

# Syllabus for VIS 128C - Topics in Modern Art History - Curatorial Practice

VIS 128C: History and Theory of Curatorial Practice

Visual Arts Department Fall 2024

University of California, San Diego

Lecture: Tuesdays and Thursdays 8am-9:20am, SME 149

Instructor: Dr. Ceci Moss

TA: Johnnie Chatman

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays before or after class, by appointment

---

## CATALOG DESCRIPTION

This is the general course description for the course that can be found at: <https://catalog.ucsd.edu/courses/VIS.html>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Exhibitions organize art objects in time and space. It assumes a subject, object and world. In doing so, the simple act of the “exhibition” is an extraordinarily weighted one. This class will present a survey of exhibition history and curatorial practice through the lens of media history and the struggle for social justice, beginning in the 19th century. We will consider the roots of colonialism and nationalism within the encyclopedic museum, and how this carries through to the present day, while also reflecting on how an evolving media and technological environment informs the experiential possibilities of exhibition-making, in and outside of formal institutions. Throughout, we will be attuned to the extraordinary context of the present, asking how exhibition-making and curatorial practice can be a vehicle for true change.

The class is organized into three sections: Subject/Object/World, Systems, and Resistance.

**Subject/Object/World** provides greater context for the dominant Western perspective, particularly within the nineteenth century, and its ties to colonialism, the patriarchy, modernity and capitalism. This section will showcase how assumptions regarding the artist’s critical position to the world, their artistic output, their imagined audience, and the construct of the “curator” are situated within certain power structures.

**Systems** begins in the early part of the twentieth century, and reveals a paradigm shift in relation to the rise of cybernetics, the role of technological development and an information society. This presents a new framework for conceiving the subject, object and world that delivers both problems and possibilities.

The last section, **Resistance**, brings us to the strange and ever mutating twenty-first century. Students will contemplate what it means to display art in public space, given the mass medium of the internet, the rise of the attention economy, and much more.

The broad goal of this course is to introduce students to the history and theory of curatorial practice, while also preparing students to engage in contemporary artistic discourse and critical theory. Students will be expected to rigorously attend not only to the readings, but to develop regular art viewing as a part of their day-to-day life. Towards this end, the midterm will require that you go off campus, and view an exhibition from an approved list.

**Prerequisites:** upper-division standing.

---

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- Ceci Moss, *Expanded Internet Art: Twenty-First-Century Artistic Practice and the Informational Milieu* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019)
  - Available via [Amazon](#) → [Links to an external site.](#) or [Course Reserves](#)
- Paloma Checa-Gismero, *Biennial Boom: Making Contemporary Art Global* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024)
  - Available: via [Amazon](#) → [Links to an external site.](#) or [Course Reserves](#) or [digital copy through the Library](#)

All other readings are available through the course website under [Modules](#).

## DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS

Syllabus will be posted on Canvas. Please be aware that any changes made to the syllabus over the semester will be noted in class and also on Canvas. Assignments will be posted on Canvas and completed assignments will be posted onto Canvas at the time of the assigned due date.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

For all Writing Assignments, you must use consistent and properly formatted footnotes or endnotes, preferably using the Chicago Manual of Style format that is the standard in the field. If you have any questions about proper formatting, please see the Chicago Manual of Style or its [website](#) → [Links to an external site.](#). You will be marked down for

inconsistent and/or improperly formatted footnotes.

*All writing should be in Times New Roman, 12pt, double spaced*

- [READING RESPONSE: What is an exhibition?](#)
- [QUESTIONS FOR GUEST SPEAKERS: Dr Chris Fremantle \(Oct 10\) / Dr. Paloma Checa-Gismero \(Nov 12\)](#)
- [MIDTERM: Exhibition Review](#)
- [FINAL: Reflection on Hybrid Spectatorship](#)

## **GRADING BREAKDOWN**

Writing Assignment: 25%

Midterm: 25%

Questions for Guest Speakers: 10%

Final: 25%

Attendance and Participation: 15%

## **GRADE SCALE**

A 90-100%

B 80-89%

C 70-79%

D 60-69%

F 0-59%

Grading Scale: A indicates work of excellent quality; B of good quality; C of average quality; D of below average quality; and F indicates inadequate work.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS will be deducted 10% of allowed points for each class day that it is late.

In order to receive credit for weekly attendance, students must show up to class on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8-9:20am. Regular attendance in all classes is required and mandatory. Students are expected to arrive on time and remain in class for the entire period scheduled.

## **Assignment Submission Policy**

All assignments must be submitted via the course website by the due date. Assignments not presented or turned in by due dates are considered late and will be penalized as described above.

## **Grading Timeline**

Grades will be posted two weeks following submission of work.

---

## **Wellness and Health Statement**

I believe a healthy work/life balance and the prioritization of overall well being is a central component to one's success both within this class and beyond. Towards this end, I model well being as a value in my classes. Please be kind and generous to yourself, and to others. If you are unable to attend class because of a personal or family emergency, please communicate that to the TA over email.

