

## Lecture Notes

**Syllabus 4/13/05 –**

### I. CONCEPTUAL ART, EARLY VIDEO AND PERFORMANCE

**4/20/05 –**

### II. FEMINISM AND ACTIVIST ART

#### **CONCEPTUALISM**

Conceptualism based on the “idea.” Sol Lewitt: “The idea is the machine that makes the art.” Once you have the idea, that’s all you need. Somebody else can execute it.

Joseph Kosuth was a leading Conceptualist. Totally epitomizes what Conceptualism was all about. Taking a step from DuChamp and philosophers. Group brought together in 1971 at Information Show in NY.

60s and 70s are now POST MODERNISM

#### HALLMARKS OF POST-MODERNISM:

- **HYBRIDITY: One of the Conditions of Post Modernism as noted by Douglas Crimp. Many exciting and challenging artists were working in several media. Signalled something different from 10 years earlier when there was pure painting in Modernism.**
- **DELIBERATE REFERENCE TO PREVIOUS ART**
- **EXPANDING CONTEXT OF ART**

These works are all POST-MODERN in reaction to/in opposition to Greenberg’s Formalist Modernism.



- **01\_One and Three Chairs – 1965 – Joseph Kosuth**
- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **POSTMODERNISM**
  - Installation
  - 1. on Left - Signifier – photo that signifies the concept
  - 2. on Right – Dictionary definition
  - 3. Center – Real thing - Total “Chairness” (1 and 2 = 3)
  - This art is semiotics – the study of representation and how we experience knowledge of things in this world
  - Interrogates representation and how we read objects and understand their meaning



- **02\_Art as Idea as Idea – 1966 – Joseph Kosuth**
- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **POSTMODERNISM**
  - Takeoff on Abstract Modernist painter Ad Reinhardt's "Art is Art is Art"
  - Clearly playing with Greenberg's Theory on Modernist painting because it's totally about itself: painting (alho it is text so it doesn't literally qualify)
  - Dictionary definition of art mounted on wall
  - Art that really boils down to the idea of what art is



- **03\_Condensation Cube – 1963-4 – Hans Haake**
- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **ACTIVISM**
- **POSTMODERNISM**
  - Hakke has always worked out of Conceptual orientation, however his work is considered Activism as well.
  - Hakke interested in Systems: Art as a system and natural, physical, biological systems
  - Condensation cube is early example of Hakke taking work already associated with minimalism and specific objects, however he added moisture inside so that sun and heat would evaporate and condense water inside.
  - Not just art anymore – taking art and expanding it outside of its rigid discipline.



- **04\_ Shapolsky et al, Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real-time Social System –1971 – Hans Haake**
- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **ACTIVISM**
- **POSTMODERNISM**
  - Example of work he's most famous for
  - Haake had a visitor's poll at exhibit asking question about whether Nelson Rockefeller's support of Nixon's foreign policy with Indo-China would influence their vote to re-elect Rockefeller as governor of the state of NY. Rockefeller was founding member of board of MOMA
  - An installation of photos of real estate, with specific ownership information on the property
  - These are tenements, and info revealed them to be overpriced, exorbitant rents, with landlords having ties to board of directors at MOMA
  - Opens his art up to Activism as well as Conceptualism



- **05\_ Injustice Case – 1970 – David Hammons**
- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **ACTIVISM**
- **POSTMODERNISM**
  - Direct Reference to Chicago 7's Bobby Seal of Black Panthers, unjustly charged with raping a white girl and jailed
  - More than just political activist statement:
    - Flag refers to Jasper Johns
    - Body print literalizes the body physically being IN the canvas



06\_Higher Goals – 1982 – David Hammons

- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **ACTIVISM**
- **POSTMODERNISM**

- Phone poles and bottle caps creating beautiful patterns like African textiles / beadwork
- Installation in Brooklyn inspired by cultural site: Watts Towers. (Watts Towers created by Simon Rodea, European immigrant over 15 years in 30s /40s in Watts in L.A. building sculpture out of bits and pieces of bottle caps, ceramics and trash.
- Basketball hoops way high up.
- Message for black youth in U.S. was not to make playing in the NBA their goal but to stay in school and have “higher goals”



07\_Wall of Respect– 1967 – OBAC

- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **ACTIVISM**
- **POSTMODERNISM**

