

Heritage & Communities

Siobhan Hart, Department of Anthropology, Skidmore College
A Public-Facing Audioguide to Accompany *This Place*

Learning Goals:

- (1) students will examine how and why some places are ascribed value as heritage sites and the process and politics of World Heritage status;
- (2) students will explore how heritage designations can be at once empowering and disempowering for communities;
- (3) students will develop skills in visual literacy, research, and public engagement; and
- (4) students will communicate complex ideas in an engaging, accessible, and brief audio format.

Background:

This project will serve as a case study to examine how heritage sites are ascribed value and how heritage designations can be at once empowering and disempowering for communities. While the *This Place* photographs offer particular vantage points, they intervene in a broader narrative about the West Bank that is being increasingly controlled and edited by the universalizing values of UNESCO. In July 2017, UNESCO declared the Old Town of Hebron, West Bank, a World Heritage Site. Recognized for its cultural and historical value, the property includes a holy site important to both Jews and Muslims. It was nominated as a Palestinian property and was referred to as part of the State of Palestine, which angered Israeli UN members (and contributed to the U.S.'s contention that UNESCO was "anti-Israeli" in its withdrawal statement). Students will apply the ideas and theories about history/heritage, concepts of communities, nationalism, and place-based heritage values that are the foundation of this course. Students will examine the process and politics of World Heritage status in light of the places and practices that matter to people today that are left out of heritage discourses.

Guidelines for Students:

Stage 1: Visit and Research

Students will visit and research two types of places: (1) those designated official heritage places (e.g. the Old Town of Hebron, Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, agricultural community of Battir); and (2) those captured by *This Place* photographers.

- (1) Choose a World Heritage Site from the West Bank or Israel (use country list or map here to identify: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>) for a "virtual visit." Review the information on the site provided by UNESCO--summary, images, maps, and documents (e.g., nomination text) and present to class:
 - site description
 - why it was nominated
 - what is identified as important about it
 - how the site contributes to nationalism and identities
 - is it a site of inclusion or exclusion?

Presentation should be ~7 minutes and include maps and images of the site.

- (2) Choose a photograph from *This Place* to analyze and research. Research includes reading the catalogues, researching the artist, attending lectures and gallery talks, and learning about the particular places in the photograph. Findings will be shared in class and reflected on in journal entries.

Stage 2: Content Development

- (1) Based on what you have learned through visits, research, and class material, write a 2-3 minute script aimed at a public audience (first draft ~4 pgs). This will be our working draft for your script and will be revised and edited down. Focus the listener's attention on the photograph you have chosen and describe what it illustrates about HERITAGE (e.g., values, types of places, or practices that are recognized as universally important, or places/practices that inspire non-polarizing, inclusive version of heritage). Read it aloud to yourself and a friend for timing and flow.

Try to incorporate the things that we identified as useful from the audioguides we listened to together:

- Include context and background information (both broad and specific)
- Use descriptive and engaging language and tone
- Discuss impact and consequences
- Invite engagement with surroundings and other works
- Reference other people, places, works that are not present
- Use quotations from archival material, experts, other sources (but judiciously)
- Fill in what you don't otherwise get from exhibition
- Ask prompting questions

You will revise drafts based on feedback from instructor, peer reviews, and a "writing for the ear" workshop (approximately 4 drafts total). Scripts will be reviewed by the exhibition curator before being finalized.

- (2) From the final script draft, create an audioguide track at the Doc Lab with the assistance of Adam Tinkle and Doc Lab staff. Once your track is edited, you will upload to Soundcloud, decide the order of track and collaborate to develop a brief guide to accompany the audioguide, configure devices, and beta test the audioguide.

Stage 3: Launch and Debrief

- (1) Launch the audioguide! We will host an evening event at the Tang to launch the audioguide. You will provide a brief "teaser" of your script for visitors and show visitors how the guide works.
- (2) Once the exhibition closes, we will participate in debrief session that will focus on the skills gained, learning outcomes, and the way the project complemented/contrasted typical classroom-based classes.

Images and Issues of Diversity in the Visual/Performing Arts
Anne Woulfe, Department of Art History, University at Albany

Below are the learning goals I created for teaching the course unit on *This Place*.

- Students will explore the University Art Museum and learn about the museum's offerings of contemporary art exhibits (*This Place*) and contributing artists by interacting with, and learning from professional museum personnel.
- Students will gain knowledge of the history of the University Art Museum, and how the museum works within the university system and the capital region.
- Students will gain an appreciation of contemporary art utilizing observational, analytical, critical thinking and communication skills.
- In addition to exploring the tensions of the region, students will also explore and consider the potential for understanding the perceived "other" by learning about the conflict in the Middle East from various perspectives. The photographs of Israel on exhibit at the University Art Museum, Skidmore College, Hamilton College and Colgate University, that together constitute the entirety of *This Place*, provide a foundation for examining and understanding the conflict that transcends more conventional narratives such as news media. Specifically, when considering the impact of *This Place*, the role of the artist (photographer) is as important to consider as the role of the journalist.

