

Jim Elkins Seminar Notes

7/11/2005	2
7/13/2005	3
7/14/2005	7
7/20/2005	9
7/21/2005	11
7/25/2005	13
Shimer Possibilities	14

Session with James Elkins July 11, 2005

The first of our eight sessions with Jim Elkins began with extended introductions. Each member of the Shimer faculty stated their background, teaching area(s), and interests with special reference to art and art history. After each autobiographical sketch, Jim asked some question(s) or made some observations related to there are of interest.

We then discussed the goals of the sessions with respect to the grant. This involved some explanation of the Shimer curriculum, particularly the Humanities core. Jim observed that in the U.S. visual studies programs tend to lean more toward methodological issues rather than specialization, since the broad scope of the arts means that there would need to be too many specializations for the latter approach to work very well. Thus, he opined, Shimer is already in the mainstream in this respect.

Jim then distributed a prospective schedule for our meetings. A few adjustments were made as we reviewed it, based on people's interests and availability. We agreed that we would remain open to other possible changes depending on how things progressed.

Drawing paper and implements were distributed in response to Jim's assignment, which was for each of us to draw two different "maps." The first was to be an intuitive map of art history, "whatever you feel at home with," in the manner of the renderings in his book *Stories of Art*. The second was to be a map of our visual world. Each of us completed the assignments, then took turns showing our maps to the rest of the group and explaining what we had intended. Jim commented during and after each presentation, noting at one point that he had never before had so many landscapes drawn in response to the second part of the assignment.

Following a break for lunch, Jim did a slide presentation on the topic of multicultural approaches to space and form. Prior to showing the slides, he divided historical Western approaches to "art appreciation" into four categories, as follows:

- 1) French Academy (beginning in the 17th century): the aim of art is naturalism, which is best taught through a complete standardization of art education; it is teachable solely through drawing, which is done in a progressive step-by-step manner, with other arts to follow as the student is inclined.
- 2) Romanticism (beginning early in the 19th century): the aim of art is personal expression, which is best learned by means of a one-on-one apprenticeship to an artistically talented and personally sensitive master.
- 3) Bauhaus: the aim of art is to complete one's sensory awareness and mastery, so the goal of art education is to erase all cultural inheritance by re-educating the senses and other bodily apparatuses.

- 4) “Identity Politics”: the aim of art is to make cogent political statements.

The slide presentation focused on the aftermath of the discovery of perspective in the West some six centuries ago. Jim explained methods of teaching simple aspects of what he called “Renaissance perspective,” such as tracing vanishing points, points of convergence, and expected distances of the viewer from the art object geometrically. He proposed a number of questions that could be fruitfully asked in seminar classes, in part because they have no single “correct” answer. For example, he noted that although Cezanne and some of his contemporaries and successors are customarily characterized as having destroyed perspective, it is evident that perspective remains an important element in their work, which problematizes the nature of the “destruction.” Some historians respond that subsequent art works (such as a Cubist piece by Picasso) suggest a multitude of perspectives, but Jim pointed out that this is in fact rarely true. For example, although it might take some time to discern the face in a Picasso painting, one will never see the back of the head of that face by looking from another angle. So the whole issue of what is and is not preserved with respect to perspective in modern art is a reasonably open one. The introduction of non-Western art, several slides of which Jim showed, can help to further open up that discussion.

In considering issues of this sort, Jim referred us both to his website and to a book by T. J. Clark entitled *Farewell to an Idea*. He agreed to continue to offer suggestions toward a bibliography of works that might be useful for the Shimer faculty as we ponder the effects of his lectures, slides, general observations and questions for our curriculum.

Session with James Elkins July 13, 2005

This session began with a reprise of our earlier discussion of the Millennium Plaza Fountain. We had visited the Fountain the previous evening and been given the task of critiquing it. We considered the question of how one might critique a work without betraying the artist’s intentions in producing it, i.e. what obligations a critic has to preserve the work’s logic while offering accounts of its successes or failures, and, more to the point, judgments of its aesthetic strategies and methods.

From this topic, we turned to the main focus of the day, which was a consideration of Elkins’ own book *Stories of Art*. We opened the discussion with a few issues to keep in mind, including 1) how much room there was to introduce new visual materials into the Shimer curriculum; 2) the nature of what textual supplements we would add to new visual materials, if any; 3) the possibilities for and/or obstacles to presenting new visual materials in a chronological/historical context given the current arrangement of Shimer’s curriculum, especially with regard to the synchronic and diachronic nature of the ultimately “Hegelian stories of art”(as Elkins describes in *Stories of Art*) that currently prevail in art historical practice; and 4) how primary texts and visual materials might be best related to the historical contexts of their production.

