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Figure 1. 'Flower Superflat' (2004) Murakami.

<https://www.artnet.com/artists/takashi-murakami/flower-superflat-a-m-W3IYjWMg-qh8EKbIwgjO2>

Figure 2. 'Cherry Blossom' (2003) Murakami x Louis Vuitton.

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/takashi-murakami-x-louis-vuitton-the-fashion-collaboration-that-defined-a-generation>

Figure 3. 'Panda' (2004) Murakami x Louis Vuitton.

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<https://willkommen.koelntourismus.de/en/poi/dropped-cone>

Figure 6. 'Infinity-Nets' (1959), Yayoi Kusama.

<https://www.meer.com/victoria-miro-gallery-mayfair/artworks/19903>

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<https://insights.masterworks.com/art/artists/what-is-the-meaning-of-yayoi-kusamas-infinity-nets/>

INTRODUCTION

Kitsch is a term in the art world that is traditionally refers to artworks and pieces that are of dis-taste and are cheaply made or manufactured, although is a small portion of the overall art movement, this shows that this concept is relevant to many artworks. Kitsch is a concept in art that refers to artworks that are cheesy or deemed as tacky. "The admittedly obscure origins of the term "Kitsch" are found in the art world. The German word implies an artistic creation that "makes use of the refuse taken from the rubbish dump" (Lugg, 1998, p. 1). This can be subjective to the artist because everyone has a different opinion and point of view. Typically, Kitsch, a form of art that is made cheaply or made for the purpose of economic gain. However, this form of art can be controversial in different ways, Kitsch has a vague description and can relate to a lot of topics. It is also a way to determine something that is popular or trendy. For something to be classed as Kitsch it would have to be in a high demand for the product to be cost productive.

It can also be subjective to people's knowledge of it, for example, the brand Louis Vuitton. The majority of people know what this brands symbol is because of how highly it was marketed over the years. To the point where a lot of the objects made with the Louis Vuitton symbol are knock offs and cheaply made because of how many people buy them due to their popularity. 'I would even venture to suggest that Mario of The Super Mario Brothers is as familiar as The Mona Lisa – if not more so to certain generations' (Arnold, 2004, p.12). But because of vague description of Kitsch, no artwork is labelled as a Kitsch piece unless it was the artists intention. Kitsch is typically described as a term that is supposed to lack emotional connection because of the idea of how the object or art piece was manufactured, and how it was made for economic gain and not for meaning and value. This may not always be the case when it comes to the target audience of the artwork. For example, Kitsch is typically "cheaply made" and "high in demand", it would make the object more commonly bought in society. Therefore, giving the object more sentimental value, as it is wanted more by people. 'Visual culture is partly about the psychological processes of seeing and also the nature of perception'

(Arnold, 2004, p. 12). In the book 'Art History', Dana Arnold relates the term Kitsch to more of a determination to describe the artworks relevancy. Describing how an artwork that is described as Kitsch can only be Kitsch if recognised as this by multiple people. One of the art related movements that is associated with Kitsch is Pop art. Pop art, like Kitsch, is subjective in art. Pop art is a commonly used artistic style because of the use of opaque colours and repetitive patterns.

CHAPTER 1.

Known for creating a genre that is relevant to pop art and Japanese style art, Takashi Murakami is a Japanese contemporary artist. His style is very known and even adapted by big names, but his constant use of his style and brand can be deemed as Kitsch because of how much it is used, noticed and trademarked. He took the idea of modern pop culture and merged it with traditional Japanese art to create a unique perspective. According to the Kumi Contemporary article, Murakami was inspired by Pop art artists Andy Warhol, Anselm Kiefer and Jeff Koons.



Figure 1. 'Flower Superflat' (2004) Murakami.

In 2002, he was approached by Louis Vuitton to design a line of handbags. This collaboration was on the line of what was considered high art and commercialism but went on to become the most

successful fashion-art collaboration in history. Again, this is a big reference to Kitsch art and culture. Where similar to artists like Jeff Koons, Murakami collaborated with the brand because of how big the name was. But, also like Jeff Koons, Murakami is aware of his style of art and embraces it. This was his spin on modern art and Japanese art. This is contradicting in the art world because, as insinuated before by theorists such as Clement Greenburg, creating art is traditionally for the moral standard in the art world and should not be contributing to capitalism.



