

AD 502: Seminar in Contemporary Theory
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University of Illinois Chicago, Art and Design Hall, 400 South Peoria Street, room 3226
Mondays 4-7pm, Fall 2010, office hours by appointment

On the Avant-Garde

The term “avant-garde” signifies both an intellectual radicalism and the advent of a new generation: in English it is translated most commonly as “vanguard,” in French as “advance guard.” Vanguard or in-front-of the rest, does the notion of avant-garde-ness have relevance in the contemporary moment? When we speak of the avant-garde, are we always referring to the new-ness and radicalism of the past? Is the avant-garde dead? Or, is it more alive and relevant than ever?

This critical theory seminar examines how the avant-garde has been defined theoretically, historically, and dynamically (as something that is in a constant state of development, flux, and tension). We will focus primarily on works produced in the mediums of film, video, and sound, and will question how the avant-garde was (and is) defined through both its programs (declarations, visions, overviews) and manifestos. An examination of various avant-garde artists and movements will complement the theoretical component of the course.

Responsibilities and Requirements

This is a small, discussion-based seminar course that relies heavily on your participation and critical input – in order for it to succeed, you must be present and on time. The class meets weekly and I expect you to be here every week. If you are too sick to attend, please send me an email prior to the start of class. You may miss one class without penalty. If you miss three or more classes, you will fail the course.

The texts we will read over the course of the semester will provide us with the common ground upon which we will base our conversations. You need to read the required texts prior to the start of class and come ready to engage in a discussion of this material. Together we will foster a creative working environment that supports intellectual curiosity, openness, critical engagement, and, most importantly, questions.

Extensions on deadlines require at least one full day’s advance approval. I do not grant incompletes except in cases of serious illness, personal or family emergencies. Approval for granting an incomplete will have to be confirmed with the director of graduate studies.

I expect that all the work you produce for this class will be your own. If you plagiarize any material from outside sources for your written work or presentations, it will result in a failure of the course and possible suspension / expulsion from UIC. There are no exceptions to this, and no second chances. For more information, please see: www.uic.edu/depts/pols/Plagiarism1.pdf and http://tigger.uic.edu/%7Eedelberg/crediting_others/index.htm

UIC Disability Resource Center

The UIC Disability Resource Center works to ensure access to classes and programs for students who have documented learning disabilities, vision or hearing impairment, or emotional or physical disabilities. If you have a disability that you believe may affect the work you are asked to accomplish in this course, please inform me. Together we will work with the staff at the center to identify mutually agreeable ways to resolve your concerns. For more information, please call 312-413-2183 (video phone 312-957-4822) or visit: http://www.uic.edu/depts/oa/disability_resources/index.html

Assignments The final grade for the course is based on the following (1000 total points):

- (a) Participation in class discussions and the weekly generation of one short question and/or comment about one of the required texts. Questions should be emailed to me at mpuetz@uic.edu / mpuetz@saic.edu and /or posted on the blackboard site by 10am Monday. (250 points)
- (b) One in-class presentation on an assigned reading and short (2-3 page) summary of key issues, including 2-3 questions to catalyze class discussion. (200 points)
- (c) A short (2-3 page) final project proposal, research outline, and in-class presentation (100 points)
- (d) A final 15-20 page (double-spaced) research paper (450 points)

Required Texts

Renato Poggioli *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968)

Peter Bürger *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

Juan Suárez *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, and Superstars: Avant-Garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960's Underground Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)

Course Reader (CR) available at the UPS Store, 910 West Van Buren Street

August 23

INTRODUCTION: AVANT-GARDE HISTORY AND THEORY

Screening: SIGNER'S SUITCASE: ON THE ROAD WITH ROMAN SIGNER (Peter Lietchti, 1996, 86min)

Recommended screening: Jesse McLean, Zummertapes at Roots and Culture Gallery (1034 N. Milwaukee), 8pm August 29th, 2010

August 30

EXPERIMENTATION IN / AND THE AVANT-GARDE

Reading: Clement Greenberg "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (RP); Matei Calinescu "The Idea of the Avant-Garde" from *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (RP); Hal Foster pp. 34-43 from *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Politics* (RP)

Screening: DER LAUF DER DINGE (Peter Fischli & David Weiss, 1987, 30min); CYCLES OF 3's AND 7's (excerpt, Tony Conrad, 1976, 3min); THE CHILDREN'S TAPES (excerpt, Terry Fox, 1974, 29min)

