

Proposed question for Independent Project (Part One in Independent Project in Year Three):

‘How can Psychoanalytic theory be applied to Editorial Illustration?’

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Three Keywords: **Perception, Illusion, Faces**

For my practice I will be looking at combining portraits and geometric shapes for album covers, editorial and magazines, exploring in depth the essence of what creates the persona and how Illustration can be used to represent and portray this concept for better understanding of Psychoanalytic theories that can be used to express who we are as individuals. I want to interpret intellectual themes in a creative way to support the artwork, leading towards a proposed question for my independent project in Year Three. I will focus my attention on three key words: Perception, Faces and Illusion, and how they all link together. I will further be exploring theories of semiotics, philosophy and psychiatry in synthesis with key artists and thinkers, including M.C. Escher; Franz Kafka; George Orwell; Carl Jung; and Cindy Sherman.

Perception

Merriam-Webster provided two definitions for Perception. The first one being “awareness of the elements of the environment through physical sensation”, so it would be a conscious understanding; and the second one being “physical sensation interpreted in the light of experience” (Merriam Webster, 2019). Reid said: “Perception has always an external object” (Reid, 2004, p.27). To add on from this, Berger noted, “Although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own ways of seeing” (Berger, 2008, p.10). It is understood that everything we visualise we are digesting and drawing meaning from, and so it becomes personal to us. Carl Jung would consider this a part of our “collective unconscious” whereby memory traces are stored that date back centuries from evolution of learnt behaviour, ideology and information about the world we live in (McLeod, 2018). Perceptions are also very individual and it hones in on the self or what creates the self. Jung’s Psychoanalytic theory behind the concept of becoming your true self would be interpreted in the form of a diagram, showing the different sections of the brain and that also represent the four main Jungian archetypes: the self; the persona; the shadow; and the anima/animus. There are two quotes by the psychiatrist that provide a solution amongst

confusion: “In all the chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order” (Chase, 2014); and “Intuition is perception via the unconscious that brings forth ideas, images, new possibilities and ways out of blocked situations” (AZ Quotes, n.d.). This suggests that the whole idea of perception is to problem solve and visualise what needs to be fixed. It is more or less something that we can control and access to see our true potential as opposed to something that limits us.

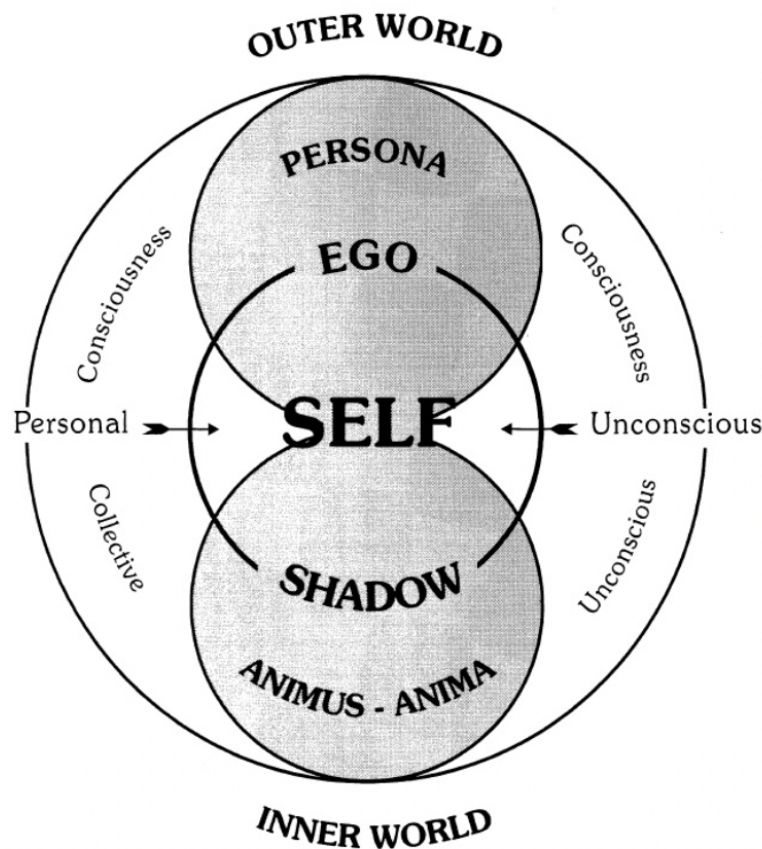


Fig. 1
Jung, C. (n.d.) *Jung's Model of the Psyche* [poster]

