

ARTH/CHTE386 The art and craft of curating: making sense of art in the 21st century

FALL 2019

Course Instructor: Athena Hadji

HOURS AVAILABLE: by
appointment

Class Meetings: Mon-Wed 11:00-12:35

Course Description

The course suggests an inquiry into the world of curating art in the 21st century. The course combines theory and history of curating with hands-on experience in curating a project with the Professor's guidance. The term curating is derived from Latin verb *curare* which translates as to heal/ to take care of/ to attend to. The course unravels the mechanisms through which curators make exhibitions happen whether they re-imagine contexts for existing works of art and/ or commission new artworks specifically produced/ installed for a show. Emphasis is placed on contemporary art and its curators, institutions, premises and principles, starting with the concept of the *curatorial*. Themes explored are, among others, history of museums and art institutions; theories of curating; the relationship between curator and artist; the premise of the white cube vs. the re-activation of historical spaces; curator-as-artist/ artist-as-curator; curator-artist-spectator. With visits to art spaces, from national museums, to privately owned galleries, the students will learn first-hand how to curate an exhibition, covering all aspects, from coming up with a curatorial concept, to more practical issues, such as fund-raising, promotion, liaising with artists and galleries, insurance, budget, installing art and all constituent elements of a successful show.

Course Resources and Activities

To investigate the issues outlined above, we will read; analyze and interpret texts, evidence, and experience; work and think with others; visit sites and venues; and write as follows:

Reading: We will read a wide variety of texts, from Johan Joachim Winckelmann to Hans Ulrich Obrist; from theoretical treatises to exhibition catalogs; from academic articles to curator interviews.

Analyzing and interpreting: We will critically analyze and interpret our first-hand experience from scheduled class visits (see below) to galleries, artist studios and museums in Athens and beyond (National Museum of Contemporary Art; Museum of Cycladic Art; The Breeder Gallery; Eleni Koronaiou Gallery; State of Concept Gallery; The Athens Biennale), where we will study curated projects. Our tools will be field notes and discussion on site followed by discussion in class.

Working and thinking with others: Art is a collective endeavor, so is education. Building the culture of the class so that genuine inquiry is possible will take all of our efforts. Because we rely on everyone's contributions, the course will follow the pedagogy of a seminar, focused on motivation for participation in an atmosphere where all (informed) opinions are encouraged.

Writing: This course involves a significant amount of writing of different kinds. You will take short field notes during our site visits, as mentioned above; you will write brief reports on selected weekly readings. You will take scheduled written midterm and final exams. Finally, you will compose a hypothetical exhibition term project to be presented in class (see below) and submitted in written form.

Presentations: Toward the end of the semester, you will present your term project, in which, utilizing the theoretical and methodological tools you will have acquired in class, you will curate an imaginary exhibition where (in an ideal world) budget and venue are non-issues.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed ideally for students of archaeology, art history, fine arts, architecture, anthropology, design, communication, business, or any discipline with interest in the arts and art institutions.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- 1) Possess a firm knowledge of how curating, curators and the curatorial came about
- 2) Reflect on the role of the curator and the artist in 21st century art
- 3) Analyze the parameters that contribute to the making and staging of a contemporary art show
- 4) Critically assess and evaluate exhibitions and curatorial projects whether in museums and art institutions or elsewhere
- 5) Position themselves on the debate about art and society in the world of today

Course Requirements

- Midterm and Final exams
- Participation with active contribution to each week's topic. This involves critically processing assigned readings and commenting on their content during class
- An average of 100 pages of reading per week
- At least 10-15 pages of research work. If spacing is 1,5 and font size 12 Times New Roman, 4,000 words are 12,5 pages. This comprises short reports, field notes and the term project
- Term project presentation in class
- Deadlines are listed below.

Assignments

To receive credit for an assignment, you must turn it in at the beginning of class on the due date, unless otherwise noted. No late assignments will be accepted.

TERM PROJECT-PRESENTATION-PAPER

TOPIC: Curate an art exhibition. Presentation of a coherent comprehensive curator proposal.

Paper submitted to the Professor (see below "Due Dates")

INSTRUCTIONS AND DESCRIPTION

Work will be conducted in groups of 2 students. Both members of each group will be graded on an equal basis, therefore it is important that work is divided equally from the beginning.

Due Dates:

- Deadline I: send group registration email for class presentation with provisional exhibition project title.
- Deadline II: 30-minute class presentation; dates for each group will be assigned on a priority basis, according to when group registration emails are received by the Professor (see above).
- Deadline III: Final work, paper submitted at the beginning of class.

