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Syllabus for a Course “The History of 20th Century Artistic Research”

Abstract

Syllabus for a Course “The History of 20th Century Artistic Research” attempts to reconstruct (or rewrite!) the history or art in the 20th century from the perspective of artistic research. The paper should be understood as a functional proposal for an actual class, but it can also be seen as a statement both about what “artistic research” or “art-based research” could signify and how these notions might help us to look differently at the meeting place between art history, art practice and the humanities.

Keywords

History of 20th century art, artistic research, artists’ magazines, digital humanities

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Lehrplan für den Kurs „Die Geschichte der künstlerischen Forschung im 20. Jahrhundert“

Zusammenfassung

Syllabus for a Course „The History of 20th Century Artistic Research“ ist ein Versuch, die Kunstgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts aus der Perspektive der künstlerischen Forschung zu erzählen. Der Syllabus dient dabei zugleich als konkreter Vorschlag für ein Seminar und als Versuch, den Begriff „künstlerische Forschung“ näher zu definieren, besonders in Hinblick auf die Konstellation von Kunstgeschichte, Kunstpraxis und Geisteswissenschaften.

Schlüsselwörter

Kunstgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts, künstlerische Forschung, Künstler-Zeitschriften, digitale Geisteswissenschaften

*Die Wissenschaft unter der Optik des Künstlers zu sehen,
die Kunst aber unter der des Lebens...*

The following is an outline for a proposed class entitled “The History of 20th Century Artistic Research.” It follows the (overly!) ambitious plan to reconsider the History of 20th century art from the standpoint of artistic research. Throughout the proposed two semester-long course, we will explore the relationship between art and especially the humanities and in some limited cases between art and the natural sciences, working from the assumption that artistic research is the place where sciences and art meet, collide, support each other, call each other into question... which, of course, in itself would not be very novel: Art, philosophy, literature, the natural sciences, etc. have always maintained a relationship to each other—sometimes more, sometimes less friendly. What I would like to claim, and what is perhaps the underlying polemic of the very idea of “artistic research,” is that this place of interaction between different disciplines, especially between the humani-

ties and the arts, has over the course of the 20th century increasingly become a discipline of its own.

One of the most controversial aspects of artistic research is that although it synthesizes art, the humanities and the natural sciences, it does this in such a way that it often stands in conflict both with traditional ideas of art and with traditional forms of research: While artistic research is grounded in intellectual and artistic traditions, it functionally defines the point where such traditions are rethought and reformulated. This course in the history of artistic research should be understood in this two-fold manner: It is both a review of past work in research in the arts and humanities and at the same time intended to serve as a basis for new projects and work. Each week should thus be conceived both as an appraisal of given historically significant positions and methodologies and as an exercise or preparation for future projects.

Although the course itself is structured chronologically, the problems addressed during each week could be connected to other times and places, including, inescapably, each topic's relevance for present concerns. The broad range of examples given can be interpreted as a call to define artistic research in the most comprehensive terms possible—without however making the claim, as too often is the case, that all art is in fact research. Further it is hoped that the course will stimulate a discussion about what other versions, alternate thematic constellations or other selections of artists and writers could be included in this history. Ideally the course could be followed by or accompanied with a review of other positions that were either absent or underrepresented.

“The History of 20th Century Artistic Research” could be taught both at an art school and within the humanities department of a university. I see the need to provide a new institutional space for “artistic research” as indicative both of a crisis in the traditional image of the artist *and* the humanities scholar. The new institutional space that the discipline “artistic research” would establish could be used to support both projects that do not fit into the art world/market *and* those projects that challenge the limitations of conventional academic practice. In a more traditional

university setting, the discipline of artistic research would provide a space to explore other forms of academic practice including other styles of writing (not strictly academic), the role that other media could play in producing knowledge (the digital humanities, design, film) and the breadth of possible careers for humanities scholars outside of the *scriptorium* (filmmaking, curating, radio, television, etc.).

Concretely the course would entail an eight hour seminar—with at least that much time allotted for individual film viewing, projects and readings. The best possible situation for this foundational course would involve multiple professors or tutors with differing fields of expertise—with one principle professor accompanying the whole year.

As an addendum to the syllabus, I have included the work “1848, 1849 Biographie de Suspecte” from the project “Ein Gespenst geht um in Brüssel” by Florian Clewe and Leon Filter as an example of work that has developed within and alongside of this curriculum. The project is a particularly interesting example because it began with traditional academic research locating, scanning and translating documents from police archives that relate to Friedrich Engels’ and Karl Marx’s stay in Brussels during the 1840s (when Marx/Engels were writing the Communist Manifesto). But this initial research was done with the intent of creating a different (and not necessarily contrary!) experience or form of interface with the archive than one would normally produce as a traditional scholar. Filter’s and Clewe’s work moves between historical research, film, the web and the archive in Brussels—documenting their research as much as their experience of the place and their interaction with other artists and academics. These images and texts hint at and relate to this research as it passes between libraries, the archive, the web and the streets of contemporary Brussels.

