

MIA DOCENT TRAINING

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REVIVING REALISM

- this section looks at various approaches to realism
 - it's called "reviving" realism because this way of working has been overshadowed by abstraction, conceptual, and other ways of working since the mid-20th c
 - but more and more artists are turning in this direction in recent decades
 - but it's usually not "straight" realism – it comes with a twist
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- one of the basic things Liz asked me to do in these lectures is to give you some art historical context, so you can connect this contemp work with the MIA's historical holdings
 - that's why I've started each section with a bit of background

Gustave Courbet, *The Meeting* (aka *Bonjour M. Courbet*), 1854

- Courbet is often thought of as the quintessential realist
 - working during a period in history that is sometimes called the Empirical Age
 - when scientific method depended on careful observation and collection of data – think Darwin
-
- we still are under the spell of this approach to knowledge, to some degree
 - we often assume that "Reality" is understandable through the body's sensory mechanisms – sight, taste, sound, touch, smell
 - and that this reality can be reproduced in images by artists
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- so when we look at a picture like this, we assume it reflects what the artist saw
 - this is how I would define Realism as a style – an image that looks as if it depicts a real event in space and time
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- but this is a tricky concept
 - even in a realist picture, the artist is still positioned in between viewer and image – mediating it
 - choosing the view
 - leaving out or adding detail
 - maybe adding drama by changing the sky
 - changing the position of people or objects to improve the composition
-
- all these choices are of course influenced by attitudes of the time

Wandering Jew

- as it turns out, Courbet's composition was based on this print
- the landscape and costume transform it into what appears to be a realistic image of a meeting he had
- but in fact it is a hybrid that simply lays period detail on an appropriated composition

- Realism seems to provide a transparent window on the world
- but it is a style like every other style -- albeit one based mostly on observation rather than convention or invention

Bonvin, Savoyard

- in art history Realism usually refers to a specific group of artists working in France in the mid-19th century
- among them Courbet and Francois Bonvin
- many Realists intended their work as social critique
- this is a young beggar in Savoy, counting his coins

Luks, Breaker Boy, 1921

- American Realism of the late 19th and early 20th c is both "journalistic," – think Winslow Homer
- and socially minded, as in this Luks portrait of a young boy who works in a coal mine
- an implicit critique of child labor –

Edward Hopper, *Night Windows*, 1928

- later in the century, Hopper made paintings that were a mix of accurate representation and mysterious, open-ended narrative
- this one looks realistic but would have had to be painted from memory
- so it really is part invention, like realist fiction

- Realism wasn't one of the most popular ways of working during the 40s 50s and 60s – abstraction, pop, and minimalism were dominant

Richard Estes, *Double Self-Portrait*, 1976, oil on canvas

- Photorealism, 70s
- so named because the images were based on photos and appeared photographic
- often used projection techniques to transfer the image to the canvas
- airbrush to paint them
- so perspective was perfect -- brushmarks were absent – they looked very photographic

--of course Realist painting and photography have had a very close relationship, which we will see throughout the century

-- many Photorealists chose reflective surfaces like windows, mirrors, and chrome to highlight their virtuoso technique

Sylvia Plimack Mangold, *Floor with Light at Noon*, 1972

--not quite a photorealist, but of the same moment and using a realist style

--her works of the 70s are of floors, walls, windows, and mirrors --they are almost abstract –

Sylvia Plimack Mangold, *August*, 1973, oil on canvas

--the window as a theme in Realism would be an interesting one to explore – because the window is the classic metaphor for painting

--“window on the world”

– phrase comes out of Renaissance,

--in 1436 the architect and artist Leon Battista Alberti wrote that painting should be like “a transparent window through which we look out into a section of the visible world”.