Special Projects: field notes and reports.

Exams:

- Midterm
- Final

Grading and Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

Midterm exam: 15%

Final exam: 30%

Term project presentation and paper: 40%

Participation and contribution with field notes and reports: 15%

Grades are intended to give you a sense of the quality of a particular piece of work: roughly speaking, a B means that you have done a good job with the writing, the ideas, and the organization of the work; a C conveys that the work lacks some important qualities and has some problems, while an A means that the work is exemplary in some key ways: the writing is particularly clear, the ideas thoroughly treated, the organization of the presentation well considered and effective.

Class Participation: Your attendance and in class critically commenting and analysis of assigned texts and ideas presented – is vitally important to your success in this course.

Use of Laptops: In-class or on-site use of laptops and other devices is permitted if that facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if there are not used for class-related work. However, use of mobile phones during class and class visits is not permitted.

Attendance: Students are expected to report for classes promptly. CYA regards attendance in class and on-site as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately in the Student Affairs Office.

Policy on Original Work: Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own, original work. Any excerpts from the work of others must be clearly identified as a quotation, and a proper citation provided. (Check Student handbook, pg 9)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Director of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

Books, Course Materials, Moodle

Books (see Bibliography in the last section of the syllabus)

Websites:

Journals, platforms, fora

1. e-flux
<http://www.e-flux.com/>
2. frieze
<https://frieze.com/>
3. artforum
<https://www.artforum.com/>
4. mousse
<http://moussemagazine.it/>
5. on curating
<http://www.on-curating.org/issues.html>

Museums, galleries, institutions

1. National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens
<http://www.emst.gr/>
2. The Breeder Gallery
<http://thebreedersystem.com/>
3. State of Concept
<https://www.stateofconcept.org/>
4. Eleni Koronaïou Gallery
<http://www.koroneougallery.com/>
5. Ileana Tounta Gallery
<https://art-tounta.gr/>

6. Vorres Museum

<http://www.vorresmuseum.gr/>

7. National Archaeological Museum

<http://www.namuseum.gr/>

8. Alex Mylona Museum

<http://mouseioalexmylona.blogspot.gr/>

9. State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki

<http://www.greekstatemuseum.com/kmst/index.html>

10. Apexart

<https://apexart.org/>

11. NEON

<http://neon.org.gr/en/>

12. DESTE Foundation

<http://www.deste.gr>

Exhibitions and Fairs

1. Documenta 14

<http://www.documenta14.de/en/>

2. The Venice Biennale

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

3. Istanbul Biennale

<http://15b.iksv.org/home>

4. Art Athina

<http://www.art-athina.gr/index.php/el/>

5. Athens Biennale

<http://athensbiennale.org/>

6. Frieze Art Fairs

<https://frieze.com/fairs>

Artists

1. Marina Abramovic Institute

<https://mai.art/>

2. Lydia Dambassina

<http://www.lydiadambassina.com/>

3. Tracey Emin

<http://www.traceyeminstudio.com/>

Videos:

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 1972

Marina Abramovic, *Balkan Baroque*, 1977

The way I think, an interview with George Condo, the Louisiana Chanel

Class Schedule

Class Day	Day/Date	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due
Mon Sep 9		<p>Introduction: course specifics and requirements Short library visit and orientation</p> <p><i>Description</i> We begin the course by thoroughly examining the syllabus, analyzing the structure, aims, requirements and components of the course.</p> <p><i>Required reading</i> No required reading for the first class</p>
Wed Sep 11		<p>Curator collection spectator</p> <p><i>Description</i> We enter the world of curating contemporary art by introducing basic concepts, derivations and stakeholders in the world of curating art. Why do we make a big deal about curating? Does art need to be curated? Is there anything that is <i>not</i> curated anymore? We will address these questions and pave the way to the theory and history sessions that follow in the first part of the course.</p> <p><i>Required reading</i> Tokumitsu 2015, https://newrepublic.com/article/122589/when-did-we-all-become-curators Berger 1972, Ch. 1: 7-34; Ranciere 2007</p> <p><i>Recommended reading</i> Züskind, 1985</p> <p><i>Short assignment</i> What can be curated? Short (two-paragraph) essay due at the beginning of next class (Sep. 16)</p>
Mon Sep 16		<p>Presentation and representation, a visual understanding of the world Aesthetics and style: meanings and derivations, contemporary understandings</p> <p><i>Description</i> Although contemporary art and its curatorial process transcend the world of the image, it is a common understanding that images proliferate both in our daily life and art production. In today's class we will discuss visual language, presentation and representation, the concept of aesthetics, of paramount importance in the History of Art since its inception, and the concept of style.</p> <p><i>Required reading</i> Sturken, M. and L. Cartwright: 1-35; O' Doherty 1986, Ch. 2: 35-64</p> <p><i>Recommended reading</i> O' Doherty 1986, Ch. 3: 65-86</p>
Mon Sep 23		<p>History of collections and museums</p> <p><i>Description</i> How did collecting come about? The history of collections, exhibitions and their host institutions takes us to an unexpected journey all the way back to</p>

