

**Proposed curriculum on contemporary art and performance:
Dennis Oppenheim and the art of survival, Day 16 and 17**

November 16 and November 17, 2011
Performa Institute, 233 Mott Street, New York City

Presented by Slought Foundation and Dennis Oppenheim Estate

Overview

"In some way our individual objectives gave way to a union of investigation, our work became an instrument to combat what seemed to be happening to us. The 80s bred 'the art of survival.'"

--Dennis Oppenheim, *Lecture #1*, 1976

Slought Foundation and the Dennis Oppenheim Estate, in collaboration with Performa Institute, are pleased to announce a proposed curriculum on contemporary art and performance. The public is invited to attend the presentation of the first installment, "Dennis Oppenheim and the art of survival, Day 16 and 17," which will consist of an evening screening of works and an action, followed by a day-long series of provisional seminars.

The proposed curriculum has been developed in response to particular works by the artist that in and of themselves have a performative dimension. It is focused on the artist's lifelong interrogation and redefinition of the idea of performance as expressed through the frequent use of surrogate performers. Throughout the program, friends, colleagues, and cultural practitioners will engage in facilitated conversations, and will each bring distinct vantage points to the discussion of the artist's work and practice. Suggested areas for conversation include current art world conditions, the relationship between collaboration and survival, surrogate performance, and the semiotics of radicality. Seating and choreography will upset the conventional pedagogical dependence on a podium or stage. Successful completion of the proposed curriculum will symbolically designate each participant as a live surrogate and a newly defined member of the union of investigation.

Proposed curriculum on contemporary art and performance: Dennis Oppenheim and the art of survival, Day 16

November 16, 2011; 5-6pm
Performa Institute

Screening and Action

On the left chalkboard “Proposed curriculum on contemporary art and performance: Dennis Oppenheim and the art of survival, Day 16” is written. Below that the featured works are listed: “*Compression-Fern (Hand)*, 1970, 5:38 min / *Compression-Fern (Face)*, 1970, 5:13 min / *Leafed hand*, 1970, 3:35 min / *Tooth and Nail: Film and Video* 1970-74, 111 min.”

On the right chalkboard is written “*Instead of grabbing clay, you grab your stomach. For the first time, instead of imposing form manually, you are feeling what it is like to be made. You might have felt your hands picking up a piece of wood and stacking it, but you have never felt what the wood felt.* -- Dennis Oppenheim.”

The complete compilation of the artist’s films from 1970-74 is shown on a monitor in the private screening room (closet). One large screen features a projection in the northwest corner of the classroom. The large screen projection recalls the gallery installations of the work in the 1970s in places such as Yvonne Lambert, the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Francisco, and The Kitchen. Two adjacent monitors in the southwest corner of the classroom resemble the artist’s use of the split-screen technique, so as to upset the viewer’s habitual relationship to the single image and the preciousness of the work.

Three areas of activity in the classroom correspond to organic material, a covered body, and a compression, all developed by artist Maja Rajenovich in response to the selected works. They are facilitated practices involved with the art of endurance.

The seminar will run for 60 minutes.

