

# Objects, Agents, and Audiences: Sculpture and its Expansions in the United States from the 1950s to 1990s

JFKI 32101

BA seminar

Winter Semester 2020-2021

Wednesdays 10.15am-12.00pm

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Rosemarie Castoro in her *Two-Play Tunnel* (1974)

## Course description

The second half of the twentieth century saw a fundamental reorganization of the medium of sculpture, and this course will chart its major developments. From the 1950s onward, sculptors in the United States became preoccupied with their work's relationship to everyday objects, industrial products, mass consumer goods, and the human body. Sculptural representation was left behind as abstraction, assemblage, objecthood, and dematerialization took hold, and we will examine sculptors' restless attempts at greater degrees of relation to everyday things, institutional contexts, and human bodies. Artists were energized by how sculpture could expansively incorporate architecture, performance, and the lived body; but they also prophesied its disintegration and obsolescence. Pushed to its limits, sculpture came to occupy a central role in American art theory, and it became an analogy for debates about gender, power, history, and commodification. This course will examine the ways in which these contestations of the sculptural object registered important cultural and intellectual shifts in American art and culture across these decades.

## Assignments and credit

*Note: Students requiring accommodations for class discussions or assignments should be in touch with the professor at the start of term.*

**READINGS:** Assignment #1 (active participation + full credit students)

Readings are listed under the day that they will be discussed. Students are expected to come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Each 90-minute course session will be focused primarily

on our examination of the assigned texts. **All readings should be completed thoroughly before submitting your discussion prompt on Tuesday at noon.**

**PARTICIPATION: Assignment #2 (active participation + full credit students)**

Students are expected to attend all sessions, and they must **participate in course discussion** in at least six different sessions (hopefully more).

**Before class, students should read the compilation of discussion questions on Blackboard that were due on Tuesday at 12pm.**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS : Assignment #3 (active participation + full credit students)**

*For each class*, students should post on Blackboard one **discussion question** of 1-2 sentences. You should raise issues that can be the topic of conversation. (Questions that are merely factual are unacceptable.). Discussion questions must be submitted each **Tuesday at 12.00pm CET at the latest**. Discussion questions are not required for the introduction, museum day, or alternate lecture day.

*To receive active participation or full credit, **all eleven** discussion prompts must be submitted by the last day of class (24 February 2021). **A minimum of six** must be submitted on time (**Tuesdays at 12pm CET**).*

**ARTICLE REPORT: Assignment #4 (active participation + full credit students)**

There are optional readings listed as “further research” under each session. All are posted on Blackboard in a folder for each session. These readings extend the topic for each seminar, and they are intended for your exploration into new topics. Many are recently published and represent current debates and new directions in U.S. sculpture history. Those writing research papers may find these texts especially useful.

All students (both active participation and full credit students) must choose **one text and write a 1-2 page** (250-500 word) summary of it, due **12 February 2021 at 5pm**. In our final discussion on 17 February, you may be asked to discuss the reading you chose in relation to our conversation.

**RESEARCH PAPER: Assignment #5 (full credit students)**

A research essay on a topic directly related to the course is required. Papers should be 3000-5000 words and illustrated. An abstract (250 words) and bibliography is required by **24 February 2021**, and final papers are due **31 March 2021**. Papers should be standard, double-spaced typed pages. *Word counts listed above are exclusive of bibliography, captions, and endnotes*. Final bibliographies must contain **at least 15 items** from valid sources. Acceptable sources are books, exhibition catalogues, and articles from scholarly journals only. Websites, blogs, or encyclopedias (online or otherwise) are not acceptable sources (though they may be objects of interpretation).

## Course calendar

A 4 November 2020

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### Introduction: How to look at sculpture

#### Required reading

- Getsy, David J. "Sculpture Since 1960." In *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, second edition, ed., Michael Kelly. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 529-34.

B 11 November 2020

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### The Status of the Figure After World War II

#### Required reading

- Lyford, Amy. "Noguchi, Sculptural Abstraction, and the Politics of Japanese American Internment." *Art Bulletin* 85.1 (March 2003): 137-51.
- Gibson, Ann. "Louise Bourgeois's Retroactive Politics of Gender." *Art Journal* 53.4 (Winter 1994): 44-47.

