



Pipilotti Rist, Still from "Open My Glade," 2000

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**Readings in Contemporary Art
Dr. Charissa N. Terranova
July 6-August 4, 2020
University of Texas at Dallas
Arts & Humanities**

**Meeting Time: T-Th 1:00-5:15 pm
Location: On-line via WebEx
Office Hours by Appointment
Contact: terranova@utdallas.edu**

**Tuesday July 28
Mechanical Reproduction:
Between Film and Pictures**

- Who was Walter Benjamin?**
- How does a sacred object become a work of art according to Benjamin...by what historical trajectory?**
- What is 'aura'?**
- What is 'authenticity'?**
- What is the role of photography and film in Benjamin's essay?**
- What is the role of painting in it?**
- How does his comparison of the painter to a magician and the cameraman to the surgeon work? What does it mean?**
- How does it compare to Greenberg's essays we've read together?**
- How is Benjamin contending with modernization and modernism in the essay? And, how is this different from Greenberg's 'modernist painting'?**
- What is a 'picture' according to Crimp?**
- How do these two articles relate to one another?**
- What is postmodernism?**

“The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as
does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.”

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)



The Frankfurt School

- The 'first generation' of Frankfurt School theorists included Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, among others.
- Habermas is the leading intellectual figure in the Frankfurt School, belonging to its second generation of theorists.



Adorno



Horkheimer



Benjamin



Fromm



Marcuse

Genealogy of Cultural Studies I: Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School

The Institute of Social Research

Max Horkheimer: philosophy, social theory,
history of ideas

Theodor Adorno: music, sociology, philosophy

Herbert Marcuse: philosophy, politics,
psychoanalysis

Wilhelm Reich: psychoanalysis

Eric Fromm: psychoanalysis, philosophy

Friedrich Pollock: economic history, economics

Leo Lowenthal: literature, art, media and
propaganda

and

Walter Benjamin: philosophy/ history/ cultural
critique/surrealism (He was not an official member
of the Institute, but was close to them, especially
Adorno. Also a friend of Klee, Breton, Brecht, etc.)



The Historical Situation

Transition from small-scale entrepreneurial capitalism to monopoly capitalism & imperialism; socialist labor movement grows, turns reformist; emergence of welfare/welfare state; Russian Revolution & rise of Communism; neotechnic period; emergence of mass media & mass culture, "modern" art; rise of Nazism.

Weberian Theory

comparative historical analysis of Western rationalism in capitalism, the modern state, secular scientific rationality, culture, and religion; analysis of the forms of domination in general and of modern rational-legal bureaucratic domination in particular; articulation of the distinctive, hermeneutic method of the social sciences

Freudian Theory

critique of the repressive structure of the "reality principle" of advanced civilization and of the normal neurosis of everyday life; discovery of the unconscious, primary-process thinking, and the impact of the Oedipus complex and of anxiety on psychic life; analysis of the psychic bases of authoritarianism and irrational social behavior, psychic Thermidor.

Critique of Positivism

critique of positivism as philosophy, as scientific methodology, as political ideology, and as everyday conformism; rehabilitation of -- negative -- dialectic, return to Hegel; appropriation of critical elements in phenomenology, historicism, existentialism, critique of their ahistorical, idealist tendencies; critique of logical positivism and pragmatism.

Aesthetic Modernism

critique of "false" and reified experience by breaking through its traditional forms and language; projection of alternative modes of existence and experience; liberation of the unconscious; consciousness of unique, modern situation; appropriation of Kafka, Proust, Schoenberg, Breton; critique of the culture industry and "affirmative" culture; aesthetic utopia.

Marxian Theory

critique of bourgeois ideology; critique of alienated labor; historical materialism; history as class struggle and exploitation of labor in different modes of production; systems analysis of capitalism as extraction of surplus labor through free labor in the free market; unity of theory and practice; analysis for the sake of revolution, socialist democracy, classless society

The Critical Theory of Society

1st Generation

Responding to the intensification of unfreedom and irrationality in industrial, scientific, advanced capitalist society -- culminating in fascism--critical theory is a comprehensive, ideology-critical, historically self-reflective, body of theory aiming simultaneously to explain and combat domination and alienation and help bring about a rational, humane, democratic, and socialist society. The critical theorists developed an integrated theory of the economic, political, cultural, and psychological domination structures of advanced industrial civilization and of the dialectic through which the emancipatory potential of modern society is suppressed and its rationality turns into a positivistic rationality of domination leading to barbarism.

