

<http://www.openartsarchive.org/open-arts-objects>

Student handout

Presenter: Amy Charlesworth

Martha Rosler, *Service: a trilogy on colonization, 1976-78*, postcard novel/performance

In this short film, Dr Charlesworth examines a durational performance and text-based project by American artist Martha Rosler. The form taken is that of the postcard, the dissemination of the work is through the USA postal service and the subject comments on experiences of the domestic. Dr Charlesworth points to the new social movements and political climate of the time prompting students to think about the relation between art and everyday life.

<http://www.openartsarchive.org/resource/open-arts-object-martha-rosler-1970s-postcard-novel>

Before watching the film

Before watching the film, you might want to take a look at the entry for Martha Rosler on the Tate website: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/ey-exhibition-world-goes-pop/artist-biography/martha-rosler>

and look at these two images of the work : <https://www.printedmatter.org/catalog/23591/>

What do you know about 'modern' and 'post modern' art? What are the similarities, what are the differences? It might help to draw up a comparative table for this exercise.

Modern art	Postmodern art

You can find a definition of modernism in Tate's Art Term Glossary here <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/modernism>

And a definition of postmodernism here: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/postmodernism>

What do you think this work depicts or represents? Describe what you see on the screen. (you might think of things like scale, how a viewer might interact with the object, or even use it). Can you identify any recognisable elements (plants, humans, animals, landscape features, architectural details, forms)?

How is the different media displayed in the work?

After watching the film

1. What effects (aesthetic, social, political etc) do you think the artist was trying to achieve in this work?
2. Does it have a recognisable purpose or function? Does this relate to the time period in which it was made?
3. Has the film helped you define some of the formal elements of the work/object? Consider scale, subject matter, medium, and other formal elements
4. How has this film helped your understanding of Modern and postmodern art?
5. What is its relevance for today?

Online Activity

1. Do a google image search for work by Martha Rosler, you'll see she often uses photomontage. Then read this interview with her on the Tate website: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/ey-exhibition-world-goes-pop/artist-interview/martha-rosler>

Thinking about the medium of photomontage have a go at discussing points of similarity between Rosler's work and other artists from the periods associated with Pop and Dada.

Richard Hamilton *Just what was it that made yesterday's homes so different, so appealing?* (1956)

Hannah Höch *Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany* (1919-1920)

- (a) These three artists span the 20th century in the west, what points of comparison and differentiation can you make between them?
- (b) How has this activity been informed by what you have learnt looking at the Open Arts Objects film on Rosler's *Service: a trilogy on colonization*? In addition, consider how thinking about these works impact your understanding of the postcard novels.

You can find information about Dada and Surrealism here: <http://smarthistory.org/tag/dada-surrealism/>

And watch a film about Hannah Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany* here: <https://smarthistory.org/hannah-hoch-cut-with-the-kitchen-knife-dada-through-the-last-weimar-beer-belly-cultural-epoch-of-germany/>

And information about Pop Art and Richard Hamilton's 1956 collage, *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing* here: <https://smarthistory.org/pop-art/>.

Bibliography

Archer, M (2002) *Art Since 1960*

Hopkins, D., (2003) *After Modern Art 1945-2000*, Oxford University Press

Rosler, M. (2004). *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected writings, 1975-2001*, Massachusetts: MIT

ed. De Zegher, C. (1999). *Positions in the Life World*, Massachusetts: MIT

Resources online

Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* 1975 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vm5vZaE8Ysc>

Martha Rosler, <http://www.martharosler.net/> (artist's website)