition, Fetish(ism), Formalism, Historiography, Modernity, Museum, Orientalism, Postmodernism, Wunderkammer)

(section on Old National Gallery and intro) Gaehtgens, Thomas W. (1996): “The Museum Island in Berlin”, in: *The Formation of National Collections of Art and Archaeology*, ed. by Gwendolyn Wright, Hanover/London, pp. 53-77

Forster-Hahn, Françoise (1996): “Shrine of Art or Signature of a New Nation?” The National Gallery(ies) in Berlin, 1848-1968”, in: *The Formation of National Collections of Art and Archaeology*, ed. by Gwendolyn Wright, Hanover/London, pp. pp. 78-99

### **Week 4**

Friday, 24.02.2017

Site Visit Museum Island

Bode Museum (The style room) / Alte Nationalgalerie (The canon)

Presentation: The Basilica

**TASKS:** Think about Bode's role as curator, the meaning and significance of connoisseurship and the definition of the style room. Also think about the relation between art, the evolution of the museums on the island and Imperial politics.

Readings:

Karsten Schubert, *The Curator's Egg. The evolution of the museum concept from the French Revolution to the present day*, Chapter 3: "Berlin", 2000 (here London 2009), pp. 29-38 and Chapter 7: "Architecture 2: Museum Makeovers", pp. 128-133

(re-read part on Bode Museum and Alte Nationalgalerie) Gaehtgens, Thomas W. (1996): "The Museum Island in Berlin", in: *The Formation of National Collections of Art and Archaeology*, ed. by Gwendolyn Wright, Hanover/London, pp. 53-77;

Can Bilsel, *Antiquity on Display*, only pp. 145 (from ... Bode belonged to a...) - 146 (bottom), pp. 152 (from chapter BODE'S Style Rooms)-157

## **Week 5**

01.03.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

Aims and Objectives: Museum Island continued  
Installing Berlin's ethnographic and archeological collections  
The Neues Museum

Presentation: Nefertiti. The dynamics of the masterwork

Presentation: Dealing with mass tourism. Chipperfield's James Simon Gallery

Readings:

Kathryn W. Gunsch (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), "Seeing the world: Displaying foreign art in Berlin, 1898-1926". <https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/2015/06/15/published-june-special-issue-2015/>

(re-read part on Neues Museum and Ethnological Museum) Gaehtgens, Thomas W. (1996): "The Museum Island in Berlin", in: *The Formation of National Collections of Art and Archaeology*, ed. by Gwendolyn Wright, Hanover/London, pp. 53-77 (Section on Neues Museum)

**Week 6**

08.03.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30, 08.03.2017

The Politics of Ownership: from Dahlem to Humboldt-Forum

Presentation: The “No Humboldt” Initiative. Aims and Objectives

Readings:

Ian Johnson, “Berlin: The End of a Museum Idyll”. In: *New York Review of Books*, Feb 29, 2016:  
<http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2016/02/29/berlin-dahlem-museums-humboldt-forum/>

Bose, Friedrich von (2013): “The Making of Berlin’s Humboldt-Forum: Negotiating History and the Cultural Politics of Place”, in: *darkmatter. In the ruins of imperial culture*. An international peer-reviewed journal

Kate Sturge, “The Other on Display: Translation in the Ethnographic Museum” (PDF)

**Week 6**

Friday, 10.03.2017

Site Visit

Neues Museum and Humboldt-Forum

Presentation: The Conception of the Neues Museum

Readings:

Kwame Opoku, “Looted/Stolen Cultural Artefacts declared ‘Shared Heritage’” (PDF published on website of the Humboldt Forum’s critics)

\*\*\* Sunday, 12.03.2017: Mid-term essay due\*\*\*

**Week 7**

15.03.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

\*\*\* Visual Quiz / Revision Class \*\*\*

Prepare the following terms (summing up your notes by trying to come up with ca. 5-10 relevant criteria in each case, some more abstract/conceptual, some more historical/factual)

Alte Nationalgalerie; Basilica at the Bode Museum; Bode Museum / including Style Room; Connoisseur; Curator / also with regard to changing role; Exhibition (cf. te Heesen, Hantelmann); Fluxus as signalling a shift ; Museum; Museum Island; Neues Museum; Role of Public (cf. von Hantelmann); Salons in Paris; Wilhelm von Bode; Humboldt Forum

