



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
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**Disneyland:
AN
AESTHETIC
OF
POSTMODERN
CONSUMER CULTURE,
HYPERREALITY
AND
SEMIOTIC CONTENT
IN THE
VISUAL ARTS**

by

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in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for
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FOREWORD

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.



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Introduction

Disneyland is everywhere.

The Walt Disney Corporation's agenda of internationalisation, coinciding with the opening of Euro Disney in Marne-la-Vallée, France, in 1992, has clearly positioned the Disneyland phenomenon within the mind of Postmodern spectator-consumers. If one takes into account the proliferation of articles concerning Disneyland, in contemporary critical scholarship, one can see that it stands at the forefront of growing, global demand for a new aesthetic.

This study will turn a critical spotlight on the Disneyland phenomenon in order to ascertain the root of its existence, and further to document its precise meaning and influence upon the visual arts and its audience in the Postmodern world. The acknowledgement of the lack of serious criticism regarding Disneyland (Willis 1993:1; Tannenbaum 1983:299) further necessitates an inquiry of this kind, since important debates initiated at the Frankfurt and the Birmingham schools have demonstrated the centrality of such cultural studies for the development of art historical theory.

Previous studies on Disneyland include an inquiry into the sociomythic character of Disneyland entertainment as a response to the audience's collective values and beliefs, a reflection on general American culture, and an examination of Disney via the psychoanalytic approach, all conducted in the Department of American Studies at the University of Michigan (Keller 1983:285; Berland 1982). Art historian Barbara Tannenbaum (1983:299) pinpoints the initial attempt at a theoretical approach towards animation as art historian Marie Thérèse Poncet's *L'esthétique du Dessin Animé* (1952) which employed a philosophical and abstract orientation. The American Film

Institute's *Guide to College Courses in Film and Television* reveals that more than 60 major American colleges feature animation workshops in their curriculum (Canemaker 1980:52). Willis (1993:1) believes that the 'floodgate of Disney criticism is about to open'.

The recent announcement (coinciding with a personal visit) by Walt Disney World representative Bob Ziegler that South Africa is being considered for inclusion in EPCOT's *World Showcase*¹ brings the entire Disneyland phenomenon to rest at our doorstep. An inquiry into the overall effects of such a global entertainment campaign, thus becomes all the more justified within global Post-Apartheid South Africa.

This study is aimed at analysing the varied mass of information that has dealt with Disneyland to date. The extraction of issues particularly relevant to current cultural debate, will form an integral part of this inquiry. This study aims to come to a critical awareness and synthesis of both the cultural and aesthetic implications of the Disneyland phenomenon.

The current view that Disney has become an object of study at a moment dominated by Postmodern discourse, creates the obligation not to force a Postmodern inquiry, but to highlight existing trends and essences within Disneyland with regard to Postmodern debate. In this regard Tannenbaum (1983:299) notes the excitement of exploring the new medium of Disneyland via the combination of traditional methodological approaches, as well as new

¹EPCOT's *World Showcase* is situated at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. It consists of 11 national pavilions ringing a lagoon. It is a clever pastiche of indigenous landmarks, shops, restaurants and theatres where films of each particular country are shown.

ones, in order to cope with the mixture of technological, sociological, economic, and cultural influences that have shaped a nascent formal and iconographic tradition. In a similar vein, Postmodern architect Charles Eames (in Jacobs 1992:71) concurs with the inclusion of the popular by stating that one can tell more about a culture from its 'bread and soup' than from its 'museums and masterpieces'.

This study will therefore explore the ways in which prominent and popular thinkers, philosophers, critics, and artists regard Disneyland as a model for an aesthetic in contemporary visual arts.

'Disneyland' indicates the 'multi-million-dollar-entertainment-industry' which was dreamed into reality in 1942 by Walter Elias Disney (1901-1966) and was expanded and remarketed since 1986 as a 'mega-entertainment-empire' by businessman Michael Eisner (1942-) and his *Walt Disney Company*.

Disneyland includes the individual theme parks (with hotels and resort facilities) situated respectively in Anaheim, California (opened in 1955 and christened *Disneyland*); Orlando, Florida (1971, *Walt Disney World* plus *EPCOT Centre*, *Fort Wilderness Campground*, *Typhoon Lagoon*, *Pleasure Island*, *Disney Village Marketplace* and *Disney-MGM Studios*); Tokyo, Japan (1983, *Tokyo Disneyland*), and Marne-la-Vallée, France (1992, *Euro Disney*); *Disney MGM Studios*; 335 retail stores in America, Canada, Britain, Germany, Japan and France; *Jim Henson's The Muppets* which was acquired for \$100 million after Henson's death in 1990; *Disney Premier Cruise Lines* which will set sail in 1997; *The Walt Disney Gallery* in Santa Ana, California, with its limited edition art, adult fashions and themed household goods; *Disney's Christmas on Ice Escapades* in collaboration with impresario Kenneth Feld; a hockey team named *The Mighty Ducks*; a

codex of blockbuster and classic moving pictures translated into 14 languages around the world distributed by *Miramax Films* and *Buena Vista Pictures*, and an alliance with highbrow studio *Merchant-Ivory Productions*; television and home video on *The Disney Channel*; a host of characters such as Mickey Mouse (marketed since 1928), educational material and Broadway productions such as *Beauty and the Beast*, and popular television series such as *The Golden Girls* and *Home Improvement* (Allens 1993; Jodidio 1992:1-7; Meyer, Fleming & McGuire 1994:33; Van Tassel 1990:38; Reed 1990:71).

The proverbial 'Disney magic' also implies the broader manifestation of theme park entertainment. In America alone the following Theme and Amusement Park Resort complexes are in operation: *Cedar Point's Raptor Attraction*, *Hershey Park*, *Cypress Gardens*, *King's Island*, *Fiesta Texas*, *Knott's Berry Farm*, *Six Flags Magic Mountain*, *Six Flags Great America*, *Six Flags Over Mid-America*, *Six Flags Over Texas*, *Six Flags Over Georgia*, *Carowinds' Smurf Island*, *Busch Gardens' Old Country*, *Busch Gardens' exotic Dark Continent*, *Hanna Barbera's Kings Dominion*, Nashville's *Opryland*, *Astroworld Houston Texas*, *Universal Studios Hollywood*, *The Luxor Theme Park Casino Hotel*, Steve Wynn's *Treasure Island Hotel Complex*, and the *MGM Grand Casino Hotel* (Birbaum 1994; Norman 1990; Wiley 1994; Fenster 1994; Andersen 1994).

Russia's best-known sculptor and architect, Tsereteli, is planning a 927-acre version of Disneyland, called *Wonder Park*, seven miles from the Kremlin (Carpenter 1994). In Southern Africa there has been a growth of entertainment parks and centres during the past two decades. These include for example *Gold Reef City*, *The Lost City at Sun City* (whose creator, Sol Kerzner (in Ainsworth Sharp 1993:37),

has admitted to an entertainment agenda), *The Carousel Entertainment Centre*, *The Wild Coast Sun and Entertainment Complex*, *The Swakopmund Hotel and Entertainment Centre*, etcetera; not to mention the growing interest in and popularity of international fairs such as *The Rand Show*, or the rise of shopping complexes all over South Africa such as *The Wheel* (Durban), *The Workshop* (Durban), *Tygervalley Centre* (complete with imitation steamer and 'fantasy' restaurants), *The Pavillion* (Durban), *The Waterfront* (Cape Town and Randburg), etcetera.

In America numerous architects, developers, and planners have incorporated Disneyland techniques into their designs for suburban shopping malls, inner city festival marketplaces, revitalized small town main streets, new satellite residential neighbourhoods, and entire cities such as Seaside in Florida (Warren 1994:96).

For the purposes of this study the term 'Disneyland' will be used in order to refer to the magnitude of entertainment phenomena that hold sway within global Postmodern culture.

But what is it that makes Disneyland so interesting and attractive to prominent cultural critics and philosophers as to elicit not one, but several responses?

Without attempting to provide a comprehensive overview of Disneyland as phenomenon, I have instead organized this study around three main areas of criticism, or foci², which appear in contemporary critiques on Disneyland. It is hoped that a close analysis thereof will reveal more clearly the particular cultural meaning and function of Disneyland. Firstly,

critics regard Disneyland as a reflection of a **Postmodern consumer culture** mentality. Secondly, Disneyland is seen as a model for the creation of a state of **hyperreality**, encompassing also 'simulation' or 'simulacra', and thirdly Disneyland is seen as a model for the manifestation of **semiotic content**, meaning or communication. An explanation of these foci will follow, in order for their relevance within this inquiry to be fully illustrated.

Postmodern Consumer Culture

Firstly, Disneyland touches upon the essences of **Postmodern consumer culture** mentality. Although Disneyland projected the image of 'honkey-tonk-crasness-and-phoniness' as well as 'middle-class-mentality' for a number of years within the entertainment industry, it was discovered as a rich field of inquiry by architect Charles Eames. Eames (in Finch 1983:425,426) interprets Disneyland as a convincing experiment in urban psychology. He is also of the opinion that it is exclusively in Disneyland that mass society or popular culture can congregate with courtesy and pleasure.

Eames (in Finch 1983:388) further suggests that Walt Disney succeeded in reaching mass culture through a solid knowledge of advertising and promotion skills, as well as through a well-planned presentation of archetypal imagination which appealed to the post-war spectator-consumer.

Postmodern critic Frederic Jameson (in Kaplan 1988:28) characterises this Postmodern, post-war consumer culture as that culture which comprises the following functioning characteristics: post-industrial multinational capitalism; new modes of consumerism; planned obsolescence; rapidly changing fashion; omnipresent advertising; television and mass media such as radio, television, video, newspaper,

²Previous undergraduate research for the BA(FA) degree, completed during 1994, revealed three specific areas of critique within the media concerning Disneyland.

magazine, film, book, record or tape, as vehicles for the transmission of information and entertainment; an exchange of the old tension between urban and rural areas by the new dichotomy of the suburb; universal standardisation; the manifestation of networks or superhighways³ of information distribution, as well as the rise of a 'brand-conscious-automobile-culture'. The implications of the 'Information Superhighway' are that systems of wires and cables, software applications, operating systems, protocols, on-line services, interactive television, and video on demand are created by the private sector (that is the entertainment industry as well as computer and software companies). These will have an enormous impact on global business, education, and entertainment (Otte 1994:6).

Chambers (1986) explains popular culture in terms of the changes that it is experiencing, such as: industrial capitalism, growing literacy, impact of the print media, secularization, and participatory politics. The concept 'mass culture' is identified with those products produced primarily for entertainment rather than for intrinsic worth, and with artifacts to be sold and items created by mechanical reproduction such as the printing press, gramophone records, and art illustrations. The mass culture debate goes back to Romantic poet Wordsworth (1770-1850) and was revived in the 1950s with the spread of affluence and the fear that advertising was shaping cultural tastes (Bullock & Stallybrass 1988:506). During the 1960s the debate took a different turn with the rise of Pop Art. A group of critics associated with the American magazine, *Partisan Review* (including liberalists Susan Sontag and Richard Poirier), became advocates of the new sensibility which denied the

distinction between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' art, proclaimed film as the important art of the twentieth century, and argued that the music of *The Beatles* and *The Rolling Stones* was as important as that of Austrian-American composer Schönberg (1874-1951) for its evocation of popular responses (Bullock & Stallybrass 1988:506).

Cultural critic Robert Atkins (1990:131) on the other hand, in order to explain the state of art and culture, clarifies Postmodernism as that movement which has arisen within art criticism since the 1970s. Avant garde artist Mark Kostabi and Postmodern theorist Charles Jencks, documented the exact birth of the expression 'Postmodernism' as taking place at 3.33pm, on 15 July 1972 (Polan 1988:45).

Atkins (1990:131) further notes that Postmodernism as a movement has brought about a shift in thought which has moved beyond the boundaries of Modernism. Robert Venturi (in Polan 1988:45), the proclaimer of Postmodern architecture, also shares in this opinion by stating that the Modernist belief in technology and human achievement currently has to make way for the 'spectacles' of mass culture.

This study will launch an inquiry into the characteristics of Postmodern consumer culture with special reference to Disneyland, its global target market and its visual preferences. An inquiry of this nature is seen as totally relevant and necessary by art historian Marcia Pointon (1983).

In this regard the following will be examined in chapter one: the global manifestation of a mass aesthetic; the influence of the Information Revolution on Postmodern consumer culture; the tendency towards nostalgia, myth, and spectacle in Postmodern culture; the influence of Disney on popular art; as well as the aesthetic of animation, and infotainment.

³The phrase 'Information Superhighway' was coined by Al Gore, Vice-President of America, in 1988 to help raise awareness and support from the public and private sectors. It was initially called *National Information Infrastructure* or *High Performance Computing* (Otte 1994:6).

Hyperreality: 'simulation' and 'simulacra'

Secondly, concerning hyperreality: Disneyland is not just a mass culture theme park *par excellence*. Several critics, specifically Italian novelist and philosopher Umberto Eco, who propagated the concept of **hyperreality** in Disneyland, American critic Kate Linker, French semiologist Jean Baudrillard as well as the author of an illuminating work on the simulated Postmodern world, Benjamin Woolley (1992), defensively reiterate the stance that Disneyland is the quintessential model for current debate surrounding the notions of **simulation** in the Postmodern world.

Simulation demands that Postmodern society be ruled externally by messages, signs, and images which are continuously fed into that society's mass media. Within this magnitude of spectacles, the 'spectator-consumer' is left to continually construct, reconstruct, and adjust the image of reality. Consumer culture is obsessed with the interweaving of mass imagery which infiltrates the television screen, multimedia computer programs, the Internet, films, videos, and the printed media. And nowhere more so than in Disneyland. According to Baudrillard (in Smagula 1991:7-18), Disneyland is committed to a definitive play on illusions via the creation of an imaginary environment in its theme parks. This imaginary environment constitutes certain thought processes or 'simulacra' which in turn control the world of negotiable culture or the proverbial 'consumers' utopia' (Smagula 1991:8).

The concept simulation is defined as an indication of the way in which the imaginary, illusory or fictitious has replaced the real, actual or true as a proponent of the believable in the Postmodern era (Smagula 1991:8). Woolley (1992:53) pinpoints the notion of simulation as originating in Flight Simulator

Experiments at NASA, as early as 1910. The generalization of the idea of simulation came with Ivan Sutherland's 1968 academic paper, *A Head-mounted Three-dimensional Display*. Communications expert Michael de Certeau (in Blonsky 1985:154) explains the contemporary simulacrum as the last meeting place of the spectator-consumer's belief in what is seen. In this regard it is postulated that the spectator-consumer 'trusts' that that which is seen, constitutes reality (Blonsky 1985:154).

According to art historian Rosalind Krauss (1986:38-39) the simulacrum is the:

Postmodernist notion of the originalist play of the signifier and those investigations of the representational system of absence.

The simulacrum, in other words, is that space which is seen and 'believed' by the spectator-consumer (Blonsky 1985:154). It represents that relationship between what is seen and what is believed to be reality (Blonsky 1985:154).

In this connection the following will be examined in chapter two: Baudrillard and Eco's interpretation of Disneyland as the basic model for the creation of a state of hyperreality; the notion that the representation of reality encompasses messages which influence the spectator-consumer's perception of reality, as well as the conception of the 'credibility' of that 'reality' (Perloff 1988:250); and the manifestation of a state of hyperreality in Disneyland and the visual arts in the form of simulation, body politics, illusion, semiurgy, and deconstruction.

Baudrillard's (1984:253-283) vision of the process of simulation as part of a detailed communication theory

concerned with the juxtaposition of historical images, brings us to the third focus on Disneyland, namely that of **semiotic content**.

Semiotic content

Contemporary concerns with mass society, the commodification of leisure, identity, etcetera, under consumer capitalism have led to an erosion of the distinction between elite and popular culture, and now cultural Semiotics deconstructs all representations and **signs** to expose their uniform ideological significance (Chambers 1986).

Baudrillard's argument is that the spectator-consumer's frame of reference can only consist of images or signs which are Platonically interpreted (Perloff 1988:10-13). The philosopher Plato of Athens (c.428 - c.348 BC) remarked in his *Meno*, that the human subject is endowed with certain amounts of unconscious knowledge which can assist in the daily confrontation with the environment (Flew 1979:271). Plato's Theory of Ideas postulates that it is the shape of things that determine their real or true identities (Flew 1979:271). In this regard, the spectator-consumer recalls an angular shape with three sides as triangular, only because that particular shape coincides with the requirements for 'ideal' triangularity (Flew 1979:271).

This process of image interpretation forms part of the study of Semiotics. Images refer to certain predetermined meanings in the mind of the spectator-consumer. An image indicates any depiction, portrayal or representation of an object or an idea which in turn represents a certain historical content

(Smagula 1991:9-11). Images function as aesthetic symbols in society within the framework of the communication process of simulation (Blonsky 1985:154).

Art historian Sebeok (in Blonsky 1985:451) defines Semiotics as a branch of the science of communication. Since its advent in the 1930s the field of Semiotics has been concerned with the 'life of signs' in society (Blonsky 1985:451). Semiotics gives insightful explanations into the grammatical or linguistic character of contemporary Postmodern thought. It is a science of signs, representational and communication systems such as advertising, language, food, objects, clothing, jazz, and imagery (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis 1992:1-5).

In this connection the following will be examined in chapter three: Eco's vision of Disneyland as a 'Las Vegas-type' message city complete with a subtext of meaningful imagery; the manifestation of icons, trademarks and brand names with special reference to the image of Disneyland's major protagonist Mickey Mouse as an icon with semiotic meaning, as well as lastly, the manifestation of an art of signs.

This study has as its prime goal the synthesis of the current information and writings on Disneyland with regard to the three proposed foci. It will strive to lead to a deeper understanding of Disneyland as cultural phenomenon at the end of the twentieth century and its resultant influence on a Postmodern visual aesthetic. As this study is the first of its kind in extent and interest, a further aim will be to provide a detailed and up-to-date bibliography on Disneyland in order to stimulate further debate.

Introduction

Disneyland is everywhere.

The Walt Disney Corporation's agenda of internationalisation, coinciding with the opening of Euro Disney in Marne-la-Vallée, France, in 1992, has clearly positioned the Disneyland phenomenon within the mind of Postmodern spectator-consumers. If one takes into account the proliferation of articles concerning Disneyland, in contemporary critical scholarship, one can see that it stands at the forefront of growing, global demand for a new aesthetic.

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The proverbial 'Disney magic' also implies the broader manifestation of theme park entertainment. In America alone the following Theme and Amusement Park Resort complexes are in operation: *Cedar Point's Raptor Attraction*, *Hershey Park*, *Cypress Gardens*, *King's Island*, *Fiesta Texas*, *Knott's Berry Farm*, *Six Flags Magic Mountain*, *Six Flags Great America*, *Six Flags Over Mid-America*, *Six Flags Over Texas*, *Six Flags Over Georgia*, *Carowinds' Smurf Island*, *Busch Gardens' Old Country*, *Busch Gardens' exotic Dark Continent*, *Hanna Barbera's Kings Dominion*, Nashville's *Opryland*, *Astroworld Houston Texas*, *Universal Studios Hollywood*, *The Luxor Theme Park Casino Hotel*, Steve Wynn's *Treasure Island Hotel Complex*, and the *MGM Grand Casino Hotel* (Birbaum 1994; Norman 1990; Wiley 1994; Fenster 1994; Andersen 1994).

Russia's best-known sculptor and architect, Tsereteli, is planning a 927-acre version of Disneyland, called *Wonder Park*, seven miles from the Kremlin (Carpenter 1994). In Southern Africa there has been a growth of entertainment parks and centres during the past two decades. These include for example *Gold Reef City*, *The Lost City at Sun City* (whose creator, Sol Kerzner (in Ainsworth Sharp 1993:37),

has admitted to an entertainment agenda), *The Carousel Entertainment Centre*, *The Wild Coast Sun and Entertainment Complex*, *The Swakopmund Hotel and Entertainment Centre*, etcetera; not to mention the growing interest in and popularity of international fairs such as *The Rand Show*, or the rise of shopping complexes all over South Africa such as *The Wheel* (Durban), *The Workshop* (Durban), *Tygervalley Centre* (complete with imitation steamer and 'fantasy' restaurants), *The Pavillion* (Durban), *The Waterfront* (Cape Town and Randburg), etcetera.

In America numerous architects, developers, and planners have incorporated Disneyland techniques into their designs for suburban shopping malls, inner city festival marketplaces, revitalized small town main streets, new satellite residential neighbourhoods, and entire cities such as Seaside in Florida (Warren 1994:96).

For the purposes of this study the term 'Disneyland' will be used in order to refer to the magnitude of entertainment phenomena that hold sway within global Postmodern culture.

But what is it that makes Disneyland so interesting and attractive to prominent cultural critics and philosophers as to elicit not one, but several responses?

Without attempting to provide a comprehensive overview of Disneyland as phenomenon, I have instead organized this study around three main areas of criticism, or foci², which appear in contemporary critiques on Disneyland. It is hoped that a close analysis thereof will reveal more clearly the particular cultural meaning and function of Disneyland. Firstly,

critics regard Disneyland as a reflection of a **Postmodern consumer culture** mentality. Secondly, Disneyland is seen as a model for the creation of a state of **hyperreality**, encompassing also 'simulation' or 'simulacra', and thirdly Disneyland is seen as a model for the manifestation of **semiotic content**, meaning or communication. An explanation of these foci will follow, in order for their relevance within this inquiry to be fully illustrated.

Postmodern Consumer Culture

Firstly, Disneyland touches upon the essences of **Postmodern consumer culture** mentality. Although Disneyland projected the image of 'honkey-tonk-crasness-and-phoniness' as well as 'middle-class-mentality' for a number of years within the entertainment industry, it was discovered as a rich field of inquiry by architect Charles Eames. Eames (in Finch 1983:425,426) interprets Disneyland as a convincing experiment in urban psychology. He is also of the opinion that it is exclusively in Disneyland that mass society or popular culture can congregate with courtesy and pleasure.

Eames (in Finch 1983:388) further suggests that Walt Disney succeeded in reaching mass culture through a solid knowledge of advertising and promotion skills, as well as through a well-planned presentation of archetypal imagination which appealed to the post-war spectator-consumer.

Postmodern critic Frederic Jameson (in Kaplan 1988:28) characterises this Postmodern, post-war consumer culture as that culture which comprises the following functioning characteristics: post-industrial multinational capitalism; new modes of consumerism; planned obsolescence; rapidly changing fashion; omnipresent advertising; television and mass media such as radio, television, video, newspaper,

²Previous undergraduate research for the BA(FA) degree, completed during 1994, revealed three specific areas of critique within the media concerning Disneyland.

magazine, film, book, record or tape, as vehicles for the transmission of information and entertainment; an exchange of the old tension between urban and rural areas by the new dichotomy of the suburb; universal standardisation; the manifestation of networks or superhighways³ of information distribution, as well as the rise of a 'brand-conscious-automobile-culture'. The implications of the 'Information Superhighway' are that systems of wires and cables, software applications, operating systems, protocols, on-line services, interactive television, and video on demand are created by the private sector (that is the entertainment industry as well as computer and software companies). These will have an enormous impact on global business, education, and entertainment (Otte 1994:6).

Chambers (1986) explains popular culture in terms of the changes that it is experiencing, such as: industrial capitalism, growing literacy, impact of the print media, secularization, and participatory politics. The concept 'mass culture' is identified with those products produced primarily for entertainment rather than for intrinsic worth, and with artifacts to be sold and items created by mechanical reproduction such as the printing press, gramophone records, and art illustrations. The mass culture debate goes back to Romantic poet Wordsworth (1770-1850) and was revived in the 1950s with the spread of affluence and the fear that advertising was shaping cultural tastes (Bullock & Stallybrass 1988:506). During the 1960s the debate took a different turn with the rise of Pop Art. A group of critics associated with the American magazine, *Partisan Review* (including liberalists Susan Sontag and Richard Poirier), became advocates of the new sensibility which denied the

³The phrase 'Information Superhighway' was coined by Al Gore, Vice-President of America, in 1988 to help raise awareness and support from the public and private sectors. It was initially called *National Information Infrastructure* or *High Performance Computing* (Otte 1994:6).

distinction between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' art, proclaimed film as the important art of the twentieth century, and argued that the music of *The Beatles* and *The Rolling Stones* was as important as that of Austrian-American composer Schönberg (1874-1951) for its evocation of popular responses (Bullock & Stallybrass 1988:506).

Cultural critic Robert Atkins (1990:131) on the other hand, in order to explain the state of art and culture, clarifies Postmodernism as that movement which has arisen within art criticism since the 1970s. Avant garde artist Mark Kostabi and Postmodern theorist Charles Jencks, documented the exact birth of the expression 'Postmodernism' as taking place at 3.33pm, on 15 July 1972 (Polan 1988:45).

Atkins (1990:131) further notes that Postmodernism as a movement has brought about a shift in thought which has moved beyond the boundaries of Modernism. Robert Venturi (in Polan 1988:45), the proclaimer of Postmodern architecture, also shares in this opinion by stating that the Modernist belief in technology and human achievement currently has to make way for the 'spectacles' of mass culture.

This study will launch an inquiry into the characteristics of Postmodern consumer culture with special reference to Disneyland, its global target market and its visual preferences. An inquiry of this nature is seen as totally relevant and necessary by art historian Marcia Pointon (1983).

In this regard the following will be examined in chapter one: the global manifestation of a mass aesthetic; the influence of the Information Revolution on Postmodern consumer culture; the tendency towards nostalgia, myth, and spectacle in Postmodern culture; the influence of Disney on popular art; as well as the aesthetic of animation, and infotainment.

Hyperreality: 'simulation' and 'simulacra'

Secondly, concerning hyperreality: Disneyland is not just a mass culture theme park *par excellence*. Several critics, specifically Italian novelist and philosopher Umberto Eco, who propagated the concept of **hyperreality** in Disneyland, American critic Kate Linker, French semiologist Jean Baudrillard as well as the author of an illuminating work on the simulated Postmodern world, Benjamin Woolley (1992), defensively reiterate the stance that Disneyland is the quintessential model for current debate surrounding the notions of **simulation** in the Postmodern world.

Simulation demands that Postmodern society be ruled externally by messages, signs, and images which are continuously fed into that society's mass media. Within this magnitude of spectacles, the 'spectator-consumer' is left to continually construct, reconstruct, and adjust the image of reality. Consumer culture is obsessed with the interweaving of mass imagery which infiltrates the television screen, multimedia computer programs, the Internet, films, videos, and the printed media. And nowhere more so than in Disneyland. According to Baudrillard (in Smagula 1991:7-18), Disneyland is committed to a definitive play on illusions via the creation of an imaginary environment in its theme parks. This imaginary environment constitutes certain thought processes or 'simulacra' which in turn control the world of negotiable culture or the proverbial 'consumers' utopia' (Smagula 1991:8).

The concept simulation is defined as an indication of the way in which the imaginary, illusory or fictitious has replaced the real, actual or true as a proponent of the believable in the Postmodern era (Smagula 1991:8). Woolley (1992:53) pinpoints the notion of simulation as originating in Flight Simulator

Experiments at NASA, as early as 1910. The generalization of the idea of simulation came with Ivan Sutherland's 1968 academic paper, *A Head-mounted Three-dimensional Display*. Communications expert Michael de Certeau (in Blonsky 1985:154) explains the contemporary simulacrum as the last meeting place of the spectator-consumer's belief in what is seen. In this regard it is postulated that the spectator-consumer 'trusts' that that which is seen, constitutes reality (Blonsky 1985:154).

According to art historian Rosalind Krauss (1986:38-39) the simulacrum is the:

Postmodernist notion of the originalist play of the signifier and those investigations of the representational system of absence.

The simulacrum, in other words, is that space which is seen and 'believed' by the spectator-consumer (Blonsky 1985:154). It represents that relationship between what is seen and what is believed to be reality (Blonsky 1985:154).

In this connection the following will be examined in chapter two: Baudrillard and Eco's interpretation of Disneyland as the basic model for the creation of a state of hyperreality; the notion that the representation of reality encompasses messages which influence the spectator-consumer's perception of reality, as well as the conception of the 'credibility' of that 'reality' (Perloff 1988:250); and the manifestation of a state of hyperreality in Disneyland and the visual arts in the form of simulation, body politics, illusion, semiurgy, and deconstruction.

Baudrillard's (1984:253-283) vision of the process of simulation as part of a detailed communication theory

concerned with the juxtaposition of historical images, brings us to the third focus on Disneyland, namely that of **semiotic content**.

Semiotic content

Contemporary concerns with mass society, the commodification of leisure, identity, etcetera, under consumer capitalism have led to an erosion of the distinction between elite and popular culture, and now cultural Semiotics deconstructs all representations and **signs** to expose their uniform ideological significance (Chambers 1986).

Baudrillard's argument is that the spectator-consumer's frame of reference can only consist of images or signs which are Platonically interpreted (Perloff 1988:10-13). The philosopher Plato of Athens (c.428 - c.348 BC) remarked in his *Meno*, that the human subject is endowed with certain amounts of unconscious knowledge which can assist in the daily confrontation with the environment (Flew 1979:271). Plato's Theory of Ideas postulates that it is the shape of things that determine their real or true identities (Flew 1979:271). In this regard, the spectator-consumer recalls an angular shape with three sides as triangular, only because that particular shape coincides with the requirements for 'ideal' triangularity (Flew 1979:271).

This process of image interpretation forms part of the study of Semiotics. Images refer to certain predetermined meanings in the mind of the spectator-consumer. An image indicates any depiction, portrayal or representation of an object or an idea which in turn represents a certain historical content

(Smagula 1991:9-11). Images function as aesthetic symbols in society within the framework of the communication process of simulation (Blonsky 1985:154).

Art historian Sebeok (in Blonsky 1985:451) defines Semiotics as a branch of the science of communication. Since its advent in the 1930s the field of Semiotics has been concerned with the 'life of signs' in society (Blonsky 1985:451). Semiotics gives insightful explanations into the grammatical or linguistic character of contemporary Postmodern thought. It is a science of signs, representational and communication systems such as advertising, language, food, objects, clothing, jazz, and imagery (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis 1992:1-5).

In this connection the following will be examined in chapter three: Eco's vision of Disneyland as a 'Las Vegas-type' message city complete with a subtext of meaningful imagery; the manifestation of icons, trademarks and brand names with special reference to the image of Disneyland's major protagonist Mickey Mouse as an icon with semiotic meaning, as well as lastly, the manifestation of an art of signs.

This study has as its prime goal the synthesis of the current information and writings on Disneyland with regard to the three proposed foci. It will strive to lead to a deeper understanding of Disneyland as cultural phenomenon at the end of the twentieth century and its resultant influence on a Postmodern visual aesthetic. As this study is the first of its kind in extent and interest, a further aim will be to provide a detailed and up-to-date bibliography on Disneyland in order to stimulate further debate.

Chapter One:

Disneyland as model for the manifestation of a Postmodern consumer culture mentality in the visual arts

1.1. Characteristics of a Postmodern consumer culture in Disneyland

Disneyland is the place where you can't get lost... it is a sanitized fortress against the dis-ease of 50's society...

Walter Elias Disney
(in Bukatman 1991:55)

...if you build it, they will come...

Field of Dreams, Universal, 1990
(in Corliss 1990a:64)

...Gutenberg made everybody a reader... Xerox made everybody a publisher... personal computers are making everybody an author...

Marshall McLuhan
(in Woolley 1992:165)

1.1.1. Global intimations of a mass entertainment aesthetic in Disneyland

In his seminal work on Disney, *The Art of Walt Disney: From Mickey Mouse to The Magic Kingdoms* (1983) Christopher Finch describes Disneyland as the Versailles (1669) of the twentieth century. Disneyland's design strongly recalls the landscape design of the French 'Sun King' Louis XIV's (1638-1715) Baroque playground with its imitation lakes and **entertainment attractions**.

Finch (1983:392) further maintains that Disneyland is the playing field for today's global culture, just as the

bourgeois culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries depended upon the monarchy for their entertainment. Disney's personal motto continues to be:

*to entertain everyone,
of every age, from
every land, we work
while you whistle*
(in Corliss 1992a:89).

Anderton (1988:88) compares Disneyland to the Vatican, because both enjoy a real and mythic status worldwide. Disney **imagery has a potency** which makes a trip to Disneyland a longed-for pilgrimage for all spectator-consumers: for Disney is indeed a **global religion**. As a shrine, Disneyland is surpassed only by Kyoto, Mecca, and the aforementioned Vatican (Painton 1991:52).