--another interesting thing about realist paintings is how they incorporate the viewer

--they ask us to consider where we are in relation to the scene

--and sometimes make us feel as if we are IN the scene

Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Girl with Coca Cola*

--here’s a conceptual, or concrete take on that idea

--Pistoletto did a whole series of paintings on mirror finished stainless steel

--he attached painted tissue paper cutouts of life sized figures to the surfaces

--the paintings are installed near floor level

--the effect is to reflect and include the environment around it, as well as anyone who passes in front of the painting

--these are a realist paintings that are constantly changing, depending on where they are hung and who walks in front of them

-- offer a reality that is never fixed

--in a way that is more real than any static painting could ever be

Neil Jenney, *Atmosphere*, 1978, oil on panel, wood frame

--Neil Jenney is has two distinct bodies of work

--one of them, the Atmosphere series, advances an interesting variation of Realism

--the image is pure color, an abstraction
--but he tells us with the label that we should understand it as an image of sky, or atmosphere

-- not unlike Monet's-Haystacks
--those were really about light, although Monet chose an object to hang the light on, so to speak
--Jenney strips out the object
--then uses language to tell us what we are looking at

Neil Jenney, *Daytime Diptych*, 1988/2006

--the frame is a crucial part of this whole scheme
--he makes frames himself
--referring perhaps to that idea of the window on the world

-- painters of landscape always frame a view for us, we just don't usually think about the fact that it is framed, or chosen
--when we look through a window we don't notice the frame
-- Jenney forces us to think about the process by which an artist chooses a viewpoint for the audience
--a Realist artist is always a mediator – an interpreter

David Hockney, *Woldgate Lane to Burton Agnes*, 2007, oil on canvas (two panels)

--in recent works Hockney has returned to his childhood landscape in East Yorkshire
--landscape has been a favorite subject of realist painters
--Hockney's landscape is in a region known as Constable Country because the landscape immortalized by the famed painter of bucolic rural scenes, John Constable

--Hockney's are nothing like Constable's
--they are very intimate views of the woods and fields
--no sentimentality or nostalgia
--rather than looking at the scene from afar, or above, as we often do in Constable
--we feel as if we are right there on the path with him

-- painted *en plein air*
-- unlike Constable who used an apparatus of glass and string to reproduce the correct perspective in his studio

--Hockney has been very engaged with the historical use of cameras, camera obscuras, and other optical devices in art

--in his book *Secret Knowledge* he claims that Vermeer and many of the old Masters used camera-like devices to help them render space photographically
--many people have been disturbed by this theory, as if it takes something away from Vermeer – as if it's cheating

--but as we know, painting and photography are not redundant

-- QUOTE "Artists thought the optical projection of nature was verisimilitude, which is what they were aiming for. But in the 21st century, I know that is not verisimilitude. Once you know that, when you go out to paint, you've got something else to do. I do not think the world looks like photographs. I think it looks a lot more glorious than that."

Eric Fischl, *Untitled (Shower)*, 1989, oil on canvas (two panels)

--Fischl is an artist identified with the 80s, when figurative painting had a little revival

--he works with in a Realist style, with postmodernist strategies and ideas:

--reality is a constructed notion

--not a seamless truth

--his paintings are built from collaged and fragmented photographs, which he shoots himself
--when he puts them together to make the painting, they do not quite add up to an understandable scene

--spatially they are confusing

--in this one the sink appears twice – once with a woman seated on it, and again without

--like separate moments in time, or a time lapse

-- the narratives are mysterious too

--in that way he is like a contemporary Hopper

--but in Fischl's work there is that postmodernist acknowledgement that reality is multifaceted and slippery and ultimately unknowable

JoAnn Verburg, *Still Life with Jim*, 1991, chromogenic prints

--this notion that photos do not equal reality helps us to understand why there is a photo in this section

--otherwise it would seem redundant

-- we used to believe that photographs by their very nature equaled Realism

--now we understand them to be as vulnerable to subjective construction as painting

--Verburg's is a particularly painterly photograph

--triptych format

--titled like a painting -- "still life with [blank]"

-- traditional painting theme – the vanitas

--the word in Latin mean "emptiness," and refers to the meaninglessness of earthly life

-- they are reminders of mortality

-- typically include overripe fruits, skulls, timepieces, smoke, and other symbols of the ephemerality of life

--Verburg gives us a still life with fruit

--timepiece, newspaper (of the moment)

