

Educational Establishment  
“Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts”

APPROVED

Vice-Rector for Research of Educational  
Establishment “Belarusian State  
University of Culture and Arts”

V. R. Yazykovich

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**TOPICAL ISSUES OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND ART CRITICISM**

*The syllabus of the academic discipline for the specialty  
of the II stage of higher education 1-21 80 14 Art Criticism*

РЕПОЗИТОРИЙ БГУСА

The syllabus is completed in accordance with the educational standard of the II stage of higher education OCBO 1-21 80 14-2019 “Art Criticism” and the curriculum in the specialty of the II stage of higher education 1-21 80 14 Art Criticism, reg. № D 21-2-18/уч., April 18, 2019.

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### **RECOMMENDED TO APPROVAL**

*The Department* of Belarusian and World Culture, educational establishment “Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts” (minutes № 11 of 23.05.2019).

*The Presidium* of the Scientific and Methodological Council of the Educational Establishment “Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts” (minutes № 5 of 12.06.2019)

Responsible for the editorship: A. N. Sharoyka

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

The academic discipline “Topical Issues of Contemporary Art and Art Criticism” is the leading discipline for master students in the named specialty of the II stage of higher education 1-21 80 14 Art Criticism. The syllabus of the named discipline is a complex one and includes three sections in accordance with different art-technological platforms. The discipline “Topical Issues of Contemporary Art and Art Criticism” is taught simultaneously with the disciplines “Theoretical Aspects of Study of Plastic Arts”, “Media Technologies in Art and Modern Art Practices” and others.

The academic discipline “Topical Issues of Contemporary Art and Art criticism” acts as a single corpus of subjects aimed at understanding the artistic processes of contemporary world and domestic art and art history. The course of the discipline gives an overview of the current state of theory and history of art, shows the prospects for their further development. Course of this discipline provides students with essential knowledge of the shifts of paradigms in making and understanding art production across the timeline of 20th century until nowadays. Lectures and seminars are oriented to expand student’s knowledge in less known (locally) non-formalist tendencies in modern art and the consequences of this outlook on current situation of contemporary art.

The aim of the discipline is the organization of the educational process to strengthen undergraduates knowledge, abilities and skills in the system of professional training of scientists, whose activities are associated with art and art criticism.

The main objective of the discipline “Topical issues of contemporary art and art criticism” is to master the skills of conscious and focused assessment and analysis of the phenomena of contemporary art with an orientation on the system of types and genres of art and in the entire body of fundamental scientific texts, which avoids any form of ideological and conceptual dogmatism.

According to the educational standard of higher education ESHE 1-21 80 14 in specialty “Art Criticism” and in the process of studying the academic discipline “Topical issues of contemporary art and art criticism” a master-student is to develop the following special competences:

SC-1. Be able to develop and design scientific texts on the problems of Comparative Art Criticism;

SC-2. Be able to analyze Contemporary Art, determine the problematic field of Art Criticism and solve its current issues

SC-6. Be able to independently author work, editorial preparation of scientific publications, work in scientific and editorial teams

As a result of studying the discipline, undergraduates should know:

- basic facts, events, dates, names of the largest representatives of contemporary art;
- the main directions of development of art thought at the present stage;
- the main methodological approaches to the study of contemporary art;
- actual problems of scientific understanding of modern art practice.

As a result of studying the discipline, undergraduates should be able to:

- to characterize the specifics of the figurative language of each art form, the typology of their types and genres;
- to analyze contemporary works of art culture;
- to systematize the most important trends in the development of modern art history;
- to own the terminology apparatus of the discipline.

The main methods (technologies) of teaching realizing the aim of learning the named discipline are a problem solving (a research method) and communicative technologies (a discussion, problem debates, round tables and others).

Studies are accompanied by audio and visual demonstrations.

The syllabus in the speciality 1-21 80 14 Art Criticism is featured of 94 hours for practical training the academic discipline “Topical Issues of Contemporary Art and Art Criticism”. The approximate distribution of hours is 40 hours of class room activities, lectures – 18 hours, seminars – 10 hours, practical studies – 12 hours. The recommended form of knowledge control is a credit.

