

Critical Visual Literacy

Critical Visual
Literacy

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Abstract

Current theoretical shifts in art education aspire to reconceptualize the human subject-via poststructuralist, semiotic, cultural, and social theories-as one who actively constructs meaning from, is constructed by, and responds to visual culture (Anderson, Gussak, Hallmark, & Paul, 2010; Chung & Kirby, 2009; Duncum, 2010; Smith-Shank, 2004). These contemporary thoughts form the basis of an emerging framework on which to establish a critical pedagogy of visual literacy on behalf of social justice. A critical approach to art education creates the possibility for fostering critical visual literacy in young people so that they are better prepared to navigate in a visually mediated society, and have access to power to counter corporate domination of cultural expression/consumption, and engage in the politics of visual practices for purposes of emancipation and democratization. Art education for critical visual literacy places on emphasis on critique and creating deconstructed texts so as to prepare new generations for the expanding (cyber)society, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to process a plethora of pleasurable, and though often sexist, racist, homophobic, and dehumanizing, visual spectacles. This article explores the conceptual underpinnings of teaching visual literacy for social justice. It describes several approaches to developing critical visual literacy and advocates its importance in enabling youths (particularly at middle/high school level) to promote social justice and cultural democracy.

Keywords: Art Education, Critical Literacy, Visual Literacy, Visual Culture, Social Justice

Expansion of Literacy

The notion of literacy continues to expand as visually mediated texts (e.g., media ads and TV commercials) become the increasingly dominant form of expression and communication facilitating consumption and identity formation. Over time, new media technology has continued to shape what it means to be literate and change the landscape of visual literacy education. In the modernist era, literacy was treated as a set of technical skills independent of context, culture, or power. Centered on an industrial economy driven by manual labor, modernist capitalism required workers to master technical skills in order to produce “hardware” products (Luke, 1994). Postmodern capitalism, on the other hand, is driven by an information economy in which information is the currency of exchange. The postmodern worker is expected to have flexible yet critical (beyond technical) skills to perform multiple “software” tasks (Luke, 1994). As society continues to transform from an industrial to an information economy, from emphasis on print literacy to multiliteracy, developing critical visual literacy is crucial for students living in an image-saturated (cyber)society.

The commodification of aesthetics as shaped by postmodern capitalism is today in full operation, especially in cyberspace, offering teenagers sensory-stimulating visual spectacles. Cyberspace is a learning environment where teenagers can construct their identities while immersing themselves in exciting multimedia activities. They learn as much if not more than sitting in the classroom by participating in many cyber-activities. Steinberg and Kincheloe (1997) referred to “cultural pedagogy” as the idea that learning takes place through a variety of pedagogical venues such as schooling and the media. Instead of giving dreary classroom lectures and seatwork, cultural pedagogy emphasizes innovative learning adventures such as fantasy kingdoms, animated toy stories, and multimedia games (Gaimster, 2008; Parks, 2008). Unsurprisingly, the current tech-savvy generation of youth is immersing itself in these types of sensory-stimulating activities as its everyday aesthetic sites/sights.

A Theory of Texts for Art Education

Critical Visual
Literacy

Roland Barthes (1964), a theorist in semiotics, defines the concept of "text" as encompassing more than the verbal/textual. Instead, text is an efficient way to describe a social construction in virtually any mode of communication. In other words, whatever is seen, perceived, heard, experienced, or remembered can be a "text." The reconceptualization of images and all other visual sites, signs, and sights as texts has pragmatic implications for visual culture pedagogy in general and critical visual literacy education in particular. For the purpose of this article, the concept of texts will be defined as a reflective way of referring to all things involving the visual. It is constructed and interpreted according to discursive codes and conventions upon which people rely for meaning making (e.g., to play a video game, certain rules and conventions applied to control fictional characters properly). Although semiotics initially focused on the language mode of communication, media technology has expanded the parameters of semiotics to include various multimodal and interrelated texts. All texts may be said exist in a state of intertextuality (Yeoman, 1995). The notion of intertextuality allows art educators and students to examine and understand visual practices at a deeper level from different perspectives, especially when it comes to critical visual literacy education. According to Duncum (2010), intertexts provide opportunities to explore interrelated power, ideology, and representation in visual culture education.

When considering art-making as a way to make signs, symbols, and icons, we can understand its products and meanings using social semiotics. This provides insights into critical visual literacy education as it emphasizes "the social effects of meaning" (Rose, 2001, p. 70). The use of social semiotics offers "a method that can help [the viewers/readers] penetrate the apparent autonomy and reality of adverts, in order to reveal their ideological status," and show how meanings change and are changed in the course of use (Rose, 2001, p. 71). A text is always an area of contention where material conflicts and competing social relationships occur. In effect, we

should rethink a text as an ideological dynamic that is always related to a socially and politically afforded set of signifieds. Social semiotics illuminates the ways language and images operate in social formations (e.g., race, gender, or class), which in turn shape our knowledge and understanding of the world. When viewers approach images and all visual sites, signs, and sights as ideology-loaded texts, it may remove them from making habitual associations primarily with the material aspects of the artistic rendering and instead may focus them on the different layers of meaning the texts deliver. In other words, viewers may be more likely to treat an image as the subject of interrogation rather than or in addition to an object of appreciation. In the case of looking at art, the position of the viewers and their attention and attitudes toward art/text is shifted from passive to active and from being art appreciators to being interrogators of text, since to examine an image as text is to “read” it with the aim of interpretation, meaning making, and communication. This is done by asking such fundamental questions as when, how, and why it was made in order to determine its meanings and purposes.

Critical Visual literacy

If literacy means the ability to read and write, visual literacy refers to the ability to “read” and produce any kind of visual text; for example, signs, icons, artworks, ads, billboards, Web banners, and all other cultural artifacts. Visual literacy was an educational movement in the 1960s that posited the need for students to understand the uses and power of images (Gitlin, 2001). The proliferation of visually mediated texts in our globalized culture has made visual literacy a necessary skill. The current development of *critical* visual literacy is different from the visual literacy movement of the 1960s as it goes beyond mere *analysis* and *understanding* of visual objects. Critical visual literacy is related to and has been shaped by critical theory, critical pedagogy, and critical literacy.

Critical theory is defined as “a critique of dominance, a commitment to emancipation, and the use of critique and reflection as means to empowerment” (Stevens & Bean, 2007, p. 124). Critical theory builds on a

system of self-reflection and critique to challenge the dominant discourse by uncovering the hidden bias in “common sense” assumptions, make explicit the correlation between sanctioned knowledge and power structure, and commit intellectual life to social transformation. A theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human emancipation, “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (Horkheimer, 1982, p. 244). Critical theory problematizes knowledge and social practices sanctioned by the dominant cultural group.

Additionally, critical pedagogy plays an important role in shaping critical visual literacy education. Freire (1970) highlighted in critical pedagogy the intertextuality between reading the word and reading the world in the literacy process. Critical pedagogy sees literacy as an instrument to help the oppressed and marginalized minorities learn about the outside world, and as an opportunity for empowerment, liberation, and social justice (Freire, 1970). For critical pedagogues, literacy is emancipatory when meaning is both “multiaccentual and dispersed, and resists permanent closure” (Giroux, 1993, p. 369) and when meaning is used to problematize power structures in liberating the oppressed and marginalized, thereby leading to an emancipated identity and ultimately the transformation of unjust societies. Educators use critical pedagogy to empower students to investigate and help change oppressed social practices to make their world a better place.

