

ART, SEX AND THE 1960S

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In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.

Susan Sontag in *Against Interpretation*, p 14 (1964)

At the zenith of the civil rights movement in the USA and de-colonizing movements in Africa and Asia, just prior to the advent of second wave feminism, gay and lesbian liberation, and other social movements linking political liberation to embodied physical differences, something new was born. There arose a new vision of the body as precisely the obverse of how we now consider it—a single, universal human body shared by all, ungendered, unraced, unsexed. This new body-in-common, unmarked even by such core physical differences as biological sex, became legible as radically dissident under a new political ideology that has thus far largely escaped historical attention: Eros. As a potent challenge to a number of repressive orthodoxies, not least capitalism, Eros was also, perhaps not surprisingly, a central theme in a number of art works of the period, from Carolee Schneemann's performances to Claes Oldenburg's erotic public sculpture, Yayoi Kusama's immersive environments, and Kenneth Anger's films.

This course examines the relationship among art, sex, gender and revolution from the vantage point of Eros' brief historical moment, a vista now largely obscured by our contemporary fixation on a politics of social distinction and bodily difference. As such, this period constitutes both the theoretical prehistory of the sexual revolution, as well as perhaps the defining episode in our ongoing transubstantiation of flesh into politics.

GRADUATE STUDENT COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You will each be asked to present to the class—and critique—several of the assigned readings over the course of the semester, to offer a conference length (20 minute) paper on your research topic, and complete a 15-20 page research paper. The paper topic is largely of your choice. Please select one artist (you may select more than one if you're doing a comparative analysis) and frame their work according to the logic of Eros as we've been developing it in class. Among the artists you may select (and this list is by no means comprehensive) are Acconci, Anger, Broughton, Clark, Hamilton, Horn, Lozano, Kaprow, Klein, Kuchar, Kusama, McCarthy, Oiticica, Ono, Ranier, Rosenquist, Schneemann, Smith, Thek, Twombly, Walthers. You are encouraged to meet with me before settling on a paper topic.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course will challenge you in both the degree of difficulty and the quantity of reading. As a consequence, I will give you the option of deciding whether you to write a paper or take a final exam. If you choose to write a paper, it need be only 10 pages and no class presentation is required (though you may choose to do one). The other part of your grad will be based on your in-class critiques and participation.

A NOTE ON READING AND CANCELLED CLASSES

This course will start out in a flood of readings and gradually trickle to very light to accommodate your increased individual topic research. The texts can be dense and may require multiple readings to understand, so please allow plenty of time.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following texts are of central import to the course, as they were to the period in question. The King and Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* will be the first used:

1. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*
2. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*
3. Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death*
4. Richard King's *The Party of Eros* has been republished, and older versions are also available used.

- WEEK
1 | INTRODUCTION, DEFINITIONS, AND THE MEANINGS OF EROS
Discuss various artists and see Kenneth Anger, *Kustom Kar Kommandos*
- WEEK
2 | PREHISTORY: THE END OF IDEOLOGY DEBATE
Lipset "The End of Ideology?" in *The End of Ideology Debate*
Bell "The End of Ideology in the West" in *The End of Ideology Debate*
Katz "Passive Resistance: On the Success of Queer Artists in Cold War American Art" in *L'Image* #3, Dec. 1996
- WEEK
3 | EROS AND THE ROOTS OF THE "SEXUAL REVOLUTION"
King, *The Party of Eros* Introduction and chapters 1, 2 and 4
Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, chapters 1-3
- WEEK
4 | EROS AND THE EUROPEAN ROOTS OF AMERICAN THEORY
Finish Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Chapters 4-11
- WEEK
5 | MARCUSE'S COMPLAINT
One-Dimensional Man, chapters 1-7
- WEEK
6 | FINISH ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN
Katz, "Dada's Mama: Richard Hamilton's Queer Pop," in *Art History* (April 2012)
- WEEK
7 | THE BODY POLITIC
Monika Langer, "Merleau Ponty: On the Ontological Limitations of Politics" in *Domination*
King, Chapter 3
Kaja Silverman, *Flesh of My Flesh*, selections

WEEK | NORMAN O. BROWN
8 King, Chap 5
Sontag, "Psychoanalysis and Norman O Brown's Life Against Death," in *Against Interpretation*
Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death* Chapters 1-8

WEEK | BROWN AND MARCUSE
9 David Greenham, *The Resurrection of the Body* chapters 2 & 3

WEEK | DISSIDENT EROS
10 "The Silent Camp: Queer Resistance and the Rise of Pop Art," in *Visions of a Future: Art and Art History in Changing Contexts*, eds. Kornelia Imesch and Hans-Jörg Heusser (Zurich: Swiss Institute for Art Research, 2004), pp. 147-58.
Katz "Allen Ginsberg, Herbert Marcuse, and the Politics of Eros," in *21st-Century Gay Culture*

WEEK | FLAMING CREATURES
11 Susan Sontag, "Jack Smith's Flaming Creatures," in *Against Interpretation*
"The Culture Industry Revisited" and "The Autonomy of Art" in the *Adorno Reader*

WEEK | SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS
12-13

WEEK | FINAL PAPERS DUE
14

ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Basualdo, C. (2006) *Tropicalia: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture*
- Bataille, G. (1962). *Death and sensuality; a study of eroticism and the taboo.*
- Bataille, G. (1989). *The Tears of Eros.*
- Cabo, P. T. (1997). *Resignifying modernity: Clark, Oiticica and categories of the modern in Brazil.*
- Floyd, Kevin, (2001). "Rethinking Reification: Marcuse, Psychoanalysis, and Gay Liberation"
- Friedman, M. L. and Walker Art Center. (1962). *New art of Brazil.*
- Geoghegan, V. (1981). *Reason and eros: the social theory of Herbert Marcuse.*
- Jones, A. (1998). *Body art/performing the subject.*
- Gillan, G. (1973). *The horizons of the flesh; critical perspectives on the thought of Merleau-Ponty.*
- Kusama, Y., B. Karia, et al. (1989). *Yayoi Kusama: a retrospective.*
- Lippard, L. R. "Eros Presumptive," *Hudson Review* 20 (Spring 1967)
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Sense and non-sense.*
- Nobile, P. (1970). *The new eroticism: theories, vogues and canons.*
- Pepper, Ian, (1997). "From the 'Aesthetics of Indifference' to Negative Aesthetics: John Cage and Germany 1958-1972"
- Reed, Christopher, (1994). "Postmodernism and the Art of Identity"
- Rose, B. "Filthy Pictures," *Artforum* 3 (May, 1965)
- Schneemann, C. (2001). *Imaging her erotics: essays, interviews, projects.*
- Schneemann, C. and Max Hutchinson Gallery (New York N.Y.) (1982). *Carolee Schneemann: early work 1960/1970.*
- Schneemann, C. and B. McPherson (1979). *More than meat joy: complete performance works & selected writings.*
- Spicker, S. F. (1970). *The philosophy of the body; rejections of Cartesian dualism.*
- Warr, T. and A. Jones (2000). *The Artist's body.*
- Wittig, Monique (1981). "The Straight Mind"
- Yoshimoto, M. (2005). *Into performance: Japanese women artists in New York.*