

# OBJECT ENCOUNTERS

AS.389.384

FALL 2018

THURSDAYS  
1:30-3:50pm

GILMAN 10

Johns  
Hopkins  
University



## Course Overview and Objectives

In this course, we unpack the stories art museums tell & test new approaches to object interpretation.

You will use the Baltimore Museum of Art as a laboratory to investigate how museums produce and stage art. You will become conversant with the historical trajectory of select types of collections in American art museums. You will also develop the ability to rethink existing interpretive choices using tools of academic and applied research.

As a practicum, the course engages substantively with the

practice of museums, and with museum practitioners. In particular, it allies curatorship with museum interpretation. We will host guests from the curatorial, education and strategic leadership teams of the BMA. Readings include both academic scholarship and practical how-to's. You should expect to learn by doing. The majority of assignments require hands-on work in the museum's galleries.

The course aims to consider ways of applying a social justice perspective to presenting art collections for the public. The course emphasizes the 'recognition' condition of justice. Recognition encompasses concerns

pertaining to cultural domination, nonrecognition, cultural imperialism, and status hierarchy.

### Your Instructor

Dr. Jennifer P. Kingsley  
[jkingsley@jhu.edu](mailto:jkingsley@jhu.edu)

Email is the preferred way to reach me. I will respond by end of business day.

Office: Gilman 389  
Phone: 410.516.3188

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-3:30 pm & by appointment.

cell (only for site visits):  
718-864-0213

# Academic Integrity

Statement from the JHU Ethics Board: *The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitation of academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and/or the Chairperson of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on 'Academic Ethics for Undergraduates' and the Ethics Board website (<http://ethics.jhu.edu>) for more information*

Simply put: Any work you do for this class must be your own. You must acknowledge any help you receive (from published sources, the internet, experts you interview, classmates etc.) in proper form (notes, bibliography). You also may NOT reuse work from another class to fulfill a requirement without my explicit authorization.

## Course Requirements

This course involves reading, group discussion, object-based research and applied assignments. It is fast paced. Each class builds on the prior week's material and research findings. You will need to absorb that material and consider its significance on your own outside of class. Readings provide essential background & key concepts that will jump-start class discussions. Research into your assigned artwork will be ongoing and self-directed. You will need to put in steady and consistent effort throughout the whole semester. You will need to have (or learn) scholarly research skills and learn museum evaluation techniques. You will need to stay engaged and demonstrate active learning.

**Participation (20%).** I track attendance. You should be on time and ready to participate each day. I expect class discussion to be lively, respectful and substantive and that you will have done preparatory assignments and readings before class. Should you need to miss class on medical grounds, for religious observances, or family emergencies you will need to document the reasons for your absence in writing.



John Russell Pope designed the BMA as a Roman-style temple. The building opened in 1929.

Excessive absences will be penalized and may result in failure for the course – even if all written work has been completed. If you miss class it is your responsibility to make-up the work.

**Applied Work (80%)** You will choose a BMA object from the list at the end of the syllabus and work on it throughout the semester. This work involves both academic research and museum-based assignments that cumulate in the creation of interpretations for select artworks. You will justify your interpretations with reference to your academic research and your findings from the museum practice assignments. The choice of objects and assignments is designed to contribute substantively to the BMA's understanding of its permanent collection. A schedule of work appears in the course outline.

**Academic Research milestones:** object timeline (10%); all but the paper (10%)

**Museum-Based Assignments:** 1) museum mapping (10%); 2) visitor survey (10%); 3) stakeholder interviews (10%); 4) object connections (10%); 5) object label (10%).

**Mid-Term Report and Presentation: 15%**

**Final Report and Presentation: 15%**

[See the course website for detailed information and guidelines for each of these assignments.](#)

All work must be completed in order to pass.

In general, an A exceeds expectations, a B meets expectations, a C meets most expectations but may present problems in content or presentation. Within that general range, grades will be differentiated with a +/- as appropriate.

