

## NCAD Critical Cultures Elective programme, semester 1, 2020-21

All classes are ONLINE on Wednesdays at different times - 9.30 / 11.30 / 13.30 or 15.30.

To sign up for an elective, please use the on-line form sent to you by email. If you have not received the email, please email [visualculture@student.ncad.ie](mailto:visualculture@student.ncad.ie)

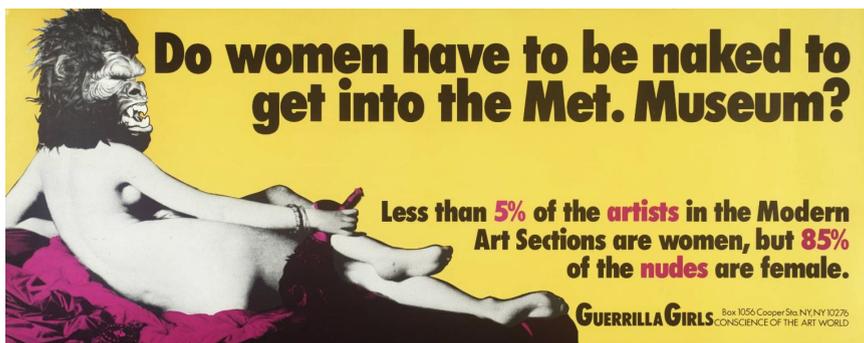
The deadline for completing the form is 4pm on **Thursday 1st October 2020**. You will hear about the allocation of places by Tuesday 6th October.

You will be sent a link to join the online class.

Classes last for up to two hours. Please ensure that you are free for the entire duration of the class.

Each elective runs for 11 weeks starting on Wednesday 7th October (with a reading week in November).

Full reading lists and timetables will be shared at the start of the classes.



1. *Understanding the Artworld in the Age of Neoliberal Globalisation* taught by Emma Mahony (9.30 AM)

When you graduate from NCAD you will need the knowledge, tools and skills to negotiate the artworld, which includes a

thorough understanding of how it operates, and the values and inequalities that shape it. This elective offers a critical overview of the artworld and the various institutions that comprise it, including the public art museum, the commercial gallery, the global biennial, the art fair, the art auction, and art in the public realm.

The elective begins by exploring the birth and evolution of the public art museum from its origins in the private collections of the aristocracy and the church, to the role the early museum played as a mechanism for governing citizens and driving nationalist and capitalist narratives. It considers evolutions in exhibition display from the birth of the White Cube in the 30s to more recent challenges to this rigid display format. Moving to the 90s it examines how the artworld and its cultural policy has internalised the values and practices of neoliberalism, resulting in the emergence of a proliferation of global biennales, art fairs and 'megamonster museums'. It then considers how artists and activists are fighting back and attempting to "liberate" the 'neoliberal museum' through a combination of strikes, boycotts and occupations that prefigure alternatives that experiment with commoning practices. Along the way, it examines the inequalities that have shaped the artworld from its inception, including gender, racial and class inequalities.

Image: Guerrilla Girls, *Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get Into the Met. Museum?*, 1989. Poster. © Guerrilla Girls. Courtesy [guerrillagirls.com](http://guerrillagirls.com).

2. *Agents of Change in 20th Century Irish Art* taught by Maebh O'Regan (9.30 AM)

This elective looks at the milestones that shaped the turbulent political landscape of 20th Century Irish Art. In the wake of the 1916 Rising, how did Irish artists move away from their colonial past and establish their own identity?

Women played a major role in the modernization of Irish art. Political revolutionaries such as Countess Markievicz and Grace Gifford were active participants in the 1916 Rising, but they were also practicing artists. Mainie

Jellett, Evie Hone, May Guinness and Mary Swanzy travelled to Europe, explored new art practices and, according to the critic, George Russell, brought 'Artistic Malaria' (aka Cubism) back to Ireland.

In the late 1960s students in the National College of Art revolted, and this led to a change of management, a change of curriculum and a change of premises. Other external influences such as those facilitated by the Rosc exhibitions led to a further widening of the Irish artistic mindset.

