

ANGLIA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

BA (Hons) Art (Practice and History) (and combined)

BA (Hons) Art History (and combined)

BA (Hons) Modern Visual Culture (and combined)

Level 2 semester 1

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SAD1038/2038 VISUAL THEORIES

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SAD1038/2038 VISUAL THEORIES

Introduction

The module is concerned with some of the broader questions raised in the study of art and visual culture.

We shall be thinking about the history of visual history and theory, whether 'art' objects and images constitute a distinct category, the classifications which might be applied to the visual, the ways in which the visual cultures of other times and places might be understood, the validity of possible approaches to the interpretation of images, the problem of how images originate, the reasons why art undergoes transformation, questions of discrimination and evaluation, the place of psychoanalysis, the significance of the spectator's response, the validity of perspectives concerned with differences of class, gender and race, the ways in which non-western visual cultures might be understood, the issues of partiality and relativism, the relationship between verbal and visual language and the relationship of 'Modernism' and its sequels to all of these issues.

This module is unlike any of the other modules offered in the Study of Art field in that it almost entirely based upon reading. You will need to read several texts every week.

10 and 20 credits

If you are taking the module for 20 credits, by its completion you should be able to

1. to retrieve and select, with guidance, relevant visual and theoretical information on visual representation from a variety of sources
2. demonstrate a critical understanding of the central visual theoretical debates
3. evaluate the evidence presented by scholars in these debates and formulate a position in relation to them
4. analyse the critical assumptions of selected writers on art
5. communicate arguments in the language of these debates, interacting effectively with the learning group

If you are taking the module for 10 credits, you will be expected to achieve 2, 4 and 5

Student taking the module for 20 credits should study the weekly photocopies, the reading and aspects of the further reading. You will be expected to read the essential texts before the seminar

and to attempt at least some of the further reading during the week of the topic, or thereafter. The further reading lists appear quite daunting but remember that you are not expected to read everything; set yourself the objective of reading part of at least two of these texts. You should come to each seminar with one line taken from a passage in one of the further reading texts which you have found particularly interesting. Be prepared to speak about the line.

Students taking the module for 10 credits, study the weekly photocopies and the reading but they are not expected to tackle the further reading.

Whether you are taking the module for 10 or for 20 credits, you are expected to attend both the lectures and the seminars. The 10-credit students write the first essay only (see **Assessment** below)

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Lectures and Seminars

Each week, we shall be examining a broad theoretical issue.

The lecture is intended to set out the principal questions generated by the theme of the week and to assemble some of the arguments which have been developed around the questions.

The seminars will provide the opportunity to examine the arguments in more detail, assisted by readings from key texts.

It is important that you come to the seminars prepared:

1. You will need to have attended the lecture in order to understand the general outlines of the debate
2. You should have developed some preliminary thoughts about the questions set out at the head of each week's entry in the module booklet
3. You will need to read the photocopies for each week (see the pigeonholes outside of rooms 65/6).
4. You should have completed the readings from the set book (Ferne – see below), together with aspects of at least some of the other recommended texts for the week. Remember each week to bring to the seminar a copy of Ferne.
5. If you are taking the module for 20 credits, you should have found at least two of the texts in the further reading section and you should be prepared to comment on an idea from at least one of them.

Set book(s)

The principal reader we shall be using is **Eric Fernie** (1996), ***Art History and its Methods***, published by Phaidon @ £14.99 and available in Browne's Bookshop. (There are copies in the library but you are strongly advised to buy your own).

Other anthologies you might want to buy are: **Donald Preziosi** (1998), ***The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology***, published by O.U.P. @ £15.99 and **J. Evans & S. Hall**, eds. (1999), ***Visual Culture: The Reader***, London, published by Sage. (The library holds copies of both).

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Week I Art and Visual Culture

This week's principal questions:

What theories have been advanced to argue that there is a category of object and images called 'art'?

Can 'art' be regarded as a universal category, evident in the visual culture of all societies in all places at all times?

How do notions of 'art' relate to social theories?

Is the 'aesthetic' a mode of perception rather than a quality inherent in objects and images?

Should we substitute the term "visual culture" for "art"?

The use of the words "art" and "artist" to describe a particular class of objects and images, or a person who practices a distinctive activity, is deeply ingrained in western languages and culture. We talk of art museums, art departments, fine art degrees, art teachers, art students. The language presupposes not only the existence of a category called 'art' but that there is some consensus about what this category might be. Debates about contemporary art, however commonplace or abstruse they may be, often circle around the problem of where an object or image stands in relation to other objects or images already regarded as 'art'. At the same time, in recent years the word "art" has been substituted in some quarters by terms such as the "visual" or "visual culture", in recognition both of the difficulties in defining the term and what has come to be perceived as its limited applicability.

We shall begin by rehearsing some of the possible answers to the question of how art might be defined. Most of answers can be routed through one or other of two approaches.

The *first approach* to the problem of how, or whether, a category called 'art' can be defined, brings together two tendencies which have been around for a long time and refuse to go away.

Could it be that there is something intrinsic to certain objects that persuades us that they deserve special consideration? Do they have a certain appearance which draws our attention, by virtue, for instance, of their materials, or the skill invested in them, or the shape or composition they take, or the novelty of their configuration? The intrinsic, or essentialist theorists, might very well come to similar conclusions about what is valued in the object or image to those put forward by the social historians and cultural anthropologists but for different reasons. They might maintain that these visual qualities are not simply an invention of the societies which produce them but have a more general, perhaps even universal, value.

Theories which employ the idea of 'beauty', not much in vogue now but still there below the surface in many minds, appeal to the conviction that we have a pre-disposition to separate the beautiful from the ugly, that this pre-disposition can be trained and that some forms of 'art' and its criticism are devoted to its display. The theory is not a trivial one; it underlies much of western 'art history'. 'Beauty' has been understood to be a quality of the natural world, which the artist has attempted to transcribe, or as an ideal form which can only be visualised through the imagination of the artist. Either way, theories of 'beauty' will usually suppose that 'beauty's' essence is not circumscribed by the original cultural elite which sponsored its representation.

For those who regard 'art' as a category which is not ultimately contingent upon the society which originally defined it, there is another type of argument which has an essentialist dimension, but it is one which shifts attention from the object or image to the observer. This view recognises the difficulty of attempting to define any intrinsic qualities in objects or images which mark them out as 'art'. If there is an intrinsic quality, it is to be found in the spectator. In its popular guise, this is the 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' argument. In its developed form, this approach suggests that one of the most highly developed human faculties is our ability to detach our understanding of things from considerations of usefulness so as to view them aesthetically, that is, for the sake of the quality of their visual appearances alone. Therefore, following this line of reasoning, what affects us 'aesthetically' is, necessarily, 'art'. What affects us 'aesthetically' may have an emotional element. Of course, this argument can only work if we accept that some objects have the sorts of visual qualities which mark them off from other objects and encourage in us an 'aesthetic' appreciation.