No longer meaning the ability to read words, Freire and Macedo (1987) defined literacy as a social act involving the ability to respond to and transform the world, a view echoed by Lankshear and McLaren (1993), who asserted that critical literacy enables “human subjects to understand and engage the politics of daily life in the quest for a more truly democratic social order” (p. xviii). Ciardiello (2004) defined critical literacy as “a set of literacy practices and civic competencies that help the learner develop a critical awareness that texts represent particular points of view while often silencing other views” (p. 138). The practices of critical literacy help students to examine multiple perspectives, identify barriers of social separation, and regain their identity. It calls for a rethinking of taken-for-granted assumptions

and supports students in asking questions about representation, marginalization, and interests (Stevens & Bean, 2007).

Most scholarly work in critical literacy does not regard visual arts as central to fostering critical literacy as I have yet found a major piece of published work relating visual arts to critical literacy education. Art education is generally perceived as a recreation program; thus, the development of critical visual literacy is significant to the field of art education and education in general. Critical visual literacy is the ability to investigate the social, cultural, and economic “contexts” of visual texts in order to illuminate the power relationships in society. Learning becomes critical when it aims at resisting domination and increasing emancipation from oppression and injustice. Critical visual literacy aims at empowering students to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of texts, analyze these texts as sites of ideological struggle, critically negotiate meanings with problems of visual (mis)representation, and use creative tools as instruments for self-emancipation and social activism. It positions students as active agents interrogating different forms of visual culture in the process of deconstructing texts, and using their creative voices to promote an equal, democratic society. Critical readers are those who observe texts carefully and analytically, decoding their ideas, intentions, points of view, and biases; placing them in a sociopolitical context; and ultimately creating their own texts to delegitimize unequal power structures. In essence, critical visual literacy seeks to promote social justice as it examines the operation of texts in shaping the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the individual and group. It approaches texts as sites, signs, and sights of political agency for transformative action.

Approaches to Critical Visual literacy

Lewison, Flint, and Sluys (2002) have identified four key dimensions of critical literacy applicable to critical visual literacy practices. These include disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action to promote social justice. In the

following, I propose several approaches to exploring texts through a critical lens to foster critical visual literacy. These approaches require a close analysis of the text in use. Class exploration should focus on a collaborative exchange of different viewpoints to detect the biases and assumptions of the text and unveil its hidden political agendas. Teachers should seek to engage students as critical subjects in liberating and transformative dialogue for personal and social transformation (Apple, 1990). To empower human agency for social activism, involve students in "culture jamming," creating subvertisements, and participating in guerrilla communications in the quest for social justice and cultural democracy (see Chung & Kirby, 2009).

Poststructuralist Analysis

A poststructuralist analysis of texts examines the limitations of the binary oppositions (e. g., good/bad, male/female, or black/white) operating in the texts. Texts in the media usually portray characters or events simplistically, leading to misperceptions and biases toward certain minority groups. Discuss with students the space between and beyond the binary opposition in texts to reveal hidden ideologies and prejudices based on gender, sexual orientation, and race. Using historical images of children's playdolls and picture books marketed in the early 20th century can highlight a critical lesson about racial biases; for example, American picture books depicting white people as good and black people as evil, and men as strong protectors and women as weak and in need of protection. These biases and associated stereotypes are still common in today's action figures and TV cartoon programs made for children. Guide students to reflect upon the different values that these texts convey (e.g., gender roles on popular TV cartoon program, "The Simpsons"). To help students study artifacts in question, it is necessary to supply or have them brainstorm a list of probing questions such as who constructed the artifacts and why, and what impact do they have on viewers as these texts continue to reinforce prejudices. A fieldwork opportunity can be arranged for students to visit local toy stores to investigate firsthand what biases, stereotypes, and prejudices are

Critical Visual
Literacy

perpetuated in action figures or play dolls. For instance, racism is often glorified in popular action figures. As shown in Figure 1, the black figure is a beast-like creature with sharp claws in leopard fur, wearing a necklace compiled of animal teeth. The white figure looks more civilized and carries more modernized accessories. This type of action figures can be used for classroom discussion and as an example to prompt further fieldwork investigation.



Figure 1 The racial stereotypes seen in this set of action figures has inspired American artist, Michael Ray Charles to create a body of racially charged artworks. Photograph taken by the author.

Postcolonialist Analysis

A postcolonialist approach analyzes how texts (mis)represent other groups through ethnic stereotypes and exotic myths. Texts, especially those portraying non-Western people by the West, can show how the West

(mis)represents other ethnicities, thereby legitimizing its exploitation and cultural domination of the world. Texts show a great deal about the exercise of power in society and the ways in which the dominant group advances its cultural beliefs and values, while using stereotypes to inferiorize cultural minorities that differ in values or physical attributes.

An example can be seen in children's ethnic playdolls (e.g., Chinese and Japanese Barbie dolls) dressed in exotic pre-Modern costumes produced and marketed in the West from a Eurocentric perspective. The degree of exoticism and the characterization of these playdolls in pre-Modern costumes not only suggest that they belong to an uncivilized group, but also, at best, exude the stereotypes of ethnic minorities subjecting them to an inferior position. In examining texts related to ethnicity such as multiethnic dolls by Mattel or ethnic artifacts sold, the teacher should direct students to pay attention to issues of marginalization and inferiorization in relation to the ethnic stereotypes portrayed in the texts and to what degree these texts truly (mis)represent the ethnic groups they portray. For example, I asked my college students to investigate local texts that perpetuate cultural/ethnic stereotypes. One of my students visited a souvenir shop in Texas and uncovered many texts (merchandizes) sold in the shop depicting rodeo and cowboys. which are primarily based on stereotypical perceptions of people in this region. He found that cowboys are often portrayed as tough guys who participate in rodeos and wear big belt buckles and work boots. As a matter of fact, most real-life cowboys do not fit in this type of portrayal. Alarming, stereotyping is a celebrated and often an unchallenged tool for marketing a local culture. Another place for students to study ethnic stereotypes is the souvenir shop in the museum. Many museum shops feature reproductions of cultural artifacts without providing important contextual information, which continually reinforces ethnic stereotypes and miseducates the consumer about people who used those artifacts.

Feminist Analysis

Texts, especially in the media, often serve as a tool of social control. Historically, the male has been the authority in representing women and other things feminine in cultural texts. In most societies, women's bodies have been sites of sexualized commodification and spectacle for the heterosexual male (cited in Keels, 2005). The silencing of female authorship in cultural texts has objectified women to the eyes of a collective heterosexual male gaze. According to Luke (1994), "Cultural industries have a long history of male cultural productions of feminine stereotypes and misrepresentations which conceptualize women primarily either as objects of male adornment, pursuit and domination, or as mindless domestic drudges, brain-dead bimbos, or saintly supermoms" (p. 32).

One focus of feminist criticism has been sexist portrayals in popular media culture as ideology of women's bodies as sexualized commodities continues to prevail in today's most advanced societies. An example is hip-hop music videos that frequently exploit women's bodies as objects of transient sexual gratification whose primary function is to entertain men. An American hip-hop scenario portrays women as club dancers and prostitutes while the rapper (usually male) glorifies himself as a well-off pimp, using provocative language to denigrate women. This depiction suggests that women play a subordinate role by catering to the sexual needs of men in order to survive in a male-controlled arena. In addition to these sexist texts, hip-hop music videos also glorify violence and materialism. Such artistic expression does not simply portray women negatively; it also questions what meaningful contribution they can make to society. One way to challenge sexist hip-hop music videos is to have students compare and contrast misogynist videos with those performed by feminist rappers such as Queen Latifah, Sister Souljah, The Real Roxanne, M.C. Lyte, and Salt-N-Pepa. Although not all are consistent with feminist ideology, the music videos performed by these female rappers can be used to rebut the exploitative characterizations of female bodies in hip-hop. Judith Butler's (1990) theory of

gender as performance serves as a pragmatic approach to deconstructing hip-hop's sexist portrayals. Contrary to society's conventional views of gender roles, Butler argued that the biological gender binary (masculine/feminine) reinforces the differences and inequality of the sexes in society. According to Butler, gender is not a biological condition but rather an enactment or performance (expressed, for instance, in language, clothing, movements, or actions). In other words, it is a socially constructed fluid variable associated with how people behave in certain situations:

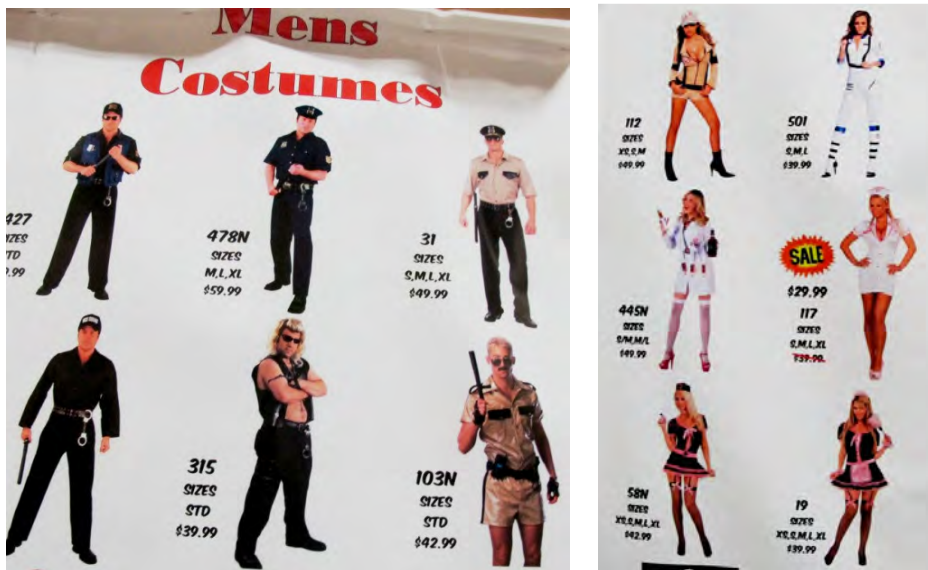
By applying Butler's view of gender as performance to the examination of hip-hop music videos, teachers can help students to identify specific sexist behaviors and attitudes manifested in hip-hop performances and to further articulate the explicit and implicit messages being conveyed through identified gendered performances. When gender is perceived as performance, scenes of a video can be dismantled and analyzed in terms of the cultural capital (e.g., clothing, posture/gestures, facial expressions, speech patterns, or persona) that hip-hop performers adopt to enact their gender roles -- in other words, what and how a video's incorporated visual and linguistic texts contribute to the impression of unjust gender roles. The following questions (in no particular order) can serve to guide high school students in analyzing a typical sexist video scene and interpret its meanings with respect to attitudes, values, self-image, and social expectations:

- What pictorial elements/design techniques are used to get our attention?
- What is the scene trying to tell us? (viewpoint, belief, or value)
- What is the purpose of this scene?
- Is the scene portraying a stereotype? Which stereotype?
- How do we know the portrayal is a stereotype?. Is there a sexist expression in this scene, and how do we know?
- What responses is the scene meant to elicit from the viewer?
- How are the female dancers portrayed?
- Are there other implicit messages in this scene?
- What assumptions do you make from watching the scene?

Critical Visual
Literacy

- What does the scene teach young women in society and the general public?
- Can you think of any ways to challenge sexist portrayals?
- What other sexist presentations do you frequently see in the media?

In the classroom, art teachers can encourage students to identify and study gendered social/cultural practices in their community provided with these question prompts. For example, one of my students examined Halloween costumes made for men and women for her fieldwork investigation. As seen in Figures 2 and 3, the gendered portrayals in Halloween costumes are questionable across different age groups. These photos were used in my classroom to explore men and women's roles in society from various standpoints.



Figures 2 & 3 Photos taken in a local store selling Halloween costumes. Costumes for men/boys depict more protective roles and those for women/girls emphasize sexy, man-serving, and fantasy characters. Photographs taken by the author.

Psychoanalytic Analysis

Critical Visual
Literacy

Psychoanalytic analysis intertextualizes the language and symbolism of a text to unravel its latent thoughts behind the manifest content. Corporate advertising is probably one of the greatest psychological projects ever undertaken, yet its impact on how we live is largely ignored. Texts in the media connect with the subconscious mind of the viewer by conveying repressed wishes and fantasies through metaphors and symbols. Widely disseminated texts (e.g., media ads and TV commercials) often serve as ideological sites that shape children's perceptions of reality as they formulate attitudes, beliefs, and values. Psychoanalysis may allow youngsters to question the domination of corporate America over media advertising and programming and the manner in which it plays a central role in influencing what they consume, experience, and believe.

To disrupt such cultural domination, involve students in deconstructing and reconstructing media texts and disseminating newly created texts via guerrilla communications and online social networking. Culture jamming is a key tactic for breaking corporate domination over what people consume and experience every day. It is regarded as a resistance movement dedicated to disrupting such domination, control, and cultural influence. Culture jammers recognize that symbols, logos, and slogans are the predominant text through which the discourse of capitalism takes place. In response they produce subvertisements to reveal the sharp contrast between the public images of corporate America and the consequences of corporate behavior, and to provide commentary on unethical business practices (see Figure 4). By disseminating parodies of mainstream media constructs, culture jammers attempt to break this cultural domination and unveil the hidden agendas of corporations.

Critical Visual
Literacy



Figure 4 A student subvertisement questions unethical business

A learning goal for students is the recognition that media constructs can be analyzed and deconstructed and virtually all distinctive design elements related to brands or logos are subject to subvertising. For a classroom lesson, I introduced the concepts of culture jamming, subvertising, and deconstruction to middle school students. These concepts are important to youth, as they are constantly bombarded with media images and messages in their public and private spaces that dictate what they should consume, value, be, and become. After exploring these important concepts, the students brainstorm greater issues of concern and choose an issue to produce a subvertisement about, using a logo and slogan with Adobe® Photoshop®. They paid particular attention to how their subvertisements unveiled or illuminated the consequences of corporate behavior or addressed a particular social issue (see Chung & Kirby, 2009). I iterated the elements of an effective logo design to make them more understandable to the students in designing their work. A successful subvertisement, for instance, should be clear about the message it delivers, easy to read (not using too many colors or a complex composition), show appropriate design principles (e.g., space and consistency), sway people into believing the message, convey strong emotions, and challenge people's perceptions.

