

# ART 251: Introduction to Art Media Studies

Fall 2002

Wednesdays 6-9 p.m.

Shemin Auditorium

Instructor: Joanna Spitzner

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Office : 005 Shaffer

Hours: Mon. 2:00-4:00, Wed. 3:30-5:30

and by appointment

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## Description

Introduction to Art Media Studies is a required course for all sophomore majors in the Department of Art Media Studies, which incorporates the areas of Computer Graphics, Film, Photography and Video. These areas have their own specificities, as well as many intersections--increasingly, the boundaries between distinct media become blurred. This course will explore various histories and ideas in relation to art media, its relationship to other art histories as well as to culture. The course will also include lectures by visiting artist, so that students will be exposed to the wide range of possibilities within art media.

## Course Objectives

As they are all relatively "new" art forms and are engaged in developing new ways of experiencing art, art media is also engaged with questions of technology, culture and ideas of how we interact with each other (as well as expanding what we think of as art). These media are also used in popular culture--Hollywood films, video games, TV, advertising--and have a strong relationship to them, whether as critique or alternative. We will be looking at work that engages in these issues, such as photography, performance, conceptual art, independent film and video, installations, telematic / networked art, sound art, radio, television, print media and comic books. We will have visiting artists from all different fields, and look at work that connects one type of media to another. The course will be organized around several topics, as follows:

- Technology's relationship to art and to society
- Intersections of media theory and cultural studies
- Material engagements
- The everyday and popular culture
- Language and semiotics
- Viewer and audience
- Subjectivities
- Hybrids and networks

## Course Requirements:

**Required Text:** There is a photocopied reader available at Electronic Publishing Center in Simms Hall, which contains the following:

**Walter Benjamin**, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."  
**Marshall McLuhan**, "The Medium is the Message," [excerpted], "Media Hot and Cold."  
**Martha Rosler**, "Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment."  
**Allan Kaprow**, "The Real Experiment."  
**Susan Sontag**, "In Plato's Cave."  
**Trinh T. Minh-ha**, "Mechanical Eye, Electronic Ear, and the Lure of Authenticity."  
**Donna J. Haraway**, "A Cyborg Manifesto" [excerpted]  
**Maria Fernandez**, "Postcolonial Media Theory."

There may be supplemental texts on particular subjects or artists. I will let you know where to get these texts (either online or on reserve at the library).

**A note about reading:** The amount of reading for this class is very reasonable. Please take your time with each text--you should read each text at least **twice**: once to gain an overall impression, and again to take notes and gain a more in-depth understanding of its ideas and arguments.

**Lab Fees:** Your lab fee is put toward bringing in visiting artists. The schedule for lectures will be announced within the next few weeks.

**Grades** for the class will be determined by attendance, class participation (yes, I do expect you to participate in class) and from **three short papers**. The topics for these papers will be announced later in the semester. Assignments are expected to be done on time. All written assignments should be grammatically correct--correct spelling, complete sentences--or else they will not be accepted.

**Attendance:** Attendance and punctuality is required. Missing a part of a class can set you behind, and missing work will affect your grade. Attendance will be taken at every class through sign-in sheets, and full attendance/roll call will be taken randomly. If you miss more than 2 classes, your grade will be dropped a letter for each absence. Three lates equals one absence. Bring in a medical excuse whenever necessary as it will count as an excused absence. Days needed for religious observance are also considered excused absences.

If you miss a class or anticipate an absence, please discuss it with me before the next class. You will be responsible for being prepared for the next class.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you have any special need, such as a learning disability or other impairment, please talk to me so that we can develop suitable arrangements. Confidentiality will be maintained.

*In compliance with Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Syracuse University is committed to ensure that "no otherwise qualified individual with a disability...shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity..." If you feel that you are a student who may need academic accommodations due to a disability, then you should immediately register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 804 University Avenue, Room 309--3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, (315) 443-4498 or (315) 443-1371 (TDD Only). ODS is the Syracuse University office that authorizes special accommodations for students with disabilities.*

Please feel that you can talk to me about any concern, question or idea.

