

SPRING 2008 PERFORMANCE AND INSTALLATION ARTS 5104/4104-001
FRANCES CHARTERIS

M/W 12-2.30. Room: Fleming 104 and elsewhere

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Office hours: Wed. 2.30-3p.m. & Thurs. 1-3p.m. and by appointment

The heart has reasons that reason knows not of.

Anonymous

When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision – then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid

Audre Lorde

Course objectives

The goals of this course are various: to investigate performance as an artistic practice as well as a critical methodology; to investigate installation for its relation to performance and sculpture, as well as installation as an independent art practice. The class refines an understanding of those areas where the two practices merge and where they separate completely. Students are expected to do individual or group works using either method, or both. Works, experiments and productions are to be performed live or exhibited for course participants during class time, as well as for a larger public at the end of the semester. Outsiders are always welcome to any performance or installation, and to improvisational exercises with my permission.

Structure

Classes are comprised of three distinct elements: **Improvisation exercises** to break down barriers and build community necessary for art-making; the **viewing of works on tape and DVD and on slides**, as well as a discussion of texts; and, most importantly, the **experiencing and critiquing participants' works**. Critiques are an essential component of audiencing. The intention is to maintain a safe place/space for self-revelation and for experimentation in making art. Play and risk are elemental features of both performance and installation, because it is through play and risk that new possibilities establish themselves, and fresh terrain explored. Lectures cover a limited history and are conducted in a seminar style; participation and discussion are encouraged whilst viewing material. Performances must be witnessed during class time, even if the performer is not actually visible. Installation works clearly might exist independent of class time and space but must be visited by the class in order for a group critique to occur. Critiques need to be honest and supportive; students are asked to write their comments after each performance and installation then hand them to the artist. If it is necessary to ask for help documenting from class members or from friends, please do so. Documentation is now part of the course requirement.

NB: It is violently important that students meet their time commitments: if you say you will do a piece on a specific time and date, honor that commitment that has been allotted to you and your work. Do not renege – it wastes everyone's time. If something comes up whereby you are genuinely unable to fulfill your obligation, let me know in advance. Someone else can use that time or I will devise another activity. A similar caveat applies to being late for class. Lateness is unprofessional and affects group energy.

Texts

Two books are required immediately:

Performance Art: from Futurism to the Present (World of Art), by RoseLee Goldberg, publ.2001 (revised addition) Thames and Hudson World of Art.

Performance Studies. (6th edition) An Introduction. By Richard Schechner, pub.2006, Routledge, (You can also order this from Amazon since you will not need it in the next 4 weeks).

NOTE: Graduate students and those who have taken the class before: I am asking you buy a reader that will be ready in a couple of weeks.

Highly recommended: (All these are available at considerable discount from Amazon.com. Feel free to order them from there ASAP).

Performance: Live Art since 1960, by RoseLee Goldberg, with introduction by Laurie Anderson. Pub. Harry Abrams 1999. (mainly inspiring images.)

Out of print texts: (sometimes available from Amazon.com):

Out of Actions: between Performance and the Object 1949-1979, catalogue of an exhibition organized by Paul Schimmel, edited by Russell Ferguson, Thames and Hudson, 1998 (highly recommended and available from Amazon.com although out of print).

Out of Character: Rants, Raves and Monologues from Today's Top Performance Artists, edited by Mark Russell, pub. 1997, Bantam Doubleday Dell. (also out of print).

Assignments

Students are expected to complete 5-7 installations and/or performances as well as have work in public events. The number is not arbitrary; it anticipates what you are capable of achieving in a four month long semester. Each completed assignment must include a script or a drawing/plan of the installation following the completion of the work. Hand this to me the following week, and I will grade it with comments. These performance descriptions/scores should also include accreditation of any material appropriated. This visualization in two dimensions can take many forms depending on the action accomplished by the artist. Some suggestions: a single drawing or series of drawings and/or notations that describe space activated and employed during performance or installation, accompanied by a brief written statement of intention and also your experience during, and as a result of, doing the work. All works should be titled, announced in advance of doing the work, or at the end. It is essential to record performance and installation in still images and/or video. This is the only record there will be.

Finals

There may be two events of performance and installation, most likely at the CU Museum and at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art. (Dates to be announced as soon as I receive them.) Everyone is required to produce work for these events; each person is also required to help with set up and clean up, and to help each other with anything from technical support to putting on a costume. A chain is as strong as its weakest link; there's no need for weak links and no call for single links either. In the event we don't produce events for the public, there will be a final on the last day of class.

Materials

The materials for this class are: You, your experience, a choice of objects, physical matter, electric and electronic media, your courage, energy, vision and voice. Recommended: a still (digital) camera as well as a video camera.