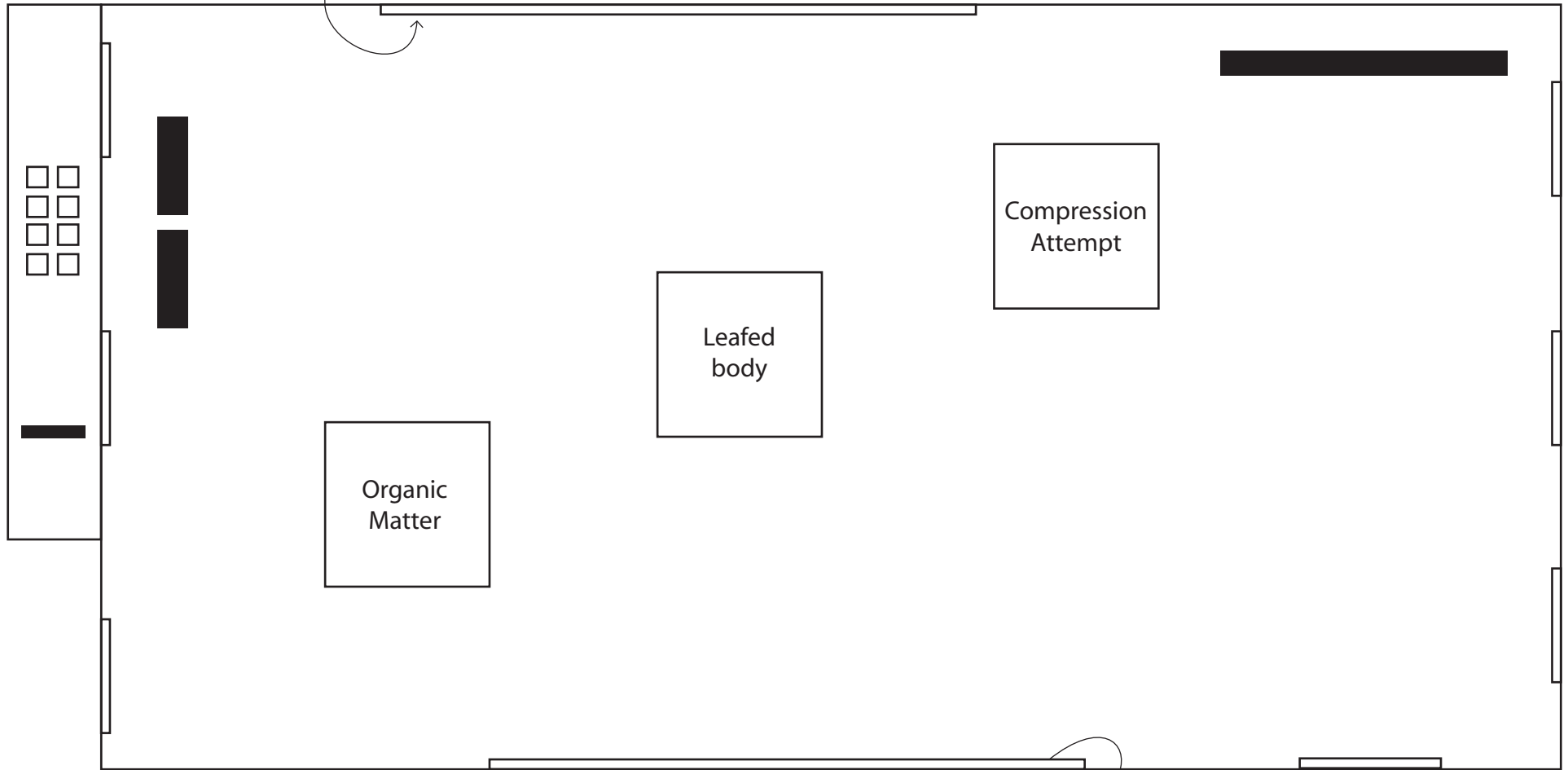
**Proposed curriculum on contemporary art
and performance: Dennis Oppenheim and
the art of survival, Day 16**

Compression-Fern (Hand), 1970, 5:38 min

Compression-Fern (Face), 1970, 5:13 min

Leafed hand, 1970, 3:35 min

Tooth and Nail: Film and Video 1970-74, 111 min.



*“Instead of grabbing clay, you grab your stomach.
For the first time, instead of imposing form manually,
you are feeling what it is like to be made. You might
have felt your hands picking up a piece of wood and
stacking it, but you have never felt what the wood felt.”*

-- Dennis Oppenheim

**Proposed curriculum on contemporary art and performance:
Dennis Oppenheim and the art of survival, Day 17**

November 17, 2011; 1-6pm
Performa Institute

**Setting and Procedure for “Provisional seminar
517: Dennis Oppenheim, *Lecture #1*, 1976”**

Class begins at 1pm.

On the left chalkboard “Provisional seminar 517: Dennis Oppenheim, *Lecture #1*, 1976” has been written (Class Monitor). On the right chalkboard, “*In some way our individual objectives gave way to a union of investigation, our work became an instrument to combat what seemed to be happening to us. The 80s bred ‘the art of survival.’*” has been written (Class Monitor).

