Pre-postmodernism

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In the process of writing this paper, I have done my utmost to attempt to situate it in some large, grand conversation, much larger and much grander than any one critic or writer. I ask you forgive my audacious attempt to link the very large and the very small as I give specific examples in an attempt to cling onto some semblance of grounding my argument in real artists and their influence rather than being guided by only vague ideas. This being said, I will very likely be making some sweeping generalisations, for which I apologise, though I think they perhaps cannot be avoided if I am to try to draw some line, or use the overlap between the micro and the macro in the essay.

The Macro-level: Modernity, Modernism and Postmodernism

I would first like to lay out the backbone of this "macro" I am referring to: the shift in perspective in philosophy (which then leads to or perhaps can even encompass literary theory and art criticism) between the first and second halves of the 20th century. Though it is most likely an obscene generalisation, I will try to separate the two into "modernism" and "postmodernism".

According to Ferraris and Segre (1988), "philosophical postmodernism has been characterized (at least by its promoters) as the consequence of a dissolution of modernist projects, rather than as a new age's allergic, polemic reaction to modernism."[1] They go on to say that it "originated from the dissolution of the values of modernity rooted in the Enlightenment and idealism, including the *pathos* of evolution and overcoming, the idea of progress and human liberation, the variations on the death-of-the-arts prophecy and the obsolescence of philosophy."[2] Whilst there is some debate over whether postmodernism is more

[1] Ferraris, Maurizio, and Anna Taraboletti Segre. 1988. "Postmodernism and the Deconstruction of Modernism." Design Issues 4 (1/2): 12. https://doi.org/10.2307/1511383.

[2] Ibid., 13.

of a dissolution or upheaval of "the values of modernity" (the latter being ironic as the very idea of upheaval is intrinsic to that of progress, which is taken apart by postmodern thought, rendering this definition impossible for philosophers), there is a separation between the postmodern and the modern, with the latter being the historical period which saw the emergence of socio-cultural phenomena labelled as "modernist" or comprising "modernism." For Habermas, modernism was not only rooted in the Enlightenment. It *was* the Enlightenment.[3] Postmodernism, on the other hand, challenges ideas fundamental to the Enlightenment, such as the simple existence of objective truth, the idea that humans have a purpose in finding some truth, as well as the belief that reason was a means of finding said truth[4]. Postmodernism was in fact defined by its subjectivism, suspicion of reason, and "sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power."[5]

These Enlightenment ideals underpinning modernism that, if we are to take up the philosophically accepted definition of postmodernism, are "dissolved" in postmodernism are ideas of the discovery of a universal objectivity or truth which, up until the 1950s, had been a key goal of art. Here, I would like to briefly point out that "truth" is a very broad word which I use rather loosely, so I will attempt to define my usage of it in this essay. It is something found in art, any art, that conveys some pre-postmodern idea (or lack of challenging of the status quo) of a universal ideology[6], or at least an inability to challenge the status quo of the idea of a universal ideology. "Truth" is something which, in pre-postmodern criticism, was something absolute or objective to be discovered and conveyed in art. Instead of trying to find new ways to extract some of this "truth" or perspective that already existed in art, postmodernism shifted the goal of artistic criticism by taking away any idea of universal meaning, which meant that the audience (viewer, reader, listener) is in dialogue with the art, that it is a conversation, a symbiotic relationship formed between the art and audience. It is no longer a discovery to be brandished and advertised and

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[3] Ibid., 15.

[4] Duignan, Brian. 2018. "Enlightenment." In Encyclopædia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Enlightenment-European-history.

[5] Duignan, Brian. 2020. "Postmodernism." In Encyclopædia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy.

[6] I would like to acknowledge that a consciousness of ideology emerged from the 19th century with Marx and Engels, and gradually developed over the course of the 20th century, culminating in the kind of acute awareness of it which I refer to as specific to postmodernism. More in-depth consideration of this history might be considered in a longer essay.

named, but an idea to be proposed and discussed. As Barthes puts it in his seminal 1967 essay, "Death of the Author," "The responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator." This is to say, the responsibility, onus and praise is shifted from the writer to the text, from the painter to their painting. Now this is difficult to identify as belonging to postmodernism (as a period in time following modernity and a critical movement interrogating the assumptions of the Enlightenment and its modernist embrace) as many of the ideas of radical doubt and self-questioning which seem inherent to what I have just outlined do not at all seem to be new. In fact, not only were these ideas crucial to Descartes' radical doubt[7] back in the 17th century, but fundamentally questioning one's own ideas was essential for ancient Greek philosophers too. The very idea of the Socratic method, learning through questioning, is exemplary of this, as it is inherently self-critical. Plato's "Parmenides"[8] are a particularly good example of this, as not only did the two figures in the discourse (Parmenides and Socrates) allow others to question their ideas, but they put themselves into question by self-critiquing and presenting counterarguments. However, if we determine this self-doubt in postmodernism as part of a broader scepticism of ideology, we can separate it from earlier iterations of a similar idea.

