

Rendering the Geography of Community Through Art

Art and Ideas are the only to last through Times
El Arte y las Ideas son lo único que dura a través del Tiempo

Graffiti on a wall in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2008

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The proposed projects to be created at the Spencer Center for Civic and Global Engagement at Mary Baldwin College have in common the investigation of the intersection of ethics, aesthetics and politics locally, nationally and internationally.

Project #1: *Mapping Peace: Artists as Peace Practitioners- A profession for a damaged world*

“Peace is a constant activity of diversity. Peace is not static. Rather, it is a constant exercise of respect for people. Peace follows a trajectory: personal peace, communal peace and lastly, world peace. If we continue to rule the world with the law of “an eye for an eye”, we will all end up blind”

Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Argentina- 1980 Nobel Peace Prize

An artist is, above all, an optimist. The root of art practice departs from trust that something that is not existent yet, can *become*. That is the genesis of a work of art. Artists envision a possible resolution to make real an intuition. Artists trust both the intuition and the craftsmanship with which the artist will convey the actual art piece. Peace Building as praxis and the praxis of art have in common that both disciplines assume that *“it can happen”*.

Art and art practice require commitment, professionalism and vigilance. Analogies can be drawn between the creative process, the building of community and the proposal and implementation of a peace process.

- **Fall Lecture: *“Mapping Peace: Artists as Peace Practitioners: A profession for a damaged world”*** - Date to be arranged
 This public lecture will address the role of artists as activists and Peace Builders. The lecture will be designed to present the vision and the proposal for the upcoming Art in Community mural to be created in May Term 2009.
- **“Building Peace”** Mural created at the Spencer Center, April 25- May 20, 2009. This mural will be envisioned, designed and painted collaboratively by students enrolled in May Term and Claudia Bernardi. Before students

start the creation of the mural, they will investigate and research the fragility and successes of Peace Processes all over the world. They will use this research and investigation as the “theme’ of the mural, proposing a new paradigm of community building through art.

PROJECT #2: “*Mapping Existence: Science, Art and Human Rights*”

Artists create in an ever-changing environment where culture and crisis collide in the arduous task of defining a historical period. Artists as “cultural activists” re-examine reality, denounce violations of Human and Civil Rights and transform the damage and fracture of societies with the practice of beauty as a methodology of resistance.

Science provides the unquestionable technology to identify DNA evidence that confirm the identity of disappeared people, victims of state terror in Latin America.

“If you have a relative victim of forced disappearance between 1974 and 1983, a single sample of your blood can help identify him/her”
Latin America Initiative for the Identification of Disappeared People
Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team

Message on a poster vastly distributed and disseminated in Argentina, 2007- 2008.

- **Fall Lecture: “*Mapping Existence: Science, Art and Human Rights*”**
 Date to be arranged. This public lecture will address the Argentine case: Institutionalization of illegal disappearance as a method of repression and the ethics of genetics, DNA: imprint of existence.
- **May Term: April 25- May 20, 2009.**
Mapping Existence: Science, Art and Human Rights: This research class is created as a bridge course with other departments and disciplines on campus. Students enrolled in this course will investigate, document, interview and collect evidence of issues regarding genetics and DNA investigation, in science, history, international law, human rights and art.

During the three weeks of this course, students will create artwork individually or collaboratively (in any selected media) basing the creation of the piece upon the information provided by Professor Claudia Bernardi’s lectures and by the evidence of their collected cross-departmental research:

- Genealogy
- Identity/ Anonymity
- The Victims
- The Mothers/ Grandmothers and the Children (H.I.J.O.S.) of the “Disappeared” during the Dirty War in Argentina

- The Search for the Disappeared
- Artists who address “Absences”

The final artworks produced by the students during May Term 2009, will be exhibited at the Spencer Center. (Dates to be arranged)

PROJECT #3: “*Mapping Hope: Art as Diplomacy: The Perquin Project Travels the Continent*”

In March of 2005, Claudia Bernardi in collaboration with the community of Perquin created **The School of Art/ Open Studio of Perquin**. This unique art/ art education and community based project is designed to facilitate, implement and teach art to children, youth and adults. In a community polarized by poverty, politics and religious antagonism, art has become an important tool for conflict resolution, crime prevention, diplomacy and the respect for human rights.

The School of Art and Open Studio of Perquin has established its ongoing presence in the community through the creation of public art projects, murals, urban interventions and weekly classes and workshops in painting, drawing, wood sculpture, textile art, printmaking and mask making. International artists come to Perquin to share with the community their skills and artistry producing weeklong workshops that are designed to teach and disseminate techniques, skills and aesthetic propositions to be implemented in community based projects.

The “**Perquin Project**” has started to travel all over the continent. From El Salvador to Guatemala to the United States and Canada, artists and communities are willing to partake in the proposal of creating art as diplomacy.

The partnership of art, community building and the affirmation of social justice conforms a new paradigm of hope.

- **Fall Lecture: “*Mapping Hope: Art as Diplomacy: The Perquin Project Travels the Continent*”** - Date to be arranged
This public lecture will address the School of Art and Open Studio of Perquin, El Salvador. The focus of this lecture will be presenting evidence of community and collaborative art projects in El Salvador, Guatemala and Canada where art becomes a diplomatic tool of reconstruction. The lecture will be designed to present to students the vision for the upcoming Art in Community course/ project in May Term 2009.
- ***Mapping Hope: Community and Collaborative Mural Project***. April 25-May 20, 2009. This community and collaborative mural project will be developed and painted at the Spencer Center for Civic and Global Engagement. Students enrolled in this course will be expected to establish a liaison, connection or partnership with already existing community groups, agencies and/ or public or private schools. Students will

investigate, interview and collect information regarding the vast social texture of the community of Staunton (off Campus). The collected information will be the basis of the theme or narration of the mural. Children and young artists from the public or private school system will be invited to partake in the rendering of the mural under the guidance and assistance of MBC students.

The Goals of the mural can be identified as:

To create a forum for children and youth to explore social issues through art

To create art that celebrates growth, unity and diversity.

To learn about other countries and cultures

To propose enduring new liaisons with community based agencies.

Project #4: “Mary Baldwin College Students Visit Perquin during May Term, 2010”

MBC students, guided and assisted by Professor Claudia Bernardi will design *Art in Residence Projects*. During the three weeks of May Term 2010, MBC students will learn how to design and implement art in community projects created in partnership with the needs, desires and proposals of the inhabitants of Perquin, El Salvador. Students will be encouraged to strategize art and art practice according to the needs, economic limitations and realities of Perquin.

MBC students will be immersed in the recent history of El Salvador and the legacy of the Civil War, 1980-1992. MBC students will meet the community and community’s leaders who had been active members of grassroots organizations in the postwar time. Through lectures, visits and conversations with ex combatants, survivors of massacres, political leaders and Salvadoran artists, MBC students will be introduced, educated and guided on how to implement community based projects such as murals, public art, film and video documentation and visual art. Professor Bernardi will oversee, direct, help execute and give guidance to students on how to successfully design and carry on art in community project.

The proposed project will become effective not earlier than 2010 because courses/ lectures and / or seminars need to be created to introduce MBC students to the dynamics of working as Artists in Residence, for, within and in partnership with a given/ chosen community.

Spanish language will be strongly encouraged among the participating students.

“ We, the people, need to assume ourselves as protagonists of our own history”

Adolfo Perez Esquivel

