



Christian Boltanski, *Personnes*, 2010. Paris, Grand Palais.

Instructor: Dr. Dore Bowen, Professor of Art History and Visual Culture

Email: dore.bowen@sjsu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 10-noon (online)

Class Days/Time: T/TH 12:30 – 1:45 (online)

Prerequisites: Prior upper-division art history coursework

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully recognize that San Jose State University exists on the occupied, traditional lands of the Tamyen-Ohlone (Muwekma) People, who have stewarded this land for generations.

Course Description

This upper-division undergraduate course is devoted to exploring contemporary art practices with a particular focus on artists who engage directly with process, materials, and objects. Over the course of the semester students will become familiar with a variety of artists and media while reading texts that explain, describe, and theorize various approaches to the work discussed. By the end of the semester students will be familiar with a range of artists and writers who grapple with the mystery of things.

The first half of the course will address different types of object-based art, while the second half will focus on strategies artists have developed for altering our relationship to objects, such as alternative viewing strategies, museum intervention, and relational aesthetics. Throughout the semester the course will emphasize the way the contemporary practices discussed are inspired by, or a reaction to, earlier artists and movements.

Course Structure

See Canvas for full details on assigned readings and videos, as well as assignments. This schedule below is slightly abbreviated so that you can download to your computer for reference. For full participation in this class you should arrive on time and be prepared, having read the assigned material, with your camera on. Questions and comments are welcome during my lectures! We also have a number of group assignments, so you will need to arrange the assignment by working closely with your fellow students. This is part of your participation grade. All assignments will be explained in class.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

CLO1- Read critical texts (from art history, but also related disciplines in the humanities) and demonstrate an understanding of the ideas contained therein,

CLO2 - Apply these ideas verbally and in writing to contemporary art practices, and

CLO3 - Be able to identify significant works of contemporary art.

Required Texts, Materials, Resources

Syllabus and schedule: <http://www.sjsu.edu/art>

Textbook: Peter Kalb, *Art Since 1980: Charting the Contemporary* (Pearson, 2013) (available on Canvas)

Canvas: You should check Canvas frequently. Under each module you will find a description of the weekly topic, weekly readings, and assignment information. You will also use Canvas to upload your paper draft and final. Class changes or announcements will be posted on Canvas. Use your SJSU ID and password to log in; Help Desk is at 408-924-2377.

Binder: A pocket binder with notebook for class notes, assignments, etc.

Art21

A number of the featured artists can be found at Art 21 at <https://art21.org>. This PBS series on contemporary art features a variety of material on featured artists, all of which can be accessed online. Art21 should be consulted for your group and individual projects. Have fun finding an artist who is new to you!

Library Liaison

Gareth Scott, email: gareth.scott@sjsu.edu, phone: (408) 808-2094

Library Resources specific to art and art history are available online at <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/Art>

Department Advising

For information about Art & Art History, for a change of major/minor forms and a list of

advisors: <http://www.sjsu.edu/art/> or the department office in ART 116, 408-924-4320, art@sjsu.edu

Course Requirements and Assignments

- 1) "MOMAFFOUND OBJECT" EXERCISE: Intended to introduce groups, for this assignment your group will select, discuss, and present a found object artwork, and upload the pdf by the due date. See schedule. (CLO 2).
- 2) OBJECT PROJECT AND PRESENTATION: This group project involves selecting a contemporary artist whose work involves "things." Your group will divide up the duties to build a comprehensive understanding of this artwork and the materials that constitute it. Groups present and upload one group pdf. See **Object Project pdf** on Canvas for a full explanation of the project. See schedule for dates. (CLO 1, 2)
- 3) ROUGH DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER: See **Research Paper pdf** on Canvas for the full assignment.
- 4) IN-CLASS PEER REVIEW: This assignment is graded P/NP. See schedule for date. You should arrive prepared with a rough draft of your research paper to share. (CLO 1, 2, 3)
- 5) FINAL RESEARCH PAPER: Drawing on the ideas explored in your group project this is a 5 page double-spaced paper contextualizing a contemporary work of art in relation to its life-cycle. See **Research Paper pdf** on Canvas. See schedule for dates. (CLO 1, 2, 3).
- 6) PARTICIPATION: (CLO 1,2): Full participation in this class involves showing up on time for class with camera on, having read the assigned material, and ready to engage. Engagement includes asking relevant questions during lecture, and participating in break-out rooms and other in-class activities. You should make time to meet with other students as needed outside of class.

