

Research in Practice.

Independent Inquiry.

Layer. Form. Subversive.

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In this writing I will explore the 3 key words Layers, form and Subversive in order to link them in some way that includes a few of my interests, in order to lead to a question or questions to expand on for further exploration and research.

All types and forms of Art, crafts and Design as social elements can have a great influence on mental and physical health and in education and communication and often take a political stance aimed at regulating aspects of moral, social and cultural ways of life within our society. I feel It is important to study how morals, ethics and aesthetics within our culture and our cultural industry can be influenced by the practice and the products and works of Art, crafts and Design. In this case, an analysis of three keywords is considered to illustrate how form, layers, and subversion integrate to pursue a political and cultural discourse. To explore the elements the study will make use of artists and theorists such as Gestalt, John Berger, Tim Ingold, Olaf Eliason, Banksy, Grayson Perry and others.

layers (*plural noun*)

a sheet, quantity, or thickness of material, typically one of several, covering a surface or body.

synonyms: coating · sheet · coat · surface · covering · blanket · skin · veneer

(Oxford English Dictionary, 2020) In art, layers are defined in a variety of ways with reference to the type of art.

Digital and

physical painting are different approaches which make use of layers. Under physical

painting, layers are considered pieces of plastic that are placed on the canvas.

Another definition of layers is the application of color. In this case, layers are different color coatings or coverings, which, based on the type and approach of the artist, can dry in cases where the painting or work must be developed over a long period. From

this definition, a layer is a column of color that may be applied primarily, or which can be made on top of another layer of color (Gingold, 2015)

The definition I want to apply to the word layers here is the way in which a piece of art can have many “layers of meaning” and what one work suggests for one person can be completely different for another. When you look more closely and in more detail at certain works it becomes clear that there are deeper meanings there than initially look like on the surface, these happen when the artist uses symbols, imagery, materials or similar to develop a kind of emotion or response in the viewer that helps to create a theme or a message. As Tina Meyers says on her blog “I love the emotion it is capable of expressing. in the many layers of meaning. And that there is no right or wrong way”_(Meyer, 2020)

These layers of meaning can touch on all the layers of our psyche, and are referred to, by Gestalt in his theory, as the peeling of an onion, eventually getting right down into the core of our being and enable and empower us to see the realities of our own behaviors and fears and the affect we can have on the world. they can speak volumes to us, inspire us, motivate us, influence our behavior, calm and move us.

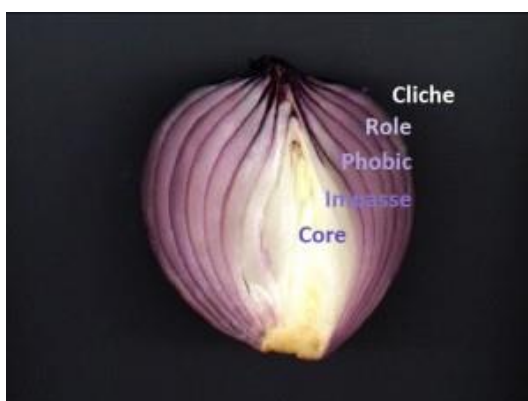


fig 1. Peeling the onion.

(gestalt therapy institute, n.d.). Fritz Perles describes this awareness of the human psyche, essentially a phenomenological description of the experience, identifications, and behaviors of people. Each layer has its own place and use in our every-day lives, both in terms of normal and abnormal functioning.

The first layer is called the Cliché layer. It's the small talk, the initial view someone has of a piece of art, or a way of life, good for getting the initial attention of something.

Next is the Role layer. what we do to make a living, what it is that adds meaning to our lives, and how we define ourselves within our society.

Then, finally, there is the Phobic layer. This layer holds our deepest fears,

This layer is where we come face-to-face with our fears, overcoming them, or coming to terms with them. It is the layer of growth, of reflection and of self-discovery. When we penetrate down to this innermost layer, it opens the door to our core – to who we really are at any moment.

The core layer represents our true emotions, our real response to the world at any given instant. It is where we are the most open to learning and start learning to learn.

(Ingold, 2013)

Form.

the visible shape or configuration of something. "the form, color, and texture of the tree" · particular way in which a thing exists or appears. synonyms: appearance ·

embodiment · semblance · shape · guise · VERB bring together parts or combine to create (something: create · bring into being · make or be made into a specific shape or form · fashion · model · mould · forge · · cast · sculpt · (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020)

In relation to art the term form has two meanings: it can refer to the overall form taken by the work – its physical nature; or within a work of art it can refer to the element of shape among the various elements that make up a form. (Tate, n.d.)

