LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE 254 / THEATER,
DANCE, AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES 266

# PUBLIC SPACE: PLACEMAKING AND PERFORMANCE

## THEORIES OF PRACTICE AND PRACTICE OF THEORIES

## GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES GRADUATE INTERDISCIPLINARY THEORY COURSE CASE STUDY

# WHY READ THIS CASE STUDY?

The disciplines of environmental design and of performance both focus on bodies and space, but their teaching methods are often siloed.

In this graduate theory course, **Public Space: Placemaking and Performance**, taught by choreographer and performance maker Erika Chong Shuch and urban designer Ghigo DiTommaso, students from disciplines ranging from anthrolopogy to architecture to dance were asked to research notions of public space using methods from both performance and design.

The results yielded important insights into public space. Perhaps even more importantly, the pedagogical benefits of incorporating exercises such as movement and drawing in disciplines where they are not usually included became clear.

As one of the earliest classes in UC Berkeley's interdisciplinary **Global Urban Humanities Initiative**, this course helped lay the groundwork for incorporating cross-disciplinary assignments in other courses in the project.

The course expanded on interdisciplinary methods pioneered by choreographer Anna Halprin and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin in the 1970s with a heightened awareness of race, difference, and inequality.

In the **faculty reflection** starting on page 18, the instructors speak frankly about the challenges and rewards of this kind of teaching, and on how it impacted their own artistic and professional practices.

**Keywords:**
**Interdisciplinary pedagogy, experiential learning, humanities pedagogy, design pedagogy, doctoral programs, embodiment, mapping, performance studies, dance, architecture, environmental design, urban design, public space, commons, emotion, comfort zones, affect.**

*This case study is part of an archive of the UC Berkeley Global Urban Humanities Initiative and its Future Histories Lab, supported by the Mellon Foundation. The entire archive, including course case studies, faculty and student reflections, digital projects, symposia, exhibitions, and publications, is available at https://escholarship.org/uc/ucb_guh_fhl.*

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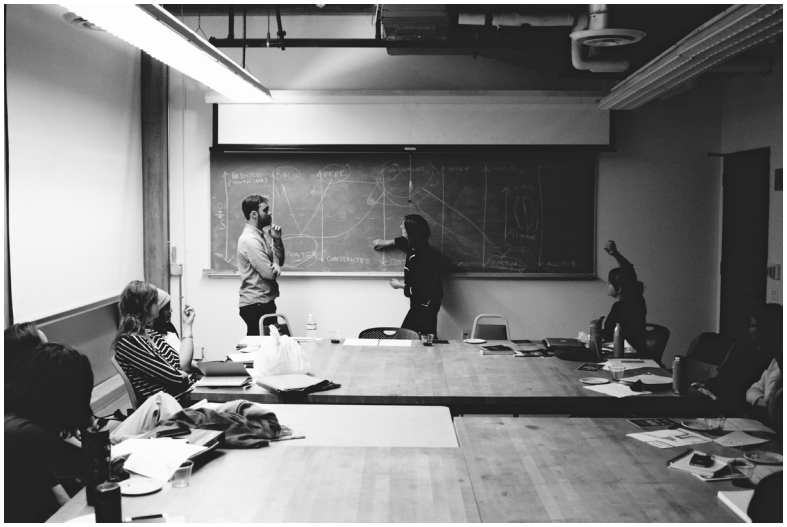
Cover Image: Clockwise from top left, 1st, 4th and 5th images courtesy of Pak Han

# COURSE DESCRIPTION

## PUBLIC SPACE: PLACEMAKING AND PERFORMANCE



### THEORIES OF PRACTICE AND PRACTICE OF THEORIES

**Landscape Architecture 254 / Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies 266**

**4 Units, Spring 2015**

**Instructors:**

**Ghigo DiTommaso** (Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning)

**Erika Chong Shuch** (Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies)

Access Course Website

Access Course Blog

**WHAT:**

In this course, we both investigated and intervened in the urban public realm. We explored the contested normative frameworks that make up our notion of public space by examining the corpus of descriptive and prescriptive theories on the subject. We tested some of the central hypotheses that support such theories through student-led urban actions, involving impromptu performances and tactical placemaking.

In the first part of the class (Theory of Practice), we conducted a critical review of an extensive selection of theoretical writings and worked collaboratively on formulating a shared definition of the urban res publica.

In the second part of the class (Practice of Theory), students tried to measure the distance between our aspirations for public space and the reality of our urban surroundings by conceiving

and staging a series of extemporaneous interventions across various Bay Area sites. The reactions we provoked may bring unspoken truths about our public realm to light and offer clues for future action for change.

**WHO:**

Graduate students from all departments were encouraged to register. No previous experience in design or performance was necessary. This experimental course is part of the interdisciplinary Global Urban Humanities Initiative (GUH), a joint venture of the College of Environmental Design and the Arts & Humanities Division of the College of Letters & Science. GUH aims to deepen our knowledge of cities by using approaches from architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture as well as from art, literature, music, and other humanistic disciplines.

**EXPECTATIONS:**

Students were expected to read and write about theory, to make things, and to move their bodies in space. This did not mean students needed to be fluent in critical theory, a carpenter, or a dancer. Students brought strengths and questions from their respective disciplines and learned from each other. Students were put outside of their comfort zones at times, but in a supportive and collaborative environment.

Students from anthrolopogy, architecuture, dance, and many other disciplines were asked to create capstone projects investigating notions of the commons in public space. The instructors led students in embodied exercises in order to build their ability to see relationships among bodies, space, identity and power.

# COURSE SUMMARY

## CONTEXT

In this experimental seminar, we investigated and intervened in the public realm. We examined the descriptive and prescriptive theories that make up our notion of public space and tested their validity through urban interventions based on impromptu performances and tactical placemaking.

In the first part of the class (Theories of Practice), we worked collaboratively on formulating a definition of the urban res publica. We conducted a series of fieldwork sessions in which we experimented with a variety of unconventional methods of qualitative analysis of the public space and furthered our understanding of the public realm through the critical review of an extensive selection of fundamental writings on spatial practice. Subsequently, we synthesized the lessons learned from the field, the readings, and class discussion to draft a shared definition of public space that we proceeded to test in the second half of the course.

In the second part of the class (Practice of Theories), we conceived and staged a series of extemporaneous interventions across various Bay Area sites aimed at measuring the gap between our aspirations for public space and the reality of our urban surroundings. The reactions we provoked may bring unspoken truths about our public realm to light and offer clues for future action for change. Week by week, through a series of progressive exercises in class and in the streets, we learned a variety of techniques for site-specific performance and rapid placemaking and had a chance to put them into practice. The course culminated in one final series of student-led urban actions which took place across different locations in public space  during the span of one sole evening.

