

## Recurring Concepts in Art H79.2586.1

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Wednesday, 3:30-6:00

Office hours by appointment

*“In the end [interpretive approaches to new media] borrow from existing paradigms. They weren’t conceived with digital media in mind, and as a result they don’t exploit the special qualities that are unique to digital worlds. Yet it’s those unique qualities that will ultimately define entirely new languages of expression. And it’s those languages that will tap the potential of digital media as new vehicles of expression.”* – Media Theorist Steven Holtzman (1997)

*“Holtzman misses the point. He himself appeals to a comfortable, modernist rhetoric, in which digital media cannot be significant until they make a radical break with the past. However, like their precursors, digital media can never reach this state of transcendence, but will instead function in a constant dialectic with earlier media, precisely as each earlier medium functioned when it was introduced...”* – Media Theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999)

A question raised in the above exchange: do digital media transcend or dialogue with earlier media? This course, which examines relationships between new/digital media art and 20<sup>th</sup>-century art which preceded it, will shed light on this debate. For the purposes of the course, we will steer a position somewhere between those of Holtzman, and Bolter and Grusin. While observing how advancing technologies are producing new territories in the making of meaning and languages of interpretation in contemporary art, we will examine how artists working before the boom of technology utilized other media, techniques and approaches to effect formal, conceptual and experiential dynamics comparable to those being investigated by new media artists today. For example, the concept of interactivity, commonly observed as original and specific to the user-interaction component of technology-mediated works, was equally if differently specific to Minimalist sculpture and Environment art of the 1960s. The play between figuration and abstraction, today with vast applications via increasingly sophisticated computer software, has roots in the rejection of Academic imperatives in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed the very concept of new media and the correlating implication of radically significant artistic development apply throughout history. In the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the found object indelibly altered definitions of art - as well as the artist, artistic critique, concepts of value and the role of the institutional voice - the primary significance of the object being consumed by that of the concept (Conceptual art) in the 1960s.

This course is organized thematically. Each class will focus on a concept central to new media/digital production, which will be examined in relation to 20<sup>th</sup>-century art outside of new media rubrics. Each class will be introduced by one or a few “lead artists” – a new/digital media artist representing the main concept(s) investigated during a particular class (lead artists are indicated in parentheses after the title of each class).

This course involves reading, discussion and writing components. *Please note* that the reading and discussion components of the course are vital to its success; there is a fair amount of reading and all students are expected to fully prepare all readings and fully participate in class discussions. Class preparation and participation in discussion comprises 20% of the final grade and is taken very seriously. If you have any concerns about your ability to fully engage with the reading and discussion, you should reconsider taking the class or see me *immediately*. Each week, a few students will be assigned to help me present the readings for the following week.

We will be making quite a few off-site visits since images of art works projected on a screen are difficult to perceive. Students are expected to take each one of the off-site visits as seriously as they would attendance at a class – with prompt arrival, preparation and focus.

Critical theory will be incorporated into all aspects of the course but this is not strictly a theory course. The course has been conceptualized and designed to enhance perception and understanding of art through a variety of channels - from sustained, close looking at art/objects, to exploratory conversations, to more rigorous thinking and discussions informed by lectures, readings, projects and papers. The ultimate goal of the course is to expand students' sense of artistic possibility *in their own work* through an expanded awareness and understanding of the tremendously rich history of artistic creativity.

### **Disability statement/policy**

The ITP community extends itself to create a fully inclusive learning environment for all students. For students who have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact their course work, please contact the Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 719 Broadway, (212) 998-4980. They will work with students – or students and their professors if the student wishes such a collaboration - to determine what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information is confidential. If contacting the Center is a necessary option for a student, they should do so at the very beginning of the semester. I will not be able to be of any assistance to a student who informs me of a disability near the end of the semester.

### **Attendance and credit**

- Students are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. Two (2) absences – excused or unexcused - will result in failure of the course. Chronic late arrivals will weigh significantly on your final grade.
- *Pass/Fail*: ITP switched from letter grades to pass/fail in 2008; students are encouraged to read about this decision at <http://itp.nyu.edu/help/Help/PassFail>. In the previous, grade-based system, students were expected to maintain a B average in order to stay in the program. The same expectation exists within the new system. Earning a C grade in the previous system translates to failure in the new one. *The same holds for this course*. Students are expected to demonstrate – and are graded on - continued effort, participation and progress in *all* aspects of the course.

