

THE SCHOOL OF MAKING THINKING

NYC COURSE ARCHIVE

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MASKS!!!

Spring 2019

Alex Tatarsky

Masks are sacred ritual objects, comic, grotesque, monstrous, and deeply human. They play within the generative paradox of revealing by concealing, using artifice and disguise to get closer to vulnerable truths. Drawing from Commedia dell'arte, Balinese mask work, the pedagogy of mime master Jacques Lecoq, and a smattering of contemporary mask-based artists, this will be a crash course in mask-making, mask performance, and thinking through (and with) masks. It will combine theory and practice, oscillating between reading about and discussing contemporary and traditional art practices that draw upon mask work, and actually making our own masks and developing an embodied practice to aid in mask performance. Questions we will explore both by sitting around talking and by getting up on our feet and moving around: How do masks put us in touch with archetypes, elements, and the logic and feelings of shapes? How can the mask teach us to listen, share, and perform with precision and generosity? How do we breathe life into a mask to discover wild characters and expressions that elude language? We will experiment with making masks out of unexpected materials as well as in more classic styles. By the end of the course, students will have each made and painted a papier mache commedia-inspired mask and have a personal plaster mold of their faces that they can keep to use for building perfectly fitted masks forever! We will have several visiting artists come share with us their own experimental mask practice including Poncili Creacion (who make extravagant masks out of foam), Lord of Beef (whose wild masks are fashioned from stockings and stuffing), and Gina Murdock (trained in intuitive mask-making, and herbalism).



LAND E(X*)SCAPE: WRITING FROM THE GARDENS

Fall 2018

Alex Viteri

I would like us to practice landscape as the source of inspiration. I would like us to consider landscape painting as a writing prompt. To look, to listen, to meditate. I would like us to concentrate on the composition, harmonies, patterns, relations, and rhythms resulting from the arrangement of components. I propose to look for components in specific public, private, outdoor, indoor, mental landscapes. Through writing prompts, we will explore the ways speech connects to the visual/affective experience of space. We will experiment with poetic forms and look for tools to speak in/about our artistic practices. For each session, we'll gather in a particular landscape in the surroundings of Abrons Arts Center. (The East Village's counts with 39 community gardens :) As background readings, we'll encounter the work of contemporary artists that orchestrate landscapes in their performances—non-Aristotelian, hybrid works where words are brushstrokes, where each phrase is a contemplation, and where paragraphs summon portraits. We'll also be in conversation with Landscape Dramaturgy and discuss the intervention of eco-friendly guerrillas, the ways architecture performs, and the politics of public space. As we move within the course, we will identify and work on a piece to be shared with the group for feedback.



THE BODY IN EXILE: EXPERIMENTING THE BODY UNDER MIGRATORY AND TRAVELING PRACTICES

Fall 2018

Vanessa Vargas

In this course, we will ask participants to explore migratory practices and experiences through different means (from histories, interviews, testimonials, field work, memoir, documentary and journalist documents, to embodied experiments that can be used to inform creative material, in order to create a performance). We will thoroughly think on the body-subject as an open form, an active becoming, a migratory body, at a time both subject and object. Through texts, video excerpts, and group discussion, supplemented by short reading assignments, class participants will encounter writers and artists who experiment inserting themselves into their own work. Our investigations will focus on the meeting point of texts and body, shifting between text-based, field work and movement-based exercises to approach new modes of analysis and expression. To this end, each class will include discussions, physical improvisation, body exploration and generative performance assignments that consider performance to be a form of research. Our last meetings will focus more heavily on creative/artistic responses, giving participants the opportunity to develop a final project in the medium of their choice. Participants with any level of writing and performance experience are welcome. The course is designed for an interdisciplinary group, representative of a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.



ON WALKING: AMBULATORY POETICS, PERFORMANCE AND PHILOSOPHY

Spring 2018

MC Hyland & Emily Skillings

This course will function as a laboratory space for experiments integrating walking, thinking, and making. We'll draw on a wide set of methods and discourses, including somatic poetics, urban/park planning, visual and performance art, disability studies, and literary criticism. In the process, we'll draw on the work of a number of thinkers, artists, and and writers; among them, Lisa Robertson, Harryette Mullen, Teju Cole, Rebecca Solnit, Richard Long, Judith Butler, Cole Swensen, and others. Central questions we will consider include: What do thinkers gain by integrating a walking practice into their creative and intellectual work? How might walking allow us to think through our social, political, and economic surrounds with embodied specificity? What happens when we draw parallels between our inner landscapes and the landscapes we inhabit, the geography of our bodies and the grids, ways, and architectures of the spaces we cross? How might we create personal walking practices that augment and deepen our creative or critical thought processes? How do people with different bodies, backgrounds, and abilities "take a walk" and how might we question and dismantle the long-held "universality" of certain experiences of the walker/writer?

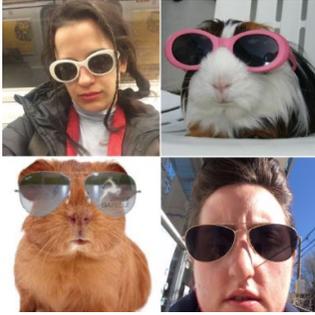


IMAGE SPEAK

Fall 2017

Rachel James & Georgia Wall

Image Speak delves into the world of video art, specifically works with little hierarchical delineation between text and the moving image. In addition to making video essays, we will discuss texts that address the theoretical underpinnings of the medium and screen seminal and experimental works in the field. Examples include videos by Moyra Davey, Ismail Bahri, Anicka Yi, Trinh T minh ha, and Chris Marker. The course will culminate in a public showcase of student work at Spectacle Theater in Brooklyn. Does the moving image become an illustration of text, or is text created in response to footage? What does a process look like in which the text and image is being developed simultaneously? Exploring these processes together, the eight weeks will include many experimentations in writing and image making. Students will be asked to self-generate material as well as respond using the video essay form. Each participant will have the opportunity for group critique. By the end of Image Speak students will have produced at least one video essay for public screening at Spectacle Theater and a series of written, video, and response pieces as potential material to develop in the future.



