

SYLLABUS (as of February 18, 2019)**The Black Voices of *Black Model*: New Perspectives for the Histories of Art
Columbia University - Reid Hall Paris
Summer 2019****Instructor: Denise Murrell, PhD**Email: (dmm71@columbia.edu)

Office:

Office Hours:

Course Description

This course will be based on the Musée d'Orsay exhibition *Le Modèle Noir de Géricault à Matisse (The Black Model from Géricault to Matisse)*, also known as the "Black Model" exhibition; and its precedent version, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today*, which was displayed from October 2018 to February 2019 at the Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University New York.

The course seeks to reveal a black presence as central to the changing aesthetics of Western art from the early nineteenth century through to the contemporary moment. It seeks to introduce the diverse voices of selected black figures featured in the *Black Model* exhibition, and to formulate new narratives of art history, through the close visual analysis of key original works of art; the study of primary sources, often newly revealed in the two *Black Model* exhibitions; and a review of the relevant art-historical texts.

A focal point of the course will be a series of juxtapositions of the posed portrayals of black models by prominent artists in comparison with the models' available modes of self-representation. To this objective, the course will focus on primary sources ranging from correspondence, journals, rental records and modeling schedules to cartes de visite, literary texts and photographic portraits.

Readings from the *Posing Modernity* catalogue and a newly planned English translation of the Orsay *Black Model* catalogue will reveal the transformative voices of emerging and historical black curators and historians, of French, French Caribbean, African American and West African heritage, whose work comprises a preponderance of the assigned readings.

The course will explore the manner in which changing modes of representing the black figure were foundational to the development of modern art in the West, from Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863) to the present. It begins with a review of selected antecedents to the black model Laure of Manet's *Olympia*. These include major works by artists Chassériau and Lethière who the exhibition presents as artists of color in the wake of recent research revealing their self-described mixed-race ancestry. We will also analyze the *Black Model* exhibition's presentation of extensive primary sources that re-position the famed writers Alexandre Dumas father and son, as well, as self-identified "men of color," a fact not generally known in France despite these writers' prominence.

The course then considers Manet's modernizing portrayals of the black model Laure, including her pose as the maid in *Olympia*, and his monumental portrait of the actress Jeanne Duval, the biracial mistress of poet Charles Baudelaire, as well as portraits of black figures by Degas and Cézanne. These depictions are set, where possible, in juxtaposition with little-known archival materials that establish the models' identities and reveal the models' correspondence, cartes de

visite and other archival documentation of self-expression.

We further examine these works in the context of the social, cultural, economic and political factors that shaped artistic portrayals of the black figure, including the impact of north/south migrations, and the emergent curatorial practice of replacement of pejorative racial nomenclature such as the ubiquitous term “négresse” with titles recognizing the models’ identities. The course gives particular attention to an extensive gallery of photographic portraits of black Parisians, by Nadar and others, as further articulations of the models’ chosen modes of self-portrayal.

These works collectively reveal the little-known interface between Manet and his Impressionist circle and a post-abolition community of free black Parisians who, like the artists, lived and worked in the newly modernized northern neighborhoods of post-abolition Paris. Within this avant-garde milieu, Manet and his friends embraced Baudelaire’s exhortation to be painters of modern life, and thus marked the the modernist shift away from the “exotic other” toward portrayals of the black figure as an active participants in everyday Parisian life rather than as the exotic “other” sanctioned by the Paris Salon.

The course then traces the impact of the modernizing reconsideration of the black model into the twentieth century and across the Atlantic. Henri Matisse visited Harlem jazz clubs and produced transformative portrayals of an international roster of black models including the Haitian dancer Carmen Lahens, the Belgian-Congolese journalist Mme Van Hyfte, and the famed African American dancers Katherine Dunham and Josephine Baker, as icons of modern beauty. The course examines the correspondence and family portraits of these models, and the choreography and publications of Dunham, a trained anthropologist, to gain insights into their perspectives on, and often collaboration in, their portrayals.

