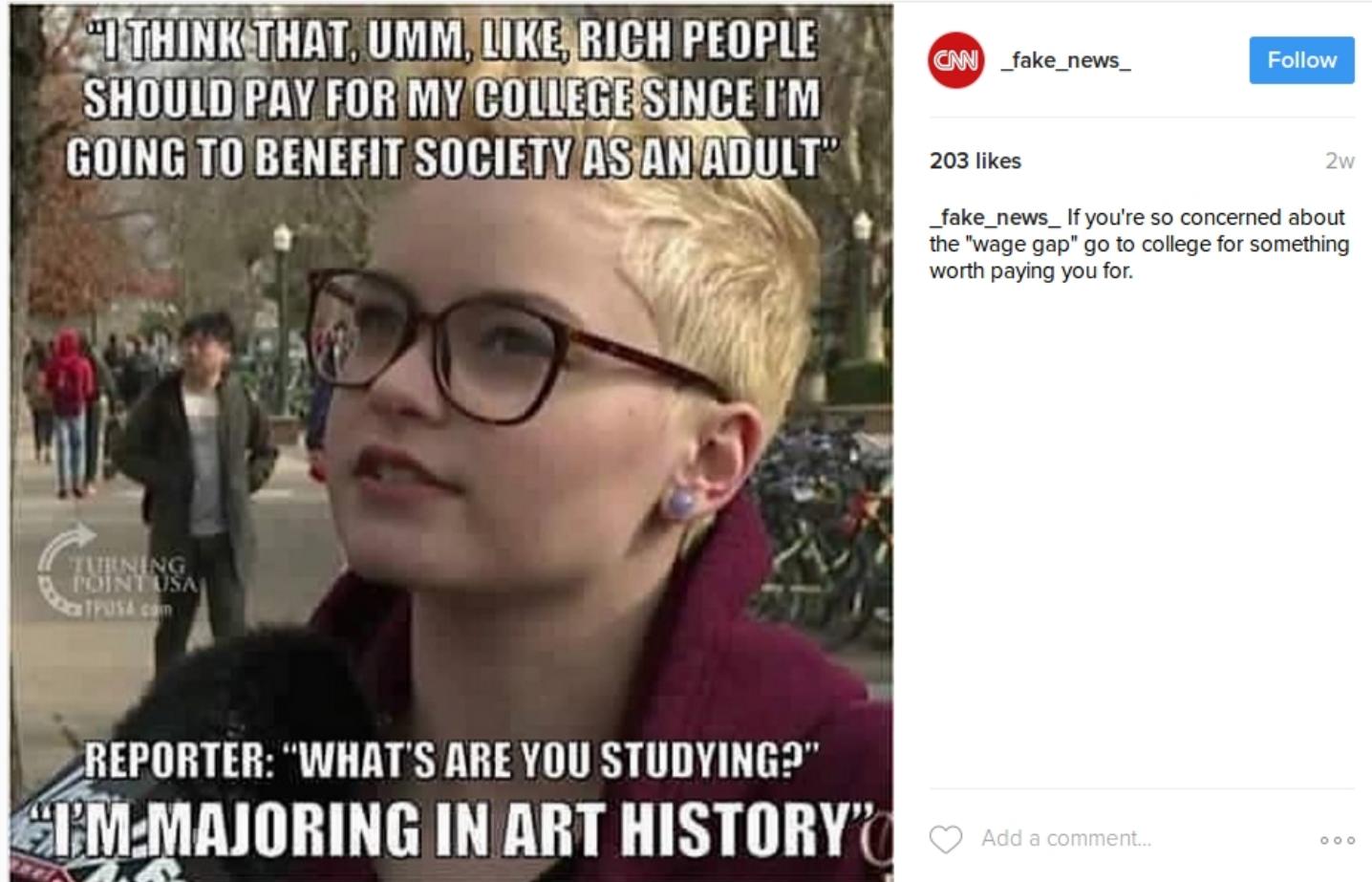


Week 4: Visual culture and its visualities



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Overview

- **A: Visual methods in general**
 - Basic method: compositional analysis treats images as a text
- **B: Visuality, practice and performativity (based on reading from Gillian Rose)**
 - How to study acts of seeing
 - Group research exercise
- **C: Interview preparation**
 - Interview itself



What visual methods are there, and who uses them?