## Course Outline (detailed weekly plan at end of syllabus)

| Date  | Logistics                                                                                        | To Prepare                                                                                            | What's due                                                               |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9/6   | Intro to course & academic research                                                              |                                                                                                       |                                                                          |
| 9/13  | "Read" BMA & Visit to Archives<br><b>Meet @ BMA</b> - Guests: Gamynne Guillotte & Emily Rafferty | 27 pages (Duncan; Coffee; Bodo)<br>+ 2 hours at BMA to complete map                                   | museum map (10%) // email your object choices (3 in order of preference) |
| 9/20  | Many Faces of Antioch                                                                            | 41 pages reading (Morey; Carrier; Truettner) + Cuno video (11 min) & 45 min in Antioch mosaics at BMA | draft bibliography; start academic research; continue w BMA files        |
| 9/27  | Contested Status of 14th c Art                                                                   | 35 pages (Morowitz, Bagnoli, Cohen) cf: interp of Water Moon Guanyin & Virgin Mary (30 min)           | draft bibliography; keep reading up on your object                       |
| 10/4  | New Collecting Priorities // 2nd half of class at BMA for close looking                          | 40 pages of reading (Macdonald, Kramer, Perry, Nochlin, Cooper) + news about BMA deaccessions         | start visitor survey                                                     |
| 10/11 | BMA Visitors<br>Guest: Melanie Martin                                                            | 30 pages (Greenblatt, Gopnik, Silverman)                                                              | visitor survey due (10%) (10 interviews @15-20 min each)                 |
| 10/18 | Mid-Term Presentations                                                                           | you will each have about 10 min to share key points of your report                                    | object timeline (10%); mid-term package (15%)                            |
| 10/25 | Taxonomies of Difference<br><b>Meet @ BMA</b> Guest: Kevin Tervalá                               | 37 pages (Vogel; Clifford; Adams)<br>+ interpretive plan                                              |                                                                          |
| 11/1  | Critical Race Perspective                                                                        | 50 pages (Caviness + Public Medievalist blog posts)                                                   | object connections (10%)                                                 |
| 11/8  | Unpacking Gender<br>Guest: Kevin Tervalá                                                         | 30 pages ((Oyewùmí, Phillips, optional: Bynum)                                                        |                                                                          |
| 11/15 | A Feast for the Senses<br>Guest: Jennifer Stager                                                 | 30 pages (Alpers, Dudley, Bradley)                                                                    | stakeholder interviews (10%)                                             |
| 11/29 | Field Trip to Walters Art Museum<br><b>Meet at WAM 2pm</b><br>Guest: Amy Landau                  |                                                                                                       | object label (10%)                                                       |
| 12/6  | ACCESS - Guests: Nancy Proctor and George Ciscle                                                 |                                                                                                       | All but the paper (10%)                                                  |
|       | Final Presentations                                                                              |                                                                                                       | Final project package (15%)                                              |

### Syllabus Overview

Our goal is to rethink how museums present objects and how visitors encounter them. Concepts from cultural studies, race theory, feminist art history, and inclusive design provide a critical lens. We use three BMA collections as a springboard for our in-class work: late antique mosaics from Antioch; a grouping of 14th and 15th century works that open the European galleries; and the installation of Sande society masks in the African galleries. We consider the acquisition, classification, cataloging, siting, display and interpretation of these collections.

Class models the process of your independent projects. These investigate the history of select artworks and their changing meanings as part of new collections and displays. Important anchor points are the creation and initial reception of the object, its removal from its original context, its entrance into a public collection, and the archival record of its staging and interpretation at the Baltimore Museum of Art. You will also consider alternative interpretations present in art-historical scholarship and in peer museums.



In the 1940s, collector Saidie A. May created a Renaissance period room for the BMA.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to....

