

ART ON THE TOWN

SYLLABUS: ART 7/603, 3 UNITS
BRIAN MOSS, Lecturer
Long Beach City College, Fall 2005
Friday 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Classroom: K 102
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“The goal (of art) is to sustain a rigorous process of asking difficult questions. Not in order to find answers but to have questions about questions that produce confusion as a precondition to radical thought... I don’t see why we should be afraid to ask complex questions about who we are and the role that we have.”

Daniel J. Martinez, artist

“I am asking or daring the viewer, I suppose, to just look at it as a painted thing, as a kind of layered spectacle... I prefer to work from the point of view that what I am doing is wrong rather than right. And I also like to keep in mind that it isn’t truly dangerous, it’s just fiction. But I also know how powerful good fiction can be.”

Lisa Yuskavage, artist

Course Objectives / Student Outcomes

1. Students will study art by the following methods:
 - A. View actual works of art and reproductions of artworks
 - B. Listen to lectures and participate in class discussions by responding to and asking questions
 - C. Read about artists and their art in books, periodicals and on the internet
 - D. Write about art and make presentations based on your observations and readings
 - E. Learn and use the vocabulary of art in writing and in discussions
2. Students will gain an understanding of the basic aspects of art:
 - A. Aesthetics / visual and formal qualities
 - B. Content / idea / meaning
 - C. Context
 - D. Technical aspects / medium
 - E. The differences between process and product
 - F. Describe individual works of art in terms of technique, form, meaning and context
3. Students will learn how art is created:
 - A. Learn to recognize, identify and differentiate between the different materials and techniques used in creating art
 - B. Understand how and why artists make choices when creating work
 - C. Understand how the artists’ decisions affect the final artwork
 - D. Become familiar with and meet some of the many different artists in Southern

California

4. Employ critical thinking where art is concerned
 - A. Demonstrate critical thinking about art and its role in culture
 - B. Demonstrate an ability to discuss and write critically about all aspects of art
 - C. Examine the gallery system, patronage, collecting and display
5. Behave professionally at all times
 - A. Attend all classes and field trips on time and prepared to work
 - B. Contribute intelligently to class discussions, ask questions
 - C. Present well finished work and be prepared to explain it

Course Description

This is a 16 week class in art and art history for art majors and non-majors. Art on the Town is a guided study of art and artists in the Southern California region. The purposes of this class are to understand art as a visual language capable of communicating ideas and to learn the many different ways artists try to do this. It is your effort that will be judged most, so you must impress upon me the extent of your efforts by any means necessary. This means communication - coincidentally the purpose of art!

Methods of Instruction

Field trip visits to see art in galleries and artists' studios, lectures, presentations of art reproductions and videos, assigned reading and independent research, discussion and collaborative learning will all be used. Our class will take on a certain form on the weeks in between field trips: we will discuss the previous weeks field trip and any questions or observations you may have from the trip or the reading. We will then go over new material related to next weeks field trip. These lectures and associated weekly readings will be followed by visits to exhibitions and artists' studios.

***Warning:** Some art that will be shown and discussed in this class may offend some students.*

This includes artwork that addresses themes about religion, race and racism, sexuality, violence, and gender identity.

Assignments and Expectations

I want to help you do the very best you can in this class, and come away with a better understanding of the complexities of art. In order to this, you must participate by speaking up in class when appropriate, asking lots of questions, keeping good notes including making sketches of images if you need help remembering them, and attending **all** classes and field trips. **Public speaking is an important skill in many careers, and everyone will speak publicly here!** You will be asked to turn in worksheets after every field trip, and to produce a final paper based on your own independent gallery visit and using original research. These products must demonstrate your understanding of the art and concepts covered in class and on field trips. Students are also expected to contribute thoughts, observations and questions to group discussions and during lectures. Your final paper should be a minimum of three printed pages (though more is usually better!) in twelve point type and must consist of sound sentences using the descriptive vocabulary I demonstrate in class, proper grammar and spelling and should display your skills of critical thinking.

Hand-written papers will not be accepted. Late Final Papers will also not be accepted!