Buldeo, N. (2019) *What is individuation?*
Available at: <https://nuninhighheels.com/2019/03/02/what-is-individuation/>
(Accessed 30 April 2022)

I can relate this to 'Kafkaesque' which would be a term used to help us “recognise and gain a measure of perspective and relief” and anything which resembles the “uniquely dark, disorienting and surreal” writing style of 'Franz Kafka' (Pursuit of Wonder, 2020). His work

addressed dark topics and feelings such as alienation, anxiety and self hatred in the early twentieth century through works such as 'The Trial' and 'Metamorphosis'. His work, along with Carl Jung's theory, would be the key in allowing yourself to become aware and bring attention to what's going on inside. Kafka's work became therapy to him as he wrote stories about his psychologically abusive upbringing by his father to where his self hatred and feelings of alienation and lack of self worth stemmed from: "He lived his life in the eyes of his Father". His work also tells us that "viewpoint is a construct" (Pursuit of Wonder, 2020). This would imply that the way we look at things is determined by how our lives have been shaped.

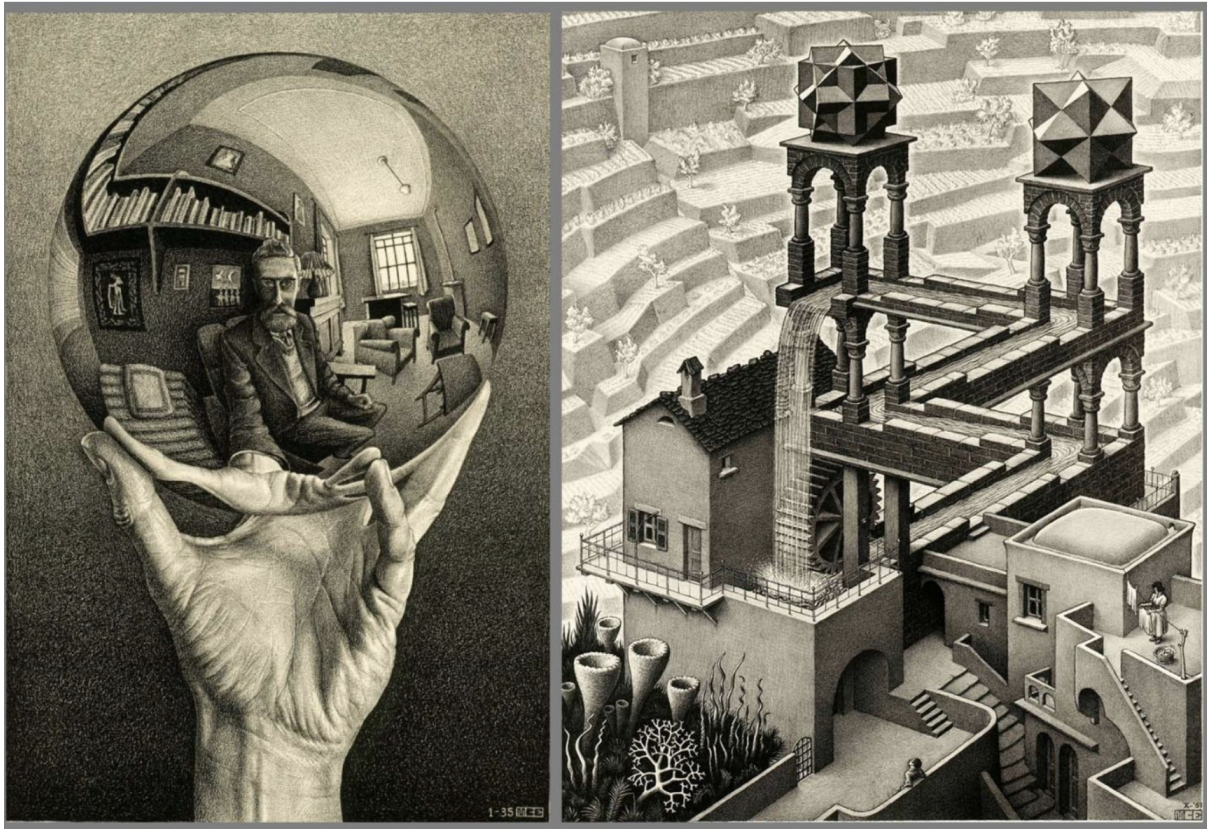


Fig. 2

Escher (1935) *Hand with Reflecting Sphere* [lithograph] 15" x 12"

Escher (1961) *Waterfall* [lithograph] 12.5" x 8.4"

Dambrot, S. (2021) *A New Film Presents M.C. Escher In His Own Words*.

Available at:

<https://www.villagevoice.com/2021/02/01/a-new-film-presents-m-c-escher-in-his-own-words/>

(Accessed 30 April 2022)

Illusion

M.C. Escher's work has been described as "the perfect coming together of Mathematics and Art" (Stewart, 2005). This refers back to Jung's theory, and how you can use problem solving as a breakthrough: "in all disorder a secret order". Escher's work resembles visual Illusions; geometric shapes and symmetry. Professor Ian Stewart at University of Warwick commented on the nature behind the artist's work: "Our brains interpret what they perceive and make assumptions about what they're seeing" (Stewart, 2005). It is about how the mind can be tricked and reconstructed and that we all have our unique ways of seeing through our unique ways of "thinking, feeling and choosing" (Leaf, 2019). Dr Caroline Leaf explained, "The way

that we use our brains is different for each of us” (Leaf, 2018). Following on from this, there is an example of Escher’s work that is personal to the artist himself - “visual parable of the metamorphosis of Escher’s thoughts and inspiration” (Schattschneider, 2004, p.19). As subjective individuals we will all get something different out of Escher’s work based on how our minds are digesting the information.



Fig. 3

Orwell, G. (1949) *Big Brother Is Watching You* [poster]

