

Artists in/and Dialogue H48.1050/2050

Art & Public Policy, Spring 2009

Thursdays, 6:20-9 pm

721 Broadway, Room 3

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Catalog description:

This seminar will present critical frameworks for and in-depth case studies of art that creates, stages, facilitates and/or provokes public dialogue on public policy. Readings will alternate between the historical, theoretical and practical, with a focus on texts by and interviews with artists and their collaborators. Much of the semester will be spent studying several key projects from initial context through inception, collaborations, implementation, and community and critical responses. Case studies will include Suzanne Lacy's Oakland projects in the context of the California "war on youth" of the 1990s; Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave*, Thatcher labor politics, and the culture of historical re-enactment; Rick Lowe's Project Row Houses and the experiences of the women in its Young Mothers Residential Program; and Group Material's year-long *Democracy* project as a model for recent exhibitions like Creative Time's *Democracy in America: The National Campaign*. Each student will be expected to lead one discussion session and produce and present in class an 8-12 page final paper, which may be substituted by a creative project of equal commitment. Through a collaboration with the New Museum, students in the course will also have the opportunity to contribute to a new Jeremy Deller project that will launch in mid-February. Enrollment open to graduate students and undergraduate juniors/seniors.

Credits: 4 points

Prerequisites: none

Course policies:

Grading is ABCDF and will be based on the following ratio:

Fieldwork participation: 10%

Discussion leadership: 10%

Final paper/project: 60%

Class participation*: 20%

*Participation includes attendance, punctuality, preparation for and contribution to discussions.

There will be no grades assigned until the end of term. If you have concerns about your standing in the course at any earlier point in the semester, feel free to come see me during office hours for an informal evaluation.

Papers should follow MLA style. I grade syntax and structure according to the classic Strunk and White rules. You will be required to submit a 1-page proposal for your final

paper or project, which we will discuss in an individual meeting before you begin the work.

Students are expected to arrive prepared to discuss the readings assigned each week. Each student will also be assigned to lead the discussion of at least one reading. Discussion leaders should prepare a more detailed analysis of the text and its larger context (historical, art-historical, biographical, social, political, cultural). A simple summary of what you read is not sufficient. Find something generative in the text, unpack its meaning, and examine it critically. Discussion leaders may also choose to distribute additional recommended readings or present a/v materials to supplement their discussions.

Students are also expected to read the news on a regular basis and keep a file of articles, editorials and images that resonate with course themes or strike you as particularly provocative. Bring one item from this ongoing file into class each week and be prepared to initiate a discussion around it. If your own practice is currently centered on a particular issue, configure an RSS feed to deliver you stories focused on that issue; otherwise, try using a service like Google News to show you multiple perspectives on the same story.

Occasionally, I may change the schedule of assigned readings to reflect the flow of discussion in the classroom. If you do not attend class, it is your responsibility to find out if such a change was made.

I am available by email or during office hours if you have any questions or concerns about the course.

Texts:

Finkelpearl, Tom. *Dialogues in Public Art*. Paperback edition, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001. ISBN 0262561484 (*this should be purchased and will be ordered into the bookstore for the second half of the semester*)

Course pack, including contextual information on case studies (news clippings, etc.) and excerpts from these books:

Bishop, Claire, ed. *Participation*. London: Whitechapel, 2006. ISBN 0-262-52464-3

Deller, Jeremy. *The English Civil War Part II: Personal accounts of the 1984-85 miners' strike*. London: Artangel, 2002. ISBN 1 902201 13 2

Kester, Grant. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004. ISBN 0520238397

Lacy, Suzanne, ed. *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995. ISBN 0-941920-30-5

Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. New York: The New Press, 1997. ISBN 978-1-5684-248-9

Wallis, Brian, ed. *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*. Bay Press/Dia Art Foundation, 1990. ISBN 1565844998

Media:

Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (Artangel, London)

Suzanne Lacy's *No Blood, No Foul* and *Code 33* (Video Data Bank, Chicago).

Coco Fusco/Guillermo Gomez-Peña's *The Couple in the Cage* (VDB, Chicago).

