Syllabus

Kursbeschreibung

Titel der Lehrveranstaltung	Histories, Theories and Critical Interpretations of Art
Code der Lehrveranstaltung	47215
Zusätzlicher Titel der Lehrveranstaltung	
Wissenschaftlich-disziplinärer Bereich	ARTE-01/C
Sprache	Englisch
Studiengang	Master in Kritische Kreative Praxis
Andere Studiengänge (gem. Lehrveranstaltung)	
Dozenten/Dozentinnen	Prof. Dr. Inge Hinterwaldner, Inge.Hinterwaldner@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/53246
Wissensch. Mitarbeiter/Mitarbeiterin	
Semester	Erstes Semester
Studienjahr/e	1st year
KP	6
Vorlesungsstunden	30
Laboratoriumsstunden	0
Stunden für individuelles Studium	90
Vorgesehene Sprechzeiten	18
Inhaltsangabe	This course provides students with a comprehensive exploration of the historical and theoretical frameworks shaping modern and contemporary art production. It emphasizes critical engagement with key topics, including the history of contemporary art, visual cultures, art theories, and art criticism, fostering a deep understanding of the intersections between art, technology, nature, and culture.

Themen der Lehrveranstaltung	The course starts with a brief history of art criticism since the 19th century with a focus on how art critics were able to influence the history and canon: ex negativo (Leroy "Impressionism") or ex positivo (Frey "Post-Impressionism"; Barr "Cubism"). We discuss several models of historiography with maps and diagrams to recognise their scope. Session 2 is dedicated to one of the most impactful art critics in the first half of the 20th century. In his manifestos "Towards a Newer Laocoon" and "Modernist Painting" Clement Greenberg opts for a purity in the arts and reveals his premises as well as agenda (establishing abstract art). Success has many dimensions. We trace some ties to US Federal State Administration promoting the export of US culture abroad in the Cold War. Session 3 critically engages with Greenberg's medium specificity: Rosalind Krauss proposes a post-medium condition in the arts. Her text "A voyage to the North Sea" features the oeuvre of Marcel Broodthaers that serves her for developing the idea of conceptual, non-material-determined mediums. Artistic examples discussed are from Ed Ruscha, Sophie Calle, William Kentridge, James Coleman and the early video pioneers. Session 4 introduces the feminist critic Arlene Raven whose dialogical, eclectic approach in writing resonates with her topic. She is dealing with the artist duo Helen and Newton Harrison, pioneers of bio art, eco-critical art, eco-feminism. We will compare all three art critical writing styles encountered so far. Session 5 discusses biological art in the light of post colonialism (Lois Weinberger, Eva-Maria Lopez, Angelika Böck). It is centered around Okwui Enwezor's text "The postcolonial constellation" to shed light on the past, present and future of how large, representative museums handle the question of global inclusion. Session 6 introduces facets of digital imagery in pre (LLM-) AI discourses. We analyse how scholars in the 1990s and 2000s viewed the 'digital image' by framing it ontologically, ending up with very sceptical or overly optimistic views. The blackboxing of critical technology is a major argument here. One of the pioneers

	of computer graphics, Frieder Nake provides key concepts. Session 7 traces the controversies around James Bridle's "New Aesthetic" initiative and introduces concepts like the 'post-digital' or 'post-internet'. Katja Kwastek reacts to both, the criticism and the artists criticism of the criticism. Furthermore, Vladan Joler's "New Extractivism" served as a bridge between Nake's surface/subface distinction and Bridle's statement that his collection hints at what processes lie behind/underneath the shiny digital surface. Hito Steyerl's works serve to discuss visibility and ubiquitous surveillance. Session 8's analyses the term 'networked' image as promoted by the Center for the Study of the Networked Image (CSNI) in London. The curator Gaia Tedone applies this approach in her strategy of immersed "critical online following". We discuss the role of social media in curation and more specific online exhibition platforms. Session 9 deals with Adrian MacKenzie and Anna Munster's text "Operational Images and the Platform Seeing". In their view, the AI-powered 'platform seeing' begins with the advent of the photography in the 19th century only to move onto another level with mobile digital photography. In that light, we critically analyse Harun Farocki's seminal trilogy on operative images. Session 10 continues with the impact of current AI models and usages on creation and co-creation. We widen the perspective on authorship starting with Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" and discuss the new constellations of collaboration with diverse human or non-human agents in the loop.
Stichwörter	medium/post-medium conditions, hybrid formats, multiple perspectives: histories-criticisms-theories and their entanglement with politics, power structures in globalisation and network condition, plurification of intelligences/agencies in art production
Empfohlene Voraussetzungen	No recommended prerequisite.
Propädeutische Lehrveranstaltungen	

