Weimar Definitions and Descriptions

The following definitions and descriptions are more detailed that those that are mentioned in class, and you should read them as supplements to the class comments. The definitions come from The Bulfinch Guide to Art History, Shearer West, Editor. This is a basic introduction, please consult other art history dictionaries for more details.

This handout also includes: 1- A cultural map of mid-Europe in the 1920s, 2-Art streams of the 20s: the main movements, 3- Art streams of the 20s: organizations and political links. These “maps” are from the book, Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety 1917-1933 by John Willett. The book is in your bibliography.
At the back of this book there is a very detailed chronological table that you might want to consult for more information. The table starts on page 230 and runs to page 259.

============================================= 

Assemblage

A term which is used loosely to refer to a three-dimensional work that is neither a collage nor a sculpture, but takes on properties of both. The invention
of the assemblage is disputed but Picasso was one of the first artists to make consistent use of it. From 1914 he employed techniques from cubist collage to three-dimensional objects. Assemblage has the advantage of being a flexible method that allows a variety of materials.

**Collage**

Making a collage involves cutting up newspapers, cardboard, wallpaper or cloth and pasting them on a piece of paper. It has long been popular with amateurs, but it was first used extensively by professional artists in the early part of the 20th century. Among their Cubist experiments, Picasso and Braque began to add cut-out bits of newspaper and wallpaper to their paintings from c.1912. Dada and Surrealist artists, who were more interested in the unconscious forces that were involved in the process of making collages.

**Constructivism**

A term often used loosely and inaccurately. Specifically it refers to a type of abstract sculpture originating in Russia shortly after the revolution in 1917. Constructivism insisted on the separation of art from any political or social purpose. It was thus a form of art for art sake, which concentrated on the
importance on raw materials such as wood, glass and wire.

**Cubism**

One of the most important art movements of the early twentieth century. It was formed from a collaboration between Picasso and Braque. They created a new style of art that was based on the idea that objects should be looked at from all points of view. The basis of cubism was thus conceptual rather than perceptual, as it was not predicated on what could be seen by the naked eye, but the stable components of an object both seen and known about. By 1912 cubism had become an international style practiced by a variety of artists.

**Dada**

An intellectual movement that begun in Zurich in 1916. It was called a state of mind, and certainly the movement evaded stylistic characterizations. It was not solely an art movement and its premises were anti art rather than positively created. Artists put on performances to express their disgust with the war and with the bourgeois interests that had inspired it. The term dada has several possible origins. It is
certainly a non-sense word, but it can also be the French word for hobby-horse.

Expressionism

It describes art which distorts reality through exaggeration, vigorous and visible brushwork and strong colors in order to express an artist's ideas and emotions. Expressionism was not purely associated with two-dimensional art, sculptors were motivated by aims similar to those of expressionist painters. Expressionism was also applied by many writers, theatre practitioners and architects.

Impressionism

A general title given to painters working at the end of the 19th century in a spontaneous, naturalistic style, with visible brushwork, a light palate and open composition. Impressionism created a new interest in the depiction of urban scenes, and the artist were a vague, fluctuating group who had met by change and who occasionally worked together. Despite these common factors the impressionists never set out a specific program.
Merz

A collage or relief of randomly collected junk, associated with the Dada artists Kurt Schwitters – who invented this meaningless word by chance when making a collage (it was the result of cutting the letters “merz’ out of the newspaper clipping of the word “Kommerzbank”).

Montage and Photomontage

A composite picture, musical piece of film produced from several different elements. In cinema this may be a selection of shots or scenes spliced into one sequence, or a blending/superimposition of shots to produce a single picture. Photomontage is a technique of making pictures out of photographs, magazines, newspapers, drawings, etc., it developed from Cubist collages by the Zurich Dadaists. Photomontage is more with creating strange pictures of contrasting scales, images and perspective compared with collage’s interest in surface, texture and color. The propaganda potential of photomontage was brilliantly exploited by John Heartfield, particularly in his attacks on Nazism.
**New Objectivity**

A term used to describe an artistic and literary movement in Berlin in the early 1920s which sought to portray the miseries and corruption of everyday life through clear and honest means. The movement was the product of the political turmoil of the post war Germany and the desire of artist to produce relevant socially aware art.

**Surrealism**

An artistic movement that arose out of self destructive Dada. It was defined as pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express either verbally or in writing the true function of thought. The Surrealist movement included a number of the foremost European artists of the 1920’s and 1930’s. Surrealist artist were primarily focused on the world of dreams and the subconscious.
Cultural map of mid-Europe in the 1920's
Art streams of the 20s: The main movements

19th-century Realism
via Düsseldorf-Moscow
via Frankfurt-Munich

CUBISM
1907-14

FUTURISM 1909-15

EXPRESSIONISM 1910-22

Der Sturm 1910-32

Léger

Neoplasticism 1917
De Stijl 1917-31

Purism 1918-21

Hanover Dada (Merz) 1919-33

CONSTRUCTIVISM

Weimar Bauhaus 1919-24

Pure Constructivism 1920

LEF 1923-28

OST 1925-31

CIAM 1928

19th-century Realism
via Piero, Repin etc. & the AKhRR

Socialist Realism c. 1934

Arbeitrat Stuttgart

Dessau BAUHAUS 1925-32

New photography c. 1924

NEUE SACHLICHKEIT c. 1923-33

SURREALISM 1924-39

Dresden Sezession 1924-25

Berlin DADA 1917-20

Cologne Dada

Arles cubisme

Duchamp and Picabia via Picasso

Italian metaphysical painters c. 1915-20

Neo-classicism 1917-24

Neo-impressionism

Expressionism

Activism 1915-19

Arbeiterkunst

Zurich DADA 1916-19

Novembergruppe

Verism c. 1920-24

Magic Realism

Munich Realism

Novecento 1923-31