SpatialStudies 7c: Lecture 4

Body/Mutation/Transformation

A. Bodies in Space: from ideal to abject – *Return of the Real* (Hal Foster)

Two main directions in art of early nineties; one towards the *body and the abject*, another towards the *social and site-specific* (H. Foster)

B. Examples of artist’s works

C. Mid-term Review

Andres Serrano, *Piss Christ*, 1989

(milk, blood, urine)
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A. Starting with the space of the body, including a psychological space.

Andres Serrano, *Piss Christ*, 1989
(milk, blood, urine)
The self: ex. of Rodin’s narrative break and consequential reflections of self - his presence as author - mark-making - beginnings of personal expression/subjectivity

Conflicts: role of art (western culture)

objectivity vs. subjectivity

orthodoxy vs. absurd

autonomy vs. applied/utilitarian

real time and space vs. transcendent t & s

ideal vs. real

(social + site specific, body and abject all belonging to the REAL)
left, *Victory of Samothrace*, 3rd C b.c., right, Robert Graham, *Olympic Torsos I & II*, 1984, Los Angeles Coliseum

- Human figure in space - Gotthold Lessing’s assertion - sculpture is an art concerned with the deployment of bodies in space
- examples of heroic idealized bodies
- IDEAL

**Hans Bellmer**, 1902-1975 - constructed photography - “tableaux vivants” – made work that opposes fascism - was declared *degenerate* by the Nazi Party, and he was forced to flee Germany to *France* in 1938.

- anti-heroic, disturbing, Freudian fetish - fragmented depictions signaling shift from ideal to acknowledging dark side of human subconscious
• 2006 retrospective, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, removes numerous Bellmer works to avoid offending Islamic groups
• images of misogyny?

psychological terrain of abject – for some, closer to the real
Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Stills*, late 70s - early 90s, lower right, from old masters series, remaking Caravaggio’s *Self Portrait as Bacchus*, 1593

**Cindy Sherman: 1954 -**
- *Film Stills* resemble vulnerable, isolated starlet, B-movie, film noire
- uses herself as model, mutability of self (Heidegger)
- studies painting, failed first photo course
- multitude of masquerades that continue to explore both cinematic traditions - particularly horror - and conventions of representation in popular culture
taking back the picture of herself from the male gaze – she is both before and behind the camera
Monstrous feminine
“As her imagery becomes monstrous…it challenges “woman as nature.” (S. Taylor)
Cindy Sherman, *Untitled*, 1989

Monstrous representations of the feminine - How does this work compare to Hans Bellmer’s tableaux vivants? How does the gender of the author affect your reading of the work?
b. 1953, attends military academy in Illinois, admin. by Benedictine order of Catholic church — period of intense unsettling anxiety affects subsequent career (subjectivity, psychology - phobic)

Story about marching children

Influenced by Anthony Caro’s work - very formal syntax
Charles Ray

• early work - influence of 60s performance and Minimalism

• Brener taught Ray competitive sailing - how to find the line where the boat is perfectly balanced on the brink of disaster

sees sculpture less as object and more as activity
Charles Ray

• fascinating relationship to 3d depictions of the human body, some works anticipate the body of the audience, in others works Ray utilizes the history of sculptural depictions of the human body.
Jan Ove Steilhaug - “Hal Foster postulates two main directions in the art of the early nineties: one towards the body and the abject, another towards the social and the site-specific.

‘...much contemporary art presents reality in the form of trauma and the subject in the social depth of its own identity.’ Hal Foster, Return of the Real, 1996”

(Hal Foster is considered to be an articulate theorist of the post-modern era and was student of R. Krauss.)
Charles Ray, *Fall*, 1991
series inspired by fear of 1980’s shoulder-padded women

ab·j ect [ab-jekt, ab-jeekt]
*adjective*
1. utterly hopeless, miserable, humiliating, or wretched: *abject poverty*.
2. contemptible; despicable; base-spirited: *an abject coward*.
3. shamelessly servile; slavish.
4. Obsolete. cast aside.
Charles Ray, *Family Romance*, 1993
Charles Ray, Self Portrait with Homemade Clothes, 1998

