Visual Literacy: Confluence and Collaboration

Katharine Martinez
Fine Arts Library, Harvard University
IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

BENEDICT ANDERSON
Joy S. Kasson

Marble Queens & Captives

Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture
1898
THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

“History composed with zest and care and an eye for the anecdote.”
—The Boston Globe

DAVID TRAXEL
"It's time to embrace visual literacy. We judge children on their math and verbal skills, but our culture is so visual that people really get their information from images. The entire education system should be revamped to emphasize visual educations; from kindergarten to college."

Toshiko Mori, architect and former Dean, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University
What is Visual Literacy?

• Ability to understand the subject and meaning of an image within the context of the culture that produced the work
• Ability to analyze the syntax – compositional and stylistic principles of the work
• Ability to evaluate the aesthetic merits of the work
• Ability to interpret, use, appreciate, and create images
Confluence

- aesthetics/art
- philosophy, linguistics
- cognitive/gestalt psychology
- visual perception, anatomy of the eye, mental imagery, neurophysiology, research on hemispheric process in the brain
- sociology, cultural anthropology
- educational technology, instructional design, communication theory
Visual Literacy
Image, Mind, & Reality
Paul Messaris
Visual Culture

The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn

Margaret Dikovitskaya
“Every picture has many layers and many truths. But we know that behind every image revealed there is another image more fateful to reality and in back of that image there is another and yet another behind the last one and so on up to the true image of that absolute mysterious reality that no one will ever see.”

Michelangelo Antonioni

Al di la delle nuvole:Beyond the Clouds. (1995)

Lines spoken by John Malkovich.
LONGFELLOW’S TATTOOS
TOURISM, COLLECTING, AND JAPAN
Christine M. E. Guth
Tender Violence
DOMESTIC VISIONS IN AN AGE OF U.S. IMPERIALISM

Laura Wexler
When working with images for the first time it is important is to recognize that:

- There is no ‘one-way’ visual method or perspective.
- We don’t ‘see, we ‘perceive’.
- All images are regarded as having many possible meanings.
Art librarians can help historians formulate questions about images:

- Why were they created?
- What was their purpose?
- What can the process of creation and use tell us about the past?
REDISCOVERING JACOB RIIS

EXPOSURE JOURNALISM AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY NEW YORK

Bonnie Yochelson & Daniel Czitrom
VISION, RACE, and MODERNITY

A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World

DEBORAH POOLE

PRINCETON STUDIES IN CULTURE/POWER/HISTORY
A photograph does not show how things look.

- It is an image produced by a mechanical device,
- at a very specific moment,
- in a particular context,
- by a person working within a set of personal parameters.

Jon Prosser, “Researching with visual images: Some guidance notes and a glossary for beginners (July 2006) Economic and Social Research Council’s National Centre for Research Methods, The Universities of Manchester and Leeds
NO CAPTION NEEDED
ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHS, PUBLIC CULTURE, AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY
ROBERT HARIMAN AND JOHN LOUIS LUCAITES
Digital Visual Literacy = 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Literacy:

a set of skills that enable students to function in an increasingly digital and visual workplace.
What is Digital Visual Literacy?

- Ability to critically analyze visual materials
- Ability to make judgments and decisions using visual representations of thoughts and ideas
- Ability to create effective visual communications
Academic initiatives in Visual Literacy

- U of Wisconsin, Visual Culture Cluster  
  http://www.visualculture.wisc.edu/
- Duke University, Visual Studies Initiative  
  http://visualstudies.duke.edu/
- University of Southern California, Institute for Multimedia Literacy  
  http://iml.usc.edu/
Academic initiatives in Visual Literacy

• George Mason University, Center for History & New Media  http://chnm.gmu.edu/
• Yale University, Collaborative Learning Center  http://clc.yale.edu/