

## 11135 - VIS 412/512 — Museums and Contemporary Art: A History of Exhibition-Making

Instructor: Duygu Demir

**Fall 2022-2023**

Subject meets on Tuesdays 10:40- 13:30, FASS 1001-1001A

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### **Introduction:**

This course focuses on the medium through which a contemporary artwork becomes public, namely the exhibition. The exhibition is an unwieldy form; it has a premise, an internal logic, and a structure. Exhibitions cannot be reduced to their physical parts; they can only be understood through the social, political and economic forces that shape them. Exhibitions are constitutive of the objects they present as well as the audiences they engage. Since the formation of the universal art museum, exhibitions have produced meanings as well as publics.

As displays and divisions of knowledge, informed by universalist and rationalist Enlightenment ideals, exhibitions have been employed to produce a certain bourgeois public, a national consciousness, a conception of history as a continuous forward movement since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Exhibitions produce meaning and value, both symbolic and real. They champion and circulate ideas. They create economies by their supply as well as their demand. Examining the role and form of exhibitions is an examination of the relationships between power and knowledge, as they are embodiments of this symbiotic relationship. Exhibitions introduce the new art of an era, formulate the canon and sometimes, challenge it. They make art history and influence the way art is made and discussed today. This course looks at the many forms the temporary exhibition takes, ranging from the world fairs and salons of 19<sup>th</sup> century to the plurality of exhibition models today, including the self-organized artist exhibitions, thematized singular curatorial statements, museum shows that de-limit movements and groups, as well as the transnational biennials and triennials.

Following a historically organized schedule of readings, *A History of Exhibition-Making* looks at this ever-changing modality of making art public as it gets shaped by individuals, artworks, architectural design, technology, and theory, with a commitment to analyzing its constitutive elements, producing its own history. By looking at the history of this discursive format, the course tracks the emergence of the curator and uses historical perspectives to take a critical position on contemporary practice, to develop informed practitioners and participants—be they artists, critics, curators or viewers—aware of the longer history of exhibition-making.

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### **Requirements:**

To learn the material covered in this class, you will be expected to complete the reading, submit weekly response papers, and participate in discussion; you will deliver one or two in-class presentations, and if you are an undergraduate, take the mid-term and final exams. If you are a graduate student, you must prepare a final project or final paper.

### **Grading:**

For undergraduates:

30% participation

(includes in-class presentations and weekly response papers)

35% mid-term

35% final

For graduate students:

30% participation

(includes in-class presentations and weekly response papers)

70% term project (proposal, in-class presentation, final write-up)

### **In-Class Presentations:**

Students will each be assigned specific weeks in which they work as a team to present a guiding question or questions that tie together the assigned readings, and orient class discussion. These are brief instigations, not lectures.

### **Final Project:**

Your final project will be a long-term, meaningful engagement with the course material, focused on a research or production theme that you will choose in consultation with the instructor.

Drawing on your own disciplinary interests, produce a creative or scholarly project that examines some aspect of “History of Exhibition-Making” as it has been negotiated and interrogated in this class. The final product can be materialized as a research paper, artwork (installation, performance, video, land or earth work), exhibition proposal, or other format agreed upon by the instructors in advance. Periodic benchmarks for the final project are outlined below.

Studio projects will be presented in a completely finished, exhibition-worthy state **the week of January 16-20, 2023**, on the date of the final exam (tbd), for a panel of critics. You will work with the TA, Gonca Mutaf, on preparing for this public presentation (see below).

An associating text of 3-5 pages describing your research and process for this project (with thesis/justification/ polemic and illustrations of process) must be uploaded to the course website by 5pm **the same day (tbd)**. Scholarly papers will range from 15-20 pages will include your own research, and will be submitted in a polished, double-spaced, footnoted, proofread, style-aligned format, complete with thesis argument, evidence, and supporting bibliography. If you choose this option, you will give a 10-minute presentation with visuals clarifying your thesis for class feedback on the final exam day, **the week of January 16-20, 2023**. A print-out of the final paper should be submitted to the instructor, but please also upload a pdf of the paper to the course website by 5pm on the same date. Hybrid projects can combine the options above. The balance of writing and materialization of your final assignment is up to you but must be worked out well in advance with the instructor and TA. All final projects should have research and written components, using the

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course readings/site visits/bibliography to cite in a meaningful fashion at least three of these sources.

