

Martha Rosler Discussion

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Useful Terms

The Situationists

European group Situationist International (SI) explored the “complicit role of art in exploitation.” Grounded in Marxist theory with roots in surrealism and Dadaism



The ‘Spectacle’ and Spectacle Culture

“The all-encompassing, controlling nature of modern industrial and ‘post-industrial’ culture.”

“The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.”

The Dérive

A tool through which to engage with urban neighborhoods free from “bureaucratic control.” A version of 19th century Flaneur.

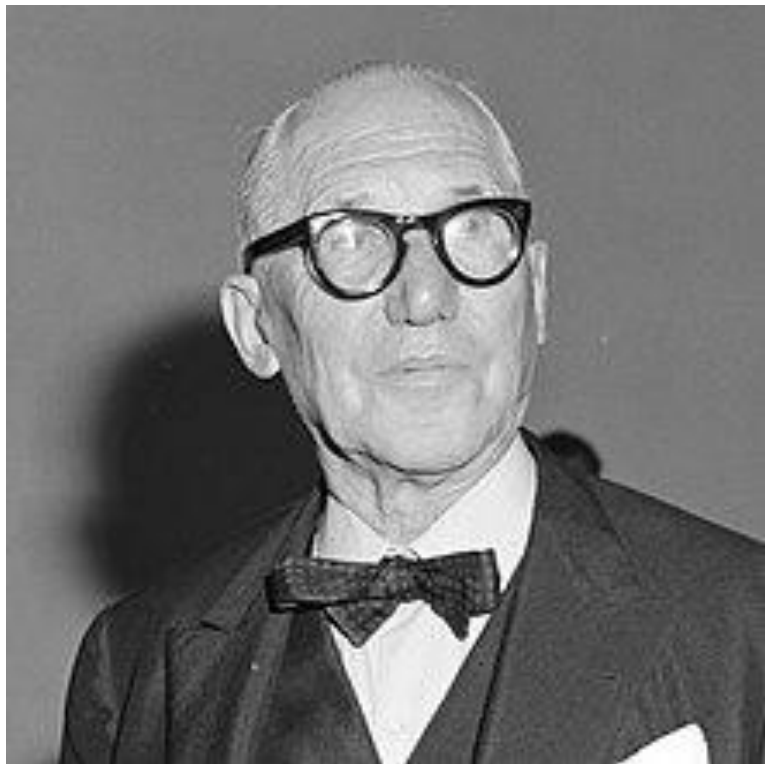
Important people



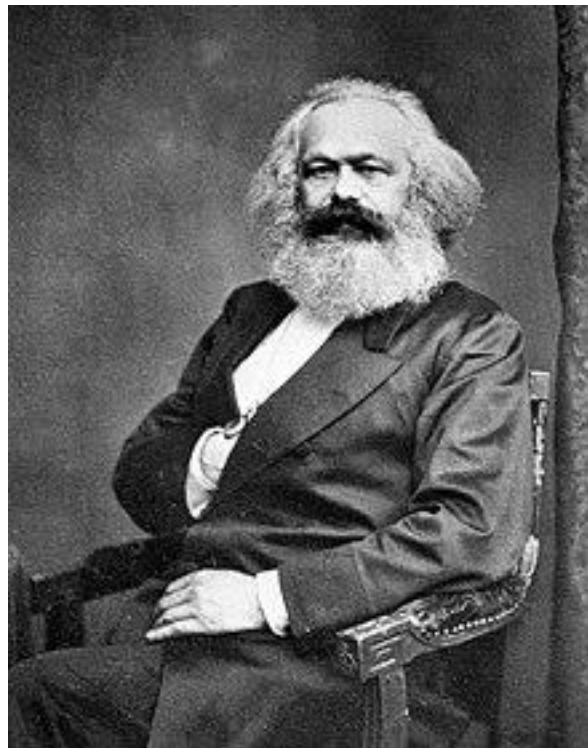
Henri Lefebvre



Guy Debord



Le Corbusier



Karl Marx

Discussion Questions

“The Western art world has periodically rediscovered the Situationists, who presently occupy what a friend has described as a quasireligious position, embodying every aspiring artist/revolutionary’s deepest wish – to be in both the political and the artistic vanguard simultaneously.”

What do you think this implies about the role of the Situationists during the time of the groups inception and today? Do the two conflict?

What is the role of the artist (or “creative class”) in urban society according to Rosler?

Is this problematic? What role does the author think culture plays in postwar capitalism? Do you agree with this?

How does Rosler think this has played into the commodification of the arts, artists, and creatives within capitalist structures?

How can Oberlin students, especially art students, not become part of the problem of gentrification?

What would Rosler do? (WWRD)

Is there a world in which the arts don't further stratify (economically, politically, socially) urban areas?

In what ways is “hippie” culture consumerist? How did the term “revolution” become commodified?

“Artists have routinely harbored messianic desires, the longing to take a high position in social matters, to play a transformative role in political affairs; this may be finally understood as a necessary – though perhaps only imaginary – corrective to their roles, both uncomfortable and insecure, as handmaidens to wealth and power.”

Why do artists feel the need to “make up” for something? In what ways have they (we) erred?

In what ways is a *dérive* a political statement? What is the power/structure that one fights by doing a *dérive*? How does it help one engage with their city in a more productive way? What is the difference between it and *flaneur*?

Photos from -

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guy_Debord

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Corbusier

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Lefebvre