CULS5330 A: Special Topics in Cultural Management: Digital Curation & Aesthetics
Department of Cultural and Religious Studies
Chinese University of Hong Kong
Dr. Ashley Lee Wong
Thursday 2:30pm-5:15pm, Venue: WMY404

Course Description:

This course traces historical and contemporary perspectives of media art and technology through practices of exhibition-making and digital curation with a focus on internet art. Students will gain broader insight into the ways in which artistic practices have evolved with technology and methods for curating works of art in diverse media. The course will look at developments of video and media arts and its relationship to conceptual and performance art, and movements within media art from hacktivism, open source ethics, net.art and post-internet art. Through a brief survey of media art history, we will discuss some of the social, political and cultural practices that have shaped the development of art and technology globally. We will then look at developments of arts technology in Hong Kong and recent developments of NFTs and AI art in relation to the creative industries and ideologies of innovation. By the end of the course, we address key issues in relation to technology, culture and ecology in the context of East Asia. Classes will be spent discussing key texts in media art history and theory, studying key exhibitions (both historical and contemporary), and analysing artworks and artistic practices. The course will include field trips and guest speakers, where possible.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs):

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
1. Reflect upon key concepts and issues related to media art and technology, aesthetics, digital curation and its place with in art historical discourse;
2. Analyse and evaluate exhibitions and artworks employing various kinds of technologies and their conceptual underpinnings and methods of presentation;
3. Engage in debates on topics related to art and technology by applying knowledge from reliable sources and personal experiences, both orally and in writing;
4. Reflect on how the internet and advanced technologies have transformed curation and artistic practices.
5. Develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between humans and machines, and post-humanist perspectives of technology to contrast current ideologies of innovation.

Assessment:

Assignments	Percentage	Description
Attendance and participation	10%	Attendance and in-class participation (individual) including participating in weekly reading summaries.
Assignment 1	20%	Study journal (individual) - a weekly journal entry of reflections from class and readings and short sharings on artworks.
Assignment 2	30%	Group presentation (group) – a study of a key

		exhibition, its conceptual theme, artworks and presentation methods/curatorial strategies.
Assignment 3	40%	Paper 2,500-word essay (individual) on a case study or on a topic related to digital curation and aesthetics **OR** exhibition proposal including artist/artwork selection, curatorial statement, exhibition plan (online and/or offline), and public programme plan.

Course Syllabus and Schedule: (Tentative)
* Readings listed below are for reference only. Specific articles and pages for readings will be assigned in class each week. Selected students will be asked to provide summaries, questions and reflections on the readings. The course contents and schedule are provisional and are subject to change according to field trip and guest speaker planning.

Week 1 (7 Sept): Intro to Digital Curation and Aesthetics
This class will introduce the course through a discussion on the history of technology and reproducible media to the advent of digital technologies. We will discuss various categories of art and technology from generative art, software art, computer graphics and animation, interactive art, sound art/experimental music, video art, internet art, game art, and bioart. We will differentiate artistic practices which follow ideologies of innovation and spectacle versus practices grounded in collaboration and experimentation.

Week 2 (14 Sept): From Mechanical to Digital Reproduction
This week we will review a foundational text by Walter Benjamin and analyse its relevance to today's digital art and culture.

Reading:
Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version)." Translated by Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland and et al. In The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y. Levin, 19-55. London, UK: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich, and Michael, Marrinan. *Mapping Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Digital Age*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Week 3 (21 Sept): Networked Cultures and Online Communities
This class will explore early net.art cultures and practices of community-building, self-organising and collaborating. We will focus on aspects of software art, open source ethics, hacktivism in media art practices in the 90s. Students will have the chance to study and analyse artworks from online archives of born-digital and web-based artworks.

Rhizome Artbase: https://artbase.rhizome.org/wiki/Main_Page
Whitney Artport: https://whitney.org/artport
Rhizome Net Art Anthology: https://www.openhistoryarchive.com/net-art-anthology

HKADC Arts Go Digital: https://www.artsgodigital.hk/about/?lang=en

Reading:
Greene, Rachel. *Internet Art*, Thomas & Hudson Inc. 2005.

Munster, Anna. *An Aesthesia of Networks: Conjunctive Experience in Art and Technology*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2013.

Week 4 (28 Sept): Media Specificity and The Post-Medium Condition
This class will explore media art's relationship with conceptual and performance art and the shift away from art's definition by its media in contemporary art. This class will provide a brief survey of developments of art and technology and its role and relationship to contemporary art and creative industries/mass media. These areas present cultural divides that allow art and technology to exist across diverse spaces.

Reading:
Krauss, Rosalind E., and Marcel. Broodthaers. *A Voyage on the North Sea : Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000.

Weibel, Peter. "The Post-Media Condition." Mute, March 19, 2012.
http://www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/post-media-condition.