This Place short essay assignment

Assignments are to be typed in black or dark blue ink with 12pt. Times New Roman font size. Use one inch margins and double space your text.

- This is an essay assignment that should be at least 2 pages in length (not to exceed 3)
- Find your assigned photographers below by the first letter(s) of your last name.
 - A-B: Martin Kollar and Wendy Ewald
 - C-De: Martin Kollar and Frederic Brenner
 - Di-G: Jeff Wall and Josef Koudelka
 - H-K: Jeff Wall and Gilles Peress
 - L-Ma: Thomas Struth and Fazal Sheikh
 - Mc-R: Thomas Struth and Stephen Shore
 - S: Jungjin Lee and Rosalind Fox Solomon
 - T-Y: Jungjin Lee and Nick Waplinton
- Of the two photographers you are assigned to write about, one of them has work on exhibit at the University Art Museum. The other photographer you are assigned to write about has work on exhibit at one of the other institutions; Skidmore College, Hamilton College or Colgate University. For the assigned photographer with work on our campus, you may reference information from museum personnel, class discussions and the *This Place* website. For photographers exhibiting **off** the UAlbany campus, use ***only*** the *This Place* website as a resource.

- Consider this quote by photographer and initiator Frédéric Brenner of the *This Place* project: “The process of becoming clear about my working hypothesis – seeing Israel as a place of radical alterity, of radical ‘otherness’– made me envision other photographers becoming part of the project. As my idea started to crystallize, it made sense to invite ‘others’ to question ‘otherness’.”
- This statement is related to the fact that among the 12 photographers (including Brenner), none of them call Israel home. After reading the interviews, listening to the photographers speak about their participation in this project, and seeing their work in person or via the web site, do you believe that Brenner’s vision of Israel as a place of “radical otherness” is realized through this project? Do the photographers you are writing about contribute to understanding the region as a diverse place (why or why not)? Are the two photographers similar in what they have photographed; i.e. landscapes, people? In what ways are they different? Compare and contrast their feelings about working on the project, their methods of production, their backgrounds and where they’re from. What are your overall impressions of the photographs? In your informed opinion, do these photographs allow viewers to see the reality of this region or a more idealized image of the region?
- Be sure your essay has an introduction, body and conclusion and be sure to follow all instructions above. Failure to follow instructions will result in a lower grade.

Writing in the Tang

Michael Marx, Department of English, Skidmore College

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

To some, it is the West Bank, part of the homeland for the Palestinian people. To others, it is Israel, the Biblical homeland of the Jewish people. Yet to still others, it is the location of one of the longest political conflicts in contemporary times. But what is this place? *This Place* is the name of the spring 2018 photographic exhibit at the Tang Teaching Museum. The exhibit explores the people and places of Israel and the West Bank as captured by the lenses of 12 international photographers, all outsiders to this much-contested region. The four photographers featured at the Tang Museum are Wendy Ewald, Gilles Peress, Stephen Shore, and Nick Waplington. *This Place* is also the subject for our interdisciplinary writing seminar. The Tang exhibit will be our primary text and classroom. By studying the images, their presentation in the Tang, and historical information about the region, we will learn about the geography, culture, and people of Israel and the West Bank; explore the art of photography; and develop and refine our skills as analytical writers. Students will write close readings of individual photographs, use images as the basis for arguments about the region, and create proposals for mini-exhibits that reconceive and recontextualize the materials from the exhibit. The course also includes one or two field trips to a sister *This Place* exhibit at the University Art Museum at the University at Albany, SUNY.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Form a supportive community of writers and learners
- Develop critical thinking skills
- Explore the relationship between writing and the visual arts
- Develop and refine skills in reading visual and discursive texts
- Examine how visual materials can be used to develop and support expository writing
- Understand and practice writing as a recursive process
- Develop effective drafting techniques
- Recognize and practice writing productive thesis statements
- Explore heuristics to generate, focus, and organize ideas
- Develop techniques for skillfully integrating quotations
- Locate, use, and cite supporting evidence
- Learn and practice techniques for writing concisely
- Write and revise sentences with particular attention to grammar
- Recognize and practice writing nonrepetitive, effective conclusions
- Revise essays and recognize revision as an integral to clarifying, strengthening, and expanding meaning
- Gain familiarity with the social, cultural, religious, and political issues central to Israel and Palestine

Global Warming

Catherine Beck, Department of Geosciences, Hamilton College
Cross-listed in Environmental Studies, Geosciences, and Government

Introduction-

From the project webpage: “The exhibition *This Place* explores the complexity of Israel and the West Bank as seen through the eyes of twelve contemporary photographers (<http://this-place.org>). The photographs represent very different perspectives, working methods, and artistic styles. Their highly individualized works combine to create not a single, monolithic vision, but rather a diverse and fragmented portrait, alive to all the rifts and paradoxes of this important and much contested space.”

