

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

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REPRESENTING REALITIES AND IDEALS, RENEGADE AND REMEMBERED

Session Moderator: Julia Sapin, Art History, Western Washington University
258 MGH

3:45 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Photoshop: Idealism in our Modern World?

Erin Arnold, Junior, Art History, Western Washington University

Mentor: Barbara Miller, Art, Western Washington University

Most people think of idealism as an old and forgotten notion from antiquity. However, today, this concept seems to have taken on an afterlife. This essay looks at how Photoshop goes beyond stylistic preferences of the past and investigates how photo editing informs our current notion of ideal forms. Instead of a sculptor such as Praxiteles carving his vision of Aphrodite of Knidos, a designer using Photoshop idealizes the figure with key commands. These altered types permeate dominant media, producing a widespread prescription for the female body. Through creating a case study of edited photos seen in magazines and advertising I will provide evidence that a widespread ideal is in fact being created, an ideal which would not be able to be created without the help of Photoshop. Ralph Lauren Co. took Photoshop too far when they morphed Filippa Hamilton, a beautiful model, into an unnatural creation. In this Photoshopped image of Hamilton in which her head is larger than her hips, many have noted that she looks painfully emaciated and almost cartoonish. It is unrealistic to think that any woman could naturally be that thin. This is an example of how Photoshop is being used to create an unattainable ideal beauty, one which cannot even be obtained with the help of plastic surgery. This widespread ideal has led many women to go so far as to use plastic surgeries in the hopes of obtaining the current, electronically enhanced, ideal form of feminine beauty. I will also be examining how these examples of excessive photo editing and the unnatural ideal they create have become a problem within our society. This research helps to examine how current technologies are exacerbating the societal problem of low self-esteem seen in females who do not fit into this ideal.

Through a Giant's Eyes: Extending the Stereoscopic Technique at Mt. Rainier

*Martin Jarmick, Senior, Digital Arts & Experimental Media
 Mary Gates Scholar*

Mentor: James Coupe, DXARTS

My project explores the stereoscopic technique to express Mt. Rainier in 3D images for the first time. By extending the camera distances to fabricate the vision of a giant, the mountain and its surrounding terrain is experienced disembodied, yet familiar. This effort represents a 3-year culmination of art-practice with the stereoscopic-3D video medium. Experiments with projection surfaces, short film, video-installation art, and computing have placed me as a leader in the field at the University. Stereo-3D's rise and fall in popularity and its function in popular culture is easily visible, but my research places it in the Fine Arts context in an attempt to embed 3D video in a tradition of visual poetics and technique.

Kinetic Sculpture and Open System Art

Soledade Soleil (Juliana) Meira Do Valle, Senior, Digital Arts & Experimental Media, Art History

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: James Coupe, DXARTS

The field of kinetic and interactive sculpture has been the focus of my research. Capturing the subtleties of movement in structures, experimenting with materials, and creating a slow, organic shifting of materials that functions as an open system in a modular kinetic sculpture which coexists with other elements in a space as an installation is the focus for my investigation of movement, fluidity, and flux as it relates to memory, shared experience and secrets. The central sculptural element in this installation uses modularity as a metaphor for this. Incorporating bones on the floor of the gallery along with a sound element tie together this experience as I explore the creation process of a whole and integrated installation. The next part of my research will incorporate the movement

mechanisms more seamlessly as I will replace visible motors with nitinol muscle wire.

Francisco Goya's Transformation from Light to Dark

Elizabeth (Beth) Schultz, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University

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

When looked at in chronological order, it is impossible to deny that the work of Francisco Goya (1746-1828) underwent a major shift in style, palette, medium and content in the middle of his life. Past scholars have pointed out that there are multiple reasons for this shift, including Goya's increased involvement in the turbulent politics of eighteenth century Spain and his fascination with the aging process that only increased with his own age. Another frequently cited cause is the onset of deafness that the artist suffered after a near fatal illness in 1792 at the age of forty six. The relationship between his deafness and his new found forms of expression has been explored by scholars in a variety of fields. In my research on the topic, I have gathered information from otology and neuroscience periodicals and placed them alongside art history and biographical information, blurring the line between the art and science of Goya. Along with these unusual sources, I will be taking a different approach in terms of my visual analysis of Goya's work. Most scholars resort to analyzing his most famous paintings to point out the differences between his early and late style, such as his royal portraits and "Saturn Devouring his Children" (1819-1823). I have decided to use three of his seven known self-portraits instead: "Self Portrait 1" (1773), the frontispiece for "Los Caprichos" (1798), and "Self-Portrait with Dr. Arrietta" (1820). I chose to examine these self-portraits because Goya created them at three pivotal points in his life and they reflect the artist's self-image at the time. Goya was very self-aware of his position in the universe and his extraordinary knack for creating truthful depictions allow his self-portraits to freeze him in time for us to dissect hundreds of years later.

Iconography in the Work of Ai WeiWei

Lillian (Lilly) Wasserman, Fifth Year, Art History, English, Western Washington University

Mentor: Barbara Miller, Art, Western Washington University

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

Ai WeiWei, a contemporary Chinese artist and self-described "dissident," is the first to admit that political activism forms the basis of his aesthetic. In an artist's statement, from a recent exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC, Ai plainly stated: "I've always believed it is essential for contemporary artists to question established assumptions and challenge beliefs." The majority of Ai's installations at the Hirshhorn function as a platform for his renegade agenda,

and his piece He Xie is no exception. The striking collection of ceramic river crabs, in various shades of red and brown, is invested with manifest symbolism. However, a deeper investigation of the work reveals a latent significance, not readily gleaned from a limited investigation of its formal elements. In order to adequately engage with Ai's work, one must look beyond the surface and trace the installation back to its historical origins and cultural conditions. To draw out his strategic use of symbolism, I analyze Ai's installation according to German art historian Erwin Panofsky's iconographical approach. Panofsky begins with the simplest translation of visual forms and works his way toward a more nuanced historical and culturally relevant perspective. In short, Panofsky's three-pronged methodological approach allows me to demonstrate the complexity of Ai's He Xie. In this presentation, I discuss the conceptual stimulus behind Ai's sprawling display of porcelain delicacies, exploring its political significance and identifying a larger metaphysical trend in the artist's career.