

VPAS 6312-051 (53731)
Art and Society: Dematerialization and
Rematerialization in Art, 1914-Present
Dr. Charissa N. Terranova
June 1-July 3, 2026
Tu-Th 1-5
ATC 2.705E



Eileen Agar, *Autobiography of an Embryo*, 1933-34

Description:

This course explores the braiding of dematerialization and rematerialization in art, c. 1914-present. The word “dematerialization” identifies forms within artistic practice that are immaterial, evanescent, or of marginal value, such as performance, photography, collage, appropriation, and found objects. This art often engages machines, mechanization, and mass production and is anarchic, ironic, and righteously indignant. By contrast, “rematerialization” names the thrust in art towards upbuilding repair, social renewal, and sincere actions of the collective. A type of neo-romanticism, art of rematerialization explores nature and biology in the plural. Individual artists may be motivated by one, the other, or both forces, at once a sly trickster and sincere poet. The class studies the contextual role of science, technology, and nature in the making of dematerialized and rematerialized art, including wars of necessity versus wars of choice; rebuilding and economic redistribution; identity and individual agency; and environmental destruction and regeneration.

The class is visually rich. Images of art are central to each meeting. Grades are based on class participation and presentations of short written essays summarizing and expanding on reading assignments. No prerequisites are required for this course. All comers welcome.

Assignments:

There will be a one- to two-page essay (250-500 words) due each class meeting. For these short essays, students choose one work of art and then explain how it relates to the reading while also summarizing it. Students are free to choose the artwork, which may or may not come from the reading assignment.

Schedule:

- Tu June 2 Dematerialization-Rematerialization: Constructivism and the Bauhaus
Th June 4 Dematerialization-Rematerialization: Dada and Surrealism
Cyborg Subjectivity of Hannah Höch 1919/Andre Breton, Surrealist Manifesto
1924/Biomorphic Organicism
- Tu June 9 Rematerialization: Popular Science and Experimental Art
Growth and Form 1951
- Th June 11 Dematerialization: The End of Teleology
The Artworld (Danto)1964
- Tu June 16 Dematerialization: Everyday Interruptions from the Street
Flatbed Picture Plane 1972
- Th June 18 Dematerialization: War, Protest, and Art as Language
Dematerialization of Work of Art 1968
- Tu June 23 Rematerialization: The Earth is Landscape
Eco-Feminism Groundswell, and the Women of Earthworks 1970
- Th June 25 Dematerialization: Fluxus
The Diagram Dematerialized: From Marcel Duchamp to John Cage to George
Brecht 1965-70
- Tu June 30 Rematerialization: Nonhuman Landscaping
Art and the Anthropocene 2015
- Th July 3 Rematerialization: Futures Abound!
Art after the End of the World: The Radical Humanism of Bioart 2026