Syllabus

One Year Course: A History of 20th Century Artistic Research

1 First Semester

1.1 Week 1

Introduction: Some preliminary remarks and questions to be addressed during the seminar

A. Experimental humanities

Why do we read Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Warburg, Gramsci, Adorno, Saussure, Lacan, Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Rancière, Kristeva, Mouffe, Butler, Spivak, etc. at art school? (Authors one might refer to as part of a tradition of “experimental humanities”). Why does a working knowledge of these (and other similar) authors represent for many practicing artists today not merely a passing interest—but rather a central and constitutive aspect of their practice?

Of central importance here is the triad “Marx-Nietzsche-Freud” that we will be meeting throughout the course. Variations on the “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Paul Ricœur)² would become a central and constitutive part of artistic practice throughout the century. How do these new possibilities of interpretation, these new demands made upon hermeneutics, change art practice? As Foucault in a discussion in 1964 stated, “Marx, Nietzsche and Freud have confronted us with a new possibility of interpretation, they have founded a new possibility for hermeneutics.”

² See the chapter “L’interprétation comme exercice de soupçon” in: P. Ricœur (1965). *De l’interprétation: Essai sur Freud*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

The works of Marx-Nietzsche-Freud represent not only a new approach to knowledge but also “techniques of interpretation that concerned ourselves”³. These new possibilities of interpretation, this new kind of radical hermeneutics of suspicion stands at the beginning of a new appreciation of our relationship to representation—“representation” here understood as the difficult to delineate common ground of consciousness, images and representative political order. Throughout the course, we will look to show how these new experimental interpretative practices were translated into different forms of art practice—where exploring the self, social reality, our relationship to other persons and objects has continued to take place in yet-to-be-defined space between reading, experience and the production of images and works of art.

B. Works on Paper: Artists’ Magazines as the Principle Space for Artistic Research

The most important medium for artistic research has always been paper. First in its most basic form: sketches, notebooks and diagrams; but also the collected works of printed journals, magazines, manifestos, catalogues and other ephemera: Artistic research grows out of communities of practice that meet on the printed page in photographic documentation, in woodcut, offset and Xerox print. The artist magazine as “alternative space for art”⁴ brings together a constellation of forces that cannot be reduced to a single medium, discipline or institution. As media of communication and as works in their own right, artists’ magazines are the space where a large part of artistic research has been developed, presented and disseminated.

³ M. Foucault (2001). Nietzsche, Freud Marx. In *Dits et Écrits I* (pp. 594-595). Paris: Gallimard, 2001. [my translation]

⁴ G. Allen (2011). *Artists’ Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art*. Cambridge (USA): MIT Press.

With access to originals, facsimiles or scans, the following magazines, journals and books will reappear throughout the course, providing an underlying structure to the “The history of 20th Century Artistic Research”:

- *Der Sturm* (1910-1932)
- *Die Aktion* (1911-1932)
- *De Stijl* (1917-1932)
- *L'Esprit Nouveau* (1920-1925)
- *Merz* (1923-1932)
- *Lef* (1923-1925)
- *Novy Lef* (1927-1929)
- *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1924-1929)
- *Documents : doctrines, archéologie, beaux-arts, ethnographie* (1929-1930)
- *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* (1930-1933)
- *Minotaure* (1933-1939)
- *Acéphale* (1936-1939)
- *Bauhausbücher* (1925-1930)
- *Film Culture* (1955-1999)
- *Internationale Situationniste* (1958-1969)
- *Artforum* (esp. during the 1960s and 1970s)
- *Archigram* (1961-1964)
- *Aspen* (1965-1971)
- *BIT International* (1968-1972)
- *Interfunktionen* (1968-1975)
- *Art-Language* (1969-1985)
- *Radical Software* (1970-1974)
- *Avalanche* (1970-1976)
- *File* (1972-1989)
- *Art-Rite* (1973-1978)
- *Semiotext(e)* (1974-1984)
- *Heresies* (1977-1993)

- *Real Life* (1979-1994)
- *October* (1976-

*** In this context we will also look towards “expanded education for the paperless society” (Paik) with the “digital humanities” as yet another important alternative space for artistic research:**

Right from the beginning of the course and specifically in the context of artist magazines it will be important to consider the exciting opportunities digital technologies present to the artistic researcher: What new forms and what new kinds of communities of practice have been made possible by the various digital revolutions (music, film, networking...)? It will be important to look at ways of exploiting the potential of new information technologies—both in terms of artists as researchers and as revolutionary humanities scholars!

The manifesto-like book *Digital_Humanities* (2012) by Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner and Jeffrey Schnapp might serve as inspiration for our work...

C. History as Constitutive Knowledge: How might we avoid a new kind of humanism?

Why is a profound knowledge not only of the “experimental humanities” but also the history of film, painting, sculpture and architecture a central part of contemporary art education?

Or to be more specific: Why is it that a good grasp of these histories has become something so closely tied not only to the interpretation but also to the production of art?