The Micro-level: Close Reading

These broad ideas can perhaps be put into context with an example: Virginia Woolf's "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" is a seminal piece often referenced as describing the shift to modernist writing at the start of the 20th century. The line "On or about December 1910 human character changed."[9] The date of the exhibition, "Manet and the Post-Impressionists" is quoted (though its arbitrary nature is brought to attention by Woolf, indicating that the date itself is for the purpose of the argument rather than the other way around). Woolf's text rebuts the view expressed by a contemporary novelist, Arnold Bennet, regarding the inability of other current writers to create believable characters on the model of their literary predecessors. Woolf gives a beautiful demonstration of the different approaches to character of the

[7] In "Principles of Philosophy," Descartes says, "If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things."
[8] Plato. 2013. Parmenides of Plato. Hardpress Ltd.
[9] Woolf, Virginia. 1924. "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." *The Hogarth Press*, 4.

"new" and "old" writers, or "Georgian" and "Edwardian" as she calls them. In doing so, she describes the way in which the grammar rules of writing are changing and makes the grand claim that "we are trembling on the verge of one of the great ages of English literature." However, the way in which she posits the shift to a new set of rules and a dismissal or "overcoming"[10] of the old ways of creating character implies some kind of improvement or progress in this set of rules. Woolf begins by criticising Bennet's loud assumption that his view is correct, and then somewhat ironically undermines it by making scathing criticisms of others, thus quite boldly putting forth her own opinions on the subject. What strikes me here is that even as she champions modernity, dismissing the old ideas in favour of the new, she stops short of questioning the very idea of progress; even as she critiques Bennet's reactionary views, she stops short of questioning objectivity itself by exposing ideologies driving affirmations of right and wrong. In this, her position is distinctly modernist and thus separable from postmodernist thought.

There are a great many examples of modernist artists who create new perspectives, perhaps with the intention of discovering something new in the art: redefining the perspective on it or finding some new truth. Picasso is a very important example of someone credited with having shifted perspective in art. One of the leaders of cubism, he was and is very much a leading figure in the modernisation of art and how we think of it. For example, in his piece "Homme à la cheminée," which translates to "Man at the fireplace/chimney," as in many of his pieces, the subjects of the painting (the man and the chimney) do not at all take distinct forms. The chimney is very easy to identify at the top where it takes on an elegant curved shape, as well as at the bottom where you can see the lines that form the sides of the fireplace. However, upon looking at the painting, I had the distinct impression that it was exactly that: lines, not a fireplace itself. The fact that the only object easy to identify in the painting is distinctly two-dimensional means that, once they have identified it, the viewer takes a second look to understand what about the object is odd. Here, the proportions

"Homme à la cheminée," Pablo Picasso, 1916

[10] The word used by Ferraris and Taraboletti in "Postmodernism and the deconstruction of Modernism" to describe the Enlightenment (and therefore modernist) approach to changes in ideology or cultural revolutions.

of the fireplace are off: the top part is not in line with the bottom part of it, there should visibly be a continuation of the straight line, but instead the bottom part of the fireplace is at an angle. The "man" at said chimney is much less definable than the chimney. He is comprised of an amalgamation of lines and curves generally forming a shape that is somewhat rectangular (like that of a person) but otherwise distinctly un-human-like. In fact, Picasso has taken this "man" and interpreted it as shapes rather than as one coherent thing which he recognised as a person. Instead, his painting is different glimpses of a man, certain parts which he perhaps noticed more than others. It is a representation of how he perceived the different parts of this man rather than a representation of a "man" in the way in which one is taught to represent a man. The line between the human and the object is also blurred as the "man" appears to be an amalgamation of objects. Then the wholeness of an object is put into question, as well as the wholeness of perception, i.e. how much of seeing is actually looking at something, and how much of it is recognising certain shapes and putting them in a category in your head: "man" or "chimney". The image has, in addition, the disconnect between the two aesthetics of the very colourful "man" full of dimensions and odd shapes, and the black lines that form the chimney. There is irony in that the "man," though completely unrecognisable as such, is very real and present and vivacious, whereas the background seems to be nothing more than a drawing on a piece of paper. This contrast is part of what Picasso uses to bring attention to the line between the signifier and signified: he not only brings attention to the fact that it is a representation, but the painting itself is about the fact that it is a representation. There is no pretence of the painting being anything remotely resembling a man and a fireplace. Perhaps this is more simply illustrated in René Magritte's well-known painting, "La Trahison des images," where the legend of the painting of a pipe reads "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," or "This is not a pipe." The status of the painting as a representation is the first step to making the viewer experience the two and three-dimensionality of the figures at once, making them into, not unlike Woolf's Mrs. Brown, his own characters.

