

From Plato to Instagram

Visual culture in the Western Tradition and its global implications

Lecture proposal for summer school in Shih Chien University (USC)

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Content of the lecture

The proposed lecture focuses on the issue of visual communication and its social functions in relation to the representational tradition. The starting point is the concept of imitative art proposed by the Greek philosopher Plato.

The subject of the lecture will be the history of European and American art seen in an extended geopolitical perspective – from ancient foundations to the end of the 20th century. The lecture will explain the most important changes and turns in this story. It will also show how today's global media has achieved its domination.

The emphasis will be put on the shift in the 2nd half of the 19th century, when the European avantgarde rejected the patterns of academic art. It was then that the creative potential of art was released, which manifested itself in stylistic diversity on a previously unknown scale. It was the first step to the democratization of art. The development of new media in the next era - photography, radio, cinema, television and finally the Internet - led to further reformulation in the field of art. Art lost its privileged position to the mass media, and advertising took over its aesthetic function, relegating artistic creativity to the position of abstraction and conceptualism.

The lecture will focus on the question of the place of art in the modern world. The status of social media as a new communication channel will be considered. Instagram, facebook, twitter, tik tok will be presented as tools of mass individualism.

Thematic Blocks

1. Ancient foundations of the visual culture (Plato, Greek art, Roman Art)
2. Western tradition of mimetic art (from Italian Renaissance to French academic art)
3. Fin de Siècle and the I wave of avantgarde art
4. Art under control – soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, communist China (comparison)
5. Futurism, Dadaism and Abstract art as a manifestation of democracy in culture
6. From graphic art to graphic design and advertisement – economic approach to creativity
7. New media and “individualized art” – marriage of art and life

The audience

The lecture is aimed at a wide audience - students regardless of the field of study. There are no formal or knowledge requirements as a prerequisite for the audience.