## ART 251 Course Schedule

August 28	Introduction to class, topics Man with a Movie Camera, Vertov
Sept. 4	<b>Technology/ society</b> Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Sept.11	<b>Media Studies:</b> McLuhan, Baudrillard, the Postmodern Marshall McLuhan, " The Medium is the Message," [excerpted], "Media Hot and Cold."
Sept. 18	<b>Viewer / Audience</b> Reading producing Martha Rosler, "Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment. " Interactivity, Performance Art, Situationsits Consciousness /Culture Industry: Subversions/Alternatives
Sept. 25	<b>Languages / semiotics-- the text</b> Meaning , representation: Barthes Rhetoric of the Image Susan Sontag, "In Plato's Cave." Screenings: "La Jetee," Chris Marker; "Nostalgia," Hollis Frampton
Oct. 2	MAX KANDHOLA <i>First Paper Due</i>
Oct. 9	<b>Materials</b> Structuralist Film : T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G Paul Sharits (Flicker or Wave Cycle?) Body Art - Performance Video Aesthetics: Vasulkas
Oct. 16	IRIT BASTRY
Oct. 23	<b>Everyday and the Document?</b> Allan Kaprow, "The Real Experiment. "
Oct. 30	<b>Subjectivities</b> Minh-ha, "Mechanical Eye, Electronic Ear, and the Lure of Authenticity." Screening: Trinh Minh-ha, Jack Smith
Nov. 6	<b>Hybridities / Networks</b> Globalization, identity- Postcolonial Telematic Art Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" [excerpted] <i>Second Paper Due</i>
Nov. 13	PAMELA JENNING
Nov. 20	ERNESTO PUJOL
Dec 4.	<b>Posts / Wrap-up</b> Maria Fernandez, "Postcolonial Media Theory." <i>Final Paper Due</i>

## ART 251 Introduction to Art Media Studies

### Readings

**Walter Benjamin**, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*. ed. and trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books. 1968. p. 217-251

**Marshall McLuhan**, "The Medium is the Message," [excerpted] and "Media Hot and Cold," *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company. 1964. p. 23-45.

**Martha Rosler**, "Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment," *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*. ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer. New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc. 1990. p. 31-50.

**Allan Kaprow**, "The Real Experiment," *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*. Allan Kaprow, ed. Jeff Kelly. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1993. p. 201-218

**Susan Sontag**, "In Plato's Cave," *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1973. p. 3-24.

**Trinh T. Minh-ha**, "Mechanical Eye, Electronic Ear, and the Lure of Authenticity" *The Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*. New York: Routledge. 1991. p. 53-64.

**Donna J. Haraway**, "A Cyborg Manifesto" [excerpted] *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge. 1991. p. 149-182.

**Maria Fernandez**, "Postcolonial Media Theory," *Art Journal*, Vol. 58 No.3, Fall 1999, p. 58-73.

## Introduction to Art Media Studies Fall 2002 Visiting Artists Schedule

Shemin Auditorium, Shaffer Art Building

All Lectures start at 6 pm, unless otherwise noted and are open to the public

### October 2: Max Kandhola

Max Kandhola is a photographic artist interested in the illustration of life. As a British Indian, living in a European society, he is part of the second generation of Asians who are influencing the popular culture of contemporary Britain. Beginning with interests close to his heart, he has created ways of working with the image, which reflect his fascination with the body and passing of time, through the process itself and the final prints. Decay, loss and death lie at the core of much of his work. As a photographer he is actively creating cultures for how photographs are made and how we view them. Within his work he begins and ends with one constant -his own relationship with life.

#### Exhibition at the Robert B. Menschel Media Center

MAX KANDHOLA: ILLUSTRATION OF LIFE through October 13, 2002

For the past 10 years, Max Kandhola has been creating haunting images of death, decay and loss.

