

Knowledge and the Aesthetic

Course Intro

What do you think this painting is about?





The Fighting Temeraire (oil on canvas)
JMW Turner, 1839

Context

The Fighting Temeraire

- English artist JMW Turner
- 98-gun hero ship that served in the Battle of Trafalgar (where the British defeated the French and Spanish in the Mediterranean)
- Saved Nelson's ship from attack, and captured 2 enemy ships!



Context

The Fighting Temeraire

- Never saw military action after the Battle of Trafalgar; became largely a supply ship
- It was towed up the Thames by a paddle-wheel steam tug in 1838, towards its final berth in Rotherhithe to be broken up for scrap



Questions

- Did all of us get the message? What does this suggest about objectivity/subjectivity in art?
- Did you understand the message of the painting more when you learned about its context?
- Does – and should – context matter in understanding art?





WHY **TALK ABOUT ART?**

Recap: Compare AOKs

What kind of knowledge?	What is being studied?	How do we know?	What is assumed? Issues in K construction?	What does this reveal about the nature of K?
Scientific	The physical world	Scientific Method (Observation, Hypothesis, etc.)	K is verifiable through correspondence. <i>What else?</i>	Universal scientific laws
Psychological	The mind	?	Behaviour and beliefs are directly correlated. <i>What else?</i>	Universal human behaviour? Human nature?
Sociological	Society / The social world	Scientific Method? Interpretive Means? ?	Observer Effect Theory-ladenness <i>What else?</i>	Universal social laws? Etc.
Moral	- language - justification - intuition	Moral discourse Intuitively?	Disagreement abounds <i>What else?</i>	Universal moral codes? Objective/Subjective? Etc.
Aesthetic / Beauty & Taste	?	What are we observing? What can be observed? Why?	?	?



UNDERSTANDING ART

Understanding Art

Fine Art

- Created primarily for aesthetics or intellectual purposes, judged for its beauty and meaning
- Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Music, Poetry
- Involved refined judgments of taste
- Distinguished from popular art and entertainment

Applied Art

- Also serves a practical function
- Pottery, most metalwork



Understanding Art

- Performance Art
 - Performance presented to an audience within a fine art context, traditionally [interdisciplinary](#)
- Abstract Art
 - Does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality
- Culinary Arts



Understanding Art

- Visual Art
 - Involves a visual medium
 - Ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, design, crafts, photography, video, filmmaking, and architecture
- Digital Art
 - Artistic work or practice that uses digital technology as part of the creative or presentation process



Understanding Art

- TONS of other art categories
 - Outsider art
 - Body art
 - Art Noveau
 - Street art
 - Clip art
 - Etc.
- See “Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA)”