Forty-eight chairs in four rows of twelve fill the room. The last chair is reserved (Artist Surrogate). In the front of the room is a table with 2 chairs. In front of the table and facing the chairs is a podium. As people (Students) enter they are directed (Class Monitor) to stand to the sides of the room and behind the chairs.

Lecture #1 is performed from behind the podium (Artist’s Live Surrogate). After the lecture, notebooks and a printed copy of the lecture are placed on the seats (Class Monitor) and people (Students) are invited to take their seats. Meanwhile, the podium is removed and table adjusted (Janitor).

An interrogation begins at the table (Guest Instructor #1 and Commentator). The interrogation centers on the experience of hearing the lecture. Over time, the dialogue grows to include different participants (Class Monitor, Artist’s Live Surrogate, Students, Janitor, Guest Instructors, Commentator).

At 2:20pm, the end of the class and the start time of the next class (2:40pm) is announced (Class Monitor). People (Students) are asked to stack their chairs as they leave the room (Class Monitor). The last chair remains (Artist Surrogate).

**Setting and Procedure: “Provisional seminar
294: Dennis Oppenheim, *Theme for a Major Hit*, 1974”**

Class begins at 2:40pm.

On the left chalkboard “Provisional seminar 294: Dennis Oppenheim, *Theme for a Major Hit*, 1974” is written (Class Monitor). Also written on the left chalkboard is “*It ain’t what you make....*”, and on the right chalkboard “*It’s what makes you do it*” (Guest Instructor).

Only one chair is in the room (Artist Surrogate) and the soundtrack is playing. People (students) are invited to place a chair randomly in the room and to sit (Class Monitor).

After everyone is seated the sound is lowered slightly (Guest Instructor 2), who then moves freely through the classroom, reading Roselee Goldberg’s authoritative account of the work (in *Performance Art: from Futurism to the Present*, Thames and Hudson, 1979, page 158). Further remarks on the piece with an emphasis on intention and motivation are offered, and lyrics as written on the chalkboard are highlighted (Guest Instructor 2).

People (Students) are invited to reposition their chairs in relation to their identification with one phrase or the other (“what you make” versus “what makes you do it”) (Guest Instructor 3). Two long rows preferred, with the exception of the Artist surrogate which remains seated in the same position. Discussion follows (Class Monitor, Artist’s Live Surrogate, Students, Janitor, Guest Instructors, Commentator).

At 3:40, the volume of the soundtrack is increased (Class Monitor). Collective singing follows (Students). A microphone is passed around for individual articulation of lyrics.

At 4:00pm, the end of the class and the start time of the next class (4:20pm) is announced (Class Monitor). People (Students) are asked to stack their chairs as they leave the room (Class Monitor).

**Setting and Procedure: “Provisional seminar
301: Dennis Oppenheim, *Radicality*, 1974”**

Class begins at 4:20pm.

On the left chalkboard “Provisional seminar 301: Dennis Oppenheim, *Radicality*, 1974” has been written (Class Monitor). Chairs have been placed in an amphi-theater style of three semicircular rows (Janitor). On the right chalkboard, a photo print of *Radicality* has been placed (Janitor).

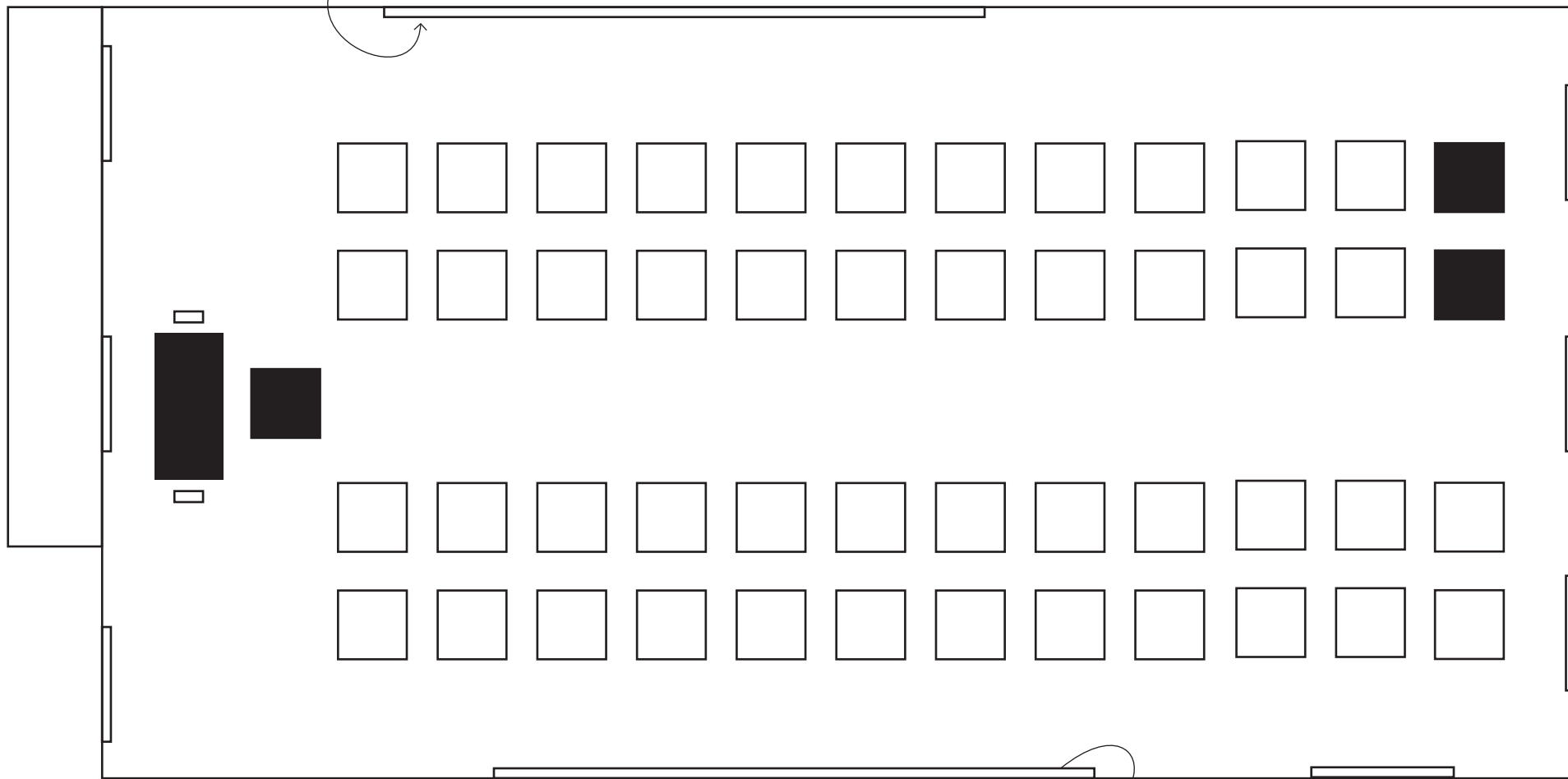
Remarks are made on the idea of radicality in art and life (Guest Instructor 4). Discussion follows (Class Monitor, Artist’s Live Surrogate, Students, Janitor, Guest Instructors, Commentator), with a focus on the importance of our individual artistic objectives giving way to the union of investigation. This collective union functions as an instrument to combat what seems to be happening to us and thus constitutes an art of survival.

Box of white bow ties is circulated (Artist’s Live Surrogate), symbolically designating each participant as a live surrogate and a newly defined member of the union of investigation. The location and time of the first meeting of the union to be discussed.

