



Approaches to Narrative: Visual Story Telling Across the Ages

Fall 2017: Mary Snowden and Mary Ball Howkins

Lifelong Learning Collaborative

Course Description: Artists have been telling stories in their images for centuries. Some of their narratives were Christian and some promoted ancient religious philosophies. Many artists, post-Renaissance, told stories about economic class (the upstairs and the downstairs) and specific individual lives. In contemporary times much narrative art is African-American and Hispanic, with a decidedly political bent. How do visual stories take on meaning and how does story-telling change in approach over time? What can the spectator bring to the story and how does historical context fit into meaning? Come consider these and more questions with us.

Class meeting structure: each meeting, after our first meeting on September 12th, will consist of two participants' presentations and class discussion of the images offered via PowerPoint (organized by the presenter or with the help of a coordinator if that program is not familiar). The material to be explored in each meeting of the course will pair the work of two different artists, often from quite different eras. This pairing will reveal various approaches to story-telling from the late Renaissance to the present, and will reveal some of the inventive ways visual stories can be told.

Discussion of visual, content and media similarities and differences will follow presentations, with the ultimate course goal of ferreting out new understandings and appreciations of what approaches to story-telling artists explored and how each era may have related to the next. There will be some short lectures at the outset by the coordinators to elucidate more complex, obscure or interesting trends. Short readings may be given out from time to time for clarification of challenging contemporary issues. If you are passionate about a particular artist, we can arrange a

short time for you to share your passion and knowledge with the class. Hopefully, we will be able as a group to shape working definitions of narrative approaches by the end of the course.

SOME QUESTIONS ALONG THE WAY

- How early in human history did story-telling in art begin?
- What motivations for story-telling were common in the European Renaissance, north and south?
- How can still life painting direct the human soul, conventionally spiritual or not?
- How has story-telling served marginalized peoples?
- What can narrative art reveal about our own contemporary times?
- Is narrative art relevant in every era?
- What are the most common approaches to story-telling are used by artists?

APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE

- Simultaneous: cave paintings
- Monoscenic: in a single scene (still life, 'Gin' by Hogarth, Chardin's 'Broken Eggs')
- Continuous: multiple scenes in a single frame (Masaccio, T. H. Benton, Kara Walker)
- Progressive: passing time in narrative via multiple actions (Khnopff, Darger)
- Sequential: same figures over time (Hogarth 'Marriage a la mode' and 'Rake's Progress')
- Panoptic: events over time (Jacob Lawrence 'Migration Series' and 'Toussaint L'Ouverture' Series)

MEETING SCHEDULE

September 12: **Introduction**, housekeeping; Howkins lecture on the history of narrative in visual art, Snowden lecture on narrative structure and form dedicated to story

Sept. 19 Willem Kalf (Barnet Fain) and Audrey Flack (Deborah de Coteau)

Sept. 26 Gianlorenzo Bernini and Duane Hanson (Alice Grellner)

Oct. 3 Henryk Ross' Lodz photos (Maxine Cohen) and Jimmy Nelson

Oct. 10 Florine Stettheimer (Linda Shamoon) and Joan Brown (Suzanne Lewis)

Oct. 17 *In the Realms of the Unreal*, film about Henry Darger (1hr, 21 mins)

Oct. 24 William Hogarth (Avram Cohen) and Yinka Shonibar (MBH)

Oct. 31 Pieter Bruegel the Elder (Lenore Bunting) and Kerry James Marshall (Mary)

Nov. 7 Michelangelo Merisi Caravaggio (Patricia Bisshopp) and Bill Viola (Fran Lourie)

Nov. 14 Jacob Lawrence (Marilyn Eanet) and Amy Cutler (Judith Knilans)