

Art in China

ARTH 214

Tuesday-Thursday 1:30 p.m.-2:50 p.m.

Spring 2020

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Course Description: This course introduces the visual arts in China and the practices of their exhibition in public museums. The structure of the course follows the structure of our textbook, which is both thematic and chronological. The themes encompass things made for tombs; things made at the imperial court; things made for worship; things exchanged among members of the elite; and things bartered in a market place. Within each theme, objects will be presented in chronological order.

My lectures will complement the focus that the textbook places on the social and economic aspects of Chinese art. In particular, we shall look into the materials used by Chinese artists over time and the technological innovations they pursued. We shall also look more closely at the historical circumstances under which objects were made. Finally, we shall try to see contemporary Chinese art in relation to its past.

Your final projects will allow you to put your experience of museum exhibitions to use in designing a gallery exhibition on a topic of your choice.

Course Overview:

The order of the course will follow the order of the textbook. As Clunas states in his introduction to the textbook, the structure of his book is neither “fully chronological nor fully thematic” (p. 13). Clunas conceived of his chapters as presentations of particular objects that share a common use or a common mode of production. These objects are presented in chronological order. Thus, the chapters of his book run as follows:

- A. Art in the Tomb: Encompassing Neolithic potteries and jades, as well as tomb sculpture of the mid-7th century
- B. Art at Court: From paintings produced at the early Tang court through porcelains and paintings produced at the Qing court
- C. Art in the Temple: Embracing Buddhist and Daoist artifacts, as well as Christian books
- D. Art in the Life of the Elite: Calligraphy and painting done by, and exchanged among, members of elite social groups from the 4th through 19th centuries
- E. Art in the Market Place: Ceramics, prints, paintings, and videos produced in commercial settings from the 10th through 19th centuries

[The modern and contemporary material in this chapter will be presented throughout the course of the term.]

Throughout the semester, you will work on a Gallery Exhibition project, which will culminate the term. This work will involve a critical analysis of the exhibition of China at Illinois, both in the Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion and in the Spurlock Museum.

Course Objectives

What can you expect to take away from this course? Of course, this will depend, in part, on what you want to take away. But it is my hope that you will come to understand the multifaceted character of Chinese art: it is not a Euro-American fantasy; it is not unchanging; it is not necessarily mysterious and indeterminate. Through comparison between lecture and textbook, I hope that you will come to understand that the interpretation of things, the re-creation of a set of circumstances under which an object was created, is a complex historical endeavor that is, in many ways, unending. Through the design of a gallery exhibition, it is my hope that you may begin to appreciate the work that goes into creating an interpretation: What is a thesis? How does it differ from a report? How to create a thesis through research? How to use visual evidence to make an argument? How to design a meaningful exhibition of objects? Last, but not least, it is my hope that you will come to develop skills of good looking.

Course Readings: The primary textbook for this course is the second edition of *Art in China* by Craig Clunas. It is available for purchase at the Illini Union Bookstore.

Other Learning Resources: 1). The **Undergraduate Library** is an invaluable resource for all students. Tours designed to introduce students to the library--its physical plant as well as its digital catalogs--are available and highly recommended.

2). You may also want to acquaint yourself with the **Writers Workshop**, which is located in 251 UGL on the lower level of the library where the Circulation Desk is located. For more information, go to: www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop. There are other locations at various Residence Halls. To make an appointment, call (217) 333-8796.

3). **Online image databases** are among the most important study tools for this class. Please see the web links to important collections of Chinese and Japanese art in museums in Japan, the U.S.A., and Europe.

ARTstor, a large digital image database, is accessible through the Ricker Art Library home page. You may be able to find good images and/or ideas by working with this database for your Gallery Exhibition projects.

4). A course **Compass** site will also be available. The Powerpoint presentations that I show in class will be posted there.

Methods of Assessment

Writing is an important component of this course. You will work in a variety of genres, as described below:

1). Attendance.....10%

Since your lecture notes constitute a substantial part of your textbook for this course, everyone is encouraged to attend class. Only illness (verified by a letter from a doctor) or a personal crisis (verified by a letter from an emergency dean) will excuse you from attending class.

You may have two unexcused absences. You should notify me of any additional absences. Please see me after class, make an appointment during my office hours, or send me an email at least 24 hours prior to the class you must miss.

