



CUL 223

Visual Countercultures: Graffiti, Kitsch and Conceptual Art

S2 Day 2013

Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Joseph Pugliese

joseph.pugliese@mq.edu.au

Contact via joseph.pugliese@mq.edu.au

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

15cp

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit introduces students to a range of theories that question traditional hierarchies of value and that enable a critical re-evaluation of the practices of everyday life. This unit theorises key topics such as: countercultures; oppositional cultures and post-subcultures; the politics of high versus popular and low culture; and cultural practices in global/local contexts. The following practices, sites and objects are examined: graffiti, hip hop and crimes of style; graffiti and the cultural politics of public space; the relation between kitsch and high art; the politics of kitsch in the context of colonialism and Indigeneity; the cultural politics of tourist sites, gigantism and miniaturism; queer culture, camp and kitsch; and celebrity kitsch.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Demonstrate critical skills, informed by cultural theories, that will enable students to re-evaluate those practices of everyday life that are too often dismissed as worthless or ephemeral.

Develop analytical skills that will enable students to examine and critique the presuppositions that constitute those hierarchies of value that classify, judge and position cultural objects and practices.

Producer research skills that will enable students to present theorised, contextualised and informed accounts of key issues and problems in the context of subcultural and counter-visual practices.

Demonstrate communication skills in order effectively and creatively to present research across different genres and cultural media.

Employ cultural literacy skills designed to educate students on the importance of issues of cultural difference and ethical relations in social and political contexts.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Class Test</u>	20%	Week 4: Wed 21 August 2013
<u>Tutorial Presentation</u>	30%	On assigned tutorial week
<u>Final Essay</u>	50%	Tuesday 12 November 2013

Class Test

Due: **Week 4: Wed 21 August 2013**

Weighting: **20%**

Students will be given a class test that requires them to offer brief definitions of the key terms that organise the conceptual framework of the unit. The definitions of the key terms must be based on the readings and lectures of the opening weeks of the unit, specifically, the Michel de Certeau, Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, Jeff Ferrel, Greg Tate and bell hooks readings.

In their responses, students need to demonstrate a clear and effective grasp of such terms as 'tactics,' 'strategies,' 'crimes of style' and so on as discussed in the readings and lectures.

Marking Criteria:

- Clear grasp of key terms
- Lucid Expression
- Functional understanding of theoretical concepts

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical skills, informed by cultural theories, that will enable students to re-evaluate those practices of everyday life that are too often dismissed as worthless or ephemeral.

Tutorial Presentation

Due: **On assigned tutorial week**

Weighting: **30%**

Students present an oral, multi-media tutorial paper based on a selected tutorial topic. Length: 20 minutes.

Base your tutorial presentation on the topic and readings of your selected week. Explain in your presentation the key concepts and issues outlined in the week's readings. Illustrate your presentation with examples (from media, films, videos, and so on). Pose questions to the class based on the issues and concepts you are addressing. Make sure you pose relevant questions to the class and that you generate discussion amongst the tutorial group. Generating class discussion related to the topic you present is a key aspect of your assessment for this task.

Your assessment will be based on the following criteria: clear and effective grasp of the key issues raised by the relevant readings; relevant evidence used to support and illustrate your arguments; posing of relevant questions to class; creative and innovative address of the topic; and effectively engaging the class in discussion of key issues.

Marking Criteria:

- Clear communication of issues and theoretical concepts
- Substantive evidencing and illustration of the topics discussed
- Engaged communication with other students

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical skills, informed by cultural theories, that will enable students to re-evaluate those practices of everyday life that are too often dismissed as worthless or ephemeral.

Final Essay

Due: **Tuesday 12 November 2013**

Weighting: **50%**

LENGTH: 3000 Words

Choose a question from the list of essay questions below. In your essay (3000 words), critically address the essay topic with reference to the relevant readings from the Unit Reader.

NB: You cannot write on the same topic that you addressed in your Oral Presentation.

FINAL ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. " 'Ways of operating' constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users

reappropriate the space organised by techniques of social production." Michel de Certeau. Discuss how particular subcultural practices, such as graffiti for example, illustrate de Certeau's thesis on "ways of operating," "arts of making" and "strategies" and "tactics."

2. Popular culture, Stuart Hall argues, is structured by the "double movement of containment and resistance." Discuss in relation to a particular cultural practice such as graffiti or the production/consumption of kitsch.

