

Simonetta Moro: Course Narrative

In the following pages I will illustrate the content of a number of courses I have taught at Eugene Lang College, The New School for Liberal Arts, and Parsons the New School for Design, beginning with the most recent ones. For the sake of clarity and conciseness, I decided to group all the Drawing courses under the same section, and the same I did with the Mapping courses, which have changed title, level and syllabus a few times in the past, but not the core concepts. I will discuss how my courses have evolved over time, what I decided to change and why, and strategies I adopted to improve them. I will also comment on specific course activities, many of which are documented in the Evidence section.

The Evidence section contains course syllabi, selected course materials, and selected course projects. The web Dossier includes picture galleries (in most cases classified under “course code.c. student projects”), and provides a quick and easy way to view them. The Picture Galleries are not password-protected. As for the courses that I no longer teach or that have been momentarily archived, I will discuss them in the Selected Past Courses section. Please refer to the Evidence section for syllabi and course materials of past courses not mentioned here.

Note: the classification system in this Appendix corresponds to the Evidence section. For example, to find syllabi and other course materials related to the Mapping courses, see **Evidence: A.1.1.** (a, b, c, d)

The letter preceding the numbers refers to the category in the Dossier (A=Teaching).

A.1 Course Packages

Active Courses

- A.1.1. Mapping (Personal Mapping in NYC, 2009; Mapping it Out, 2007- 2008; Mapping the City/Mapping the Self, 2004-2006)
- A.1.2. Drawing (Drawing from Observation, 2008-2009; Drawing in Space, 2007; Advanced Drawing, 2006; Drawing the Line, 2003-2005)
- A.1.3. Image/Text (2009-2010)
- A.1.4. Skybridge Curatorial Project (2006-2010)
- A.1.5. Senior Thesis (Parsons, 2010)

Selected Past Courses

- A.1.6. Modes: Space (2009)
- A.1.7. Painting 4 (Spring 2008)
- A.1.8. Hearing Art/Seeing Music (2004-2008)
- A.1.9. Nodes & Networks: War Culture and the Arts / Art and War (2004-2006)
- A.1.10. Arts in New York City (2004-2007)

In the Evidence Section Only

- A.1.11 Nodes & Networks: Art of the Subway
- A.1.12 Meaningful Image
- A.1.13 Studio 2: Advanced Drawing
- A.1.14 Visual Problem Solving

Active Courses

A.1.1 Mapping (Personal Mapping in NYC, 2009; Mapping it Out, 2007- 2008; Mapping the City/Mapping the Self, 2004-2006)

In its various stages of evolution, the “Mapping” course has maintained many of its core objectives and themes throughout the years, but it has also morphed quite significantly every time I taught it, in the effort to keep the course material fresh and up to date. Connecting the course to major cultural events and art exhibitions in the city influenced the content of the curriculum. In addition, the different student group dynamics that I observed over the years, provided a striking element of variety in each course’s outcomes.

From the outset, the course curriculum involved the exploration of the city as a springboard for the conceptualization and production of original artwork, and as a vehicle for developing a new awareness of the urban environment. Many students happen to be coming from different parts of the U.S. or abroad, and know very little about New York City. The course also aims at providing an alternative reading of the historical European avant-garde movements under the rubric of map-making and walking as aesthetic practice.

This course is based on studies of maps and urban representations, which have been at the core of my artwork for a number of years. I wanted to communicate my personal experience with different environments and cities, while tackling issues of cultural nomadism, dislocation, urban renewal and social change, with “mapping” as a metaphor and tool to visually represent them. There has been an extraordinary amount of study and artwork on these issues, particularly in the last decade or so; their genealogy can be traced back to at least Baudelaire and his writings on the city of Paris, down to Walter Benjamin and the avant-gardes of the early 20th century, passing through Dada, Surrealism and Situationism, and arriving at contemporary notions of psychogeography. I imagined a course that would tie together these experiences and ideas, by providing students a historical and cultural backgrounds as outlined above, and by giving them the tools to engage hands-on on their personal explorations of the city.

One of the assumptions of the course is that the city becomes the “laboratory” for investigations that cross several boundaries – visual and public art, urban studies, sociology, activism, philosophy, geography, and cartography. Psychogeography has by now become a buzzword in the cultural debate around urban art practices, however in its original meaning (first defined by the Situationists in the 1950s) it underpins the concept that is at the basis of a variety of artistic strategies that are studied and practiced in this course. In the first issue of *Situationniste Internationale* (1958), Guy Debord described psychogeography as “The study of specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals”. A City like New York has provided endless material to be explored, studied and used creatively for class projects.

I consider the Mapping course a truly interdisciplinary class. It was conceived from the start as a combination of studio practice and seminar discussion, which set it apart from both traditional studio courses taught at Parsons and typical Lang seminars based on reading and writing only. This is still an unusual format for Lang courses (although the definition of seminar does not exclude, in principle, the notion of practice), and one that is hardly classifiable with traditional “specialized” disciplines. This format does present some challenges (particularly when it is evaluated according to standard, discipline-based forms of evaluation) but it pays off by providing a well-rounded and intensive point of entry into the subject. I believe that there is tremendous value in bridging the gaps between various fields of knowledge, and opening up young minds to the possibilities that art can bring to everyday life. The benefits for students are a comprehensive and horizon-broadening education, grounded in historical models, and open to contemporary art practices. Many of the student responses highlight these facts as a particularly valuable learning outcome (see p. 7).

Recently, an article appearing on the New York Times mentions my “Map-Making in New York City” course (note that I use the abbreviated form “mapping” instead) as an example of courses taught at the New School with an emphasis on the city. (See Evidence: A.1.1.d, “Backpacks Among the Briefcases”, by Rachel Aviv, NYT, July 15, 2010)

1.1.i Course Evolution

The content and structure of the course has been updated over the years based on personal observations, course evaluations, suggestions from students and colleagues, and experiences that are pertinent to the subject matter. The first change that took place was to turn the course from a twice-a-week, 100’ per session course into a once-a-week, 220’ per session course, and raising the level from 2000 to 3000. The former decision was based on the necessity of having a longer chunk of time during which the class could take field trips, work on extensive projects, watch a movie or a series of slides, and move from an introductory reading to a practical assignment with virtually no interruptions. With the Arts concentration having reached a more even distribution of introductory and upper-level courses, and because of the time reduction on once-a-week courses, which brought the Mapping class to 160’ per session (with an added 40’ “online” component, see below), in the Fall 2009 the course was returned to a 2000 level.

Given the broad character of the course and its connection with New York City, it makes sense to keep it open to different levels of student population, from freshmen to seniors: the former will find an introduction to themes they may further explore in upper level art history courses, art studio courses, or Urban Studies and Culture and Media Studies courses; the latter will find a new way of looking at subjects and topics they may have already encountered in the course of their studies, and often develop a project that will culminate in an independent Senior Work. This has happened in many cases; see p. 6 of this document, and Evidence: C.2.2 (Appendix 5: CD with supplemental materials).

Within the once-a-week format, I structured each weekly session as a complete “package” revolving around a specific theme or project. The interconnection between theory and practice became more fluid and compact at the same time. To prevent the risk of students losing their focus from one week to the next, I made extensive use of the Blackboard, our online internal web portal. I have used Blackboard in all my courses, but it proved particularly useful for the Mapping class, since much of the reading and viewing material can now be found online, and the theme itself leads naturally to be explored in blogs and web publications. Through Blackboard I have been able to upload readings, links, and images, and to stay in touch with students via the discussion board and regular announcements. For our latest collaboration, “Grown Your Own”, the public art project that was part of Personal Mapping in NYC in Fall 2009, an independent blog enabled the class to communicate with other courses and external collaborators (<http://growingspace.wordpress.com/>). (Blackboard screen shots samples and course materials available in Evidence: A.1.1.b)

The increasing use of technology in art, in communication and in teaching methods has certainly influenced the course makeup over the years. Although I still retain free-hand drawing as a basic course requirement, students make more and more use of digital photography, video, blogs and social networks as mediums of expression and communication tools.

Course readings are now provided through links to websites, blogs and newspaper articles posted on Blackboard, as a way to integrate the traditional reader (or “course pack”) that I still use, comprised of selected readings culled from books and articles. Last year the course pack went digital, available through e-reserves. However, I am considering re-introducing the printed version, which for several reasons students seem to prefer.

Right now I am studying open-source programs such as Google Sketchup, which will allow me to introduce students to simple 3D drawing and modeling that may be used in conjunction with more traditional art-making processes during class projects

1.1.ii Selected Class Projects and Collaborations (images available in Appendix 2: A1.1.ii: Sample Course Projects, and in web Dossier, Evidence: A.1.1.c).

