

...ISMs. An Introduction to Modern Art.

Part Two. From Abstract Expressionism to The Art of Nothing.

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Images 1- 13

What do we mean by Abs Ex? A moment in American painting from c1940 to c 1970.

Large scale canvases
violently non-representational,
strong use of colour,
either hyperactive or spaciouly meditative.

Big scale makes it seem very American and so reflecting a particular American self-confidence and success.

And it is usually seen as very urban, connected with New York. They were actually from different parts of America. Certainly not all NY. Still from California. Pollock from mid-West but moved to NY and his best and most famous work came when he moved out the city.

Only statement of their aims and purposes comes from Rothko in a letter to New York Times in 1943. ***“We favour the simple expression of the complex thought”***.

Influences and history

Abstract art of early 20th C (i.e. work of Malevich) and expressionist movement coming from Germany.

Two styles. **Action painting and colour field**. Either a Pollock person or a Rothko person.

Action painting.

“Action painting” - impulsive brushwork, and unstable or energetic composition, which seemed to express the state of consciousness held by the artist in the heat of creation.

Links with automatic drawing.

Pollock as supreme action painter.

Mural 1943. For Peggy Guggenheim. Painted in one day. 20ft x 8ft

Result of a vision of a “stampede of every animal in the American West, cows and horses and antelopes and buffaloes. Everything is charging across that goddamn surface”. But real sense is of freedom from form – abstraction.

‘At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act. ...What was to go on canvas was not a picture but an event’. (Harold Rosenberg).

Pictures of Pollock at work. apparent psychological freedom and physical engagement with materials. Painting **One: Number 31**. Hyperactive intricacies. These are his classic works created by pouring and dripping paint onto the canvas lying on the floor. Pollock calls it “energy and motion made visible”

Lee Krasner. A tighter, more organised style but still with Pollock’s energy. A feeling of intense activity. Generated by filling the whole canvas. Her style became looser and angrier after his death. **Gothic Landscape 1961**.

Blue Poles. make a decision to create straight lines here and to use particular colours but much of the painted canvas emerges from a series of chances. As such it represents how life is lived for most of us. A mixture of intention and chance. Pollock was once accused of painting chaos – he said there was no chaos. He reconciles order and chaos.

Painting is about the process – the energy, tensions and gestures that create the picture.

Susan Daltry. Waves. Cley Contemporary 2019

Initial idea was for two large scale 'waves' prints hanging back-to-back in the arches of the church. One blue inspired by the longshore drift and the beauty of the sea off Cley - last summer I was watching the waves and it felt like they were moving onwards only blinking at the shore.

And one red to represent the power of the waves to alter coastlines.

Colour Field Painting.

Rothko, Newman, Still

use of colours and colour tones close in value and intensity,
its radically simplified compositions,
no obvious focus of attention

very large formats

link with nature – landscape, rock formations, sea, sky. Transcendental.

Newman:

Wrote an essay “The Sublime is Now”. Art to be stripped to its essentials but dealing with emotions. Sublime, imposition of monumental on the viewer.

Abstraction conveying awesome meaning and feeling.

Newman’s use of narrow line dividing two blocks of the same or closely related colour. He called this lines “zips”. i.e. take apart or bring together the whole.

Onement 1. Vertical lines convey sense of humanness – some have seen them as the equivalent of Giacometti's stick thin figures. We relate to these lines in the images which are the human in the divine/sublime.

Vir Heroicus. "It's no different, really, from meeting another person. One has a reaction to the person physically. Also, there's a metaphysical thing, and if a meeting of people is meaningful, it affects both their lives."

Blurred edges of vertical lines give a sense of drama and ambiguity – colours bleeding into each other. i.e. not entirely geometric. But give a sense of life within the void of colour.

Vast fields of colour are also alive. These are not dead images. **Cathedra.** Shimmering blue like the sea but blue shading into green and purple and black. Religious elements – Newman. "Instead of making Cathedrals out of Christ, man or life, we are making them out of our own feelings".

We are meant to stand close to picture. The relationship is to the colour. Intensity and sublimity of colour. We are drawn into it because there is so little going on in terms of representation or narrative. This can either give comfort or a sense of alienation. Balance between awe and isolation in the face of sublime and vast nature.

For Newman art was a spiritual exercise. Art replacing or working alongside religion, spirituality.

Clyfford Still. Again, sense of sublime and awe in face of nature. Like Rothko and Newman, for Still, colour as an ultimate emotional vehicle.

An outsider in Ab Ex. Brought up on West coast and Canada in farming communities. Obsessed with power of huge Canadian landscapes and relationship of individual to it. As his work progresses,

July 1945 R. Line as lightening. Relationship to Newman's vertical line. Can we talk about the line as the subject of the painting? Line as foreground and larger blocks of colour as background.

Becomes more abstract and colour block merge and bleed into each other. 'life and death merging in fearful union'.

light and darkness.

paint surface as a hostile terrain reflecting the hostility of the landscape.

his belief that art must be a moral and aesthetic power in an age of conformity.

Titles - system of numbers, years and letters. He thought that titles manipulated the viewer's experience. "The pictures are to be without titles of any kind. I want nothing to interfere with or assist the spectator. Before them I want the viewers to be on their own and if they find in them an imagery unkind or unpleasant or evil, let them look to the state of their own soul". Ab Ex painting as a very direct experience.

Rothko

Communicating his ideas about the condition of mankind

‘The progression of a painter’s work...will be toward clarity; toward the elimination of all obstacles between the painter and the idea, and between the idea and the observer.’

“I’m interested only in expressing basic human emotions — tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on — and the fact that lots of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I *communicate* those basic human emotions... The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them”.

His painting should fill an entire room. Not shown with other artists or individually. Indirect light.

Early paintings were more representational but went to work with Clyfford Still in California in 1947 who influenced his large scale abstract style. amorphous masses of colour that spread across the entire surface of the canvas, (**Untitled 1948**)

He then starts to simplify the form and structure.

Rectangles against a background colour. He thought of his rectangular forms as actual objects positioned over the field of background colour. Floating in space. As a result of the shimmering and flickering light and the pulsating colours that project and recede, Rothko’s large canvases produce an impression of constant motion. The intense colour and bold form merge into a single unified image whose impact transcends the sum of its individual components.

Brown and grey. Conscious decision to move away from colour. Smaller scale, on paper.

Religious, transcendental, metaphysical. Aesthetic theology. Rothko Chapel.

Tragic and timeless

If there is anything uniting these artists it is a shared experience. All figures were born between 1903 and 1912. Lived through WW1, Great Depression, Spanish Civil War, rise of totalitarianism, WWII and Holocaust. Some were immigrants to the USA: Rothko and de Kooning. Rothko in particular never felt fully comfortable in the US – committed suicide. Pollock suffered from depression and alcoholism and killed himself in a car crash.

Newman also from an immigrant Jewish family. “the feeling I had at the time around 1941 was that the world was coming to an end.”

This is art of its time. It is a response to what TS Eliot called “the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history”.

Ab Ex art has this quality of reducing art to essentials and simple archetypes, line, colour, form. Gives it a primeval mythic quality. Ab ex seems to express something at a very deep almost unconscious level.

Concrete art

Images 14-18

If Ab Ex is an art of emotion we should see it as reaction against a cold, cerebral form of art which began in the 1930s.

Term coined by Theo van Doesburg in 1930.

Specific type of non-figurative painting and sculpture.

Concrete art was itself a reaction against the mystical, religious and philosophical explanations of and justification for formless abstract painting of Malevich and Mondrian.

1930 manifesto, *The Basis of Concrete Art*.

1. We want to exclude lyricism, drama, symbolism, and so on.
2. The painting must be entirely built up with surfaces and colours. A pictorial element does not have any meaning beyond "itself"; as a consequence, **a painting does not have any meaning other than "itself"**.
3. The construction of a painting, as well as that of its elements, must be simple and visually controllable.
4. The painting technique must be mechanic, i.e., exact, anti-impressionistic.
5. An effort toward absolute clarity is mandatory."