- ***Please note: All assignments must be submitted to pass this course. Assignments are to be submitted on time. There is no make-up work in this course.***

- 1) 5-page project proposal, 20%
- 2) Project and project presentation 25%
- 3) Four, 3-page response papers, 35%
- 4) Participation, 20%

*Participation:* thorough preparation of weekly readings; verbal engagement in class discussions

### **Format for all written assignments**

12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, complete sentences. If including images, they should be added in addition to – not in place of – the text.

### **Laptops**

Laptops may be used during class only for taking notes. Laptops must be closed for any presentation by students. Please, no e-mailing, surfing or working on other courses during class.

### **OUTLINE** (subject to change)

*It is recommended that readings be done in the order that they are listed.*

The first two classes are introductory in the sense that they focus on very broad topics foundational to the course and the work done at ITP: new media and technology. These classes provide a kind of grounding for the classes that follow.

Readings are available as pdfs (method of distribution TBD) and on-line. The source of each reading is indicated in parentheses after the citation.

**WEEK 1, 9/7:** Introduction; syllabus. Radical Shifts in Media (the found object, popular culture, the concept, the body, the land, installation)

*The concept of new media and the correlating implication of radically significant artistic development apply throughout history, for example in the development and use of oil paint in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the found object indelibly altered definitions of art - as well as the artist, artistic critique, concepts of value and the role of the institutional voice. The 1960s ushered in a particularly fertile rejection of traditional media (and artistic goals) and an embrace of innovation. With the time we have left after the introduction to the course, we will look at some examples of these radical shifts.*

**Pdf** (should you be interested)

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, “Introduction: The Double Logic of Remediation” and “Immediacy, Hypermediacy, and Remediation,” *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, MIT Press, pp. 3-50

### Note

*Cory Arcangel: Pro Tools* closes on September 11, at the Whitney Museum of American Art

**WEEK 2, 9/14:** Art and Technology: the Futurists, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology) (lead artists: see agenda for next week)

*Technology and art before the boom of digital media.*

### Reading due this week:

1) Billy Kluver with Julie Martin, "Working with Rauschenberg," *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, Guggenheim Museum, 1998, pp. 310-27 (pdf)

2) Joseph Caton, from "The Idea of the New: Technology and Utopia," *The Utopian Vision of Moholy-Nagy*, UMI Research Press, 1980, pp. 26-38 (pdf)

3) "Futurism," Wikipedia entry

### Viewing in class:

Robert Rauschenberg, *Open Score*, New York, E.A.T., 2007 (35 minutes)

**Response paper #1 due next week; assignment:** Visit the exhibition, *Manfred Mohr*, at Bitforms. Write a critical response to your visit, incorporating thoughts about E.A.T. if they seem relevant to your observations/experience.

- Bitforms is located at 529 West 20th Street (between 10th and 11th), 2nd Floor, open Monday-Friday from 11am-6pm.

- For essays about Mohr's work, see his website <http://www.emohr.com/>

### Note

For further information on E.A.T, see the Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science and Technology website

<http://www.fondationlanglois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=237>

**WEEK 3, 9/21: Off-site visit to MoMA:** Exhibitions: 1) *Carlito Carvalhosa: Sum of Days* 2) *Harun Farocki: Images of War (at a Distance)* 3) *Talk to Me: Design and the Communication between People and Objects*

*These exhibitions represent the "lead artists" for last week's class.*

- Please bring your student ID. Anyone who has a membership card to MoMA, please bring it.

- MoMA is located at 11 W. 53<sup>rd</sup> St., between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues.

### Reading due this week

1) Paola Antonelli, "Talk to Me"; Jamer Hunt, "Nervous Systems and Anxious Infrastructures"; Alexandra Midal, "Design Wonder Stories: When Speech is Golden"; Khoi Vinh, "Conversations with the Network"; Kevin Slavin, "Reality is Plenty, Thanks: Twelve Arguments for Keeping the Naked Eye Naked" from *Talk to Me: Design and the Communication between People and Objects*, MoMA, 2011 (pdfs)

### Response paper #1 due this week

### Project partner decisions due next week

### Note

1) New York Electronic Art Festival (NYEAF) closes on Sunday, September 25, at Governors Island

2) You are all invited to a free visit to the Guggenheim on Saturday, September 24 to view the current exhibition, *Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity*. Please let me know no later than one week in advance if you will be in attendance.