- articulate the historical trajectory of select types of artworks and collections in American art museums
- spy out the relationship between artworks, ideas about artworks, and museum practices
- offer evidence and scholarship-based alternatives to existing museum interpretation
- use archives in academic research and apply basic techniques of museum evaluation
- identify, analyze and explain the ways any given museum is producing and staging art objects
- distinguish between types of research approaches and use the results of each appropriately to inform their interpretation of art for scholarly and public audiences
- connect objects logically across different places and time periods in ways that matter

## Submitting Assignments

Best = hand in a hard copy of your assignment during class on its due date

Also Best = upload your assignment (or link if you choose to use a web-based medium) to Blackboard Assignments

Acceptable = turn in your assignment before its due date either in class, to Blackboard or to my office mailbox in Gilman 301

My least favorite = sending your assignment as an attachment or in the text of an email

Not acceptable = anything else, like having printer or computer trouble and not bringing it to class, not uploading it before class begins, or

begging me to let you print it later and drop it off, or forgetting to do the assignments and asking to turn them in all at once at the end of the semester.

To avoid losing work, I recommend that you 1) not keep your papers on only one computer or flash drive, and 2) email your papers to yourself frequently so you can access them from another computer in a pinch. You can also use JHBox to store documents in the cloud for remote access.

**Museum-based Assignments build on each other and on your academic research. Plan ahead to stay on schedule with both. You will report formally on your progress to the class and museum staff midway through the semester.**

## Help & Resources

If you are feeling lost or overwhelmed...

### 1. Speak up in class

You may not be the only person with the same concern, and we all benefit from working questions out together.

### 2. Make an appointment with me

Email or sign up for an appointment to meet at any time or catch me after class. Many questions & issues can be resolved this way.

### 3. Consult with a research librarian

Our library staff is eager to help guide your research. JHU's specialist for art history and museum studies is Donald Juedes: [djuedes@jhu.edu](mailto:djuedes@jhu.edu). I also created an inclusive object toolkit with a host of useful links, articles, videos and bibliographies: <https://guides.library.jhu.edu/inclusive-object>

### 4. Use the Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free resource at all stages of the writing process, from getting started to revising drafts to polishing a final essay. Make an appointment at <http://krieger.jhu.edu/writingcenter/>

### 5. Visit Academic Advising and Support

Academic advising offers many tutoring and mentoring services, including a study consulting program. Appointments can be made directly online from the webpage <http://advising.jhu.edu/tutoring-mentoring/>

ARTIST UNIDENTIFIED

*Commemorative Head of a King (Oba),*

c. 1848–1897

Benin City, Nigeria

Copper alloy

In 2016 the BMA changed how they identified African artists on their labels from *anonymous* to *unidentified* to reflect that our lack of knowledge about African artists is the product of colonial collecting and not African cultural practices.

## Inclusion and Accommodations

The diversity that you bring to this class is a resource, strength and benefit. I am committed to creating a learning environment that serves students of all backgrounds and perspectives and which honors your identities. To help me:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official JHU records, please let me know!
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- Inclusion is an ongoing process. The nature of the course and project also means we will be digging into difficult and challenging content. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it. You can also submit anonymous feedback by dropping an unsigned note in my mailbox in Gilman 301 (which may lead to me making a general announcement to the class, if doing so is necessary to address your concerns). If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, staff from the Center for Diversity and Inclusion are an excellent resource: <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/student-life/staff>

This course involves hands on work in the museum galleries both 1) during class time and 2) on your own outside of class. If you anticipate needing accommodations to participate fully in this work please let me know.

Anyone needing academic accommodations should obtain a letter from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, [studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu). Please provide this letter to me as soon as possible so that I can make sure to accommodate your needs. If you believe you have a need for accommodation but have not yet met with SDS, please do so right away – they are here to help and professionally equipped to advise us on which accommodations would be most helpful.