# CONTENT OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

## Section I. Contemporary Art and Its Problems

### 1.1 Introduction

The concept of art and the problem of its origins. Art as an artistic activity (man-made, “manual” character of artistic activity). The origin of creative activity and its religious and religious sources. Creativity as an organization of existential experience and the formation of a living environment. Creativity as a projection of the human inner world. Imagination as an organizing force. Figurative activity as the basis of visualization.

The phenomenon of the image: definition and typology. The artistic image and the concept of “artistry”. “Musicality” as one of the criteria of “artistry”.

The phenomenon of visualization as "imitation". The iconic aspects of the image. Medial aspects of visualization. The problem of the interaction of consciousness and the figurative world. The problem of art and non-art.

### 1.2 Features of Artistic Perception

Psychological problems of artistic perception. Visual images and visual art. The structure of visual experience as the basis of visualization.

Projection and fixation as the main ways of interacting with the outside world.

Visual images as a result of active organizing activity of consciousness. Selectivity of the experience of perception. Thresholds of perception (physical and psychological). Intelligence and intuition in artistic perception. The phenomenon of gestalt qualities in sensory experience in general and in visual in particular. The problem of art form as a problem of visual perception and attitude to portrayed things. Form and gestalt. Gestalt as an integral dynamic characteristic of an object. Gestalt as a structure (interaction of elements and invariant characteristics of an object). The concept of perceptual and mental gestalt. Shape and structure.

“Ecological” (environmental) approach to visual perception.

Social problems of artistic perception. Types of perception. The role of the reader in determining the artistic meaning. Artistic perception as a dialogue. The concept of “artistic value” as an aspect of perception. The history of perception and the history of the impact of a work of art. The problem of conditioning a work of art.

### 1.3 Era, Epoch, Style, Movement: Meanings and Boundaries of Concepts

Characteristic of the concept of “historical era”. Reasons for the change of historical eras. Typical and specific in the concept of “artistic direction”. A terminological mixture of the concepts of “era, style, movement” and its causes. The concepts of “artistic direction”, “artistic style”. The formation of the concept of “artistic direction”. The connection of the concept of “artistic direction” with an individual and collective worldview. The conditions necessary for the formation of an artistic direction. Dialogue of artistic directions. The specifics of the concepts of

“artistic era” and “historical style”. The evolution of the concept of “artistic ideal”. Substantial and formal standards of an ideal work of art (in different artistic directions). The essence of the ideals of various artistic directions (from the Renaissance to the twentieth century).

Definition of style as a system of specific and constant expressive means of a particular artistic language. Style as a relation to the expressive means and subject of the image.

The question of the origin of style as a phenomenon. Origin from substantial levels of art (expression of ideas). Style as the quality of the sample (style as a typological system). Style as a tool (and a system of rules of use; style as a norm). Style as a description of the general principles that determine historical change. Style and mimesis (or means of reproducing natural features, or, conversely, a way of liberating from natural forms through fantasy or cultural conventions). Style as a means of ensuring (maintaining) communication (focusing on the expressive side of the message). Style and thinking (and worldview).

Universal styles (classicism and naturalism, renaissance and baroque in the understanding of Heinrich Wölfflin; preclassical, classical and postclassical of Viktor Frankl. Style of state and style of becoming (Viktor Frankl). The concept of historical style as a way of describing the historical transformation (development or evolution) of an art form. The style is unitary and consisting of phases of development. The style is early, mature, late. Alternative models for understanding style (Gestalt theory). The difficulties of organic theory (in the field of spiritual life there are no straightforward and irreversible processes). The problems of the late style (not necessarily a synthesis of the previous development, but also its denial). The problem of conscious choice of a particular style.

The question of the unity of style and how to explain it. Style analytics as a search for finite constants and certainties of the psyche and history (the process of constructing by the subject of history through constructing himself and vice versa). Style, thinking and consciousness.

