

**University of Roehampton - International Summer School**

**Department of Humanities & Social Sciences**

**Module Title: From Renaissance to Abstraction: The History of Art in London Museums**

**Module Code: HSA020C902H**

**Module Tutor: Dr Katerina Volioti**

**Module Rationale**

This module introduces students to the study of History of Art, using as its primary sources art galleries and museums of London. It is specifically designed to utilize the city of London itself and, in particular, its many collections, as learning tools. Participants will learn how to view and interpret art, and how to place it within its historical, socio-political and cultural context. The chronological spectrum covered by the module ranges from classical to modern art. This broad overview is made possible by a tight focus on key periods and art movements, such as ancient Greek and Roman Art, the Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Victorian Art, up to and including Modern Art. Working together, in a small group setting, we will examine how the concept of a national gallery/museum emerged in Britain and more generally in the western world. We will investigate its evolution from the eighteenth to the early twenty-first century, paying particular attention to the radical shifts in artistic tastes during this period. Additionally, we will consider the dramatic changes in how art is displayed, especially within the framework of a national gallery/museum.

A particularly strong thread running through the module is the investigation of the reception of Greek and Roman art, literature, history, and mythology in later artistic movements, as an example of how ancient art and culture was appropriated and refashioned in the service of new artistic, ideological and political agendas. Beyond this, the module seeks to develop students' knowledge of the institutional frameworks within which art has been historically produced, disseminated, and consumed. A further aim is to broaden participants' understanding of the public functions of art, such as the construction of national and civic identities and the propagation of political ideas and regimes. The module has been specifically designed specifically for Study Abroad students.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students who successfully complete this module will be able to:

- Discuss how to view and interpret art
- Learn how to place art within its historical context
- Analyse the display of art for different audiences
- Appreciate the public functions of art and of the role played by cultural, social and political institutions in the production, dissemination and commercialisation of art
- Develop a good understanding of the main movements and stylistic developments in Western Art and of the role played by public museums
- Critically analyse the formal characteristics of paintings, sculptures, and architectural/ornamental elements
- Evaluate exhibitions and museum online entries, including digital images
- Carry out independent research on a chosen topic and utilise this information to construct logical arguments
- Develop written and presentation skills to communicate their ideas effectively

## Syllabus

The module begins with an introduction to the study of western art, focusing on Winckelmann and Gombrich, underpinned by a thorough grounding in the critical methodology used to interpret art. We will examine the socio-economic and cultural bases of art, its public functions, and changing institutional settings. After this, the core material is structured around various artistic, cultural, social, and political agendas represented by particular artistic movements and their display in public and private settings. The lectures and field trips will concentrate on an integrated analysis of key artworks, their institutional framework, and their social and cultural context. The primary focus of the module will be on painting, sculpture, and architecture, although we will also consider the decorative arts. The module will consider works by numerous key artists, including Botticelli, Gainsborough, Constable, Turner, Schad and Kandinsky.

Topics in this module may include:

- Art in an age of globalization / glocalization (global and local)
- Digital Humanities and a critical evaluation of 3D models
- Museum Studies and the challenges faced by public museums in big cities
- A comparative perspective of museums, galleries, and iconic exhibits
- Landscapes, Seascapes, and Cityscapes in Renaissance to modern paintings
- Museum architecture
- Design in the modern world
- Materiality, especially Material Renaissance
- African Art, ethnographic collections and multiculturalism
- The emergence of the art gallery as a public institution in Britain and Europe
- The mission to elevate British art production and training
- The reception of ancient Greek and Roman art in the western world
- The role of art galleries in the construction of national and imperial identities in Britain
- British art and colonialism viewed through a post-colonialist perspective
- Feminist perspectives on art and the question of why there are not more women artists
- Dissenting artistic movements, new subject matters and styles: from the Pre- Raphaelites to Modernism
- The national vs. transnational and global nature and ownership of art, with a focus on digital humanities

## Teaching and Learning Methods

The module will be delivered through a series of lectures, seminars and campus activities, and will mainly involve visits to museums and galleries. Our fieldtrips will take us to the British Museum, the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the Tate Britain, the Tate Modern, the Victoria & Albert Museum, and the Sir John Soane's Museum. There will be an optional trip to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

## Assessment

- A 7-minute presentation of a chosen essay topic [50%]
- A 1,500-word reflective essay closely related to the main themes of the module and the artworks we examine over its course [50%]

## Selective Bibliography

### Primary Bibliography

Berger, J. *Ways of Seeing*, London: Penguin Modern Classics, originally published in 1972, reprinted 2008.

Destree, P & P. Murray. *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*, London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

Gombrich, E. H. *The Story of Art* (16<sup>th</sup> edition), London: Phaidon, 2007.

Graham-Dixon, A. *A History of British Art*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

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Saslow, J. M. et al. *A Companion to Renaissance and Baroque Art*: John Wiley, 2013.

Woodford, S. *Looking at Pictures*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

### Further Reading

Barringer, T., Quilley, G. and Fordham, D. *Art and the British Empire*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009.

Carrier, D. 1983. "Gombrich on Art Historical Explanations", *Leonardo* 16: 91-96.

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De Munck, Bert. 2014. "Artisans, products and gifts: rethinking the history of material culture in early modern Europe." *Past & Present* 224: 39-74.

Ernst, W. 1993. "Frames at Work: Museological Imagination and Historical Discourse in Neoclassical Britain", *The Art Bulletin* 75: 481-498

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Irwin, D. *Neoclassicism*, London: Phaidon, 1997.

Kriegel, K. 2006. "After the Exhibitionary Complex: Museum Histories and the Future of the Victorian past", *Victorian Studies* 48: 681-704.

Myrone, M. *Representing Britain 1500-2000: 100 Works from Tate Collections*, London: Tate Publishing, 2000.

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Rogoff, I. (1999) "Modern German art," in Kolinsky, E. and van der Will, W. (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to Modern German Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Companions to Culture), pp. 256–281.

Taylor, B. *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London Public, 1747-2001*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999.