

# **GCIN2009 Art worlds: Aesthetics, money, and markets<sup>1</sup>**

## **Course Instructors:**

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**Lectures:** Tuesdays, 4.30 – 6.20pm. CPD-3.29

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## **Course Content**

The course looks at how art worlds function in Europe, Asia, and the United States, and focuses in particular on the socio-cultural relations linking beauty and aesthetics with business, organizations, people, and money. It is taught primarily by lectures and class work, and is attentive to art worlds in China, Korea, Hong Kong and Japan, comparing what we find there with standard readings on art worlds in Europe and the United States. It thus looks at how local/regional variations can be found in the organization and practices of different art worlds, and tries to explain why they exist.

The course is intended as an elective for students who wish to major or minor in Creative Industries, and/or who have already taken the Introduction to Creative Industries (GCIN 1001), as well as for students in the Department of Art history at HKU. In the long-term, the course serves as a foundation for those who wish to pursue a career in art by familiarising them with the special dynamics of art worlds, alerting them especially to the challenges of managing creative people, artworks, and their accompanying ideologies.

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## **Learning Objectives**

The aim of this course is to remind students of the concept of “art worlds” put forward by the sociologist, Howard Becker, and to examine and analyse how they are organized and function. By the end of the course students should have gained an understanding of:

1. The social processes surrounding the production, appreciation, sale and purchase of art works;
2. The composition of an art world, and the relationships between the main protagonists of artist, gallery owner, collector, auction house, and museum;
3. The confused and confusing relationship between artistic ideals, and the pricing and sale of art works in the art market;
4. How reputations are made and sustained in art worlds.

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<sup>1</sup> This course outline is adapted from the course syllabus developed by Professor Brian Moeran when he taught the course for the Global Creative Industries Programme at HKU.

## Teaching Methods

Lectures, case studies, presentations, and class discussion.

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## Assessment

### A. **Short written assignments (30%):**

You will be given regular written assignments (no more than **500 words**) summarizing a theme in each week's readings, and will be marked on how well you present the main arguments therein.

### B. **Final essay (50%)**

At the end of the semester, you will write an essay of **around 2000 words** in length. You are asked to focus on at least two main protagonists in the art world in Hong Kong (e.g. artist/ art critics/ gallery owner/ collector/ auction house/ museum/ fair organizer etc). You should conduct fieldwork and interviews with the people concerned and incorporate your findings in a theoretical analysis which makes use of the course lectures and reading materials. You will be assessed on your fieldwork, understanding of the art world concerned, and theoretical issues applied in your analysis.

The essay should include a summary of your field notes (in English) as an Appendix. Everything should be handed in as a **hard copy** to the office of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures (5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Run Run Shaw Tower), and as a **soft copy** on Moodle by **5pm on 14 December 2018 (Friday)**.

### C. **Class Participation (20%)**

You will be expected to participate actively in discussing points raised in the readings and accompanying lecture. You are expected to attend lectures regularly, and random attendance lists will be taken throughout the course. Failure to comply fully with these expectations will result in a percentage being deducted from your final assessment mark.

Further details of the assessment will be discussed in class.

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## Indicative literature

1. Howard Becker 1982 *Art Worlds*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.
2. Don Thompson 2008 *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: the curious economics of contemporary art and auction houses*. London: Aurum.
3. Iain Robertson and Derrick Chong (eds.) 2008 *The Art Business*. London & New York: Routledge.

4. Brian Moeran 1997 *Folk Art Potters of Japan*. London: Curzon/Routledge.
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## **Tentative Course Outline<sup>2</sup>**

### **Week 1: Approaches to the Study of Art and Course Introduction (04/09/18)**

Vera L. Zolberg 2015 "What is art? What is the sociology of art?" Chapter 1 in her *Constructing a Sociology of the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-25 only.

Iain Robertson and Derrick Chong 2008 "Introduction to studies in art business." In their edited *The Art Business*. London & New York: Routledge, pp. 1-21 only.

Jansson, J. 2014 "Temporary events and spaces in the Swedish primary art market." *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie* 58 (4): 202-215.

### **Week 2: Artwork: The Stuffed Shark (11/09/2018)**

Damien Hirst, "The physical impossibility of death in the mind of someone living, 1991." <http://www.damienhirst.com/the-physical-impossibility-of>

Don Thompson 2008 "The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark." *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: the curious economics of contemporary art and auction houses*. London: Aurum, pp. 1-7.

Carol Vogel 2006 "Swimming with famous dead sharks." *New York Times*, October 1, 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/01/arts/design/01voge.html>

"Damien Hirst. The shark's last move." *The Economist*, September 11, 2008. <http://www.economist.com/node/12202493> Plus "Comments." <http://www.economist.com/node/12202493/comments#comments>

Maev Kennedy 2008 "Hirst's super-rich fans confound critics and snap up his sharks, calves and stardust." *The Guardian*, September 16, 2008. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2008/sep/16/damienhirst.art>

### **Week 3: What is an Art World? (18/09/18)**

Howard Becker 1982 "Art worlds and collective activity." Chapter 1 in his *Art Worlds*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, pp. 1-39.

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<sup>2</sup> The tentative schedule is subject to change.

Brian Moeran 1997 "Anthropology, philosophy, and the art world." In his *Folk Art Potters of Japan*. London: Curzon/Routledge, pp. 5-9.

Brian Moeran 1987 "The art world of contemporary Japanese ceramics." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 13 (1): 27-50. (Also found in "Afterword: the art world of Japanese ceramics." In *Folk Art Potters of Japan*. London: Curzon/Routledge, pp. 228-242.)