Available at:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Brother-Watching-Large-Poster-Print/dp/B08193DPP9?th=1>

(Accessed 1 May 2022)

The 'Big Brother Is Watching You' poster is an example of the powers of perception and how minds can be corrupted under the power of the hierarchy, which ties back to Kafka's concept where "We're in a world defined by Kafka when we feel powerless in a world of authority"

(The School of Life, 2016). This poster is a piece of propaganda and “replacing love from people’s lives with Fear” (Literary Devices, 2015). This commands the citizens to obey the law and follow orders under a dictator or else ‘Big Brother’ will know, manipulating them into thinking that they are always being watched. A quote from George Orwell’s ‘1984’ resembles another person’s experience looking at the poster: “The hypnotic eyes gazed into his own. It was as though some huge force were pressing down upon you - something that penetrated inside your skull, battering against your brain, frightening you out of your beliefs, persuading you, almost, to deny the evidence of your senses” (Orwell, 1949, Part 1, Chapter 7). This refers back to one of the key definitions for perception, which is being aware through the senses; implying the power of influence through gaze. This would lean into the second quote from the same page on dismissing what the individual was previously aware of in order to become susceptible to manipulation: “In the end, the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it” (Orwell, 1949, Part 1, Chapter 7). In the first Chapter, Orwell talks about the thought behind the image and how it was constructed in a way that would draw you in: “It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move” (Literary Devices, 2015). This poster and Escher’s work both play a part in creating optical illusions in different ways.



Fig. 4

Zeta, P. (2015) *A Head Full OF Dreams* [album cover]

Available at:

<https://beta.music.apple.com/us/album/a-head-full-of-dreams/1053933969?i=1053933987>

(Accessed 30 April 2022)

Artist and creative director, Pilar Zeta, created the album artwork for British Rock Band, Coldplay's record: 'A Head Full of Dreams'. This encapsulates the same visual elements as Escher by using geometrical shapes and symmetry, drawing the eye into the centre of the image. The shapes create an illusion that captures the surreal effect of dreams as they live inside the unconscious part of the brain, making sense of the external world by creating something internal within ourselves. This refers back to the work of Dr Caroline Leaf when she talks about our individuality and how we uniquely think to use our brains; interpreting the world around us- "thinking, feeling and choosing" (Leaf, 2019).

