

## **The Highlights - ARTS 02-2011: The Artist-Created Institution as Art Practice**

ARTS 02-2011

The artist-created institution as art practice

Tu/Th, 1:30-2:45 am

Instructor: E. Larned

Office Hours: Th, 4-6 am

Skype: emilylarned

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What is the nature, purpose, and meaning of the artist-created and artist-directed 'institution'? What motivates artists to create institutions, when such an act suggests a rejection of existing iterations? Disregarding, except as historical precedent, artists who self-organize in order to collaboratively generate or distribute work, this course will instead examine artists' creations of institutions as an ongoing practice. Course content will focus on the collection-based ('museum' or 'library') and education-based ('school') artist institution, but students will select an artist-organized institution of their choice for independent study and presentation to the group.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- ? Connection making, pattern making
- ? Projecting, theorizing
- ? Creating new insights
- ? Transforming potential into action

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Attendance is mandatory. Three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course. Tardiness is rude and inexcusable. Three tardies (defined as 5 or more minutes late) translate to one unexcused absence. Failure of technology is never an excuse for absences or late assignments.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

#### 1. Collection project proposal

A written document, with images, proposing a collection-based institution. What is the nature of a collection-based institution? What is to be gained by forming such an institution? What does it offer that is not to be found elsewhere? How is a collection defined by what it includes? By what it excludes? Is this a growing or static collection?

#### 2. Education project proposal

A written document, with images, proposing an education-based institution. What is the nature of an education-based institution? What does this institution offer that is lacking elsewhere? What is this institution's philosophy of education? What is at stake?

### 3. Research presentation

In addition to active, lively, and thoughtful participation in each week's class discussion, each student will choose an artist-created institution not covered in class to present to the group. This institution need not be education or collection focused. Bibliographic references, images, and thoughtful, well-organized notes to be turned in after presentation.

## PART I: INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

### Week 1 - The institution and critique as practice

What are existing art institutions? What functions do they perform? How well? What are common critiques? Identify areas of improvement. How do existing educational institutions operate? How about collection-based institutions? What is to be gained by reusing or redesigning these models? What needs should they address? Define the problems to solve; articulate the questions to ask.

Discuss: Critique and quest as artistic practice. "You create the mountain, and then you climb it. Not for the final peak: the challenge is the process and the journey." -Denes, The Human Argument. Art practice as practicing utopia. "Even in the most sublimated work of art there is a hidden 'it should be otherwise.'" -Adorno, Commitment.

### Week 2 - The artist group in action: A historical survey (Part 1)

Considering among others: Arts & Crafts, Futurism, Suprematism, Dada, Wiener Werkstätte, De Stijl, Bauhaus, Surrealism, Black Mountain College, Art Workers Coalition, Fluxus, Situationism, Free International University, Artist Placement Group, Grapus, Ant Farm, and Woman's Building.

Week 3 - The artist group in action: A historical survey (Part 2) + some contemporary issues: Collaborative Projects, The Offices ? Ocean Earth, Group Material, Critical Art Ensemble, Temporary Services, and 16BeaverGroup.

Discuss: Role and influences of public art; activist art; conceptual art; site-specific art; installation art; community art; art/design as social practice; publishing as art practice; appropriation as art practice; changing vs. becoming the status quo; dematerialization of the art object; relational aesthetics; democratization process of the internet; rise of bottom-up organization; the increasingly sophisticated relationship between irony and sincerity.

## PART II: COLLECTION-BASED INSTITUTIONS

### Week 4 - Museum of Jurassic Technology

Established in 1987 in Los Angeles, a dark, mysterious, fantastical (un)natural history

museum. "In its original sense, the term, "museum" meant "a spot dedicated to the Muses, a place where man's mind could attain a mood of aloofness above everyday affairs."

#### Week 5 - City Reliquary

Begun in 2002, a community museum and civic organization in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, offering a permanent collection of quotidian NYC artifacts, rotating exhibitions from the community's personal collections, and neighborly events. "Standing on the corner of Havemeyer and Grand Streets, where the original City Reliquary window is still maintained, will not reveal views of the famous City landmarks. Instead, one discovers that everyday New York is already in clear sight."