Culture Theory

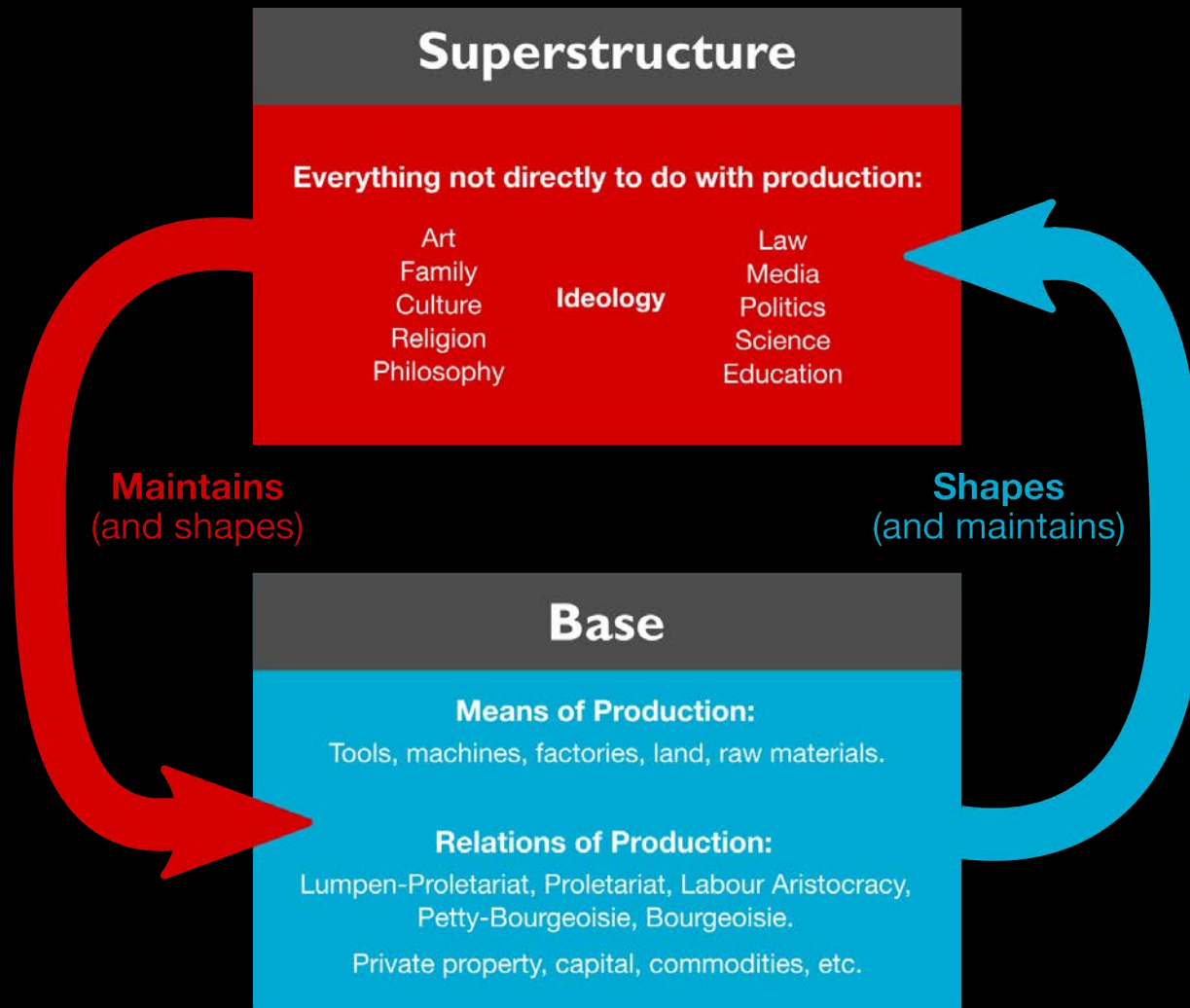
critique of mass culture as suppression & absorption of negation, as integration into status quo; critique of Western culture as culture of domination of external & internal nature; dialectical differentiation of emancipatory & repressive dimensions of elite culture; Nietzsche's transvaluation of values & Schiller's aesthetic education

Major theorists: Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Lowenthal, Friedrich Pollock, Erich Fromm.

Major works: Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*; Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*, *Critical Theory*; Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, *Prisms*, *Aesthetic Theory*, *Negative Dialectics*, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, *Notes to Literature*, *Hegel*, *Mahler*, *Wagner*; Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction*, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, *The Paris Arcades*; Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, *Eros and Civilization*, *One-Dimensional Man*, *Essay on Liberation*, *Negations*, *Soviet Marxism*, *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, *Hegel's Ontology*; Lowenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*; Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*.

CRITICAL THEORY TODAY

- Over the years the goals and tenets of critical theory have been adopted by many social scientists and philosophers who have come after the Frankfurt School.
- We can recognize critical theory today in many **feminist theories** and **feminist approaches** to conducting social science, in **critical race theory**, **cultural theory**, in **gender and queer theory**, and in **media theory** and **media studies**.



This moves in a spiral pattern.
The base is generally dominant.

Marx's Industrial Age Social Pyramid

Bourgeoisie
(capitalists,
the "haves,"
the oppressors)

Proletariat
(workers, the "have-nots,"
the oppressed)

Bourgeoisie & proletariat

(owners)

(workers)

- **Exploitation**
We have to sell our bodies and our work, the owners make the profit
- **Alienation**
Most of us don't feel our work *belongs* to us; we may not put ourselves into our work or be allowed to make it our own
- **Means of production**
We don't have control over the company, the factory, the store, the restaurant etc
- **Opiates**
Religion and other forms of fantasy & escapism keep us from dwelling on these unhappy facts of our present real existence



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*“Our fine arts were developed, their types and uses were established, in times very different from the present, by men whose power of action upon things was insignificant in comparison with ours. But the amazing growth of our techniques, the adaptability and precision they have attained, the ideas and habits they are creating, make it a certainty that profound changes are impending in the ancient craft of the Beautiful. In all the arts there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art.” **

—Paul Valéry, PIÈCES SUR L’ART,
“La Conquête de l’ubiquité,” Paris.

What is the significance of the opening quote?

Let's talk briefly about the Preface...

How do we understand the role of Marx here – his ideas about the proletariat and capitalism?

How do we understand fascism here? What is the context of this piece written in 1935?

What for Benjamin is lacking in the reproduced
work of art?

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership.¹ The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analyses which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original.

How does Benjamin's "presence" relate to Michael Fried's "presence" and "presentness"?

