Lecture 15: Montage

Slide 1: Title slide

Slide 2: Midterm exam information

Slide 3: Title slide (introduction)

Slide 4: What is montage?
- French philosopher Gilles Deleuze defines montage as “the determination of the whole . . . by means of continuities, cutting and false continuities. . . . Montage is the whole of the film, the Idea,”
  - “It is necessarily indirect image, since it is deduced from movement-images and their relationships.”

Slide 5: René Clair & Eric Satie, Entr’acte (1924)
- *Entr’acte* was made in 1924 to be shown during the intermission of the Swedish Ballet performance *Relâche*. The French title names the film as an intermission, an interval between the acts of a dramatic ballet performance. Dadaist film
- The basis of *Entr’acte* is found firmly in the European avant-garde. The first part is largely nonnarrative, and built instead upon visual rhythm. Disparate objects are linked through graphic and rhythmic matches.

Slide 6: René Clair & Eric Satie, *Entr’acte* (1924)
- Show film and discuss
- The camera’s point-of-view is dramatized: the shape of the building columns is matched by that of the chess figures, which are first seen in a close-up shot. But their eyes play tricks on them, revealing a “world” within the formal order of the chessboard. The microcosm quickly gets out of control, destroying the game and dislocating the players from their space. A mini-narrative about the disruption of order
- That the chess players are themselves recognizable artists, Duchamp and Man Ray, also parodies the notion of art as a calculated game
- If art as a calculated game of chess has been displaced by art as a rudderless, drunken, poetic voyage, why can’t the boat have a point-of-view up the ballerina’s skirt?

Slide 7: Berlin Dada
- Berlin Dada was certainly the most politicized iteration of Dada. Artists gathering in collapsing, postwar city included Franz Jung, Gerhard Preiss, John Heartfield, and George Grosz. This is understandable, relating to the volatile political situation in Germany at that time

Slide 8: Käthe Kollwitz, *In Memorian Karl Liebknecht* and German history through the founding of the Weimar Republic
- The First World War concluded on November 11, 1918, but instability in Germany had begun far before this date. A devastating blockade of Germany during the war had contributed to the starvation of hundreds of thousands of civilians, compounding the millions of casualties incurred on the battlefield
• The German Empire was founded in 1871; before this time there were various German principalities and states, but no unified entity. Under the hegemony of Prussia and Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, Germany became an empire with some constitutional rights (e.g., the Reichstag, or Imperial Diet), led by Emperors Wilhelm I, Friedrich III, and Wilhelm II.

• Capitulation to the Allies in the First World War led to the abdication of the emperor, and his flight to the Netherlands. The power vacuum led to the German Revolution, beginning with the revolt of sailors at the Kiel naval base on 28 October 1918, and the declaration of Bavaria as socialist republic on 8 November. The next day, a German republic was proclaimed by the social democrat Philipp Scheidemann.

• The new republic was under pressure almost immediately. Leftwing socialists and “Spartacists,” led by Karl Liebknech and Rosa Luxemburg, spearheaded strikes and founded workers’ councils like those in the Soviet Union. Both were arrested and executed.
  - Rightwing paramilitary units, most under the Freikorps group, engaged in urban warfare against these socialist groups, with the tepid approval of the new government. The first election, held on 19 January 1919, gave the Social Democrats and other moderate parties a solid block, one that evaporated in elections held the next year.

• Other rightist coups were attempted in March 1920 and November 1923, the latter the famous Beer Hall Putsch which thrust a young Adolf Hitler into the national limelight.

• Hyperinflation, largely due to the imposition of onerous indemnities upon Germany, ravaged the national economy during the early 1920s. The Ruhr, an industrial region of Germany, was even occupied by France for over two years to extract reparations.

• Nevertheless, there was a flourishing of the arts in Weimar Germany.

Slide 9: Hannah Höch (1889-1978)

• Hannah Höch was a German painter and photomontagist. She moved to Berlin in 1912 to study applied arts and textiles, which she studied—with interruption—until 1920. Her relationship with Raoul Hausmann (1915-1922) brought her into contact with the literary and artistic heart of Dada in 1918.

• Höch wasn’t treated very well by the Berlin Dadaists.