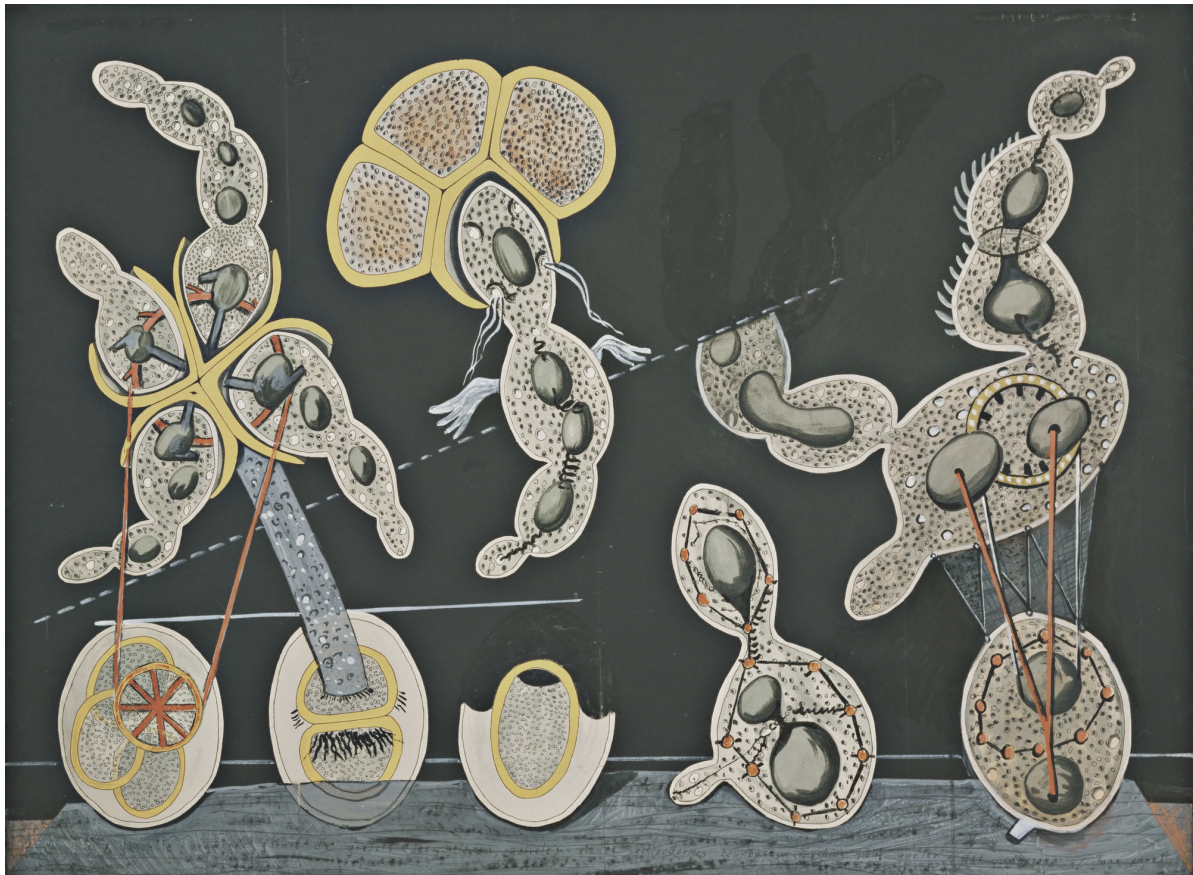


Fig. 5

Ernst, M. (1921) *The Gramineous Bicycle Garnished with Bells the Dappled Fire Damps and the Echinoderms Bending the Spine to Look for Caresses* [painting] 29 ¼" x 39 ¼"

Available at: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/35940>
(Accessed 30 April 2022)

Max Ernst "was one of the leading figures of Dada and Surrealism" (Umland, 2017). This yeast cell poster is an example of how he used found imagery, overpainted and created a new idea. The artist used collage to create 'illusion' on August 10, 1925, after discovering the technique of frottage: "I was amazed at the sudden intensification of my visionary capabilities and the hallucinatory result of the contrasting pictures" (Spies, 1968, p.7).

