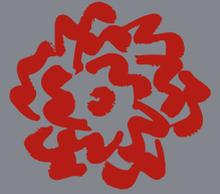


2013–2014

One Year MA Program



School of
VISUAL ARTS®

CRITICAL THEORY and the ARTS

Robert Hullot-Kentor,
chair

ART KNOWS
US BETTER
THAN WE
KNOW OURSELVES.
— T. W. ADORNO

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I. Introduction

“Art knows us better than we know ourselves.”

– T. W. Adorno

The program in Critical Theory and the Arts is an intensive yearlong study for students with an edgy involvement in the problems and questions of making art today—in what art has become, and is becoming—and who are no less engaged in wanting to understand what is at stake in the relation of these questions to contemporary social conflict and reality.

The program responds to a need: For thinking about art has never before been so protean, so broadly inventive and urgently central to the whole of social, philosophical and political reflection. Every major area of thought now turns considerable attention to art in expectation that art will provide the key to solving its central questions.

At the same time, in art itself, every aspect of its reality presents dynamic conflicts and puzzles that demand theoretical reflection. Those directly involved in the arts can no longer imagine that artists proceed naïvely, mixing passion with thin air. While artists of earlier generations once struggled to disguise the thinking labor that went into their work, today art theory has become part—often an explicit part—of all art-making. To an unprecedented degree, developments in art theory even directly transform art.

What the arts once were, they soon enough will no longer be; in large measure, they have already been irreversibly transformed. For artists and graduate students from several fields of inquiry, the need collaboratively to understand what has happened, what is happening and what is at stake is salient.

The focal points of the program are the two proseminars, **The Situation of the Arts: “The Level of the Problem”** and the **Serious Times Lecture Series**, which poses the question, **“Why doesn’t the United States make social progress?”** Discussions are led by New York City intellectuals and internationally acclaimed visiting artists.

Graduates of Critical Theory and the Arts become members of the Serious Times Lecture Series and part of the program’s intellectual community.

A small group of students, a maximum of 14, is selected annually by the Committee on Graduate Admissions. We are able to provide some financial assistance and a number of teaching assistantships to our students.

II. Chair Interview

In September 2012, SVA opened the doors of its MA in Critical Theory and the Arts program. The rigorous three-semester course of study is an interdisciplinary curriculum of lectures and seminars that focuses on the contemporary situation of art in a way that—according to Robert Hullot-Kentor, the program chair—“involves the entire history of art and society and the most important concerns we have about our lives. The year is meant for students who have a whole lot on their minds and who very much want to have a whole lot more on their minds.”

Breixo Viejo, a London-based videographer, visited Robert Hullot-Kentor at SVA to ask him more about the new MA program.

BREIXO VIEJO (BV): We’ve known each other for some years already, back from when I was a graduate student making a video on Hanns Eisler’s and Adorno’s book on film music...

HULLOT-KENTOR (HK): Sure, you don’t need to remind me, Breixo. You wanted to interview me then about Adorno and the composer, Hanns Eisler...

BV: ...and instead you hypnotized my video equipment!

HK: I didn’t mean any harm, I swear. That was a lot of fun. Anyway, it was an experiment.

BV: We got nothing done.

HK: As I say, Breixo, it was for the greater good. Nothing got broken, did it?

BV: What’s past is past...

HK: ...oh, I doubt that...

BV: ...It’s a figure of speech; I doubt it too. But, now I’m interviewing you, instead, about the new graduate program in Critical Theory and the Arts that you’ve started at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan. It’s a big undertaking, I know. Is this something you just got into in the last couple of years?

HK: No. I’ve had this on my mind at least since graduate school.

BV: That means you’ve had plenty of time to think about it, because I know you spent a lot of years in graduate school. You went from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, to clinical psychology, to a bunch of other things, and ended up in Europe studying philosophy and literature.

HK: It’s true. I rattled around a lot. There’s more to it than that, but in the ’80s there weren’t any jobs for anyone, and definitely not in the universities, and I figured I’d be better off staying in school.

BV: How did you manage?

HK: I’m not sure I did. I had a theory back then, for my amusement, the “Stay at Home Theory of Surplus Value.” It had one thesis: “Capitalism needs us more than we need it, so if we stay home, they’ll send checks.”

BV: Did it work?

HK: No. What do you think? No. No checks arrived. But there were a lot of credit cards, and, along with there being no worthwhile jobs around, I had decided that youth was most of all for debt and travel, and altogether the moment to get the education that I was sure I would never get later on if I ended up selling shoes.

BV: And you wanted to get an education in everything?

THE CURRICULUM?

“The curriculum is made up of courses in aesthetics, political theory, social history, the history of art and social theory. These highly organized classes are taught by a mutually cognizant faculty, and are matched by two proseminars that, with the preparation and guidance of experienced moderators, provide the occasion for open discussions with distinguished visitors concerning the most important questions we have about art, politics, society and our lives.”

HK: Not at all. I’m not an omnivore; and even if I wanted to be, I don’t have that cast of mind. I enjoy hearing someone put on the show, but that’s not me. I’ve always had the sense of being interested in one thing.

BV: And what’s that?

HK: It’s one thing that is very hard to say. And it’s because it is so hard to say what that is, that I went from one graduate program to the next, trying to find the right place to study. I couldn’t help thinking a lot about the kind of graduate program I’d put together if it were up to me.

BV: Now it is up to you to make what you just called, “the right place to study.” The program started in the Fall 2012. What is it turning out to be? It must be hard to put in a couple of sentences.

HK: It is hard to put in two or three sentences. Instead, how about I see what all I can jam into one?

BV: One sentence?

HK: The program in Critical Theory and the Arts is an intensive year of study meant for students with an edgy involvement in the problems and questions of making art today—in what art has become, and is becoming—and who want to understand what is at stake in the relation of these questions to contemporary social conflict.

BV: That’s it?

HK: A single sentence only goes so far, you know. This one I think I’ve got down pat. I’ll use it again. It’s one way of stating the heart of the matter. I’m not sure it

throbs in the ear; but it frankly states the topic. There’s plenty more to say about what we are concerned with, and want to accomplish in the year.