Unterrichtsform	Through lectures, readings, exercises, and discussions, the course situates these topics within broader socio-political, ecological, and philosophical contexts, encouraging students to adopt ecocritical and decolonial perspectives that challenge traditional narratives and promote inclusive and sustainable approaches.
Anwesenheitspflicht	not compulsory
Spezifische Bildungsziele und erwartete Lernergebnisse	Educational objectives Analyze the Evolution of Contemporary Art. Develop a critical understanding of the history of contemporary art and its relationship with broader cultural, social, and political developments. Foster Ecocritical and Decolonial Perspectives. Equip students with the tools to critically evaluate traditional art narratives, emphasizing inclusive and sustainable approaches that address ecological and decolonial concerns. Examine the Impact of Globalization and Technology. Investigate how globalization, digital art, virtual reality, and social media shape contemporary art, its production, and its reception. Critique Identity and Representation in Art. Foster a nuanced understanding of identity, representation, and their intersections with contemporary art practices, emphasizing inclusivity and diversity. Develop Critical and Contextual Thinking. Equip students with the analytical tools to critique artistic works and articulate their creative practices within the complex intersections of art, technology, nature, and culture. Learning outcomes Knowledge and understanding: Knowledge of ecocritical theories and their applications in visual arts and design. Specific knowledge of artistic and design techniques that promote environmental sustainability. Understanding of the processes of interaction between artistic practices and natural context, analysing them while considering the connections with other fields of knowledge, such as philosophy,

	sociology and environmental sciences. Applying knowledge and understanding: Conceive and implement artistic and design projects that respond to contemporary environment challenges, using sustainable materials and ecological techniques. Develop initiatives that involve local and global communities, promoting greater awareness and action towards environmental sustainability. Collaborate with scientists, activists and other professionals to integrate interdisciplinary knowledge into artistic and design projects. Making judgements: Collect and interpret cultural and material data from the fields of art, design, technology and spatial and curatorial practices, demonstrating the ability to place events, works and production operations in the historical context and current trends. Grasp the authority and evaluate the reliability of the various available sources. Reflect and express an independent judgement, including on social, ethical and political-cultural issues. Interpret specific facts and events, within subject of their field of study. Communication skills: Writing scientific and technical articles and reports with clarity and effectiveness. Presenting projects and ideas verbally in a professional and convincing manner. Learning skills: The strengthening of the critical operational autonomy of students. The development of their ability to choose, compare and adapt to the new knowledge and technologies.
Spezifisches Bildungsziel	Specific Educational

und erwartete Lernergebnisse (zusätzliche Informationen)	Objectives and Learning Outcomes Critical and Contextual Thinking - Acquire knowledge about key debates from the 20th century and learn to bridge past, present and futures. - Develop a critical understanding of the history and historiography of contemporary art and its relationship with broader cultural, social, and political developments. - Interpret circumstances, events and technologies in relation to art. - Reflect and express an independent judgement, including on social, socio-technical, ethical and political-cultural issues. - Learn to map and articulate their creative practices within the art-related discourses and the complex intersections of art, technology, nature, and culture. Knowing about methods, their strengths and aims - Are equipped with methods and analytical tools to critically evaluate traditional and contemporary art narratives. - Apply these conceptual tools in further contexts. Knowing about contemporary conditions - Learn about digital and hybrid forms of expression. - Examine the impact of globalization, networked media, technologies, and ecological challenges and how they shape contemporary art, its production, scope, dissemination, and reception. - Become familiarized with urgent contemporary topics, emphasizing inclusivity and diversity. Communication skills - Professionally communicate and substantiate their own decisions and justify them from a theoretical point of view. - Accompany non-textual analyses in oral and written form. Learning skills - Strengthen complex and critical thinking and self-reflection. - Develop an ability to choose, compare and adapt to the new knowledge and technologies.
Art der Prüfung	Exercises and participation during the semester (50%), written exam at the end of the semester (50%).