--sleeping man – bed – death

--not a "snapshot" -- she carefully constructs her images

Gerhard Richter, *Betty*, 1991, offset lithograph

-- works in both realist & abstract styles

--the absence of signature style is a postmodern notions, again, about privileging multiplicity over wholeness

--all of his realist works are based on photographs

--he's been collecting them since the early 60s

-- has a huge archive of photos -- newspaper photos, snapshots by amateurs, as well as photographs taken by himself

-- From this storehouse of images he chooses his motifs,

--this is an offset lithograph,

--based on a painting of 1988

--the painting is based on a photograph Richter took in 1978 of his 11-yr old daughter

---the painting – and the print – are really ravishing Photo Realist works

--virtuoso technique in imitating the texture and light

--the image recalls Vermeer – mysterious, calm, quiet

--yet her pose denies all connection

--why make a print that is exactly like a painting you have already made?

--Richter is interested in layering, and in this work the layers are of memory and history and movement from one form into another

Michaël Borremans, *Oblivion*, 2002, oil on canvas

-- an artist who is sometimes compared to Richter because he works from photos in a realist style

--this one, like Betty, also denies us connection with the sitter

--but Borremans uses a different device – he simply paints a black rectangle on the face

-- “anti-window on the world”

--it interrupts the gaze that Realist portraits depend on

--so the painting frustrates – no matter how much we try we cannot get past that barrier

--so we’ve come full circle from Hopper’s open window to this, the closed window

--and from Courbet’s notion of realism as a transparent style to Borremans’ reminder that realism is just as abstract as abstraction, even when a photograph is involved

NEW POETICS

--this section looks at developments in abstraction over past 50 years

--sort of the flip side of the Reviving Realism section

-- abstraction, like realism, is a relative term

-- any artwork that attempts to reproduce reality will be abstract to some degree

– even a photograph – which makes 3D reality into a 2D image

--so in one sense, every artwork by its very nature is an abstraction

--that said, we are going to look at what is commonly called abstraction

– aka Non-Objective, or non-representational, art

Wassily Kandinsky, *Painting with White Border*, 1913

– Kandinsky was one of the first to work with pure color and form

--his goal was to produce a “spiritual vibration” by expressing the innermost feelings of the human soul

--he believed this would be better accomplished by working with the inherent qualities of painting

– color, form, composition

– instead of imitating the appearance of the outer world

--he even developed a system for linking specific colors with specific emotions

--so that an artist could almost “program” the effect a work would have

-- Kandinsky is usually credited with making the first purely abstract painting
--it was a spiritual expression

--much of early abstraction was expressive and personal and spiritually /emotionally oriented
--this approach continued in the work of the Ab Exp
--we talked about Pollock, and Rothko, who wanted people to experience his works as religious objects

--I talked about how Pop was a reaction against AB Exp
--I didn't mention the other reactive style, which also emerged in the 60s
--this was an abstract style, known as Minimalism

Frank Stella Hyena Stomp 1962

--Stella is the exemplar of Minimalism in painting
-- "What is you see is what you see"
--he wanted to make art that had no subtext, no highfalutin content, just an image on canvas
--he used a geometric style, not a gestural one like Kandinsky's, because it is less expressive
--often his works are composed using mathematical or spatial progressions
--again, not expressive of his interior state but of something outside himself

Judd, untitled stack, galvanized iron 1962

-- best known Minimalist sculptor who worked abstractly
--also used mathematical progressions to order his works
--and favored industrial materials that had no expressive associations
--he also used industrial construction methods to make them
--again, no personal content
--and an interest in empirical data: surface, material, and form

Eva Hesse, Repetition 19, 1968

--Hesse is the poster girl for Post Minimalism
--she worked abstractly
--but within the abstract form, Hesse's work -- and post-minimalism -- in general wants to reinsert human content
-- emotion, body, personal content, etc

--this is a "repetition" but it is not orderly, or precise, or mathematical
--its arrangement is intuitive

- forms are obviously handmade
- they are alike, but not uniform
- no sense of industrial processes:
 - surfaces are not slick
 - materials are organic

