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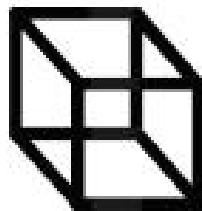






CLIFFS NOTES
on
ART SCHOOL RHETORIC

and You Have No Power, You Have No Power



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Cliffs Notes on Art School Rhetoric

and

“YOU HAVE NO POWER, YOU HAVE NO POWER”

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“You Have No Power, You Have No Power”





Marx, Karl. Capital 1867.

The industrially advanced countries become the standard by which other countries envision their futures. Therefore change is a slow process if at all, because other modes of operation become inconceivable. Ideals that are set up by capitalist society are no more than the material world filtered through the human mind. Marx explains commodity as something that satisfies a human want or need. Value of commodities can be defined through use-value, exchange-value, and human labor. Use-value is the potential of the object to be used or consumed. Exchange-value is the value expressed by one commodity for another; a valid exchange value is equal exchange. Commodities are the embodiment of human labor. Human labor influences value by establishing the average amount of human labor required to make a specific commodity. Marx simplifies all labor to simple labor, because of qualitative differences. Useful labor is always in proportion to productive power.

Because humans have a biological need to work there exists a use-value of commodities. Additionally there is value in the material make up of the commodity that affects the overall value of a commodity. Commodities values therefore reside in its physical state and as depositories of value.

The mythical character of a commodity is not for subsistence but for exchange. Because production is intended for exchange value, this becomes a precursor to its production. When a commodity is stripped of its use value in this way it is the fetishism of commodities. In this shift of intent of production, social hierarchies emerge. These hierarchies are established by historical social value systems. The final product of the circulation of commodities is money. There are two forms of circulation of commodities, which are C-M-C and M-C-M. These two circuits reflect a certain social status. C-M-C circuits ultimately end in the purchase of a commodity.

On the contrary, the M-C-M circuit purchases a commodity with the sole intention of selling it to gain capital, a round a bout way of exchanging money for more money. C-M-C satisfies the use value whereas the goal of M-C-M is exchange value. Surplus value is the profit that a seller stands to make in the M-C-M circuit. This circuit is controlled primarily by consumption. The M-C-M circuit is a generator of capital because it seeks to repeatedly put money back into circulation. Inside these circuits labor is exchanged for money as a means of survival by the laborer. It is in this exchange that labor becomes a commodity; it is extracted from its use value. Labor uses up these commodities and is therefore just a process of consumption. It is in this way that human beings become produced through the circulation of capital.





Burger, Peter. Theory of the Avant-Garde. Minneapolis: Univeristy of Minnesota Press, 1974.

In his 1974 text, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Burger rethinks and recontextualizes the early 20th century avant-garde's project to resist and expose normalizing powers of the institution of art. Ultimately, Burger's work debunks notions of the avant-garde as inherently and lastingly radical. Along the way, he destabilizes established definitions of art and their theories, positing that the very intelligibility or availability of art means and their theories are precariously contingent to the contexts of their production and reception. For example, though it purports to be separate, aesthetic autonomy is never really separate from the culture that produces it.

Burger's understanding of history demands a continual awareness of the unfolding of history. Through a string of dialectical arguments, Berger traces a web of social developments in and around specific modes of artistic production and reception that set the stage for the avant-gardiste project to sublimate art into the praxis of life.

Berger unpacks the conceptualization of art as "Art" as caught up in and also produced by the domination of bourgeois society from the onset of modernity. Formulated as autonomous aestheticism, art here is a specialized experience freed from social function. Additionally, art turns its attention on itself in "system-immanent" criticism. These two conditions of society and art brought about the possibility for recognition of a mode of art production and reception specific to its context to which the avant-garde responded. The gestures of resistance to artistic normativity though subsumed back into a normative, regulatory, though expanded redefinition of art.

This same "crystallization of subsystems" initially made possible the avant-garde response. As an "attempt to direct toward the practical the aesthetic experience that aestheticism developed" the avant-garde is never really posited as "new" (32). It in itself is dependent on the art institution for its intelligibility: both are caught up in each other in the same way that art and theory are caught up in themselves and their contexts.





Foster, Hal. "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?" in Recordings. The New Press, 1985.

By the same token, Hal Foster's "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde," critiques Burger's text while still regarding it as valuable. Utilizing Buchloh's critique, Foster's investigation also conceives of the relationship between the "original" and the "copy" as more complicated than Burger's formulation. Foster draws on models of theorists returning to and rereading both Marxist and Psychoanalytic texts. Here returning to an open model is not simply an assessment of what the text might mean. Instead, revisiting is a critical analysis of what these texts reveal about our normative discursive structures: their limits, conventions, and possibilities for intelligibility.

Parallel to this, Foster references post-war neo-avant-garde art and asks the questions, "Why do these returns occur? What is the relationship between moments of appearance and reappearance do they pose? And are these returns passive repetitions or "does the avant-garde act on the historical avant-garde in ways that we can only now appreciate?" (8). The answer lies in Foster's understanding of why we reread: again, not to look at the individual works for meaning, but to examine the works in their socio-historico-economic-geo-political (etc) context to understand how they operate in and are operated on by a dominant discursive structure. Even critical developments in art exist in relation to the dominant discourse, either by defining the institution (modernism) or/and by transforming that discourse. Both tactics "reposition art not only in relation to mundane space-time but to social practice as well" (10).

