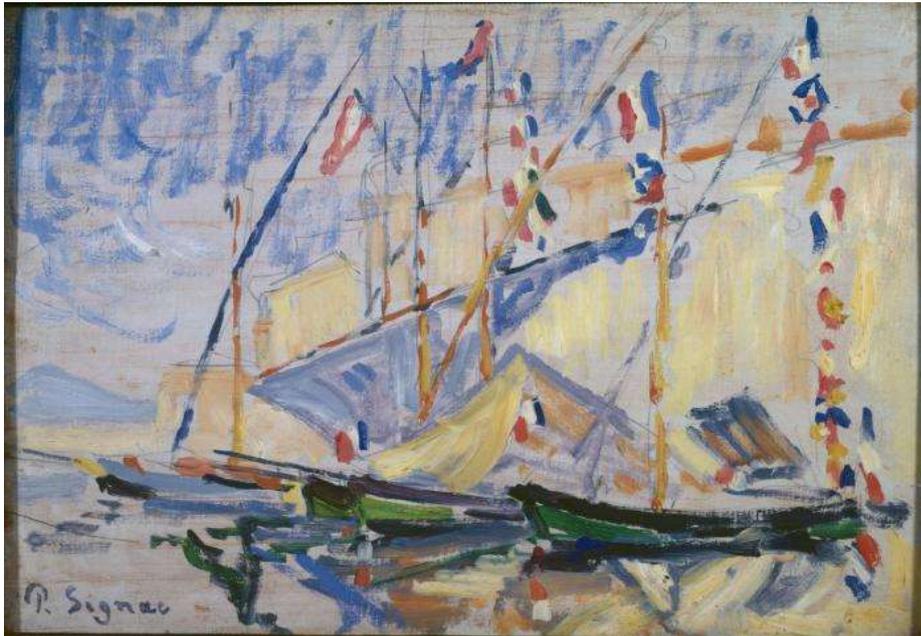


SHOWCASING ART HISTORY, SEASON XII, 2017-2018

Spring Term 2018: Colour: Theory, Practice, and Meaning in Byzantine and Western Art

What colour is and what it brings to art has been thought about since antiquity. From the Renaissance, the skilful employment of colour, light and shade in the service of a 'life-like' art was a key requirement of the master painter, and was seen to be brought to perfection by the Venetian and Flemish 'schools', epitomised by Titian and Rubens respectively. Colour's status in relation to 'design' was hotly debated, with colour assigned an inferior position in



the context of Academic discourse for its perceived appeal to the senses rather than the higher faculties of the mind. This notion of a binary opposition – colour versus line – and their hierarchical relationship was challenged from the late 1700s onwards; a century later, French avant-

garde artists described Eugène Delacroix as the father of the 'modern school' for his emancipation of colour from line, and its employment as the principal means of composition. The use of pure, loosely applied colour was the hallmark of many modern artists, from the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists to the *Fauves* and Expressionists.

In this series of lectures, ranging from Byzantine mosaics to colour field painting, we will discuss the ways artists, critics and theorists thought about colour, what value they assigned to it and how it was believed to act upon the viewer. As John Gage pointed out, artists engaged with the full range of scientific and philosophical theories on colour available to them and we will likewise look at some of the most influential of these ideas. We will also consider more practical matters concerning the manufacture, sale and accessibility of pigments, and about the impact on artistic skill when the preparation of paints – once an important aspect of the artist's training in the workshop – began to be taken over by commercial 'colourmen' early in the 18th century. Colour in art is a vast subject and this ten-week term will focus on Byzantine mosaics and Western painting only; colour in other cultural contexts, polychromy in sculpture and the significance of colour in architecture and the decorative arts will be the subject of future explorations.

Timetable

9 January	Professor Liz James	<i>Light and Colour, Space and Shadow. Medieval Mosaics in situ</i>
16 January	Professor Paul Hills	<i>Venetian Colour</i>
23 January	Dr Sheila McTighe	<i>The Battle of Line and Colour in the Grand Siècle: Poussin versus Rubens in the Académie Royale, and Colour in Poussin's Artistic Practice</i>
30 January	Dr Lelia Packer	<i>Monochrome: Painting in black and white</i>
6 February	Clare Richardson	<i>The Matter of Colour</i>
13 February	Dr Anne Puetz	<i>Secrets and Lies: Venetian Colour and the 'British School'</i>
20 February	Professor Paul Smith	<i>Cézanne's use of 'ton', or harmony through thick and thin</i>
6 March	Dr Natalia Murray	<i>Red in Russian Art: from Icons to the Avant-Garde</i>
13 March	Dr Kate Aspinall	<i>Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue? The Colour Revolution in Mid-Century New York City</i>
20 March	Dr Caroline Levitt	<i>Dissonance and Dissidence: The work of colour in Van Gogh, Gauguin and the Fauves</i>

Suggested Preliminary Reading

Primary sources

Free e-book of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Theory of Colours*, translated from the German by Charles Lock Eastlake, 1840, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=8Yg5AAAAcAAJ>

Free e-book of Michel Eugène Chevreul's *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colours, and Their Application to the Arts*, 1860: <https://google.co.uk/books?id=LIMOAAAQAAJ>

Secondary sources

John Gage, *Colour in Art*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2007

Paul Hills, *Venetian Colour: Marble, Mosaic, Painting and Glass, 1250-1550*, Yale University Press, 1999

Laura Anne Kalba, *Color in the Age of Impressionism: Commerce, Technology, and Art*, Penn State University Press, 2017 [not yet reviewed] **[pdf of the Introduction – available on the VLE]**