

# Lecture 9

03/04/19

## Post Modernity & Visual Culture

“Postmodernism remains a difficult, slippery and for some, infuriating topic ... it is now so well established as a way of thinking about our time and our 'condition ' that it cannot be simply ignored.”

Rick Poyner (No More Rules)

- Roughly dates from 1980's to the present?
- describes the time we're living through... but still in the process of being defined?
- Seductive and fashionable
- Disputed – lack of consensus on its meaning of application

Post-Modernism

After modernism / Anti modernism/ hyper modernism

## Modernism

A sustained period of innovation in the arts – linked to changes in industrial practises

- Rationalism – human existence can be rationalist to find a truth of the human condition
- Scientific/industrial determinism > culture
  - Origin of the species
  - Newtonian physics

Key themes

- Crisis of representation
- Foregrounding of high culture
- Belief in grand narrative
- Hierarchy & Taste
  - History of art is determined by cultural elites that push trends

**The new typography [Jan Tschichold 1928]**

## Post – modernism

“The modernist laboratory is now vacant. It has become a period room in a museum, a historical space that we enter, look at, but are no longer be part of.” Robert Hughes [Shock of the new]

Modernism is over and is now static

- Post industrial age (post-Fordian economics)
- Computerization, is now the principle force of production

- Global markets
- Turbo capitalism v late/post capitalism

No grand or meta narrative

Historical fragmentation > post-modernity displaces and fragments meta narratives

“I define the post-modern as incredulity towards metanarratives.” **The Post Modern Condition [Jean-Francois Lyotard]**

“We have lost the ability to locate ourselves historically.” **[Madan Sarup]**

Gran narratives have been replaced by individual stories

Mini-narrative > personal take on culture

**Detournement** of modernist text

**My Bed** [Tracy Emin 1998]

## Anti-Modernist

"Reason has been shaped by a dishonest pursuit of certainty." [Jean-Francois Lyotard]

- Complex reaction to the failures of modernism > conflicts, the holocaust, ecological disasters
- Anti-foundational: rejection of rational truths, certainties, doctrines and unstable belief systems – ie there is no universal truth or philosophy
  - Contradictory attitudes to modern media
  - Feminism anti 'patriarchal' perspectives
  - No more rules – subversion of modernist ideal
  - Post-truth politics
    - Emotion > fact/expert opinion

**No more rule graphic design post modernism** [Rick Poynor]

**Raygun** [David Carson]

## Hyper Modernism

“in an amazing acceleration . . . postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in its nascent state, and this state is constant.” [Jean-Francois Lyotard 1979]

- An in complete project
- Cyclical > seen in relation to/in tandem with post modernity

In relation to new technologies

- Technological acceleration [determinism]

- Post-internet > cultural hybridity “A widening of ones cultural scope mixing local with global culture”
- Cyberculture & the ideological new

The cult of technology – the ‘ideological new’

Where do we find post modernity?

High culture	Low culture
Depth	Surface
High value	Low value
Spiritual	Commercial
Elitist	Popular
Long lasting	Transient
Serious	Gimmicky
Unique	Mass produced
Politically motivated	Politically influenced

**Untitled Film Still 21** [Cindy Sherman]

Barbara Kruger

**Benetton advertising** [Tibor Kalman 1990s]

Mutations of Public space

- Urban or fantasy architectural spaces
  - Global/cultural hybridity
  - Turbo-consumerism
  - Hyper Real
  - Nostalgia culture
- Theme Park > hyper-real (Immerging of Reality & Fiction)
  - Nostalgia culture

“The hyper-real ... the boundaries between the real and the simulated implode” [Jean Baudrillard]

**Visual Culture: PO-Mo features**

1. Merging of high & low cultural forms
2. Mutations in public space
3. Unstable image
  - The hyper real is a semiotic overload
  - The order off the simulacra
  - Bricolage
  - Parody & pastiche

- We can no longer trust images as true representations of reality
  - i. Derogation of the image, a continual copying of copys

Order of Simulacra

Stage 1

It is a reflection of basic reality

Stage 2

Masks & perverts' basic reality

Stage 3

Marks the absence of a basic reality

Stage 4

It bears no relation to any reality whatever

Bricolage

Parody -> referring to an original text to subvert the original

Pastiche -> images are presented without reality or meaning or argument, a false simulation

Intertextuality & Double coding -> reference to other cultural site/texts & appeal to different audience demographics

Hybridity and irony within filmic texts – combining film genre and history to rehash film

Retravisation/Nostalgia Culture -> reinterpreting the past in our own image

#### 4. Society of the spectacle

"The outcome had been devoured by the retro virus of history. And now that it is over, one can finally take account of its non-occurrence."

The Gulf War did not take place [Jean Baudrillard 1991]

Infotainment and media communication provide experience more intense and involving than scenes of 'banal' every day

**Post-modernism / Post-Structuralism/Post-Internet/post-post-modernity**