

Is a Picture Worth A Thousand Words? Engaging with Visual Culture

Handout 1: Media & Themes

Media: The term media in this context means 'the agency or means of doing something ... the material or form by which something is communicated.'

Oxford Dictionary

Types of Media:

Advertising	Cyber	Graffiti	Products
Animation	Digital	Maps	Signage
Architecture	Film	Packaging	Spatial Design
Artefacts	Fine Art	Performance	
Clothing	Flags	Photography	

Themes

Authorship

The role of the author in the creation of imagery and in the construction of meanings; the role of the author should be considered in relation to the role of the viewer.

Ethnicity

Civilisations, traditions and customs of different ethnic groups, and the influence this has to interpretation or image creation; Western representation of non-Western ethnic groups.

Gender

Constructions of masculinity and femininity; gender as an unstable concept which is informed by biology and environment.

Family

The history of the family and the changing family unit.

Memory

How we remember; representing memory in and through imagery; the image as a form of remembrance and archive.

Narrative

Storytelling and the construction of narrative through imagery. History made up of narratives.

Race

Race and identity; stereotypes, prejudice, racism, apartheid.

Religion

Organised and non-organised religion; the role of religion in societies and identity construction. Responses to and uses of religion through history.

Sexuality

How male and female sexuality has been presented in imagery throughout history; how sexuality and identity have become interlinked through imagery. A key consideration, particularly in art and visual culture discourse is how the body is sexualised and becomes an object or commodity. It is important to recognise how sexuality is treated within different cultures and societies.

Space/ Place

Architectural, public and private spaces; physical and imaginative. How the body and mind responds to space and place; place as a symbol, site and structure.

The Canon

Hierarchies of art; the art history survey. The survey attempted to give an understanding of how art evolved and what its great canonic works and artists were. Traditional art history canons were predominantly male and excluded many artists who were not considered worth of the canon. The notion of a canon is now severely interrogated and scrutinised, and often disregarded within contemporary art.

The Gallery

The role of the gallery in culture and the history of art. The gallery space was traditionally the place where people would view art works, and was considered an exclusive space only understood and accessed by certain members of society. This is no longer the case. The gallery has a role to play in education and visualisation and presentation of imagery, but many visual artists are now taking their art outside the gallery space, into more public environments.