The class also offered the opportunity to get to know the work of several prominent practitioners in the fields of site-specific performance, tactical placemaking, and public art through sessions dedicated to the critical assessment of relevant projects from across the world and guest lectures by international performers, designers, and artists.

With the exception of guest lectures and few in-class sessions, most of our work happened in the field we studied — in public space: storefronts, plazas, and parks, but also transit stations, public libraries, and the notorious POPOS (privately-owned public open spaces).

Each session was led jointly by both instructors with the active contribution of all students. Throughout the course, students were expected to observe, draw, and photograph the public realm; to collect people and places's stories; to read, write, and discuss about theory; to make things with their hands and move their bodies in space. This did not mean students needed to be fluent in critical theory, a carpenter, or a dancer. Students and instructors brought their personal knowledge, experience, and skill-set and learned from each other. Students might have been slightly outside their comfort zone at times, but always in an open and supportive environment. We focused on our subject matter through the lenses of our respective disciplines. We discovered where the languages of our fields overlap and where they differed, where they have influenced each other and where they have not yet but could and should. More importantly, we learned how the values we shared pushed us to pursue similar objectives even if we were using very different tools to do so.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION

Assignments, readings, and contributions to the course webpage were defined together week by week, following the specific skill-sets and interests of the students and the focus of the collaborative research we conducted.

# SEMESTER MAP

## ARC OF THE SEMESTER

This chronicle of the semester is based on the website created by Kasey Klimes, a master in city planning student who was the teaching assistant for the course.

## WEEK 1- PROLOGUE & COURSE ORIENTATION

Explorations of space went well beyond our syllabus in the first class of "Public Space: Placemaking and Performance." Students were invited to design interactive moments of performance to illuminate and understand our first space of study: our humble classroom in the back of Wurster Hall's third-floor studio.

Our class set out to first collectively generate a theory of public space to be informed through a series of exercises, thought experiments, and literature. We called this phase "The Theory of Practice." We then tested this theory through performative interventions in public space–"The Practice of Theory."

## WEEK 2- STORIES OF PRACTICE

For our second week, students were invited to create 120-second presentations of themselves through any medium they saw fit.

The resulting work was a colorful mix of narrated soundscapes, contemporary dance, live visual art, theatrical performance, spoken word, creative technology, and candid recordings of friends' conversations among much more. These presentations (in the loosest sense of the word) were generous, intimate, thoughtful, playful, meaningful, and earnest.

The class wrapped up with a live class prototyping of the creative process within the realms of performance (led by Erika) and urban design (led by Ghigo).

## WEEK 3- DRIFTING & MAPPING

Our class this week was about exploring public space through the lens of the dérive, the unplanned journey of an urban landscape guided by subconscious cues of the sensory experience as explored by Guy Debord. After a group warmup exploring our kinetic relationship to space and one another (featuring 'The Dude' of Big Lebowski fame as a means of experimenting with visual focus and peripheral experience), we left the classroom to begin our first class exercise using public space as a laboratory.

At the UC Berkeley Campanile, students tied the ends of 300 yard long bundles of yarn to a central post. From here, they drifted in different directions as their impulses dictated, stopping to write down a word on a post-it note describing their sensory or emotional experience at a given site when compelled to do so, and attaching it to the yarn there. After a reconvening and discussion of our experiences, students ventured back onto the space and chose the yarn of another student to re-bundle by tracing the path in reverse and studying the experience of their classmate.

## WEEK 4- SITTING & CAPTURING

First, students were invited to visit the Albany Bulb, a rubble-filled landfill park, and sit still and write down 100 questions about this mysterious landscape. Next, the class ventured together into San Francisco to visit the SOMArts Cultural Cente for the opening night of the Refuge in Refuse exhibition. The evening was a multi-media exploration and documentation of the homeless community living on the Albany Bulb prior to the recent evictions by the City of Albany.

In an exercise of art amongst art, students were asked to catalog gestures and "moments" witnessed of others in the gallery space for interpretive performance shared together afterwards.

## WEEK 5- TALKING & LISTENING

Students selected and interviewed people with unique perspectives on public space. Students then reinterpreted these interviews into 2-minute monologues for the class – monologues that ranged from socio-political explorations of public space across countries to the struggle of a child trying to grasp the nebulous concept of public space. Some employed humor and rhythm, while others were sober and emotionally challenging.

A poignant theme emerged through discussions in this class–what is the role of personal identity as an artist or designer, and how might we reconcile this identity (which often represents privilege) when telling the stories of others? Do we even have the right to tell the stories of others, or is this practice too wrought with appropriation? To tackle this question from a place of personal experience, Ghigo and Erika both shared the philosophical struggles they face in their respective fields of urban design and performance.

The availability of a dance studio that allowed students to sit and work barefoot on a clean floor was important. Many students in the class had no background in dance, but instructors designed simple exercises accessible to all.

Ghigo's story pulls from the poetry of Pier Paolo Pasolini during the Italian student protests of 1968. While the police represented oppression on the surface, the men behind the uniforms were of working class backgrounds, often doing their job with little say in the matter. While the students cried for revolution, they did so from a place of societal privilege and comparatively few obstacles ahead of them in life. Pasolini challenged the popular notions of who was the 'power' and who was the 'people' between the standoffs of police and students.

This is much like the challenge of the urban designer today. How does one improve the quality of the public realm – surely a noble and egalitarian cause – without assisting the rampant gentrification boiling in our major cities today? Surely the poor deserve just as high a quality of public space as the rich, but how do we create this without displacing those struggling to afford ever-higher rents? San Francisco's Parklets, a product of Ghigo's work with local arts collective Rebar, are intended to give space back to people in the most ardently public manner, but what do we make of their eventual association with gentrification? We are left with more questions than answers.

Erika struggles with the difficult positions of identity and her art looking back at Chorus of the Stones, her performance piece inspired by the stories of North Korean refugees. A brief NPR piece about the training of North Korean journalists to sneak footage and information to counterparts in South Korea led to the journey that would take Erika to South Korea and into the lives of countless North Korean refugees. Even after the performance derived from these experiences came to be, Erika kept harboring questions of her right to these stories. Were they hers to tell? Was her art form the strongest way to tell this story? Would it have been better handled or had more impact in the hands of another artist? She grappled with her place of privilege, conscious of how her ability to hop on a plane to Seoul with such ease contrasted so starkly with the struggles of those she was flying to meet... But what if these stories were never told at all?

Like Ghigo, the philosophical paradoxes of Erika's work leave her without conclusion or consolation. As artists and designers we have a responsibility for positive impact in the world, but this is not a cut-and-dried venture. Our work cannot be extricated from our identities, nor our identities from the politics of our work and those whose lives we work amongst.

## WEEK 6- HETEROTOPIAS

Over the last week, students explored and collected examples of heterotopias; places that approximate utopian conditions by intermingling largely unrelated identities, spaces, times, etc. The idea as developed by Michel Foucault described these heterotopias as places of otherness.

