

RS II: Crossing the line

Crossing the lines of taste has become public sport in contemporary culture. What used to be the arena of John Waters, Lenny Bruce and the Avant-Guard has now been invaded by Howard Stern, Fear Factor and the Saw series. For centuries, artists have been both lauded and punished for taking artistic risks and becoming taste makers. In this class we will dissect the tissue that stretches between risk and taste. We plan to develop a rigorous approach to moving artistic decisions out of aesthetically and emotionally safe territory. In order to learn where the line is, you have to learn how to cross it.



Contacts

If you want to contact Chuck, email him at cjones@saic.edu

Any general First Year Program concerns may be addressed in the First Year Program Office, located on the Third Floor of the Sharp Building, right across from the elevators. The FYP office phone number is 312-899-5180

4 Possible Assignments

There will be several pieces due through out the semester. Some Chuck will give out on the fly and others will be scheduled work based on your ideas and your research. The latter pieces count more and will be due on a confusing rotating schedule. Chuck will explain this at length.



Taboo

In order to make a proposal¹ for a piece, take the following steps:

1. Pick an object that inspires you. No smaller than a blood cell and no bigger than the sun.
2. Make a list of reasons why you like this object. These would be sentences, i.e. "The rocking chair I found in the alley kicks my ass because..."
3. Make a short list of words (6) that describe your inspirational object.
4. Brainstorm: How can I make a piece about my feelings for (your object) without using any of the descriptive words? If this seems to tricky. Scratch out 3 of the words from the short list so that you have some more options.
5. Do a bunch of sketches. Throw them out and do some more. Once you have some kind of idea, do a real drawing to bring to class. The point is to make an work that communicates the inspiration, but isn't strictly derivative of the original.

¹A few drawings with notes to explain what it is and to point out some of the details. Make the drawing big enough for other people to see. If you have to make a few drawings to get the idea across, then make a few. Give different views, suggestions of scale, close-ups of details, etc. A proposal doesn't have to include a working plan for the object, but if that information is necessary to get the idea across, or if the process seems important in terms of content, then you really should include it.

Two Objects, Opposing Strategies

Take a research trip to the museum². Make several (3 to 7) pairs of drawings of art objects, comparing those pieces that use opposing visual/artistic strategies; list those strategies and what they communicate. Using a set of strategies from one of the pieces, create a detailed proposal for a piece of your own. Make a new list of opposing strategies, and then create a second proposal using those.

²If no museum is available, assemble a group of art works of some sort and continue as above.

1 Idea, 4 Objects

Using your brain³, come up with an idea for an object. Make several drawings based on this idea. Separate out the various ideas you feel you are interested in communicating/exploring based on these drawings. If you have 4 ideas then do 4 new drawings, each one based on one of those ideas. If you only had 2 ideas then make 2 new drawings but then extract ideas from those, until you have at least 4 drawings total. Use these drawings as subjects for detailed sculpture proposals, in order to create 4 objects based upon different facets of the same idea.

³Sometimes you just have to come up with an idea. Maybe it's an idea that already interests you. Maybe it just pops into your head fully formed. Maybe you use some form of an "idea catalyst," like a word game or a by reading "People" magazine. Once you arrive at an idea, you have a responsibility to weigh it's merit.

Evil Twin

Design a piece and then create a design for it's evil twin: a piece that seems on the surface to be very much like the original piece, but with ulterior motives. Your intention here is to create a piece with multiple reads, with each read being somewhat different in its accessibility. Your piece does not necessarily have to be evil. Shoot for depth.



R u l e s

Attendance, etc.

Four absences will result in a NO CREDIT. If you are regularly late or take prolonged breaks, Chuck will yell at you and it will be recorded as an absence. You should be ready to work at 4:30. You have to finish every assignment in order to get credit. Try your best not to trash the room and clean up when you are done. Eat well and get enough sleep. Working outside of class is absolutely necessary.

If you miss any class, you must contact the Chuck via email immediately, and find out from classmates what was covered during class.

Expectations

Bring along a clear head.

It is important to use class time productively. Pay attention to safety concerns. Start small. Work like crazy. Expect to make mistakes, but learn from these many mistakes and from the many mistakes of others. Listen carefully to critiques. Think through your comments to others. Don't wear clothes you care too much about. Help each other. Ask for help.

When class starts, you need to be awake. If you need coffee to wake up, you should be on your second cup when you get to class, not your first.

Evaluation

This course is a credit/no-credit course.

You will receive credit if you successfully complete all of the requirements. In other words: Show up, participate and complete all of the assignments. If you don't come to the final critique, you don't get credit. If you miss any critique at all, you are in serious trouble, and will have to do extra work. If you are often late and/or unprepared to work, Chuck will find someone to yell at you and will then mark you in for an absence. The class expects your very best effort. Your best effort is a requirement for credit.

Requirements

Every student must maintain a Project Journal throughout the year in order to keep track of all drawings, information, exercises, and research you have worked on. Bring this journal to every class. When Chuck ask you what your ideas and plans are for a project, your should be able to show the in this journal.

Additionally, you must document all of your work throughout the year so you can produce a digital portfolio of your work at the end of the semester. You will present this on a CD or a DVD. While the Chuck may document your work through out the year, you can not count on him to do this important work for you. Take digital photos, archive all recordings and videos, record all performances.

