

## SEMINAR 6 SPORT AS ART, ARGUMENTATIVE TALK

**Discuss:** Which sports do you consider artistic spectacles?

How and why can a sporting performance impress?

In which time in history was art and sport clearly linked?

### **Reading: Through artists' eyes**

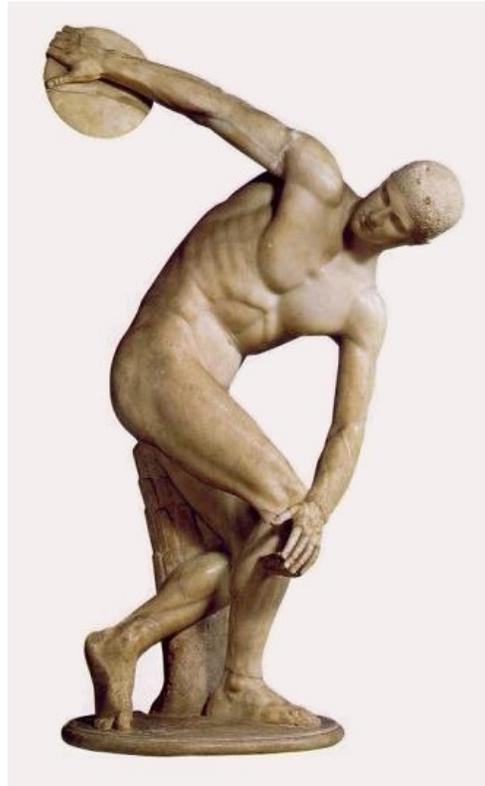
We could identify 1766 as the year in which a legitimate art form called sporting art emerged. It was primarily through the work of the British painter George Stubbs whose portfolio *Anatomy of a Horse* was published in that year. His work is generally considered to have defined a new direction for artists. While Stubbs gave new shape to sporting art, he was by no means the first artist to have focused on sports. Indeed, artistic impressions of sporting events and competitors are as ancient as athletic competitions themselves.

Wall paintings and reliefs of men wrestling and lifting weights have been discovered in Egypt and dated to the second millennium BC. In later Cretan and Greek cultures there were engravings and frescos that suggested the presence of an athletic spirit: depictions of combative activities or bull-leaping indicate an interest in dangerous competition. Apart from combat sports, which seem to have existed through several different cultures and epochs, racing of some sort is found in the decoration of ceramics.

Sculptures were characteristic of Greek art and, in this form, there is a pantheon of heroes, the most celebrated of which is Myron's Discus Thrower in bronze from the 5th century BC. For Greeks, sport, education, and culture were all involved in the cultivation of the whole being; the mental and the physical were not dualities but part of the same unity. So, sport, as we understand it, did not exist: it was not a separate sphere of activities away from other parts of life.

By contrast the Romans were indifferent to sports and to art as well. The only sporting activities encouraged were those that contributed to the preparation for war. The Roman fascination with fights manifested itself in gladiator conflicts and chariot racing. Without doubt the most memorable reconstruction of such a chariot race is in William Wyler's 1959 epic *Ben Hur*. It is probably one of the most exciting pieces of dramatized sport ever.

The fall of the Roman empire in the 5th century introduced a period of 1,000 years that became known as the Middle Ages. Artistic evidence of *les tournoiments* was preserved in the form of great medieval tapestries that told stories of chivalry. Contemporary visualisations of tournaments are common thanks to



the popularity of films, such as Jerry Zucker's *First Knight* (1994), starring Richard Gere, Sean Connery and Julia Ormond.

In the 18th century it became clear that the natural world was governed by laws and so sports too underwent a revision. Races took place over prescribed distances, times were measured, results were recorded.

We find the scientific tendency to analyze, quantify and record in the art of the period, art which became known as "sporting art". As we have noted, George Stubbs's *Anatomy of a Horse* was published in 1766: it was not only work of great aesthetic beauty but of scientific precision.

In the 20th century photography became popular and artists of sport were adventurous in their use of the medium to portray sports in entirely new ways. The photo-collages of John Heartfield introduced satire. For example, his *A Specter is Haunting Europe* features a runner made up of industrial parts, the head a stopwatch, pistons for limbs and a clock card in place of a chest. The work satirizes the effect of industrial production on sports.

(Adapted from Cashmore, E. *Making Sense of Sports*. London: Routledge, 2000)

**Task 1** Choose the answer (a-d) which you think fits best according to the text.

1. According to the text the sporting art

- a dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- b has several controversial dates defined.
- c was started by American painter George Stubbs.
- d could be dated back to Ancient Egypt.

2. What happened after the fall of the Roman Empire?

- a several recent films helped to the popularity of Ancient Greek tournaments.
- b sporting art was neglected during medieval times.
- c it was an era of analyses and quantifications performed until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- d a complete change followed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, satirical sculptures emerged.