QUEER ART OF IMPROV

Fall 2017

Alex Schmidt & Lily Marotta

Queer Art of Improv embraces failure, values non-binary relations, and makes room for a wide variety of motives and games that go beyond the language we already speak. We create new world futures as a group by saying yes to each other's experiences and building upon what we've heard with a generous "and," accepting that a belly-flop may be on our immediate horizon. The space of laughter has joyous pleasure as its goal and biting social commentary as its content; our newly performed scripts come to shape how we act in the world. Comedy is a rich site for making a fool of the present: enjoy the possibilities that evolve from the free fall! Much like children hide in basements practicing the observed scripts of adulthood, the permission to play offers us an opportunity to experiment with new modes of being a Grown Up. Queer Art of Improv is informed by the writings of Jack Halberstam, LARPing, and social constructivist paradigms such as the Harold (long form improvisation), the Reggio Emilia Approach, and social performance group therapy. The 8-week course aims to equip performers with the skills they need to transform real life observations into compelling characters and interactions. In the beginning, basic standards for improv ("Yes, and"; performing from the top of your intelligence; making statements rather than asking questions) will be emphasized through short-form games such as "Park Bench" and "Movement Telephone." Further into the course, participants will be challenged to explore long-form scene-work, where there no game is given to frame the play. Rather, side-coaching and feedback from the instructors will guide the participants to generate laughter without reverting to heteronormative tropes.



HOLY FOOLS: Performing the Irrational Imaginary

Spring 2017

Alexandra Tatarsky

A performance workshop interwoven with performances! Hysterical laughter politics to re-energize you in these dismal times! Surreal psycho babble songs and conversations!

Together we will make and share performances and writings from the perspective of the clown, the holy fool, the outsider, the bumbling truth-seeker. Through readings and embodied experiments, we will take inspiration from myriad traditions and practices that engage gibberish and ecstatic movement including Russian Futurist zaum poetry, Kabbalistic vision text, primitive voice work, automatic writing, and Nuyorican linguisualism. Drawing upon Lecoq clown pedagogy, commedia dell'arte, and contemporary dance practice, we will undertake physical explorations that access rage, despair, hunger, excitement, longing, and curiosity – and use these states to create characters and performance pieces that respond to and affect the world we live in.

Our investigations will focus on the meeting point of word and body, shifting between text-based and movement-based exercises to approach new modes of analysis and expression. To this end, each class will include discussion, physical warm-ups, and generative writing assignments that consider performance to be a form of research.



Eavesdropping for Dialogue: Embracing Transgression To Listen for What Goes Unsaid

Spring 2017

Rachel Lyon

George Saunders has said, “Bad dialogue is when A asks a question and B answers it.” Dialogue should be two people “firing missiles past each other.” And well-written dialogue is “like poetry—it’s not functional, but it looks good on the page and has a zinginess.” Even our greatest writers have a complicated relationship with dialogue. For years Zadie Smith didn't write dialogue at all, because Nabokov was against it.

In this course, we'll analyze the power dynamics, performance, communication, confession, (dis)functionality, and "zinginess" of organic and constructed dialogue from vastly different sources—from Beckett to Gchat to the subway. We'll eavesdrop on ourselves, our friends, and strangers, and read between the lines in our own conversations. We'll comb through the archives at StoryCorps, and take a trip to see some improv comedy. And we'll practice the craft of writing great dialogue, from "said-bookisms" to dialogue tags, direct address, and beyond.

Preliminary reading / listening list:

- Corydon (André Gide's), written in the style of a Socratic dialogue
- Krapp's Last Tape (Samuel Beckett)
- The Women (Clare Boothe Luce)
- Talk (Linda Rosenkrantz), a recently re-released "reality novel"
- Excerpts from Stephen King's *On Writing* and other texts on craft
- Our own Gchat conversations
- Recordings of verbal conversations



Handbook for a

Prophetic Activist Art: Strategies for a Spiritual Revolution

Spring 2017

Tom Block

Prophetic Activist Art: Strategies for a Spiritual Revolution is a seminar exploring how to build individual art-activist projects. Over the course of the eight weeks, classes will include an introduction to the specific aspects of the Prophetic Activist Art model (developed by Tom Block out of his own work, and published as an art/activist manifesto in 2014), and then an exploration about how these ideas can be applied to each artist and their endeavor.

The course will follow the specific model developed in the text, *Prophetic Activist Art: Handbook for a Spiritual Revolution* (Centre for Human Ecology, Scotland, 2014). The seminar will explore the motivations and strategies for each particular activist art project. It will then introduce artists to the specific ideas of the model, including co-opting political, business and social energy; partnering with non-profit groups; making liaisons with other artists; utilizing unusual exhibition and outreach methods; “Machiavellian” activism; how to build a project from inception through completion; how to imagine and successfully attain quantifiable activist goals and other specific aspects of a Prophetic Activist Art intervention.



JUST LIKE THAT: Embodied Knowledge and Political Movement

Fall 2016

Rosza Daniel Lang/Levitsky

Dancing (such as at parties and clubs, in the studio, on stage, or in ritual spaces) can be incredibly useful to the work done in the struggle for social justice. In this course, we will take 'the choreography of social movements' seriously, exploring what the embodied knowledge we already have can bring to street actions, group decision-making, and more. From the 'defensive dancing' we use to protect ourselves and our friends from harassment at clubs, to the kinds of full-body awareness that keeps a dance squad synchronized, to the versatile variety of chain- and circle-dances, we hold more knowledge than we often let ourselves believe. Our investigations will aim to help us articulate what our bodies already know, to develop it as a way of getting concrete things done, and to pass that knowledge along more clearly. The class will be a working laboratory. We will examine case studies from the streets and meeting-rooms of NYC and beyond, to see what we can learn from the recent past. We will use a wide range of approaches to draw out and cultivate our individual and collective knowledge, according to the different situations and material we are working with in different sessions. Our toolkit will include exercises from theater, dance, and somatic practices; playground games; and models from direct action and consensus facilitation training.

