

Honors Seminar in Creative Arts: Thinking Through Art

HONR 204-02, Tu/ Th 1:40-2:55 pm

Dr. Daniel Selcer



Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs* (as installed at MOMA, 1965)

What is art, and can it do to us or for us? In this class, we'll explore and apply the tools of philosophical aesthetics and criticism to ask questions about art in relation to sensation, thought, and judgment as well as image, sound, and concept. We'll first consider traditional aesthetic notions such as *mimesis* (representation or imitation), *catharsis* (release), and *kallos* (beauty) by engaging the primary texts that articulate them, reaching back to the ancient Greek philosophical tradition and thinkers of the European Enlightenment. We'll then turn to contemporary thinkers who critically engage the core intuitions behind classical aesthetics by considering how race, class, gender, and sexuality bear on aesthetics as well as considering the impacts of new technologies for artistic production (from the reproductive print to photography, cinema, digital-images, and the explosion of possibilities for aesthetic communication offered by new media platforms). We'll also think through challenges associated with the fraught relationship between art and money; the possibility of using art to intervene in public space and collective discussion; and relationships between artistic and political representation. The course requires active participation in discussion, a reflection journal, an analytical paper, visits to various Pittsburgh art spaces (galleries, museums, studios, public installations, etc.), and a scaffolded final project connected with an on-campus art exhibition collectively organized by students in the class.