participations:
Laurel Beckman (faculty), Ryan Bulis, Alexander Bogdanov, Sterling Crispin, Alison Ho, Tristan Newcomb, Chris Silva, Erik Sultzer, James Cathey, Cathy Ellis, Clare Little, Maria Rendon, Sommer Sheffield

This syllabus has been drafted after the end of the course. At the outset, and after earlier discussions with many of the participants, it was my desire to hold a nimble graduate critique seminar that evolved as we did; with a mixture of conversation-based critique, and sessions that emphasized alternative forms of critical exchange.

My general approach is: The critique seminar will focus on your individual practice amongst and with an eye towards polymorphous contemporary practices within art and affiliated gestures. Our base position is from that of the maker, individual or collaborative, and their relationship to the growth of their work, and to an extant or prospective audience. There is no assumption or bias related to media or exhibition/dissemination strategies; all are welcome. There is every assumption that making and thinking are interdependent. Since this is your work, you will drive the discussion. Since this is the dinner hour, refreshments are encouraged.

There were no assigned texts, though every week was followed by a reference list I drafted in relation to presenting students and our conversation (see below).

Weekly activities:
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week 1 Jan. 9- team/collaborative presentations on a theme
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week 2 Jan. 16- Cathy/Alison (in the 479 gallery)
-----------------------------------------
week 3 Jan. 23- Sterling/Chris
-----------------------------------------
week 4 Jan. 30- Tristan/James (in the estudio)
-----------------------------------------
week 5 Feb. 6- Ryan/Erik
-----------------------------------------
week 6 Feb. 13- Sommer/Maria (in the 479 gallery)
-----------------------------------------
week 7 Feb. 20- Clare/Alex
-----------------------------------------
week 8 Feb. 27- silent critique (open studios, written responses)
-----------------------------------------
week 9 Mar. 6- Square Pegs, Round Table, discussion led by Erik and Ryan

GRAD CRIT
MARCH 6Th

"Square Pegs, Round Table"
hosted by second year MFA's Erik Sultzer & Ryan Bulis

The UCSB Dept of Art website includes the following statement: "At UCSB, emerging artists develop the means to express themselves and the critical thinking essential to their future roles within society."

Taking up this notion of our "future roles within society," we ask the question: what is the role of the artist?

This question is directed at you and your practice, and their relationships to society at large. At the moment, we can all safely hide behind institutional walls, enjoy the benefits of government funding, and take advantage of a temporary period of blissful self-reflection and open experimentation. But the "real world" waits—and it's just around the corner. Projecting yourself into that "real world," we ask that you consider your understanding of the artist (your future role?) in contemporary society.
To prepare for this discussion, please present a one-minute brief that outlines your understanding of the artist and her/his current and/or ideal position within society. What are the social/economic/historic/cultural/institutional/emotional/pedagogical/technological/political/etc/etc/etc responsibilities of this character? Where is her/his place in society (is it static or fluid)? What is your assessment of this role's projected future?

From these brief one-minute introductions, Ryan and Erik will moderate a conversation on the topic of the artist's role in (present and future) society. If you have any questions you'd like the group to address on this topic, please bring them. You can ask them yourself, or have the moderators ask on your behalf.

We expect a lively conversation on this highly relevant topic. Snacks will be dealt with on a pot luck basis, so please bring something for everyone to share.

This invitation is open to anyone, and will be extended to our Thesis Show co-curators, Samantha and Diva. If you have any questions, please contact Ryan or Erik.

Until then.

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week 10 Mar.13- Show and Tell

Share with the group something that got under your skin, changed how you think/feel, that moved you. On-line image/s, videos/audio; offline images, objects. Show us, tell us what and why, and if your own work is implicated, show/tell us that too.

There are few parameters, mostly that we need to see/hear your 'item', a verbal description alone will not suffice. If you don't have a visual/aural then make one, and keep it clean. Other than that this is wide open, I prefer (as you know) not to pre-determine or define what you may share/buy to the table.

