

BETWEEN GOOD AND THE GOODS :

AH527 // FALCONI

FRIDAY 9AM - 12M

Some Ethical
Problems in
Contemporary
Latin American Art

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Latin American Art

PROFESSOR: JOSÉ LUIS FALCONI

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IMAGE: ANIBAL LOPEZ's (Guatemala, 1964–2014) "Sicario" (Hitman) at Documenta 13– Kassel, Germany. Performance consisted in artist bringing to Documenta a hitman and gang member to talk about how he kills people in his country.

RATIONALE

One does not need to go any further than browsing the days' news to recognize that the picture, the idea of what art is, in popular culture, situates its practice and values outside the normative—usually against the uses and costumes of everyday life. The artistic domain—which includes all works of art—seems to be perceived as is a field inherently transgressive to the uses of its time, especially of its ethical conventions.

The historical reasons for such belief are hard to track --they might include the stubborn presence at the very base of our culture of some (diluted) version of romanticism, as well as some remnant of Nietzschean thought—the fact remains that the perception of what art is in our society seems to be defined, necessarily, by some kind of ethical transgression. That is: something (might) be art precisely because it is beyond the ethical realm—beyond the “accepted” conventions.

Nonetheless, up to what point can this extended belief hold some scrutiny? Beyond the Dadaist dictum of “scandalizing the bourgeois” is this just an empty cliché with no truth behind it? What does it mean to understand the artistic practice as “autonomous” from the ethical one and could that position even be sustained? And more importantly: If we believe that art could be anti-ethical what would its role in society be? How could art have a function or and any sort of social value if it is ultimately harmful to society?

This course is an invitation to think the place of art and of the aesthetic experience in general by examining some key works of the late Latin American canon, especially of the last three decades. From Sebastião Salgado's “aesthetization of poverty” to Santiago Sierra's “conscious exploitation” of workers in order to create “works of art” sellable in top tier galleries, the practice of contemporary art in Latin America, is filled with examples that problematize and tease up the very possibility of finding a place for art in society. Thus by careful consideration of particular Latin American cases, students would be asked to ponder the consequences of the possible existence of an object (or action) that could be aesthetically valuable but ethically harmful, mainly:

- Can we justify aesthetic pleasure directly derived from human suffering?
- Can we justify breaking the law to produce a work of art?
- Can we justify preserving an “unquestionable” art masterpiece in detriment of the wellbeing or the integrity of common citizens?

Furthermore, by teasing out these fundamental questions will also shed light and hone some of our basic intuitions in relation to the value of artistic practice in general and of the artist in particular, in our society. Thus, this course will allow us to keep exploring questions such as what is the relation between art and politics? Can art really change a given political environment or unlock an otherwise intractable situation? If so, what kind of art could do such thing? What kind of individual will be able to carry such feat? In short: what constitutes an artist? What are his/her capabilities? And if art is not capable of “doing much” then is it just condemned to be merely decorative and in the houses of the rich?

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Insofar each session discusses one contested aspect of aesthetic theory by addressing a particular case usually taken from contemporary Latin American Art, the student’s profit should be double: he/she will be capable to have a command on some of the most sophisticated ethical theories as well as learning about some of the most important artistic polemics in Latin American contemporary art, as well as some of its most salient practitioners.

Most importantly, the student will be able to learn how judgment calls (whether ethical or aesthetical) require not only careful consideration of principles and facts, but also require the development and training of the imagination.

REQUIREMENTS

No previous knowledge of art history or philosophy is needed, nonetheless it is extremely important that students read all the materials prior to arriving to class.

This course contains many cases which might offend some people –that is the precisely the reason why they are gathered here. I urge you to keep an open mind when confronting –(un)fortunately, all of them have been “exhibited” (shown) or presented as art pieces in the región and even in the United States and other parts of the world for which they “belong” to (are part of) the self regulating (contemporary) “art world” and for which reason its our duty to deal and discuss them.

READINGS

All required main readings are in English, which are drawn from artist's writings, criticism, art-historical scholarship. All readings will be made available on the course's site. The readings are posted by week.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

There are a number of important resources on the web you can access to help you when researching and/or writing a paper in Art History and more specifically about Latin American Art. I encourage you to take a look at them:

Oxford Reference online (includes Oxford Art online)

<http://www.oxfordartonline.com>

International Center of the Arts of the Americas (ICAA) Digital Archive:

<http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/>

Insofar, we will be also dealing a lot with philosophy, please take a look at the many resources that are on the web, especially the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/>

Also, please take a look at these guidelines for writing a philosophical paper, they are the best out there and gives you a good idea what is to argue philosophically:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

1. ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is mandatory and absences will affect your grade. If you miss multiple classes due to illness, you are expected to bring in a doctor's note. If you know that you will need to miss class, please see me in advance.

You are each required to read course materials in advance and to arrive prepared to actively participate in daily activities and discussions. In addition, other in-class assignments will contribute to your final participation grade. Regular tardiness, use of cell phones during class, and other disruptive or disrespectful behavior will negatively impact your participation grade.

Finally, discussion and debate will make this course a lot more fun so, please engage with the material and please respect your fellow classmates; each and every other opinion is valuable!

2. WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND OFFICE HOURS

You are each expected to complete a final paper which must be submitted as a **hard copy** to me on the day that it is due. It should be typed, using a 12-point Times New Roman font, and double-spaced with one-inch margins. You should use Chicago Style for your citations and bibliography.

I would like to meet with each of you separately during my office hours (Fridays after class, from 12-1 pm) at some point during the beginning of the semester. Please sign up for a 10-minute conversation during the first two sessions of class.

3. FINAL PAPER

The goal of this 25-page research paper is to offer an in-depth analysis of one work of art and to connect it to the broader themes that the individual work and the class have addressed. Thus, students will need to present one "case" work of contemporary art that is sufficiently problematic on ethical terms that requires careful examination for its judgment.

Papers are due on the last day of the exam period (**May 7**).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Response Papers: 35%

Final Paper: 45%

GRADING SCALES

A (94-100), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83), C+ (77-79), C (74-76), C- (70-73), D+ (67-69), D (64-66), D- (60-63), F (0-59). Incompletes (I) will be given only in documented cases of extreme hardship.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Ethics and Aesthetics: Identity, Cohabitation, Co-dependence or Transgression of the two realms?

SESSION ONE

JANUARY 22



Habacuc "Exposición #1" (October 2007)

TOPICS:

- Why now? Why the turn to ethics in aesthetics? What might explain it?
- Ethics and Aesthetic realms as similar in their apparent "subjectivist" nature
- The case of "Moral Realism" but can we talk about "Aesthetic Realism"?

