

AR 360 Practices and Politics of Contemporary Art: Documenta and Venice Biennial

Seminar Leader: Dorothea von Hantelmann

Course times: Wednesdays, 14.00-16.00 (with excursions to Kassel and Venice)

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11am-1pm (and by appointment)

Course Description

The highlight of this course will be two trips to major international art exhibitions: *documenta* in Kassel and the Venice Art Biennial. The Biennale di Venezia is the oldest world exhibition of visual art: founded in 1895 it figures as a model (and counter-model) for many of the 200 international biennials and triennials that exist today. Entitled “The Milk of Dreams,” the 2022 iteration focuses on three themes in particular: the representation of bodies and their metamorphoses; the relationship between individuals and technologies; the connection between bodies and the Earth. *Documenta*, held every five years, is considered the most important contemporary art exhibition worldwide. Up to 900,000 visitors come to Kassel expecting to encounter the current “state of art,” or even more: the current “state of thinking.” This year’s fifteenth edition is curated by Jakarta-based artists’ collective ruangrupa, who build their exhibition on aesthetic and economic principles such as collectivity, communal resource sharing, and equal allocation. Through visits to and discussion of these art events, we explore developments and individual works in contemporary art and examine the logistics, politics, framing, and effect of the major international art exhibition as a phenomenon. The excursions to Kassel and Venice will be supplemented by pre- and post-sessions in Berlin. During these we will visit, engage with the history, conceptual agenda and theoretical framework of the exhibitions, and discuss individual artworks.

Please note there is a fee of €520 for participation in this course to cover travel to and accommodation in Venice and Kassel. The trip to Venice will take place during fall break.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent

(e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2022: Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assessment

The course assessment consists of the overall seminar work (incl. two approx. 10-minute-long presentations on selected artworks in Kassel and Venice) and two essays (mid-term and final). See also “Grade Breakdown”.

Assignments

There are two essays for this course, one mid-term essay (ca. 2000 words) and one longer final essay (ca. 3000 words). A range of prompts will be provided in advance.

The mid-term essay is due on Monday, October 17, midnight.

The final essay is due on Wednesday, December 14, midnight.

Essays should be sent via email and include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your essays can be discussed in individual tutorials.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late.

Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion.

Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors’ office hours.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar Grade = Attendance (oral presentations / participation in discussions)

Seminar Grade: 45% (20% / 25%)

Essay 1: 20 %

Essay 2: 35 %

Schedule

Note: All reading assignments will be uploaded on google classroom.

Week 1

31.08., 14:00-16:00

Introduction: Contemporary Art and Curation

To prepare: Please post the name of a contemporary artwork and artist that you consider a 'game changer' (or that has been especially significant for you) on this padlet:

<https://padlet.com/dvonhantelmann/Bookmarks>

Think of the reasons for your choice and be prepared to present/discuss them in class.

Week 2

07.09., 14:00-16:00

Excursion to the 12th Berlin Biennial

Meeting 2pm at KW (Auguststraße 69)

To prepare: watch **Conversations | Extractive Legacies: Decolonial Perspectives — 12th Berlin Biennale**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywu84dU-_AY

Week 3

14.09., 14:00 – 16:00

Introduction: the history and significance of Documenta (part I)

Reading:

- Dorothee Wierling, “Documenta in its Times: A Chronology”
- Julia Voss, “How documenta 1955 Almost Never Happened”
- Lars Bang Larsen, “The Cultural and Political Programme of ‘the West’ at documenta”

Week 4

21.09., 14:00 – 16:00

Introduction: the history and significance of Documenta (part II)

Reading/please watch:

- Catherine David, “On the Potential of Critical Art”
- Ute Meta Bauer, Talk on Documenta 11:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxfaOO15DIA&t=2224s>
- documenta fifteen handbook, page 8-40.

23.09. – 25.09.

Excursion to Documenta in Kassel.

All organizational details will be communicated in the first seminar session.

Week 5

28.09. 14:00 – 16:00

Debrief discussion documenta

Reading:

- <https://www.dw.com/en/antisemitism-debate-rages-at-documenta-art-fair/a-62202383>
https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2022/06/220618-documenta-Englisch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile
- <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/467337/antisemitism-accusations-against-documenta-a-scandal-about-a-rumor>

Week 6

No class

Week 7

12.10., 14:00 - 16:00

Introduction: history and significance of the Venice Biennial

Reading:

- Caroline A. Jones, "Biennial Culture: A Longer History", in: *The Biennial Reader*, ed. by Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal, Solveig Ovstebo, Ostfildern 2010, pp. 67-87

<http://www.labiennale.org/en/biennale/history/>

To watch:

- <https://vimeo.com/126659029>

Week 8

19.10., 14:00 – 16:00

Venice Biennale 2022 “The Milk of Dreams”

Readings:

- “The Milk of Dreams. Cecilia Alemani interviewed by Marta Papini (Cat. Venice Biennale, pp. 24-37)
- Alyce Mahon, “Daughters of the Minotaur: Women Surrealists’ Re-Enchantment of the World” (Cat. Venice Biennale, pp. 88-92)
- Rosi Braidotti, “Posthuman Critical Theory” (Cat. Venice Biennale, pp. 215-223)
- Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction” (Cat. Venice Biennale, pp. 417-421)

- Donna J. Haraway, “Sowing Worlds. A Seed Bag For Terraforming with Earth Others” (Cat. Venice Biennale, pp. 422-427)

24.10. - 30.10. Fall Break

Excursion to Venice Oct. 24 to Oct. 28

Week 9

02.11., 14:00 – 16:00

Debrief Venice Biennale

Readings:

- Chloe Wyma “Chimerical Romance” (Review Venice Biennale)
- Daniel Birnbaum, “Say it with – Bolts” (Review Venice Biennale)
- Ken Okiishi on “Human Brains: It begins with an Idea” (Review Fondazione Prada)

Week 10

09.11., 14:00 – 16:00

Conversation with Ana Teixeira Pinto, Curator and Cultural Theorist (Co-curator of 12th Berlin Biennial)

Reading:

- <https://www.artforum.com/slant/regarding-torture-at-the-berlin-biennale-88836>

Week 11

16.11., 14:00 – 16:00

Visit of the exhibition Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster at Esther Schipper Gallery

Week 12

23.11., 14:00 – 16:00

Open Session (topic of this class will be communicated at a later point).

Week 13

30.11., 14:00 – 16:00

Final class, wrap-up