Seminar Series: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Art (online, 8 Feb–22 Mar 21)

Online, Feb 8–Mar 22, 2021

Freya Gowrley, University of Warwick

New Directions in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Art Seminar Series
Season 3: January – March 2021

New Directions in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Art (NDENCA) is a digital seminar series aimed at championing new scholarly voices working across visual and material cultures in this period. It aims to take a global perspective, and in particular welcomes contributions by scholars from minority groups.

For further information on NDENCA see: https://ndenca.wordpress.com/

The seminars take place via Zoom and are open to all. Seminars take place at 5pm GMT.

To book tickets, please email us at: ndencaseminar@gmail.com

PROGRAM

1. Monday, 25 January 2021, 5pm GMT

Gursimran Oberoi, PhD Candidate, University of Surrey and Watts Gallery
'Global Watts: When Victorian Painting and Sculpture Meet International Communities'

One of the ultimate challenges facing art historians is to demonstrate art's influence. This quandary is of particular concern when one considers the living relationship between artistic and social development. This presentation gives an introduction to my doctoral project, Global Watts: Allegories for All. It considers the circulation of G. F. Watts's symbolist paintings and sculptures, analysing the ways in which these objects traversed the globe to inspire different communities.
In his heyday, G. F. Watts was internationally respected as 'England's Michelangelo'; this accolade inflected the mastery of High Renaissance art with British Victorian values of Empire. Despite operating within a very English and wider European milieu, Watts's reputation journeyed far and wide in the twentieth-century. When Watts fell out of favour with the British Edwardian public, he was championed by international audiences as 'England's Michelangelo'. This title sat beside art objects in international exhibitions, in local vernacular publications, and alongside photographs and mechanical reproductions that inspired numerous communities beyond Europe. Watts was celebrated for crafting a language in art that promoted universalism and 'Art For All'. His practice enticed institutions for its thematicaccessibility, charmed audiences, and mobilised activist com-

munities into action. His artworks are recognised today as foregrounding the Symbolist Movement – a style I have also identified as a powerful vector for Watts's global influence and impact. This presentation asks how values of global significance were seen to be embodied in Watts's allegories through aesthetics and ethics. Points of focus include the exhibition histories of Endymion, Hope, Love and Life, Love and Death and Physical Energy in Britain, France, Luxembourg, United States, Australia, Japan and South Africa. This study contextualises how Watts's symbolist practice inspired a global visual culture.

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2. Monday, 1 February 2021, 5pm GMT

Dr Elisabeth Gernerd, Independent Researcher
'Sartorial Satire: Re-examining the Relationship of Dress and Satirical Prints'

Though eighteenth-century dress history has long been viewed through the lens of visual representation, like the heavily art historical based work of Anne Hollander, Aileen Ribeiro, and most recently Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, this approach as often been limited to painted portraiture, drawings, and fashion plates, excluding the genre of graphic satire. Considered a taboo by previous generations of dress historians, satirical prints were deemed too exaggerated, too contorted, and too ridiculous to be taken seriously as a dress historical source. This paper seeks to challenge those conceptions through a re-examination of sartorial and print culture, ultimately forming a bridge between Dress History, Material Culture Studies and History of Art.
Between 1760 and 1820, Britain witnessed the 'golden age' of graphic satire, when the output of satirical prints flourished amidst the growing industry and market for print culture. The production of satirical prints, designed by professional satirists or amateurs, allowed for a quick turnaround, capable of producing a print that addressed current events within a day. Like their portrait-painting counterparts, satirists' treatment of dress, or sartorial agendas varied. Some satirists (and publishers) were more focused on representing the material world, like John Collet and the Darlys, while others, like Thomas Rowlandson, developed a more stylised and abstract manner of depicting figures.
By considering the sartorial agenda and subject of prints and the clothing they portray, this paper argues that graphic satire can not only provide a reliable depiction of garments worn, but simultaneously functions within the 'loaded,' opinionated field of satirical commentary, giving added weight and significance to the material life represented. When viewed in relation to the material artefacts, we can negotiate a nuanced understanding of sartorial satire, establishing dress' cultural currency: how it was publically interpreted and manipulated to demonstrate social issues and anxieties that reached far beyond those concerns surrounding fashion itself.