- Differences – The Critical Issue: (Direct) Experience: How to evaluate ethical vs. aesthetic claims
- Ways in which Aesthetic metaphors have usually played the role of ethical “goodness” (the case of “beauty”)
- The connection with Personal Conduct: Motivation Force of Each realm

Readings:

1. On the Ethical Turn of Aesthetics:

- Jacques Ranciere, “The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics” in *Critical Horizons* 7:1 (2006)

Ethical Stances in Aesthetics:

- Berys Gaut, “The Ethical Criticism of Art” in Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, The Analytic Tradition*.
- *An Anthology*. New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. pp. 283-294.
- Kendall L. Walton, “Morals in Fiction and Fictional Morality” in *Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley* (ed.). London: Routledge, 2002. (Part 10), pp. 339-357.
- Michael Tanner, “Moral in Fiction and Fictional Morality- A Response” in *Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley* (ed.). London: Routledge, 2002. (Part 10), pp 358-371.

2. Classical Positions on the relation between Aesthetic and Ethics:

- Plato, *Symposium* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1989) – Read all: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html>
- Plato, *Republic* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1992) – Book X: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html>
- Aristotle, *Politics* (New York City: Penguin Books, 1981) – Book VII-VIII: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-pol/>

3. Traditional Subjectivist and Realist positions on Morality:

- David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* (Read all three parts of Book III): http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4705/4705-h/4705-h.htm#link2H_4_0083
- Jonathan Dancy, “An Ethic of Prima Facie Duties.” In *A Companion to Ethics*, ed. Peter Singer. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991. 219 – 229.
- Rachels, James, “Subjectivism,” in *A Companion to Ethics*, ed. Peter Singer. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991.

4. Relation between Aesthetics and Ethics, “Goodness as Beauty”:

- Earl of Shaftesbury, “Sensus Communis; an essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour” (any version)

- Francis Hutcheson, "The Origin of our Ideas of Beauty, Order, Harmony and Design" (any version)
- Philippa Foot, *Theories of Ethics*. London: Oxford U.P, 1967, Chapter VI.
- Mary Mothersill, "Beauty and the Critics Judgment: Remapping Aesthetics" in Peter Kivy, *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004. (Chapter 8)

Ethics and Aesthetics: The Question of Value, or how come art might be important to/for life?

SESSION TWO

JANUARY 29



Reenactment of Jannis Kounellis's "Untitled (12 Horses)" at Gavin Brown Gallery (2015)

TOPICS:

- Motivation beliefs and the role of desires in reasons (and viceversa):
Desires / Reasons / Desires again -> motivation beliefs
- The value of art in life (and viceversa)
- Under which description can art (and artistic practice) be more valuable to human life?
- Competing theories of aesthetic value and its relation to art
- What art is anyway?
- The value of masterpieces vs. "regular" (or bad) art: do they have the same value? Under which description and context every "artistic expression" is equal?
- Is art a closed system of signs *only* defined by what is already part of its system (think of Bordieu's "field" concept)?

- Up to what point does “nominalist” definitions of art, as the one used these days (art is all what says its art) is insufficient. If this definition doesn’t work which one to use? Up to what point does it violate the “autonomy” of art?
- If art is autonomous how can it be valuable for life?

Readings:

Basic Modern Aesthetics:

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Read all.
2. Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, (1794). Read all. <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/schiller-education.asp>
3. Paul Guyer, “The Origins of Modern Aesthetics, 1711-1735” in *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. pp. 3-36.
4. “Autonomist” Visions of Art:
4. Walter Pater, “Conclusion” in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (any version).

Institutional Theory of Art and its alternatives:

5. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996. (Selected Passages).
6. Arthur Danto, “Bourdieu on Art: Field and Individual” in Richard Shusterman, *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*. London: Blackwell, 1999. pp.214-219.
7. Richard Wolheim, “The Institutional Theory of Art” in *Art and its Objects*. (New York: Harper and Row, 2000). Pp. 157-166.
8. George Dickie, “The New Institutional Theory of Art” in Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, The Analytic Tradition*. – An Anthology. New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. pp. 47-54.
9. Arthur Danto, “The Artworld” in Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, The Analytic Tradition*. – An Anthology. New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. pp. 27-34.
10. Jerrold Levinson, “Defining Art Historically” in Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, The Analytic Tradition*. – An Anthology. New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. pp. 35- 46.
11. Monroe Beardsley, “An Aesthetic Definition of Art” in Peter Lamarque

and Stein Haugom Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, The Analytic Tradition. – An Anthology*. New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. pp. 55– 62.

SESSION THREE
AND FOUR

Case 5: The demise of photojournalism and the use of others (Sebastiao Salgado and the Aesthetization of Poverty)

FEBRUARY 5 AND FEBRUARY 12



Sebastiao Salgado's "Sahel's cover", 1985.

TOPICS:

- The facts.
- The charges: It has been said that the images of the Sahel famine by Sebastiao Salgado are perhaps the most important case of "aesthetization of poverty" –a case that which probably marked the ending of the golden era of "photojournalism" in the world. Upon his 1990 exhibition in New York, a number of critics charged that his "beautiful images" numbed the reaction of the viewers, producing in them the opposite of the desired intention to act: it anesthetizes spectators.
- Up to what point does beauty can anesthetize spectators and does not become a call to action? Does this belief fit Kantian aesthetics?
- Understand the development of the function of
- The photojournalist tradition since the 1920s till its demise in 1990s: from Jacob Riis, Robert Capa and Cartier Bresson to Kevin Carter's suicide.
- Understand the conditions in which the "eye of the photographer" became

a credible paradigm, following attempts by Stiglitz to make photography become a fine art.

- Conditions under which consider "aesthetization" of any object: supposes a strong representational stance. What does it imply in the case of photography?
- Conditions to assess the opposite of "aesthetization"?
- Conditions of "uber-witnesses": what means to "act" for a photojournalist and for a spectator?
- What are the new conditions for "acting"? What happens when is someone fails to act? Is the contract by which the image was taken in the first place broken and irreparable damaged?
- Problem of spectatorship: up to what point have the conditions of "acting" changed since the heyday of photojournalism for which "acting" (politically) does not follow the same path as before, and therefore becomes much more complicated? What could amount to "act" these days? Why the solution presented by Salgado himself seems too little, too insufficient despite it provides a very clear path to "action"? What does this insufficiency of the "path for action" promoted by Salgado reveals a misunderstanding on the way images circulate, especially in the digital age?
- Up to what point, therefore, this lack of sight in relation to the image circulation after/beyond the exhibition leaves his solution inadequate for the contemporary viewer who keeps "exploiting" the image and is unable to "act" accordingly.
- Up to what point, this problem of the "consumption" of images is one inherent to the nature of images (B. Stimson's analysis on the historical origins of the medium) for which this might not be, after all, the best medium for this kind of denunciation? If not, what other medium?

Readings:

1. On Salgado and the controversy:

- Sebastiao Salgado, *Sahel*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006 (reprint).
- Vicki Goldberg, "Documenting Poverty" in *Light Matters: Writings on Photography*. New York: Aperture, 2005. 177-182.
- Ingrid Sischy, "Good Intentions" in *The New Yorker* (Setiembre 9, 1991). 89-95.
- David Levi-Strauss, "The Documentary Debate: Aesthetic or Anesthetic?" in *Between the Eyes, Essays on Photography and Politics*. New York: Aperture, 2005. 3-11.