This approach might seem, as Clive Bell believed, unsusceptible to scientific examination but attempts have been made recently to develop neurological theories of art linked to ideas of evolutionary biology (see Ramachandran and Hirstein photocopy).

The *second approach*, now forming something of an orthodoxy in British art history departments, draws on ideas developed by social historians, cultural anthropologists and linguistic semioticians. The idea common to these viewpoints is that 'art' is a category constituted by particular cultures. These societies encode their beliefs and practices in visual forms and these forms are shaped by that other great system of encoding, verbal language. All societies produce visual forms in bewildering abundance; in order to ensure that certain objects achieve the special status required for the encoding and transmission of the dominant ideas of the group, a distinctive and revered category of objects is defined by the cultural elites.

Status will be conferred on these objects for a number of reasons: because they display rare materials or great skill, because of their size or location, because of the meanings they bear or the functions they fulfil, because of the inspiration of their makers or simply because the high priesthood sanctifies them. So, this theory can still, in its less challenging form, reserve for art historians a group of objects for special consideration.

Particularly influential in recent years have been the ideas of Arthur C. Danto and George Dickie. Danto believes an object attains the status of 'art' by its position in relation to other art objects and by virtue of the art talk which develops around it. George Dickie's institutional theory has it that an object becomes 'art' only within the institutional frameworks which validate it.

The social historical/anthropological approach can be used to question the continuing validity of the definitions of past times of 'art'. We might broaden our area of interest to include the visual appearances of all the objects, great and small, made in that world, subsuming the privileged category of 'art' in the process. By this means, we might not only find out more about the ways which elites influenced the beliefs of common people, but we might also learn how the beliefs of the common people found expression in the objects they made and used.

This way of looking at 'art' requires, first and foremost, that we use the definitions of 'art' which applied in the original culture. If a group from another culture, say our own, attempts to apply its own definitions of 'art' on the art of other times and places, then theorists of this persuasion would want to examine the group's motivations as well as the language it uses. They might agree that there are objects which seem to be accorded significance across time and cultures but would argue that this can be accounted for in terms of the shared interests of cultural groups.

From this conclusion it is just a small step to reasoning that the proper purpose of visual studies should not be defined by the narrow interests of art history. In recent years, the term "visual culture" has come to replace "art history" in the vocabulary of many academics. Visual culture can be regarded as embracing all forms of the visual, without attempting to separate out a privileged category of objects and images.

Photocopy

Roger Fry (1909): *An Essay in Aesthetics* from his *Vision and Design* (1922), London
V.R.Ramachandran and William Hirstein *The Science of Art; A Neurological Theory of Aesthetic Experience* from *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 6, 1999, pp.15-51

Reading

Eric Fernie, *Art History and its Methods*. Read the excerpts in Fernie by **Vasari**, **Winckelmann**, **Morris**, **Fry**, **Hauser**, **Clark** and **Oguibe** and try to establish under what definition of 'art' they are writing. Also see **Preziosi**, *The Art of Art History*, readings by Warburg, Solomon and Mitchell. See also **Edwards, S.** (1999), *Art and its Histories*, O.U.P., 'Introduction' (pp.1-15) and **Cheetham, M.** (1998), *The Subjects of Art History*, C.U.P., chapter 1, *Kant and the Borders of Art History*.

week 2 Significance and value

This week's principal questions:

How do we determine the relative importance or significance of objects and images?

Is 'significance' decided by 'aesthetic' value and, if this is a consideration, how are such judgments made?

Can we determine value in terms of 'content' or 'meaning'?

What is the role of originality in determining value?

Does each individual, group or culture determine its own scale of values for its own purposes or are can we talk in any useful way about universal values?

What part does the artist, maker, patron, spectator, exhibitor and critic play in determining significance?

The previous week's topic, devoted to the problem of the definition of a category which we might call 'art', raised the question of evaluation. If we accept, using either historical or essentialist

arguments, that there is a category of objects which demand particular attention by virtue of their difference from other objects, then some theorists would argue that it is difficult to resist the proposition that within this privileged category, some objects deserve more attention than others. The 'art' world is continually making judgments about the significance of the objects which it regards as special to it. The curators of museums, the publishers of art books, the designers of university degree courses, the buyers and sellers of art, all make evaluative decisions about the relative significance of visual objects and images.

A radical way of dealing with this problem, is to argue that no image, of itself, is any more or less significant than any other. What makes an image significant is the attention we pay to it and this attention will be guided by the line of inquiry we happen to be pursuing. For instance, if we are investigating the visual culture of the peasant, the design of the scythe and sickle will be important; if we are researching the history of the cartoon, the illustrations from Mad magazine will become significant; if we are interested in the history of the altarpiece, then Leonardo's 'Virgin of the Rocks' will be essential. Who is to say that one line of research is of greater value than the other? The most consistent advocates of relativism would deny that there can be a verifiable hierarchy of significance applied to objects and images. Can there be any objective criteria for measuring the quality of a Rembrandt etching against a common piece of graffiti?

Over time, most critics and historians have taken another view. Although it would be difficult to find a writer who was not acutely aware of the precariousness of taste, it would be difficult to find a critic considered in this module who did not believe in the need for distinctions which implied a discrimination of significance or value. Curators, dealers, scholars, teachers and publishers may argue about the relative merits of artworks but have often operated under the assumption that it is possible to discern merit and construct canons. The contemporary fashion for denying the possibility of establishing agreement about what a canon might be has not quite let critics and scholars off the hook of defining their own canon, however contingent and provisional that might be.

The arguments which have been devised to evaluate objects and images broadly follow the lines of those used to argue about definitions of 'art'. Thus, it is possible to approach the problem as a social historian or cultural anthropologist who believes that judgments about significance, quality and value are made within a framework of belief developed within particular societies to serve their own, often hidden, ends. It is the investigator's job to discover the sociological basis of these judgments and to discover in whose interests the values are operating and for what reasons (one way to do this is to examine the language in which the evaluations are expressed.).

On the other hand, it is also possible to take the view, which we examined in week one, that there are certain intrinsic qualities, which are apparent to a higher degree in some objects or images than others.

Both these approaches will often refer to the very same criteria we saw being applied in the 'what is art' debate. Here are some of the grounds that have been used to support judgments about the significance, or quality, of an art object:

the skill with which it has been made, the value of the materials which it contains, the form it takes, its resemblance to the world of appearances, the uses to which it was put, its authenticity, the authority of its makers and patrons, the meanings it encodes, the emotion it is capable of generating, its moral seriousness and didactic power, its connection to tradition, its originality, its subversiveness.

