

2nd Semester Writing Project: MODERNIST ARTISTS (10% of Semester Grade)

DUE BY JUNE 10, 2019 (Late papers will be accepted until June 17, but will lose 5 pts per day that they are late. I will NOT accept them for credit after June 17.) ***Please put your name on everything!!!!***

Papers must be handed into me in the art room. If you are late, YOU MAY LEAVE YOUR PAPERS IN MY MAILBOX, since classes will no longer be in session. (*I will check my mailbox at 3:00 each day. After 3pm, it's not on time for that day.*)

WHEN YOU HAND IN THIS PAPER, IT SHOULD INCLUDE:

I. Your paper with typed answers, in outline form, with complete sentences and paragraphs, to all the questions asked.

It should be @ 4 pages (55) + bibliography (minimum of 5 references, *not using Wikipedia*) (7), including 4 reproductions (8), 2 per artist, of typical work. (70) *Please make a big effort to follow the outline when you write.*

II. Your plan for a public artwork at Lehman College that synthesizes the ideas and work of these two artists. Should include a brief description (7), 2 drawings (20) and a copy of the Lehman Map (3) showing the location of the installation. (30)

POINTS OFF: *10 points deducted for work not typed. 5 points deducted for using loose-leaf paper for drawings.*

WHAT IS MODERNISM?

We have spent some time in class talking about what happens to art in the Western world after the invention of the camera and the Industrial Revolution.

- The visual arts make a big break from the its traditional role of representation.
- Influenced by scientific method, artists experiment with ways to represent perception.
- Influenced by psychology, philosophy and politics, artists invent new ways to represent subjective experience and points of view.
- Visual language becomes idiosyncratic, abstracted and focused on formal* means as a way of communicating human experience.

*Formalism means that the artist's message is conveyed through the way they use materials: for example, Picasso fracturing form, Rothko staining canvases, De Kooning's thick brush stroke gesture, Pollock's spatter. It develops out of the idea that the artist's mark (brush stroke, drawn line, etc....) tells some kind of "truth", so innovations in materials use become the equivalent of self-expression.)

We call this period "Modernist".

Modern Art is often controversial for people who don't know much about it because the distorted or abstracted imagery seems inexplicable at first glance. People often ask why, if someone has the skill to create realistic and representational work, they would make art that may seem less elegant or understandable. But, with some exposure, viewers often come to appreciate why. At the end of your paper, you can tell me if you have become a fan or not.

Modernism makes another big shift after the 2nd World War to what is called Post-Modernism

The idea of the artist as a solitary genius, whose work tells some kind of authentic truth about the human condition seems old-fashioned. Artists have a more ironic attitude, and embrace commercial imagery and processes. Multiple truths and many simultaneous perspectives, the social construction of experience and of meaning are all post WWII intellectual trends that challenge early modernist notions of authentic self-expression.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN ART:

- When it's made (after 1850, mid 20th century, now...)
- Its attitude; a critique or rejection of societal norms. Its comment on culture, and its reaction to culture or art trends that precede it. "Epaté le bourgeois" is a French expression meaning "Shock the middle classes".
- Its affiliation with constantly shifting intellectual and aesthetic movements. (Impressionism, Post Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Pop Art, etc....)
- Its degree of self-expression and celebration of subjectivity The artist's perspective, "mark" and interpretation having more value than skilled representation
- Its innovative use of materials. (Colorist and ala prima painting, collage, assemblage, welded steel sculpture, mixed media, installations, video art, and digital art)
- Abstraction. Not all Modernist art is abstract, but formalist ideas, looking at the materials and art elements that make up a work of art to find the meaning, are basic to it. Eventually, the need to make representational ("realistic") images gets in the way of formalist expression, so often artistic styles evolve towards abstraction.

CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE: INDIVIDUAL VS. SOCIETY OR SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED EXPERIENCE. (MODERN OR POMO?)

- Late 19th and early 20th century artists had a role as societal rebels, critiquing it, and reacting against the effects of the industrial revolution by embracing a subjective voice.
- Mid 20th century artists to the present often reject the idea that the subjective voice is the most authentic, embracing commercialism (pop art), with an ironic voice, and suggesting instead that all our ideas and feelings are socially constructed. The increased presence of media (television) influences this attitude. Much art from the mid-century on uses aspects of the society that it comments on to make the art that does the commenting. (Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Pop Artists, Pictures Artists).
- Art historians usually refer to the period between 1850 and 1950 as Modernist, and that which comes after @ 1950-1980 as Post-Modernist. But it is more of an attitude than a specific time frame. For example, the Surrealists were a very prominent early 20th century group of artist, but with a much more post-modern, ironic sensibility.
- Multiculturalism: What we think about Art History is primarily a story of Western Art, and early Modernist movements are partially stimulated by Western culture coming into contact with other cultures through Colonialism. Since the 1950's, the art world has become much more globalized, and culturally diverse.

