9/13: POLITICAL POWER, Place of Power cont.: Teotihuacan and Versailles

ASSIGNMENT: 138-141 (on Teotihuacan) and 346-47 and 388-389 (on Versailles)

TERMS TO KNOW: Mesoamerica, Pyramid of the Sun, Pyramid of the Moon, Avenue of the Dead, tablero, Temple of Quetzalcoatl (the Feathered Serpent), Tlaloc, Aztecs, Hernan Cortés, Louis XIV, Baroque, Iconography, Salon de la Guerre, Hall of Mirrors

KEY WORKS:

4.55 - 4.57 Teotihuacán, Mexico, c. 100 BCE – 750 CE. (ceremonial plaza, façade of the Temple of the Feathered Serpent, and Maguey Bloodletting Ritual (fragment of a fresco)

9.1, 9.47-9.48 Palace of Versailles, France, c. 1660 – 1690, exterior garden façade, Salon de la Guerre (Room of War), and plan of the gardens and park.

Questions and Issues to Consider:

- Be able to name the chief structures at the Teotihuacan site.
- What is the relationship between the built spaces of Teotihuacan and the landscape/site on which it is built?
- Consider the purposes and symbolic meaning of the pyramid structures at Teotihuacan. How do they compare to the great pyramids at Giza in terms of function and meaning?
- How might the procession along the Avenue of the Dead at Teotihuacan compare to procession as it was enacted at the Forbidden City?
- What is the significance of water and rain to the people of Teotihuacan and how is this significance figured in the structures and art that remain of this culture?
- It is thought by some scholars that the rain god, Tlaloc, as he is represented at the Temple of Quetzalcoatl may have served an “apotropaic” function. What does this mean?
- Order and balance as an expression of political strength and will are inherent in the designs of both the Imperial Chinese place (Forbidden City) and the Palace at Versailles. In what ways are the two similar? In what ways are they different?
- What is the relationship of the King to the natural world, as expressed in the gardens at Versailles? How is Louis XIV’s identity as the “Sun King” evident in the design and plan of Versailles?
- In what ways is the Palace at Versailles “Baroque” in its exterior and interior decoration?
- What purpose did the Hall of Mirrors serve at Versailles?
- How was the political relationship between Louis XIV and his court (the nobility) enframed by and enacted through the palace?

9/15: POLITICAL POWER – Representing Authority: Easter Island, Benin Kingdom, The Byzantine Empire and 17th-century Spain
ASSIGNMENT: 162-163 and 166-167 (on the Byzantine empire and the Justinian mosaics at San Vitale), 212-213 (on Moai Ancestral Figures, Easter Island), 244-245 and 350 (on Benin, Ife and Owo culture), and 380-381 on Velázquez’s Las Meninas

TERMS: Byzantium, Justinian, Theodora, Maximianus, tesserae, Easter Island, marae, ahu, maoi, tufa, aringa ora, Benin Kingdom, ancestral shrine, oba, realism, Philip IV, Margarita, Order of Santiago

KEY WORKS:

5.25 – 5.26: Interior of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy with mosaics commissioned by Emperor Justinian and the local bishop, Maximianus, 526-47 CE. Justinian, Archbishop Maximianus of Ravenna, and Attendants, and Theodora and Attendants, mosaic.

Volcanic stone (tufa). Average height, 36’.

6.49–6.52: African Royal Portrait Heads, Benin, Ife, Yoruba and Edo cultures, Nigeria, c. 15th–c. CE

9.4 General and Officers, Benin culture, c. 1550-1650, brass

9.40: Diego Velázquez, Las Meninas (The Maids of Honor), 1656. (Probably commissioned by Philip IV of Spain.)

Questions and Issues to Consider:

- What was the Byzantine Empire? When did arise? Where was its capital located?
  - Why did the Emperor Constantine move the capital from Rome to this location?
  - Think about the stylistic differences between an early Roman representation of the emperor (fig. 3.105), and the later Byzantine image of Emperor Justinian. What might account for these differences?
  - In what ways is naturalism denied or rejected in Byzantine imagery? Why?
- Why does light and color play a large role in Byzantine religious architecture?
- What is the political and religious significance of the mosaic program at San Vitale?
  - Why is mosaic as a medium particularly suited to representing Justinian and his court in this setting?
- The Moai figures from Easter Island were aligned in a row on a platform called the ahu. Why might they have been arranged in this way?
- Who is represented in these Moai figures? What is aringa ora?
- What is the significance of the relief carvings on the Moai figures?
- What are some of the similarities linking the Moai figures with the portrait heads of the Benin kingdom that were displayed in ancestral shrines?
- In what ways does the ancestral portrait head from the Benin kingdom (fig. 4.100) negotiate between the earthly and spiritual realm?
  - Be able to define the oba, and explain how the function the portrait head serves politically and spiritually in maintaining the oba?
  - Why is it necessary to consider the bronze portrait head from Benin in the context of the ancestral shrine, where it would have been located originally?
- Why is Velázquez’s Las Meninas considered a particularly radical and bold reinterpretation of the portrait? Who is depicted in the work? What questions does the work pose about the role of art and representation in presenting ‘reality’? In what ways does the work celebrate the power of the artist?
ASSIGNMENT: 283-284 (on the Portrait of Emperor Hongzhi), 364-365 on Ruben’s portrait of Marie de’Medici, and review 380-381 on Velázquez’s Las Meninas

7.42  Portrait of the Emperor Hongzhi, 16th-17th centuries, hanging scroll, ink, and color on silk.

9.20  Peter Paul Rubens & Workshop, Arrival and Reception of Marie de’Medici at Marseilles, 1621-25, oil on canvas, one of a series of paintings commissioned for the Luxembourg Palace. (Rubens was Flemish, Marie de’Medici was Italian born, became Queen of France).

9.40  Diego Velázquez, Las Meninas (The Maids of Honor), 1656. (Probably commissioned by Philip IV of Spain.)

Terms: hanging scroll, Ming Dynasty, Marie de’Medici, baroque, Luxembourg Palace, allegory, realism

- What are the similar qualities and/or concerns between the portraiture and the architecture of Imperial China?
  o Be able to discuss the symbolism of Emperor Hongzhi’s robe.

- Compare and contrast the Rubens portrait of Marie de’Medici with the Portrait of Emperor Hongzhi. Come to class prepared to discuss the formal properties of each (media, scale, composition, iconography, technique, etc).
  o How does The Arrival and Reception of Marie de’Medici fit into the larger series of paintings of which it is a part? What was the purpose of this series as a whole and where were the paintings exhibited?
  o In what ways is Rubens’ painting quintessentially “Baroque?”

- While both Rubens and Velázquez were powerful court artists, favored by kings, and while both artists are defined as “Baroque” in their handling, style and approach to subject, there are significant differences between the Flemish and Spanish painters. Contrast the theater, drama and allegorical presentation in Rubens’s work to Velázquez’s trenchant realism.
  o Think about the profound differences between Velázquez’s portrait of a Royal family, and Ruben’s Baroque rendition of Marie de’Medici, queen of France.

- Paper Assignment distributed and discussed in recitation this week.
  o Reminder: There will be a mandatory visit to the Carnegie Museum of Art next week to begin the paper assignment! Everyone must attend recitation next week.