#### **1.4 The Main Problems of Historical and Artistic Analysis of Art**

The main areas of art studies: “traditional” (combining the intuition of the researcher with a positive knowledge of the subject), sociological (research on the problems of organizing artistic life), formal and analytical (problems of poetics, shaping), structural and semiotic (using accurate methods of studying the language of art), cultural (identification of sociocultural foundations of artistic creation).

Art form as a carrier of aesthetic information. A work of art as a historical source. Content analysis and form analysis. The concept of iconography and iconology. The formal statistical method. Structural and functional analysis. The sociological aspect of the study of art. Analysis of a single work. Problems of comparative analysis of several works. The terminology of art history research (idea,

theme, plot, composition, color, plastic characteristic, monumentality, decorativeness, etc.).

Historically Informed Performance Practice (HIPP) as the practice of playing music of the past, taking into account its specific features. Achievements of Western European scholars Hugo Riemann, Johannes Wolf, Friedrich Ludwig, Pierre Aubry, etc. The practical application of information gathered from sources in the reconstruction and restoration of ancient instruments (including wind instruments), in their alternative tuning, in the reconstruction of the ancient game technique (fingering, strokes, dynamic nuances, etc.). The largest representatives of authentic performance: Arnold Dolmetsch, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Frans Brüggen, René Clemencic, Wanda Landowska, Gustav Leonhardt, Christopher Hogwood and others. Activities of the popular musical groups “Academy of Ancient Music”, “Hilliard Ensemble”, “Gothic Voices” (all in the UK), “Arts Florissants” (France), “Bach Collegium Japan”, “Collegium vocale Gent” (Belgium), “Concentus musicus Wien” (Austria), “Hespèrion” (Spain), “Studio der frühen Musik”, “Musica antiqua Köln” (both from Germany), “Orchestra of the 18th Century” (Netherlands). Authentic performance in Russia. Achievements of performers Andrey Volkonsky (founder of the ensemble “Madrigal”), Andres Mustonen (head of the Estonian ensemble “Hortus musicus”), Tatyana Grindenko (ensemble “Academy of Early Music”). The world center for the study of ancient music and the teaching of authentic performance is “Schola Cantorum” (Basel).

### **1.5 Practices of Contemporary Art**

Conceptual Art and artistic skills. Contemporary influence of conceptual art. Notable examples and artists (Sol LeWitt, Chris Burden, Joseph Beyus, Yoko Ono, Zhang Huan etc.). Fluxus as an international community of artists. Artistic philosophies of Fluxus.

Installation Art. Specificity and context. Decentring and fragmentation of human subject in Post-Structuralism. Types of installation. The origins of the installation. “Readymades” by Marcel Duchamp. Masters of installation: Joseph Boyce, Robert Rauschenberg, Joseph Kossuth, Edward Kienholz, Ilya Kabakov.

Performativity: Social engagement in Participatory, Performance and Live Art; Nicolas Bourriaud and Relational Aesthetics. Claire Bishop and Artificial Hells. Richard Martel and Art Action.

Performance Art. Kinds of performance. Origins Artists working with performance: Marina Abramovic, Vito Acconci, Rebecca Horn, Dennis Oppenheim, Suzanne Lacy, etc.

Environmental art as a range of artistic practices encompassing both historical approaches to nature in art and more recent ecological and politically motivated types of works. History of environmental art (landscape painting and representatio). Environmental Art and public and urban spaces. Ecoart as an artistic practice or

discipline proposing paradigms sustainable with the life forms and resources of our planet. Ecological awareness and transformation.

Street Art as a kind of visual art created in public locations. Common forms and media of street art: spray paint graffiti, stencil graffiti, wheat-pasted poster art, sticker art, street installations, and sculpture, video projection, yarn bombing. Medias of street art: LED art, mosaic tiling, stencil art, sticker art, reverse graffiti, "Lock On" sculptures, street installations, wheat pasting, wood blocking, yarn bombing, and rock balancing. New media forms are a popular tool for street artists. Software allows street artists to be competitive with corporate advertisements. Guerrilla Art and Graffiti as a forms of street art.