TO FULFILL THIS ASSIGNMENT, YOU MUST COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

I. CHOOSE YOUR ARTISTS

1. CHOOSE TWO ARTISTS* from the “modern artists” binders. Choose one from Binder A “Before 1950” and one from Binder B, “After 1950”. Write their names here:

Artist A: _____ Artist B: _____

*Also write their names on the class list on the blackboard. **You may NOT choose the same pair of artist as another student.**

II. RESEARCH THE ERA.

As background for this era of Art History, you need to read passages from this excerpt of *Janson's History of Art*. These are the introductory summaries of each of the last six chapters in this authoritative art history textbook. You will find these readings as a PDF on the class website, www.hsasart.weebly.com. It is also available via the Lehman College Library website. ** Please read the entire PDF. I will expect you to cite this reading in your paper, and list it as part of your bibliography.

III. WRITE THE PAPER

A. WRITE AN INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH. (Minimum of 5 sentences.) How would you define Modern Art? Think about what you've read in *Janson's History of Art* and about what we've discussed in class, as well as any modern or contemporary art you may have seen on your own. What are some characteristics of Modern Art? Do you like this kind of art? If so, why? If not, why not?

B. WRITE ABOUT THE ARTISTS: State which artists you are writing about.

Look at each artist individually. (@ 1 page per artist)

Research: **PER ARTIST:** please find at least 2 sources of information that are not Wikipedia.

Your **bibliography** (*which is required*) must have at least 5 references listed. (*2 per artist, and the Janson's reading*)

Answer the following questions for each artist.

1. Basic biography

- a. Born (when & where). Died or still alive? (when/where) and what is this artist's background? (family, culture, education)
- b. What inspired this person to become an artist? What kinds of artistic/intellectual influences have shaped her/him and his/her work?
- c. What was going on in this artist's part of the world when they were first developing ideas/identity? (Political, intellectual, economic events or ideas) and how have these influenced artist's choices of expression?
- d. Were they affiliated with any particular art movement or style? Which one?

2. Describe the artist's mature work:

- a. What materials are used? Is it conventional or unusual? Does this artist actually make the artwork, or do they design it and have others fabricate it?
- b. Is it 2-D or 3-D? What size is it? Should the viewer look at it from one fixed position, or can she/he move around or into it? Can it be seen in one glance or does the viewer need time to look at it? Is the image distorted, simplified or abstracted in anyway?
- c. Is there a signature “style” (type of brush stroke, composition, use of color? Use of material? (Obviously, if your artist makes videos, or found object sculptures, you would talk about how s/he uses those materials, not about brush strokes.) Does the artist make the same kind of work all the time or does his/her work change from piece to piece? (An example of a series of similar work, or two radically different types of work...)
- d. What is the artist's main subject/message? How does the way the artist uses materials express that subject? what a typical “idea” and a typical style for each artist? (e.g. Picasso's fragmented shapes identify him as a Cubist.)

3. The Artist and Art History

a. Based on the criteria listed on the first page, do you think this artist's work is "modern" and why? Was it considered modern when it was made? Can this artist be considered more "Modernist" or more "Post-Modernist"? (Subjective, personal work vs. ironic social commentary?) Is it somewhere in between? Explain your answer.

b. In which of the six chapters of *Janson's History of Art* would you expect to find your artist written about? Why?

C. COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE ARTISTS.

1. How do these two artists' lives and work compare? How was/is the way they make their work similar & how was/is it different? (Materials and usage? Process?)

2. How does their attitude and subject compare? Would these artists like/understand each other's art or not? Why?

3. How do their bodies of work relate to basic ideas about Modernism or Post-Modernism. Do you like their work, and why?

4. Did you change your mind about Modern Art in the course of doing this research? If so, why?

5. ***Synthesize their work and ideas; how could they collaborate? (This will be your idea for Lehman College Public Art*.)***

D. REPRODUCTIONS

Find and attach two reproductions for each artist that typify a signature style, and reveal a typical subject. (These can be in the body of your paper) (4 reproductions total)

*III. LEHMAN COLLEGE PUBLIC ART PROPOSAL

- Imagine that your two artists have been invited to collaborate on a public art project for Lehman College (like Wopo Holup's "Intersections" walkway.)

- Design a collaborative work that they might create. It should reflect specific aspects of each artist's process, but be a distinct work. It must be fit into a real place on the Lehman Campus.

- Describe your invented collaborative piece in a short paragraph.

- Illustrate it with drawings from 2 perspectives (front and side). Please use the drawing paper supplied or copier paper, unless you have a better alternative. **(Do not use loose-leaf paper.)**

Your drawings should show effort. The more elaborate, detailed and specific, your drawings, the better your grade will be.

You may use drawing materials, and/or collage and paint.

If you can, take a picture of the space that you are planning to use for your collaborative project, so that you can refer to it when you make your drawings.

If you need a supply, ask me.

