

minutes). Transatlantic Films. 1997. Distributed by Ambrose Video Publishing.

For a good introduction to film studies, please see: Gianetti, Louis D. *Understanding Movies*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2001 (9th ed.).

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Bringing the Classroom to Art: Art History and Modern Culture in Japan

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Bringing art into the classroom is a useful tool when teaching in such disciplines as history, religion, communications and literature, not to mention art history. It provides a means to make history and ideas come to life, and become manifest in human experiences both quotidian and extraordinary. This is usually accomplished by introducing slides, videos or picture books into the class experience. Those who are fortunate to live in the Cleveland area, such as myself, benefit from the unique opportunity to bring the classroom to a very fine and fulsome collection of art, the Cleveland Museum of Art, which serves as a wonderful teaching tool about Asian culture. My suggestion, however, is to remove the classroom even further from the home base, board a plane to the country of origin, encounter culture and utilize art in teaching first hand. This is precisely what I and a colleague did in March and April of 2001 when we took ten students to Japan for a month to learn in an interdisciplinary course the ideologies and institutions of Japan, with a heavy emphasis on art as an entrée into Japanese culture.

The interdisciplinary nature of our enterprise was the product of our very diverse disciplines. My colleague is a professor of communications and business management and I am an art historian. Together we created a three-course sequence, called a collegium at our college, which blended our interests and expertise. Our students completed courses in Japanese art history and communications between cultures with an emphasis on Japan—one very past oriented, the other focused on the present—before we left Ohio. In Japan the third course was called Ideologies and Institutions of Japan and through it we sought to combine, to apply, and to expand on the two preliminary courses.

Art monuments served to identify and clarify many of these ideologies and institutions. We began with an historical perspective, looking first at the monuments of early Japan in Nara and Kyoto. Visits to Buddhist temples, especially the enormous Nara Todaiji, enabled students to see the significance that Buddhism played in the development of Japanese identity. Clearly, the institution of Buddhism by

the 8th century was immense, bolstering the political power of the early emperors and establishing a power base of its own, which the movement of the capital to Kyoto (Heian-kyo) at the end of the century was intended to dissipate. The size of the structure alone can convey this, as well as the Buddha statues within. In addition, students saw there the way that temples and shrines were used by adherents and the familiar role that they play in the lives of people. The students knew the Indian source, which had been filtered through China and Korea, and this established the Asian roots of Japanese culture. And a brief walk to the Kasuga Taisha Shrine of the Fujiwara family allowed us to compare Shinto and Buddhist architecture and practices.

In Kyoto, where most temples were relegated to the outskirts of the city, students could perceive approaches to worship that stressed remote, removed, and esoteric practices of later eras. A study of gardens (via a guest lecturer) and an experience of a tea gathering allowed us to see the importance of the aesthetic components attached to temples, and especially to the ideology of Zen. At the Nijo Palace we encountered the political division of Japan that began in the Kamakura age, one that gave rise to a ruling shogunal institution supporting the now impotent emperor. Architecture sustained the secrecy and inaccessibility of the supreme command, while screen paintings symbolized the shogun's authority using forms drawn from nature. Walking through the building and around the grounds allowed students to imagine the Kyoto of the middle ages.

Our assignments for students encouraged the imaginative faculty. We gave each student the task of role playing "A Day in the Life" of some personage, famous or not. One was an emperor, one his empress; one was a Shinto priest, one a Buddhist; one was a samurai, one a farmer, another a merchant, another an actor, and so on. Their research was undertaken before we left and also from our travel reading list, especially Junichiro Tanizaki's (1932) *In Praise of Shadows*, C.J. Dunn's (1967) *Everyday Life in Traditional Japan*, and Ivan Morris's (1994) *The World of the Shinning Prince*. These projects were presented to the group at an appropriate site with as much creativity as students could muster. Some created a drama that they presented on the Shinto stage at the Hida Historical Village in Takayama (a reconstructed village consisting of 18th and 19th century farmhouses), a particularly apt location to learn of the farmer, the Buddhist priest and the merchant. Our shogun did her presentation at the Himeji Castle.

Other assignments took advantage of the unique opportunity of being there. Students each gave researched historical background for one site visit (The Golden Pavilion or the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, for example) and were assigned a "culture hunt" requiring them to find monuments on their own and engage in activities that required cultural interaction. Our purposes were ambitious, as we stated in our syllabus: To appreciate Japanese patterns of behavior and to recognize the ideological and institutional foundations of these patterns; to apply interdisciplinary models of analysis to patterns of behavior and develop explanations; to develop

the ability to critically observe and discuss (in written and oral forms) significant aspects of Japan; to engage in on site research through reading, interview and observation; and to improve our understanding of our own culture through the exploration of Japanese culture.

