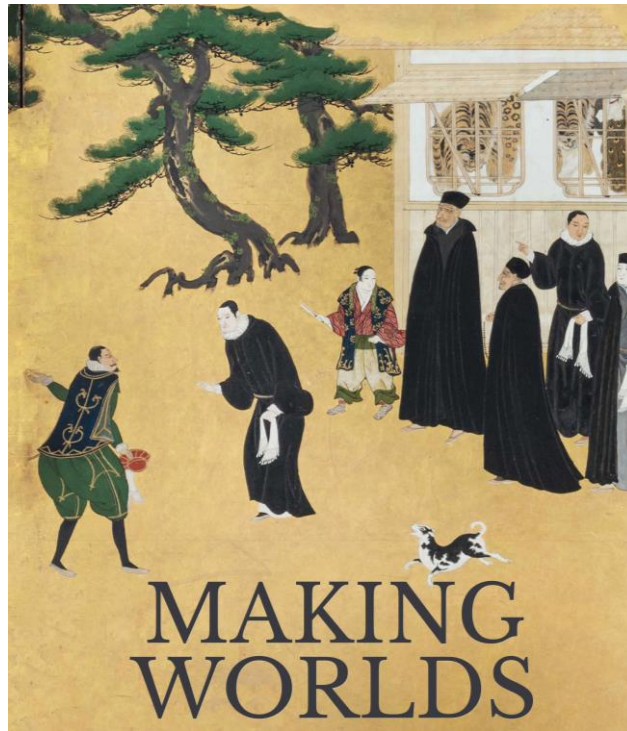


Art History 653

MAKING WORLDS

GLOBAL MOBILITY, INVENTION, AND CATASTROPHE IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD



Winter 2024: Wednesdays from 11:35 to 2:25 in **Leacock 927**

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Office Hours: Thursdays 11-12 in Arts 255B (tel. 514 398 4929)

Course Description

This seminar assesses the intersections of global mobility, planetary crisis, and artistic invention in the early modern period (ca 1492-1700). The focus is on worldmaking and the role of visual imagery, built environments, and material culture that advanced new understandings of the world as a human-made invention. We will consider how the escalation of global capitalism, colonization, extraction, and exploitation generated new forms of art that were simultaneously creative and destructive. In so doing, we will take up methodological questions raised by recent decolonial, anti-racist, and ecocritical approaches to art and art history and be attentive to conflicting and oppositional worldviews.

Potential research topics include (but are not limited to):

- in-between spaces: the sea, gardens, plantations, ports, markets, coastal areas, ships, menageries, curiosity collections, utopias, heterotopias
- extraction: mining, quarrying, fishing, logging, hunting, monocropping
- labour: practices of enslavement and exploitation, colonialism and anticolonialism, resistance, opposition, and rebellion
- Indigenous knowledges and lifeways

- artmaking and the transformation of materials: stones, metals, wood, gems, pearls, shells, glass, pigments, porcelain, ivory, etc.
- phenomena that challenge human experience: mountains, waterfalls, ice, caves, storms, forests, rainbows, earthquakes, etc., and aesthetic responses (wonder, horror, the sublime)
- tools, processes, technologies, media, and systems of managing, transforming, collecting, and classifying materials, animals, plants, artifacts, and ‘curiosities’
- transportation, transplantation, and commodification: people, animals, insects, birds, trees, plants, waters, minerals, rocks, soil, etc.



READINGS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

Jan 10 Introduction

Reading: Vanhaelen and Wilson, “Introduction,” *Making Worlds: Global Invention in the early modern period* (University of Toronto Press, 2022), 3-10.

Jan. 17 Art History and the Planet: Earth, Water, Air

Robert Marks, “Exhausting the Earth”: Environment and History in the Early Modern World.” In J.H. Bentley, S. Subrahmanyam, & M. Wiesner-Hanks, eds. *The Cambridge World History. Volume VI. The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE. Part I: Foundations*. Cambridge University Press, 2018, 29-53.

Ros Gray and Shela Sheikh. “The Wretched Earth: Botanical Conflicts and Artistic Interventions.” *Third Text* 32, no. 2–3 (2018): 163–169 (skim 170-5).

Steve Mentz, “A Poetics of Planetary Water,” *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2023.

Sugata Ray, “Art History and the Political Ecologies of Air,” *Venti Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2020): 40–7.

Further Reading:

Sugata Ray, “‘Dead as a Dodo’: Anthropocene Extinction in the Early Modern World,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 67, no 1 (2023): 126–35.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Jan. 24 Shipwreck Art History and Blue Methodologies

Steve Mentz, "Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature." *Literature Compass* 6, no. 5 (August 2009): 997-1013.

Aaron Hyman and Dana Liebsohn. "Lost and Found at Sea, or a Shipwreck's Art History." *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 28, no. 1 (2021): 43-74.