Here it is important to stress the dangers of a new kind of normative humanism developing (however critical, revolutionary or hip this new form of historicism might seem!). While I will argue throughout the course that artistic research is grounded in diverse but interrelated hermeneutic and artistic traditions, one must at the same time beware of the dangers of thought or practice being reduced to mere

academic methodology or historical pastiche. We may not quote Cicero or Goethe any more, but our modern “authorities” might run the risk of playing a similar role in our own thought and practice. In this sense, the “projects” that coincide with each week should be interpreted as freely as possible.

Artistic research must also not be confused with art theory or art history—although, of course, they share in many of the same points of reference.

The “history of artistic research” is intended more as a guidebook or an operational manual than as an academic textbook. While we maintain that a thorough knowledge of this admittedly overly broad field of knowledge represents an important part of the education of the “artistic researcher,” there must also be a point where our historicist and hermeneutic academic excesses can be turned against themselves... lonely, nostalgic, drunk, deranged, or charged with political rage, the artistic researcher might at the right moment just as easily forget all that he/she has thus far learned...

D. What is the difference between writing a “History of 20th Century Art” vs. a “History of 20th Century Artistic Research?”

The paradoxical goal of this course in the history of artistic research might be to reclaim the experimental in art from its art-historiographic understanding. In expanding our work to include the humanities, we hope to make it clear that this history follows different guidelines than those followed by art understood as a separate form of human intelligence or practice: “What is needed is an aesthetic method that brings together anthropology and linguistics in terms of ‘building’. This would put an end to ‘art history’ as sole criterion. Art at the Present is confined by a dated notion namely of ‘art as criticism of earlier art’”.⁵

⁵ R. Smithson (1967). Towards the development of an air terminal site. In *Artforum*, Summer 1967, 40.

E. Rethinking the implications of the “avant-garde”

The terms “research” and the “experimental” within the less lofty (less Hegelian!) goals of artistic research indicate a sense of distinction or differentiation that is entirely different from the socio-political implications of the 20th century “avant-garde” use of these terms. It is not a question of going beyond our peers, of seeing through their dated ideologies or “false consciousness” but rather simply of working out our own forms of thinking and practicing (that may or may not apply to or contradict those around us). Artistic research is an experiment with ways of being “in the world” that at the same time might hint at other worlds against, above or beyond this one (the worlds to come!).

1.2 Week 2: 19th Century Origins, Part I Living and Expressing the Contemporary: Charles Baudelaire

In a conscious turn away from given religious, mythological and historical themes, new ways to express the “eternal and immutable” are sought after in the present constellation of the moment, with the explicit goal of extracting “mysterious beauty” from everyday life to create an art that perhaps at some future time will be worthy of being thought of as a new antiquity (the eternal).⁶ Baudelairean themes recur (very often in explicit reference to him) throughout the history of the 20th century. With Baudelaire we gain a way of understanding how historical shifts based on creating new artistic styles in art could be seen with respect to life (rather than merely as innovations with respect to the history of art). What is at question here is to understand “originality” here in Baudelaire’s words as the “stamp that time imprints upon our sensations”—not as merely an original transformation of a given

⁶ W. Benjamin, *Passagen-Werk* (J6 84); C. Baudelaire, The Painter of Modern Life. In J. Mayne (ed.), *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (p. 13). London: Phaidon Press.

style. The stamp of time is much more of an indication of an understanding of an “ontological” relationship to originality—with art expressing a very specific kind of being (here we can also sense the coming importance of late 19th century French painting for future phenomenology...).

The “painter of modern life” (here the researcher) might celebrate the contingency of the present moment in phenomenological analysis (here thinking together with and at the same time against Baudelaire of the painters Manet, Monet, Cézanne etc. but also Pollock, Rothko, ...) leaving traces of their perceptions and sensations of the moment on tableaux, with lines and colors creating an image of the external world that at the same time maps a “field of forces” related to the specific time or intensity of the moment). Or one could here also think here of the Benjaminian urban-hermeneutic or Marxist-Situationist flâneurism (the *dérive* as socially critical research of psycho-social landscapes).

What is important from the outset is to stress this understanding of the direct relationship between artistic practice and a critical analysis of contemporary everyday life—this theme that will recur throughout the history of artistic research and represents one of its distinguishing characteristics. Finding a unique relationship in art to social constructs of time, space and practice.

Project: Students are asked to make documentations (photographic, drawings, writings) of their environment based on excerpts from Walter Benjamin’s Arcades Project.

1.3 Week 3: 19th Century Origins, Part II The Untimely Science

In 1872, roughly ten years after the publication of *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne*, one of the foundational texts that belongs to the tradition of what in this context I will call the “experimental humanities” was written by the at that time obscure philology professor Friedrich Nietzsche. *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste*

der Musik worked out the ambiguities of the origins of ancient tragedy in contrast to the simplified view of an antiquity reduced to generalizations and idealizations. Nietzsche's model posits a shift (already in antiquity) from the ritual, ecstatic practice of theater towards a rationalist, civic theater (with Euripides and Socrates as protagonists in this story marking the beginning of this decline—a "decline" that one could argue belongs more to the eternal return than to a specific historic progression). In contrast, Nietzsche stressed the dangerous and unpredictable, the amoral force of the Dionysian cultic leftovers in Greek tragedy, using them to expand the dimensions of artistic expression beyond the humanist culture and academic philology in which he was surrounded. In seeing the art of antiquity not as some external and essentialist form or model, as mere "cultivation," Nietzsche was attacking the Apollonian Humanist virtues that informed German education from the Gymnasium to the University (and therefore the very foundations of Prussian society).

