

Week 7 – 20th Century Art continued

Socialist Realism

- Soviet artistic and literary doctrine
- product of Soviet system - conceived by Stalin, Zhdanov and Gorky
- purpose was education in spirit of socialism
- widely condemned as stifling to artistic values, because of strict adherence to party doctrine and conventional techniques of realism
- where in market societies professional artists earned their living selling and being commissioned by rich individuals or the Church, in Soviet society, the market was suppressed and the State monopolized art market – artists became state employees
- The State decided what artists should paint, hence no incentive to excel
- The State, after Congress of 1934, laid down four rules for "Socialist Realism" art

That the work be:

1. Proletarian- art relevant to the workers and understandable to them.
2. Typical- scenes of every day life of the people.
3. Realistic - in the representational sense.
4. Partisan - supportive of the aims of the State and the Party.



Lenin, Alexei Nesterenkov



In the Stalin factory, Mikhail Kostin

Social Realism in America (The Mexican Muralists)

- Set in 1930s, decade of dramatic social and political upheavals, starting from Wall Street Crash (Great Depression) and onset of World War II
- Government initiated a series of public programs to bring optimistic messages to people through public art – murals
- Artists Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros

Influenced by

- Ancient Aztec (Mexican) sculptures – massive, symbolic and Mexican folk images
- Renaissance composition – simplicity, symmetry, organized draughtsmanship
- Renaissance frescoes – majestic scale, awe-inspiring subject matter
- Marxism

Philosophy

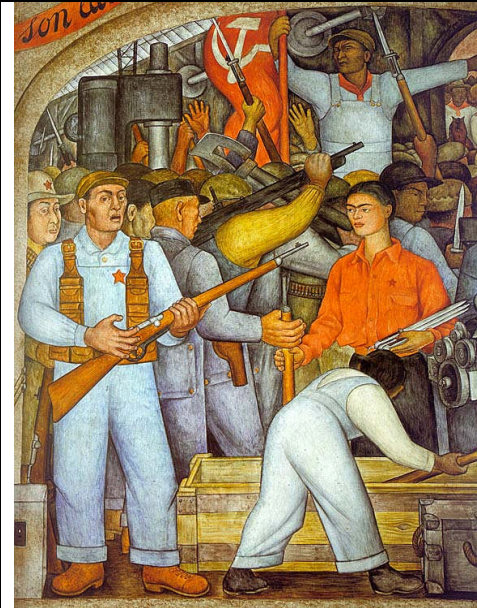
- Universalism – The Mexican Muralists wanted to glorify the common man, who, collectively contributes to the greatness of mankind (demonstrated by the oversized, state of the art technology they built)
- Noble vision of a utopian, futuristic society improved by technology – rejection of individualism

Painting Theory

- Ordinary worker was immortalized by being depicted in a monumental scale. Anonymous, resilient and disciplined, he is the indispensable unit of a great race – mankind, who is distinguished by his ability to harness the energies of Nature with the aid of sophisticated machines
- Stylized, idealized portrayal of man as identical units of a group – stresses on uniformity and repetition – individualism rejected

Subject matter

- Celebration of technology as a main subject matter – praises the second industrial revolution initiated by Henry Ford's novel idea of mass production (car assembly lines)
- Peasants, common people working harmoniously together in a utopian society
- Monumental, public art in form of gigantic murals aimed at communicating optimistic, spiritually uplifting messages to the masses
- E.g. Rivera – "The New Workers School" (1933), Orozco "Prometheus" (1930)



