Italian Art: Futurism to Present (ARTH-UA 9850)
Fall 2011, Course Meetings: Tuesday, 10:30 – 13:15
Prof. Paola Nicolin, paola.nicolin@unibocconi.it

**Course description:** This course examines the rise of Modernity in Italian art from the Futurist avant-garde to current artistic practices. Considering exhibitions as a particularly useful framework to investigate structures and narratives of the Italian context in the 20th and 21st centuries, the course will examine through case studies (from Futurist shows to the Venice Biennale) the development of modern Italian visual culture, introducing in parallel arguments about 20th-century architecture. The course aims at underscoring this articulated history, using exhibitions as critical subjects of research that would work as tools for the analysis of the intersection between Italian modernity and the international context.

Although the notion of Modernity in Italy is linked to leading figures or groups that acted in parallel with international debates on visual art (Futurists with the European avant-gardes, Lucio Fontana and Alberto Burri with Informal culture, Arte Povera and Transavanguardia with Conceptual art and Abstract Expressionism, just to list a few), the context of Italian art practices has been enriched by many actors that contributed to redefining medium and issues in Italian visual culture. Through a variety of languages, these figures were, and remain, significant contributors to the broad discussion of issues like the dialogue between historical memory and contemporary practice (Metafisica and Valori Plastici), between art and design (Bruno Munari, Gruppo T), the notion of space/environment or the monument, questions of political art and public art, the development of sculptural practice towards performance (Maurizio Cattelan), the relationship between art, science and technology. Also, among the topics to be discussed during the course are the role of private collections and institutional exhibitions, and the artist’s book as a space of production. The course thus explores the rise of modernity in Italian art through its own privileged topics.

**Requirements and exams:** Students are expected to attend all sessions, site and field visits. They are also kindly encouraged to visit Florentine and Tuscan art museums, institutions and sites to see and be informed about the production in the area where they are living. Visits to historical collections are also more than welcome. In the first week of class, there will be a list of sites to let everybody know what’s on in those places in Fall 2011.

There will be a day trip (to Milan), a field trip (to Venice Biennale), one site visit (at BASE, Florence) and an artist’s talk (the last day of class, before exams). A basic knowledge of Italian history is helpful but not required. There is a written presentation (MID TERM) and final paper (FINAL EXAM). All the works submitted must be original and written for this course only.

**MID TERM:** Students will be expected to submit as a mid term exam a VISUAL ESSAY (a meaningful selection of 10 images), followed by a written presentation. This work will be discussed in class. In this MID term paper the students have to:

- **Select** an Italian artwork, dating from the 19th to the 21st century;
- **Write** the most detailed and up-to-date caption possible (title, technique, location, exhibition histories, bibliography, etc.) and describe the artwork;
- **Contextualize** the image of the artwork selected, using 10 other images related to the piece. These images could be artworks, books, architecture, design, exhibitions, novels, music and any other form of cultural production that the student would consider relevant to the deep understanding of the art piece originally chosen;

The Mid Term presentation will be submitted in hard-copy on **October 18** and will be discussed in class day on **October 25**.
**FINAL TERM paper:** The final paper will consist of a WRITTEN ESSAY (6/8 double-spaced, typewritten pages), where the students analyze in depth the same artwork presented in the visual essay, keeping in mind crits and comments we shared during the oral presentation. This term paper is a research paper and it has to demonstrate in depth knowledge of the artwork selected as well as the relationship to one of the topics discussed in the course, i.e., the question of historical memory in Italian art, the relationship between art and politics, the tension towards the “ambiente”/environment in Italian art, the dialogue between spectacle and engagement.

**Grades breakdown**
- Class presentation and participation 50%
- Final Paper 50%

**Readings:** The readings for this course are coming from very different sources, some primary some secondary. They offer a complex framework for the study of Italian art history, formulating new possibilities and new perspectives about relevant Italian artists. The aim of the course is actually to cover the broad historical frame keeping the focus on the artwork and on the artist: for this reason, the schedule lecture plan is organized to have for each lecture ONE artwork by an Italian artist, to be considered as central reference for the discourse. All the artworks listed are from the collection of Museo del ‘900 in Milan, which will be part of the itinerary of the day trip to Milan.

