Museums and Society

Carol Clark Samuel C. Morse

Art and Art History Art and Art History

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**Description**

This course considers how art museums reveal the social and cultural ideologies of those who build, pay for, work in, and visit them. We will study the ways in which art history is (and has been) constructed by museum acquisitions, exhibitions, and installation. We will also consider the ways in which museums are constructed by art history by looking at the world‑wide boom in museum architecture, and by examining curatorial practice and exhibition strategies as they affect American and Asian art in particular. We will analyze the relationship between the cultural contexts of viewer and object, the nature of the translation of languages or aesthetic discourse, and the diverse ways in which art is understood as the materialization of modes of experience and communication.

**Books**

The following books have been ordered from Amherst Books (8 Main St.):

Duncan, Carol. *Civilizing Rituals--Inside Public Art Museums.* London and New York: Routledge, 1995. $35.00

McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum from Boulée to Bilbao*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. $31.99

The others readings will be available through E-Reserve on the class CMS website.

**The Course**

The class will meet on Monday and Wednesday from 12:30–1:50 in Fayerweather 113. There will be two field trips–to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Art Museum, and the Institute of Contemporary Art on **Saturday, March 6**; and to the Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, New York and the Dia Art Foundation in Beacon, New York on **Saturday, April 17**.

The assignments and readings have been designed to help you come to your own understanding of the ways that art history shapes museum practice and museum practice shapes art history. Since such a wide range of material is to be covered in only one semester, regular class attendance is essential. The assigned readings should be completed before each class. You should be prepared to participate in class discussions and share you opinions with your fellow students.

**Requirements**

There will be three writing assignments and a formal in-class presentation at the end of the semester. You will also be asked to present material in class regularly and participate in class discussions (20%). All assignments must be typewritten and submitted in hard copy. Two printed copies of each must be submitted to the Fine Arts Department office.

1) A critical analysis of a theoretical writing on museums, **due February 12.** (15%)

2) An essay on the collector and collecting, **due March 12**. (15%)

3) A final paper (40%) and in-class presentation (10%). An outline of the fifteen minute presentation is due **April 9**. Presentations are scheduled for **April 21, 26, 28** and **May 3**. A fifteen to eighteen page paper based on the in-class presentation is due on **May 13 at 12:00 noon.**

**Schedule**

January 25 (1) Introduction I

Readings:

Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*,pp. 7–20

Kimmelman, “Art, Money and Power”

McClellan, *The Art Museum*, introduction

Smith, “Memo to Art Museums”

January 27 (2) Introduction II

Readings:

Cuno, “Against the Discursive Museum”

Malraux, *Museum Without Walls*

McClellan, *The Art Museum*, ch. 1

Prown, “Mind in Matter”

Winter, “Change in the American Art Museum”

February 1 (3) The Comprehensive Museum I

Readings:

Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*

Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*,pp. 21-47

McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre* pp. 1-12

February 3 (4) The Comprehensive Museum II

Readings:

Ames, *Cannibal Tours*, pp. 15-24

Conforti, “The Idealist Enterprise”

Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, pp. 48-71

Hudson, *Museums of Influence*

Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections*, pp. 89-117

February 8 (5) Discussion Session: Repatriation-- Group presentations of assigned case studies

Readings:

Coombes, “Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identity”

Cuno, “View from the Universal Museum”

McClellan, *The Art Museum*, ch. 6

St. Clair, “Imperial Appropriations”

February 10 (6) Methodologies–Museums and Display

Readings:

Alpers, “The Museum as a Way of Seeing”

Baxandall, “Exhibiting Intention”

Fisher, *Making and Effacing Art*

Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder”

McClellan, *The Art Museum*, ch. 3

February 12 Critical Analysis due at noon

February 15 (7) Museum Architecture

Readings:

Goldberger, “A Delicate Balance”

*Making the Modern* (video)

McClellan, *The Art Museum*, ch. 2

Schjeldahl, “Art House”

February 17 (8) Student Presentations—Museum Architecture

February 22 (9) Student Presentations—Museum Architecture

February 24 (10) Methodologies–Collecting I

Readings:

Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions*

Baudrillard, “The System of Collecting”

