



THE MOTORCYCLE AND ART AND THE MOTORCYCLE

FNAR-2413-A

Wed., 2:30-5:20

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*“Perhaps more than any other single object of industrial design, the motorcycle can be considered a metaphor for the 20th century. Predating the automobile by 25 years and the airplane by 36, the motorcycle was the first form of personalized mechanical transport to emerge from the beginning of the industrial age; its subsequent evolution follows the main currents of modernity” - Introduction to *The Art of the Motorcycle*, Guggenheim Museum*

This class introduces the motorcycle and art through illustrated lectures, group discussions, assigned readings, hands-on art projects, and edited film screenings. Conventional definitions of art and the relationships between art, industrial design and engineering are questioned.

Arguments are made for and against the motorcycle as art.

Assignments and Evaluation:

There are three required assignments. Each is worth 30% of the final grade. Class participation accounts for another 10%. In a seminar class, participation is expected. Any student may be selected at any time to lead a group discussion of a text. Attendance for the full length of each class is expected. 10% is deducted for each class missed without documentation of a valid (normally, medical) reason. Evaluation of projects is based on effort, originality, relevance in relationship to and demonstration of understanding of course content.

1. DUE MID TERM OCTOBER 16

Produce a book collage: Purchase two magazines, one motorcycle magazine and one art magazine. (In a large magazine store such as *Reids* or *Chapters* there will be at least a dozen of each to choose from.) Cut and paste, to combine the two magazines with both sets of images and both sets of texts into a single magazine/book that as a work of visual and textual art effectively communicates your understanding of the relationship between art and the motorcycle. Among other issues, consider the motorcycle in advertising art from Art Deco posters to Katrien (Davida/Guzzi), Keira Knightly (Ducati/Chanel), and the *studio i.d.e.a.* human motorcycles (<http://www.odditycentral.com/pics/human-motorcycles-made-from-body-painted-yoga-gurus.html>). The collage should retain the format of a magazine or book. This “book” is due at midterm, October 16. It will be evaluated, marked and returned in one week.

1. DUE AT END OF TERM

Produce a work of art using a motorcycle helmet: Consider the helmet as a blank canvas or an un-carved block. Your helmet can be painted, sculpted (additive or subtractive process), or otherwise modified in any way. This is up to you. If you intend to wear the helmet, be aware that certain modifications may compromise the safety of the helmet. You must purchase a motorcycle helmet. Used helmets are often available on Kijiji or in thrift stores for \$10.-\$20. New helmets are sometimes discounted in the fall at large chain stores. You may find a new helmet for as little as \$20. Friends and relatives may have old helmets that they can give you for free. Obtain the helmet as soon as possible. Go online to study the visual history of helmets, their forms and embellishment. Note that helmets are often displayed in art museums. No class time is available for this project, however JDH 212 can be used as a workroom when classes are not in progress. Technical assistance and individual critiques are provided on request. The finished helmet art work will be shown in a group exhibition/critique and evaluated at the end of term.

1. TO BE WRITTEN IN CLASS AT END OF TERM

Read a book of your choice on motorcycles. In class handwrite a 1000 word book report in an academic format (e.g. <http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/bookreports.html>) modified to relate the book to the concept of “the motorcycle and art”.

Choose your book and begin reading it as soon as possible. Some of the books below are available in the library. It may be necessary to purchase a book. Access used book resources like <http://www.abebooks.com/> and new book resources like <http://www.amazon.ca/>

Examples of appropriate books to read include but are not restricted to the following:

The Perfect Vehicle: What it is about Motorcycles by Melissa Holbrook Pierson, 1997

Pierson, capture(s) ... the specific what and why of motorcycling. She sifts through myth and hyperbole: misrepresentations about danger, about the type of people who ride and why they do so. ...the origins of the machine, the often hidden story of women riders past and present, intertwined with Pierson's own story.

Riding with Rilke: reflections on motorcycles and books by Edward Bishop, 2005

English professor Bishop rides south from the University of Alberta on his Ducati, to the University of Texas at Austin to do research on writer Virginia Woolf. For Bishop, riding "is an inward experience. Like reading," a parallel that links the elements of this account—part travelogue, part literary criticism. On the ride home he crashes but survives to write.