Puzzle Bottle, 1995
Self-Portrait, 1990
Male Mannequin, 1990

disturbance in perception - double-take
Charles Ray

“Like Crusoe, he has remade the clothes he generally wears, by hand: from suede shoes, to jeans, plaid shirt, and jacket. … Ray forces us to reflect on things so basic or so close that we take them for granted. By subtly disrupting norms or changing the context of the ordinary, he causes a shift in perception and consciousness - an apprehension of the strangeness in the familiar…”, Lisa Phillips
Mike Kelley, installation, 1991
abject and phobic in objects that we use/love
Mike Kelley, Craft Morphology Flow Chart, 90s, More Love Hours Than Could Ever Be Repaid, c. 1985
Kiki Smith, born 1954, reintroduces representations of female nude – controversial. Simon Taylor states, abject art implies “not so much a lack of cleanliness or health as an assault on the totalizing and homogenizing notions of identity, system, and order. This base materialism in art confronts and transgresses social prohibitions and taboos, reenacting psychic traumas, personal obsessions, and phobias…”
Kiki Smith, *Tale*, 1992

“mind/body dichotomy…has had enormously devastating ramifications in the society…to justify great quantities of oppression…we have this split where we say the intellect is more important than the physical. And we have this hatred of the physical,” K.S.
Duchamp asserts that the mind is our most important tool – the intellect.

*Fountain* – ambiguous sexual references - *Duchamp* redefining masculinity.

Marcel Duchamp, *Female Fig Leaf & Fountain*, 1914

Kiki Smith, *Tale*, 1992

“we have this split where we say the intellect is more important than the physical. And we have this hatred of the physical.”

Robert Gober, b. 1954

Invokes abject in horror related to fear of dismemberment and death/ Aids virus
Concerned about visibility of gay male desire

Severed leg a metaphor for the pathology of homophobia
beeswax, human hair
Robert Gober, below, *Xcrib*, Rt., *Pair of Sinks*, 1980s
often uses traditional materials
explicit sexual references
knew Surrealists

Louise Bourgeois, *Blind Man’s Bluff*, 1984
b. Paris, 1911, died 2010

“What modern art means is that you have to keep finding new ways to express yourself, to express the problems,…about this painful situation of having no absolutely definite way of expressing yourself. This is why modern art will continue, because this condition remains; it is the modern human condition.”

*What does she say about feminism? About success?*

abject in action and materiality phobic & scatological matter
David Hammons, *Untitled, 1992*
*Rt, Pissed Off, 80s (R. Serra work)*
abject in action and materiality
phobic & scatological matter
*Ideology of DIRT*
  
a critique of antiseptic polish and
anity (authoritarianism)
David Hammons, *Head*, 2004,
Jordan Baseman, *CallMeMister*, 1995
**Review:**

**Week 1:** impact of Rosalind Krauss’ writings, Gotthold Lessing’s assessment of sculpture, how diff. from poetry or music or film? How did another historical critic analyze the modern artist’s use of mass and space - two distinct directions. RK - What is her take on the relevance of time and space in sculpture?

**Week 2:** What did Eisenstein mean when he said that all sculpture possesses an ideology? What did he say about the role of rationalism in art? Review the neo-classisist ideals and aesthetic approaches. What is the ‘pregnant moment’? How was Rodin different from neo-classicists? What role did repetition play in his work and how did it affect the nature of narrative? What other forms of repetition were covered during this week and what were the ramifications? On Baudrillard’s study of humans and objects - go over the different categories listed and think about the process of making a desirable/desired object.
**Week 3:** know the tendencies of the modernist movements mentioned in lecture - well enough avoid spending time looking up in notes. Who were the two Constructivists that headed up a split in ideology? What did RK say about the differences and similarities btwn Duchamp and Brancusi? “The Way Things Go” by Fischli and Weiss - think about and re-read their use of ‘play’ in their art and think about how their work reflects aspects of modernist movements.

**Week 4:** What is meant by the abject in art? What does Simon Taylor say that the artists were trying to achieve in relation to societal norms and repression? Who were the artists, be able to identify works they’ve made without looking them up. What does Kiki Smith say about the mind/body dichotomy? Re-read how Kelley and Gober relate to an ‘abject masculinity.’ How does Hal Foster’s concept of the ‘Return to the Real’ relate to Modernist ideas? (movements like Surrealism, etc.)
mid-term next week

1. Be ready: you can bring your reader and notes to class on Tuesday. (Those who need alt. space, see me.)

2. Bring green scantron - (long, narrow) and blue book

3. 43 true/false and multiple choice questions & choice of 2 essay questions out of 4, (no more than 3 blue book pages double-spaced each answer)

4. Re-read your assigned reading for comprehension of basic concepts, and go over lectures online, website under courses at: http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/faculty/mulfinger/

If this link doesn’t work, google Jane Mulfinger.

1. Images for essay questions will be provided.