BV: For instance?

HK: To be honest?

BV: Honest injun, isn’t that what gringos like to say?

HK: Honest, then, Breixo, most anyone who has taught for a long time probably thinks about education in very serious, and perhaps even lofty terms that, when stated out loud while riding around on the back of one’s imaginary

steed, may not carry all that well in public—especially in a country where educational reform is being self-evidently modeled, K through college, on testable prerequisites oriented to the ideal MBA. So I’ll heed my own advice here and keep those thoughts about education largely to myself except to say that I recognize that students today feel deprived of the truth, and even angry at that deprivation. Education needs to respond to this impulse in students, though without presuming that truth were something we might hold between our hands and dispense as from a jug.

BV: And you think of the program in Critical Theory and the Arts as responding to that impulse in students?

HK: It’s definitely not a one-year program in computer repair.

BV: Let me ask you some more about it then. You have a central faculty and several Graduate Associates; and, in addition, there is a large number of participating visitors to the program.

HK: There are four philosophers. Their backgrounds are in social criticism, the arts, history, media and aesthetics. Then we have a political economist and a sociologist; and a political scientist—who is more a political philosopher. And because it is crucial to the whole of contemporary critical theory, we're hoping to have a visiting specialist in psychoanalysis as well. We'll see.

BV: But what about those “Graduate Associates”? I don't know the phrase.

HK: It is special to this program. The GA's are advanced doctoral candidates. They are on the faculty, and are in charge of the Serious Times Lecture Series because—first of all—they are terrifically intelligent, capable and engaged colleagues, and at the same time because they provide an historical depth of field in the generations participating in the program. America, by contrast, is otherwise strictly age segregated: you know, “I'm in fifth grade; I don't talk to fourth graders.” That kind of thing. Except for the thin-wishing—“I want my kids to earn better than me,” itself derived from the model of economic competition—there is no reflection at all on the antagonism of the generations, which is emerging with considerable bitterness now that even this meager, dislocating wish for a future that is the quintessence of economic competition is collapsing and young people are being forced back home without even beginning to establish adult lives. It has been

ART AND THEORY?

“This is not a theory program about ‘theory.’ There is plenty of that around. This is a program about what we can learn about art, of course, but, most of all, what we have to learn from art. Artworks ask us to think about them as does nothing else humanly made. An artwork is not founded on any conceptual presupposition or assertion, and this makes it possible for us to experience in it the origin of thinking—as the experience of the need in thinking—which is why art is at the center of the critique of domination. Art that is art is waiting to be understood, and with no less intensity than the mobbed corridors of MoMa prove that today the need for art overflows the museums.”

said before, but in this regard as elsewhere, the nation is held together by what tears it apart.

BV: It's true what you're saying. In Europe, older and younger people are often together—certainly where I come from in Spain. But in the U.S., you don't see it.

HK: So, I'm still answering your question about the Graduate Associates. I might have fully staffed the program with some of my colleagues, the old bears, from universities around the city; they would have come bounding out of the woods ready for September. But, with the GA's, we have faculty of several generations. That will deepen the teaching and improve the advising of students, and make the program more interesting for the faculty themselves. As the Occupy

Movement has made clear, the generations have much to say to each other right this minute.

BV: You need a considerable faculty to staff the curriculum. It could hardly be more ambitious: aesthetics, art theory, political philosophy, social theory, social history, psychoanalysis, and art history.

HK: It is a lot, but the curriculum fits together coherently and dynamically in an education that, as I said earlier, involves one thing that happens to be very hard to say.

BV: Maybe you could say more about what this “one thing” might be? But, in any case, the program is altogether interdisciplinary.

THE STUDENTS?

“As I’ve said before, I expect students who have a whole lot on their minds and who very much want to have a whole lot more on their minds. The program is under no pressure to select any particular number of students, other than that we intend to be very selective and not to exceed 14 students in the year.”

HK: You mean that as a compliment, I know. But, while I expect there is almost no escaping it, I’m not so content with it being thought of as “interdisciplinary.”

BV: You’re against it?

HK: Not exactly; some good things have come of it. But interdisciplinary programs tend to be slack: “Invent your own MA; we teach everything; come to school, visit foreign lands.” The critique of knowledge is more complex and more demanding than whatever the healing salts of interdisciplinarity might cure. Knowledge is not additive. And the argument for “breaking down the boundaries” between the disciplines is, however distantly, akin to those “get government off our back” impulses that have been all but unconsciously transposed from national ideology to education. It is not pleasant to consider, but interdisciplinary education seems to devolve from the same process of rationalization that gave us the free market ideology of neo-liberalism.

BV: But neo-liberalism is for the privatization of education and, as you were saying earlier, for narrowing teaching to feed-back controlled testing structures for inculcating business proficiency.

HK: I’m aware of that. But to find two things antagonistic is not necessarily to conclude that they have nothing in common. If we had time to consider it, it might turn out that both interdisciplinary education and neo-liberalism presume the instrumentalization of knowledge in one fashion or another.

BV: Still, what are you saying? I can jump ahead to your point about interdisciplinary studies as, paradoxically, the

instrumentalization of knowledge—as the subjectivization of knowledge; and maybe then it isn’t so different from education that has been drastically reduced to the business model and an open market mentality. But, from the outside anyway, reading through the course descriptions of Critical Theory and the Arts, the program looks about as “interdisciplinary” as any education there ever was.

HK: That’s the point; it’s not. There is a distinction between “come invent your own education in our graduate interdisciplinary program,” and a program organized so that one moment, one course and each course is brought into a relation with other moments in such a way that each part of the program sheds light on the rest of the...

BV: ...I see; I see...

HK: You do?

BV: Yes; it has to do with something I had wanted to discuss with you in our interview on Eisler and Adorno that never happened—it’s the question of constellations of concepts in Adorno’s work. And what you were just saying about the structure of the program in Critical Theory and the Arts made me realize that it is less designed as an interdisciplinary program that adds one field of inquiry to another, than as a program constructed exactly in terms of what Adorno called “constellations” of knowledge.

