

Christine An from USA

About myself and why I participated in the course “From Bauhaus to Social Sculpture”, 2008:

I am an artist and an art teacher. I participated in the course to learn and experience. I wanted to be in a creative and open environment to find artistic stimulation.



Summary of what I got from small group discussion:

Relationship of Weimar classicism, Bauhaus, and social sculpture

- One of Goethe’s thoughts is that human beings are deficient and need development (development of culture). This is an anthropocentric idea which implies idealism—the idea that human perfection can be achieved through changes. Is aesthetic challenge this continuous change to “fix” ourselves? Trying to reach anthropocentric idealism by fixing human deficiency can be self-defeating. This is shown in Bauhaus. Bauhaus’ aim was to make changes in art, architecture, and social equality. By pushing only the pragmatic function, however, Bauhaus failed. Sole emphasis on “form following function” and equality led to destruction of form. Form became impractical. Strive for social equality produced masculine and oppressive forms. It was a naïve attempt to “fix” society.

What is aesthetic challenge? What is the role of aesthetics?

- The role of aesthetics is to create awareness. Aesthetic challenge is to pull us away from ignorance and denial.

My art work:

My installations were titled “Little Drownings,” one in a modern building and one in an old building. My basic concept was to build on the idea of “Hidden/Ignored/Denied.” On a white table in a modern building, I randomly placed clear glasses. The glasses were filled with varying amounts of water. Inside each glass, I placed small transparency pieces with typed words. Some floated, some submerged, and some placed diagonally. As light casted on the glasses throughout the day, reflections and appearance of the words changed. The words were: fragment, secret, broken, last five years, torso, I am a, last Wednesday, pain of consciousness, obsolete presence, phone call, bed sheets, guards, recipe for rage.

In an old building, glasses filled with varying amounts of water and words on transparency pieces were placed near a window sill in a straight row. The light coming through the window changed the appearance of the installation throughout the day. The words were: leaving, assault, impersonal, extinguish, demanding, conforms, incoherent suffering, perfection ruined, watching, breath, cruelty, existed.

I chose the words carefully. From big issues to daily things, we hide, ignore, and deny so much that we end up destroying ourselves and others. We hurt. We marginalize. Our rage is muffled and drowned. Some “Hidden/Ignored/Denied” things are easily seen and some are hidden deeply, like the words in the water that move, sink, and float throughout the day. The installation is in part a time piece of change. Light throughout the days change the piece. As the water dries, the words on transparency pieces will eventually be exposed—some dried and shriveled up and some preserved as they were.

As for the presentation of the installations, I chose a minimal, transparent, and meditative form. The simple transparency and movement of the glasses with varying amounts of water carried viewers from one glass to the other quietly. Although the words did not create complete sentences, the movement allowed viewers to identify with the words and create a moving poetry within themselves. The action of having to “look into” the glasses made the interaction more personal, like they are looking into themselves. Contradiction of something transparent, minimal, and delicate conveying intense ideas was also an important concept in the installations.