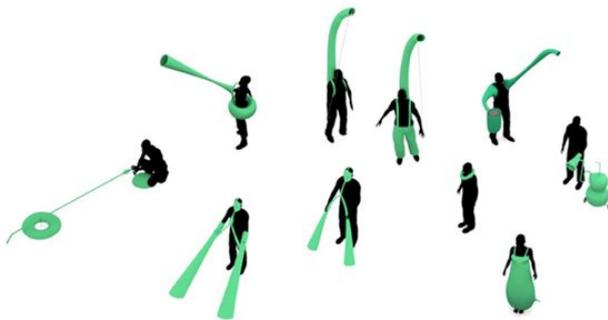
In the final three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, events in Northern Ireland fueled Irish art. Southern artists made work in protest against the troubles, while their Northern counterparts employed art as a catalyst to bring about political change.

This series of lectures spans the period from the Easter Rising in 1916 to 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2008 when, in the spirit of conflict resolution, Patrick Ireland once again reclaimed his birth name, Brian O'Doherty, at a performance in the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

Image: Mary Swanzy, *Young Woman with a White Bonnet*, c.1920



### 3. Designer as Agent of Change taught by Kate Buckley (9.30 AM)



This course provides a framework for the description, experience, critical analysis and discussion of contemporary design practice and cultures with a focus on critical and future oriented design. It will explore specific themes within contemporary design such as sustainability, technology, speculative and critical design as well as exploring ideas and projects related to protest, post-humanism, design dissent and design for debate. Through image and video-based lectures, students will be introduced to ideas and theories that have informed our contemporary understanding of design and develop an understanding of current and future

trends, assumptions and values in the design world. We will investigate how designers have become agents of change, how design practice has evolved to encompass new technologies and also explore the future of contemporary design practice.

Image: *Designs for an Overpopulated Planet: Foragers*, 2009, by Dunne and Raby

### 4. Thinking Through Materials: Theory, Method, Practice taught by Liza Foley (9.30 AM)

We live in a world surrounded and constituted by materials (concrete, wood, plastic, leather). Yet despite their prevalence in our lives, our preoccupation with their position as objects or 'things' (smartphones, furniture, clothing) means that they often go unnoticed. In this elective we will critically reflect on our use and understanding of materials. Drawing on different theoretical approaches, we will explore what they are, how we define them and how we can gain different types of knowledge (social, cultural, environmental) from them.



Focusing on a range of individual cases studies - from cultivation of cotton to the materiality of tear gas - we will explore their role in human and non-human development (and destruction), and the ways in which their various properties and applications help stimulate different sensory, emotional and imaginative experiences. Seminars will include lectures, readings, videos and practical hands-on sessions, and draw on a combination of contemporary art-based and indigenous practices, from the temporal artworks of Andy Goldsworthy to the tactile designs of Julia Lohmann and the living root-bridges of the Khāsi people.

Image: Julia Lohmann, 'Antonia' Cow Bench, 2005

## 5. Crossdressing, Crossing Genders taught by Denis Kehoe (11.30 AM)



This seminar series will use the incidence of crossdressing, from Shakespearean times to the present day, as a starting point for the examination of gender divergence and diversity. Figures such as James Miranda Barry, Claude Cahun and Grayson Perry will be studied. The course will trace how crossdressing and the disruption of gender norms can be liberating, subversive, dangerous and creative. The representation of such gender disruptions across cultures and languages, from the South American film *Kiss of the Spider Woman* to the sworn virgins of the Balkans, will be examined. Examples from popular culture such as the film *Boys Don't Cry* and the Amazon series *Transparent*, will also be interrogated. An attempt will be made to show how crossdressing and gender divergence frequently challenge overly simplistic notions about gender, sexuality, identity and desire. Each week an artist, film, novel, TV programme etc. will be dissected and discussed alongside a key theoretical text from writers such as Jack/Judith Halberstam, Judith Butler, Marjorie Garber, Susan Stryker and Michel Foucault.

Image: *Untitled (I am in training, don't kiss...)*, Claude Cahun, 1929

## 6. Tactical Media, Critical Design & Hacker Culture taught by Rachel O'Dwyer (11.30 AM)



In this class we will explore the ways in which artists, designers and activists use digital and networked media technologies to present alternative and marginalised views and/or to resist dominant politics and dominant culture. The material covered will cut across different time periods and social movements (histories of hacking from Dadaism and Situationism through to the role of Anonymous); different media forms; and different issues (biological, environmental, economic, spatial and algorithmic activism). We will also look at some of the failures and limitations of these practices within the context of recent controversies around fake-news, algorithmic governance and online trolling.