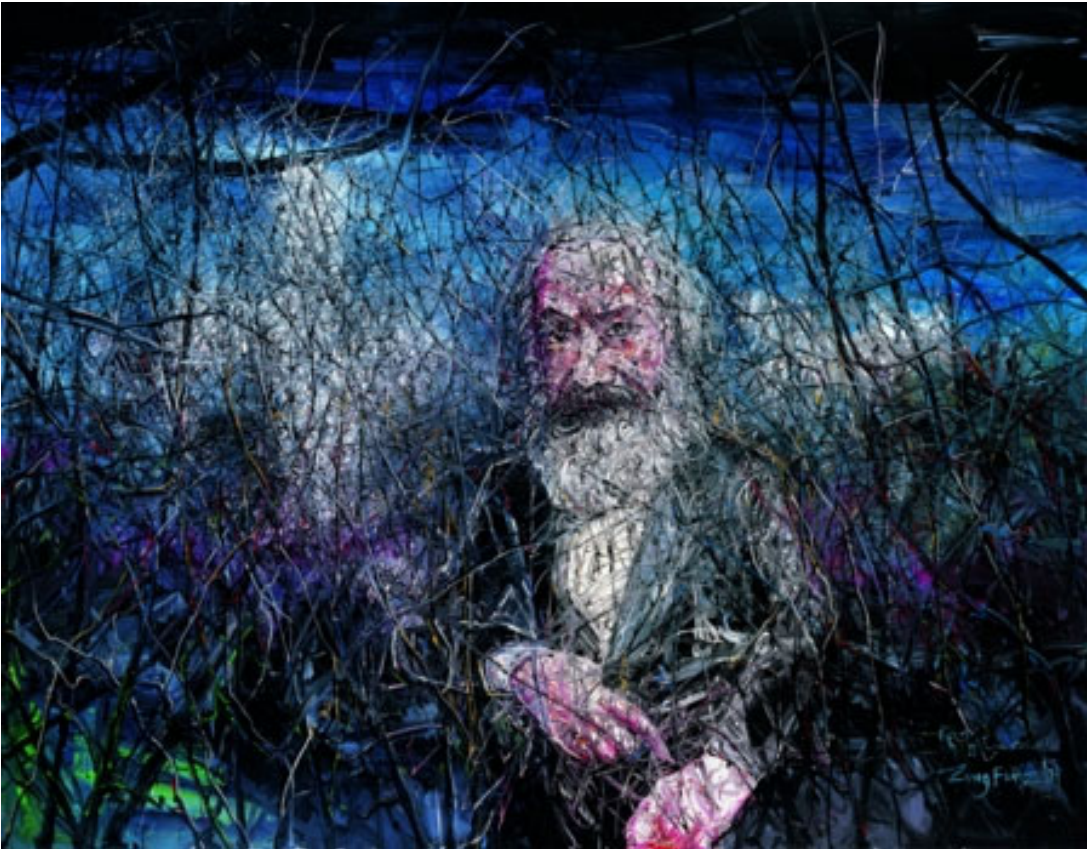
WHAT IS ART?

Art as Mimesis

- X is an artwork only if it is an **imitation** (of real life)
- Mimesis is part of the theory of **Representation**



Art as Representation



Karl Marx
Zeng Fan Zhi



From the Masses
to the Masses
Zeng Fan Zhi

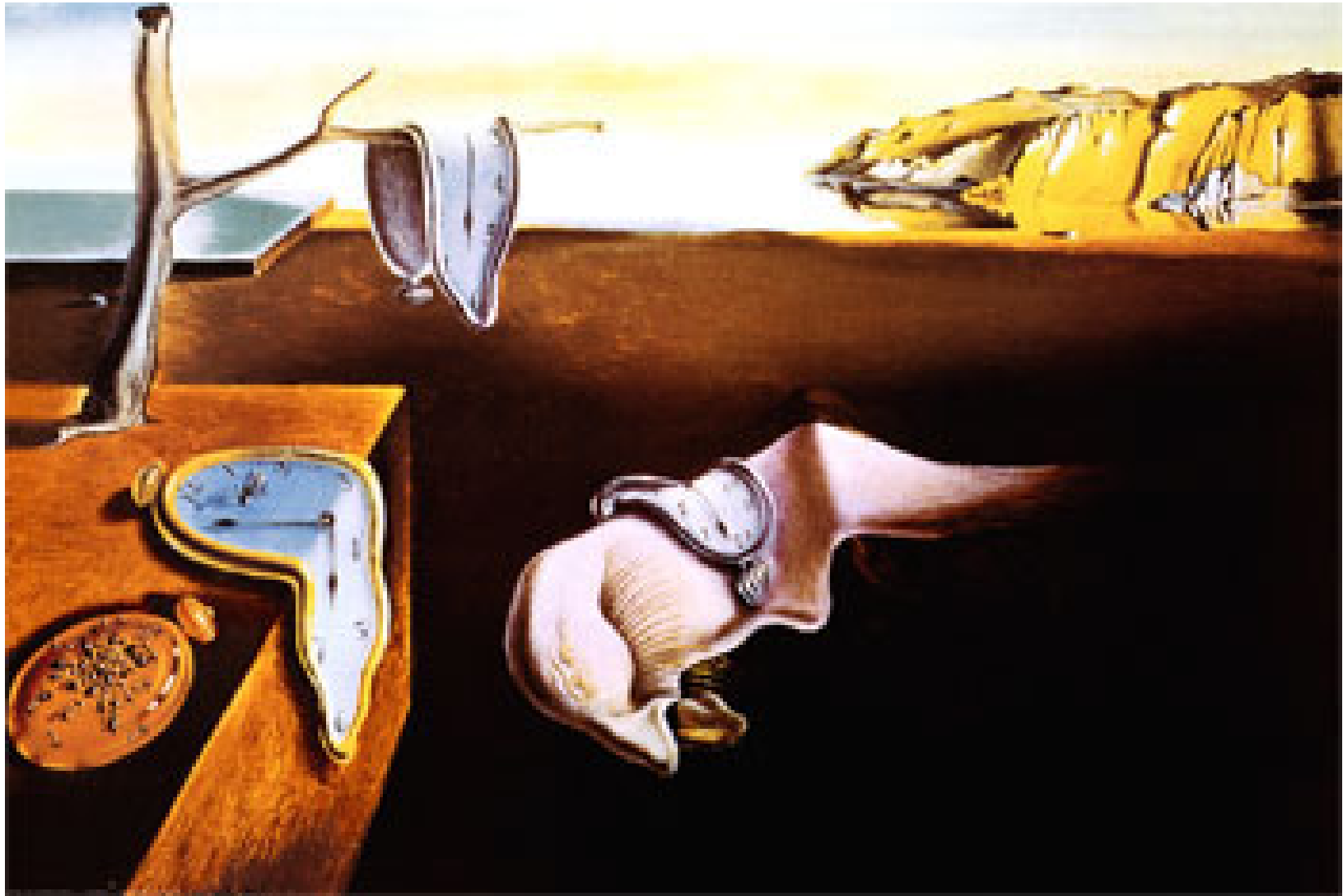
What does his work represent?

