

## The Instinct of Justice and The Practice of Beauty

### El Instinto de la Justicia y La Práctica de la Belleza

Professor: Claudia Bernardi

Spring 2006/ Thursdays 12- 3

*“Justice is the effort of correcting an unbalance of inequality”*

Venerable Judge Richard Goldstone  
Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals  
For the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda

*“Beauty is a worldly stability, a premonition of immortality,  
not the immortality of the soul or of life but of something immortal  
achieved with mortal hands, tangibly present, to be seen, to be  
heard, to speak and to be read”.*

Hannah Arendt

January 19- 2006

#### **Introduction:**

This class is about questions more than it is about answers.

This class is about philosophy and recent history as much as it is about art.

Harold Pinter, ART, TRUTH AND POLITICS

**Of urgent matter: The institutionalizing of TORTURE as a practice in the US**  
Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib  
Mark Danner on : Torture

This course responds to the urgent demand of investigating the reason and the role of art in our current history and the role of artists as intellectuals. Intellectuality and the praxis of identifying the concerns of the *“Greater Common Good”* (Arundhati Roy) places a pivotal link in the development of historical processes. In countries where political dictatorships and violations of human rights do occur, the voice of the artists, thinkers and intellectuals narrate and record reality with the commitment to preserve it for the future.

We are forced to re-examine the bankruptcy of spirituality and the recurrence of brutality, which has characterized the XXth Century as well as the dawn of the new millennium. From the field of International Law to the realm of the “artworld” it is imperative to go back to essential questions such as:

What is "Justice"?  
 What is "Beauty"?  
 How can Justice be obtained and sustained?  
 Does art effectively transform reality?  
 What is violence?  
 What are Human Rights?  
 Is it at all possible to imagine a change based on the praxis of Justice?

This course will investigate movements of protest through art and the resistance through beauty in Latin America and the United States. The historical analysis of a period of recent political unrest within which art is created will be the methodology used to understand the intention of the artists in their demand of Justice through the practice of their Art.

The Permanence of the World and The Work of Art: Hannah Arendt and the examination of the voice of aesthetics in History  
 Reporting From the Killing Fields: War, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity.  
 The resistance through Art in the Narmada Valley, India: Arundhati Roy  
 Art and Exile: Juan Gelman and the perseverance of Beauty.

### **FIRST ASSIGNMENT:**

**1) Students will write a **brief statement/ response** to what is the definition of **Justice and Beauty**. Please DO NOT write more than one page. This first assignment will NOT be graded.**

**2) The World Post -September 11:** Students will write a **brief statement/ response** addressing independent analysis/ reflections/ memories/ thoughts/ self-questioning/ criticisms/ etc , about, **what has happened to the world post 9-11?** This first assignment will NOT be graded

January 26

First two assignments due: Brief response to the definition of **Justice and Beauty** and response to **September 11, what has happened to the world?**

### **The Commitment of the Gaze/ El Compromiso de la Mirada**

*"My terror of forgetting is greater than my terror of having too much to remember"*  
 Yosef Yerushalmi, Holocaust survivor

*"Silence condones: once awareness exists, it is unthinkable to remain silent"*  
 Justice Richard Goldstone

Can an image change people's understanding of the world?  
 The role of the media in human rights  
 What does it mean "recording history"?

Photography/ Photo Documentary  
 Photography as an icon of a historical period  
 Kevin Carter (South Africa)  
 Adam Kuffeld (El Salvador)  
 Stephen Ferry (El Salvador/ Ethiopia)  
 Larry Towell (El Salvador)  
 Susan Meiselas (Nicaragua)  
 Gilles Peress (Rwanda/ Vukovar)  
 "The Graves", Srebrenica and Vukovar

"The Spectre of Hope", Sebastião Salgado in conversation with John Berger

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Students will investigate, research and respond to an image that may have changed or influenced the way they see reality or understand the world. Students could refer to images seen and discusses in class.

Students will have to present the requested material in a written and oral forma and they will have to show/ exhibit the selected image. Please, be prepared to bring your selected photographic material.

February 2

Students will present / discuss the selected photographic material.

**The role of the Media in Human Rights: The Way We Regard The Pain of Others**

Susan Sontag on "Photography"

How does the media shape the way we see the world?

How does the media present and "manufacture" reality?

Why do we believe in it?

Designed strategies to avoid analysis of the reality, who is behind it all? What interests are involved in withholding information?

Why?

"Manufacturing Consent" Naom Chomsky and the Media

A film by Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonik , 1992, Canada, 167 minutes

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Have you ever felt cheated by the media?

When? Describe the occasion and the circumstances under which you have felt uninformed or miss informed by the media.

Students will respond in a written form and to they will discuss in class.

Appoint three students to lead discussion next week on: Operation Condor,

February 9

Discussion on “misinformation”.

