

Critical Cultures

Elective

Programme

Autumn Trimester

24  
NCAID

**The deadline to  
sign up for an  
elective is 4pm  
Wednesday 18th  
September 2024**

**Confirmation of  
your elective by  
Monday 23rd  
September 2024**

**Classes start on  
Wednesday 25th  
September 2024**

An elective is an on-site 90-120 minute class offered by the Critical Cultures programme by the School of Visual Culture.

You will be sent a link to sign up for your Critical Cultures Elective.

If you have not received the link, please email [visualculture@staff.ncad.ie](mailto:visualculture@staff.ncad.ie)

The invite to sign up is sent to your NCAD email address.

Students sign up for one elective **unless** they are Joint Course year 2 or year 2 BA Visual Culture. (These students sign up for two).

Final year Joint Course and Final Year BA Visual Culture students sign up for one elective.

Some electives will be over-subscribed. We cannot guarantee your first or second choice of elective but we will do our best.

Please do not sign up for an elective you have already studied before.

Details of times and summaries appear on the following pages.

The rooms will be announced later.

# Times

**Cultural Matter: Originality,  
Taste and Value in the Age of  
Mass-production**

**Ria Czerniak-LeBov**

**9.30-11.30 Wednesdays**

**Critical Ecologies and  
Contemporary Art Practice**

**Seoidín O'Sullivan**

**9.30-11.30 Wednesdays**

**Inside Jokes - Humour in Art and  
Design**

**Vaari Claffey**

**9.30-11.30 Wednesdays**

**Design (as) Activism**

**Kate Buckley**

**9.30-11.30 Wednesdays**

**Silk & Simulation: The Fabric of  
Fashion**

**Hilary O Kelly**

**11.30-13.30 Wednesdays**

**Made by Hand: Themes in Craft  
Practice**

**Anna Moran**

**11.30-13.30 Wednesdays**

**Pop Art and Its Afterlives**

**Larissa Vilhena**

**11.30 -13.30 Wednesdays**

**This Class is Cancelled**

**Sarah Pierce**

**11.30-13.30 Wednesdays**

**Sensitive Objects**

**Donna Rose**

**11.30-13.30 Wednesdays**

**Navigating the Art System**

**Emma Mahony**

**13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays**

**Art, Design and Technics**

**Jye O Sullivan**

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**Vision and Spectacle**

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**Thinking About and With Bodies**

**Francis Halsall**

**13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays**

**Improvisation: Attempts at  
Making Utopia**

**Judit Csobod**

**15.30 - 17.30 Wednesdays**

**Genderama**

**Denis Kehoe**

**15.30-17.30 Wednesdays**

**Art, Music and Activism:  
Agitation and Protest**

**Anne Kelly**

**15.30-17.30 Wednesdays**

## Cultural Matter: Originality, Taste and Value in the Age of Mass-production

Ria Czerniak-LeBov

9.30-11.30 Wednesdays

What do our possessions say about us? The things we buy, covet or regard with disdain reveal insights into the ways we perform identity, class and status. From fine art prints and multiples to collectibles and ornaments, this course will examine modern and contemporary society's relationship to mass-production.

In an age characterised by digital reproduction, fast fashion and single use goods, the original, innovative, handmade and bespoke are increasingly valued. During this course, students will consider the importance of such conditions, questioning the status of replicas, copies, dupes and fakes. We will also be looking at perceptions of good and bad taste, considering terms such as kitsch, camp, readymade, craft and souvenir in a bid to examine the hierarchies of value attributed to various cultural matter. Readings will include texts by Susan Sontag, Walter Benjamin, Rosalind Krauss, Clement Greenberg, Pierre Bourdieu and Alice Sherwood.



Andy Warhol, *Coloured Mona-Lisa*, 1963

*The Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes (CICC) is a collaboration between Framer Framed, Indian academic, writer, lawyer and activist Radha D'Souza and Dutch artist Jonas Stall*

## Critical Ecologies and Contemporary Art Practice

Seoidín O'Sullivan

9.30-11.30 Wednesdays

In what ways are contemporary artists responding to our many earth crises?

This course will explore a range of current visual, design and spatial practices that critically and creatively respond to earth crises and system change. Today art projects within this myriad field vary from documentary to site specific, social practice to performance, durational to activist, entropic to reclamation. You will learn the histories and methodologies of these creative practices and connect to key theory. It's a field that is gaining greater visibility and attention as the world turns its head towards recognising that we need to urgently rethink our collective multi-species futures.

