Getting Personal: Narrative, Needs, and Desires

Studio Objectives

Discuss and distinguish how we need and the kinds things we desire affect our behavior and interactions with others.

Construct a narrative about self that begins with needs and desires.

Produce a collaborative video or sculptural work with classmates driven by personal narrative. (This will be done virtually with someone in the AVP Class)

Pull, 2013

In this work, Mary Mattingly pulls a mass of domestic objects—lamps, pocketbooks, magazines, etc.—across city sidewalks. This work highlights, among other things, how her possessions have become a burden. How do our desires sometimes weigh us down?
Deceptively simple, Bruce Nauman’s work in neon places the words “need” and “desire” on either side of this symmetrical work. How does Nauman play with this idea by having the words blink on and off?

**Before You Begin**

In this Studio you will create a collaborative video or sculpture that begins with the kinds of things you need juxtaposed with the kinds of things you desire. To begin, make a list of ten things you need and ten things you want. You are encouraged to list a combination of material objects, experiences and lifestyles.

**Materials**

- chart paper, markers
- cameras for video and/or photography
- found objects from home, community
Create

2. Research artists, and especially performance artists and sculptors, who use personal narrative as a starting place for their work. These include Mary Mattingly and Bruce Nauman (above) as well as Ana Mendieta, Adrian Piper, Tania Bruguera and Lynn Hershman Leeson. Take note of the different approaches and strategies these artists use to tell personal stories and convey experience.

3. Use the chart paper and markers to begin planning and making a diagram of your collective personal experience- the kinds of things both you AND your partners need and desire, as well as how needs and desires affect your individual behavior, interaction with others, etc. This should be seen as a “portrait” of the collaborative effort!

Begin thinking about how you might visually present these similarities and/or differences through a video, found object sculpture, or sculpture that’s utilized within a video. Questions to think about include: Will all partners perform in the work? Will different partners have specific responsibilities, such as collecting symbolic objects, shooting and editing video, modeling, performing, etc.?

4. Begin shooting video footage and/or collecting objects for your work. Choose a context or setting for the work and make necessary arrangements to video, photograph and present your work at time(s) specified with your teacher. For example, you may want to set up the video as a story based on the collective experience of the group, or you may choose to tell three contrasting stories that juxtapose with each another. You may also choose to create a sculpture literally supported by the things your group identified as key needs and wants.

5. Edit the video footage and/or assemble the sculptural components to convey a sense of how your personal needs and wants compare with your collaborators. If creating a video, decide on whether sound or narration will enhance the work. If creating a sculpture, photograph the work from various perspectives- with and without viewers.

Reflect

What does the work you created with your partners say about you individually and collectively? How do these needs and desires affect you personally? How do they affect your interaction with others? How does the work you created compare with other collaborators in the class? (answer this last question after Presenting Your Work- below)

Digital Option

Use digital editing software to create an animation as a way to tell your story instead of shooting a video or creating a sculpture. Create characters that “stand in” for you and your partners.

Presenting Your Work
Include the video or photographs of your sculpture in a class slideshow set up by your teacher. Share your video or sculpture with the class and have all collaborators take part in explaining how needs and desires inspired the story and finished work.

**Write about Art**

An interviewer asks you to describe your process— the steps you took to create this collaborative work and the critical decisions you made along the way. In two or three paragraphs, what would you say? ½ to ¾ of a page.