Making art seem more mechanical, more machine-made (especially in sculpting), rather than created by human touch. More often than not, the pieces possessed superb finish which later on inspired critics to call them "**cold abstraction**".

Very influential for minimalism and Op Art which came later.

"Concrete" artists did not see themselves as rejecting traditional art but as getting at the essence of art.

They thought that the mathematical proportions expressed in abstract form are to be identified in various art forms over millennia.

"the elimination of representational images and the overt use of pure geometry do not imply a radical and definitive rejection of the great art of the past, but rather a reassertion of its eternal values stripped of their historical and social disguises."

"Concrete" artists claimed that traditional, figurative, representational art "dampens the cognitive energy of man". i.e. it creates an illusion of three-dimensions on the two-dimensional surface of the canvas.

Instead, they proposed that people should be surrounded by real things, not illusions. Concrete art was the path forward, since it “accustoms man to a direct relationship with things and not with the fiction of things”.

A canvas is a two-dimensional object so it should show objects as two dimensional. So this sort of art is, in fact, much more realistic than traditional art.

Composition of Circles and Overlapping Angles, 1930.

Van Doesburg: ‘nothing is more real than a line, a colour, a surface’.

Disputes and disagreements between the artists:

Some supported only ‘pure’ abstraction and would accept no painting containing any suggestion of an outside reference.

Debates over how abstract art could best serve society in the face of political events. The view that commitment to abstract art represented independence and opposition to totalitarianism. Can art make a political difference?

On van Doesburg’s death in 1931 Concrete art was taken up and elaborated by **Max Bill**.

Enrolled in the Bauhaus, Dessau, in 1927.

The aim of concrete art is to create “in a visible and tangible form things which did not previously exist”.

Much, although not all, of this work took geometric form.

Variations. 1938.

He published the series, asserting in his introduction to the *Variations* that "concrete art holds an infinite number of possibilities", even though "such constructions are developed only on the basis of their given conditions and without any arbitrary attempt to modify them."

i.e. They are what they are because of their intrinsic shape and colour.

Concrete art is an art that expresses nothing more than the logic of its own creation

Later Max Bill used his interest and skill in engineering to create a commercial design based art.

Endless Ribbon. Based on the Mobius Strip. Influence of science and engineering.

Continuity (1983–6), on the square in front of the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt am Main, he reverts to the theme of *Endless Ribbon*. There are two strips of granite that as a result of several turns become entwined with one another.

Criticism of concrete art.

Cold, rigid and self-centred, failed to communicate with the audience and is more interesting as an exercise in itself, a sort of a monologue.

Post-painterly abstraction

Images 19-24

Reaction against Ab Ex. More purely abstract than Ab Ex and other forms of abstract art.

Rejected the inwardness and mysticism of abstract expressionism and of any residual references to the external world,

Explored new approaches to composition.

Created a purely factual kind of art which - functioned in terms of the basic elements of the medium itself; form, colour, texture, scale, composition and so on.

Purely optical colour, often using acrylics.

Avoided any sense of brushwork. Tried to make paintings look as though they were not painted.

The name came from an exhibition in 1964 organised by Clement Greenberg He titled it *Post-Painterly Abstraction*.

Greenberg said that there was a need for an abstract art, with no meaning, and removed from reality. Getting further away from horrors of 20th century and the need for art to reflect that. Desire for an art that represents nothing and says nothing about anything except art.

It is about how the artist uses paint. It uses the essential idea of concrete art but applies it only to painting.

What does post painterly mean?

Distinction between painterly and linear art (Heinrich Wölfflin). Painterly means loose brushwork, we can see where the artist has placed and moved his brush. Free and loose sense of colour and shape and form. We can see and appreciate the work of the artist.

Greenberg thought that the most recent painting, was moving towards a greater linear clarity and a physical openness of design.

2 distinct types of PPA.

Hard-edge painting

Abstract paintings composed of simple geometric or organic forms executed in broad, flat colours and delineated by precise, sharp edges.

Works composed of a small number of large, flat forms, generally avoiding the use of pictorial depth.

Economy of form, fullness of colour, clear lines, neatness of surface

Rejection of the tactile application of paint in favour of staining the canvas with diluted paint. Anonymous style of execution.

Kenneth Noland

1956, Noland moved away from the Abstract Expressionist principle of 'all-over' composition, favouring instead a clear centre.

The circle, usually set centrally on a square canvas was an important element in his work. The sharp delineation of concentric rings of different colours.

Simple patterns. Circles, chevrons, stripes. Nothing inherently interesting about the shape (form). They were a platform for colour and the relationship between colour.

"I was trying to neutralise the shape, the layout, the composition in order to get at the colour. I wanted to make colour the generating force".

How does this differ from Fauvism (Andre Derain's *Charing Cross Bridge*)? Fauvism still has focus on representation and the realistic image. Abstract painters say that his dilutes our concentration on the colour because we see the image first before the colour. Post painterly abstraction makes us think about the colour and nothing else.

Albers. Homage to the Square. four superimposed squares of oil colour applied with a palette knife directly from the tube onto a white, primed panel.

Optical effects—shimmering colour contrasts and the illusion of receding and advancing plane.

Challenge the viewer's sense of visual reception. Albers tried to teach the mechanics of vision. i.e. it is about how we see. Just about colour. How colour changes depending on other colours we place them next to.

Washington Color Painters.

Helen Frankenthaler.

Abstract expressionist - influenced by Jackson Pollock.

Painted on unprimed canvases on the floor, allowed thinner pigments to soak directly into the canvas. This created a closer relationship between image and surface. Can see the canvas being visible within the painted image.

Visibility of the canvas beneath the painted surface negated the sense of illusion and depth. Draws our attention to both the material and the nature of the medium.

Morris Louis - pour extremely thin acrylic paints directly on to unprimed canvases to produce 'stains' of overlapping, translucent colours.

"Soak-stain" technique. **Collapsing colour into canvas** by manipulating thinned acrylic washes into the canvas.

Sarabande. Veil paintings - overlapping, superimposed layers of transparent colour poured onto and stained into canvas.

Pure opticality held primacy over content and form.

The *Veils* are not paintings “of” anything. Allowed Louis to concentrate entirely on the visual. Using paint as a dye that penetrates the fibres of the canvas rather than as a topical layer brushed over it. Makes figure and ground one and the same, uniting them through colour. He is simply creating coloured canvases.

Hang upside down or not? Does it matter? Louis thought not.

Early 1960s. Later produced canvases with stripes and rivulets of more opaque, intense colour.

Make pleats on canvas and run paint down it. No brush, no intention, no human movement in the paint. Art that is impersonal - no character of the painter because there is no painter. Perfectly flat figure on a perfectly flat ground.

Offer a pure, uncluttered hedonism to the eye. But that is all they offer.

Minimalism

Images 25-32

Another reaction against Ab Ex. But using all media, not just painting.

Term used in the 20th century, in particular from the 1960s, to describe a style characterized by an **impersonal austerity, plain geometric configurations, rational and mathematical industrially processed materials. Removal of technical virtuosity or skill.**

'Minimalism derives its name from the minimum of operating means. Minimalist painting is purely realistic—the subject being the painting itself.'

Non-hierarchic compositions - no part is given more emphasis than any other.

Frank Stella.

What you see is what you see. There is no subject matter. We cannot ask the question: "what is this a picture of?"

Also, we cannot really ask the question: "what does this picture or sculpture mean?" It simply is what it is. Rectangular shape of the canvas reflects and determines the image.

Compare this with the minimal art of Suprematism (Malevich's Black Square). This aims at a spiritual, intellectual meaning. *Minimalism* has no such meaning or purpose.

Carl Andre. Influenced by Stella's - Black Paintings.

Worked on railways.

"The railway completely tore me away from the pretensions of art, even my own, and I was back on the horizontal lines of steel and rust and great masses of coal and material, timber".

Ordered structure of railways and the packing of freight on the trains. As each unit is replaceable by another, all units are equally important.

Ordinary, everyday, industrial materials. Not standard art objects. Important for late 20th century art especially sculpture.