Together we will critically examine ideas of 'Nature' and 'Ecology' and problematise the inherited histories of modern environmentalism. How do artists navigate and work across this complex multidisciplinary field? What and whose temporalities and timescales are we speaking to? In exploring the complex intersections between creative practice, ecological crisis and spatial justice, students will discover an inspiring array of creative practices and become equipped with current theory and debate in the field to enhance their own studio or curatorial work.





# Inside Jokes - Humour in Art and Design

## Vaari Claffey

### 9.30-11.30 Wednesdays



Rather than acting in opposition to seriousness, humour can function as a rich carrier of meaning and can be instrumental in building the 'architecture of a feeling' - a sense of experience of the world alongside knowledge.

This elective will explore how humour has been constructed and used in art and design especially at those moments when very substantial changes have been affected through humorous intervention. Looking at jokers and tricksters such as Lynda Benglis, Atelier van Lieshout and Vivienne Westwood within the worlds of art and design, we will also address the humorous (and often undermining) representation of artists, architects and designers

Examining who gets to make jokes and who needs to make jokes, the elective will look at the relationship between power and humour, particularly in relation to offence and dis/respect. This will also take account of fashion, acceptability and consequences and includes the ideas of 'backfiring' and 'falling flat'.

Form will be considered too – whether as punning objects, word plays or as edited images.

## Design (as) Activism

### Kate Buckley

### 9.30-11.30 Wednesdays

This elective explores the capacity of design to entice progress and change within society. We will investigate how designers have become agents of change and how design practice has evolved as a result. We will look to define design [as] activism through various writings as well as using projects that span environmental, gender, political and global-local concerns.

Through image and video-based lectures the purpose, intention and outcome of socially engaged and radical practices will be explored. Projects that will be discussed may be situated outside of commercially driven practice so we will question how designers have and can integrate personal beliefs with their professional practice.

*Forensic Architecture:  
The Architectural-Image-Complex, Rafah:  
Black Friday, 2015*



# Silk & Simulation: The Fabric of Fashion

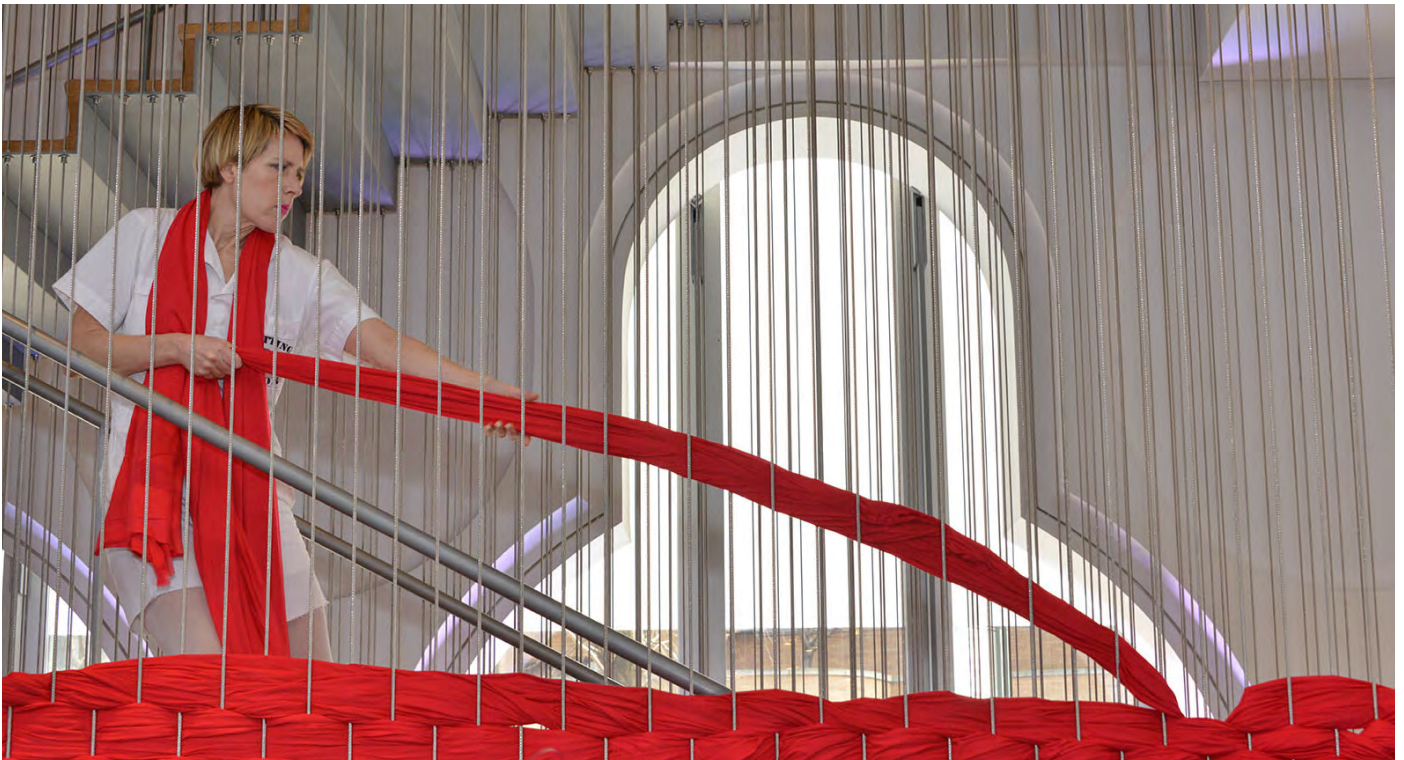
Hilary O Kelly

11.30-13.30 Wednesdays

Fashion has moved so far from 'natural' fabric that it seems timely to study what clothes are actually made of. Most on-line sites offer any amount of silk, cotton and wool, but on closer inspection the same garments turn out to be silk-y, cotton-feel, wool-blend. What is the difference and what difference does that difference make and to whom? Not only fibers, but a variety of simple and complex weaves, dyes and finishes create distinctive fabrics; satin, taffeta and crepe are all different weaves of silk for example.

There will be an element of experimentation in how the course is structured, but it will include examining physical textiles, investigating technical manufacturing processes, considering the nature of the real and the imitation, and hopefully talking to makers and purveyors of fabrics.

If you are interested in this study of the history, manufacture, physical and cultural qualities of wool, linen, silk, cotton, polyester and thread, then this seminar series may be of interest to you.



Liz Collins, *Knitting Nation Phase 15: Weaving Walls (detail)*, 2016, rayon and polyester jersey fabric, knitting machines, screen printed jumpsuits, white doc Martens, at the Museum of Art & Design, New York with Kristine Woods. Image courtesy the artist. Photographer Eric Scott.

Source: <https://www.jessicahemmings.com/thinking-in-motion>



## Made by Hand: Themes in Craft Practice

Anna Moran

11.30-13.30 Wednesdays

When we think of craft, we might think of a maker at work, perhaps a potter skilfully throwing a pot on a wheel, or a weaver at a loom. In the past, the production of finely crafted objects, each the result of a practice that honours skill, handwork and time, was understood as the primary focus of craft practice. Over the last two decades, however, many makers have expanded their range of materials, ways of making, conceptual thinking and forms of display. We will explore the work of practitioners who use materials frequently associated with craft – such as clay, glass, wood, textile and metal – as well as those who work with less traditional materials, such as human hair, food, animal bone, found objects, sixteen-millimetre film and 3D-printed forms.

Classes will be oriented around themes that are relevant to craft today – including skill, narrative, place, protest, repair, sustainability, display and technology – allowing us to consider how makers are contesting many of the assumptions, and ideologies, surrounding craft.



*Marisol Escobar, Andy, 1962-3, graphite, oil and plaster on wood with Andy Warhol's shoes, 143.5 x 43.8 x 57.2 cm, private collection.*

## Pop Art and Its Afterlives

Larissa Vilhena

11.30 - 13.30 Wednesdays

The success of the 2024 Warhol exhibition at the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin shows that Warhol's work and the socio-political commentary in Pop Art are still as relevant today as they were during the rise of the art movement in the 1960s. Back then, Warhol had a major influence on the development of Pop Art, as can be seen in the 'sculpto-painting' above depicting a totemic figure of the artist by Paris-born Venezuelan artist Marisol Escobar.

This elective will explore critical themes surrounding Pop Art and its afterlives, including fame, consumerism and popular culture. It starts with the origins of Pop Art in the UK and moves on to its widespread dissemination in America and beyond, drawing from a wide range of artists, such as Evelyne Axell, Peter Blake, Richard Hamilton, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Marisol Escobar, Martha Rosler, as well as Warhol himself.