- Chicago. OBA is a Yoruba diety in Africa. Large number of slaves taken from Yoruba people living in Nigeria.
- Acronym: Organization of Black American Culture
- OBAC related to AfriCobra: Coalition of Black Revolutionary Artists (or Bad Relevant artists)
- Wall basically organized by Jeff Donaldson
- Wall has images of black role models for African Americans in this country.
  - Art with a social purpose to instill racial pride
  - Gangs corrupted it by adding their signatures and trying to claim it as their territory
  - Taken down as a result



- **08\_George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware:Page from an American History Textbook– 1975 – Robert Colescott**
- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **POSTMODERNISM**

- Colescott well-educated.
- Decided to paint images that interrogated representation in a deliberate historical context. Clearly contrary to modernism.
- Geo Wash Carver surrounded by racist caricatures of black stereotypes – jugs, banjos, mammies – trying to co-opt the power of stereotypical representations
- Raising questions of how and why African Americans represented in media
- This is Hallmark of Postmodernism
  - Reference to previous art
  - Directly counter to Greenberg’s Formalist Modernism since Greenberg was all about progressing forward in a continuum, and this is looking backward
  - troping art = using it and twisting it in a different way
  - expanding context

### **FEMINIST ART:**



- **09\_Political Self-portrait #2:Race – 1978 – Adrian Piper**
- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **POSTMODERNISM**
- **FEMINIST/ACTIVIST**

- African American woman engaging questions of identity
- Has PhD in Philosophy
- Mixed race, very light skinned, Caucasian looking
- Made calling cards chastizing people making racial slurs in her presence
- Quit doing it c/o people started recognizing her and did it on purpose
- So – she’s a conceptual artist working with broad social issues including racial, and political.
- This work is about
  - class and race and gender – reactions of people who found out she was black
  - issues of representation and misunderstanding of people who are different



10\_ Woman House: Linen Closet – 1971 – Sandra Org

- CONCEPTUALISM
- FEMINIST/ACTIVIST

- Installation produced by a seminar class at a Calif. college under Judy Chicago and Marian Shapiro who ran Feminist Art program
- Investigating women's issues in experimental art program
- Entire house used and each room became an installation engaging issues relevant to feminist issues
- This one was the closet – woman trapped in linen closet with carefully folded towels
- A lot of early feminist work was deliberately shocking. Judy Chicago did "Menstrual Bathroom" in this spirit.



11\_ The Dinner

- Party – 1974-79 – Judy Chicago
- CONCEPTUALISM
- FEMINIST/ACTIVIST
- POSTMODERNISM

- Most notorious installation piece
- 30 place settings for women
- Triangle important shape adopted by feminists; "centralized imagery" / womb / women organized around central core
- Collective effort by many female artists
- Each setting a famous woman in history
  - Artemesia Gentileschi
  - Emily Dickinson
  - Susan B. Anthony
- Also wrote names on floor of women who didn't rate a place setting

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- **12 Interior Scroll – 1975 – Carolee Schneeman**
- **CONCEPTUALISM / PERFORMANCE**
- **FEMINIST/ACTIVIST**
- **POSTMODERNISM**
  - Meant for shock value
  - Representation of female bodies and how meanings are written onto nude body
  - She wanted to suggest that women should be able to create their own meanings from within rather than have them imposed upon them from without
  - Painted herself to represent herself as nude in painting
  - Wrote text on a scroll, inserted it into her vagina, and in performance pulled it out and read from it



- **13\_S.O.S. Starification Object Series – 1964 – Hannah Wilke**
- **CONCEPTUALISM**
- **FEMINIST/ACTIVIST**
  - Wilke had ties to Atlanta College of Art
  - Beautiful woman who capitalized on it with her art
  - These are from a series including photos of herself, sculpture, mixed media
  - She poses semi-nude & uses kneaded erasers to convey multiple meanings: scars, female genitalia, female stereotypes (soft porn star vs housewife);
    - starification vs. scarification = commentary on ritualistic cultural scarring vs. what women do to themselves in our culture to achieve beauty and stardom.
    - kneaded gum erasers vs her title, “Needed Gum Erase-Her” = has to do with wiping out the actual identity of women and seeing them as represented sex objects of male need.