

# Media Exhibition Design

Shannon Mattern, Ph.D.  
[MatternS@newschool.edu](mailto:MatternS@newschool.edu)

Class: Wednesdays 6-7:50pm

Office Hours: Room 1205  
M 1:30-3, 5-7:30, W 4-6

Throughout the semester, we'll learn by doing: we'll learn about theories and practices of display and curation by creating the Project **Media Space** [**Public Space** exhibition, which will be held in the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's 3000-square-foot gallery at 15 Nassau St., in Lower Manhattan, for two weeks in mid-May 2006. We'll pay particular attention to the unique challenges of displaying media pieces, and by addressing these practical concerns, we'll also explore such theoretical issues as the "situatedness" of media experience and the relationships between media and "space." All students enrolled in the course must be prepared to make themselves available for installation during the last week of April and the first week of May.

## Expectations:

**Reading, Attendance, and Participation:** 30%. You need to have read the assigned texts in order to participate meaningfully in class discussions – and, ultimately, to contribute to the exhibition design. And showing up is, of course, a prerequisite for your contributions, both in word and in action.

**Exhibition Reviews:** 2 @ 15%. You're encouraged to attend as many exhibitions as you possibly can this semester – for several reasons: (a) to get a sense of *what's* being exhibited, (b) to see *how* it's exhibited, (c) to judge what exhibition strategies *work* and which *don't*, and (d) to extract some insight and tips that we can apply in our own exhibition design project. Some issues and themes of interest include: sequencing and adjacencies, circulation and density, labeling, integration of media, lighting, mounting and presentation, etc. Please compose **two three- or four-page reviews** of two of those exhibits, and **email them to me**, both as a .doc/.rtf attachment and pasted into the body of your email message. I'll review *your* review, and recommend revisions. You can **then revise and post the final review to our class's online journal:** <http://www.wordsinspace.net/exdes/index.php>. One review is due to me by **March 1**, and the other by **April 1**; please then **post the revisions within a week of receiving my editorial comments**. Form and content are up to you; create something that's useful, insightful, and well presented.

**Final Class Project:** 30%. Designing the Media Space] [Public Space exhibition. At some point in the semester, we'll decide upon a division of labor – and you'll be responsible for working independently, in small groups, and with the class as a whole, to play your part – and to make sure your part fits into the "grand scheme." In order to ensure coherence and promote communication, we'll keep a class journal -- <http://www.wordsinspace.net/exdes/index.php> -- where we can post ideas, concerns, to-do lists, references, and keep aware of what everybody's up to. I'm hoping that this journal just "happens" organically – but, just to be sure it's used effectively, I'd like to ask everyone to visit regularly and **post at least once a week during the first part of the semester, and more frequently, as needed, as we move into the "hands-on" part of the class.**

**Final Evaluation and Group Assessment:** 10%. At the end of the semester, each of you will be asked to submit a 500-word statement addressing what you've learned from this experience and what you wish you *would* have learned; what you felt especially well prepared for and what you wish you had been *better* prepared for; and how this experience has contributed, if at all, to your intellectual, professional, or personal growth. In addition, I'd like for you to write a couple-sentence summary evaluating the contribution of each classmate with whom you've worked closely over the course of the semester. Your assessment of your classmates' contributions will help *me* to evaluate everyone's performance – and to ensure that everyone gets the credit that's due to them. **Due 5/10 by 5pm.**

## Required Books:

Elizabeth Ellsworth, Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy (Falmer Press, 2004) (~\$32).

Barry Lord & Gail Dexter Lord, The Manual of Museum Exhibitions (AltaMira Press, 2001) (~\$41).

Beverly Serrell, Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996) (~\$28).

Additional readings available on the portal.

## Schedule:

Wednesday, January 25:

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Wednesday, February 1:

### **PLACES OF LEARNING**

Elizabeth Ellsworth, Introduction through Chapter 6 (In Chapter 1: focus on pp. 18-22) In Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy (Falmer Press, 2004): 1-149. (*Ellsworth helps us to start off by thinking big and progressively – and minimally restrained by practicalities. Not everything she addresses is explicitly about exhibition design – but I challenge you to find potential links to our class, and identify concepts and models that could be useful in our project. We'll revisit some of the themes addressed in this book in later readings; I hope you'll be thinking about how these other texts resonate with, concretize, or contradict Ellsworth's.*)

Wednesday, February 8:

**FIELD TRIP: Ralph Appelbaum Associates**, 88 Pine St. @ **6:15pm** – Meet with Tim Ventimiglia, Associate @ RAA, who will discuss with us some of the firm's exhibition design projects and the possibilities of integrating media into site-specific installations. Please review [www.raany.com](http://www.raany.com) and "Appelbaum Press" on the portal beforehand.

