Student name: Group:

Art movement.....Futurism, 20th century
Timeframe.....1909 - 1944
Topic Focus.....The Aesthetic of Speed and Technology

Teaching material: The instructor will provide video materials for educational purposes. ~15'

Discussion questions: Muybridge versus Duchamp. We will compare Muybridge's photographs with Duchamp's "Nude descending the stairs". (15')

Background: This lesson focuses on the theme of movement and its representations in Futurism.

Futurism was the first movement to directly and deliberately address a mass, primarily urban, audience. In its concern to equate art with life, Futurism aimed at nothing less than transforming the political mentality of society. By addressing a public audience, in contrast to the hermetic intimacy of Picasso and Braque, the Futurists aimed to engage the public in an instantaneous reaction to social provocation, rather than in a slow, gentle contemplation of art forms. It was a movement conscious of the effects of modern life and the key to understanding it is the idea of a complete renewal of human sensibility brought about by modern science.

The Futurists strove to express the essence of dynamic sensation itself and saw the world as a place of flux, movement and interpenetration. All objects in space and time were united in a universal dynamism, driven by the speed of the machine. The idea of multiple perspectives became codes for dynamic movement. For the Futurists, the neo-Impressionist brushstroke was the visual form that allowed them to paint their obsession: things that moved. With this brushstroke, they could demonstrate the disintegration of objects due to the action of light and colour. This whirling activity, this excitation of the surface of the canvas by means of nervous brushstrokes and bright, pure colours, was intended to place the viewer at the centre of the canvas.

Main activity: Analyse the representation of movement in Futurism.

Futurism rejected the idealistic notion of a static, unchanging reality. Artists were to focus on movement, change and the advances of industrialisation. Whereas earlier works of art took a snapshot of a particular moment or scene, Futurist works of art were to capture the idea that life is constantly changing and advancing. Activity or change was equated with reality and life and should therefore be the essence of art. Artists should begin to capture movement in their work.

Artists had to show movement through gesture, capturing the subject in action. They were also to show the passage of time, juxtaposing different frames of the moving subject on the same canvas (a nod to Cubism).

Group activity: Find the 5 most representative works of Futurism and use them to summarise the main techniques and references used by the artists. What references did we find from Post-Impressionism and Cubism? How do they show "action" in painting?"

Related reading: Filippo T. Marinetti, at the end of 1908, wrote the Futurist Manifesto which laid the foundations of the artistic movement. A text that would set a precedent in avant-garde art.
Christine Poggi wrote a study of Marinetti's writings during the first decade of the 20th century, in "Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism", traces his contradictory attitudes to the machine; he moves from fear to awe and admiration.

1. Notes on the artistic movement of FUTURISM. General background

3. Key words on the subject. Art and movement

2. Notes on the subject of Movement and dynamism in the context of Futurism. Individual activity

4. Summary of group activities. General conclusions.