FA105 Contemporary Materials and Techniques

Module: Art Objects and Experience

Seminar Leader: John von Bergen

Course Times: Tuesdays, 1:30 – 4:45 with a 15 minute break

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Course Description

This course is a comprehensive introduction to sculpture as a medium that has evolved in many diverse directions over the last century, and is accelerating as an expansive, critical medium for art production in the 21st Century. The concentration of this course is a hands-on workshop that explores materials and techniques, supplemented by slide lectures, reading and writing assignments, and off-site classes (off-campus workshop, museum / gallery visits, etc.). Workshops will allow students to learn about a large range of materials that will be explored further by individual projects, as we investigate the advantages and disadvantages of many materials that include rubber, wood, styrofoam, plaster, plastics, polymer-gypsum, polymer-webbing, wax and found objects. We also will explore basic construction, various mold-making techniques, the advantages of 3D scanning and printing in relation to traditional “hands-on” production, and the importance of maintaining health and safety standards in one’s studio. Please Note: A limited supply of materials will be offered to students. Some students may need to contribute their own funds / resources for completing projects.

Requirements

A material fee of 100,- euros is required towards general materials used during this semester. Students may also need to contribute additional funds towards final projects, depending on their personal needs.

Shared studios spaces will be assigned by a lottery basis. Students are held responsible for their own spaces, with an inspection scheduled at the end of the semester. Spaces must be cleaned and returned in the condition they were given or final grade may be affected.

Aside from personally maintaining the workshop, students will be expected twice in the semester to clean and organize the communal workshop.
Health and safety gear will be supplied by the teacher, but students will need to be prepared for every class with their own work clothes (shoes, pants, shirt). Safety rules and regulations, explained at the beginning of the semester, must be adhered to at all times.

Any assignments handed in late will significantly affect the grade for that assignment.

Bard may choose to document and share images of students working and their artworks during the course of the semester. Please inform instructor at the beginning of the semester if you do not wish to participate.

There may be adjustments to the timing of assignments as well as to the content as this course progresses. All students will be informed of any changes and / or deadlines.

**Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all classes. More than two absences in a semester will significantly affect the grade for this course.

Attendance is mandatory for any off-campus classes (which may occur on a weekend).

Additional class hours may be required beyond the minimum expected for course credit.

**Grade Breakdown**

Class participation (includes maintaining studio and workshop): 30%

Homework assignments: 30%

Final Project: 40%

**Schedule**

Classes start on Tuesday, September 1st and run until Tuesday, December 8th. Final presentations will be presented to the public the evening of Thursday, December 10th. Studios must be returned and presented for inspection during completion week (exact date to be announced).

**Week 1 (Sept 1st)**

Seminar:

- Intro to class / assign studios

- Slideshow / discuss Nauman homework (PDF to be read before first class)
- Watch Fischli & Weiss “The Way Things Go”

Workshop:

- Intro to workshop / basic construction with tools and materials
- Health and safety

Assignment:

- Prepare studios
- Reading (TBA)

- Prepare first “construction” project to be presented in two weeks (Sept 15th).

**Weeks 2 - 4 (Sept 8th – Sept 22nd)**

Seminar:

- Slide lectures (TBA)
- Presenting assigned projects for critique

Workshop:

- Basic mold-making (plaster, earth clay, wax, silicone...)
- Intro to polymer-based materials (gypsums, wax, “Kobracast” polymer-webbing, polymer clay...)

Assignment:

- “Fistball” plaster casting project completion
- “Kobracast” project in response to “Uncanny Valley” reading

**Weeks 5 - 7 (Sept 29th – Oct 13th)**

Seminar:

- Slide lectures (TBA)
- Presenting assigned projects for critique

Workshop:
- New tools and techniques (Dremel, 3D-Pen, Neodyme magnets...)

Off-site:
- 3D Printing workshop at Dimensions Alley (Prenzlauer Berg)

Assignment:
- Scale model for an outdoor / public art project

**Fall Break: NO CLASS on Oct 20th**

**Weeks 8 - 10 (Oct 27th – Nov 10th)**

Seminar:
- Slide lectures (TBA)
- Visiting artist lecture (TBA)
- Presenting assigned projects for critique

Workshop:
- Begin plans for final project
- Independent work with teacher assistance

Off-site:
- Visit to Hoffmann Collection (date TBA)

Assignment:
- Student presentation of a “new” material or technique
- Writing assignment connected to Hoffmann Collection

**Weeks 11 - 13 (Nov 17th – Dec 1st)**

Seminar:
- Slide lectures (TBA)
- Group critiques of projects
Workshop:

- Arrangement of materials (Baumarkt visit)
- Independent work with teacher assistance and / or studio visits one-on-one with instructor

Assignment:

- Presentation of plans for final project
- Independent Berlin gallery tour (writing assignment in response)

**Week 14 (Dec 8th)**

Installation of final projects are to be finished and presented to class (no exceptions / extensions). Following discussions, students will document their own works. Works will be presented two days later for Bard’s open studio event.

**Dec 14th - 18th: Completion week – all studios must be cleaned and returned this week.**