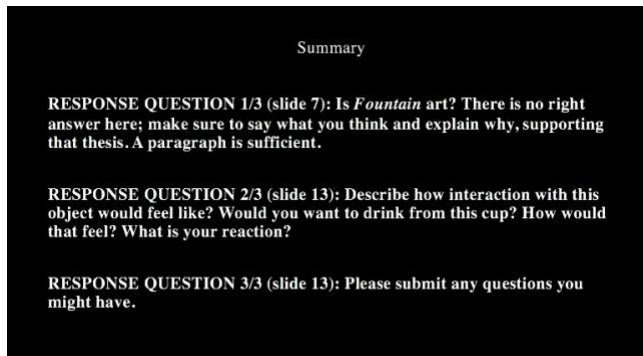


Responses due 5/7/2020 at 9:30 AM by email (anna.carroll@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Slide 1



RESPONSE QUESTION 1/3 (slide 7): Is *Fountain* art? There is no right answer here; make sure to say what you think and explain why, supporting that thesis. A paragraph is sufficient.

RESPONSE QUESTION 2/3 (slide 13): Describe how interaction with this object would feel like? Would you want to drink from this cup? How would that feel? What is your reaction?

RESPONSE QUESTION 3/3 (slide 13): Please submit any questions you might have.

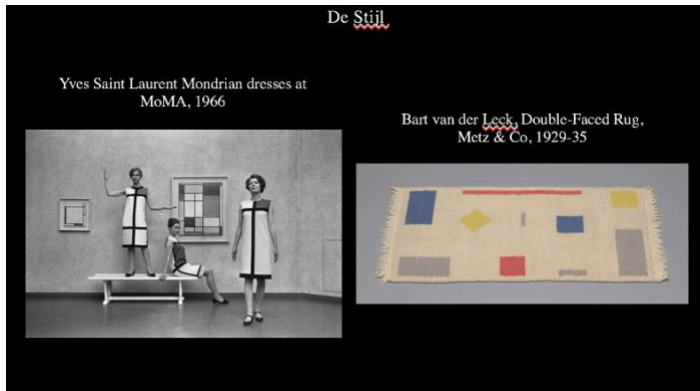
Slide 2



Another movement in the early 20th century was De Stijl, which means The Style. Like Cubism, which was beginning to reject illusionistic art, De Stijl also embraces the canvas as a flat surface. What does this mean? A canvas is flat. It is two-dimensional. When artists use perspective and other techniques to create depth in a painting or a drawing, they are “creating” space on that flat surface. De Stijl is all about emphasizing that flatness and accepting a painting as a painting, not real life. Mondrian created this style. His paintings are extremely linear because he wasn’t interested in creating an illusionistic depiction of the world. Mondrian called this the “abstract real.” Mondrian wanted to depict universal truths that could be understood by everyone. He’s not interested in art historical references or symbolism, but through pure abstraction, he is depicting the great opposites of life- life and death, light and dark, good and evil, etc... Pure abstraction is abstraction that does not refer to any real-life thing. We’ve seen artworks that are abstract and representational, like the Futurist sculpture *Horse*. De Stijl is not representational. Mondrian said, “pure abstract art becomes completely emancipated, free of naturalistic appearances.” *De Stijl* is a style that is meant to represent a universal human experience.

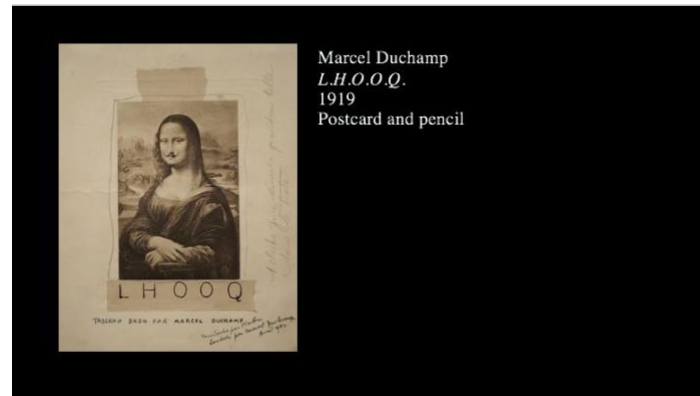
5.6.20 20th Century Part 1

Slide 3



De Stijl wasn't restricted to just paintings. The goal was to create a whole new way of living through a visual language that everyone knew. Clothing, house decorations, etc. were all made in the De Stijl style.