Enstrangement

This distancing between the identifier and identified (the painting and the object being painted) is brought to the forefront in modernist art, it is a goal to highlight this, rather than being actively hidden. There are

infinite interpretations of this relationship and its role in different artworks, but in his essay, "Art, as Device" (2015), originally published in 1917, Viktor Shklovsky defines an intentional disconnect in art as a way of forcing the audience to see the art rather than simply recognise it. In Alexandra Berlina's English translation of the text, she makes use of the term "enstrangement"[11] to describe this phenomenon of intentional distancing between the object and the viewer. The additional "n" mirrors the missing "n" in the word "ostrannenie," often translated as "making strange" (or "enstrangement"), which is the word Shklovsky used in the original text. The grammatical error, itself, enacts the enstrangement it describes. Picasso uses this very technique, and enstranges the viewer from the subject of his painting by dissecting what the subject is, taking it apart to the point where he seems to just paint the things that stick out to him, the things that he notices about the subject, rather than the object he has recognised. He is enacting this enstrangement by distancing the viewer from the object, and by proposing some kind of reinterpretation of what the subject might be. He gives glimpses of the subject, corners and edges, as if he has placed the subject upside-down and so can no longer recognise it as a man, but only as the separate shapes, the angles and colours that compose a man.

In "Art, as Device," Shklovsky bases his concept of "enstrangement" around the idea that the goal of art is to "create a special way of experiencing an object, to make one not 'recognize' but 'see' it."[12] The distancing between the audience and objects that enstrangement creates actually allows the audience to view the art in a different way, creating a new relationship between the object and the audience. He says it is to "restore the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things." The word "distancing" seems to be reductive of this effect of enstrangement; while it is making the object appear strange to the audience, it is so as to give the audience an opportunity to develop a new relationship with the object, to reconsider it and, ultimately, bring us closer to the object as we are seeing that specific object rather than recognising it and placing it under a category. In Shklovsky's own words, the goal of all imagery is "transferring an object from its usual sphere of experience to a new one, a kind of semantic change. When studying poetic

[11] Shklovsky, Viktor. 2015. "Art, as Device." *Poetics Today* 36 (3): 151–74. https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-3160709.
[12] Ibid., 167.

language—be it phonetically or lexically, syntactically or semantically—we always encounter the same characteristic of art: it is created with the explicit purpose of deautomatizing perception."[13]

Shklovsky also gives extensive examples of "enstrangement" being used in literature, with a focus on the late 19th-early twentieth century writer Leo Tolstoy. "Tolstoy's method of enstrangement consists in not calling a thing or event by its name but describing it as if seen for the first time, as if happening for the first time."[14] Shklovsky gives detailed descriptions of how Tolstoy enstranges the act of flogging so as to make the audience experience it more directly, to make it "reach our conscience," by describing it in painful detail. Tolstoy walks his readers through every movement as though there was not one word which described it. Though this effect was not coined and named until the early 20th century, and this specific essay (which was regarded as a "manifesto of early formalism"[15]), these ways of shifting perspective, making the audience re-experience an object (through visual or written art) had long been used, even before the time of so-called "modernism" where perspective was thoroughly put into question in theorertical terms.

This "enstrangement" between the viewer and the object that was painted, drawn or described can be identified in many different movements, but it becomes explicitly apparent in the Surrealist movement of the 1920s. I will start by discussing automatic writing. While this is not a visual art form, it was key in forming the ideology of the surrealist movement, and even, according to Jenny and Trezise in their essay, "From Breton to Dali: The Adventures of Automatism" (1989), one of the "rights of man"[16] of the Surrealist revolution was the right to automatism. Automatic writing is a technique promoted by the Jewish writer Ludwig Borne, and developed in relation with the idea of "free association" by Sigmund Freud in psychoanalytic theory[17]. The subject would write, and keep writing, and not let themselves stop writing so that they were writing so fast that they were no longer in control of the content that was being written. In this way, it was intended to reveal something about the subject's subconscious, a hidden

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[13] Ibid., 171.
[14] Ibid., 163.
[15] Erlich, Victor. 1973. "Russian Formalism." Journal of the History of Ideas 34 (4): 627–38. https://doi.org/10.2307/2708893.
[16] Jenny, Laurent, and Thomas Trezise. 1989. "From Breton to Dali: The Adventures of Automatism." *October* 51: 111. https://doi.org/10.2307/778893.
[17] Jay, Martin Evan. 2019. "Sigmund Freud - Psychoanalytic Theory." In Encyclopædia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sigmund-Freud/Psychoanalytic-theory.