At the completion of the project, the students shared their work by articulating what issue they were telling people about, how they sought to persuade people with their subvertisements, and what they were trying to accomplish through their work. Through this media literacy art project,

students were expected to gain knowledge and insights about media (mis)representations and how they affect people and society as a whole. Through the design cycle (investigating, planning, creating, and evaluating), students were encouraged to think about and reflect upon the mediated world in which they live, to transform it, and to initiate a positive change. The ultimate goal of the project was to have students go into the real world to increase public awareness about important social issues that people face today. To do so, students printed their designed subvertisements on image-transfer paper and transferred them onto T-shirts. They wore their designed T-shirts and participated in culture jamming using the approach of guerrilla communication.¹ Guerrilla communication moves students from passive spectatorship toward active involvement with culture production. The students wore their T-shirts as living billboards and behaved as cultural producers to solicit comments or reactions from the public.

Queer Analysis

Queer analysis of texts is concerned with issues of sexual and gender identity and the role of performance in forming and maintaining identity. Queer theorists challenge the privileged discourse of heteronormativity and critique the social construction of gender and sexuality. Heteronormativity refers to the notion that heterosexuals are the dominant group in society holding the political power to legitimize and advance its own heterocentric cultural, economic, and educational agendas. The dominant group defines and governs cultural values and social norms such as sexual relationships, marriage, and family structure from a heterocentric cosmology. Queer analysis looks into the ways in which sexual and gender identities either change or resist change, and the relationship between power and heteronormativity. Texts depicting homosexuals can force students to revisit

¹ Guerrilla communication is a communication method and a political intervention through street performance/events or public engagements designed to disrupt or change the public's perspectives. It attempts to distort normality by illuminating those hidden desires that are usually silenced by dominant rules of conduct.

Critical Visual
Literacy

their conceptions of homosexuality, masculinity, and femininity, and confront issues of homophobia.

Images of homosexuals showing public affection (see Figure 5) can be used to explore gay and lesbian issues such as homophobia, same-sex marriage, and stereotypes. In most societies, heterosexuals are free to show their affection in public, while public displays of affection are considered a social taboo for homosexuals. In America and many other countries, it is not uncommon to hear school youngsters use homophobic language to humiliate their peers or tell malicious jokes. Students uninformed about homosexuality are likely to form prejudiced attitudes and use offensive language and/or behavior toward gay people. Heterocentric sex and gender roles have permeated a mainstream ideology that controls almost every aspect of social practice and portrays gay people as deviant, which in turn has a detrimental effect on gay youth as they struggle to understand themselves and construct their own identity (Chung, 2007).



Figure 5 A public mural displayed outside a local bar in Houston, Texas

Street art by British artist, Banksy, can be used to explore issues of homosexuality in the classroom. Several of Banksy's images of kissing policemen (two policemen in uniform kissing each other on the street) have been seen in London city streets and can be found on the Web. The

representation of these policemen forces pedestrians to revisit their conceptions of homosexuality and masculinity and to confront the issue of homophobia. The following questions can be used to explore these issues with students while art images such as Banksy's kissing policemen are shown.

- What is your first reaction to this picture? What responses is the picture meant to elicit from the viewer?
- What is the picture trying to tell us? Are there elements you would characterize as symbolic? How do you think this picture was made?
- Where was this picture presented? Is its location important, and why? Is this art, and why?
- Are policemen authority figures in our society? Is it socially acceptable to see policemen act in this way? Would it be more socially acceptable if one of the policemen was a woman, and how so? Are there other implicit messages in this picture?
- Can societies be truly equal and democratic? How does our society as a whole discriminate against gay people? What can we do to make a truly equitable society?

Conclusion

Critical visual literacy encompasses a cross-disciplinary orientation to art education aimed at fostering visual literacy, critical faculty, and human agency. It contextualizes the cultural, sociopolitical, and economic aspects of texts and seeks to underline the power of texts in shaping what we know and what can be known. Critical visual literacy is emancipatory in that teachers dare to share their power with students on a learning journey to disrupting hegemonic ideologies and agendas. It enables students to question commonsense assumptions and injustices from an analytical stance, “to research how things are, how things got to be that way, and how they might be changed; and to produce texts that represent the under and misrepresented” (Comber, 2001, p. 1). The acquisition of critical visual literacy requires thinking consciously of conditions of privilege and injustice

as manifested in texts, and by addressing issues of human rights via critiquing texts, (re)creating texts, and engaging the public with texts to lay the foundation for social justice.

The core of critical visual literacy lies in the interplay between visual literacy and liberation, using texts as a conduit through which to examine the complexities and issues of domination, access, and equity, and transform oppressive structures via educational praxes. Critical visual literacy validates and utilizes students' real-world knowledge and lived-through experiences to examine socially constructed texts and to critically reflect upon their everyday consumption and sociocultural experiences. It positions students as agents of social change in deconstructing and making sense of the pleasures and troubles of visual spectacles in cyber(society) and further analyzing how these spectacles are created, shaped, and embedded with specific values and, often unjust, points of view. To reach this end, an unpoliced media terrain is necessary for youths to learn to think for themselves, develop autonomy from their caretakers, and participate in political discourse/activism via creative venues (Jenkins, 1997).

Conventional approaches to literacy education are questionable because they prevent youngsters from accessing "real-world" material (e.g., censored or controversial images). Knowing that modern children define their cultures in opposition to adult supervision, values, and taste hierarchies (Jenkins, 1997), as educators we cannot engage them in critical thought if we imagine them to exist outside the real-world conflicts of race, class, gender, and sexuality (Rose, 1984). Protecting children from censored/controversial images strips them of active agency, of their ability to analyze images critically. Expressions of censorship project children as powerless victims incapable of shaping their own fate and speaking in their own defense.

Central to critical visual literacy pedagogy is the politicization of knowledge, recognizing that schooling by its very nature is a political enterprise with its hegemonic curricula and pedagogies. Learning itself is political regardless of where it occurs. Teachers should thus raise

awareness of the politics of knowledge about visual practices with respect to whose interests are served, who is (dis)empowered, and who is (dis)enfranchised. They should problematize the systems of visual (mis)representations to understand how the world as known today is constructed by power relations and factored by class, gender, race, and sexual orientation. It is important to treat a text as a social construction and analyze both how it maintains the status quo, and how we can disrupt the dominant narratives operating in society, give voice to the marginalized, and take action on important social issues.

Critical Visual
Literacy

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批判性視覺識讀能力

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摘要

當前藝術教育理論的趨勢是從後結構主義、符號學、文化與社會學理論的視角，重新將人類定義為一個能在視覺文化中主動建構意義、同時也被建構並予以回應的主體 (Anderson, Gussak, Hallmark, & Paul, 2010; Chung & Kirby, 2009; Duncum, 2010; Smith-Shank, 2004)。這些當代思潮奠定了新興理論架構的基礎，由此我們得以建立一套實現社會正義的批判性視覺識讀教學法。批判性藝術教育希望培養年輕一代的批判性視覺識讀能力，使他們更從容地面對這個視覺媒體主導的社會，並具備力量對抗文化表達／消費當中的商業霸權，同時參與以解放與民主為目標的視覺實踐政治。致力於培養批判性視覺識讀的藝術教育強調解構式文本的批判與創造能力，希望讓下一代能順利適應不斷擴張的（虛擬）社會，傳授他們必備知識與技能，以處理深具娛樂性、但也常夾帶性別與種族歧視、同性戀恐懼症性戀與背離人性等特質的視覺奇觀。本文旨在探討以社會正義為目標，進行視覺識讀教育的觀念性基礎。文中將介紹幾項批判性視覺識讀能力的開發策略，並指出視覺識讀能力可以促使年輕人（尤其是中等／高中階段）推廣社會正義與文化民主精神。