Image: Rosa Menkman, *A Vernacular of File Formats* (2010)



## 7. Usefulness taught by Lisa Godson (11.30 AM)

This elective is based around the concept of usefulness across a series of intersecting domains including fine art, product design, fashion, graphics, architecture, literature and urban planning. Drawing on the recent work by Sarah Ahmed (*What's the use? On the uses of use*, 2019), we will trace the idea of usefulness, out of use, used, used up, used to, unused, in use, useless, usable and overused. We will explore practices that seek to find new ways of being useful and new ways of thinking about publics that might variously be described as users, viewers, participants, readers and consumers. Among the case studies we will encounter are the aspirations of Constructivist artists to be involved in industrial production in the USSR, the implied 'rational' users of modernist design, the dystopian uses for design as figured by critical designers

such as Dunne and Raby, recent proposals by Arte Útil (Useful Art) for new uses for art, the aesthetics of tech-wear and protest and the investigative aesthetics of Forensic Architecture.

Image: Tania Bruguera, *Arte Útil (Useful Art)*, 2010. Sculpture installed in bathroom. Ceramic, water supply tube, flange bolts, silicone caulk, black paint

## 8. Making and Technology in Craft and Design taught by Sorcha O'Brien (1.30 PM)

This elective seminar will look at the cultural, social and political contexts of craft and design, particularly in terms of different types of making, both historical and current, physical and digital. It will focus on issues surrounding the making and production of objects, who gets access to different technologies of making and why. Types of making considered range from embroidery to 3D printing, looking at concepts of skill, flow and workmanship and how they affect the making process, both physical and digital. It will look at issues surrounding access to the knowledge and skills of making in relation to gender and amateur making, as well as the handmade and the simulacra.



Image: How to Guide: Makeshift Tear-Gas Mask. Illustrated by Marwan Kaabour, at Barnbrook, for the V&A Disobedient Objects exhibition, 2014

## 9. Documentary Effects? taught by David Crowley (1.30 PM)

Documentary has a high profile. Cinemas screen documentary films which only a few years ago would have struggled to find a slot on late-night television; art has colonised the medium with documentary film becoming the subject of engaged discussion in the art press. Documentary is now a well-established practice in animation and graphic novels. Nothing is quite as it seems. Whereas documentary film-making



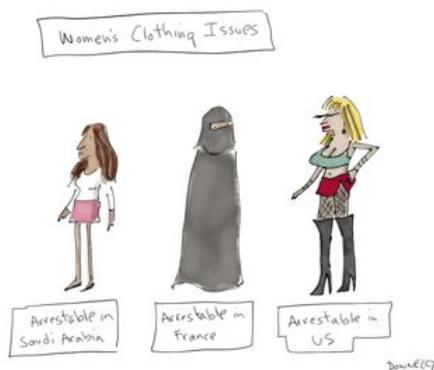
and photography once had a set of well-defined visual conventions and a moral agenda, it is now a loose term describing diverse phenomena. In this elective, we will explore the many faces of documentary to explore questions of reality and truth; the ethics of making images of others and of viewing them; parafictional practices, mockumentaries and ethical deceptions; etc.

Image: Enjoy Poverty, Renzo Martens, 2008

## 10. Cloth and Clothing: Idea, Object, Image taught by Hilary O'Kelly (1.30 PM)

This elective course will focus on cloth and clothing as forms of expression, creativity and conformity to explore the role of dress in shaping culture and identity. Spanning history, modernity and the contemporary world, subjects to be explored in seminars will include dress and health; masks and culture; the politics of hair; make-up and up-keep; tailoring, drapery and gender; bags, pockets, power and mobility.