Form is one of the visual tools that an artist uses to make a piece of art. **form** is an object or something that is three-dimensional with volume, length, width, and height, versus shape, which is two-dimensional, or flat. It can be manmade, or it can be a natural form (thouhtco.com, n.d.)

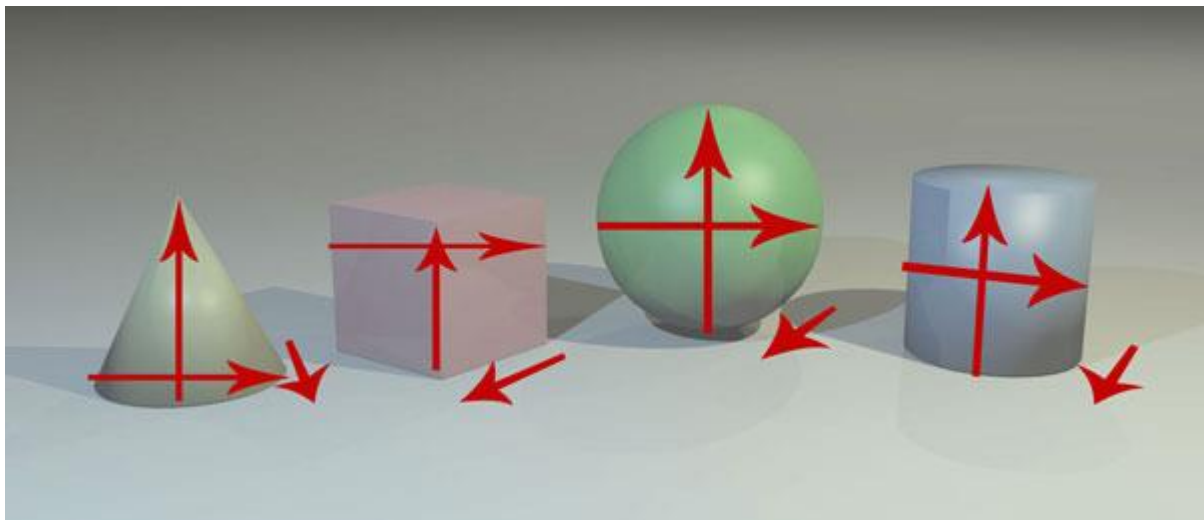


Fig 2: Forms (fatehahblog.wordpress.com, 2017)

There are currently no doubts about the communicative nature of works of art, although some artists affirm that their objective is not to communicate a message, but to express themselves through an artistic discourse. However, even in the most abstract languages, it is possible to establish a relationship with the viewer, who may

experience various sensations or perceptions that lead to connotations of an intellectual and/or emotional nature (Mattusch, 2019) What is it that brings about these experiences?

At the end of the 18th century, Emmanuel Kant systematically and critically analyzed the aesthetic experience linked to beauty, a beauty free of concepts and meanings.

In the *Critique of Judgment* written in 1790, Kant expresses (1987: 234): "The beautiful is what, without concept, is represented as the object of universal satisfaction. (Kant, 1987)

Kant assigns form a relevant importance in the work of art, considering it as a true carrier of beauty in painting, sculpture, architecture and in the design of gardens, (Jay, 2016) Kant felt that form was the basis of aesthetic pleasure and what people saw as beauty no matter their backgrounds, or tastes in art. The color in the painting, Kant considers it as a variable, which makes the work pleasant, but which does not give it its authentic condition of aesthetics and beauty; In this regard, he maintains the thesis that, the true bearer of beauty is form. the colors, patterns and textures are a mere charm. These "charms" as he calls them can be very useful in conveying messages or communicating ideas for other people to make their own opinion.

Grayson Perry is one artist that is known for his preference in the use of conventional forms and traditional making methods for his vessels, he then uses more contemporary methods to adorn them with images and texts of his social and cultural concerns and of his own life and experiences. Perry also often uses his work as a form of therapy, bringing his own thoughts and feelings from his subconscious or core layer and displaying them on the surface of his forms.



Fig 3. (Perry, 2011)

Other artists such as Andy Goldsworthy, or Olaf Eliason prefer to use more natural forms that they see in nature to convey their messages or communicate their ideas.

