CRIT 150: Histories of Art, Design, and Visual Culture  
Spring 2023

MW 4:00 – 5:20 PM Pacific Time, January 9–April 28, 2023  
Location: Harris 101, 4 Units

Dr. Rotem Rozental  
Email: rozental@usc.edu  
Office hours: Zoom or by appointment

Teaching Assistants:  
Nadia Estrada, nadiaest@usc.edu  
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Mandatory discussion sections:  
Fridays 9-9:50 AM, THH 213  
10-10:50 AM, CPA 256  
11-11:50 AM, CPA 258

Course Description:

This course is a loosely chronologically, thematically organized survey of art, design, visual culture from the early period through modernism (1500-1950), presented through the lens of critical inquiry. This course is designed to reflect the long and loaded histories of art and visual practice and provide an opportunity for the students to think about their own creative journeys in relation to these histories.

While it is inevitable in an American program that Western modernism will become a vanishing point and a particularly central point of reference, this course will trouble traditional perspectives, and observe the Western canon of art and design while questioning its seemingly foundational narratives. We will confront and challenge the limitations of this canon by integrating relevant concurrent examples by figures who have long been marginalized, such as women, self-taught, disabled, LGBTQIA+, BIPOC and international practitioners. We further consider the complex social constructions of subject positions as they relate to the production, circulation, and reception of visual culture, as well as the power dynamics and social hierarchies that have defined these relations. We examine how art and design have been shaped by, and in some cases have helped to shape political, social, and economic phenomena (e.g., colonialism, industrialization, urbanization, capitalism). Furthermore, we investigate examples of art and design that have functioned as critical tools, posing inventive modes of resistance to imperialism and exclusionary power structures.

In addition to completing weekly readings, attending lectures, and participating in class discussions and activities, students will critically explore/create at least one art or design exhibition, culminating in the final Exhibition Review assignment.

Learning Objectives:
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
• Identify and critically assess key works of early modern and modern art, design, and visual culture as they intersect with issues in critical studies
• Become familiar with various critical approaches to art and design production and historicization, as well as modes of art/design display
• Hone skills in research, visual analysis, critical thinking, and writing

**Prerequisite(s):** None. | **Co-Requisite(s):** None. | **Concurrent Enrollment:** None.

**Recommended Preparation:** Students should have some awareness of 20th century art history, as well as some experience reading and discussing critical theory.

**Requirements, Assignments and Grading:**
The course includes creative and analytical assignments, to allow each student to practice research and critical thinking skills, while considering how their own creative practice meets the histories of art and design.

1. **Readings:** the readings will be posted on Blackboard and will be available as PDFs. Links are included here when they are available. Minor adjustments might be made during the semester, and will be announced in advance and via emails if needed. At times these reading may be dense or challenging. Please do not panic or give up if you have trouble with them. Read what you can and assess and write down what you are getting from them. Most of all, give yourself the time and space to do the reading and reflect. TAs will reinforce readings during section and will practice how to take effective notes.

2. **Assignments:**

2.1 **Assignments Breakdown:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Monitored throughout the semester (lectures and discussion sections)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortune teller</td>
<td>*Bring design materials to class, January 11 *Scan and submit fortune teller by Friday, January 13</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Essay: analyze two works of art (2 pages)</td>
<td>February 10 by 9am</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Essay: Write an exhibition label (1 page)</td>
<td>February 17 by 9am</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm take home exam</td>
<td>Submit March 1 at 9am</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifesto writing</td>
<td>March 24 by 9am via email</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review outline</td>
<td>April 5 by 9am via email</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition review in lieu of final exam</td>
<td>April 28 by 9am via email</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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2.2 Description and Assessment of Assignments:

**Participation.** This includes attending lectures and discussion sections having carefully read/reflected on and being prepared to discuss assigned readings/course content. Punctual attendance in discussion sections is important to succeeding in the course. Students should attend discussion sections having carefully read/listened to and reflected on weekly readings/lectures, and be prepared to discuss course content (e.g., by analyzing, questioning, drawing out main points, raising related issues). Key course content will be presented in class lectures, while discussion sections provide an opportunity to discuss course content and learning aims in-depth in a smaller setting with peers.