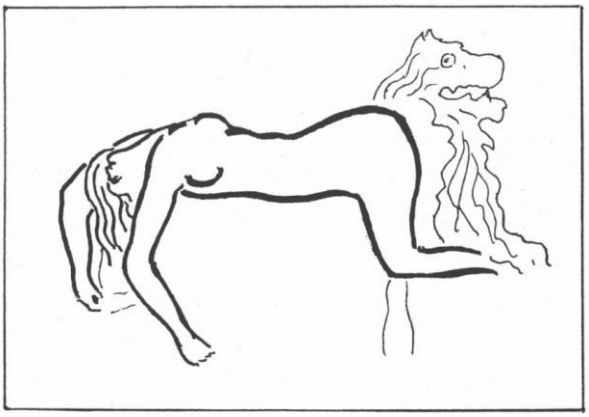
"truth." Even Breton in his first Surrealist manifesto, called Surrealism (and therefore, tangentially, automatism) a form of "pure expression."[18] Automatic writing was adopted by the Surrealist movement, initially as a way of finding new perspectives and finding some "truth" in a writer. However, as the focus of art started shifting away from the author or artist (as I will later discuss with Barthes), the Surrealist movement redefined automatic writing as a way of finding subjective perspectives. According to Jenny and Trezise (1989), "'Passive' automatism was still, despite itself, a form of realism, while 'active' automatism aims at derealization." No longer a way to find a "truth," about the author, the power was given to the writing instead, the act of which (writing) was acknowledged as being a mediator between idea and written word. Jenny and Trezise say that, for Breton the role of automatism shifted as, "automatism could not relinquish all passivity." Even the structure of this phrase enacts what it is saying, with the anthropomorphism of automatism (the subject of the sentence and the enactor of this verb "to relinquish"), it is not simply a method to enable the writer's "true" thoughts to be revealed, but gives automatism agency. Thus some power over the narrative is taken away from the author and instead placed upon the "mediator," which here is language. This way of thinking of the author (as having an importance secondary to the process of writing) and of the writing process (as, itself, doing something powerful and meaningful), while it is not postmodern, is founded on key ideas which later would become discussed and foundational to postmodern ideas and texts. In fact, Barthes even names Surrealism (and thus automatic writing) in "Death of the Author," saying that "though unable to accord language a supreme place [Surrealism] contributed to the desacralization of the image of the Author by ceaselessly recommending the abrupt disappointment of expectations of meaning."[19]

Salvador Dali, a key figure in the early 20th century Surrealist movement, also enacts various forms of "enstrangement." Dali's approach was a little different to the other artists I describe in this essay; instead of confusing reality (creating ways to make viewers re-interpret ordinary objects), Dali took an opposing angle of entry, and instead worked to "systematize confusion." Which, as Jenny and Trezise (1989) explain, means he creates "a new order or system out of elements taken in the external world which

[18] Jenny, Laurent, and Thomas Trezise. 1989. "From Breton to Dali: The Adventures of Automatism." *October* 51: 107. https://doi.org/10.2307/778893.
[19] Barthes, Roland. 1967. "The Death of the Author." *Aspen* 5-6.

otherwise would be unrelated to one another" This phrase, "systematize confusion" is repeated throughout Dali's writing, as in criticisms of his work, but first appeared in his 1933 essay, "Nouvelles considérations générales sur le mécanisme du phenomène paranoiaque du point de vue surréaliste."[20] Dali understood automatism as producing "delirious interpretations," nothing tied to an inner truth about a person.

Of course, Dali not only interpreted the standard tools of Surrealism in his own fashion, but he also had his own ideas about how one can create an "estrangement" (though he did not phrase it as such) between the object and the audience. One example of this is his double images. In his painting, "Invisible Sleeping Woman," Dali creates a double image with two figures clearly distinguishable but simultaneously part of the same image. In this drawing, a woman is lying on her back, her hair falling down and her arms behind her head. However, she shares herself with a lion, whose tail is her hair, and whose leg is her arm. Here, Dali creates an "enstrangement" by disrupting the viewer's idea of reality. The drawing shows neither woman nor lion, but is simultaneously two different things, and can be perceived as one or the other or both at the same time. All of a sudden, the two subjects are inextricable, the idea "woman" cannot be thought without immediately thinking "lion." The two (or more) subjects of the image are redefined in that they are now connected. One cannot exist without the other, and they could be completely different people, animals or objects, but in the image they may share a limb or a profile or hair, meaning that after having seen the image, the viewer can no longer extricate, for example, a woman's arm from a horse's leg. In addition to this inability to "other," to place the subject of the image into a category of "recognition"[21] forces the viewer to notice and to observe in more detail what it is they're seeing: how the shapes are shared, how the woman's hair and the



"Invisible Sleeping Woman," Salvador Dali, 1930

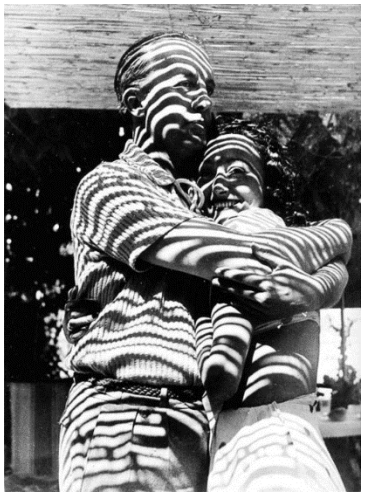
[20] Dali, Salvador. 1933. "Nouvelles Considérations Générales Sur Le Mécanisme Du Phenomène Paranoiaque Du Point de Vue Surréaliste." *Minotaure* 1.