3. "Subcultures represent 'noise' (as opposed to sound): interference in the orderly sequence . . . a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation." Dick Hebdige. Discuss in the context of a specific subcultural practice.

4. Dick Hebdige outlines two forms of incorporation of subcultures by a dominant culture: the commodity form and the ideological form. Discuss these two forms of incorporation in the context of an actual subcultural style, with reference to bell hooks' essay on "Eating the Other."

5. "Graffiti exists as a public art outside the control of public officials, an alternative style outside the circle of corporate style and consumption." Jeff Ferrell. Discuss.

6. Graffiti, as a subcultural practice, contests established legal notions of public space, private and corporate property and art practice. Discuss.

7. "Shouting on the wall" - animating the virtual self." Nancy Macdonald. How is graffiti about individual and/or group identity, about the construction of virtual selves in dialogue across urban spaces?

8. Gang graffiti is about regulation, respect, reputation and the signing of space into place in the face of systemic exclusion and disenfranchisement of particular racialised communities by the state. Discuss with reference to Susan Phillips' essay.

9. Discuss how graffiti is a "contentious form of political participation." Evidence your arguments with relation to specific and culturally-situated examples of political graffiti.

10. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's work, discuss how both kitsch and art are in fact all about questions of taste and distinction and the consecration of the social order.

11. Discuss the importance of reproductive technologies in relation to kitsch. In your answer, you need to discuss Benjamin's and Olalquiaga's work on the aura, the original and the reproduction, the tactility of kitsch, and the democratisation of the image. 11. The kitsch object/souvenir promises the consumer "pieces of the aura (mythic time)." Celeste Olalquiaga. Discuss Olalquiaga's concept of nostalgic kitsch and melancholy kitsch.
12. Cute kitsch is underpinned by sadism, the grotesque and mutilation. Discuss in the context of Daniel Harris' essay.
13. Aboriginalist kitsch is enabled by white supremacism: it is an "assertion of rights of ownership in the intellectual and cultural sphere to match power in the political and economic sphere." B. Hodge and V. Mishra. Discuss.
14. "Indigenous tourist wares were threatening because they blurred the boundaries, they rendered the other unrecognisable." R. B. Phillips. Discuss in the context of indigenous tourist art.
15. "We are enveloped by the gigantic, surrounded by it, enclosed within its shadow. Whereas we know the miniature as a spatial whole or as temporal parts, we know the gigantic only partially. We move through the landscape; it does not move through us." Susan Stewart. Discuss gigantism and the miniature in the context of examples in the Australian landscape and kitsch culture.
16. Art cannot exist without kitsch. Discuss in the context of the work of Marcel Duchamp and Jeff Koons.
17. Kitsch and queer "are in a lascivious embrace. They constantly transmute." Craig Judd. Discuss.
18. Queer kitsch brings into focus a concept of the self as "performative, improvisational, discontinuous, and processually constituted by repetitive and stylized acts." Moe Myer. Discuss.
19. "Representational excess, heterogeneity, and gratuitousness of reference, in constituting a major *raison d'être* of camp's fun and exclusiveness, both signal and contribute to an overall resistance to definition." Fabio Cleto. Discuss.

20. "The audience's connection with celebrities, celestoids and celestors is dominated by imaginary relationships." Chris Rojek. Discuss how celebrity kitsch is one of the key products of this imaginary relationship.

21. Construct your own essay question, with reference to the topics and readings of the unit, *in consultation with your tutor*.

Marking Criteria:

- Competent use of key theoretical terms and concepts
- Evidencing of arguments with relevant material
- Substantive analysis of the essay topic

FINAL ESSAYS THAT ARE SUBMITTED AFTER THE DUE DATE WILL RECEIVE A MARK OF ZERO, AND THE STUDENT WILL FAIL THE UNIT, UNLESS THEY SUPPLY RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION JUSTIFYING THE LATE SUBMISSION.

Special Consideration Policy

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/special_consideration/policy.html

Applying for Special Consideration: Students applying for Special Consideration circumstances of three (3) consecutive days duration, within a study period, and/or prevent completion of a formal examination must submit an on-line application with the Faculty of Arts. For an application to be valid, it must include a completed Application for Special Consideration form and all supporting documentation.