Recommended reading: David Antin "What it Means to be Avant-Garde"; Clement Greenberg "Towards a Newer Laocoon"; Friedrich Kittler *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*

September 6

LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

Recommended performance: Nicholas Bernier & Martin Messier: La Chambre des Machines, Chicago Cultural Center (78 E Washington), 7pm September 11, 2010

This performance is one of many fantastic (and free!) events happening at the Sónar Festival, held September 9-11, 2010

(<http://www.sonarchicago.com/en/>). The Sónar Festival is being held in conjunction with the Wire's AIMM (Adventures in Modern Music) festival, which is also highly recommended, and is taking place at various venues in Chicago (including the Empty Bottle) from September 8-12, 2010 (http://www.thewire.co.uk/articles/aimm_chicago/).

September 13

MODERNISM & THE HISTORICAL AVANT-GARDES: FUTURISM, DADA, SURREALISM

Reading: Andreas Huyssen "The Hidden Dialectic: Avantgarde – Technology – Mass Culture" (RP); Tristan Tzara "Dada Manifesto 1918" (RP); Hans Richter "Against Without For Dada" (RP); André Breton "Manifesto of Surrealism" (RP); Luigi Russolo "The Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto" (RP)

Listening: Tristan Tzara, Marcel Janco, Richard Hulsenbeck "L'amiral Cherche Une Maison à Louer" (1916), and others

Screening: LE RETOUR À LA RAISON (Man Ray, 1923, 3min.); BALLET MÉCANIQUE (Fernand Léger 1923-24, 16min.); EMMA BAKIA (Man Ray, 1928, 16min.); ANÉMIE CINÉMA (Marcel Duchamp, 1924-26, 7min.); LICHTSPIEL SCHWARZ-WEISS-GRAU (László Moholy Nagy, 1930, 5 min.); ROSE HOBART (Joseph Cornell, 1936, 19min.)

Recommended reading: Christopher Schiff "Banging on the Windowpane: Sound in Early Surrealism"; Balilla Pratella "Manifesto of Futurist Musicians"; Louis Aragon *Paris Peasant*; André Breton *Nadja*; Roger Shattuck *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France 1885 - WWI*

Recommended screenings: LA COQUILLE ET LE CLERGYMAN (Germaine Dulac, 1928, 28min.); Ben Russell's "The Artist's Talk as a Selection of Moving Images", MCA Theater (220 E. Chicago), 6pm September 14, 2010; Ben Russell's LET EACH ONE GO WHERE HE MAY at Cinema Borealis (1550 N. Milwaukee, 4th fl), 8pm September 19, 2010

September 20

STRUCTURALISM: SILENCE & NOISE

Reading: Renato Poggioli *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 1-77; John Cage "The Future of Music: Credo" & "Experimental Music" (RP); Douglas Kahn "Noises of the Avant-Garde" pp. 45-67 from *Noise Water Meat* (RP)

Listening: Steve Reich "It's Gonna Rain" (1965, 18min.); John Cage

Screening: PRIMARY STIMULUS (Robert Russett, 1977, 12min.); SOUNDTRACK (Barry Spinello, 1969, 10min.); EPISODIC GENERATION (Paul Sharits, 1978, 30min.); OUTER SPACE (Peter Tscherkassky, 1999, 10min.)

Recommended reading: Jacques Attali pp. 133-148 from *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*; Juan Suárez "Structural Film: Noise"; Jacques Attali "Noise and Politics"

September 27

DURATION, PERFORMANCE, AND THE BODY

Reading: Renato Poggioli *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 78-231

Screening: ISLAND SONG (Charlemagne Palestine, 1976, 17min.); CUT PIECE (Yoko Ono, 1965, 12min.); WALKING IN AN EXAGGERATED MANNED AROUND THE PERIMETER OF A SQUARE (Bruce Nauman, 1967-68, 10min.); VIOLIN FILM #1 (PLAYING THE VIOLIN AS FAST AS I CAN) (Bruce Nauman, 1967-68, 11min.); TILT (Rita Myers, 1973, 7min.); PAUSA! (Peter Kubelka, 1977, 12min.)

Recommended screening: ZIDANE: A 21st CENTURY PORTRAIT (Douglas Gordon & Philippe Parreno, 2006, 90min.)

