CHES5145 Chinese Art in the World after 1900: Aesthetics and History

2020-2021, Term 2, Mondays 3:30pm-6:15pm

Lecturer: Dr. Elaine Kwok, Yin Ning (kyn.elaine@gmail.com)
Teaching Assistant: Ms. Mavis Siu (mavissiu@cuhk.edu.hk)

Course Description
This course looks at the history and aesthetics of various arts in China (painting, calligraphy, photography, sculpture, architecture, installation, performance art, video or digital art, etc.), their role in Chinese culture, and in shaping the characteristics of Chinese art in the global context. The following themes will be dealt with: the aesthetic evaluation of these arts and their unique artistic features; the roles of the artist and the spectator in the context of globalization; the transformation of Chinese art from a perspective of cross-cultural exchange; the influence of Chinese art on the West; the aesthetic valuation of expressiveness and descriptiveness in art; and the cultural correlation between art and society. Historically, the course will cover the following areas: the artistic importance of the Lingnan School paintings in the late Qing dynasty (c.1850-1911), the evolution of Western and traditional painting in China (1911-1949), the art development during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the cross-cultural exchange between Chinese art and Western art (1976-1989), and the question of “Chineseness” under the conditions of globalization and digitization (1989-now). We will deal with these topics by examining major works of art and by analyzing primary texts as well as contemporary scholarly writings.

Learning Outcomes
After completing the course, students should:
- be equipped with the essential techniques to examine the artistic features of any artwork;
- have a basic understanding of Chinese art history and aesthetics since 1900;
- be able to critically analyze various aesthetic and artistic issues in Chinese art, and to participate in relevant scholarly debates.

Assessment Scheme
Students are required to express themselves in the form of in-class discussions, a presentation, and a final paper. Students will need to write a short exhibition curatorial leaflet and present a seminar on one special topic of the course. They are also required to write an academic paper in order to demonstrate their understanding of contemporary Chinese art by participating in the scholarly debates about the various aesthetic and artistic issues put forth in the course (please see the grading system below).

Remarks: If in-person contact is not allowed, all the assessments will be conducted online and be submitted in soft copy.

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academic honestly/. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of the policies, regulations and procedures.
Grading System (details will be provided in separate documents available in due course)
- In-class seminar presentation on one seminar topic (30%) (the seminar topics are scheduled and listed below)
- Exhibition curatorial leaflet (20%) (submit the hardcopy or PDF file of your Exhibition Curatorial Leaflet on the same day of your Seminar Topic presentation)
- Final paper (50%) (the due date for final paper is stated below)

Course Schedule
Remarks: If in-person contact is not allowed, all the course contents will be conducted online.

Unit 1 – The Global Context for Chinese Art: 20th-Century Western Art (11 Jan)

Unit 2 – (before 1900) Summary of Chinese Art History (18 Jan)

Unit 3 – (1900-1966) The New and the Old: Traditional and Foreign Influences (25 Jan)

Unit 4 – (1966-1989) The Modern and the Post-Modern (1 Feb)

Unit 5 – (1989-now) Chinese Art and the Individual (8 Feb)

Happy Chinese Spring Festival! (NO class on 15 Feb)

Unit 6 – (1989-now) Chinese Art and the Global Cities (22 Feb)

Unit 7 – (after 1900) Chinese Art in the World (1 Mar)

Unit 8 – (after 1900) Hong Kong Art: The Colonial and the Post-Colonial (8 Mar)

Unit 9 – Field Trip: Art & Cultural Places (?? Mar, Saturday afternoon ??12:30-17:30??)
NO lecture on 15 Mar (Mon)
Details and notes will be provided in separate documents available in due course.

Unit 9 – Exhibition Curatorial Writing (if no field trip) (15 Mar)
***Submit the hardcopy or PDF file of your Exhibition Curatorial Leaflet on the same day of your Seminar Topic presentation.

Unit 11 – Special Topic 1: Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Global Context (22 Mar)
Elkins, James. Chinese Landscape Painting as Western Art History, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010. ix-xviii; 24, 45, 57, 62, 110, and 145.

Unit 12 – Special Topic 2: Orientalism and Exoticism (29 Mar)


Happy Qing Ming Festival (NO class on 5 Apr)

Unit 13 – Special Topic 3: Post-Modernism and Globalism (12 Apr)

Unit 14 – Special Topic 4: The City and the Body in Art (19 Apr)

Final Paper Due (26 Apr)
Late papers will NOT be accepted. Details will be provided in a separate document available in due course.
Remarks: PDF versions of all readings and other related materials can be found on the CUHK eLearning System. Registered students may access the CHES5145 page by using their Student ID and OnePass password.