Lisa Han, "The Blue Frontier: Temporalities of Salvage and Extraction at the Seabed." *Configurations* 27 (Fall 2019): 463-81.

Sara Rich, *Shipwreck Hauntography: Underwater Ruins and the Uncanny* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021), chap 5 "Macabre Simulacra;" sections titled "Exploration" and "Exploitation."

Further Reading: Steve Mentz, *Ocean. Object Lessons*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.

Jan. 31 The Unsalvageable

Khaled Malas, "Concerning the Observation of Other Corpses," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (2021) 80 (4): 395-96.

Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 26 (2008), 1-14.

Kevin Dawson, "History Below the Waterline: Enslaved Salvage Divers Harvesting Seaports' Hinter-Seas in the Early Modern Atlantic." *International Review of Social History* 64, no. S27 (2019): 43-70.

Trinh T. Minh-ha and James Clifford, "Beyond the Salvage Paradigm," in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (DIA Art Foundation, 1987) 121-9, 138-141.

Feb. 7 Invisibility and Erasure

Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, "Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America," *Colonial Latin American Review* 12:1 (2003): 5-35.

Cécile Fromont, "Visibility and Invisibility of the Cross-Cultural in Images from Early Modern Franciscan Missions in Central Africa and Central Mexico," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 75, 4 (2022): 1221-1265.

J. Vanessa Lyon and Caroline Fowler. "Revision and Reckoning: The Legacy of Slavery in Histories of Northern Art." *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2022): 1-20.

Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15:1 (2003): 11–25 (can skim the rest).

Feb. 14 The Plantation System / Plantationocene

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Culture on the Edges. Creolization in the Plantation Context," 194-214, in *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History*, 1995 (read excerpts: 194-196 and 203-210).

Katherine McKittrick, "Plantation Futures." *Small Axe* 17, no. 3 (2013): 1-15.

Romita Ray, "Unruly Indigo? Plants, Plantations, and Partitions," in Christine Göttler, Mia Mochizuki, eds., *Landscape and Earth in Early Modernity: Picturing Unruly Nature* Amsterdam UP, 2023, 181-202.

Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities*, 6 (2015): 159–165.

Feb. 21 Material Transformations

Cécile Fromont, "Paper, Ink, Vodun, and the Inquisition: Tracing Power, Slavery, and Witchcraft in the Early Modern Portuguese Atlantic," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 88, 2 (2020): 460-504.

Stephanie Porras, "Locating Hispano-Philippine Ivories," *Colonial Latin American Review* 29:2 (2020): 256-291.

Anna Grasskamp, "Introduction," *Art and Ocean Objects of Early Modern Eurasia: Shells, Bodies, and Materiality*. Amsterdam University Press, 2021.

Caroline Fowler, "Delineating the Sea: Maritime Law and Painting in Willem van de Velde the Elder's Sea Drafts," *Landscape and Authority in the Early Modern World*, ed. Stephen Whiteman (Penn State University Press, 2023), 197-214.

Feb. 28 Mobility and Mediation

Astrid Erll, "Circulating Art and Material Culture. A Model of Transcultural Mediation," in *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, eds. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North (Amsterdam, 2014), 312-28.

Nancy Um, "Nested Containers for Maritime Journeys: Aromatic Gifts around the Late-Seventeenth- and Early-Eighteenth-Century Indian Ocean," *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 25:2 (Fall-Winter 2018): 199-223.

Carrie Anderson, "Between optic and haptic: Tactility and trade in the Dutch West India Company's Gold Box," *Oud Holland* 133:2 (2020): 127-43.

Amy Knight Powell, "Porcelain White," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 2020.

March 13 Ports and Forts

Nancy Um, "From Surat to Jidda: Picturing the Western Indian Ocean Port City." In *The Seas and the Mobility of Islamic Art*. Ed. Radha Dalal, Sean Roberts, and Jochen Sokoly (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 184-99.

Marsely Kehoe, "Dutch Batavia: An Ideal Dutch City?" in *Trade, Globalization, and Dutch Art and Architecture: Interrogating Dutchness and the Golden Age*, Amsterdam University Press, 2023.

Sandy Prita Meier, "Chinese Porcelain and Muslim Port Cities: Mercantile Materiality in Coastal East Africa," *Art History* 38:4 (2015)

Amy Knight Powell, "Life and death according to the 'episteme' of the fort. A picture of the slave trader Dirck Wilre in Elmina, 1669," *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art / Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 72 (2022): 272-305.

March 20 Animal Studies and the Violence of the Image

Sugata Ray, "From New Spain to Mughal India: Rethinking Early Modern Animal Studies with a Turkey, ca. 1612," in *Picture Ecology: Art and Ecocriticism in Planetary Perspective*, edited by Karl Kusserow, 94–113. Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum and the Princeton University Press, 2021.

