AVANT-GARDE ART IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY

ARTH 02 Wednesdays, 7:00 - 8:50 pm
INSTRUCTOR: Sidra Stich

COURSE SUMMARY:
The early 20th century was a dynamic era in the history of modernism. Virtually all aspects of creativity—form, style, content, process, and subject matter—were reconceptualized. Long-standing conventions associated with figurative art were forsaken as abstraction took root. Innovations were rapid and widespread, occurring in many different countries simultaneously. This course will explore the revolutionary art movements that characterized the era. Discussions will focus on signature artists and ideas.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CREDIT/NO CREDIT (CR/NC)
For Credit, attend 5 out of 6 classes.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A LETTER GRADE
Write a 2-PAGE commentary on a painting by Fernand Léger. Details of the assignment will be given in the first class, June 24. Due on or before July 22.

Week 1 — June 24
FAUVISM. Influenced by the art of preeminent late-19th century artists—Monet, van Gogh, Gauguin, Seurat, and Cézanne—the Fauvist movement explored the potential of vibrant color applied in painterly brushstrokes. The artists responded spontaneously to nature, boldly rejecting realistic depictions premised on illusionistic conventions. The discussion of Fauvism will focus on HENRI MATISSE, the lead figure of the movement, and ANDRÉ DERAIN.

Week 2 — July 1
ANALYTIC CUBISM. Characterized by a fragmentation of pictorial elements into geometric facets, this early phase of cubism was a radical departure in the representation of figures and forms. Multiple viewpoints and overlapping and intersecting planes were distinguishing features. The introduction of pasted paper (collage) and it’s “fool-the-eye” technique added to compositional complexity. The experimentation of PABLO PICASSO and GEORGE BRAQUE, often working in tandem, was key to the development of cubism.
Week 3 — July 8

SYNTHETIC CUBISM. Among the artists who took Analytic Cubism to the next level were PABLO PICASSO, JUAN GRIS and FERNAND LÉGER. This phase is characterized by assembling figurative fragments into an abstract aesthetic of large, hard-edged geometric planes of color and patterning.

Week 3 — July 8

ORPHISM. This offshoot of cubism developed its techniques into a poetic, lyrical mode of pure abstraction focused on bright colors. The paintings were sensuous, carefully structured and concerned with expression and sensation. ROBERT DELAUNAY, SONIA DELAUNAY, and FRANTIŠEK KUPKA exemplify the style.

FUTURISM. This movement, centered in Italy, celebrated the dynamic character of technological advances and the fast pace of urban life. The outright rejection of the past and a revolutionary zeal for machines, speed and the triumph of man over nature were major preoccupations of such Futurist artists as GIACOMO BALLA, UMBERTO BOCCIONI and GINO SEVERINI.

Week 4 — July 15

GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM, DIE BRÜCKE. Die Brücke, a group founded in Dresden in 1905, was intent on renouncing academic traditions by emphasizing subjective feelings. Their work is characterized by spontaneous, crude brushstrokes and reductive colors and forms detached from naturalistic representation. Emotional intensity prevails in urban street scenes and a primitivistic mode of expression is evoked by scenes of nudes in nature. ERICH HECKEL, ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER, EMIL NOLDE, and KARL SCHMIDT-ROTTLUFF were key members of Die Brücke.

Week 5 — July 22

GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM, DER BLUE REITER. Formed in 1911 in Munich, Der Blaue Reiter was an loose association of painters seeking to express spiritual values in their art in reaction to the spread of materialism and industrialism in contemporary life. They took an intuitive, subjective approach and used high-keyed color, abstract forms, and non-perspectival space to create their lyrical compositions. VASILY KANDINSKY, FRANZ MARC and PAUL KLEE were major figures in the movement.

Week 6 — July 29

NEOPLASTICISM (also known as DE STIJL) A Dutch movement founded in 1917, is known for its advocacy of pure abstraction and universality in the reduction to essentials of form and color: red, yellow and blue with black and white; horizontal and vertical directions; and flat planes. The geometric, asymmetrical compositions that resulted were an extreme form of abstraction. The work of PIET MONDRIAN and THEO VAN DOESBURG epitomizes De Stijl.

SUPREMATISM. Founded in 1913, this Russian movement was rooted in the supremacy of pure artistic feeling, as opposed to “the visual phenomena of the objective world.” This radical attitude, which was tied to an anti-materialist, anti-
utilitarian philosophy, aimed to denote absolute non-objectivity. KASIMIR MALEVICH is the signature Suprematist artist.