

## unit guide

Theory and Practice  
AME-1-TPR  
BA (Hons) Digital Media Arts



Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences  
Semester 1, 2008 – 2009

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## 1. UNIT DETAILS

<b>Unit Title:</b>	Digital Media Arts: Theory and Practice
<b>Unit Level:</b>	1
<b>Unit Reference Number:</b>	AME-1-TPR
<b>Credit Value:</b>	15
<b>Student Study Hours:</b>	150
<b>Contact Hours:</b>	36
<b>Private Study Hours:</b>	114
<b>Course(s):</b>	BA (Hons) Digital Media Arts
<b>Year and Semester</b>	1, Semester 1
<b>Unit Coordinator:</b>	Simon Lewandowski s.lewandowski@leeds.ac.uk
<b>Subject Area:</b>	Arts, Media and English
<b>Summary of Assessment Method:</b>	1500-word critical analysis (75%) Seminar Presentation (25%)

## 2. SHORT DESCRIPTION

This unit is designed to introduce students to the field of digital art. It will examine its origins and evolution, and explore key ideas, issues and concepts relevant to understanding and making digital and new media art. Tracing the relationship between art and technology from a historical and socio-cultural perspective, students will be encouraged to consider the impact of digital technology on our conceptions of the artwork, the artist and the audience. Students will have the opportunity to view examples of 20<sup>th</sup> century contemporary art and to explore approaches for evaluating these artworks.

### 3. AIMS OF THE UNIT

The unit offers an overview of digital and new media art and aims to:

- Introduce students to the origins and evolution of digital and new media art
- Develop an understanding of key ideas, issues and concepts relevant to making digital media art
- Explore the relationship between theory and practice
- Identify frameworks for the evaluation of digital media art
- Encourage students to develop independent research skills

### 4. LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### 4.1 Knowledge and Understanding

- Students will develop an understanding of developments in digital and new media art practice, and the histories which underpin it.
- Students will develop a familiarity with the ideas and concepts associated with this genre

#### 4.2 Intellectual Skills

- Students will develop an ability to closely analyse and compare examples of digital art

#### 4.3 Practical Skills

- Students will develop the ability to undertake research into digital art practice and theory

#### 4.4 Transferable Skills

- Oral communication and presentation skills
- Media research and study skills
- Written communication skills appropriate to academic study

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIT

### 5.1 Assessment Methods

- Seminar Presentation (25%)
- 1500-word critical analysis (75%)

### 5.2 Seminar Presentation

You are required to produce a seminar presentation of between 5 and 10 minutes. These presentations will be scheduled in class during weeks 5 and 6.

The topic and scope of the presentations will be introduced to you in class. A guide to this assessment will be handed out in class and is also available on Blackboard.

### 5.3 Seminar Presentation Requirements

You will be assessed on both the content and delivery of your seminar presentation using the criteria outlined below. Please ensure that you address all the criteria, giving careful consideration to how best to present any visual or multimedia materials.

Content of Oral Presentation:

- Use of research and other relevant sources
- Structure and analysis
- Evidence of evaluation

Oral Presentation Technique:

- Clarity and structure
- Pace and timing
- Body language
- Interest and engagement
- Use of visual aids and handouts, etc.

## 5.4 Critical Analysis

For this assignment you are required to produce a written 1500-word Critical Analysis of an individual artwork which is part of an exhibition or collection (or otherwise publicly accessible) publicly accessible in London. A separate sheet including the topic and requirements will be given to you in class and made accessible via Blackboard.

## 5.5 Critical Analysis Requirements

What your essay needs to demonstrate is the ability to analyse a piece of work that you have seen in its original form, to research its historical, social and critical context and produce a coherent, well-structured account of all of these in clear, concise language.

**Analysis:** you are being asked to show that you can understand the difference between analysing and merely describing. Analysis involves the breaking down of things into their constituent parts to see how they work - what are the methods the artist/maker has used to put the work together, what kinds of devices does he/she use?

**Context:** look at your subject and think about where it is sited historically and socially. When and where was it made? What else did the artist/maker do? What was being made at the time? What was going on around them? Who was it made for. If it is contemporary these questions are no less important.

**Comparison:** what have you come across that looks like your subject? Which qualities are the same and which differ? Can looking at one thing give you an insight into the other?

**Research:** find out what other people have said about your subject. Look in the library, on the internet, in magazines. Does what they say make sense to you? Does it accord with what you see yourself? If not, why not?

## 5.6 Presentation and Submission of Written Work

Submit TWO copies of your critical analysis to the Faculty Office (BR-266) or the coursework submission box.

Please make sure that a single title page is attached to the front of each copy with the name of the unit, your level, your student number, and the date. All written coursework should be word-processed on one side of the paper only, and a single title page must be attached to the front. All work should double-spaced, using a font size of no smaller than 12pt, with enough space left in the left and right margins for comments and corrections.

Carefully proof read your work before submission. Grammatical, spelling and referencing errors make the work appear careless and will reduce your overall mark.

If you require an extension you need to your Course Director Katrina Sluis at least 24 hours prior to the deadline and provide documentary evidence of illness.

