

Art and Design Theory

Glossary of Terms

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There are also other resources for terms not found in the course glossary. You may also use the following links for unfamiliar terms you come across:

- ART21 glossary: <http://www.art21.org/learn/tools-for-teaching/archive/glossary>
- Museum of Modern Art glossary: http://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/glossary
- Tate glossary: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary>
- Oxford University Press' Glossary of Philosophical Terms:
http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199812998/studentresources/pdf/perry_glossary.pdf
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>
- Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.rep.routledge.com/>

Alienation (Entfremdung)

Definition:			
Author:		Date:	

Antiaesthetic

Definition: Whereas “aesthetic” is concerned with the visually beautiful or things of good taste, and looking at the visual qualities of a piece,¹ anti-aesthetic is in direct response to and rejection of this idea of the pure aesthetic that had been explored by modernists.

Anti-aesthetic is connected to Postmodernism, the chronological movement that pushed against modernism, which had been concerned primarily with the purely aesthetic experience that existed outside of context. Anti-aesthetic looked instead to be deeply rooted in the current context and give purpose back to the art that was being created at the time.

There is a collection of essays by Postmodern artists, theorists, and/or critics titled *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster and published in 1983, which introduces and outlines the anti-aesthetic theory. Hal Foster says anti-aesthetic, like Postmodernism “marks a cultural position on the present” and denotes a sensitivity “to cultural forms engaged in a politic (e.g., feminist art) or rooted in a vernacular.”²

¹“Aesthetic,” *MoMA glossary*, accessed January 30, 2017, https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/glossary

² Hal Foster, “Post-Modernism: A Preface,” in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983), xv, accessed January 30, 2017, https://monoskop.org/images/0/07/Foster_Hal_ed_The_Anti-Aesthetic_Essays_on_Postmodern_Culture.pdf

Author: Alina Anderson

Date: 01.30.17

A posteriori

Definition: *A posteriori* is knowledge that is derived by reasoning of observed facts. It literally means “from the latter,” which means that which comes after experience. This type of knowledge is opposed to *a priori* knowledge, which is based on concrete facts. *A posteriori* was first discussed in *Critique of Pure Reason* written by Immanuel Kant. In this text, Kant illustrates the distinctions between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge and defines the two types of judgments (analytic and synthetic).

1. Analytic judgment is one in which a proposition is true by meaning alone. An example of this would be “cardiologists are doctors.” It is possible to understand the truth about this statement by knowing the meaning of the words. *A posteriori* judgments do not exist because there is no need to reference experience for one to understand the denotation of words.
2. Synthetic judgment does not only depend on meaning. Synthetic judgment relies on knowing both the meaning of the words and something about the

world as well. An example of this would be “cardiologists are rich.” Synthetic a posteriori judgments do exist because experience plays a large part in understanding not only denotation, but connotation of words as well.

Author: Amanda Anderson

Date: 02.21.17

A priori

Definition: In general, this term refers to deduction and inference about things rather than basing thoughts on observations or previous experience. It literally translates from Latin to “from what is before”. Throughout the ages philosophers have considered that one can learn by thinking rather than observation, and have some have called this phenomenon “a priori”. Descartes statement “I think therefore I am” is a perfect example of this.

A more concrete example is the idea that all widows have deceased husbands (a priori) verses it is sunny outside (which is a posteriori). The term “widow” is something that English speakers have come up with to classify a group of people, but one who understands the term “widow” does not need to experience it in person. However, knowing that it is sunny is based on the idea of a person’s having experienced a sunny day previously.

Art often explores ideas based on thoughts rather than experience. Artists using “a priori” can attempt to show various thoughts, feelings and ideas as well as more representational work which show specific moments in time.

Author: Catherine Byrd

Date: 01.30.17

Argument

Definition: Charles Sanders Peirce divided sign-vehicles into three areas in which they could be organized suitably. These separate areas are divided by virtue of qualities, existential facts, and laws. These three categories are known as, qualisigns, sinsigns, and legisigns. Argument falls under the legisign category. Legisign, “is one whose crucial signifying element is primarily due to convention, habit or law. Typical examples would be traffic lights as sign of priority, and the signifying capability of words; these sign vehicles signify in virtue of the conventions surrounding their use.”¹

An interpretant is a thing in which furthers from just being a sign and creates thought about relations and interpreting the signs.

Signs are also often related with cognition, which is having a mental action or having an understanding of something. Pierce calls an argument, delome or a rule of inference. If we are knowledgeable of a sign and fully understand it, we are able to create new assumptions from the sign. Once this happens, we are given the opportunity and the interpretant where the sign creates a delome or argument.

1. Albert Atkin, “Peirce's Theory of Signs,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed January 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics/>

Autonomy

Definition: Generally, the term *autonomy* is used to signify an independence from something and having a self-reliance. This is manifested in a few different ways in art theory.

1. As Modernism was ushered in, and artists began creating works that slowly divorced themselves from strictly traditional representation, it is said that those works become autonomous—independent of traditional modes of representation. This thought developed as works of art became more self-referential. For example, Frank Stella's canvases' compositions were largely determined by the thickness of the stretcher bars, the shape of the canvases, and a few rules Stella set for himself. The paintings looked inward for content and aesthetic, rather than looking and pointing outward. The work is self-determined.
2. Theodor Adorno called art autonomous when it became purposeless. He saw Modern art's strength being derived from its socially nomadic tendencies. It critically questioned social norms and markets. As culture industries emphasized the marketability of work within a capitalist system, the work was robbed of its autonomy.
3. As the term is more widely used, it means that the work of art is independent of an audience and its trappings—bourgeois aesthetics, markets, historical context, social reference, the *need* of an audience to activate the work, and a relationship to an audience's body.

Author: Christopher Lynn

Date: 08.11.16

Avant-Garde

Definition: Avant-Garde literally means “advanced guard” in French. It has been used in art to refer to the new, experimental, and forward thinking. Henri de Saint-Simon, an early socialist philosopher, coined the term in 1825. He believed that artists could be a positive force for social change. The avant-garde is important in art because it moves history forward. It rebels against codified, stifling ideas of “what art is.” A well-known example of avant-garde is Marcel Duchamp, who caused an uproar when he displayed a signed urinal titled “Fountain” as an art piece. Another example is Marina Abramovic, who has pioneered performance art with controversial, often dangerous performances. Ironically, these rebellious innovators eventually become a recognized part of history, hailed as masters and great ones. What was once unconventional and sometimes offensive to the general public segues into a whole new art movement.