Burger's reductive positing of post-war avant-garde as merely neo here reduces all art after the first failed avant-garde intent to empty, meaningless reiterations of a once "true" and meaningful gesture—a reiteration that negates the "original." In contrast, Foster claims that perhaps the neo-avant-garde is the first time that the aims of the historical-avant-garde were comprehended. In his attempt to right the dialectic, he points out that though the historical avant-garde sought to destroy the institution of art, what they actually pointed to were the limits of convention in art as well as to articulate the conditions of what we understand as art (19). But, convention is not institution. Not until the second wave of neo-avant-garde did institutional critique actually occur. The historical avant-garde becomes for Foster discursive originators upon which neo-avant-garde expands as well as reveal structurally-similar to rereading a text described above.

Repetition is also discussed in terms of trauma and repression. For example, the first wave of neo-avant-garde had to happen because the historical avant-garde was institutionally repressed, made historical before its effects could even begin to manifest. Consequently, as Burger suggests, its reprise of the basic strategies of the historical avant-garde ultimately institutionalizes the latter. It was not until the late 1960s model of neo-avant-garde that a critique of this acculturation/accommodation process could occur. The so-called failure of the historical avant-garde to destroy the "false autonomy of bourgeois art" made available the possibility of institutional critique. (11).





Krauss, Rosalind F. The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,

Opening with a description of the posthumous casting of Rodin's "Gates of Hell," Rosalind Krauss examines conventional understandings of the relationship between unique and multiple modes of artistic production. Krauss claims that the context surrounding the casting of this previously unrealized work in recent years complicates that relationship by running the full spectrum between these two ends of a binary. Krauss adds that this reveals our limitations in understanding this relationship—in this model, a value system is assigned that posits unique as more desirable or valuable than that which has the potential for reproduction. Additionally, either these two notions cannot be thought independently, without calling the other into presence. These two notions together are what Krauss refers to as the "cult of originality" (155). The avant-garde is not separate from the discourse of originality: Krauss examines the ways in which the avant-garde purports to be original, but is in fact reissuing production strategies of other avant-gardes. She does this primarily through explicating the use of the grid in avant-gardiste works as well as through the dynamic of the picturesque. Both are attempts to organize representational and "natural" phenomena by isolating the aesthetic. Krauss attempts to unhinge our preconceived notions about originality and spontaneity by examining the processes of the impressionists.





Buchloh, Benjamin H.D. "The Primary Colors for the Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde"

According to Peter Burger in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, the main operations of the historical avant-garde were to criticize the autonomy of the art institution in order to "abolish the separation of the aesthetic from the real"—that is to insert the aesthetic into daily praxis (41). For Burger, the avant-garde was the moment when this challenge could claim authenticity; neo-avant-garde is both inauthentic and negates "genuinely" avant-garde intentions (42). Buchloh, in his text "Primary Colors for the Second Time," undertakes a project to reexamine Burger's argument, though valuable, as problematic in its claim to the historical avant-garde as an original "moment of irretrievable plenitude and truth" (42). The most problematic element of Burger's text is the positioning of an original and a copy or reiteration in the relationship between the historical and neo-avant-gardes, respectively. For Buchloh, this is not only reductive in terms of our conceptions of influence, imitation, and authenticity, but more importantly, an out-moded understanding of those ideas.

At its most basic, the positing of any of these terms in Burger's text is that it never makes a challenge to these basic conventions of understanding; that is, he posits the historical as authentic, without considering that description as reliant on the inauthentic, he criticizes the auratic/autonomous work, yet clearly relies on these works for defining his narrow scope of "avant-garde" (42).

In his examination of how we can potentially grasp this type of repetition without ascribing priority or influence; that is, to unhinge the copy from its original and understand the fluid temporal relationship between production and reception at any historical moment. For this, Buchloh looks to a Freudian descriptive model of repression and disavowal. In this model, neo-avant-garde uses a system of selection and disavowal as well as repression and "simple omission" (unpack this). Furthermore, for Buchloh, it is perhaps precisely the process of repetition that constitutes the specific historical "meaning" and "authenticity" of the art production of the neo-avant-garde. Even the historical avant-garde utilized repetition of already familiar modes of production.

Ultimately, Berger's work, for Buchloh does nothing to extract itself from the language of the discourse it criticizes— not only is the historical avant-garde equally as embedded in the same taken-for-granted-"truths" as modernism, but Berger's language is rooted firmly in the cannon-creating rhetoric of art-historical theory. In this sense, each aspect is already always a reiteration and it will take more than a simple cause-effect paradigm to explain it away.





Greenberg, Clement, "Modernist Painting," *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4*, John O'Brian, ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, 1961.

In his 1960 article, "Modernist Painting," Clement Greenberg defines the conditions under which Modernism and Modernist painting emerged, clarifying some ideas he first expressed in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch." Greenberg posits that by utilizing a "truer and purer" means of construction, while continuing to build upon the history of painting, Modernist painting validates its autonomous existence in the world. Modernist painting strives to defend itself against the devaluing influence of Enlightenment thinking, which regards art as mere entertainment. For Greenberg, the "essence" of Modernism is a self-reflexivity that hinges on utilizing that which is already physically present in a medium in order to discuss, criticize and justify itself.

