CP 5800.01, Spring 2013, Maryland Institute College of Art
INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO CURATORIAL PRACTICE (IACP)
Instructor: Marcus Civin, mcivin@mica.edu
Wednesdays, 7:00 - 9:45 PM, Studio Center 109 (unless otherwise noted)
Office Hours: Wednesdays, by appointment, or as needed.

Course Description: Students will be introduced to the history and theory of curatorial practice through a variety of disciplines. Relevant issues to be discussed include the mission and goals of exhibitions, politics and ethics of the art world, and the role of critical analysis in an exhibition’s development and assessment process.

IACP Course Goals:
• Students will analyze exhibitions to understand how exhibitions can entertain, instruct, alter perception, energize community and keep pace with culture.
• Students will consider the impact of different exhibition strategies.
• Students will consider how the display of cultural materials can lead to distortions of history.
• Students will consider how radical and activist curatorial strategies have shaped curatorial practice.
• Students will demonstrate critical thinking and advanced literacy skills by locating, evaluating and integrating information gathered from multiple sources into effective, organized writing and presentations.
• Students will lead class discussion, support their peers and participate in collaborative projects.
• Students will lead necessary planning for field trips, guest speakers and collaborative projects.
• Students will relate course readings and independent, art historical research to their own interests.

Student Learning Outcomes:
• Students will be able to communicate orally and in writing about exhibitions.
• Students will be able to identify major exhibitions and discuss the role curators played in these exhibitions.
• Students will be able to work in teams.
• Students will contribute to discussions about the interrelation of objects, place, audience, and what is contemporary.
• In their projects, students will reference work that has proceeded their work.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:
• Course Reading: It is very important for this course that you read. Read often and as much as possible. Required course readings will be distributed each week on our Moodle Classroom site as electronic pdf’s. Please see the list of course readings and the schedule of course readings by week, as outlined in the Preliminary Course Schedule below. This syllabus also includes a list of Further Reading to help you start your independent research. Some course readings will lead to follow-up assignments.
• Follow-up Assignments to Course Readings: Reading is a habit that includes taking notes and forming questions. Some weeks, you will be required to write questions in response to readings, to map examples in a particular section of a reading or copy down an important quote.
• Independent Research: Part of being a great curator is being a great researcher. Curators often have to know what has happened in their field in the past and what is happening currently in their field. In this course, you will be required to research, and present information, images and ideas related to your own interests. You will organize material for a map that explores ideas about artistic influence and the evolution of ideas through relationships and community interaction. You will also individually research and write one short, informative Curator Card summarizing the
career of a curator we encounter in the course. The Curator Card will use a short format, something like a baseball card.

• Presentation: Great curators consistently make effective presentations. You will be required to present independently and in groups, for your peers and for guests, using good quality images and well-prepared texts. Please see the descriptions in this syllabus of the Exhibitions Alive! assignment and Nothing Comes From Nothing! Barr Chart: Visualizing Artistic Influence.

• Writing: Over the course of the semester, students will contribute five short pieces to a blog about the Station North Arts and Entertainment District. The writing will be held to a high standard appropriate for writing about art. Whenever possible, this writing should be related to the course material.

• Other Assignments To Be Announced will include short written exercises completed during class time and possibly short, written responses to field trips. Some assignments listed here may change due to the progress of the class. Many assignments will require group work outside of class time, correspondence, or independent visits to locations around Baltimore. Though student work should relate to individual student interests, students must create original work for this course, not present old, completed work from other courses. Marcus will be available after class, before class, and by e-mail. Marcus will also be available for Office Hours by appointment.

COURSE READINGS (subject to change):
We may need to add a few readings depending on guest speakers, field trips, and student interests.


Susan Vogel, “Always True to the Object, in our Fashion,” in Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, 

RECOMMENDED READING: A one-year, physical subscription to Artforum (artforum.com/ subscribe/), Art in America (click the “subscribe” tab at the bottom of the page: www.artinamericamagazine.com), and The Baltimore Sun (subscribe.baltsun.com/Circulation/).