## Object Choices

From the pre 1900 European collection (of "Old Masters"):

Rembrandt van Rijn,  
*Titus, The Artist's Son*  
ca. 1660

oil on canvas

81.5 x 78.5 cm (32 x 30.9 in)

The Mary Frick Jacobs Collection

1938.206: After years debating its authenticity, this object is considered today the best example of Rembrandt's paintings of his son. There is a renewed interest in Rembrandt this year because of the 350 year anniversary of his birth so there are a lot of upcoming exhibitions and scholarship: <https://museumnetwork.sothebys.com/article/the-year-of-rembrandt-350th-anniversary-celebrations-in-the-netherlands>

Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun  
*Princess Anna Alexandrovna Galitzin*  
ca. 1797

oil on canvas

136 x 100.5 cm (53 1/2 x 39 1/2 in)

The Mary Frick Jacobs Collection

1938.192: One of the first female painters to be championed by feminist critics. Subject of an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2016. Painted numerous portraits of the court and lived during the time of the French Revolution. Traveled widely, including to Russia, where she painted this portrait. This painting is the subject of an outdated online interactive at: <https://artbma.org/archived/interact/pachyderm/lebrunbma/>

Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin  
*The Game of Knucklebones*  
ca. 1734

oil on canvas

81.9 x 65.6 cm (32 1/4 x 25 13/16 in)

The Mary Frick Jacobs Collection

1938.193: Several works in the BMA's collection take games and play as their subject. JHU's archaeology museum owns pieces of a knucklebones game. Chardin is known for painting realistic scenes of 'lower classes' like the kitchen maid pictured here. Painting includes some social critique. Could also be interpreted from a gender perspective. It is also the subject of an online interactive: <https://artbma.org/archived/interact/pachyderm/chardinbma/>

Raphael  
*Emilia Pia da Montefeltro*  
ca. 1502-1504

42.5 x 28.6 cm (16 3/4 x 11 1/4 in)

Oil and possibly tempera on wood panel

The Jacob Epstein Collection

1951.114: Raphael is a canonical artist, ie: has long been treated as setting the standard for European art (ever since Vasari). This painting has been in many famous collections over time. Portrays the widow of someone described in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*. A somber portrait of a widow known as a great intellect in her day.

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

*Shepherds of Arcadia*

1872

78.7 x 90.5 cm (31 x 35 5/8 in)

oil on canvas

The Jacob Epstein Collection

1951.106: A pivotal landscape painter who was a strong influence on young impressionist painters. Several Corot landscapes on view in different parts of the BMA. "Barbizon" school which became very popular to collect in America at the turn of the 20th c

Bacchiacca (Francesco Ubertini)

*Madonna and Child in a Landscape*

ca. 1540

86.4 x 68.6 cm (34 x 27 in)

oil, possibly with tempera, on wood panel

W. Clagett Emory Bequest Fund, in Memory of his Parents, William H. Emory of A and Martha B. Emory, and Special Purchase Fund

1959.87: "Mannerist" painter from Florence Italy famous for his unusual color combinations. Reflects the spiritual and artistic upheaval of the first half of the 16th century. Biography in Vasari. A favorite of the European art curators. Could be treated from a sensory and/or devotional perspective.

## From the African Collection (comments by Curator Kevin Tervala)

*Commemorative Head of a King (Oba)*

1848-1897

Culture: Edo

20 1/4 x 11 x 11 in. (51.4 x 28 x 28 cm.)

Copper alloy

Gift of Alan Wurtzburger

Origin: Nigeria

1954.145.44: This object, like all other Benin bronzes, were looted by the British after a sack of the capital in 1897. The Nigerian government has just started a repatriation campaign, focused mainly on the British Museum (which has the largest collection of Benin bronzes). The BMA has not received a repatriation request. On display.

*Ndassa, Female Reliquary Figure (Mbulu Ngulu)*

Early 20th century

Culture: Kota

23 x 13 1/2 x 3 1/2 in. (58.4 x 34.3 x 8.9 cm.)