From this opening and wide-ranging discussion, we narrowed our focus to consider two key questions in regard to including new visual materials as, in effect, new “texts” within the curriculum: first, what specific works (i.e. art and architectural objects) would we include? And, second, what texts might we read alongside such new objects in order to provide students with a vocabulary of formal terms and theoretical positions?

Taking up the second question, two related points were made: that, for the most part, “common sense” is not generally a reliable method for approaching and understanding much of art, and that it is generally difficult to discuss any art at length and in detail without some grounding in art historical and theoretical contexts and methods.

Pursuing both questions of what new works and accompanying texts to include in a revised curriculum, Elkins pointed out that in some respects, current art historians seek to mitigate the logic of the “Great Books” approach by considering typical canonical artists - Shakespeare, Beethoven, or Mozart, for example – as simply “higher peaks among others.” One participant pointed out that the next working session of the Grant with Paul Barolsky would be devoted to mining the Renaissance in particular for works that could be included in the curriculum across subject matters. Elkins mused that it would then make sense to pursue something of an “expanded Renaissance” story of art as described in his book.

Detouring through a brief outline of Shimer’s current methods for preparing students with theoretical texts for parsing musical scores, we turned to brainstorm on possible methods and texts to support them for doing something similar with visual art. Elkins opened this topic with an offer to give thought to what texts within the history of art – i.e. primary sources – might be available to consider alongside whatever new art works we decided to include in our curriculum - as opposed to using a single art historical text to support our “story of art.” At this point, we followed a digression raised by one participant on why Impressionism did not figure larger in the various stories of art Elkins outlines in his book. Elkins pointed out that in fact, the Impressionists were not a major concern for most current art historians, largely because of the decreasing interest in purely visual matters, which meant that they generally received “political readings.” In the popular mind and current museum practice, he acknowledged, the Impressionists loomed large, while old master galleries at the Art Institute, for example, get “lumped into one.”

Turning back to the matter of textual support for artworks in the Shimer curriculum, Elkins offered some possible drawbacks of using Rudolf Arnheim’s *Art and Visual Perception*. Some participants explained and defended the use of Arnheim’s text as a useful presentation of basic “tools” for discussing art, while others raised the possibility that it limited possibilities for discussing artworks to their formal properties, through a largely (art historically) outmoded psychological theory of perception. Such pros and cons of Arnheim’s text remained a motif in the discussion throughout the day, and into future sessions, it might be added.

With Elkins' lead, we considered other single, major art historical texts that might take the place of Arnheim in an introductory course; he discusses many of them at length in *Stories of Art*. Elkins raised Wolfflin's *Principles of Art History* as a possibility, noting that while art historians (notably Panofsky) had long reacted against Wolfflin's analysis of style and tendentious Hegelianism, his work was still an important touch point for grounding in the discipline's own history. Beyond Wolfflin (and Gombrich, the currently prevailing historian of art as per Elkins' account), we considered the possibilities for doing a non-chronological, and/or, in Mieke Bal's terms, a "preposterous" history of art, to the extent that the current structure of Shimer's curriculum might well support such an approach. In this context, Elkins mentioned Bruno Latour's *We Were Never Modern* as a possible support for doing an expanded modernist story of art, which could include Arnheim as one key figure among others. During this discussion the point was made that electives offer the possibility of exploring different artworks and texts in more detail and without the constraints that revising the core curriculum presents.

The pros and cons of using Arnheim's work again became the topic, with Elkins asking about the distinctions between 1- and 2-, versus 3- and 4-level core courses. One participant asserted that a "how to" approach to discussing artwork was necessary at Shimer, as past evidence has shown, and that this is not needed for philosophical texts, for example. Another offered the qualification that theological and philosophical issues, for example, could be explored through artworks as opposed to texts. Elkins and other participants pointed out that Arnheim's text imported 20th century/modernist claims about the nature of artwork that could well be made more explicit if it is used again. Again, the question of what viable alternatives to Arnheim's text could be used was raised; it was suggested that a series of shorter texts accompanying specific works could work well to exemplify a range of art historical and formalist approaches, while another participant felt it was important not to privilege texts over works of art in discussions of visual art. Also, the point was made that the comprehensive exam format opened up opportunities for students to write about artworks beyond purely formal matters (a la Arnheim) or Joshua Taylor's "expressive content."

From this topic, the discussion turned briefly to core courses in the sciences and the possibilities for using visual works there. Elkins offered William Wimsatt's exploration of the history of genetics and the "thickets of representations" of genes that support this science. The distinction between image and model came up, with one participant asserting that the latter was already a major concern of his in natural sciences courses in which he encouraged students to "think pictorially." Darwin's descent of man was proposed as a good candidate for including visual evidence. Sam Edgerton's work on the links between scientific and artistic uses of perspective also came up in this regard.

