

REPRESENTING QUEERNESS IN AMERICAN ART

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(If there are no academic Departments of Heterosexual Studies, even in more liberal universities, that is not only because all branches of the human sciences are already, to a greater or lesser degree, departments of heterosexual studies but also because heterosexuality has thus far largely escaped becoming a problem that needs to be studied and understood.) By constituting homosexuality as an object of knowledge, heterosexuality also constitutes itself as a privileged stance of subjectivity—as the very condition of knowing—and thereby avoids becoming an object of knowledge itself, the target of a possible critique.

David Halperin in *Saint Foucault*, 47.

Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Vol. 1*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

That the key terms of this course title, "Queerness" and "American," are in and of themselves—and even more so in conjunction—so fraught is evidence of the newness of this scholarship and the heat it still generates. This course historicizes that mode of difference which today is commonly called lesbian/gay/ bisexual/transgendered and/or queer, but which in other historical periods could have been called Uranian, inverted, sodomitical, Sapphic, Wildean, homosexual, homophile and a host of other terms. More often than not, as Foucault suggests above, it was simply not called anything at all. Given the peculiar and particular array of pressures—political, religious, juridical among others—governing the social manifestation of queerness, its visualization in works of art might seem a rare survival. On the contrary, we'll discover that same sex sexuality is everywhere present in American art and the lists of artists covered in this course is more or less the same as would be covered in any course on American art of this period, from Winslow Homer through to the modern period.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

The organization is largely chronological and interdisciplinary. We will shift our attention fluidly between paintings, poems, literature, film and video, and music towards an art historical consideration of queer representations and their significance. Throughout the course, in every respect, we will be attentive to the ways race, gender and social class crosscut the story of sexuality and its representations.

REQUIREMENTS

You are required to write a short (3-4 page) paper describing and analyzing a single work of art. You will also write a long research paper of about 12 pages addressing the career of an artist as a whole. Note that you will be asked to submit an initial topic proposal and bibliography well in advance of the due date.

READINGS AND IMAGES

All required readings for each lecture are listed below. I have added a few optional pieces—if you feel so inclined—which are by no means mandatory to read. In addition, for books on related topics see the attached bibliography.

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION-GRADING AND THEORETICAL PRINCIPLE
"Adhesiveness," Whitman, Homer and the Problem of Naming"
Handouts: Tobias Smollett, *Roderick Random* (1763)
Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1855)

WEEK 2 MASCULINITY: EAKINS, SARGENT, BELLOWS, LEYENDECKER
READING
Hatt, Michael, "Muscles, Morals, Mind: The Male Body in Thomas Eakins' *Salutat.*" In *The Body Imaged*, eds. Adler and Pointon, 1993.
Chauncey, George, "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion: Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War 1 Era," in *Hidden From History*, eds. Chauncey, Duberman, Vicinius: 294-317.
OPTIONAL
Doyle, Jennifer, "Sex, Scandal, and Thomas Eakins's *The Gross Clinic*," *Representations*, No. 68 (Autumn, 1999): 1-33.

WEEK 3 EXPATRIATE PARIS: STEIN, BROOKS, BEATON, ABBOTT
SHORT PAPER AND ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT
READING
Chadwick and Lattimer, "Becoming Modern," *The Modern Woman Revisited: Paris between the Wars*, eds. Chadwick and Latimer.
Stein, Gertrude. "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," in *Geography and Play* (1922), 17-23.
Elliott, Bridget & Jo-Ann Wallace, "Fleurs du Mal or Second-Hand Roses?: Natalie Barney, Romaine Brooks, and the 'Originality of the Avant-Garde,'" in *Feminist Review*, no 40 (Spring 1992): 6-30.
OPTIONAL
Lubar, Robert, "Unmasking Pablo's Gertrude: Queer Desire and the Subject of Portraiture"

WEEK 4 THE NEW YORK SCENE/HARLEM RENAISSANCE: BLUES, HARTLEY, DEMUTH, STETTHEIMER, VAN VECHTEN
READING
Weinberg, Jonathan, "Demuth and Difference," *Art in America* (April 1988): 188-223.
Whiting, Cecile, "Decorating with Stettheimer and the Boys," *American Art*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 2000): 24-49.
Garber, Eric, "A Spectacle in Color," in Martin Duberman, *Hidden from History* (1989): 318-331.

WEEK

5

BETWEEN THE WARS: O'KEEFFE, CADMUS, WOODS, TCHELITTEW, AND LYNES

READING

Chave, Anna, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," *Art in America*, (Jan. 1990): 115-124.

Weinberg, Jonathan, "Cruising with Paul Cadmus," in *Art in America* (Nov. 1992): 102-108.