### Phases:

#### 1.

Abstract/ Proposal and Bibliography— a paragraph or page describing your intended approach to the research and completion of your project, with a project bibliography, drawing on the course readings supplemented by other material you have identified to support your approach, with sources formatted according to a style guide (i.e. in the manner you see in the course syllabus).

Final studio project outlines should include a clear production plan. Due in class **November 22, 2022.**

#### 2.

Presentation— a presentation of your paper or project to classmates and critics.

Scholarly: Rehearsed, ten-minute presentations, articulating the thesis argument and accompanied by slides. To be presented in class during exam week.

Studio: Final studio presentations should be in a finished, exhibition-worthy state.

The TA Gonca Mutaf will coordinate installation plans with you. You must submit a project title and description to her well ahead of time to be included in didactic materials circulated to classmates and critics. To be presented in class on **final exam date (TBD).**

#### 3.

Written Component— clear, proofread, with citations as in the format of this syllabus, uploaded to the course website and provided in hard copy by **final exam date (TBD), 5pm.**

### Required Reading:

#### **WEEK 1. October 3, 2022:**

#### **Introduction**

Recommended:

Boris Groys, “On the Curatorship,” *Art Power*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008): 44-52.

David Balzer. *Curationism: How Curating Took over the Art World and Everything Else*. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2014).

Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” *New Formations 4* (Spring 1988): 73-102.

Simon Sheikh. “Constitutive Effects: The Techniques of the Curator” *Curating Subjects*, ed. Søren Andreasen and Paul O’Neill. (London: Open Editions, 2007): 174-185.

**WEEK 2. October 10, 2022**

**Curator as Classifier: Sorting the jumble**

The first set of readings looks at the transition from privately collected objects of fascination, in the model of the *Wunderkammer* and the princely collection, to the establishment of museums, and the concurrent differentiation of the art object from curiosities. The foundation of the Louvre as a national museum in 1793 during the French Revolution led to the initial categorizations of artworks and established the guiding principles of their presentation in terms of medium as well as historical and geographical determinations. The proto-curatorial figure emerged as more than a caretaker; a *surveillant conservateur* and connoisseur, embodied in the figure of Jacques-Louis David who as a citizen-artist parallels the complex formation of the universal art museum. In addition, in order to connect these historical moments to a vein of current practice, we look at the contemporary artistic tendency to adopt earlier modes of display as installation strategies.

Paul Grinke, “Preface,” “Some Notes on the Wunderkammer” and “Introduction” in *From Wunderkammer to Museum* (London: Quaritch, 2006): 1-18.

Boylan, Patrick J., “Revolutionary France and the Foundation of Modern Museum Management and Curatorial Practice – Part 1: From Revolution to the First Republic, 1789-92”, *Museum Management and Curatorship*, vol. 11, (1992): 141-152 and “Part 2: David and Vic d’Azyr 1792-94,” *Museum Management and Curatorship*, vol.15, no:2 (1996): 117-131.

Andrew McClellan, “Nationalism and the Origins of the Museum in France,” in *The Formation of National Collections of Art and Archaeology* (Washington D.C.: University Press of New England, 1996): 29-39.

Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum,” *Art History*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (December 1980): 448-469.

Bruce Altschuler, “Introduction,” in *Salon to Biennial—Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume I: 1863-1959*, ed. Bruce Altschuler (New York: Phaidon, 2013): 11-19.

Areti Adamopoulou, Esther Solomon, “Artists-As-Curators in Museums: Observations on Contemporary Wunderkammern,” *Thema*, Issue 4 (2016): 35-49.

