Thomas Struth, *Art Institute of Chicago I, 1990*
In art history, as in other academic disciplines, it is easy to get caught up in details – names, dates, technical jargon, et cetera – and lose track of the larger picture. From time to time it is helpful to step back and consider the broader perspective. That is the main goal of this course.

A quick glance at the preliminary schedule will show that the course is organized around a series of questions fundamental to understanding art, including:

- What is Art?
- When did Art begin?
- What is an artist?
- How does art convey meaning?
- What is the role of the viewer?
- Has the notion of Art changed in the 21st century?

We are certainly not the first to ask these questions. Thoughtful scholars have discussed many of these issues for more than a century. Our job this semester is to try to enter into their conversations by reading and considering what they have said. At first we might be frustrated to learn that there seem to be no fixed, permanent answers. Like art itself, art history changes from one generation to the next. But this is only to be expected. Art history is not a detached set of timeless, objective analyses of artifacts made in the past, rather it is an ongoing, experiential process of engaging the present with the past. In 1958 the Hungarian art historian Arnold Hauser put it this way:

“Works of art…are like unattainable heights. We do not go straight towards them, but circle around them. Each generation sees them from a different point of view and with a fresh eye; nor is it to be assumed that a later point of view is more apt than an earlier one. Each aspect comes into sight in its own time, which cannot be anticipated or prolonged; and yet its significance is not lost, for the meaning that a work assumes for a later generation is the result of the whole range of previous interpretations.”


Writing:

Writing about art is a way of thinking about art; if we can improve our writing we will probably also change our thinking. There will be four writing assignments. You can expect extensive feedback on your papers and there will be opportunities for revision. We will also set aside class time to talk about various aspects of writing.

Grades:
Grades will be based on the four writing assignments (80%) and on informed class participation and quizzes (20%).

John McEnroe
Molly Root 116
Office: 315-859-4230; Cell: 315-796-3004
Preliminary Schedule:

September

2  What would you think if you were told that…?
   Reading: Staniszewski, “What is Art?”

4  What is an artist? Art and Biography
   Readings: Vasari, “Life of Giotto” (abbreviated); Lubow, “Screening Pollock”

9  What is “genius?”
   Readings: Gombrich on van Gogh; Loos, “van Gogh’s Evolution.”

11 When was Art invented? Kant and Aesthetics
    Minor, Immanuel Kant; Staniszewski. “Aesthetics;”

16 Who painted that? Connoisseurship and Attribution
   Reading: Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes;”
   Schwarz, “Connoisseurship: The Penalty of Ahistoricism.”

18 What is “taste?” Art and Connoisseurship 2
   Reading: Price, “The Mystique of Connoisseurship;” Bourdieu,
   “Introduction to Distinction;” Greif, “The Hipster in the Mirror.”

23 What is style? Formalism 1
   Reading: D’Alleva, “Formalism in Art History,” pp. 16-19; Wölfflin,
   Principles of Art History

25 What is style? Formalism 2
   Reading: Bell, “The Aesthetic Hypothesis;” Duncan, “Teaching the Rich.”

30 How does art convey meaning? Iconography 1
   Reading: D’Alleva, “Iconography and Iconology,” pp. 19-26;

October

2  How does art convey meaning? Iconography 2
   Reading: Cassidy, Iconography at the Crossroads.

7  Is Art a social product?
   Berger, from The Ways of Seeing.

9  “Why have there been no great women artists?
   Reading: D’Alleva, “Feminisms,” pp. 59-61; Nochlin, “Why have there been no great women artists?”

14 What is the “canon?” Feminism 2
   Reading: D’Alleva, “Feminisms,” pp. 61- 68; Broude and Garrard,
   “Intro to The Expanding Discourse.”

16 Where does meaning come from? Semiotics
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>What is deconstruction?</td>
<td>Reading: D’Alleva, “Taking a Stance Toward Knowledge,” pp. 118-151; Johnson, “I was an underage Semiotician.”</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>How do conservatives react to postmodernist theory?</td>
<td>Reading: Kimball, “Rape of the Masters;” Review of Rape of the Masters (The Nation)</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Review: Approaches to Art History</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>4  What is a critic? Part 1</td>
<td>Reading: Wolfe, The Painted Word</td>
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<td>13  What is the role of the museum?</td>
<td>Reading: Duncan the Museum as Ritual.</td>
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<td>20  What is the “New Curator? Curators as Artists</td>
<td>Reading: O’Neill, “Curating Cultures;” Hoffmann and Aranda, “Art as Curating; Curating as Art.”</td>
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<td><strong>THANKSGIVING BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>2  How does the contemporary art market affect art?</td>
<td>Reading: Schjeldahl, “All is Fairs.”</td>
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* All readings are posted on Blackboard in PDF format.