Photocopies

Clement Greenberg: A selection of reviews from (1989) *The Collected Essays and Criticism vol 1*, Chicago

Clive Bell *An Aesthetic Hypothesis* from his (1914) *Art*, London

Reading

All of the contributors to **Fernie** operate theories of evaluation. We shall look particularly at **Giorgio Vasari: (1)**, **Karel van Mander (2)**, **J J Winckelmann(4)**, **Goethe (5)**, **William Morris (7)**, **Giovanni Morelli (8)**, **Roger Fry (12)**, **William Fagg (20)**. In **Preziosi**, you might look at **Riegl**, **Solomon**, **Duncan**.

Further reading

See also **Clive Bell** (1914), 'Aesthetic Hypothesis', in **Neill, A. and Ridley, A.** (1995), *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, New York, (9). A very lucid introduction to the issues is provided by **Sheppard, A.** (1989), *Aesthetics*, Oxford, ch. 5, *Art, beauty and aesthetic appreciation* 6, *Criticism, interpretation and evaluation* and 9, *Art and morals*. We will also need to consider excerpts from **Greenberg, C.** (1988), *Collected Essays and Criticism* (2 vols), New York, and esp. his essay *Modernist Painting*'(see **Neill and Ridley**). You might look at **Fry, R.** (1922), *Vision and Design*, London; **Bell, C.** (1914), *Art*. London, **Greenberg, C.** (1976), *Art and Culture*, New York; **Clark, K.** (1974), *What is a Masterpiece?*, London, **Ackerman, J.**, *On Judging Aesthetic Absolutes*, *Critical Inquiry*, Spring 1979; **Gombrich, E.H.**, "They were all Human Beings - So much is plain." *Reflections on Cultural Relativism in the Humanities*, *Critical Inquiry*, Summer 1987; **Gombrich, E.H.**, *Art History and Social Science*,

(see articles collection P709), in *Ideals and Idols: essays in values and history in art*, London, 1971; see also his essay in the same volume; *The Tradition of General Knowledge*

Week 3 Categories

This week's principal questions:

What are the major visual categories used to group objects and images?

What forms of temporal classification have been used? What value should we place upon the idea of the 'period', 'age' or 'movement'?

How has visual culture been subdivided on geographical grounds and what role has nationalism and colonialism played in such categorisation?

What arguments can be used to support stylistic classifications of visual data, based upon morphological analysis?

Is it useful to classify according to function or subject or meaning?

This week, we shall be considering the ways in which the objects and images have been categorised by historians, theorists and curators. This is a large subject and one which was introduced to many students in the level B modules *Framing Modernism* and *Introduction to Art History: the Fitzwilliam Museum*.

Since the origin of art history as an academic discipline in the 19th century, its practitioners have regarded classification as one of their primary responsibilities. How to divide the vast array of visual objects and images so that they not only become more manageable and amenable to study but also make more apparent their fundamental structures and the reasons for their genesis and change. Art history, for much of its history, harnessed to the great museums of the west, has attempted to operate in a way which is comparable to the organising ambitions of the natural sciences.

The most obvious way in which this organising has taken place is by arranging objects and images in chronological order, attempting to find groupings in 'periods' or 'ages' which relate to political and social formations or, more ambitiously, ways of thinking ('mentalities'). This project has persuaded its practitioners to try to find relationships and connections between 'periods'. Alongside this approach has been the attempt to associate art with the places within which it was made and seen, typically in terms of the city, the region, the linguistic or racial grouping, the state and the continent. Often such endeavours have been directed by nationalistic and, sometimes, racist motivations.

(The terminology here is highly contentious and very current. The new Government QAA guidelines (Benchmarks) for art history degrees require that students should study in depth two “periods” and two “regions”. We might be entitled to ask the authors of the Benchmarks: what they mean by “period” and “region”!).

One approach to categorisation, which has had a pervasive influence on art thinking, is that of morphology, from which comes the term ‘style’. Is ‘style’ a purely visual quality and, if so, what are its identifiers and how are they to be recognised in objects which belong to the same class? Contemporary writers will often go to great lengths to avoid using the term ‘style’ though they still habitually look for the common denominators of form which groups of objects can be said to share. Is it possible for stylistic characteristics to be codified and applied to all visual formations?

What relationship can be said to exist between styles and the cultures which produce them? Is there, as Hegel proposed, a common spirit which somehow pervades all the cultural forms, including all things visual, inevitably and thoroughly. Can we recognise the period style of, say the 1490s or the 1960s in everything from the design of a shoe or bottle to the grandest of architectural projects? Do all objects and images, whatever their purpose or significance, made at certain times or in particular places, take on the features of a series of related styles, perhaps only recognisable to those who come after?

Do styles develop or mutate and, if so, in what ways do they change and for what reasons? Wolfflin considered these questions to be the central problem of the history of art and offered one answer, that art is semi-autonomous of culture and is partly self-sustaining, moving inevitably from the classic to the baroque manner and back again. These views, Hegelian in grandeur and wave-like in pattern, were conceived as a totalising explanation of history with a predictive potential which has beguiled many followers of Wolfflin.

Marxists of various persuasions continued to maintain the belief that it was not just possible but absolutely necessary to discover the laws which explained the changing history of style. For the most part, though, they sought material explanations, which doubted the possibility of autonomous mutation.

Today, the fashion amongst many academics is for a form of extreme scepticism, which denies the possibility of constructing large-scale explanatory histories of art. The interest in establishing grand stylistic categories has waned and the tendency is towards fragmentary, tentative and provisional narratives.

Photocopies

E.H.Gombrich, *The Tradition of General Knowledge*, from his (1979) *Ideals and Idols*, Oxford
Steve Edwards, *Introduction*, from Edwards, S. (1999), *Art and Its Histories*, Open University
Assorted contents pages from art history surveys

Reading

In preparation for the seminar, examine the contents page of **Gombrich, E.H. (1984), *The Story of Art***, London (or, alternatively, any other of the survey books, for instance, those by Hartt, Janson, or Honour and Fleming) looking at the ways in which history is subdivided. What forms of periodisation and geographical identification does he use and how does he apply stylistic ideas to them? In **Preziosi**, look at the essays, both entitled 'Style', by **Schapiro** and **Gombrich**. Read the excerpt from Wolfflin's **Principles of Art History** in **Fernie (10)**. Another version appears in **Preziosi**, together with an excerpt from **Hegel**. Look also at the excellent essay in **Preziosi** by **David Summers, *Form, Nineteenth Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description***.

Further reading

Fernie has a number of relevant readings; see **Giorgio Vasari (1)**, **Alois Riegl (9)**, **Giovanni Morelli (8)**, **Roger Fry (12)**, **E H Gombrich (19)**. Also, **Brown, M., *The Classic is the Baroque: On the Principle of Wolfflin's Art History, Critical Inquiry***, Dec 1982. The library holds copies of the Dover edition, **Wolfflin, H. (1915), *The Principles of Art History***, New York, which you should read at some time during the module. Look at **Podro, M. (1985), *The Critical Historians of Art***, New Haven, ch. 11, 'Hegel', V1, *Wolfflin and Classic Art* and V11, *The Principles and its Problems*. Also, **Moxey, K. *Art History's Hegelian Unconscious*** in Cheetham, M., Holly, M.A., Moxey, K. (1998) *The Subjects of Art History*, Chicago. For museums and the ordering of art history, see **Duncan, C. (1995) *Civilising Rituals***, London and **Baker, E. ed. *Contemporary cultures of display***, OU.