For Benjamin, how do presence, authenticity,
and originality relate to one another? See pp.
220-221

By connection what is aura? See pg. 221

What is the spatiality – the spatial experience
– of aura? See pg. 222

What is the distinction between cult value and exhibition value? See pp. 224-225

How do photography and film transform the viewing experience of art? See pp. 227-232

Magician vs. Surgeon
Painter vs. Cameraman

Here the question is: How does the cameraman compare with the painter? To answer this we take recourse to an analogy with a surgical operation. The surgeon represents the polar opposite of the magician. The magician heals a sick person by the laying on of hands; the surgeon cuts into the patient's body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs. In short, in contrast to the magician—who is still hidden in the medical practitioner—the surgeon at the decisive moment abstains from facing the patient man to man; rather, it is through the operation that he penetrates into him. Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web.¹⁴ There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law. Thus, for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art. (pp. 233-34)

What are the benefits of introducing modern technologies like photography and film into the artistic viewing experience?

By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones "which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, give the effect of singularly gliding, floating, supernatural motions." Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye-if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. (pp. 236-37)

Optical Unconscious
Haptic Unconscious

Unconscious
Extensions
Prosthetics
Enhancements

Distraction
vs.
Concentration

Mass Viewership
vs.
Single Viewership

See pp. 239-240

What is the relationship between aesthetics and politics for Benjamin?

See pp. 241-42

Film

Constructivist and Montage

Alexandra Ekster, designer

Sergei Eisenstein, director

Dziga Vertov, director

montage, noun

1. the technique of combining in a single composition pictorial elements from various sources, as parts of different photographs or fragments of printing, either to give the illusion that the elements belonged together originally or to allow each element to retain its separate identity as a means of adding interest or meaning to the composition.

2. photomontage

3. Movies, Television. juxtaposition or partial superimposition of several shots to form a single image.

a technique of film editing in which this is used to present an idea or set of interconnected ideas.

4. any combination of disparate elements that forms or is felt to form a unified whole, single image, etc.



Aelita, Queen of Mars, costume design by Alexandra Ekster [Exter], 1924

Silent film directed by Yakov Protazanov based on Alexei Tolstoy's novel of the same name



Yakov Protazanov's 1924 film, *Aelita*, begins in December of 1921 with the worldwide transmission of a cryptic message. An iris revealing a set of powerlines is followed by a quick cut to an image of an electric current dancing between two wires. The next sequence reveals scientists and military men in different regions of the world – the Far East, the Middle East, and finally Russia – analysing a transmission that reads: “Anta... Odeli ... Uta”. This scene, which serves as a prologue to the larger film, combines images of high-speed technology with foreign views to create an atmosphere of mystery and anticipation. As the narrative progresses, Engineer Los (Nikolai Tsereteli) – the film’s hero – will become increasingly obsessed with decoding the meaning of the message, which he believes to originate from Mars.

<http://sensesofcinema.com/2010/cteg/aelita-queen-of-mars/>

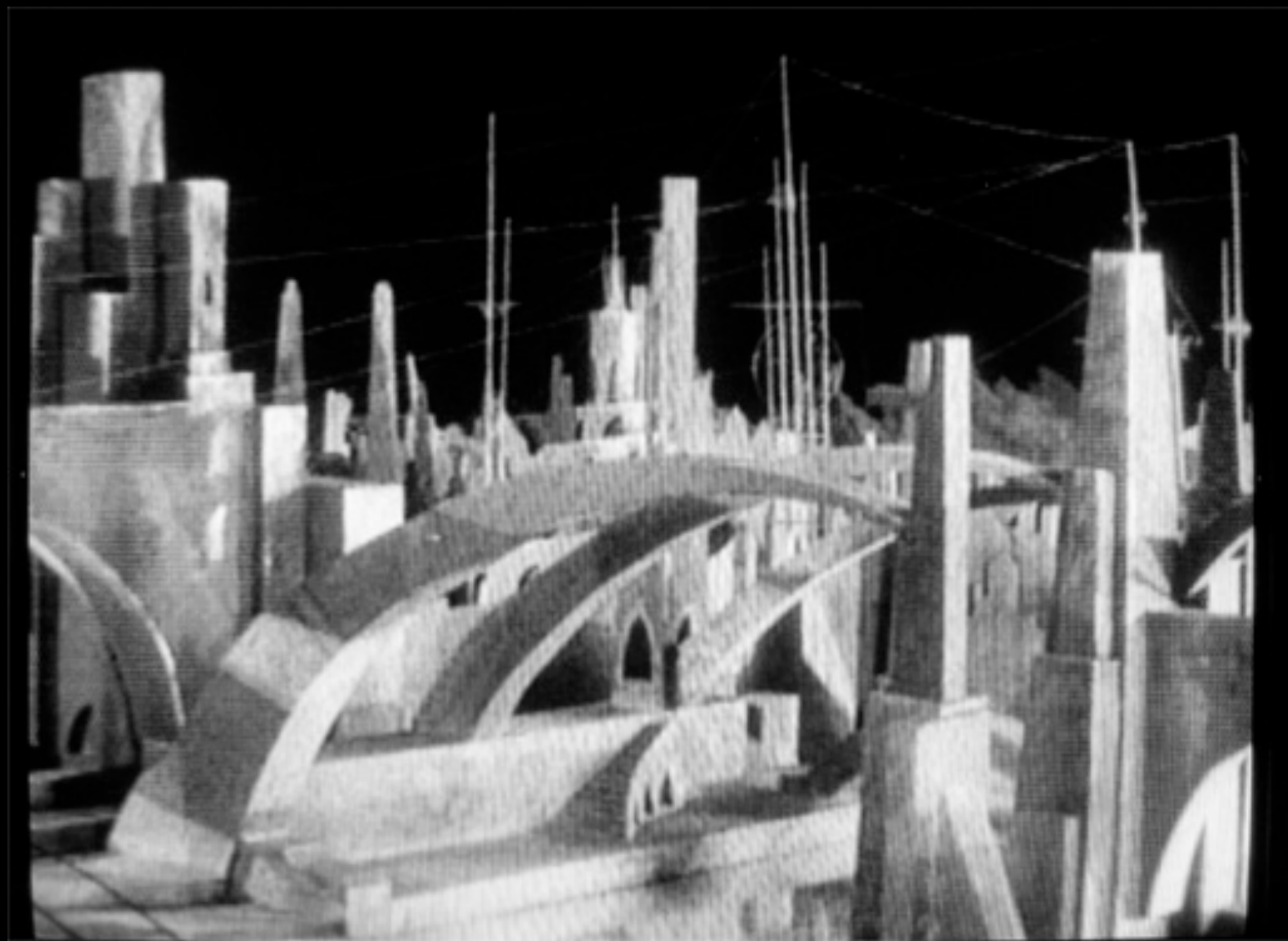
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoROo4Ur49c>



