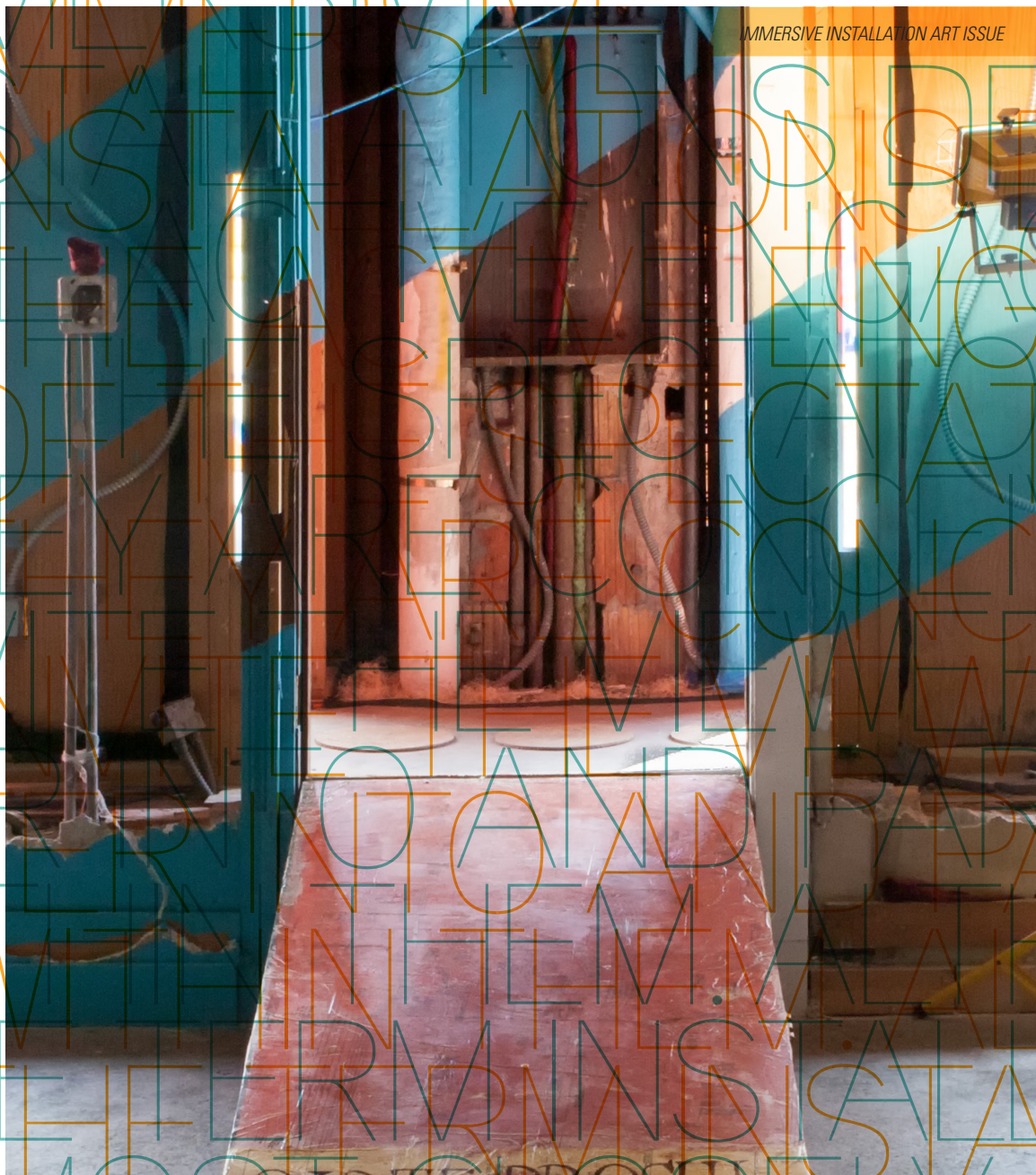


RICK VALICENTI COLLABORATIVE TEACHING INITIATIVE

BGSU | the Arts
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF ART // SPRING 2015 // VOL. 1

IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION ART ISSUE



THE INITIATIVE

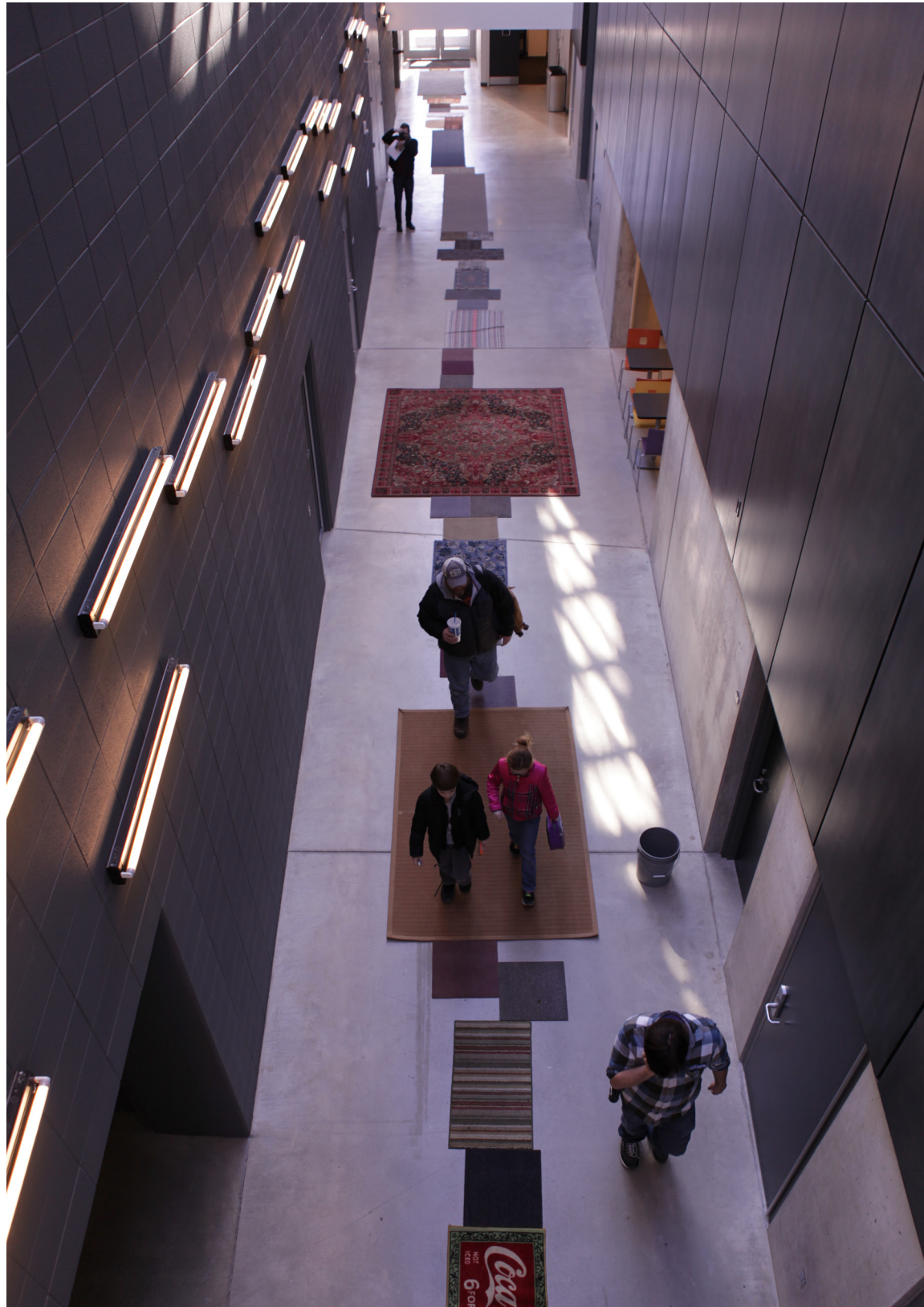
Rick Valicenti '73 is a celebrated graphic designer who leads an award-winning design firm and is recognized by the White House for his lifetime contributions to his industry. But none of that matters much during the alumnus's visits to BGSU, because his focus is building the confidence of students.

