

Topics in Installation Art

ARTH 4929
University of Colorado
Department of Art and Art History

Fall Semester 2009
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11-12.15

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Please make appointments in any case to ensure that I'll have time for you as my office hours can be heavily frequented. Walk-ins for short inquiries are welcome.

The days of the competition between painting and sculpture are long gone. In the 20th century, other media were introduced; installation is one of them. Although there are various predecessors (Schwitters and Tatlin) in the early 20th century, this new artform became predominant in the 1960s, pushing the object into a presentation that emphasized the experience of the viewer almost more than the creation of the artist. Ever since, installations are a main part of contemporary art.

We will look at these early forms of installations but then focus on more contemporary works including very recent ones that push the viewer's role again, this time from experience into participation.

We will also include a close look – an experience, if you will – on an exhibition that will be on view at the Denver Art Museum in the fall: *Embrace!* 17 artists will develop a site-specific installation for the Libeskind architecture. Make sure you can go to one of the “installation insider moments” when the public has access to artists while they are installing their works – follow what is happening on Facebook.

Textbook: Claire Bishop, *Installation Art. A Critical History*, Routledge, 2005

Additional weekly readings are uploaded to our private class blog:
<http://installsurvey.wordpress.com/>

Aims and Objectives

This course can serve as an overview of contemporary art and its roots although important classic media like painting and sculpture are being excluded. The focus will be on the viewer's role instead. Students will practice the analysis of artworks, a critical reading of different sources, and they conduct individual research that they present in a power point presentation, which they will then elaborate for the term paper.

A critical exchange among students will be strongly encouraged; participation plays a crucial role for the grade. A vivid blogging record on the class blog is also required. Blogging will enhance your willingness to sharing intellectual input.

REQUIREMENTS

Attendance

It should go without saying that students strive to attend every class session. Experience tells, though, that this needs reinforcement. Two unexcused absence are granted. Each additional absence results in a lowered grade; with more than 6 classes of unexcused absence you will be failed. Note that reasons for an excuse are very limited! You can make up absences with extra-credit work.

I will take roll in the minutes before class starts; we will start on time. If you are late, it is your responsibility to see me after class or write me an email to have your name checked.

Participation (classroom and blog)

A simple rule: Physical presence in the classroom is no participation yet! Students who are about to graduate from college should be able to develop and express a substantiated position. In general, practicing critical thinking is the main goal of our discussion in class.

I require ALL students to participate; be aware that participation counts much in this class! If you are reluctant to speak up, or need more time phrasing your thoughts, the class blog is your best chance ever to make yourself heard, respectively read!

In order to earn an A, you need to be active in class AND on the blog. As a general rule, you should try to post at least 10 posts and 10 comments on top of the specifically required posts and comments. What counts is not only the quantity but also the substance of your submissions to the blog.

Make it a habit to comment, no matter how briefly, whenever you have read a post. That way, our blog will be more vivid and authors are honored with attention.

Intellectual Profile

You are being asked to share your intellectual profile (due Aug. 30). This is a first practice to get into the habit of sharing and exchanging your intellectual riches with each other. This is what an academic community is all about!

Weekly readings

In alphabetical order, students will introduce one of the weekly reading to the class, approximately 5 minutes. A handout with the main points needs to be distributed for the presentation. Afterwards, other students might be asked to elaborate on certain points.

Presentations

I am a fervent believer in having juniors and seniors present instead of just read and listen. Sometimes it may seem like a waste of time, but it never is. On the one hand, it is a skill that you need to have acquired for graduation, on the other, you'll understand artworks and readings about them much better when you have to verbalize what you think you have understood.

Reading Introduction

Each student will introduce one of the class readings in a 5-minute presentation. This is, obviously, to practice reading scholarly articles. While students often only read for information, we will strive to achieve a critical point of view on the author's argumentation. A one-page handout for the class needs to accompany the presentation.