Matisse’s works are set in dialogue with the urbane “New Negro” portraits of African American Harlem Renaissance artists such as William H. Johnson and Laura Wheeler Waring—the first modern artists in the United States to depict African American city life during the height of the Great Migration in overt defiance of racial stereotypes; while forging Black Atlantic contacts through portrayals of prominent African and French Caribbean subjects, including the Senegalese dancer Feral Benga, whose own reflections are also reviewed.

The course will conclude with a look at the living legacy of art history from the perspective of postwar African American collagist Romare Bearden, as seen through his published texts on Manet and Matisse, as well as the artists of contemporary black France.

Course Requirements

The class requires regular attendance and active participation in class discussions and for museum visits.

Also required are:

Timely completion of all reading and written assignments

Presentation of one assigned reading for class discussion

Two comparative analyses, 2-3 pages each, of paired works of art from assigned lists

One 6-8 page final paper

Mandatory visits to the Musée d’Orsay (2) and the Centre Pompidou/Archives Matisse (1) Orsay visits will be on Mondays, when the museum is closed to the public.

Grading

Final course grades will be determined as follows: class attendance and participation 30%; two comparative analyses 40%; final paper, 30%.

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend every class meeting. Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion are essential to success in this course.

Please come to class on time and prepared to discuss any reading or other assignment. Students with more than one unexcused absence should expect to have their grade lowered by one level (from A to A-); students with more than 2 unexcused absences risk failing the course. The Orsay and Pompidou visits are mandatory; all absentees, including those with excused absences, must submit a short makeup paper to be assigned that will require an individual visit to the museum.

Please plan to be in the classroom for the duration of each session, and to refrain from the use of electronic devices, except for taking notes, during class. An absence for reasons other than religious observance, illness or family emergency is considered to be unexcused. If you will miss class for religious observance, please notify me in writing in advance. Please submit a doctor's note to be excused for absence due to illness.

COURSE SCHEDULE (primary sources, including works of art assigned for in-gallery viewing in the original, archival materials and period texts, are in bold font)

Session 1: Wednesday June 12

Introduction: Course overview and logistics

Cécile Debray, Stéphane Guégan, Denise Murrell and Isolde Pludermacjher, "Curators' Introduction" in *The Black Model from Géricault to Matisse**, exh.cat. (Paris: Flammarion and the Musée d'Orsay, 2019), 15-17.

Denise Murrell, "Manet's Laure and the Histories of Art," in *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (exh.cat.), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 2-4.

Hugh Honour, "Images of the Other" and "Aesthetics and Theories of Race" in *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 7-23

*The Musée d'Orsay will publish an English translation of the *Black Model* catalogue, with sponsorship from the Ford Foundation; the expected publication date is April 2019. Pages cited herein are from the current French-language catalogue proof; revisions will be made as needed once a proof of the translation is available.

Session 2: Monday June 17

Class meets at the Musée d'Orsay.

Study visit to the exhibition *Black Model: Géricault to Matisse*, Musée d'Orsay (galleries for the period 1801-1848). **Primary sources on view include over 250 original works of painting, photography and sculpture, as well as archival materials, including correspondence, modeling contracts, rental records, publicity posters, cartes de visite, contemporaneous descriptions of the models by family, friends and colleagues.** These sources reveal the self-expressed thoughts, actions and overall lived experiences of the black models, artists and writers who are portrayed in the exhibition.

Session 3: Wednesday June 19

Portrayals of the Black Body in the Era of Enslavement

Selected focus works to include:

-**Benoist, *Portrait of Madeleine* (formerly *Portrait d'une négresse*), 1801**

–portrait of an enslaved black woman, by a white female artist, as a symbol of freedom during the aborted first French abolition; discussion of recent new research that has revealed the model's identity and led to the renaming of this iconic painting from the Louvre.