WEEK

6

ANTI-ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM: WHITE, TOBEY, GRAVES, PARK, JESS, RIVERS

READING

Rosenberg, Harold, (1952) "The American Action Painters," *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record*, Shapiro, Cambridge, 1990: 75-85

Jones, Caroline, "Finishing School: John Cage and the Abstract Expressionist Ego," *Critical Inquiry*: 19, no. 4 (Summer 1993).

Katz, Jonathan, "John Cage's Queer Silence or How to Avoid Making Matters Worse," *Here Comes Everybody: John Cage*, ed. Bernstein, 1997.

O'Hara, Frank, *Art Chronicles*, 1954-64.

WEEK

7

PROTOPOSTMODERNISM: CAGE, CUNNINGHAM, RAUSCHENBERG, TWOMBLY, JOHNS

READING

Roth, Moira, "The Aesthetic of Indifference," In *Difference/Indifference*, 33-48.

Katz, Jonathan, "Indifference to What," In *Difference/Indifference*, 49-68.

Katz, Jonathan, "The Art of Code: Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg," *Significant Others*: 189-207

OPTIONAL

Katz, Jonathan, "Passive Resistance: On the Critical and Commercial Success of Queer Artists in Cold War American Art," *L'image*. Paris, no. 3 (Winter, 1996).

WEEK

8

GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION: MARTIN, KELLY, INDIANA, NEVELSON

READING

Chave, Anna, "Agnes Martin: Humility, the Beautiful Daughter," in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Barbara Haskell, 131-153.

Gruen, John, "Agnes Martin: 'Everything, everything is about feeling...feeling and recognition.'" *Art News*, vol. 75, no. 7, (Sept 1976): 91-94.

WEEK

9

CAMP: WARHOL, HOCKNEY AND RAY JOHNSON

READING

Warhol, Andy, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 5-27.

Katz, Jonathan, "The Silent Camp: Queer Resistance and the Rise of Pop Art." *Visions of a Future: Art and Art History in Changing Contexts*: 147-159

Buchloh, Benjamin, "Andy Warhol's One Dimensional Art." *Andy Warhol*, ed. McShine: 39-61.

WEEK

10

UNDERGROUND FILM: SMITH, WARHOL AND ANGER

READING

Koch, Steven, "The Tycoon of Passivity," in *Stargazer: Andy Warhol and his Films* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1985), 17-46.

Finch, Mark, "Rio Limpo," in ed. Michael O'Pray, *Andy Warhol's Film Factory* (London: British Film Institute, 1989), 112-116.

WEEK

11

STONEWALL: GAY AND LESBIAN ART

READING

Damon, Betsey, "The 7000 Year Old Woman," *Heresies*, no. 3, (Fall, 1977).

Hammond, Harmony, "Class Notes," *Heresies*, no. 3, (Fall, 1977).

Meyer, Richard, "Robert Mapplethorpe and the Discipline of Photography," in ed. Abelow, *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*.

WEEK

12

AIDS AND ART

READING

Seidman, Steven, "AIDS and the 'Homosexual Question': The Gay Sexuality debates." *Embattled Eros: Sexual Politics and Ethics in Contemporary America*.

Reed, Christopher, "Postmodernism and the Art of Identity," in *Concepts of Modern Art*, 271-293.

Wojnarowicz, David, "Postcards from America," *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*.

WEEK

13

ACTIVIST ART

READING

Katz, Jonathan, " 'The Senators were Revolted:' Homophobia and the Culture Wars." *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, ed. Amelia Jones.

SELECTED GENERAL REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chadwick, Whitney and Tirza True Latimer. *The modern woman revisited: Paris between the wars*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003.

Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Whitney Davis, editor. *Gay and lesbian studies in art history*. New York: Haworth Press, c1994.

Duberman, Martin Bauml, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. *Hidden from history: reclaiming the gay and lesbian past*. New York, N.Y.: NAL Books, 1989.

Faderman, Lillian. *Odd girls and twilight lovers: a history of lesbian life in twentieth-century America*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin, 1992.

Hammond, Harmony. *Lesbian art in America: a contemporary history*. New York: Rizzoli, 2000.

Hubbs, Nadine. *The queer composition of America's sound: gay modernists, American music, and national identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Saslow, James. *Pictures and passions: a history of homosexuality in the visual arts*. New York: Viking, 1999.

Smalls, James. *The homoerotic photography of Carl Van Vechten: public face, private thoughts*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 2006.

Weinberg, Jonathan. *Male Desire: The Homoerotic in American Art*. New York: Abrams, 2004.