

## XAA: Extreme Arts Administration

Instructor: Gregory Sholette

Church and state, individual industrialists, intellectuals, professional not-for-profits, as well as even the United States congress have each sought to manage artistic output at different times, for different ends. Yet if art and management share a long history, it is a far from happy one. As far back as Plato's Republic we find a desire to prohibit undesirable forms of artistic practice in favor of other, more obedient types of expression and Theodore Adorno argued in 1978 that, 'The aversion toward the words culture and administration — an aversion by no means freed of barbarism and over-shadowed by the urge to release the safety catch on a revolver—must not conceal that a certain truth is involved in it.' Since that time the administration of art and the art of administration have become so entwined that historian Dr. Chin Tao-wu describes this mutual attraction as an entirely new hybrid she calls 'enterprise culture.' The aim of this class is to investigate these charges and counter-charges, fears and expectations while examining some new (as well as some old if overlooked), forms of alternative organization, including art cooperatives, collectives, and various micro-institutions that insist on resisting the instrumentalization of creativity while claiming to practice a critical autonomy from mainstream culture. We will ground our critique in historical and sociological analysis with a strong materialist bent.

### Some Initial Research Questions (to be added to by the class):

- Why must creativity be administered, and how is this attempted?
- Are there foundational myths of arts management and if so, how do we read them?
- Do "alternative" art spaces mimic the normative administrative structures of larger institutions?
- Can culture be a form of capital and what are the implications of this metaphor?
- Will new media technology change curating and arts administration or visa versa?
- What is driving the juridical juggernaut over intellectual property rights today?
- How does one administrate the anecdotal nature of much contemporary art?
- Is organizational autonomy possible within the social horizon of today's global world?
- Are there links between shadow economies and creativity challenging management?
- If the gift is expenditure without the anticipation of recuperation, then what sort of arts organization is a gift, and how would it/could it work in today's art world?
- What sort of organizational structure would be based on love, friendship, empathy, camaraderie?

## **XAA Syllabus**

### **I Deconstructing Arts Administration**

#### **Week One**

Reading for week one: *Book X* of Plato's Republic.

Introductions: to the class and to each other.

Defining expectations: as well as interests of the class and instructor.

Discussion: Incipient Arts Administration: Fear & Loathing in Plato's Republic

#### **Week Two**

Readings: Walter Benjamin: *The Author as Producer*; RTmark: *Notes on Strategic Embarrassment*; Theodore Adorno: *Free Time and Resignation & Commitment*.

Discussion: Pessimism or activism: false choices?

Presentation: 80's activist collectives, NYC: outsider strategies: PAD/D, Carnival Knowledge, early Group Material.

### **Week Three**

Readings: Theodore Adorno: *Culture Industry Reconsidered & Culture and Administration*; Derrick Chong: Intro to Arts Management.

Discussion: Culture Industry: Measuring, Managing and Resistance?

Presentation: Case Study: From Alternative to Mainstream at the New Museum, NYC.

### **Week Four**

Readings: Sholette: *Fidelity, Betrayal, Autonomy...*, and

*Disciplining the Avant-Garde: The United States Vs the Critical Art Ensemble*.

### **Week Five**

Readings: Sholette, *REPOhistory: Anatomy of an Urban Art Project & Counting On Your Collective Silence...*; Critical Art Ensemble, *Observations on Collective Cultural Action*.

Assignment: Relate to the class one collective experience that impressed you: positively or otherwise.

Discussion: Collectivism: the travails of working collaboratively.

Screening: Mystery Men, excerpts from the dvd.

### **Week Six**

Readings: Hans Haacke: *Working Conditions*, & Chong: Chapters 3 & 4.

Discussion: Institutional Critique: Still a Challenge to the Culture Industry?

Presentation: Haacke, Fraser, Wilson, Dion & Hirshhorn.

### **Week Seven**

Readings: D. Chong: chapters 6 & 7 & Adorno: *The Schema of Mass Culture*.

Assignment: clip a news article about arts marketing and be prepared to discuss it in class.

Discussion: market this - *Or not!*

Does anything, can anything escape the relentless drive of what Tom Franks calls, the *Anti-Orthodox, Orthodoxy* of capitalist markets?

### **Week Eight**

Readings: Guy Debord: *Situationist International*, <http://www2.cddc.vt.edu/situationist/si/theory.html> selections, & artist Alex Villar's website. [http://www.de-tour.org/betweenplaces/qt\\_video.html](http://www.de-tour.org/betweenplaces/qt_video.html)

Assignment: Each of you will take the class to an "in between" space of your own discovery and describe to us an "in between" administrative structure you could imagine within this space.

### **Week Nine**

Readings: Jacques Derrida: *Signature Sign Event & Creative Commons* website:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Discussion: Managing Simulacra: from Plato to Fan Cuts and the problem of copyright

Screening: Craig Baldwin: *Specters of the Spectrum*.

### **Week Ten**

Open discussion session: students bring material related to our topic for critique and debate.

### **Week Eleven**

Readings: Roger Callous, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*.

Discussion: Responding to Administrative Spaces.

Presentation: Working around the Institutional Gaze: Peterman, CAE

### **Week Twelve**

Readings: Brian Holmes: *The Flexible Personality — For a New Cultural Critique*; Matthew Jesse Jackson, *Managing the avant-garde*, New Left Review, 32, March – April, 2005.

Discussion: Radical culture now: is it stealing the state or stealing corporate power?

### **Week Thirteen**

Conclusions: we wrap up the course by re-capping our findings and self-evaluating ourselves

### **Week Fourteen & Fifteen**

Final student presentations