

ARTH100-301 Fall 2005 Spiegel Freshman Seminar
Contemporary Art in Context: The Venice Biennale 2005
Dr. Stephen Petersen

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Tuesday 2-4:00 pm or by appt.

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Course description:

The Venice Biennale, the sprawling international art show held every two years in the thirty national pavilions of the Giardini della Biennale and in the vast 16th-century shipbuilding and warehouse spaces known as the Arsenale, has been a leading international venue for contemporary art for over a century. It has also frequently been the occasion for artistic, political, and social debates. With more than three hundred artists from sixty countries participating, and close to a quarter of a million square feet of exhibition space, the Biennale as it exists today offers a uniquely exciting and always controversial experience of cutting-edge art from around the world, including everything from paintings to high-tech installations.

In this seminar we will study the Biennale as an institution involving issues of aesthetics, internationalism, multiculturalism, gender, and even economics. And while active engagement with recent art will be the focus in this class, we will also explore the historical background of Venice and the Biennale. To these ends students will undertake both critical analysis and historical research, investigating different ways of relating to contemporary art.

This seminar includes a five-day trip to Venice, Italy, over the October mid-term break (leaving Oct. 14, returning Oct. 19). We will prepare by studying the institutional history of the Biennale and its place in contemporary art, as well as past debates and controversies. Following the trip, students will report on their experiences and, for their final projects, will investigate topics in response to issues raised by the exhibit.

Required texts:

Reading packet to be purchased at University Copy Service, Houston Hall, lower level.

Artforum vol. 44, no. 1 (September 2005).

Additional readings will be assigned over the course of the semester, and supplemental reserve reading materials will be available at Fisher Fine Arts Library.

Class requirements:

In addition to weekly attendance and active participation, students will be expected to prepare reading reports, short research presentations, critical responses to contemporary art, and a final research project.

Attendance:

Class absences should be cleared with the instructor in advance. Unexcused absences may result in a grade penalty.

Grading:

Breakdown of grading is as follows:

Weekly reports	15%
Short research presentation (due Sept. 26)	10%
Art journal	10%
Critical reviews (due Oct. 31)	15%
Class participation	20%
Final project (due Dec. 5)	<u>30%</u>
	100%

Course schedule:

Monday Sept. 12 – Introduction: Contemporary Art and the Venice Biennale: Rodney Graham

Reading:

Packet #1. Christopher Miles, “Lost in the Moment,” *Art in America*, vol. 93, no. 3 (March 2005), pp. 108-113.

Monday Sept. 19 – History of the Biennale

Readings:

Packet #2. Maria Mimita Lamberti, “The Context of the Early Exhibits, from the End of the Century to the First World War,” in *Venice and the Biennale: Itineraries of Taste* (Venice: Fabbri Editori, 1995), pp. 39-56.

Packet #3. Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968: from Salon to Goldfish Bowl*, Ch. 1: "The Biennale in 1968," pp. 12-29.

Packet #4. Alloway, Ch. 2: "The Biennale as Super-Salon, 1895-1914," pp. 30-53.

Packet #5. Alloway, Ch. 6: "The Avant-Garde in a Goldfish Bowl, 1948-68," pp. 132-155.

Packet #6. Laurie J. Monahan, "Cultural Cartography: American Designs at the 1964 Venice Biennale," in Serge Guilbaut, ed., *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 369-416.

Class will visit the Fisher Fine Arts Library. Presentation by Fine Arts Librarian William Keller.

Monday Sept. 26 – The Biennale from 1995 to 2003

Reading:

Packet #7: Peter Schjeldahl, "Festivalism: Oceans of Fun at the Venice Biennale," *New Yorker*, vol. 75, no. 17 (July 5, 1999), pp. 85-86.

Short research presentations on one of the past decade's Biennales (students will work in pairs)

Monday Oct. 3 – Biennale 2005: Issues and Views

Readings:

Packet #8. Elizabeth Sussman, "Curator's Work: The Pragmatics of Internationalism," in Jean Fisher, ed., *Global Visions: Toward a New Internationalism in the Arts* (London: Kala Press, 1994), pp. 161-169.

Packet #9. Jeffrey Kastner, "Two for the Show," *Artforum*, vol. 43, no. 9 (May 2005), p. 141.

Packet #10. Daniele Sorrentino, "Biennale Arte 2005," *Venice Magazine*, vol. 4, no. 30 (June 2005), pp. 20-22.

Packet #11. Marcia E. Vetrocq, "Venice Biennale: Careful What You Wish For," *Art in America*, vol. 93, no. 8 (Sept. 2005), pp. 108-119, 168.

Packet #12. Linda Nochlin, "Venice Biennale: What Befits a Woman?" *Art in America*, vol. 93, no. 8 (Sept. 2005), pp. 120-125.

Packet #13. Carol Vogel, "Feng Shui in Venice?: China Lands at Biennale," *New York Times* (Wash. D.C. edition), 11 June 2005, pp. A15, A20.

Class visit by artist Cecilia Paredes-Reise, representing Costa Rica at this year's Biennale.

Monday Oct. 10 – Ed Ruscha and the American Pavilion, Trip Orientation

Reading:

Packet #14. Herbert Muschamp, "The Empire Strikes Back," *T: The New York Times Style Magazine* (Summer 2005), pp. 90-97.

Ruscha reading TBA

Friday Oct. 14 – Depart for Venice US Airways flight 830 leaving 5:50 pm

Wednesday Oct. 19 – Return to Philadelphia US Airways flight 829 arriving 2:45 pm

Monday Oct. 24 – No class, individual meetings scheduled to discuss final projects

Monday Oct. 31 – Reviewing the Biennale: Reading and Writing Criticism

Critical reviews due. Visit with critic Dave Hickey (tentatively scheduled).

Monday Nov. 7 – Curating Contemporary Art

Visit with ICA Curator Ingrid Schaffner (tentatively scheduled)

Monday Nov. 14 – Contemporary Art in Public Space

Readings: TBA

Wednesday Nov. 16 – Lecture: Jenny Holzer on "Public Art," 5:00 pm, Institute of Contemporary Art. Pre-register (required) at: <http://humanities.sas.upenn.edu> or (215) 573-8280. Attendance required.

Monday Nov. 21 – Student Presentations: Final Project

Monday Nov. 28 – Student Presentations: Final Project (cont'd)

Monday Dec. 5 – Final Projects due in class