Students collected reference photos of places from across the globe that they felt best responded to the definition of heterotopias as places that allow for a full expression of personal identities without any constraints. The exposition of these places served as a catalyst for what we might formally call "The Conversation."

In "The Conversation," our conceptual rubber hit the structural pavement in which we began to develop and articulate a theory (or theories) of public space. As a starting point of semantic convenience, predominant descriptive spectrums arose from conversation; public vs. private, free vs. constrained, physical vs. virtual, and so on. Though some of these axes appear parallel at a glance, the de facto laws governing many places suggest otherwise. An example discussed in-depth was Costco, a legally private space and for-profit entity, yet a heterotopia in its own right with fewer constraints of access than many "actually" public places in the city. In response to the "clearly" constrained requirement of Costco membership, one student noted that even the most public spaces in cities are exclusive along the bounds of citizenship and immigration laws –and that Costco membership could be thought of as a nationality.

"Costco is kind of like the USSR"
"Except the shelves aren't empty"
–Student

Each wall of the room was given a title for collecting thoughts via post-it notes:

- "Moments of Searing Beauty," which catalogued the more visceral moments of beauty that we stumbled upon.

- "Performance Ideas," which catalogued the sparks of creative thought that might be channeled into performance.
- "Happy Accidents," which catalogued moments of accidental elegance, convenient misinterpretations, or coincidences in thought.
- "What The f*!#k Is Going On?" which provided a forum for thoughts and ideas of confusion, rejection, or reactionary impulse in regard to the conversation.

This was an exercise borrowed from Erika's world of performance, employed to compound and collect ideas as "The Conversation" moved onward. Together we churned through hypotheticals, metaphors, paradoxes and parallels in constructing a set of spectrums from which we then embarked on exploring in the medium of a book throughout the following week.

## WEEK 7- COMMONS

This week we had the pleasure of hosting Ava Roy, director and producer at We Players, a Bay Area non-profit theatre group that blends traditional performance with the unconventional contexts of public space. Ava graciously gave us a look into her world of site specific performance and her appreciation of the unexpected moments of beauty that happen when a piece as timeless as Hamlet is molded into the unique landscape of Alcatraz and the immersive experience this can create for viewers and performers alike.

Another of We Player's works of particular interest to our class was The Tempest at the Albany Bulb, which was warmly welcomed by the community there (we'd learned about this community three weeks earlier at SOMArts).

Although Ava admitted to creating some level of discomfort for her audience, she also stressed the importance of providing food as a communal experience amidst the sometimes long and tiresome experience of the performance.

## WEEK 8- THE URBAN RES PUBLICA

This week's class was brought to us in large part by PhD student Annie Danis, who helped us devise two exercises to generate cohesion in the final period of development in a definition and theory of public space. The first of these exercises was a network diagram, in which students were asked to bring a photo of a public space in the Bay Area and diagram the relationship of that space to key concepts we'd previously generated with yarn.

The second exercise might be called 'definition by swarm' in which all students anonymously and simultaneously edited a Google Doc to generate two definitions of public space, one descriptive and one aspirational.

## WEEK 9- STUDIO EXPERIMENTS

In moving forward from theory to practice, our class this week found a temporary home in a dance studio across campus for the evening. In a series of kinetic experiments led by Erika, students grappled with a range of interpretive performance exercises, explorations of the body and space.

## WEEK 10- KEITH HENNESSY

Our class this week had the great privilege of hosting San Francisco-based performance artist and activist Keith Hennessy. The universe of Keith's work is difficult to classify, but the character of his thought behind it is distinct. Keith's work is unsettling, provocative and poignant. He is a deeply political artist and freely explained that anger drives the bulk of his work.

The first work Keith shared with us was staged on the vacant site of a landlord-committed arson in which several tenants were killed. “Religare” was more than a performance; it was a deeply contextual tribute to an urban space with painful memories, and an opportunity for communal healing amongst neighbors.

Other works employed a dark humor, such as Bear/Skin.

As a class, we also began the journey of our urban interventions with a rapid fire sketch proposal session of things to come. In the effort to avoid giving away too much now, suffice it to say the semester would end on an interesting note


*“We were asking the students to be really bold in the way that they insisted that their own identity and opinions were at the forefront. This is how we were gauging success: whether they were generous, whether they were sincere, invested not just in their own project but really amazing listeners, really amazing question askers. People who understood that what we were trying to do was to build a community to research [public space].”*
*- Instructor Erika Chong Shuch*

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The course combined techniques from theater and dance such as breathing and movement with methods from the design disciplines including mapping, collage, and visual representation.

# STUDENT WORK

For their final project, students tested notions of public space by creating installations and performative actions that engaged passers-by both in a nominally public plaza in Downtown Berkeley and in a nominally private space inside a Costco warehouse store. By observing people's reactions, they concluded that even privately owned spaces can represent a commons.

# A COLLECTIVE DEFINITION OF PUBLIC SPACE

The course aimed to increase students' understanding of public space. Through a semester of investigations using unconventional methods, the students developed the following collective definition and normative aspiration about public space. In order to develop this statement, students created a network model with paper and yarn. They also synchronously typed around and over each other on a shared single Google doc. Words and phrases appeared, disappeared, and moved around the page, and the resulting dancing, animated textual argument was a performance of its own. These statements were edited into their final forms by teaching assistant Kasey Klimes. You can see videos of these two processes in Week 8 of the class blog.

**Access Course Website**

## *"What is Public space?"*

*Public space is a collectively imagined sphere – objectively a space like any other, inter-subjectively that which belongs to all, subjectively that to which the individual feels entitled without exclusive ownership. Public spaces are defined in the collective imagination by the memories they hold; the stories of the place which are composed of many congealing performances over time. Public space is a mess of affective and relational histories, characterized by a normative code of behavior uniquely molded by the histories of the space."*

## *"What should Public space be?"*

*Public space should be an extension of the collective living room, a heterotopia for free expression and a universal opportunity to simply 'be'. A good public space is one which keeps people longer than intended. Public space should be flexible and allow for the multiple rhythms and intensities of social life."*


Students developed definitions of public space by methods including creating a network diagram using yarn to link photos of Bay Area public spaces to concepts discussed during the semester.

# FACULTY REFLECTION

## INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING IN THE GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES INITIATIVE

*Conversation with instructors Ghigo Di Tommaso and Erika Chong Shuch about their Spring 2015 course Public Space: Placemaking and Peformance*

*Interview conducted on 6/29/2015 by Susan Moffat, Global Urban Humanities Executive Director*

**Susan:** What did you have in mind when you started teaching this course? Why were you interested in teaching something collaboratively? And what were you hoping to get from this partnership?