[21] Shklovsky differentiates between to "see" and to "recognize" an object in "Art, as Device."

lion's mane are so distinguishable as woman's hair and lion's mane, and yet the lines that form them are one and the same. This means that the viewer cannot simply superimpose onto the drawing their idea of what hair or a horse's tail look like, as these images are too contrasting. Dali makes the status of the drawing as an identifier and not the different identified objects into an insurmountable fact, which must be addressed when looking at the drawing, thus, as Finkelstein (1983) describes Dali's aim with such double images, he is "subverting or discrediting our perception of reality." Dali does, to some extent, achieve this goal, however, it is limited in that he fails to meet the prerequisite he set for himself in his 1930 essay, "L'Ane pourri,"[22] that the figures must be "equally devoid of any deformation or abnormality which might betray some arrangement." Dali never produced a work which was entirely void of these abnormalities. In his later work, he created several double images with figures who were also part of the landscape itself, but he never had two people or animals who were one without any obvious deformation, for example of the woman in "Invisible Sleeping Woman," who appears to be lying on her back, but with limbs bent backwards at unrealistic angles. Here, Dali's theory separates from the technique; as with automatic writing, which was theorised (rather ironically) without the restrictions of writing, whose slow, laborious nature may inhibit the "pure expression" of the unspoken thought, the theory cannot quite line up with the physical enactment of the technique. Artworks with double images are not unique to Dali, for example back in 1533 Hans Holbein's "Ambassadors" is famous for its skull which looks like just a blur on the canvas, until the viewer moves to the right and the shape of a skull is revealed. However, despite his failure to do so, Dali's ideas remain applicable in looser forms to his own art (I would argue that he does succeed to "systematize confusion"), as well as to other art forms.

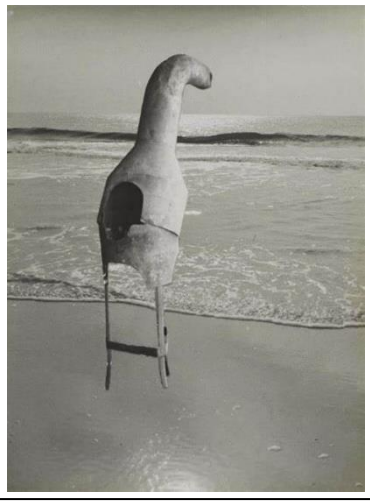
[22] Dali, Salvador. 1930. "L'Ane Pourri." *Le Surréalisme Au Service de La Révolution*.

I will give a few examples of the enstrangement operated by surrealist photography, because there is an inherent assumption that photographs are factual and objective, so in causing the viewer to question the subject, surrealist photographers also put into question the very basic assumption of what photography is; for surrealist photographers, subjectivity was a goal rather than an obstacle. Odd angles (often close-up), weird subject choices, playing with exposure, and collage techniques all were used, to prevent viewers from relying on images in-built in their minds of what a certain object or person should look like. Viewers may have to look at the image a little longer than normal to identify the subject and place it in a category. It may even encourage viewers to rebuild their idea of what that object is or means. For example, as with the image to the left, "Paul and Nusch Eluard", by Dora Maar, the shadows alone make the bodies look warped. Their faces look alien and their arms don't seem to be straight on first glance. These features all work to disrupt our idea of what bodies should look like, even redefining the relationship between the two figures. Because the two bodies are not immediately definable, they almost merge together, perhaps creating more intimacy between them.



"Paul and Nusch Eluard," Dora Maar, 1937

In the following image, "Monster on the Beach," a collage is used to disrupt assumptions. Firstly, the bird looks out of place in the scene (its harsh edges make it is clear it has been artificially placed into the image). Our identification of the bird as other forces us to question *why* it's other, therefore to look more closely and realize that it must be these harsh edges and the shadow on it incongruous with its background that are confusing us. I should also mention the obvious: the bird is some sort of sculpture that appears to be on stool legs. This in and of itself is off-putting, but with a beach backdrop, it seems very out of place.



"Monster on the Beach," Dora Maar, 1936

The close attention we pay to the image alone is enough to disrupt our idea of what the image should be or that an image should make sense or have a story. Then, the fact that we have to piece apart what we

were expecting it to look like forces us to question why we have these expectations and how we might rethink how we see that object.

Much later in the 20th century, Roland Barthes describes this phenomenon of distancing directly in relation to photography. In "Image, Music, Text", (Barthes 1977) there is an essay, "The Photographic Message" which takes this conversation of perspective into a different context. Like writing, a photograph is a singular object that does not change between when different people see it. However, what makes a photograph different is that, in and of itself, it is supposed to be objective – in fact, it is objective by its very definition. It captures an instant, perhaps not an exact replica of the scene before you, but that has the appearance of the scene you pointed it at – as Barthes puts it, there is no "transformation" between what the camera is pointed at and the photograph. Barthes challenges this objectivity. He constructs a list of a number of ways in which the perception of a photograph can be altered. Trick effects, pose, objects, photogenia (lighting, exposure and printing), aestheticism and syntax (context: in a series of photographs or alone). These are all things he says are part of the message: they get between the subject and the person perceiving the subject through the photograph, as they influence what the object in the image signifies and how it is interpreted. The photograph in this way becomes a "message," because it is not simply transmitting information but is an interpretation of this information. "The structure of the photograph is not an isolated structure; it is in communication with at least one other structure."[23] As one of the forefathers of postmodernism, it makes sense that Barthes' ideas link in very closely to the idea of subjectivism defined as key to postmodernist thought.

