

CALARTS, FALL 2010,  
INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSE CLUSTER

**Some of the most exciting work in critical theory and the arts today is taking place at the crossroads of biology, technology, and creative practice...**

Bio artist EDUARDO KAC commissioned a French laboratory to create Alba, a green-fluorescent rabbit implanted with a Green Fluorescent Protein gene from a type of jellyfish. PHILIP ROSS built a teahouse out of fungus. For his composition Nexus 1, DAVID DUNN took three trumpet players into the Grand Canyon and recorded the canyon's reverberations.

# ON BIO-ART

Each of these examples raises the question of biological life's relation to technology and the arts today. But what is biological life? Isn't biological life in itself already technical? And what is technics, if not another word for art? This course cluster sets out to explore these questions and much more across the life sciences (biology), critical theory (biotechnics, biopolitics, and bioaesthetics), bio-art, and bio-musicology.

Sign up for a semester packed with exciting discussions and events, and have your bio-art featured in a final group show!



## PARTICIPATING COURSES:

In addition, there will be a semester-long series of events, including artist talks at CalArts, and an academic mini-conference featuring artists such as Philip Ross and David Dunn at the Museum of Contemporary Art in downtown Los Angeles.

### SEX AND DEATH: BIOLOGY FROM BEGINNING TO END

Instructor: Michael Bryant Reg: CSSM265

Bioart is traditionally defined as art whose medium is life. But what is life? This course focuses the scientific study of life, biology. The course is organized around the biology of life-histories (the patterns of reproduction and death). Perspectives from anatomy, behavior, ecology, evolution, developmental biology, genetics, neuroscience, and physiology will be brought together to understand life. All life-forms will be considered, but there will be a particular emphasis on the biology of humans. Towards our more complete understanding of "life" in the context of humans, we will conduct a class project on human reproductive behaviors and examine some technological advances for controlling our reproduction and lifespan.

### TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF (ON BIOTECHNICS)

Instructor: Arne De Boever Reg: CSHM440-MA

Although bioart is traditionally defined as art whose medium is biological life, the "life" that bioart links to "art" surely includes much more than just biology. What about the life of the *mind*, for example, and the various techniques of *thought* that humans have developed over the centuries? Might these *psycho-techniques* also be a form of bioart? Starting from Sophie Calle's artwork *Take Care of Yourself*, this course investigates the long history of philosophical reflections on "the care of the self" (also referred to as the "cultivation of the self" or the "art of existence"), ranging from Aristotle and Saint Paul to contemporary thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Bernard Stiegler. Throughout the course, special attention will be paid to the resonances of Calle's work in US society today, specifically with reference to the current health-care debates and the question of biological life's relation to political power.

Open to upper-level BFA and MFA/MA students only.  
200- or 300-level students with a special interest in the topic should contact Arne (adeboever@calarts.edu) to be considered for the course.

# ON BIO-ART

### CONTEMPORARY AESTHETIC THEORY

Instructor: James Wiltgen Reg: CS721

What questions can be asked of art today? In an era of image saturation and digitized existence, what place does a thinking of aesthetics occupy? This course investigates a number of key concepts in a genealogy of aesthetics ranging from the beautiful and the sublime, to the uncanny, the *aura*, *Gestell*, difference and the repetition, the *simulacrum*, intensity, embodiment, representation, immanence, the image, the *parergon*, binaries, and the *sensuous*. The final two sessions of the course address the ways in which the issue of "life" has affected the conceptualization of aesthetics, most particularly in terms of what has been termed the "biopolitical", and its coefficient "bioaesthetics". How are we to understand these formulations? How do they prompt us to expand our definitions of the aesthetic, linking it with compelling elements of contemporary theory as well as a thinking pressed toward the future?

Open to MA in Aesthetics and Politics students only

### CONVERSATIONS ON TECHNOLOGY, CULTURE, AND PRACTICE

Instructor: Tom Leiser and visiting speakers Reg: IM1006

During the 2010-2011 academic year, the Center for Integrated Media (CIM) course "Conversations on Technology, Culture, and Practice"--a lecture series given by visiting artists, writers from various disciplines, and members of the CIM faculty--, will host four talks that will highlight the crossover between biology, technology, and art. The talks will be held in an informal setting designed to promote serious, yet relaxed conversations about the importance of this interdisciplinary constellation not just for the contemporary art world, but also for culture (science, ethics, government) at large. A tentative list of speakers includes (amongst others) Philip Ross, creator of *Mycotectural Alpha*.

### CRITICAL READING: THE SOUNDSCAPE, ACOUSTIC ECOLOGY, AND THE FIELD

Instructor: Michael Pisaro Reg: MC412/MT412

This course will be concerned with modes of reading and listening that are associated with the soundscape and the field, and with forms of human, artistic interaction with both.

The course will focus on what is called "bio-music", and on the notion of "acoustic ecology" in particular. We will begin by discussing the Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer's book *The Tuning of the World*, in order to then explore various conceptualizations of both the "field" and the "human". There will be ancillary readings by critical theorists such as Gernot Böhme, Francis Ponge, Alain Badiou, Oswald Egger, and Catherine Malabou (who will speak in the Fall 2010 MA in Aesthetics and Politics lecture series). In addition to these theoretical readings, the course will explore concrete examples of human interaction with the sounding environment: from field-recording work, to sound installations, to multi-media work by David Dunn, Max Neuhaus, Peter Ablinger and others.