Other collage artists, including 'Eleanor Shakespeare' and 'Lauren Child' have used their medium to convey a different reality using ready made imagery; turning something plain and straight forward into a different idea or concept.

Faces

Photographer and Film director, 'Cindy Sherman' is best known for her conceptual portraits, portraying many different personas - using herself as the model. By presenting herself in a different way that is outside of her own identity, the artist is able to get into the headspace of someone else by "depicting realities and illusions through images", creating a new perception (Sherman, Felix, Schwander, Bronfen, 1995, p.7); she said: "I always try to get as far away from myself as possible in the photographs" (Sherman, 1995, p.13).

She would accomplish this not only through the clothes and environments Sherman used to convey a certain identity, but also through her facial expressions. Sherman quoted, "We're all products of what we want to project to the world. Even people who don't spend any time, or think they don't, on preparing themselves for the world out there - I think that ultimately they have for their whole lives groomed themselves to be a certain way, to present a face to the world" (Stevens, 2008). When talking about self expression, Sherman's work appears contradictory: "she uses her photographs to reveal the latent psychological material that one does not normally see on the surface, in a subject's face or gestures, namely the material that contains the subject's imagination". On the other hand, "this other self of the imagination can only be articulated through surface appearances" (Bronfen, 1995, p.13). This ties in with the relationship between the persona and the self which would be an expression of Jung's Psychoanalytic diagram. Another explanation of Sherman's work would further support this analogy: "The represented subject can, therefore, be understood as a knot, binding together the various languages that have shaped it and through which it is able to express, in a displaced and dislocated manner, its traumas, its memories, its desires and its fantasies" (Bronfen, 1995, p.14). Sherman's fascination for self-representations has displayed itself in the understanding of what builds up a character and how that is portrayed subjectively and objectively.



Fig. 6

Sherman, C. (1978) *Untitled Film Still #21* [photograph]

Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jul/31/photographer-cindy-sherman-first-uk-retrospective>

(Accessed 30 April 2022)

In an article by 'The Guardian', Moorhouse comments on Sherman's work: "By inventing fictitious characters and photographing herself in imaginary situations, she inhabits a world of pure appearance" (Moorhouse, 2018). This would be an example of creating our own reality and that everything we project to the rest of the world creates that reality - "What she was really saying was that all of life is an appearance"; "what are we to make of these appearances? What meanings do we attach?" (Moorhouse, 2018). Cullinan explains that when we observe and create our own image we are "exploring the often complex and ambiguous relationship between appearance and reality" (Cullinan, 2018). This is believed to be represented through Sherman's work. This refers back to 'perception' and 'illusion' as what is believed is created but it is not often true. In Jung's work, he refers to the "complex",

referring to a “collection of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and memories that focus on a single concept” (McLeod, 2018).



Fig. 7.

Sherman, C. (1975) *Cover Girl (Vogue)* [photograph]

Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jul/31/photographer-cindy-sherman-first-uk-retrospective>

(Accessed 30 April 2022)

Former FBI agent and body language expert, Joe Navarro, identifies the importance of reading the face as it displays the information we need: “When it comes to non-verbals, the face is key. There’s so much information and feelings that we receive from the face, that for us, the face takes primacy”. People can play around with the face and use it as a mask but it

is very often used as a navigation device to convey inner feelings and emotions - “from the time we’re born we’re looking at the face for that information” (Navarro, 2020).

