



Judy Pfaff, N.Y.C./B.Q.E., 1987, Whitney Biennial

# Painting Redefined, Arts 352

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Defining the act of painting is not as simple as it may seem. This activity of creative expression, which has been in existence for thousands of years, has taken on myriad forms. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it has been deconstructed, reworked, turned on its head and conflated with many other art making processes. Because a good many artists today do not want to be labeled as painters or sculptors or media artists or what have you, they work with a range of materials and techniques that allow them to cross boundaries and defy categorization; they are most intent on pushing edges of neatly defined traditional definitions.

This class allows the student to play with, fear and celebrate the endless choices that may be made in creating work that may begin conceptually as “painting” but takes on its own life as a hybrid; for example: a three-dimensional painting; a painted installation; a non-painted mixed-media wall relief; a process-based sculpted painting; a wearable painting; a spoken painting; a taped painting; a traveling painted mural. The list is endless.

We will look at the artists who instigated these new directions and how, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present, artists have reinterpreted painting and forged exciting and even “failed” new paths within this medium. Assignments will focus on issues that allow some of the following to be dominant formal concerns: frame and the substrate; relief and form; materiality; the found object; scale and locale; mobility; architecture and space; the body as substrate. This course will involve a

whirlwind of experiments and risks with no guarantees that every project will succeed. We may use paint one week then toss aside all brushes the next; lie on the floor to make a piece; search for ribbons and film to “paint” with; hang out studio windows in inclement weather; or carry our work to unexpected locales. The only way we will fully embrace this mix of unknowns is to know we may experience angst and exhilaration. After all, being comfortable and aiming for the knowable is so boring, and as artists, we are anything but! Hold onto your seats, here we go...

Goals for this class:

1. Play, experiment, rework, edit, fail, and succeed. (Not all of those all of the time.)
2. Allow your energy and authenticity to emerge through the art making process.
3. Embrace handing and exploration of materials and concepts in a unique and new manner.
4. Consider how your work relates to history, culture and contemporary art.
5. Be supportive of class members and the notion of community in this studio.
6. Show improvement in your work, being willing to accept where you are and to push yourself to go further. Exploration (and at times “failure”) is crucial to growth.
7. Celebrate art.

**All this being said, art courses take time.** Theoretically, you need to spend as much time outside of class as in class to receive a grade of C. But this is a difficult process to measure--how much time we put into art making is very individual. Many students say that even though a class such as this takes more time, they welcome a new manner of thinking and expressing, one that is non-verbal and very right-brained. Time passes in beautifully distinctive way when one makes art. We stand naked and with blind trust, giving ourselves to the imagination and the body.

#### **REQUIREMENTS/EVALUATION METHODS:**

Attendance: Due to the nature of the course, with demonstrations, spontaneous discussions, image presentations, lectures and studio time, it is important that you be present every class period. I want you here because this is a unique community that grows over the weeks like a fascinating organism. I value your input and your ideas, be they visual or verbal. You will learn from the instructor and each other, so the consistency of the group is essential. The only acceptable absences are urgent medical needs or family emergencies. Ambulatory illnesses, taking friends to the airport, leaving early for a break, etc. are not excused.

**More than three unexcused absences will cause your final grade to drop by one third of a grade for each extra absence. If you are absent on a day before or after a break it will count as two absences.** ATTENDANCE WILL BE TAKEN ON A REGULAR BASIS AT 10 to 15 MINUTES AFTER THE HOUR. Three tardies will equal one absence. If you are late to class, it is your responsibility to see me after class to be sure you are marked present. Clean up will start at ten minutes before the hour. Leaving early without permission also constitutes an absence. **You must be present the day of a critique to get credit for an assignment due that day.** You need to e-mail me any time you are absent to explain the reason for missing class.

Finally, **cell phones and MP3 players/I-pods are not allowed for individual use during class time.** I understand that music can be a valuable auditory backdrop while making art; I play it all the time in my studio. But I do not want students cutting themselves off from one another or me; otherwise, what is the point of having a studio class? We can play ambient music from your selections or mine (I love

jazz and lots of rock and some classical), but I will let you know if I think the tunes are not conducive to concentration in the studio.

### **GENERAL ASSIGNMENT INFORMATION:**

Group and individual critiques form the basis of feedback on your work. These are supplemented with written comments and numerical grades after assignments are handed in. Each assignment will be graded on how closely it meets the specific goals of the assignment. **Work not turned in on the due date will drop a whole grade for each day it is late. You need to be present on the day of a critique--you cannot use this as one of your “unexcused absence” days. It is better to hand in unfinished work on time than not at all.**

Here is your saving grace: you may revise and resubmit one project at the end of the semester to receive a new final grade for the assignment. You need to resubmit a piece by the 13<sup>th</sup> week and you have to **submit the original grade sheet with it**, so I can see what improvements you have made. The final assignment may not be resubmitted, as it will most likely be graded after the term is over.

### **Critiques:**

Your participation in critiques is very valuable to the rest of the class and to me. Your willingness to contribute will have an effect on your final grade for the course. This means volunteering comments even if you are shy and being considerate of others if you are not. I can always tell if a student is paying attention to the discussions. The critique format will vary to avoid monotony and to allow for a range of ways in which to discuss art. Critiques may take more than one class, depending again on the assignment. Considering how much time students work on a project, I feel it is only fair to give each one of you a decent amount of feedback. For some projects, we may have progress crits halfway through the process to check in with one another and for me to see if you are indeed making progress.

We will have a few short-term assignments as warm-up projects and several long-term projects. You will be expected to keep a sketchbook in which you will record ideas, do drawings, work through designs, and save information that may apply to a project—clippings, reproductions, printed materials, etc. For any project that requires collaboration, you will be expected to pull your weight and work cooperatively. The syllabus lists the projects I intend to present this semester, but I may make the decision to eliminate a project or extend the work time on one, if I feel it is necessary to do so.

### **MEETING WITH THE INSTRUCTOR:**

I am a strong believer in clear communication between my students and me. You may meet with me during my office hours or when we are both available to discuss any class concerns. **I am here, in tandem with your hard work and commitment, to help you create the strongest art possible.**

### **DISABILITIES:**

If you have a disability and therefore may have need for some type of accommodations to participate fully in this class, please feel free to discuss your concerns with me, and be sure to contact Erin Salva in the Office of the Dean for Academic Advising.