Ways of Seeing Study Guide

Ways of Seeing by John Berger

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

A child sees before it learns to speak. Seeing also enables an individual to relate to the environment that surrounds him. Words are used to try to explain the environment that surrounds. Words cannot settle the matter because they are static and the surrounding environment changes. There is a constant gap between the words used and the sight seen. Berger claims Magritte's painting "The Key of Dreams" comments on this gap.

The painting is comprised of an apparent four-pane window with black background in each pane. Each quadrant contains an image in black and white with white script words below. A viewer might assume there is some relation between the image and the script. A word in the lower right quadrant does indeed state what the picture is. Underneath the image of a suitcase in that pane is written "the valise", which is another word for suitcase, satchel, grip, and other synonyms. Ironically however, below the image of a horse's head in the upper left quadrant is "the door", under an image of a clock in the next quadrant is "the wind", and the lower left pane contains a picture of a pitcher with "the bird" in script below. No "key" or other images or words suggest "dreams" either. Magritte paints in the Surrealist school, which allows him more freedom of expression than Realism would.

The point is made by the painting and Berger's explanation that there is a gap between images one sees and words used to express their meaning in an environment. Berger's work "Ways of Seeing" is a 166-page book including an eight page list of reproductions. The work has seven untitled but numbered chapters called essays in the authors' "Notes to the reader". There is no table of contents that lists titles, numbers, or topics of the seven sections. The book is uniquely structured, since the first chapter is comprised of words and images, but the second is comprised of images only. The third and fourth chapters alternate similarly, as do the fifth and sixth chapters. The seventh and last chapter is comprised of words and images and followed by an index "List of Works Reproduced" with page numbers on which the reproduction is shown. Most pages of text have at least one image and many pages have several images. Several reproduced works also have detail insets on the same or nearby pages. Except for the front and back covers, all written words, reproduced works, and other images in the book are in black and white, bold or gray shade on glossy paper stock.

The book begins uniquely with its core message on the front cover continued on the back. Seeing establishes our place in a surrounding world and at the same time unsettles it in ways the words used to explain it never resolve. The book blends words and pictures to illustrate an interrelated dynamic environment. The work is composed by five authors whose final message converges on its last page "To be continued by the reader. . ." The book is published in 1972 by them in a venture with the British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books. The writing style is dense, pithy, philosophical, and enlightening. Reproduced images are placed in miniature format with several on each image page. Much of the writing relates directly to the surrounding images on the same or adjacent pages. Although original images are assumed to be in full color, they are reproduced in black and white in the book. Presumably, this style of

monochrome presentation is selected to enhance the message and avoid any distraction from full color presentation.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

A child sees before it learns to speak. Seeing enables an individual to relate to its environment. Words are used to explain the environment, but there is a gap between words and sight. Berger claims Magritte's painting "The Key of Dreams" comments on this gap. The painting is a four-pane window with a black background and a black and white image with white script words below in each pane. One might assume a relation between the image and the script. Underneath the image of a suitcase in one pane is written "the valise." However, below the image of a horse's head is "the door," under an image of a clock "the wind," and under a pitcher "the bird." Nothing suggests the title of the painting. Magritte paints in the Surrealist school which allows him more freedom of expression than Realism would.

The painting and Berger's explanation suggest there is a gap between images one sees and words used to express their meaning. Other subjective factors influence meaning. Seeing is not just a mechanical action. Berger asserts vision is a reciprocal function. Whoever can see can also be seen. What one sees differs from images, which are man-made. The word image means reproduced sight in this book. Sight occurs at some other place and time than the image that represents it. An image is predicated on a way of seeing that is intrinsic to its existence. Even a photographer makes subjective choices of subject, background, and lighting. A painter creates an image on canvas from his way of seeing the sight chosen as subject. The image-creator reproduces a sight from his way of seeing for an image-seer to view from his way of seeing.

Images show a sight that is not presently available, but if they last longer than the sight they represent, they show how the sight once looked. Images represent sights as seen by an image-maker, who has a way of seeing, so the image is also a record of how the subject is seen by the viewer. Individual consciousness of these representations becomes prevalent with the beginning of the Renaissance. A work of art, however, is more or less appreciated through learned assumptions. These assumptions do not make the history of an image any clearer. A work of art mystifies one about the past. A viewer "sees" himself in the landscape he looks at. A viewer of art of the past situates himself in the time viewed. Most actual historical works of art are kept from the many. Those who are privy to viewing the art can re-invent history to justify their role, the work of art mystifies.

For example, Frans Hals is an eighty-year-old destitute Dutch painter in 1664. He receives an official commission to paint the directors of a poorhouse for old people and at the same time receives free fuel so he does not freeze. Hals biographer states Hals is not bitter about the charity. A modern view might see the demeanor and dress of one of the Regents as drunken, but is described as simply the fashion of the time. The subjects see their image-maker as an old destitute pauper with a lost reputation who depends on them for his survival. Hals is the first painter of portraits commissioned by a

capitalist society. He is a poor, old starving man promoted as having "unwavering commitment to his personal vision" that "heightens our awe for the ever-increasing power of the mighty impulses . . . to give us a close view of life's vital forces." This is the mystification or confusion of past facts that Berger speaks about in the viewers' ways of seeing.

The past is viewed in the present from the point of view of the modern viewer. Berger uses the metaphor of a lighthouse beacon to represent the single eye of perspective into which appearances of reality flow in. This concept of perspective is unique to the art of Europe and begins with the early Renaissance period. Reality converges on a beholder's eye within that convention like a reverse light beacon. The spectator is the center of the visible universe, like God is once thought to be. The convention becomes contradictory, however, when a single viewer can only be in one place until the camera is invented. The mechanical eye of the camera is free from all boundaries of time and space in its ability to move anywhere and see anything. No longer do all things converge in perspective on a unique center of the spectator. The camera disproves the idea of center and single eye.

The Impressionist and Cubist schools of painting immediately reflect these changes in perspective brought about by the camera. Specifically, the Cubist style now can present the visible from many eyes rather than one single view from the perspective center. The camera also changes the way in which a painting is viewed as unique to its location in one or another building. The painting is no longer unique, since a camera can reproduce and present it in more than one location at a time. Its meaning diversifies and fragments into various environments; for instance, as a painting broadcast on a television screen.

For example, the National Gallery is once uniquely the only location an original painting of Leonardo da Vinci named the "Virgin of the Rocks" is seen. The authors reproduce it in this book to demonstrate since being reproduced it can be seen virtually anywhere. It is unique now as the original of a reproduction. The original's meaning is once unique in what it says but is now unique in what it is. A reproduction's meaning may be seen anywhere, so the original becomes valuable because of its rarity. Since it is a "work of art", it has a dimension of spiritual value reflected in its market price. Berger et al refer to this mystification as "bogus religiosity", comparable to a holy relic. A viewer may feel a sense of authenticity and beauty in the presence of an original. The fact of its legitimacy is substantiated by researched history in the National Gallery catalogue. It is a relatively unknown original painting by Leonardo until more than two million pounds is offered for it. Its established market value makes it impressive, mysterious, and displayed separately. The mystifying "bogus religiosity" based on market value replaces the unique meaning of a work of art that is reproduced and seen anywhere. Statistics quoted demonstrate most people do not visit art museums because they feel excluded by the material and spiritual wealth of those who appreciate the presumed mysterious holy relics shown there.

