Introduction to Art

Representations, Performances and Interactions

Code: HUM1011

to imitate,
to follow,
to mimic,
to ape,
to counterfeit,
to forge,
to reproduce,
to copy,
to mirror,
to double,
to represent,
to render,
to impersonate,
to repeat and
to translate,
to recite and
to cite,
etc.

Contents

Front cover illustration:
Possible translations of the Greek term "mimesis", taken from Samuel IJsseling's *Mimesis*, pp. 7 and 9: "The notion of mimesis is said to have its origin in the world of music and dance, and then to have later passed into a theory of drama, literature, and the visual arts, finally coming into a theory of language, education and culture. […] Among the possible English translations of the Greek *mimesthai* are: to imitate, to follow, to mimic, to ape, to counterfeit, to forge, to reproduce, to copy, to mirror, to double, to represent, to render, to impersonate, to repeat and to translate, to recite and to cite, etc." Cf. Assignment 3.

Introduction

1 Topic

An introduction to the arts.

2 Objectives

- To provide students with an advanced introduction to the diverse domain of the arts such as painting, literature, music and performance art.
- To broaden the students' theoretical understanding of art.

3 Description of the Course

The traditional term for the many ways in which art works represent reality is mimesis. The mimetic talent for imitation and representation has been the subject of admiration, study and debate throughout the history of Western art. The notion of mimesis has been employed to describe literature, painting, music, theater, dance, and more; it is still often used to characterize the domain of the arts in general.

In engaging with mimesis, the course "Introduction to Art: Representations, Performances, and Interactions" covers three central themes and approaches. The first part of the course is concerned with the representation of reality in nineteenth and early twentieth century literature, painting and music. A second part deals with contemporary performance art and performance studies. The latter is an innovative academic field, expanding the study of forms of performance (theatre, music, dance, etc.) to include all sorts of play, ritual, entertainment, and art. It offers perspectives on art and representation that attempt to deal with the blurring of genres, cultures and conventions that are typical for our present age, shaped by mass media and globalization. The third and last part of the course discusses sociological perspectives on art as collective activity.

Through its emphasis on representation, performance and interaction, this course constitutes a basis for courses on the arts in all their diversity, as well as courses on culture in general.

4 Coordination

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5 Schedule

The course is scheduled during teaching period 1, in September and October 2017. The precise dates, times and locations of lectures and tutorial group meetings will be made known to you as soon as possible. MyUM will be the principal means of official communication and making announcements for this course. Please check MyUM regularly.

6 Attendance

In accordance with general UCM rules, there is a compulsory attendance requirement for this course. Attendance in lectures and group meetings is registered. Students who have valid reasons for their absence and wish to compensate for missed meetings need to apply for an additional assignment with the Office of Student Affairs. The course coordinator will inform those applying for an additional assignment about its nature and deadlines.

7 Assessment

Each individual student will be assessed on the following separate points:

- Participation in tutorial group meetings / performance as discussion leader (pass/fail)
- A practical exercise in realistic representation in week 3 (20% of final grade)
- A final take home exam in week 7 consisting of open essay questions covering the course material (80% of final grade)

Further information on the format of the assessment, as well as the grading policy is provided in the introductory lecture.

Students who fail the course, but meet the attendance requirement *and* have made a fair attempt at participating in the assessment are eligible for a resit taking place in the last week of period 3.

8 Literature

Key texts for the course are:

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Princeton University Press, 1968 [1953]. Many reprints.

Becker, Howard S. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.

Gombrich, E. H. *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. New York: Phaidon, 2002 (1956).

Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Thornton, Sarah. *Seven Days in the Art World*. London: Granta, 2008.

Buying these books can be useful, but is not obligatory. All three key texts can be found in the UCM reading room.

Relevant literature is indicated below each assignment text. This literature can be found in the UCM reading room (**RR**), is included in the e-reader of this course (**E**), will be sent to you as a PDF (**PDF**), or is available at the University Library (**UL**). Some texts published online are referred to by hyperlink.

Assignments

Assignment 1
Mimesis: The Representation of Reality

"In all [his] works Auerbach preserves the same essayistic style of criticism, beginning each chapter with a long quotation from a specific work cited in the original language, followed immediately by a serviceable translation (German in the original *Mimesis*, first published in Bern in 1946; English in most of his subsequent work), out of which a detailed *explication de texte* unfolds at a leisurely and ruminative pace; this in turn develops into a set of memorable comments about the relationship between the rhetorical style of the passage and its socio-political context, a feat that Auerbach manages with a minimum of fuss and with virtually no learned references."

"The "representation" of reality is taken by Auerbach to mean an active dramatic presentation of how each author actually realizes, brings characters to life, and clarifies his or her own world; this of course explains why in reading the book we are compelled by the sense of disclosure that Auerbach affords us as he in turn re-realizes and interprets and, in his unassuming way, even seems to be staging the transmutation of a coarse reality into language and new life."

"In comparing himself to modern novelists such as Joyce and Woolf, who re-create a whole world out of random, usually unimportant moments, Auerbach explicitly rejects a rigid scheme, a relentless sequential movement, or fixed concepts as instruments of study. […] Auerbach offers no system, no shortcut to what he puts before us as a history of the representation of reality in Western literature. From a contemporary standpoint there is something impossibly naïve, if not outrageous, that hotly contested terms like "Western," "reality," and "representation"—each of which has recently brought forth literally acres of disputatious prose among critics and philosophers—are left to stand on their own, unadorned and unqualified. It is as if Auerbach was intent on exposing his personal explorations and, perforce, his fallibility to the perhaps scornful eye of critics who might deride his subjectivity. But the triumph of *Mimesis*, as well as its inevitable tragic flaw, is that the human mind studying literary representations of the historical world can only do as all authors do—from the limited perspective of their own time and their own work."

Edward Said, in: Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, Introduction, pp. ix-x; xx; xxxi-xxxii.