關鍵詞：藝術教育、批判性識讀能力、視覺識讀能力、視覺文化、社會正義

識讀能力的擴展

隨著視覺文本（如媒體廣告與電視廣告）逐漸成為消費與身分建構的主要表達與溝通形式，識讀能力的概念也跟著擴大。長久以來，新媒體科技改變了識讀內涵，也改寫了視覺識讀教育的風貌。現代主義時期的識讀能力是與社會背景、文化或權力無關的一套技能。以手工業經濟為主的現代時期資本主義要求工人精通生產「硬體」產品所需的技能 (Luke, 1994)。後現代時期資本主義則以資訊經濟掛帥，資訊成為交易貨幣。後現代時期勞工必須擁有彈性且批判性（不只是技術性）的技能，以執行多重「軟體」工作 (Luke, 1994)。當社會從工業時代邁入資訊經濟時代、從平面識讀走向多元識讀，生活在影像（虛擬）社會裡的學子更應培養批判性視覺識讀能力。

後現代資本主義造成了美學商品化現象，尤其在虛擬空間裡，不斷提供青少年刺激感官的視覺奇觀。透過虛擬空間的學習環境，青少年可以建構個人身分認同，同時體驗許多精采的多媒體活動。在各種虛擬活動裡，他們學到的不比在課堂上少。Steinberg 與 Kincheloe (1997) 提出的「文化教學法」認為，學習可以發生在各種教學環境裡，包括學校教育與媒體。文化教學法不再要求學生忍受單調無味的課堂講課，也不一定要待在課堂內學習，它鼓勵運用創新的學習活動，如奇幻王國、動畫玩偶故事與多媒體遊戲 (Gaimster, 2008; Parks, 2008)。而嫻熟科技的年輕世代所沈迷的感官性活動，也成為他們日常生活中不時接觸的美感場域／景觀。

藝術教育的文本理論

符號學理論家，Roland Barthes (1964) 認為「文本」超越了言語／文字的範疇。文本事實上可以泛指任何溝通模式中的社會建構。換言之，任何可被看見、感知、聽見、經驗或記憶的事物都可稱為「文本」。重新理解圖像與其他所有視覺場域、符號與景觀等概念，對於一般性視覺文化教學法，尤其是批判性視覺識讀能力教育都具有實用性意義。在本文中，文本是指涉包括視覺在內所有事物的一種反省方式。文本的建構與詮釋，乃是建立在人們賴以生產意義的論述法則與常規之上（例如玩電動遊戲時，需要運用特定規則與常規來控制虛擬角色）。雖然符號學最初的主要研究對象是溝通性語言，但現今媒體科技已進一步擴展符號學疆域，將各種多模態與相互連結的文本都納入其中。可

以說，所有文本都存在於一個互相指涉的狀態當中 (Yeoman, 1995)。互文性的概念讓藝術教育工作者與學生能從更深入、更多元的視角來檢視與瞭解視覺實踐活動，對於批判性視覺識讀教育而言更是如此。根據 Duncum (2010) 的說法，互涉文本讓我們能探索視覺文化教育當中，錯綜複雜又交互影響的權力、意識形態與再現方式。

如果藝術創作是一種製造符號、象徵與圖像的方式，那麼社會符號學可以幫助我們理解其產品與意涵。社會符號學可以為批判性視覺識讀教育帶來更深刻的見解，因為它強調的是「意義的社會效應」(Rose, 2001, p. 70)。社會符號學旨在「幫助“觀看者／讀者”滲透廣告表面呈現的獨立性與現實，揭發其中的意識形態底蘊」，並顯示意義如何在使用過程中不斷變動與被改變 (Rose, 2001, p. 71)。文本永遠是物質性衝突與相互競爭的社會關係不斷交鋒的場域。事實上，我們應該把文本當成一種意識形態的動力學，永遠受到整套社會及政治性符指的影響。社會符號學企圖說明語言與圖像在各種社會建構（如種族、性別或階級）當中的運作方式，這些建構又進一步決定了我們對世界的認識與瞭解。當觀看者將圖像與各種視覺場域、符號與景觀都當成表達某種意識形態的文本時，也許他們可以不再只是關注藝術表現的物質層面，而更注意到文本傳遞的多重意義。換言之，觀看者更有可能將圖像視為一個提出問題的主體，而不是一個等待被欣賞的客體。在觀看藝術時，觀看者面對藝術／文本的觀賞位置、注意力和態度已從被動轉為主動，從藝術鑑賞者成為文本探究者，因為將圖像視為文本就等於在「閱讀」圖像，以期達到詮釋、意義建構與溝通的目的。主動的觀看者會對藝術品的創作時間、方式與原因提出疑問，以判斷藝術品的意義與目的。

批判性視覺識讀能力

如果識讀能力代表讀與寫的能力，則圖像識讀能力指的是「閱讀」和生產各種視覺文本的能力；例如，符號、圖像、藝術品、廣告、告示板、網站橫幅廣告和其他所有文化產品。圖像識讀能力是 1960 年代興起的教育運動，它倡導學生需要瞭解圖像的使用方式與背後的權力問題 (Gitlin, 2001)。視覺媒體文本在今日的全球化文化中不斷擴充，因此視覺識讀能力已成為一種必備技能。目前正在發展的「批判性」視覺識讀能力有別於 1960 年代的圖像識讀能力運動，前者追求的已不僅僅是「分析」和「瞭解」視覺對象的能力。批判性視覺識讀能力涉及並取法自批判理論、批判式教學法與批判性識讀能力。

批判理論的特點是「批判主流、參與解放和運用批判與反省來賦能」(Stevens & Bean, 2007, p. 124)。批判理論建立在一套自我反省與批判系統上，目的是揭開隱藏在「常識」假說中的偏見，以挑戰主流論述、揭露知識與權力架構之間的並存關係，同時奉獻知識研究於社會改革運動。批判理論透過強烈的批判能量，其終極目的是解放人類，「將人類從奴役他們的困境中解放出來」(Horkheimer, 1982, p. 244)。批判理論試圖質疑主流文化團體所核可的知識與社會實踐。

除此之外，批判教學法也影響了批判性視覺識讀能力教育。Freire (1970) 強調識讀過程中，閱讀文字與閱讀世界之間的互文性。批判式教學法認為識讀能力能幫助受壓迫與邊緣化的弱勢群體瞭解外在世界，並提供他們獲得賦能、解放與社會正義的機會 (Freire, 1970)。批判式教學法認為識讀能力本身就是一種解放，因為意義是「多聲部且分散的，它抗拒固定的閉鎖狀態」(Giroux, 1993, p. 369)，當意義用來質疑權力結構，解放受壓迫與邊緣族群時，便能邁向一個解放的身分，最終達到改革不公平社會的目標。教育工作者透過批判式教學法，培養學生研究與改變受壓迫社會實踐的能力，進一步打造更美好的世界。

識讀能力不再只是閱讀文字的能力，Freire 與 Macedo (1987) 認為識讀能力是一種回應與改造世界的社會行動，這個想法也受到 Lankshear 與 McLaren (1993) 的認同，他們聲稱批判性識讀能力使「人類主體更加瞭解與關懷日常生活政治，追求真正民主的社會秩序」(p. xviii)。Ciardiello (2004) 則認為批判性識讀能力是「一套識讀實踐活動與公民能力，它們協助學習者培養批判意識，瞭解文本在表達特定觀點時，同時也往往壓抑了其他觀點」(p. 138)。實踐批判性識讀可幫助學生檢視多重視角、辨識社會分化的隔閡並重新形塑自己的身分。學生必須重新思考過去視為理所當然的說法，針對再現、邊緣化與利益等層面提出問題 (Stevens & Bean, 2007)。