The meaning of original paintings is detached from them when images are reproducible and can be transmitted like any other information. Images that are reproduced can be

used or ignored for many reasons. Some uses for reproduced images are illustrated by the authors. The face of one figure in a group can be isolated in reproduction to become a portrait. A painting seen in all its elements by a viewer presents an understanding that a viewer can reconsider by viewing in a different set or order of elements. A still camera may photograph one face in isolation, but a film camera can take many images in a series to present an understanding that a viewer cannot reconsider. A painting presents a static image that can be reviewed but a movie film is dynamic.

Another way to use a reproduced image is by placing words around the image. A graphic example is presented with its image described as "a cornfield with birds flying out of it". Turning the page reveals the same image with the painting's title "Wheatfield with crows, by Van Gogh 1853-1890" on the side and the caption, "This is the last picture that Van Gogh painted before he killed himself". The author claims words significantly change the image, but in some indefinable way. A reproduction may also be used as a point of reference for images or words around it. Images may be used for political or commercial purposes. Over time and through multiple uses a reproducible work of art in its original form may lose the mystification that causes it to be seen nostalgically as a holy relic.

Original paintings even as a reproduction still maintain a silence and stillness that bridges the distance between their historical origin and the viewer's experience. Berger et al assert in a special sense all painting is a present-day experience. Each viewer sees it based on their prior experiences and expectations. The authors pose the question whether the meaning of historical art belongs to "relic specialists", or those to who use it in their own lives. Initially, visual art is made for a location, whether cave or building. The experience is set aside for that place to maintain its authority. Reproduction eliminates that authority and makes images available anywhere. Since it promotes an illusion, nothing is changed of the past, few people are aware of the new political power available with images.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 2 is an eight-page chapter comprised of reproduced images whose originals are photographs, oil paintings, and advertising posters. There are no words used to describe the images, although the advertising posters contain promotional messages. There are a total of twenty-four images in the chapter, but only six are identified in the List of Works Reproduced. Another five are acknowledged for their owners' permission to reproduce. Artists whose works are identified include modern contemporaries Picasso, Modigliani, Gaugin, and Giacometti, and seventeenth century artists Rembrandt and Rubens. Several unidentified photographs and publicity images are included. With the exception of three still-life photo reproductions and one apparent escalator shot in a store or terminal, each image prominently features a woman. Reproductions in this image chapter are arranged to compose a visual statement based on their facing page layout.

Facing pages thirty-six and thirty-seven contain two photo reproductions, each with female images. The upper left facing page thirty-six is of a female artist holding a paintbrush and wearing a smock. She is in a workroom amid wall photos, posters, or sketches of other women. The female artist is using a brush on the paper or canvas she holds and seems unaware the photograph is being taken of her. The number twenty-one shows on an apparent wall calendar. The lower left facing page thirty-six reproduction is of a woman seated in an auto or limo, wearing a sleeveless short white dress that exposes her knees, mid-thigh, and attractive legs. She does not look at the man dressed in a suit and tie and two other women staring at her through the auto window. This reproduction is acknowledged with the permission of Evening Standard and seems to be the news photo of a female celebrity. Directly across on facing page thirty-seven is an unidentified picture of a social gathering. Three men in the forefront are dressed in tuxedos and an attractive woman is dressed in a backless off the shoulder evening gown. Ironically, the three men in this photo ignore the woman as she looks at them. One of them stands on the hem of her long gown which does not let her move without pulling on it. The upper right unidentified photo is of two store mannequins without clothes in the forefront. A man works in the background, perhaps on a storefront display where he will dress and place them. Except for mannequins that show no female features, the women are clothed but display legs and shoulders that hint of things to come.

The next facing pages thirty-eight and thirty-nine reverse the prior visual statement. None of the women are clothed, and except for the upper left Cubist work by Picasso, they all display the fully female features just hinted at in the previous pages. The two unidentified photographs of unclothed female figures at the center top and center left are partially covered, one by inset oil paintings titled "Nude" by Picasso and Modigliani, and the other by beads, a lace belt, and other dangling jewelry. Picasso's work is in the Cubist style and needs a degree of viewer imagination to see an unclothed female body.

Diagonally is a reproduction of the Giacometti work titled "Nude Standing Figure" that is similarly stylized. Five other reproductions on facing pages need no imagination to recognize unclothed female bodies. Gaugin's mysterious title "Nevermore" is a female lying unclothed on a bed with two blurry figures and a bird, perhaps a raven, perched on a window sill, in the background. On the facing page thirty-nine, Rembrandt's seventeenth century painting acknowledged from the Mansell collection, "Bathsheba", perches fully without clothes on the edge of a divan.

Facing pages forty and forty-one introduce the new dimension in visual reproduction. Both pages are replete with publicity images. Most of the nine photos are of female bodies in stages of sensual undress, but the center page forty-one is of slices of ham and hunk of raw meat on a table beset with olives, onions, eggs, and other foodstuffs. Above it to the right is an inset photo of the ingredients to match the statement that "Frank Cooper puts everything he's got into making soup". To the right and below is an inset still life of an apparent tipped over goblet and perhaps a plate of grapes. Bordering on the left and above the sumptuous samplings of foodstuffs are ladies' legs in stockings, lips and tongue touching a "blaze of frosted colour" lipstick and bare sensitive English skin advertising "Cooltan for the English skin". Underneath the food display on the left is an exposed female breast and raised underarm where the model is spraying deodorant. Directly to the right on page forty-one shows a partially naked upper thigh and buttocks with the partial wording "Welsey's Top. . . tights for the. . . anti-panti. . ." Inset on that photo is a long-haired female showing similarly clothed upper thigh and buttocks but with raised underarms lifting her lacy top.

The next two facing pages forty-two and forty-three continue the publicity image themes of female thighs, buttocks, and cosmetics on the left facing page. The oil painting "Judgment of Paris" by the sixteenth century painter Rubens is placed atop a photo shoot reproduction acknowledged from Jean Mohr of a blond clothed but provocatively posed female model being photographed by four dressed male photographers. The Rubens oil painting is as well comprised of five prominent male and female figures, but none of them are fully or even partially clothed. Seven other small-stature and background figures in the Rubens are also unclothed. Diagonally up from the blond in the photo shoot is an unidentified photo of a long-haired blond topless model. She is photographed from a rear view with a profile and arms crossed frontal view in the mirror. She seems to be dressing for perhaps a photo shoot. The photo image has the phrase "Next to myself I like Vedo . . ." which may be the name of her undergarment. Inset below to the right is a mirror reflection of a seated female face applying eye makeup and other cosmetics from the open case in front of her. The top right photograph of several people seeming to move on an escalator in a department store or terminal may evoke the people to whom publicity images are aimed.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

The preceding pictorial chapter is comprised of female reproductions from various times and forms of manner and dress. Chapter three begins with describing differences between a man and a woman. A graphic presentation summarizes its topical focus with the image of a reclining woman without clothes and the head of a man with clothes looking at her through an open window. The image is a reproduction titled "Reclining Bacchante by Trutat 1824-1848".

