AESTHETIC THEORIES IN ART
POSTMODERN APPROACHES

Art History AP
Schorsch 08-09
Postmodern Theories in Aesthetics

• Characteristics of Postmodernism in Art include:
  – Technology
  – Non-Linear Thinking
  – Reflection/Commentary of Realities
  – Value in Historical/Cultural Context
  – Chaos
  – Aesthetic Values as Process
Semiotic Theory

- The essence of art is the communication of important ideas and other knowledge through symbolic (non-verbal) languages.

- Good art communicates its meaning effectively in this non-verbal language.
• Lichtenstein

Whaam!
1963
Magna on canvas
172 x 269 cm (68 x 106 in.) (two canvasses)
- Warhol
  Liz,
  1964
  Color offset lithograph
• Basquiat

Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari
1982
Acrylic, oil, and oil paintstick on canvas with exposed wood supports, 72x72 inches
• Keith Haring  
  *Untitled, 1981*  
  Acrylic on Vinyl  
  96 x 96 inches  
  244 x 244 cm
• Keith Haring
  *Untitled*, 1982
  Enamel and dayglo on metal
  90 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 72 inches
• Keith Haring
  *Free South Africa*, 1985
  Poster
• Keith Haring
  *Crack Down*, 1986
  Poster
  22 x 17 1/4 inches
  56 x 44 centimeters
• Keith Haring
  
  *Ignorance = Fear*, 1989
  
  Poster
  
  24 x 43 1/4 inches
  
  61 x 110 centimeters
• Marcel Duchamp
  *The Large Glass*
Marcel Duchamp
*Fountain*
1917, replica 1964
Porcelain
unconfirmed: 360 x 480 x 610 mm
Instrumentalist Theory

• In general terms, an Instrumentalist view is one that sees the message of an artwork as its most significant aspect, and the value of art as its capacity to change the way people think, believe, or behave.
• Using this theory, artwork may be judged by their effectiveness in influencing the thoughts and actions of individuals in society.
Käthe Kollwitz
1903
*Working Woman in Profile facing Left* Lithograph on Japanese paper, 16 7/8 x 11 7/8 inches (image)

Instrumentalism emphasizes the use of art as an instrument for furthering moral, social or political points of view. Artwork is valued for the role that it plays in our social history.
• Boccioni
States of Mind: The Farewells
1911
Oil on canvas
70.5 x 96.2 cm
• Boccioni
  *States of Mind: Those who go*
  1911
  Oil on canvas
  70.8 x 95.9 cm

This theory holds that art is and/or should be primarily functional in that it is intended to do something significant.
• Boccioni
  States of Mind: Those who stay
  1911
  Oil on canvas
  70.8 x 95.9 cm
Braque

*Still Life with Harp and Violin*

1912

Oil on canvas

116 x 81 cm
• Pablo Picasso

*Girl with a Mandolin (Fanny Tellier)*

Paris, spring 1910

Oil on canvas

39 1/2 x 29 in. (100.3 x 73.6 cm.)
• Margaret Bourke-White
  Nuremberg
  1945
• Weegee (Arthur Fellig)
  Summer, Lower East Side
  1937
• Larry Clark
  Untitleds, From Tulsa
  1970, printed 1980
Instrumentalist Theory

• The essence of art is its usefulness in helping us to comprehend and improve our overall life experiences.

• Good art is always a means to some important end.
Contextualist Theory

• The essence of art is the ability of the art work to reflect the interest and concerns of a specific group of people.
• Barbara Kruger
  *Untitled (It's a small world but not if you have to clean it)*, 1990
  Photographic silkscreen on vinyl
  143 x 103 in. (363.2 x 261.6 cm)
Barbara Kruger
_Untitled (You are not yourself)_
1982
Black-and-white photograph,
72 X 48 in. (182.9 X 121.9 cm).
• Frida Kahlo
  The Two Fridas
  1939
  Oil on canvas
  68 x 68 in. (173 x 173 cm)
• Cindy Sherman
  *Untitled Film Still #10*
  1978
• Cindy Sherman
  Untitled Film Still #35
  1979