

“TECHNOLOGY IN ART AND VISUAL COMMUNICATION”

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SUMMER PROGRAM IN VENICE 2018

Course Proposal

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Course Description

From early optical instruments to Renaissance printing presses, from camera obscuras, floating on boats to portable paint tubes, from modern film cameras to laser sculptures, from computer robotics to 3D printing, technology continues to play a major role in art, and visual communication. It shapes both creative processes and production techniques in the making of visual culture and it affects and defines the status of the beholder of its manifold expressions. The course will investigate some of the milestones in the history of instruments and will take up contemporary technology to investigate the intertwined connection between man and machine in the creative world.

In the summer session of 2018, the course is designed as a field study in Venice and will focus mainly on optical instruments and technologies developed from the eighteenth century to the present day. It will begin by investigating the specific technology of the camera obscura and its use by Venetian painter Canaletto. A sketchbook in the Venetian Accademia suggests that Canaletto used a portable camera obscura, possibly putting it on a boat and floating down the Canal Grande, to create a mobile device for recording his city. Concurrently, this mobility has specific implications for the beholder of his works, as individual views are stitched together to create an imaginative rather than faithfully copied representation of Venice. Mobility is the center of investigation of technologies. Portable paint tubes allowed artists to work in the field in the nineteenth century, time-lapse photography and early cinema allowed images themselves to become mobile. Twentieth-century technology will be explored through the 16th International Exhibition of the Architecture Biennale in Venice, using national and curated installations and collateral events as a primary resource. The course investigates the history of art with respect to the use of technology in creative production and considers both use and user of technology from an epistemological point of view. The course is interdisciplinary in its scope, incorporating theories from film, semiotics, cultural studies, as well as aspects of neuropsychology.

Course Goals

The goals of this course include the following:

- to acquire visual literacy to read the visual world in a global context
- to gain an understanding of art and visual communication with respect to the use of technology in its production
- to draw transversal connections between art, anthropology, cultural studies, film studies, philosophy, psychology, and epistemology
- to develop critical thinking, analytical, and writing skills
- to critically synthesize information from class discussions, readings, field research, guided visits, travel experience, and further research
- to present these connections in a variety of formats, including class discussions, oral presentations, and in written assignments
- to acquire study and research skills to be applied in other subjects and classes

Student Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- understand the history of technology as related to artistic production
- have acquired the visual literacy in order to read the visual world in terms of its formal organization and symbolic content
- understand the relationship between technology and its user in the production of art, fashion, and images
- to acquire skills to do empirical research in and document the visual world
- be able to analyze their empirical research and to structure and work it into coherent arguments
- cultivate cross cultural competencies (e.g. language, empathy, communication) that develop capacities to work across socio-economic and cultural communities
- develop communication proficiencies appropriate to a particular focus (written, visual, and presentational) and relevant for diverse audiences

Course Requirements and Grade Composition

❖ Attendance and course contributions	25%
❖ Photo essay/video project	20%
❖ Biennale installation critique and presentations on site	20%
❖ Art and technology blog	15%
❖ Research paper	20%

Tentative Course Schedule With Readings

WEEK 1	Technology from the Renaissance to the Eighteenth Century
Session 1	Museo Correr: Venetian Drawings from the Renaissance to the Eighteenth Century
Session 2	Venetian Paintings Trough the Lens of the Restorer (with Giulio Bono)
Readings:	Marin Sanudo. "Praise of the City of Venice, 1493." In David Chambers and Brian Pullan, eds. <i>Venice: A Documentary History 1450-1630</i> , 4-20. Toronto, 2001. David Rosand. <i>Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation</i> . Cambridge, 2002.

- WEEK 2** **Eighteenth Century: Canaletto and the Camera Obscura**
- Session 1 Accademia: Investigating Canaletto's sketchbook
Studying and re-sketching Canaletto in situ: land
- Session 2 Studying and re-sketching Canaletto in situ: boat
- Reading: Jonathan Crary. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge and London, 1995.
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- WEEK 3** **Optics and Gravity Opening a "New World" View**
- Session 1 Gianantonio Guardi's Painted Optics and the Tiepolo's "Mondo Nuovo"
Sant'Angelo Raffaele and Ca' Rezzonico
- Session 2 Early Cinema
- Readings: Johanna Fassel. "The Meaning of the Mark: Gianantonio Guardi's Optical Investigations." In *Venetian Painting Matters 1470-1750*, ed. J. Cranston. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers.
Barbara Stafford and Frances Teepak. *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2001.
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- WEEK 4** **From Conscious Investigations to the Optical Unconscious**
- Session 1 Museum of Modern Art: Ca' Pesaro and Peggy Guggenheim Collection
Archive of Museo Correr
- Session 2 16th International Exhibition of the Architecture Biennale: Giardini
- Readings: Walter Benjamin. *A Short History of Photography*. [1931]
David Lewis. "On the Logically Paradoxical Task of New Beginning." In Chrissie Isles et al., editors. *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art 1905-2016*, 200-205. Yale, 2016.
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- WEEK 5** **Modern Technology in the 16th International Architecture Biennale**
- Session 1 16th International Exhibition of the Architecture Biennale: Arsenale
- Session 2 16th International Exhibition of the Architecture Biennale: Collateral Events
- Readings: Donna Haraway. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London, 1991. Chapter 8: "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century."
Biennale Exhibition Catalogue Essays (forthcoming)
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- WEEK 6** **Technology and the Mind: Unearthing Trauma**
- Session 1 Excerpts Screening: *Waltz with Bashir*, *Hurt Locker*
- Session 2 Final Project Presentations
- Readings: Garrett Stewart. "Screen Memory in *Waltz With Bashir*." *Film Quarterly* 63/3 (Spring 2010): 58-62.
Johanna Fassel. "We Photograph Things in Order to Drive Them Out Of Our Minds: Abstraction and Memory in the Photography of a Veteran from Afghanistan and Iraq." *intervalla: platform for intellectual exchange*, volume 2: "Trauma, Abstraction, and Creativity." J. Fassel and C. Wiedmer, eds. 2014-15.