HK: Yes. The critique of knowledge is not in supposing that wiping out the distinctions between disciplines will do the trick. Those disciplines are as forcibly and objectively in conflict with each other as is the entire

social division of labor with itself. Here, as elsewhere, thinking is motivated by the experience of these conflicts, not in avoiding them. On one hand, thought must have the conceptual capacity to tolerate the tension of reality; and, on the other, those concepts must be organized in such a fashion—Adorno called it ‘constellative’—as to potentially become conscious that reality is also something other than these concepts. Thought that thinks achieves something more than thought, as the fulfillment of knowledge, and not as its destruction or circumvention.

BV: So Critical Theory and the Arts isn’t an “art and philosophy program.”

HK: It’s really not.

BV: No?

HK: No; it’s not even another “art and politics program.”

BV: No?

HK: And it doesn’t involve writing trumped up thirty-page papers that students barely care about and that no one will ever read anyway.

BV: But students do write in the program?

HK: Yes. But they write and struggle to shape what they have to say—and to find that when they have succeeded, they have shaped it under the pressure of what needs to be said. That, and not the edifying posture of being a writer, is the source of whatever binding objectivity expression can achieve. The

WHY AN ART SCHOOL?

“A program in critical theory and the arts that is most of all involved in understanding art should be located at an art school, surrounded by students who are up all night making things in their studios. We want to be upstairs from the print room, across the street from animation and around the corner from video, photography and painting. And that’s where we are, on the 6th floor of an art building.”

summer before I went to the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, I picked up a feisty hitchhiker in Belgium. I was a bit proud of my plans, I admit. But fate hadn’t sent this Diotima along to deliver encomia. That lady wanted to know—kind of right away, “What do you have to write about?” It did not feel good. But, it gave me a shake. I did not stay long in Iowa.

BV: So, the program in Critical Theory and the Arts is not art plus philosophy; and not art plus politics; and it’s not a writer’s program—though it intensely involves art, philosophy, politics and writing. We’re on a roll. What else isn’t the program?

HK: It’s also not a job preparation program. But it does lead somewhere, and in directions that are considerably more real than what those ominous “career paths”—with carefully inventoried “career skills”—claim to guarantee. An eye for reality is what education achieves when it is an education; if any, that’s the career path we provide. And that eye for reality is what is most of all needed in a nation that fears knowing itself for what it is, and, by that measure, fears knowing what it instead might be.

BV: “Paths” and “skills”—if you don’t mind my saying, America is full of Cub Scout stuff. But how can colleges and universities be built that way? Incidentally, did you see the article recently that a group of young law school graduates is suing Brooklyn Law School because that “career path” turns out to be a dead end?

HK: I did. So on one hand, we have lives being crushed under a spuriously imposed pragmatism, and, on the other, it has recently been estimated—by Gar

ART AND WRITING?

“Artworks want us to speak about them, and they want us to be silent. Tact in writing about art senses when to do one and when the other without alternating between them.”

Alperovitz—that if the national product were more equitably distributed, every family of four might have resources well in excess of \$100,000 yearly. Why can't the country know itself for what it is?

How did we end up making life so hard for ourselves? And why can't the nation comprehend its own possibilities?

BV: I gather that the possibility of finding any kind of answer to these questions concerns the problem of developing an eye for reality. In this regard, the motto you've chosen for Critical Theory and the Arts—that “Art knows us better than we know ourselves”—is intriguing. It comes from Adorno?

HK: From *Current of Music*. Adorno wrote several variations on the line, some published, some not. The epigram implies a series of questions. If we suppose that art knows us better than we know ourselves, how does art form this insight; how would we be able to know what that content is; and how would we be able to say it? That's for starters.

BV: The answers to these questions would be very difficult to say.

HK: To my mind, it is one thing that is extremely hard to say.

BV:

HK: In any case, the motto is the middle point of the program; all of the year's study—in aesthetics, social theory, and art history—is equidistant to that point. It is in thinking about art, and the contemporary situation of art, that the several courses bear on each other and become something more than interdisciplinary study.

BV: Is this a program for artists or for—it's hard to find the right word—scholars?

HK: Both, for sure; there will be those who are most of all scholars—

students who may or may not go on to get more advanced degrees. And there will be artists who are taking a year away from the studio for more study. And certainly there will be those who are both involved in making art and thinking about it. I meet that increasingly.

BV: Why is that?

HK: Again, that would be a lot to get into. But, the general point is that, as always, the artists who are emerging are those who can make what art now demands. And what it demands are artists who are intellectual to a considerable degree. How else could it be? There just isn't any possibility for making art that matters in a straightforward way.

BV: Everything is up for grabs now, isn't it.

HK: Yes, everything: what do you make art out of? What is painting, what is installation, what is dance, what is music?—which is which?—the arts no longer arrive one at a time, but keep turning up in a giant heap. Where does art belong, in a gallery or at the bottom of the ocean? Why are the materials at once so available and so recalcitrant? Why does every artwork, if it is going to succeed, need to throw something in front of itself to trip over? And as virtuosity has vanished as the sine qua non of art, the conception of the work has become overriding, and that conception tends to be intellectual or political in a way that runs contrary to what art historically has been.

BV: You're picking up momentum.

CENTRALITY OF ART?

“Artworks present problems— as problems that artists engage in making artworks, and that we engage in wanting to understand them. Today, in a particularly intense way, these problems take shape as enigmas and necessarily demand considerable reflection that radiates out in every direction. Philosophy, social history, and political science seem compelled to turn to the arts in wanting to solve their most critical concerns, which is why students in the program are likely to come from many disciplines, no less than from the art studio.”

HK: The point is, like it or not, the conceptual, reflective dimension that was once commonly held, self-evidently held, to be the opposite of art, now needs to be woven through art with every stitch—and artists who want to make anything must do an awful lot of thinking. I’m sure you’ve noticed: virtually all younger artists now also write about what they do and what they think art is and take part in what was once the rarified realm of social theory and aesthetics.