We returned then to the question of how to justify the inclusion of any given visual work in a "canon" for Shimer's curriculum, with Elkins musing on further possibilities for using texts and visual works in concert, including Vasari and various old masters such as Karel von Mander on Brueghel, and Darien Leader on the theft of the Mona Lisa. Additionally, Elkins noted that some artworks could be used as texts in and of themselves, such as the Sistine Chapel. However, Elkins noted that for most works

before the 19th century, few if any art critical or historical texts that would lead well into a direct discussion of an artwork were readily available.

In the afternoon session, Elkins introduced one of his teaching tools: a “comprehensive exam” on the world history of art. The object of this exam was to test students’ ability to make certain kinds of inferences from purely visual evidence as to who made them, what they were, and/or when and where they were produced.

Participants took the slide-based exam, and then discussed possible standards students at Shimer and elsewhere could and should meet regarding their knowledge of art and its history. “Do we want students to know Giotto, and if so, how?” was taken as the kind of question Shimer would have to address in devising its story of art. We returned thus to the matter of finding suitable “landmarks” or case studies of artworks that would support a visual arts course of study. This raised the new matter of whether style analysis was the key consideration in such study, and whether this entailed a chronological approach to art history, rather than a synchronic analysis of a work in context. One participant asserted that the Integrated Studies 5 and 6 senior seminars were the most appropriate place for including artworks in this regard. This brought up again the question of how to pair artworks and texts. Elkins suggested Baxandall’s *Patterns of Intention* as a good candidate for an overview of Renaissance art in particular. One participant who taught Asian materials reported that he found secondary works on visual objects very helpful, if not indispensable in his courses. Another participant raised the possibility that a work like the Parthenon might well require a great deal of secondary literature to offer a suitable basis for discussion. To this another respondent raised the possibility that suitable pairings of texts and visual works would require care so as to not lead students into preconceived interpretations of either text or artwork.

During this discussion, the possibility of using Botticelli’s illustrations for Dante’s *Divine Comedy* came up. Elkins raised the objection to this since it would place Botticelli in an illustrative position vis a vis Dante’s text, an arrangement he felt should be avoided insofar as it privileged the text and rendered the visual work secondary. In other words, “surrounding Dante with images” was not, in his view, doing art history. Elkins recommended Charles Dempsey’s work on Botticelli (*The Portrayal of Love*) as an alternative way of presenting that artist’s work.

The day ended with a brief consideration of the non-western stories of art Elkins writes about in his book, including texts by Priyabala Shah and Zhang Yengyuang. Both texts, though not readily appropriate to inclusion in Shimer’s core curriculum, presented viable alternatives to standard historical treatments of artworks in the West, as both were at base “non-historical,” though infused with the logic of art as expressing a certain “spirit,” as were many (Hegelian) art histories. Elkins offered the possibility of pairing Zhang’s work with Vasari’s in that both presented distinct versions of common concerns with anecdotal accounts of individual artists.

**Session with James Elkins
July 14, 2005**

Part I: Possibilities of Integrating Visual Materials into the Curriculum

Dr. Elkins distributed and discussed an outline of three major curricular approaches for us to consider, including their advantages and disadvantages, along with specific examples. (See document below)

His commentary included the following observations and suggestions:

- a) Slide lecture on postage stamps. This sort of thing is rarely done and could be good. We might also want to look at David Standish's *The Art of Money*.
- b) Manifestos by artists. There are some good anthologies available, including one by Peter Selz and Kristine Stiles, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*.
- c) We could consider whether a particular work of art is equal in cultural weight to a particular written text.
- d) With regard to narratives, a standard text is Jean Seznec's *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*.
- e) There are standard texts on comparing images to texts, including Rensselaer W. Lee's *Ut Pictura Poesis* and Mario Praz' *Mnemosyne: The Parallel between Literature and the Visual Arts*.

We spent quite a bit of time asking ourselves whether there are works of art which we consider to be as great and canonical as certain texts. Dr. Elkins suggested that we create a list of such indispensable works, and that we could then explore each of them several times in the curriculum. Other topics touched up were: Would we want to include non-Western art? How do we define "greatness"?

Our preliminary list of great works of art/architecture and artists for possible inclusion follows:

Parthenon
Chartres
Masaccio or Giotto
Leonardo – *Annunciation; Assumption*
Raphael
Laocoön
Michelangelo - *David*
Titian
Botticelli – *Primavera*
El Greco – *Ascension of the Virgin*
Velazquez - *Las Meninas*
Manet – *Dejeuner; Olympia*
Ravenna
Greek pottery

Temple of Karnak
“Agamemnon’s Mask”
Pyramids
Heliopolis
Colossus of Rhodes
Medieval manuscript illuminations
Book of Kells
Rembrandt – *The Anatomy Lesson*
David - *Death of Socrates, Death of Marat*
Sistine Chapel
Poussin
Ajanta and Ellora Caves
Chavín de Huantar, Peru
Stonehenge
Lascaux Cave Paintings
Forbidden City, China
Borobudur Temple
Taj Mahal
Great Zimbabwe Ruins

In conjunction with texts read in courses, for Social Sciences 1 we might want to consider looking at Navajo and Northwest Coast art; Pueblo art and ruins (Hovenweep, Canyon de Chelly, Chaco, or other Southwestern sites)

Alhambra could be studied in conjunction with reading Don Quixote

Elkins suggested some good books on sacred spaces, especially David Summers’ *Real Spaces*.