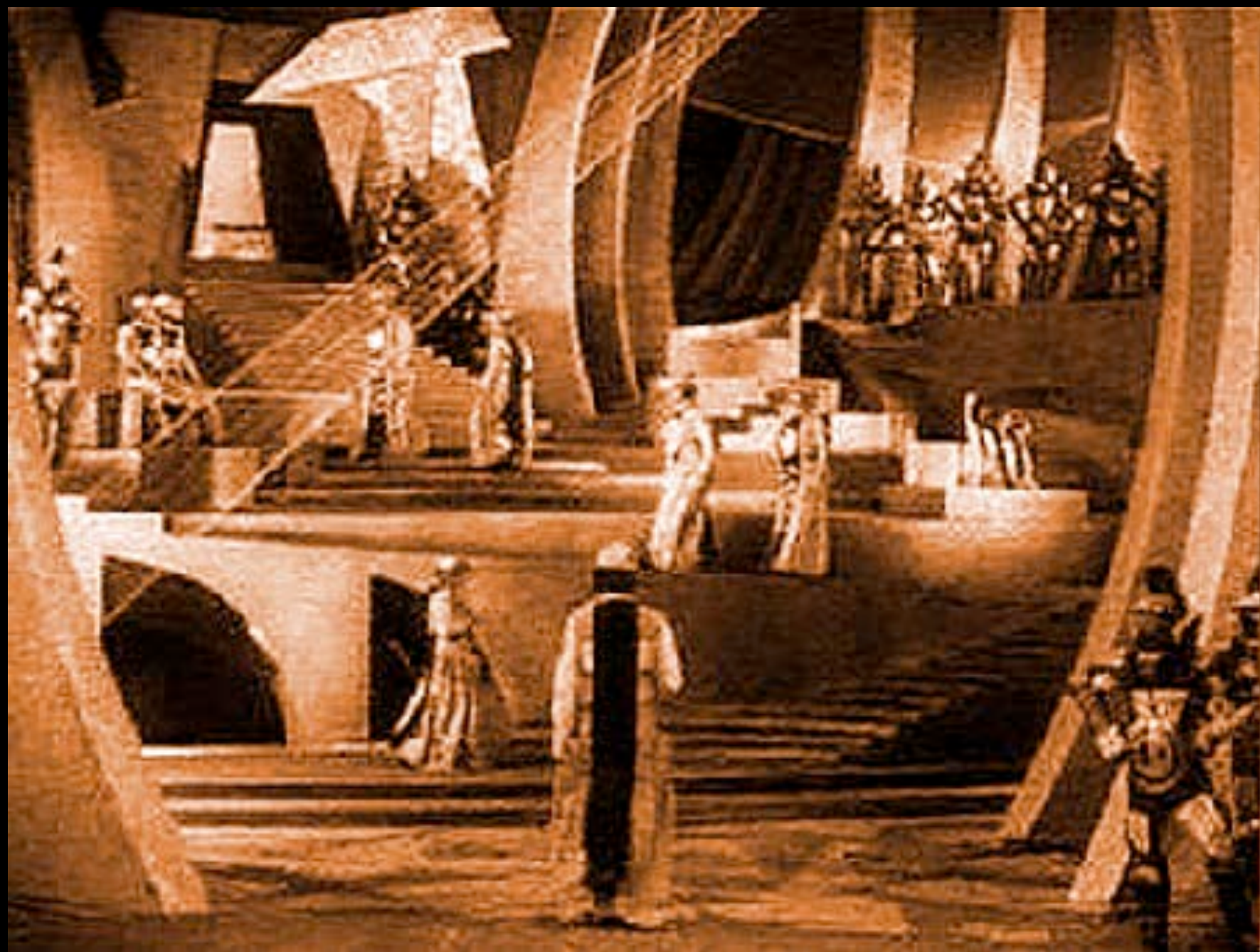
A cryptic radio message is picked up all around the world where it is believed to originate from Mars. In Moscow, Chief Engineer Los becomes obsessed with deciphering the message and finding a way to get to Mars. On Mars, Queen Aelita becomes preoccupied with looking at Earth through a telescope. Through this, she sees Engineer Los and becomes fixated on him. Los and his wife Natasha are forced by the housing authorities to give up a room in their apartment to Victor Erlich. The corrupt Erlich gets a job as a supply clerk but steals rations for his own use. He keeps making advances on Natasha, which enrages the jealousy of Los. Finally, this becomes too much and Los shoots Natasha. He evades the police by disguising himself as his co-worker Spiridinov who has left for another country. He places all effort into completing work on a Mars rocket. Meanwhile, the bumbling Kravtsov, who has been rejected by the authorities as a detective, determines to prove himself by solving Natasha's murder and follows Los/Spiridinov. As the launch nears, Los and the soldier Gusev, along with a stowaway Kravtsov, board the rocket. Landing on Mars, Los and Queen Aelita throw themselves at one another, she eager to learn about the idea of a kiss, while Kravtsov seeks to get the aid of the rulers of Mars in arresting Los. Meanwhile, Gusev inspires the downtrodden Martian slaves to rise up and unite in the Communist revolution.

