2022 Eleanor Greenhill Symposium

Katherine Gregory
Visualizing Discovery in Robert S. Duncanson’s “Pompeii”

In 1853, African American artist Robert Seldon Duncanson departed for Europe with fellow Ohioan William Sonntag. The two landscape painters were beginning a Grand Tour of Europe, which was a rite of passage for aspiring artists seeking to learn from the Old World masters. Duncanson was likely the first African American artist to sail for Europe on a Grand Tour, and spent eight months traveling through the Continent. In this presentation, Gregory will consider one painting made as a result of this trip, titled “Pompeii” (1855). Completed one year after his return to America, Duncanson depicts an imagined scene of eighteenth-century archaeologists digging at the site shortly after the ruins at Pompeii were first discovered. The ongoing archaeological dig at Pompeii was an important destination for Grand Tourists, who sought to capture the beauty of the Italian countryside and the poetic, ancient ruins scattered within it. This paper will consider Duncanson’s “Pompeii” alongside other depictions of this site, ultimately arguing that Duncanson was most interested in visualizing the process of archaeological excavation and not the traumatic explosions of Mount Vesuvius. Gregory argues that in visualizing the act of discovery, Duncanson sought to insert himself into a lineage of learned gentleman-scholars, which was a revolutionary act for an African American artist. In painting this scene of peaceful yet productive archaeological excavation, Duncanson depicts this place as a site of ongoing discovery and places himself as a key witness (and participant) in this history. Duncanson’s own Grand Tour was a similar process of discovery, in which he witnessed and learned from great art of the past. Through this presentation, Gregory also asks: what did Pompeii symbolize for nineteenth-century landscape painters? What was at stake for an African American artist visiting Italy in the nineteenth century? These are the central questions guiding Gregory’s analysis.

>> Katherine Gregory is a third year Ph.D. student studying American and African American art with Dr. Eddie Chambers. She is writing her dissertation on Robert S. Duncanson, a nineteenth-century African American landscape painter, and is studying his international travel between the U.S., Europe, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Her research interests include American art from the colonial period through present, African diaspora studies, the history of scientific imagery, and archive theory. Gregory is the recipient of a University Continuing Fellowship from the Graduate School at UT Austin and was recently awarded a Luce/ACLS Dissertation Fellowship in American Art for 2022-2023.
Marina Schneider

*Staging Brotherhood: Confraternities and Processions in Early Modern Iberian Cities*

Knowledge about the ways confraternities functioned in society, and the negotiations taking place in urban space in medieval and early-modern Iberia is fractured. Religion as a tool for unity, is a common theme in studies of early-modern Iberia. However, religion is but one piece in a complex social web that includes social hierarchy, economics, politics, etc. Schneider’s presentation looks at religious confraternities and religious processions in Iberia between the 14th and 16th centuries. By looking at the way people interacted through religious confraternities and religious processions, this project seeks to better understand the complex relationship between religion, society, and the racialization and exclusion of religious minorities in early modern Iberia. Using examples from multiple cities at different moments in time, Schneider will show how confraternities and religious processions were more fluid than current studies suggest. While religion was used as a weapon of discrimination and a tool for conformity, this study seeks to consider how confraternities and processions reflected local politics and concerns, in order to show how processional space could operate as sites for the negotiation of local identity and social validation. Schneider confesses that the proposed paper uncovers more questions than it answers. However, it shows that scholarship has barely scratched the surface of the messy, entangled, inclusive, exclusive, and at times racist interactions taking place in medieval and early-modern Iberia.

>> Marina Schneider is a first year Ph.D. student in the Department of Art History. She works on medieval and early modern Iberia, focusing on how Iberia’s Islamic past informs artistic traditions on the Peninsula and in Viceregal Latin America. She is also interested in how reimaginings and invocations of Al-Andalus in the 19th and 20th centuries informed discourses on Nationalism and identity.