Course Schedule

January 22nd

Week 1: Introduction & Expectations
Syllabus review; assign discussion sessions

Due next week: Grant Kester, "A Critical Framework for Dialogical Practice" in *Conversation Pieces* (2004), pp 124-151.

January 29th

Week 2: Critical Frameworks 1
Discussion: artist/artwork as facilitator/medium for public dialogue

Due next week: Jeremy Deller, *The English Civil War, Part II* (2002)

February 5th

Week 3: Case Study 1: Jeremy Deller
Screening: *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) / other Deller projects

Due in 3 weeks: Jacques Rancière, "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art" (from *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, 2004), trans. Claire Bishop (in *Participation*, 2006).

Monday, February 9th at 3 pm – external event – New Museum 7th floor: tea with Deller project participants

February 12th / 19th

Weeks 4-5: Fieldwork: Jeremy Deller - *It is What it is: Conversations About Iraq*
http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/408/new_commissions_jeremy_dellerit_is_what_it_is_conversations_about_iraq

Students will be participating in Jeremy Deller's new project for the New Museum (opening 2/11) by attending, on a revolving basis, the daily dialogues about Iraq that will take place at the museum and recording their personal impressions of and responses to the conversations that take place. These records will be collected to serve as documentation of the project from multiple perspectives. We will meet briefly on the 12th to discuss the logistics of your fieldwork and on the 19th to trade first impressions of the experience. Those who wish to may continue working on the project through the close of the exhibition on March 22nd.

February 26th

Week 6: Case Study 2: Suzanne Lacy: Oakland Projects (1991-2001)
Discussion: ethics of participatory practice

Due next week: Suzanne Lacy, "Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for New Public Art," from *Mapping the Terrain* (1995) pp 171-185; Context readings: the "war on youth" in 1990s California.

March 5th

Week 7: Suzanne Lacy Part 2
Screening/discussion: *Code 33* as media spectacle

Due next week: Grant Kester, "Community and Communicability" in *Conversation Pieces*, pp 152-191.

March 12th

Week 8: Suzanne Lacy Part 3
Screening/discussion: *No Blood, No Foul*

Due in 2 weeks: Patricia C. Phillips, "Public Constructions," from *Mapping the Terrain* (1995) pp 60-71; Lucy Lippard, "Public Art: Old and New Clothes" from *The Lure of the Local* (1997), pp 262-276; Paulo Freire, "Discussing Dialogue" from Tom Finkelpearl's *Dialogues in Public Art* (2001), pp 277-293.

March 19th - Spring break – no class

March 26th

Week 9: Critical Frameworks 2
Discussion: artworks as spaces/platforms/stages for dialogue

Due next week: Group Material, "On Democracy" and David Deitcher, "Social Aesthetics" from *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*; Context readings: institutional framework for and critical responses to *Democracy*

April 2nd

Week 10: Case Study 3: Group Material's *Democracy*
Discussion: the repurposing of institutional time, space and resources;
Democracy as a model for both artistic and curatorial practices

Due next week: Shakur and Lowe interviews from Tom Finkelpearl's *Dialogues in Public Art*

April 9th

Week 11: Case Study 4: Rick Lowe/Project Row Houses
Discussion: literal versus metaphorical constructions of dialogic space

Due next week: Guillermo Gomez-Peña, "From Art-mageddon to Gringostroika: A Manifesto Against Censorship" (1991-93) from *Mapping the Terrain*; 1 paragraph proposal for final paper or project.

April 16th

Week 12: Critical Frameworks 3
Discussion: artist/artwork as *agent provocateur*
Screening: *The Couple in the Cage* (Gomez-Peña & Fusco, 1993)

Due next week: John Ahearn, Avalos/Hock/Sisco, and Chin/Cheney interviews from Finkelpearl's *Dialogues*

April 23rd

Week 13: Case Study 5: Public Controversies
Discussion: *Bronx Bronzes*, *Revival Field*, and *Welcome to America's Finest Tourist Plantation* as deliberate or unwitting agents of dialogue

Due next week: Final paper/projects

April 29th

Week 14: Wrap-up
Presentation of final paper/projects