

## ***Art Intervention in Public Space Syllabus***

Instructor: Graham Coreil-Allen  
Contact: [graham@grahamprojects.com](mailto:graham@grahamprojects.com)  
Schedule:  
Teaching Intern:

### **Description:**

Through this course students will gain an introduction to the history of contemporary public art, become familiar with the current discourses surrounding public art, art intervention, and social critique of space, and have the opportunity to create a series of their own public interventions dealing with site-specificity, pedestrian psychology, and the political of place.

### **Goals:**

This hybrid seminar/studio course will be an opportunity for students to engage with the discourse cultivated and techniques used by interventionist artists working in public space. Students will engage in critical discourse regarding the value and potential of recent interventionist projects vis-à-vis the purposes and limitations of traditional public art. In addition, students will also learn how to analyze public space from social, architectural, and political perspectives. Lastly, students will execute a series of individual and group interventionist experiments in the conditions of architectural place, the contours shaping pedestrian mental experience, and the possibilities of addressing political issues through interventionist, socially engaged public art.

### **Assignment Topics:**

What is public art, what is place?  
Playful appropriation of urban form.  
Commuting versus the drift: the semiotics of city travel.  
Invisible upheaval – politics in situ.

### **Attendance:**

All students are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. Unexcused absences and or tardiness's will reflect poorly on your evaluation. Students are expected to have completed all out of class work requirements and readings in time for critiques and be prepared to participate in our weekly discussions.

### **Grading:**

This is a pass/fail course with narrative evaluations based on the following criteria:

- Documentation of the art process used for class projects, including additional research sources, notes, portfolios, sketch books, etc.
- Completion, effort, display, and quality of all projects and papers
- Active participation in class activities, discussions, readings, and critiques
- Individual contributions to class blog and flickr.
- Creative development.
- Attendance.

### **Grading Evaluation:**

This class is pass/fail. Students will be evaluated on their level of participation, progressive quality of discourse, and the sensitivity and success of their interventionist art projects. Each student will receive a narrative evaluation at the end of the semester reflecting on the student's overall participation and body of work.

## **Art Intervention in Public Space Schedule**

### **Week 1 INTRODUCTION / WHAT IS PLACE?**

Introduction to class, goals, and schedule.

Resources review: internet, library, and people.

Personal introductions exercise.

Lecture: What is place?

Reading assignment: Selections from *Invisible Cities*, by Italo Calvino

### **Week 2 WHAT IS PLACE?**

Student PPT presentations on individual work.

Reading discussion.

Lecture: What is traditional public art in place.

Reading assignment: *Place Memory and Urban Preservation*, by Dolores Hayden

### **Week 3 WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?**

Reading discussion.

Lecture: Site specificity in public art.

Project assignment: Personal Public Space Analysis.

Reading assignment: *Sitings of Public Art*, by Miwon Kwon

### **Week 4 WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?**

Reading discussion.

Video screening.

Project progress review / studio time.

Mount Vernon walking tour.

Reading assignment: *Fortress Los Angeles*, by Mike Davis.

### **Week 5 WHAT IS PLACE, WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?**

Reading discussion.

Presentations: Personal Public Space Analysis.

Group discussion on analyses.

Reading assignment: *Thirdspace*, by Edward Soja.

### **Week 6 PLAYFUL APPROPRIATION OF URBAN FORM**

Reading discussion.

Lecture: Playful appropriation of traditional form.

Project assignment, Part A – Individual appropriation of traditional form.

Reading assignment: Selections from *Living as Form*, Nato Thompson, Ed.

### **Week 7 PLAYFUL APPROPRIATION OF URBAN FORM**

Reading discussion.

Presentations/critique, Part A – Individual appropriation of traditional form.

Project assignment, Part B – Group appropriation of traditional form.

Reading assignment: Selections from *Living as Form*, Nato Thompson, Ed.

### **Week 8 PLAYFUL APPROPRIATION OF URBAN FORM**

Reading discussion.

Presentations/critique, Part B – Group appropriation of traditional form.

Reading assignment: *Formulary for a New Urbanism*, by Simon Sadler.

## ***Intervention in Public Space Schedule continued***

### **Week 9 COMMUTING VERSUS THE DRIFT: THE SEMIOTICS OF CITY TRAVEL**

Reading discussion.

Lecture: Commuting versus the drift: the semiotics of city travel.

Project assignment – Detournement in transit.

Reading assignment: *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*,  
by Robert Smithson.

### **Week 10 COMMUTING VERSUS THE DRIFT: THE SEMIOTICS OF CITY TRAVEL**

Reading discussion.

Project progress review / studio time.

Video screening.

Writing assignment: Choose a place in Baltimore by chance, go there, write 1000  
word narrative essay on how you got there and what you saw.

### **Week 11 COMMUTING VERSUS THE DRIFT: THE SEMIOTICS OF CITY TRAVEL**

Writing discussion.

Presentations/critique – Detournement in transit.

Reading assignment: *Right to the City*, by David Harvey.

### **Week 12 INVISIBLE UPHEAVAL – POLITICS IN SITU**

Reading discussion.

