



Cristina Ferrigno's diagram: <https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/>

History & Theory of Social Practice Art

ARTS 777 - ARTH 505/310 - ARTH 7453 - EES **79903**

Fall 2021

Mondays 6- 8 PM

Sholette, Gregory instructor

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** Syllabus and its content might be changed, online site is latest version.

*** A copy of the basic syllabus is available here: [CLICK](#)

An increasing number of artists, curators, and critics have recently turned their energies toward a new type of participatory socially engaged art making. What had previously been marginalized is now gaining more mainstream attention, with a new prominence in museums, biennials, but also on the streets and other public spaces. Even the New York Times has hailed the emergence of this tendency as “social practice art.” The aim of this seminar is to survey, critique and historicize the theory and practice of social practice art as well as activist, interventionist, public, participatory and community based art operating within and across fields such as performance, urban studies, environmental science and other socially engaged disciplines. The class will focus on such questions as: Why is it useful, even necessary, to understand the history and theory of social practice art? Where should we look to find the historical roots of social practice art? Are these within the history of art, or external to it, or crossing a line between two spheres of cultural interpretation and understanding? And what is the "social"? In an increasingly privatized society how do we define and operate within a concept of the public sphere? And how are both mainstream and alternative types of cultural institutions responding to the increasing interest in socially engaged art by emerging artists? Through lectures, readings, discussions and student research presentations we will seek to position socially-engaged visual culture and the shifting role of the artist within an historical, ideological, and critical framework. If possible, guest speakers and offsite visits will also be added as available.

Learning Goals & Course Outcomes

- # Develop theoretical and historical knowledge of emerging social practice art field.
- # Explore and debate complexities, paradoxes and possibilities of socially engaged art.
- # Engage in original research related to social practices and individual student projects.
- # Foster an environment for investigating cross-disciplinary exchange and critical thinking.
- # Acquire working knowledge of seminal texts relevant to this field and in relation to the broader background of art history.

Five Research Questions this Course will Attempt to Answer

1. **The definition question:** How does social practice differentiate itself from social service ? Is this important to resolve? What kind of

questions and assumptions arise if we seek to make social practice its own distinct artistic method? And what sort of questions and assumptions arise if we do not differentiate it from art or from say, community work, environmental activism, urban reform, or social justice advocacy?

2. **The institutionalization/academic question:** Is social practice art radically opposed to mainstream art and culture? Is it rejuvenating it? Or is it being co-opted by it? How can we frame this question to get beyond simple answers and find a more engaging and useful thesis from which to work?

3. **The context question:** Who is a social practice artist and what sort of “agency” does she or he have in a world of hyper-surveillance and economic ? And who is such work made for and why? Is it global or local, white or black, academic, or populist? Does it have a specific historical framing? Is it logical to assume it will be part of future arts academic curricula and how will this alter the study of art and of art criticism, history, curating, etc..?

4. **The "aesthetic" question:** Is there a social practice art-aesthetic or form or repertoire of forms specific to this kind of work? If yes, what kind of questions do we need to ask in order to investigate what this particular aesthetic consists of? And if there is no such thing as a social practice aesthetic how will this “lack” impact the practice of social practice art if at all?

5. **The organizational question:** the practice of social practice art, as opposed to many other types of artistic practice, inevitably involves processes of organization, administration, and self-governance. What precedents exist regarding this conjoining of artistic and organizational needs and goals, and does a distinctive hybrid of some type emerge from this entanglement?

& **Five Evaluative Concepts** for determining the presence of a "work of art" (these might be useful for your research and projects):

1. **INTENTION** - the artist means for the project [the work/performance/event/etc...] to be grasped as a work of art

2. **ART-CENTRICITY** - artistic concerns or activities are a central concern of the project

3. **INSTITUTIONALITY** - the project is readable within the discourse and power relations of art industry/art history, criticism & theory

4. **WORLDING / WORLD BUILDING** - the project's methods draw upon, explore, and/or expand a uniquely artistic world view or approach to research or expression or making.

