



Faculty of Fine & Performing Arts

KONB86, Criticism, Essayism and Artist's Writings, 6 credits

Kritik, essäistik och Artist's Writings, 6 högskolepoäng

First Cycle / Grundnivå

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by Department Board of Malmö Art Academy on 2020-09-09 to be valid from 2020-09-09, autumn semester 2020.

General Information

Theoretical course, Lund University, Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, Malmö Art Academy.

Optional course for the BFA programme (KGFKO).

Language of instruction: Swedish and English

Main field of studies

Fine Arts

Depth of study relative to the degree requirements

GXX, First cycle, in-depth level of the course cannot be classified

Learning outcomes

The aim is to provide the students with deepened knowledge and insight in both the artistic field which their work will be a part of and the history of how that field has developed.

To integrate analytical knowledge into their own artistic work, both in the spoken and the written language, will be given special attention.

The course aim is to enhance the students' ability to formulate and show a well-motivated artistic wholeness.

The goal is that the students shall develop a deepened understanding of artistic work.

Course content

The course aims to introduce three forms of critical writing. Art and cultural criticism, essayism and artists' writings. Theoretical seminars, presenting the different writing traditions' genealogies, are combined with short writing exercises. The course also investigates the relationship the writing exercises have to critical theory.

The course includes presentations of texts by artists, critics and philosophers, including Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, Gayatri C. Spivak, Lucy Lippard, Allan Sekula and Maria Fusco.

Background:

Jürgen Habermas said in his classic *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) that cultural criticism, as we know it today, originated in large parts of Europe in a bourgeois public sphere at the end of the 18th century and 19th century. In a new bourgeois environment, in new public spaces – such as cafes and the daily press – in European cities, art and culture had started to be discussed and critiqued. The autonomous artist, the genius, also needed to be legitimised by a profession: a public opinion maker, a critic.

Habermas was himself part of the so-called Frankfurt School, the Institute for Social Research, which was founded in the 1930s and, at the time most famously represented by Adorno and Horkheimer. Those linked to the school presented an approach that, through Marxism, psychology and social studies, criticised not only policies and modes of production, but also cultural expressions, which they said created ideas and conceptions of normality and ideology. Since the 1930s, critical theory has developed through and impacted on, for example, gender analysis and decolonisation theory.

In addition to cultural criticism, the essay was a form of writing commented on by the representatives of the Frankfurt School. Adorno said the essay itself was in constant conflict between form and content. Bound to its subject, but also to the need for a form of individual observation, an aesthetic approach. A circumstance that ties the essay to the particular rather than to the universal. Or, in the words of a later exponent of the essay, Robert Musil: the essay presents probabilities rather than truths.

During the latter half of the 20th century, the presence of text in art and by artists increased. Conceptual artists such as Sol LeWitt opposed themselves to the rules of the Enlightenment in which the artist should only be interpreted and understood through their mouthpiece, the critic. According to LeWitt, art should approach pure information, requiring no interpretation. LeWitt's practice is an example of how text occurs in art; however, he was himself also an example of an artist who began to talk about and not just through art. However, the artists' writings genre includes not only forms of writing that are one or the other. A strength of the texts written in art today is that they are able to transcend genre divisions. Allan Sekula does this, for example, in his epic *Fish Story* (1989-95). A report on the global maritime shipping industry. Sekula uses the ability of photography to portray real events, while also reflecting on the role of representation in the transformation of the world's oceans into an abstract natural resource that has 'disappeared' from the collective consciousness.

In addition to learning about the three aforementioned writing traditions through practical exercises in the course, we will also look at how artists' writings can be compared to criticism and essayism, and at the critical potential that lies in the genre if it were to be examined with the help of critical theory.

Course design

The educational form will be with workshops and seminars with discussions under the supervision of the teacher responsible.

Assessment

For the grade pass the student needs to be at least 80% present at lectures and seminars and receive the grade pass on tasks, if any.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

Subcourses that are part of this course can be found in an appendix at the end of this document.

Grades

Marking scale: Fail, Pass.

Entry requirements

General requirements for university studies in Sweden

Subcourses in KONB86, Criticism, Essayism and Artist's Writings

Applies from H20

2001 Criticism, Essayism and Artist's Writings, 6,0 hp
Grading scale: Fail, Pass