

Ways of Seeing

Part One:

According to chapter 7 in *Ways of Seeing*, advertising uses images that convey messages of a better life for the consumer. The viewer is meant to feel like what they have is not enough, but if they bought the product in the ad, their life would become happy and glamorous. To be glamorous is to be envied by others and to be more lovable. The viewer/consumer is forever entrapped in an emotional state of envy and powerlessness.

Publicity uses references to fine art as a symbol of status and cultural significance in order to make the product more desirable. In order to make these references, publicity uses similar compositions to famous works of art. In the chapter, Berger provides several examples of the similarities, like stereotypical female figures, men in powerful poses, and natural scenes to symbolize innocence. The argument that publicity is making is that the consumer can always improve her/his life through obtaining new possessions. "You are what you have." Showing people who appear powerful and beautiful conveys this message.

Lately, I have been feeling a very strong confliction within myself. Since I started my clinicals at University High, I have been trying to buy some new clothes that will help me feel the part, the role of a teacher. I want to look professional in order to feel confident and in control of the classroom. But, I still want to look young and stylish. So, my consumer side has been coming out in full force, and it is making me feel conflicted because I really strive to feel grateful for what I have now. I try to keep a perspective that I am lucky to have the comforts I do and understand that possessions are not what will make me happy. If I find myself in a phase of buying things I don't necessarily need, I try to look inward to see what is really going on. Am I just buying something new to cheer myself up? What am I actually upset about? So, I suppose I do actually need some new clothes for my transition from student to teacher, but I try to remain introspective about my consumerism.

Part Two:

In the Victoria's Secret ad I chose, a woman casually looks at her fingers, seemingly uninterested in her surroundings, a purple room. The color purple, which makes up the majority of the composition, could symbolize royalty or luxury. She is lounging on a purple, patterned, Victorian style couch, wearing the products, a bra, underwear, and thigh high tights. This pose on a couch in very few clothes can be interpreted as a sex symbol, and it therefore falls under the category of female stereotypes Berger mentions in the chapter. This is enhanced by the lighting, which is illuminating her skin perfectly and drawing attention to the garments. The background is subtle and simple as to not distract from the model and the products. She has the standard appearance for a Victoria's Secret model, tall and curvy only in the "right" places. Her hair and make up look naturally beautiful and attractive. This is a good example of what Berger talks about in chapter 7 because her facial expression and body language are aloof, as if she does not care about the viewer. She is the one to be envied and looked at, not the other way around. She demonstrates a position of power because she evokes envy in the viewer. Women who see this ad are supposed to want to be like her, and the ad is trying to convince women that these products can bring them closer to this "ideal".

The artwork that this ad somewhat reminds me of is *Olympia* by Manet. Because her undergarments are pink, from a distance she could appear to be nude, which is the case in Manet's painting. In the painting, the female figure is in a lounging position similar to the model in the ad, and in the painting there is a patterned blanket that appears silky, like the couch in the ad. In the painting the background is also unimportant in order to make the focus on the female figure, although the lighting in this painting is harsher than in the ad. I think the message of the painting is a very different one than that of the ad. Manet is speaking out against upper class men that objectify prostitutes; the viewer is meant to empathize with the woman and feel bad for her. However, in the ad we are supposed to envy the woman and want to be in her position. I find it very interesting that these two images can be fairly similar, but convey such different messages. Manet's painting was very controversial in its time and was a call for social change and justice, and now we live in a time where ads like this, that completely objectify woman, are not just accepted as the norm, but accepted as the ideal.