Sculptures were made to be placed directly on the floor and were constructed out of common building materials. Aluminium, lead, and magnesium plates and building bricks, each sculpture comprising one material only, as in *144 Aluminium Squares*.

To be looked at and walked on, so that the material difference between the floor and the sculpture could be physically experienced.

Structure of the whole depends on the shape and size of the individual elements.

Does this sort of work have a classical purity and structure to it?

The configuration of a work was to a great extent self-determined and logical.

The structure of the sculpture would be immediately apparent. Retain the identity of each of his building materials - again, what you see is what you see. The artist's hand is not visibly apparent. No sense of artistic skill.

Equivalent VIII. Bricks. Structure of the whole matches the structure of the individual brick.

Is this just a pile of bricks? Is this the same as a pile of bricks in a builders' warehouse? What makes it different? Gallery or museum context. Consider in more detail with Duchamp and institutional theory.

The surrounding space (gallery) serves as a frame. That context is what makes it a work of art or gives it meaning as art.

Geometric forms and use of industrial materials or such modern technology as the fluorescent electric lights that appeared in Flavin's works. Minimalists also often created **simple modular and serial arrangements of forms**

Dan Flavin. Use of ordinary materials with a practical, industrial quality. Influence of constructivism.

Donald Judd.

Abandoned painting as illusionistic. Thought it was not truthful because it was an illusion.

Started making sculptures, or **objects**, made from materials such as aluminium, perspex, and wood. All about the physical presence of the object itself.

This reductive approach led him increasingly towards what he later referred to as '**specific objects**'. **A new type of object. Such objects avoided the categories of painting and sculpture because they were a break from illusionism.**

Industrial materials, geometric forms, and repetition.

These were made by other people or industrial makers.

Made pieces in metals such as steel, aluminium, or galvanized iron, which he often painted or combined with Plexiglas - use of colour and light.

Is this more industrial design than art?

Repetition or mathematical progression. The principle of 'one thing after another'.

Singleness of each object, can be perceived as a whole. This is important for minimalism.

Robert Morris. 'Notes on Sculpture'

Repudiated Cubist principles. '**The sensuous object has had to be rejected**'.

In its place **Morris proposed a more compact, 'unitary' art form. He was especially drawn to simple, regular and irregular polyhedrons.**

form and shape could be grasped intuitively. Do not have to think about and analyse them to understand and appreciate them.

Untitled 1965. Rigorously pared down geometric forms. Arranged these into 'situations' where 'one is aware of one's own body at the same time that one is aware of the piece'. As the viewer walks around the four cubes, their mirrored surfaces produce complex and shifting interactions between gallery and spectator.

Morris said that his work was about detaching art from the "craft of tedious art production".

Debates about whether this is art.

Did artists think it was art? Flavin: "symbolising is dwindling. We are pressing downward towards no art".

Does art have to represent something?

Does it have to show an emotion, feeling or idea?

Does it have to be a demonstration of skill?

A demonstration of work? (See Leonardo and Last Supper).

It seeks to challenge notions of art. It is work that pushes forward debates on what art or the art object might be. Make us think about objects and their context. Linking art with design etc.

Serious art critics questioning whether it is art. Greenberg, Fried. **concerned at the Minimalist elimination of complex compositional relations and subtle nuances of form, which they believed to be essential qualities of modernist sculpture. Fried - theatricality of minimalist art. i.e. no artistic presentness in spatial experience of the work. It is just there, on display. Anti-humanist - no evidence of human agency.**

Wollheim: *what are the minimum criteria by which we are able to identify a 'work of art'?*

Work as distortion or destruction of traditional image. Minimalism as a radical version of that. Image dismantled so far that it no longer exists.

Work in art - 2 elements: mental decision that work or object has gone far enough to be a work of art; and physical creation.

Minimalism stresses first of these.

The physical creation is often non-existent so it is about the mental process of what constitutes a work of art. Close to conceptual art.

Op Art.

Images 33-41

Abbreviation of 'optical art' to refer to painting and sculpture that exploits the illusions or optical effects of perceptual processes. Makes the pictures look as though they are moving.

Involves a technique, not an ideology. The technique is the subject matter and the sole content of the painting.

The basis of the Op Art movement was a form of geometric abstraction, which was in a way impersonal and not obviously related to the real world.

two-dimensional structures with strong psychophysiological effects. The exhibition, *The Responsive Eye*, held in 1965 at MOMA, perceptual ambiguity created by coloured surfaces, and the suggestion of movement created by lines and patterns in black and white.

The origins of Op art in art history: *trompe l'oeil* and anamorphosis.

Op Art takes the idea of minimalism (simple, no subject matter) but uses it to work with traditional illusionary ideas of art. Creates 3D images from very simple forms.

Op artists thus managed to exploit various phenomena: the after-image and consecutive movement; line interference; the effect of dazzle; ambiguous figures and reversible perspective; successive colour contrasts and chromatic vibration; and in three-dimensional works different viewpoints and the superimposition of elements in space.

Victor Vasarely. Between 1951 and 1959 worked with geometric shapes and predominantly in black and white. Development of Op Art.

In Vega (1957) paints a huge checkerboard, its regularity disturbed by the bending of the lines that make the squares.

The painting presents our eyes with contradictory data as we read part of the field in terms of diagonals and other parts in terms of horizontals and verticals. The painting practically forces us to move backwards and forwards and as we do so, the field appears to move – expanding, contracting and undulating.

'Vonal' series in 1970s - making full use of colour. Explorations of movement and perception.

In Vonal-Stri (1975), the feeling of movement and depth are created by use of lines of decreasing scale advancing towards the centre of the canvas – the further in we

look to the centre, the further away the field appears to be from us. The use of changing colours across the field also serves to provide the viewer with the feeling of movement, depth and space.

“To experience the presence of the work of art is more important than to understand it”. About sensation, not intellect.

Bridget Riley

“I couldn’t get near what I wanted through seeing, recognizing and recreating, so I stood the problem on its head. I started studying squares, rectangles, triangles and the sensations they give rise to... (Bridget Riley)

From 1961 Riley obtained strong black and white effects. Geometric units such as squares, triangles and circles were depicted in such ways that their distortions set up a definite rhythm and movement. Have an optical and psychological effect.

Crest. More subtle - just a use of curved lines. Clearly creating a 3D effect with minimal visual elements.

Riley and colour.

From 1967 onwards Riley began to use more colour. She also started to use more stable forms – often simple vertical straight or wavy lines. The positioning of the colour that produced the feel of movement she wanted to convey. The colour groupings affected the spaces between them to produce fleeting glimpses of other colours and hence the illusion of movement.

Vibration. Bridget Riley Entice.

At the edge between two colours that are complementary mixtures (for instance a red-violet and a yellow-green) a new line of colour appears. A spilling over of the common colour to create an effect on the eye. Particularly strong in works employing stripes or other thin elements. In these, the new colour, appearing along both edges, may replace the original colour completely.

Colour vibration has been used to achieve great power and an almost physical response by many graphic designers and painters associated with Op Art.

Think about neo-impressionism. Placing two dots of complementary colour next to each other and our eye creates one single colour out of them.

Although Op art was an ephemeral art trend, it has had some permanent effects. Particularly strong connection with fashion, design, advertising.

Neo-Expressionism. Return to feeling and the human figure.

Images 41-48

Work with sensuous subjects including narrative, mythology, memory and psychology.

Tactile, raw handling of materials and a vibrant expression of emotions.

Rebelling against the restrictions against imagery and heavy and emotional paintwork. Revived the formal elements of German Expressionism.

Flamboyant textural brushwork and distorted figures.

Philip Guston - example of rejecting an abstract style of painting in favour of roughly executed figurative subject matter loaded with political content. *'I got sick and tired of all that purity ... (I) wanted to tell stories.'*

Naïve, almost childlike comic style. Figurative, inspired in part by the comic books he had loved as a child.

Realism and an expressionist tendency was present throughout 50s and 60s. Much of it was a disturbing reaction to postwar Europe and a sense of angst about the human condition. But instead of representing this through abstract art with hidden spiritual meanings, it was achieved by visceral images of the human form and the landscape.