The way that photographs are altered to create an image which can be distanced from the subject of the photo is something universal to photography, but is very identifiable as intentional in surrealist photography as early as the 1920s. Whilst there had not been a broader questioning of the role of ideology in shaping our perspectives on art among other things (which is the core reason that postmodernism is defined by its skepticism), artists and movements much earlier than postmodernism

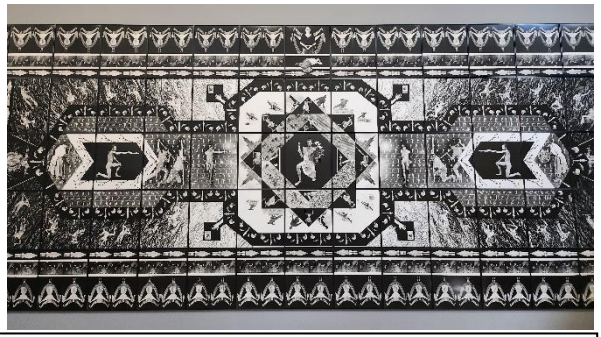
[23] Barthes, Roland. 1961. "Le Message Photographique." *Communications* 1 (1): 16. https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1961.921.

was put on paper seem to be utilizing techniques to bring about these questions of perspective and subjectivity of an object, art or ideology that are key to much later postmodern thought.

As mentioned when discussing Dali, one of the key transformations in postmodern thought was the removal of the role and even the very idea of the author. In Barthes' "Death of the Author" (1967), the author's role is secondary to the relationship between art and audience. Throughout this essay, he is talking about language, but the same rules apply to art and the image as visual art can be doing something in and of itself that was not planned, predicted, or even necessarily experienced by the author. For Barthes, the death of the author is a way of removing the agency and the power over writing from the author, and instead allowing the reader to engage in a relationship with the text. This relationship is foregrounded, and the creation of the text comes when the text is read, rather than when the writer puts pen to paper. As Barthes says, "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author." This kind of thought was not formulated as literary or artistic theory as such until Barthes' "Death of the Author" with the start of the postmodern movement around the 1960s. This essay also came in the context of post-colonization which ultimately was to give rise to postcolonial theory with its own historically- and ethnographically-defined challenges to universality, which in turn exposed ideological frames of interpretation. "Ideology" in this context largely means narratives told of history, which are then applied to any notion of "great" art and "great" artists. This dissolution of any kind of narrative did not exist when Dali and Dora Maar were shifting the perspective of an object and its relationship to the artist and audience in the 1920s and 1930s, but these works started to challenge the fact that there might be any "truth" to be found in this perspective shift, which in turn can later be interpreted as a challenging of the very fact that there is any kind of universal truth at all. For Barthes, it is not only this, but the very idea of the removal of the author which appeared in art long before Barthes formulated it as such. In "Death of the Author," (1967) Barthes says that "Though the sway of the Author remains powerful […] certain writers have long since attempted to loosen it." He gives the example of the poet Mallarmé in France, who "was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner. For him, for us too, it is language which speaks, not the author." Barthes is clear in saying that, for Mallarmé, the responsibility for narrative is not that of the author, but of the mediator: language. "Mallarmé's entire poetics consists in

supressing the author in the interests of writing (which is, as will be seen, to restore the place of the reader)." In addition to Mallarmé, Barthes references Surrealism as another place that this idea of the author has been subverted. He uses the example of "the famous surrealist 'jolt'" as a description of how Surrealism (and automatic writing) disrupts expectations, forcing the audience to re-evaluate and contribute to the creation of meaning (as they can no longer take it for granted that they know what an artwork is or does). Therefore the audience plays a much larger role in the artwork, and as already mentioned, "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."