#### Further research

Wisotzki, Paula. "Strategic Shifts: David Smith's China Medal Commission," *Oxford Art Journal* 17.2 (1994): 63-77.  
Jones, Kellie. "Swimming with E.C." In *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965-85: New Perspectives*, exh. cat., ed. Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley. Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 2017. 49-70.

C 18 November 2020

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### Sculptural Forms of the Cold War in the 1950s

#### Required reading

- Slifkin, Robert. "Sculpture and the Weapon." In *The New Monuments and the End of Man: U.S. Sculpture Between War and Peace, 1945-1975*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. 67-115.

#### Further research

Vartikar, Jason. "Ruth Asawa's Early Wire Sculpture and a Biology of Equality." *American Art* 34.1 (Spring 2020): 2-19.  
Polcari, Stephen. "Barnett Newman's Broken Obelisk." *Art Journal* 53.4 (Winter 1994): 48-55.  
Taylor, Alex J. "Unstable Motives: Propaganda, Politics, and the Late Work of Alexander Calder." *American Art* 26.1 (2012): 3-25.  
Burstow, Robert. "The Limits of Modernist Art as a 'Weapon of the Cold War': Reassessing the Unknown Patron of the Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner." *Oxford Art Journal* 20.1 (1997): 68-80.

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### Assemblage and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s

#### Required reading:

- Kee, Joan. "Corroborators in Arms: The Early Works of Melvin Edwards and Ron Miyashiro." *Oxford Art Journal* 43.1 (2020): 49-74.

- Smith, Richard Cándida. "Learning from Watts Towers: Assemblage and Community-Based Art in California," *Oral History* 37.2 (Autumn 2009): 51-58.
- Noah Purifoy and Judson Powell, *66 Signs in Neon*, 1966. Online at <http://www.noahpurifoy.com/s/Junk-Art-2266-Signs-of-Neon22-catalog.pdf>

Further research

- Wofford, Tobias. "Reconsidering Black Internationalism." In *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades*, exh. cat., ed. Catherine Craft. Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Center, 2015. 60-71.
- Siegel, Harmon. "Melvin Edwards Decides." *American Art* 34.1 (Spring 2020): 86-111.
- Weaver, A.M. "Reflections on John Outterbridge," *Nka* 35 (2014): 32-41.
- Kelly, Patricia. "When Push Comes to Shove: Barnett Newman, Abstraction, and the Politics of 1968." *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* 1.1 (2008): 27-47. Note: image of Barnett Newman, *Lace Curtain for Mayor Daley*, 1968, is at <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/90579/lace-curtain-for-mayor-daley>
- Getsy, David J. "Preposterous Parts: Nancy Grossman's Relief Assemblages, 1965-67." In *Nancy Grossman: Tough Life Diary*, exh. cat., ed. Ian Berry. Munich: Prestel Verlag/Delmonico and Saratoga Springs: Tang Museum at Skidmore College, 2012. 52-65.
- Hatch, Kevin. "'It Has To Do With Theater': Bruce Conner's Ratbastards." *October* 127 (Winter 2009): 109-32.
- Bryan-Wilson, Julia. "Keeping House with Louise Nevelson." *Oxford Art Journal* 40.1 (2017): 109-31.
- Katz, Jonathan D. "'Committing the Perfect Crime': Sexuality, Assemblage, and the Postmodern Turn in American Art." *Art Journal* 67.1 (Spring 2008): 38-53.

E 2 December 2020

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## Pop Sculpture: Commodities and Commentary

*Required reading:*

- Applin, Jo. "Gross Anthropomorphism: Claes Oldenburg." In *Eccentric Objects: Rethinking Sculpture in 1960s America*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012. 42-61.
- Shapiro, David. "Sculpture As Experience: The Monument That Suffered." *Art in America* (May/June 1974): 55-58.