1. "Art Term: Avant-garde," *Tate*, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/a/avant-garde>

Author: Brynne Capps

Date: 01.31.17

Base (or Infrastructure)

Definition: John Storey describes the *base* in terms of Marx's use:

The "base consists of a combination of the "forces of production" and the "relations of production." The forces of production refer to the raw materials, the tools, the technology, the workers and their skills, etc. The relations of production refer to the class relations of those engaged in production.¹

In short, the base is the engine of the [proletariat](#)—skills, materials, and tools. The base sits in opposition to the [superstructure](#), however the two inform and build one another. For example, the working class dictate the type of entertainment they will purchase and consume, and the superstructure will feed them that entertainment as long as it keeps the proletariat as complacent workers.

1. John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 60.

Author: Christopher Lynn

Date: 09.14.17

Bourgeoisie (Bourgeois)

Definition: Generally, *bourgeoisie* refers to the wealthy middle class. In Marxism, the bourgeoisie is considered to be the dominant of two classes in a capitalist society—capitalists, bankers, manufacturers, and other employers. Marx criticized the bourgeoisie for exploiting the lower class or proletariat. In the 19th Century, the strengthening of the bourgeoisie meant that art was no longer produced only for ecclesiastical and secular clients. It was now shown to the general public. Along with this came the emergence of painting outside of studios and into the open air. This movement was a catalyst for impressionism and realism.

In contemporary art, the question of whether socioeconomic status plays a role in defining one's artistic career. We have to look at the effect class has on art, whether that be looking at artists themselves, curators, institutions, or even audiences.

Author: Kallie Hancock

Date: 09.15.16

Commodity Fetishism (Warenfetischismus)

Definition:

Author:

Date:

Connotation

Definition: 20th century French philosopher Roland Barthes' interpretation of the semiotic term, "connotation," was an amplification of work by linguists Ferdinand de Saussure and Louis Hjelmslev.

In line with Barthes' interpretation, a "connotation" is a facet of meaning in a text or image exposed through application of socio-cultural "codes" accessible to the reader or viewer.

In specifying how meaning is found in a text, Barthes asserted that the mind forms a "relation" (R) between a "plane of expression" (E) and a "plane of content" (C). The plane of expression refers to the words themselves and the plane of content refers to their literal meaning. When a reader moves from (E) to (C), a "first-order signification," or "denotation" is achieved. When (R) comes in to play, through the application of cultural associations, a "second-order signification," or, "connotation" is achieved.

There is a question as to whether or not denotation can be considered the "first-order signification." It is at times approached as an illusion—or simply another connotation. Barthes said that denotation and connotation combine to produce ideology, and that connotations are not always personal. Rather, we learn the "dominant connotations" of our culture as we are presented with denotations.

Author: Pearl Corry

Date: 01.31.17

Deconstruction

Definition: *Deconstruction* was based upon the idea of "marking the unmarked" as a way to complicate and shift our accepted assumptions and bring forward what was overlooked. For example, in a written text, "he says" disappears, while "he writes" feels intentional. Jacques Derrida realized this, and wanted to bring it to attention by using "she" as a default pronoun when writing.¹ He called this *deconstruction* because it overthrew assumptions by drawing attention to absences that reveal themselves in the process. This process allows structures to be taken down, and boundaries crossed, in order to undermine said structure and show new interpretations and thoughts.²

When applied to criticism, *deconstruction* helps one become aware of what is unspoken, and what is implicitly understood within works of art, literature, and other items of cultural impact.³ For instance, when one is faced with the realization that women are often underrepresented in museums, what is not being said? What is being understood?

1. Foster, Hal, Rosalind E. Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, B. H. D. Buchloh, and David Joselit. *Art since 1900: modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004.

2. "Deconstruction," *New World Encyclopedia*, July 27, 2013, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Deconstruction>.

3. "Art Term: Deconstructio,," *Tate*, Accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/d/deconstruction>.

Author: Annelise Duque

Date: 02.22.17

Denotation

Definition: As first explored by Ferdinand de Saussure and later on by Roland Barthes, *denotation* is a term used in the study of symbols and signs (better known as

semiotics) in the description and relationship between an image/sound for a concept and the concept itself. An example of this image/sound and concept would be the word "Artist" and what is conjured up in our minds to best represent the concept of the artist itself. Denotation focuses primarily on the absolute and simplest meaning of the signifier. In the case of the word "artist," the denotation would be "one who produces art."

As language, art and what each of them implies evolves over time, *denotation* can also be seen as a process in which culture and the highest judgment changes a denotation to better fit its connotation.² In simpler terms, the literal definition of art is a fluid one which through time has and will continue to change to better integrate the new attitudes and perspectives on it. During the Renaissance, an artist was one who adhered to the study of nature, and humanistic and the classical ideals of Greek tradition. Poetry, sculpture, painting and architecture were some of the mediums of the time, but now, as art has evolved and time has passed, our definition of an artist and their mediums has vastly expanded and will most likely continue to do so.

1. "An A to Z of Theory Roland Barthes and Semiotics," *Ceasefire*, January 11, 2012, accessed January 31, 2017, <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-barthes-1/>.

2. Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics for Beginners*, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html>.

Author: Daniela Ferreira

Date: 02.23.17

Desublimation

Definition: *Desublimation* is based on the fundamental concept of *sublimation*, an idea conceived by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) that proposed that humans divert base libidinal energies and transform them into more socially acceptable behaviors. Freud believed this was a necessary function of modern civilized humans.

Based on this knowledge that sublimation was a means of cultural production, philosopher Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) developed the concept of *desublimation* in his 1964 book titled *One-Dimensional Man*. In Marcuse's conception of desublimation, art exists (or should exist) as a separate dimension from reality and is in opposition to it. This separate existence is based on the function of Freud's sublimation which focuses libidinal energy into aesthetic production and culture. In a capitalist society this has become further repressed through desublimation which attempts to undermine libidinal repression itself by indulging in crude and base behavior. This expression of behavior is understood by Marcuse not to be an expression of freedom but rather a repressive behavior, insofar that acting on crude impulses is a means of social control in a capitalist society. In other words, some might consider behavior based on sublimation (behavior which transcends the natural man) to be highly controlled and not based on free choice, but Marcuse proposes that it is instead behavior that is based on desublimation (behavior that indulges the natural man) that is the highly controlled behavior, especially under capitalist societies.

Author: Eric Edvalson

Date: 10.04.16

Dicent

Definition:			
Author:		Date:	

Discursive

Definition:			
Author:		Date:	

Epistemology

Definition:			
Author:		Date:	

Existentialism

Existentialism refers to the philosophy of defining one's selfhood and carving a spectrum of personal ethics while rigorously analyzing the subjective world of the individual. The ideas surrounding Existentialism evolved to create a more distinct separation between the individual and the world that surrounded them.