Body Art as an art made on, with, or consisting of, the human body. The most common forms of body art are tattoos and body piercings. Bio Art as an art practice where humans work with live tissues, bacteria, living organisms, and life processes. Using scientific processes such as biotechnology (including technologies such as genetic engineering, tissue culture, and cloning) the artworks are produced in laboratories, galleries, or artists' studios.

Creating living beings and practicing in the life sciences brings about ethical, social, and aesthetic inquiry. Pioneers of Bio Art (Eduardo Kac, Suzanne Anker, Joe Davis and the artists hosted by SymbioticA).

## **Section II. Trends in Contemporary Art Criticism**

### **2.1 Structure of Artistic Creation and Structure of Sense Context**

The system of research methods as a repertoire of cognitive "reactions". The spheres of art and the correspondence of each area of existence to its field of knowledge (discipline). The methodology of art history as the "rules of transition" (from one more simple level to a more complex and vice versa).

The methodology of art history as a technique of choice (subject of study and related tools). A work of art and an artistic person as two principles of art. Art creation as the starting point of research (from creation to creator). "Simultaneity" of a work of art and a sequence of approaches. Organization ("levels") of the work and the stages of its study.

### **2.2 Psychoanalytic Approaches to Art Criticism**

Art as an artistic activity and levels of human activity (from perception to thinking and behavior). Perceptual sources of the art form ("schematism" of perception and thinking as the basis of the structure of the work).

Rudolf Arnheim and the Gestalt approach in understanding the structure of a work of art ("Art and Visual Perception", 1960). Psychological aspects of the architectural form ("The Dynamics of Architectural Forms", 1977). Methodological problems in the "New Essays on the Psychology of Art" (including criticism of style



theory from the perspective of phenomenology). Development and revision of Gestalt theory (Richard Gregory, James J. Gibson).

Psychoanalysis and art. The irrational components of art and the unconscious psyche. Libidinal energy and the problem of sublimation (psychodynamic model of the human inner world). Fantasy as the source of artistic creativity and visual imagery (the theory of “condensation” and its origin). The problem of oneirism. Resources of psychoanalytic theory and practice: art as a special case of transfer (“projection” of the artist as a mechanism of generation and as a defense mechanism). The viewer as a “patient” and as an “analyst. Psychoanalytic approach to the interpretation of visual symbols: art as symptomatology and art history as therapy (the possibility of inverse relationships). Psychoanalytic “metatheory” and criticism of culture. Ways to overcome Freudian biologism (from instinct theory to ego theory).

Sigmund Freud as an interpreter of art and a critic of culture. The history of art in the interpretation of Otto Rank.

Jungian Analytical Psychology: archetypes of the psyche and typology of visual imagery: image, symbol, imago. The religious (numinous) component of the symbol as a manifestation of the archetype. Mandala as a universal symbol of the psyche and creativity (in the aspect of integrity). Archaic and mythological roots of art and methods for their interpretation (influence on the iconological approach).

Jacques Lacan: art as a special case of “writing of the unconscious” (“stage of the mirror” and “letter instance” in relation to art). Art as “fiction” (“fictitious analysis” in receptive aesthetics).

### **2.3 Sociological Approches of Art**

The concept of the artistic environment and artistic life. The problem of ordering and patronage. □□□□□□□□ Problems of the sociology of art in modern critical theory. Critical theory: the individual and society. Problems of sociological analysis of art. Sociology of form and sociology of the content of a work of art. The concept of “social totality” (Rudolf Adorno). The social attitude and being of the individual: identification, mediation, fetishism. Capitalism as a form of social totality. Art as repression and return of repressed social content. Theory of interpretation of art Fredric Jameson. “Interpretative horizons” of art: text-work, text-history.

The style of art and the “cultural dominant” of society. Typological triad Realism-Modernism-Postmodernism: a socio-economic rationale. Aesthetic form and social content. “Crisis of representation” as the key to the social logic of art. Modern as a state of society and a form of art. The processes of reformation in social and aesthetic terms: fragmentation, specialization, autonomy, commodity fetishization. The art of postmodernism: the appearance of the social.

