

# Assignment 3

## Page Layout/Design on a Grid

A Look at Postmodernism

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# A Look at Postmodernism

Part 4 of a 6-Part Educational Series

BY CLAUDE SWANSON



**P**ostmodernism. What is it? The Postmodern movement is almost always by comparing it with its predecessor... Modernism. But, "what is that?" you ask. The Modern era in Fashion and Beauty, Art and Photography and Design and Living had its roots during the period from 1890 to the mid 1920's and it lasted until the end of World War II in 1945 but didn't abruptly end there. It was an movement of the times for people to express themselves in ways appropriate to those times.

Most movements or style eras have a transition period from one period until the next. Some of those transitions do seem to have clearly defined begin and end dates, but not many do. That is the case with Postmodernism. The Postmodern era began in 1968. That year seemed to signal a shift in world thought. It certainly was a time of great upheaval in the United States with so many social and cultural changes taking place. Those changes didn't take place overnight. They took some time to develop and/or be recognized.

There are those that argue that Postmodernism is simply an extension of the Modern era, expanding on the styles, traditions,

methods and techniques we use when it comes to how we interpret and express ourselves artistically. However, there are some drastically distinct differences you will learn about when you read articles that compare the two so-called periods. In fact, most writers will point to a diametrically opposed school of thought on just about anything you can name when comparing the two eras

Some will consider the times we currently are living in to be part of the postmodern era. Many have coined our current times, "The Digital Age. Indeed, everywhere one looks today, one easily sees the influence of electronics and technology in our daily lives... in our work, communications, recreation, banking, shopping, entertainment and even our travel. It didn't happen overnight, but it did happen more quickly than Postmodernism evolved.

I would argue that, at least in part, one era lends part of itself to the next and we keep parts of previously-named eras alive in our thinking. For without a past to learn from and guide us, we can never grow or see a need for change even if those changes mean a complete break from our current thinking and adjustments

to our philosophies.

So, what are those differences and just what do the Postmodernists believe? Postmodernists categorically reject every tenet of the Modernist model and developed a philosophy all their own. For them, reality is a result of effort on the individual level - not something that is imposed by pre-existing societal rules. People are free to find and create their own realities without constraint.

## What is Postmodernism?

- Postmodernism is the idea that reality is not mirrored in human understanding, but rather constructed as individuals find their own reality
- It takes a micro rather than macro approach in looking at the way individuals identify themselves, compared to the structuralism view, in which an entire society is looked at
- Postmodernists believe that realities are subject to change, and that apparent realities are actually social constructs which limit individuals

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Credits:

*Title Image: Artist's rendering, "The Club" V&A Gallery, Glenn Adamson, Curator, et. al., London, UK 2010*

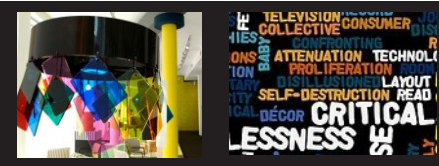
*Article Postmodernism PowerPoint-Graphic: Postmodernism for Beginners, C. Deakin, 2005*

*Painting/Photograph: BELIEVE AN-THING, Barbara Kruger, Hirshorn, Washington, DC 2013*



## Coming in November:

*A Look at the Pioneers of the Digital Age and How You Can Be One of Them!*



October 2018

*This is the fourth part of a six-part monthly series dedicated to identifying and exploring different periods in Art History. This month we take an in-depth look at Postmodernism. The introduction to this article can be found in the October issue of our print magazine, Art History Magazine Plus, available at educational institutions, art galleries and newstands everywhere. We also offer home subscriptions at a substantially reduced rate with access to special features for subscribers only that are not found anywhere else.*

## Part 4: A Look at Postmodernism (continued)

As previously discussed, Postmodernism is most often discussed in comparison to what lay people would assume is its predecessor, Modernism. Purists will argue that Modernism came before Postmodernism along the continuum of time and they would be correct. However, the Postmodern era was an attempt at the time by the next generation or two to establish their own identity by developing a new set of values that represented a whole new way of thinking and expressing themselves. Indeed, they accomplished this goal. Not only that... they succeeded in creating an entire new ideology.

I think there were two problems that led to some confusion about the era. First and foremost is simply the name adopted by or placed on this new period in art history. The term “post” refers to something that comes afterward. So naturally, most people believe this to be a continuation of what had come before. It was not.

Perhaps a more creative moniker would have provided the Postmodernists with the timely and widespread recognition of the philosophy they espoused. It certainly would have helped the masses to understand them better. Secondly, instead of creating something entirely new, the Postmodernist method was to categorically reject every tenet of the Modernist ide-

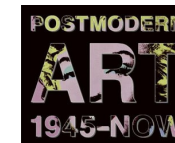


Still, some confusion and questions persist. Are we still in the Postmodern era? The name would suggest so. What comes next? The Postmodern era? There is an argument that we sailed through that already. Luckily, we have entered into what is accurately (for now) being labeled as the “Digital” age. Ours is a heavily technology-driven time. The year 2010 is being heralded as the beginning of this new age, but it began long before then.

### From modernity to post-modernity

Modern age	Post modern age
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• production</li> <li>• Community life</li> <li>• Social class</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• A belief in continuity and situation</li> <li>• A role of education</li> <li>• A one-way media</li> <li>• Overt social control</li> <li>• Nationhood</li> <li>• Science aided progress and finding the truth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consumption</li> <li>• fragmentation (individualism)</li> <li>• Identity from other sources</li> <li>• Families (many options)</li> <li>• Breakage with the past/tradition</li> <li>• Education for what?</li> <li>• Duality of media (choice/interchange)</li> <li>• Covert control (CCTV etc)</li> <li>• Global</li> <li>• Science is only one source of knowledge – plurality of truths now</li> </ul>
Structure/security/place/stability YOU KNEW WHO YOU WERE	Confusion/lack of structure/ incessant choice YOU CREATE WHO YOU WANT TO BE

ology and they replaced each with its opposite value or a craftily amended view. This ultimately led to a new identifiable age in Art History with an ideology and flavor all its own.



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