Further research

- Rose, Julian. "Objects in the Cluttered Field: Claes Oldenburg's Proposed Monuments." *October* 140 (Spring 2012): 113-38.
- Williams, Tom. "Lipstick Ascending: Claes Oldenburg in New Haven in 1969." *Grey Room* 31 (Spring 2008): 116-44.
- Whiting, Cécile. "Figuring Marisol's Femininities," *RACAR: revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 18.1/2 (1991): 73-90.
- Middleman, Rachel. "Pop Perversions: Marjorie Strider." In *Radical Eroticism: Women, Art, and Sex in the 1960s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018. 89-115.
- McCarthy, David. "Of *Plush* and *Imitation Knotty Pine*: H.C. Westermann and American Sculpture of the 1960s." *American Art* 33.3 (2019): 33-55.
- Potts, Alex. "Tactility: The Interrogation of Medium in Art of the 1960s." *Art History* 27.2 (April 2004): 282-304.

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## Minimalism and the Body Politic

*Required reading*

- Chave, Anna C. "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power." *Arts Magazine* 64, no. 5 (1990): 44-63.
- Ketchum, Christopher. "Tony Smith, Bryant Park, and Body Politics in John Lindsay's New York." *Public Art Dialogue* 7.2 (2017): 138-59.

Further research

- Lovatt, Anna. "On Ruth Vollmer and Minimalism's Marginalia." *Art History* 33.1 (February 2010): 150-69.
- Fraser, Andrea. "Why Does Fred Sandback's Work Make Me Cry?" *Grey Room* 22 (Winter 2006): 30-47.
- Getsy, David J. "Dan Flavin's Dedications." In *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015. 209-65.

**G** 16 December 2020

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## Postminimalism, Gender, and Difference

*Required reading:*

- Chave, Anna C. "Sculpture, Gender, and the Value of Labor." *American Art* 24.1 (2010): 26-30.
- Chadwick, Whitney. "Balancing Acts: Reflections on Postminimalism and Gender in the 1970s." In *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the '70s*, exh. cat., ed. Susan L. Stoops. Waltham, Massachusetts: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, 1996. 14-25.

Further research

- Wagner, Anne. "Another Hesse." *October* 69 (Summer 1994): 49-84.
- Poe, Alison C. and Aliza Edelman, "Eva Hesse's *Laocoon*: Mitigated Antiquity and Specters in Space." *Woman's Art Journal* 41.1 (Spring/Summer 2020): 11-19
- Obler, Bibiana K. "Lynda Benglis Recrafts Abstract Expressionism." *American Art* 32.1 (Spring 2018): 2-23.
- Getsy, David J. "The Primacy of Sensibility: Scott Burton Writing on Art and Performance." In *Scott Burton: Collected Writings on Art and Performance, 1965-1975*, ed. D. Getsy. Chicago: SoberSCOPE, 2012. 1-32.
- Richmond, Susan. "The Sentimentality of Ree Morton's *Signs of Love*." *American Art* (Fall 2016): 92-111
- Sneed, Gillian. "'Pleasures and Possible Celebrations': Rosemary Mayer's Temporary Monuments, 1977-1982." In *Temporary Monuments: Work by Rosemary Mayer, 1977-1982*, ed. Marie Warsh and Max Warsh. Chicago: SoberSCOPE Press, 2018. 5-33.

**H** 6 January 2021

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## MUSEUM OR READING DAY – DETAILS TO BE ANNOUNCED

**I** 13 January 2021

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## Taking (Up) Space: Land Art and Installation

*Required reading:*

- Causey, Andrew. "Public Spaces." In *Sculpture Since 1945*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. 195-227.
- Lippard, Lucy. "Rosemarie Castoro: Working Out," *Artforum* 13.10 (Summer 1975): 60-62.

Further research

- Hamill, Sarah. "'The Skin of the Earth': Mary Miss's *Untitled* 1973/75 and the Politics of Precarity." *Oxford Art Journal* 41.2 (2018): 271-91.
- Potts, Alex. "Installation and Sculpture." *Oxford Art Journal* 24.2 (2001): 5-24.
- Fredrickson, Laurel. "Trap: Kate Millett, Japan, Fluxus and Feminism." *Women & Performance* 19.3 (2009): 337-67.

