

# Falling from the Grip of Grace: A Reading of Contemporary Art and Exhibitions

Spring 2016  
Thu, 5:30–8:30 pm

**VES 105, Harvard University  
Carpenter Center, Room 401**

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**Description** The course will explore a history of spectatorship, participation and social engagement in contemporary art. It will use a selection of case studies of exhibitions, artworks and institutions to equip ourselves with the knowledge and tools for assessing the changing role of spectators from indifferent viewers to integrated participants. Readings, class discussions, screenings, museum visits, and Carpenter Center programming will guide our critical reflections on recent curatorial and artistic strategies in exhibitions at museums and biennials in the United States and Europe.

The Carpenter Center exhibition *Phil Collins: A Learning Site* will be an essential component of our course. The program will be the locus for experiencing the art of British artist Phil Collins while providing opportunities to organize and contribute to CCVA public programs. The class will collectively coordinate and host two Open Seminars dedicated to topics in contemporary art generally connected to Collins's practice. The course and program will, therefore, occasionally merge the public sphere of the institution with the private activity of the academic seminar to engage the visiting public in questions around the art of Phil Collins, one of the most acclaimed voices in contemporary art.

**Goals** Students will become familiar with and proficient in a vocabulary for speaking about historical, aesthetic and conceptual topics related to current issues in art, visual culture and exhibitions. Students will acquire perspectives in curatorial strategies for making public programs, exhibitions, and for building audiences. They will be introduced to a range of curatorial models and approaches to provide knowledge and insight into the working relationships among contemporary artists, curators and institutions.

**Requirements**

- (1) Each week two class members are required to introduce assigned readings for the session. About 15 minutes, these introductions will address the main points of the readings and guide the remainder of the class conversation. The students responsible for introducing the session's readings are responsible for compiling at least 3 relevant images per reading to assist with class discussions. The images are organized in PowerPoint and will be uploaded to the Canvas course site by 8 am on the day of the class meeting.
- (2) Each week one member of the class is required to introduce the assigned reading on Phil Collins. About 10 minutes, these introductions will guide student discussions on Collins's practice. The student is also required to upload relevant images to the Canvas course site prior to class meeting.
- (3) Each student is required to provide 250-word written summaries of each reading for each course meeting.
- (4) Students are expected to participate fully in class conversations, respond to peers, engage actively with materials and readings, and overall contribute to generating a convivial and collegial classroom atmosphere.

(5) As a collective, students are required to participate in and organize two Open Seminars. The individual responsibilities for the Open Seminars will be determined as a group based on interests of the students.

**Evaluation** Students are evaluated on the quality and frequency of participation in the course. This evaluation is based on organization, content, attendance, presence and communication of ideas through speaking and writing.

**Attendance** Attendance is required. Students will fail the course with more than two unexcused absences. Notification of absences must be given in advance by email.

## **Schedule**

**January 28**                      **Introduction**

**February 4**                      **A Critique of Modernist Ideologies**

**Michael Fried**, "Art and Objecthood," 1967, in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998), 148–171.

**Robert Smithson**, "Letter to the Editor," *Artforum* (1967), reprinted in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 66–67.

**Yvonne Rainer**, "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio," in Gregory Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), 263–273.

**Phil Collins**: "Don't Blow Your Own Horn," Interview of Phil Collins by Suzanne Weaver, in Siniša Mitrović and Suzanne Weaver, eds. *Phil Collins: the world won't listen* (New Haven: Yale University, 2008), 85–98.

**Phil Collins**: Liz Kotz, "Live Through This," in Siniša Mitrović and Suzanne Weaver, eds. *Phil Collins: the world won't listen* (New Haven: Yale University, 2008), 57–65.

**February 11**                      **Critical Curatorial Strategies and Problems**

**David Joselit**, "Carsten Höller," *Artforum*, vol. 50, no. 6 (February 2012), 219.

**Randy Kennedy**, "Is It Art, Science or a Test of People?," *New York Times*, Arts Section (October 25, 2011).

**Nicolas Bourriaud**, "Relational Aesthetics" (1998), in *Participation*, Claire Bishop, ed. (London: Whitechapel and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 160–171.