**Erika:** I can talk about that. I come from the performance world and so much of the work that I do as a creator of performance is collaborative. Each project that I create is an opportunity to research something very specific, and each project is an opportunity to build relationships with collaborators and to build community to research together. So I don't think that this class felt actually that different from my own creative process. I have never studied anthropology formally. But I sometimes imagine that I am an anthropologist because so much of the work I do is about finding people who know how to ask smart questions. I don't think that the questions that performers ask necessarily allow for the most interesting raw material.

I often find in working with non-performers or people that are just outside of the field but interested in the field, that they are able to kind of navigate in a way that just feels really organic and really driven by a sense of curiosity as opposed to being driven by wanting to make something good. And so I think that all of my interactions with Ghigo, everything about the way that we structured the class was creative and was about facilitating an organic and creative research project for the students.

And I think that there was a little bit of a learning curve. For me, at least, I felt this pressure to be smarter than I am, smarter in a way that I am not necessarily smart. Do you know what I mean? I felt like, "Oh my God, these are graduate students in anthropology and landscape architecture, and I need to really school myself. And so I think, I think the both of us, but I know that for me that I felt like this pressure to hold the space in a way that wasn't necessarily speaking to my own strengths and so I did a ton of research. I have never even studied Performance Studies. I have never had a relationship through academia to what it is that I do. All of my teaching has been practice space. So the big learning curve for me was realizing what we have to offer is who we are as practitioners and that is our wisdom, and that is our strength, and that is our confidence, and being able to just trust that that is worthwhile within the [Global Urban Humanities] Initiative.

And once I kind of let go of trying to be somebody that I'm not, and trying to teach something that I don't really understand, we were able to lock into a flow that was messy in the way that creative processes are messy and contradictory in the way that creative processes are unpredictable.

*"You want to create a space in which people are bringing their best selves and their best work into the room. People need to feel seen and…be respected." – Erika Chong Shuch*

*"Students were creating work that was driven by their guts and driven by their hearts, and driven by the parts of them that they felt had no place in their role as students. And so it's a complicated question around pedagogy, because I think that the barometer that we were using to gauge success and investment and growth isn't a barometer that necessarily exists in other places on campus."– Instructor Erika Chong Shuch*

We were very transparent with the students that we don't always know where it is that we're going and that's what it is to be researching something that hasn't really been researched in this way before– that we all have to be not just comfortable with a process that is driven by impulse but we have to, like, celebrate a process that is driven by impulse. So I think we got to the point that we could say to the students, "We don't know where we're going. Yay! And that's how it is. Yay!" And no apologies around that. That's how we're going to learn. We don't know where we're going and we all need to open up, just be courageous about the way that we dive into things.

**Susan:** And Ghigo, what were you after? What were you looking for in this partnership?

**Ghigo:** Yes, a few things. So when we started to talk, Susan, I found the idea behind this project very interesting because I was myself trying to see where the kind of things I'm interested in are driving me regardless of the boundaries of my own discipline. So, my background is in a very traditional architectural practice. That's how I started in Barcelona, as an architect, a practicing professional designing buildings. And then, progressively, I let myself be driven more by the problems I'm interested in rather than what my discipline usually does. And socially, working with [the design collective] Rebar has been a very important step in that direction, and then that process has continued.

So my focus started to be the problem of public space, how to make public space a better place, try to understand its values and potential. And when we started to talk, I had just been returning from a trip to New Zealand, which was very inspirational to me, where I met this collective of artists and designers that had worked on revitalizing the town center of Christchurch after the earthquake. And they were sharing many of the tools of my trade, they were like very much doing things similar to the work that Rebar has been doing, making things with cheap materials, building in public space to make statements in this middle ground between design installation and public art. But then they had another layer that maybe Rebar had in the very beginning and then lost at some point along the way, in performance. And so installations, design installations, public art made of objects and performers were mixing altogether and meshing altogether in an incredibly interesting way.

So I had been there for a week and just looked at what they were doing and their performances,

and just understood that, you know, there was an incredible potential in this way to open up design in public space to another dimension which was the dimension of performance. This is when we said, "Oh, okay, maybe that's what we want to do. We want to investigate more about what public space is or could be today instead of using just the tools of design, we have to use performance as well."

So that was one thing. The other was, I think, this interest in theory. The class was intended to be a theory class, after all. But while I have an interest in theory a fascination with theory, I also have a little bit of personal frustration with theory because of the real detachment that it has from practice, often, in the design field. Design theory is often too detached from the real experience of practitioners. So this idea of reaching back and looking at things from the perspective of a practitioner was very interesting. It was also a way in which, you know, frankly, I could see myself being able to teach a theory class. Like, I'm not expert enough in design theory to teach a design theory class. I do teach landscape design theory, but that has a very strong focus on theory related to what is nature, and the idea of nature, so it's less related with the actual social dimension, if you will, at least to a certain degree.

And so I was thrilled by this idea of doing this with another practitioner from another discipline. Two practitioners, looking at theory together from the perspective of people that actually do things and their daily life is about projects, and they have budgets, they have constraints, they have a number of people that have to be involved and they have to work together on a tight timeline. Yet, practitioners are trying to understand the very meaning of what they are doing. Therefore, they have to go consciously or unconsciously back to the theory that is behind their discipline. So that

*"For me, the act of receiving from the students was greater than in any other teaching experience I have ever been involved in." – Ghigo DiTommaso*

was for me the very beginning. And a certain awareness that, yeah, that this kind of uncharted path could take us somewhere interesting.

From the very first time I met with Erika, there was a very deep connection and so very soon we said, "Oh, this is what it's going to be. You know, we're just going to work together on this and try to wrap our heads around the problems that we care for together from the perspective of the practitioner, knowing that we are also really investigating the very meaning of what we're doing so there is a certain tension to our theory and this should probably go somewhere interesting. So, yeah, let's go! Let's go for it." I think that was the initial agreement.

**Susan:** And then how does this relate to pedagogy? You had questions you wanted to pursue. So in putting together the syllabus, and the structure for the class, how did you work through what you wanted to pursue and how that would mesh with what the students are doing, what you ask the student to do?

**Ghigo:** So my answer to that, if I understand the question correctly, is that my personal experience with graduate students at Berkeley was very positive. A graduate seminar could be just an ongoing conversation and that the role of the instructor could be to kind of provide that framework to select the initial path and to draw attention to the core issues every time it was necessary, facilitating the conversation just like a facilitator does among a group of professionals discussing a matter. So I was very confident that somehow, even if we were exploring this uncharted territory, we could just do this altogether and if we were good facilitators of this process, this journey would have a very high pedagogic value just because it was made by us, together with mature students that had already many tools to travel with us in this experiment.