Wood, copper alloy, iron

Gift of Alan Wurtzburger

Origin: Democratic Republic of the Congo

1954.145.64: This is a reliquary figure that would have once stood atop a container with the bones of important ancestors. This is by a known hand and the attribution has changed over the years as we've done more and more research. Many of these types of objects were looted after families fled from their homes to avoid colonial labor conscription. On display.

*Great Mother Headdress (D'mba)*

Late 19th-early-20th century

Culture: Baga

Culture: Buluñits

48 5/8 x 13 3/8 x 28 3/8 in. (123.5 x 34 x 72 cm.)

Wood, copper alloy tacks, iron tacks

Gift of Alan Wurtzburger

Origin: possibly Monchon Village, Guinea

1957.97: This is the perhaps the best object in the BMA's African collection and one of the best (or best) of its type in the world. The BMA's first curator of African art (who served from 1981-2003) studied the art from this ethnic group extensively and all we know about these types of masquerades comes from his work. Not really controversial, but a good example of curatorial research work. On display.

*Kòmò Society Helmet Mask (Kòmòkun)*

Early 20th century

Culture: Manding

Culture: Minianka

14 1/2 x 10 7/8 x 23 1/2 in. (36.9 x 27.7 x 59.7 cm.)

Wood, animal horns, bird skull, plant fibers, porcupine quills, encrustation, glass

Gift of Robert and Mary Cumming, Baltimore

Origin: Mali or Guinea

1983.79: This object was designed to intentionally terrify folks and women and children were prevented from even looking at it. Raises interesting issues about what you talk about in the labels. Is currently on displaying in *Subverting Beauty: African Anti-Aesthetics*

*Koffi Djereba, Nafana, Male Mask (Bedu)*

1968

Culture: Nafana

140 x 59 x 10 cm.

Wood (silk-cotton tree), fiber (baobab tree bark), pigment

Purchase with exchange funds from the Collection of Albert D. and Esther Lazarus Goldman; Gift of Howard B. Marshall; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John J. McCavitt; Gift of A. Harvey and Phyllis K. Schreter; and Gift of Daniel Solomon, M.D.

Origin: Tambi village, Côte d'Ivoire

2003.66.1-2: Two masks that are very new and have only been danced once. There was a lot of push back from the accessions committee on these because the masquerade is very new, and had, at that point, only been around for two generations. Raises interesting questions of what is contemporary, what is not, what do museums collect, etc. Is not on display but can be viewed in the African study room by appointment.



## Weekly Plan

### 9/6 **Week 1: Introduction**

Course & Syllabus Overview

Research Librarian Don Juedes on resources for academic research at JHU library

### 9/13 **Week 2: Orienting to the BMA**

*What shapes visitors' experiences of art in the museum? How are museums spaces of privilege? How does cultural identity and personal background affect the museum experience?*

Meet at the BMA

Part 1 - Guest: Gamynne Guillote, Director of Interpretation and Public Engagement, BMA

Part 2 - Guest: Emily Rafferty, Head Librarian and Archivist, BMA

Due: museum map (about 2 hours) + choose object (email choice of 3 in order of preference to instructor)

To prepare (about 2 hours in the museum + 27 pages of reading)

- Complete your museum map and be ready to discuss your findings
- Carol Duncan, "The Art Museum as Ritual" excerpt in *Critical Perspectives on Art History* ed. JC McEnroe and D.F. Pokinski (pp. 255-260 (5pp)
- Kevin Coffee, "Cultural Inclusion, Exclusion and the Formative Roles of Museums," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 23.3 (2008): 261-79. (read in detail - we will unpack this in class - 18 pages incl. notes)
- Simon Bodo, "The challenge of creating 'third spaces' Guidelines for MAP for ID pilot projects" in *Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue Selected Practices from Europe* pp. 22-26 [https://www.nemo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/service/Handbook\\_MAPforID\\_EN.pdf](https://www.nemo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/service/Handbook_MAPforID_EN.pdf) (4 pages)