Slide 4



One of the things that can get a little confusing about modern art, is that so many styles and movements are happening at the same time, and they are connected. At the same time as Picasso and Matisse, and other artists we've talked about, another artist, Marcel Duchamp, was also working. Duchamp was part of a group that formed from called Dada, which is essentially a nonsense word in English, means "yes, yes," in Russian, and "hobbyhorse" in French. Dada is all about making multiple meanings and poking fun at art. Dada artists didn't recognize themselves as a unified group, and their work looks very different, but they are all pushing back against the "rational" machine age that led to World War I. After the war (1914-1918), during which there were 16 million military and civilian deaths, people were questioning societal conventions that had led to such a terrible war. Artists made fun of art as part of this, like Marcel Duchamp's satire of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. Duchamp has given her a mustache and beard, and written L.H.O.O.Q., which when said out loud sounds like "she has a hot ass" in French. Duchamp took a postcard of the *Mona Lisa*, taped it to paper, and then vandalized it with pencil.

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Slide 5



We have here *Fountain*, by Duchamp, which was made in 1917. We're looking at a copy from 1964, because the original has been lost. What are we looking at? It's a toilet, a urinal. Marcel Duchamp went to Mott's plumbing and bought the urinal, flipped it around, signed it R. Mott and submitted this to an exhibition put on by an artists' group that he was a founding member of called the Society of Independent Artists.

Why did he do this? The exhibition put on by this group was special because there was no jury. Juried art exhibitions, like the salons of the Neoclassical period, required artists to apply and then the jury would decide what made it into the show. The Society of Independent Artists wanted an exhibition with no jury and no prizes for artists who won prizes- this exhibition was about loosening restrictions in the high art world.

Duchamp submitted this as part of his philosophy to make fun of art and to question what art is. Duchamp is the artist- he flipped the urinal and through his idea, transformed the toilet into an art object, differentiating it from other urinals. But he didn't make this object, someone else did. So is this art. Duchamp said that this is a **readymade- a mass produced or found object that an artist makes into art by selecting and naming it.**

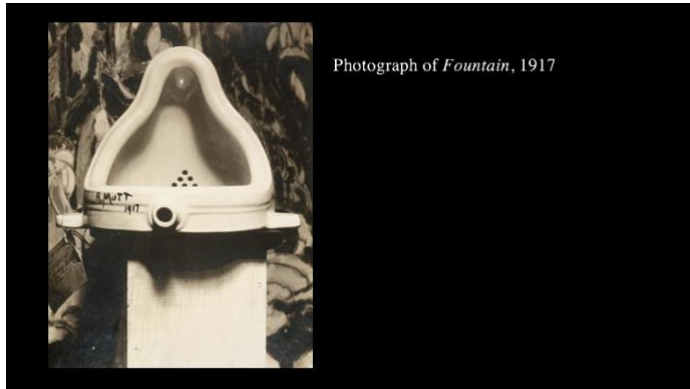
Slide 6



Think back to our first day of class, when we debated if this object was art. It was made by natural forces (erosion) but was picked up and moved by someone because it looks like a face. We could say that this is a readymade because it has been found and put into an art context.