The highlight of my Mapping courses are the site-specific projects and collaborations that my students developed over each semester, and the public events in which we participated:

- Conflux Festivals in 2004 and 2008;
- Provflux Festival in Providence, R.I., 2005;
- Flux Factory exhibition NYNYNY in 2007;
- Guided tour and lectures offered by students of the Columbia Student Coalition in 2008;
- Art in Odd Places in Fall 2009.

By making these events part of the curriculum, I emphasize the importance of engaging with a broader community of artist and activists, and to understand the life of the city from within. I will focus on the most significant experiences, providing examples of student work and other documentary evidence in the appropriate section.

Art in Odd Places, 2009 (see p. 1 of Appendix 2: A.1.1.ii Sample Course Projects)

In Fall 2009 Eve Mosher was the Visiting Artist for the Visual Arts. Mosher joined a sequence of accomplished artists who have honored the college with their presence since the Visiting Artist program was inaugurated in 2006. Eve Mosher creates public art projects that are concerned with environmental and sustainability issues, and of a participatory and democratic nature: a perfect fit for our students and for Lang College's standing values. Mosher and I applied for the public art festival "Art In Odd Places: Signs" with a joint proposal involving my "Personal Mapping in NYC" class, her workshop "Food for Growth", and Janet Kravak's "History and Theory of Exhibitions and Institutions" course. Our accepted proposal, "Signs of Growth", centered around the idea of creating signs that would highlight possible spots on 14th street (the designated site of the festival) where food could be grown. With this project, we wanted to raise awareness of the underutilized spaces in the city that could be put to the service of the community, and the importance of growing and consuming local food. Later, at one of the Art in Odd Places meetings, we met artist Tattfoo Tan with whom we decided to join forces, given the commonality of our respective projects. This expanded collaboration resulted in the project "Signs of Growth/Mobile Gardens", after Tan's creative repurposing of salvaged materials and plants to construct portable gardens.

The first thing I learned from this project is that collaboration on a large scale is not easy. We were dealing with four classes (including the "Skybridge Curatorial Project" for the Skybridge part of the exhibition) and more than fifty students, two guest artists and very little space where we could actually meet and work on the pieces for the installation/performance. Somehow we managed to work it out, by dividing tasks among the courses and the students and by "reimagining" the use of classrooms and common areas at the College. Coordination was challenging, but in the end it turned out to be a successful event. The process developed students' abilities to work in teams and meet strict deadlines, questioned their ideas about art, its role in public places and influence on society at large. It made them experience first-hand what it means to promote an idea by literally taking it to the street and engaging the general public. (See Evidence: A.1.1.c in web Dossier for pictures and videoclips of the event)

West Harlem Walk (spotlight on: gentrification), 2008 (see p. 2-5 of Appendix 2: A.1.1.ii Sample Course Projects)

Mapping it Out in Fall 2008 focused in many ways on issues of gentrification and transformation within the city. A group of activist students from Columbia University gave a talk for my class on the

theme of Eminent Domain in the context of Columbia University's planned expansion in West Harlem. I credit my Skybridge student assistant at the time, Monica Fagioli, who established that connection. They subsequently organized a tour of the sites that were designated for the expansion (and considered "blighted"), with a local community organizer and Harlem expert going by the name of Doctor G. It was quite astonishing to see the places and get to know the history of the neighborhood from an extremely informed and articulated insider; the students were overwhelmed by impressions that were later elaborated in written assignments, including maps and other artifacts.

Flux Factory, Fall 2007 (see p. 6 of Appendix 2: A.1.1.ii Sample Course Projects)

In 2007 "Mapping it Out" joined forces with "Lab: Cluster 8" from Parsons' Foundation Program and participated in a city-wide event at Flux Factory, a non-profit art organization located in Long Island City. The event was an exhibition and site-specific installation called "NYNYNY", with more than 70 participating local and international artists. The aim was to create a new 3D Panorama of the City of New York, inspired to the Panorama commissioned by Robert Moses in 1964 for the World Fair (and currently displayed at the Queens Museum in New York). This new Panorama, though, was supposed to be the opposite of an "objective" rendition of the city, emphasizing instead the subjective, transient and imponderable aspects of the urban landscape.

Our team of students focused on the neighborhood where they study and spend most of their time – Greenwich Village. The motto of the project was "Our Campus= Our Neighborhood", a statement that clearly marks the close connection with the urban environment that surrounds the School buildings. It was the students' intention to highlight a positive notion of belonging to a neighborhood, as opposed to being part of an enclosed campus.

Collaborating with John Roach and Julia Gorton from Parsons Foundation was an enjoyable and instructive experience. Students from both sides were able to appreciate different approaches and methodologies applied to the same sets of problems. While Parsons students brought their highly skilled and product-oriented designs to the table, Lang students offered the conceptual framework to define the project from a broader perspective. This collaboration made me aware of the benefit of having shared curricular activities across the divisions of the New School. I look forward to continue working with John Roach and other faculty on common course programs, and to further develop a research project around issues of space and its uses (see Evidence: B.6.2 / B.6.3)

Provflux, Providence, RI 2005 (see p. 7 of Appendix 2: A.1.1.ii Sample Course Projects, and A.1.1.c in web Dossier)

After Mapping the City/Mapping the Self participated in Conflux Festival 2004, the class of 2005 went to Providence, R.I., to take part in an exhibition and cultural event on the theme of psychogeography. The Glowlab group, which organized Conflux 2004, collaborated with PIPS (Providence Initiative for Psychogeographic Studies) to realize the annual Provflux Festival, a weekend-long event with art exhibitions, performances, lectures and public interventions. The Faculty Development Fund sponsored the field trip, which took place at the end of May. Student works - including Elizabeth Hamby's, my teaching assistant at the time - were represented in the Cube gallery, in the center of downtown Providence. The experience was a full-immersion event where people from every corner of the world could socialize and exchange ideas, see stimulating works and listen to presentations in a very unusual and informal environment.

Besides these projects, there have been many important guest speakers: from Joyce Kozloff, who opened her Soho loft to the class and showed her map paintings, to Sono Osato, who gave us a highly informed tour of DUMBO, Brooklyn, while bringing to life the history of the neighborhood and the transformations brought by urban renewal from an artist's point of view. Marjetica Potrc (Vera List fellow and former mentor) gave us a talk on her projects for the barrios in Caracas, and colleague

Cecilia Rubino graciously took us on a tour downtown tracing the steps of Walt Whitman across the Brooklyn Bridge. I interpreted this particular walk in a drawing called “Walking with Whitman”, which is a good example of artwork inspired by my didactic activity. (See drawing in the web Dossier under A.1.1.c – In and Out the Grid, 2006, and in the Psychogeography section of my website.)

1.1.iii Assessment of Outcome

The variety and quality of student works; the degree in which their initial ideas evolve during the semester, as many projects and assignments demonstrate; and the long-term influence of these ideas in students curricula, as exemplified by the numerous Senior Works and Independent Projects centered on the concept of mapping, testify to many successful outcomes of this course.

Although I try hard not to create a “house style”, I am pleased to see that students carry on and develop many of the ideas that they started in the Mapping class. This is partly due to the currency and topicality of the subject matter, and to the interdisciplinary quality of the themes explored, to which students from different paths and interests can relate.

A few examples of independent studies and senior works:

Yueyi Zhang wrote her senior work for Spring 2010 inspired by Mapping it Out (which she took in Fall 2007). She used my syllabus and course readings to outline her thesis. The final Senior project, “Mapping it Out: Tea York”, is a virtual map of tea drinking in NYC.

Aria Boutet’s independent study, “Woman Walk”, which I supervised in Fall 2009, is based on a concept she outlined for the Mapping class she took in Fall 2008. I actually participated in the project as one of the performers, and I am particularly grateful to Aria for this experience.

Maya Barrera-Loeb did an independent study with me in the Summer 2009 in which she mapped out and explored the history of the Westbeth community in the West Village. She made reference to readings I gave her from the Mapping class, and applied what she learned in the Sybridge Curatorial class (which she took in Spring 2009), in conceiving an exhibition centered on Westbeth memorabilia.

Andrea Fischbach (Personal Mapping in NYC, 2009) completed her Senior Work in Spring 2010 on exploring and mapping three major cities: New York, Tokyo and Los Angeles. She created a self-designed magazine as part of her project.

Bridget Stixrood “Burning Amber Memories” is a collection of poems and maps/drawings/collages on the theme of memory and the city. Bridget took my Mapping the City/Mapping the Self class in 2005 and graduated in 2008.

Elizabeth Hamby’s complex and ambitious year-long Senior Work (part of her BAFA studies) on space and place, was partly inspired by the work she did as a teaching assistant in my Mapping the City / Mapping the Self class in 2005.

