

Parsing the Evolving Politics and Practice of 'D.I.Y.'

Organizers:

Brian J. Hracs - Uppsala University

Gordon C. C. Douglas - University of Chicago

Abstract:

When the term 'do it yourself' emerged in the 1950's it had a very literal meaning - to do something without the aid of experts or professionals. Often associated with home improvement, on this basic level D.I.Y. simply describes how a practice is performed. Beginning in the 1960's and 1970's, however, the term took on a new range of political and cultural connotations. Indeed, the D.I.Y. practice of making music in suburban garages migrated to cities like New York and evolved into an alternative 'punk' ethos, replete with specific fashion styles and ideologies. In recent years, anti-market identities and alternative cultural movements have connected and fetishized everything from 'craft' food production and home brewing to 'zine' publishing, software development, 'guerrilla' urbanism, and a whole 'handmade' aesthetic under the monicker of D.I.Y.. Yet the contradictions associated with the increasing complexity and ubiquity of D.I.Y., both in practice and popular discussion, have received surprisingly little empirical attention or critique. This panel will bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to discuss the evolution of the term and its value as a topic of conceptual and empirical inquiry. Drawing on studies of music, art, fashion, cycling culture and urban revitalization the panelists will unpack the intersections between alternative identities and practices and how activities associated with D.I.Y. shape, and are shaped by, local spaces and scenes.

Panelists:

Patrick Adler - University of California, Los Angeles

Alison Bain - York University

Daniel Campo - Morgan State University

Gordon C. C. Douglas - University of Chicago

Brian J. Hracs - Uppsala University

Doreen Jakob - University of Exeter / University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Johan Jansson - Uppsala University