Prague Art and Design: Early 20th Century
HUMS 4090

Prague Summer Seminars 2014

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Course Description

In this class we will look at the various movements in Architecture, Art and Design in Prague from the turn of the 19th century to the aftermath of World War I. During this relatively short period of time Central Europe saw an unprecedented explosion of activity in all of the arts: from graphic design and the decorative arts to painting, sculpture and architecture. Through class discussions, readings, tours and museum visits we will examine the theories, the artists and the stylistic developments of this time. From Art Nouveau to Rondo-Cubism, through furniture, paintings and tea cups, we will experience the visual excitement of the design of an era still vibrantly present in the city of Prague.

The class will include visits to the Mucha Museum, the National Gallery’s collection of 19th and 20th century art and design, the Cubist Museum and the Art Nouveau Obecni Dum. We will consider the original works of Czech artists including Alphonse Mucha, Frantisek Bilek, Emil Filla, Jan Zrzavy, Ladislav Šaloun, Otto Guttfruend, Max Svabinsky, Jan Preisler, and Bohomil Kubista.

There will be lectures in the classroom followed by excursions and walking tours. The lectures are mandatory as they set the stage for the excursions to follow. Sketch projects will be assigned for each excursion to be recorded in the journals. Students are also expected to keep lecture notes in their journals and to refer to these notes during our discussions and excursions. The scheduled times of all excursions are subject to last-minute changes. Our schedule will be updated on a daily basis, please be prepared to be flexible.

Student Learning Objectives:

At the end of this course students will have developed an understanding of the artistic and design movements of the turn of the century in Prague. Through first-hand experience of venues retaining the décor of the era and critical analysis of original works of art students should acquire a keen perspective of the time and place and recognize this era’s importance as a pivotal point in art history.

Student Assignments:

On each excursion students will be given an assignment to analyze an individual work. These analyses should be recorded in sketchbooks and will be researched independently
and presented to the class along with the mid-term and final presentations.

This course requires each student to choose a series of works by one of the artists covered in class and complete a formal and subjective analysis of those works in mid-term and final audio/visual presentations.

Students will also work in small groups to research and present various artists and styles of art to the class at the mid-term and final presentations.

Students are asked to keep a journal/sketchbook, including lecture notes, sketch assignments and notations of their impressions of the various artists and styles we will examine. These journals will be reviewed the second and final week of the program.

Class Participation:

Class participation implies active involvement in the class. 10% of the final grade will be based on attendance, completion of readings and participation in discussions.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

Mid-term - Individual Presentations - 25%
Group Presentations - 15%
Final: Individual Presentations - 30%
Group Presentations - 20%
Class Participation and Journal - 10%

Grading Standard
A 100%; B 80-89; C 70-79; D 60-69; F 0-59.

Required Texts:
Collection of articles to be provided in class
Small hard-cover sketchbook (A5, 5x7, 6x8)

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory for all classes and cultural series events that take place on Wednesday evenings. Each absence will reduce the student’s final grade by five (5) points. All absences are unexcused, unless a medical report is provided. A five-minute grace period is allowed before a student is marked “late.” (Leaving the class early will be considered a “late,” as well.) Three “lates” make up one absence. After five absences the student will fail the class.
Statement on Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to http://www.ods.uno.edu.

Classroom Conduct:

Civility in the classroom and respect for the opinions of others is very important in an academic environment. Courteous behavior and responses are expected. No form of harassment (verbal, sexual, or physical) will be allowed.
2014 Assignments (Subject to change on location!!)
Introduction Presentation Tuesday 8 July

Your first assignment is a brief (5-minute) presentation to the class.

Please introduce yourself and give the class some incite as to why you are studying 20th century Art and Design in Prague.

Present a specific style (or styles) which you are interested in. Have at least one image available as illustration. Give some historical background, describe the stylistic characteristics and explain what it is about the style or styles that interests you. Please note that the style you choose does not have to be a 20th century style, it can be from any period you choose.

Mid-term Tuesday 22 July

part one

Individual Presentations Using the works analyzed on our excursions, present to the class your sketches, your impressions and your subjective opinions, along with independent historical research on each artist. You should identify the artist, the works by title, and set the works into the context of the turn of the century.

Each student will choose a Czech artist from this time period, (preferably one covered in class). The artist will be introduced historically at the mid-term presentation along with examples of their representative work.

part two

Group Presentations Students will work in small groups to research and present various artists and styles of art to the class.

Final Thursday 7 August

part one

Individual Presentations For the final presentations students will complete an extensive formal and subjective analysis of a series of work by one of the artists covered in class. This project will be presented to the class in a 10 to 15 minute audio/visual presentation. It will include illustrations of the chosen work, a thorough formal analysis, an historical overview (setting the work into the time it was created), and a thorough subjective review (what the work says to you and why).

part two

Group Presentations Students will work in small groups to research and present various
artists and styles of art to the class.

**Journal/sketchbook**

Students are asked to keep a journal, including lecture notes, sketch assignments and notations of their impressions of the various artists and styles we will examine. These journals will be reviewed the second and final weeks of the program.
Prague: Early 20th Century Art, Architecture and Design
2014 Lectures and Excursions

Various artistic and architectural styles are first presented in the classroom in lecture – audio/visual presentations with assigned readings, followed by excursions to visit examples of each. The class excursions are a most important component of the course. Using the city and its architectural monuments, museums and galleries as the textbook students see first-hand the various aspects that compose each artistic style. Using their class notes and assigned readings the students are prepared to participate in discussions examining works of art and architecture.