Social status of the artist. The evolution of the status of an artist in the history of culture. The problems of becoming a professional self-consciousness of the artist, gaining his own identity. The position of the artist in the social hierarchy as a factor in the motivation of creativity. The reasons for the uneven position of representatives

of different types of art in the perception of contemporaries. “The Era of Salons” as a transition from an aristocratic to a democratic type of artistic life. The lack of overproduction of artistic intelligentsia in Russia, in contrast to the countries of Western Europe.

РЕПОЗИТОРИЙ БГУКИ

## EDUCATIONAL METHODOICAL CHART OF THE ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

section theme №	Name of section & theme	Number of classroom classes		Managed independent work	Form of control
		Lectures	Seminars		
<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>			
<b>2.</b>	<b>Contemporary Art and Its Problems</b>				<b>test</b>
2.1	Features of Artistic Perception	4	2		
2.2	Era, Epoch, Style, Movement: Meanings and Boundaries of Concepts	2	2		
2.3	The Main Problems of Historical and Artistic Analysis of Art	2	2	2	
2.4	Practices of Contemporary Art	4	2	2	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Trends in Contemporary Art Criticism</b>				<b>abstract</b>
3.1	Structure of Artistic Creation and Structure of Sense Context	2			
3.2	Psychoanalytic Approaches to Art Criticism	2	2	2	
3.3	Sociological Approaches of Art	2	2	2	
	<b>Total...</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	

## INFORMATION-METHODICAL SECTION

### Literature

#### *Main Literature*

1. Auslander, Ph. From acting to performance : essays in Modernism and Postmodernism / Ph. Auslander. – Abingdon : Routledge, 2009. – 173 p.
2. Alberro, A. Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity / A. Alberro. – The MIT Press, 2003. – 236 p.
3. Bishop, C. Installation Art. A Critical History / C. Bishop. – Tate Publishing, 2005. – 144 p.
4. Blandy, D. E. Pluralistic Approaches to Art Criticism / D. E. Blandy, K. G. Congdon. – Popular Press, 1991. – 135 p.
5. Goldberg RoseLee. Performance Now. Live Art for the 21st Century / RoseLee Goldberg. – London: Thames&Hudson, 2018. – 272 p.
6. Gooding, M. Song of the Earth: European Artists and the Landscape / M. Gooding. – London: Thames & Hudson, 2002. – 167 p.
7. Lippard, L. R. Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory / L. R. Lippard. – New York; New Press, 1983. – 272 p.
8. Mitchell, R. Bioart and the Vitality of Media / R. Mitchell. – Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010. – 224 p.
9. Sonfist, A. Nature: The End of Art. Florence, Italy: Gli Ori, Dist. / A. Sonfist. – Thames & Hudson, 2004. – 280 p.
10. Weilacher, U. Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art / U. Weilacher. – Birkhäuser, 1999. – 247 p.
11. Zylinska, J. Bioethics in the Age of New Media / J. Zylinska. – Cambridge: MIT Press/Leonardo Books, 2009. – 248 p.

#### *Additional Literature*

1. A Performance Cosmology : Testimony from the Future, Evidence of the Past / ed. J. Christie; R. Gough; D. P. Watt. – Florence : Taylor and Francis, 2013. – 935 p.
2. Auslander, Ph. Fluxus Art-Amusement: The Music of the Future? / Ph. Auslander // Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde: Performance and Textuality // ed. J. Harding, Ann Arbor. – University of Michigan Press, 2000. – pp. 110–129.
3. Auslander, Ph. Postmodernism and Performance / Ph. Auslander // The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism // edit. St. Connor. – Cambridge University Press, 2004. – pp. 97–115.
4. Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks / ed. M. Rampley, Th. Lenian, H. Locher. – BRILL, 2012. – 567 p.
5. Beardsley, J. Earthworks and Beyond. Contemporary Art in the Landscape / J. Beardsley. – New York: Abbeville Press, 1998. – 224 p.

