

Antioch Statement

THE EXHIBITION AS ARTISTIC MEDIUM. Doug Ashford

"The true crisis in our cultural theory is between the view of art as object and the alternative view of art as practice." Raymond Williams

The function and habits of the contemporary museum are today under great critical and social pressure. No longer accepted as pristine containers, their galleries and catalogues are increasingly understood as repositories for ideological and emotional directives. This course will examine the role artists and audiences have had in shifting definitions of the art exhibition toward the actual production by students of an exhibition or series of exhibitions.

Students will be introduced non-traditional exhibition practices from dada to the alternative arts movement. Areas of concern such as audience participation, the creation of critical narratives and the de stabilization of stereotypes will be examined. Together we will seek to redefine the accepted notions of our public and private lives and how formal and design strategies effect social discourse. It is imperative that students understand that there is a cultural conversation going on that they can alter through critical use of exhibition spaces.

Students will then propose and produce actual exhibitions themselves from various forms of visual material. Here the dynamic of the act of collecting will become our focus as archives of the "valuable" become perceivable. Depending on the circumstances and timing of this class, our sources can spread from materials that I bring to collections already existing on the Antioch campus -- including personal artifacts and souvenirs. The way in which our culture assigns and organizes value in political and psychological ways will be our concern.

Throughout I will be stressing how the organization of culture affects what we understand as aesthetics. The reproduction of beauty through presentation and re-presentation is the phantom subject of this project.