## **This Class is Cancelled** **Sarah Pierce** **11.30-13.30 Wednesdays**

*This Class is Cancelled* will equip students with a critical understanding of debates in visual culture involving two distinct but related concepts: censorship and cancel culture. We will look at historical examples of censorship in art alongside recent cases where contested images and acts have become the subject of public scrutiny. With the support of key texts by Jack Halberstam, Susan Sontag, Fred Moten, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, Peggy Phelan and Gareth Harris, among others, we will discuss controversial, racially charged, sexually explicit and often violent images that are the subject of these debates. As we unravel contests between knowledge and power, social responsibility and personal freedom, we will consider the different contexts in which artists have faced restrictions, including political censorship, the legislation of LGBTQ+ artists, algorithms policing images online and narratives around historic monuments. Beyond obvious and official acts of silencing, we will ask what impulses regulate the cultural realm. What does it mean to cancel artworks in the face of other systemic, and violent erasures. From micro-aggressions to trigger warnings, self-censorship to anti-woke rhetoric, safe spaces to book bans, what are the implications of a will to eliminate controversial, offensive and uncomfortable messages from creative and intellectual work?



*Parker Bright protesting Emmett Till painting at the Whitney in New York. Photograph: Twitter*



*Protesters throwing the statue of Edward Colston into Bristol harbour. Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA*

## **Sensitive Objects** **Donna Rose** **11.30-13.30 Wednesdays**

Can working with the material remains of sensitive histories have the potential to be transformative, harmful, and/or healing? What can we, as artists, designers, researchers, and cultural heritage workers, do to care for and respond to objects that are the material remnants of slavery, oppression, war, confinement, and other harms?

This elective examines national and international case studies as a jumping-off point to explore topics such as the ethics of display, representation, nationalism, and the recontextualising of historical figures and the roles of museums, galleries, and universities. We will also consider practices such as decolonisation, activism, restitution, repatriation, reparations, provenance research, and how we can work alongside affected communities to create meaningful change.

Please note that classes will be discussion-based, and students can choose objects to consider together in an