**WEEK 4, 9/28:** Original/Copy: Reproduction/Re-Production (lead artists: Mark Hansen and Ben Rubin)

*The reuse of imagery, sounds, effects, etc. is a signature element of new media production. The doctrine of Fair Use regulates intellectual property rights within domains of electronic technologies, but the advancement of these technologies has made it so easy to appropriate and reuse materials that it is very often done without permission. There are also dense grey areas in Fair Use regulations regarding the degree to which appropriated materials are rearticulated by a user (discussed in Buskirk, assigned reading). The use of appropriated materials – and questions regarding “copies” as well as “originals” – can be traced to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the collages of Georges Braque and the readymades of Marcel Duchamp; interest in the “found object” (and in intellectual property rights) had a resurgence in the 1960s.*

**Reading due this week:**

1) Martha Buskirk, “Original Copies,” *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*, MIT Press, 2003, pp. 59-105 (pdf)

**Project partner decisions due this week**

**WEEK 5, 10/5:** The Body/Embodied Experience/Identity. **Off-site visit to Chelsea galleries.**

*The role of the physical body and embodied experience as they relate to personal and social identity are of key interest to artists and theorists working within realms of technology capable of disrupting and reconfiguring one’s sense of physical and social space. This class will examine these relationships through a visit to the following exhibitions in Chelsea:*

- 1) Tabaimo (lead artist), *Dandan*, James Cohan Gallery (meet at James Cohan at 3:50)
- 2) Nick Cave, *Ever-After*, Jack Shainman Gallery
- 3) Nick Cave, *For Now*, Mary Boone Gallery
- 4) Martha Wilson, *I Have Become My Own Worst Fear*, PPOW Gallery
- 5) *Crazy Lady* (group show), Schroeder Romero & Shredder Gallery

**Reading due this week:**

- 1) Michel Foucault, “Utopian Body,” in Caroline A. Jones ed., *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art*, MIT Press, 2006, pp. 229-34 (pdf)
- 2) Qian Zhijian, “Performing Bodies: Zhang Huan, Ma Liuming, and Performance Art in China,” *Art Journal*, vol. 58, no. 2 (Summer 1999), pp. 60-81 (pdf)
- 3) Amelia Jones, Geoffrey Batchen, Ken Gonzalez-Day, Peggy Phelan, Christine Ross, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, Roberto Sifuentes, Matthew Finch, “The Body and Technology,” *Art Journal*, vol. 60, no. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 20-30 (pdf)

**Response paper #2 due next week; assignment:** Write a critical response to the exhibitions viewed this week, as related to the theme(s) of the body/embodyed experience/identity.

**Note**

Jenny Saville, *Continuum*, at Gagosian Gallery, 980 Madison Avenue (closes 10/22).

**WEEK 6, 10/12:** The Society of the Spectacle, Guy Debord and the Situationists; Considerations for Contemporary Art and Society (lead artist: Pierre Huyghe) *As articulated by Best and Kellner (assigned reading), along with other critics of contemporary art (ie. Buchloh, referenced in Mark Godfrey, assigned reading), the advancement of new technologies has contributed to the increased spectacularization of our culture/society. Guy Debord's The Society of the Spectacle(1967) and the Situationist International (formed in 1957) serve as roots for contemporary critical theory on the spectacularization of present-day art, culture and society. Theories on the society as spectacle date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century ( T.J. Clark).*

**Reading/Viewing due this week**

1) "On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International 1956-1972," <http://www.ubu.com/film/si.html> (22 minutes, UbuWeb)

2) Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, "Debord, Cybersituations, and the Interactive Spectacle," *SubStance*, Vol. 28, No. 3, Issue 90: Special Issue: Guy Debord, 1999, pp. 129-56 (pdf)

**Two volunteers to read and help me present to the class**

Mark Godfrey, "Pierre Huyghe's Double Spectacle," *Grey Room*, No. 32, Summer 2008, pp. 38-61 (pdf)

**One volunteer to watch and present to the class**

(The counter spectacle) Claire Bishop, "Spectacle and Participation," from *Rethinking Spectacle*, a symposium at the Tate Modern, March 31, 2007 (26:45 minutes)

[http://www.tate.org.uk/onlineevents/webcasts/rethinking\\_spectacle/default.jsp](http://www.tate.org.uk/onlineevents/webcasts/rethinking_spectacle/default.jsp) (click on Claire Bishop, below the video image)

**Response paper #2 due this week**

**WEEK 7, 10/19: Project proposals due;** during class, I will meet with each pair to discuss their proposal (14 minutes each), while other pairs discuss their proposals with class mates for constructive feedback.