Recent Enstrangement

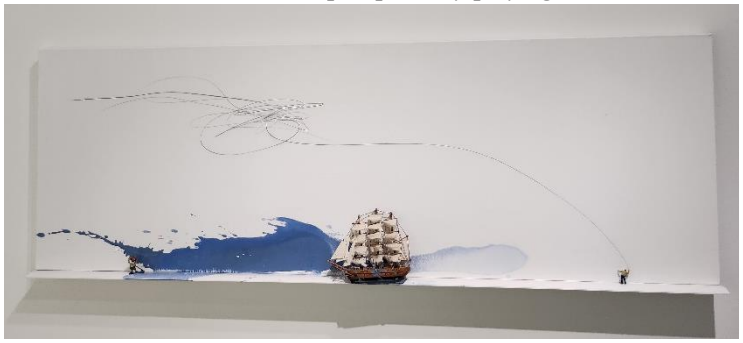


"Splendor of the Artisan," Zofia Kulik, 2023

Many recent artists have also, in their work, created an "enstrangement" between art and its subject, comparable to those I have already discussed. Zofia Kulik, in her photography show, "Splendour of the Artisan" at the 2023 Arles photography festival, "Les Rencontres de la Photographie," uses many of the techniques already discussed to create a harsh divide. For example, she uses collage (or more modern digital versions of the same idea) to take apart ideas and subjects and juxtapose them with completely different images. Like Dali's double images, this forces the audience to reconsider not only the meaning of an image itself, but its meaning in relation to other images. Her artwork is focused on juxtaposition of images, on patterns, and on order. One photograph shown here from "Splendour of the Artisan" is just one example of this, and she uses all these techniques to "enstrange" the audience. Firstly, the photographs themselves: many of the portraits in this image are male nudes. This feels like an invasion of privacy, an invasion of the man's body as well as an invasion of the moment the photograph was taken. Then the very idea of the male nude. Then the angles of the model, his positioning in the photographs, is odd: his limbs are at right angles in poses implying power: on one knee as if to receive a crown, sat astride a chair (or throne). But this implication of power comes alongside the vulnerability of his nudity. Beyond the model himself, his image is surrounded by

photographs of daggers and skulls meant to shock. This creates something along the lines of the famous surrealist "jolt" which Barthes describes. The audience is forced to take a second look, to comprehend their shock at not just the dagger itself, but, again, its presence in dialogue with the man: is it there for his use or to hurt him? Which is worse? Kulik might have a political agenda, but it is incredibly broad. Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska says of "Splendour of the Artisan" that "The works unroll stories of totalitarian political regimes, death, domination, the power games of the church or more broadly of patriarchal culture, but also the relationship between man and woman, the individual and the mass." While this does seem incredibly broad and all-encompassing, there is a common theme of power dynamics which provides the audience with a goal, some kind of limits in their exploration of the piece, as the art itself has a motivation. I would argue that this explicit motivation is actually re-inserting the role of the Author, as an explicit intention in the goals of the artwork mean that the audience is aware of the Author's influence. Despite this, there is still a lot of room for audiences to engage with the artwork itself (as, regardless of Barthes' thoughts on the matter, the insertion of the Author and loss of the reader and vice versa are not necessarily proportional to each other in a linear way. The surrealist "jolt" apparent in Kulik's evidently encourages (if not necessitates) the intervention of the audience.

This explicit detachment between the artist and their 'original' object is often used to make a specific point in recent artwork. At the museum Les Abattoirs in Toulouse, Liliana Porter has a lot of work that is explicitly about perspective and the barrier between the artist and their art as well as that between the object and the art. The fact that attention is brought to it explicitly differentiates it from the kind of distancing (or "enstrangement") created by the likes of Picasso, Dali and Maar, because the painting itself is explicitly aware of its separation from the subject of the painting. The series of artworks "Forced Labor" make this relationship explicit by playing with the scale of different objects and people. For example, one of the pieces is a model ship (shown below) with blue paint and two figurines: one cleaning, and one drawing. The figurines are not to scale, and one of them is cleaning the blue paint as though it were water on the floor. For the

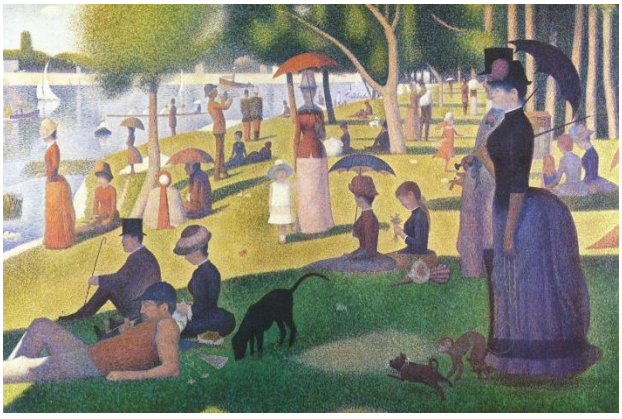


"Forced Labor," Liliana Porter, 2004

woman cleaning, it is neither the sea (like the paint is to the boat) or paint (like it is to the artist). The artworks are very politically charged and this idea of playing with scale is done in order to demonstrate the inequity of the enormity of the manual labour. Playing with perspective forces the viewer to ask why there is such a disconnect between the size of the figure and the size of the water she's cleaning up. Here, pushing the viewer to question the relationship between the art and what it was based on (why is manual labour represented as so unimaginably huge? Is this grounded in the reality of the immensity of their work?) achieves a very specific end of bringing awareness to underappreciated workers. Like surrealism, it is intentionally interrogating the audience, forcing them to engage with the artwork in an active. While the agency of the audience is perhaps more limited with Porter's painting because there is a certain view with political motivations at the foundation of this series of works which, most likely, becomes the focus of the audience's potential engagement with her work. Nonetheless, it does give power and influence to the audience, allowing them to interpret it and respond to it emotionally in a way that earlier art movements, such as surrealism, share.