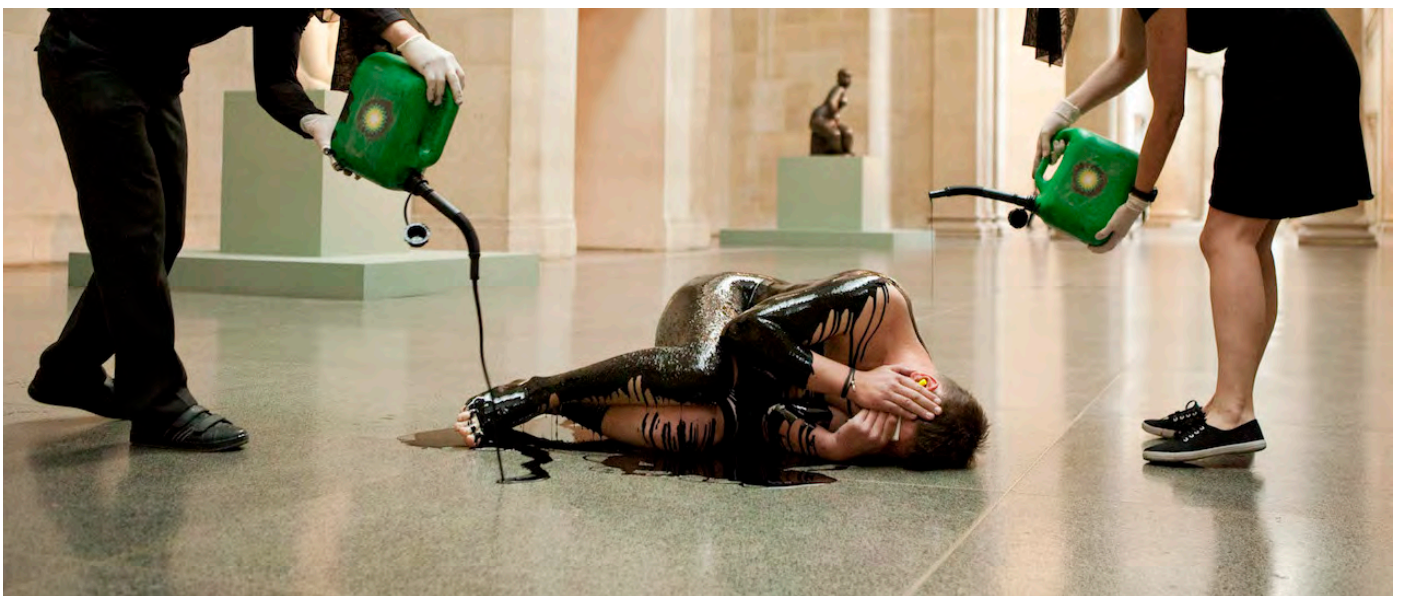
## Navigating the Art System

### Emma Mahony

13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays

When you graduate from NCAD you will need the knowledge, tools and skills to navigate the art system, which includes a thorough understanding of how it operates, and the values and inequalities that shape it. This elective offers a critical overview of the art system and the various public and private institutions that comprise it, including the art museum, the commercial gallery, the global biennial, the art fair, and the auction house, as well as the forces that attempt to resist its instrumentalising focus including the artist-run space and art activist collectives that forge relationships with social movements. This class is suitable for anyone interested in cultural politics and the public sector.

It begins by exploring the birth and evolution of the public art museum from the role it played as a mechanism for governing citizens and driving nationalist and capitalist narratives. It then considers evolutions in exhibition display from the birth of the White Cube in the 1930s, to more recent challenges to this rigid display format. Jumping forward to the 1990s it examines how the art system begins internalising the values and practices of neoliberalism and globalisation, resulting in the emergence of a proliferation of global biennales, art fairs, megamonster museums, corporate sponsorship and an all-consuming art market. In light of these developments, it then considers how artists, collectives and activists are fighting back and attempting to either “liberate” the neoliberal museum through a combination of strikes, boycotts and occupations, or to prefigure alternatives to it centered on the principles of commoning, radical care and interdependence.



*Liberate Tate, Human Cost (2011). Tate Britain.*

## Art, Design and Technics Jye O Sullivan 13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays

*Art, Design and Technics* begins with an expanded understanding of what constitutes technology. Inclusive of language, gestures and fabrics as well as computers and bioengineering, this module embraces the idea of “technics” as a way of conveying how humans shape and are shaped by technologies and how they are used. *Art, Design, and Technics* traces the intersections between visual cultures and the sciences, outlining the different ways that art, architecture, and design have shaped, and have been shaped by, scientific and philosophical ideas rooted in specific geopolitical contexts.

The elective uses case studies from different times and places, ranging from the medieval to today, to illustrate the co-formation of the sciences and art/design, as cultures with their own epistemologies (ways of knowing). We will examine a wide range of practices including the curation of natural history museums, critical posthumanism, witchcraft, and bio-art to critically understand the different ways that worldviews have been formed at the intersection of art, design, and science. Each of these topics will be analysed with reference to specific methodology and technics with the aim of equipping participants with an analytical toolkit.



Nobrega, Guto, *Breathing*, 2008.

## Vision and Spectacle Silvia Loeffler 13.30 - 15.30 Wednesdays

Spectacle derives from the Latin *specere* – to look at – and evokes visual experiences that concern something striking or unusual – an impressive public display in a society dominated by consumer and celebrity culture.

Inspired by Griselda Pollock’s Holberg Lecture “Art, Thought, and Difficulty” (2020), we will focus on the art of looking, the politics of the gaze, the alchemy of performance in public spaces, and cultural constructions of intimacy and desire. We will evaluate ‘the spectacular’ from cabinets of curiosities to subversive installations. How are free time, private life, leisure and personal expression entangled with the shock and surprise of seduction?

We will discuss freak shows, fantasies and illusions that transport us into worlds of magic. This seminar series allows for a creative exploration of students’ own visions and narratives as counter-voices to rigid models of spectacle and spectatorship determined by the market economy.



Niki de Saint Phalle, *Temperance Chapel, Tarot Garden* (1979-2002), Tuscany, Italy, evoking alchemy, harmony, and divine intervention. Image: Pietro Izzo/Creative Commons; Source: Metropolis



# Thinking About and With Bodies

Francis Halsall

13.30 -15.30 Wednesdays

Bodies are hot right now; that is, they feature prominently in public discourse. Whether its debates about the body as the site of identity; the possibilities of augmentation through technology; or concerns about control, agency and autonomy its important to think about bodies right now.

We often find ourselves talking about having a body rather than being a body and this might presuppose a dualism in which there is a distinction between mind/ self and body. In this rigorous and student-centred seminar we will interrogate philosophies and theories of the body and consider how they apply to our own experiences and practices. Students will be expected to review all material (readings, recordings etc.) in advance and come prepared to engage in class discussion.

