

ARTH 383 - Art & Philosophy

Lecture 1 - Introduction

- affect: qualities of a feeling, experience (vis-a-vis art)
 - judgement of beauty > “taste”
 - subjective and universal validity
- 18th century > Enlightenment
 - art history
 - art criticism
 - art aesthetics > separate branch of philosophy
 - what is aesthetic truth? grounded in human subjectivity
- the public > in 18th C, taste/judgement now based on ‘feeling’, legitimated.
 - prior to 18th C, Royal Academy of Art established the doctrines of ‘art’ with academic rules > BIG shift
- judgment of taste we don’t need to preface with subjectivity
 - “(I thought, personally) that movie sucked.”
- Kant > individual subjects feel they may legitimize judgment of taste based on their own feelings.
 - pre 18th C this was not a valid method
- 19th C Romanticism > art is a direct conduit to certain truth
 - (rather than an aim at reflecting truth)
- Descartes, ‘I think therefore I am’ > truth is grounded in the self
- for the Empiricists > everything we know, we know through experience > the mind is a blank slate at birth
 - morals/truth in question
- at this time, new interest in the body
 - (feeling) empathy is an invention of Modernity (we’re not doing classic philosophy)

- the course:
 1. aesthetics in critical philosophy
 2. Lacans theories: psychoanalysis - anxiety
 3. affective photography (Barthes)
- Denis Diderot > shift in style 18th C . Rococo to Neoclassicism
 - more austere, moral form of painting
 - friction of social classes in judgment of taste
 - increasing importance of the self - rationalism, will, feeling.
 - the individual subject as the ultimate authority (rather than the Academy)
- Immanuel Kant 1724-1804 (born Koenigsberg, East Prussia) > Psychoanalytic theory
 - Critique of Pure Reason 1781, Critique of Practical Reason 1788, Critique of Judgment 1790. Synthesize Rationalism and ..?
 - aesthetic judgment is both subjective and universal. We assign beauty to objects as if they're innate ('a beautiful painting') rather than a subjective experience by the beholder
- Hume is empiricist > No innate ideas
 - how can there be a standard of taste?
- Bourdieu > socioeconomic determinism of taste (critique of Kant)
 - low class > literal viewing
 - upper class > formal viewing
 - taste further entrenches social hierarchies
 - feminist scholars will say similar things in terms of a patriarchal structure
- The Sublime > Kant: awe > negative > dis/pleasure (paradox)
 1. mathematical sublime
 2. dynamical sublime
 - perception of magnitude/infinity .. beyond pleasure
- Freud > death drive

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- sublime in painting (ie Turner storms etc.)
 - in modern art > Barnett Newman colour field
- 2nd part of course: psychoanalytic > Freud idea of Uncanny
 - uncanny disturbs us because it was once familiar, emerges with anxiety
- Lacans “extimacy” (opposite of intimacy), where interior and exterior coincide > ‘otherness’
- “abjection” (Julia Kristeva)> 1980s affect
 - disgust, the grotesque
- affect in photography > Barthes > why is photography different from other art?
 - analyzing his own reactions//feeling to photos
- C. S. Purse > kinds of imagery
 - icon > resemblance (painting/photo)
 - index > contiguity (a trace > footprint, smoke, etc.) physical > (photo?)
 - symbol > conventional (stop sign)