I was never afraid that somehow the students would not be able to follow this project because it was a little bit of an experimental journey. And I think that fact has been confirmed, e ven more than what I expected. I took a long while, way too long, in letting the students take the lead as much as they actually could. Not for a lack of humility, I think, but just for a sense of responsibility. Like, you know, "Oh, I am the instructor, I am supposed to deliver content," and sometimes I think I overdid that because the sense of responsibility pushed me in a direction where students maybe not necessarily wanted to go because they were well aware that we could just be all in equal part and deliver the same amount of content. So once I kind of decided that, yes, I could just get really specific, like guide the discussion without having to really add always the last word, I think that everybody felt more comfortable about where we're going.

**Erika:** Yeah. I have a friend named Brian, and he's finishing up his PhD at Stanford right now. And he is writing a dissertation about whether love has a place in the performance studies world and his kind of primary argument is that everything that we do is driven by love and yet there is just no place for that in the conversation and so he's been creating all of these very intimate one-on-one performances for the people that he loves and really documenting them beautifully. And what he's doing is he's bringing something into the room that doesn't normally have a place at the table.

So I'm thinking about this metaphor of things that belong on the table. And I'm thinking about our first class, and how we have this big, secure table, and one of the first things that happened is that all of the students were climbing on the table and they were creating work that was driven by their guts and driven by their hearts, and driven by the parts of them that they felt had no place in their role as students. And so it's a

complicated question around pedagogy, because I think that the barometer that we were using to gauge success and investment and growth isn't a barometer that necessarily exists in other places on campus.

We were asking the students to be really bold in the way that they insisted that their own identity and opinions were at the forefront. So we were doing a lot to kind of try to stop them from–like, just stop talking and stop thinking so much and just do something that is true to you. And there is a way that the smartest, the brightest of the students would disappear into their really articulate theory. They would disappear in it and they would build a wall that separated themselves from everything and everybody else by, like, talking about things as opposed to just doing things. We gave two A plusses, and we talked a lot about what that means and we gave these A plusses to the students who were–the word "generous" kept coming up. This is how we were gauging success, whether they were generous, whether they were investing, sincere, invested not just in their own project but really amazing listeners, really amazing question askers. People who understood that what we were trying to do was to build a community to research this thing with. So when you ask about pedagogy, it just makes me think a lot about what barometer are we using and what are we using to gauge the success of–

**Ghigo:** Yeah, and I would say maybe just the personal growth, intellectual growth, emotional growth of our students–

**Erika:** And the willingness to engage.

**Ghigo:** And if that's what we're pursuing then...I think that's what we were looking for. And I'm sure Susan would be in agreement with this kind of broad way to–

**Erika:** It was also just a willingness, their own willingness to engage in a conversation. Not their ability to articulate the product, but the willingness to just get lost.

**Susan:** Both of you gave such interesting answers to my question and my question was kind of very mundane, intended to be, "How did you go about structuring your syllabus?" and you came back with this really interesting answer that was not about the usual process of creating a syllabus. And you came around to asking, "What is our goal here?" It's not about an end product. It's interesting that it was a class about performance but you weren't creating a final performance that was a performance in the usual, traditional sense where you have an audience that was invited or they buy tickets, they come, they watch, they clap or don't clap. That's not what it was about. You described some personal growth, intellectual growth. On the more academic side, do you think the students discovered something new about cities? What would you say about that?

**Erika:** I absolutely do. I mean, I think that the performance took the form that it took because what we were trying to do is understand more deeply how public space functions. So the reason why we didn't have 16 people doing, like, a can-can with an audience that was sitting there passive was that wouldn't have been the test, or it would have been a very different test. So the performances were really cultivated as a way for them to test something very specific about how we exist in public or public/private space.

**Ghigo:** Yeah, I think besides the personal growth, the intellectual growth, the emotional growth, came from trying to get into some specifics. So in terms of what they learn about cities, what they learn about public space, I think that the class was successful in giving each and every student a deeper understanding of the complexity of the problem, of the problems really of public space and somehow illuminated, if not all, many of the layers that are involved.

**Susan:** For example...

**Ghigo:** For example, in issues dealing with property, issues of regulatory frameworks and restraint of behaviors, issues of justice, all these variables somehow are often in conflict one with another. So it becomes impossible to pursue all the things that we consider good things for public space without somehow restraining or eroding another of these positive values that we have identified. And I think we did a lot of work on that. First of all, [we worked on] understanding all the layers, giving a name to all the layers, because often they are overlapping in such a way that it's difficult to identify them in a systematic way. There is a fundamental dilemma with the fact that free expression of our individuality in public space often is in conflict with a deep justice that would embrace all the actors.

There is a tension between liberty, freedom, and justice, if you will. And I think we went pretty close in looking at this in a very interesting way.

So I think this is what the students learned the most about public space. So now every time they look at public space, I think they will be able to recognize all these layers, to distinguish them one from the other, to understand their relations, to understand that every time that they are pursuing something they care for, they might be actually eroding some other people's rights or some other people's freedom. And that therefore, working in public space is the hard labor of mediating among contrasting values. So I think that is what they have learned about public space and therefore about cities. But then, another very important value of the class for me has been really with the process itself.

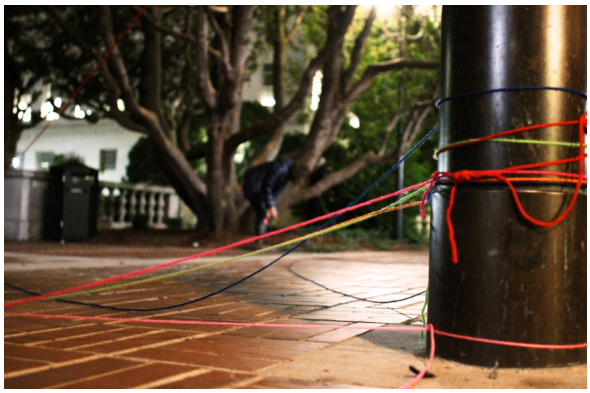
And I don't know how much we wanted this, but I think that we proved our class to be a little bit anti-disciplinary, like we were somehow not only going from one discipline to the other, bridging and blurring the boundaries. We were refusing altogether the idea that you reach knowledge and understanding and then that knowledge and understanding can inform action and change through one or many disciplines. But you're just constantly moving freely, demolishing for the better the very institution of the discipline itself. And I think that the students pushed a lot on that much more than us. I think they're much more advanced than us in this regard. Especially students that are doing personal research on issues of queer space—queer studies in general—I think they urged us to stop to talk about disciplines and to require somehow a framework of other disciplines to address a problem.

And so our investigation of public space then eventually felt much more comfortable through the language of art, I think. That's what an artist does nowadays, right? He has a problem he wants to investigate. He doesn't really tap in to the tools of any discipline. He just carves his own path toward a solution of the problem, toward illuminating a specific issue for his interest And so I think that's what we started to do more than anything else.

