

Grand Rapids Undergraduate Art History Symposium

April 17, 2020



Gord Hill/ Zig Zag (Kwakwaka'wakw), *No Justice on Stolen Land*, n.d.

Morning Session: 10am-11:30am

Afternoon Session I: 12:30pm-2pm

Afternoon Session II: 2:30pm-4pm

Morning Session

Joshua Brady, Ferris State University

Between the Cracks: Revisiting the Meaning of Damage to Cycladic Figures

Many small, human-shaped marble figures with varying degrees of abstraction have been found throughout the Cyclades Islands, dating from the fifth through first millennia BCE. The original function of these figures is ambiguous, and scholars have tended to focus on stylistic variation. This paper argues that signs of use over time provide insight into the functions of these figures in the Cycladic culture. Several Cycladic figures have evidence of breakage and repairs. Building upon the research of Pat Getz-Gentle, I examine these repairs to consider the importance of maintaining the longevity of Cycladic figures. Incidents of drilling and reconnecting broken figures, as well as one case of intentional breakage before burial, suggest that the figures were highly valued and maintained over time. I argue that Cycladic figures were intimately connected to individuals insofar that they could not be replaced in life or separated postmortem from the people who owned them.

Mia Kivel, Kendall College of Art and Design

Byzantine Caesaropapism: A Cognitivist Exploration of the Role of Religious Art as Imperial Propaganda

By applying principles of the cognitive science of religion to Byzantine religious art, and viewing works thereof through a critical historical perspective, a number of propagandistic elements unmistakably emerge. As such, Byzantine religious art, including architectural as well as mosaic works, must be understood as serving a dual purpose: While the ritualistic and pedagogical functions of art and architecture as tools for aiding in and enabling worship are historically significant, so too is the didactic function of promoting a unique Byzantine identity, structured with the emperor in a position of near absolute temporal and spiritual authority. This role is particularly apparent in the evolution of imagery of Christ and the emperor from the early Christian to Byzantine periods, as well as works of monumental architecture such as the Hagia Sophia.

Katharine Remington, Kendall College of Art and Design

Hausmannization: Isolation and Visual Detachment of Parisian Society as Seen Through Impressionist Works of Manet and Degas

Abstract- Through examining impressionist paintings of café and café-concerts by renown painter, Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas, I will exploit the disconnect of Parisian society after Hausmannization and a growing mental detachment from humanity and the world around them. Napoleon III and Georges-Eugene Haussmann reconstructed and remolded the city of Paris into what we know it now to be. Though the new streets and buildings provided the opportunity for social interaction and exploration the outcome proved to be contrary. Through impressionist's artworks, like Manet's *Café in the Place du Theatre-Francais* (1877) and Degas' *Woman of a Café Terrace in the Evening* (1877), I will illustrate the common imagery of detachment and mental seclusion within Paris society at the end of the 19th century.

Afternoon Session I

Nicole McClellan, Grand Valley State University

Manuel: Teaching the Next Generation

Manuel Cuevas, or simply Manuel, began his journey into the wearable arts at age 8 in Mexico. Taught by his brother and mother, he soon was creating formal dresses for the neighborhood girls. He moved to California and began his work under rodeo tailor Nudie Cohn. Manuel learned the extravagant design techniques from Cohn and on he went to create his own name. Manuel blossomed in his talents while dressing the likes of Elvis Presley and Dolly Parton with his unique garments. Manuel continues to be a sought-after tailor and still employs traditional design in his western wear. Manuel, now working out of his Nashville studio, aims to educate a new generation on the importance of preserving the techniques and styles of western wear through his extensive knowledge and experience.

Josie Vargas, Grand Valley State University

Visual Responses to the American Far-Right

This paper explores the use of art as an activist tactic to combat neo-fascism within the United States. Fascism emerged in the U.S. following World War I, taking root in 20th-century sentiments about race, power, and personhood. In the contemporary moment, these groups are collectively known as the Far-Right. To counter increasing neo-fascist activities, activists employ a variety of tools. Art presents itself as a tool with many possibilities, including (but not limited to) traditional image-making, performance pieces, and film. This paper considers historical and political frameworks while examining work by Vincent Valdez, W.I.T.C.H., Gord Hill, and Adam Bhalal Lough. Although these artists differ in format and intensity, they express a shared desire to eradicate hate politics.

Drue McPherson, Kendall College of Art and Design

Kara Walker's Gift of the *Fons Americanus*

As a self-proclaimed "unreliable narrator," Kara Walker offers the gift of the *Fons Americanus*, a four-tiered monumental fountain depicting the Black Atlantic, to the British Empire. Walker depicts the Black Atlantic through her use of postmemory, reconstructing allegorical depictions of themes that are foundational in the development of Black consciousness in the Americas and Europe. *Fons Americanus* disrupts the embodiment of monumental sculptures by deconstructing how we choose to memorialize and celebrate histories in the form of a public monument. Walker's use of caricatures to depict the unacknowledged history of violence caused to Black people of Africa during imperialism exaggerate and exoticize the Black body, requiring art historians and critics to question if Britain should accept Walker's storytelling monument.

Afternoon Session II

Raymond Borregard, Grand Valley State University

Kehinde Wiley: Maximizing the Marginalized

Kehinde Wiley is an artist known for his use of bold color, monumental scale and clear references to well-known artworks. His paintings and sculptures add contemporary subjects of diverse backgrounds, with a particular emphasis on African and African American individuals, to replace their original subjects. This presentation will examine several of Wiley's works and their original counterparts to position them within a historic framework. This is meant to highlight the importance of a diverse range of subjects in his artworks and how this choice of historically marginalized and underrepresented communities allows them to inhabit a space of power and autonomy where they have been excluded. In addition, I will discuss how Wiley's more recent work has shifted to highlight powerful and highly visible individuals to further increase recognition of their achievements and visibility within society.

Harmony Nguyen, Kendall College of Art and Design

Kent Monkman: Indigenous Healing, Classical Correction, and Challenging Modernity

Lush landscapes, untamed wildlife, and untouched resources as far as the eye can see; these are the variables of American and European landscape painting. Over time these paintings have revealed their reality: idealist billboards for the colonization of American Indigenous land and manifest destiny. Paintings like those from the Hudson River School and the Academy show that history informs much of the world around us; simultaneously it has misinformed, erased, stolen from many of the people that reside on such lands. Contemporary artists like Kent Monkman have used these colonizer histories, systems, and styles to inform, critique, and actively resist the continuous theft of Indigenous cultures. I will examine three central paintings from Monkman: *Daniel Boone's First View of the Kentucky Valley* (2001), *Miss Chief's Wet Dream* (2018), and *Female Figures in Prison* (2019). I will argue that Monkman's work is simultaneously critiquing and reshaping the tradition of Eurocentric painting, challenging colonial/neocolonial concepts of multiculturalism, modernity, sexuality, and globalism and that Monkman's work is successful in part because of its unique accessibility for public and academic audiences.

Thank you to all our participants and faculty for being flexible and helping to create this year's online version of GRUAHS!