Grading Percentages

1. "Found Object" Exercise	P/NP	5%
2. Object Project		20%
3. Object Project Presentation		10%
4. Rough Draft of Research Paper		10%
5. In-Class Peer Review Workshop	P/NP	10%
6. Final Research Paper		25%
7. Participation	P/NP	20%

Grading Policy and Criteria

Grades will be assigned according to University policy from A to F as outlined in the SJSU catalog. SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

Numeric Grade Equivalents

93% and above	A
92% - 90%	A-
89% - 88%	B+
87% - 83%	B
82% - 80%	B-
79% - 78%	C+
77% - 73%	C
72% - 70%	C-
69% - 68%	D+
67% - 63%	D
62% - 60%	D-
below 60%	F

GRADING CRITERIA – Excellent through Poor
(1) Responds appropriately to the assignment
(2) Presents a clear topic or position
(3) Focused and organized
(4) Uses critical thinking
(5) Uses appropriate college-level resources and cites sources
(6) Provides supporting arguments along with examples
(7) Evidence of research
(8) Free of errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and format
(9) Originality
(10) Uses appropriate language for the discipline

Personal Responsibility

If students miss class for any reason they are responsible for **acquiring the lecture notes from a fellow student. You should exchange contact info in groups.**

Late or missed assignments **will only be accepted for emergency circumstances.** A signed physician's note explaining why the student is not able to fulfill the assignment is required.

Unless a documented emergency, incomplete grades are not given. There are no extra credit options.

Plagiarism and Recycling

Plagiarism is taken very seriously and will result in an F on the assignment and possibly the course. If students would like to include material or planned to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Integrity policy S04-12 requires approval by instructors.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](#), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the above. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

[Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>.

Course Schedule ARTH 191A, Section 01, Fall 2021

The schedule is subject to change. Changes will be posted on Canvas as “Announcements”.