Bishop, Claire. "Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media." Artforum, 2012.
https://www.artforum.com/print/201207/digital-divide-contemporary-art-and-new-media-31944.

Week 5 (5 Oct): Post-Digital Aesthetics
This class will discuss the post-digital and the influence of digital technologies on aesthetics and visual culture. We will look at how the internet has shaped artistic practice transcending both physical and digital spaces and its implications for curatorial practice.

Readings:
Cramer, Florian. "What Is 'Post-Digital'?" In *Postdigital Aesthetics: Art, Computation And Design*. Berry, D, and M Dieter ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015.

Vierkant, Artie. "The Image Object Post-Internet." 2010.

Week 6 (12 Oct): Curating Immateriality / Online Curation
This class will look at online curation and challenges and specificities of presenting and exhibiting works online.

Guest Speaker (TBC):

Reading:
Krysa, Joasia. "Curating Immateriality". *DATA Browser 03*. Autonomedia, 2006.

Dekker, Annet. *Curating Digital Art. From Presenting and Collecting Digital Art to Networked Co-curation*, Amsterdam, Valiz Publishers, 2020.

Richter, Dorothee and Paul Stewart, eds. "Curating the Digital: Curating and Art Practice: Contemporary Considerations on Automation, Place, and Digital Communication", *On Curating*, Issue 45, April 2020.

Week 7 (19 Oct): NFTs and The Digital Art Market
What challenges has digital art posed for its monetisation in the art market in the past? How has NFTs enabled the sale of infinitely reproducible digital objects? What happens to the aura and uniqueness of the art object?

Reading:
McAndrew, Clare. ""Art and NFTs in 2021"". Art Market 2022. Art Basel & UBS Report. pp. 40-59

O'Dwyer, Rachel. "Does Digital Culture Want to be Free? How Blockchains are Transforming the Economy of Cultural Goods." 2017. In: *Artists Re-thinking the Blockchain*. Ruth Catlow, Marc Garrett, Nathan Jones & Sam Skinner (eds). Torque Editions. pp. 297-308.

Shanken, Edward. 2013. "The $34.2 Million Question: Writing Histories or Staging Alternative Histories." In: *Speculative Scenarios: or what will happen to digital art in the (near) future?*. Dekker, Annet (ed). Baltan Laboratories. pp. 36-44.

Field Trip (TBC): Digital Art Fair, 19-23 Oct, K11 Musea

Week 8 (26 Oct): Group Presentations

Week 9 (2 Nov): Cybernetics and Systems Aesthetics
Cybernetics as a cross-disciplinary field has influenced artistic practice with technology that challenged traditional conceptions of art and the artist in society. How has systems theory and cybernetics influenced artistic practices with technology in conceptual and contemporary arts?

Reading:
Gronlund, Melissa. "Cybernetics and the posthuman: The emergence of art systems." In *Contemporary Art and Digital Culture*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017.

Burnham, Jack. "Systems Esthetics." ArtForum, 1968, 30-35.
https://www.artforum.com/print/196807/systems-esthetics-32466.

Week 10 (9 Nov): Art & AI
Recent trends in art include a fascination with AI technologies and worries of AI replacing the human. However, how these technologies function is often equated with human creativity. There is a need for further discussion on what characterises creativity and to navigate the differences between human and machine. To better understand technology, is not to create dichotomies and oversimplifications of the possibilities and challenges of technologies, but

rather understand how humans are inherently technological beings and how we may evolve as a society with machines.

Guest Speaker (TBC)

Reading:
Longo, Anna. "Computational Creativity or Automated Information Production?" Balkan journal of philosophy 15, no. 1 (2023): 13–22.

Hui, Yuk. "ChatGPT, or the Eschatology of Machines". *e-flux journal*, Issue 137, 2023.
https://www.e-flux.com/journal/137/544816/chatgpt-or-the-eschatology-of-machines/

Week 11 (16 Nov): Post-Humanism and the Ecological Turn
This class will look at intersections of art and science through bioart practices, and an interest by artists to address issues of ecology in the Anthropocene. We will open perspectives on artistic practices and community engagement and contrast this perspective with practices which celebrate technological innovation with efforts to challenge boundaries between the biological and artificial.

Readings:
Kac, Eduardo. *Signs of Life: Bio Art and Beyond.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007.

Hui, Yuk. "Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics". *e-flux journal*, Issue 86, 2017.
https://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/161887/cosmotechnics-as-cosmopolitics/

Constantin, Patrizia and El Baroni, Bassam eds. *The Helsinki Biennial, Art Mediation Forum 2023: An Anthology*. Helsinki Art Museum, 2023.

Week 12 (23 Nov): Digital Performance
This class will look at digital performance and the ways in which technology has transformed performance. We will discuss the case study of Lu Yang's live motion capture performance and strategies for staging online performances, particularly during the pandemic. We will look at the artist's approach to using technology and its relationship to the conceptual development of the work.