One entry point will be street tactics for confrontational situations, which we will look at through approaches from ACT UP to the Direct Action Network to Black Lives Matter. Another will be non-verbal group communication and decision making, for which we'll work with improvisation techniques and ensemble-building exercises. We'll also come closer to more conventional forms of performance as we look at collaborative approaches to bodily presence in public space that trouble the line between symbolic and material impact (through examples from Queer Nation to Reclaim the Streets to Betty's Daughter). And we'll touch on somatic strategies for staying connected to ourselves and our aims as we carry on with our work.

The only requirement is being ready to move, to think about moving, to talk about how we move together in all our different bodies. Participants' own past experiences will be a key resource for the process, as will reports back on the time we spend on dancefloors and at demonstrations during the run of the class. All of this will enable us to gain facility in working with embodied knowledge - a form of understanding that is often either ignored or taken for granted



Wound Dwelling:

Writing and Stitching the Survivor Body(ies)

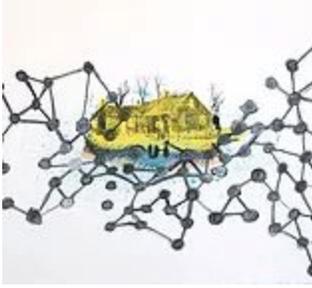
Fall 2016

Jennifer Patterson

What is the physicality of a wound? What types of loss feel nearly impossible to come back from? Can we dive into the wound, the loss: excavate and unearth it? In this class we will focus on survival and survivorhood; what it looks and feels like to live beyond traumatic experiences. The dominant narratives about the survivor body(ies)— oft pathologized as disembodied, disassociated and unwell— will be turned on their heads. We can never actually leave our bodies, as hard as we might try (and as wise as we are in our reasons for trying) and are therefore always already embodied. Too often survivors that are also writers are told to not dwell in the trauma, that writing from personal and traumatic experience isn't "legitimate" writing.

Reading work by Arianne Zwartjes, Bhanu Kapil, CA Conrad, Amber Dawn, T Fleishmann, Kazim Ali (and so many more) and working with theory and visual art (embroidery and performance artists) we will also generate our own written body of work as we consider how embodied practice(s) (like writing and stitching) can be utilized to support our writing from the body and through trauma. We will also work on translating the writing into embroidery pieces and will use embroidery as an active meditation. A wound as a word as a picture, giving shape to the energy rippling in a body after experiencing trauma(s)— moving from skin to paper and fiber.

Note: "Wound Dwelling" is language drawn from Leslie Jamison's work



Drawing and Knowledge

Fall 2016

Christine Garvey

In this 8 session course, students will explore the practice of drawing as a powerful language of questioning. We will locate this investigation within art history, looking at drawing's heritage as a tool to examine, critique, appreciate and order our perceivable world, and in doing so, create space for something wholly new. Class presentations and studio-based projects will introduce students to drawing's deeply interdisciplinary significance as a medium: from the first recorded marks of cave paintings, to Galileo's drawings of the moon, these examples and others will help us consider the uniquely human impulse to draw what we perceive, and the meaningful questions that lay at the heart of our creative practices.

Note: This is primarily a studio-based class. Students will work both in the sketchbook, and on larger independent works as the semester progresses. For full syllabus, please contact christine.garvey@gmail.com or SMT.



Experimental Nonfiction: The Self as Writing and Performance

Spring 2016

Cory Tamler

With demand for "true and shocking" narratives [apparently at a peak](#), this course will ask participants to explore alternative ways that personal lives, histories, and relationships can be used as creative material, and what the reasons might be for doing so. Experimental, hybrid works of literary nonfiction and memoir by Hilton Als, Chris Kraus, Maggie Nelson, Karl Ove Knausgaard, and Fernando Pessoa, and performances that use their authors as material by She She Pop, Kara Walker, Carmelita Tropicana, Nature Theater of Oklahoma, the Rude Mechs, Nick Vaughan and Jake Margolin, and the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse are not memoir, documentary, journalism, or fiction. Though they experiment with a variety of nonfictional and cross-genre techniques, what interests these authors most is what happens when a creative work incorporates layers, versions, and fictionalizations of its author's self.

The artists mentioned above work across genres, disciplines, and media, and in this course, so will we. Through texts, video excerpts, and group discussion, supplemented by short reading assignments outside of class, class participants will encounter writers and artists who experiment with inserting themselves into their own work. Performance and writing exercises that put some of the ideas we discuss as a group into practice will also be an important part of the way we develop a vocabulary together. Our last several meetings will focus more heavily on creative/artistic responses, giving participants the opportunity to develop a final project in the medium of their choice.

Participants with any level of writing and performance experience are welcome; the course is designed with an interdisciplinary group, representative of a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, in mind.

Image credit: She She Pop, Testament (photo by Doro Tuch)



Sci-Art: The Art-Science Continuum

Spring 2016

Sally Bozzuto

In this course students will examine the relationship between science and the arts from past to present day. A wide range of topics will be discussed including the cultural divide between the arts and sciences, the history of this relationship and how it evolved into its present form; a history of technology and its influence on art and vice versa from early history to the current digital age; biology, ecology, the human body and their relation to the arts and society. This course will examine these relationship exploring topics such as physics, bio-art, cyber-culture, bio-ethics, hacktivism, net art, new media, neurology, perception, cyborg theory, and the post-human body.

Some of the scientist-artists we will engage with include Leonardo DaVinci, Ernst Haeckel, László Moholy-Nagy, Wassily Kandinsky, Ray Kurtzweil, Natalie Jeremijenko, Eduardo Kac, and Mariko Mori. The class is divided into five sections: Physics (light, sound, motion etc.), Bio-Art/Bio-Design, The Digital Age, The Self and Society and The Future/Post-Everything + Review and Synthesis, culminating in student presentations of their own work or a research topic of their choosing relating individual's interests to the course's themes.

