Sightlines on Cultural Appropriation in Our Libraries and Communities

The Cultural Exchange Market in Visual Literacy

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● Cultural appropriation defined:

*Cambridge Dictionary:* the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture

*Wikipedia:* also phrased cultural misappropriation, is the adoption of elements of one culture by members of another culture. This can be controversial when members of a dominant culture appropriate from disadvantaged minority cultures.

● Is it or is it not - cultural appropriation *or* cultural appreciation?
Cultural Appropriation and Visual Literacy

- ACRL’s Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education
  1) Defines and articulates the need for an image
  2) Finds and accesses needed images and visual media effectively and efficiently
  3) Interprets and analyzes the meanings of images and visual media
  4) Evaluates images and their sources
  5) Uses images and visual media effectively
  6) Designs and creates meaningful images and visual media
  7) Understands many of the ethical, legal, social, and economic issues surrounding the creation and use of images and visual media, and accesses and uses visual media ethically
Why we need visual literacy skills?

*At my institution and many others in Higher Ed there is a initiative towards promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EAD) of which cultural appropriation is a topic. 

*Visual culture, the proliferation of visual media, and the expansion in interdisciplinary scholarship results in a greater number of images being used and therefore a rise in cultural appropriation issues on both the individual or community level. 

*Advocating for visual literacy instruction workshops on important topics like cultural appropriation and gender issues is crucial to societal growth and understanding. 

Visual Literacy and Cultural “Exchange” Debates

*Recent controversy over Damien Hirst’s aesthetic similarities with paintings by a community of female Aboriginal Australian artists from Utopia, near Alice Springs, Australia.

*Hirst denies the accusation claiming he was unaware of the Aboriginal women’s paintings, stating the inspiration came from Post-Impressionist artists Pierre Bonnard and Pointillist George Seurat (as well as his own 1990 series “Visual Candy”)

*Exhibition highlighting similarities helps raise prices of paintings by Utopia artists, but do the artists benefit or the gallery dealers/auction houses?

Visual Literacy Standards and Cultural Appropriation

Standard Three

The visually literate student interprets and analyzes the meanings of images and visual media.

1. The visually literate student identifies information relevant to an image's meaning.
   a. Looks carefully at an image and observes content and physical details
   b. Reads captions, metadata, and accompanying text to learn about an image
   d. Examines the relationships of images to each other and uses related images to inform interpretation
   e. Recognizes when more information about an image is needed, develops questions for further research, and conducts additional research as appropriate
Visual Literacy Standards and Cultural Appropriation

3. The visually literate student identifies the physical, technical, and design components of an image.
   a. Describes pictorial, graphic, and aesthetic elements of an image (e.g., color, composition, line, shape, contrast, repetition, style)

4. The visually literate student validates interpretation and analysis of images through discourse with others.
   a. Participates in classroom and other discussions about images
   b. Seeks expert and scholarly opinion about images, including information and analysis found in reference sources and scholarly publications
   c. Informs analysis with discipline-specific perspectives and approaches

Pierre Bonnard, *Siesta*, (1914)

George Seurat, *The Seine of Courbevoie*, (1883-1884)
2. The visually literate student situates an image in its cultural, social, and historical contexts.

**Learning Outcomes:**

a. Describes cultural and historical factors relevant to the **production of an image** (e.g., time period, geography, economic conditions, political structures, social practices)

b. Examines the purposes and meanings of an image in its **original context**

c. Explores choices made in the production of an image to construct meaning or influence interpretation (e.g., framing, composition, included or excluded elements, staging)

d. Describes the **intended audience** for an image

e. Explores representations of gender, ethnicity, and other cultural or social identifiers in images

f. Investigates how the audience, context, and interpretation of an image may have changed over time
The Indigenous Art Code

The purpose of the Code is to establish standards for dealings between Dealers and Artists to ensure:

(a) fair and ethical trade in Artwork;

(b) transparency in the process of promotion and sale of Artwork; and

(c) that disputes arising under the Code are dealt with efficiently and fairly.

https://indigenousartcode.org/
Cultural Appropriation on Display

*Culture or Costume, Exploitation, Trivialize, Oppression, Misrepresentation, Assimilation
References


THANK YOU!