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the European Union**

Supported by project *Humanities going digital*,
2020-1-CZ01-KA226-HE-094363. The European
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A CRITICAL “NEW” MEDIA

interaction and art

In this class

- Our last activity
- How do we interact with texts?
- Why is interaction not always horizontal?
- Is interaction desirable?
- What is the problem of art in terms of interaction?

From our previous class

- We started talking about *interaction* in general terms
- If we go by text as communication, then we usually have a sender-receiver image
- In interaction, we situate ourselves in one of the roles
- The way we interact can be summed up as either *passive* or *active*
- This can be problematic in the case of how we frame some specific cultural objects

Defining interaction

- Interaction is simply how we *engage* with a cultural object
- But this engagement, as we've mentioned, is not equal across the board
- We can be passive agents or active agents
- A passive agent is, at its simplest, a receiver that interacts with the cultural object simply by appreciating it
- An active agent, however, will interact with the cultural object through something that affects the cultural object directly to some degree
- **Interaction is thus the property of a cultural object to influence and be influenced in its performance by an agent at the side of the receiver**

How do we interact with texts?

- First, one question: **Do texts hard-code interaction in themselves?**
- In other words, is a text capable of containing interaction in its definition?
- The answer is not straightforward and will still depend on how we parse our texts
- If the text includes a receiver, then it will include that interaction
- But when you are parsing the text from the point of view of an analyst, then you yourself are attempting to remove yourself from the object

For example

- Take this image
- As receivers, we are given a message
- We interact with it because of its mode
- Is that interaction coded in the text?



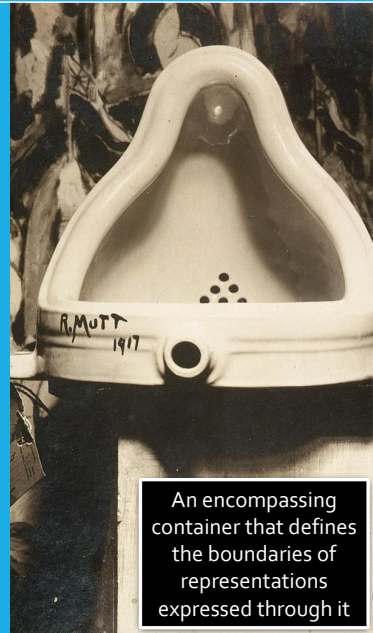
Types of interaction

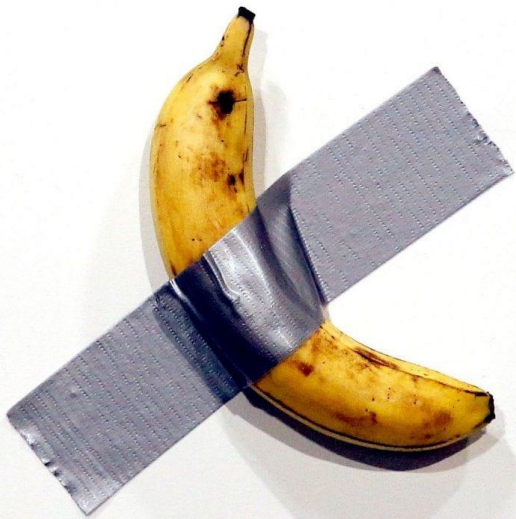
- Interaction requires an **interface**
- An interface is a point of connection between an object and a subject
- Much like the software you use in your computer to get it to do the things you want it to do, cultural objects depend on an interface to be interactive
- That interface can be derived from context, and sometimes it can result in a false positive, as in the following video



Not every interaction is the same

- Readymades still make the headlines!
- Cultural objects do seem to have some interface coded, either by context or by structure
- How you interact with a cultural object is partly dependent on the characteristics of the **medium**







Base level interaction

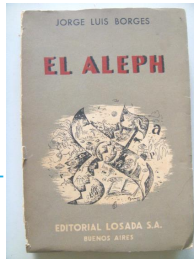
- The most basic, simplest interaction we seem to witness everyday in terms of cultural objects is that of *witnessing*, being the receiver of a message
- This, however, would seem to apply only to cultural objects that are intent on *communicating* to some degree
- But that's not necessarily so: The interface we have is *cognitive* and *semiotic*
- The base interface is cognitive because it depends on what we've called our primary modeling system
- The base interface is semiotic in the sense that perception of signs is sufficient in the primary modeling system to enable our interaction

Higher complexity in interaction

- Complexity of cultural objects goes hand in hand with the complexity of our own semiotic systems
- Our secondary modeling system would make more complex interactions possible
- Remember that tertiary modeling systems would in fact be equated with things like *art*

Do we actually *want* interaction?

- Interaction is quite a problem in how we frame our consensual understanding of some cultural objects as opposed to other cultural objects
- Take for instance these two:
- These are very much cultural objects, but they are worlds apart in how they are!
- Their engagement is qualitatively different at least in terms of main (apparent) functions



Types of interaction

- Passive
- Active
- Physical
- Psychological
- Biological
- Phenomenological
- The point of all of these is that interaction is a measure of intrinsic features of the relation between object and perceiver
- We could keep adding things to this list, such as *political, ideological, scientific, phenomenological*, but we either describe subsets of interactions or we use context-dependent features as intrinsic features

Is art interactive?

- Well, all cultural objects are, by default, interactive, as we have seen
- So the real question is: What sort of interactivity does art create?
- Now this question is much harder to answer because of the social and historical connotations of the concept of art



