

Chapter 5 outline for note-taking

“Every culture has had its graven images. What do ours say about us?”

The Second Commandment: *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.”* --Deuteronomy 5: 4, 5

Visual theory

Gestalt, a form of constructivism. The whole is different from the parts, the whole is more than the mere sum of the parts.

- Similarity >> Dissimilarity (We note what is different >> furniture chairs example; blue flowers/yellow flower example)
- Proximity >> photos of people in groups, page 52
- Continuation >> Target bra ad page 53, my two print examples, baseball sports surgery advert
- Common fate (or grouping) >> why celebrities are used to endorse products.

Semiotics (what is signified), >> scissors example >> draw outline of scissors and write my name under it. Say it was left on my desk as a joke >> what happens? HOW does this happen? Semiotics: Miss California.

Cognitive theory (how the brain works); in your book, Miss Rhode Island. Barely a mention. This is perhaps because of chapters 2-4, which explain how the brain works.

What is Semiotics?

Semiotics is the study of signs, explicit and implicit. A sign is something that stands for something else, anything that stands for something else. The meaning must be learned, in other words. For something to be a sign, the viewer must understand its meaning(s).

Charles Sanders Peirce's types of signs:

- Iconic
- Indexical
- Symbolic

Iconic – they are much like what they depict. We discussed this with comic books. A human face.

Indexical – A footprint is an index of the presence of a person. Exhaust for pollution. Sundial for time, for the sun. Smoke for the presence of fire, heat. Google balls showing movement. Comic book movement.

Indexical signs have a logical connection to the thing or the idea they represent, but not a direct resemblance, as iconic signs have.

Symbolic – completely learned and culturally embedded. Contextual. A swastika. KKK garb (which is strangely similar to Catholic garb; each is learned; the distinction, of course, is all important).

There is no logical relationship or representational connection between, say, white sheets and notions of racial supremacy. A Nike swoosh is just an abstract mark. It has to be learned that it represents a footwear company.

Frenchman Roland Barthes talked about codes or systems or rules for signs, for semiotics. “The chain of association,” he called it. Societies produce these codes, or combinations of signs, to communicate complicated ideas.

Asa Berger’s types of symbolic codes:

Metonymic – a collection of signs that produce certain associations.

Analogical – a code that spurs comparison.

Displaced – meaning from one set of signs is transferred to another.

Condensed – Signs that when combined take on a new meaning.