-the juxtaposition of **Géricault, *Study of the model Joseph*, 1818** vs **Chassériau, *Study of the Model Joseph* (formerly *Study of a Black Man*), 1839**, to discuss the long career of the model Joseph, and the different modes of his portrayal by white artists (Géricault) vs Chassériau, an artist recently revealed to be of self-proclaimed biracial French Caribbean heritage.

Readings:

-**original Chassériau family correspondence**

- **Joseph's signed modeling contracts from the Académie des Beaux-Arts** indicating his acceptance and rejection of specific modeling assignments

--**contemporaneous descriptions of Joseph's life and work**

Black Model exh. cat., 58-63, 73, 84-91

James Smalls, "Slavery Is a Woman: Race, Gender, and Visuality in Marie Benoist's *Portrait d'une négresse*," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2004) <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring04/286-slavery-is-a-woman-race-gender-and-visuality-in-marie-benoists-portrait-dune-negresse-1800>

Anne Lafont, *Portrait de femme noir Anew: Writing the Black Atlantic Model in the 21st Century*, keynote address at Posing Modernity symposium, Wallach Art Gallery, November 8, 2018 (view videotape archived on Wallach Art Gallery site)

Sylvain Bellenger "Les droits de l'homme et du citoyen" in Girodet: 1767–1824, exh. cat. (Paris: Gallimard/Musée du Louvre, 2006), 331, 335

Session 4 Monday June 24

Diverse Artistic Portrayals of Enslavement, the Exotic Other and Abolition

Selected focus works to include:

-a juxtaposition of **paintings and sculpture portraying scenes of abolition by artists including Biard (European), Lethière (Haitian) and Edmonia Lewis (African American)** to explore the differing perspectives on abolition as bestowed by the French (Biard) vs secured through a victorious war of independence (Lethière)

-**Gérome, *The Moorish Bath*, 1870**, for a discussion of recent research on Orientalism, often by black scholars, that examines the construction of the racially coded Exotic Other in the archetypal black figures featured in depictions by European artists of lavishly decorative but pseudo-realistic scenes set in locations of empire including North Africa

Readings

Childs, *Black Women, Orientalism, and the School of Gérôme*, paper at November 2018 Posing Modernity symposium, (view videotape archived on Wallach Art Gallery site)

OR

Adrienne Childs, "Exceeding Blackness in the Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme," in Blacks and Blackness in European Art of the Long Nineteenth Century, ed. Adrienne L. Childs and Susan H. Libby (Farnham, Surrey, Eng.: Ashgate, 2014), 125–34, 137–42.

Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 266–72

Session 5 Wednesday June 26

Portrayals of Black Parisians: From the Archtypes of Salon Painting and Sculpture to the Commissioned Photographic Portrait

Selected focus works to include:

-a juxtaposition of **Nadar's well-known photographic portraits titled *Maria l'Antillaise, 1856-59*** with recently discovered photographic portraits on the **cartes de visite of the black French-Cuban singer Maria Martinez** to contrast the model's chosen modes of self-portrayal with her poses for the prominent photographer Nadar; also **publicity posters and prints from her performances**
-an analysis of the aesthetic affinities between fine art and ethnography, as seen in **paired portrait photograph portraits and sculpture by Nadar, Potteau and Cordier**, in comparison with art photography.

Readings:

-**originals of letters by Maria Martinez describing her life and career**, publicly displayed for the first time in the Black Model exhibition

-**letters by Charles Baudelaire and other prominent Parisians describing their attendance at Martinez performances and conversations with her at receptions**

- Deborah Willis and Carla Williams, The Black Female Body: A Photographic History (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 10–34

-Laure de Margerie, Édouard Papet et al., Facing the Other: Charles Cordier (1827–1905), Ethnographic Sculptor, exh. cat. (New York: Abrams, 2004), 50–54, 70

Session 6 Monday July 1

Class meets at the Musée d'Orsay (galleries for 1849-present)