Francis Bacon

In 1953 he painted eight pictures of a seated figure, known as *Study for a Portrait I-VIII* in which the man gradually becomes more and more agitated. The pictures were not intended to have a precise meaning but, in Bacon's own words, to 'trap reality' with the greatest possible intensity.

Claustrophobic intensity of *Study for a Portrait*. Bacon's trademark 'space-frame' technique, traps the central figure in a transparent cage.

Bacon: 'I cut down the scale of the canvas by drawing in these rectangles which concentrate the image down. Just to see it better'.

Bacon painted directly onto the unprimed side of the canvas (rather than using the smooth, receptive surface provided by primed canvas), and in this work he emphasised the texture further, especially around the figure's eyes and mouth, by rubbing sand into the paint.

Bacon's later work consisted mainly of paintings of particular people he knew, and it was therefore more intimately connected with his personal life. Painted people he knew well, whom he had seen many times from different angles. He chose to paint from memory and from photographs rather than from life.

The process of painting involved distorting the image in order to intensify it. He found it easier to do this in the absence of the model. The facial features and limbs are often wrenched and twisted out of shape, though without ever completely losing the original likeness.

Bacon also used chance methods, such as throwing a splash of paint at the canvas.

Lucian Freud - heavy impasto. Similar to abstract painters but clearly realistic and representational.

David Bomberg

Borough Group. Declared that the Group had been “founded on the belief that there is in nature a truth and a realism which the usual contemporary approach to painting is unable to convey”.

Reflected his belief that in a technological age often characterised by alienation and destruction, humanity needed to reconnect with nature.

For him landscape painting, was this link with nature.

In 1940s North Devon and Cornwall.

Cyprus. *Trees in Sun* was not intended to be a completely accurate depiction of a particular part of the Cypriot countryside. Bomberg sought to reveal the underlying structure of the land and give a sense of its character and spirit. The fiery colours, the range of textures and vigorous marks imbue the painting with an overwhelming sense of movement and vitality. There are abstract elements but is just this side of representational.

Wyndham Lewis described Bomberg and his group as “rip-roaring flaming romantics”

German neo-expressionism.

Georg Baselitz. He returns to important German themes of nature and landscape and trees. But he literally turns it upside down as a comment on recent German history.

Anselm Kiefer

Dein Goldenes Haar, Margarete!! (Your Golden Hair, Margarete!!) and Dein Aschenes Haar, Sulamith (Your ashen hair, Sulamith) 1981.

Titles come from a line in a poem called Death Fugue by Paul Celan. Inspired by Celan’s experience in concentration camps and the history of **Auschwitz**.

Paintings are about the differing fate of blond German Margarete and the dark haired Jewish Shulamith. One lives and is healthy (Kiefer uses wheat to symbolise life and colour), one is burnt and dead. But the use of straw (for Margarete’s blond hair) in the burnt field shows how interconnected their fates and histories are.

Dada and Duchamp

Images 49-58

Duchamp as member of Dada. A general art movement working in poetry, music and painting. Cabaret in Zurich. Dada moves art away from the pure visual arts to encompass all art forms and media.

Also represents the beginnings of an “anti-art” movement.

“Dada” - origins of name.

Random selection from dictionary. Link with childlike sounds. The child’s first sound - signifying the beginnings of a new art based on irrational, childlike play.

Art as mockery, playfulness.

Deliberately unserious and irrational and incoherent.

Jean Arp - one of the founders of Dada. New aesthetic of simple, childlike organic shapes, referencing nature. Reaction against intellectual art of Russian Suprematism or Dutch neo-Plasticism. *Birds in an Aquarium*.

Wanted to “recover the natural and unreasonable order”.

A challenge to the intellectualism of modernism and to the traditional idea that art is principally something to be looked at.

Arp and Dada also used chance in making their work. Cutting pieces of paper and allowing them to fall at random. See **Tzara - Dada poetry**.

There is, therefore, little in the way of a creative act.

Taken to extreme with Duchamp’s ready-made art. The artistic act is the act of choosing the object or finding it and then designating it as a piece of art. First readymade was the bottlerack. Just took this object, signed and dated it (like a normal work of art) and displayed it like a sculpture.

Also about destroying and mocking art itself. Anti-art. Max Ernst displaying a sculpture with an axe next to it.

Deliberate undermining of notions of beauty, imitation, tradition.

Duchamp’s “Fountain”. 1917

Duchamp wanted to exhibit this in New York at an exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists: supposed to accept all work but rejected this.

“The *Fountain* may be a very useful object in its place, but its place is not in an art exhibition and it is, by no definition, a work of art.’

Fountain was taken up in an art magazine called *Blind Man* in which Stieglitz’s photograph was shown. ‘Mr Mutt’s fountain is a fixture that you see every day in plumbers’ shop windows. Whether Mr Mutt with his own hands made the fountain has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that

its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view – **created a new thought for that object**". This emphasis on "thought" is the beginning of conceptual art.

Later, in 1966 Duchamp wrote of his readymades: "A point I very much want to establish is that the choice of these "ready-mades" was never dictated by aesthetic pleasure. "I was interested in ideas, not merely in visual products". The choice of an object was based on a reaction of visual indifference with, at the same time, a total absence of good or bad taste...in fact a complete anaesthesia".

So, it didn't matter what it looked like or whether it was beautiful or ugly.

The point was that for the first time, items that are in everyday use for a practical purpose were being presented as art works and the argument for it as a work of art was if an artist chose an ordinary object and then reconfigured it or rethought it, then that idea, that rethinking was enough to make it a work of art. It did not matter that nothing was actually constructed, no technical artistic skill was used. The idea was the work.

What this means and what effect it has on art.

Non-superiority of the artist. i.e. anyone can produce art. No need of special skill or feeling.

The link between the creator and the object is broken (see Donald Judd)
Demystifying art. A work of art becomes such by its context.

Dada as a major starting point for modern art. How have Dada and Duchamp been influential? What is their effect on modern and contemporary art? What has Dada given us?

Unsettling. Man Ray. Aggressive and destructive.

Anti-art. Dada about destroying creativity.

De Kooning erased.

Banksy

Cornelia Parker

Institutional theory.

institutional theory. This was developed by American philosophers in the late 20th century to understand and accommodate radical changes in what artists were creating and what we understood as art. It also led to a growth in what was and could be regarded as a work of art.

How do we approach a work of art that is, on the face of it, not a representation of something or an abstract study or a piece of original design but is simply the display of the real thing itself or an exact replica of it? How is this art? And how do we analyse it in an artistic context?

How does a mundane commercial product become transformed into a work of art?

The answer lies in Arthur Danto's **institutional theory of art**. What determines whether something should be viewed as a work of art depends on what those involved with its creation and those involved in the art world generally (critics, curators, gallery owners, teachers etc) decide should be a work of art. It is about an object that has the right sort of idea or interpretation behind it.

i.e. the context (which is defined by people in the artworld) tells us whether something is a work of art. Now this sounds rather elitist and precious.

But that artworld also includes us when we go to a gallery. Duchamp said that the work of art was not finished until it had been completed by the viewer. i.e. modern art as a process of communication and conversation between the artist, the institution and the viewer.

Contemporary art is open to interpretation. It is meant to be controversial. It is not necessarily giving us answers but wants us to ask lots of questions. This dialogue between artist and viewer is the "postmodern" idea - breaking down boundaries and hierarchies. The viewer stands with the artist and the artwork.

So what do we mean by the artwork? What is an art object when that object is also an ordinary object in everyday life (such as a bed or a lavatory). There will be two indistinguishable objects. One will still be languishing in a plumber's warehouse and one is the work of art. What is the relationship between these two, the art object and the ordinary object?

These questions began a completely new way of looking at art and exhibiting it. Which has given us work such as this. **Tracey Emin – My Bed**. Talk about background.

Later, she spoke of her reaction when she looked into her bedroom and saw the bed objectively, as it were: She described:

"This absolute mess and decay of my life".

"Once I had transported that death bed and took it somewhere else in my head it became something incredibly beautiful".