### **WHAT CAN AN EXHIBITION DO?**

Svetlana Alpert, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing" In Ivan Karp & Steven D. Lavine, Eds., Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991): 25-32.

Elaine Heumann Gurian, "Noodling Around With Exhibition Opportunities," In Ivan Karp & Steven D. Lavine, Eds., Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991): 176-190.

Barry Lord & Gail Dexter Lord, Chapter 2, "The Purpose of Museum Exhibitions," Section 2.1, "Exhibitions as a Function of Museums"; and "Where Do Exhibition Ideas Come From?" In The Manual of Museum Exhibitions (AltaMira Press, 2001): 11-15, 27-38.

*Think also about what people, in various roles, do on an exhibition team:*

"Pattern Language: Clothing as Communicator," Exhibition Fact Sheet:  
<http://www.artinteractive.org/shows/patternlanguage/files/fact.html> -- note division of labor within the exhibition team

Barry Lord & Gail Dexter Lord, "Introduction: The Exhibition Planning Process" In The Manual of Museum Exhibitions (AltaMira Press, 2001): 1-8.

Wednesday, February 15:

### **THINKING ABOUT THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

Barry Lord & Gail Dexter Lord, "The Purpose of Museum Exhibitions," Sections 2.2-2.3 and "The Role of the Exhibition Designer" In The Manual of Museum Exhibitions (AltaMira Press, 2001): 15-25, 405-424.

R.S. Miles, et al., "Introduction" In Design of Educational Exhibits (Routledge, 1988): 1-10.

John H. Falk & Lynn D. Dierking, "A Place for Learning" and "Making Museums Better Learning Experiences" In Learning From Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning (AltaMira Press, 2000): 113-134, 177-204.

Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," In Ivan Karp & Steven D. Lavine, Eds., Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991): 42-56.

Judith Barry, "Dissenting Spaces" In Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson & Sandy Nairne, Eds., Thinking About Exhibitions (Routledge, 1996): 307-312

Barry Lord & Gail Dexter Lord, "How Will We Know When We Get There? Exhibition Evaluation" In The Manual of Museum Exhibitions (AltaMira Press, 2001): 39-66.

Supplemental Reading: R.S. Miles, et al., "The General Framework," "Psychological and Educational Aspects of Exhibition Design," "Planning the Work" and "Organizing the Intellectual Content" In Design of Educational Exhibits (Routledge, 1988): 10-44, 50-55.

Wednesday, February 22:

### **HOW CAN AN EXHIBITION COMMUNICATE?**

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, "Museums and Communication: An Introductory Essay" In Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Ed., Museum, Media, Message (Museum Meanings) (Routledge, 1999): 1-12.

Flora E. S. Kaplan, "Exhibitions as Communicative Media" In Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Ed., Museum, Media, Message (Museum Meanings) (Routledge, 1999): 37-58.

Bruce W. Ferguson, "Exhibition Rhetorics: Material Speech and Utter Sense" In Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson & Sandy Nairne, Eds., Thinking About Exhibitions (Routledge, 1996): 175-190.

Ivan Karp & Fred Wilson, "Constructing the Spectacle of Culture in Museums" In Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson & Sandy Nairne, Eds., Thinking About Exhibitions (Routledge, 1996): 251-267.

Mike Wallace, "Changing Media, Changing Messages" In Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Ed., Museum, Media, Message (Museum Meanings) (Routledge, 1999): 107-123.

Supplemental Reading: Sandra Bicknell, "Here to Help: Evaluation and Effectiveness" In Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Ed., Museum, Media, Message (Museum Meanings) (Routledge, 1999): 281-293.

