Seeing Sculpture

Fall 2013
Thursdays, 1:30-4pm
11 Talbot Ave., Seminar Room

Jeremy Melius
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This seminar explores the relation between two related phenomena: on the one hand, the rise of modern sculpture between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, and on the other, the development alongside it of new ways of experiencing sculptural objects, past and present, as staged in a body of powerful critical texts. The work of artists such as Canova, Hildebrand, Rodin, Brancusi, Giacometti, Hepworth, Smith, and Nauman will be juxtaposed with that of strong writers about art such as Herder, Hildebrand (again), Rilke, Einstein, Stokes, Krauss, and Wagner. Close attention to the interaction between verbal and visual representation will make it possible to explore the specific problems that sculpture poses for interpretation. Particular emphasis will fall on the special phenomenology that the medium entails—its effects on an embodied, mobile viewer who encounters three-dimensional objects in real space and time. And whenever possible, discussion in the classroom will be tested against first-hand engagement with sculptures in local collections, enabling us not only to reassess the usefulness of looking at artworks through the eyes of the writers we study, but also to develop a precise and flexible vocabulary of our own with which to record encounters with sculpture’s forms.

ASSIGNMENT: Three or four times over the course of the semester, I will ask you to write brief comment (2-3 pages) responding to select readings, highlighting points of discussion you think should be raised in seminar. The final assignment will consist of two parts: a seminar paper, roughly 20 pages in length, and a 25-30 minute presentation on the topic of the paper, to be presented orally at the end of the semester.

Week 1 / 9.5
Introduction

Week 2 / 9.12
Herder and the Discovery of Sculpture

**Week 3 / 9.19**

**Hildebrand’s Poetics of Relief**


**Week 4 / 9.26**

**Rilke / Rodin**

Rainer Maria Rilke, Auguste Rodin (1902, 1907), tr. Daniel Slager (New York, 2004), pp. 31-88.


**Week 5 / 10.3**

**Einstein, Worringer, and the Primitive**


**Week 6 / 10.10**

**Modernism and its Objects**


Alex Potts, “Sculpture as Object: Brancusi,” in *The Sculptural Imagination*, pp. 132-144.

**Week 7 / 10.17**  
**Depressive Positions: Stokes’s Modernism**  


**Week 8 / 10.24**  
**Starshake: Baxandall on Limewood Sculpture**  

**Week 9 / 10.31**  
**Medium/Post-Medium: Fried and Krauss**  
Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood” (1967) and “Two Sculptures by Anthony Caro” (1968) in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago, 1998), pp. 148-72, 180-84.


**Week 10 / 11.7**  
**Sculpture after Sculpture?: Buchloh and Wagner**  


**Week 11 / 11.14**  
**TBD: Photography of Sculpture?**
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 12/11.21</td>
<td>Antiquity Now</td>
<td>Richard Neer, <em>The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture</em> (Chicago, 2010), selections.</td>
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<td>Week 13/11.28</td>
<td>NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK</td>
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<td>Week 14/12.5</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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