For over 75 years, the School of Art at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) has provided a nurturing environment, encouraging students to express their creative voice in a school where art is innovative, vibrant, and full of possibilities. Through the generosity and vision of Rick Valicenti comes the *Rick Valicenti Collaborative Teaching Initiative* (RVCTI.) This initiative supports a one-of-a-kind art-focused teaching structure to provide collaborative learning experiences for students and faculty from across the BGSU campus. The RVCTI gives the BGSU art faculty (instructor, lecturer, tenure-track and tenured) opportunity to propose and implement a Spring term collaborative course that embraces team-teaching experiences for unique learning content and hybrids with intimate course enrollment sizes.

The 2015 RVCTI recipients were Dr. Allie Terry-Fritsch, associate professor of art history, and Leigh-Ann Pahapill, assistant professor in the first year program, for their course Immersive Installation Art. This extraordinary class combined undergraduate and graduate students of womens' studies, art history, graphic design, and the studio arts with a focus on creating installation spaces in consideration of the historical resonance of Renaissance Art and the expression of the human form in physical spaces.

To Work Is To Pray
Automatic 419!
Toledo // April 2015





THE COURSE

IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION ART

This special topics course focused on site-specific, immersive installation art. Immersive installations demand the active engagement of the spectator since they are conceived to invite the viewer to enter into and participate within them. Although the term installation is most closely associated with artistic practices of the 1960s and beyond, this course considered installation art as an artistic strategy that was used throughout the history of art to draw attention viewers' perception of space and their bodies within it in order to communicate meaning. Specifically, we considered multi-media installations from the Renaissance alongside contemporary installations as a means to highlight the potential ways in which such works fostered the production of bodily memories that have lead to political, religious, or ethical thinking. Study of historical examples were performed in conjunction with the artistic production of immersive environments, both in real and virtual spaces.

Throughout the semester, students performed a combination of research, writing, presentation, and studio investigation. The course was divided into three sections that explore the production of space, affect and politics. Each section introduced a critical frame for investigating how installation artists transform their sites into immersive environments for a participating audience. Students read and discussed key critical theorists alongside art historical examples to develop a working knowledge to put into practice in a series of three collaborative immersive installation projects. Students were involved in all aspects of installations including curatorial planning, promotion, and in-studio projects leading up to final installation. The thematic sections were organized so as to build upon each toward the last project, which focused on the collaborative creative translation of a local space in the context of local social and political histories at the Art Commission of Greater Toledo's Artomatic419! A research colloquium was held April 23rd and which students presented their research experiences to Rick Valicenti, the university public alongside BGSU faculty, and other alumni. A final collaborative reflective project provided a capstone to the course.

IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION ART // RENAISSANCE & PRESENT

Professors Allie Terry-Fritsch
and Leigh-Ann Pahapill

ARTH4950/ARTH5820

Special Topics in Art History

ARTS4010/ART5860

Special Topics in 3D Art

Thursdays // 2:00-4:50 pm

Room 1024 // Art History Seminar Room
BGSU School of Art

COLLABORATIVE IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION PROJECTS

- 1** // Spatial Practices
- 2** // Sensing the Past and Present
- 3** // Activated Spectatorship
- 4** // Colloquium
- 5** // Reflective Capstone

Connectivity
Wolfe Center for the Arts
Bowling Green // February 2015



THE ESSENCE

Assistant Professor
First Year Program Coordinator
MFA, University of Chicago
Sculpture, Video, 2007
BFA, York University
Sculpture, Drawing, 1998

What was the essence of the immersive installation art course?