-- the abstractions in New Poetics draw on the history I've just outlined:

- the expressive and emotive spirituality of the early century
- the desire to include personal or specific content within abstract form

-- you might define the "New Poetics" as an interest in exploring the fusion of abstraction and representation

--again, there are myriad ways that artists have done this – no one school or style dominates in this pluralist time

Ross Bleckner, *Before and After Being Young*, 1987, oil on canvas

- Bleckner – same group as Fischl,
- but he made it his project to produce abstractions that are both homages to Op Art and memorials to the dead

Bridget Riley, *Current*

- Op Art was another version of Minimalism, of the same era as Frank Stella
- but with a kind of psychedelic twist – the interest was in optics and perception

Ross Bleckner, *Before and After Being Young*, 1987, oil on canvas

- Bleckner talks about Riley as an inspiration
- he works with stripes- a whole body of his abstractions are stripe paintings
- and his work does have a shimmering opticality of Riley's

--but it is interrupted by a decorative emblem that he puts right at the center of the canvas, like a heart

- and he adds scrollwork along the edges
- these interrupt our visual experience of the minimalist abstraction

-- Bleckners work is very much related to the AIDS crisis of the 80s

--another body of work is called memorials – dark abstractions with specks of light, like fading stars

--even this one is a kind of melancholy, with the cool palette and that lonely emblem

--this turns the stripes into a sort of empty field

David Reed, #563 2006-07

--both Bleckner and David Reed have expressed the belief that abstraction had to be reinvented in the 80s in order to remain relevant

--Reed has defined his work against three major developments I've discussed: AB Exp, Pop, and Minimalism

--at the same time, he is interested in how to make his abstractions part of the continuing "conversation" that acknowledges the past while being very much of the moment

--he has a vocabulary of visual strategies he returns to

--one is format. In the 70s he made a series of paintings that were the proportions of a door – adding a definite human element to the scale and shape of the paintings

--we can really relate to the shape physically

--later works, including this one, are narrower

--still have a figurative feel, because of the height to width ratio

--his imagery resembles enlarged brushstrokes – flowing, undulating like ribbon candy

-- these are references to the heroic brush strokes of Pollock, Kline, and Motherwell

--but he also compares them to the billowing, energetic forms of Baroque and Mannerist painting and sculptures – particularly drapery and robes

-- so there is a connection again to the figure, and a sense that he is reworking a historical style

Jasper Johns, *Catenary (Jacob's Ladder)*, 1999,

--Reed is sometimes compared to Johns –

--both artists have committed to the medium of painting, but they don't make work that is concerned with fashionable critical strategies

--Johns' process is one of recycling and experiment

--"take an object, do something to it, do something else to it, etc"

--he recycles his own motifs, repeating them, repeating them in different scales, media, colors, etc

-- to see what happens to them

- this painting is from a group of works he began in the 90s
- they share a motif called the catenary
- used in bridge design
- the idea of connection really informs this work

- catenary literally connects the two sides of canvas,
- the wooden slats do the same for the vertical
- the painting joins many pairs of opposites:

- 2d and 3D elements – wood slats, paint on canvas,
 - reality and illusion are both present

- real shadows are cast by wood and string, but also painted (string)

- real and painted wood grain

- string is real, and imprinted – a thing, and its “negative” image

- in addition, the text along bottom refers to a biblical connector, the ladder between heaven and earth

- through the title, the brushy abstraction can be read as an infinite sky

- and that somehow the contraption of string and wood connects us, the viewers, the that sky

- so this work, which at first looks like a pretty pure abstraction, actually contains quite a bit of content and many allusions, some of which are even mystical in nature

Gerhard Richter, *Abstraktes Bild (801-3)*, 1994, oil on canvas

- Richter, like Johns, has stuck with painting by his whole career

- Richter has said that he thinks painting – and art – are pointless activities, but he can't help himself

- QUOTE 'I have no intentions, no system, no style, no particular case or message.'

