

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 **6 January 2020**.

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

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Since the late nineteenth century, museums have been cited as tools of imperialism and colonialism, as strongholds of patriarchy, 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.

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-faceted 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 leisured 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

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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.