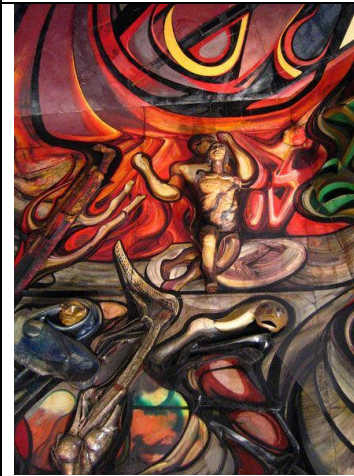
Diego Rivera. *En el Arsenal*, 1928



Diego Rivera. *Detroit Industry (North Wall)*, 1932-33



Jose Clemente Orozco. *Prometheus*, 1930



David Alfaro Siqueiros. *The March of Humanity*

Abstract Expressionism/Action Painting/New York School

- Emerged in New York City during mid 1940s, also known as Action Painting and New York School
- Represented shift of artistic capital to America, New York became focal point of artistic innovation
- Massive emigration of European artists to US during WW2; European artists (esp. Surrealism) exerted profound impact on American culture; economic supremacy of American further contributed to its primacy in visual arts
- American art prior to development of Abstract Expressionism was provincial, followed the artistic trends established in Europe, London, Paris and Rome; patronage for local American art was minimal; art collection focused on art of Europe
- The term 'Action Painting' was coined by critic Harold Rosenberg, who developed a theory that the painter improvises images as he goes along; hence the final work records a moment in artist's life
- First important school in American painting to be independent from European styles and to influence development of art overseas
- Important artists – Jackson Pollock, Hans Hoffmann, Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Theodoros Stamos, Adolph Gottlieb, Helen Frankenthaler, Barnett Newman, Lee Krasner, Esteban Vicente, Willem de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt

Philosophy

- Emphasized the active process of creating art – energy, action, kineticism, freneticism – the act of painting
- Developed inspirations from Surrealism, relying on instincts to shape/create works of art that were irrational, works were unpremeditated accidents
- "...painting is a state of being...Painting is self discovery..." – Jackson Pollock

Painting Theory

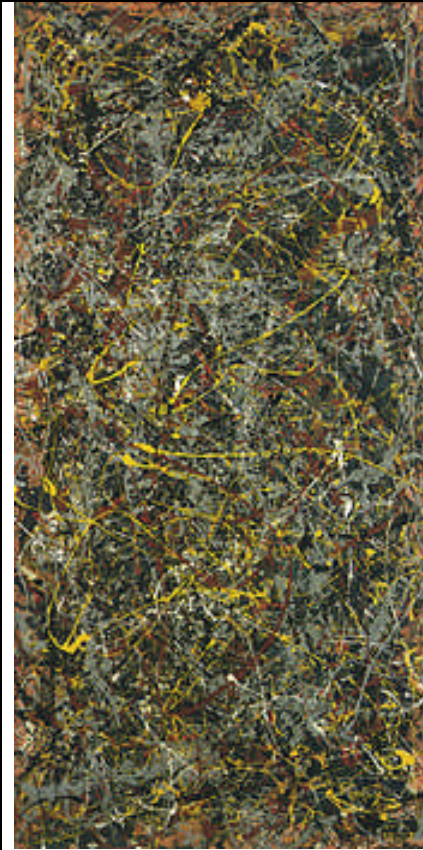
- Attention to surface qualities, i.e. qualities of brushstrokes, texture, use of huge canvases,
- Glorifying the act of painting itself as means of visual communication
- Attempt to transfer pure emotions onto canvas through subconscious means
- Traditional concepts of composition, space, volume and depth were abandoned
- Made use of flatness of picture plane & varying qualities of colours to create an ambiguous spatial relationship
- Physical action of the artist became an end & means to directly express his internal unconscious being

Jackson Pollock

- 1912-56
- Studied in New York City under Thomas Hart Benton
- Broke down conventional idea of art; freed the need to depict images; the act and process of painting became the subject and content of work
- Influenced by AP Ryder and Mexican Muralist, especially Siqueiros, Surrealism and Picasso
- Famous for his "drip" paintings, in which he energetically drew or "dripped" complicated linear rhythms onto enormous canvases placed flat on the floor
- Became symbol of new artistic revolt – abstract expressionism, highly promoted by art critic Clement Greenberg and the CIA to promote the USA as haven of free thought and free markets, thus challenging the social realist styles in communist nations and dominance of European art markets



One: Number 31, 1950



No. 5, 1948

Colour Field Painting

- A type of Abstract Expressionism characterized by works of Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman, Robert Motherwell and Adolph Gottlieb, Helen Frankenthaler
- Highly stylized and minimalist, getting rid of recognizable imagery
- Intelligent and psychological use of colour
- Artists wanted to present each painting as one unified, cohesive, monolithic image