---

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. <http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Appendices/2>

Effective 9/25/2017, UC San Diego will use new Administrative Sanctioning Guidelines to respond to academic integrity violations: <http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/consequences/sanctioning-guidelines.html>.

Associated Students Office of Student Advocacy: a free and private resource providing one on one Zoom advising to students accused of violating Student Conduct or Academic Integrity policies. Contact or make an appointment at <https://asadvocacy.ucsd.edu/>

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter (paper or electronic) issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (link to OSD website). Students are required to discuss accommodation arrangements with instructors and OSD liaisons in the department IN ADVANCE of any exams or assignments.

For additional information, contact the Office for Students with Disabilities:

- 858.534.4382 (V)
  - 858.534.9709 (TTY) - Reserved for people who are deaf or hard of hearing
  - [osd@ucsd.edu](mailto:osd@ucsd.edu)
  - <http://disabilities.ucsd.edu>
- 

## **Day 1 Introduction/Welcome**

## **Day 2 *What is Curatorial Practice?***

### Required Reading:

Paul O'Neill "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse" in *Issues of Curating Contemporary Art and Performance* Eds. Judith Rugg and Michele Sedgwick (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012)

Elena Filipovic "What is an exhibition?" in *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating* (Mousse Publishing, 2013)

### Recommended Reading:

McClellan, A. (2019) "Professionalizing the Field: The Case of the United States" in *A Companion to Curation* (eds B. Buckley and J. Conomos).

## **Day 3 *The Form of the Exhibition***

### Required Reading:

Ingrid Schaffner, "Wall Text," *What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, ed. Paula Marincola (Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, 2006), 154-167.

Orit Gat, "Could reading be looking?" in *e-flux journal*, March 2016 (Issue #72)

### Recommended Reading:

N.B. "An Art World Glossary for a Turbulent Decade" in *Art in America* (Dec 20, 2019)

Boris Groys "Curating in the Post Internet Age" in *e-flux journal* (Issue #94) October 2018

## **Day 4 *Subject/Object/World: Art in the Evolving Public Sphere of the 19th Century: Imperialism, Public Museum, and the Emergence of the "Observer"***

### Required Reading:

Jonathan Crary "Modernity and the Problem of the Observer" in *Techniques of the Observer : On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990)

### Recommended Reading:

Louis Haghe, et al., *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851* (London, 1854)

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/dickinsons-comprehensive-pictures-of-the-great->

exhibition-of-1851

Brooke Belisle, "Introduction" and "Chapter One: Encompassing the Global View" in "The Bigger Picture: The Panoramic Image and the Global Imagination" (UC Berkeley, PhD Dissertation: 2012)

**Day 5 Interlude: Future Gardens - Thursday October 10th**

**Guest Presentation by Dr. Chris Fremantle (Lecturer on the Contemporary Art Practice and Senior Research Fellow at Gray's School of Art) within the exhibition [Helen and Newton Harrison: California Work](#) at the Mandeville Art Gallery**

**Meet at the Mandeville Art Gallery at 8am**

Required Reading:

Tatiana Sizonenko "Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison: Meditations on Climate Change" in *Field Journal* Issue 23, Winter 2023

**Day 6 Subject/Object/World: The Afterlives of the Encyclopedic Museum**

Required Reading:

Laura Raicovich "Introduction" in *Culture Strike: Art and Museums in an Age of Protest* (New York: Verso, 2021)

Yesomi Umolu, "On the Limits of Care and Knowledge: 15 Points Museums Must Understand to Dismantle Structural Injustice" in *Artnet* (June 25, 2020)

Recommended Reading:

Ceci Moss, "The Social in Practice: A Conversation with Nina Simon" in *Art in America* (October 14, 2016)

Charlotte Kent, "Public Relations: On Museums and Protest" in *Artforum* (Summer 2024)

Ofri Cnaani "Leaking Lands: Museum documentation without digitization" in *Documentation as Art : Expanded Digital Practices*, Eds. Dekker, Annet, and Gabriella Giannachi (London; Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023)

**Day 7 Subject/Object/World: The Exhibition in the Age of Technological Reproduction and the Rise of the Avant-garde**

Required Reading:

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility" in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Edited by Michael William Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin. Translated by E. F. N. Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, and Howard Eiland. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 19-55

Jacques Ranciere, "The Art of the Possible" in *Artforum*  
March 2007

### **Day 8 Systems: Systems Theory and Cybernetics**

Required Reading:

Jack Burnham "Systems Esthetics" in *Artforum*  
September 1968

N. Katherine Hayles "Cybernetics" in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010)

Recommended Reading:

Pamela Lee "Systems" in *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004)

### **Day 9 Systems: Exhibition as Medium**

Required Reading:

Yuk Hui and Adeena Mey "The Exhibition as Medium: Some Observations on the Cybernetisation of the Institution and the Exhibition" in *Afterall* (Issue 53) September 2022

Victoria Ivanova "Art, Systems, Finance" in *Intersubjectivity Vol II - Scripting the Human*. Eds. Rochester, Lou Cantor. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2018)

Recommended Reading:

Sol Le Witt "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" in *Artforum* (Summer 1967)

Sassen, Saskia. "Conclusion: At the Systemic Edge." *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*, Harvard University Press, 2014, pp. 211–22.