- Andy Grundberg, "Magnum's Postwar Paradox" in *Crisis of the Real: Writings on Photography Since 1974*. New York: Aperture, 1999. 191-195.

2. On the status of documentary photography in the late 80s –late 90s:

- Georges Didi-Huberman, "La emoción no dice "yo" Diez fragmentos sobre la libertad estética" en Adriana Valdés (Ed.), *La política de las imágenes*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Metales Pesados, 2008. 39-67.

- Jacques Ranciere, "El teatro de imágenes" en Adriana Valdés (Ed.), *La política de las imágenes*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Metales Pesados, 2008. 69-89.

- Jacques Ranciere, "The Intolerable Image" en *The Emancipated Spectator*. Londres: Verso, 2009. 83-105.

- Abigail Solomon Godeau, "Who is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography" en *Photography at the Dock*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. 169-183.

3. On the "Mission" of Photojournalism (first contract):

- Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York City: Penguin, 1997).

4. On the "Precise Moment":

- Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Mind's Eye*. New York: Aperture, 1999. Selected Passages

- Robert Capa, *Slightly Out of Focus* (New York City: Modern Library, 1999). Selected Passages.

- Paul Strand, "Photography and Photography and the New God," *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980).

5. The Flaneur as Precedent to "Photo-journalist" (the "Rise of "Vision"):

Charles Baudelaire, *Paris's Spleen* (Oneworld Classics, 2006).

- Walter Benjamin, "Notes on Baudelaire", *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York City: Schocken Books, 1988).

- Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991).

6. On the Demise of "Eye Sight" and "Vision":

- Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

- Philip Geffer, *Photography After Frank* (New York City: Aperture, 2009). (selections)

7. On the way images are “supposed” to work:

- John Calvin, *A Treatise on Relics* (1529) (Any version):

http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32136/32136-pdf.pdf?session_id=-432b16155263381876afc49e3f1dcdec58486be3

- David Hume, “Of Tragedy,” in *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* ed. Eugene Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985).

8. The way photographic images are produced and consumed:

- Blake Stimson, *The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006.

Case 3: Ana Blohm and Santiago Sierra or the problem of the conditions of voluntary “consent”

SESSION FIVE

FEBRUARY 19



Santiago Sierra, “250 cm line tattooed on 6 paid people” (Havana, 1999)



Ana Blohm, *Photograph of Patient* (New York, c. 2006)

TOPICS:

- The facts.
- The charges: Although both Blohm and Sierra justify their work by stating that the subjects who they work on their pieces have “voluntarily” entered into it, a closer analysis on the conditions in which they gave their “consent” seem to cast doubt of the “voluntary” nature of their engagement. If not voluntary, therefore, do these works constitute instances of exploitation?
- Review the conditions needed to be making an informed, non-biased, non pressured decision and consent.
- In which ways has Sierra and Blohm have not been able to secure such conditions? In what position does such violation leaves the spectator of the pieces?
- Flesh out their differences? Can we find something different in order to have their evaluation as works of art differ?
- What other features of the pieces might serve as mitigating factors? Up to what point would achieving the intended consequences with them “save” the works?
- Could they “work” (i.e. be effective) in different ways in the social realm beyond the “infraction” committed?
- Up to what point art is capable of acting in different ways than the “usual” ones? If so, which are those? Could Adorno’s “non-linear” account on how art works and has an effect on society convincing enough to make these cases ok?
- Can these photographs be considered “a gift” from the patients to the doctor and therefore short-circuit any ethical concern?
- Can the process of “portraiture” itself (negotiation between the photographer and the portrayed) can help humanize the ill?

- In the case of Blohm, let's recall the case of Sally Mann's controversy regarding her children's images: up to what point her line of defense in this case differs from Blohm's? Can it be used for our purposes?

Readings:

The facts:

1. On Santiago Sierra's action:

http://www.santiago-sierra.com/996_1024.php?key=10

Another similar case (by the same artist):

http://www.santiago-sierra.com/20006_1024.php?key=3

2. On Ana Blohm:

<http://medhum.med.nyu.edu/blog/?p=160>

<http://www.iahnow.com/DRHOUSE2s.htm>

3. Finding mitigating factors –the “social turn” and relational aesthetics:

- Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” *October Magazine*, Fall 2004, 160–171.
- Liam Gillick, “Letters and Response,” *October Magazine*, Winter 2006, 95–107.
- Jennifer Roche, “Socially Engaged Art, Critics and Discontents: An Interview with Claire Bishop,” *Communityartwork, readingroom*, July 2006:
♦ <http://www.contextualpractice.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/bishop-interview.pdf>
- Grant H. Kester, “Dialogical Aesthetics,” *Conversations Pieces, Community + Communication in Modern Art*, 2004, 82–123.

4. Philosophical Accounts on the situational aspect of art, differences between art and the aesthetic:

- J.O. Urmson, “What Makes a Situation Aesthetic?” in Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, The Analytic Tradition. – An Anthology*. New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. pp. 19–26.
- Marcia Muelder Eaton, “Art and the Aesthetic” in Peter Kivy. *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004. (Chapter 3)

5. Medical Ethics:

- Tony Hope, *Medical Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2004. (Read all)
- Tristram Engelhardt and Fabrice Jotterand. Eds. *The Philosophy of Medicine Reborn: A Pellegrino Reader*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008. (Selected Essays)

6. Negative Dialectics and Aesthetics (“Semi-Autonomy” of Art):

- Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. (Selected Passages)

7. On the "Modernist" Autonomy of Art:

- Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.
- Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. (Selected Passages)

8. On the notion of a "gift" in non western-societies:

- Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*. New York: Norton, 2000. (Read all)

9. On the Sally Mann controversy:

- In the New York Magazine: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/magazine/the-disturbing-photography-of-sally-mann.html?_r=0
- Reply by Mann: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/magazine/the-cost-of-sally-manns-exposure.html>

SESSION SIX

Case 4: Santiago Sierra and Graciela Carnevale

FEBRUARY 26



Graciela Carnevale, "Confinement Action" (Rosario, 1968)



Santiago Sierra, "Obstruction of a Freeway with a Truck's Trailer" (Mexico City, 1998)

TOPICS:

- The facts.
- The charges: Both of these works did not consult with anyone the actions that were going to take place, and which were not only highly risky for a number of its audience, but actually put in danger a number of people and even an entire city. Up to what point is such action permissible and could/should be considered art?
- In a larger art-historical context: What is the contract between an artist and his/her audience?
- Besides "scandalizing the bourgeois" tradition what are the conditions for the possible aesthetic merit of the piece?
- Without leaving it to moral luck, how would have one defend the act if someone would have gotten hurt?
- Compare closely the conditions of each of the pieces, notice their differences: in the case of Carnivale's piece up to what point her decisions of the type of place in which the enclosure happened may constitute a difference?
- Up to what point the "metaphoric" reading of Carnivale's piece (a reflection of the Argentine society) might or might not constitute a defense for the piece? Can we use the same defense for the Sierra piece?
- If we decide the work is immoral what action should we follow with the institutions that own that piece? Boycott them? How? Under what pretenses? (function of a museum)

Readings:

The facts:

1. On Santiago Sierra's action:

http://www.santiago-sierra.com/987_1024.php?key=3

(Review too, similar pieces by other artists such as this one by Teresa Margolles:

http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/teresa_margolles/)

- Santiago Sierra, *300 Tons and Previous Works* (Bregenz, Austria: Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2004). Selected passages.