3. What was typical for the Ancient Greeks?

- a imminent interest in gladiator fights
- b cultivation of various sport disciplines
- c sport as an internal part of other areas
- d highly developed culture and education systems

4. What does the word "legitimate" in paragraph 1 mean?

- a legal
- b official
- c authorized
- d reasonable

5. Which is NOT a synonym of the phrase "without doubt"?

- a no doubt
- b undoubtedly
- c certainly
- d maybe

6. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century

- a photography become the most popular art form marginalizing the others.
- b new art forms, such as cinematography or photography were born to promote sports.
- c sports became ruled by aesthetic beauty and scientific precision.
- d sport started to produce a considerable number of artworks.

## CONNECTORS

**Task 2** Read these phrases then **fill both** gaps in the following sentences with the corresponding phrase (A) for the beginning and (B) for the end.

**A,** These phrases are used when making generalizations:

as a rule	broadly speaking	everyone would agree that	generally speaking
in many cases	in most cases	in some cases	it is often said that
it is sometimes said that	<b>many people believe</b>		on the whole

**B,** These phrases are used when explaining exceptions:

but now and then	but in other cases	but in this one case
but there are exceptions to every rule	except for	however
on the other hand	<b>to some extent</b>	to certain extent

1. **Many people believe** that artists lead a good life: their hobby is their profession, but **to some extent** they are deprived of their personal lives.
2. .... Hollywood movies are short-lived..... you see one you can't forget.
3. .... watching TV is rather a waste of time, .....
4. .... reading is a wonderful source of pleasure; .....
5. ....people work because they have to, not because they want to, .....
6. ....I enjoy all kinds of music, .....

(Adapted from Jones, L. New Progress to Proficiency, Cambridge University Press, 2001.)

**Task 3** The arts. Which branch of the arts do you think these people are talking about?

1. 'Animation does not have to be just Disney, you know.'
2. 'It was just pure movement, with very exciting rhythms.'
3. 'It does not have to rhyme to be good.'
4. 'Oils to me don't have the delicacy of water-colours.'
5. 'Her design of the new shopping centre won an award.'
6. 'I read them and imagine what they'd be like on stage.'
7. 'The first chapter was boring but it got better then.'
8. 'I was falling asleep by the second act.'

(Adapted from McCarthy M., O'Dell F. English Vocabulary in Use. Upper-intermediate and Advanced. CUP 1994, unit 42.)

## ARGUMENTATIVE TALK

**Task 4** Put the sections of an argumentative talk below in a proper order and match each of them with the corresponding paragraph from the extract:

Talks which contain argument usually have the following sections:

1. discussion + conclusion
2. arguments against
3. author's argument
4. rejection of arguments against (2x)
5. arguments for (2x)
6. background

**Student evaluation of lecturers. Match the above parts (1-6) with the paragraphs (A-H) below.**

- A) Anyone who has ever attended a university knows that the quality of lecturers varies greatly. A few are very effective communicators: they convey the substance of their lectures clearly and interestingly and inspire students to want to know more about the subject. Others produce dull, and sometimes even incoherent lectures and the students learn little from them. These are also likely to kill any interest the students may have in the subject.
- B) It is my contention that a lecturer's performance in the lecture hall should be regularly evaluated and that the best people to carry out this evaluation are the students.
- C) You could, of course, argue that students are not competent to evaluate the academic quality of lectures. They may know little of the subject and have no means of judging whether a particular lecturer is giving them outdated or irrelevant information and or whether he or she is accurately reflecting the current state of the discipline. If anyone should evaluate lecturers, the argument goes, it should be their colleagues.
- D) However, I am not arguing that students should be asked to comment upon the academic content of lectures. We can still assess the academic calibre of lecturers in the usual way through their qualifications, publications, course outlines, performance at staff seminars and so on.
- E) What students are best placed to do is to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching which goes on in a lecture. Students know perfectly well when they are learning something and are normally quite clear about which lectures are interesting and give them a clear understanding of the subject and which are boring.
- F) Another common objection is that the students do not know what is good for them. They are likely to rate highly lecturers who do not demand much of them, who keep their lectures very

simple, give few assignments and award good grades for average work. They might even be influenced by such irrelevant factors as whether a lecturer is good looking or friendly.

- G) This argument assumes very low levels of maturity, motivation and intelligence among students. University students, after all, are no longer school children. They come to the university to learn and normally expect a certain amount of stimulation and challenge.
- H) I suspect that many of the objections to student evaluation of lecturers rise from the fear some lecturers have of being subject to criticism by their students. However, lecturers should see such evaluation as an opportunity to become aware of defects in their lecturing techniques and thus to become better lecturers.

(Adapted from Interactive Writing by Anna Kwan-Terry, Prentice Hall, 1988, pp.60-61)

### **Argumentative topics**

- 1) Should cheating at schools be strictly abolished?
- 2) School uniform: formal ware or burial of the individuality?
- 3) Can Internet communication substitute the common one?
- 4) Is there any need of forgiving others their mistakes?
- 5) Is it important to talk about men and women equality at school?
- 6) Is it helpful being shy?
- 7) Do you care about public opinion?