The Art of Observation:
Visual Literacy for the Dermatologist

Specialist Course | 03-05 November 2022 | The Courtauld - London, UK

Course Speakers:

Dr Anne Puetz (The Courtauld), Dr Charlotte de Mille (The Courtauld), Prof Aviva Burnstock (The Courtauld), Nicola Moorby (Independent art historian).

EADV Faculty:

Prof Sarah Walsh, Prof Christopher Griffiths, Dr Helen Young

Description of the course
From Image to Word: Modern Art 1860s-1910s

Effectively translating visual perception into written or spoken language is a central concern that art historians and medical professionals have in common.

This intensive short course explores the complex relationship between close looking and skilful describing, between image and word, 'nature' and language. We shall focus largely on modern art of the period 1860s-1910s – including, of course, examples from the world-class Courtauld Gallery collections – but also refer to 'old masters', where relevant. In addition to fostering a heightened sense of the connections between the visual and the verbal, we aim to provide participants also with a solid amount of art history: an understanding of some of the key themes, concerns and terminologies of 'classical' and modern visual art, along with an insight into the specific art form of the watercolour.

Learning Objectives
- Hone translational observational and descriptive skills using the medium of fine art.
- Gain knowledge of the key concepts of Visual Literacy.
- Enable participants to use different thematic approaches in the development of their own observational skills and personal reflection.
- Provide participants with an understanding of the range of educational opportunities for dermatology that are available in art galleries, and how to use these in conjunction with dermatology resources available in clinical practice (such as slides/photographs/texts).
- Help developing communication and listening skills, allowing participants to become more comfortable with uncertainty.

Programme

Thursday, 3rd November 2022
«EKPHRASIS»
Dr Charlotte de Mille, Dr Anne Puetz

14:00-16:00 Classroom session
The class-room session in the Learning Centre starts with a short reflection on the relevance of art history to dermatology, followed by a brief overview of art-historical looking and describing. We shall then present participants with an exploration, and a key example of the concept of *ekphrasis*: the vivid, even dramatic, description of a visual work of art.
The group will then be invited to engage with ekphrastic exercises of their own, focusing on particular aspects in a drawing, and a painting, and then progressing to the description of an entire, complex work of modern art.

The point of the exercise is to encourage participants to look closely and then to draw on any register of language available to them. We do not expect any pre-existing art-historical knowledge, or technical/stylistic terminology, but hope to inspire participants' creativity and increase verbal dexterity.

16:00-16:30 Tea/Coffee break

16:30-18:00 Courtauld Gallery session
After tea, we shall visit The Courtauld Gallery and focus on a selection of old master and modern paintings, including by Cézanne and Manet, two of the 'fathers' of modern art, whose vision requires complex rationalisations, a new language, from art historians.

Friday, 4th November 2022
«WATERCOLOUR - ART AS 'LANGUAGE'»
Led by Nicola Moorby, with Dr Anne Puetz

10:00-13:00 Class-room session (with a refreshment break from 11:15-11:45)
Morning session in the Learning Centre: this investigates the watercolour medium in relation to ideas about 'nature', as a language in its own right to 'translate' effects of nature. After an exploration of the medium's specific characteristics and technical terminology, through an excursion into its 18th- and 19th-century 'Golden Age' history, we'll spend some time with watercolour's place in modern and modernist art practice, looking at examples by artists from Van Gogh and Cezanne to Dufy to Klee, Kandinsky and others.

13:00-14:30 Lunch break

14:30-16:30 Print room and Drawings gallery
In the afternoon, the group will be split (depending on size) and both sets of participants will be given an opportunity to view, and attempt to describe, a remarkable collection of watercolours by Cézanne and others in our print-room, - the characteristic transparency of the medium revealing the artist's complex creative processes - and a display of works on paper by English Vorticist painter Helen Saunders, in our Drawings Gallery.

19:00-21:00 Networking Dinner with faculty and participants

Saturday, 5th November 2022
«CONCEPT AND TECHNÉ – Does language influence perception?»
Dr Charlotte de Mille, Dr Anne Puetz, Prof Aviva Burnstock

10:00-13:00 Class-room session (with a refreshment break from 11:15-11:45)
The language we employed during the workshops of day 1 was descriptive and evocative, intended to help us put into words the impressions received by our sense of sight. Today we are concerned with language as an interpretative tool: what did it mean to paint in a particular way at a particular time? At particular points in the day, we shall discuss some of the limitations of language in this respect: to what extent might the connotations inherent in certain terms and concepts limit or distort our perception? Focusing one a key example, we shall examine the evidence presented by technical analysis as a basis for art-historical interpretation and visit the Courtauld's conservation studio together.

Our afternoon will end with a roundtable discussion inviting participants to reflect, a.o. on their own practice in relation to the connection between looking, and communication, and on the ethics of decision-making and intervention.