Wednesday, March 1:

**Meet at 15 Nassau**, corner of Pine St. (take 2/3/4/5/J/Z to Wall St. or N/R/I to Rector): Please **bring laptops**, if you have them. We can't count on having A/V equipment at the gallery – so I'll distribute a Powerpoint on CDs, which you can then view on your own computers.

### **EXHIBITING MEDIA: Media on Display**

Mary Anne Staniszewski, "Framing Installation Design" (if you're short on time, skip pp. 36-44) & "Beaumont Newhall's 'New Vision' and the Triumph of Camera Aesthetics" In The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998): 2-57, 102-111. (Optional: "Installation Design and Installation Art," pp. 263-286; *We won't be discussing Staniszewski's book in class; these readings are offered to you primarily to provide some historical context for the ever-evolving challenges of designing spaces for the exhibition of media in various formats. Oh, yeah – one more thing: sorry about the terrible image reproduction. Couldn't do much about it, unfortunately, aside from asking you to buy the \$70 book.*)

Marita Sturken, "Set in Motion: The New York State Council on the Arts Celebrates 30 Years of Independents: The Moving Image in Space: Public Funding and the Installation Form" Video History Project (1994):  
<http://www.experimentalstvcenter.org/history/people/ptext.php3?id=100>

Media Art Net: Read all sections of "Overview of Media Art" ([http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview\\_of\\_media\\_art/](http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview_of_media_art/)) if you have time, but focus on "Media → Art / Art → Media: Forerunners of Media Art in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," "Form Follows Format: Tensions, Museums, Technology, and Media Art" and "Milestones of Media-Art":  
[http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview\\_of\\_media\\_art/forerunners/](http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview_of_media_art/forerunners/),  
[http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview\\_of\\_media\\_art/museum/](http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview_of_media_art/museum/),  
[http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview\\_of\\_media\\_art/milestone/](http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/overview_of_media_art/milestone/).

Beryl Graham & Sarah Cook, "Exhibiting New Media" Art Monthly (November 2002):  
<http://www.newmedia.sunderland.ac.uk/crumb/phase3/am.html> (*Quite a few of the links are now inactive – but please follow those that still work.*)

Gloria Sutton, "Exhibiting New Media Art" Rhizome Digest (November 5, 2004):  
[http://www.constantvzw.com/kris\\_search/000859.php](http://www.constantvzw.com/kris_search/000859.php)

CRUMB list: <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/new-media-curating.html>

Supplemental Listening: Baltic: Curating New Media Seminar: <http://archive.balticmill.com/index.php?termid=30427>  
(*I've listened to all the audio files; I can't say that any are terribly interesting or illuminating – but given the fact that this seminar is one of few that's focused specifically – at least in title – on the issue of exhibiting media art, you might want to listen to excerpts of some of the files.*)

Wednesday, March 8:

**RAW MATERIAL:** The jury announces which pieces will be included in the show.  
**PLANNING AND CURATION**

Barry Lord & Gail Dexter Lord, Chapters 8-11 & 13: "Planning and Managing an Exhibition Programme," "Financial Planning and Management of Exhibitions," "Curatorship in the Exhibition Planning Process," and "Interpretive Planning" In The Manual of Museum Exhibitions (AltaMira Press, 2001): 261-392.

Wednesday, March 15:

**EXHIBITION MEDIA: Using Media to Support the Work on Display**

Beverly Serrell, Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996).

Tate Collection, "Insight: Production Tour": [http://www.tate.org.uk/collections/in\\_production.htm](http://www.tate.org.uk/collections/in_production.htm)

Rhizome ArtBase: <http://www.rhizome.org/artbase101.rhiz>

Walker Art Center, Art on Call: <http://newmedia.walkerart.org/aoc/index.wac>

MoMA Audio: [http://moma.org/visit\\_moma/audio.html](http://moma.org/visit_moma/audio.html)

ArtMobs: Remix MoMA: [http://mod.blogs.com/art\\_mobs/](http://mod.blogs.com/art_mobs/)

SFMOMA Podcasts: [http://www.sfmoma.org/education/edu\\_podcasts.html](http://www.sfmoma.org/education/edu_podcasts.html)