PRELIMINARY COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change):
Wednesday, January 23
Introduction to Course Themes and Expectations: We will discuss student expectations for the course and discuss the frameworks for course assignments. Touching on relevant case studies, we will form guiding questions for our exploration of curatorial practice.

Wednesday, January 30
Missions and Ideals: We will focus here on the missions, ideals, and goals of museums and exhibitions, particularly where we can locate some formative streams that express a certain Humanist ideology—for example, the ideology behind the creation of the Louvre Museum in Paris. We will raise questions about presenting an art historical canon, and we will raise questions about audience. For example, what are museums? Are museums and galleries places for discovery and contemplation? Are they places for high art, scholarship, study, care of collections, education, or moral uplift?
* In class today, there will also be some time to begin planning for field trips and guest speakers.
Read: Andrew McClellan, “Ideals and Mission”
Assignment: Choose one of the subheadings in McClellan’s chapter, “Ideals and Mission,” and draw a map showing the relationships between exhibitions, historical events, and ideas that McClellan discusses in the portion of this chapter that is most interesting to you. Bring a printout or a final draft of your map with you to class January 30 at the start of class. You will map one of these subheadings: Utopian Ideals and Real Politics; Useful Recreation; The Social Utility of High Art; Art Museums and War; The Return of Social Relevance; or 9/11 and Beyond.

Wednesday, February 6
Collecting: How can we create inclusive models for curatorial practice by considering models for the social work of museums and the care of cultural objects? Who collects and cares for which objects and why? We will further our discussion of collections by asking questions about the development, management, and exhibition of collections, especially collections of objects kept far away from where they were created.
* In class today, there will also be time to look at examples of great, short-format writing for blogs or similar formats.
Read: Andrew McClellan, “Collecting, Classification, And Display”

Friday, February 8
Assignment: First Blog writings due February 8

Monday, February 11, 10:30 - 11:15 AM
Discuss blog format; review first submissions with Jeffry Cudlin and Gerald Ross, Curators and Curatorial Practice Faculty.

Wednesday, February 13
We will share a guest speaker program with the Mount Royal School of Art. Speakers: Frances Barth (artist and director of Mount Royal School of art), Alice Aycock (artist), David Strauss

OTHER READINGS To Be Determined

Wednesday, February 20
Exhibitions Alive! We will further explore the framework for this important assignment. With a team, you will propose a reinstallation or response to a historical exhibition. As a main focus, the exhibition will include educational programming for a targeted audience. Presentation due March 27. Guests: Emily Blumenthal, Manager of Family Programs at the Walters Art Museum and Curatorial Practice Faculty, and students Emily’s course, Connecting Audiences.
* There will also be time during this class period for individual meetings and some research work.
Read: Christina Kreps, “Non-Western Models of Museums and Curating in Cross-Cultural Perspective”
Suggested Reading: John Cotton Dana, “Americans Too Busy To Appreciate Art” and “Fashionable Museums are Criticized, Useful Institutions Urged by Dana”

Wednesday, February 27
Curator Corral 1: We will investigate the diverse strategies of influential curators including John Cotton Dana, and Lucy Lippard.
Read: Edward Alexander, “John Cotton Dana and the Newark Museum: The Museum of Community Service” (pdf)
Catherine Morris, “Six Years as a Curatorial Project”
Garth Clark, “Garth Clark: Life and Works”

Friday, March 1
Assignment: Second Blog writings due March 1, 5:00 PM.
Monday, March 4, 9:00 - 10:00 AM
Discuss second blog submissions with Jeffry Cudlin and Gerald Ross.

Monday, March 4, 1:30 PM
Marcus visits Ellen Lupton’s course, Graphic Design Studio II to present on the context of Alfred Barr’s map and to present some counter-examples. Other IACP students are welcome to attend.

