

Vesalius College, Vrije Universiteit Brussel
ART 107, Belgian Art in European Perspective 1400-Now
Syllabus, summer 2010

Course tutor : Dr Léon Lock

Office hours : Fridays, hours as indicated in the weekly schedule

Email : l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org (please always indicate something recognisable in your subject line, e.g. VeCo, VUB... so that I don't take your message for spam !)

Mobile : +32 472 501894 (to be used especially during field trips, otherwise, please prefer email)

Time and place of class

Fridays, normally 9 am-6 pm (slight variations indicated in the weekly schedule, depending on field trip practicalities)

Please note that field trips are an integral part of the course, at which your presence is required. The planning of the field trips may be subject to change. Any changes will be communicated as the course progresses : please check announcements.

Entrance fees and transportation costs are not included in the tuition for this course, but many museums offer free entrance to students in art history, so please use the Dean's letter for this purpose. You are also encouraged to buy a 10-single-trip train ticket (Go Pass at €50 for under 26; Rail Pass at €74 for 26-64), which is cheaper and also avoids queuing for single/return tickets and can be used for several passengers at the same time.

Course description and objectives

Based around three case studies of art in Belgium (or the equivalent cultural area before Belgium's independence in 1830), the course intends to function as an eye-opener towards art and culture in Belgium from the 15th to the 20th century, by using a number of analytical tools in art appreciation, art historiography, the collecting and display of art, including some business and legal aspects. The course should provide an historical and intellectual framework for the other courses given at Vesalius College and life in Brussels during the Summer Course, so that students can contextualise the rich and diversified aspects of Belgian culture, as well as its quirky ones.

Classes are mostly organised in front of the original works of art, so as to encourage a pragmatic approach and visual experience. Active participation will further help students develop a critical vocabulary in the appreciation of art and increase their skills in expressing informed views on painting, sculpture, architecture and the decorative arts.

The richness of artistic holdings in Belgium is a direct consequence of the (historically) highest concentration of artists compared to any other part of Europe, including Italy. It is a small part of this artistic heirloom at our doorstep that we will be using for our three case studies.

It is hoped that students will gradually be able to draw numerous links between these three quite diverse case studies – allowing them to form a well-argued view of Belgian culture, its manifold roots and the remarkable continuity of some of its aspects.

Reading list

Compulsory reading :

« Charles the Bold » **Susan Marti, Till-Holger Borchert and Gabriele Keck eds.** (2009) *Charles the Bold. Splendour of Burgundy*, Mercatorfonds, Brussels, especially the essays on pp. 20-35, 50-61, 72-81.

« Groeninge » **Irene Smets** (2000) *Groeninge Museum & Arentshuis, Bruges. A Selection of the Finest Works*, Ludion, Gent/ Amsterdam, especially pp. 8-35.

- « Memling » **Irene Smets** (2001) *St John's Hospital Bruges*, Ludion, Gent/Amsterdam, especially pp. 7-10, 34-69.
- « Giotto to Dürer » **Jill Dunkerton, Susan Foister, Dillian Gordon and Nicholas Penny** (1991) *Giotto to Dürer. Early Renaissance Painting in The National Gallery*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, especially the section on *Oil Painting in the Netherlands*, pp. 193-197.
- « Jaffé » **David Jaffé et al.** (2005) *Rubens : A Master in the Making*, exh. cat. National Gallery, London, especially pp. 11-20 and 21-27.
- « Tapestry » **Guy Delmarcel** (1999) *Flemish Tapestry*, Thames & Hudson, London, especially the introduction, pp. 11-23.
- « Balis » **Arnout Balis** (2007) *Rubens and His Studio : Defining the Problem*, in : Rubens, A Genius at Work, exh. cat. Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels, 30-51.
- « Greenhalgh » **Paul Greenhalgh** (2000) *The Style and the Age*, in exh. cat. Art Nouveau 1890-1914, V&A Publications, London, 14-33.
- « Aubry » **Françoise Aubry** (2000) *Victor Horta and Brussels*, in exh. cat. Art Nouveau 1890-1914, V&A Publications, London, 274-285.
- « Borsi » **Franco Borsi and Paolo Portoghesi** (1970/1991) *Victor Horta*, Academy Editions, London, especially pp. 11-35.