Come prepared with these things:
1. the 'item' you're sharing - either already online (extant video/image/s/audio with url, or something you've uploaded with url), or bring it on a flash drive, or bring it in person.
2. a verbal description of the 'item' as if we have no idea what it may be, like we're blind strangers.
3. a verbal 'telling' of how the 'item' got under your skin, changed how you think/feel, moved you, opened you up to....? colloquial is ok, we like stories, they are powerful, but must be in addition to a description that is the result of your giving time to thinking/writing about how the item worked it's way on/in you. be honest/genuine.
4. If there is any correlation, however tangential, to your practice, please also bring (or have cued up/url) a visual/aural of that work. This inclusion will enrich the whole thing for all of us, so please do that if you can.

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Reference lists inspired by individual evenings’ conversation:

week 1
good morning,

that was lively and somewhat unexpected (by me) conversation last night. I always have things swirling in my head after we meet, and today is no exception. I hope you do too. I very much look forward to where you and your work takes us in weeks to come. I think I mentioned last night that i was fantasizing you all doing something like a motel room exhibition/event. I don't expect that you'll do that, but action is the best way to move your practice forward, and a solid cure for venue anxiety; so you may want to break the usual programmatic rhythm of things and take a week 'off' to something together (that keeps individual voice alive if desired, totally doable). mix it up, take some chances. always interested in encouraging and helping with that if you like.

these links below you may have already seen, taken mostly from my web page of self organization resource links (a few dead links in there, need to update).

anyway, this is still one of my favorite articles:

Paul Chan
What Art Is and Where it Belongs

these are just a few interesting and successful current/recent artists initiatives:
http://www.323projects.com
http://www.panoramaonview.org
http://www.missrockaway.org/wordpress/project-info/
http://www.missrockaway.org/wordpress/
http://www.thebrucehighqualityfoundation.com/Site/home.html

and for good measure, in today's LA Times
http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-guy-de-cointet-lace-20130110,0,6305134.story

for a little recent history:
The Boom Is Over. Long Live the Art!
By HOLLAND COTTER
Published: February 12, 2009
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/15/arts/design/15cott.html?_r=0

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week 2
land, environment, western, and the sublime
http://www.clui.org
http://www.sandowbirk.com
Li Dafang
Karin Mamma Andersson
Olafur Eliasson
http://www.olafureliasson.net/index.html
Julian Rosefeldt, in particular his 5 screen project, "American Night"
Kate Levant
Detropia (2012 film)
filmmaker Kelly Reichardt (Old Joy, Meek's Crossing, Wendy and Lucy)

ccontent and the picture plane
Mikalene Thomas
http://mickalenethomas.com
Kerstin Brätsch
http://www.gclass.org/artists/kerstin-bratsch
Monique Prieto
http://www.acmelosangeles.com/artists/monique-prieto/
Nicole Eisenman, in particular her earlier wall works (image search)
http://www.vielmetter.com/artists/nicole-eisenman.html
http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/2012Biennial/NicoleEisenman
Richard Hawkins
http://www.artic.edu/exhibition/hawkins
Matthias Weisger

race, identity, form
Kori Newkirk
http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/16/arts/design/16newk.html?_r=0
Daniel J. Martinez
http://www.jewishjournal.com/arts/article/artist_daniel_j_martinez_provokes_religion_politics_to_incite_insight
http://www.brooklynrail.org/2008/03/art/daniel-joseph-martinez-with-phong-bui
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uj1OWIHKvmg
Kalup Linzy
http://www.kaluplinzyartist.com
Amanda Ross-Ho
http://www.cherryandmartin.com/artists/amanda-ross-ho
Carrie May Weems, Yong Soon Min, Kerry James Marshall, Kara Walker, David Hammons, Hung Liu
classic texts
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist_Theory:_From_Margin_to_Center

pop culture/entertainment/monologuists/et
Key & Peele
http://www.comedycentral.com/shows/key-and-peelee
http://vimeo.com/channels/keypeelee
Tig Notaro
http://tignation.com
http://themoth.org
Eric Bogosian, Spalding Gray, Miranda July

week 3
hi everyone,

only a few links this week, but also some thoughts and rhetorical questions.