Part II: Comments/Discussion of Elkins’ *Master Narratives and Their Discontents*

Dr. Elkins went through major points in the chapters we had read, with additional comments.

Introduction and Chapter 1: Modernisms:

- a) p. 45 – Burckhardt is a good starting point for visual studies.
- b) p.49 ff. – Fried – theatricality. Whether you as the viewer are being looked at is often considered a criterion of good art. These are very dense readings, so they could be very good for discussion.

Chapter 3: Politics

- a) This topic is usually called “social art history”. He called it “politics” because there is a group that thinks everything is political. This term includes that group and other individuals such as Jesse Helms and Rudolph Giuliani.
- b) Diego Rivera is the main example. Leon Golub would be the second best example.

c) Crow [pp. 108ff.] has the best theory of politics and its relation to contemporary art.

d) Question of whether Adorno should be added as a core text. J. Elkins: Yes, Adorno is up there with Benjamin; but question of which readings are appropriate to undergraduates. *The Adorno Reader* is great. Jay Bernstein is the current expert on Adorno.

Chapter 4: The Importance of Skill:

a) Outside the art world, skill is by far the major criterion.

Skill can involve a variety of meanings, including perceptual. Elkins wouldn't include technical skill here.

Skill as a culturally constructed value that comes out of a certain milieu and is no longer pertinent.

Skill as the shame of the modern [and postmodern?] world.

Session with James Elkins July 20, 2005

The day focused on visual literacy, beginning with the conference on visual practices across the curriculum that Elkins had organized in Cork, Ireland. The exhibition featured visual practices across the university including departments of Chemistry, Performance Art, Field Geology, Economics, Irish Language, Restorative Dentistry, Radio Astronomy, Archaeology, Mapping, Art History, Civil Engineering, Anatomy, Aerodynamics, and Applied Social Science. Each department submitted visual images which they used in teaching or research along with a 500 word text explaining the image and its use.

Some of the images we viewed from the exhibit included the following:

Anatomical Charts

What does a Virus Look Like?

Genetic Analyses

Gene Chart

Poster of Hitler (anti-Hitler politics of image)

Dolphin video used to observe and record identifiable flukes

Duck video to reference points in aerodynamics

Distorted crystals in sandstone

Mathematics and modeling

3D laser scanner of ancient stone monuments to reveal texts and designs

Biopsy of diseased kidney

Aerial views of Cork

Book of Kells

Before/after photographs of restorative dentistry

Phonograms used in speech therapy

Digital images of massacre scene

Economics department magazine cover of Odysseus and the Sirens demonstrating a non-iconographic history of images

Magnified images from geology

Sonar images mapping the sea bed

We followed this with a power-point presentation on “The Concept of Visual Literacy and its Limitations.” Elkins raised questions in four areas:

- 1) The limits of the visual. From the 30 departments responding to requests for visual images, most of the non-visual disciplines were in the humanities. We spent a few minutes discussing word imagery as opposed to visual imagery. This brought up the question of what is not “picturability.” For some disciplines, what matters most is the limits of visibility due to the physical limitations of technology. For instance, the laser scanning of ancient monuments can only help to enhance eroded images, but it can’t restore them to readable visibility.
- 2) Abuses of the visual. Elkins began with unnecessary visuals used with forced applications. His example came from quantum physics where electron images are useless and sometimes misleading. His second category dealt with politically useful images which have no actual use in the discipline. He referred specifically to scientific images which were used to “dress up” grant applications and had never resulted in usable scientific information.
- 3) What counts as a “picture”? Elkins questioned the use of extreme compression in time sequences under 1000th of a second in the military, non-spatial velocity and distance studies, multi-dimensional data appearing in pictorial form, and “apparently” visual images made from infra-red data which falsifies the color and combines pin-points from several sources (as used in astronomy).
- 4) Could pictures provide a lingua franca for the university? If there is a pre-eminent “language family” analogous to language, it’s technology. Such technology would include anything from field guides to images of citrus fruit; quality typing, from internet technologies like Google or NIH Image to map making and surveying; from microscopy to digital videos, from x-rays to art history. Elkins questioned what reasons we have to bypass or generalize non-art images. His tentative conclusion is that images are language-like, overlapping but distinct and mutually unintelligible.