大部分有關批判性識讀的學術研究都未將視覺藝術當成培養批判性識讀能力的主軸，而就我所知，至今尚未有同時探討視覺藝術與批判性識讀教育的專書出版。藝術教育一般被認為是一種休閒課程；因此，培養批判性識讀能力對於藝術教育與一般教育領域而言，意義更為重大。批判性視覺識讀是探討視覺文本的社會、文化與經濟「脈絡」的能力，目的是瞭解與揭露社會中的權力關係。如果學習旨在抵抗霸權、解放壓迫與不公平現象，那麼學習就成功地發揮了批判功能。批判性視覺識讀旨在讓學生學習欣賞文本的美學價值、分析文

本中的意識形態角力現象、批判性地反覆探討各種意義與視覺（謬誤）再現的問題，並使用創意工具來實現自我解放與社會行動的目標。學生在解構文本的過程中，主動地質疑不同類型的視覺文化，並以創意之聲來創造一個平等而民主的社會。批判性讀者能夠仔細觀察與分析文本、解碼文本中的想法、意圖、觀點與偏見；將文本置入社會政治脈絡中思考；最後創造出自己的文本，將不平等的權力結構去合法化。基本上，批判性視覺識讀能力希望能推動社會正義，因為它主要在檢視文本如何形塑個人與團體的態度、信仰與價值觀。它將文本視為改革行動所需的政治性場域、符號與景觀。

批判性視覺識讀能力之策略

Lewison、Flint 與 Sluys (2002) 指出批判性視覺識讀實踐可運用的四個批判性識讀層面。包括破解常識、提出多重視角、重視社會政治議題與提倡社會正義。以下我將就培養批判性視覺識讀能力，提出幾個探討文本的批判性策略。這些策略需要更細緻的文本分析。階級研究應該著眼於不同視角的集體交換過程，方能探知文本中的偏見與假說，並揭露其隱藏的政治意圖。教師應該培養學生成為批判主體，為了個人和社會改革進行開放與改革性對話 (Apple, 1990)。為了培養有力的社會行動者，應該讓學生參與「文化反堵」、創作顛覆性廣告，並進行游擊式溝通，以追求社會正義與文化民主（參見 Chung & Kirby, 2009）。

後結構主義分析

後結構主義文本分析主要在檢視文本當中二元對立觀念（例如，善／惡、男／女、或黑／白等概念）的侷限。媒體文本往往以過度簡化方式來描繪人物或事件，造成對特定弱勢群體的誤解和偏見。教師可與學生討論文本當中二元對立之間與之外的問題，揭露其中與性別、性向和種族相關的隱晦意識形態與偏見。二十世紀初期的兒童玩偶和圖畫書中的圖像，就是省思種族偏見的極佳教材；例如，美國圖畫書裡的白人都是好人，黑人則是壞人，男性是強壯的保護者，而女性則是需要保護的弱者。這些偏見與附帶的刻板印象在今日的動作公仔和電視卡通節目中仍屢見不鮮。教師還可引導學生思考文本傳達的不同價值觀（例如熱門電視卡通節目，「辛普森家庭」當中的性別角色）。為了協助學生研究相關的藝術產品，教師應該提出疑問，或讓他們自行構思問題，例如

誰建構了這件藝術產品，原因為何，以及當這些文本持續強化偏見的同時，這些藝術品會對觀看者造成何種影響。教師也可安排田野調查活動，讓學生親身造訪當地玩具店，研究動作公仔或玩偶造型身上是否隱含哪些偏見、刻板印象與成見。例如，流行的動作公仔往往讚頌種族主義。如圖 1 所示，黑人公仔造型宛如一隻野獸，手長利爪，身披豹皮，佩掛動物牙齒組成的項鍊。白人公仔外表文明多了，配件也比較現代化。教師可在課堂上討論這種動作公仔，鼓勵學生展開更多田野調查。



圖 1 這套公仔所顯示的種族刻板印象也啟發了美國藝術家 Michael Ray Charles 創作出一系列討論種族議題的藝術品。作者拍攝。

後殖民主義分析

後殖民主義理論主要在分析文本如何透過對族裔的刻板印象與異族神話來（錯誤）再現其他族群。文本，尤其是西方描繪非西方人的文本，往往可顯示西方如何（錯誤）再現其他族裔，以將自己剝削與主導世界文化的行為合理化。文本當中顯示社會中的大量權力運作，以及主流團體宣揚其文化信仰和價

值觀的方式，同時透過刻板印象來矮化擁有不同價值觀或具體特性的文化弱勢族群。

兒童的族裔玩偶就是很好的例子（如中國與日本芭比娃娃），這些從歐洲中心角度在西方製造與銷售的玩偶通常都穿著前現代時期的異族服飾。這些身著前現代服飾的玩偶，所展現的異國情調與角色定位不只暗示它們來自不文明的族群，甚至在傳播弱勢族群的定型化印象。檢視族裔相關文本，如美泰兒公司出品的多元族裔玩偶或族裔藝術品時，教師應該提醒學生注意文本中描繪的族群刻板印象與邊緣化和弱勢化之間的關係，思考這些文本如何（錯誤）再現這些族群。例如，我曾要求大學部學生研究那些協助深化文化／族裔刻板印象的在地文本。其中一位學生在德州一間紀念品商店發現，裡頭許多描繪牛仔競賽與牛仔的文本（商品），都是根據當地人的刻板印象來製作。牛仔一律被描繪成參加牛仔競賽、配戴粗扣皮帶、穿著馬靴的硬漢。事實上，現實生活中的牛仔根本就不作這種打扮。讓人驚訝的是，以刻板形象來推銷本土文化的行為，不但未受到質疑，反而備受鼓勵。另一個適合研究族裔刻板印象的地方是博物館的紀念品商店。許多博物館紀念品店會銷售文物的複製品，但卻沒有提供關鍵的背景資訊，造成族裔刻板印象不斷強化，誤導了使用文物產品的消費者。

女性主義分析

文本，特別是媒體中的文本，往往是一種社會控制工具。有史以來，男性一直是再現文化文本中女性和其他陰性事物的主要作者。在大部分社會中，女性身體始終是滿足異性戀男性慾望的性別化商品與景觀（引述 Keels, 2005）。女性主體在文化文本中遭到噤聲，女性成為集體異性戀男性凝視的物化對象。根據 Luke (1994) 的看法，「文化產業一直是由男性文化來製造女性刻板印象與不實再現，女性主要的角色是男性身邊的花瓶、男性追求與操控的對象，不然就是愚笨的家庭女傭、腦殘的性感辣妹，或是神聖的超級媽咪」（p. 32）。

女性主義評論十分重視流行媒體文化中的性別歧視現象，因為即使是最先進的社會，也仍存在將女性身體物化為性慾商品的意識形態。例如嘻哈音樂影片便常將女性身體當成服務男性、暫時滿足性慾的客體。美國嘻哈音樂將女性呈現為夜店舞者和妓女，而饒舌歌手（通常為男性）則將自己美化成有錢的皮條客，使用煽動性語言來貶低女性。這種現象暗示，女性為了在男性主導場域裡生存，只能淪為滿足男性性需求的附屬品。除了這些充滿性別歧視的文本