For each unexcused absence beyond the two that you may have, your *final grade* will be lowered by one-half a letter grade.

See the most recent iteration of the *Student Code*, Part 5: Class Attendance, at http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part5_1-501.html.

2). Three Essays.....25%

You will write three brief essays to practices skills in art-historical writing and analysis:

- 1). Description, using words to approximate a visual experience;
- 2). Interpretation, considering how an object responds to an historical moment and even gives shape to that moment;
- 3). Museums and Colonialism, considering how Chinese art is represented at Illinois both in the Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion and in the Spurlock Museum.

You will be asked to revise each of your essays in response to the critiques of your peers and your instructor. You will choose one of your three essays to polish and refine for your Writing Portfolio.

Late essays cannot be accepted without a serious excuse verified by an emergency dean or a doctor. Nonetheless, please do not hesitate to request an extension if you ever have trouble finishing these assignments.

4). Two Examinations.....25%

Both examinations will be completed outside of class. Each examination constitutes a comparison between class lectures and the assigned readings in the textbook.

Late essays cannot be accepted without a serious excuse verified by an emergency dean or a doctor. Nonetheless, please do not hesitate to request an extension if you ever have trouble finishing these assignments

5). Final Project: Designing a Gallery Exhibition.....40%

The Final Project requires that you design a gallery exhibition on a topic of your choice. You will explain the thesis of your exhibition and how you developed its layout in a brief (5-page) essay. This essay will be included in a Writing Portfolio, in addition to the thesis statement and explanatory label texts. The essay will constitute 30% of your project's final grade. An oral presentation to the class at the end of the term will constitute 20% of its final grade.

Summary: Attendance, 10%

Three Essays, 25%

Two Examinations, 25%

Final Exhibition Project, 40% (Oral Presentation and Writing Portfolio)

Your Syllabus: A List of Daily Objectives and Assignments

(Circumstances out of my control may require that I alter the Course Outline. Changes will be announced prior to their implementation.)

Abbreviation used below: "Clunas" refers to the textbook *Art in China*. Numbers that follow "Clunas" refer to pages in the textbook assigned for reading.

Week 1: 15-17 January

Introduction

T, 15 January: Why Bother? Introducing the objectives of this course.

Useful Things to Know—What is ARTstor? How is the Chinese language transcribed into an alphabetic language such as English?

Th, 17 January: Describing Things, a basic skill in the practice of art history

Read: 1). Michael Baxandall, "Introduction," in *Patterns of Intention*, pp.1-11. Course Packet.

2). James Elkins, *On Pictures and the Words That Fail Them*, pp. 55-77. Course Packet.

- 3). Irene Castle McLaughlin, “The Bracelet,” in *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, pp. 110-116. Course Packet.
- 4). *Mysteries of Ancient China*, edited by Jessica Rawson, “Vessel with Relief Decoration of a Naked Figure” and “Vessel with Anthropomorphic or Frog-like Decoration,” pp. 38-39.

“Description” due Thursday, 24 January, in class. Please refer to assignment sheet for details.

Week 2: 22-24 January

Art in the Tomb

How were tombs constructed in China? Why were certain grave goods buried with the dead? How do changes in the structure and contents of tombs evidence changes in contemporary society and religion?

22 January: Clay and Jade Things in Neolithic China—Do the methods used to shape clay embody the mentality of a potter? What was the power possessed by a piece of jade? Who manipulated this power?

Read: Clunas, 15-17.

Gallery Exhibition, Step 1: Five groups of 4 students should be identified and the group’s general topic of interest determined. Define the tentative responsibilities of each group member. Report with names of group members, general topic, and tentative responsibilities due **Thursday, 31 January**, in class.

24 January: Shang China—Why did the Shang kings exhaust local mineral deposits to make ritual bronze vessels and implements? How were royal ancestors crucial to the maintenance of political authority by the living king?

Read: Clunas, 17-22.

“Description” due in class today.

Week 3: 29-31 January

Art in the Tomb, continued

29 January: Zhou China—Why did inscriptions on ritual bronze vessels change after the fall of the Shang and the establishment of the Western Zhou? How and why did bronze production and tomb construction change during the Eastern Zhou?

Read: Clunas, 22-29.

31 January: Qin Shi Huangdi’s Clay Army—Why did the First Emperor order the construction of an underground army? How was it created?