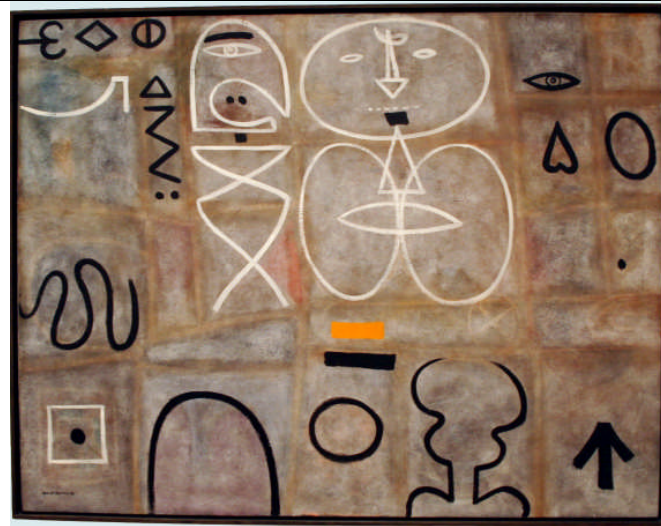
Robert Motherwell, *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 110*, 1971



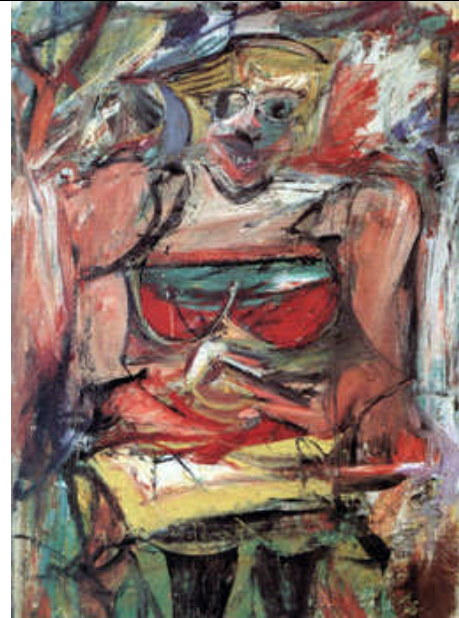
Clyfford Still, *1957-D No. 1*, 1957



Mark Rothko. *Magenta, Black, Green on Orange*, 1949



Adolph Gottlieb. *Man Looking at Woman*, 1949

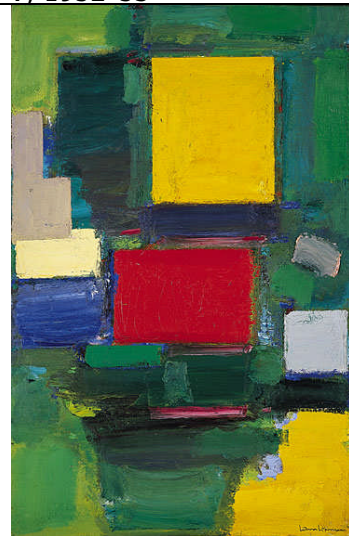


Willem de Kooning. Woman

V, 1952-53



Helen Frankenthaler. *Mountains and Sea*, 1952



Hans Hofmann. *The Gate*, 1959-60



Isamu Noguchi. *Cronos*, 1947



Jean Dubuffet



Robert Rauschenberg, Untitled "Combine", 1963



Jasper Johns. *Map*, 1961



Frank Stella. *Science of Laziness*, 1984



Franz Kline, *Painting No. 2*, 1954



Cy Twombly, *Bacchus*

Minimalism

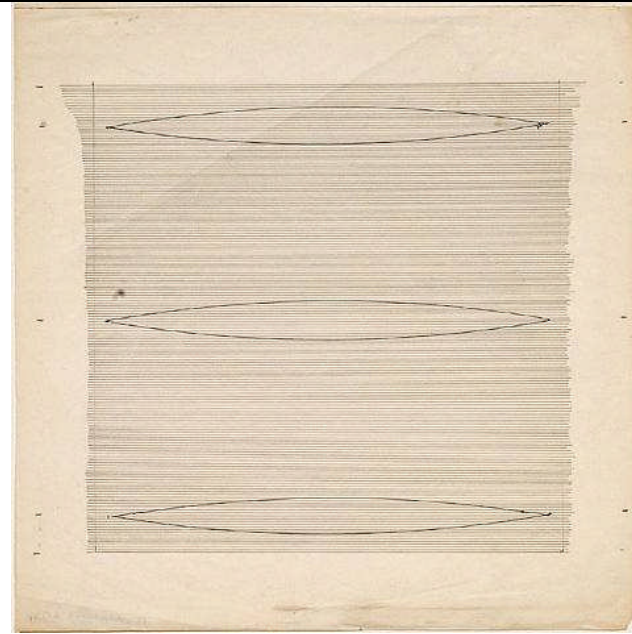
- Visual arts movement which developed most strongly in America (1960s – 1970s)
- Artists include Donald Judd, Carl Andre, Richard Serra
- A style of art which objects are stripped down to their elemental, geometric form and presented in an impersonal manner
- Influenced by constructivism, postwar artists such as Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt and David Smith
- Based on reductive aspect of Modernism and interpreted as reaction against Abstract Expressionism
- Eliminated representational imagery and illusionistic pictorial space in favour of a single, unified image, often composed of smaller parts arranged according to a grid (tendency towards mathematically regular compositions)
