

## **Art and Articulation: Meaning and Intention in the Nuances of Artistic Expression**

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“What does this *mean*?” – “What did *he* mean by this?”

The idea of this student seminar is to explore the nuances of artistic expression through the framing question of intentionality. By analyzing a range of different works and media we will address the relationship between the two questions above. Does meaning imply authorial intention? Is a meaning valid if the author didn't intend it? Through this in-depth analysis even more fundamental questions of contemporary theory will arise. What do we mean when we talk about an author? Can this author be isolated from their broader cultural context? Does authorial intention play a role in defining certain objects as 'art' and others as 'not art'?

With the intention of a truly interdisciplinary approach, this five-week seminar will begin with a theoretical discussion, sparking a variety of inquiries into all modes of human expression. Such inquiries may include (but are not limited to) literature, music, film, dance, and painting. Initially, students will meet as a group to identify the particular works they are interested in. Although based in the question of intention, this exploration will surely inspire a myriad of related questions, which could lead the discussion in an infinite number of directions. While the nature of the seminar will largely depend on the particular interests and areas of expertise of the students involved, below are a few examples of types of works and possible questions that the seminar might deal with.

### **Theory**

Dr. Frank Cioffi, *Intention and Interpretation in Criticism*

Dr. Theodore Redpath, *The Meaning of a Poem*

E.D. Hirsch – *Objective Interpretation*

Michel Foucault, *What is an Author?*

Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Possibility of Criticism* (selections)

Ronald Barthes, *The death of the Author*

Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (selections)

William K. Wimsatt Jr., Monroe C. Beardsley. *The Intentional Fallacy*

### **Literature**

Italo Calvino, *If On a Winter's Night a Traveler*

Jorge Luis Borges, *Pierre Menard, Author of "The Quixote"*

Plato, *Ion*

Robert Browning, *My Last Duchess*

Ronald Barthes, *S/Z*

In the *Ion* Plato's Socrates seems to suggest that Ion's rhapsodic skill is not really skill at all, but rather completely inspired by the Muses. In Borges' short story, however, when Pierre Menard rewrites sections of *Don Quixote* word for word the mere fact that Menard wrote the words rather than Cervantes seems to completely change the meaning. Is there a way to reconcile these seemingly contradictory views?

### **Music**

John Cage, *4'33''*; *Etudes Australes*; *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*

In each of these pieces Cage is giving up complete control of the product. *Etudes Australes* is based on a map of the southern sky and chance events in the i-ching, and *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* simply gives instructions for the tuning of twelve different radios, the sound of which is totally dependent on the exact time and location of the recital. His most famous piece, *4'33''*, is completely silent, and what one hears is simply the random sounds of the surrounding room. Is it possible to completely distance oneself from one's own intention?

### **Film**

Alfred Hitchcock *Vertigo*, *North By Northwest*, *Spellbound*, *Marine*, *Psycho*  
Virginia Wexman, *Film and Authorship*

Film, by its very nature, is a collaborative effort. Yet auteur theory suggests that the director's own personal vision can be seen in a film as if he or she were the primary author. Is it possible to understand Hitchcock's own preoccupations by comparing two or three of the above films? Is intention always singular, or is there such a thing as communal intention?

### **Painting**

Leonardo Da Vinci, *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*  
Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*

By analyzing a few minute details in the above painting, Freud comes to the conclusion that Da Vinci homosexual. Does this type of psychoanalytic theory involve intention? Does it matter what Da Vinci meant to paint? Does it matter if Da Vinci identifies as a homosexual?

### **Potential Speakers**

Aryeh Kosman – Retiring professor who has taught numerous classes and faculty seminars on similar issues. Professor Kosman has agreed to participate in discussions as much or as little as students would like.