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3. Monday, 8 February 2021, 5pm GMT

Dr Bart Pushaw, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Copenhagen
'Writing Images in the Native Nineteenth Century: A View from the Colonial Arctic'

On April 22, 1840, Israil Nichodemus Gormansen inscribed his name onto paper colored with

watercolors and ink. Ascribed to a series of seven small watercolor paintings, this signature has held profound meaning in the brief history of Greenlandic art, the sole means by which Israil Gormansen's name has reached posterity. In these watercolors, word and image appear to work in tandem as didactic "object lessons" or "picture dictionaries" of Arctic life, which mediated the relationship between colonial Inuit subjects and Danish missionaries. Closer inspection of Gormansen's cautious calligraphy reveals a striking discrepancy—a confidence in the colonial language of Danish that escapes his written command of his native West reenlandic (Kalaallisut).
This talk explores how Inuit deployed imported visual, alphabetic, and material literacies to negotiate their positions in the shifting social contours of the colonial Arctic. I investigate what it means for Gormansen to wield ink in the missionary context, and the agency that medium could afford him. My reading questions the definitions ostensibly provided in Gormansen's "picture dictionaries," contending that they may reveal the ontological limitations of painting in the particular colonial conditions of the Circumpolar North. In doing so, the talk contributes an art historical perspective to the growing body of scholarship that investigates the robust Indigenous textual cultures of the "Native Nineteenth Century."

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4. Monday, 15 February 2021, 5pm GMT

Emma Bryning, PhD Candidate, University of York
'"I Was Here": Tourist Marks to Tagging, a Consideration of Graffiti Practices as a Way to Express Personal Identity'

As a form of public mark-making, modern graffiti is usually defined by its illegality and as a form of anti-social and criminal behaviour, often regardless of the various contexts within which these marks are situated. However, whether this particular definitional understanding of graffiti is applied to a mark can largely depend on the spatial and temporal context of the graffiti itself. Juliet Fleming has pointed out that in early modern England graffiti was not necessarily distinguished from other writing practices and not yet considered a vice. Furthermore, in her work, Fiona McDonald has looked at the association of graffiti practices and the Grand Tour, when it was popular for individuals to leave their marks – such as their initials, names and the date – when visiting heritage sites as part of the tourist experience. Not only do such tourist marks reveal an individual's desire to record their presence within these spaces, as they leave their mark for posterity by symbolically writing 'I was here', such marks can also illustrate how our relationships with historic sites, and the built environment more generally, has changed over time.
It was arguably only in the 19th century that graffiti was increasingly considered a criminal act, whilst the concept of 'official heritage' was also becoming more prominent. Whilst historic graffiti has increasingly become the focus of recording, preservation and conservation, their modern descendant marks are actively discouraged. This is in no way to suggest that modern graffiti practices, particularly those on historic sites, should be encouraged, but to consider how historic tourist marks from the 18th and 19th centuries can help us to understand how relationships with historic sites have shifted over time, through the consideration of what was once, but is no longer, considered acceptable practice. With a focus on one's name, or pseudonym, both tagging and historic tourist marks can be viewed as a statement of being and a way to express personal identity, yet, it is our differing reactions to them which can reveal how much our relationship with heritage

has changed over time.

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5. Monday, 22 February 2021, 5pm GMT

Shivani Sud, PhD Candidate, UC Berkley
'Courtly Cities, Colonial Worlds: Urban Vistas and Imaginaries in Jaipur Painting, ca. 1778-1818'

Located today in the Edwin Binney 3rd Collection at the San Diego Museum of Art, an unusual late eighteenth-century painting from Jaipur, the royal capital of the Kacchwaha kingdom in western India, presents a bizarre scene: European figures dressed in red, yellow, green, and blue overcoats, sporting black hats and carrying canes, stroll alongside a riverbank (figure 1). The scene is one of a bustling Indian port city, with European merchants and westernstyle boats. In the eighteenth century, port cities such as Calcutta, Surat, and Bombay were important sites of maritime trade for Indian and European merchants, traders, and royal patrons. However, the royal capital of Jaipur was not a port city. Given that Jaipur was not a coastal town, from where can we trace the profound artistic and cultural impact of maritime trade and seafaring in Jaipur?
The SDMA painting is one example of a new genre of painting that emerged in the last quarter of the eighteenth century in Jaipur during the rule of Maharaja Pratap Singh (r. 1778-1803). A series of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century paintings from Jaipur, now located in museums and private collections across the world, depict European merchants and officers of the East India Trading Companies, multiple point perspective, expansive architectural vistas, maritime imagery, and components from seventeenth-century European prints and engravings. References to these hybridized paintings can be found in scholarly publications and museum and exhibition catalogues; yet, these paintings have not been adequately located within the historical and cultural contexts in which they were produced. In my presentation, I will situate these unusual artworks, which scholars have seen as mere imitations of European landscape painting, in relation to the shifting political, economic, and cultural structures of early colonial South Asia. By delineating the contours of the shared, transcultural visual economy in which these types of images emerged, I demonstrate that artists forged new pictorial and material practices that articulated a politics of the region in relation to wider geographies of devotion, trade, politics, and migration. In specific, I suggest that Jaipur artists manipulated and mobilized the language of European and Mughal art to create a new pictorial program for the visualization of the Kacchwaha kingdom as a prosperous regional polity, ensured by Kacchwaha constructions of kingship and urbanism.
My research joins an emergent strand of scholarship that interrogates a prescriptive view of the eighteenth century in South Asia as a period of political, economic, and cultural decline, an assumption inherited from imperialist and nationalist histories on the period. Far from a "Dark Century" of political instability, cultural decline, and economic volatility, revisionist histories have demonstrated that the long eighteenth century, in fact, witnessed the formation of new political communities and alliances, the growth of pan-Indian mercantile networks, and the affluence of visual and literary cultures across the regional courtly and urban centers of South Asia (Bayly 1980; Inden 1990; Khera 2020). Jaipur's position as a vital political, commercial, and religious center in the eighteenth century, indeed, formed an important part of the ruling elite's vision of themselves and their kingdom—a vision that took material form in painted urban landscapes. This study, thus, aims to make two contributions to scholarship on the long eighteenth century: first, I

