

Lecture 9: Broadway Boogie Woogie

P.I Avant-Garde and Kitsch

→ Influences were flooding into NY in the 1930s & 40s. Clement Greenberg's Avant-Garde & Kitsch

Avant-Garde: Girl before a mirror (Picasso)

Kitsch: Girl at the mirror (Rockwell)

Themes: a bourgeois society is unique from all prior societies because it is created an avant-garde (modernism, behaviorism)^{vs}. Avant-Garde in AHIS: counter-modernist mit (ex: Dada, Surrealism) as historic; then neo-Avant-Garde: repetition of these methods in post-war era.

Bourgeois society has created an art-garde, dedicated to progress of culture in a moment where it feels impossible (NOT an experiment)

The artist removes himself and focuses on the picture plane. Disinterest from politics
radical (still life, figure, ~~place~~ landscapes)

- gets specific about the medium they work with. Unique to avant-garde

- Kitsch: Hollywood movies, tap-dancing, comics, mass-produced (industrial) culture ("inauthentic" vs folk culture, organic)

⇒ pre-digested art. easy, legible, no thought required

Confronting the organization of the masses (fascism and socialism,

Benjamin vs Greenberg on the role of man-product

B: utopian possibilities in photo & film. Get away from cult value for exhibit value. collective self-portrait of yourself (no more myth)

G: this is papulum, pre-digested superficial thing that papers over the differences. He sees Kitsch conquering the world (wiping out "authentic" folk culture). Here "universal" means Kitsch; different mode of cultural exchange (we now associate with globalization, the McDonaldization of the world)

Process by which mature culture is swept up & taken away by Kitsch, even even extending to the USSR, Repin had never painted a battle scene BUT his work was circulated a lot (ex: Homecoming in an Unexpected visitor)

⇒ very legible storytelling

Max Papulum. Greenberg is articulating the relation between avant-garde & kitsch at a point where we're approaching a crisis.

• ... ~~Stalin~~ ~~Stalin~~

→ Profound disillusionment with the USSR; ~~very~~ ~~no longer~~ acknowledge that the USSR has been a totalitarian state: Floyd Sturpin, The Morning of our Motherland and ideal of collectivized industrial Russia.

⇒ What is the political function of art? How does culture play with the masses? Their role is not to be involved with politics; ~~include~~ ~~yourself~~ and keep culture moving to preserve in these new times (times are tumultuous, close to Van Gogh; point to the same conclusion: establishment of socialist society) They are the keepers of culture until socialist ('Keepers of the Flame')

→ Greenberg doesn't speak of a loss of premodern society; Greenberg thinks of the economic side as well. He talks about a social elite that remains attached by an "umbilical cord of gold". They're supported by the ruling class.

Part II - Victory Boogie Woogie

→ Purity is the world of minimizing external influence. This impulse is based on a rationale for primitivism (justify your interest in purity)

Then Greenberg gets more specific: Mondrian; acknowledge the flatness of the picture plane. Painting got rid of imitation (painting detaches itself from storytelling). Line has no reference for lines in nature; so line is losing its role as bounding shape & becomes a hind color between other colors. Techniques of painting new reflect its medium and get rid of anything extraneous to its medium. (1940)

→ Piet Mondrian: New York City (1942). (Ideas arrive in NY through culture and immigration) Mondrian introduces repetition of parallel identical lines (breakthrough move), // lines create parallelism, repetit° brings questions about figures and ground. He also introduces 'blips' of red that are not bounded by black lines. He's gotten rid of black lines entirely, and he uses color type in an original work. Braiding of strips, impossible to ascertain what part of the composition is in front. Uses impasto (thick brush) to try to articulate subtle differences of overlap & underlap. The illusory depth of perception (created by overlapping of lines) coincide with concrete, material depth: They're now brought close. Articulate the flatness of the picture plane. ~~superst~~ ~~your~~ ~~percept~~ of depth. (Mondrian doesn't work, too easy)

... → Atoms, units of color (independently), none of them bounding each other & aligned with the picture plane

→ Broadway Boogie Woogie (extending the red blps, primary colors, no blacks, blips of grey - Boogie Woogie is a type of 'jazz', you associate the grid of Broadway BUT no melody (no figure coming out of the ground).

Musical allusion - empathy - and here's the pivotal point: pattern of comport + short-fuse the figure coming out of ground

→ Last experiment with Victory Boogie-Woogie (unfinished, 1942-1944) introduces more blps, suspends motion of line reads as independent, autonomous units of varying proportions; Malevian remained unsatisfied

Part III - We'll always have Paris.

→ Looking towards European modernism (School of Paris)

Rosenberg: Paris represented the International of culture; it is not the capital of a nation, but of culture. Primary organisms for labourers have an affinity to communism → in Moscow (Moscow as political capital of the world)

Set of institutions that facilitate relations between different parts of the world

→ He argues that modernism exists without reference to any particular nation.

Modern art is used as an international language; and recognizing how the rise of nationalism (1930's) have suppressed that dream. His take on modern is different from Greenberg's:

G: purity is emphasized (orientalism, primitivism) as corroborating evidence.

