



Directions for use:
"Life never does more than
imitate the book, and the
book itself is only a tissue
of signs, an imitation that
is lost, infinitely deferred."

ROLAND BARTHES

FOUND IN TRANSLATION



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adidas

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FOREWORD

The Death of the Author is an essay written by Roland Barthes in the 1960s. A time in history that gave rise to the civil rights movement, the Vietnam war, the women's liberation movement, and the counterculture- the environment was focused on freedom in every sense, breaking away from any kind of cultural confinement; a time of social unrest and consciousness-raising about class, racial, and gender inequalities. The essay is a highly influential one in the field of literature, literary theory, structuralism, and post-structuralism. However, its implications or philosophical application is beyond just the field of literature. It is a culmination of social, cultural, and political events that led the society to contest the modern ideals/values/systems by challenging the notions of meaning, the fallacy of originality, and active authorship and celebrates the newfound multiplicity and emphasis on the reader-response critical theory.

The essay is an influential text in the development of literary theory. It traces a time in our culture when structuralism paved the way for post-structuralism as the basis of critical cultural analysis. In The Death of the Author, Roland Barthes argues not only that we should not just rely on the author's intent when analyzing a cultural text but also questions the implications of active authorship, of putting uncontested trust in the search for a definitive meaning through the author's intention. It elaborates on the distinct roles of the

author and the reader in the creation of meaning and its communication.

The author's perspective elaborates on the topic of the formation of meaning by expanding on the author and reader individually as well as their relationship to communicate meaning by highlighting the inherent flaws present in our pre-existing systems of communication, that is language, text, image, sound, etc. He rejects the idea of the possibility to derive a definitive meaning out of any cultural text on the basis of simply believing what the author dictates, for it takes away the very goal of analysis, which is to seek what lies beyond the surface, and a sense of freedom of looking at things. He argues that the meaning we derive from any cultural text is influenced by the wider cultural codes and systems it exists in and if that is true then is it right to credit the author for the creation of its meaning? And in doing so he questions the notions of originality attached to any cultural text. Rather, he shifts the focus on the imperative role the audience/reader plays in the creation of meaning beyond the author, and this process of signification through which meaning is communicated only reaches its potential when an audience/reader interacts with a cultural text. Since every reader/audience will have a different reading due to the presence of unique cultural codes and pre-existing influences, every cultural text is bound to have multiple meanings.

Creation and communication of meaning

Barthes elaborates on the structuralist perspective of how we understand the world around us and focuses on the analysis of cultural texts in terms of relationships, a system, a hierarchy, and an eco-system that it exists in. It is through the presence of these consistent structures that inform the genesis of these texts as well as the meanings that we derive from them. Similarly, all means of communication in our society, be it film, art, books, sound, image, etc are all made up of a language. Fundamentally arbitrary, a language is a self-contained system that works on the principle of differentiation, and the conceptual value of this language is determined by relationships and differences with other signs. These signs are based on utterance or written word, or phrase or sentence and only come to mean something when we view them as a part of a wider structure. This wider structure denotes the presence of new and pre-existing cultural codes that further aid the meaning of a cultural text by providing what is essential to infer meaning, and that is context. To build on the creation of meaning Barthes emphasizes the imperfect nature of language through the post-structuralist perspective, that is meaning relies on not what is just present but also through what is absent. That the use of any given term/sign always carries within it/signifies the trace of the opposite.

The role of the Author

Barthes highlights the dependency of any cultural text/sign on the presence of cultural codes to convey what it signifies and in doing so questions whether should we really give credit to any individual at all. In a way he points towards the lack of originality of any cultural text and that the author should not be treated as a divine creator of meaning from nothingness but a sort of collage maker, piecing pre-existing ideas in an original way. He uses the term 'scripter' in place of an 'author' for he sees active authorship as a way of assembling from multiple influences.

Barthes suggests that in the process of analyzing any cultural text we should not be too preoccupied with what the author intended to communicate in the first place. "The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us." Succumbing to such an approach where one is only interested in the author's intent behind a cultural text/sign requires us to rely on two assumptions:

- 1) Is it possible to uncover what were an artist/author's intentions with a cultural text?
- 2) The artist/authors meaning is the objectively correct meaning.

Barthes in his essay seems to refuse both assumptions but does not suggest that trying to decipher an author/artist's intent behind a work is not an interesting pursuit, but he argues strongly that to derive a definitive conclusion is near impossible. He also conveys the possibility of a lack of objective meaning attached to a cultural text since the author/artist's process of creation is not free of the cultural codes/influences either.

