AH209 Radicalism of the Avant-Garde

Seminar Leader: Dr. Susanne Märtens
Course Times: Friday, 9:00-12:15 (with offsite visits to museums and galleries outside regular course hours)
Office Hours: by appointment
Email: s.maertens@berlin.bard.edu

Course Description

The term “avant-garde” has become a mainstay of art-historical description. But what does this term actually mean? How did the practices and movements classed in this manner alter the way art is conceived, produced, presented, and displayed? This course examines the transformation of art in the period between 1900 and 1930. We will look at how movements such as Expressionism, Dadaism, Constructivism, Bauhaus and Surrealism proposed completely new ideas of the artwork. A work came to be conceived as the result of any kind of practice serving the programmatic purpose of the artist. In his Triadisches Ballet Oskar Schlemmer combined dance and pictorial art, while Kurt Schwitters invented the dadaistic sound poem (Ursonate). Other innovations, from Bauhaus and Werkbund, aimed at eliminating the traditional distinction between the fine arts, design and crafts. Traditional boundaries and hierarchies between artistic fields and media were overcome; photography could be used in unusual ways (abstract photography) and new artistic techniques like collage and montage (John Heartfield, Hannah Höch) were invented. The significance of these developments will be analyzed in the context of the institutionally-sanctioned art produced around 1900, dominated by painters like Adolf Menzel, Max Liebermann, Max Slevogt or Lovis Corinth. Our investigation of the avant-garde includes discussion of its manifestos, and of original works in museums, collections, and archives.

Week 1
07.09. 2018, Friday, 9.00 - 12.15
Introduction

Readings:

Week 2
14.09.2018, Friday, 9.00 - 12.15
Manet to Cézanne – French Modern Art in Imperial Berlin

Readings:
Week 3
21.09.2018, Friday, 10.00 - 12.30 – 10.30 Einlass
Special Session: Meeting Point Alte Nationalgalerie
Anton von Werner, Adolf Menzel, Max Liebermann, Lovis Corinth
Edouard Manet, Camille Pissaro, Paul Cézanne

Reading:

Week 4
28.09.2018, Friday, 10.00 - 12.30
Primitivism and Avant-Garde in France – Pablo Picasso, André Derain, Henri Matisse

Readings:

Week 5
06.10.2018, Saturday, 12-15.00
Special Session: Meeting Point Brücke Museum
Primitivism and German Expressionism – The artist groups Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter

Readings

Week 6
12.10.2018, Friday – 9.00-12.15
Cubism – Space and Time in Painting and the invention of Collage

Readings
Week 7
19.10.2017, Friday, 9.00 - 12.15
Futurism – the beauty of speed and movement and Avant-Garde’s turn to fascism.
F.T. Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla.

Readings:

Week 8
26.10.2018, Friday, 9.00-12.15
Dada in Zürich and Berlin

Readings:
Hal Foster, 1916, In Zurich the international movement of Dada is launched and 1920, The Dada Fair is held in Berlin (...),in: Hal Foster et al. (eds.), Art since 1900, London 2016 (3rd Ed.),pp.147-153, 186-191.

29.10.2018 - 04.11.2018 Fall Break

Week 9
09.11.2018, Friday, 10.00 - 12.30
Special Session: Meeting Point Berlinische Gallerie
Dada Collage: Hannah Höch, Raoul Haussmann, John Heartfield

Readings:

Week 10
16.11.2018, Friday, 9.00 - 12.15
Bauhaus in Dessau and Weimar

Readings:
Magdalena Droste, Bauhaus, Köln 2016, pp. 16, 31-41.
To watch:
Oskar Schlemmer, Triadisches Ballett (1912), Interpretations
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM3iC-yCf8A
Bayrisches Staatsballett
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM3iC-yCf8A
https://vimeo.com/67084264

Week 11
23.11.2018, Friday, 9.00 - 12.15
The artist as engineer – Russian Constructivism / Kasimir Malevitch, Vladimir Tatlin, El Lissitzky

Readings:
Yves Alain Bois, 1915 Kasimir Malewitsch shows his Suprematist canvases (...) and 1921 The Members of the Moscow Institute of Artistic Culture define Constructivism, in: Hal Foster et al. (eds.), *Art since 1900*, London 2016 (3rd Ed.), pp.142-146,198-203.

Week 12
30.12.2018, Friday, 9.00 - 12.15
Surrealism - Avant-Garde and Psychoanalysis

Readings:

Week 13
07.12.2018, Friday, 9.00 - 12.15
The space of the museum from an Avant-Garde perspective – El Lissitzkys Demonstration Room

Reading:

Week 14
14.12.2017 Friday, 9.00 - 12.15
Avant-Garde and Utopia
and
Modernism and the Social History of Art

Reading:
Sam Cooper, „Enemies of Utopia for the sake of its realisation“, Futurism, Surrealism, Situationism, and the Problem of Utopia, in: David Ayers and others (eds), Utopia. The Avantgarde, Modernism and (Im)possible Life, Berlin 2015, pp. 17-32.

Requirements

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than one absence in the seminar (e.g. one double session) will significantly affect the grade for the course. Please also make sure you depart early in order to reach the museums and exhibition spaces in time. If absent, a short notification via email, sent before the beginning of class, is expected. Please note that punctuality is essential. Also note that the use of smartphones and notebooks is not allowed during seminars. Students are advised to consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment

The course assessment consists of the overall seminar work (one presentation in addition to class participation) and two essays. See also “Grade Breakdown”.

Presentation

Each student will be in charge of one oral presentation. For the presentation, students will bring to class one or more pages of written notes with questions and bullet-points intended to introduce the assigned reading and to facilitate the discussion. These notes will be handed to the instructor at the end of the class and will be part of the presentation grade.

Writing Assignments

There are two essays for this course, one mid-term essay (ca. 2000 words) and one longer final essay (ca. 3000 words). A range of prompts will be provided in advance. The mid-term essay is due on 21th October, midnight. The final essay is due on 20th December, midnight. Essays should include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your essays can be discussed in individual tutorials.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

All written work must be submitted electronically and on time. Please note that essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar Grade = Attendance (preparation of texts/participation in discussions, presentation)

Seminar Grade: 50% (30% /20%)
Essay 1: 20 %
Essay 2: 30 %