<http://moria.co.nz/sciencefiction/aelita-queen-of-mars-1924.htm>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoROo4Ur49c>



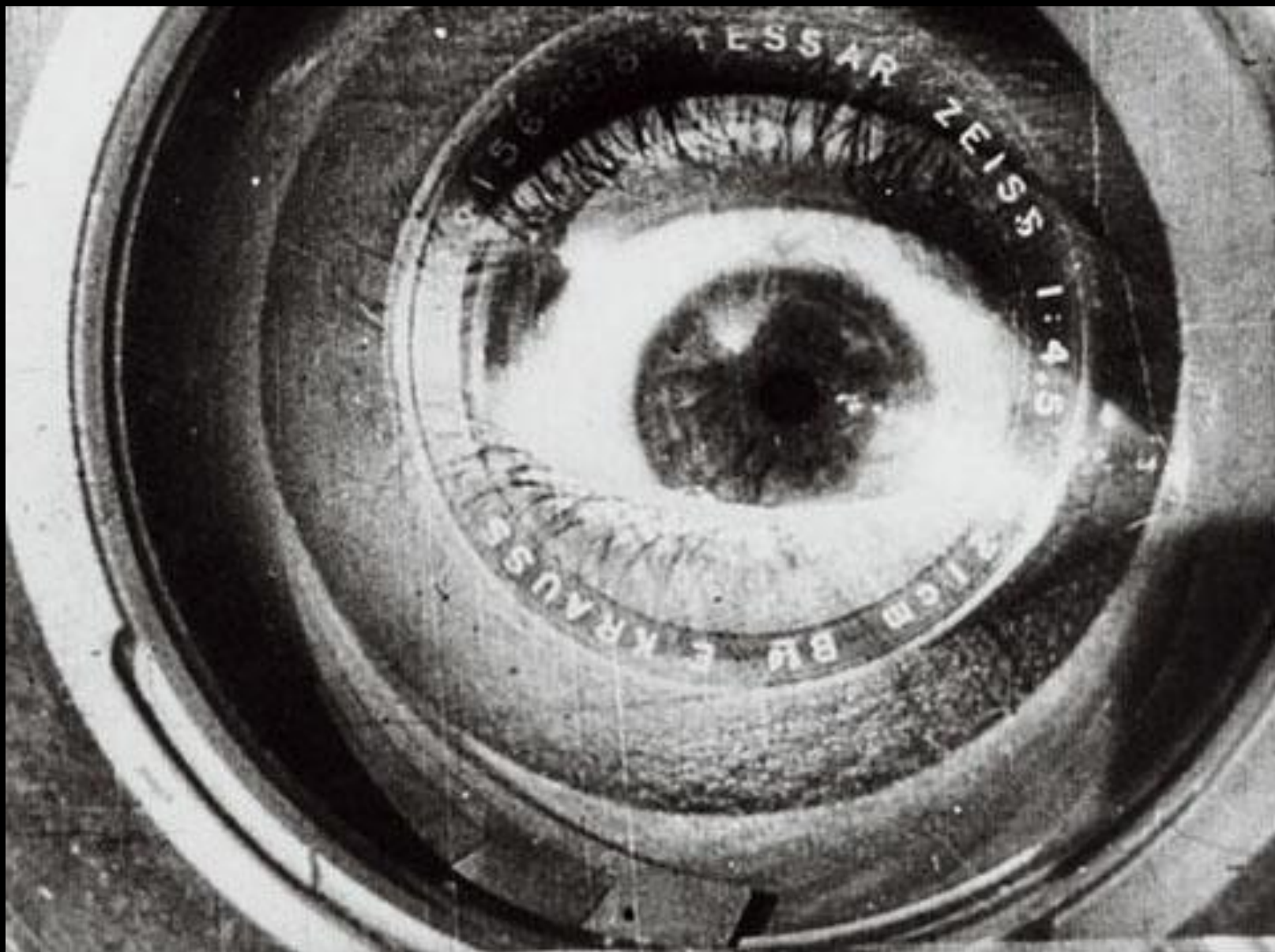












Dziga Vertov, Man with a Movie Camera, 1929

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z97Pa0lCpn8>



Dziga Vertov, Man with a Movie Camera, 1929

Dziga Vertov [1896-1954]

Vertov was a Soviet filmmaker, documentarian, and film theorist.

He believed his concept of Cine-Eye, or "Kino Eye" would help contemporary man evolve from a flawed creature into a higher, more precise form. He compared man unfavorably to machines: "In the face of the machine we are ashamed of man's inability to control himself, but what are we to do if we find the unerring ways of electricity more exciting than the disorderly haste of active people [...]"

