1 Introduction

- Q1: What makes us judge something as beautiful?
- Q2: What makes us judge something as ART?
- What triggers an aesthetic judgement?

1.1 Review: Three Conceptions of Art

- H1: The AESTHETIC Conception of Art
  - The value of art is correlated with how aesthetically pleasing it is

- An Essential Properties/Objectivist Approach

  **Classical Renaissance Ideals of beauty:**
  An object, x, is ART/BEAUTIFUL if it has
  
  - (i) a SYMMETRICAL composition
  - (ii) IDEAL subject matter and forms
  - (iii) a HARMONIC HUE SCHEMA
  - (iv) a HARMONIC VALUE SCHEMA

- H2: The CONTEXTUALIST Conception of Art

- H3: The CONSTRUCTIVIST Conception of Art

- Today’s Focus: What is ART?
  
  - REPRESENTATIONAL VS EXPRESSIVE ART
  - The CONTEXTUALIST conception of art
  - Brief overview of Western Art Movements

**Kant’s Theory of Aesthetics**

The aesthetic judgement (i.e., the act of judging something beautiful)

1. is SUBJECTIVE (a felt judgement, not an intellectual calculation)
2. is UNIVERSAL (not just a personal opinion)
3. is DISINTERESTED, and (value independent of usefulness/benefit to perceiver)
4. ENGAGES IMAGINATION AND INTELLECT (in addition to the senses)
How could something like this be categorized as art, assuming we follow the Aesthetic Conception?!

2 The Contextualist Conception of Art

H2: The CONTEXTUALIST Paradigm of Art

→ The value of art is correlated with
   (i) how aesthetically pleasing it is, and
   (ii) its relationship to its historical context of creation

• eg., The artistic value of Manet’s 1863 “Olympia” is a due to
   (i) its formal properties
   (ii) a comparison to Titian’s earlier 1583 “The Venus of Urbino”, and
   (iii) how the comparison reflects the shifting artistic and political ideologies of the time

Parisian artists in Manet’s time were rebelling against what the art academies deemed “art,” - eg.,

– ideal, rounded figures
– contrasting dark/light values indicating depth
– warm golden hues
– idealized content matter: gods, goddesses, biblical scenes

Manet’s “Olympia” 1583, Oil on canvas

Titian’s “Venus of Urbino” 1583, Oil on canvas
• Artistic sensibilities were shifting from **idealism** to **realism**...
  
  – rigid, sharp, angles
  – low-contrast values indicating flatness instead of depth
  – cold colour palettes
  – realistic content matter: prostitutes, servants

• Titian’s “**idealism**” approach to painting may appear more realistic on a purely visual level, eg., with respect to the depth and roundness of forms...

• ...but Manet’s “**realism**” was more realistic in terms of reflecting the non-ideal everyday life of Paris

• **Basic Idea:** The historical reference and contrast to Titian’s “Venus of Urbino” and the interpretation with respect to this emerging political and artistic ideology adds **artistic meaning** (and therefore **value** to Manet’s work.

• Many movements in western art history can be interpreted as rebellion against previous artistic conventions:

  – **Renaissance:** (1400s-1520s)
    Symmetry, idealism, harmonic colour and value schemas

  – **Mannerism:** (1520-1580)
    Compositional tension, asymmetry, elongated (non-naturalistic) body proportions

  – **Baroque:** (1590s-1720s)
    Dramatic asymmetrical compositions, Exaggerated high-contrast values (tenebrism), intense emotion

  – **Da Vinci’s “La Gioconda”, 1503-4, Oil on Poplar**
  – **Michelangelo’s “The Last Judgement,” Detail of Mary and Jesus**
  – **Parmigianino’s “Madonna with the Long Neck,” 1534-40, Oil on wood.**
  – **Raphael’s “School of Athens”, 1509-1511, Fresco**
  – **Caravaggio’s “The Crucifixion of St. Peter,” 1601, Oil on canvas.**
  – **Artemisia Gentileschi “Judith Slaying Holofernes”, 1614, Oil on canvas.**
- **Rococo**: (1720-1790)
  Light colour schemes, graceful curves, lighter/frivolous subject matter

- **Neo-Classicism**: (1750-1850s)
  “Classical” symmetry, moralizing/idealized subject-matter (often from mythology), idealized body proportions, idealized golden skintones, political themes

- **Realism**: (1850s-1890s)
  Realistic subject-matter (post-revolution everyday life), realistic/non-idealized body proportions, cold/dreary colour palette