Originating with Soren Kierkegaard's writings, existentialism in relation to visual art was perhaps more influenced by Jean Paul Sartre, who in his book "Being and Nothingness" built upon the notion of the importance of the individual by suggesting that the individual's soul was separate from the outside world. Through this concept he defined¹ "...two types of reality which lie beyond our conscious experience: the being of the object of consciousness and that of consciousness itself. The object of consciousness exists as "in-itself," that is, in an independent and non-relational way." Existentialism was a useful philosophical tool to analyze post-war art because of its focus on the personal soul as a separate entity from the horror and bloodshed that existed in the world. The figurative art of Francis Bacon (1909-1992) and the work of "action painters" in the mid twentieth century was often viewed through a critical lens that championed the artist's desire to escape and find oneself.

1. Christian J. Onof, "Jean Paul Sartre: Existentialism." University of Tennessee Encyclopedia of Philosophy". May 3, 2011. Accessed January 31, 2017. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/sartre-ex/>

Author: Noah Jackson

Date: 01.31.17

Formalism

Definition: *Formalism* is concerned with form in the visual aspects of a work independent of time and place, whether it be painting, sculpture, film, etc. Formal analysis compares form and style in the properties of the work's composition including color, line, shape, light, texture and so forth. The composition, therefore, is the culmination of properties which can be formally analyzed. According to formalism, everything needed to comprehend a painting can be found within the work.

However; it says nothing about taste, the message or setting. Therefore; formalism can be defined, in part, by stating what it doesn't do. Formalism doesn't concern itself with context; the reasons for the creation of a work; the iconography-historical/social aspects; the artist him/or herself; or even the concept. The content, the relationship to our world, the intent or the story behind the work is irrelevant. Formalism completely eliminates the intentions of the artist, and, instead looks at the cold, hard facts found within the confines of the work. The hand of the artist remains in the periphery and doesn't influence interpretation of the work.

Formalism declined in the 20th Century, especially as conceptualism rose to prominence in the 1960's. The artist's ideas, context, etc. rose to displace formalism. One's mind, emotions, sensations, and the setting influences the evaluation of a work guided by individual taste.

Author: Loretta Farnsworth

Date: 10.10.16

Gestalt

Definition: *Gestalt* is a term that originated in German psychology meaning "unified whole." It originated when psychologists started to realize that people rarely viewed things as separate unique entities, but rather, usually viewed them as unified wholes. The ideas behind gestalt psychology have rather obvious applications to art given that the theory is based in the way humans view their surroundings. Visual cues in artworks, can tie together small parts to make a whole that is larger than the sum of its parts. This is clearly evident in a lot of minimal artwork. For example, Donald Judd has several works composed of manufactured boxes placed evenly spaced out on either a wall or floor. Although the work is made up of many small parts, our mind perceives it as one, and the space in between the boxes becomes an equal part of the work as our mind connects the lines from box to box. Aspects of an artwork's visual and thematic components, such as similarity and proximity, have very clear effects on how strongly our mind unifies the whole.

Author: Tanner Halversen

Date: 09.20.16

Haecceity

Definition:

Author:

Date:

Hegemony

Definition: According to Antonio Gramsci, *hegemony* is changing the way people think and their value systems to the degree that they welcome their oppressor. In other words, hegemony is ideological domination. In Marxist philosophy, cultural hegemony is the ruling class manipulating the whole culture of a society. They twist society's beliefs, values, and perceptions of a culturally diverse society in a way that their imposed worldview becomes the new accepted norm. They make the ideologies seem beneficial for everyone instead of social constructs that only benefit the oppressors.

Hegemony contains several ideologies. Artificial hegemony comes from theoretical explanations of academics, while organic hegemony comes from common people's lived experiences and ways of seeing religion and education. Institutions that dominate a culture can determine what ethical beliefs and manners are right or true, which is how hegemony works and propagates. Gramsci argued that to combat cultural hegemony, the working class depends upon the intellectuals produced by the society. He distinguished between the bourgeois-class intellectuals and the working class, which were respectively the proponents and the opponents of the imposed ideologies.

Art and politics often go hand and hand. Artistic practices contribute to investigating the dominant hegemony. Chantal Mouffe, a Belgian political theorist, regards art as one of the "empty signifiers" whose content is determined entirely by hegemonic struggle.

Author: Annie Anderson

Date: 10.10.16

High Modernism

Definition: The authors Gail Day and Chris Riding succinctly defined the term *high modernism* in their essay "The Critical Terrain of 'High Modernism'" (2004):

High modernism is associated with certain American east-coast art from the late 1950s and 1960s; the paintings of Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella, Larry Poons and the sculpture of Anne Truitt. The work of the English sculptor Anthony Caro is also incorporated along with the so-called "New Generation" of sculptors, most of whom, with Caro, taught or studied at St. Martin's School of Art, London in the same period. High modernism is primarily aligned with the later writings of Clement Greenberg, and, especially, with the essays of the young art critic Michael Fried. It has been called "high" because it involves some of the most developed articulations arising from the protocols and preferences established in Greenberg's theorisations of modern art, view that achieved a particular prominence from 1961 when Greenberg published a collection of essays in *Art and Culture*. At its peak, when it had attained its most complex formulations, there coalesced a wave of challenges to high modernism's sense of what the practices of art making, criticism and theory entailed. By the mid-1960s, already simmering disputes crystallised, and 1967—the year acknowledged in Rose's comment above—marks the watershed. Thereafter, high modernism

was, as Fried notes, “beleaguered” and “eclipsed,” and no longer held the critical summit.¹

1. Gail Day and Chris Riding, “The Critical Terrain of ‘High Modernism,’” *Varieties of Modernism*, ed. Paul Wood, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 189.

Author: Christopher Lynn

Date: 11.04.18

Icon (Semiotics)

Definition: Commonly referred to as a semblance or likeness, an icon is an imitative image of an object or concept, even if the object or concept does not exist. The icon grounds the sign in reality, making it real enough for the recipient to understand the meaning of the sign. The icon is made up of three facets—the “hypoicon.” The first being the image, the second being the diagram, and the third being the metaphor. These three facets come together to create what is commonly known as the icon. The icon is also commonly referred to as “ground.”

An icon is a visual representation of the thing you are trying to describe, whether that be an actual picture, a diagram, or a metaphor describing the object. Icons are the literal representation of the thing depicted. For example, photographs are considered icons since they are a literal representation of the thing being depicted. A men or women’s bathroom sign would also be an icon, since the figure of the men is meant to depict an actual man, the same going for the women’s sign. Since these bathroom signs are meant to signify who is to use the restroom, they would be considered icons as they are depicting the actual thing they reference.

The items the icon depicts do not always have to be real, but the icon needs to be what a realistic depiction of them would be. For example: there’s no real proof that dragons ever existed but we have icons that depict them nonetheless.

