ARTh/CHTe386 The art and craft of curating: making sense of art in the 21st century

FALL 2019

Course Instructor: Athena Hadji

HOURS AVAILABLE: by appointment

Class Meetings: Mon-Wed 11:00-12:35

Course Description
The course suggests an inquiry into the world of curating art in the 21st century. The course combines theory and history of curating with hands-on experience in curating a project with the Professor's guidance. The term curating is derived from Latin verb *cura*re which translates as to heal/ to take care of/ to attend to. The course unravels the mechanisms through which curators make exhibitions happen whether they re-imagine contexts for existing works of art and/or commission new artworks specifically produced/installed for a show. Emphasis is placed on contemporary art and its curators, institutions, premises and principles, starting with the concept of the *curatorial*. Themes explored are, among others, history of museums and art institutions; theories of curating; the relationship between curator and artist; the premise of the white cube vs. the re-activation of historical spaces; curator-as-artist/ artist-as-curator; curator-artist-spectator. With visits to art spaces, from national museums, to privately owned galleries, the students will learn first-hand how to curate an exhibition, covering all aspects, from coming up with a curatorial concept, to more practical issues, such as fund-raising, promotion, liaising with artists and galleries, insurance, budget, installing art and all constituent elements of a successful show.

Course Resources and Activities
To investigate the issues outlined above, we will read; analyze and interpret texts, evidence, and experience; work and think with others; visit sites and venues; and write as follows:

Reading: We will read a wide variety of texts, from Johan Joachim Winckelmann to Hans Ulrich Obrist; from theoretical treatises to exhibition catalogs; from academic articles to curator interviews.

Analyzing and interpreting: We will critically analyze and interpret our first-hand experience from scheduled class visits (see below) to galleries, artist studios and museums in Athens and beyond (National Museum of Contemporary Art; Museum of Cycladic Art; The Breeder Gallery; Eleni Koronaiou Gallery; State of Concept Gallery; The Athens Biennale), where we will study curated projects. Our tools will be field notes and discussion on site followed by discussion in class.

Working and thinking with others: Art is a collective endeavor, so is education. Building the culture of the class so that genuine inquiry is possible will take all of our efforts. Because we rely on everyone's contributions, the course will follow the pedagogy of a seminar, focused on motivation for participation in an atmosphere where all (informed) opinions are encouraged.

Writing: This course involves a significant amount of writing of different kinds. You will take short field notes during our site visits, as mentioned above; you will write brief reports on selected weekly readings. You will take scheduled written midterm and final exams. Finally, you will compose a hypothetical exhibition term project to be presented in class (see below) and submitted in written form.

Presentations: Toward the end of the semester, you will present your term project, in which, utilizing the theoretical and methodological tools you will have acquired in class, you will curate an imaginary exhibition where (in an ideal world) budget and venue are non-issues.

Learning Objectives
The course is designed ideally for students of archaeology, art history, fine arts, architecture, anthropology, design, communication, business, or any discipline with interest in the arts and art institutions.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1) Possess a firm knowledge of how curating, curators and the curatorial came about
2) Reflect on the role of the curator and the artist in 21st century art
3) Analyze the parameters that contribute to the making and staging of a contemporary art show
4) Critically assess and evaluate exhibitions and curatorial projects whether in museums and art institutions or elsewhere
5) Position themselves on the debate about art and society in the world of today

Course Requirements

• Midterm and Final exams
• Participation with active contribution to each week’s topic. This involves critically processing assigned readings and commenting on their content during class
• An average of 100 pages of reading per week
• At least 10-15 pages of research work. If spacing is 1.5 and font size 12 Times New Roman, 4,000 words are 12.5 pages. This comprises short reports, field notes and the term project
• Term project presentation in class
• Deadlines are listed below.

Assignments
To receive credit for an assignment, you must turn it in at the beginning of class on the due date, unless otherwise noted. No late assignments will be accepted.

TERM PROJECT-PRESENTATION-PAPER
TOPIC: Curate an art exhibition. Presentation of a coherent comprehensive curator proposal.
Paper submitted to the Professor (see below “Due Dates”)

INSTRUCTIONS AND DESCRIPTION
Work will be conducted in groups of 2 students. Both members of each group will be graded on an equal basis, therefore it is important that work is divided equally from the beginning.