Recommended event: Glitch conference, September 29-October 3, various venues (<http://gli.tc/h/>)

October 4

THE AMERICAN VERNACULAR, FOLK TRADITIONS, THE "MINOR"

Reading: Peter Bürger *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 3-82; Tom Gunning "Towards a Minor Cinema: Fonoroff, Herwitz, Ahwesh, Lapore, Klahr and Solomon" (RP)

Screening: FILM #12: HEAVEN AND EARTH MAGIC (Harry Smith, 1957-1962, 66min.); OUR LADY OF THE SPHERE (Larry Jordan, 1969, 10min.)

Recommended reading: Rani Singh "Harry Smith: An Ethnographic Modernist in America"; Annie Besant & C.W. Leadbeater *Thought Forms*; Wassily Kandinsky *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*

October 11

THE AVANT-GARDE & MASS CULTURE

Reading: Peter Bürger *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 83-99; Juan Suárez *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, and Superstars*, pp. 1-51

Screening: I, AN ACTRESS (George Kuchar, 1977, 9min.); KUSTOM KAR KOMMANDOS (Kenneth Anger, 1965, 3min.); SCORPIO RISING (Kenneth Anger, 1964, 28min.); BLOW JOB (Andy Warhol, 1963, 27min.)

Recommended reading: Jean-François Lyotard "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde"

October 18

THE QUEER UNDERGROUND

Reading: Juan Suárez *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, and Superstars*, pp. 52-140, 181-213

Screening: FLAMING CREATURES (Jack Smith, 1963, 43min.); BLONDE COBRA (Ken Jacobs, 1959-63, 30min.); ECLIPSE OF THE SUN VIRGIN (George Kuchar, 1967, 15min.)

Recommended reading: Douglas Crimp "Getting the Warhol We Deserve"; Douglas Crimp "Face Value"; Simon Watney "Queer Andy"

October 25

AVANT-GARDE NARRATIVES / EVERYDAY INTERVENTIONS

Reading: Hal Foster "What's New About the Neo-Avant-Garde" (RP); Hans Magnus Enzensberger "The Aporias of the Avant-Garde" from *Zig Zag: The Politics of Culture and Vice Versa* (RP); Rosalind Krauss, excerpt from "The Originality of the Avant-Garde" (RP)

Screening: CAT'S CRADLE (Stan Brakhage, 1959, 6min.); KILLER OF SHEEP (Charles Burnett, 1977, 80min.)

Recommended reading: Michel de Certeau "Walking in the City" from *The Practice of Everyday Life*; Fred Moten "The Sentimental Avant-Garde" from *In the Break: The Aesthetics of Black Radical Tradition*

Recommended screening: JEANNE DIELMAN, 23 QUAI DU COMMERCE, 1080 BRUXELLES (Chantal Akerman, 1975, 201min.); MYSTERIOUS OBJECT AT NOON (Apichatpong Weersethakul, 2000, 85min.)

November 1

AFRO-FUTURISM / SUN-RA

Reading: John Corbett pp. 7-24, 163-177, 308-317 from *Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein* (RP)

Screening: SPACE IS THE PLACE (John Coney, 1974, 85min.)

Recommended reading: Mark Dery "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delaney, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose"

November 8

THE AVANT-GARDE & THE ACADEMY / MARCEL BROODTHAERS

Guest lecturer: Bruce Jenkins

Reading: "An Interview with Marcel Broodthaers by the Film Journal 'Trépiéd'" (RP); Michael Zryd "The Academy and the Avant-Garde: A Relationship of Dependence and Resistance" (RP)

Recommended reading: Benjamin H. D. Buchloch "Marcel Broodthaers: Open Letters, Industrial Poems"; Noël Carroll "Avant-Garde Art and the Problem of Theory"

November 15

FEMINIST INTERVENTIONS / THE END OF THE AVANT-GARDE

Final project proposals due

Reading: Annette Michelson "Film and the Radical Aspiration" (RP); Fred Camper "The End of Avant-Garde Film" (RP); "Response to the Experimental Film Congress, Toronto 1989" (RP)

Screening: B/SIDE (Abigail Child, 1996, 40min.); SOFT FICTION (Chick Strand, 1979, 54min.); MAYHEM (Abigail Child, 1987, 16min.)