Author: Rylee Mecham

Date: 10.11.16

Ideology

Definition: Ideology generally refers to a set of beliefs that an individual or group upholds consciously or unconsciously. Louis Althusser further defined ideology as the beliefs that represent the relationship a person or group has to its reality.¹ He identifies the system that creates ideology as institutions: religious, educational, family, legal, political, and cultural. The people that make up an institution cyclically perpetuate its ideology to its subjects. When a rebellion or revolution occurs its participants organize and follow a preferred ideology that is often then declared by way of a written document. For example, as the thirteen colonies fought in the American Revolutionary War the founding fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence to define the reasons and ideals for separating from Britain. Umberto Boccioni wrote the “Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto” to break painting free from Italian traditions of painting and move

into a modern ideology focusing on dynamic ideas like speed and motion.²

1. Harrison, Charles, and Paul Wood. *Art in theory, 1900-2000: an anthology of changing ideas*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2003, 953-60.

2. *Ibid.*, 150-52

Author: Brie Jensen

Date: 01.31.17

Index (Semiotics)

Definition: In Semiotics, index is a term used to categorize a specific type of sign, and is one of the three types of signs defined by Charles Peirce. An index is an indication, a symptom, or an evidence of the thing (object, concept, etc.) that is signified. For example, a fingerprint is an index of a finger, or smoke is an index of a fire. The fingerprint does not look like the finger whose presence it signifies, nor does the smoke look like the fire that it indicates, which is a way that you can differentiate an index from an icon. Additionally, unlike a symbol, an index does not stand in for the signified in a completely unrelated way, the way that the symbols of the letters "e," "y," and "e" arbitrarily signify the concept of an eye. Instead, an index represents something that indicates the presence of the signified, the way a shadow indicates the presence of a light source or steam indicates the presence of heat and water.

Author: Elizabeth Lew

Date: 01.30.17

Interpretant

Definition: The Interpretant is one of the three points in Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotics structure. In this structure, there is the representamen, or the symbol of the sign; the object, or what a sign represents; and the interpretant, or the sense made of the sign. After having seen a sign one recognizes the object and then must interpret what that sign means to one's self. Peirce uses the example of a red light. A red traffic light is the representamen or the signifier that tells the audience to start interpreting. Through cultural context the audience knows that a red light represents a stop sign and must interpret what sense to make of that sign, which is to stop their car. Through these semiotic steps we reach an understanding of the relationship between a sign and what the audience interprets that sign to mean. As the audience continues to contemplate the meaning of a sign, they translate or develop the original sign to mean something else. This three-point structure allows for associations and relationships to be formed among the representamen, object and interpretant to create more and more meaning, like a spiral effect; the interpretant becomes the representamen for a new sign triad. Peirce goes on to clarify the interpretant by dividing it into three classifications:¹

1. Immediate interpretant: This is the first impression or immediate understanding of a sign. For example, one might see a stop light and the immediate interpretant is "there is a red light." This is the understanding of the sign without any critical reflection of the meaning.
2. Dynamic interpretant: This is the audience's understanding of the sign and the effect of the sign actually produced on the mind. There is a form of recognition or connection between the sign and what it means to the audience. For

example, we see a red light, recognize that I am the driver, there is a red light in front of me and it tells me to stop.

3. Final interpretant: This is the “final” understanding of the sign after sufficiently thinking and developing thought about the sign. After enough thought, we all would come to the same conclusion. For example we all see a red light and stop because we have developed enough understanding about this sign, so that it is universal.

1. Albert Atkin, "Peirce's Theory of Signs," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/peirce-semiotics>.

Author: Megan Livingston

Date: 02.17.17

Kitsch

Definition: Clement Greenberg described *kitsch* as the “rear guard” of avant-garde, which he wrote about in *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* of 1939. To some, kitsch erases culture and flattens society, and can be seen by some as an insult to the arts. To Clement Greenberg, however, kitsch is found everywhere, from popular movies to tap dancing. A magazine cover and a painting by Picasso each hold a place in culture. Each have a conversation within academics and within the world of kitsch. Because of the constant interaction between academics and kitsch, Greenberg suggested they are the same. Academics is equal to kitsch and kitsch is equal to academics. Kitsch brought about “universal literacy,” as it was a product of the industrial revolution and allows common people to interact with the art world.

Author: Emily Holt

Date: 10.06.16

Latent Text

Definition: Something that is latent exists but is not manifest or yet fully developed. It is a concealed message within the writing. Text is the organization of language that communicates a message to the reader. Latent text is an underlying message concealed within the body of a work. This message might be intentional or unintentional. The manifest text—the message we deliberately read and understand—shapes the latent text and vice versa. There is much that is left unsaid in social norms and societal expectations. Racism or gender inequality can be latent in many social situations. In art we can argue that conceptual negative space can be read as latent text. The artist has control over what is implied and what is laid out clearly. A few questions to ask could be, “What has been deliberately left absent? Is it worth investigating? What has the author ‘whispered’ or ‘left unsaid’?” In literary Marxism, latent text is located amongst the dialectic methods. The dialectic method is a debate between those who hold different points of view and want to find the truth through their argument. Through literary criticism we can analyze and understand an author’s intent, thus shedding light on potential perspectives within the work.

Author: Ishel Brimhall

Date: 10.04.16

Legisign

Definition: Falling under the field of [semiotics](#), a legisign is one of the three sign typologies by Charles Pierce. It represents habits individual people may have (passwords for personal accounts, or even the songs or TV shows we watch), laws that we abide by in our day-to-day (traffic signs/laws), or rules that are put in place at work, home, school, or elsewhere, that aren't necessarily law, but are abided by by certain groups of people in a specific environment (the Honor Code system here at BYU.) These three instances together create what Pierce referred to as "the norm." Legisigns are more of a representational type of sign as they aren't actually physical things you can touch and hold. They are also unique to each individual person, as everyone has different "norms" or frames of reference for things that occur in our daily lives.

We associate these legisigns in our life with another part of semiotics, [sinsigns](#). Sinsigns being a reaction or a symbol we associate with our legisigns. All legisigns need *sinsigns* (a symbol "indicative of an individual incident), but not all sinsigns are legisigns.

Example: A song could remind you of a certain incident or moment in your life you associate that song with.

Author: Rachel Loose

Date: 02.02.17

Modernism

Definition: A movement which is often considered more of a "way of thinking" than anything else, Modernism was the rejection of traditional social, cultural, and religious values, and lasted roughly from the mid-19th to the late-20th centuries.