Disneyland entertainment is based on earlier popular amusements such as the Olympic Games of ancient Greece, the chariot races of ancient Rome, the carnivals of medieval times, the pleasure gardens of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (such as London's *Vauxhall Gardens* and Paris' *Tivoli Gardens*), the nineteenth century craze for public parks, travelling carnivals and the circus, as well as the Exposition (such as *Fairmont Park* in Philadelphia, *P.T. Barnum's Circus*, the *Crystal Palace Great Exhibition* of 1851, and the *World's Columbian Exposition* in Chicago in 1893)(Weinstein 1992:134;



Mills 1990:68). Amusement parks reached their zenith in the early 1920s, a time of strong economic growth in America (Weinstein 1992:145). As competition with the early picture film for entertainment accelerated, designers of amusement rides devised newer and safer ways to frighten and thrill their clientele.

With the advent of **television**, spectator-consumers entertained themselves at home and new parks seldom got off the drawing board. But during the 1950s popular culture in America entered a new phase: in 1946 when little electron tubes in wooden boxes first rolled off the assembly line and into the living rooms of millions of Americans, few observers imagined the great **revolution in cultural tastes and habits** that would follow (Weinstein 1992:146). Walt Disney prophetically saw the television as a medium through which he could sell his film products globally and communicate his ideas on entertainment and technology (Weinstein 1992:147).

Disney is credited with singlehandedly saving the American amusement park industry in the 1950s, and with giving it the impetus it needed to climb to the level of economic and cultural importance it enjoys today (Weinstein 1992:147). Disney marketed the idea of an interesting, educational, and scientifically correct park without cheap carnival atmosphere, alcohol, games of chance, shoddy merchandise, or unfair prices for refreshments (Weinstein 1992:150). According to Weinstein (1992:161) Disneyland has made a dual contribution: it redeveloped and extended the theme or fantasy park idea and it created a fourth line of development⁴ based on

⁴Weinstein (1992) distinguishes three earlier park formulas: 1. The idea of structuring amusements around sea animals, water rides, and aquatic exhibitions began with Paul Boyton's Sea Lion Park in 1895; 2. The idea of patenting fun-making devices which linked technology to amusement and commodified leisure to a high degree was devised by George

Disney's own entertainment formula: continuity with existing cultural products and the innovation of new ones. This line of development remains popular today: Disneyland **recycles current cultural ideas** in its theme parks and media orientated items and it **presents innovation and invention** at its *Innoventions Pavilion* at EPCOT Centre.

Disneyland's continuing popularity in contemporary culture was recently acknowledged when the *American League of Savings Institutions* changed its convention site from Las Vegas to Disney World in Orlando (Gray 1990:23). Frederic Jameson (1988:25) supports the existence of a global culture which demands **entertainment-specialization** in the vein of a typical Disneyland consumer. Additionally, Jencks (1990:25) and Herbert Marshall McLuhan⁵ (in Kroker, Kroker & Cook 1989:78) regard the mega-park of specialized fun, its formula of controlled ride-through parks, its theming, ersatz, and mechanised experience as appealing to global culture.

Features writer Carl Bernstein (1990:56) has credited Disneyland's universal appeal to its scale, its inclusion of **spectacle and fairy tales**, its **technical excellence**, its inclusion of the **unexpected**, its highly developed style of the outrageous, and its gift for **visionary vulgarity**. Disneyland and its Mickey Mouse culture is seen as part of a 'World culture' by Arthur Grumbach (in Jodidio 1992:39), architect of a recent Euro Disneyland hotel. Similarly, Kroker et al 1989:78) envisages Postmodern consumer culture as exhibiting the traits of a Mickey

Tilyou's Steeplechase of 1897; 3. The idea of the Luna Park, 1903, an entertainment environment with attention to illusion, crowd control, live spectacular shows, rides and ambience.

⁵Herbert Marshall McLuhan was lecturer in media studies at the University of Toronto from 1946 - 1966. This Canadian media theoretician created controversy during the 1960s with his thoughts on culture.

Mouse world culture which adores the showy, swanky, humorous, democratic, and nostalgic (Jodidio 1992).

Along with Kroker, Eco (1987b:41) positions Disneyland within the Postmodern arena of anything goes blandness, where **obsessive consuming** makes anything possible. In this regard, the capitalistic yearnings of Prince Al-Waleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud included a commitment to invest heavily in and to build a convention centre at Euro Disneyland (Horn 1994). The Fahd-family prince and Chairman of *United Commercial Bank*, also suggested that the convincing factor for his contribution was the quality of construction as well as the existence of a superior management team at Euro Disneyland (Horn 1994).

The prominent position of Disney's animation feature *The Lion King* (1994)⁶ on the world film listings as well as the popularity of other Disney animation features such as *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995), and *Toy Story* (1996), convincingly positions Disneyland entertainment within the taste of global **popular culture** (Ansen 1994:49). *Amusement Business Magazine* noted Disney World (first place with attendance of 12 million), Disneyland (second with 11.4 million), EPCOT Centre (third) and Disney MGM Studios (fourth) as the theme parks which attracted the most visitors during 1993 (Reckard 1994).

Disneyland culture reflects the essences of Postmodern consumer culture, popular culture or so-called mass culture. It is a modern phenomenon which developed out of the urban milieu of nineteenth

century Western Europe (Atkins 1992:130). It is essentially based upon the **demands for consumer entertainment** born from a growing labour class blessed with newfound **leisure** (Atkins 1992:130). Kunzle (1990:159) explains Disneyland culture as the representative mass culture of **late capitalism**. Kunzle (1990:159) states that Disney Culture, like American foreign policy, professes to project the myth of benevolence, innocence, and invincibility. Chairman of the American Federal Reserve Board, Alan Greenspan (in Bernstein 1990:56), recently noted the tendency towards increased leisure hours of people seeking entertainment all over the industrialized world. Additionally, Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis (in Bernstein 1990:56) has found the megatrend of the century to be the availability of free time. American ambassador Richard Holbrooke (in Thorson 1994:1-5) also stressed culture and commerce as the two main pillars of Postmodern **international relations**.

The culture which patronises Disneyland is described as the Mickey audience, in other words that audience which presents itself as partly immortal, precious, and ageless, via their propensity towards playing with children's toys, laughing without self-consciousness at silly things, singing in bathtubs, dreaming, and believing that their babies are uniquely beautiful (Berland 1982:99).

Animator John Canemaker (1980:46) pinpoints the Disneyland audience as consisting of children, as well as adult viewers with cartoon collections. The Disney patron is further described as a family unit with money to spend (Dennett 1989:49). The average annual income of an attending family is \$35,700 or more, with a substantial proportion of that income budgeted for

⁶Disney's *The Lion King* generated approximately \$34 million during July of 1994, according to World Film Listings.

leisure time activities: three quarters of the patrons are professional managers⁷.

Time Magazine features writer Richard Corliss (1990b:92) describes the official American culture as breezy: breezing through a feel-good decade of peace and prosperity. A look at the most popular films and television shows suggests a nation of superheroes and pretty women, of Cosby kids and caring, of thirty-something L.A. lawyers who make funny home videos and vacation at *Disney World*. Tony Smith (1995:20), UK Marketing Director of South African company *Kurt Salmon Associates*, discerns three profound changes which will affect future marketing strategies. They are: 1) the emancipation of the consumer, 2) the acceleration of consumer advances, and 3) the emergence of a truly global market place. Smith (1995:21) further distinguishes the main demands of the sophisticated nineties global consumer to be **individualism, immediacy, and value**.

Advertising Age Magazine defines the *Disneyland* audience as an **international** breed of Mouseketeer, aimed at Baby boomers, childless couples, and empty nesters (Fisher 1994:4). This more sophisticated culture is reached via detailed advertising campaigns run by such agencies as *Leo Burnett*, *Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising*, *Dentsu*, *Young & Rubicam Partnerships*, *Ogilvy & Mather*, *Butler, Shine & Stern*, *Rubin Postaer & Associates*, *Hal Riney & Partners*, and *Ground Zero*, *ICG*, and *Young & Rubicam* (Fisher 1994:4).

⁷The Professional Managerial Class which patronises Disneyland includes professional and technical personnel (48%), managers and administrators (26%), craftsmen (4%), operatives (4%), sales personnel (8%), service personnel (2%), and labourers (2%). Dennett 1989:49. It is interesting to note that author Faith Popcorn describes this older market as participators in the process of 'down-aging' (Popcorn & Marigold 1996:266).

The advertising agency responsible for Euro Disney, *Sussman & Prejza*, tried to find the one striking visual metaphor that would epitomize the entire project, taking it out of the museum and into the street (Jacobs 1992:71). *Sussman & Prejza* added purple to the existing Disney corporate colours of black, white, red, and yellow in order to reach an European audience (Jacobs 1992:70). An easily recognisable 'Appearing Mickey' concept was employed, displaying two circular Mickey Mouse ears over freeway signs which directs guests to Euro Disneyland (Jacobs 1992:70).

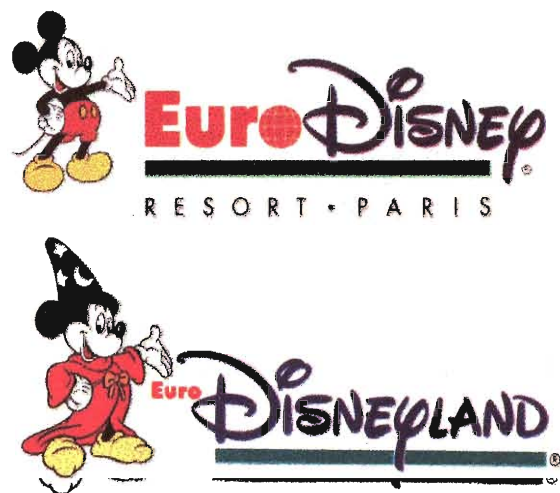


Figure 1: 'Euro Disney Corporate Identity', 1992, Sussman & Prejza, Ink on Paper (in Jacobs 1992:71; Euro Disneyland Brochure, Maison du Tourisme, Ile de France).

Jeffrey Katzenberg (in Fisher 1994:4; Johnston & Thomas 1993:207), executive at Disney during the early 1980s, acknowledges the emergence of a more **sophisticated youth audience** which is enthralled by such 'hip' characters as the Genie in *Aladdin*, the Monty Python-inspired character of Basil in *The Great Mouse Detective* (1986), the calypso island rhythm and stirring representation of 'heart' against villainy employed in *The Little Mermaid*, and the inclusion of a strong story, timeless theme, morality, romance, 'heart', and excitement in *Beauty and the Beast*. According to Seale (1983:101) the American baby boom during 1946-53 produced a nation of children at



just about the time when Hollywood was losing interest in the family market. According to a 1989 *Roper Report Study*, children decide 74% of the time what leisure activities their families will pursue: if they choose Disneyland, they see the Disney characters, *The Muppets*, and *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, then go back home primed to consume more of the same (Corliss 1991a:81). James McNeal, a professor in marketing at *Texas A&M*, concluded that children control about \$8.6 billion in discretionary income and spend perhaps \$1.3 billion of it during the Christmas season. This spending is due to the post-war baby boomers who have become **obsessive parents**, trying to make up for lost time with their children by spending money on them (Corliss 1991a:81).

Disney's Michael Eisner admitted in an interview with *Graphis* that the ultimate goal for him remains the creation of an emotional audience reaction (Jacobs 1992:61). After visiting Disneyland in 1965, science fiction writer Ray Bradbury (in Warren 1994:95) stated:

*No Beatniks here...no cool people
with cool faces pretending to care...
Disneyland causes you to care all
over again.*

The nomination of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* for Best Film at the 1992 Oscars, as well as a Best Song victory for *Pocahontas* in 1996, effectively places Disney entertainment within popular taste (Ronge 1992:26).

In her study on the effects of Disney's urban design model, Warren (1994:104) concludes, along with Eames⁸, that elements of the Disney city continue to

hold great appeal for the sophisticated mass culture: people respond favorably to a vision of urban space that is **clean and safe**, where buildings and landscaping have been carefully designed and tended, where traffic proceeds smoothly and the trains run on time, where all are welcome and where traditional urban ills such as poverty, unemployment, and racial or class tensions have been dealt with - in effect an **urban space where each person is empowered** and true community can grow. Parallels with a desired New South Africa model abound. In this regard, King (in Bukatman 1991:64) notes that Disneyland may provide an alternative vision of what people seek in urban environments: everyday life as an art form, with entertainment, fantasy, play-acting, role-playing, and the reinstatement of some of the values which have been lost in the megalopolis.

Postmodern society differs radically from pre-war (in other words before 1945) society, which propagated high modernism, the upkeep of borders, and Victorian rigidity (Jameson 1988:28).

Stam (1988:33) explains the Postmodern situation as representative of a **basic, non-unitary, and fluctuating cultural field which sustains the existence of several discourses or interest groups** simultaneously. This type of culture is equated with the so-called PMC or Professional-Managerial-Class-culture, according to cultural critic Fred Pfeil (in Stam 1988:33). The PMC-culture idealises **anti-essentialism, plurality, and democracy** (Stam 1988:33). Atkins (1992:132) argues that capitalism has led to a consumer-vision that no longer regards the world as cropped or bordered, but rather as a **global, homogenous market**.

Cartoon artist Dan Rose (in Hornblower 1993:42) similarly sees Disneyland entertainment as a deeper

⁸See Introduction of this study, p.3.



genre which reiterates the ideals of **freedom, imagination, and democracy** in mass culture. In this way, the coming together of the modernist and avant garde with the popular, is seen as a continuous process within the space of the television set and feature film. The process of the disintegration of barriers between high and low culture, male and female, past, present and future, private and public, verbal and visual, realism and anti-realism, is particularly noticeable on the popular music video television channel *MTV* (Stam 1988:36).

Eco (1994a:45) sees mass culture as emerging at an historical moment when the **masses enter public life as protagonists, sharing in responsibility for the commonweal**. Often these masses have imposed an ethos of their own, asserted specific needs, disseminated a language of their own, and elaborated cultural proposals from below. Ironically, their way of enjoying themselves, of thinking and imagining does not originate from within their ranks, but is suggested to them through the mass media in the form of **messages formulated according to the codes of the ruling class**. Eco (1994a:46) argues that mass culture depicts human situations that have absolutely no connection with the situations actually experienced by its consumers, but which come to represent model situations for them. According to Eco (1994a:48) the progress of the working classes towards an active participation in public life and the broadening of the social base of information consumption have created a new area of anthropological study: that of mass civilization. In this civilization all individuals become **consumers of an intensively produced and nonstop stream of messages which are generated industrially and transmitted through the appropriate commercial channels** governed by the laws of supply and demand. Willis (1993:4) argues that the crucial factor in mass culture and its critical

analysis, is the desire every one of us has to experience in culture both the gratification of social bonding and the affirmation of self in creativity and imagination. The positive functions of culture are situated in the pleasure of storytelling, of having, of remembering, and of transmitting **narratives as a sort of social adhesive or link towards the celebration of history and imagination** (Willis 1993:5). Disneyland has refined these positive functions to a high art.

Jencks (1991:8) furthermore acknowledges the existence of a new period of global communication wherein literally hundreds of styles and ways of life thrive simultaneously. Jencks (1991:8) regards **tolerance, the respect for difference, and the enjoyment of variety** as the attitudes suited to the Postmodern age.

Postmodern consumer culture represents a floating world which is critically aware of **brand names and trademarks** (Kroker et al 1989:21). The slogan '*as spotless and shiny as Disney World*' presents the trademark of Disneyland (Branegan 1993:36). In this way, the lives of spectator-consumers become more concrete after they consume that particular image to which they aspire, in the form of a lite beer, lite menthol cigarettes or polyunsaturated margarine (Kroker et al 1989:21). Media critic John Berger, in his reflective essay on advertising in *Ways of Seeing* (1972:139), furthers the debate on branding by stressing the way in which the media propagates the consumer culture's belief in itself by way of glamorous imagery. The phrase '*You are what you have*' is relevant here, but the contrasting reality of the advertising-image of the world with the true condition of society, remains interesting and worrying (Berger 1972:139).

Cultural prophet Alvin Toffler (1990:334) confirms Berger's vision by mentioning the by now proverbial **image explosion** within Postmodern culture at the end of the twentieth century. Toffler (1990:335) positions the coming of age of this phenomenon against the background of former American president Gerald Ford's⁹ attempt to stimulate mass production in America. According to Wollen (1993:158) the Fordist flowering of mass production led to **mass advertising as well as mass consumerism**. The American post-war boom, a time of urbanisation, housing, and cars for all, led to the development of a mass-consumer-goods-machine, which in turn led to a never ending source of **imagery** on every street, in the printed media as well as on television (Wollen 1993:158).

The global consumer preference for Mickey Mouse motifs has inspired a plethora of novelty consumables (Jackson 1994). The development of an animated film, such as *Beauty and the Beast*, into a sound track, a theme park attraction, an ice show, a lunch box, a T-shirt decoration, and a Broadway musical, **increases consumer choice and desire** (Henry 1994). A recent profit estimate put Disney's global sales of *Aladdin* merchandise at \$63 million as well as a box-office grossing of \$217.4 million (Horn 1994). Similarly, in 1992 Disney merchandise generated worldwide wholesale returns of \$275 million for toy company *Mattel* (Horn 1994). Jeffrey Logsdon (in Reckard 1994), head of *The Seidler Research Firm*, has projected the daily per capita spending of a Florida Disneyland consumer at between \$45 and \$60.

In Tokyo, a free-spending culture continues to patronise its Tokyo Disneyland theme park: about 140

million people have visited it since 1983, spending \$85 per capita (Ferguson 1994). Tokyo Disneyland's profit may be due to the booming Japanese economy which makes spare cash available to its consumers: after decades of hard work, the Japanese want fun (Ferguson 1994). Additionally, Japan spends R2.7 billion on Disney merchandise, excluding takings from Tokyo Disneyland (Norman 1990:177). With these numbers in mind, scenario planner John Naisbitt (1990:114) argues that mass culture, from America, has indeed conquered the world: lovers of American style demonstrate little restraint in their **wild embrace of American cultural icons**, be they nightclubs or Disneyland. Consumer spending may be due to the fact that **novelty, undiluted Americanism as well as cosmopolitanism** (in this case 'Americana') is desired globally (Reckard 1994; Wyatt 1983). Richard Martin (in Ingrassia & Dissly 1994:72), curator of the Costume Institute at the *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, explains this popularity of Disneyland as its capacity of being better and bigger than the real thing.

Entertainment is indeed a global enterprise: overseas investors¹⁰ already own more than \$400 billion worth of American business and real estate (Castro 1990:68). Foreign firms want popular American programming for their booming television stations, cable companies, movie theatres, and videocassette ventures (Rudolph 1989:51). Only three major

¹⁰These investors include Japanese giant *Matsushita Electric Industrial*, the world's largest manufacturer of consumer electronics, which acquired *MCA*, the American show business giant and owner of *Universal Pictures*, for \$6.1 billion in 1990; and *JVC*, the Japanese consumer electronics company and founder of VHS technology which launched *Largo Entertainment* in America (Quinn 1990:63; Castro 1990:68; Rudolph 1989:51). *Universal* is the fourth of Hollywood's seven major studios to be acquired by foreign companies: *20th Century Fox* is owned by Rupert Murdoch's Australian based *News Corporation*; *MGM/United Artists Communications* was taken over in November 1990 by Italian financier Giancarlo Parretti; Christopher Skase of Australia's *Qintex Group* bought the *United Artists studio*; Britain's *Television South* bought *MTM Enterprises* (Bob Newhart Show and Mary Tyler Moore Show); *The Rank Organization* bought half interest in *MCA's Universal Studios* (Castro 1990:68).

⁹Gerald Ford was President of the United States of America from 1974-1977.

entertainment studios are currently under American ownership, namely: *Disney*, *Paramount* and *Warner Brothers* (Castro 1990:68). It is expected that foreign ownership of American entertainment companies seems likely to increase its exposure globally (Castro 1990:69).

At the same time, popular culture reaching America may become more **democratic** as that country becomes a crossroads for 'other' entertainment such as the Spanish *Gypsy Kings*, the *Bulgarian State Radio and Television Choir*, and the increased popularity of opera stars such as Pavarotti, Domingo, and Carreras (Castro 1990:69).

Popular culture is known for its seasonal **rituals of renewal** (Bernstein 1990). Ira Mayer (in Horn 1994), publisher of the monthly *Licensing Letter* trade magazine, applauds the appeal of family entertainment, as well as the existence of huggable lead characters, as the overriding consumable factor at Disneyland.

Disneyland represents the pinnacle of the current entertainment explosion involving education, according to cultural critic Margaret Hornblower (1993:42). Furthermore, landscape architects regard theme park design as more than mere entertainment: since education is equated with law enforcement in specific parts of America, Disneyland creates spiritual refreshment for its spectator-consumers (Sragow 1993:106). Disneyland has been described as a vacuous, pastel-tinted escape hatch (Carlsen 1972:16). In this regard, it has been noted that Disneyland has helped to establish a rebirth of familial recreation inside its parks: that is why families account for about half of Tokyo Disneyland's visitors (Ferguson 1994; Henry 1994:1). Disneyland's proposed construction of an animal conservation park

also evokes an environmentalist image which will educate and entertain (i.e. 'edutain') its spectator-consumers in the spirit of current ecological concerns (Associated Press 1994:a). This **edutainment** paradise will include a Safari Village and a Tree of Life as well as four themed lands called the Beastly Kingdom, Dinoland, Africa, and Asia (Associated Press 1994:a). The Walt Disney Company has also distributed a video on water pollution, starring *The Little Mermaid* (Painton 1990:1).

Furthermore, Disney's government-subsidised renovation of the New Amsterdam Theatre on 42nd Street, New York, (once home to the *Ziegfeld Follies*), aims to symbolically sanitize the porn district by presenting stage versions of cartoons, virtual reality, and cinema products (Henry 1994:2; Winer 1994). Disney has led to a change in children's museums: young visitors are increasingly encouraged to explore a host of interactive, jazzed up, and glitzy exhibits (Reed 1990:80). Raised on mornings with *Big Bird* and vacations at Disney World, today's children are sophisticated **infotainment** consumers. Exposure to interactive exhibits is giving youngsters new ideas about what museums ought to look like.

1.1.2. Watch out! Here comes the Information Revolution in Disneyland: 'caveat emptor'

Jameson (in Cooke 1991:22) sees Postmodernism as the cultural correlate of the latest stage in the development of capitalism, the capitalism of pure consumption and the onset of consumer society. This society is advanced, hyper-modern, post-industrial, media-dominated, given to indulging spectacle, adorned with photographic paraphernalia, and dominated by multinational capital (Cooke 1991:22; Klugman 1993:18). Smith (1995:20) is of the opinion that everyone will be part of the coming information

explosion where all human knowledge to date will account for only 1% of what will be known by the year 2050.

Toffler (1990:139) maintains that the Industrial Age of the assembly line led directly to an electronic age of digital data distribution, of which Disney is at the forefront.

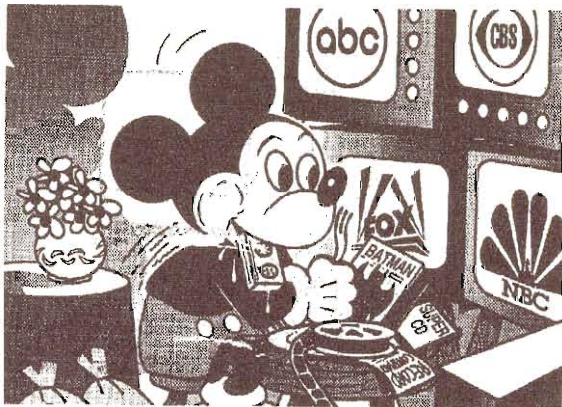


Figure 2: 'Mickey Gets a Taste For TV', 1995, Anonymous, Ink on Paper (in Rankine 1995:6).

Electronic data is transported invisibly via wire and satellite, in order to get immediate information to the spectator-consumer (Toffler 1990:139).

This phenomenon is brilliantly documented in the feature film *Sneakers* (1992) where actor Ben Kingsley, playing the role of a cyberjunkie, advocates the thrilling slogan: 'It's all information'. The notion of ubiquitous computing propagated by computer guru and chairman of *Microsoft* Bill Gates, describes an era where everyone, of every country or creed, will be able to acquire the information and imagery that they desire¹¹ (Otte 1994:37). Postmodern spectator-consumers reside in an age where multinational corporations, such as the \$19 billion-strong Walt

Disney Company/Capital Cities/ABC merger¹², retain control over a system of information technology which reaches beyond national boundaries (Atkins 1992: 131; Corliss 1995b:58).

Maidment (1995:30) acknowledges that the American-based infotainment groups have global markets: in a world already awash with American cultural icons, are we seeing the signs of a global Americanized culture?

Eco (1994b:92) argues that the present and forthcoming young generation is and will be a computer-oriented generation. The main feature of the computer screen is that it hosts and displays more alphabetical letters than images: the new generation will therefore be more alphabet than image-oriented (Eco 1994b:92). Young people will become increasingly accustomed to speaking through cryptic short formulas such as 'dir', 'help', 'diskopy', 'error', etcetera. Eco advises that the problem of future research on the spectator-consumer's comprehension of television messages will be that of a community which has stopped regarding itself as an object of surveys and is, instead, a subject that discusses and brings into the open its own rules of competence and interpretations, whilst discovering those of others.

Bukatman (1991:61) notes that Disneyland was the first place that was conceived simultaneously with a television series, and therefore the park is notable for its overall **narrative character**. In an Information

¹²The Walt Disney Company repertoire includes filmed entertainment (Hollywood, Caravan, Touchstone, Walt Disney Pictures); television programs (Siskel & Ebert Studios, The Disney Channel); animation features; cartoon series; film distribution (Buena Vista, Miramax); home video; theme parks and resorts; hockey teams; ice shows; stage productions; publishing; licencing. ABC/Capital Cities repertoire includes hit shows (Roseanne, Home Improvement); news casting (World News Tonight, NFL, ABC Daytime); 10 television stations; 21 radio stations; cable group (ESPN, A&E, LifeTime); international investments; publishing (Kansas City Star, Los Angeles Magazine, Fairchild Publications); and multimedia (Online interactive television)(Gibbs 1995:38).

¹¹This will be made possible by AT&T's *Picasso* which creates high-resolution images which can be transported via regular telephone lines for the price of a regular phone call.



Age, Thomas Hine (in Bukatman 1991:61), author of the paradigmatic *Populuxe* (1986), describes Disneyland as a 'movie' that could be walked into. One is led along *Main Street USA* toward *Fantasyland's* castles, at the central square towering *Starjets* lead to *Tomorrowland* while other monuments lead to further adventures (see Figure 17). Hine (in Bukatman 1991:61) sees Disneyland as a sequence of filmic establishing shots, medium shots, and close-ups. Bukatman (1991:61) notes that several writers have observed the manner in which Disneyland rides mimic the proairetic and hermeneutic structures of **narrative**, so that the spectator-consumer sees exactly what the movie camera sees. According to Bukatman (1991:61) narrative within Disneyland provides a **comforting paradigm for the physical experience**. De Michelis (in Bernstein 1990:56) further notes that the **lines between entertainment, communication, education, and information become blurred** in Postmodern entertainment.

Bukatman (1991:57) notes that Disneyland, especially EPCOT Centre, bears an interesting relation to works of contemporary science-fiction literature and cinema in which ontologies of space and **narrative** combine and contradict one another. Bukatman (1991:58) regards Disney's *Tomorrowland* or *Future World* as richly imbricated with the shifting experiences and metaphors of Postmodern urbanism, electronic culture as well as the pervasive redefinitions of space and subjectivity. William Gibson's science fiction short story *The Gernsback Continuum*, is seen as a reflection of a trip to Disneyland:

*here, in the heart of the Dream,
we'd go on and on, in a dream
logic that knew nothing of pollution,
the finite bounds of fossil fuel, of
foreign wars it was possible to*

*lose...they were smug, happy and
utterly content with themselves
and their world...the illuminated city,
searchlights swept the sky for the
sheer joy of it...I imagined them
thronging the plazas of white marble,
orderly and alert, their bright eyes
shining with enthusiasm for their
floodlit avenues and silver cars...*
(in Bukatman 1991:60).

Within this culture, **novelty and innovation** are continuously manufactured by the mass media (Kroker et al 1989:97). Postmodern society is continually managed by cybernetic messages, signs, and images (Kroker et al 1989:78). Many recent feature films, including *Brazil* (1985), *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* (1984), *Sneakers* (1992), and *Disclosure* (1995) deal implicitly with this phenomenon in order to create an action-packed storyline which meets the requirements of mass spectator-consumer taste (Miller 1990:46-8).

Toffler (1990:336) notes the increase in the production of **niche market imagery** by major broadcast networks: in 1990 there were 72 national services in America and the average cable user had between 27 to 50 channels to choose from. This tendency is fractionalizing the audience (Toffler 1990:336). Robert Iger (in Toffler 1990:368), head of ABC's entertainment division, notes that the keywords in today's society are **choice and alternatives**. Toffler (1990:368) cites Moritz's use of the term 'screenie' to describe the **video-drenched generation**, which has digested thousands of hours of television. They not only follow a different logic, but are accustomed to making the screen do things, thus making them good prospects for the **interactive services and products** soon to hit the global market:

above all they are accustomed to choice (Toffler 1990:368).

According to Toffler (1993:71) the **central resource of Postmodern economy is knowledge in the shape of data, information, images, symbols, culture, ideology, and values**. Postmodern society has explosively expanded the amount of information moving around the world: the Information Revolution, the multiplication of satellites, the spread of copying machines, VCRs, electronic networks, data bases, faxes, cable television, and direct broadcast satellites have created many rivers of data, information, and knowledge that now pour into **a vast, constantly growing ocean of images, symbols, statistics, words, and sounds** (Toffler & Toffler 1993: 209-210).

It is believed that the television set will eventually be replaced by a unit that will combine a computer, a scanner, a fax, a telephone, and a desktop tool for creating multimedia messages all rolled into one and networked to one another (Toffler & Toffler 1993:222). What all this points to is a world in which millions of **individuals have the power to create Disneyland-like special effects, virtual-reality-based simulations, and other potent messages**. Toffler (1993:223) sees the media becoming an interactive self-referencing system in which ideas, information, and images flow from one medium to another. Thus, television clips of war news suggest stories to newspaper editors, movies about the military generate printed commentary, radio, and television interviews, television sitcoms picture journalists at work, and news photos shot on the battlefield for a news magazine turn up as a television clip. Ramonet (in Toffler & Toffler 1993:224) argues that television sets the new agenda within the media system:

*television has succeeded in imposing itself on the other media not only because it presents a **spectacle**, but because it has become **faster than the others**.*

Toffler (1990:369) identifies the six principles of the new media system as interactivity, mobility, convertibility, connectivity, ubiquity, and globalization.

For some social theorists the globally televised news service CNN, for example, has become far more than a news medium: it is considered prime evidence for the evolution of McLuhan's borderless world (Henry 1992:24). The theories of McLuhan propound a new electronic information environment which is a direct extension of the nervous system of mass society and which will have a more profound effect on spectator-consumers than printing, railroads, and television (Laing 1995:82). As corporations become multinational, as free trade transcends tariffs, as Europe develops a single currency, and as pop culture, air travel, migration, and television make the world psychologically smaller, the concept of nationalism recedes. CNN is populist: it provides the raw materials of the story and lets spectator-consumers form their own opinions.

It seems as though critic Howard Smagula's (1991:1-10) vision of Postmodern culture as an 'expanded central menu of events' is correct. This phenomenon reflects a cultural arena where the old barriers between high culture and popular entertainment disappear (Smagula 1991:1-10). Disneyland can be seen as the quintessential menu of events disguised in the form of *Fantasyland*, *Main Street USA*, *Frontierland*, *Adventureland*, *Discoveryland*, *EPCOT* and *MGM Studios*. Here spectator-consumers can

choose which land they want to visit, when they want to visit it, and which stories they would like to combine within the omniscience of their voyage in Disneyland (Loewenstein 1992:1-5).

In *Panic Encyclopaedia: the Definitive Guide to the Postmodern Scene* (1989), Kroker et al characterise Postmodern consumer culture as 'panic stricken' culture.



Figure 3: 'Television: Give Me the Children Until They Are Seven, and Anyone May Have Them Afterwards', 1992, Deirdre Luzwick, Charcoal on Paper (in Luzwick 1992:81).