Topics include:

Care and the body keeps the score: looking after ourselves and each other

Embodied Consciousness: Phenomenology

Biopower

The Gendered Body

Animal Bodies

Agency and Disability

The Augmented Body: Technology, Sport

The Creative Body: Play and Improvisation

Bodily Responses: Affect, Disgust, Laughter



*Silicon Valley: Fiona AI Robot*





*Improviser Oscar Jan Hoogland at the Doek Festival, Amsterdam, 2017*



*Above: Bilal Baig and the cast of Sort AOf, Series 1 (CBC Television, 2021)*

## **Improvisation: Attempts at Making Utopia**

### **Judit Csobod**

### **15.30 - 17.30 Wednesdays**

Improvisation plays a key role in everything we do, think and imagine as humans. It advises our conversations and our relationships, it surrounds, sustains and guides us in a broad variety of situations and environments. A major force in our past and present art practices, improvisation represents an essential inquiry in art making from music to dance, literature, architecture and fine arts. It informs diverse areas of study including social change and human rights struggles, conflict, trauma and healing, pedagogy, interaction and performance studies.

This seminar introduces students to key concepts in the interdisciplinary field of critical improvisation studies and invites them to experiment with building individual and collective research questions through a mix of traditional readings, multi-media learning resources, discussions, debates, games and exercises. It equips students to successfully connect areas of art practice, activism, community care and pedagogy in the students' art practice by experimenting with concepts of listening, rust/risk, flow, dissonance, responsibility, liveness, surprise, and hope. We will utilise works by activists, educators and improvisers including bell hooks, Malcolm X, Merce Cunningham, The Feminist Improviser Group and Merzbow to advance our radical learning experiment.

## **Genderama**

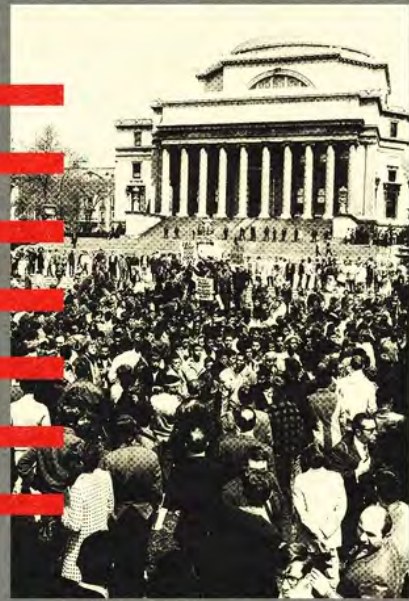
### **Denis Kehoe**

### **15.30-17.30 Wednesdays**

This seminar series will explore incidences of gender 'divergence' and diversity throughout history, starting in the present and working back to Shakespearean England. Real life figures such as Grayson Perry, Brandon Teena, Claude Cahun, Colette and James Miranda Barry will be studied, focusing on issues of gender identity and expression in the individuals' lives/work and their representation by others. Fictional figures such as the titular character of the film *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* will also be investigated.

The course will trace how various forms of gender 'divergence' can be read as potentially liberating, subversive, dangerous and creatively enriching. The articulation and representation of gender diversity across different cultures, from the Two-spirit people of North America, to the South American novel/film *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, to the sworn virgins of the Balkans and the television series *Pose* and *Sort Of* will be explored.

Each week a text from writers such as Jack Halberstam, Paul B. Preciado, Judith Butler, Susan Stryker and José Esteban Muñoz will be read and applied to the seminar topic.



**Art, Music and Activism:  
Agitation and Protest  
Anne Kelly  
15.30-17.30 Wednesdays**

*Illustration by The Atlantic; Sources: Fatih Aktas / Anadolu / Getty; Associated Press, 2024. Columbia University, New York, USA.*

This elective explores strategies, tactics and modes of address at the intersection of art, music and activism. Classes will examine key movements since the 1960s including the Situationist International, women's liberation, rave culture in the 1990s, Black Lives Matter, Rights of Nature and recent student activism. We will focus on the actions of artists, musicians, designers, groups and citizens who push boundaries, give voice to the marginalised, and confront power to effect social change. In addition to the groups and topics listed here, you will have the opportunity to identify cultural movements and protest aesthetics, reflect on agitation and protest as an artistic medium, and consider art, design and music's capacity to mobilise, intervene into, or alternatively negotiate, social challenges.

In the weekly seminars exploring real-world examples, you will participate in class discussion and reflect on assigned texts. There will be an opportunity for the student group in this elective to consider activating a public outcome too (a class-led event, happening or intervention).