

**Contemporary Art 101: Post-modernism**  
**Lecture Notes**  
**Lecturer: Scott Stulen, Curator of Education**

Modernism

- Refers (in art historical terms) to the period from 1860 - late 1960's
- Marked by the introduction of the camera in widespread use

Modernism

- The camera allowed artists the freedom to explore new subjects
- Alternative to painting to record history

Modernism

- Painters (in particular) begin to capture contemporary life
- Breakdown of traditional support  
–church, state, wealthy patrons

Modernist Movements

*Impressionism*

**Claude Monet**

*Cubism*

**Pablo Picasso**

*Surrealism*

**Salvador Dali**

*Abstract Expressionism*

**Willem De Kooning**

High Modernism

- Modernism peaks with Abstract Expressionism
- Formalism promoted by **Clement Greenberg**

Characteristics of Modernism

- Formalism
- Narrow in practice and theory
- Each movement builds and improves on the previous
- Cult of the Avant-Garde and Originality (able to act outside of history)
- Artwork for sale and created for viewing in museums and galleries
- Belief in a Universal Truth

**Jackson Pollock**

*Autumn Rhythm 1949*

**Franz Kline**

**Mark Rothko**

## Postmodernism

- A reaction to Modernism
- Expansion of media
- Multi-cultural
- More “hybrid” than “pure”
- Loss of faith in upward progress
- Ambiguous rather than articulated
- Contextual and relative

## *Modernism vs. Postmodernism*

### Postmodernist Roots

- **Marcel Duchamp**
- *Fountain* 1917
- Signed R. Mutt
- First Readymade
- Conceptual: “declared as art”
- Art in the idea not the craft

### Transition Artists/Movements

- Pop Art breaks the division between popular culture and high art
- **Andy Warhol** uses Pop Culture as subject matter-similar to a readymade  
Repetition softens impact and meaning

### Influential Early Postmodern Artists

- **Joseph Bueys**
- German artist and mentor for following generations
- Conceptual and political artist
- *I Like America and America likes me* 1974 (performance)

### **Anselm Keifer**

- Post war German painter
- Deals with mythic themes with enormous textured canvases
- Painterly and political
- History and context

### Post-modernism

#### Loss of the Object

Non-salable often temporary works

- **Earthworks**
- **Robert Smithson** *Spiral Jetty* 1971
- **Richard Long** *Walking in a Line*

Earthworks continued...

- **Maya Lin**
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.
- Completed in 1982
- Earthwork as Public Monument

Earthworks/Installation

- **Christo and Jean Claude**
- *Wrapped Reichstag*  
1971-1995  
Also created the "Gates" in central park, NYC in 2004

*Earthworks*

- **John Baldessari**
- *CALIFORNIA*

**Andy Goldsworthy**

- Contemporary sculptor and earthwork artist
- 2003 Documentary *Rivers and Tides*

*Process and Performance Art*

- Starting with Duchamp and continuing through Fluxus
- **John Cage** Experimental Music, Dance Theater
  - *4'33"*

Performance

- **Laurie Anderson**  
*O'Superman* 1981 Sound, Video, Performance,
- **Karen Campbell**
  - *When I Close My Eyes* 2002

Performance

- **Yoko Ono's**  
*Cut Piece* 1964
- **Chris Burden's**  
*Shoot* 1971

Conceptual Art

- **Joseph Kosuth**  
1 & 3 Chairs
- Meaning is a product of culture
- Relativism

## **Martin Creed**

*Everything is going to be alright*

Painting as Conceptual Art

- **Komar and Melamid** People's Choice painting project
- Held public meetings and survey to determine the most and least wanted painting in over 30 different countries
  - America's Most Wanted*
  - America's Least Wanted*

Process and Installation art

- **Tom Friedman**
  - Sugar cube sculpture**
- **Ann Hamilton** Performance, Process, Installation
  - Suitability/positioned* 1984

Installation art

non-salable, site specific work

- **Chris Burden** *Samson and Medusa's Head*

Installation art

non-salable, site specific work

- **Robert Morris**
  - Steam Cloud*

Installation Art

immersive environment

- *Cookie Room PS 1* Queens, NYC

Installation art

- **Tadashi Kawamata**
  - The Shortcut Chairs* 1998

Immersive Installation

- **Olafur Elisson**
  - The mediated Motion* 2001

## **Maurizio Cattelan**

*Lift*

Installation and Video

- **Sanford Biggers and Jennifer Zackin**
- *A Small World...* 2002

#### Appropriation

- **Sherrie Levine**  
*After Walker Evans* 1981 “borrowing” images directly
- Putting the image into a new context alters meaning

#### Appropriation

- **Jeff Koons**  
*New Shelton Wet/Dry Triple Decker* 1981  
*Michael Jackson and Bubbles* 1988

#### Context

- **Mark Quinn**  
*Self-Portrait* 1995
- **Marcus Harvey**  
*Myra*

#### Sculpture

- **Robert Lazzarini** *Payphone* 2002
- **Rachel Whiteread** *House* 1993
- **Inigo Mangallo-Ovalle** *Cloud Prototype*

#### Painting

- **Gerhard Richter**
- Post-pop critic of painting
- 2 major styles of work
- Photo-realism
- A mocking, often beautiful style of abstraction
- Recently some work is a blending of the two

#### **Sigmar Polke**

- German post-war painter
- Major influence of post-modern painting
- Humor, appropriation, photography, collage
- Blending of historical and contemporary images
- Uses different non-traditional painting materials
- Many works change over time

#### Second Generation

##### post-modernism

- The generation of artists after the emergence of post-modernism
- A blend of post-modernism and modernism

**Jorge Pardo** at Dia NYC

**Liz Miller:**

*Failure of an Eloquent Defense 2004*

**Chris Larson:**

*The Rocketship*