#### Week 6 - Junkyard Museum of Awkward Things

Since 2002, this museum in Lagos has examined the junkyard as "artistic hospital": a place where discarded objects, fraught with political meaning in Africa, are recuperated as art: "Wear and Tear as a concept attempts to expose the often overlooked and underrated elements of the African-Urban communal life which largely influence it. The alienated situation of the African in his own society becomes tragic. There is a struggle inside him, a consciousness of living with the complications of an imposed civilisation. He can no longer go back to pick up the fragments of his father's shattered culture; neither is he equipped enough to keep pace with the white-man's world."

#### Week 7 - Reanimation Library

Established in Brooklyn in 2005, a small, independent library of deaccessioned and other outdated books, redeemed by the merit of their images, and offered for use to artists, designers, writers, and other "cultural archaeologists."

#### Week 8 - Public Collectors

Since 2007, Public Collectors seeks to make accessible the private collections of individuals: "Public Collectors is founded upon the concern that there are many types of cultural artifacts that public libraries, museums and other institutions and archives either do not collect or do not make freely accessible. Public Collectors asks individuals that have had the luxury to amass, organize, and inventory these materials to help reverse this lack by making their collections public."

*Research project topic due*

*Project 1: Collection project proposal due*

## PART III: EDUCATION-BASED INSTITUTIONS

### Week 9 - Copenhagen Free University

From 2001 to 2007, an artist-run, Situationist-inspired school, operated out of an apartment, that sought to re-center education on discovering new ways of living: "Copenhagen Free University was established to explore and intensify the forms of knowledge and subjectivity that we see withdrawing from or being excluded from the increasingly narrow-minded circulation of the knowledge economy."

### Week 10 - The Momentary Academy

In 2005, a ten-week free school taught by artists, hosted at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco: "Classes involved practical as well as experimental subjects, and ranged from single workshop sessions to weekly meetings."

### Week 11 - The Public School

Founded in 2008 in Los Angeles and now operating in multiple cities, the Public School organizes classes suggested and taught by members of the public. But the curriculum committee - those responsible for materializing proposals into classes - is not a closed group: "Every few months one or two people should leave the committee and one or two new people should join the committee. The idea is to perpetually de-institutionalize The Public School, to pass around power like a ball, and to generate a promiscuous set of relations with the world."

### Week 12 - The School of Life

Founded in 2008 as a storefront in London, the School of Life offers courses and services "addressing such questions as why work is often unfulfilling, why relationships can be so challenging, why it's ever harder to stay calm and what one could do to try to change the world for the better."

### *Project 2: Education project proposal due*

### Week 13 - Trade School

Begun in 2010 as a "barter for instruction" storefront, Trade School organizes classes in which students barter with instructors. Anyone can propose to teach a class. Upcoming classes include Philosophy of Social and Economic Quality, The Secrets of Taking Amazing Photographs with Any Camera, Twitter and Facebook for Artists, The Basics of Distilling

Alcohol, Feng Shui 101, and Chakra Sound Meditation.

#### PART IV: THE WRAP UP

Week 14 - Student research presentations

*Project 3: Research presentation due*

Week 15 - The Institution of the Future / Future practice

Institutionalizing the artist institution: Social Practice MFA programs at CCA, PSU, Otis, UC Santa Cruz, and annual conferences. What is gained and what is lost by this process? What new practices are now emerging?

#### READINGS & RESOURCES

Aberro, Alexander & Blake Stimson.

Institutional Critique: an Anthology of Artists' Writings

Art Workers Coalition.

Open Hearing & Documents 1

Bishop, Claire.

Participation (Documents of Contemporary Art)

Bourriaud, Nicholas.

Relational Aesthetics

Thompson, Nato.

Interview with Temporary Services

Bryan-Wilson, Julia.

Art Workers: Radical practice in the Vietnam War Era

Control Magazine

Journal of Aesthetics & Protest

Kester, Grant H.

Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art

Kronman, Anthony.

Education's End

Kwon, Miwon.

One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity

O'Neill, Paul & Mick Wilson.

Curating and the Educational Turn

Podesva, Kristina Lee.

A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art

Purves, Ted.

What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art

Rogoff, Irit.

Academy as Potentiality

Sholette, Gregory.

Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945

Temporary Services.

Group Work

Wallace, Ian.

The Idea of the University

Weschler, Lawrence.

Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder