

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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540 Seminar

Office Hours, Tuesday, 10-12.

Dictating Art Around 1939: Art, Democracy/Fascism and Communism

In early 1939, as perhaps a defensive sign, Superman and Batman appear for the first time in comic book form. They arrive in the mind of the American public while Hitler is invading Czechoslovakia and while Madrid falls into the hands of Franco. This painful re-organization of Europe along with the neutrality of the U.S. and the possibility, according to Einstein, of an atomic attack while New York is organizing and celebrating the international 1939 World Fair, shows the intensity of debates occurring during that year.

By investigating these harsh discussions around 1939 in Europe and in the United States, by analyzing the different artistic strategies populating a western culture in eruption, the seminar in studying this crucial moment, will also be an occasion to reflect on our time, a period where so many people are wondering again about the dysfunction and disintegration of the traditional model of western democracies.

Starting with the Breton/Rivera/Trotsky manifesto about independent art, and the famous article by Clement Greenberg "Avant-Garde an Kitsch", the seminar will compare works produced by traditional Avant-Garde groups to other esthetic forces actively challenging them.

The seminar will investigate and compare multi-cultural spheres (art, Jazz, world fairs, fashion, theatre and literature) confronted with the upcoming war. The concepts of alienation, modernism, populism will be discussed as well as contemporary texts about democracy

Art works by De Kooning, Gorky will be compared with Surrealist works (after their famous exhibition in Paris in 1938), with Vieira Da Silva, Hans Hartung new abstraction and Julio Gonzales, Bram Van Velde etc...without forgetting the imprisonment, already by 1939, of artists in the Concentration Camp des Milles in Provence (Bellmer, Wols, Ernst).

Aaron Daniel and Robert Bendiner, The Strenuous Decade , New York, Anchor, 1970

Acéphale 1936-1939.

Theodor W. Adorno: The Culture Industry, Selected essays on Mass culture. London, Routledge 1991.

G.Agamben, A.Badiou, D.Bensaid, W. Brown, L-L Nancy, J.Rancière, K.Ross, S, Zizek: Démocratie, dans quel état? , Paris, La Fabrique éditions.

Dudley Andrew, Steven Ungar, Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture , Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005.

Mark Antliff: Avant-Garde Fascism, The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909-1939 , Durham, Duke University Press, 2007

Ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebjardt: The Essential Frankfurt School Reader ,New York, Continuum, 1992.

Jean Baudrillard: A l'Ombre des Majorités Silencieuses, la fin du social,Paris Denoel/Gonthier, Mediations, 1978/1982 (In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities (Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents, 2007)

Cioran : History and Utopia, University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Erica Doss: Benton, Pollock and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Jacques Ellul : Propaganda : The Formation of Men's Attitudes, New York, Vintage Books 1965/1973.

Clement Greenberg: "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", in Partisan Review , Fall 1939, 34-49. Also in ED. John O'Brian, Clement Greenberg: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944 , University of Chicago Press, 1986, Volume 1, p. 5-22.

Leo Gurko: The Angry Decade: American literature and thought from 1929 to Pearl Harbor, New York, Harper 1947.

Steven Harris: Surrealist Art and Thought in the 1930s, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

James D. Herbert: Paris 1937, Worlds on Exhibition, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1998.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno: Dialectic of Enlightenment, New-York, A continuum Book, 1944/1969.

Denis Hollier: Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges bataille , MIT Press, 1989

Alice Yeager Kaplan: Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and Frenche Life Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Herman Lebovici: True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945 , Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1992.

Helena Lewis: The Politics of Surrealism, New-York, Paragon, 1998.

John Lukacs: “Democracy and Populism, Fear and Hatred, New Haven, London, Yale University Press. 2005.

Maureen Lunn: “Looking at Dirty Pictures: Sur(sous)realism, Fascism and reproducing intoxication in the 1930s. Public , No 7, 117-146 Secret Technologies, 1993.

Yves Michaud: Violence et politique, 1978

Laurie Monahan: A Knife Halfway Into Dreams: André Masson, Massacres and Surrealism of the 1930s Ph.D. Thesis Harvard University, 1997.

Jackson Pollock and Family: American Letters, 1927-1947 , Malden Mas., Polity Press, 2011.

Adrian Rifkin: Street Noises, Parisian Pleasure 1900-40 ,Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993.

William B. Scott and Peter M.Rutkoff: New-York Modern: The arts and the City, Baltimore/London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Maryse Souchart, Jean Claude Pinson, Jean Michel Vienne, Joël Gaubert: Le populisme aujourd’hui, Paris, Editions M-Editer, 2007.

John Taylor : Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War, NYU Press, 1998.

Leon Trotsky: Writing of Leon Trotsky 1938-1939 , New-York, Pathfinder Press, 1969/1974

Eugen Weber: The Hollow Years, France in the 1930s , London, Norton, 1994.

Cécil Whiting: Antifascism in American Art. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989

Week 1: James D. Herbert:”Short Circuit” (on Exposition 1938), Paris 1937, Worlds on Exhibition, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1998. P. 123-160

Dudley Andrew, Steven Ungar,”After the Front: From Revolution to Art Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture , Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005, P. 367-378

Week 2: American Abstract Artists: Editorial Statement 1938 in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood: Art in Theory, 1900-1990 , p.377-378

Bertold Brecht: “Popularity and Realism”, in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood: Art in Theory, 1900-1990 , p.489-493.

Fernand Léger, “The New Realism Goes on”, 1937 in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood: Art in Theory, 1900-1990 , p.493-496.

Ernst Bloch: “Discussing Expressionism” 1938 in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood: Art in Theory, 1900-1990 , p. 523-526

Week 3: Clement Greenberg: Avant-Garde and Kitsch in ED. John O’Brian, Clement Greenberg: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944 , University of Chicago Press, 1986, Volume 1, p. 5-22.

Theodor Adorno: “Culture Industry Reconsidered” in: The Culture Industry, Selected essays on Mass culture. London, Routledge 1991, p. 85-92.

Week 4: Andre Breton, Diego Rivera, Leon Trotsky: “Towards a Free Revolutionary Art” in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood: Art in Theory, 1900-1990 , p. 526-529.

Helena Lewis: “Trotsky and Surrealists”, in: **Helena Lewis:** The Politics of Surrealism, New-York, Paragon, 1998, p. 140-160.

Week 5: Max Horkheimer: “The Authoritarian State” in Ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt: The Essential Frankfurt School Reader ,New York, Continuum, 1992, p. 95-117

Theodor W. Adorno: “Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda” in Ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt: The Essential Frankfurt School Reader ,New York, Continuum, 1992, p. 118-137.

Week 6: Alice Yeager Kaplan: “Theoretical Voices” in Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Life Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986,p. 3-40.

Alice Yeager Kaplan: “Fascism and Banality” in Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Life Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986,p.41-58.

Week 7: Maureen Lunn: “Looking at Dirty Pictures: Sur(sous)realism, Fascism and reproducing intoxication in the 1930s. Public , No 7, 117-146 Secret Technologies, 1993, P. 117-146.

Denis Hollier: “The Labyrinth and the Pyramid” in Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges bataille , MIT Press, 1989, p. 57-73.