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Psychoanalytic Studies

Freud's Objects

Spring 2021
Liliane Weissberg

MW 1:45 PM-3:14 PM
Van Pelt Library, Kislak Center, 627

How do we look at objects? And which stories can objects tell? These are questions that have been asked quite regularly by Art Historians or Museum Curators, but they take a central place within the context of psychoanalytic studies as well. The seminar "Freud's Objects" will offer an introduction to Sigmund Freud's life and times, as well as to psychoanalytic studies. We will focus on objects owned by Freud that he imbued with special significance, and on of Freud's writings that focus on specific objects. Finally, we will deal with a re-interpretation of the "object" in psychoanalytic theory, via a discussion of texts by British psychoanalysts such as Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott.

The Canvas site will offer readings for the course, images, and brief films. The material will relate to the objects under discussion and their history, to the conservation of objects, and (if appropriate) placement in museums. A choice of Freud's writings will be put on line as well. In addition, readings for the entire course will include:

Lynn Gamwell and Richard Wells (Eds.), *Sigmund Freud and Art: His Personal Collection of Antiquities*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989.

Janine Burke, *The Sphinx on the Table. Sigmund Freud's Art Collection and the Development of Psychoanalysis*. London: Walker Books, 2006.

Daniela Finzi and Monika Pessler (Eds.), *Freud: The Origin of Psychoanalysis: IX. Vienna, Berggasse 19*. Berlin: Hatje Craz, 2020.

In German:

Lydia Marinelli (Ed.), *Meine ... alten und dreckigen Götter: Aus Sigmund Freuds Sammlung. Katalog zur Ausstellung im Freud-Museum Wien*. Frankfurt/M: Stroemfeld /Roter Stern, 1998.

Lydia Marinelli, *Die Couch. Vom Denken im Liegen*. München: Prestel, 2006.

Lothar Müller, *Freuds Dinge: Der Diwan, die Apollokerzen & die Seele im technischen Zeitalter*. Berlin. Die andere Bibliothek, 2019.

Additional essays will be added on canvas for each session.

Syllabus

Introduction: Learning with Objects

Wednesday, August 30

Locating Freud in Vienna

Monday, September 4

Wednesday, September 6

In the first week, we will study the history of the city of Vienna in the 19th century by looking at city maps, and trace Freud's life from the 2nd District (Leopoldstadt) to the 9th District (where Freud's home and office at the Berggasse 19 was located). We will focus on the building of Berggasse 19 and its neighborhood. We will go on a virtual tour of the neighborhood in Vienna.

Freud's Home and Office

Monday, September 11

Wednesday, September 13

In 1938, shortly before Sigmund Freud's emigration to London, Edmund Engelman recorded Freud's office and his family apartment in a series of photographs. We will study the photographs and discuss the Freudian interiors. Readings deposited on Canvas will also include essays on the history of the medical profession in Vienna and the interior decoration of Freud's time.

Charcot's Clinic

Monday, September 18

Wednesday, September 20

In Fall 1885, the medical student Sigmund Freud traveled to Paris, to study with Jean-Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière clinic, and learn about the treatment of hysteria. Freud returned from Paris with an etching of "Charcot's Clinic" after the painting "A Clinical Lesson at the Salpêtrière" by Pierre Aristide André Brouillet (1887). Freud placed this etching in his Vienna office, and later on, it received a prominent place above his couch in London. We will discuss this painting, and the tradition of medical paintings (with

comparison to the Thomas Eakins' clinic paintings in Philadelphia), and read about Charcot, his hospital, and his influence on Freud's early medical practice.

The Couch I

Monday, September 25 : No Class (Yom Kippur)

Wednesday, September 27

We will focus on the most famous of Freud's objects, the couch, both an item of interior decoration, and the center of his psychoanalytic practice. We will study the history of the couch as an object of furnishing, 19th century bourgeois tastes, orientalism in interior decoration, the turn-of-the-century carpet trade, as well as alteration of the couch in Freud's office. Readings will include Marinelli's essays on Freud's furniture.

The Couch II

Monday, October 2

Wednesday, October 4

We will focus on Freud's writings on psychoanalytic technique that theorize about the placement of patient and analyst, and discuss the development of his psychoanalytic technique. The central text this week will be his *Introductory Lectures* (1916-17).

In week five, we will connect with psychoanalysts from the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia, to discuss current psychoanalytic practice, and their "use" of the couch.

The Sphinx

Monday, October 9

Wednesday, October 11

If the couch was the most famous object in Freud's office, the story of Oedipus is perhaps the most central one for psychoanalytic theory. The story includes the riddle of the sphinx, and figures depicting the sphinx were part of Freud's collection of antiquities. In week five, we will focus on a prominent item of his collection, as well as a medal that Freud received that depicts Oedipus and the Sphinx. We will read the drama by Sophocles, excerpts from Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899/1900), and essays on his formulation of the Oedipus complex.