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Slide 7



Back to *Fountain*. The original is shown here on a pedestal in a photograph. So, Duchamp created the idea of the readymade, made this statue and submitted it to the exhibition. But, this exhibition, founded on the idea of accepting all art, rejected it. Duchamp was furious and resigned from the group. Why was it rejected. The committee said, “The *Fountain* may be a very useful object in its place, but its place is not in an art exhibition and it is, by no definition, a work of art.”

But this rejection is a bit problematic because in some ways Duchamp did make it. He transformed it from a utilitarian object into an art object. This object forces us to ask what is art? It is the object, or the idea?

RESPONSE QUESTION 1/3: Is *Fountain* art? There is no right answer here; make sure to say what you think and explain why, supporting that thesis. A paragraph is sufficient.

Slide 8

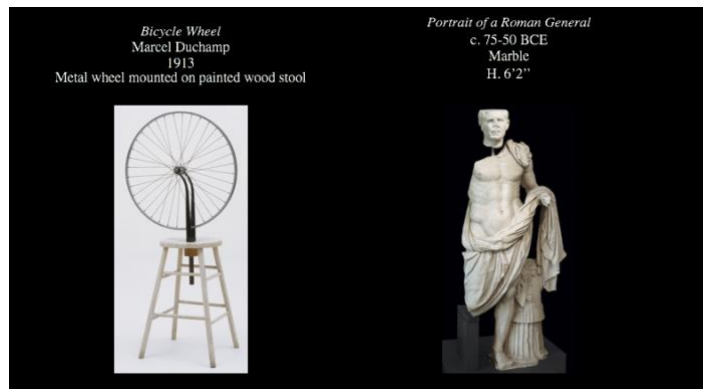


Like *Fountain*, many of Duchamp's works prompt us to reconsider what art is. Take *Bicycle Wheel* as an example, which is again a readymade. It's a stool with a bicycle wheel mounted on this. This sculpture required more participation from Duchamp than *Fountain*, because in this case he had to combine the objects.

A question that a lot of people ask about Dada, is why does this matter? Is it good art? Let's start with the second- is this good? That is entirely subjective, and up to you. You may hate this or you may love it, and both are ok! But why does this matter? It encourages rethinking of art.

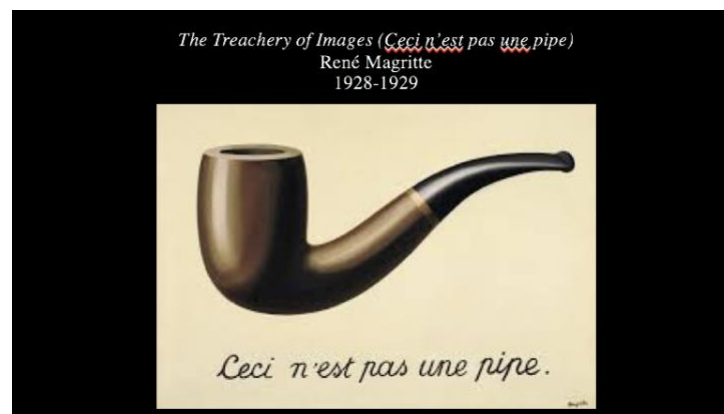
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Slide 9



This may seem like just a bicycle wheel on a stool, but it's also a figure! Duchamp is drawing on art historical precedents- contrapposto, an interest in naturalism and anatomy, etc.- and rejecting them. In some ways this is an abstract figure, with the wheel the head and the legs of the stool the legs of the human.

Slide 10



What are we looking at here?