外，嘻哈音樂影片也常歌頌暴力與拜金主義。這些藝術表現不僅刻劃女性的負面形象；同時也質疑女性對社會的貢獻。若要挑戰這類嘻哈音樂影片，教師可以讓學生比較與對照那些醜化女性的影片，和那些由女性主義饒舌歌手演出的影片，如 Queen Latifah、Sister Souljah、The Real Roxanne、M.C. Lyte 和 Salt-N-Pepa。雖然這些女性饒舌歌手的音樂影片並非完全符合女性主義的意識形態，但仍可用來反駁嘻哈音樂中慣見的女性身體剝削現象。

Judith Butler (1990) 將性別視為表演的理論，可有效解構嘻哈樂的性別歧視現象。相對於社會對性別角色的傳統界定，Butler 認為生物性別的二元化（男性／女性）只會強化社會中兩性的差異與不平等。對 Butler 而言，性別不是一種生物條件，而是行動或表演（例如以語言、服飾、動作或行動來表達）。換言之，性別是社會建構的流動變數，牽涉到人在某些情況中的行為模式：教師在應用 Butler 的性別即表演理論來檢視嘻哈樂影片時，可協助學生辨別嘻哈表演中的性別歧視行為與態度，並進一步說明特定性別表演中傳達的表面與隱晦訊息。若將性別視為一種表演，便可拆解影片畫面訊息，並分析嘻哈演出者搬演性別角色時採用的文化資本（如服裝、姿勢／手勢、臉部表情、言談模式或角色扮演）－換言之，影片當中的視覺與語言文本如何製造不平等的性別角色印象。教師可利用下列問題（無特定順序）來引導高中生分析典型性別歧視影片畫面，並詮釋有關態度、價值觀、自我形象和社會期待的意義：

- 影片使用哪些圖像元素／設計技巧來吸引我們的注意力？
- 這個畫面想傳達什麼訊息？（觀點、信念或價值觀）
- 這個畫面的功能何在？
- 這個畫面是否呈現刻板印象？哪種刻板印象？
- 我們怎麼知道這算是刻板印象？這個畫面中是否表現出性別歧視，我們如何得知？
- 這個畫面企圖引起觀看者的哪些反應？
- 影片如何描繪女性舞者？
- 畫面中是否有其他隱含訊息？
- 觀看這個畫面時你會做出哪些假設？
- 這個畫面教導社會中年輕女性與一般大眾哪些事情？
- 你是否想到任何方式可以挑戰性別歧視的再現？
- 你在媒體中還常看到哪些性別歧視的呈現？

課堂上，藝術教師可以鼓勵學生利用上述問題來辨識與研究自己社區當中社會／文化的性別實踐。例如，我有一位學生在她的田野調查中，便檢討男性與女性的萬聖節服飾。如圖 2 與圖 3 所示，各個年齡層的萬聖節服裝都有相當可議的性別呈現。我在課堂中利用這些照片，從不同角度探討男性與女性在社會中扮演的角色。

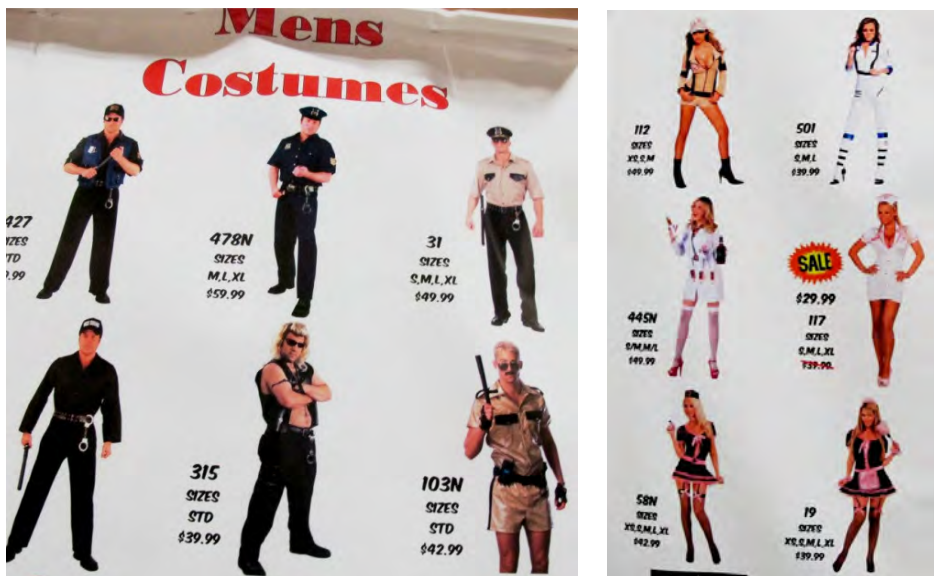


圖 2 與圖 3 於當地一間販售萬聖節服裝的商店裡拍攝。男人／男孩的服飾多為保護者的角色，女人／女孩的服飾則強調性感、服務男性與幻想角色。作者拍攝。

精神分析

精神分析將文本的語言和象徵用法予以互文化，以揭示隱藏在表層內容之後的思想。商業行銷廣告可說是最大規模的心理遊戲，但它對人類生活的影響卻常被忽略。媒體文本藉由隱喻和象徵方式傳達被壓抑的願望和幻想，以此召喚觀看者的潛意識心理。廣泛傳播的文本（例如媒體廣告與電視廣告）往往成為意識形態場域，它們形塑了兒童對現實的看法，進而建構其態度、信念與價值觀。精神分析可以促使年輕人質疑美國企業對媒體廣告與節目的主宰狀況，及其如何影響人們的消費、經驗與信仰。

讓學生試著解構與重建媒體文本，並透過游擊式傳播與線上社交網絡平台來傳播新創作的文本，如此也許可以達到瓦解文化霸權的目的。文化反堵行動是推翻以商業為主體，主導人類日常消費與經驗模式的一種重要策略。這種抗爭運動的主要目的在於干擾這些霸權、操控與文化影響。文化反堵者認為象徵、商標和廣告標語都是孕育資本主義論述的優勢文本。他們製作顛覆性廣告來顯示美國企業的公眾形象與商業行為後果之間的巨大差異，並針砭不道德的商業行為（見圖 4）。文化反堵者散播對主流媒體建構的諷刺言論，試圖打破其文化主導權，揭發隱含的商業企圖。



圖 4 這則學生創作的顛覆性廣告試圖質疑不道德的商業行為。

學生從這裡可以學習分析和解構媒體建構，而幾乎所有與品牌或商標相關的獨特設計元素都可用來創作成顛覆性廣告。我曾在課堂上向中學生介紹文化反堵、顛覆性廣告和解構等觀念。這對年輕一代來說很重要，因為他們在公眾與私人空間裡，無時無刻都接觸到大量媒體影像與訊息，這些訊息總是試圖教導他們應該如何消費、判斷、存在和成長。瞭解這些重要觀念後，學生可以思索更重要的社會議題，並從中選擇一個議題，在 Adobe® Photoshop® 上用商標和標語來創作一個顛覆廣告。學生會特別注意到自己創作的顛覆性廣告如何揭露或說明商業行為造成的後果，或討論一個特定的社會議題（見 Chung & Kirby, 2009）。我會反覆說明商標設計如何有效運用各種元素，好讓學生在設計自己作品時也能充分運用。例如，一個成功的顛覆廣告應該表達明確訊息、易於辨識（不使用過多顏色或複雜的構圖）、顯示適當的設計原則（如空間與一致性）、說服觀看者、傳達強烈情感並挑戰一般感知。