Our discussion has me pondering the nature of how our interests, inclinations, or what we love, reveals (or not) itself in our work. My mentioning of the (Hudson School painters) intentionality or motivation not being to 'sell' an idea, and Ryan's use of the word, 'Enchantment' in the same light (no pun intended), resonates. Influence may be distinct from 'sell'.

My feeling is that what we're attracted to, or love, is unassailable- not up for judgement. These things may be engines or generators for our work; they may be self-evident in the work, or not. We control to a great extent how important it is for an audience to know these things in the actual work and in it's context. While what someone cares about, or loves, is unassailable, that doesn't preclude interesting, critical discourse on its manifestation in the work and its presentation; and importantly, also doesn't eliminate the artist from benefitting from (some might say having a responsibility for) a level of self-awareness that includes self-to-other. The 'other' in self-to-other awareness includes individual and collective others- the person, the cultures (the expanded conversation known as art is a culture, so is my neighborhood market, you 'all, our department, campus, california, kenya, the internet...). The work, after all, isn't us, it's a cultural object that participates at some level in cultural conversation. What do you want your participation to be?

For example, I love musical theater/film/even tv - 'Cop Rock', R. Kelly's 'Trapped in the Closet'. Is it silly, manipulative, and culturally reductive? Of course. But I attend to (honor) my affection for it at the same time as I do my knowledge of how it is variously embraced, considered, and shunned by culture at large, and how that may shift over time/context. There is no real conflict in those 2 things; they (my affection and knowledge) coexist, are kind-of fascinating as a dualism, and human. My attraction (self-awareness) and self-to-other awareness fuels work that, in my example, engages screen/stage space, the pleasure & power of absurdity, music, visual and conceptual richness. Just an example.

There's a spectrum of correlation potential (none to 1-to-1) between our engines/inspiration//love and what we make. Related questions: is it enough to show what we love, what we're interested in, with little consideration of the self-to-other, and conversely, if we don't reveal ourselves in our work, is that stingy? Again, this shifts with context, no fixed answers, but worth considering. One thing is hardly ever enough. Should I put on a broadway musical? Honestly, if I did a killer one, in a way that added to our experience or knowledge, that moved, yes, moved people, that would be great.

Have a great week,
Laurel

Tom Sachs
http://www.tomsachs.org
http://tomsachsmars.com
http://www.armoryonpark.org/programs_events/detail/tom_sachs_space_program

Rita Mcbride (I remembered the wrong name earlier)
http://barcelonaprojects.gatech.edu/arch2012/?p=3126
http://www.ritamcbride.net

Damien Ortega
re: sub-surface fields  
not exactly what Sterling is doing, but worth thought in developing other 'strata' in the hologram. metaphors  
come to mind of the sub/unconscious, the basement (as in psychology, horror/fear/the illicit), rhizome,  
regressive/aggressive play (inhibitors and generators), turning a corner/flip/fold.

Ben Grasso  
http://bengrasso.com  
<br><img src="http://bengrasso.com/ungrounded-150x150.jpg">

Pipolotti Rist (old piece/video in floor at PS1, ) - i know this seems wildly unrelated, but reciprocal vision,  
elliptical as it may be, could also be rich.  
<br><img src="attachment.jpeg">

for the curious, some general old school (?) generative art links:  
http://blog.hvidtfeldts.net/index.php/generative-art-links/  

links 4  
good morning grads,  

James and Tristan gave us a lot to see/hear and ponder last evening; below some related items.  
first, i came across an article in todays LATimes about the tv show '30 Rock'. a section of the article (below) is a  
good follow-up to my thoughts sent last week.  

