

Course Title and Description

ART AS AGENCY

We are living in interesting times, a phrase that rings with grief, irony and most important - opportunity. Artists have magnetized and tantalized the critical issues of our times with unprecedented power to ignite and put up a valiant fight. History, politics, fashion, media, pop culture, converge as public art expands inspiration, function and purpose. Mayor Bill deBlasio was featured on the front page of the New York Times “painting a Black Lives Matter public art work on Fifth Ave in front of Trump Tower.” Mayor London Breed orders the removal of Christopher Columbus so he is not tossed in the San Francisco Bay and an Andy Goldsworthy sculpture is burned in the Presidio as icons are toppling across the land.

This course will be an exploration of contemporary art changing in response to conceptual, artistic, aesthetic, social and political ideas and forces. Artists play an ever changing role as catalysts, visionaries, provocateurs, healers and tricksters. Cultural trends will be examined in light of shifting ideas about how art is made, showcased or experienced. The course will highlight types of practices including interventions, site specific, time base, street art, artist/activism, community art, performance art, with and without permission. Celebrated and deliberately anonymous artists will show a range of materials, imagination, context and consequence from Kehinde Wiley taking over Times Square with a mounted stallion to counter the confederacy to global response to pandemic painted in the streets and circulating online. Art is everywhere and belongs to everyone.

Week by Week Outline

Each session will focus on a theme and practice in contemporary public art, giving background and focus to featured artists' work, within the art historical context and contemporary impact. Other artists working in parallel will be included and framed within the influences and confluences of the social and cultural landscape.

Week 1: Alter/Altar Changing the Picture

Artists repair and consecrate public space.

Focus on work of JR, Chip Thomas, Billboard Liberation,
Mona Caron, Swoon

Week 2: Installation Art – Reframing History

Focus on Kara Walker, Shimon Attie, Kehinde Wiley,
William Kentridge

Week 3: Public Memory Site Specific

Focus on Christo, Mark Bradford, Ana Teresa Fernandez
Ai Wei Wei, Mildred Howard

Week 4: Public/ Performance Art – Power and Community

Focus on the Question Bridge & Oakland Youth
Projects,
Suzanne Lacy, Chris Johnson, Annice Jacoby

Week 5: Language as Visual Vocabulary – Disrupting Message and Meaning
Focus on Concrete Poetry, John Baldessari, Jenny Holzer, RIGO,
Barbara Kruger, Glen Ligon

Week 6: Street Art Trends in recent San Francisco Street Art
Focus SIRONI, fnnch, Mags, Alicia McCarthy, and many others
Survey of artists, tactics and politics

Week 7: Contested Space Whose Art is this Anyway?

Raising questions of taste, values, aesthetics, legacy, legitimacy and power, art has often been the focus of cultural ownership and conflict. Case studies will examine the controversies over protecting or destroying public art. We will examine Richard Serra's Tilted Arc sculpture in a downtown New York plaza and three San Francisco disputes over a rock and a school and library murals. Symbolic violence and destruction of false history, touch on topics that polarize and empower. We will look at the art and politics when statues and monuments topple.

Week 8: Public Art in a Post Pandemic World

As cultural institutions have been shuttered, the role of public art has shifted including online. Cultural assumptions and artists function in a new dynamic, yielding an outpouring a fresh creativity portending a potential flourishing of new forms and ways artists/activists address healing and dealing. We will look at how democracy of expression has expanded in the context of historical revolutionary art movements.

Objectives of the Course

To familiarize students with themes, genres & artists of contemporary public art
To analyze the relationship with traditional and rapidly evolving cultural understandings
To acquire an exposure, vocabulary and concepts related to contemporary public art.
To question and discuss the social context in which the work is created, how the work is experienced, context and impact.

Instructor Bio – Short paragraph (60 words)

Annice Jacoby (www.annicejacob.com) writer and artist is known for groundbreaking public artwork. UNDERCOVER, addressed the homeless humanitarian crisis. She co-founded City of Poets and Watershed, national literary environmental campaign with the Library of Congress. She wrote *Street Art San Francisco* (Abrams). She was director of Public Relations at SFMOMA and curator of public street art series at the DeYoung Museum.

Professional website(s)

www.annicejacoby.com