
ARCH 0250
INTIMATE STORIES: NARRATIVE IN ANCIENT VISUAL CULTURE
FIRST YEAR SEMINAR
Brown University, Fall 2008
Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World

Syllabus

Meets Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00-10:20 pm

Instructor: Ömür Harmansah (Assistant Professor of Archaeology and Egyptology and Ancient Western Asian Studies)

Office Hours: Wed 3-4:30 pm. Thu 10:30-12 am (and by appointment-please e-mail Ömür)

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Course Description and objectives

Images tell stories that carry us to imaginary worlds other than our own. An arresting story in pictures engages us deeply, opening the doors of fantastic places and times. In antiquity many architectural monuments displayed pictorial narratives that animated public spaces and enthralled broad audiences. This course explores cultural aspects of visual narrative imagery from Western Asian and Mediterranean worlds, from magical hunt scenes in Palaeolithic caves to mythical histories of Mesopotamian sculpted stones; from the paradises on Egyptian tomb walls to Aegean frescoes and Assyrian reliefs of exotic landscapes, from domestic intimacies on Greek vases to Roman commemorations of campaigns to the fringes of the known world. Using contemporary perspectives on ancient art, we will explore the material power and the everyday significance of such pictorial representations as intimate visual spectacles.

This course intends to cover cross-cultural perspectives on pictorial narrative programs that one encounters extensively on Ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian, Aegean, Greek and Roman monuments. Using cross-cultural comparisons across time and in different cultural contexts, we will explore how pictorial narrative scenes were produced, presented and received by their audiences. In a chronological sequence, every week, the class will collaboratively work on a separate visual narrative program, study its historical and cultural context and attempt to unpack it using a critical tools of visual analysis. In these exercises of writing about pictures, we will explore issues of representation, narrative, textuality, space, monumentality, ideology and politics as well as technology and materials. We will also explore the relationship between pictorial representations and monumental inscriptions, and discuss how reading images differed from or overlapped with reading monumental inscriptions.

The primary aim of the course is to enhance student skills in critical thinking, reading and writing. In accessing this objective, students will in fact be invited to think precisely on acts of "reading" (in the visual sense) and "describing" (verbal). Developing skills of in-depth description (ekphrasis) and critical analysis of pictorial narrative imagery will be central aspects of the course. A series of museum visits (RISD Museum and Museum of Fine Arts) will allow students to have first hand experience in engaging with artifacts with pictorial representations, and they will be asked to think about museum strategies of exhibiting such objects. Students will also be guided to be creative about the use of different modes and media of presentation of their arguments, not only in academic and creative prose but also through the use of visual/aural/material media.

Course wiki (interactive web page)

A wiki is created for this course and we will use this site actively throughout the semester. It will be particularly useful in posting weekly readings, accessing images shown in class, carrying out follow-up discussions, posting comments and assignments, weekly communication, group work and co-authoring and the like. Every student registered or auditing this course will have access to editing this page. At the end of the semester, all of our collaborative work within the frame of this seminar will be accumulated in the wiki. Please familiarize yourself with the wiki, and make sure to check the site regularly, at least a few times every week.

<http://proteus.brown.edu/intimatestories/Home>

Course Requirements

Students are expected to do weekly readings regularly and comprehensively, and contribute to discussions in the classroom. In the first half of the semester, there will be a number of brief writing assignments, including brief write-up exercises to be posted on the wiki as a follow-up for class discussions.

We will also visit a museum or two during the semester (RISD Museum, Providence or Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). In the next couple of weeks, you will be responsible to visit [RISD Museum \(down the hill from Brown\)](#), select an artifact that tells/relates to a story pictorially, and study it (this object could be from their [ancient art collection](#) or others. You are expected to write a short paper about it (4-6 pages) and its story. (More on this next week). Omur will also be arranging a trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston to visit their upcoming exhibit [Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum](#).

There will be a take-home midterm that will involve essay questions (answering 2-3 questions out of 5-6) halfway through the semester. In the second half, students will focus on their individual final paper projects on an ancient monument and its pictorial narrative program (8-10 pages).