Harley-Davidson and philosophy : full-throttle Aristotle, by Bernard E. Rollin, 2006

An investigation into the connections between Marx and Foucault and the motorcycle. Words like Sturgis, Hollister, and Panhead share the page with philosophical giants such as Marx, Hobbes and Socrates. A series of essays, combine humour and philosophical introspection.

Shopcraft as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work, by Matthew B. Crawford, 2009

A philosopher/motorcycle mechanic makes a case for working with one's hands. For anyone who felt hustled off to college, then to the cubicle, against their own inclinations and natural bents, *Shop Class as Soulcraft* seeks to restore the honor of the manual trades as a life worth choosing. Crawford questions turning everyone into a "knowledge worker," based on a misguided separation of thinking from doing, the work of the mind from that of the hand.

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values, by Robert M. Pirsig, 1974

The book describes a journey on a motorcycle, punctuated by philosophical discussions tied together by the story of the narrator's past self: a teacher at a small college, who became obsessed by the question of "quality". This drove him to therapy that changed his personality. In the book, this personality re-emerges and the narrator is reconciled with his past.

Rebuilding the Indian: A Memoir by Fred Haefele, 2005

Fred Haefele was a writer who couldn't get his book published, an arborist whose precarious livelihood might kill him, and an expectant father. In a rut, he purchased a box of parts and tackled the restoration of an Indian Chief motorcycle. With limited mechanical skills, and a cast of local experts, Haefele goes down the rocky road of motorcycle restoration.

Course Texts:

Photo-copies of texts will be distributed. (Note: Texts must be read prior to class. Be prepared.

Any student may be selected at any time to lead a group discussion of a text.) The on-line resources of the *International Journal of Motorcycle Studies* will be used (<http://ijms.nova.edu/>).

There is a photocopy course fee payable to the registrar. No final grades can be issued until the fee is paid.

Course Cost:

\$20. for the two magazines.

\$20. for a used motorcycle helmet.

\$10. for paint, glue, etc.

\$10. photocopy fee.

Class Schedule:

1. Art, Engineering and Industrial Design. A series of lectures on the history of motorcycle design (1894-1998) illustrated with images from the Guggenheim Museum, *The Art of the Motorcycle* exhibition, 1998. Marcel Duchamp's *readymades* and found object art.

The Art of the Motorcycle exhibition presented 114 motorcycles chosen for their historic importance or design excellence in a display by noted American Architect Frank Gehry in the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City, in 1998. The exhibition attracted the largest crowds ever at that museum, and received positive reviews in the art world. Described by historian Jeremy Packer as representing the end of a cycle of demonization of motorcyclists, the Guggenheim exhibition served as "a long-overdue celebration of the sport, the machines". Texts: *What are a Bunch of Motorcycles Doing in an Art*

Museum? by Bernard E. Rollin, *The Motorcycle As Art* by David Minton, 2001, *Art and the Motorcycle Museum* by Peter Egan, 2009, and *Motorcycle or Motorsculpture?* by James Parker, 2007.

2. Ezra Pound's writing on the "machine aesthetics" of Cubism, Futurism, and Vorticism. The sculpture of Boccioni and Duchamp-Villon. the sculpture *The Great Horse*(power), 1916 and the motorcycle industrial designs of Hans Muth of Target Design: BMW, Suzuki and KTM.

Texts: Short selections from Ezra Pound and *Song of the Sausage Creature* by Hunter S. Thompson (café racer) <http://www.latexnet.org/~csmith/sausage.html>

3. The sculpture of John McCracken, Minimalism as industrial Pop Art, the "Finish Fetish" of West Coast motor culture. The motorhead art of Ed "Big Daddy" Roth and Von Dutch. *From Spare Part to High Art: The Aesthetics of Motorcycles* by Craig Bourne

4. Zero. *Adding up to Zero, The perfectly imperfect motorcycles of Japan's Shinya Kimura* by Tom Zimmeroff, 2007 and *Road Wabi* by Jim Gianatsis, 2012. Japanese motorcycles vs. Japanese Aesthetics: Wabi-Sabi (Beauty in the "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete"). The ceramic vessels of the Japanese Tea Ceremony and the custom motorcycles of Shinya Kimura.

5. The Vespa. Guest lecturer Professor Michael Camp (Journalism) on scooters and Vespa scooter culture. Partial screening of the film *Quadrophenia*: London, 1979. (Rival youth cults in 1964 Britain: the scooter riding "Mods" vs. the motorcycle riding "Rockers".)