Classical Athens and the *Pinakothek* on the Athenian Acropolis. Subsequently, via Rome, the Renaissance, papal collections, cabinets of curiosities and seafarers bringing back exotica, we will witness the birth of the National Museum in the 19th century.

Required reading

Bennett, 1988; Bennett 1995, Ch. 3: 91-105

Recommended reading

Mango, 1963

**Wed
Sep
25**

20th century: modernism, post- and the emergence of contemporary art

Description

We begin with the emergence of modern art and the creation and construction of a new kind of museum to accommodate this breakthrough in art: the modern art museum and the premise of the white cube.

Required reading

O' Doherty 1986, Introduction: 6-12; Ch. 1: 13-34; Draxler in Martinon 2013: 163-168

**Mon
Sep
30**

21th century museums for contemporary art

Description

What constitutes a contemporary art museum in the 21st century? From National Museums of Contemporary Art to private enterprises to collections on view only occasionally, we discuss the institutions and their current variables.

Required reading

Hughes 2005; Dasgupta in Martinon 2013: 173-182; Madani in Martinon 2013: 197-206

**Wed
Oct 2**

Pioneers: the emergence of art curator

Description

A class about the people behind the exhibitions. Every human endeavor has its pioneers, art curating is no exception. With none other than Hans Ulrich Obrist as our guide, we will meet the curators who acted as visionaries, in order for us, 21st century curators, to enjoy an unlimited field of inspiration, creation and communication with artists and audiences alike.

Required reading

Esche in Martinon 2013: 241-244; Obrist 2011, PREFACE AND POSTFACE; selection of 5 interviews

Recommended reading

Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, The Guardian, 2014

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/23/hans-ulrich-obrist-art-curator>

Short Assignment

Are there any common threads/ trends among the interviewed pioneers in the interviews you selected to read? A short essay on the things you observed (two paragraphs), due at the beginning of next class (Oct. 4)

Mon
Oct 7

Institutions and exhibitions of contemporary art: the stakeholders

Description

Where is contemporary art stored? Where and how is it displayed and studied? Where can one buy it if one so wishes? We will explore the world of contemporary art institutions, major private collections, art initiatives, and important art fairs around the world.

Required reading

Groys 2009; Blazwick in Marincola 2006: 118-133; O' Neill 2012, Ch. 2: 51-86.

Recommended reading

Altshuler in Altshuler 2005: 1-9

Wed
Oct 9

Principles of curating

Description

We will discuss and critically analyze the most influential trends in curating art since the 1960s, with an emphasis on current developments and future directions. Genres explored include, among others, monographic, thematic and collection exhibitions, projects, performances, (new) media-based and interactive approaches. We will explore the social dimensions of curating, based on the phenomenon of collaborative art and how to curate it.

Required reading

Bismarck et al. in Bismarck 2012: 21-40; Gronemeyer 2018, Introduction: 11-20; Smith 2012: 17-56; O' Neill 2012, Ch. 3: 87-130; Martinon in Martinon 2013: 25-34; Cramerotti and Martinon in Martinon 2013: 35-40

Recommended reading

Gaskill 2011; Smith 2012: 57-100; Kester 2012, Introduction: 1-17; Rogoff in Martinon 2013: 41-48

Fri
Oct.
11

Film screening

1. The Artist is Present (2012)

Description

Required film viewing

Waiting for the Artist (2019)

Watch online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QUUtjdOubE>

Short Assignment

Critically comment on the two films watched. Is there something about the oeuvre of Marina Abramovic that justifies the *Documentary Now* episode? Emphasis should be given on the role of Abramovic as curator not solely of her art, but also of her life and ultimately herself.

