

MODERNISM AND THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY DISCUSSION

Discussion of the terms "modern," "modernity," "modernization," "modern movement," etc. How are they different? What do they have in common? What is "modernism" and how is it different from past styles or epochs? Why did it come about in the late 19th-century? How do Baudelaire and Simmel define modern times? What is Kitsch, Avantgarde, Popular Culture?

Report 1: ER: C. Baudelaire, "Painter of Modern Life" & "Salon 1848" in Modern Art & Modernism: A Critical Anthology, eds. Frascina & Harrison (1854, 1982) pp.23-24, 17-18.

ER: G. Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in Art in Theory 1900-1990 eds. Harrison & Wood (1910, 1992) pp.130-135.

ER: M. Bermann, "The Experience of Modernity" in Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object, ed. John Thakera (1988) pp.35-48.

ER: Excerpt of H. Heynen, "Architecture facing Modernity," Architecture & Modernity: A Critique (1999) pp.9-21.

MODERN = multiple meanings: A) the new; B) the contemporary, now, currently fashionable; C) the transient and changing. The "modern" has been around since ancient Greece, e.g. the Renaissance was more "modern" than ancient Rome, and the Enlightenment saw a "battle of the ancients vs. moderns." To be modern is to be contradictory and paradoxical. "Retro" can be "modern," as can a (conservative) longing for a better past.

MODERNITY = The condition of the modern, industrialized world and the modern metropolis as described by Simmel & Baudelaire. It implies whole new cultures, political ideas, economies, social interactions, etc. Modernity is the condition caused by "modernization," the processes, effects of, reactions to various revolutions - industrial, political, social, philosophical, scientific, artistic.

MODERNISM = Modernism is the progressive reaction to the condition (or crisis of) modernity, especially in the arts. It begins with Baudelaire, and continues until the beginning of "post-Modernism." It involves radical statements about the modern world, sometimes aligning with technological modernity, and sometimes proposing radical or utopian alternatives. Many modernist artists seek to be avant-garde, ahead of their time.

AVANT-GARDE = a military term that was transferred to the arts by Saint-Simonians in early 19th-century. Those artists that consciously seek to break the norms of the present, to get out ahead of the masses (and mass culture), and explore the future (like advance scouts in an army fighting force). Tends to be elitist, and politically progressive.



Historicism, ca. 1800 (the old way)



Impressionism, 1850s-90s (modernity)



Expressionism, ca. 1910
Avant-garde