The first-hand experience of architecture, painting, sculpture and the decorative arts augments traditional classroom methods by allowing a deeper understanding through subjective appreciation. This teaching method has proven to be ideal for the intensive, short-term courses such as study abroad programs.

Proposed Calendar

WEEK ONE
Introductions in classroom

Lectures: Introduction
        Turn of the century Prague

Excursion: Area tour – the National Movement
A walking tour through the neighborhood near the classroom visiting the National Theater, built in 1883 by Josef Schultz, in the neoRenaissance style, and the adjacent Nova Scena complex, built in 1989 by Karl Prager. Passing by a Baroque palace, we will also visit significant examples of Art Nouveau, Modernism and Functionalism, ending at the National Museum, also by Josef Schultz, 1891, at the top of historic Wenceslas Square. This tour introduces the students to the area and introduces them to architectural styles from the Baroque through contemporary.

Lecture: Frantisek Bilek and Alphonse Mucha

Excursions: Bilek Villa and Mucha Museum

Frantisek Bilek was one of Prague’s most important symbolist artists. A sculptor and graphic artist, Bilek designed his own villa as a perfect gesamtkunstwerk, including all of its furniture and furnishings. Now the Bilek museum, the villa – the first with a flat roof in Prague – is an important expression of Bilek’s individual style during the Art Nouveau period. The exhibition contains Bilek’s monumental sculpture, fascinating black and white woodcuts and graphics, as well as fittings and furniture.
On the other extreme of the Art Nouveau style is Alphonse Mucha. Known as the father of Art Nouveau, Alphonse Mucha is well represented in this small museum. The Mucha Museum offers an instructive video on his life and his art, setting the stage for this era with film footage. The collection, often presented by a student guide, covers the wide variety of work produced in his provocative style.

WEEK TWO

Lecture: Prague Art Nouveau

Excursion: Obecni Dum
Completed 1912 as the Czech municipal house by only Czech craftsmen and artists, the Obecni Dum may be one of the best known art nouveau buildings in Prague. We are guided on a special tour through private salons and the concert halls of this historically and socially significant building. The tour is followed by a group discussion of assigned readings and Art Nouveau in the Prague cityscape.

Excursion: Art Nouveau Cubist Walking Tour
A walk along the embankment of the Vltava to the base of Vysehrad we will pass examples of art nouveau apartment houses by some of the primary architects with ornament by the foremost sculptors and artists of the time. At the base of Vysehrad we find the unique cubist apartments and villas, cubism in architecture unique to the Czech lands. Some of the best known Czech Cubist architects, including Chochol, Beyer, Belada and Kralicek are represented.

Lecture: Symbolism to Expressionism

Excursion: Collection of 19th and 20th century art
Prague National Gallery
We will visit the Veletrzni Palace, a monument of modernist architecture built in 1928 by Oldrich Tyl and Josef Fuchs, which today houses the National Gallery’s collection of Modern and Contemporary art. We will examine original works by important Czech artists from the 19th and 20th centuries including Max Pirner, Max Svabinsky, Jan Preisler, Emil Filla, and numerous other representatives of Czech art from the turn of the century to World War II, previously presented in readings and lectures. Students are given analysis and sketch assignments and allowed sufficient time to study several works in detail.

WEEK THREE

Lecture: Czech Modern Artists

Mid-term presentations - Tuesday 22 July
Excursion: Rudolfinum
This stunning NeoRenaissance concert hall and art gallery on the banks of the Vltava was built as the German counter to the Czech National Theater. Built between 1876 and 1884 by architects Josef Zitek and Josef Schultz, the Rudolfinum was named to commemorate Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria. Our program is dependent on current exhibitions. We will visit the gallery halls and follow with discussion in the café.

Vienna Excursion Thursday 24 - Sunday 27 July

WEEK FOUR

Lecture: Czech Cubism
The Czech Cubist Collection and The House of the Black Madonna

Excursion: Collection of 19th and 20th century Art
National Gallery
The Cubist collection has moved from the House of the Black Madonna to the Veletrzni Palace. We will make a second visit to the gallery to address the cubist movement. We will visit the museum’s extensive collection of Picasso and French art and examine the European influences on Czech cubism, including those elements unique to the Czech movement. We will examine works by the foremost Czech Cubists including Otto Guttfreund, Bohomil Kubista, Vaclav Spala, Capek and others. Paintings, Sculpture, Architectural models and drawings and furniture and decorative arts are on exhibit. Students are given sketch assignments after a brief discussion of the various artists while viewing multiple examples of their work.

Excursion: Kampa Museum
One of the newer museums in Prague, the Kampa Museum houses the collection of Jan and Meda Mladek. The exhibitions include work by artists from the turn of the century to contemporary. Emphasizing Frantisek Kupka and Otto Guttfreud we will examine the works of several important artists from this era.

Lecture: Functionalist Architecture in Prague
Introduction to Adolf Loos

WEEK FIVE

Vltava Perspective
An unusual perspective of the city is offered in this surprising tour through the center of Prague on the Vltava River.
Muller Villa
Designed by Adolf Loos, one of the fathers of Modernism, the Muller Villa is a gem of Functionalism. On a small, private tour we will experience the spatial flow of Loos’s famous “Raumplan.” This villa is an important masterwork in world architecture and contains original art by Jan Priesler, Kavan, and other masters of Czech art.

Review
Class Discussion/Individual Meetings

Final Presentations – Thursday 7 August

The scheduled times of all excursions are subject to last-minute changes. Our schedule will be updated on a daily basis, please be prepared to be flexible.

The unique opportunity to visit these museums, galleries and architectural monuments is one of the many advantages offered by the UNO Prague Summer Seminars. Many of our tours are private and not generally available to the public.