

Lecture 5: De Stijl

Theo van Doesburg, Composition VIII (The cow)

(You still need to justify your work: abstraction anxiety)

Mondrian, still life with Gingerpot I → II → Composition No VII → Sea in starlight → (see present)

(a year apart; in person you see wicker-basket application on the painting)

⇒ painting as congeal thought: take them as serious compositions

1921: neo-plasticism: Mondrian has arrived to maturity

Kandinsky: even if they say it's abstract, figures / forms come out of the flatness of the picture plane

Mondrian wants to short-circuit that (lines are independent, finite, we're not sure of the continuity)

⇒ he doesn't want to read depth (even the lines, you don't know what line is above the other) Black & color - black lines

Look demands to flatness of picture plane

The Grid is exclusive to XXth century art

Krauss → way to articulate flatness + suspension of narrative (no more represent a scene)

→ quasi-scientific project: claim to objectivity due links to XIXth century theory of vision + spiritual dimension (contradiction ⇒ yearns to the spiritual)

→ motif of the open window in Romanticism (she says symbolism but talks about light)

Especially German landscape painting (Caspar Friedrich)

they moved away from painting scenes, recording & using landscapes to represent inner subjective ~~feeling~~ emotion

They find motifs / symbols as receptacles: - back figure (turned away) who becomes a surrogate figure you experience through

- open window: broader field, transference on the other side

⇒ with every grid, both science and the open window

(with proof in Mondrian's painting)

→ Grid is a symptom that keeps repeating / not progressing: psychological neurosis we can derive meaning in

Ziegert → interest in Grid in more broader sense. It's a technology w/ historical open (material + practices)

... origin in cloth (gridcloth)

→ what it does, how it functions: it is integral to modern imaging, governance, and to our inner subjective sense of ourselves

Burroughs famously said

"language is a virus" (enters to you, enters your mind, and infects your brain: you can't turn it off!)

→ Grid allows to schematize space (coordinates for objects, distances) you record positions, and even control them

→ Grid is not automatic / not immediate conscious experience but we've internalized automatically: Grid is another kind of infection.

One of the symptoms of that infection is Modernist painting

→ Modernity in the Grid

Lecture 5: Mass Production

I. futurism

→ immediate response to cubism in Italy (1800's, before it was a collection of provinces)
Modernizat° comes to Italy late, but fast: futurism is a response to that efflorescence of technology.

Marinetti; Fortunato Depero (+ apology of colonizing Libya)

Jules Marey, chronophotography (sequence of motions)

→ Futurist painting combines these 2 languages. The cubism's fragmentation is now read as suggestion of movement (Carrà, Severini, Boccioni): meant to suggest a heightened energy - dynamism in the newly technologized Italy

→ Also, Carrà's collage in Interventionism Ca

2 impulses:

* valorizat° of speed, tech, modernizat°

* desire to continue on western tradition = speeding motorboat (1923-24)
= unique form of continuity in space

new interpretations & position: being all in to modernization while withholding old tradit°
⇒ history suggests that this is the most dangerous

Marinetti (20's) wanted Futurism to be the official art of Mussolini's party

→ Orali, Before the parachute opens

what is fascism? attempt to organize newly proletarian masses while leaving intact leaving intact property relations (Walter Benjamin)

Process that reaches its apogee in war

II - World war 1

→ whole sense of confidence in political & science here implodes.

Tradition is in crisis

Benjamin writes in '36 sees the quest of how to organize the masses.

He sees the key problem as proletarianism (leave countryside & join industrial workforce as workers)

→ In Germany after WW1, it is wrecked (after war + Versailles Treaty)
National humiliation & resentment

Organize masses with socialism or fascism

Arendt writes looking back (1951) sees another issue: de-nationalization
(Russian, Ottoman empires are gone & release dominion of countries)
new national boundaries are drawn, creating minority populations in the millions

pol. sci

Nation-state

Nat. - people bound by
common set of customs
& beliefs

State - institut^{ns} of laws

Nationalization: belief that people
should self-rule in
autonomy

Liberal Democracy

political ideology based on
freedom & equality of all

democracy is not the rule of all, but the
rule of the demos (people)

(people assumes inclusion & exclusion)

[Is the state to uphold liberalism? (equality of all in the law?)

Or does it serve the demos? (the people, the nation)

There is a divide between ideals & needs of a nation

→ Minorities are created with no national belonging. Entre-2-guerres: treaty
for protectⁿ of minorities, stipulatⁿ of belonging, but they're routinely
disregarded because rarely enforces (they become beyond the pale of law)

... for both Proletarianisation & deNationalization

(Benjamin)

(Arendt)

→ Culture is present, & even essential

To have a national style of painting is a key to sovereignty

III - Return to order

→ Conscious return to older European classicism: Casorati & Oppi (1921)

Benjamin sees this return as very dangerous

because it kills creativity and genius, it allows factual material to be manipulated into fascism. All painting has connections in rituals

→ That return to classicism is also seen in Germany (Brecht's Readiness)
seemingly mechanical shell as body, more armor than flesh
+ aryan race is valorized

→ 1937 NAZI's "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich

we see deformations of the body, which was a part of modernist styles, are presented as indications of racial inferiority, a mental weakness

* Hitler's favorite

IV - Dada

- Munich, 1917 starts in Zürich (neutral, no mayhem)

Cabaret Voltaire (which was close to Lenin's apartment, btw)

- Benjamin on Dadaism: their strategy is montage "the cut", like cubist collage
it uses found piece of paper, but instead of still life dadaism montage retains the identity of the found materials (rather, it brings energy around which pictures are juxtaposed)

- Dadaist painting (see Kurt Schwitters): assemblage

they achieve an annihilation of the aura (see Jean Arp), then concentration and evaluation is impossible: they're created by chance, proposition is

"I didn't compose this (the laws of chance did)"

vs: Mallarmé "I express myself, you also have depth too so register and experience it for yourself", "experience one's own plenitude"

chance: short-fused that, because it has nothing to do with the author's depth
it is instead produced by chance (short-fused art)

)) cult value can be mobilized to the end of fascism; powerful forces: absorb/contemplate; not all painting is found

→ Marcel Duchamp was different stoppage to paint, letting chance to absent his presence from painting.