**J** 20 January 2021

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## Actions: Performance as Sculpture

### Required reading

- McMillan, Uri. "Sand, Nylon, and Dirt: Senga Nengudi and Maren Hassinger in Southern California." In *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965–85: New Perspectives*, exh. cat., ed. Catherine Morris and Rujeko Hockley. Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 2017. 97-118.
- Aranke, Sampada. "Voiding from Nowhere: Object Materiality in David Hammons's *Pissed Off*." *ASAP/Journal* 5.2 (May 2020): 245-48.
- Frazer Ward, "Gray Zone: Watching *Shoot*," *October* 95: Winter 2001: 115-30. RE: Chris Burden

### Further research

Jones, Kellie. "In Motion: The Performative Impulse." In *South of Pico: African American Artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017.

Schriber, Abbe. "'Those Who Know Don't Tell': David Hammons c. 1981." *Women & Performance* 29.1 (2019): 41-61.

Jones, Amelia. "Space, Body, and the Self in the Work of Bruce Nauman." In *The 'Do-It-Yourself' Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media*, ed. Anna Dezeuze. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. 145-64.

K 27 January 2021

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## Sculpture and Historical Revision in the 1970s

### Required reading

- Jones, Kellie. "Hoodoo You Love: Betye Saar." In *South of Pico: African American Artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017. 167-95.
- consult the website for Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art [https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner\\_party/home](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/home)
- Jones, Amelia. "The 'Sexual Politics' of *The Dinner Party*: A Critical Context." In *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, exh. cat., ed. Amelia Jones. Los Angeles: Hammer Museum of Art and University of California Press, 1996. 84-109.

### Further reference

Gerhard, Jane. "Judy Chicago and the Practice of 1970s Feminism." *Feminist Studies* 37.3 (Fall 2011): 591-626

### TONIGHT: ADDITIONAL COURSE LECTURE (OPTIONAL)

David J. Getsy, "**Viral Sites: Scott Burton's Sculpture, Undetectability, and Public Art in the First Decade of the AIDS Crisis**"

27 January 2021, 18.00–20.00hr (CET), online via WebEx, open to public

[https://www.ifki.fu-berlin.de/en/faculty/history/dates/RVL-WiSe20\\_Getsy.html](https://www.ifki.fu-berlin.de/en/faculty/history/dates/RVL-WiSe20_Getsy.html)

In JFKI lecture series: "Disaster and Disease in North America"

L 3 February 2021

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## Sculpture and the AIDS crisis

### Required reading

- Liebman, Lisa. "The Case of Robert Gober." *Parkett* 21 (1989): 6-9.
- Getsy, David J. "Scott Burton, *Two-Part Chair*, 1986." In *Art after Stonewall 1969–1989*, exh. cat., ed. Jonathan Weinberg, et al. Columbus: Columbus Museum of Art, 2019. 132-33.

- Chambers-Letson, Joshua Takano. "Contracting Justice: The Viral Strategy of Felix Gonzalez-Torres." *Criticism* 51, no. 4 (2009): 559-87.

Further research

Baker, George. "The Other Side of the Wall." *October* 120 (Spring 2007): 106-37. Re: Tom Burr's *Deep Purple*.

M 10 February 2021

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## **Abstract Publics?**

*Required reading*

- Kelly, Michael. "Public Art Controversy: The Serra and Lin Cases." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54.1 (Winter 1996): 15-22.
- Ater, Renée. "Slavery and Its Memory in Public Monuments." *American Art* 24.1 (Spring 2010): 20-23.
- Savage, Kirk. "The Obsolescence of Sculpture." *American Art* 24.1 (Spring 2010): 9-14.

Further research

Kester, Grant. "Crowds and Connoisseurs: Art and the Public Sphere in America." In *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, ed. Amelia Jones. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. 259-68.

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## **Concluding discussion: The current monument controversies in the U.S.**

*readings TBA*

O 24 February 2021

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## **INDEPENDENT STUDY PERIOD**