Neo-Representational Theory



- Pablo Picasso's **Guernica** shows the tragedies of war and the suffering it inflicts upon individuals, particularly innocent civilians.
- An immediate reaction to the Nazi's devastating casual bombing practice on the Basque town of Guernica. It expresses horror.

Art as Expression



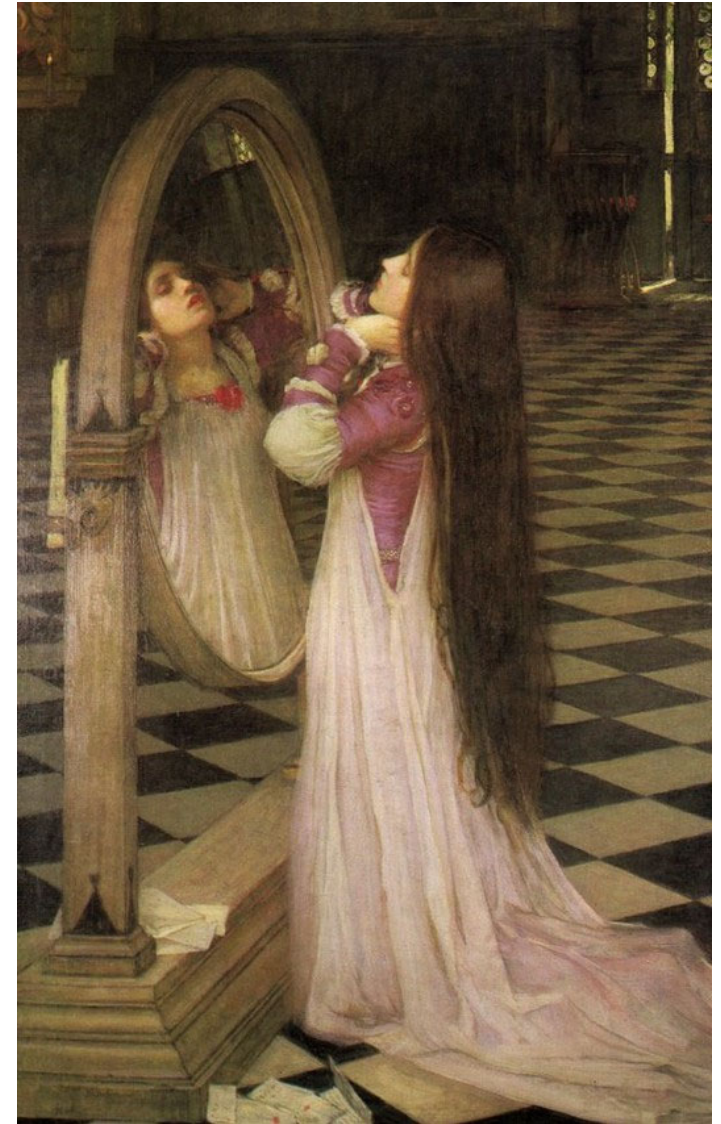
The Persistence of Memory (1931) illustrates the soft watches debunking the assumption that time is rigid or deterministic, supported by the wide expanding landscape and the insects devouring the other watches.