Read: Clunas, 29-32.

“Interpretation” due Tuesday, 12 February, in class. Please refer to assignment sheet for details.

Gallery Exhibition, Step 1: Report with names of group members, general topic under consideration for exhibition, and tentative responsibilities of each group member, **due in class today.**

Week 4: 5-7 February

Art in the Tomb, continued

5 February: From Han to Tang China and Beyond—How did ideas of the afterlife change during Han times? How are these new ideas embodied in contemporary tombs? What is the *jouissance* in Han tombs? How did the introduction of Buddhism into China affect funerary practices?

Read: 1). Clunas, 32-43.

2). Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs*, pp. 126-138.

Recommended for review of “Art in the Tomb”: James C. Y. Watt, “The Arts of Ancient China,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, new series, 48, no. 1 (Summer 1990): 1-72. Online.

Gallery Exhibition, Step 2: Annotated bibliography of sources, both web-based (excluding Wikipedia) and print, to be utilized for written parts of Gallery Exhibition. At least **eight** different sources are required: 2 books and/or exhibition catalogues; 4 journal articles; 2 web sites. Use the Chicago Manual of Style to format the references in your bibliography. Annotated bibliography due **Thursday, 21 February**, in class.

7 February: Visit Ricker Art Library, Architecture Building, 2d. floor. **Meet at Ricker Art Library.**

Learn how to use library digital databases with Mr. Christopher Quinn. Exercise sheet will be distributed to help you prepare bibliographies for your Gallery Exhibition projects. **Exercises due at the end of this class.**

Week 5: 12-14 February

Art at Court

Did imperial courts in China support artistic enterprises to legitimate their rule? If so, what did they support and why? How did they manage artists at court? What was the status of the courtly artisan?

12 February: The Tang Court—How and why did the early Tang court establish the calligraphy of Wang Xizhi as a canon?

Read: Clunas, 45-49.

“Interpretation” due in class today.

14 February: The Northern Song and Southern Song Courts—What was the relationship between the emperor and the imperial painting department? Why did the imperial court collect art objects? How was “nature” constructed? Why did “gentlemen” venture into a landscape? What did the term *shanshui* 山水 (literally, mountains and waterways) mean?

Read: 1). Clunas, 51-63.

2). Wendy Swartz, “The Landscape Poetry of Xie Lingyun,” in *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology*, edited by Zong-qi Cai, pp. 129-138. Course Packet.

Recommended: Wendy Swartz, "Naturalness in Xie Lingyun's Poetic Works," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 70, 2 (December 2010): 370-374. Online.

3). Selections from Guo Xi, *Linquan gaozhi*. In-class hand-out.

4). *Bi fa ji*, in *Ways with Words*, edited by Pauline Yu et al., pp. 202-219. Course Packet.

Week 6: 19-21 February

Art at Court, continued

19 February: Late Imperial Court Art—How did the Yuan and Ming courts maintain their martial aspect? How did Mongol rulers incorporate Buddhism into state institutions?

Read: Clunas, 63-72, 123.

21 February: Late Imperial Court Art—How did the Qing court establish its political authority over a conquered land? How did court artists respond to European prints and paintings brought to China by Jesuit missionaries?

Read: Clunas, 72-84.

"Museums and Colonialism," due Tuesday, 12 March, in class. Please refer to assignment sheet for details.

Gallery Exhibition, Step 2: Annotated Bibliography due in class today.

Week 7: 26-28 February

26 February: Individual group discussions with instructor about Gallery Exhibition projects with focus on annotated bibliographies.

Gallery Exhibition, Step 3: List at least five, and no more than eight, objects selected for presentation in your Gallery. Prepare a **draft of a thesis statement**. Your thesis statement should delineate why the group will use the objects that were selected and how the sources in your Annotated Bibliography will serve as evidence to support an idea about the group of selected objects.

First draft of thesis statement due Thursday, 7 March.

Revision of thesis statement and list of objects due Thursday, 14 March.

Art in the Temple

How did the introduction of the Buddhist religion affect artistic traditions in China? How did Chinese Buddhists alter the religion that was transmitted from India? What are the other indigenous religions of China?

28 February: The Teachings of the Buddha—What are the primary teachings of the Buddha? Early Buddhist Art in China—What forms did Buddhist art assume in China? How did Chinese artists help to transform some aspects of Buddhism?

