

Humanities Seminars Program

Fall 2014

Postmodern Art and Its Discontents

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This ten week course examines the issues, artists, and theories surrounding the rise of Postmodernism in the visual arts from 1970 into the twenty-first century. We will explore the emergence of pluralism in the visual arts against a backdrop of the rise of the global economy as we explore the “crisis” of postmodern culture, which critiques ideas of history, progress, personal and cultural identities, and embraces irony and parody, pastiche, nostalgia, mass or “low” culture, and multiculturalism.

In a chronological fashion, and framed by a discussion of mid-century artistic predecessors Abstract Expressionism, Pop, and Minimal Art, the class looks at the wide-ranging visual art practices that emerged in 1970s Conceptual Art, Performance, Feminist Art and identity politics, art activism and the Culture Wars, Appropriation Art, Neo-expressionism, Street Art, the Young British Artists, the Museum, and Festivalism.

Week 1: October 6

Contexts and Setting the Stage: What is Postmodernism
Abstract Expressionism

Week 2: October 13

Cold War, Neo-Dada, Pop Art

Week 3: October 20

Minimalism, Postminimalism, Earth Art

Week 4: October 27

Conceptual Art and Performance:
Chance, Happenings, Arte Povera, Fluxus

Week 5: November 3

Video and Performance

Week 6: November 10

Feminist Art and Identity Politics

Week 7: November 17

Street Art, Neo-Expressionism, Appropriation

Week 8: December 1

Art Activism and Culture Wars

Week 9: December 8

Young British Artists (YBAs)

Week 10: December 15

Festivalism and the Museum