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THE IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC'S OPINION THROUGH VISUAL AIDS

Pablo Picasso once said, "Painting is not made to decorate apartments; it is an offensive and defensive instrument of war against the enemy" (Brennan). Art, illustrations, diagrams, graphics, and other forms of visual aids refer to imagery used to explain something in people's daily lives. This essay will explore how illustrations have been used as a language to affect society's opinions. This essay will define art, in a general sense, and the components that make up a language which is form, content, and use. Pieces of art like *The Fountain* by Marcel Duchamp, *Black Square* by Kazimir Malevich, *Olympia* by Edouard Manet, and more will be explored and then related back to the idea of language to show how illustrations have affected the public's opinion. Ultimately, through the use of art as a language, the public's emotions, knowledge, and understanding of visual aids have affected their opinions and sparked social change.

Defining art as a language

In a blog, Arthur P. Shimamura wrote, "Art is meant to instill a myriad of emotions in the beholder," and in the study of what is art as a form of language, this is a critical quote to take

note of (Shimamura). When people look at an artwork, they are experiencing a variety of thoughts whether it may be relevant to the piece of work or not is not the point. As long as someone is able to leave with an experience, then they have just looked at an “art” work. Shimamura says “I explored the psychological processes involved when we invite an aesthetic experience and offered the I-SKE model” (Shimamura). With this I-SKE model, Shimamura maps out how art is created and then how the viewer perceives it. The I-SKE model stands for Intention-Sensation, Knowledge, and Emotion. First, artists create a piece of work with the intention they hold, and then from the artwork, the viewer experiences a sensation, knowledge, and or emotion from their intention or artwork. This is what art is and from the definition of art, it can be connected to the components of language.

In Paula K Eubank’s scholarly article “Art is a Visual Language,” we are able to tell from the title her stance and purpose which is to persuade the readers, who consist of those interested in art or people in general, of how art is a form of language. She uses a quote from another source and writes “The three overlapping components of language: form, content, and use” (Lahey, 1988). From that quote, she broke down what is needed for something to be a language. Form refers to how it was delivered in the form of written language, orally speaking, or other types of delivery. Content is the meaning behind the use of this language or intent of the speaker, and the use component is the purpose behind what was spoken or written. Then using a formal tone, she defines what art is as well, “a code whereby ideas about the world are expressed through a conventional system of arbitrary signals for communication” (Lahey).

Relating back to Shimamura’s blog on art, his I-SKE model can be used here to prove that art has a content, form, and use. In art, the intent is the content of the artist and the message it is

conveying. The form is the medium in which the artist chooses to convey that content and the use is the viewer's experience and the reason behind the content of the artwork. This proves that art is a language according to Lahey's definition of a language. From this use of art as a language, there were times when it is used to spark a social movement or create a stir in public.

Art affecting the public

In Jacqueline Adams' scholarly article, "Art in Social Movements: Shantytown Women's Protest in Pinochet's Chile," Adams says "social movements use the medium of artistic expression for communicating with the larger society" (Adams). In a protest that Adams has studied, she stated that in social movements, art is used to communicate with a larger group of people. Social movements use art as a way of advertising as well because "in essence, it becomes a form of psychological warfare against the dominant culture and elite and reveals an emerging subterranean movement" (Adams). To challenge the status quo is the reason behind a social movement, and to show everyone their intention, a single visual aid, or multiple, can be used to effectively demonstrate and get the message through a large population. But social movements don't always need to be big protests, other forms of social movements are small and more micro compared to large-scale protests.



Marcel Duchamp's, *The Fountain*, was created April 9th, 1917, and it was just a urinal signed with the name "R.Mutt 1917". This urinal was one of the most controversial artworks because it was presented to an art gallery where it was rejected "on the grounds that it was not a true work of art" (Mann). This piece of work started the constant arguing and debating on whether *The Fountain* was art or not. Many artists have argued that just signing a urinal and presenting it would not be considered art while others argued that there was an intention behind the presentation of the urinal. Because of one artist's work, the whole art community was affected and was interacting with this piece of work.