With Nietzsche we are able to see an outline of the coming "war" between traditional, academic hermeneutic practice and more experimental approaches to knowledge. As Nietzsche himself diagnosed in his preface written 14 years later, it was in this work that he had here first understood "something fearful and dangerous (...) a problem with horns (not necessarily a bull exactly, but in any event a new problem). Today I would state that it was the problem of science [Wissenschaft] itself for the first time grasped as problematic, as dubious."⁷ In order to come to terms with this problematization of knowledge, it would be necessary to dare to approach research from a different perspective: "to look at science [Wissenschaft] from the perspective of the artist, but to look at art from the perspective of

⁷ „...etwas Furchtbares und Gefährliches, ein Problem mit Hörnern, nicht notwendig gerade ein Stier, jedenfalls ein neues Problem: heute würde ich sagen, daß es das Problem der Wissenschaft selbst war – Wissenschaft zum ersten Male als problematisch, als fragwürdig gefaßt.“ (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. KSA 1, p.13)

life.”⁸ To look at research from the perspective of the artist implies looking at experience in terms of art—which in turn implies a unique relationship to the future via the untimely practice of affirmation of the moment.

The Nietzschean trajectory occupies a special place in the history of 20th century thought. It is in this unique relationship to knowledge, time, experience (the Dionysian!) that we see art and experimental research in philosophy meet throughout the century (esp. Bataille, Foucault, Deleuze...). While it is true that the Dionysian (and unfortunately in many ways Mandarin!) side of this tradition should perhaps not become the foundational logic informing the constitutional theory of a modern state..., nonetheless this tradition should not be left out of our research into what it means to be human (we might read and understand where Luc Ferry, Jürgen Habermas, etc. are coming from... but then throw their books (disgustedly or joyfully?) out the window of a moving train...).

Project: How might one imagine a new kind of revolutionary philology? What place will the many coming experiments in reassessing past mythologies play within our own practice?

1.4 Week 4:

19th Century Origins, Part III

Die Welt... es kommt darauf an sie zu verändern!

Many late 19th century artists and writers Richard Wagner, William Morris, Walt Whitman, Leo Tolstoy ... explored the conditions under which it would be possible to imagine and/or bring about a fundamental change in the world that would not only transform society but also make it possible to understand and create a different kind of art. During the early 20th century, these revolutionary considerations increasingly crystallized around Marxism—no doubt due to the success of the

⁸ „...die Wissenschaft unter der Optik des Künstlers zu sehen, die Kunst aber unter der des Lebens...“ (Ibid., p.14)

Communist Revolution but also, I would argue, due to many of the philosophical claims of Marxism that corresponded with a new kind of critical and practical-transformative “hermeneutic” of history and culture.

It is difficult to overstate what crucial role different perspectives on Marxism and Communism played in art throughout the twentieth century: from such obvious examples as Rodchenko, Malevich, Tatlin, Grosz, Heartfield, the Surrealists and the Situationists, to less outwardly politically motivated figures such as Picasso, Pollock, Rothko, or even the young Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg.

The link between Marxism and art is precisely the speculative, critical, even militant side of “artistic research”—with the goal to determine in what way art might not merely interpret but also transform (or subvert) “the world.”

Project: Put together one’s own visual history of the relationship between politics and art (here thinking about various methods from diagrams (both linear and non-linear) to “learning machines” (Maciunas) or time-based media). No time-lines allowed!

1.5 Week 5: Paradigmatic Example of Artistic Research: Surrealist Journals

Breton’s famous programmatic slogan helps us to understand how the Surrealist project might be integrated into this history: “‘Transform the world,’ said Marx, ‘change life,’ said Rimbaud: These two mottos are for us but one.”⁹ In 1924, Surrealist research (as it was explicitly referred to) looked (ecstatically!) to establish a new, more comprehensive and egalitarian declaration of human rights through developing new practices of art and research. The cover of the first issue of *La*

⁹ “‘Transformer le monde,’ a dit Marx; ‘changer la vie,’ a dit Rimbaud: ces deux mots d’ordre nous n’en font qu’un.” (A. Breton, Discours au Congrès des écrivains. In *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. II, p. 459.)

Révolution Surréaliste reads programmatically: “Il faut aboutir à une nouvelle déclaration des droits de l'homme.” The Surrealists called into question the given order of society on many different levels—not merely economic or political—questioning given models of sexuality, identity and morality, calling into question and playing with the discourses of madness, illness, and criminality—which led to their investigations into the relationship between consciousness and institutions (especially prisons and mental hospitals).