If you have any symptoms of illness whatsoever DO NOT ATTEND CLASS! You will not be penalized for missing lectures (though you will be responsible for getting notes from a classmate/arranging to discuss missed content with Dr. Rozental/your TA), nor will you be penalized for excused discussion section absences. If you must miss a discussion section due to illness or other excusable absence (e.g., family emergency), contact your TA as soon as possible, so they can excuse your absence/catch you up/arrange for makeup work. After more than 2 unexcused discussion section absences, 10 points per discussion section absence will be deducted from your participation grade (which begins at 100%). You may add up to 15 points to your participation grade through exceptional participation.

**Fortune Teller.** An opportunity to add your family story to an ongoing work of art by Jenny Yurshansky. This assignment requires students to design a fortune teller that outlines a family story of migration, using a designed template that will be provided in class. Unfolded Narratives is an ongoing project that is created by designed and scanned fortune tellers, which tell individual stories of migration. We will discuss the project in class, and each student will then create their own contribution to the project. Each student will scan and submit their fortune tellers, which will be discussed in discussion sections and incorporated into Jenny Yurshansky’s ongoing project, presented in various workshops and museums as a growing quilt project.

**Brief Essay: analyze two works of art.** Choose two works of art discussed in class and analyze them. Analysis should clearly state why these pieces were chosen, and discuss their differences and similarities. Include information about the artists and the time period. 2 pages max. (not including bibliography and images.)

**Brief Essay: write an exhibition label.** Choose one work of art/design discussed in class and write an exhibition label for it. The label should include bibliographical information about the piece and the artist, a description of the piece, analysis, reflection on the artist and a brief statement that clarifies your point of view of the work. 1 page max. (not including bibliography and images.)

**Midterm Take-Home Exam.** The open-note take-home midterm exam tests students’ comprehension of the course material (including lectures, readings, discussion
section material) from weeks 1-7. The Midterm Exam contains a short-answer slide identification component and two short essays, in which students analyze and compare two related images. All images in slide identification and short essay components will have been discussed in class during weeks 1-7. A detailed Midterm Exam Study Guide (including all slides which may appear on exam) will be posted on Blackboard two weeks prior to the exam and the Midterm Exam questions will be released two days prior to due date. The Midterm Take-Home Exam will be graded according to accuracy and quality of information conveyed.

**Manifesto writing.** This is a 1-2-page written manifestation of beliefs related to art, design and/or visual culture. Examples of art and design manifestos will be discussed in class. Manifesto will be evaluated based on how well students meet assignment requirements and demonstrate effort, creativity, and persuasiveness.

**Exhibition Review Outline.** This is an important preparation assignment to sketch out the final exhibition review. Students should select and visit an exhibition, create a preliminary thesis/argument, outline, and short annotated bibliography of 3-4 related research texts. This assignment provides a chance to receive feedback on the topic and direction of the final assignment prior to final submission. A detailed sample Exhibition Review Outline and Preliminary Bibliography will be posted on Blackboard, and the assignment will be discussed in discussion section prior to due date. The Exhibition Review Outline and Preliminary Bibliography will be evaluated based on how well students meet assignment requirements.

