

## **4.396 Special Problems in Visual Arts**

### **The Production of Space - Acting in the Void, the Vacuum, the Inbetween**

MIT Visual Arts Program | Department of Architecture

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Course number: 4.396

Monday lecture series: 6 - 9 pm, N51 Room 337 (see dates below)

Wednesday class meetings: 2 - 5 pm, N51 Room 315

Prerequisites: permission of the instructor; class size limited to 15 students.  
9 Units, Level H.

Students from various disciplines and backgrounds are welcome.

This advanced level seminar/workshop is combined with a lecture series (Monday Nights @VAP, M 6 - 9) and engages students in the theory and practice of the possibilities of the production of space in moments of crisis and catastrophes.

The seminar/workshop tries to seek an understanding of what could be the role of cultural production and "cultural acteurs" in moments of instability and flux. How can one intervene in a situation of crisis, catastrophe and trauma to make it active and constructive, not neglecting the need for critical and theoretical reflection? The workshop/seminar searches for possibilities of how the notion of public sphere and the idea of civic societies at the beginning of the 21st century can be renegotiated through cultural interventions, through the production of communicative spaces. In the seminar we will also investigate historical examples of artistic movements such as DADA during WWI, the Surrealists and Intuitionists when fascism overran Europe, and as well the role of film during Latin American dictatorships.

This seminar/workshop tries to engage in a number of real scenarios, both through theory and in developing possibilities of interacting with various localities. Today's lack of public space due to privatization leaves little room for truly public discourse. How can art and architecture renegotiate the "res publica" - a space for a multitude of voices - the foundation for democracy? Texts by artists from DADA, Constant, Debord, as well as theoreticians such as Bataille, Davis, Harvey, Hollier, Wigley, Agamben just to name a few will be intertwined with lectures by practitioners from various fields from outside and within MIT. The seminar is organized around external input considered as lab time with the Monday nights@VAP, a mix of lectures, screenings and debates that are open to the public. Class meeting on Wednesday is for course students only. Here we

reflect historical examples, debate and deepen questions arising out of the Monday night events and go through additional material such as texts and background material on the topic of the course including contemporary approaches. The course intends to create a small active archive as one example of a space of communication and exchange. The students will be asked to research and collect material and debate parameters on how to create, with limited means, an archive of the practice.

The Wednesday classes will be broken into two parts:

- 1) lecture/screenings and
- 2) debate and short presentation by individual students.

At midterm each student will introduce a topic and outline for material for the archive and at the finals each student is expected to “fill” a section in the archive.

Class attendance and participation is mandatory on both days.

Course Requirements and Grading:

\*Proposal (mid term) and realization (finals) of an archive contribution equal 70% of your grade. \*Readings/discussions and class attendance equal 30% of your grade.