HISTORY OF ART
POSTGRADUATE LEVEL SHORT COURSES 2019 - 20

Department of History of Art: MA Options for MA Graduates

For the first time in 2019-20, we are opening up places on our MA options to our MA (and
Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma) graduates, in response for demand for further
personal enrichment and professional development. If you completed the MA in 2019 but have not
graduated yet, you are still eligible. We hope you’ll find the following offer attractive and
stimulating, and we would love to have your feedback.

What to expect

• You will be taking these modules alongside seminar-size groups of current MA students. The
  overall number will not normally exceed 18. You'll be given access to all preparatory
  readings and other resources, and will be part of the seminar along with the rest of the
  group. As you'll remember from your own studies, doing the reading in advance is crucial to
  your own and everyone else's experience of the seminar, so we ask all participants to
  commit to coming to class prepared.

• You will be included on any class visits to sites and collections.

• You will have access to the Birkbeck library and its online resources, as well as to the
  module's Moodle page, for the duration of the module.

• You will probably be asked to do a non-assessed presentation, but you won't be asked to do
  the assessment (final essay) for the module.

How to sign up

• The list of options available in the Spring term 2020 is available below, with dates and times.
  You can opt to take one or more than one, as long as the times don't clash.

• Places on each module are limited, so please rank your choices in order of preference.

• Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, so send your ranked choices
  (including an indication of how many you would like to take) to art-history@bbk.ac.uk as
  soon as possible and no later than 13 December.

Cost: £650 per option module.

SPRING TERM

Global Victorians: Visual Cultures of the Colonial
Dr Sean Willcock
Dates: Mondays, 13 January – 23 March 2020, 18.00-19.30 (no class on 17 February)
Number of Available Spaces: 5
Fee: £650
Entry Requirements: Department of History of Art MA/PGDip/PGCert Graduates
Contact Details for Enquirers: art-history@bbk.ac.uk

This course looks at the art and photography of the British Empire during the Victorian period. The
colonial encounter was heavily mediated by the visual practices of portraiture, landscape, and
ethnographic documentation, with the rise of photography and the illustrated press situating the
image at the heart of the colonial experience. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said wrote
of how geopolitical struggle over territory ‘is not only about soldiers and cannons, but also about ideas,
about forms, about images and imaginings.’ Through close readings of colonial sources and
postcolonial scholarship, we will examine how such images and imaginings helped the Victorians to
conceptualise, classify, and control the vast array of territories and peoples across the empire; and
how, in turn, those peoples responded with visual approaches of their own. We will discuss visual
anthropology, colonial art schools, and the imagery of insurgency, in addition to assessing the relationship of colonialism to both the fine arts and popular culture in Britain and throughout the empire. Situating Victorian art in a global framework, this module considers how aesthetic practices grappled with fraught notions of Britishness, race, and sovereignty in the colonial context.

The Critical Museum
Dr Kasia Murawska-Muthesius
Dates: Mondays, 13 January – 23 March 2020, 18.00-19.30 (no class on 17 February)
Number of Available Spaces: 5
Fee: £650
Entry Requirements: Department of History of Art MA/PGDip/PGCert Graduates
Contact Details for Enquirers: art-history@bbk.ac.uk

Since the late nineteenth century, museums have been cited as tools of imperialism and colonialism, as strongholds of patriarchalism, masculinism, homophobia and xenophobia, and accused both of elitism and commercialism. Could the museum absorb and benefit from its critique, turning into a site of reflection rather than celebration, debate rather than concurrence, resistance rather than ritual? This module begins from looking at the major tenets of the museum critique, studying seminal texts, from Quatremère de Quincy, to Kasimir Malevich, and to Pierre Bourdieu and Carol Duncan. It moves onto examining the diverse proposals of the ‘critical museum’, emerging throughout the new millennium. Our aim is to discuss both the potential and limitations of a museum to use its collections, its cultural authority, its ‘auratic’ space and resources to take part in public debates about the major issues of the contemporary world. What are the ways, accessible to the museum, to address the widest strata of the societies, to give voice to the marginalised, and to lay bare the museum’s mechanisms? Our case studies will include provocative exhibitions, rehanging of permanent collections, as well as events staged at museums, all of them aiming to transform the museum from functioning as Temple of Culture into the museum as Forum for public debates.