**Exhibition Review Final Paper.** In lieu of a final exam, students will be required to attend and write a 6–8-page review of an art, design or a historical exhibition currently on view in a gallery, museum or cultural center in Los Angeles or the surrounding area. These could include art museums, design galleries, or community-driven institutions, such as the California African American Museum (CAAM), Plaza de la Raza or the Skirball Cultural Center. Students should plan to spend a couple of hours in the exhibition, studying the overall layout and design, key artworks/design objects on display, and audience response. Students should carefully read over the exhibition’s wall texts and image labels, accompanying literature, and, if relevant and possible, attend related events (e.g., public lectures, tours, or workshops). The final paper should assert a critical, informed evaluation of the exhibition, giving readers who may not have attended a sense of what the exhibition looks like, how it is organized, the primary curatorial aims/frames/themes, and how these are or are not successfully met. Furthermore, the review should account for the student’s personal experience and opinion of the exhibition, including observations of audience response (general and particular), raising further questions/concerns in relation to curatorial and/or artistic intent and issues of display, and highlighting key exhibited artworks the student feels especially contribute to or detract from the overall exhibition. The review should include 3-4 images that notably represent the exhibition. Images may include personal photographs taken within the gallery and/or images found online. The goal of this assignment is for students to engage in thinking about how exhibitions are created, designed and implemented, what they communicate, and whether this matches the
main argument or intention outlined within the exhibition overview. Final papers will be evaluated based on how well students meet assignment requirements and how effectively students analyze the exhibition using skills of formal analysis, related research, and critical interpretation.

2.3 Assignment Submission Policy
Assignments must be submitted via email by due date (in some cases before class). See highlighted due dates on Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown Table above and Course Schedule below.

2.4 Written Assignment Format:
Typed, Double-Spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman (or comparable) font, standard margins; Include Title, Name, Page Numbers, (and for Exhibition/Exhibition Review) References to at least four scholarly sources using Chicago Manual of Style Format, Labeled Images, and Bibliography. Refer to USC Library Guide on Chicago Manual of Style for all formatting questions (full access available, log-in required): [https://libguides.usc.edu/chicago_style](https://libguides.usc.edu/chicago_style)

3. Grading:
3.1 Grading Timeline:
Grades and feedback will be given as soon as possible and at the latest by two weeks following assignment submission.

3.2 Grading Scale:
Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

- A 95-100
- A- 90-94
- B+ 87-89
- B 83-86
- B- 80-82
- C+ 77-79
- C 73-76
- C- 70-72
- D+ 67-69
- D 63-66
- D- 60-62
- F 59 and below

4. Additional Policies
- Punctual class attendance is mandatory. If you must miss a class for a well-documented emergency, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and inquire with instructor about missed activities/information/possible make-up work. Five percentage points will be deducted from Participation Grades for each missed lecture class; ten
percentage points will be deducted from Participation Grades for each missed discussion section. Students entering class late, leaving early, or engaging in non-course related activities (e.g., texting, Internet surfing) may be marked as absent and/or lose participation points.

- Late work not accepted unless in extreme cases of well-documented emergencies
- Cell phone use not permitted; TA will monitor
- Laptop use permitted only for course-related work; TA will monitor
- Important announcements will be articulated in class and/or via Blackboard
- Per explicit USC policy (https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/ & https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/, point 11.12), students must adhere to rules around integrity and not distributing course materials without instructor consent.
- Classes may be officially recorded by instructor; no student is allowed to record at any time; no student is allowed to disseminate recordings of the class; no student is allowed to disseminate class notes or content unless given official permission from Prof. Lin.
- This syllabus subject to change and class subject to move on-line in adherence with USC policies; any updates will be announced in class and/or via Blackboard.
Residential and Hybrid Streaming Model Courses

Should an on-campus or hybrid model resume during the semester, students are to consult the latest COVID-19 testing and health protocol requirements for on campus courses. Continuously updated requirements can be found on the USC COVID-19 resource center website.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

https://roski.usc.edu/resources/statement-academic-conduct-and-support-systems

Academic Conduct:
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298 equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298 usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.
The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
dsp.usc.edu
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710
campussupport.usc.edu
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
ombuds.usc.edu
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.
Course Schedule:

*Subject to revision. Any changes will be communicated in class and via Blackboard.
* All readings are due BEFORE the date under which they appear on Course Schedule.

**Week 1: Introduction to Critical Terms in Art + Visual Culture + Design**

Jan. 9  Introductions and Overview

**Recommended Reading:**


Jan. 11: Who Gets to Tell Our Stories? Fortune Tellers and Unfolded Narratives

*Bring materials for collage making to class: scissors, markers, pens, maps, magazines, etc. for fortune tellers.*

**Required Reading:**


**Jan. 13 DUE: Fortune teller for Discussion.**

- Scan and submit your fortune teller via email by 9am.
- Bring your fortune teller to class.
- Notetaking & study techniques.

