Gothic, Baroque, Modern: Arts in Bohemia

Fall 2012

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Course Description
The course will survey the visual arts and architecture in the Czech Lands since the Middle Ages to the present, with an emphasis on the last century. The highlights will include the impact of the Gothic on the Czech Decadence; the Bohemian Baroque tradition and its influence on the Czech Cubism; varieties of the Czech abstract and Surrealist art; the local roots of modernist architecture; and the fate of modern art under Communism. A lot of the artifacts that we shall discuss are located in Prague, so we shall see them for ourselves during numerous class trips. We shall cover not only the Czech artists, but also other nationals—French, German, or Italian—who were active in the region since the Middle Ages. We shall also situate the development of the local art scene within the context of the European art in general. And finally, we shall pay attention to connections between art and intellectual and social history, seeing, in particular, how nationalism, religion and ideology influenced the development of Czech art and architecture.

Course Objectives
To provide the students with a good understanding of the history of art and architecture in the Czech Lands, within a wider context of social and intellectual history.

Structure
The course consists of lectures, slide presentations, discussions of readings, and museum trips.

Requirements
Students are required to attend all classes, do required readings and participate in the museum trips. Required readings consist of primary sources, usually quite short but dense. Optional readings are essential for the final paper which should not exceed 10 pages (illustrations should take up no more than 30 per cent). The style of formatting is optional but should be followed consistently. Two in-class multiple-choice exams are based on lectures and required readings. Make-up exams will be allowed only in the case of medical or family emergencies. The same applies to late papers.

Academic Honesty
Although the students are encouraged to exchange ideas in and outside class, everybody must submit their own work. Copying the work of other students or published materials is strictly prohibited.
**Grading System**
Class participation/attendance 10%
Mid-term 25%
Final exam 25%
Final paper 40%

**Course Schedule**
Primary sources: Required readings throughout the semester. Available in hard copies and online.

Secondary sources: Optional but highly recommended for the final paper projects. Available in books or xerox copies at the CERGE Library. The readings that are available in library books are asterisked. For the full bibliographical information about the books, see the list at the end of this syllabus.

**Week 1**
Introduction
Glorious Visions: The Bohemian Gothic in Context

HAVE READ:
Eco, “Theories of Art” and “Inspiration and the Status of Art” (1959)

OPTIONAL:

**Week 2**
Paint It Black: The Echoes of Gothic in the Czech Decadence

HAVE READ:
Huysmans, from *Against the Grain* (1884)

OPTIONAL:
* Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1902-3), in Harrison and Wood (1992)

Class Trip – The National Gallery, The St. Agnes Monastery

**Week 3**
Kunst and the Kunstkammer: Art at the Court of Rudolf II

OPTIONAL:
* Kaufmann, “Princely Patronage of the Later Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries: The Example and Impact of Art at the Court of Rudolf II,” in Kaufmann (1995)

Class Trip – The Villa Bílek

**Week 4**
The Glory of Baroque Bohemia
OPTIONAL:
*Kaufmann, “Art and Architecture after the Thirty Years’ War,” in Kaufmann (1995, )
*Stolárová and Vlnas, Karel Škréta 1610-1674 (2010)

Class Trip – The National Gallery, The Schwarzenberg Palace

Week 5

The Prism and the Pyramid: Cubist Design

H ave READ:
Worringer, from Abstraction and Empathy (1908)

OPTIONAL:

Class Trip – The Museum of Czech Cubism, The House at Black Madonna

Week 6

M ID-TERM EXAM
Art and Politics 1: Art Nouveau and Pan-Slavism in the Art of Alfons Mucha

H ave READ:
*Jiránek, “The Czechness of our Art” (1900), in Benson and Forgács (2002)

OPTIONAL:

What is Modern Art?

H ave READ:
Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863)
*Bell, “The Aesthetic Hypothesis” (1914), in Harrison and Wood (1992)
*Greenberg, “Modernist Painting” (1960), in

Week 7

Don’t Tattoo Yourself! The Modern Lifestyle according to Adolf Loos

H ave READ:
*Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, “Five Points towards a New Architecture” (1926)
OPTIONAL:

Class Trip – The Mueller House

Week 8

Modernisms in the Early 1900s: Osma, Skupina and Tvrdošíjní

HAVE READ:
*Kramář, from Cubism (1921), in Benson and Forgács (2002)

OPTIONAL:

After the Demise of Naturalism: Abstraction and Photography

HAVE READ:
*Kandinsky, from Concerning the Spiritual in Art (1911), in Harrison and Wood (1992)

OPTIONAL:
Anděl and Kosinski, from Painting the Universe (1994)

Week 9

Art and Politics 2: Czech Functionalism—Architecture in the Service of Revolution

HAVE READ:
Le Corbusier, “Towards a New Architecture: Guiding Principles” (1920)
Teige, “Constructivism and the Liquidation of Art” (1925)
Gropius, “Principles of Bauhaus Production (Dessau)” (1926)
Meyer, “Building” (1928)
*Teige, from The Minimum Dwelling (1936)

OPTIONAL:

The Last Offshoot of Romanticism: the Czech Surrealism of the 1930s

HAVE READ:
*Tzara, “Dada Manifesto 1918” (1918), in Harrison and Wood (1992)
*Breton, from The First Manifesto of Surrealism (1924), in Harrison and Wood (1992)
*Teige, “Poetism” (1924), in Benson and Forgacs (2002)
*Breton, from Surrealism and Painting (1928), in Harrison and Wood (1992)
OPTIONAL:
Bydžovská, “Against the Current: The Story of the Surrealist Group of Czechoslovakia” (2005)

Week 10
Art and Politics 3: Socialist Realism and Its Discontents

HAVE READ:
*Hitler, Speech Inaugurating the “Great Exhibition of German Art” (1937), in Harrison and Wood (1992)

OPTIONAL:
Groys, from The Total Art of Stalinism (1992)

Class Trip – The National Gallery, The Fair Trade Palace

Week 11
Surrealism Against the Current: the 1950s and Beyond
Jan Švankmajer’s film The End of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia

HAVE READ:
*Sartre, from Existentialism and Humanism (1946)
*Dubuffet, “Crude Art Preferred to Cultural Art” (1949)
*Atlan, “Abstraction and Adventure in Contemporary Art (1950)
*Greenberg, “Modernist Painting” (1960-5)
“The Platform of Prague” (1968)
“The Possible against the Current” (1969)

OPTIONAL:

New Art Forms of the 1960s and ‘70s: Happenings and Performance Art

HAVE READ:
*Artforum, from “The Artist and Politics: A Symposium” (1970)
*Burn, “The Art Market: Affluence and Degradation” (1975)

OPTIONAL:
Belting, “Europe: East and West at the Watershed of Art History” (1993)
Week 12

FINAL PAPER DUE, FINAL EXAM

**Select Bibliography in English**
Asterisked books are available at the CERGE Library.