完成作品後，學生彼此分享創作，說明他們想探討的議題、說服大眾的方式以及作品想達到的目的。透過這種媒體識讀能力藝術計畫，我們希望學生能

對媒體（錯誤）再現以及它們影響整體人類與社會的方式有更多瞭解和不同見解。學生透過設計循環（調查、計畫、創作與評價）可以思考與反省自己生活的媒體世界，想辦法改變它和啓動正面的改革能量。計畫的終極目標是讓學生深入現實世界中，對於當今人類面臨的重大社會議題培養出更強烈的公眾意識。學生將自己設計的顛覆廣告印在轉印紙上，再轉印到 T 恤上。然後穿上自己設計的 T 恤參加文化反堵行動，實踐游擊式溝通策略。¹ 透過游擊式溝通，學生從被動的觀看者變成主動參與文化生產的行動者。學生穿上猶如行動告示牌的 T 恤，化身為文化製造者來吸引大眾評論與反應。

酷兒理論分析

酷兒理論的文本分析著重性別與社會性別認同，以及表演在形成與維持認同身分過程中的重要性。酷兒理論試圖挑戰優勢的異性戀常態論述並批判性別與性向的社會建構。異性戀常態化是指異性戀者這個社會主流團體，把持了政治權力以合理化並且推動其異性戀中心文化、經濟與教育思想。主流團體從異性戀中心的普世觀點來定義與管理文化價值和社會常規，如性別關係、婚姻制度和家庭結構。酷兒分析試圖探索性別與社會性別身分認同改變或抗拒改變的方式，以及權力和異性戀常態化之間的關係。描繪同性戀的文本可以讓學生重新思考自己對同性戀、陽剛與陰柔特質的看法，同時面對同性戀恐懼的議題。

教師可利用同性戀者在公開場合表達情感的影像（如圖 5）來探索男女同志議題，如同性戀恐懼症、同性婚姻和刻板印象。在大部分社會中，異性戀者可以在公開場所大方示愛，但對同性戀者而言則是冒大不韙的社會禁忌。在美國與其他許多國家，年輕學生使用同性戀恐懼症話語來羞辱同儕或惡意取笑的情況屢見不鮮。對同性戀議題缺乏認識的學生很可能抱持偏頗的態度，並使用冒犯性言語和／或行為來對待同性戀者。異性戀中心的性別與社會性別角色滲透於主流意識形態中，後者幾乎掌控了社會實踐的各個層面，將同志視為異類，連帶對努力瞭解自己和建構個人身分的年輕同性戀者造成極大傷害 (Chung, 2007)。

¹ 游擊式溝通是一種溝通策略，也是一種政治干預行動，利用設計街頭表演／活動或公眾參與活動來干擾或改變大眾的視角。它企圖瓦解常態，揭露主流行為規範所遏止的潛藏慾望。



圖 5 德州休士頓一間酒吧外展示的公眾壁畫

教師可在課堂中利用英國藝術家 Banksy 的街頭藝術來探討同性戀相關議題。在倫敦市區多個街頭和網路上都可以看到 Banksy 的警察接吻圖像（兩位穿著制服的警察在街頭接吻）。這個警察的呈現方式迫使行人重新思考自己對同性戀與陽剛特質的既有看法，並面對同性戀恐懼症議題。教師在展示 Banksy 的警察接吻圖或其他藝術圖像時，可同時與學生討論下列問題。

- 你對這幅畫的最初反應為何？這幅畫企圖引起觀看者的哪些反應？
- 這幅畫想傳達什麼訊息？你觀察到哪些具有象徵性的圖像元素嗎？你認為畫家如何創作出這幅畫？
- 這幅畫在何處呈現？它的展出地點重要嗎？為什麼？這幅畫算是藝術嗎？為什麼？
- 警察是我們社會中的權威人士嗎？社會能接受警察這樣的舉動嗎？如果其中一名警察是女性會比較容易為社會接受嗎？為什麼？畫中是否有其他隱含訊息？
- 社會可以真正平等與民主嗎？我們社會如何歧視同性戀者？我們該如何創造一個真正平等的社會？

結論

批判性視覺識讀能力涵蓋跨領域的藝術教育，以培養視覺識讀、批判能力與人類能動性。它試圖爬梳文本的文化、社會政治與經濟脈絡，並關注文本背後的權力結構如何影響我們的認知。批判性視覺識讀具有解放功能，因為教師

勇於在學習旅程中，與學生分享自己的權力，共同突破意識形態霸權與思想。它能让學生從分析角度來質疑常識假說與不公義現象，「探索現狀為何如此、過去為何如此以及未來如何改變；同時創作文本來再現被壓抑與不實呈現的內容」(Comber, 2001, p. 1)。要獲得批判性視覺識讀能力，學生需要有意識地思考文本中顯示的特權與不公平，同時透過批判文本、(重新)創作文本與邀請大眾參與文本，來討論人權議題，奠定社會正義的基礎。

視覺識讀能力與解放力量共同形成批判性識讀的基礎，將文本當成渠道來檢視霸權、管道與平等的複雜性與議題，並透過教育實踐活動來改變壓迫性結構。批判性視覺識讀運用學生的真實世界知識與真實生活的經驗來檢視社會建構的文本，並批判日常生活的消費與社會文化經驗。學生成為社會變革的能動力，他們能解構與瞭解(虛擬)社會的視覺奇觀所帶來的愉悅與矛盾，並進一步分析這些奇觀的生產方式，思考特定價值觀和往往失之公允的觀點如何塑造與建制這些奇觀。為此，我們必須為年輕人打造一個不受查禁的環境，讓他們學習獨立思考、培養自主能力並透過創意管道來參與政治論述／行動 (Jenkins, 1997)。

傳統識讀教育禁止年輕人獲得「真實世界」的資料(例如查禁或爭議性圖像)，這是相當可議的做法。身為教育工作者，我們明白現代兒童對文化的看法與成人世界的監督、價值觀與品味階層大異其趣 (Jenkins, 1997)，因此如果我們還幻想他們存在於充滿種族、階級、性別與性向紛爭的現實世界之外，便無法讓兒童成功培養批判性思考 (Rose, 1984)。保護兒童不接觸查禁／爭議性圖像等於剝奪他們的主體能動性，以及批判、分析圖像的能力。查禁與審核行為是將兒童當成無力的受害者，彷彿他們無法創造自己的命運並為自己辯護。

批判性視覺識讀教學法的核心議題是知識的政治化現象，它認為學校教育本質上便是施行霸權課程與教學法的政治組織。無論在何處發生的學習活動都是一種政治行為。因此，教師應該提高對知識政治性的意識，特別注意視覺實踐是在為誰的利益服務、誰獲得(或被剝奪)權力，誰享有(或失去)權力。教師應思考視覺(謬誤)再現系統的問題，以瞭解今日你我所知的世界如何被權力關係所建構，又如何受到階級、社會性別、種族與性向等因素影響。我們應該將文本視為一種社會建構，分析文本維繫現狀的方式，以及我們該如何擾亂社會中的主流敘事，讓邊緣群體發聲，並以具體行動參與重要社會議題。

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