Check the class portal page often, and always before class.

No!

No Cell Phones: Turn them off and put them away. Any phones that ring during class time will be answered by Chuck. He will make fun of you to the caller. No Texting. No arguing about this. If you answer your cellphone or call someone on a cellphone during class you will be counted absent for that day. If you answer your phone during your own critique, then you will get now credit. No Chat Software can be running on your computers during class time. No Facebook during class time. Anyone playing a game on the computer during class will be asked to leave.

Labeling

All work must be labeled. This includes all 2D, 3D and 4D pieces. Any unlabeled work will be immediately thrown out. Every assignment must be marked clearly with your name, the date and the name of the assignment. Also you have to check all media to see that your assignment is actually there. Never give faculty your only copy of any piece. Never give them your master tape.

You should also be sure to label any materials left in a classroom. Label your notebook and your computer and its power supply.

How to Survive Chicago

Weather

It gets really cold in Chicago. In the winter of 1994, it was 16 degrees below zero for ten straight days. Most winters it will dip below -5° for a for a few days or so. So make sure that you have warm clothes before it actually gets cold.

You will need to own and to wear the following:

- A very warm coat
- A warm jacket
- Several sweaters or heavy sweatshirts.
- 2 or 3 sets of long underwear. The thin silk or poly kind are good.
- Wool socks. If you hate wool socks, then wear cotton socks underneath them.
- Warm boots. Beware of most punk rock boots or anything with a steel toe. The punk boots are often uninsulated and steel toes promote frostbite.
- Gloves, make sure that they fit.
- Get a decent warm hat that covers your ears and wear it. Scarves are good too.

Safety

If you leave anything valuable unattended or unlocked, it will be stolen. This is almost a 100% guarantee. You need to permanently mark all tools, equipment, and electronics. Mark your bags and your coats and your books. Mark your CDs, DVDs, etc.

Never prop open any doors that should be locked.

Read all security posts and notices. Chicago is not an especially dangerous city, but all cities are dangerous. So do what you can to keep yourself out of dangerous circumstances. Ask about shuttle programs between buildings at night, and think twice about travelling alone in under populated areas of the city.

Punching strangers is also probably not a good idea. Neither is screaming at them.

How To Be A Student

Learn to take care of yourself. This means eating enough decent food and getting enough sleep. It also means that you need to learn to pace yourself. An Art School education is notable in the vast amounts of time necessary to complete the work. The sheer quantity of hours required makes it fairly easy to fall behind and to get stressed out. Once you stop sleeping and eating well, you are fairly sure to get sick. Here are some strategies to use in order to keep it together:

Get up at 7:30 or 8:00 in order to give yourself time to eat, and wake up before classes start at 9:00. Rolling out of bed at 8:55 and running to class without eating will turn almost anyone into a rotten student.

Make food in bulk and then save it to eat over the week. Soup, Chili, hummus, and some pasta are good for a few days and can be frozen. Share extra food with each other.

Get a decent alarm clock that's easy to set and don't put it next to your bed. If you tend to over sleep, get someone to knock on your door to make sure you are up.

If you are really sick, if you have a fever, are throwing up and/or can't stop coughing/sneezing, DON'T COME TO CLASS (unless it's a critique, then you still have to come. The only reason you may be excused for a critique is a dire emergency). Wash your hands often and with soap as illnesses uses hand contact to rocket through the dorms and through the school.

If you hate your roommate, do everything you can to get a new one. Ask for help with this if necessary. It's better to have a tiny room in the basement than to have a bad roommate.

The Academic Advising people at SAIC are very good and if faculty refer you to them, you should go. They will work as your advocate and can help you reorient your

academic career. Likewise the Counseling Services are also very good. If you fall behind and are panicking, don't keep it to yourself; get help.

Art Materials can be toxic and often are, so it pays to know what you are working with. Some surefire ways to really hurt yourself are to use oil paint in your room, and to not use respirators and dust masks at the appropriate times, i.e. when using the spray booth, or while sanding. Smoking while working with dangerous materials is much more damaging than smoking alone, which, as we know, is also very bad.

Remember that talent isn't an asshole license.

Be nice.



A r t R u l e s

#1 Take something, do something to it. Then do something to that. -Jasper Johns

#2 The thing that gave you the idea for the piece is most probably the thing you need to leave out. -Maureen McCabe

#3 You want to go where it almost seems like it's not art. -Kerry James Marshall

#4 If you can't make it good, make it big. If you can't make it big, make it red.

#5 Make sure you take a good picture, then throw the piece away.

#6 If you can't be your own hardest critic, you should go do something else.

#7 Start with the understanding that the work is bad, and move on from there.

#8 Putting all of your ideas into the same piece is the classic student mistake. Separate the ideas out and use them to make a number of pieces that can then relate to each other.

#9 Every piece must take that extra risky step in order to be good.

#10 Leaving out information in order to make the piece somehow mysterious is crap.

#11 While making art may be therapeutic, art is not therapy, it's a form of communication. If you need therapy, get therapy.

#12 It takes 90% of the time to do the last 10% of the work

#13 The question is not whether or not it's art, because it's probably art; the question is whether or not it's good art, because it probably isn't.

#14 New York is the center of the art world, but as all Muslims need to travel to Mecca, they don't have to live there.

#15 Save all of your art receipts for tax time.