School Staff

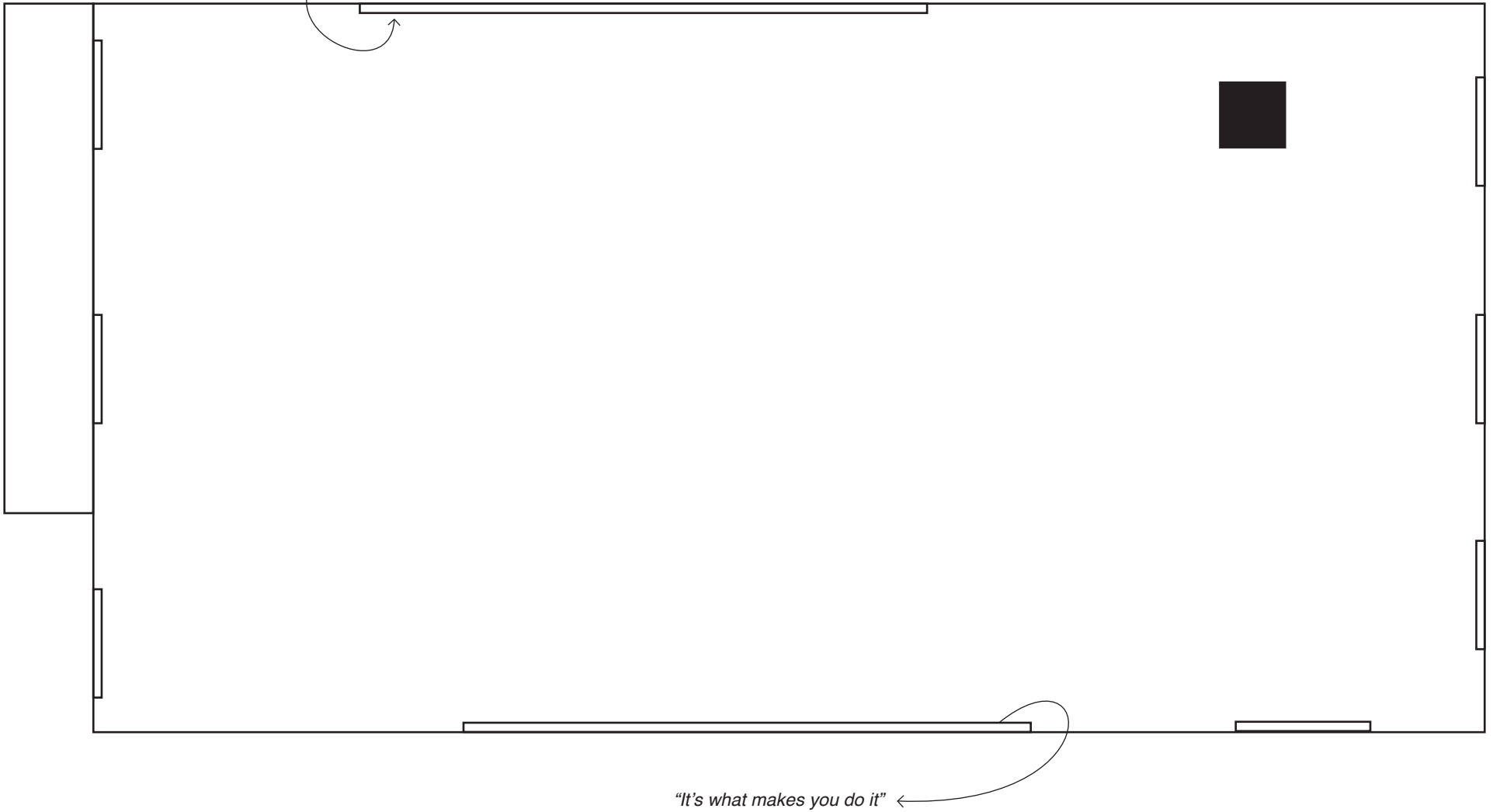
Class Monitors: Pamela Sharp (1), Amy Oppenheim (2)
Artist Surrogate: Artist Surrogate
Artist’s Live Surrogate: Aaron Levy
Janitor: Maja Rajenovich
Guest Instructors: Les Levine (1), Steve Poser (2),
Roger Welch (3), Bill Beckley (4)

