Image Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture

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- A professor of Communications at the University of Massachusetts.
- Author of numerous books and articles about media.
- Best known as the producer and director of films and videos, such as Tough Guise, that deal with gender, sexuality and race to commercialism, violence and politics.
The Beginning of an Image-Based Society

- Before the 1920’s products were advertised by celebrating their function through text.
- During the 1920’s companies needed to sell and abundant of “nonessential” products with the help of printing and color photography.
- The consumer society was literally taught how to read commercial messages.
The Good Life
Spread of Image-Based Influence

- Gender Identity
- Politics
- Marketing of Toys
- Auditory Perception
Gender Identity

- Not real depiction of gender but pulled from a very concentrated pool of people.
- Women are defined along the lines of sexuality.
- Gender is displayed by not the way that men and women actually behave, but by which we think they behave.
Politics

- Presidency is most susceptible to image politics
- Focus has shifted from “real issues” to symbolism and emotionally based-imagery.
- The idea that presidents win because they have a better ad campaign.
- Politics is conducted on a symbolic realm and that a notion of politics is based upon people having a coherent and deep vision of their relationship to the social world is no longer relevant.
"Children's imaginative play has become the target of marketing strategy, allowing marketers to define the limits of children's imaginations.... Play in fact has become highly ritualized - less an exploration and solidification of personal experiences and developing conceptual schema than are articulation of the fantasy world provided by market designers. Imaginative play has shifted one degree closer to mere limitation and assimilation"
"Since the marketing targets and features different emotional and narrative elements (action/conflicts and emotional attachment and maintenance), boys and girls also experience difficulty in playing together with these toys."
Auditory Perception
“Many people report that listening to a song after watching the video strongly affects the interpretation they give to it - the visual images are replayed in the imagination. In that sense, the surrounding commodity image-system works to fix - or at least to limit -the scope of imaginative interpretation”.
Speed and Fragmentation: the commodity information system

- Reliance on visual modes of representation and increasing speed and rapidity of the images that constitute it.
- Vignette- approach: in which the narrative and “reason why” advertising are subsumed under a rapid succession of lifestyle images, meticulously timed with music, that directly sell feeling and emotion.
"They're a wonderful way to pack in information: all those scenes and emotions-cut, cut, cut. Also they permit you a very freestyle approach - meaning that as long as you stay true to your basic vignette theme you can usually just drop one and shove in another. They're a dream to work with because the parts are sort of interchangeable."
Education in an Image Saturated Society

- We need an image based system because that is the way the modern world understands itself given that our reality is always socially constructed.
- Believes that visual literacy should be taught in school.

"Citizens of the democratic societies should undertake a course of intellectual self-defense to protect themselves from manipulation and control, and to lay the basis for meaningful democracy"
- Do you believe our society today is still as susceptible to this type of imagery? Or does it take more to persuade us?
- Do you think that advertising is manipulating at all? Why or why not?