

American Art and Transgender History

JFKI 32112

MA Seminar

John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies

Freie Universität Berlin

Summer Semester 2021

Wednesdays 14.00-16.00hr

Prof.Dr. David J. Getsy

Terra Foundation Visiting Professor of American Art

<http://davidgetsy.com>

email: dgetsy@zedat.fu-berlin.de

Course description

This graduate seminar in theory and methodology will ask what transgender studies and art history have to say to each other. The seminar will introduce transgender studies and examine the ways in which the discipline of art history can contribute to its debates about form, the status of the human figure, the legibility of bodies, and the visualization of complex and successive states. Our primary focus will be on how transgender studies compels us to read and write U.S. art history differently. Our topics will include work by transgender cultural producers and artists, but we will also examine the ways in which transgender and nonbinary methods can be used to look at canonical, mainstream, and ostensibly non-trans topics in a new and more accurate light. While there will be case studies from contemporary art, the majority of the seminar will be focused on the methods that can be used to write new historical narratives of nineteenth- and twentieth-century in U.S. art history. This is a reading-intensive, theoretically-focused graduate seminar.

Assignments and credit

Note: Students requiring accommodations for class discussions or assignments should be in touch with the professor at the start of term.

READINGS: Assignment #1 (active participation + full credit students)

Readings are listed under the day that they will be discussed. Students are expected to come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Each 90-minute course session will be focused primarily on our examination of the assigned texts, the artists they discuss, and their methods. **All readings should be completed thoroughly before submitting your discussion prompt on Wednesday mornings (due 9am on Wednesdays).** Some sessions have required viewing before class of videos or websites. URLs are listed. These are considered required assignments.

PARTICIPATION: Assignment #2 (active participation + full credit students)

Students are expected to attend all sessions, participating regularly.

Before each class, students should read the compilation of discussion prompts on Blackboard by other students.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS: Assignment #3 (active participation + full credit students)

For each class, students should post on Blackboard one **discussion prompt** of 2-3 sentences that contains a comment or question on the readings. You may frame your prompt as questions or statements, but each should raise issues that can be the topic of conversation. Discussion prompts must be submitted each **Wednesday by 9.00hr CET at the latest**.

You may choose to focus on one reading or to address all of that week's assignments. Discussion prompts should *not* be questions about facts or background contexts; they should address directly the writer's argumentation or the artists' work.

To receive active participation or full credit, all nine discussion prompts must be submitted by the last day of class (24 February 2021). A minimum of four must be submitted on time (Wednesdays at 9am CET).

RESEARCH PAPER: Assignment #4 (full credit students)

A research essay on a topic directly related to the course is required. Papers should be 4000-6000 words and illustrated. All topics must be approved by **30 June 2021**, and final papers are due **1 August 2021**.

Papers should be standard, double-spaced typed pages. *Word counts listed above are exclusive of bibliography, captions, and endnotes*. Final bibliographies must contain **at least 15 items** from valid sources. Acceptable sources are books, exhibition catalogues, and articles from scholarly journals only. Websites, blogs, or encyclopedias (online or otherwise) are not acceptable sources (though they may be objects of interpretation).

Course Calendar

14 April 2021

Introduction

21 April 2021

The limits and limitlessness of transgender studies

1. Keegan, C  el M. "Transgender Studies, or How to Do Things with Trans*." In *The Cambridge Companion to Queer Studies*, ed. Siobhan B. Somerville, 66-78. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
2. Gossett, Che. "Blackness and the Trouble of Trans Visibility." In *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, eds. Tourmaline, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton, 183-90. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2017.

3. Stryker, Susan. "Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10.2 (2004): 212-15.

28 April 2021

The colonization of indigenous genders

1. Smithers, Gregory. "'Two Spirits': Gender, Ritual, and Spirituality in the Native South," *Early American Studies* 12.3 (Fall 2014): 626-51.
2. [watch] Jeffrey Gibson, *I Was Here*, 2018. <https://vimeo.com/400691606>
3. Gibson, Jeffrey. Interview. *Artforum* (5 November 2018)

5 May 2021

Flesh and gender

1. Spillers, Hortense. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 65-81.

12 May 2021

Trans possibility and resistance in the 19th century

1. Snorton, C. Riley. "Trans Capable: Fungibility, Fugitivity, and the Matter of Being." In *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, 55-97. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.
2. [review online exhibition] Jonathan Ned Katz and Tavia Nyong'o, *Peter Sewally/Mary Jones, June 11, 1836* [exhibition], *outhistory.org*, <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/sewally-jones>

19 May 2021

Shifting categories at the turn of the 20th century

1. Manion, Jen. "The Criminalized Poor." In *Female Husbands: A Trans History*, 198-230. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
2. Rand, Erica. "Getting Dressed Up: The Displays of Frank Woodhull and the Policing of Gender." In *The Ellis Island Snow Globe*, 67-106. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005.