**Susan:** Do you feel that the students brought habits of thought or ways of doing things from their disciplines or were they not yet in those silos?

**Erika:** Some of both, I would say. I mean we even had a couple of undergrads in the class and they were at different points Some of them had just begun their studies and some of them, it was their final class.

**Susan:** Did anybody change? Was it uncomfortable for any of the students if they had a fixed sense of how things were supposed to go? Did any of them change that?



**Ghigo:** I don't think they were uncomfortable. Actually, they were more comfortable than us in this. They did come with toolboxes, I think. But then they were first excited by the idea of using their usual tools to do something radically different, to use a hammer not to put the nail in the wall but to, I don't know, use it as a telephone.

**Susan:** Can you give an example?

**Ghigo:** Some of the design students used drawing quite a bit but kind of in an unconventional way. The whole idea of phenomenological mapping of the first weeks was about that: you know, maybe you're good at writing, and you could use your writing, not to write a paper about your specific social science issue, but writing a narrative that is a way to map this space. So I saw a little bit of that. I saw drawing used in an unconventional way, writing used in also an unconventional way from academic standards.

*"My background is in a very traditional architectural practice... [but] progressively, I let myself be driven more by the problems I'm interested in rather than what my discipline usually does." – Ghigo DiTommaso*

A lot of reliance of students' skills to move toward a more artistic process. It was about creating a narrative, describing a story, creating characters.

**Susan:** Did they ever do something that you would not have thought of?

**Erika:** All the time, every class.
**Susan:** For example...

**Erika:** My mind immediately goes to those darn Costco performances. I was thinking about so much of what they did was unexpected. One student did this performance where she was passing out samples of brownies and had these little affirmative notes attached to the brownies and she basically pretended to be a Costco employee. It actually takes a very skilled performer to pull that off. So there was a way that she was actually using her experience and her intelligence as a really good performer to pull off this thing that was completely non-performative. So I was really surprised at that piece and she just stuck with it for a couple hours.

**Ghigo:** Yeah, it's good that you're asking these questions because it helps us think through this thing. Going back for a second to the toolbox metaphor to see if I can put this even better. I think every student can relate to the toolbox. Some have the tools of carpenters, plumbers and then every time they're asked to do something, they would pull their usual tool from the toolbox, and then try to use them to make somehow the unusual thing that we asked them to do, unusual for them given that they usually would use those tools to do something else.

So for example, the first day was about introducing ourselves, a moment to start to do this community and better understand who we are and so I remember Sophie, this was great, started to introduce herself. She decided to actually made a quick portrait of everybody else in the room, so she used drawing as a landscape architect and the ability of a landscape architect to capture detail from reality and translate it in drawing to respond to our prompt exactly the same way which Sasha presented themself through a little video where she's showing herself dancing while a voiceover was describing her history. I think it was incredibly touching. And other people went to kind of a much more classic stream of consciousness piece of writing.

So there were all different tools. But now each of the students was using them to respond on the spot to what they were asked to do. This thing worked well and somehow naturally, organically happened each and every week. All of these different languages were intertwining so much that you kind of lost track of what was produced by the designers and what was produced by the dancers.

**Susan:** So what's really interesting is that one thing that we have beenkind of exercised about in Global Urban Humanities is how to teach new tools to students from other disciplines so they can use them. But that's hard because it takes a long time to learn how to draw or to dance or to write. But what you're describing is, no, we're not telling them to use a tool from some other discipline but to use their own tools in a different way.

**Erika:** So it takes a long time to learn to draw a face accurately, or a building to scale, but everybody can hold a pen and a piece of paper and just put something down. It takes a long time to learn how to do a plie in fourth position but everybody has a body that can perform a series of gestures. So I think if we shift the way that we–in this class, generally, I feel less interested in these kind of formal notions of–what's the word I'm looking for?–it's not rigor, but, like, technique.

**Ghigo:** Yeah, technique development. I don't know if that's what you wanted to say, but, we're not interested in teaching students to use a screwdriver incredibly fast or incredibly well. I personally, through this class, am interested in seeing a person who has never seen a screwdriver see a screwdriver in action in the hands of a fellow student who actually has quite an expertise in screwdriving. The guy that's never seen a screwdriver, though, works with a handsaw incredibly well and so is using it to do whatever we ask him to do and the other students observe

him. A nd students understand, first of all, how you can use a handsaw, but also what a handsaw can do and a little bit about how you can use even other tools to do the thing that the handsaw is doing in that moment. So there's this kind of borrowing and lending of tools. But it's not about learning super well a skill. Because that would be impossible.

**Susan:** And so you've been speaking metaphorically about literal hand tools. Are there any other examples that you can think of concretely where somebody had a skill from their discipline that they used?

**Erika:** Used a skill specifically from their discipline?

**Susan:** Yeah.

**Erika:** I guess I'm more interested in when people use skills outside of their discipline.

**Ghigo:** So for example, if you divide the class into the designers and the dancers–this is really simplifying a lot because it was a much more complex array of students–then week 2, week 3, all the dancers started to draw maps using pen and paper. And then, sure that in their future practice, they would be able, if they want to, to continue to draw, they start conceiving the performance by drawing a map, a phenomenological map that is very personal, that somehow elaborates its own graphic language to explore their site-specific performance. On the other end, making kind of an opposite example, designers are a little bit body-numb. That I always knew and I think this class helped me understand even more.

Erika was joking and every time she saw me moving, she said, "Oh, Ghigo is now finally relaxing a little bit." So you know we work in public space but we never use our own space, our own body, to understand what a dancer has for millennia understood about space through body. And I'm not saying that I will use that as my primary tool in the future, but this awareness that my body itself is a tool through which I can understand space to a certain degree, and reconnecting with this part of my being that is so underutilized, being a little bit less about just using my brain and my hand to make a sketch but also being aware of my body in space...I think in this case, the tool I'm talking about is I'm looking at the body of the dancer for a second as a tool, right? So I do have that tool, too, it's just in the toolbox and I never use it. So maybe there is something I can understand when I start to do that.

And I think a lot of designers did that and actually felt because there's much less dust on their tool than on mine, as designers, because they are still developing their expertise and they're at the very beginning, they were thrilled with the idea of using their body to do what we were asking them to do. They were incredibly open. I remember that beautiful session that we had in the studio, maybe we could talk more about that. That was, I think, one of the greatest moments of the class when we did that exercise which was about moving through space with your body and attaching emotions through the position that you had within the space of the room. That was a great moment of trading tools in which designers were actually using their bodies to understand space in a very, very specific way.

**Erika:** I think the thing about those exercises is that we weren't asking anybody to be impressive. Even though they were exercises that were about broadening your own palette as performers, there's nothing about the exercises that we did, the performance space exercises, that asked them to do anything that wasn't reflective of their inherent strengths. So I think a lot of it was just about choosing exercises that have a way for everybody to be able to enter into.