Subversive

An effort to promote, impede, direct, or intervene in cultural, social, political, economic, or environmental changes. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020) The word Subversive in our society generally has negative connotations. A lot of artists can be classed as being subversive or activists and often extend their work practices into the community to voice ideas and opinions on things that mean a lot to them from a wide range of issues relating to the environment, culture, social, historical and political problems. Sometimes they take part in marches, demonstrations and campaigns from a street aesthetic - tradition, puppets, live music - but also to a metaphorical meaning that incorporates visual elements such as sculptures and art works. (Jacobs, 2019)

In most of these cases, the strategy is the appropriation of public space, with the purpose of subverting the current institutional messages. The applications used vary depending on the population and their cultural and social characteristics, since the spectators are casual passers-by, the work sometimes is renounced, leaving people to wonder about the origin of the work. Art works are often produced in this way to generate political resistance or social awareness of an issue and can consequently lead to transformation and emancipation (Zagorin, 2017)



Fig 4. (Banksy, 2018)

One example of subversive art would be Banksy and his relatively recent painting on a garage wall in port Talbot. The painting was widely speculated on and was successful in bringing world attention to Port Talbot and to the issues that the people living in the immediate and surrounding area face daily from pollution from the nearby Steel works and the motorway that runs through the area. Banksy works anonymously and can be referred to as a political activist, his art usually is a combination of satirical dark humour with graffiti and uses a distinctive stencilling technique. (wales online, 2018)

On a smaller, but of no less importance, more local scale, there are a lot of Craftivism groups and individual artists that make their voices heard by with their

work with Yarn Bombing, film making, song writing, seed planting, guerrilla gifting etc. Such as Sarah Corbett, Rozsika Parker and the craftism collective.

These forms of public, relational and participatory art, utilize and rely on human interactions and their social context as a field of action for a collective elaboration of meaning, which is why they constitute a meeting space that favors the formation of new possible collective imaginary (Ramirez, 2017) They would define a conceptual aesthetic of an artistic or ideological nature, with the intention of making seen what usually goes unnoticed and figuring out which areas to campaign in, when and where to campaign for the best effect for the construction of a more democratic society. From this perspective, art becomes an activity linked to the community, with the aim of contributing to distorting power structures and relations of domination. Cases such as Mexican muralism highlight the symbolic power of the image (painting, drawings, crafted art, and sculpting): the architects of the revolution, seeing that art was an effective instrument, empowered their potential to subvert the ousted tale (Subirats, 2017) The image has been wielded as a subversive instrument.

Art, craft, Design and sculpting embody some of this subversive trait that we describe (be it in graffiti, stencil, yarn, sculpture or techniques such as stickers - printed papers that stick to the walls.) because the means necessary to intervene on a surface are even more immediate than described. A marker, a pencil, or any item of daily use for the writing contain the potential to leave an imprint on surfaces as diverse as walls, doors, tiles, asphalt, etc (Regli., 2018)

Perhaps creating, in this sense, has an even more subversive and disruptive potential. That street art, or craftivism its commitment with social causes -ethical, ideological, political reflection, etc. is the component that legitimizes it as an

expression that, although subordinate, has roots in counter cultural spheres that claim their values (Romanovska, 2020)

Contextualizing

The aestheticization of society, sociability and sociality are part of the postmodern process of de-differentiation. Postmodernism is strictly cultural. It produces cultural objects and reconstructs what is differentiated by the previous stages of modernity. The Kantian differentiation between the theoretical, the aesthetic and the ethical is beginning to blur. Dedifferentiation implies new relationships between the cultural and the social. Art is no longer separated from the social and that it is a version of reflection, not cognitive but aesthetic.

In current times, the time of estrangement and hedonism are adapted to the time of production. There is specialized equipment for work and specialized equipment for leisure, functional and subject to the needs of working time. Daily life is interrupted with art, festivity, and play. We need to regain control over conceptions of goodness and beauty, and over our lives and not have our existence boxed in different compartments. Today we are facing the reconstruction of ethics and aesthetics using layers, form, and most importantly, subversion as a means of illustrating and calling into action, an ethical, aesthetic, and moral treatment of social spaces and the environment.

Art does not show people what to do yet engaging with a good work of art can connect you to your senses, body, and mind. It can make the world felt. And this felt feeling may spur thinking, engagement, and even action.' – (World economic forum, 2018)

Question. What is the best way we as Designers and Makers can educate, engage motivate and empower the general public into a call of action that will help heal all society and the environment from the effects caused by the recent Coronavirus Pandemic?

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Fig 1. <https://thejoyofliving.co/peeling-onion-revealing-layers-personality/>

Fig 2: Forms (Source: <https://fatehahblog.wordpress.com/2017/07/09/exercise-2-element-of-art-form-space-and-texture-week-3-4/>)

Fig 3. Grayson Perry RA, The Rosetta Vase, 2011. www.royalacademy.org.uk

Fig 4. Banksy . Boy in bobble hat