

Research Essay

Name

Professor

Course

University

Date

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Appropriation has for a long time been an instrument used in art, and has always been divisive in its understanding and acceptance. Art usually represent people's ideas. What and how they feel about something, how they see something and their opinions on what has to be done to make things right. And needless to mention, artists have a different way of doing work and their sources of motivation exist in variable forms. For example, an artist can be feeling uneasy at national politics and what the very people voted into office for public service they are doing. This inspires him or her to do art to criticize the politicians. Artists who are romance enthusiasts express, would do work related to intimacy, relationships and friendships (Collins, 1995).

This paper will not make much sense if the meaning of appropriation of art is not explained. Appropriation of art is the utilization of pre-existing objects or images with little or no transformation applied to them. The history of art and its success has heavily depended on appropriation. Visual art, literary art, music art and performing art all depend on appropriation to make the most natural sense. They say originality is key to success in art, but artists such as Barbara Kruger see a different picture.

Barbara Kruger refutes the connotation of originality in post-modern art. Being a post-modern artist, Barbara Kruger maintains that borrowing existing imagery or aspects of imagery or any artistic product, an artist is re-contextualizing or appropriating the original imagery. This in turn permits the viewer to do a negotiation of the meaning of the original imagery in a different, more relevant, or more current context. For instance, imagery that represented wars centuries ago, are now symbolizing piece.

Barbara Kruger in 1987 enthused: "I'm interested in coupling the ingratiating of wishful thinking with the criticality of knowing better. To use the device to get people to look at the

picture, and then to displace the conventional meaning that an image usually carries with perhaps a number of different readings"

Long time ago, the meaning of art was down to the artist. Imagery used to symbolize war was interpreted as war-based art. However, contemporary art has something different to offer the viewer; the viewer has the liberty to interpret the art as he or she wishes.

When the images are separated from the original context of their own media, we allow them to take on new and varied meanings. As a result, anthropologists hold that appropriation is a special way of studying cultural change and cross-cultural contact. Culture is represented by imagery and art. Every community or ethnicity has its own way of expressing its culture. Dragon imagery represents Chinese culture and the culture of a greater part of the South East Asia. Camel imagery belongs to the Middle East culture and images of arrows, crossbows and other crude weapons say something about a warring community or reveal that hunting and gathering is/was the main economic activity.

Images and aspects of culture that have been under appropriation are commonly involving popular and recognizable art works, well known and understood literature, and easily accessible images from the media. The Chinese "Red Dragon" culture or Leonardo Da Vinci's ingenious drawings symbolize adherence to cultural values. Just to walk out of context a little bit, archeologist and anthropologists visit ancient caves to uncover the mysteries surrounding the culture of a specific community. By looking at the wall drawings, utensils, and some forms of treasures, these scientists get to know what the community that lived there over 2000 years have been doing, what they have been eating and wearing and how they related to each other within the community and other societies. So when an artist takes such drawings the way they are and

present them to a curious audience and give them the opportunity to analyze and come up with their own conclusions about what they see is just too exceptional to be ignored.

Like anything else, appropriation has a pioneer in the form of Marcel Duchamp. Marcel Duchamp engineered the concept of the ‘readymade’, which basically involved an item being chosen by the artist signed by the artist and repositioned into a gallery context. Sometimes breaking the rules of originality enhances originality itself. There is nothing like one being a copycat or anything close to that reference as accepting others artists’ creativity is appreciating your own creativity.

Pastiche and Parody

A pastiche is a piece of literary, theatrical, musical or visual art in imitation of the style or character of the work of one or more other artists. Pastiche, unlike parody usually celebrates, rather than mocks, the work it imitates. In other words pastiche (French) or pasticcio (Italian) is a word that is in description of works that are either composed by a multitude of authors, or that incorporate stylistic aspects of other artists’ work (Rowe, 2011).

Cupit (2009) is a strong proponent of Julie Heffman’s work and what it represents. Julie’s work involves lots of genres and images that are conventionally feminine by nature whose visual rhetoric are inseparable. Julie was a political and a social activist who decided to keep a low profile and most of her opinions were in art; pastiche to be particular. Julie, like Barbara Kruger, held strong feminists views. Julie’s works at first glance appear to embrace an essentialist connotation of femininity, but a closer analysis at their maker and their execution demonstrates political and social moral lessons. The works of Barbara and Julie were prominent decades ago and now modern artists have something – although not-so-different - to offer.