Recommended reading: "Roundtable: Obsolescence and American Avant-Garde Film"; Laura Mulvey "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"; Paul Arthur "The Last of the Last Machine? Avant-Garde Film Since 1966"; Robin Blaetz *Women's Experimental Cinema*; Lauren

Rabinovitz *Points of Resistance: Women, Power and Politics in the New York Avant-Garde, 1943-71*; Jean Petrolle and Virginia Wright Wexman *Women and Experimental Filmmaking*; Paul Mann *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde*; Cornelius Cardew *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*

Recommended screening: BORN IN FLAMES (Lizzie Borden, 1983, 80min.)

November 22

THE GLITCH, CRACKED MEDIA, THE DIGITAL AVANT-GARDE

Guest artist: Jon Satrom

Reading: Lev Manovich "Avant-Garde as Software" (RP); Steve F. Anderson "Aporias of the Digital Avant-Garde" (RP)

Recommended reading: Caleb Kelly *Cracked Media: The Sound of Malfunction*; Lev Manovich *The Language of New Media*; *The New Media Reader* (MIT Press)

November 29

FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

December 8

FINAL PAPERS DUE

No later than 4pm in my mailbox in the Art and Design Office, Jefferson Hall (929 West Harrison Street, room 106)

Recommended Resources

Conversations at the Edge: screening series held every Thursday at 6pm during the academic year at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State Street (<http://conversationsattheedge.org/>)

Eye and Ear Clinic, SAIC: <http://www.eyeandearclinic.net/>

UIC Film Club, <http://3290film.tumblr.com/>

Nightingale Theater: <http://nightingaletheatre.org/>

UbuWeb: <http://www.ubu.com/>

Continuo: <http://continuo.wordpress.com/>

Michelle Puetz
AD502: On the Avant-Garde
UIC, Fall 2010

Selected Bibliography, Historical Avant-Gardes: Futurism, Dada, Surrealism

Ades, Dawn, ed. *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*. London: Tate Publishing, 2006.

Apollonio, Umbro, ed. *Futurist Manifestos*. Boston: MFA Publications, 2001.

Aragon, Louis. *Paris Peasant*. Boston: Exact Change, 1994.

Caws, Mary Ann, ed. *Le manifeste et le caché : langages surréalistes et autres*. Paris: Lettres modernes, 1974. (in French)

Dickerman, Leah and Matthew Witkovsky, ed. *The Dada Seminars*. Washington: National Gallery of Art in association with D.A.P, 2005.

Foster, Stephen, ed. *Hans Richter: Activism, Modernism, and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998.

Hammond, Paul, ed. *The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2000.

Kirby, Michael. *Futurist Performance*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1971

Kuenzli, Rudolf. *Dada and Surrealist Film*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996.

Lawder, Standish D. *The Cubist Cinema*. New York: New York University, 1975.

Richter, Hans. *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1964.

Williams, Linda. *Figures of Desire: A Theory and Analysis of Surrealist Film*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Michelle Puetz
AD502: On the Avant-Garde
UIC, Fall 2010

Noise / Sound and the Avant-Garde Selected Bibliography

- Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.
- Battock, Gregory, ed. *Breaking the Sound Barrier: A Critical Anthology of the New Music*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1981.
- Beck Jay and Tony Grajeda, ed. *Lowering the Boom: Critical Studies in Film Sound*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.
- Cage, John. *Silence*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1939.
- Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.
- Cox, Cristoph and Daniel Warner, ed. *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. New York: Continuum Press, 2004.
- Dyson, Frances. *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.
- Goodman, Steve. *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.
- Hegarty, Paul. *Noise / Music: A History*. New York: Continuum Press, 2007.
- Kahn, Douglas. *Noise Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999.
- Kahn, Douglas and Gregory Whitehead, ed. *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.
- Kelly, Caleb. *Cracked Media: The Sound of Malfunction*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.
- Kim-Cohen, Seth. *In the Blink of an Eye: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art*. New York: Continuum Press, 2009.
- LaBelle, Brandon. *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*. New York: Continuum Press, 2006.

Licht, Alan. *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories*. New York: Rizzoli, 2007.

Nyman, Michael. *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Ragona, Melissa. "Hidden Noise: Strategies of Sound Montage in the Films of Hollis Frampton." *October* 109, Summer 2004, pp. 96-118.

Suárez, Juan A. "Structural Film: Noise." *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, ed. Karen Beckman and Jean Ma. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008: 62-89.