In order to self-criticize and to maintain its validity, each genre must locate the elements exclusive to itself, not shared with any other medium. For modernist painting, these elements are 'flatness' and abstraction. This is a purer expression, for Greenberg, because it does not infringe on the three-dimensional territory of sculpture; it does not attempt to disguise its pictorial essence and it hones in on that which makes a painting a unique experience: flatness. In so doing, Modernist painting maintains its integrity through autonomy.

This autonomy to which Greenberg holds Modernist art hinges on a strict definition of 'painting' that does not arbitrarily set limits, but does so in order to ensure the experience of a painting as a painting. Illustrative content is merely a distraction. To clarify, abstraction is necessary because there will be nothing to distract the viewer from contemplating the picture for exactly what it is: a picture.

Modernist painting's intersections with modernist scientific methods of control does not mean that Modernist art is preoccupied with its own theories. Greenberg's Modernist painting comes out of an artist's unique 'personal' vision-- a vision concerned solely with achieving the truest or purest expression before any other considerations come into play. Because it is not motivated by any means other than the purely personal drive for artistic expression, Modernist painting is more sincere, trustworthy or valid in Greenberg's eyes.

Furthermore, Modernist art, though reactionary to Enlightenment modes of thinking, is not a break with it. Because it has a respect for tradition and is willing to learn from the mistakes of the past, Modernist art for Greenberg, is not purely reactionary in its attempts for newness. Rather, it follows builds on history and forges Greenberg's trajectory of the art discourse. It is justified in its existence.





Fried, Michael. "Art and Objecthood," in Art and Objecthood. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1997, 1967.

Michael Fried compares and evaluates two modes of mid-century art practice: minimalist (or literalist) and modernist. At the center of Fried's constructed war between the two modes is the relationship of art to its own sense of objecthood. For Fried, modernist works have defeated or suspended the issue of objecthood through self-reference, while literalist works become preoccupied with it.

This is a problem for Fried because this sense of objecthood-consciousness engenders "theatricality." This theatricality is here the antithesis to the very notion of "art" because it blurs the boundaries between what Fried insists on maintaining: specific disciplines of art as well as the separation between art and "the world."

Along these same lines, Fried champions work whose every meaning is imbued into the fabric of its being, present at every moment, complete at every moment.

This is what he understands as "presentness." Because "literalist" works are reliant on a viewer to create meaning and ask the viewer to reconsider meaning with every shift in context, Fried see the work as endlessly incomplete.

Minimalist objects threaten Fried's strict definitions of permitted uses and modes of art production. "Art and Objecthood" points to Fried's own anxieties about his clear investments in the creation of the art-historical narrative; namely the possibilities that manifest with the emergence of minimalism and the "pollution" of each Arts own purity. For Fried, the art is modernist art.





Smithson, Robert. "Letter of the Editor," in *Artforum*. October 1967. p. 4.

Rushing to the defense of Judd and Morris, Robert Smithson examines Michael Fried's argument against minimalism. A proponent of blurring the boundaries between art and life, Smithson attacks Fried's hotheaded authoritarian tone, and his use of dramatic religious rhetoric. He upbraids Fried for his willful ignorance, or outright denial of his own investments in the shaping of the art historical narrative. Pinpointing time as that which threatens Fried the most, Smithson claims that Fried is terrified by the notion of endlessness in art. Additionally, Smithson attacks Fried's use of 'conviction' as the qualifier of art, stating that possibilities arise, rather, from skepticism and critical inquiry.

Roth, Moira. "The Aesthetic of Indifference" *Artforum* 16 (November 1977): 46-53.

Moira Roth argues that the seemingly apolitical, silent midcentury work of Rauschenberg, Johns and Cage must be understood within their historical, political contexts. These works are inextricable from their cold war contexts and must be read as political statements in their very silence. It is a conscious decision on the part of the "cool intellectuals" to refrain from what are understood to be hotheaded emotional gestures aligned with macho abstract expressionism. The "aesthetic of indifference" is a physical manifestation of the alienation and paralyzation felt by these artists in the wake of McCarthy era hysteria. These sentiments become present in their apparent absence. These artists, according to Roth, take were influenced by the likes of Duchamp and reacted against Greenberg's avant-garde. Roth's three phases of aesthetic indifference are as follows: 1) cool and ironic (as in Duchamp and Rauschenberg) 2) Jasper Johns's early work 3) pop and minimalism (seen by Roth as a weakened phase).





Todorov, Tzvetan. "Theory of the Utterance," and "Intertextuality," in Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1995, 1981.

Todorov examines the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin that seek to describe the relationship between a variety of verbal communications: language, utterance, and sentences. For Bakhtin, there are three aspects of the utterance, the spatial/temporal context and the common horizon line of understanding between the speaker and the listener. The primary difference between a sentence and an utterance is that the former is autonomous, whereas the latter is socially contingent. This recognizes that the linguistic form still belongs not to the individual or to expression, but to the social realm itself: the linguistic belongs to the linguistic. There is a difference as well between language and discourse. Language is a signification made up of reiterative utterances that has no relation to value. Discourse can be understood thematically. It is unique (since it results from the context of the signification) and it is always evaluative. In discourse, the author, character, and reader are all necessary constituents of the utterance. Every utterance is intertextual—that is, it relates to the previous contexts inhabited by that utterance for the author, character and reader. To grasp this, Bakhtin attempted to establish a new discipline named "translinguistics" whose object is the utterance. This theoretical framework finds its departure point at the endpoint of linguistics.