A man and a woman present different social presences. A man represents power that is smaller or larger relative to his size, bearing, and appearance. The power he represents may be effective in different realms, but the focus of its use is always external to a man. In contrast, however, a woman's social presence represents how she feels about herself and what may be done to her. It is stated by the authors that a man thinks of her presence as a physical emanation. Culturally and socially, a woman is born to be under the control of men. She is taught, trained, and conditioned from early on to become aware of herself as the image of herself others see. In herself, she continually sees and is seen by herself as two parts of one female identity. Berger et al refer to her contemporaneous dual roles as surveyor and surveyed. How she appears to men ultimately is critical to her life. Her self worth is supported by her sense of appreciation by others. Since a man surveys a woman before caring for her, a woman tries to anticipate and control this treatment by showing how she would like to be cared for. Her presence is comprised of her internal surveyor's perception of how she should act to be treated like she wants. For example, whether throwing a glass in anger or telling a joke in humor, a woman conveys how she treats herself and would like to be treated, unlike a man whose anger or joke is seen as apart from him. Conceptually then, a woman has a male element, the surveyor, that turns herself, the surveyed, into an object. Specifically, a woman sees herself as a sight.

The nude is a category of European oil painting in which women regularly appear as the subject. The first famous painting in the category is Adam and Eve in Genesis, when they discover they are naked. They are unclothed as before, but eating the apple causes them to become aware of nakedness. Their disobedience by eating the apple is blamed on Eve. She is made subservient to Adam, who is an agent of God to her. The story presented in nude images evolves through the medieval, Renaissance, and secular traditions. Its moral value transforms from first look at being naked and ashamed to covering the shame from a viewer with fig leaves to displaying their naked shame to spectators. An oil painting by Tintoretto includes spectators in the work looking at the naked female subject taking a bath. Another painting includes the naked Susannah as a spectator of herself by looking at her own image in a mirror.

Introduction of a mirror is used to show that a woman is vain but is really hypocritical moralizing. Both painter and spectators like looking at naked women. Using a mirror

presumably neutralizes their guilt by her willingness to see herself as well. A dimension of competition is added when Paris awards an apple to the most beautiful naked woman. The King has his mistress painted naked while looking out at her spectators to show she is submissive to him and the envy of his guests.

One difference between naked and nude is that nudity is a form of art according to the author Kenneth Clark but naked is without clothes. Berger et al list several conventional ideas about nakedness and nudity that derive from a tradition of art and lived sexuality. Naked is as one is without clothes but a nude is to be seen naked but not as one is. In other words, a person may be naked but a nude is an object to view. Ironically, nakedness is without disguise, but nudity is a type of dress and therefore not naked. In a work of art displaying a nude, the main focus is usually the fully dressed male stranger viewing the figure of a naked woman. Everything in the painting is focused to exhibit a nude for the benefit of the spectator. For example, Bronzino's painting of Cupid kissing the lips of Venus' tilted head displays her body in a sexually provocative way to the spectator, not to Cupid. In this case and that of the two adjacent images, the nude females' expressions are alluring. The women offer a sexually stimulating gaze to the unknown male spectator they imagine looking at them. Cupid is present as a surrogate lover for the spectator to ignore or identify with in the arms of Venus.

Another style of European oil painting that presents unclothed females is that of women who are loved by the painter who displays their nakedness. The unknown male spectator is not drawn in by her look as an imagined paramour. Her lover is the painter and their relationship is for display, not her naked body. This is a somewhat asexual vision of the naked body that is itself a pleasurable vision. This nakedness is impersonal while at the same time reassuring and confirming of the maleness or femaleness of a body. While clothed, the body is mysterious until naked. The process of becoming naked lessens the ordinariness of an unmoving body without clothes. A static naked body on display does not impute the desire for sexual fantasy of a nude. The example of Rubens' painting of his young second wife partially clothing her still naked body creates a sense of dynamism that lets it rise above her bare banality.

Although European oil painters are assumed to present an example of humanism, their individual expression of women as either an object or an abstraction is a contradiction. If they are truly committed to the humanity of the individual, then so too ought the naked female that they paint be treated similarly. They ought not to turn her naked body into an object for display, the nude. Another painter, Durer, thought an ideal nude could be manufactured on canvas from various parts like a female Frankenstein, who would be recognizable to no one. Traditionally and culturally, however, the display of a woman as object by a presenter, whether painter or spectator-owner, the male is deeply ingrained in European art until the mid-nineteenth century. Manet begins the break with that tradition as shown, for example, in a comparison of his Olympia with Titian's Venus. The period of modern art may have begun the change, but in the reality of contemporary advertising, journalism, and television the tradition continues in the way of seeing women.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Chapter four is a sixteen-page chapter comprised of reproduced images whose originals are oil paintings, and one apparent photograph of the Knole Ball Room. There are no words used to describe the images but many of them list the title, dates, and artist of the work along their left side border. There are a total of thirty-six images, all of which are identified in the List of Works Reproduced. Many of them are also acknowledged for their owners' permission to reproduce. Paintings of the artists whose works are identified illustrate a virtual history of art. The chapter begins with religious reproductions of paintings by Cimabue in 1240, and continues the gamut of representative art and artists through the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, ending with Magritte in 1967. No unidentified works are included. Subjects include iconic religious figures, dead bodies and severed heads, still life arrangements, mythical characters, portraits of historical persons, as well as self-portraits among others. Unlike images of the previous pictorial chapter, most of the figures in these images are fully clothed in the dress of their time, both male and female. Reproductions in this image chapter are arranged along more closely aligned themes that represent the style changes over time on facing pages.

Facing pages sixty-six and sixty-seven are reproductions of religious icons from 1240 through 1893. Cimabue's "Virgin Enthroned" sets the theme for the seven repetitive virgin or Madonna and child paintings. Six paintings are from the Early to Middle Ages and portray heavily religious themes with cherubs, angels, halos, and other iconic objects and features surrounding the central figure of mother and child. Artists painting the serious religious themes include Piero della Francesca, Fra Filippo Lippi, Rafael, and Murillo. Ford Madox Brown's nineteenth century painting titled "The Pretty Baa Lambs" introduces a touch of secular humor or sacrilege with the mother as shepherdess holding a long-skirted girl child while tending sheep. The iconic style of other earlier religious paintings shows the boy Child covered cherub-like in swaddling clothes and considered the Lamb of God.

Death sets the theme of facing pages sixty-eight and sixty-nine. Similar to the previous pages, Giotto portrays the "Death of St. Francis" from Early Ages, and Brueghel illustrates the Middle Ages with detail from his "Triumph of Death". Manet's "Dead Toreador" echoes the elegant simplicity of the corpse lost in the complexity of the gatherings surrounding the deaths on page sixty-eight. Gruesomeness of the French Revolution is illustrated by Gericault's "Guillotined Heads." A degree of peace in death is re-established with Hans Baldung Grien's "Three Ages of Woman". The three women and child are all unclothed, as is common in the Middle Ages, but their images' physical transformation from child to skeleton overcomes any hint of sensuality.