She said that she saw it as a work of art and said that it should belong in a gallery.

The initial decision was hers as an artist. It was her choice. And others within the art establishment agreed. Tate, Turner Prize committee, Charles Saatchi and a significant number of critics. Therefore, what makes this a work of art, is its setting in a gallery and its being regarded as such by people within the art establishment. Take away the structure of the art establishment, the institutions of the art world and it simply becomes a bed surrounded by some grotty objects.

Influence of Dada on Conceptual Art. The art of ideas and the art of language.

What is the relationship between art and language?

Conceptual Art

Images 59-70

Not about art creating unique objects but about an engagement with ideas.

“Without language there is no art”. Visual experience and sensory pleasure are secondary. Almost all conceptual art depends on language or thought.

Minimalism was about the reduction of the form or the object. So, to take this further or to react against it meant the elimination or de-emphasis of the object altogether. Reacting against the whole idea of art.

Mel Ramsden. Secret painting. A critique of Malevich Black Square (and of minimalism). The subject of the painting, all the elements of what goes to make up a painting are hidden in the words. The words explain the art. Make it a work of art or not a work of art. The words are doing the work here. But also make it clear that we cannot know or explain the art.

The art is simply a concept. A work about how we cannot really know what a work of art is or means. Does the same apply with a more traditional work of art. Do we really know what it is or is that known only to the artist?

Art is about intention, not about what the artist does with his hands. This gives us the “infinitely stimulating conviction that art can be made out of anything”.

Joseph Kosuth “Being an artist now means to question the nature of art”

One and Three Chairs. Real chair, photo of a chair and a linguistic definition of a chair. Relationship between them. Can we say that in each case, we are looking at a chair? Is it a study of “chairness”, the nature of what a chair is? I.e. a chair exists in more than one form, is more than just the thing we can see and touch and sit on that we call a chair. It might also be a 2D image of a chair and a written definition of a chair.

In the case of One and Three Chairs, the central idea was to explore the nature of representation itself. We know instinctively what a “chair” is, but how is it that we actually conceive of and communicate that concept? All three of these could be interpreted as representations of the same chair (the “one” chair of the title), and yet they are not the same. They each have distinct properties: in actuality, the viewer is confronted with “three” chairs, each represented and experienced—*read*—in different ways.

Role of the viewer.

But he also reveals the importance of the viewer’s role in the function of conceptual artwork. It is not until we approach pieces such as *One and Three Chairs* and begin to engage with them intellectually that the actual “artworks”—the concepts—emerge. In this sense, conceptual art can only exist in tandem with its audience, and is created anew each time we view it.

If art exists in the mind of artists, this requires a new response from us, the viewer.

Sol LeWitt. Paragraphs on Conceptual Art.

“In conceptual art, the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art”.

“It is usually free from the dependence on the skill of the artist as a craftsman. It is the objective of the artist who is concerned with conceptual art to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to become emotionally dry”.

“Ideas can be works of art”.

“What the work of art looks like isn’t too important”.

LeWitt’s wall drawings. Line on a wall. Lines are drawn according to instructions given by Lewitt so that others can draw the image in the future. The primacy of the line. By drawing directly on the wall, Lewitt limited the work’s duration; ultimately the wall drawings are painted over. Temporary but the **idea is permanent**, and the drawings can be redrawn on another wall by another person.

Lewitt is doing no traditional artistic work here to create the end picture. So, it could look different each time.

What is the work of art? Is it the certificate signed by the artist? Or the finished work done by someone else?

This raises questions about who is the artist and what is the art? The disappearance of the art and disappearance of the artist.

Keith Arnatt - plays with this idea, using his own body. Ideas of reductivism.

He is asking the questions: How far can an artist go in producing a minimal work of art? How far can you go in reducing or removing the work of art?

Arnatt’s interest in what could be considered ‘radical’ behaviour in art. He saw ‘radical’ as synonymous with ‘extreme’ and with ‘pursuing ideas to their limits’.

1970 work ‘Is it possible for me to do nothing as my contribution to the exhibition?’. Brinkmanship was also important to him in ‘the sense that I wondered how far you could go and still be considered an artist.’

Idea of humour.

If anything can be art, then the artist can also decide that something that was art is no longer art.

Robert Morris’ Statement of Artistic Withdrawal from his earlier work Litanies, which takes the de-materialisation of art to another level, with added humour.

Litanies is a Conceptual piece by Robert Morris. Each key is inscribed with a word quoting Marcel Duchamp demonstrating the greater importance of words and ideas of the aesthetic of the piece. Key unlocks the work but this is only done with words. Words explain the art.

Philip Johnson bought this from Robert Morris, but was slow in paying. Morris, in response to this, created the following *Document, Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal*.

Essence of Conceptual art: the idea makes it art. If Robert Morris, the artist, created it with the intention of its being art, he can also revoke this intention by declaring that it is not art for he is the artist.

Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal. The undersigned Robert Morris, being the maker of the metal construction entitled Litanies described in the annexed Exhibit A hereby withdraws from the said construction all aesthetic quality and content and declares that from the date hereof said construction has no such quality and content.

How do we approach and analyse conceptual art?
A short test.

Damian Hirst. Shark.

Cley Contemporary 2019.

Joy Pitts. Like birds and humans, garments also migrate from one country, region, or place to another. Starting their life as a plant for harvesting, followed by weaving and finishing, garment production, shipping and distribution. These 3000 garments have been intercepted allowing them to pause at St Margaret's Church before they complete their journey abroad to new communities and trade. Arranged in a circle and linked by their sleeves the sculpture reflects the support and inclusion offered in the context of the Church.

Steve Baker & Mike Dodd-The Other Side of the Words

Public signs, like borderlines, are a means of shaping human experience and expectations of urban space. They mark the border between the understood and the uncertain, between compliance and the scope for creative misinterpretation.

Criticism of conceptual art.

LeWitt's Paragraphs on Conceptual Art - deliberately controversial but actually there is some truth to what he said. Contemporary art generally can be intellectually and theoretically challenging to point of being completely opaque and it can also be technically and artistically and creatively very simple, to the point of being aesthetically inept. But, and it is important to say this at the outset, this is, to a great extent, the point. Much contemporary art is meant to be ugly, unsettling, aesthetically basic and artistically baffling.

Art made out of the problems of defining art. Is it satirising the theory based art of minimalism and abstraction? i.e. art that appeared to be about art but was heavily based on theory and language. Are conceptualist simply showing what an art dependent entirely on language looks like?

Is endless playing with definitions of art, all that modern art has to offer?

i.e. we are judging an object on the basis of its ingenuity in posing the questions and problems (is it art?) so that the less probable it is that the object should be accepted as art, the "better" it is as art. The more an artist questions art, the more likely he is to be an artist.

Abandonment of the art object. Challenges the idea that art is about creating a unique object that has a separate life as a "work of art". The nature of the object: "The world is full of objects more or less interesting: I do not wish to add anymore. I prefer simply to state the existence of things in terms of time or space". i.e. the object takes its significance from when and where it is placed. That when and where alters the object's meaning and purpose and determines whether it is art or not.

Link with language which has different meanings depending on when and where the word is used. "The meaning of a word is its use in the language" i.e the meaning of words is bound up in the contexts in which they are used. Can we say the same about art and works of art.

Object is replaced by ideas. By writing and language, photographs, documents, film, video, bodies.

It is anti-elitist and anti-art and anti-form (Process art). It is against the traditional art object in the traditional gallery. Although one of the paradoxes of conceptual art is that while it sets itself apart from the gallery in theory, its validity as art, depends on the entire structure of the institutional art world which includes galleries.

Conceptual art has become the status quo of contemporary art.

How Conceptualism conquered contemporary Fluxus, Performance Art, Process Art. *Images 71-80*

Questions raised by conceptual art.

What was art? Does the artwork have substantial form or is it a set of ideas on how to understand the world? Is art a single object or more diffuse? Is a thing or an idea, or a performance? What space does it occupy? Inside or outside gallery?

Fluxus

Images

Informal international, avant-garde

wide range of media

early 1960s to the late 1970s.