Our class builds on Rosalind Krauss’s claim that the Surrealist magazines “more than anything else are the true objects produced by Surrealism” and that in reconsidering their importance we “begin to force attention away from the pictorial and sculptural production that surrounds Surrealism,”¹⁰ going further to look at the Surrealist project as an example of a new combination of knowledge production that would bring together philosophical, anthropological, psychoanalytic, art historical and political considerations with visual art practices— i.e. what this course argues to be the core of artistic research.

Many of the defining characteristics of artistic research can be seen here:

- Collective work
- Visual and textual hermeneutics: Exploring the relationship between text and image (including photography, drawing, painting, film stills) as specific thought process
- Experimental and academic approaches to knowledge and writing (especially *Documents* and *Minotaure*)
- Forms of thinking and practicing seen as part of a “movement” (indicating a sense of the larger implications of research)
- Anthropology of distant societies also turned towards one’s own society

¹⁰ R. Krauss (1981), The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism. In *October*, Winter 1981.

- Challenging social norms and linking these challenges to art practice: art is seen together with political activism and the politics of everyday experience

Links to the future:

Show direct connections to post-war theory through Dali / Lacan (Minotaure), Bataille and later Ferdinand Alquié (here more speculatively wondering about his influence on the generation of students he instructed, especially Deleuze); show commonalities with and post-war “western Marxism” (Merleau-Ponty) and 1960s Freudo-Marxism (sexual revolutions, hippy culture, etc.).

Project: Over the course of the year, we will work together to produce one common (or many individual?) catalogue(s) or book(s) that document the work we did during the semester based loosely on the Surrealist magazines.

1.6 Week 6

The Continual Project of the “Dematerialization of the Art Object”

This week should remind the students that there is a continuity of the traditions of immaterial practice throughout the 20th and onto the 21st century! By beginning with Baudelaire-Marx-Nietzsche-Freud, passing through the various artists’ periodicals (*Der Sturm*, *Die Aktion*, *De Stijl*, the Surrealist magazines, etc.) it should already be clear that what was to become “conceptual art” was not a fundamentally new situation for art qua artistic research. I would argue that the “dematerialization of the art object” if seen within the long history of artistic research was a much less radical shift, much more a change in the institutional valorization of certain already given aspirations of 20th century art production.

Already in 1973, in her afterword to *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the art object*, Lucy Lippard had recognized how, in our terms, conceptual art had stopped being a form of “artistic research,” bemoaning the fate of the recent attempts to transform art she had been a part of:

“Hopes that ‘conceptual art’ would be able to avoid the general commercialization, the destructively ‘progressive’ approach of modernism were for the most part unfounded. It seemed that in 1969 [...] no one, not even a public greedy for novelty, would actually pay money, or much of it, for a Xerox sheet referring to an event past or never directly perceived, a group of photographs documenting an ephemeral situation or condition, a project for work never completed, words spoken but not recorded; it seemed that these artists would therefore be forcibly freed from the tyranny of a commodity status and market-orientation. Three years later (sic!), the major conceptualists are selling work for substantial sums here and in Europe; they are represented by (and still more unexpectedly—showing in) the world’s most prestigious galleries. Clearly, whatever minor revolutions in communication have been achieved by the process of dematerializing the object [...], art and artists in a capitalist society remain luxuries.”¹¹

We need art galleries. We need the art market. We need the often random seeming hierarchies of the art world. But do we really need them? The continual project of the dematerialization of art is the idealist core of egalitarian and anti-hierarchical claims made upon art as a kind of more concentrated, heightened or expanded research of the conditions of reality—a fleeting, transient state of being much closer to experience itself... Artistic research could be understood as that special part of art that cannot be sold or traded as a commodity.

Artistic research must continue to work between its material realization and the immaterial and ephemeral implications of its practice (research for the sake of research!)—this is its freedom!

Project: Collect pieces of paper (sketches, receipts, etc.) together for a small DIY publication (here thinking about Mel Bochner’s *Working Drawings And Other Visible Things On Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed As Art*).

¹¹ L. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*. (although she would later also reconsider this position...)

1.7 Weeks 7 to 8: Aby Warburg and the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* The Birth of Artistic Research out of the Spirit of *Kulturwissenschaft*?

We begin with the given “symbolic forms” (myths, language, society at large...) within which we navigate reality, but also perhaps thinking about ways of using and at the same time undermining the Kantian and humanist side (Cassirer) of this philosophical project (with the *Denkraum der Besonnenheit* as forever elusive goal rather than starting point...). What is interesting here is Warburg’s (personal and theoretical) understanding that all of human culture is schizophrenic. That the “cosmic, worldly and genealogical” structures into which one is born are also perhaps random, repressive and pathological.

