Art History 295/395/COVA 395: Art, Community and Activism

Mon/Wed 3-4:20, CWAC 153
Screening time: Mon 4:30-6:30, CWAC 157. This time slot will also be used for guest speakers and site visits.

Instructor: Rebecca Zorach
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Office hours: M 10-12, Th 2-4

Course description

This course considers recent issues at the intersection of art and activism, looking particularly at artists and projects in Chicago. Beginning with historical antecedents and theoretical background, the course moves quickly to very contemporary issues and interventions in art and tactical media, both inside and outside the art museum or gallery. We will consider a series of issues: how art and artists produce, define and critique notions of community, and map and creatively intervene in urban space; what it means for artists to develop expertise outside "art" per se (do-it-yourself culture, artists' efforts in HIV and biotech activism); the visual culture of antiwar and anti-globalization efforts; new media (digital), old media (silk screen, stencil, puppets), and "other" (film, broadcast, bicycles); performance and collaborative process. Course materials will include exhibition catalogues, interviews, manifestoes, websites, ephemeral materials, site visits in Chicago, and materials and expertise brought by students.

Requirements

Active participation in discussion [N.b. Quality is as important as quantity. Especially appreciated are efforts at involving others in discussion]

Lead class discussion once, in groups that will depend on the size of the class. In order to prepare I ask that you meet with me as a group in office hours (or at another time to be arranged) the week before the class meeting you'll be leading. More info to come.

Contribute short review summaries and new links to online compilation of links on art and activism

Contribute short reading notes to chalk site (schedule tba)

Write one "program note" on an artist/activist individual or group for inclusion in "expo" program (to be explained)
Individual final project, 12-15 pp. paper or other project of comparable scope

Self-evaluation

Books ordered at Seminary Coop

Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*
Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces*
Notes from Nowhere Collective, ed., *We Are Everywhere*
Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, *From ACT-UP to the WTO*
Critical Art Ensemble, *Digital Resistance*
Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (optional background reading)

Other readings will be available on e-reserve. Additional materials for further reading and research will also be on reserve. Substitutions are possible based on student interests (to be discussed).

Resource list
http://lec.uchicago.edu/~utopias/mediawiki/index.php/Art_and_Activism_Links (available through chalk site)

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Schedule of class meetings

January 3   Introduction
John Jordan, "Deserting the Culture Bunker" *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, vol. 3, 179-182
Charles Green, "Against Artists" from free cooperation
Kartemquin, *What the Fuck are These Red Squares?* (1970, 15 min.)

4:30 Screening:
January 5  Historical/theoretical background 1

Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" in Cultural Resistance Reader (CRR), 67-81
Clement Greenberg, "Avant-garde and Kitsch" in Art and Culture pp. 3-21
Stephen Duncombe, "Introduction," CRR, 1-15
Mikhail Bakhtin, from Rabelais and his world, in CRR, 82-88

Suggested: Matthew Arnold, from Culture and Anarchy, in CRR, 49-58
Antonio Gramsci, from The Prison Notebooks, in CRR, 58-67

January 10  Historical/theoretical background 2

Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, eds., Theories and Documents of Contemporary art, pp. 702-730 (readings on performance art)
Arlene Raven, "Womanhouse" pp. 48-65 in The Power of Feminist Art

Suggested:
Laura Cottingham, "L.A. Womyn" in Seeing Through the Seventies, pp. 161-174

No screening scheduled; re-screening of Jan. 3 shorts possible in CWAC 153 (AH dept lecture in 157)

Public art, community art, and their discontents

January 12 Visit to South Side Community Art Center, 3831 S. Michigan Ave.
Meet outside CWAC courtyard on Greenwood at 3:00

Grant Kester, Conversation Pieces, pp. 1-81

Suggested:
Kester, pp. 82-151
January 17 Martin Luther King Day. No class/no screening

January 19  Debating public/community art
Miwon Kwon, One Place After Another (entire book)
Grant Kester, Conversation Pieces, pp. 152-191

Taking to the streets: media of protest

January 24  Media Activism
Critical Art Ensemble, "Electronic Civil Disobedience," ch. 1 from Electronic Civil Disobedience and Other Unpopular Ideas
Shepherd and Hayduk, from ACT UP to the WTO, Part Four ("Media and the New Social Movements")
www.indymedia.org; "Indymedia: don't hate the media, be the media," from We Are Everywhere, pp. 228-243