Discourse is a three role drama, played outside the author. The relationship between speaker and listener is where the tone of an utterance is determined—neither within the speaker nor the listener. This mediated relationship is clearer in the formal delineation of utterances (i.e., the alternation of speakers) and the internal completion of the speaker's utterances by the listener. Discourse is not contact, and nor is it a direct reflection of its object. Rather, it organizes its object, as well as "transforms and resolves situations" (55). It is not purely formal or autonomous, but the utterance is in a state of continual (trans)formation. Discourse is unique because it is not merely a ready-made code, but rather because the process of transmission of those codes creates messages for the first time, continually producing the image of the author anew with each





Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author," in Image/Music/Text. New York: Hill and Wang. 1991, 1977.

For Barthes, the Author is a specifically modern figure, rooted in French Rationalism and individual faith of the Reformation. The Author is posited an originary, the writing as the trace or expression of an inner person. The image of literature in ordinary culture is fixated on this author as an individual-work and writer married for meaning. New criticism maintains the power of the Author through ceaseless interpretation, regardless of intent. However certain writers contributed to the divorce the work from the individual, including Mallarme, Valery, Proust, and the Surrealists with automatic writing.

Barthes uses a linguistic analytic tool that demonstrates enunciation as an empty process: performativity. Here, the utterance has no other content than the act of the utterance itself. In conventional temporality, the author exists prior to the work. Through this linguistic turn, a writer is brought into existence through the textual utterance. There is no direct relationship between the thought and the writing: the writing is all, the language is all, language itself is language's origin. If the space of written language is an amalgamation of signs that have already lost connection to the "thing," we are infinitely removed from expression. It is in this sense that Barthes compares subjectivity to being a "big dictionary."

Thus, the decipherment of texts for meaning is useless because though writing posits meaning, it refuses it on a structural level and the work of the critic rendered obsolete. This refusal of meaning for Barthes is a "truly revolutionary act" because it refuses the hypostasis of God, reason, science and law. Instead, the space of writing is refocused on the reader, not as individual, but as disentangler and placeholder of those multiple signs and links to other writing that make up any text.





Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969.

In light of lofty claims that the author is dead, Michel Foucault, in his 1969 text, "What is an Author," aims to reexamine the relationship between an author and a text. Similar to Roland Barthe's formulations, the author is never outside of the text, never precedes it. Foucault wonders whether the consequences of such "death" have really been unpacked. Though the concept seems useful to displace the privilege of a subjective "author," in reality these claims impede the possibility of actual change. Looking to criticism, if the point is not to examine the work through authorial intent and interiority, but to look at the structural mechanics of the work, a basic problem is established: What is a "work" if not something written by an author? And furthermore, those structuralist theories (écriture), through granting primordial, transcendent status to writing, serve to reinforce that which it claims to debunk: authorial precedence. The death of the author becomes an empty slogan.

Here, the name of the author is a sign under which certain writings may be organized, not a particular individual. This sign creates authorship and "works." This is named "author-function." The emergence of this subject was made possible through specific legal and economic developments around systems of ownership in the 19th century. The author is not a universal constant, and it exists now primarily to reinforce itself, always as a plurality of subject positions.

Through tracing this genealogy, Foucault locates the production of a certain type of author: the initiator of discursive practices. In contrast to the "author" of a novel whose work produces style, the initiator's work enables a different possibility, which seeks to examine applications opened up by the initiator's text. By resisting the establishment of norms, as in the development of fields of study, the discourse is open to rearticulation. Because subsequent writers in the discourse return again and again to the works organized under the sign of that 'originary' author, this formulation reinforces the relationship between an author and his or her works in a peculiar way. Thus, the writer-subject emerges as a complex and variable function of discourse.





Drucker, Johanna. "Subjectivity and Modernity" in Theorizing Modernism. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Johanna Drucker once again examines the fallacy of expression, this time with more steps and artists' works in between. Drucker simultaneously examines both artists together with theorists who use those works in order to destabilize authorship in both their and those artists' works. She traces a familiar history, the cannon of art from Picasso to Duchamp to Rauschenberg to Judd and the Specific Object to Warhol, Jasper Johns to Acconci, and finally to the good old stand-bys, Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince. Alongside these descriptions, Drucker traces those works of theorists from Berger, Schapiro, Barthes Benjamin and Foucault. All this to rearticulate the ways in which different formulations of "artist" and "viewer" in art change how we understand subject position. These artists and the theories that follow are pivotal instances in which the roles played by and between artist and viewer transformed. From the continual reinscription of the "self" of the artist onto the works to critique of authorship to reconstruction of the author, to the recession of the artist-figure to the assertion of the body of the viewer to the finality of the impossibility of originality, Drucker concludes once again that the task of the artist as a subject within the discursive field is to enunciate that self same extant field of image and language, that is, representation.



Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Illuminations. New York: Schocken, 1969.

During the early portion of the twentieth century film and photography were still new and radical forms of both production and reproduction. In his 1936 essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin utilizes the idea of these particular modes of mechanical reproduction as a vehicle for understanding the cultural imposition of a hegemonic constructed artistic discourse. Benjamin sets up a dialectic describing the ways in which the invention of photography and film had and have the potential to radically alter understandings of art's operation in the world.

From where the work of art's obvious authenticity comes is a question that begs asking. For Walter Benjamin, the authenticity of a work of art is established and maintained through its "aura," or assumed internal, inherent presence. Modes of mechanical reproduction unsettle the authenticity. Likewise, it destabilizes the authority as original from the art object. This also makes visible the very fact that the 'aura' of the work of art is a construction, with investments among bourgeois fascist leaders who raise up their 'pure' Futurist paintings at the expense of the bodies of the proletariat.

