

# HA980-30 Then and Now: Displaying the Renaissance

**23/24**

**Department**

SCAPVC - History of Art

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Marta Ajmar

**Credit value**

30

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

---

## Description

### Introductory description

The module addresses the significance of setting, context, presentation and audience for Renaissance/Early Modern works of art – both today and in the past. In recent years, museum and exhibition curators have become increasingly engaged in the display of Renaissance/Early Modern objects and works of art in ways that echo practices of display that can be reconstructed within the Renaissance/Early Modern period (vis-à-vis lighting, eye-level, ensembles of objects and material that echo documented groupings and spatial arrangements). This is a fraught issue within current curatorial practice, as it opens central questions around authenticity, illusion, appropriation, power and the role of conservation. Students on this course will consider the evidence for display within the historical period, and how modern museum practice seeks to evoke or replicate arrangements that have been reconstructed through academic and museum-based research. The ethics of reconstructing lost spaces, exhibiting appropriated objects and fragmentary originals will be analysed, together with the challenges modern displays pose to traditional taxonomies and divisions between 'high' and 'low', 'fine' and 'decorative', 'Global North' and 'Global South', and 'gendered' artefacts.

### Module aims

- To examine the ways in which works of art were experienced and consumed in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe, in order to better understand their changing functions and meanings over time.
- To consider the development of collecting as a key factor in the production and consumption of works of art.
- To analyse the material and visual culture from which a variety of artefacts and display practices originated, by addressing such issues as the relationships between expenditure and ethics, art market dynamics, appropriation, patronage and taste, and political and social concerns.
- To evaluate the process and ethics involved in reconstructing lost spaces and fragmentary originals, together with the challenges that modern displays pose to traditional divisions and taxonomies.

## **Outline syllabus**

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Introduction

Domestic contexts

Devotional and sacred contexts

Courtly contexts

The scholar's study, cabinets of curiosities and the origins of the museum

Renaissance/Early Modern collectors and practices of material appropriation

The formation of national collections

Displaying the Renaissance/Early Modern in the twentieth century

Displaying domesticity in the modern museum

Displaying making in the modern museum

Displaying 'ethnographic' artefacts in the modern museum

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Command a knowledge of key elements of art production, consumption and display in Renaissance/Early Modern Europe
- Demonstrate understanding of the social, political and economic significance of art display practices in the period 1400-1700
- Display an understanding of key conceptual and theoretical frameworks within which the collecting and display of works of art have been discussed by art and cultural historians
- Demonstrate an ability to interpret differing modes of and approaches to displaying historical objects within current museum practice
- Present an argument, initiate and sustain group discussion through intelligent questioning and debate at an appropriate level
- Ability to undertake research and to write up the results in the form of a well-structured argument at an appropriate level
- Familiarity with essential ICT skills

- Ability to collaborate effectively with others
- Show understanding of diverse viewpoints
- Ability to find, select, organize and synthesize evidence
- Ability to formulate a sustained argument
- Think conceptually and independently at an appropriate level
- Sophisticated visual analysis
- Bibliographical skills at an appropriate level
- Critical analysis of cultural artefacts in their context
- Ability to select and respond to particular methodological approaches when dealing with material and visual evidence

### **Indicative reading list**

- Tim Barringer, *Colonialism and the object: Empire, material culture and the museum* (Routledge, 1998)
- Daniela Bleichmar and Peter Mancall (eds.), *Collecting Across Cultures. Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011)
- Constance Classen (ed.), *The Book of Touch* (Berg, 2002)
- Surekha Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human* (Cambridge University Press, 2016)
- Richard Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300-1600* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)
- Ivan Karp and Steven. D. Levine (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991)
- Martin Kemp, *Behind the Picture. Art and Evidence in the Italian Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 1997)
- Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn Welch (eds.), *The Material Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) [esp. chs. 2-5]
- Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy* (British Museum Publications, 2001)
- Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, (V&A Publications, 2006)

### **Subject specific skills**

- Command a knowledge of key elements of art production, consumption and display in Renaissance/Early Modern Europe
- Demonstrate understanding of the social, political and economic significance of art display practices in the period 1400-1700
- Display an understanding of key conceptual and theoretical frameworks within which the collecting and display of works of art have been discussed by art and cultural historians
- Demonstrate an ability to interpret differing modes of and approaches to displaying historical objects within current museum practice
- critical analysis of cultural artefacts in their context
- ability to select and respond to particular methodological approaches when dealing with material and visual evidence

## Transferable skills

- present an argument, initiate and sustain group discussion through intelligent questioning and debate at an appropriate level
  - ability to undertake research and to write up the results in the form of a well-structured argument at an appropriate level
  - familiarity with essential ICT skills
  - ability to collaborate effectively with others
  - Show understanding of diverse viewpoints
  - ability to find, select, organize and synthesize evidence
  - ability to formulate a sustained argument
  - think conceptually and independently at an appropriate level
  - bibliographical skills at an appropriate level
- 

## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (7%)
Tutorials	1 session of 1 hour (0%)
External visits	2 sessions of 3 hours (2%)
Private study	273 hours (91%)
Total	300 hours

### Private study description

Required and recommended reading for seminar presentation and research for written assessments

## Costs

Category	Description	Funded by	Cost to student
Field trips, placements and study abroad	Trips to museums - one in London and one more local are likely	Department	£0.00

---

## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

## Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
Written Assignment 5000 word essay	90%	
Engagement Engagement with in-class and preparatory tasks	10%	

## Feedback on assessment

Written feedback and dedicated feedback tutorials.

---

## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of TRSA-V1PF Postgraduate Taught Culture of the European Renaissance

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 1 of THAA-V4PJ Postgraduate Taught History of Art and Visual Studies

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 1 of TPHA-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts