Framing the Other: 30 Years After *Orientalism*

COURTAULD INSTITUTE
RESEARCH FORUM

Saturday 26 April 2008
Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre, The Courtauld Institute of Art

ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Elizabeth Mjelde (De Anza College)
View from the Pacific Rim: Cultivating a Pedagogy of Disbelief

In what was arguably the finest early riff on Edward Said's *Orientalism* by an art historian, Linda Nochlin, in her essay *The Imaginary Orient* (1983), urged scholars to consider the "effects of realness" which have led viewers to believe the visual fictions of Jean-Léon Gérôme. As such, the art historian—as researcher and as teacher—is charged with the project of dismantling visual misinformation.

If implementation of an Orientalist critique requires, in its essence, a tearing down, what forms of meaning emerge in the process? This paper chronicles a decade of writing by a diverse range of college students required to come to terms with this question through analysis of a painting by Gérôme in the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Positioned to receive the gaze of viewers at a public institution on the Pacific Rim, where the legacy of U.S. militarism in the Philippines and Hawaii is close at hand, and long-term effects of Asian-American internment and Chicana/o land-use struggle remain more lived than consigned to memory, Gérôme's icon of otherness has become, in the eyes of its local population, a site for the questioning of power and language, and for consideration of the implications of belief. Further, the contradictions of Orientalist projects become heightened when juxtaposed with the work of local artist-educators who wrestle openly with issues of empire, land, and the body in a neocolonial context.

Ultimately, this paper argues for an art historical approach to nineteenth-century colonialist imagery which is, as Said wrote of *Orientalism* in 2003, "tied to the tumultuous dynamics of contemporary history."

Elizabeth Mjelde co-chairs the Art History Program at De Anza College in the San Francisco Bay area, where she is also a founding member of the Women's Studies Department. Her work merges art history with theories of colonial discourse; she is presently writing about nineteenth-century British artist-writers who produced images and text based on travel along the Indian Ocean littoral. She has been an institute fellow of the (U.S.) National Endowment for the Humanities.

Peter Benson Miller (independent curator and art historian)
Local Colour: French Painting and Racial Classification in the Nineteenth Century

Among the frames defining the "Other," the discipline of anthropology, which embraced physiological criteria in the mid-Nineteenth Century, provided a scientific justification for emerging racial stereotypes. The critic Théophile Gautier wrote that Jean-Léon Gérôme's studies of racial types were "so exactly observed that they could be used in the anthropological treatises of M. Serres." Referring to Étienne Serres, who held the chair of the department of comparative anatomy at the Natural History Museum in Paris, Gautier insisted that the authority of Gérôme's images, as well as their artistic merit, were underwritten by contemporary anthropological inquiry. In her seminal article, *The Imaginary Orient*, Linda Nochlin, following Edward Said, asserted that the "artlessness" of Gérôme's technique substantiated the positivist claims of his images and in so doing reinforced the hegemonic claims of the West over the Islamic world. By focusing on process, Nochlin showed how European anxieties animated the material structure of Orientalist genre scenes. At first glance, Eugène Delacroix's virtuoso colourism or Théodore Chassériau's idiosyncratic handling assert an authorial presence diametrically opposed to the purportedly neutral, self-effacing surface authenticating Gérôme's ethnographic naturalism. Zero-ing in on the dovetailing of method and subject, this paper proposes that the colour system that Delacroix and Chassériau experimented with in the late 1840s, was equally indebted to the anthropological research sponsored by Serres. Unpacking the coordinates and unstable classificatory schemas of racial science, including the trope of the mixed-blood, I will trace how these painters' overall colourism and formal daring indexed fears fanned by anthropological research in Algeria haunted by the spectre of miscegenation.

Peter Benson Miller is an independent curator and art historian of nineteenth-century French painting. He received his Ph.D. from the Institute of Fine Arts/New York University in 2003. His published work includes articles and catalogue essays on the mural paintings of Théodore Chassériau, the late work of J.-A.-D. Ingres and the official pictures of Algeria commissioned or purchased by Napoléon III during the Second Empire. He has recently completed a manuscript entitled 'Local Color: Representing Race and History in Algeria, 1830-1871'*, and is currently preparing a book-length survey about Orientalist painting for Gallimard.*

Roger Blackley (Victoria University of Wellington)
Another Colonial Orientalism: the Case of Charles Goldie

Emulating his Parisian *pompier* masters, the New Zealand painter Charles Goldie staged elaborate studio photographs to serve as promotional tools. One from 1901 depicts the artist enjoying a tea break with his model, the venerable Maori chief Patara Te Tuhi, in which Te Tuhi is traditionally dressed for his depiction as *Patara Te Tuhi, An Old Warrior*. The missionary-educated Te Tuhi ('The Scribe') was a tribal leader, newspaper editor and secretary to the Maori King Tawhiao, with whom he visited England in 1884 and witnessed his portrait sitting for a London society painter.

According to John M. MacKenzie, there are no examples of Orientalism by colonial artists working in distant parts of the British Empire. While this may well apply to earlier colonial work, it overlooks the ethnological strain of art that accompanied the later nineteenth-century rise of museums and the concerted literary appropriation of Maori culture. Goldie's meticulous portraits of 'olden-time' Maori represented a distinct adaptation of European Orientalism, one which celebrated an indigenous 'Other' that was explicitly consigned to the past.

What is most fascinating about the case of Goldie is the diversity of responses generated by his work. Acclaimed and avidly collected in the early years of the century, the paintings were later condemned by modernist critics as 'ethnographs', more suited to an anthropological museum than an art gallery. Maori critical enthusiasm meanwhile centred on the works' status as ancestral portraiture, with the persistent reverence for Goldie's work in the Maori world standing in stark contrast to academic deconstructions of colonial 'dying race' imagery. Analysis of 'Maoriland' imagery needs to account for the complicity of models such as Patara Te Tuhi, assessing the Maori purposes they were arguably serving.

Roger Blackley is a Senior Lecturer in Art History at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, where his teaching and research focus on art and collecting of the colonial period. Recent essays have considered the fate of plaster cast collections in colonial museums, and the trompe l'œil *tradition in Australasian art. He is currently developing* 'The Galleries of Maoriland'*, a book exploring the ethnological strand of art that flourished in* fin-de-siècle *New Zealand. In his former role as curator of historical art at the Auckland Art Gallery, Blackley was responsible for the 1997 retrospective of Charles Goldie's celebrated Maori portraits.*

Evgeny Steiner (Sainsbury Institute, SOAS)
A View from In-Between: Images of the Orient for the Western Audience seen through Russian Eyes

The study of Russian Orientalist art yields a new and unexpected light to the phenomenon of (West) European Orientalism. The Romantic fascination of the picturesque, mildly dangerous and irresistibly alluring Orient was well shared by Russian artists and poets, but at the same time there was a crucial difference in their sentiments and perception of the East. For the Russian society the Romantic mythologem of dashing Arab or Turkish warriors—no less seductive in their indolent ferocity than dreamy odalisques—was complemented by the experience of having these characters either on its southern borders or inside its territory, as on Caucasus or in Central Asia. More often than not, this coexistence was belligerent and brutal, which is well documented in literature from Pushkin to Tolstoy. In painting, the instructive case study might be the art of V. Vereshchagin, one of the most celebrated artists in his land, and one of the best known Russian artists in the West during his lifetime.

The art of Vereshchagin represented a dissenting version of Orientalism — based on the first-hand personal experience and well-informed cultural and geopolitical understanding, which influenced his perception of the East. His (and not only his) case shows that the unduly popular concept of Said's Orientalism was yet another ideologically motivated construction far from the complexity of the real picture.

Evgeny Steiner, a graduate of Moscow State University (Department of Art History), earned his Ph.D. at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences. He was also conferred a Higher Doctorate by the Institute for Cultural Research (Moscow, 2002). Professor Steiner has taught and conducted research in the field of Far Eastern and Russian art history and cultural studies at a number of world universities (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991-1994; Sophia University, Tokyo, 1994-1995; Meiji Gakuin University, Yokohama, 1996-1997; New York University, 1999-2007; State University of New York, 2002-2005). In 2006/07 Steiner was a Leverhulme Visiting Professor at the University of Manchester, attached to two Centres: of Russian and Eurasian studies and the Japan Centre. Currently he is a Senior Research Associate at the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is also a Leading Research Fellow of the Russian Institute for Cultural Research. Professor Steiner has published eight books; the

latest: 'Victory Over the Sun'*, (London: Bookworks, 2007) (transl. from Russian, commentaries and introductory articles); and* 'Catalogue of Japanese Prints in the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts'*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 2008) (academic editing, updating and overall revision, and writing of many entries).*

Mary Roberts (University of Sydney)
Crossing Boundaries, Testing Limits: Edward Said and Nineteenth-century Visual Culture

Nineteenth-century visual culture was crucial to the articulation of 'imaginative geographies' of the Middle East, incorporating complex formations across and between empires. In recent years scholars have recognized that this diverse visual legacy, involving artists and patrons from many parts of the globe including Ottomans and North Africans, defies any simple formulation of Orientalism as exclusively an expression of European hegemony. Investigating the new priorities for the study of Orientalist visual culture, I will revisit the writings of Edward Said. It is not so much his landmark book *Orientalism* with which I shall engage, but rather his writings on music. In them, I will argue, we find a theory of transgression and reading contrapuntally that offers an alternative approach to issues of cross-cultural exchange in the visual arts.

In this paper I propose a contrapuntal reading of the British Orientalism exhibition, *Lure of the East* (2008) by exploring the historical resonances of its third touring venue, the Pera Museum in Istanbul. The district in which this new Museum is located, Beyoğlu, was a particularly significant site for cultural exchanges between Ottoman artists and visiting Orientalists in the nineteenth century. In this period the European embassies, tourist hotels and many Ottoman photographic studios were located there as were some of the first Ottoman and European collaborative art exhibitions. One of the participants in these Istanbul art exhibitions was the Ottoman-Egyptian Princess Nazlı Hanım. Analysing harem paintings from *Lure of the East* in relation to further portrait photographs of Nazlı that I have recently discovered, my paper will reveal how Nazlı's transgressive self-imaging tested the limits of both Ottoman and Orientalist cultural codes. This analysis thus reveals intersections between Orientalist art and the often separated domains of Ottoman political reform, Egyptian nationalism and Ottoman women's history.

Mary Roberts is the John Schaeffer Associate Professor in British Art in the Department of Art History and Film at the University of Sydney. She has published and lectured widely on Orientalist art, gender, the culture of travel and cross-cultural exchange and her book, 'Intimate Outsiders. The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature' *was published with Duke University Press in 2007. She has also co-edited three books:* 'Edges of Empire. Orientalism and Visual Culture' *(Blackwells, 2005),* 'Orientalism's Interlocutors. Painting, Architecture, Photography' *(Duke University Press, 2002) and* 'Refracting Vision: Essays on the Writings of Michael Fried' *(Power Publications, 2000). Between 2002 and 2007 she was a member of the International Advisory Board of* 'Art History'*, UK. In 2008, Dr. Roberts will be a Visiting Fellow at the Yale Center for British Art and is co-convening a symposium,* 'The Ottoman Empire and British Orientalism'*, at the Pera Museum in Istanbul. Her current project is a book,* 'Artistic Exchanges in Nineteenth-century Istanbul'.

Monia Abdallah (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales)
'Contemporary Islamic Art': Inquiry into an Identity Construction by a Reader of Edward Said

This paper concerns the categorization of 'Contemporary Islamic Art'. It is a question of understanding the very existence of this categorization, which raises many contradictions in terms of terminology as well as the criteria of classification for these works of art. The political dimension of such a categorization is all the more relevant today in that it concerns a designation referring to Islam. Edward Said's work will help us to achieve a better comprehension of the profound mechanisms that set up the fundamental paradox that the actions of players, however diversely motivated by different, even divergent, interests, head towards the same goal, and lead to the same result: the construction of 'Contemporary Islamic Art'. Said's contribution to analysing the complexity of the relation between Self/Other is very crucial in this paper which rests on a critical approach towards this classifying concept and which consists of the interrogation of the concept of 'Contemporary Islamic Art' compared to a broader socio-political context. To some extent, an inversion takes place, since, at the beginning, it was a question of defining and understanding an 'artistic phenomenon' due to its incorporation in a broader political and social context. It is finally a question of defining and understanding a 'social phenomenon' starting from the role that art can play in this arena. Through investigation into the construction of a contemporary 'Islamic' artistic identity, this research ultimately raises the question as to what role contemporary art plays in the construction of an 'Islamic identity' today as well as to which stakes are linked to this.

Monia Abdallah is a Ph.D. candidate in Art History at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. She is affiliated to the Centre of History and Theory of Art (CEHTA) and holds a M.A. degree in Art History from the University of Québec in Montreal (UQAM), Canada. She is currently writing a doctoral dissertation on the construction of the concept of 'Contemporary Islamic Art'.

Ian Horton (London College of Communication)
Colonialist Stereotypes and Narratives in British Comic Books

'My basic point [is] that stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world…' (Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993).

Said's concept of the 'Other' has been challenged from a number of perspectives in the last 30 years but the idea that narrative is a key component in representing and reinforcing colonialist ideologies and mythologies remains important in the interpretation of visual culture. Throughout the twentieth century stories appearing in mainstream British comic books relied on representations of the 'Other' to both locate and structure their narratives. In this paper these comic book narratives are interpreted in relation to concepts of stereotype and mythology as developed by Said in works such as *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

Firstly, this paper examines colonialist stereotypes and the colonised 'Other' in adventure stories from the 1950s to the 1980s that appeared in traditional comic books such as the *Eagle*, *Hotspur* and *Victor.* It is argued that in addition to providing the requisite 'exotic' locations and caricatured representations of the 'Other' these stereotypes and associated mythologies actually drove and shaped narrative structure. More surprisingly, similar stereotypes and mythologies were central in driving the narrative in more innovative British comic books from the 1970s to the 1990s that generally challenged socio-political norms. Using examples from the comic book *2000 AD* and work by the British comic book writer Alan Moore the use of these, by now, outmoded colonialist stereotypes and mythologies in this period is examined in detail.

Following Said's notion that these narratives tell us more about the coloniser than the colonised, it is suggested that the survival of these stereotypes and mythologies is indicative of Britain's difficult relationship with its colonial past. In the period covered by this study Britain had withdrawn from many of its colonial 'possessions' but these comic books still used representations of the 'Other' to communicate concepts of 'Britishness' and national identity.

Dr. Ian Horton is currently Programme Leader for Visual Culture and Theory in the School of Graphic Design at the London College of Communication. He is also a member of the Information Environments Research Unit at the University of the Arts London. His Ph.D. focused on the codification of British architectural education in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In addition to researching art and design education he has written on national identity and architectural aesthetics, William Morris and the Artworkers Guild and colonialist stereotypes in European comic books.

Julia Walker (University of Pennsylvania)
"Tribal Markings"?: Imagining Russia in the Reichstag Graffiti

Most critical discussions of architect Norman Foster's renovation of Berlin's Reichstag building tend to focus on the bold glass-and-steel cupola with which he crowned the historical structure. Few, however, account for one of the project's more surprising aspects: the painstaking and fetishistic preservation of the countless graffiti scrawled on the walls by jubilant Soviet soldiers when the Red Army took control of the Reichstag in May of 1945. In order to convert the building into what Foster called a "living museum of German history," he proposed (in concert with supportive Bundestag members) that these historical marks be maintained within the building, arguing that erasing the graffiti would be tantamount to silencing history. Foster insisted that these "visible memories of the building's past" should be maintained on the interior, in order to make the building "of the present" and not "historical pastiche". But the attention paid to these graffiti indicates more than just Foster's attempts to stage an authentic encounter with history; it also speaks volumes about Russia's liminal cultural status in the late twentieth century. In western thought since the Enlightenment, Russia has occupied an unclear third category against the terms "western" and "non-western," continually confounding attempts to assimilate it into either classification. Yet this paper argues that the project for the renovated Reichstag takes canny advantage of Russia's "Otherness," particularly in terms of its most fundamental expression of visual culture: writing. Because few of the building's daily users (and even fewer of its visitors) are able to decipher Cyrillic text, the graffiti appear to most viewers as, indeed, "visible memories of the building's past"—visible, certainly, but divested of their content. In the Reichstag building, the Russian soldiers' scrawls are displayed as primitivized symbols of German progress. Ultimately, this treatment of Russian visual culture, in which Cyrillic figures are framed, gestured to, and treated as exotic, is politically intentioned, as post-reunification Germany sought to ally itself westward and distance itself from its neighbours to the east.

Julia Walker is a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. She is spending 2007-08 in Berlin, completing her dissertation, 'Capital Building: Anxiety and Memory in Berlin's Government District'*, with the help of a grant from the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD). This winter, she presented a paper on Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum at the congress of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art in Melbourne, Australia.*

Matthias Weiss (Freie Universität Berlin)
Madonna as Odalisque? Some Remarks on "Legend", a Photograph by Pierre et Gilles

In 1995, popstar Madonna was hired to advertise for a drink produced by a Japanese beverage concern. The campaign consisted of a TV commercial and a photograph. The latter was taken by the French photographers Pierre et Gilles. The picture shows Madonna in front of buildings with cambered roofs. Sitting within a garland, she holds a musical pipe without blowing it. Her blond hair is pinned up to a big knot on top of her head and the veil and wide breeches she wears make her look like a lady from the harem. In its eclecticism, the picture 'orientalises' the American popstar in a way that must appear as foreign to Eastern viewers as it does to Western ones.

Is Madonna portrayed as an odalisque? And if so, why are Pierre et Gilles reanimating an image that we conceptualize today as if it were the epitome of nineteenth-century chauvinism? To answer these questions, we must take a closer look at the history of the harem and the history of nineteenth-century painting. Since Orientalism is an issue of cultural authority, not of ethnic or geographic origin, the idea of what an odalisque might be is heavily dependent on the position of the observer. For a Turkish nobleman, the odalisque was a female foreigner in a familiar dress. For a French bourgeois gentleman, the odalisque was a familiar female in a foreigner's dress. But what kind of eroticised image do Madonna and her collaborators perform in the eyes of a Japanese consumer? This will be the topic of my paper.

Being an art historian and a theatre scientist, Matthias Weiss wrote his doctorate about picture references in the music videos from Madonna, published as: 'Madonna revidiert. Rekursivität im Videoclip'*, (Berlin: Reimer, 2007). Today he is a member of the Interdisciplinary Research Project 'Cultures of Performativity' at the Freie Universität Berlin, where he works on staged photography. The topic of his paper combines these two fields of interest.*

Robert Fisk (*The Independent*)
Title to be confirmed

Robert Fisk is an international journalist, author and commentator. He received a B.A. in English and Classics at Lancaster University and a Ph.D. in Political Science, awarded by Trinity College, Dublin in 1985. From 1972-75 Fisk served as Belfast correspondent for 'The Times'*, before becoming its correspondent in Portugal covering the aftermath of the 1974 revolution. He was then appointed as Middle East correspondent for* 'The Times' *from 1976 to 1988, when he moved to* 'The Independent'*. As Middle East correspondent, Fisk covered the 1979 Iranian revolution, the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, and the 1991 Persian Gulf War. He was one of two Western journalists to stay in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war. Robert Fisk is the world's most-decorated foreign correspondent, having received numerous awards including the Amnesty International UK Press Awards twice, and the British Press Awards' International Journalist of the Year award seven times. He was also awarded honorary doctorates by the Department of Laws of the University of St Andrews (2004), the Political and Social Sciences department of Ghent University (2006) and the American University of Beirut (2006). Robert Fisk has published four books. His latest publication:* 'The Age of the Warrior: Selected Writings' *is being released on 7 April 2008, by Fourth Estate/Harper Collins.*