Some of assigned readings can be found in the following texts, which are useful reference books both for the mid-term and the final paper. The list of requirements and further readings is in the lecture plan. All the readings followed with this symbol - **CP: Course Packet** - will be available for students in a course packet in the Villa Ulivi library.

**Reference texts**
- Giorgio Agamben, "What Is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays, Stanford University Press, 2009;
- Bruce Altshuler, Salon to Biennal, London, Phaidon, 2008;
- L’Attico di Fabio Sargentini, (English texts), exhibition catalogue edited by Luca Massimo Barbero and Francesca Pola, Milan, Macro - Electa, Milano, 2011;
- A Roma, la nostra era Avanguardia (English texts), exhibition catalogue edited by Luca Massimo Barbero and Francesca Pola, Milan, Macro - Electa, Milano, 2010;
- Emily Braun, Mario Sironi and Italian modernism: art and politics under fascism, Cambridge, UK, New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 2000;
- Annie Cohen-Solal, Leo and His Circle: The Life of Leo Castelli, Knopf, 2010;
- Carlo Cardazzo. Una nuova visione dell’arte, Electa, Milano, 2008;
- Anne D'Harnoncourt, Germano Celant, Futurism and the International Avant-garde, Philadelphia, 1980;
. Italian Art 1900-1945, Germano Celant, Rizzoli, 1989 (Published on the occasion of an exhibition at the Palazzo Grassi, Venice, in the Spring of 1989, with Pontus Hultén);
. ITALICS, exhibition catalogue, curated by Francesco Bonami, Electa, Milan, 2008;
. Lucy Lippard, Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1997;
. OCTOBER, 124, Spring 2008, Postwar Italian Art, special issue;
. Claudia Salaris, La Quadriennale, Marsilio, Venezia, 2004 (English texts);

Schedule of Lectures

I

6 Sept.: Introduction – Italian Art: Futurism to present
1901, Pelizza da Volpedo, Quarto Stato
Location: Classroom

II

13 Sept.: Futurism: Avant-garde and mass culture in the urban context
1911 – Umberto Bocconi, Trittico degli stati d’animo
Location: Classroom

Required readings:

Further readings:
- Christine Poggi, In defiance of Painting, Yale University press, New heaven and London, 1992;
III

20 Sept.: Creators of plastic worlds.
Art and architecture in the works by Giorgio De Chirico, Alberto Savinio, Carlo Carrà, Giorgio Morandi, Mario Sironi
1929, Giorgio Morandi, Natura Morta
Location: Classroom –

Required readings:
- Paolo Baldacci, De Chirico: the metaphysical period, 1888-1919, Boston, Little Brown, 1997; CP

Further readings:
- Emily Braun, Mario Sironi and Italian modernism: art and politics under fascism, Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2000;
- Pontus Hulten, Les Realismes, exhibiton catalogue, Centre George Pompidou, 1980;

IV

27 Sept.: From “monumento” to “concetto”: Lucio Fontana between sculpture and painting
1951, Lucio Fontana, Concetto Spaziale (installation at IX Triennale, in Milan)
Location: Classroom

Required readings:
- Lucio Fontana, Manifesto tecnico dello Spazialismo (translation in Arts and Architecture (ed. Germano Celant), [exhibition catalogue], Skira, Milan, 2005; CP
- Enrico Crispolti (ed.), Centenario Lucio Fontana, Milan, Charta, 1999, pp. 11-84, 147-168; CP

Further readings:
- Lucio Fontana, 1899-1968, a retrospective, [exhibition], The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City;

V
4 Oct.: From painting to action: Alberto Burri and Piero Manzoni
1958, Piero Manzoni, Achrome (Ipotesi prima. Rettangolo interrotto)
Location: Classroom

Required readings:
- Jaimey Hamilton, Making Art Matter: Alberto Burri’s Sacchi, in October, Spring 2008, MIT press, pp. 31-52; CP
- Germano Celant (ed.), Piero Manzoni, Milan and New York, Skira and Gagosian, 2009;

Further readings:
- Giuliano Serafini, Burri: la misura e il fenomeno = the Measure and the Phenomenon, Milan, Charta, 1999;
- Piero Manzoni, catalogo generale (with English texts), Milan, Skira, 2004;
- Giorgina Bertono, Francesca Comisso, Enrico Ghezzi, Pinot Gallizio, Milan, Charta, 2005;

