

## *Florence through the Eyes of the Victorians*

London & Florence Program - Spring 2013

### **Course Description**

Just as the artists of the Renaissance drew on the works of the Classical era, artists in Victorian England drew heavily on the works of the Renaissance. In each case the artists felt that the works of the earlier period represented a view of humanity that was more harmonious, balanced, and desirable than the art of their own time. This course will use the writings and drawings of John Ruskin, the artwork, illustrations, and poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites, and the writings of art critic Walter Pater as lenses through which to view Renaissance Florence. Through this examination we will be able to understand how the Victorians were influenced by the Italians and apply our own cultural perspective to that relationship. The course will be structured around readings by Victorian artists and art critics and around visits to Florentine locations that are important in those texts. Students will complete formal and informal writing assignments as well as sketchbook work where the students follow the example of the Victorians and create visual studies of the artwork in Florence.

### **Guiding Questions**

- How did Victorian artists view/interpret the art of Renaissance Florence?
  - What did they learn from Florentine art in terms of style, technique, and ideas?
  - How did it shape their views on how to make art in their own time?

### **Course Objectives**

Students will:

- Expand their knowledge of the art, architecture, literature, and history of Medieval and Renaissance Florence.
- Develop an understanding of Victorian art by considering the art against which the Pre-Raphaelites were reacting and by examining their influences in Italian Renaissance art.
- Explore the philosophy of art of Walter Pater, John Ruskin, and the Pre-Raphaelites.
- Consider religion in both the Victorian Age and Medieval and Renaissance Florence through contrast and comparison.

### **Assessment**

- Participation = 10%
- Sketchbook Assignments = 20%
- Written Reflections = 20%
- Formal Writing (10 page, comparative essay) = 25%
- Final Exam = 25%

### **Texts**

- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Stories of Boccaccio (the Decameron)*. NY: Penguin. 2005. Print.
- Harrison, Colin and Christopher Newall. *Pre-Raphaelites and Italy*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum. 2010. Print.
- Lambourne, Lionel. *Victorian Painting*. London: Phaidon Press. 1999. Print.
- Pater, Walter. *The renaissance; studies in art and poetry*. New York: Macmillan. 1903. Print.
- Ruskin, John. *Mornings in Florence*. 1875-77. Web.

- Ruskin, John. *The Elements of Drawing*. Dover. 1857. Print.
- Ruskin, John. *Laws of Fésole: A Familiar Treatise on the Elementary Principles and Practice of Drawing and Painting as Determined by the Tuscan Masters (arranged for the use of schools)*. Boston: Dana Estes & Company. 1877–78. Print.

## Outline of Classes

### Week 1

#### Class 1

Topics / Introduction to the course. Guiding questions and course structure. Overview of the art and ideas we will explore. Begin John Ruskin: *The Elements of Drawing* as an introduction to the sketchbook projects.

#### Class 2

Topics / John Ruskin: *Mornings in Florence* (Morning 1 focuses on Santa Croce).  
 Readings: Sketchbook: sketch and/or photograph and glue into sketchbook relevant images and written observations for each of Ruskin's six morning site visits.  
 Site visits: Santa Croce site visit

### Week 2

#### Class 3

Topics / John Ruskin: *Mornings in Florence* (Mornings 2-5 focus on Santa Maria  
 Readings: Novella)  
 Site visits: SMN site visit

#### Class 4

Topics / John Ruskin: *Mornings in Florence*  
 Readings:  
 Site visits: SMN site visit

### Week 3

#### Class 5

Topics / John Ruskin: *Mornings in Florence* (Morning 6 focuses on Giotto's Camponile)  
 Readings:  
 Site visits: Camponile and Duomo Museum site visit

#### Class 6

Topics / History of San Marco/Fra Angelico. The influence of artists like Fra Angelico  
 Readings: on the early work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.  
*Pre-Raphaelites and Italy*  
 Site visits: San Marco site visit for Fra Angelico

### Week 4

#### Class 7

Topics / Dante Gabriel Rossetti's work with the story of Dante and Beatrice.  
 Readings: *Pre-Raphaelites and Italy*, Dante's *Vita Nuova*, Rossetti poems

#### Class 8

Topics / Pre-Raphaelite illustrations for Boccaccio's *The Decameron*. Sketchbook:

Readings: illustrate a Renaissance poem.  
Boccaccio's *The Decameron*.

## Week 5

### Class 9

Topics / Pater's *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*

Readings:

Site visits: Uffizi site visit to discuss Botticelli, da Vinci, & Giorgione essays

### Class 10

Topics / Sketchbook: draw sculptures in the Bargello

Readings: Pater's *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*

Site visits: Bargello site visit for Luca Della Robbia and Michelangelo essays - Discussion of "Conclusion."

## Week 6

### Class 11

Topics / Alma Tadema and Victorian artists influenced by late Renaissance style

Readings:

Site visits: Site visit to Pitti Palace

Visit American Church during Rome trip for Burne-Jones design work.

### Class 12

Topics / The Pre-Raphaelites, Ruskin and photography (how photography influenced art)

Readings: Sketchbook: recreate an Allinari Florence photo (shoot from same spot, same lighting, etc.)

Site visits: Site visit to Allinari Museum

## Week 7

### Class 13

Topics / Discussion of 19<sup>th</sup> century Florentine history

Readings:

Site visits: Pitti Palace (for 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian art)

### Class 14

Topics / Lorenzo Bartolini

Readings:

Site visits: (Charles Cecil Studio) 19<sup>th</sup> c. Italian sculptor's studio – site visit and discussion of Bartolini's connections/influence. What was studio art like in 19<sup>th</sup> c Florence – who were the active Italian artists?

## Week 8

### Class 15

Topics / Giovanni Costa and "The Etruscans" (Victorian landscape painters –

Readings: followers/students of Costa)

Site visits: Site visit – scenic location painted by them – overlooking Florence. Landscape sketchbook drawing.

### Class 16

Topics: Exam (slide ID, short answer, and essay questions)

*This syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class.*