

tdgr278 Special Topics in Design: *History of Design-the Transformation of Design in Performance*

Syllabus

- Thursdays 2:10-5:00 pm
- GH111 Grad Design Studio
- Victoria Petrovich, Instructor
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- Office hours: Wed. 2:30-3:30 & by appointment

A seminar course that explores many of the radical ideas that have transformed live performance design in the 20th-21st centuries.

We'll examine historical and contemporary creative artists and movements—their theories, practices, and technologies from Wagner's *Gesumptkunstwerk/Total Theater* onward. We'll evaluate the contributions, various approaches/perspectives towards *live performance design*, and identify connections between the pioneers of the past and our contemporary innovators. By deepening our understanding of our connections to the past, the course is intended to also broaden our perceptions of worldwide artistic activities that have contributed to and shaped how we approach our artistic work today.

The course is designed to be experiential, and discoveries will be made through lectures, reading/viewing discussions, related activities and projects that support the topics. Students are expected to fully participate in all class discussions and activities. The assigned reading material should be completed before each class meeting. Any contemporary digital examples or links in response to the weekly topics should be sent to the instructor before 10 am on the morning of the class. Bring any analog hardcopy examples with you to class, along with your questions.

- There will be a mid-term project/presentation and a final project/presentation in lieu of exams. Details given in class and on the course website.
- The course website contains the syllabus, contact information weekly assignment details, required and further reading, visual examples of topics, and bibliography. Password given in class.
<https://historytransformationofdesign.weebly.com/>
- Syllabus is subject to change-please contact me if you have questions about changes and/or consult the course website for updates. I will announce any changes or updates, and follow up with an email reminder.
- No unexcused absences (please contact me if you need to miss class for any reason). It is your responsibility to get the missed assignments. The course website will have this information.
- If you have any special needs-please contact me so I can accommodate

Week 0/ Sept. 22, 2016

Introductions; Collaboration, constructive criticism in live performance

Theater=place for viewing

What is a designer? What is *design for live performance*?

What is collaboration?

Reading:

- Collaborative Theatre/Creative Process

<https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1053&context=ctamj>

- Who Owns A Gesture? Negotiating Creation and Collaboration in a Theatre Arts Practice

<https://www.nanocrit.com/issues/issue10/who-owns-gesture-creation-and-collaboration-theatre-arts-practice>

• *Critical Response*-Liz Lerman

• *USITT 2012 Keynote Address*-Luís Valdez

Choose an idea from each article that you would like to discuss in class.

• Be prepared to discuss your current curiosity in life and/or art.

Extra:

- *A visit to a Small Planet*-Elinor Fuchs

View & discussion:

• What is the *Gesamtkunstwerk*? Who are the contemporary artists working this concept?

• Wagnerian technology-then & now

<https://www.americantheatre.org/2014/01/15/new-stage-technology-changes-the-behind-the-scenes-route/>

Assignment for the following week:

• Interview & research your assigned partner as if you were devising a performance-portrait of them
* use any visual or aural material to represent the worldview of your portrait subject • assemble as a creative research presentation and/or as a performance that integrates these creative elements

• Keep it to a 5 min. maximum presentation

Week 1/Sept. 29

Spectacle & Illusion in Performance Design

Reading:

- *Projecting Shadows*-Gunning
- *Draughtsman's Contract*-Willits (view excerpts from the film)
- *What is Scenography?*-Howard
- Spectacle and its purpose

Assignment:

After reading articles, choose contemporary examples:

- 1 each: inspiring illusionistic/immersive performance design
- one excessive spectacle

Week 2/Oct. 06

Modernism: the age of dematerialization

Reading:

- *The Age of Windows*-Friedberg

- *Paris—Capital of the nineteenth Century*—Benjamin
- notes on the *Paris* article
- *Transparency—Literal and Phenomenal*—Robert Slutzky

View & Discussion:

Disruptive technology-intentional and unintentional

What do transparent materials and ideas about transparency mean in a performance design?