2. On Graciela Carnevale's action:

- <http://www.latinart.com/faview.cfm?id=964>

- Grant Kester, *The Sound of Breaking Glass, Part I: Spontaneity and Consciousness in Revolutionary Theory* in: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-sound-of-breaking-glass-part-i-spontaneity-and-consciousness-in-revolutionary-theory/>

- <http://www.reactfeminism.org/entry.php?l=lb&id=27&e=a>

- Andrea Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007 (Selected Passages)

- Ines Katzenstein, Ed. *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art in the 1960s: Writings of the Avant Garde*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004. Selected Entries.

3. The tradition of "scandalizing the bourgeois" and "hell raising" within artist settings:

- Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997. (Selected Passages)

- Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012. (Selected Chapters)

4. The (revolutionary) uses of "scandalization of the bourgeois" in Latin America:

- Roberto Schwarz, "Culture and Politics in Brazil, 1964-1969" in Carlos Ba-sualdo (ed.), *Tropicalia: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture* (New York: Bronx Museum, 2005).

5. Art and Morality Redux (value judgments):

- Noel Carroll, "Art and the Moral Realm" in Peter Kivy (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004. (Chapter 7)

Case 1: "Art Kidnapping" at the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas, Venezuela- October 1963

SESSION SEVEN

MARCH 4



News about the Museum Kidnapping

TOPICS:

- The facts
- The charges: By kidnapping the works of art and ask them in exchange for their prisoners, the Guerrilla established equivalence between "masterpieces" of art and the life of a human being? Nonetheless, such equivalence is difficult to measure, especially when one needs to consider the asymmetry between "masterpieces" and "political prisoners" of a peripheric nation on one hand but also a much more fundamental one regarding the value of life vis a vis art.
- Other things to consider: Was this action a work of art in itself? If so, in which ways does it matter to our evaluation?
- How to judge and weight the consequences?
- Who loses when a masterpiece is destroyed? What is the social contract be-

hind the well keeping of a masterpiece vs. the life of a "common man"?

- What is the "social contract" about art?
- Why should we care so much about art? Hasn't the "time(epoch) of art" has passed anyway (Hegel), so why bother?

Readings:

[Besides continuing with the readings of Kant and Schiller from last week, please consider]

The facts:

1. Clippings from Diario "El Universal" (Caracas, Venezuela), October, 1963
2. Gabriela Rangel, "How to Become a Good Revolutionary (Within the Museum)" in *Parkett* 79 (2007). pp. 185-189.

On Situationist Tactics:

3. Guy Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics or Art," in: Tom McDonough, Ed. *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004. pp. 159-166.
4. Tom McDonough, *The Beautiful Language of My Century: Reinventing the Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945-1968* Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press, 2007. pp. 104-107.

On the Place of Aesthetics in Society:

5. Arendt, Hannah. *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Ed. Ronald Beiner. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. (Lecture 1)
6. Paul de Man, "Kant and Schiller" (1983)
7. G.W. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (New York City: Penguin, 1993). (Read all)

On the establishment of value between art and society:

8. Malcolm, Budd, "Artistic Value" in Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, The Analytic Tradition. – An Anthology*. New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. pp. 262-273.
9. Peter Lamarque, "Tragedy and Moral Value" in Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, The Analytic Tradition. – An Anthology*. New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. pp. 274-282.

[NO CLASS /SPRING BREAK – MARCH 11]

SESSION EIGHT

Case 2: “Autosabotaje” by Tania Brugera (2009)

MARCH 18



Tania Bruguera, “Autosabotaje” (Venice Biennale, 2009)

TOPICS:

- The facts.
- The charges: In her “Self-sabotage” performance piece of 2009 at the Venice Biennale, Cuban artist Tania Bruguera played “Russian Roulette” in front of the public. How would one defend the (very) possible death of the artist as part of her “work of art”?
- Possible solutions all rest on the authority of the first person (conscious volition): Died doing what she wanted, anyways? Martyr?
- What happens if we don’t believe necessarily on the authority of the first person over the third person (Moran)?
- History of “placing the body” in art history: from civil disobedience to Chris Burden. In Latin America: from the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in the 1970s to Cuban Carlos Martel.
- Self-Exotization, Self-Harm And Self Exploitation: Can we allow it? When can

we allow it? (is it a "right"?) In other words: what's the spectator responsibility with the performer?

- Under which conditions can self-harm be considered a "work of art"? Is immolation/hunger strikes/radical body performances acceptable for any audience? Can audiences extract beauty out of immolation?
- Taking the voice of others: is it the prerogative of the artist to assume a "self-immolation" position? Who furnaces it, anyhow? Does it need to be always tied to a "denunciation" to work and have aesthetic merit?
- Consider the case of Jose Maria Arguedas, and his "El Zorro de Arriba, el Zorro de Abajo" failed novel and his suicide.
- "Nothing happened": "moral luck" as a position where to judge works of art.
- Taking the voice of others: is it the prerogative of the artist to assume a "self-immolation" position? Who furnaces it, anyhow? Does it need to be always tied to a "denunciation" to work and have aesthetic merit?
- What is the inherent risk of art anyhow? (Walter de Maria example) What is the relation between risk and beauty? (Romantic theory)

Readings:

The facts:

1. <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/111-0-Self-sabotage.htm>

On the notion of the "Beautiful Souls":

2. GWF. Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. (Sections 632–671).

On "First Person Authority":

3. Richard Moran, *Estrangement and Authority*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001. (Chapter 1 and 2)
4. Quasi Cassam, *Self-knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. Intro and XII.

On Moral Luck:

5. Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Vol 1. (1976). pp. 115–135.
6. Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck: Reply to Bernard Williams" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Vol 1. (1976).