Wednesday, March 6
Guest Curator: Ellen Lupton, MICA Faculty and curator, will present on useful techniques for visualizing information.
Read: Dan Roam, The Back of The Napkin: Solving Problems and Selling Ideas With Pictures
Robert Storr, “Show and Tell”
Susan Vogel, “Always True to the Object, in our Fashion,”
Sunday, March 10, 2:00 - 5:00 PM, Studio Center 109
Nothing Comes From Nothing! Barr Chart: Visualizing Artistic Influence: Present your completed research material to Graphic Design students and create design teams.

Wednesday, March 13
Curator as Community Agent: We will explore case studies such as New Urban Arts in Providence, RI, (visit: newurbanarts.org), and Perform! Now! in Los Angeles, CA, (visit: performnow.tumblr.com).

SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 25, 7:00 PM
Public Talk at MICA: Curator, Mary Jane Jacob
(For more information, please consult: www.maryjanejacob.org)

Wednesday, March 27
Exhibitions Alive! presentations and reflection. Guests: Emily Blumenthal and students in Connecting Audiences.
Read: Bruce Altshuler, “A Canon of Exhibitions”

---New York City Field Trip - March 29-30
............ MICA takes MoMA! Highlight: Meet with Education Director, Pablo Helguera ---

Wednesday, April 3
Exhibitions Alive! presentations and reflection. Guests: Emily Blumenthal and students in Connecting Audiences.

April 7, 2:00 - 5:00 PM, Graphic Design Studios
Graphic Design students present new designs.

Wednesday, April 10
* Studio Work Day and time for Independent Meetings.

April 12 – April 14
Weekend Road Trip! Barnes Foundation (Philadelphia, PA), Mass Moca (Massachusetts), Williams College Art Museum (Massachusetts), The Clark (Massachusetts), Dia Beacon (New York)

Monday, April 15, 9:00 - 10:30 AM
Discuss blog submissions with Jeffry Cudlin and Gerald Ross.

Friday, April 19
Exhibition opening for Nothing Comes From Nothing! Barr Chart: Visualizing Artistic Influence

Saturday, April 20
MICA Visiting Speaker: Nato Thompson (curator).

Wednesday, April 24
Review and respond to Exhibition Proposals from Undergraduate Course, Introduction to Curating.
Wednesday, May 1
Curator Card due.
Student Reflection and Feedback on Course Activities and Course Structure including proposals of ideas for next year.

Friday, May 3
Blog 3 due.

Wednesday, May 8
Final one-on-one meetings with the Instructor.

Friday, May 10
Blog 4 due.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Evaluation: This course will be graded Pass/Fail. Students will be evaluated based on standard levels of participation, effort, writing and grasp of history as expected of Graduate students at MICA. Excellent students will:
1. Demonstrate the ability to make connections between artworks, artists, contexts and exhibitions;
2. Investigate historical approaches to curatorial practice as jumping off points to consider their role as curators in the 21st century;
3. Focus our attention on overlooked but important approaches to curatorial practice.

Attendance: Class attendance is mandatory. I will keep a detailed record of attendance. You are expected to attend all class meetings. Consistent attendance offers the most effective opportunity for understanding the concepts and expectations for this course. It is very difficult to make up missed classwork. Classwork cannot be communicated over e-mail. Absences and chronic tardiness will affect your work and your grade. Excessive absence (more than one of our scheduled sessions) will severely affect your grade. Three unexcused absences in the semester will cause your overall semester grade to drop. If you are more than 20 minutes late for class three times without permission, this accumulated tardiness will count as one unexcused absence. More than three unexcused absences could contribute to a failing grade in the course.

I will excuse absences for the following reasons:
• illness or injury if you are unable to attend class;
• religious observance where the nature of the observance prevents you from attending class;
• participation in University activities at the request of University authorities; or
• other compelling verifiable circumstances beyond your control.