He acknowledges it but discounts its importance

R: emphasizes heterogeneity of modern; it is the core of modern art (you can't rationalize it away). In that process, seeking out the un-eternal continuing tradition under the profound change of modernity.

Rosenberg would remove the color coding in the Barre chart.

He's expressing what a New Yorker sees in Paris (rich exchange, team-matched style of modernism). Over the 1940's, that energy begins to move towards New York City (artists start going / moving to NY).

... Many of the surrealists end up in NY (Breton, Masson by way of Havana).

They settle in Guggenheim's gallery Art of This Century

Max Ernst - Napoleon in the wilderness (1941): mechanical process of rubbing ink; then fills in the shapes automatically, generated

André Masson - Pegasus (1945)

grammar of script, chromatic language, floating planes that feel graspable (like writing on a flat tablet) organs of color scattered around

Roberto Matta, Years of Fear

build up colors on a composite with sponges (read landscapes?) $\Rightarrow$ inscapes ^(don't include the mind)

$\Rightarrow$ Image intuitively created by automatic (unconscious intention), then
adjusted in an intentional way // successive processes

$\rightarrow$ The presence of these surrealists has a marked impact on artists present in NY.

By that time, they're monuments: a number of these artists are no more dicties of composite; you now meet them (through Guggenheim). They can be drawn inspiration from, and they can be surpassed.

• Collective painting by Bazilio, Kamrowski & Pollock

• Anshu Gorki (1944), composite that has vague allusion to landscape, uses biomorphism - a profusion of vaguely organic shapes (Regot from Matta) & saturated palette (Kandinsky)

Part IV - Pollock's Picasso

$\rightarrow$ Both compelling because they both can draw from a mass variety of sources, they take & transform to a sufficient degree that their work becomes generative for their future generation (transform influence, and depart from their work)

$\rightarrow$ That genealogy of influence is big with Pollock:

• American Muralism (Hart Benton, in regional naturalism)

• Mosaic (CR 1048)

• Siquieros' experimental workshops; experiment with material, technique + leftist politics

• Really, closely at Picasso. Girl Before a Mirror (1932) is a direct allusion to that kind of patterning, read as fabric, incorporate of color suggest flat material. The painting also has a debt with surrealism. Expressive variant of synthetic cubism; play of mirror feels less hard, doubling of self, absolute fabric + doubling of identity.

→ Picasso in New York (1937) Guernica ; he painted in 5 weeks for the spanish pavilion
Why so quickly? immediate response to Germans bombing the Basque town (with the accord of Franco) as a test of power.

All in black and white (grey of newspaper ; mourning too; photographic reproduction)

Return to analytical cubism's reduced palette, but now arriving to us through war photography. We have forms & volumes broken up. It's not a play of conventions, these breaks are signs of atrocity, chaos, murder. Mixes in allegorical symbols (bull, etc...)

He gives it to Moma, for it to stay out of Spain until Franco is out.

Deployment of scale: mural size composition

→ Pollock's response: The Moon Woman (1942) - directly quoting Girl by 17th c.
suggestion of 2 figures on either side of the bisecting lines. Patches of seemingly flat color, but for Pollock less patterns & more script- automatic drawing or even hieroglyphs & totem currents ⇒ reference older forms of communication instead of mass production. The titles themselves; reference to an archetypal or mythical figure.

→ Painter and Model (1932) Picasso: analytic cubist scaffolding; but no longer a broken up grid, now curving lines that bulge out to the end of a frame. Absolute divide between the loops, & the planes of color (like a screen on top of color, totally independent). Line & color are completely removed: figures operate in the black lines only

Stenographic figure (1942) Pollock: marks that are written on top of the composition, even depth. If you disregard scribbles, you have 2 biomorphic forms on two sides of a table; very loose indication of a room. ⇒ independent scribbles, while the desk illustrates another way of reading.

→ The Su-Wolf (Pollock 1943) has no finality, and see totem faces running on top of the composition.

Part V - Abstract° and its dilemmas

→ Miró in *Hirondelle l'Amour et le Hunter*
Planes broken up with color

→ Remare Bearden, *Poor Hursty souls* (1942)

sensitive to the problems of this mode of image painting; he understands the role of Negro oppression. Reading culture plays a role in oppress.
(establishes stereotypes + pseudo-scientif.) creates a rationale of oppressa.

→ Emergence of black artists looking for pictorial modes, Jacob Lawrence paints the migration series. Merges of the roles of artist & historian.
How to represent a collective subject? You tell the story of the great migrat° to escape oppress° of the south, and pursuit of opportunity.
He's telling it in these small panels, and finds a pictorial image to represent them. Strategy of limited palette, reds & greens repeat throughout the series

Bearden: 1) Continue tradit°s of african art
2) Attempt a unique social & materialistic expression
3) Show political aspirations

Social energies in the 1930's, tied up with various forms of realism / figuration
A question: Abstract° or its loss/expuls° of representat°, and where does that leave politics & identity?