Suggested further reading/consultation :

www.fine-arts-museum.be: « Fabritius database » of their collections.

Maryan Ainsworth et al. (1994) *Les Primitifs flamands et leur temps*, La Renaissance du Livre, Louvain-la-Neuve.

Jane Block (1980) *Les XX : Forum of the Avant-Garde, Belgian Art 1880-1914*, Brooklyn Museum, New York, 17-40.

Richard Calvocoressi (1990) *Magritte*, Watson-Guption, New York.

Rudi Fuchs and Jan Hoet (1997) *Flemish and Dutch Painting from Van Gogh, Ensor, Magritte, Mondrian to Contemporary Artists*, Bompiani, Milano, 63-98.

Anne Pinget and Robert Hoozee eds (1997) *Paris-Bruxelles. Bruxelles-Paris. Réalisme, impressionnisme, symbolisme et art nouveau*. Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris/Fonds Mercator, Antwerpen.

Nicholas Serota (1996) *Experience or Interpretation. The Dilemma of Modern Art*, Thames & Hudson, London.

Preparation for class and attendance

Given the short period during which the summer course takes place, students are required to read the materials, as indicated on the syllabus and/or announced during class, before coming to class. Class attendance and participation are essential and will influence the final grade. In the event you are unable to attend class, please notify the reception of Vesalius College by phone beforehand.

Written work

Written work for the course consists of one homework assignment. Written work should be typewritten, single spaced, 12 font. Only electronic versions are accepted (RTF/Word 2003/Word 2007 preferred ; please avoid PDF as it does not allow for online corrections). The deadline is **Monday 21 June 2010 at 12 noon**, essay to be emailed to l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org; given the short duration of the term, overdue work will not be accepted.

Length : **minimum 1000, maximum 1500 words** (excluding footnotes, references and bibliography).

Choose an essay title amongst the following :

- *What do social and business aspects imply for Rubens's art ? Illustrate your argument with a few specific cases that you analyse in detail.*
- *Choose a painting, a sculpture or a building created/erected between 1850 and 1950 and analyse its importance with respect to Belgian culture then and now.*

You also need to adhere to the following rules : specify your sources (footnotes and bibliography, that fall outside the word limit) ; do not use low-quality (internet) sources ; be critical towards your sources ; do not plagiarise ; always refer to the original source of the text ; be specific, establish connections, think outside the box...

Presentation

Apart from informal discussions and interventions, students are required to give one presentation for which some research will be required. Duration : **minimum 2 minutes, maximum 5 minutes.**

Possible subjects :

Theme Weeks 1-2 (to be presented 11/6/2010, 10.00-11.30) : analyse the intrinsic and contextual qualities of any work seen on the field trips, provided that you can find a decent photograph of it, that you should include in a one-slide Powerpoint presentation (please bring this to class in week 3 on a USB memory stick)

Theme Weeks 3-4 (to be presented 25/6/2010, 12.45-2.45) : analyse the intrinsic and contextual qualities of a painting by Peter Paul Rubens on display at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels. Presentation to be done in-situ.

Theme Weeks 5-6 (to be presented 25/6/2010, 3.00-4.50) : analyse the intrinsic and contextual qualities of a painting or sculpture of the 19th or 20th century on display at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels. Presentation to be done in-situ.

You will need to sign-up for a specific presentation session in week 2.

Midterm exam

The midterm exam is a written exam which will take 40 minutes and will constitute two pairs of images to be compared and contrasted. These pairs of images will be projected on screen for 20 minutes each.

As a reminder, the following may constitute a methodological check-list (non-limitative list), to guide you in finding inspiration how to structure your comparisons :

- Artist / period / place of conservation
- Subject / iconography > meaning
- Composition / formal analysis > meaning
- Materials / techniques
- Stages in the conception and production
- Place of installation/exhibition
- Collection(s) / former collection(s)
- Contemporary and current reception
- Patrons, and their intentions
- Other actors in the commission, contemporary politics

- Signature(s), date(s) and other inscription(s)
- Sources of inspiration of the artist
- Influence on other works: imitations, derivations, copies

Final exam

The final exam is a written exam of the same format as the midterm exam, but will take one hour (three instead of two pairs of images).

Make-up examinations are discouraged and will be allowed only in extreme emergency, which must be documented by a physician or college official.

Grade weighting scheme

Presence and participation	15%
Presentation (oral)	15%
Written paper	30%
Midterm exam (written)	15%
Final exam (written)	25%

A note on *participation*. The course tutor will distribute an attendance sheet during each class session and will keep a record on participation in class (e.g. raising interesting questions, participation discussions in class and during field trips).

Grading scale

A	85
A-	81
B+	77
B	73
B-	69
C+	66
C	62
C-	58
D+	54
D	50
F	anything below 50/100

Academic Honesty

Each tutor at Vesalius College is responsible for ensuring proper conduct in his or her classes. The Student Handbook has a section on conduct that you should read before continuing. The responsibility for preventing cheating belongs both to the tutor and to the student. The tutor takes responsibility for designing and monitoring examinations so that cheating will be difficult, if not impossible. Severe punishment will be inflicted on anyone caught cheating. Besides maintaining a high standard of personal honesty, it is the student's responsibility to take the necessary precautions to avoid being copied or plagiarised.

Course schedule

Week 1 – Friday 28/5/2010 Brussels, the Burgundian Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire

- Class E0.10 at Vesalius College
- 9.00 – 10.30 **Presentation of the course**: methodology, learning objectives, course requirements, student introductions and expectations
- 10.30 – noon **Introductory lecture**: Art and history, with case studies on the patronage of the Dukes of Burgundy, Early Netherlandish Painting and a brief overview of the urban history of Brussels
- noon – 12.30 Travel to the historic centre of Brussels
- 12.30 – 1.00 **Lunch break** (and « office hour »)
- 1.00 – 4.50 **Field trip**: meet in front of the town hall, Grand'Place: the mercantile and court areas of Brussels (C15-17), the cathedral (architecture, sculpture, stained glass windows, treasury), later urban developments (C18-20), ending at the Palace of Justice (that closes at 4.50 pm).

Compulsory reading before the class : none.

Week 2 – Friday 4/6/2010 The Dukes of Burgundy and Early Netherlandish Painting

- 10.00 – 12.15 **Field trip**: meet in the main lobby, beyond the ticketing, of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, rue de la Régence 3. Class on Early Netherlandish Painting. Free entrance with your letter.
- 12.27 – 1.29 Train Brussels Central – Brugge (« office hour » on the train)
- 1.30 – 1.45 Walk to the Groeningemuseum, Brugge.
- 1.45 – 3.30 **Field trip**: meet in the main hall of the Groeningemuseum, by the ticket booths.
- 3.30 – 4.00 Tea break
- 4.00 Meet just outside the Groeningemuseum.
- 4.05 – 5.00 Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk/Sint-Jans hospital/Hans Memling Museum
- 5.00 – 5.30 Questions and Answers about the Midterm Exam (Week 3) in a local café

Compulsory reading before the class : « Charles the Bold », « Groeninge », « Memling » (see reading list)

Return to Brussels: direct trains at 31 and 58 minutes past every hour, last trains at 9.58 and 10.58 pm.

Week 3 – Friday 11/6/2010 Rubens between art and business I

- Class E0.10 at Vesalius College
- 9.00 – 9.40 **Midterm exam**
- 10.00 – 11.30 **Student presentations** on subjects related to the first two weeks
- 11.30 – 12.30 **Lecture** on *The Archdukes Albert and Isabella, Peter Paul Rubens and their time*
- 12.30 – 1.30 **Lunch break**
- 1.30 – 2.00 Travel to the Royal Museums of Art and History, Cinquantenaire Park
- 2.00 – 5.00 **Field trip:** meet in the main (circular) hall of the Royal Museums of Art and History. Tapestries and other court art in the age of Rubens (+preview of a few Art Nouveau works of art)

Compulsory reading before the class : « Jaffé » and « Tapestry » (see reading list)

Week 4 – Friday 18/6/2010 Rubens between art and business II

- 8.32 – 9.15 Train Brussels Central – Antwerpen Centraal + 15-minute walk
- 9.30 – 9.50 **Field trip:** meet on the Grote Markt of Antwerpen, around « Brabo »
- 10.00 – 11.30 Rockoxhuis Museum, Keizerstraat 10-12, **in 2 groups** alternating
- 11.45 – 13.30 Rubenshuis Museum, Wapper 9-11, **in 2 groups** alternating between the house, studio and garden
- 13.30 – 14.00 **Lunch break** (and « office hour » at the café Wappertien, opposite the Rubenshuis).
- 14.00 – 15.00 Former Jesuit church (Sint-Carolus-Borromeuskerk)
- 15.15 – 17.00 Plantin-Moretus Museum, **in 2 groups** alternating
- Return to Brussels: direct trains at 03, 06, 17, 35 and 45 minutes past the hour, last trains at 11.17, 11.25 pm and 00.25 am.

Compulsory reading before the class : « Balis » (see reading list)

Week 5 – Monday 21/6/2010

- 12.00 noon Essay due on this day by 4.00 pm by email to l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org.
- 1.00-2.00 Extra « office hour » at Vesalius College (room tbc).
Only if requested in advance the day before at the latest by email to l.lock@lowcountriessculpture.org.
-

Week 5 – Friday 25/6/2010 Modernity to Surrealism I

- Class E0.10 at Vesalius College
- 9.00 – 10.00 **Lecture:** *Towards Modernity: Art Nouveau architecture and decoration*
- 10.00 – 11.00 **Lecture:** *Belgian art 1880-1958*
- 11.00 – 11.30 Discussion
- 11.30 – noon Travel to the centre of Brussels
- noon – 12.45 **Lunch break**
- 12.45 – 4.50 **Field trip:** Royal Museums of Fine Arts and Magritte Museum, for :
- 12.45 – 2.45 Student presentations on paintings by Peter Paul Rubens : meet in the Rubens Room, where all the large altarpieces are displayed
- 3.00 – 4.50 Student presentations on C19 and C20 paintings/sculptures of their choice
- 5.00 – 6.00 « Office hour » in the café « Pain Quotidien », Grand Sablon

Compulsory reading before the class : « Greenhalgh » (see reading list)

Week 6 – Friday 2/7/2010 Modernity to Surrealism II

- 8.50** **Field trip:** meet in front of the Palais Stocklet, avenue de Tervuren 279-281 (near metro Montgommery ; don't forget sturdy shoes and an umbrella if it rains !). Travel together (metro+tram) to the Horta Museum.
- 10.00 – 12.30 Horta Museum, rue Américaine 23-25, **in 2 groups** (€3.50 per student)
- 10.00 – 11.00 Group 1 interior
- 11.00 – 12.00 Group 2 interior
- noon – 12.30 Exterior all together
- 12.30 – 1.00 **Lunch break** (during which the course tutor holds his « office hour » at a nearby café)
- 1.00 – 3.00 Walking tour in the Avenue Louise area: Victor Horta, Paul Hankar, Jules Brunfaut, Albert Rosenboom, etc.
- 3.00 – 3.30 Travel by tram to the Van Buuren Museum, avenue Léo Errera 41
- 3.30 – 4.30 Van Buuren Museum (Art Deco house and garden that are marvellously well preserved). (€5 per student). **In 2 groups alternating between house and garden**
- 4.30 – 5.30 Course review in the garden (or a local café if it rains)

Compulsory reading before the class : « Aubry » and « Borsi » (see reading list)

NB **Field trip : group 1 : students with surnames A – G / group 2 : surnames H – Z**

Week 7 Final Exam

Date and time tbc Final exam (written) at Vesalius College (class tbc). Version 26/05/2010