CHAOS AND COMPLEXITY IN THE VISUAL ARTS—Power Boothe

If we regard art, not as a mind-independent object, but as an integral part of an experiential process, it seems we can more easily understand the importance of the irrational in art. The view of the ideal in art as an independent harmonious object parallels Newtonian science, which defined a deterministic world operating in a symmetrical state of perfect equilibrium. Here the irrational was dismissed as simply evidence of our lack of knowledge. The dream of the work-as-perfect, despite our not having the ability to see it, has been around since recorded time. However, the science of complexity that emerged in the second half of the 20th century took a different tack. Chaos was not banished and the irrational and chance were embraced as an important aspect of the universe. Complexity theory seems to shed new light, not only on the nature of evolution, patterns of growth, and determinism; it provides new insights on the creative process. And, it gives us a new lens through which to view the work of many artists that we thought we knew. Using the lens of complexity theory, the course will explore the artwork of a range of visual artists including Leonardo, Bosch, Velasquez, Blake, Turner, Goya, Pollock, Twombly, Rauschenberg, Tuttle, Hesse, and Puryear; artists who have imagined chaos, embraced chance, and revealed a dynamic view of the world that is open-ended and not determined.

Cost: $80; Fellows, $60
FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS BUILD A COUNTRY HOUSE: HILL-STEAD MUSEUM AND ITS ORIGINS—Melanie Bourbeau

Hill-Stead Museum and its collection of French Impressionist paintings is, perhaps, familiar to many of us, but this three-part course will delve into the story in a deeper way than the typical guided tour at the historic house. In part one, learn about Alfred Atmore Pope’s business career as a midwestern industrialist and his budding interest in collecting, years before he and his wife moved to their “retirement” estate in the heart of Farmington. In part two, learn about Theodate Pope’s life and architectural career. Excerpts from diaries and letters will make her come alive. The course will conclude with part three, Hill-Stead’s collection and French Impressionism. We’ll examine the paintings on view in the museum, other works Alfred Pope purchased that are “gone but not forgotten” and works by other artists that will place Hill-Stead’s collection in context.

Cost: $80; Fellows, $70

ANCIENT NUBIA: LAND OF GOLD—Colleen Manessa Darnell

The great civilization of ancient Egypt was not alone in the Nile Valley—to the south lay a rival kingdom, Nubia. This course explores the interconnected histories of Egypt and Nubia, from the origins of civilization in the Nile Valley in the fourth and fifth millennia BCE, to Egyptian imperial expansion around 2000 BCE and the construction of a large series of fortifications, to the rise of an independent Nubian kingdom around 1700 BCE.

Egyptian colonial domination of Nubia and the extraction of its natural resources—predominately gold—alters throughout the millennia with the dominance of Nubian political power in the south. Egyptian-Nubian history culminates with the Twenty-Fifth Kushite Dynasty that ruled a unified Egypt and Nubia in the middle of the first millennium BCE. The course will cover larger political and military trends, as well as the lives of individual Nubians, whose experiences cast a more personal light on historical processes.

Cost: $85; Fellows, $75

GOYA AND PICASSO: ARTISTIC REVOLUTIONARIES—David Simon

Both Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828) and Pablo Ruiz y Picasso (1881–1973) share certain biographical particulars that might be considered accidents of history in that both were born and trained in Spain and both died, virtually in exile, in France. In fact, each of their paths from Spain to France can be seen as a reaction to the social and political events of Spain during the 19th and 20th centuries. Both artists were renowned as painters and also as printmakers and both used their notable talents to comment on political events of their times, developing new artistic techniques to do so. Indeed, both Goya and Picasso established profound revolutionary agendas for their work.

Cost: $85; Fellows, $75

FAKES AND FORGERIES: AMAZING BUT TRUE ADVENTURES OF AN ART MUSEUM DIRECTOR—Douglas Hyland

Over a 35-year period, Douglas Hyland has encountered many extraordinary situations involving the authentication of major masterpieces by Sir Anthony van Dyck, Antoine Watteau, John Singleton Copley, Winslow Homer, Thomas Hart Benton, and Frank Benson, among many others. Each set of circumstances involved a web of intrigue and mystery. Beyond European and American paintings, there is no end to the forgeries offered for sale to museums and collectors of Asian and African Art, as well. The art market, which is the least regulated major industry in our nation, is rife with fraud and the growing number of fakes is astonishing. Hyland has benefitted from the assistance and expertise of many eminent friends and colleagues, both art historians and professional conservators from around the world, and he will recount in detail the personal adventures he has very much enjoyed as a art museum director since 1982.

Cost: $90; Fellows $70