This culture represents a changing reality which is experienced as dreamlike because it is no longer possible to 'do' Disneyland in a week-long vacation, although many frantically try (Kroker et al 1989:16). Thus, the Postmodern era is defined as the age of the:

*television-viewer-market, of stock
 market crashes, of the super computer*

*and its viruses¹³, of money and fashion
 as energy resources, and of the
 individual as quantum energy particle
 travelling in and out of the enormity
 of it all (Kroker et al 1989:16).*

Blonsky (1992:64) notes that Postmodern culture requires drugs in the form of Coke, crack, video clips, and filmic FX. Blonsky (1992:64) argues that the slogan, 'I want my MTV, I want my ecstasy', should be the slogan of our age. Cultural visual drunkenness is the ultimate Postmodern drug. Toffler (1990:334) notes the **increased amount of imagery** being transmitted via the breakup of mass audiences into segments and subgroups, **each receiving a different configuration of programs and messages**. The reason for this **image-explosion** is that humans have always **exchanged symbolic images of reality**: that is what language is all about and what knowledge is based on (Toffler 1990:334).

Different societies, however, require either more or less symbolic exchange: the **transition to a knowledge-based economy therefore increases the demand for communication** and swamps the old image-delivery systems. In this new society, the labour force needs high levels of **symbolic sophistication**: it needs **instant and largely free access to all sorts of information hitherto considered irrelevantly**. According to Toffler (1990:335) the labour force of today is worldly, alert to new ideas, fashions, customer preferences, economic and political changes, aware of competitive pressures and cultural shifts, and many other things previously

¹³With regard to the existence of the super computer, the Utah based computer company *Novell*, the world's third largest software company after *Microsoft* and *Computer Associates*; plans to ease 1 billion users into the game of information exchange via international networks by the year 2000. Southern Africa will be incorporated through networking giants *Cisco* and *Silicon Graphics*.



regarded as pertinent only to managerial elites. Toffler notes that this wide-scan knowledge comes from exposure to a constant barrage of news delivered by television, newspapers, magazines, and radio, as well as from entertainment. Entertainment delivers information about new life styles, interpersonal relationships, social problems, and foreign customs or markets. Similarly, Disneyland's *Innoventions Pavilion* at EPCOT Centre, assists technology hungry spectator-consumers in becoming familiar with the Information Revolution (Germain 1994).

Toffler (1990:384) believes that the Postmodern super symbolic society, which is directed by multinational corporations and entertainment giants such as Disneyland, is involved with the reciprocal retailing of entertainment via video, compact disc, and satellite communication.

Robert Stam (1988:35) notes that the main propagator of the **ideology of entertainment** in Postmodern society, is the **television set**. Robert M. Pirsig (1974:14), celebrated author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, equates television viewing with the process of seeing through a car window: we are all **passive observers of outside happenings**, moving by frame by frame. Otte (1994:13), like Toffler & Toffler (1993:222), states that the difference between computers and television sets will become increasingly difficult to see because of their overlapping functions. In the future, the spectator-consumer will be able to control television content and programming. Digital high-definition television (HDTV) and the rise of home theatre systems will transform the living room into a spectacular entertainment centre unparalleled by anything available now (Otte 1994:15).

Otte (1994:34) and Popcorn (in Popcorn & Marigold 1996:411) argue that the Information Superhighway will make the lives of spectator-consumers much more fun and educational as the entertainment industry grows and diversifies over the next two decades. They describe much of this entertainment as interactive and nonlinear: the spectator-consumer will become a participant in **new forms of entertainment** that are both stimulating and engrossing. These include computer games and interactive television¹⁴, electronic shopping¹⁵, and video on demand¹⁶.

Sontag, author of the influential 1964 essay on pop-kitsch in America, *Notes on Camp*, continues to question the power that Disneyland has over its spectator-consumers. Sontag (in Jackson 1992:34) regards Disneyland as the instigator of a lobotomized society, because of the intoxication it presents to the mind of spectator-consumers by way of entertainment. In *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* (Chapman, Cleese & Gilliam 1983:26,27), thus, spectator-consumers are portrayed as mass fabricated Mickey mouse heads.

¹⁴Computer games, ITV and Educational Virtual Reality allows the spectator-consumer to control the fundamentals and to affect the final outcome of the game played. These include Maxis software's *SimCity*, and Philips' *CD-I* and Electronic Arts' *3DO* player which both hook up to the passive television and convert it into a vehicle for hours of very realistic entertainment (in Otte 1994:34; Popcorn & Marigold 1996:411).

¹⁵Electronic shopping links spectator-consumers to their televisions by a set-top box which expands the functions of the current cable converter by adding computer components that convert the television into a two-way communications device (in Otte 1994).

¹⁶Video on demand digitizes videos on a remote server at either the cable or telephone company, which may be accessed by paying spectator-consumers as well as paused, rewound, played or recorded (in Otte 1994:35).

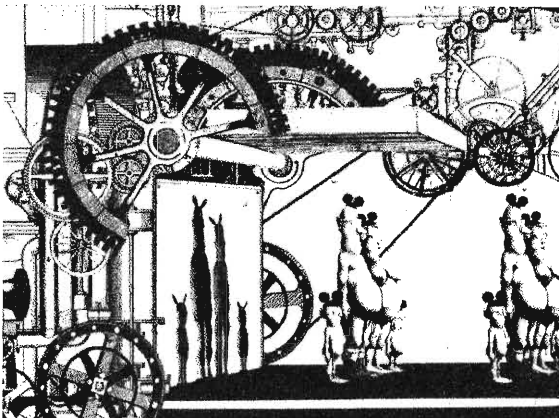
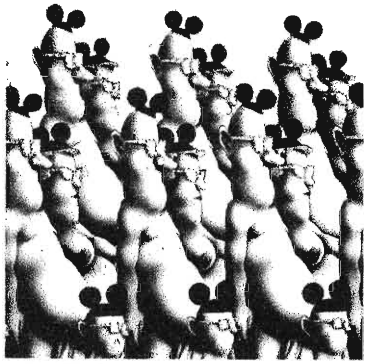


Figure 4: 'Scientists Say We're Just Simply Spiralling Coils of Self-replicating DNA', 1983, Terry Gilliam, Ink on Paper (in Chapman et al 1983:26-27).

In a similar vein, German critics are wary of the long-term influence of the American Information Superhighway: they fear that spectator-consumers will turn into automatic creatures of their television sets (Thorson 1994). Cultural critics such as George Steiner and Adam Zagajewski (in Jackson 1992:34-36) are concerned about the possibility of any resistance towards Disneyland in developing and developed countries in Africa and Europe. On the other hand, French cultural resistance to Disney, resulting from the opening of Euro Disneyland, has led to such captions as '*Euro Disgrace*', '*Euro Dismal*' and '*a cultural Chernobyl*' (Corliss 1992d:82). American science-fiction writer Ray Bradbury, French film-director Francois Truffaut, McLuhan, and even American Pop artist Andy Warhol (1930-1987) have all communicated a similar message of warning: that in this age of mass media, spectator-consumers risk

falling into a state of mindless conformity, thereby threatening culture (Otte 1994:135). McLuhan (in Otte 1994:136) declared pop culture both monstrous and sickening, whilst ironically making a living writing commentary about it. Advocating the slogan '*The medium is the message*', McLuhan prophesied the obsolescence of the book as well as the decline of logical sequence. According to McLuhan (in Otte 1994:137) electronic mass communication will create a global village where everyone demands a quick fix.

The question still remains whether trendiness in pop culture is threatening to replace innovation and creative thought? Otte (1994:138) disagrees by saying that it must become the **responsibility of every viewer to regulate his or her own viewing habits** and not to become mesmerized and desensitized by an incessant assault on their senses. Ultimately, McLuhan's state rationing of television viewing must make way for personal 'remote-control' (Otte 1994:139). Professors Harold Bloom of Yale University, Paul Fussell of the University of Pennsylvania, and Henry Giroux of Penn State University collectively regard Disneyland as:

cultural homogenisation of the most ghastly kind, '*sub-adult*' taste and a sexist, racist, anaesthetic dumber-down vision of American history and folklore
 (Landsberg 1995:7).

Looking at the African milieu, a recent seminar entitled *Cultural Industry for East and Central Africa*, held in Nairobi, concluded that something must be done to deter the dazzle and dominance of Western cinema, television, music, and dance (Bernstein 1990:56). Liberal classes are concerned about Disney's grip on popular culture abroad (Rankine 1995:6).



But this fear has been interpreted as cultural chauvinism by the head of the interministerial government delegation which supervised the Euro Disney project. Accordingly, it is argued that the opening of an amusement park is not going to stop university students from studying Sartre (Rudolph 1991:48). According to Schmertz (1992:43) few French view Euro Disney so darkly as that country's intellectual elite. Most accept it as a culturally nonthreatening fun fair and resort presenting Wild West kitsch. A Parisian architect revealed that too much is being made of the imposition of American culture on France: Paris needs large hotels with full resort facilities just beyond the city limits because Europeans want leisure, golf, tennis, swimming, and a place to take their children, just like everyone else (Schmertz 1992:34).

Furthermore, influential French essayist and staunch critic of popular culture Alain Finkelkraut (in Bernstein 1990:56), concedes that French rock stars just do not have the same appeal as their American or British counterparts. Perhaps it is important to remember the traditional relationship between buyer and seller as summed up in the Latin *'caveat emptor'*, meaning *'let the buyer beware'*. In other words the buyer is responsible for protecting his own interests. Without regulations and standards, **the lone spectator-consumer must accept the decisions and practices of corporations, advertisers, and sellers.** In a free market economy, competition should guarantee quality, but, in fact, many goods and services are sold by large companies that control most of any particular market and thus are not subject

to normal competition.

Shah (1995:34), along with Katzenberg¹⁷, notes the existence of alarmingly sophisticated spectator-consumers who are identifiably the spawn of the ad-led eighties with its diet of 'three-minute visual bites' The often heard slur is: *'Here's a generation with no attention span!'* The media presents a structureless flow of visual images, but this temporality is taken as positive by contemporary 16 to 25-year-olds: to them it represents the creativity of change. Just because everything is fleeting and momentary does not mean that there is nothing of lasting value. It is in **constant transformation** that Postmodern youth expresses its creativity. The **fractal images of computer generated contemporary art**, is an indication of this presumption. Its creative energy comes from the **animation of an infinite number of abstract images: each one reinventing itself from the last.**

The new youth matures as Chaos Theory appears as the most groundbreaking and influential scientific paradigm of our time (Smith 1995:37). They are aware of patterns forming in a seeming random haphazardness and that there is ultimate form in the wider picture even if it is not immediately apparent in the close up world. Cyberculture is about **movement and interactivity**, about creation and not recreation, anything referential is at the most a kitsch quotation, about **personal choice and the active imagination.** Issues and images being aired in San Francisco are simultaneously accessible in London, Amsterdam and Tokyo. Self-determination comes from the **exercise of choice**, it happens from second to second in a state of constant update.

¹⁷See p.10 of this study.



1.1.3. *Nostalgia, myth, and spectacle in Disneyland*

Tufts drama lecturer Laurence Senelick (in Corliss 1993a:55) interprets Disneyland as part of the 'gay-nineties-bicycle-built-for-two' repertoire, and similarly Corliss (1993a:55) regards Disneyland as a good reflection of a current global market for the flashy, humorous, and **nostalgic**.

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* evokes the nostalgia of Busby Berkeley movies and the *Folies-Bergère* in its poignancy and emotional depth. Theme-park and cruise ship shows present Wild West rarities, Victorian parlour skits, Tin Pan Alley, and 1950s nostalgia (Henry 1990:66). The Euro Disneyland attraction *Festival Disney* is described as a sanitized honky-tonk, as well as a distillation of commercial Americana which is offered to visitors as a glimpse of the genuine American way of life (Schmertz 1992:35). Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) even became a cult film at universities around America, where its bizarre characters, imagination, illogical invention, and captivating scenes found a receptive audience (Johnston & Thomas 1993:107)

The usage of spectacle thus represents Postmodern consumer culture's belief in its own **myths** (Polan 1988:52). Andersen (1994:42) argues that America has become much like its Nevada gambling city, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, as an accurate prism through which to regard the American nation as a whole, represents:

a 24-hour-a-day fantasy-themed party machine with high-tech spectacle, convenience, classlessness, loose money, a Nike-and-T-shirt dress code

and lots of immigrants
(Andersen 1994:42).

The Las Vegas Strip offers Disneyesque fun and games, as well as a separate amusement park at the *MGM Grand Hotel* (Andersen 1994:42). The change in the perception of Las Vegas is mainly because of Americans' collective tolerance for vulgarity (Andersen 1994:42). Las Vegas' **24-hour commercial culture** represents a tendency around the globe where around-the-clock restaurants, supermarkets, and petrol stations are unremarkable in hyper-convenient societies. Even in its embryonic state, the Information Superhighway allows people everywhere **to consume entertainment at any time** (Andersen 1994:42). Pop culture has as its supreme virtue **instant gratification**.

Disneyland and Las Vegas represent two distinct moods in popular entertainment: Vegas presents more romantic, personal, and sensual gratification, whereas Disney presents tightly scripted 'smile-button fun' for kids (Andersen 1994:42).

Bukatman (1991:63) describes Disneyland spectator-consumers as stable, white, heterosexual, middle-class citizens with extended nuclear families, whose lives are conveniently narrativized. Disney's *Horizons* attraction is aimed at mere **passive spectator-consumers, comfortable in their viewing and experience of narrated history** (Bukatman 1991:63).

Morrow (1992:50) is of the opinion that television leads to a symbiosis of the spectator-consumer's left and right brain: fantasy becomes fact whilst entertainment and journalism reenact with each other beyond their respective boundaries. For Morrow (1992:50) the baby of the fantasy character in the television series *Murphy Brown*, flies right out of its



cot and into the American Presidential election campaign in the role of an angel guarding everyone involved.

A television program employs the process of the shortflow of segments in order to fulfil the demands and desires of its spectator-consumers (Stam 1988:36). Baudrillard (in Stam 1988:36) explains this process as a **stream of divergent images** which constitute the transmission of textures which can hypnotise the spectator-consumer. Alternatively, Morrow (1992:50) sees American history as becoming interactive slapstick in the genre of the Disneyland animation feature *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988). Film companies have managed to produce a gigantic image system, by way of television production houses such as Buena Vista International, syndicates, cable networks, record companies, theme parks, and media institutions¹⁸ (Miller 1990:6).

Global television places a well-planned emphasis on cliché which turns society's madness, disobedience and egoism into **myth** (Polan 1988:56). It has been noted that **America is saturating the world with its myths, its fantasies, its songs and dreams** whilst becoming the driving cultural force around the world (Bernstein 1990:56). Reed (1990:71) notes that entertainers have a unique hold on the public imagination. They nourish dreams. They enter millions of homes electronically. Like Disney, Jim

Henson (1941-1990) mined a vein of the American character with his warm and witty Muppet bestiary (Reed 1990:71). The Muppets live on as adult archetypes: everybody knows a Kermit, a Miss Piggy or a Gonzo. Entertainment is America's second largest net export after aerospace (Bernstein 1990:56). It has also been noted that the **popular arts perpetuate an American mythology** that has long since become obsolete (Bernstein 1990). Americans are however, currently busy merchandising their mythologies within the boom time of their popular culture (Bernstein 1990). Much like cartoons, where action has very little consequence, Disney history hides the 'truth' and glorifies the past, present, and future (Dennett 1992:49).

Similarly, television creates popular images of politicians (e.g. John F. Kennedy), criminals (e.g. Jeffrey Dahmer or O.J. Simpson), mass movements and societies (e.g. Green Peace), the good life (e.g. Hollywood or Beverly Hills) and intimacy (e.g. the British Monarchy). The feature films which broadcast these images, in turn become part of popular and recycled myth and folklore which draw the spectator-consumer ever nearer into their web (Miller 1990:41).

Bukatman (1991:66) notes a level of aimless travel, or wandering, in the theme park as well as in the shopping mall. Similarly, Kowinski (in Bukatman 1991:67) proposed that strolling through a mall is analogous to walking around inside a giant television set. Kroker et al (1989) make the same observation when arguing that shopping malls are liquid and sensual television sets for spectator-consumers at the end of the twentieth century. Shopping malls deliver giant image-repertoires which tantalize spectator-consumers into obsessive consuming.

¹⁸It is interesting to note that the majority of theme parks are owned by the biggest media companies (Morrow 1990:234). Disneyland is run by global entertainment conglomerates such as Eisner's Walt Disney Corporation and his colleagues. These include Fox's Rupert Murdoch, Paramount's Martin Davis, Steve Ross of *Time Warner* (which owns the parent company of TIME), Ted Turner of *Turner Communications*, superagent Michael Ovitz and Steven Spielberg's *DreamWorks*, including Jeffrey Katzenberg, one time employee of Disney, and record mogul David Geffen; who wants to provide digital systems to develop games, educational tools, simulations, and animation features such as *The Prince of Egypt* and *Eldorado: Cortez and the City of Gold*, and early morning television from a cartoonist point of view (Corliss 1995b:54; Bernstein 1990:56).

Bukatman (1991:64) cites Situationist¹⁹ Guy Debord's projection of the ideal city on to the division of the theme park into separate monadic lands or worlds. These lands recall the different retail stores in Postmodern shopping malls. Situations were designed to provoke a recognition of spectator-consumer alienation and to permit the perception of the reification of **spectacle**. The television and the shopping mall, employ the same consumer attraction tool as Disneyland, namely the entertainment spectacle (Stam 1988:36).



Figure 5: 'Parade: Mankind Cannot Bear Very Much Reality, Says TS Eliot', 1992, Deirdre Luzwick, Charcoal on Paper (in Luzwick 1992:81).

Disneyland considers everyone who greets the public to be a performer. The ranks of 'honest-to-Goofy' singers, dancers, and actors reach into their hundreds and thousands at Disneyland (Henry 1990:66).

Performance and spectacle have become important cultural vehicles at Disneyland.

According to Tannenbaum (1983:303) Disneyland's animal hero, Mickey Mouse, ultimately becomes a means of moving from our individual everyday lives towards a **communal mythological or folk tradition**. Disneyland creates television commercials to support central narratives with the help of celebrities from all walks of life²⁰. In a similar manner, Disney takes fairy tales in the public domain and reinvents them as corporate identity (Henry 1994:1). Does corporate identity therefore become more myth?

The mythmaking process at Disneyland has been equated with Freudian psychoanalytic mythology, especially as in the Disney cartoon *Ferdinand, the Bull* (1940). In this narrative, a little bull would rather sit under his cork tree and smell flowers than grow up. For if he matures, he must face a matador in the bull ring. When a bee stings Ferdinand, the villagers mistake his reaction for ferocity. They then take him to the bull ring, where he prefers to look at the crowd and smell the flowers. He is therefore rejected as an object of scorn. There is no way out, if he acts ferociously he will be taken to the bull ring and killed, hence he must opt for the smelling of flowers and never grow up (Berland 1982:102).

Morrow (1992:50) postulates that a large part of folklore and myth remains hidden in the remnants of the **visual memory** of spectator-consumers in the form of stereotypes, propaganda, entertainment, and in national epics such as the Kennedy saga with its moments of success and its darker subplots and

¹⁹The Situationists demanded a revolution of everyday life during the period from 1953 to 1958 (Disneyland opened in 1955) - the dual communist/capitalist reliance on labour was rejected in favor of a more total liberation of the individual from the repressive reason of the state (Bukatman 1991:66).

²⁰These celebrities include: Los Angeles Lakers basketball players Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar; Minnesota Twins pitcher Frank Viola; Washington Redskins MVP Doug Williams; 1988 Olympic ice skating medallist Brian Boitano; and Miss America 1989 Gretchen Carlson (Walley 1988).



despondency. Morrow (1992:50) maintains that when spectator-consumers busy themselves with novelty, pure habit will not be a sustaining factor, but only the stabilising, calming and guiding influence of other narratives will make the discovery of the new easier. This is why the television is the main attention grabber of the Postmodern age: because it creates points of contact for spectator-consumers in contemporary global society.

According to Morrow (1992:51) **a person without the background of myth or example, is doomed to the stupidity or dumbness which flourishes out of isolation and the disregard of earlier experience.** In this connection, Bernstein (1990:56) suggests that Postmodern spectator-consumers have created the demand for an ultimate luxury: the fact that they do not have to live the life that they are born with. The suggested practise of role-playing makes it possible for the Disneyland spectator-consumer to be a cowboy, a space age pilot or a beauty queen (Bernstein 1990:56).

Morrow (1992:51) furthermore maintains that the creation of myth in Postmodern society resides with a cultural elite. The television transmits several visions and dilemmas which then come to the fore within broader culture. Television ultimately aims to create a visual rhetoric and electronic folklore (Morrow 1992:51). Baudrillard (1984:253-83) describes the television screen as the strategic site of Postmodern culture. The term bombardment has become a familiar metaphor in discussing the way in which images saturate society (Woolley 1992:196). In terms of Euro Disney, Schmertz (1992:43) has argued that France's religious faith, in the disguise of Sleeping Beauty's Castle, has been replaced by comic strip mythologies.

Media critics therefore regard Disneyland as part of a glamorous 'A-Production' feature film which is broadcast on global television networks and which creates awe-inspiring myths in tabloid newspapers, fanclub merchandise, and gossip columns (Miller 1990:6). The current interest in public figures (e.g. Princess Diana, Michael Jackson, O.J. Simpson, Bill Clinton), the fanatic patronage of sports (e.g. Maradona, Lewis, Indycar and Rugby, especially in South Africa), as well as the interest in ritual (e.g. Oktoberfests, church fêtes, Fourth of July festivities, the Cape Coons and other parades or shows) provides a certain measure of **freedom** for spectator-consumers, creating beacons whereby they can associate themselves or whereby they can determine their specific character or role in the society of which they are part (Stam 1988:134).

Frederick Law Olmsted (in Faga, Rummel & Chao 1990:47), designer of the first modern theme park, realised the role of vital human gaiety as represented in masquerade, song, musicians, colour, and exotic costume, as a beacon for spectator-consumers. This **spectacle** represents a state of romance and populism which is currently detectable in global Postmodern society (Stam 1988:137). The entertainment milieu of the Hollywood comedy and Disneyland ride²¹, becomes representational of a **current carnival aesthetic.**

Postmodern architect Michael Graves' *Walt Disney Dolphin and Swan Hotels* are described as a Dionysian experience because when the birds come and beg pieces of hot dog from spectator-consumers, they act like Disney characters (Stam 1988:47). This interaction excites spectator-consumers at Disneyland

²¹An example of a Disneyland 'ride' is the *Pirates of the Caribbean* where the spectator voyages through the simulated underground hide-away of pirates in a mechanically powered boat.



(Scully 1991:45). Carnival implies periodical disorientation in a world that is too real to take (Scully 1991:45). The ultimate representation of spectacle is EPCOT Centre, where acrobats, singers, comedians, and storytellers are constantly assembling, dispersing, and reappearing as spectator-consumers walk from one attraction to the next (Holleran 1990:44). EPCOT is seen as a permanent World's Fair, where spectator-consumers actually live a life that they cannot find anywhere else in the world (Holleran 1990:45).

According to liberalist critic Mikhail Bakhtin (in Stam 1988:137) the phenomenon of spectacle can be characterised by five discernible elements in Postmodern culture. Postmodern culture is drenched with an aesthetic of energy (i.e. the expression of freedom, dance and movement), multiplicity (i.e. the omniscient availability of festivity and role playing), intensity (i.e. life becomes theatre), transparency (i.e. freedom and reputation: everyone is part of the game) and communality (i.e. loss of self: collective *jouissance* according to Bakhtin) (Stam 1988:137).

According to the film critic Mark Crispin Miller (1990:234) Disneyland is the provider of fantasy for its mass audience. The industry is hence designed to **infantilise** its paying spectator-consumers.

Miller (1990:233) argues that Postmodern ultra spectator-consumers constitute the ideal market

because their lives are filled with action, drama, adventure, and a variety of costumes. The abundance of theme parks and shopping complexes presents Postmodern spectator-consumers with the promise of total **participation** by being constantly fed with new images against which they can measure their way of life (Miller 1990:201).

It is therefore possible to conclude that Postmodern consumer culture exhibits the following traits: a global demand for sophisticated, individualistic, relevant, and valuable entertainment with potent imagery during increased leisure time; the revolution in cultural tastes via the television; the fulfilment of individualism, immediacy, and value for a sophisticated, caring urban culture where everyone is empowered; a tendency towards the democratic juxtapositioning of all discourses into one mass aesthetic which salutes anti-essentialism, plurality, democracy, and freedom; the mass production of messages and information via the Information Revolution; the production of narratives, brand names, trademarks, and images as a comforting paradigm for spectator-consumers as well as a space for responsible choice; and the proliferation of nostalgia, myth, and spectacle in producing communal traditions between societies.

This study will next explore the ways in which Postmodern consumer culture mentality presents an aesthetic for the visual arts.

1.2 The influence of Postmodern consumer culture mentality on the visual arts

1.2.1. *Disney and a popular aesthetic*

According to Smagula (1991:1) the New art criticism of the Postmodern age occupies itself with the **work of art's holistic ideological, economic, political and social essence**, and not just with its visual style, quality, iconography or meaning. The New criticism looks at the social process and interaction between the artist and the spectator-consumers who appreciate the artist's work, and not at art as the expression of individual genius (Smagula 1991:1-5).

Baudrillard (in Perloff 1988:271) stresses the fact that **Postmodern art must start to take mass culture into account**. Postmodern culture seems to create a demand for an art form in the genre of artist Laurie Anderson's work. Anderson is interested in the everyday consciousness of spectator-consumers, as well as in the **unavoidable images and messages within popular mass media** (Polan 1988:45).

The concept of Postmodern culture is clarified by Holbrooke (in Thorson 1994:4) as:

*the conglomeration of the fine arts,
sports, youth culture, museums,
music, theatre, and political
culture of democratic institutions.*

Disneyland's combination of the art museum and the theme park²² confirms the **coalition** which is now well under way **between the popular-commercial and**

the elite-fine arts (King 1991:194). King (1991:195) refers to a **multisensory whole-brain aesthetic** at work in Postmodern culture, which once again reflects increased democratisation in the arts. The democratic inclusion of the ideas of minority groups is illustrated by British novelist D.H. Lawrence's (1885-1930) impressions of America before going to New Mexico in 1923:

Up till now, the unexpressed spirit of America has worked covertly in the white, American soul...when one is actually in America, America hurts, because it has a powerful disintegrative influence on the white psyche: it is full of grinning, unappeased aboriginal ghosts, and it persecutes the white men like some Eumenides, until the white men give up their absolute whiteness. America is tense with latent violence and resistance, the very common sense of white Americans has a tinge of helplessness in it, and deep fear of what might be if they were not so commonsensical
(in St John 1983:70).

The acknowledgment of previously omitted narratives illustrates the *raison d'être* of Disney animation²³. If one substitutes America for South Africa, one realises Disney's effort to instill **an indigenous, home-bred art form by popularising, localising, and colourising found imagery with the soulfulness of the indigenous continent**.

²²See p. 14 of this study for an explanation of Disneyland's influence on museums.

²³Disney's latest animation features popularise the narratives of previously omitted groups. These include *Pocahontas*, the strong female lead of *Belle* in *Beauty and the Beast*, and the forthcoming *Hunchback of Notre Dame*.



According to Kroker et al (1989:18) the buzzwords in the art world today are **simulation**²⁴ and **reification**. The term reification was first used by German socialist Karl Marx (1818-1883) and meant that the social relation between people assumes for them the fantastic form of a relation between things (Bullock & Stallybrass 1988:735). In capitalist society, reification is the result of **alienation** or the estrangement of labour, a separation of the worker from the product of his work. According to Bullock and Stallybrass (1988:735) Marx wrote that:

*the general social form of labour
appears as the property of a thing
and is reified through the fetishism
of commodities.*

This social situation is determined by the action of objects which rule the producers instead of being ruled by them. For example, if Disneyland produces a variety of consumables they stimulate a desire for similar products. The concept has been applied by philosophers of the Frankfurt School such as Lukács, Horkheimer, and Marcuse. Similarly, Bukatman (1991:56) sees the Disney *MGM Studio Theme Park* as the epitome of **commodity fetishism and ideological reification**.

Naisbitt (1982:267) argues that the central theme of the arts today is **multiple option**. According to the critic Ada Louise Huxtable (in Naisbitt 1982:268) an atmosphere of ferment and change has abounded since the early 1980s, encompassing the desire to **pursue all possibilities for a richer and more varied kind of aesthetic**. The sense for exploration and experiment, and of **using history and technology as source material**, is the leading spirit

²⁴For a definition of simulation see the Introduction of this study.

of the new work. Naisbitt (1982:268) distinguishes decentralisation, rich pluralism, and eclecticism as the precursors of a new art.

The current boom in animation is a reflection of the tastes of the baby-boom audience, who grew up watching classic cartoons, and now regard them as a reminder of their youth, and as a point of contact with their children (Zoglin 1990:66). The expansion of the animation unit at Walt Disney Studios since 1984 and its venture into television cartoons, sparked a cartoon revival²⁵. According to Eco (1994a:55) the mass culture industry produces comics on an international scale and distributes them on every level: as they prevail, true popular art, the art that rises from below, dies, no more legends are born to be told around the hearth, and ballad singers no longer arrive to display their narrative panels during festivals in the village square. The comic strip is commissioned from above, it operates according to all the mechanisms of hidden persuasion, it presupposes in the spectator-consumer an attitude of escape that immediately stimulates the paternalistic aspirations of the producers. Thus **the comic strip reflects the implicit pedagogy of a system and acts as hidden reinforcement of a society's dominant myths and values** (Eco 1994a:55). According to Eco (1994a:59) the best proof that the comic strip is an industrial product purely for consumption is that, even if a character is created by an author of genius, after a while the author is replaced by a team, his genius becomes fungible, his invention a factory product.

²⁵Fox presents *The Simpsons*; Disney presents *DuckTales*, *The Gummi Bears*, *Tale Spin*, *Goof Troop*, *Marsupilami*, *Gargoyles* and *Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers* on television; and cartoon shorts and a Mickey Mouse featurette on the big screen; Steven Spielberg presents *Tiny Toon Adventures* on television and is planning an animated version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Cats* (Zoglin 1990:66).



According to Jameson (in Cooke 1991:22) Postmodern consumer culture's most significant feature is its predilection for **pastiche**. Jameson (in Cooke 1991:22) defines pastiche as the imitation or mimicking of original styles without any respect for them. He suggests pastiche has lost its humour since it disregards the universal norms by which artists or satirists justify choosing particular styles to ridicule. Jameson (in Cooke 1991:22) argues that Foucault's critique of subjectivity, which states that only texts matter²⁶, as well as the apocalyptic notion of the death of the subject proposed by Baudrillard²⁷, have contributed to a strange **devaluing of the subject**, a condition in which pastiche thrives.

Hughes (1989:106) likens Disneyland to the Mannerist delight in bizarre illusion of Giulio Romano's (c.1499-1546) *Palazzo del Te* (1527) in Mantua, Italy. Thus, art becomes artifice via the endless recycling of the styles of the past (Cooke 1991:23). The result is an inflated market for nostalgia and the reinterpretation of the past in fiction, film, art, architecture, and rock music (Cooke 1991:23). This **cultural recycling** places spectator-consumers in a state where the present is seen as ever permanent, according to changing images presented in the mass media, the fashion industry, and advertising (Cooke 1991:23). The danger is that spectator-consumers will forget the past and accept its reproduction in various prepackaged forms of nostalgia (à la *Main Street USA*). This implies a passive compliance with the ideas propagated by a society's dominant ideology (Cooke 1991:23). Jameson (in Cooke 1991),

however, makes a clear distinction between pastiche (bad) and parody (good). According to Hutcheon (in Cooke 1991), Postmodernism is engaged in **parody** rather than pastiche because it involves the **critical and ironic reinterpretation of standard aesthetic norms**, pointing to differences but still remaining within the tradition. The New art has therefore broken away from a feeling for historicism or tradition, because there is a condition of continuous presentness presented by the images and ideas continually transmitted by the mass media (Kaplan 1988:13-29).

Pfeil's PMC society²⁸ prefers a type of art which is **anti-essentialistic, plural, and beyond hierarchical differences**. King (in Kay 1990) maintains that there is no more successful, **global, cross cultural** or inter-art art form in the history of the human race than that within Disneyland. Thus, for example, Finnish-born conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen plans to conduct Bruckner at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in 1997. The meeting of Bruckner and Donald Duck, two immortal souls speaking a universal language, will merge classical music with Disneyland entertainment (Walsh 1993:64).

Postmodern architect Robert Venturi's influential works, *Complexities and Contradictions in Modern Architecture* (1966) and *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), praise the **ad hoc, populist design** of the Vegas Strip: the giant neon signs, the kitschy architectural **allusions** to ancient Rome and the Old West, the zany kind of skin-deep picturesqueness - which a decade later became a full-fledged movement called Postmodernism. Venturi (in Ochoa & Corey 1995:315) advocates an **eclectic style that makes use of popular culture, historical associations,**

²⁶In Deconstructionist analysis the term text is employed to refer to a body of work free from the value-judgements implicit in terms like 'literature' or 'poetry'. In this instance, Foucault's belief in texts is supported by Jacques Derrida's concept of the text as a product of many texts shimmering off each other.