**WEEK 3. October 17, 2022:**

**Universal Expositions and the Biennale di Venezia: Towards the International Art Exhibition**

This section traces the international art exhibition’s origins back to the aristocratic tradition of the Grand Tour, and to the first world’s fairs and state-sponsored art exhibitions in the mid-19th century. The readings take up the Venice Biennale’s beginnings in the 1890s, when commercial interests were the primary motivation, unlike the later conception of the Biennale as providing primarily an arena for national representation. The rise of the international art exhibition is also examined by readings that address the visual regimes and new forms of social interaction created by these public presentations.

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Bruce Redford, *Venice and the Grand Tour* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996): 5-25.

Meg Armstrong “A Jumble of Foreignness”: The Sublime Musayums of Nineteenth-Century Fairs and Expositions” *Cultural Critique* no. 23 (Winter, 1992-1993): 199-250.

Elizabeth Basye Gilmore Holt. “Introduction” and “State-Sponsored Fine Arts Exhibitions” in *The Expanding World of Art, 1874-1902* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988): 1-6 and 171-179.

Enzo De Martino, “Origins of the Biennale” and “From the First Biennale until the Great War,” *The History of the Venice Biennale 1895–2005* (Venezia: Papiro Arte, 2005): 7-16.

Umberto Eco, “A Theory of Expositions,” *Dot Zero* No. 4, *World’s Fairs* (Summer 1967): 5-10.

Caroline Jones, “Biennial Culture: A Longer History” in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, Solveig Øvstebø, Marieke Van Hal, (Bergen : Ostfildern ; Bergen Kunsthall ; Hatje Cantz, 2010): 66-87.

### **WEEK 4. October 24, 2022:**

#### **Salon des Refusés: Stories of rejection and conventions of display**

This week looks at the dynamics of the French Salon in the late 19th century, and specifically at the formation of the *Salon des Refusés* in 1863, as a moment when the questioning of the juried selection process, as well as the “salon hang”—which both served as models throughout Europe—came under scrutiny. Rejection from the salon caused a number of artists such as Gustave Courbet and later the Impressionists to seek other venues for exhibition and led them to organize their own shows. This new avenue proved significant for artists in considering the environment surrounding the work of art in ideological, commercial as well as aesthetic terms. Elements such as frame, wall color, and many other aspects that today fall under the rubric of “exhibition design” become central concerns to artists. Courbet’s independent exhibition of 1855 in Paris serves as an opportunity to consider the format of the solo exhibition, while JAM Whistler is looked at as an example of a proto-installation artist for his tactics of display.

Thomas Crow, “The Salon Exhibition in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985): 1-22.<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

“Salon des Refusés” in *Salon to Biennial—Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume I: 1863-1959*, ed. Bruce Altshuler (New York: Phaidon, 2013): 23-32.

Patricia Mainardi. “Courbet's Exhibitionism,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 118 (December 1991): 253-266.

Martha Ward. “Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions.” *The Art Bulletin* 73, no. 4 (1991): 599–622.

David Park Curry, “Total Control: Whistler at an Exhibition.” *Studies in the History of Art* 19 (1987): 67–82.

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João Ribas. "Notes Towards a History of the Solo Exhibition," *Afterall* 38 (Spring 2015): 4-15.  
<http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.38/notes-towards-a-history-of-the-solo-exhibition#footnote10552>

### Recommended:

William Hauptman. "Juries, Protests, and Counter-Exhibitions before 1850," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Mar. 1985): 95-109.

