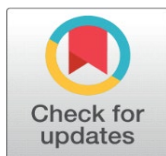
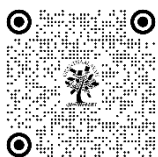


FINE ART AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION: VIEWING IT AS A SOURCE OF CULTURAL MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

Specific pieces of art can reveal insights into the artist's perspective, while their content often addresses broader themes or social issues of the time. Given the numerous artworks that reference mass communication, media emerges as a relevant theme. The portrayal of media has evolved significantly throughout the history of both art and media. This paper aims to present a distinctive analysis of artworks that incorporate communication within fine arts. The selected works underwent an interdisciplinary analysis, combining historical and semiotic approaches. The connection between media and art has not yet been explored within the media space, and exploring this relationship can enhance our understanding of historical and social sciences. How media is represented in art highlights its significance during different historical periods. Some artworks clearly demonstrate how media was produced and consumed, or, in later periods, how it became material for artistic creation. The goal of this paper is to examine the potential and limitations of art as a source of cultural memory and to assess the benefits and challenges of combining historical and semiotic analyses in the study of specific.

Keywords: Fine Art, Communication, Media, History, Mass Communication, News, Culture

1. INTRODUCTION

The transmission of information has always relied on the media. Initially, communication was through oral speech, followed by increasingly complex forms of communication. Cultural memory is rooted in communication via media, and as media technologies advanced, the scope of memory expanded. Each medium has its own unique way of preserving memories, offering different perspectives on topics within cultural memory. Over time, the media themselves have become subjects of other media content. The blending of various media and intermedia connections is now a regular part of our daily media consumption. For example, we read books about the internet, watch films about the invention of the printing press, or follow TV shows set in the journalism world. Some of these combinations are perceived as normal, while others may not even cross our minds. One such combination is the link between media and fine arts. The visualization of communication has been widely discussed, particularly since the early 21st century. According to Vilém Flusser, an image is simply a space or surface imbued with meaning. Throughout history, images have played various roles and taken many forms. Classifying or defining the core features of an image is complex due to the diverse processes involved in its production, circulation, and reception. This complexity is evident in the shift from focusing on fine arts and art history to the broader study of visual culture.

The primary change in this shift is the growing emphasis on the diverse contexts of an image, including its social, cultural, technological, economic or political influences. Another significant change is the growing interest in studying genres once considered lowly, such as illustrations, comics, photography, or posters. Recently, the study of images through the lens of signs has gained importance. Unlike the study of language, these genres were largely overlooked until now. Semiotics has therefore become increasingly important in the analysis of images. The modern era is often described as the culture of the book, or the Gutenberg Galaxy, while the postmodern era can be seen as the age of the image. Though the focus on the visual has only recently become a key subject of academic inquiry, communication through images has been important since the beginning of human interaction. Visual representation played a significant role long before written language became widespread. Visual communication has also been crucial in persuasive messaging. Essentially, pictures have always been the primary means for telling stories.

2. ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

Artistic expression has evolved alongside human civilization for tens of thousands of years, with the motivations for creating art changing over time. Art serves several functions, some of which, like self-expression, evaluation, and cognitive functions, are always present and considered central roles of art. In addition to its aesthetic purpose, art also acts as a form of self-expression, although this perspective has shifted over the years. Art history can be categorized based on how a picture is perceived. Initially, art was simply an object, but later, it became a representation of an object, a concept essential for understanding the content of art. In addition to the primary functions of art, there are secondary roles, such as signaling, advertising, and documentation. The documentary aspect is particularly important when exploring the relationship between art and media studies. As the primary function of an artwork evolves over time, it can transition from being decorative and aesthetic to serving as a form of documentation. Art reflects the reality as seen by the artist and can provide a perspective on life during a specific period. For example, a Dutch still life from the 17th century reveals the food people ate, and a painting of a wedding depicts the customs and celebrations of the time. The same concept can be applied to media history. Art forms like paintings, lithographs, and sculptures can serve as historical records, especially in times before photography and cinematography. Art offers valuable information beyond just the historical context; it can provide insights into the role of media and how it was perceived by the artist. In the modern era, media serves as a source of information, but this was not always the case. Defining what we now consider mass media is complex, and its origins cannot be traced solely to the invention of the printing press, though that was a significant milestone.