²⁷Baudrillard sees Postmodern spectator-consumers as slaves of the powerful mass media at work in Postmodern society.

²⁸See p.11 of this study for a clarification of this term.



and humour. After the Bauhaus, it is the Vegas aesthetic of architecture as grandiose cartoon, that has become the American Establishment Style. Life for Vegas residents as well as visitors is more thoroughly sugar-frosted with fantasy than anywhere else. According to Steve Wynn, owner of the *MGM Grand Hotel and Treasure Island Complex* at Las Vegas, spectator-consumers want a passive but romantic experience (Andersen 1994:42).

St John (1983:69) argues that the purpose of American popular art is **to entertain, and to alienate citizens from the reality, history, and concerns of the exploited.** He argues that the peddling of wish-fulfilment, common conceptions, and racial stereotypes in popular art prevents the widespread appreciation of the wealth of a society's historical experience. According to him a new mass public, which is willing to participate in a myth of success at the cost of the inability to think critically and clearly, has emerged during the past century.

At a time when mass art is fragmented and divisive, when virtually no species of entertainment has universal appeal, the hip, comic ingenuities of recent cartoon presentations reunite consumers of popular culture with Hollywood's surest instinct to please (Corliss 1992b:74). Disney's cartoon characters have gone global, making Disney an easy target for cultural resistance: but the mockery of the omnipresence of Disney images ironically improves its visibility (Thorson 1994:4). In his warning that popular culture may dominate or control the minds of men, Winston Churchill (1871-1947)(in St John 1983:70) proclaimed the **power of the visual image** in reaching the Asian and African audience, thereby maintaining a precarious, British, Imperial, white supremacy. Even a German newspaper has raised the question:

*Why shouldn't our Mickey Mouse
and your Goethe get along in one
city? You'll see, millions will enjoy
it!* (in Thorson 1994:4).

To further stress the **cross fertilization of ideas**, Allan Bloom wrote in his 1987 best-seller, *The Closing of the American Mind*, that German thought is essentially at the root of many modern American problems (Thorson 1994:1-5). It is ironic that Walt Disney chose as his raw material the German fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm. Similarly, many American ideas concerning liberty, good and evil, egalitarianism, and liberalism have been watered down by the thought of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and other **German philosophers** (Thorson 1994:4). According to Canemaker (1980:45) Disney is a great and beloved name, synonymous with animation to the general public, but Disney today is only part of an international art form comprising a dazzling **variety of styles, techniques, and content.**

1.2.2. Disneyland's aesthetic of animation

The debate whether Disneyland may be regarded as art, is alive and well. Confirmation of Disney's art status, however, is manifold. Walt Disney never tried to be highbrow. He became amused when highbrow critics professed to see profundities in the abstractions created for two segments in *Fantasia* (1940), namely, the *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*²⁹ and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*³⁰ (Thomas 1994:153). Disney advised French cartoonists to abandon avant garde content and to be commercial: for Disney, art

²⁹This segment is based upon the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, directed by Samuel Armstrong, with art direction by Robert Cormack.

³⁰This segment was written by Paul Dukas, directed by James Algar, with art direction by Tom Codrick, Charles Philippi and Zack Schwartz.



was what spectator-consumers liked (Thomas 1994:277).

Nevertheless, the Walt Disney Studio enjoyed a high degree of critical respect from the 1930s to the 1960s. Disney cartoons were often regarded as art, as opposed to the less respected products of Warner Brothers and MGM (White 1992:3). British critic David Low regarded Disney not as a draftsman but as an artist, and as the most significant figure in **graphic art** since Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)(White 1992:4). Eisenstein and painter Jean Charlot analysed Disney cartoons in the Formalist tradition³¹ and specifically admired his ability to merge form, function, and beauty (Charlot 1939:261). British critic Paul Nash compared Disney's drawings to those of English Romantic William Blake (1757-1827), praising their formal and strictly decorative qualities (White 1992:5).

Canemaker (1980:48) describes another force at work in the art of animation, namely a large and vital network of independent animation-film and video producers who, freed from profit-motive considerations, explored **alternative ways of communicating, interpreting, and expressing** themselves and the world through animation. Modern animators confess that the medium of animation enters into the realm of art only when it has a strong personal imprint from its producer (Canemaker 1980:49). Independent animators therefore employ **diverse techniques and graphic signatures**³².

³¹Cartoons analysed included *The Ugly Duckling* (1939), a Silly Symphony derived from Mother Goose stories; as well as *The Three Little Pigs* (1933), the famous Silly Symphony which included the song 'Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?' and animation by Max Fleischer.

³²These include collage (e.g. Frank Mouris), optical printing (e.g. Peter Rose, Anita Thatcher), drawing on film (e.g. Steve Segal), direct three-dimensional manipulation (e.g. Caroline Leaf, Eli Noyes), rotos coping (e.g. Mary Beams), drawing on paper (e.g. Kathy Rose, Dennis Pies), and cel animation (e.g.

According to them, experimental film is not about what a work looks like, but what it does: how it **invents its own form, makes its own rules, while stretching the definition of the medium** of animation (Canemaker 1980:49).

Thus began the industry of animation, the mass production of cartoon films starring a parade of internationally famous characters (Canemaker 1990:51). Often the influence of the avant garde³³ was felt in the studio product, but it was adapted to an accepted version, reduced for the conditioned taste of the audience who rarely experienced the strong individuality of the original source (Canemaker 1980:52).

Canemaker (1980:53) regards the art of animation as **vigorous and varied**. Computer systems³⁴ are being developed to enhance productivity and to cut production costs. The **increasing visual sophistication of audiences**, the international exchange of ideas between the avant garde and the industry, and new technology outlets for films and tapes such as video-disks and home tape consoles, make the future of animation **exciting and unlimited**. Woolley (1992:13) also **acknowledges the employment of the computer to produce art**. Panel discussions at the 1989 SIGGRAPH³⁵

Suzan Pitt, Sally Cruikshank) (Canemaker 1980:49).

³³For example, the preliminary work which German Abstractionist Oskar Fischinger contributed to a sequence in Disney's *Fantasia* in 1940; Len Lye who painted directly onto film, Lotte Reiniger who used cut-out silhouettes, Alexander Alexeiff who worked in pinscreen, John Whitney with his computer designs, and Jordan Belson whose speciality was video projects (Canemaker 1980:52).

³⁴For example Computer Creation's *VideoCel* or Pixar's *Silicon Graphics* assisted software employed in the production of *Toy Story*.

³⁵SIGGRAPH is an acronym for *Special Interest Group, Graphics of the American Association of Computing Machinery* (Otte 1994:12).



Conference, recognised **computer graphics as a new medium** and a potential successor to television and print. Mass media will become more personalized for those who want to filter out meaningless or unappealing content. This forces us to rethink the concept of mass media, since it really would not be mass anymore once it becomes interactive (Otte 1994:12).

The digital network of the Information Superhighway, popularized by Gibson³⁶, is a space where pixels replace atoms, where information takes on the form of moving images, text, graphics, stereo sound, and where other sensory data can be folded, mixed, and recombined (Otte 1994:12). Otte (1994:13) warns that **any business which assumes that the Information Superhighway will not have a profound impact on its future, is making a mistake. The visual arts should therefore heed this wake-up call.**

1.2.3. Infotainment Art: the importance of being entertaining and informative

Postmodern consumer culture's inclination towards the mass production of messages and information in the media, as mentioned by Toffler & Toffler (1993), presents an interesting aesthetic for the visual arts. A study of this manifestation, reveals philosopher Arthur Danto's (1992:26) viewpoint that Postmodern spectator-consumers have an astounding degree of **visual literacy**, due to their constant exposure to various images in the mass media. Jameson (in Kaplan 1988:13-29) similarly maintains that the visual ability of the spectator-consumer, as well as the nature of the visual arts in the Postmodern age, is

due to the production of images by multinational media corporations.

In this connection, it is important to consider that the **manifestation of a knowledge-based economy necessarily will increase the demand for communication** (Toffler 1990:334). Images in the media become immediately accessible for global Postmodern spectator-consumers. The creation of **hyper media systems**³⁷ has led to the increase in the ways in which information from various discourses are pooled, according to Toffler (1990:175). Woolley (1992:153) explains the agenda of a new kind of literary object, namely the hypertext, as the discovery of texts that no individual author has so far discovered, including variations on existing texts, alternative endings to familiar scenarios, elucidations, glosses and diversions. Woolley (1992:153) sketches the possibility of the **combination of electronic texts, images, and information into new narratives.**

This **cut up method of creating** was developed by novelists such as William Burroughs in order to destroy the control of narrative³⁸ (Woolley 1992:154). Today this method can be seen in computer adventure games where the player is presented with different scenarios and multiple endings³⁹. According to Woolley (1992:165) the mass media have been imposing their ideas on spectator-consumers for too

³⁷Hyper media systems are databases which include text, graphic imagery, music, and speech. *Microsoft's* range of multimedia CD ROM packages is a good example of hyper media.

³⁸Burroughs was ultimately inspired by Tristan Tzara's narrative disintegration that developed a technique for writing poetry by pulling a poem out of a hat.

³⁹ Similar hypertexts were presented by Michael Joyce who adapted Borges' *The Garden of the Forked Paths* to create texts which did not force their readers down one particular route. John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* similarly explores different conclusions of the same narrative.

³⁶See p. 16 of this study for more information on Gibson.

long, and new technology, in the form of personal computers, will initiate a personal renaissance by making everybody an author. Morphing⁴⁰, the big news in computerised special effects has made the computer an essential design and communications tool promising **images no one has ever seen before** (Corliss 1992a:68). The mass consumer goods machine has, according to Wollen (1993:158), brought about a definitive change in the arts. This has manifested within the more traditional spheres of the arts, which dare not ignore the **new visual environment** of the Information Revolution.

Wollen (1993:159) maintains that 1960s **Pop Art** reflected a broader movement within the arts of that time. Pop artists such as Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein (1932-) mingled with media critics such as McLuhan, Eco, and Roland Barthes (Wollen 1993:159). These artists nullified the gorge between high art and the flux of consumer-orientated imagery (Atkins 1991:130). **Motifs and images from everyday comic strips and historical encyclopaedias were employed in the visual arts** (Atkins 1991:130). Lichtenstein, for example, became interested in comic strip cartoons as an art theme after he finished a painting of Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse for his children during the 1960s (Ratcliff 1989:112).

This development stressed the importance for the artist of **becoming familiar with the new images which were available everywhere**, whether through **irony, celebration or aesthetic deepening** (Wollen 1993:159). In this way, Claes Oldenburg's (1929-) *Mouse Museum: Ray Gun Wing* Exhibition of 1979,

was the showcase for the way in which mass-produced goods can become the souvenirs and clichés of a society (Van Bruggen 1979:15). Pop Art was a fantastic new 'wonderland' or Disneyland which propagated the victory of inner feeling over the material, according to the curator of the Oldenburg show (Van Bruggen 1979:16).

The mass-produced consumer article is not just an item for use by spectator-consumers, but also a translator of consumer emotion, fantasy, and desire (Van Bruggen 1979:16). Thus, Warhol's *Mickey Mouse Images* screen prints of 1981 sold for \$25 000 each as emotive consumer articles which incorporate Disneyland imagery and content (Tully 1992:25).

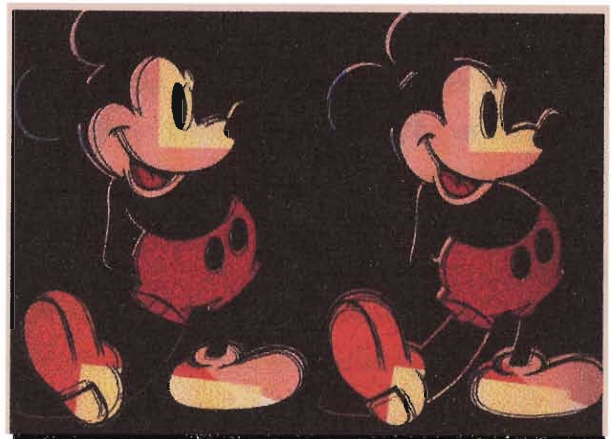


Figure 6: 'Mickey Mouse Series', 1981, Andy Warhol, Silkscreen on Paper (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:115).

Warhol fashioned reproductions of his favourite childhood cartoons such as Popeye, Nancy, Dick Tracy, and Mickey during the 1950s and 1960s (Tully 1992:25). With the big business usage of the image, for example, the employment of the branded smile of Clint Eastwood, or the high-speed-chase or the million-dollar-helicopter-explosion, the power of the image as a carrier of messages was once again realized (Miller 1990: 47,48). Even laureate film producer Steven Spielberg (in Miller 1990:48)

⁴⁰The computer graphics tool of Morphing was employed in the film *Terminator 2* by design company Industrial Light & Magic, in *Willow* (1988), in Michael Jackson's *Black or White* video (1995) by Pacific Data Images in California, in *The Lawnmower Man* (1994), and in Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1994).



admitted being guilty of **exalting the image** over the word, or text, of a film.

According to comic strip artist Will Eisner (in Hornblower 1993:41), there is a marked demand for **figurative metaphorical language** to fill the gap between books and feature films. Eisner maintains that since an image can translate emotions better than words, and since a beautiful text can carry the imagination beyond the confines of a picture, **a good comic strip with text, colour, line, and image will sharpen the intellect as well as the sense**. Toffler (1990:336) confirms the existence of an extensive market for figurative metaphorical language in Postmodern culture: where the old boundaries between entertainment and politics, holiday and labour or news and entertainment crumble, the demand for popular illustrative material abounds. The Postmodern spectator-consumer is, according to Toffler (1990:336), enveloped in a process of **continuous exposure to an extensive and fragmented plethora of images**. In this connection, Postmodern artist Mark Tansey⁴¹ (in Stapen 1994:161), regards the human brain as a crossroads where the coming together of diverse images leads to avalanches. The subsequent collisions of images determine the maximum meaning of the newly formed image (Stapen 1994:161).

Lovejoy (1989:93) regards the art of photography as part of the Postmodern aesthetic wherein existing images, texts, forms, and styles are **recycled** as part of the cultural context of the work of art. According to Walter Benjamin (in Lovejoy 1989:110) the **photocopier**, too, has become an instrument for the **appropriation** and recycling of already absorbed

image references within the history of art and popular culture. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) Benjamin (in Ratcliff 1989:115) argues that the use of image-making machinery - and by implication machine made images - engages the artist in more meaningful events. Benjamin launches a sharp attack on such outmoded concepts as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery. According to Benjamin, images of the creative genius draw their power from the aura of significance, even sacredness, that surrounds the unique, handmade work of art. Because methods of mechanical reproduction have dispelled this authentic aura, Benjamin insists that a modern aura can only be fake, whether generated by a painter in a studio, or by a publicist at a film studio. Alternatively, he concludes that the mechanics of reproduction should be used to reveal the phoniness of modern aura: **lithography, photography, and the motion picture should be deployed to show how the clichés of individual genius and the mysteriously expressive power of the great painter's hand shore up the barrier between high and low art and glamourize the notion of hierarchy**. Benjamin thus praises mass audience films for their **undermining of elitism**.

Ultimately, the **introduction of mechanically produced found imagery - generated by technological processes - into the high-art discourse** of painting, repudiated gestural identity and originality (Ratcliff 1989:115). This arena exposed a field of inquiry into the meaning of originality, which is currently being debated in Postmodern criticism (Lovejoy 1989:110). From techniques of mechanical reproduction artists were supposed to learn how to dispel the fake aura that reduces works of art to luxurious commodities and elevates them to the status of cultural icons detached from any authentic history (Ratcliff 1989:115). For

⁴¹Tansey's art created interest during the early 1980s due to the combination of dissimilar characters, cultures, happenings, time spaces and shapes.



Warhol, ironically, mass-produced images of Marilyn, Elvis, Mickey or even an electric chair had not a fake but an authentic aura, a **glamour that he exploited for his own aggrandizement** in a similar way as does Disney with its imagery (Ratcliff 1989:116).

Baudrillard (in Lovejoy 1989:117) however, maintains that the **photocopier⁴² must be regarded as a sophisticated printing technique** for the visual arts, because it is able to immediately appropriate any image. The photocopier presents the artist with the opportunity to create a **visual collage** of dissimilar image elements. In this way, the photocopier brings about **changes in contextual relationships between images**. The **changed contexts of newly created images create surprising, fresh, and interesting visual metaphors for contemporary life** (Lovejoy 1989:117).

Jencks (in Polan 1988:45) pinpoints a new type of art of redemption in Postmodern society. This art form represents an **escapist-urge** which has become an unavoidable part of entertainment culture. A culture blessed with leisure time has created the demand for a more accessible art than that of European opera, academic painting or complex novels (Atkins 1991:130). Thus, Euro Disney confirms itself as a spectacular splurge of Postmodern architecture combining wit, glamour⁴³, decoration⁴⁴ and function in the master designs of such noted architects as Michael Graves, Frank Gehry, Arata Isozaki and Robert Stern (Corliss 1992:89). Euro Disney offers ornament to ensure that visitors breathe, eat, buy and

⁴²And for that matter, any technologically new laser or ink-jet printing device.

⁴³As clarified by John Berger in *Ways of Seeing* (1972), see p.12 of this study.

⁴⁴As clarified by E.H. Gombrich in *The Sense of Order* (1979) as compositional logic.

dream Disney (Corliss 1992d:89). The aim is to create show-bizzy, showstopping showplaces that millions of spectator-consumers will enjoy (Corliss 1992d:89).

Social historian Christopher Lasch (in Bernstein 1990:56) clarifies entertainment culture as the final triumph of style over substance in America. Lasch pinpoints the American psyche for drama, escape, and fantasy as dominant narcissism not only in that country's culture and politics, but also in its commerce where cultural goods are trivialized and equalized by entertainment. Everything therefore becomes equally meaningless, according to Lasch (in Bernstein 1990:56). Nevertheless, the strengths of American pop culture have always been its originality and genuineness (Bernstein 1990:56).

According to Jencks (1990:25) entertainment architecture has many references to European culture. These references include Bernini's swans and water cascades from the Villa Lante in Italy, a sailboat bridge and central pyramid from Ledoux in France, and stepped massing from Zoser's famous pyramid in Egypt. Dietsch (1992:41) regards the growing trend of entertainment architecture at Euro Disney, the Seville Expo '92, and Oriole Park at Baltimore's Camden Yards, as the brilliant proclaimers of architecture to a wide ranging audience.

Disneyland architecture and design reveal the pictorial effects of a sublimation between the work of Pop artist David Hockney (1937-) and Post-Impressionist Paul Cézanne (1839-1906): in other words, it reveals the combination of the Pop images of trees and beach umbrellas with the more subtle tonalities of a Provençal landscape (Jencks 1990:26). Jencks (1990:26) sees entertainment architecture in terms of a developing Postmodern tradition of **ornament and symbolism**. Disneyland design is likened to the

Mannerist and Baroque fantasies of Giuliano da Romano or the fountains of Rome, the papal symbolism that dominates Catholic structures, and iconic roadside architecture such as the Hotdog Stand (Jencks 1990:27). All of the above share explicit imagery. Nevertheless, Jencks (1990:28) argues that the effects of Disneyland on architecture cannot be fully gauged as yet. Architects Graves and Stern (in Jencks 1990:28) contend that entertainment architecture should not be judged by the same canons as serious work but rather on a populist level: where spectator-consumers like it and where Disney is 'fun'. Disneyland architecture should be judged against the 1980s tendency towards a more sensual kind of architecture concerned with entertainment and lush imagery (Goldberger 1991:61). Disney is credited as one of the most ambitious patrons of serious architecture in the world (Goldberger 1991:61).

For example, the Isozaki-designed *Disney Office Building* near Orlando, presents an intellectually challenging and functionally adept work (Fisher 1991:6). As in most of Isozaki's work, where a central metaphor informs the entire project, a central sundial converts the building into a solar clock. The sundial reminds us that throughout history it has been common to think about time as cyclical and its measurement as relative to particular events, such as the rising and setting of the sun or the change of the seasons (Fisher 1991:6).

Once again, to stress the role of Disneyland in presenting entertainment and information, it is important to note that Disneyland has been likened to Surrealism of the 1930s. Disneyland's trendsetting, informative, and entertaining qualities concur with Surrealist agendas of that time (Eggener 1993). According to Eggener (1993:32) Surrealism was frequently cast as the close cousin of cartoons and

popular cinema. The 1930s vogue for slapstick comedy, circus freak shows, vaudeville, and other popular entertainments that presented the pathetic or the unusual as amusement, supported Disney's early cartoons as well as Surrealist offerings (Eggener 1993:35). Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí's (1904-1989) *Dream of Venus* paraded beside such attractions as Morris Gest's *Little Miracle Town*, home of the World's Greatest Midget Artists, at the pavilion of the 1939 World Fair (Eggener 1993:35). It is interesting to note that in this era milieu paintings, like movies and tabloids, were now being directed at audiences seeking diversion from the distressing realities of economic depression. The presentation of bizarre imagery remained on the agenda for Hollywood as well as for Surrealism (Eggener 1993:38).

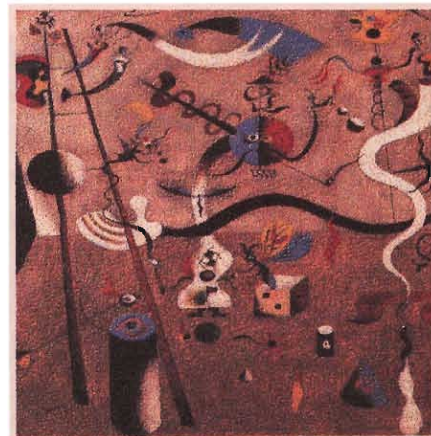


Figure 7: 'Carnival of the Harlequins', 1925, Joan Miró, Oil on Canvas (in Eggener 1993:38).

Paintings such as Joan Miró's (1893-1983) *Carnival of the Harlequins* were praised for their perky, goofy imagery and their fantastic humour and jaunty wit (Eggener 1993: 38). Miró's figures were compared to Krazy Kat comic strips and Mickey Mouse cartoons. Glenn Wessels (in Eggener 1993:39), of the San Francisco *Argonaut*, described Surrealist artist Max Ernst (1891-1976) as one who spoke from the Mickey

Mouse world where almost anything was liable to happen.

Matthew Josephson (in Eggener 1993:39), of the *New Republic*, proposes that Americans have long been producing super-realist or Surrealist art in a raw state. Josephson argues that Europeans inspired themselves with American movies, jazz, and folk customs. The 1936 Museum of Modern Art exhibition furthered this notion by mixing together European Dada and Surrealism with American Independents such as Rube Goldberg, James Thurber, and Walt Disney (Eggener 1993:39). Disney's direct involvement with Surrealism did not stop here: in 1946 Disney and Dali collaborated on an animated short entitled *Destino*. During late 1950, Disney again discussed the possibility of an animated version of *The Adventures of Don Quixote* with Salvador Dali (Eggener 1993:43).

The central menu of events propagated by Smagula (1991:1-10) further stresses the interdisciplinary **synthesis of several discourses or systems of information**. It confirms the simultaneous existence of several fields of study, discourses or ideas in one work (Smagula 1991:1-10). Art historian Joan Retallack (in Perloff 1988:268) describes this tendency as one where all modernist or avant gardist techniques, genres, codes, and images from popular mass culture are stored in the computerised memory networks of Postmodern culture as one knowledge-pool.

Baudrillard (in Kaplan 1988:13-29) sees the role of visual simulation in Postmodern consumer culture as fundamentally important. It justifies the existence of an array of artworks which are involved with **the theory of communication, mass media, and the appropriation of historical images and popular**

icons as aesthetic symbols (Kaplan 1988:28). Baudrillard (in Perloff 1988:278) envisions the art of the future as an enormous **montage** of previously created images which will move beyond the ideas of Plato's idealism or Surrealist Marcel Duchamp's (1887-1968) nihilism. This implies that art will become **more than just the mere combining of dissimilar images, found objects or concepts** (Perloff 1988:278). In this way, the creative process of art becomes littered with images clipped from the mass media. The resulting **congruence of image and word leads to a visual work of art that communicates effectively with knowledgeable spectator-consumers**.

To illustrate Disneyland's influence on the visual aesthetic of artists, it is interesting to take a look at the work of South African artist, Tommy Motswai.

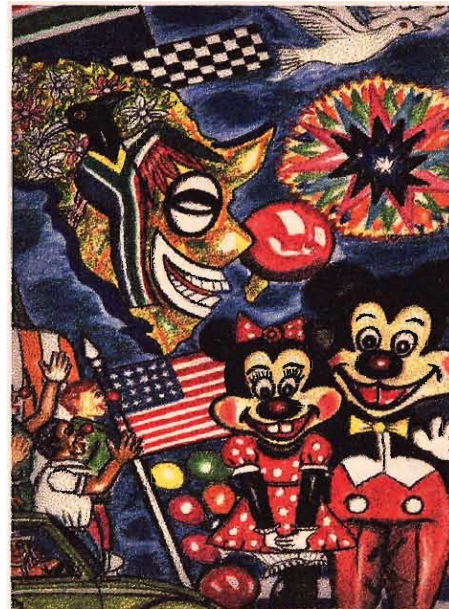


Figure 8: 'Its a Small, Small World: Red Nose Day Party', 1994, Tommy Motswai, Mixed Media on Paper (Courtesy of the Natalie Knight Gallery).

Motswai juxtapositions popular South African and American icons and historical symbols in his vibrant drawings.

Rudisill (in Hall & Fifer 1990:35) demonstrates that visual images, which were a mania with Americans even before the invention of the daguerreotype⁴⁵, are still an American passion via the current availability of reproduction processes. The politics of this newly found vision continues to be interpreted in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1844-1930) who stated that:

full human freedom in a state of illuminated consciousness and perception...the identification of details of external objects, interiors, landscapes, ethical and intellectual demands of democracy, provides a motif for American cultural metaphysics
(Hall & Fifer 1990:35).

Disneyland therefore presents an aesthetic to visual artists which motivates the use of details, objects, various images, and concepts. Canadian airbrush artist Cesar Santander, for example, composes complex still lifes based upon a cinematic, Disneyland-idea (Watts 1991:47).

Santander creates 'film stills' such as his *Disney Toys and Reflections*, in which a sense of time is implied: his photo-realistic paintings of antique toys, carousels and vibrantly coloured dolls present a sense of movement to spectator-consumers via the inclusion of diagonals and the repetition of shapes. The arrangement of entertaining objects leads the eye over the canvas (Watts 1991:47). Santander

launches a play between the spectator-consumer and the exact reproduction of toy objects in order to draw the spectator-consumer into the picture. For him, a painting is a 'created fantasy', and the more realistic he makes it look, the more fantastic it becomes.



Figure 9: 'Disney Toys and Reflections', 1988, Cesar Santander, Acrylic on Canvas (in Watts 1991:47).

Dutch artist Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) was also fascinated with Disney memorabilia because of its entertaining, informative, and fairy tale allusions (Hoek 1989:137).

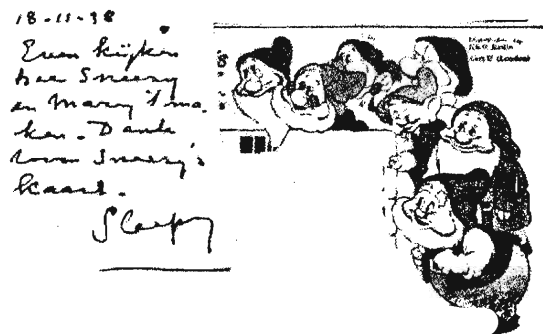


Figure 10: 'Postcard from Piet to Carel with Dwarfs from Disney's Snow White', 1938, Piet Mondrian, Mixed Media on Paper (in Hoek 1989:140).

Mondrian had a surprising passion for Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Mondrian's letters to his brother Carel, during his stay in London from September 1938 to September 1940, describe his daily life and speak in unexpected

⁴⁵The daguerreotype was the first technological discovery to make pictures of everyday objects or persons available to the public. It was discovered by Joseph Niepce and Louis Daguerre in the 1820s. It is interesting to note that French artist Delacroix, rather than regarding photography as a potential competitor, applauded its invention. He was among the first members of the *Société Française de Photographie* who used photographs to paint from (Prideaux 1966:172).

metaphors of his 'helpful friends' (Hoek 1989:142). Mondrian makes references to dwarfs, birds, squirrels, and tortoises. Hoek (1989:142) interprets this metaphorical writing of Mondrian as playful encoding, displaying Mondrian's childlike enthusiasm and delight in Disney's film. In his letters, Mondrian expresses gratitude to his 'London Friends' and gives each of them an identity taken from the Disney film (Hoek 1989:142). Ironically, Mondrian portrayed himself as Sleepy and his brother, Carel, as Sneezey: Mondrian humorously saw how the popular and the fairytale mirrored aspects of his own existence (Hoek 1989:143).

Mondrian's encoding is similar to that of **hyper media** systems which lead to the multiplication of the ways in which information from various fields of inquiry is assembled, juxtaposed or manipulated within the visual arts (Toffler 1990:175). The purpose of this web of information, is the free availability of information. Since hyper media constitutes the **layering** of information, spectator-consumers can generate information according to will, and realise new mixtures of ideas (Toffler 1990: 175). The juxtapositioning of data leads to new ideas because the **combinations of dissimilar images break down stereotyped categorisations of information** (Perloff 1988:176).

Spectator-consumers, for example, do not only have to stay in Disneyland's *Fantasyland*. Because *Fantasyland* is bordered by *Adventureland*, they can expand and test present information with regard to the new information they will receive. Everything experienced in *Fantasyland* ⁴⁶ can be played off

⁴⁶ *Fantasyland* includes Sleeping Beauty's Castle, the character cast of *Sleeping Beauty*, such as the Wicked Queen; the sword Excalibur from *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*; *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and its cast; *Pinocchio* with Jiminy Cricket, Geppetto and Monstro the Whale; *Dumbo the Flying Elephant*; *Peter Pan* with Wendy, The Lost Boys and Never Land; *It's a Small*

against the new data of the bordering codex of *Adventureland* ⁴⁷ (Loewenstein 1992:46-67). In this way, Alice (*in Wonderland*), suddenly becomes Alice *in the Pirates of the Caribbean* or Alice *in the Temple of Doom*. A play on stereotypic information as well as the **reinterpretation of history** is therefore continually launched.

In a similar vein, artists juxtapose historically significant and metaphorically rich images in Postmodern art. American artist Peter Saul, who was discovered by painter Matta in the late 1950s, paints depictions of tangled masses of copulating objects and comic-strip mayhem (Storr 1985:92).

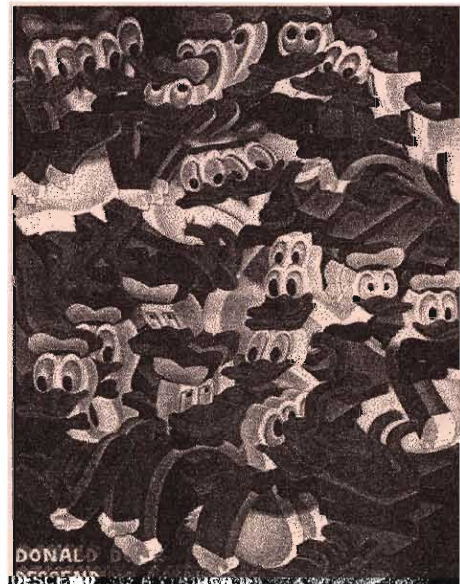


Figure 11: 'Donald Duck Descending a Staircase', 1979, Peter Saul, Acrylic on Canvas (in Storr 1985:96).

Flailing limbs, balloonlike phalluses, off-the-shelf merchandise, ice boxes and electric chairs mingle in a jumble of social symbolism. Based on a cheeky gloss of Disney and *Mad Magazine* and executed in a *faux-naif* style, these pictures are a reminder that

World and Alice's Curious Labyrinth with the Cheshire Cat and the Mad Hatter. See Figure 17.

⁴⁷ *Adventureland* includes *The Pirates of the Caribbean*, *The Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse*, *Aladdin's Bazaar* and *Indiana Jones' Temple of Doom* attractions. See Figure 17.

there is nothing nastier than the childlike imagination. The personal fantasy of consumer-culture claustrophobia and the crucifixion of Donald Duck gives way to the public horror of jungle war and the politics of racial hatred and war: taking on a harsher look with the introduction of Day-Glo pigments.