"In Stendhal and Balzac we frequently and indeed almost constantly hear what the writer thinks of his characters and events; sometimes Balzac accompanies his narrative with a running commentary—emotional or ironic or ethical or historical or economic. We also very frequently hear what the characters themselves think and feel, and often in such a manner that, in the passage concerned, the writer identifies himself with the character. Both these things are almost wholly absent from Flaubert's work. His opinion of his characters and events remains unspoken; and when the characters express themselves it is never in such a manner that the writer identifies himself with their opinion, or seeks to make the reader identify himself with it. We hear the writer speak; but he expresses no opinion and makes no comment. His role is limited to selecting the events and translating them into language; and this is done in the conviction that every event, if one is able to express it purely and completely, interprets itself and the persons involved in it far better and more completely than any opinion or judgment appended to it could do. Upon this conviction—that is, upon a profound faith in the truth of language responsibly, candidly, and carefully employed—Flaubert's artistic practice rests.

This is a very old, classic French tradition. There is already something of it in Boileau's line concerning the power of the rightly used word (on Malherbe: *D'un mot mis en sa place enseigna le pouvoir*); there are similar statements in La Bruyère. Vauvenargues said: *Il n'y aurait point d'erreurs qui ne périssent d'elles-mêmes, exprimées clairement*. Flaubert's faith in language goes further than Vauvenargues's: he believes that the truth of the phenomenal world is also revealed in linguistic expression. Flaubert is a man who works extremely consciously and possesses a critical comprehension of art to a degree uncommon even in

France; hence there occur in his letters, particularly of the years 1852-1854 during which he was writing Madame Bovary (*Troisième Série* in the *Nouvelle édition augmentée* of the *Correspondance*, 1927), many highly informative statements on the subject of his aim in art. They lead to a theory – mystical in the last analysis, but in practice, like all true mysticism, based upon reason, experimentation, and discipline—of a self-forgetful absorption in the subjects of reality which transforms them (*par une chimie merveilleuse*) and permits them to develop mature expression. In this fashion subjects completely fill the writer; he forgets himself, his heart no longer serves him save to feel the hearts of others, and when, by fanatical patience, this condition is achieved, the perfect expression, which at once entirely comprehends the momentary subject and impartially judges it, comes of itself; subjects are seen as God sees them, in their true essence. With all this there goes a view of the mixture of styles which proceeds from the same mystical-realistic insight: there are no high and low subjects; the universe is a work of art produced without any taking of sides, the realistic artist must imitate the procedures of Creation, and every subject in its essence contains, before God's eyes, both the serious and the comic, both dignity and vulgarity; if it is rightly and surely reproduced, the level of style which is proper to it will be rightly and surely found; there is no need either for a general theory of levels, in which subjects are arranged according to their dignity, or for any analyses by the writer commenting upon the subject, after its presentation, with a view to better comprehension and more accurate classification; all this must result from the presentation of the subject itself."

Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 486-87.


Erich Auerbach


Stendhal


Edward Said


Honoré de Balzac

Gustave Flaubert

Readings:

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Fiftieth-Anniversary Edition. With a new introduction by Edward W. Said. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003 [1946], pp. 454-92 (= Chapter 18: 'In the Hôtel de la Mole', especially on Flaubert). **RR**

Flaubert, Gustave: On Realism. In: George J. Becker (ed.): *Documents of Modern Literary Realism*, Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1973. pp. 89-96. **E**

Said, Edward W.: Introduction to the fiftieth-anniversary edition. In: Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003.
(can also be found under http://www.pupress.princeton.edu/chapters/i50.html)

Assignment 2
The Representation of Reality, continued

"The essential characteristic of the technique represented by Virginia Woolf is that we are given not merely one person whose consciousness (that is, the impressions it receives) is rendered, but many persons, with frequent shifts from one to the other […] The multiplicity of persons suggests that we are here after all confronted with an endeavor to investigate an objective reality, that is, specifically, the "real" Mrs. Ramsay. She is, to be sure, an enigma and such she basically remains, but she is as it were encircled by the content of all the various consciousnesses directed upon her (including her own); there is an attempt to approach her from many sides as closely as human possibilities of perception and expression can succeed in doing. The design of a close approach to objective reality by means of numerous subjective impressions received by various individuals (and at various times) is important in the modern technique which we are here examining."

"These are the characteristic and distinctively new features of the technique: a chance occasion releasing processes of consciousness; a natural and even, if you will, a naturalistic rendering of those processes in their peculiar freedom, which is neither restrained by a purpose nor directed by a specific subject of thought; elaboration of the contrast between "exterior" and "interior" time. The three have in common what they reveal of the author's attitude: he submits, much more than was done in earlier realistic works, to the random contingency of real phenomena; and even though he winnows and stylizes the material of the real world—as of course he cannot help doing—he does not proceed rationalistically, nor with a view to bringing a continuity of exterior events to a planned conclusion. In Virginia Woolf's case the exterior events have actually lost their hegemony, they serve to release and interpret inner events, whereas before her time (and still today in many instances) inner movements preponderantly function to prepare and motivate significant exterior happenings."

"For there is always going on within us a process of formulation and interpretation whose subject matter is our own self. We are constantly endeavoring to give meaning and order to our lives in the past, the present and the future, to our surroundings, the world in which we live; with the result that our lives appear in our own conception as total entities—which to be sure are always changing, more or less radically, more or less rapidly, depending on the extent to which we are obliged, inclined, and able to assimilate the onrush of new experience. These are the forms of order and interpretation which the modern writers here under discussion attempt to grasp in the random moment—not one order and one interpretation, but many, which may be either those of different persons or of the same person at different times; so that overlapping, complementing, and contradiction yield something we might call a synthesized cosmic view or at least a challenge to the reader's will to interpretative synthesis."

Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 536, 538, 549

"So much of the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the story is not merely labour thrown away but labour misplaced to the extent of obscuring and blotting out the light of conception. The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour. The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn. But sometimes, more and more often as time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion, as the pages fill themselves in the customary way. Is life like this? Must novels be like this?

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being "like this". Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came

not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?"

Virginia Woolf, *Modern Fiction* (1919), pp. 188-89.