Pre-20th-century Enstragement

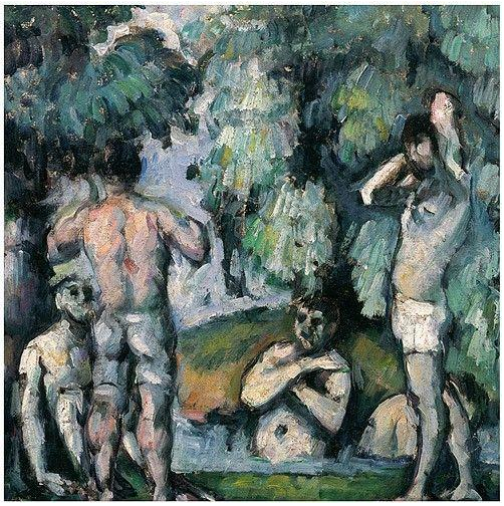
The redefinition of perspective in art was not invented in the 20th century, and there are many examples of estrangement being used to redefine art. Impressionist artists for example brought attention to the fact that a viewer was looking at a painting, not the scene itself, as the goal was not to make the painting as realistic as possible, and instead tried to capture the light that they saw, not the objects themselves. Pointillistes similarly created a distance between the object and viewer by depicting scenes using dots which, from close up, looked like an amalgamation of random colours nothing like the original object, but from a distance took on the appearance of a single colour, as demonstrated by



"Un Dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte," Georges Seurat, 1884-86

the Seruat Seurat painting, "Un D17imanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte" shown on the right.

Cézanne took the impressionist work a step further and used various methods and styles to redefine the subject of his painting as his own. He reinterpreted the subject so as to make the viewer question their own perceptions of it, influencing the likes of Picasso who later took this much further. For example, in various of his paintings, Cézanne puts figures in poses that are out of context of their backgrounds or the poses of figures around them. In "The Five Bathers", there is one figure who seems to be crouched down facing away from the group, seemingly upset. It doesn't fit in with the whole image, where the rest of the group are in a circle, seemingly paying no mind to this figure despite their body language indicating an entirely contrasting emotion and atmosphere to that which the rest of the painting portrays. In "Cézanne's Bodies", an article by Kathleen Adler, she discusses how "Cézanne's bathers are by no means copy their sources […] instead they appear to relate to them in ways which we might now think of as postmodern – that is, they seem to explore and question the nature of their own connection to the source, the nature of the difference between an 'original' and a representation of it."[24] The poses in and of themselves are nothing unusual, but their positioning in a new context makes the viewer question why it is noticeable and out of place, thus bringing about an awareness that we, as viewers, have expectations and assume that the small parts of the image will fit the impression we get from the whole. *The Five bathers* also has one figure stood up with his arms in the air. He seems to be washing himself, but he is not in the water. Another has his arms crossed over his chest, and it is again not clear why. The initial time it takes to be taken aback by the figure sat down is enough time to realise the other figures also seem to be behaving at odds with their surroundings.



"The Five Bathers," Paul Cézanne, 1875

This method of depicting certain moments, poses and objects caught in a moment in time, while it might appear unnatural, can be a way of representing how one notices something. You can't see something all at

[24] Adler, Kathleen. 1990. "Cézanne's Bodies." *Art in America*, April. 237.

once: the size, the colour, the light, the texture – you see it in pieces – you might see an arm or a nose or just a hair. This translates directly into Picasso's own way of interpreting his subjects in many of his cubist paintings, such as "Homme à la cheminée." He might capture the angle of an elbow and then sees the shadow under the man's trousers and get distracted by that. It is precisely in its unnaturalness that it encourages the viewer to reinterpret the subject in Picasso's terms and see what they can discover in a particularly long neck or a lopsided ear.

Concluding Thoughts: returning to the Macro-Micro

It wasn't until the second half of the 20th century that postmodern and postcolonial criticism overtly challenged the ideologies of linear progress and universality - in Ferraris and Segre's terms, comprising a 'dissolution' of past interpretive frames rather then adjustments to them perceived as the next step in making forward progress. In attempting to link macro (historical) understandings with micro (close readings of materials - texts or artworks - from those historical periods and movements), I have probed both relations and ruptures between modernity/modernism and postmodernism. Ironically, finding the building blocks of postmodernism in close readings of modernist works both confirms the historical progression the macro view sets out and undermines it by. Both linear and non-linear temporalities are at work. Likewise, the assumption of a "universal" viewpoint devoid of ideology implicitly embraced by modernity/modernism with its Enlightenment roots was dissolved by postmodernist thought while still all perspectives are on the order of the subjective.

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