Week 4 Imitation, expression and convention

This week's principal questions:

What is the nature and status of 'imitation'?

Is the artist ever able to 'express' individual feelings or states of mind?

What part do artists play in the creation of the artwork?

Is what the artist does already predetermined by the conventions of the genre within which the artist operates?

One of the central concerns of western theorists, from Plato to Gombrich, has been the resemblance of the image to the reality which it represents. This week we shall be considering the significance of theories of mimesis, or imitation and illusion, exploring the paradox that the more apparently truthful an image is of the thing which it represents, the more deceptive it must be. To what extent is realism attainable in the visual arts and what are the constraints upon it? Readings from Nelson Goodman, Norman Bryson and E.H.Gombrich will help us explore the role of convention and schema in the construction of the seemingly realist work.

Since the 15th century, the classical view, that the most significant art is the result of exceptional moments of inspiration by the most gifted of individuals, has mutated and developed. The Romantic movement idealised the transcendent and visionary genius capable of illuminating the minds of others as a result of spasms of spontaneous creativity. Expressionism's cult of the tormented individual, and Surrealism's revelation of the artist's subconscious world, could be said to be 20th century manifestations of related thinking.

In the later 20th century, such ideas have come under concerted attack, from historical materialists and from structuralists and post-structuralists.

One of the most complex thinkers on the problems of creativity and subjectivity is E.H.Gombrich. In his devotion to a canon of masterpieces (*The Story of Art*), he appears to subscribe to the belief that great art is the most admirable achievement of human culture and that it is the work of the most gifted individuals. However, he has also developed the view that the history of the visual arts is a history of the transmission and transformation of images. Artists are not free agents: they can only express themselves by using and modifying given visual images which inevitably shape what they create.

He argues that we must understand the 'schema' of art, those visual configurations which evolve over long periods of time, giving shape to ideas. For Gombrich, such schema form a complex visual language, passed down from age to age, constantly in a state of modification and adjustment. He does not try to minimise the influence of social and cultural changes on the appearances of the schema but still insists that these forces act on a pre-existing visual matrix which possesses formidable powers of survival. The intelligent observer watches the ways in which artists redesign the schema and arrange them in new patterns in response not only to changing ideas about the nature of the world but to the acquisition of new skills and techniques. This is a view of art which, though very unlike Wofflin's in most regards, also looks to the internal history of art for the reasons why art has a history. It is a view which has enabled Gombrich to

take a highly sceptical approach to much to 20th century art, particularly the work of artists who have claimed that their creativity has sprung from their 'feelings'.

The American philosopher, Nelson Goodman, has occupied an extreme position on this question of the ways in which visual representations are determined by the 'languages' in which they are expressed..

Photocopies

Nelson Goodman, *Reality Remade* from his (1976) *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis

E.H.Gombrich, *Expression and Communication* from his (1963) *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*, Oxford

Norman Bryson, *The Natural Attitude*, from his (1983) *Vision and Painting*, London

Reading

The key book for our study is **Gombrich, E.H.** (1961) *Art and Illusion*, London. Read also **Fernie: E H Gombrich (19)**. Return to **Gombrich, E.H.** *The Story of Art* and try to find evidence there for his application of his ideas about stylistic change to a general history of art. In preparation for the seminar, you should have read or re-read the following texts from Fernie, asking yourself what view did the author take about stylistic change: **Giorgio Vasari (1)**, **Alois Riegl (9)**, **Heinrich Wofflin (10)**, **Paul Frankl (11)**, **Henri Focillon (13)**, **Alfred H Barr (14)**, **Arnold Hauser (17)**. In **Preziosi**, read the fine essay by **David Summers**, which examines the thinking of Gombrich, as well as the two passages on Style by **Schapiro** and **Gombrich** himself.

Further reading

Consult any of **Gombrich's** collections of essays held in the library: *Ideals and Idol*, London, 1979, (esp, *The Tradition of General Knowledge* pp 9-23), *Symbolic Images*, London, 1985; *Sense of Order*, London, 1981, *Reflections on the History of Art*, London, 1988. See especially his essay on Hegel: *The Father of Art History* in *Tributes*, London, 1984, pp 51-69. **Carrier, D.** (1991), *The Principles of Art History Writing*, Pennsylvania, discusses Gombrich's views (amongst many other things). A demanding essay is **Mitchell, W.J.T.** (1983), *Nature and Convention; Gombrich's Illusions*, in *Iconology, Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago. See also **Podro, M.** (1983) *Critical Historians of Art*, London, for a history of German Hegelianism and **M Iverson: Alois Riegl**, London, 1993 (especially chapter I on Kunstwollen). A valuable collection of essays on Gombrich appears in **Woodfield, R.** ed. (1995), *Gombrich on Art and Psychology*, Manchester; see esp. *Introduction; mapping the ground* and B R Tilghman: *A conceptual dimension of art history*(6).

Week 5 cultural and social histories

Principal questions for the week:

Is there a useful distinction to be made between 'cultural' and 'social' histories?

How persuasive is the view that art is a form of 'social production', determined in every respect by the society within which it is 'produced' and 'consumed'?

How do social and cultural historians define 'art' and construct its histories?

What methods of interpretation do social historians employ and with what results?

Are social historians necessarily 'relativists' and can they develop evaluative criteria?

In week 4, we began to consider the answers which social historians of art have offered to the question of why art changes. We have seen that social historians believe that the primary explanation for why art changes is because society changes, though some social historians, conceding that art's behaviour is not always directly co-ordinated with major social change, will grant art what is sometimes called a 'relative autonomy'.

The social historians are related to, and in some ways preceded by, the early cultural historians and the distinction between the two sometimes appears to be not so great. Winckelmann and Burckhardt stand out as leading cultural historians, writing in the Hegelian tradition, and therefore concerned to relate art to a context of philosophy, religion, law and literature - the leading ideas or spirit of the age.

One of the key problems in this approach is what counts as context? Social historians will be particularly concerned with the material culture and will attempt to relate imagery to economic, social and political history as well as to the more traditional cultural history. A key notion is that of 'ideology', particularly as it has been defined by Althusser, the controlling, though often unacknowledged, patterns of belief used to justify the arrangements of power in any society. 'Ideology' in this view is usually deceptive and is to be found in all forms of visual representation. It is the social historian's mission to reveal to us its true character.

