

MIT 4.651 – ART SINCE 1940

LECTURE NOTES

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Week 1: INTRODUCTION TO THEMES OF THE COURSE

I. Modernism to Postmodernism

- A. Modernist claims (by mid-century) for transcendent, transnational, a-political meaning (artist is “unmarked,” usually straight, white, male)
- B. Post-modernist critique surfacing personal, political, ideological constructs (artist is often “marked” as gendered, raced, etc. – but this is *performative* more often than *essentialist*)

II. Prehistory – the 1930s

- A. Documentary photography (Federal Arts Project – FAP – in U.S.)
- B. Leftist modernism
  - 1) Social Realism (broad-based style, roots go back to French Revolution)
  - 2) Works Progress Administration in US (part of FAP)
  - 3) Communist Popular Front (favored Social Realism)

*versus*

- C. Right-wing modernism
  - 1) Regionalism
  - 2) The “Silo School”

III. Modernism mid-century

- A. Form
- vs. B. Content

IV. Postmodernism’s Answer: Form vs. Content is a false dichotomy

IMAGE LIST (the medium is painting, unless indicated otherwise)

Intro:

Mark Rothko Number 10 1952

Cindy Sherman Untitled #92 1981 (photograph)

Jackson Pollock No. 1, 1948

Rebecca Horn, Eine Kleine Malschule (The Little School of Painting) 1988 (kinetic sculptural installation)

Barney, Cremaster Series 1994-2002 (films, photographs, sculptures, drawings)

Santiago Sierra, 250cm line tattooed on six paid people, 1999 (ongoing performance piece)

the 1930s:

Dorothea Lange Migrant Mother 1936 (photograph)

Benton Cotton Pickers 1932

Picasso Guernica 1937

Matisse Liseuse... (Reader) 1939

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