- Also describes a trend in design and architecture – highly functional, severe and undecorated

Philosophy

- To reduce painting and sculpture to essentials of geometric abstraction
- To reassert physical reality of art object in reaction to metaphysical preoccupations of artists in 1940s and 1950s

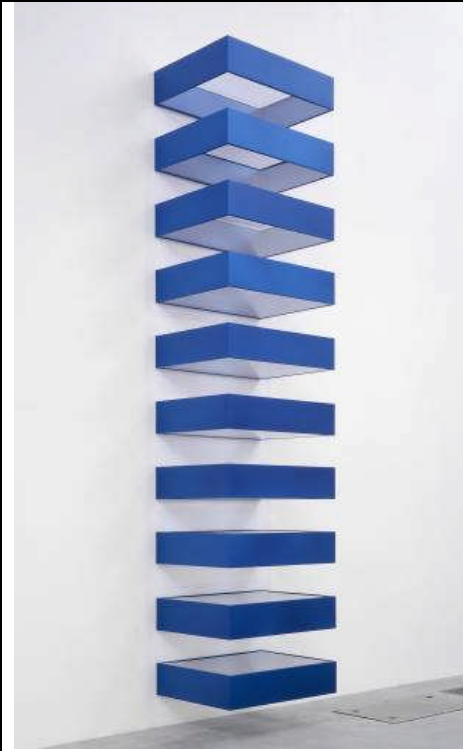
Characteristics

- Dismissed any reference to the hand, gesture, mood or feelings of the artist
- Anonymous, cold, indifferent and seemingly mechanical forms that made use of mathematical relationships



Agnes Martin.

Untitled, 1960



Donald Judd. *Untitled, 1990*

Minimalist sculpture

- Got rid of representational imagery and even artist's touch
- Typically produced by industrial fabricators
- Committed to ideal of creating new forms rather than recycling old ones. Minimalist sculptors hoped to transcend the production of mere art objects by producing 3D works that crossed the boundaries between art and everyday world
- Key issue is perception of artwork. Artists present their artworks as simple 'information'. The 'meaning' depends on viewer's experience and interpretation, which varies according to scale, viewpoint and setting
- Placement of object (gallery/outdoors) is calculated to trigger perceptions about dynamic relationships between forces, forms and space