Slavery and its Cultural Legacies
Dr Sarah Thomas
Dates: Wednesdays 15 January – 25 March 2020, 18.00-19.30 (no class on 19 February)
Number of Available Spaces: 5
Fee: £650
Entry Requirements: Department of History of Art MA/PGDip/PGCert Graduates
Contact Details for Enquirers: art-history@bbk.ac.uk

In 2007 Britain commemorated the bicentenary of the abolition of its slave trade with a series of exhibitions and events across the country. Often criticised for privileging a narrative of Britain’s benevolence and redemption over its leading role in sustaining a brutal political system, debates around slavery and its abolition have nevertheless remained in public consciousness. Works of art (whether statues of slave traders or slave owners, or Confederate generals in the United States) have gained attention as lightning rods for often heated and bitter debates about slavery’s history. Museums (like universities) are starting to acknowledge and seek to further understand their institutional debt to this history. The role of slave-owners in the early history of British art museums, for example, is currently being scrutinised. This module considers how the enslaved and slavery itself have been, and continue to be, represented both by artists and curators, not only in Britain and the United States but in former sites of colonisation too — the Caribbean and Brazil. It explores why
slavery’s cultural legacies have remained hidden for so long, and why these continue to remain so fiercely contested.

**Rome: Place, Continuity and Memory**

**Dr Dorigen Caldwell**  
**Dates:** Wednesdays 15 January – 25 March 2020, 18.00-19.30 (no class on 19 February)  
**Number of Available Spaces:** 1  
**Fee:** £650  
**Entry Requirements:** Department of History of Art MA/PGDip/PGCert Graduates  
**Contact Details for Enquirers:** art-history@bbk.ac.uk

In this option we will look at ways in which the ancient past has been referenced and enshrined in the evolution of the city of Rome from the Middle Ages to the present. We will begin with a consideration of the history of the city after the fall of the Empire and look at how successive generations of rulers and inhabitants used and re-used the remains of antiquity in their occupation and re-occupation of space. The legacy that antiquity bequeathed to later ages was so expansive and rich, both physically and symbolically, that it was mined time and again, creating a continuity between past and present which is inescapable even into the twenty-first century. We shall look at a variety of modes of appropriation and memorialisation, from the borrowings of buildings and materials in the Middle Ages, to the creation of classicizing styles and the revival of architectural types in the Renaissance, to the challenges faced by today’s planners and archaeologists to create a contemporary city out of a heritage site. As well as looking at broader themes, we shall focus on case studies, which highlight the significance of place and memory in the city and how that has been incorporated into its modern identity.

**English Portraiture in the Long Eighteenth Century**

**Professor Kate Retford**  
**Dates:** Thursdays 16 January – 26 March 2020, 18.00-19.30 (no class on 20 February)  
**Number of Available Spaces:** 5  
**Fee:** £650  
**Entry Requirements:** Department of History of Art MA/PGDip/PGCert Graduates  
**Contact Details for Enquirers:** art-history@bbk.ac.uk

The enthusiasm for portraiture in eighteenth-century England resulted in some of the most innovative and complex images produced in the period. Reynolds, for example, tried to reconcile the tensions between the recommendations of his Discourses and his practice through his grand manner portraits, in which sitters don classical drapery rather than fashionable dress, or even full mythological or allegorical guise. Some followed his lead, but this was a multi-facetted genre and competitors offered a range of alternatives. Thomas Gainsborough, for example, specialised in images of ‘sensibility’; sensitive depictions suggesting his patrons’ absorption in and empathetic relationship with the natural world. Johan Zoffany, meanwhile, rather offered ‘conversation pieces’ in which his sitters engage in leisureed and sociable occupations within minutely detailed environments, often seeming to pay homage to the newly developed consumer culture of the period. This option course will not provide any kind of overview, or chronological account of the portraiture of the period, but rather explore a series of key themes. Some seminars will focus on particular types of sitter, considering topics such as theatrical portraiture, the image of the hero, self-portraiture and representations of the monarchy. Others will be concerned with newly developed types of portrait, such as the ‘historical portrait’ or the conversation piece. A couple will deal with practice and processes, thinking about the encounter
between the artist and the sitter in the studio, or the ways in which portraitists engaged with and
exploited the advent of exhibitions in the 1760s. Each seminar will be based on set readings, including
a number of contemporary texts, and will take one or two key portraits as the starting point for
discussion.

Photography in the Archives: Issues for Nineteenth-Century Photography
Professor Steve Edwards

Dates: Thursdays 16 January – 26 March 2020, 18.00-19.30 (no class on 20 February)
Number of Available Spaces: 4
Fee: £650
Entry Requirements: Department of History of Art MA/PGDip/PGCert Graduates
Contact Details for Enquirers: art-history@bbk.ac.uk

The photographer and critic Allan Sekula suggested that photography was always caught in a sort of
limbo between the chattering ghosts of bourgeois art and bourgeois science. This module explores
some key constitutive concepts that emerge from this strange location. The module is intended to
introduce central ideas for the study of photography. It is not a methodology course, but addresses
problems that cut across the current approaches to the field. While the module does not take an
exclusive theoretical approach, the issues may be said to constitute 'historical epistemology' and they
all tackle issues that may be taken for granted, such as 'objectivity', 'evidence' or 'documents'. The aim
is to track the development of these core ideas in photography through a process of historical
development. Each class will be take a specific topic for discussion and will be organised around set
readings. Teaching is not period specific, but it will have a historical emphasis on the 19th century.