### **WEEK 5. November 1, 2022:**

#### **Exhibition Design and Curating: completing the atmosphere or depleting the gallery**

Gertrude Stein allegedly stated that something could be either modern or in a museum, but not both. This conception started to change at the turn of the century. From early 20th-century Germany, Karl Ernst Osthaus's Folkwang Museum in Hagen and the Hannover Museum under Alexander Dorner's directorship are examined as they each adopted new display strategies to effectively present their collections, which included modern art. Both museums wanted to engage the public and strive for institutions that not only referred to the past but participated in the present, but their display tactics were divergent. Osthaus adopted a seamless integration of a wide range of historical periods and geographical regions, while Dorner created restrained period rooms. The curatorial figure, embodied in the museum director at this moment, is seen as an administrator, educator, as well as a diplomat, negotiating between tradition and the present, as well as emerging as a close collaborator with artists. In addition, the legacy of the now widely utilized "white cube" is traced from Germany to Museum of Modern Art, New York, through founding director Alfred Barr and his visits to Europe, starting in 1929.

Sheehan, James J. "Bode, Tschudi, Lichtwark," "Toward the Modern Museum," and "The Folkwang Museum in Hagen" in *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000):157-164, 168-169, 175-178.

Katherine Kuenzli, "The Birth of the Modernist Art Museum: The Folkwang as *Gesamtkunstwerk*," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (December 2013): 503-529.

Samuel Cauman. "Directorship" in *The Living Museum* (New York: NYU Press, 1958): p.43-111.

Richard Meyer, "Young Professor Barr (1927)" in *What Was Contemporary Art?* (MIT Press, 2013): 37-115.

Mary Anne Staniszewski, "Creating Installations for Aesthetic Autonomy: Alfred Barr's Exhibition Technique" in *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001): 60-73.

Elena Filipovic, "The Global White Cube," *The Manifesta Decade*, ed. Barbara Vanderlinden, and Elena Filipovic (Cambridge and Brussels, 2006): 63-84.

**WEEK 6. November 8, 2022:**

**Exhibition as Total Work of Art and its Politics: between the two world wars**

The strategies of display in Dadaist and Surrealist exhibitions as well as the “Degenerate Art” exhibition in 1937 are looked at as modes of dissent and propaganda. The emergence of the exhibition designer, in figures such as Frederick Kiesler and Herbert Bayer, is seen in relation to the Bauhaus principles that emerged in Germany and the political neutralization of these ideas is traced in their transfer from Europe to the United States after World War II. The legacy of the romantic idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* is addressed in relation to the practice of combining various art forms into a whole embraced by certain modernists, in the conception of the aforementioned exhibitions as well as Kurt Schwitters’s *Merzbau* projects. Schwitters presents another model for art as environment, as his socialist and utopian tendencies contrasts with Kiesler’s embrace of the Fordist research agenda that strives for maximum efficiency. Additionally, Thomas Hirschhorn’s practice, specifically his Swiss Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011, is also looked at as a contemporary re-incarnation of the ideas embedded in the *Merzbau*.

Mary Anne Staniszewski, “Framing Installation Design: The International Avant-gardes” in *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001): 1-16, 22-58.

“The First International Dada Fair, Berlin, 1920,” “Degenerate Art, Munich, 1937,” “Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme, 1938” and “Art of this Century” in *Salon to Biennial—Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume I: 1863-1959*, ed. Bruce Altshuler (New York: Phaidon, 2013): 187-202, 255-278, 279-294, 309-326.

Maria Stavrinaki, “Total Artwork vs. Revolution: Art, Politics and Temporalities in the Expressionist Architectural Utopias and the *Merzbau*” in Finger, Anke K, and Danielle Follett. *The Aesthetics of the Total Artwork: On Borders and Fragments* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011): 253-276.

Stephen Phillips. “Toward a Research Practice: Frederick Kiesler’s Design-Correlation Laboratory.” *Grey Room*, (2010): 90–120.

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh. “Cargo and Cult: The Displays of Thomas Hirschhorn.” *Artforum* v. 40, issue: 3 (November, 2001): 108–15.

**WEEK 7. November 15, 2022:**

**Exhibitions as politics of inclusiveness: Populism or propaganda?**

Here, the canonizing powers of MoMA director Alfred Barr and the effective exhibition design of his colleague Herbert Bayer are seen in the light of Cold War rhetoric. MoMA’s postwar traveling exhibitions, funded in part by the CIA, and the continuing world-fair model that embodied Cold War rhetorics in exhibition displays are examined as mission-oriented projects that move between propagandistic tactics and populist endeavors. The exhibition as communication model is subjected to the lens of Roland Barthes’ concept of “myth” and Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s analysis of the “culture industry.” We examine two specific cases in which the campaign for supposed “universal values” are undertaken by MoMA: “The Great Family of Men” of 1955, which toured the world for eight years, as well as abstract

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expressionism in “The New American Painting” in 1959.

Mary Anne Staniszewski, “Installations for Political Persuasion” in *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001): 207-227 and 235-260.

Roland Barthes, “The Great Family of Men,” and “Myth Today,” *Mythologies*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976): 100-102, 116-145.

Fred Turner, “The Family of Man and the Politics of Attention in Cold War America,” *Public Culture*, (24:1, 2012): 55-84.

Eva Cockroft, “Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War” in Francis Frascina (ed.) *Pollock and After: Critical Debate* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985): 125-133.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1997): 94-136.

Susan Reid, “The Soviet Pavilion at Brussels ’58: Convergence, Conversion, Critical Assimilation, or Transculturation?” *Cold War International History Project*, Working Paper #62 (December 2010): 1-67.

“The New American Painting, New York, 1959” *Salon to Biennial—Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume I: 1863-1959*, ed. Bruce Altschuler (Phaidon, London and New York, 2013): 373-293.

### **WEEK 8. November 22, 2022:** **New Institutionalization in Europe**

While the US and the USSR were in a propaganda game, institutions in Europe were rethinking the exhibition model. The curatorial approaches of two museum directors, Willem Sandberg at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and Pontus Hultén at Moderna Museet in Stockholm, provide examples of tactics to avert a “museological crisis,” as the social upheavals, counter-cultural movements and the sexual awakening in the pre-’68 moment pushed museums to rethink the role of art institutions in society. Deciding on close collaboration with living artists and encouraging open-ended and event-oriented artworks that allowed for audience participation, these institutions campaigned for a certain model of inclusiveness. From a larger cultural perspective, Pierre Bourdieu’s text problematizes these attempts to bring museums up to date as a means of neoliberal cultural management that nevertheless fails to mask the elitism of these institutions. Another form of rethinking is an attempt at coming to terms with the legacy of modernism in and outside Europe: while Documenta’s beginnings mark the rehabilitation of Germany’s relation to modern art, after its suppression under National Socialism, in the global south, an alternative example of approaching the European legacy in the postwar era is Lina Bo Bardi’s innovative display strategy for the collection at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo.

Walter Grasskamp, “‘Degenerate Art’ and Documenta 1: Modernism Ostracized and Disarmed” in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed. Sherman, Daniel J. and Irit Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994): 163-194.

Ulrike Schmitt, “Curating Bewogen Beweging: the exchange between Daniel Spoerri, Jean



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Tinguely, Pontus Hultén, and Willem Sandberg,” *The Artist as Curator: Collaborative Initiatives in the International Zero Movement 1957-1967*. ed. Caianiello, Tiziana, Mattijs Visser, and Antoon Melissen. (Gent: AsaMER ; Düsseldorf, 2015): 221-235.

Antille, Benot, “HONen Katedral: Behind Pontus Hultén’s Theatre of Inclusiveness.” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, no. 32 (2013): 72–81.

“Dylaby, Amsterdam, 1962” in *Biennials and Beyond—Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume II: 1962-2002*, ed. Bruce Altschuler (New York: Phaidon, 2013): 25-36.

Pierre Bourdieu, “Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception,” *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*; ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1993): 215-37.

Roger M. Buerger, “‘This Exhibition Is an Accusation’: The Grammar of Display According to Lina Bo Bardi,” *Afterall* vol.26, (Spring 2011): 51-57.