Leigh-Ann Pahapill (LP) // I would say that the 'essence' of the course was threefold. In the first place, a key aspect of the course was an introduction to a way of making art that is thoroughly engaged with theory, and scholarly in practice. This was something very new to most of the students and provided them with the critical tools necessary to produce work concerned with political, ethical and/or religious thinking. Secondly, Installation Art as a spatial practice, is mistakenly taken to have a very short history. Most of the students, if they even knew what Installation Art was, would have considered the practice of Installation Art as being limited to the 60's and 70's in the United States. This is where Prof. Terry-Fritsch's research really came in. The students were introduced to fresh ways of thinking about artistic practice and practices of spectatorship in the Renaissance. Finally, the course also provided a unique opportunity for students to make art in public space and to collaborate. All of these aspects offered our students the chance to produce work in a manner that is closely aligned with much of contemporary artistic practice today.

Associate Professor
Art History
Ph.D., University of Chicago
Italian Renaissance
Art History, 2005
MA, University of Chicago
Italian Renaissance
Art History, 1998
BA, Duke University
Art History and Medieval &
Renaissance Studies, 1996

Allie Terry-Fritsch (ATF) // I agree with what Prof. Pahapill has said about the essence of the course. Within my own scholarly practice, I am deeply invested in the investigation of the full bodied spectator in space, or the activated mobile spectator, and have been writing a series of articles and now a book manuscript on renaissance somaesthetics, or the ways in which individuals cultivated their bodies and minds to enhance aesthetic experience. The critical language surrounding installation art is very similar to the language that I use to describe renaissance experience so the opportunity to collaborate with a practicing installation artist was compelling.





THE OBJECTIVES

What were the goals and learning objectives?

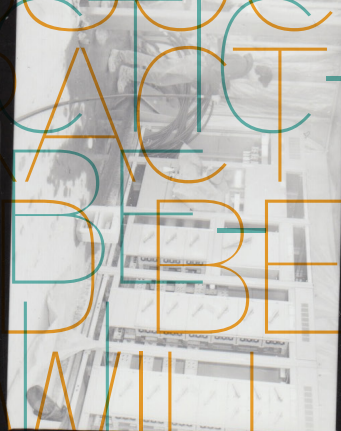
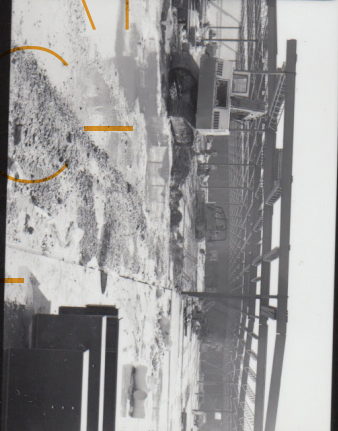
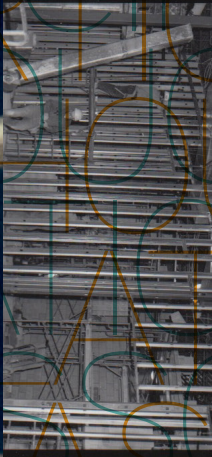
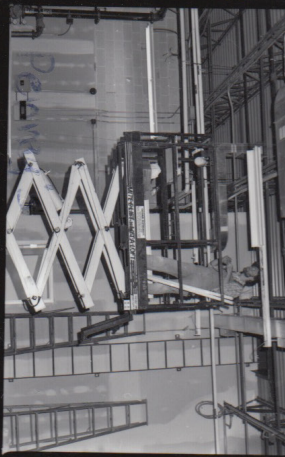
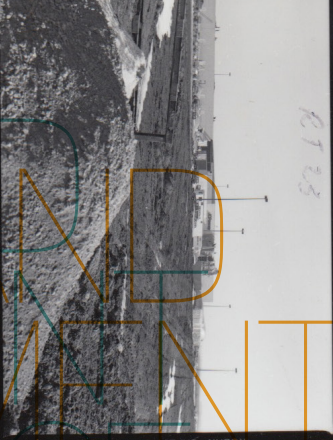
LP // The goals and learning objectives for the course covered aspects of both theory and practice. In the case of the former, I believe a key goal was an introduction to contemporary theory on affect, phenomenology, ontology, epistemology, space, place, and somaesthetics. In the case of the latter, students were introduced to a mode of spatial practice that is site-responsive and immersive. A primary goal for me as a professional artist was modeling ways of working that are critically engaged rather than merely formal and/or constitutively narrative-based, metaphoric, or symbolic. The mode of practice that we modeled also required students to be resourceful in terms of obtaining materials to work with, recycling, and repurposing materials along the way.