Provisional seminar 517: Dennis Oppenheim, Lecture #1, 1976

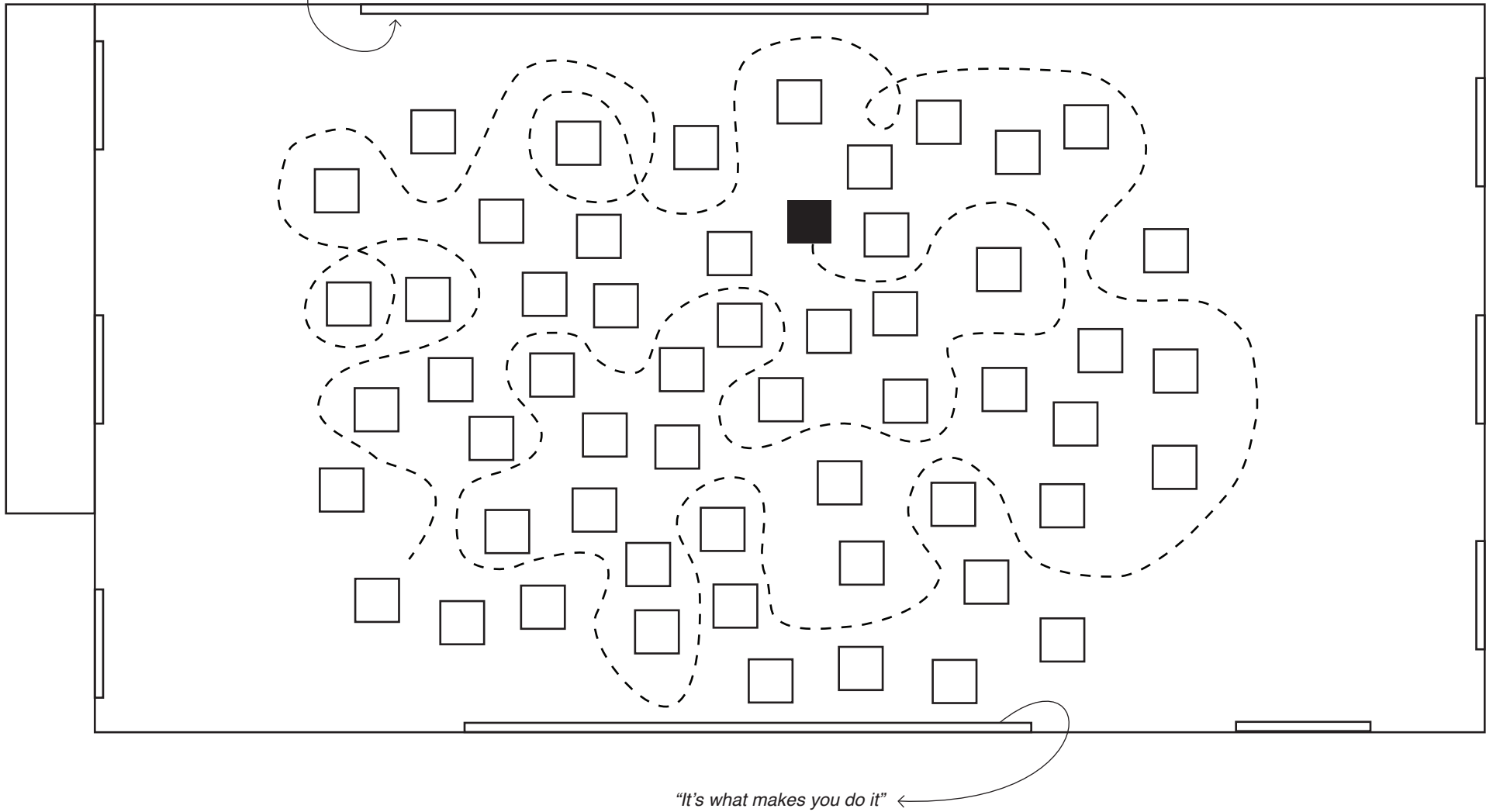


In some way our individual objectives gave way to a union of investigation, our work became an instrument to combat what seemed to be happening to us. The 80s bred "the art of survival."

