

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 18, 2012 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

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A PANORAMIC LOOK AT ART: FROM CARTOONS AND ALLEYWAYS TO SKYLINES AND STREET VIEWS, AND FROM DUST AND CLAY TO GOLDEN HALOES AND RECURSIVE PATTERNS

Session Moderator: Barbara Miller, Art History, Western Washington University

Mary Gates Hall 251

1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Art, Allies and the Activation of Community

Madeline Anna (Maddie) Beeders, Senior, Communication, Community, Environment, & Planning

Mentor: Keith Harris, Built Environments

My senior project explores the use of art to activate public spaces, specifically urban mixed-use alleys. It has two purposes. First, I want to determine whether an alley art walk event can enhance community wellness and revitalize alleys in the University District. And second, I want to explore how context shapes meaning by examining how the blunt contrast between fine art, typically reserved for an exclusive gallery setting, and a public alley, typically seen as a hub for crime and debauchery, can shape our perception of both art and alley. To achieve these goals, I have organized an event called Alley Art Walk that will be held in the University District in May, 2012 featuring UW student artwork and musicians. I have drawn on the advice of the non-profit The International Sustainability Institute to organize this event as well as my own research into street art events and alley activation methods. I will assess the project's impact using interviews and observations of the event and its participants. The result of my work will be an established infrastructure for future Art Alley events, a greater sense of community and place in the University District, and a reconceptualization of alleys, art, and the relationship between the two.

The Masked Cartoon: Elements of the Grotesque in Victorian Representations of the Irish

Philby Brown, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University

Mentor: Julia Sapin, Art History, Western Washington University, Western Washington University

Illustrations of the Irish dating from the Victorian era were

often layered with political commentary, making it important to differentiate between the art of caricature and that of cartoons. A defining characteristic of caricature is the emphasis on the grotesque, whereas in cartoons it is associated with comedic content. This research will examine the hidden nature of British political cartoons that demeaned the character of the Irish by veiling caricature under the guise of comedy. Through analysis of political caricatures from the mid to late-nineteenth century British publication Punch magazine, I will trace the emergence of the use of crude simian imagery to portray the Irish. The horrific appearance of such caricature had its basis in political suppression and was implemented in order to rationalize British sovereignty over Ireland. The art of caricature was a common tool for cartoonists, such as John Tenniel, to promote stereotypes and false sciences regarding the Irish. These caricatures also have far reaching implications, which went beyond the confines of the United Kingdom. Emigrating along with Irish immigrants, who fled their nation during the Great Famine, the stereotypical depictions of the Irish extended into the United States and even impacted the Kennedy administration. Caricature in America perpetuated the second-class status of Irish immigrants and created obstacles on the path toward assimilation.

Marilyn Monroe's Halo: Examining the Semiotics Behind Warhol's Image

Kate McKee, Senior, Art: Painting, Art History, Western Washington University

Mentor: Barbara Miller, Art History, Western Washington University

Most people associate images of the halos with holiness or sainthood. Although heavily charged with religious symbolism, over the centuries, the halo as a personification of re-

ligious values has existed in a variety of forms. Moreover, throughout its history it has taken on very diverse meanings within an assortment of Western and non-Western art forms such as the mandorla used in Buddhist imagery or perhaps the more familiar Christian halo seen in images of Christ. In this research, I look deeper into the connotative and denotative meanings associated with its historical uses, identifying veiled messages hidden within its various forms. In my analysis, I utilize Saussure's study of semiotics as well as Roland Barthes "Myth Today." I seek to understand not only the history and progression of meanings associated with the halo, but how its form continues to circulate within modern-day culture. My contention is that Andy Warhol's Gold Marilyn Monroe reprises this age-old form. Examining Warhol's work reveals how on the one hand, the myth of the halo plays a role in its current definition and communication to the viewer. Yet on the other, I illustrate how Warhol manipulates and undermines the signified meaning of the halo and ultimately the form of the halo itself.

From Earth to Vessel: Symbolism and Ritual in the Use of Clay Among the Tewa Pueblos of the American Southwest

Emily Zach, Senior, Art History, Cultural Anthropology, Western Washington University

Mentor: Barbara Miller, Art History, Western Washington University

Clay, as Barbara Babcock describes it, is regarded as a god-given, living and life-sustaining substance. Clay, she continues, is a material which one takes, makes, and gives with thanks, and which one never handles lightly. For the Pueblo peoples of the American Southwest, the medium is inseparable from their spiritual, artistic, and utilitarian practices. Their collection, use, and treatment of clay involves a complex system of ritual and respect — an observation that continues to inform present-day artists. Nora Naranjo-Morse, contemporary Tewa artist, retains the sacred nature of clay that Babcock describes. Drawing from Tewa cosmology, worldview, and daily life, I examine the deep significance of clay as a source of artistic production and cultural symbolism. My argument is that, even in the sterility of the gallery space, Naranjo-Morse invokes the spiritual, artistic, and utilitarian practice associated with the medium.