Benjamin understands the work that refuses its reproductive potential to transform into *l'art pour l'art*-- pure art. Film, more than art-historical instances such as Dada, more effectively destabilizes the dominant discourse of art and authorship because it is not a self-conscious effort to do so. Moreover, Dada's self-conscious effort to emphasize the uselessness of the contemplative object remained an art comment in an art dialogue in the art world. Contemplation when viewing a painting is decidedly different from contemplation of the movie. A viewer cannot enter individual contemplation before the movie frame (238). Because a frame is only available for an instant before it is replaced with another the viewer is constantly distracted from his or her attempts to ponder laboriously over any given image.

Benjamin's work ultimately makes intelligible the construction of this discursive structure and traces the effects that this power structure has on actual bodies in the world, particularly as they are intertwined with the early twentieth century conflict between fascism, democracy and communism. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," is a cry for revolution for the democratic uses and functions of art in the world.





Guy Debord: "Separation Perfected", in The Society of the Spectacle. Detroit: Black and Red Press, 1983.

In his 1968 text "The Society of the Spectacle," Guy Debord draws on Marx's theories of circulation and production to describe the condition of contemporary capitalist society. Defining contemporary life as the "accumulation of spectacles," he critically examines the way in which society conflates the circulated experience of autonomous images with "actual" experience or social activity. In other words, individuals do not participate with full-faculty in the experience of the world. Instead "reality" is distilled to a partial, mediated, contemplative experience of images or signs. News, propaganda, advertising, and entertainment form society's sense of reality that justifies the predominant goal of a society. Actual reality is informed by the spectacle in a symbiotic relationship. Diversity and contrast are the façade of the spectacle and asserts that all life is understood through appearance. Spectacle is accepted because it makes claims to be the only mode in which we can understand the world. It does this through the "monopolization of the realm of appearances". It is in this way that individuals are alienated from reality.

Thus, spectacle is the main product of society. Because it insists on its primary importance or dominance, vision diminishes the need to experience life through other senses. This changes society's experience of material life into mere speculation or contemplation. Philosophy has replaced religion as alienating thought and dreams of greener pastures. The spectacle forms the relationships and hierarchies of society. The economic system that produces the spectacle (ie, capitalism, industrial society) relies on division and separation, and ultimately its goal becomes the perpetuation of this very system of isolation through the production of commodity.





Jean Baudrillard "The Precession of Simulacra." In Simulation and Simulacra. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995, 1981.

Jean Baudrillard insists that the real is only as real as its image. He recalls the Borges tale in which a map so exact and so detailed is produced that it becomes indistinguishable from the territory it seeks to represent. The ideas he presents in *The Precession of Simulacra* (1984) rely on a more extreme sort of substitution; reality is replaced with its representation. In what he calls a hyperreal culture, models of the "real" continue to operate independently of the reality that originally produced it. Religion, medicine, and the army are "favored terrains of simulation." Signs no longer require a signifier or a signified—they are autonomous. The upshot of autonomous sign circulation is dire. Not just a free-floating representation of reality, these simulacra produce and maintain for society the knowledge that makes up its shared sense of reality. Though once rooted in a "reality," images now exist in and of and for themselves. Consequently, all that remains is the representation, which operates with sheer irreverence for and "irreferance" to any supposed reality.

The image circuit consists of four phases. First it is the reflection of reality. Second it disguises and distorts reality. Third it masks the void of a reality. Finally, it has no relation to a reality. It exists in itself and for itself. The more signs fail as reality the more intensely they try to maintain their existence as reality. Through simulation both the real and the simulated become artificial. Reality no longer exists because simulation has affected what we perceive as "real." For Baudrillard, this signals the beginning of the end, an outcome that can only be the death and destruction of truth.





Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism," in *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, 1991.

Postmodernism for Jameson is a historical or period model, not a stylistic model. The central question of Jameson's text is to understand how post-modernism caught up in the economic system named as late capitalism, a third stage of capitalism. Most postmodernisms manifest as specific reactions against the once radical now institutionalized, canonized forms of high-modernism. That is, for every high modernist form, there is a more plural postmodern form. For example, postmodernist substitute superficiality and flatness for the high modernist impulse to individual expression. In this supposed break with high-modernism, usually positioned in the late 1950s or early 1960s also involves an erosion of the distinction between high culture and mass, or popular culture. This erosion generally takes the form of the utilization of that those forms that were considered degraded within high modernism, i.e., commodity and kitsch.

Jameson aims to unpack the relationship between the cultural expression (post modernism) and the dominant economic model through the notions of pastiche and schizophrenia, as modes of space and time (respectively) that are characteristic of late capitalism. Pastiche can be understood as a sort of blank parody. Pastiche is "blank" because it does not require the establishment of a stylistic or linguistic norm to mock, as in modernism. This pastiche is random, and all "styles" of the past are reified and available for use, there is no such thing as "individual style" or the authentic, the entire material world is simulacra. The nostalgia mode, as a "aesthetic colonization, is a separating out of specific moments of "past-ness", as well as a way to understand the present that stands in for historical authenticity. This substitution points to a schizophrenic breakdown of time in which moments of time are not understood as coherent, but become separate and unrelated. Historical moments are also reified and can be plucked from time and magnified, resulting in a loss of reality, a loss of history.

