

Kitsch

In the 1930s, for instance, the Yes-and No cast of mind was very difficult to justify. The problems of that decade were problems in regard to which no ambiguous or intermediate position could be held: one was for or against Hitler, for or against Franco, for or against Roosevelt. Whoever hedged on those issues was a scoundrel. The 1930s were also a period during which there was a genuine divide between high art and kitsch. The big artist - Braque, Matisse, Bonnard, Klee - was a sainted hermit, rarely seen in forum or stoa and quite untainted by what were to be known twenty years later as 'the mass media'. Even the surrealists, though in principle totally subversive, were in fact among the priests of the temple. This is the context in which Clement Greenberg published *Avant Garde and Kitsch*. The renewed celebrity of this essay dates from its re-printing in 1961, but it remains a document of the late 1930s - a period at which, as Greenberg says, 'the personal philistinism of Hitler and Stalin was not accidental to the political roles they play' and the abhorrent qualities of the Horst-Wessel song related as much to its part in Nazi mythology as to its purely musical shortcomings. This was the context in which Greenberg spoke of 'that thing to which the Germans give the wonderful name of Kitsch: popular, commercial art and literature with their chromeotypes, magazine covers, illustrations, ads, slick and pulp fiction, comics, Tin Pan Alley musicals, tap dancing, Hollywood movies, etc. etc.'. Kitsch, he said later, is 'vicarious experience and faked sensations ... the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times'. He also spoke of the precondition for kitsch; 'the availability close at hand of a fully matured cultural tradition whose discoveries, acquisitions and perfected self-consciousness Kitsch can take advantage of for its own ends'. Between kitsch and high culture the relationship was all take and no give, all looting and debasement and exploitation, with nothing to counterbalance it. The most that could be said in 1939 was that now and then kitsch produced 'something that had an authentic folk flavour'. The rest was petit-bourgeois pap.

page 24-25, *Pop Art Redefined*, John Russell and Suzi Gablik, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers.

Kitsch is art of the masses. controls the people through art production. separates art into low and high art. " Popular culture is low art"

Taken from the German verb meaning "to make cheap". kitsch has come to mean vulgar, mass-produced imitations of 'objects of high' art and design. Today, the concept of kitsch is problematic since, as the old adage goes, 'one man's kitsch is another man's culture'. Moreover, there has been a tendency in Post-Modern art and design to use kitsch 'knowingly' in order to parody concepts of good taste.

Liz Dawtrey, Toby Jackson, Mary Masterton, Pam Meecham, Paul Wood, *Investigating Modern Art*, Yale University Press, 1996, pp.177

Art and culture, Clement Greenberg, 1939

Kitsch is popular, commercial art and literature with their chromeotypes, magazine covers, illustrations, ads, slick and pulp fiction, comics, Tin Pan Alley music, tap dancing, Hollywood movies, etc.

Kitsch is a product of the industrial revolution which urbanized the masses for Western Europe and America and established what is called universal literacy. page 9

Kitsch, using for raw material the debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture, welcomes and cultivates this insensibility. It is the source of its profits. Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas.

Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the

same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money-not even their time. page 10

The process of art , kitch page 15

Culture

The proliferation of the term 'culture' as both prefix and suffix(youth culture, mass-culture, television culture, culture-shock, etc.) means that it is difficult to pin down because its precise meaning may vary from one discipline to the next. In the last century it would have been safe to generalize; to say that culture was the material expression of a society (so the pyramids are the material remains of ancient Egyptian culture). However (and given that there are now academic courses called 'Cultural Studies') nowadays culture is not just a reference to material production in itself but of the range of meanings generated by all manner of human activities.

Dialectic of Enlightenment- Max Horkheimer and Theodor W.Adorno, 1944

THE CULTURE INDUSTRY: ENLIGHTENMENT AS MASS DECEPTION

Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part.

Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries.

The culture industry means:
those who serve up the data of experience.
entertainment industry
the most rigid of all styles.
is pornographic and prudish

Automobiles,bombs, and movies has made the technology of the culture industry no more than the achievement of standardization and mass production, sacrificing whatever involved a distinction between the logic of the work and that of the social system.This the result not of a law of movement in technology as such but of its function in today's economy.

Consumers appear as statistics on research organization charts, and are divided by income groups into red, green, and blue areas: the technique is that used for any type of propaganda.

Kant-What the culture manufacturers offer him. industry robs the individual of his function.

While the mechanism is to all appearances planned by those who serve up the data of experience, that is, by the culture industry.

The development of the culture industry has led to the predominance of the effect, the obvious touch, and the technical detail over the work itself- which once expressed an idea, but was liquidated together with the idea.

The whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry.

for the purposes of mechanical reproduction surpasses the rigor and general currency of any "real style"

Like Avant-garde art, the entertainment industry determines its own language, down to its very syntax and vocabulary, by the use of anathema.

The style of the culture industry, which no longer has to test itself against any refractory material, is also the negation of style.

In the culture industry the notion of genuine style is seen to be the aesthetic equivalent of domination. Style considered as mere aesthetic regularity is a romantic dream of the past.