Virginia Woolf

Nicole Kidman as Virginia Woolf

Readings:

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Fiftieth-Anniversary Edition. With a new introduction by Edward W. Said. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003 [1946], pp. 525-553 (= Chapter 20: 'The Brown Stocking'). **RR**

Woolf, Virginia. 'Modern Fiction' (1919), from: *The Common Reader, series 1*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1957. pp. 184-195. **E**

Woolf, Virginia. 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown' (1924), from: *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays*. New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1950, pp. 94-119. **E**

Mendelsohn, Edward. In the Depths of the Digital Age. NY Review of Books, June 21 – July 13, 2016, Volume LXIII, Number 11. **PDF**

Assignment 3
Mimesis and Anti-Mimesis

"Since the Pythagoreans, in Plato and Aristotle, and in the whole of the Greek literary and rhetorical tradition, the notion of *mimesis* plays an important role. It is one of the root words by which all sorts of widely divergent phenomena are voiced in European culture. The domain of the mimetic is extensive and interwoven with many other issues. It branches out on all sides and is therefore difficult to determine or delimit. As well, even translating the original Greek term *mimesis* poses considerable difficulties, first because its meaning is in each case dependent on the domain of phenomena to which it is supposed to apply. The usual Latin translation is *imitatio*, a word which is equally polysemous and, moreover, does not fully comply with what the Greeks have tried to express by the notion of *mimesis*. Among the possible English translations of the Greek *mimesthai* are: to imitate, to follow, to mimic, to ape, to counterfeit, to forge, to reproduce, to copy, to mirror, to double, to depict, to represent, to render, to impersonate, to repeat and to translate, to recite and to cite, etc. Each of these again poses all sorts of new problems. A certain ambiguity is striking in most of them. This ambiguity has to do with the common but not self-evident opposition between the real and the unreal, the authentic and the inauthentic. In any case, the word mimesis can be used in a positive as well as a negative sense. This is clear in relation to imitation, which has an explicitly positive meaning in the expressions *omnis ars imitatio naturae* (Seneca) or *imitatio Christi* (Thomas à Kempis), but which can also point to the fact that we are dealing with the unreal, the not original, the pseudo, a sham or a counterfeit.

[…]

The notion of mimesis is said to have its origin in the world of music and dance, and then to have later passed into a theory of drama, literature, and the visual arts, finally coming into a theory of language, education and culture. In music, certain movements are repeated. A same movement is taken up again in a slightly different way. In and through this repetition something like music comes into being. Every form of rhythm supposes repetition of the same and difference. Besides this repetition of the same movements, motives and measures in a slightly different way, the piece of music as a whole can also be repeated or presented again, even in a different place and under different circumstances. The same can be said of dance and, to a certain extent, of rites and ceremonies. Dance is mimetic, not so much because the dancers represent something—which may also be possible—but more so because of the fact that each dancer imitates the other and every movement supposes and evokes similar movements. Rites and ceremonies are essentially marked by repetition and repeatability. The same acts must be carried out and the same words spoken. Changes in ritual are scarcely tolerated and are usually accompanied by conflict. Music, dance and rites, together with the telling of tales belong to the ingredients from which drama, tragedy and comedy may have originated and been built up.

Drama is mimetic in many respects. […] Not only do the actors imitate and represent something, but the plot, intrigue or story is also mimetic. A 'whole' of events is produced. […] In this connection, Aristotle, in a passage from the *Poetics* on story (*epos*) and drama (*drama*), remarks that 'the poet's function is to describe not the thing that might happen, i.e. what is possible as being probable or necessary. […] Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, for its statements are of the nature rather of universals than particulars, whereas those of history are of particulars.' This is said within the broader framework of the problem of mimesis, with which the *Poetics* begin and where the question is raised concerning the essence and origin of poetry, epic and drama. According to Aristotle, these lie in the fact that it is human nature to imitate and represent others, and in the pleasure that man gets from representing and from the recognition of doing so.

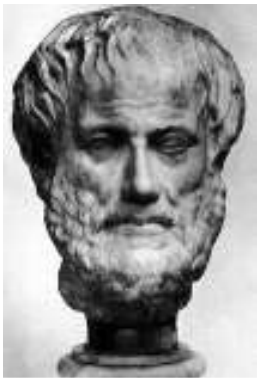
[…]

For Plato theater, like mimetic arts in general, is a world of appearance and deception. According to him, the poets and storytellers should be excluded from the ideal state. They wish to replace reality with words and images and in this way would make the world into a cave."

Samuel IJsseling, *Mimesis: On Appearing and Being,* pp. 7-12.

The conflicting views of mimesis that have been put forward by Plato and Aristotle have been very influential on Western art. Since the Renaissance debates over mimesis have intensified. And in our contemporary, globalizing world where cultures and lifestyles meet and / or clash, how can this debate be anything but lively, even heated?


Plato


Aristotle

Readings:

IJsseling, Samuel. *Mimesis: On Appearing and Being*. Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1997, pp. 7- 15, 22-30, 46-58 (= Chapters I, II, IV, VI: 'Mimesis, Drama and Literature', 'Mimetic Relations', 'Mimesis and Intertextuality'). **PDF**

Plato. *Republic*, pp. 175-183 (= book II, chapter XVII); pp. 233-245 (a fragment from book III), and pp. 419-433 (= book X, chapter I and II). Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press and Heinemann (Loeb Classical Library), 1987 (1935). **PDF**

Aristotle. *Poetics*, pp. 29-33, 37-39, 59-63 (selections from chapters 1, 4, 9). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library), 1995. **E**

Nehamas, Alexander: "Culture, Art and Poetry in The Republic", a lecture: http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/lectures/fall1999/index.php.

Assignment 4
The Nature of Realism

"The commonplace notion that Realism is a 'styleless' or transparent style, a mere simulacrum or mirror image of visual reality, is another barrier to its understanding as an historical and stylistic phenomenon. This is a gross simplification, for Realism was no more a mere mirror of reality than any other style and its relation qua style to phenomenal data – the donnée – is as complex and difficult as that of Romanticism, the Baroque or Mannerism. So far as Realism is concerned, however, the issue is greatly confused by the assertions of both its supporters and opponents, that realists were doing no more than mirroring everyday reality. These statements derived from the belief that perception could be 'pure' and unconditioned by time or place. But is pure perception – perception in a vacuum, as it were – ever possible?

