Cultural Otherness And Art Historical Values

ARTH 571
Instructor: Charlotte Townsend-Gault
Fall 2004

Description

It has become almost impossible to consider, or to define, art that is said to lie outside the canon of western art history without invoking ‘culture’. This second part of the Methodology syllabus explores some of the valences around the current, protean usages of the term ‘culture’ - visuality, performativity, space, sensory apprehension and material embodiment amongst them – as they inform discourses of art. It will also contend with the political economy of race, property, and the market forces that are inseparable from the articulation and circulation of culturally-based ‘art’.

Each reading should be understood as opening into a wider field of enquiry of which it is a part. In order for our discussions to take this into account it will be helpful if the two students who are presenting on a given week can work together, or at least have some conversations before the class, to bring out some of the shared references, areas of overlap or disjuncture between their given texts.

The mark for this graduate seminar will take into account participation in class discussion (20%), two presentations (30%) and a final paper (50%).

NB. All the books from which the readings are taken are on Course Reserve in the Library. In most cases a second, photocopy, of the reading itself is also on reserve.

January 17: What is cultural otherness? Is it race? Where does ‘art’ come in?

January 24: History of a binary: Modernism / Primitivism
Hal Foster. 1985. ‘The “Primitive” Unconscious of Modern Art’. October 34. 58-70

January 31: A different binary: Modernity / Indigeneity
February 7: What is the relationship between indigenous autonomy and nationalism?

February 14: Reading Week
February 21: Can cultural authenticity be accounted for by ‘aura’?

February 28: Culture – given, taken or sold?

March 7: Looking, seeing and visuality have histories

March 14: Performing self and performing culture

March 21: There is no such thing as (culturally) empty space
Miwon Kwon. 2002. ‘From Site to Community in New Genre Public Art: The Case of “Culture in Action”’, in One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity. MIT. 100-137

March 28: Feeling the way

April 4: When difference lies in differential access
Supernumerary class: Back to the image and the artist’s object