Even before the printing press, people found ways to share information on a larger scale. Letters, pamphlets, handwritten newspapers, and messengers all played a role in spreading news and knowledge. In the Middle Ages, the church was an important institution and a primary source of information. People accessed knowledge by attending masses, where the priest acted as the main distributor of information. However, the church also used architecture and images to communicate the greatness of God and tell the stories of saints and Christ's life. Art, in this context, was both a form of communication and a source of knowledge. This idea is present in the art world as a whole, as fiction and fine arts have the power to shape collective imagination and understanding of the past. Each piece of art communicates specific information that influences how a viewer perceives a subject. The term "media" became widely used in the early 20th century, during a period often referred to as a communication revolution. However, the interest in human communication methods dates back much earlier, to ancient rhetoric. In the 18th and 19th centuries, there was growing interest in persuasive communication. Propaganda, in particular, became a significant topic of discussion during the first half of the 20th century.

3. THE TOPIC OF MEDIA

The role of media in fine arts has evolved significantly over time, with its presence and representation changing throughout history. It wasn't until the second half of the 19th century that periodicals began to hold social importance, which likely contributed to the limited exploration of media in fine arts before this period. The first significant wave of artistic interest in media appeared at the end of the 19th century, continuing well into the early 20th century. While there are works that address media as a subject prior to this period, these pieces serve as unique artifacts, documenting the early development of media. Their value is heightened by the fact that they were created by artists who were not part of larger artistic movements at the time. Several themes emerge from the artworks examined. One prominent theme is the

portrayal of media consumption, where artworks depict people engaging with media content. This theme became particularly common with the rise of newspapers in the second half of the 19th century. These works reflect a variety of social classes and regions, depicting both city dwellers and rural populations, with men typically featured as the main consumers of media. Another significant theme is the depiction of media production, distribution, and the technology behind it. Artists have created works showing processes like printing or documenting the distribution of printed materials, such as newsstands or street vendors selling newspapers. There are also depictions of media professionals, including journalists, photographers, and cameramen. Although these representations began to appear before the 20th century, the fascination with technological advancements during this time spurred the development of these themes in art. Beyond representations of media in its natural setting, other artistic contexts often emerge. For instance, the genre of still life became linked with media, especially during the cubist period.

Some artists incorporated newspapers directly into their works, using them in collages or as the base material instead of traditional canvas or paper. One example of this artistic approach is a painting from the 1860s, which combines elements of portraiture, genre painting, and still life. The portrait features a blacksmith, and the surrounding scene, with details like a pitcher, a glass of beer, and newspapers, adds depth to the portrayal of the character's environment and lifestyle. The use of a larger-than-usual canvas for a portrait and the focus on a close personal connection with the subject rather than a famous or political figure marks a departure from the norm of the time. As for the historical and media context of the period, it's worth noting that art during this time began to address political and social dynamics, reflecting the struggle for national identity and cultural expression. The press, as a tool for shaping public discourse, played a key role in this shift. The media landscape of the late 19th century, influenced by industrial advancements, allowed for the faster and broader distribution of news, despite the political challenges that suppressed freedom of expression. This dynamic can also be seen in the depiction of the blacksmith reading a newspaper in the painting, which illustrates his literacy and interest in current events. The specific periodical shown, "Slovak Newspaper," was a publication with strong political ties to the ruling Habsburg dynasty. This connection offers insight into the political landscape of the time, reflecting the censorship and control imposed on the media during this era. The choice of this particular newspaper adds a layer of complexity to the painting, questioning why a character from a Czech city would read a publication aligned with the oppressors of his people.

4. IN CONCLUSION

The connection between culture, cultural memory, and media has become a significant topic for interdisciplinary research across various humanities disciplines. Exploring the relationship between fine arts and media can greatly enhance our understanding of both historical and social sciences. This connection can provide deeper insights into the history and development of media, as well as its role in the society of different eras and nations. Analyzing a work of art can offer opportunities for a deeper understanding of various aspects, including historical facts, the artist's motivations, and the perception of media by the creator.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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