Exploration Term 2022 Dr. Kathleen Spies

Birmingham-Southern College Office: Kennedy Art Center 14

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M-TH 1-3 plus fieldtrips Office Hours: By appointment

**The Real Thing:**

**Exploring Art in and Around Birmingham**

**Course Description and Goals**

This course will help students learn about art and art history through an examination of “the real thing,” that is actual paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints rather than reproductions in a textbook or classroom. Class periods will be held at the Birmingham Museum of Art, with day trips to the Montgomery Museum of Art and the High Museum in Atlanta. Movements, periods, and geographical regions discussed will be of a wide range, with special attention to the art of Europe, the United States, Asia, and Africa. In addition to studying the history of art, we will take a critical look at the aura historically attached to the real object versus the reproduction. We will explore how exhibition practices affect the meaning of art and how scholars and artists recently have been challenging them. Class meetings will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, and student presentations. The aim of this course is to give you an overview of major artistic movements and tendencies, to familiarize you with the language and methods of interpreting visual art, and to get you thinking critically and intelligently about the viewing process.

**Reading**

Fred Kleiner et al., *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages: A Global History*, v. 2

Daniel Buren, “Function of the Museum” (on Moodle)

**Coursework and Assessment**

Your grade for this course will be assessed on the following basis:

1-2 page response paper on Buren and museums 15%

Museum visit journal, 2 entries @ 2-3 pp. each 15%

5-10 min. oral presentation at BMA 25%

Five-page paper on BMA artwork 25%

Participation and attendance 20%

Response Paper: Should include direct reference to Buren, but not a regurgitation of this reading. In addition to displaying your understanding of the main points of Buren’s argument, I also want you to react to these points. Let me hear your opinion of Buren’s critique of the museum. Do you agree or disagree and why?

Museum Visit Journal: Hand and/or typewritten response to our visits to the High and the Montgomery Museums of Art. You should write at least 2 pages for each visit. Which works strike you and why? How do they cohere with (or contradict) any of the assigned readings, either Buren or Gardner’s? How are they representative (or not) of the artist and/or period style? These entries may be informal and more personal than the other writing assignments but should still be thoughtful and legible.

Paper and Oral Presentation: Pick an artwork at the BMA. The artwork cannot be the same for both assignments. You must pick different artworks and artworks of different eras for your paper and presentation. Both assignments should at least address the following: Identify the artist, title, country, date, and style. How would you describe the color, brush, line, and compositional arrangement? How do these formal qualities cohere with the meaning, theme or mood of the work? How is this work exemplary or different from most works from this period/country/artist? Depending on which work you choose, you may want to further investigate the artist’s biography, the social function or purpose of the work, the contemporary meaning of the subject matter, the movement to which the artist belonged, etc. Unlike the other two assignments, these are more objective and formal. Your oral presentation will take place in front of the artwork on which you are presenting, and you will give your presentation to the entire class. This should be polished. Practice. Your paper should be type-written, double-spaced and stapled. Additional sources are encouraged but not required.

**Directions to Museums**

Birmingham Museum of Art: Located at 2000 Rev. Abraham Woods Jr. Blvd. Take I 20/59 East toward Downtown. Take exit 124D onto 17th St. N. toward Downtown. Turn left onto Rev. Abraham Woods Jr. Blvd. Turn left onto Richard Arrington Blvd. (21st St. N.). Turn left into Museum parking lot.

The Museum is closed Mondays; call 254-2565 or go to [www.artsbma.org](http://www.artsbma.org) for hours and additional directions. Admission is free.

High Museum of Art, Atlanta: Located in Midtown Atlanta at 1280 Peachtree St NE. Take I 20/59 East. Follow I 20 towards Atlanta (veer right). Merge onto I 85 North. Exit at 10th/14th Streets/Georgia Tech. and take right on 10th St. Go to Peachtree St. and take a left. Museum will be on your left between 15th and 16th Streets. Schedule about 2 hours 45 minutes (with additional hour for time change) for driving and parking.

