

POSTMODERN BUZZWORDS

Semiotics - the science of signs, which include language/communication

Representation – depiction through re-presentation

- one of the significant themes that becomes the subject matter of a lot of postmodern and feminist art, deconstructing accepted modes of representation in western society

Deconstruction – to unravel, take apart.

- Analyzing via semiotics the multiple meanings of art.
- An operation associated with postmodernism.
- Refers to artists who take stereotypical, recognizable image and take it apart, revealing layers of assumptions and attitudes; in the case of feminist art: revealing constructed representations imposed on women from the outside and creating new ones from within.

Appropriation – self-conscious use of images culled from art history or popular culture

The Art Co-efficient – “meaning” added to art in addition to intended, original meaning

- Duchamp writes about it in “The Creative Act” (required reading)
- Recognition of the Art Co-efficient is a signal of a postmodern attitude
- It’s the difference between the meaning of the work of art as conceived and created by the artist, and the meanings as it develops and goes out/lives in the world

Simulacrum – Simulation. From Baudrillard. Not just imitation or re-duplication but “Substituting signs of the real for the real itself.” Says the way we come to know things is largely through simulacrum rather than the original thing.

- The idea for simulacrum itself as a subject matter for art becomes also very common in postmodernism.
- We’re back to Benjamin’s “Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” This came back to post modernists and became the foundation of post modern critics and theorists examining the way knowledge is conveyed and the way we experience things in postmodern society.
 - after baby boomers of the 50s, communication is so easy in 70s, 80s and 90s and onward
 - we’re bombarded with images from tv, print media etc.
 - techniques of reproduction get to be so good we take for granted how we get to know things

Hybridity – use of different media as opposed to Modernism that was all about “pure painting.”

Performance – allowed artists to break out of the confines of modernism and engage issues outside of simply the making of art and reveal ways that art is implicated in this broader context. **Performance is anti-modernist.**

History - deliberate reference to previous art



- **01_Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face – 1981 – Barbara Kruger**
- **POSTMODERN APPROPRIATION**

- Photographer, graphic designer, art director working for high fashion periodicals
- Appropriated the visual vocabulary of high fashion magazines and the commercial look and took it to her fine art
 - Photos, posters etc. based on look and technique of popular mass media
 - Incorporated text and photographic image
- “The Gaze” – the male gaze. Investigating the issue of dominance/control/representation. Renaissance through 19th century way of representing the nude was as a female subject for the consumption/pleasure of the male viewer.
- “hits” implies violence



- **01A_I Shop Therefore I Am – 1985 - Barbara Kruger**
- **POSTMODERNISM (not on slide sheet or book)**
 - **She is getting beyond expressly feminist concerns talking about consumer culture and broader societal issues, presenting them very simply and allowing viewer to come to own conclusion**



- **02_Film Still #35 – 19679 – Cindy Sherman**
- **POSTMODERN APPROPRIATION**
 - Rose to prominence using photography, posing as in a still from a 50s or 60s B movie
 - Frozen moment implying part of a series
 - Breaking away from modernism because it's implying time – no longer self-contained
 - Implicates the viewer as part of the story
 - Raises the question of reproduction.
Appropriating/copying/reproducing movie scene that is fictive, or a real painting



- **03 A_History Portrait #224–1990 – Cindy Sherman**
- **POSTMODERN APPROPRIATION**
 - Enacting Caravaggio painting
 - Clearly postmodern: uses appropriation of previous art. A Modernist painter would never have done this because modernists didn't go back – their paintings were about themselves, NOT about history!
 - Another twist: Gender-bending. She's a woman portraying herself as youthful boy. Engages debate surround Caravaggio's scandalous behaviors.
 - Raises the question of reproduction



03B_Little Bacchus – 1593 - Caravaggio

Sherrie Levine came to know works of art through slides or in books, very different from the experience of the real object. She looked in books and made very careful gouache reproductions of famous paintings.

She raises questions of reproduction and Walter Benjamin.