"I am an eye. I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, I am showing you a world, the likes of which only I can see"



Dziga Vertov, Man with a Movie Camera, 1929

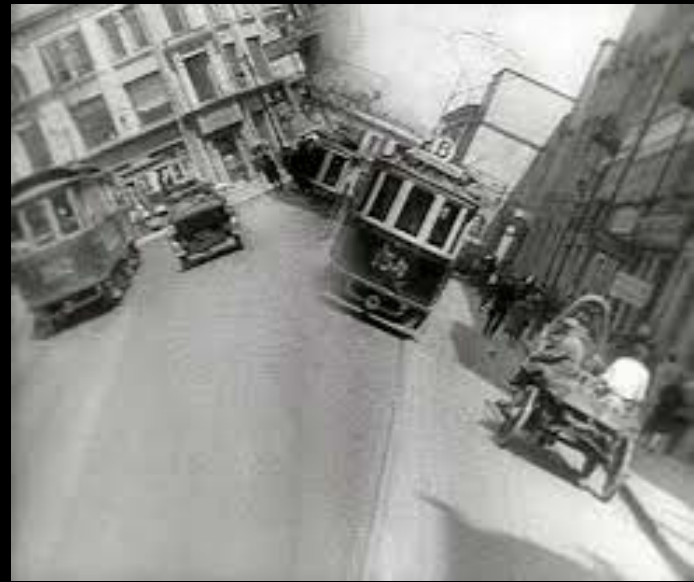
Man with a Movie Camera

Directed by	Dziga Vertov
Written by	Dziga Vertov
Cinematography	Mikhail Kaufman
Edited by	Elizaveta Svilova

Dziga Vertov (né David Kaufman)
and brother Mikhail Kaufman



Yelizaveta Ignatevna Svilova



**Four Soviet cities —
Kharkiv, Kiev, Moscow and Odessa — were the
shooting locations.**

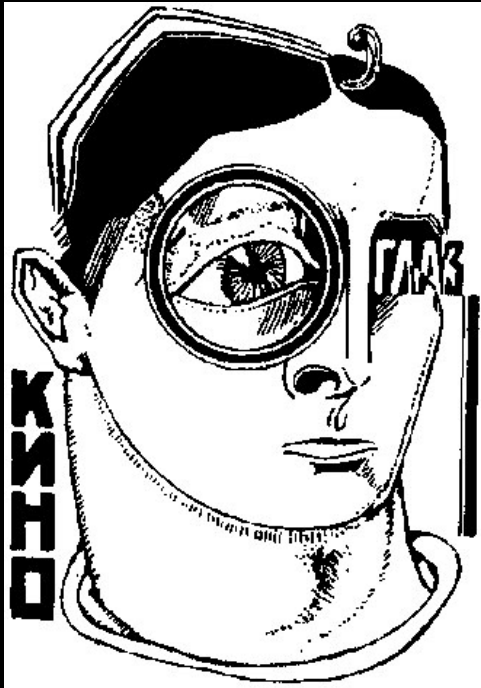




Dziga Vertov, Man with a
Movie Camera, 1929

SELF-
REFLEXIVITY

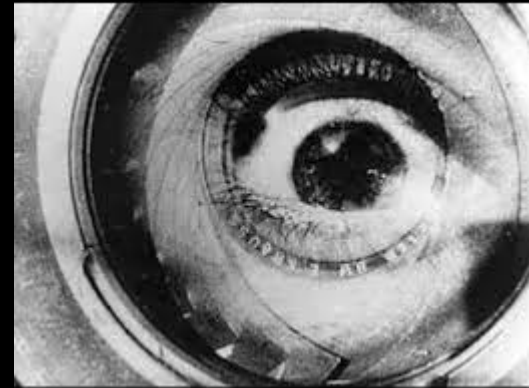
CRITICAL
THINKING



The Kinoks: Dziga Vertov, by Pyotr Galadzhev, c. 1935

Vertov and his wife Elizaveta Svilova were "kinoks" (from "kino-oki," meaning cinema-eyes), a collective of Soviet filmmakers in 1920s Russia. The Kinoks rejected "staged" cinema with its stars, plots, props and studio shooting. They insisted that the cinema of the future be the cinema of fact: newsreels recording the real world, "life caught unawares." Vertov proclaimed the primacy of camera ("Kino-Eye") over the human eye. The camera lens was a machine that could be perfected infinitely to grasp the world in its entirety and organize visual chaos into a coherent, objective picture. At the same time Vertov emphasized that his Kino-Eye principle was a method of "communist" deciphering of the world. They declared it their mission to abolish all non-documentary styles of film-making.

Our eyes see very little and very badly – so people dreamed up the microscope to let them see invisible phenomena; they invented the telescope... now they have perfected the cinecamera to penetrate more deeply into the visible world, to explore and record visual phenomena so that what is happening now, which will have to be taken account of in the future, is not forgotten.—Provisional Instructions to Kino-Eye Groups, Dziga Vertov, 1926





Sergei Eisenstein, Battleship
Potemkin, 1925



Sergei Eisenstein, Battleship Potemkin, 1925 – “Odessa Steps Sequence”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMWMq4AEyjU>

Pictures by Douglas Crimp

Pictures Generation

Artist's Space 1977 and Metro Pictures

“Pictures Generation”

Artists Space 1977 and Metro Pictures

What then are these new aesthetic activities? Simply to enumerate a list of mediums to which “painters” and “sculptors” have increasingly turned – film, photography, video, performance – will not locate them precisely, since it is not merely a question of shifting conventions of one medium to those of another. The ease with which many artists managed, some ten years ago, to change mediums – from sculpture, say, to film (Serra, Morris, et. al.) or from dance to film (Rainer) – or were willing to “corrupt” one medium with another – to present a work of sculpture, for example, in the form of a photograph (Smithson, Long) – or abjured any physical manifestation of the work (Barry, Weiner) makes it clear that the actual characteristics of the medium, per se, cannot any longer tell us much about an artist’s activity.

