

Baroque- isms

Mondays | 8:30 - 11:30am | 2210 A&AB
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“Baroque is the superlative of the bizarre, the excess of the ridiculous.” Or so says Italian critic Francesco Milizia, writing in 1797. Long reprimanded for its “excessive” ornamentation and “convoluted” forms, the Baroque style stretches, undulatingly, across artistic media to architecture, design, and urbanism. The Baroque also travels, imperialistically, across the globe as it wriggles its way across centuries, from the early modern period to the present. Celebrated by some but derided by many, what does the style reveal as it shifts to different contexts, places, and times?

This elective seminar interrogates the Baroque as a lens through which to examine imperialisms, colonialisms, nationalisms, and fascisms. Our investigation of the Baroque will lead us to consider architectural translations and urban transformations, and to confront conceptions of race and gender. In the process, we will contend with issues of religiosity, power, class, migration, labor, extraction, hybridity, exchange, abundance, excess, persuasion, theatrics, and taste. From the Roman Baroque to the Punjabi Baroque to the digital Baroque, the seminar engages this contentious style in its many iterations across time and space, encouraging students to explore new Baroque-isms. Taking as its core premise that questions of style matter, this course asks what the Baroque has to tell us today.