### 9/20 **Week 3: The Many Faces of Antioch (Creating the Master Narrative)**

*What role do the late antique mosaics of Antioch play in the BMA storyline today? Why were they collected in the first place? Is Antioch Roman? European? Syrian? Turkish? What roles has Antioch played in different museums? What is the place of late antiquity in museums and in art-historical narratives? How do scholars currently understand these objects and what might be their relevance for public audiences today?*

Due: draft bibliography

To prepare (30-45 min in the museum; 41 pages of reading + some wikipedia)

- Visit Antioch Court at BMA and read all the texts – aim to get a sense of the range of the objects in the collection and test our visitor evaluation instrument on yourself vis a vis the Atrium House Triclinium mosaic
- Read select catalog entries from Worcester Museum's 2005 exhibit - posted on Blackboard
- For a general sense of Antioch: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antioch>
- For a general sense of present geo-politics of the area [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatay\\_Province](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatay_Province)
- C.R. Morey, "The Antioch Mosaics at Baltimore" *Museum Quarterly of the Baltimore Museum of Art* 11 (1937-38), pp. 3-5 (pay attention to the storyline Morey is creating - gives insight into the early interest in Antioch)
- David Carrier, "Art Museum Narratives," in *Museum Skepticism* pp. 91-109 + notes pp 239-242
- William H. Truettner, "Museums and Historical Amnesia," *Museums and Difference*, 354-374.
- James Cuno on repatriation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5dRJ1LjryI> (11 min)

## **9/27 Week 4: Contested Status of 14th century art**

The BMA has a small collection of European art dating to between 1350-1500, all originally donated by Saidie Adler May for the purpose of creating a period room. How has this collection been understood and presented at the BMA? How have conceptions of medieval art evolved in collections over time and what is its relationship to 1) national politics 2) the invention of Europe as a political idea? How is the collection folded into the present art-historical narrative and how does it address the religious culture of late medieval / early Renaissance Europe?

To Prepare: (about 30-45 min in the museum; 35 pages of reading)

- SEE: the Water Moon Guanyin at the Baltimore Museum of Art and take notes on its presentation and the discussion of religious practices in the Asian art gallery. Listen to its verbal description @ . Then go upstairs to the first room of the European art galleries and look closely at the images of the Virgin Mary in the galleries and the discussion of religion in these galleries
- Laura Morowitz, "Medievalism, Classicism and Nationalism: The Appropriation of the French Primitifs in Turn of the Century France" *Studies in the History of Art* 68 (2005): 224-241
- Martina Bagnoli and Kate Gerry, *The Medieval World: The Walters Art Museum* (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum in association with D Giles Limited, London, 2011), articles: "What are the Middle Ages?" pp. 9-17, and "Conclusions: The Invention of the Middle Ages," pp. 169-179.
- Rachel Cohen, "Italians Come to America," *Art in America* 101.9 (Oct. 2013): 148-155.

## **10/4 Week 5: New Collecting Priorities (Changing the Canon)**

We will look into the patterns of collecting at the BMA, with a special focus on the museum's engagement with African and African-American art (a current priority). What have these collections meant to the museum over time, including today? We debate also how new collecting priorities at the BMA are challenging the canon and to what extent they might be confirming existing paradigms of art-historical knowledge. Part II: Slow Looking at the BMA

To Prepare: (about 40 pages of reading; start visitor survey > give yourself at least 1 hour in the galleries)