Still life paintings of food, drink, and the hunt to acquire meat is the theme on facing pages seventy and seventy-one. These works are all done in the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries by Pierre Chardin, Goya, Oudry, and Jan Fyt. They are all titled "Still Life", which when juxtaposed with the corpses and gruesome images that represent the death theme of the previous pages, presents a visual irony. The depth of irony is enhanced by the still life presentations of life-sustaining sustenance. The hunt is represented by the rifle and dead animal carcass placed diagonally from the skinned cow's head and chunks of raw meat.

As if tiring of reality with never-ending life and death cycles, the next two sets of facing pages are populated with mostly unclothed fanciful human figures of mythology. Middle Ages artists Ferrari, di Cosimo, and Signorelli's oil paintings of "Daphnis and Chloe", "Venus and Mars", and "Pan" are reproduced to provide a respite from heavy earlier page themes of death. Sensuous unclothed male and female bodies are presented amidst other similarly dressed and styled lesser images in the works. An aura of fantasy and unreality surrounds the prominent figures symbolized by the unclothed rear view of Pan playing his flute, while the unclothed full frontal female view of his consort is ignored by him. The draped male at her feet looks up at her and other male characters around her look over at her. Pan reappears with renewed interest in unclothed female views in Boucher's eighteenth century work titled "Pan and Syrinx" on page seventy-five. This reproduction appears atop Prud'hon's eighteenth century "Love seducing Innocence. Pleasure leading her on. Remorse following." As may be expected, most of the male and female bodies in these two facing pages lack any clothes. Diagonally from Prud'hon's Seduction is Ingres' "Angelica saved by Ruggiero", that shows her naked and bound with an evil dragon or serpent at her feet being pierced by Ruggiero's lance. Couture's eighteenth century "A Roman Feast" displays no food but the naked rear view of a voluptuous reclining female is an effective sensuous balance to "Pan and Syrinx".

A reproduction of the Knole Ball Room on page seventy-six has walls covered with majestic oil paintings, ornate furniture, and accessories, and faces the three courtly seventeenth and eighteenth century paintings of historical personages. "Emanuel Philibert of Savoy", "Endymion Porter", and "Norman, 22nd Chief of Macleod" reproductions of the original oil paintings of van Dyck, Dobson, and Ramsey respectively are presented. All subjects stand alone, are stately posed and fully clothed in appropriate dress of their time. These portraits introduce the final series of facing pages in this chapter. Five portraits from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century are reproduced from original oil paintings by Frans Hals, Velasquez, Goya, Chardin, and Gericault. These works may be the precursor to modern day but formal portrait photography.

The last two facing pages eighty and eighty-one are interesting for their perspective on the artist. Each work is a self-portrait, and with the exception of Magritte, are titled "Self-Portrait". Durer, Rembrandt, and Goya are represented from sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Ironically, the twentieth century artist Magritte titles his self-portrait "Not to be reproduced" and shows the back of his head facing a mirror that also reflects the back of his head.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

The preceding pictorial chapter is comprised of various reproductions from many times and forms of manner and dress. Chapter five begins with an oil painting showing several items contemporaneous with the Dutch school in 1665. This still life includes musical instruments, a globe, fruit, vases and faces, and assorted other objects. The authors assert the purchase of a painting includes acquiring the appearance of the things it characterizes. The anthropologist Levi-Strauss, ironically neither an art expert nor historian, is the first to notice that possessing and a way of seeing merge in oil painting. Specifically, objects in an oil painting are in a sense owned by the owner of the painting.

Oil painting is an art form developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to present a view that other existing methods are not able to do. This new method itself is subject to adaptation and change that Impressionism and Cubism bring to it. The traditional period of oil painting runs through 1900. After that the photograph becomes the primary form of visual imagery. The method nonetheless remains the standard-bearer against which other forms and terminology are defined. For example, a love of art is described through Teniers' painting "Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Private Picture Gallery". The art lover is the patron of painters in the seventeenth century. The five or six figures in the painting are minuscule compared to the wall of oil paintings that surround and envelope them. A collector of art is different from a collector of other objects, since an art lover is surrounded by the pictures that show him the sights of what he may posses. The ruling class of each period supports a way of seeing the world that forms their attitudes about property and exchange. Oil painting reduces all things to tradeable material measurable commodities. The soul of an oil painting is apart from any great or small work of art no matter how rare or plentiful the number exists throughout the world. The mediocrity of most works even in a museum when surrounding a masterpiece is not differentiated. The market has a need for more product than genius has talent to create.

The two dimensional oil painting is different from other art, even three dimensional sculptures, because it can convey the illusions of tangibility, texture, luster, and solidity. Its objects have color, texture, and temperature that fill the world. For example, "The Ambassadors" by Holbein creates an illusion that surrounds the figures with dominant material objects that seem to be real and touchable. Each surface in the oil painting is richly worked over and reproduced by the painter. Oil painting is able to make objects desirable to the touch of an owner. Their materiality can be bought with the purchasing power of money. Even the ominous metaphysical and religious symbols that carry over from the medieval period are overcome by a spectator's desire to acquire material goods and illusions that seduce him. Except for William Blake, who minimizes the tangibility of his painting, the work of Holbein and "The Ambassadors" is typical of the period. Their aloof and wary gaze while surrounded by the material goods and symbols of their world belies their confidence, formality, and arrogance. Navigation instruments

between them symbolize trade routes to acquire the riches of other nations, a world globe as their target to colonize, and an African to symbolize the slave trade. Their individual appearance, gaze, and objects demonstrate their self-perpetuating intent to conquer and colonize.

Several types of oil painting typify the period. They begin with the formal portrait that functions as a mask to their costume and eventually evolves into the politician. Painters often used gold-leaf in the painting but then just on the frames which enhances the notion that material good is the subject matter of art. Food is a subject that represents the wealth and style of life. Paintings of animals are shown that emphasize their quality to represent the wealth of their owners. Objects, buildings, and mythological figures are also subjects, with the mythological creatures being accorded the highest prestige. The classics are studied and appropriate subjects painted to represent a significant but generally vacuous scene. Vulgar or common life subjects are painted to reassure the owner-spectator that their life is more valuable as a moral statement. These images are called "genre" pictures, that depict real life as an antidote to mythology and classic forms. The landscape does not initially address social needs. Its primary subjects, sky and distance, are intangible and have no surface. However, landowners have a desire to present their estates and perhaps themselves in the forefront. The landowner has the pleasure of his portrait with their landholdings to substantiate their wealth and value.

Berger et al propose a metaphor that the European oil painting tradition is a wall safe into which the ways of seeing are deposited. Historically, the figure of speech used is that of a window unto the world. Their argument, however, is a study of the European oil painting culture with its conventions is better represented overall with their model. Specifically, an obsession exists with property and art in the European society and culture from which the traditional oil painting conventions develop that is natural to it. They make a distinction between the traditions overall and specific exceptional masters that oppose the traditions in their innovations. The exceptional masters whose principles are not incorporated but rather imitated include Rembrandt and Goya. The great artist is a painter, who struggles through his life with the culture and its conventions, the lack of understanding his work evokes, and often with himself and physical survival. For example, the earlier illustration of Van Gogh' last painting, "a cornfield with birds flying out of it", may represent the final release from struggle of his soul before suicide.

