AHC 325 Issues in Contemporary Art Curating

Syllabus

Catalogue Description

AHC 325 Issues in Contemporary Art Curating; 1.2 (per week per semester); 3 cr. Offered Annually, across 2 semesters.

The course stretches across two semesters, with the first one offered as a seminar and the second as a colloquium with invited speakers and an internship. It offers students an opportunity to get acquainted with seminal models of exhibition making practices that are alternatives to the paradigms of Western representation. This includes questions related to Islamic art collections and display, curating in non-Western contexts, global art events, alternative models of musicological practices and so on. The internship should be conducted outside of AUB (it can also take place at the AUB Art Galleries, the Archaeology Museum or the Library) to encourage student to collaborate with outside institutions.

Course Description

This course offers an opportunity to art history students to gain knowledge in theories and methods of exhibition making practices and curating, combined with a hands-on practical experience in organizing art exhibitions and related events.

Curating both as a critical and administrative practice has been professionalized in the past two decades through various full-time positions in art institutions as well as university graduate and undergraduate programs. The proposed course will combine in-depth historical explorations of various curatorial propositions as models for exhibition making practices with the larger institutional analysis of the art world. Students will learn the difference between curating art events such as biennials and festivals that function temporarily and in a global context versus curating permanent collections in museums, including collections of non-Western, and particularly Islamic art. They will be acquainted with various paradigmatic exhibitions that have historically changed the ways exhibitions are thought. This includes Harald Szeeman’s 1969 When Attitudes Become Form, Le Magiciens de la Terre of 1989, The Venice Biennial of 2003 and Documenta of 2012. This historical discussion is combined with conceptual and methodological elaborations of how to make exhibitions that produce a long-lasting impact upon the critical discourse or on a specific community. In addition to theoretical and historical components, students will have a unique chance to acquire practical experience in producing exhibitions at AUB Art Galleries. Under the supervision of the Galleries’ curator they will conceptualize exhibitions, practice writing texts for exhibition catalogs, manage communication with artists, acquire skills in making expositions, learn to situate artworks within a space in ways that is formally strong and conceptually justified, promote the exhibition within the larger community, etc.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students should have gained the following skills and aptitudes:

- Acquire knowledge in the history of exhibition making practices;
- Develop awareness of methods of organizing exhibitions;
- Acquire critical skills to assess exhibitions in order to situate these in larger political, art historical and theoretical contexts.
- Develop a hands-on experience in organizing exhibitions.
- Reflect on their learning processes.

**Assessment**

**Participation: 20%**

**Position Papers: 15%**- Students are required to write three 500-word position papers in which they critically assess a seminal exhibition chosen from the history of contemporary exhibition making practices (from 1950s to the present)

**Exhibition Reviews: 10%** - Students are required to write two 500-700 word exhibition reviews that they visit in Beirut.

**Practice 40%**- This includes exercises in writing catalog essays, exhibition concepts, installing works, writing press releases, disseminating the event and other aspects of organizing an exhibition.

**Proposal for an Exhibition: 25%** - 2000 words. Students will develop a proposal for an exhibition that includes a concept, a list of artist works, a mock-layout of the exhibition (in an actual space in Beirut) and a tentative budget

**Preliminary Bibliography**

*Thinking About Exhibitions*, eds. Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg and Sandy Nairne, 1996


*On Curating*, Journal – online

*Journal of Curatorial Studies*, Intellect Press

*A Brief History of Curating* (Documents), ed. Hans Ulrich Orbist, 2008

Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating, Jean-Hubert Martin, 2007

Thinking Contemporary Curating, Terry Smith, 2012


After one Hundred Years. The 1910 Exhibition "Meisterwerke muhammedischer kunst" Reconsidered.

Tea with Nefertiti. Exhibition curated by Sam Bardawil and Till Fellrath.

In addition, catalogs of the Documenta, Venice, Istanbul, San Paolo, Sharjah and Pusan biennials and of seminal exhibitions.