We then moved to intersections between science and art. Elkins pointed out that this is the place where Arnheim belongs, since he applies the science of perception to art. Some artists involved in thinking about art and science or art as science include: Buckminster Fuller, Masaccio, Picasso (who was particularly interested in the 4th dimension), Seurat (scientific motivation but bad science), and Hockney (who claims that perspective from the 1430s on was accomplished through the use of the camera obscura, the use of prisms, or the convex mirror). In terms of mechanical construction, Elkins mentioned the work of Douglas R. Hofstadter who has computerized musical composition so that with the help of a computer he can “compose” in the style of any composer he has entered into the program.

So, what is art?

We moved on to scientists who use pictorial representations of scientific ideas—images which represent, but do not explain the science involved. Elkins began with the Bohr model in which the equation is all and the model is a “picture.” He mentioned Feynman’s diagrams as a solution to problems which analytic equations would were too “weighty” for his lay audience. He thinks “thought experiments” belong in this category since they allow scientists to solve problems illogically in non-Aristotelian terms.

We talked briefly about way of combining science and humanism: assigning a class to study urban sprawl using Harvey’s method of studying blood, or using mapping techniques to have students trace how the electricity they get in their dorms comes to them from the plant.

Visual Studies programs are oriented toward post-modern philosophy. In such a program, the high/low distinction tends to disappear. Density of meaning becomes a criteria for judgment. Visual Studies contains an inherent tension between theory and practice.

TEXTS AND SOURCES MENTIONED DURING THE DAY:

Duke University, Society for Literature and Science
Martin Kemp, The Science of Art
Linda D. Henderson, Writings on Duchamps and the 4th Dimension
John Berger, Various works
T.J. Clark, Farewell to an Idea
Nichol Mirzoeff, Visual Cultural Reader
Charles Jencks, Various works
Martin Jay, Downcast Eyes
Brian Goldfarb, Visual Pedagogy
Carol Becker, Surpassing the Spectacle
Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, Themes in Contemporary Art
Susan Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project
David G. Stork, “Optics and Realism in Renaissance Art,” *Scientific American*, Dec. 2004
Dolores Hayden, A Field Guide to Sprawl

Session with James Elkins July 21, 2005

We spent most of the day discussing possible changes to our Humanities 1 course. There are 3 main ways to go about it: 1) focus solely on images; 2) study images in conjunction with secondary texts; 3) have the primary focus be on the secondary texts.

Elkins reviewed a number of possible texts for consideration, and gave much commentary on the advantages and disadvantages of particular selections. Highlights of this review follow:

Wölfflin is an idealist; he views art history as an Hegelian enterprise. His writings may be included in many undergraduate and graduate programs, though he is considered somewhat dated. It is essential to be familiar with his work, but not necessarily to use it. Joshua Taylor is in many ways a modernized Wölfflin. Along with Shapiro, Gombrich, Ackermann, and Elkins' entry in the *Grove Dictionary of Art*, much of the focus is on "style" and what is meant by this term. He suggests we may want to use some excerpts, or use him in an elective course. Elkins also noted that studies of "style" are not currently in vogue. It is considered by many U.S. and European critics to be "too subjective", old-fashioned, and outside the true subject matter of art history; today the primary focus is on social context and narrative meaning.

Baxandall is very helpful in training students to really focus on the image itself. He helps students to really describe what they are seeing and what the viewer takes from it. He can be helpful to us in our attempts to get away from "intentionality" as a primary way to approach a work of art.

Mitchell's work could also be very useful, especially for more advanced students. Students need to have read Marx to full understand his writings.

Rather than introducing students to multiple approaches to viewing works of art, one could also think of creating "exemplary encounters" with individual works. In this approach one might pair secondary sources with a specific art work (See Elkins's chart of "Possibilities"). Authors and images noted in this context included Leo Steinberg and Picasso, or Dürer and his Critics. The advantage of the exemplary encounter approach would be that it doesn't require lots of previous experience, sophisticated or nuanced interpretive skills, and is not a monolithic approach. It would also make an interesting textbook.

We returned to a more in-depth discussion of what is currently being taught/done in graduate programs in art history and visual studies. Multi-culturalism has of course become a major area of concern; this is relevant for the selection of images, and even the terms and vocabulary used in analysis. For example, when looking at non-Western art, how transferable or useful are all the terms that have been developed for describing the history of perspective? These are issues that anyone today must consider if they are writing/editing a new "history of art." Introductions for such anthologies or histories must be self-reflective in their presentation; authors must give the reasons for their process of selection, and want to avoid the appearance of tokenism or the remnants of 19th century imperialism. Authors must also be very clear about their "target audience." Are they writing for North American and European scholars, or for an international audience? In addition, the risk of "world art histories" is that the topic is so broad that any sense of a center, direction or purpose can be easily lost.