The tendency of such an approach in recent years has been towards close synchronic study, analysing a particular period in great detail, rather than a diachronic history, explaining changes over time. This is odd, in some ways, as Marxism was originally Hegelian and historicist, seeking the grander patterns of history. At the same time, modern social historians have themselves developed new forms of cultural history which, abandoning narrower forms of art history, consider visual culture in its widest manifestations. Often, their methods adopt the discourse analysis of Michel Foucault, which related exercise of power to the formations of discourses of knowledge.

We shall have to establish the assumptions which these thinkers act upon and test their validity and establish their limitations. Social historians have had some difficulty developing convincing theories of value and have had problems adapting psychoanalytic theory. Their origins in positivist materialism has put them at odds with the linguistic structuralists and post-structuralists.

The centrepiece of this week is the work of T J Clark, who has been the leading exponent of advanced social history in the last quarter of the 20th century and a fierce opponent of formalism and essentialism. He, and his followers, can be credited with attempting to apply social history to both synchronic and diachronic modes of historical narrative. It often appears that this school of thought has come to constitute one of the contemporary orthodoxies in English speaking countries. How has social history attained this degree of prominence?

Photocopies

Linda Seidel *Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait: Business as Usual?*, **Critical Inquiry**, vol 16, 1989, pp 55-81,

T.J.Clark Introduction from his (1985) *The Painter of Modern Life*, London

Reading

In preparation for this week, you should read in **Fernie** the following extracts: **Jacob Burckhardt (6)**, **Arnold Hauser (17)**, **E H Gombrich (19)**, **T J Clark (21)**, **Michael Baldwin et al (23)** as well as **T J Clark: Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of 'Olympia'**, reprinted in **Frascina, F. and Harris, J.** (1992), **Art in Modern Culture**, OU. (5).

Further reading

Clark, T.J. (1973), **Image of the People**, London; **Clark, T.J.** (1973), **The Absolute Bourgeois**, London; **Berger, J.** (1972), **Ways of Seeing**, London; **Barrell, J.** (1979), **The Dark Side of the Landscape**, London; **Baxandall, M.** (1972), **Painting and Experience in 15th century Italy**, Oxford, (especially part 1). For a discussion of 'ideology', see also **Eagleton, T.** (1983), **Literary Theory: An Introduction**, pp 10-15 (reprinted in **Walder, D.** ed. (1987), **Literature in the Modern World**, London, chapter 3). It is also worth looking at the work of authors such as **Gary Schwarz** (see his books on **Rembrandt**, 1985, and **Saenredam**, 1990, to see how a social historian will attempt to reconstruct a milieu and deconstruct an artist's reputation). A populist attempt at a similar approach is **Buck, L. and Dodd, P.** (1991), **Relative Values**, London. A sociological view is offered by **Wolff, J.** (1988), **The Social Production of Art**, London. Look also at the writings of Michael Baxandall, especially (1972) **Painting and Experience in 15th Century Italy**, London and **The Limewood Sculptors of Germany**, London. A very influential

essay on the role of institutions in the formulation of the art world is **George Dickie**: *The New Institutional Theory of Art* (17) in **Neill and Ridley** (op cit).

Week 6 Visits' week

There will be no classes this week.

You should use the days of the week when you are not making a visit as reading days. No doubt there will be plenty of catching up to do, especially with the further reading (and there's no harm in reading ahead, either). You should also now be choosing the book (or video) you are going to review for **assignment 2** (see 'Assessment'). In week 12 you will be called on to make a 10-minute presentation on your book/video.

Week 7 Interpreting images – iconology and intention

Do images mean anything or is it only words which have meanings?

If they do have meanings, how do we go about elucidating them?

How can we judge the validity of conflicting interpretations?

Who determines meaning and with what authority?

We might question whether it makes sense to talk about images meaning something. Images are visual configurations; what is essential to them is non-linguistic. Perhaps it is what we say about images which means something. A more radical view, offered by formalist critics such as Fry and Greenberg, is that, even if an image can be said to have meanings, whatever meaning an image might have is irrelevant to our appreciation of it; it is a secondary form of knowledge. Susan Sontag takes an even more uncompromising view: the search for meaning prevents an authentic response.

Erwin Panofsky belonged to a different tradition, one which derives from biblical exegesis. He believed that high art images (he didn't consider that any others were worth serious consideration) contain complex meanings which are encoded in the artist's representation. By consulting the rich archive of the culture which gave rise to the image, and by applying a sort of informed intuition, a highly attuned investigator can decipher the original code and recover the meaning. Panofsky's approach was especially influential in the field of Medieval and Renaissance studies, where his research into the meaning of images involved the development of an incomparable erudition in the words and the images of these cultures.

He described the two related approaches that he developed to uncover meaning as 'iconography' and 'iconology'. His approach, with its close attention to the sign and what it signifies, is closely related to the semiotics of Pierce and Saussure.

Panofsky believed that attempts at the interpretation of images, though beset by the most intellectually taxing of problems, are not only possible but absolutely necessary. He regarded the elucidation of the meanings of those images which he regarded as lying at the heart of western culture as a central responsibility of the humanities. His was a mission not only to recover the revered values of former cultures but to do so using methods which were scrupulously designed to establish a form of truthfulness in interpretation.

Michael Baxandall is a social and cultural historian who, like T J Clark, has devoted much of his attention to the recreation of a particular visual culture, such as that of 15th century Florence, in order to discover its peculiar way of seeing, the so-called 'period eye'. As with many social historians, for Baxandall, an essential aspect of his attempt to reconstruct the period eye is the interpretation of images but, unlike many contemporary social historians, Baxandall has attempted to retain something of the method of Panofsky. In attempting to reconstruct the philosophy and theology of a culture, Baxandall, like Panofsky, focuses on the artist's mind. He brings the controversy surrounding the notion of artistic intention up-to-date and attempts to formulate the rules of good interpretative practice. It might be added that establishing the artist's intention is not only a way of trying to secure the validity of an interpretation of an image but also of helping to explain how the image came to be made.

Much of the debate around artistic intention has been carried on by English literary critics, in Britain and in the United States, and we will have to assess the relevance of their thinking for visual studies. For many modern commentators, the pursuit of the artist's intention is an exercise in futility; it cannot be recovered. The artist is dead. However, the biography, the most enduring of art historical narrative forms, requires the writer to gain access at some level to the thought processes of the artist. What persuades the advocates of this approach, Baxandall amongst them, that this is a necessary form of art historical investigation?

Photocopies

Erwin Panofsky *Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait*, originally published in the **Burlington Magazine**, reprinted in Gilbert, C. ed. (1970), *Renaissance Art*

Erwin Panofsky (1955) *Melancholia* from his *Durer*, pp. 156-163, 171, Princeton

Michael Baxandall (1983) *Patterns of Intention*, pp.120-135, Yale

Reading

You should read the following excerpts from **Fernie: Erwin Panofsky (15); Susan Sontag (18); Michael Baldwin et al (23), Svetlana Alpers (24), Hans Belting (25)**. In **Preziosi**, you should look at the essay on Poussin by **Panofsky** and the essay by **Damisich**.