Art as Form (Formalism)



The Oath of the Horatii

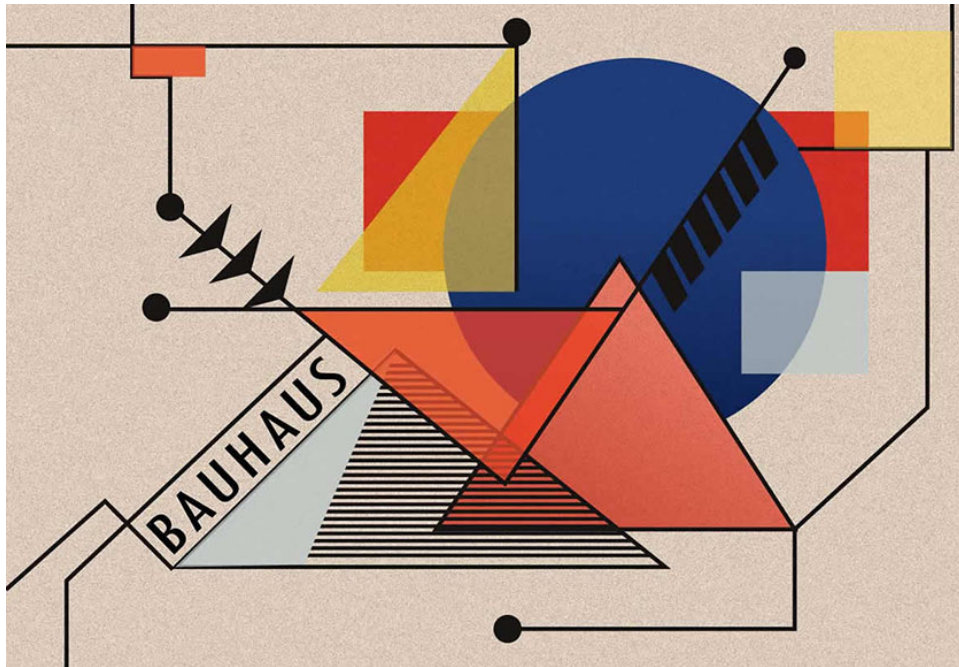
Jacques-Louis David



Mariana in the South

John William Waterhouse

Art as Form (Formalism)



Bauhaus School



Jessica Langston

Art as ...

- Complete IVY Discussion Forum assignment to learn more about art theory
- Readings by Noel Carroll on different art theories are in IVY (optional)
- Watch “Aesthetics I” lecture