1.1.iv Quality of Student Work

The way I define quality in student work for this course has to do with the variety of perspectives they embrace. It is not only an acquisition of skills (like in a traditional drawing or writing course), but a broadening of their horizons. Becoming fluent in connecting the various fields and approaches involved, developing a creative use of texts and observations and being able to visualize them in a personal and convincing way is what I aim for my students to achieve. The selection of student projects and papers in the Evidence section, amply demonstrates the high quality of student work, both from a conceptual and aesthetic point of view.

1.1.v Student Evaluations

Student evaluations for this course show extremely positive responses. In many cases, students point out the successful blending of theory and practice (the combination of readings, hands-on assignments and walks); the “interdisciplinary” nature of the course; how the course broadened their horizons, their understanding of the “real world”, and made them see things in a different way. One comment says: “I love Lang classes that are less focused on just reading and writing; this class gave me a chance to make art, not just talk about it”.

Selected student comments from course evaluations

Fall 07:

-“This was a very creatively + intellectually stimulating class”

(how did the required reading or research enhance your experience in the class)

-“everything was connected, and worked well”

-“it was informing for real life and to participate in the installation”

-“very in depth – forced me to consider everyday issues in a different way”

(what is your overall evaluation of the class)

-“it was very enriching and a pleasure”

-“a very good syllabus and a very good lab. I liked it a lot”

-“Wonderful! Brought a new type of awareness to a ‘mundane’ activity + sites”

-“truly enjoyed, it I wish I could take it again”

(what did your instructor do best) “responding to comments, and presenting the readings very clearly”

-“she combined theory and practice really well and the interdisciplinary teaching approach worked out very well”

-“unify the group and act as a leader”

-“apply reading materials to actual practice”

-“Generate enthusiasm and look for city-based examples of class materials”

(additional comments)

-“I like how productive our thoughts are in this class”

-“Please design a ‘mapping 2’!! I’m going to take it again!”

-“Mapping it Out Part Deux please?”

Fall 08:

(what topic/issue/reading was most valuable and why)

-“visiting the different parts of the city with other artists. Seeing the ways they appropriate themselves in NYC”

-“all of it was great and relevant”

(how did the required reading or research enhance your experience in the class)

-“they added depth and context to the experience of the course”

-“the readings tied into our studio projects – tied into our walks, tours, etc. Each part enhanced the whole – deepened our thought processes on space, transforming the city”

(what did your instructor do best)

-“Simonetta is informative, positive and was easy to learn from because of her pedagogy and her personality/attitude in class”

-“talked with us and took us out in NYC!”

-“she had a good knowledge of topics and took us to interesting places for class trips”

-“the class trips were always helpful in understanding course ideas”

-“great at looking at everyone’s work with a curious and critical eye”

-“fostered development of independent ideas/exploration/artistic endeavors”

(what is your overall evaluation of the class)

-“good, I learned a lot more than I thought I was going to.”

-“I would recommend this class to a friend. I would take a class by Prof. Moro again”.

-“very interesting, the Harlem + DUMBO walks made course ideas relevant to the ‘real world’”

(additional comments)

-“sometimes we could have been given more background (many of us are art-historically ill-informed) – but our ideas/engagement were always valued”

-“I loved all the trips we took and the people we met”

-“My only prof this semester who did midterm evaluations for students. This was very helpful”

-“[the professor was] always helpful, very knowledgeable of subject”

-“This opened the door for me and my art, I can’t wait to make more!”

1.1.vi Future Developments

In Fall 2011 the course will become a First-Year Advising course. I believe this will be an interesting challenge, and it will provide a exciting way to engage young students with the life of the city and the artistic possibilities it offers. It is my intention to cover more ground in the history of cartography, and in current trends in contemporary art. Following some recent student comments, more attention will be given to exploring specific ways to draw maps, and the way artists have done it. Walks and external collaborations will be maintained and better integrated in the curriculum.

In fall 2010, I started a collaboration with Hollygirt High School in Nottingham, UK, following a contact by Principal Anne Standing and Professor David Briggs who were interested in my “Peripatetic Box” project (see Evidence: B.7.2 / B.7.3). Professor Briggs led a group of students through the streets of Nottingham to explore the city according to the psychogeographical guidelines that are found in my Peripatetic Box. His students are actually going to build a new version of my Box, effectively turning it into a “prototype” for urban explorations. I am working on this connection toward a possible exchange between the School in Nottingham and a New York institution.

A.1.2 Drawing (Drawing from Observation, 2008-2009; Drawing in Space, 2007; Advanced Drawing, 2006; Drawing the Line, 2003-2005)

“There is an immense difference between seeing a thing without a pencil in the hand and seeing it *while drawing* it. Even the object most familiar to our eyes becomes totally different if one applies oneself to drawing it: one perceives that one didn’t really know it, one had never really *seen* it.”

Paul Valéry, *Degas, Dance and Drawing*

I consider the teaching of drawing as one of the most exhilarating and rewarding processes. I have been drawing since I can remember, and very early on I mastered observational drawing skills and a variety for old master’s techniques. Drawing gives me the confidence of understanding something about the world – how things are made, how a body is perceived through light and shadows, how a building is situated in space. Drawing is both result – the name of an actual object - and process – a verb; it is living thought, knowledge in action, fluid exchange between inner and outer reality, concentration tool, and perceptual aid. As Kimon Nicolaïdes said in his well known textbook for art students, “learning to draw is really a matter of learning to see – to see correctly – and that means a good deal more than merely looking with the eye.”¹

What Nicolaïdes meant here is something that anyone familiar with drawing knows: only when we draw something we truly grasp the form, the volume, the presence of an object in space, the complicated pattern formed by edges, recessions, concave and convex elements, in sum, everything that gives meaning and expression to that particular thing. Drawing bypasses verbal analysis (which in fact often impedes a non-prejudiced representation of an object), and is more than communication: it is a thinking process.² Drawing promotes steady focus, concentration and memory; interestingly, it is perceived as a blessing by many students who feel overwhelmed by the frenetic pace of their media-saturated daily life. The majority of my students loved the class meeting on a Friday afternoon: they felt they could release the entire week’s tension by drawing!

In the various Drawing courses I have taught the focus is mostly on representational drawing, with the exception of Advanced Drawing, in which the possibilities of the medium are explored in a more conceptual way. Through the representation of real objects, whether still lifes, the human figure or architecture, my goal is for students to acquire a visual vocabulary to understand the world in its visible forms. By having students practice their observation skills, I intend to give them a solid structure against which to assess progress. My concept of drawing emphasizes exactitude and measurement; however, process, interpretative freedom and expression also play major roles.

I ultimately believe that drawing from observation provides access to one’s imagination, by unlocking the invisible dimension through the visible world. Drawing is a way of knowing through experience. One not only learns to draw, but learns *from* drawing: drawing can be conceived as exercise, as a tool and not an end in itself – that is, not aimed at producing the beautiful drawing per se, but to learn how to see. In this sense drawing becomes a cognitive process, not just a form of self-expression.

Based on the idea that drawing is a “language of seeing”, my course aims at developing perceptual abilities, and to coordinate the eye and the hand in order to visually translate the information acquired through direct observation. The message I try to convey is that everybody can draw, if given proper instruction. I try hard not to impose a specific style, or manner of drawing, and preserve instead the individuality of each student’s voice. The beautiful thing about seeing eighteen different version of one drawing assignment, lined up against the wall for the weekly critique, is that they really *are* different; I see this again and again, and it never ceases to amaze me. I can teach students the same techniques, have them work within the same parameters, and the results will inevitably reflect the

¹ Kimon Nicolaïdes, *The Natural Way to Draw: A Working Plan for the Art Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941).

² Physicist Erich Harth theorized that both speech and visualization evolved as thinking skills, not communication skills, as pointed out by Peter Steinhart in *The Undressed Art: Why We Draw* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 38.

personality of the draughtsman. When students see that, they learn that nobody and nothing will take away their uniqueness, and that the way they make things is really their own. I try to guide them in understanding their particular nature, to recognize it in their drawings, and to work with it. For instance, one student may have a propensity for color, another one for expressionistic gesture, yet another one for analytical detailed cross-hatching; I have them try different things, but I also acknowledge their inclinations.

A.1.2.i Effective Teaching: Criteria to Assess Progress

The weekly class critique is one of the most effective ways to assess progress and make it visible to the students. At the beginning of class, I start by asking them to display their assignments for the day, side by side, and I spend at least 30' analyzing them, asking questions and comparing results. I comment on line quality (the degree of variety that can be detected in a line, from mark pressure to thickness, texture, tone and so on), composition, rendering, use of perspective (if the assignment requires it), and so on. My approach to drawing is based on a good amount of objective criteria that can be compared and learned, so that students get a clear sense of what constitutes improvement in their works. I try to critique their work in the most respectful and tactful way; after years of teaching I believe I have greatly improved this aspect of my pedagogy, and I managed to create a comfortable and safe environment, where students feel listened, followed and encouraged to speak and experiment. From recent student evaluations and informal talks with students I gather that my efforts have been successful.

