

ILLUMINATED SCULPTURE

Wintersession 2018
Visual Art Department
List Art, 64 College Street
B10, Sculpture Studio
Class period: 10am–3pm (12-1pm lunch)

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Course Description

This immersive winter session studio course explores the material of light in the context of contemporary sculptural practice. Students develop sculptural solutions to a given set of problems. Contemporary art issues raised in presentations and discussions. Extensive outside work is expected. Enrollment limited.

Introduction

Sculpture is an expansive field. All *things* potentially fit within its borders—including the fence (think of Christo and Jeanne-Claude). It used to be defined negatively, i.e., sculpture is all artwork *except for* painting or photography. But when painters make three dimensional wall reliefs, or when photographers create sets or props to photograph, the lines of separation begin to blur. Perhaps it is simply a problem of nomenclature. We will let the art historians worry it out. Sculptors, if history is any guide, will just change the definition anyway. But how then to approach a studio titled *Illuminated Sculpture*? I suggest: with an open mind, a sense of humor, the discipline to take one step at a time, but the willingness to run flat-out and free when opportunities present themselves.

As you will see from the following schedule, I will deliver a series of presentations to introduce the general themes of this studio and assign specific projects for each. Projects have been selected to help students expand their understanding of sculpture, and by extension, contemporary art. Each project will be discussed on a one-on-one basis while students work during class time. Throughout the term, demonstrations will be given on various tools/techniques, and we will also provide raw materials to each student. Periodic pin-up critiques of projects will provide an open forum to work through ideas in a positive, constructive manner, and to assess the relation between intention and execution.

Aims

This course has six specific aims:

- Develop spatial, tactile and visual literacy
- Introduce a number of three-dimensional fabrication procedures (wood, metal, plastic, etc.)
- Investigate a range of electric lighting technologies
- Investigate the physics of light and the optical properties of materials
- Investigate the aesthetic and symbolic potential of light within the fields of art and design
- Encourage students to continue to develop their own voice, style and attitude in the creation of their artwork

Objectives

On completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Work with various hand tools, power tools and machine tools commonly used in sculpture
- Design with the vector-based computer application Adobe Illustrator
- Cut various materials with a CO2 laser cutter
- Design and solder various electronic circuits
- Identify, install, and configure common electrical light sources
- Identify and intelligently choose from any number of means or methods of attaching things to other things
- Analyze why a sculpture is persuasive, interesting and/or in possession of other artistic and/or extra-artistic merits. Or not.
- Proudly point and state: “I made that.”

Assessment

I hold the belief that if at least one person besides the artist calls something art—even if it is the artist’s mother—then it is art. The tricky and sticky part then follows as to whether the artwork is interesting, persuasive, convincing, powerful or beautiful. Since these criteria are often vague and subjective, I will suspend consideration of the artistic value of works created in this studio for other, more practical assessments of a student’s involvement and development. Students, then, will be graded based upon the following questions:

- Did you challenge yourself?
 - I insist that students not compare themselves to other students. People are coming to this sculpture studio with a wide range of experiences and aptitudes in art making. Pay attention to your own development; learn from others who may be more advanced. Do not stress; life is long, art is longer.
- Did you work diligently and practically to meet these challenges?
 - This studio course asks you to take little steps as well as great leaps. If you trip on a particular project (which is to be expected), try to learn from your mistakes and take advantage of them.
- Did you complete all of your projects on time?
 - Group critiques are a very important part of this studio, so to respect your fellow students, your instructor and yourselves, and have your projects done in time for critiques.
- Did you participate in discussions and critiques?
 - I urge everyone to participate in discussions and critiques without reservation or prejudice, while valuing any reasoned difference of opinion or perspective that might arise. Making artwork, unlike just making the grade, can be a very personal and emotional pursuit, as well as one with social and political implications, so I insist that we respect each others efforts. Conversely, I do not want anyone indulging the “because I’m special, this artwork must be special” syllogism. Making artwork is easy; making interesting, persuasive, convincing, powerful or beautiful artwork is difficult.
- Did you attend every class?
 - I strongly discourage absenteeism. Besides demonstrations, lectures, critiques and scheduled discussions, a lot of information is shared and generated during in-class work periods. And you wouldn’t want to miss an unscheduled but brilliant insight or witticism from your instructor.

Required Texts + Materials + Tools

There is no textbook for this class. Throughout the course, online trainings via Lynda.com will be assigned. We will provide you with certain materials for projects at the beginning of the course (i.e., glues, fasteners, paper, wood, metal, LEDs, electronic components). Later, you may need to find or purchase your own materials as you see fit. You will need to purchase the following tools, which you can find at the RISD Metcalf Center (27 N. Main St). These are quite common tools, so you can also find them at most hardware stores or order them online.

Tool Kit

- Needle nose pliers w/cutter (at least 6-1/2”)
- Wire strippers (Hakko \$10.09)
- Wire cutters (Hakko \$4.97)
- Drill bits (at least 10, from 1/16”–1/4”)
- 10–15’ tape measurer
- Safety glasses/goggles (goggles are always safer and also come in sizes to accommodate prescription glasses, but get what you feel like you will be comfortable wearing)
- Masking tape
- Sketchbook, at least 8x5”, and your choice of drawing instrument

Studio Safety

Follow all safety rules. Never work in the studio alone: find out when the studio monitor is available for assistance, and schedule your work accordingly. If there are any questions using any of the tools, do not hesitate to ask the instructor or studio manager. There are a number of materials occasionally used in sculpture that are hazardous, i.e., resins, plastics. Try to avoid using these; if you cannot find alternate materials, consult the instructor or studio manager for proper safety and handling procedures.

Schedule

Besides in-class studio time, students should expect to work an additional 10-15 hours per week. When in class, be prepared to work, *so collect all materials outside of studio time.*

Class meets from 10am – 3pm, with a lunch break from 12pm-1pm

I. Introduction and Lantern Design

Week 1

- 1/2 Tu PRESENTATION: *Lantern Design*
PROJECT I: Paper cutting & folding
DEMOS: General safety, metalshop (spot welder, grinder)
- 1/3 W PRESENTATION: *Basic Electronics*
PROJECT II: Lantern with LED circuit
DEMOS: Low current LED circuit (batteries)
- 1/4 Th Work in class
DEMOS: *as needed*
- 1/5 F CRIT: PROJECT I & II

II. Illuminated Spaces

Week 2

- 1/8 M PRESENTATION: *Illuminated Spaces*
DEMOS: Adobe Illustrator for laser cutter
DEMOS: Laser cutter
PROJECT III (a): Photograph at least 5 interestingly lit spaces
PROJECT III (b): Create an *Illuminated Space*
- 1/9 Tu PRESENTATION: *Color Theory*
DEMO: High current LED circuit (AC/DC transformer)
Work in class
- 1/10 W Work in class
- 1/12 F STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: PROJECT III (a) Photographs of *Illuminated Spaces*
CRIT: PROJECT III (b)

III. Art as Light

Week 3

- 1/15 M PRESENTATION: *Art as Light*
PROJECT IV: Create a work of art using light
- 1/16 Tu CLASS PRESENTATIONS: *Artist or theme that relates to PROJECT IV*
- 1/17 W Work in class
- 1/19 F CRIT: PROJECT IV

Disclaimer

Due to the make-up of the class and/or unforeseen circumstances, I may see fit to change the scheduling and scope of the assignments, and the quantity and types of demonstrations.