Main Presentations on an installation artist

Your main presentation is in groups of two. Part of the assignment is finding your own topic: a work of art (or a series of works) by an installation artist. You also need to find a partner to team up with. Once I have received suggestions for topics, I will upload a list and a schedule.

Some guidelines for the Main Presentation

Present the selected work to the class in a power point presentation.

Each group presents for a maximum of 20 min.

Please post a reading recommendation (interview or article) for your topic the week before to the blog (about 5 pages). Categorize it as "reading recommendation".

Remember to focus on one or a few artworks, well selected, and comparisons.

Keep in mind to not just describe the project but evaluate it as well. What artistic strategy does the artist employ, what might be the objective? What is the role of the spectator?

It is wise to end your presentation with a question to your audience that has potential to trigger a discussion that you then lead.

Don't forget to improve your power point presentation after the discussion in class; then upload it to the blog. If you fail to upload your presentation, you will not get full credit for it. The reason is that we want to share our input in this class.

You may write your final paper about the same topic.

Project

This project is about public art. We want to find out about installations in public space that enable the viewer to have an experience. Much of public art does not do that; instead it falls in the category of "drop and plop sculpture".

a) Find an artwork in public space that can be categorized as installation and introduce it in a post. Describe what kind of experience the spectator is to make.

b) Find a site to which you would like to add an installation; characterize this site (its physical features as well as other aspects that determine it - historical, political, natural, ...). The site can be anywhere, a place where you have been or one that you have only seen in a photograph. Then describe the installation you would like to place there. What kind of spectator do you expect at this site? And what is the imagined impact it would have on the spectators? Add two images, one of the site as it is, one with your installation collaged in.

Due Oct. 10, submitted as a post to the blog. Comments on two other projects due Oct. 12.

Papers

Just to be sure: The same paper cannot be submitted for credit in two different classes, even if in different semesters. If you plan on modifying an older paper you need to seek the consent of the instructor.

1. Short paper

Write on one installation of the show *Embrace!* at the Denver Art Museum. Make sure you visit the show on your own. It only opens on November 14 but many of the installations will be on view well before. Make sure you sign up to the Facebook website of the Denver Art Museum in order to be informed about the "Installation Insider Moments" when the public is invited to meet the artist during the installation.

- due Nov. 17
- 4 pages, 1.5 spaced typed
- comments on two other review due Nov. 19
- submit as post to the blog, preferably as an uploaded PDF, categorize the post as "short paper"

2. Final Research Paper

- research paper
- on the same topic as your main presentation
- 8-10 pages, 1.5 spaced typed
- endnotes, bibliography
- Chicago style
- due Dec. 10

What you need to demonstrate is:

- ability to define a topic for yourself
- ability to shape a thesis
- a critical use of sources (= demonstrate that you are aware of the difference between evidence and interpretation, in your own stance as well as in others' including the artist)
- referencing sources correctly
- correct incorporation of quotes
- incorporation of issues we tackled in class
- clear structure of paper: title/introduction/conclusion
- one paragraph should lead into the next (transitions / structure)
- clear language, flawless spelling and grammar
- 3 books or scholarly articles at least required among your sources; it is unacceptable to fully base this paper on internet sources

Extra credit

You can earn extra credit by writing a review of an artist lecture (especially recommended: Marjetica Potrc on Sept. 22). Please approach me if you want to earn more extra-credit; you can always improve your grade, though, by writing additional posts to the blog.

3 pages, 1.5 spaced typed

- well-structured summary of the lecture
- reflection on the style of the lecture:
- what did the lecturer intend to do, and how did she or he go about
- provide some context for the particular work the artist is doing
- some research (on the web) should be included

Peer Feedback

Students are expected to comment on each other's presentations and papers in a constructive way. This means, besides praise, some suggestions on how to improve.