Reading:
Salter, Chris. *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2010.

Wong, Ashley L. "Cyclic Existence, Iteration, and Digital Transcendence: Lu Yang's Live Motion Capture Performances." Screen Bodies 7, no. 1 (2022): 128-45. https://doi.org/10:3167/screen.2022.070108.

Week 13 (30 Nov): Course review and individual presentations on essay topics or projects.

Final assignment due two weeks after the last day of class.

Recommended Readings:

Berry, D, and M Dieter. *Postdigital Aesthetics: Art, Computation And Design*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015.

Betancourt, Michael. *Glitch Art in Theory and Practice: Critical Failures and Post-Digital Aesthetics*. ON: Taylor and Francis, 2016.

Bishop, Claire. "Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media." Artforum, 2012. https://www.artforum.com/print/201207/digital-divide-contemporary-art-and-new-media-31944.

Burnham, Jack. "Systems Esthetics." ArtForum, 1968, 30-35. https://www.artforum.com/print/196807/systems-esthetics-32466.

Dekker, Annet. *Curating Digital Art. From Presenting and Collecting Digital Art to Networked Co-curation*, Amsterdam, Valiz Publishers, 2020.

Graham B, Cook S. *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.

Greene, Rachel. *Internet Art*, Thomas & Hudson Inc. 2005.

Gronlund, Melissa. *Contemporary Art and Digital Culture*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich, and Michael, Marrinan. *Mapping Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Digital Age*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Hanhardt, John G., Gregory Zinman and Edith Decker-Phillips, eds. *We Are in Open Circuits, Writings by Nam June Paik*, MIT Press, 2019.

Hui, Yuk. "Planetary Thinking", Interview by Anders Dunker, Kunstkritikk, Nordic Art Review, 2021. https://kunstkritikk.com/planetary-thinking/

Hui, Yuk. "Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics". *e-flux journal*, Issue 86, 2017. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/161887/cosmotechnics-as-cosmopolitics/

Hui, Yuk. "ChatGPT, or the Eschatology of Machines". *e-flux journal*, Issue 137, 2023. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/137/544816/chatgpt-or-the-eschatology-of-machines/

Koleif, Omar, *Internet_Art: From the Birth of the Web to the Rise of NFTs,* Phaidon, 2023.

Krauss, Rosalind E., and Marcel. Broodthaers. *A Voyage on the North Sea : Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000.

Krysa, Joasia. "Curating Immateriality". *DATA Browser 03*. Autonomedia, 2006.

Munster, Anna. *An Aesthesia of Networks: Conjunctive Experience in Art and Technology*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2013.

Paul, Christiane ed. *A Companion to Digital Art*. 1st edition. Wiley, 2016.

Paul, Christiane, ed. *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond: Curatorial Models for Digital Art.* London: University of California Press, 2008.

Quaranta, Domenico. *Beyond New Media Art*. Lulu, 2013.

Respini, Eva. *Art in the Age of the Internet: 1989 to Today*. Boston, MA: The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, 2018.

Richter, Dorothee and Paul Stewart, eds. "Curating the Digital: Curating and Art Practice: Contemporary Considerations on Automation, Place, and Digital Communication", *On Curating*, Issue 45, April 2020.

Salter, Chris. *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2010.

Weibel, Peter. "The Post-Media Condition." Mute, March 19, 2012. http://www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/post-media-condition.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:

Please refer to the University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work at: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

With each assignment, you will be required to submit a signed declaration.
- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should sign the declaration.
- For text-based document assignments submit via VeriGuide: https://veriguide1.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/portal/plagiarism_detection/login.jsp and submit the receipt the statement, in the form of a copy of the receipt along with your assignment.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

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Blackboard, adopted by CUHK for their own educational use, but shall not distribute/ share/ copy the materials to a third-party without seeking prior permission from the staff members/ teachers concerned.

Assessment Criteria:

Grade A / A-: Well-structured essay or presentation with clear framework for discussion. Clear evidence of sophisticated analysis or innovative thinking with depth and complexity of argument beyond course readings and lectures. Evidence of creative thought and articulation of own ideas.
Grade B+ / B: Mostly well-structured essay or presentation with a well-developed framework for discussion. Logical development of ideas with some complexity of argument expressed. Some evidence of creative thought and use of own ideas.
Grade B- / C+: Essay or presentation has a satisfactory structure with mostly accurate material. Logical presentation attempted and successful in a limited way. Limited evidence of creative thought and use of own ideas.
Grade D: Poor and unclear essay or presentation structure. Weak development of argument. Little support from the literature. General appearance of resources lacks clarity.
Grade F: No submission or incoherent framework with little relevant material selected and poor use of examples. No development of argument and absence of own ideas.