MDA 599 VSRI: Material Evidence
Spring 2015
Professor Amy F. Ogata, Art History
Office: VKC 349, Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-4pm

The recent “material turn” in the humanities has brought scholarly attention to the importance of a vast array of things for societies of the past and the present. Although the cross-disciplinary field of visual culture studies offers a variety of methods for examining and understanding objects that are not bound to established hierarchies, a specific focus on materiality has awakened scholars to the production, presence, agency, transformation, and demise of objects and images and prompts us to grapple with how we engage and understand both the manmade and natural worlds. Furthermore, the notion of the immaterial and its complex relationship to materiality opens the discussion to a host of experiential, epistemological, and disciplinary possibilities. This seminar explores how scholars of materiality across a variety of disciplines have theorized and used material evidence in their work. It asks how artisanal and technical knowledge has contributed to the production and understanding of works of art and visual experience, and how material evidence has produced its own historiography.

Learning Objectives:
• Develop a critical understanding of the scholarship on materiality and material culture
• Explore the interdisciplinary ways that materials and objects have been understood
• Engage with prominent scholars who are producing this literature;
• Situate traditions of Visual Studies within this area of scholarship.

Course Requirements:
• Students and other participants will read all assignments and respond in the Responses section to the Wordpress site materialevidence.vsri.org. All comments must be logged by 11:00pm on Tuesday before class on Wednesday. Students should review all the comments before class. The reading for this course is substantial and the discussion will in many cases be conducted as a conversation between graduate students, faculty and the outside guest, therefore preparation is essential.
• Students are expected to attend the final two-day symposium on Material Evidence, April 30-May 1.
• A final research paper of 20-30 pages on the topic of your choice (relevant to the course) will be due on May 13. Preliminary research proposals are due February 11 via email.
Grading:
Participation in class, including attendance and posting to the site: 20%
Research Paper: 80%
  Research Proposal due February 11 via email
  Final Paper due May 13
Statement for Students with Disabilities:
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible.

Statement on Academic Support Systems and Conduct:
Academic Conduct
Plagiarism - presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity, or to the Department of Public Safety. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems
A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.
Schedule of Meetings
NOTE: Syllabus and Guests subject to change

January 14
What is Materiality? What Kind of Evidence?
• Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture, Theory and Method, Winterthur Portfolio (1982);
• Bruno Latour, "Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts" (1992)
• “Notes from the Field, Materiality,” Art Bulletin 95, no. 1 (March 2013): 10-37.

January 21
Reading Material Evidence
Guest: Ann-Sophie Lehmann, Associate Professor of Media and Culture Studies, Universiteit Utrecht
Archaeology and the Evidentiary
January 28
Guest Lynn Swartz Dodd, Associate Professor of the Practice of Religion and Interdisciplinary Archaeology, USC


February 4
Guest Ann Marie Yasin, Associate Professor of Classics and Art History, USC

- "Prayers on Site: The Materiality of Devotional Graffiti and the Production of Early Christian Sacred Space," in Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval Worlds, ed. Anthony Eastmond (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 2015), 36-60

February 11 No Class College Art Association meeting
Research Proposals DUE via email

Material and Visual Evidence: Prints and Books
February 18
Guest Ruth Iskin, Associate Professor of Art History, Ben-Gurion University, Israel

February 25
Guest Willa Z. Silverman, Professor of French and Jewish Studies, Penn State University
  • Introduction to Henri Vever Cahiers 1898-1901

March 4

Materials and Natural/Colonial Evidence
March 11
Guest Debora L. Silverman, Professor of History and Art History, UCLA

Spring Break

March 25
Guest Daniela Bleichmar, Associate Professor of History and Art History, USC
Materials, Technology, and Shifting States of Evidence
April 1


April 8
Guest Allison Stielau, Getty Fellow (Ph.D. Candidate, History of Art, Yale University)

- Allison Stielau, "The Weight of Plate in Early Modern Inventories and Secularization Lists," The Journal of Art Historiography (December 2014)
- "SY-XRF study of Hans Baldung Grien silverpoint drawings and the silver stylus from the ‘Karlsruhe sketchbook’" (2007)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEZdRU6-bBA

Material and Visual Evidence
April 15
Justin Underhill, Digital Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow, USC


April 20 UCLA-USC Greek Symposium
April 22

April 30-May 1 VSRI Conference: Material Evidence, Visible Knowledge

Final Papers DUE May 13 (hard copy to department office, VKC 351, email to me)