SpatialStudies 7c: Lecture 2
Narrative Time & Manufacturing Desire
A. Sculpture as ideology/ the monument and sculpture
B. Rodin’s narrative break
C. Repetition, the grid
D. Project II
E. Creativity: BBC, The Creative Brain, How Insight Works
Jonathan Schooler, Dr. Simon Ritter, John Kounos
A. Sculpture as ideology

(OCTOBER - Sergei Eisenstein’s commissioned filmic portrayal of the last days of Russia’s Provisional Government and its overthrow by the Soviets in 1917.)

Krauss discusses how the filmmaker utilizes sculptural icons as stand-ins for political views...**sculpture is ideological.**

Sculptures in this film represent (for Eisenstein) an outmoded 18+19c. neoclassical rationalism, which was an unquestioning belief in the mind of man and logic of a universal design.

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**If x, then y**

*A belief in the temporal, chronological causality of events*
A. Sculpture as ideology
(For the Neoclassicists), “…the context through which understanding unfolds is time; and, for sculpture, the natural context of rationality is the medium of relief.” RK

Nicolas II, Czar of Russia, October still, 1927

Monument for Saddam Hussein, 2003

If \( x \), then \( y^* \)

* A belief in the temporal, chronological causality of events
A. Sculpture as ideology

* example *

* Titled Arc, 1981-89 *
Richard Serra, Jacob Javits Federal Building, NYC
Dock, 2014
Phillida Barlow, Tate Britain
Feels her work comments on the history of the monument, deliberately undermines permanence and preciousness
Frontal relief sculpture in classical tradition: sequential narrative - illusory – operates like painting in its clear unfolding of a story.

Omniscient Viewer: illusion provided of having as much information necessary to “circumnavigate” forms without moving around them.

Francois Rude, *La Marseillaise*, *Departing Volunteers*, 1833-36
Francois Rude, “La Marseillaise”, 1833-36.

A. Sculpture as ideology

“The pregnant moment,” (Lessing) in 19th century, neo-classical relief sculpture:

Juncture of horizontal + vertical axes in Francois Rude’s relief = logical unfolding of narrative - between vertical progression and horizontal climax = the sculpture’s moment of ‘absolute pregnancy.’

“History was understood to be a kind of narrative, involving the progression of a set of significances that mutually reinforce + explicate each other and that seem driven by divine mechanism toward a conclusion, toward the meaning of an event.” (Krauss)
B. Narrative Break

Rodin’s Gates of Hell, 1840-1917, after Dante’s Inferno

Lorenzo Ghiberti’s Doors of Paradise, Baptistry, Florence, 1429-47
Rodin’s *The Three Shades*, 1880, and Canova’s *The Three Graces*, 1813

*Three Shades* breaks with convention of representing one figure in three different poses - Rodin presents same figure three times.
Rodin’s *The Three Shades*, 1880, and Canova’s *The Three Graces*, 1813

*Three Shades* above presents awkward positions, lacking in Neoclassical composition — impossible to find perfect vantagepoint
B. Narrative Break

Rodin’s *The Gates of Hell*, central figures are Fugit Amor, 1880

Figure-ground relationship has changed in relief: **ground** has mass, shape, + opacity, not representing space only, not pictorial - HIGH relief
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B. Narrative Break
Rodin’s Ruptures with 19th C Narrative Structure:

1. Repetitions: repeating same figure in one work - breaks narrative time (repetitive process of his own creation)
2. Lack of Composition: (appears lacking in graceful arrangement to the neoclassicist)
3. Opacity of Ground: not pictorial - disjointed figure/ground relationships - shadows separate.
5. Marking of Process: passage of medium from 1 state to another highlights Rodin’s process
RK “It is this communication between the surface and the anatomical depths that Rodin aborts. We are left with gestures that are unsupported by appeals to their own anatomical backgrounds, that cannot address themselves logically to a recognizable, prior experience within ourselves.”
B. Narrative Break


• RK – ‘the condition’ (cause for distention and torment expressed in figure) “it is not as though there is a different viewpoint one could seek from which to find those answers. Except one; and that is not exactly a place from with to look at the work – any of Rodin’s work – but, rather, a condition.”