BV: So Critical Theory and the Arts is a program in contemporary studies?

HK: There you hit a nerve. Yes and no, in equal measure. It would like to be a program in contemporary studies in the sense that Joyce’s *Ulysses* is contemporary studies: one day in the life of a character that contains the whole of western history in its tensest reality. But while we have this insight into time, it has also slipped out of our understanding.

BV: What are you saying?

HK: I’m saying, in answer to your question whether this is a program in contemporary studies, that it is not at all clear what “contemporary” means. We have clues to it. We have some insights into a new idea of time that began to emerge in the early 20th century in which figures such as Joyce, El Lissitzky, and Benjamin, understood something about the past as the origin within our own moment, not as a moment ‘back then.’ But what sense can a new idea of time have, if the idea of the new is itself palpably anathema? Try it out on your own lips. You can rethink all you want,

revisit, and reinvent all you like. But don’t try anything new on us. The syllable won’t carry...

BV: ...wait a second. Is it a program in contemporary studies, or not?...

HK: ...wait a second yourself. The radical thoughts of modernism have lapsed. How can we have a sense of what “contemporary” means when, by any measure, the past is so broadly withheld from us as it now is? The thread of human history has snapped; the sense of imagination having gone slack measures this lapse. We talk about the past as if it occurred some forty-some miles from something called the present. Derrida didn’t help us out much at all with this by

making “presence” a taboo and a madhouse, as if now everyone knows why that word bears a stigma.

BV: So, it is not a program in contemporary studies?

HK: What is there to be dogmatic about here? All we can do, is to consider the question of what it is to make art, and how to think about art in its vast history, as the unconscious transcription of the history of human suffering, when the thread of human history has snapped. We must look to grab a hold of these threads when there are really no threads at all to grab a hold of.

BV: Are you saying that there is nothing at all to take hold of, or that artworks are what we have when the thread of history has snapped?

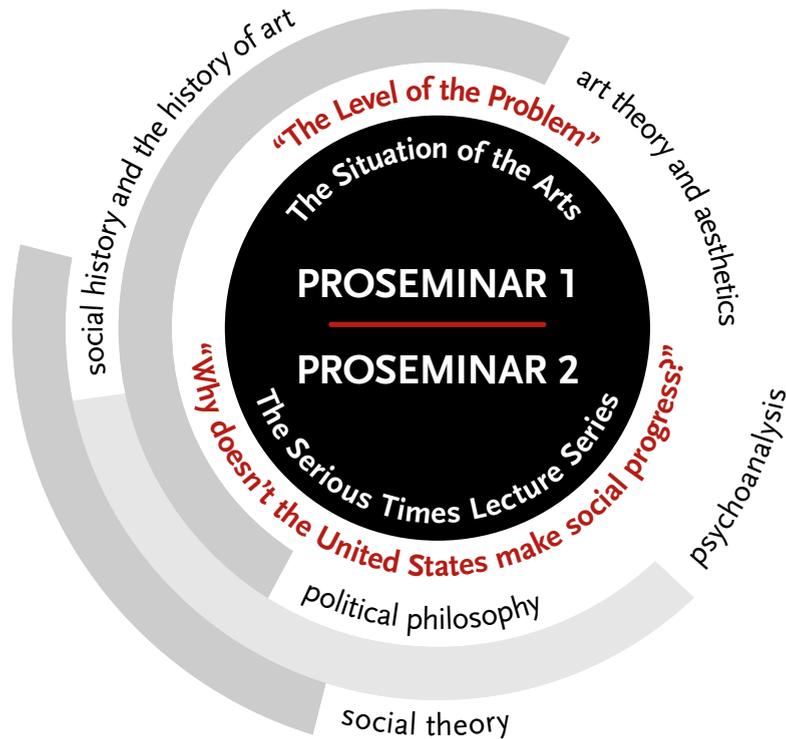
HK: Now we really have something to talk about.

III. Curriculum + Courses

Curriculum

The program is unique in presenting the philosophical, sociological, political, art and social historical contexts with which a student must be familiar to meaningfully pursue the questions that the contempo-

rary situation of art poses. Society and art are studied in their actual tension, without reducing art to society, or pretending, narrowly, that society somehow amounts to the world of art.



The program has a dynamic structure. There is a central group of courses concerned with art theory and aesthetics, social history and the history of art, and social theory. These courses are built around two open **proseminars**: "*The Situation of the Arts: The Level of the Problem*" and the *Serious Times Lecture Series*, which poses the ongoing question, "*Why doesn't the United States make social progress?*" These aspects of the program combine to focus on what is going on in art today in a way that involves the entire history of art and society and the most important questions we have about our lives.

Courses

Art Theory and Aesthetics I and II

The motivating concepts and history of aesthetic theory that continue to shape contemporary thought is the focus of these courses. We begin with a review of the Platonic and Neo-Platonic concerns with representation and the social as well as epistemological status of the artwork. An understanding of the developments that led up to Kant allows the class to closely study Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, which continues to be a basic work of reference in all thinking about art. This is followed by an investigation of the philosophical complex of thought that Kant's aesthetics spawned in the writings of Friedrich Schiller and G.W.F. Hegel. The first semester aims to provide an historico-philosophical undergirding for the theoretical and art historical work that follows.

The second semester is an intensive study of the questions of philosophical aesthetics as they develop throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Additional themes include the meaning of the so-called "end of art" debate; theories of the museum; the "art world"; the "New Aesthetic"; varieties of object theory and aesthetics; theories of the sublime; and tactics of subversion (e.g., feminist, vegan, erothanatic impulses on the fringe). We begin with the writings of Nietzsche and Heidegger, to be followed by selections from Adorno, Agamben, and Arendt; Sloterdijk and Žižek; and Bataille, Baudrillard, Bourdieu, Danto, Derrida, Foucault, and Rancière, among others.