The struggle of other masters may not be as dramatic, but are nonetheless evident in the transition of their work over years. For example, over a thirty-year period, from the age of twenty-eight to fifty-eight, Rembrandt paints two self-portraits. The first is in the year of his first marriage and includes his wife. It is a smiling, joyful happy picture of himself and Saskia that he paints in the traditional style and methods that illustrate their happy exuberance and pleasure but conveys no depth of soul. Berger refers to it as a heartless advertisement. Saskia dies within six years. Thirty years later, Rembrandt paints the second self-portrait of the two examples. He is an old man in this painting that conveys the question of his existence. He uses his own individualistic style that portrays his soul but none of the traditional style and methods of the earlier heartless advertisement. The tradition is turned around in this second work by posing a question that the medium is traditionally designed to exclude.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

Chapter six is a fourteen-page chapter comprised of reproduced images whose originals are oil paintings and some photographs. No words are used to describe the images but some list titles and dates of the work along its bottom or left side border. This chapter also has thirty-six images identified in the List of Works Reproduced. Some are acknowledged for owners' permission to reproduce. These works are almost exclusively from middle to late seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. The chapter begins with reproductions of symbolic works by turn of the eighteenth century artist William Blake. Historic persons and events are presented in both paintings and photographs. Regular, common social events and experiences comprise the presentation of art and artists through seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. There are no unidentified works. Subjects include common-day life, pets, and farm animals set against landscapes with some representative theme-setting among them. Unlike previous image chapters, most figures in these works wear clothes, whether in social or individual settings. Reproductions are less symbolic than indicative of traditional photo albums.

William Blake uses unclad female figures to represent the opening works in this chapter that include "Europe supported by Africa and America", "Pity", and "Mildew Blighting Ears of Corn". Three female figures stand together facing front, touching in a supportive manner the central figure. Left and right figures are colored, one black, the other brown or red skinned, both are holding the white central figure, apparently symbolic of Europe. The message seems to be white people of Europe or Caucasians depend on the black native Africans and Native Americans to survive. His second work, "Pity", echoes the corpse of earlier chapters that a cherub-like figure overhead is caring for. Facing page 115 shows both male and female stylized naked bodies titled "Mildew Blighting Ears of Corn" reminiscent of modern surrealism since neither naked body looks like corn or mildew.

Facing pages 116 and 117 return to Blake's theme of Africa and America supporting Europe. The photograph on the lower left page poignantly confirms in its title "Sale of Pictures and Slaves in the Rotunda" state-sponsored commoditization of slaves. Their humanity is shown by Rembrandt's "Two Negroes" directly opposite. Social structure acceptable and expected of the time is shown by three portraits of elite white persons served by black attendants. Nattier's "Mademoiselle de Clermont", "Princess Rakoscki", and "Charles, Third Duke of Richmond" by other artists of the time confirm their status.

The following facing pages 118 and 119 demonstrate a side by side view for comparison the photograph titled "Sarah Burge, 1883. Dr Barnardo's Homes", and the oil painting by Bartolome Murillo titled "Peasant Boy Leaning on Sill". Since both are reproductions in black and white, their relative clarity, definition, shading and tone can be analyzed. The boy is more life-like with softer texture, skin shading and tactile hair compared to the

girl's pasty white features with no skin shading or tone, black stringy featureless hair and a dark dress with no relative sense of texture. The photograph dated 1883 is a primitive visual technology still in developing stages. The painting of two hundred years earlier shows refinement and development yet to be achieved by photography.

Family and other social groupings of common ordinary daily life is depicted in the six reproductions on facing pages 120 and 121. There is nothing extraordinary, symbolic, or is there any particularly meaningful message to be garnered from any of these early sixteenth century paintings. They are indicative of the times and how people lived then and there. Four hundred years later they could simply be snapshots taken by a camera or today even by a cell phone and digitally transmitted. The extraordinary significance of these works is that an artist spends days and weeks of time laboriously putting oil on canvas to record such mundane events as "A Family Group" by Nouts, "Interior with Woman Cooking" by Boursse, or "Tavern Scene" by Jan Steen. Common everyday life seems to have more meaning then when it takes huge blocks of time to record it as it was than it does now.

The ten reproductions on facing pages 122 and 123 may be extraordinary because of their subjects. A human may be willing to sit for portraiture, whether painting or photography, while the artist captures their likeness. However, the animals and children in nine of these ten reproductions are unlikely to have the ability or patience to sit. These eighteenth and nineteenth century artists paint on the fly, so to speak, and produce fine art from memory and imagination. Similar to the prior pages, there is no major significance to the works on these facing pages that are used to hang on the walls of one's environment. Their significance is that an artist takes the time to create these paintings at all. These paintings by Gainsborough, Landseer, and others provide evidence for their patrons of what they own and enjoy in their lives.

Courbet's two paintings reproduced on facing pages 124 and 125 titled "Girl in White Stockings" and "Demoiselles au bord de la Seine" illustrate two distinct styles of his work. The former has broad and firm strokes, like the style of Paul Gaugin. There is little detail defined. In contrast, Demoiselle is dainty, lacy, and ornate in setting. The paintings seen side by side do not seem to flow from the vision of the same artist. The Girl is alone, elegantly simple yet powerful and intense. Demoiselles is surrounded by flowers, dainty leaves, and a friend. Shaded by the trees, Demoiselles is covered, hidden protected and innocent while Girl is open uncovered strong and Rubenesque. Both are feminine, but Demoiselles is dainty and the Girl is sensuous and voluptuous.

The final eight reproductions on facing pages 126 and 127 of this chapter return to social situations supporting themes and echoing photos and paintings. Thomas Couture's "Les Romains de la Decadence" presages the photograph beneath it "Le Salon". Bonnat's "Madame Cahen d'Anvers" patterns Doerstling's "The Ondine of Nidden" with flowing female lines. Morot's "The Temptation of St. Anthony" parallel "Witches Sabbath" by Falero. "Psyche's Bath" by Leighton and "La Fortune" by Maignon share the columns and Greco-Roman sense of majesty and strength.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

Chapter seven begins with a photograph by Sven Blomberg, showing several contemporary advertising items reflected in reverse on an apparent store display window. This photo includes a mannequin, buildings, and billboard advertising among other items in a typical city view. Berger refers to them as visual messages and publicity images. These images are momentary, ever-present everywhere and constantly changing as one experiences modern daily life. The common element indicated by the author is that the images do not address the present, always point to the future, and often use the past to do so.

Generally, a viewer passes the publicity images while walking, driving, riding, or reading. The frequency and omnipresence provide the sense of a parade, although a viewer moves past them except for television. The images are like the weather or the climate in which viewers live. Their impact usually occurs unnoticed. Television viewers receive a steady stream of publicity images, like an automated drug delivery system. Publicity is assumed to promote the public's freedom of choice to purchase. In reality, the freedom of choice offered in publicity is between competing products but the message to buy something is the same. The purchase promises to change our lives. Examples are shown to illustrate the changes brought about by the product. The viewer is stimulated to want the product too. The language of publicity creates envy that makes the product or service glamorous.