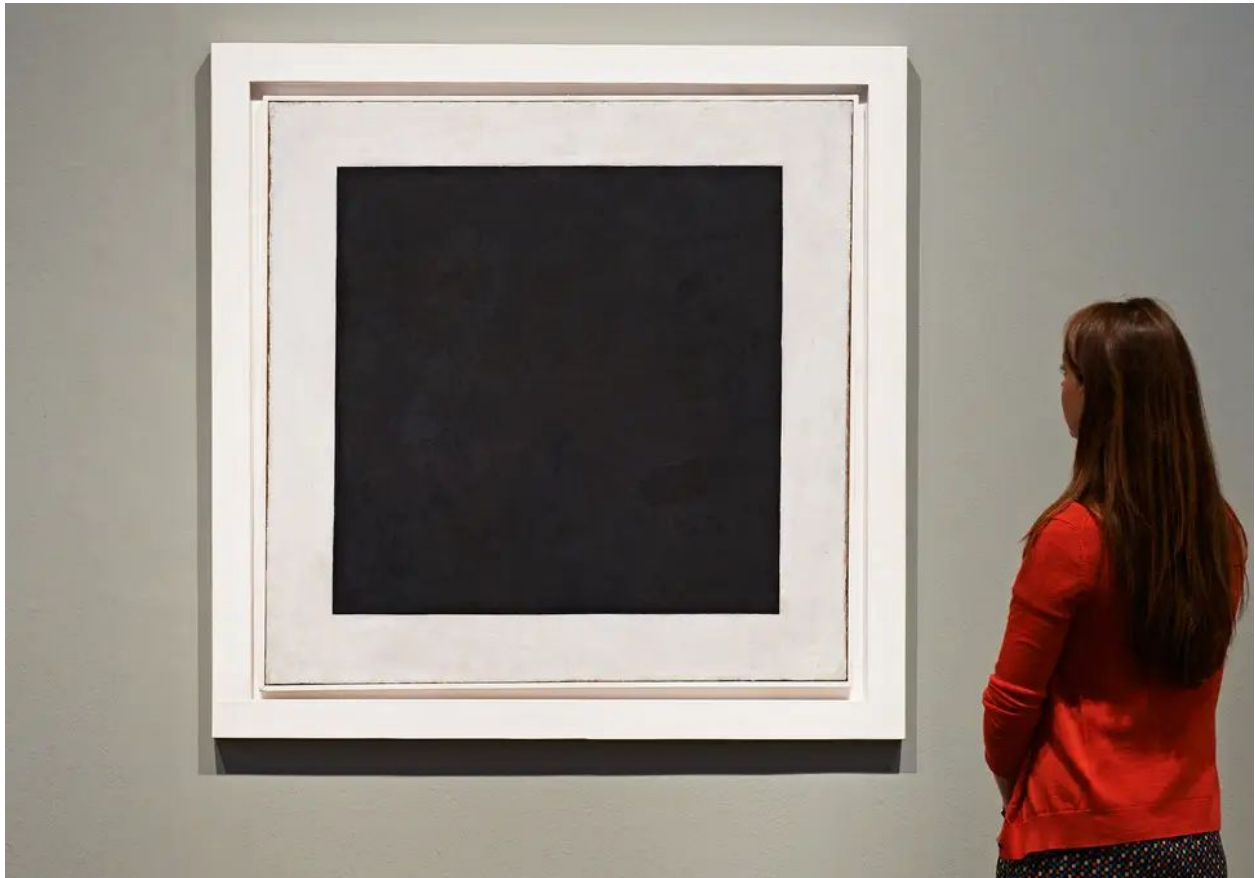


Duchamp continues creating “readymades - existing objects taken from real life and modified or re-contextualized to function as works of art” (Mann). In my visit to the Museum of Modern Art, I encountered one of Duchamp's “readymades” and was able to experience his creation in person. In the audio for this readymade called *Bicycle Wheel* created by Duchamp in 1913, Duchamp said: “The choice was based on visual indifference—a total absence of good or bad taste—in fact, a complete anesthesia” (Duchamp). When looking at this my thoughts were “I can create this too what is so hard about this.” The “total absence of good or bad taste” shows that this was created with the intention of indifference for looks and beauty, rather it was for the meaning behind it and the purpose of rethinking what art is (Duchamp). In the audio Duchamp also says, “I had the happy idea to fasten a bicycle wheel to a kitchen stool and watch it turn” (Duchamp). This was the content behind the art piece, his fascination and attachment to this wheel and playful attitude towards it were what sparked his reason for presenting this as one of his readymades. The *Bicycle Wheel* and *The Fountain* are just two of many other readymades that he created. He continues to challenge the definition of art through his creations and inciting more discussions of what is considered art. This example of how artwork can instigate and insinuate the public’s opinion holds true with Duchamp’s artwork.