In painting, no matter how honest or unhackneyed the artist's vision may be, the visible world must be transformed to accommodate it to the flat surface of the canvas. The artist's perception is therefore inevitably conditioned by the physical properties of paint and linseed oil no less than by his knowledge and technique – even by his choice of brush-strokes – in conveying three-dimensional space and form on to a two-dimensional picture plane.

When Constable said that he tried to forget that he had ever seen a picture as he sat down to paint from nature, or Monet that he had wished he had been born blind and then suddenly received his sight, they were not merely placing a high premium on originality. They were stressing the importance of confronting reality afresh, of consciously stripping their minds, and their brushes, of secondhand knowledge and ready-made formulae. So radical and extreme an approach was new. […] But important though it might be, fidelity to visual reality was only one aspect of the Realist enterprise; and it would be erroneous to base our conception of so complex a movement on only one of its features: verisimilitude. […] A new and broadened notion of history, accompanying a radical alteration of the sense of time, was central to the Realist outlook. Furthermore, new democratic ideas stimulated a wider historical approach.

The Realists' endeavour to see things as they are was inseparable from their general beliefs, their world, their heritage and the very quality of what they were divesting themselves of and rebelling against."

Linda Nochlin, *Realism*, pp. 14-15, 20-23, 51.


Linda Nochlin


Constable, Study of Clouds at Hampstead, 1821

Readings

Nochlin, Linda: *Realism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990 (1971); pp. 13-56 (= Chapter 1: 'The Nature of Realism'). **UL/PDF**

Rosen, C. and Zerner, H. Realism and the Avant-Garde. In: *Romanticism and Realism. The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art*. London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1984, pp. 133-179 (= chapter VI). **UL/PDF**

Assignment 5
Style is Everywhere

Is it possible to make a neutral, truthful visual or written representation of something, a representation that would not show any stylistic traits? Or is there always an element of style involved? How far-reaching is the influence of style on representation?

As a first step towards answering this encompassing question, you may remind yourself of the difficulties that are involved in making a drawing or a painting that "looks exactly like" its subject matter. It is far from easy to draw, for example, a portrait that gives a fair likeness of someone. In fact, for most artists, to acquire the necessary skill to make a convincing portrait requires years of practice, study and training.

It is easy to understand that a painting of, say, a human being or a landscape can not be said to be unconditionally "objective", if only because it is a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional reality. There are, upon closer scrutiny, many more reasons why pictorial representations are never free of stylistic influences. Art historian Ernst Gombrich is probably the most famous scholar who has studied both the historical developments of styles of realistic depiction, and the general psychological factors that make it possible for an artist to produce the illusion of full-blooded reality on a flat, still surface. In his book "Art and Illusion", Gombrich states that "A style, like a culture or climate of opinion, sets up a horizon of expectation, a mental set, which registers deviations and modifications with exaggerated sensitivity." And, naturally, over the course of history, expectations change. An example of this is, that "The truth of a landscape painting is relative, the more so the more the artist dares to accept the challenge of light."

In general, for Gombrich, "Everything points to the conclusion that the phrase 'the language of art' is more than a loose metaphor, that even to describe the visible world in images we need a developed system of schemata." He writes:

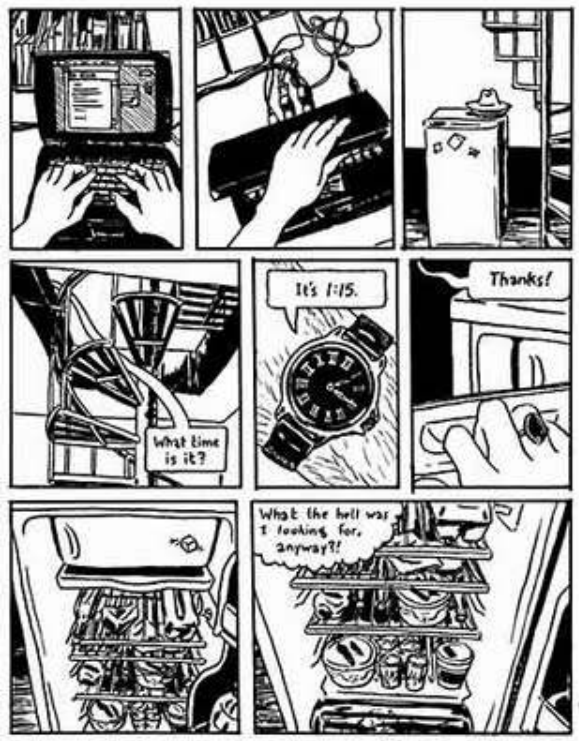
"Styles, like languages, differ in the sequence of articulation and in the number of questions they allow the artist to ask; and so complex is the information that reaches us from the visible world that no picture will ever embody it all. This is not due to the subjectivity of vision but to its richness. […] The form of a representation cannot be divorced from its purpose and the requirements of the society in which the given visual language gains currency."

E.H. Gombrich: *Art and Illusion,* p. 90.

The insight that our knowledge of reality is determined and limited by matters of representation and style may be a source of philosophical irritation and melancholy, but it can also become the inspiration for a humoristic treatment of stylistic variations. A wonderful example of this is Raymond Queneau's little book "Exercises in Style", in which Queneau has told a single, rather uninteresting brief story no less than 99 times, each time in a distinct style. On the back of the book, the story is summarized as follows:

"On a crowded bus at midday, Raymond Queneau observes one man accusing another of jostling him deliberately. When a seat is vacated, the first man appropriates it. Later, in another part of town, Queneau sees the man being advised by a friend to sew another button on his overcoat."

The book is very witty. Yet, many of its admirers feel that behind the humor is a kind of wisdom; the New York Review of Books wrote that "it makes a greater contribution to the philosophy of language than many a portentous, academic tome."