Figure 2. 'Cherry Blossom' (2003) Murakami x Louis Vuitton.



Figure 3. 'Panda' (2004) Murakami x Louis Vuitton.

Jeff Koons said 'the objective in Pop art is very much the acceptance of the world around you, and Pop art tends to end up being judged in terms of these images of objects, and they're always looked at in materialistic ways' (Serpentine Gallery, 2009, p. 68). At the beginning of the rise of Pop art, there was a realisation of the capitalist system both in the art world and the general society. This affected many aspects at the time because of consumer culture. Where people felt the need to buy materialistic items to feel included such as buying from designer brands. This resulted in brands creating items with a lower budget cost, due to consumer culture resulting in more belongings being thrown away more often. "The total availability of consumer goods has turned into the waste-disposal problem of a "throw-away society" in which the desires and fates of a individuals disappear into the mass' (Osterwold, 2003, p. 10). Successful artists are generally artists who have been previously

questioned about their morals in the art industry. Artists like Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami hired people to help with their own work and became employers to keep up with the high demand of work.

'Warhol, conversations about the artist', a book written by Patrick S. Smith. A book written to clear up misconceptions by having informal conversations about the famous Pop art artist. These conversations were taken place in 1978, with people who worked for and around the artist. In the preface of the book, it states 'Warhol is seen from his early years at Carnegie Tech, through the infamous "Factory" of the sixties, to his acquaintances and assistants of the late seventies' (S. Smith, 1988, preface). This book is an interesting insight into the development of commercialised art and how it does benefit the artist. 'Warhol's second commercial art assistant was his most important one. As associate of Warhol from the mid-1950s through 1964-65, Nathan Gluck's work may be considered as being synonymous with his employer' (S. Smith, 1988, p. 55). Nathan Gluck in the book gave a great understanding of working for Warhol. Smith's intention as mentioned on the brief of the book was to clear up controversy surrounding the artist, controversy such as being referred to as a 'capitalist' in the art industry. Nathan Gluck explains in the book how he was hired by Warhol to be his commercial assistant but ended up helping physically with creating the artwork itself.

'The reason that he needed someone was the fact that he got busier and busier'. 'Over the years, he got so busy that he didn't have time to blot it, so I would blot it. Andy's mother signed his handwriting, so she had over the years become tired of that, and I would fake it'. (S. Smith, 1988, p.56)

This questions the ideology behind the artwork, this again refers to the concept of Kitsch. Where the same artwork is printed and signed repeatedly until it is washed out, the reader can start to get a sense of Warhol's intentions. Until reading further into the book, where Nathan Gluck was questioned by S. Smith on why Warhol would paint cupids. 'But Andy did things because they were fun-they

amused him, and he got delight out of them. And, I think, that is why one of the reasons he did cupids' (S. Smith, 1988, p. 62).

'There is something awfully nice about being an artist. I think one of the great satisfactions of being an artist is being in a situation of total control of a work. Whereas, if you were a commercial artist or a designer, no matter how well you are thought of, you are always working toward a target that someone has set for you'. (S. Smith, 1988, p. 224)

'Political Kitsch is a type of propaganda that incorporates familiar and easily understood art forms (Kitsch) to shape the direction of public policy. Kitsch is something readily accessible in everyday life' (A. Lugg, 1998, p.1) Kitsch and Pop art are extremely similar and can both be subjective to modern art as shown by artists such as Takashi Murakami. Pop art is an art movement that originated in the 50s but mainly became popular during the 60s. It is defined as a postwar climate, where the aim was to promote the idea of turning everyday objects into an inspiration for artists. This movement was then using as a form of rebellion and attempt to revolutionize the future of fine art. 'Pop characterized those particular vibrations of a new epoch which were making inroads into every sphere of public and private life' (Osterwold, 2003, p. 6).