- Sharon Macdonald, "Collecting Practices" in *A Companion to Museum Studies* (London: Blackwell, 2011), 81-95
- Hilton Kramer, "The Assault on the Museums," in *Critical Perspectives on Art History*, pp. 261-263
- Gil Perry, "What is the Canon?" in *Critical Perspectives on Art History*, pp. 277-281
- Linda Nochlin "From 1971: Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *ArtNews* May 30, 2015.
- Ashton Cooper "The Problem of the Overlooked Female Artist: An Argument for Enlivening a Stale Model of Discussion," *Hyperallergic* January 10, 2015 (originally appeared in the catalogue for *Lucid Gestures* at Barnard College)
- On recent deaccessions at the BMA
  - Cara Ober, "Artists and Curators Weigh In on Baltimore Museum's Move to Deaccession Works by White Men to Diversify Its Collection," *Hyperallergic* May 8, 2018
  - Lee Rosenbaum "Deaccession Deception: Baltimore Museum's Castoffs Leave Holes in Its Collection," *Arts Journal*, June 1, 2018
  - Julia Halperin, "The Baltimore Museum Sold Art to Acquire Work by Underrepresented Artists. Here's What It Bought - and Why It's Only the Beginning" *ArtNet News* June 26, 2018

## 10/11 **Week 6: BMA Visitors Encounter the Object**

In traditional museum thinking, the transformative experience of being before a work of art and the "information package" that exists around it compete with each other. Must this be the case? What meanings are the BMA's visitors making from the artworks you are researching?

*Discussion with Melanie Martin, Chief Innovation Officer, BMA*

Due: Visitor Survey

To Prepare: (complete visitor survey 1-2 hours in the museum; 30 pages of reading)

- Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," in *Exhibiting Cultures: Poetics and Politics of Representation*, (Smithsonian, 1991), 42-56.
- Adam Gopnik, "The Mindful Museum," *The Walrus* June 12, 2007 <https://thewalrus.ca/the-mindful-museum/> (Gopnik makes the case for getting rid of textual interpretation in museums)
- Lois H. Silverman and Mark O'Neill, "Change and Complexity in the 21st-Century Museum: The Real Relics in Our Museums May Be the Ways We Think and Work," *Reinventing the Museum*, 193-201

## 10/18 **Week 7: Mid-Term**

You will turn in a written report and share your main findings to a panel of your peers, faculty and museum staff orally. The presentation should be about 10 minutes + 5 minutes of Q&A.

"State of the Question" How do scholars currently understand your artwork / artist / the category of object to which your artwork belongs? How does the museum currently present the work, how has it been understood / presented previously - at the museum and in other collecting contexts? What meanings do visitors currently make of the work and what questions do they have about it? What social injustice(s) are relevant to your artwork?

## 10/25 **Week 8: Making Meaning from the Sande Society Masks (Taxonomies of Difference)**

Compare the presentation of the Sande Society Masks to that of the Antioch Mosaics. What stories are being told? By what means? What are the main preoccupations of the interpretive elements in the gallery? their assumptions ie: the things they don't feel the need to justify or explain? How does this relate to the history of the reception of African art in western museums?

Guest: Kevin Terval, Associate Curator of African Art & Department Head, AAAP, BMA

Due:

To Prepare: (37 pages of reading)

- Susan Vogel, "Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion," in Karp and Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: Poetics and Politics of Representation*, (Smithsonian, 1991), pp. 191-204.
- James Clifford, "On Collecting Art and Culture" in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 215-36; - pay special attention to the diagram\*
- Read internal document on interpretive plan for African galleries posted on Blackboard (consider also this perspective of museum practitioners on interpretive planning > Marianna Adams and Judy Koke, "Comprehensive Interpretive Plans: A Framework of Questions," *Reinventing the Museum*, ed. Gail Anderson (New York: Altamira Press, 2012), 395-400).

## 11/1 **Week 9: Critical Race Perspectives**

What is critical race theory? How has race intersected with museums? When US art-historians and art museums address race they typically take as their subject the arts of the African diaspora - but what

happens when we apply a critical race perspective to the content of European art objects? And how do current more global approaches to European arts affect art-history and the museum's long positioning of the European West at the center of the story of art's development? We use the BMA's collection of late medieval objects as a springboard for our discussion (because the Middle Ages are being used in our present by white nationalists). We will also draft questions you might ask about your artwork from a critical race perspective.