Further reading

New York; re-read **L Seidel: Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait: Business as Usual?** You might also dip into one of the following: **Panofsky, E.** (1924), *Perspective as Symbolic Form*; **Panofsky, E.** (1939), *Studies in Iconology*, Oxford; **Wind, E.** (1958), *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance*, London, 1958; **Wind, E.** (1964), *The Eloquence of Symbols*, London; **Wittkower, R.** (1972), *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*, London; **Cassidy, B.** ed. (1993), *Iconography at the Crossroads*, Princeton, esp. *Introduction: Iconography, Texts and Audiences*. See the fine essay by **Hirsch, E.D.**, *The Validity of Interpretation*, reprinted in **Sim, S.** ed. (1992), *Art, Context and Value*, O.U.; and **Sheppard A.** (1987), *Aesthetics*, Oxford, ch. 7, *Intention and Expectations*. Refer also to the following essays in **Neal, A. and Ridley, A.** ed. (1995), *The Philosophy of Art; Readings Ancient and Modern*, New York, **W Wimsatt and M Beardsley: The Intentional Fallacy (27)**, **Roland Barthes: The Death of the Author (28)**, **E D Hirsch: In Defense of the Author (29)**. See also **Terry Eagleton's** attack on the search for artistic intention in (1981), *Literary Theory*, London, chapter 2, pp 67-71.

Week 8 Interpreting images – semiotics, structuralism and post-structuralism

What use to the study of visual culture are the theories associated with structuralism and post-structuralism?

In what ways is our understanding of art governed by the need to express our views in verbal language?

What truth is there to the claim that we can respond to art in a non-verbal way (which is a claim central to some forms of modernist and expressionist criticism)?

How useful is it to draw analogies between visual forms and verbal language?

The terms of the debate around these issues have been established by two influential modern theories, structuralism and post-structuralism, both essentially linguistic theories. As the terms suggest, these two beliefs are closely related yet the second sets about undermining the first. They are related by the common view that verbal language is an artificial construction which has no necessary connection with the world it purports to describe and cannot be relied upon to give a realistic account of the world. They are opposed in their views about the arrangement of language; structuralism sees it as governed by order based upon the similarities and differences

between the words themselves; post-structuralism sees language as incapable of sustaining order as its words can never maintain a constant meaning; they are forever shifting and sliding.

Your reading and discussion this week will require you to examine the ways in which these systems of belief have influenced the ways in which we think about visual culture. Semiotics (or semiology) attempts to provide a method of visual analysis which takes the principles of its theory from the linguistic philosophies of Ferdinand Saussure and realist-empiricist C.S. Peirce. The hope of semiotics was to replace iconology with a more scientific system which could be extended far beyond the limits of traditional art history and be applied to all visual artefacts, particularly those of the contemporary world.

Those art theorists and historians who have attempted to use post-structuralist ideas (Norman Bryson would be a good example) have developed styles of thinking and writing which deliberately depart from the traditions of clarity, order and empiricism of the older school. It is easy to be impatient with this manner but in the very obscurities and tortuous convolutions of some of this writing lies the post-structuralist conviction that language is forever subverting its own meanings.

The question you will need to keep before you is what bearing these essentially linguistic theories can have on our understanding of art. It is easy to grant that structuralism and post-structuralism might offer penetrating insights into the ways in which art history and criticism uses verbal language. The harder case is whether visual forms operate like a written language, with the visual equivalents of an alphabet, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, syntax, similes and metaphors. In other words, is it accurate to talk, as we increasingly do, of a 'visual language' as if it were parallel in some ways to a verbal language and, if this parallelism is justifiable, can we apply the methods of structuralism and post-structuralism directly to the visual forms of art?

Photocopies

Mieke Bal, *Seeing Signs: The Use of Semiotics for the Understanding of Visual Art*, from Cheetham, M., Holly, M.A., Moxey, K. (1998), *The Subjects of Art History*, CUP

Roland Barthes, *Rhetoric of the Image* and *Myth Today*, from Evans, J. & Hall, S. (1999), *Visual Culture, the Reader*, London

Reading

Read **Fernie's Glossary of Concepts** for entries on 'post-modernism', 'post-structuralism' and 'semiotics'. Again, a bright way of entering this territory as by way of **T Eagleton** (1983), *Literary Theory*, London, ch 3: 'Structuralism and Post-Structuralism' and ch 4: 'Post-Structuralism'.

Further reading

See what you can make of **Kemal, S. and Gaskell, I.** (1991), *The Language of Art History*, Cambridge, esp. ch. 1. Another difficult read is **Mitchell, WJT** (1994), *Picture Theory*, Chicago, but try to tackle at least ch 1, *The Pictorial Term*. Also **Bryson, N.** (1981), *Word and Image*, London, 1981, esp. ch 1, *Discourse, Figure* or his (1991) ed., *Visual Theory: Practice and Interpretation*, London and **Shapiro, M.**, *On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art* in **Innis, R.** ed.: *Semiotics: an Introductory Anthology*. London, 1981; and **Krauss, R.**, *In the name of Modern Culture*, **Hebdige, D.**, *Post-Modernism and the Politics of Style* in **Frascina, F. and Harris, J.** (1992), *Art in Modern Culture*, OU. A helpful survey of semiotic thinking is **Alex Potts**, *Sign*, in Nelson, R., Shiff, R. (1996) *Critical Terms for Art History*, Chicago. **Bryson, N., Bal, M.** offered an influential defence of the use of semiotics in *Semiotics and Art History: A Discussion of Context and Senders* in **Preziosi** pp.242-256. For discourse theory and Michel Foucault (who stands a little outside some of these debates), see the excellent **Rose, G.** (2001) *Visual Methodologies*, London, chapters 6 and 7.

Week 9 Spectators and reception

What is the role of the spectator?

What does the spectator need to know?

Should the spectator abide by certain rules when looking at the artwork?

What value should we place on theories of the gaze, the look and the glance?

What place should there be for feeling and emotion?

The importance of the spectator's responses has been a constant theme of western art criticism. All commentators on art, even those who have appealed to unchanging values like Bellori or those who have sought to construct a science of criticism such as Wolfflin, have recognised the role of the spectator and the spectator's judgment. The conviction in the importance of the beholder is particularly important for the aesthetics of both Kant and Hegel and for the formalists. Much modernist art criticism has been based upon the primacy of the response of the viewer. We have seen how Fry, Bell and Greenberg sought to lay the responsibility for the evaluation of an image upon the individual observer, recommending a response unencumbered by the requirements of interpretation. For these critics, the most valuable responses were authentic, subjective and even intuitive though founded in long experience and reasoned appreciation. Susan Sontag passionately supported the primacy of instinctive emotional response, unencumbered, so far as it is possible, by learning or convention.

