

4.301 Introduction to Artistic Experimentation

Symbiotic Creatures

Prereq: None
U - Fall 2016
3-3-6 HASS-A

12 UNITS T/Th 2 PM- 5 PM

Instructor: Azra Aksamija, PhD (azra@mit.edu)
Teaching Assistant: Rainar Aasrand (rainar@mit.edu)
Technical Instructor: Seth Vecilla (sethvim@mit.edu)

Office hours:

For a meeting with Azra Aksamija, please schedule a meeting online via:
<https://azra.youcanbook.me/>

This course is an introduction to artistic practice and critical visual thinking. Thematically, the course embraces the notion of “symbiosis” to explore the future of cohabitation on our planet - by studying the nature of humanness today, coexistence and relationships between humans and other species. This topic is explored through theoretical readings and historical contextualization, analysis of diverse artworks and artistic practices related to the topic, as well as hand-on work. We will be creating new symbiotic species, relationships and/or environments in form of two studio-based projects. Creative exercises and critical feedback will lead you through various stages of conceptual development, while also learning about materials and techniques.

The two studio projects are based on the following scales or media:

- Body Extension
involving sculptural, architectural, or corporeal device
- Made Public
involving projects as site interventions and strategies for working in public

Each of the assigned projects concludes with a final presentation and a critical discussion engaging the course participants. Students explore sculptural, architectural, or performative artistic methods; video and sound art; site interventions and strategies for artistic engagement in the public realm. Lectures, screenings, guest presentations, field trips and readings supplement studio practice. The course offers an index to the historic, cultural and environmental forces that affect both the development of an artistic vision and the reception of a work of art.

A minimum of six hours per week outside class work is expected. Students from all disciplines are encouraged and welcome to enroll.

READINGS

For news, reading materials, and updated syllabus please regularly refer to the class website on Stellar.

RESOURCES:

You are responsible for obtaining most of your own materials. Our shop provides certain basic materials which the program will buy in bulk, and which are available to everyone (for example, plaster and some molding compounds) as well as upkeep of shop tools

<http://act.mit.edu/>

<http://arts.mit.edu/>

<http://writing.mit.edu/wcc>

EXPECTATIONS:

The course meets twice a week for 3 hrs each session for a total of 12 units of credit. A minimum of six hours per week outside class work is expected. There will be two studio projects and 2 technical exercises that must be completed for the course. You are required to prepare a written 1-page statement for each project. Readings are regularly assigned to provide a historical and theoretical framework for each studio project and will be discussed in class.

ATTENDANCE :

Regular and on-time attendance is required for all class sessions and reviews. If you miss a class due to health reasons, please inform the TA as soon as possible. If you need to miss a class, please inform the TA ahead of time and provide a document for excuse. It is your responsibility to catch up on missed content through TA, instructor, or fellow students. All class work and assignments must be completed on time. Unexcused absences and repeated tardiness will automatically lower a grade by 1/2 of a letter grade.

THE USE OF FACILITIES:

No Food or Drink in lab facilities. The lab facilities need to be cleaned after used and left in the condition you found them. In the woodshop, please wear adequate clothing and protection as informed by Seth Avecilla.

EVALUATIONS:

Grading will be based on: Conceptual development (20%), Execution of individual projects (20%), Class participation (20%), Personal investment and commitment to your work (20%), Demonstrated growth over the course of the semester (20%). Completion of all projects is required for a passing grade, as is regular attendance.

LAB FEE:

The bulk of the lab fee covers printing costs for handouts and. \$110.

POLICY ON LAPTOPS, TABLETS AND CELLPHONES

I allow the use of laptops and tablets, but only for the purpose of class work (i.e. note-taking, presentations or research), but not during class discussions and peer presentations. The use of cellphones (regardless if calling, surfing or texting) during class time is not allowed.

WRITING AND COMMUNICATION SUPPORT

The Writing and Communication Center (12-132) offers free one-on-one professional advice from lecturers who are published writers about all types of academic, creative, and professional writing and about all aspects of oral presentations. Go to <http://writing.mit.edu/wcc> and click on "Appointments." The Center's core hours are Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; evening hours vary by semester--check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours.

LOCATION OF FACILITIES

E15-207	Our classroom, 20 Ames Street, 2nd floor
E14-251G	Our workshop space, 75 Amherst Street (# Ames St.), 2nd floor
E15 - Cube	The performance space in the basement of E15
E15-DIL	Digital Imaging lab in the basement of in the basement of E15

4.301_Assignment 1: Body Extension - A Prosthesis for a Symbiotic Relationship

Create an artwork that exists as a “body extension,” a sculptural/ architectural/corporeal supplement to the human body, conceptualized as a symbolic prosthesis/mask/communication device that can facilitate a symbiotic relationship with another person/culture/species/environment. The objective of the assignment is to reimagine what it means to be human, in light of our growing interdependence, increasing existential crisis of the globe, while embracing critical artistic perspective, sensitivity to cultural context and technological innovation.

