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Three Keywords – CULTURE, GENDER, COLOUR

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I will be focussing on three keywords that have some reference to my interests and practice in my workspace. These are Culture, Gender, and colour. Focussing on the key parts for each keyword from The Effects of Gender and how sometimes embroidery and stitch have some benefits to it, looking at the symbolic meaning behind the understanding of colour combined with understanding of culture and heritage in other countries. Looking at artists Althea McNish, Aran Illingworth and Kehinde Wiley combined with references from thinkers from Stuart Hall, Ramon Williams, Rozsika Parker and Ellen Conrey. Focussing on the main theme of stitch/embroidery and having some reference towards the topic from each specific word.



Figure 1 Madonna and Child III Aran Illingworth

My first word Culture (or in another meaning heritage) which is “the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020) or Culture could also be ‘said to embody the ‘best that has been thought and said’ in a society. It is the sum of the great ideas, as represented in the classic works of literature, painting, music and philosophy’ presented by Stuart hall’s ‘Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices’ which is about outlining how visual images, language and discovery of works (Hall 1997, pg. 2). So ‘Culture’ can be presented in more specific and common medias of study but saying that ‘all cultural objects convey meaning, and all cultural practices depend on meaning’ (Hall 1997 pg.) in more specific words saying that the other types of culture can not only be defined via the objects and their techniques and medias; an example would be through my chosen media of stitch/embroidery; with the early America where they used porcupine quillwork and beading, or Russia basing on more traditional methods of flock printing. Although even though modern times. Culture can also be defined into important sections shown in Ramon Williams Culture and society which is an argument about the notion of culture which is a developed response into the industrial revolution Combined with the social and political changes saying that ‘The development of the word culture is a record of a number of important and continuing reactions to these changes in our social, eco

conomic and political life,' (Williams, 1958 pg. introduction XV) shows me that culture can be shown in other prospects of life. However, Culture brings up 'questions directly raised by the great historical changes which the changes in industry, democracy and class, in their own way, represent, and to which the changes in art are a closely related response' (Williams, 1958, pg. introduction XV) representing that the idea of culture can be represented in three other ways but also presented through the idea of art and also creates a related response that is shown through powerful messages towards the audience creating a meaning with a related purpose behind it,

Which is shown directly in my research on an artist's work created by Aran Illingworth's who is a textile artist whose work focusses on the idea of telling a story, with her art often depicting the women and the social positions those who live through poverty in the Indian culture. In her work she formed the basic stages of form and colour through her Indian culture, with it producing an emotional response in her work to help the viewers understand another culture. An example would be one of her artworks shown on the left called Madonna and child III-based form a collection which from my perspective shows the representation of the Indian culture, and depicting the level of class and culture with the use of colours and shows what Indian class represents. the embroidery represents a young woman who is holding her child, and how it feels like it is shown in a traumatic time. Showing the viewers about the focus of women in Asia living in culture poverty and deprivation and seek to elicit an emotional response by referring obliquely to the underlying narrative of the subjects. Which shows a powerful and an understanding message towards the audience.



Figure 2 Officer of the Hussars, Kehinde Wiley

Which then leads me onto my second keyword which would be Gender which explains that 'The state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and differences, rather than biological ones; the collective attributes or traits associated with a particular sex or determined because of one's sex (OED 2020). From a health care perspective Gender from inequality and discrimination perspective towards women and girls puts their health at risk. Women and girls often face greater barriers than men and boys to accessing health information and services. With these barriers acting as a restriction towards genders containing a lack of access of decision making in power.

Leading to the referencing from the subversive stitch ; The embroidery and making of the feminine which is about the documentary of the history on embroidery explaining why art became a predominantly activity for females based in the medieval period to the present day, that shows the difference between genders, where the author says that 'the role of embroidery in advertising and commercial design also endorses the notion that a man who practices embroidery is imperilling his sexual identity' (Parker, 2012, pg.2) suggests that embroidery is defined as something that would harm, injure or destroy male identities and that it isn't original for a men to be able to embroider. However, for men who stitch as shown in an article in 2015 saying that men have been quilting since the dawn of the 19th century however it would give a fresh sense of masculinity and through sexuality within the

mismatched fabric patches style like never seen before. Considering that, females are the most suitable genders to do stitch/embroidery saying that 'its not home and family that embroidery signifies but, specifically mothers and daughters' (Parker, 2012, pg. 2) and saying that 'When a women embroider, it is seen not as an art but entirely as the expression of femininity' (Parker, 2012, pg. 2) telling me that embroidery is shown more as a representation of the female gender and shown as a way to express their femininity.

Although in the past some people believed that 'Embroidery, therefore, was viewed by some as the major cause of unhappiness, while others insisted that it was their sole solace' (Parker, 2012, pg. 54) saying in the (Cambridge Dictionary) that solace means that it is a way to 'help and comfort when you are feeling sad or worried' indicates that embroidery is also shows some healing benefits in some ways. There are more ways that embroidery is shown as a key benefit for relieving and to boost your mental health as well; examples would be that it can alleviate stress, it could reduce your anxiety levels, it can keep your brain healthy, it can boost your confidence and how it can also express yourself and how you feel. And how gender in artwork can convey a powerful message to the audience.