Sheyda Aisha Khaymaz

*The Quiet of Refusal: Listening to Bedouin Palestinian Resistance in Documentary Photography.*

In *Listening to Images* (2017), Black feminist scholar Tina Campt poses the question, which this study, in part, echoes: “What is the relationship between quiet and the quotidian?” More specifically, we query: What does the quotidian sound like for the dispossessed, disenfranchised, and subalterned Palestinians? In this collaborative paper (penned jointly by Sheyda Aisha Khaymaz, UT Art History; and Frank Guzman, UT Anthropology), Khaymaz and Guzman look at and listen to British documentary photographer Peter Fryer’s photography series *The Unrecognised Villages* in order to learn from the everyday practices of refusal and nonviolent resistance by Palestinian Bedouins. In the early 1990s, Fryer documented everyday
Palestinians from the Bedouin villages of ‘Ayn Hawd (عين حوض)، Arab al-Na’im (عرب النعم) whose lives were interrupted by a continuous threat of dispossession and complete destruction of their lifeways and dwellings. The photography series takes its epithet from the well-known phrase “unrecognized villages” that refers to Palestinian communities remaining inside the state borders of Israel yet whose legitimacy is not recognized in any official Israeli accounts. Khaymaz and Guzman argue that when filtered through Fryer’s lens, Bedouin Palestinians become subjects who are misrepresented because his inert framing allows no room for narratives of strength, steadfastness, and subsistence to emerge. Further, they demonstrate that it is precisely inside these so-called unrecognized spaces that the Palestinian Bedouins effectively frustrate the settler-colonial project of the Israeli state. They weave together Campt’s theories of the quiet and the quotidian with an incisive settler-colonial critique from the poetry of Mahmoud Darwīsh, in a bid to embrace the potential of the indeterminate and the unrecognized in revealing viable modes of survivance, subjectivity, and futurity under the tyranny of Israeli occupation.

Sheyda Aisha Khaymaz is an artist, curator, poet, and a second year Ph.D. student in Art History at The University of Texas at Austin, specializing in the modern and contemporary art of the Maghrib. Their doctoral dissertation explores the nexus between artistic production and Indigenous language sovereignty across the Maghrib; encompassing new artistic forms, especially script-based abstraction, which emerged out of anti-colonial struggle. Their research aims to connect modern day instances of Tamazight language activism and revival movements with a larger discourse on Indigeneity and Africanity.

Alex Grimley

*Bad Taste and the Decade of Excess: Donald Trump in the Culture of Warhol and Olitski*

Color field painter Jules Olitski (1922-2007), Pop artist Andy Warhol (1928-87), and real estate developer Donald Trump (1946-) occupied disparate worlds. The few interactions they had among one another were unpleasant. Olitski didn’t care for Warhol; Warhol hated Trump; and Trump was indifferent at best, hostile at worst, to art and artists in general. But the three were linked together through a network of associations in 1980s New York.

The subjects of taste and class—of bad taste and the nouveau riche class—are crucial to understanding each of them. This essay first examines class and its role in the formation of the aesthetic tastes of Warhol, Trump, and Olitski, then turns to the mid-decade constellation of art and design ventures that link them together: Trump’s wanton destruction of Art Deco sculptures promised to the Metropolitan Museum; Warhol’s commission of paintings for the newly-built Trump Tower on the corner of Fifth Avenue and East 56th St; and Olitski’s neon mirrored-Plexiglas paintings exhibited one block north at the Andre Emmerich Gallery.
The decade of excess, the 1980s, framed their unlikely interactions: modernist austerity crashed into postmodern fragmentation, and minimalist restraint into baroque opulence; hedonism and self-indulgence became supreme values; the shimmering surfaces of silver, copper, marble, silver, and brass were ubiquitous—as superficial symbols and shallow simulacra of wealth; interiors replete with gold mylar tablecloths, pearlescent paints, Louis XIV furniture, visual Muzak. Through this kaleidoscope of aesthetics and materiality, Warhol’s taste is found to be conservative, Olitski is transfigured into a cipher of postmodernist art, and the national disaster of Trump is foretold in the narcissism and destruction that lay behind his first New York venture.