Saul made a series of Pop parodies of past masterpieces, including Rembrandt's (1606-1669) *Night Watch*, Delacroix's (1798-1863) *Death of Sardanapalus*, an almost animated takeoff on Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* featuring Donald Duck, as well as *Double de Kooning Ducks* (Storr 1985:93). Saul's work is largely motivated by his longstanding dispute with the 'sophisticated' social elite he sees as having taken possession of art and the unhealthy symbiosis among dealers, critics, collectors and artists. Saul describes 'obvious humour' and satire as something that comes to him when he sees people, especially 'the elite', looking at his work.

Works such as *Donald Duck in the Icebox*, *Donald Duck Descending a Staircase* and *Superman on the Toilet* are a revenge against a pretentious but incurious hierarchy (Storr 1985:94). Cameron (1990:75) describes Saul's work as appropriation because he uses American behaviour as a specimen for exploring the failures of modern consciousness. Saul's work accords precedence to content: he **undermines the established values of high culture by incorporating the language and images of popular culture**. This is done by quoting comic strips, postcards, and pulp-fiction violence. More importantly, Saul's art goes beyond mere quoting or appropriation towards a rendering of his own personal choice.

Pop artist Mark Lancaster, on the other hand, brings to mind the serial methods of Warhol's screen printed canvases in his own renditions of screen idol *Marilyn Monroe*. **Symbols of contemporary life are endlessly repeated** as if on an assembly-line. The implications of depersonalisation and anonymity aroused by this repetition, enhance the meaning of Lancaster's work (Crowther 1991:68). Lancaster makes direct allusions to aspects of Pop Art. His *9 December - 3 December 1987*, subtitled *MM as MM*, shows the image of Marilyn Monroe as Minnie Mouse or vice versa.



Figure 12: '9 December - 3 December 1987: MM as MM', 1987, Mark Lancaster, Oil on Canvas (in Crowther 1991:68).

Consumer product labels appear as a formal container for Lancaster's Marilyn images. These labels are appropriated from the screen printed wooden sculptures which Warhol made in the 1960s of *Heinz Tomato Ketchup* packing boxes. In the context of this series one is reminded also of Heinz's slogan '57 varieties': this particular rendition of Marilyn is reminiscent of the face that adorned Betty Crocker cake mixes, on which Lancaster had based some of his own Pop-derived paintings.

Postmodern culture therefore exhibits a new democratic coalition between high art and popular entertainment; the characteristics of a new art of reification and simulation where society is determined by changing images in the mass media, and where parody creates the alternative of a richer aesthetic than the dominance of singular cultural norms. The new art entertains its spectator-consumers and

makes them forget major concerns. It presents a cross-fertilization of ideas, as well as a variety of styles, techniques, and content. Furthermore, it comprises characteristics of the cartoon such as popularity, shifting viewpoints, formalism, indigenous themes, diverse graphic qualities, and computer-aided design. It presents a new visual environment of indigenous, home-bred art, alternative expressions, various machine appropriated imagery, metaphor, juxtapositioned fragments as well as contextually altered escapisms. Art becomes more than the mere

combining of found images, it presents informative collage for the Postmodern spectator-consumer by layering dissimilar images into new narratives.

Consequently, it is necessary to inquire into the ways in which Postmodern consumer culture is directed by the continuous fabrication of reality within the media. The extensive field of study known as simulation in contemporary criticism, will therefore be examined in the following section of this study, to explicate its influence on Postmodern aesthetics.

Chapter Two:

Disneyland as model for the creation of a state of hyperreality: 'simulacra' and 'simulation' in the visual arts

2.1. Hyperreality: 'simulacra' and 'simulation' in Disneyland

*...Humankind cannot bear very
much reality...*

Thomas Stearns Eliot

*...There is no reality: only a simulation of it...
the Gulf War That Did Not Take Place took
place not on the deserts of Arabia, it took place
on screens of the world's TV sets...*

Jean Baudrillard

(in Woolley 1992:196)

...la realite se montre; et le reel se demontre...

Jacques Lacan

2.1.1. Disneyland and the problem of 'more' reality

Eco (1987b:123) sees Disneyland as the ultimate representation of hyperreality. Eco (1987b) states that Disneyland overtakes reality because the total Disneyland environment is represented as *'more real than reality itself'*. Similarly, Baudrillard (1984:253-283; 1989:171) regards Disneyland as the perfect model for the entangled orders of simulation. According to Baudrillard and Louis Marin (in Wallis 1984:262) Disneyland is presented as imaginary, in order to make spectator-consumers believe that the outside is real, whilst the whole of America surrounding the theme park, is no more real, but part

of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. **When Disneyland is accepted as real, true reality, for example Los Angeles, takes on a form of reality which is 'above' that of Disneyland: the real world thus becomes 'hyperreality'**. Critics no longer look at false representations of reality, but analyse the reality which is nourished by the myths of reality manufactured in Disneyland (Wallis 1984:262). Disneyland's imaginary world is neither true nor false (Wallis 1984:262). The fear that Disney attempts to create a synthetic America that overwhelms and ruins forever the treasures of the real thing, is stated by author David McCullough (in Hebert 1994). This fear is illustrative of Disneyland's hyperreality (Hebert 1994).

Los Angeles, the reality, is surrounded by imagined pauses which confirm reality and deliver an amount of authenticity to a city which is really just a network of never ending and illegitimate fantasies and media myths (Wallis 1984:262). Marin (in Wallis 1984:262-3) equates the process of the creation of illusion with the American Watergate scandal. According to Marin, Disneyland represents a Watergate scenario because an imaginary effect is used to disguise the fact that reality does not exist, inside or outside the imitated arena. Similarly, Eileen Manion (in Kroker et al 1989:108) regards the whole of the Florida basin as an artificial oasis of modelled plaster and stucco work. Disneyland's clientele storm towards it in order to

chase the ideal of perpetual youth, with Mickey Mouse as rejuvenating totem.

But what is reality? If one assumes that reality is that which is excluded from the symbolic or the network of sign systems which constitute reality, then one can assume that a state of hyperreality is one which goes beyond the exclusion of the symbolic or sign systematic towards the inclusion thereof (Bullock 1988:724).

American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)(in Smart 1993:5) argued that a direct experience of reality is possible, whilst other critics regard reality exclusively as representation within common taste. Peirce anticipated a state of never ending semiosis where reality is determined by signs, and where signs create a state of hyperreality. On the other hand, psychiatrist Jacques Lacan (in Smart 1993:5) separates reality from truth: according to Lacan, **reality is exhibited whilst truth is demonstrated**. Yuri Lotman (1981:36) notes that the photo or filmshot is the most accurate representation of reality in Postmodern society. Baudrillard argues that the concept of reality is drenched with its own image. According to Baudrillard (in Perloff 1988:268), reality has lost the ability to take on the image of reality, in other words it no longer outclasses fantasy, but manages only to reach the status of a dream before it takes on the image of a dream.

Baudrillard (in Luke 1991:348) sees hyperreality as a **fabricated system of meaning** which limits a person's participation in the world to the role of spectator-consumer or responder, rather than producer or imitator. Inside the boundaries of capitalism, the flow of goods, services, images, and signs create new regions and sites of shared cultural consciousness such as hyperrealities or media

scapes, which continuously display the workings of new powers and new ideologies (Luke 1991:347).

Baudrillard (in Woolley 1992:197) argues that **there is no thing in itself or no real thing depicted**. According to Woolley (1992:197), the Gulf War, for example, was a Postmodern War with no reality. In Baudrillard's language, the Gulf War was merely a simulation of reality. Baudrillard's argument has its origins in a series of essays written to confront what he sees as the '*obscenity*' of Postmodern life. At the centre of his thesis lies the discovery that **reality no longer exists**. Reality has become fiction (Woolley 1992:197). The concept of independent, objective reality was an assumption of Modernism that could be sustained in the face of the technological and economic developments of the late twentieth century. Even critical theory and Structuralism operated on the principle that reality was the basis of truth. Today, everything has changed.

According to Baudrillard (1984:262; in Woolley 1992:198) **reality is a simulacrum: a perfect copy that has no original**. He states that:

the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth - it is the truth which conceals that there is none.

The simulacrum is true
(Baudrillard 1984:262).

Abstraction, like the drawing of an accurate map, is no longer that of the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer simulation of a territory, a referential being or a substance:

it is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality:

a hyperreality
(Woolley 1992:198).

Baudrillard believes that **culture is concerned with producing signs that signify nothing, that have only fake, artificial or counterfeit significance**. For example, a chocolate bar containing coconut is sold via its associations with the image of tropical paradise, which in itself has no actual existence. This image has meaning only in the context of Hollywood films or holiday brochures, and romanticized late nineteenth-century novels concerning colonial exploits. The chocolate bar becomes the signifier in a web of associations that confirm its meaning. Desire becomes a matter of meaning, of the manipulation of signs, and **what sustains Postmodern consumer society is the ability of manufacturers to perform this manipulation, or in other words to manufacture meaning**.

The same applies to culture as a whole, not just to consumer goods, politics, entertainment, or the arts. Everything is the product of human effort which results in Baudrillard's hyperreality. Baudrillard (in Woolley 1992:199) states:

*when the real is no longer what it used to be, **nostalgia** assumes its full meaning, there is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality, of secondhand truth, objectivity and authenticity...and there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential.*

Baudrillard (in Smagula 1991:9) explains Disneyland as a space which presents the representation of the imaginary in order to make the spectator-consumer

believe that the world outside Disneyland 'really' constitutes reality.

Baudrillard (in Smagula 1991:8-10) sees this reality as part of the order of the hyperreal or simulated. According to Eco (1987b:40-45), on the other hand, it is evident that Disneyland also attempts to recreate fantasy absolutely. Eco (1987b:40-45) argues that the spectator-consumer's experience of the real and the artificial, imitated, counterfeit, imaginary or simulated is repeatedly frustrated at Disneyland.

Thought processes, or simulacra, are those elements which make spectator-consumers doubt if what they see is real. According to Schickel (1989:127) spectator-consumers become embroiled in a purposeful symbiosis between real life and the images which they see in the mass media. This fine line between illusion and reality forms part of the 'feature film world' as well as 'Disneyland imitation'.

Gray (1994:60) warns against the danger of making spectator-consumers believe in images as the ultimate presentation of reality. The **power of imagery** does not lie in the information they carry but rather in spectator-consumers' propensity to believe that they have seen the whole picture in them. Gray (1994:60) concedes that the Postmodern visual age has made it possible for spectator-consumers to look at each other over long distances and to take close-ups of deep space. This does not imply that everything we see is good: it should be remembered that images do not come with built-in memories or instructions on how they should be interpreted.

Toffler (1990:335) admits that the intentional content of a television show⁴⁸ often paints a false picture of

⁴⁸Intentional content is the plot and the behaviour of the characters presented in a television show (Toffler 1990:335).



social reality. However, there is in all television programs, commercials and movies, an additional layer of inadvertent content⁴⁹. In contrast with the intended content, the inadvertent detail frequently provides an accurate picture of quotidian reality: even the tritest 'cop shows' display current fads and fashions and express popular attitudes towards sex, religion, money, and politics (Toffler 1990:335).

None of this is ignored by spectator-consumers; it is filed away in their minds, forming part of their general bank of knowledge about the world. Toffler (1990:336) further notes that much of a spectator-consumer's image of the world is absorbed during leisure hours: for this reason, mere entertainment is no longer innocent. Postmodern economy is linked not only to formal knowledge and technical skills, but also to **popular culture and its expanding market for imagery**. According to Daney (in Woolley 1992) 'live war', in the shape of the televised Gulf War, is a fantasy. What is 'live' is the *mise en scène*⁵⁰ of all true, falsified or omitted information.

In this connection, Eco equates Disneyland with a modern wax museum. According to Eco (1987b:123), Disneyland makes it very clear that it presents **absolutely recreated fantasy** within its confines. Disneyland's equation with the Vatican⁵¹ indicates a physically and legally autonomous world (Holleran

⁴⁹Inadvertent content consists of background detail such as landscape, cars, street scenes, architecture, telephones, answering machines as well as barely noticed behaviour such as the banter between a waitress and a customer whilst the hero of the program seats himself at a lunch counter (Toffler 1990:335).

⁵⁰The phrase *mise en scène* is a French concept which has its origins in theatre. It means the arrangement of the stage in order to represent an accurate picture of a given scene, environment or location. The phrase was picked up by cinema critics who gave it a more sophisticated meaning: it can be thought of as the mechanism of cinematic illusion, the relationship between what the audience sees and the staging and framing that produces it (Woolley 1992:197).

⁵¹See p.7 of this study.

1990:44). Disneyland maintains the right to present its imitations as masterpieces of falsification, because that which is sold under its banner, is indeed an **artificial spectator-consumer taste** (Eco 1987b:123).

The spectator-consumer's desire to consume is falsified, imitated or simulated by Disneyland (Eco 1987b:45). This creation of a false consumer desire as well as a different version of reality, as it occurs at Disneyland and its *Disney Stores* is emphasised by Reiss' (1994:52) question: '*Who needs reality if you've already got Orlando?*'.

South African dramatist Pieter-Dirk Uys (1995:3) describes our age as one of 'faction' and the fabrication of truth wherein photos mean nothing. Everyone has had their image blended with that of Arnold Schwarzenegger or Madonna, shaken hands with the Queen or Gorbachev, and kissed their favourite sports star: all this happens on film where dreams can come true for a few bucks. Thus, reality is invented and truth is produced by technology (Uys 1995:3). Uys' recent television show, *Evita's Funigaloro*⁵², was a surrealistic representation of a man dressed as a woman. The farce becomes real the moment the cameras swallow it. Uys (1995:5) describes his character as just another experience in front of the television set where one is foxed by what looks real and is not, cheated by what sounds true and cannot be, and convinced beyond a doubt by something that can only be a lie.

Corliss (1989:102) argues that the Disney ideal remains illusion. The Magic Kingdom even has a

⁵²*Evita's Funigaloro* comprised a series of interviews with South Africa's political leaders conducted by the grand courtesan of South African society, Evita Bezuidenhout. Evita's claim to fame is that she does not exist in spite of the history she has hijacked (Uys 1995).



subterranean system of corridors so that the cowboy actors do not have to walk through the audience in order to stage their gunfights (Holleran 1990:44). Disneyland's employment of design company *Rhythm and Hues*, as well as *Circlevision's 360 Degree Viewpoint*, to create a believable flyby of Paris for its *Visionarium Nine-eyes* attraction at Euro Disneyland, attests to the lengths Disney will go to to present **faked reality** (Pizzello 1992:14).

Horvath and Lin (1991:105) note that simulated sites, such as Disneyland, **merge the real and unreal to approximate simulation** in Baudrillard's purest sense. Such sites are described as totally synthetic assemblages. The result is a deliberate sensory overload in which careful design, real, and surreal converge in a kind of nostalgic Mousketecture in which the guiding philosophy is 'more is more' (Brown 1989:B3).

The attempt to inject architectural history-book realism into Disney parks is said to represent an evolution in Disney design and philosophy (Brown 1989:B3). But are things claiming to be real, real? If the Mann Chinese Theatre in Hollywood is itself known to the public as a fabrication, the Disney replication of this theatre can only be a reflection of the 'untrue' (Horvath & Lin 1991:106). The Chinese Theatre at Disney World is therefore a simulation of a simulation. Orlando is hence the 'Rococo industry of make-believe' (Painton 1991:52). Americans have often built new communities in the image of earlier ones, such as New Amsterdam, San Francisco's Chinatown, and Miami's Little Havana (Painton 1991:52). **With the replication of the replica the untrue is portrayed as truth, and the simulation becomes a new referent. So pervasive has simulation become that the real and the unreal can no longer be distinguished.** In Disneyland,

huge expense is expended to make the park 'realistic' and to make it appear plausible and internationally consistent (Horvath & Lin 1991:108).

Danto (1992:47) describes Western society as one which adores the wonder of the simulator and its artificial realness, whilst Eastern tradition demands 100% authenticity. Kay (1990:51-4) also describes Disneyland as a motown, fauxtown, where spectator-consumers have to drive in order to take a walk, or have to touch in order to distinguish fibreglass and gunite from wood and stone. Walt Disney himself reprimanded a publicity man for parking his car near the Frontierland railroad station thus:

*When people come here, they
expect to see the Frontier, your
car destroys the whole illusion*
(Thomas 1994:289).

At Disneyland illusion is everything. Disney dismissed the idea of a television show portraying himself walking down a deserted Main Street whilst discussing the park, because he did not want spectator-consumers to see the park empty (Thomas 1994:289). A final touch in creating illusion includes special building codes at Disneyland: on the ground floor, buildings, street scapes and vehicles are imitated on life size scale and on the first floor, the environment is recreated in 75% life size scale (Jodidio 1992:75). This is done in order to convey the illusion of habitability, hospitableness and consumer friendliness.

In accordance with Baudrillard, Bukatman (1991:67) notes that the real world only seems real against the background of Disneyland's explicit simulations. Eco (1987b:44) states that spectator-consumers enjoy this perfect imitation or illusion at Disneyland, because

Disneyland tests their desire for imitation. Imitation reaches its zenith at Disneyland because all objects in the real world lose their credibility after comparison with Disneyland (Finch 1983:451). Only in Disneyland can the spectator experience the best scenario of a given happening, because there will always be crocodiles, Indians, pirates, river boats and gunfights along the Mississippi river in *Adventureland*, whilst the possibility thereof during an outing to the real American Mississippi-delta, depends greatly on chance (Eco 1987b:44-50). Moreover, Eco (1987b: 46) stresses that Disneyland is not only concerned with the creation of illusion, but that it **stimulates the spectator-consumer's desire for illusion and imitation** by way of its confession thereof. This implies that when spectator-consumers learn that technology in Disneyland can deliver more reality than nature, they will follow the road of simulated reality, because it will fulfill their desire for spectacle (Eco 1987b:44-50).

The technology of animatronics⁵³ at Disneyland manages to present fantasy as more real than reality itself, and therefore fulfils spectator-consumer desire for hyperreality (Finch 1983:81). When real life, be it rainy weather or expensive actors, gets in the way of movie-making, cartoons manage to save the day (Schickel 1989:92). In this way Disneyland characters can move beyond the state of imagined reality into a space of equation with reality and interact with the spectator (Eco 1987b:40-45). The employment of live-action⁵⁴ scenes in such Disney films as *Mary*

⁵³An example of Animatronics at Disneyland is the attraction *Country Bear Jamboree*, the original audio-animatronic installation in Florida. It is an experiment in the total illusion of movement by an electronically driven body and creates the credible experience of spectacle (Finch 1983:408-9).

⁵⁴Live-action refers to the combination of animation and real life acting. It follows in the footsteps of a tradition started in 1919 with the Fleischer Brothers' *Out of the Inkwell* series, where Koko the Clown is drawn onto a background of real footage; Walt Disney's *The Three Caballeros* (1945) where real persons dance

Poppins (1964) and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988), represents the use of the creation of credibleness, as well as the attempt to imitate reality (Finch 1983: 424-60).

When real life actor Bob Hoskins is confronted by the unbelievable antics of a hoard of 'toons' in the animation feature, *Who framed Roger Rabbit?*, spectator-consumers love every minute of the fantasy which becomes reality on screen (D'Estaing 1995:113). The employment of optical tricks and gimmicks in such Disney films as *Star Wars* (1977) and *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* (1954), has made the imaginary believable (Schickel 1985:293; Finch 1983:367).



Figure 13: 'Bob Hoskins in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, 1991, The Walt Disney Company, Cel Animation (in Thomas 1991: 109).

The invention of the Multiplane Camera in 1941, following Disney's experiments since 1935, presented the animator with a table that permits decor and careful naturalistic detail, as well as depth of detail from foreground to background, with as many as nine levels of illustrations being photographed simultaneously. The first animation film produced with the aid of the Multiplane Camera, *Bambi* (1942),

against an animated background along with Donald Duck (D'Estaing 1995:113).



presented a newfound depth and realism of environment never before realized in animation (D'Estaing 1995:114). Disney's later employment of *CinemaScope*⁵⁵, the reproduction process known as Xerography⁵⁶ as well as computer generated technology⁵⁷ further narrowed the gap between animation and the realistic feature film (Geis 1978:270).

To sum up, we can refer to Baudrillard (1984:261-262) who identifies the above-mentioned aspects of Disneyland as being representative of a perfect model of simulation.

Baudrillard sees Disneyland as a shadow-show or phantasmagoria which thrives **beyond reality into the imaginary world of the spectator-consumer** (Wallis 1984:261-2). This phantasmagoria is enhanced by the warmth and excitement of the real crowd amidst the extensive amount of **devices**⁵⁸ which are employed in Disneyland in order to imitate the effect of reality. According to Baudrillard (1984:261; in Smagula 1991:100-109) Disneyland constitutes a play on illusion and ghost images, of *'pirates, the Wild West and the world of the future'*.

According to Atkins (1990:145) a simulation remains a **replica**. A simulation represents something which

is fake or faked. The terms 'simulation' and 'simulacrum' therefore imply the same within contemporary art language. Stallybrass (in Bullock & Stallybrass 1988:778) sees the process of simulation as an applied probability account whereby a specific model such as Disneyland is equated with a reality such as Hollywood in order to obtain certain results.

Baudrillard (in Smagula 1991:100-9) sees Postmodern **simulation as being characterised by the media and the masses**. It is here that McLuhan's motto *'the medium is the message'* makes way for the catch phrase *'mass-age is the message'* (Bullock et al 1988:778). The Postmodern age thus becomes one of simulacra, according to Benjamin (Bullock et al 1988:778). It constitutes an age of **imagery without source** which still remains effective in its representation or simulation of reality.

According to Linker (in Smagula 1991:108) the contemporary simulacrum is the pure image, imitation or representation of reality. The simulacrum is that relationship between what the spectator sees and that which truly exists in a society (Blonsky 1985:153). Spigel and Jenkins (in Pearson et al 1991:121) regard television as the propagator of hyperreality. Television represents the finished simulation of real events because spectator-consumers remember powerful moments, flashes or images and adjust their self image accordingly. Kroker et al (1989; in Pearson 1991:121) argue that memory dictates the desires of spectator-consumers, whilst giving an imagined status to the past and paving the way for personal fantasies to take control. Television and the control of hyperreality presents, according to Wallis (1984:290-1) an all-encompassing imagined reality which is broken down by social rationality.

⁵⁵CinemaScope was released in 1955 with the Disney feature *Lady and the Tramp* (Geis 1978:270).

⁵⁶Xerography was released in 1961 with the feature *101 Dalmations* in which artists' drawings were transferred directly to animation cels (the transparent overlays on which the characters were drawn) and from there to film (Geis 1978:270).

⁵⁷Computer generated technology came with the release of *The Little Mermaid* in 1991, where some of the finest character animation was achieved with mixing real footage of an octopus with the final animation of the character of the villain Ursula (Geis 1978:270).

⁵⁸Reality is fabricated within Disneyland with the aid of certain devices such as the Disneyland Passport, Disneyland Dollars, the clothing of the 'cast members', animatronics, etcetera.



Metz (1982:72) similarly christens the state of hyperreality a state of verisimilitude⁵⁹, whereby **everything possible is done in order to elicit an effective and convincing spectacle from Postmodern spectator-consumers.**

Baudrillard (in Smart 1993:51-6) identifies three historical orders of simulacra. These orders convey different relationships between simulacra and reality. The three ways in which reality may be imitated in history, include the following:

1. The first order of simulacra comprises the period from the Renaissance up to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Here, Baudrillard sees the rise of **representation** as cardinal. The hierarchical ordering of natural signs, such as trees or other tangible objects, was substituted by imitations, such as fabricated copies of the real, which looked exactly like the original, for example genre paintings of the Golden Age in the Netherlands (Smart 1993:51-6).

2. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, and the possibility of mechanical reproduction, rose a second order of simulacra. Here, the possibility of **never ending reproducibility** substituted the imitated object. During this stage, technology and mechanical reproduction became representative of a new reality.

3. With the increasing centrality of communications networks, information technology, media and advertising after 1945, a third order of simulacra came into being. This order is dependent upon the first order of the falsified imitation of the original as well as the second order of pure ranges of exact replicas. Spectator-consumers are introduced to Baudrillard's vision of the Postmodern world as one

where **reality is represented and sustained by models.** The structured law of the value of the image is nullified, and the relationship between images, codes, subjects and happenings undergoes a total process of change. It is **no longer possible to engage with a real object**, because the difference between representations and objects, ideas and things no longer exists in a world where simulation is practised (Smart 1993:51-6).

Baudrillard (in Smart 1993:5-6) argues that there can be no distinction between the simulacrum and reality. For Baudrillard, **only simulacra exist.** Thus, the third order of simulacra becomes synonymous with **models, codes and digital representation** in Postmodern society. Illusionistic effect or meaning is removed from everyday life in order to be replaced by models and codes. Baudrillard's world therefore consists of realities and objects which reflect reality. The real is no longer that which can be imitated, but rather that which can be recreated. According to Baudrillard (in Smart 1993:51-6), the Postmodern spectator-consumer already lives in a state of aesthetic hallucination of reality.

According to Manion (in Kroker et al 1989:108), the process of imagineering⁶⁰ at Disneyland propagates a belief in the American way of life. Within the fantasy of the theme park, the spectator is brought into contact with reality via the omnipresence of 'waste please' signs on litter bins, by recommended routes on free atlases, and by Kodak prime photo opportunity resting points (Kroker et al 1989:108). Disneyland is a prime exponent of simulation in the Postmodern

⁵⁹The term 'verisimilitude' is explained as the appearance or semblance of truth or reality, or something which merely seems to be true or real (McLeod 1982:1304). The term was initially employed in Literature, and is now entering the visual sphere.

⁶⁰Disneyland's concept of imagineering defines the usage of advanced technology to make fantasy seem as real as possible. Imagineering employs technologically advanced and experimental three-dimensional films; animatronic robots; etcetera. Woolley (1992) defines it as 'artificialization' and 'making dreams come true'. Imagineering has led to Disneyland's status as the 'Symbol of Futurism'.



world: it presents reality as illusion, and illusion as reality in a world already awash with representations of fake situations.

2.1.2. *Simulation and body politics*

Bukatman (1991:68) sees Disneyland as the 'simulation of tactics', the simulation of aimless wandering, the traversal of the complexities of urban space so cherished by the Situationists, and the simulation of walking, in the specific sense of inscribing oneself upon the territories of strategic power.

Bukatman (1991:73) describes the **narrative strategy** of Disneyland as a kind of virtual reality system which is largely conditioned by the narrative strategies that move guests through technologically informed yet conservative visions of the 'future'. Disneyland is a 'gigantic piece of installation art' that spatializes the structures of a computer system. Metaphorically, Disneyland's rides become 'files' which are gathered into the subdivisions of the different Lands or 'folders'. 'Utilities' break the sequence of rides and narratives in the form of food and service kiosks. Transportation systems (monorail, horse-carriage, railroad, paddle-boat) that shuttle guests or 'users' from 'function' to 'function' form an extremely efficient 'operating system'. All the technology remains hidden behind the tropical plants and architectural facades of the attractions, just as the 'tower' of the personal computer disguises the micro-circuitry within. Finally, the 'blips' being processed and circulated within this cybernetic **paraspaces** are the spectator-consumers. The computer becomes a site of **bodily habitation** in the theme park, a technological 'interface' so effective that most users are unaware of it (Bukatman 1991:73).

The combination of simulation and transportation in the Disneyland ride, brings the body in motion, and real movement of the subject's actual body occurs. Inevitably, this real movement is supplemented by a further simulated kinesis (Bukatman 1991:75). Disneyland transforms the real spatial movement of the spectator-consumer into a simulated temporal trajectory. The **kinaesthesia** of *Disney's Horizons*⁶¹ is intense and effective (Bukatman 1991:75). Virilio (in Bukatman 1991:76) notes that one can no longer separate film from auditorium: the experience of *Disney's Star Tours* Omnimax physically moves and tilts the auditorium in order to augment the on-screen action. Bukatman (1991:77) concludes that this **intensification of sensory experience** during a Disneyland ride, is nothing less than an **inscription of the body on the body**. Journeys into technologically complex zones serve to guarantee the **continuing presence and relevance of the subject**: the rides announce that you have a body, that you exist and that without you the rides do not exist (Bukatman 1991:77).

The **body (subject)** therefore penetrates fantastic spaces to merge with them in a state of kinetic, sensory pleasure. The spectator-consumer is projected into the data scape and is incorporated by its technology (Bukatman 1991:77). The inscription on the body announces the human machine interface in terms of author Merleau-Ponty's⁶² model of the 'world-subject-interface' (Bukatman 1991:77). Merleau-Ponty (in Bukatman 1991:78) sees the penetration of the 'normal subject' into the 'object by perception', assimilating its structure into substance,

⁶¹ *Disney's Horizons* presents four-person vehicles which move laterally across an enormous IMAX screen. Suddenly, a whirling molecular shape rotates towards the spectator and the car tilts against the direction of the vortex.

⁶² Merleau-Ponty is the author of *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962, London: Routledge).

and through the body the object directly regulates movement. This subject-object dialogue, the symbioses of subject by object, arranges round the subject a world which presents to the subject a vision of the self and which gives the subject's own thoughts their place in the world. Bukatman (1991:78) states that Disneyland rides locate and centre the subject whilst reifying the perceived **power** of the subject.

Klugman notes that Disneyland characters demonstrate **body language**. Klugman (1993:12) interprets the entire space of Disneyland as a 'ride' where one is positioned within a 'controlled queue' from which it is impossible to cut ahead in line. In her exploration of the bond between Disney and Kodak⁶³, Klugman (1993:14) recognizes the importance of the film camera as 'required' tool in Disneyland. Instead of regarding the camera as intrusion, Klugman (1993:17) interprets it as an adornment, a grotesque way of seeing and part of the body itself. The invention of the peripatetic video-taper allows the spectator-consumer to see the world through the eye of the video lens: gazing at the screen while walking grants participation on the same level as the camera eye. Klugman (1993:18) interprets the photographic frenzy at Disneyland as a fetishistic demand to artificially preserve the magic. The notion that what is represented in the picture is reality itself and not some fiction framed by technology, further explains the romantic nostalgia towards photography.

Klugman's (1993:23) definition of reality was shaken by giant Disneyland dioramas with plastic foliage that looked more real than perfectly sculpted gardens. Audio-animatronic characters who displayed more fluid movements than some of the tour guides,

⁶³Disneyland only sells Kodak film in a limited selection of colour emulsions at its Kodak Camera Centre across Main Street, and several Kodak Picture Spots are scattered across the park to denote photogenic scenes.

questioned reality. Taking pictures of people beside their own pictures, videotaping films about making films or photographing films being made, represent a Postmodern experience.



Figure 14: 'Untitled', 1993, Karen Klugman, Photograph (in Klugman 1993:8).

Berelowitz (1990:70) similarly examines the **museum** in terms of simulation and its relation to the human body. The nineteenth century museum was an emancipated sign in a world where signs proliferated according to demand (Berelowitz 1990:73). In Baudrillardian language, the modern **museum produces a world of simulation, a world of the counterfeit, whilst the simulation and the counterfeit work produce meaningful discourse** (Berelowitz 1990:73). A major premise of modern museums, such as EPCOT Centre, is that:

*we live in a world now where
space and mobility have radically
changed...people will go distances...
they will travel to see special
exhibitions*
(Berelowitz 1990:78).



Thomas Krens (in Berelowitz 1990:81), director of the Guggenheim Museum, points out a growing global trend in museum management where the distinction between the theme park and the museum is being eradicated⁶⁴. Krens' opinion would be fully endorsed by the 300 museum trustees who recently met at Walt Disney World in Florida for a meeting of the *Museum Trustee Committee for Research and Development*. Issues on the agenda included 'Creating museum magic through quality service Disney style', as well as 'Attracting a mass audience without boring them'. The recipe for Disney style is simple: 'entertainment, education, big video terminals, food and souvenirs' (Berelowitz 1990:81).

Benjamin's reflections on film and mass culture, and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, encode central questions concerning the politics of mass culture and its historical relations with technology, nature, the body, and sexuality (Hansen 1993:27). Benjamin (in Hansen 1993:27) concludes that Disney films pioneer ways of inhabiting the new space or margin that historically emerged with film, by disarming the destructive effects of technology by way of technologically mediated laughter. In Benjamin's analysis of the fascist mass spectacle, two strands of **human self-alienation** appear. Firstly, in the spectator-consumer's identification with the commodity where exchange-value becomes a phantasmagoria, a sensuous transfiguration of the commodity, an illusion that is a mental drug and utopian wish-image; and secondly, in the failed and fatal reception of technology (in Hansen 1993:27).