Assignment:

- consider how glass *dematerializes* structure and how mirrors (and reflection in glass) create mediated views in contemporary architecture; how is this used in performance design?
 - how do they "frame" our views of the world around us?
- With these ideas in mind, take photographs of "theatrical scenes in daily life" that are framed, viewed and/or reflected in windows (mediated by their reflections in windows, mirrors and other reflective surfaces in local architecture)
- human/s should be included

[Definition of UNMEDIATED: not mediated; not communicated or transformed by an intervening agency
 <experience unmediated by artifice

1. an unmediated depiction of reality, I.E. transparent views
 2. Vrs. mediated views (reflected images in windows, mirrors, water, etc.)
- send me/or bring in your 3-5 best photos by Thurs. 10 am.— before class

2. Identify which modern *material* has effectively influenced your creative work and bring that choice/or a representation into class

• how has it altered the way you work, or the way you think about your work?

Week 3/Oct. 13

Cult of the machine-Futurism

Reading:

- Futurist Scenography
- Marinetti's concept of a theater enhanced by audio-video media)
- Fuller and Futurists-Revolutionaries of Theatrical Experience
- Futurist Photography
- Futurist Fashion
- listen to Russolo's *Macchina Tipografica/Russolo Noise* (write down your responses for discussion)

Assignment:

1-Based on the philosophy and stylistic elements of Futurism, provide a contemporary performance example to share with the class next week-either send links to me or show on your own device

- How have the Futurists' experiments in performance design influenced contemporary artists today?
 In your own work?

2. Prepare an outline proposal for a Dada/Futurist performance-based project (from your own artistic interests) that reflects the futurist philosophy and stylistic element(s) that have influenced your own work

3. the proposed performance(s) assignments will be due as the MIDTERM Wk. 5-you may work solo or integrate your ideas and collaborate with others in the class-teams to be determined

Week 4/Oct. 20

Total Montage 1 // the REMIX

-often used in reference to film, creating new dialectical meaning where new ideas emerge from the collision of the montage sequence (synthesis) and where the new emerging ideas are not innate in any of the images of the edited sequence. A new concept explodes into being via juxtaposition. Discussion of Barthes' *The Third Meaning*, *Kuleshev effect*, Eisenstein's thoughts on *ideograms*.

Reading:

- assigned text
- Montage Culture
- Constructivism and Russian Stage Design
- Goncharova and Futurist Theater
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuleshov_Effect

Assignment:

- create a montage of reference material (in any medium) that responds to the assigned text based on the ideas discussed in class and the reading
- Use juxtaposition and ideogrammic structure to create a *new signifier // new meaning*
- How is this theory used in contemporary performance? Visual, audio, staging, etc.

Week 5/ Oct. 27

Anti-art andThe Dada Machine: Experimental Sound & Cinema

MIDTERM PROJECTS DUE

Reading:

- Intermedia
- <http://www.ubu.com/sound/fluxus.html>
- Duchamp, Tsypin

View:

- examples of Dada gender play and contemporary equivalents-Wk. 4 webpage;
- Zangezi production (Sellars) on its own page; experimental cinema webpage; John Cage webpage
- George Tsypin's Dada constructions as stage design
- Other performance artists working in the Dada tradition (Fluxus and beyond)

Assignment:

TBD> we may take a detour to RITUAL, field trip to Dia de los Muertos celebration depending on what is available locally around Nov. 1/2

- Richard Schechner
- Wolfgang Laib
- Ann Hamilton
- James Turrell

Week 6/Nov. 03

The Expressionist Sublime

Reading:

- *Short history of the Sublime*-Morey

- *The Expressionist Sublime*-intro from the Architecture Exhibition
- *A Short History of the Shadow*—Stoichita
- *One Hundred Years of Stage Lighting*—Aronson
- *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*—Benjamin (excerpts)

extra credit:

- *Are Shadows Transparent?*
- Bill Viola—*Allergories in Subjective Perception*

View: on website, further examples viewed in class

- Expressionist Theatre
- *Metropolis* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*
- <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/art-and-sublime>