Due Dates:
• Deadline I: send group registration email for class presentation with provisional exhibition project title.
• Deadline II: 30-minute class presentation; dates for each group will be assigned on a priority basis, according to when group registration emails are received by the Professor (see above).
• Deadline III: Final work, paper submitted at the beginning of class.

Special Projects: field notes and reports.

Exams:
• Midterm
• Final

Grading and Evaluation
Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

Midterm exam: 15%
Final exam: 30%
Term project presentation and paper: 40%
Participation and contribution with field notes and reports: 15%

Grades are intended to give you a sense of the quality of a particular piece of work: roughly speaking, a B means that you have done a good job with the writing, the ideas, and the organization of the work; a C conveys that the work lacks some important qualities and has some problems, while an A means that the work is exemplary in some key ways: the writing is particularly clear, the ideas thoroughly treated, the organization of the presentation well considered and effective.
Class Participation: Your attendance and in class critically commenting and analysis of assigned texts and ideas presented – is vitally important to your success in this course.

Use of Laptops: In-class or on-site use of laptops and other devices is permitted if that facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other devise privileges will be suspended if there are not used for class-related work. However, use of mobile phones during class and class visits is not permitted.

Attendance: Students are expected to report for classes promptly. CYA regards attendance in class and on-site as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately in the Student Affairs Office.

Policy on Original Work: Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own, original work. Any excerpts from the work of others must be clearly identified as a quotation, and a proper citation provided. (Check Student handbook, pg 9)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Director of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

Books, Course Materials, Moodle
Books (see Bibliography in the last section of the syllabus)

Websites:

Journals, platforms, fora
1. e-flux
   http://www.e-flux.com/

2. frieze
   https://frieze.com/

3. artforum
   https://www.artforum.com/

4. mousse
   http://moussemagazine.it/

5. on curating
   http://www.on-curating.org/issues.html

Museums, galleries, institutions
1. National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens
   http://www.emst.gr/

2. The Breeder Gallery
   http://thebreedersystem.com/

3. State of Concept
   https://www.stateofconcept.org/

4. Eleni Koronaiou Gallery
   http://www.koroneougallery.com/

5. Ileana Tounta Gallery
   https://art-tounta.gr/
6. Vorres Museum
http://www.vorresmuseum.gr/

7. National Archaeological Museum
http://www.namuseum.gr/

8. Alex Mylona Museum
http://mouseioalexmylona.blogspot.gr/

9. State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki
http://www.greekstatemuseum.com/kmst/index.html

10. Apexart
https://apexart.org/

11. NEON

12. DESTE Foundation
http://www.deste.gr

Exhibitions and Fairs
1. Documenta 14

2. The Venice Biennale
http://www.labiennale.org/en

3. Istanbul Biennale
http://15b.iksv.org/home

4. Art Athina
http://www.art-athina.gr/index.php/el/

5. Athens Biennale
http://athensbiennale.org/

6. Frieze Art Fairs
https://frieze.com/fairs

Artists
1. Marina Abramovic Institute
https://mai.art/

2. Lydia Dambassina
http://www.lydiadambassina.com/

3. Tracey Emin
http://www.traceyeminstudio.com/

Videos:

Marina Abramovic, *Balkan Baroque*, 1977

*The way I think*, an interview with George Condo, the Louisiana Chanel
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Day</th>
<th>Day/Date</th>
<th>Topic / Readings / Assignments Due</th>
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| Mon Sep 9 | **Introduction:** course specifics and requirements  
**Short library visit and orientation**  
*Description*  
We begin the course by thoroughly examining the syllabus, analyzing the structure, aims, requirements and components of the course.  
*Required reading*  
No required reading for the first class |
| Wed Sep 11 | **Curator collection spectator**  
*Description*  
We enter the world of curating contemporary art by introducing basic concepts, derivations and stakeholders in the world of curating art. Why do we make a big deal about curating? Does art need to be curated? Is there anything that is not curated anymore? We will address these questions and pave the way to the theory and history sessions that follow in the first part of the course.  
*Required reading*  
Tokumitsu 2015, [https://newrepublic.com/article/122589/when-did-we-all-become-curators](https://newrepublic.com/article/122589/when-did-we-all-become-curators)  
Berger 1972, Ch. 1: 7-34; Ranciere 2007  
*Recommended reading*  
Züskind, 1985  
*Short assignment*  
What can be curated? Short (two-paragraph) essay due at the beginning of next class (Sep. 16) |
| Mon Sep 16 | **Presentation and representation, a visual understanding of the world** Aesthetics and style; meanings and derivations, contemporary understandings  
*Description*  
Although contemporary art and its curatorial process transcend the world of the image, it is a common understanding that images proliferate both in our daily life and art production. In today’s class we will discuss visual language, presentation and representation, the concept of aesthetics, of paramount importance in the History of Art since its inception, and the concept of style.  
*Required reading*  
Sturken, M. and L. Cartwright: 1-35; O’ Doherty 1986, Ch. 2: 35-64  
*Recommended reading*  
O’ Doherty 1986, Ch. 3: 65-86 |
| Mon Sep 23 | **History of collections and museums**  
*Description*  
How did collecting come about? The history of collections, exhibitions and their host institutions takes us to an unexpected journey all the way back to
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| Wed Sep 25 | **20th century: modernism, post- and the emergence of contemporary art**  
**Description**  
We begin with the emergence of modern art and the creation and construction of a new kind of museum to accommodate this breakthrough in art: the modern art museum and the premise of the white cube.  
**Required reading**  
O’ Doherty 1986, Introduction: 6-12; Ch. 1: 13-34; Draxler in Martinon 2013: 163-168 |
| Mon Sep 30 | **21st century museums for contemporary art**  
**Description**  
What constitutes a contemporary art museum in the 21st century? From National Museums of Contemporary Art to private enterprises to collections on view only occasionally, we discuss the institutions and their current variables.  
**Required reading**  
Hughes 2005; Dasgupta in Martinon 2013: 173-182; Madani in Martinon 2013: 197-206 |
| Wed Oct 2 | **Pioneers: the emergence of art curator**  
**Description**  
A class about the people behind the exhibitions. Every human endeavor has its pioneers, art curating is no exception. With none other than Hans Ulrich Obrist as our guide, we will meet the curators who acted as visionaries, in order for us, 21st century curators, to enjoy an unlimited field of inspiration, creation and communication with artists and audiences alike.  
**Required reading**  
Esche in Martinon 2013: 241-244; Obrist 2011, PREFACE AND POSTFACE; selection of 5 interviews  
**Recommended reading**  
[https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/23/hans-ulrich-obrist-art Curator] |

**Short Assignment**
Are there any common threads/trends among the interviewed pioneers in the interviews you selected to read? A short essay on the things you observed (two paragraphs), due at the beginning of next class (Oct. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon Oct 7</th>
<th>Institutions and exhibitions of contemporary art: the stakeholders</th>
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<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
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<td>Where is contemporary art stored? Where and how is it displayed and studied? Where can one buy it if one so wishes? We will explore the world of contemporary art institutions, major private collections, art initiatives, and important art fairs around the world.</td>
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*Required reading*

Groys 2009; Blazwick in Marincola 2006: 118-133; O’ Neill 2012, Ch. 2: 51-86.

*Recommended reading*

Altshuler in Altshuler 2005: 1-9

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<th>Wed Oct 9</th>
<th>Principles of curating</th>
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<td>We will discuss and critically analyze the most influential trends in curating art since the 1960s, with an emphasis on current developments and future directions. Genres explored include, among others, monographic, thematic and collection exhibitions, projects, performances, (new) media-based and interactive approaches. We will explore the social dimensions of curating, based on the phenomenon of collaborative art and how to curate it.</td>
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*Required reading*

Bismarck et al. in Bismarck 2012: 21–40; Gronemeyer 2018, Introduction: 11-20; Smith 2012: 17-56; O’ Neill 2012, Ch. 3: 87-130; Martinon in Martinon 2013: 25-34; Cramerotti and Martinon in Martinon 2013: 35-40

*Recommended reading*

Gaskill 2011; Smith 2012: 57-100; Kester 2012, Introduction: 1-17; Rogoff in Martinon 2013: 41-48