In choosing the word pictures for this show, I hoped to convey the work's most salient characteristic-recognizable images-but also and importantly the ambiguities it sustains. As is typical of what has come to be called postmodernism, this new work is not confined to any particular medium; instead, it makes use of photography, film, performance, as well as traditional modes of painting, drawing, and sculpture. Picture, used colloquially, is also nonspecific: a picture book might be a book of drawings or photographs, and in common speech a painting, drawing, or print is often called, simply, a picture. Equally important for my purposes, picture, in its verb form, can refer to a mental process as well as the production of an aesthetic object.

Douglas Crimp, “Pictures,” *October*, Vol. 8 (Spring, 1979), pp. 75-88



Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Shields Family, 1936/39



L: Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Shields Family*, 1936/39

R: Sherrie Levine, *Untitled (After Walker Evans: 2)*, 1981



Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Shields Family, 1936/39



L: Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Shields Family*, 1936/39

R: Sherrie Levine, *Untitled (After Walker Evans: 2)*, 1981



Sherrie Levine, Untitled (President 4), 1979



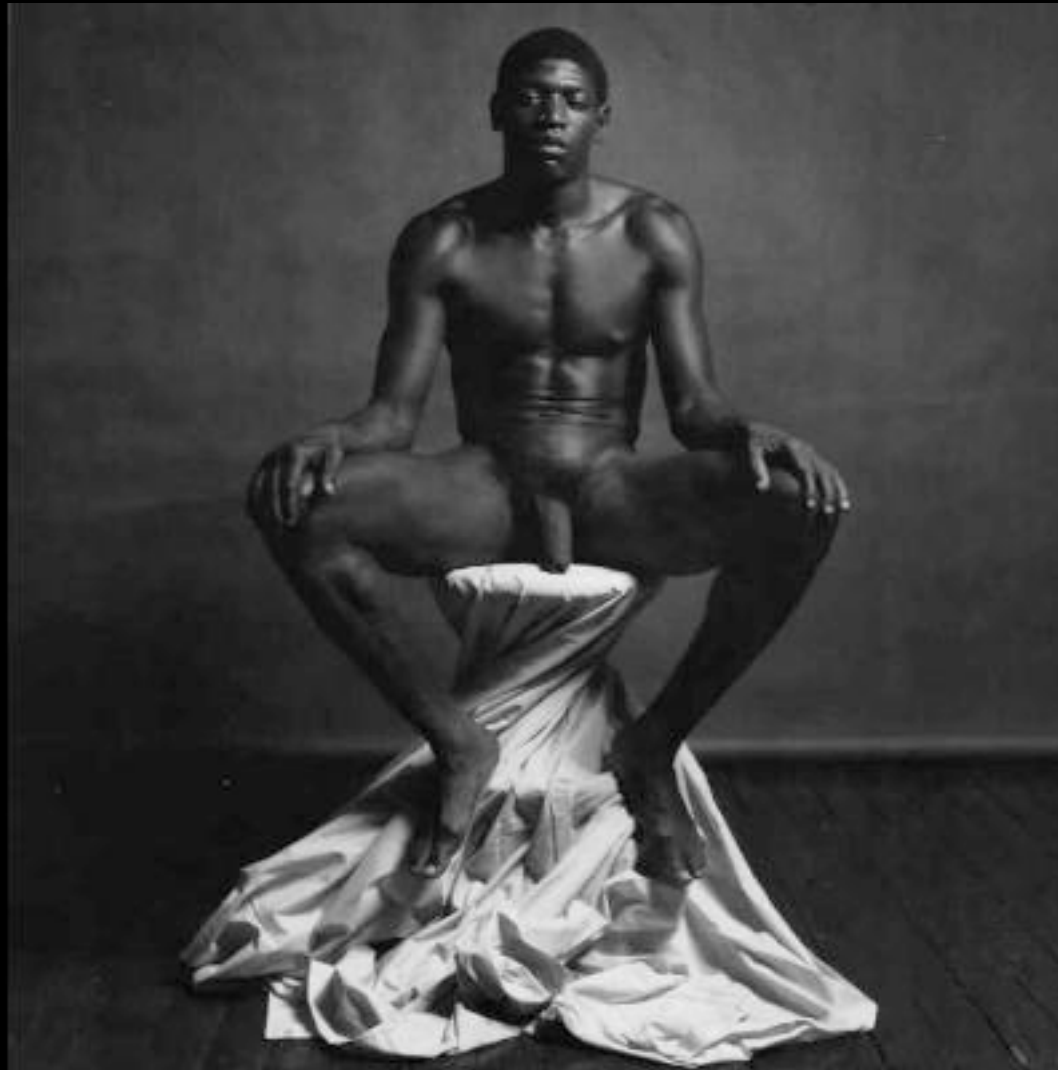
Sherrie Levine, President Collage 1, 1979



Robert Mapplethorpe, Self-Portrait, 1980



Robert Mapplethorpe, Self-Portrait, 1980



Robert Mapplethorpe, Bob Love, from *The Black Book*, 1979



Glenn Ligon, Notes on the Margin of the Black Book, 1991–93



Robert Mapplethorpe, from the
Black Book



Glenn Ligon, Notes on the Margin of the
Black Book, 1991–93



Glenn Ligon, from Mapplethorpe book
1980

Robert Mapplethorpe, Man in Polyester Suit,

“What one's imagination makes of other people is dictated, of course, by the laws of one's own personality and it is one of the ironies of black-white relations that, by means of what the white man imagines the black man to be, the black man is enabled to know who the white man is.”