I also make sure to evaluate progress in relation to each student's capabilities and experience: many of my drawing courses have had a mix of students from every level, from freshmen to seniors, from students with experience in drawing to students with little or no experience. I quite like having this variety in the class, and I am used to tailoring specific assignments for different student's levels.

A.1.2.ii Examples of Student Progress

In Appendix 2: A.1.2, example 1 (Kashanie La Grotta), I illustrate an example of student progress that I consider particularly successful, given the starting point of this student. In Appendix 2: A.1.2, example 2 (Will Klein), I illustrate an example of student progress that shows a refinement of previously acquired skills, of a very motivated and talented student. The criteria that define the quality of these drawing are similar in both cases (attention to line, construction, energy, accuracy, etc.), but the way I determine progress has to do with each student's particular case and personal growth.

A question I often hear from students is "what makes a good drawing?". They know a "good" drawing when they see it of course, but they may not be able to articulate its characteristics.

A lot of what makes a "good" drawing is in the line quality. One of the first lessons I teach is how to free one's hand in order to produce a more lively, dynamic and varied line. It is not so much about being accurate or descriptive, at least in the beginning stages. By exercising gesture drawing, it is possible to achieve that particular fluidity of line that allows for more sophisticated drawings to be made. (See Appendix 2: A.1.2.ii Drawing Process: Gesture)

A.1.2.iii Assessment of Outcome

The comment I have mostly heard from students since I began teaching drawing is that they did not expect to work "so hard" in a drawing class. There is indeed a general underestimation of the amount of work that goes into a drawing, when it is based on the observation of reality. Drawing can be a lot of fun, but it is also tough, fastidious work, often a source of frustration. This is all good. I often tell my students that frustration is what often prompts great leaps in one's progress, so they must learn to work with it. The entire process can be very rewarding at the end, for those willing to take up the challenge. Some students in the past have been put off by criticism, but most of them have found

constructive criticism valuable. Over the years I have worked on improving my communication skills, making my expectations clearer but also less overwhelming for a student body so diversified in levels of preparation and commitment to the subject. The challenge in such a course is to allow creative freedom while retaining the rigor that is necessary for the course to effectively lead to a building up of drawing skills. Evidence demonstrates that I succeeded in this goal.

A.1.2.iv Student Evaluations

In the latest course evaluations (Fall 2009 – I am referring to the narrative supplemental questions) there is an overwhelming majority of positive comments, especially regarding class critiques and personal instruction. While in past evaluations some students expressed their uneasiness with critiques, none of the students uses negative words in recent evaluations. Nearly all point out how respectful and helpful the critiques were, to the point that they even demanded for more. Also, the number of students lamenting the scarceness of self-directed assignments as opposed to constructed ones diminished significantly. Partly because I put more emphasis on the final project, which gives students a chance to fully focus on a creative idea of their own; but also partly, I believe, because of more engaging assignments that I developed over time, and a more open attitude I demonstrate towards the way they complete them. In the end most students recognized the benefits of gaining a solid background in representational drawing, and felt proud to be able to master techniques and methods that they considered challenging or obscure (such as linear perspective and proportions).

Excerpts from narrative evaluations, Fall 2009:

-“I really appreciated her help and her critiques. She was possibly the best drawing teacher I had ever had”.

-“I feel that this course above all else has allowed me to see and draw what is really there as opposed to just what it ‘should’ look like.”

-“I feel less threatened by the idea of drawing something realistically.”

(what did you learn)

“A lot. I’ve improved significantly in how to draw from observation: the techniques learned that I am now on my way to mastering are too numerous to describe”.

-“I learned to see what I am drawing more fully. I realize now that I can see the composition of lines and shadows more.”

-“I have more control over my hand. I improved on my precision, and my eye can see stronger as to what I am drawing.”

-“Less what I learnt and more what I was offered. I learnt that I could enjoy learning.”

(did you enjoy class discussions and critiques? Do you think your work was discussed fairly and respectfully)

-“Yes, I was extremely impressed with the critiques, they were sincere and honest but kind and gentle.”

-“YES. I loved critiques (it motivated me and I always got helpful feedback.”

(what did your teacher do best)

-“Critiques. She knows how to comment on work in insightful, helpful and thought-provoking way.”

-[she]“Created an artistic atmosphere for a class of liberal art students. Treated us as if we were artists.”

-“She let me know what was to be improved on projects we worked on in class – her advice was very helpful.”

-“show personal attention to each student.”

(How did this class change or affect your attitude to drawing)

-“It reignited my love for it!”

-“I’ll be drawing a lot more now.”

-“I STILL LOVE to draw!”

-“I enjoyed drawing more than I did before this course.”

-“I really enjoyed and learned in you class. Thank you”.

A.1.3 Image/Text (2009-2010)

Introduced in Spring 2009 as an upper-level LAIC, and now LINA (Integrated Arts), course, Image/Text explores the relationships between the written word (poetry and narrative in particular) and the pictorial image, through various time periods. Starting with the concept of *Ut Pictura Poesis* and ekphrasis, students analyze several historical instances of overlaps and cross-reference between the text-based and the image-based fields, and collaborations between poets/writers and visual artists. Examples include: Michelangelo and William Blake (both writers and visual artists), the Chinese tradition of the “literati” painters and poets, 20th century experimentations in concrete poetry, Art and Language, Fluxus, and the “book art” form. Throughout the semester, students engage with theoretical analysis and practical work in various media, culminating in a final creative project.

I developed this course with the needs of students in the Arts in Context program in mind. There appeared to be a lack of Integrated Arts courses that would cater specifically to students interested in studying the Visual Arts with an interdisciplinary perspective. Most of the LAIC/LINA courses were coming from the Theater or Dance programs, and we wanted to offer a broader variety in the curriculum. I have long been interested in the relationship between the visual and the verbal forms of expression, which is also one of the central topics of aesthetic theory from antiquity to modernity. And I knew that Arts students would be drawn to this subject too, as demonstrated by their assignments, senior work projects, and the creative work they do outside of class. I thus envisioned a seminar to instigate a broader understanding and appreciation of the visual arts as an intellectual activity, through the relationship with the written word and the literary arts. In this course, students are encouraged to draw connections across traditional boundaries, and to see how time-tested ideas have carried on through the centuries, and still inform the work of several modern and contemporary artists. Another important goal of this course is to help students develop an adequate vocabulary to express ideas both verbally and visually, through the study of specialized terminology, methods and trends, and to place them in their historical context. Specific case studies support generalized theories and movements, which students analyze and critically evaluate through primary and secondary texts. By getting acquainted with a variety of styles and approaches to text and image, students get a chance to explore their own creative capacities, which they exercise in assignments and projects, while sharing their experience and knowledge with the class.

I am very satisfied with the outcomes of this course, particularly after teaching it a second time in spring 2010. Students have been extremely responsive to course material, and enrollment has been over capacity the second time around. I found the mix of students in the class extraordinarily rich, and conducive to a lively learning environment. Having students from all programs - Theater, Dance, Music and Visual Arts – has been culturally stimulating and beneficial to everyone. Through open discussions and presentations in class and on Blackboard, students have significantly contributed to course material and shaped the course in unexpected and exciting ways.

Highlights of last semester’s class were: a printmaking workshop session (courtesy of Bill Phipps in the Parsons’ Printmaking department), in which students followed the remaking of a William Blake’s illustrated poem through a practical demonstration; a visit to the Center for Book Arts in Manhattan, specialized in artist books and letterpress; and Kate Eichhorn’s lecture/presentation about concrete

poetry towards the end of the semester. Kate recited from her own book of poems, showed one of her videos, and brought to the students' attention some beautiful examples of original visual poems that are part of her collection. These and other activities fueled the students' imagination with possibilities to be creatively explored in their final projects (see Appendix 2: A.1.3 Sample Final Projects).

Sometimes students take an assignment or creative project to great lengths. Lucas Syed, a former student of Image/Text in Spring 2009, and a recent Lang graduate, turned one of the assignments into a theater play (see Evidence: A.1.3.b Assignment #3). The play was performed at a local theater in December 2009. I find this kind of outcome particularly significant, because it goes beyond the confines of the classroom and becomes part of a student's real life experience.

