

AH31010

CONTEMPORARY ART 2: POSTMODERNISM



Module Co-ordinator: John Harvey

Assessment

Examination (seen paper) = 50%

Essay (2,500 words) = 50% (Deadline: 15 December)

Aims

The module aims to:

- A. study British, European, and American art from the 1970s to 1990s;
- B. examine the hypothesis that western culture is undergoing a period of heightened consciousness expressed in terms of a revivalist phenomenon and a crisis in direction;
- C. deal with art as formal propositions, repositories of value, as the focus of critical writing;
- D. describe the major definitive characteristics and developments in recent art;
- E. encourage students to develop convictions regarding the debates surrounding art today;
- F. cultivate an ability and confidence to examine and compare ways in which art is discussed and written about;
- G. comprehend the current critical apparatus and criteria by which it is evaluated
- H. sharpen students powers of judgement.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module the student should be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge of the salient traits and evolution of international art during the last twenty years, and the multivalent nature and reflexivity of the art product within a cultural context (Aims: A,B,D)
2. analyse particular art works in order to show an informed awareness of their formal precedence and character, and significance (Aim: C)
3. articulate, assess, and substantiate (orally and in writing) personal opinions, as well as the views of authors and artists dealt with in the module, regarding the nature, issues, and problematics of recent art and its dissemination (Aims: C, F, G, H)
4. critique specific modes of textual and artefact-based discussion with a view to demonstrating an intelligent and critical appreciation of modes of contemporary art-discourse.(Aims: C, F, G, H)

Relation to Assessment

Outcomes 1 & 3 will be assessed through an essay that aims to assess a particular and in-depth comprehension of one aspect of the module curriculum;

Outcomes 2 & 4 will be examined through a seen paper that aims to assess a broader comprehension of curriculum content.

Description

The module is a study of current British, European, and American art from the late 1970s to the present. It proposes that, at the close of the twentieth century, western culture is experiencing a period of heightened historical consciousness. In the visual arts this is expressed in terms of a revival, revision, and commentary upon historical styles. This preoccupation with the past, it is suggested, is indicative either of a time of taking stock as a prelude to the emergence of a new period in art, or of a crisis of direction in contemporary art. The module deals with art as objects resulting from a technical, a stylistic, and an imaginative process, as repositories of value-systems or ideology, and as the subject of issue and debate. It aims to describe some of the definitive characteristics and developments of art today in order for you to understand their position and convictions in relation to it. You will also be examining and comparing ways in which art is discussed and written about in order to comprehend the current critical apparatus and criteria by which it is evaluated, and to sharpen your powers of judgement and debate.

Content

The curriculum will be drawn from the following themes:

RECENT FIGURATIVE PAINTING

1. Lecture: Beyond the Crisis in Late-Modernism: The New Spirit
2. Lecture: The Postmodern Condition: a Cultural Overview
3. Lecture: Revivalism and Contemporaneity: The New-Classicism
4. Seminar: New-Classicism: Distinguishing Traits
5. Lecture: Tradition and Innovation: British Realism from Sickert to Freud
6. Lecture: 'Neo-Mannerism': Figurative Expressionism

ART EDUCATION

7. Lecture: An Academic Question: Artistic Training at the Close of the Twentieth century.
8. Seminar: Designing a Curriculum for Today

ART-WRITING

9. Lecture: Writing about Contemporary Art: Preparing the Module Essay
10. Lecture: Beyond Criticism: The New Art History
11. Seminar: Francis Bacon: Composing a Rejoinder To Paul Johnson

ABSTRACTION

12. Lecture: The New-Modernism: Abstract Painting since 1970
13. Lecture: Beyond Abstraction: A Case Study
14. Lecture: 'Off the Wall': Neo-Minimalist and New-Conceptualist Sculpture
15. Lecture: Beyond Minimalism - The New Music

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

16. Lecture: 'Pop Goes the Easel' (Reprise): The 'Brit Art' Sensation
17. Seminar: Art or Painting?

18. Seminar: Case Study 1: The Art of Glen Lenny
19. Lecture/Seminar: Case Study 2: A Contemporary Artist talks about Their Work
20. Lecture: Beyond the Crisis in Postmodernism: Some Speculations

Transferable Skills

- Self-directed project work -- through the production of the Essay and Seen Paper Examination.
- IT and information handling -- you will be expected to word-process the Essay. Where appropriate
- Writing in an academic context -- Essay will be composed in accordance with academic conventions.
- Oral discussion and presentation -- These will be developed in the context of Seminars.
- Careers need awareness -- N/A.
- Self-management -- you will be expected to construct a realistic timetable for the completion of the Essay and preparation for the Seen Paper Examination.
- Group activity -- Seminar Discussion.

Bibliography

BOOKS

Edward Lucie-Smith (1985) *American Art Now* (Oxford: Phaidon).

Peter Fuller (1980) *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative)

Thomas Crow et al, (1987) *Endgame: Reference and Simulation in Recent Painting and Sculpture* (Boston: ICA).

Francis Francina and Charles Harrison (1984) *Modern Art and Modernism: Critical Anthology* - first published 1982 (London: The Open University/Harpers and Row).

Brandon P. Taylor, (1987) *Modernism, Post-Modernism, Realism: A Critical Perspective on Art* (Winchester School of Art Press)

Charles Jencks (1987) *Post-Modernism: The New Classicism in Art and Architecture* (London: Academy Editions)

Francis Francina, *Pollock and After* (1985) (London: Harper and Row).

Victor Burgin (1986) *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Post-Modernity* (London: Macmillan)

Edward Lucie-Smith et al, (1985) *The New British Painting* (Oxford: Phaidon)

Tony Godfrey (1986) *The New Image: Painting in the 1980s* (Oxford: Phaidon)

Corinne Robins (1984) *The Pluralist Era*, Icon Editions, (New York: Harper and Row).

Herschel B. Chipp (1968) *Theories of Modern Art* (Los Angeles/London: University of California Press).

JOURNALS

Artforum, Artscribe, Art Monthly, Block, Flash Art, Modern Painters.

ARTICLES

Andreas P. Papadakis (ed.), (1987) 'Abstract Art and the Rediscovery of the Spiritual', *Art and Design*, 3, nos. 5/6.

Andreas P. Papadakis (ed.), (1992) 'Contemporary Painting', *Art and Design*, 7, nos. 3/4.

Andreas P. Papadakis (ed.), (1988) 'The New Modernism: Deconstructionist Tendencies in Art', *Art and Design*, 3, nos. 3/4.

Andreas P. Papadakis (ed.), (1987) *The Post-Avant Garde: Painting in the Eighties*, *Art and Design*, 3, nos 7/8.

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