Wk	Date	Topics, Readings	Assignments / In-Class Activities
1	8/19	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE Reading Kalb Textbook, Introduction (10-17) Martin Heidegger, “The Thing” (1950) (Canvas)	
2	8/24-26	Part I: OBJECTS AND THINGS RELICS AND RELIQUARIES According to myth, natural objects once mingled with art objects, and both were thought to be alive. Featured artists include the Museum of Jurassic Technology and Jeffrey Vallance. Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Christian Boltanski (146), Mark Dion (287) • Lawrence Weschler, excerpt from Mr. Wilson’s Cabinet of Wonder (Canvas) • Celeste Olalquiaga, “The Organ of Marvelousness,” The Artificial Kingdom (Canvas) 	8/26 IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: ASST #1: MOMA FOUND OBJECT - SEE DETAILS ON CANVAS IN-CLASS: Divide into groups; Type “found object” into http://www.moma.org/collection/the_me.php?theme_id=10135 . As a group select an artwork. Be prepared to discuss it as a found object, or as it uses found objects, next week.
3	8/31-9/2	COMMODITIES: POP AND NEO-POP ART This week we will address commodities in relation to the work of Pop and Neo-Pop artists. Featured artists include Andy Warhol, Takashi Murakami, Jeff Koons, etc. Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 5: Commodities and Consumerism; Takashi Murakami (235) • Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of Commodities,” at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#S4 CAPITAL, 1867 (and Canvas) • “My Warhol,” Artforum 43.2 (Oct. 2004) (Canvas) 	9/2 ASST #1 - IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: Break out rooms for discussion and completion of Assignment #1
4	9/7-9	FOUND OBJECTS: READYMADE, ASSEMBLAGE, APPROPRIATION This week examines artists who work with found objects including Marcel Duchamp and the Surrealists working in the 1930s, and contemporary artists, such as David Hammons, Wang Guangyi, and Willie Cole, as well as the “unmonumental” artists. Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Doris Salcedo (160); David Hammons (103); Wang Guangyi (205) • André Breton, “Crisis of the Object” (1936), in Surrealists on Art (Canvas) • Salvador Dali, “The Object as Revealed” (1932), in Surrealists on Art (Canvas) • 2008 Unmonumental at: http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Occurrence/Show/occurrence_id/918 	9/9 ASST #1 – MOMA FOUND OBJECT GROUP PRESENTATION AND PDF DUE Groups present MOMA found objects assignment in class. Plan on approximately 5 minutes presentations. The presentation should be uploaded as one pdf (per group) to Canvas before class.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willie Cole at VOLTA NY, https://youtu.be/TOPQn71ORfU <p>Suggested Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Julia Kelly, “The Anthropology of Assemblage” in Art Journal (Spring 2008) 	
5	9/14-16	<p>MEMORY OBJECTS: MNEMONIC ART</p> <p>This week we examine how artists alter our relationship to objects in order to engage with history and memory. These include Walid Raad, Maya Lin, William Kentridge (Art 21), Christian Boltanski, Rachel Whiteread, Dinh Q. Le, and Shimon Attie. Our featured artist will be Kara Walker (Art 21).</p> <p>READING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook, Ch. 6: Memory and History Kara Walker on her art (at http://www.moma.org/interactives/projects/1999/conversations/kw_f.html) Christian Boltanski, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/christian-boltanski-2305/christian-boltanski-studio-visit 	<p>9/16 GROUPS MEET TO DISCUSS OBJECT PROJECT ASSIGNMENT #2</p> <p>BEFORE CLASS READ the Object Project pdf, available on Canvas, and bring notes and ideas to class about possible artists. Be prepared to discuss.</p>
6	9/21-23	<p>THE SYSTEM OF OBJECTS: PROCESS ART</p> <p>This week we begin to look at practices from the 1960s onward that concern the systems that objects participate in. While some of the artists reveal natural systems of object circulation others engage with the political and cultural systems that influence the way objects circulate. Featured artists include Martha Rosler, Joseph Beuys, Terry Fox, and Andy Goldsworthy.</p> <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook, Ch. 1: Discovering the Contemporary and Ch. 7: Culture, Body, Self <i>Object Project pdf</i> (Canvas) 	<p>9/23 GROUPS MEET</p> <p>Today your group will select an artwork for Assignment #2, The Object Project, and distribute the activities. See details on Canvas.</p>
7	9/28-30	<p>THE LIFE-CYCLE OF AN OBJECT</p> <p>This week we will discuss the essays required for your group projects (and research paper) in light of the topic of body art in chapter 7 of your textbook. Featured artists include Janine Antoni and Felix Gonzalez-Torres.</p> <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook, Ch. 7: Culture, Body, Self (continued) Michael Shanks, “The Life of an Artifact” <i>Fennoscandia Archeologica</i> 15:15–42 (1998) (Canvas) <i>Object Project pdf</i> (Canvas) 	<p>9/30 GROUPS MEET</p>
8	10/5-7	<p>HYBRIDITY IN ART</p> <p>Although hybrid objects have always been with us, with globalism objects now appear in new ways. A product may be designed in</p>	<p>10/7 GROUPS TO MEET</p>

