

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 19th- and 20th-century galleries? And what does the current transformation of white cubes into time-based experiential spaces tell us about early 21st-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.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

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 March 14, midnight.

Your proposal of a new ritual will be presented in our last class on May 5, along with your reflection.

Essays should include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your essays and rituals 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

27/01, 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?
- The ritual of the exhibition, what does that mean?
- A demonstration

Week 2

03/02, Monday, 14 – 17.15 FIELDTRIP: Berliner Ensemble

Meeting 3pm

Collective formats of gathering: Theater

Week 3

ATTENTION, SPECIAL DATE 15/02, Saturday, 14-17.15 FIELDTRIP: Alte Nationalgalerie
Meeting: 3pm

Individual formats of gathering: Museum

Week 4

17/02, 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

24/02, 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

03/03, 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

10/03, 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

ATTENTION 22/03, SATURDAY, 14-17.15

Field Trip, “Nan Goldin” at Neue Nationalgalerie

Week 9

24/03, Monday, 14 – 17.15

Margaret Mead

Reading:

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

Week 10

31/03, Monday, 14 – 17.15

Participation (Robert Morris)

To prepare:

- Research about participation in art

Week 11

07/04, Monday, 14 – 17.15

The Fun Palace

Reading:

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

- **Spring Break** -

Week 12

21/04, Easter Monday, no class (public holiday)

ATTENTION: 27/04, SUNDAY, 14.30

Field Trip to Humboldt Forum, visit of a tea ceremony
(Monday, 27/11, no class)

Week 13

28/04, Monday, 14 – 17.15

Individual online meetings, work on your ritual projects

Week 14

05/05, Monday, 14 – 17.15

Wrap-Up, presentation of ritual projects