

Sculpture I
Adjunct Professor: Sarah Ross
Illinois State University, Fall 2008
salaross@yahoo.com

Syllabus

The Class.

Sculpture 1 will introduce students to frameworks of sculpture, such as, what are the parameters of sculpture as a discipline (what is sculpture? how is it different from, say for instance painting or performance art), the formal and conceptual elements of objects (what 'shape' do they take and why?), and the contexts in which these objects are placed (why does an object's history and/or environment matter). Modern history defined sculpture as a discipline whereby autonomous objects took up space in a location (a gallery, building, plaza). Current sculptural practices have a range of processes and practices from object-making to experience-inducing. This class will begin to look at both historical and current art practices in order to explore formal, spatial and relational components of sculpture/art practice. This class is composed of studio time, lectures, readings and critiques.

Project List

ONGOING PROJECT:

Each week you are required to visit the library* and research 2 contemporary** artists, collaborative groups, designers, architects, etc. Keep a photocopy of the artist's work in a 8"x10" notebook. Have 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 student groups will do presentations, collected from this research, on themes as they relate to our projects. Also, as I talk with you individually about your work, I will look at your notebook as evidence of your investigation and progress.

* Library means library, look at printed books, not your computer screen.

**For this class, modern and contemporary will mean from the years 1945 to present.

Each project will require drawings and material investigations. Drawings will be done in your notebook and graded. Quick sketches, using pencil, colored pencil, watercolor, collage, etc. are required. Material investigations are quick investigations of how you might use a material. Each project will require that you manipulate different materials in different ways, thereby making each material investigation different. In short you have to try, fail, try again, perhaps

fail again, in order to gain knowledge of materials.

Project #1 Juxtapose

All objects have meaning. Some objects are made with a use in mind, and the use value becomes part of the meaning. Other objects gain value over time, perhaps their intended use is modified to become valuable in another way. And again, other objects have symbolic value, they don't function according to use but instead stand in for an idea or spirit.

Make 3 small sculptures using found objects. Combine two or more objects together, (using yet another object--wire, twine, glue constitute an object) to create a sculpture that juxtaposes the objects. The combined objects should have some tension, they should play off each other, their presence side by side should make us reconsider the meaning of each. Consider the way you the combine the objects, the materials and their inherent or symbolic qualities. Present sculptures to class.

The final step of this project is to remake one of these sculptures in plaster--making all the materials into one plaster object. Here you will consider more carefully the type of objects you will cast (limitations of casting and plaster) and how this object will both

borrow from popular culture (found objects) and result in a new form.

Conceptual and formal ideas to consider are: tension, balance, symmetry/asymmetry.

Project #2 Negotiated Objects

Find objects that only ONE person can use at a time. Examples are chairs, clothes, toilets, pens, keyboards, headphones, utensils, etc. Study the use of these objects, how people interact with them, how they misuse them, where the object has wear and tear, or gets under utilized. Do a set of renderings (drawings, timelines, videos, sound recordings, etc) that reveal your findings. Present renderings to class.

Chose one of the studied objects and redesign it for use by two or more people at a time. Recreate this object so that the users/participants have to share, negotiate or battle for this object. This project will require a theoretical/conceptual consideration on turning the personal to public, the intimate to general. How much of the original object will you reveal? Will the use be rhetorical, practical, absurd, funny, embarrassing? Think about the physical interaction the viewer/user will encounter when looking at and/or using this object. How will the life of the object be retained or denied?

Project #3 Intervene!

Chose partners and select a space that you regularly frequent and study it by making a 3-d map of that space. Chose 2-3 elements of that space to map (shapes that reoccur, smells, path of animals, shadows of buildings). Create a path you want participants to take to get to or around the mapped elements. Consider, what are the dynamics of the space? What dictates the speed at which people move, where they walk, the proximity people are to each other?

What times of day are people here? not here? why? How does this effect any of the elements you are mapping. Present maps to class.

After gathering a significant amount of observable details, think of a way to shift the movement, perception, and/or interaction with that space by making a simple intervention. The intervention can be object-based (like adding a feature to a space) or performance based*- using bodies or temporal objects. The goal is to break the monotony of the space, as we know it, by adding, subtracting or creating a parallel experience through intervention.

* if you chose a performative intervention, you must document the intervention. Consult with me concerning ways of documenting work.

**Class projects are largely self-directed and depend on the parameters you set for yourself. Some projects you chose to develop may not be as labor intensive as others. In this case, you might make the project a few times, noting the best practice of creating, you might make models or 'test phases' of the project. In any case, class time is work time. Come to class with materials to work, otherwise you will be asked to leave.