Learning goal: The goal of working with *This Place* is to study an example of how art can be a powerful means of communication about the impacts of humans on the natural world. We will use the exhibit as a point of discussion for how what we know about climate change from the sciences perspective translates into visual arts. Working with *This Place* will provide a case study on how human anthropogenic activities have impacted the Middle East specifically. It is also an opportunity broaden the understanding of the ways in which individuals call attention to these issues.

Instructions-

The assignment for class will be to create alternative labels for the artwork exhibited at the Wellin and highlight the connections between the photographs and anthropogenic climate change. Your work will be due in one week on Tuesday, April 17th and it is worth 5% of your final grade for the semester (see the syllabus for full breakdown). In class on Tuesday, April 10th we will complete the following:

- 1) Introduction to *This Place* by Wellin Museum staff (Wellin Classroom)
- 2) Tour of exhibit with Wellin Museum docent (Wellin Exhibit Hall)
- 3) Assignment of artwork (Wellin Classroom)
- 4) Free time to revisit the exhibit and work on your labels
 - You can discuss with peers but all writing must be your own
 - Photography is allowed but only **without** the flash
 - No pens allowed in the Wellin, **only pencil**
 - I encourage you to visit the [Wellin website](#) for more info
 - You are welcome to use external references but please cite them appropriately
- 5) Alternative labels typed up and submitted electronically by Tuesday, April 17th via Blackboard and following the template included at the end of this document
- 6) Labels will be discussed in class on Thursday, April 19th

Evaluation-

Your alternative labels will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- 10 pts- scientific content
- 10 pts- goodness of fit with the artwork
- 5 pts- writing clarity
- 25 pts TOTAL (5 % of final grade)**

Introduction to Psychology
Alexandra List, Hamilton College

1. Extra credit assignment for The Role of the Perceiver in Art (Biological Bases of Behavior)

Background

To provide you with an opportunity to connect Psychology concepts with life outside the classroom, on February 23, 2018, we visited the Wellin Museum of Art. We visited *This Place*, a multi-site photography exhibit at Skidmore, Colgate, SUNY Albany and Hamilton. With two pieces by Frederic Brenner (The Weinfeld Family, 2009 and The Aslan Levi Family, 2010), Amber Geary led us through a Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) exercise—she asked what people saw and why they saw what they did. We then learned a bit more about VTS and linked this to some themes presented in our Psychology coverage of vision.

Purpose

Your goal for this extra credit opportunity is to reflect on your role as a perceiver in how you experience art. As we have discussed, with sensory information, there is physical input that gets subjectively interpreted by each person. Some perceptual interpretations are very common across individuals (e.g., occlusions tend to indicate a depth organization), and some are more variable (e.g., what are the relationships between the people in the photographs?)

Instructions

Using any of the pieces (except the ones we examined as a class) from *This Place*, write a reflection in response to one of the prompts below. You should plan a visit to the exhibit so that you can clearly identify which piece(s) you are reflecting upon, and so that you can precisely describe the features of the piece.

1. The physical/objective environment is only subjectively experienced—how did that manifest in your experience of visiting the art exhibit? Discuss several specific examples, providing reference to specific arrangements, pieces and/or artists and the relevant concepts from Psychology.
2. Gestalt psychologists have described various laws of perceptual organization, how are those utilized in the exhibit or within the art? To what end? Describe several specific examples, providing reference to specific arrangements, pieces and/or artists and the relevant cues to perceptual organization.
3. Pictorial cues assist us in inferring 3D depth from the 2D retinal information—they help us solve the inverse problem in vision. Identify several pictorial cues and how they are manifest in specific pieces.
4. Consider motivations and drives in art creation, exhibition and appreciation, which might manifest through the curation process, artist, medium and/or content. From this exhibit, present evidence for specific artistic motivations and drives, providing reference to specific arrangements, pieces and/or artists.

Format

1-2 pages; double-spaced; 1”-margin on all sides; 12-point Times font

Pedagogical Context

Assignment is given to (primarily first and second year) undergraduates enrolled in an Introduction to Psychology course. This extra credit opportunity was offered after a guided museum visit (see Background), and after students had read chapters 1-8 from Gray and Bjorklund’s *Psychology* (7th ed.) covering psychological foundations, methods, genetic and evolutionary bases of behavior, neural control of behavior, motivation and emotion, learning, and sensation and perception.