- this is obviously the polar opposite attitude from that of the high modernists

- he has a very interesting approach to the theme of this section (bringing together realism and abstraction):

- he practices both, but as separate, parallel activities

- so the merger happens in the context of his career not within the work itself

- by doing this he avoids a signature style, avoids becoming an identifiable “brand”

- this is a basic postmodern notion – the acknowledgement of multiplicity, and denial of seamless wholeness

--here is one of his abstractions
--his process in making these is intuitive, reactive
--he layers colors on colors, moving them across the canvas with squeegees and sometimes a brush, and removing it by scraping
-- as he responds to what is happening he adds or subtracts
--they are numbered in order of production, not titled any other way.

Ghada Amer, *LES FLANEUSES*, 2008, acrylic, embroidery, and gel medium on canvas

--lastly, two younger women who work in between representation and abstraction

--Amer born in Cairo, raised and educated in France
-- signature style –embroidery on canvas, with threads hanging down in front
--behind the stitching are drawings, copied from girlie magazines, fashion magazines, and cartoons
--all images of women
--Amer has been quite articulate about the feminist and pacifist intent in what she is doing
--she wants to explore (in her words):

the submission of women to the tyranny of domestic life,
the celebration of female sexuality and pleasure,
the incomprehensibility of love,
the foolishness of war and violence,

Amer, *Red Diagonals*

QUOTE:

“The history of art was written by men, in practice and in theory. Painting has a symbolic and dominant place inside this history, and in the twentieth century it became the major expression of masculinity, especially through abstraction.”

[she’s talking here, of course about Ab Ex]

QUOTE “I create materially abstract paintings, but I integrate in this male field a feminine universe: that of sewing and embroidery. By hybridizing those worlds, the canvas becomes a new territory where the feminine has its own place in a field dominated by men.”

--Amer is drawing on the examples set by Judy Chicago and Faith Ringgold and other feminist artists

--uses imagery that celebrates female sexual agency and pleasure together with techniques associated with female domestic practices (sewing) into a fine art context that has been dominated by men

Mona Hatoum Cube 2008

--Palestinian artist who was out of the country when a civil war broke out in Lebanon in 1975
--she was forced into exile in England, and that is where she trained to become an artist

--she works in several media – sculpture, photography, installation, video, and performance
--this recent work is a good example of post-minimalism of the globalized variety

– it's a cube, 9 x 9 x 9 -- obviously alluding to the minimalist sculptures of Don Judd with its simple shape and mathematical title

--it also uses an industrial material—steel wire

--but in every other way it is different

-- it is constructed using an interlacing technique that has been employed since medieval times for use in window grills

--not a modern mass production method

--looks like barbed wire, with all kinds of associations – pain, prisons, etc

--in form, it resembles a wire cage – more associations

--and it implicitly references the artist's body, which determined the size of its interior space

--in her work Hatoum is interested in eliciting contradictory responses

-- often her works are both --attractive and repellent -welcoming and dangerous

--she has made sculptures that have high voltage current running through them, -- you can hear them buzz, they are viscerally scary

--others have included unprotected electric heating bars, very hot

--so her minimal forms contain very strong allusions to history, the body, and her personal roots in a region of the world that has been consumed by war and hatred

-- interestingly, she has said that Minimalism is just as much a part of her heritage and her identity as her Palestinian ethnicity

--younger artists like Hatoum do not isolate one aspect of themselves – gender, sexuality ethnicity – as their subject matter

--their work is as layered as our diverse, globalized culture has become

RECUPERATION

--if Realism and New Poetics are a linked pair of sections

--Recuperation is the partner to Poptical

--in Poptical, artists working in a neo-Pop style work with imagery and strategies drawn from material culture

--in Recuperation, artists using the actual materials themselves

Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912

--a couple precedents in art history

--Picasso's famous Cubist still life, in which painted objects are mixed with real objects that represent themselves

Kurt Schwitters, *Merz Construction*, 1921

-- roamed the streets of Hannover picking up bits of trash to use in his collages and assemblages

--he used them as abstract elements – colors, forms –

--not a representations of themselves, as Picasso did

Meret Oppenheim, *Object (Breakfast in Fur)*, 1933

Man Ray Gift 1921

--and of course the Surrealist Object, popular during the 1930s

--the power comes from the simple juxtaposition of unrelated materials and objects