### Other Readings

Harvey Molotch and Mark Treskon 2009 "Changing art: SoHo, Chelsea and the dynamic geography of galleries in New York City." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33 (2): 517-541.

Kathleen K. Diamond 2011 "Feminist art, aesthetics, and art criticism." Chapter 9 in her *Ideas about Art*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 123-141.

### **Week 4: Public Holiday (no class) (25/09/18)**

### **Week 5: The Artwork as Social Process (02/10/18)**

Michael Baxandall 1972 "Conditions of trade." Chapter 1 in his *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 1-16 only.

Vera L. Zolberg 2015 "Is a thing of beauty a joy forever?" pp. 92-97 in her *Constructing a Sociology of the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

David Clarke 2000 "Para/site art space." *Third Text* 50: 73-86.

Brian Moeran 1997 "Theory and practice in Japanese *mingei*." Chapter 9 in his *Folk Art Potters of Japan*. London: Curzon/Routledge, pp. 181-206.

**Homework: Summarize Howard Becker's theory of art worlds and discuss in what ways artworks are the result of social processes. (Write no more than 500 words and hand in at the beginning of class on October 9).**

### **Week 6: Art Markets (09/10/18)**

Iain Robertson, Victoria L. Tseng, and Sonal Singh 2008 "'Chindia' as art market opportunity." In Iain Robertson and Derrick Chong (eds.), *The Art Business*. London & New York: Routledge, pp. 82-96.

Andrew Rice "Jumping the shark: Damien Hirst and the cruel economics of art." *Bloomberg*, November 21, 2012. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-11-21/damien-hirst-jumping-the-shark>

Brian Moeran 1997 "Conclusion." Chapter 7 in his *Folk Art Potters of Japan*. London: Curzon/Routledge, pp. 149-155.

#### Other Readings

Stuart Plattner "A most ingenious paradox: the market for contemporary fine art." *American Anthropologist* 100 (2): 482-493.

Don Thompson 2008 "Art and artists," and "Christie's and Sotheby's." In *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark*. London: Aurum, , pp. 53-60 and 95-102.

### **Week 7: Reading Week (no class) (16/10/18)**

### **Week 8: Art Dealers (23/10/18)**

Howard Becker 1982 "Distributing art works." Chapter 4 in his *Art Worlds*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, pp. 93-130.

Don Thompson 2008 "Branded dealers," and "The art of the dealer." In *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark*. London: Aurum, pp. 27-40 and 41-52.

#### Other Readings

Joaquim Rius Ulldemolins 2012 "Gallery districts of Barcelona: the strategic play of art dealers." *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 42: 48-62.

**Homework: What are the main features of art markets and what is the role of an art dealer in them? (Write no more than 500 words and hand in at the beginning of class on October 30).**

### **Week 9: Aesthetics and Art Critics (30/10/18)**

Howard Becker 1982 "Aesthetics, aestheticians, and critics." Chapter 5 in his *Art Worlds*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, pp. 130-164.

Brian Moeran 1997 "Social and aesthetic ideals." Chapter 10 in his *Folk Art Potters of Japan*. London: Curzon/Routledge, pp. 207-209.

#### Other Readings

Toby A. Ten Eyck and Lawrence Busch 2012 "Justifying the art critique: Clement Greenberg, Michael Kimmelman, and orders of worth in art criticism." *Cultural Sociology* 6 (2): 217-231.

Tomoko Mamine 2013 "Displaying 'globality': art exhibitions and art criticism in Japan in the 1950s." *Third Text* 27 (4): 502-509.

Peggy Wang 1987 "Art critics as middlemen: navigating state and market in contemporary Chinese art, 1980s-1990s." *Art Journal* 72 (1): 7-19.

### **Week 10: Pricing Art (06/11/18)**

Don Thompson 2008 "Art and money," and "Pricing contemporary art." In *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark*. London: Aurum, pp. 177-188 and 189-200.

Olav Velthuis 2003 "Symbolic meaning of prices: constructing the value of contemporary art in Amsterdam and New York galleries." *Theory and Society* 32: 191-204 only.

Iain Robertson 2008 "Price before value." In Iain Robertson and Derrick Chong (eds.) *The Art Business*. London & New York: Routledge, pp. 29-54.

**Homework: What is the relationship between "art," aesthetics and money in an art world? (Write no more than 500 words and hand in at the beginning of class on November 13).**

### **Week 11: Collectors (13/11/18)**

Don Thompson 2008 "Charles Saatchi: branded collector." In *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark*. London: Aurum, pp. 85-93.

Eric Otto Wear 2001 "The sense of things: Chinese art in the lives of Hong Kong collectors and connoisseurs." Chapter 6 in Gordon Mathews and Tai-lok Lui (eds.) *Consuming Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 173-204.

### **Week 12: Artists (20/11/18)**

Don Thompson 2008 "Damien Hirst and the shark," and "Warhol, Koons, and Emin." In *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark*. London: Aurum, pp. 61-71, and 73-84.

Martin. G. Fuller 2015 "Less than friends, more than acquaintances: artists, markets and gallery openings in New York." *International Review of Social Research* 5 (2): 120-129.

## Week 13: Guest Lecture: Art Managers (27/11/18)

### Additional: Reputations

Howard Becker 1982 "Reputation." Chapter 11 in his *Art Worlds*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, pp. 351-371.

L.E.A. Braden 2016 "Collectors and collections: Critical recognition of the world's top art collectors." *Social Forces* 94 (4): 1483-1492 **only**.

Gladys E. Lang and Kurt Lang 1988 "Recognition and renown: the survival of artistic reputations." *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 79-109.