Gradiva

Monday, October 16

Wednesday, October 18

Freud placed a copy of an ancient image of “Gradiva” in his office. We will discuss the original art work and its copy, and also read the Wilhelm Jensen’s novella, published in 1902, that deals with an archeologist who falls in love with a young woman, and Freud’s essay on “Delusion and Dream in Jensen’s Gradiva,” published in 1907. We will talk about the art work and the novella as sources for Freud’s psychoanalytic theory.

First Term Paper Due!

The Figure of Athena

Monday, October 23

Wednesday, October 25

A small statue of Athena was Freud’s favored item, and had a prominent place in his collection of antiquities. It was also the figure that his friend and former student Marie Bonaparte carried to London to greet Freud upon his arrival there in 1938. We will study the artifact, Freud’s letters about Athena, the meaning of Athena in Greek mythology. We will also read about Freud’s friendships with contemporary archeologists and the circumstances of his collection.

October 25: Ann Kuttner (Art History) will be our guest.

Week Nine: Freud’s Bible

Monday, October 30

Wednesday, November 1

Freud was reading the German Philippson *Bible* (1853) as a child, a publication that was richly illustrated. Freud’s father Jakob gave him the book with a Hebrew inscription, and Freud’s scholars see it as evidence of his Jewish learning. The illustrations of Egypt in this book have influenced Freud’s interest in this country’s ancient culture. We will study the history of this illustrated Bible, and its role in Freud’s work, with an emphasis on German Bible translation, the reform Jewish tradition, and the illustrations included in this book.

The Moses by Michelangelo

Monday, November 6

Wednesday, November 8

Freud traveled to Italy on several occasions, and was particularly fascinated by the figure of Moses by Michelangelo. He sent a postcard of this sculpture to a friend and former student, Sandor Ferenczi in Budapest. We will discuss the sculpture, the context of its creation, but also its reception in the nineteenth century. Readings will include Freud’s essay on the “Moses by Michelangelo,” and his last book on *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), plus sections from *Totem and Taboo* (1913).

Photographs and Home Movies

Monday, November 13

Wednesday, November 15

Freud placed photographs of family members and friends throughout his apartment, and in his office space, he placed various photographic reproductions of works of art. The time during which he conceived of the psychoanalytic treatment was also the time in which photographic images turned into moving ones. Freud did not attend many movie screenings, but he was the subject of a good number of home movies, taken by family members, friends, and colleagues. We will discuss the status of photographs and films at that time, and as a tool to understand Freud's life and psychoanalytic theory. A number of Freud's home movies will be posted on Canvas.

The Object in Psychoanalytic Theory: Sigmund Freud

Monday, November 20

Wednesday, November 22

How does Freud deal with objects in his psychoanalytic treatment? As an example, we will read Freud's case study of Sergei Pankejeff, or the "Wolf Man", "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1918). This case study focuses not only on Pankejeff's dream narrative, but also on a drawing that he rendered of his dream. Pankejeff would paint this dream as well (Freud owned one of these paintings). In future years, he would view himself as a painter, and produce hundreds of paintings primarily of landscapes, but also of flower arrangements and some portraits. He would sell some of these paintings to visiting psychoanalysts after WWII, but the majority of his work is now part of the collection of Freud's papers, and in the National Archives in Washington, DC.

The Object as Fetish

Monday, November 27

Wednesday, November 29

Freud has been particularly concerned with objects in his work on fetishism. In week thirteen, we will read his essay on "Fetishism," as well as excerpts from his texts describing human development. We will talk about the fetish in the context of a discussion on gender and sexuality, and contrast hysteria (as a largely female disease) with fetishism (which, according to Freud, afflicted men only). Readings will include excerpts from Emily Apter's book on *Feminizing the Fetish* (1991).

The Object in Psychoanalytic Theory: Melanie Klein

Monday, November 27

Wednesday, November 29

What is an object of desire in Freud's psychoanalytic theory? And how does the Freud student and British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein build on Freud's theory to develop an object-relational psychoanalysis? We will focus on Klein's *Love, Guilt and Reparation* (Works from 1921-1945) and her concept of child development.

The Object in Psychoanalytic Theory: D.W. Winnicott

Monday, December 4

Wednesday, December 6

Like Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott was a child analyst. He wanted to observe children play, and analyze them via their relationship to the objects they chose to play with. We will read an excerpt from D.W. Winnicott's book, *The Child, the Family, and the Outside World* (1964).

Second Term Paper Due!

Final Discussion: Learning from Objects

Monday, December 11

The course requirements will consist of class attendance and participation, two short papers (due midterm and at the end of the semester), and participation in on-line discussion forum.

The term papers should focus on the analysis and contextualization of a Freudian object. It will be the student's choice, but it should not be one that is at the center of our class discussion.

Liliane Weissberg's office hours are W, 3:30-5pm, Williams Hall 747, and by appointment (lweissbe@sas.upenn.edu)