Both Benjamin and Hansen (in Hansen 1993:39) assign Mickey Mouse with a specific historical,

⁶⁴For example, in South Africa the sublimation between the museum, the terrain museum, and the theme park attraction may be viewed at the *Willem Prinsloo Landbou Museum, Kleinplasia* in Worcester, or *Gold Reef City* in Johannesburg.

cultural, and political place: World War I had an emblematic function of exploiting the fragile human body with its crises of technological murder (Hansen 1993:39). According to Hansen (1993:44) Mickey answers to the historical experience of mutilation and fragmentation in technological warfare and industrial production. To spectator-consumers tired of experience, fed up with 'Kultur' and the 'human being' Mickey Mouse is a dream that compensates for the sadness and discouragement of the day and which shows them simple and quite magnificent existence (Hansen 1993:41). This reflects the state of pure being at Disneyland. Disney films are close to Surrealist fantasy, because the existence projected by them is full of miracles that not only surpass those of technology, but also make fun of them (Hansen 1993:41). The **playful fragmentation** of the body in the cartoon recalls the Dadaist depictions of the body as a dysfunctional automaton or a dismembered mannequin (Hansen 1993:45). Mickey's hybrid status⁶⁵ brings the character into the arena of Benjamin's reflections on the body, namely that of the **problem of the psycho-physiological boundaries that should contain the subject and distinguish the human species from the rest of creation** (Hansen 1993:44). If 1920s actor Charlie Chaplin is the embodiment of self-alienation in the spirit of Kafka⁶⁶, Mickey prefigures the utopian interpenetration of body and image space which Benjamin delineates at the end of his essay on Surrealism.

One can therefore conclude that the concept of simulation has the following implications for

⁶⁵The hybrid status of an image, in this case Mickey Mouse, refers to the blurring of human and animal qualities in the same entity (Hansen 1993).

⁶⁶Kafka was a Czech novelist during the 1920s and 1930s. He was seen as a neurotic interpreter of the human condition which is why the term Kafkaesque refers to something being nightmarish. Kafka saw himself, however, as a humorist and Surrealist.

Postmodern society at large: the comprehension of reality is determined by signs which are continually digested by Western disciples of imitated reality. The perfect imitation and total illusion which is presented via technology at Disneyland, represents the human propensity to imitate. In this way, the Postmodern world becomes one of replicas which are equated with reality by the media and the masses. We live amidst a fabricated system of meaning where culture produces signs without single meaningfulness. The spectator-consumer's belief in the environment is hindered by the application of three historical orders of simulacra, namely the imitation, the never ending reproduction, and the model, code or digital

representation of reality. These are employed by the media to approximate reality in the eye of the spectator-consumer. Reality is presented and sustained by models. Baudrillard argues that the contemporary world of mass created commodity, demands a new economy of the sign, of the spectator-consumer's body as matrix for participation in society, as well as an altered stance towards representation.

It is therefore necessary to inquire next into the ways in which hyperreality and simulation present an aesthetic for Postmodern visual arts.



2.2 The influence of a state of hyperreality: 'simulacra' and 'simulation' in the visual arts

2.2.1. Hyperreality and the 'art of illusion'

Graves (in Jodidio 1992:52), one of the prime architects at Walt Disney World and Euro Disney, sees Disneyland as a pop-surrealist play between illusion and reality. In a similar vein the cultural critic Thomas Sancton (1993:46) praises Disneyland for its Disneyesque art of illusion-spinning.

Atkins (1990:145) notes a decline in genuineness in the never-ending reproduction of information and imagery in Postmodern society. Along with Baudrillard, Atkins (1990:145) questions the state of **the original** as that which is the final point of public happening, or that which is the **starting point of a series of images which determine reality in a society**. Baudrillard (1983:147) argues that Postmodern spectator-consumers already live in a world where reality is an aesthetic hallucination. In a world of narrative images, spectator-consumers know that what is seen are only simulacra. The spectator-consumer is conscious of the fact that what is seen, is only the result of the manipulation and choices made by media moguls (Blonsky 1985:153).

Spectator-consumers, however, continue to interpret images in the media as reality. The belief that **printed and presented images** constitute a reflection of reality still exists, despite the knowledge that these images **are created in a narrative society which is defined by the stories and fables of advertising and information systems which cite, recapitulate and manipulate images** (Blonsky 1985: 153).

According to Lotman (1972:12) the genuineness of the visual image in Disneyland forms part of an

information-giving art which demands the attention of a mass audience. Lotman (1972:12) believes that the relationship between spectator-consumers and the artist's text manifests itself in two ways. Firstly, the visual elicits the same emotions from spectator-consumers as reality would, and secondly, during this process of emotive reaction, spectator-consumers suddenly remember that they are confronted by an imaginary happening. When spectator-consumers cannot distinguish illusion, in the form of stage, film screen or animatronics, from reality or life, they forget that what is seen is only a contrivance (Lotman 1972:12). According to Lotman (1981:17) spectator-consumers, as a result, cannot experience true artistic emotion towards the work of art. Art is involved with a twofold experience: firstly, spectator-consumers have to forget that they are being confronted by an imagined happening, and secondly, they must not forget this. It is only in the world of art that one can simultaneously be moved by the reality of a situation, and appreciate its aesthetic value (Lotman 1981:17). Lotman further states that this twofold perception in art leads to a situation where art and reality become very similar.

Toffler (1970:210) acknowledges the construction of fantastic simulations or illusions at Disneyland. Tannenbaum (1983:299) states that the artist of the animated film is truly a maker, or a Pygmalion, for whatever is seen on the screen is totally the artist's creation. Toffler (1970:210,231) predicts that the combination of features from Disneyland, the World's Fair, Cape Kennedy, the Mayo Clinic, and the honky-tonks of Macao will sharply challenge the manner in which reality will be grasped in the future: Postmodern culture is moving towards the development of **interactive films and soap operas with the aid of advanced communications technology**. According to Toffler (1970:232) the packaged experiences

offered in the future will reach far beyond the imagination of the average spectator-consumer, thereby filling the environment with endless novelties.

Baudrillard, Jameson, and Postmodern theorist Francois Lyotard (in Stam et al 1992) propagate a Postmodern paradigm whereby the representation of reality will make way for a secondhand edition or false representation of reality. **Art will become a further rendering of a socio-ideological world which is already defined by certain basic models of hyperreality** (Stam et al 1992:215). Hyperreality is created within the world of art when **the sign⁶⁷ becomes more real than reality itself** (Stam et al 1992:215). In the visual arts, signs determine the spectator-consumer's perception of reality or illusion.



Figure 15: 'Mosheshwe, Oom Paul, Rhino, and Mona', 1995, Christel Wolfaardt, Multimedia Montage on Found Book (Courtesy of the artist).

Thus, juxtapositioned images⁶⁸ come to present new realities in the work of art. In this connection the author, South African artist Christel Wolfaardt, includes certain historically documented truths, as well as faked illusions of reality in the work entitled *Mosheshwe, Oom Paul, Rhino, and Mona*.

In this connection, Baudrillard (in Stam et al 1992:215) sees the contemporary world of mass mediated commodity being ruled by a new economy of the sign. This implies a change in the comprehension of representation. The Postmodern era is characterised by semiurgy, which is the **process whereby the production of mass mediated signs substitute the production of objects as the nucleus of a society** (Stam et al 1992:215). Signs become objects and they are continuously devoured by Postmodern fetishistic society.

Baudrillard, sociologist Max Weber, and Post Structuralist writer and philosopher Michel Foucault, question the value of these signs of reality in Postmodern society (Baudrillard 1983:262). According to Baudrillard (1983:262) spectator-consumers have to realise that they no longer have the capacity to create their own circumstances. Reality can no longer be measured against a reference system, because reality no longer exists. According to Baudrillard (1983; Stam et al 1992:215) nothing takes place in the land of reality anymore. Therefore, it is important for spectator-consumers and artists to question the objectivity of things because in a telecommunicated culture, reality is devised by messages (Eco 1987b).

⁶⁷A sign can be an image, a work of art or a representation of a physical entity.

⁶⁸As mentioned on p.37 of this study.

In a similar vein, Swedish author Per Olov Enquist (in Ivry 1992:48) argues that Postmodern spectators must not take everything which they are told about a society and its history as the solemn truth. This fact is all the more significant in Post-Apartheid South Africa with its Reconciliation and Development Programme, as well as its proposed agenda for the resynthesis of history, and the inclusion of previously omitted narratives.

If signs determine how representations of reality are perceived, or whether something is pure simulation or imitation, then Postmodern artists such as Barbara Kruger and Sherrie Levine are correct in their self-conscious appropriation of images from history or popular culture. This is done in order to present informative representations of reality (Eco 1978).

Baudrillard (in Stam et al 1992:215) distinguishes four steps in the creation of social simulacra exhibited in mass media. To illustrate this process in the visual arts, we will examine Antoine Predock's *Hotel Santa Fe* at Euro Disneyland, as well as Wolfaardt's *Mosheshwe, Oom Paul, Rhino, and Mona* (see Figure 15):



Figure 16: 'Hotel Santa Fe', 1992, Christel Wolfaardt, Photograph (Courtesy of the artist).

1. Firstly, a basic reality is represented by a sign; for example the historically significant symbols of 1950s cars, a drive-in movie or a UFO are represented as believable in *Hotel Santa Fe* at Euro Disneyland (Dietsch 1992); as are the historical characters of South African leaders Paul Kruger and Mosheshwe, a rhinoceros, and the famous Da Vinci painting of Mona Lisa, in *Mosheshwe, Oom Paul, Rhino, and Mona*.

2. Secondly, reality is disguised by a sign; for example the use of obscure symbolism in the representation of archetypes of the West in the *Hotel Santa Fe mise-en-scène*; which include the symbols of good and evil (half black, half white), money (silver), the rush (gold), and a jail (gray)(Dietsch 1992); and the intertwining of the images of Paul Kruger, Mosheshwe, a rhinoceros, and the Renaissance Mona Lisa which presents a historically impossible anachronism.

3. Thirdly, the absence of reality is disguised by a sign; for example the environment of *Hotel Santa Fe* is presented as 'real' by several convincing symbols, such as 'real Mexican' street names, trails of water emanating from viaducts, rattle snake motives, cacti, and other set pieces (Dietsch 1992); and the image of Paul Kruger is presented as a historically documented reality. Furthermore, the sign implicates the visitor as actor within the movie version of the absent 'Mexico'. Postmodern realities capitalise on what we have all grown up to expect from stereotyped scenes of the Wild West, and have little to do with the real thing (Schmertz 1992:52).

4. Fourthly, the sign becomes a simulacrum: a simulation or imitation which is not a representation of reality, is represented by the sign; for example, several historically significant symbols and metaphorically rich images collectively create a new truth or condition of reality. This new truth, is at the utmost a skilfully executed fantasy, because when



spectator-consumers arrive at *Hotel Santa Fe* or view *Mosheswe*, *Oom Paul*, *Rhino*, and *Mona*, they can make believe that they are either in the real Mexico or amidst a state of rewritten reality (Dietsch 1992). This rewritten reality, in the case of Wolfaardt's work, tells the story of a Boer leader (Kruger) who is connected with a Zulu leader (Mosheshwe), an almost extinct animal (rhino), and a fine art icon (Mona Lisa). The artwork therefore presents reformulated realities via various images which present a context of extinction, power, preservation, and iconicity. The composition of images sequentially implies a narrative of surprising context which may be richly **embroidered** with philosophical, allegorical, and historical meaning (Stam et al 1992:215). A state of hyperreality is thus created when the sign becomes more real than reality itself.

For Baudrillard (in Ratcliff 1989:118) it is imperative that one can no longer distinguish images from their referents: '*all is image*', and it is no longer a question of imitation, or of reduplication, or of parody, but rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself. Baudrillard's denial of authenticity therefore lingers (Ratcliff 1989:118).

The art of Lichtenstein, with Disneyland as subject, provides a set of practical examples for the relations between the real and the imaginary (Ratcliff 1989: 119). No less images than objects, Lichtenstein's works are imaginary as well as real, and they always refer to something that is in itself both an object and an image or reproduction, which in turn refers to another image or reproduction (Ratcliff 1989:119). The referential nature of Lichtenstein's work was realised in 1961 when he and Warhol began producing 'pictures of pictures' with the slogan 'to refer is to reproduce' (Ratcliff 1989:119). A brushstroke on canvas, an art-book reproduction of a

Lichtensteinized brushstroke, Lichtenstein's reprise of a Lichtensteinized brushstroke - no matter how long the chain of reference, it never tangles, but remains part of simulation (Ratcliff 1989:119).

2.2.2. Hyperreality and deconstruction in the visual arts

Dennett (1989:47) convincingly positions Disney's EPCOT Centre within Postmodern discourse and **deconstructionist analysis**. To explain the manifestation of deconstruction in Disneyland, we once again return to McLuhan's prophesy of the decline of logical sequence⁶⁹ as well as Baudrillard's (in Smagula 1991:109) vision of hyperreality as a force which unifies all images into a different reality of disparate images.

Disneyland therefore deconstructively disregards logical sequence and presents repositioned texts in its juxtapositioning of disparate ideas.

In this connection, Dennett (1989:47) argues that the comparison of different texts, in Disneyland, can help to unravel tangled repressed texts, by giving privilege to the metatext and thereby exposing the interplay between dramatic text⁷⁰, *mise-en-scène* and performance text⁷².

Disney's theme parks, as environmental theatres, resonate with **public history spectacles** which specifically promote **new ways of seeing** historical

⁶⁹See p.20 of this study.

⁷⁰The dramatic text is the outcome of history as known text by way of performances (Dennett 1989:47).

⁷¹In this case, the specific combination of stage materials (Dennett 1989).

⁷²The performance text is the environment in which the dramatic text is presented (Dennett 1989).

events (Dennett 1989:47). Disney's ability to utilize the storytelling principles of film making, action, fantasy, and making learning exciting and understandable for the entire family, has been successful.

When history is transformed into public history or when historical events are reproduced for mass culture, history tends to be transformed into a disposable and smartly packaged commodity (Dennett 1989:49). In the words of Benjamin (in Dennett 1989:49), historical authenticity becomes political when it ceases to be relevant to artistic production.

Dennett (1989:49) pinpoints the entire EPCOT environment as part of a deconstructed **performance text**. At Disney's *American Adventure Show*, for example, American history unfolds in just 29 minutes. History is almost nonexistent in this production due to the fact that characters become icons, and historical events are fabricated, symbolically mythologised, and compressed into snapshots (Dennett 1989:50). The fictitious premise of the piece is immediately proposed in its Prologue where former American president Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) and popular American novelist Mark Twain (1835-1930), who obviously never met historically, act as narrators. As they step away from their role as narrators and physically interact with other figures in the production, one has to question the accuracy of each scene (Dennett 1989:50). Ironically, in the deconstruction or manipulation of historical facts, the truth, or the source of a dramatic text is lost, ignored or even contradicted while at the same time it is apparently honoured.

Disney's *American Adventure* projects a sequence of memorable images including former presidents, Marilyn Monroe, and an astronaut on the moon's

surface. These images serve as a reflection of American history, and they create interesting silences, which are never mentioned in a 'fantasyland' (Dennett 1989:51). Consequently, a disparity between artificial history and living memory is created. This once again illustrates the manifestation of deconstruction where master narratives are reformulated into new narratives.

In Disneyland consumer goods, objects, images or self-advertisements transmit a single message: '*buy me and be satisfied, at least for now*' (Ratcliff 1989:122). Disneyland's mechanically reproduced brochure persuades us that we are free participants in the marketplace, not terrified by mechanization, not addicted to sensuality, but sovereign in our power to choose (Ratcliff 1989:122). Spectator-consumers are at least partially defined by the products, styles, or images that they consume. A more subtle definition occurs when they buy into the attitudes prevailing in a subculture, like Disneyland, and consummate a transaction on an imaginary market. Fictive or real, consumerism reduces the spectator-consumer to a detail in the image of the thing consumed in an attenuation of the self (Ratcliff 1989:122).

According to Lotman (1972:10) human communication does not succeed in conveying information correctly. Since the end of the eighteenth century, a rise in the demand for 'truth' in painting came to the fore. This desire for truth was initially substituted by authoritative or reliable documentation in the tradition of the newflash, as well as by photography. The juxtapositioning of certain images thus leads to new insights, which in turn question the spectator-consumer's vision of reality. It is therefore necessary for spectator-consumers to distinguish between imitations and realities: in this way, the work of art becomes a point of departure for presenting



deconstructed, reformulated, and objective messages to spectator-consumers: Everything that is seen in a 'simulacrum-cum-work of art' is not necessarily a representation of reality, but is a representation of an imitated, deconstructed, or simulated reality. The work of art therefore becomes a 'miniature simulacrum' because spectator-consumers interpret their own vision of the reality which the particular work of art may exhibit, according to the amount of information they receive and interpret. The work of art launches a play between the artist and his or her spectator-consumers, between visual style and social criticism, and between single image and global meaning. To a certain extent, the artist becomes the paragon of the multinational media corporation at work in Postmodern society, since the work of art juggles with the spectator-consumer's concept of reality. In this way, the juxtapositioning of dissimilar images, as in Wolfaardt's *Mosheshwe, Oom Paul, Rhino, and Mona* (see Figure 15), from history represents a new form of deconstructed reality which extends beyond the borders of the everyday milieu towards a state of hyperreality.

One can therefore deduce that the employment of a state of hyperreality via simulation, implies certain repercussions for the contemporary visual arts. The 'pop-surrealistic-Disneyesque' art of illusion, is committed to the questioning of the state of the original in the art world. A series of particular images

determines reality in a given society. These images are created by a narrative society which is defined by advertising systems, which in turn manipulate certain images to intoxicate spectator-consumers. Information-giving images which are created in art by the simulacrum are experienced by spectator-consumers in a twofold manner. Firstly, they forget that they are being confronted by an imaginary happening. Secondly, they stay aware of the fact that what they are viewing is only an imitation or a secondhand representation of reality. Art is created by a multitude of signs which are presented as more real than reality itself. Art becomes a rendering of a world defined by certain models, codes or images. These signs continue to create an obligation for the artist as well as the spectator-consumer, to question the state of reality, because the artist himself becomes the epitome of the multinational media corporation which juggles the spectator-consumer's conception of reality, according to the images presented as a uniform entity. The spectator-consumer has to distinguish between 'realities and imitations'.

Lotman (1972:13) furthermore regards art as a manifestation of the signs which fill the world with meaning. It is therefore appropriate to inquire into the nature of this process of sign communication in Postmodern society in the next section of this study.

Chapter Three:

Disneyland as model for the visualisation of semiotic content in the visual arts

3.1. The essence of semiotic content in Disneyland

*...imagery grants perpetual
 life in our memories...*
 (in Schickel 1989:159)

...it's all in the ears...
 (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:15)

3.1.1. Semiotics and images, images, images in Disneyland

According to Baudrillard (in Smart 1992:51-6), Postmodern society is ruled primarily in symbolic fashion, via the proliferation of **mass mediated images**. Baudrillard believes that Postmodern society is no longer socially determined, but that it **creates itself via the imagery presented in the media**. The function of images as propagators and circulators of meaning in a society, has subsequently been analysed in art history and in fields of study such as Structuralism, Psychoanalysis and especially Semiotics (Chadwick 1992:10). It is therefore necessary to take a closer look at Semiotics, in order to comprehend its manifestation in Disneyland.

The point of a semiotic approach to popular culture is similar to psychiatrist R.D.Laing's⁷³ communication systems approach to family therapy. Laing discovers

⁷³R.D.Laing is a noted psychiatrist who specializes in the analysis of schizophrenia.

the 'larger stories' which include individual signs, symptoms, and clusters of symptoms (Mechling & Mechling 1981:166). The foremost semiotic analysis of Disneyland, however, is Louis Marin's approach of reading the map of Disneyland as a text of possible narratives to be pursued by spectator-consumers.

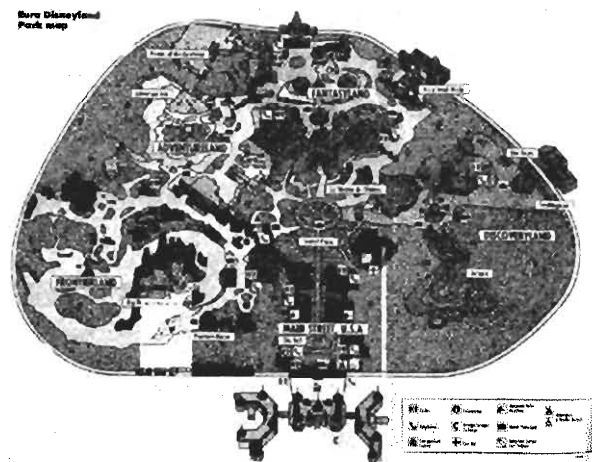


Figure 17: 'Map of Euro Disneyland', 1992, IBM, Coloured Ink on Paper (in Euro Disneyland Guest Book 1992:1).

In this model, Marin's Marxist-structuralist analysis presents Disneyland as '*centered space*' with *Main Street* as the '*narrative operator*' that leads the '*visitor-performer/spectator-consumer*' into the centre of the '*text*' (Mechling & Mechling 1981:167). *Main Street* is the axis of Disneyland, leading from reality to fantasy. It forces the visitor-performer/spectator-consumer to see the relations and differences between these two worlds. Marin (in Mechling & Mechling 1981:167) continues by defining *Main Street* as a 'district' which separates and links *Frontierland* and *Adventureland* on the one hand, and *Tomorrowland* on the other. On the left, *Frontierland* and *Adventureland* represent the two distances of history and geography, and on the

right, *Tomorrowland* represents space as time, and the universe captured by science and technology. Marin (in Mechling & Mechling 1981:169) sees *Main Street* as both a passageway from reality to fantasy, and a mediating space between America's past history and geography and her future space and time. Marin finds an economic meaning modelled in the two 'eccentric centres' on either side of *Main Street*, namely *New Orleans Square* and the *Carousel of Progress*. Its economic meaning lies in its most important narrative, the *Pirates of the Caribbean* ride. Here, the juxtapositioning of skulls and skeletons with treasure reveals the feudal hoarding of treasure as a symptom of death. In contrast is the 'live exchange' of commodities in the shops and restaurants of *Main Street*. Ultimately, Disneyland implies the value cluster of a **bourgeois capitalist culture** (Mechling & Mechling 1981:178).

Peirce (1839-1914), and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) recreated the science of the life of signs during the late nineteenth century (Stam et al 1992:1-5). These signs include representational systems and communication methods such as advertising, food, objects, clothing, jazz, and imagery (Stam et al 1992:1-5). Semiotics provides a key to the comprehension, metaphysics, and psyche of Postmodern society (Stam et al 1992:1-5). The study of semiotics is interested in the representation of objects, concepts, and ideas in the shape of signs, images, and illustrations in the mass media (Blonsky 1985:233). Lotman (1981a:1) maintains that when human culture communicates, information is sent to and fro by way of various types of language. These languages can take on an acoustic or visual form. An example of such a language structure is a traffic light system which is used in urban areas in order to supply drivers and pedestrians with the necessary information in order for them to take the correct action

within arranged society. Lotman (1981a:1) sees language as an ordered, communicative sign system, with the purpose of exchanging information. A sign, for Lotman, is a materially exhibited substitute for objects, phenomena and concepts which are employed during the process of information exchange in a society.

The social function of communication is defined by Sebeok (in Blonsky 1985:451) as the achievement of continuity in society. Communication, according to Sebeok (Blonsky 1985: 451) must ultimately lead to **humanity's universal participation** in experiences and ideas from the past, with the assistance of a **network of symbols** which can be recovered from the media. Fabo (1993:316) furthermore regards the contemporary emphasis upon images, as the outcome of electronic image processing, which may lead to the relationship between an image and a concept in universal dialogue.

During the 1993 UNESCO Symposium entitled *Arts and the Media: Towards a Universal Understanding?* the role of the contemporary image was pitted against the role of human **imagination** and **memory** as the links between tradition and the present (Fabo 1993:316-20). Spectator-consumers use imagery in order to steer clear of a state of 'Babelonian'⁷⁴ confusion and to maintain a sense of universal comprehension (Fabo 1993). According to Sebeok (in Fabo 1993) their use of language, number, gesture, image and other symbolic forms, makes it possible for spectator-consumers to 'connect' with their

⁷⁴The city of Babel is mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible. The building of a tower was frustrated when the God of Abraham and Isaac confused the language of the builders (Genesis 11:1-10). Today, the term 'Babelonian confusion' is used to describe a scene of noise or confusion.



environment. Disney, because of its global status⁷⁵, stands at the forefront in creating the premises for connectivity.

Eco (in Blonsky 1985:176) stated during the first congress of Semiotics in 1974, that the **image or sign plays a central role in the consciousness of spectator-consumers**. Communicationist Roman Jakobson (in Blonsky 1985:177) describes the science of Semiotics as that study which is interested in the basic '*relation de renvoi*': in other words, the **relationship between sender and decoder**, where something stands for something else in a particular relationship.

Semiotics, according to Sebeok (in Blonsky 1985:233), is involved with the formulation and encoding of messages via sources, the transmission of these messages via channels, and the decoding of interpretations thereof via destinations and their meaning. Semiotics starts with the **sign as object** and ends with the final message which consists of a series of signs which constitute meaning (Blonsky 1985:203-9). Semiotics looks at the influence of the media in creating abstract patterns of signification or representation in a society (Smagula 1991:8). Semiotics is the study of those tendencies, modes and ideas in society, which are taken as reality by its spectator-consumers, via the transmission of imagery by the mass media (Smagula 1991:8).

In this connection, Baudrillard (in Luke 1991:348) seeks to elaborate a new political economy of the sign. With the planned programming of production, capitalism moves from the production of 'useful' goods and services to the **generation of semiotic**

codes and images: the focus of our understanding of commodity fetishism, as visible in Disneyland, must therefore shift from exchange values to 'sign values' invested in products as image or symbolic coding (Luke 1991:348).

Every dimension of social existence today is a complex simulation of reality, designed to sustain the fragile cycles of political, economic and cultural production. Baudrillard (in Luke 1991:363) shows that in hyperreality, needs are grounded in the prepacked expectations of cultural codes conveyed to individuals as part and parcel of their **aesthetized duty to consume**. Individuals serve as the vital productive force of monopoly capitalism, or of any prevailing organization, while the code enforces their productive potential through a free-floating flow of signifiers and signs. Under this regime, art and industry continually exchange signs in order to keep art productive and industrial production masked in aesthetic signs of prestige. **In the Postmodern terrain of cybernetic hyperrealism, spectator-consumers already live out the aesthetic hallucination of reality** (Luke 1991:363).

In Disneyland then, Allan (1984/85:136) sees the **extraordinary juxtapositioning of a kaleidoscope of images and signs**⁷⁶ as a central factor.

The basic element of a sign is that it functions as a substitute for different meanings (Danto 1992). The image, sign, or word replaces the object or concept represented. According to Berger (in Smagula 1991:28) all images are created by spectator-consumers. An image is a vision which is recreated

⁷⁵According to a recent poll, the Disney parks have the most respected brand name in the United States of America (Henry 1992:24). Following in their footsteps is Kodak, Mercedes-Benz, CNN, Rolex, Levi's, IBM and AT&T.

⁷⁶Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* (Disney,1946), for example, reveals a cornucopia of dissimilar signs, such as the *Queen of Hearts* who chases *Alice* back into the rabbit hole, the garden of life-like flowers which symbolise musical instruments, and the *knight on the white horse* (Allan 1984/5:136).

or reproduced. An image is an appearance or series of appearances which are independent of the place and time of their initial occurrence. These 'image-appearances' are subsequently preserved within this initial state (Smagula 1991:28). A sign is always a substitute for something. Therefore, each sign implies a constant relationship with the object for which it stands (Lotman 1981:3). In Semiotics, it has been proved that certain signs imply certain codes and subcodes. These signs further imply free creations of content which in turn can create several contexts within a wide spectrum (Lotman 1981:3).

According to Peirce (in Blonsky 1985:176) there are several categories for the creation of meaning. These include **iconism, symbolisation, and indexicalisation**. Peirce argues that signs come into being via the global interaction of these categories of the creation of meaning. A sign is therefore that relationship between an expression and a content (Blonsky 1985:176; Finch 1983:242). This relationship has subsequently been labelled the **semantics of the sign** (Finch 1983:242). The semantic relationship contains the contents of the sign (Finch 1983:242). Furthermore, the sign exhibits a syntactical relationship: in other words, the juxtapositioning of single signs into consecutive signs which lead to the creation of final, all encompassing signs and meaning (Finch 1983:242).

The existence of two types of semiotic messages was realised by the Greek philosopher Hippocrates (c.500-400 BC). These semiotic messages manifest themselves in the form of signs in human communication systems (Blonsky 1985:233). These **signs can be conventional** (i.e. the sign depends upon the norms and traditions of a culture according to time and place), **natural** (i.e. they have the power to emit the same meaning at all times and in all

places), **pictorial or iconic** (i.e. a representation of an object according to similarity or likeness such as the self portrait, diagram or statue which enjoys unique and inherent expression), **indexical** (i.e. determined by the direct relationship of an object with its representation: it includes a causal point of reference between the sign and the interpretant, for example, smoke which represents fire) and **symbolic** (i.e. which is determined by language)(Blonsky 1985:233). According to Lotman (1981b:3.4), two cultural signs exist in a growing society, namely the **word** and the **image**.

According to critic Margot Lovejoy (1993:107), industrialised society cannot function without its daily dose of media imagery. She sees the photographic image as the chief carrier of information, which in turn determines the state of a culture and its dominant ideology.

De Saussure (in Smart 1993:1-5) described the sign as the representation of something, namely the 'signifier', and of an idea which is represented, namely the 'signified'. The 'signifier' is a concrete, touchable, and visual sign which leads to a laboured concept, which is coupled with other signifiers. The 'signified', in turn, delivers a 'perceptual edition' of an object (Smart 1993:1-5). This involved theory of semiotic communication is interested in the role of the 'signifier' (for example the image of Mickey Mouse) which leaves behind the traces of a 'narrative' (such as fantasy, mystery and universality) of that which is 'represented' (for example Mickey Mouse as the Sorcerer's apprentice in *Fantasia*).

The crux here is the semiotic interest in the 'representation' of something that once existed in the real world and which is now once again diagrammatically evoked. It is a science of the

relationship between the 'signifier' and that which is 'signified'. It is important to remember that the 'signified' is not equal to the physical entity it represents, but that it is equal to a 'cerebral idea-version' of that entity in the memory and mind of the spectator (Smart 1993:1-5).

A sign is therefore part of the social environment out of which it is born: in this way, the sign can be either paradigmatic (i.e. a single image equals a single idea) or syntagmatic (i.e. sequential characteristics determine a signifiable whole such as a certain tie, jacket, and Gucci shoes which suppose a certain 'fashionableness' (Stam 1993:1-5).

Eco (in Smart 1993:5) further clarifies the sign as that 'function' between a material expression and its content. According to Peirce, the production of meaning (in other words the process of semiosis) implies the coming together of three participatory elements:

1. The existence of a 'sign';
2. The existence of an 'object' which is represented by the original sign;
3. The existence of an 'interpretant' which elicits associations from the spectator-consumer, according to the relationship between the object and the sign (Smart 1993:5).

Peirce (in Blonsky 1985:176) anticipates an arena of 'never-ending semiosis', where signs refer to other signs without end, and where **meaning changes continually**. To illustrate this, we may refer to Graves who deploys an artillery of signs, symbols, and iconographies of New York in his *Hotel New York* at Euro Disneyland (Stephens 1990: 76). According to Graves (in Stephens 1990) his playful motifs call attention to the make-believe aspect of this world, and provide the right 'corny' touches that appeal to global

sensibilities. Antoine Predock's designs for Euro Disneyland, include trails which evoke the history and myths of the far-off place with their conceptualism (Stephens 1990:77). With titles such as "*Trail of Artifacts*" or "*Trail of Legends*", ideas are formulated in the mind, pieced together by certain buildings and artefacts appearing and reappearing throughout *Hotel Santa Fe*, where the site of the imagination expands into a cinematographic realm of escapism (Stephens 1990:77).

Essentially, theming at Disneyland includes the use of iconography, irony, narrative, dream sequences, and 'high concept' (Stephens 1990:121). When asked to explain Disney **iconography**, Eisner (in Jacobs 1992: 62) stated that it depends upon the **appropriation of classical references**, such as the dolphin in Graves' *Walt Disney World Dolphin Hotel*. Disneyland's essence lies in its strong personal image which is imprinted with evocative and metaphoric thought (Jacobs 1992:62).

Kuenz (1993:64) interprets Disney as the provider of the structures whereby spectator-consumers establish and affirm their identity by locating themselves within already existing social structures and the power relations which they express. According to Kuenz (1993:65) Disney repeats and magnifies dominant social formations. Kuenz (1993:66) sees the process of acquiring self-knowledge as specifically a spectator-consumer, national subject, and heterosexual 'family member' in Disneyland; as reproducing power relations of the dominant capitalistic ideology which Disneyland supports. We are only allowed access to Disneyland as spectator-consumers 'identifying' with or finding pleasure in the **dominant ideological structures** in the park. Kuenz (1993:87) offers an alternative vision of consumerism at Disneyland by stating that one must begin to

understand the specific desires exploited in order to find other ways of fulfilling them.