4:30 Speaker: Dara Greenwald, Video Data Bank, on 70s video collectives and activism

January 26  Writing on the wall (and on the streets)
Reading(s) from Eva Cockcroft, Toward a People's Art
Jeff Donaldson, "The rise, fall and legacy of the Wall of Respect movement" pp. 22-6 in International Review of African American Art v. 15 no1.
www.bikesagainstbush.com
Browse: Josh MacPhee, Stencil Pirates; James Mann, ed., Peace Signs; A Brief History of Outrage

January 31  But Is It Art?
Derek Conrad Murray, "Hip-Hop vs. High Art: Notes on Race as Spectacle," in Art Journal summer 2004

4:30 Screening, Tony Silver, Style Wars (1982, 70 min.)

Feb 2  From ACT-UP to the WTO and back again
Shepherd and Hayduk, *from ACT UP to the WTO*, selections: "Introductions" (1-20); selections from part two (pp. 126-149, 172-201)
Douglas Crimp, "The Boys in My Bedroom" from *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*

Feb 7 No class – undergraduate break

Feb 9  **The Carnivalesque**
"Trickster's Time: the art of transforming protest" (section includes several different pieces), pp. 17-37 in *What If? Journal of Radical Possibilities*
"Carnival" section in *We are everywhere*, except pp. 228-255 (i.e., read 173-227 and 256-301)
Benjamin Shepard, "Playin' It Straight: Fighting To Turn NYC into a PATRIOT Act-Free Zone" pp. 63-73 in *JAP* vol. 1 no. 3 (2004)

**Making Space: The Global and the Local**

Feb. 14  **Making Space**
"Emergence" and "Networks" in *We are everywhere* (pp. 19-105)
Brett Bloom and Ava Bromberg, eds., *Belltown Paradise/Making their own plans*

4:30 Speakers: Ava Bromberg and Brett Bloom of *In the Field*

Feb. 16  **Autonomy/nomadism**
"Autonomy" section in *We are everywhere*
Hakim Bey, from TAZ, in *CRR*, pp. 113-118
Critical Art Ensemble, "Nomadic Power and Cultural Resistance," ch. 2 from *The Electronic Disturbance*

Suggested: Tom McDonough, "Situationist Space," pp. 241-265 in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*

Feb. 17 Recommended event: Panel discussion for YOUGenics exhibition,  "Rounding up the Unusual Subjects: Art in the Age of Biotechnology and the Patriot Act" 6:00 pm, SAIC Auditorium, 280 S. Columbus Dr.

Feb. 21  **Artist projects/spaces**
228; Wochenklausur, "Art and Sociopolitical Intervention," 255-264]; optional: "Utopia Station" section in *Dreams and Conflicts*

Meet only for 4:30 Screening: Andrea Meller, *156 Rivington* (2002, 56 min.)

Feb. 23 Speaker: Jim Duignan, Stockyard Institute

Feb. 28 Site visit: Mess Hall, 6932 N. Glenwood. Meet outside CWAC at 3:00
No readings; Program Notes due

Tactical Media and Technology

March 2 Pranks
http://www.rtmark.com
http://www.theyesmen.org
Rotten Milk, "Tactical Media: Chicago Overview" from *Lumpen* 89, pp. 10-11.
Suggested: 347-396 in *CRR* (Reclaim the Streets, Reverend Billy, Billionaires for Bush, Electronic Disturbance)

Screening: Dan Ollman and Sarah Price, *The Yes Men* (2003, 83 min)

March 7 Technology
Critical Art Ensemble, *Digital Resistance*
"subRosa Manifestations," pp. 217-221 in Fernandez, Wilding and Wright, *Domain Errors*
Browse *The Interventionists* catalogue

March 9 Space v. Time
Coco Fusco, "Questioning the Frame: Thoughts about maps and spatial logic in the global present," *In These Times*, Dec. 16, 2004
Conclusions

March 14 Final projects due

Based on student interest, a meeting may be scheduled early in spring quarter to present final projects to one another.