(Image credit: Brandon Ballangee, "DFA186 Hades", 2012)



Exploring the Dreamworld: Touching the Unconscious Source of Creativity

Spring 2016

Sophie Traub & Lolo Haha

What is beyond the You that you present to the world everyday? What is your unconscious saying that you don't hear? Join us as we explore the body as vehicle to the unconscious in the waking state through the lens of Process Work—a depth psychology theory and set of techniques developed by Arnold Mindell associated with transpersonal, somatic and post-Jungian psychologies. Over the course of eight two-hour classes, we will delve into the origin of the impulse in the body, improvisational movement with one another, authentic response in face-to-face exercises, and sensory exploration of tensions in the body using the practices of Inner Work (from Process Work), Authentic Movement, Grotowski, Meisner, Viewpoints, and Suzuki. Through this course, you will learn to notice and integrate the symbols and sensations of your unconscious to find intuitive inspiration for life projects, strengthen your art-making practice, and ultimately deepen your self-awareness and individual spiritual path.

(Image credit: Dusk Flip Smoke Strip (2007) by Ryan McGinley)



Playing with Perception: Reconstructing the Theatrical Canon

Fall 2015

John Kurzynowski

Hamlet. Three Sisters. A Streetcar Named Desire. These plays have managed to weave their way into the very fabric of our artistic culture (and even society at large). Their stories have become instantly recognizable and oddly universal. The lamenting son searching for meaning after his father's untimely death. The uprooted family of former means longing for the glory days of their past. The broken sibling seeking refuge from the mad world around her in the arms of her sister. These canonical stories often fall victim to a preconceived perception of how they should be presented, due largely in part to the many iconic performances of these works that have come before, and the many interpretations and adaptations of these plays that have been embraced by our society. Without even ever having to read the play Hamlet, most can connect the image of a man holding a skull and the words "To be, or not to be" to the bard's most well-known play.

But what happens when we attempt to view these canonical works without any sort of preconceived perceptions of the plays in performance, and instead rely on some sort of intuitive observation of the works, free of intellectualization? What happens when a group of people begin to allow themselves to truly play with well-known material as though it were new, all the while acknowledging the past we cannot escape? In *Playing with Perception*, we will collectively attempt to navigate our way through a number of classical or canonical theatrical works, redefining our basic understanding of their cultural significance by tapping into our own instinctual and intuitive perceptions of the material in play. Our altered perceptions of some of the most well-known and established works of theater will in turn inspire us to form new theatrical material, that may take shape in surprising and unexpected forms, in response to our collective and individual discoveries.

Week 1: Introduction to course and discussion of theoretical texts (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Freud, Critchley, and others). **Week 2:** Discussion of canonical theatrical texts, including Shakespeare's Hamlet and Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire, among others. **Weeks 3-4:** Through a series of task-based exercises catered to the discoveries made over the previous sessions, we will collectively begin to intuitively explore the theatrical and theoretical texts in play. These exercises can range from creating human statues to devising elaborate scenes, from choreographing dance phrases to creating new methods of acting, etc. **Weeks 5-6:** Participants will be given the opportunity to continue this intuitive mode of exploration by bringing in task-based exercises of their own, inspired by the work of the previous two sessions. **Weeks 7-8:** We will examine the work that's been generated thus far and our newly altered perceptions of the original source material. Based on this newly generated material, we will collectively piece together a new performance-based work that best represents our discoveries



Taking Buildings Down

Fall 2015

David Bench

This course is to look critically at the built environment in our landscape as it relates to economic and power dynamics of development. Through successful grassroots efforts largely in the 1960s, community activists have a role to play in preserving existing buildings, structures, and landscapes through a Landmarking process. Now in its 50th year in NYC, this program has successfully saved many unique buildings from over-development. This class is proposed to explore a corollary development process in which citizens can propose buildings and infrastructure to remove- as removal is currently only achieved in the expectation of some replacement as proposed by a developer or government agency. Can removal be a design decision? Aren't some structures better of removed? How does this concept get incorporated into a community dialogue?



Lower East Side Architecture: Re-designing Essex Crossing

Spring 2015

David Bench

This course will look critically at the pending development in the Seward Park Urban Renewal Area (SPURA) at [Essex Crossing](#) (Essex and Delancey) and guide participants to the formation of their own unique vision for the site. Each student will design their own alternative proposal for Essex Crossing which will begin with design research techniques such as site visits, historical and sociological research and interviews with stakeholders but move quickly into massing and site design.

The challenge of design is in synthesizing complex issues into a set of forms- and should be fun! The goal of the course is to produce innovative schemes that interrogate the prerogatives of the current development. Models, hand drawing, and rendering techniques will be utilized (no prior experience necessary).

Outline

- Course 1: Site Visit
- Course 2: Historical Background
- Course 3: Neighborhood Economics and Transportation
- Course 4: Presentation- the word on the street (neighborhood interviews)
- Course 5: Visual communication techniques
- Course 6: Design charette (independent)
- Course 7: Design charette (group)
- Course 8: Final presentations and next steps



Art and the Everyday

Spring 2015

Magali Duzant and Jeanette Spicer

"The ordinary arts we practice every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest." ~Thomas Moore

In an age when every moment is photographed, uploaded, tagged, and shared it can seem difficult to see beyond the momentary to the momentous. Photographs no longer function as prints but files that are added to a stream, status updates are spun into careers, and digital life is a separate, fuzzy entity from physical life. This class looks at how artists have engaged with the ebb and flow of daily life as fodder and inspiration for their art practices from the 1960s to now. Before the advent of reality TV, social media and it's multiplying personalities, and smart phones as an extension of ourselves artists began to investigate the everyday small gestures that built up and defined a life. Students will gain a deeper knowledge of art trends of the everyday through conversations structured to pull apart the minutiae and importance of the routine, to empower personal moments as creative growth, and to weigh the small activities in life as insightful to the art making process.

Broken up into one week sessions we will examine the "everyday" through such topics as Meals, Presence / Proof, Reality TV, The Banal, and Relationships and the artists who have worked with said themes including On Kawara, Moyra Davey, Alison Knowles, Alejandro Cesarco, and Nan Goldin. Each week will include discussions of texts related to the week's topic (ie Long Life Cool White by Moyra Davey, an article on On Kawara's Twitter bot, and more) as well as weekly exercises in observation, via journals and photographic assignments culminating in a final student defined project that addresses the theme.