- **04_After Piet Mondrian – 1983 – Sherrie Levine (IN BOOK)**
- **POSTMODERN APPROPRIATION**



- **05A_After Leger – 1983 – Sherrie Levine (NOT IN BOOK)**
- **POSTMODERN APPROPRIATION**



- **05B_Nude on Red Background – 1927 - Leger.**



- **06_Double Mona-Lisa Self-Portrait – 1985-88 – Mike and Doug Starn**
- **POSTMODERN APPROPRIATION**
 - Identical twins working primarily with photographs, collaging and pasting to create their work
 - Revisits Benjamin and the idea of media being inherently multiple and questions of our idea of what is original and authentic
 - 2 photos of themselves reflected in the glass at the Mona Lisa at the Louvre – they are removed by the glass, and each one is a reproduction of the other = multiples without an original.
 - Cutting it apart and putting it back together is what makes it an original work of art with the hand of the artist upon it



- **07A_The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist – 1988 – Robert The Guerilla Girls**
- **POSTMODERN APPROPRIATION**

- Women working out of the feminist context who expand it to include race etc.
- Using text that speaks for itself
- Activist, interventionist type of work, showing up in costumes putting up posters
- Exposing the museum and gallery system
- Discontinued for awhile. Do a lot of work on the internet now,

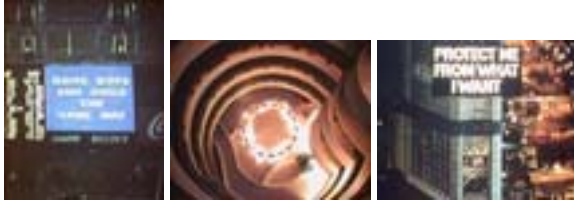


- **07B_The Guerilla Girls**



- **08_How Women Get Maximum Exposure – 1989 – The Guerilla Girls (NOT ON SHEET OR IN BOOK)**
- **POSTMODERN APPROPRIATION**

➤ Big billboard they put up near Metropolitan Museum in NY



09A,B,C_Truisms – 1982-90 –

• Jenny Holzer

• **POSTMODERN APPROPRIATION**

- Very interested in words, images and use of technology to transmit information
- First Image: in Candlestick park during ball game, she broadcast this message on the big screen
- Second Image: Installation at Guggenheim
- Third Image: Times Square sign
- Truisms often have to do with power, politics, corruption, class, gender, race as well as feminism
- She fits loosely with postmodern category – especially with reference to hybridity: using media and contexts that get into fields outside of art and mixing them together (art and words and commercial); words and images together comes out of conceptual art

NEO-EXPRESSIONISM – a return to expressionism

- **Reaction against Minimalism**
- **Bold gesture**
- **Heroic scale**
- **Mythic content**
- **Rebellious figuration**
- **Agitated, feeling-laden brushwork**
- **Exploiting taboo, primal, vulgar, sexual**
- **Daringly embrace metaphor, allegory, narrative**

German NeoExpressionist artists were born during or directly after WWII. Their imagery relates to German history and guilt/shame from Nazi legacy.



10_Cafe Deutschland I – 1977-78 – Jörg Immendorf

• **POSTMODERN NEO-EXPRESSIONISM**

- German artist lived in Berlin. After WWII Berlin became a divided city.
- Engages history deliberately – has been compared to Van Gogh's Night Cafe: perspective tilted and exaggerated. But also content has:
 - Upper right: govt official
 - Upper left: German imperial Eagle feathers and talons holding Swastika
 - Man in Center: the artist's self portrait
 - Hands thrust through "the wall" that divided E. and W. Berlin
 - Reflected on column: Brandenburg Gate (Checkpoint Charlie: ominous symbol of a divided Germany)

- Reflection of 2 selves: suggests a divided self (a theme that sometimes enter into these artists' works)
- Renewal of deliberate social, political & historical expressionism puts it very firmly in postmodernism



- **11 More Blondes – 1992 – George Baselitz**

- **POSTMODERN NEO-EXPRESSIONISM**

- Take-off on deKooning's women.
- Became an expressionist painter in mid 60s. Influential to younger artists
- She's painted upside down – dislodges and dislocates her in unsettling way, putting them in the realm of the uncanny. Reflects the same feeling of not being located and not belonging that generation German artists felt.
- Actually re-presenting Abstract Expressionism as a historical fact