• “relinquishing certain notions of cause as it relates to meaning …meaning without proof or verification of cause.”
B. Narrative Break

Left, Rodin, Adam, 1880, right, Medardo Rosso, Ecce Puer, 1906-07

new conception of self – not fixed

Husserl - phil., the self as a negotiation between our personal beings and the presentation of ourselves to others. The self is at the meeting point/juncture of these two entities.
Art nouveau (parallel to Rodin’s surface/structure divide) - design style that does not concern itself with internal structure of an object.
B. Narrative Break

Western sculpture into the 20th Century:
(some characteristics)

• The experience of the event takes place as it unfolds...
• Its meaning occurs within the experience, rather than preceding it. (new conception of self)
• The meaning of the object’s history is presented through the object’s external process of formation.
• Aura of the original in question: (Walter Benjamin’s Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction)
C. Repetition:
1. Rodin repeats figure, breaks expectations of narrative
2. Casting as inherently multiple (questions originality)
3. Avant-garde claims to originality - the grid as an example of the vanguard emerges from repetition and recurrence
4. Appropriation, (copy of the original) as device to question sanctity of original
5. Model vs. Serial Object, (Baudrillard)

Untitled, Felix Gonzales-Torres, 91
(Baudrillard’s claim of desire for original)

Three x Four x Three, Sol Lewitt, 84
C. Repetition:

3. Avant-garde claims to originality - the grid as an example of the vanguard emerges from repetition and recurrence. Grid as silent, cunning, hostile to narrative, non-hierarchical.

Accession I, Eva Hesse, 1967

Structure, Sol Lewitt, 1973

Mondrian
C. Repetition:

- “For those for whom art begins in a kind of originary purity, the grid was emblematic of the sheer disinterestedness of the work of art, its absolute purposelessness, from which it derived the promise of its autonomy. We hear this sense of the originary essence of art when Schwitters insists, ‘Art is a primordial concept, exalted as the godhead, inexplicable as life, indefinable and without purpose.’ And the grid facilitated this sense of being born into the newly evacuated space if an aesthetic purity and freedom.” RK
RK - modernism attempts to locate a new way of looking - equivalent to seeing as a newborn

4. Appropriation, (copy of the original) as device to question sanctity of original

Levine’s appropriations challenge: authenticity, originality, individuality, value, ownership, masterpiece and gender inequality
5. Model vs. Serial Object, (Baudrillard)
Discusses psychological aspects of humans and objects

Collecting, objects and habits, objects and time, (absorbing angst of death)

model, (a kind of original), and it’s lowly copy, the serial object –

re: the ideology of democracy, “This is a society whose embrace of technological progress enables it to make every conceivable revolution, just so long as those revolutions are confined within its bounds. For all its increased productivity, our society does not open the door to one single structural change.”
5. Model vs. Serial Object, (Baudrillard)

“When it comes to material objects,… and especially to manufactured objects complex enough to lend themselves to mental dismantling, (the tendency to break down into perverse autoerotic system)...has free reign.”
5. Model vs. Serial Object, (Baudrillard)

“With the automobile, for instance, it is possible to speak of ‘my brakes’, ‘my tail fins’, ‘my steering wheel’ …

Unpainted Sculpture, Charles Ray, 1997
(brings former serial object to model status)
C. Repetition: 5. Model vs. Serial Object

Ai WeiWei, *Sunflower Seeds*, 2010, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern

Where does this work stand in terms of the model and series dichotomy?
C. Repetition: 5. Model vs. Serial Object

Blizzard Ball Sale, David Hammons, 1983
For next project: bring 1 qt. milk carton
AND/OR large zip-lock baggies
+ plaster carving tools by Jan. 19
D. Project II:

Body/Transformation/Mutation

Investigate the sculptural possibilities of the human form. Work in a reductive manner to derive form from a solid through the process of carving away the material. Negotiate the relationships between object, form and surface.
Michelangelo’s Slaves/Prisoners, Florence
Michelangelo’s Pietá
David Today
Duchamp, *Female Fig Leaf*
D. left, Duchamp, étant Donné, right, Magdalena Abokanowicz, Backs
D. Eleanor Antin, *Carving A Traditional Sculpture*, 1973
D. Ron Mueck, Baby
D. Ron Mueck, Boy
Showing examples of whole figures - do not attempt this - focus on sections of the body.
E. BBC video:

Horizon: The Creative Brain, How Insight Works
Jonathan Schooler, Simone Ritter

Divergent Thinking