The last two are up to you….sort of

There are two more projects due in this class. Both of them are qualitatively different from previous assignments in that they rely on you to bring structure and a sense of meaning to your activities in the studio.

The last project, your independent project, is due for the last two days of class (December 11 and 15) which will be critique classes. The other project, which will be a collaboration, is due whenever it is finished between now and the last two days of class.

Independent Project

You can do anything you want but you have to think about and plan what you do with David Joselit’s reading “Painting Beside Itself” in mind. We discussed the reading as a group but there may still be aspects of it that you don’t feel you understand well enough to act on. Don’t delay, come and speak with me about it.

The size and scope of this project will be dictated by you, however the ambition with which you approach it should be in line with the 27 hours of work per week expected of this 9 credit course. You do have to provide me with a typed 1-2 page proposal that:

- addresses the Joselit’s reading;
- describes what you are going to do and how you are going to do it; and
- a timeline that takes essential aspects of the making of the work into account ending with the final critique. This proposal is due 16 November.

Collaboration

A process of collaboration can be incredibly rewarding but can also be difficult and unfulfilling if the parties involved don’t have an understanding about how things should proceed. In my opinion it is not worthwhile imposing groups intended for collaborations, so I am leaving it up to you. If there is another individual - and it could also be 3 collaborators but not 4, who you would like to try working with and who is interested in working with you, then you have the beginning of a collaboration. On the other hand, you may not want to collaborate with another actual person. It might not be in your nature (I, for instance, find it very hard to collaborate). In this case, you will have to collaborate with the work of an artist that is of interest to you. If you take this later path, please be able to speak about what part of the painting belongs to you and what part belongs to the artist you chose, metaphorically speaking.

The painting(s) that you make should have horizontal and vertical dimensions that when added together equal 7 feet: 6 1x1 paintings (multiples), 1 6x1 painting, 1 2x5 painting, 1 3x4 painting, 1 3.5x3.5 painting… If there are 3 collaborators the vertical and horizontal dimensions have to add up to 11.

Below is a piece of writing about artistic collaboration.
Collaboration in Art -- mutual respect, mutual work, mutual exposure
by Brian Sherwin on 8/21/2011 6:10:35 PM

This article is by Brian Sherwin, regular contributing writer for FineArtViews. Brian Sherwin is an art critic, blogger, curator, artist and writer based near Chicago, Illinois. He has been published in Hi Fructose Magazine, Illinois Times, and other publications, and linked to by publications such as The Huffington Post, The Boston Globe, Juxtapoz Magazine, Deutsche Bank ArtMag, ARTLURKER, Myartspace, Blabbermouth, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Modern Art Obsession, Citizen LA, Shark Forum, Two Coats of Paint, Vandalog and Art Fag City. You should submit an article and share your views as a guest author by clicking here.

Collaboration in art is the ultimate test of placing your ego aside in order to work toward a common idea. The image of the ego driven artist may be somewhat stereotypical -- but I'd say that there is some truth in suggesting that most artists find it difficult to invite other artists into their process directly. After all, the creation of art is a private affair for the majority of artists I've known over the years. Not all are open to the idea of sharing an artistic vision in that manner. Point blank -- creating collaboration art is not for everyone. For those who can work jointly -- creating collaborative art can be a powerful experience.

Working on an artists collaboration can be a good learning experience for those involved. Each artist will likely inform the other on how to improve the direction of the combined effort. This exchange of ideas and process can be very healthy for both artists -- as long as ego does not become an issue. "Maybe you should try this." or "This might work better." can come off as an attack to an artist who is unwilling to open up to ideas. The artist collaborators must understand that mutual respect is required, that the work belongs to those involved, and that all involved with the creation of the piece will benefit from the exposure garnered when it is exhibited.

Artists, specifically painters, often mention how creating art is like a dialogue -- a conversation between the artist and the work. In a sense, the painting 'tells' the artist what it needs. For this reason alone mutual respect between art collaborators is very important. After all, both artists are involved in the dialogue -- both artists are being 'told' what to do next... both have a 'say' in the 'conversation'. Debate over the direction of the piece will arise. Creative conflict is a reality of collaborative art -- without mutual respect, and the trust that comes with it, the collaborative artwork will be doomed from the start. Mutual respect... mutual effort.

For the collaborative artwork to be a pure example of a joint artistic effort the collaborators must have equal say. In other words, those involved must understand that they are working mutually toward a common goal -- that being the creation of a work of art and the exploration of shared ideas. The collaborative art project will likely be abandoned if a collaborator ends up treating his or her artistic partner as if he or she is a mere apprentice or assistant. Both artists must understand that the work is a mutual effort -- there is no room for thoughts of hierarchy to cloud the direction of the work at hand. Mutual effort... mutual work.

Once the art collaboration is complete one can assume that, unless stated otherwise from the start of the collaboration, it is time to gain exposure for the joint effort. Oddly enough, this can be the most trying time for a collaboration. Everything that was done before -- all of the mutual respect and work -- is put to the test. At this point those involved in the collaboration must accept that all involved with the creation of the piece share credit for the creation of the piece.
The exposure garnered from exhibiting the collaboration -- be it online or in a gallery setting -- benefits all of the collaborators. Mutual work... mutual exposure.

Obviously not all art collaborations are the same. That is why it is vital for those involved with the project to know exactly what they are getting into. I'm not suggesting that a contract is in order -- but it may help if each artist writes down what he or she expects from the venture. Those collaborating should strive to reduce as much confusion as possible as to the task at hand and how it will be presented later. The goal from the start should be to avoid hardships -- and hard feelings -- during and after the creation of the collaborative art.

In closing, a collaboration shared between two or more artists can be a powerful experience. A collaboration of this nature -- perhaps more than other forms of collaboration -- tests the mettle of all involved. It involves mutual respect, mutual work -- and eventually, mutual exposure. The key point is to understand that the effort is a joint effort -- a collective exploration....

Brian Sherwin