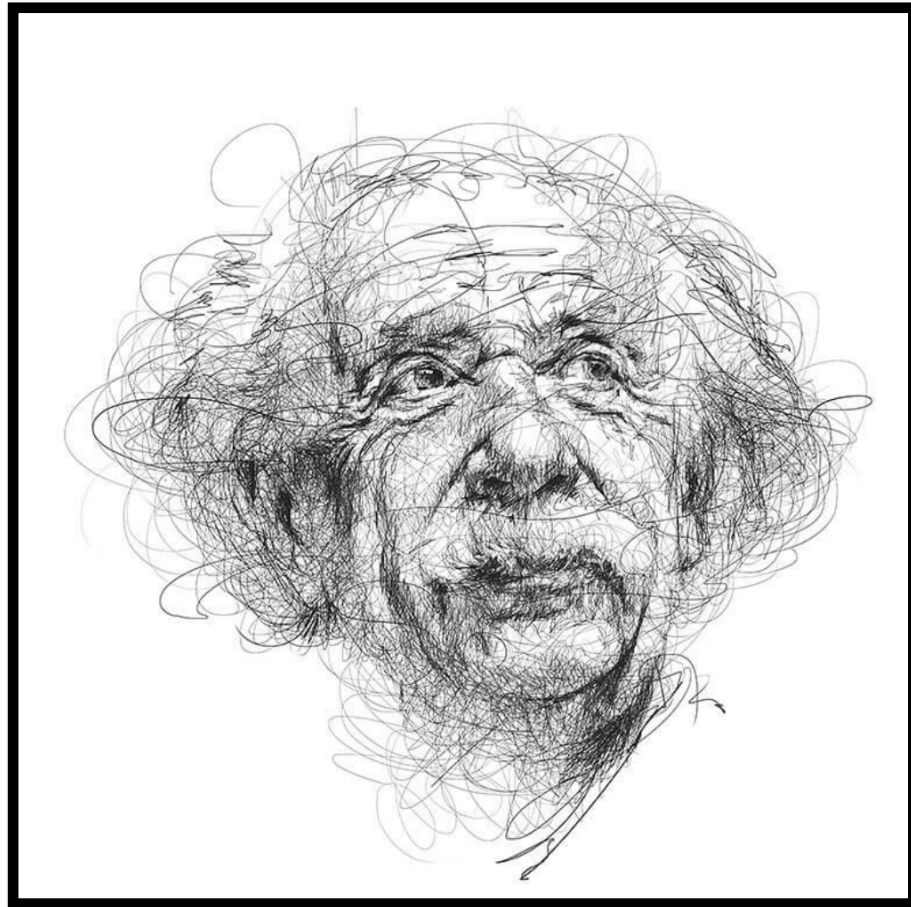


Fig. 8

Low, V. (n.d.) *Einstein German Theoretical Physicist* [portrait]

Available at:

<https://vincelow.com.my/index.php/product/einstein-german-theoretical-physicist/>

(Accessed 30 April 2022)

Vince Low is a dyslexic artist who uses a scribble technique, shining light on celebrities with the condition to bring awareness to the disorder. The artist's intense emotive expressions are further enhanced by his use of mark making and creates this illusion as it is difficult to tell where the marks end and the face begins. A quote by Albert Einstein reinforces ideas of perception which appeared in Akingbade's TED talk: “the bigotry of the nonbeliever is for me nearly as funny as the bigotry of the believer” (Akingbade, 2017). This reinforces the notion

of being subjective individuals in an objective world and that “There are realities that exist outside of our own perspective” (Jake’s Takes, 2020).

Based on these three key words and how they all intelink, I aim to further explore Psychoanalysis; ideas surrounding Metamorphosis, which are shared amongst the artists and thinkers mentioned, including Ernst, Kafka and Escher. These ideas can either be developed further - a collection of thoughts - or they can transform into something entirely different; the relationship between Psychology and Art and how this can feed into a therapeutic process; further examining the way in which perception can be determined based on the inner world, the way that this is projected outwardly and what that inner world looks like from an outsider’s perspective; appearance and reality; what we take from reality to bring it into our subconscious and vice versa. I would also look into identifying shape, colour and mark making, and our ability to make unique associations from the language we use - which plays a role in feeding into our descriptions and interpretations - through semiotic analysis.

My objective is to look into psychoanalytic art and the approach I can take to transform a concept or idea into an illustration, look into the way in which people perceive images, and how an image can be deconstructed to reconstruct itself in people’s minds; delving deeper beyond the surface. Therefore, I propose that my question will be: ‘How can Psychoanalytic theory be applied to Editorial Illustration?’.

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