

Lecture 11: Postwar Europe

Part I: Histories

→ Jean Fautrier, *Head of a Hostage series* (1945)

Parry
made from oil on paper, high impasto (Haute-pâte), large relief, emphatically material, pressed down then over it would apply pigments (marbles) along the surface of the mound. He associates these paintings with a mass execution in the woods (origin story)

→ Same with *La Juive* (1943), *Sarah* (1942): ethnic identities, very suggestive of degraded human body (attack of the human form). Challenge to the fascist imagery of Readiness by Brecher (1933)

→ Oradour-Sur-Glane (1944) atrocities committed on all French citizens (no more an ambivalent position); not initially exposed. He connects to a number of tendencies associated with matter, degraded form

→ Connect to Jean Dubuffet - *Will to Power* (1946), *Woman with Pom-Pom* (1948)

⊗ *Art Brut*; emphasizes rawness of it; involved w/ graffiti, even suggests of the scatological (shit smeared into the wall).

Flat form, emphatically material. Remove figure between ground.

Triumph and Glory (1950) degradation of the human body or *Butcher's slab* (1950)

confusion of figure & flat; and underlying connotations of violence

⊗ *Art Informel*, George Mathieu (surrealist abstraction, gestural strokes) in *Hommage to Louis XVI*; the *Battle of Bouvines* (25 April 1954); performance of painting Fautrier: Kitch of "bad taste"; described as either evocations of torn-up bodies to metaphors of marshallism, cementing, make-up (use of pastel colors) that degrades painting with its association to cheap culture.

→ Lucio Fontana, *Spacial Concepts*, working with metallic paint on canvas

(+ see his ceramic & clay works); looked at as point of preference for return to ceramics
Gold used as cheap foil covering on a plastic canvas

Part II Atoms

→ In Italy, Alberto Burri (prisoner of war); he starts painting on burlap and finds it to be a convincing material, then after the war finds it to be a good metaphor (rough, degraded) and further degrades them with tears, holes, rips: degradation of painting: connects wartime, and with the damaged human body

Sachlotz and Gold (1953) can be read as a mode of saying that the values of gold have been reversed at the moment: no more rich/luxurious but now negative / kitsch connotation.

Assault on painting: Black Plastic (burning plastic) (1963)

→ Also in Italy: the nuclear movement

Enrico Baj (Manifesto Nucleare BNM): radioactive yellow field, with black mushroom cloud, covered with annotations (the new form of man are atomic): collapse of history into a major scientific myth BUT more ambivalent to technology than the futurists (dark & tragic universalism: we can all be destroyed by technology)
Baj, Dangelo, Colombo (Nuclear Composition) reads like gestural abstract: art informal, automatism of Georges Mathieu

→ Lucio Fontana, transnational figure (back & forth between Argentina & Italy)
Spatial Concept (1949) series: attack against the surface of the paper or the canvas. stabbing motions ("bucchi"), and later cuts ("tagli")
direct attack, physical act placed against the canvas. Breaking the illusion of the window, capacity to conjure depth by physical action
(VS Mondrian who does this in the convention of painting)

Much less medium-specific, however: he invokes Television in a manifesto to relate his art to the logic of manifesto; Manóu explains how that connect works (vast multi-part apparatus, not stable, TV signals are continuous flows)
Manóu argues that Fontana achieves the same with his art

→ Also, his engagement with mass culture