

Postmodernism

The aim of this lecture is to consolidate an understanding of Postmodern theory and practice.

POSTMODERNITY

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What does the term postmodernity refer to?

- as a result of modernity?
- the aftermath of modernity?
- the development of modernity?
- the rejection of modernity?

postmodernity

- exhaustion
- pessimism
- irrationality
- heterogenous
- dystopian

modernity

- progress
- optimism
- rationality
- hegemonic
- utopian

What does the term postmodernism refer to?

- as a result of modernism?
- the aftermath of modernism?
- the development of modernism?
- the rejection of modernism?

Modernism is an art historical term used when people speak about modern art or certain forms of design. Modernism is in short the philosophical idea which frames modern art. Modernist forms of art and design arose as part of Western societies attempt to come to terms with Modernity.



Postmodernism tends to be defined as the period after modernism and as the ‘condition’ whereby established values are rapidly eroded by new technological advances. Post-modernism endorses pluralism but is by no means resolved at this time. This in itself is very post-modern: Living without fixed laws and standards.



Postmodern ➔ Post + Modern

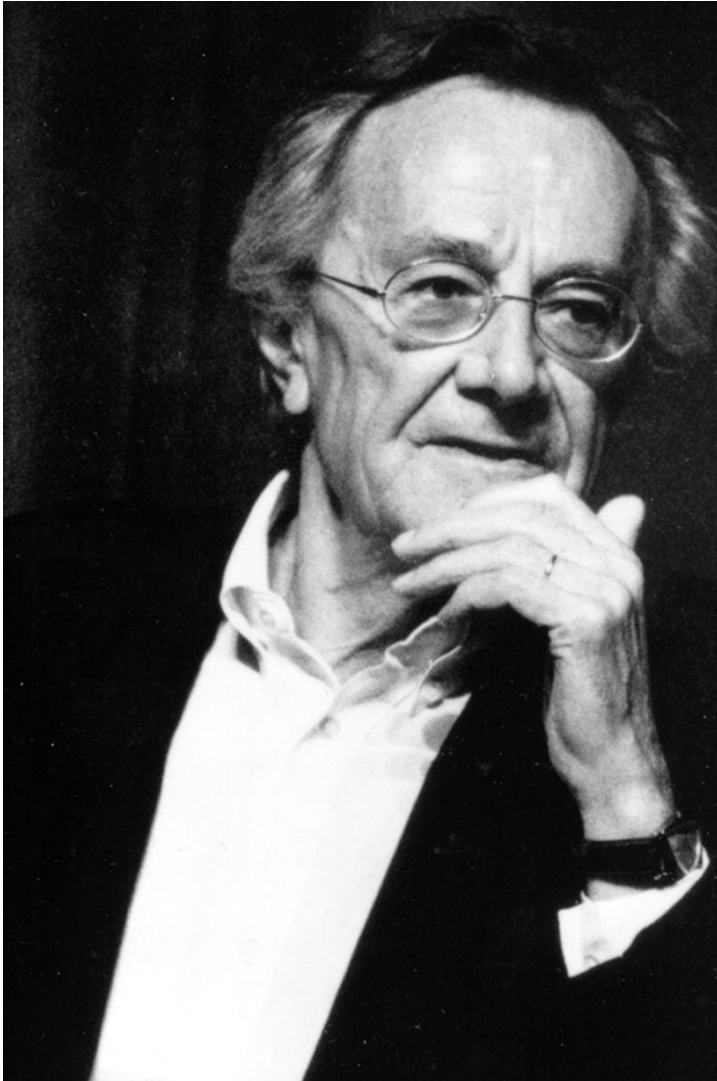
Within a culture of postmodernism all knowledge is considered relative and provisional.

The products of post-modern culture may sometimes bear similarities to modernist works, but their purpose is fundamentally different.

‘If modernism sought to create a better world, postmodernism – to the horror of many observers – appears to accept the world as it is.’ (*Graphic design and Postmodernism: No More Rules*, p.11)

Postmodern art does not eclipse or replace modernist art, as it constantly refers to modernism by breaking modernist principles and aesthetics.

