

AH219 LANDSCAPE, LAND ART, AND THE CITY

Art and Aesthetics
Module: Artists, Genres, Movements / Aesthetics and Art Theory
Fall 2020

Seminar Leader: Geoff Lehman
Course Times: Tuesday, 15:45-19:00

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Office Hours: Thursday, 14:00-16:00

Course Description

This course will examine landscape art as a mode of representation, of experience, and of site-specific intervention, through close readings of a small number of major works. In the first part of the course, we will focus on European landscape paintings, from the Renaissance to modernism (where landscape plays a foundational role), as well as exploring the landscape tradition of Song dynasty China. In the second part of the course, we will turn our attention to land art, an artistic practice in which the engagement with landscape becomes a direct intervention in, and experience of, the actual physical landscape, and consider its relationship to landscape painting as well as its place within the transition from modernism to postmodernism. Topics for the course include: nature and human experience; perspective, landscape representation, and knowledge; subjectivity and the aesthetics of landscape; the materiality of the art object and the “post-medium condition” in site-specific work; art and environmentalism; and the relationship of land art to the experience of urban space. Among the artists whose works will be our focus are Leonardo da Vinci, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Fan Kuan, Xia Gui, Caspar David Friedrich, Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne, Robert Smithson, Mary Miss, and Ana Mendieta. Readings will include art historical, philosophical, and literary texts. Visits to sites in Berlin to experience works of land art firsthand are an integral part of the course.

Course Books

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 2020-2021 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.

Site Visits

Two of our scheduled classes will be site visits, an opportunity to look at site-specific interventions in the landscape of the city.

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, 2000-2500 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

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

Tuesday, September 1

Perspective and the “Invention” of Landscape

Jan Van Eyck, Leonardo da Vinci

Reading:

Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, edited by I. Richter, selections

Suggested reading: Hans Belting, *Florence and Baghdad*, Chapter 6

Tuesday, September 8

Landscapes of the Song Dynasty

Fan Kuan, Wang Ximeng, Ma Lin

Reading:

Hubert Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, Chapter 5, pp. 200-225

Tuesday, September 15

The Evocative, the Contemplative, and the Oneiric

Xia Gui, Giorgione

Reading:

Jorge Luis Borges, “The Aleph”

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, “Miniature,” sections I-III & VIII-IX, and “Intimate Immensity,” sections I-III

Walter Pater, “The School of Giorgione” and “Conclusion”

Suggested reading: David Rosand, *The Meaning of the Mark*, “The Stroke of the Brush”

Tuesday, September 22

Nature and Human Experience

Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Hesiod, *Works and Days*, ll. 383-694 (Nelson trans., pp. 84-94)

Hans Sedlmayr, “Bruegel’s ‘Macchia,’” sections I-III and IX-XI (Wood trans., pp. 323-335, 356-370)

Tuesday, September 29

Goya and Romanticism

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, Caspar David Friedrich

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *The Disasters of War*, series of 80 etching with aquatint prints, c. 1810-20, published posthumously in 1863

William Wordsworth, *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*

Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, part 2, 1-16

Suggested reading: Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, pp. 66-72

Tuesday, October 6

Photography and Painting: Orientalism, Aestheticism,

Modernism

Early Daguerreotypes, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Gustave Moreau

Reading:

François Arago, “Report to the Academies of Arts and Sciences” (in *Classic Essays on Photography*)

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, selections

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” Sections II, IV, and V

Tuesday, October 13 **Impressionism and the Avant-Garde**

Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Edmond Duranty, *The New Painting*, selections

Jules LaFogue, "Impressionism"

T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, "The Environs of Paris," pp. 147-185

Leo Steinberg, "Monet's Water Lilies"

Suggested Reading: Clement Greenberg, "Cézanne"

Midterm essay due: 23:59 on Sunday, October 18

FALL BREAK (October 19-25)

Tuesday, October 27 **Land Art: Environments**

Nancy Holt, Robert Smithson, Walter De Maria

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Robert Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects"

Robert Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty"

Tuesday, November 3 **Visit to Naturpark Südgelände**

Photography assignment (details to follow)

Reading:

Yve-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll Around Clara-Clara"

Tuesday, November 10 **Land Art: Interventions**

Richard Serra, Mary Miss, Ana Mendieta

Discussion of student photographs

Reading:

Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field"

Rosalind Krauss, "Richard Serra: Sculpture Redrawn"

Tuesday, November 17 **Visit to Memorials in Mitte**

Reading:

Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, selections

Tuesday, November 24 **Art, Environmentalism, and Climate Change**

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, selections

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, selections

FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday, December 1

Tuesday, December 8

Final essay due: 23:59 on Tuesday, December 15