On Chris Burden:

7. "2 Artists Quit UCLA Over Gun Incident," The Los Angeles Times (January 22, 2005):
<http://articles.latimes.com/2005/jan/22/local/me-profs22>

8. New York Times Obituary (May 11, 2015):

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/12/arts/chris-burden-a-conceptualist-with-scars-dies-at-69.html?_r=0

9. Peter Schjeldahl, "Performance: Chris Burden and the Limits of Art," in *The New Yorker* (May 14, 2007):

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/05/14/performance-2>

10. Robert Horvitz, "Chris Burden" in *Art Forum* (Volume XIV, N. 9, May 1976, pp. 24-31):

<http://mujweb.cz/horvitz/burden.html>

11. On other artists with similar works:

Walter de Maria's "The Lightning Field" (1977) Dia Art Webpage:

<http://www.diaart.org/sites/page/56/1375>

12. On the Limits of Consent (i.e. Selling Kidneys or accepting hard jobs like Dwarf Tossing):

- Richard A. Epstein, "The Market Has a Heart," *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 21, 2002

- Gregory Mankiw, "The Kidney Shortage", May 15, 2006

- Robert G. McGee, "If Dwarf-Tossing is Outlawed, Only Outlaws Will Toss Dwarfs," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, vol. 38, 1993

Case 6: Regina José Galindo and Javier Tellez

MARCH 25



Javier Tellez, "Choreutics" (A Motion Study), 2001 (Installation)



Regina José Galindo, "Blind Spot," 2010

TOPICS:

- The facts.
- The charges: In her video "Blind Spot" Regina José Galindo recruits dozens of blind people to participate in a taped performance that might be considered "exploitative" as they are tapped but they would never be able to contemplate the kind of spectacle they have produced in the video. In other words: they might give their consent but they are unable to really "know" (see) what they are giving their consent to. Up to what point is this consent "informed"?
- Up to what point does this consent becomes much more pressing in cases such as this one, when you have a "visual work of art" that is going to be consumed visually and presented in "spectacular" fashion.
- The same could be said of some of the works by Javier Tellez whose work involve in some cases mentally ill people. Depending on the severity of the illness, up to what point can these people really give their consent.
- Would this mean that no works of art on the subject or using these type of subjects could be ever produced? What does this tell us of the way images work?
- In which is this possible violation of consent different from the cases of Sierra, Blohm or others? Why not?
- What does this difference tells us about these pieces?
- A defense of these works might appeal to a utilitarian argument of some sort: despite all these people might be get "used" to some degree, its is argued they are "used" in order to exemplify a larger problem, for which the action and any possible ethical problem might be excused.
- This, of course, puts us in the camp of consequentialism and of course of utilitarianism, so up to what point the standard criticism of utilitarianism (Kantian) also applies to this type of work of art?
- Up to what point can art pieces claim a consequentialist defense if it does not provide (and is opposed) to measured outcomes?
- Can Mill's refined utilitarianism in terms of types of higher pleasures (and not Bentham's) might be useful for the defense of this type of art.

Readings:**1. On Regina Jose Galindo:**

- Guggenheim Museum: <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/33095>
- Julian Stallabras "Performing Torture" Essay: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/31591443/Regina-Jose-Galindo>

2. On Javier Tellez:

- Interview by Pedro Reyes at BOMB: <http://bombmagazine.org/article/3379/javier-t-llez>

- At the Guggenheim Museum Website:

<http://www.guggenheim.org/guggenheim-foundation/collaborations/map/latinamerica/artist/javier-tellez>

- "El Sueño de la razón produce monstruos" On Javier Tellez Work" by Michele Faguet in *Afterall*

3. Recalling the "debate" between Kant/Hume in relation to Normativity:

- Dancy, Jonathan, *Normativity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2000. Intro and Chapter 1.

- Guyer, Paul, *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Chapters 2 and 4.

4. Utilitarianism and its discontents – Treating persons like "ends" and not means:

- Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), Chapters I and IV.

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863) – read all.

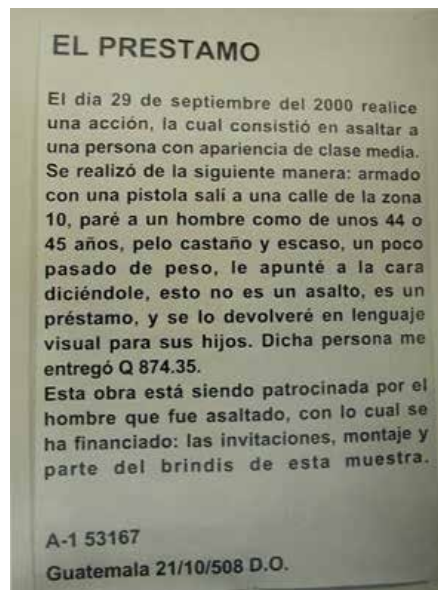
- Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785)

- Immanuel Kant, "Of Duties to the Body in Regard to Sexual Impulse," Lectures on Ethics

SESSION TEN

Case 7: Lifted: Anibal Lopez and William Cordova theft pieces

APRIL 1



Aníbal López, "El Préstamo" (2000)



William Cordova "Labyrinths (After Octavio Paz)" (2003-2009)

TOPICS:

- The facts.
- The charges: In both pieces, the artist commits theft in order to produce the work. In fact, it is precisely the action of lifting or stealing which is requested to be considered by the spectator when contemplating, evaluating the piece.
 - ♦ i.e. Cordova's piece label reads: "Appropriated vinyl records from undisclosed ivy league institution in response to that institution's refusal to return 200 Inca artifacts from Peru after it originally borrowed them in 1914"
 - ♦ i.e. López piece also requests us to consider a theft (an armed robbery) as an essential part of the work of art.
- Up to what point can they be considered works of art if they ask to condone theft or to consider integral part of the work of art? If art should not present necessarily solutions, then what is wrong with these pieces?
- Up to what point are these pieces making the spectator an "accomplice"? If so, what to do? How can a spectator "reject" such stance? Go to the police?
- What does it say about the spectators the fact that no one actually called the police?
- "Getting away with it": is the point of the piece that the artist "could get away with it" (especially in the case of Lopez)? Would the spectator/viewer an accomplice of it? Does the fact of them "getting away with it" absolve the pieces or mitigate their ethical trespassing? Or, in the contrary, up to what point does this type of thinking confuses the relation between the law and morality (not the same, different realms, one preceding the other)?
- How can this type of art be seen as valuable to society? Is it feasible to transform it as a value by presenting their "emancipatory" edge by showing how we are all "implicated" in a system of lax moral values –therefore, the piece would be "valuable" because it reveals it?
- Other relations between art and theft: what is the relation between art and theft from the position of the creative process? Up to what point do artists

"steal" from one another (T.S. Eliot)? That this kind of relation between producers of art reveals?

- If these art-robberies are somehow considered goods up to what point can they be useful for promoting virtue among people which according to Aristotle promotes?

- Aristotle: Cultivating virtue, reasoning about goods: What, according to Aristotle, is the purpose of a political community? Can this be aided by arts and crafts?

- Why, according to Aristotle, is it necessary to reason about the purposes and ends appropriate to social practices? What are the implications of Aristotle's view for the just allocation of jobs and social roles?

- On what grounds does Aristotle distinguish between pleasure and happiness? What are the implications of this distinction for our aesthetic reasoning?

