

Migration, Displacement, Mobilité. Technology and the Circulation of People and Things - 1750-1870

ARTH 539

Instructor: Maureen Ryan

Fall 2003

Description

In the Spring of 2003, Daniel Roche, historian of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution, published a new study on 18th century France called Humeurs vagabonds. De la circulation des hommes et de l'utilité des voyages, (Paris, 2003). Roche's book addresses the issues of mobility, circulation and exchange in 18th century France. And while many have critiqued the work as overly empirical and anecdotal, Roche deliberately sets out to rework forms of historical analysis that have ended up asserting an image of social and political communities and institutions in ways that stress the stable, the permanent, and the hierarchical. Humeurs vagabonds, in its emphasis on the changeable and the mobile across space and time, responds to an important trajectory over the past decade and a half. Through the 1990's and into the present decade, theoretical and historical investigation of both the legacies of colonialism and of ongoing globalisation, have brought the continuing crises associated with migration, nomadism, exile and displacement to the fore. The title of the present seminar, Migration, Displacement, Mobilité. Technology and the Circulation of People and Things - 1750-1870, will allow us to investigate the import of these issues in relation to visual culture of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Over the term of this seminar, course readings, class discussion, presentations by visiting scholars, and an individual research topic will provide an opportunity to examine the complex ways in which various categories of visual culture operate in relation to mobile viewers, new technologies and shifting relations of global exchange. It should be noted that the focus of the seminar will not be on one particular region or national entity (for example France or England, or the Americas), nor on one particular medium or form of visual culture. Rather course readings have been designed to explore theoretical and methodical questions that need to be raised when considering how different forms of the visual media (high art or popular art forms), processions or spectacle, or the built or imagined environment, work in relation to the circulation and consumption of meanings.

Individual term research projects could range from inquiries into particular visual media and technologies in relation to the movement, exile or transportation of populations through time and across space, exchanges of capital and labour, or the circulation of ideas and technologies (for example, the transformations and migrations of science or medicine as exemplified in the plates of Diderot's and d'Alembert's Encyclopaedia). Projects could also consider the roles of gender, sexuality, class and 'race' in the displacements and reconfigurations attending architectural and urban spaces or in forms of public spectacle or private ritual. These topics will allow the theoretical and methodological problems raised in readings and in class discussions, to be worked out in relation to particular historical and visual problems. The research projects will be developed over the course of the term and will be presented in an oral seminar in the last weeks of

class, and further developed into a written research paper of 18-25 pages to be handed in at the end of the term.

Course Requirements:

In Class discussions of readings - 25% Seminar Presentations - 15% Research Paper - 60%