As Fernie points out, so-called 'reception theory' has gained a renewed significance in the past fifty years, as followers of German hermeneutical philosophy, such as Merleau-Ponty, and French post-structuralism, such as Derrida, have devoted some of their attention to the examination of the role of the spectator. Some of these thinkers, despairing of the projects to establish valid accounts of the origins of the work of art, or of the intentions of the artist, or of the original meanings of the image, have turned to the contemporary spectator, whose responses can at least be examined immediately if not reliably. Scepticism about the possibility of capturing the original character of the work of art is a characteristic position of post-structuralists, who are unconvinced by the rhetoric of all forms of historical evidence. Some have resigned themselves to examining their own responses to the image, others to developing highly personal word-plays which make no attempt to analyse the object.

In recent years, theories of looking have been elaborated around the notion of the 'gaze', which has had a particular impact upon film studies, following on from the writings of Laura Mulvey.

Social historians have also concentrated upon the spectator, especially the original spectator, but for quite other reasons. Retaining a degree of faith in the ability of history to construct a plausible account of the past, social historians have interested themselves in the experiences of the original spectators, as literal eye-witnesses. Much modern writing on art involves the often fraught enterprise of recreating the original conditions of seeing and the history of reception.

Feminist theorists and critics have used reception theory to discuss the notion of forms of vision which are peculiar to each gender. This question of whether there are characteristics of perception which are typical of women and of men is perhaps the most contentious issue debated by feminists.

Photocopies

Michel Foucault, *Las Meninas*, from his (1986) *The Order of Things*, London.

Jacques Derrida *Passe-Partout* from his (1987) *The Truth in Painting*, Chicago

Brendan Prenderville, *Merleau-Ponty, Realism and Painting: psychophysical space and the space of exchange*, *Art History*, vol.22, no 3, Sept 1999.

Reading

The reading for the week begins with **Fernie: Giovanni Morelli (8); Alois Riegl (9); Roger Fry (12); Erwin Panofsky (15); Susan Sontag(18); Svetlana Alpers (24)**. Refer also to the patchy **Wollheim, R.** (1987), *Painting as an Art*, London, esp. to chapter 11 *What the spectator sees* and chapter 111 *The spectator in the picture*.

Further reading

Alpers, S. (1983), *Interpretation without Representation, or the Viewing of 'Las Meninas*, in **Representations 1**, 1983, pp. 31-42. A lively introduction to reception theory is to be found in **Eagleton, T.** (1983), *Literary Theory: an Introduction*, London, chapter 2. A difficult but important book, mentioned by Fernie, is **Fried, M.** (1980), *Absorption and Theatricality*, Chicago. Refer also to **Belting, H.** (1990), *The Image and its Public in the Middle Ages*. **Freedberg, D.** (1991), *The Power of Images*, Chicago, is an ambitious but flawed attempt to investigate the impact of images upon the spectator. For the increasing influence of ideas about the nature of looking, see particularly **Olin, M.** *The Gaze*, in Nelson, R., Shiff, R. (1996) **Critical Terms for Art History**, Chicago, pp. 208-219. For cinema, see esp. **Mulvey, L.** (1988), *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, London. For the views of the Situationists, see **Debord, G.** (1983), *The Society of the Spectacle*, Chicago. See also **Norman Bryson**, *The Gaze in the expanded field* in his (1988) *Vision and Painting: the logic of the gaze*, CUP.

Week 10 Cultural difference and anthropology

Principal questions for the week:

Are western notions of 'art' applicable to the visual cultures of other societies?

In what ways can someone from one culture understand the objects of another culture?

What role has anthropology played in the study of non-Western artefacts?

How does pre-modern Chinese art theory compare with that of western thinking?

How should a Westerner approach the visual culture of Islam?

Writers such as Edward Said and Olu Oguibe have been concerned about the ways in which a Western art history has imposed its own understanding of the visual cultures of other societies.. Art history emerges from an alliance of the Christian and the Judaic traditions of scholarship, which has helped to give shape and definition to the concept of 'the West'. It can be argued that, when this art history deals with non-Western art, its inherently racist tendency is to behave imperialistically, imposing its definitions of art and its values on other cultures. The West has spent centuries plundering the art of other people, expropriating their most precious objects in order to fill the museums and auction houses of Europe and America. Even when modern artists such as Picasso and Kirchner draw on non-European art they do so in a way which appropriates forms without showing any recognition of their original meanings. For Westerners, the art of Africa and Asia is the Other, belonging to a world which is outside, remote, beyond the margins, beyond comprehension. It is strange and different, it does not belong.

These views about art and difference are given urgency by the tensions created by the increasing globalisation of western culture, particularly as it is impacted on Islamic societies.. First there is the question of how non-Western art is to be displayed, viewed, evaluated and interpreted in a Western context, an issue partly dealt with by William Fagg (see Fernie). Then there is the problem of how Western art is to be understood in non-Western cultures. Thirdly, there is the question of how cultures assimilate and utilise the art of other cultures - is this ultimately a matter of power, in the sense both of its imposition and of its subversion?

Further, how applicable are western concepts of 'art' when applied to other visual cultures. What language should be adopted? What form of critical appreciation or contextual understanding, if any, is appropriate? What visual theories obtain in other cultures?

Photocopies

Raymond Firth (1992) *Art and Anthropology*, from Coote, J. & Shelton, A. (1992)

Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics, OUP

Bernard Faure (1998) *The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze*, Critical Inquiry, Spring 1998

Reading

There are three key texts in Fernie, those by **Baldwin, Harrison and Ramsden (23)**, **Fagg (20) and Oguibe (27)**. In Preziosi, look at **Timothy Mitchell's** piece on *Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order* pp.455-472 and **Aby Warburg's** *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America* pp.177-207.

Further reading

See **Frascina, F.** ed. (1992), *Art in Modern Culture*, O.U., section 14, Edward Said, *Orientalism*; **Coote, J.** (1992), *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, OUP, especially the introduction and chapter 1. See also **Hiller, S.** ed. (1991), *The Myth of Primitivism*, London. Also **Davies, S.** *Non-Western Art and Art's Definition* in Carroll, N. ed. (2000) *Theories of Art Today*, Wisconsin. For the influence of western formalist aesthetics on museum display, see **Court, E.** *Africa on display – exhibiting art by Africans* in Baker, E. ed. (1999), *Contemporary cultures of display*, OU. For orientalism, see **Said, E.W.** (1978) *Orientalism*, Yale and (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*, Yale. For a response to the ideas of Edward Said on orientalism, see **Mackenzie, J.M.** (1995) *Orientalism: history, theory and the arts*, Manchester. Use the uneven **Root, D.** (1996), *Cannibal Culture; Art, Appropriation and the Commodification of Difference*, New York with caution.