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<tr>
<th>Fri Oct. 11</th>
<th>Film screening</th>
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<td>1. The Artist is Present (2012)</td>
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<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
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*Required film viewing*

Waiting for the Artist (2019)

Watch online here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QUUtjdOubE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QUUtjdOubE)

**Short Assignment**

Critically comment on the two films watched. Is there something about the oeuvre of Marina Abramovic that justifies the *Documentary Now* episode? Emphasis should be given on the role of Abramovic as curator not solely of her art, but also of her life and ultimately herself. (Due Oct. 30 at the beginning of class)
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<td>Mon Oct 14</td>
<td>How are curators made? Programs, studies, backgrounds</td>
<td>Description: After a month-long inquiry into what curating is, where curators work, and what they do, it is now time to see curators-in-the-making. There is an ongoing debate on the necessity of curatorial studies programs, but also there is a proliferation thereof, clearly indicating that curators can be and are made through formal <em>curatorial</em> education. We will explore curricula and principles of curatorial studies and bring into class the debate on whether a curator is ‘born’ or made. From the independent curator to the global curator, curator as jet-set flaneur (Rugoff 1999)</td>
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<td><em>Lange, 2011, <a href="https://frieze.com/article/look-learn">https://frieze.com/article/look-learn</a></em></td>
<td><em>In-class debate: are curators born or made? We will make two groups and argue for and against the necessity of curatorial studies curricula. Each group will have ten minutes to prepare their arguments, and ten minutes to present. Group notes will be handed in at the end of class.</em></td>
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<td>Wed Oct 16</td>
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<td>Mon Oct 21</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAM</td>
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<td>Mon Nov 4</td>
<td>Inside the curator’s mind II: how an exhibition is shaped and implemented</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Rendell in Rugg and Sedgwick 2007: 59-76; Dorsett in Rugg and Sedgwick 2007: 77-87</td>
<td>Buchan in Rugg and Sedgwick 2007: 131-145</td>
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<td>Mon Nov 11</td>
<td>Case study of a contemporary art exhibition: The Body is Victory and Defeat of Dreams on Lesvos, Molivos Municipal Art Gallery, Lesvos</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Hadji, 2017</td>
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<td>Wed Nov 13</td>
<td>EMST: architecture, layout, collection, organizing principles</td>
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We inaugurate the second part of the course, site visits, with a visit to the National Museum of Contemporary Art of Greece. We learn about the history of the formerly industrial building, its iconic architecture, the project and adventure of converting it into a contemporary art museum, iconic exhibitions, its collection and former temporary incarnations (such as the Athens Conservatory and the Athens Concert Hall).
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mon Nov 18</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contemporary art galleries and spaces in Athens: site visit I</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>TBA. Fall 2019 contemporary art shows in Athens will be announced in late summer/ early Fall.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Required reading</strong></td>
<td>Barrett 2000, Ch. 1: 1-27; Ch. 2: 29-62</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mon Dec 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contemporary art and public display</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>We will visit public spaces that offer free access to and unlimited views of contemporary art in the city of Athens, from Kotzias Square to the Athens Concert Hall and selected stations of the Athens metro (subway) system, and observe how curatorial approaches to art placed in public spaces differs.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommended reading</strong></td>
<td>Kwon 2012, Ch.6: 156-167</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Short assignment</strong></td>
<td>Utilizing the theoretical and methodological tools you have learnt in class so far, choose one of the works we visited and describe the curatorial approach taken in two paragraphs.</td>
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<td><strong>Assignments due at the beginning of next class.</strong></td>
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<td>As stated above, term project will revolve around a hypothetical exhibition. Detailed instructions for presentation and project write-up will be uploaded on moodle well in advance, so that you can prepare accordingly. Part of the presentation of each group is the other groups’ active commentary and evaluation.</td>
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<td>Take notes as presentations unfold, make comments, evaluate and give a mock grade with substantiation. To be handed to the Professor at the end of class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed Dec 11</td>
<td>Final exam review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon Dec 16</td>
<td>Final exam</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on due date, unless noted otherwise on syllabus

Course schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and in keeping up to date with current research.
Course Readings: Full Bibliography