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**Class 10, November 30 2009**

**“Painting the Stuff of Life: Still Lives and Style”  
Kevin Murphy, Associate Curator of American Art**

**a. Why Still Life?**

- a. Formal exercise in composing line, shape, color
  - i. Jumping-off point for abstraction
- b. Iconographic meaning

**b. Development of Still Life Painting in America**

- a. Very little still life painting in Colonial and early Federal America
  - i. Still Lives considered too imitative of nature; not idea driven
    - 1. Portraits are necessary to display familial relationships
    - 2. Landscapes become nationalist
- b. Artists *are* interested in materiality of objects
  - i. Copley, *Sarah Jackson (Mrs. Henderson Inches)*, ca. 1765

**c. Early Still Life painters**

- a. Raphaelle Peale
  - i. *Still Life with Wine, Cake, and Nuts*, 1819
  - ii. Between Neo-classical and Romantic thought
- b. Severin Roesen
  - i. *Still Life with Flowers and Bird's Nest*, after 1860
  - ii. Still Life painting and nationalist enterprise

**d. Diverging traditions in the late nineteenth century**

- a. Hyper-realism: *Trompe l'oeil*
  - i. Harnett, *After the Hunt*, 1883
  - ii. Peto, *The Full Shelf*, ca. 1891
- b. Stylistic Experimentation
  - i. William Merritt Chase, *The Inner Studio*, 1882
- c. Both traditions engage with cultural, economic, social issues in Gilded Age America
  - i. Consumerism
  - ii. Cosmopolitanism
  - iii. Nostalgia

**OVER**



**e. The Modernist Still Life**

- a. European background
  - i. Cézanne
  - ii. Picasso
  - iii. Matisse
- b. Lucioni, *Still Life with Telephone*, 1926
  - i. Manipulation of perspective
  - ii. Reduction of form
  - iii. Traditional and modern objects
- c. Maurer, *Red Table Top Still Life*, ca. 1919
  - i. Perspective divorced from optical experience
    - 1. Wall vs. Window
  - ii. Arbitrary color
  - iii. Semiotics—forms reduced to indexical signs
- d. Continuation of Realist tradition
  - i. Medearis, *Still Life with Green Chair*, 1950

**f. Recommended Reading**

- a. Cécile Whiting, "Trompe L'Oeil Painting and the Counterfeit Civil War", *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 2 (June 1997): 251-268.
- b. Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Blois and Benjamin Buchloh, *Art Since 1900* vol. 1: 32-39 and 112-116.