- Locate the site of your proposed public artwork on the map on page 4.**

2018-2019 WRITING PROJECT RESEARCH STEPS USING THE LEHMAN COLLEGE LIBRARY

1. For the Online Library Resources for Art: <http://libguides.lehman.edu/hsasdatabases/art>

2. Lehman College Library Home Page (<http://www.lehman.edu/library/index.php>)

a. OneSearch (Lehman College Library's home search engine, the "Google" of the library)

i. Type the title of object/image

ii. What is a general category that can be used to expand your search. Use keywords

b. Google Books type the title of the object or a keyword

i. You will be able to find specific passages in books/articles that refer directly to the object

c. Databases: List a subject to research (Art)

i. Best ones: Oxford Art Online, Art Full Text, Humanities Sources, Met Publications, Artstor

ii. You must type in a research subject

i. How to structure a search, choose three terms,

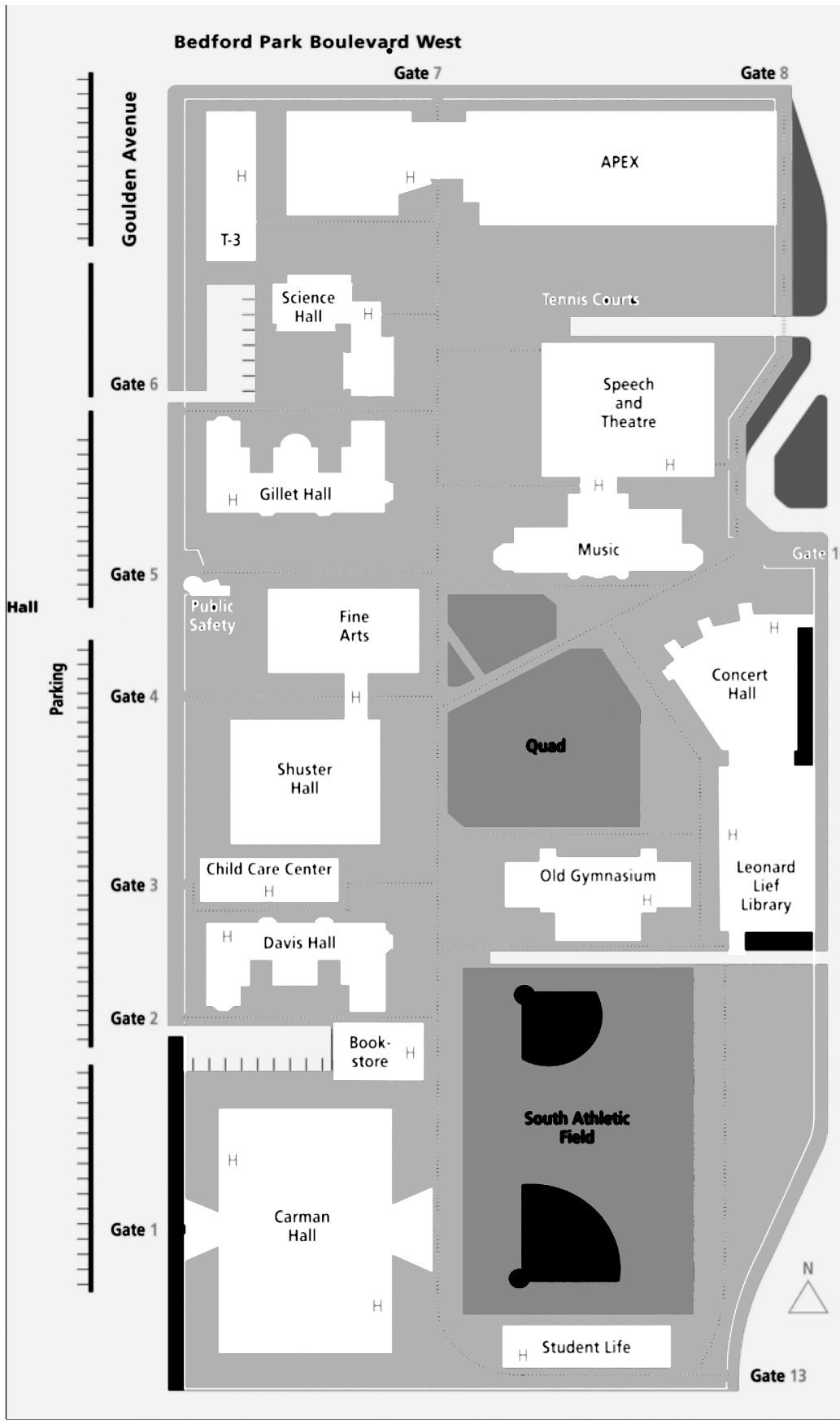
ii. how to limit terms of search to most efficiently optimize the results

3. ***get help***

a. A question about art history research? Contact HSAS Librarian, Mr. Paul Sager: paul.sager@lehman.cuny.edu 917-751-7595

b. Ask for help on the "Ask Us!" 24/7 research assistance function on the LCL home page

c. Can't log in? Contact Stephen Walker, Head of Access Service for the Library. stephen.walker@lehman.cuny.edu 718 960 7773



**Using this map, locate the site for the imaginary collaborative public art installation that your two artists have designed.

Will it be outside or in? How will the Lehman College Community be able to interact with it?

How will your two drawings of the art installation reflect this location?

X marks the spot where your installation goes.

Make it legible.

Make it fun!