Legal issues

There is no reason to produce illegal work for this class. If you want to break the law, do not do so during class time. Ignorance of the law is no excuse. Alcohol, drugs, cigarettes are not permitted in the building at all. There is also a law prohibiting the use of blood on campus. All of these rules must be obeyed. If you break the law on campus it directly involves me. If you break the law off campus but during class time, I am involved by implication. Please be respectful. Therefore, never interrupt other classes; education is a costly privilege.

Clean up

It is imperative that you clean up completely after your performances wherever you choose to work. This practice also applies to installation works. The classroom must be left clean and neat after class. You are as responsible for this as I am. If you do work on campus, or anywhere in natural surroundings, or even on concrete, you should also clean up. Materials such as acrylic paint, commercial foodstuffs and containers severely damage the environment in every kind of way – it is not acceptable or legal to destroy the earth.

Class Room set up and clean-up

I would very much appreciate help at the very beginning of class on those days when the room needs to be cleared. It is time consuming and backbreaking work. I will end class early on occasion so you stay to return chairs from the passage and help clean up after class. This is a communal effort. Thank you.

Equipment

It is imperative you return any equipment you use or borrow from Visual Resource Center in my name or in the name of this course. Your grade will be affected if you do not take full responsibility for this. If anything is lost, damaged or stolen you are responsible. This also holds true for borrowing the video camera or data projector available for the class. You are responsible for returning them to me if borrowed, I should not have to ask.

Documentation

It is urgently recommended that you document all your work from day one - please do not rely on me to do this for you, even though there is a camera for the class. Make necessary arrangements for someone to do this for you if it is too complicated to handle as well as perform/install. Performance is evanescent. Often it exists only in form of photographs and audience memory. It is highly recommended you have a video camera for this class and/or a still camera for documenting your work. Whether you have or have not used either one before this class is unimportant; both instruments are quickly learned and applied. I, or someone else, or people in the store, can tell you what tape to buy for what camera, or what film should be used for what lighting, etc. Documentation is a vital component of doing performance and installation art and, often, all that remains when enactment is over.

- Aesthetic and political considerations:
- Avoid shooting down on someone; it diminishes their power.
- Avoid shooting up from very low – this exaggerates and distorts performers' presence
- Try to position yourself on a level and keep a steady hand when shooting video or when shooting in low light. Do not turn video cameras on and off. Let it run smoothly during a work.
- When shooting video, try not to move around too much or zoom in and out too frequently.
- Keep the filming calm and steady, best of all use a tripod if there isn't too much movement in the work
- Always consider the space around. Ask yourself how much should be included especially when shooting outside. Context and environment is always important.
- If you are filming for someone else, try and get as much information as possible before you begin, such as space used, placement, entrances and exits.
- There is a class camera that people can take turns using to document throughout the semester. Any work for the group is to your credit in the class.
- Using a still camera: remember to use vertical framing as well as horizontal. Also, vary framing: shoot whole figure as well as close up, and torso. Back views are OK too.
- In documenting, it is not important to be highly creative, but more essential to create a clear visual record, that may or may not be dramatic.

Grades

Performances and Installations comprise 80% of your total grade; this INCLUDES producing performance scores and installation drawings. The remaining 20% will concern engagement, effort, attendance, attention to documentation of your work, consistency and a mystery factor. Students also grade each other.

Refer to these criteria as a means of assessing each other's work for critiques.

A

- excellent in every way:
- Original idea
- Effective use of space
- Technically competent
- Delivery of language
- Formally inventive
- Professional sound and/or music
- Incorporation of installation elements or props
- Strong composition visually and temporally
- Completely prepared

A-

Outstanding work but weak in one of the above

B+

Very good but could be weak in one or more areas, such as:

Idea/concept

Technical competence

Definition

Finish

B Good but not clear conceptually, needs more work.

B- Same as above but also reveals lack of preparedness.

C+ Adequate work but demonstrates lack of engagement and minimum effort.

C OK, average but little effort has been put into work.

C- Below average.

D Unacceptable work and demonstrates no effort.

Critiques

Critiques need to be energetic and supportive as we establish a shared space of communication and enquiry. As the semester progresses we will find a way to discuss performance and installation and a fresh vocabulary that articulates the quality we find in works. Criticism should be delivered accurately, and be accompanied by positive suggestion for improvement that is based on an understanding of the artist's intention, not your projection. A personal criterion for art is that transformation occurs - transformation of materials, yourself, an object, an idea, a space, an audience.

It is crucially important you speak honestly out of respect for your colleagues. Please refrain from delivering criticism of your classmates to me personally. It is not conducive to a positive, open community.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. More than three absences will impair your grade and lateness is also detrimental. Every time you are late, I will make a note, and after the third time your grade will be lowered by one half grade point. Again: poor professional habits lower class morale. It is important you attend the performances of other participants. Class is community. Illness requires a doctor's note and the only reason not to come to class is a fever or surgery. Doctors' appointments are not a legitimate reason for absence from class.