Bewertungskriterien	The final evaluation is based on the following criteria: - Knowledge of the covered topics, perspectives and approaches. - Critical thinking and application of the theoretical positions to other examples (transfer knowledge). - Capabilities in analyzing and contextualizing art and texts about art.
Pflichtliteratur	Greenberg, Clement: Towards a New Laocoon, in: Partisan Review, VII,4, July-August 1940, pp. 296-310. Krauss, Rosalind: A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition, London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. Raven, Arlene: Two Lines of Sight and the Unexpected Connection: Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison [1987], in: Söntgen, Beate/Voss, Julia (eds.): Why Art Criticism? A Reader, Hatje Cantz: Berlin 2022, pp. 251-265. Enwezor, Okwui. The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition, in: Research in African Literatures 34, no. 4 (2003): 57-82. (especially chapters 1-3) Nake, Frieder: Das doppelte Bild, in: *Bildwelten des Wissens*, vol. 3, no. 2: Digitale Form, 2025, pp. 40-50. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110547375-005 Steyerl, Hito: How Not To Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File, 14 min., 2013, in: YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LE3RlrVEyuo Kwastek, Katja: How to Be Theorized: A Tediously Academic Essay on the *New Aesthetic*, in: Berry, David M./Dieter, Michael (eds.): Postdigital Aesthetics: Art, Computation and Design, Palgrave Macmillan: London 2015, pp. 72–85. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137437204_6 (Steyerl: how not to be seen)

	James Bridle: The New Aesthetic, tumblr blog: https://new-aesthetic.tumblr.com Tedone, Gaia: Tracing networked images: an emerging method for online curation, in: Journal of Media Practice, 18,1: Practice Symposium, 2017, pp. 51-62. https://doi.org/10.1080/14682753.2017.1305843 MacKenzie, Adrian/Munster, Anna: Platform Seeing: Image Ensembles and Their Invisualities, in: Theory, Culture & Society, 36,5, 2019, pp. 3-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764198475 https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/0263276419847508 Meyer, Roland: 'Platform Realism'. AI Image Synthesis and the Rise of Generic Visual Content, in: Transbordeur, 9, 2025, pp. 1-18. https://doi.org/10.4000/13dwq
Weiterführende Literatur	Further readings and teaching materials will be provided in class from time to time. Greenberg, Clement: Modernist Painting [1960], in: O'Brian, John (Hg.): Clement Greenberg. The collected essays and criticism, Vol. 4: Modernism with a Vengeance 1957-1969, University of Chicago Press: Chicago/London 1993, pp. 85-93. Krauss, Rosalind: Reinventing the Medium, in: Critical Inquiry, Vol. 25, Winter 1999, pp. 289-305. Krauss, Rosalind: The Guarantee of the Medium, in: Arppe, Tiina/ Kaitaro, Timo/ Mikkonen, Kai (eds.): Writing in Context: French Literature, Theory and the Avant Gardes, (= Collegium. Studies Across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 5, 2009), in: http://helsinki.fi/collegium/e-series/volumes/volume5/005:09_Krauss.pdf (27.10.2010).

Nake, Frieder: Surface, Interface, Subface. Three Cases of Interaction and One Concept, in: Uwe Seifert, Jin Hyun Kim, Anthony Moore (eds.): *Paradoxes of Interactivity. Perspectives for Media Theory, Human-Computer Interaction, and Artistic Investigations*, Bielefeld: transcript 2008, pp. 92–109. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/2719.

Amelunxen, Hubertus von/Iglhaut, Stefan/ Ro¨tzer, Florian (eds.): Photography after photography: memory and representation in the digital age, G+B Arts: 1996. (excerpts)

Cloninger, Curt: Manifesto for a Theory of the 'New Aesthetic', in: Mute, Vol. 3, Nr. 4, 2012,
in: http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/manifesto-theory-'new-aesthetic' (10.12.2017).

Cox, Geoff/ Dekker, Annet/ Dewdney, Andrew/ Sluis, Katrina: Affordances of the Networked Image, in: The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics, No. 61-62, 2021, pp. 40-45.

Tedone, Gaia: Tracing networked images: an emerging method for online curation, in: Journal of Media Practice, vol. 18, no. 1, 2017, pp. 51-62.

The Photographers Gallery/Screen Walks: Screen Walk with Gaia Tedone, in: YouTube, 17.6.2020,
in: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=To1lr_0Gj1c (5.5.2026).

Whitaker, Amy: Art and Blockchain: A Primer, History, and Taxonomy of Blockchain Use Cases in the Arts, in: Artivate: A Journal of Entrepreneurship in the Arts, 8,2, Summer 2019, pp. 21-46.

https://doi.org/10.34053/artivate.8.2.2

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	Buik, Lisanne/Rotondi, Carmen: Designing with Intelligence. A gracious approach to AI-powered biodigital fabrication, in: Pau Alsina, Tere Badia and Andrés Burbano (eds.). Node «Arts, science, technology and society as a catalyst for change». Artnodes, 37, 2025. UOC. https://doi.org/10.7238/artnodes.v0i37.432976
Weitere Informationen	
Ziele für nachhaltige Entwicklung (SDGs)	Hochwertige Bildung