CP 5500: Writing for Artists, Critics, and Curators  
Fall 2012

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Course Description/Objectives
Students will develop writing skills for a variety of exhibition situations. The areas of study will cover four different areas: the exhibition catalogue essay; interpretative material for the gallery (wall text, curatorial/artist statements, brochures, labels); press release and marketing texts; and grants and exhibition proposals. Emphasis will be placed on clear, informative writing that amplifies, rather than marginalizes, the voice of the artist and curator in the community. The portfolio of writings produced will be geared towards initiating and maintaining a conversation between artist/curator and the community at large.

Evaluation Methods
Students will be evaluated on in-class participation and writing exercises, as well as a portfolio that will include examples of each type of writing (catalogue essay, interpretative material, press release, and proposals). A mid-term portfolio review will also be held.

Course Outline

August

T 28  Introduction  
  “Writing about art is like dancing about architecture.” –Martin Mull  
  Resisting Artspeak  
  “Arty Bullocks Generator”/”Arty Bio Generator,” blog post  
  John Waters’ Walker Art Center audio tour in Pig Latin  
  “Ink Tank,” Robert Storr (reflects on what it takes to be an art writer), frieze, April 2011.  
  “Life-Changing Art” writing exercise

September

T 4  The Art of Conversation and the Importance of Curiosity (the Latin curiosus means “careful” “attentive” and is related to the Latin cura, “to care”)
Initiating the Conversation: Interview Strategies and Cupcakes
Crafting an effective letter of introduction/cover letter, see “How to Write a Letter of Application,” Writing for the Visual Arts.

T 11   [2012 CP Artist] class visit/Interview session

T 18   Wall Text: Curatorial Statement/Approaches
   “How to Write a Curatorial Statement,” Tensta Konsthall blog, March 12, 2010, states that “the main aim in writing a curatorial statement is to imply a great deal without actually saying very much at all. The trick is to be wantonly suggestive and at the same time to speak as indirectly as possible.” Really?
   “Is It a Gallery?” George Ciscle, Baltimore Magazine, September 2005

T 25   Rebecca “The Queen of Wall Text” Hoffberger visit at AVAM

October

T 2   Interpretive Materials: Artist Statement/Labels/Hand-outs
   “Your Artist Statement: Explaining the Unexplainable,” Alan Bamberger, ArtBusiness.com
   “Glenn Ligon,” Ingrid Schaffner, Looking Forward/Looking Black exhibition catalogue, BMA
   Review of hand-outs from Maryland Art Place, BMA, MICA, Contemporary, etc.
   What Makes Us Smile? Exhibition wall text, American Visionary Art Museum
   Material Girls Exhibition wall text, Reginald Lewis Museum

T 9   Grant Writing/Proposal Discussion With Merrell Hambleton (Creative Time)
   Creative Time “Best Practices” document for grants/proposals
   Brenda Richardson/BMA proposal to Andy Warhol Foundation, 1993
   See Hear project proposal, John Lewis, Baltimore magazine, 2005
   Alec Soth’s America, page 152, Alec Soth blog post w/ excerpt from Magnum
   Photos application letter
   Jackson Pollock, excerpt from 1947 Guggenheim Application, Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art, page 22

FALL BREAK

T 23   Mid-Term Portfolio Review

T 30   Catalogue Essays/Voices and Approaches
   “Least Likely to Succeed,” Aaron Rose, Beautiful Losers: Contemporary Art and Street Culture, DAP
   “In the Cipher: Basquiat and Hip-Hop Culture,” Franklin Sirmans, Basquiat
exhibition catalogue, Brooklyn Museum of Art
Claes Oldenburg essay, *Environments Situations Spaces* exhibition catalogue, Martha Jackson Gallery
“Curator’s Comic,” Paul Candler, *Comics on the Verge* brochure, MICA
“Hiding in Plain Sight: Warhol’s Camouflage,” Brenda Richardson, *Andy Warhol: Camouflage* exhibition catalogue, Gagosian Gallery
“Looking for Art in all the Wrong Places,” Brenda Richardson, *John Waters: Change of Life* exhibition catalogue, Abrams

**November**

T 6 Brenda Richardson class visit for discussion of catalogue essays/proposals

T 13 The Press Release: Reaching Out
Review and evaluation of press releases from various Baltimore-based arts organizations

T 20 Roger Gastman class visit to discuss curatorial collaboration/developing materials for exhibition

T 27 DIY Art Critics/Blogs

**December**

T 4 Catalogue Essays/In-Class Review
“Guarded Review,” *Esopus* # 17.

T 11 Portfolio Presentation

**Suggested Reading**


*Writing for Visual Thinkers: A Guide for Artists and Designers*, Andrea Marks, New Riders. Effective approaches/attitudes for writing well, with an excellent intro by Ellen Lupton and companion CD with links to articles, blogs, wikis, podcasts, etc.


*What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, Paul Marincola (editor), PEI. Ingrid Schaffner’s “Wall Text” chapter (page 154) will be essential to our Interpretive Materials discussion.
Other Class Materials:  
Spiral notebook for in-class writing exercises  
Two-pocket folders for submission of revisions, portfolio  
Photocopies of your work for workshops