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From Art History to Visual Culture: Studying the Visual after the Cultural Turn

July 8-July 26, 2002

Course Director: **Margaret Dikovitskaya**, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Toronto, Canada
Resource Persons: **Edit Andras**, Institute of Art History, Hungary
Margaret Dikovitskaya, Postdoctoral Fellow, Canada
Steven Mansbach, University of Maryland, USA
Kobena Mercer, Middlesex University, UK
Nicholas Mirzoeff, SUNY (Stony Brook), USA
Piotr Piotrowski, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland
Hilary Robinson, University of Belfast, Northern Ireland

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is threefold. First, it will assess the claim of Western modernist aesthetics to universal currency in terms of an alternative modernist tradition in Central Eastern Europe. Second, it will raise the issue of gaining/losing regional identity in both art and art theory in the recent past (due to communism) and in the present (due to European unification and globalization). Third, it will familiarize the participants with the recent theoretical developments in western visual culture studies, postcolonial studies, and feminist theory. The course will have an international and comparative perspective.

Course Level and Target Audience

This course is designed for those with prior knowledge of the history of art. Preference will be given to faculty members of institutions of higher learning and researchers with professional experience in art history and theory, art education, art criticism, aesthetics, museum studies, and cultural studies. The course will offer an advanced analysis of the proposed topics.

Syllabus

This course, a sequel to "History and Theory of Art after the Cultural Turn" (2001 CEU SUN), will examine the status of art-historical knowledge in relation to the recent theoretical developments in the humanities and the social sciences. It will be structured thematically.

Steven Mansbach's segment "*Methodological Myths in Modernist Culture*" will examine the most deeply embedded assumptions regarding the history, practices, and meanings of modern art. Among the principal issues to be analyzed are the following: the claim of Western modernist aesthetics to universal currency, its assertion of an essential connection between visual arts and social reconstruction, and its belief in a revolutionary unfolding of history through visual culture. These claims will be assessed in terms of an alternative modernist tradition in Eastern Europe in which the roles of style, the function of social programs, and the interpretations of history were configured differently from those in the West. By charting the conflicting courses, diverse functions, and defining roles of local traditions within the genesis and function of Eastern European modernism, the richness and complexity of modernism universally might be reclaimed and revived. Although the discussions will focus on the classical modern art and architecture of both Western and Eastern Europe during the first third of the twentieth century, the implications of the investigation into the methodological structures on which modernism is based will likely affect our appreciation of contemporary culture as well.

Piotr Piotrowski's segment "*Art around the Wall: Central-Eastern Europe between the Past and the Future*" deals with the art of the second half of the twentieth century and the contemporary art scene in Central Eastern Europe. It considers art production not as an autonomous activity but rather as the complex issue of the political and social context produced by both a "shadow" of the Wall (still dividing the West

and the East) and the process of globalization. The course focuses on the political/historical mechanisms that have constructed the regional cultural identity, as well as on the mechanism responsible for the vanishing Central European identity after the fall of communism.

Edit András in *"Art and Art Theory after the Wall: Difficulties of Tradition in Eastern-Central Europe at the End of the 20th Century"* argues that the modernist paradigm endorsing such notions as utopianism, formalist aesthetic values, the artist as autonomous entity, and the transcendent character of art, has outlived itself. This segment will explore the difficulties of the cultural transition following on the political one. It will examine the relationship between current Western theoretical discourse and Eastern art-critical practice, and the remnants of the mental 'walls' tending to impede the teaching of the new critical theories. It will scrutinize the widely held view in the region that the new theory, along with all its assumptions, is a domestic affair of the West, and thus is of no concern to Eastern Europe. Case studies and 'close readings' of the regional art informed by the new critical and feminist theory will be offered.

In the last decade, visual culture has emerged, first as a descriptive term and now as an interdisciplinary practice, in the study of visual media in the West. **Nicholas Mirzoeff** argues that one of the key components of the visual culture is globalization in its various forms whether in terms of global visual infrastructures such as cable and satellite or the global TV channels and programs or the World Wide Web. Rather than using the cultural studies metaphor of culture as text, visual culture studies culture as images, or more precisely, as visualizations. It analyzes visual events in which the consumer interfaces with visual technology. This segment will explore the hypervisuality of everyday life that is everywhere around us.

Margaret Dikovitskaya will provide an overview of visual culture's theoretical frameworks and of postcolonial theories. 'Postcolonial' refers both to the historical period that marks political autonomy (but not economic and cultural autonomy) in former colonies of the West and to a research paradigm that attempts to explore the (neo-) colonial map. As a research paradigm, postcolonial studies share commonalities with cultural studies, postmodern theories and feminist theory. The differences between postcolonial and post-Soviet studies will be addressed.

New perspectives on 'race' and ethnicity in the visual arts have arisen over the last two decades as a result of critical practices among contemporary artists and new paradigms on cultural difference and identity among critics and scholars. **Kobena Mercer**'s segment *"Examining 'Race' and Ethnicity in 20th Century Art"* provides an introduction to the key artists and debates of the English-speaking Black Diaspora in the African American and Black British contexts. Providing the student with access to the critical vocabularies of postcolonial theory, the course examines key moments in modern art history by way of detailed case studies that will reveal aspects of cross-cultural dialogue in visual culture hitherto obscured by politics and ideology.