Instructor availability

I will be as available and accessible as possible. It is recommended you meet with me at least once during the semester, especially if you have questions or concerns about definitions of performance and installation. You can call me at home from 8a.m. to 9 p.m. if really necessary. See my blog address below under email communication.

Disability

Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of disability is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class.

Ecology

To protect Boulder Creek's sensitive ecosystem, wastewater must meet stringent quality standards for numerous pollutants. Pottery, painting and photography operations are of particular concern because these activities use materials possibly containing toxic metals which are not removed by water treatment plant processes, they are therefore retained in the environment. Such materials may not be placed in the sewer system. Rather they must be collected for proper hazardous waste disposal.

STANDARD CU POLICIES

E-Mail communication

It is now university policy and regulations that all students have CU e-mail address that can be used by faculty as an official means of communication. Students forward mail to other addresses at their own risk. There can be no excuse for not checking or receiving e-mails regarding course assignments, changes etc. I use e-mail regularly and, in order to avoid printing expenses, frequently e-mail information to you concerning the course. I will not engage in any kind of personal discussion on email or on the blog; this includes any problems you may have with me, the course or your grades.

And this is my blog: <http://spot.colorado.edu/~charteri/blog.html>

Disability

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner (in the first two weeks of class is reasonable) so that your needs may be addressed.

Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities.

Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, or www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices.

Religious Holidays

Campus policy requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, I ask only that you let me know when you are leaving for religious holidays so that I can make adjustments if necessary. I would expect that you not miss other classes.

See policy details: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

Classroom behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion, and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and nationalities. See policies at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and

http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code .

If you come to class in your pajamas or I any other from of inappropriate clothing, I will ask you to leave.

Sexual harassment

The University of Colorado Policy on Sexual Harassment applies to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been sexually harassed should contact the Office of Sexual Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the OSH and the campus resources available to assist individuals who believe they have been sexually harassed may be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment/>

Honor Code

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include cheating, plagiarism, academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. I will report all incidents of academic misconduct to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information may be found at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>

I subscribe to the University of Colorado's Honor Code. In response to slightest hint of plagiarism, students should note that their work may, at the discretion of the instructor, be evaluated through TurnItIn.com, a plagiarism service provided to all faculty at CU-Boulder; and that this service retains a copy of the submitted work for future comparisons.

In this course: I expect you to be ethical by crediting those who have helped you, or acknowledging authors or artists whose work you appropriate in the course of creating your own pieces. In class, I will comment openly on any works I consider obviously derivative of other artists' work, and I include student work in this statement. Be conscious when you are so affected by someone's work, you end up mimicking. On programs and posters and all public announcements, please give thanks and credit to galleries, museums or funding sources. This is a common courtesy and must be observed.

Preliminary assignments.

PLEASE DO NOT EVER DISTURB CLASSES ANYWHERE ON CAMPUS OR BLOCK TOILET ACCESS

- Bring a series of objects with a view to doing a spontaneous mini-installation in this room or elsewhere in the building, inside or outside. Possible themes: a portrait of yourself, an issue that is really bugging you right now. Bring anything that comes to mind in order to conjure and represent your ideas. Think contrast within your composition; it's an essential.
- First independent assignment to be prepared in advance. You may consult with me as necessary but best to take risks always and then discuss: occupy a space on campus, outside of/away from the art building. You may use yourself, a costume, boundaries you create, sound, lighting, rope, or any other objects to occupy the space. Ask yourself: am I transforming this space? How so? Am I animating the space? You may think geometrically, laterally or vertically or build something organically. There are roof tops, ditches round other buildings, the street, stagnant water, dry river beds, and streams, spaces on or around sculptures.... This is a large campus and there are many nooks and crannies that are secret, under-investigated and ignored. Take your pick. It can be an altogether public location like UMC, or a practice room.... The occupation can be on-going over a prolonged period of time, with or without your presence, or it can be a brief performance or installation.
- Perform a pet peeve. In private (or in public): Write a personal narrative, a whine about something that bugs you - a whine is the low end of criticism; it is basically inappropriate behavior. Read it from paper or, preferably, learn it and deliver as a text performance. Make good use of the opportunity to attack something you dislike intensely for probably quite subjective reasons. No need to be polite; be nasty and derisive. This is something that really bugs you. Use objects or props as needed. Work with whatever communicates your point. You can mock, imitate, sing, shout, lecture, whine, rap, rhyme, or simply gesture mutely, or thump, throw your body around, punch the air....