ATF // Again, I agree completely with Prof. Pahapill's response above. From the art history pedagogy side of things, it is very rare that young scholars get a chance to perform the practical, hands-on making side of art, so the biggest advantage of the collaboration was to force the art historians to confront the process of making, just as it was equally important for the student artists to confront the intellectual issues surrounding practice before, during and after in ways that I do not see widely happening within the School of Art. So the greatest goal of the course was exposure, both to unfamiliar modes of inquiry and to brand new content. I can't emphasize enough how current the content of the readings of the course was—we had them read the most recent critical edition on installation art and then organized the course to introduce the most current critical literature on the areas described by Pahapill above, including affect, phenomenology, ontology, epistemology, space, place, and somaesthetics. For most of the students (if not all, apart from one PhD student), everything was new—the language, the theory, the ideas—and this was a big part of our learning objectives: exposure, with the hope that by both thinking about it AND doing it, the students would come to a personal understanding of them that would transcend the class itself and enter into their artist and scholarly practice in the future.

ABBREVIATED LIST OF COURSE READINGS

- Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
- Cynthia Hahn, "Vision" in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 44-64.
- Allie Terry-Fritsch, "Performing the Renaissance Body and Mind: Somaesthetic Style and Devotional Practice at the Sacro Monte di Varallo." *Open Arts Journal* (January 2014), 1-28.
- Scott Magelssen, *Simming: Participatory Performance and the Making of Meaning* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 1-26; 77-95.
- The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 29-51.
- Alison Landsberg, "Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture" in *Memory and Popular Film*, ed. Paul Grainge.

Changing Room
BGSU Fine Arts Center
Bowling Green // February 2015



THE OUTCOMES

What were the successes and learning outcomes?

LP // There were successes and learning outcomes related to both theory and practice. Students in the School of Art are not typically asked to engage with theory as a generative aspect of making. They are also not typically required to write robust critical analyses of their work in the context of theory. There were great strides made, I believe, on the part of most of the students, both in terms of a hands-on introduction to merging theory and practice and in terms of developing their reading, writing, and research skills.

In terms of practice, a key learning outcome was definitely related to the development of new skills in collaboration. In addition, students were challenged to embrace new modalities in terms of what constitutes art making. By this I mean that the ways in which the course prioritized both experience and context over implicit content, challenged students to deeply interrogate the everyday. This new critical perspective about the implicit content of experience enabled the students to produce artworks that challenged the way a viewer interprets and understands the structures that shape how we live our lives.

ATF // Prof. Pahapill is spot on in her assessment of the successes and outcomes of the course. In addition, I would also write that one of the successes was to introduce a critical rigor into art scholarship and practice. Students were pushed constantly to question what they were doing, to place what they were doing within very contemporary discourses, to develop verbal and visual vocabularies to express what they were doing and to work extremely hard. Rick Valicenti's assessment of the class, during his visit to our colloquium, as equal in rigor to the best art schools in the nation was extremely rewarding to us as educators, but was also validating for the students, who worked extremely hard over the entire semester.

(previous pages)

Sears

Woodland Mall
Bowling Green // March 2015

Untitled

Artomatic 419!
Toledo // April 2015





THE PROCESS

How was collaboration initiated, employed and supported by student to student, student to teacher and teacher to teacher?

LP // Students began collaborating by working with a single partner for the first project. Over the course of the semester we gradually increased the size of the groupings of students, finishing with a collaboration that included the entire class. Canvas and collaborations in Google docs supported communication between students, as well as between students and teachers. For their final project, the students elected to use Facebook as the tool for collaborating. Since I am not on Facebook, Prof. Terry-Fritsch handled the teacher to student communication and collaboration on that platform. In terms of collaboration teacher to teacher, Prof. Terry-Fritsch and I met many times in advance of the course for preparation. Once the class began we also met weekly to plan, to divide tasks, and to grade the student work. All email correspondence between student and teacher was shared and collaboratively responded to.

