

Modernity and Modernism

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The Argument – David Harvey

- The Argument: Although there has been a simultaneous ‘sea change’ in political economy, culture and the experience of space and time since around 1972, there are “shifts in surface appearance’ when seen against ‘the basic rules of capitalistic accumulation

Overview of Modernism and Modernity (10-38)

- Traces the modernist project back to its enlightenment roots. Bracketing the question of whether the worst excesses of 20th century modernity were inevitable
- Harvey's relation to modernity is apparently ambivalent. While one can appreciate the goals of the Enlightenment project in their historical context, the underside of the project of rationality, universality and technologism has always had its critics from Rousseau to Weber and Nietzsche

Overview – Contd.....

- Harvey says that the Enlightenment project began to break down about 1848 producing cultural trends that are grouped together under the rubric Modernism,
- 1910-1915 are a critical period in this development.
- This is partly due to the increasing class tensions in capitalist Europe in the mid 19th century but also has to do with a specific change in the experience of space and time

Overview of Modernity and Modernism – Contd....

- Modernism's increasing tendency to mythologize found its outlets in the fascist movements and American consumerism no less than in T.S. Eliot or James Joyce.

- Part II Modernity and Modernism (Pages 10-38)
- Baudelaire – conjoining ephemeral – fleeting and eternal – immutable (10-38)
- Modernity as chaotic, ephemeral
- Enlightenment project as aiming at eternal, immutable
- Habermas: objective science , universal morality and law, autonomous art.

- Cassirer: Progress and Secularity
- Horkheimer and Adorno: Dialectics of enlightenment
- Problems with enlightenment thought

Critics of Modernity (15-18)

- Weber: iron cage of rationality
- Nietzsche : creative destruction and aesthetic experience beyond good and evil.
- Haussman and Robert Moses
- Schumpeter: entrepreneur

Cultural Modernism (the artist hero) (18-22)

- Rousseau, Kant, Romanticism: Aestheticism and Politics
- Baudelaire : Extraction of eternal from the fleeting
- Representation and language: Freezing time
- Architecture
- Poetry: Montage/Collage

Art Market: Creative destructive Production and cultural consumption (22-24)

- Art and Politics: Dada, Gropius Le Corbusier
- Material conditions of art Reproduction
- Work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction
- Modernism as reaction to factory mass production

Complexity of Modernism (24 – 38)

- Historical geography
- Nationalism, globalism, urbanism(Simmel) etc
- US vs Europe: pace of industrialism

Periodisation

- Enlightenment: only one answer :post 1848: multiple answers.
- Explosion post 1890: turning point 1910-1915 truth in perspectivism
- Deep change in culture and knowledge
- Class struggle: Politics of Art
- Democratic and Progressive: Critical of Bourgeois life styles

- Contra Anarchy, despair: still looking for truth under chaos
- Trauma of WWI leads to heroic search for a modern myth
- Rationality of the machine: Rivera, Bauhaus, logical positivism
- Fascist turn: Futurism, Pound
- Contradictions

- Political Art: Surrealism, Constructivism, Socialist realism
- Universal myths: Eliot, Picasso
- Myths taking over class politics: Sorel, Heidegger

Universal or 'high' modernism after 1945

- Architecture: Building cities: celebration of corporate power
- Literature: Canonization of previously shocking modernism
- Art: Guilbaut: How NY stole the idea of Modern Art
- America as the essence of Western Culture
- Artistic rebellion transformed into aggressive liberal ideology
- Counter culture of the 60s as turn to postmodernism
(38)