



The European Graduate School
EST. 1994

Seminar with Professor Robert Brewer Young (4.5 ECTS credits)
Division of Philosophy, Art and Critical Thought
August Session/August 8–10 2019

The Thinking of Craft: Poiesis, Politics and Praxis

Poiesis

The calling and practice of “Craft,” like that of “Art” and “Philosophy,” is impossible to de-limit or contain, yet constructively approached through perspectivism, creation, and a non-binary approach to the intersection of these activities.

In the seminar, variable illustrations of these terms will be drafted with the tools and disciplines of close textural readings, translation and individual handwerk.

We will read Derrida on The Frame, Hannah Arendt on Homo Faber, Sôetsu Yanagi on a Life of Skill, Adorno on Functionalism, Plato on Poiesis as the bridge between craft and thinking and Ghandaran Buddhist sculptural theory.

We will create our own frame for dialogue with a brief review of non-binary logical traditions found in early 20th Century Poland and 5th Century India to see how these relate to contemporary issues where craft, art and the practice of philosophy intersect.

Further excursions into Contemporary and/or Classical writings on craft will be guided by student interests.

Politics

Issues that we will confront include:

the role of the machine, the master-apprentice relationship and possibilities for subverting this through dialogue, the ambiguity and plasticity of skill, the self created myths sur-

rounding “solitary” figures who craft their own image, like Constantin Brancusi and Rodin, the privileged economy of the artisanal in contemporary society and the attendant emptiness of “pure craft,” the possibilities and paradoxes of craft activism.

Praxis

The seminar will also be a laboratory and workshop for actual craft, where the creation and assemblage of a conservatory quality, three dollar violin will be undertaken by each interested student, with the finished instrument theirs to use, play or give away. No experience in woodworking or making music is required to complete a personal instrument as part of this project.

In order to serve musical movements around the world, where the greatest lack is actual instruments to perform on, the three dollar violin project aspires to make an instrument from recycled, donated and sustainably harvested materials - using a combination of advanced technology and individual handwerk - with the Braga/Chanot, guitar shaped Stradivari from 1726 serving as a model.

The project is being developed using the resources of Cambridge University’s Claire College engineering department and a 3D pantographic laboratory for the fabrication of parts created for hand assembly, refinement and completion by players and parents in under-served communities.

This seminar at EGS will be the first event where a group of individuals are invited to create their own instrument, which should take between three hours to one full day, with three violinmakers present to support the process. We will dedicate a small part of each seminar day to violin making alongside the close reading of texts. The workshop will also be open on the assessment days immediately before and after the seminar to allow more time for the making of a personal violin for those interested.

The three dollar violin laboratory and workshop will be a platform for dialogue about the philosophical, political and practical issues we raise while reading various texts and traditions, using these to challenge our conceptions of craft.

Violinist, luthier, and actor Antonin Stahly-Viswanadhan will be present during the seminar to provide musical interludes from different world traditions and to bring the finished instruments to life with the seminar participants.