#### To prepare

- <https://www.publicmedievalist.com/race-racism-middle-ages-toc/> - Blog Posts: "Introduction" "Part IV: Is Race Real?" "Part VI Were Medieval People Racist" "Part VII: Where were the Middle Ages?" "Part XL: Race, Racism and the Middle Ages: Looking Back, Looking Forward" AND the series on Africa "Part XIV: Recovering a "Lost" Medieval Africa" and "Part XVII "Uncovering the African Presence in Medieval Europe"
- Blog Posts on Getty Museum Outcast Project - <http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/dialogue-exposing-the-rhetoric-of-exclusion-through-medieval-manuscripts/>
- Caviness, Madeline. "From the Self-Invention of the Whiteman in the Thirteenth Century to The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly" *Different Visions: A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 1 (September 2008): 1-33.

### **11/8 Week 10: Unpacking Gender in the Museum**

What are our present notions of gender in the United States and how has feminist art history operated within those notions, challenged them or contributed to them? What are some of the problems of existing approaches that need complicating? How do multiple and intertwining identities - cultural background, race, class, family, age, sexual orientation etc.. help to shape women's artistic production, the representation of women, and their engagement with cultural objects? Why should these questions matter to the museum? We return to the Sande Society masks as a springboard for that discussion (because it is one of the few African masks danced by women). We will also draft questions you might ask about your artwork from a feminist perspective.

Guest: Kevin Terval, Associate Curator of African Art & Department Head, AAAP, BMA

#### To prepare:

- Oyèrónké Oyewùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. ix-xvii; 11-17
- Ruth B. Phillips, "Masking in Mende Sande Society Initiation Rituals," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 48.3 (1978): 265-277.
- [optional] Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," in *Renaissance Quarterly* 39.3 (1986): 414-437

### **11/15 Week 11: A Feast for the Senses**

What might a more materialist and sensory approach to art objects look like in the museum? Why might it be valuable? How is this different from Gopnik's ideal museum experience that we discussed several weeks ago. We return to the Antioch mosaics as a springboard for our conversation.

Guest: Jennifer Stager, Assistant Professor of Ancient Art, History of Art, JHU

- Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991) pp. 25-32.
- Sandra H. Dudley, "Museum Materialities: Objects, Sense and Feeling" in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2010), excerpts: pp. 3-13 (Dudley uses some fancy

academic jargon - do your best to read past that, and we will unpack the key ideas she raises during our discussion)

- Mark Bradley, "Colour as Synaesthetic Experience in Antiquity," *Synaesthesia and Ancient Senses* (London: Routledge, 2014), 127-140

#### Additional Resources

- Hawley MacLean "The Sensational Exhibition Survey, 2011" A Report of the Sensory Museum Project <http://www.david-howes.com/senses/sensational.pdf> > describes some museums that try to engage multiple senses (you in 2017 the Walters also did an exhibition on senses and medieval art called *A Feast for the Senses* in case you are interested to check that out)

### **11/29      Week 12: Putting it all together: Field Trip to Walters Art Museum**

*The Walters Art Museum is overhauling its permanent installations, trying to rethink the stories it tells and how it stages visitors' encounters with art. We will get a glimpse of some of their thinking, questions and challenges through a conversation with chief curator Amy Landau. Note the curator has a particular interest in the presentation of religious art, and specializes in Islamic art history.*

*Guest: Amy Landau, Director of Curatorial Affairs and Curator of Islamic and South Asian Art*

#### To Prepare:

- Visit the Walters on your own and make note of your impressions of the stories the museum seems currently to tell (including anything that seems weird or needing challenge). Look for objects that bear a relationship to the art you are researching and check out how it is presented at the Walters. Identify key points you might bring up in discussion with Dr. Landau
- no readings - keep working on your projects!

### **12/6      Week 13: Access**

Nancy Proctor, George Ciscle

- no readings this week - wrap up your projects!