Grading ratio

participation (classroom and blog): 40%

project: 15%

main presentation: 15 %

short paper: 10%

final paper: 20%

Grading criteria

A vivid participation that reveals a superior understanding of the topics and a critical thinking; extensive comment record that introduces own thoughts and reveals a critical potential; written assignments excellent in form and content; clean, clear style, no mechanical errors; a structured and dedicated way of presenting; and ideas that surprise me (in a positive way!)

B occasional participation and comments; proved fulfillment of reading assignments, extras that make your overall performance more than average

C average fulfillment of requirements; adequate preparation; participation mostly only when called on; not more than the required comments to the blog

D preparation less than adequate; never participates unless called on; poor mandatory comments to the blog, no additional comments; papers poor in content, form and mechanics; presentations undedicated

F disruptive to class; unprepared when called on; unable or unwilling to participate in class discussions; papers incoherent, disastrously flawed; or not turned in on time; dull presentations

One-on-one consultations

I encourage all students to come see me in my office hours or make other appointments with me.

Schedule

Week 1

Aug 25: Introduction to the course

Aug 27: Blog Issues / How to prepare presentations

A Blogging Tutorial is offered after class on Thursday.

All students need to be subscribed users to the blog by today.

Personal Introduction post due Mon, Aug. 31.

Week 2

Sept 1: Introduction to the course topic

Sept 3: Guest lecture by Tricia Robson on Schwitters' Merzbau

Readings due on Tuesday!

Week 3

Sept 8: From Object to Space: the 1960s I: Minimal Art

Sept 10: Merleau-Ponty, Fried, Morris

Week 4

Sept 15: From Object to Space: Institutional Critique

Sept 17: Broodthaers, Buren, Asher

Week 5

Sept 22: Nauman and Serra: Models for behavioral studies

Sept 24: Guest lecture by Gwyndolyn Davis

Week 6

Sept 29: Video: Nauman, Graham, Pipilotti Rist

Oct. 1: Fred Wilson

Week 7

Oct 6: Land Art

Oct 8: Guest lecture by Lindsey Mikash

mid-term

Week 8

Oct 13: Guest lecture by Melanie Walker and George Peters

Oct 15: Public Art / Student Online Projects

Week 9

Oct 20: Neo-Dada / Gesamtkunstwerk (Rauschenberg, Meese, Bock)

Oct 22: Thomas Hirschhorn

Week 10

Oct 27: Participation / Interaction / Relational Aesthetics

Oct 29: Guest Lecture by Jeanne Quinn

Week 11

Nov 3: Political Installations: Beuys, Oiticica, Osorio

Nov 5: Gonzalez-Torres, Santiago Sierra

Week 12

Nov 10: Olafur Eliasson

Nov 12: Ilya Kabakov

Nov. 14/15: Visit Embrace on your own! Paper due Nov. 17

Week 13

Nov 17: Videos on *Embrace*.

Nov 19: Discussion on *Embrace*.

Nov 24: *no class: fall break*

Week 14

Dec 1: student presentations

Dec 3: student presentations

Week 15

Dec 8: Experiencing War. Lecture by instructor.

Dec 10:

Due Dates

Thu, Aug. 27:
must be a user on the class blog

Sun, Aug. 30:
must have posted your intellectual profile

Mon, Aug. 31:
must have posted comments to five of your fellow students' personal introductions

Tue, Sept. 1:
First readings due; weekly reading from now on!

Oct. 10:
Public Art Project submitted to blog.

Oct. 12:
Comments on two projects.

Nov. 12:
Topic abstract and group constellation for presentation submitted to the blog.

Nov. 17:
Short Paper on one *Embrace!* installation, posted to the blog. Make sure you visit the exhibition, which opens on November 14. Many of the installations will be on view well before.

Nov. 18:
Comments on two other short papers

Dec. 1 and 3:
Students' main presentations

Thu, Dec. 10:
Final Paper, uploaded as a PDF to the blog in a post PLUS a hardcopy in the mailbox next to my office until 5 pm)

Sat, Dec. 12
Substantial comments with constructive criticism on 2 final papers of your fellow students