Having experienced the death of both parents, a brother and a close personal friend, the artist has used his photography as a method for processing grief. *Illustration of Life* confronts us with the trauma of seeing the body deteriorate. In the two years leading up to his father's death Kandhola spent much of his time in the hospital at his father's bedside, documenting traces of hair, blood, urine samples, and various body parts, including hands, feet and eyes, both closed and open. In carefully editing this large body of work the artist presents us with a series of moments to pause and look at the reality of death.

### October 16: Irit Batsry

Batsry was named Winner of Whitney Museum's Second Bucksbaum Award. Born in Israel, video and installation artist Irit Batsry has lived and worked in New York since 1983. Ms. Batsry's presentation in the 2002 Biennial Exhibition, *These Are Not My Images (Neither There Nor Here)*, 2000, is her first feature film. It belongs to an ongoing thematic project, *Neither There Nor Here*, begun in 1994. The 80-minute film, set in Southern India, shifts between documentary, experimental narrative, and personal essay. It is shot on video and digitally edited. The setting is both an actual location and a metaphor for remoteness. Batsry's characters -a Western filmmaker journeying through Southern India, a half-blind guide and a local filmmaker- all relate personal views on the meaning of place.

Ms. Batsry received her B.F.A. and Post Graduate Certificate from the Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem. She was also a teaching assistant at the Bezalel Academy and was an instructor and on-line editor at Film/Video Arts in New York City. Her single and multi-channel videos and installations have been shown extensively in 35 countries, and she was awarded the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1992 as well as the Grand Prix Video de Creation of the Societe Civile des Auteurs Multimedia, Paris, in 1996 and in 2001.

### October 30: Peggy Ahwesh

Peggy Ahwesh came of age in the 1970's with feminist politics and the experimental film underground. Her formative years were spent in Pittsburgh where she worked for horror director George Romero and as a film programmer at the Pittsburgh Filmmakers, Inc. Originally she worked in the Super 8mm film format and now works in film, video and digital media. A mid-career retrospective of her work called *Girls Beware!* was presented at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1997. Her works *The Deadman* (1990, made with Keith Sanborn), *Martina's Playhouse* (1989) and *Nocturne* (1998) are in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

Ahwesh's most recent video *She Puppet* (2001) premiered at the New York Video Festival and is screening in Animations, at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, the Rotterdam International Film Festival and the 2002 Whitney Biennial exhibition. Ahwesh is the recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship, a Creative Capital grant and the Cal Arts/Alpert Award

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## Introduction to Art Media Studies Fall 2002 Visiting Artists Schedule - continued

### **November 13: Pamela Jennings**

Pamela Jennings' work has explored issues of identity and otherness in contemporary western society. Her projects include the CD ROM "Solitaire: dream journal," a document of self-discovery that unfolds dense layers of heterogeneous material culled from personal and popular memory that are revealed with each successful move made on a checkers-like game interface. In the Art-I-Tronic sculpture "the book of ruins and desire," the user manipulates and explores an intimate world about desire, communication, and emptiness by physically interacting with the metal pages of the structure. The CD ROM "Narrative Structures for New Media," is a forum for defining the developing theory of parallelism in design thinking by comparing an eclectic group of western, non-western narrative and scientific theories. Her writings have appeared in *Felix: a Journal of Media Arts and Communication*, and *Leonardo: Journal of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology*. The book *Struggles for Representation: African American Film/Video/New Media Makers*, published in 2000, includes descriptions of Jennings' work in the historical canon of African American media makers. Her recently completed report, *New Media Arts/New Funding Models*, for the Creativity and Culture division of the Rockefeller Foundation is available on her web site.

