

NY Arts Program Spring 2015 Faculty Seminars:

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Seminar: Art Worlds of New York: Critical Thinking in Contemporary Art

New York is made up of many art worlds—both independent and symbiotic. Some of these are formed by identification with a particular medium, others by the rejection or celebration of activism, theory, or popular culture, and still others through affiliation with an art institution like the Whitney ISP, Skowhegan, the MacDowell Colony or a particular graduate program. At one time the divisions among exhibition spaces (for profit, non-profit, and “alternative”) might have provided an overview of how these various worlds interacted. But now the relationships both among the various art worlds and between artists and institutions are much more fluid and complex. Unlike many other professions, there is not one dominant path in art making. In fact, one of the beauties of being an artist is that, to some degree, one can construct one’s own path. This freedom is also what can be most terrifying to artists.

In this seminar we will consider case studies of how artists have constructed their art lives—their communities and networks, and how these relate to the existing institutions of the art world(s). We will do this by visiting artist studios, attending lectures and exhibitions, and meeting with artists, curators and critics. We will visit a range of art world locations—Chelsea, the Lower East Side, Bushwick—and compare their dominant characterizations with the concrete experiences of artists who exhibit there. Students will be expected to keep a journal, documenting and analyzing their experience of our visits. Course work will involve trans-historical readings that reference artist communities, collaboration, and correspondence. Hearing artists, critics and historians speak about their art and scholarship will provide a context for students to begin forming a critical and conceptual foundation for their own studio /writing practice. We will do this by:

- Visiting artist studios
- Attending lectures
- Completing required reading
- Attending exhibitions
- Meeting artists, curators and critics.

Students will also have assigned reading to be posted.