Study visit to **the exhibition *Black Model: Géricault to Matisse***, Musée d'Orsay (galleries for the period 1848-1950)

Session 7 Wednesday July 3

Laure of *Olympia* and More: Manet and Post-Abolition Black Paris

Selected focus works to include:

-**Manet, *Olympia, 1865*; *Portrait of Laure (formerly La négresse), 1862*; **Manet, *Children in the Tuileries, 1862*; Feyen, *The Enfants' Kiss, 1865*****

Readings:

Assigned selections for student presentations from:

-**Original of Manet's 1862 studio notebook, including his description "Laure, très belle négresse (Laure, very beautiful black woman)**

Jennifer De Vere Brody, "Black Cat Fever: Manifestations, of Manet's *Olympia*," Theatre Journal 53, no. 1 (2001): 95–118

-**Originals of Manet letters from Brazil** (with translations by Denise Murrell)

-descriptions of the letters in Édouard Manet, Lettres de jeunesse: 1848–1849 Voyage à Rio (Paris: Louis Rouart, 1928), 52, 58

Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," 1853, in The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Phaidon, 2005), 1–42.

Charles Baudelaire, Jeanne Duval Suite, "À une Malabaraise" (To a Woman from Malabar) and "Les yeux de Berthe" (Berthe's Eyes) in *Les fleurs du mal The Flowers of Evil, 1855-57*, trans. James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 47-81, 301, 319

Marilyn Brown, "Miss La La's Teeth: Reflections on Degas and Race," Art Bulletin 89, no. 4 (December 2007): 738–65

Françoise Cachin, Charles S. Moffat, and Juliet Wilson-Bareau, Manet, 1832–1883, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983) 175, 179

Denise Murrell, "Manet, the Impressionists and Black Paris," in the Posing Modernity exhibition catalogue (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 7-37, 53-62

Therese Dolan, "Skirting the Issue: Manet's Portrait of Baudelaire's Mistress [Jeanne Duval], Reclining," Art Bulletin (December 1997): 611–29.

Session 8 Monday July 8

Alexandre Dumas father and son: "Moi, je suis nègre aussi" ("I am black too")

Selected focus works to include:

-gallery studies of the **Black Model** exhibition's extensive display of prints, photographs and portrait paintings depicting the black French novelist **Alexandre Dumas père** and playwright **Alexandre Dumas fils**
- **photographic portrait of Dumas père, 1851, by Haitian born photographer Alexis Gouin**

-While Alexandre Dumas père and his son are among the best known 19th century French writers, they are not considered by the general public in France to be men of color, despite their self-proclaimed Haitian maternal lineage, even though Dumas père in particular wrote extensively about his experiences with racism in both French and Caribbean society (see *Georges* below) and despite their decision to carry their Haitian Dumas names instead of the name of their French aristocratic paternal family. Dumas père famously told his friend, the African American Shakespearean actor Ira Aldridge, after his performance of *Othello*, that "I am black too."

-We will consider this repositioning within France of the Dumas family as "men of color" by viewing artistic portrayals of the Dumas father and son, who were often depicted in racially stereotyped satire as well as in statesmanlike portraits and sculpture, as well as their writings about race.

Readings:

-**Alexandre Dumas père, *Georges, A Novel, 1828***, Modern Library translation by Tina Kover with foreword by Jamaica Kincaid (New York: Penguin Random House, 2007)

-Tom Reise, *The Black Count*, 2012 (New York: Broadway Books), 1-23

Session 9 Wednesday July 9

The Harlem Renaissance and African American Modernism: “New Negro” Portraits

Selected focus works to include:

- the extensive display in *Black Model* of photographs and portrait paintings by African American artists of the Harlem Renaissance, including James Van Der Zee and William H. Johnson
- paintings by the Mexican artist Covarubbias, who had strong ties to the Harlem Renaissance,
- Harlem Renaissance artists’ 1930s portraits of Senegalese dancer Feral Benga, who lived and worked in Harlem and Paris.
- Black Model* exhibition’s extensive display of images of Senegalese dancer Feral Benga, including in performance with Josephine Baker, in photographs and publicity posters

