

Assignment 3: Critique (Group Project)

15%

This is a group assignment. Groups are to have 4 to 6 members.

TOPIC: Choose one of the options below

REQUIREMENTS: 300-400 words/person (e.g. a group of 4 would submit 1200-1600 words)

OTHER REQUIREMENTS: Provide online reference for exhibition notes, artist's statement or other supplementary text

NOTE ON EVALUATION: Good grammar, clean spelling, and good writing count

DUE DATE: March 1, 9 a.m.

Exhibitions Options

The first 2 options listed provide excellent opportunities for those of you who'd like to meet others in the course to engage with the artwork in real space and real time through real dialogue. The last three options have been left open for you to determine the object of your review in the virtual space. This means that if you sign up for any of these, you will have to find an artwork in the listed sites and agree on it as your topic with others in the group. Alternatively, if your group chooses to, for these options only, you may want to write your critique on the entire site/field. I will add to this list on the course website until January 25 at which point the list will be considered final.

Reconnaissance: Finnish New Media Art

January 19 – February 11, 2006, Opening Reception Thursday January 19:

Artist talks begin at 6:30 p.m., Reception begins at 8:00 p.m.

InterAccess Electronic Media Arts Centre, 9 Ossington Avenue, Toronto

<http://www.interaccess.org>

Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 12 – 5 p.m.

Art +Activism @ YYZ Artists' Outlet

Saturday, January 14- Saturday, February 25, 2006

Art+Activism looks at the role and nature of contemporary artistic practices as activist practices.

<http://www.yyzartistsoutlet.org/exhibitions.asp?language=en> for more information

401 Richmond Street West, suite 140, Toronto, Canada M5V 3A8

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 5pm, Admission: free

Data Agency ~ An Online Exhibition

<http://www.scansite.org/scan.php?pid=309>

Soft Cinema - by Lev Manovich

<http://www.softcinema.net/?reload>

<http://runme.org>

Software art hub. Choose any project.

<http://www.kunstradio.at/>

Internet radio/sound art. Choose any programme.

<http://rhizome.org>

Netart hub. Choose any project.

Why this?

Having read through your assignments 1 and 2, and also following and thinking about the group discussions, I think it is time that we broaden the scope of interactions and dialogue among you and engage in deeper collective and collaborative learning. I think we can achieve this very nicely through group work on this essay. This should create an opportunity for you to work with and meet a few others in the course, and also to formulate your ideas and opinions about your topic in dialogue with others. Groups are to be between 4 and 6. Each group goes to one of the exhibits or events listed and submits a collective review/presentation.

Group formation

I have opened a new forum called “**assignment 3 groups**” under ASSIGNMENTS category, specifically for kick-starting group formations. Anybody can initiate forming a group by posting a note that indicates what option they’re interested in. Many of you have shown excellent organizing skills in your regular discussion groups, so I know you can take it up yourself. And, of course, I’ll facilitate where needed.

Very important note on group work ethics

Now, I start from the assumption that you are all conscientious individuals who do your bit, respect others and try not to become a burden and a nuisance. But I also know that some of you may have reservations about working in groups perhaps because in your previous experience you’ve come across people who did not do their share of the labour, dumped the responsibility on others and got credited for the work of others at the end. Thankfully, we only had a couple of these cases last year. And, sadly, they ended up getting a zero on the assignment with no chance to make up. Please be aware that part of the evaluation of these essays will be done by yourself so that all members of the group get to comment on the process as well as what other people contributed to the final product and evaluate their participation. And, of course, at any point, if somebody doesn’t do what everybody’s agreed to in the group, you can knock on my door to let me know and I will take whatever measure may be necessary. This is to say that working collaboratively requires diligence, respecting others, carrying through with what you promise, taking initiative, taking responsibility, communicating openly and honestly, and, of course sticking to the agreed-upon process and timeline.

What to do now

Look at the list of exhibitions and events posted on the exhibits page. Pick one that attracts you the most. Take the initiative to form a group for this option by posting a message to the forum, or join others who may have already started a group. **You must reply by Tuesday, January 31, 5 p.m.** (If you reply later, I may have to assign you to a group rather than let you choose.)

Content guidelines

The goals of this assignment are 1) to get you to **critique** an artwork within the **contexts** of **artistic fields**, **cultural practices** and **social issues** and 2) to articulate your ideas in **conversation** with your peers.

What is a critique?

A critique is a **formal** re-presentation of a subject. In a critique, which may be written or oral, the subject is **described**, **analyzed** and **interpreted**, as it might be in a review. A critique applies

an additional process, however, and that is **judgement**.

You have exercised your proverbial and real muscles in the first three processes during your last two assignments and your discussion postings. In this assignment you will get the space to engage with the making of a judgement as a formal process. This is where you get to evaluate the **effectiveness** of the work that is the subject of your critique.

Logically, you need to first **set the criteria** for effectiveness and a **means of measurement**, the so-called “standards of evaluation,” the “measuring scale.” (In spheres of popular tv, press and internet media channels, the “critics” often have a “rating system.” In the sphere of education, this is analogous to grading the work of students.)

In setting the criteria and measures, it is crucial to be aware of the standards, debates and issues in the field in which the work is presented. For example, in order to judge a particular symphonic arrangement, it is important that you know symphonic music in general and what standards of evaluation are used in the area by experts. In other words, a critique is not just your personal opinion of the work. So, in writing your critique, you need to familiarize yourself with the area of art practice to which the work belongs, know its context, and know what are the general standards used in the field. You may choose to reject the established standards but you need to be aware of them.

Use the questions below to help you generate and organize your thoughts. These are not to replace but to add to other guidelines given in the previous assignment descriptions, where you already got acquainted with the tasks of description, analysis and interpretation. Your critique should **not** be a point-form response to the questions below, but use these as a starting point for generating content. And you do **not** have to organize your content in the same order as below.

Description

- What is the title and who is (are) the artist(s)?
- What is the written description on the didactic material about the work?
- When and where was the work created?
- Describe the elements of the work (i.e., movement, projection, image, sound, etc.).
- Describe the technical qualities of the work (i.e., devices, materials, technologies).
- Describe the subject matter. What is it all about?

Analysis

- How is the work constructed or planned (i.e., acts, movements, simultaneous projections)?
- Identify some of the similarities throughout the work (i.e., repetition of lines, two songs in each act).
- Identify some of the points of emphasis in the work (i.e., specific scene, figure, movement).
- If the work has subjects or characters, what are the relationships between or among them?
- What is the artistic context of the work, and how is the work situated in this?
- What is the broader socio-cultural and/or political context of the work, and how does the work relate to these?

Interpretation

- Describe the expressive qualities you find in the work. What expressive language would you use to describe the qualities (i.e., tragic, ugly, funny, confusing)?

- Does the work remind you of other things you have experienced (i.e., analogy or metaphor)?
- How does the work relate to other ideas or events in the world and/or in your other studies?

Judgment or Evaluation

- What criteria can you list to help others judge this work?
- What qualities of the work make you feel it is a effective or not effective?
- Compare it with similar works that you think are effective or not.
- How original is the work? Why do you feel this work is original or not original?

Note on assignment length

300-400 words/person is a general guideline that determines the final length of the essay based on the number of people in the group. This doesn't mean that each of you have to write a separate bit unless this is what you agree upon as your process. You may divide the work differently so one or two do the writing while others do other work. Up to you how you go about the actual writing process.