This course has a writing fellow, Nathan "Driskell (E-mail: Nathan_Driskell@brown.edu) who will read the drafts of your two papers. You will be submitting your drafts early on to him and getting feedback from him, improving your papers and submitting them to me.

Grading will be based on:

- Class participation and attendance (30%),
- Museum Paper (20%),
- Midterm exam (20%),
- Final paper project (including a brief presentation, paper draft, final paper) (30%).

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Weekly Schedule and Reading List

Week 1. September 4. Introduction: how does one tell stories with pictures? The idea of the story-board.

- Eisner, Will; 2008. *Graphic storytelling and visual narrative*. New York: Norton and Company. (Handout)
- Kemp, Wolfgang; 2003. "Narrative" in *Critical terms for art history*. Robert S. Nelson (ed.). The University of Chicago Press, 62-74. (Handout)

Optional reading for future reference:

- Altman, Rick; 2008. "What is narrative" in *A theory of narrative*. Columbia University Press, 1-28.
- Holliday, Peter J.; 1993. "Introduction" in *Narrative and event in ancient art*. Peter J. Holliday (ed.). Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 3-13.

Week 2. September 9-11. Origins of the image: telling stories with pictures...

Tuesday: Monuments, Memory and Narrative: the architectural context of storytelling.

Readings

- Kemp, Wolfgang; 2003. "Narrative" in *Critical terms for art history*. Robert S. Nelson (ed.). The University of Chicago Press, 62-74. (Handout)
- Hugo, Victor (1831). "This will kill that" in *Notre Dame de Paris*. Trans. John Sturrock. Penguin 1978, 188-202.

Thursday: Hunter-gatherers, shamans and cave paintings: looking for stories on rocks. Is this really "art"? Palaeolithic cave paintings from South Africa.

Readings

- Lewis-Williams, J. David; 2001. "South African shamanistic rock art in its social and cognitive contexts," in *Archaeology of shamanism*. Niel S. Price (ed.). London and New York: Routledge, 17-39.
- Taçon, Paul S. C. and Sven Ouzman; 2004. "Worlds within stone: the inner and outer rock art landscapes of northern Australia and southern Africa," in *The figured landscapes of rock art: looking at pictures in place*. C. Chippindale and G. Nash (eds). Cambridge University Press, 39-68.

Week 3. September 16-18. Rituals and war: Early Mesopotamian visual narratives -The Uruk Vase from Warka and the Stele of Eannatum (vultures) from Tello.

- Winter, Irene J.; 1985. "After the battle is over: the stele of the vultures and the beginning of historical narrative in the art of the ancient Near East", *Studies in the History of Art* 16:11-32.

- Bahrani, Zainab; 2002. "Performativity and the image: narrative, representation and the Uruk vase," in *Leaving no stones unturned: essays on the Ancient Near East and Egypt in honor of Donald P. Hansen*. E. Ehrenberg (ed.), Eisenbrauns: Winona Lake, Indiana, 15-22.
- Schmandt-Besserat, Denise; 2007. *When writing met art : from symbol to story*. Austin : University of Texas Press, pages TBA

Week 4. September 23-25. From the underworld with love: Narratives of Egyptian tomb painting

- Davis, Whitney. *Masking the blow: the scene of representation in late prehistoric Egyptian art*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1992.
- Hartwig, Melinda K.; 2004. *Tomb painting and identity in ancient Thebes, 1419-1372 BCE*. Turnhout : Fondation Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth : Brepols.

Sept 23: Museum Paper drafts due to the Writing Fellow Nathan.

Week 5. September 30-October 2. The paradise painted: Minoan frescoes at Thera and Knossos.

- Immerwahr, Sara Anderson. *Aegean painting in the Bronze Age*. University Park : Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990.
- Kontorli-Papadopoulou, Litsa. *Aegean frescoes of religious character*. Göteborg : P. Åströms förlag, 1996.
- Preziosi, Donald, and Louise Hitchcock. *Aegean art and architecture*. Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1999.
- German, Senta C. *Performance, power and the art of the Aegean Bronze age*. Oxford, England : Archaeopress, 2005.

Sept 30: Museum Paper drafts returned to you by Writing Fellow Nathan.