Her work has been exhibited internationally, including the 1993 Whitney Biennial as part of Shu Lea Cheang's "Those Fluttering Objects of Desire," Video Art: The First 25 Years curated by the Museum of Modern Art, NY and the Lincoln Center Film and Video Festival. Pamela was recently invited to participate in the 1999 European Network for Intelligent Information Interfaces Community of the Future conference in Seina, Italy. She is a research fellow at the Center for Advanced Inquiry in Interactive Arts (CAiA), University of Wales College Newport, UK, under the directorship of Roy Ascott. More information at : <http://www.digital-bauhaus.com>

### **November 20: Ernesto Pujol**

Ernesto Pujol is an artist whose work crisscrosses boundaries among sculpture, painting, photography, and performance art. His imagery draws on religious art history as well as contemporary conceptual photographic practices. Born in Havana and raised in San Juan, Pujol has received grants from the NEA/Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation Regional Fellowship program, as well as the Pollack-Krasner, Joan Mitchell, and Cintas Foundations. His work is included in the public collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Museo Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City, the Casa de las Americas in Havana, and El Museo del Barrio in New York.

For more information, contact Joanna Spitzner at [joanna\\_spitzner@hotmail.com](mailto:joanna_spitzner@hotmail.com) or [jspitzne@syr.edu](mailto:jspitzne@syr.edu)

# ART 251: Introduction to Art Media Studies

## ASSIGNMENT 1

**DUE IN CLASS: Wednesday, October 9**

Papers should be **3-5 pages**, clearly written, typed & double-spaced. Any more than 5 grammatical or spelling errors and your paper will be returned. Please make sure your name is on your paper.

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Over the last month, we have been examining aspects of technology, its impact on culture, art, and politics, as well artists' engagement with these issues. Some topics that we have touched on include:

- Questions of technology: emancipating or repressive
- Changes in culture and experience/perception
- Nature and role of the Image in contemporary culture
- Originality / Uniqueness
- Authority /Tradition
- Artist/Audience/Producer
- Politics
- Technology as extension of the body, senses
- Media critique/ alternatives
- Characteristics of a medium
- Intersections of art and institutions

**Choose an artist/group** from the list below and research his/her work. Discuss a work or body of work by this artist in terms of the ideas presented in **ONE of the essays** you have read for this class. [You may connect to other readings and work; however, I want you to use one text and one work/body of work as your central focus]

- **Describe the work** you have chosen both in terms of its content and form / presentation. What is the artists' intention? What issues does this work engage in? Is the work rooted in a traditional notion of art or does it challenge tradition? What is its attitude toward technology? Politics?
- **Describe, in your own words, main points/ ideas in the essay** you have chosen that relate to the aspect of the work you are examining. Use your lecture notes as well to expand on the essay's ideas.
- **Bring together the work and the essay** to discuss aspects that you think are most important, disturbing, and/or illuminating. Is the artwork different from the ideas in the essay—do they agree or disagree, or both? Can the essay help to describe the work? Does the work help to understand the essay? What are the most important implications of either?

## **Artists**

Doug Aitken  
Ant Farm  
Aziz + Cucar  
Judith Barry  
Bernd and Hilla Becher  
Dara Birnbaum  
Bureau of Inverse Technology  
Nancy Burson  
Critical Art Ensemble  
Douglas Davis  
Deep Dish TV  
Diller + Scofidio  
Stan Douglas  
Marcel Duchamp  
Emergency Broadcast Network  
Felix Gonzalez-Torres  
Andreas Gursky  
Gary Hill  
Jenny Holzer  
Perry Hoberman  
Institute for Applied Autonomy  
jodi.org  
Joan Jonas  
Suzanne Lacy  
Les Levine  
Sherry Levine  
Kristin Lucas  
Lazlo Maholy-Nagy  
Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle  
Joseph Nechvtatal  
Nam June Paik  
Paper Tiger TV  
Richard Prince  
Alan Rath  
Man Ray  
Leni Reifenstahl  
Martha Rosler  
Julia Scher  
Situationist International  
Stelarc  
Survival Research Laboratories  
Bernard Tschumi  
Diana Thater  
Steina / Woody Vasulka  
Dziga Vertov  
Krystof Wodizcko

## **Essay**

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message," [excerpted], "Media Hot and Cold."

Martha Rosler, "Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment."