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHXoqBhqChk>) Text: *The reel life of Rockers* by Jerry Clayton, 2001.

6. Dirt Bikes and Earthworks: The Earthwork sculpture of Robert Smithson. The motorcycle-made earth drawings of artist Michael Heizer. Group Discussion of text: *The Films of Roger Corman* by earthwork artist Robert Smithson. Edited screening of *The Wild Angels*, 1966 (60's

anti-establishment/drug culture and the motorcycle) Roger Corman, Director) and *On Any Sunday*, 1971 (Bruce Brown, Director. (*Endless Summer*, 1966) Actor Steve McQueen sponsored pro-motorcycle sport documentary.

7. There will also be at least one field trip to a custom motorcycle building shop. The date will be announced. Normally, a field trip will take place during the first part of the class (2:30-4:00) and the class will meet back in the classroom (4:30-5:20) to discuss the trip.

8. The motorcycle in film: edited film screenings. Selections from the following films (among others) will normally be shown in the later part of each class 4:00-5:20.

The Wild One, 1953 (Fictional version of the 1947 Hollister riot. Marlon Brando)

Famous “motorcycle scenes” from films including, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1962 and *The Great Escape*, 1963

The Wild Angels, 1966 (60’s anti-establishment/drug culture and the motorcycle) Roger Corman, Director)

The Leather Boys, 1967 (Social alienation in the London working class café racer motorcycle scene of the early 1960s,)

Girl on a Motorcycle, Starring Marianne Faithful, 1968
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7OHjK3QHyl>)

Quadrophenia: London, 1979. (Rival youth cults in 1964 Britain: the scooter riding “Mods” vs. the motorcycle riding “Rockers”.) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHXoqBhqChk>)

Mad Max, 1979 (Science fiction: vengeful motorcycle cop vs. violent motorcycle gang in a future dystopic Australia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mad_Max)

Torque, 2004 (Action movie, California sport bike gangs.) Produced by Neal H. Moritz, known for his *The Fast and the Furious* film series.)

The World’s fastest Indian, 2005 (Docu-drama of motorcycle racer Burt Monroe) and *Burt Munro: Offerings to the God of Speed*, 1971 (Documentary). Both directed by Roger Donaldson.

Brittown (<http://www.brittown.com/>), 2008. Independent film by Scott Di Lalla & Zack Coffman.

Motorcycle music from *Leader of the Pack* (1964, The Shangri-Las) to *1952 Vincent Black Lightning* (Richard Thompson, 1996).

Websites

Guggenheim Museum, *The Art of the Motorcycle*:

<http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/motorcycle/>

GM: <http://senum.com/sak/Classics/1868.html>

GM, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_motorcycles_in_The_Art_of_the_Motorcycle_exhibition

International Journal of Motorcycle Studies ("Motorcycle: Beschleunigung und Rebellion?" by Suzanne Ferriss, 2010) http://ijms.nova.edu/Spring2010/IJMS_Artcl.Ferriss.html

Shinya Kimura: <http://www.chabottengineering.com/menu.html>

Book Report Format: <http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/bookreports.html>

Source for Motorcycle Books: <http://www.abebooks.com/>

Helmets: <http://technabob.com/blog/2011/05/24/geeky-motorcycle-helmets/>

<http://www.techeblog.com/index.php/tech-gadget/10-cool-custom-motorcycle-helmets-that-act>

<http://hellmutts.webs.com/ually-exist>

Note: It is not necessary to be familiar with motorcycles or art in order to do well in this class, however if you find the class consistently uses motorcycle terms with which you are not familiar, consult the Motorcycle Terms Glossary (<http://motorcycle-glossary.com/>). Similarly, if the class consistently uses art terms with which you are not familiar, consult the Art Terms Glossary (<http://www.artcyclopedia.com/scripts/glossary-art-a.html>).

This is an outline only. All readings and projects will be further described on the dates indicated.

The class schedule is subject to change.



NOTES:

Assignment: Graphic symbols and subliminal messaging. Study the visual relationship between the following two corporate logos. (Note that the Harley-Davidson Motorcycle Company “Bar and Shield” logo was designed in 1910, and the Victory logo was not designed until 1998.) Modify them to demonstrate your understanding of the visual relationship.



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