(Due Oct. 30 at the beginning of class)

Mon
Oct
14

How are curators made? Programs, studies, backgrounds

Description

After a month-long inquiry into what curating is, where curators work, and what they do, it is now time to see curators-in-the-making. There is an ongoing debate on the necessity of curatorial studies programs, but also there is a proliferation thereof, clearly indicating that curators can be and are made through formal *curatorial* education. We will explore curricula and principles of curatorial studies and bring into class the debate on whether a curator is 'born' or made. From the independent curator to the global curator, curator as jet-set flaneur (Rugoff 1999)

Required reading

Smith 2012: 141-176; Bauer in O' Neill and Wilson 2010: 97-107; Beech in O' Neill and Wilson 2010: 47-60; Milevska in Martinon 2013: 65-72

Recommended reading

Lange, 2011, <https://frieze.com/article/look-learn>

Short assignment

In-class debate: are curators born or made? We will make two groups and argue for and against the necessity of curatorial studies curricula. Each group will have ten minutes to prepare their arguments, and ten minutes to present. Group notes will be handed in at the end of class.

Wed
Oct
16

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Mon
Oct
21

MIDTERM EXAM

**Wed
Oct
30** **Inside the curator's mind I: how an exhibition is conceived**

Description

The birth of the curatorial concept. How does a curator decide upon an idea for an exhibition? How can one know that this idea is viable and can support the legitimacy of – yet another – art show? What resources can a curator draw from? Where is inspiration to be found?

Required reading

Crimp 1984; O' Neill in Rugg and Sedgwick 2007: 13-75; Hylton in Rugg and Sedgwick 2007: 113-127

**Mon
Nov
4** **Inside the curator's mind II: how an exhibition is shaped and implemented**

Description

The second part of the discussion on the multifaceted endeavor that is called “curating” revolves around the more practical aspects: liaison with artists and representing galleries; artwork loans; artwork commissions; fund raising; preparing an application; budget making; insurance and installation; a down-to-earth approach with practical advice on how to survive making an exhibition happen

Required reading

Rendell in Rugg and Sedgwick 2007: 59-76; Dorsett in Rugg and Sedgwick 2007: 77-87

Recommended reading

Buchan in Rugg and Sedgwick 2007: 131-145

**Mon
Nov
11** **Case study of a contemporary art exhibition: *The Body is Victory and Defeat of Dreams* on Lesvos, Molivos Municipal Art Gallery, Lesvos**

Description

We discuss and critically analyze the Professor's group show, staged at 2017, aiming at unraveling the curatorial process in its various parameters. We compare concepts, themes, and processes with Tuesday's class case study. Aim is to understand in action the range of a curator's work.

Required reading

Hadji, 2017

**Wed
Nov
13** **EMST: architecture, layout, collection, organizing principles**

Description

We inaugurate the second part of the course, site visits, with a visit to the National Museum of Contemporary Art of Greece. We learn about the history of the formerly industrial building, its iconic architecture, the project and adventure of converting it into a contemporary art museum, iconic exhibitions, its collection and former temporary incarnations (such as the Athens Conservatory and the Athens Concert Hall).

Required reading

Smith 2012: 177-248

**Mon
Nov
18**

Contemporary art galleries and spaces in Athens: site visit I

Description

TBA. Fall 2019 contemporary art shows in Athens will be announced in late summer/ early Fall.

Required reading

Barrett 2000, Ch. 1: 1-27; Ch. 2: 29-62

**Wed
Nov
20**

Contemporary art galleries and spaces in Athens: site visit II

Description

TBA (see above)

**Mon
Dec
2**

Contemporary art and public display

Description

We will visit public spaces that offer free access to and unlimited views of contemporary art in the city of Athens, from Kotzias Square to the Athens Concert Hall and selected stations of the Athens metro (subway) system, and observe how curatorial approaches to art placed in public spaces differs.

Required reading

Smith 2012: 101-140; Jeffery in Jeffery 2015: 7-16; Jeffery in Jeffery 2015: 177-192; Vidokle 2010; Kwon 2012, Ch. 3: 56-99

Recommended reading

Kwon 2012, Ch.6: 156-167

Short assignment

Utilizing the theoretical and methodological tools you have learnt in class so far, choose one of the works we visited and describe the curatorial approach taken in two paragraphs.

Assignments due at the beginning of next class.

**Wed
Dec
4**

Term project presentation, class discussion and evaluation

Description

As stated above, term project will revolve around a hypothetical exhibition. Detailed instructions for presentation and project write-up will be uploaded on moodle well in advance, so that you can prepare accordingly. Part of the presentation of each group is the other groups' active commentary and evaluation.

