FAH 48: Nature into Art (proposal for Talloires 2019)
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From the Garden of Eden and caves of Lascaux to contemporary art responding to climate change, the natural world has been a constant source of inspiration—and foil—for art. Focusing primarily on French visual art of the last five centuries and ranging across media, this course will survey various ways in which nature—the land, environment, flora and fauna—has been filtered through the artistic imagination for our edification and pleasure. Themes will include: landscape painting and photography; parks and gardens; Environmental art and sustainability; exploration, tourism, and scientific illustration. Assignments will encourage students to respond to art and nature of the French Alps and Talloires area. Nature into Art is designed for all students with an interest in deepening their connection to the world around them.

Graded Assignments:

- Over the course of the semester, create a portfolio of nature photographs of the Talloires area—you are free to determine what constitutes “nature.” As part of your final assignment, select your favorite 5 and, for each one, write a 1-page (250 words) paper explaining why you chose it and relating each image to course material, where relevant. Each student will present their work in class at the end of the semester. (25%; presentation and portfolio due June 24)

  To help you prepare, starting in week 2 half an hour of class time will be set aside for peer discussion of 3 photographs you took that week. Paired with another student, take turns presenting your 3 photos and saying why you chose them.

- Choose a postcard of Talloires from the shop in town that you think best represents the character of the place; analyze its formal qualities (composition, lighting, color), and say why you chose it. Students will present their choice to the class. (250 words; 10%; due May 23)

- Mid-term assignment: Visit the Jardins de l’Europe in downtown Annecy and describe how its location, layout and appearance relate to the history of public parks/gardens. Start by defining the chief characteristics of the European gardening tradition based on class readings and discussion. (3 pages; 15%; due June 7)

- Determine as best you can the spot where Paul Cezanne painted his famous painting Lac d’Annecy and what time of day it represents. In your own words, describe any artistic liberties he took with the view. (250-400 words; 10%; due June 17)

- Final exam: slide identification and analysis. (25%)

- Class participation. (15%)
Schedule & Readings

May 16: Class overview – brief history of Talloires and wander through town
  Reading: Andrews, chap 1; Glacken

May 20: Nature into Art in Renaissance Europe (painting, natural history, exploration)
  Reading: Andrews, Chaps 2 & 3

May 21: Idealized Nature (painting, country villas, gardens)
  Reading: Andrews, chap 4; Harris

May 23: Photo journal overview & Postcard discussion
  (*postcard assignment due before class*)

May 27: French Parks & Gardens
  Reading: Tarabra; Charlton, “Pastoral Landscapes”; Ives; Jackson

May 28: Rococo Nature Domesticated and Enlightenment Exploration (photo journal)
  Reading: Tarabra; Charlton, “Transoceanic Perspectives”

May 30: Travel and the Alpine Sublime
  Reading: Andrews, chap 6; Smith

June 3: Romantic Nature
  Reading: Andrews, chap 7; Constable; Chu

June 4: Realist Art and the Animal Kingdom (photo journal)
  Reading: Chu; Green; Potts

June 6: Landscape Photography
  Reading: Chu; Bright
  (*June 7: mid-term paper due by 12 noon*)

June 10: Impressionist Nature I
  Reading: Rubin (a), (b); Chu

June 11: Impressionist Nature II (photo journal)
  Reading: Willsden; Frascina

June 13: Post-Impressionism I (Van Gogh, Gauguin)
  Reading: Chu; Shackleford; Van Gogh letters

June 17: Post-Impressionism II (Seurat, Cezanne)
  Reading: Chu, Nochlin
  (*Cezanne assignment due before class*)
June 18: Back to the Land: Land Art and Environmental Art (photo journal)
   Reading: Andrews, chap 9; Beardsley; Tufnell

June 20: The Art of Sustainability
   Reading: Demos

June 24: Photo journal presentation & exam review
   (*photo portfolio and paper due before class*)

June 25: Final exam

Reading list:


readings available on Canvas:


D. G. Charlton, “Pastoral Landscapes” and “Transoceanic perspectives” in New Images of the Natural in France (1984)

Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Nineteenth-Century European Art (2012), selections

Letters of John Constable in Sources & Documents: Neoclassicism and Romanticism 1750-1850, 61-68


Ann Sutherland Harris, Seventeenth-Century Art & Architecture (2008), selections


James Rubin (b), *How to Read Impressionism: Ways of Looking* (2013), selections

George Shackleford, ed., *Gauguin Tahiti* (2004), selections


Daniela Tarabra, *European Art of the Eighteenth Century* (2006), selections


Clare Willsden, *Impressionist Gardens* (2010), selections