**Session with James Elkins
July 25, 2005**

The first item we discussed continued a theme from previous sessions which entails selecting what we termed ‘exemplary encounters’ as a way of introducing students to art and the writings of art history. The idea behind the ‘exemplary encounters’ is to select a work of art, perhaps one in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, and to pair the contemplation of that work with a strong, rich and powerful piece of art historical criticism that articulates a distinctive methodology or approach. Jim Elkins prepared a list of objects and source texts for us. The idea behind this model would be to eliminate, or to greatly reduce, the use of methodological introductions and to replace this with more direct student interaction with great works of the visual arts.

The primary theme of the session was the relation between studio art and art history. Jim Elkins is very concerned by the increasing separation between the discipline of art history and the practical character of studio art. He urged us to make sure we allow time for drawing in our curriculum. In the training of artists, he told us, there is growing expectation that the terminal degree is not the Master of Fine Arts; the standard is gradually becoming the PhD. This is the direction things are going in the United Kingdom. These students are expected to write a thesis which is a contribution to scholarly knowledge, along with their other creative work. According to Elkins, the motive for this does not come from a perceived need by practicing artists but from government funding sources that allocate funds based on the numbers of PhD candidates. His view is that this kind of credentialing does not need to be a completely bad thing because it also opens up greater possibilities for the field of Visual Studies. He believes that Shimer’s emphasis on interdisciplinary studies allows us to try out some unusual juxtapositions and investigations in visual studies outside the canon of high art. We discussed the use of visual images in science and the ways in which engineering drawings deal with the issue of two dimensional representations of three dimensional structures.

One exercise he does with his students at the School of the Art Institute is to have them copy a painting in the Institute’s collection. What the students quickly discover is that to copy, they must discover how the artist moved his/her hand in order to recreate the work. He showed us slides of some of their work. To give us the experience of the importance of practice in teaching art we spent time copying segments of a Michelangelo and Kokoschka drawing. For most of us this was something we had never attempted before and the kind of concentration it required was a new experience for us. It was mentally exhausting and even if our individual productions were not always exemplary or even satisfactory copies, the activity gave us a different understanding/approach to art works that exemplified grace and skill. To attempt to see, to view an object, and then to imitate and replicate it was, yes humbling, but it also gave a different way of thinking about the work of art.

Shimer College

Possibilities of integrating visual materials into the curriculum
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First possibility

Introduce images as “texts” — as “masterpieces” on a level with the required readings. No secondary readings would be included.

Advantages:

- This practice would be consonant with the great books program.
- It could imply the presence of a full art historical curriculum without embodying it. Students could fill in the blanks, connect-the-dots fashion

Disadvantages:

- Only certain kinds of images can be discussed without secondary texts for an entire class period — and those kinds are normally ones amenable to formal analysis (see the Third possibility).
- The works would come to seem as if they were illustrations of certain of the required texts.
- Students *can be* wholly dependent on information from the instructor, which comes from secondary texts

“Text”	Advantages	Drawbacks
Linear perspective: works by Masaccio, Alberti, etc.	Discussions on Renaissance naturalism could reach an informed level fairly quickly	A small amount of help would be needed to get from Euclid to the pertinent constructions
Modernist anti-naturalism: Cézanne, Picasso, Braque, etc.	Students could begin to form their own theories about what the painters were trying to accomplish	Those theories would probably be disconnected from the terms of discussion in the literature (Merleau-Ponty, Richard Shiff, etc.)
Medieval illuminations of the universe	Could spark discussions that would link to Ptolemy, Dante, etc.	There would be a lot of guessing without possibility of answers
<i>Wunderkammer</i> objects and scenes	Would connect to Lamarck, Gould, Aristotle, Darwin, etc.	The objects themselves might not spark much conversation
Outsider art, art of the insane	Students would not feel inhibited; there are texts to read	The historiography of outsider art, and its relation to modernism, would remain invisible

Second possibility

Introduce images as “texts,” with secondary readings

Advantages:

- Discussions can go on longer, and be more rewarding, with secondary literature
- The visual material *can be* clearly different in kind from the nearest curricular (“great books”) text
- The secondary art historical text that is read along with the visual material *can have* intrinsic interest as a book

Disadvantages:

- Many such websites exist, in university departments
- This would be more a sample than a program of art history, and its incompleteness might be difficult to justify
- For publicity purposes, the results will seem more like what’s done in other colleges and universities
- The practice is asymmetrical, because the great books are not presented as if they were in need of shoring up by other texts
- The visual material *can seem* to exemplify, or follow on from, the assigned texts