The role of the audience/reader

Barthes questions that since the process of creation of a cultural text is not free of any cultural codes/influences then how could the process of decoding it be? For Barthes, every reader participates in the creation of meaning based on a similar number of pre-existing notions. This means that the meaning that any given reader will derive from a cultural text/sign will be different from that of any other.

"a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into" mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination."

Barthes argues that the process of signification through which meaning is communicated, is only truly fulfilled when a text is read, and any given reader is bound to have a unique reading of the text. Thus any text has multiple meanings."

Barthes sees this multiplicity and shift of emphasis in the creation of meaning from the author to the reader as a freeing notion and not as a defeat of literary analysis.

In conclusion, many ideas within *The Death of the Author* function as an extension of ideas rooted in structuralism, but it is in introducing the new-found imperative role of a reader that Barthes lays the foundations for post-structuralism and in doing so the essay turns to not be much about the death of the author but instead the birth of the reader.



IDEA[®]

RON ENGLISH

MC Supersized, Popaganda

English came up with the fat Ronald McDonald mascot called "MC Supersized" for Morgan Spurlock's 2004 Supersize Me documentary. MC Supersized is a take on what would Ronald McDonald look like if he actually ate at McDonald's according to the Artist. Bootlegged MC Supersized vinyl figures are sold in China and are the reason for its great popularity. MC Supersized vinyl figures are packaged in a box adorned with golden arches and the McDonalds logo to support the created narrative.



Banksy in this artwork juxtaposes the image of the famous Vietnam War photograph taken on June 8th, 1972 by Nick Ut of a young girl Phan Thi Kim Phuc fleeing the town of Trang Bang after an air strike to surface bombing raid by U.S. soldiers, against the symbols of capitalist giants, Mickey Mouse and Ronald McDonald. Investigating the relationship between perception and reality.

It is a satirical take on the cultural perception of America, and America's perception of itself. This is considered to be one of Banksy's most daunting artistic expressions.



BANKSY

Napalm (Cant Beat That Feeling), 2004



Banksy's work here is his commentary on mega- industry business corporations, By creating a fiberglass replica of Ronald McDonald with a ridiculously large shoe being buffed to a shine by a real person. It was put up outside McDonald's in South Bronx. Banksy, through his work here, speaks volumes on the tough labor required to maintain and keep the polished image of such mega-corporations.



BANKSY
Shoeshine, 2013

Nutrition Facts
8 servings per container
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving
Calories 2500

Nutrition Facts
8 servings per container
Serving size 2/3
Total
Sat
Tra
Chole
Sodi
Total
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Tot

tion Facts
6%
... value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in
a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories
a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Ai Weiwei's longest running work, using the power of symbolism he conceptualises the stirring of east and west together, and its starkness, in the form of the Coca-Cola logo on Han Dynasty Urns, an ancient Chinese craft. It is a commentary on the evident effects of globalisation that is setting its roots down and deep, as capitalism infiltrates China. For Ai Weiwei, it depicts the tides of change and cultural conflict washing China. The Coca-Cola symbol with its lettering in red color is ubiquitous and proliferating, which aptly sits in the subconscious of the masses as a leading symbol of the consumer culture. He constructs a reflection of a country in flux, where the east and west are in a way chafing but do not appear to be settling in its formation.