Contemporary artists use visual references to promote the aesthetics of the past. Adrian Piper- a quality artist and art theorist once referred to postmodern art as: a “dissolution of faith in intellectual progress, and a corresponding attitude of mourning for the past glories and achievements of all previous stages of Euro-ethnic art history”. According to Cupit (2009), “Within this atmosphere of longing for a time when the social-political-cultural-visual connection seemed more relevant and fundamental to society than it does at the beginning of the twenty-first century”. So Julie Heffman uses pastiche as a technical skill ‘to reference the creators and creations of history with a more personal and less woeful motive’

It is our understanding that the concept of postmodernism is beyond our ability to comprehend as scholars and professionals of art, but its effect can be felt a mile away. Unfamiliarity of what postmodernism in art covers has led to the development of resistance from traditional literature and architecture (Jameson, 1982).

Jameson (1982) asserts the importance of pastiche in postmodernism. This author is careful to draw a thick line between pastiche and parody: “must first explain this term, which people generally tend to confuse with or assimilate to that related verbal phenomenon called parody. Both pastiche and parody involve the imitation or, better still, the mimicry of other styles and particularly of the mannerisms and stylistic twitches of other styles. It is obvious that modern literature in general offer a very rich field for parody, since the great modern writers have all been defined by the invention or production of rather unique styles: think of the Faulknerian long sentence or of D.H. Lawrence's characteristic nature imagery; think of Wallace Stevens's peculiar way of using abstractions; think also of the mannerisms of the philosophers, of Heidegger for example, or Sartre; think of the musical styles of Mahler or Prokofiev. All of these

styles, however different from each other, are comparable in this: each is quite unmistakable; once one is learned, it is not likely to be confused with something else.”

Jameson (1982) further stresses that parody is not in honor of the artist and his or her work, but some form of mockery. In contrast to pastiche, parody never offers the viewer the opportunity to read between the lines and interpret the art in accordance to his or her thoughts; and instead, it directly acts in mockery of the original imagery. It is like when a modern artist imitates Leonardo Da Vinci’s work with the view of mocking him. Parody continues to add problems to the already complicated art fraternity and it is time that artists show respect to one another unconditionally.

On the other side of the road, what would happen if someone does not believe in the existence of normal language no more? What if the speech and linguistic norm of the language is not ticking all the boxes? This is the point that parody chips in.

With everything comes a limit. If ridiculing one’s art is not adding any benefit to the viewer or his or her intended audience, the acceptance of art as it is becomes a paramount thing. Barbara and Julie have made tremendous contributions to the understanding and appreciation of pastiche and parody and the concept of appropriation as a whole.

Conclusion

Appropriation has for a long time been an instrument used in art, and has always been divisive in its understanding and acceptance. Art usually represent people’s ideas. What and how they feel about something, how they see something and their opinions on what has to be done to make things right. While the role of traditional art and originality in art are of material importance, postmodernism should also be accorded a special place in the society. As far as

pastiche is concerned, there is nothing like originality in art. Considering that most artists use observation techniques to study what is happening around them and in the society before coming up with their artistic innovation to speak to the world about everyday issues, there is nothing original. Pastiche is a form of appreciating one's creativity and at the same time allowing the audience the freedom of interpretation.

Parody has equal importance to say the least. Like literary, movie and music critiques, parody serves to scrutinize and evaluate the imagery of an artist. The source must done a critique on and that is normal. Even in art and history classes, students are encouraged by their instructors to write reviews or critiques of sources and by identifying the weakness of an art, the learner broadens his or her horizon of artistic thinking, creativity and constructive imagination. At the end of the day, critiques are a path to perfection in art. In general, postmodernism and art are correlated and each cannot do without the other (Collins, 1995).

The above examples and explanations show that appropriation, with parody and pastiche included have not started today. Appropriation is a culture of art that has enjoyed existence of centuries if not millennia (Eco, 1982).

References

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