

Re: Academic Initiatives Program 2006-2007

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I hope your summer has been a pleasant one and that this message finds you well. As the newly appointed Chair of the Senate Academic Initiatives Committee, I am pleased to present this year's program of events, which are designed to fulfill the committee's charge of identifying academic, intellectual, and pedagogical issues of central concern to the Pratt community.

Two initiatives are scheduled to take place over the 2006-2007 academic year:

"Perspicuous Representations: Basic Questions in the Life of the Institute," a series of monthly, lunchtime discussions, all directed at exploring fundamental concepts animating the disciplines at Pratt, and;

"Art, Design, Architecture, Liberal Arts and the Future of Formalism in 2006-2007," a research group founded and coordinated by Professor Jeffrey Hogrefe and inspired in part by faculty interest in exploring issues of interdisciplinary methodology among the areas of art, design, architecture and liberal arts.

In support of the above initiatives, the AIC is pleased to announce also the launch of the blog "Perspicuous Representations" (perspicuous.wordpress.com), which will serve as the primary site communicating and documenting the AIC's activities.

Finally, with the generous support of the Academic Senate and the efforts of Senate President Jenny Lee, the AIC has been able to create a student assistantship position, whose title will be Research Associate in Academic Initiatives. The Research Associate will aid in the execution and documentation of AIC events.

Detailed descriptions of the above items, including procedures for applications and/or nominations to the position of Research Associate in Academic Initiatives, follow below.

Thank you for your interest. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

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www.prattsenate.org/aic.htm

"Perspicuous Representations: Basic Questions in the Life of the Institute"

"Perspicuous Representations," a phrase that comes from Ludwig Wittgenstein's posthumously published 1953 work *Philosophical Investigations*, names a program of events whose aim is to critically assess and discuss basic assumptions -- conceptual, pedagogical, linguistic, practical -- operating within the various disciplines. Such assumptions include the meaning of such concepts as 'interdisciplinarity,' 'criticality,' 'materiality,' and even 'the conceptual' itself.

Because they are assumptions, they often go unquestioned, even though they help shape the direction of work in the disciplines (and what qualifies as 'work'), as well as the limits of disciplinary discourse. The goal then is to turn these basic assumptions into basic questions, to provide what Wittgenstein calls a "perspicuous representation," an overview of how different terms and concepts -- how language itself -- appears on the disciplinary scene.

Each lunchtime discussion will be dedicated to a single concept, with faculty presenters from the various areas making-up Pratt's academic community. The series will begin in September by investigating a notion positioned at the heart of the AIC's mission -- What is an academic imperative?

The series schedule is as follows:

Fall 2006

September: What is an academic imperative?
October: What is interdisciplinarity?
November: What is problem solving?
December: What is critical thinking?

Spring 2007

January: What is creativity?
February: What is craft?
March: What is materiality?
April: What is research? (Or, What is a concept?)

Fall 2007

Symposium to be held in conjunction with New Faculty Orientation presenting the findings of the past year's initiative.

A more detailed description of the "Perspicuous Representations" series can be found at www.prattsenate.org/aic.htm, and more precise dates for each discussion will be announced shortly.

"Art, Design, Architecture, Liberal Arts and the Future of Formalism in 2006-2007"

The AIC is honored to have Professor Jeffrey Hogrefe as Research Coordinator for the research group "Art, Design, Architecture, Liberal Arts and the Future of Formalism in 2006-2007." Founded by Professor Hogrefe, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Architecture, English and Humanities and Coordinator of Architecture Writing Program: Language/Making, the research group will host two roundtable discussions focusing on formalism as a means to explore interdisciplinary methodology and relations.

For October 2007, Professor Hogrefe will host the event "Studio Culture as a Model for an Academic Course":

This event will assess ways in which studio culture has been, is and could be used as a methodological model for an academic course. The session would include, for example, a presentation of the genealogy of studio pedagogy, beginning with Fredrick Froebel, Jean Piaget, John Dewey, Walter Gropius, Howard Gardner, etc., and feature case study presentations by faculty representatives from the different schools.

The research group's spring offering will take place in March 2007 and will be titled "Formalism in 2006-2007":

This event will feature this time a more specific genealogy of formalism, running from Aristotle to Colin Rowe, Roland Barthes and Gilles Deleuze, and will compare how formalism is theorized and taught by the various studios and academic courses in SLAS, Architecture and Fine Arts. Similar to the fall event, the formalism roundtable will invite faculty presenters from within and without Pratt, as well as student presentations.

Professor Hogrefe will be contacting the Pratt community personally with more details of the research group's program.

AIC blog: Perspicuous Representations (perspicuous.wordpress.com)

With the launch of the AIC blog "Perspicuous Representations," it is hoped that the discussions conducted as part of the above initiatives will 'live on' and transform in ways unanticipated and unforeseen. Providing a site for both the documentation AIC events, as well as from which to offer preparatory material such as relevant links, book and article reviews, and faculty interviews, the Perspicuous Representations blog is designed to be the primary space in which the AIC conducts its activities. In addition to offering the above features, it will make it possible for members of the Pratt community to continue

the discussions begun by AIC events through the submission of comments and even guest posts.

Research Associate in Academic Initiatives

The position of Research Associate in Academic Initiatives is open to any student, graduate or undergraduate. Working in collaboration with both the AIC Chair and the Research Coordinator for "Art, Design, Architecture, Liberal Arts and the Future of Formalism in 2006-2007," the Research Associate will be responsible for maintaining the AIC blog, documenting AIC events, and will serve in the role of liaison between the AIC and other offices at Pratt.

The ideal candidate will have excellent writing skills, as well as the requisite skills in digital archiving, graphic design, etc. Above all, the successful candidate will have an abiding interest in matters intellectual and a desire to interrogate the issues -- artistic, aesthetic, philosophical, social, political, whatever -- at stake in the academic and educational mission of the Institute.

Individuals may apply directly to the AIC Chair (meng@pratt.edu) or may be nominated by another individual. If applying directly, please include: A letter of intent; a current CV, and; a writing sample no longer than 2000 words. Deadline is: 01 September 2006.