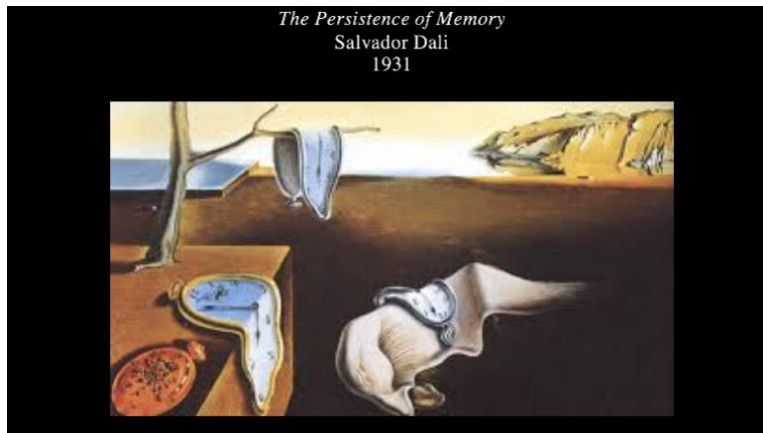
I'm guessing that many of you thought a pipe. We're looking at a pipe. But are we? No, it's a painting of a pipe, not an actual pipe.

Another movement that asks us to reconsider how we think about art was Surrealism, which was all about the subconscious mind. René Magritte was a Surrealist artist, who could paint incredibly illusionistic paintings. Here he has painted a pipe, underneath which he was painted the phrase "ceci n'est pas une pipe," which is French for "this is not a pipe."

Much of the art we've looked like in this class has been illusionistic, with artists trying to trick us into thinking we're looking at real objects/people/places, rather than a painting. Magritte pushes back on this idea of the perfect representation. He forces us to ask which to trust- the image that is a pipe and looks like one, or the text, which very clearly tells us that this is not a pipe.

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Slide 11

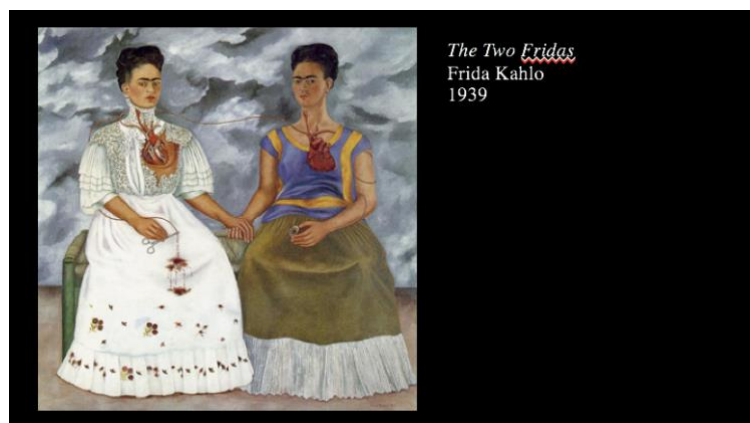


Like Magritte's rejection of illusionism, Salvador Dali rejects rationality and forces us to ask what we are looking at. This is not any real scene that Dali witnessed, but is a dreamscape. Surrealism was very interested in the subconscious- what do we dream? What determines our dreams and inner thoughts? At this time, psychoanalysis was developing as a field, and so the study of dreams captured the interest of many artists.

Let's break down this painting. There are melting clocks in the foreground. Time and movement influenced art in this time, like in Futurism. Perhaps the melting of clocks is commenting on industrialization and the regulation of time. But against this empty background with a still sea which does not even have waves, the space feels still and timeless. The clocks melt away and time ceases to exist. The distorted beige form in the foreground may be a self-portrait, also melting away. There are personal touches in this painting. The hills at the upper right are the hills of Catalonia, where Dali was from.

Despite the confusing and impossible images, the painting is done very naturalistically. It doesn't make any sense, but there is perspective, tight brushstrokes, highlights and shading. Dali is capturing the dream and showing the irrational subconscious.