Dust in Contemporary Art

Katherine Gleason, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University

Hilary Hamilton, Senior, Art History, East Asian Studies, Western Washington University

Mentor: Barbara Miller, Art History, Western Washington University

Dust is something usually swept away and discarded after it falls. Most would not consider dust as a medium for artistic

expression, yet artists have utilized dust in their work. For example, Duchamp used a year's worth of collected dust in his Large Glass. Indeed, Man Ray's photographs of the dust on Duchamp's piece are almost as famous as Large Glass itself. Additionally, Rauschenberg showcased dust in his series of White Paintings — monochrome canvases that act as, according to John Cage, "landing strips for dust motes, light and shadow." Dust is not merely a nuisance — it has the potential to add a layer of meaning to art, something that can be seen in recent artists' work. The shroud of dust on the crumpled covers of Tracey Emin's *Bed* transforms it into a piece of the past. To an even greater degree, Gosia Wlodarczak explores the potential of dust in her series of covered pieces, aptly named *Dust Cover*. For Wlodarczak, dust shows the collected presence of the energy of a space. In this presentation, we begin with an historical overview of artists' use of dust. We then consider these more recent artists' work: Emin and Wlodarczak. Here, we discuss how such tiny particles add meaning; the collection of dust on the surface of these works documents the passage of time.

The Montparnasse Tower: Paris's One and Only Skyscraper, and Its American Developer

Robert Zhao, Senior, Business Administration (Finance), Business Administration (Information Systems)

Mentor: Meredith Clausen, Architecture/Art History

Paris has a long history of being one of the most beautiful cities in the world. In the immediate postwar era, despite public opposition, a towering, Manhattan-like skyscraper was built in the middle of Paris, marring the traditional skyline. It was initially backed by President Charles de Gaulle. But because of the lack of funding as well as public protest, its construction was delayed over a decade. An American real estate developer, Wylie F. L. Tuttle, was the major force behind this controversial matter. So our questions are – How did this controversial tower come about? And who is Tuttle and how did he get involved? My professor, Meredith Clausen and I formulated the hypothesis that Tuttle must have been a well-established real estate developer in the U.S. Also, we hypothesized that somehow must have had strong and powerful connections in France and internationally. I started my research by a background search on Mr. Tuttle. An initial hurdle was that he was not cited in any electronic text database. So I had to search more specifically in the historical archives of the NYT, Wall Street Journal, and other daily newspapers. At this point, I am moving on to researching American real estate developers who began investing in Paris in the postwar era, and how Tuttle got interested in this international investment. Thus far I have found some but only limited information about Wylie Tuttle. My professor as well emailed Carol Willis, adjunct professor of Urban Studies at Columbia University and the curator of Skyscraper Museum, who replied she had never heard of him. With more research, I hope to

find out how he got involved in this politically as well as urbanistically controversial American “invasion” of Paris. My goal is to supply this missing piece in real estate investment history.

Finding Infinity in Pattern

Kaylie Piver, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University
Elizabeth Etzkorn

Mentor: Barbara Miller, Art History, Western Washington University

Today, a number of artists have returned to drawing – in a big way. For example, Julie Mehretu uses swarming masses of lines and geometric shapes to document the urban environment in which she thrives. Her canvases are huge documents, often measuring more than ten feet in both directions. Likewise, Gosia Wlodarczyk uses large-scale linear-line drawings. In her wall-covering installations, she brings forth a wide range of shapes and figures to create a visual atlas of her life. Common to these artists’ works is a sense of infinite expansion. The artists’ use of layering creates an unexpected depth that blurs the line between the artists’ reality and the abstract. It is as if their drawings continue out into space and enter ours – the spectator in front of the work. Using the idea of infinite expansion, we compare these artists’ work and discuss the underlying geometric structure within their explosive drawing fields and how it relates to the world around us.

The Globalized Spectator: Investigating Google Street View Aesthetics and Applications

Zachary Johnson-Guthrie, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University
Mentor: Barbara Miller, Art History, Western Washington University

In 2007 strange cars began appearing around the United States. Clad in eccentric color schemes and a curious cluster of cameras jutting from their roofs, these cars were in the service of Google’s Street View project. As an extension of the company’s Maps program, Street View has systematically photographed panoramic views of the roads of the United States and the World. Unsurprisingly, related projects, specifically utilizing Street View technology in the service of art, have sprung up. For example, The Google Art Project began as a way to bring museum collections to Internet users using Street View technology. Art Project allows “visitors” to “walk” through museum collections from all over the world, choose paintings and view them in excruciating detail. Alternatively, artist Jon Rafman culls images from Street View that range from the banal to the picturesque, often beckoning the viewer to formulate enigmatic and, at times, counter-cultural narratives out of the chaotic mash. In my presentation, I want

to mediate these two projects, The Google Art Project and Jon Rafman’s 9eyes. While I argue that Google Street View is an emergent medium for artistic investigation and a provocative new consumer technology, I ask if and how new media provide agency to their globalized users. Through the use of accessible new media technologies, Street View shifts the role of the user from static and passive to dynamic and active, but does it emancipate the spectator? Here my focus turns to Rafman’s concept of the virtual sublime. Using the writing of critical theorist Elizabeth Grosz and Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben as a guide, I discuss Rafman’s image “strings” in regards to the overall Street View project.