These spatial and temporal models that characterize post-modernism imply an infinite heterogeneity and fragmentation, while simultaneously superficial. Jameson points to these characteristics as influencing the death of the subject, the end of expression, and the weakening of history. There has been a fundamental paradigm shift into a global, multinational capitalism that results in an incomprehensible network of power, which impacts the material world. In a decentered material world, with decentered subject positions, Jameson ultimately makes a call for a new political art that utilizes a strategy he calls cognitive mapping, a strategy that has the potential to locate, or manage space, temporality, and subject position in the economic system.





Foster, Hal. "The Expressive Fallacy," in Recordings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics. New York: New Press, 1983.

In his 1983 article, "The Expressive Fallacy," Hal Foster asks the questions, "If expressionism has been disavowed as a serious mode of artistic production, why and how is it taken up again and again?" After he unpacks how both abstract and German expressionism became available as a mode of artistic production, Foster examines the two ways he understands it to manifest in art of the 1980s—both conceptually, "as second degree image repertoires," and "ahistorically, in a way that betrays false consciousness" (59).

Expressionism makes two claims to which Foster responds. That it claims to exist as a direct and untranslated correlation to inner consciousness as well as posits the artist's "inner necessity" as originary together allow expressionism to deny its own cultural production. These are the claims that conceal that expressionism, far from getting outside of convention, is actually engendered by it: it exists primarily in relation to the coding of the "realist outer world," replacing that language with the "coded symbolist inner world." By comparing expressionist and classical conventions of representation, mark-making and primary means of production, Foster establishes that both coded periods or styles are based on substitution or exclusion. We can see then, that the claim to immediacy is an effect of two-fold mediation, not the unmediated correlation to subjective reality it purports to be. In the first instance, classical representation creates a linguistic code, and it is in relationship to such an established linguistic code that allows the strategies of expressionism appear to be in collusion with their claim to destroy "linguistic veils " that concealed or obscured reality itself.

It is through the lens of existentialism that the "binary polarity of classical banality in the history of metaphysics" reappears as abstract expressionism (61). Foster, through Nietzsche reroutes the abstract expressionist stake in the "inner necessity" of the artist to "express." For Nietzsche, this "inner necessity" (and sense of self for that matter) is based on linguistic reversal—it can only become intelligible after an individual has "found a language that the individual understands" (62). That is, language precedes even a sense of self. Thus, because the unconscious is structured as language, it is forever unavailable to us in its unmediated form: it is never "at our transparent disposal" (62).

The expressionist claim to immediacy comes out of the notion that one can escape the discursive structure to arrive at a "reality beyond representation." This claim, however, reveals that the necessary "I of expressionism" is not the "transcendental individual," but rather the subject who is alienated within





the dominant discursive structure. This mode of thinking privileges the primitive or natural, which becomes its own regulatory structure. Everything is left to what appears as subjective interpretation, when in actuality, the possibility of that subjective interpretation itself is possible only within the dominant discursive structure. Ultimately, Expressionism's denial of its own complicity with the historical and rhetorical serves to reinforce that linguistic structure, rather than destroy it.

Taking up the works of Holzer and Nadin, Sherman, Richard Prince, and Casebere. Foster examines works in which artists reflect critically upon the language of expressionism. For Foster, these artists reveal to us that attempts to express a sense of self is based largely on already established models, that this inner sense of self is actually part of the dominant discursive structure. Furthermore, Foster debunks certain truth-claims made by photographic representation, which results also in unhooking both the real from its referent as well as to destabilize "the relationship between the subject and representation and the subject and the real" (71).

Though expressionism in its first historical moment may have been a viable or hopeful mode of production, Foster speculates on why the expressionist impulse is renewed in the works of the neo-expressionists. He formulates that this is largely because this art discourse maintains that art is "an individual retreat, a last refuge of humanism" which allows that false sense of self to remain sovereign. This reactionary position, however, is a desperate attempt to infuse both art and artist with aura and authenticity which only attests to their decay. Though the same process of alienation and disintegration of the individual that enabled expressionism also enables neo-expressionism, in late-capitalism, hyper-investment in subjectivity ignores that "subjectivity is no more exempt from reification and fragmentation than objective reality" (75).

In conclusion, it is possible to understand neo-expressionism as just another delayed attempt to deny that reification of subjectivity. However, in that neo-expressionism enacts a certain suspension or loss of history, it only returns us once again to an emptied out mode of production, but this time as kitsch. Neo-expressionism takes up the loss of the historical, the real and the subject through investment in them as substance, whereas the work reveals these elements to be but signs in the expressionist language. By simply applying the characteristics that were established in the expressionist lexicon as authentic, the works of neo-expressionists reveal the very thing that the practitioners would deny—that authenticity is defeated.





Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in Dialectic of Enlightenment. New York: Continuum, 1976, 1944.

It is Horkheimer and Adorno's aim to expose the operations of what we conventionally imagine as "culture" in their 1944 text, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." Strikingly impenetrable, the key to understanding this article lies in its title. The point is to examine the culture industry in opposition to its more commonly used and misleading counterpart, "mass culture" as well as to investigate what is meant in the relationship between the terms "enlightenment" and "mass deception."