Week 11 Gender

Principal questions for the week:

How significant should the question of gender be in the study of, and making of, art?

To what extent can differences in the ways in which art is made and seen be attributed to differences in gender?

Are artworks indelibly stamped with the signs of the gender of the maker?

Do we see the world differently as a result of our gender and, if so, are these different ways of seeing socially determined?

Should the ambition of the artist be to accentuate or suppress gender difference?

The case for the significance of gender will be put by feminist writers (though in recent years so-called 'masculinist' and 'queer' theorists have appeared). Feminists argue that conventional art history is patriarchal in a number of ways. It has been blind to the achievements of women artists and constructed a male-dominated canon. It has skewed its priorities towards the types of art which, traditionally, have been reserved for men and has promoted the values which this art represents. It has devalued the forms of craft in which women artists have excelled. It has not acknowledged the ways in which women artists have been systematically excluded from the structures of art, attributing the failure of women to enter the canon to gender inferiority. It has neglected the ways in which art has contributed to the construction of forms of 'Woman' and hence her oppression. It has habitually misinterpreted and misrepresented the imagery of the past in ways steeped in masculinist prejudice. These arguments are used by writers such as Pollock to promote new forms of art, which will no longer be subjugated to patriarchal systems.

In its most ambitious mode, as in the writings of Griselda Pollock and Patricia Mathews, feminist analysis is not seen as an additional method to add to the others we have studied but a world view and a committed politics devoted to the dismantling of sociocultural hierarchies of distinction and difference that remain central to the constitution of values and meaning in Western cultures today. Deconstruction and psychoanalytical theory are methods typically employed, often expressed in a dense post-modern language.

Recently, feminist scholars, particularly in the United States, have worried that the growing divisions amongst them, over essentialism and deconstruction but also over racial questions, are distracting attention from the true purposes of feminism.

Fernie questions the methods and the intentions of feminist critics. He asks whether it is legitimate to conduct a political campaign by scholarly means, what advantage is to be gained from insisting on approaching visual culture in only one way and what are the gains and losses of using a language only easily accessible to a particular group. For some critics, the exclusive

tendencies of some feminist theorists appear hardly more defensible than the old male-dominated ways they seek to replace. Another objection might be that feminism has not developed a method of its own but parasitically uses the methods of others, the psychoanalysts, the structuralists and post-structuralists and the marxist social historians, all, according to feminist analysis, masculinist constructs.

Photocopies

Mary Garrard, *Judith*, from her (1989) *Artemesia Gentileschi*,

Griselda Pollock, *Differencing; Feminism's encounter with the canon*, from her (1999) *Differencing the Canon*, London

Reading

There are four key texts in **Fernie is Pollock (26)** but also read Fernie's commentary and his entry in the 'Glossary of Concepts' for **feminism**. In **Preziosi**, see especially **Nanette Solomon, *The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission*** and **Mary Kelly and Paul Smith, *No essential Femininity* (370-383)**

Further reading

See also **Tickner, L. *The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists since 1970***, in the journal 'Art History', vol. 1, 1978, pp. 236-251. For our purposes, **Edwards, S. ed. (1999), *Art and its Histories, a Reader***, Yale, section 3 *Gender and Art*' and section 5, *Views of Difference* is very useful. For the construction of the canon, see the Preface to **Chadwick, W. (1996), *Women, Art and Society***, London. For a thorough survey of current thinking, see also **Mathews, P. *The Politics of Feminist Art History*** in **Cheetham, M. ed. (1998), *The Subjects of Art History***, CUP. For feminist views on the spectator, look at **Parker, P. and Pollock, G. (1981), *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology***, London; and **Pollock, G. (1987), *Vision and Difference***, London and **Garb, T., *Gender and Representation*** in **Frascina, F. et al (1993), *Modernity and Modernism, French Painting in the Nineteenth Century***, New Haven, chapter 3. On the question of essentialism, refer to **Robinson, H. (2001), *Feminism-Art-Theory***, Oxford, for the essay by Whitney Chadwick (523-527) and Diana Fuss (527-534).

Week 12 Presentations

There will be no lecture this week. The lecture and seminar times will be given over to student presentations (see Assessment below).

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ASSESSMENT

If you are taking the module for 10 credits (SAD1038), you complete only the first assignment.

If you are taking the module for 20 credits (SAD2038), you complete both assignments (including the presentation).

First assignment: max. 2000 word essay (50%)

Choose two objects, one which might be described as 'Western' and one which might not. When discussing them, which questions would you give priority to and why?

(n.b. you are not being asked to analyse your two objects!)

Besides demonstrating your ability to fulfil the assignment cover-sheet criteria, you will be given credit for:

- recognising the complexities of the issues under consideration
- giving evidence of substantial reading, referring particularly to relevant recommended texts in the module booklet
- showing that you have engaged with the issues considered in the lectures and seminars
- demonstrating a mature appreciation of both the arguments, and any possible objections to these arguments, in the debate
- taking a critical approach to the analysis of any texts which you quote or refer to
- writing in a lucid and lively way

due by 1 pm, Wednesday 18 December.

Second assignment: 1800 word essay and presentation (50%)

Choose any book devoted to an individual artist and examine the assumptions of the author(s) and, if relevant, the publishers.

You are encouraged to formulate your own questions, although you may find it helpful to consider some, or all, of the following:

- why has the author chosen the subject?
- what system of evaluation or discrimination is operating in this book?
- what view of originality and creativity does the author hold?
- how does the author construct an account of the artist's character?

- how does the author account for changes in the artist's work?
- what is the author's notion of tradition and how is the artist placed in a tradition?
- how does the author deal with social and cultural history?
- what reasons can you find for the choice and arrangement of the images?
- how does the author deal with the question of style?
- what attitudes govern the way in which the author analyses the images?
- what forms of language does the author employ and what interests do these forms betray?
- what assumptions does the author make about the spectator and the reader?
- can the author be accused of serving the purposes of the art market?
- what interest does the author take in questions of class, race and gender?
- to which approaches to art history covered in the module can you relate the author's views?
- what about the book is characteristic of the period in which it was written/published?

In week 12, you will be expected to give a **short presentation**, for which you will be allocated an 8-minute slot (5 minutes for the presentation and 3 for questions). The presentation will be marked, using the field criteria, and allocated 10% of the marks given to the first assignment. You will be given an assessment feedback form.

In the **short presentation** you will present to the class with your preliminary views about the book you have chosen as the subject of your assignment. You should offer opinions about some (certainly not all!) of the questions listed in the first assignment brief. Try not to read from notes – address the class directly, as if talking to interested friends. Bring the book along so that it can be passed around. *Remember that the aim is not to summarise the book but to examine the assumptions and the methods of the author (and, in some cases, the publisher).*

Essay due by 1 pm, Friday 7 January

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