



## Art/Place

Brown University/JNBC  
Fall 2011



Instructor	Betsey Biggs Office hours: by appointment Email: betsey_biggs@brown.edu
Meeting Time/Place	Tue: 10:30-11:50am at JNBC (room tbd) Thu: 10:30-11:50am at Olga's Cup & Saucer, 103 Point St. Note: Thursday meetings will consists of walks through the Jewelry District
Description	This studio course surveys the many ways in which contemporary artists respond to, remake, and intervene in places, and teaches students to articulate their own creative responses to place. We will be working intensively in Providence's Jewelry District, collaboratively creating a public artwork and developing each person's creative practice in response to the narrative and aesthetic prompts of this contested space. The course will culminate in a final exhibition of student projects curated by the students themselves.
Course Structure	<p>The course meets twice a week. <u>Tuesday meetings take place at the JNBC</u>, and are devoted to student and instructor presentations of place-based practices and discussion of readings. <u>Thursday meetings take place in the Jewelry District, rain or shine</u>, and consist of explorations of the site, discussions with others who are there, and presentation of possible projects there.</p> <p>After an introduction to the basic concepts and questions of the course, we will spend the first half of the semester focusing on making and remaking a sense of place through fieldwork, collaboration, and intervention; in teamwork with the nonprofit group Artists in Context, we will create a public artwork centered in the Jewelry District. The second half of the semester will shift our focus to the ways in which gallery-based work can express and remake senses of place through documentation, performance, mapping, reenactment, voyeurism, and abstraction. The course will culminate in a student-curated exhibition of work done throughout the semester.</p>

## Objectives

When this class is over, students should be able to:

- Deeply be in a place and analyze and articulate the ways in which their sense of place has come to be
- Artistically communicate their experience of a place to others
- Understand the spectrum of creative practice responding to place and learn which historical strands or particular projects inspire them
- Listen to and understand other people's experiences of the same place (across time and culture) through research and fieldwork
- Recognize the challenges artists face in creating public artworks

## Reading, Assignments & Projects

There is a fair amount of work expected for this course – about eight hours a week, slightly more when large projects are due. Some of this is in the form of reading texts; much more of it is in the form of reading the landscape and creating original responses to place. I encourage you to bring in your own sources to share with the class as you research your own projects. All of the reading will be handed out in class.

Crucially, each week you will be asked to spend a significant amount of time 'reading' the landscape of the Jewelry District, as well as conducting your own fieldwork and research into the history of the spots you choose to work with. You will also be asked to contribute interesting ideas, quotes, sketches, and photographs in a collage notebook each week, with weekly project proposals due in these notebooks based on the week's theme. Each week you'll be asked to discuss and share your notebook.

You will also be making two class presentations, for about 20 minutes each time: once in the classroom, where you will present on the artist/artwork of your choice, and how he or she relates to the ideas we're discussing that week, and once in the Jewelry District, where you will lead the course on a walk and discuss a project proposal in detail.

Finally, you'll be working on two larger projects. One will be

	<p>in collaboration with your classmates and the Artists in Context project to create a site-specific public work to be unveiled in the Jewelry District on October 15. The second, final project will be a gallery-based work which documents or acts as a 'trace' of your own explorations of place.</p>
<p>Grading</p>	<p>20% Place collage/notebook  20% Artists in Context collaboration project  20% Class presentation on artist (slides and/or sound)  20% Field presentation: on idea (have draft of it done)  20% Final project (including statement &amp; critique discussion)</p>
<p>Participation</p>	<p>It's important that our class become a community that can learn from one another; to do that we must all engage with one another. Participation means: completion of assignments, classroom discussions, studio focus, feedback to other students, and contribution to the class as a whole. It will affect your grade as a whole.</p>
<p>Important Dates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oct. 13: Project 1 due (Artists in Context collaboration)</li> <li>• Oct. 15: Artists in Context event</li> <li>• Nov. 8: Deadline to meet w/instructor about final project</li> <li>• Nov. 10: Draft of proposal and timeline for final project</li> <li>• Nov. 15: Final proposals and timelines presented to class</li> <li>• Dec. 5: Final projects installed</li> </ul>

Week 1  
Sept. 8:  
introduction

Thu: Seminar: Psychogeography loosely describes a cluster of arts practices that explore the effects of the geographical environment on the emotions and behaviors of individuals. How can we use these creative practices to question the urban cultural heritage of Providence's Jewelry District? Show several modes of contemporary artwork responding to place. How can we fully engage with a place and respond to it artistically? The importance of brainstorming. The importance of constructive critique. Talk about the projects that will be due: collage notebook, two projects, two presentations. Go for a short walk.

