

The American Context: Historical Aesthetic and Political Narratives

This lecture will cover the historical, cultural and political contexts for the works to be examined on the US road trip. It will explain the debates in American art and criticism against which Minimalism and Land Art developed. Beginning with the 19th and early 20th century political context of 'isolationism' and the desire to identify uniquely American art ('Ruralism'), the lecture will move on to discuss the move to 'internationalism' after the 'Fall of Paris' in the 1940 and the identification of an indigenous American Modernism. Central to that shift was an historical narrative relating to formal aspects of artworks and their 'objecthood', a narrative that facilitated the critical evaluation of art works according to their autonomy, and created a category of 'non-art' as a by product.

The lecture will cover the following issues:

- Nationalism and Art
- Art and nationalism and the notion of indigenous talent.
- The era of American political 'isolationism' and 'regionalists art' (Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Woods, John Stuart Curry)
- Modernism, internationalism and the International Style prior to 1940
- Rosenberg's 'Fall of Paris' and claim of New York
- Indigenous American Internationalism and the 'New York School'
- The walls of the museological institution (Abstract Expressionism and colour field painting): the issue of scale
- Greenbergian Modernism: escaping the oppression of the state and the market and the repression of subject matter.
- High Modernist formalism, category and evaluation
- Introducing the problems of 'objecthood', 'non-art' and subject matter, and the crisis of evaluation