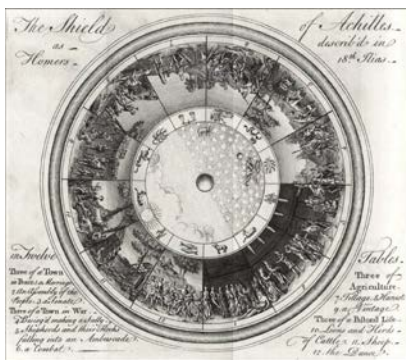


Instructors: **Marius Henderson, M.A., Jolene Mathieson, M.A.**  
 Title: **Writing about Art**  
 Course: **Seminar Ib**  
 Number: **53-541**  
 Time: **Mondays, 14-16**  
 Room: **Phil 1269**  
 Starts: **13.10.2014**

**Course description:**



Imaginative Interpretation of the  
Shield of Achilles, 18<sup>th</sup> century



René Magritte  
*The Treachery of Images*, 1928



The Amazing Spider-Man,  
Issue # unknown

The earliest known and most famous example of writing about art in Western literature is the 3000-year-old poetic description of engraved images on the Shield of Achilles in Book XVIII of Homer's *Iliad*. Beginning in Ancient Greek literature and extending to our own time, the literary practice of engaging, describing and negotiating visual artwork and representation has continued without interruption in all European literatures. And with the exponential rise of visual media over the last half century, both writing about art and the academic study of word-image relations have become highly productive and veritably *en vogue*. This discourse, however, is not relegated to the upper echelons of culture production: it has become quite popular in mainstream culture as well. Children's books abound with art descriptions, blogs and other online platforms publish large amounts of poems on all kinds of artworks, and a number of festivals have sprung up over the years which invite the public to recreate visual artworks through the medium of words and to perform their poems on stage. It is in this context that our seminar will operate. We will examine the ways in which poets use the verbal register to construct, represent and comment on visual representation. We will work transatlantically, looking at poems from Great Britain, Ireland and the US, and chronologically, beginning with 19<sup>th</sup> century poems on traditional art forms such as paintings and sculpture and moving toward contemporary poems on new visual media. Along the way, we will examine poetic form and texture; we will be introduced to important concepts such as *ut pictura poesis*, *ekphrasis*, *paragone* and inter-semiotic translation; and we will take an excursion to the Bucerius Kunstforum where we will produce our own writings about art!

**Texts:** A reader with all the required reading material is available for purchase at Print und Copyhaus (Grindelallee 32). Each of you must purchase a copy and bring it to the first session.

**Credit requirements:** Thorough preparation of all reading material, completion of a short creative writing assignment, active participation, oral presentation and a research paper.