Instagram, Food Porn and the Aesthetics of Desire: A History of Photographing Dinner

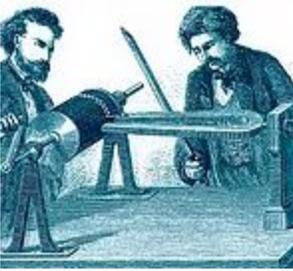
Spring 2015

Rebecca Robertson

“For what is food? It is...a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviors...Food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies.”

– Roland Barthes in “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption”

This class explores the meanings of #food culture, looking at its roots in art history and commercial photography, its overlap with contemporary art, and its future. Combining conversation with hands-on photography, we will attempt to understand eating as a part of a broader visual culture, especially as it exists online today. The class consists of a lecture and class discussion using Barthes and Foucault to examine the meanings of the growing archive of digital food photography and its relation to older images. Participants are asked to bring a favorite 2-dimensional example of visual food culture, as well as an interesting food item, which we will photograph and then eat as a part of a photo shoot/potluck.



Electronic Voices: The Physics of Sound

Spring 2015

David Sheinkopf

This class aims to demystify the invisible physical phenomenon that we process as sound. We will follow the mechanical and electrical pioneers of the 19th and 20th century as they spent sleepless nights trying to capture the minute fluctuations in air pressure that our brain effortlessly decodes as sound.

This class will explain and re-create some of the experiments of the early sound recording pioneers and then go on to cover the history and techniques of sound manipulation through the acoustical, electrical, and digital eras.

In this class we will learn some the basics of early sound recording and reproduction and learn to build a makeshift phonograph using mechanical amplification. We will then move on to discuss electronics and electromagnetism and how they relate to recording and amplifying sound. We will eventually build a working speaker out of a post-it note, a wire, and a magnet.



The Videopoem

Spring 2015

Ilana Simons

As literature increasingly lives in the digital world, literature increasingly enters relationships with images. That trend has given birth to a genre—the videopoem, a short movie that is not a typical film but expresses a particularly lyrical relationship between poems and pictures. In this class, we will look at the history of the videopoem from its forerunners in works from William Blake and Jan Svankmajer to the work of modern masters like Bianca Stone and Joshua Mulligan.

Class participants can create their own short videopoems, for which they would need a camera that can upload, like an iPhone.

This class calls poets who want to create a visual presence online and filmmakers who want to try something more homemade than conventional.



Democratic Body: What would the community think?

Spring 2015

Eroca Nicols

Democracy as an ideal is held high in "free society". Yet many are disillusioned with politics and do not actively engage in political processes. What is going on here? Do any of us really know what this concept/system really means? To what degree do any of us have embodied direct experiences of democratic ideas/processes in action? Can we apply theories of democratic decision making to our physical structure? Can we apply aspects of social movements to our bodies as well as to humans in relationship to each other? If our body is the community, how can our soft tissues be part of a collective decision making process? Is it possible to find agreement between our bones? How much of the community can we involve in physical and social choice making?

Using these questions as a starting point, together we will research ways to make fair and reasonable, as well as ridiculous and impossible choices, as they relate to our internal structure and to our external interactions with other humans. How do the processes by which we make choices shift as we attempt more and more inclusion? Perhaps in this era, where the failure of agreement has such large implications, an embodied understanding of democracy should be something familiar, welcome and practised. Or is this a bunch of pretentious nonsense from a couple of lowlife dance artists? Let's find out.

We anticipate many of these actions will happen during our time together: -talking -choice making -dancing ...maybe even a phrase -walking -touching ourselves and/or other humans -choosing to do or not do things -being frustrated with ourselves and/or others -investigating ourselves/others -screaming -feeling weirded out -laughing -sweating -likely sitting in a circle -doing things that at first seem a bit stupid and perhaps are



Race, Gender, Land Art

Fall 2014

Park McArthur

As urban unrest accelerated in accordance with domestic public policy or lack thereof, American artists began developing a movement in the 1960s and 70s now known as Land Art. This turning towards geology and nature, though not without a certain social conservatism and escapism, also provided women and artists of color spaces of critique through the construction of outdoor memorials, mounds, and living fields. In addition to permits and rights of use, an earthwork often requires the work of many people to accomplish. As such, Land Art is highly administrative.

This class looks at how specific earthworks came to be and how artists navigate the social, economic, and political conditions of their becoming in hopes of questioning massive outdoor sculpture being built today, such as Richard Serra's contribution to the Brouq Nature Reserve in Western Qatar. More specifically, this class will take an in-depth look at artists who use Land Art and its administrative requirements to assert or critique identity. These artists include Beverly Buchanan, Michelle Stuart, Nancy Holt, Agnes Denes, and Ana Mendieta. This consideration of individual artists' works will be paired with close readings of texts by Lucy Lippard, Robert Smithson, and Miwon Kwon. We will also visit and have guests present the archives of artists' works in local museums, such as Beverly Buchanan's papers at the Whitney Museum and Michelle Stuart's works at Leslie Tonkonow Gallery. Students will draft their own instructional documents for producing an earthwork.

Photograph- Untitled Sculpture by Beverly Buchanan- Date Unknown)



The Phenomenology of Shoes

Fall 2014

Chris Moffett

"But what is there to see here? Everyone knows what shoes consist of.... The peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. Only here are they what they are. They are all the more genuinely so, the less the peasant woman thinks about the shoes..."

—Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"

Rather than thinking through actual phenomena, we often prefer to think about doing so. Even Heidegger, in his reflections on peasant shoes, is happy enough to use Van Gogh's famous painting of shoes as a stand in. As if actual shoes, the ones on our feet right now, are unthinkable. Indeed, since Plato, shoes have been the very image of specialization: not just anyone can make a shoe, and conversely shoemakers should not be tasked with something like doing philosophy. If we have to think about our shoes, it is because something went wrong.

