Let’s turn now to the rise of mechanized art; in particular I'd like to look at the way that artistic production changes in the early 20th century as a result of the Increasing mechanical capabilities of industrial production. There're really two things talk about here -- the techniques and technologues used to produce artworks and their relationship to the reality thry are meant to reproduce; for one thing, most art prior to the 19th and 20th Centuries had a somewhat different relationship to the technologies used to create it; that is not to say that technology was not important for artistic production. Fir instance, one of the most characteristic aspects of n 16th to 19th-century music is the rise of instrumental musical genres like like symphonies -- music that is not about anything in particular except its own inner coherence, the coherence of musical structures and so on -- and of course musical instruments are an example if a creative technology; but most music before the 19th century came out of the model of vocal music; and for the most part, in art forms before the 19th and 20th Centuries, the technology of production is meant to be transparent; so for instance in Renaissance painting say in a painting by Raphael, the work is meant to look like an image of reality and the techniques used to create that illusion should not get in the way of this illusion; there's a sense in which in order for the painting to seem realistic or natural it's important that the techniques used to create the illusion of realism be invisible; if the brush strokes or the texture of the canvas are too obtrusive or are more salient than the content - the image that the painting is representing - there seems to be some sort of failure; in order for the painting to seem realistic the real techniques behind its creation have to be hidden.

Already In the 19th century however, we start to see artists that are in some sense more concerned with the psychological effect of bringing the technique of production to the foreground - so for instance in Impressionism say for instance Monet’s series of cathedral paintings - the technical use of color is not really a naturalistic or objective reproduction of a scene but is more a reflection of the psychological or emotional effect of light on the consciousness of the observer - Jonathan Crary in one of the readings for next time talks about this in relation to the British painter Turner in his approach to depicting sunlight - and as we will see, this coincides with a movement away from art understood as a “realistic” or objective representation of reality, which at least according to Crary correlates with a change in how we think about vision more generally - it’s a motion away from the concept of the impartial objective observer of reality towards an understanding of observation, perception, understanding as being part of reality itself - the mind is no longer thought of as separate from the reality it observes, that is - the natural world, but is just one more part of it and as a result - just as technology can be harnessed to manipulate and control the natural world (say for instance in the extraction of resources or management of disease) the mind can be similarly manipulated and controlled through technological means.

But there is a difference between the way that painters foregrounded the apparatus of techniques used to create an image and what happens in film.

Before the advent of film and photographic images visual art had been either representational or abstract, but always figurative (ex. Kandinsky’s move toward abstraction).

DISCUSS

What radically changes with film is the relationship of an artwork to the reality that it records. Unlike all other types of visual art film is different in that instead of it representing the artists imagination of reality it injects actual fragments of reality - photographic images - phono graphic sound - into the artwork.

There are several contemporaneous movements in visual art to this development - in fact I think it’s apt to say that film influences many early 20th century artists in the way it injects reality into the artwork

Picasso DISCUSS

Duchamp DISCUSS

As I discussed last time, one of the big problems that artists working in the 20th century had with the model of Autonomous art was that it takes art to reside in some rarified aesthetic realm - beyond interest, beyond purpose but you can imagine why many artists might be unhappy with this way of construing art - for one thing most artists don’t want to be cut off from the world - they want to change it: this is especially true of artists who were influenced by Marxist thought. Marx famous wrote in his Theses on Feuerbach that

"Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it” in fact these words are inscribed on his tombstone in Highgate Cemetery in London.

So for artists working in a Marxist tradition the idea that art should be in some special aesthetic realm, above the fray of politics, was pretty unsatisfying -

One approach to this involves attempts at Piercing the aesthetic veil of an artwork

Aesthetic distance, stylized march vs real battlefield march

the playwright Bertold Brecht (another Marxist artist) Direct address : breaking the 4th wall

this brings us to Montage

For Eisenstein this involves the rapid alternation and combination of images that do not normally belong together in our normal experience of the world a technique known as montage.

Now there's sort of interesting tension between two facets of eisenstein's approach to Montage. On the one hand we have the d familiarization of images from everyday reality situations in which familiar images are rendered strange because of their juxtaposition with other images so for instance in the case of the bull being slaughtered there's something extremely shocking about that and not only because of the reality of an actual bull being slaughtered but because of the way that it takes an image that we might be quite familiar with especially if we are Russian peasants in the beginning of the 20th century and put it in a context that renders it strange. On one hand it creates a connection between two things that we might not otherwise immediately connect in our minds ... namely political protesters being gunned down and livestock being slaughtered but also, the next time that we see a bull as we're driving down the road in the countryside, rather than seeing it simply as some bucolic image of simple and honest farm life, perhaps now will see the underlying violence associated with the life of a bull on a farm. I mean there are only two reasons why Bulls are on farms anyway.... to impregnate cows and to be slaughtered for their meat, and so instead of viewing the bull as an aesthetic object that brings forth associations of peace and nature we might be awoken to a consciousness about the underlying economic and power structures that placed that bull at that field on that farm. And eisensteins Hope here is that by taking images that might be familiar to us from everyday life and ripping them away from our normal assumptions about them, placing them in a context in which they become unfamiliar, defamiliarized, we might start to ask what other aspects of the social political economic status quo do we take for granted, whst things might be otherwise.

So you can see that underlying the technique of defamiliarization in montage is a radical political consciousness that is interested in shaking up the status quo, and hopefully Awakening the people that come into contact with this kind of art into a new sort of political and social awareness.

But on the other hand, because of the way the mind spontaneously supplies meaning to images that might not have any literal or explicit connection to each other, Montage functions in a way that's kind of like subliminal messaging. Does it really awaken its viewers to a sort of critical awareness about there by life circumstances, or does it basically function as propaganda, using the proclivity of the mind to fill in meaning where none is explicitly stated as a way to subliminally inculcate ideas in its viewers?

GESTALT

These questions will be interesting when you read eisenstein's statement on sound and especially in combination with watching Alexander nevsky his first sound film because one of the things you will probably notice is that he doesn't follow his own advice in the statement on sound as regards the synchronization of sound and images .... and it'll be interesting to talk about why that is what changes in the Soviet Union between 1920 and 1939 when Alexander nevsky comes out that might precipitate such a drastic change in eisenstein's aesthetic sensibilities.