Activities included public concerts or festivals

electronic music, theatrical performances, ephemeral events, gestures and actions
art and poetry.

Fluxus works often required the participation of a spectator in order to be completed.

Fluxus, taken from the Latin for 'flow', the title for series of works of experimental music, poetry, performance events and 'anti-films'.

Fluxus founder George Maciunas said that the purpose of Fluxus was to 'promote a revolutionary flood and tide in art, promote living art, anti-art'.

Described as 'Neo-Dada'

The first Fluxus festival 1962. After that, were also called Fluxconcerts.

The typical Fluxconcert consisted of a rapid series of performances of short events of actions and music.

Consisted of physical performances representative of mundane activities, or music based on non-musical sound sources. They were often humorous and concerned with involving the audience (see **Yoko Ono -Cut Piece**).

It was also about disrupting the expected conventions of musical and theatrical performance and spectatorship; their 'event scores' were characterized by reduction, repetition, improvisation and chance.

Maciunas Piano Piece. Paint the piano and hammer nails into the keys while the pianist is playing.

John Cage 4'33''.

Records of these events were compiled in yearboxes, because of its unique wooden packaging. Each year had a new yearbox. The contents included texts and objects by dozens of artists associated with the Fluxfestivals. Their purpose was to erode the cultural status of art and to help to eliminate the artist's ego.

Fluxus manifesto of 1963 exhorted the artist to 'purge the world of bourgeois sickness, "intellectual", professional and commercialized culture ... dead art, imitation, artificial

art, abstract art, illusionistic art ... promote a revolutionary flood and tide in art, promote living art, anti-art, ... non art reality to be grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals'.

Fluxus was about creating an art where anything can substitute for an art work and anyone can produce it.

Fluxus had no single unifying style. Artists used a range of media and processes adopting a 'do-it-yourself' attitude to creative activity, often staging random performances and using whatever materials were at hand to make art. Seeing themselves as an alternative to academic art and music. Fluxus was a democratic form of creativity open to anyone. Collaborations were encouraged between artists and across artforms, and also with the audience or spectator. It valued simplicity and anti-commercialism, with chance and accident playing a big part in the creation of works, and humour also being an important element.

Importance of humour as a means of puncturing the seriousness of traditional art. Fluxus and much of late 20th century art undermines the notion of art as a quasi-religious experience, something to be engaged with at a deep spiritual level.

Performance Art

“Live” presentations by artists.

It was first used very loosely by artists in the early 1960s in the USA to refer to live events taking place at that time, such as Happenings, Fluxus concerts, Events, body art.

Closely linked to the ideas of Conceptual Art

“An art that could not be bought and sold”; those who made performance pieces did so as a statement against the gallery system and the art establishment.

The term ‘performance’ was originally adopted in the early 1970s to emphasize the fact that the work was made by artists and to distinguish such events from theatre; (although there may not be that much difference).

It had connotations of theatre or entertainment, tendency towards vaudeville or cabaret.

Yves Klein. Covered naked women with blue paint and they were then dragged over a canvas.

Gilbert & George. The sense of theatre. Dada art exhibition presented as a theatrical performance with paintings being brought onto the stage for display. Anything becoming art.

Art as the process of its making (related to the idea of its making and conceptual art). The logical end point of this process is the use of the bodily presence of the artist. “I never go anywhere except as an artist”. (Ad Reinhardt).

This gives us performance art. The idea that the artist is art and art is the life of the artist.

G&G. “On leaving art college and being without a penny, we were just there...We put on metallic make-up and became sculptures. Our whole life is one big sculpture”.

First work was Singing Sculpture - faces and hands painted with metallic paint, standing on a pedestal miming a dance to Underneath the Arches. Other performances - serving dinner to David Hockney. Is it serious or ironic?

Marina Abramovic. *The Artist is present.*

The work was inspired by her belief that stretching the length of a performance beyond expectations serves to alter our perception of time and foster a deeper engagement in the experience. Seated silently at a wooden table across from an empty chair, she waited as people took turns sitting in the chair and locking eyes with her. Over the course of nearly three months, for eight hours a day, she met the gaze of 1,000 strangers, many of whom were moved to tears.

“You know performance really has this kind of power to change not just the performer’s life but also the one who is witnessing the performance. I truly believe that only long durational work has that kind of power because if you do a performance for one hour, two hours, five hours – you can still pretend. You can still can act. You can still be somebody else. But if you do something for three months, it’s life itself”.

“It was [a] complete surprise...this enormous need of humans to actually have contact.”

Importance of the audience. Are part of the performance. They are part of the art. Viewer is the artist. This idea is made explicit here.

What does this say about the audience’s need to engage with art and/or artists.

Process Art.

Held onto materials but threw out the object, divesting the work of structure, permanence and boundaries. Used random, temporary distributions, "scatter pieces", non-rigid, ephemeral substances - sawdust, felt, etc.

Gallery as part of the process of making art.

Term used to discuss art that emphasizes the procedures and materials of artistic practice in the finished product.

Process art: random occurrences, improvisation, and the liberating qualities of nontraditional materials such as wax, felt, and latex.
Created eccentric forms in erratic or irregular arrangements produced by actions such as cutting, hanging, and dropping.

Originally called '**Anti-Form**' by founder of the movement, Robert Morris.

"anti-form" as a basis for making art works in terms of process and time

rather than as static and enduring icons, which he associated with "object-type" art.

It is art that stresses change over the immobility and geometry of minimalist sculpture. Process art changes every time it is shown. Dispense with the idea of sculpture as a permanent and enduring form.

The process of making the work is part of the end form of the work. It looks as it does precisely because of the process of its being made.

Robert Morris. Felt strips - these could not be replicated in another place in the same way. Unique objects that depend entirely on their time and place.
The work resembled a kind of dematerialisation, art made from the left overs of another activity.

His work emphasized the pliancy and variability of its materials. He subsequently began piling thread waste, wire, and other industrial materials onto the gallery floor. Dispensed with the idea of sculpture as an enduring form.

Playing with the idea of the art object in the art space. Different object in a different place. How do we see a traditional work of art when it is moved from one space to another? Do we react differently to work in a gallery, a church, a modern space, a traditional room, inside or outside? If the same work makes us think differently depending on where it is placed, then how much more is this so with a work that alters every time it is exhibited?

Morris claimed that the main influence for Process art was Jackson Pollock. Splatters and lines of paint in Pollock's paintings registered the materials and the practices that brought them into existence. Much process art can look like 3D Jackson Pollock.

Richard Serra made his site-specific piece *Casting* (also known as *Splatter*) by flinging molten lead into the corner of the gallery. In such works, the activity of making endures in the final product, often to the exclusion of other content, and the **objects cannot be clearly separated from the procedures by which they were made.**

The aspirations of process art were given particularly programmatic expression in Serra's famous 1967–8 **Verb List**, in which he catalogued a series of gestures that often constituted the activity of sculpting. His list included 'to tear', 'to split', 'to cut', 'to splash', and 'to disarrange'.

Art becomes about action and the activity of making rather than the object made.

Lynda Benglis. Poured sculptures with polyurethane foam and latex. Believing that sculptural form should derive from the inherent qualities of the material. In traditional sculpture that isn't the case. The form of a traditional sculpture (a head, say) does not derive from the material (i.e. it could be wood, bronze, plaster etc). If you pour foam and latex, this is what it will look like. *Quartered Meteor* is cast from an object made from layers of poured polyurethane foam cast in lead.

Likewise, in **1966, Barry Le Va** began a series of 'scatter pieces' (which he preferred to call 'distributions') in which he dispersed a variety of materials such as cut felt, wood chips, ball bearings, and shattered glass across gallery and museum floors.

Attempts to '**eliminate sculpture as a finished, totally resolved object**'.

By emphasising the action of making the work, Le Va encouraged the viewer to reconstruct the process through which they were arranged.

Although these works were carefully planned, they introduced an element of chance into the completed object because they could never be realized in exactly the same way twice.

Eva Hesse increasingly used rope, latex, and other plant materials to make sculpture into something variable, indeterminate.

