

NABA 2019-20

Phenomenology of Contemporary Arts

Marco Baravalle

marco_baravalle@docenti.naba.it

Syllabus

The course will address the problem of the statute of contemporary art and the relationship between aesthetics and politics within the framework of the affirmation of the neoliberal mode of production. The theoretical, the curatorial and artistic case studies refer to the historical period from the late 1960s to the present day (with incursions in the first decades of the XXth Century in relation to historical avant-gardes).

Expected Results

At the end of the course students are expected to get acquainted with a series of relevant positions of the contemporary debate on art theory, especially with those trying to frame the problem of the relationship between art and society, aesthetics and politics.

Students are also expected to improve their capacity to read, interpret and discuss critical literature pertinent to the course's topic.

LESSON 1

Aesthetics and Its Discontents. The relationship between aesthetics and politics, focus on Jacques Rancière.

We use Jacques Rancière as a starting point to address the problem of the relationship between art and politics; a relation that, according to the French philosopher, is located at the very core of aesthetics.

Bibliography

Jacques Rancière; *Aesthetic as Politics*, in *Aesthetics And Its Discontents*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2009. pp 19-44

Jacques Rancière; *The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics And Politics*; in *Aesthetics And Its Discontents*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2009. pp 109-132

LESSON 2

Autonomy and heteronomy. Exhibition design at the time of historical avant-gardes.

Exhibition design is crucial in shaping our experience of art. The 20s and 30s of last century are a key period that has not ceased to influence present modes of display. A period where, through the innovation of display, a dialectic between autonomy and heteronomy of art unfolds at the core of modernism.

Brian O'Doherty; *Notes On The Gallery Space*; in *Inside The White Cube*; University Of California Press; Berkeley, Los Angeles; London, 1976

Mary Anne Staniszewski; *Framing Installation design: The International Avant-Gardes*; in *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*; The MIT Press, Cambridge, London; 1998. p. 3-24.

Mary Anne Staniszewski; *Creating Installations for Aesthetic Autonomy: Alfred Barr's Exhibition technique*; in *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*; The MIT Press, Cambridge, London; 1998. p. 60-83

LESSON 3

From Institutional critique to alter-institutions

Institutional critique as a critical meta-analysis of the art system left space to a new tendency in contemporary arts towards institutional invention. This lesson aims to shed light on the problem of institution in contemporary art, particularly focusing on what is called autonomous alter-institutions, those experiences that experiment non neoliberal models of cultural production.

Bibliography

Marco Baravalle; *Alter-institutions and art. Between governance and autonomy. Capture, subjectivity, decolonization, governance, acceleration, queering, Imaginary Economics*; (forthcoming).

Andrea Fraser; *From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique*; in J. C. Welchman (ed.); *Institutional Critique And After*; JRP Ringier; Zurich, 2006. p. 123-136

Hans Haacke; *All The Art That's Fits To Show*; in J. C. Welchman (ed.); *Institutional Critique And After*; JRP Ringier; Zurich, 2006. p 53-56

Gerald Raunig; *Flatness Rules. Institutent Practices and Institutions of The Common in a Flat World*; in Pascal Gielen (ed.); *Institutional Attitudes. Instituting Art In A Flat World*, Amsterdam: Valiz; 2013. p. 167-178.

Martha Rosler; *Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and makers. Thoughts on Audience buyers, Dealers, and Makers*; in; *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001*; The MIT Press; Cambridge; London; 2004.

LESSON 4

Against Utopia. The Italian critique of art and architecture as ideologies around 1968.

Starting from the 60s with the operaist critique of utopian neo avant-gardes, we will reflect on how contemporary artists are re-processing utopias (and dystopias) to break the cage of capitalist realism and to react to the approaching limit of the biosphere in our time of climate crisis.

Bibliography

Marco Baravalle; *Utopia and Art After The End Of Globalisation. Is The Imagination Of A Better Future Not Reactionary Any More?*; lecture paper, delivered at "Internationalism After The End Of

Globalization"; The Museum Of Modern Art in Warsaw; October 25-26, 2019.

Manfredo Tafuri; *Design And Technological Utopia*; in Emilio Ambasz; Italy; The New Domestic Landscape. Problems of Italian Design, MoMA Press; New York; 1972; p. 388 - 404.

José Esteban Muñoz; *Just Like Heaven. Queer Utopian Art And The Aesthetic Dimension*; New York University Press; 2009; pp 131-146

LESSON 5

The Curator's "hot autumn". Harald Szeemann: the independent curator as a paradigm of neoliberal labour.

Harald Szeemann is widely recognized as the prototype of the independent curator. The aim of this lesson is to frame the success of its model within the historical context of the capitalist response to 1968 movements and the subsequent affirmation of the hegemony of a neoliberal mode of cultural labor. When Szeemann was moving his first steps as independent curator, embodying, has he later affirmed, the "spirit of 1968", other examples attempted, "body and soul", to engage with the demands raised by that global movement. In Italy this is the case of the actions linked to the "decentramento of the Teatro Stabile in Torino" by Giuliano Scabia, and the curatorial and theoretical work of Enrico Crispolti between 1973 and 1976. These are not examples of revolutionary artists or thinkers, but of praxis and discourses that radically challenge the capitalistic aesthetic framework at the crossroad between social conflict, institutional renovation and the event of 1968.