The African American philosopher Alain Locke wrote, in the assigned reading cited below, that during the 1920s Harlem Renaissance, “art must discover and reveal the beauty which prejudice caricature have overlaid.” We will study the range of pictorial styles with which the Harlem artists worked with the “New Negro” portraiture style to depict everyday life of the new northern black cities formed in the midst of the move by millions of black Americans out of the rural South during the Great Migration. We also explore the interface between the Harlem artists and those of the Black Atlantic, specifically the French Caribbean and Senegal.

Readings:

Alain Locke, “The New Negro,” in Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro*, (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 3-19

Note: this essay was first published in 1925; we will read this in a new edition republished fifty years later

Aime Cesaire, “I am Black, and I Will Remain Black,” in *Interviews with François Verges* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2005), 25. (translated by Denise Murrell)

Assigned selections for students’ in-class presentations:

Pap Ndiaye, “The Black Atlantic: Africa’s Diaspora Takes Center Stage,” in *Black Model* exh. cat., 269-282. (Feral Benga -pages 279-282)

Richard J. Powell, David A. Bailey, et al., *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: University of California Press; London: Haywood Gallery, 1997), 18–19,

Petrine Archer Shaw, *Negrophilia: Avant Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 51-64

Session 10 Monday July 15

Class will meet at the Kandinsky Library, Centre Pompidou, in collaboration with the Archives Matisse, Issy-les-Moulineaux

Selected focus works to include:

- Hélène Adant, photographs of Matisse studio sessions with Carmen Lahens, 1946
- 1940s letters between Matisse and of the Belgian Congolese Matisse model and journalist Mme Van Hyfte
- letter from Matisse to his wife, March 1930, in which he describes seeing a “fabulous” black play in Harlem
- the Julie Kluver archives for 1920s photographs of Aicha Goblet, the Martinican Matisse model and doyenne of Montparnasse café society

Readings:

Jack Cowart et al., Matisse in Morocco: The Paintings and Drawings, 1912–1913, exh. cat. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990).

Session 11 Wednesday July 17

Henri Matisse and Romare Bearden: Postwar Modernism and Cultural Hybridity

Selected focus works to include:

-the class will explore the medium of collage as emblematic of the new TransAtlantic cultural hybridity that has increasingly defined postwar Western society, with a close visual analysis in the Black Model galleries of the compositional process, materials and imagery of two iconic works of postwar modernist collage: Matisse's monumental cutout **Creole Dancer, 1951**, evoking the African American choreographer/dancer Katharine Dunham, and **Romare Bearden's collage Patchwork Quilt, 1970**, for its blend of the aesthetics of the African mask, Egyptian tomb sculpture and the Africa American quilting tradition. -we will also discuss the **original costume photos and publicity photos of Katharine Dunham's 1948-49 Paris performances**, seen in the Black Model galleries, and assess the extent to which Matisse captures her costume designs and choreography as her own mode of self-presentaton.

Readings:

Romare Bearden and Carl Holty, *The Painter's Mind* (New York: Crown, 1969), 142–45 (the African American artist Romare Bearden's essays and letters about Manet and Matisse

Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity* exh.cat, 115-130

Session 12 Monday July 23

Black France Today: A conversation with contemporary artists

Possible speakers :

Omar Victor Diop (Senegalese) or the curator at the Vuitton museum Paris who recently acquired a selection of Diop's 2010-18 works.

Elizabeth Colomba (Black French)- based on instructor's March 22, 20018 interview with the artist in New York

Aimé Mpane (Congolese)- based on instructor's October 16, 2017, interview with the artist in Brussels

Readings:

Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity* catalogue excerpts from author's interviews with these artists (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 171-175

Cécile Debray, "Olympia II, III, III...in Black and White," in *Black Model* exh.cat., 341-347.