Readings:

On Aníbal Lopez:

- Interview in Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nceXKTFHYpc>

On William Cordova:

- Gallery Webpage:

<http://sikkemajenkinsco.com/index.php?v=artist&artist=4eecdb96e9420>

On Theft as "Art":

- Gavun Morris and Fraser Stables (ed.), *Lifting: Theft in Art*. London: Atopia Projects, 2007 – read all.

On the difference between "stealing" and "influence":

- T.S. Eliot, "Philip Massinger" in *The Sacred Wood* (1921):

<http://www.bartleby.com/200/sw11.html>

Aristotle on the cultivation of virtues:

- Aristotle, *The Politics*, Books I, III (ch. 113)

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books II (ch. 13), X (ch. 13)

Case 8: Aníbal López's "Testimonio"**APRIL 8****Aníbal López, "Testimonio," (2012)****TOPICS:**

- The facts.
- The charges: On June 8, 2012, as part of the official Professional Preview Program of the 13th edition of DOCUMENTA, the late Guatemalan artist Anibal Lopez presented in Kassel, Germany, his performance piece entitled "Testimonio" (Testimony) which consisted in a "sicario" (a contract killer, a hitman) on the stage behind a flimsy white screen telling or "confessing" a number of his crimes to the audience. Up to what point could that be considered art? And if not, how could be exhibited at Documenta XIII? What are the blind spots on the art world structure that allowed such "performance" to ever take place? How to hold the responsible accountable for it?
- To a large degree, the piece follows a large number of instances of "exotici-
zing" Latin American artistic production at this kind of international art fairs, the piece seemed to have marked a new low in terms of the level of the exoti-
zation of the conditions of living in the region, as it also exhibited a particular
blindspot: the belief that there were no possible targets for the killer in Docu-
menta; that no Guatemalan could be in the audience. In other words: there
is a such a belief that "reality happens elsewhere" (in Guatemala) that the
organizers felt it possible to prophylactically extract a killer from Guatemala
and exhibit him in Kassel without any repercussion –as if the two worlds will
never collide at some point.
- Besides this "geographical disconnect", what other reasons or beliefs can
be found to support the inclusion a type of work such as this one? Mind ex-

periment: under what conditions would have they allow a rapist from NYC to come to Documenta to talk about the way he raped women in NYC? Why is this possibility inconceivable and the one by the Guatemalan hit man not?

- Up to what point can we consider this "extraction" of the killer from Guatemala into the Documenta "white cube" as part of long tradition of "ready-mades"? Up to what point were we "simply" displacing one reality onto another in traditional terms? Up to what point there is a problem of "framing" of such reality that is not even considered?

- In other words: it seems that the problem with the "transfiguration of commonplace" occurring here is not so much the transposition of Guatemalan "reality" into the white cube of Documenta, but what kind of "reality" has been framed? The problem is, therefore, once more up to what point are we "constructing" a reality by simply framing it? It is possible to not alter a reality and simply frame it?

- The second aspect in this case is related to the type of ethical model that is behind this type of work: it is clear that this type of work bases itself in denouncing a type of condition. If there no promise of denunciation or presentation of a problem then there is no piece, so what kind of denunciation might this be? Why it might be important? What is the position of the artist in this denunciation?

- Up to what point is this denunciation returning the artist to a position of martyr or outside morality? Or, instead, they are acting within the parameters of the "common good"?

- If the problem seems to be an issue of how to achieve the greater good, then we are confronted with a typical case of means to ends: up to what point are the means used for this work not condoned by the ends of the piece?

- What type of utilitarianism might be convenient for this kind of work to be acceptable ethically? (please refer to sections in this syllabus where we discuss utilitarianism)

- A important aspect of the strength of the piece refers to the problem of placing the spectator as a "accomplice" in a confession of a crime. The calculated reaction by the spectator from the artist for this piece is one of "indignation but no real action": only if they feel rage but fail to do something meaningful to "stop" the artist then the piece would have achieve its supposedly critical stance: to "demonstrate" that we live in a world in which the suffering of others can be transformed into mere spectacles without any consequence. Nonetheless, are there any other aspects that might not make the spectator reach this conclusion, mainly the possibility of fiction: how do we know it is not all a prank?

- This possible "fictional" stance might be a calculated aspect by the artist in order to suspend the ethical indictment against it, but it seems that it might also complicate the efficacy of the piece, as it will be placing the spectator in

the ethical predicament calculated by the artist too. Therefore, how to judge "success" in this piece?

- Up to what point does the "success" of this piece points out to a type of morality that Nietzsche proposed and which to a degree seems to have proposed by Romantic poets even earlier in regards to the status (and function) of the work of art in the world?
- Is this type of function in society the one we hold now for art? What does that say about the piece?
- Up to what point are we really thinking this is a "testimony"? what are the conditions of a "testimony"?
- Why if seen at under this light this piece seems to have fallen into the same problem that Nobel prize winner Rigoberta Menchu's testimony fell into in terms of veracity?
- Up to what point would then Doris Sommer solution on Rigoberta might help on Anibal Lopez "Testimonio"?

Readings:

On Aníbal López's "Testimonio":

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOwm9TCcmOw>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lr-Qun7WQWs>

On the philosophical underpinnings of the "Ready-Made" and the transfiguration of the common-place and its limits:

- Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981. (Chapter 1 and 4)
- Octavio Paz, "The Ready-Made" in Joseph Masheck (Ed.), *Marcel Duchamp in Perspective*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1975. pp. 84-89.
- Ferreira-Gullar, "Theory of the Non-Object" (1959) in Kobena Mercer, ed. *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 170-172.

On Nietzschean Morality:

- F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872)- any web version – (read all)
- F. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (1886)- any web version – (read all)
- F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1887) – any web version – (read all)

On Romantic Morality, Artistic Manifestos:

- Percy B. Shelley, *Defense of Poetry* (1840) – any web version (read all)
- John Keats, "Letter to Benjamin Bailey" (1817), "Letter to George and Thomas Keats" (1817), "Letter to John Taylor" (1818), "Letter to Richard Woodhouse" (1818) – any web version – read all.
- Samuel Coleridge, *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism Concerning the Fine Arts* (1814) – read all.

- Berlin, Isaiah. *The Roots of Romanticism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999. – read all

On the conditions of testimony:

- David Hume, "Of Miracles" (Section X) of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748):
 - <http://www.davidhume.org/texts/ehu.php#E10>
- C.A.J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. Read all
- Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. Read All.

