POSTMODERN NARRATIVE
STORYTELLING AND HUMOR

Erwin Wurm, One Minute Sculpture, 1997
The caves of Lascaux, 15000 B.C.
WHAT IS STORY?

STORY

NARRATIVE

STORY GOAL

VALUE/OUTCOME
WHAT IS STORY?
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WHAT IS STORY?
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WHAT IS STORY?
Duccio, *Madonna Enthroned*, 1308
MODERNISM AND NARRATIVE

REASON

?  

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH
MODERNISM AND NARRATIVE
Grand narrative or “meta-narrative” is a term introduced by Jean-François Lyotard in his classic 1979 work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, in which he describes grand narrative as “master ideas” that legitimize codes and values in the society.
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POSTMODERNISM AND NARRATIVE

In Postmodern narrative the important thing is not the story but how it is told!
**PASTICHE & HUMOR**

*Pastiche* is the governing principle of the Postmodern narrative. It is different than old-fashioned narrative, mainly because its *lack of a clear referent*. This means a disproportion between what you see and what you expect to see.

Fredric Jameson
“Pastiche is based on Imitation and humor. Its referent is less obvious and its purpose is less evident.”
THE FUNNIEST JOKE IN THE WORLD

Who said words could never hurt them?
WHAT IS HUMOR?

PERMISSION to Laugh
WHAT IS HUMOR?

SUPERIORITY THEORY

Based on the idea that laughter occurs primarily as a result of a feeling of superiority to someone else.

“being stupid enough not to see where the pavement ends, or that there is a paving stone in my way.”

- Baudelaire, Of the Essence of Laughter
WHAT IS HUMOR?

RELIEF THEORY
Involuntary discharge of a tension caused by an interplay between conscious and unconscious.

"The psychic energy normally expended in the suppression of inappropriately sexually oriented thoughts suddenly, in joking, becomes superfluous, and as such needs to be discharged."

- Freud’s Relief Theory of Humor
WHAT IS HUMOR?

THEORY OF INCONGRUITY

Humor is generated by a sudden interruption to the normal flow of things. Laughter is the result of surprising disproportion between what one expects and what one sees.

“Whatever is to arouse lively, convulsive laughter must contain something absurd (hence something that the understanding cannot like for its own sake). Laughter is the affect that arises if a tense expectation is transformed into nothing.”

- Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment
Erwin Wurm, *Truck*

Erwin Wurm, *Telekinetically Bent VW Van*
PASTICHE & HUMOR

“Pastiche is based on imitation and humor. Its referent is less obvious and its purpose is less evident.”
PASTICHE & HUMOR

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Narratives characterized by pastiche are no longer about direct experience or the real world, they are stories of vaguely remembered or misremembered fictions about the past and future.

- biased
- subversive
- non-linear

- incomplete
- inconclusive
- vague
POSTMODERN STORYTELLING

- biased
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- non-linear

David Lynch, *Twin Peaks*, 1990-91
POSTMODERN STORYTELLING

• biased
• incomplete
• subversive
• inconclusive
• non-linear

David Fincher, *Fight Club*, 1999
POSTMODERN STORYTELLING

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Alejandro González Iñárritu, 21 Grams, 2003
LE CHEF D'ŒUVRE DE
DAVID LYNCH
NOUVELLE VERSION SONORE

ERASERHEAD
Gregory Crewdson, Untitled, 2002
Gregory Crewdson,
Untitled, 1998
Anna Gaskell, *from Wonder*, 1996
Anna Gaskell, *from Wonder*, 1996
Anna Gaskell, from Wonder, 1996
Anna Gaskell, from *Wonder*, 1996