Author: Hannah Lowell

Date: 03.30.17

Metaphysics

Definition:

Author:

Date:

Neo-Avant-Garde

Definition: The Neo-Avant-Garde movement was a post World War II movement of the 1950s and 60s, and it was a resurgence of the original pre-war avant-garde movement of the 1910s and 20s. The neo-avant-garde consisted of a group of North American and Western European artists that reinterpreted many of the original avant-garde methods such as the assemblage, collage, the ready-made, monochrome paintings, and constructed sculpture. Neo-Avant-Garde artists like Michael Asher and Daniel Buren analyzed the original avant-garde movement critically with historical context. Like the original avant-garde artists, their art sought to critique and analyze the nature of art

making. Up to this time, the modernists sought to create pure autonomous art forms, where each medium was concerned only with its essence. The neo-avant-garde artists sought to destroy or critique this false autonomy.

Author: Shae Warnick

Date: 09.19.16

Neocolonialism

Definition: Generally the term *neocolonialism* is used in a political or economical context. It is the term used to describe the indirect control that an imperial power has on a lesser power and most commonly describes well-developed countries that control underdeveloped countries by indirect means including finances, economics, and trade policies. Critics claim that multinational corporations play a big role in neocolonialism.¹ Large investments made by these corporations seldom improve the state of underdeveloped countries and instead maintain the country in a state of dependency so that the country serves as a source of cheap labor and materials.

Karl Marx predicted that the divide between the wealthy class and lower class would grow enough so that a conflict fatal to capitalism was inevitable.² Neocolonialism is the term used by Marxists to describe this issue on an international level. Marxists see it as the worst form of imperialism because the countries who use it have power without responsibility and countries who are victims of it are exploited without compensation. Neocolonial countries do not gain power by the will of the people, but instead, by economical and political revenues, any sort of aid or improvement to the underdeveloped country is usually overlooked or avoided.

1. Halperin, Sandra. "Neocolonialism." Encyclopaedia Britannica. March 23, 2016. Accessed January 30, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/neocolonialism>.

2. Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-colonialism: the last stage of imperialism*. London: Nelson, 1965.

Author: Clara May

Date: 01.31.17

Object

Definition: According to the Global Glossary of Philosophical terms, *object* can refer to "any sort of things at all, whether abstract or concrete, universal or particular." From traditional thought, or definition of an object, we would assume that it is a tangible material thing. It can also be used in reference to an object of thought, a particular mood, a fact, numbers, properties or people.

According to the art critic Michael Fried's view on objects, the notion of *shape* can be important in relation to the term *object*. *Object* is frequently used in reference to sculptures and things that have a certain shape, such as the shape the form of the sculpture makes as a whole. It can also be used when talking about paintings, in reference to the shape of the canvas. A painting can be viewed as more than just a representational image. It can be viewed as an object, that includes analyzing the shape of the support in the same manner of a sculpture's shape.

The noted semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce defined a sign as:

"I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the later is thereby mediately determined by the former."¹

The for Peirce, the sign is the signifier—the word, the sound or the thing that points to something else. The object is what the sign references. The interpretant is the relationship of the sign and object—in Saussurian semiotics, this would be similar to the signified, or the concept of the thing being signified. To provide an art example, Peirce may see an artist as an object. The sign may be the resulting painting we see. Because there is a canvas that has more than just a blank surface, we know that there was someone that created it. Therefore, the painting (sign) refers to the artist (object) in the same way that smoke (sign) refers to fire (object).

1. *The Essential Peirce*. Volume 2. Edited by the. Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington I.N.: Indiana University Press, 1998.

Author: Stephanie Corbett

Date: 10.11.16

Ontology

Definition:

Author:

Date:

Objecthood

Definition: Generally utilizing epistemology, one can dissect the word *objecthood* to interpret its significance. Object: "a thing that you can see and touch and that is not alive." ...Hood: "a suffix denoting a state or condition of being."

The question that media theorists address is, "Under what condition are objects declared art objects, and under what conditions do they remain mere objects?"

A mere object attains the state of objecthood, or the state of being an art object, when the qualities of "art" and "object" combine to transcend the qualities of a trite object or simply an object occupying a position in the world. The art object must be existent independent of its surroundings.

Theorist Michael Fried in his essay, "Art and Objecthood" declares that art objects transcend mere objects when they "form compositional relationships that seem to have an underlying logic or order to them [and] present themselves to the viewer as self-sufficient and internally purposeful. The viewer is drawn to the compositional unity of the piece, not the unitary object confronting them." For example, Dan Steinilber's composition of regular, non-intrinsic clothes hangers moves beyond being a mere object by persuading the viewer to distinguish the hangers as something more than what they ordinarily are with the use of light, color, and varied spatial orientation.

As Cultural critic Walter Benjamin claims an object can also reach the status of

objecthood, or being more than just an object, through its social status. If we take the example of Andy Warhol's Brillo boxes, they gained a uniqueness about themselves by existing in one spatial location. An object that becomes art, thereby having reached objecthood, is not accessible to the masses.

Critic Raymond Williams supports Benjamin's notion by expressing that an object does not reach the state of objecthood because it possesses no intrinsic value when compared to other objects produced in society.

Author: Kevin Hunter

Date: 09.20.16

Performativity

Definition: *Performativity* is one of the two modes of language defined by the British Philosopher John Langshaw Austin. He describes it as the enactment of things. Examples are when a judge says "I sentence you to five years in jail", when a person says "I promise", or when someone is pronounced "husband and wife". These phrases are actions in and of themselves. By speaking these things they happen. Performativity is then the use of speech not to communicate, but to act or construct/perform an identity. This was then related to art. It is the idea of a work of art being an action rather than just the final image or product itself. It is related to performance art, but includes all art that has a performance like element. Even with paintings and sculpture. The concept of the piece is connected to the action that the art is.

Author: Katie Wishart

Date: 09.20.16

Polysemy

Definition:

Author:

Date:

Postmodernism

Definition: Postmodernism is movement of the late 20th century, first introduced by that name in 1979 by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard. Postmodernism is a response and critique of Modernism. It is a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices to analyze societal conventions and frameworks. Where modernism believed in universal truths, postmodernism breaks down the hyper-rationalism of Modernism and absolutes found in the philosophies of science, religion etc. Postmodernists believe there is no objective truth, because values and conventions are social constructs. It seeks to question and rebel against social conventions such as morality, social class, high culture and low culture, and gender binaries. It plays with, satirizes, and deconstructs ideas previously assumed and accepted as fixed truths.

Author: Sarah Allan

Date: 10.01.16

Poststructuralism

Definition: As the prefix suggests, poststructuralism is a late 20th century movement that arose in response, and opposition to, the ideas presented by the structuralist movement of philosophy and literary criticism. Whereas structuralism understood language and culture as a system with meaning present as a set of structures, poststructuralism criticizes these ideas stating that culture and language exist independent of meaning. The phrase, "there is nothing outside the text" coined by French Philosopher and leader in the Deconstruction movement (later named the Poststructuralist movement) Jacques Derrida, illustrates well the general approach of the theory. Derrida, along with other prominent poststructuralists Michael Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Roland Barthes, rejects the idea of reducing meaning to become overly simple. He argued that meaning has a performative dimension with no association to an originating subjectivity.

