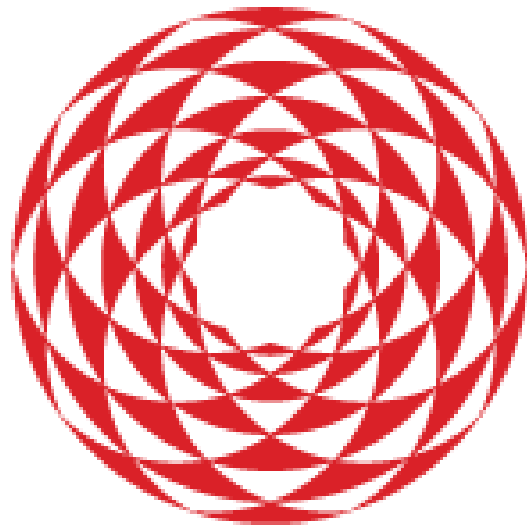


# VISUAL ARTS HANDBOOK



**ASHOKA**  
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ARTS  
ASHOKA UNIVERSITY

## Contents

1. Introduction to the Department of Visual Arts.....	Page 3
2. Requirements .....	Page 4
a. Minor	
b. Concentration	
3. Cross-listing Policy for Visual Arts.....	Page 6
4. ASP Guidelines .....	Page 7
5. Frequently Asked Questions .....	Page 8
6. Studio Guidelines.....	Page 9
7. Course Catalogue (Monsoon + Spring) .....	Page 10
a. Courses offered by the Department - Gateway Courses	
b. Courses offered by the Department - Elective Courses.....	Page 27
c. Courses cross-listed with Visual Arts	

## **The Department of Visual Arts**

The Department of Visual Arts at Ashoka University combines courses in Art History and Visual Culture with training in material, media and site specific aspects of Studio Arts. While the Art History and Visual Culture courses offer historical and philosophical contexts in which visual arts has been developed and practiced, the Studio Arts courses help the students learn the fundamentals of an art form and develop it through practice. Both the components work in tandem and help the student acquire an integrated understanding of art.

The gateway courses are designed to offer thematic overview of various disciplines and media practice that constitute the field of Visual Arts. Given the University's geographical and cultural location, the gateway courses introduce the students to the visual worlds of South Asian Art in its diverse form and material media. It offers critical training to some of the basic terms and methods of reading histories of South Asian Art as part of larger global cultural formations, explores sites of display of art in South Asia and beyond, and engages with art as practice of various media.

The elective courses are designed thematically to address specific questions that are central to the disciplinary fields that constitute the realm of Visual Arts. These courses often extend beyond South Asia to raise larger questions around form, style, media and site specificity of the visual image. They engage with processes of production, reproduction, circulation and the impact of these images on the viewing public, explore the shifting temporal and cultural locations of major art movements, and dwell on methodological challenges posed by the turn to critical global art history.

Faculty Members:

1. Rakhi Peswani
2. Sraman Mukherjee
3. Janice Pariat
4. Preeti Bahadur Ramaswami
5. Anni Kumari
6. Latika Gupta
7. Deepti Mulgund
8. Orijit Sen

Department Assistant Manager:

Rajendra Tiwari

Student Representative (term 2021-22):

## Requirements

### Minor:

To pursue a minor in Visual Arts, one must complete **six courses** in Visual Arts. These include courses offered by the Department along with those offered by other departments and cross-listed with Visual Arts (code VA).

For UG/ASP 2022 and onward: Four of the six courses taken should be gateway courses. The four **gateways** are a balanced mix of courses across art history and art practices and they are :

Histories of South Asian Art : From the Earliest Times to the Present  
Sites and Sights : Museums, Exhibitions and the Making of the Art  
Arts of our Times I (Mediums and Media in Contemporary)  
Arts of our Times II (Media as Material of Practice)

Rest of the two courses from the six mandatory courses for Minor pathway, can be any of the elective courses being offered by the department or cross listed courses from Visual Arts and other departments ( For a detailed list of elective courses, please scroll down to see courses on offer during the academic year 2021-22.)

### Concentration:

To pursue a concentration in Visual Arts, one must complete **four courses** in Visual Arts. These include courses offered by the Department along with those offered by other departments and cross-listed with Visual Arts (code VA).

For UG/ASP 2022 and onward: All four courses taken should be gateway courses, which are:

Histories of South Asian Art : From the Earliest Times to the Present  
Sites and Sights : Museums, Exhibitions and the Making of the Art  
Arts of our Times I (Mediums and Media in Contemporary)  
Arts of our Times II (Media as Material of Practice)

The Department recommends this sequence for the Visual Arts Gateway courses for batches graduating 2022 onwards. The department also recommends doing the two parts of Arts of our Times courses, but it is not mandatory to take these courses sequentially.

Semester	Recommended Sequence (for batches graduating in 2023 onwards) - Visual Arts Compulsory Gateway Courses
1 (Monsoon)	None
2 (Spring)	Arts of our Times II: Media as a Material of Practice
3 (Monsoon)	Arts of our Times I: Mediums and Media in the Contemporary   Histories of South Asian Art: From the Earliest Times to the Present
4 (Spring)	Sites and Sights: Museums, Exhibitions and the Making of the Art
5 (Monsoon)	None
6 (Spring)	None

Please note:

\*Gateway courses are offered once every academic year, and sometimes over the summer semester. Histories of South Asian Art and Arts of our Times I are offered in the Monsoon semester, whereas Sites and Sights and Arts of our Times II are offered in the Spring semester.

\*The listing of Gateway and Elective Courses is provided in the Course Catalogue, and is subject to change.

**\*Also note: No combination of co-curriculars would count as a minor/concentration elective course for visual arts as it has been in the past.**

## **Cross-Listing Policy**

While some of the courses offered by Visual Arts are cross listed with other Departments, the Department of Visual Arts also houses cross listed courses offered by other Departments. This is integral to the spirit of interdisciplinary enquiry that we seek to foster at Ashoka. Please note that all cross listing decisions are interdepartmental decisions keeping in mind the pedagogic objectives of specific courses.

Minor:

For UG/ASP 2022 and onward: A student completing a Minor in Visual Arts can take one such cross-listed elective course offered by another Department in conjunction with Visual Arts to count towards their minor.

Concentration:

For UG/ASP 2022 and onward: The number of permissible cross listed courses for students pursuing a concentration in Visual Arts offered by other Departments is zero, since there will be no academic space available for any as all four courses will be gateway courses.

## ASP Guidelines

A thesis with the Department can be of two kinds:

1. Visual Arts Thesis
  - Requirement for this include a concentration in Visual Arts
  - The student, along with completing the thesis, will be required to take two visual arts elective courses to complete a minor in the ASP year.
2. Interdisciplinary Thesis
  - Such a thesis can be co-hosted by any other Department at Ashoka University along with the Visual Arts Department
  - It is preferred that the student has done some visual arts gateway or elective courses
  - Home and host departments collaborating on the thesis need to be mentioned in the SOP
  - The SOP must mention certain specific areas of concern/ research interests in Visual Arts

The process to apply for an ASP thesis in the Department is as follows:

The student is encouraged to reach out to faculty within the Visual Art Department under whose supervision they're interested in developing their thesis further. The student has to subsequently submit the following documents:

1. Statement of Purpose: Addressing areas of research, specific set of questions; making a case for their interest in the field of visual arts; identification of the problem, its scope, and the approach they will take. (Word limit: 500-1000 words)
2. Writing Sample of about 1500-2000 words.
3. If a student is interested in pursuing a practice based approach during their ASP in visual arts, a portfolio revision must be submitted to the Department at the point of application.
4. Covering Letter
5. Academic CV: Important areas to highlight are list of courses completed at Ashoka, extracurricular activities/achievements, internships, publications. Additionally, no personal details except the student's name and email ID are required.

6. Any other accompanying documentation such as artwork.
7. Further discussions about viability of ASP (Ashoka Scholars' Programme - Undergraduate Capstone year including thesis) and MLS (Masters in Liberal Studies) thesis need to be discussed on lines of methodology course/ courses to be offered by the Department.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

- a. What are the mandatory courses to complete a minor in Visual Arts?

For UG and ASP 2022 onwards, the four mandatory courses are Histories of South Asian Art and Sites and Sights offered by Professor Sraman Mukerjee and Arts of our Times I and II by Professor Rakhi Peswani.

- b. What are the mandatory courses to complete a concentration in Visual Arts?

For UG and ASP 2022 onwards, the four mandatory courses are Histories of South Asian Art and Sites and Sights offered by Professor Sraman Mukerjee and Arts of our Times I and II by Professor Rakhi Peswani.

- c. Do any courses have any prerequisites?

Unless mentioned, most courses offered by the Department do not have prerequisites.

- d. Are courses to be taken in the order of levels (1000, 2000, 3000)?

It is not a mandatory requirement, but taking courses in the increasing order of levels is encouraged for the benefit of the students.



## Studio Guidelines

1. The studio is open for public use only between 10am - 6pm from Monday to Saturday. The Studio is closed on Sundays.
2. The studio cannot be accessed by the public during class hours – 2:50-4:30 on Wednesday and Friday, 8:30-11:30am on Monday, and 6:30-8:30pm on Wednesday.
3. Students will have to check out and check in all the materials they are using in a register kept with the Studio Manager. Any damage to the materials will have to be compensated by the student who is responsible for the same.
4. Students taking studio classes can use the studio between 6pm-9pm between Monday-Saturday to finish course work only after booking it by sending a mail to the student representative, Noor Khatra, at noor.khatra\_ug22@ashoka.edu.in at least 24 hours prior to when they want to use the studio.
5. The clay in the studio is primarily intended for the students enrolled in the following courses:. If students who are not enrolled in the same want to make use of the clay then they need to take the permission from concerned studio course faculty, who is teaching the course on clay modelling.
6. The studio provides the following materials to students (enrolled in VA courses + rest of the students): drawing boards, easels, stools, printmaking press, glass table for printmaking, brayers, Intaglio ink, silkscreens, pottery wheels, carving and ceramic tools, cutting mats, paper cutting knives, metal scales, measuring tapes, and masking tape.
7. Students will have to get their own paper, paints, paintbrushes, stationary, and printmaking blocks (wood/lino) and tools for use in the studio.
8. It is important to not leave materials lying around the studio and to keep the studio clean. Make sure you're responsible for your own space and that you don't damage others' artwork kept in the studio.

## Course Catalogue

**Gateway Courses offered by the Department across the Monsoon and Spring semester:**

### **Gateway courses - Monsoon Semester 2021-22**

#### **VA-2004: Arts of Our Times I**

**Instructor:** Rakhi Peswani

**Course Level:** 1000-2000 Gateway course

**Course Prerequisites for students (if any):** No pre-requisites

**Class schedule:** Friday morning, 8:30 am - 11:40am.

**Office hours:** Thursday afternoon, 2pm - 3pm

#### **Course Description:**

This course will enable the fundamentals of contemporary artistic practices through the structures of Materiality, Space, Place, Time and (Im)materiality. Students will be urged to develop questions and expressions through a basis in practice of visual and other media forms. The course will engage experimentation in 2Dimensional, 3 Dimensional and time based media to arrive at ideas and concepts through formations of repetitions.

#### **Framework and Objectives:**

The objective of this course is to enable students with foundational clarity in contemporary artistic practices and its possibilities. The course is designed to provide students certain potentiality in observing or asking difficult/complex concerns or reflections with and through varying media of artistic practices.

The course will be based on certain guidelines of media specificity and expansion of concepts/messages through medium.

Since it is a studio based course, certain introductions to histories of abstraction and installation art will be provided through the framework of revisionist art practices after 1960s as well as introductions to affective possibilities of artistic languages. Both these realms will be expanded

through making of artistic forms, referring histories of art practices and artists, students presentations and classroom discussions

The overarching objective of the course is to provide students with faith and confidence in visual/aural/verbal languages that amalgamate other sense perceptions and to provide certain foundational understanding of language and affect in artistic forms.

**Learning outcomes:**

The objective of this course is to enable students with foundational clarity in contemporary artistic practices and its possibilities. The course is designed to provide students certain potentiality in observing or asking difficult/complex concerns or reflections with and through varying media of artistic practices.

The course will be based on certain guidelines of media specificity and expansion of concepts/messages through medium.

Since it is a studio based course, certain introductions to histories of abstraction and installation art will be provided through the framework of revisionist art practices after 1960s as well as provide introductions to affective possibilities of artistic languages. Both these realms will be expanded through making of artistic form and references towards art practices.

The overarching objective of the course is to provide students with faith and confidence in visual/aural/verbal languages that amalgamate other sense perceptions and to provide certain foundational understanding of language and affect in artistic forms.

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**Histories of South Asian Art: From the Earliest Times to the Present**

**Course Code: VA-3006/ HIS-4007-1**

**Instructor Sraman Mukherjee**

**Level 1000 to 2000 for Visual Arts and 3000 for History (Gateway course for Visual Arts and Elective Course for History)**

**Pre-requisites:** This course has no pre-requisites

**Course Description**

What is Art and who is it meant for? What is specifically South Asian about South Asian Art? What does it mean to think of South Asia and Art as analytical categories? Did South Asian Art always exist? Or were historical processes involved in the making of the field? Where do we locate the “genesis” of art in South Asia? Did art forms in South Asia emerge in a zone of cultural and social isolation? Or can we trace trajectories of trans-regional contacts, encounters, and exchanges as central to the shaping of the field of South Asian Art? What is space of tradition and innovation in the visual arts of South Asia? Did arts of South Asia “influence” artistic practices in other regions? How did artists at different points in history think about the region we identify as South Asia?

Seeking to address some of these questions, this course examines aspects of the visual arts of South Asia from its earliest traces in cave paintings and stone implements to sculpture, painting, illustrated manuscripts, calligraphy, and architecture. The course follows a chronological scale, from pre-history to c. 1980s. The vast geographical as well as the temporal span of the field will restrict the course from delivering an encyclopedic survey. Instead it will prioritize intensive analysis of selected themes. Rather than placing the teleology of South Asian “art” solely in the context of changing dynastic histories, the course takes up specific themes in art across a range of objects, artefacts, archaeological sites, built spaces, religious and political symbols, and institutions of art pedagogy and exhibitions. In the process we address the questions of image, icon, and representations of body, landscape, portraiture in the context of social and ideological changes, aesthetic turns, shifting patrons and markets, and introduction of new material media. The course will probe both ‘South Asia’ and ‘South Asian Art’ as stable (art) historical categories and map the new methodologies and vocabularies employed by art historians.

Class discussions will form the basis for museum and (virtual) gallery visits to the National Museum of India (New Delhi), NGMA (New Delhi), National Handloom and Handicrafts Museum (New Delhi), Indian Museum (Kolkata), British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum and the MET which will enable us to study the works of art in their institutional locations and explore the visual dynamics of organization of exhibition spaces.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, we will be able to:

- a) Identify and analyze aspects of works of art and visual images in different material and medium using appropriate vocabulary.
- b) Explore the main trends in the development of Art History and Visual Culture by accessing the critical essential skills.
- c) Evaluate the approaches of artists, art historians, visual anthropologists and curators to the field of visual arts.
- d) Develop the interests for a future training in critical art historical training and art curatorial programme.

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### **Methods in Art History**

**Course Code: VA 4001-1**

**Course Specifics: Compulsory/ Gateway course for students pursuing ASP Capstone thesis or MLS Thesis in Visual Arts.**

**Prerequisites:** The course is restricted to students pursuing ASP Capstone thesis or MLS Thesis in Visual Arts.

**Class Meets Mondays and Wednesdays 10:10 am to 11:40 am**

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm or by prior appointment

### **Course Description**

This course introduces theories and methods of art history that have played a major role in its intellectual and professional formation of the discipline. From the pre-disciplinary cusp of Vasari and artistic biography in the Renaissance, the course will explore the origins of art historical scholarship in the eighteenth century, and then touch on a wide range of subsequent approaches, including Marxist, feminist, and post-colonial interpretations of art. The course approaches the discipline of art history as an archival mediated site of cultural critique and construction. Special attention will be given to the adequacy of established art-historical paradigms of formal, stylistic, and iconographic analysis in dealing with the “expanded field” of visual studies and image theory today. In addition, some consideration will be given to the professional structure of art history and visual studies as an increasingly “globalized” mode of inquiry.

### **Learning Outcome**

The course is designed to help MLS and ASP Capstone students in Visual Arts develop their specific research skills for writing their thesis in Art History.

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### **Gateway courses: Spring Semester 2021-22**

**Arts of Our Times II - Media as Material of Practice**

**Course Code: VA-3054**

**Instructor Rakhi Peswani**

**Course Level: Level 1000/2000**

**Gateway course**

**Course Prerequisites for students (if any): Recommended course as prerequisite (not mandatory) Arts of Our Times I: Mediums and Media in Contemporary**

**Description of the Course:**

This course will enable students to inculcate fundamentals of contemporary artistic practice through material or immaterial interventions within certain critical contexts of their choice. Students will be urged to develop questions and expressions through a basis in non-functional or fictional routes, basing their work in visual and/or other media forms. Students will be urged to produce a line of enquiry as an expression, in the formation of drawings, journaling, published material/blogs or any kind of public exposition of their ideas. Social/cultural contexts will be seen as terrains that enable artistic concerns through creative questions. Channels for information and communication will be seen as possible mediums to investigate and experiment in creation of artistic practices. 2 Dimensional, 3 Dimensional, time based media and other media forms will be explored to locate contexts of location and circulation. Arts will be seen as possible critical tool of communication, through interventions, provocations, positions, and reflections in social/political contexts.

### **Learning outcomes:**

- \* To enable critical artistic practices outside the confines of studio based enquiry.
  - \* Enable a framework of practice that considers media as an amalgamation of social, political, cultural / aesthetic contexts and as a potential tool of creative and critical thinking.
  - \* To enable articulation of critical concerns through creativity and artistic continuities.
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## **Spring Semester 2022**

### **Sites and Sights: Museums, Exhibitions and the Making of the Art**

Course Code: VA-2005/ HIS-3802-1

#### **Course Specifics**

Class Meets: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:50 am to 1:20 pm

Office Hours: Wednesdays, Mondays 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm or by prior appointment

No Prerequisites

#### **Description:**

This is a gateway (compulsory) course for students pursuing a Minor/ Concentration in Visual Arts (both across UG/ and ASP. The course is cross listed with History and can be taken up as a Major/ Minor elective course by students of History. The course is also open for credit and audit to students across all departments (UG/ ASP/ MLS/ Graduate Studies).

#### **Overview**

What is Art and how do sites and spaces of encounter with the visual image condition our understanding of works of art? Seeking answers to these fundamental questions in art history and visual culture, this course brings in dialogue the works of art with the spaces that such works have come to inhabit in our present world – museums, art galleries, and other spaces of visual exhibitions. Moving beyond the established trajectories of looking at exhibitions, museums, and gallery spaces as storehouses of masterpieces of Art, or merely as spaces of ordering, classifying,

and displaying objects and images, we will look closely at how exhibitionary practices of museums and public art galleries, constitute the very category Art around a select body of objects and images. Beginning with early modern royal and notable private collections, and cabinet of curiosities across the world, the course will explore the specific moments of the coming into being of public museums and art galleries, freak shows and world exhibitions in Europe and across different parts of the world. It will explore how politics of collection, museum acquisition, display, and repatriation are tied with larger questions of colonialism, war, loot, postcolonial nationalist reassertions, and postwar encounters with race and ethnicity. With a specific focus on Asia, the course will map the connected global trajectories of art museums, art galleries and art fairs as diverse ways of engaging with the visual image. In the process it will highlight the role of the artists, curators, and museum/ gallery visitors in the production of a complex set of dialogues around artistic and curatorial visions. The course will end by looking at contemporary South Asia, mapping the challenges of redesigning exhibitionary orders of older museums and art institutions and spread of museum display modes for different intent in commemorative sites, theme parks, memorials, and new temples. This co-constitution of art and art museums will be addressed during class discussions and during visits to local galleries, museums, theme parks, and temples - to the Indian Museum, Kolkata, the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi the National Museum, New Delhi, the National Handloom and Handicrafts Museum, New Delhi, the Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal, Nodia, the Swaminarayan Akshardham Complex, New Delhi, the British Museum, London and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, we will be able to:

- a) Explore the main trends in the development of Art History, Visual Culture and Museum Studies by accessing the critical essential skills.
- b) Evaluate the approaches of artists, art historians, and curators to the field of visual arts and museum studies
- c) Explore curatorial practices in the art world
- d) Develop the interests for a future training in art curatorial programme and critical museum studies.

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## **Elective courses offered across Monsoon and Spring Semesters**

**(depending on Faculty availability)**

### **Understanding Art**

**Course Code: VA-2079-1**

**Course Instructor – Janice Pariat**

**Course Level – 2000 Elective**

**Course Prerequisites for students (if any): None**

**Description of the Course:** This course explores the definitions of art developed by societies from the ancient Greeks to our globalised world. ‘What is art?’ is the question posed as we consider objects and activities in settings both remote in time and place and present around us. It attempts to build a critical language for classifying and evaluating a broad range of visual forms of expression. The disciplines of aesthetics, hermeneutics, iconography, and iconology are explored in order to find an approach that works across the cultures East and West. The course looks into connoisseurship, taste, and the role of the institutions of the art world.

**Learning outcomes**

- Demonstrate knowledge in various theories of art from Plato to Danto
- Be familiar with the views of at least four philosophers of art
- Critically evaluate at least two of the major problems in the philosophy of art
- Distinguish between classificatory and evaluative approaches to art
- Formulate their own critical responses to theories and problems in the philosophy of art

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**On Photography – Histories, Theories, Practice**

**(offered in Spring Semester 2021-22)**

**Course Code: VA 3018-1**

**Instructors: Rakhi Peswani, Sraman Mukherjee**

**Course Level: 2000 to 3000 level**

**Elective course**

**Course Pre-requisites for students (if any) :** Curiosity, interest in photography .

**Description of the Course:**

This course will bring together image making histories, concerns, theories and practices, based on photographic techniques and technologies. The course will comprehensively introduce proto-photographic methods and re-trace those with modern and contemporary material as well as some nineteenth and twentieth century cultural reactions and theories of photographic image-forms.

Considering its interdisciplinary nature, the media of photography will be introduced and explored through its contemporary usage as well as creative possibilities, bringing in perspectives from Art History, Visual Culture as well as artistic practice of the form.

**Learning outcomes :**



1. To recognize and locate photographic image-making language as a nuanced process with historical and theoretical underpinnings.
  2. To frame (reading) and craft (making) photographic practices from the discourse of technique, technology and aesthetics.
  3. To discern and gain confidence in situating and making of photographic image forms.
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**Everyday Life and Artistic Practices  
(Offered in Monsoon semester 2021-2022)**

**Course Code: VA3003-1**

**Instructor: Rakhi Peswani  
Course Level : Elective 3000**

**Course Pre-requisites for students:** Prior coursework in Studio Practice based Visual Arts courses will be helpful to focus on specific areas of Everyday life.

**Course Requirements:**

The course will have both practice and theory based components, carrying equal emphasis. Thus the students will be required to engage in reading and writing, as well as create visual material over classroom exercises. Methods of collecting, collating, transforming and working with this will be instructed over designed tasks and exercises. All the explorations and notes will be amalgamated along with work production.

**Description of the Course:**

Through the framework of Everyday Life, this course will structure artistic practices as refined tools to trace, highlight and discern various social and political (dis)continuities that are seemingly imperceptible and yet embedded within the sphere of our everyday lives.

The course will engage students with certain frames of practice and theory, enabling them to develop critical and creative tools to understand and articulate the nuanced politics of everyday life.

As a Visual Arts course, the students will be facilitated towards exploring and expressing their everyday lives as a storehouse for concerns, revisions and research. Through the medias of mass-production and mass circulation, students will be urged to excavate the everyday life

**Learning outcomes:**

The course will encourage students to create critical lenses to reflect on contemporary life inundated with mass media of production, consumption and regeneration. Theoretical tropes of strategies and tactics will be introduced to reflect on contemporary times.

As methods to develop an approach to art practice in everyday life, tropes of fiction, play, story-telling, repetition, irony, humour, mimicry, farce, tension and suspense in language will be expanded with art references.

Students will be urged to explore and create visuals, namely through the media of drawing, photography, found materiality, moving images, sound, visual and material formations of written language through poetry and prose, print or digital channels of media.

The thrust of the course will be to encourage students to frame and create a 'body' of artistic works that bring out clarity, positions, language on everyday life.

Emphasis will also be given to intersect discourses on everyday life with positions and propositions of chosen media forms.

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### **Visual Culture of Indian Paintings: Courtly Traditions (Offered in Monsoon 2021-22)**

**Course Code: VA 2001/ HIS 3806**

**Instructor: Preeti Bahadur Ramaswami**  
**Level : 2000**  
**Course Prerequisite: None**  
**Attendance Policy: None**

**Course Description:** This course offers a critical survey of miniature paintings made for Mughal, Rajput and Decani courts from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries in India. It will focus on this period but also look at the sources of these traditions within Persian and Indian schools of paintings on the one hand, and their production beyond the eighteenth century into the present on the other, as contemporary miniatures made in India and Pakistan. The course will open ways of entering the intensely visual fields of these paintings for students. It will map the field by exploring schools, workshops and ateliers and offer an understanding of style as a dynamic tool, both for artists and patrons. Following this, the course will focus on themes both as subject matter of the paintings, and for understanding the affective, cultural and political value of these works. Themes will include the relationship of texts and paintings, representation of music, devotion, and courtly etiquette

#### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon completing this course students will be able to:

- identify major schools of miniature paintings that flourished in the subcontinent,
- appreciate intensely cosmopolitanism cultures in pre -modern India through visual traditions.
- assess ways in which these traditions have been re-calibrated in contemporary contexts by artists from India and Pakistan.

**Arts, Crafts and Performative practices from Central India: Chartering Identities  
(Offered in Spring Semester 2021-22)**

**Course Code: VA 3001/PA 3009**

**Instructor: Preeti Bahadur Ramaswami**

**Level: 3000**

**Course description:**

This course will focus on critically examining trajectories in artisanal and performative practices from the region of central India in post-Independence India. The states of Madhya Pradesh and the recently created state of Chhattisgarh will form the ambit of discussions. The course will acquaint students with case histories of practitioners, to trace trajectories of transformation. It will engage with questions of caste and community, agency and selfhood to understand the shaping of art forms and their contexts as well as the role and modes of interventions in these practices, including the work of anthropologists, scholars, museums and institutions, and the market. Students will critically engage with discourses surrounding the representation of these forms, including the binaries of art versus craft, or the categories of folk and tribal.

**Learning outcomes:**

What are the forces that shape the lives and practices of individuals referred to in public discourse as craftsmen, or 'folk' and 'tribal' artists in post-independence India? How much agency do they have over their lives and practice and to what extent are they 'manipulated' by 'outside' mediators? How do caste and community shape their practice, and to what extent is it transformed when negotiating spaces beyond traditional contexts? And how do tradition and modernity parley with each other in the shaping of their careers? This course is designed to make students actively debate and engage with these issues and beyond, through case studies of practitioners of both crafts and performative practices from Central India. Oral epics, metal sculptures, clay reliefs, 'Gond' painting, body art (tattooing) are some of the practices that will form the focus of discussion. Students will also examine shifts in representation in museums and exhibitions and debate them.

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**Drawing as Extended Play  
(Offered in Spring Semester 2021-2022)**

**Course Code: VA 3025-1**

**Instructor: Anni Kumari**

**Course Level**

**Elective 3000**

**Course Prerequisites for students (if any):** None

**Course Description:** Can drawings be dialogues about provisionality, uncertainty, and change? Can drawings be explored as collaborative reflections on politics, history, identity, and culture? What is the purpose and relevance of drawing in contemporary times? In what ways can we think of drawings as something beyond, materials, materiality, skills, and techniques?

The course encourages students to engage with multi possibilities of drawings -as a thinking and visualization tool; as a visual tool to record factual details; as a process of blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality; and as a work of art meant to be viewed and admired by an audience. Through a practice-led approach, the course takes the students through various analog and digital processes that involve the creation of a set of drawings, transforming the drawings into GIFs, creating free-standing cut-outs, using the cut-outs for shadow projections and digital animations. Students will also be exposed to printmaking techniques, including drypoint, Lino, and woodcut, and will learn to experiment with text and sounds.

The core emphasis of the course is to 'free' the drawings from their background and allow them to make an intervention in space, time, memory, and history.