Call 404-733-5333 or go to [www.high.org](http://www.high.org) for additional directions and parking and exhibition information.

Montgomery Museum of Art: Located at One Museum Drive in the Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park. Take I 20/59 East. Merge onto I 65 South. Merge onto I 85. Take exit 6. Exit right onto Eastern Blvd. Turn left onto Woodmere Blvd. Turn right into the Blount Cultural Park. Call 334-244-5700 or go to [www.mmfa.org](http://www.mmfa.org) for more info.

Other area museums:

Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga: Located at 10 Bluff View. Take I 20/59 East. Follow I59 North (towards Chattanooga). Follow signs to downtown Chattanooga (Hwy. 27 North). Exit at 4th St. IC. Take 4th Street east (right?) to High Street and turn left. Go two blocks. Parking is available at the Museum. Go to huntermuseum.org or call 423-267-0968 for a map and more info.

The Frist Center for the Visual Arts: Located in Nashville, TN at 919 Broadway. **Traveling north on I-65,** take I-40 west when the interstate splits, then take Exit #209A, "Broadway". Turn right on Broadway. Turn right on 9th Avenue South, just past the Frist Center. Take an immediate right past the Frist Center (onto McGavock) to access Frist Center parking and main entrance. Call 615-244-3340 or go to [www.fristcenter.org](http://www.fristcenter.org) for additional directions and exhibition information.

The Huntsville Museum of Art: Located in downtown Huntsville, AL at 300 Church St South at Big Spring International Park. Take I65 North, then take Exit 340 on I-565 to Huntsville. Travel approximately 19 miles east on I-565. Take Exit 19C to downtown Huntsville. Merge right and turn right onto Monroe Street. Take first left at light onto Church Street. Go through two lights. Museum is ahead on the right. To enter the Colonial Bank Parking Garage, turn left at the intersection onto Williams Street. Then take the first left onto Fountain Row. Enter the Garage from Fountain Row. Parking is available in the Colonial Bank Building and Public Garage across from the Museum. The entrance to the garage is located behind the Colonial Bank Building on Fountain Row. Other parking facilities are accessible throughout the downtown area. Call 256-535-4350 or got to [www.hsvmuseum.org](http://www.hsvmuseum.org) for additional directions and exhibition information.

Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts, Auburn: Located at 901 South College Street in Auburn, Alabama. From Birmingham, take I 65 S toward Montgomery. Merge onto I 85 N via exit 171 toward Atlanta. Take the US 29 exit (exit 51) toward Auburn. Turn slight left onto US 29/AL 15/S College St. Continue to follow S. College Street to 901.

Go to [www.jcsm.auburn.edu](http://www.jcsm.auburn.edu) or call 334-844-3081 for additional directions and exhibition information.

**ARH E299 06 Schedule of Topics, Activities, and Readings**

Week 1: Jan. 4: Introduction and Discussion: “The Real Thing”

Jan. 5: BMA, Proto-Renaissance through Italian Baroque

•Read two assigned chapters from following: Gardner’s, Ch. 14, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 (skim other chapters)

Jan. 6: BMA, Northern Baroque and Rococo

•Read: Gardner’s, Ch. 25 and 26

Week 2: Jan. 10: Response Paper Due (via email), 1 p.m.

•Read Buren (posted on Moodle)

Jan. 11: BMA, 19c European and American

•Read: Gardner’s, Ch. 27 and 28

Jan. 12: BMA, 20c, Modern and Contemporary

•Read: Gardner’s, Ch. 29, 30 and 31

Jan. 13: Montgomery Museum of Art, AL (full day)

Week 3: Jan. 17: No Class Meeting – MLK Day

Jan. 18: BMA, Asian and African galleries

•Read: Gardner’s, Ch. 34 and 37

Jan. 19: BMA, Student Presentations

Jan. 20: High Museum of Art, Atlanta (full day)

Week 4: Jan. 24: Museum Journals Due (via email), 1 p.m.

Jan. 25: BMA, Student Presentations

Jan. 26: Final Papers Due (via email), 1 p.m.