The on-line Special Consideration application is found at: http://www.arts.mq.edu.au/current_students/undergraduate/admin_central/special_consideration.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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Delivery and Resources

CLASSES:

Students are required to attend all tutorials. Tutorials are one hour in duration.

I recommend students attend all lectures as they supply important multimedia information not available in the lecture notes.

Technology Used and Required

Lectures will be delivered via PowerPoint. I recommend students present their Oral Tutorial

Presentation via PowerPoint.

There will be lectures for all tutorial topics and lecture notes will be available at the unit's iLearn site.

REQUIRED TEXT:

The set text for the unit is the **CUL223 Reader** available from the CoOp Bookshop.

What Has Changed:

I have replaced an existing lecture on kitsch with a new lecture on political graffiti.

Unit Schedule

UNIT SCHEDULE

LECTURE SCHEDULE:

Week One: Introduction

Week Two: Graffiti: Crimes of Style

Week Three: The Cultural Politics of Graffiti and Public Space

Week Four: Graffiti as Contentious Form of Political Participation

Week Five: Kitsch, Bad Taste and Distinction

Week Six: Kitsch, Mechanical Reproduction and Modernity

Week Seven: The Politics of Kitsch: The House of Aboriginality and Indigenous Tourist Art

RECESS: 16-29 September 2013

Week Eight: READING WEEK: 30 September to 6 October: NO CLASSES

Week Nine: Kitsch, Gigantism and Miniaturism

Week Ten: Kitsch/Art

Week Eleven: Queer as Kitsch

Week Twelve: Celebrity Trash

TUTORIAL and READING SCHEDULE

Week One: No Tutorials

Week Two: Introduction:

Michel de Certeau, "Introduction," *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'," in John Storey (ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. Hempel Hemstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.

Dick Hebdige, "Subculture: The Unnatural Break," *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge, 1987.

Week Three: Graffiti: Crimes of Style

Jeff Ferrell, "Crimes of Style," *Crimes of Style*. Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1996.

Greg Tate, "Nigs R Us, or How Blackfolk Became Fetish Objects," in Greg Tate (ed.), *Everything But the Burden*. New York: Harlem Moon Broadway Books, 2003.

bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," *Black Looks*. Boston: South End Press, 1992.

Remi Calzadada and Henke Pijenburg, "The Hip-Hop Movement" and "An Interview of Bernard Stiegler by Elizabeth Caillet," *Graffiti Art*. Paris: Musee National des Monument Fracais, 1991.

Week Four: The Cultural Politics of Graffiti and Public Space

Nancy Macdonald, "Making a Difference," *The Graffiti Subculture*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2001.

Frances Butler, "Youth Art and Mobile Galleries," *Artlink* 14.3 (Spring 1994). Susan A. Phillips, "Bloods and Crips in the City of Angels" and "The Gang Manifesto,"

Wallbanging: Graffiti and Gangs in L.A. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Week Five: Graffiti as Contentious Form of Political Participation

Lisa K. Waldner and Betty A. Dobratz, "Graffiti as a Contentious Form of Political Participation," *Sociology Compass*, 7.5 (2013): 377-389.

Julie Peteet, "The Writing on the Wall: The Graffiti of the Intafada," *Cultural Anthropology*, 11.2 (1996) 139-159.

“Muslim Women and Graffiti: Taking Art, Politics and Gender to the Streets,” 30 May 2013, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/mmw/2013/05/muslim-women-and-graffiti-taking-art-politics-and-gender-to-the-streets>.

Fair Soliman and Angie Balata, “Egyptian Women Fight for Equality with Graffiti,” 29 April 2013, <http://observers.france24.com>.

Nicholas Casey, “Graffiti is Redefining Public Spaces in Post-Revolutionary Cairo,” The Wall Street Journal, 26 May 2013, <http://blog.wsj.com/middleeast/2013/05/26/graffiti-is-redefining-public-spaces-in-post-revolutionary-cairo>.

“She’s Making Graffiti at the Most Dangerous Place on Earth,” Green Prophet, 19 February 2013, <http://www.greenprophet.com/2013/02/fighting-the-taliban-with-paint-draft/>.