whole article: http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/showtracker/la-et-st-30-rock-20130131,0,4459902.story  
excerpts, swap out 'art' for 'broadcast television':  
"The humor was so unmistakably smart and self-aware that the writers could get away with the most sexist,  
racist or scatological remarks and still smell fresh....This is broadcast television — it's a nasty, ruthless  
business...a dying enterprise in need of "a grave robber who'll strip every last bauble off the corpse...At the  
same time, they provide many occasions to be moved, even as they mock the manipulative ways that television  
tries to move you. Because, underneath the irony and the parody and the satire, the knowingness and the  
cleverness and the strangeness, it's clear that the series was made with commitment and exhilaration, and that  
love, though it takes many unusual forms, has been its most constant themes."

James Casebere  
http://jamescasebere.net  
http://www.hbs.edu/schwartz/items/caseberejames47.html

Gregory Crewdson  
http://www.gregorycrewdsonmovie.com

and, of course, http://www.wernerherzog.com/114.html

empathy  
Thomas Nagel's classic, "What is Like to be a Bat?"  
I first came across this essay in an excellent art catalog, "Searchlight: Consciousness at the  
Millennium" (Lawrence Rinder)

digital domes (another idea for presentation, akin to immersive/cave, though different, Sterling has some experience with digital domes)
http://www.aiia.edu/academics/digital-dome-home/ ; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13PxNIu4P4o
https://www.facebook.com/DigitalDomeIAIA
http://www.currentsnnewmedia.org/digitaldome.html

sonic 'scapes' and presentation
sound as an element in this kind of immersive, confusing, compelling environment is an idea, not so much a discrete installation, but a journey: http://creativetime.org/programs/archive/2007/nelson/

sonic/ambient pioneers & friends
Pauline Oliveros, http://www.paulineoliveros.us
http://www.deeplisten.org/site/ , http://www.deeplisten.org/site/content/dliartists
David Fenton, & of course, Cage, Steve Roach, & minimalist composers Steve Reich, T. Riley, P. Glass, La Monte Young
http://disquiet.com
http://freesound.org

the absurd, artists and film makers, screens
Ryan Trecartin
yes, everyone knows about him, and/but, Trecartin makes long, absurd, relevant, complex, video works (sometimes with installation) that defy explanation, are both annoying and compelling, and feature him prominently.
http://vimeo.com/trecartin
http://www.eai.org/artistTitles.htm?id=12077
http://www.ubu.com/film/trecartin.html

Stanya Kahn
http://www.eai.org/artistTitles.htm?id=13108

such a huge field, here's just a few: Issac Julien, Steve McQueen, Omar Fast, Pipilotti Rist (again, i know, but surreal, interesting, and good looking work), Nathalie Djurberg, Marco Brambilla <http://motionographer.com/theater/marco-brambilla-civilization/>, Maja Borg, Stan Douglas, Doug Aitken, John Greyson, Mika Rottenberg

newish approach festivals/platforms
Tugg.com
http://thehiddenfilmfestivals.moonfruit.com/#/home/4567666214
http://www.lux.org.uk
http://preview.instantcinema.org/channels
http://www.youngprojectsgallery.com (bad web site, good projects, in west hollywood)
http://www.eyefilm.nl/en/watchfilmsonline

5

greetings grads,
good vibe last night. many of you will be familiar with references here, but for the curious and some comments-

what i find most compelling with Erik's presentation is the negotiation in the work and methodology between attention and process. how does one wish to, or not to, draw attention to objects, gestures, process. presentation of any kind assumes interest in what's presented, and directly or tangentially in how it came to be. that's somewhat complicated by (what i'll just shorthand as) detritus work, though in a contemporary framework, that gets updated to include structures and experience of valuation. can the humble be special, how might evidence of intimate communication and engagement prompt response?

