Critical Practice: Art in Conversation
Saturday 23 February 2013

All Yale MFA students take a required course in their first term entitled "Critical Practice." Dean Robert Storr is the lead faculty member for this course that included lectures by Gregory Crewdson, Sheila de Bretteville, Anoka Faruque, Martin Kersels, Pamela Franks, and Kobena Mercer, as well as group discussions led by Ian Alteveer, Julian Bittiner, Paulina Pobocha, and Molleen Theodore. The course aims to initiate informed discussions about contemporary art. It is about finding words that open up the meanings of images, objects, gestures, ideas, and intuitions. Students have come up with panel topics and will be moderating and participating in a series of informal panel discussions with invited guests from Yale and beyond. The day of panels hopes to encourage conversation between current Yale students and leaders in their fields.

Schedule

10:00 – 10:10
Opening Remarks,
Robert Storr, Dean, Yale School of Art

10:10 – 11:30
Exit through the "Rear": Reframing Kitsch and Camp

11:30 – 12:50
Post Physical

1:00 – 2:00
Lunch Break

2:10 – 3:30
"Amateuring" Photography

3:30 – 4:50
#Baudelaire: New Media before "New Media"

5:00 – 8:00
Wine & cheese reception at Yale School of Art, Green Hall Lobby (1156 Chapel Street), coinciding with Painting & Printmaking (Group 2), Thesis Exhibition Opening

Panel Descriptions

Exit through the "Rear": Reframing Kitsch and Camp

Panelists:
John Pilson and Elaine Reichek
Student Moderator:
Ana Maria Gomez Lopez
Student Panelists:
Cathleen Mooses and Emmy Thelander

In his essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), Clement Greenberg describes kitsch as the "rear-garde" of art and "the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our time." Centering on examples of "low art" such as advertising, Hollywood cinema, jazz, and popular music, Greenberg argued that kitsch stood in direct opposition to the tenets of Modernism. Like all writing, Greenberg’s arose from and responded to the contemporaneous cultural and intellectual milieu; nonetheless the tensions between high art and popular culture articulated in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" have remained relevant issues of debate. More than six decades since the essay’s publication, the expansive boundaries of appropriation in visual and technological production, from art history, popular culture, and commercial sources, make the identification of kitsch both as subject matter and form far more difficult to delineate. What is today’s version of kitsch, particularly in the face of other emerging forms for art such as You Tube videos and mash-ups? Does the framing of kitsch imply tension with the cultural production of the past and its contextualization in the present? Is the spurious or the false still an apt qualifier for artworks that incorporates everyday forms of media-based production?

"Amateuring" Photography

Panelists:
Roe Etheridge and Mia Fineman
Student Moderator:
Maya Marvi
Student Panelists:
Erin Desmond and Darja Bajagic

Since its invention more than 175 years ago, photography has been able to establish itself as a viable and distinct artistic medium, independent of purely commercial or quotidian concerns. However, photography’s inherent reproducibility and accessibility, as expressed in Walter Benjamin’s "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," has always been inextricably linked to its potential as an art form and its role in the broader culture. How does the advent of digital photography and now the omnipresence of cell phone cameras and video recorders affect art making today? Further, the distribution of the photographic medium is evermore accessible and immediate via social media sites such as Instagram, Tumblr, Facebook, etc. This panel explores the ease with which images, both still and moving, are captured and incorporated into art and culture, and the ubiquity of such imaging in painting, sculpture, and installation work. What is the connection or opposition between photography as a distinct artistic medium with its own historical lineage and craftsmanship versus photography as an expedient shorthand to record and represent?

#Baudelaire: New Media before "New Media"

Panelists:
Sarah Oppenheimer and Laura Parnes
Student Moderator:
Scott Langer
Student Panelists:
Heidi Hahn and Even Whale

If Baudelaire’s flaneur responded to a new urban condition, what contemporary condition does today’s flaneur respond to? "New media," defined today primarily by digital exploration, questions the nature of artistic mediums and production, as well as the way institutions function. But long before digital art, artists have grappled with the changing landscapes offered by new media. How can an understanding of previous critical responses to new subjects, radical materials, and emerging technologies contextualize our current response to "new media" in the art world? How does the use of new media change the making and reception of art? This panel seeks to understand the making and reception of "new media" art as part of a continuum of artists incorporating new materials, ideas, and processes into their practice. We hope to engage the audience through questions and we will be accepting questions and comments via Twitter #Baudelaire.

"Excellent."