CHAPTER 2

Claes Oldenburg was a Swedish-born American sculptor. Infamous for his public art installations. Some of his most famous sculptures are the Shuttlecocks in Kansas City, Dropped cream Cone in Cologne, and Cherry at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. He was known for his soft sculptures of everyday objects. Oldenburg would feature large replicas of everyday objects, similar to the work of Jeff Koons. Oldenburg is classed as a Pop art artist because of his enlargement of objects, it's the objects that he chooses results in his artwork being described as Pop art.

'The most apparent aspect of Oldenburg's work is his use of images resembling familiar objects. As a result, Oldenburg was initially identified as a Pop artist and his ideas and creativity believed to function only within the realm of representation' (Haskell, 1971, p. 8).

Barbara Haskell studies Oldenburg's work and discusses his passion for the work that he pursues.

Oldenburg has exhibited in a variety of public spaces including travelling to various countries to do this. Haskell briefly mentions how Oldenburg like to spend time in a place before he even considers what he will exhibit in that public area.



Figure 4. 'Shuttlecocks in Kansas City' (1994) Claes Oldenburg.

These images contain some of the work that Oldenburg has created over the years. 'But what's really important is that those images are just metaphors for people and that they are metaphors for the acceptance of things outside the self' (Serpentine Gallery, 2009, p. 68). Referencing how artists express themselves through their style of art. How Pop art is an act of expression and used as a reaction to society or other forms of art. But can Kitsch be used as an expression?



Figure 5. 'Dropped Cone in Cologne' (2001) Claes Oldenburg.

'Draws upon a given history and culture-that carries both information and emotional import'. (A. Lugg, 2012, p. 1). This quote is in reference to Kitsch being a cultural impact on society. Referencing Kitsch objective for consumer culture and mass production, it can be shown that rather than it being an overall negative experience, it has in fact been impactful. Items that are over produced can fall into the category of everyday objects, similar to Pop art.

'Kitsch has also been described as "art that sentimentalizes everyday experiences, or that appeals to beliefs and emotions encouraging vanity, prejudices, or unjustified fears and dubious successes".

While Kitsch can be occasionally disturbing, it is more likely to reassure and comfort the observer' (A. Lugg, 1998, p. 1).

CHAPTER 3.

Yayoi Kusama is a Japanese contemporary artist. She works in many different art forms such as sculpture, installation, painting and performance art. Infamous for her use of polka dots in her art, Kusama rose to prominence in the 60s. She influenced Andy Warhol and even had an effect in the rise of Pop art and feminist art. 'Yayoi Kusama is surely the most prominent Japanese female artist of our time; her spectacular installations with their mirrored interiors and polka dots are recognized across the world' (Morris, 2012, Foreword). The use of polka dots in Pop art is widely used. A simple repetitive pattern that has been used multiple times in the art form. This has been prominent in Kusama's work since the late 50s and early 60s. Her series Infinity Nets has been the artists longest-running series after she moved to New York in 1958.