Hilary Robinson's segment, *"The Feminist Problematic in Art and Art Writing: Interventions,"* will explore the intersection of feminist theory and activism with art and art history. It will be grounded in the premise that feminism is not an academic theory or methodology, nor is it a style of art. Instead, feminism will be presented as a rich and diverse set of political and social discourses, able to make strategic interventions in all areas of culture. Following initial discussion of what is at stake in the encounter between feminism and visual art, and some of the different positions and strategies found in feminist interventions with the art world, the course will attend to some of the major issues: the critiques of art writing; negotiating the intersection between nation and gender; and the issues at stake in representing the body.

Teaching Methods

Daily seminars will be supplemented by lectures and a film screening. Each day a set of readings dealing with a particular topic will be assigned; participants are expected to be familiar with the readings and to be prepared to discuss them. Critiques and discussions should act as major motivators for the participants, unlike the situation of the traditional lecture-format. Participants are asked to submit by the end of the third week a short literature review (approx. 5 double-spaced pages). Please develop one research question that is useful for your own studies/research and select three texts from the course readers or from the texts put on library reserve. When writing the literature review bear the following components of a literature review in mind:

- description (summarize all three texts without making any value judgements);
- comparison and contrast (i. g., highlight the particular perspectives of each author) with regard to your research question;
- analysis (strengths and weaknesses of each perspective);
- critical reflection (discuss usefulness of the texts for your research/studies).

Short Biographies of the Resource Persons

Edit András, Ph.D., Eötvös Loránd University, 1998

Research interests: Hungarian and Eastern European modern art and avantgarde of the first half of the 20th century; American and Eastern European Art and gender issue.

Selected recent articles: "Tapestry in the contemporary art scene," 2001; "Representation of the body in contemporary Hungarian art," 2000; "Exclusion and inclusion in the art world," 1999; "The Hungarian art scene: A virtual roundtable discussion," 1999; "Cultural cross-dressing," 1999; "Gender minefield: The heritage of the past, attitudes to feminism in Eastern Europe," 1999; "The painful farewell to modernism: Difficulties in the period of transition," 1997; "Journey around our bodies," 1997; "Water ordeal on contemporary (women) art and (women) artists," 1996; "Death knocking at life's door: The names project AIDS memorial quilt," 1994; "American art through the eyes of Europeans," 1994.

Conference organizer: "Strategies in the Women's Art" (Hungary, 1997); "Surviving Freedom: Visual Arts in Hungary since 1989" (USA, 1998).

Margaret Dikovitskaya, Postdoctoral Fellow, Toronto, Canada

Ph.D., Columbia University, 2001

Research interests: theory and pedagogy of visual culture studies; East European émigré artists in the USA; modernist sculpture; postcolonial studies; postsocialist studies; Russian Imperial colonial education.

Teaching experience: Comparative Education (USA); Art History II (Russia); Visual Culture (Hungary).

Selected recent articles: "Does Russia qualify for postcolonial discourse?" 2002; "A look at visual culture," 2002; "Theoretical frameworks of visual studies," 2001; "Counter-volume in sculpture and art history approaches," 2000; "Soviet Ukrainian education for citizenship: Children's art and life in the 1930s," 1999; "Mihail Chemiakin: The making of an artist," 1997; "The New York art party 'Pravda': The reflection of Russian artist's experience today," 1997; "Norton Dodge Collection of Soviet avant-garde art in the Zimmerli Art Museum," 1996.

Course and conference organizer: "History and Theory of Art after the Cultural Turn," *CEU SUN* (Hungary, 2001); two sessions on visual culture, *Crossroads in Cultural Studies* (Finland, 2002).

Steven Mansbach, Professor, Department of Art History, University of Maryland, USA

Ph.D., Cornell University, 1978

Research and teaching interests: East and Central European art and visual culture (from the late baroque to the present, with primary focus on the early twentieth century); 19th and 20th Century European Art; Twentieth Century Architecture, American and European; Constructivism, East and West; The Theory and Philosophy of Modern Art History; Art and Utopia; Eighteenth Century Art and Architecture; History of Photography.

Books, catalogues, and edited journals: *Modern Art in Eastern Europe, from the Baltic to the Balkans*, 1999; *Standing in the tempest: Painters of the Hungarian avant-garde, 1908-1930*, 1991; *Two centuries of Hungarian painters, 1820-1970*, 1991; *The suppressed avant-gardes of East-Central and Eastern Europe of the early twentieth century* (editor, *The Art Journal*, Spring 1990); *Visions of totality: Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Ell Lissitzky, and Theo van Doesburg*, 1980.

Kobena Mercer, Lecturer, Visual Culture, Middlesex University, UK

Ph.D., University of London, 1990

Books published: *Keith Piper: Relocating the remains*, 1997; *Welcome to the Jungle: New positions in Black Cultural Studies*, 1994.