### **Day 10 Systems: Postmodernism**

Required Reading:

Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" Excerpts

(pdf)

bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness" in *Postmodern Culture* (1:1) September 1990

### **Day 11 Systems: Hybrid Spectatorship & the Postsensual**

Required Reading:

Claire Bishop "Black Box, White Cube, Grey Zone: Performance Exhibitions and Hybrid Spectatorship" in *Disordered Attention: How We Look at Art and Performance Today* (New York: Verso, 2024)

James Voorhies, "Exact Imagination" in *Postsensual Aesthetics: On the Logic of the Curatorial* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2023)

Recommended Reading:

Keller Easterling, "Activism in the Age of the Superbug" October 2019. (Frieze : Contemporary Art and Culture. London: Frieze)

### **Day 12 Systems: Navigating the Network: Internet Art**

Required Reading:

Josephine Bosma, "Let's Talk Net Art" in *Nettitudes: Let's Talk Net Art* (Amsterdam: NAI Publishers, 2011) pp. 22-61

Recommended Reading:

Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, "Conclusions: Histories, Vocabularies, Modes" in *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010)

### **Day 13 Systems: Post Media / Post Medium & the Content Industrial Complex**

Required Reading:

Seth Price "Dispersion" (2002-Ongoing)

Ceci Moss, "Introduction" in *Expanded Internet Art: Twenty-First-Century Artistic Practice and the Informational Milieu* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019)

Recommended Reading:

Dena Yago "Content Industrial Complex" in *e-flux journal* Issue #89 (March 2018)

Kate Eichhorn "A Brief History of Content in a Digital Era" in *Content* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2022)

## **Day 14 Systems: Envisioning the Global**

### **Guest Lecture by Dr. Paloma Checa-Gismero (Assistant Professor in Art History at Swarthmore College)**

#### Required Reading:

Paloma Checa-Gismero, "Biennial Conversions at the Borders of Liberalism: An Introduction" in *Biennial Boom: Making Contemporary Art Global* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024)

Ceci Moss is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Guest Lecture by Dr. Paloma Checa-Gismero  
Time: Nov 12, 2024 08:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

#### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/93700478240> → Links to an external site.

Meeting ID: 937 0047 8240

#### One tap mobile

+16692192599,,93700478240# US (San Jose)  
+16699006833,,93700478240# US (San Jose)

#### Dial by your location

+1 669 219 2599 US (San Jose)  
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)  
+1 213 338 8477 US (Los Angeles)

Meeting ID: 937 0047 8240

Find your local number: <https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/93700478240>

## **Day 15 Resistance: Meme**

#### Required Reading:

Hito Steyerl "Spam of the Earth: Withdrawal from Representation" in *The Wretched of the Screen* (London: Sternberg Press, 2013)

#### Recommended Reading:

Mike Pepi, "I, Meme, Mine: The Meme Accounts Upending the Art World's Class System" in *Frieze* (May-June 2020)

## **Day 16 Resistance: Queer**

#### Required Reading:

“Introduction: Feeling Utopia” in Jose Esteban Munoz *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009)

### **Day 17 Resistance: Hack, Occupy and Cloak**

Required Reading:

Zach Blas “Queer Darkness” in *Depletion Design: A Glossary of Network Ecologies* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2012)

Alexander Galloway “Black Box, Black Bloc” in *Critical Digital Studies: A Reader*. Eds Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013)

### **Day 18 Resistance: Decolonization**

Required Listening/Reading:

Shimrit Lee "Decolonize Museums" (*e-flux* podcast, September 15, 2021)

Recommended Reading:

Nina Möntmann "Introduction: Why Decenter Museums and Why Now?" and "The Colonial Dilemma of the Modern Museum" in *Decentering the Museum : Contemporary Art Institutions and Colonial Legacies*. Translated by Gerrit Jackson. (London, UK: Lund Humphries, 2023)

### **Day 19 Resistance: The Present Moment**

Required Reading:

Chus Martinez "The Octopus in Love" in *The Complex Answer: On Art as Non-Binary Intelligence* (London: Sternberg Press, 2024)

Recommended Reading:

Daphne Dragona "Commoning the Commons: The Role of Art in Times of Crisis" in *Aesthetics of the Commons* Eds. Cornelia Sollfrank, Felix Stalder, Shusha Niederberger (Berlin: Diaphanes, 2021)

Ting Wing Yan Vivian "Curating Contemporary Art: Narrating the past and reflecting on the individual and the time" Translated by Yan Ying in *Curating Art*, Eds. Janet Marstine, Oscar Ho Hing Kay. (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2021)

### **Day 20 Conclusion: Braver Art Scenes**

Required Reading:

Ceci Moss, “Ingredients for a Braver Art Scene” in *CARLA* (Summer 2019)

Recommended Reading:

Maria Lind "Pointless Acts" in *Seven Years: The Rematerialisation of Contemporary Art from 2011-2017* (London: Sternberg Press, 2019)