The idea that through the performances meaning is renewed, can be applied to political and social movements both in and out of the art world. One example of this is Judith Butler's articulation on performativity collapsing the distinction between sex and gender. She suggests that gender is not inherent or biological the way sex is but that it is something to be performed or acted. This means that there is not an identity to which it can turn separate from its conditions. This can be applied to political and social movements both in and out of the art world and the ideas presented by the poststructuralists continues to be influential.

1. Stephen S Bush, "Nothing Outside the Text: Derrida and Brandom on Language and World," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 6, no. 2 (December 2009): 45-69.
2. Sara Salih. *Judith Butler*. London: Routledge, 2002, accessed February 21, 2017, http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Salih-Butler-Performativity-Chapter_3.pdf
3. Cressida Heyes, "Identity Politics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 21, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics/>.

Author: Rachel McCloskey

Date: 02.21.17

Pragmatics

Definition: *Pragmatics* is a branch of linguistics and semiotics that deals primarily with the study of language as used in conversation, specifically how language is employed in varying social or cultural situations. Words have implied meanings beyond their semantics, or their literal "coded" definitions and structures. These implied meanings and messages change depending on how they are said and in what context they are used. One's interpretation of a word or phrase in a conversation relies heavily on tone of voice, the speaker's apparent intent, location and time of the conversation, or the preexisting knowledge of the speaker and listener on the subject. In simple terms, pragmatics is known as the "rules for social language".

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association lists three major communication skills that are involved in the study of pragmatics in their article "Social Language

Use(Pragmatics)". The first is using language for specific purposes, including greeting, informing, or requesting. The second communication skill is when language is changed per the needs of the listener or social situation. Examples of this would be speaking differently to a child than to an adult, giving background information to a newcomer in a conversation, or whispering in a sacred building. The last pragmatics skill mentioned by the ASHA is following cultural or social rules for conversation, such as staying on topic, rephrasing misunderstood communication, and using verbal and nonverbal signals and gestures.¹

1. "Social Language Use(Pragmatics)", American Speech-Language-Hearing, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Pragmatics/>

Author: Megan Mitchell

Date: 01.31.17

Primitive Accumulation (Ursprüngliche Akkumulation)

Definition:			
Author:		Date:	

Proletariat

Definition: The proletariat, in terms of Marxism, is defined as the class whose major source of income was the selling of their own labor in the industrialized world. They are not considered synonymous with the working class through the lens of Marxism because the working class can encompass anyone in the working field, which includes everything from blue collar jobs to white collar. Economic depressions, with their unemployment and minimal wages, heavily influenced the proletariat.

Marx strongly argued that the bourgeoisie—those who owned the means of production—exploited the proletariat. They let men and women work grueling hours for pennies each day, while they made mounds of profit as the products that were made were often sold for more than the labor and materials cost. It was because of this constant exploitation of the workers that Marx called for the proletariat to overthrow capitalism. This, he believed, would create a classless society in which everyone would provide what they could to suit other's needs.

A good example of the exploitation and living/working conditions of the proletariat lies in the Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*. In this novel an immigrant named Jurgis Rudkus moves to Chicago in the meatpacking district in an attempt to attain the American Dream and simply finds the pains of the proletariat waiting for him.

Author: Rylee Mecham

Date: 10.11.16

Qualisign

Definition: In Charles Peirce's theory of signs, he subdivides the three terms of [semiotics](#) into three additional categories in order to define the elements of a sign. The first triad, known as a [representamen](#), organizes their signs in relation to the immediate object and concerns what form the object is in.

As the first part of the first trichotomy, a qualisign is a quality that functions like a sign. Unlike the other parts of the trichotomy, a qualisign has no identity in itself, but instead must be paired with a [sinsign](#) in order to create meaning. Peirce elaborates that a qualisign, cannot actually act as a sign until it is embodied; but the embodiment has nothing to do with its character as a sign.”¹ This explanation shows that a qualisign cannot exist without being represented by another sinsign. Otherwise, a qualisign simply embodies the quality of a feeling.

For example, the color yellow has little meaning on its own until it is contextualized with another object. When the color yellow is paired with a candy, it creates a different feeling than if it was paired with the yellow stop light.

1. Charles S Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. by Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931).

Author: Olivia Outzen

Date: 02.23.17

Quiddity

Definition:

Author:

Date:

Representamen

Definition: Charles Sanders Peirce was a semiotician who philosophized about the way that our culture and environment help to shape and define the meaning of things. He defined *representamen* as a thing that represents some other thing. Within this thought process, there are three aspects that help us to make sense of the things that surround us. There is first the sign (representamen) given by an object (the thing being represented). This sign is what is used to help identify or make sense of the object. The object can be any number of things, such as stop signs, traffic signals, flags, symbols, animals or people. So as an example, a sign or representamen of a person could be a house. We see the house and it signifies to us that it is where people live.

Author: Stephanie Corbett

Date: 10.11.16

Rheme

Definition: A rheme is one of three different relationships between a sign and its interpretant (see also *argument* and *dicent*). Rhemes are the most abstract of the three, as it determines what the interpretant *could be* in reality. The rheme thus depends on the possible qualities the sign and its object can have. A rheme is independent of

reality—neither true nor false until a definite object is defined with the qualities associated with the rheme.¹ Rhemes require imagination to supply the mind with objects that could match the qualities. A more concrete way to understand their function is to imagine a rheme as a form with blanks that need to be filled in.² Examples include:

1. ____ is purple
2. ____ feels ____
3. ____ is ____, ____, and ____

In each of the above examples there is a large number of possible objects and their qualities that the mind supplies that could fill the blanks to create true statements. These possibilities and their qualities are what comprise a rheme.

1. Jay Zeman, "Peirce's Theory of Signs," accessed January 30, 2017, http://users.clas.ufl.edu/jzeman/peirces_theory_of_signs.htm.
2. Nicole Everaert-Desmedt, "Peirce's Semiotics," *Signo*, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.signosemio.com/peirce/semiotics.asp>.

Author: Mykaela Rogers

Date: 02.18.17

Semantics

Definition: Semantics is the study of meaning of symbols, words and sentences. In art, semantics are universal, as semantics deal with the intent of the piece. Throughout cultures and languages, the overall meaning of an artwork remains the same. The intent of the piece is expressed through syntax, which comprises the actual words used to express an object or event and the rules that govern their arrangement in sentences. There can be no semantic understanding of an artwork without the syntax used to explain the meaning. Through the syntax, the semantics can be verbalized. The semantics of a piece may also determine the way the piece is verbally described, as the subject and composition can constrain the syntax used to express the piece. Art is expressed and often understood through implicit semantics.