Jason Rhoades
http://www.hauserwirth.com/exhibitions/734/jason-rhoades-1-12-perfect-world/view/

Elliott Hundley
http://www.regenprojects.com/exhibitions/2009_3_elliott-hundley/#1
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I67-HY8WBXA

http://couchassassin.com/event/detritus-ecologies
the popular Tim Noble and Sue Webster, married couple recently divorced, http://www.timnobleandsuewebster.com
Isa Genzken
http://moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=508
http://www.cmoa.org/international/the_exhibition/artist.asp?genzken#void
Alexandra Bircken
http://artforum.com/video/mode=large&id=20865
earlier work of Cady Noland (daughter of Kenneth Noland)


Nato Thompson, Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011, MIT Press 2011

curious state of a/fairs, this image used on email blast for miart 2013 (Milan) contemporary art fair:
somewhere between tim hawkinson, jefferey vallance and tom laduke lies ryan's engaging work.  
http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/tim-hawkinson  
http://www.acegallery.net/artistmenu.php?Artist=1  

an old piece that touches on enemies- Stephen Prina & Christopher Williams' The Construction and Maintenance of our Enemies, almost impossible to find online, was reproduced in Real Life magazine (Tom Lawson's early and very good mag, I have it somewhere), the project essentially photographed planted 'exotic' plants with small signs in Huntington Gardens in LA.

I like being prompted to think about efficiencies of thought or associations. so much we experience & observe (in the world) is the result of that, largely to unfortunate results. uncanny connections that have entrance points for the viewer, like the apples and the icons, are important and wisely employed currency for artists. in that vein, check out the new Lynn Foulkes show at the Hammer, http://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/detail/exhibition_id/221, http://llynfoulkes.com  

degenerative processes/biology reminds me of  
http://www.collegeofphysicians.org/mutter-museum/  

apples/Pollan  
http://www.pbs.org/thebotanyofdesire/apple-sweetness.php  
http://video.pbs.org/video/1283863020/  
of course, the book, review http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/p/pollan-01botany.html

my troll in a conjoined twin knitted sweater with barbie, an editorial inclusion for a late 80's zine (theme- fear & monsters) of mine:

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6

hi all,

one thing we could have talked about more last night, during our productive and engaging evening, is the state
of vulnerability and its relation to our negotiation between head and meat space (the psychic and corporeal). you've probably heard me mention that I think it's important to be both present and vulnerable (attend to current states of will/self and ones environs- people and conditions). It's safe to say that our culture does not value true vulnerability in humans, which comes in many forms; too messy, inconvenient. can art objects/actions be about vulnerability without being vulnerable themselves (this is the 'about' vs 'performative' or 'demonstrative' argument), and goes to some issues concerning illustration. the relations between our heads, hearts and flesh is at the core, and very much addresses the actual in relation to the imagined and fantasy. vulnerability and/vs (meat) mass is part of ryan's work too.

have a great week,
Laurel

for the record, i made a mistake re: tracey emin- i should have said the tent piece is about intimacy (i said love) not tents.
http://www.traceyeminstudio.com/homepage/
i enjoyed your conversation re: shantyporn and relative obligation, or innate nod, to acknowledge impoverished states/peoples.

re: order and vulnerability, this tedx link was sent to me by Megan Ogle, as part of her honors reader:
http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html
Richard Artschwager's blps, decidedly not representative of anything but their environment
http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/RichardArtschwager/Blps
http://momaps1.org/exhibitions/view/165

line work:
Ernesto Caivano, of course
Monika Grzymala, http://www.t-r-a-n-s-i-t.net/projekte.html

post-its
not very deep or original, lighthearted fun
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpWM0FNPZSs, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juBFxe0-ryI

E.G. Crichton's work with (domestic chemical) material's- 'Little Disasters'
http://egrichton.ucsc.edu/archive/?p=17
http://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/the-plight-of-the-suburban-deer

mother-child (not a stroke, but another kind of 'loss')
Jonathan Caouette's documentary on growing up with his schizophrenic mother - 'Tarnation'
do a you tube search for clips, or better, rent/find the whole film