“Text”	Advantages	Drawbacks
Manet’s <i>Olympia</i> , with Tim Clark’s essay on it in <i>Painter of Modern Life</i>	Would make it possible to introduce modernism concisely	The literature is large, and this would be only an example (e.g., the first pages of <i>Formless: A User’s Guide</i>)
Postage stamps, with David Scott’s book	Could introduce principles of modernist design, and it has connections to painting and emblemata	They’re only postage stamps! It might be hard to extrapolate to fine art
Duchamp’s <i>Fountain</i> , with Thierry de Duve’s <i>Kant After Duchamp</i> , ch. 1	Very clear, argumentative presentation of Duchamp’s value for septsics	Students might find it coercive
Chinese Northern Song monumental landscape painting, with Guo Hsi’s treatise, etc.	Good introduction to a non-Western tradition; lots for students to see on their own	Current scholarship (Susan Bush, etc.) has turned away from mimetic analysis
Images of Europa, with the catalog (could be <i>Europa 1789: Aufklärung, Verklärung, Verfall</i>)	An extremely diverse assembly of examples that could serve as a kind of art history course in its own right	Would give students an old-fashioned idea of iconographic lineages
Pictures inspired by Albrecht Dürer, with the catalog <i>Dürer Through Other Eyes</i> , and Jan Bialostocki’s book <i>Dürer and His Critics</i>	(same)	(same)

Pictures inspired by Joyce, with <i>Joyce in Art</i> , ed. by Mia Lerm Hayes	Extremely thorough, and an interesting crossover from books to images	Students would need to read a fair amount of Joyce
<i>Pathosformeln</i> , with E.H. Gombrich, <i>Aby Warburg</i> ; writing of Warburg; also Georges Didi-Huberman's book <i>l'Image survivante</i>)	Would avoid the iconographic lineages (see above)	Difficult psychoanalytic theories; lots of references what would be unfamiliar to students
Postmodern appropriations of Caravaggio, with Mieke Bal's <i>Quoting Caravaggio: Preposterous History</i>	Many contemporary examples; good opportunity to familiarize students with Caravaggio	Lots of postmodern theoretic speculations
"Wm Blake and Sons," exhibition in the Glucksman Gallery, Cork, Ireland	Long history of a relatively neglected tradition, including contemporary art	The exhibition is current; material would not be available for a year or so

Examples that use contemporaneous texts

Greuze, with Diderot, <i>Salons</i> (also, a chapter in my <i>Pictures and Tears</i>)	Great fun; the <i>Salons</i> are well documented	It would be disconnected from current work unless other secondary texts were also read
Kandinsky, with <i>Concerning the Spiritual in Art</i>	Good connections to idealism; good introduction to international abstraction	The book does not correlate with the images; lack of contemporary scholarship (e.g., Rose Carol Washton Long)
Klee, with <i>Pedagogic Notebooks</i>	Good connections to studio pedagogy; an opportunity to try to correlate an artist's intentions with the work	Lack of contemporary scholarship (e.g., Karl Werckmeister's book on Klee)
Mondrian, with his writings	Same	Same as above (e.g., <i>Mondrian: The Transatlantic Paintings</i> ; work by Marek Wieczorek; an article in a recent <i>Word & Image</i>)
Malevich, with <i>God is Not Cast Down</i>	Same	Same as above (e.g., Christine Kaiser; Tim Clark's chapter in <i>Farewell to an Idea</i>)
Peruvian <i>huacas</i> , with something written by Tom Cummins?	Fabulous non-Western example	Students could not see any originals; they would be limited in what they could deduce without just following the texts

Choices made by the group

Object	"Primary" or introductory texts	More recent literature, as a corrective
Stonehenge	Christopher Chippindale, <i>Stonehenge Complete</i>	
Karnak		

Mayan site / Teotihuacan etc.	Linda Schele, <i>Blood of Kings</i>	Rosemary Joyce, <i>Gender and Power in Mesoamerica; Embodying Lives</i>
Mask of Agamemnon	George Mylonas, <i>Ancient Mycenae</i>	
Parthenon		
Chartres	Panofsky, <i>Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism</i>	Robert Branner, <i>Chartres Cathedral</i>
Laocöon	Lessing, <i>The Laocöon</i>	Virginia Newhouse's book
Ravenna		(?) Giovanni Montanari, <i>Ravenna: l'iconologia</i>
<u>Sistine Chapel</u>	Charles de Tolnay, <i>The Art and Thought of Michelangelo</i> ; Charles Seymour's text	Frederick Hartt's theory; Esther Dotson's theory; Sinding-Larsen; others listed in my <i>Why Are Our Pictures Puzzles?</i>
Giotto		
Leonardo	Carlo Pedretti's books	Martin Kemp for perspective; Leo Steinberg's <i>Incessant Last Supper</i>
Masaccio	Samuel Edgerton's book on perspective; Bernard Berenson's appreciations...	Hubert Damisch, <i>Origin of Perspective</i> ; my book <i>Poetics of Perspective</i>
Hovenweep / Chaco Cañon / others		
Poussin	Anthony Blunt, <i>Poussin</i>	Todd Olsen, <i>Nicolas Poussin: His French Clientele and the Social Construction of Style</i> ; Charles Dempsey and Elizabeth Cropper, <i>Nicolas Poussin</i>
<u>Velázquez, <i>Las Meniñas</i></u>	Foucault's chapter	Recent literature that critiques Foucault: Snyder, "Paradox Lost"; Alpers; Steinberg; Brown; references in my <i>Why Are Our Pictures Puzzles?</i>
El Greco, <i>Assumption of the Virgin</i>	Eileen Reeves's book	Gets into complicated debates about astronomy; see my review in <i>Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte</i> ; also David Freedberg's new book on Galileo
Botticelli's <i>Primavera, Birth of Venus</i>	Gombrich's essay	Charles Dempsey, <i>Botticelli and the Portrayal of Love</i>