6. Chaffee, L. Political Protest and Street Art: Popular Tools for Democratization in Hispanic Cultures / L. Chaffe. – Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993. – 208 p.
7. Crimp, D. On the Museum's Ruins / D. Crimp. – The MIT Press, 1993. – xix, 348 p.
8. Harris, J. Art History: The Key Concepts / J. Harris. – Routledge, 2006. – 346 p.
9. Kastner, J. Land & Environmental Art / J. Kastner, B. Wallis. – Phaidon Press, 2005. – 304 p.
10. Lee Morgan, Ann. Historical Dictionary of Contemporary Art / Ann Lee Morgan. – Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. – 570 p.
11. Lewisohn, C. Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution / C. Lewisohn. – London, England: Tate Publishing, 2008. – 160 p.
12. Signs of Life: Bio Art and Beyond / ed. E. Kac. – Cambridge: MIT Press/Leonardo Books, 2007. – x, 420 p.
13. Wu, Xin. Patricia Johanson and the Re-Invention of Public Environmental Art, 1958–2010 / Xin Wu. – Routledge, 2017. – 334 p.

## **EDUCATIONAL METHODS AND TECHNOLOGIES**

To reach the aim of educational efficiency while working with master students, it is effective to use the following methods: oral speech and visual materials, written speech (work with a book and the Internet sources), the methods of discussion, interactive so as the method of comparative analysis.

The technologies of education include the following ways of the organization of educational process: 1) informative communicative technology (a lecture, presentation), which contributes to personal self-realization and orients in informative space; makes Master students close to informational communicative possibilities of modern technologies and obtains informational culture; 2) the technology of critical thinking (a round table, discussion, debate). Such a technology contributes to critical thinking development, openness to new ideas, methods and responsibility for Master students' decisions; 3) project technology (an abstract, report). The usage of project technology stimulates self-independent search activity of Master students who have already had a definite amount of knowledge and ability to apply practically this knowledge.

## **DIAGNOSTIC INSTRUMENTS**

One of the recommended elements used to define the level of Master students' academic achievements by means of criteria-oriented tests. They are a complex of close test tasks with one or several right answers; tasks on finding the correlation between elements of two multitudes with one or several correlations; and open tests with formalized answers: tasks on defining the right order of data in the consequence of artifacts.

To estimate Master students' academic results and the degree of conformity of their knowledge to the requirements of the educational standard; it is recommended to use creative problem-solving tasks, which need Master students' heuristic activity and non-formalized answers.

## **METHODICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZING SELF-EDUCATION WORK OF MASTER STUDENTS**

The aim of Master students' self-education work is the stimulation of their cognitive activity and advancement at a productive creative level of knowledge receiving, the development of academic, social, personal and professional competences.

Self-education work is organized in accordance with the regulation of Master students 'self-independent work and maintained in the form of practical lessons and consultations. The academic discipline is supplied with the educational and

methodical complex with recommendations and materials, which can help a master student to organize self-education. The estimation of self-education quality is made in the form of constant control.

Master students' self-education includes working out, writing and defending the abstract; doing tests on studied themes; attending various artistic events (exhibitions, festivals, performances and films) or watching the necessary audio visual materials using the Internet.

Self-education comprises the preparation for listening or watching the named events, which involves preliminary acquaintance with an author's (authors') creative work of a presented work (works), their dominating stylistics and the analysis of the given artifacts.

### **APPROXIMATE LIST OF TASKS FOR CONTROLLED SELF-EDUCATION WORK**

Tasks for controlled self-educational work compass the following forms: an abstract, a test, round table, discussion, debate.

*An abstract* is a written work (a communication) on a definite theme, where the information from several published works is presented.

*A test* is a set of tasks in a close form with several versions of right answers.

*A round table* is a form of organizing a practical class, when the Master students exchange their points of view. Each participant can give his/her point of view, arguments, and grounds on the announced topic. The speaker (the leader) of the round table sums up the ideas when all the participants have given their arguments. This moment is the result of the class and its culmination.

*A discussion* is a talking through a contradicting question or problem. The main characteristic of a discussion, which differs it from any other discourse, is the presence of arguments.

*A debate* is a well structured, especially organized exchange of thoughts between two sides of participants on actual themes.