Image: 'Women's Clothing Issues' / Source: <http://lizardonnelly.com/archives/politics-women-clothing>



## 11. What is Contemporary Art? taught by Declan Long (1.30 PM)

Barking guard dogs, an active beehive, gigantic balls of wool, cat pheromones, a bouncy-castle Stonehenge: over the past decade, all these have been main components of widely acclaimed contemporary artworks (by Anne Imhof, Pierre Huyghe, Sheila Hicks, Pamela Rosenkranz and Jeremy Deller). In each case — in dramatically different styles — these artists have sought to explore the limits of what is acceptable or appropriate as the form and content of an artwork. In this elective we will focus on the challenging diversity of contemporary art today: exploring its key practices and debates, reflecting on how it remains a field for testing new ideas and alternative approaches to



creative and critical thinking. We will reflect on some of the important ways that art has changed in the wake of modernism and postmodernism, considering recent developments in video, photography, painting, sculpture, installation, performance and other less easily categorised forms. Central to the course, however, will be consideration of how artistic practices are responding to the cultural, social and political circumstances of our current era — not least the changes and challenges triggered by the COVID 19 pandemic — often presenting us with new and difficult questions about bodies, social interaction, community, technology, territory, mass media and even the lasting significance of art itself.



## 12. Ends: A Phenomenology taught by Francis Halsall (3.30 PM)

We live in remarkable times; almost unrecognisable from 40 years ago. Through a combination of technological, social and environmental change once fixed categories seem up-for grabs. The limits of nature, gender, society and humanity are all being

challenged whilst technology renders things once ubiquitous, such as CDs, paper money and telephones, rapidly obsolete.

A quick internet search of: “the era of ... is over” throws up some diverse and remarkable suggestions for things that are reaching their end including: *Is the era of the influencer over, or just evolving?* [[https://www.dazedigital.com](https://www.dazeddigital.com)] / *Is the era of the movie star over?* [[www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)] / *Is the Facebook Era is Over?* [<https://www.linkedin.com>] / *The Era of People Like You Is Over* [<https://www.nytimes.com>] / *Lizzo And The End of Genre* [<https://www.switchedonpop.com>]

The Philosopher Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi addresses this predicament with a simple but unanswerable question: “What happens when a world dies, when outside flows of semiosis overpower and outperform existing languages and forms of life, and an entire world of values, expectations and moral codes disintegrates?” (2015: 332) This intellectually demanding and student lead seminar will attempt to think of some answers to Berardi’s question. It will involve reading-based discussions on different theoretical accounts of the “ends” of things. The aim is to give participants an understanding of some theoretical discussions of ends, and to question whether these concerns are new or consistent themes in the history of ideas. Are ends a cause for despair or a thrilling opportunity for renewal? We can discuss what talk of “ends” means for thinking about our own identities, practices and experiences right now.

Image: *Melancholia*, Lars von Trier (2011)



## 13. Vision and Spectacle taught by Silvia Loeffler (3.30 PM)

Spectacle derives from the Latin *specere* – to look at – and evokes visual experiences that concern something striking or unusual – an impressive public display in a society dominated by consumer / celebrity culture.

Based on W.J.T. Mitchell's *What do Pictures Want?* in the visual arts, literature, media, and fashion, we will look into values that are foundational to visual merchandising and branding. Our focus will be on visual displays in public space and on cultural constructions of desire. Concepts of 'public intimacy' – the quest for fulfilment and ecstasy - refer to Zygmunt Bauman's concept of the 'overflow society'.

We will evaluate 'the spectacular' from cabinets of curiosities to subversive billboard and street art - and discuss how free time, private life, leisure and personal expression take on accelerated meanings of shock, surprise and seduction, until everything crashes into the abyss of disenchantment.

*Image: Holly Perreira at Capital Dock, Dublin Docklands (Sept. 2020)*

#### 14. *Once Upon a Time in Cinema* taught by Denis Kehoe (3.30 PM)

What is the role of the director in a film? How does the director put her or his imprint on their work? How do they construct a narrative in a way that is specific to them? How do the films they make represent wider social, political and historical issues and events? This seminar series will examine the work of ten directors and how their films fit into the history of cinema. Amongst the directors under discussion will be Quentin Tarantino, Sofia Coppola, Claire Denis, Jane Campion, Spike Lee and Alfred Hitchcock. The films of these directors will be explored through a variety of lenses including psychoanalysis, theories of gender and race, Marxism, postcolonialism and auteur theory. Connections will be drawn between their creations and the worlds of fashion, graphic design, architecture and music. This elective would be ideal for anybody who wants to deepen their knowledge of the history of cinema and investigate the various potentialities of the medium of film.

