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ARTHISTORY296A/CL252: (PROF. SVEN SPIEKER)

Graduate Seminar

“Art, Activism, and Autonomy in Times of Crisis”

General Information and Syllabus

General Information

Time: Wednesday, 5pm-7.50pm, including a break (ARTS 2622)

My Email: spieker@gss.ucsb.edu

Please email or call me for an appointment (805-452-4717)

Seminar description

One of the most powerful contestations of the autonomy of art—the idea that art and literature are separate by nature from everyday life—was issued by the philosopher T. W. Adorno when he questioned whether “after Auschwitz” poetry could still be written. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the problem of art's autonomy, especially on the part of Marxist critics who critique the pervasive commodification and co-optation of art and argue for the need to reinstate its independence in some form. Yet, how can autonomous art provide much-needed resistance to the pervasive oppression and discrimination we are witnessing all around us? The seminar will seek to provide both a historical reconstruction of artistic autonomy (Schiller, Kant) and read the work of contemporary philosophers and historians who have considered the issue (Boris Arvatov; Vladimir Nabokov; T. W. Adorno; Peter Bürger; John Roberts; Alain Badiou; Jacques Rancière; Peter Osborne; Jürgen Habermas). Discussions are supplemented by the consideration of the work of contemporary artists and writers in whose practice the problem of autonomy and its practicality comes to the fore.

Requirements

Depending on the size of the seminar, you will be asked to present one or two of the readings, and lead a discussion about the reading presented, based on prepared questions and a modest handout. Paper topics must be chosen by week 7 and should be organically linked to the material covered in the seminar. The seminar paper will be due by the end of

exam week, standard length (15-20pp). Formal requirements will be discussed in class. I'll be more than happy to help you choose a topic. If we have extra time, seminar participants may present their papers in class between week 7 and week 10.

Required Materials

A Reader is available for purchase at the Copy Shop in the UCen. Additionally, please purchase Boris Arvatov's book *Art and Production* (Plutp, 2017), which is available quite cheaply online. A Reader and other material will be available at the Main Library.

SYLLABUS

NOTE: All readings can be found in the Reader except the one labelled with an Asterix. Text labelled with * will be made available online.

WEEK I

Readings:

Daniel Spaulding and Nicole Demby, "Art, Value, and the Freedom Fetish" in <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/art-value-and-freedom-fetish-0> (accessed 12/05/18)

Immanuel Kant, from *The Critique of Judgment* (London: Hafner, 1951), pp. 147-200

Jennifer A. McMahon, "Aesthetic Autonomy: Tracing the Kantian Legacy to Olafur Eliasson", in *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* vol. 3, 2011, pp. 220-234

WEEK II

Readings:

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (NY: F. Ungar, 1979)*

Jasper Berns, "Introduction"; "The Poetry of Feedback" "Epilogue: Overflow" in J.B., *The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2017), pp. 1-36; 84-119

WEEK III

Readings:

Pierre Bourdieu, "The Conquest of Autonomy", in P.B., *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1996), pp.

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WEEK IVReadings:

Peter Bürger, “On the Problem of the Autonomy of Art in Bourgeois Society” in PB, *Theory of the Avantgarde* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1984), pp. 35-54

Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer” in W.B., *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931-1934 (Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard UP, 1999), pp. 768-782

WEEK VReadings:

Boris Arvatov, *Art and Production* (London: Pluto Press, 2017) [Purchase]

Maria Gough, “Red Technics. The Konstruktor in Production” in M.G., *The Artist as Producer. Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2005), pp. 151-190

Kerstin Stakemeyer, excerpts from „Entkünstung. Artistic Models for the End of Art” (Ph.D. Diss., University College, London), pp. 16-71*

WEEK VIReadings:

Excerpt from Adorno/Horkheimer, from *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment**

Theodor W. Adorno, from *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) pp. 225-261

WEEK VIIReadings:

John Roberts, “Autonomy and the Avant-Garde” in: J.R., *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 51-91

John Roberts, “Chto delat, Russia and the Avant-Garde: Culture and the Post-Soviet Transition” in: J.R., *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 165-193*

WEEK VIIIReadings:

Alain Badiou, “Destruction, Negation, Subtraction : On Pier Paolo Pasolini » ; « The Autonomy of the Aesthetic Process”: “What Does Literature Think”, in A. B., *The Age of the Poets* (London: Verso, 2014), pp. 83-92; 111- 139

John Roberts, “Art, Negation, and the Avant-Garde” in: J.R., *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 51-91

David Ingram, “Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment Author(s)” in: *New German Critique*, No. 53 (Spring - Summer, 1991), pp. 67-103

Optional: Jürgen Habermas, from *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* [Library Reserve]

WEEK IX

Readings:

Jacques Rancière, “The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics”; “Artistic Regimes and the Shortcomings of the Notion Modernity” in J.R., *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 12-30

Jacques Rancière, Aesthetics as Politics, in J.R., *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 19-44

WEEK X

Readings:

Sarah Brouillette, “Introduction”; “Work as Art/Art as Life”, in S.B., *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2014) pp. 1-19; 34-55

Dave Beech, “Introduction”; “Art and Productive Capital” in D.B., *Art and Value. Art’s Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical and Marxist Economics* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), pp. 1-30; 241-266

Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents” in C.B., *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), pp. 11-40