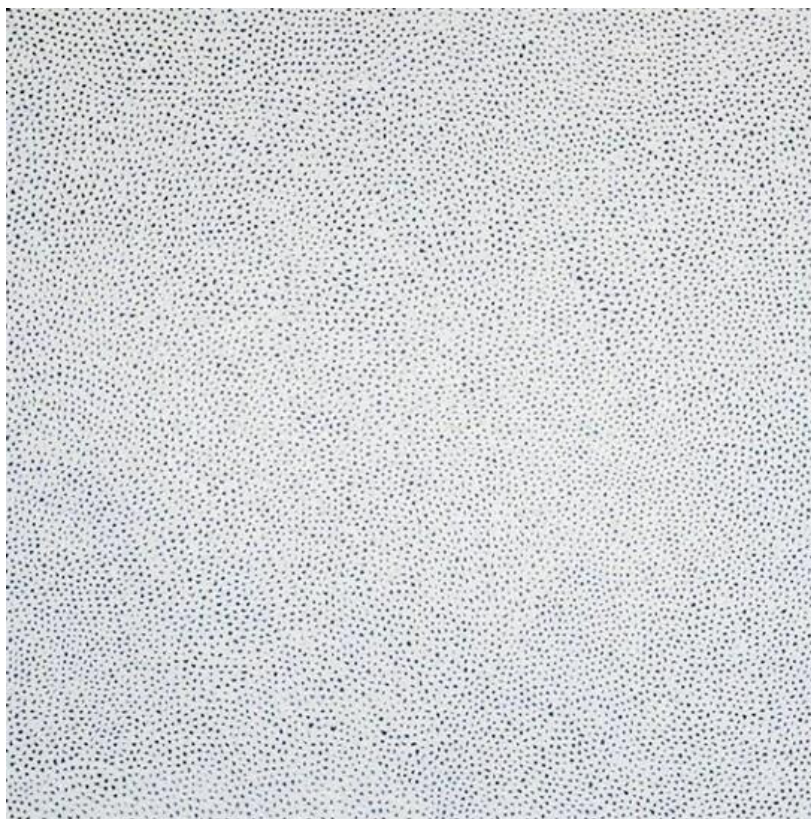


Figure 6. Infinity-Nets (1959) Yayoi Kusama.

Kusama describes in her journey how much she channels her emotions when creating art. This series was her first major exhibition since migration from Japan to America in 1955. She describes her art as an escape, which is why she creates so many pieces at a time. 'I make them and make them and

then keep on making them until I bury myself in the process. I call this obliteration' (Morris, 2012, p. 51). This is how she explains her approach to making her sculptural art and her general approach to creating her art at this time in her career.



Figure 7. Infinity-Nets (1960) Yayoi Kusama

Throughout the book 'Yayoi Kusama', Kusama refers back to her emotions whilst creating her art on occasion. Further showing how much of an impact culture has on artistic styles. Throughout Kusama's sketchbook from 1945, there are 'seventy-six pages of her sketchbook meticulously depicted' (Morris, 2012, p. 108). The sketchbook has continuous references of Kusama's life in Japan before, during and after the war broke out in 1944. Furthermore, 'Biscuit tins and calendars, as well as for posters and prints. In this way, visual culture can be said to encompass a broad range of subject matter that stands outside the definition of high art' (S. Smith, 1988, p.13). Art is a cultural thing, whether it relates to wider range of audience, or just the artist as an individual. Kitsch and Pop art are defined as art concepts that embrace surroundings and everyday objects. Similar to how Kusama used and made art from peony petals. At the time of the war, it was the one of the few materials she

had access too. 'In the early days of Japan's entry into the war, Kusama was mobilised to work in the fields, planting crops' (Morris, 2012, p. 108).

CONCLUSION

After looking at three artists in relation to Pop art and overlooking the impact of their art influence. It is clear that the concept of Pop art has been revolutionary during the art movement. However, to diminish the idea of Kitsch to be such a negative style of art and use this term as a way to undermine other artists work can come across as hypocritical. After overseeing both art forms, Kitsch and Pop art are extremely similar aesthetically.

Historically, Pop art has had a huge impact on the art culture due to the timing of the rise of Pop art which is how the style gets so much praise. Kitsch on the other hand, is described the same way as Pop art yet has a lot of stigma behind it. Both art forms have had a history of capitalism and contributing to consumer culture, yet they are art forms that are viewed very differently.

'Manufacturers of Kitsch are aware of a given audience's cultural biases and deliberately exploit them. Kitsch is art that engages the emotions and deliberately ignores the intellect, and as such, is a form of cultural aesthesia' (A. Lugg, 1998, p. 1). When Jeff Koons is asked about how he feels about his art being referred to as Kitsch, 'I've never had an interest in Kitsch per se. I always try to give viewers self confidence in particular in their own judgement, whatever others may have to say, especially on matters of art' (Serpentine Gallery, Koons, 2009, p. 32). Describing how the meaning of the art piece is in the eye of the beholder. Regardless of Kitsch being an art form that is described as dis-taste, Kitsch has shown that it has sentimental value regardless of this label. Kitsch has been around for around longer than art movements such as Pop art but was not a popular art style until the same time. Can Kitsch be disregarded when it comes to the art scene despite Pop art being praised for decades?

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