Postmodernism

Postmodernism can be defined using narrow academic language, or it can be left delightfully and humorously ambiguous:

An architectural style characterized by formal style being secondary to superficial decoration.

A philosophy of dismissal, ridicule and removal from older concepts.

Usually denotes a lack of sophisticated sense of taste or style. An excuse for bad design.

"That new ugly-ass Wal-mart is so Pomo, I hate it."

or

"Either the website was designed by a rabid chimpanzee, or it was supposed to be very Pomo."
Critical Inclusion of Postmodernism in the Secondary Visual Arts Curriculum

Creative Inclusion of Postmodernism the Secondary Visual Arts Curriculum by Lorinda Stevens is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.
Postmodernism is tough to define.

- Postmodernism is a contemporary approach to thinking about culture which includes a direct address of feminism, the knowledge/power paradigm, individuality, truth, multiculturalism, and the environment.

- Postmodernism is freely accessible to all, denying the elite often academic position of “only those in the know” It pertains to all culture: the arts, language, sociology, and philosophy.
Finally, the goals of postmodern thinking are clear:
It fosters democratic, global acceptance of all regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, ability, socioeconomic status, or any like trait that might make one be perceived as an “other.”
Modernism to Postmodernism
Modernism fostered one movement at a time.

- Impressionism
- Post-Impressionism
- Cubism
- Surrealism
Values “high” art: Elitist art for the highly educated
Perpetuates the artist as “Hero” - The white male artist

- Monet
- Picasso
- Matisse
- Dali
- Pollock
And promotes the idea of the “lone” genius

- Van Gogh
- Picasso
- Matisse
- Pollock
- Diebenkorn
- Rothko
Stylistic beliefs:

• Abstraction
• Minimalism
• Universal subject matter
• Reason and logic

Elsworth Kelly
• Modernism is dependent on the belief that progress is made possible through use of reason and scientific knowledge.

• Modernity is future oriented and that future is portrayed as a better time than the present.

• Emphasis is on the NEW.
Postmodernism

- The term first came to be used in the 1970’s. It followed on the heels of Pop art from the 60’s.

- Pomo is an umbrella term for cultural shifts in a postindustrial society.

- Pomo challenges the idea that all change is good.
Postmodern....

• ...culture is rooted in the past and present not the future.
• ...future is not pictured as being better.
• ... roots are political and located in general culture.
Stylistic beliefs vary:
Advocates realism, a cluttered look, personal, political, and social subject matter, as well as spontaneity and emotion.
Postmodern artists...

• Appropriate images and forms from previous times and places
• Include representation in their work
• Often make social statements
Cultural critique is present.

- Jenny Holzer
- Sandy Skoglund
“Minority” artists are anti-modernist.

- Six main groups that emerged:
  - Feminists
  - Gays and lesbians
  - African-Americans
  - Asian Americans
  - Native Americans
  - Latinos
Multiculturalism is a postmodern issue!
Feminist

- Judy Chicago
- Kiki Smith
- Cindy Sherman
- Deborah Oropallo
- Sue Coe
- Sherrie Levine
Gay and Lesbian

- David Hockney
- Keith Haring
- Félix González-Torres
- Annie Liebowitz
African American

- Chris Ofili
- Kara Walker
- Faith Ringgold
- Jean-Michel Basquiat
- Robert Colescott
- Basquiat
Asian or Asian American

- Hung Lui
- Yoshitomo Nara
- Mariko Mori
Native American

- **Brian Jungen:**
  Uses unexpected materials, turning prefabricated commodities into sculptural objects, proposing a dialogue between his First Nations ancestry, the global economy and the object of art.

  (His “Shapeshifter” is made out of plastic chairs.)

- **Jaune Quick-to-See Smith:**
  Looks at stereotypes of Native Americans
Latino

- Frank Romero
- Judithe Hernandez
The environment is another focus.

Andy Goldsworthy

Christo
and Jeanne-Claude
Pairs or groups of artists collaborate and challenge the modernist heroic myth of individual genius.

- Gilbert and George
- Jeff Koons
- Mario Kostabi
- Starn Twins
Artists use unusual and recycled materials

- Chris Ofili’s “The Holy Virgin” uses elephant dung.

- The Super Robot was made from styrofoam packing materials.
...and are often interested in surface, juxtaposition, and illusion.
It’s often figurative.

John Currin

Elizabeth Peyton

….and humorous!
And sometimes sexual… almost pornographic!

