

With changes in culture, come changes in art. Throughout history, artworks have been produced as an imitation of the culture and society in which they were created. The cultural frame examines the meaning of artworks in relation to the social perspective of the community from which it grows. A reflection can be seen in Manet’s realist artwork of Olympia, and similarly, Umberto Boccioni’s Unique forms of Continuity and Space reflects different beliefs and conventions merely as a result of societal changes. Pop Art works such as Andy Warhol’s Marilyn x 100 and Post – modern works, such as Yasumasa Morimura’s Monna Lisa in its Origin, are also strong reflections of the society in which they were created.

Edouard Manet’s Olympia, an extremely controversial painting of its time, reflects greatly its cultural context. Created during the time of Realism (from c.1850 to c.1880) and in the city of Paris, it demonstrated the new and exciting Parisian way of life and the determination of the Realist artists to depict life as it was seen rather than the traditional fantasy and romantic exaggeration. The redesign of Paris in the 1860s saw a great change in the social practices and activities and a rise particularly in the Middle Class due to the prosperous Industrial Revolution. The redesigning of Paris resulted in the demolition of hundreds of buildings and neighbourhoods, some home to many pre-existing brothels. Therefore, there was a big move into the city by many people, including a large number of prostitutes. The stimulating and new atmosphere and activity began to inspire and attract artists known as the Realists from the art movement of Realism. These particular artists chose to focus their interests on worldly, real, raw and pure subjects. They wished to create simple art, painting exactly what they saw and how they saw it. Among these artists was Edouard Manet. Manet was known as a rebel for his time most likely because of his rebellion against Classic and Romantic traditions and his confronting and stirring painting of Olympia. Manet takes Titian’s Venus of Urbino as his model, yet instead of following accepted French art practices of depicting historical, biblical or mythical themes, he paints a woman of his time. The subject is a real female courtesan lying nude on a bed in a provocative position, with one hand covering her genitalia. He paints in his own manner of quick, rough, visible brushstrokes and replaces deep perspective with two flat frames. Olympia was a very confronting artwork to society as although many middle

and upper class gentlemen of the time were frequent customers of courtesans and prostitutes, but being confronted by one on a canvas in a gallery was something different. Manet has broken away from traditional practices of art in the 1860s, and created a unique realist artwork depicting a common scene.

Dramatic events such as the Industrial Revolution, World Wars, and changes in the social world, influenced new ideas and technology which revolutionized the way artworks appeared and were constructed. Futurism was an aggressive Italian movement active from 1909 to the 1940's that glorified the speed, motion, violence and machinery of the twentieth century. Artists sought to destroy traditional artistic and social values and replaced them with entirely new forms they felt were more appropriate to life in the modern world. One main influence on the way Futurism artists saw the world was the Industrial Revolution. People embraced machines, and it was believed that technology could create a Utopian world. Umberto Boccioni's Unique Forms of Continuity and Space is a fine futurism artwork which explores motion, movement and the disillusion of interior and exterior forms. In his sculpture, Boccioni attempted to illustrate the interaction of a moving object with the space that surrounded which, he believed, “is achieved through the intuitive search for the one single form which produces continuity in space”. The sculpture, although part figurative, appears to be almost robotic and machine-like with its shiny, smooth appearance and blocks of shape, which reflects of his infatuation with the machine. Boccioni also suggests movement through distortion and complex placement of forms. Unique Forms of Continuity and Space is a true reflection of futurism ideas and methods as it suggests movement along with its very robot-like form.