Social Theory, Social Criticism and the Arts I and II

These courses present and carefully examine the structure of contemporary society drawing on close readings of seminal texts in modern social theory and philosophy. We develop in-depth comprehension of modern society and the traditions in social thought and criticism that have considered its antagonistic elements. The first half of the course focuses on the fundamental concepts of the founders of sociology and their development from Hegel to Marx to Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. What distinguishes modern society from other social formations? What insight does this tradition of thought provide into the nature of social action, the comprehension of social artifact and contemporary society?

The second semester amounts to a consideration of particular aspects of modern society in light of the principal debates in current social theory. We study the interconnection of economic and political forms, of modern commerce and state. How do social relations and individual comportment interrelate in modern society? What is the specific function of technology, media and culture industry in its dynamics? The overarching question of the second semester is how social structure at once makes the arts possible and no less structures their crises.

The Arts, their History, and the United States I and II

These courses are organized around four studies of considerable importance, heft and renown: Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art*, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Walter Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragic Drama* and Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Together they provide historically substantive and highly nuanced approaches to art, culture and society. In mastering these four works, students come away with a broad understanding of the entire history of the visual arts; the single most reputed history of literature and its techniques from Homer to Virginia Woolf; a penetrating and unprecedented theory of art—Walter Benjamin's—that continues to hold a central role in contemporary thought; and knowledge of the most important work written about the United States, whose insights are far from exhausted.

Proseminar 1: The Situation of the Arts – “The Level of the Problem” I and II

The 19th-century romantic tradition presented art as originating in a moment of spontaneous, intoxicating creation. And while it is true that there would be no art at all without something like inspiration, however reluctant artists might be to discuss that moment, artists, especially of our own times, know that making art presents sets of problems to be solved. The formulation of these problems is certainly distinct in the various media: videographers, painters, dancers, performers, installation artists, novelists, and poets find themselves faced by different kinds of problems. But, over the course of the year, in discussions with a

series of carefully selected artists in our seminar room and in their studios, we will see that even in the diversity and close detail of how these artists present what they most have to contend with in their work, it is possible to discern commonalities in the problems that artists now confront and engage. Recognizing these central problems provides us with an optic through which we are able to discern what most of all is taking place in contemporary art and what it in fact means to talk about the “crisis in art today.”

Proseminar 2: The Serious Times Lecture Series – “Why doesn't the United States make social progress?” I and II

The Serious Times Lecture Series emphasizes the program's other focus on social reality. The ongoing question of this seminar is: Why doesn't the United States make social progress? For while there is no doubt that the United States makes considerable technical progress, and while there are certainly achievements in social equality—we have an African-American president, for instance, and several states have legalized same-sex marriage—the society itself, as a whole, fails to progress. Central questions, however, are going unanswered: why 10 million homes have been foreclosed, why the jobless recovery, why this is the nation with the largest prison population, why the continued degradation of the environment, and—most of all—why have efforts to imagine alternative forms of society been abandoned?

The Serious Times Lecture Series is organized as an open seminar in which students and invited guests read recent work by outstanding contemporary social critics

and have the opportunity to engage them in discussion. Continuity is maintained through the semester and the year under faculty guidance.

Comprehensive Thesis

The Comprehensive Thesis is the occasion for MA candidates to establish meaningful coherence in their year's work, to integrate their thinking and research, to find new problems to investigate, and to sketch out plans for their future with faculty and mentors.

Preparation for the Comprehensive Thesis

Preparation for the Comprehensive Thesis begins with the student's application to the program. Prospective students are asked to describe the issues, problems, curiosity, experiences or conflicts that motivated their application. On acceptance into the program, students begin to expand on these motivations, with the intention of developing four topics that they craft and assemble in preparation for the summer semester work for the Comprehensive Thesis. Students are encouraged to formulate these topics in a way that builds directly on what they have been intensely studying for two semesters. It is an opportunity to remember, organize and develop important thoughts that have arisen during the year, whether in course discussions, readings, or in the student's own reflections and research. In one of the four topics the student is asked to set out plans for future work, whether it is scholarly or artistic, and thoughts about "what is next" in a way that the faculty can be of help in considering and discussing those plans.

Fulfillment of the Comprehensive Thesis

Once the student has completed the statement of the four topics along with a brief supporting bibliography of the work to be undertaken, and a faculty member has reviewed the statements favorably, the student spends the final semester preparing research. During this period, the student consults with his or her faculty advisor for advice and direction. Over the last two weeks of the semester, students present the Comprehensive Thesis through written response to questions formulated as 'prompts' on each of the first three topics. The fourth topic, "What is next?," is treated as part of a final discussion of the student's work on the Comprehensive Thesis with selected members of the faculty.

IV. Faculty

Robert Hullot-Kentor

Chair, Critical Theory and the Arts, Master of Arts degree program, School of Visual Arts; philosopher

EDUCATION: BA, Marlboro College; MA, Goddard College; PhD, University of Massachusetts

BOOKS INCLUDE: author, *Things Beyond Resemblance: Collected Essays on Theodor W. Adorno; Ice Flow: Essay and Commentary on David Salle; Terra Infirma: The House that Mowry Baden Built*; editor, *Current of Music: Elements of a Radio Theory*; editor, translator, *Philosophy of New Music; Aesthetic Theory; Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*

AWARDS AND HONORS INCLUDE: DAAD; Orion Visiting Artist, University of Victoria; J. Paul Getty Resident Scholar; J. Paul Getty External Scholar; Mellon Faculty Fellow, Harvard University; Mellon Faculty Fellow, University Professors Program, Boston University

Babette Babich

philosopher

EDUCATION: BA, State University of New York at Stony Brook; MA, PhD, Boston College

BOOKS INCLUDE: author, *The Hallelujah Effect: kd lang's Desire, Adorno's Ghosts, and Nietzsche's Beethoven* (forthcoming); *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science; Words in Blood, like Flowers; La fin de la pensée?*; co-editor, *Heidegger and Nietzsche*; editor, *Nietzsche, Habermas, and Critical Theory*