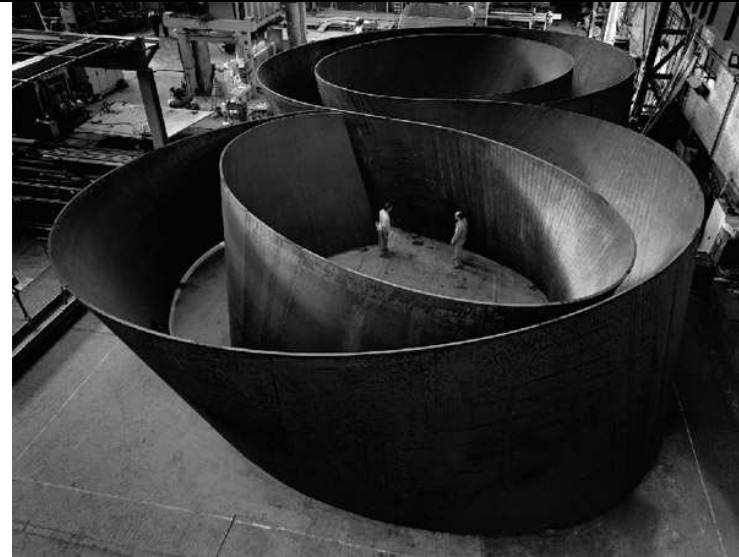
Donald Judd (1924-1994)



- American Minimalist sculptor
- Reduced sculpture to its essence; use of space to express art
- His use of interchangeable units/modules is characteristic of Minimal art
- His geometric shapes inspired by architecture; primary shapes assembled in a regular, mechanical progression have monumental feeling of contemporary skyscrapers
- "Actual space is more powerful & specific than paint on flat surface"



Richard Serra (1939~)



Carl Andre (1935~)



Conceptual Art/Idea Art/ Post-Object Art

- Took place around mid-1960s through 1970s
- Conceptual art is based on notion that essence of art is an idea, or concept, and may exist distinct from and in absence of an object as its representation
- Explored linguistic, mathematical, and process-oriented dimensions of thought and aesthetics, invisible systems, structures & processes
- Art which is not committed to long-lasting materials and forms
- Conceptual artists - Sol LeWitt, Joseph Kosuth

Philosophy

- The idea, instead of the object is the art
- Emphasis on artist's thinking made any activity or thought a potential work of art, without necessity of translating it into pictorial or sculptural form
- Influenced by ready-mades of Dada artist Marcel Duchamp
- Viewer's responsibility increases – his mental efforts have to be greater and his visual pleasure is often replaced by intellectual stimulation

Painting theory

- Popular format is the printed page and use of Xerox machine
- Documentation becomes art

Sol LeWitt

- 1928-2007
- American Minimalist/Conceptual Installation Artist
- Fascinated with infinite combinations inherent in the most radically simplified formal vocabulary
- Concerned with serialization and creation of systems
- Characteristic – use of white & black cubes displayed as open or closed forms
- "Ideas alone can be works of art"