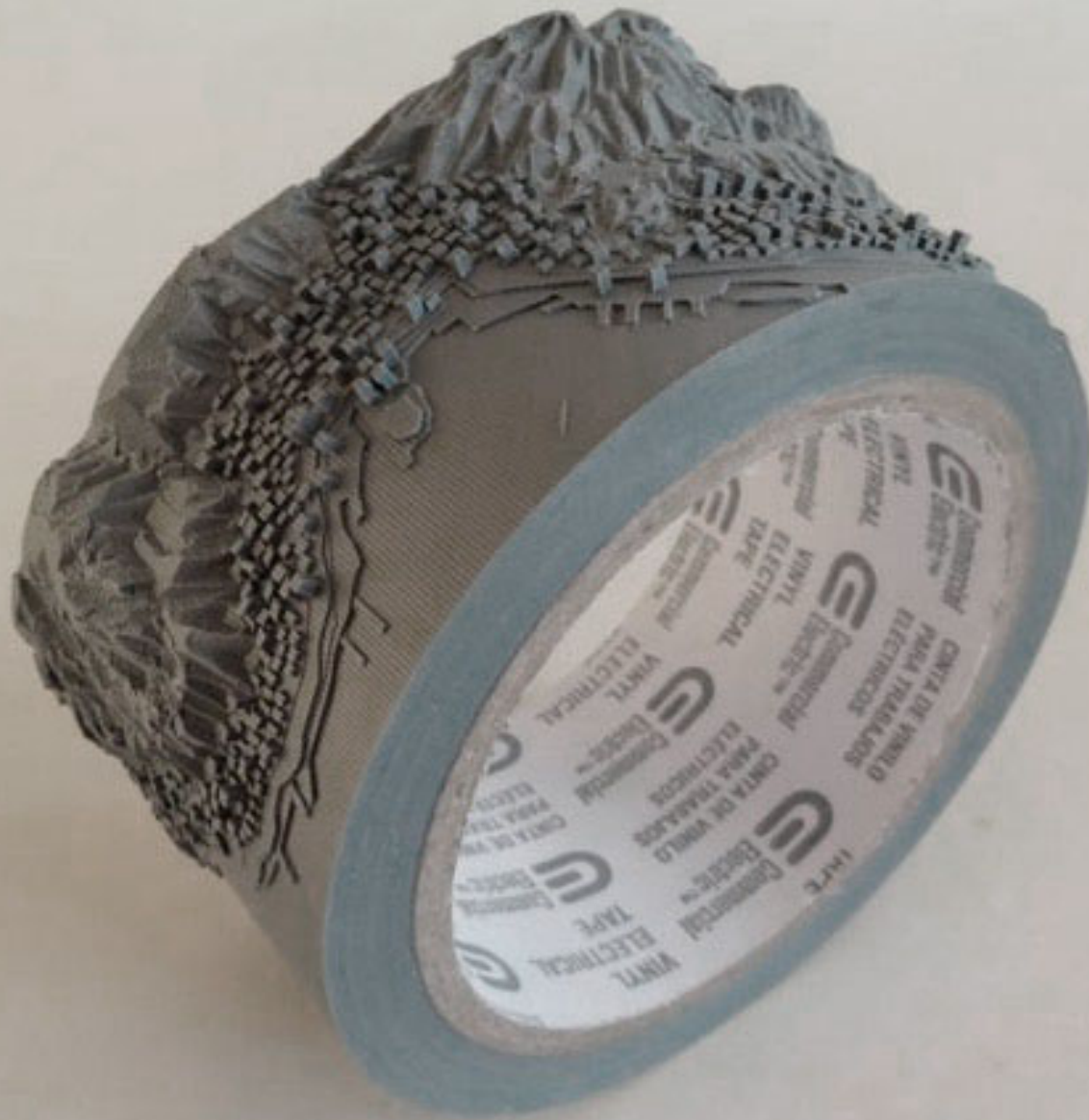




WHAT ABOUT THESE?