Plagiarism: *Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work without proper citation. This is a serious offense that can lead to an "F" in the course. All work in this course must be your own.*

Suggestions about WRITING ON ART

When writing about art, you must begin by learning to how to describe the work. In order to do this, you must take detailed and specific notes that you write down while looking at the work itself. You must investigate several inter-related topics about every work of art. These are the questions you should be asking yourself while looking at the work and while writing your final paper later:

1) What are the technical aspects of the work, in other words, what medium did the artist use to create the work (for instance if it is a painting and if so, is it oil, acrylic, watercolor, etc.; or is it a sculpture? and if so, what material is it: marble, ceramics, found objects, etc.), how was it made? what size is the work, and if it's a wall work, how is it framed or mounted, and attached to the wall? Specifics about the way the medium was used are very important, such as is the paint thickly applied, are the brushstrokes obvious or hidden? Or if it's wood, is the wood plain, carved with a chisel, sanded or scraped somehow? Painted or raw? Pay attention to the surface in this area of investigation!

2) A related area to the technical (as well as to context) is the installation of the work. Questions to ask yourself include what is the lighting on the piece, the wall color, the floors and ceiling, how many and how close are the works placed in relation to each other and where, what quantity and type of information is available on the wall labels, or elsewhere in the space? These things encompass the technical aspects of the exhibit or its installation aspects.

3) Context: when was the work created, what influenced the artist, in terms of culture, history, other artists, and at what stage of their life was the work created? Where did the creator live and work, and how does this piece affect other works of art made by other artists later in time?

4) The visual or aesthetic aspects of the work are also important, including which pieces are attractive to you and why. How are flat or three dimensional works visually constructed, in other words are there visual or compositional similarities or differences about them? What is the arrangement of the various elements in the work? In flat work, pay attention to the framing (where does the image end) and point of view (where is the viewer in relation to the image: close or far, above or below, etc.). Do the works have some sort of visual style, and how might you describe that?

5) I would also like you to consider the subject and content of the work; not just what the art shows or represents, but what is it about, and what does it make you think about? What is the artist trying to do and why? What are they attempting to communicate? How do they do this in the actual subject matter they choose, and in the way in which these

things are portrayed? And what have others added to the work after the artist created and presented it to the world?

I am less interested in biographical information on the artists unless it directly relates to something specific about the work. I am more interested in what you see in a work of art (description) what it makes you think about (imagination and inspiration) and why. All your ideas about any work of art should be backed up by written descriptions. You must use these descriptions as concrete examples for your conclusions!

Attendance & Participation

Participation in class discussions is a must and makes up a significant part of your grade. **More than three unexcused absences from class will lower your grade by one letter, and so on for more absences.** Excused absences are only for *documented* (meaning you must bring a signed document from the appropriate source) illness or family emergency. **Three tardies** (more than 5 minutes late for class or from break, leaving early unexcused or coming to class unprepared to work) **equal one unexcused absence.** Any late or incomplete assignments or writings and excessive absence or tardiness will result in decreased grades. Attendance on field trips (including the bus) is mandatory. Writings and discussions will derive from our field trips. If you miss class, call someone and e-mail me to find out what you missed! Always refer to the schedule if you are confused.

Textbook and Readings

Copies of readings for our bi-weekly fieldtrips will be placed in the library on reserve.

Suggested:

1. *Understanding Comics*, McCloud, Scott. Perennial Currents, 1994, ISBN: 006097625X
2. *Why is Painting Like a Pizza?*, Heller, Nancy. Princeton University Press, 2002, ISBN: 0691090521
3. *Believing is Seeing*, Staniszewski, Mary Anne. Penguin Group, 1995, ISBN#: 01401.68249
4. *Interpreting Art: Reflecting, Wondering and Responding*, Barrett, Terry. McGraw-Hill, 2003, ISBN# 0767416481

Grading

Each paper will be graded A thru F according to how well you address the criteria mentioned above. These criteria will be specifically explained during class. A = exceptional: unusually high quality. B = good or better than adequate. C = average: adequate or just enough. D = minimum effort or quality, barely acceptable. F = failure, unacceptable.

Late Final Projects will not be accepted!

Final grades will be computed as follows:

64 %	writing assignments
12 %	final paper
10 %	attendance
14 %	participation and progress

Disability: If you need any accommodations in this course, please notify me immediately. Students with disabilities must be registered with the DSPS office (call extension 4558).