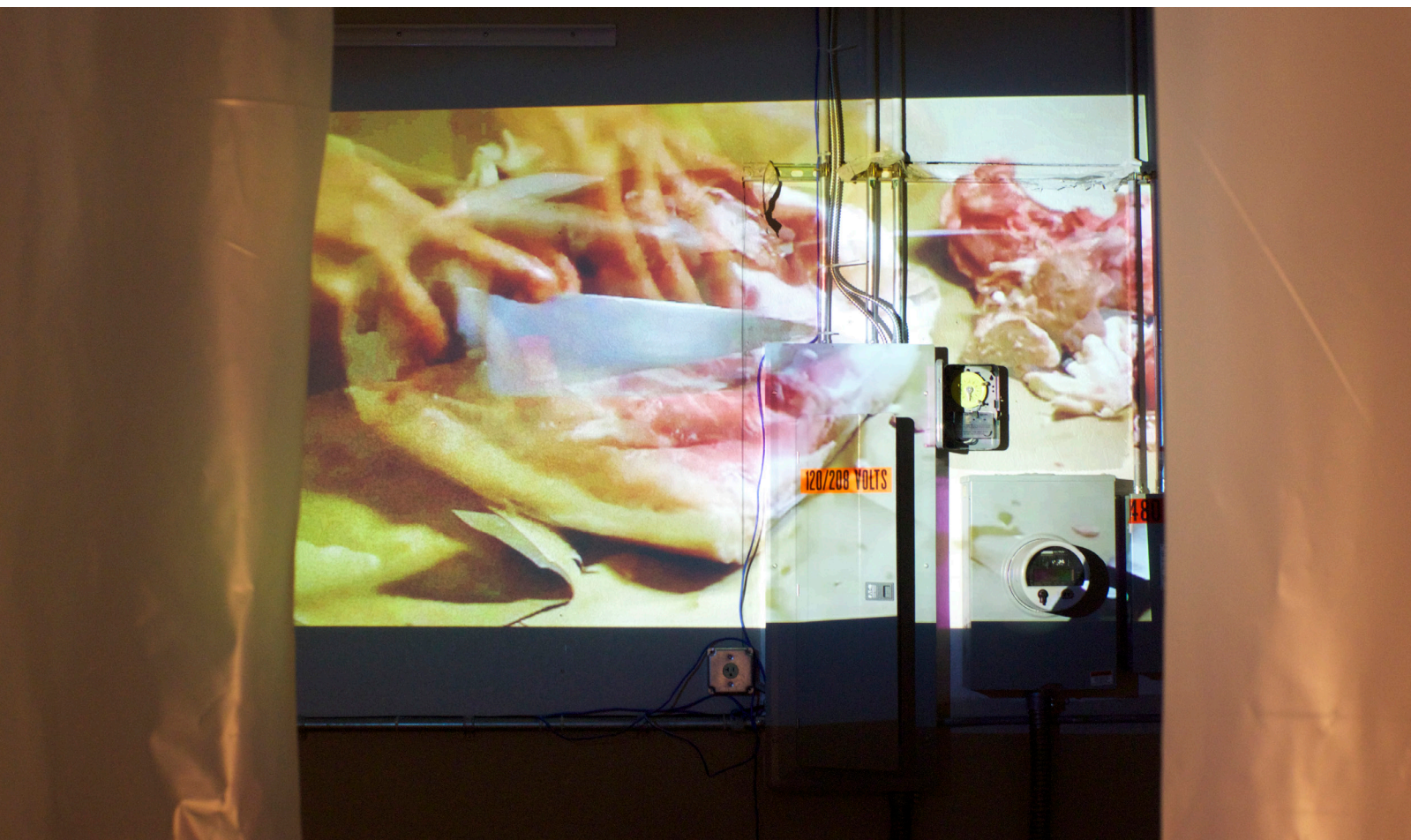
ATF // Absolutely! In addition, we held weekly seminar as a collective group and two or three students would lead the discussion of the readings. We tried to build in as much opportunity for building students' voices as possible. We also met with students outside of class, both in office hours and on-site at installation locations.