**Susan:** And that kind of gets us to the question of advice for future teachers in Global Urban Humanities who will be coming from different places. It sounds like you are able to create a really kind of safe and productive space. Do you have any advice of how to go about that?

**Ghigo:** I helped a little bit, but I think it was Erika that really knew the magic recipe for that.

**Erika:** I think it's the same thing that happens in a creative process, right? You want to create a space in which people are bringing their best selves and their best work into the room. So, people need to feel seen and they need to understand that everything that they bring to the room will be respected. I think that my main approach is to just be stupid, to just let yourself be really stupid. To create a space in which you don't have to be smart and that who you are is enough. It sounds very trite but I think it's really–

**Ghigo:** I think that's what it was.

**Erika:** And I think that it is this thing that Ghigo was talking about earlier–about not feeling like as teachers, we need to have the answers. I have learned the most from teachers who are asking questions with me and who are standing by my side and looking at something outside of ourselves together. We entered into this class not knowing what it is that we would find. I had no idea. I had never even considered public space, it was just something that wasn't even part of my world. And I think building a class around something that was fueled by our genuine curiosity for us felt really important. That we weren't structuring a class around what it is that we knew. We didn't structure the syllabus around what we could teach. Structuring the syllabus was structuring an adventure, it was structuring a journey, it was structuring a map. But we didn't know what we would find at those locations.

**Ghigo:** Yes. So many things we can talk about in this regard.

**Erika:** I think the main piece of advice—I don't know "advice" would be the word that I would use–it's an amazing opportunity to just rethink about the kind of research that could happen within academia. The work that you have been doing with the Albany Bulb, Susan,* it feels really important to have safe spaces like that in this institution in which we can question the way that we teach and really question the way that we learn and create ways for us all to learn in new ways.

**Ghigo:** Yes. The first answer that came to mind when asked this question, there are issues of content—we touched a little on that. There are issues of tools, and skills. And then there are issues of the environment for a class, for a group of people that are doing something at the same time sharing the same purpose of it. And I think that the environment was key to creating this very safe space that we did. And I think the design school has this space of the studio as a fundamental space, a fundamental environment that fosters the creative process, the workflow, the evaluation process, the interpersonal relationships between fellow students and instructors. It's quite traditional, hierarchical but very rewarding in many ways.

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*see case studies of courses based at the Albany Bulb landfill: Siteworks [link] and Ghosts and Visions [link].

I've rarely met a student that didn't like the studio experience. Actually, we almost like the fact that it's so old-school and hierarchical. There's something special about this effort of working very hard and then being scrutinized but being able to face courageously and proudly this confrontation and then get onto this other shore of the river. And then, you know, even if I didn't know much about it, the performance world has its own environment. It has its own codes of rules. And I think that it felt natural from the very beginning to be inspired not from [the architecture] studio as an environment but actually from the dance studios. Each has its own rules, its own exercises to be grounded at the very beginning to disconnect from what is outside, to come together as a group.

I don't think we ever decided, "Yeah, we're going to use the rules of the dance studio." But the rules of the dance studio, through you, Erika, came very soon to be the natural rules to create that atmosphere that we were looking for. So more and more we felt more confident, and especially in the last session. I think everything helped, the fact that we were sitting on the floor, the fact that we were sitting in a circle, the fact that we had no shoes, the fact that we were starting with the respiration and we were humming and chanting in front of each other. Even if everything felt very, very embarrassing the first session, then it became incredibly bonding.

There are tradeoffs in which you keep judgment, even evaluation—that's a critical part of the thing–out of the room. Everything matters, everything is okay, everything is fine. We value sincerity and generosity and experimentation more than anything else. So even if what you've done actually we don't really find of value, we're not going to say it right away, because tomorrow, you may have a great idea and not bring it to the table because you're afraid to do so. And I think that that's, again, to me connects a bit with to the tools of the artist and even more to contemporary artists—it's opening the door to absurdity. Sometimes I felt a lot of that, like we were investigating public space, through a little bit of absurd images. They were strongly symbolic and that had something that was a little bit intangible but profound about it. And this is what we were cherishing. So that also helped, I think, to create this moment of sharing of not tea but profound ideas that could help us understand things.

**Erika:** The goal was never that the students become experts of anything. And the real success

is that just as when you travel to another country, another environment, your pores open up and you absorb information differently. When you are forced take off your shoes, if you're not used to doing that. When you're forced to put on a suit jacket. So what can we do to adjust, shift the ground underneath us, and to shift the way that we absorb information so that when we go back to our fields, we're that much more nimble and that much more receptive and able to notice details that perhaps we didn't notice before simply because that wouldn't have been on our radar to look for.

**Susan:** So I have a question of how this can be incorporated into the design and planning disciplines and how what you're talking about relates to analysis, evaluation, judgment, decision-making practice, right? Because in the end, this all does relate to how we end up building cities and whether we're building cities that are just and beautiful and sustainable. So what is the connection? It seems you didn't necessarily reach conclusions. Is reaching a conclusion important? Is something you would call "analysis" important? And how does what you came up with, if it's not a conclusion, how does that relate to future action in the city?

**Erika:** Can you ask the question around analysis again?

**Susan:** Did you feel like you were carrying out analysis and was that important?

**Erika:** I did. Yeah, I did. The performances weren't very performative.

The performances existed so that the students could, as I said before, test something very specific. So they entered into those experiences with a very tangible question.

**Ghigo:** Absolutely.

**Erika:** And I think that in all of those experiments they walked away from those experiments with a clear answer to that question.

**Susan:** Did they have a written question or hypothesis?

**Erika:** They did.

**Ghigo:** They had to come with a kind of a micro proposal. So I would say, yes, very specific but not at all scientific. And this is something that we have to be very aware of. As I said before, there are tradeoffs, we cannot have everything. So we really said, "We don't care about this to be systematic, to be scientific, to be measurable, and maybe we won't even be able to evaluate them after all, but what we gain, we somehow really let the students be free to do this kind of exploration that is absolutely unconventional. This is why I go back to art and I usually go back always to the same topic when I'm trying myself to understand it better in my brain.

So I think that we used the same tools that artists use to make their investigation. Nobody would ever somehow think that it's a good idea to try to evaluate a work of art in a systematic or scientific way. The investigation behind a work of art is a value that is somehow difficult to quantify, but it's there. You sit up from your chair in the theater and you get goosebumps. And you absolutely know that you now know something new or something more about the very topic that that work of art was addressing. But of course then, the artist that is behind a work of art was not doing systematic or scientific research, it was just following his drive toward the understanding of the problem through an expression of his thoughts about that problem. So I think that's a little bit what we did. So we really steered away from any systematic analysis that would allow us to compare problems, compare case studies, to compare understandings. No, we didn't do that. It would be wrong to try to look for that in our materials because it was something else.