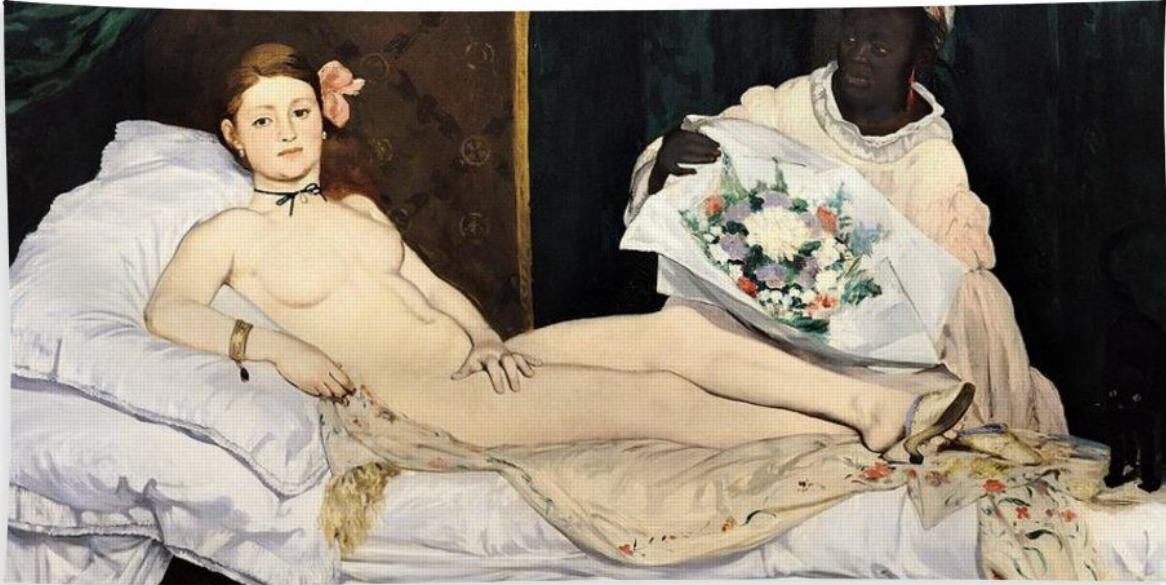
Other visual elements like paintings can also be created to affect public opinion and to alter them. Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* created in 1937, depicted the overnight bombing Guernica in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War. This large mural was considered different because "it challenges rather than accepts the notion of war as heroic" (Picasso). Picasso, who was also Spanish, heard of the bombing by German soldiers and created this Painting to show how gruesome and horrifying war and the bombing was (Picasso). Although the intent of the painting was clear, the way it was represented was up to interpretation. Around this time period was a rising type of art called cubism, where multiple artists express their artworks in forms of geometric shapes. Although they look abstract and random, they have a form and "the public who look at the picture must interpret the symbols as they understand them" (Picasso). In this painting's case, it affected public opinion in two ways. One was the anti-war symbolism and advocated for the abolition of war or the decline of it, while the other way was through the visual representation and what the symbols mean. People were unsure of the meaning behind the

painting and there was an endless debate on what each symbol meant. Picasso used art to show the world death and suffering as a result of war to affect their emotions and opinions on war. As a result, his painting has become an important symbol of anti-war movements.



The next example is by Kazimir Malevich, his piece of art was created in 1915 and is called *Black Square*. He challenges the social norms that art should be a depiction of reality. So unlike Picasso, he isn't showing something real or symbolizing something related to reality. Although this isn't changing the world it was "changing art forever" (Brennan). Because of this simple black square presented as art, it redefined what art could be just like Duchamp did with his *Fountain*. Later on, this piece of art inspired other artists to start thinking and creating more

abstract and conceptual artworks. The intention was to redefine art and it did just that as viewers who were other artists as well started the conceptual art movement and a boom of other types of art were presented to the art world. Their opinions of art have been affected which started these changes in the art world.



The final example is *Olympia*, painted by Edouard Manet in 1863. *Olympia* is a painting of a nude woman staring straight at the viewer. The intention behind this painting was the “rejection of the patriarchal gaze in art” (Brennan). The result was hanging the painting “very high to protect it from physical attacks” (Harris). Instead of the normal feminine painting at the time like *Venus of Urbino* by Titian, this painting “rather than a come hither look in the eyes of the subject, Olympia is confrontational, her stare hard” (Brennan). With the intention behind the painting, artists and other onlookers can see that Olympia was more reserved and less complacent to the patriarchal side of society which goes against the social norms of society at that time as well as today.

From these examples of artworks, the way each of them challenged something in society has been the spark for social changes and movements. These artists created their artwork with their intention behind it and played with the experiences of the public so that opinions would be altered and change would be instigated.

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