As late as Schonberg and Picasso, the great artists have retained a mistrust of style, and at crucial points have subordinated it to the logic of the matter. What Dadaists and expressionists called the untruth of style as such triumphs today in the sung jargon of a crooner, in the carefully contrived elegance of a film star, and even in the admirable expertise of a photograph of a peasant's squalid hut. Style represents a promise in every work of art.

The system of the culture industry comes from the more liberal industrial nations, and all its characteristic media, such as movies, radio, jazz, and magazines, flourish there. Its progress, to be sure, had its origin in the general laws of capital.

The culture industry can pride itself on having energetically executed the previously clumsy transposition of art into the sphere of consumption, on making this a principle, on divesting amusement of its obstructive naivetes and improving the type of commodities.

The purity of bourgeois art

Nevertheless the culture industry remains the entertainment business. Its influence over the consumers is established by entertainment

Simulacra

Jean Baudrillard, "Art after Modernism", 1984, p.

less of referentials. No originals, computer space. Fetishism of the copy.

Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory - Precession of Simulacra - it is the map that engenders the territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the desert which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own: The desert of the real itself. p.253

Hyperreality and simulation are deterrents of every principle and of every objective; they turn against power this deterrence which is so well utilized for a long time itself. For, finally, it was capital which was the first to feed throughout its history on the destruction of every referential, of every human goal, which shattered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange the iron law of its power. It was the first to practice deterrence, abstraction, disconnection, deterritorialization, etc.; and if it was capital which fostered reality, the reality principle, it was also the first to liquidate it in the extermination of every use value, of every real equivalence, of production and wealth, in the very sensation we have of the unreality of the stakes and the omnipotence of manipulation. Now, it is this very logic which is today hardened even more against it. And when it wants to fight this catastrophic spiral by secreting one last glimmer of reality, on which to found one last glimmer of power, it only multiplies the signs and accelerates the play of simulation. page 268

Spectacle

Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle, 1967, Black&Red

is recycle images-propaganda, commercials, comics and films.

commodity is the aspect of everyday of life. It is the way we think capitalism is linked to all area of life.

Public image most visible manifestation of spectacle.

#2

The spectacle is general, as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomous movement of the nonliving.

#3

The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as instrument of unification.

#4

The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images.

#6

The spectacle is both the result and the project of the existing mode of production. It is not a supplement to the real world, an additional decoration. It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society. The spectacle's form and content are identically the total justification of the existing system's conditions and goals.

#7

The language of the spectacle consists of signs of the ruling production, which at the same time are the ultimate goal of this production.

#10

The concept of spectacle unifies and explains a great diversity of apparent phenomena.

#12

The spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable and inaccessible.

#14

In the spectacle, which is the image of the ruling economy, the goal is nothing, development everything. The spectacle aims at nothing other than itself.

#15

The spectacle is the main production of present-day society.

#34

The spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image.

#71

What the spectacle offers as eternal is based on change and must change with its base.

Medium

Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man - Marshall McLuhan

1965

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.

Marshall McLuhan believes that the arrival of a new medium consigns prior media to obsolescence. It is true that each new channel of communication has its effect on the existing ones, but so far the effect has been cumulative and expansive. The number of possibilities and combinations increases with each new channel, whereas McLuhan assumes a kind of steady state of a number of messages that cannot be exceeded. Consider the relation of movies and TV. At first, movies patronized the tiny screen and the low-definition image in asides in

films; then movies began to compete with TV by expanding into large screens (CinemaScope and Cinerama, for instance) and by using higher-definition film stock (for example, VistaVision). Today, TV shows old movies (more than two years old) continually and in so doing has created a new kind of Film Society audience of TV-trained movie-goers. In addition to making TV films, Hollywood is making sexier and tougher films, leaving the delta of family entertainment largely to TV. Movies, now, are more diversified and aimed at more specialized audiences, which is not what McLuhan's theory (which would expect the extinction of the movie) requires. Marshall McLuhan's theory became the main theoretical background of Pop Art. His brilliant thinking about art also gave a great influence to Pop artists.

Lawrence Alloway, American Pop Art, (Collier Macmillan Publishers 1974 by Whitney Museum of American art), pp.4

American Art of the 1960s, Irving Sandler, 1988, Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, PP. 78-79

Marshall McLuhan was the most talked about intellectual in the art world of the sixties. He even became a cult figure, particularly to Pop artists and to those in the circle of his friend John Cage who were attempting to introduce new technologies into art. McLuhan took the limelight soon after his book *Understanding Media* was published in 1964. McLuhan proclaimed that a revolution in communications was in progress. This was being brought about by the decline of old technologies and the five centuries since Gutenberg's invention of movable type were typographical-linear. All linearism, said McLuhan, was obsolete. McLuhan's theories were used to justify the new art of the new generation, which had focused its attention on the properties of the various media. McLuhan believed that television was a "cool" as opposed to "hot" medium. A "hot" medium provides a great deal of information to viewers, so that they need not participate; they remain passive observers. In a "cool" medium, such as television, imagery is poorly defined, low information. It has to be filled in by the viewers; their response must be active, or "hot." Like television, sixties art was "cool"; there was talk, as I recall, that this was because the generation of artists who created it had been reared on television. Thus notion of "hot" and "cool" media is problematic. So is McLuhan's basic idea that the medium is the message, or so it seems today, but in the sixties, both conceptions were plausible.

Cyborg