

AR-469

Seismography - art since the 1950s at Documenta

Gerke Stefanie

Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	MA1, MA3	Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	3
Session	Winter
Semester	Fall
Exam	During the semester
Workload	90h
Weeks	12
Hours	2 weekly
Courses	2 weekly
Number of positions	

Summary

Using the recurring international art show Documenta as a framework, this course will critically examine and contextualize relevant artworks, topics and media that have shaped the second half of the 20th century and continue to do so today.

Content

In what way can it be enlightening, even crucial to engage with contemporary art today?

Looking at the history and the evolution of the recurring international art show *Documenta* can teach us. Originally conceived as an exhibition bridging the gap between modernism and the 1950's in ruinous post Nazi Germany, the Documenta soon became a seismographic survey of trending topics in international art and thus in international culture. Since its first edition in 1955, the small city of Kassel has become the epicenter of the (Western) art world every couple of years. Revisiting and re-evaluating some of its most impactful artworks leads us to consider a diverse range of topics and media: conceptual art and moving images, feminist and post-colonial tendencies, performances and Social Sculpture, to name just a few. Particular attention will be given to site-specific and spatial artworks.

During the course of this class, it will become apparent how art not only records and represents current topics, but also – in turn – impacts the discourse that can shape culture as we know it today.

Keywords

contemporary art
contemporary culture
Documenta
creative processes
site specificity

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Argue the relevance of contemporary art to our understanding of social complexities.
- Contextualise artistic currents since the 1950s.
- Interpret individual artworks discussed in class.
- Assess / Evaluate the background, structure and outcome of various creative processes.
- Identify relevant topics and media in art since the 1950s.

Transversal skills

- Demonstrate the capacity for critical thinking

- Access and evaluate appropriate sources of information.

Teaching methods

Weekly two hour lectures, including bibliography for further reading. Reflective questions. One on one office hours (online) for clarification purposes as well as the supervision of written essays.

Resources

Ressources en bibliothèque

- [50 years documenta, 1955-2005, vol. 2 : Archive in motion / Glasmeier](#)
- [documenta : a brief history of an exhibition and its context / Siebenhaar](#)
- [One place after another / Kwon](#)