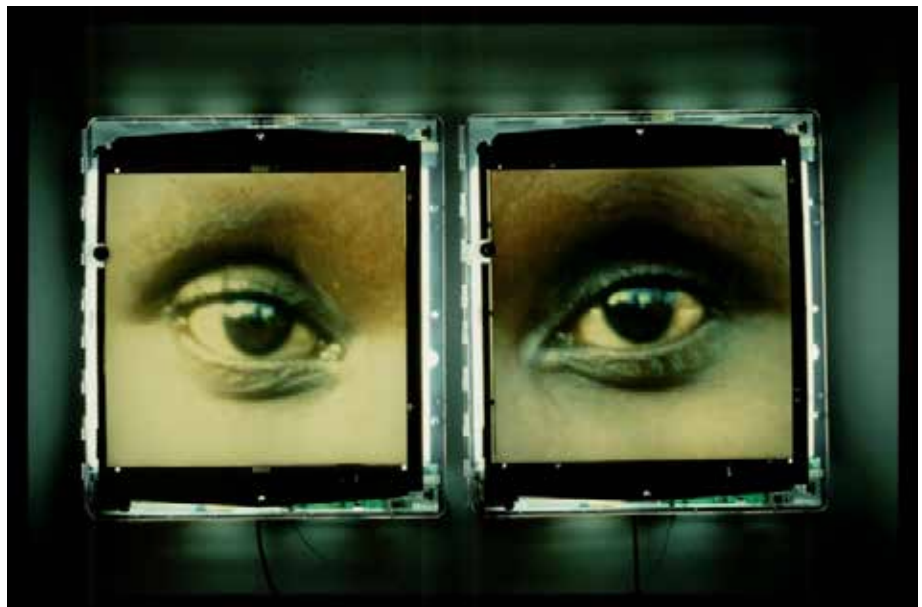
Rigoberta Menchu Controversy:

- Rigoberta Menchú, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchu y así me nació la conciencia* (1984) – read all
- Arturo Arias (ed.) *The Rigoberta Menchu's Controversy*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. – read all.
- Doris Sommer, *Proceed with Caution, When Engaged by Minority Writing in the Americas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. Read: "Rigoberta's Secret".

SESSION TWELVE

Case 9: Alfredo Jaar's (Empty)Universalism?

APRIL 15



Alfredo Jaar's "The Eyes of Gutete Emerita" (1996)

TOPICS:

- The facts.
- The charges: During the mid 1990s Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar produced a series of important works dedicated to commemorate the Rwandan genocide. His novel use of photographic materials and the powerful resonance it had in discussions on how to use graphic material of genocide, made those pieces instance successes and Jaar an international star.
- Jaar continued working in a number of important pieces, all of them dealing with violation of human rights especially in Africa and other parts of the periphery of capitalism, becoming a sort of super hero of a type of engaged art that has remained relevant until these days.
- Nonetheless, the fame at the international stage of the art world, his reputation in his home country, Chile, and in Latin America by extension, was somehow tarnished: whether due to a type of entrenched provincialism on the part of Latin Americans, or whether detecting a level of "bad faith" (or playing it safe) by never talking about the issues in his home country –which passed through a military dictatorship.
- This, of course, is an attack to the artist based in one main assumptions: that although the artist might be free to do and take on whatever topic they want, there are certain historical events are one is incapable of not addressing, to the point of being suspicious if avoided. In this case: Jaar avoided to talk/address the "dictadura" in his work in a consistent way and instead chose to address "other" social ills, especially in the United States and other parts of the world such as Africa.
- The suspicion therefore, in the case of Jaar, becomes double, as he did not renounce his interest in addressing social issues through his art –he still remains a socially inclined artist—but he simply (it seems) chose to focus on other topics, so why he chose to raise social problems through his art in other parts of the world and not in his own country? Maybe (it is suggested) because it is easier, safer, less risky? And the pay out might be better (becoming an international star)? In other words: Jaar seems to be accused of intentionally choosing "someone else's tragedy" in lieu of his "own history"?
- What makes something "our own history"? Gender? Ethnicity? Race? Nationality? A combination of all of those?
- Also, up to what point does one's "history" needs to be "directly witnessed" in order to be one's? In other words: what are the minimal conditions for claiming a particular historical account as one's?
- What would happened if he (Jaar) would have not experienced directly the ills of the dictatorship? Would his "moral duty" have fundamentally changed? Why?
- In relation to the existence of events that no one should avoid to deal with: Do these types of events actually exist? Does an artist needs to confront them even if they don't want it? Wouldn't that curtail his/her freedoms?

- Saving distances, a similar controversy occurred between noted Art Historian Benjamin Buchloh and seminal German artist Joseph Beuys, as the former accused Beuys, among other things, of not dealing with the legacy of the Holocaust. Buchloh found such omission suspect, to say the least –he later recoiled such criticism when he learned that Beuys was in conversations with some institutions on producing a show dealing precisely with those issues.
- Buchloh's argument seems to rest on the same type of view about history of those who are criticizing Jaar: it rests on the belief that there are moments in history that are unavoidable, and that somehow need to be addressed by everyone. Nonetheless, are events even as central the Holocaust unable to be unavoidable by everyone? Why does this still feel like a restriction?
- Perhaps a way of solving this problem is by differentiating an historical act from one that is directly witnessed? Would that change the ethical force to "speak about it"?
- Once more, it seems one needs to consider the conditions of the "witness" and when such witness is "compelled" to give "testimony"? (see earlier class on this topic). That is: up to what point does the direct witnessing of an atrocity, for example, requires the witness to denounce it?
- Is there any other factor stronger than witnessing an event, that might tie someone to an event that needs/requires denouncing? Are family ties also as strong? Or ethnic or gender or national ties count too? In other words: in comparison with direct witnessing, how much do other type of allegiances count when we assess the relevance of an event in our lives?
- What about simply been part of the "human race"? Why does that not cut it (yet)?
- Philosophically, it was Kant who first posed the notion of "cosmopolitanism" –all human kind forming part of one unique regime—which will therefore provide us with solid ties to one another by the simple reason that we are human. Nonetheless, it seems that more than a reality, it is still a lofty ideal –despite the enormous gains in the notion of "humanitarianism" that we have seen since the twentieth century. Instead, it seems that we are still regulated by much smaller, more precise and way stronger as family, nation, and ethnicity –as Hegel proposed. In which way do the ties with "all humankind" play or not play a role here? Do they matter?
- Finally, if we believe in a model in which denunciation of the vent is merely obligatory, we would have, effectively, ban the possibility of superogatory acts: the normative was so rigorous that the possibility of someone going the "extra mile" and, in this particular case, be genuinely "touched" by events occurring to other people with whom he/she has no connection. Up to what point the celebrated Urmson/Singer debate on the possibility of superogatory acts helps us define and hone suspicions when it comes to accept that maybe some people can make "theirs" the plight of others with whom they have no real connection?

Readings:**On Alfredo Jaar:**

- Artist website with all his projects:
<http://www.alfredojaar.net/>
- Alfredo Jaar (Ed). *Let There Be Light: The Rwanda Project 1994-1998*. New York: Actar, 1989.
- Adriana Valdes (ed.). *Studies on Happiness 1979 – 1981*. New York: Actar, 2011.