Classes will typically include experimentation with drawings of bodies in motion, representation of the human figure using lines, thinking of bodies in terms of positive and negative space, and the transformation of the image into a character. The assignments are aimed at encouraging students to think of the theatrical possibilities of drawing, assuming their role as that of a theatre director, planning the various stages of the composition and its interplay with light, sound, and text.

**Learning outcomes**

- An understanding of drawing as a visual language with multi-dimensional possibilities.
- Experience of working with a range of drawing mediums and techniques.
- Practical understanding of working with free-standing cut-outs, shadow projections, GIFs, and drawing based video animations.
- An insight into processes that enable the translation of concepts/ideas/emotions into visual forms.
- Motivation to realize that visuals play a strong role in everyday communication.

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**Figurative Drawing**

**(Offered in Monsoon semester 2021-22)**

**Course Code: VA 2005-1**

**Instructor: Anni Kumari**

**Course Level**

**Elective 2000**

**Course Prerequisites for students (if any):** None

**Course Description:** The course focuses on the exploration of the human body using drawing as a formal and conceptual tool. Through a practice led approach students will have the opportunity to develop a three-dimensional understanding of anatomy and body structure by engaging with a wide range of materials, techniques and processes including cut-outs, wood-cut printmaking, stenciling, tracing & enlarging.

The course encourages students to think of observation based drawings as a process of dialogue between the physical and the visceral by working through a series of processes that reveal the transformation of the image at each stage. It values not just accuracy and attention to detail, but also the emphasis on developing a personal vocabulary by bringing in socio-anthropological layers of association with the body.

The course aims at presenting a wide angle perspective to figurative drawing with a focus on subjective visual explorations. It seeks to offer an insight into artistic practices wherein the human figure plays a pivotal role in communicating ideas, philosophies and experiences related to diverse socio-political, historical references. It is envisaged to familiarize students with skills and techniques that enable them to connect concepts, processes and materials into a concise whole through a hands-on approach.

Rethinking body beyond a representational image, as an entity with constant trans-mutative possibilities in terms of form, functionality and aesthetics. Probing the ideas of beauty, identity, sexuality, and gender and space-time memory in the context of the body and the human figure. Reflecting on overlapping, erasure and incision as acts layered with emotive and intuitive sensibilities.

### **Learning outcomes**

- An understanding of drawing as a visual language with multi-dimensional possibilities.
  - Experience of working with a range of drawing mediums and techniques.
  - An insight into processes that enable the translation of concepts/ideas/emotions into visual forms.
  - Motivation to realize that visuals play a strong role in everyday communication.
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**Title : Caves: Surfaces, Shrines, Art, Architecture  
(Offered in Monsoon Semester 2021-22)**

**Course Code: VA 2007**

**Course Instructor: Dr. Deepti Mulgund**

**Level of the Course: 1000/2000/3000.**

**Prerequisites: None.**

### **Course Overview:**

As natural geological formations, caves provided humans with the earliest surfaces for leaving behind enduring visual accounts. Their status between ‘nature’ and ‘culture,’ meant that they have long been associated with sacred spaces in Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. They also serve as a large corpus of art and architectural histories. While hugely labour-, time- and capital-intensive, what made caves popular across religious and political formations, and for a large period of human history? Delving into this, and allied questions, the proposed course will promote engagement with the histories of rock-cut art and architecture from the South Asian Subcontinent. Reflecting on the foundational relationship, between caves and the discipline of art history, students will deepen their understanding of issues of iconography, the relationship between religion, art and architecture, religious and philosophical formations such as monastic orders and their impact upon stylistic changes, artistic patronage and royal power, etc.

The course envisions advancing two tracks of study, viz. chronology and thematic concerns. The chronological component will introduce students to key sites and the attendant questions of architectural and iconographic developments. The sites considered will include: Bhimbetka, Lomas Rishi cave, Khandagiri/Udayagiri, Karle, Bhedsa, Kanheri, Ajanta, Badami, Elephanta, Mamallapuram, Ellora, among others.

Thematic concerns will include: historical methods and the ‘discovery’ of sites, the role of caves in fashioning neo-revivalist projects (e.g. Ajanta murals’ constitutive role in forging an ‘Indian’ visual language) and as spaces of artistic transmission, through long-term 19th century projects such as the copying of its murals. Underscoring the many lives of these sites, one theme explored will be the conversion of cave shrines into ‘monuments’ under colonial governance and the consequent impact upon questions of public access; Elephanta in western India will be considered as a case-study. Taken together, these case studies and themes will equip students to carry out iconographic, historiographic and critical analyses of Indian art history.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of the course, students will learn:

1. Key art historical skills, such as the reading of architectural plans, holistic analysis of sites, analyzing primary sources such as field reports and a close-study of images and iconography.
2. The process of building a ‘context’ for reading images by developing questions around iconography, historiography and socio-political developments.
3. A historically informed understanding of human interactions with the landscape and natural formations, and learning to problematize the nature/culture binary.
4. The ability to develop new, independent research pathways in disciplines such as art history, anthropology, sociology, religious studies, etc.

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**Title - The Viewer of Art in Modernity: Methodologies and Approaches to Reception  
(Offered in Spring semester 2021-22)**

**Course Code: VA 3010**

**Course Instructor: Dr. Deepti Mulgund**

**Level of the Course : 2000/3000**

**Prerequisites: None**

## **Course Description**

Serving as an introduction to the sub-field of art reception, this course will equip students with a foundational, and historically-informed understanding of the viewer of art. Privileging a qualitative approach to reception, the course will lead students to understanding the viewer of art as a historically- determined and dynamic figure, rather than a static and/or universal agent. By paying attention to the shifting definitions, expectations and constructions of the viewer, students will engage with the idea of what is at stake in defining the viewer of art at a particular moment in time; in doing so, they will familiarize themselves with the processes and institutions of culture in the modern world. The course's objective is to promote reflection on the viewer within students' own artistic practice, as well as developing a deeper understanding of the institution of art and its intersection with modern public culture. Beginning with religious art, the course will proceed to an interdisciplinary understanding of modern art and its relationship with the viewer. Students will draw upon methods from art history, museum studies, urban studies, philosophy, sociology; in addition to relevant secondary material from these disciplines, they will also engage with artists' manifestos and select quantitative studies.

