

Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man - Marshall McLuhan

introduction

"Media hot and cool"

Slang offers an immediate index to changing perception. Slang is based not on theories but on immediate experience.

"the medium is the message" clarified that any technology gradually creates a totally new human environment.

in the electronic age, The young student today grows up in an electrically configured world. It is a world not of wheels but of circuits, not of fragments but of integral patterns.

"the medium is the message" means-

in terms of the electronic age, that a totally new environment has been created .

The content of this new environment is the old mechanized environment of the industrial age.

The new environment reprocesses the old one as radically as TV is reprocessing the film.

The machine turned Nature into an art form.

"the culturally disadvantaged child."

this child exists not only in the slums but increasingly in the suburbs of the upper-income homes. The culturally disadvantaged child is the TV child. For TV has provided a new environment of low visual orientation and high involvement that makes accommodation to our older educational establishment quite difficult.

The power of the arts to anticipate future social and technological developments, by a generation and more, has long been recognized.

1. The Medium is the Message

...in a culture like ours, it is sometimes a bit of a shock in operational and practical fact.

the personal and social consequences of any medium, result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.

Many people would be disposed to say that it was not the machine, but what one did with the machine, that was its meaning or message.

The medium is the message because Medium shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action.

electric light

is pure information

It is a medium without a message unless it is used to spell out some verbal as or name.

It is not till the electric light is used to spell out some brand name that it is noticed as a medium. Then it is not the light but the content (or what is really another medium) that is noticed.

=The message of the movie medium is that of transition from lineal connections to configurations. It is the transition that produced the now quite correct observation.

An abstract painting represents direct manifestation of creative thought processes as they might appear in computer designs.

For cubism substitutes all facets of an object simultaneously for the "point of view" or facet of perspective illusion. Instead of the specialized illusion of the third dimension on canvas, cubism sets up an interplay of planes and contradiction or dramatic conflict of patterns, lights, textures that "drives home the message" by involvement.

Cubism by giving the inside and outside, the top, bottom, back, and front and the rest, in two dimensions, drops the illusion of perspective in favor of instant sensory awareness of the whole. Cubism, by seizing on instant total awareness, suddenly announced that the medium is the message.

The effect of the medium is made strong and intense just because it is given another medium as "content"

The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance. The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense perception.

2. Media Hot and Cold

Hot medium (low in participation): Radio, Movie, Photograph, we are hot, past mechanical time, waltz,

Cool medium (high in participation or completion by the audience): Telephone, TV, Cartoon, speech, backward countries , TV age, Jazz

A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in high definition.

High definition is the state of being well filled with data.

It makes all the difference whether a hot medium is used in a hot or a cool culture. The hot radio medium used in cool or nonliterate cultures has a violent effect, quite unlike its effect, where radio is felt as entertainment. A cool or low literacy culture cannot accept hot media like movies or radio as entertainment. They are, at least, as radically upsetting for them as the cool TV medium has proved to be for our high literacy world.