Week 2  
Sept. 13 & 15:  
introduction:  
basic concepts  
and meet with  
artists in context

Tue: Seminar: The Situationists and the act of the dérive; the flâneur and commitment; analysis of what makes a space a place; engaging the five senses.

Thu: Field: We'll meet at Olga's to walk around and discuss your dérives and analysis assignments.

Week 3  
Sept 20 & 22:  
tell me a story:  
the echoes of history

Tue: Seminar: Narrative and place; layers of history; basic history of the Jewelry District. Possible visit by Artists in Context organizers Jori Ketten and Micah Salkind.

Thu: Field: Walking discussion of proposed narrative projects.

Week 4  
Sept. 27 & 29:  
collaborative and  
participatory work

Tue: Seminar: Participation with the public, and giving up artistic control; designing systems; inviting multiplicities of place. The role of play. What are the reasons your audience is choosing their trajectory: imaginative, emotional, aesthetic, pragmatic?

Thu: Field: Walking discussion of proposed collaborative projects

Week 5  
Oct. 4 & 6  
intervention

Tue: Seminar: Think about controversial public art, and the reverse of that. How could you make your work secret? How could you surprise people? We'll take a look at street art and other public work that offers surprising interventions in the middle of the everyday.

Thu: Field: Workshop Artists in Context projects

Week 6  
Oct. 11, 13 & 15  
artists in context  
project!

Tue: FIELD: MEET AT OLGA'S! Workshop Artists in Context projects. Plus documentation and public work; the role of public discussion.

Thu: Seminar: Critique Artists in Context projects. Do publicity for event.

Sat, October 15 Artists in Context event! Volunteer as needed.

Week 7  
Oct. 18 & 20  
artists in context  
discussion & intro to  
gallery-based work

Tue: Seminar: Discuss Artists in Context event. How did our event change the place? Introduction to the idea of bringing the world in, rather than the art out. How can gallery-based projects include the world and engage the public? How can we express our wanderings through our work? What is the role of abstraction in gallery-based projects?

Thu: Field: Walking discussion of proposed abstraction projects

Week 8  
Oct. 25 & 27  
performance

Tue: Seminar: What constitutes performance? Documentation by someone else? The presence of another pair of eyes or ears? Are performers subject to more stringent rules than the average flâneur? Could you make your work more performative? Is that natural for you or does it seem strange? It can be good to push yourself in an unfamiliar direction. Remember, if your work is performative you will still need to decide where on the continuum between documentation and abstraction you wish your project to live.

Thu: Field: Walking discussion of proposed performance projects.

Week 9  
Nov. 1 & 3:  
mapping &  
reenactment

Tue: Seminar: Reenactment and mapping; the map as hierarchy and value system. The walk as drawing.

Thu: Field: Walking discussion of proposed mapping projects.

Week 10  
Nov. 8 & 10:  
surveillance

Tue: Seminar: Think about surveillance and how it plays into place-based work. Discuss Hasan Elahi's work, as well as the work of Scanner, Sophie Calle, Vito Acconci and the Glowlab project "Following the Man of the Crowd" which takes off from both Poe and Acconci. Look at Sophie Calle's work and think about self-surveillance and self-voyeurism.

Thu: Field: Walking discussion of proposed surveillance projects.

Week 11  
Nov. 15 & 17:  
project proposals

Tue: Seminar: Present introductory final project proposals.

Thu: Field: Walk through project proposals in the Jewelry District; work on final projects.

Week 12  
Nov. 22:  
project proposals/  
thanksgiving!

Tue: Seminar: Final project proposals & timelines due and presented to class.

Thu: No class; enjoy your holiday! Keep thinking about your projects, though. You might try out some of your ideas/sounds on family members or friends!

Week 13  
Nov. 29 & Dec. 1:  
final project  
workshops

Tue and Thu: Seminar: Final project class workshops. This is a great opportunity to get feedback on your pieces, or ideas. Try to be as prepared as possible so your piece is ready for prime time.

Week 14  
Dec. 6 & 8:  
final project critiques

Final projects must be installed by Monday, December 5.

Tue and Thu: Seminar: Critiques and discussion of final projects and class as a whole. What did we learn? How will you use it?

Dec. 9-16:  
final exhibit!

Final dates and location to be determined. Invite your friends!