2. Extra credit assignment for The Role of the Perceiver in Art (Developmental, Social, Personality and Clinical Psychology)

Background

To provide you with an opportunity to connect Psychology concepts with life outside the classroom, on February 23, 2018, we visited the Wellin Museum of Art. We visited *This Place*, a multi-site photography exhibit at Skidmore, Colgate, SUNY Albany and Hamilton. With two pieces by Frederic Brenner (*The Weinfeld Family*, 2009 and *The Aslan Levi Family*, 2010), Amber Geary led us through a Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) exercise—she asked what people saw and why they saw what they did. We then learned a bit more about VTS and linked this to some themes presented in our Psychology coverage of vision. Recently, we have discussed social perception, attributes and influences, in addition to previous sections in which we discussed socio-cultural alternatives to evolutionary, biological and genetic causal sources of behavior.

Purpose

Your goal for this extra credit opportunity is to reflect on your role as a perceiver in how you experience art when considering your personal socio-cultural experiences, and how that shapes your experience of *This Place*, including how your perspective interacts with the artists' (via didactic material, online videos/interviews, presentations), or the subject of the art.

Instructions

Using any of the pieces (except the ones we examined as a class) from *This Place*, write a reflection in response to one of the prompts below. You should plan a visit to the exhibit so that you can clearly identify which piece(s) you are reflecting upon, and so that you can precisely describe the features of the piece.

1. People exhibit socio-cultural biases and expectations—how did the art exhibited challenge some of your own pre-conceived notions? (you may focus on the artist's perspectives, art medium, process, arrangement or content) Discuss several specific examples, providing reference to specific arrangements, pieces and/or artists.
2. An over-arching theme in our course concerns the (often interacting) influences of nature (e.g., biology, genes, evolution) and nurture (e.g., physical, cultural, social environments). How do these influences manifest in the exhibited art? Discuss several specific examples, providing reference to specific arrangements, pieces and/or artists.
3. The exhibited art depicts people across the lifespan—identify several examples, and connect those to concepts in cognitive and/or social development. For example, do you see children learning from other children or adults? Do you see depictions of care-giving? How do these depictions contribute to your understanding of developmental theories or concepts covered in class? Provide reference to specific pieces and/or artists.

Format

1-2 pages; double-spaced; 1”-margin on all sides; 12-point Times font

Pedagogical Context

Assignment is given to (primarily first and second year) undergraduates enrolled in an Introduction to Psychology course. This extra credit opportunity was offered after a guided museum visit (see Background), and after students had read chapters 1-14 from Gray and Bjorklund's *Psychology* (7th ed.), but was developed to support the material covered in chapters 11-14, which cover cognitive and social development, and social perception, attitudes and influences.

Wandering Jews & Zionists

Greg Spinner, Department of Religion, Skidmore College

Presentation at the Tang Museum

In your initial Tang report, you recorded your own impressions of the exhibition, *This Place*. You also considered the ways in which the images on display do not narrate events, but might suggest that there are stories or histories about which one could inquire further. Returning now to the exhibition at the Tang, I want you to both (a.) fabricate a narrative incorporating multiple photographs, and (b.) to take a perspective that is not your own.

Using a persona you have crafted, tell us a story using images you select from the exhibition. On the evening of Thursday, **April 19**, you will lead a mini-tour through the Tang, in some sense performing the identity you have fashioned. I think you should employ at least 5 images, but not more than 10. Do not rely solely on one photographer, but integrate the work of at least two. As for duration, I think you will need at least 6 or 7 minutes to make this assignment work, but I ask that you do not go over 10 minutes.

For the purpose of this assignment, adopt a different identity. If you are secular, you could consider a religious viewpoint: can you imagine yourself having the kind of fervor for the very dirt of the Land that Judah Halevi expressed in his poems? Maybe you have read a secular Zionist like Klatzkin, or heard an anti-Zionist like Domb, and been persuaded by their arguments. Perhaps your persona has a different gender, or comes from another diaspora, far from where you were raised. Maybe one of the photographs shows you, or maybe your persona is that of another visitor to the Tang, walking through the exhibit and trying to make sense of *This Place*. What kind of stories might a Druze, or a Palestinian Christian, tell when looking at these images?

For whatever perspective to which you give voice, construct a believable persona. Do not simply impersonate a historical person, but invent a plausible mask. You will have to think critically about that perspective, and then embody it creatively. If it will enable your staying in character, you can bring in elements of a costume, but keep props to a minimum. You may choose to alter your speech pattern to speak in this persona, but avoid caricature. Consider whether someone might find your persona offensive, and make an effort not to give offense. *Invest your persona with empathy*. By all means, enjoy this role-playing, but please remain respectful.

Please send me a one or two paragraph sketch of what you plan to do (outline your persona, and indicate the specific images you will incorporate) by Monday, April 16.