--the combinations are meant to create an uncanny or disturbing effect

Bruce Conner, *The Bride*

--in the late 50s there was a surge of so called “junk art” on the west coast

--indebted to both Surrealism and the combines of Rauschenberg

-- Bruce Conner was a prominent one

--he mixed mundane material – candle wax, doilies, nylon stockings, salvaged architectural fragments

--to make an evocative assemblages, almost all of which carried some kind of narrative

--this one refers to Charles Dickens' Miss Havesham, the jilted bride who lived out her life in her wedding gown

Jim Dine, *Window Brain*, 1959

- working in the wake of Rauschenberg, making combines out of miscellaneous materials
- one of his earliest surviving works
- combines text, painting, and objects
- it sits on the wall like a painting, but is actually made on a card table with its legs folded under
- crude, kind of suggestive, but has a spontaneous feel

Carolee Schneemann, *Sphinx* 1962

- several artists started out working in this post-painterly assemblage style before they moved on to other things
- Carolee Schneemann is another
- she is most remembered for her feminist, sexually oriented, performances and films

- but she began as a painter
- and in the early 60s she too was making combines and assemblages that should be considered alongside Rauschenberg and Dine and Conner et al
- in this work, she began with a broken Egyptian plaster statue she found on the sidewalk
- used an oak box to contain an energetic abstract painting
- she added broken bottles, dowels, other fragmented objects, and a spider web of string weaves in and out of the box
- she really saw this as a painting, that was in the process of morphing into a zone between art, life, and the body of the artist

Arman *Madison Avenue*, 1962

- in Europe there was a related movement in which the recuperation of found objects was a basic strategy
- it was called "New Realism"—it too was a reaction against the dominance of abstract painting
- New Realism was dedicated to the concrete -- the things themselves, rather than imitations of the things
- this is one of Arman's "accumulations"
- made from discarded women's shoes
- title refers to the American advertising industry, which was responsible for exporting goods and helping to spawn advertising industries all over the world

Raymond Hains, *Sans titre*, 1960, torn posters on canvas

- the piece by Hains
- one of a number of artists who appropriated torn posters as their work
- in Paris during that time there were lots of walls where posters and broadsides were pasted up

--Hains would go out at night and find spots where the old posters had been torn off but new ones not pasted on yet
--he would then cut the posters out of their supports, take them to the studio, and remount them
----Hains left the posters more or less as he found them –
--to demonstrate the moral and aesthetic bankruptcy of consumer capitalism
--in general, European artists were much more politically inclined in their work than Americans during the early 60s

John Chamberlain, Red Ryder

--John Chamberlain is often associated with the AB Exp
-- his sculpture is seen as the 3D analogue to AB Exp paintings, especially bravado gestural works by Franz Kline and others

--Chamberlain's sculptures have the same kind of energy
--but he was unusual in that he didn't take raw material and construct a form
--he took found objects and deconstructed them
--he mostly used junked cars
--he would twist and bend the parts into shapes that disguised, for the most part, the source of the metal
--the only clue is in the paint – he would leave the original automotive paint on the parts

John Chamberlain, *Whitmore Wash*, 1969, painted and chromium steel

--this one uses parts from an old washing machine
--and probably some car parts as well

--the fact that the source of his materials is unclear was something he did on purpose
-- his goal – to find another association for this reused material
--he wanted to ABSTRACT it – but it's an impure situation because he made no secret of where he got his metal

--now we have a few artists representing a younger generation
--using found materials in still other ways

Swoon, two wall works in NYC

--Swoon is known best for her wall works
--she is one of a bunch of "street artists" who follow in the path of Keith Haring
--you might have heard of Banksy, Shepard Fairey, or Barry McGee
--guerrilla installations

--technically illegal, that's why she uses a pseudonym
--her works are cut from cheap paper, some printed with linoleum blocks, and then glued on walls around NY
--she leaves them there to decay and disappear
--the figures are based on the kind of everyday people one sees in a big urban environment, that might go unnoticed
--she is trying to call attention to the anonymous and forgotten