PUBLICATIONS INCLUDE: executive editor, *New Nietzsche Studies*

AWARDS AND HONORS INCLUDE: Fulbright Fellowships; Nietzsche Fellowship, Kolleg Friedrich Nietzsche, Klassik Stiftung Weimar

Devi Dumbadze

social philosopher, sociologist

EDUCATION: BA, Tbilisi State University; MA, Ruhr-University Bochum; PhD, Ruhr-University Bochum (expected 2013)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE INCLUDES: Visiting scholar, The New School for Social Research; research assistant and lecturer, Institute for Media Studies, Ruhr-University Bochum; lecturer and coordinator of scholarly publications, Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Ilia Chavchavadze State University of Language and Culture

BOOKS INCLUDE: co-editor, *Critique of Political Philosophy: Society, Contract, State, vol. II; Knowledge and Critique: Contemporary Philosophical Positions*; translator, *Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interest* (Georgian)

PUBLICATIONS INCLUDE: *Festschrift for Burkhard Mojsisch; Limes: Italian Journal of Geopolitics (Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica); Netgazette (Netgazetti); Jungle World; Journal for Media Research (Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft); Matsne: Philosophy and Psychology*

AWARDS AND HONORS INCLUDE: Open Society Georgia Foundation; Munich Grant, Goethe-Institut; DAAD; United States Freedom Support Exchange Program

Tom Huhn

Chair, Art History Department and BFA Visual and Critical Studies Department, School of Visual Arts; coordinator, Honors Program, School of Visual Arts; philosopher; critic

EDUCATION: AB, Sarah Lawrence; MA, PhD, Boston University

BOOKS INCLUDE: *Imitation and Society: The Persistence of Mimesis in the Aesthetics of Burke, Hogarth, and Kant*; *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*; *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*; co-author, *The Wake of Art: Criticism, Philosophy, and the Ends of Taste*

PUBLICATIONS INCLUDE: *Art in America*, *New German Critique*, *Art & Text*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, *Art Criticism*, *Telos*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, Philosophy and Social Criticism*, *Art Book*

CURATORIAL WORKS INCLUDE: "Between Picture and Viewer: The Image in Contemporary Painting," Visual Arts Gallery; "Ornament and Landscape," Apex Gallery; "Still Missing: Beauty Absent Social Life," Visual Arts Museum and Westport Arts Center, CT

GROUP EXHIBITION: Triple Candie

AWARDS AND HONORS INCLUDE: Getty Scholar; Fulbright Scholar; First Prize, American Society for Aesthetics Essay Contest; New York State Council for the Humanities

Jay Sanders

curator, writer; co-curator of the 2012 Whitney Biennial

EDUCATION: BA, Reed College; MA, Portland State University

CURATORIAL PROJECTS INCLUDE: "ITWAN," International Project Space, Birmingham, U.K.; "Looking Back: The Third White Columns Annual," White Columns; "Allen Ruppersberg," "Gelitin: Blind Sculpture," Greene Naftali Gallery. Co-curator, "Gutja Hai Surn Been Lop Sop," William Gallery; "Charlemagne Palestine: Running Outburst,"

Electronic Arts Intermix; "Entertainment," Greene Naftali Gallery; "Incohesive Listening + Centerless Portrayal," Sculpture Center; "Repeat Redux," Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria

PUBLICATIONS INCLUDE: *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *BOMB*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Parkett*, *Triple Canopy*, *Spike Art Quarterly*. Co-editor, *Whitney Biennial 2012*, *Poetry Plastique*

Antonio Y. Vázquez-Arroyo

political scientist

EDUCATION: BA, magna cum laude, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras; PhD, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS INCLUDE: "Power, Freedom, and Political Forms," Freedom and Democracy in an Imperial Context: Dialogues with James Tully, University of Victoria; "Unseen Catastrophes: Capitalism and Colonialism as Non-Events," Political Theory Seminar, The New School for Social Research; "The Dialectic of Catastrophe and the 'Catastrophization' of the Political" (Spanish), Rutas de Poder, Universidad de los Andes

BOOKS INCLUDE: *Scenes of Responsibility: Responding to Power and Suffering in a Post-Political Age* (manuscript in progress)

PUBLICATIONS INCLUDE: *Telos*, *Political Theory*, *Theory & Event*, *Polity*, *New Political Science*, *Radical Philosophy*, *Antropolítica*

Graduate Associates

Jacob Blumenfeld

social philosopher

EDUCATION: BA, with honors, Vassar College; MA, The New School for Social Research; PhD, The New School for Social Research (in progress)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS INCLUDE: New School Graduate Student Philosophy Conference; Hannah Arendt and Reiner Schürmann Symposium in Political Philosophy; University of Minnesota; CUNY Graduate Center

AWARDS AND HONORS INCLUDE: Dean's Prize, New School University; Philip Nochlin Prize, Vassar College

John Clegg

economist, sociologist

EDUCATION: BA, with honors, MA with honors, University of Sussex; MS, The New School for Social Research; PhD, New York University (in progress)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE INCLUDES: Editorial assistant, Pluto Press; researcher, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science; editorial assistant, *Social Research*

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS INCLUDE: Marx & Philosophy Society, Joe McCarney Memorial Conference, London Knowledge Lab; Annual Institute on Culture and Society Conference, Portland State University; Postwar Economy and Culture Conference, University of California, Berkeley; Historical Materialism Conference, SOAS, University of London

AWARDS AND HONORS INCLUDE: Dean's Prize Fellowship, New School University; Henry M. McCracken Fellowship, New York University

Jeremy Cohan

sociologist

EDUCATION: BA, with honors, University of Chicago; Education Certificate, Pace University; PhD, New York University (in progress)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE INCLUDES: Instructor, teaching assistant, New York University; Graduate Student Association Elected Representative, Department of Sociology, New York University

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS INCLUDE: "Lukacs' Abyss," Institute of Culture and Society, University of Illinois at Chicago; "Foucault's Detours," Cultural Studies Association Annual Convention; "Lukacs: Professor or Politician?," Leftforum Conference; "Why We Should Care about Class," Economic and Political Sociology Workshop, New York University; "What Marx Really Thought About Class," Marx and Philosophy Society Annual Conference

