Chapter 4

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Realism and Perspective: From Renaissance Painting to Digital Media

In the case of photography, a technique historically linked to mechanical objectivity, realism is sometimes tied to ethical ideas about whether and how accurately photographs represent events as they occurred

Realism has been associated with many different styles and meanings and has been fraught with questions about authenticity.

Not Representation

Saussure's dictum is…

The signifier is...the signified is...

'"photographic realism '" when we see it, but we may not necessarily associate it with scientific objectivity

the idea of realism was widely embraced as the profession tried to separate itself from politics to show the social conditions of everyday life

Think denotation.

social realism, associated in this context with the nineteenth-century photography

social realist photographers Jacob Riis and John Thomson.

1890 photographs included in the book How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York, Riis used the new technology of flash photography to reveal living conditions in an unlit tenement room typical of those occupied by New York factory workers, who had neither the time nor the income to clean and make repairs.

scientific objectivity

computer graphics realism into three categories: physical realism, in which the image provides the same visual stimulation as the scene it represents; photorealism. in which the image produces the same visual response as the scene; and functional realism. in which the image provides the same visual information as the scene

action cinema, painting, and flight simulation training programs

Ex: Terracotta soldiers

A tenet in photography is that the realist image depicts something as an observer saw it.

Types of Realism

Realistic Manifesto

The manifesto criticized the modern art forms of Impressionism, Cubism, and Futurism, condemning their use of line, color, volume, and mass as mere illusionism. It championed art practice grounded in the material reality of a space and time undergoing technological transformation

embrace the new reality of the scientific. industrial, and technological materials and forms

Man with a Movie Camera embodies realism in its attention to the everyday Soviet life. even as this content is shot and edited in a fragmented, prismatic, and nonnarrative style.

Connection to the mechanical-human hybrid of the cyborg, modernity-we saw this example visualityin Berger's Ways of Seeing

Perspective

Perspective is a set of techniques for depicting spatial depth within two-dimensional pictorial space

Renaissance perspective exemplifies that era's integration of science and art.

perspective allows us to consider the ways in which images can function not only as representations of space, but also as ways of seeing that are formally integral to worldviews.

Throughout art history, the role of perspective in the formation of a modern scientific worldview has been interpreted in different ways

Brunelleschi, the story goes, painted a precise drawing onto the surface of a mirror: the outlines of the baptistery of the Florence cathedral, for which he would later design a dome that would be regarded as his most important architectural accomplishment. When he continued the lines beyond the point where the buildings ended, he noted that they converged at the horizon.

relies on a precise representational system emphasizing the measurability of basic forms in space, so the drawing can serve as a model for a future space, and not just a representation of an existing, real space.

Sandro Botticelli's Cestello Annunciation (1489)

lines of which emphasize linear perspective and a single vanishing point, which can be found in the middle of the horizon line made visible in the open door frame behind Gabriel

The Cartesian grid is an important tool in cartography and in systems for graphic and computer modeling, measuring, locating, and manipulating three dimensional forms on a two-dimensional plane.

Perspective and the Body

realism was achieved not by seeing one body from the fixed perspective of an imagined spectator but by merging different parts of different bodies viewed and sketched at different times and in different places. The history of anatomical rendering thus provides insight about another potential history of modern visuality: that of composites, collage, and remixes.

Renaissance era embraced the idea that it is art's social function to reproduce human vision through drawing instruments designed to replicate vision.

The Lamentation over the Dead Christ - Mantegna

Durer

Was Durer really operating within realism? I would argue he was conscious of his own Idealism.

Distortive or deceptive aspects of viewing practices seen over time i.e. Plato's cave.

Renaissance art's social function reproduce human vision pp 155

DaVinci and anamorphosis + Salvador Dali

Surrealist plays on meaning, mental play, the unreal to say something real

The Camera Obscura

Development 10-19th cent.

Single point perspective holds its own

Empiricism vs. rationalism -

the photographic camera brings us back to empiricism, which is a counterpoint to the rationalism of mechanical objectivity through which we have interpreted perspective's history.

The camera obscura is based on the phenomenon that light rays bouncing off a well-lit object or scene, when passed into a darkened chamber (a box or a room) through a tiny hole,

Shen Kou, Alhazen - eye-light empirical experimentation

Walk-ins

Reorganization of the subject 16th-18th cent. Pp157

interior/exterior embodied experience

this way of viewing was not simply a technique but part of a larger episteme.

Camera obscuras were also found in artists' studios, where they were used as a drawing instrument, much like the perspectival grid

Marx's take

Drawing instrument

Hockney/Falco "Secret Knowledge" controversy thesis pp157

Vermeer used it? Pp158 Fig 4.18

Challenges to Perspective

Perspective in its more traditional forms has, throughout its long history, remained tied to the idea of technology and an objective depiction of reality

human vision is infinitely more complex

Cubism, Impressionism, Abstract Expressionism

The "primitive" seen as mere cultural curio, then used by Modernists, and suddenly its forward thinking and avant garde.

artists working in styles of modern art after the invention of photography defied perspective

Impressionists shifted their focus from line to light and color, aiming for a visual spontaneity that some critics have compared to photography

Monet demonstrated the complexity of human vision and depicted it as a fluid process that interacts with nature

Picasso and the French painter Georges Braque became interested in depicting objects from several different points of view simultaneously

Cubism an approach to form in which perspective lines are bent and spatial planes are fragmented and dislocated to suggest movement over time

Perspective in Digital Media

Digital imaging presents new modes through which the viewer can experience a multiplicity of perspectives on a multiplicity of virtual worlds within the same screen.

One game technique that foregrounds the body is the use of simulated point of-view shots which situate the player in relation to the experience of moving through space.

including virtual reality and video games, are distinct from traditional. material Cartesian space

Realism and Perspective is a multi-perspective worldview

Connects everything from body, materials, technologies, drawing, and programming

Can depict real life and simulations