Minimalism and Postminimalism: theories and repercussions

Department of Art History, Theory, and Criticism 4372
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
David Getsy, Instructor [d-getsy@northwestern.edu]
Spring 2000 / Tuesdays 9 am - 12 pm / Champlain 319

Course description

Providing an in-depth investigation into the innovations in art theory and practice commonly known as “Minimalism” and “Postminimalism,” the course follows the development of Minimal stylehood and tracks its far-reaching implications. Throughout, the greater emphasis on the viewer’s contribution to the aesthetic encounter, the transformation of the role of the artist, and the expanded definition of art will be examined. Close evaluations of primary texts and art objects will form the basis for a discussion.

Method of Evaluation

Students will be evaluated primarily on attendance, preparation, and class discussion. All students are expected to attend class meetings with the required readings completed. There will be two writing assignments: (1) a short paper on a relevant artwork in a Chicago collection or public space due on 28 March 2000 and (2) an in-class final examination to be held on 9 May 2000. The examination will be based primarily on the readings and class discussions. Students have the option of writing a full research paper on a relevant topic in lieu of taking the final. Papers must be 12-15 pages in length. Final topics must be approved by 4 April 2000. No student may choose to opt for a paper after this date.

Course Readings

The majority of readings can be found in the required course text book: Gregory Battcock, ed., Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). Other readings will be made available for photocopying at least one week before the session and can be found in the library on reserve. Many can also be found in the anthology Kristine Stiles and Peter Howard Selz, Theories and documents of contemporary art: a sourcebook of artists’ writings, California studies in the history of art 35 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), though this book has not been ordered through the bookstore. All readings must be done carefully, and students will be expected to raise critical questions about the texts. Readings listed for ‘further reference’ are optional and are meant to aid students pursuing the research paper option. Any concerns about the availability of readings or suggestions for alternative readings should be addressed to the professor as soon as possible.

Session Calendar

1 February 2000

Introduction

Further reference

8 February 2000

**competing definitions of the Minimal**

**required reading**
- Barbara Rose, “ABC Art” (1965), Battcock 274-97 [skim]
- Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture [1 and 2]” (1966), Battcock 222-35
- Mel Bochner, “Primary Structures,” *Arts Magazine* 40.8 (June 1966), pp. 32-35

**further reference**
- Samuel Wagstaff, “Talking with Tony Smith” (1966), Battcock 381-86
- Peter Hutchinson, “Mannerism in the Abstract” (1966), Battcock 187-94
- Corinne Roberts, “Object, Structure or Sculpture: Where Are We?,” *Arts Magazine* 40.9 (September 1966), pp. 33-37

15 February 2000

**modernist painting and the ‘inevitability’ the minimal: non-relational composition and the emergence of shape**

**required reading**
- Clement Greenberg, “The Recentness of Sculpture” (1967), Battcock 180-86
- Bruce Glaser and Lucy Lippard, “Questions to Stella and Judd” (1964-66), Battcock 148-64
- Will Insley interviewed by Elayne Varian, “Schemata 7” (1967), Battcock 359-63
- Frank Stella, Excerpts from “The Pratt Lecture” (1966), reprinted in Stiles and Selz 1996, pp. 113-14

**further reference**

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22 February 2000

**encountering the Minimalist object**

**required reading**
- Lucy Lippard, “Eros Presumptive” (1967), Battcock 209-21
- Dan Flavin, “Writings” (1967), Battcock 401-402
- John Perreault, “Minimal Abstracts” (1967), Battcock 256-62
29 February 2000

**minimizing the artist: seriality, repetition, literalism**

required reading
- Mel Bochner, “Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism” (1967), Batcock pp. 92-102
- David Bourdon, “The Razed Sites of Carl Andre” (1966), Batcock pp. 103-108
- Toby Musman, “Literalness and the Infinite [part I]” (1966), Batcock 236-47

further reference
- Roberta Smith, “Multiple Returns,” *Art in America* 70.3 (March 1982), pp. 112-14

NOTE: The second half of class may take place in the Art Institute galleries

7 March 2000

**the politics of Minimalism**

required reading
- Rosalind Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” *October* 54 (Fall 1990), pp. 3-17
- Dan Graham, Photographs from *Homes for America* (1966), Batcock 175-79

further reference

NOTE: The second half of class may take place in the Art Institute galleries
• Alex Alberro, “The Turn of the Screw: Daniel Buren, Dan Flavin, and the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition,” *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 57-84
• Charles Reeve, “Cold Metal: Donald Judd’s Hidden Historicity,” *Art History* 15.4 (December 1992), pp. 486-504

14 March 2000

**the anaesthetics of minimalism: Michael Fried’s**

*Art and Objecthood*

**required reading**

- Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood” (1967), in Battcock 116-47

**further reference**

- Richard Wollheim, “Minimal Art” (1965), Battcock 387-99
- Frances Colpitt, “The Issue of Boredom: Is It Interesting?,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43.4 (Summer 1985), pp. 359-65

21 March 2000

**spring break: CLASS CANCELLED**

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28 March 2000

**the post-modernist re-reading of the Minimalist moment**

**required reading**


**further reference**


• Paul Beidler, “The Postmodern Sublime: Kant and Tony Smith’s Anecdote of the Cube,” Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 53.2 (Spring 1995), pp. 177-86

• Lynn Zelevansky, Sense and Sensibility: Women and Minimalism in the 1990s, exh. cat (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994)


Writing assignment due at the beginning of class

4 April 2000

anti-form in the work of Robert Morris, Barry Le Va, Alan Saret, and Richard Serra

required reading


• Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, part IV: Beyond Objects,” Artforum 7.8 (April 1969), pp. 50-64


further reference


• Jane Livingston, “Barry Le Va: Distributional Sculpture,” Artforum (November 1968)

• Fidel A. Daniele, “Some New Los Angeles Artists,” Artforum 6.7 (March 1968), pp. 44-48


Deadline for submission of final topics for all students choosing to write a research paper instead of taking the final examination

11 April 2000
from shape to substance: materials and processes

required reading

further reference

NOTE: The second half of class will take place in the Art Institute galleries

Eva Hesse: paradigmatic Postminimalist?

required reading
- Anne Wagner, “Another Hesse,” October 69 (Summer 1994): 49-84

Further reading
- Briony Fer, “Treading Blindly, or the Excessive Presence of the Object,” Art History 20.2 (June 1997), pp. 268-88
2 May 2000
‘the conventions of art are altered by works of art’: repercussions into the 1970s
required reading
• Toby Mussman, “Literalness and the Infinite [part II]” (1966), Battcock 247-50
• Brian O’Doherty, “Minus Plato” (1966), Battcock 251-55

further reading
• Jack Flam, ed., Robert Smithson: Collected Writings (Berkeley: Univ. of CA, 1996)
• Craig Owens, “Earthwords,” October 10 (Fall 1979): 120-30

9 May 2000
final examination

general references
David Batchelor, Minimalism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
Maurice Tuchman, American Sculpture of the Sixties, exh. cat. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967).