

Course Number

ART-HIST 395

Course Title

Blackness and Abstraction

Quarter/Year

Spring 2021

Day/Time

F 1-3:50

Instructor

Love

Degree/Distro Fulfillment

post-1800; seminar

Course Description

This course addresses the relationship between racial Blackness and abstraction in Modernist art from the 1920s to the 1960s. Through close analysis of objects in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, we will rethink the canonical historiography of Modernist abstraction by situating it in relation to primitivism, colonialism, racial representation, the civil rights movement, and anticolonial struggles. The seminar will be split into three blocks of three weeks, each of which revolves around a primary case study: Constantin Brâncuși's *White Negress II* (1928), Norman Lewis's *Multitudes* (1946), and Ibrahim el-Salahi's *Male-Female Figure with Pomegranate* (1968). Rather than simulating a developmental narrative, these three blocks are contrapuntal: they provide a window into the artistic, cultural, and political issues of three different time periods (Interwar, Postwar, and Postcolonial) and three different continents (Europe, North America, and Africa). Against a monolithic conception of "Black art," this seminar demonstrates how racial Blackness undergirds the practices of diverse artists across a wide historical and geographic spectrum.

Required Textbooks

No textbooks. All required readings will be made available as PDFs.

Assessments

Discussion participation, weekly response papers, and final paper.

Contact.

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