Slide 12



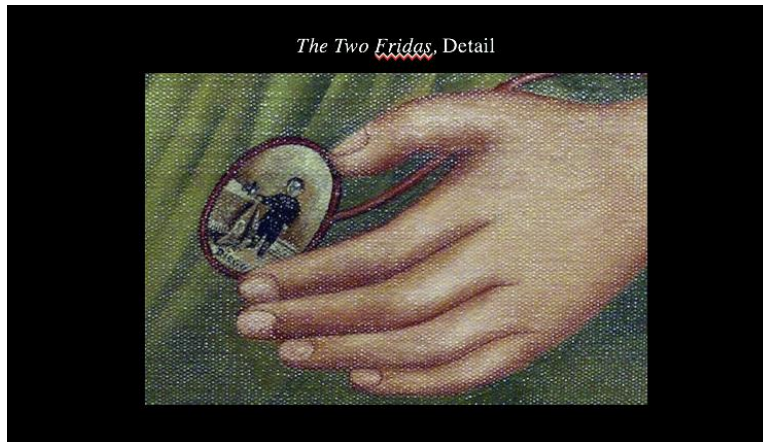
5.6.20 20th Century Part 1

Frida Kahlo was another Surrealist. Born to a middle-class family in Mexico, she was working at a time when women were mostly restricted to the domestic sphere and the when the idea of what made a woman beautiful was very set. Kahlo went against societal expectations in many ways, such as becoming a painter and also by keeping her unibrow. She painted mostly self-portraits so this picturing of self-identity is extremely important to her work.

Here we have a double self-portrait, painted the year she got divorced from her husband, Diego Rivera, who was also a painter. Before meeting Rivera she wore very European clothing, but when she met Rivera he encouraged her to dress in more traditional Mexican styles, which is shown in her dress. This painting is exploring her own identity in relation to her marriage to Rivera. So we see 2 Fridas, because there is the married Frida and the divorced Frida.

The two Fridas are sitting hand in hand, so they are connected. One is stronger and less exposed. This is shown quite literally with the Frida in white, European dress with an open heart and a cut vein. The Friday in traditional Mexican dress has her heart less exposed. The vein from her heart is not cut off, but is connected to a small portrait that she holds in her hand.

Slide 13



The portrait is of Diego Rivera, so her vein is connected to her now ex-husband. Why this emphasis on anatomy? Kahlo had polio and was in a car crash when she was younger. Over her life she had 32 surgeries. The idea of cutting open the body and exploring anatomy is then very familiar to her, and makes its way into her work.

This is a very Surrealist idea, with the inner parts of the body coming out. This interest in anatomy is not that interest which we saw with the ancient Greeks or in the Renaissance. This isn't about the ideal, naturalistic depiction of the body, but is more about the inner workings of the mind and how the subconscious relates to anatomy. Kahlo, drawing on very personal experiences, brings the inside out and imbues her anatomical depictions with very visceral, emotional, and personal undertones.

References to dreamscapes are also present in the background, which is a stormy sky with no real sense of land. Where are these women? The implication is that they are not in a real space.

Slide 14



Finally, we will look at Meret Oppenheim's *Object*. This is a cup, saucer, and spoon covered in fur. According to legend, Oppenheim was at a café in Paris with Pablo Picasso and his girlfriend Dora Maar. Oppenheim was wearing a bracelet that was brass covered with fur and Picasso and Maar shouted, "anything can be covered in fur!" A little while later, still at the café, Oppenheim's tea had gotten cold and she jokingly asked a waiter for more fur for her cup to keep it warm. Oppenheim bought the cup, saucer, and spoon, covered them in fur, and created the first Surrealist Object.

RESPONSE QUESTION 2/3: Describe how interaction with this object would feel like? Would you want to drink from this cup? How would that feel? What is your reaction?

A surrealist object is a normal object that has been given a symbolic function. This no longer functions well as a cup; you could drink from it, but you probably wouldn't want to. It creates a physical reaction. When this went on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1936, a woman who saw it fainted. It's just a cup, saucer, and spoon. It should not incite such an intense reaction but through the transformation into a Surrealist object, it became very unsettling. Oppenheim said of this "it is not an illustration of an idea, but the thing itself."

RESPONSE QUESTION 3/3: Please submit any questions you might have.