Matt Madden, from: 99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style

Matt Madden, from: 99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style

Readings:

Gombrich, E. H. *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. New York, Phaidon, 2002 (1956), pp. 2-78 (Introduction; Part I: The Limits of Likeness). **RR**

Queneau, Raymond. *Exercises in Style*. Translated by Barbara Wright. New York: New Directions Books, 1981 [1947], pp. 19-20, 21-22, 23, 37-38, 39-40, 41-42, 48-49, 54-55, 65-66, 100-101, 136-38, 182-83. **E**
(This is a selection of 12 of the original 99 exercises: Notation, Double Entry, Litotes, Precision, The subjective side, Another subjectivity, Animism, Official letter, Ignorance, Philosophic, Reactionary, Modern Style.)

Madden, Matt. *99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in style.*New York, Chamberlain Bros., 2005 **RR** (also check out http://www.exercisesinstyle.com/)

Hipss, Bradford. To Write Better Code, Read Virginia Woolf. NY Times, May 21, 2016. **PDF**

Exercise in imitation

Write your own 'Exercises in style'. Begin by writing a plain, factual, very brief and rather uninteresting anecdotal story about two people. (See Queneau's "Notation", pp. 19-20.) Then retell your story two times, in different styles. Look at Queneau's and Madden's exercises in style for guidance and inspiration. We will cooperate with the Charles Nypels Lab at the Jan van Eck Academy to include stylistic experiments using different printing technologies. Your experiments in styles may also include musical and theatrical performances, drawings, paintings, sculptures, photography etc. Please ask your tutor for instructions.

Assignment 6
Mimesis in Music

Can there be such a thing as realistic music? In other words, does it make sense to ask how mimesis functions in music, or is music the most non-representational and non-mimetic of the arts? It is customary to think of music, especially instrumental music, as an art of purity and abstraction, with the ability to create an independent world of its own. Music is above and beyond realism: it speaks directly to the soul.

But in the eighteenth century, lovers and connoisseurs of music had different expectations. They spoke of musical expression in terms of images or recognizable sounds, with music painting its particular meaning. To them, music presented a clear picture in a one-to-one correspondence of tone to image or it had no expression at all. In his cultural history of listening, James H. Johnson quotes several authors on music:

"All music must have a signification and a meaning, the same as poetry," reads the *Manuel de l'homme du monde* from 1761; "thus the sounds must conform to the things they express." For d'Alembert music was "hopeless noise" when the composer failed to paint clearly in his music. Marmontel wrote virtually the same thing - "Music that paints nothing is insipid" - while Bâton declared music to be an art by virtue of its capacity to imitate. "The object of every art is to paint nature: to the mind for poetry, to the eyes for painting, and to the ears for music." The abbé Morellet devoted a book to musical expression in 1759 to conclude that music is expressive insofar as it is imitative."

Some seventy years later, a new way of listening had been introduced. Johnson illustrates this by quoting the critic and musical educator François-Joseph Fétis:

"Past listeners have viewed the goal of music as "expressing the author's ideas or realizing sentiments or images," he wrote, citing as examples love, joy or sadness, the sounds of storms or battles, and the image of a sunrise. Instrumental music was independent of all this. "To say what Haydn, Mozart, or Beethoven intended to paint or express in their admirable quartets, quintets, sonatas, or symphonies would not be easy." Whereas twenty years before, musical imprecision was for most a sign of weak writing, the reverie it was now said to produce was a splendid voyage into the imagination. As M. P. Lahalle wrote in an essay on the nature of musical expression, "uncertain, indefinite qualities that are so harmful in virtually every other art are by contrast quite fitting to music."

As the well-known historian of music Richard Taruskin has written, romantic artists and thinkers agreed that music "left phenomenal reality (that is, what can be apprehended through the senses alone) far behind and seemed to approach what Kant, following Plato, called the noumenal: the irreducible, ineffable essence of things, the reality that lay behind all appearance. Where other arts could only describe or reproduce appearances, music had access to the thing itself."

Beethoven in 1810 expressed this as follows: "I despise the world which does not intuitively feel that music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy." And the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer insisted that not even a composer could fully explain music: "The composer reveals the inner nature of the world and expresses the deepest wisdom in a language which his reason does not understand."

Nineteenth-century audiences learned to approach musical performances as occasions for the revelation of deeply moving, personal and sublime feelings. But is making the music of one's private soul known to the world not also an act of representation?

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) is generally regarded as the early romantic composer whose work most clearly and decisively explored inner emotions, the inner "I". Especially in the songs he composed, harmonic invention, formal experiment, and psychological nuance go together. The lyric introspection of these songs projects extreme subjective expressive immediacy.

Does it follow that only an emotionally and intuitively responsive audience can experience such music as it deserves to be experienced? Taruskin writes that "Music in conjunction with a text can easily express mixed or ambiguous feelings, or downright contradictory ones, with

breathtaking and often heartrending effect." Can a detailed analysis of the combination of music and text provide an explanation of the representational strategies that romantic composers made use of?


James Johnson


Ludwig van Beethoven


Susan Youens

Franz Schubert

Readings:

Johnson, James H. *Listening in Paris. A Cultural History*. Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 35-50 and 270-280 (= Chapter 2 and 16: 'Expression as Imitation', 'The Musical Experience of Romanticism'). **RR/PDF**

Youens, Susan. *Retracing a Winter's Journey. Schubert's* Winterreise. Ithaka and London: Cornell University Press, 1991, pp. 119-130 and 278-284 (= Part II. The Songs, Chapters 1, 21: 'Gute Nacht', 'Das Wirtshaus'). **E**

Assignment 7
What is Performance Studies?

"Performance must be construed as a 'broad spectrum' or 'continuum' of human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media, and the internet. Before performance studies, Western thinkers believed they knew exactly what was and what was not 'performance.' But in fact, there is no historically or culturally fixed limit to what is or is not 'performance.' Along the continuum new genres are added, others are dropped. The underlying notion is that any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed is performance. Many performances belong to more than one category along the continuum. For example, a football player spiking the ball and pointing a finger in the air after scoring a touchdown is performing a dance and enacting a ritual as part of his professional role as athlete and popular entertainer."