**Erika:** The real analysis would have happened if we would have had time to do the same performances in three more sites. So we have Costco, we have Downtown Berkeley, we have downtown San Francisco, we have a farm. I think that that's where we would have really been able to–

**Ghigo:** But even then, I think that understanding would have been maybe greater, but not more systematic, because social sciences have to come and ask, "Really, are you kidding me? This is how you want to come to some objective understanding of a problem?"

**Erika:** See, and I guess in my field, the word "objective" doesn't even exist. Like what's the point?

**Ghigo:** And I think that's where we were and there's also what I try to mean when I say "anti-disciplinary" because we were not interested in attaching our point of arrival to any discipline.

We were more interested in pursuing as artists do a deep understanding through an unconventional and subjective path. At the same time, I think we were very interested in the science. We used, it was a little like a pseudoscience, if you will. We were interested in the scientific tools, to use them in a conventional and maybe approximate way. We liked them because they could lead us in places where it would be difficult to go otherwise. Which is a strategy that contemporary art uses a lot. And I think it's a little bit unconscious that we went that way too.

**Susan:** So this is my last question before I have a couple real specific questions. How did this experience end up influencing your own practice and research?

**Erika:** So significantly, really. This relates to another question you asked around how the students used the tools from their own trade in their work. One thing that's happening in the performance world right now is there's a lot of kind of, like, anti-performance performance, so people just aren't really interested in seeing anybody pretend to be anything that they're not. So in the performance world, there's a lot of stripping away. People either want to see a profound sense of pretending or we just don't want to see any sense of pretending. And we're really conscious of the ways that we are manipulated through design, so through music or through lights. We don't want to be told how we should—we don't want to tell the audience how to feel. We don't want to create a kind of didactic experience that removes the possibility of somebody coming to their own conclusions. And so a lot of the work that's happening in the performance world is really, really stripped down right now.

So I saw that the performance studies folks, in a way were creating the least performative works, in some way. They were creating works that facilitated an experience for the audience but they didn't take on the role as performer. The audience became the performers. The person who took the brownie and ate it, that was the performer. There was a birthday party with cake: yes, the performance studies students initiated that experience. But really what happened is you had forty people at Costco celebrating a birthday party for themselves and eating this cake. So I've been really curious about that in my own work and also just being interested in creating experiences that are kind of traditional and proscenium-based. And so I'm working on a project at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts right now that is a project that's created for an audience of twelve.* And I had this project in mind for several years but the experiences in the class are really affecting the ways that I'm thinking about it so we're creating an experience for twelve people in which we're collecting applications from the public and we select twelve people who have applied to be in our audience and we're spending basically two months with those twelve people and we're building a performance experience that is tailored specifically for them and then they are the only ones that get to experience it so we're creating three works over the next two years that are just for audiences of twelve.

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*For You, a performance piece that grew into multiple iterations: https://www.foryou.productions/

So we're just looking a lot at shifting the power dynamic that usually happens between a performer and an audience. Usually, you know, I can create a piece of work and pour my heart out and anybody can pay twenty bucks to come sit in the audience and judge it. So we're asking the question of how, if you have to work to be in the audience, if that's something you had to earn, how does that shift the way that you experience the work. And then so many of the experiments that we tried out in the class I'm thinking about in relation to this project, and I actually am very much hoping that Ghigo can collaborate with me on it. And I've even been thinking about a couple of the students, like the work that some of the students did, and asking some of the students to create something around it. So it very much affected my own process specifically in relation to this one project.

**Susan:** How about you, Ghigo?

**Erika:** Nah. Unaffected. [smiles]

**Ghigo:** Of course. I think the class was incredibly thought-provoking. In general I think we all agree as educators you end up learning almost more than what you think you were able to give to the students. I think, for me, the act of receiving from the students was greater than in any other teaching experience I have ever been involved in. So for me personally it was quite transformative in my thinking. This skepticism toward categorization that the students expressed throughout the semester, toward the need to put things in buckets and in boxes in order to orient your thought, has been in a way what limited us from coming to those conclusions we were looking for. But at the

same time, I'm really understanding the value of that skepticism. I understand the limitations of my need to simplify through categorizing things, systemizing things, ordering things.

I think that it was a little bit of a generational gap between me and some of the students who are just fifteen years younger than me but think about the world in a different way. All these things made me understand pretty clearly that my approach to the way I wrap my head around problems is certainly reassuring because it's often able to give me a good roadmap pretty quickly, but it's also somehow incredibly constraining and prevents grasping the complexity of the problem itself. So I had a lesson in method from the students, who were not as obsessed as I was about finding a final point of our discourse. So I pushed the students about this definition of public space for the first half of the semester up until the moment I realized that the more I was insisting the more I was putting myself in a corner in the sense that they didn't feel any need to define it. They were perfectly fine with the complexity and open-endedness of this issue. I'm still struggling, here–is this right or not? Are we right to push less or more? But there is something there I'm still struggling with and I think I learned a lot from them in that regard.

**Susan:** But if you take this kind of skepticism to its ultimate conclusion, doesn't that make you less able to design?

**Ghigo:** Oh, yeah. That is where–that was the only point I could score with them was when I was taking the conversation exactly to this point. I was saying, "Okay, but by the end of the day, if we want to be able to make an impact on the things that we care for, we will have to be able to define them; if we are not able to define them, we will not be able to explain to others what they are and why we care for them and why it's important to act the way we want to act. And this is where they were getting it and somehow trying to get closer to me. But for all the rest of the conversation, and rightly so, they were showing me the limitation of my intent of defining problems. So I think we both learned in this regard. I think they probably got the value of defining a problem and I understood that there is an important drive in all knowledge toward this kind of more fluid paradigm. And then the other thing again is about disciplinary knowledge versus free roaming knowledge that I think influences me quite a bit as well. This is why I go back to this point so much today.

I've been for a while interested in somehow let my development steer away from the traditional training I had. A great example of that is Charles and Ray Eames, the way they were kind of escaping from the constraints of their own disciplines, they were switching from one discipline to the other. So he starts as an architect, she starts as a painter, but then they become furniture makers. At some point they start to make toys, and then documentaries, and then exhibitions. And it's a wonderful story of pursuing your own interests but in a way you're moving from one discipline to the other. From one box created by the discipline to another box created by another discipline, with its own methods and its own evaluation systems and so forth. And actually I think this class was all about putting all the boxes in the same box and starting to use them at the same time. And I find something very contemporary and very powerful and very new in this approach so that is something that also has been very inspirational for me.

*"We [ended up being] a little anti-disciplinary...just moving freely, demolishing for the better the very institution of the discipline itself." – Ghigo DiTommaso*

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