Week 6. October 7-9. Theater of the world: Queen Hatshepsut's complex at Deir el Bahari.

- Roehrig, Catharine H. with Renée Dreyfus and Cathleen A. Keller (eds.); 2005. *Hatshepsut : from Queen to Pharaoh*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, pages TBA.
- Karkowski, Janusz. *The temple of Hatshepsut : the solar complex*. Varsovie : Zeszyty Pan : Éditions Neriton, 2003.

Oct 7: Museum Paper final drafts due to Omur.

Week 7. October 14-16. Assyrian palace reliefs - Assurnasirpal II's Palace at Nimrud/Kalhu.

(Possible trip this week to Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, on Saturday?)

- Pittman, Holly; 1996b. "The White Obelisk and the problem of historical narrative in the art of Assyria," *Art Bulletin* 78: 334-355.
- Winter, Irene J.; 1981. "Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs", *Studies in Visual Communication* 7: 2-38.

- Russell, John Malcolm; 1998. "The program of the palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud: Issues in the research and presentation of Assyrian art," *AJA* 102: 655-715.

Week 8. October 21-23. Bronze Gates of Balawat: the map of the world. Bronze repousse reliefs of Shalmaneser III.

- Marcus, Michelle I.; 1987. "Geography as an organizing principle in the imperial art of Shalmaneser III," *Iraq* 49: 77-90.
- Marcus, Michelle I.; 1995. "Geography as visual ideology: Landscape, knowledge, and power in Neo-Assyrian art," in *Neo-Assyrian geography*, M. Liverani (ed.), Roma: 193-202.
- Hertel, Thomas 2004. "The Balawat Gate narratives of Shalmaneser III," in *Assyria and Beyond: Studies presented to Morgens Trolle Larsen*. J.G. Dercksen (ed.). Leiden, 299-316.

Oct 23 Midterm take-home distributed- due Monday Oct 27.

Week 9. October 28-30. The story of Athena and her peplos: Panathenaia on the Parthenon.

- Donohue, Alice A. *Greek sculpture and the problem of description*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Neils, Jennifer; 1996. *Worshipping Athena : Panathenaia and Parthenon*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press.

Week 10. November 4-6. Of giants and really cool warriors: The altar of Zeus at Hellenistic Pergamum.

- Dreyfus, Renée and Ellen Schraudolph (ed.); 1996. *Pergamon: the Telephos frieze from the Great Altar*. San Francisco, Calif.: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
- De Grummond, Nancy T. and Brunilde S. Ridgway (eds.); 2000. *From Pergamon to Sperlonga : sculpture and context*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 11. November 11-13. Power of images: narrative in late Republican-Early imperial Rome- Altar of Peace (Ara Pacis)

- Holliday, Peter. *The origins of Roman historical commemoration in the visual arts*. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Kleiner, Diana E.E.; 2005. "Semblance and storytelling in Augustan Rome," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*. Karl Galinsky (ed.). Cambridge University Press, 197-233.
- Holliday, Peter J; 1990. "Time, history and ritual on the Ara Pacis Augustae," *Art Bulletin* 72 (1990) 542-557.
- Kellum, Barbara A.; 1994. "What we see and what we don't see. narrative structure and the Ara Pacis Augustae," *Art History* 17: 46-58.

Week 12. November 18-20. The (sad) story of an emperor: Trajan's column in Rome

- Brilliant, Richard. *Visual narratives : storytelling in Etruscan and Roman art*. Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Davies, P.J.E.: 1997. "The politics of perpetuation. Trajan's Column and the art of commemoration," *American Journal of Archaeology* 101: 41-65.

- Huet, V.; 1996. "Stories one might tell of Roman art. Reading Trajan's Column and the Tiberius cup," in *Art and text in Roman culture*. Cambridge: 8-31.

Week 13. November 25. Back to the story board: what is narrative? Review.

November 26-30. Thanksgiving recess. No class

Week 14. December 2-4. Presentation of student projects (Paper drafts due to Nathan and Omur).

December 9 –Final paper drafts returned to you by Nathan and Omur

December 16- Final final papers due.