### **Week 8**

22.03.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

Curiosity Cabinets

Reading:

Susan A. Crane, "Curious Cabinets and Imaginary Museums", in: *Museums and Memory*, ed. by Susan A. Crane, Stanford 2000, pp. 60-80

### **Week 8**

24.03.2017, Friday, 9:00-10:30

Olbricht Collection / Kunstwerke / Aperto

Olbricht Collection / Me Collectors Room Berlin. Wunderkammer Olbricht and temporary exhibition, Auguststrasse, Berlin-Mitte. Transfer to S-Oranienburger Tor/Auguststrasse

Reading:

TBC

### **Week 9**

29.03.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

Collecting Practices

Presentation: Examples of Collecting / Collections

Readings:

Sharon Macdonald (2011): "Collecting Practices". In: *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Malden/Oxford, pp. 81-97 (PDF)

### **Week 10**



05.04.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

The controversy about the Flick Collection

Introduction to Berlin's private Art Collectors (Boros / Stoschek / Hoffmann)

Readings:

<https://www.textezurkunst.de/58/defacing-flick-collection/>

Rosalyn Deutsche and Isabelle Graw, (De)Facing the Flick Collection: Should Art Replace Political Reparations for Nazi War Crimes? Panel Discussion, Barnard College, March 25, 2005, In: Texte zur Kunst

### **Week 10**

07.04.2017, Friday, 09:45-12:30

Visit of Private Collection, TBC

Readings:

TBC

\*\*\* SPRING BREAK \*\*\*

### **Week 11**

19.04.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

Curatorial Practices in the later twentieth century: Trends and Developments

Presentation: The documenta (focus on 1972)

Reading:

Dorothee Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors". In: *Cultures of the Curatorial*, Berlin: Sternberg Press 2012, pp. 229-248

\*\*\* 22.04.2017, Saturday, 10:30-13:30 \*\*\*

**Hoffmann Collection / Aperto**

**Week 12**

26.04.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

The role of the Art Exhibition: Past and Present

Revision of key Exhibitions: Paris, 1667, first Salon at Palais-Royale; Paris, 1867 Salon; London, 1851 Exhibition of Industry, Crystal Palace; Armory Show, New York; Futurist Exhibitions; Suprematist Exhibition; Dada Art Fair, 1919; Degenerate Art Show, 1937

Presentation: Biennials

Readings:

Bruce Altshuler, *Salon to Biennial – Exhibitions that Made Art History*, Vol. 1: 1868-1959, London: Phaidon Press 2007, pp. 11-19.

**Week 13**

03.05.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

The Global Art World

Presentation: From Tate Modern to Volksbühne: The debate about Chris Dercon

Readings:

Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse". In: *Issues on Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, pp. 13ff.

Charlotte Bydler, "The Global Art World Inc: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art". In: *The Biennial Reader*, pp. 379-445

**Week 13**

05.05.2017, Friday

Hamburger Bahnhof / Boros Collection

Readings:

Hans Belting, "Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age". In: Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg (ed.), *Contemporary Art and the Museum*, Ostfildern 2007, pp. 16-38

## **Week 14**

10.05.2017, Wednesday, 9:00-10:30

Conclusion: Curating in the Museum of the Future

Presentation: Tate Modern, The Guggenheim or other

Readings:

"After the White Cube. Hal Foster asks what art museums are for". In: *London Review of Books*, vol. 37, no 6, 19 March 2015, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n06/hal-foster/after-the-white-cube>

Hans Belting, "The Narrative of Art in the New Museum: The Search for a Profile". In: Hans Belting, *Art History after Modernism*, Chicago and London 2003, pp. 96-111;

\*\*\*\* 12.05.2017, Final Essay due \*\*\*\*

## **Essay Deadlines**

The mid-term essay is due on, 12th March, midnight.

The final essay is due on 12th May, midnight.

## **Library and Book Purchase Policies**

All texts will be accessible through a special folder on google drive, and through online links. A selection of relevant books will be placed on the reserve shelf in the BCB library.