## **Learning Outcomes:**

Upon the completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Combine qualitative and quantitative methods to holistically understand reception
- Examine the history of modern art, schematically, through the critical vantage point of reception
- Recognize artistic strategies, tropes and gestures that foreground the artist's address to the viewer
- Develop a critical understanding of how art and its institutions shaped/can shape public culture

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Title : **Visual and material cultures of the Himalayas.**  
(Offered in Monsoon Semester 2021-22)

**Course Code: VA 2006**

Course Instructor: **Latika Gupta**

Level of the Course: **1000/2000/3000**

Prerequisites: None

## **Course Description:**

This course focuses on the Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Tibet to understand how art, material and ritual cultures are intrinsically connected with the idea of 'place'. How did the field of 'Himalayan Art' emerge? Where do we 'locate' this field; which geographical areas and religions are made emblematic of this discipline; which cultures are excluded and why? The course will

examine how places, cultures and people are constructed through representations — visual and written — both by ‘outsiders’ as well as local communities. Students will engage with critical questions about the ethics of representation in imaging ‘other’ places and people, the political and social processes that inform the making of ‘tradition’, and the entanglements of politics and culture in the formation of regional and national identities.

Methodologically, the course will explore a wide archive of material from the 10<sup>th</sup> century to contemporary times. It will include colonial and contemporary photography, travel accounts, art historical writing, temple and monastery sites, performative rituals, museum displays, films and representations in popular culture. A key area of study will be major museum collections of Himalayan art. How were these collections built and in what historical circumstances? What curatorial strategies are used to reconstruct the sacred auras of objects? How are objects of worship segregated into categories of art and ethnographic things? How is culture constructed through acts of museumization? The course will examine the recent museum-making impulse in the Himalayas through case studies of a range of museums situated in these borderlands — war memorial museums, community museums of conflict and trade route artifacts, and museums in Buddhist monasteries to understand the relationship between heritage and religion, the impact of the movement of things from sacred sites to ‘secular’ museums, and to ask how a politics of remembrance may manifest in cultural production. The course will conclude with an introduction to contemporary Tibetan art and Tibetan Buddhist culture-in-exile.

### **Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the course, students:

- will be familiar with the broad field of the visual and material cultures in the Himalayas as well as major art-historical sites in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.
- will learn about major museums and collections of Himalayan Art and be able to critically analyze the framing of objects as art/ ethnography, and basic questions of provenance research and label writing in object displays.
- will be conversant with critical questions around ‘heritage’, the politics of museums and the role of ‘tradition’ in the construction of contemporary cultural identities.
- will acquire critical tools to interrogate the nature and impact of ‘representation’ of regions, cultures and communities in images, writing and art history.
- will be able to critically ‘read’ images and texts, with a focus on meaning making through vocabularies and terminologies, and ‘apply’ this thinking in a practical curatorial project.

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Course Title: ***In Situ: architecture, sculpture and painting in the Western Himalayas***  
(Offered in Spring Semester 2021- 2022)

**Course Code: VA 3009**

Course Instructor: **Latika Gupta**

Level of the Course: **2000/3000**

Prerequisites: None



**Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to the architecture, sculpture and paintings of Buddhist temples and monasteries in the Western Himalayas, with a focus on extant sites in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh. Students will study major sites of art historical and cultural importance, while tracing their roots and interconnections to developments in art, religion, iconography and aesthetics in Kashmir, Bihar, Tibet and Nepal.

The course focuses on studying monasteries and temples through their geographical location, their usage, and changes in structure and style in response to religious and socio-political developments. The artistic strategies employed, the material used in making paintings and sculptures will be explored in relation to their architectonic contexts as well as the ritual requirements of different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Students will be familiarized with artistic styles from the late 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards and the major iconographic programmes and deities of the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon.

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of this course, students:

- Will be conversant with major Tibetan Buddhist temples and monasteries in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.
  - Will have the ability to ‘read’ sites as architectonic spaces, and study the architecture, sculptures and paintings in relation to their usage.
  - Will be able to identify major deities of the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon and identify stylistic features of early Tibetan Buddhist art.
  - Will be familiar with developments in the art of the region in conjunction with changes in religion and socio-political contexts of patronage.
  - Will be able to write concise art historical notes in the nature of museum catalogue entries.
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**Course Title**

**Nonfiction Comics: Explorations in Visual Research and Narration  
(Offered in Monsoon Semester, 2021-22)**

Course Code: VA 2008

**Level: 2000, 3000**

**Instructor: Orijit Sen**

**Course Description**

In an era which some commentators have described as the ‘golden age of the documentary’, comics – particularly non-fiction comics - have emerged as a persuasive new form of narrative art situated at the intersection of the visual, the textual, the spatial and the temporal. This course is designed to lead students through a critical study of the history, semiotics and structures of comics to the techniques and methods of researching and creating non-fiction comics.

**Course Requirements**

The course will have theory and practice components. Students will be required to engage in reading and writing as well as drawing from life, taking photographs, collaging, tracing and digital image making and manipulation. Although each student will be required to complete an individual project, they will be encouraged to interact/collaborate and share skillsets and resources with each other as far as possible. Apart from research and writing skills, basic drawing and photography skills are a must.

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**Title of the course: Comics For Social Media**

**(Offered in Spring Semester, 2021-22)**

Course Code: VA 2009

**Level: 1000, 2000**

**Instructor: Orijit Sen**

The rapid and almost universal spread of internet in the past two decades has generated a large number of interactive online platforms and social media spaces. These offer novel and complex media and means for comics artists/producers to connect with their readerships. In terms of both capabilities and reach, online comics offer powerful new ways of not just communicating but also of forming communities. It is no longer a one way or even two street. What we have now are intricately interconnected networks.

