

## Ashford - Three-Dimensional Design - The Cooper Union School of Art

### Fall 2020: Section C, Wednesdays, Online and in other locations as they become available

Three-Dimensional Design at The Cooper Union is a two-semester course that introduces first-year students to the languages and skills needed to conceptualize and build three-dimensional visual experiences. Although our purpose is to learn the many techniques and histories used in the planning and fabrication of “sculpture”, this course is considered a foundational learning experience relevant to all the disciplines in the School of Art.

Through a series of assignments that prompt visual responses, we will be making things and talking about them with each other continuously. For the first few months, our work will engage the physical conditions of three-dimensional production - using simple materials and reduced forms - to make objects that present and confront the paradoxes of physical perception. Subsequently, we will apply these understandings - of orientation, scale, volume, mass, and presence - to more complex speculations that question historical identity, social formation and human consciousness. The re-assembly of materials, methods and places that occupy this historic moment of social separation and reinvention, will inevitably become part of this learning.

A significant part of class time will be taken up with the discussion of student presentations and shared responsive conversations. Close looking, careful listening and engaged speaking are essential to this process. Through these discussions, relevant historical and contemporary examples of art, architecture, and urbanism will appear. In turn, independent research and emerging sensibilities of each maker will be encouraged to address how the existing built world must change. Care in how we respond to another’s thinking and making allows the experiences we produce to live in other people. It is only through experiencing the labor and emotions involved in the actual making of things, that we might understand the radically different implications of how art can help us think and feel.

Every human being is an expert in something. Unfamiliar terms and ideas will arise periodically and provoke questions about the context of art making, and life making. Therefore, it is a requirement of this course to keep a separate documentation of the working-through of all assignments and class conversations. Also, all work must be documented and presented for an individual review with Doug Ashford at the end of each semester. By working through, documenting and remembering shared curiosities as a group, we will discover how aspects of physical life built by others in the class also build each of us. When personal research is brought back to the entire group, the sensibilities of the group transforms. There is no such thing as a bad idea or a stupid question. Nobody becomes an artist alone.

Finally, in order to collectively widen the cultural fields for our work, we will begin each class period with a group discussion of what we have seen or heard the week before that might have affected us. Each participant is expected to bring to the group something seen, heard or known, from any experience, every week, to share with the group. This can also be our time to discuss how artistic learning happens, and how Cooper Union is helping with this or not.

On-time attendance and a visible presence online is mandatory. Three unexcused absences will result in no credit for the class. Grading is calculated as: 60% assignments, 30% critical participation, 10% documentation. Late assignments will be lowered one grade for every week overdue.

Please see and keep the calendar that accompanies this syllabus.