

# AH320 The Exhibition – A New Western Ritual?

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

## **Course Description**

Museums and exhibitions derive their social function from the fact that they uphold and certain values and concepts within society. Looking at art spaces historically as a series of decisive moments of transformation, we will explore the format of the exhibition as a modern ritual site in which central aspects of the modern socio-economic order – such as the individual, the object, or notions of progress – were, and continue to be, practiced and cultivated. What can the early modern cabinets of curiosities in the 16th century tell us about the emergence of an initial consumer culture? Can we retrace the entire history of individualization by following the increase of wall space between paintings in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century galleries? And what does the current transformation of white cubes into time-based experiential spaces tell us about early 21<sup>st</sup>-century societies? Combining historical and theoretical approaches, we'll draw from sources of museum history, anthropology, and cultural history in order to understand the changing social role of art institutions throughout history. Looking at utopian institutional models of the 1960s and a selection of contemporary approaches, we will then also discuss the parameters of new arts institutions for today. We may find that the transformations of our epoch are asking for a new kind of ritual, to follow and perhaps replace that of the exhibition.

## **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 may 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.

### **Assessment and Assignments**

Each student must give one classroom presentation and write two papers. The first one will be a theoretical essay, the second will be a shorter reflection in addition to a design of a new ritual. The mid-term essay is due on October 20, midnight.

The final essay is due on Dec 15, midnight.

Essays should 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.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

### **Grade Breakdown**

The grade breakdown for this seminar will be as follows:

Final reflection and ritual project (1000 words): 40%

Midterm essay (3000 words): 30%

Participation (including one classroom presentation): 30%

## **Schedule**

### **Week 1**

04/09, Monday, 14 – 17.15

#### **Introduction: Ritual gatherings**

- What is a ritual? What is the social significance of rituals? Can one 'invent' a ritual? How do rituals change?

**Week 2**

Attention: FIELDTRIP 09/09, SATURDAY, 11 – 14:00  
(Monday, 11/09, no class)

**Collective and individual formats of gatherings: Museum & Theater**

**Week 3**

Attention: FIELDTRIP 17/09, SUNDAY, 15 – 18:00

**Visit of the exhibition “High Spirits” at Monopol, Provinzstraße 40-44**

(Monday, 18/09, no class)

**Week 4**

25/09, Monday, 14 – 17.15

**Early Modern Prefigurations**

Reading:

- Krzysztof Pomian, “The Age of Curiosity” (from: Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800, Polity Press 1990, pp. 45-65)

**Week 5**

02/10, Monday, 14 – 17.15

**The Exhibitionary Complex**

Reading:

- Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex” (from: Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum, Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago (eds.), Ashgate 2004, pp. 413-442)
- Helen Rees Leahy, “Making of the Social Body” (from: Museum Bodies. The Politics and Practices of Visiting and Viewing, Ashgate 2012, pp.19-44)

**Week 6**

09/10, Monday, 14 – 17.15

**The Art-Industrial-Complex**

Reading:

- The Great Exhibition, 1851. A sourcebook, Jonathan Shears (ed.), Manchester University Press 2017  
(Sections from various chapters)

**Week 7**

16/10, Monday, 14 – 17.15

**The White Cube and its counter-models: Case Study MoMA and documenta 1**

**Reading:**

- Brian O’Doherty, “Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space”
- Charlotte Klonk: “The Spectator as Educated Consumer” (from: Spaces of Experience, Yale University Press 2009, pp. 135-173)

**Week 8**

30/10, Monday, 14-17.15

Field Trip, exhibition visit (tbc)

**Week 9**

06/11, Monday, 14 – 17.15

**Margaret Mead**

**Reading:**

- Margaret Mead, „Art and Reality: From the Standpoint of Cultural Anthropology“

**Week 10**

13/11, Monday, 14 – 17.15

**Participation (Robert Morris)**

**To prepare:**

- Research about participation in art

**Week 11**

20/11, Monday, 14 – 17.15

**The Fun Palace**

**Reading:**

- Stanley Mathews, “The Fun Palace as Virtual Architecture: Cedric Price and the Practices of Indeterminacy”

**Week 12**

ATTENTION: 26/11, SUNDAY, 14 – 17.15

(Monday, 27/11, no class)

**Field Trip to Humboldt Forum, visit of a tea ceremony**

**Week 13**

04/12, Monday, 14 – 17.15

**Individual meetings, work on your ritual projects**

**Week 14**

11/12, Monday, 14 – 17.15

**Wrap-Up, presentation of ritual projects**