

BOSTON UNIVERSITY SYDNEY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

AH374: Australian Art and Architecture

COURSE COORDINATOR: Dr Adam Geczy

General

The course offers a selective account of the major trends and achievements in Australian Art and Architecture from colonisation in 1788 to the present. An emphasis of the course will be on actual sites, buildings and works of art. It will begin at the site of the first Government House (now the Museum of Sydney) and what was called Farm Cove (now the Botanical Gardens), and will end at some of the major Contemporary Galleries in Sydney. You will experience as many forms of artistic endeavour as possible: etching and drawing, painting, sculpture, landscape and architecture, as well as recent practices in photomedia and installation which form part of an international artistic discourse.

As well as offering the rudiments of Australian Art, you will be introduced to the main themes and debates relating to Aboriginal Art. Some of the main ideas in this area of study are: the difference between traditional and contemporary Aboriginal Art; the variety of approaches from individual to group; the problem of national inheritance and identity; and whether at all traditional Aboriginal Art can indeed be called art.

There is a strong bias towards basic skills in engaging with, assessing and writing about art. The course will touch on the various attitudes and theories about art history, and, at the relevant juncture, you will be brought to notice the differing methodologies that are brought to bear on certain eras and types of art. Needless to say, you will touch on key moments in national history to which art serves as an invaluable document, such as Settlement, the Gold Rush, Federation and the early Modernisation.

This is no chronology or exhaustive survey, rather it is a course that emphasises notions which are both (hopefully) entertaining and have critical content. Not all of a nation's art is worth assessing. Rather, you will take with an understanding of Australian Art that will also maybe give you a new perspective on your home environment. Not only that, you will leave with increased confidence in art history as a humanistic discipline and in your general approach to viewing and judging art.

Course Presentation

Combining formal lectures and group discussion, the course will take place both on campus in Sydney and at specific venues such as national sites, public collections and temporary exhibits.

Grading/Assessment

Successfully completing the course involves the fulfillment of four tasks:

- i. Short Essays, 1200w — 30%
- ii. Longer Essay, 2200w — 50%
- iii. Exam — 20%

Terms and Conditions

- Note that attendance without an acceptable excuse (including confirmation, such as a medical certificate) is a basic expectation of the course. Unsatisfactory attendance will be met with a failure.
- Punctuality is also an expectation – late students are disruptive, especially when the first five to fifteen minutes consists of a precis of content and expectations for that session. Tardiness of more than twenty minutes will be regarded as an absence and dealt with accordingly.
- Plagiarism: All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be 'expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the Dean'.

Week 1

Background; Beginnings

The First Fleet and Colonisation; The Noble Savage; Inherited aesthetic traditions; The creation and question of an Australian Vision

Visit to Farm Cove/Botanical Gardens; the new Museum of Sydney, site of the first Government House in Sydney.

Visit to the Art gallery of New South Wales

Reading:

1.1 Bernard Smith, 'British Reactions to Australian Nature', *European Vision and the South Pacific*, Oxford 1960, 158-204

1.2 Andrew Sayers, 'The Shaping of Australian Landscape Painting', in Elizabeth Johns et al., *New Worlds from Old*, exn cat., Canberra and Connecticut 1998

1.3 John Updike, 'O Beautiful for Spacious Skies', *The New York Review of Books*, August 15, 2002, 26-28

Week 2-3.

The Modernist Movement: Modernism and women artists

Visit to the Art Gallery of New South Wales

Reading:

Helen Topliss, 'Introduction', 'Women's Emancipation, The Professions and the Media', *Modernism and Feminism: Australian Women Artists 1900-1940*, Sydney: Craftsman House, 1996

Weeks 4/5.

Aboriginal Art, Traditional and Contemporary

Visit to the Art Gallery of New South Wales (and to MCA where applicable)

Reading:

3.1 Robert Hughes, extracts from *The Fatal Shore*, London 1986

3.2 Adam Geczy, 'Djamu Gallery: Notes on Exhibiting Aboriginal Art', *Postwest*, 14, 9-13

3.3 Jennifer Phipps, 'Reflections on Aboriginal art, assimilation and land rights', *Art Monthly Australia*, October 1998, 22-4

3.4 Terri Janke, Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights: a visual arts perspective, *Art Monthly Australia*, July 2002, 26-28

3.5 Benjamin Genocchio, from *The Australian Review of Books*, March 2000, 3

3.6 Adam Geczy, 'Dedicated to the geniuses of loci', *Eyeline* 33, 1997, 33-4

3.7 Timothy Morrell, Dealing Dreaming, 'The Selling of Aboriginal Art', *Eyeline*, special issue, 2001, 30-1

*** Postmodernism/Contemporary Australian Art**

Cultural Difference; Postcolonialism; Feminism; New Media Art; The international Scene

Visit to some prominent contemporary galleries and/or the Museum of Contemporary Art

Reading:

4.1 Rex Butler, 'Australian Art History and Revisionism', *A Secret History of Australian Art*, Sydney: Craftsman House, 2002

4.2 John Conomos, 'Rethinking Australian Video Art in the Nineties', in Nicholas Zurbrugg ed., *Electronic Arts in Australia*, Continuum, v. 8, no. 1, 1994, 133-9

Week 5/6.

* Architecture.

Colonial; Georgian; Neo-Gothic; Modern

Field Trip possibilities: Elizabeth Bay House, Government House, War Memorial

Reading:

R. Apperly et al., extracts from *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, North Ryde NSW 1989

General comments on assessment expectations and grading

1. Regarding the short paper: you will note that it is oriented more toward a direct response and hands-on empirical research, but if you are aiming for a higher grade you will need to do more than the minimum, that is, do some more exacting research and follow through your initial labours with further reading regarding the context, background and meanings of the work.

2. Longer Essay: do not expect to get more than a respectable grade if you do little more than describe works. It is essential that the sensuous qualities of works of art and/or architecture be engaged with, however you must show understanding of historical circumstance. Essays wishing to score well will be well researched and make use where possible of primary as well as secondary sources. It will also be clearly written and observe the tenets of good essay writing. It is advised that you consult the essay writing guide that you have been given.

3. Exam: The exact length will be confirmed, but the exam will be no longer than one hour and forty minutes. Logistics and requirements will be discussed in class during the final weeks.

4. Participation: this includes conduct during field trips, especially keeping up with the group and not stretching break times. It entails responsiveness to guides and discussions, as well as keeping abreast of the readings.

Grading is as follows: A 94-100; A- 90-93; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C- 70-72; D 60-69; F 0-59