And we must not forget that these exhibitions took place in the most hermetic of libraries (the library as Kiva)! Or that the path of artistic research might pass through distant lands (Arizona-New Mexico) or through distant epochs (Florentine Renaissance, Mesopotamia-Rome-Hamburg...) before it can realize the implications of its symbolic practice. In Aby Warburg’s *Reisebericht* we see how the *Pathosformel* as aesthetic of intensification can be translated from the *Schlangenritual* in New Mexico to the *Prozessionen* in Florenz and thus to Botticelli’s nymphs and gods of the winds—and (with a small jump) beyond this to Happenings and performance art. Warburg’s study of pagan demons and Kachinas reminds of us of the cosmological and ritual intensity that might surround our own work.

The “deep history” of artistic research might begin, following Warburg, with a priestly cast deciding the fate of the world through studies of sacrificial animals’ innards and their relationship to the stars and planets! Art establishes and provides order to a cosmos (explaining and making the grand scheme explicit). Consciousness develops in the “Zwischenraum” of symbolic forms—and we must find or create our place somewhere in it all. At the center of the distinction between mere art and artistic research we find the *iconological*.

Warburg's collection and organization of images (religious, art, newspaper etc.) is to be seen as the basis of artistic and existential practice. The importance of Warburg's exhibitions and *Diavorträge* during the 1920s must be stressed: imagining Warburg "performing" the Bilderatlas. Philosophy, art history, etc. as a performing art. The central role of teaching and learning in this history: "Teaching and learning as performing arts!" (Robert Filliou)

Project: Students create their own collections of images (linking these collections directly to "the library" (which here could be conceived in Warburgian or Borghesian terms!). We imagine Warburg's *Diavorträge* as the first in a long line of what would become the now omnipresent artists' and art critics' PowerPoint performances...

1.8 Week 9

Histoire(s) du cinéma: An Archeology of the 20th century

Continuing the Warburgian project of rhizomatic analysis of the symbolic world, we look to Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as a "Kinobilderatlas". Here we expand our studies to include, however fragmentarily, the entire history of cinema. Formal, cinematographic and dramaturgical questions can be posed as they relate to the (re)production of the real—trying to grasp however fleetingly the accompanying transcendental-virtual historicity of our collective experience of the world (again thinking about the difficulties of differentiating between thought, images and collective memory):

actualité de l'histoire... histoire de l'actualité... histoire du cinéma...

Studying, criticising but also producing images and series of images (Vertovian pensiveness mixed with Eisensteinian drama!).

Here we retell the history of cinema (and literature and philosophy and painting and photography) as the history of the 20th century (both affecting (emotionally) and effecting (bringing about) reality).

Ideas for potential projects

All Students should make a 3-10 minute version or critique of Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

1.9 Week 10

An introduction to dialectical images: From John Heartfield, Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein to Jean-Luc Godard, Martha Rosler...

- 1) Eisenstein vs. the Kinoki: As an introduction we look at two differing ideas about the way film (and perhaps all visual arts) could attempt to change human consciousness with the goal of creating a new social order. (Sergei Eisenstein vs. Dsiga Vertov; Very schematically: theatrical montage vs. documentary-style and mostly rhythmic montage).
- 2) Reading and comparing texts by Vertov, Eisenstein, Solanas, and Marx, Lukács and Bazin.

Project: We take the Marxist films of Godard, Álvarez, Solanas, etc. and chop them up and link them together to make different constellations: Marxist mashup.

1.10 Week 11

Photography as a Weapon (Heartfield)

Study the exhibition *Film und Foto* in Stuttgart (1929) along with work in the following magazines:

- Der Arbeiterphotograph
- Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung
- НОВЫЙ ЛЕФ [Novy lef]
- USSR in Construction

We will also contrast these examples with work produced with the support of the Farm Security Administration: Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Gordon Parks, Jack Delano...

Project: We wander the streets of our respective city in search of images that we could turn into weapons.

1.11 Week 12

Making Documents of the Real

Where to begin the history of the documentary? Already with Lumière? With Vertov? With Nanook?

We will watch films by Robert Flaherty, Robert Siodmak, John Grierson, Walter Ruttmann and Joris Ivens

Project: In the spirit of the “symphony of the city”, we either perform or write a piece of music that forms the basis for a 4-10 minute study of the city.

1.12 Week 13

Abstract Art and the Natural Sciences: Abstraction between the new mathematics, pataphysics and Bergsonian philosophy

During this week we will go back to the beginning of the 20th century and concentrate on the writings and intellectual background of abstract painting. We will explore possibilities of finding new forms of representation to correspond to new scientific and epistemological models.

See especially: Linda Dalrymple Henderson: *Duchamp in context: science and technology in the “Large Glass” and related works* and *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*.

We will also explore the significance of the “pataphysical”—a kind of Grundlagenforschung celebrating the absurd side of intellectual order:

Alfred Jarry, Jorge Luis Borges, Marcel Duchamp, Marcel Broodthaers, On Kawara...

Here looking at the arbitrary side of meaning and thus also to an extent the arbitrary side of power and intellectual order (reading Foucault reading Borges in *Les mots et les choses*). The order of things: a fragile but all powerful construct.

Project: Create two-dimensional works based on scientific data—with the most extreme degree of absurdity possible!

1.13 Week 14

Art in the 1930s: Art Institutions at War

The concluding week will focus on the years 1936-1937 based on an in-depth study of exhibitions (including the art, architecture and writings surrounding them):

- *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York 1936)
- *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* (Paris 1937)—looking especially at the Spanish Pavilion (Guernica) in contrast to the Russian and German Pavilions, along with the new Museums of Modern Art in Paris
- *Entartete Kunst Ausstellung* (Munich 1937)
- *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Munich 1937)

We will also read Benjamin's *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* along with Heidegger's *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks* that were both originally written between 1935-1936.

2 Second Semester

2.1 Week 1

A New Sense of Reality

Art in the aftermath of war: Artists and filmmakers try to come to terms with the new sense of ethical answerability of art. Revelations about the extent of the killing

under totalitarianism and the invention of the atomic bomb created demands and problems for representation that were fundamentally new.

The first lecture concentrates first on a new sense of reality expressed in cinema:

1. Italian Neo-Realism
2. *Caméra-Stylo* (Astruc): The filmmaker as writer/historian/critic commenting on the world and on the history of film: Filmmakers around *La Cinémathèque Française* and *Cahiers du Cinéma*.
3. The Holocaust and Hiroshima as new challenge for art (Renaïs: *Nacht und Nebel*, *Hiroshima mon amour*—in contrast to Lanzmann's *Shoah* and later the controversy with Godard).
4. Gilles Deleuze's differentiation between the movement-image and time-image

Project: Try to stage a scene that would express this new relationship to representation.

2.2 Week 2

Critical Urban Studies: Situationism and *La Société du Spectacle* (film and book)

Artists working in the tradition of “Western Marxism,” focussing on the critique of consciousness as Capitalist *Verdinglichung* (Lukács). We begin with various forms of derive and détournement serving as a starting point for artistic practice, but also look at how this tradition of art as a critique of spectacular deception could be critiqued or rethought (esp. Deleuze and Rancière).

Project: Combine previous projects to create a psycho-geographical study of the city we inhabit.

2.3 Week 3

Art Students in Art Schools: From Bauhaus to the Black Mountain College (and beyond!!!)

Beginning with Bauhaus and following Albers and Moholy-Nagy to the US, then looking at the role other institutions played like MIT, Yale, Goldsmiths, as well as some examples of important teachers including Hans Hofmann, Franz Erhard Walther and Bernd and Hilla Becher, we open the question of the central significance of art schools and education for especially late 20th century artistic research.

It is time to look at art schools no longer as preparation for a future career in art—but rather as institutions of art production and experience in their own right.

Project: Based on the first Bauhaus manifesto and plan of studies, put together a four page description of the future art academy.

2.4 Week 4

The artist as writer:

Literature:

- Robert Morris: *Notes on Sculpture* (1966-1967); *The Present Tense of Space* (1978)
- Donald Judd: *Specific Objects* (1965)
- Dan Graham: *Homes for America* (1966)
- Hollis Frampton and Carl Andre: *12 Dialogues 1962-1963*
- Robert Smithson: opera omnia
- Sol LeWitt: *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art; Sentences on Conceptual Art*
- Yvonne Rainer: *A Quasi Survey of Some...* (1968)
- Joseph Kosuth: *Art after Philosophy* (1969)
- Lucy Lippard: opera omnia

Project: Write!

2.5 Week 5

Performance as Research Part I: Explosions! (Happenings, Fluxus, Viennese Actionism)

This lecture looks at works and events organized by Allan Kaprow, Robert Watts, John Cage (silent explosions!), George Maciunas, Otto Muehl, Valie Export, etc. as they continued through the 1970s establishing a set of traditions of art practice based on an examination of human interactions within specific, often absurd or contingent temporary institutional or ritual circumstances.

Project: Over the course of the next weeks, students will work to choreograph and perform a solo performance first to be performed by themselves then by one of their colleagues. During the first week their work should be limited to words and drawings and only over the course of the second to movements and space.

2.6 Week 6

Performance as Research Part II: Manifestations of Discourse in Dance

The second part of the performance series will focus on five artists Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Valie Export and Joan Jonas. It will be important to concentrate here not only on the subtleties of bodies in movement but also on the reflection upon and documentation of this movement. What might a score or script for a performance look like? What might a score or script of our class look like? Also on a more everyday level: What might a choreography of our different paths through the city look like? (I see Valie Export lying down on the corner of the street). How might we integrate our reflections into the spaces where we experience and/or produce art? How can we transform our bodies and movements into “symbolic forms”?

“I saw a man in pyjamas walk up to a tree, stop, regard it, and change his posture.”
(Simone Forti: *Handbook in Motion: An Account of an Ongoing Personal Discourse and its Manifestations in Dance*)

Project: Dance!

2.7 Week 7

Cinéma-Vérité and Direct Cinema

Watch movies by Jean Rouch, Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, Frederick Wiseman, D.A. Pennebaker, Albert and David Maysles, Ross McElwee...