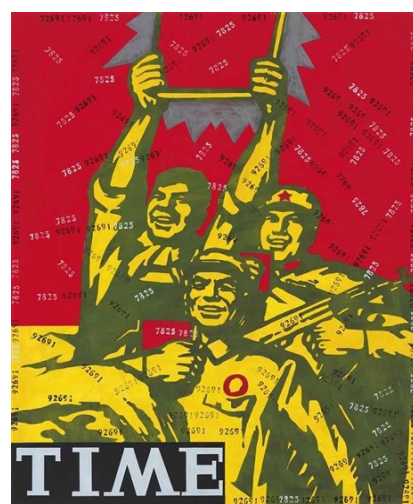
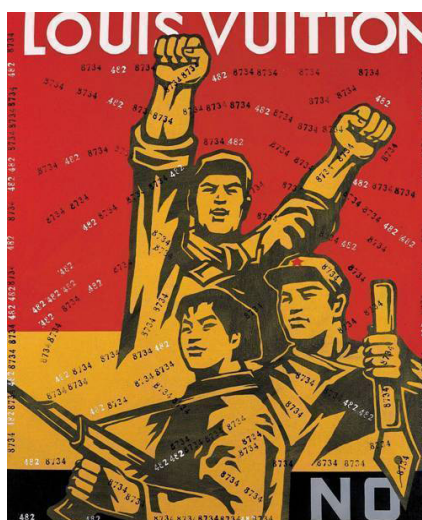
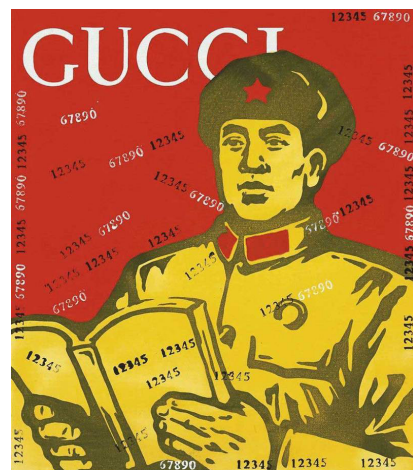
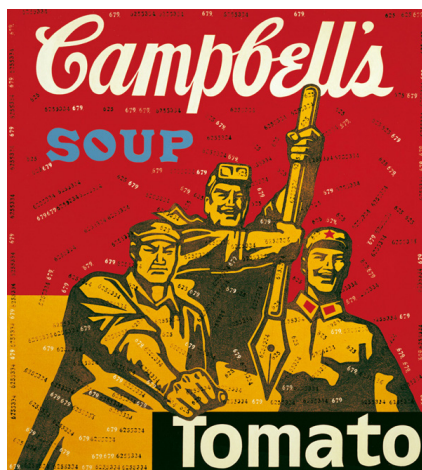
AI WEIWEI

Han Dynasty Urn with Coca-Cola Logo, 1993



Open
happiness





WANG GUANGYI

Great criticism

Known as the Andy Warhol of China and best known for his series, Great Criticism, Wang Guangyi's work focusses on repurposing Chinese propaganda paintings, by merging them with western influences, such as Coca-Cola, Louis Vuitton, contributing to the movement known as the Political Pop. Guangyi puts in juxtaposition the yellow-red Mao- era posters with brand logos, serial numbers and barcodes, and his own captions ('No') forming a merger of commercial and political symbols. The artist is indicating the uneasy points of confluence between the country's Maoist past and its promising economic future. Wang's work is deeply rooted in the investigation of the binary of Western society and Socialist ideology, and through usage of imagery denoting the visual culture of both, he finds a powerful meeting point.

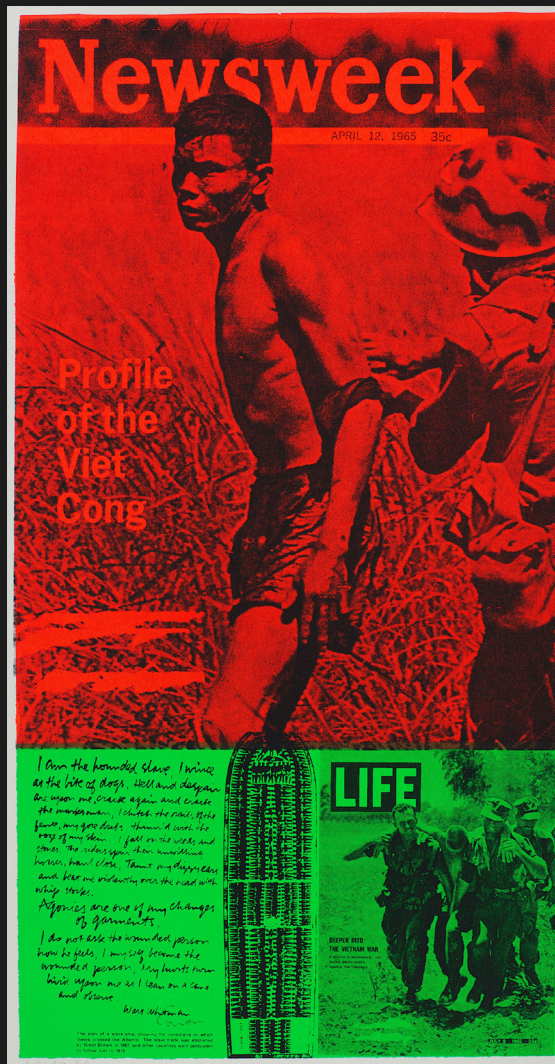


CORITA KENT

The cry that will be heard, 1969

Corita Kent also known as Sister Mary Corita, created vibrant serigraphs, screen-prints and artworks that carried a combination of logos of mega-corporations along with some excerpts by the artist's favourite writers, which created a junction of religious sentiment and advertisements. Corita's work reflected her concerns about poverty, racism, and war, and her messages of peace and social justice continue to resonate with audiences even today.





