

MAKING AND MEANING

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

M-W 1pm-4pm Spring 2010

Adjunct Professor: Sarah Ross

contact: sarahlynnross@gmail.com

Class Description.

- 1) Making and meaning is designed to make critical connections between the process of making art objects and the ideas those objects provoke for others (viewers, participants).
- 2) This course will cover 3 core ideas: working in non-traditional spaces/working with non-traditional materials, experimentation and the experiential as aesthetic object, and audience engagement.
- 3) We will explore these ideas by looking at modern and post-modern eras in art to understand how artists before us have used materials, created content, engaged viewers and worked in and outside of the gallery. Through research, readings, field trips, screenings and discussion, we will consider ways to develop a methodology for art making.
- 4) Finally, we will ask specific questions about the object of art and role of artists: what is at stake in making art? Who looks at it and should they care about what we are producing? Is there something that an art experience can do that other experiences (literary, filmic, etc.) can't? What important questions in culture at large that we should address as artists?
- 5) In order to pull these ideas together, a culminating project, resulting in a parade or procession, will take place at the end of the semester. It is here that your projects will be presented to a public, will take on a life intended for use, provocation and engagement.



Projects.

Projects in this class should be experimental. Attention to craft and formal issues are always essential but think less masterpiece and more experiment, more practice, content and concept!

Ongoing project:

In your notebook, create a catalogue of artists' project that respond to your current

work. Throughout the semester you will visit the library*. There, you will look for artists, collaborative groups, designers, architects, etc. that get you excited, inspire ideas or challenge your thinking. Keep a photocopy of the artist's work in a 8"x10", designated notebook. Keep information on the artwork such as artist's name, location of work, materials, title of the work, and 2-3 sentences describing the work (how does it function, who is it for, what is the social and/or political context of the work). Throughout the semester we will call on this research to share ideas, generate sketches and to present themes that emerge. As I talk with you individually about your work, I will look at your notebook as evidence of your investigation and progress.

For each assignment, you are required to find a minimum of 10 projects/artworks that inform your thinking. Adhere one image per page of your notebook. At the end of the semester, I'll grade your notebook and will look for at least 40 'catalogue' pages. DUE: Throughout the semester, turn in notebook on April 28

* Library means library, for this assignment use printed books, NOT computer print-outs.

Project#1

a) working with non-traditional materials, working in non-traditional spaces

Early western, modern artists, such as Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp, first used non-traditional materials– materials that were not archival, were found objects or materials barely altered by the artist. For various reasons, artists introduced these materials into the art object; the materials could create new content, make formal relationships and challenge to the institution of art itself. For this project create an artwork using a gallon of water as your *material**. Use the gallon of water in any way shape or form- for example the water can be in tact, can be used up, dried up, recycled, reproduced, etc. The work can take on a variety of forms– it can document the use of the water or potential uses, it can be instructional and tell us how we should or shouldn't use water, it can deal with the physical qualities of water, the political implications of it, tell a story through the idea of water, or discuss the human need for water. In critique, we'll be looking for how you use the material as an idea as much as a material; we'll be considering content and form.

Starters: Gutai Group, Fluxus, Yoko Ono, Jennifer Monson, Brett Bloom and Simparch

DUE: FEB 3

*project conceived by Anne Walsh

b) working in non-traditional spaces

Since at least the 1950s, artists have been strategizing ways to get out of the white cube of the gallery and into the city, nature and beyond. Issues that brought artists out of the gallery were desires to de-commodify the art object, concerns for the

environment, use of the artist's body as a vehicle for communication and more. For this project the 'art object' will be created for a space out of the gallery setting using a walk as the *form*. Create a walk that replicates or builds on an existing artist's walk/project. You will have to adapt the walk to our area, and produce some materials that guides participants on the walk. You can produce the walk to take the form of a live guided walk, an audio-tour walk, a book-driven walk or any other form (staying close to your chosen artist's walk). In critique, we'll be looking for how you communicate the 'directions' for the walk and how you translate the content from the artist's context, to the context of Champaign Urbana.

Starters: Francis Alys, Richard Long, William Pope L., Conflux Festival (Brooklyn), Rachel Henson

DUE: FEB 17

Project #2

experimentation and the experiential as aesthetic object

Early post-modern sculptural practices (i.e. minimalism) included objects that were off the pedestal and into the space of the viewer and gallery. Artists were interested in objects in relationship to a viewers body, creating a physical experience for viewers and requiring a viewer's presence to make the work function or have meaning. To build on the work of these early post modern practices and produce experiential works, installation artists use and have a deep understanding of spatial relationships, performance artists use their bodies and bodies of audiences, new genre artists use games, community spaces and public meals as vehicles for making meaning. For this project, you can chose to address one of two proposals stated below:

- a) create an object that requires 2 or more people to operate
- b) create a wearable object that makes sound and does not hinder the body's movement

In critique, we'll be looking for how the objects function, how they are used by participants and what is the affect for the viewers/onlookers (2 sets of viewers here).

Starters: Gabriel Orozco, Lucy Orta, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Lygia Clark

DUE: March 15 and 17

Project #3

audience engagement

In the previous projects we have considered audience engagement through participatory, wearable and user friendly projects. This final project will continue to consider audience through the popular culture activity of the parade or procession. Throughout this project we will look at processions and parades for inspiration and consider how they captivate audiences, how they communicate ideas, use space and place and create meaning. For this project, work in teams to create a set of ideas we will convey, a system for communicating those ideas and a route for the walk and a set of final pieces for a parade/procession.

Starters: Arto Lindsay, Ultra Red, Mel Chin, Daniel Joseph Martinez, Fritz Haeg,
Pink Bloque
Due? planning committee will decide!