Of course, we never stop thinking about shoes, even when we think we are not. Cinderella's idealized slipper fit perfectly, as if it wasn't even there. Made of glass, it is transparent, invisible, unthinkable, and hence the perfect mechanism for obsessive searching itself. Is it because they elude us that we fetishize them?

In this course we will attempt to think with our shoes. Working with this fundamental mediator of our contact with the world, we may come to better understand our modern condition (shod feet being one of the classic, but unexamined, markers of "modern" civilizations.) We'll read works of philosophy and phenomenology, old texts on shoemaking, and new texts on ergonomics. We'll look at a lot of shoes (from dress shoes to flip flops, high-heels to flats, ski-boots to huaraches, "five finger" shoes, running shoes, pointy shoes, and ruby slippers.) We'll go shoe shopping, analyze shoe ads, and do shoe dissections. We'll also look at foot structure and gait, work with our sensation, and regain intelligent feet. This course is for a broad interdisciplinary audience. Like Heidegger's peasant woman, we all know shoes, and their effects on us. It will be of particular interest to thinkers, designers, makers, athletes, artists, barefoot runners and movement practitioners of all ilks.



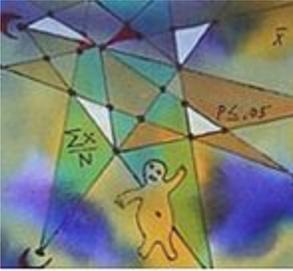
Sensational Cinema: The Poetics of Experience in Film

Fall 2014

John-Paul Bernbach & Heather von Rohr

Robert Bresson once said, "I'd rather people feel a film before they understand it." In this course we will "feel" our way toward understanding ten films (contemporary and classic) that invite this kind of viewing by loosening the grip of narrative and foregrounding the experiential nature of cinema. As we immerse ourselves in, for example, the queasy horror of "Repulsion," the light of nature in "Days of Heaven," the kinetic rush of "Fallen Angels," or the sensory spirituality of "Mirror," we will explore the particular poetics at work, not only as viewers, but also as artists, practitioners, and thinkers with a vested interest in the ways that films can move beyond the conventional language of narrative cinema to say--and be--something individual and new.

In keeping with our focus on the experiential, we will do a variety of in-class exercises that resonate with the films, drawing from our senses and intuition, and cultivating a spirit of playful experimentation. We will complement our viewing with short weekly readings of film theory (Bazin, Sobchack, Deleuze...) and philosophy (Plato, Schopenhauer, Merleau-Ponty...) to ground our own investigations into the phenomenology of cinema, and to provide a framework for broader discussions about the nature of meaning, experience, and spectatorship in art. Clips and screenings will include films by F. W. Murnau, Alfred Hitchcock, Yasujiro Ozu, Jacques Tati, Roman Polanski, Andrei Tarkovsky, Agnes Varda, Terrence Malick, Wong Kar Wai, Carlos Reygadas, Alfonso Cuarón, Josephine Decker, and others.



Self Analysis Through Statistics: Attempting the Impossible

Fall 2014

Nisse Greenberg

Those buzzfeed quizzes that help you define who you are by analyzing who you are through a series of inane questions compiled and processed through algorithms that are kept secret from you are super fun, but always leave you with more questions than answers. Why is the city that represents me Minneapolis? What about me means that I am the color magenta? Why should I define myself as that specific pouty face of Ryan Gosling looking at a puppy? In this workshop we will become the puppet masters of our own self-analytic strings.

We will begin with an assumption about "the self": that it can only be fully explored by one's self; that the only algorithm that can fully encapsulate the infinity of being that is "the self" is one that is recursive - one that admits its necessary self-referential nature. We will track back through our memories following Leibniz's concept that "every substance has as a real cause some previous state of that very substance" and in doing so discover the variables that are important to us in our definitions of self.

We will then attempt to ascribe, first, numbers to these memories, then lines, then drawings, then ascribe a story or a flag or some other artistic representation to epitomize our lives. In this process we will look at how Gaussian, Binomial, Bernoulli, and Poisson distributions represent the diversity of probabilities while simultaneously being pretty pictures. We will examine the problematic nature of defining infinite beings through singular identities like mean or median while also attempting to do just that.

We will look at the reasoning behind the creation of linear-regression as an analysis of the nature of relating variables to one another while attempting to create lines and scatterplots that represent some truth of our own selves. While we will try to leave the workshop with a tangible product of statistical analysis, my hope is that the day is simply an instigator in the process of a lifelong exploration of how quantitative analysis can provide insight into the depths of our soul.



Nonsense: An Applied Theory

Fall 2014

Sam Corbin

This workshop offers an investigation into the matter of nonsense. What does it mean to ‘make Nonsense’ in a world that manifests itself as the ultimate achievement of Sense? Why do wordplay, misdirection and sleight of hand seem to stop us in our tracks, threatening the boundaries of knowledge to some unknown beyond?

Using excerpts from the book-length essay "Nonsense" by poet/critic Susan Stewart, this class will delve into the topsy-turvy, the deeply absurd, and explore what nonsense does to our brains when we use it to write. We may pass through the gobbledygook of Lewis Carroll, the tomfoolery of Shakespeare and the antics of Monty Python. We will write scenes, play with words, and test the boundaries of infinity as defined by the language we use to perceive it.

The takeaway, among other things, is a sip from the fountain of youth—not only because of the childlike way in which this subject encourages one to view the world, but because the act of making Nonsense is itself a reversal of Time's arrow. It is ‘play’, ‘practice’: it ‘did not happen’.



Cooking Creativity: The Egg

Spring 2014

Kouri Killmeier & Julie Edwards

This workshop will start with each participant taking on a specific role in the kitchen assigned by Chef Kouri Killmeier as we focus on one simple ingredient, the egg, an ingredient inspired by the limitless directions all art forms can take. The humble egg can be transformed into an endless array of edible masterpieces from its most simple form dancing in a pot of boiling water to a stunning display of glossy whipped meringues and the never disappointing sultry texture of a perfectly prepared creme brûlée.

After our inspiring experience in the kitchen, Julie Edwards will facilitate a discussion to propel us forward into creating our own art work based off of the inspirations we had from working in the kitchen.