**Week 2: Alternative Origins of Visual Production, Part I**

Jan. 16 *MLK Day, No Class*

Jan. 18  Shadows and Lights
Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Recommended viewing:


Jan. 20 Crafting a Critical Thesis

Week 3: Alternative Origins of Visual Production, Part II

Jan. 23 Re-Viewing the Renaissance

Required Reading:


Jan. 25 Modern Views of the Baroque

Required Reading:


Jan. 27 Comparative analysis of works of art and design.

Week 4: Reframing Art Histories, Part I

Jan. 30 Bodies in Flux

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Feb. 1 Between East and West and Back Again


Feb. 3 Comparative analysis of works of art and design cont.

Week 5: Reframing Art Histories, Part II

Feb. 6 The Writing on the Wall: Visual Culture, Design and Collective Creativity

Required Reading:

Feb. 8  The Binaries of Looking: Primitivism and Civilized Creatures

*Required Reading:*

Feb. 10 DUE  Brief Essay: Analyze Works of Art
- Submit brief essay by 9am.
- Reading and analyzing exhibition labels.

**Week 6: Islamic Manuscripts, Medieval Times and Colonial Views**

Feb. 13  Illuminated Manuscripts Between Islam and Christianity

*Required Reading:*

Feb. 15  From Hand to Print: Albums of the Ottoman Court

*Required Reading:*

*Visual Reading:*

**Feb. 17**  DUE: Brief Essay, Exhibition Label  
- Submit your label by 9am.  
- Displaced objects and narratives.

**Week 7: Portraiture at the Dawn of Modernity**

**Feb. 20** NO CLASS PRESIDENT'S DAY

**Feb. 22**  The Rise of the Photographic Age  

*Required Reading:*  

*Visual Reading:*  

**Feb. 24**  Review, midterm exam.

**Week 8: Midterm Exam**

**Feb. 27**  Midterm Exam assigned.
March 1 DUE  Midterm exam submitted by 9am.

March 3  Early photography, nature and science.

Week 9: Photography as a Medium

March 6  Social Perspectives and Reclaiming Early Protagonists

*Required Reading:*


*Visual Reading:*


March 8  Photography and its Political Impact

*Required Reading:*

- Siegfried Kracauer, “Photography,” in *Classic Essays on Photography*, edited


**Suggested Reading:**


March 10    Manifesto workshop.

**Week 10: Spring Recess**

*No Class March 13, 15, 17*

**Week 11: Manifestation in Art, Design and Visual Culture**

March 20    Roaming the Future

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**March 22**  The Rippling Impact of Bauhaus

**Required Reading:**


**March 24 DUE Manifest**

• Submit your manifest via email by 9am.
• Design and social belonging.

**Week 12: Photography, Archives and Civic Identities**

**March 27**  Identity, Photography and Data Visualization

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Visual Reading:**


March 29  Documentary and the Rise of Public Relations

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


March 31  Exhibition review workshop.

**Week 13: Dismantling Narratives**

Apr. 3  Claiming an Archive


Apr. 5  Abstract Expressionism and Its Protagonists

*Recommended Reading:*

**Week 14 TBA**

**Week 15: Postwar Art, Technology and Modernism**

*Apr. 17*  
Human Beings and Machines

*Required Reading:*

*Apr. 19*  
Re-Reading Pop

*Required Reading:*

*Recommended Reading:*

*Apr. 21*  
• Breaking away from Abstract Expressionism  
• Q&A for Exhibition Review.
Week 16: Postwar Art and Design in Los Angeles

Apr. 24  
Scene Emerges from Censorship

**Required Reading:**


**Suggested Reading:**


Apr. 26  
West Cost Living: Homes, Objects and Design

**Required Reading:**


**Apr. 28 DUE Exhibition Review in lieu of Final Exam**