Hanging pieces, for instance, she famously translated Pollock's linear compositions into three dimensions by suspending tangles of latex and fibreglass-covered rope in complex configurations from the ceiling of the gallery. Like the work of other process artists, the very composition of these pieces precluded the possibility of an invariable structure or definitive form.

Moving away from the idea of a work of art as a "closed structure" towards an "open structure".

Pop Art

Images 81-89

International art movement in the 1960s inspired by the imagery of mass media and commercial and 'popular' culture. Pop was initially defined in 1957 by Richard Hamilton. He defined the essential terms of pop art in a letter to Alison and Peter Smithson.

It is art engaging with the world through extensive use of the things that surround us in the world.

Pop - less about style or consistent attitude and more about how to respond to mass media and new commodity-driven lifestyles.

Pop Artists used business logos, billboard and magazine advertisements, household objects, grocery store commodities, comic book strips, pulp fiction, movie icons, TV broadcasts, and more. Many pop artists trained outside traditional art establishment.

Exhibition - *This is Tomorrow* at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1956

Hamilton believed in 'fine/pop art continuum'. What culture means and what culture is - should simply be a description of "what society does".

Hamilton interpreted this as meaning that "all art is equal - there was no hierarchy of value. Elvis was to one side of a long line while Picasso was strung out on the other side ... TV is neither less nor more legitimate an influence than, for example, is Abstract Expressionism".

Just what is it? Has many of the elements of pop art. And many of the conventions of pop art were derived from this painting. Brand names/advertising, cheap fast food culture, cartoons, new consumer goods (hoover, tape machine).

Art made from the things of the new everyday consumer culture.

Work feels very American but is English. An English, slightly humorous but longing look at American consumerism from an England that was only just emerging from post war austerity and which was still a hierarchical society.

Look also at **David Hockney**. Glamour of California, sunshine, youth, cheap travel. These things can be seen as having been filtered through pop music and television. Both these cultural forces had a flattening effect on culture generally - traditional high culture of art was being replaced with the ephemeral image and sound. People could shift from cultural experience to cultural experience quickly easily and cheaply. We skim from image to image. Our attention span shrinks and this recalls Andy Warhol's famous comment about everyone being famous for 15 minutes. In other words, everything will be disposable.

American pop art was a reaction against Abstract Expressionism and its creation of big, emotional artistic statements. Pop art was an art of the banal and the everyday, an art about consumer objects.

Warhol was the artist who best understood consumer capitalism. Started his career as a commercial artist. Became fascinated with advertising and the endlessly repeated image that advertising and mass-market shopping gives us. His work is both a celebration of this and a critique of it. He repeats the same image again and again. By using screen printing technique - these are paintings but can then be printed. He is also showing that mass culture is essentially a glut of sameness. The uniqueness of things that art tried to show traditionally has gone.

Soup cans, Coke bottles - he was interested in the democratic implications of mass consumerism and its flattening of culture and society. Ordinary people drink the same Coca Cola as Elizabeth Taylor or the President. Even though advertising tries to tell us that the same stuff that everyone eats or drinks will be somehow unique to us. Warhol makes it clear that it really all just the same.

Warhol did more than anyone to turn art into the art business. Will look at how this sense of art as commodity and consumer object develops with Jeff Koons.

Use of popular culture - cartoons and comics. Lichtenstein. Takes the cartoon strip and raises it to the level of high art. Blurring the divide between high and low culture. Although they look like prints, huge photocopied blow ups of existing cartoons, they are each painted, with every dot meticulously drawn. A paradox in that when we stand back we think we just see a simple comic strip but when we stand very close we see a highly technical and formally adept work of art. High and low culture are combined.

How pop art continues. **Grayson Perry - Julie Cope**. Tells the story of the everyday life of an ordinary woman in Essex. Uses bright colours and a slightly cartoonish style, simple images. But made as a tapestry which traditionally was a very high status medium used for decorating aristocratic houses. Perry is playing with high and low art.

Commodity art.

Warhol invented the use of consumer objects as art.

The most striking and explicit recent examples of this showing the object as a consumer commodity, and a work of art are in the work of **Jeff Koons**.

We are of course, in the world of Duchamp and the ready-made here. But the important difference and what brings it up to date is the fact that it is presented as a consumer object.

Koons's work has been called "commodity sculpture" (it is also relevant that, before devoting himself to art, Koons was a commodity trader on Wall Street which gave him the money to start up as an artist).

This isn't just any old vacuum cleaner. It is a **New Hoover Deluxe Shampoo Polisher**. Similarly, these floating basketballs are two **Dr J Silver Series** and one **Spalding NBA Tip-Off**. They are displayed as art objects, static in glass cabinets but the

reference to their brand names demands that we see them as consumer objects to be advertised and sold. Which is of course, exactly what happens with the work of art. Koons approaches sculpture in a shamelessly commercial way, using commercial objects to refer to the fact that art itself is a commercial object.

This blurring of the lines between art object and commodity object reached its high point (or low point depending on your point of view) in 2007 with **Damien Hirst's *For the Love of God***. Hirst sees it as a reference to death and the possibility of overcoming death, but it is also about the grotesqueness of art object as luxury item.

A skull is a central motif in much western art. It is the memento mori. Golgotha (the place of the skull) is the site of Christ's crucifixion. Hirst has turned this universal symbol of grief into a consumer art object for the very rich.

Art is an object to be exchanged and traded, bought and sold. Hirst and Koons are simply making explicit what everyone else in the art world knows but are too polite to say. They use art to comment on the objectification of art.

Arte Povera

Images 90-92

A rejection of the consumerism of Pop Art. against industrialization, American minimalism (too impersonal) and conformity, artists were anti-technology, anti-elitist and anti-consumerist.

Born out of radical political movements in Italy in late 1960s/early 1970s. Connected with economic decline in Northern Italy. Term coined by the critic and curator Germano Celant

Artists began attacking the values of established institutions of government, industry, and culture.

Literally **means poor art** but poverty relates to the **ordinariness of the objects used**. Of course pop art uses ordinary objects but these are consumer objects designed to be traded for money.

Arte Povera uses scraps and waste material. "As far as I am concerned ... all forms, materials, ideas, and means are available and to be used".

Venus of the Rags - attacking ideas of Italian classical high art. Attack on the past and on high culture. But also attack on consumerism by use of cheap materials. Break down the hierarchies of "art" and common things. An art of impoverished materials is certainly one aspect of the definition of Arte Povera.

Arte Povera was concerned with "taking away, eliminating, downgrading things to a minimum".

In this way it is similar to much other art we have seen but it is done to make a specific political or economic point.

A refusal on behalf of many artists to produce saleable commodities

Jannis Kounellis. Untitled.

Organic. Always moving and changing. (see **Horses**). Not endlessly repeatable. Organic, not man made. Nature, not industry or consumerism. Necessary not luxury.

These are the opposite of the list of pop art essentials drawn up by Richard Hamilton.

Untitled 1969 consists of seven sacks lined up in an uneven row on the floor, against the wall. Each sack is filled with a different dried pulse or bean: chickpeas, coffee beans, green lentils, green peas, kidney beans, white beans and maize. The top of each sack is rolled back so that the contents can be seen. The sacks slump this way and that, some leaning against each other, some against the wall and some away from it.

Sometimes sacks contained other foodstuffs such as potatoes and rice. So the work was made of perishable materials, and would rot and be replaced. Also sometimes used edible food - audience would eat from the bags and so the work would change. A connection between art and life. Pop art is about a consumerism that is out of reach - about advertising and fantasy. Arte Povera is about everyday things that we can use. Invites the viewer to experience them on a material and sensory level.

Land art.

Images 93-99

“The post medium” world to show how almost any material can be used to create art.

How the land is used to make art. Much traditional sculpture uses natural materials from the land, especially stone or marble and wood.

But land art is made directly in the landscape, sculpting the land itself into earthworks or making structures in the landscape using natural materials.

Little is done to the natural objects (the piece of stone or slate or wood) by the artist save for moving them to make a structure.