CORITA KENT

News of the week, 1969

Transcribed text:

Newsweek APRIL 12, 1965 35 cents

Profile of the Viet Cong

LIFE July 2, 1965 35 cents

Deeper into the vietnam war.

A marine is evacuated during patrol action against the Vietcong.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of dogs, Hell and despair are upon me, crack again and crack the marksman, I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinned with the ooze of my skin. I fall on the weeds and stones, the riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close, taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head with whip-stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments, I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the wounded person, my hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a can and observe.

Walt Whitman







ANDY WARHOL

Campbell's Soup Cans 1962

Andy Warhol's Campbell Soup Cans is one of the most iconic representations of Pop Art Culture. It is a piece that exemplifies appropriation art. The original labels have been copied exactly, and the entire plane has been filled with them. The repetition of the image makes the brand the image's identity, which instills the recognition of the product. This also linked to other associations of consumerism, commercialism, fast food, middle-class values etc.



ALEC MONOPOLY

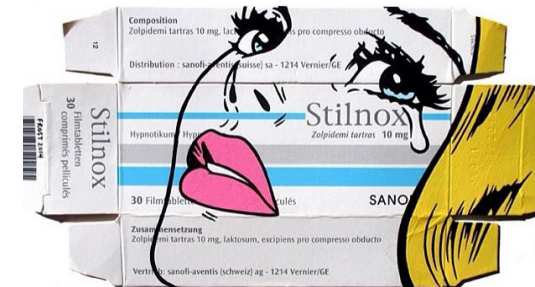
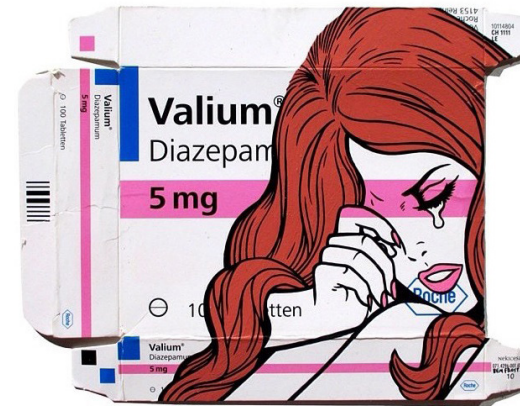
Money Bags Monopoly, 2015

Alec Monopoly (born Alec Andon) through his art, tempts viewers to buy into ideas of fame, money and celebrity. The mascot of Monopoly, his symbol of reflecting upon economical concerns of the world, Rich Uncle Pennybags, inspired Alec. The moustachioed mascot, who often carries a money bag among many other conspicuous markers of wealth throughout the artist's wry work, becomes a mirror for capitalist greed and culture.

BEN FROST

Retail therapy, 2017

Artist Ben Frost is popular for his work that stands as a unique blend from diverse sources such as graffiti, collage, photo-realism and sign-writing. His work undermines the power of the mainstream icon from entertainment, politics and advertising, and creates a visual piece that is bold and often controversial. According to the artist, the media has fine-tuned the 'must-haves' appeal of the products for the consumers, which also has a duality to it. Borrowing from the widely accepted world of advertising, entertainment mainly Frost uses subversion of iconography to communicate a strong, confronting visual narrative.



A text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author- God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none' of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.

ROLAND BARTHES

Text



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uaym
oyym
hyym

KIKAYOU

Felix Chill

Kikayou brings images from his imagination and memories, which have been a part of his journey thus far. His work creates a path for the viewers that activates their own interrogations and perceptions, through its colours and sensations. His work targets topical concepts presented in their own mix of emotions and imaginations and always devoid of any pretension.



GASPARD MITZ

At Your Own Risk, 2021

Gaspard Mitz is a mixed-media artist from Paris. His notable work known as the Box Stories, is aimed at making people smile and offering a new perspective to the the otherwise ubiquitous. He fuses eras and mediums, through destinies for his figurines with references to art history, using varied materials such as wood, foam board and paper.





