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VISL 140

Visual Culture

I've learned a lot from Cartwright and Sturken's "Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture." The book "Practices of Looking, Third Edition" talks about how we understand images and looking in our daily lives. It covers topics like how images spread around the world quickly now, how people are getting more into designing things themselves, how art and activism mix online, and how journalism and news photography are facing problems.

I examined how powerful the media can be in making people aware of important issues. For example, when Till, a young black boy, was killed, his mother used pictures of his body to show the injustice caused by racial discrimination. This made people think about racism and demand change. I also saw how social media, like Twitter, can spread important messages quickly, like when a picture of Israelis watching the bombing of Gaza was shared online. It made me think about how social media can make people aware of what's happening in the world. I learned about "interpellation," which is when visual symbols make us think they're talking to us. For example, when we see the Uncle Sam poster saying "I Want You," we feel like it's talking directly to us. This poster allowed me to think about how visual symbols can influence our

thoughts and actions; and, during the time of war, that symbol influenced and encouraged men and women to support in terms of fighting and nursing. The movies and pictures illustrated what life was during different times in history. For example, the movie, "Modern Times", demonstrated how difficult life was for people during the industrial revolution. The interesting part about this movie is the genre, which is comedy. Charlie Chaplin's comedic representation of the life of poor or unemployed people, formed a new way of thinking and understanding of the industrialization era. I saw how visual media can reflect the changes happening in society. For example, pictures of tenement houses showed how crowded and dirty cities were during the industrial revolution. This made me think about how living conditions have improved over time. I learned about different perspectives in art, like in Diego Velazquez's painting "Las Meninas." I find this to be significant because Cartwright and Sturken provide examples of different perspectives that the viewer can interpret. One of them being that we, the viewer, are in the perspective of the king and queen, who can be seen in the background. We gaze into the arts of many paintings and try to form different ways of seeing and interpreting in order to understand the mind of the artists.



Las Meninas by Diego Velazquez

Visual media can show us the reality of life, both good and bad. For example, pictures of tenement rooms illustrated how difficult and melancholy life was for poor people during the industrial revolution. The tenement rooms were filled with diseases, which were tuberculosis and influenza; and they were unsanitary due to the congested living spaces. The unfortunate people lived in such places due to the impact industrialization had on jobs and money. As emphasized by Chaplin, being in jail was more comfortable than living in the real world. The tenement and Chaplin's representation of the harsh industrialization era, demonstrates the drawback of that era. J.M.W. Turner's painting "Rain Speed and Steam" illustrated how industrialization changed the landscape. This made me think about how important it is to take care of the environment. I also learned about how artists can use color to make their work more powerful, like in John Constable's painting "Dedham Vale." It made me realize how colors can affect our emotions and thoughts.



Interior rooms of an Old Law apartment, n.d. NYC Municipal Archives Collection.

I learned about how technology has changed art, like in Naum Gabo's sculpture "Standing Wave." The art made me think about how technology can make art more interesting and accessible to everyone. Art and technology was, at first, difficult to sum up; however, I realized even taking a video is a form of art with technology. Now going back to the "Standing Wave", this sculpture used space and time to create an illusion that the sculpture is moving. I saw how visual media can show us the effects of human activity on the environment. Every aspect of visual culture showed me new perspectives to think about and made me consider how visual media connects with society, culture, and our own experiences. For example, I explored how technology becomes part of who we are and how brands shape our society. Brands such as LIFEWTR and aquafina are a key part of our lives due to what they represent: water. The brand LIFEWTR advertises electrolytes in water and balanced pH to inform and persuade us to buy their product. Smart advertising from companies represent the common visual representation of the society. Also, I thought about changes in how we show scientific information, which made me consider how visual culture is changing in today's digital world. In Chapter 10, I learned about the history of making pictures and how it has changed over time. I saw how inventions like the Gutenberg press and halftone printing have changed how people see and share images. This chapter helped me see how technology has changed our visual world and how people make and view pictures today. It showed me how closely linked technology, culture, and images are. The addition of color greatly impacted the people during the era of black and white. This visual innovation created a sense of realism in the minds of the people back then. This subtle, yet powerful change created the era of color and new technology.

To conclude, as I explored more chapters, I saw how visual culture is everywhere around us. From TV shows to advertisements, visual media shapes our understanding of the world. I've gained a deeper appreciation for how visual culture reflects and shapes society. It's not just about looking at pictures; it's about understanding the messages they convey and how they influence our beliefs and actions. By learning about different theories and examples, I've come to see visual culture as a powerful tool for communication and social change.