If you are requesting an excused absence please notify me as soon as possible. If you are absent from class, you are responsible for consulting with your peers and with me to make up any missed work. I expect you to make up all missed classwork and homework. If you have to miss class for any reason, please contact me immediately. I will tell you what you will need to do to be prepared for the next class.

Late Policy: Any assignment handed in late will receive a penalty. Assignments will be due at the start of class on the date due or as otherwise specified.
Participation: Please participate regularly in class and engage with the instructor regularly about issues related to the course. Meeting with the instructor and corresponding with the instructor about the course also counts as class participation. Students who sporadically participate in discussions, are disruptive or repeatedly fall asleep in class will not reap the full rewards of this course. I urge you to be a broad-minded and generous scholar. Keep an open mind when you are reading, researching, and meeting new people. Keep an open mind in discussion and when you are collaborating with groups. Practice seeing the validity in ideas you perhaps disliked initially. In this course, we will encourage diverse points of view. The classroom will be a safe space. I will not tolerate any rudeness between students. We will be especially kind to each other, welcoming to guests, respectful on field trips and create thoughtful, thorough work.

E-mail: Our correspondence will take place through MICA e-mail. Reminder: my MICA e-mail is mcivin@mica.edu. I check my e-mail daily. I will make every effort to respond to all e-mails in a timely manner. I will respond to your questions before our next class meeting. Please respond to my e-mails if I ask you a question. Please treat e-mail for this course as professional correspondence. I will not tolerate any rudeness in e-mail correspondence.

Moodle: I will post all of the course pdf’s on our Moodle classroom site. I will also post updates, notes about assignments and important links and images.

Computers/Cell Phones, etc.: Other than by special arrangement with me, you will not use communication devices or e-mail during the class period. Please silence cell phones, smart phones, and other communication devices. During class, please do not e-mail, text, chat, Google, Facebook, Tweet, etc. If you are the kind of person who is tempted to check your e-mail every 10 minutes, please do not bring your laptop or phone to class.

Readings: Readings are a major component of this course. Excellent students will take notes on reading and follow-up their reading with independent reading and image research. Please leave yourself enough time during the week to read and begin to formulate informed and thoughtful responses to the reading. Additional work outside of class time: It may be necessary for students in this course to visit various galleries and museums or other locations during the semester. These visits may take place outside of scheduled class periods. Students may also need to schedule group meetings outside of class time to work with their peers.

Writing Studio: During the semester, take some time for yourself to focus on your writing. Visit MICA’s Writing Studio located in Bunting 452. ADA Compliance Statement: Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. If you haven’t already, please contact the Learning Resource Center to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://www.mica.edu/LRC.

Plagiarism Policy: The consequences of plagiarism could be severe. MICA’s policy states: “MICA will not tolerate plagiarism, which is defined as claiming authorship of, or using someone else’s ideas or work without proper acknowledgment. Without proper attribution, a student may NOT replicate another’s work, paraphrase another’s ideas, or appropriate images in a manner that violates the specific rules against plagiarism at MICA. In addition, students may not submit the same work for credit in more than one course without the explicit approval of the all of the instructors of the courses involved.”

Please refer to MICA’s full ADA Compliance Statement, your Health and Safety Guidelines, and MICA’s full Plagiarism Policy on our Moodle Classroom site at classroom.mica.edu.
Counseling Center: Student Counseling Services is available to help students have the best possible learning and growing experiences during their years at MICA. For more information, visit:
http://www.mica.edu/Campus_and_Student_Life/MICA_Wellness_Center/Counseling_Center.html

More Detailed Descriptions of Major Assignments:

Nothing Comes From Nothing! Barr Chart: Visualizing Artistic Influence
In 1936, Alfred Barr [1902-1981] published a famous diagram describing the evolution of abstract art as he saw it. In 1936, purely abstract art was still young, a radical experiment and the subject of feisty, fervent manifestos. Barr, a pioneer in the history and display of modern art and the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, featured his diagram on the front cover dust jacket of the museum’s catalog for the exhibition Cubism and Abstract Art. Barr worked and reworked this largely Eurocentric diagram, and it became a legendary symbol of a certain way of thinking about abstraction as the telos of modern art practice, particularly in painting and sculpture, but in many other media as well.