approach my archive as a means by which to study histories of imagination (khayal) and the creative artistic strategies at play in practices of world-making at the regional peripheries of Empire. Blurring the ontological boundaries between reality, imagination, fiction, and mythology, I suggest that this genre of paintings reveals a worldly, cosmopolitan, and highly perceptive aesthetic imagination and a historical awareness of the early colonial world. Second, the paintings signal a distinct vision and experience of political modernity, a view from the provinces, as it were. Indeed, the paintings "provincialize Europe" by foregrounding a genealogy of political modernity that emerges from broader geographies of devotion, politics, and migration in eighteenth-century South Asia, rather than one that develops "first in Europe then elsewhere (Chakrabarty 2000)." In the establishment of a new pictorial paradigm for the representation of regional Indian urban cities, artists illustrated a historical consciousness of the politico-economic and religious significance of the provincial courts to the early colonial world.

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6. Monday, 1 March 2021, 5pm GMT

Thomas Moser, PhD Candidate, Ludwig Maximillian University of Munich
'The Vital Force in Nature: Electric Lamps by Émile Gallé and the École de Nancy'

In the Fin de Siècle, electricity was not initially understood as an artificial man-made resource, but as a vital and driving force found in nature and drawn from it. The laws of thermodynamics and the related mutual convertibility of all forces and energies into one another seemed to confirm such biological understanding. As I'd like to demonstrate in my talk, the artisans around Émile Gallé and the École de Nancy integrated the technological components of the ultra-modern light bulbs into the visual program of their lamp designs, bringing the connotation of electric light with the invigorating forces of nature to the fore by almost naturalistic, sculptural means. In contrast to the products of sculpture, the functional properties of the electric lamp also allowed the vital force of electricity, which was assumed to be present in nature, to actually act within these objects. Due to their electrification, the artistically designed plants appear to have literally grown from the ornately carved Art Nouveau tables.
For the entire 19th century, yet especially for Art Nouveau and Jugendstil, the recreation of nature in private interiors was an essential paradigm. Guyau has attested to both naturalist and symbolist art movements that they were concerned with the recontextualization of nature and "renouveler la nature, de la créer une seconde fois." Yet, this original nature was identified above all with the flowing movement of living organisms. So how could this artificial second nature be made visible more properly than in the shape of the electric force of nature, which can be sensually experienced as light and heat? Vases, services, cane handles and fauteuils picked up a distinct moment from nature's repertoire that was as close to life as possible, captured it and made it tangible; in the lamps, however, the galvanic élan vital actually ran. Thus, an almost energetic causal relationship can be ascertained between the lamps and the nature-shaped interior: Only through the living lamps does the total work of art come alive. Particularly from the evening hours onwards, their luminous properties breathed life into the surrounding biomorphic objects, which would otherwise have disappeared for hours in the dark.