Marks, “The Ethics of Art Dealing”

Stewart, *On Longing*

Storr, “To Have and to Hold”

February 25 Lecture: Ivan Gaskell on *Vermeer’s Wager*

4:30pm in Pruyne Hall (115 Fayerweather)

March 1 (11) Methodologies—Collecting II

Readings:

Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*

Geertz, “Art as a Cultural System”

March 3 (12) Discussion Session: Deacessioning—Group presentations on assigned case studies

Readings:

AAMD position paper on deacessioning <http://www.aamd.org/papers/>

March 6 Field Trip—Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gardner Museum

March 8 (13) The Private Museum I

Readings:

Armstrong, “A Moveable Feast”

Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, pp. 72-101

Higonnet, “Museum Sight”

Higonnet, “Private Museums, Public Leadership”

Chong, *Eye of the Beholder* *Gardner Museum*, scan plates

March 10 (14) Guest Lecture: Dr. Elizabeth Barker, Director and Chief Curator

Mead Art Museum (Main Gallery, Mead Art Museum)

March 12 Essay on the collector and collecting due at noon

March 22 (15) Discussion Session--The Barnes Collection

Readings:

Toobin, “Battle for the Barnes”

Zolberg, “The Collection Despite Barnes”

March 24 (16) The American Art Museum I

The Rise of Art Museums in the U.S.—Lecture Professor Clark

Readings:

Wallach, *Exhibiting Contradiction*

Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life*

March 29 (18) The American Art Museum II-- “*The West As America*”

Readings:

Dubin, *Displays of Power*

Truettner, “A Case for Active Viewing”

Truettner, "For Museum Audiences”

March 31 (19) The Modern and Contemporary Museum

Readings:

Barker, “The Museum in a Postmodern Era”

Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, pp. 102-132

Grunenberg, “The Modern Art Museum”

Lowry, “A Deontological Approach”

Mainardi, “Repetition and Novelty”

Prior, “Having One’s Tate and Eating It”

April 5 (20) Discussion Session: Museums and Institutional Critique—Group presentations of assigned case studies

Readings:

Alberro, “Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique”

April 7 (21) The Asian Art Museum I

A History of Displaying Asian Art—Lecture Prof. Morse

Readings:

Barringer, “The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project.”

Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture*

Guth, *Art, Tea and Industry*

Lawton, *Freer*

Morse, “Promoting Authenticity”

Shioda, “Morimura Yasumasa”

April 9 Outline of final presentation due at noon

April 12 (19) The Asian Art Museum II

Readings:

Clunas, “Oriental Antiquities/Far Eastern Art”

Earle, “The Taxonomic Obsession”

Gaskell, “Sacred to Profane”

Luke, *Museum Politics*

April 14 (22) The Ethnographic Museum

Readings:

Ames, *Cannibal Tours*, pp. 49-69

Danto, “Artifact and Art”

Goldwater, “Art History and Anthropology”

McEvilley, “Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief”

Rubin, et al. “On Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief”

April 17 Field Trip—Storm King Sculpture Park, Dia Foundation

April 19 (23) The Museum and Its Audience

Readings:

Barker, “Exhibiting the Canon: The Blockbuster Show”

Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

Bourdieu, *The Love of Art*

McClellan, *The Art Museum*, ch. 4

Merriman, “Museum Visiting as a Cultural Phenomenon”

Tinterow, “The Blockbuster, Art History and the Public”

April 21 (24) Presentations

April 26 (25) Presentations

April 28 (26) Presentations

May 3 (27) Presentations

May 5 (28) Conclusion—The Commercialization of the Art Museum

Readings:

Connelly, “Impressionists Sure Move the Merchandise”

Horyn, “A Peek into Coco’s Closet”

McClellan, *The Art Museum*, ch. 5

McClellan, *The Art Museum*, conclusion

Martin, “This Isn’t Your Father’s Art Museum Any More”

Muschamp, “Armani at the Guggenheim”

Rosenbaum, “Fashion Victim”

Smith, “Art, With Baggage in Tow”

Vogel, “Watch Out, Warhol, Here’s Japanese Shock Pop”

May 13 Final paper due at noon

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