On the Chilean Scene “Escena de Avanzada” during the dictatorship:

- Nelly Richard, *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile Since 1973* (On-line pdf, read all)
- Francine Masiello, *The Art of Transition: Latin American Culture and Neo-liberal Crisis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. (Introduction and Chapter 5).

The Joseph Beuys’s controversy:

- Caroline Tisdall (ed.), *Joseph Beuys*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1979.
- “Social Sculpture” in *Public Dialogues* (1974/120 min). Excerpts can be found at:
 - ♦ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7_PiPv6YVo
 - ♦ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX6wUkUx7NQ>
- Benjamin Buchloh, “Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol,” in *Artforum*, vol.5, No.18 (January 1980), pp.35-43.
- Benjamin Buchloh: ‘Reconsidering Joseph Beuys, Once Again,’ in Gene Ray (ed.): *Joseph Beuys, Mapping the Legacy* (D.A.P., 2001), pp.75-90

Proximity Argument in Ethics:

- Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2000. (Sections III and IV).

Against Proximity as a value in Ethics:

- Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence and Morality” in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1972), pp. 229-243:
<http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/1972----.htm>

Possibility of Supererogation In Ethics:

- J. O. Urmson, “Saints and Heroes,” in *Essays in Moral Philosophy*, ed. Abraham I. Melden (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958),
- Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed. (London: Dover Press, 1907). Excerpts

Nuclear Family vs. Cosmopolitan Allegiances as Values:

- Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View" (1784):

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/universal-history.htm#n1>

- G.W. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* – Read "The Family" (1820) Sections 158 – 181, from "Third Part: Ethical Life":

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/prfamily.htm>

SESSION THIRTEEN

Case 10: Pedro Reyes or Goody Two Shoes Art or Bad faith?

APRIL 22



TOPICS:

- The facts
- The charges: for the last fifteen years, Pedro Reyes has been producing a number of art pieces that not only "denounce" but actually try to heal/solve the problem they are pointing out. Thus, his works, like many other artists of his generation defy the "function of art" lexicalized by almost two-centuries of theorization on the place of art in society since Saint-Simon and further refined by the Frankfurt School, as his work goes beyond the limits posed by them, and might feel as not only instrumentalization of art but as providing, in its efforts for "solving" the problems denounced, as working in "bad faith" by

presenting a very partial, very incomplete solution as a final one. For that reason, just as Jaar, his career has been asymmetrical in terms of exposure: his international stature in the international art world is immense, but in his own home country much less so. In Mexico, he is actually seen by a large sector of the contemporary art with suspicion. What is he exactly trying to do?

- Most critics also feel that Pedro and others are doing a disservice to the problem raised because it makes the spectator feel good, satisfied with the solution and therefore forget of the problem presented.

- Nonetheless, Pedro is not the only artist collapsing the until recently very stable differentiation between denouncing and solving. There are, indeed, a large number of "A-listers" artists not only in Latin America but around the world –a list that goes from Theaster Gates to Tania Bruguera—and that which this tendency need to be understood and discussed.

- Does this new tendency really supposes the end of the way in which art was understood until very recently? In which way does it change?

- Up to what point is Pedro's or other's artist "bad faith" in passing a partial solution as final and general?

- Up to what point does the notion of "satisfaction" by the spectator that supposedly rises from the solution presented, ends up becoming an anesthetic and inaction?

- Are we instead in front of a new way of understanding the relation between art and society, one that is just now being constituted amidst the dismantling of the modernist regime?

Readings:

On Pedro Reyes:

- Robyn Greeley, "Modernism as Toolbox" in Jose Falconi, ed. *Ad Usum: The Works of Pedro Reyes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016 (forthcoming). 320 – 337.

- Irmgard Emmelhainz or "Comité Invisible Jaltenco":

<http://comiteinvisiblejaltenco.blogspot.mx/2012/02/el-calderonismo-como-estetica.html>

- Reply to Irmgard Emmelhainz by Cuauhtemoc Medina "Viendo Rojo" at Plé-tora: <http://pletora.es/Viendo-Rojo> (Spanish) and in English at Art in the Global Present (edited by Nikos Papastergiadis) in: <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/books/art-global-present>

- Response to Cuauhtémoc Medina by Emmelhainz, "Art and the Cultural Turn: Farewell to Committed, Autonomous Art?" in <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-and-the-cultural-turn-farewell-to-committed-autonomous-art/>

- Critical Review of his show "PUN" at the Hammer Museum in The Art Newspaper:

<http://theartnewspaper.com/comment/reviews/exhibitions/a-mere-semblance-of-political-activity/>

On The function of the artist in modern society:

a. First attempts to define it:

- Henri Saint-Simon and Léon Halévy, "The Artist, the Scientist, and the Industrial: Dialogue", *Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825)* (London: Croom Helm, 1975).
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts (First Discourse) and Polemics* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992).
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960).
- Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," "The Communist Manifesto," "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *Selected Writings* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994).

b. The Frankfurt school, economical determinism and the role of art in society:

- Jean Paul Sartre, "Why write?" (1948)
- Benedetto Croce, "Art as Intuition," in *Problems in Aesthetics*, ed. Morris Weitz (New York City: Macmillan, 1970).
- Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukács, *Aesthetics and Politics* (New York City: Verso, 2007).

c. Ways out of mere economical determinism:

- Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*
- Antonio Gramsci, *Hegemony, Relations of force, Historical Bloc (Selections)*
- Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Selections)
- Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (Selections)

Some Conclusions: A place for Ethics in Aesthetics (and Viceversa?)

SESSION FOURTEEN

APRIL 29



Clement Greenberg, 1972.

TOPICS:

- The facts and charges: It seems that all what we have been trying to find reasons in order to make all these cases/pieces fit a particular way of judging them ethically. Insofar they are able to fit ethically, then they will not pose any further problem, but is there any other way of addressing these cases? Nonetheless, do they lose some aesthetical qualities in this process? That is: do we find them aesthetically provocative enough after they have been ethically "tamed"?
- After all these cases, what might be wrong for advocating for "art for arts sake" in the high-modernist tradition (a la Greenberg)?
- In fact, in all these cases have we ever actually moved from such claim? If so, how far?
- How can you have "art for arts sake" without arts autonomy (understood in the traditional sense)? Is its autonomy in danger?

- Can we think of a minimal autonomy? How would it look like?
- Finally: remember the central question of the course? Have we found such object that might be ethically objectionable and aesthetically pleasurable?

Readings:

The promise of aesthetics:

- Victor Shklovsky, *Art as Technique* (1917)
- Mothersill, Mary. *Beauty Restored*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984. CH I, VII, XI.
- Nehamas, Alexander. *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Chapters 1 and 3.

The continuous question on moral responsibility:

- Galen Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility" (1994), *Philosophical Studies* 75, pp. 5–24.
- Peter Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment" in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 48, 1960:
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctytho/dfwstrawson1.htm>
- Phillipa Foot, "Does Moral Subjectivism Rest on a Mistake"? in *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*. Vol. 15-1, 1995.

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