The twentieth century brought about rapid and radical changes to people's way of thinking and living, which influenced a change in the way people painted. Artists aimed to express new ideas and sometimes their art became highly emotional, and sometimes shocking. War torn Europe was in a state of change, and as society changed, so too did art. The working classes and new middle classes, which were encouraged by improving wages and literacy, were redefining society. Many technological advances were made

including the invention of the television, radio and newspaper, which meant works could be easily and widely distributed. Along with invention of camera, painters sought new methods, new ideas and new subjects that were abstract; to capture what the camera could not. Many of the artistic styles which came about during the twentieth century emphasised bold colours which was influenced by the introduction of propaganda by the rise of Communism. The Industrial revolution meant that the subject matter of paintings were new and unlike that of the Renaissance. As a result of these changes, new styles of art evolved, including Pop Art. Pop Art is an art movement and style that had its origins in England in the 1950s and made its way to the United States during the 1960s, and was a reaction against Abstract Expressionism. Pop artists focused attention upon familiar images of the popular culture such as billboards, comic strips, magazine advertisements, celebrities and supermarket products. This movement was influenced by advertising of huge billboards which pioneered large scale art with vibrant colours. Pop artists came from the first generation of people brought up with television, so there was a fixation on celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe. Andy Warhol's "Marilyn x 100" is a fine example of Pop Art. Created just after Marilyn's death, the artwork is generally accepted that his Marilyn portraits were funereal and commemorative icons. Warhol also intended to emphasize the notion of celebrity as a manufactured commodity and wanted to portray Marilyn as a contemporary sex goddess, packaged for the public as a consumer item. The artwork is of large scale and large areas of the canvas were painted by hand with garish pink, red, yellow and green colors; all characteristics of Pop Art.

In the 1970's, artists began to break away from the norm and react against the modernist movement at the time. The Postmodernism movement developed in the late 20th century and is characterized by the combination of modern forms, materials, and techniques with the subtle and highly conscious use of motifs and conventions from earlier periods meaning that in the era of postmodern culture. Artists rejected ideas such as religion, philosophy, capitalism and gender that had defined culture and behavior in the past, and instead began to organize their cultural life around a variety of more local and subcultural ideologies, myths and stories. Postmodernism art promotes parody, irony, and playfulness. Yasumasa Morimura is one of Japan's best known and most creative postmodern artists.

His artwork “Monna Lisa in its Origin” is one of a series of images in which he appropriates Da Vinci’s legendary “Mona Lisa.” Morimura’s work presents us with a classic Renaissance artwork: the Mona Lisa; however one significant feature has been altered: Morimura has replaced the beautiful face of the Mona Lisa with his own. Through this digital intervention into the model we can see fundamental icons of Western art (i.e. the Mona Lisa) take on Asian features by means of Morimura’s own face as a substitute for her famous face. He has put himself in the place of a European woman. Morimura has deconstructed a Western cultural icon. He has appropriated a Western cultural image and recontextualised it, and as a result, has changed the meaning of the original artwork. Morimura is making a comment on the colonial conquest of East over West, as he is putting an Eastern ‘object’ in a traditionally Western position. Many of the cultural images Morimura impersonates are Western images which he explains thus: “I am Japanese, so why am I dealing with Western work? Because it feels as close to me as traditional Japanese art. If I had used a canvas to explore my themes, I would have shown partiality to a Western language but photographs, I think, are neither Japanese nor Western. They represent my feeling that I exist in between the two worlds.” Reminiscent of postmodernism style, Morimura’s artwork is one of humor and irony. His artworks are kitsch in the way that they mock important aspects of contemporary artistic features. Morimura has commented on an assimilation of culture and also has tested the audience in altering an extremely eminent and revered artwork. Creating artworks which are parodies and mock accepted beliefs and values is a major characteristic of postmodern art.

Artworks are imitations of culture. The time and place in which an artwork is created has a strong influence on its composition and meaning. Manet’s Olympia displays the type of society and culture which took place during its creation. As the city of Paris changed so did the views and subjects of artists, creating more real and confronting paintings such as Olympia. Umberto Boccioni’s Unique Form of Continuity in Space embraces the machinery and technological advances which were results of the Industrial Revolution of the twentieth century. Andy Warhol’s Marilyn x 100 shows strong influence of technology, mass production and the media through its construction and meaning. The

“Art Imitates Culture”

kitsch appropriated artwork of Monna Lisa in its Origin by Yasumasa Morimura is a fine example of postmodernism art and a mix of cultures.

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