A.1.3.i Excerpts from Narrative Student Evaluations, Spring 2010

(What did you learn)

- “the history of image and text as sister arts”
- “how all arts are actually interrelated – learned about various artists, poets ...”
- “I learned several different aspects of art, art movements, ideas and time periods”
- “Image/Text are interchangeable and that the balance of sister arts is complex and complicated”
- “art history – important artistic movements and their philosophies”
- “I learned a lot about the importance of image and text and how they coexist, without one another I don't believe they could exist”
- “I learned about the relationship of visual art and language, and how the two fields often overlap and operate in relation to one another”
- “one of the most valuable lessons in relation to this course was the study of concrete poetry. I thought this topic was interesting and highly relevant in the context of the class”
- “for me the final project was the most valuable lesson or experience I will take from this class. It allowed me to express myself through what we had learned”
- “we had a very extensive and thorough study of ekphrasis. I found this project + analysis to be the best because it [put] a few things into perspective for me”

(what should the instructor keep doing)

- “I really enjoyed the approach of her teaching for this class”
- “being creative and experimental”
- “keep bringing passion and high expectations to class! Field trips are a great tool”
- “She's very kind, motivated and encouraging of creative projects”
- “keep inspiring / influencing her students by showing us her works of art and encouraging to branch out and explore arts in the city – such as gallery visits, performances etc.”
- “keep giving us interesting assignments and field trips in class, and assignments which require travel”
- “bringing in related work to enhance understanding of materials (i.e. slide shows of work that serve as example of theoretical ideas)”
- “artistic projects and encouragement of creative endeavors”

(do you feel this course met the goals and learning objectives?)

-“yes I do because I was challenged and gained a new base of knowledge in a new field of study”

-“yes the class met the objectives of its course description, and the class material was really interesting. I enjoyed being introduced to new pieces of art and text”

-“yes. Even though I wasn’t always interested in all the subjects, I still feel much more intellectually and artistically stimulated by the main ideas of the course”

-“yes, everything we learned always related back to the overall meaning and challenged us, making us think out of the box and in a creative manner”.

-“for me the course will be most valuable in approaching my senior work next semester. I will apply many things that I have learned to [senior] work”

-“I think so because I walk away from it with a much greater knowledge of art history, for example”

(what did your professor do best)

-“create a safe and suitable space for learning”

-“She ...has a great passion and high expectations for students that is infectious”

-“she presented us with a significant amount of great image/text combination and interesting essays”

-“she was extremely knowledgeable about the topics and helped the students come to their own conclusions about the subject matter”

-“you are passionate and engaging and offered a lot of resources”

-“explain any questions or confusion we may have had of the text. She had a very extensive knowledge of the text and subjects”

-“I liked when she brought in her own works as well as Ivan and Kate”

-“she is very receptive and creative, enthusiastic and interesting”

-“encourage creativity and generate interesting class discussions”

-“overall I think my professor was best at inspiring us. You could tell how passionate she is about art and the idea of image/text itself. She brought in works of her own and shared with us so much about her experiences with art while encouraging us to experiment with our own ways and forms of artwork. I really enjoyed being in her class and learned a lot from what she had to offer.”

-“Simonetta really gathered an incredible collection of work. [...] All the readings were awesome! There was a lot of stuff I had never encountered”

(additional comments)

-“I hope this course is taught again because I know many people who wanted/want to take it! It’s lovely”

-“I enjoyed the class a lot and its experimental and creative approach”

A.1.4 Skybridge Curatorial Project (2006-2011)

A.1.4.i On Curating Exhibitions

As an artist, I know the importance of showcasing one's work, and the eye-opening experience of seeing it on a clean wall, displayed for the enjoyment and appreciation of others. In the various courses I have taught at Lang and elsewhere, the moment of displaying and presenting artwork to the public has been an integral part of my pedagogy. For students, regardless of their level and aspirations, it is always a moment of reflection and affirmation to see their works presented in an organized and public context. Initially, I began showing student work either on the fourth floor bridge (where a glass case along the corridor provides adequate, albeit unglamorous, display space for 2D works such as drawings and paintings), or on makeshift spaces around the campus. One of such spaces was the third floor bridge, a passageway between the Lang and the New School buildings that was neglected and sometimes used as a temporary storage space. I had students in my "Visual Problem Solving" course in 2004 and 2005 display their works there, due to the nature of their projects – site-specific 3D works and installations – unsuitable to the limitations of the fourth floor bridge. Eventually, what started as an informal practice of utilizing an unremarkable space at the College, became first a legitimate exhibition space, and then a structured curatorial course.

A.1.4.ii Birth of a Gallery Space

The Skybridge Art and Sound Space officially opened in 2006, after a major renovation of the third floor passageway. I am grateful to former Dean Jonathan Veitch, who at the time asked me to submit a proposal for a dedicated exhibition space at Lang, for passionately supporting this project and making it happen. The new space features an architecturally daring wall structure with four large panels tilted at different angles, to maximize visibility and better receive the light from the large windows at the opposite side. A built-in sound system allows for ambient sound to be played along with the visual displays. Today the Skybridge is also equipped with two video monitors and digital sensors for the display of multi-media art. It is worth mentioning that the fourth floor bridge technically belongs to the New School for General Studies, so the third floor Skybridge is the only true Lang exhibition space at the College.

A.1.4.iii The Skybridge Curatorial Project

As our program became more ambitious, and we moved from a simple showcase of student work to a variety of exhibition projects (including Visiting Artists events, faculty and course projects, and so on), I felt the need to create a course in which students would use the space as a laboratory to acquire first-hand knowledge of curatorial practices. I see curating as an art in itself: it requires organizational skills, team-working, knowledge of art history and contemporary art theory, public relation skills, and the ability to solve problems on the spot. Students in the Skybridge Curatorial Project receive an introduction to all these complex facets of the curatorial industry, while learning skills that are actually a valid asset in the art business. Many students are drawn to the course either because they already work as interns in art galleries in the city, or because they want to pursue a career in that field. A good number of my students actually did end up working in art galleries, museums or foundations, and it's encouraging to think that the experience they gained in the Skybridge course may have helped them afterwards in their professional development.

I mentioned the importance of team work, and in fact students in the Skybridge course work in several distinct areas for the management of the gallery space, such as: conceptualization, production of informational material, installation practice and archiving, all the while coordinating their efforts as a group. Field trips to museums and art galleries, as well as specialized readings in curatorial practices, complete their experience and provide the necessary background for the exhibition projects.

Reading and writing is often geared to practical application (such as press releases, reviews, introductory text panels, etc.). The class has a segment dedicated to the soundscape, or the aural element that is integrated in each exhibition. Professor Sarah Montague, with whom I have been co-teaching this course since 2009, is responsible for the soundscape. Before then, Prof. Montague and I had collaborated on a less formal basis, but found it very difficult to coordinate our respective groups

of students that way. Sharing the same students and schedule has greatly improved the quality of our exhibitions, and made the teaching and learning experience more fulfilling.

A.1.4.iv Selected Projects and Exhibitions (see corresponding images in Appendix 2: A.1.4.iv)

The list of exhibitions and curricular projects that have been accomplished in these years is too long to be explained in details here. I will limit myself to a few examples out of the main categories of exhibitions that are part of the Skybridge mission, namely: Visiting Artists Projects, Course, Faculty, and Collaborative Projects, and Student Shows.

Visiting Artists projects (p. 1 of Appendix 2: A.1.4.iv)

Martha Rosler (Visual Arts program Visiting Artist, Spring 2008) graciously lent us some of her famous photcollages, the “Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful” series from the late 1960s and the more recent ones referencing the Iraq War. To select the works for the exhibition, I took my class to the gallery in Chelsea that represents Rosler, Mitchell Innes & Nash. The students looked at the works and chose fifteen pieces out of them. We arranged transportation, unpacking and hanging of the pieces. Students also took care of designing a title label, writing a press release and a wall panel. The exhibition opened the night Rosler gave a talk about her work in Wollman Hall. Students greatly enjoyed the experience to work with a professional gallery and see the “behind the scene” of the curatorial process.

Blondell Cummings (Dance program Visiting Artist, Fall 2008) worked extensively with students in the Skybridge class to give shape to her project “30/30”, an installation performance centered on the Declaration of Human Rights. After much brainstorming, students decided to go for a very “minimal” installation based on text (the edited human rights), the color blue (which Cummings chose as a symbol of humanity), and a series of 30 images and objects to represent each of the human rights. The Skybridge became an open page where visitors could read the human rights and reflect upon their significance in the development of our society.

Marni Nixon (Music program Visiting Artist, Fall 2007) had a brilliant career as a “ghost singer” for famous Hollywood movies in the 1950s and ‘60s (The King and I, My Fair Lady, West Side Story). Students decided to focus the exhibition on this part of her career, by showing documentary materials from Nixon’s personal archive. “The Voice Behind the Stars” provided a photographic account of her most famous roles and a biographical background. In the process, students became acquainted with a fascinating world, and learned how to create a compelling visual narrative.