What are the *theatrical conventions* of Expressionism? How are they applied to invoke a sense of the sublime? Which forms of technology today are being used to invoke sublimity? Share examples

Assignment:

- Either solo or with a partner, create a (5 min. max) piece that responds to the experiential concept of the sublime using light/shadow/lo/hi tech
- lighting & sound students take the lead (you have access to the Light Lab, sound designers have access to the Sound Lab)

Week 7/Nov. 10

Total Machine: The Bauhaus, Simulation, & Mediated Performance

- Sublime projects

reading:

- *Taylorism & Fordism*
- the Uncanny Valley: read/view:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncanny_valley

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzxBpz7Xjl0>

<http://www.karakuri.info/perspectives/>

- *the Bauhaus Theater of Human Dolls*
- *Puppets and Performing Objects in the 20th century*
- *Staging of robots*
- *R.U. or R.U. Ain't My Baby?*
- *Absolute Stage*—Bauhaus
- *Theater Circus Variety*—Bauhaus Theater
- Taylor Mac
- Harvey Moon's drawing machines

Assignment:

- Send me 2 links/files that exemplify simulation/the Uncanny Valley/ and/or contemporary mediated performance before next class or bring on own device

- View in class: Bauhaus and Bauhaus-influenced contemporary performance together in class (if you have examples you'd like to share, please include with assignment)

Taylor Mac (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhKb96oPxkc>)

- More on the webpage

Week 8/Nov. 17

Total Montage 2: Epic Theater

Reading:

http://sodacity.net/system/files/Bertolt_Brecht_The_Radio_as_an_Apparatus_of_Communication.pdf

- *Man's a Man*-R. Woodruff & Bill Irwin
- *Neher and Brecht*
- *Dismantling the Gesamtkunstwerk: Weill, Neher and Brecht in Collaboration*
- *Sellars-Performance & Ethics*

View:

<http://www.universaledition.com/caspar-neher-sceneries>

Assignment:

- Listen:

Brecht, *Radio Play*

<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/bertold-brechtaudio/1/>

- Propose a *political performance piece* for discussion in class (one page written proposal)
What are your current burning issues?
How does this relate to your experience of contemporary theater? Which theater artists and/or collectives do you consider *political*? Why?
- Send examples of 2 inspiring contemporary performance designs in which the form reveals the mechanics/and/or the 4th wall inspired by “Brechtian” conventions discussed in class
- Final Assignment: discuss final project ideas in class

1. Choose one from the following (must be approved by instructor):

- Design a mediated character for the text from scenic studio class (design it in a way that you can communicate it to others via references, sketches, photos, etc.—as you would present an idea to a Director/Choreographer)

Ex.: Create a Video, light, or sound *motif* for a character from your costume design text• Choose a scene/location (from the text) to perform as a site-specific installation—provide photographs of the site, consider time of day/night, how the location would amplify the scene

2. Expand your political project proposal

3. Propose an *alternate project* that is related to the topics we've discussed in class

Week 09 Nov. 24

NO class– HAPPY Thanksgiving!

reading for Wk. 10/Dissolving the Frame

- *Svoboda-Theater Artist in an Age of Science*
- *Scenography of Joseph Svoboda*
- *George Coates Performance Works Trilogy*
- *Foreman on Foreman*
- *Sound Design-Brown*
- *Olfactory Performance-Banes*
- *Buildings that Breathe*-Doris Sung's Living Architecture

Assignment:

Finish up on reading assignments
work on final projects

Week 10 Dec.01

Space: Dissolving the Frame

- Discussion and viewing based on reading assigned wk. 9
- View Foreman productions-discuss his compression of space; use of sound; audience/performance proximity
- View George Coates' work-discuss his approach to space and immersive theater (before we used the word immersive); seamless integration between performers and video space
- VR in live performance

Wk. 11 if needed:

Final project presentations

Details discussed in class and provided on webpage