

Visual Studies: Fifth Proposition

VALUE OF MATERIALS

Metaphor in Art

Metaphor refers to the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain in terms of another, like describing the sound of a trumpet as scarlet to quote Cazeaux's example.

Whilst often considered merely as an ornamental or elaborate form of speech, the structures at work in the use of metaphor actually establish the same patterns of understanding and reasoning as that used in the creation of art. That is to say, the identification of symbols to express meaning in speech use the same cognitive skills as the identification of symbols to express meaning in art.

Our use of metaphor is often perceptually based, fusing realms of experience: colour and sound, activity and sight, texture and taste. They activate what Johnson refers to as 'category crossings' the fusion of different modes of experience, which can place heavy demands on cognitive reasoning for both artist and viewer; identifying particular correspondences and what their collaboration may suggest. Yet, similar use of metaphor appears across different languages leading to the hypothesis that such mapping corresponds with neurological mapping in the brain.

Metaphors do not exist objectively in the world, the sound of a trumpet is not actually scarlet, its use is to offer interpretation, to pose example of a subjective response. Lakoff would argue that non-metaphorical thought is in fact only possible when we talk about purely physical reality, the greater the level of interpretation or subjective response, the greater the layers of metaphor required in order to express it. Such common use perhaps goes unnoticed due to the extent of its integration in our thinking process, it is simply how we communicate our thoughts or feelings.

An artwork can be understood as giving form to metaphor, often calling upon the value of materials, colour and form to stand in place of a more literal representation of an idea. Proposition five explores how materials can offer equivalents, elaborate and demonstrate response to the subject of an artwork. In particular it shows how relationships between the value of materials and more recognizable imagery can give rise to new ideas.

CORE CHARACTERISTICS

Coupling: explores how connections can be made between the subject of an artwork and the materials or processes involved in its construction.

Ambiguity: identifies how not everything needs to be literally represented, that space for a viewer to work things out, to come to their own conclusions can be a valuable quality in an artwork.

Narrative: demonstrates how connections between subject and materials can be teased out into a series to suggest a development or narrative of ideas