Slate's Authorized Audio Tours: <http://www.slate.com/id/2123266/>

Supplemental Reading: Barry Lord & Gail Dexter Lord, Chapter 12: "Exhibition Text" In The Manual of Museum Exhibitions (AltaMira Press, 2001): 393- 404; R.S. Miles, et al., "Choosing Media and Their Modes of Use" In Design of Educational Exhibits (Routledge, 1988): 78-101. (*Although much of what Miles discusses is more relevant to museum exhibits, he does offer a much broader view of "media" – and may offer something that can inform our project.*)

Wednesday, March 22:

## **NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

**Please be sure to visit 15 Nassau sometime between March 27 and April 12 for the Parsons MFA student exhibition. Word has it that they've got a rather ambitious installation plan!**

Wednesday, March 29:

**GUEST SPEAKER: Michael Sarff**, exhibition construction manager @ the Guggenheim; exhibition designer for Eyebeam, Pace Wildenstein, etc. (recent shows include “Breaking and Entering: Art and the Video Game, 12/10/05 - 1/28/06); media artist in MTAA (<http://mteww.com/>).

## **FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT PLANNING**

Barry Lord & Gail Dexter Lord, Part II: “Where? Space and Facilities for Exhibitions” The Manual of Museum Exhibitions (AltaMira Press, 2001): 67-257.

National Gallery of Art, “Anatomy of an Exhibition: Art Nouveau, 1890-1914”: <http://www.nga.gov/feature/nouveau/nouveau.htm> -- See “Concept,” “Design,” and “Construction”

Supplemental Reading: Daniel Buren, “Function of Architecture: Notes on Work in Connection With the Places Where It Is Installed Taken Between 1967 and 1975, Some of Which Are Specially Summarized Here”; Brian O’Doherty, “The Gallery as a Gesture”; Rosalind E. Krauss, “Postmodernism’s Museum Without Walls”; and Reesa Greenberg, “The Exhibited Redistributed: A Case for Reassessing Space” In Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson & Sandy Nairne, Eds., Thinking About Exhibitions (Routledge, 1996): 313-367.

Wednesday, April 5:

## **PLANNING FOR INSTALLATION**

Victoria Newhouse, “Placing Art” In Art and the Power of Placement (New York: Monicelli, 2005): 212-283. (*The scans are slightly oversized; try printing at 80%.*)

Barry Lord & Gail Dexter Lord, Chapters 14-16: “Construction and Installation,” “Lighting the Show,” and “The Role of the Project Manager” In The Manual of Museum Exhibitions (AltaMira Press, 2001): 425-454.

Supplemental Reading: Germano Celant, “A Visual Machine: Art Installation and Its Modern Archetypes” In Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson & Sandy Nairne, Eds., Thinking About Exhibitions (Routledge, 1996): 371-386.

Wednesday, April 12:

## **PLANNING, cont. (including planning for the opening event)**

Excerpts from Carin Kuoni, Ed., Words of Wisdom: A Curator’s Vade Mecum on Contemporary Art (New York: Independent Curators International, 2001): including words from Donna De Salvo, Senior Curator, Tate Modern, London; Steve Dietz, former Director of New Media Initiatives, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Robert Fleck, Independent Curator; Dana Friis-Hansen, Chief Curator, Austin Museum of Art, TX; Lucy Lippard, writer, activist; Olu Oguibe, artist, critic; Mari Carmen Ramírez, Curator of Latin American Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Jérôme Sans, Co-director, Palais de Tokyo; Ingrid Schaffner, Senior Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA

Excerpts from Carolee Thea, Ed., Foci: Interviews with Ten International Curators (New York: Apex Art Curatorial Program, 2001): including words from Hou Hanru, Rosa Martínez, Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Barbara London, Kasper König

Wednesday, April 19:

**Meet Hendrik Garrets**, LMCC's Artist Space Manager, @ **I5 Nassau** to discuss our installation plans – which means that we'd better *have* an installation plan by this time!

**WORKSHOP**

Wednesday, April 26:

**WORKSHOP**

Wednesday, May 3:

**PREP FOR INSTALLATION; BEGIN INSTALLATION MAY 4; PREP FOR OPENING ON MAY 9**

Of course most of you will have deadlines in your other classes at this time, too, so you'll need to plan ahead.

Wednesday, May 10:

**REVIEW; DEBRIEF; EVALUATE  
DE-INSTALLATION MAY 20-21**