Slide 10: *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* (1919)

• Photomontage was created by Höch and Hausmann in 1918, partly as a response to the instability of the war years, and partly as an anti-academic alternative to German Expressionism.

• *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada Through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany* is her most famous photomontage, and was exhibited at the First International Dada Fair in 1920.
  - It represented postwar confusion and misery, political upheaval, and the consolidation of a young republic.
  - Höch laid out the contemporary images rhythmically, in order to convey the pace and heterogeneity of this revolution. Divided into four quadrants.

Slide 11: *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* and the factory

• Industrialization, Bauhaus, and Dada were not antithetical to one another; Dada merely wanted to experiment with the elements of machinery and modern industry in new and novel ways. The body as a machine. Dada was a thoroughly modern movement, and saw itself radically of its time; unlike the German Expressionists, it did not seek the esoteric or spiritual.

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Slide 12: Dada propaganda
- How do we propagandize Dada?
- Within the section Kreinik called “Dada Propaganda” there is a large head of Albert Einstein framed by two German newspaper clippings that translate to “invest your money in dada!” and “hehe, young man…dada is not an art trend”. To the right of Einstein is the head of Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert pasted upon a topless female performer’s body. Diesel locomotive and industrial cogs, a praying mantis.

Slide 13: Dada persuasion
- Covered with images of crowds, and emerging from the midst of them is Karl Liebknecht. Liebknecht was the leader of the Communist part in Germany, but in 1919 he was arrested and executed due to his role in the Spartacist uprising. The text clipping “join dada!” is bursting forth from his mouth.
- Käthe Kollwitz’s head is being thrown up in the air by a famous Berlin ballet dancer; Hannah Höch’s “HH” initials.

Slide 14: Anti-Dada
- Politicians displayed through Hoch’s satirical and mocking eyes; those critical of Dada. Most prominent is the large head of Keiser Wilhelm II, who was blamed for leading Germany into the disastrous war. His mustache is replaced with two pairs of wrestling legs spouting from either side of his nose. Below Wilhelm is the head of Paul von Hindenburg (First World War general and president of Germany 1925-1934) attached to the body of a belly dancer.
- German generals and women intermix, as does a figure looking very much like Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

Slide 15: Dada World
- Hoch included many of her male Dadaist colleagues in the bottom-right section, referred to as “Dada World”. She placed the heads of Dadaists George Grosz and Wielande Herzfelde together on the body of a ballerina. The heads of Lenin, fellow Dadaist Johannas Baader and leader of the Communist Party in Germany, Karl Radek, look caricatured atop small female performers’ bodies. And, directly to the right is the small head of Karl Marx with his mouth open, seeming to say “Die grosse Welt Dada”, which translates to “the big dada world”. The head of a modern art critic of the time is placed backwards upon the chubby, naked body of an infant.

Slide 16: Höch, Da-dandy (1919)
- Höch was particularly interested in the ironic banter concerning the “new” type of woman which was propagated after the First World War.
- A new woman—empowered and in new, provocative dress.

Slide 17: Höch and Lepape: New Woman and Bright Young People
- New Woman: new feminist empowerment in dress, manner, and entry into the economic sphere (spurred on by female labor participation during the First World War); “Bright Young People”: partiers; socialites; conflation with wealthy women who wanted to have fun.

Slide 18: Höch and the mechanical woman
• Create a juxtaposition between industrialization and perceptions of the role of women in a modernizing society. Idealized version of the New Woman was conflicted with the reality of the situations and experiences of real women in Germany

• The New Woman was advertised as a freethinking, independent, socially, and sexually progressive kind of female → superficiality of trend and cultural ideas of beauty; German women did not truly reflect the ideal of the new women, false sense of equality

Slide 19: Sparkplug and The Beautiful Girl

• Objectification of the body (literally)? America as a hard, unchangeable creature without possibilities? Cynical estimation of American culture as one dominated by materialistic and technical concerns? Spark-plug to reboot society (women as drivers)?

Slide 20: Raoul Hausmann, Mechanical Head (The Spirit of Our Time) (1920)

• Hausmann was an Austrian photomontagist, painter, photographer, printmaker, and writer. He trained in art under his father before moving to Berlin in 1900. There he associated with some of the German Expressionists, taking from other artists including Fernand Léger and Robert Delaunay. His views were eclectic, and influenced by a diversity of influences including contemporary biology, philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, and Laozi.