For this pair of Frankfurt School philosophers, the term "mass culture" is incorrect because it assumes that the mass, or the people, decide the culture. The case is quite the contrary: people in this formulation neither decide nor play an active role in the articulation of culture. Those who make up the masses in this society are in fact produced in much the same sense as the culture itself: subjects are merely a function of culture. As a total system in which everything, beginning with that which was once autonomous art, is made to be consumed, the now reified, limited and empty stylistic forms such as film, literature, music all enter into the culture industry only to create a retroactive "need" for them. Thus the commodities themselves reinforce the very system they created.

Let us not be deceived, though. This type of subject-production is not in the interests of "subjectivity" but rather, subservience. This total system serves the laws of capitalism and it exists to perpetuate and naturalize those ideologies. So naturalized has the circulation of commodity-culture (that is to say, all that we name as culture) become through various processes of reiteration, repetition and reproduction that it is the culture industry that society demands! Work and entertainment both have the same end: both function to keep capitalism going. This is the problem of standardization to which the authors point. Averages and standardization limit the possibilities of culture and "leisure" activities. "Choice" in this system amounts to little more than a decision between Britney or "Xtina," or Mary-Kate and Ashley.





This, for our authors is no laughing or "light" matter. It points to the notion that there is no more individual: no choice, only the semblance of choice, no individual experience, only the emotive reaction prescribed by the product under consumption. It is in this way that the culture industry produces its subjects as a pseudo-individual. In this society, subjects are formulated as employees or consumers: both are equally objects of the culture industry. Even resistance, especially resistance to this system are already calculated into it: resistance, like the subjects who rally for it, are all produced by the culture industry itself.

The problem runs even deeper though.

Adorno and Horkheimer's greatest despair seems to stem from the 'weight' or actuality of things, experiences, being lost or unaccounted for through reification. In this system, objects become their image, objects themselves become a plug for the idea of that object. No longer experiential, this process is similar to unhinging the signifier from the signified. When the world as we understand it is merely a stand-in image for itself, we are forever detached from truthful experience, and nothing is experienced as damage, trauma or of any serious import. In other words, with the image of democracy and freedom in held firmly in place by the deception of the culture industry, actually damaging Fascist power dynamics are the law of the land.





de Certeau, Michel. "Introduction, "Making Do," and "Spatial Stories," in The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

In this text, de Certeau attempts to make generative spaces possible in a system that conceals production on a local level by establishing a model that reduces its subjects to a one-to-one equivalent to the products they consume. That is, in the dominant discourse the meaning of consumption boils down only to the meaning of the product consumed, and the intentions attached to that product. He establishes a theoretical framework for the study of certain modes of operation made invisible by the dominant discursive structure: the practice of everyday life. . De Certeau's framework utilizes the following categories of analysis: usage/consumption, process/power involved in creativity, and formal structures of practice. Using the work of Foucault, de Certeau asks what tactics a subject is able to take when locked into the "grid of discipline." Ultimately, this theoretical framework is directed toward the investigation of "operational combinations" such as walking, dwelling, reading cooking, and shopping, etc, in order to demonstrate how the ways in which a subject, user or consumer in the system can actually be an agential producer though the ways in which they use or consume the culture. Consumption can be making.

Indicating that marginality is actually a heterogeneous majority, de Certeau turns to an examination of tactics and strategies. Here, tactics as the favored mode of operation are mish-mash unorganized and contingent, while strategies remain fixed, formalized, and rely on 'proper' nominalization. Tactics are utilized by those who are stripped of power, who must "make do" contextually in a system of strategies, understood here to be the mode of operation of the institution (science, economics, art). There is agency in consumption as a tactic. Emanating from the gaps in between the culture industry and the consumer of culture, this agency resists the formalized strategies of the few who produce official culture.





Bourriaud, Nicolas. Relational Aesthetics. Dijon: Les Presses du Reel, 2002, 1998.

Bourriaud contends that we live in the final stage of deBord's "society of the spectacle." We exist now as a society of extras in which a subject is reduced to "the condition of a consumer in time and space" (9). Parallel to this transformation, the 1990s the art world experienced a paradigm shift. More than a simple style shift, this type of work was named "relational." Freed from the shackles of yesterday's modernism, art and artists were no longer concerned with form and content, but instead emphasized exterior relationships as their very form. For this reason, this is, for Bourriaud, the art that utilizes the space of art to its fullest potential, that resists subsumption into the society of the spectacle and that actually subverts by modeling "micro-topias" or "possible universes" (31). Relational art is exemplified by the likes of Rirkrit Tiravanija, Liam Gillick, and Philippe Parreno.

This work relocates art from private property to a highly exclusive period of time to be lived through, and manifesting through tactics such as DIY, recycling, offering services, the invention of the everyday: it is not the object that is important (though there may exist one) but the human interaction that takes place as a result of that object or event. Bourriaud compares relational art with Marx's notion of the interstitial – "trading communities that elude the capitalist economic context by being removed from the law of profit"(16). In the same way, these types of works are to operate as a wrench in the mechanisms of late capitalism that challenge or resist passive viewing (ie, television, movies, the culture industry) and instead engage active production. This is, for Bourriaud, to be the art of the living which locates for us once again, our lost subject.





Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" October 110, Fall 2004, pp. 51-79.

In "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," Claire Bishop unpacks the curatorial model established by Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics*. She formulates that this model is founded on a "creative misreading of poststructuralism" in which the interpretation is not open ended, but rather, the work itself is willfully unstable. She criticizes the model for its ready assimilation into entertainment culture, a realm it purports to resist or subvert. For Bishop, this model is one that runs parallel to and is a clear product of the "experience economy" in which "goods and services are replaced with scripted and staged personal experiences" (52).