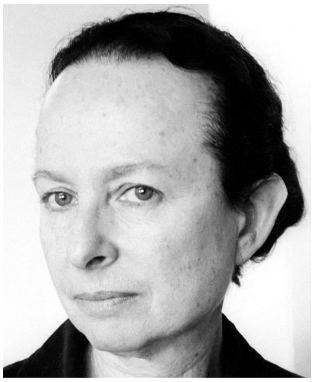
Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, p. 2

"The field of Performance Studies takes performance as an organizing concept for the study of a wide range of behavior. A postdiscipline of inclusions, Performance Studies sets no limit on what can be studies in terms of medium and culture. Nor does it limit the range of approaches that can be taken. A provisional coalescence on the move, Performance Studies is more than the sum of its inclusions. While it might be argued that 'as an artform, performance lacks a distinctive medium' (Carroll 1986: 78), embodied practice and event is a recurring point of reference within Performance Studies.

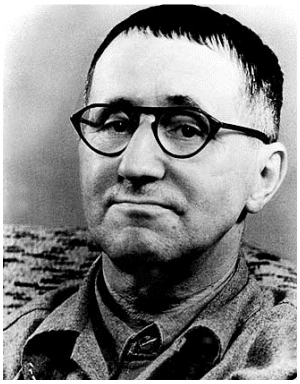
Performance Studies starts from the premise that its objects of study are not to be divided up and parceled out, medium by medium, to various other disciplines – music, dance, dramatic literature, art history. The prevailing division of the arts by medium is arbitrary, as is the creation of fields and departments devoted to each. Most of the world's artistic expression has always synthesized or otherwise integrated movement, sound, speech, narrative, and objects. Moreover, the historical avant-garde and contemporary art have long questioned these boundaries and gone about blurring them. Such confounding of categories has not only widened the range of what can count as an artmaking practice, but also given rise to performance art that is expressly not theatre and art performance that dematerializes the art object and approaches the condition of performance. […] Performance Studies takes its lead from such developments. This field is not only intercultural in scope and spirit, but also challenges aesthetic hierarchies and analyzes how they are formed. Performance Studies encompasses not only the most valorized, but also the least valued, cultural forms within these hierarchies."

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Performance Studies'. In: Henry Bial (ed.) *The Performance Studies Reader*. pp. 43.


Richard Schechner


Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett


Konstantin Stanislavski


Berthold Brecht

Readings

Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies. An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. (Chapter 1, 2, and 6: 'What is Performance Studies?', 'What is Performance? 'Performing'). **RR**

Stanislavski, Konstantin. 'Toward a Physical Characterization.' In: : Goodman, L. with DeGay, J. (eds.) *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 28-31. **E**

Brecht, Bertolt. 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting.' In: Goodman, L. with DeGay, J. (eds.) *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 94-97. **E**

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 'Performance Studies'. In: Bial, Henry (ed.) *The Performance Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004, pp. 43-55. **PDF**

Assignment 8
Comparing the Experiences of Performers and Spectators

"I call performances where performers are changed 'transformations' and those where performers are returned to their starting places 'transportations' - 'transportation,' because during the performance the performers are 'taken somewhere' but at the end, often assisted by others, they are 'cooled down' and reenter ordinary life just about where they went in."

"People are accustomed to calling transportation performances 'theater' and transformation performances 'ritual.' But this neat separation doesn't hold up."

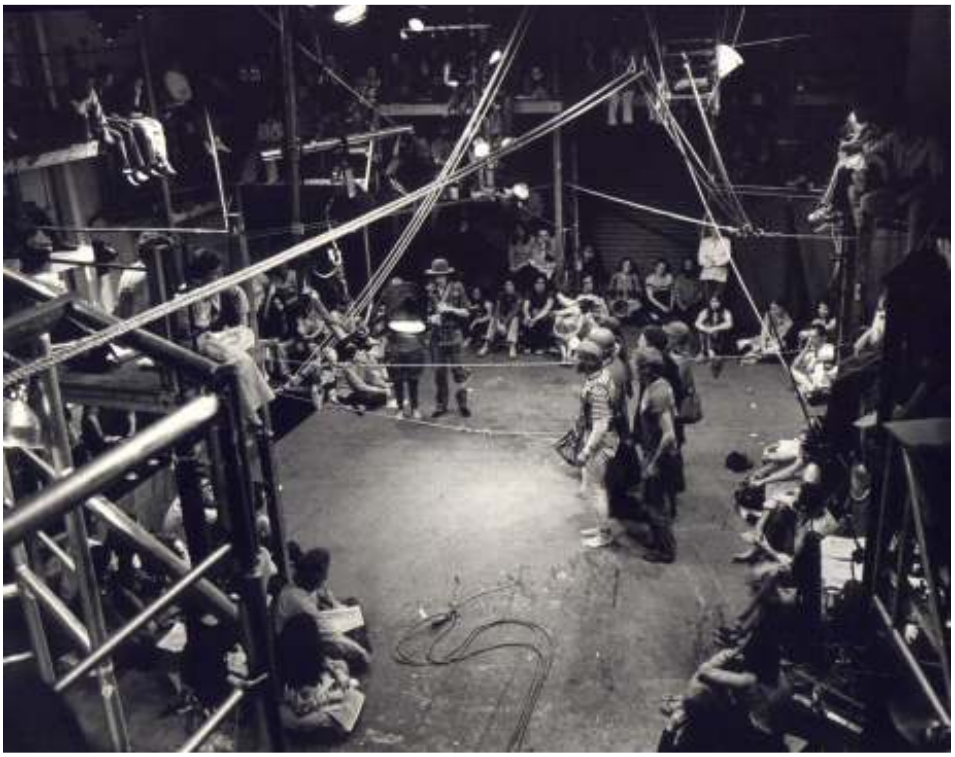
"The actor in Euro-American theater is an example of the transported performer. For reasons that will be made clear later, the Euro-American theater is one of transportation without transformation. Many performance workers, especially since 1960, have sought to introduce into the Euro-American performing arts the process of transformation.

And the audience? Spectators at transformation performances usually have a stake in seeing that the performance succeeds."