Lecture: Politics in situ.

Project assignment – Political poetics in place.

Plan for group show.

Reading assignment: *Lethal Theory*, by Eyal Weizman.

### **Week 13 THANKSGIVING BREAK- NO CLASS**

### **Week 14 INVISIBLE UPHEAVAL – POLITICS IN SITU**

Reading discussion.

Project progress review / studio time.

Video screening.

Publicize group show.

Writing assignment: Write a 500 word online manifesto for your final project. At  
least 100 words must be hyperlinked to supporting site, documents, etc.  
Post your manifesto to class blog.

### **Week 15 INVISIBLE UPHEAVAL – POLITICS IN SITU**

Writing discussion.

Project progress review / studio time.

Group show final preparations.

### **Week 16 FINAL CRITIQUES**

Group show.

Final group critiques.

Individual meetings.

Turn in final semester's project documentation: writing portfolio & DVD.

## ***Art Intervention in Public Space***

### **Annotated bibliography**

Calvino, Italo. (1972). *Invisible Cities*. San Diego: Harcourt, Inc..

The author traces a drifting narrative about Marco Polo's travels to the far reaching cities of the Tartar empire; and his subsequent descriptions to emperor Kublai Khan. Polo's urban vignettes are loosely categorized through the perspectives of memory, desire, design, the dead, the sky, trading and being hidden.

Sorkin, Michael (Ed.). (1992) *Variations on a theme park*. New York: Hill and Wang.

The editor draws together a collection of critical essays addressing the sinister and monotonous design of contemporary city and public space re/development. The collection of writings shows how seemingly benign urban situations of passive consumption are actually spectacular arrangements of anti-democratic authority and class control.

Soja, Edward. (1996). *Thirdspace*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Picking up where Henri Lefebvre left off, the author presents a philosophy on a practical analysis of space that he calls 'trialectics'. The author surveys previous postmodern critiques of space and place in relation to his thirdspace thesis. Composed of one part concrete science and one part conceptual signs, trialectics proves to be as mercurial as it is revolutionary.

Flam, Jack (Ed.). (1996). *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

The editor presents a linear compendium of earth artist and post-minimal, cultural critic Robert Smithson writings including statements, written art pieces, art reviews, philosophy, letters and poems.

Thompson, Nato (Ed.). (2012). *Living as Form*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Serving as a yearbook of socially engaged art and history of the New York City public art organization Creative Time, this volume showcases over 100 examples of artists and collectives operating in the urban realm to address urgent issues of social justice and quality of life.

Kwon, Miwon. (2002). *One Place After Another*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

The author presents an investigation of the development of site-specific art as it has developed since the 1960s and its creators overlap with other art movements such as performance art, conceptual art and institutional critique.

## **Art Intervention in Public Space**

### **Quotations**

*I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of the arcades' curves, and what kind of zinc scales cover the roofs; but I already know this would be the same as telling you nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of relationships of space and the events of its past..."*

- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

*Representational spaces, embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces).*

- Henri Lefebvre

*Urban form obediently follows repressive function.*

- Mike Davis

*I walked down a parking lot that covered the old railroad tracks which at one time ran through the middle of Passaic. That monumental parking lot divided the city in half, turning into a mirror and reflection. One never knew what side of the mirror one was on.*

- Robert Smithson

*Under the pavement the beach!*

- Anonymous, Paris 1968

## **ART PROBLEM EXAMPLE 2**

### **Class: *Art Intervention in Public Space* Project 3 – Detournement in Transit**

Related reading assignments:

*Formulary for a New Urbanism*, by Simon Sadler.

*A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*, by Robert Smithson.

#### **Guidelines**

- 1) Create a group proposal for a public project ideally located within a 10 minute walking distance from the Main building at MICA.
- 2) Proposed work should somehow appropriate and transform an existing element of public transportation communication, such as signs, billboards, traffic markings, flyers, architectural lighting, etc. The appropriation should communicate a “hidden truth” derived from the original element.
- 3) All detournements should be temporary in nature, and non-destructive of private property.
- 4) Artists should consider the durability of their projects, and take into consideration the possibility of severe adverse weather conditions, as well as the safety of their audience.
- 5) All proposals should be submitted in hard copy by [insert date].

#### **Proposal Requirements**

- 1) 150-250 word summary description, including
  - a. Message/goal
  - b. Intended audience(s)
  - c. Reasons behind site selection
  - d. How/form/medium/media
- 2) Location documentation, including image and small map
- 3) Project design drawings, including a basic plan and elevation, along with any additional photos or diagrams.
- 4) Duration and viewing schedule: explanation of how long the project will be in existence and when/how we will experience the piece.
- 5) List of materials needed for construction.
- 6) Other pertinent information to for better understanding the project idea.

#### **Presentations**

- 1) Presentations will take place on [insert date].
- 2) Each group will have 40 minutes to present work and respond to class questions.
- 3) Groups should take into account walking time when planning out their 40 minute presentations.
- 4) Groups are expected to fully document their work and class presentations. Make arrangements to have a video camera, tripod, digital camera, etc., on hand.