Barr used his diagram not only to communicate ideas but to actively think through those ideas for himself. Charts and diagrams are thinking tools that belong in the arsenal of the curator, critic, or writer as well as the graphic designer. Barr’s distinctive language of boxes, arrows, and the Futura typeface set in red and black came to signify the attempt to visualize complex aesthetic concepts. Over the decades, artists and curators have parodied, repurposed, and revised Barr’s diagram. In 2011, for example, the designer, artist and writer Daniel Feral attempted to map the evolution of graffiti and street art using a Barr-inspired methodology. In 2012, MoMA reprised its own diagram with an astonishing new relationship map presented in conjunction with Inventing Abstraction: 1910-1925, How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art, curated by Leah Dickerman. Barr himself recognized some of the challenges of this kind of quasi-scientific approach to history. Barr wrote in his notes in 1934, “The truth is that modern art cannot be defined with any degree of finality either in time or in character and any attempt to do so implies a blind faith, insufficient knowledge, or an academic lack of realism.” (Alfred Barr, “Modern and ‘Modern’”)

This project invites MFA candidates from the courses Graphic Design Studio II and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Curatorial Practice to explore ideas about artistic influence and the evolution of ideas by visualizing relationships and community interaction. Students from the two programs will work in crossdisciplinary teams. Initially, the Curatorial Practice students will prepare a body of content to visualize which they will present to Graphic design students as a rough sketch and a related powerpoint. Students will then meet together to design a visualization of that content. Graphic Design students will lead the design component. A team of students will install the completed maps and create signage for an exhibit in the MICA Studio Center by April 19th. We will have a small reception for the posters on April 19th.

Potential topics to map and diagram include: cabinets of curiosity; reliquaries; the museum as muse; the artist as curator; important nonprofit art spaces; nonwestern models of collecting and curatorial practice; feminist models of curatorial practice; debates related to intersections of craft and contemporary art; changing notions of the museum’s relationship to the public; relational aesthetics; post-minimalism; net art; political art; public art; contemporary artists or designers living and working in Baltimore; architecture or leadership in Baltimore’s Station North community; artists or designers born after 1990; artists or designers featured in a particular biennial, exhibition, or neighborhood; the price of a work of art over history; a map of a contested
work’s provenance; a New-York-Magazine-style “approval matrix;” a single artist or designer in communication with movies, television, fashion, art, and other media; the eternal afterlife of Helvetica; the sex life of Futura; the spread of a particular image or term (art or design); relationships among books on your bookshelf. Relationships can be presented via network diagrams, timelines, trees, venn diagrams, geographical maps, matrix plots, and other means. Students are encouraged to consider how diagrams can represent nonhierarchical relationships and create tangible space to court and account for un-mapables, unknowns, the reclusive, the antisocial, unforeseen exclusions, and audience feedback. Further, students will address questions such as: Who is this new diagram for? How can it circulate in the world?

THE BLOG
This semester, students will begin developing a platform for a Curatorial Practice Station North Arts Blog. This project will be designed and maintained by students in the Curatorial Practice MFA Practicum course and students in Interdisciplinary Approaches to Curatorial Practice. Students will be asked to write five blog entries on a range of predetermined topics; these entries will be edited by the instructors, and discussed by the group. Access to the blog will initially be restricted, but by midterm some content should be ready to go public.