Author: Emily Holt

Date: 10.07.16

Semiotics

Definition: Semiotics is a field of linguistics and is the study of signs and symbols, how they came to be, and how they create meaning. The field can help us to better understand art and literature. Two of the main figures of semiotics are Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, each of whom had distinct understandings of language and meaning. Although there is some difference in terminology and theory, the field of semiotics is concerned with the arbitrary nature of language (how words have no innate connection to the things to which they refer, except for the fact that they are assigned to that thing), and how the assignation of words to things or concepts creates meaning and therefore communication.

Take Felix Gonzalez Torres' candy installations for example. Although literally are brightly colored piles of candy that gets constantly replenished, the work is about the slow loss of a dying companion. But the replenishing of the candy signifies the loved one always staying with you even when they are gone. The more the viewer studies the meaning behind what the candy and weight of the pile signify, the more they can come to understand what the piece is trying to communicate.

Author: Alex Draper

Date: 10.10.16

Sign

Definition: Within the field of semiotics, a sign is an object, image, gesture, or other language that is used to communicate an idea that is conceptually linked to the sign. The formation of some signs come quite naturally while other signs require the complexities of shared culture to formulate understanding.

In the semiotic theory of Swiss linguist Charles de Saussure (1857-1913), a *sign* is the fundamental unit of communication. *Signs* are comprised of two necessary parts: the *signifier* (an object, image, symbol, word, etc.) and the *signified* (the concept communicated to the recipient).

American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) further explored this concept by dividing the signifiers of signs into three typologies: the icon, the index, and the symbol. Icons are signifiers by virtue of their visual resemblance of the signified, indexes signify by association or a causal link, and symbols signify strictly by culturally agreed standards.

Examples:

1. A drawing of a cat signifies a cat and is an [icon](#) because it visually resembles a cat.
2. The meowing sound made by a cat signifies by being an [index](#) of a cat; it itself is not a cat but is associated with cats.
3. The written or spoken English word 'cat' signifies a cat by being a [symbol](#), which is to say that this arbitrary word only signifies cat because culturally we have a mutual understanding of its meaning.

Author: Eric Edvalson

Date: 10.04.16

Simulacrum

Definition: *Simulacrum* is the singular form of *simulacra* meaning in the likeness of, or similar to. Its first usage dates to the Renaissance and was specifically used as an artistic term. A work of art representing something, therefore, is a simulacrum. Generally, a simulacrum would lack the quality of the original or the thing it's representing. It interprets the original rather than copies it.

For example: a photo-realistic painting is a replica of the original scene, however it may take away or add to the original scene. An artwork made to look 3D as an optical

illusion is a simulacrum of the form. An intentional distortion made to generate perspective (i.e. statues made with oversized hands or upper bodies placed above the viewer such that it appears normal from the viewer-point) creates a simulacrum of a real person. Other forms of realism; cinema; automation or simulated environments in film and engineering, etc. can also be simulacra. Independent robots, animals, puppets, and inanimate objects that perform like real, self-actualizing human characters can fit into this description as well as holograms or reproductions of reality, icons, signs and symbols.

The French Postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard saw dogmatically faithful reproductions like those in Pop Art as “hyperreal”—items that are not just a copy of something, but that take on their own reality and begin to act independently from the original. The signs of the real substitute for the real.

Author: Loretta Farnsworth

Date: 10.10.16

Sinsign

Definition: A sinsign is a type of sign that projects meaning because of a physical characteristic or reaction to an actual event. (e.g. a bandaid on a person's arm is a sinsign of an injury beneath it, smoke is a sinsign of a fire, irritated eyes might be a sinsign of emotion, and bad breath may be a sinsign of having just eaten an entire loaf of garlic bread).

The concept of sinsigns was explored by the scientist Charles Sanders Peirce, through his theory of sign relations, or semiotics. In his writings, he extensively categorized signs and elements of signs. Peirce defined a sign as an embodiment of an idea or concept by means of imitation, indication, or symbol.ⁱ Each sign is made up of parts: the object, the sign-vehicle, and the interpretant. An object that is a sign may have many characteristics (for example, a paint sample chip, used to choose between colors, is square, it's made of wood or cardboard, it's flat and small) but only one characteristic actually sends meaning (in this case the color of the paint chip).ⁱⁱ This singular element is called the sign-vehicle. Categories of sign-vehicles include: a qualisign, a legisign, and a sinsign. The example of the paint chip is a qualisign, because it relies on abstract qualities of an object. A legisign relies on existing patterns or laws. Sinsigns differ from the alternate types, because the signifying characteristic is indicative of an individual incident. The sign is specific to the event it symbolizes.

1. Charles Sanders Peirce, “Three trichotomies of Signs,” *Philosophical Writings of Pierce*, trans. Andy Blunden, ed. Justus Buchler (Dover 1955),

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/peirce2.htm>.

2. Albert Atkin, “Peirce's Theory of Signs,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, last edited November 15, 2010, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/peirce-semiotics/>.

Author: Rebecca Watkins

Date: 01.31.17

Situationism

Definition:

Author:

Date:

Specific Objects

Definition: *Specific objects* is a term coined by minimalist artist Donald Judd in a 1965 essay of the same name. Specific objects were a new variety of art viewed differently from both traditional painting and sculpture. Referring to these artworks as objects removes them from a conventional view of art and recognizes that they are actual physical items. These artworks tend to focus on simple geometric forms, repetition, and abstraction.

Judd saw the creation of specific objects as a broad movement and thought of them as being more unified by what they didn't have in common with traditional sculpture and painting than by what they had in common with each other. In Judd's essay he describes objects as disparate as Frank Stella's shaped canvases and Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures of ice cream cones as specific objects. The tendency in these artworks is toward pure form, with a rejection of illusion. For example, traditional painting on a rectangular plane is inherently illusionistic, as the edges of the piece mark a clear end of the work, and the space within nearly always alluded to something else. Stella's shaped canvases removed this typical property of painting and created a specific object that was based in pure form and worked in harmony with the wall rather than rejecting the wall.

Author: Tanner Halversen

Date: 09.20.16

Structuralism

Definition:			
Author:		Date:	

Sublimation

Definition: *Sublimation* is the act of transforming a base or primal desire into a form that is more socially acceptable. This can take the form of art or another type of act or performance that is seen as normal and acceptable in society but also satisfies the primal desire. The father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud speaks of it mainly in sexual terms, where we sublimate the base sexual desire so as to function in society and maintain a level of psychological balance. Practices like monogamy are thought to be a result of sublimation. Sublimation also helps us satisfy our need for acceptance and security by putting on a surface of respectability to our base desires, however, the base desire is still always present under the socially acceptable act.