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You may select an artists not listed here, however, please check with me first: [jspitzne@syr.edu](mailto:jspitzne@syr.edu)



## **ART 251: Introduction to Art Media Studies**

Papers should be **3-5 pages**, clearly written, typed & double-spaced. Any more than 5 grammatical or spelling errors and your paper will be returned. Please make sure your name is on your paper, as well as which topic you have chosen to write about.

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### **ASSIGNMENT 2: DUE IN CLASS: Wednesday, November 6**

The second half of this class has explored how artists and theorist have been engaging in issues of materiality, subjectivity, and post colonialism. Choose a topic from the following list and develop a paper around it:

#### **The Everyday**

The line between art and life is very narrow for some artists (i.e. Allan Kaprow). Why are some artists producing work about everyday events, encounters, noticing? Does the everyday nature of some work make it more powerful or less? Is art a place of action or of contemplation? Choose 1-2 artists whose work is engaged in the everyday in some way and use them to examine this issue.

#### **Construction of narrative**

How are narrative and ideology related? Do narrative forms enforce or disrupt ideology? What role does ideology play in our lives? Are certain media better for certain kinds of narrative (i.e. are the narrative structures of film and the Internet the same or different?) Choose 2 artworks which use different narrative structures as examples to analyze in this paper.

#### **Subjectivities and identities**

Is our sense of self and identity inherent to us or constructed? What are the political ramifications of each view? What role does representation, language, technology, ideology play? How do the ideas of the Cyborg or the PostColonial subject relate to new technologies, new media? Choose the work of an artist which deals with subjectivity in some way to analyze the notion of subjectivity.

#### **Dominant Culture / art world subculture:**

What are the differences and similarities between art and popular culture? Historically, art is thought of as an advanced sphere (the avant-garde), where new ideas and constructs are developed and which later trickle down to a broader mainstream. Is this true? What relationships are there between, for example, Survival Research Laboratory and Battlebots, or Chris Burden and JackAss, or Jodi and video games? Conversely, what are the relationships between Pipilotti Rist and MTV, or Cindy Sherman and Hollywood films? What does each ask of the viewer? Choose the work of 1-2 artists and analyze its relationship to popular culture.

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Your paper should display your ability to think critically about an issue and relate it to some form of art. Use the questions I have presented above as a starting point for the development of your essay. Your ability show the relationship between theory and practice will be important in my evaluation of your paper.

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### **ASSIGNMENT 3: DUE: Wednesday, December 11**

Turn papers in to my mailbox in 102 Shaffer by **5 pm** on December 11.

Choose on of the following:

#### **Write a review of a visiting artist's work:**

Identify the issue(s) the artist is engaged in

Describe and analyze 2-3 works by the artist: its structure, form, and method

How does this work relate to topics in this course?

**Consider your response to the work.** What emotions does it raise? What ideas does it provoke? What about the work, in particular, do you find provocative? How does the artist manage to evoke these ideas and feelings?

**Consider the context of the work.** With what other works is it in conversation? What cultural or historical matters have influenced it? What cultural or historical matters does it seem to be addressing? If you don't know much about the context of the work, make a list of questions that you might wish to pursue. These questions will guide you in your research.

#### **Write a response paper to this class:**

This class has attempted to expose you to a broad range of work and critical theory within art and media. What ideas are the most powerful for you? Which ones questioned your ideas and experiences the most? Do not write an evaluation of the class, but rather what aspects of the class were personally important to you and why.

#### **Write an Artists' Statement:**

Write an essay that shows critical awareness of your interests and the development of work. Theorize your practice. Relate your methods to ideas presented in lectures, reading and artwork viewed in the class. What part of the class has been relevant to your work? Do you feel an affinity towards a particular visiting artist or work we've viewed in class?

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Although this paper can be more personal-- a chance for you to reflect on what you have learned—your writing should be clearly organized. Arguments and ideas must be supported by examples such as an artwork, an essay, or idea presented in class.