Issues and questions to be considered:

1. **PROBLEM:** What social, political, cultural, economic or other problem is your project addressing? What is critiquing?
2. **SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP:** In what ways does your project facilitate a symbiosis? With whom or what? To what end? Think about biological, psychological, cultural, political forms of symbiotic needs and relationships. In what ways does your concept help us reimagine the nature of humanness?
3. **CONTEXT SPECIFIC:** For whom is your body extension made and in what cultural/socio-political/geographic/climatic context? Your design may reflect the specific context in which the project would reach its full meaning, or it may lead to an invention of a new species that would reflect an imaginary context.
4. **FICTION OR FUNCTION:** Is your project fictional, or bound to the real world? If it is imaginary, your design needs to reflect a scenario for which your project is designed (i.e. living on Mars, interaction with aliens, birth of new hybrid species, etc.). If it is based on the actual problems of our world, you may want to create a design that would project into the future of the problem that you are looking at.
5. **MATERIAL CONCEPT:** Think about the conceptual dimension of materials that you use to create your work. In what ways does your choice of materials support your concept?
6. **DISPLAY:** How is your project worn, or attached to the body? How would it be displayed, exhibited or used?

Remarks: Later in the semester we will be exploring the possibilities of hybridising the individual projects into hybrid species and interacting with your body extension projects in a way that significantly alters your experience of it. The interactivity may become part of your concept, so try to integrate some ideas for the public performance of the piece.

Body Extension project is due Oct.6

One page written project statement is due Oct.13.

	Tuesday - E15-207		Thursday - E14-251G	
WEEK 1	6-Sep	Register it	8-Sep	Fake It
	Registration Day - NO CLASS		Course introduction and class exercise	
			Project 1 assigned	
			Shop safety intro (part 1)	
WEEK 2	13-Sep	Mix it	15-Sep	Make it
	Technical tutorial - hand mold		Technical tutorial - hand mold	
WEEK 3	20-Sep	Compare it	22-Sep	Cut it (Bldg. 7)
	Presentation of body estensions		Lasercutting tutorial in Building 7	
	Discussion about the artworks and readings			
	Student presentations of Project 1 ideas: bring sketches and reference examples			
WEEK 4	27-Sep	Remake it	29-Sep	Prototype it
	Discussion about the artworks and readings		Model / Prototype Creation	
	Student presentations of project research:			
	Revised sketches for Project 1+bring material samples (or images of materials)		Bring materials for Project 1	
WEEK 5	4-Oct	Sew it	6-Oct	Fabricate it
	Sewing tutorial		Fabrication Project 1	
			Bring materials for Project 1	
WEEK 6	11-Oct	Relax it	13-Oct	Visit it
	Columbus Day Holiday - NO CLASS		Visit to the ICA - Meet at 2pm in front of the	
			Downtown-bound Kendall T-stop	
			Continue Project 1 fabrication outside of the class	
WEEK 7	18-Oct	Fabricate it	20-Oct	Finish it
WEEK	25-Oct	Defend it	27-Oct	Combine it

8	FINAL REVIEW Project 1	Project 2 assigned	
	Project presentation with external jury		
		Due: Hand in 1p written Project 1 statement (on Stellar)	
WEEK 9	1-Nov	Discuss it	3-Nov Drill it
	Presentation of Made Public examples		Wood tutorial
	Discussion about the artworks and readings		
	Student presentations of Project 2 ideas: bring sketches and reference examples		
WEEK 10	8-Nov	Visit it	10-Nov Fabricate it
	Visit to the MFA		Fabrication of Project 2 with a tutorial
WEEK 11	15-Nov	Revise it	17-Nov Fabricate it
	Discussion about the artworks and readings		Fabrication Project 2
	Feedback on the Project 2: groups present work in progress		
WEEK 12	Fabricate it		24-Nov Eat it
	Fabrication Project 2		Thanksgiving Holiday - NO CLASS
	Get permits for the public space installation		
WEEK 13	29-Nov	Present it	1-Dec Display it
	Completed prototype presentation		Exhibit the project in public space
WEEK 14	8-Dec	Test it	10-Dec Defend it
	Test and document the interaction with the audience		FINAL REVIEW Project 2
			Present the prototype and the results of the public interaction / reception of the piece
WEEK 15	13-Dec	Document it	15-Dec Celebrate it
	Project documentation		
	Due: Hand in 1p written Project 2 statement (on Stellar)		