- **12 Bunnies – 1966 – Sigmar Polke**

- **POSTMODERN NEO-EXPRESSIONISM**

- Could be called NEO-POP.
- Polke and Richter worked together for a time.
- Resembles Lichtenstein (Polke's inspiration)
- Polke appropriates images from popular culture and paints them. Engages Postmodernism in an odd way. The act of painting becomes incorporated into the meaning of the work of art itself. But also it's a painting about Playboy bunnies, how they're represented in the print media, imperfections of that representation, the printing process.



- **13 Hochstand – 1984 – Sigmar Polke**

- **POSTMODERN NEO-EXPRESSIONISM**

- Gone beyond appropriating and making an expressionistic painting out of something that isn't supposed to be expressionistic, like Pop Art.
- In this later series, it's all painted but LOOKS like collages, photo transfer prints, wallpaper etc.

- Lookout tower is oddly reminiscent of prison watchtowers which in German context unavoidably suggests concentration camps



- **14_Barn – 1984 – Gerhard Richter**
- **POSTMODERN artistic practice -- but not really NEO-EXPRESSIONISM**

- Much has been written about Gerhard Richter
- What characterizes his work are his multiple, totally unrelated styles (as evidenced by this piece and “Vase” below)
- Painted this from photograph: this helped image become more objective and removed subjectivity.
 - Opening the question of authenticity, originality



- **15_Vase – 1984 – Gerhard Richter**
- **POSTMODERN NEO-EXPRESSIONISM**

- Radically different approach to painting from “Barn”.
- This is *clearly* going back and attempting abstract expressionism to pursue brush stroke and color in liquid paint on canvas. No other explanation than that!



- **16_Departure from Egypt – 1984 – Anselm Kiefer**
- **POSTMODERN NEO-EXPRESSIONISM**

- Kiefer epitomizes the German NeoExpressionist
- Studied with and influenced by Joseph Beuys
 - Renewal and cathartic healing theme influenced him
- Born at the end of WWII. As young artist, experimented with some radical activities trying to understand the past he was born to but not actually a part of
 - He would pose and have himself photographed doing the Nazi salute (not a popular thing to do!)
- Huge canvass
- Used tar, dirt, sticks to resemble charred burnt earth to conjure images of German fields from aftermath of WWII
- Content has to do with a fascination with ancient traditions of ancient Christianity and Judaism.

- Aaron's rod from Bible



- **17_ The Breaking of the Vessels – 1990 – Anselm Kiefer**
- **POSTMODERN NEO-EXPRESSIONISM**

- Huge installation with multiple meanings
- Derived from an ancient creation story that comes from a strain of Judaism
- Universe created by a diety called Ainsoff. He squeezed out 8 emanations both good and evil held in glass vessels. Three broken in the process and released in the world.
- Glass broken all over floor a reference to these broken vessels but also a reference to 1938 “Cristalnacht,” the night after Nazis came to power and vandalized German towns and business and homes of Jews. This was the immediate precursor to the Holocaust.
- Books a common theme c/o
 - burning of books by Nazis but
 - also an ancient source of knowledge
- Books made of lead. Lead books suggest alchemy which is a transformative process and implies hope through knowledge.



- **18_ White Squad, El Salvador – 1983 – Leon Golub**
- **POSTMODERN NEO-EXPRESSIONISM**

- American Neoexpressionist.
- Many of his paintings are critical of U.S. govt, foreign policy, covert activities
- Series about political terrorist groups and other atrocities taking place in parts of the world that generally implied U.S. involvement
- Mercenary Figure shoving another figure into trunk, gun pointed at his head
- Huge unstretched canvas hung on wall without frames or stretchers
- Most had intense cadmium red background. Figures scraped or scratched out of it.
- Scenes of horrible cruelty for bad political reasons,
- painted with background similar to Rothko letting background stain into canvas, exploiting the evocative properties of his medium. Still exploiting what modernist abstract expressionists were doing but turning it to maximum potential by expressing specific social commentary.