Focusing in on Palais de Tokyo, as well as Tiravanija and Gillick as paradigmatic of relational aesthetics, Bishop demonstrates how the model and its manifestations privilege intersubjective relations over detached opticality as a veil of democracy and use value. Tracing the argument to Benjamin and Barthes desire to activate the viewer, she cites a misnaming of literal interaction with the work of art in the place of "the activation of the viewer" as a major flaw in Bourriaud's claim. The work of these artists is not focused on reception, but on merely reproducing the dynamics of everyday social interaction without examination of what those interactions do and mean in this society.

Bishop asks what types of relationships are being produced, for whom, and why in these works of art. A major problem with Bourriaud's formulation is that the works purport to create micro-utopias—spaces without antagonism, and consequently, these works create totalizing relationships that "rest too comfortably within an idea of subjectivity as a whole and of community as togetherness," not democratic ones (67). Looking to Hirshhorn and Sierra as clearer better models of art that establish "relationships" but sustain tension among viewer, participant and context. Maintaining these social political tensions is key to the antagonism and subject-positioning Bishop sees necessary to a successful work of relational art.



Out of the way girls, boys only!!!

Citing both Nietzsche and Freud as the main influences on his own theories of influence, Bloom's goal is to focus on "intra-poetic relationships as parallels of family romance" (8). That is, to take up and revise the Freudian notion, of 'family romance' which "allowed children to safely express ambivalence and anger toward their parents, all the while encouraging them to develop independent identities necessary to becoming a healthy adults." Poetry continues to be made because poets understand their predecessors' works as continually incomplete-- an Oedipal-type relationship arises between the poet and the poetic tradition. It is because of this continual state of incompleteness, or "creative misreading" that poets make discursive space for their work. This is why the patrilineal history of poetry is the genealogy of poetic influence.

Bloom argues that new poems originate mainly from old poems; since the Enlightenment, the primary struggle of the young poet is against the old dinosaur masters. The young poet must "clear imaginative space" for himself through a creative misreading of the strong poets of the past (1). This misreading is termed poetic misprision. A continual comparison between the later poet and his predecessor, it is characterized by Bloom as anguish and melancholy. It is a neurotic anxiety—a sort of compulsion. Only strong poets can overcome this anxiety of influence; weaker ones become derivative flatterers, taking up forms of the past, turning these strategies to meaningless style. It is precisely for this reason that poetic misprision is an important field of study: it will help to free us from the absurd myths of literary pseudohistory of tautology and reduction (69). Instead, Bloom's study is in favor of antithetical criticism—the idea that there are only misinterpretations, which are generative spaces. That is, "the meaning of a poem can only be a poem, but another poem—a poem not itself" (70).

The strong poets "transform their blindness toward their precursors into the revisionary insights of their own work" (10). Dealing solely with the notion the influence of poets on later poets, Bloom traces six stages or revisionary moments of the strong poet's life cycle—he shows us how strong poets through revisionist misinterpretation make creative space for themselves. Ultimately, Bloom's study is one that demonstrates six modes or phases of a rather common condition: reader and producer simultaneously present in the same body and mind.

The six stages or revisionary movements through which the "strong poet" passes are as follow: Clinamen, Tessera, Kenosis, Daemonization, Askesis, and Apophrades.



Deleuze, Gilles & Felix Guattari. "Rhizome," in *a thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*." Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1987, 1980.

Another way of understanding the way we try to make sense of the world and the knowledges that bubble up: the rhizome operates as metaphor and structural paradigm. This time, we are after necessarily incomplete, yet always-whole multiplicity. This is not about signifying knowledge (old model) but about mapping knowledge.

To clarify: we tend to automatically order the world as a tree-binary and this structure has its despotic grip on our minds. There is so much that we cannot even begin to think under the law of this linear order. It determines not only what is important of that which came before, but also what the possibilities are for the discourse of the future. The possibilities are closing in on thought. This is a taproot system: univocal, centered, self-evident, and seemingly stable. It builds and re-affirms itself and its claim to reality.

Resistance to this system is also the result of binary logic: the radicle-system (purports to be radical, funny). The radicle is a false sense of multiplicity. Like Burroughs's cut-ups, it does not actually break with dualism (means-ends rationality of capitalism), but has its origins within that self-same linear unity. There is no clever trick to get us out of this. One cannot really resist from within and a system that oppresses in this way. The root and radicle model are damaging because of the centered power structures they encourage. We need another mode: the rhizome. Briefly, the characteristics of a rhizome are as follow:

1 & 2. Every point (of knowledge) is connected to every other point of knowledge (the collective assemblages of enunciation)

3. There is no language in and of itself, but knowledges around language that make it exist, made up of multiplicities on a flat, equal plane (the plane of consistency)

4. A signifying rupture negates priority, genealogy, thus making present in every node of knowledge every other node of knowledge.

5 & 6. Rhizomes are a map, not the tracing or image of a map. They construct what we name as reality, and do not claim to make a relationship between itself and some a priori "real"

Rhizomes are made up of plateaus, which always necessarily crop up in the middle. They do not even consider linear time, and remain fragmentary yet whole through multiplicity (not multiple, because that's just repetition of the 1), always unstable—a variable minus any unifying logic (n-1).





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