

Marts 2010

Final semester evaluation of ArT, 1. sem., marts 2010

by semester coordinator Falk Heinrich

1. The theme, content and objectives of the semester

The semester module *Embodiment* dealt with the creation of performative sculptures that would thematize the body's various relationships with technology. The semester focused mainly on conceptual and material aspects. This module was divided into three parts, where sub-module a and c were related by thematic and pedagogical progression, while part b was a joint workshop with the 3. semester student led by artist Frans Jacobi.

The module *Art History and Science* emphasises the interactive dimensions of aesthetics and artistic production and thus typically focused on obvious technological, cultural and expressive innovations and breakthroughs in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The module *Problem Based Learning* introduced to the Aalborg Model of problem based project work.

2. Pedagogical principle and progression behind the structuring of the semester

The overall idea was to divide the main semester project into two reiterative processes. The first iteration (sub-module a) posed a seemingly simple question 'What is a body'. The 'answer' should be a sculptural artefact as a result of the students' work with the notion of the body. The artefacts were evaluated as an open critique session. The 2nd reiteration consisted in a similar project, but with a more specific theme at hand: Embodiment - Artistic Transformation of the Body through Mechanic Artefacts. The students had to learn to continue, refine and revise the findings of the first part. The results were quite different and interesting artefacts ranging from development of art method and performances to sculptural artefacts.

The module *Problem Based Learning* should have given the students knowledge and means to work in and as a group and to apply specific method of problem based project work.

Sub-module b (joint workshop) should be seen as an intermezzo during the semester progression. Artist Frans Jacobi directed a 2-week workshop, which was finalized as an open performance. The students evaluated the workshop very differently, from 'waste of time' and too much spare time to valuable experience. There were problems in regard to the work place, which also was used by other AAU students, and the sudden cancelling of the second performance.

3. Courses and workshops

3.1 Perception

This course was a minor workshop introducing the students to hands-on exercises exemplifying that different perceptual approaches render different conceptual significances. The students missed references

3.2 Tectonic

Nice and practical introduction to tectonic art including intro relevant laws of physics. The students felt the relevance of this course for the semester project.

3.3 Design and Artistic Methodology 1

Being a theoretical and practical introduction to the broad field of artistic methodology, the main focus lay on the distinction and relations between theory and practice, how theory informs practice and vice versa. The course seemed too short.

3.4 Portfolio

Due to its length, the course could only introduce to some functions of Photoshop and InDesign. It was meant as a starter for further individual exploration and learning. Unfortunately, the teacher was not organized enough and missing basic language skills.

3.5 Art History and Science

Two teachers with different approaches and teaching practices shared the module. Generally, it was evaluated as a valuable and informative course. There was some confusion concerning divergent information regarding the assessment of the module.

4. Supervision

The group supervision was distributed to three teachers. During the semester, several groups experienced difficulties in the field of cooperation and the sharing of responsibilities and duties. One group split up and the member became part of other groups. Next years *Problem Based Learning* module should address problems of that kind and convey concrete methods for group work and report writing.

The groups size was generally seen as being too big especially when it comes to report writing, where several groups experienced failures. The future semester coordinator should think about forming minor groups during the 1. semester, but at the same time trying to secure the social interaction between all students.

There were no comments on the supervision task.

5. Study related issues

There were server complaints about the IT resources. The Internet connection was not running during extended periods of time, the wireless connection functioned only sporadically. The computers in the group room are lacking essential software.

The students expressed furthermore the wish for more and suitable workshop facilities (space to build and perform).

The students never got familiar with moodle, the course management system (moodle is widely used at Aalborg University), even though they received an introductory lesson.

6. Summary

The overall experience was that ArT-study was confronted with many (40) different students all having special interests, inclinations and wishes. Seen in the light of ArT being an

interdisciplinary programme, this could be expected. But the study should work towards a better integration of the contextual and technological aspects.

Furthermore, the next 1st semester teachers should address and work with 1) methods for group work and 2) general requirements and requisites for university study.

Apart from (and sometime due to) the difficulties, the final semester artefact proved generally to be of good quality. Some groups had nice and interesting ideas, and some showed rigor in their investigations of their chosen subject.

Here is 1st semester's additional comment for the semester summary:

Joint workshop

'Joint workshop' should be described as an individual paragraph in the semester evaluation.

The reason why it should be highlighted is that the general opinion expressed by the students attending the workshop was of a generally negative character. Although some disagreement could be found in what had been a positive/useful experience and what had been a negative.

The general verdict of the semester meeting summary was that a lot could be criticized about the course and that what was found useful could have been taught within a considerably shorter amount of time.

The rest of the semester summary we find precise.

On behalf of 1st semester

Kirsten og Anne Sofie