The use of publicity encourages the viewer to see him or herself enjoying or benefiting from the product or service promoted. Publicity is aimed at a viewer who may be made to feel envy at seeing someone using the product or enjoying an experience. Publicity promises happiness to the viewer just like the glamorous subject in the image. Glamour is the happiness at feeling envied, according to the authors. For example, a bureaucrat or politician is sustained by an illusion of their power and happiness being envied by those looking up to them. Publicity images are designed to make the spectator-buyer envious of herself as others will see her if she buys the product or service herself. Berger explains the psychology that the publicity image takes away her love of herself as she is, but then offers her back to herself after buying the product or service that makes her enviable.

The European oil painting way of seeing shares common similarities and differences with publicity images. In some cases, there is a direct relation by a publicity image that uses an oil painting updated to promote a product or experience. For example, Manet's pastoral picnic setting is reproduced with an old phonograph record machine and the caption "We could all use a little romance". Using artwork, sculpture, and paintings can contribute to the aura or attractiveness of a product or display used in publicity images. Art can bring a sense of wealth and cultural authority to a publicity image. The claim is proposed that publicity practitioners can understand and use the cultural traditions of oil

painting more effectively than art historians. Publicity images use the relationship between art and the spectator-owner to encourage spectator-buyers. Using a work of art in a publicity image is referred to as "quoting" a work of art, like citing a quotation adds credibility to a text.

In addition to "quoting", other techniques of visual correspondence can also be used effectively. For example, other cases beyond the Manet painting of similarity between an oil painting and a publicity image that is referred to as the game "Snap" are illustrated on the following pages 136 and 137. Sets of signs are also suggested to indicate visual correspondence and continuity from oil paintings to publicity images. For example, some sets mentioned are comparing nature and innocence, the sea and new life and materials to illustrate luxury such as furs and leather among others. A consumer society requires the use of publicity images to develop its culture and beliefs. The messages conveyed by traditional oil painting provide the basis for images that support that development.

An oil painting historically demonstrates the wealth or private property one has. An image used for publicity is a last current continuation or extension that demonstrates what one owns. Publicity draws upon the past and its visual language to stimulate confidence, credibility, and sales into the future. The objects in publicity images are effective only to the extent they suggest learned behavior and icons. They use commonly known historical but vaguely understood icons whose images have a glamorous effect on spectator-buyers. Texture, tangibility, and contrast introduced with European oil painting are re-introduced with the invention of color photography fifteen years before publication of this text. Color photographs create a sense of reality in publicity images that black and white photos do not. A spectator-buyer is led to believe in feeling and having the reality of color images.

A spectator-owner of an oil painting, however, already possesses the painting, which enhances his life and surroundings. The spectator-buyer, however, can only experience what it may be like to own the object or experience imaged if he is dissatisfied with his present condition. Specifically, the spectator-owner may experience self-satisfaction with his oil painting, but the spectator-buyer must experience dissatisfaction to accomplish the purpose of a publicity image. In addition, to just enjoying the view of his oil painting, the spectator-owner may also receive money and wealth if he chooses to sell the oil painting. The spectator-buyer, however, must buy the object or experience in the publicity image to enjoy what he believes is the pleasure of possession that a spectator-owner already has. The spectator-owner takes pleasure in his oil painting, but the spectator-buyer experiences anxiety until he has the happiness he believes getting the object of his envy will provide. His purchase proves to himself he has the power to overcome the fear of having nothing that publicity images create. With that power he believes he is lovable. Since publicity uses sexuality to stimulate desire to purchase, the spectator-buyer is doubly encouraged to buy because the use of that power also makes him sexually desirable as well.

An oil painting captures the present experience for future viewers. The painting is settled past and provides a permanent record for future descendants of the spectator-

owner to see his past present life. Publicity images, however, present the future. A spectator-buyer is shown what his future can be like if he acquires the promoted product or experience. A spectator-buyer knows what his past present is like. He rejects it for the future happiness promised by having the product or service promoted by publicity. For example, a personal or place change like Cinderella or The Enchanted Palace is promoted. The future is never attainable, but remains desirable through the fantasy of daydreams.

Glamour is the modern-day substitute for the qualities present in the traditional oil painting. Elegance, wealth, authority, beauty, and good fortune as presented in the painting does not stimulate envy. Her qualities are acknowledged in themselves and do not depend on the spectator's desire for them or her. Berger et al claim the development of glamour needs the personal envy of one another in a society to be a "common and widespread emotion". The democratic industrial society generates these feelings through its assurance of the right to pursue happiness, but without its guarantee. The individual consequently feels powerless and becomes either a rebel or an envious daydreamer. The gap between what an individual is and would like to be is filled by the publicity images that feed his envious daydreaming. Driven by the desires of his dreams, he is forced to spend his days alternatively working and dreaming to satisfy his unachievable goals. The freedoms of democracy are brought to fruition by choices that publicity offers between one or another car, cereal, or deodorant. The good life is available just by picking and buying the right product or service that satisfies one's envious desire for happiness.

Publicity images provide reassurance for one's choices by presenting the contrast between the world it promotes and the world that exists. Color news magazines are used to present the contrast by placement of the images. The Sunday Times magazine excerpt about Pakistan is placed above the ad for "a badedas bath" illustrates an example of the contrasts produced by the publicity culture. The contrast occurs apart from any event, since they all happen to strangers with no relevance except the shock effect on a viewer. The influence of publicity is significant because its narrow imperative to acquire is compelling to the exclusion of all other offers to purchase. It is just this one product or service, each one at a time, that promises to provide the happiness desired to the exclusion of all others. The use of publicity is the life flow of a capitalistic culture. Publicity is the tool of capitalism that forces the majority of viewers to narrowly define their interests whether by deprivation or by setting false standards of the desirable.

Characters

John Berger, Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, Michael Dibb, Richard

John Berger, Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, Michael Dibb, and Richard Hollis are all the co-authors of "Ways of Seeing". Their co-authorship is rather ironic if, as suggested by their names, they are all male. They are variously referred to in this write up as Berger, the co-authors, the authors, and Berger et al because no specific attribution is made to any of them in the seven chapters, both written and pictorial of this work. The work originates in the BBC television series by the same name. The authors refer to the book's chapters as essays that can be read in any order desired. Their significance to the work is critical because it does deal with the way individuals and societies in general see and record what they see. To that extent Berger et al interpret for the reader their way of seeing the subject matter and images selected for their verbal and pictorial essays. The co-authors in their apparent exclusive gender choice do maintain the male dominant world that ways of seeing originates from. The male is dominant as actor-spectator and the female is subordinate as subject-object. The time and place of their published work is England in the early 1970s, where perhaps a male-dominant way of seeing is pertinent.

According to the authors' understanding, a woman is born culturally and socially to be under the control of men. Berger et al assert the chauvinist view of women begins at birth when a female child is trained and conditioned to see herself as the image others see of her. Her female identity is split in two and her schizoid training is euphemistically termed by the authors "contemporaneous dual roles" as surveyor and surveyed. The self worth of a woman in their opinion is based on how she sees herself being appreciated by others, specifically men. This concept is central to the underlying theme and destination of the authors' argument to visual messages that constitute the publicity image. Berger et al claim these images point to the future and draw upon the past to accomplish their goal.