Author: Kheng Lim

Date: 10.10.16

Superstructure

Definition: John Storey explains Marx's use of the term *superstructure*:

The “superstructure” (which develops in conjunction with a specific mode of production) consists of institutions (political, legal, educational, cultural, etc.), and “definite forms of social consciousness” (political, religious, ethical, philosophical, aesthetic, cultural, etc.) generated by these institutions.¹

In short, the superstructure is the cultural byproduct and sculptor of the [base](#). For example, certain types of educational models will rise to create the workers that the [bourgeoisie](#) want. Conversely, the workers will help validate and build that educational model by participating in it.

1. John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 60.

Author: Christopher Lynn

Date: 09.14.17

Symbol

Definition: Within the field of [Semiotics](#), [signs](#) are typically broken down into three main categories: [icon](#), [index](#), and symbol. Unlike an icon, a symbol bears no logical resemblance to the thing it represents. For example: a Valentine’s heart symbolizes love, but is representing an abstract concept with an image that bears no resemblance to a heart. Written words (at least in most Western languages) bear to physical resemblance to the things they represent. The word “dog” does not look like a dog, nor does it recall any characteristics of a dog. It is an arbitrary assignation of a visual to represent an idea.

Author: Christopher Lynn

Date: 09.14.17

Synesthesia

Definition: Synesthesia: Synesthesia is a phenomena dealing with the senses and how they can be interconnected. A person who has this condition can often hear something that triggers as a color in their brain; or when there is a powerful smell introduced into the room, instead of “smelling” it, an affected individual might feel it—describing the smell as *sharp* as if it were a texture. Within the context of art, *synesthesia* can have two kinds of meanings:

1. Art that deals with how stimulus to the different senses (smell, taste, ect) can be the driving influence behind color choices, or composition for synesthetic people who identify themselves as artists.
2. Art that works to combine different mediums, colors, or methods of working to create an artwork that echoes the effect of overlapping senses can be considered synesthesia.

Author: Elizabeth Stone

Date: 09.19.16

Syntactics

Definition: Syntactics is a branch of semiotics that specifically analyzes the relationship between signs and their significance in the form of sentences. It is the arrangement of words and phrases to create coherent sentences in language. The word syntactics comes from the word *syntax* which refers to the set list of principles that rule the overall structure of our sentences. We can use our knowledge of symbolism through cinematography such as understanding rain at a funeral conveys sadness or recognizing an object in the background may foreshadow an important event.

Author: Ishel Brimhall

Date: 10.04.16

Tautology

Definition: The literal definition of tautology is the saying of the same thing twice in different words, generally to be considered to be a fault of style. In art, tautology is art that poses a self-evident statement that is necessarily true; they are self-referentially true. These may be paintings that say 'painting' or a neon light that says 'neon light'. On Kawara has used tautology in many of his works, including his "date paintings" in which he paints the date of the day he made the painting. This is also seen in Sol LeWitt's painting 'Red Square, White Letters'. Tautology is the redundant phrase itself, while the artwork is the redundant image or sign. As in Jasper Johns' flags, we see an image that represents the title of the work.

Author: Kallie Hancock

Date: 09.15.16

Theater

Definition: In his essay "Art and Objecthood" Michael Fried says that modernist painting is at war with theater. Modernist art forms were very preoccupied in asserting their uniqueness, the essence of their particular art form. For painters and sculptors, the greatest threat to their essence was theater. Theater, as an art form, conveys an experience, a situation to an audience. The delineation between painting/sculpting and theater was blurred when certain painting movements, such as the literalists (or minimalists) tried to assert the objecthood of painting and sculpting. They believed painting and sculpture should have a wholeness that could be grasped as a single shape and absorbed at a glance. In order to accomplish this, they made their work large, simplistic, and imposing. Viewers had to distance themselves from the work to view it, and suddenly the viewing became a situation, an experience with a subject (or audience) and an object, theatrical in nature. When seen in this light, paintings and sculpture became what Fried called "an un compelling and presenceless kind of theater." However, in the end, Fried asserts that modernist painting saves itself from becoming theater in its instantaneousness—its "perpetual presentness" or ability for the viewer to absorb it in its entirety at a glance—making it in no way ephemeral like theater.

Author: Shae Warnick

Date: 09.19.16

Weltanschauung

Definition: The German word *Weltanschauung* literally means “world view,” and refers to a wide-ranging idea, understanding of the world, or personal philosophy of the universe in relation to humans. It includes a person’s or a group’s philosophical, moral, and religious interpretation of life. *Weltanschauung* is the view the artist holds and uses to explain the world. It is a lens through which the artist can explore social contexts of artistic forms. *Weltanschauung* is an inseparable part of art, because art passes on cultural information and examines social structures through individuals’ perspectives. Many artists also use art as a way to understand certain viewpoints, or a medium to examine existence and the world.

Author: Sára Bown

Date: 10.09.16

Utopia

Definition: As in Sir Thomas Walter’s novel, “Utopia” is portrayed as a perfect place. But, in reality, it is nowhere, being believed as unreachable. Instead of interpreting Utopia as a final landmark it can be used as an ideal reference to better interpret our society’s current state and thereby oppose any standing objections. As philosopher Peter Kropotkin declares, speaking of Utopia conjures up “present intolerable arrangements and pessimism toward the present state as opposed to a more positive idealistic future.” This can be understood through the lenses of manifest and latent interpretation. As one views what could be, one actually perceives more easily what is not.

Modernists, as an example, sought to create a utopian society through the use of technology as a mode to advance socially. We all reach toward a utopian ideal when we act in order to improve the present, whether it be socially, politically, religiously, or on a personal level.

The purpose of referring to Utopia is to unveil the reservations we hold about our present society. Distaste for the present leads to potential optimistic change. As artist Dr. David Bell states, “Utopia is not a destination but a direction... it is ‘a place of becoming; a place-in-process. It remains a utopia only to the extent that it is open to change, and to the extent that that change is open to change.’”¹

1. David M. Bell, “Art’s Utopian Function,” *David M. Bell*, accessed September 20, 2016, <https://nomadicutopianism.wordpress.com/2011/04/22/art-and-utopia/>.

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Zeitgeist

Definition: *Zeitgeist* comes from the German word meaning spirit and refers to the general feel of an era. It is the “spirit” or mood of a time period in reference to the intellect, culture, and moral. It is reflected in the art and the commonality of art within a certain period in history. It changes as the ideas, beliefs, and spirit driving the art scene and relevant

work shifts into a new phase or era. It is a type of basis of what is informing the art scene or driving it within a designated era. An example given is the ideas of faith in salvation through technological advancement would be the zeitgeist of the modern period while postmodern zeitgeist would be feelings again those expressions of certainty.

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