Marin (in Kuenz 1993:69) believes that Disney reduces the dynamic organization of places to a scheme allowing only the same redundant behaviour. Disney 'rides' operate with a limited menu of options from which to choose, and they grow tiresome after the third time. Rather than providing opportunities to violate social proprieties, everything in Disneyland is designed to confirm them, and make doing so fun. Kuenz (1993:74) notes that if we find Disneyland attractions pleasurable, we are accepting the world they represent. This in turn requires identifying ourselves with it in the only role available: that of technology's beneficiaries. In this way, EPCOT's *American Adventure* gives spectator-consumers the opportunity to identify with the inflected values of individualism, innovation, freedom, independence, and pioneering which are subordinated to the **grand narrative of American life told in words and images** (Kuenz 1993:75).

Similarly, St John analyzes certain cartoon imagery as racial fantasy set against the Depression era. He sees the famous image of the Big Bad Wolf in Disney's *The Three Little Pigs*, as representative of an entire range of Indian, African-American, and Jewish stereotypes. St John (1983:66) notes Disney's employment of the '*wild beasts and skulking Indians of the American imagination*', where the Wolf is the stereotype of an American settler's image of '*an Indian behind every tree*'. Critic Lewis Jacobs (in St John 1983:67) suggests that Disney was an acute interpreter of the violent spirit of his times. Psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (in St John 1983:67) alternatively interprets Disney's material as collective catharsis: his Tarzan stories, the sagas of twelve-year-old explorers, the adventures of Mickey Mouse,

and comic books serve to release collective aggression.

Kunzle (1990:159) furthermore analyzes Disney's Duck comics for its pattern of themes, locales, contemporary allusions, and historical or geographical references which pinpoint some of the finer nuances of imperialist ideology concerned with the evolution of American foreign policy during 1947-1966. Kunzle (1990:159) regards Carl Barks' Duck cartoons as gentle mockeries of racial and cultural stereotyping. The character of Uncle Scrooge is interpreted as the representation of the spirit of American Imperialism at its most aggressive. Scrooge (i.e. = the United States or Uncle Sam) worships only Mammon whose altar and container is the famous Money Bin. Kunzle (1990:160) sees the Money Bin as an obvious symbol of greed, fetishized into sportive, artistic, and psychoanalytic realms.



Figure 18: 'Treasure of Marco Polo', 1966, Carl Barks, Ink on Paper (in Kunzle 1990:163).

Kunzle (1990:161) analyzes Disney's *A Spicy Tale* iconographically, set against the social reality of the Cuban Revolution of 1959, as well as the CIA's failure to overthrow Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961: Uncle Sam now had to go elsewhere for the spice and sugar in his beverages.

Kunzle (1990:161) interprets the character of Donald Duck in the role of a 'tutor' (e.g. Donald = peace =

American popular culture ('doing the twist, singing like *Elfish Pestly*, playing bongo drums!') for the life-threatening native resistance (Cubans); supplying the most superficial, noisy and unproductive symbols of advanced capitalism.



Figure 19: 'A Spicy Tale', 1962, Carl Barks, Ink on Paper (in Kunzle 1990:161).

In other words, Disney is not so innocent after all.

Semiotics thus presents abstract patterns of images as presented by the mass media in a society. A look at the specific nature of these abstractions, codes, and subcodes reveals the Semiotic manipulation of a society that exists between reality and pure signs, alphabets, and brand names.

3.1.2. Icons, trademarks and brand names in Disneyland: a look at Mickey Mouse

When Disney markets licensed products featuring Mickey Mouse⁷⁷, Minnie, Pluto, Goofy, and Donald, it places a signature on them (Jacobs 1991:45). Disney stamps products with its imprimatur, a signature that

says: 'Isn't this fun?'. The Disney logo, which for all intents and purposes is Mickey, is the symbol of a profoundly American cultural phenomenon, namely 'good clean fun' (Jacobs 1991:45).

Since Eisner became CEO in 1984, he has diversified the company's cultural products by setting up *Touchstone* and *Hollywood Records*, a label for 'grown-up pop'. There are more Disney things out there, more images of Mickey, than ever before. Charles Totaro, the managing creative executive of *Disney Consumer Products*, interprets **Mickey as a strong identifier**. Even when schematic, Mickey is recognizable because he can be drawn in countless styles⁷⁸(Jacobs 1991:46).

Mickey is the most recognizable graphic in the world, according to noted film critic Leonard Maltin and creative director David Bender of *Janklow/Bender*, the New York advertising agency which handles *Disney Consumer Products* (Jacobs 1991: 47). Bender keeps two statues in his office, one of Mickey Mouse and the other of Buddha. Disney is now launching a global merchandising program with three possible directions for its licensees: 'hip' is the 'ultra-cool look' that is young and global; 'contemporary' is classic, smooth and sure; and 'nostalgic' is rich and deep. Disney's 1990s look includes Neville Brody typefaces, Duffy Group-style linoleum cuts, Rodchenko posters, Keith Haring 'hip' products, Postmodern cliché, turquoise columns, magenta pediments and candy coloured *trompe l'oeil*. Marketing director Glen Ellen Brown states that Disney's unique selling proposition is emotion (Jacobs 1991:49).

⁷⁷ Mickey Mouse will subsequently be referred to as Mickey.

⁷⁸ For example, from a Bauhaus Mickey used as corporate logo, the classic 'pie-eyed' Mickey on upscale merchandise, or the bright, airbrushed contemporary Mickey on high top sneakers (Jacobs 1991:47).



The **image of Mickey**, regardless of his nationality as the Italian *Topolino*, the Japanese *Miki Kuchi* or the Swedish *Musse Pigg*, is seen by popular author John Updike (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:1-5) as the ambassador of the Disneyland empire. Mickey is valuable as a symbol of the American mass ideals of the 'all-around-nice-guy'. Corliss (1992d:89) notes that Disney iconography (see Figure 1) reinforces Disney ideology in the way that medieval religious art did: it announces Disneyland as a complete, hermetic world. Psychiatrist Fritz Moellenhoff (1989:105) links Mickey's success to the simple pictures and immediate happenings which do not presuppose any knowledge but which touch on the child's emotions simply by visual means. Moellenhoff notes that the repetition of actions and gestures gives profound satisfaction to the child. Moellenhoff (1989:106) attempts to find a rationale behind the image of Mickey as a creation fabricated for childlike intuition, because of its 'smallness'. In other words, Mickey's success is due to the gratification he presents to children, in their daydreams of growing up. For them, Mickey substitutes the daydream of adulthood with a series of pictures in which smallness is victorious.

Moellenhoff (1989:106) sees Mickey as representative of a specific kind of American humour which **denies the spectator-consumer's need for logic**, and which prefers the grotesque. In Mickey films, wild action, jumping, fighting, and conquering are done at breakneck speed: at times a plan of action is concocted but rarely carried through since it usually ends up in haphazard **wandering**.

Moellenhoff (1989:107) describes Mickey as persevering, courageous and cunning, and as a good identification vehicle in the spectator-consumer's enjoyment of stage and film. He places the image of Mickey in the tradition of anthropomorphic thought

where poets and writers like to attribute human characteristics to animals⁷⁹. Moellenhoff (1989:108) admits, however, that spectator-consumers are not concerned with the material of the film after they have seen it, because their experiences seldom leave the plane of visual entertainment. Popularity has to do with the 'unconsciousness' of spectator-consumers with whom something or someone is popular.

Mickey has the head of a mouse, he is exaggerated, impudent, childish, his neck is missing, his body is round, fat and undifferentiated, his arms and legs are unnaturally thin, his hands and feet are unnaturally large, his larynx contains a peculiar voice which is crowing, thin and without modulation, and we are unable to tell whether the character is a man, woman or child (Moellenhoff 1989:109). Mickey's anthropomorphic and sexless voice met with laughter after his first, deeper voice failed. Moellenhoff (1989:111) also sees the popularity of Mickey in terms of folklore in which a lover expresses the wish to become a mouse in order to be able to slip unseen into the bedroom of his sweetheart. There is an unconscious tendency, especially in the German ethos, to make love objects temporarily asexual or small. Mickey films exhume the qualities of a child's world of wishes and fantasies, of mechanized fairytales which are closely involved with our own unconsciousness. Moellenhoff (1989:111) situates the attraction of Mickey in the interweaving of fantasy and reality, between the world of our conception of reality, and that other world of fantasy and dreams.

The secret of Mickey's appeal further lies in his primitiveness, his mechanism, and his freedom of movement (Moellenhoff 1989:117). Mickey is thus seen as the 'tool' which meticulously promotes the

⁷⁹This genre includes Aesop's and La Fontaine's *Fables*, and Goethe's epic *Reinecke Fuchs*.

patented and conservative image of Disneyland (Rudolph 1991:48).

Mickey was interpreted as an ego ideal by psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and David R. Berland (in Berland 1982:96). Mickey is explained as a child's ego ideal which exhibits the capacity to play, to make play of work, and which never gets into trouble through his own mistakes. Mickey's magnetism is situated in his playfulness as well as his way of exploring whatever strikes his curiosity (Berland 1982:96). Finch (1983:150) describes Mickey as the:

average young boy of no particular age, living in a small town, clean living, fun loving, bashful around girls, polite, and clever.

This image is similar to that of another Disney character, *Pinocchio*, who does not wish to grow out of childhood but wants to become a 'real boy' (Sragow 1993:106). Berland (1982:96) continues his analysis of Mickey by stating that the character not only attracts the **child**, but that he also exhibits **idealized qualities for the adult**. Mickey's loyalty, cleanliness and sexlessness make him a safe identification object (Berland 1982:96; Schickel 1968; Holleran 1990; Moellenhof 1940).

Berland (1982:97) ultimately sees Mickey as a major character in popular culture: Mickey illustrates the ironic role of the witty underdog who is able to outsmart his opponents. Mickey personifies the return to childhood, the satisfaction of nostalgic longings, and is a clear example of the phenomenon of the juvenilization or neotenization of fantasy animals (Lawrence 1986:66). La Barre (in Lawrence 1986:67) points out that Mickey's physical configuration of a

high and slightly bulging forehead, a brain case large in proportion to the face, big eyes, rounded cheeks, and short limbs elicits an adult nurturing response which moves spectator-consumers towards feelings of tenderness. Gould (in Lawrence 1986:68) further demonstrates the evolution of Mickey towards increased neotenization, from his conception as a nasty character in 1928 to a lovable national symbol in the Postmodern era.

Urdike (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:1-5) sees the image of Mickey as a classic **trademark** which exhibits the qualities of pluckiness, inventiveness, resilience, and good-naturedness. Care (1981:77) reveals that Mickey appeared at *MGM's Hollywood Party*, a musical revue hosted by popular singer Jimmy Durante, as a spunky, mischievous maniac, pulling his snout into a parody of the Durante profile.

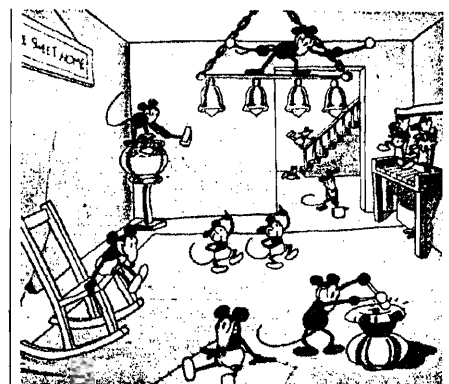


Figure 20: 'While the Cat's Away', 1929, Walt Disney, Ink on Paper (in Care 1981:77).

Mickey's saleable factor is not the plastic toy-imitation, but the character image or trademark which is impressed upon the memory of the spectator-consumer as a Semiotic sign (Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:1-5). Mickey introduces certain essences which remain in the imagination of spectator-consumers as a result of the information which they have already come across in the media about these characters (Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:1-5). Similarly, the character of Roger Rabbit in *Who framed Roger Rabbit?* is a



parody of popular Humphrey Bogart films about stereotyped 'jaded detectives' in Raymond Chandler stories from the 1940s (Johnston & Thomas 1993:181).

Corliss (1994c:54) regards the image of Mickey as a 'classic icon' which today decorates a wide range of consumables. The University of California even bestowed an honorary degree upon Walt Disney in praise of the *joie de vivre*, universal appeal and mythic stature of his creation, Mickey (Lawrence 1986:65). Many other important figures in contemporary culture regard Mickey as an **icon**. For them, Mickey is a **sign which advocates a subtext** of musicality, Rabelaisian⁸⁰ morality and comicality (Finch 1983: 424). Several popular cultural critics further maintain that the comic-book 'superhero' of contemporary society, has become a weighty icon. This implies that even when spectator-consumers have never read a comic strip, they nevertheless are aware of the figures of Batman, Superman, Dick Tracey, Spiderman or Mickey (McCue & Bloom 1993:79).

According to Finch (1983:150) Disneyland characters convey the essences of a Fred Astaire (1899-1986), Charlie Chaplin (1889-1979) or Douglas Fairbanks (1883-1939). Similarly, Johnston and Thomas (1993: 38) note the influence of live-action performances by Chaplin and Harold Lloyd on Disney, where situations were built around '*suspense, mood, gags, and villainy*'. Finch (1983:150) notes that the images of Chaplin call into being the image of the small, helpless, lost little boy such as in *Pinocchio* (1940). Disneyland characters individually represent a type of fullness of character within the collective memory of mass society (Finch 1983:150). For example, the

names of the seven dwarfs⁸¹ contain specific Semiotic information which determines their meaning within a framework of the memory of a society (Finch 1983:256).

Disneyland characters were presented during the late 1920s by way of generic codes or formulas which became staple items in the cartoon repertoire (Tannenbaum 1983:303). Precise character development is highly prized at Disney studios, where exact facial expression, 'underacting', slapstick, the communication of ideas in single, exaggerated actions, as well as 'focus' create memorable characters such as Jafar, the villain in *Aladdin*, and his elegant Erte-type 'shoulder padded look', or Captain Hook in *Peter Pan* with his Gilbert and Sullivan-inspired 'whimsy' (Johnston & Thomas 1993: 109,213).

The character of the Genie in Disney's *Aladdin*, revolutionized cartoon voice acting with dubbing by actor Robin Williams (Corliss 1992a:74). The character of the Genie makes dozens of metamorphoses from a Scotsman, a Scots dog, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Senor Wences, Ed Sullivan, Groucho Marx, a French waiter, a turkey, the crows from *Dumbo*, Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, a rabbit, a dinosaur, William F. Buckley Jr., Robert de Niro, a stewardess, a bashful sheep, Pinocchio, a magician, a Jean Gabin-style Frenchman, Sebastian the crab from *The Little Mermaid*, Arsenio Hall, a tailor, Walter Brennan, a television parade hostess, Ethel Merman, Rodney Dangerfield, Jack Nicholson, a bee, a U-boat, a one-man band, and a quartet of cheerleaders. Many of these apparitions or images, which display the ethos and **myth of Americanised entertainment**,

⁸⁰French novelist Rabelais was noted for his brilliant character portrayals. Disney has also been equated with nineteenth century novelist Charles Dickens for his magnificent ability to capture the essence of true personalities.

⁸¹The seven dwarfs appearing in Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, (1937), are Happy, Doc, Sleepy, Bashful, Grumpy, Sneezy and Dopey.



show up in the song *A Friend Like Me*, a 'showstopper-abstract-pantomime' in which the Genie displays awesome versatility and imagery (Corliss 1992a:74).

Walt Disney (in Finch 1983:431) labelled **the idea or image as the mythology of the twentieth century**. According to him a single image determines certain meanings, emotions and ideas which proliferate within the collective imagination and knowledge structures of spectator-consumers.

Disney (in Finch 1983) furthermore negated the existence of the innocent eye⁸². Similarly, author Ann Spirm (in Kay 1990:53) states that theme parks are readily appreciated by spectator-consumers, because they depict archetypal environments as well as the iconic eternity or immortality of fairy tales. This fact supports the successful interpretation of a character via the animation artist who has the ability to represent an **emotion**, happening or character with the minimum employment of line (Finch 1983:18)

Updike (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:17) regards Mickey as a prototype of the Disneyland cosmos. According to him, Mickey's 'ears' become representative of an ideal arena where notation, symbolisation and comic strip eternity are applied. Updike (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:17) sees the comic strip world as a:

*Surrealistic, optical and logical
consistency which exists somewhere
between reality and the space of
pure signs, alphabets and
trademarks.*

⁸²The concept of the 'innocent eye' was explained by Sir Ernst Gombrich in his *Art and Illusion*, as that vision which takes place without prior knowledge.

According to Updike (Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991) naked-chested Mickey with his yellow shoes, oval buttons, and red shorts exhibits the qualities of an icon. Finch (1983:442) similarly states that when spectator-consumers see an image with round, black ears, yellow shoes or red shorts, they immediately comprehend the total meaningfulness of Mickey: his humour, tenacity, honesty, and entertainment value.

Updike (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:22-5) interprets Mickey as being comparable to the symbols of yin and yang, the Cross and the Star of David, because they are all omnisciently visible as sign, hieroglyphic trace, secret power or electric pulse. Furthermore, Mickey has always been associated with time and timelessness (Lawrence 1986:70). His timepieces became an American institution when in 1935 two-million Mickey watches were sold in a single eight-week period (Finch 1983:126). Mickey's name is also employed widely as linguistic indication of neoteny and powerlessness (Lawrence 1986:71). In common usage, something that is 'Mickey Mouse' is not quite adequate; it is trivial or foolish. A quick course in college is called a 'Mick', sportsmen refer to a losing team's membership in the 'Mickey Mouse league', and an undercapitalized venture is called a 'Mickey Mouse operation' (Lawrence 1986:71).

The image that Postmodern spectator-consumers have of Mickey, is therefore the icon of the classic rounded head, fitted with two circular, black ears, such as the one created by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks⁸³, 65 years ago (Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:1). But the question remains: just what is it that makes Mickey so recognisable in modern history, so that

⁸³Ub (Ubbe) Iwerks met Disney in 1919 in a commercial art studio and became his partner at Laugh-O-Grams Incorporated from 1923 onwards. Iwerks was responsible for a lot of the vitality of Disney's characters, since he was better at drawing characters instinctively: a trait acknowledged by Disney himself (Thomas 1994).



even members of a remote African tribe choose to mount small mosaic likenesses of Mickey onto their front teeth, and refuse to buy soap if it does not have the image of Mickey embossed on it (Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:17).

Urdike (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:1-10) expands upon the image of Mickey as part of the process of **iconification**: Disney **animation** relates immediate messages of archetypal value, such as embarrassment (i.e. the spaghetti scene in *The Lady and the Tramp* (1955)), joy and ecstasy (i.e. the many productions of romantic scenes in *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast* or *Aladdin*), or heartache (i.e. the death scene of the patriarchal lion king, Mustafa in *The Lion King*). These **archetypal or universal emotions**, elicit further depth and meaning via the conjunction of music and imagery. Urdike (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:1-10) sees Mickey Mouse as timeless, as something which grew beyond the status of 'fad' or 'fashion' towards '**iconicity**'. The **successful icon therefore exhibits the traits of soulfulness, simplicity and imagination**.

During 1928 Mickey Mouse reached mythical status in society: he had a real personality which other comic strip characters of that time did not possess (Finch 1983:50). King George V decreed that there must be a Mickey cartoon at all film performances at the royal palace, the emperor of Japan wore a Mickey watch, Mickey was listed in *Who's Who*, and *Encyclopaedia Britannica* devoted an article to him. Even the German Nazi Party took notice of Mickey as an '*anti-ideal-type-of-animal-covered-with-vermin*' (Keller 1983:297).

Brockway (1989:26) sees Mickey as a **complex fairy tale character, profound in his symbolic and mythic implications, touching something deep in**

the human psyche. In his initial drawings of Mickey, Iwerks created a character in the genre of a swashbuckler like Douglas Fairbanks (Brockway 1989:26). Mickey's slapstick style built upon the comic film style which originated in France in the late 1890s, which was enormously popular among the urban proletariat (Brockway 1989:28). Mickey's antics were squared on the slapstick works of Chaplin, Arbuckle, Keaton, and Lloyd. The Mickey Mouse film was primarily addressed to the inner child in the adult rather than to actual children, few of whom had money for theatre tickets (Brockway 1989:29).

Finch (1983:434; in Lawrence 1986:68) states that Mickey Mouse is part of so-called 'lollipop-art': since his character is created out of several circles, his roundness is interpreted by the spectator-consumer as typical of Semiotic connotations of 'softness, cloudiness, and feminine caring'. This recollection of spectator-consumers, functions like a commercial Rorschach test, whereby spectator-consumers assign certain associations to certain forms, images or signs (Finch 1983:434). In both of Disney's Magic Kingdoms, souvenir 'Mickey Mouse' ear sets are the most frequently purchased items which relate spectator-consumers across the globe to Disney parks and Mickey Mouse (Lawrence 1986:69). Disneyland also specifically employs music to enhance this process of **association and recollection**: the music of the composer Mussorgsky (1839-1881) was used for example, in order to convey the dynamic movement of the spirit world in the feature film *Fantasia* (1940), whilst simultaneously employing a subtext of associations such as 'bestiality, chaos, good versus evil, or angst' (Finch 1983:85-9). During the portrayal of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* in the same film the orchestra instruments were divided into **semiotic symbols** such as 'toot, whistle, plunk' and 'bloom', which immediately

presents spectator-consumers with certain images (Finch 1983:89).

Many theorists⁸⁴ have attempted to interpret the popularity of Mickey in terms of Jungian **psychology**. Iwerks (in Brockway 1989:31) pinpoints Mickey's circular character in terms of the meaning of the circle as symbol of 'ultimate wholeness and vitality'. Hench suggests that the circle is a reassuring shape to which spectator-consumers respond.

Schechter (in Brockway 1989:32) sees Mickey as a 'trickster', the archaic and universally encountered god who, according to Jung, evokes the shadow, the seamy side of the personal unconscious, akin to the Freudian id. The concept of the 'trickster' corresponds to the universal mythic figures such as the Coyote of some American Indians, Loki of the ancient Norse, the popular African myth of the 'tokkelossie', the medieval jester, and Punch and Judy (Brockway 1989:32). In this connection, it is interesting to note the current popularity of the South African praise singer or 'iimbongi'. Whitmont (in Brockway 1989:32) interprets the shadow of Mickey Mouse as representative of an archaic level of the human mind - the level which links us with our animal past - often symbolized by some sort of anthropomorphized animal.

Finch (1983: 64) argues that Disneyland characters take on the form of superheroes, while they fulfill the roles which parody human behaviour in the tradition of the Greek fable poets such as Aesop or Aristophanes. Lotman (1972:37) also maintains that the basic requirement of the Disneyland language of animation is the commitment to **signs of signs**: in

⁸⁴These include Iwerks, former CEO of Walter Elias Disney Enterprises John Hench, Harold Schechter, and Edward Whitmont.

other words, the **movement of 'images of images' in front of the spectator-consumer**. The animation image or 'cartoon' creates drawings which have clear language elements. These language elements also appear in narrative caricatures, and child drawings. What is presented, is not just an image of the outside world, but an image of that outside world as expressed via the honesty and abstraction of the child drawing (Lotman 1972:37). According to Lotman (1972:37) animation specifically stresses the nature of the character, object or idea which is represented.

Thus far, we have found that the study of Semiotics is concerned with the abstract patterns of representation created by the media in a society. The communicative sign system of Postmodern society, is filled with 'substitutes of meaning' in the form of codes and subcodes, cultural icons (such as the image of Mickey Mouse) symbols and indexes, as well as trademarks or brand names which elicit certain 'final messages' in society. Society becomes a space which lies somewhere between reality and the space of pure signs, alphabets or brand names.

As already mentioned, Lovejoy emphasises the photographic image as chief carrier of information. Similarly, Barthes (1977:17) defines the photographic image as 'a message without a code'. The image is not the reality, but at least it is its 'perfect analogon', and it is exactly this analogical perfection which defines the photograph. These messages without a code include the whole range of 'analogical reproductions of reality', such as drawings, paintings, cinema, or theatre. In addition to the analogical content of scene, object, or landscape, each of these develops a supplementary message which is commonly called the 'style' of the reproduction. This second meaning of the image, whose signifier is a certain 'treatment' of the image by a director, reveals

a certain 'culture' of the society receiving the message.

Barthes (1977:18) believes that one can only anticipate that the code of the connoted system is very likely constituted either by a universal symbolic order or by a period rhetoric, in short by a stock of stereotypes (schemes, colours, graphisms, gestures, expressions, arrangements of elements).

In his description of connotative procedures, Barthes (1977:22) sees images as accepted inducers of idea associations and symbols. Barthes means that an image, for example Mickey, leads to a series of thoughts in the mind of the spectator-consumer which in turn lead to the meaning of the image. These objects are the elements of a 'lexicon', which allows them to be instantly constituted into syntax or meaning (Barthes 1977:23). To the connotation procedures of the image may be added the 'text' which accompanies the image (Barthes 1977:25). The 'text' constitutes a 'parasitic message' designed to 'connote' the image. The text 'quickens' the image with one or more 'signifieds'. In other words, the image no longer *illustrates* the words, it is now the words which illustrate the image. Formerly, the image clarified the text, today, the text 'loads' the image, it burdens it with culture, with a moral, and with an imagination.

Barthes (1977:28) defines signification as the dialectical movement which resolves the contradiction between cultural and natural man or woman. Thanks to its code of connotation, the reading of the image is always historical: it depends on the reader's 'knowledge' just as though it were a matter of real language. It is intelligible only if one has learnt the signs (Barthes 1977:28). At the root of the semiology of images lies the question: can analogical

representation, a 'copy', produce true systems of signs? Or do they merely produce simple agglutinations of symbols? (Barthes 1977:32).

Barthes (1977:33) analyzes the advertising image and pinpoints its three messages:

1. A linguistic message, which is denotational and connotational, and is supported by labels, captions, and a knowledge of its language;
2. A coded iconic message, which is the pure image. It provides a series of discontinuous signs with the support of a knowledge of the habits of a widespread culture, and includes certain stereotypes;
3. A non-coded literal message, which is deprived of all knowledge, the spectator-consumer continues to read images as identifiable objects with the support of our perceptive knowledge, as well as the knowledge of what an image is.

Sebeok (in Blonsky 1985:458) furthers this debate by noting that images present 'some information to some spectator-consumers at some times'. It is the how and why which remains complicated. According to Sebeok, the perception of diagrammatic drawings, comic strips, drawings, paintings, or photographs varies according to the species, culture, and time of the spectator-consumer.

Postmodern society is ruled in symbolic fashion by the images in the mass media. These images strongly influence cultural myths such as class and power differences. Images and signs create the possible narratives in a society. Disneyland stands at the forefront in creating the premises for better communication via a plethora of signs: the image or sign plays a central role in the consciousness of the spectator-consumer, and its final meaning depends upon the relationship between the sender (artist) and

the decoder (spectator-consumer). Communication is managed by the sign or photographic image as chief carrier of information in the Postmodern era. Certain signs deliver certain messages: Disneyland provides structures whereby spectator-consumers establish a specific American identity via the use of specific American stereotypes and icons such as Mickey Mouse. With the knowledge of the precise makeup of

an iconic image, such as Mickey Mouse, as well as a knowledge of Barthes' classification of possible messages, the artist is able to recreate his or her own representation of reality.

In the next section the ways in which Semiotic content presents an aesthetic for Postmodern visual arts will be examined.



3.2 The manifestation of semiotic content in the visual arts

3.2.1. *The manifestation of an art of signs*

Art historian Whitney Chadwick (1992:8) believes that contemporary art is involved with the representation of a wide variety of images taken from popular culture, the media and photography. Chadwick (1992:8) argues that Postmodernism as a movement relies greatly on existing representations rather than on the discovery of new styles. The Postmodern artist obtains images from the mass media or popular culture, which influence cultural myths such as class and power differences in contemporary society.

These cultural myths may be presented in the shape of two messages according to Barthes: namely the denoted and the connoted message. The denoted message is an analogy of reality whilst the connoted message displays the manner in which a society and its spectator-consumers communicate what they think about reality. The duality of messages is evident in all reproductions and images of a society (Barthes 1977:17).

Jencks (in Polan 1988:45) sees Postmodern culture as the mirror for a new art which is brought about by signs from several discourses or subjects. Polish semiologist Veltrusky (1973:249) states that the pictorial sign produces certain psychophysical effects which in turn imply certain semiotic implications in the genre of Barthes' classification of images. Danto (1992:19) states that art in the tradition of Gombrich⁸⁵

always betrays the density and consistency of a 'text'. In other words, artists cannot create outside a schema or tradition.

According to Danto (1992:19) the influence of the meaning of **images** upon spectator-consumers cannot be disregarded. When spectator-consumers are confronted by a work of art, they immediately associate it with earlier conventions, allegories and paradigms which have appeared in the media (Danto 1992:19). Wittgenstein (in Danto 1991:20) regards all spectatorial-consumerist observation as **theory-laden**. This implies that the image of Mickey Mouse is understood as such, only relative to a code or convention which spectator-consumers have internalised. According to Danto (1991:21) spectator-consumers have to be grounded in a certain 'cultural historicity' in order to comprehend an article as a work of art.

Danto (1991:21) sees the **sign as the fulfilment of an aesthetic function** within the visual arts. Veltrusky (1973:250) regards the Cubist movement (1911-15) as the pinnacle of semiotic possibility in the visual arts: here **language and image are intertwined in order to bring about new insights and interpretations** concerning the message of the work of art. The role of the 'closeness of codes' in the association of signifier with signified, is important in the visual work of art. These associations are ruled and regulated by social convention, as seen in the Symbolist employment of colour and graphic symbols such as the point, circle, triangle, cross or star. Veltrusky (1973:250,251) furthermore states that spectator-consumers interpret such code-series as 'traces of similarity'. Spectator-consumers can also

appear to match the visible world. Therefore, the artist aspires to an 'essential copy' of nature (Kleinbauer 1982:93; Rees & Borzello 1986:21).

⁸⁵ Art historian, Sir Ernst H. Gombrich, investigates the history of representational images in the light of the findings in psychology and psychoanalysis. Gombrich maintains that the artist's point of departure is not the imitation of nature or 'reality', but the experience of 'works of art'. He writes in *Art and Illusion*, that all representational images remain conceptual, a manipulation of a vocabulary, and that even the most naturalistic art starts from schemata or technique, which are modified and adjusted until they

interpret the symbol which is represented as a label, for example red = A, blue = B, Mickey Mouse = fun and entertainment.

Semiotics presents reality to spectator-consumers according to the images or signs which they recognise within a given environment. Semioticians maintain that these images or signs constitute the contemporary simulacrum, which in turn constitutes reality for different spectator-consumers according to their individual synthesis of the total meaning of the signs and images which they come across in a particular environment or society (Perloff 1988:251).

Semiotics regards visual art as a manifestation of the creative employment of the sign (Veltrusky 1973:253). Semiotics occupies itself with the deeper and more complicated ways in which meaning is created within a system of referents. Semiotics must never be thought of as similar to the study of Iconology as propagated by art historian Erwin Panofsky and the Warburg School. Veltrusky (1973:252) and the Prague School argue that the majority of semiotic studies do not overlook iconology, but remain embedded within the thematic meaning of an image. For Panofsky, the patriarch of Iconographical inquiry, 'meaning' and 'thematic material' are the cardinal point of study (Veltrusky 1973:252). On the other hand, semiotics strives to launch an inquiry into the **deeper and more complicated ways in which meaning is created within a system of references**. Semiotics is concerned with the creation of total meaning or inherent synthetic knowledge which is revealed by images, composition, colouring or multimedia as an entirety within the perception of the spectator-consumer. A conversation is thus elicited between media, composition, image, paradigm, society, and the work of art. Convention creates codified links which present interesting possibilities for

the visual arts. In a semiological system the sign possesses a specific character. A sign is composed of an element of 'particularisation' in a series of facts which are based upon a universal, identical, and consequential character (Veltrusky 1973:260).

Eco (in Blonsky 1985:176) formulates certain ways in which successful **signs may be created**. This process includes the following steps:

1. The recognition of existing phenomena (i.e. Mickey Mouse);
2. The production of replicas of these phenomena, to create new expressions (i.e. toys, watches, emblems, and other consumer goods);
3. The relationship between abstract expressions and their distinguishing marks (i.e. Mickey Mouse 'ears' which become signs of the entire Disneyland experience);
4. The use of materials to imitate phenomena in physical terms (i.e. masonry, stucco and animatronics);
5. The articulation of precise entities and distinguishing marks (i.e. the representation of a single work of art and the employment of several images).

