

The Avant-Garde and the Museum (CL 9686B)

Winter 2017

Instructor: Cristina Caracchini

Time: Thursday 9:30-12:30

Stevenson Hall room 2166

Office hours: Monday 3:00-4:00

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First there was Marinetti, the father of the Futurist Avant-Garde, with his famous 1909 comparison of museums to cemeteries. The urge to destroy the museums, along with the libraries and academies, in a theorized attempt to put an end to the cultural stagnancy he accused those institutions of facilitating, would be just one of the father of Futurism's many hyperbolic injunctions.

Fifty years after Marinetti's deprecatory comparison, Sanguinetti (Gruppo '63) would declare that "the destiny of all works of art is the museum, and that the museum is only one of the faces of the market's omnivorous 'system'." Hence, since language and ideology entertain an intrinsic dialectical relationship, ensues the necessity to formulate and employ a constantly evolving *experimentalism*, and to propose an expressive strategy that resists immediate consumption, and keeps challenging the 'system' itself.

In this course we will interrogate the limits of the equivalence between these two antagonists of the museal institution: the experimentalism and Avant-Garde. We will redefine the two terms and reflect on the multiple announcements of the death of the Avant-Garde to the profit of experimentalism.

We will focus on the concept of movement, on the manifesto as a specific genre, on linguistic and visual experimentation, and on the artist's determination to have an impact on the world, based on a cultural and political vision.

Futurism, and its attempt to encompass all forms of art and social interaction, will be our initial case study, followed by Dadaism, Surrealism, Brazilian Concretism, Oulipo, and the Neo-avant-Garde. Attention will be given to women's contributions to Avant-Garde art and ideology, including male/female relationships, sexuality, and militarism.

We will read works by Marinetti, Palazzeschi, Valentine de Saint-Point, Breton, Tzara, Soupault, Alvaro de Campos (Pessoa), Queneau, Sanguinetti, Roubaud and the Wu Ming.

Course Requirements

Class Participation (questions /comments -half a page in length- to bring to class weekly, and active involvement in discussions): 10%.

Oral presentation of a theoretical reading: 20%

Oral project on selected creative texts (including pertinent theory): 20%

Final essay (on a different topic and selection of texts): 50 %