WEEK 5:
Relational Aesthetic (Part 2)
Critique of Relational Aesthetics
Critique of Relational Aesthetics

If human relations is the work of art, then how do we measure or compare these relationships?
Critique of Relational Aesthetics

If the work of art consists in the act of participation itself—the taking of the candy—then how exactly are we to evaluate the aesthetic success or failure of a pile of candy in a gallery? By the degree of participation? The more candy taken from the pile, the better the art?

Felix Gonzales-Torres, Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA), 1991
Critique of Relational Aesthetics

If relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?

Claire Bishop
According to Bourriaud the structure of relational work facilitates a social relationship, though Bishop suggests we look at such social relationships through a critical lens which can be specifically related to the construction of such relations and the development of a ‘public’ instead of ‘community.’
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Critique of Relational Aesthetics

A collective that is formed by constructed relationships, which generates common connection amongst people (microtopia)

A collective that is organically formed by situational randomness, shared values, and political antagonism

Rikrit Tiravanija, Untitled (Free)
“Given the absence of any aesthetic criteria for evaluating relational art, a competing theory which champions aesthetic strategies of dissonance, subversion, disruption, is Relational Antagonism.”
Santiago Sierra
250 Cm Line Tattooed On 6 Paid People, 1999
Santiago Sierra
250 Cm Line Tattooed On 6 Paid People, 1999
Santiago Sierra
8 People Paid To Be In Cardboard Boxes, 1998
Santiago Sierra
Six People Who Are not Allowed to Be Paid for Sitting in Cardboard Boxes
2000
Santiago Sierra
*Six People Who Are not Allowed to Be Paid for Sitting in Cardboard Boxes*
2000
“In contrast to Tiravanija’s happy soup kitchen, Sierra is there to offer the sobering reminder that there’s no such thing as a free meal: everything and everyone has a price.”
Critique of Relational Antagonism

What is the ethical value of aesthetic antagonism?

Santiago Sierra
8 People Paid To Be In Cardboard Boxes, 1998
Critique of Relational Antagonism

What is the ethical value of aesthetic antagonism?

How we distinguish the aesthetic object from the object critiqued?

Santiago Sierra
8 People Paid To Be In Cardboard Boxes, 1998
Critique of Relational Antagonism

“Sierra’s work is not symbolic, it is not simply about oppression, it is oppressive itself. Again, that hypothetical defender of Sierra may say that his work does this in order not to excuse itself from the cruelties of the labor market. But why recapitulate something in order to say it is wrong? Furthermore, why simply stop at saying it is wrong, something any moral midget can do, and instead not try to help transform those social relations?”

- John Menick
Critique of Relational Antagonism

“...that’s the way the world is!”

Relational Antagonism does not believe in change. Its negative and reactionary gesture perpetuates a sociopolitical impotence.

Santiago Sierra
Six People Who Are not Allowed to Be Paid for Sitting in Cardboard Boxes
2000
“Today’s critical art only consists in manifestations of agonism and refusal... It dismisses the importance of proposing new modes of coexistence, of contributing to the construction of new forms of collective identity.”

-Chantal Mouffe
Socially Engaged Art

- Authorship
- Activation
- Community
- Political Discourse
- Structural alternatives
“proposing new modes of coexistence, of contributing to the construction of new forms of collective identity.”
"proposing new modes of coexistence, of contributing to the construction of new forms of collective identity."

Jon Rubin and Dawn Weleski, Conflict Kitchen, Ongoing Project
Jon Rubin and Dawn Weleski,
*Conflict Kitchen*, Ongoing Project
Amar Bakshi, The Portals, Ongoing Project
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