HELLO YELLO, 2017



GUNDAMN!!!, 2017



HER MESS #08, 2017

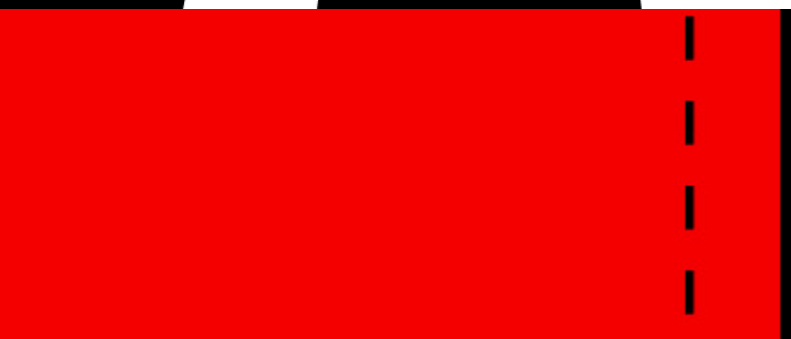


L. SUPREMON, 2017

ANDRE TAN

Andre's work carries a chaotic mix of brand identities along with comic and cartoon characters. For the viewers, there is path of perception that first gives way to recognition of elements, after which humor strikes. The brands and characters have high recognition values from fields as varied as fashion, apparel, visual merchandising, film, animation and gaming, drawn from both Western sources as in comics, or Eastern ones as in manga or anime. They emerge from the fabric of contemporary popular culture, placing Andre firmly in the genre of pop art. Andre goes beyond the mere juxtaposition of these images to construct complex witty pieces of parody of these products.

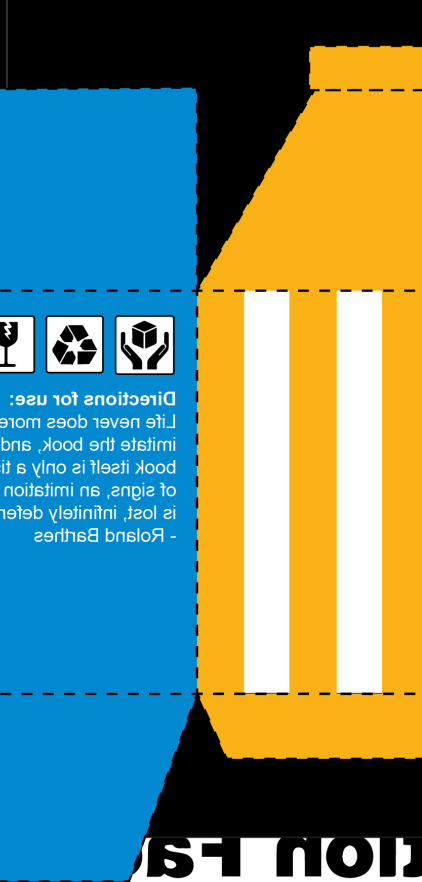
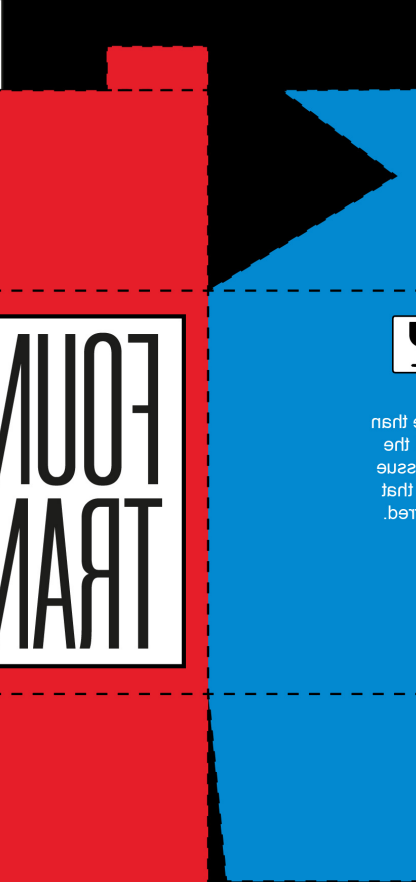
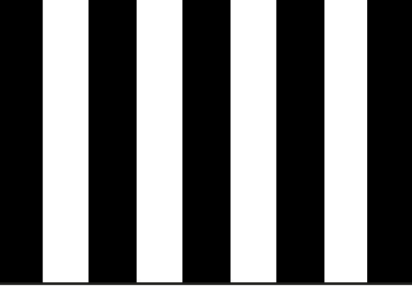
PRIME



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- Roland Barthes

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