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7. Monday, 8 March 2021, 5pmg GMT

Fuchsia Hart, DPhil Candidate, University of Oxford
'From Stoke-on-Trent to Tehran: English ceramics at the court of Fath-ʿAli Shah'

In 1809, Fath-ʿAli Shah, ruler of Iran from 1797 to 1834, sent the first ambassador from Iran to London for some two hundred years. During his time in London, Mirza Abu'l-Hasan Khan fulfilled many important duties, among which was placing an order for the Shah with Wedgwood and Sons, one of the most prestigious producers of ceramics in England at the time. The two table services which comprised the order were lavish, and worth £1300. Wedgwood, however, was not the only English producer of ceramics represented at the court of Fath-ʿAli Shah – Spode, Royal Worcester, and Royal Crown Derby also received ordersfrom the early Qajar court.
Through an exploration of these commissions, this paper will be the first study devoted solely to English ceramics at the court of Fath-ʿAli Shah, filling a significant lacuna in the art history of this period. While English visitors to the Qajar realm often understood the court's preoccupation with art as a hallmark of profligacy and degeneracy, recent scholarship on Qajar art explores the political contexts for this perceived extravagance. Ceramics, however, have hitherto remained largely neglected. Therefore, by addressing political motivations, as well as artistic considerations, this paper will contextualise these commissions within the Qajar courtly life of the period. Stylistic evaluation will demonstrate the aesthetic eclecticism of Fath-ʿAli Shah's court, while analysis of the ways in which these pieces were commissioned and then used, e.g. through the East India Company or as diplomatic gifts, will support conclusions concerning the political multivalency of art at the Qajar court and the nature of the Qajar encounter with England.

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8. Monday, 15 March 2021, 5pm GMT

Dr Kathryn Desplanque, Banting Postdoctoral Fellow, Carleton University

'Creative Destruction: The Invention of the Starving Artist in Paris between 1750 and 1850'

Our ideological investment in a narrative that aligns the story of modern art with the story of the artist's liberation has a dark underbelly. Whom or what does this narrative serve and what does it obscure? Are we really witnessing a liberation of the artist, or rather the emergence of a different art system? Indeed, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the artist's status shifted so decisively, so too did many European political and economic systems, towards industrialization, economic liberalism, stock trading, empire building—in other words, modern industrial and financial capitalism. Is not the visual artist liberated also another way of molding artistic work to the ethos of competitive individualism?

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries artists demonstrated a nuanced awareness of these transitions, their implications, and their paradoxes. They criticized their impact on the artist, art object, and the art world prolifically and vociferously. But their protests have entirely escaped our notice, having been conducted in a medium marginalized or overlooked in the field of art history: the satirical image. This talk surveys the genre of art-world graphic satire—a corpus of 530 images that satirize Paris' art-world and range from eighteenth-century loose-leaf etchings and

engravings, to Revolutionary and early nineteenth-century satirical image albums in etching and lithography, to the lithographic satirical periodical press established around 1830.

Art-world satire's protagonist is the starving or inglorious artist, which served as a vehicle to visibilize invisible structural changes in Paris' art world. Through the inglorious artist and other figures, art-world satire explores the shift in the status of the artist, the organization of the art world from a corporate model to a free market, the emergence of a bourgeois market for art, and the unresolved debate on art's status as a mechanical or liberal art.

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9. Monday, 22 March 2021, 5pm GMT

Dr Hannah Young, Lecturer in Nineteenth-Century British History, University of Southampton
'"The perfection of his taste": Ralph Bernal, collecting and slave-ownership'

When Ralph Bernal died in August 1854 James Robinson Planché, fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, noted that the collector 'distinguished among English Antiquarians by the perfection of his taste, as well as the extent of his knowledge'. Bernal was certainly a prodigious collector and his distinction as such continues to characterise his posthumous reputation to this day. He was not, though, merely a 'politician and collector', as he is described on the website of the Victoria and Albert Museum. In addition to his extensive collection of objets d'art Bernal owned three Jamaican plantations, upon which worked over six hundred enslaved men, women and children.
This paper will explore the slave-ownership and collecting practices of Ralph Bernal. It will demonstrate that the different facets of Bernal's identity — politician, collector and 'West Indian' — were not separate or distinct and cannot be properly understood in isolation from one another. In examining how Bernal's collection was funded, and the ways it worked to fortify and remake racial hierarchies, the paper will interrogate the complex ways that slavery, race, culture and taste were intertwined in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. It will argue that we cannot and should not uncritically valorise or celebrate 'the connoisseur' without interrogating the power relations that underpinned the ways in which their collections, and reputations, were constructed. To focus solely on Bernal's collecting practices is to highlight just one aspect of a much messier picture. It is important that we remember that the violent enslavement of hundreds of men, women and children underpinned the 'perfection' of Bernal's taste. We cannot understand his collection without acknowledging the violence that though not immediately visible is nonetheless embedded within it.

Reference:

ANN: Seminar Series: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Art (online, 8 Feb-22 Mar 21). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 2, 2021 (accessed Apr 4, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/33332>.