Read: Clunas, 89-97.

First Examination due in class today.

Week 8: 5-7 March

Art in the Temple, continued

5 March: Buddhist and Daoist Art in Tang China—Which sects of Buddhism gained popularity in China during the Tang? How did these new teachings manifest themselves in Buddhist imagery? What are the teachings of Daoism?

Read: Clunas, 97-113

7 March: Buddhist Art in Late Imperial China—What were the consequences of the widespread popularity of Buddhism among the social elite in Song times? Which sect of Buddhism did Mongol rulers of Yuan China support and how did these teachings manifest themselves in Buddhist imagery? What were the consequences of the introduction of Christianity?

Read: Clunas, 113-130.

Gallery Exhibition: First draft of thesis statements due today.

Week 9: 12-14 March

12 March: Individual group discussions with instructor about Gallery Exhibition projects with a focus on your thesis statements.

“Museums and Colonialism” due today in class.

Art in the Life of the Elite

Which art forms were most valued by the social elite and why? When was painting elevated in importance among the social elite? What were the consequences of its elevation?

14 March: Calligraphy—Why was calligraphy so important to the educated elite in traditional China? How was calligraphy learned?

Read: Clunas, 135-141.

Gallery Exhibition: Revision of thesis statement and list of objects due today.

Week 10: 18-22 March

Happy Spring Break!

Week 11: 26-28 March

Art in the Life of the Elite

26 March: Art and Art Theory in Northern Song China—How did painting achieve an equal status with calligraphy?

Read: 1). Clunas, 141-44.

2). Su Shi, “On the Paintings of Bamboo by Wen Tong in the Collection of Chao Bu-zhi (first of three),” and excerpt from “An Account of Wen Tong’s Paintings of the Slanted Bamboo of Yun-dang Valley,” in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, ed. and trans. Stephen Owen, p. 642. Course Packet.

28 March: Individual group discussions with instructor about Gallery Exhibition projects with a focus on your thesis statements and list of objects.

Gallery Exhibition, Step 4: Write draft of the introduction and the object labels for your Gallery Exhibition. Prepare a sketch of your design for the Gallery Exhibition with a written explanation of your design decisions and how your design or layout complements and highlights the thesis of your Gallery Exhibition. **Draft and sketch due in class Thursday, 11 April.**

Week 12: 2-4 April

2 April: Painting in Middle and Late Imperial China—What were the concerns of painters during this period? How did painters retrieve the past? How were inscriptions incorporated into paintings? How did Dong Qichang transform painting in the 17th century? Why was this important? What was his legacy?

Read: Clunas, 144-171.

4 April: Painting in the Nineteenth Century—How did the art world change during the Republican period?

Read: Clunas, 169-171, 199-212.

Week 13: 9-11 April

Art in the Market Place

How were things traded and circulated in China? How was their circulation related to social and economic circumstances?

9 April: The Ceramic Industry from Song through Ming—Who were the consumers? What was the relation between craftsmen and elite consumers? How did the export trade begin?

Read: Clunas, 173-75, 185-86.

11 April: Circulating and Exchanging Art in Late Imperial China—How did painters circulate their work and for what purposes? How did consumers obtain a painting? How did illustrated printed books become part of these exchanges?

Read: Clunas, 175-85, 187-94.

Gallery Exhibition: Draft of introduction and sketch of exhibition due in class today.

Week 14: 16-18 April

16 April: Modern and Contemporary Chinese Art

Read: Clunas, 212-235.

18 April: Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern* and the Representation of Women (film screening in class)

Read: 1). Wendy Larson, "Raise the Red Lantern," in *Zhang Yimou: Globalization and the Subject of Culture* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2017), 105-131.

2). Su Tong, *Raise the Red Lantern: Three Novellas*, trans. Michael S. Duke (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 11-99.

Week 15: 23-25 April

23 April: Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern*, continued (film screening in class)

Second Examination due in class.

25 April: Individual group discussions with instructor about Gallery Exhibition projects.

Week 16: 30 April-2 May

30 April: Group Presentations of Gallery Exhibition Projects with critical reviews from instructor and peers.

2 May: Group Presentations of Gallery Exhibition Projects with critical reviews from instructor and peers.

Gallery Exhibition Portfolio due 8 May by 5 p.m. in my office (312 Architecture) (in lieu of final examination).