October 21, 2014

* TODAY’S TOPIC: Representation & Engineering
  + Walter Ruttman: “Berlin - Symphony of a Great City” (1920s) (Video)
    - Abstract black and white imagery
    - Rapid cuts/editing; frenetic
    - Shots of industry; all seen from a traincar
    - Rather intense music; gives an uncertain, slightly sinister atmosphere
    - No people being shown; more interest in the products/creations of people rather than the humanity of them
    - Analogy being made between humans and machines
    - Series of still images of buildings, gutters, sewers, windows; very modern concrete buildings, giant boilers, machines, power lines, shuttered shops
    - A frame from a film depicting a lonely, white piece of cloth/paper rolling along on the breeze along a deserted city street. The image is divided compositionally into thirds, with the top third showing the walls of buildings in the background, the middle third showing the curb of the street with the cloth, and the lower third the middle of the street. The camera is centred on the cloth.
    - Loneliness; an absence of humanity; a cold, unfeeling place, disposability? Slow and meandering, melancholy. Slower cuts, fades/dissolves, very few pieces of mechanics working.
    - The music is slow and “sickly sweet”; reminiscent.
    - Finally, humans and animals appear; one walks a dog along a residential street.A cat wanders along the sidewalk. There are posters and a couple walking with a child carrying a teddy bear. Pigeons peck at some horse dung. A man hangs up posters. Police offers walk.
    - Slow, contemplative shots of factory and train warehouse doors opening. A train exits the doorway in a cloud of steam and comes straight at the camera. A man leaves his home smoking a pipe; we see him twice; the camera follows him as he is joined by another. Then another. A group of people walk down a street.
    - Someone pours wastewater into a gutter. Scenes of people taking mass transit; cable cars/trams, buses, trains.
    - More factory gates open. People get on and off trains. The music gets more excited and frenetic. People in business suits carrying briefcases.
    - Soldiers march. Workers walk. A man plays a hurdy-gurdy for tips.
    - More images of factories as the workers start to arrive. They park their bikes and put on work clothes, then start up machines. They slowly whirr to life as the music swells with a driving beat. (Making lightbulbs)
    - Fast-paced, closely zoomed/cropped images of machines working; busy, intense music plays. Mass production.
    - “We’re working for the machines instead of the machines working for us.”
  + “Triumph of the Will”
  + Simon Schama(sp?)’s Power of Art “Picasso - Guernica”; impact of technology on war and the devastation of cities.

PRESENTATION:

* Engineering & Illustration
  + Engineering = science and technology to construct machines and buildings
  + Technical drawing is the simplest way of thinking of engineering drawing.
    - Bridges the gap between idea and reality
  + Can also mean creating something; “engineering an idea”; not always about machines and building.
  + Russia 1920s and 40s:
    - Russia shows a change to cubism and modern styles; propaganda
    - Rodchenko’s “Pro Eto”
    - A drawing for something they wanted to build; a drawing showing the support wires and all
    - Constructivism style; drawings for installations/sculptures that were large useful structures; architecture
    - Designed to be built, not just as an image.
  + Ukiyo-e from Japan
    - Woodblock print that flourished in Edo Period
    - 200 years of peace without war; commoners had more time to indulge in art practices. Their works are themed on everyday life
    - An illustration of the process of building a castle
    - The engineering/process was used as a basis of art
    - Celebrates steam locomotives; the nobles are the first to be able to ride the train. The brand new station and train, lanterns and floating umbrellas. They are not traditional Asian bamboo umbrellas; they are metal framed ones. Also shows all the modern architecture with strange composition with the train in the sky.
    - Bridge is a monument of engineering; a lot of ships and boats, too, are depicted. You can see the range of available structures/vessels
    - Boat shown as very menacing in another painting; shows the boat as looking like a creature.
    - They all have the word “chart/graph/diagram” in their titles; they are technical records.
    - Resemblance in Howl’s Moving Castle castle designs. Fuelled by an ember demon, very magic, etc. But has a distinct style and logic to it.
  + Engineering in Illustration through contemporary Asian artists
    - “Even motion has life”.
    - Uses mechanical processes to create art using household items.
    - Use engineering in the artistic process itself (as opposed to art of engineering processes)
    - Images change based on what media is attached to the process; like a pencil vs. Pen vs. Ink vs. Etc attached to a walkman to make images.
    - Barcode book:
    - Tells you to read through illustration using the barcodes; creates a multimedia work utilizing played back sounds
    - Engineering is related to art practice, and opens doors into experimentation
  + Al Jazari illustrations “The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices”, 13th Century
    - Theoretical aspect of engineering which sites all his predecessors.
    - They aren’t just beautiful and technical, but incredibly detailed and interesting illustrations visually as well as informatively.
    - Al Ahnaf “Horse giving birth aided by man”
    - They are a book of instruction as well; engineering not just a technology of devices and machines, but also the improvement of science and technology in general.
    - Postage stamp for Ghaddafi; 2001. Lists his political achievements and civic improvements. Depiction of engineering projects; especially buildings and rivers and airports; are important to his image as a benevolent leader and a piece of propaganda. Ex. A pipeline carrying clean water and fruit and vegetables
  + Buckminster Fuller: architect and designer
    - His drawings were very technical, forward and challenging at the time. Supposed to be a light, compact, cheap way to build a home, costing as much as a car did at the time; the War prevented its construction.
    - He was accused to being overly technical at the expense of artistic merit/consideration
    - He wanted to create something memorable in an artistic way.
  + Aldo Gyogini(sp? gee-yo-jee-nee) - Italian artist living in North America
    - Trained as an artist and went into computer engineering
    - Using the first programable computer he could create images by inputting numbers and add his own bits to it.
    - He understood the numbers himself, while other artists were using random numbers. He was very interested in mathematics.
    - Very complex mathematics involved in creating the images.
    - He would screenprint the images sometimes which would take a long time.
  + Modern comics; Batman from New 52
    - Uses incredible futuristic technology; it’s unreal, but you don’t need to understand it. It shows Batman on his computer using a contact lens interface.
    - Dick Grayson using an EMP mask; feasible in the future, but existing in a realm of fantasy today. The technology is limitless in this world.
    - It would be unrealistic to add more more more! You need to have limits.
  + Bioengineering:
    - In the real world is unethical and illegal
    - It is accepted in comics. Superboy is a clone, half human half kryptonian.
    - Adventure Time: Princess Bubblegum does bioengineering to create her whole kingdom from candy.
    - Weird balance between what is ethical vs. What isn’t. Bad science vs. Good science can be rather murky in fantasy worlds/fiction.

CLASS DISCUSSION:

* (Not enough time for this!)