Rivera		
Chavin		
Alhambra		
Rembrandt, <i>Anatomy Lesson</i>	Svetlana Alpers, <i>Art of Describing</i>	Hanneke Grootenboer, <i>The Rhetoric of Perspective</i> ; Lyle Massey's work on anatomical illustrations; Elizabeth Honig's work on Dutch still life

Jim Elkins's choices

Object	"Primary" or at least "classic" texts
Leonardo, <i>Last Supper</i>	Leo Steinberg, <i>Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper</i>
Picasso, <i>Women of Avignon</i>	Leo Steinberg, <i>The Philosophical Brothel</i>
Courbet, <i>Burial at Ornans</i>	Michael Fried, chapter in <i>Courbet's Realism</i> , along with Clark's chapter
Pierre Remiet, medieval illuminator	Michael Camille, <i>Master of Death</i>
Marcel Broodthaers's <i>Imaginary Museum</i>	Rosalind Krauss, <i>A Voyage on the North Sea</i>
Francis Bacon	Gilles Deleuze's book, along with David Sylvester interviews
Duchamp, <i>Fountain</i>	Thierry de Duve, <i>Kant After Duchamp</i>
Palace of Ashurbanipal (Assyria)	Leo Bersani, <i>The Freudian Body</i>

Third Possibility

Introduce secondary texts into Hum 1, exemplifying general approaches to images; ultimately, replace Arnheim and Taylor

Advantages:

- Students would be up to date with art historical methodologies
- Their research papers would be more acceptable to graduate programs

Disadvantages:

- Any such texts is at odds with the great books philosophy
- There is no single text that introduces students to "looking" because "looking" itself is in question!

Text	Advantages	Drawbacks
Heinrich Wölfflin, <i>Principles of Art History</i> (1914)	Often used in graduate methodology classes in art history; clear; engaging style	It is used in art history departments as an example of a disused method
Zhang Yanyuan, Priyabalah Shad, Qadi Ahmad, etc. (cited in <i>Stories of Art</i>)	Students would be fascinated; a single text could show the distance between Western and nonwestern traditions	None of them offer the kind of detailed formal analysis that normally comprises “art appreciation”
Michael Baxandall, <i>Patterns of Intention</i>	Rarely criticized by art historians	Later chapters are idiosyncratic, especially in regard to art and science
Tom Mitchell, <i>Iconology</i>	Is consonant with literary-critical interests (critique of ideology; deconstruction)	Little analysis of particular images
<i>Critical Terms for Art History</i> , ed. by Shiff and Nelson, 2nd ed.	Standard book in art history seminars	Essays are uneven, and some are too specialized

Third possibility, concluded

“Exemplary encounters”

Here the idea is to present short, 5-10 pp. texts, which have strong rhetorical power, in lieu of any methodological introduction like Arnheim or Taylor. These texts could be ancient (Pliny’s description of the *Iliupersis*, Vasari, etc.) but the idea is principally to exemplify modern or contemporary approaches.

Object	Source text
Pissarro, painting in the Art Institute (<i>Peasant Girl on Bank?</i>)	Martha Ward, <i>Pissarro, Neo-Impressionism, and the Spaces of the Avant-Garde</i>
French romantic paintings: Drouet’s <i>Wounded Gladiator</i> and Girodet’s <i>Sleep of Endymion</i>	Thomas Crow, <i>Emulation: the Making of Artists in Revolutionary France</i>
Paul Delaroche, <i>Young Christian Martyr</i>	Stephen Bann, <i>Paul Delaroche: History Painted</i>
Manet, <i>Olympia</i>	T.J. Clark, <i>The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers</i>
Picasso, <i>Woman with a Mandolin</i>	Leo Steinberg, <i>Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art</i>
Thomas Cole’s landscapes	Bryan Jay Wolf, <i>Romantic Re-Vision: Essays in American Painting of the Nineteenth Century</i>
Tiepolo	Alpers and Baxandall, <i>Tiepolo and the Pictorial Intelligence</i>

Duchamp, <i>Large Glass</i>	De Duve, <i>The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp</i> (?)
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