ARTH 100-304—Freshman Seminar
Accumlated Vision, Barry Le Va
Spring 2005

Tuesdays: 1:30-4:30pm
Williams Hall, Room 438
Ingrid Schaffner, Senior Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art
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Office hours: by appointment only
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Course Description:

This seminar is being held in conjunction with a major exhibition organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art, surveying the art of Barry Le Va. Since the late 1960s, this highly influential American artist has used broken glass, meat cleavers, wool felt, ball bearings, powdered chalk, cast concrete, paper towels, linseed oil, a typewriter and a gun, among other things, to make his work. Part of a generation intent on knocking art off its pedestal, Le Va claimed the floor as his field of operations by scattering massive amounts of materials, or forms, to create works which he called “distributions.” He has likened these installations to crime scenes and invites viewers to look for clues to reconstruct the, often violent, act or concept that underlies them. Following this lead, the seminar will track the art of Barry Le Va through major movements of Postmodern art up into the present, where its impact on younger artists is everywhere in evidence. At the same time, students will be expected to investigate other contexts suggested by the work.

Course Requirements:

Assessment
Assessment will be based on participation in class, presentations, and essays. Papers must be handed in on time. Any paper submitted after the deadline must be accompanied by documentary evidence (eg. medical certificate) of serious mitigating circumstances, or it will loose 10% for each day it is overdue. If at all possible, please come and see me before the due date with any problems you may be having. Except in the most exceptional of circumstances, no incompletes will be given.

Class Participation (20%)
Participation is a very important element of this class. Thoughtful (and playful) participation is essential. Two excused absences are permissible. Attendance at ICA programs related to the class is mandatory.
Presentations (20%)
Throughout the seminar, students will be required to report on individual artists and a time line of political, social and cultural events. These PowerPoint presentations should be a minimum of 5 minutes and a maximum of 10 minutes (practice and time yourself at home).

Object File/Report Papers (20%)
Each student will be responsible for researching and reporting on one work by Barry Le Va in depth. Four short papers (2-4 pages each) will briefly examine the work from different vantage points: as a physical object; in terms of its art historical context; in terms of its social and political context; its review and exhibition history.

Final Paper (40%)
A 6-8 page paper, plus bibliography, based on the Object File and in response to a theme or question from the instructor.

SYLLABUS

1. Introduction with a visit to the ICA installation of the Barry Le Va exhibition; Library Orientation; In-class assignment based on Lucy Lippard’s contribution to the “Information” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, 1970.

2. Barry Le Va as an emerging artist in California; PowerPoint lesson. [Öyvind Fahlström] [1960-1964]
3. Class Trip: Visit private collection of major works of Minimalism. WEAR NICE SOCKS and come encumbered with no excess baggage, accoutrements, etc. This is a private home, no shoes or knocking things over allowed.

4. Minimalism [Donald Judd] [Agnes Martin] [1965-67]  
   *First Report Due

5. Anti-Form [Richard Serra] [Lynda Benglis] [1968]

6. Sculpture Studio: Recreating a distribution

7. Dematerialization: Conceptual Art and Land Arts [1969-72] [Robert Smithson] [Mel Bochner]  
   *Second Report Due

8. SPRING BREAK

9. Performance and Body Art [Chris Burden] [Marina Abramovic and Ulay] [1973-75] NO NUDITY PERMITTED IN THIS CLASS!

10. SPIEGEL SYMPOSIUM: Instead of meeting on Tuesday, the class will attend the Spiegel Symposium 2005, organized in conjunction with the Barry Le Va exhibition on the theme of “Resistance.” The Barry Le Va lecture (on March 17th) and the Art History Panel and Artists Panel (March 18th) are mandatory. (Although it all should be required and you would be nuts to miss keynote speaker Greil Marcus!) Come prepared with questions for the panelists.

11. “Alphaville”: Science Fiction and Crime [1975-80] [Vito Acconci]  
   *Third Report Due

12. Architecture and Deconstruction [1980s] [Tony Smith] [Peter Eisemann]

13. Architecture Studio

14. Barry Le Va as an established artist in New York and symbolic form; Bibliography workshop [1990s] [Louise Bourgeois] [Bruce Nauman]

15. The Distributional field and the scatter gesture in recent art [2000-2005] [Jason Rhoades] [Polly Apfelbaum]

April 28, 2005 FINAL PAPER DUE
*ARTISTS

Marina Abramovic
Vito Acconci
Polly Apfelbaum
Robert Barry
Joseph Beuys
Lynda Benglis
Mel Bochner
Trisha Brown
Chris Burden
John Cage
Marcel Duchamp
Carroll Dunham
Valie Export
Öyvind Fahlström
Eva Hesse
Philip Glass
Mike Kelley
Klaus Kertess
Barry Le Va
Lucy Lippard
Greil Marcus
Ana Mendieta
Robert Morris
Bruce Nauman
Dennis Oppenheim
Paul McCarthy
Jackson Pollock
Yvonne Rainer
Jason Rhoades
Allen Ruppersberg
Beverly Semmes
Richard Serra
Tony Smith
Robert Smithson
Robert Storr
Harald Szeemann
Marcia Tucker