We invite dancers, poets, writers, singers, visual artists, actors, film makers and artists of all kinds to join us and allow the food and kitchen experience to inform and translate into your respective art form. Dance like an egg boiling, write like the energy that's in the room when many people work together to create a single dish, recite like a chef with a specific and heartfelt vision.

Kouri and Julie are excited for the opportunity to let new art forms inform their own. Join us in the realization that something that is seemingly simple can be limitless.



Magical Storytelling in Film and Drawing

Spring 2014

Juliana Cerqueira Leite & Josephine Decker

In this course, we will investigate how films support their stories through specific visual choices and editing techniques, and we will use the films we watch as jumping off points to guide our own hands-on, artistic explorations.

In our sessions, we will tie a great work of fantastic visual storytelling -- Rosemary's Baby, Babe, The Fifth Element, The General -- to a drawing exercise that will explore and explode the themes of the film. Film director Josephine Decker will lead a discussion about how the filmmakers' visual choices and editing techniques enhance the film's central narrative and themes. Juliana Leite will lead us through our weekly drawing and collage experiments exploring themes of transformation, futurism, and surprise/suspense.

Juliana will offer a brief history of how time and space have been conveyed in the visual arts and its changing relationship to storytelling, and Josephine will link each film's techniques to techniques from other filmmakers, bridging Hitchcock with Kubrick with Leos Carax.

Materials to bring:

- drawing pencils: any of your liking, we recommend 2B, 2H and 6B
- scissors (for cutting paper)
- markers, crayons, colored pencils, watercolors, brushes or any other materials you enjoy working with.
- a sketch pad.

We will provide students with card, glue, and collage materials.



The Magick Circumstantial

Spring 2014

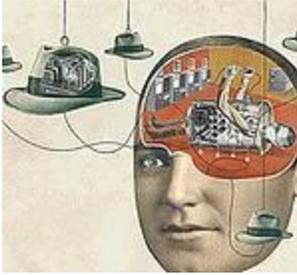
Alan Ram3n Clinton

*Like echoes from infinity drawn out
 Into a dappled unison of light,
 Beyond the dawn of day or dead of night,
 All scents, all sounds and colors correlate.*
 -Charles Baudelaire, "Correspondences"

In his autobiographical novel *Mad Love* (1936), Surrealist Andr3e Breton declared that beauty would be "magic-circumstantial, or it will not be." To describe the magic-circumstantial, Breton references a time when, while sitting in a caf3e, he had the premonition that an unknown woman writing in the corner was in fact writing a letter to him, a premonition which turned out to be true. This woman, Jacqueline Lamba, eventually became his wife.

What is at stake then is the cultivation of an awareness of our intuitions and a call to pursue them, however irrational they may seem to us at the time. By adding a "K" at the end of Breton's coinage, we recall Aleister Crowley's term to differentiate magic in general from the magick of practice, to be invoked in a more willful fashion designed to operate in everyday life.

While in this seminar we may talk about the relationships between these two traditions, I hope to spend the majority of our time producing correspondences between one another, with the aid of divination techniques including the tarot, the I-Ching, and various forms of bibliomancy (divination with books) in order to imagine other possibilities for our writing. Ideally, each participant will "put things to the test," in both individual and collaborative exercises, imagining, at least today, their work as "a possibility" with energies that may extend to other lives and worlds. One need not be a "writer" or "artist" to participate, and if anyone is interested in exploring these concepts, I will also bring several short poems for people to work with. I am more interested in suggesting new practices to be expanded upon in one's own future research than in producing "quality work" this day, quality being a term that doesn't necessarily apply to magick or, for that matter, "making thinking."



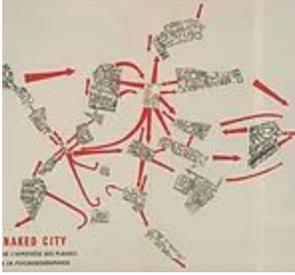
Neuroaesthetics as Performance (or, This is Your Brain on Art)

Spring 2014

Adam Thompson

This course will offer a brief foundation in the field of neuroaesthetics - the study of the brain's response to creative experience, followed by a practical application of the field to the creation of interdisciplinary live performance. Participants will explore the history and evolution of creativity from game playing and survival mechanism through contemporary biological views of creative activity. Students will choose and study a function of the brain and collaboratively build and present a short performance piece modeled on and exploring the relationship between the form and role of the selected function. Inspiration will be drawn from scientific texts, novels, essays, films, and theatre and students will cooperate to bring one another's work to life. This course aims to bridge the fields of science and art by blending and blurring the lines between rehearsal room and research laboratory.

Readings will include: *Neurocinematics: The Neuroscience of Film* by Uri Hasson, Ohad Landesman, Barbara Knappmeyer, Ignacio Vallines, Nava Rubin, and David J. Heeger; selections from *Proust was a Neuroscientist* by Jonah Lehrer; selections from *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf; selections from *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf; *The Cinema* by Virginia Woolf; selections from *Splendors and Miseries of the Brain* by Semir Zeki; *Statement on Neuroaesthetics* by Semir Zeki; *The Science of Art* by V.S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein



Urban Drifting: Theory and Practice of the Dérive

Spring 2014

Chris Moffett

“ONE OF THE BASIC situationist practices is the dérive [literally: “drifting”], a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. Dérives involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.”

—Guy Debord, “Theory of the Dérive”

We move through cities. It is largely what we do.

What are we doing when we do what we do? And what happens when we take it on as a technique or practice? In this course we will situate ourselves to the history and theory of the dérive, attempting to feel out what this strange moment of Debord and the Situationist International has to offer us today: its momentum, its surprises still.

In addition to winding our way into texts, we will also establish a working practice of individual and collective drifting, seeing if we can find ways to follow something of our experiences. Availing ourselves, absurdly, of “classic” dérives, we will also see what new directions make themselves known. Suitable for intrigued denizens of the city, this course is not a course, but a course. Coursing.

Weaving between texts, images, maps, somatic practices, our skeletons, sidewalks, subways, tight passages, rooftops, SMS messages, writing and other recordings, we will feel our collective way.