5. **TRESPASSING** - Rick Lowe's term for mimicry & border-crossing visual art carries out into other disciplines, parts of society or the world)

Assignments and Expectations

- A. Generate at least one question for each week's guest based upon readings and your own research.
- B. Make one short (ten minute) presentation during the course of the semester in consultation with instructor.
- C. Submit a Final Project last 2 - 3 weeks of semester (two options):
 - 1. Create a performance, situation, exchange for the class tbd.

OR

- 2. Write a review of a book, extended essay tbd. * This can be the basis of your short presentation. *

Grading and Requirements

You are responsible for reading and discussing all assigned texts. Attendance is essential due to the participatory nature of this course. All students are expected to come to class prepared and on time.

If a problem arises regarding attendance or assignments, you should contact me as soon as possible. Missing a class does not mean that you are excused from an assignment. In short, *participation and attendance* figure heavily in your overall evaluation and grade.

Evaluation:

30% Participation in class

30 % Class presentation

40% Final Project

More About the Final Project Options:

- 1.) an *artistic work* based on research and knowledge gained during our seminar. This project needs to be accompanied by documentation of research in the form of a short description of the piece and a bibliography of research references (that must include some written material, three minimum, but can also cite art works, musical compositions, performances etc...)
- 2.) A second option is to write a *book review* of 1500 - 2000 words focused on a book or extended academic essay related to the class in general, or about a particular practitioner of socially engaged art. Your review should consist of 1500 - 2000 words and accomplish these objectives: 1.) Summarize why the book/essay is important including what its arguments are and how it relates to socially engaged art. 2.) How does this particular book contribute to the field of art, socially engaged practices, improving society? 3.) Does the author(s) achieve what they set

out to do and does their argument make sense? Additional notes: if you quote the author be sure to add the page number of the citation inside (parentheses). For more details see: [BOOK REVIEW GUIDELINES](#), and be sure to use this format below for the title of your review:

Additional readings and possible book review sources (discuss with me please) are available in this [Socially Engaged Arts Reader](#)



Meeting with Mierle Laderman Ukeles and CUNY Students at the Queens Museum

THE SYLLABUS

August 30—Introductions & Overview of course

-[Some origin stories about socially engaged art](#)

Readings:

[Pablo Helguera - \(excerpt\) *Education for Socially Engaged Art*](#)

[Grant Kester - Eyes of the Vulgar](#)

Sept 13 – A Conversation with [Chloë Bass](#) (via zoom from St. Louis)

Reading: [Public Art as an Invitation Towards Abolition](#)

Sept 20 [Lucy R. Lippard](#) (zoom from New Mexico)

Reading:

Sept 27 [Suzanne Lacy](#) (in-person at [Queens Museum](#))

Reading: [Sharon Irish. Book Excerpt - Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between](#)

Oct. 4 [Josh MacPhee](#) at [Interference Archive](#), (meet 314 7th St. Brooklyn)

Reading:

Oct. 18 Raquel Ermida & 1990s Portuguese art collectivism, (location TBD)

Reading:

Oct. 25 [Avram Finkelstein](#), curator of "[OMNISCIENT: Queer Documentation in an Image Culture.](#)" (meet at [Leslie Lohman Museum of Art](#), Manhattan)

Reading:

Nov 1 [Shellyne Rodriguez](#) (meet [Horseshoe Park](#), in the Bronx)

Reading: [Bringing Abolition to the Museum](#)

Nov 8 [Daniel Tucker](#) - (possible in-person or zoom from Philly)

Reading: Tucker, [Communiversality: Inside and Outside Art Education](#)

Nov 15 [Floor Grootenhuis](#) (meet at Raper Laboratory, Hunter College)

Reading:

Nov 29 [The Clemente Center](#) ?

Nov 22 Open

Dec 6 Presentations

Dec 13 Presentations

Dec 20 Presentations / Wrap up - Eat

NOTE School is closed:

Monday, September 6th (Labor Day)

Monday, October 11th (Columbus Day)

Possible Sites for Presentations:

[Weeksville Heritage Center](#) - Brooklyn

The Graduate Center

Trump Tower ground floor (vintage maga accessory shopping optional)

Additional Optional Readings:

[Michael G. Birchall, Socially engaged art in the 1990s and beyond](#)

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SPECIAL INSERT: COVID-19 READINGS:

["The Corona Reboot" by Ian Alan Paul](#)

["Coronavirus Propagations" by Jonas Staal](#)

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Counter Critiques of Social Practice Art

[Ben Davis in International Socialist Review](#)

[Notes about Joseph Beuys, Gregory Sholette \(2018\)](#)

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Art and Labor and Feminism:

M. [UKELES MANIFESTO PDF Download](#)

[The labor-oriented performance art of Marty Pottinger](#)

[Interview with Marty Pottinger](#)

Visit the Guerilla Girls website: <https://www.guerrillagirls.com/>

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From Tom Finkelpearl:

[Finkelpearl, "A Cooperative Animal"](#)

[Introduction to "What We Made," by Tom Finkelpearl](#)

[Chapter 5 in "What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation," interview with Rick Lowe and Mark Stern in Finkelpearl.](#)

[Tom Finkelpearl interviews Mierle Laderman Ukeles from his book Dialogues in Public Art.](#)

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SPQ's Urbanism/Transforming Corona Plaza Project 2012:

<http://www.streetfilms.org/queens-corona-plaza-a-community-place-rises/>

[Transforming Corona Plaza Studio Presentation](#)

[Sholette interview with T. Cruz "Urban Policy & DNA"](#)

[Article about Immigrant Movement International \(IMI\)](#)

[The Collective Making of ABC NO RIO, Nandini Bagchee](#)

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On Theaster Gates:

[John Colapinto, "The Real-Estate Artist," *The New Yorker*, Jan. 20,](#)

[2014https://www.ted.com/talks/theaster_gates_how_to_revive_a_neighborhood_with_imaginati
on_beauty_and_art?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshar
e](https://www.ted.com/talks/theaster_gates_how_to_revive_a_neighborhood_with_imaginati_on_beauty_and_art?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)

[Nate Bert, "From Theaster Gates to Assemble: is there an art to urban regeneration?"](#)

[Gary Younge, “Theaster Gates, the artist whose latest project is regenerating Chicago.”](#)

[Sholette, “Art After Gentrification.”](#)

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On REPOhistory:

[1992 REPOhistory sign project catalog](#)

[Overview of REPOhistory 1989-2000](#)

[Online documentation of REPOhistory signs \(select\)](#)

[Fordham Urban Law Journal about 1998 REPOhistory project](#)

REPOhistory slide presentation with notes: [click here](#)

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Additional Resources:

PPT LECTURE: [A BRIEF HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE](#)

[Dark Matter Archives](#)

[General history of art collectivism timeline](#)

[The Tate's Definition of Socially engaged art practice](#)

[Identity and Political Art as Mainstream Culture](#)

[Proletarian Fashion Dolce & Gabbana \(seriously?\)](#)

CUNY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The Policy on Academic Integrity, as adopted by the Board is available to all candidates. Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. This policy and others related to candidates' issues are available to you at: <http://qc.cuny.edu/?id=IUHC>

**USE
OF CANDIDATE WORK**

All teacher education programs in New York State undergo periodic reviews by accreditation agencies and the state education department. For these purposes, samples of candidates' work are made available to those professionals conducting the review. Candidate anonymity is assured under these circumstances. If you do not wish to have your work made available for these purposes, please let the professor know before the start of the second class. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

**REASONABLE
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES**

Candidates with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: 1) register with and provide documentation to the Special Services Office, Frese Hall, Room 111; 2) bring a letter indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to Queens College candidates, contact: Special Service Office; Director, Miriam Detres-Hickey, Frese Hall, Room 111; 718-997-5870 (Monday – Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. & Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4 p.m.).