Robert Smithson’s Spiral Jetty (made in Great Salt Lake, Utah from basalt rocks and earth is perhaps the most famous and influential of the modern examples of land art.

The influence of much earlier art is very clear (Monkey from Nazca Desert) and land sculpture has an ancient, organic feel about it.

Removes art from the formality of the gallery and it alters the relationship between the object and the place. In many ways, the place is the work. It is sculpture as place, not object. We are being asked to concentrate on the setting as a whole in the broader environment rather than just on the materials and the objects. The landscape is not being represented in a traditional artistic sense but the landscape is being used for the creation of sculptures in that same landscape. These are sculptures made out of the land and like the land, they have an organic life of their own. Nature changes and moves and these works are subject to those same forces.

Spiral Jetty was covered at one point by water but now isn’t.

Often just temporary, ephemeral, inaccessible works. **Sahara Circle**. In particular, many of the works of Richard Long (who is perhaps the best-known living land artist) were made never to be seen except in photographs. This approach to art negates the whole notion of sculpture as a permanent solid monumental object. It undermines traditional views of what sculpture is, how it is made, how it is exhibited. Idea is the same as many other forms of modern sculpture - namely to challenge our notions of sculpture.

Line made by Walking

Made on one of Long’s. Between hitchhiking lifts, he stopped in a field in Wiltshire where he walked backwards and forwards until the flattened turf caught the sunlight and became visible as a line. He photographed this work. Is the art the line in the field or the photograph.

'A Hundred Mile Walk' was done over the New Year 1971–2, hence the dating. Round in circles. Notes some of the sounds heard on the walk. The first time the circle was walked it was new, but each subsequent time it became more and more familiar. 'Corrina, Corrina' (Day 6) is a reference to a traditional folk song,

The work concerns both the internal feelings and thoughts of the artist and the external aspects of his experience during the walk. It records sensory and perceptual experiences including time, space, movement, sight, sound, touch, taste, illusion, etc.

Element of performance art.

Ackling Five Sunsets.

Use of the power of nature. Five short horizontal parallel lines which the artist has burned into a board by concentrating the sun's rays through a hand-held magnifying glass.

The work consists of 'Five Sunsets in One Hour/Five one minute sun lines'. He has marked each 'sun line' with the exact time at which it was made.

Ackling stopped at intervals and sat with his back to the setting sun, holding up a magnifying glass to deflect the rays on to his board. He described these five stages as 'sunsets' in the work because each time the sun sank below his immediate horizon line, he had to climb higher to catch sight of it again and to 'catch' it in his glass. His ascent paralleled the sun's descent. It seemed to him that the sun set five times as it sank from view and he felt as though he was resurrecting it each time he climbed further up the hill.

As he climbed higher and the sun sank, its rays naturally became weaker and, in consequence, the lines become shorter towards the top of the card. The progressive shortening of the lines creates a curve which relates formally but also actually to the curve of the Down; Ackling has also compared it to the curve of the earth's surface, which finally obscures the setting sun.

Relationship between land art/nature and traditional sculpture.

Long's work does now feature in galleries and public art spaces but he challenges the formality of the art-space.

Flint circle - using local materials direct from the landscape. Flint is a simple democratic material being used on churches and smart houses and simple cottages and barns.

Buildings in complete contrast to Houghton Hall and particularly William Kent's classical, Italianate hall which is everything that traditional sculpture represented. This is sculpture with no connection to the landscape.

Is Long making a comment on traditional sculpture and materials.

The **Italian sculptor Giuseppe Penone** plays cleverly with the relationship between nature and sculpture in his works of trees.

'The tree is a spectacular creation because each part of the tree is necessary to its life. It is the perfect sculpture.'

These are made from bronze which is of course one of the most traditional of sculptural materials. It suggests solidity, permanence, monumentality and grandeur. Its use in a natural setting to represent natural objects seems counter-intuitive. But these are designed to be trees as living sculpture. Bronze, placed outside, takes on a weathered patina and, from a distance, becomes indistinguishable from the real trees. Like Long, but starting from a different point and using different materials, Penone is aiming to break down the boundaries between the imagined and the real, art and nature.

Crates of Air and the Art of Nothing.

Images 100-105

Movement in contemporary sculpture to create what have been called “loose-limbed, visually transparent constructions that embrace a chunk of air”.

Sean Scully. *Crate of Air* 2018. Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Scully is interested in how objects fit together. His work is minimalist in the sense of using simple objects in simple structures. He works with regular shaped, flat or box like structures which suggest order

Reminds us of Carl Andre and Donald Judd.

Scully describes how, when he was younger, he had a job stacking boxes in large lorries and was struck by how he loved fitting them together to form neat, orderly piles and rows of boxes. He saw these boxes as having a sculptural quality.

How materials work as stacks, how the single object relates to others of the same or similar type. But *Crate of Air* takes this further. The frame (made of steel) conjures up images of empty boxes pile up against and on top of each other, but the title suggests that the main subject of the work is the air inside the frame.

Influence of Judd who regarded the space between his solid blocks as part of the sculpture. Judd wanted to create art out of “nothingness”.

Scully’s work recalls Sol Lewitt’s open geometric structures. In creating these boxes or crates of air, Scully is making sculpture out of space. A solid object (whether an art object, a building or anything else), displaces the chunk of air that it occupies.

In leaving a chunk of air unoccupied, while the surrounding air is taken up with frames and blocks, that space, that air, acquires its own form. Sol LeWitt, said: “It is the interval between things that can be measured. The intervals and measurements can be important to a work of art.”

This might all sound a little vague and improbable. Can nothingness be said to have an existence?

Rachel Whiteread. Her sculptures quite clearly and explicitly “fill in the air” that exists between, behind and under structures and objects and so they make an object out of space, out of air.

Whiteread’s most famous sculpture and the one which brought her to wider public acclaim (and won her the Turner Prize) was ***House***. It is a concrete cast of the inside of a house in East London that was part of a terrace due to be demolished. It is sometimes referred to as a negative of the house, or an inside out house. It shows the

space that was enclosed by the windows, the walls, doors. In other words, it is a sculpture of the air inside a house. A sculpture, on the face of it, of nothing. But of course, the air inside a house is not nothing. It contains a record, a memory of everything that has ever happened there. And so Whiteread's House registers the imprint of human use and wear and tear. You can (or could, it was demolished in the same year it was made) see traces in the concrete of painted and papered walls, fireplaces, cupboards and all the things that provide domestic comfort and record the presence (now long past) of human habitation.

Whiteread's work therefore addresses ideas of presence and absence. By making solid structures out of apparently empty space, she is making something present out of things that are absent and in the past.

Her most explicit example of the use of absence to generate memory is the Holocaust Memorial, in the centre of the old Jewish quarter in Vienna. Here, Whiteread shows a library from the outside. We see the fore-edge of the books rather than the spines. And we see the gaps between the rows of books which is where the shelves would have been. The rows of books all looking the same are intended to refer to the Jewish people as "a people of the book" and the fact that the books are closed and we cannot read the titles, highlights the sense of cultural closure, the end of a highly literate and cultured community. All these references are to absence and endings. We are meant to think about the absence that it represents, the absence of the people memorialised here. And I wonder whether this works more successfully than memorials that actually show the person or people being remembered.

Nine Tables. She is filling in the spaces that appear to be empty. She shows the opposite of what a work of art might be expected to show. A few years after *House*, Whiteread made these tables. You will see that these are casts of the spaces under a table - the empty space. I think these are quite amusing works and slightly unsettling. She became fascinated when sitting in meetings (particularly about the Vienna Memorial) with what was going on under the table, below waist level.

When we are sitting at a table with others, the part of our bodies that cannot be seen are not referred to, they become slightly disembodied and awkward (think about the situation when you are sitting at a table and you accidentally hit your leg or foot against someone else's). And of course the space under a table can be illicit, the place to hide something, the place to carry out something secret. When we look at a table or the image or sculpture of the table, we don't necessarily think about that. We concentrate on the legs and the flat surface.

But Whiteread, in turning the table inside out and presenting the negative image of the table makes us notice the empty space which, when we really think about it, isn't, empty at all.

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