Week Six: Kitsch, Bad Taste and Distinction

Gillo Dorfles, “Kitsch” and “Conclusion” in Gillo Dorfles (ed.), *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste*. New York: Universal Books, 1969

John Codd, “Making Distinctions,” in R. Harker, C. Mahar and C. Wilkes (eds.), *An Introduction to the Work of Bourdieu*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1990.

Week Seven: Kitsch, Mechanical Reproduction and Modernity

Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1985.

Celeste Olalquiaga, “The Souvenir “ and “The Debris of the Aura,” *The Artificial Kingdom*. London: Bloomsbury, 1999.

RECESS: 16-29 September 2013

Week Eight: READING WEEK: 30 September to 6 October: NO CLASSES

Week Nine: The Politics of Kitsch: The House of Aboriginality and Indigenous Tourist Art

Glenn R. Cooke, “Kitsch or Kind: Representations of Aborigines in Popular Art,” *Artlink* 15.4 (Summer 1995).

Vivien Johnson, “Introduction: Aboriginal Art in the Age of Reproductive Technologies,” *Copyrites*. Sydney: National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association and Macquarie University, 1996.

Ruth B. Phillips, “Why Not Tourist Art? Significant Silences in Native American Museum Representations,” Gyan Prakash (ed.), *After Colonialism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Week Ten: Kitsch, Gigantism and Miniaturism

John Cross, “Kings of Kitsch: Big Things” and Paul Ryan, “Bigs R Us,” *Artlink* 15.4 (Summer 1995).

Susan Stewart, “The Gigantic,” *On Longing*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999.

Stephanie Stockwell and Bethany Carlisle, “Big Things: Larrikinism, Low Art and the Land,” *Journal of Media-Culture*, 6.5.

Week Eleven: Kitsch/Art John Caldwell, “Live Now,” and Brian Wallis, “We Don’t Need Another Hero: A Critical Reception of the Work of Jeff Koons,” in F. W. Simpson (ed.), *Jeff Koons*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1992.

David Joselit, “Investigating the Ordinary,” and Roberta Smith, “Rituals of Consumption,” *Art in America* (May 1988).

Week Twelve: Queer as Kitsch

Fabio Cleto, “Introduction: Queering the Camp,” in F. Cleto (ed.), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

Craig Judd, “Kitschville: The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras,” *Artlink* 15.4 (Summer 1995).

Richard Dyer, “It’s Being so Camp as Keeps Us Going,” *The Culture of Queers*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

Moe Myer, “Introduction,” *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Week Thirteen: Celebrity Trash

Chris Rojek, “Celebrity and Celestoids,” *Celebrity*. London: Reaktion Books, 2001.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Special Consideration Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/special_consideration/policy.html

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of Academic Student Support Services. Details of these services can be accessed at: <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

UniWISE provides:

- Online learning resources and academic skills workshops http://www.students.mq.edu.au/support/learning_skills/
- Personal assistance with your learning & study related questions.
- The Learning Help Desk is located in the Library foyer (level 2).
- Online and on-campus orientation events run by Mentors@Macquarie.

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

Details of these services can be accessed at <http://www.student.mq.edu.au/ses/>.

IT Help

If you wish to receive IT help, we would be glad to assist you at <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the university's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students and it outlines what can be done.

Graduate Capabilities

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Demonstrate critical skills, informed by cultural theories, that will enable students to re-

evaluate those practices of everyday life that are too often dismissed as worthless or ephemeral.

Assessment tasks

- Class Test
- Tutorial Presentation
- Final Essay

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Demonstrate critical skills, informed by cultural theories, that will enable students to re-evaluate those practices of everyday life that are too often dismissed as worthless or ephemeral.

Assessment tasks

- Class Test
- Tutorial Presentation
- Final Essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Demonstrate critical skills, informed by cultural theories, that will enable students to re-evaluate those practices of everyday life that are too often dismissed as worthless or ephemeral.

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Presentation
- Final Essay

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Presentation
- Final Essay

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Demonstrate critical skills, informed by cultural theories, that will enable students to re-evaluate those practices of everyday life that are too often dismissed as worthless or ephemeral.

Assessment tasks

- Class Test
- Tutorial Presentation
- Final Essay

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Demonstrate critical skills, informed by cultural theories, that will enable students to re-evaluate those practices of everyday life that are too often dismissed as worthless or ephemeral.

Assessment task

- Final Essay

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment task

- Final Essay