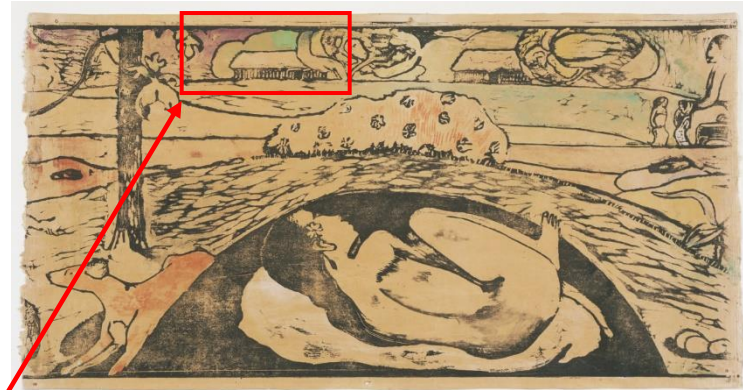


ARTH 3020: Methods of Object Study – Understanding Works of Art on Paper

Spring 2024. Thursday afternoons, 1:45-4:45 pm



*Paul Gauguin, French, 1848 - 1903
Manao tupapau (The Spirit Watches Over Her).
Printed by Gauguin, 1894*

*Woodcut printed in black ink and color
monotype, with touches of watercolor (hand
coloring) 1950-129-16*



*Detail showing black woodcut lines, colored
monotype inks (purple and orange), and touches
of blue-green watercolor, as well as inherent
cockling of the paper*

Course Location

Paper Conservation Laboratory, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Perelman Building, 2525 Pennsylvania Ave
Trips to off-site workshops may be included.

Instructors

Nancy Ash, Senior Conservator of Works of Art on Paper, Emerita
Thomas Primeau, The Charles K. Williams, II, Senior Conservator of Works of Art on Paper

Office Hours & contact information

The instructors will be available before or after class or by appointment to continue the class discussions and to advise on student questions and projects.

Nancy Ash	nancy.ash@philamuseum.org
Thomas Primeau	thomas.primeau@philamuseum.org

Requirements

Brief readings for each session will be chosen to educate and stimulate discussion about the physical aspects of the materials and their context.

Readings will be available on the Penn Library Canvas site.

Participation in class will be a significant part of the course grade, so in-person attendance is critical.

Technical examinations. Each student will carry out the technical examination of two works of art, with observations documented in written reports and class presentations. The reports will consider the objects in terms of their materials and condition but also within the artist's body of work and its art historical context. The instructors will be available to guide students during their examinations.

All course assignments must be completed for credit to be awarded.

Course Description

This seminar introduces students to methods of analyzing the material, physical, and visual aspects of objects. Students will engage in close observation and learn to use the tools essential for examination. They also will learn precise terminology for describing materials and techniques, and about methods of technical analysis.

This immersive course will stress the importance of developing the visual literacy essential for connoisseurship of works of art on paper. Students will learn to use close observational skills to understand artist's choice, the subtle inherent characteristics of the material and physical aspects of works on paper, their context and significance.

The focus will be on examination and discussion of works in the Philadelphia Museum of Art collection to study materials and techniques used by artists from the fifteenth through twenty first centuries. We will begin by considering what questions to ask about a work of art on paper and the approaches and tools for looking and informing our answers. Throughout the semester students will engage in direct examination, study, and discourse about the physical characteristics of papers, dry drawing materials, watercolors, inks, and print processes, and their implications for understanding the completed artwork – its appearance, purpose, condition, and historical context. Condition and other conservation considerations will be addressed.

Class Sessions (subject to revision)

Session 1. Introduction: Developing visual literacy

- . What questions do we ask about a work of art on paper? Why did the artist choose this paper – paper characteristics, availability, context & references? What is the artist's intent?
- . Approaches and simple tools for looking: Learning to use close observational skills – examination using magnification and a range of lighting (normal, raking, specular, transmitted)
- .

Session 2. Papermaking workshop with hand papermaker Nicole Donnelly

- . A hands-on paper-making workshop to provide a basic understanding of the material components and characteristics of Western papers.

Session 3. Looking at paper

- . History and technology of paper, looking closely at paper samples and artworks in the collection
- . The papers chosen by artists examined within the context of the completed work
- . Subtle inherent qualities in paper including those introduced during creation of the work
- . Drawings for different purposes – studies, working drawings – special considerations

Session 4. Introduction to condition and conservation considerations and approaches.

- . Inherent characteristics and alterations introduced through inherent vice, age, storage, handling, or conservation treatment
- . Safe handling, housing, and storage

Session 5. Looking at dry drawing materials – graphite, charcoal, chalk, pastel

- . Origins and manufacture of different kinds of drawing materials
- . Distinguishing black dry drawing materials by physical characteristics and use
- . Distinguishing colored dry drawing materials by physical characteristics and use

Session 6. Looking at wet drawing materials – watercolor and ink

- . Paint vs. ink
- . Types of ink
- . Types of paints and their characteristics

Session 7. Identifying and describing what you see

- . Once you can identify it, how do you describe it? The importance of doing this – accuracy, consistency, internal & external audiences. Descriptive Terminology Guidelines.
- . Students create study samples to use for future comparison

Spring Break March 2 - 10

Session 8. Collage and assemblage

Session 9. Looking at prints with master printmaker Cindi Ettinger. Learn about print processes and techniques, technical identification and condition considerations. Meet at C.R. Ettinger Studio, 2215 South Street

Session 10. Looking at prints – artist's proofs in PMA collection. Special considerations. Unique multiples

Session 11. Looking at rare books with Sarah Reidell, Head of Conservation, University of Pennsylvania Libraries. Bound structures. Determining the authenticity of the parts and considerations in retaining structural authenticity/integrity. Session held in Steven Miller Conservation Laboratory, University of Pennsylvania Libraries

Session 12. Scientific analysis and technical examination with Kate Dufy, Senior Scientist, Philadelphia Museum of Art

Session 13. Student Presentations

Session 14. Student Presentations

Writing assignments due