The Postmodern Condition



- Jean-Francois Lyotard
- Born: 10 August 1924, Versailles, France.
- Died: 21 April 1998, Paris, France.
- 20th Century Western Philosopher and literary theorist.
- School of Postmodernism.
- Theoretical interest: meta-narratives and the collapse of the 'grand narrative'.

Grand narratives Meta narratives

- Grand narratives are large-scale theories and philosophies that advocate the progress of history, the ability of knowing everything by science.

Lyotard proposed that the metanarrative should give way to 'petits récits', or 'small narratives'. The 'petits récits' may serve to disrupt totalizing principles the grand narrative. (disrupt hegemony - Hegemony is political or cultural dominance or authority over others.)

Lyotard's philosophy promotes a heterogeneous approach – diverse in character or content – an approach which fosters a multiplicity of possible perspectives.

Run Lola Run, Tom Tykwer, 1998



What makes *Run Lola Run* a postmodern film?



- The film is formed of three twenty-minute cycles or ‘runs’.
- Each cycle of the film operates like replaying a computer game rather than the anticipated narrative structure of a film.
- The film offers no answer, only possibility.

- Three versions of the same event.
- In *Run Lola Run*, the main character repeats a sequence several times, but with each repetition differences emerge, as slight variations lead to radically different results for all of the characters involved. (chaos theory – in contrast with the utopian vision of the Enlightenment).
- The film demonstrates non-linearity and fragmentation.
- Run Lola Run is in contrast with Modernist concepts in that there is no single grand narrative but rather there are several different perspectives/possibilities.
- The film includes a deliberate mixing of styles. (The inclusion of graphic novel imagery in a German screen play).
- The mixing of 'high' and 'low' culture.
- The mixing of Classical with pop music
- Uncertain ending.

The Visitors, Ragnar Kjartansson, 2012

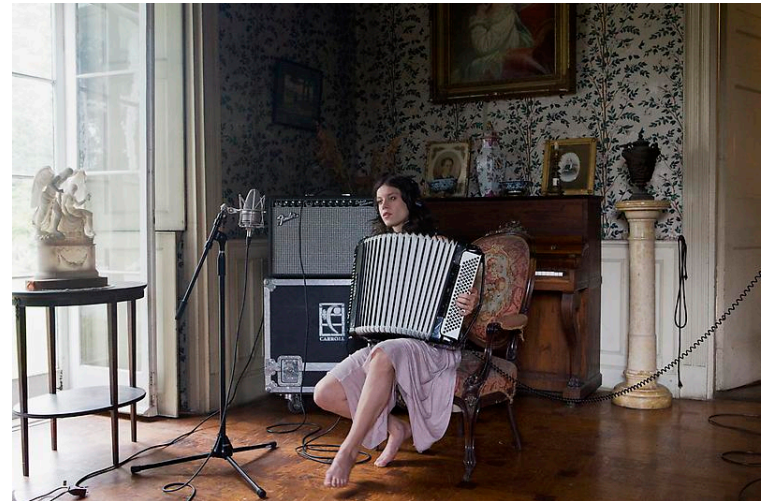


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5Nkwoq9ybc>



The Visitors features Kjartansson and a group of his friends performing a short piece of music.

The performers in *The Visitors* are virtually rather than actually assembled until the close of the film.



The performers have been filmed separately in separate rooms of the 195 year old house.

Each performer is given their own space on the gallery's wall, thus each performer occupies a discrete aural and visual space within the gallery, whilst also forming part of an ensemble.

No single performance of 'My Feminine Ways' but rather plural perspectives.



40-part Motet, Janet Cardiff, 2001



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hj83cYfGtZw>

A Single Multiplicity



Postmodernism may be considered 'an overused catch-all for anything playful, humorous, ironic, knowing, appropriative, pluralistic and code-breaking in our culture. The down-side of postmodernism's lack of fixed principles and standards is (arguably) a melancholic schizophrenia, in which the lack of boundaries becomes itself restrictive and even repressive'. (Meecham & Sheldon)

After Postmodernism?

- Late Modernity
- Post-postmodernism
- Altermodernism
- Meta modernism
- Remodernism
- Digimodernism
- What next?