### **Argentina**

*“Será posible el Sur, será posible?” / Could it the South be possible, could it”?*

*“To think about new ways for Latin America, with the conviction that everyone who inhabits this continent is a human being means to re-connect with some key concerns on how to see history critically in order to envision a future. We must go to the original sources from which ideologies are born, and to re-plan political projects. We need to consult our common memory”*

Alcira Argumedo

The selected three students will introduce the Argentine case by presenting Operation Condor

El Proceso/ The Process of National Organization  
 The Military Junta  
 Operation Condor/ Operación Condor  
 The movements of Human Rights during the Dictatorship  
 Las Madres/ The Mothers  
 Las Abuelas/ The Grandmothers, Documentary  
 Hijos/ The Children  
 Three generations in search of the Disappeared  
 Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team

February 16

### **Argentina**

Artists creating during the dictatorship:

Victor Grippo

Juan Carlos Distéfano

Ricardo Longuini

Alberto Heredia

Marcelo Brodsky, (Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires)

El Grito/ The Scream

The poets: Juan Gelman / Paco Urondo

The Thinkers: Rodolfo Walsh/ Pino Solanas,

25 years after: The release of secret documents

2001-2003 :Marches and Public Demands

Theatre for Identity, El Teatro por la Identidad

MAR: Movimiento Argentino por la Resistencia/ Argentine Movement for Resistance

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Students will read and be prepared to discuss the “ Open Letter to the Military Junta” by Rodolfo Walsh

February 23

**Assignment :** Students will present and discussed “The Open letter to the Military Junta” by Rodolfo Walsh

Presentation : *“The Official Story”*

March 2

**Nicaragua**

*“Nadie quería cruzar aquel campo quemado/ No one wanted to cross that burnt field”*

Daisy Zamora

The Sandinista revolution

Solentiname

The murals and the Peace Brigades

Ernesto Cardenal

Daisy Zamora: Poet, Comander of the FSLN and Vice Minister of Education during the Revolution

The role of women in a Latin America at War

March 9

- **Reminder:** Research paper due next class

**Second Assignment due on March 16: Research paper (two to four pages)**

**This research paper WILL BE graded.**

**Guatemala**

*“My mother said that when a woman sees her son tortured, burnt alive, she is incapable of forgiving, incapable of getting rid of her hate”*

Rigoberta Menchú Tum

A forty years war

The massacre of the 2Rs



Documenting war: The revolutionary radio: “Radio Venceremos” / The Museum of Words

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Selected Students will research and investigate:  
Museum of Words and Image  
The School of the Americas

April 6

Students will present research on: Museum of Words and Image and  
The School of the Americas

**El Salvador:**

“*School of Assassins*”, Maryknoll World Productions, Documentary: 18 minutes

The massacre at El Mozote  
Artists and Ideas in El Salvador  
The rights of political refugees

April 13

**Art and Activism**

“*There is no excuse for bad art.*”

Arundhati Roy

The School of Art and Open Studio of Perquin

But is it art?  
Art and cultural implications  
Art in Communities  
Art for Social Change  
Art and Human Rights

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Students will research and present a local, national or international art in community project that they feel connected to, part of or would like to join

April 20

Presentation of the researched work on art in community projects:  
Why have you selected this project, please explain the philosophical and artistic reason for this selection.

Urban Interventions: GAC, Grupo de Arte Callejero/ Group of Street Art  
 Memory Rescue: El Pozo de Rosario, (The Hole of Rosario) artists responding  
 to a clandestine Center of Detention  
 Fernando Traverso and the series : The Bicycles

April 27

**Reminder: Final and last presentations are coming up!!!!**

April 27/ May 4: Final Presentations

Final and last presentations of this course: **April 27 and May 4, 2006**

## **Requirements:**

Since this class meets only once a week, **attendance** will be of great importance.

Students will respond weekly to the presented material. Students will be selected individually or in groups to address/ discuss/ reflect/ comment/ respond to the material presented in class/ lecture.

At the beginning of each class, half an hour will be devoted to student's presentations. Please note, that this weekly presentation **WILL HAVE** great importance in the final grade of this course. The purpose of the presentation is to encourage and create debate

Students will be asked to complete three projects:

- a) Three times in the semester students will be asked to define "**Justice and Beauty**".  
 During the first week of class, students will compose a **brief** response to the definition of **Justice and Beauty**. This response will be presented in a written format.  
 Students will have to write another response to : **September 11, two years after, What has happened to the world?**

These two first assignments will **NOT** be graded but **they are mandatory**

***First Assignments due on January 26***

- B) Students will present the second report on "**Justice and Beauty**". Two to four pages research paper based on theoretical analysis of the material included in the lectures and recommended readings.

- This paper can be an “in depth” research on a country of interest
- or it may be investigated as a comparison between two or more countries studied in this course
- or it may be an opportunity to address the artists/ poets/ thinkers/ intellectuals presented during the lectures
- it **CAN NOT BE** a repetition or summary of the presented material during the lectures or material taken from the readers

***Second Assignment due on March 23***

C) The final project of this class will be the creation of an art piece (any media) which will be the student’s personal response to “**Justice and Beauty**”. The piece needs to be created upon the parameters of investigation of this class and it will be formulated within the information provided in this course.

A written statement must accompany the artwork, addressing how the idea originated?

Based on what?/ What is the artist’s statement representing in the actual piece?

***The final presentations will take place on April 27 and May 4***

Collaborations among students are greatly encouraged. Students may choose to work collaboratively in-groups of two or three students. Their group-development of the idea and the resolution of the final artwork will be considered a “collaboration”, they will present the work collectively and they will share the same grade.

**Office Hours:**

Claudia Bernardi will be available for Office Hours **upon request** every Thursday, one hour before or one hour after class.

Please, make sure to contact me previously by e-mail in order to schedule a meeting before or after class

**wallofhope@gmail.com**  
[claudiabernardi@access4less.net](mailto:claudiabernardi@access4less.net)