26 May 2021

Photography's intrusions and revisions, two episodes

1. Malatino, Hil. "Black Bar, Queer Gaze: Medical Photography and the Re-visioning of Queer Corporealities," 129-57. In *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence, and Intersex Experience*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019.

2. Johnson, Dominic. "Transition Pieces: The Photography of Del LaGrace Volcano." In *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories*, ed. Amelia Jones and Erin Silver, 340-55. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.

2 June 2021

*** We will not have regular class on Wednesday. Instead, please plan to attend the online symposium "Lives: Biography and Autobiography in New Writing on American Art" tomorrow, June 3rd, 4pm GMT+2.** Speakers include Joan Kee, C. Ondine Chavoya, Cyle Metzger, and Helen Molesworth.

9 June 2021

The built environment

1. Crawford, Lucas. "How to Beat a Straight Flush: D[iller]S[cofidio]+R[enfro]'s Brasserie and the Rhetoric of Transgender 'Plumbing.'" In *Transgender Architectonics: The Shape of Change in Modernist Space*, 39-65. New York: Routledge, 2016.
2. Halberstam, Jack. "Unbuilding Gender: Trans* Anarchitecture In and Beyond the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark." *Places Journal* (October 2018). <https://placesjournal.org/article/unbuilding-gender/>

16 June 2021

Representation and abstraction

1. Getsy, David J. *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* [selections]. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015: "Preface" (pp. xi-xvii); "From Ambiguity to Openness in Modern Sculpture;" "The Transgender Phenomenon of the 1960s;" and "Transgender Capacity" (pp.19-36 inclusive).
2. Hall, Gordon. "Reading Things: On Sculpture, Gender, and Relearning How to See." *Walker Art Center Blog* (8 August 2016). <https://walkerart.org/magazine/gordon-hall-transgender-hb2-bathroom-bill>
3. Kwak, Young Joon. "Mark Aguhar." *Brooklyn Rail* (July-August 2016). <https://brooklynrail.org/2016/07/criticspage/mark-aguhar>
4. Hayward, Eva. "Painted Camera, 'Her,'" *e-flux* 117 (April 2021). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/117/385172/painted-camera-her/>
5. Hernández, Robb. "Pretty in Pink: David Antonio Cruz's portrait of the florida girls." *Journal of Visual Culture* 19, no. 2 (2020): 232-45.

23 June 2021

Art and the technologies of bodies

1. (online) cárdenas, micha. "Shifting Futures: Digital Trans of Color Praxis." *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 6 (2015) <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/shifting-futures-micha-cardenas/index>

2. Getsy, David J. "'A Sight to Withhold: David J. Getsy on Cassils," *Artforum* (February 2018): 57-60. <https://davidgetsy.com/s/Gettsy-Cassils-Artforum-Feb2018.pdf>
3. Cassils and Eliza Steinbock, "On Propagating Collective Resilience in Times of War: A Conversation with Cassils," *Performance Matters* 4, no. 3 (2018). <https://performancematters-thejournal.com/index.php/pm/article/view/109/225>
4. Edwards, Adrienne. "Relishing the Minor: Juliana Huxtable's Kewt Aesthetics." Exhibition brochure, Museum of Modern Art, 2015. https://assets.moma.org/d/pdfs/W1siZiIsIjIwMTYvMDEvMDUvOWF2bGY1dGIheF9NUDAxOTEyOF9KdWxpYW5hX0h1eHRhYmxlX0ZJTkFMLnBkZiJdXQ/MP019128_Juliana_Huxtable_FINAL.pdf?sha=c7926cb946ae0a60

30 June 2021

Independent Study Period / ALL RESEARCH TOPICS MUST BE APPROVED BY THIS DATE