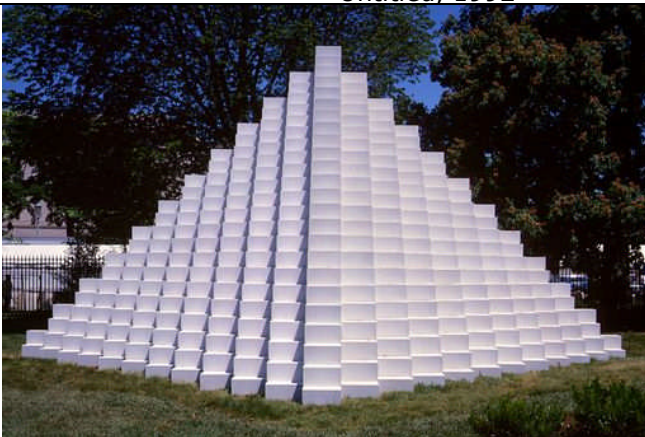


Untitled, 1992

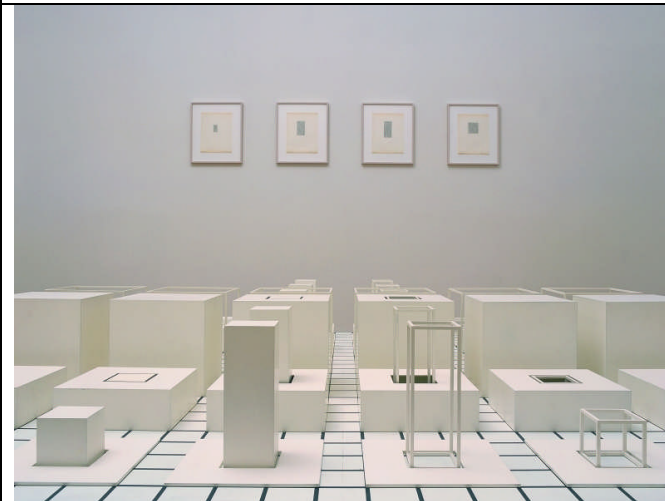


Isometric

projections#13, 1981



Four-sided pyramid



Environmental Art/Earth Art/ Earthworks

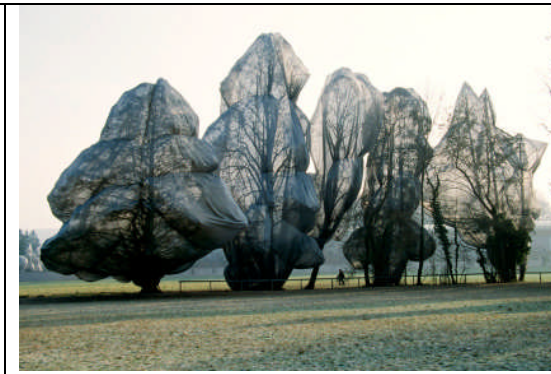
- Temporary form of art, aimed to increase awareness of a site and of spatial relationships
- Idea & process of execution are the 'art' and not the physical product, which can usually be remade at another time and place by other hands
- Artists of this movement shared 2 key concepts of the late 1960s – rejection of commercialization of art
- Interested in transforming natural environment into works of art
- Exhibiting photographic documentation of remote works is standard operating procedure for earth artists, as is for conceptual artists
- Artists – Robert Smithson (1938-1973), Richard Long (1945~), Christo



Robert Smithson. *Spiral Jetty*, 1970



Richard Long, *Walking & Marking*



Christo & Jean-Claude



Christo & Jeanne-Claude. *The Gates*, 1979-2005



Christo & Jeanne-Claude. *The Gates*, 1979-2005



Christo & Jeanne-Claude. *The Gates*, 1979-2005

Pop Art

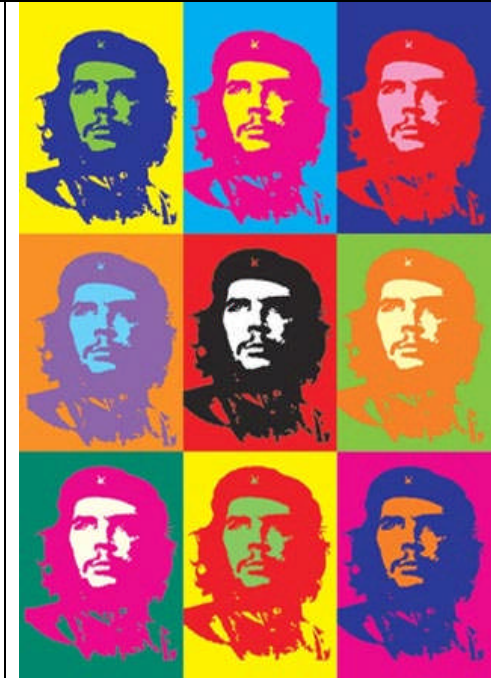
- Art movement which first emerged in Great Britain at the end of 1950s
- Reaction against seriousness of abstract expressionism by using common imageries found in pop and commercial culture - comic strips, soup cans and Coke bottles, to express formal abstract relationships
- Making art accessible to ordinary people
- Artists – Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Keith Haring, Sigmar Polke, etc



Andy Warhol. *Campbell's Soup*, 1968



Andy Warhol. *Marilyn Monroe*



Andy Warhol. *Che Guevara*



Robert Rauschenberg. *Riding Bikes*



Claes Oldenburg. *Typewriter Eraser, Scale X*



Roy Lichtenstein. *Drowning Girl*, 1963



Jasper Johns. *Flag*, 1954-55



Keith Haring. *Untitled*



Sigmar Polke. *The Goat Wagon*, 1992

