

HA2C5-15 A Fine Tomorrow: British Art and Culture in the 1950's

26/27

Department

SCAPVC - History of Art

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Sarah Walford

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

50% coursework, 50% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This module examines British art and architecture in the immediate post-war period with reference to the historical and social circumstances in which it was created. It will allow students to probe anxieties to project a robust image of British culture during the Cold War era, and survey the competing versions of modernism represented by the work of artists and sculptors of the time. The module will examine the beginnings of significant state patronage for the arts and the adoption of modernist architecture for public buildings during this decade. Debates about national identity and the role of artists and architects in modern society; the importance of the designer for the burgeoning consumer culture; approaches to the creation of public art and public space during the 1950s, and the relationship between artist, architect and planner.

Module aims

The module aims to develop students' understanding of British art, architecture and design in the post-war period, and to encourage an appreciation of cultural and historical significance. Through examination of major cultural manifestations such as the Festival of Britain (1951), the competitions for Coventry Cathedral (1950-1) and for the Unknown Political Prisoner (1953-4), and the This is Tomorrow exhibition (1956), students will probe the anxieties of the period to project a

robust image of British culture during the Cold War era, and survey competing versions of modernism. The module will allow scrutiny of the beginning of significant modern-day state patronage of the arts and will consider the rationale for the adoption of modernist architecture for public building, particularly mass-housing, during this decade. Students will thus engage in debates about national identity, about the nature and meaning of modernism, and about the role of the artist and architect, and public art in post-war society and consumer culture.

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.

The Festival of Britain: representing the nation
Neo-romanticism and the legacy of war
'The geometry of fear': sculpture and politics in 1950s
Debates around realism
Homes for the people: mass-housing and the modernist architect
Modernism and the home: consumption, aesthetics, and the designer.
The Independent Group, the ICA and 'This is Tomorrow', 1956
Constructed sculpture and the lived environment

Learning outcomes

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

- Demonstrate extensive knowledge and understanding of developments in British art, architecture and design during the 1950s and situate those developments within the cultural and political contexts of the period.
- Examine the connections between the ideals of the Welfare State and post-war changes in the creation, patronage and consumption of art.
- Apply visual analysis skills to frame art works, architecture and design within the changing social, cultural and economic contexts of the period.
- Evaluate art and architecture of the period in relation to debates about national identity, the role of artists and architects in modern society, and competing versions of modernism.

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

[Specific reading list for the module](#)

Subject specific skills

- understanding of developments in British art, architecture and design during this decade
- a nuanced understanding of post-war changes in the patronage and consumption of art
- be able to make connections between the ideals of the Welfare State and the practice and enjoyment of the visual arts in the 1950s

- sophisticated visual analysis
- critical analysis of cultural artefacts in their context

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
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (13%)
External visits	1 session of 2 hours (1%)
Private study	128 hours (85%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Required and recommended reading for seminar presentations, research for written assessment and revision for examinations

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

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

Assessment group C4

Weighting Study time Eligible for self-certification

Assessment component

Assessed essay 2000 word essay	50%	No
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Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component

Centrally-timetabled examination (Online) Online Written Assignment (Open Book) ~Platforms - WAS	50%	No
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- Online examination: No Answerbook required

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback and dedicated feedback tutorials

[Past exam papers for HA2C5](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 2 of UHAA-V401 Undergraduate History of Art

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UHAA-V3R3 Undergraduate History of Art with Italian

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 1 of UHAA-V41P Undergraduate History of Art

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 1 of UHAA-V41P Undergraduate History of Art

This module is Option list E for:

- Year 2 of UHAA-V3R1 Undergraduate History of Art and French

This module is Option list G for:

- Year 3 of UITA-R3V3 Undergraduate Taught Italian and History of Art