### **Recommended:**

Willem Sandberg, “Presentation of Vision '67” *Design Issues*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (The MIT Press, Spring, 1986): 64-77.

Alice Rawsthorn, “The Museum Director Who Was Also an Artist. (The Arts/Cultural Desk)(Willem Sandberg).” *The New York Times*, Last accessed: Oct. 28, 2016.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/25/arts/design/dutch-museum-director-also-an-artist-gets-a-show-of-his-own.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/25/arts/design/dutch-museum-director-also-an-artist-gets-a-show-of-his-own.html?_r=0)

Hans-Ulrich Obrist, “Interview with Pontus Hultén”, *A Brief History of Curating*. Documents (Zurich : Dijon: JRP / Ringier ; Les Presses du reel, 2008): 41-66.

### **WEEK 9. November 29, 2022:**

**MIDTERM** for undergraduates

**Deadline for** graduate students to hand-in **project proposals/research abstracts and bibliography.**

### **WEEK 10. December 6, 2022:**

#### **Curating Outside the Frame and Curator as Conduit: Conceptualism/dematerialization & Land Art**

Seemingly divergent trends of exhibition-making are brought together in this set of readings to suggest affinities between the dematerialization of the art object with conceptualism and a new materialism that manifests itself in Land Art in the late 1960s and early '70s in the US. On one side is German gallerist Heiner Friedrich’s advocacy of the permanent installation model inspired by Renaissance patronage which finds its match in the patronage of minimalists and land artists in the American Southwest, and gets institutionally codified in the model of Dia. On the other is conceptualism’s de-prioritization of the object, as championed by curator and critic Lucy Lippard and the New York gallerist Seth Siegelaub. The two converge as artists and curators come together to question the [ontological] status of the art “object.” Also common to both is the

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conception of the curator as “conduit,” a vessel for the realization of the artwork, tasked with creating the most suitable environment for its reception, minimizing mediation. Walter Hopps, a curator who operates both outside the art institution and from within is looked at as another model, an inclusive figure who is not attached one art movement or another, and one who sees the role of the curator as more of a conductor, defining his approach by useful advice he received from Marcel Duchamp: in the organization of exhibitions, the works must not stand in the way. Another suggested strain is the contemporary practice of the treatment of the book-form as an exhibition space, seen here as a legacy of the conceptual moment.

Calvin Tomkins, “The Mission,” *The New Yorker*, (May 19, 2003): 46-53.

Lucy R. Lippard, “Curating by Numbers,” *Tate Papers*, no.12 (Autumn 2009).  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/12/curating-by-numbers>

“555,087, Seattle, 1969” *Biennials and Beyond—Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume II: 1962-2002*, ed. Bruce Altschuler (New York: Phaidon, 2013): 111-124.

Michael Baldwin “Remarks on Air-Conditioning” and Charles Harrison and Seth Siegelaub, “On Exhibitions and the World at Large” in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alberro, Alexander, and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999): 32-35, 198-203.

Calvin Tomkins, “A Touch for the Now – Walter Hopps”, *The New Yorker*, (July 29, 1991): 33-57.

Hans-Ulrich Obrist, “Interview with Walter Hopps,” *A Brief History of Curating. Documents* (Zurich:Dijon: JRP / Ringier; Les Presses du réel, 2008):10-39.

Anna Sophie Springerin, “Volumes: The Book as Exhibition” in *C Magazine*, (C116, Winter 2012): 36-44.

