

## I. February 4

### Avant-garde

#### What does avant-garde mean? Is this the same thing as modern art?

- Advance guard of an army
- Etymology actually can be traced back to old French of Middle Ages
- First came into use in connection with art in the writings of the French socialist Henri de Saint-Simon around 1820
- Today-- connections with modern art

#### Is this a positive or negative term?

- This term is not neutral--it always implies some kind of evaluation.
- Positive: forging ahead, breaking barriers, innovation, challenge to convention
- Negative: difficult, incomprehensible
- Synonymous with the most adventuresome manifestations of modern art

#### Examples

-Cubism: Picasso, Still Life on a Piano (1911-12)

-Abstraction

Mondrian, Composition with Yellow and White (1932)

-Surrealism

Duchamp, l.h.o.o.q. (1919)

<http://www.artofcolour.com/painting-profile/profiles-no6-files/lhooq.jpg>

-Dada

Duchamp, Fountain (1917/1964)

<http://www.waywardintellectuals.com/duchamp.jpg>

-Conceptual art

Hirst, The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living (1991)

[http://www.whitecube.com/images/artists/dah/dah\\_lrg\\_009.jpg](http://www.whitecube.com/images/artists/dah/dah_lrg_009.jpg)

-The avant-garde is increasingly identified with mass culture (blockbuster shows advertising)

[http://64.95.118.51/images/opti/7a/a2/L\\_Oreal\\_Studio\\_Line\\_Lastig\\_Curls\\_Gel-resized200.jpg](http://64.95.118.51/images/opti/7a/a2/L_Oreal_Studio_Line_Lastig_Curls_Gel-resized200.jpg)

-Clement Greenberg's essay 'avant-garde and kitsch' (1939) was important in establishing the modern currency of the idea. Avant-garde has become shorthand for modernism when it actually works in resistance to modernism!

**What are the main concerns of modernism?**

**Déjeuner sur L'herbe (1863): what features make it 'modern'?**

**So, what do we mean by formalism?**

-Composition of pictorial elements, their relations in the pictorial space, color contrasts

....so the unity of the whole rather than the relationship between those marks and shapes and something in the real world they may be used to depict

-Now, avant-garde works in resistance to the modernist—where modernists want: purity, autonomy, emphasis on ‘the aesthetic,’ here avant-garde wants to bring art into life...to mess up the categories

Lissitzky, Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge

<http://209.11.144.65/eldritchpress/el/pix/beat.jpg>

<http://www.waywardintellectuals.com/duchamp.jpg>

[http://www.whitecube.com/images/artists/dah/dah\\_Irg\\_009.jpg](http://www.whitecube.com/images/artists/dah/dah_Irg_009.jpg)

[http://64.95.118.51/images/opti/7a/a2/L\\_Oreal\\_Studio\\_Line\\_Lastin\\_g\\_Curls\\_Gel-resized200.jpg](http://64.95.118.51/images/opti/7a/a2/L_Oreal_Studio_Line_Lastin_g_Curls_Gel-resized200.jpg)

[http://www.princeton.edu/~his291/Jpegs/Durer\\_Perspective.JPG](http://www.princeton.edu/~his291/Jpegs/Durer_Perspective.JPG)

<http://www.ackland.org/tours/images/poussin.JPG>

<http://209.11.144.65/eldritchpress/el/pix/beat.jpg>

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