AWARDS AND HONORS INCLUDE: Henry M. McCracken Fellowship, New York University

Nora Griffin

painter, writer

EDUCATION: BA, with honors, Oberlin College; MFA, Columbia University

ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS: Abaton Garage Gallery, Jersey City, NJ

GROUP EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE: Marvelli Gallery; Fisher Landau Center for Art; Janet Kurnatowski Gallery

V. Visiting Participants

Lecturers visiting the program in the next years will include:

Richard Foreman

Richard Foreman is the founder and artistic director of the Ontological-Hysteric Theater. He has written, directed and designed over 50 of his own plays internationally and in New York City. He has received several “OBIE” awards for best play of the year, as well as several for directing and ‘sustained achievement.’ He has received the annual Literature award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, a “Lifetime Achievement in the Theater” award from the NEA, the PEN Club Master American Dramatist Award, a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship, and in 2004 was elected officer of the Order of Arts and Letters of France. His archives and work materials were recently acquired by Bobst Library at NYU.

Paul Chan

Paul Chan’s artwork has been exhibited internationally at the Venice Biennale, Centre Pompidou, Biennale of Sydney, International Istanbul Biennial, and Whitney Biennial, and most recently at Harvard University, Serpentine Gallery, New Museum, and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In 2007, Chan collaborated with the Classical Theatre of Harlem and Creative Time to produce a site-specific outdoor presentation in New Orleans of Samuel Beckett’s play, *Waiting for Godot*.

Jessica Stockholder

Jessica Stockholder is a sculptor and installation artist. Her work has been exhibited at the DIA Center for the Arts, Centre Pompidou, Open Air Museum for Sculpture in Belgium, Power Plant in Toronto, and

Mitchell-Innes & Nash Gallery. Her work is represented in various collections including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Art Institute of Chicago, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, LACMA, and the Stedelijk Museum.

McKenzie Wark

McKenzie Wark is the author of *A Hacker Manifesto*, *Gamer Theory*, and *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International*, published by Verso Books in 2011. He teaches at The New School for Social Research and Eugene Lang College in New York City.

Martin Jay

Martin Jay is an intellectual historian and Sidney Hellman Ehrman Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. Among his many works are *The Dialectical Imagination*, *Marxism and Totality*, *Adorno*, *Permanent Exiles*, *Fin de Siecle Socialism*, *Force Fields*, *Downcast Eyes*, *Songs of Experience*, *The Virtues of Mendacity*, and *Essays from the Edge*.

Dani Leventhal

Dani Leventhal employs a process of accumulation and excision to create videos and drawings that unearth a curious beauty in the minutiae of everyday life. Her work has been screened at the Gene Siskel Film Center, CineCycle and Anthology Film Archives. In 2010, her video *54 Days this Winter 36 Days this Spring for 18 Minutes* was included in the Greater New York exhibition at MoMA PS1.

Mowry Baden

Mowry Baden is a sculptor and teacher. Articulating an internal awareness of movement and posture has always been the most important element in his work. Over the past forty-three years, he has developed various methods of decentering vision and interfering with habitual human gestures. He wants the viewer to enter the object, or the space, and have an experience that is visceral, internal, and sensorially cross-circuited.

Moishe Postone

Moishe Postone is a professor of history and a member of the Committee on Jewish Studies at the University of Chicago. His research and teaching focus primarily on nineteenth and twentieth-century European intellectual history and critical social theory. His work has also considered the problematic of modern anti-Semitism and questions of history, memory, and identity in postwar Germany. Postone is the author of *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*.

Adolph Reed

Adolph Reed Jr. is a professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania. He has written articles for *The Nation* and *The Progressive*, and is a founding delegate of the Labor Party in the United States. Reed is the author of such works as *Class Notes: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene*, *Stirrings In The Jug: Black Politics In The Post-Segregation Era*, and, as co-author, *Renewing Black Intellectual History: The Ideological and Material Foundations of African American Thought*.

Molly Nesbit

Molly Nesbit is a professor of Art History at Vassar College and a contributing editor for *Artforum*. Her books include *Atget's Seven Albums* and *Their Common Sense*. *Midnight, the Tempest Essays*, a collection of her writings on contemporary art, was published by Periscope Press in 2009. Since 2002, she has been a co-organizer of Utopia Station, an ongoing book, exhibition, seminar, website and street project.

Gedi Sibony

Gedi Sibony is a sculptor. His recent exhibitions include "Culturgeist" in Lisbon, the Hammer Museum invitation "All of this and nothing" in Los Angeles, "My Arms Are Tied Behind My Other Arms" at the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis, and "If Surrounded by Foxes" at Kunsthalle St. Gallen in Switzerland. Solo exhibitions include Greene Naftali Gallery and Gladstone Gallery (Brussels). Sibony's work is in the collections of MoMA, Whitney Museum of American Art, SFMoMA and the Walker Art Center.

Frances Fox Piven

Frances Fox Piven is a Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center. She is the co-founder of the National Welfare Rights Organization and the author of *Who's Afraid of Frances Fox Piven?*, *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America*, *The War at Home*, and *Labor Parties in Postindustrial Societies*. Her many other books include *Poor People's Movements; Regulating the Poor; The Breaking of the American Social Compact*; and *Why Americans Don't Vote*, co-authored with Richard Cloward.

Stefan Litwin

Stefan Litwin is a composer, pianist, and a George Kennedy Distinguished Professor at the University of North Carolina. He has worked with composers Luigi Nono, Luciano Berio, Hans Zender, Herbert Brün, Frederic Rzewski, Johannes Kalitzke and Jörg Widmann; performed with renowned conductors Christoph von Dohnányi, Michael Gielen and Marek Janowski; and collaborated with musicians Aurele Nicolet, Christian Tetzlaff, Irvine Arditti, Gustav Rivinius, Manuel Fischer-Dieskau and Ib Hausmann. He has a special interest in contemporary music.