The thesis of their work is that the woman's dual role in seeing the publicity image that promotes a product or service makes her into a spectator-buyer. Her dissociation with her unique true self makes her vulnerable to the message that she is less than she could be with the product or service promoted. As a result she envies herself. Berger et al claim the publicity image takes away love of herself as she is. Publicity images offer her self-love back to herself by buying a product or service that makes her envy herself as she could be. The co-authors may be all male, but exclusive gender choice may be more critical to maintain the thesis of their way of seeing than gender bias.

Rene Magritte

Rene Magritte is an oil painter who lives from 1898-1967. He paints in the Surrealist school, which allows him more freedom of expression than a Realist style would. The observation surrounding his painting titled "The Key of Dreams" sets the keynote for the Berger work. Magritte claims there is an ever present gap between words and seeing. His theme carries through this entire book. His ending work titled "On the Threshold of Liberty" depicts a cannon aimed within an apparent room of frames that echo the appearance of the panes in his keynote work. An interesting visual comment on this book of reproduced images is provided by his self-portrait titled "Not to be reproduced" that shows the back of his head reflected in a mirror into which he looks.

This work particularly highlights the significance of Magritte's freedom of expression to thrive with a surrealist style. Surrealism uses well-drafted, realistically crafted and recognizable real-life objects juxtaposed in an unrealistic or "surrealistic" grouping to convey a message. Berger et al place this work of Magritte's in a grouping with the reproduced images of other artists' realistic paintings bearing the title "Self-portrait". Self-portraits of the other three artists portray face and torso as each presumably is in the dress of their day. By whatever method each sees their face, whether reflection in a mirror or other way is unclear, but it is a face they see to craft their own self-portrait. Magritte however, somehow sees the back of his own head. It is a well-crafted and clearly drawn head and shoulders of a view that is unrealistic to create of oneself even using a camera. The ironic unreality persists by Magritte's reproduced self-reflection of the back of his head in the mirror with the title "Not to be reproduced". None of this is possible or even conceivable before the camera is invented. Magritte pushes imagery post-camera and Cubism to an ironic level by claiming his own self-portrait is not to be reproduced. Since his face does not show anyway, his message is conveyed.

Frans Hals

Frans Hals is an eighty-year-old destitute Dutch painter in 1664. He receives an official commission for his last two paintings that show the directors of a poorhouse for poor old people in Haarlem. He receives from these same subjects free fuel for the winter so he does not freeze. His biographer states that Hals is not bitter about the charity he receives from them and their penetrating characterizations. He comments on the seductive impact of seeing the subjects the way Hals would see them from a modern viewer's social understanding. Frans Hals produces their image from his viewpoint as an old destitute pauper with a lost reputation who depends on them for his survival. Hals is the first painter of portraits commissioned by a capitalist society. He is a poor, old starving man who is promoted as having "unwavering commitment to his personal vision" that "heightens our awe for the ever-increasing power of the mighty impulses . . . to give us a close view of life's vital forces".

The Nude

The Nude is a recurrent theme and category of European oil painting. Adam and Eve in Genesis represent the first subjects in the category. Ironically, however, they are male and female and find themselves unclothed after an act of disobedience. The nude traditionally is considered an unclothed or partially clothed female. Also in accordance with tradition there is an actual or implicit spectator of the naked woman. The purpose of the nude is to have her image viewed.

The nude is a form of art which displays an unclothed female body as an object for a fully dressed male stranger viewing the painting. Composition and layout of the nude painting is focused around displaying the nude subject for the benefit of the spectator. For example, Bronzino's painting of Cupid kissing the lips of Venus' tilted head displays her body in a sexually provocative way to a spectator. In nude composition the females' expressions are designed to be sexually stimulating to an unknown male spectator that they imagine to be looking at them. Other figures in the painting may be there for spectators to identify with. The painter Durer suggested the ideal nude could be painted on canvas with various parts of females that no one would recognize. Traditionally, the display of a woman as object is deeply ingrained in European art until the mid-nineteenth century.

The Spectator-Owner

The spectator-owner is the term used by Berger et al to denote the owner of an oil painting that he possesses and which enhances his life and surroundings. Specifically, the spectator-owner may experience self-satisfaction with his oil painting. In addition to enjoying the view of his oil painting, the spectator-owner may also get money and wealth if he sells the oil painting. The spectator-owner receives pleasure from his oil painting. An oil painting captures his present experience to show future viewers. The painting is settled past and provides a permanent record for future descendants of the spectator-owner to see his past present life.

The Spectator-Buyer

The spectator-buyer is a term Berger uses that is adapted from the spectator-owner of an oil painting to denote the prospective buyer of an object or experience he wants to possess and believes will enhances his life and surroundings. The spectator-buyer, however, can only experience what it may be like to own the object or experience imagined if he is dissatisfied with his present condition. Unlike the spectator-owner of an oil painting, the spectator-buyer must experience dissatisfaction to accomplish the purpose of a publicity image. The spectator-buyer must buy the object or experience in the publicity image to enjoy what he believes is the pleasure of possession that a spectator-owner already has.

Publicity images use the relationship between art and a spectator-owner to encourage spectator-buyers. Using a work of art in a publicity image is called "quoting" a work of art, similar to citing a quotation. Since publicity uses sexuality to stimulate desire to purchase, a spectator-buyer is encouraged to buy because purchasing also makes him sexually desirable. Publicity images present the future. A spectator-buyer sees what his future will be if he buys the promoted product or experience. Consequently, the spectator-buyer is anxious until he gets the happiness an object of his envy provides.

Publicity images make the spectator-buyer envious of herself, as others will see her if she buys the product or service. Berger illustrates that the publicity image takes away her love of herself as she is, but then offers it back to herself after buying the product or service that makes her enviable. A spectator-buyer knows what his past or present is like. He rejects it for future happiness promised by the product or service promoted by publicity. The future is never attainable but remains desirable through the fantasy of daydreams. The spectator-buyer's purchase proves he has power to overcome the fear of having nothing that publicity creates and with that power he becomes lovable.

The Cubists

The Cubists are students of a school of stylized visual arts. The Impressionist and Cubist schools of painting immediately reflect the changes in perspective brought about by the camera. Specifically, the Cubist style presents the visible from many eyes rather than the one single view traditionally seen from the perspective center. The camera also modifies the way in which a painting is considered as unique to its location in one or another building. The painting is no longer unique since a camera can reproduce and present it in many more than one location at a time. Its meaning diversifies and fragments into several different environments like, for instance, as an oil painting broadcast on a television screen.

Picasso

Picasso is an oil painter who is born in 1881 and is alive at the time of this book's publication. One of his paintings, titled "Nude", is reproduced in this book along with several other examples of nudes. None of the women are clothed, and except for the Cubist work by Picasso, they all display fully female features. Picasso's work is in the Cubist style that requires a great amount of viewer imagination to see a naked female body. This painting is representative of the impact on the art world that Picasso, the camera, and Cubism has.