Young, Rob, ed. *Undercurrents: The Hidden Wiring of Modern Music*. London: Continuum Press, 2002.

Michelle Puetz
AD502: On the Avant-Garde
UIC, Fall 2010

New Media, Technology, & Software-As-Art Selected Bibliography

Some Recommended Readings:

Rosa Menkman:
Glitch Manifesto (attached / posted as .pdf)
<http://rosa-menkman.blogspot.com/>

Media Art Histories blog, lots of great references and readings:
<http://mediaarthistories.blogspot.com/>

Matthew Fuller "Behind the Blip: Software as Culture"
<http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0201/msg00025.html>

Florian Cramer and Matthew Fuller "Interface"
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/21180868/INTERFACE-Florian-Cramer-Matthew-Fuller-2008>

Kim Cascone "The Aesthetics of Failure"
<http://www.mediamatic.net/page/5901/en>

Saul Albert, various texts
<http://twentiethcentury.com/saul/index.htm>

Saul Albert "Artware"
<http://twentiethcentury.com/saul/artware.htm>

Top Lab "Read Me Paper"
http://toplap.org/index.php/Read_me_paper

Some Recommended Texts:

Richard Barbrook *Imaginary Futures: From Thinking Machines to the Global Village*

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin *Remediation: Understanding New Media*

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun & Thomas Keenan, ed. *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*

Richard Coyne *Technoromanticism: Digital Narrative, Holism, and the Romance of the Real*

Erik Davis *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic + Mysticism in the Age of Information*

Herbert Franke *Computer Graphics, Computer Art*

Matthew Fuller *Behind the Blip: Essays on the Culture of Software*

Charlie Gere *Art, Time and Technology*

Charlie Gere *Digital Culture*

Oliver Grau *MediaArtHistories*

Oliver Grau *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*

Rachel Greene *Internet Art*

Mark Hansen *New Philosophy for New Media*

Ken Jordan and Randall Packer *Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality*

Ruth Leavitt *Artist and Computer*

Peter Lunenfeld *Snap to Grid*

Lev Manovich *The Language of New Media*

Lev Manovich *Soft Cinema: Navigating the Database*

WJT Mitchell and Mark Hansen, ed. *Critical Terms for Media Studies*

Christiane Paul *Digital Art*

Jasia Reichardt *The Computer in Art*

Howard Rheingold *Tools for Thought* online: <http://rheingold.com/texts/tft/index.html>

Michael Rush *New Media in Late 20th Century Art*

R.L.Rutsky *High Techné: Art and Technology from the Machine Aesthetic to the Posthuman*

Neil Spiller *Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era*

Mark Tribe and Reena Jana *New Media Art*
<https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/MarkTribe/New+Media+Art>

Fred Turner *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*

Neil Spiller *Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era*

Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort, ed. *The New Media Reader* (MIT Press)

Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*

Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan *Second Person: Role-Playing and Story in Games and Playable Media*

Norbert Wiener *Cybernetics*

Stephen Wilson *Information Arts: Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology:*

Gene Youngblood *Expanded Cinema*

Siegfried Zielinski *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*

Siegfried Zielinski *Variantology: On Deep Time Relations of Arts, Sciences and Technologies*

Some Sites / Artists:

Rhizome

<http://rhizome.org>

Radical Software (Beryl Korot, Phyllis Gershuny, and Ira Schneider):

<http://radicalsoftware.org>

Jodi:

www.jodi.org

<http://www.wrongbrowser.com>

LoVid (will be performing in Chicago on Saturday December 4th at the Graham Foundation, presented by Lampo <http://lampo.org/current/>):

<http://www.lovid.org/>

Rosa Menkman:

<http://rosa-menkman.blogspot.com/>

Cathy Davies / Dollar Hack:

<http://cathydavies.com/dollarhack.html>

Matej Smetana / Self-Erasing Program:

<http://self.execute.sweb.cz/index.html>

Peter Luining / ZNC browser:

<http://znc.ctrlaltdel.org/>

<http://www.ctrlaltdel.org/>

I/O/D 4 WebStalker

<http://bak.spc.org/iod/>

Alexei Shulgin / Form Art:

<http://www.c3.hu/collection/form/>

Soundhack:

<http://soundhack.com/>

hundreds of amazing sites and artists!

<http://criticalartware.net/winners/>