Becoming Philosopher(s)

Spring 2014

Aaron Finbloom

Becoming Philosopher(s) is an intro course to philosophy with a twist - instead of focusing on philosophical concepts and texts, we will use these to help us enact the methods and lived practices of each philosopher we study. From engaging in Socratic public dialectics in the "marketplace," to constructing Cartesian meditations, to writing Nietzschean aphorisms, each class will be an opportunity to become a philosopher by creatively interpreting their way of philosophizing. By the end of the course each student will come away with a physical or electronic "booklet" containing documentation of each philosophical becoming they have performed.

Philosophers we will become include Socrates, Plato, Hellenistic Philosophers, Descartes, Kierkegaard/Nietzsche, Heidegger and Deleuze.



Mystics

Spring 2014

Benjamin Korta

We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us that they may see, it may be, their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our quiet.

- W.B. Yeats

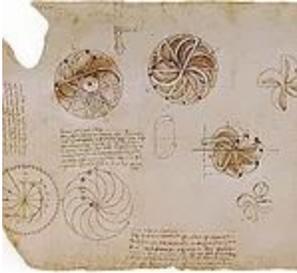
Step by step you go into the dark. The movement itself is the only truth.

- from Ingmar Bergman's *The Magician*

Mysticism is a marriage of strange, contradictory beauty. As an experience, it is intimate encounter with mystery. As a text, it struggles to convey this mystery, sometimes to the brink of impossibility and paradox. As a practice, it is the ever-refined integration of the ordinary with the extraordinary.

In this course, we will examine mystics and mysticism from a number of perspectives, both theoretical and experiential. Writers from classical mystical and contemplative traditions – Christian, Sufi, and Zen/Daoist – will be explored alongside experimental meditation and writing practice. Modern authors such as Thomas Merton, C.G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Simone Weil will also be surveyed.

Our study together will aim to ground the challenging themes of the mystic inside the context of everyday life. At the same time, we will engage – perhaps even enhance – our uncertainty without seeking its resolution, asking instead how obscurity, absence, and the unknown can become privileged sites of opening. In this way, we will discover mysticism as a positive form of getting lost: each tradition a certain mode or style of luminous disorientation.



Math: An Empowering Manipulation of Collective Perceptions of the Natural World

Fall 2013

Nisse Greenberg

Math is a utopian language world that is in no way representative of the world we live in. This utopian world does have a function: it helps us to relate our world to some objective metaphor land where life can be compared, described, conveyed without the harmful pesterings of bias and subjectivity. Math does not attempt to exist in the real; math exists as our fantasy of what the world could be if we started from scratch and re-created everything all over again. Math is our exploration of that starting from scratch. In this class we will explore this "scratch" by both inventing math anew and discovering the maths invented by ancient civilizations.

Each class will be divided into two parts. The first part will be an open discussion format where we "invent" mathematics. We will operate within a fictitious world where no mathematical concepts exist and we will try to answer the unanswerable questions. For example, we can't have a discussion about how hot it is out without figuring out a method of measurement. Over the 8 weeks we will continue the discussion until we've built a method of mathematics to deal with the world. The second part of class will be researching how various ancient civilizations discovered/inventing mathematics. This second part of the course will work alongside "A Compact History of Infinity" by David Foster Wallace.



Thinking through the Body-Subject: Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology and the Alexander Technique

Fall 2013

Julie Edwards and Benjamin Korta

The body is an open form, an active becoming. To be embodied is to be both subject and object, inner and outer, sensing and sensed, and therefore to subvert those abstract dualities we have inherited from the Western philosophical tradition and which continue to influence, often unconsciously, our activity in the world. Our aim in this course will be to live this open form and to trace this becoming. Using the Alexander Technique and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body as our guides, we will invite our students to live and question the world from the perspective of their embodiment.

Along with solo and group exercises in the Alexander Technique, we will investigate key notions developed by philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Through this combined momentum of mind/body practice and philosophical inquiry, we will explore fundamental but often overlooked features of our experience – such as weight, breath, speech, sight, and touch – and thereby find these dimensions not only investigated conceptually but reawakened perceptually. Each class will thus explore a given bodily dimension both experientially and theoretically, pairing an Alexander practice with a parallel concept in Merleau-Ponty.

Though guided by these twin traditions of the body, our course will not be confined by them. Like the body itself, our method will include improvisation and be geared toward direct encounter with the world around ourselves. In engaging the body at this deepened level, we aim to rediscover – beneath the sedimentation of accustomed actions and concepts – our primitive and first-order contact with the world.

About Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Maurice Merleau-Ponty was a French philosopher working in the phenomenological tradition. His innovative descriptions of embodiment and its role in perceptual experience have had an important influence on a range of contemporary conversation and inquiry, including philosophy of mind, cognitive science, art, and ecology. **About F.M. Alexander and the Alexander Technique:** The Alexander Technique was founded by Frederick Matthias Alexander in the early twentieth century as an education on the "use" of the self. The Alexander Technique acknowledges psychophysical unity and invites its students to consciously participate with their actions and reactions to stimuli in the most easeful and anatomically sound way.



Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy

Fall 2013

Lauren Siegel

"A man should not strive to eliminate his complexes, but to get into accord with them; they are legitimately what directs his conduct in the world." --Sigmund Freud

Psychoanalytic psychotherapy is an art form whose aim is to promote one's accessibility to unconscious instruments such as metaphor, reverie, association, and impulses so as to breathe mobility into one's psychic life. This course will be an experiential tour through this process. The structure of the course will dynamically oscillate between "classroom" (a student/teacher relationship) and "group therapy" (a patient/therapist relationship). The syllabus will develop organically out of this process as an article will be assigned following each group session that will frame the meaning which we will have created. Articles will be reviewed and discussed every other class. Through academic articles, class discussion, therapy, object gathering, and writing, a proper and radical tutorial of psychoanalytic psychotherapy will be provided. My hope is that this course will explode students' rational selves to make way for primitive glory.

"Shit on your whole mortifying, imaginary, and symbolic theater!" --Gilles Deleuze