Sebeok (in Blonsky 1985) suggests that there should be a **process of selection in art according to the 'fragility and delicacy' of images. Images always have to be used in accordance with a framework of icons or symbols which will further clarify the 'total meaning' of the image.**

Imagery is defined as the planned, synthetic, and simplified representation of real objects for transmission to an audience which may include persons, places, and historical periods as well as inanimate objects (Horvath & Bin 1991:104). There are a number of ways in which images are produced.

Although the mass media are unequalled in the size of their audience, several advantages accompany the technique of promoting imagery by simulation. Chief among these are vividness, concreteness, realism, and, when the images are produced by advanced simulation as described by Baudrillard, not merely realism but hyperreality (Horvath & Bin 1991:104).

Stam (1992:203) sees one of the results of the semiotic approach towards the visual arts, as the questioning of the 'authenticity' of the work of art. Since the visual arts depend upon the spectator-consumer's encoding of what is seen, it becomes a discourse which does not react upon reality, but which reacts upon the 'ideas and images of other discourses'. Lotman (1981a:10; in Stam 1992:203) thus propagates the **independent aesthetic value of animation as a modern art form which is interested in texts about texts, as well as in double semiotic systems.**

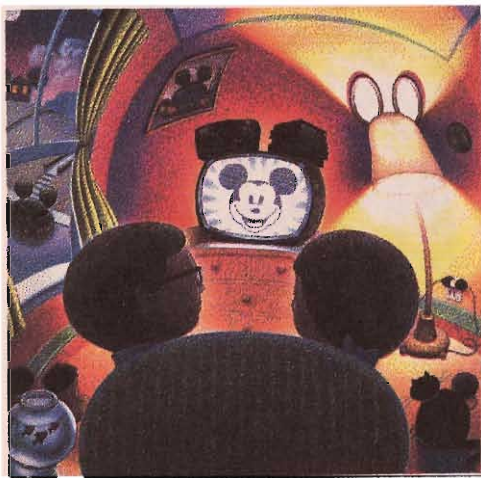


Figure 21: 'Echoes', 1991, John Berg, Acrylic on Paper (in Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:28).

Lotman (1981a:1) argues that animation opens up the opportunity for a variety of themes in the visual arts. Similarly, Pop artist Claes Oldenburg, regards the image of Mickey as a sign that moves beyond commerciality towards the state of '**artefact**': In other words the basic configuration of Mickey Mouse, his

two solid ears, may now be used in the visual arts as an '**immediate referent**', as in the work of John Berg (Yoe & Morra-Yoe 1991:1-10).

According to semiotic film critic Christian Metz (1982:118-19) visual art implies a **textual system where several codes meet and collaborate in order to create new meanings.**

These representations deliver a clearer picture of people, society, authors⁸⁶ and their art (Metz 1982: 118-19). South African artist Diane Victor employs the image of Mickey as a stereotype, displaying the saleability of the violent image of a tortured man.



Figure 22: 'Consumer Violence: First Panel', 1995, Diane Victor, Charcoal and Pastel on Paper (in Van Rensburg 1995:31).

Whether Disney will agree with the 'adult' content remains doubtful in view of the Walt Disney Company's fervent copyright and anti-porn beliefs. Disney is notorious for its hard-nosed enforcement stance against image piracy. The conglomerate's

⁸⁶In Deconstructionist terms, the creator of the work of art is known as the author.

vast resources allow it to censor most unapproved uses of its ever popular characters and images (Cembalest 1993:35). In the past the company has granted licences to such artists as Haring, Warhol, and Thiebaud. A 1988 catalogue, celebrating Mickey's sixtieth anniversary, reproduces a 'Mickey' by Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Don Eddy, but Disney has subsequently retracted the offer. Artists who request permission to use Disney characters must generally pay a licensing fee and satisfy the company's concerns that the 'image is used in an appropriate manner' (Cembalest 1993:35). Disney does not want its imagery to become pornographic. Disney sued Dennis Oppenheim for his use of Mickey and Donald Duck figures in his sculpture *Virus*.

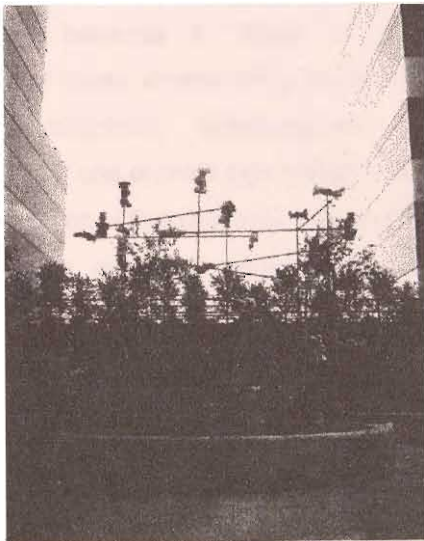


Figure 23: 'Virus', 1993, Dennis Oppenheim, Cast Fibreglass and Bronze (in Cembalest 1993:35).

The 14 feet tall sculpture resembles a molecular model with 34 cast fibreglass figures of the two cartoon characters on a matrix of bronze rods. Oppenheim assumed the casts of Mickey and Donald in his sculpture qualified as 'fair use', but the Walt Disney company saw it as a blatant infringement of their rights (Cembalest 1993:35).

Disney therefore controls the distribution of its imagery to enforce a specific narrative. Similarly, artists control their choice of imagery to enforce a certain message or narrative. A wide range of artists translate mass media images into semiotic signs which in turn present new representations of reality to spectator-consumers. For example, Warhol draws and quarters Mickey on silk screen to enforce a Pop content and Bob Buccella places Mickey's hat on an image of Dutch artist Van Gogh (1853-1890) minus one ear to present deconstructed information to informed spectator-consumers (Kanfer & Stengel 1991:81; Yoe 1991).

According to Heath (in Stam et al 1992:203) 'representation' in the visual arts is the recognition of a system or series of systems of meaning. In practise, art is therefore seen as the production of meaning (Stam et al 1992:203). This definition, immediately creates a relationship between theme, spectator-consumers, the artist, and meaning.

For Lotman (1981:10) art does not try to '*redraw*' everyday reality into a lifeless form or mirror image, but when images of reality are translated into signs, they fill the world with new, and possibly objective, meaning. Signs always have meaning, and always carry information. That is why the object's relative status in a particular society becomes the **choice** of the artist. Lotman (1981:14) therefore confirms the purpose of *art as 'creator of meaningful images'*. According to Lotman, no one, when looking at a stone or a tree in a landscape, will inquire after its meaning. But when that landscape is portrayed in a painting, or if it is the result of intentional manufacture as in Disneyland, the question may be asked in all earnestness.

According to Feminist art historian, Julia Kristeva (in Stam et al 1992:203), the artist is involved with the **productive work of the signifier**, and spectator-consumers concern themselves with the **encoding** of the work of art as the set of meaningful signs which are presented to them. This process implies a measure of intertextuality in the reading of images. This means that any group of signs, such as poetry, song, film, text, or imagery, overlaps with another group of signs. This clarifies a never-ending and open possibility which is generated by the discourses of a culture (Stam et al 1992:203). Kristeva explains these discourses as representational practices or systems.

According to Kristeva, Bakhtin, and Gerald Genette⁸⁷, each 'text' becomes a 'mosaic of citations', a 'grouping of traces' wherein other texts may be read (Stam et al 1992:203). Intertextualism is the substitution of one or more sign system with another. It is a new vision of the meanings which are located in a sign system, and which are recalled by spectator-consumers via denotation and enunciation. Riffaterre (in Stam et al 1992:203) defines this process as:

the spectator-consumer's perception of the relationships between a text and all other texts which have been previously experienced, digested or which will be digested in the future.

This process takes place in the work of art. Certain characters elicit certain nuances in the memory of spectator-consumers by way of 'association' with previously found ideas, images, or knowledge sources. **Graphic images** are more than descriptive

illustrations of things seen or imagined: they are signs whose context gives them a unique meaning, and whose positioning can lend them a new significance (Hollis 1994:7). The intertext of a work of art, is not just other works of art which concur with that particular work of art, but also the series of the single text where the work of art exists (Stam et al 1992:203). The originality of the work of art remains 'hidden' in the bold and impudent imitation, quotation, and recycling of other existing texts (Stam et al 1992:206). Critics label this process the 'ironic hybridisation of traditional, dissimilar discourses' (Stam et al 1992:206).

Blonsky (1992:60), similarly contemplates the signage system designed for Euro Disney. Blonsky (1992:61) notes that the ambient lighting that inspired Monet's canvases now inspire a purple palette for the Disney park (See Figure 1). Designers Sussman and Prejza (in Blonsky 1992:62) explain how purple suggests the Crucifixion in Catholic Europe. Semiotically, purple was described as a cooled-down red by Bauhaus artist Kandinsky (Blonsky 1992:62). The context of purple at Euro Disney, envisions Europeans as 'red' and Americans as 'cooled down purple'. Mickey Mouse's happy design of black, white, red and yellow colouring is interpreted by a code which conceptualizes the spectrum: black and white are 'silent colours', while yellow and red are grasped in terms of 'lightness and darkness' (Blonsky 1992:63). Disney gave the Europeans 'red and yellow' to perk up the vanquished mood in Europe after the fall of Russia, and the fragmentation of Eastern Europe. As if red were the contrary of yellow, Mickey banishes the 'dark' and enters the Pantheon of American mythology to display the America of the 'Euphoric'. Disney came to Europe to sell the American message of 'gigantism' (Blonsky 1992:63).

⁸⁷Genette is author of *Palimpsestes*, 1982.

Eco (1987b) states that the strongest image of the promised land is America and Disneyland's faux-exclusivity, which evoke the monied world of Newport and of New York in the 1920s. Disney offers Europeans a glimpse of the promised land: it exports America in a conglomeration of signs and entertainment. America is nothing other than the name, the metonymy, of technical modernity. America is an enormous enterprise for the simulation of happiness (Blonsky 1992:65).

Oldenburg similarly occupies himself with the overlapping of meaning in his *Mouse Museum: Ray Gun Wing Exhibition* (Van Bruggen 1979:64). Here, the parallel implications of the image of Mickey Mouse, the Swedish word for mouse ('mus') and the word 'museum' elicits a play of references. The artist launches a play between word and image in his use of the Swedish name for Mickey Mouse ('Musse Pigg') which determines the title of his 'Mouse Mus-eum'. Even the exhibition space is installed in the shape of a geometric mouse-head.

Similarly, British war artist to the Gulf, John Keane recently portrayed *Mickey Mouse at the Front*, in a painting illustrating the Gulf War. Keane uses an image of Mickey Mouse in the shape of a rocking toy the artist had photographed in a child's play room. The Mickey Mouse toy was used as a lavatory by the Iraqis (Lee 1992/1993:160).

The satisfying significance of the Mickey Mouse rumpus was that it brought the discussion of serious art to the front page: even though he was misrepresented, here was a painter who by his **symbolism** was setting the agenda for comments about a major world event (Lee 1992/1993:160).

Keane's canvases are complex constructions. They involve collaged elements of newspaper reports, photographs, and his repetitive hallmark of using real money for borders - dollar bills and Saudi riyal notes in the Gulf pictures (Lee 1992/93:161).

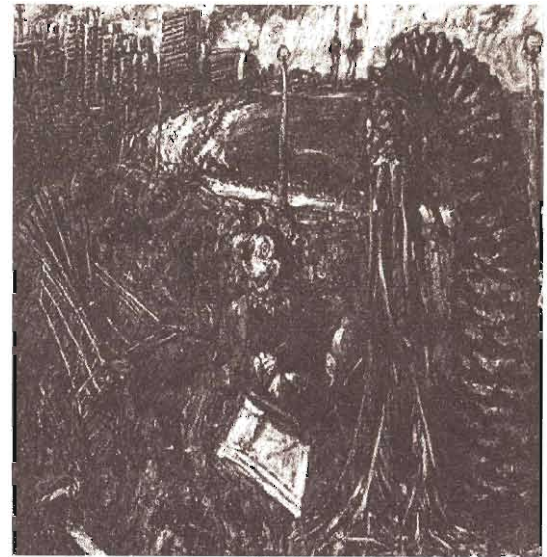


Figure 24: 'Mickey Mouse at the Front', 1992, John Keane, Oil on Canvas (in Lee 1992:161).

In his rendition of *Mickey Mouse at the Front*, Keane arranges three objects across the foreground against a backdrop of Kuwait City and its cornice. The objects are a shot-up palm tree, the symbol of a luxurious paradise debased, and Mickey himself in the middle. Mickey is the grinning personification of imperialism, while a supermarket trolley charged with a cluster of rocket-propelled grenades, recalls rolls of wallpaper from American distributor, *Texas Homecare*. Lee (1992/93:161) interprets Keane's painting as an inclusion of every possible reading of the economic and cultural agenda informing the Gulf conflict. Keane's refusal to play the contemporary art game of painting pictures which are merely self-referential and appreciated by a coterie, involves a larger audience.

Carl Barks worked on more than 30 Donald Duck shorts as well as *Fantasia* and *Bambi* before

dedicating himself in 1942 to comic book illustration. Since 1968, he has been putting his storytelling into brilliantly hued original oil paintings which *Disney Art Editions* now publish as limited-edition serigraphs. Barks paints classical motifs, from Mona Lisa to scenes from Wagner operas, all populated by ducks (Diederichsen 1994:75).

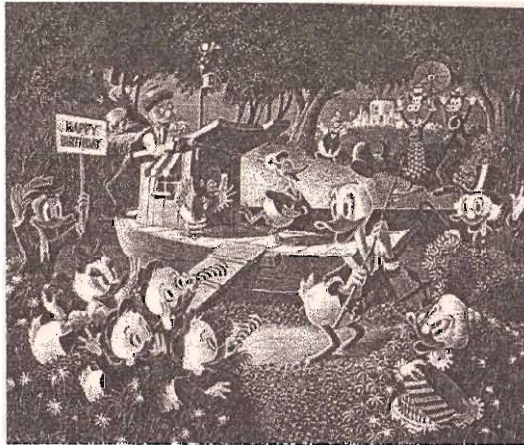


Figure 25: 'Surprise Party at Memory Pond', 1989, Carl Barks, 80-colour Serigraph on Paper (Courtesy of Disney Art Editions, Walt Disney Studios).

The youthful language of Huey, Dewey, and Louie presents a mixture of signs collected from contemporary teenage slang, classical and internal rhyme, and artfully composed alliteration. Barks' Donald Duck multi-layered stories are compared to the affirmative work of Warhol and Tamla Motown with their **coded construction of images and successful communication** which is represented by symmetrical compositions (Diederichsen 1994:75). Barks' cartoons ultimately reveal the hidden agendas of official American stories and legends.

The use of intertextualism as the substitution of one or more signs for another, as well as the production of meaning via the conglomeration of these signs, recalls the spectator-consumer's perception of new texts and all other texts that have been digested before. Barks' art illustrates the coming together of high and low art, the imitation, quotation, and

recycling of existing texts, and the **ironic hybridisation** of traditionally opposing discourses.

In this connection, philosopher Edward Said⁸⁸ (1994: 16) notes that the independent artist is among the few remaining personalities equipped to resist and to fight mass media stereotyping and the consequent death of genuinely living things. He calls upon the artist to **unmask and smash stereotypes of vision and intellect** with which modern communications swamp us (Said 1994:16). Artists are of their time, herded along by the mass politics of representation embodied in the mass media. Artists are capable of resisting stereotypes only by disputing the official narratives, the justifications of power circulated by an increasingly powerful media, and whole trends of thought that maintain the status quo or keep things within an acceptable and sanctioned perspective on actuality (Said 1994:16). The artist should **unearth the forgotten, make connections that were denied, cite alternative courses** of action that could have avoided war and its attendant goal of human destruction (Said 1994:17). The artist should be filled with a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful and conventional have to say.

Said (1994:67) cites Foucault's critique of objectivity and authority as positive by underlining how, in the secular world, human beings construct their own truths, and that, for example, the so-called '*objective truth of the white man's superiority*' built and maintained by classical European colonial empires, also rested on a violent subjugation of African and Asian peoples, who fought that particular imposed

⁸⁸Edward Said is University Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He is a prolific writer on a wide range of topics, especially Postmodern discourse.

'truth' in order to provide an **independent** order of their own. Said (1994:9) mentions his own mix between the private and the public worlds, his own history, values, writings and positions as they derive from his own experiences, and how they enter into the social world where people debate and make decisions about war and freedom and justice. Foucault (in Gutting 1994:43) similarly undermines traditional historical accounts and presents a character of 'Dionysian-drunkenness' to a time where different signs are excitedly intertwined to create new meaning.

In this connection, for example, the juxtaposition of original *Krazy Kat* panels with oil paintings by Joan Miro at the Museum of Modern Art's 1990 exhibition *High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture*, reflects the timely infiltration of comic strips and cartoon imagery into the precincts of mainstream art and scholarship (Zurier 1991:98). Spurred in part by a continuing interest in cartoons by contemporary artists, exhibitions on comics and cartoons have been organized at the Louvre (1967), the Whitney Museum of American Art's Downtown Branch (1983), and the Institute of Contemporary Art in London (1987). The Museum of Modern Art's film department honoured Warner Brothers' cartoon animators with a retrospective in 1985 and paid homage to *Felix the Cat* in 1991.

As art historical scholarship becomes more ecumenical, social historians have expanded their views to include visual materials, and to pay attention to products of consumer culture (Zurier 1991:98). Both the *College Art Association* and the *American Studies Association* dedicated sessions at recent annual meetings to academic papers on comics. The intertwining interests of scholarship and commerce, fuelled by the growing enthusiasm of a baby-boom

generation of fans and collectors who grew up reading comics, help explain the current interest. All this attention is to be welcomed as a sign of commitment on the part of scholars, artists, and publishers alike to record an ephemeral art form (Zurier 1991:98). Comics have produced works of genius whose **formal inventiveness, mastery of technique, and insight** into human situations compare favourably with the virtues traditionally attributed to significant works of art.

Young Dutch artist Rob Birza employs a certain amount of '**method** in the buildup of the image as '**construction**' (Van Nieuwenhuyzen 1989:143). The literary, narrative aspect which intermittently crops up in his work seems to give way to a tautological outlook which involves paintings themselves: this includes the problems of the picture plane, the handling of the paint, form, and colour in relation to the chosen images and subjects.



Figure 26: 'Mickey Mouse', 1988, Rob Birza, Egg Tempera on Cotton (in Van Nieuwenhuyzen: 143).

In most of the paintings the image (such as Mickey Mouse) coincides with the picture plane: this emphasis on the plane is the natural result of using

egg tempera, which is applied in successive transparent layers.

The dry tempera produces intense, light-absorbing, pastel-like colours which are completely soaked up by the canvas, causing colour and ground to form an indivisible unity. In a dialectic process in which surprising leaps are made with respect to the choice of subject-matter and painterly ideas, Birza attempts to arrive at his own painterly truth, while making allusions in passing to the recent history of painting (Van Nieuwenhuyzen 1989:143).

New York artist Mark Dion invents a post-criticism attitude of visual thought which establishes unsuspected bridges between the state of the world and the ways in which we represent it: from science to cartoons through every possible stratum of culture (Zahm 1990:154).



Figure 27: 'Deep Time, Space Time', 1990, Mark Dion, Desk, Mickey Mouse Doll, and Objects (in Zahm 1990:164).

Dion confronts Disney with Cuvier, the nineteenth century anti-evolutionist who postulated the theory of the catastrophe of the extinction of species. This

clash between 'Disney Time' and 'Deep Time' is personified in the form of 'Mickey Cuvier', with the mythical Disney character in the role of the savant, expounding his analyses of our times while seated behind his various work desks. Dion presents four desks with scientific diagrams, work implements of yore, stuffed animals, books and statistics **juxtaposed** in scholarly disorder, as well as Disney characters in jars. Something of a dynamic synthesis of the contextual procedure of conceptual art and the visual effectiveness of paradoxes is elaborated here (Zahm 1990:154). For Dion, art is like a **moving, tectonic sheet** wherein he **brings together antithetical outposts of our conscience** which are as amusing as they are scientific and ideological.

One can therefore conclude that Semiotics manifests in the visual arts in the following ways. The employment of the pictorial sign, or image, has a psychophysical effect upon the spectator, because art encompasses the inclusion of signs and images which are theory-laden and which function according to a code or convention. Disneyland imagery therefore reminds the spectator-consumer of previously experienced objects. Semiotics is interested in the deeper and more complicated ways in which meaning is determined in a system of citations. Along with the use of immediate referents in art (such as the image of Mickey Mouse), recognition of a system or systems of meaning is important. Artists therefore occupy themselves with the productive labour of signifiers, through their presentation of an intertext of images, with picture quality, texture, beautiful imagery and movement, different approaches to image generation, the intertwining of context-sensitive language and image to bring about new and possibly objective comments. These objective statements include symbolism and juxtapositioning, formal inventiveness, the use of 'texts' and 'double semiotic systems' to



unmask stereotypes, to unearth the forgotten, to make connections that were denied, and to cite alternative courses.

The importance of independent choice over complacency on the part of the artist and the spectator-consumer, remains extremely important.



Conclusion

The study of Disneyland as a model for the creation of an aesthetic of Postmodern consumer culture, hyperreality and semiotic content in the visual arts, shows interesting tendencies at work in Postmodern society. An immersion into Disneyland paints a revealing picture of Postmodern society and its visual art preferences, whilst revealing an unavoidable aesthetic for Postmodern spectator-consumers as actors on the proverbial Postmodern stage.

Firstly, it has been shown that Disneyland supports Postmodern culture which exhibits the following distinguishing traits: a global demand for sophisticated, individualistic, relevant, and valuable entertainment with potent imagery especially during increased leisure hours; a revolution in cultural tastes via the television and its range of imagery; the fulfilment of individualism, immediacy, and value for a sophisticated, caring culture wherein everyone is empowered; a tendency towards the democratic juxtapositioning of all discourses into one mass aesthetic which salutes anti-essentialism, plurality, democracy, and freedom; the mass production of messages, information, and imagery with the aid of the Information Revolution; the production of narratives, brand names, trademarks, and images as a comforting paradigm for Postmodern spectator-consumers who have the power of responsible choice; as well as the proliferation of nostalgia, myth, and spectacle in creating communal traditions between different societies.

Postmodern society is ruled by certain messages, signs, and images which are presented via the media.

More importantly, Postmodern society blends multifarious media images into a rhetoric of folk tales, myths, and clichés which determine the state of a society. The image of modern painter Pablo Picasso, for instance, is the product of clichés and widely shared preconceptions which were presented in the media. Legends are made by the stereotypes and visions advocated in the media, and to this day Picasso seems more the stuff of myth than a flesh-and-blood person. This tendency reflects a state of romance and populism as described in the carnival aesthetic of Bakhtin and Disneyland, wherein the spectator-consumer acts as participator.

With regard to the visual arts, Disneyland Postmodern consumer culture exhibits a new coalition between high art and popular entertainment. It presents a new art of reification and simulation, where society is determined by changing images in the mass media. The popular employment of parody leads to the alternative of richer images than those displaying dominant cultural stereotypes. The new Disneyfied art is entertaining and makes its spectator-consumers forget their major concerns. It presents a cross-fertilization of ideas, a variety of styles, techniques, and content. The characteristics of animation - such as popularity, shifting viewpoints, formalism, indigenous themes, diverse graphic qualities, computer-aided design - as well as the new visual environment of indigenous, home-bred art, alternative expressions, various machine appropriated imagery, metaphor, juxtapositioned fragments, contextually altered escapisms, and hyper media; present an aesthetic for the visual arts. Art becomes more than

just the mere combining of found images: it presents informative collage for the super symbolic spectator-consumer via the layering of dissimilar images into new narratives.

The visual arts present the opportunity of interaction for spectator-consumers. The Postmodern super symbolic society demands that artists become involved with the images presented in the media by way of irony, celebration, or aesthetic deepening of the image. The artist may employ technology such as photocopiers, computer peripherals or software packages to juxtapose certain images in the visual arts. This newly created montage presents a play on information, stereotype, and cliché in order to present a reinterpretation of history. The artist thus becomes similar in stature to a Disneyland multinational media corporation in the manipulation of spectator-consumer comprehension and choice. Nevertheless, it is extremely important for the spectator-consumer to achieve a personal sense of choice: it is the responsibility of every spectator-consumer to question the state of reality presented in the media. The fear of Big Brother autocratic rule is extremely relevant in the information age.

Secondly, it has been demonstrated that Disneyland's concept of hyperreality, or simulation, influences Postmodern society in the following ways: the comprehension of reality is determined by particular signs which are digested by its spectator-consumers. The perfect imitation and total illusion which is presented via technology in Disneyland, represents the human inclination towards imitation. In this way, Postmodern society becomes a field of replicas, which are equated with reality in the mass media. We live amidst a fabricated system of meaning where culture produces signs that do not carry singular meaningfulness. The spectator-consumer's belief in

the environment becomes hindered by the application of three historical orders of simulacra presented in the mass media. The contemporary world of mass created commodities demands a proliferation of signs in order to determine visions of reality. These are employed by the media to approximate reality in the eye of the spectator-consumer. Reality, or mass created commodity, is represented and sustained by a new economy of models and signs, with the body of the spectator-consumer as matrix for participation within a society, displaying an altered stance towards representation.

The employment of hyperreality or simulation in Disneyland, has certain repercussions for the Postmodern visual arts: the 'pop-surrealistic-Disneyesque-art-of-illusion-spinning' continually questions the state of the original in the art world. A series of images determines the state of reality in a given society. These images are created in a narrative society which is continually defined by advertising systems which in turn manipulate images. Information-giving imagery - the simulacrum - is experienced by spectator-consumers in a twofold manner: firstly, they forget that they are confronted by imaginary objects or happenings, and secondly, they remain subconsciously aware that what they are experiencing is only an imitation or a secondhand representation of reality.

Art is created by a multitude of signs, such as animatronics at Disneyland, which are presented as more real than reality itself. Art becomes a rendering of a world defined by certain models, codes or images. These signs continue to create the obligation for the artist, as well as the spectator-consumer, to question the state of reality. The artist may once again assume the role of a multinational media corporation in the presentation of a specific type of

reality in the shape of personal style, genre, or materials. The artist's influence on the spectator-consumer's frame of reference must not be underestimated. On the other hand, the spectator has to distinguish between 'realities' and 'imitations'.

Thirdly, it has been suggested that visual art may be regarded as a manifestation of the sign or image. These images or signs fill a society with meaning. Postmodern society is ruled in a symbolic manner by images, codes, icons (such as Mickey Mouse), symbols, and brand names which are displayed in the mass media. These images strongly influence cultural myths such as that of class and power differences, which are examined in Deconstructionist discourse. Images or signs create the possibility of grand narratives, which change continuously in a society.

Disneyland stands at the forefront in the creation of the premises for better communication via its use of a plethora of signs which reinforce a central message. The image or sign plays a central role in the consciousness of the spectator-consumer, and its final meaning depends upon the relationship between the sender (artist) and the decoder (spectator-consumer). Communication is managed by signs or photographic images as the chief carriers of information in the Postmodern Information Revolution. Certain signs deliver certain messages: Disneyland provides structures whereby spectators establish a specific American identity when seeing specific American stereotypes and icons such as Mickey Mouse. With a knowledge of the precise makeup of an iconic image, such as Mickey Mouse, as well as a knowledge of Barthes' classification of possible messages, the artist is able to recreate a personal vision of reality.

Semiotics, as presented in Disneyland, manifests significantly in the visual arts of the Postmodern age. The employment of the pictorial sign or image has psychophysical effects upon the spectator-consumer, since visual art encompasses the inclusion of signs and images which are theory-laden, and which function according to a code or a convention. In this way, Disneyland imagery reminds the spectator-consumer of previously experienced objects. Semiotics is interested in the deeper and more complicated ways in which meaning is determined in a system of citations or signs. Along with the use of immediate referents in the visual arts, such as the image of Mickey Mouse, recognition of a system or systems of meaning is important. The artist is drawn into the productive labour of the signifier, in the shape of the presentation of an intertext of images. These images exhibit Disneyesque qualities such as picture quality, texture, beautiful imagery, movement, and different approaches to image generation. The intertwining of context-sensitive language and image to bring about new and possibly objective comments, the use of symbolism, juxtapositioning, formal inventiveness, 'texts' and 'double semiotic systems' to unmask stereotypes, the unearthing of the forgotten, the making of connections which were previously denied, and the citation of alternative courses become important aesthetic responsibilities for the Postmodern artist.

Disneyland, thus, is not just the rendition of a theme park *par excellence*: it illustrates the major aesthetic clockwork mechanisms of Postmodern society, and it presents the visual artist with a series of responsibilities as well as opportunities. These include the awareness of stereotypic information, the exercise of responsible choice over complacency, the celebration of newly acquired imagery, and the discovery of richer and more meaningful semiotic

essences which may assist a society in redefining itself. In this connection, Disneyland raises important issues for a South African aesthetic paradigm in the Postmodern era. The central fear of an Orwellian 'Big Brother' syndrome in which spectator-consumers are bombarded with Americanized cultural goods, seems real in a society saturated with hallucinatory imagery where fabricated realities are regarded as master narratives. This process is clearly illustrated in Southern Africa's 'Disneyland', namely *The Lost City*. This entertainment paradise presents the narrative of a bygone civilisation which left behind a fairy tale palace. The narrative presented reminds the spectator-consumer of courageous tribes, dark

African mystery, and royal entertainment. Additionally, in a country where visual images have the power to reach and influence a large audience because of their illiteracy, the fear of media oppression is a reality. The question whether trendiness is replacing innovation and original thought, must be answered by responsible choice on the part of the spectator-consumer. The emphasis on responsible choice over complacency implies the responsible comprehension and regulation of personal spectatorship. On the part of the artist, it implies the power to produce potent messages and objective realities.



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SUMMARY

OPSOMMING

In this study Disneyland is analysed as a model for the creation of an aesthetic of Postmodern consumer culture, hyperreality and semiotic content. It explores Postmodern society and its visual art preferences, whilst revealing an ubiquitous aesthetic for Postmodern spectator-consumers as actors on the proverbial Postmodern stage. The various manifestations of 'Disneyfied' consumerism, hyperreality and semiotic content collectively reveal a society saturated with mass media produced imagery and messages. In this milieu, this study explores the responsibilities as well as opportunities that are presented to the artist via a Disneyland aesthetic. These include the awareness of stereotypic information in the mass media, the exercise of responsible choice over complacent spectatorship, the celebration of newly acquired imagery, as well as the discovery of richer semiotic essences that assist a society in redefining itself. The central fear of an Orwellian 'Big Brother' syndrome and entertainment or mass media bombardment, indicates a central problem in Postmodern society. In this connection, spectator-consumers are saturated with American cultural goods via imagery, mass media messages, and fabricated 'hyperrealities' which are regarded as master narratives. The final emphasis is placed on responsible choice and meditated comprehension of personal spectatorship, as well as the manifestation of the latent power of mass media in the Information Revolution era.

Hierdie studie ondersoek Disneyland as 'n model vir 'n estetiese van Postmoderne verbruikerskultuur, hiperrealiteit en semiotiese inhoud. Dit stel ondersoek in na die Postmoderne gemeenskap se spesifieke visuele kuns voorkeure, terwyl dit 'n onvermydelike estetika vir die Postmoderne toeskouer-verbruiker as protagonis in die Postmoderne milieu bied. Die onderskeie manifestasies van 'Disneyland-tipe' verbruik, hiperrealiteit en semiotiese inhoud skets 'n gemeenskap wat gelei word deur beeldmateriaal en boodskappe wat in die massa media voorkom. Hierdie arena bied vir die visuele kunstenaar sekere verantwoordelikhede en moontlikhede. Die studie weerspieël die wyse waarop die kunstenaar bewus moet bly van stereotipiese data wat in die massa media tentoongestel word, verantwoordelike keuses in plaas van blote passiewe toeskouerskap moet beoefen en nuwe jukstaplasings van beelde moet aanmoedig sodat waardevolle semiotiese essensies nuutgevonde definisie aan 'n gemeenskap kan gee. Die sentrale vrees vir Amerikaans-georiënteerde media en vermaaklikheids oorheersing bly kommerwekkend in die Postmoderne gemeenskap. Toeskouer-verbruikers word deurgaans oorval met Amerikaanse kulturele goedere in die vorm van beelde, massa media boodskappe en nagmaakte hiperrealiteite. Die studie ondersteun die belangrikheid van verantwoordelike keuse en 'n begrip vir die manifestasie van die magsbeheer van die massa media in die era van die Inligtings Omwenteling.