An example that can show the representation of the gender combined with the power and impact that it can make in days like the present, Kehinde Wiley is shown to have been a heroic portrait painting who address images of young African- American men by embracing the differences in gender with his work to challenge the media representation of black masculinity as synonymous with the idea of violence. An Artwork that shows that is called Officer of the Hussars, which shows a man on the back of a horse who is holding a sword, placed in typical stance linking towards art history. His work shows a mixture of modern and past pieces of artwork showing me that Wiley's work is trying to somehow rewrite the history of historical artworks. Also, one part that is shown very different any other design is that used, for this project, he used an existing piece of artwork and transformed it into his own style to show a new perspective and the understanding of Gender but also at the equality of people, with the combination of a sense of history and modern feeling.



Figure 3 Golden Harvest Althea McNish

With the representation of gender, I move onto the idea of colour my final keyword meaning that the appearance that things have that results from the way in which they reflect light. Red, orange and green are colours (OLD 2020). Through some people's eyes it is said that 'They realise that colour helps to beautify the world. Other people, however, look upon colour as one of the greatest joys in life' (Conroy, 1921, pg. 1) showing the reader that colour is able to bring a sense of joy towards life and it sound like the structure and back bone of the beauty in the world. However throughout the art industry every subject has a different the represent the idea of the keyword colour, on the other hand stitch/Embroidery colour terminology, which can be shown through the idea of saturation meaning to measure the intense, and vivid the colour would be, looking at the hue where the colour is positioned in the colour wheel, having a tint or a shade, or even the value of the colour meaning what the dark and light colour are like in comparison to black and white, and finally the primary, secondary and tertiary colours.

With some colours having a specific meaning behind them. However, 'Few people recognise that colours are powers, forces, vitalities, and vibrations' (Conroy, 1921, pg.4) shown in the symbolism of colour by Ellen Conroy which is based on the breaking down of the colour types combined with identifying the symbolism of colours and what the definition behind

them, shows me that colour is represented in other ways. Although some colours tend to mix together to symbolize the same exact meaning as one particular colour an example would have been when 'Grey was the union of black and white, and so partook of the symbolism of each' (Conroy, 1921, pg.52) shows that some colours can be combined together to create the same purpose as another give colour a sense of purpose that nothing is impossible when mixing colours. Similarly shown by Althea McNish saying, "Grey is a colour I would never use [...] Black ... has the power in it to do what I want." Showing me that McNish uses black as the base of some of her colours to create a movement and an essence to her work.

By looking at artist althea McNish who was an African-Caribbean artist with designs from furnishing and fashion fabrics which captures the attention with dazzling colours full of movement and the expressive lines with her designs characterized by a vibrant choice of colour with a free painterly arrangement based on the post war of fashion and textiles industry from the 1950s onwards by pushing organic forms transformed into abstract One impartial called Golden Harvest is a furnished fabric that's inspired by the sun on a wheat field close based by Essex home of Edward Bawden what I recognize about the work is that she does use black the most as the base of as the outline shown as the main focus of her pieces. Combined with her colour schemes that she used which are shown as the yellow orange is a territory colour, showing that the type of feeling that she was going for a very sense of happiness, excitement and enthusiasm which also gives a sense of warmth and also energy.

To conclude my discoveries throughout my 3 keywords of Culture, Gender and colour, shows how I was able to understand more about the keywords; examples are like how the idea of Gender has a multiple arrange of mental health benefits for women specifically and even how people in the past consider men to be able to stitch as a part that would destroy their identity and gender but how it will never stop the male gender and how it was shows a representation of masculinity. With the idea of culture explaining through either objects and techniques from different countries combined with the idea of classes of social, economic, and poverty, but also conveying a powerful message towards the audience and explaining the states in other countries in. Finally, how Colour is showing in the perspective of what the audience think that colour represents to them combined with the saying of some colours being described as the backbone and the structure of some drawings and paintings with the symbolic meanings behind the colours. When it comes too what I understood about stitch/embroidery further, makes me wonder, what the option of gender would have been in the past for each gender and how the colour of someone's skin can also change the situation of what someone is capable of from a gender perspective and culture has changed the society of sewing / embroidery or even the creative industry throughout the years and what are the impacts on some classes of culture. Which then lead me to think about what it would have been like in the past to the present by showing a timeline in embroidery. So for my dissertation question I would like my question to be "What was the stitch industry like for male and women from the past to present day from the cultural, equality and a beneficial perspective and what does the future hold" for this essay I will be looking at the into the meaning of essay, and looking at the benefits for embroidery in a mental health perspective, the meanings behind male and female embroidery with audiences perspective

of each gender combined with by also showing the equality views from each gender and understanding that what has changed for each year looking at pinnacle year and leading to the present and finishing off with what the future holds for each gender in stitch.

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Images

Figure 1: Aran Illingworth <https://www.arnolds-attic.co.uk/2020/07/aranillingworth-meet-the-artist.html>

Figure 2: Kehinde Wiley <https://www.itsnicethat.com/news/kehindewiley-president-art-171017>

Figure 3: Althea McNish <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O270435/golden-harvest-furnishingfabric-althea-mcnish/>

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