

VII. 8 April

Peter Bürger argues that autonomous art movements are not the same as the historical avant-garde.

Autonomous: bourgeois, art for art's sake, affirmative

Avant-garde: rooted in socialist tradition, response to WWI and Bolshevik revolution

What are goals of avant-garde?

- Criticize modernism
- Realign avant-garde art with the practice of social life
- Dada
- Disrupt common sense

What was being rejected?

- Formalism
- Aesthetic 'effect'
- Achievement of expression

Marcel Duchamp, Bottle Rack, 1914

- Attempt at radical rejection...but nonetheless it establishes the discourse of the avant-garde
- Critique of: conventional skills of representation
artistic authority
- Targets categories of 'significant form,' 'individual expression,' 'aesthetic response'

What does Bottle Rack tell us about art?

- There is no essence of art that distinguishes art object from any other object

What makes it 'art'?

- What we do with it... is what kind of language 'games' we play around it (discourse)
- Bottle Rack only has meaning within discourse of modern art.
- It enables and enacts this discourse

What is context of WWI?

- John Heartfield, Fathers and Sons Ten Years Later (1924)
- Continent descending into barbarism
- Artists saw euro 'civilization' as a sham... just exploitation
- Even saw art institutions as contaminated
- Polarization between capital/nationalists and communists economy in ruins
- Gap between rich and poor Heartfield, Adolf the Superman: Swallows God, Spews Junk 1932
- Clamp down on attempts at German socialist revolution (Luxemburg and Liebknecht assassinated)
- This failure of socialists would open path for fascism

How to resist?

- Cabaret Voltaire (Zurich)
- Tristan Tzara, roumanian: "is the aim of art to make money and cajole the nice, nice bourgeois?"
- Dada spread from Zürich to Paris and Berlin.
- One of the first demands of Berlin dada:
- The international revolutionary union of all creative and intellectual men and women on the basis of radical communism"

How do we see this in the Berlin dada fair?

What is technique?

- Selection, cutting, rearranging
- Like collage, like montage
- Greenberg calls these 'stunts of illustration'

How to compare to Eisenstein's montage?

- Art used as weapon, artist as partisan

How to compare to Picasso and Braque?

Surrealism

- Even more than dada and constructivism, surrealism concerned with urban life and media.
- Surrealism is 'third revolutionary avant-garde'--it sets out to reengage art with daily life

What do the chapters of Une Semaine de Bonté mean?

- Ernst made this during 3-week trip to Italy-- precisely when Hitler was taking power in Germany
- Images from 19th c. popular publications
- Seamless vision... appears like dream
- Goal: to transform the banal and everyday into dramas of one's 'most secret desires'
- Transform into marvelous

How do they look different from dada montages?

- Dada shows edge, clashing juxtapositions, not seamless--
dada cut with kitchen knife
- Dada is political satire

-Ernst is dream imagery