Bibliography

Marco Baravalle; *The Curator's Hot Autumn: Worker protests and Harald Szeemann. At the roots of the neoliberal anthropology of working in art*; Lecture Paper.

Yaiza Hernandez Velazquez; *Imagining Curatorial Practice after 1972*; in P. O'Neill, Simon Shheikh, Lucy Steeds, Mick Willson (eds); *Curating After The Global*; MIT Press; Cambridge, London; 2019.

Hans Ulrich Obrist; *Harald Szeemann*; in *A Brief History of Curating*; Jrp Ringier; Zurich; 2008; p.80-101.

Beatrice Von Bismarck; *When Attitudes Become a Profession. Harald Szeemann's Self Referential Practice and The Art Of Exhibition*; in *Harald Szeemann Museum of Obsessions*; a cura di Phillips G., Kaiser P., Chon D., Rigolo P., The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; 2018.

LESSON 6

To What do We Participate? Relational aesthetics, dialogical aesthetics and neoliberal capture.

Social Art, Social Practices, Participation, Interventionism, Artivism, Activism, Relational Aesthetics, etc. The lesson will focus on a series of different recent takes on the problem of participation in art.

Claire Bishop; *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*. October, 110 (Fall). Cambridge: MIT Press,

2004.

Claire Bishop; *The Social Turn. Collaboration and Its Discontents; in Artificial Hells. Participatory Arts and The Politics of Spectatorship*; Verso; London; 2012. pp 11-40

Grant H Kester; *Dialogical Aesthetics*; in *Conversation Pieces. Community And Communication in Modern Art*; University Of California Press; Berkeley; Los Angeles; London; 2004; pp 82-123

Gregory Sholette; *Art After Gentrification*; in *Delirium And Resistance*; pp 127-148.

LESSON 7

Dark Matter. Or social creativity between capture and creation.

Gregory Sholette used an astrophysical metaphor to describe how the institutional art world is sustained through the valorization of material and cognitive labor of indebted art students, audiences, precarious workers, etc. A portion of this dark matter is composed by what should be called art singularities: activist and queer collectives, informal groups and alter-institutions. Today this general (creative) intellect finds itself more and more under the spotlights of institutional art, still it looks like its capacity to actually transform the dispositif or the art system is very limited. So how to deal with this visibility how to create new art forms instead of reinforcing the existing ones?

Maurizio Lazzarato; *Government And Valorisation Of Art And Culture*; in Marco Scotini (ed.); *No Order. Art in Postfordist Society*; n. 1/2010, Archive Books; Berlin. pp. 140-149.

Gregory Sholette; *Introduction. The Missing Mass*; in *Dark Matter. Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*; Pluto Press; London; 2011; p. 01-22.

Kuba Szreder, *How to Radicalize a Mouse? Notes on Radical Opportunism*; in *Mobile Autonomy. Exercises in Artists' Self-Organization*; edited by Pascal Gielen e Nico Dockx; Valiz, Amsterdam; 2015

LESSON 8

Queer. From the deconstruction of "objective" gaze to a post binary world.

Carla Lonzi abandoned art critique at the end on Sixties to completely devote herself to organising the nascent feminist movement. Before doing so, her critique to the existence of an objective vision remains a milestone in what could be called a real phenomenological revolution in the field of arts. From historical feminism to queer theory and art, this revolution carried on as an attempt to do away with any binary vision of the world.

David J. Getsy; *Introduction// Queer Intolerability And Its Attachments*; Introduction of The Book "Queer. Documents Of Contemporary Art"; Whitechapel and MIT Press; 2016.

J. Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, in *The Queer Art Of Failure*. Duke University Press, 2011.

Lorraine O'Grady; *Olympia's maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity*; in *Art Activism And Oppositionality*; edited by Grant H. Kester; Duke University Press; 1998.

Renate Lorenz; *Queer Art. A Freak Theory*. Columbia University Press; New York; 2012.

LESSON 9

An old problem, a new problem. Art And Populism

What does the definition "populist art" mean? How is the term populism to be understood? From Italian Operaism to Relational aesthetics until some of the most recent art practices we will focus on how the debated category of populism can be related to the field of aesthetics.

Bibliography

Alberto Asor Rosa; *The Writer and The People*. London: Seagull Books, 2016.

Marco Baravalle; *Art, Populism and the Alter-Institutional Turn*; in E-Flux Journal #89, New York, March 2018

Chantal Mouffe; *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism*, in Reihe Politikwissenschaft / Political Science Series, edited by Christine Neuhold and Gertrud Hafner, Department of Political Science, Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS), Vienna, 2000.

LESSON 10

Postcolonial/decolonial

This lesson will address how, starting from the late 80s, the "postcolonial condition" manifests itself within the realm of contemporary art. A crucial aspect of this process was the fact that "other cultures" reclaimed the space of modernity, traditionally a monopoly of the West. After having clarified some essential postcolonial positions, the lesson will address recent attempts at decolonizing art discourse and institutions.

Sara Wajid and Rachel Minott, *Detoxing And Decolonizing Museums*, in *Museum Activism*, Robert R. Janes and Richard Sandell, Routledge, 2019, pp 25-35

Rasheed Araeen, *Our Bauhaus, Others Mudhouse*, in *Third Text*, 6 spring 1989, pp. 3-16.

Okwui Enwezor, *Modernity And Postcolonial Ambivalence*, in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 109:3. Summer 2010.