Over the course of the semester, each student will write one 350 - 500 word piece on four of the following eight proposed topics:
1) A profile of a Station North artist or arts leader;
2) A profile of a Station North resident or community leader;
3) A review of an art exhibition (with special consideration of curatorial processes, referring to IACP and/or Practicum course materials as possible);
4) A “think piece” applying IACP and/or Practicum readings and class discussions to an artwork, art show, or phenomenon in Baltimore;
5) A progress report/mini-statement on the Practicum project;
6) A progress report/mini-statement on another project in Station North or close by;
7) A consideration of a Baltimore-based art news item;
8) A report on a lecture--on campus or off--that would be of interest to the curatorially curious. Blog post drafts will always be due on Fridays by 5:00 PM. Instructors for both classes will supply feedback and edits; students will address these edits and submit finished articles by the end of the following week.

Students should treat this blog as a professional activity; blog entries must reflect high standards re: sentence construction and style, direct observations, documentation and strong argumentation and analysis.

WHAT ARE CURATOR CARDS?
Curator Cards began in the inaugural Curatorial Practice MFA as a project for IACP. This independent research project focuses on revealing the history of curatorial practice by analyzing influential curators and their work. This year, we will add a new group of curator cards to the mix. Students will chose curators that spark their interest and create “Curator Cards” based on their research. After our discussion of the curator cards, students will make corrections based on instructor and peer response, and students will post a selection of the cards on the Curatorial Practice website. Here are updated guidelines for this year’s curator cards. Please include all of the following:

A Photograph of the Curator: Include a source for this photograph.
An Inspirational Quote: Include a quotation by the curator and your source for this quotation.
Selected Exhibitions: Include at least four exhibitions credited to this curator. Include
exhibition titles, locations, dates and some of the artists included and ideas explored in each exhibition. Include your source for this biographical data.

Biographical Information: Include where the curator studied, what they studied, and if possible, who they studied with. Include your source for this biographical data.

Employment: ... in museums, schools, non-profits, working for journals/magazines, organizing conferences, and/or other non-art related jobs. Include your source for this biographical data.

Further reading: Include at least two web sources AND include at least three books or print sources not available on-line.

Major Contributions to the field of Curatorial Practice: For example... “In 1996, Curator X created __________, an early and influential web-based platform for art.”

Tags: For example... #Contemporary Art, #Queer Art, #African Art, #Ceramics, #Installation, #Community Art, #Objects from the home. Include at least 8 tags for your curator.

Research completed by: Your Name! :)

EXHIBITIONS ALIVE!
This semester, with a team, each student will present to the class a history of an important exhibition of their choosing, incorporating research from multiple sources and critical perspectives. Your team will propose a reinstallation and response to this historical exhibition. As a main focus, the exhibition will aim to connect audiences.

Exhibitions are ephemeral. To understand a physical exhibition, you most likely have to be there to experience it, to participate, to respond. “Being there” can be difficult, especially when exhibitions happen across the country or across the world from you and often for limited periods of time. Pictures help, so do reviews, so do participant reflections, and audience surveys--but often there are still holes in our understandings of important exhibitions. With historical exhibitions, these kinds of problems quickly compound: culture is specific to certain moments and contexts; material gets buried or lost; memory is fallible.

It might be useful for us to somehow bring exhibitions back to life so that audiences can interact with them in a contemporary context. This project invites undergraduate and graduate students from the courses Connecting Audiences and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Curatorial Practice to explore an exhibition through research, creative response, and presentation. Integral to the new exhibition will be educational strategies to help make the exhibition useful for a targeted audience and/or help facilitate a conversation within a specific community. Students from the two courses will work together in small teams to develop and present a strategy to remake an important exhibition. Students will choose the exhibition, thoroughly research the exhibition, work as a team to present a proposal for the new exhibition, and reflect on their exhibition-development process. The proposal will take the form of an informative powerpoint presentation, a prepared lecture, a detailed handout including important information and an annotated bibliography. Each team will have 15 minutes to present.

+ FURTHER READING: These books could be some good starting points for your research on exhibitions related to the projects described above. Most of these books are available at the MICA library. I put stars next to some favorites. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO READ ALL OF THESE BOOKS.


