Sculpture and Philosophy

Instructor: Peter Hajnal
Course times: Mon 17:00 - 18:30, Thu 15:15 - 16:45
Location: P98 Seminar Room 3
Office hours: Thursdays 17:00-18.30 or by appointment
Email: p.hajnal@berlin.bard.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Sculpture clearly finishes as second in the famous Renaissance Paragone, the discussion whether painting or sculpture is the superior art. The reason may lie in sculpture’s inability to define its own nature. While painting explains itself (whether rightly or wrongly) as an illusion seen through a virtual window (Alberti), sculpture has no similarly obvious legitimation strategy. Its obstructive spatial presence merely serves to leave its essence open to question. A painter might dream of entering her picture and reappear as a raisonneur inviting contemplation. Sculptors – like Pygmalion – dream of embracing their creation as real. Sculpture’s very physicality seems to deny the intellectual distance necessary for reflexive thought, leaving no option of relating to it but the “erotic”, the sacral, or the decorative. Despite this apparent philosophical disadvantage, sculpture has a way of taking a representative role ahead of painting at major turning points in the history of Western art. Accordingly, philosophical aesthetics in the European tradition has often turned to sculpture in its efforts to define the essence of art, and to derive general norms from the allegedly inferior instance. This paradox will serve as the starting point for our inquiry concerning the nature and essence of Western sculpture, and the philosophical issues associated with it.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance
Attendance is required at all classes. Lateness can ruin a class and is therefore looked on with dismay.

Assessment and Writing Assignments
Assessment for this course will be based on in-class presentations, preparation and participation, and writing.

There is one midterm and one final paper. Tutorials will be offered both before and after the papers are due. Students will also be required to hold presentations on a regular basis (we will aim for at least one presentation by each participating student).

The mid-term paper is due October 19, at 23:59.
The final paper is due December 19, at 23:59.
Each paper should be 2000-3000 words long.
Policy on Late Submission of Papers
As the Student Handbook states, essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown
The final grade for this course is calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>50%</td>
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SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND CLASSES

INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1. What is Sculpture?
G.W.F. Hegel: Lectures on the Philosophy of the Fine Arts (selections)
Roger Scruton: What is Architecture? (selections)

SCULPTURE AND THE IDEAL

WEEK 2. Sculpture in Renaissance Florence: I.
Leon Battista Alberti: On Painting (selections)

WEEK 3. Sculpture in Renaissance Florence: II.
Adolf von Hildebrand: The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts

WEEK 4. Michelangelo I.
Vasari: Life of Michelangelo (selections); Charles de Tolnay: Michelangelo (selections)

WEEK 5. Michelangelo II.
Erwin Panofsky: Michelangelo and Neoplatonism

SCULPTURE AND THE SENSES

WEEK 6. Gianlorenzo Bernini
René Descartes: Discourse on Method; B. Pascal: Pensées (selections)

WEEK 7. Classicism I.
Johann Gottfried Herder: Sculpture
Johann Joachim Winckelmann: Thoughts on the Imitation of the Ancients in the Fine Arts (selections)

The mid-term paper is due October 19, at 23:59

WEEK 8. Classicism II.
J.G. Herder: Sculpture cont.

WEEK 9. Naivete as an Ideal
Friedrich Schiller: On Naive and Sentimental Poetry (selections)
J. W. Goethe and F. Schiller: Letters (selections)

10. The Body and the Uncanny
Stephen Mulhall: On Film (selections); K. Gross: The Dream of the Moving Statue (selections)

MODERNISM: OBJECTHOOD, EPISTEMOLOGY, and the DEFINITION of ART

11. Rodin, Matisse, Picasso
Rosalind Krauss: Passages from Modern Sculpture (selections); Herbert Read: Modern Sculpture (selections); Rainer Maria Rilke: Rodin (selections)

12. Henry Moore and Anish Kapoor
(TBA)

13. Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol
Arthur Danto: The Transfiguration of the Commonplace (selections)

14. TBA (most likely A. Danto cont.)

The final paper is due December 19, at 23:59

Books and Readers
Readers will be available around the end of September. Photocopies of initial readings will be sent electronically, and hardcopies will be available for pick-up in front of my office by 25 August.