-- obviously the walls and immediate environment are a huge part of the work
--so in a sense, you could say that the RECUPERATION she perform is to bring to life these "dead" walls spaces in the city
--by making them venues for art, making them things of interest

Swoon, *Alix and Naima*, 2008, mixed media

-- commissioned by Locksley and Shea, who collect a lot of Street Art
--this is made from sections of demo'ed wall that have been linked together
--then painted on
--one of her signature paper cutouts is pasted on it

--the fact of this work's existence speaks to one of the conundrums of being a street artist
--how do you make a living? eventually you have to find an acceptable way to translate your work into a product

Swoon, *Swimming Cities of Switchback Sea*, 2008

--recently she did a very interesting collaborative project in which she and a group of artists made a fleet of seven boats that they sailed down the Hudson from Troy NY to lower Manhattan
--along the way they did performances on and with the boats

--it was critical to her that the materials for the boats all be salvaged
--they did not go out and buy any new materials for the boats
--one of the hallmarks of her practice is ecological consciousness
-- "Very early I looked around, asked myself, Am I really going to clear cut half of a forest to make an installation, is that really conscionable? And of course the answer is no."

--that's one of the aspects of "Recuperation" that is new in this generation
-- A conviction that the world is FULL and doesn't need more stuff
-- so let's just take what is out there and reuse it

Petah Coyne, *Untitled 752*, 1992-93, wire, wax, found objects, metal chain, silk sleeves

--Coyne works in a similar way as Bruce Conner

--she makes very labor intensive sculptures from found material, many of them organic

stuffed birds

dead fish

pearls

feathers

silk and satin fabrics

wax

-- all of the associations of these materials come to bear on the objects

--particularly, according to Coyne, death and beauty

--this dress hangs by its sleeves from the ceiling

--the objects underneath the wax are partially obscured

--the accrual of layers is an accrual of history, memory

--so each object has a little biography of its own

--she calls them her girls, her female children

--and imagines them to be aggressive but also vulnerable

--in other words, the sculptures are heavy-- but seem very fragile

-- she makes her found materials into beautiful objects

--she isn't afraid of beauty, which for a while was very suspect in the art world

Nick Cave, *Soundsuit 2006* mixed media

--Nick Cave teaches fashion design at the SAIC but also has a background in dance

--his soundsuits bring those two disciplines together

--made them from cast-off materials

-- designed to be worn

-- each one makes a different sound when the wearer moves around

--the first one he made was made from twigs

-- interestingly, he links it to his response to specific historical event: the Rodney King beating

QUOTE: “[After Rodney King] I started thinking about myself more and more as a black man — as someone who was discarded, devalued, viewed as less than.”

--One day, sitting on a bench in Grant Park in Chicago, he saw twigs on the ground in a new light: they too looked forsaken.

--He gathered them, took them to his studio, and cut them into three-inch sticks.

--He drilled holes through the sticks, so he could wire them to an undergarment of his own creation, completely covering the fabric.

--As soon as the twig sculpture was finished, he realized that he could wear it as a second skin:

QUOTE "I put it on and jumped around and was just amazed. It made this fabulous rustling sound. And because it was so heavy, I had to stand very erect, and that alone brought the idea of dance back into my head."

Nick Cave, *Soundsuit 2010* mixed media

--now he makes soundsuits out of all kinds of odds and ends

-- fabrics, beads, sequins, bottle caps, rusted iron, leaves, grasses and hair

--this one is sprouting sound-making toys

--they reference various ceremonial costumes used in African and Caribbean ritual dances

--as well as haute couture (these are handmade and unique)

--they're sculptures, costumes, performative objects, and sound making instruments

--he is not using cast off materials because of their abject nature (Hains)

--or to make a political point (Swoon)

--he is using them to make new objects that celebrate movement, color, and sound

CONCLUSION

Show is a sampling of art of the past 50 years

Not meant to be comprehensive

Works chosen to fit in comfortably with the historical collections

It's just an introduction to what is sure to be an exciting expansion of your programs here