

AR315 THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: ART AND THE ONEIRIC

Art and Aesthetics

Module: Artists, Genres, Movements / Aesthetics and Art Theory

Spring 2020

Seminar Leader: Geoff Lehman

Course Times: Wednesday, 9:00-10:30 and Friday, 10:45-12:15 (9:00-12:15 for museum visits or films)

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 13:00-15:00

Course Description

“He was part of my dream, of course—but then I was part of his dream, too!” (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*). Alice’s reflection upon her dream evokes something of the oneiric experience that can be part of one’s encounter with a work of art: the dialogue between the specific universe the artwork invites us to enter—with its own logic, kinds of seeing, and means of expression—and the viewer as subject, bringing her or his own desires and experiences to its interpretation. One important aspect of this encounter could be described, in psychoanalytic terms, as a relationship between the unconscious wishes, drives, and memories of the viewing subject, on the one hand, and the unconscious qualities of the work itself, both in its production and—especially—in its visual character (its “optical unconscious”), on the other. Major topics for the course include: psychoanalytic interpretations of art; the relationship between the oneiric, the imaginative, and the theatrical; contemplation, meditation, schizophrenia, nightmare, and other altered states of consciousness in relation to the experience of artworks; the oneiric and visual narrativity; the place of (self-)reflexivity or its absence in immersive art. Artists whose works we study include Fan Kuan, Fra Angelico, Mirza Ali, Goya, Redon, Picasso, Ernst, Miller, Kahlo, Fellini, Tarkovsky, Woodman, and Kentridge. Readings will be from Carroll, Nietzsche, Woolf, Freud, Jung, Borges, Lacan, Bachelard, Krauss, and others.

Course Books

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland* (Norton Critical Edition), ISBN: 978-0393932348

Note that there is no reader required for the course. Additional readings will be handed out as photocopies before the class for which they are assigned.

Library and book purchase policies

The college book policy for 2019-2020 is that reserve stocks of books will be lent to students on the basis of need, or (thereafter) on a first come first served basis. Books not yet owned by the college will be purchased only to create a small library reserve collection, and for students receiving more than 70% financial aid. Otherwise, students must purchase all course books.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Syllabi should note that, instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

For this class attendance is mandatory and active participation in discussions will be an essential part of the course. More than two absences (that is, absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Readings should be done in advance of the class for which they are assigned. Please refer to the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Museum Visits

Four of our scheduled classes will be museum, gallery, or site visits. When possible, these will be on Friday, since the longer block of time scheduled for our course on Fridays allows us to make some of these visits during regular class time.

Assessment

Participation

Students should arrive to each class on time and prepared. Being prepared means (1) having completed the assigned reading (in the specific editions indicated above), (2) bringing to class a non-electronic copy of the assigned reading, and (3) being ready to initiate and to contribute to discussion.

Engagement in class discussion should be regular as well as productive; quantity alone will not favorably affect the participation grade.

Writing Assignments

There will be two principal assignments over the course of the term: a midterm essay, 2400-2700 words in length, and a final presentation accompanied by an essay, 3000-3500 words in length, due at the end of the term.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Syllabi for core and elective classes should note or refer to the following policy from the Student Handbook on the submission of essays: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: 30%

Midterm essay: 30%

Final presentation: 10%

Final essay: 30%

Schedule

I. TIME

Week 1: The White Queen (oneiric narrativity)

Wednesday, January 29 Mirza Ali, Bosch
Reading: Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, opening poems and Chapters 1-6

Friday, January 31 Klinger, Kentridge
Reading: Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chapters 7-12

Week 2: Humpty Dumpty (personal iconography and free association)

Wednesday, February 5 Picasso
Reading: Carl Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious"; Leo Steinberg, "Picasso's Sleepwatchers"

Friday, February 7 Film screening: *8 ½* (Fellini)
Reading: Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*, opening poem, Preface to the 1897 Edition, and Chapters 1-6

Week 3: The Garden of Live Flowers (text, image, music)

Wednesday, February 12 Illustrating Alice
Reading: Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*, Chapters 7-12 and closing poem

Friday, February 14 Visit to the Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection (Redon)
Reading: poems submitted by the group

II. SUBJECTS

Week 4: "Who Are You?" (states of [un]consciousness: contemplation, meditation, disassociation)

Wednesday, February 19 Fra Angelico, Hopper
Reading: Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, selections; Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, "Conclusion" and other selections

Friday, February 21 Visit to the Museum of Islamic Art
Reading: De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, selections; Carl Jung, *The Red Book*, selections

Week 5: The Looking Glass (oneiric self-reflection)

Wednesday, February 26 Kahlo

Reading: Carl Jung, *The Red Book*, selections; Fernando Pessoa, "The Tobacco Shop"

Friday, February 28

Film screening: *Mirror* (Tarkovsky)

Reading: Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, selections; Wallace Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"

III. OBJECTS

Week 6: Mad Tea Party (surrealism and automatism)

Wednesday, March 4

Surrealist Painting

Reading: Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, selections; André Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism" and "Automatic Writing"

Friday, March 6

Visit to the Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection (Ernst)

Reading: Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Chapter 2

Week 7: A Game of Chess (theater, the uncanny, and the optical unconscious)

Wednesday, March 11

Surrealist Photography

Reading: Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny"

Friday, March 13

Film screening: *Alice* (Švankmajer)

Reading: Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, selections; T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"

Midterm essay due: 23:59 on Sunday, March 15

IV. SPACE

Week 8: Down the Rabbit Hole (immersive art)

Wednesday, March 18

Viola, Kusama, Gonzalez-Foerster

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, selections

Friday, March 20

Visit to contemporary art galleries

Reading: Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, Part Two ("Time Passes"); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, "Drawers, Chests and Wardrobes"

Week 9: Drink Me (miniature worlds)

Sunday, March 22

Film screening: *Céline and Julie Go Boating* (Rivette)

Reading: *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (*Poliphilo's Strife of Love in a Dream*), selections; Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, "Drawers, Chests and Wardrobes"

Wednesday, March 25

Fan Kuan

Reading: Jorge Luis Borges, "The Aleph"; Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, "Miniature"

Week 10: Cheshire Cat (“the call of space”: imagination, nightmare, schizophrenia)

Friday, March 27

Goya

Reading: Goya, *Los Caprichos*; Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, selections

Wednesday, April 1

Woodman

Reading: Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, selections; Stéphane Mallarmé, “A Throw of the Dice will Never Abolish Chance”

Friday, April 3

No class

SPRING BREAK (April 6-13)

Weeks 11-14: FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Wednesday, April 15

Friday, April 17

Wednesday, April 22

Friday, April 24

Wednesday, April 29

Friday, May 1

No class (federal holiday)

Wednesday, May 6

Friday, May 8

No class (federal holiday)

Final essay due: 23:59 on Wednesday, May 13