Project: Working in teams, make a short, improvised movie in the style of either Cinéma-Vérité or Direct Cinema

2.8 Week 8

Experimental Cinema

Watch movies by Maya Deren, Marie Menken, Jonas Mekas, Stan Brakhage, Michael Snow, Chantal Akerman, Yvonne Rainer

Project: Explore different possibilities (somewhere between interrogation and inspiration) of conceiving of contemporary filmic experiments (here also thinking of possible links to dance and performance) which will lead to explorations later in the semester of the idea of expanded cinema from Maciunas to Gene Youngblood.

2.9 Week 9

Art, Information, Technology I: Early Media Art and Research

The first week will explore various attempts to link art and science as a collective practice and or as the basis for the conception of institutions of higher learning and research:

We will look specifically at the activities of E.A.T. (Billy Klüver) and the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at M.I.T. (György Kepes) along with the Nove tendencije exhibitions beginning in 1961 and the magazine *Bit International*.

Project: Scientists from the natural science departments of a local university will be invited to partake in a workshop. We will try to imagine a way of engaging with their work...

2.10 Week 10

Art, Information, Technology II: Early Video Art and Alternative Media Activism

Video on the periphery and within the art institution

We will look at relatively decentralized projects such as Raindance Corporation, Radical Software, Guerilla T.V., the Public Access movement and compare them to video art in art institutions (the white cube as basis for the aesthetics of narcissism!? etc.). What is the impact of information? Media ecology, humanization of technology (and attempts to go beyond the merely human...): Gregory Bateson, Marshall McLuhan and even the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin ...

We take the editorial Statement from the first number of Radical Software (1970) as our starting point:

“As problem solvers we are a nation of hardware freaks. Some are into seizing property or destroying it. Others believe in protecting property at any cost—including life—or at least guarding it against spontaneous use. Meanwhile, unseen systems shape our lives. Power is no longer measured in land, labor, or capital, but by access to information and the means to disseminate it. As long as the most powerful tools (not weapons) are in the hands of those who would hoard them, no cultural vision can succeed. Unless we design and implement alternate information structures which transcend and reconfigure the existing ones, other alternate systems and lifestyles will be no more than products of the existing process. (...) So six months ago some of us who have been working in videotape got the idea for an information source which would bring together people who were already making their own television, attempt to turn on others to the idea as a

means of social change and exchange, and serve as an introduction to an evolving handbook of technology.”

2.11 Week 11

Attacking the logic of the museum: Institutional Structures and the View of Reality they Impose Upon Us (Nochlin)

We will look at works by Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly, Valie Export, Carolee Schneemann, while paying special attention to the works and life stories of Ana Mendieta, Lucy Lippard and Lee Lozano.

Project: The goal of this week is to look at some of the holes in the history of art—and those who fought to change these emissions. Beginning with a feminist critique, this week should look to find other examples of exclusion—and to think about what this might have to do with one’s own position and work.

2.12 Week 12

The Wretched of the Earth

This week begins with considerations of changes in the post-war, post-colonial political map and the effects these changes (and struggles) would have on the relationship between identity, politics and art. Concentrating especially on the relationship between Africa, Europe and the Americas, we would begin with an introduction to African cinema and follow on to look at the notion of black Atlantic diasporic culture (Gilroy) as a different way to understand esp. popular music culture.

Within this context, both the Documenta 10 (David) and 11 (Enwezor) will be scrutinized.

Films:

- Ousmane Sembène: *La Noire de...* (1961)
- Gillo Pontecorvo: *The Battle of Algiers* (1966)
- Djibril Diop Mambéty: *Touki Bouki* (1973)

2.13 Week 13

Activism as Art

Despite all the depressing contradictions that surround it (its seeming dependency on and complacency with so many of the things it would call into question...), activist art remains one of the most important strands of artistic research. Here we will address both political and social questions, while at the same time looking at the actual workings of production including research, collective action, means of production and curatorial thinking. It is important to remember (contrary to the antiquarian premise of the course itself!): Political and critical practice is always possible and necessary!

The follow groups will be discussed: Art Worker's Coalition, Tucumán Arde, Group Material, Gran Fury, American Festival Project, Guerrilla Girls, Women's Action Coalition, Critical Art Ensemble, Wochenklausur.

2.14 Final Weeks and Semester Vacation

Between Art, Curating and Kulturverwaltung: Looking at Harald Szeemann's *When Attitudes Become Form* (the original and the remake), *Documenta V*, *Junggesellenmaschinen / Les machines Célibataires*

Focusing on Harald Szeemann's work, the final lecture should serve as a moment to reflect upon the ground covered and to plan an exhibition that will be held at the beginning of the next semester. Szeemann but also especially the numerous people who worked on producing the equally important catalogues to these exhibitions illustrate how art exhibitions have increasingly become a meeting place of the humanities with painting, sculpture, architecture, film etc. In looking at the curator as

artistic researcher, we will also address other Documentas (esp. 10 and 11) as well as the growth of similar exhibitions throughout the world.

Project: Begin preparations for the final exhibition:

At the conclusion of the year, students and professors will prepare and organize an exhibition of the works produced during the course of the year that will be shown at the beginning of the next year cycle of classes.

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