• In 1918 he abandoned oil painting and woodcut, using newsprint and collage that combined fragments of photographs, typography, woodcuts, and other materials.

• The Spirit of Our Time: fragmentation of the physical and psychological person; scarred by war. Thoughts and actions are determined by the objects attached to its head; head as a machine: governed not by intellect, but by mechanistic processes beyond their control

Slide 21: Kurt Schwitters’ Merz

• Schwitters was a German painter, sculptor, designer, and writer. He served as a clerical officer and mechanical draftsman during the First World War. Originally associated with Expressionism, before attaching himself to the Berlin Dadaists. Soon after meeting Hausmann, Höch, and others, began to make collages called Merzbilder

  o These were made from waste materials picked up in the streets and parks of Hannover, and in them he saw the creation of a fragile new beauty out of the ruins of German culture caused by the First World War

  o Word derives from a fragment of the word Kommerz, for which Schwitters subsequently gave a number of meanings, the most frequent being that of “refuse” or “rejects.”

  o From 1922-1930, Schwitter’s art was indebted to Russian Constructivism and to de Stijl. He differed from merely imitating Constructivism in his insistence on “natural” rather than “geometrical” forms as the basis for a new visual language

Slide 22: Schwitters’ Merzbau

• The most extraordinary project by Schwitters between the two World Wars was the Merzbau, a vast sculptural construction, which took over part of the artist’s home and studio in Hannover, begun in 1923 and unfinished when he left Germany in December 1936

• He had spoken early in his career of his ultimate aspiration being the union of art and nonart in the Merz total world view. The refuse and found objects of his assemblages, collected and stored with a manic passion in suitcases and specially-made wooden boxes, became the cult objects of what was, in the words of Max Ernst, “a huge abstract grotto,” made around and within a basic structure of wire, wood, and plastered struts
• The *Merzbau* was, in effect, an elaborate autobiographical “growth” of interconnecting grottos, in which pieces of friends’ clothing, hair, and even the artist’s own bottled urine were placed along with a host of other bizarre objects in compartments and behind secret panels. It was destroyed by Allied bombing in 1943

**Slide 23: John Heartfield**

• German photomontagist, draftsman, typographer, stage designer, and film director. Studied art in Munich, specializing in advertising, before moving to Berlin in 1913, where he quickly made contacts among the avant-garde art circles. His experiences serving in the First World War led him to conclude that the only worthy art was that which took account of social realities.

• From 1916 Heartfield collaborated closely with George Grosz, anglicizing his name. His earnest criticism of bourgeois society found its expression in his commitment to the Berlin Dada group, of which he was a founder-member in 1918. In that same year—likely January—he became a member of the German Communist Party. He illustrated various magazines affiliated with the party and labor movements

**Slide 24: John Heartfield cont.**

**Slide 25: Constructivism title slide**

• Constructivism was an avant-garde tendency in 20th-century painting, sculpture, photography, design, and architecture, with associated developments in literature, theatre, and film. The term was first coined by artists in Russia in early 1921 and achieved wide international currency in the 1920s.

• Russian Constructivism refers specifically to a group of artists who sought to move beyond the autonomous art object, extending the formal language of abstract art into practical design work. This development was prompted by the utopian climate following the October Revolution of 1917, which led artists to seek to create a new visual environment, embodying the social needs and values of the new Communist order

**Slide 26: Russian history, 1914-1930**

• The Russian Empire was a more or less absolutist monarchy until the deposition of Tsar Nicholas II on 15 March 1917. This was followed by a Provisional Government headed by Alexander Kerensky, which was subsequently overthrown under Vladimir Lenin in the 7 October 1917 revolution. A bloody civil war followed until 1922

• Lenin ruled until his death in 1924. Thereafter was a brief period of collective rule, with factions allying behind Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky. Stalin triumphed by late 1928