### **WEEK 11. December 13, 2022:**

#### **Curator as Free Agent: Harald Szeemann and Hans-Ulrich Obrist**

This set of readings looks at the emergence of the author-curator through the figure of Harald Szeemann. His now iconic exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* (Bern, 1969) and its canonization in curatorial history with its re-staging at the Prada Foundation in Venice in 2013, as well as his Documenta V in 1972, are examined as the model that informs the mainstream understanding of the freelance curator today. The curator as meta-artist model, embodied historically by Szeemann and currently claimed by global star-curators like Hans-Ulrich Obrist is also scrutinized from the artist’s point of view, in which the author-curator was not always a welcome approach, as exemplified by Daniel Buren’s dissent for Szeemann’s Documenta and the echoes of this debate in the *E-flux Journal* in 2010. This authorial power of the curator that is subject to much protest is also complicated by Roland Barthes’s text *The Death of the Author*, published two years before Szeemann’s lionized exhibition, in which Barthes argues that the meaning of a text does not lie with its creator but with its reader—stripping both artist and curator from the ability to exert total control over the text, in this case, the exhibition.

Barthes, Roland, “The Death of the Author” in *Image / Music / Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. (New

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York: Hill and Wang, 1977): 142-7.

“When Attitudes Become Form, 1968, Bern,” *Biennials and Beyond—Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume II: 1962-2002*, ed. Bruce Altschuler (New York: Phaidon, 2013): 95-110.

“Documenta 5, Kassel, 1972,” *Biennials and Beyond—Exhibitions that Made Art History, Volume II: 1962-2002*, ed. Bruce Altschuler (New York: Phaidon, 2013): 155-174.

Caroline A. Jones, “Transnational Openings,” (excerpts), Ch. 5 *The Global Work of Art* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017): 1-24, 39-63.

Thomas Crow, “Head Trip.” *Artforum International* 52, no.1 (2013): 320–25, 432.

Hans-Ulrich Obrist, “Interview with Harald Szeemann”, *A Brief History of Curating. Documents* (Zurich; Dijon: JRP / Ringier ; Les Presses du réel, 2008): 99-127.

D.T. Max, “The Art of Conversation – The curator who talked his way to the top” in *New Yorker*, December 8, 2014.

Hans-Ulrich Obrist, “Biennial Manifesto,” *Log* 20 (Fall 2010): 45-47.

Daniel Buren, “The Exhibition of an Exhibition” and “Where Are the Artists?” in *The Biennial Reader*: 210-221.

Anton Vidokle, “Art without Artists?” in *e-flux journal*, no:16 (May 2010).  
<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-without-artists/>

“Letters to the Editors: Eleven Responses to Anton Vidokle’s *Art Without Artists?*” in *e-flux journal* no:18 September 2010.  
<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/18/67472/letters-to-the-editors-eleven-responses-to-anton-vidokle-s-art-without-artists/>

### **WEEK 12. December 20, 2022:** **Curating of Cultures: Identifying Identities**

Two exhibitions from the momentous year 1989, the 3rd Havana Biennial in Cuba and *Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, are employed here to mark the break from the Euro-American hegemony in visual arts. The differences in their approach to exhibition-making and engaging non-western artistic practices offer a fruitful comparison and also help identify the questions of “de-centering” discourse that still concern exhibition-makers and art historians alike today. Two accounts by practicing curators, Jack Persekian and Stephen Gilchrist, offer additional layers of complication, as each author addresses the identity of the exhibition-maker her/himself as a further position to consider.

Rachel Weiss, “A Certain Place and a Certain Time: The Third Bienal de La Habana and the Origins of the Global Exhibition” in *Making Art Global (Part 1). The Third Havana Biennial 1989*. ed. Lucy Steeds (London: Afterall Books, 2011): 14-70.

“Magiciens de la Terre, Paris, 1989” *Biennials and Beyond—Exhibitions that Made Art History*,

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*Volume II: 1962-2002*, ed. Bruce Altschuler (New York: Phaidon, 2013): 281-294

Stephen Gilchrist, “Indigenising Curatorial Practice” in *The World is Not a Foreign Land*, ed. Quentin Sprague (Melbourne: Ian Potter Museum of Art, 2014): 55-59.

Persekian, Jack. “A Place to Go.” In Boullata, *Belonging and Globalisation: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, (London: Saqi Books, 2008): 137–46.