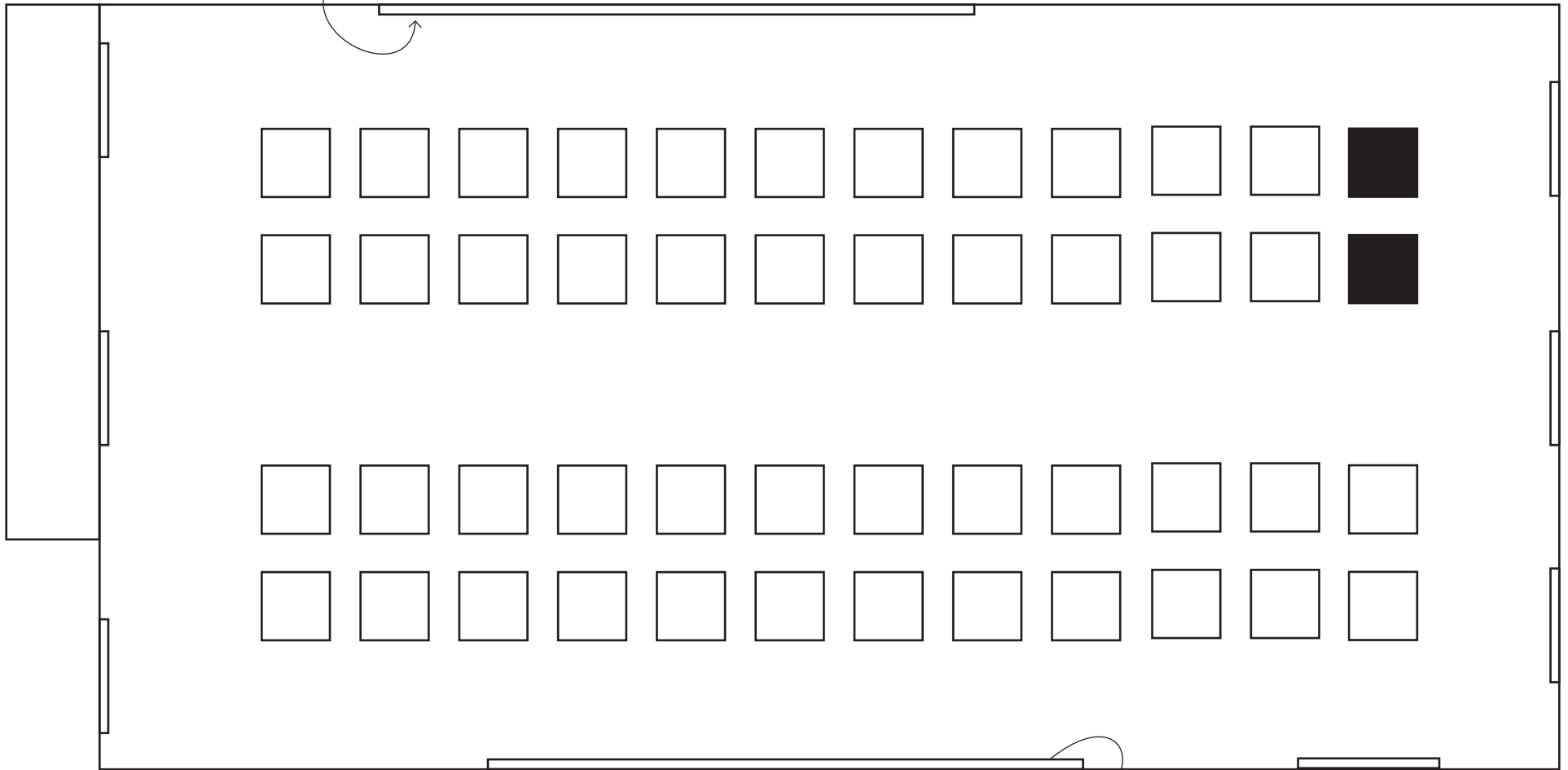
Provisional seminar 294: Dennis Oppenheim, Theme for a Major Hit, 1974
"It ain't what you make..."



Provisional seminar 294: Dennis Oppenheim, Theme for a Major Hit, 1974
"It ain't what you make..."



Provisional seminar 294: Dennis Oppenheim, Theme for a Major Hit, 1974
"It ain't what you make..."



"It's what makes you do it" ←

Provisional seminar 301: Dennis Oppenheim, Radicality, 1974