• *Battleship Potemkin*: 1905 mutiny during the Russo-Japanese War

**Slide 27: El Lissitzky**

• Lissitzky studied engineering and architecture at the Technische Hochschule in Darmstadt, and also travelled extensively in Europe. He frequently made drawings of the architectural monuments he encountered on his travels. These early graphic works were executed in a restrained, decorative style reminiscent of Russian Art Nouveau book illustrations

• His innate awareness of the importance of controlling the design of the page was to remain a feature of Lissitzky’s work throughout radical stylistic transformations. He graduated in architecture from the Technological Institute of Riga in 1915 and to a substantial degree remained an architect throughout his career
The Russian Revolution of 1917 had involved Lissitzky in early Soviet attempts to formulate an art appropriate to Communism. He learned about Suprematism from Malevich in person and became a complete convert to its systematic and geometric procedures.
  - Working with Malevich transformed Lissitzky’s attitudes and designs permanently. By 1919 he was fully aware of the range and potential of Suprematism. The most celebrated instance of this shows his complete adoption of the new means: *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* was designed as a lithographic poster in red and black on white while utilizing the geometric motif of a red triangle cutting into a white circle to make a propaganda poster for the Civil War effort
  - Malevich had been thought unintelligible to the masses, but Lissitzky used Malevich’s innovations to construct a visual analogy that gave the dynamics of Suprematism a specific, public, and Communist purpose

Slide 28: Lissitzky, *Proun*

- In 1920, Lissitzky announced a new type of artwork that he called a “Proun”—an acronym of the Russian phrase meaning “project for the affirmation of the new.” Lissitzky and his contemporaries were working in Russia just three years after its revolution, when a civil war still raged for control of the country. For them, the new was a pressing concern
- Lissitzky’s term “project” came from the language not of fine art but of architecture, and betrays his training in that profession in Germany in the years before the revolution. It was an innovative form of creative work, part painterly, part architectural, and part graphic, capable of application in any of these fields of activity.

Slide 29: Lissitzky and Malevich

- Applying Malevich’s technical innovations towards the political
- Malevich was a central figure in a succession of avant-garde movements during the period of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and immediately after. He is most closely associated with Suprematism—coined by Malevich in 1915—a new art superior to that of the past that was purely aesthetic and concerned only with form, free form any political or social meaning.
  - Suprematism stressed the purity of shape, particularly of the square, and Malevich regarded Suprematism as primarily an exploration of visual language comparable to contemporary developments in writing

Slide 30:

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Slide 31: Vladimir Tatlin, *Monument to the Third International*

- The technique of constructing sculpture from separate elements, as opposed to modelling or carving, was developed by Pablo Picasso in 1912, extending the planar language of Cubism into three dimensions. This method was elaborated in Russia, initially by Vladimir Tatlin from 1914 onwards and then by his many followers who made abstract sculptures that explored the textural and spatial qualities of combinations of contemporary materials such as metal, glass, wood, and cardboard
- indirect image of time, of duration
- the whole of film, the idea
  Deleuze, 1983

1924, Entr'acte, Clair and Satie
- Dada film
- begins with a neoclassical facade, then goes to chess players
- Duchamp and Hanrey self referential/ dada
- visual interplay of random moments in an artistic whole

Berlin Dada
Katrin Kollwitz (1920)
political strife

Hannah Höch (1889-1978)
affiliated with dada
montage
- cut with the kitchen knife... (1919)
- Dada propaganda
- her own initials
- futurism: machine parts
- top right: anti-dada
- Dada World

The New woman / bright young people
The Beautiful Girl (1925) woman as object

Raoul Hausmann
The Spirit of our-time, Mechanical Head
1920, sculpture

assemblages of waste material
Kurt Schwitters M2601 (1923)
beauty from detritus
grid - Russian constructivism
Mondrian (1923-37).
John Heartfield
The hand has five figures (1928)
photomontages that were critical of Hitler

**Constructivism** (Russia)
- Sergei Eisenstein, *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925)
  propaganda in pursuit of new regime
- El Lissitzky, *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*
  (1919)
  infused the Suprematist style with political relevance
  abstract shapes → concrete political goals

Vladimir Tatlin, *Monument to the Third International* (1919 - 1920)
→ never built
→ imagined in Photomontage