Course, Faculty and Collaborative Projects (p. 2 of Appendix 2: A.1.4.iv)

“Bridge to Tula: In the Realm of Tolstoy” marked the centenary of Tolstoy’s death, and accompanied the Tolstoy Conference held at Eugene Lang College in October 2010, organized by Professor Inessa Medzhboskaya. The exhibition displayed rarely seen archival images from the official Tolstoy archive and museum at Yasnaya Polyana, and a newly released film by Professor and filmmaker Sara Winter. A copy of the thank-you letter received by the director of the Yasnaya Polyana archive can be seen in the A.1.4.c. Selected Exhibition/Bridge to Tula section of this Dossier.

“The Cardew Object: The Exhibition”, was part of the Visiting Artist program in Music (Spring 2010). The main event was organized by Ivan Raykoff and Evan Rapport, with the participation of the Either/Or ensemble, Vera List Fellow Robert Sember, film-maker Luke Fowler, and sponsored by the Vera List Foundation. Collaborators in the weekend-long workshop, together with myself, were colleague Danielle Goldman (Dance) and Sarah Montague (Soundscape). The exhibition was entirely conceived by the Skybridge class. The students recreated an environment inspired by the concepts and avant-garde music scores of Cornelius Cardew, and by the instructions contained in his most

ambitious piece, “The Great Learning”. Students constructed several interactive pieces in the gallery space, through which visitors were invited to participate. They could play a “string organ”, an instrument with strings attached to various found objects that produced distinct sounds; paint an “invisible painting”, which would soon disappear, on a special calligraphy paper attached to the wall; and perform a set of written instructions on large sheets of mylar. A beautifully crafted hanging installation reinterpreted one of Cardew’s signature graphic scores.

In “Blues’ Lyrics from Black Vistas” (Spring 2007), students worked with Professor Christopher Johnson (Culture and Media Studies) to showcase a series of blues lyrics that students in his course “Blues Lyrics From Black Vistas: The Visual and Material Culture of Jazz” had written. The lyrics were inspired by historical figures of the Blues, such as Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, and Robert Johnson. The show displayed framed and enlarged lyric texts, as well as distinctive prints of record covers from the golden age of Blues, and photographs of the musicians. The Soundscape featured music and aural poetry to complement the visuals.

“Engaging India: Portraits of Public Life” (Fall 2008) was realized in collaboration with Professor Sumita Chakravarty (Culture and Media Studies), and showcased some aspects of contemporary life in India as experienced through sights and sounds captured on camera and tape. These were collected by a small group of Lang students over a summer program in Bangalore, “A Changing India: History, Culture, Media”. Working together with the students who produced the materials, and with the help of Professor Chakravarty, students in the Skybridge class arranged vividly printed photographs, artifacts and textiles in the gallery space, to evoke an Indian environment and provide the “total experience” of stepping into another place.

(This project is featured in the Lang website, see link:

<http://www.newschool.edu/lang/multimedia.aspx?mid=55024&MediaTypeFilter=Photo>)

“30th Years of PAJ: Celebrating the New” (Fall 2006) marked the thirtieth anniversary of Performing Art Journal, the periodical directed by Theater faculty Bonnie Marranca. Students created a timeline on the walls of the Skybridge, by displaying a sequence of frames with the most significant examples from each decade of the journal. The photos, posters, and original copies of the publication came from Marranca’s personal archive.

“Permanent/Temporal: Homelands” (Fall 2007), featured two pieces from The New School permanent art collection, which were kept in storage: one piece by Lorna Simpson, *Screen I*, and one by Elaine Reichek, *Gauguin at the Harmonium*. It was a very instructive experience for students in the class to engage with the New School permanent collection in the attempt to bring the viewers’ attention to complex themes behind the artworks. I am thankful to New School curators Silvia Rocciolo and Erik Stark for collaborating with me and the students in this effort.

“Bridges”(spring 2006) was an occasions to see faculty and students works displayed together at the College. The students decided for an open call on the theme of bridges, links and connections - to pay homage to the main architectural feature of the Skybridge. We received many submissions, in a variety of forms: poems and excerpts from narratives, paintings, music pieces, drawings, and photographs. Among the participating faculty were Colette Brooks, Stefania de Kenessey, Mark Larrimore, Pamela Lawton, Pablo Medina, Robin Mookerjee, Mark Statman, and Ken Wark. The show was an exciting and unusual way to see what faculty are engaged with in their scholarly fields, and for students to be part of a creative dialogue with them and with each other.

Student Projects (p. 3 of Appendix 2 – A.1.4.iv)

Students have multiple chances to show their work in the gallery. The Senior Work Show provides a venue for Seniors to display their creative projects, and for parents to admire their daughters’ and sons’ final achievements. I have enjoyed seeing parents and relatives spending time at the Skybridge

after commencement, taking photos and looking at the works, and engaging in interesting conversations about them. I could tell it really made a difference for the seniors to have their works presented publicly, and am glad I started this tradition a few semesters ago.

Open calls provide another way in which students can submit their work for display. Open calls are the most student-driven of all the exhibitions in the curriculum, since students are given leeway in regards to concept, format, and selection process.

An example of successful open call, aside from the above mentioned “Bridges”, is “2109: Imagining the Future”. Inspired by the one-hundredth anniversary of the *Manifesto of Futurism*, the show featured student work from several divisions of The New School’s graduate and undergraduate programs as well as work from the larger artistic community of New York. 2109 reflected on the meaning of “modernity” in a rapidly developing and often polarizing age. The Skybridge Project encouraged participants not only to freely interpret the future, but to press against the boundaries of traditional artistic practices. The response was overwhelming in its diversity and scope. From the abstract to the literal, from the idealistic to the dystopic, 2109 included painting, drawing, photography, collage, fashion, sound, text, and video art in an impressive display of heterogeneity.

A.1.4.v List of Exhibitions

Faculty Collaboration highlights

- Blocks Away, in collaboration with Guest Artist Laura Elrick and faculty Kate Eichhorn, Spring 2011
- Lang@25, a celebration of the 25th anniversary of Eugene Lang College, in collaboration with Mark Larrimore, Mark Statman, The New School archive and the New School Art Collection, Spring 2011
- Bridge to Tula: In The Realm of Tolstoy (Tolstoy Centenary exhibition), in collaboration with Inessa Medzhboskaya and the official Tolstoy Archive of Yasnaya Polyana, Fall 2010
- The Cardew Object: The Exhibition, with Ivan Raykoff, 2010
- Arpoador, with Peter Lucas, 2008
- Estrogen Tales, with artist Mara Haseltine and the contribution of science faculty Katayoun Chamany, 2008
- Cluster 8/Lab + Mapping it Out, with Parsons faculty John Roach and Julia Gorton, 2007
- The Blues Lyrics, with Christopher Johnson, 2007
- Bridges, faculty exhibition, 2006
- PAJ, with Bonnie Marranta, 2006
- The Odets Project, with Cecilia Rubino, 2006
- Operetta, with Zishan Ugurlu, 2006
- Collage Now!, with Ken Wark, 2006

Visiting Artist Projects

- Eve Mosher, Visiting Artist for Visual Arts, 2009
- Martha Rosler, Visiting Artist for Visual Arts, 2008
- Blondell Cummings, Visiting Artist for Dance, 2008
- Marni Nixon, Visiting Artist for Music, 2007
- John Jesurun, Visiting Artist for Theater, 2006
- Tribute to Martha Graham, with Visiting Artist for Dance Yuriko, and Jaime Santora, 2006
- Alyce Santoro, visiting Artist for Arts in Context, 2006

Student work exhibitions and other projects

- 2109 Imagining the future, Open Call, 2010

- Proceed with Caution, with guest artist Laura Vitale (sound artist), 2009
- Temptation (open call inspired to the Spring Theater production), 2008
- The Ink Circus, 2006
- In & Out the Grid (in collaboration with Pamela Lawton), 2006
- Senior Work showcase (spring semester, ongoing)
- Drawing exhibitions on the fourth floor bridge (Fall semester, ongoing)

Looking back at the list of exhibitions, what immediately strikes me as the most valuable outcome is the collegial and collaborative side of the projects, which explains why I regard the work done for Skybridge as part of my service to the college as well. By highlighting faculty and course projects across concentrations and divisions at the University I have been able to get to know colleagues in ways that would not have been possible otherwise, and to make their work visible to the entire community. Through the Visiting Artist program and invited guest artists, I exposed my students to a variety of approaches, art forms, and distinguished personalities. Additionally, I brought the Arts to the attention of a broader community of people, at the School and outside of it, opening up the dialogue not only to faculty and students, but to staff and administrators as well, who often responded positively (and even critically) to exhibitions upon which they happened to stumble on their way through the building. The Skybridge has attracted outside visitors, artists, and professionals in the arts, and its exhibitions have often been advertised in online gallery listings. This openness and liveliness is what makes the Skybridge Art and Sound space a truly unique and democratic venue for the enjoyment of the Arts.