Painting, Poetry and Pedagogy: Teaching Chinese Imperial Art History

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At Hartwick College I teach the History of Chinese Imperial Art to undergraduate students. It's a leap for me as I was trained as an Italian Renaissance art historian and have struggled to learn enough about Chinese art and culture to allow me to teach them. I have been fortunate in my search. In the summer of 1992 I had the opportunity to attend an NEH summer seminar with Jason Kuo on teaching the arts of Imperial China and last year I participated in a seminar through the University of Pennsylvania that resulted in a three-week visit to Japan. Still it is not easy for either me or for the students. The amount of cultural information that an average student brings to class about Western Europe and the United States is phenomenal. The amount of knowledge they have about Asia, and China and Japan in particular, is correspondingly miniscule. Because of this, I try to approach the artworks in two different ways; directly, by looking at slides and assigning readings, and obliquely by bringing in other related disciplines. I have tried a variety of ways to teach the course so that it piques rather than petrifies student interest. I am going to discuss two of the more successful strategies I have employed. One uses poetry to try to expand students' cultural understanding and the other, more unusual, involves a studio component.

In the course, poetry becomes a companion to the art objects from the Zhou through to the Qing dynasties. Its importance remains constant even as its forms change. The class begins by analyzing some of the songs/poems from the *Book of Odes*.¹ The poems probably date back to the Zhou dynasty and they dovetail very beautifully with the enigmatic bronzes from the same dynasty. The bronzes are almost chilly in their craft mastery, large size and abstracted ornament. They certainly make the point that Chinese culture was well organized and highly developed but they do not invite the students into any understanding of the culture. The *Book of Odes*, however, does just that. The complaints about intrusive government officials and tax collectors given voice in *Big Rat Big Rat* have a timelessness that amazes the students. They know much more about taxes and government intrusions than they do about luxurious tombs and monumental bronze

vessels but the poem helps them to believe that they can begin to comprehend the artworks as well. Moreover there are other poems in the *Book of Odes* that students can use as an entrée into the culture. For example, *In the Meadow There's a Dead Deer*, a poem of seduction with allusions to death, is not as transparent as *Big Rat Big Rat*, but themes of seduction and death are popular with college students and they like the chance to imagine other people or poets with the same concerns. Altogether I use six or seven poems from the *Book of Odes*. The poems do not directly explain the artworks, but they do help the students reach back across the millennia.

As we move forward in time through subsequent dynasties, I try to use the poems themselves, as well as the poems and inscriptions found on actual paintings, to illuminate the art. Because Western notions about combining text and image are so different from Chinese ideas, one of my goals is to help students begin to understand the close connections between poetry, calligraphy, and painting. Students can accept the idea of a painter inscribing his or her own work, but the continuing commentary and plethora of seals added by later collectors and poets can be confusing for students.

Additionally, poems are useful in elucidating the politics of the various dynasties. Du Fu, a Tang poet, writes movingly of the unrest at the end of the dynasty. His poems give voice to societal difficulties and provide a mood for the art objects that the students study.² In fact, Du Fu's poem, *Spring Prospect*, makes a bitter counterpoint to the perceived optimism of the brightly colored Tang ceramics. The poem begins

The nation
Has been destroyed
Mountains and rivers remain
In the city
It is spring
Grasses and trees grow deep...

Two examples of the more specific interaction of poetry, painting, and politics that can, at first, elude students, and then excite them are Zhao Mengfu's *Sheep and Goat* from the Yuan dynasty and Shitao's *Reminiscences of the Chin-huai River* from the Qing. In *Sheep and Goat*, students struggle mightily to integrate the iconography and image. Sheep and goats seem far too innocuous to be the bearers of any pointed political meanings. It is only through the required reading of Chu-ting Li's article, "The Freer Sheep and Goat and Chao Meng-fu's Horse Painting,"³ that they are able to uncover and understand the political allusions in the painting and the importance of the later colophon commentary that follows Zhao Mengfu's own inscription.

A final example of the interaction of poetry and painting is Shitao's *Reminiscences of the Chin-huai River*. This image begins to reveal itself to the students even before the poem and the poet's biography are known. The claustrophobia of the mountain and sky, which overwhelm the small monk, alerts students to the mood of the album leaf.