

From Bauhaus to Social Sculpture.
The Shaping of Humane Societies as an Aesthetic Challenge

10th International Weimar Summer Courses, July 2009

Course Leaders:

Shelley Sacks and Hildegard Kurt

Christina Bechstein

Christina is a social and public artist living and working in Portland Maine, USA. She is a Professor at Maine College of Art, where she co-launched a new first year curriculum that blurs institutional boundaries while empowering students to co-create and problem solve with faculty and community members. She is currently working on "Pattern" a project that brings together Lewiston Maine neighbors, pre-school children, and other diverse collaborators to co-create art and space with and for a new school they are building.



This year and week I am in the thick of guiding a process for a new school that is now being built (for infants, young children and adults with disabilities) to collectively create art, choose colors, design their playground and garden. I'm spending much time asking, listening, and leaving space for the children, teachers and families to be a part of the building. My approach has shifted after last summer--and now leaves much more room for new, wonderful, transformative things to happen.

The questions, information and strategies that Hildegard and Shelley cultivated have stayed very much alive for me. They are being practiced and acted on in multiple fronts, and have truly transformed my practice of both living in and creating with/for the world.

Christina Bechstein 2009

floating

open

flexible

carpet space

INGREDIENTS

1. found lines (large wood building poles, tiny cut rubber bands, red silk and cotton thread)
2. other humans
3. a space, that makes us feel capable of 'shifting', 'defying', going 'under' or 'around' it



SCRIPT

SHARING + ASKING OTHERS TO JOIN

I am working to create in my mind and in my practice a space that I would like to share, with each of you.

GATHER AROUND LINES

Please choose a line - tiny or small, and while holding it, through touch connect to another line or human

Imagine and feel our connecting

I would like to ask you to listen with me, for just a few minutes.

Try to close your eyes, if you are okay with that.

I dreamed about a floating, open, flexible carpet space:

it makes present all dreams

it is offering, honoring, reflective

it frames, shares and protects beauty

it is active, it gives voice

holds our intentions, our highest functions

it does not hold one form nor mold solidly earth OR matter: rather is flexible, rolling, folding, fluid, spatial

it moves through and around and under fixed form

it moves through under and around:

grocery stores, government buildings, playgrounds and farms

with and through forests, oceans, deserts and meadows

under objects, tenderly over seedlings

traveling over - the surface of this earth

it can go anywhere

it is mobile, collapsible, expands and grows - but also contracts and becomes small, swollen or flat

it can wind, and wrap, and unravel as needed - to tend and/or connect all living forms and beings

it is invisible as matter, but something we are developing the ability to be able to see, together

I WONDER

I am interested in the idea of seeing, and rethinking seeing.

As far as MATTER or a material that can represent my visual diagram of a new kind of human awareness, LINE as thread - that which is highly flexible and tiny, and much like a tender sprout or root, but can take mobile floating form is an important starting point.

I am trained as a weaver, and think often about the Bauhaus weavers. The female artists were marginalized institutionally, but working in a craft that is highly attuned to processes of growth, is warm, harmonized, very human and focused on the creation of something quite ephemeral, and almost 'small', like a plant.

I wonder how to interface Paul Klee's notation from his journal *all is leaf*.

A woman who studied at the Bauhaus who did work at the school I studied at, and collaborated intensely with her architect partner (as did a whole lineage of other weavers Lilly Reich, etc), was quoted as saying:

"The building isn't finished until you weave the carpet".

So I ask, *what is the building*, this creative work we humans are engaged in?

And, what is the carpet?

This invisible, moving form that we can create together, and how do we make it?