A.1.4.vi The Role of Work Study and Teaching Assistants

The conspicuous amount of work that is involved with the management of the gallery goes beyond a regular two-credit or even three-credit course load. This situation has greatly improved since the assignment of a “work study” student. Over the last two years, I had the pleasure to work with federal-grant students, who helped me with a variety of tasks, such as coordinating student groups, getting materials, scouting resources, blog development and bookkeeping. I was also able to hire student assistants, who often acted as student mentors as well. At the same time, I tried to delegate many important decisions to students in the class whom in turn felt more empowered and in control of the course content. It is important for students to feel a certain intellectual ownership of what they are creating, and not just being the executer of a plan established a priori. Because of time constraints, I have to start the semester with an exhibition schedule with the understanding that the plan has to be flexible enough to allow for students’ creative contributions. I believe that in the last couple of years I succeeded in achieving this important goal.

A.1.5 Parsons: Senior Thesis (Spring 2010)

This course is designed to provide a structure in which students can focus on writing their Senior Thesis. In its present form, it is the result of a series of meetings with a small group of faculty, including myself, and the Chair of the Fine Arts department at Parsons. Together we discussed new guidelines for the written thesis, ways to coach students into developing a coherent statement about their work, what didn’t work from previous semesters and what could be done to improve the situation. Within these general guidelines, each instructor had the freedom to structure the course the way she wanted, choose the readings that she retained most appropriate, and so on.

This course gave me the opportunity to collaborate with colleague Andrea Ray, who is teaching the other segment of the seminar, with a parallel class of seniors. Together we decided to approach the writing of the thesis in small steps, beginning with a series of related written assignments (reviews of other artists, personal influences, annotated keywords, and so on) that would progressively lead the

students to writing about their work. I enjoyed the collaborative aspect of the course, and I believed our students benefited from it as well.

As the course (and the thesis) progressed, I switched gears towards a more individualized approach, by giving one-to-one tutorials and personalized readings. As I can tell from the student evaluations, this is what students appreciated the most, together with time spent talking about their work in relation to the written thesis.

Many students also commented on the necessity for this to be a year-long class, or to start the writing process earlier in their studies at Parsons. I believe that the Fine Arts department is taking this idea seriously, and is currently implementing some important changes to meet students' needs and expectations, and to better prepare them for the challenges of an increasingly competitive art world.

(For samples of Student Theses see A.1.1.5.c)

A.1.5.i Highlights from Senior Thesis Evaluations

(what did your instructor do best?)

-“she knew exactly what she would like to see in our paper, the way it [...] written. That was helpful but yet restricting in a way”.

-“she really enjoyed the teaching process and was very insightful and formal.”

-“finding readings that are specific to the individual student. Talking about the work and thesis in terms of the student's practice, rather than her own, which is very nice and rare during my years at Parsons.”

-“Tailored and found helpful materials for each student. Spent time looking and giving feedback to your work.”

-“she went out of her way to help us, put a lot of time into reading our assignments”.

-“Take class time seriously”.

-“Very sensitive, listening, never put words in your mouth, but tried to meet students' own visions”.

(what did your instructor value?)

-“good writing skills. Ability to talk and write well about our work.”

-“strong writing skills and a well spoken person.”

-“Critical thinking, work ethics.”

-“Time spent. Thoughtful comments”.

-“hard work, being committed”.

-“rigorous scholarly attitude”.

-“discipline, perseverance”.

(additional comment about instructor)

-“Simonetta is a bit strict but a good teacher”

-“really spending extra time to research readings for each of us. In some, it feels like the course is tailored to my practice”.

-“Great.”

-“very good. Knows exactly what she's doing, was always very reasonable when we had suggestions”.

-“An honor to have been her student.”

(what is your overall evaluation of the course?)

-“This could easily be a year-long course.”

-“very good”

-“Great. Should have been a year-long course! We need to introduce theory earlier!”

-“Very good, depending on the teacher, in this case very good”.

-“Dedicated, intelligent, sensitive teaching. It just needed to be longer; right now it’s a bit crummy”.

(which lecture/class/week was your favorite?)

-“class discussions were ok, but the time spent on our individual works or one on one with the teacher was the most beneficial to me.”

-“individual studio visits were really helpful to create between connection between [sic] paper + work.”

-“Gave me a better idea of how to write my thesis, gave me more materials to work with”.

-“I thought they were all equally useful!”

(how did the required reading / research enhance your experience in the class?)

-“the readings were not my favorite, but I did see the point (...)”

-“amazingly well. Especially individualized readings”.

-“always thoughtful suggestions”.

-“the readings led me to think more critically about my work, in several formats and styles”.

(additional comment about the critique)

-“time alone with Simonetta in our studios was really eye opening and very helpful. She offered me a lot of insight and helped me understand what I was struggling to say.”

(evaluate your own involvement and effort in the course)

-“it was hard work but it all mattered, and due to the weekly deadlines and studio visits, finishing the thesis turned out to be a lot easier than I thought it would.”

Selected Past Courses

Since the beginning of my appointment at Lang, I have developed and taught a large number of courses, many of which have morphed into other courses, or are no longer available. As my vision for the Visual Arts program came into focus, following the changes that occurred in the Arts concentration, it became clear to me which courses were most valuable, and which ones we needed to implement to meet our students’ needs. Seven-week Nodes & Networks IRT seminars such as “The Art of the Subway” and “War, Culture and the Arts” (previously “Art & War”) were discontinued after the IRT curriculum was dropped from the First Year program. Hearing Art, Seeing Music, a successfully team-taught Arts in Context course developed in 2004, was no longer offered after Spring 2008 to allow Ivan Raykoff and myself to pursue other curricular projects in our respective programs. “Visual Problem Solving”, one of the first courses I was asked to teach, run from 2004 to 2005 for four semesters total, to then give way to other courses that were more fully my own. It is not described here, but syllabi can be found in the Evidence section.

A.1.6 Modes: Space (Parsons, Spring 2009)

In this second semester Junior studio class, replacing the previous year's discipline-coded courses (Painting 4, Sculpture 4, etc.), students are encouraged to explore a variety of media by focusing on a specific problem, project or area of research. In this case, the overarching theme is Space; within this general concept, students have the freedom to develop personal concepts in the medium of their choice while situating their work within a critical context.

The purpose of substituting the old Painting course with a thematic "module" (other modules include Modes: Materiality, Modes: Performance, etc.) was to shift the focus from a medium-oriented approach to a concept-driven approach, more in line with current artistic trends and with a way of working that is increasingly cross-disciplinary. Students in my class worked with painting, drawing, installation, sculpture, and video. They learned how to take responsibility for the choices to be made in their work, by creating and following a personal working outline.

With the intention of preparing students to transition into their senior year, I emphasized the synergy between the practice and the theory of art: art-making was informed by regular class discussions and critiques, in which students articulated a vocabulary to express their ideas effectively. The study of other artists, writers and philosophers' work and ideas was encouraged and supported by reading materials provided in the course.

During this course, I often exchanged ideas and collaborated with colleague Mary Judge, who was teaching the Modes: Materiality in the classroom next door. I benefited from her suggestions and expertise, and learnt a great deal from watching her interact with her students.

I was very pleased with the end of the year review of my students' work. There was a great variety of approaches and styles, and a good level of maturity in many of them. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to follow a very strong and motivated group of young artists, many of whom I found in my Senior Thesis class a year later.

A.1.7 Painting 4 (Parsons, Spring 2008)

Painting 4 was the first course I taught at Parsons. I was asked to replace a faculty that went on leave that semester, and I inherited a group of students that he had been following since the first semester of their Junior year. This presented a challenge at first, since I was not familiar with what they had done before, and I knew that my teaching approach was quite different from my colleague's. So I began by looking at their previous work, and helped each of them define a path to follow for the semester. I wanted the class to be a lab where students could experiment and push their works to the limits, while learning old and new painting techniques and methods. Students enjoyed this hands-on approach, and the freedom I gave them by not constraining their works with specific assignments. I made a point to give them reading assignments as a complement to their studio work, based on my belief that reading is a necessary part of an artist's practice. Given the nature of the class, though, I made sure that the readings were well integrated in the students' practice, and not an overwhelming part of their course load.

A.1.8 Hearing Art/Seeing Music (2004-2008)

Hearing Art/Seeing Music started as a conversation between Music Professor Ivan Raykoff and myself, about the need for an interdisciplinary course for the Arts program.