Maurice Saß, "Hunting grounds for painters: The killing of animals and the artistic domination of nature," *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art / Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 71 (2021): 144-83.

Bass, Marisa Anne. "Shell Life, or the Unstill Life of Shells." In *Conchophilia: Shells, Art, and Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Marisa Anne Bass, Anne Goldgar, Hanneke Grootenboer and Claudia Swan, 21-48. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021.

Christina Brito, "(Early) modern 'naturecultures': A co-constructed narrative of the world," in *Humans and Aquatic Animals in Early Modern America and Africa*. 223-49. Amsterdam University Press, 2023.

Further Reading:

Sugata Ray, "Das Paradies: The Anthropocene Extinction in Global Art History," *The Journal of Early Modern History*: forthcoming.

F. Egmond and S. Kusukawa, "Gessner's Fish: Images as Objects," in U. Leu and P. Opitz, eds., *Conrad Gessner (1516–1565). Die Renaissance der Wissenschaften / The Renaissance of Learning*, 581–605. De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019.

March 27 MMFA/MBAM Visit

Museum Day: We will meet at the MBAM/MMFA to visit the Dutch print collection with curator Chloé Pelletier. We will also present our wall labels of selected artworks.

April 3 & 10 Oral research presentations

Method of Evaluation:

Class participation and reading responses	15%	
Reading presentation / discussion leader	30%	(2 x 15%)
Wall text labels	10%	(March 27)
Paper Proposal	5%	(Feb. 14)
Oral presentation of research topic	15%	
Written research paper	25%	(April 17)

Participation and Blog Notes (15%)

Fifteen percent of your final mark will be based on your participation in the seminar. This includes class discussion, weekly blog notes, and overall engagement with the course.

Blog notes

In order to prepare for class, students are required to respond in writing to the week's readings by writing a focused short response (about 1 page) that explores thematic links between all of the readings. The ideal response would include one or two thoughtful discussion questions that demonstrate a command of the issues and spark conversation and/or debate. Post your response on the MyCourses discussions page the day before class so we have time to read them beforehand (by 3pm on Tues at the latest). If you are presenting, you don't need to do a blog post.

Class Attendance

To make up for any missed class, write and hand in (before the next week's class) a 5-page essay that incorporates all of the readings and references questions posed by students (in their presentations or blog notes). This essay should be more than a summary

of each reading—it should have a central argument that allows you to explore the readings in some depth.

Reading presentation / discussion leader (15% x 2 = 30%)

Twice, you will introduce the week's readings and lead a discussion. Instead of just summarizing the readings, investigate a few key ideas, methods or theories that occur across the readings and focus the discussion on specific works of art. Incorporate discussion questions into the presentation (please write them on a slide). Hand in a copy of the presentation notes (can be point form and informal).

Artwork Labels (10%)

You will each write labels for two works of early modern art in the collection of the MBAM/MMFA. Choose any two works within our time period of 1492-1600. These are very succinct texts (between 70-100 words max). Please consult and follow this useful guide on how to write effective labels:

https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/VA_Gallery-Text-Writing-Guidelines_online_Web.pdf.

With your permission, these texts will be shared with the museum staff and may inform the writing of new labels for works.

Due: on or before **March 27**

Research Project (45%)

3 parts: preliminary proposal, oral research presentation, and written essay:

- i) **Paper Proposal (5%):** Each student will orally present a brief (5 minute) preliminary paper proposal on **Feb. 14**. A written proposal is also due on this date. It can be a point-form outline describing the objects of analysis, the research questions they raise, and the strategies that you will use to address these questions. Include a bibliography of at least **eight** relevant sources. For students who miss the Zoom class, there will be a peer review exercise.
- ii) **Research Presentation (15%):** Each student will give a 15-minute presentation of their research topic to the class. The class will respond with questions, feedback, and discussion.
- iii) **Final papers (25%)** are due on **April 17**. Length: 15-20 pages.

Chicago Manual of Style has detailed information about how to format a research paper and must be consulted while preparing the paper: <http://libraryguides.mcgill.ca/citation/styles> (Use the Notes and Bibliography (NB) style. Purdue Owl provides examples)

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Academic Integrity

Note that good writing style and a well-formulated argument are very important. McGill University values academic integrity. All students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Land Acknowledgement

McGill University is situated on unceded Indigenous lands in Tiohtiá:ke (Montreal), a place that has long served as a site of meeting and exchange for Indigenous peoples. The Kanien'kehà:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are recognized as the traditional custodians of these lands and waters.

Resources

Student Wellness Hub: <https://www.mcgill.ca/wellness-hub/>

Student Accessibility and Achievement: <https://www.mcgill.ca/access-achieve/>

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.