		<p>Silicon Valley, manufactured in China, and then shipped back to Asia. People also move across borders to seek opportunities. The artists examined this week construct stories of mixed media, mixed nationality, mixed genders, and mixed cultures. Featured artists include Mona Hatoum, Matthew Barney, and Pierre Huyghe. See Canvas.</p> <p>Reading/Looking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Ch. 9: Engaging the Global Present, Mona Hatoum (183), Matthew Barney (267), and Pierre Huyghe (269) • John Akomfrah on Art 21, https://art21.org/artist/john-akomfrah/ 	
9	10/12-14	<p>GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATIONS</p> <p>NOTE: STUDENTS MUST BE PRESENT FOR ALL PRESENTATIONS TO RECEIVE FULL CREDIT</p>	<p>ASST #3- GROUP PRESENTATIONS – Groups 1-3 on 10/12; 4-6 on 10/14</p>
10	10/19-21	<p>GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATIONS</p> <p>NOTE: STUDENTS MUST BE PRESENT FOR ALL PRESENTATIONS TO RECEIVE FULL CREDIT</p>	<p>ASST #3- GROUP PRESENTATIONS - Groups 7-9 on 10/19; 10-12 on 10/21</p> <p>** PDF OF YOUR GROUP PRESENTATION DUE ON CANVAS BY 10/21 12:30PM</p>
11	10/26-28	<p>Part II: ENGAGING OBJECTS</p> <p>ANAMORPHOSIS</p> <p>The last half of the semester this course looks at the relationship of the viewer to the work of art and how this relationship alters our understanding of the objects around us. This week we examine artists that look at images askew to reveal the power dynamics that underpin the act of viewing. Featured artists include the Hank Willis Thomas, the Brothers Quay, and Barbara Kruger.</p> <p>Reading/Looking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Ch. 2: Taking Pictures • Dan Collins, "Anamorphosis and the Eccentric Observer pt. 1" Leonardo Journal 25, 1-2 (1992) (at http://www.asu.edu/cfa/art/people/faculty/collins/Anamorph.html) • Bros Quay, <i>Street of Crocodiles</i> (clip), 1986, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nW3dW4yMLfE • Hank Willis Thomas, Met, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w64KYljbXYg 	<p>10/28 Professor introduces Research Paper (ASST #4).</p> <p>Pre-Halloween voluntary assignment. On 10/28 be prepared to discuss (and show if you can) your favorite thing in class. Why? (And come as your favorite thing if you dare).</p>
12	11/2-4	<p>THE EXHIBITION AS CRITICAL FORM</p> <p>Recently, the exhibition has become a form of art practice. Artists such as Walid Raad, Fred Wilson, Ai Weiwei, and others use the exhibition to address a range of issues.</p> <p>Reading/Looking</p>	<p>This week professor to discuss the In-Class Peer Review Workshop due next week (ASST #5)</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook Ch. 10: New Metaphors and New Narratives, Ai Weiwei (212), Fred Wilson (154) Alan Gilbert, "Walid Raad's Spectral Archive, Part I: Testimony of Ghosts," Artflux, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/69/60594/walid-raad-s-spectral-archive-part-i-historiography-as-process/ James Voorhies, <i>Beyond Objecthood</i> (excerpt, MIT Press, 2017) (Canvas) 	
13	11/9 NO CLASS 11/11 VTRNS DAY	11/9 PEER REVIEW WORKSHOP	11/8: ASST #4: ROUGH DRAFT DUE 11/9: PEER REVIEW WORKSHOP, ASST #5: Be prepared to share your draft in class. After class upload your notes (written for your peer) for full credit. NOTE: ATTENDANCE MANDATORY FOR CREDIT
14	11/16-18	EXPERIENTIAL ART Art as experience is a new model in which artists manipulate the participants' experience via light, sound, etc. Featured artists include Krzysztof Wodiczko, Olafur Eliasson, Roni Horn and Harun Farocki. Reading/Looking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook Ch. 11: Contemporary Experience Textbook, module on Krzysztof Wodiczko (106) Olafur Eliasson, https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/olafur-eliasson-become-your-own-navigator-short/ 	
15	11/23- NO CLASS 11/25 THNKS GVNG	THE GIFT For many artists, the gift-model is an attractive alternative to the commodity since it operates outside the market, encouraging a kind of committed engagement between individuals and ultimately creating communities rather than consumers. In this vein, some contemporary artists create sites of exchange rather than objects, while others interrogate technology's role in crafting human experience. See Canvas. Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clive Dilnot, "The Gift," Design Issues (Autumn 1993) https://syelavich.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/the-gift.pdf Secondary Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicolas Bourriaud, from <i>Relational Aesthetics</i>, 1998 (Canvas) Molly Nesbit et al, "What is a Station," (2003) (at http://projects.e-flux.com/utopia/about.html) 	
16	11/30-12/2	THE GIFT (CONT.) – FINAL PAPER DUE BY BEG. OF CLASS	12/2 ASST #6: PAPER DUE BY BEGINNING OF CLASS.

Final	12/8 12:15- 2:30	WRAP UP. NO FINAL EXAM. THE PAPER IS YOUR FINAL ASST.	
-------	------------------------	---	--