History of photography (part 3): photography as art

CS 178, Spring 2009

Marc Levoy
Computer Science Department
Stanford University
Next week’s sections

- landscape photography
- meet at the entrance to “The Dish” (Stanford Academic Preserve) that is near Lake Lagunita
- bring your camera
- bring a hat & water if it’s hot
- be prompt, or you’ll be left behind!
Outline

- photography as an aid to artists
- genres
  - allegory
  - still life
- Naturalism
- Pictorialism
- profile: Alfred Stieglitz
Photography as an artistic medium

William Talbot, The Open Door, 1843

(Rosenblum)
Photography as an aid to artists

Eugène Delacroix, Dante and Virgil in Hell, 1822

- Delacroix collaborated with Durieu on these figure studies
Photography as an aid to artists

Thomas Eakins’s students, 1883

Thomas Eakins, The Swimming Hole, 1883

(Rosenblum)
Photography as an aid to artists

Maxfield Parrish, illustration for Life, 1923

Kitty Owen (granddaughter of William Jennings Bryan)
Planning a photograph

Henry Peach Robinson, Carrolling, 1887

pre-production sketch

photograph

(Newhall)
Photography struggles for respect

“Photography asking for just a little place in the exhibition of fine arts.”

Gaspard Tournachon ("Nadar"), from Le Journal Amusant, 1857
Genres

- allegory
- still life
Thomas Cole, The Voyage of Life: Childhood, 1840
Thomas Cole, The Voyage of Life: Youth, 1840
Thomas Cole, The Voyage of Life: Manhood, 1840
Allegorical collage

- huge print (31” wide)
- composite of 30 negatives
- widely denounced as mechanical
- made the artist rich and famous

Oscar Rejlander, Two Ways of Life, 1857
One-frame movie

- photograph as theatrical narrative
- 5 differently exposed negatives, hence early example of HDR!

Henry Peach Robinson, Fading Away, 1858
The Dutch still life

- balanced composition
- variety of textures
- specular highlights
  (white if glass, colored if metal)
- interreflections
- reflected windows

Willem Claesz Heda,
Still Life with Oysters, Rum Glass, and Silver Cup, 1634

(Gardner)
Vanitas

- intended to symbolize the transience of life, the futility of pleasure, and the certainty of death
- common symbols are a skull, clock or candle, pipes for blowing bubbles, tipping glass, rotting fruit

Willem Claesz Heda, Still Life - Vanitas, 1628
Memento mori  (“Be mindful of death”)

Caravaggio, St. Jerome, 1606

Lawrence Olivier in Hamlet, 1948,
“Alas, poor Yorick!
I knew him, Horatio.”
- anamorphic image of skull
- to view without distortion, stand near lower-left corner of painting
- salvation is represented by crucifix in upper-left corner

Hans Holbein, The Ambassadors, 1533
Photographic still life

Hermann Krone, Still Life of the Washerwoman, 1853
Charles Aubry,
Leaves, 1864
Dead nature

Adolphe Braun, Still Life with Deer and Wildfowl, 1865

Jean-Baptiste Oudry, Hare, Sheldrake, Bottles, Bread and Cheese, 1742
Genres: still life

Adolphe Braun, Still Life with Deer and Wildfowl, 1865

Jean-Baptiste Oudry, Le Pâté, 1743 (at the S.F. Palace of Legion of Honor)
Ansel Adams,
Still Life, 1932
Naturalism

- reaction against the artificiality of genre photographs
- blend of Romanticism, lyricism, and early Impressionism
- importance of pose, camera vantage point, and atmosphere

Frank Sutcliffe, Water Rats, 1886

(Rosenblum)
George Caleb Bingham, *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*, 1845

Frank Sutcliffe, *Water Rats*, 1886
Lidell Sawyer, In the Twilight, 1888

(Rosenblum)
Édouard Manet, Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe, 1863

Lidell Sawyer, In the Twilight, 1888
Pictorialism

- extreme manipulation of the photograph
- photographic Impressionism

John Dudley Johnston, Liverpool - An Impression, 1906

(Rosenblum)
• extreme manipulation of the photograph
• photographic Impressionism

Claude Monet, The Thames and the Houses of Parliament, 1871

John Dudley Johnston, Liverpool - An Impression, 1906
James Craig Annan,
A Black Canal, 1894
Claude Monet, La Grenouillère (The Frog Pond), 1869

James Craig Annan, A Black Canal, 1894
E.J. Constant Puyo, Summer, 1903
E.J. Constant Puyo, Summer, 1903

Claude Monet, Poppy Field near Vétheuil, 1879
Animating pictures
[Chuang SIGGRAPH 2005]

Claude Monet, Bridge at Argenteuil, 1874
Animating pictures
[Chuang SIGGRAPH 2005]
Alfred Stieglitz  (1864 - 1946)

- began as a Pictorialist
- became a Realist as he addressed social themes, then a Modernist as he photographed urban landscapes
- photographed (and married) painter Georgia O’Keefe
- first of the “heroic age” of artist photographers
Sun’s Rays - Paula, Berlin, 1889
Venetian Canal, 1897
Miss Thompson, 1907
(collaboration with Clarence White)
The Steerage, 1907
From the Shelton
Westward, New York, 1931
Portraits of Georgia O’Keefe
The paintings of Georgia O’Keefe
Slide credits