

AR315 THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS: ART AND THE ONEIRIC

Seminar Leader: Geoff Lehman

Course Times: Monday and Wednesday, 14:00-15:30

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 13:00-15:00, or by appointment

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 2023-2024 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.

Use of Electronics

To facilitate a focused and engaging seminar discussion the use of electronic devices during class time is not allowed, unless for disability accommodation. If you have a disability accommodation, please inform your instructor at the beginning of the rotation.

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 be on the weekends and each museum class will replace a regular Monday or Wednesday 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

Extensions may be granted by the individual seminar leaders, but the request must be made at least 24 hours before the essay deadline. Late essays will be marked down one-third of a letter grade (e.g., from A- to B+) for every 24 hours they are late, down to a maximum grade of a C.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: 30%
Midterm essay: 30%
Final presentation: 10%
Final essay: 30%

Schedule

I. TIME

The White Queen (oneiric narrativity)

Monday, January 29

Mirza Ali, Hieronymus Bosch

Reading:

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

Wednesday, January 31

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)

Monday, February 5

Illustrating Alice

Reading:

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

Wednesday, February 7

Lewis Carroll, The *Alice* Books

Reading:

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

Suggested reading:

Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (The Strife of Love in a Dream), translated by Jocelyn Godwin (Thames & Hudson, 1999), pp. 9-26 and 58-67

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

Monday, February 12

Giorgio de Chirico

Reading:

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

Wednesday, February 14

William Kentridge, Dana Al Mojil

Visual assignment (films):

Felix in Exile (Kentridge)

Wonderland: A True Story (Al Mojil)

Reading:

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

Suggested reading:

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Chapter VI: "The Dream-Work"

Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, Part III, Chapter 6: "Film and Dream: The Knowledge of the Subject" and Chapter 7: "Film and Dream: Perception and Hallucination"

II. SPACE

Drink Me (miniature worlds)

Monday, February 19

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"

Poems submitted by the group

Suggested reading:

Hubert Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, Chapter 5, "The Hieroglyph of Breath"

Wednesday, February 21

No class

Friday, February 23, 18:30

Film screening: *Céline and Julie Go Boating* (Rivette, Berto,

Labourier)

No reading assignment

Suggested reading:

Henry James, "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes"

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

Sunday, February 25, 14:00

Visit to the Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection: Piranesi, Goya,

Redon

Reading:

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, "Advertisement for *Los Caprichos*"

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan"

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

Monday, February 26

No class

Wednesday, February 28

Francesca Woodman

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia"

Suggested reading:

Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Chapter 8 ("The Line and Light") and Chapter 9 ("What is a Picture?")

Down the Rabbit-Hole (immersive art)

Monday, March 4

Bill Viola

Reading:

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

Wednesday, March 6

Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirror Rooms

Reading:

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

III. SUBJECTS

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

Saturday, March 9, 14:00

Visit to the Hamburger Bahnhof

Visual assignment (films):

Films of Maya Deren: *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), *The Witch's Cradle* (1943), *At Land* (1944),
Ritual in Transfigured Time (1946)

Monday, March 11

No class

Wednesday, March 13

Fra Angelico, Edward Hopper

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Vintage International Edition, 2004), Part I, pp. 34-51
Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, "Corners"

Humpty Dumpty (personal iconography and free association)

Friday, March 15, 19:30

Film screening: *8 ½* (Fellini)

No reading assignment

Suggested reading (browsing):

Federico Fellini, *The Book of Dreams*

Midterm essay due: 23:59 on Sunday, March 17

Monday, March 18

Pablo Picasso, *Vollard Suite*

Reading:

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

Wednesday, March 20

No class

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SPRING BREAK (March 24-April 1)

The Looking-Glass (oneiric self-reflection)

Wednesday, April 3

Frida Kahlo, Self-Portraits

Reading:

Carl Jung, "The Psychological Aspects of the Kore"

Friday April 5, 19:30 Film screening: *Mirror* (Tarkovsky)

No reading assignment

Suggested reading:

Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, Chapter V: "The film image"

IV. OBJECTS

Mad Tea Party (surrealism and automatism)

Monday, April 8

No class

Wednesday, April 10

Salvador Dalí, Dorothea Tanning

Reading:

André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)," pp. 9 (bottom) – 16 (middle), 24 (middle) – 30 (middle), 41 (top) – 47

Sunday, April 14, 15:00

Visit to the Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection: Surrealism

Reading:

Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Chapter 2

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

Monday, April 15

No class

Wednesday, April 17

Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Leonora Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, pp. 127-141

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")

Suggested reading:

Carl Jung, "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy" (in Carl Jung, *Dreams* [Routledge Classics, 2002])

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

Monday, April 22

Surrealist Photography: Man Ray, Maurice Tabard,

Lee Miller

Visual assignment: group presentation

Reading:

Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny"

Wednesday, April 24

No class

Friday, April 26, 20:00

Film screening: *Alice* (Švankmajer)

No reading assignment

Suggested reading: Anna M. Richards, *A New Alice in the Old Wonderland*, Chapters 1, 2, 11, and 12;
John Rae, *New Adventures of "Alice"*; Saki, "The Westminster Alice"; Edward Hope, "Alice in the
Delighted States"

FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Monday, April 29

Wednesday May 1

No class

Monday, May 6

Wednesday, May 8

Final essay due: 23:59 on Wednesday, May 15