As predicted by comics theorist Scott McCloud and others, the medium of comics has gained a new, different and expanded life in the digital age, while continuing it's innovative development in it's traditional domain of print. This course will look at the challenges posed by the burgeoning new form of digital comics and consider the co-dependencies of print and digital media in the comics world.

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will receive inputs and engage in dialogue and analysis on the new relationship between graphics, text, animations and sound. The hitherto unprecedented role offered to audiences - through the ability to shape the course of the creative exchange via likes comments and shares - will also be examined. This process will lead on to exercises and explorations in creating digital comics series, memes, cartoon strips and other forms of visual social media communication.

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**Visual Culture of Modern and Contemporary South Asia**

**Course Code: VA-3007**

**Level: 2000-3000,**

**Elective Course****No Pre-requisite****Instructor: Sraman Mukherjee**

This course sets out to explore the field of visual culture as it has developed at the intersections of disciplinary domains of history, art history, cultural and visual anthropology, film and media studies and heritage studies. With a specific focus on modern and contemporary South Asian societies, it will examine the shifting nature and function of visual imagery in the modern and contemporary era, the changing technologies of production and reproduction, and the different circuits of reception, dissemination and circulation of images. Interdisciplinary in its appeal and content, the course will introduce students to a wide range of sites and media of cultural productions ranging from painting, photography and popular prints to maps, archaeological relics, religious icons, public architecture and monumental statuary; from sites of display and spectatorship in museums and exhibitions to temples and urban spaces; from worlds of scholarship to those of devotion and tourism; from celluloid images of films and television to the interactive domain of the world wide web. Placing these visual forms and practices within the particular historical and political contexts of colonialism, decolonization, state building and globalization, the course will address broader theoretical concerns about the centrality of nationalism, class, ethnicity, diaspora, religion, gender and sexualities in the constitution of modern and contemporary South Asian public spheres. Exploring “vision” as constructed by physiological and social conditioning, we will map questions around boundaries between visual images and verbal texts, “Art” and “non-art”. Finally, through archives of images we will explore the different and often competing representations of South Asia both in the specific geographic region demarcated thus and in other parts of the globe among “Asians” and “non-Asian” communities in the diaspora.

**Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, we will be able to

- A) Outline the main trends in the development of the field of visual culture
- B) Evaluate the approaches of art historians, historians and anthropologists to the visual arts and material culture of South Asia.
- C) Identify and analyze aspects of South Asia's visual images using appropriate vocabulary.

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**VA 3002/ HIS 3801 Empire, Nation and Art- Histories from the Visual Image****Level: 2000 to 3000, Elective****No Pre-requisite****Instructor: Sraman Mukherjee**

This course explores global social formations from the fifteenth century of Common Era to our present times through the prism of visual images. We specifically focus on the centrality of visual archives in mapping histories of European colonialism under Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British empires. The course will address a range of colonial formations and diverse articulations of nationalist thought and consciousness in different parts of the world through different visual forms across a range of media, sites, and objects. Beginning from naturalist paintings and drawings of unknown landscapes and oceans, descriptions of plants and animals,

of unknown humans and exotic objects, the course moves on to explore diverse media and technologies of visual (re)productions like water colour, oil painting, lithographs, oleographs, chromolithographs, aquatints, photographs and the moving image, and maps different sites of visual simulations like cabinet de curiosities, ‘freak shows’, world exhibitions, metropolitan, colonial, and postcolonial public museums, art galleries, institutes of fine arts, crafts and design pedagogy. The course argues that global histories of colonialism, nationalism, and decolonization can be partially explored as histories of encounters, violent conflicts, tortuous negotiations, and often uneasy accommodations played out at the register of the visual image. The course urges us to rethink that notions of metropolis and colony, empire and nation, colonizer and colonized, alien and indigenous, as they are configured and reconfigured in the archives of the visual image, are historically relative, often fluid categories, having only situational relevance. Moving away from a purely Euro-centric discussion of the beginnings of Art and Art History, this course seeks to move towards a global history of art.

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## **Contemporary Drawing**

**Course Code: VA 1040-1**

**Instructor: Anni Kumari**

**Course Level Elective 1000**

**Course Prerequisites for students (if any):** None

### **Course Description**

The course introduces students to various perspectives and approaches that define contemporary drawing practices, emphasizing the renewed interest in drawing as a potential research and communication medium. It includes discussions and slide presentations as well as practical sessions. Focusing on developing an individualistic style to communicate personal stories, narratives and perspectives, the course offers students the opportunity to experiment at formal and conceptual levels.

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the course a student is expected to have

- An understanding of the issues, concerns and challenges that define contemporary drawing practices
- Experience of working with several drawing mediums
- A portfolio of drawings that could potentially be developed into a zine, artist book, graphic novel or illustrations for digital media.

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## **Monotype printmaking**

**Course code: VA 106-1**

**Instructor: Anni Kumari**

**Course Level: Elective 1000**

**Course Prerequisites for students (if any):** None

### **Course Description**

This is a studio-based, practice-led course that allows students to explore a wide range of materials and processes that lead to a print. It involves a fluid approach combining drawing, painting and printmaking techniques, in an individualistic style. The course is aimed at facilitating students to practically experiment with forms, colours, and textures and see their translation from one medium to another, finally culminating in a series of prints.

Process: Monotype printmaking or ‘Monotyping’ is an innovative process of creating a single print on paper. A monotype is a hybrid of drawing and printmaking. The artist would draw on a plate; the plate would be sandwiched with a piece of paper and run through a press. It goes through the press once and then the image is pulled off onto the sheet of paper.

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the course a student is expected to have

- Exposure to the various stages of translating a concept/idea into a visual form
  - An understanding of drawing fundamentals , mediums and processes
  - An experience of working with printmaking pigments , tools and techniques
  - A portfolio of prints
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