WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ART?

Takashi Murakami, 727, 1996
WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ART?

It is generally defined as the work of artists who are living/working in the twenty-first century!
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“Postmodernism”
MODERN
WHAT IS IT?

“Postmodernism”
MODERN?
Modern History of the Western Culture

18th CENTURY: AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

- Reason as the primary source of authority and legitimacy
- Democracy and individual liberty
- Freedom of expression and religious tolerance
- Reforming traditional systems of power and faith
- Increasing empiricism and scientific rigor
MODERN?
Innovative and related to the present or recent times as opposed to the remote past.
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Modernism (1870 - 1960)
MODERN?
Innovative and related to the present or recent times as opposed to the remote past.

World War 1
• Disappointment
• Loss of faith
• Radical rejection of traditions
• Fragmentation
• Embracing New rather than Value
BEAUTY IN THE EYE OF BEHOLDER

IMPRESSIONISM and POST-IMPRESSIONISM (1870-1905)

Starry Night - Vincent van Gogh
THE WILD BEASTS

FAUVISM (1905-1910)

The Dance - Henri Matisse
EMOTIONALISTS

EXPRESSIONISM (1890-1934)

The Scream - Edvard Munch
Woman of Algiers – Pablo Picasso
MODERN?
particular attitude or style of art making.

"My opinion is that new art needs new techniques. And the modern artists have found new means of making their statements. It seems to me that the modern painter cannot express this age of the aeroplane, the atom bomb, the radio, in the old forms of the Renaissance or of any other past culture. Each age finds its own technique."
MODERN?
The art that is about “Art”!

FORMALISM
artistic medium should be stripped of all associations with other non-visual arts!
MODERN?

(i) the specific time and place where it was made
(ii) the medium that it is made of
(iii) how it was made
WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ART?

MODERN ART = I COULD DO THAT + YEAH, BUT YOU DIDN'T
DIFFICULTY OF RECEPTION AND ELITISM

"To appreciate a work of art, we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions."

- Clive Bell
...our brain scans have shown that abstract forms (in contrast with images of people, places, and recognizable things) fail to activate the "regions of the brain traditionally associated with higher cognitive functions"--in particular, the areas that manage both emotion and long-term memory.

DIFFICULTY OF RECEPTION AND ELITISM
MODERN
Difficulties

- Abstract forms and the difficulty of reception
- The implicit Elitism espoused by art critics and Abstract Expressionists
- Proliferation of critical theories accumulated over several decades
POSTMODERN
the era of profusion & pluralism
POSTMODERN
the era of profusion & pluralism

- POP ART
- MINIMALISM
- CONCEPTUAL ART
**POSTMODERNISM**
an Anti- movement

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<th>Modernism</th>
<th>Postmodernism</th>
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<td>Form (conjunctive/closed)</td>
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<td>Root/Depth</td>
<td>Rhizome/Surface</td>
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* The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature (1971)
POSTMODERN
Reproducibility vs. Originality

Sandro Botticelli, Birth of Venus (1482)

Andy Warhol,
Details of Renaissance Paintings (1984)
POSTMODERN
Plurality vs. Singularity

Judy Chicago,
Rainbow
POSTMODERN
Product vs. Process

Richard Long
CONTEMPORARY
‘with the times’
Roman Jakobson’s Communication Chart

Message

Addresser

Addressee

Language
Material
Tool

code
context
channel

History
Culture
Medium
Employing postmodern values and theories, not necessarily for holding an opposition against Modernism, but most importantly for giving voice to the varied and changing cultural landscape of values and beliefs in the 21st century:

- Gender
- Identity
- Communication
- Time and Space
- Technology
- Culture
- Environment
- Spirituality
- Politics
...contemporary art as the work of artists who are living in the twenty-first century... [these works are] dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that challenge traditional boundaries and defy easy definition. Diverse and eclectic, contemporary art is distinguished by the very lack of a uniform organizing principle, ideology, or -ism.” 

-art21
Damien Hirst, *Mother and Child (Divided)*, 2007
Damien Hirst, *Mother and Child (Divided)*, 2007
Orlan
The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan
Maurizio Cattelan, *La Nona Ora*, 1999
Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Communal Meals*, 1990-2012
Walker Evans
Alabama Tenant Farmer Wife, 1936
Gelatin silver print

Sherrie Levine
After Walker Evans 1981
Zhang Huan, 12 Square Meters, 1994
Wafaa Bilal, 3rdi, 2010-2011
Wafaa Bilal, 3rdi, 2010-2011