VI
11 Oct.: Arte Povera and the Italian exhibitions of the Sixties
1964, Jannis Kounellis, Rosa Nera
Location: Classroom

Required readings:
- P. Nicolin, Year Zero. About the canon of Italian exhibitions (1967-1968)”, in Manifesta Journal, #11, Manifesta Foundation, 2011; CP
- P. Nicolin, Interview with Germano Celant, in Kaleidoscope, n. 6, April/May 2010; CP

Further readings:
- Alexander Alberro, Gilberto Zorio, in Robert Lehmann Lectures on Contemporary art, DIA Art Foundation, New York, n. 4, pp. 149-164;
- Lucy Lippard, Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1997;

VII
**18 Oct.:** DUE: Submit MID term paper (printed)

**One Day trip to MILAN**
(Program and trip details to be confirmed the first day of school. We will address: the architectural background of the city in the XXth Century, starting from the museum building history, the role of collectors, the rise and fall of groups and collectives in Milan, ecc.)

1965, *Gianni Colombo, Topoestesia – Itinerario Programmato*

Location: Departure from Santa Maria Novella Train Station for Milano Stazione Centr.

Visit to:
Museo del’900, Piazza Duomo + Museo del design, Triennale + art galleries
Lecture: *Object and structure in modern Italian art: Gruppo T*

**Required readings:**
- Gianni Colombo, Carolyn Christopv Bakargiev, Marcella Beccaria (ed.), Milan, Skira, 2009; CP

**Further readings:**
- Bruno Munari, Design as art, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971;
- Günter Berghaus, Futurism and the technological imagination, Amsterdam ; New York, N.Y. : Rodopi, 2009

VIII
**25 Oct.** MID TERM PAPERS / discussion and crits in class

FALL BREAK 31 October / 6 November

IX
**8 Nov.:** Avant-garde in Rome at the turn of the Seventies

Location: Classroom

**Required readings:**
- L’Attico di Fabio Sargentini, (English texts), exhibition catalogue edited by Luca
Massimo Barbero and Francesca Pola, Milan, Macro - Electa, 2011;
- A Roma, la nostra era Avanguardia (English texts), exhibition catalogue edited by Luca Massimo Barbero and Francesca Pola, Milan, Macro - Electa, 2010;
- Ida Gianelli (ed.), Transavanguardia, Milan, Skira, 2003; CP

Further readings:
(to come)

X
15 Nov.: Producing for Exhibiting (Part I): The Venice Biennale
Location: Classroom

Required readings:
- Germano Celant, Ambient / Art, in Environment, Participation, Cultural Structure, (first volume), Venice, La biennale di Venezia, 1976; CP

Further readings:
- The Biennale Reader, Hatje Cantz, 2010;

Field trip (overnight): visit to Venice Biennal
Venice 18 – 19 November 2011
(Program and trip details to be confirmed the first day of school)

XI
22 Nov.: Site visit: BASE, non profit art space / art producing
Massimo Nannucci, artist
Location: Firenze, via San Niccolò 18r

XII
29 Nov.: Maurizio Cattelan: from backwater to frontrunner
1993, Maurizio Cattelan, Working is a bad job (Biennale di Venezia, Aperto)
Location: Classroom

Required readings:
- P. Nicolin, Sragionare in lungo e in largo. Notes on Italian art circa 2008”, in ITALICS, exhibition catalogue, curated by Francesco Bonami, Milan, Electa, 2008; CP
- Maurizio Cattelan, London, Phaidon, 2003;

Further readings:
- Franklin Sirmans, Maurizio Cattelan: Is There Life Before Death? The Menill Collection, Houston, 2010
DUE: Submit Term Papers

XIII
6 Dec.: Artist talks: Meris Angioletti and Giorgio Andreotta Calò after their first take at Venice Biennale
Location: Classroom

Required readings:
- 54th Venice Biennale (texts related to the artists and introduction by the director: exhibition catalogue to be launched on June 2011).

XIV
13 Dec.: Final exam (term papers returned)
Location: Classroom