Assignment for non-presenting groups

Take notes as presentations unfold, make comments, evaluate and give a mock grade with substantiation. To be handed to the Professor at the end of class

**Mon
Dec
9**

Term project presentation, class discussion and evaluation

Description

As stated above, term project will revolve around a hypothetical exhibition.

Detailed instructions for presentation and project write-up will be uploaded on moodle well in advance, so that you can prepare accordingly. Part of the presentation of each group is the other groups' active commentary and evaluation.

Assignment for non-presenting groups

Take notes as presentations unfold, make comments, evaluate and give a mock grade with substantiation. To be handed to the Professor at the end of class

**Wed
Dec
11**

Final exam review

**Mon
Dec
16**

Final exam

*Assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on due date, unless noted otherwise on syllabus

Course schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and in keeping up to date with current research

Course Readings: Full Bibliography

- Altshuler, B. (ed.) 2005. *Collecting the New: Museums and Contemporary Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Barrett, T. 2000. *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Bennett, T. 1988. The Exhibitionary Complex. *New Formations* 4: 73-102.
- Bennett, T. 1995. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Berger, J. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Crimp, D. 1984. "The Art of Exhibition", *October* 30: 49-81.
- Gaskill, K. 2011. Curatorial cultures : considering dynamic curatorial practice. In: ISEA - The 17th International Symposium on Electronic Art, Istanbul, Turkey, 14-21 September 2011. (Unpublished), <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/4441/>
- Gronemeyer, W. 2018. *The Curatorial Complex: Social Dimensions of Knowledge Production*. Dusseldorf: Wilhelm Fink.
- Groys, B. 2009. The Politics of Installation. *e-flux* 2, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/02/68504/politics-of-installation/>
- Hadji, A. 2017. *The Body is Victory and Defeat of Dreams*. Exhibition Catalog. Mytilene: Municipality of Lesvos.
- Hadji, A. forthcoming. *Fiat Lux*. Exhibition Catalog. Rhodes: Rhodes Project SCE and Municipality of Rhodes.
- Hughes, L. 2005. "Do we need new spaces for exhibiting contemporary art? A critique of curatorial practice in relation to the viewer's engagement with contemporary art", *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 4: 29-38.
- Jeffery, C. (ed.) 2015. *Artist as Curator*. Bristol: Intellect.
- Kester, Grant H. 2012. *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kwon, M. 2002. *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lange, C. 2011. Look and Learn, <https://frieze.com/article/look-learn>
- Lind, Maria 2012. Performing the Curatorial: An Introduction. In *Performing the Curatorial: Within and Beyond Art*. Berlin: Sternberg Press: 9-20
- Mango, C. 1963. "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17: 53+55-75.
- Marincola, P. (ed.) 2006. *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* London: Reaktion Books.
- Martinon, J.-P. (ed.) 2013. *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Nossov, K. 2010. *The Fortress of Rhodes*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing.
Freely available from the publisher here: <https://www.educacion-holistica.org/notepad/documentos/War/Fortress/The%20Fortress%20of%20Rhodes%201309-1522.pdf>
- Obrist, H.-U. 2011. *A brief history of curating*. Zurich: JRP/Ringier and Les Presses du reel.
- O' Doherty, B. 1986. *Inside the white cube: the ideology of the gallery space*. San Francisco: The Lapis Press.
- O'Neill, P. 2012. *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- O'Neill, P. and M. Wilson (eds.) 2010. *Curating and the educational turn*. Amsterdam and London: Open Editions & de Appel.
- Ranciere, J. 2007. "The Emancipated Spectator". *Artforum*, XLV: 270-281,
- Rugg, J. and M. Sedgwick (eds.) 2007. *Issues in curating contemporary art and performance*. Bristol: Intellect.
- Smith, T. 2012. *Thinking Contemporary Curating*. New York: ICI.
- Solomon, E. 2011. "Museums and the subversion of the exhibitionary order: Playing with Enlightenment values". *Reference/Representation*, 105-110. Athens: Futura Editions
- Sturken, M. and L. Cartwright. 2009. *Practices of Looking: an Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tokumitsu, M. 2015. *The Politics of the Curation Craze*, <https://newrepublic.com/article/122589/when-did-we-all-become-curators>
- Vidokle, A. 2010. Art without Artists?, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/16/61285/art-without-artists/>
- Züskind, P. 1985. *The Perfume*. New York: Alfred Knopf.