Edited books and journals: *Black Film/British Cinema*, ICA Documents n. 7, 1988; *Screen*, Vol. 29, n. 4, 1988.

Selected recent articles: "Thinking through homophobia in *Black Skin, White Masks*" (forthcoming); "Post-colonial flaneur: Ike Ude," 2001; "In circulation: Contemporary writing on African photography," 2000; "A sociography of Diaspora," 2000; "Ethnicity and internationality: New British art and Diaspora-based Blackness," 2000; "Ike Ude: A dandy in the naked city," 2000; "Decentering and recentring: Adrian Piper's spheres of influence," 1999; "African photography," 1999; "Intermezzo worlds," 1998; "Mortal coil: Eros and Diaspora in the photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode," 1999.

Nicholas Mirzoeff, Professor, SUNY, Stony Brook, USA
Ph.D., Warwick University, 1990

Books published: *Intervisuality: Working out global visual culture* (forthcoming); *An introduction to visual culture*, 1999; *Silent poetry: Deafness, sign and visual culture in modern France*, 1995; *Bodyscape: Art, modernity and the ideal figure*, 1995.

Edited books: *Diaspora and visual culture: Representing Africans and Jews*, 2000; *The visual culture reader*, 1998.

Chapters in books: "Teletubbies: Infant Cyborg desire and the fear of global visual culture," in Lisa Parks and Ravi Kashtri (Eds.), *Planet TV*, 2001; "Paper, picture, sign: Conversations between the deaf, the hard-of-hearing and others," in Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum (Eds.), *'Defect': Engendering the modern body*, 2000; "Blindness and art," in Lennard J. Davis (Ed.), *The disability studies reader*, 1997; "Framed: The deaf in the harem," in Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla (Eds.), *Deviant bodies*, 1995; "Signs and citizens: Sign language and visual sign in the French revolution," in John Brewer and Ann Bermingham (Eds.), *The consumption of culture in early modern Europe*, 1995.

Piotr Piotrowski, Professor and Chairperson of the Institute of Art History, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland; Ph.D., 1982

Books published: *Znaczenia modernizmu: W stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku* [Meanings of modernism: Towards a history of Polish art after 1945], 1999; *Wcieniu Duchampa. notatki nowojorskie* [In the shadow of Duchamp: The New York notes], 1996; *Artysta między rewolucją i reakcją: Studium z zakresu etycznej historii sztuki awangardy rosyjskiej* [Artist between the revolution and reaction: A study on Russian avant-garde and politics], 1993; *Dekada* [The decade: On the artistic culture of the 1970s in Poland], 1991; *Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz*, 1989; *Metafizyka obrazu* [The metaphysics of the picture: On the art theory and artistic attitude of S. I. Witkiewicz], 1985.

Books edited and exhibition catalogues: *Zofia Kulik: From Siberia to Cyberia*, 1999; *Jarosław Kozłowski: Przestrzenie czasu/ Spaces of Time*, 1997; *Odwilż. Sztuka ok. 1956* [The 'Thaw': Polish art ca. 1956], 1996; *Galeria odNOWA, 1964-1969* [The odNOWA Gallery, 1964-1969], 1993.

Hilary Robinson, Senior Lecturer and Research Coordinator, School of Art and Design, University of Ulster at Belfast, Northern Ireland; Ph.D., University of Leeds, 1999.

Research and teaching interests: feminist analyses, theories and interventions in the history and theory of art; the work of Luce Irigaray; the history of feminist art; the history and theory of contemporary art; contemporary art in Ireland.

Selected recent publications: *Feminism-Art-Theory, 1968-2000*, 2001; "Women in art history, theory and criticism" and "Women in sculpture and installation," in *Encyclopedia of Women*, 2001; "The morphology of the mucous: Irigarayan possibilities in the material practice of art," in P. Florence and N. Foster (Eds.), *Differential aesthetics*, 2000; "Whose beauty? Women, art, and inter-subjectivity in Luce Irigaray's writings" in P. Brand (Ed.), *Beauty matters*, 2000; "Disruptive women artists: An Irigarayan reading of Irish visual culture," *Irish Studies Review*, 8 (1), 2000; "Luce Irigaray's re-valuings" in K. Deepwell (Ed.), *Women and modernism*, 1998; "Luce Irigaray" in M. Kelly (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of aesthetics*, 1998; "Within the pale in *from: Beyond the Pale*: the construction of femininity in the curating of an exhibition season at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin," *Journal of Gender Studies*, 6 (3), 1997; "Louise Bourgeois's *Cells*: Gesturing towards the mother," in I. Cole (Ed.), *Museum of Modern Art Papers vol. 1: Louise Bourgeois*, 1996; "Border crossings: Womanliness, body, representation" in K. Deepwell (Ed.), *New feminist art criticism: Critical strategies*, 1995; "Irish/Woman/Artist: Selective readings," *Feminist Review*, 50, 1995.

For more detailed biographies, updated course description, syllabus, reading lists please check <http://www.ceu.hu/sun/sunindx.html>

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