- *Semiotics* (see last week) – cultural studies
- *Compositional analysis* (today) – art history
- *Content analysis* – sociology and communication
- *Psychoanalytic* and other theoretical readings – film studies
- *Discourse analysis* – cultural studies, sociology and communication (next week)
- *Ethnography* of social viewing practices – sociology and communication (2 weeks time)
- *Making images* – photos, videos, etc: – sociology and communication, art and design
- *Visuality* – visual media and cultural studies (today)



Basic method: compositional analysis

- **Form of close viewing (developed by art historians) that describes:**
 - Content – what is actually shown
 - Colour and light – effect on realism, on atmosphere, etc.
 - Space: scale, complexity, geometry, perspective
 - Viewer's position – perspective, standpoint
- **Does not say much about meaning, or connotation or context**
- **Focuses on rich description of the visual entity (painting, photograph, filmic scene, billboard, et.c)**

Compositional analysis



Exercise: compositional analysis

In pairs, list some key
compositional aspects of
the Reuters News
photograph

- Content
- Colour
- Light
- Space
- Scale
- Viewer position

Part B: Visuality – practices, reflexivity, critique



Ways of approaching images

- Mcs approaches image using methods of textual analysis, **visuality** and discourse analysis (next week)

New term – *visuality*

- the images themselves, sites of production, sites of audiencing/viewing
- Remember: text, *textuality*, the textual environment
 - Couldry: 'the textual environment'
 - flow of meanings, flow of readers, flow of texts



Rose on 'the question of method in ... visual culture studies'

- What is 'visual culture studies'?
- Not much discussion of methods in visual culture studies because:
 - 'implicit methodology' of **critical connoisseurship** is used
 - Focuses on meaning, tends to ignore audiencing or the place of the researcher/critic



Gillian Rose's advice for doing visual cultural studies:

- Ok to focus on meaning, and contested meanings, with the critic 'finding' the meanings and doing the critique
- But also need to take into account:
 - **1. Visuality** = 'what happens when people look and what emerges from that act'
 - **2. Practices**: 'fairly consistent ways of doing something, deploying certain objects, knowledges, bodily gestures and emotions' (Rose, 549)
- **Visuality as a practice**:
 - 'routinization and place-specificity [that makes] certain sorts of things visible in particular ways' (Rose, 549)



Rose's advice for doing visual cultural studies: place + practice

- Researching visuality focuses on
 - 1. **Specific places** where people see or look (airport, loungeroom, street, media platform, etc.), including related geographies (global, local, digital, etc.)
 - 2. **Performativity** of practice:
 - Do you understand the notion of performativity (Austin/Butler)?
 - Discuss with your neighbour.
 - Practices produce entities that are said to pre-exist the practice;
 - Seeing/looking is a doing that makes something;
 - In both respects (place + performativity), research is closer to everyday life





- e.g. Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and visitors who come to the Louvre to see it – what is the **performativity** of seeing the *Mona Lisa*?

Rose's advice for doing visual cultural studies 2: reflexivity

- Researching visuality entails reflexivity:
 - How the researcher is entangled with the object of research (551)
 - Entangled with the object means:
 - What questions you ask, and what you see depends on who you are and how you relate to what you are seeing
 - e.g. a scientific visualization, a computer game, an instagram image

Reflexivity: 'the critic is required to work through the process of reaching that verdict, demonstrating that it was attained through a series of specific interactions rather than from a series of cumulative revelations' (551)



Rose's advice for doing visual cultural studies 3: critique

- Researching visuality still focuses on critique (pointing to problems).
- But critique is entangled with practices and performances of looking
 - Not just finding the real meaning but intervening by
 - Highlighting the unnoticed or invisible by attention to details
 - 'witness the world into being' differently 553

Thinking about visuality for the 'fake news' group research project

1. Choose two contrasting visual objects/images that relate to different places or practices associated with your project; e.g. a magazine article vs an image that appeared on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram;

2. Do a compositional analysis of the 2 images

3. Explore the visuality of these images

- Following Roses' advice about practices and places, list some of the different ways in which people in different places might look at these visual entities.
- You might examine different ways of talking about them, different ways of making or circulating them, different places in which they are seen, different affective/emotional relations, group or social activities associated with them
- You will need to describe where you found the object, look at surrounding text, comments, and audiences.

4. Write a post (400-500 words) for the online group portfolio that compares the results of the compositional analysis and the analysis of visuality

- make sure you include the images or hyperlinks to them

Interview: prepare questions on visual analysis and visuality

- In your groups, prepare 2 questions that ask Miriam how she studies visuality
 - The places where urban photographs appear
 - The practices associated with them
- Also ask her something about reflexivity and critique



Next week

- Discourse analysis – combining textuality and visuality

Gillian Rose's critique of visual cultural studies

- Exercise: what is Roses' critique of typical visual cultural studies?



Exercise: methods and textual environment

**Take the list of visual methods and say what site/s
of the image of the image they focus on
(production, image itself, audiencing)**