Jeff Koons
Postmodern Art Concepts

1. Art as Cultural Production
   Reflections of cultural conditions
   Cultural symbols

2. Temporal and Spatial Flux
   Pastiche (collaging of images in a new way to give new meaning)
   Eclecticism (borrowing from many sources)
   Recycling and transforming

3. A Concern for Otherness

4. Acceptance of Conceptual Conflict
   Fragmentation and collage
   Dissonant beauty
   Deconstruction

5. Multiple Readings
   Attached meanings and visual/textual interpretations
   Double-coding

*Postmodern Art Education: An Approach to Curriculum* by Arthur Efland, Kerry Freedman, Patricia Stuhr, published by NAEA, 1996
• About DBAE and Assessments

The postmodern art room emphasizes 21st century skills:

– Imagining
– Innovating
– Resourcefulness
– Collaboration
– Flexibility
– Risk taking
– Empathy
# Postmodern Approach to Discipline Based Art Education

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About Interpretation:
Pragmatic DBAE: Description, Analysis, Interpretation, and Judgment.

Consider:
Who gets to interpret art?
Why does art that is important and valued today lose its value tomorrow?
Does an prized Asian piece of artwork mean the same to an Afghani?
Must one understand art to appreciate it? What does it mean to “understand” art?
When are interpretations wrong?
How is interpreting art and literature the same? Different? Why is this important to consider.

Terry Barrett: 23 Principles of Interpretation, includes:
All art is in part about the world in which it emerged.
All art is in part about other art.
The meanings of an artwork may be different from its significance to the viewer.

Richard Rorty:
“Reading texts is a matter of reading them in the light of other texts, people, obsessions, bits of information,…and then seeing what happens.”

Friedrich Nietzsche
“There are no facts; only interpretations.”
About assessment...

• Assessment can still focus on some of the elements and principles
• It is often not about the skill of creating original, new images
• It is about conveying an idea or concept
• Assessment can deal with the way the images are selected/organized
• It can focus on ambiguity and juxtaposition
• It can encourage multiple readings
• It can be about keeping the work authentic and meaningful
• It can focus on the previously listed “Construction Intents.”
Fin de Siecle Pop Art

Neo Pop!
Textuality in Art and Ed Ruscha

Public fingers

A bull knows no buzz kill, but a Cellar Door can kill you.

No work is complete until one brings outside understanding; all work includes hidden elements, or “subtexts.”
“I don’t have to look up my family tree, Because I know I’m the sap.”

Fred Alllen
Boxed Narratives
A Wall of Others: Looking at Difference
– An Inclusive Mural Project.

“I swear to the Lord
I still can’t see
Why Democracy means
Everybody but me.”

Langston Hughes
2 Postmodern Painting Projects
Appropriated Image Acrylic Painting

Students create a personal work of art using specific postmodern techniques that include appropriating images.

Procedure:
• Select at least three images to appropriate
• Work in at least three layers
• Work in acrylic paint on canvas
• Include pattern in one of the layers, possibly the bottom layer
• Use an opaque projector, etc. to transfer image to canvas
• Consider flattening out images by using just the outline or a silhouette of the image

• Write an artist statement that explains
  – the idea or theme behind the work,
  – the selection of images,
  – and that supports the idea that the work is “postmodern” in style as well as concept.
Acrylic paint on an 18x24 canvas board.
Great References:

- **New American Paintings**, a periodical published by The Open Studios Press

“Images of Chico” Project

Students were asked to:
• Brainstorm the “icons” of Chico.
• Collect photo references.
• Combine an abstract background with a realistic focal point.
• Use acrylic paint on a stretched canvas.
Altered Books
Further project ideas....
“The world consists of two clearly divided groups: The English and the foreigners. One group consists of less than 50 million people. The other of 3,950 million. The latter group does not really count.”

George Mikes
“Did you ever wonder if the person in the puddle is real, and you’re just a reflection of him?”

Calvin and Hobbes
Postmodern picturebooks… show the Quixotic nature of the world, and that this uncertainty can be overcome… … and that the world is a wondrous and surprising place.” Goldstone, 2004
Feminism

“Feminism is the radical notion that women are people.”
Paula Treiclher
A Tribute to Native Americans:  
– Considering Border Cultures

2000 census:  
280 million Native Americans in 500 distinct tribes
Environmental art

When we begin to really KNOW our environment, when we become intimate with it, we will have gained the empathy to treat it as one of us.

“Be the change that you want to see in the world.”
Mahatma Gandhi
Video Voices and Collaborative Work

And 21st Century Skills
Thank you for attending our presentation today!

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Dare to go postmodern???