Lecture 17: J.P., L.K., J.C.

Part I

→ Mark Rothko on his painting: interested on conveying basic human emotions
if you're only by their color relationships, you're missing the point

// Art History: what was possible for an artist to do as an art historian?
how did individuals navigate their time?

⇒ Rothko came from a surrealist background, then the (access the unconscious) strategy became a claim to directly communicate dramatic emot's (ecstasy, doom, etc.)
Art as a direct conduit of feeling
+ He's articulating himself against Ben Shahn (1947: the violin player)
move away from conscious overt political statement

// Art Historian: Why do certain aesthetic gestures resonate at their time as they do?
Why did AbEx become the mvmt of postwar United States?
Why, of all artists, did Jackson Pollock end up in Times magazine (most important painter in US)
so what is it about him? He came to embody for Postwar
(volcanic creative male artist, and 2 years later that his painting serve as backdrop?)
When do things stop resonating?

→ Sixteen Americans show (in 1959): artist statement, a few reproduct's of their works.
Richard Lytle; Wally Hedrick (grand way of saying I fuck my canvas)
⇒ the people like Rothko, you've never heard of: they seem out-of-date.
Johns, Rauschenberg
⇒ act between art and life, disarticulate materials of painting, (non)likeness of painting. So why did they land in 1959? Their art resonates

In the picture: who's the one woman? Hedda Stern
studied w/ Ferand Leger, Alaska I represents a railway / roadway (speed + energy)

Nina Leen "The Irascibles" compare with CoBrA group (one person stands out)

What sort of subjectivity could inhabit AbEx? (Léja article)

→ Was there a rejection of positions as early in 1959? Why do these persist?

Example:

- Amy Sillman paints in a mix of figuration and gestural
- Mark Bradford did a show in dialogue with Clyfford Still (never sold his work on the market, donated his works to big institutions);

Stop distilling AbEx as only masculinist, it actually continues to be a resource
Recognize how fraught Rosenberg's essay tries to make abex masculine and [illegible]

→ Trace rethoric of AbEx to an early engagement w/ surrealism, and also primitivism.
In both these cases, the languages were revised; the appeal to totems, gestural works lost the inscrutability, they're instead direct access to emotions.
Surrealism: access the unconscious becomes access to emotion
Primitivism: incoming symbols & pictography become representat°s of a deep primal self (universal lgge)
How much of that claim is contingent to a white straight male subject:

→ Lee Krasner: late 30's, studies w/ Hans Hanfmann. (♀)
Blue Square, (Wagner) translate an img into a set of beliefs
EU modernism as a reservoir of materials you can draw on & deploy
In the moment of AbEx, communicat° of experience:
Still Life (1939): in a work's reception. The problem of artists' subjectivity (artistic identity vs gender identity?)
Wagner is not making any claim towards an essential subjectivity rather it's a function of external forces and how they do get internalised.
The problem of how art & biography get entangled, especially with people who aren't white straight males. Not only does LK go with her gender identity, but she has to deal with the name "Miss Jackson Pollock"
The faith that seems to be embedded in these works are lost by Krasner when she's married to Pollock. When she begins again, it's parallel
(1948) to Pollock + as a negation of drip paintings + (all over composit°)
No figurat° or landscapes, try to short force the figure. It's an accumulat° of fields of lines:

→ Pollock's are loose, gestural (whole body mvt)
(vs) Kramer's are minute, controlled and tight

*: Tries to limit the energy (Wagner article)

→ In dialog with Pollock: it's a cancellation, a negate of the expressive claims that subtend pollock's work.

P: controlled chaos

K: asserts a greater control of the canvas, a logic of the grid

→ P dies, and Kramer has period reinventions (1956)

more gestural work, read as a logic of the cubist grid scaffolding, but not small lines (Picasso) nor are they the scribble of stenography then.

It's a fully-embodied gesture that give them their overall structure

That paint operates independantly, a strong sense of gesture (eyes over capacity)

Three in Two: disarticulated body spread out over the canvas

The Seasons: we still have that degree of black scaffolding, lightly applied circles and half-curves, speak to fecundity & seasonal growth

different use of coloration

→ Kramer's work as series of transformations. One response to a set of circumstances. No intrinsic feminity in her work

→ Janet Sobel (1945 & 46), self-taught artist. Her method was to create a painting was the pour (using enamel-dries quickly)

→ Grace Hartigan paints in an idiom of Abex, retains the energies of her lower east side (urban life - patchwork of colors)

→ Pat Passlof

→ Louise Nevelson, trained in Europe, develops a departure from cubism, paints wood with uniform color: grid structure then inserts inside it found item & paints them all black (relief sculptures that stick out of the wall)

Part III

→ Jones article, in the work and legacy of John Cage: important counter post° to AbEx. A set of strategies and a disposition that provides for visual artists to bypass the hegemony of AbEx

→ Against this masculinist model, John Cage offered strategies like 4'33" (musical score, 3 diff. versions of musical score). Emptiness of cage as correlate to changing your percept° of soroundings: receiving subject rather than on the subject of the artist.

As response to Rauschenberg's white painting series

→ seemed to talk about the progression of modern (approaching flatness): this is the telos of modernism.
They are the support for dust and shadows. The experience of viewing a white painting is your experience of a viewer instead of how you'd see his painting

→ For drawing, it's not an empty paper but an erased de Kooning drawing (he asked de Kooning, who gave him an extremely worked-over drawing)

It's that emptiness that becomes ground for Rauschenberg (1955)
Bed, Rebus (dream imagery)

Rebus
→ Connect them to pictographic language
→ Found media imagery (embedded reproduction of known art pieces)
They're no more symbols, they're now symbols of culture

Bed → No painterly energy

In his Factum (I & II) (done in tandem) it's not original to copy it's copy to copy
In their duplication, he totally undoes the claim to authentic expression

Jones: accumulation of materials connects to Cage's prepared piano (mix of collage + refusal of using the piano in its normal fashion)

→ Jasper Johns, Flag: using a received image, paints on newspaper with hot wax (strokes dry immediately). The means of making are regenerated right on the canvas.