Alexander Rodchenko (1924)
Books (please!) in all branches of knowledge

Varvara Stepanova, Unisex clothing designs
early 1920s (affordable, inclusive)
- prototypes created in the 1980s
- utopian socialism and gender equality

*Filmic montage and photographic montage

**Dziga Vertov** (1896 - 1954)
The Eleventh Year (1928) *film*
Man with a Movie Camera
- developing a cinematic language that is of its age
  - film was staged until here
  - language of the theatre
  → Kenzo and films about real life
  Superimposition of montage
  - editing techniques specific to film
  transforming fragments into something new
Using this visual language to catch the viewer
silent films: the scores are recreated from
score notes that Vertov included
the glorification of the industrialized Soviet state

→ 1929 - man with a movie camera
factory cameras
process of filmmaking (Vertov's wife)
mundane elements / day in the life

1 - day in the life → a life within the nation
2 - coupling and uncoupling/master narratives
3 - the process of filmmaking
4 - The movie theater

- as a 1929 Soviet citizen, you are part of
  the machine of the nation
- contributing to something much larger
  than the self
- cinematographer portrayed on screen by actor
- the eye of the camera as cyborgian eye
- Motif of circular motion
* the woman in the editing room
  - we are aware we are
  - watching something
    cinema theater
  - continually draws our attention to the camera
  - dynamic lines and strong diagonals
    - in film and collage
    - collapsing of neoclassical structures of the past
  - surveillance

* Revealing the process of revelation itself
  - meta level
  - what the avant-garde movements are getting at
  - what tells you what art is
  - making sense of the physical world
I. **Historical Context of 1920s**
   a. Weimar Germany
      i. Rise of right-wing politics
      ii. Specter of fascism
   b. USSR
      i. Post-WWI, this decade saw intense transformation of the Russian empire
      ii. Became a communist state called the USSR

II. **Collage and the visualization of the body within industrial/technological context of the 1920s**
      i. Disparate parts coming together to create a whole
      ii. Against alienation created by modern society through industrialization and the war
      iii. Four identifiable parts to the collage (seen below)

      i. Addresses the “new woman” figure
      ii. Presence of woman in the labor sphere
   i. What is it that society really wants?
      1. Gender status quo?
      2. New woman
      3. Products

d. Picabia, *Portrait of a Young Woman in the State of Nudity*, 1919

e. Raoul Hausmann, *Mechanical Head (The Spirit of Our Time)*, 1920
   i. Contemplates what it means to be living in the post-war age and age of science and progress

III. **Russian Constructivism – politics in Russian art**

a. El Lissitzky, *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*, 1919
   i. Infuse suprematism style with political relevance
   ii. Red = communism
   iii. Very simple, abstract shapes channeled toward political goals

b. Alexander Radchenko, *Books (Please)! In all Branches of Knowledge*, 1924
   i. Constructivist designs (recalls Lissitzky)
   ii. Literary campaign
   iii. Art for the people

c. Stepanova, *Unisex Clothing*, 1920
   i. Designs were affordable
   ii. Total reimagining of society that was characteristic of the USSR

IV. **Dziga Vertov**

a. *The Eleventh Year*, 1928
   i. Documentary; didactic
   ii. No narrations; develops a cinematic language unique to his own age
   iii. Shows men working with and alongside industry (cranes/trains)
   iv. Skeleton with bleached bones
   v. Superimposition

b. Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929
   i. Layer 1
      1. Day in the life of a worker with lots of industrial shots and symbolic images
         a. People getting married or divorced
            i. Rites of passage
            ii. Cyclical: birth and death
            iii. ASKS: What does it mean to be alive?
ii. Layer 2
   1. The process of filmmaking itself
      a. Movie theaters
      b. Lots of editing
      c. Film captures the narrative of modern life specifically with equipment appropriate to do so (camera = modern, technological medium)

iii. Description
   1. Opening of aperture = beginning, exposition
   2. Constant forward motion (stationary bike)
   3. What does it mean to be a cog in the machine? Good? Bad?
   4. Woman in the editing room
   5. Awareness that we are watching a constructed reality
   6. Camera shown (stop-motion) as a being with its own agency
   7. Inclusion of audience references the viewer
   8. Very self-referential, self-aware