-- James Baldwin



Glenn Ligon, Notes on the Margin of the Black Book, 1991–93



Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still #6, 1978



Cindy Sherman, Untitled D 1975



Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still #10, 1978



Cindy Sherman, Untitled (No. 264 Woman with Mask), 1992



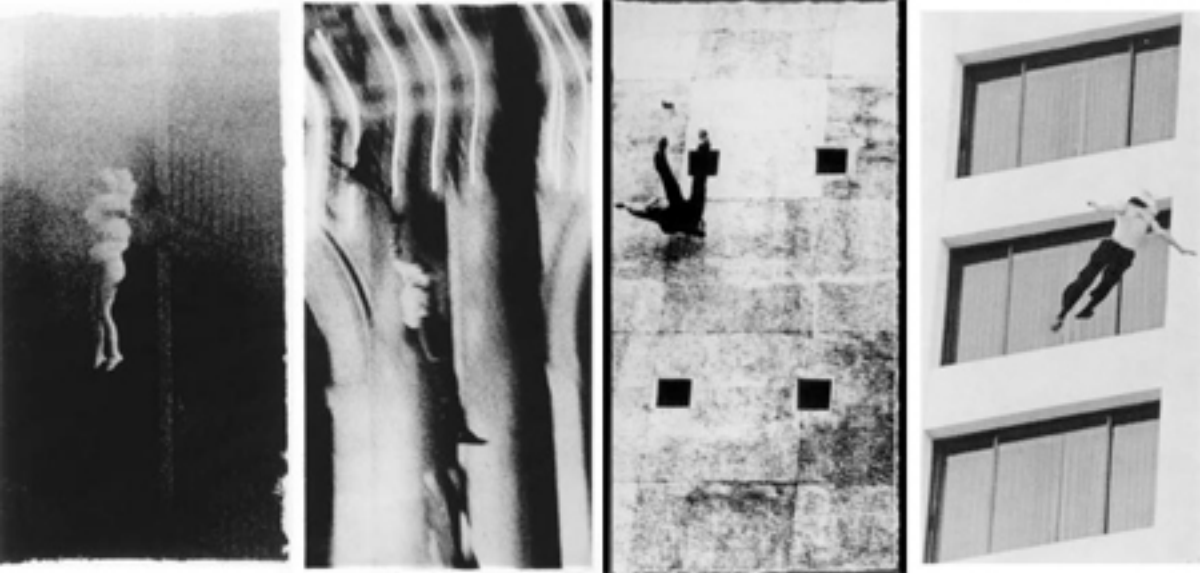
Robert Longo, Men in the Cities Series, 1979



Robert Longo, Untitled, 1981



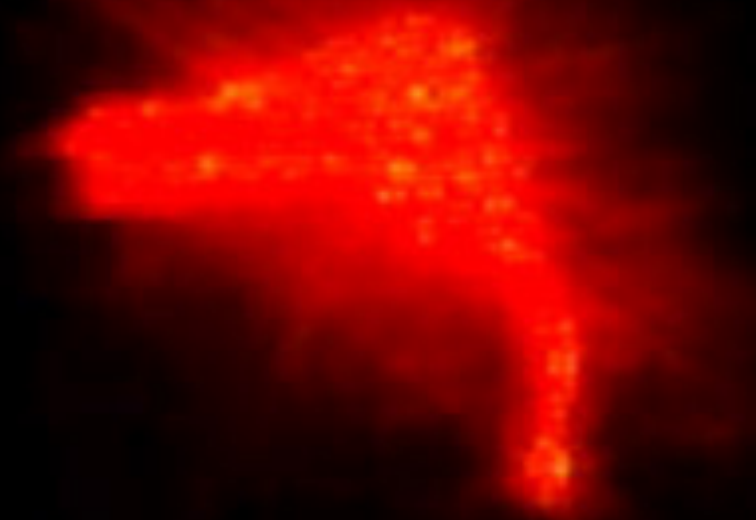
Robert Longo, Men in the Cities Series, 1979



Sarah Charlesworth, Stills, 1980



Carolee Schneeman, Terminal Velocity, 2001



Jack Goldstein, Still from The Jump, 1978

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3m0vxs-Ovs8>



Richard Prince, Untitled (Three Men), 1978



Richard Prince, Entertainers, 1982



Richard Prince, Untitled (Kool-Aid),
1982-84



Richard Prince, Untitled
(Cowboy), 1989

Richard Prince, Untitled
(Cowboy), 1991-92





Richard Prince, *Untitled (BR100CO)*, 1989



Richard Prince, Point Courage, 1989



Richard Prince, Continuation, 2004-5



Richard Prince, American Sex Drive, 2008



From SHE: Images of Women by Wallace Berman and Richard Prince at the Michael Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles, 2009





Louise Lawler, Pollock and Tureen, Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Connecticut, 1984



Louise Lawler, Living Room Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremain, Connecticut, 1984