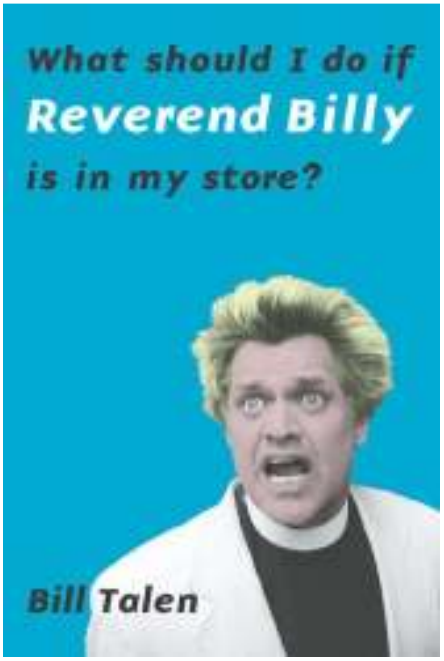
"Euro-American aesthetics, thanks to the Greeks, is a function of competition. There is no collective work set out for the audience to do or participate in."

"Chased from Plato's republic as nonrational and subversive but existing always, sometimes marginally, theater is now showing itself everywhere: in social dramas, personal experience, public display, political and economic interaction, art."

Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology*; pp. 125-6; 130; 131; 135; 145; 150.



Brecht's "Mother Courage" directed by Schechner at the Performing Garage, NYC, 1974



Bill Talen, also known as Reverend Billy

Reverend Billy protesting Starbucks

Readings

Schieffelin, Edward L. "Problematizing Performance" In: Hughes-Freeland, Felicia (ed.) *Ritual, Performance, Media.* London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 194-207 **PDF**

Schechner, Richard. *Between Theater and Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985. (Chapter 3: Performers and spectators transported and transformed). **PDF**

Lane, Jill. "Reverend Billy. Preaching, protest, and postindustrial flânerie" In: Bial, Henry (ed.) *The Performance Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004, pp. 299-310. **E** (also check out "Reverend Billy" on YouTube)

Assignment 9
Music as Performance

Generally speaking, until a hundred years ago, one could only hear music if it was played in one's presence, live. Although there were musical automatons, clocks that could play a melody, music boxes and such, live music was the rule. All the composers discussed in assignment 6 composed their works to be heard in the immediate presence of the musicians and singers. Without a doubt, the fact that music was performed live added a great deal to the experience of the listener. Nowadays, things are different. We hear music in all kinds of places and circumstances, and most often not in a live performance. How does that change the experience of music?

If one listens to musicians playing, their behaviour and the behaviour of the other members of the audience may tell a great deal about the meanings of the music. But when live music is the exception, not the rule, where and how do listeners learn to understand what they hear? This is one of the questions that Simon Frith, an influential writer on contemporary popular music, has discussed:

"Is music, as music, meaningless? If so, where do the musical meanings coded into musical descriptions, conversations, genre distinctions, and critical assessments come from? How do people move from something they hear (a tone or a beat, an instrument or vocal quality) to some understanding of what it is 'about'"?"

"We may not all have attended music schools, but we have all been to the movies; we may not be able to tell the difference between a major and a minor chord, but we do know when a piece turns sad. […] Film music enables us to see how musical/emotional coding works (a coding heavily dependent on the conventions of Western art music).

Film music is an oddly neglected area of popular music studies (and has been of even less interest to film scholars). I say 'oddly,' because if we include under the label the soundtracks of commercials on television, then it is arguable that this is the most significant form of contemporary popular music; or at least, of the popular understanding and interpretation of instrumental music."

"We hear music in the cinema as if we were hearing it 'in reality' (the film scorer's starting assumption), but we also hear music 'in reality' as if we were in the cinema. Writing about cinematic sound realism more generally, Michel Chion asks: 'If we are actually watching a war film or a storm at sea, what idea did most of us actually have of sounds of war or the high seas before hearing the sounds in the films?'"

"My argument in this book is not just that in listening to popular music we are listening to a performance, but, further, that 'listening' itself is a performance: to understand how musical pleasure, meaning, and evaluation work, we have to understand how, as listeners, we perform the music for ourselves."

"The meaning of pop is the meaning of pop stars, performers with bodies and personalities; central to the pleasure of pop is pleasure in a voice, sound as body, sound as person. The central pop gesture, a sung note, rests on the same inner/outer tension as performance art: it uses the voice as the most taken-for-granted indication of the person, the guarantor of the coherent subject; and it uses the voice as something artificial, posed, its sound determined by the music. The star voice (and, indeed, the star body) thus act as a mark of both subjectivity and objectivity, freedom and constraint, control and lack of control. And technology, electrical recording, has exaggerated this effect by making the vocal performance more intimate, more self-revealing, and more (technologically) determined. The authenticity or 'sincerity' of the voice becomes the recurring pop question: does she really *mean* it? […] If all songs are narratives, if they work as mini-musicals, then their plots are a matter of interpretation both by performers attaching them to their own star stories and by listeners, putting ourselves in the picture, or, rather, placing their emotions—or expressions of emotion—in our own stories, whether directly (in this situation, in this relationship, now) or, more commonly, indirectly,

laying the performance over our memories of situations and relationships: nostalgia, as a human condition, is defined by our use of popular song."

Simon Frith, *Performing Rites*, pp. 99, 110, 122, 203, 210-11.

Lady Gaga

Readings:

Frith, Simon: *Performing Rites. On the Value of Popular Music*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998, pp. 99-122 and 203-225 (= Chapter 5: 'Where Do Sounds Come From?', and Chapter 10: 'Performance'). **RR/PDF**

Assignment 10
Art Worlds and Collective Activity

The romantic myth of the artist encourages us to think about artists as loners and outsiders. The true artist follows his inner vision, a vision that is necessarily indifferent to the conventions of life and art that are held in esteem by society as a whole. If his art is initially rejected and despised, that can only emphasize that the audience is not yet ready to appreciate the new, unique and truly individual qualities of that art. If an artist is attacked by the critics, the government or the church, or if his work falls pray to censorship, these forms of opposition may well indicate the innovative force of the work that will make itself felt before long. As soon as the eyes and ears and minds of the audience are open to these qualities, success and recognition are within reach. This is an attractive image. It portrays the life of the artist as a path of almost religious suffering, with rewards and redemption as its conclusion. And probably everyone can think of many artists whose career and life more or less followed this model.

