Avant-Garde Reading List (updated 02/14/2013)

Note: Texts in foreign languages are recommended, not required.


__________ .. "Performativity in the 1960s American Experimental Cinema: The Body as Site of Ritual and Display." Film Criticism. 23(1):48-60. 1998 Fall.


Gidal, Peter, ed. Structural Film Anthology. London: British Film Institute, 1976.


____________. "Three myths of avant-garde film." Film Comment v 17 May/June 1981. p. 34-5


Hollein, Max and Esther Schlicht, eds. Zelluloid: Cameraless Film. Bielefeld: Christof Kerber Verlag, 2011.


Studies in Media and Culture vol. 6. 1983 Fall.


_________. *Mad to be saved: the Beats, the ’50s, and film.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998.


Weiss, Allen S. “Film” (special issue) Art & Text #34 (1989)


In addition, please consult Film Culture (entire run) and Millenium Film Journal (entire run)
1. Most experimental film has been made according to what has been termed the “artisanal mode of production”. What is this? What advantages does it have over studio production? Please refer to at least 3 films and 3 critical texts in support of your answer.

2. It has been said that video led to the demise of experimental cinema. Do you agree? Why or why not? Please refer to at least 3 films or video works and 3 critical texts in support of your answer.

3. In what ways have the aesthetics of sound, rather than (or in dialectical relation to) the aesthetics of the image, played a role in the development of avant-garde film theory and practice? Please refer to at least 3 films and 3 critical texts in support of your answer.

4. With reference to at least three distinct phases or movements of the avant-garde, as represented by the filmography and bibliography you have studied, discuss the importance of history—as trope, as material effect, as context, or otherwise—in experimental film practice.

5. In The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths, Rosalind Krauss writes: “The functioning of the index in the art of the present operates to substitute the registration of sheer physical presence for the more highly articulated language of aesthetic conventions (and the kind of history which they encode).” How might one apply this proposition, which Krauss articulates primarily in relation to painting and photography, to modes of indexicality in structuralist film? Your answer should discuss the work of two filmmakers who, in your opinion, illustrate both the possibilities, and limits, of Krauss’s formulation for film analysis.

6. Write an essay discussing uses of “found footage” in avant-garde film and video, situating such work historically and aesthetically in relation to the use of found materials in other visual and sonic arts. Please refer to at least 3 films and 3 critical texts in support of your answer.