## 5.7 Deadlines for Submission of Coursework

- Critical Analysis: Monday 5th January 2009
- **Seminar Presentations: You will be allocated a time in Weeks 5 or 6 for your presentation.** Failure to present on the allocated day will result in your mark for this component being capped at 40%, unless you have been granted an extension by your Course Director.

# 6. RETURN OF COURSEWORK AND FEEDBACK

Feedback will generally be given to students 15 working days after the submission of date, and work can be collected from the Faculty Office, Borough Road, BR-266. The feedback will include written comments from your tutor and a provisional



grade, which remains advisory until the Examination Board in July. Should you wish to discuss your feedback in more detail, you are advised to make an appointment to see the Unit Co-ordinator.

In week 11 you will be asked to fill in a unit evaluation form. The feedback you provide will help us evaluate and improve the unit in future. However, if you have feedback you do not have to wait until the end of the unit – you can raise any issues with Simon or Katrina in the first instance, or via your Course Representatives who attend department Course Boards.

## 7. INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING THE UNIT

### 7.1 Overview of the Main Content

The unit provides an overview of digital media arts practice, by examining the histories and contexts from which this broad range of practices emerge. By examining and analysing the work of artists, filmmakers and designers the unit seeks to introduce students to ideas of authorship, creative process, the role of theory and practice and the ways in which media artefacts are understood and interpreted.

### 7.2 Overview of Types of Classes

The unit will be taught via lectures, seminars, and laboratory-based workshops. Students are expected to spend approximately 7 hours a week on independent study, research and seminar presentation.

### 7.3 Importance of Student Self-Managed Learning Time

Students are expected to spend approximately seven hours per week on independent reading, research and self-managed study. You are advised to spend time doing further reading around the subject area, using the core and optional readings provided in this document as a guide. Students will be expected to read widely and follow up areas of interest through independent screenings and visits to art galleries.

## 7.4 Employability

This unit introduces key skills in analysis, research and written and oral communication skills which are all desirable transferable skills.

Recent research by Skillset.org (Overview of anticipated trends in the future use of skills in the audiovisual industry to 2010, September 2004) acknowledges the need for media workers to keep pace with digital and new technologies by acquiring a more 'complex skillset'. The report identifies 'soft skills' as being vital to this complex skillset – and it is these skills that 'theory' units like Theory and Practice helps foster. Soft-skills include verbal and written communication, planning, team-working, good interpersonal qualities and problem solving. These skills offer individuals a competitive advantage in the job market.

Additionally, as a creative practitioner it is important to understand the relationship between theory and practice. The unit aims to extend your visual literacy and understanding of the diversity of digital media arts practice in order to help you shape your own creative process.

## 8. THE PROGRAMME OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

<b>Wks 1-3</b>	<b>Wks 3-8</b>	<b>Wks 9-12</b>
What is digital and new media art? What is art?  Art's Histories and Technologies	Presentation Skills  Analysing cultural objects	Writing Skills  Performance, Interactivity, public space and new media arts
Research methodologies: Theory + Practice / Practice + Theory		

### 8.1 Week 1 (Monday 22nd September)

- Personal and general introductions, about the programme
- Film Screening and Discussion

## 8.2 Week 2 (Monday 29th September)

- This week's session will cover Art's Histories and Art's Technologies, Art as Science and Science as Art.

## 8.3 Week 3 (Monday 6th October)

- This week's session will Look at Surrealism and its Legacies. Also a look at research and presentation skills.

## 8.4 Week 4 (Monday 13th October)

- This session will look at Performance and Live Art and their relationship with Electronic Media.

## 8.5 Week 5 (Monday 20th October)

- This week will be devoted to student **seminar presentations**

## 8.6 Week 6 (Monday 27th October)

- This week will be devoted to student **seminar presentations**

## 8.7 Week 7 (Monday 3rd November)

- This week we will have a workshop on study skills, including essay writing and presentation skills.

## 8.8 Week 8 (Monday 10th November)

- In this week's session we will look at Interactivity, Participation and Activism in art.

## 8.9 Week 9 (Monday 17th November)

- Offsite visit (TBC)

## 8.10 Week 10 (Monday 24th November)

- In this week's session we look at the idea of the Everyday in Art and how artists use Journals, Diaries and Documentary to make work.

### 8.11 Week 11 (Monday 1st December)

- In this week's session we will examine Public Art and the idea of the Public Realm with particular reference to Electronic and Digital Media.

### 8.12 Week 12 (Monday 8th December)

- Module Overview - what did we make of it all? A look at the Art Industry and at careers in Arts and Media.

## 9. LEARNING RESOURCES

### 9.1 Core Materials

Paul, Christiane (2003) Digital Art London: Thames and Hudson

Manovich, Lev (2001) The Language of New Media. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rhizome Website: <http://www.rhizome.org>

Media Art Net: <http://www.mediartnet.org>

### 9.2 Optional Materials

Hughes, Robert (1991) The Shock of The New London: Thames and Hudson

Lister, Martin (ed) (2002) New Media: A Critical Introduction London: Routledge

Lucie-Smith, Edward (2001) Movements in Art Since 1945 London: Thames and Hudson

Benjamin, Walter (1999) [1936] 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in J. Evans and S. Hall (eds.) Visual Culture: The Reader. London: Sage.