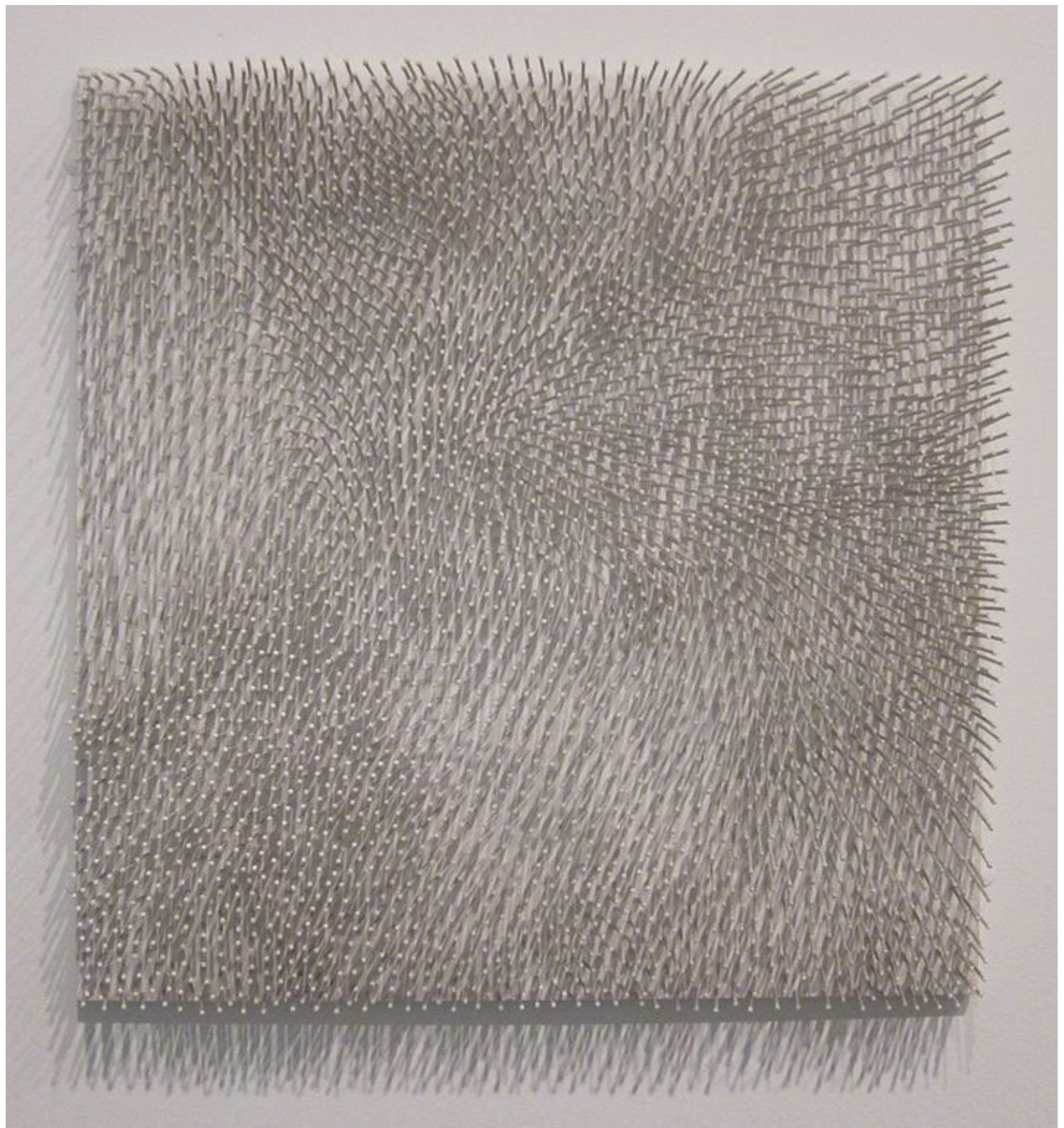
Tara Donovan, *Bluffs* (2006).
Copyright Tara Donovan, courtesy Pace Gallery.



Takahiro Iwasaki, *Geo Eye (Victoria Peak)* (2012).
Image courtesy URANO and the artist.

Günther Uecker,
White Field (1964).

Photo courtesy Tate
Modern





Marcel Duchamp,
Bicycle Wheel (1913)
(1913, 1915, 1951)

Israel Museum,
Jerusalem

Questions

- What makes these artworks art? What is art?
- What is *good* art? **Art Theory / Art Movements**
- Is it possible to *prove* that one work of art is superior to another?
- What standard(s) do / can we use to judge?
- What standard(s) *should* we use to judge?
- Etc.

Your answers to these questions require substantiation from examples of artworks / poetry / plays / music / etc.



What's the point?

- It will be useful to know several examples from **different art movements / styles** and what our reactions to these pieces are in order to question whether an art theory (defining what art is) is **adequate** in accounting for our intuitions about what art is.
- E.g., how would a Representationalist account for ready-mades? What would a Formalist say about John Cage's 4'33"?