COLLABORATIVE INSTALLATION REQUIREMENTS

Students were expected to actively participate in the organization, staging and reflection on installation projects (based not only on talent, but also on rigor and sophistication of ideas and execution). Students worked collaboratively on installations plus submitted individual reflection papers that incorporated readings and studio investigation experiences.



untitled // Martial Arts Studio
untitled // Amish Deli (following page)
 Woodland Mall
 Bowling Green // March 2015



THE TEAM TEACHING

What was the benefit of team-teaching for yourselves and your students?

(LP) // Prof. Terry-Fritsch's take on how experience was constituted in the Renaissance is unique. The links that we constructed between a contemporary critical installation art practice and Prof. Terry-Fritsch's research on somaesthetics enabled the students to participate in a form of theory-engaged practice that transcends historical and spatial boundaries. It sheds light on the way that the value systems that shape culture are adopted and instrumentalized in often problematic ways. As far as teaching goals are concerned, the primary goal that was satisfied was offering the students the sort of class that I would have wanted to take as a student. By this, I mean being introduced to a methodology that merges theory and practice. This was aided by the exposure of the knowledge base of two faculty in a collaborative process.

(ATF) // It is difficult to know how much the students appreciated the course while they were in the thick of things. Certainly, they worked hard for the grades they received, but I suspect that after time has passed that they will realize how much they gained from the class. We already had several students tell us that they wished this could be a permanent offering and they were saddened that it was only going to be a one-off seminar.

Untitled
Artomatic 419!
Toledo // April 2015



THE ADVANTAGE

How did the Rick Valicenti Collaborative Teaching Initiative (RVCTI) benefit your goals?

LP // Participating in the RVCTI was immensely rewarding. The art world has changed in the last 20 years and the merging of scholarly research and studio practice is a contemporary reality in a global academic fine arts climate where PhD's in arts-based studio research are the norm. Students who participated in this course have had an introduction to what constitutes creative research now. They would also most surely report that they had been challenged both academically and creatively, which is a goal that I consistently strive for in all of the courses I teach. As an artist-scholar, I am most inspired by other scholars whose research reveals novel linkages between aspects of culture rather than to simply rehash familiar historical models and established analyses. I feel that we were able to offer the students a similar paradigm for thinking between disciplines and research practices and so modeling a provocative methodology for knowledge production.

ATF // The RVCTI comes at a critical moment in university education, as it supports the kind of progressive thinking and practice that is happening now both in art-historical scholarship and in art practice but that is virtually impossible to perform within the bureaucratic structures that discipline our curricula within the School of Art. The simple fact that the School of Art does not offer a course—in any division within the school—on installation art is rather shocking considering the current trends within the art world. Thus, at a most basic level, the RVCTI allowed us to offer to our students at BGSU critical content that otherwise they never would have been exposed to in their four years at the university. Furthermore, the RVCTI allowed us the space and freedom to engage in non-traditional teaching methods that modeled real-life scenarios of collaboration within the art world and to set a precedent for further experimental, hands-on, active learning strategies for our students.

*Reem Abu Helal with professors
Leigh-Ann Pahapill and Allie Terry-Fritsch*

IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION ART

The colloquium of the Immersive Installation Art course was held April 23, 2015, along with students, faculty and our donor Rick Valicenti in attendance. Participating students shared thoughtful, articulate presentations followed by a robust conversation with an analytical critique of the course offering. We deeply thank Rick for his time, generosity and support of the BGSU School of Art curriculum.

If you would like to join Rick Valicenti's efforts in supporting exceptional learning opportunities for students and faculty, please contact the School of Art at BGSU by emailing the Director, Dr. Katerina Ruedi-Ray at krray@bgsu.edu for more information.

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