- **Impressionism** (1860s-1890s)
  Focus on depicting the effects of changing light, perceived movement, and transience, using visible brush-strokes. Content matter: nature and everyday life

- **Modern Art**: (1900s-)
  Rebellion against **representational** nature of art
• What is ART?
  → Manet’s “Olympia” challenged the social and artistic conventions that the viewers of his era expected

• This intellectual challenge is a large part of “Olympia”’s value as art (cf. Kant’s fourth criterion)

• → Marcel DuChamp’s “Fountain” does the same thing!
  - i.e., it challenges the conventions that art should be

• Traditional Conventions of Art
  (i) Representational (Duchamp: Rather it should be conceptual!)
  (ii) Visually-pleasing/beautiful
  (iii) Have a medium like paint, bronze, marble, etc.,

3 Representational VS Expressive Approaches to Art

• Recall: According to the representational/mimetic approach to art, the aesthetic response correlates with how well an object represents reality

• The value of an object as “art” is correlated with how faithful a representation of reality it is

• But what do we mean by REALITY?
3.1 The Expressive Aspect of Art

- **Representation:**
  Outward-looking, aims to capture **outer reality**
  - Nature
  - Society
  - Human form and action

- **Expression:**
  Inward-looking, aims to convey **inner reality**
  - Moods
  - Emotions
  - Attitudes

**The Hudson River School:**
19th-Century American landscape painters

- Realistic/naturalistic approach to natural scenes **(representational)**
- ...But also **expressive** of their nationalistic interpretation of the American landscape as monumental, dramatic, breath-taking and wild

**Manet’s “Bar at the Folies-Bergere”**
- Depicts a real part of Parisian society **(representational)**
- ...but the expression on the barmaid’s face (especially in contrast with her animated pose in mirror’s reflection), can be interpreted as expressing Manet’s critical **attitude** towards Parisian society

**David’s “Oath of the Horatii,” commissioned by Louis XVI**
- Scene from Classical Roman history: The three Horatii brothers agree to risk their lives in order to fight against three members of the Curiatii family, to settle a dispute between Rome and Alba
- Tonal contrasts give appearance of solid form to the figures. **(representational)**
- Tonal contrast between background and foreground also expressively glorifies the virtues of loyalty, sacrifice, and solidarity to the State
Prior to the French Revolution, they glorified solidarity to Louis XVI. Next week we’ll talk about how this relates to the Constructivist Approach to Art.

Q: Whose moods, emotions and attitudes?

According to the Expressive Conception of Art: The artist’s moods, emotions and attitudes

3.2 Expressive Uses of Colour

Last Week: How to understand and use colour to better represent outward realities

- Colour Theory: Hue, Value, Chroma
  1 Local Colour and interactions with Light Sources (colour constancy, in terms of hue, value and chroma)
  2 Form Principle: Predictable value regions on solid 3D forms

This Week: How to understand and use colour to better express inward realities

- Expressive Colour - Hue Temperature

Recall: The terms warm and cool are often used to describe hue

“The cool colors seem to evoke feelings of winter, night, sky, shadow, sleep and ice. The color blue suggests quietness, restfulness, and calm. Warm colours make us think of fire, hot spices, and blood. They connote energy and passion. Orange and yellow are ephemeral colors. We see them fleetingly in nature: in sunsets, flowers, or autumn leaves. (Gurney 2010)

Observation: The psychological associations of colour is often used to reinforce particular characterizations as well

- Eg., warm colours for characters with warm, energetic personalities
- Eg., cool colours for characters with cool, calm personalities

- Value and chroma can also be used expressively
- Eg., Fauvism: Non-naturalistic, expressive colour, defied conventions regarding value and form (eg., the Form principle)
- Eg., Matisse’s L’Atelier Rouge (“The Red Studio”1, 1911, Oil on Canvas “Modern art spreads joy around it by its color, which calms us.” - Matisse

1 The studio was actually white.
WEEKLY INSTAGRAM ASSIGNMENT: Option I

1 Find/create something that uses colour (hue, value or chroma) expressively instead of representationally

2 Explain (i) how the colour use is not representational, and (ii) what you think the divergence from the representational approach expresses

3 Remember to identify with your student code in the comment!

WEEKLY INSTAGRAM ASSIGNMENT: Option II

1 Find/create an image with three sections, each section showing a progression in terms of

   (i) Representation, or

   (ii) Expressiveness

2 Explain how the visual aspects

3 Remember to identify with your student code in the comment!

References