**WEEK 8, 10/26: Individual, 10-minute appointments with each student to discuss midterm grade status (scheduled ahead of time).**

**WEEK 8, class, Friday 10/28:** The Senses, Perception, Apperception: James Turrell (lead artist: Seiko Mikami). **Off-site visit to P.S.1**, James Turrell, *Meeting*, 1986. *The body as a multi-sensory as well as a perceptual apparatus is of great interest to artists working with technology. Virtual, augmented and mediated reality are obvious examples of how digital technology has driven an interest in expanding and altering one's perception of their relationship to the world through the play of the senses. Seiko*

Mikami's work, "World, Membrane and the Dismembered Body" (1987) follows upon the researches of James Turrell as well as Robert Irwin and John Cage.

- Meet inside the main entrance to P.S.1 at 3:50pm

- P.S.1 is located at 22-25 Jackson Ave. at the intersection of 46<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Long Island City

- Admission for students with ID is \$5.

- **Wear very warm clothing!**

**Reading due this week:**

1) Sabu Kohso, "On Seiko Mikami's *World, Membrane and the Dismembered Body*,"

V2\_Archive <http://www.kw.nl/~pike/v2/v2a-exit/v2archive/html/framework.v2.nl/archive/archive/node/text/default.xslt/nodentr-128166.html>

2) "Greeting the Light: An Interview with James Turrell,"

<http://www.conversations.org/story.php?sid=32>

3) Jonathan Crary, "Techniques of the Observer," *October*, Vol. 45, Summer 1988, pp. 3-35 (pdf)

**Response paper #3 due next week; assignment:** Write a critical response to your experience of Turrell's *Meeting*.

**WEEK 9, 11/2:** Figuration and Abstraction. The Rejection of the Academy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and its Repercussions (lead artists: Yoichiro Kawaguchi, Joan Fontcuberta)

*The play between figuration and abstraction, today with vast applications via sophisticated software, has its roots in the rejection of Academic imperatives in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Impressionists – led by Edward Manet – laid solid ground for this rejection via not only a style that denied every element of Academic art (we will briefly discuss these elements in class), but also the radically resounding act of establishing independent exhibition spaces. What followed can be observed as main ingredients in the unfolding of 20<sup>th</sup>-century art: literal abstraction from naturalistic form and symbolic abstraction from reality.*

**No reading due this week**

**Response paper #3 due this week**

**WEEK 10, 11/9:** Project presentations in class.

**WEEK 11, 11/16:** Further Exploring the Senses: Touch and Verbal Imaging Tour of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building and the Guggenheim Museum Collection (also, *Maurizio Cattelan: All*). **Off-site visit to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum**

- Meet inside the 89<sup>th</sup> Street entrance to the museum at 3:50pm; the 89<sup>th</sup> Street entrance is just around the corner from the main entrance on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue

- The Guggenheim is located at 1071 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 89<sup>th</sup> street

**No reading due this week**

**Response paper #4 due next week; assignment:** Write a critical self-evaluation of your course project; you will submit to me your self-evaluation next week but I encourage you to also share it with your class mates for critical feedback if you wish.

**WEEK 12, 11/23:** Interactivity: The Rise of Viewer Participation in Late Modern and Contemporary Art (lead artists: Alan Dunning and Paul Woodrow)

*The concept of interactivity, commonly observed as original and specific to the user-interaction component of technology-mediated works, has been equally if differently specific to a lot of art throughout history. Marcel Duchamp rather famously stated in 1957: “ All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.” This class will examine modes of interactivity in late modern and contemporary art.*

**Reading due this week:**

1) Myron W. Krueger, “Responsive Environments,” 1977. From Edward A. Shanken, *Art and Electronic Media*, Phaidon, Themes and Movements, 2009, pp. 256-59. Originally published AFIPS National Computer Conference Proceedings, Montvale NJ, 1977 (pdf)

2) Olafur Eliasson and Robert Irwin, “Take Your Time: A Conversation,” *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*, Thames and Hudson, 2007, pp. 51-61 (pdf)

3) Nicolas Bourriaud, “Relational Form,” from *Relational Aesthetics*, Les Presses du Reel, 1998 (English translation, 2002)

<http://www.creativityandcognition.com/blogs/legart/wp-content/uploads/2006/07/Borriaud.pdf>

**Response paper #4 due this week**

**WEEK 13, 11/30:** Sound. **Off-site visit to The Kitchen**, Jennie C. Jones, *Absord/Diffuse*. Destruction. Also at The Kitchen, Joe Winter, *The Stars Below*.

- Meet at The Kitchen at 3:50

- The Kitchen is located at 512 West 19<sup>th</sup> Street between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> avenues.

**Reading due this week:**

1) Essay from Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, TBD.

2) TBD

**WEEK 14, 12/7:** TBD