Visual Controversies in South Africa, Past and Present

"Are we the other or the other-other or just another other?"

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will track major developments and changes in South African art and media from the Union years (1910 – 48), through the Apartheid era (1948-1994) and after (1994-present). The point of this broad historical perspective is not so much to provide a condensed historical survey of South African art and media, as it is to explore the relationship between South Africa’s turbulent socio-political landscape and its visual culture.

In particular, we aim to explore notions of national and subcultural identities as it manifested and still manifests in art and visual culture. The first lectures of the course deal with the concurrent rise of Afrikaner and African nationalism in the early 20th century, and the role of visual culture in the construction of these competing national identities. Following that we focus on artists’ struggle and negotiation with personal histories, memories and cultural identities following the dismantling of apartheid and then at most recent controversies around the representation of the South African president.
The second part of the lecture series engages contemporary South African magazine culture and the manner in which particular discursive strategies construct identity positions along the lines of gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity. The lectures will focus specifically on the politics of inclusion and exclusion, which permeate the pages of selected lifestyle magazines. As an extension of this, there will also be discussions of practices, performances and representations that appear to assail and subvert hegemonic constructs, such as white Afrikaner masculinity. Furthermore, the lectures (in conjunction with the screening of two films) will touch on documentary photography in South Africa and the manifestation of punk in the Afrikaner ethnic imaginary.

**Overarching programme objectives:**

- To develop a sense of the unique relationship between the visual arts, media and national and social identities in South Africa.
- To deepen students’ awareness of the complexity of South African history and its changing socio-political environment and how the shifting tides of South Africa’s turbulent history affect the concept of South African identities.
- To inculcate a greater understanding of issues around nationalism and the postcolony in general.

**PRESENTATION**

The course combines formal lectures with field trips to galleries in Cape Town.

**EVALUATION**

Course evaluation is based on class participation (5%), a class test (45%), and a written assignment (50%).

The deadline for the assignment is Friday, 4 July 2014.

Please note:

- Assignment topics will be announced on the first day of class
- No late assignments will be accepted.
• All assignments must be uploaded onto Turnitin.com (the PGIO will provide assistance in this regard).
• Students are also required to sign a plagiarism declaration (the form is available on Moodle).

SECTION ONE

Co-ordinator: Annemi Conradie
Email: conradieannemi@gmail.com

Annemi completed her honours degree (Art History) and Masters Degree (Visual Studies) with distinction at Stellenbosch University and is currently a scholarship holder with the Graduate School in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University. In her teaching and research she explores the ways in which the political manifests in our visual environment, in particular upon and through human bodies and its representation.

Day 1 Visual culture and early twentieth century nationalism

9:00 – 10:30 Lecture: Art and Afrikaner nationalism
10:30 – 11:00 Tea break
11:00 – 12:00 Lecture: African nationalism and the early 20th century modernists
12:00 – 14:00 Lunch
14:00 – 16:00 Lecture: Black consciousness, art in the service of struggle and contemporary commodification of the revolution

Prescribed reading


Day 2  Revolution, art and identities after

9:00 – 10:30  Lecture: Formulating, challenging and expressing identities after 1994

10:30 – 11:00  Tea break

11:00 – 12:00  Lecture and screening of selected videos: Formulating, challenging and expressing identities after 1994

12:00 – 14:00  Lunch

14:00 – 16:00  Lecture: The two Zumas: investigating cries of outrage, censorship and solidarity following representations of President Jacob Zuma in the paintings of Brett Murray and Ayanda Mabulu

Prescribed reading


SECTION TWO

Course co-ordinator: Theo Sonnekus

email: 1819026@sun.ac.za

Theo completed his Master’s degree in Visual Studies with distinction at the University of Pretoria and is currently a scholarship holder with the Graduate School in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University. He is undertaking a PhD in Visual Studies intent on tracing a visual genealogy of the Afrikaner ethnic imaginary.

Day 3

Identity politics in South African magazine culture


10:30 – 11:00 Tea break

11:00 – 12:00 Lecture: Ironies, Others, and Afrikaners – an exploration of selected postapartheid print advertisements from DEKAT and Insig

12:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Film screening and discussion: The Bang-Bang Club — South African documentary photography and the apartheid era

Prescribed reading


Day 4

Dissenting performances and spaces

9:00 – 10:30 Lecture: Afrikaner masculinity in crisis – a reading of selected subversive texts

10:30 – 11:00 Tea break

11:00 – 12:00 Lecture: “We want to see something different, but not too different” – spatial politics and the Pink Loerie Mardi Gras

12:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Film screening and discussion: Fokofpolisiekar — punk and the Afrikaner imaginary
Prescribed reading


Sonnekus, T. 2010. “We want to see something different, but not too different”: spatial politics and the Pink Loerie Mardi Gras in Knysna. Critical Arts 24(2): 192-209. (PDF Article)

Sonnekus, T. 2013. ‘We’re not faggots!’: masculinity, homosexuality and the representation of Afrikaner men who have sex with men in the film Skoonheid (Beauty) and online. South African Review of Sociology 44(1): 22-39. (PDF Article)

Day 5  
Tour galleries of Cape Town

9:00 – 10:00  
Test

10:00 – 10:30  
Tea break

10:30 – 13:00  
Walkabout and discussion of South African art at the South African National Gallery (SANG) and other contemporary art galleries in Cape Town (to be confirmed)