Cory Arcangel

Cory Arcangel is a computer programmer, composer and artist. Recent solo exhibitions include “Pro Tools” at the Whitney Museum of American Art, “Beat the Champ” at the Barbican, “Here Comes Everybody” at the Hamburger Bahnhof, “Creative Pursuits” at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, and “The Sharper Image” at the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami.

Benj DeMott

Benj DeMott has written for the *City Sun*, *Village Voice*, and academic journals. In 1998, he helped start *First of the Month*—a “newspaper of the radical imagination” that is now an online journal. Since 2008, he has edited annual collections of writings titled *First of the Year*.

Spyros Papapetros

Spyros Papapetros is a member of the history and theory faculty of the School of Architecture and the program in Media and Modernity at Princeton University. His work focuses on the relationship between architecture and the visual arts, and between architecture, psychoanalysis and the history of psychological aesthetics. His many writings include *On the Animation of the Inorganic: Art, Architecture, and the Extension of Life* (University of Chicago Press) and, as editor, *Space as Membrane*, by Siegfried Ebeling.

Robert Paul Wolff

Robert Paul Wolff is a philosopher and Emeritus Professor of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts. Among his many works are *Kant’s Theory of Mental Activity*, *The Poverty of Liberalism*, *Understanding Marx*, *Understanding Rawls*, and *Autobiography of an Ex-White Man: Learning a New Master Narrative for America*.

Shierry Weber NicholSEN

Shierry Weber NicholSEN is a psychoanalyst in private practice in Seattle, Washington. In addition to her papers in the field of psychoanalysis, she is the author of *Exact Imagination*, *Late Work: On Adorno’s Aesthetics*, and is the translator of numerous works by Adorno and others.

Barry C. Lynn

Barry C. Lynn is the director of the Markets, Enterprise, and Resiliency Initiative, and is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation. Lynn is the author of *Cornered: The New Monopoly Capitalism and the Economics of Destruction* and *End of the Line: The Rise and Coming Fall of the Global Corporation*. His articles have appeared in *Harper's*, *Financial Times*, *Harvard Business Review*, and *The National Interest*.

Paul Mattick Jr.

Paul Mattick Jr. is a professor of philosophy at Adelphi University in New York. He is the author of *Business as Usual: The Economic Crisis and the Failure of Capitalism* and *Social Knowledge: An Essay on the Nature and Limits of Social Science*, among other works. He was previously the editor of the *International Journal of Political Economy*.

Anke Finger

Anke Finger is the author of a book on the total artwork and modernism, *Das Gesamtkunstwerk der Moderne*, and is the co-editor of *The Aesthetics of the Total Artwork: On Borders and Fragments*, a collection of critical essays published by The Johns Hopkins University Press in 2011.

VI. Apply

To apply to the MA Program in Critical Theory and the Arts, go to the department website at cta.sva.edu.

VII. Program Location

SVA has a number of buildings on both sides of New York City.

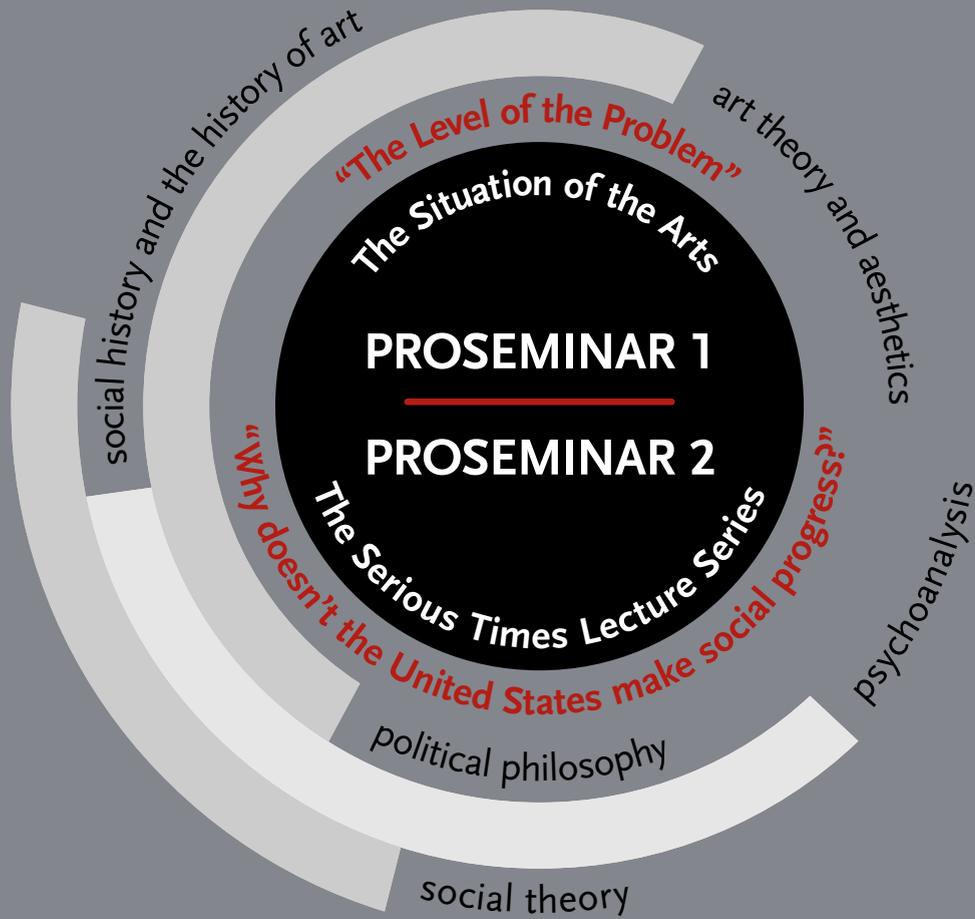
We are located in a building on the west side of the city at:

133/141 W. 21 St.,
New York NY 10011
6th floor

Come through the main entry to the building, go past the security guards on your right and take the elevator to the sixth floor. As you step out of the elevator, our offices are immediately on your left. Call us from the lobby, at the number below, if the security guard requires further permission.

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