**Claire Bishop**, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October*, vol. 110 (Autumn 2004), 51–79.

**Liam Gillick**, "Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October*, vol. 115 (Winter 2005), 95–107.

**Phil Collins**: Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," *Artforum*, vol. 44, no. 6 (February 2006), 178–183.

**February 18**                      **New Institutionalism and Its Critics**

**Maria Lind**, "What If: Art on the Verge of Architecture and Design," (2000) in *Selected Maria Lind Writings*, ed. Brian Kuan Wood (Berlin: Sternberg, 2011), 375–409.

Claire Doherty, "New Institutionalism and the Exhibition as Situation." in *Protections Reader* (Graz: Kunsthaus Graz, 2006) 1–11.

Maria Lind and Alex Farquharson, "Integrative Institutionalism: a Reconsideration," in *The New Administration of Aesthetics*, edited by Tone Hansen and Trude Iversen (Oslo: Torpedo, 2007), 108–125.

Boris Groys, "Marx after Duchamp, or The Artist's Two Bodies," in *Going Public Boris Groys* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2010), 121–134.

## **February 25**                      **Walid Raad: Walkthrough**

Performance by **Walid Raad** as part of his exhibition ICA Boston. Meet at 5:30 pm at Carpenter Center and then travel together to ICA.

## **March 3**                              **The Education Turn in Exhibition**

Mai Abu Eidahab and Anton Vidokle, in Florian Waldvogel, eds. *Notes for an Art School* (Amsterdam: Manifesta 6 School Books, 2006).

Anton Vidokle, "Exhibition to School: *unitednationsplaza*," in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, eds. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), 148–156.

Taraneh Fazel, "Class Consciousness: Taraneh Fazeli on Night School," *Artforum* (Summer 2009), 129–130, 132.

Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," (1934), in *Walter Benjamin. Reflections*. Edited by Peter Demetz and Preface by Leon Wieseltier (New York: Schocken Books), 2007.

## **March 10**                            **Phil Collins Rewind Fast Forward**

Alex Farquharson, "Minority report," *frieze*, vol. 94 (October 2005), 96–201.

Kirsty Bell, "Attending Intently to You," *Art in America*, vol. 101 (9), 110–119.

Margaret Ewing, "Phil Collins," *Artforum*, vol. 50 no. 6 (February 2012), 240–241.

Phil Collins: Claire Bishop and Francesco Manacorda, "The Producer as Artist," (2006) in Mitrović, Siniša (ed.). *Yeah, you, baby you*. (London: Milton Keynes Gallery & Shady Lane), 2005, 23–31.

## **March 17**                            **Spring Recess**

## **March 24**                            **Open Seminar: Phil Collins in Context (part 1)**

7:30 pm: Screening, Harvard Film Archive: *the world won't listen*, 2004–07 (56 min.)

## **March 31**                            **What is Critique?**

Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue" (2001), in *The Judith Butler Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 302–322.

7:30 pm: Screening, Harvard Film Archive: *This Unfortunate Thing Between Us*, 2011 (60 min.)

## **April 7**                                **Phil Collins Class Visit**

7:30 pm: Screening + Artist Talk, Harvard Film Archive: *Tomorrow Is Always Too Long*, 2014 (82 min.)

**April 14**

**Grabbing Hold of the Technique**

**Maria Lind**, “Dilemma of Love, Humor, and Critique: Notes on the Work of Anton Vidokle,” in *Anton Vidokle: Produce, Distribute, Discuss, Repeat* (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2009), 21–30.

**Anton Vidokle**, “A Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary,’” *October*, vol. 130 (Autumn 2009), 41–43.

**April 21**

**Open Seminar: Phil Collins in Context (part 2)**

**April 28**

**Harnessing the Means of Exhibition**

**Pamela Lee**, “Perpetual Revolution: Thomas Hirschhorn’s Sense of the World,” in *Forgetting the Art World*, 2012, 105–184.

**Jacques Rancière**, “The Paradoxes of Political Art,” in *Dissensus. On Politics and Aesthetics*, 2010, 134–51.

**Fulvia Carnevale** and **John Kelsey**, “Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière,” *Artforum*, vol. 45, no. 7 (March 2007), 256–69.