Thomas McEvelley, “Marginalia: Thomas McEvelley on the Global Issue,” *Making Art Global (Part 2): “Magiciens de la Terre” 1989*, ed. Lucy Steeds (London: Afterall Books, 2013): 268-272.

### **Recommended:**

Annie Coombes, “Inventing the Post-Colonial: Hybridity and Constituency in Contemporary Curating,” *New Formations* (Winter 1992): 39-52.

Paul O’Neill and Okwui Enwezor, “Curating Beyond the Canon” in O’Neill, Paul, Søren Andreasen, and Paul O’Neill. *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions, 2007): 110-122.

### **WEEK 13. December 27, 2022:**

#### **Relational Aesthetics and New Institutionalism: Performative Curating?**

This set of readings, in connection with the earlier unit that looked at the pre-1968 moment of the crisis in European museums—that was averted by integrating participatory and performative work into the museum’s program—investigates the 21st-century institutional practices that respond to artists’ relational work of the 1990s. Once participatory art is institutionalized in the museum setting, is it instrumentalized in the transformation of the museum into a spectacular playground, or can it retain its emancipatory promise?

Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2004).

Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics” *October* (2004): 51–79.

Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents” in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. (New York: Verso Books, 2012): 11-40.

Hal Foster, “Arty Party” *London Review of Books*, Vol. 25, No. 23 (4 December 2003): 21-22.

Sven Lütticken, “The Worst Audience” in *Secret Publicity* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers; Amsterdam: The Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture Fonds BKVB, 2005): 55-67.

Sven Lütticken, “Once More on Publicness: A Postscript to Secret Publicity,” *Fillip* 12, (Fall 2010): 86-91. <http://fillip.ca/content/once-more-on-publicness-a-postscript-to-secret-publicity>

Claire Doherty, “New Institutionalism and the Exhibition as Situation” in *Protections Reader*, ed. Adam Budak (Graz: Kunsthaus Graz, 2006): 172-8.

<https://elizabethhardwick.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/newinstitutionalism1.pdf>

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Miwon Kwon, "From Site to Community in New Genre Public Art: The Case of 'Culture in Action' in *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002):100-137.

### **WEEK 14. January 3, 2023:**

#### **A New Grand Tour: Globalization, Biennialization, De-cannonization**

This set of readings looks at biennials, triennials and Documenta, as they have come to be landmark surveys of contemporary art. Authors question whether these exhibitions are in the service of the global economy, meeting the needs of sponsors, and aligning with the political aims of the local municipalities in cities where they take place. Does the proliferation of the biennial as a form around the world attest to its success as an arena for cosmopolitan exchange or testify to its touristic and economic instrumentalization?

Boris Buden, "Towards the Heterosphere: Curator as Translator" in Lind, Maria, ed. *Performing the Curatorial: Within and beyond Art*. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012): 23-44.

Carlos Basualdo, "The Unstable Institution" in *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* Ed. Marincola, Paula, and Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative. (Philadelphia, PA: Chicago, IL: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, Philadelphia Center for Arts and Heritage; University of Chicago Press, 2006): 52-61.

Charles Green and Anthony Gardner, "2014: Global Art Circuits" in *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta: The Exhibitions That Created Contemporary Art* (Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2016): 241-271.

Peter Schjeldahl, "The Global Salon" *The New Yorker* (July 1, 2002): 94.

Pamela M. Lee, "Boundary Issues: The Art World under the Sign of Globalism" *Artforum International* (November 2003): 164-167.

Okwui Enwezor, "Mega-Exhibitions and the Antinomies of a Translational Global Form" and George Baker, "The Globalization of the False. A Response to Okwui Enwezor" in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, Solveig Øvstebø (Bergen: Ostfildern; Bergen Kunsthall; Hatje Cantz, 2010): 426-53.

### **WEEK 14: January 14-20, 2023:**

FINAL EXAM for undergrads

followed by:

Final Research Paper/ Final Studio Project presentations

Visiting respondents: TBD.

Feedback from peers in class/written feedback from instructor via e-mail.