

AR315 THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS: ART AND THE ONEIRIC

Art and Aesthetics
Module: Aesthetics and Art Theory
Fall 2022

Seminar Leader: Geoff Lehman
Course Times: Tuesday and Thursday, 15:45-17:15

Email: g.lehman@berlin.bard.edu
Office Hours: Fridays, 15:00-17:00

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, daydreaming, schizophrenia, nightmares, 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 Wang Ximeng, Mirza Ali, Goya, De Chirico, Dalí, Miller, Varo, Kahlo, Fellini, Tarkovsky, Kentridge, and Kusama. Readings will be from Lewis Carroll, De Quincey, Woolf, Freud, Jung, Carrington, Borges, Bachelard, and others.

Course Books

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

Library and book purchase policies

The college book policy for 2022-2023 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 highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. 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

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2022: Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Museum Visits

Three of our scheduled classes will be museum visits. Since it is not possible to go to a museum during our scheduled class time, museum classes will normally be on Saturdays and each museum class will replace a regular Tuesday or Thursday class, usually from the preceding or following week.

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

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

The White Queen (oneiric narrativity)

Tuesday, August 30 Mirza Ali, Hieronymus Bosch

Reading:

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*: opening poems, Chapters 1-6

Thursday, September 1 Max Klinger, *Paraphrase on the Finding of a Glove*

Reading:

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*: Chapters 7-12

The Garden of Live Flowers (text and image)

Tuesday, September 6 Illustrating Alice

Reading:

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*: opening poem, Preface to the 1897 Edition, Chapters 1-6

Thursday, September 8 Lewis Carroll, *The Alice Books*

Reading:

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

The Mock Turtle (*chronos* and *kairos*)

Tuesday, September 13 Giorgio de Chirico

Reading:

Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, "The Manifest Content of Dreams and the Latent Dream-Thoughts"

Thursday, September 15 Dana Al Mojil, William Kentridge

Visual assignment (films):

Wonderland: A True Story (Al Mojil)
9 Drawings for Projection (Kentridge)

II. SPACE

Drink Me (miniature worlds)

Tuesday, September 20 Wang Ximeng, *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains*

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Bhagavata Purana, selections (looking into Krishna's mouth)
Jorge Luis Borges, "The Aleph"

Thursday, September 22 Film screening: *Céline and Julie Go Boating* (Rivette, Berto, Labourier)

No reading assignment

The Cheshire Cat ("the call of space": imagination, nightmare, schizophrenia)

Saturday, September 24, 15:00 Visit to the Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection: Goya, Redon

Reading:

Poems submitted by the group

Tuesday, September 27 No class

Thursday, September 29 Francesca Woodman

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, "The Pleasures of Opium" and "The Pains of Opium," pp. 74-80

Down the Rabbit Hole (immersive art)

Tuesday, October 4 Bill Viola

Reading:

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, Part Two: "Time Passes"

Thursday, October 6 Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Rooms

Reading:

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, "Intimate Immensity"

III. SUBJECTS

Humpty Dumpty (personal iconography and free association)

Tuesday, October 11 Pablo Picasso, *Vollard Suite*

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Carl Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious"
Leo Steinberg, "Picasso's Sleepwatchers"

Thursday, October 13 Film screening: 8 ½ (Fellini)
No reading assignment

“Who Are You?” (states of [un]consciousness: daydreaming, contemplation, ecstasy)

Saturday, October 15, 15:00 **Visit to the Museum of Islamic Art**
Reading:
Hans Belting, *Florence and Baghdad*, Chapter 3, pp. 111-123 (“Mathematics and Geometry in Islamic Art”)

Tuesday, October 18 Room Space: Fra Angelico, Edward Hopper
Reading:
Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Vintage International Edition, 2004), Part I, pp. 34-51
Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, “Corners”

The Looking-Glass (oneiric self-reflection)

Thursday, October 20 Frida Kahlo, Self-Portraits
Reading:
Carl Jung, “The Psychological Aspects of the Kore”

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

FALL BREAK (October 24-30)

Tuesday, November 1 No class

Thursday, November 3 No class

Tuesday, November 8 Film screening: *Mirror* (Tarkovsky)
No reading assignment

IV. OBJECTS

Mad Tea Party (surrealism and automatism)

Thursday, November 10 Surrealism, I: Salvador Dalí, Leonora Carrington
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
Leonora Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, selections

Saturday, November 12, 15:00 **Visit to the Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection: Surrealism**
Reading:
André Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924),” pp. 9 (bottom) – 16 (middle), 24 (middle) – 30 (middle), 41 (top) - 47

The Old Sheep Shop (place as object / object as place)

Tuesday, November 15

Surrealism, II: Dorothea Tanning, René Magritte

Reading:

Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, "The Dream-Work"

Thursday, November 17

Surrealism, III: Remedios Varo

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Carl Jung, *The Red Book*, Liber Primus, pp. 118-126 ("The Way of What is to Come") and
Liber Secundus, pp. 361-374 ("Nox Quarta")

A Game of Chess (the uncanny and the optical unconscious)

Tuesday, November 22

Surrealist Photography: Man Ray, Maurice Tabard, Lee

Miller

Reading:

Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," pp. 123-125 and 132-159

Thursday, November 24

Film screening: *Alice* (Švankmajer)

No reading assignment

FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday, November 29

Thursday, December 1

Tuesday, December 6

Thursday, December 8

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