
THE NEW COMMONS PROJECT

BODIES/SPACES ASSIGNMENT

OVERVIEW

For this assignment, you will create a project that comments on the relationship between bodies and spaces in a significant way. Considering that you are a cultural theorist, this assignment asks that you theorize about an important topic rooted in questions of embodiment/space. This may include, but is not limited to: disability, confinement, freedom, safety, vulnerability, sexuality, gender, pleasure, pain, exhaustion, abandonment, and so on.

The project may take any shape that you feel best addresses the particular theme of embodiment you wish to explore. It may be, for instance: a painting, a photograph, a play, a series of corporate-style memos, a virtual museum tour that you have curated, a radio drama, a sculpture, a work in miniature, etc. Whichever media you choose, the project should compel the audience to consider the subject's emotion and contextual stimuli in a given specific place/space.

Harkening to our discussions of who the public of public humanities is, you will conclude your project by finding it an audience. This may be a general, undefined audience (by posting on an online platform), a discretely selected group of family and friends, or an audience acquired through an organizational affiliation or invitation. However you choose to find your audience, you must offer some explanation of your project and ask them questions that will prompt thoughtful engagement with your work.

In the end, you will write short blurbs offering your interpretations of your classmates' work and conclude the assignment with an explanation of your own project. The latter will include what aspects of embodiment your project explores, what relationship your work evokes between the viewer and the subject, why consideration of these issues is important for us as a community, and how your project was received by your various publics. You will be in groups of your choice to offer each other support and feedback through this process.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1) Explore the complexities of embodiment, spatial dynamics, and emotions through an original creative project
- 2) Engage with the aesthetic decisions Andrew Wyeth made in *Christina's World* to interrogate the artwork's themes in greater depth

3) Practice finding an audience for your intellectual ideas

RATIONALE

The Museum of Modern Art refers to Andrew Wyeth's *Christina's World* as a "psychological landscape" in that it encourages the viewer to consider the emotions and inner life of its subject. At the same time, the painting's setting in coastal Maine, its distant horizon and extraordinary detail, render the "psychological" aspects of the painting inseparable from its spatial elements. In this project, you will use a medium (or media) of your choice to explore emotional, spatial, and embodied concepts that are important or intriguing to you and find an audience with which to follow out these ideas.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS

- 1) Demonstrate curiosity and originality. There is an element of the unexpected in *Christina's World*. Your project should also aim to catch your audience off guard. Including something unexpected may also allow you to draw novel conclusions about the themes you have selected.
- 2) Respond to your classmates' work in a short gallery-style blurb.
- 3) Extend the project beyond the class. Find a public of no less than five people to share your ideas with and ask them to share their reflections with you.
- 4) The essay (one to two pages) should explicitly justify the organizational decisions and other thought processes that went into the project, as well as reflect on the reactions you received from your audience.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

We will be discussing other artworks that center on embodiment and/or spatiality in a variety of ways. You may take these, and any others you come across, as inspiration, as well.