>> Alex Grimley holds degrees from Bennington College (B.A., Studio Art and Art History) and The University of Texas at Austin (M.A., Art History), where he is currently a Ph.D. candidate. His research focuses on modern and contemporary art with an interdisciplinary focus on experimental music and abstract painting. His master’s thesis, Morton Feldman in Three Senses, explored phenomenologies of silence, scale, and saturation in Feldman’s music and the work of post-WW2 painters. He’s presented on Barnett Newman at the Menil Collection, and is a regular contributor to the Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon. His recent projects include an essay for the exhibition Color to the Core: Paintings 1960-1964 at Yares Art. He’s written exhibition catalogues on Jules Olitski (Paul Kasmin Gallery, 2013) and Kenneth Noland (Yares Art, forthcoming, 2022). He’s currently working on a series of thematic essays for The University of Texas at Austin’s Landmarks Collection; an exhibition catalogue on Gene Davis, Thomas Downing, and Howard Mehring; and an essay for the forthcoming centennial retrospective of Jules Olitski.

Catalina Cherńavvsky Sequeira

Experimental cinema in Argentina from the late 1960s to early 1980s worked against the oppressive and censorial powers that dominated society. The political climate affected the daily lives of citizens and moved experimental filmmakers to produce a kind of art that was formally exploratory yet socially conscious. The death of the underground art scene and the subsequent division between the political and artistic avant-garde led experimental filmmakers to be relegated to the wayside. Though some institutional bodies continued to promote experimental artistic endeavors, there was little funding available for such explorations. The Goethe Institute of Buenos Aires was one of the only institutional bodies that financially and creatively supported experimental filmmakers during this time. The institute hosted workshops and screenings for artists who informally established a group called El Grupo Cine Experimental. Marie Louise Alemann and Narcisa Hirsch became the
foundational figures of the loose network of experimental artists engaged in collaborative practices with the support of the Goethe Institute. Hirsch, throughout her many international travels, built up an extensive library of films that she shared with her artistic community in Buenos Aires. This paper explores Hirsch’s efforts to engage in a global discourse around experimental cinema and foster a collective environment in which artists could explore new ways of making in spite of the pervasive censorship taking place at the time.

>> Cherñavvsky Sequeira is a first-year doctoral candidate in Modern and Contemporary Latin American Art at The University of Texas at Austin, working with Drs. Adele Nelson and George Flaherty. Her research is centered around systems of circulation and institutions of display in regards to film, video, and performance art in South America from the 1960s to the present, focusing specifically on artistic networks and experimental art as a means of sociopolitical resistance. She received an M.A. with distinction from the Courtauld Institute of Art and completed her undergraduate studies at Yale University.

Eva Caston

*Playing with Dolls: Marisol and the Surrogate Body*

There has been a renewed interest in Marisol these days, especially because of her representation of the gendered body. Her sculpted forms were often referred to as ‘mannequins’ or dolls, and indeed she herself seems to invite a critique of objectification. Her eye for fashion, both in her own self presentation and the costuming of her sculptures, illuminates a critical understanding of the affective pull of the gendered body. A dimension often ignored in the history of pop art, the allegory of the mannequin is a ripe area for discussion given its multiple valences as manipulable body, intercessory surrogate, and uncanny double. For Marisol, the allusions both to female objectification (often regarding herself) and the conversations around abstraction and primitivism contribute to a complex set of objects entangled in, but not confined by, the male gaze and its exotification of the “Other.”

The second part of this paper looks at the theatrical and playful nature of Marisol’s oeuvre. Not only are the clothing and the formal interventions on the body an open canvas for inquiry, but the staging of a group of figures in a tableau setting creates environments where the mannequins are activated, enlivening them. The restaging of some of these works in fashion magazines like Glamour and Vogue recontextualizes Marisol’s output as material object for sale. Her mannequins act alongside live models, further blurring the line between real and performed corporeality and femininity within the context of upper class Venezuela and New York City.
Eva Caston is a first year M.A. student in the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin. She graduated with honors from the University of Michigan in 2020 with a B.A. in History of Art and a minor in Museum studies. This paper is developed from her undergraduate thesis project.