Our intention was to generate a discourse around the connections between the sonic and the visual arts, by highlighting a historical tradition that goes back to the ancient Greeks. We focused on the

period that begins with Wagner and the birth of Modernism, and extends to contemporary artworks that cross the boundaries between the two fields. The analysis of concepts such as the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), synaesthesia, sonic sculpture or spatial music, is the core of the course curriculum, and involves different ways of knowing.

Compared to the initial course syllabus, the latest one is more detailed, structured and focused on specific issues and case studies, and less on the historical sequence of “isms”. We reduced the amount of tests, and implemented more hands-on projects; we also introduced more variety in the readings, by creating a specific course pack instead of utilizing solely the textbook by Simon Shaw-Miller, *Visual Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagner to Cage* (Yale University Press, 2002). The course pack included excerpts from *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature and Other Arts*, by Daniel Albright (University of Chicago Press, 2000), John Cage *Europera*, Suzanne Delehanty’s text for the catalogue *Soundings*, and writings by Friedrich Nietzsche, Wassily Kandinsky, Clement Greenberg, W. Th. Adorno, Arnold Schoenberg, Paul Klee, and the Fluxus group.

We invited more guest speakers and got our students involved in outdoors events, such as concerts and exhibition visits. One of our guest speakers, multi-media artist Alyce Santoro, became our first Visiting Artist for the Arts concentration in 2006.

Because of the large number of students allowed to take this class (double the usual seminar class), a lecture style was initially preferred. Realizing that there should have been more room for discussion and practical activities, the following year Prof. Raykoff and I decided to adopt a seminar-style approach and to enhance a hands-on creative component. Still, we found it challenging to maintain an open discussion among students within such a large group; students easily felt intimidated or dispersed in the large lecture hall. Nevertheless, we made great progress in ensuring that all student voices were heard, and that everybody participated in the discussion. This was facilitated by the use of Blackboard, and other simple digital programs such as Paint to create images, and Audacity to compose music. Weekly assignments were listed in the syllabus, and posted on Blackboard; they usually involved answering a number of questions, commenting on a show or concert attended, or creating a picture or music composition. Two to three exams were part of their final grade; and the final project gave students the chance to contribute to the dialogue between the aural and the visual arts in their own creative ways. The latter was indeed the highlight of the class: I was often amazed by the level of sophistication and conceptual rigor the final projects demonstrated. It made me realize how engaged our students are with the arts, which they study, practice and enjoy both inside and outside of school.

My experience with this course has been very rewarding. It has been a pleasure to work with Ivan Raykoff, with whom I collaborate on a regular basis. I have learned much from co-teaching Hearing Art/Seeing Music, not just about music, but about teaching approaches too, and on how to improve my pedagogical strategies. I believe my colleague and I were able to interact in a serious but playful way (humor is mentioned more than once in student course evaluations, as well as good teamwork), and managed to give space to each other’s voices and personalities. The collegial bond that was fostered by this course developed in other mutual projects, such as the two-credit course Arts in New York City, and other collaborations, such as the Cardew Object Exhibition.

The enduring influence of the Hearing Art/Seeing Music course can be appreciated in numerous independent Senior Work that have been accomplished by former students of ours. One of the most remarkable Senior Works, Maya Seidel’s “Art Fusion”, which I supervised, consisted of a written thesis and a multi-media performance involving dance, music, painting and poetry. Her comment about Hearing Art/Seeing Music is the best testimony to its success:

“...I feel that not only did the class enrich and broaden my knowledge of art and music, but more profoundly, I learned to listen and look in a unique way. There are hidden and connections and beauty

in the spaces between the arts; you taught me ways to read between the lines. Your encouragement and enthusiasm brought to light the multitude of possibilities that art offers both the artist and the audience. Having the opportunity to both create my own work and watch other people's interpretation of the "hearing art seeing music" notion was an especially rewarding experience."

A.1.9 Arts in New York City (2004-2007)

"There are so many different reasons to be in New York City, but they all have to do with going out of the door", artist Janet Fisher once wrote. Students are usually overwhelmed with the giant city outside their door, and benefit from pre-screened events and exhibitions. Arts in New York City was conceived as a practical guide to what can be found in the City, in the fields of music, theater, dance and the visual arts.

Arts in New York City began as a collaboration between Ivan Raykoff and myself, to fulfill the need for a hands-on, two-credit course for students to experience the many cultural resources that a city like New York has to offer. Together we created an atypical course, in which field trips to various events substituted classroom sessions. We devised a system through which students chose their events from a list of possibilities provided by the instructors. A maximum of 26 students were allowed to register, and the class has always been at full capacity. During the first and only class meeting, students made their own plan for the semester. They chose at least seven events, distributed among the different art fields. Once all the choices were submitted, we cancelled all the events that did not collect at least three preferences. The remaining ones were put into the final schedule, and posted on Blackboard together with student names attending the events. To pass the course, students had to submit a written response for each event attended within 48 hours, and post it on the discussion board in Blackboard. The responses were based on their peers' questions, collected by the instructors at the end of the event. The course was pass/fail only, with the expenses for the events covered by the School.

In this type of course, the professors' role was that of facilitators. We attended the events with the students, briefly introduced them, and spent some time after the events commenting and collecting students' questions, which we would then post on Blackboard. We chose this format for practical reasons, but it became an interesting concept in its own right. It generated enthusiastic responses in our students, and it remains one of the most popular courses in the Arts curriculum (presently taught by Ivan Raykoff alone).

Renae Essinger, a student in the spring 2005 class, wrote:

"I used to attend a museum and say, 'I like this piece.' Now I say, 'Why do I like this piece?' I look at every aspect I can find, I criticize and question my choices of like and dislike. Having read a variety of responses submitted by my classmates, as well as writing my own first responses to art events, I am honestly surprised at how much can be said, even by those who are not 'educated' in the arts. These discussions are in no way basic or elementary; they offer serious, deep analysis of the events. At the same time, however, they are accessible. They seem to look more at the relatable aspects, such as the emotions or ideas the pieces are striving for, and the general ways that these events fit into our lives."

I believe that Arts in New York City helped open up a new world to many students – not only the world outside the classroom or the familiar walls, but also the world within themselves – a world of thoughts, words and opinions worth sharing.**A.1.10 Art and War, then Nodes & Networks: War Culture and the Arts (2004-2006)**

War is a pervasive subject-matter in the visual arts of all times, from pre-historic cave paintings to the latest multi-media works inspired by the most recent conflicts throughout the world. The relationship between art and war, or war and its representation, has been discussed and analyzed in a plethora of texts and many artists have explored it in a variety of ways, with different intentions and agendas.

In conceiving this course I wanted to provide a different take on 20th century art, and tell the story of modern art by focusing on one common denominator: war. I also wanted to raise awareness about a topic that still dominates our news, besides the history books. Art and War reflected my engagement in the current political situation, and the way it is understood and translated by artists worldwide, in the belief that art can bring clarity and insight into a given historic period. Art is often influenced by external events, and it may serve many purposes: it can be piece of testimony, documentation, memorial, vehicle of propaganda, or political protest. In the art and war relationship all interpretations are considered, none is judged: the course aimed at presenting a panoramic view into all these different, and often contradictory, experiences.

The extensive amount of research that went into the preparation for this course involved taking hundred of slides from various sources (books and exhibitions mostly), and traveling to specific art exhibitions, such as the magnificent “At War”, at the Centre de Cultura Contemporani de Barcelona (CCCB), in summer 2004 (a field trip partly sponsored by the Faculty Development Fund).

This course was also informed by my own work as an artist completed the previous spring. In 2003 I was an artist-in-resident at Yaddo, right at the moment when the U.S. government declared war on Iraq. I embarked on a series of drawings titled “Days of the Open Doors”, after the sentence of an Italian politician who used a metaphor to define the beginning of the conflict. (See Evidence: B.4.1.e)

In 2006, in response to the demand for courses to be implemented in the new IRT program (Integrated Research and Teaching), I decided to take the existing course and modify it to fit the Nodes & Networks requirements (two separate classes meeting twice a week back-to-back for seven weeks instead of fifteen). Art and War became War, Culture and the Arts, with a more compact and comprehensive view of the influence of war in a number of cultural and artistic manifestations.

Among the highlights of the course, Ann Messner and Joyce Kozloff, representing the group Artists Against the War, gave a presentation in the Fall 2005 of a collective DVD project, “Disarming Images”, about the protest movement in the U.S.A. against the war in Iraq. The presentation anticipated the Spring 2006 Festival’s main theme, Art and Social Action.

Please see **Evidence: A.1** for course materials regarding:

[A.1.11. Nodes & Networks: Art of the Subway](#)

[A.1.12 Meaningful Image](#)

[A.1.13 Studio 2: Advanced Drawing](#)

[A.1.14 Visual Problem Solving](#)