Pierre Huyghe, Streamside Day Follies, 2003, this is/is was a complex multi-dimentional body of work, google for more info, http://www.diaart.org/exhibitions/main/22
re: head/meat spaces, can fantasy be grounded?

the work of William Leavitt, especially earlier 'stage set' like work

http://daniellavitt.com/home.html

undoubtedly you know this from our own Jane M.
http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/faculty/mulfinger/norris.html
http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/faculty/mulfinger/gradienthangar.html

Shinique Smith
http://shiniquesmith.com/?p=475
http://www.davidcastillogallery.com/shinique-smith/
http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/extended_family/smith.php

http://www.jafelt.com/palaceyurt.html

http://www2.macleans.ca/2012/07/04/feminist-art-gallery-fights-back-with-fabric/

http://www.robinlasser.com, in particular the dress tents and floating world

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7

hi all,
i think we've got a good groove going, great.

a reminder, next week (feb 27) we'll be doing 2 things:
1. 2nd year thesis show pitches with feedback - voluntary participation, not all 2nd yrs have to, but you asked, so let's do that, it'll be useful for you. (note: this ended up not happening- students didn't want to do it)
2. we'll also be doing silent crits- everyone must have their studio open with work presented and some paper for us to write feedback on. bring a pencil/pen.

have a terrific week,
Laurel
re: presenting text
Between C and D, experimental literary magazine from the 80's (I have one), though it unfolds linearly, doesn't preclude a non-linear arrangement of 'pages', only color was hand tipped on cover


classics
http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/LawrenceWeiner
http://www.regenprojects.com/artists/lawrence-weiner/#1

go google image search for these: Robert Barry artist, Kay Rosen artist, Hanne Darboven
http://www.diaart.org/exhibitions/introduction/80

I know Alex saw this show, but for the curious
http://www.redcat.org/exhibition/experimental-impulse
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QS_9-Ut1zmG

currency:
Sal Randolph's Free Money & Money Actions ongoing projects
http://salrandolph.com/art/26/free-money


J. S. G. Boggs
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEtkSQzpj0Q
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/egg/217/boggs/index.html
Lewis Hyde
The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World, on gift economies
and some other works by him,
Common as Air: Revolution, Art, and Ownership (2011)
Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art (2010), with the very good writer Michael Chabon

the new film, Bestiare, Denis Côté
http://movies.nytimes.com/2012/10/19/movies/bestiaire-is-on-trail-of-objectivity-in-an-unnatural-home.html?_r=0

Erick Swenson
http://www.jamescohan.com/artists/erick-swenson/ - click through all the images
http://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/detail/exhibition_id/36
http://beautifuldecay.com/2012/01/03/erick-swenson/

Jennifer Pastor
http://www.regenprojects.com/artists/jennifer-pastor/1
http://www.installationart.net/PDF/Pastor.pdf
http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/jennifer_pastor/
an excellent writer, cheap book on her great project about natural forces- http://www.amazon.com/Jennifer-Pastor-The-Perfect-Ride/dp/0874271436

on repetitive objects, similarity and difference
Allan McCollum
http://allanmccollum.net/allanmcnyc/projects.html
Katharina Fritsch
http://www.matthewmarks.com/new-york/artists/katharina-fritsch/selected-works/
http://www.artic.edu/exhibition/katharina-fritsch
http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/katharina%20fritsch
http://www.amazon.com/Katharina-Fritsch-GALLERY-Critical-International/dp/B002NQHS7M

animal environs, architecture for
Presidio Habitats, http://www.for-site.org/project/presidio-habitats/

Shinto animal deities
http://www.greenshinto.com/wp/2011/07/28/power-animals/
http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/beliefs/kami_1.shtml

Erick Swenson- this was an amazing piece!