But if we see artists only as isolated individuals, that perspective may stand in our way when we want to explain art as an activity that is, like almost all human activities, inherently social. According to sociologist (and jazz pianist) Howard (Howie) S. Becker, the work of artists, and even art works in themselves, may be understood better when we see them as part of a network of social relations, an "art world". According to him, the work of the individual artist is only the proverbial 'tip of the iceberg'. Becker begins the opening chapter of his book "Art Worlds" with a quote upon which he takes off as follows:

"IT WAS MY practice to be at my table every morning at 5:30 A.M.; and it was also my practice to allow myself no mercy. An old groom, whose business it was to call me, and to whom I paid £ 5 a year extra for the duty, allowed himself no mercy. During all those years at Waltham Cross he was never once late with the coffee which it was his duty to bring me. I do not know that I ought not to feel that I owe more to him than to any one else for the success I have had. By beginning at that hour I could complete my literary work before I dressed for breakfast.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE, 1947 [1883], p. 227

The English novelist may have told the story facetiously, but being awakened and given coffee was nevertheless integral to the way he worked. No doubt he could have done without the coffee if he had to; but he didn't have to. No doubt anyone could have performed that service; but, given the way Trollope worked, it had to be performed.

All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number,often a large number, of people. Through their cooperation, the art work we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be. The work always shows signs of that cooperation. The forms of cooperation may be ephemeral, but often become more or less routine, producing patterns of activity we can call an art world. The existence of art worlds, as well as the way their existence affects both the production and consumption of art works, suggests a sociological approach to the arts. […]"

"Think of all the activities that must be carried out for any work of art to appear as it finally does. For a symphony orchestra to give a concert, for instance, instruments must have been invented, manufactured, and maintained, a notation must have been devised and music composed using that notation, people must have learned to play the notated notes on the instruments, times and places for rehearsal must have been provided, ads for the concert must have been placed, publicity must have been arranged and tickets sold, and an audience capable of listening to and in some way understanding and responding to the performance must have been recruited. A similar list can be compiled for any of the performing arts. With minor variations (substitute materials for instruments and exhibition for performance), the list applies to the visual and (substituting language and print for materials and publication for exhibition) literary arts."

Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*. pp. 1-2

According to Becker, all art works, "except for the totally individualistic and therefore unintelligible works of an autistic person, involve some division of labor among a large number of people." A result of this is that "The artist's involvement with and dependence on cooperative links thus constrains the kind of art he can produce."

"The contemporary art world is a loose network of overlapping subcultures held together by a belief in art. They span the globe but cluster in art capital cities such as New York, London, Los Angeles, and Berlin. Vibrant art communities can be found in places like Glasgow, Vancouver and Milan, but they are hinterlands to the extent that the artists working in them have often made an active choice to stay there. Still the art world is more polycentric than it was in the twentieth century, when Paris, then New York held sway."

Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*. p. xi

Howard Becker

Sarah Thornton

Takashi Murakami

Murakami's "I am but a fisherman who angles in the darkness of mind" on display at the Gagosian gallery in New York

Readings:

Becker, Howard S. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley, etc.: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 1-67 and 192-225 (= Chapters 1, 2 and 7, 'Art Worlds and Collective Activity', 'Conventions', and 'Editing'). **RR**

Thornton, Sarah. Seven Days in the Art World. London: Granta, 2008, pp.xi-xix; 181-217 (= Introduction; Chapter 6: 'The Studio Visit') **RR**

Assignment 11
Insiders and Outsiders in the Arts

"Wherever an art world exists, it defines the boundaries of acceptable art, recognizing those who produce the work it can assimilate as artists entitled to full membership, and denying membership and its benefits to those whose work it cannot assimilate. If we look at things from a commonsense point of view, we can see that such large-scale editorial choices made by the organizations of an art world exclude many people whose work closely resembles work accepted as art. We can see, too, that art worlds frequently incorporate at a later date works they originally rejected, so that the distinction must lie not in the work but in the ability of an art world to accept it and its maker.

If we consider all the people who work in a particular medium, however the art world defines and judges them, we see that they range from people totally involved in and completely dependent on the paraphernalia of an art world to those who are only marginally related to it because their work does not fit in to the way things are done. Some make work that looks like art, or is sometimes seen to do so, but do it in the context of worlds completely separate from an art world, perhaps in a world of craft or domestic life. Still others carry on their activities quite alone, supported neither by an organized art world or any other organized area of social activity.

If we compare these ways of working, the peculiarities of the nonstandard versions of the activity show us how things work when they are done in the standard way. […] The comparison shows us how things that seem ordinary in the making of professional art need not be that way at all, how art could be made differently, and what the results of doing it differently would be. We will see how being connected with art worlds shapes what people do by seeing how differently people do things when they experience neither the advantages nor the constraints of art world participation."

Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*, pp. 226-7.

"Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word."

"Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee."

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*

"Art world insiders tend to play one of six distinct roles: artist, dealer, curator, critic, collector, or auction house expert. One encounters artist-critics and dealer collectors, but they admit that it isn't always easy to juggle their jobs and that one of their identities tends to dominate other people's perception of what they do."

Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*, p. xi

The Annual European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF), Maastricht

Billboard promotion of the Murakami exhibit at the LA Museum of Contemporary Art, "defaced" by graffiti

Readings:

Becker, Howard S. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley, etc.: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 226-350 (= Chapters 8 and 10: 'Integrated Professionals, Mavericks, Folk Artists, and Naive Artists', 'Change in Art Worlds'). **RR**

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The forms of capital*. In J. Richardson (Ed.) Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. New York, Greenwood, 1986, pp. 241-258. https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm

Thornton, Sarah. Seven Days in the Art World. London: Granta, 2008, pp. 77-104 (= Chapter 3: 'The Fair') **RR**