Rembrandt van Ryn

Rembrandt van Ryn is an oil painter who lives from 1606-1609. He is considered one of the exceptional masters whose principles are not incorporated but rather imitated by others. The authors consider a great artist to be a painter who struggles through his life with the culture and its conventions, the lack of understanding his work evokes, and

often with himself and physical survival. Rembrandt's struggle to become a great artist is evident in the transition of his work over time. For example, over a thirty-year period, from twenty-eight to fifty-eight, Rembrandt paints two self-portraits. His first self-portrait is created in the year of his first marriage with his wife. The self-portrait is of a smiling, joyful happy couple with himself and his wife Saskia. His work then is in the traditional style and methods to show their happy exuberance and pleasure that Berger considers a heartless advertisement. His wife dies in six years. Thirty years later Rembrandt paints a second self-portrait. He paints himself as an old man in this example, questioning his own existence. His work evolves to an individualistic style portraying his soul far from the traditional style and methods of the earlier work. Rembrandt's second example asks questions the genre excludes by traditional design.

The Reader/Viewer

The reader/viewer is a term used to denote the individual that looks at, sees and interprets subjectively the man-made images that represent sights as seen and reproduced by an image-maker. Implicit in each image seen by a reader/viewer is an imputed record of how the subject of the image or sight is seen by the viewer of the sight that is conveyed in the image he makes. Specifically, the image-maker is first a reader/viewer of the original sight that he interprets and inculcates in the image he makes, whether oil painting, photograph, or other visual image. These images may or may not last longer than the sight they represent. For example, the photograph of a sandstorm lasts long after sand stops flying, as does the oil painting of one evening's setting sun. They both show what the sight is thought to look like to an image-maker.

Since the image lasts longer than the sight or event, the reader/viewer of the image sees only what a reader/viewer of the sight itself chose or is skilled enough to include or present. The image-maker has a way of seeing that he uses to produce the image that the second reader/viewer who has not seen the sight can only accept under the terms of his way of seeing. Presumably, a refined social structure presents general assumptions acceptable and acknowledged by the majority of its citizens. The second and any subsequent reader/viewers can only rely on these continuing interpretations of the ways of seeing to present a fair and equitable record of what the past was like. The past is not available to be seen as what it is and qualities learned by assumption may or may not reveal an objective world to clarify the history of an image. Berger et al claim that, in fact, a work of art can confuse one about the past. Consequently, the contemporary reader/viewer may be only moderately assured that what he sees in the images he is presented roughly approximates what the image-maker actually sees.

Objects/Places

The European Oil Painting

The European oil painting is a genre or type of visual art. Traditional European oil painting begins around 1500. The two dimensional oil painting is different from other art, even three dimensional sculptures, because it can convey the illusions of tangibility, texture, luster, and solidity. Its objects have color, texture, and temperature that fill the world. Berger et al use a metaphor to describe the tradition as a wall safe where the ways of seeing are deposited rather the historical figure of speech as a window unto the world. They claim the stylistic conventions of the genre can be more effectively represented with their metaphor. Specifically, the European society and culture is obsessed with property and art that enables traditional oil painting conventions to naturally develop. Two exceptional masters of that genre whose principles are not incorporated but imitated are Rembrandt and Goya.

The Camera

The camera is a mechanical device whose invention disproves the idea of center and single eye. The mechanical eye of the camera frees up the viewer from boundaries of time and space. The camera enables the viewer to move anywhere and see anything. The converging perspective on a unique center of the spectator that requires a single viewer to be only in one place is eliminated when the camera is invented.

The Nude

The nude is a category of European oil painting in which women regularly appear as the subject. Nudity is a form of art according to the author Kenneth Clark. The nude is seen without clothes but not as one is; rather, the nude is an object to view.

The Naked Body

The naked body is as one is without clothes, or unclothed. Berger lists several ideas about nakedness and nudity that derive from a tradition of art and lived sexuality.

The Landscape

The landscape is an image that is called "genre" pictures that depict real life as an antidote to mythology and classic forms. The primary subjects represented in a landscape—for example, sky and distance—are intangible and have no surface. The landscape initially does not present any social needs or significance. The landowners' desire to present their estates with themselves in the forefront changes that. The

landowner has the pleasure of a portrait and landholdings to substantiate his wealth and social value.

The National Gallery

The National Gallery is an art museum that once is uniquely the only location where an original painting of Leonardo da Vinci named the "Virgin of the Rocks" is seen. The authors use the National Gallery location and the "Virgin of the Rocks" reproduction in this book to demonstrate that the painting can be seen virtually anywhere, not only in the National Gallery collection. A viewer may feel a sense of authenticity and beauty in the presence of an original, but the fact of its legitimacy is substantiated by researched history in the National Gallery catalogue. Statistics show most people do not visit art museums. They feel excluded by material and spiritual wealth of those who appreciate the presumed mysterious holy relics shown there.

The Ambassadors

"The Ambassadors" by Holbein is an oil painting presented by the authors to demonstrate the illusion that surrounds the figures with dominant material objects that seem to be real and touchable. Each surface in the oil painting is richly worked over and reproduced by the painter. Oil painting is able to make objects desirable to the touch of an owner. Their materiality can be bought with the purchasing power of money. The work of Holbein and "The Ambassadors" is typical of the period. Their aloof and wary gaze while surrounded by the material goods and symbols of their world belies their confidence, formality, and arrogance. Navigation instruments between them symbolize trade routes to acquire riches of other nations, a world globe as the target to colonize, and an African to symbolize the slave trade. Their individual appearance, gaze, and objects show a self-perpetuating intent to conquer and colonize

The Key of Dreams

"The Key of Dreams" by Magritte is an oil painting that demonstrates a constant gap between words used and sights seen. Berger uses Magritte's painting to comment on this gap. The painting is comprised of an apparent four-pane window with black background in each pane. Each pane has an image in black and white with white script words below, presumably relating to the image and the script. A word in the lower right pane states what the picture is. Under the image of a suitcase "the valise", a word for suitcase, satchel, or grip is written. Ironically, below the image of a horse's head in the upper left pane is "the door", under an image of a clock in the next pane is "the wind", and the lower left pane contains a picture of a pitcher with "the bird" in script below. There are no "key" or "dreams" images or words to bridge the title gap.

The Image

The Image is a concept used by Berger to differentiate what one sees, or a sight from an image. Images are man-made. The word image is used to denote a recreated or reproduced sight in this book. The sight occurs at some other place and time than the image that represents it. No matter what form, whether photograph, painting, or other medium, an image is predicated on a way of seeing that is intrinsic to its existence.

The Mirror

The Mirror is a reflecting device used in visual imaging to demonstrate the subject of a painting, photograph, or other visual medium looking at him or herself. For example, a painting shows the naked Susannah as a spectator of herself by looking at her own image in a mirror. A mirror is introduced to show typically that a woman is vain, but the authors claim it is really hypocritical moralizing. Visual artists and spectators like looking at naked women. A mirror lessens any guilt by her looking at herself as well.

Themes

Distinguishing Features of the Naked and the Nude

The nude is a category of European oil painting. Typically, a woman or women regularly appear as subject. Adam and Eve discover they are naked in Genesis when they disobey God by eating forbidden fruit that makes them aware of nakedness. Their disobedience is blamed on Eve and she becomes subservient to Adam. Initially, they feel shame from being naked and cover themselves from view with fig leaves. Later, the artistic tradition transforms the female shame to display of her naked body to the view of spectators. Tintoretto's painting includes spectators looking at a naked female subject taking a bath. The naked Susannah becomes a spectator of herself by looking at her own image in a mirror. Presumably, the mirror symbolizes that a woman is vain. However, both the artist and spectators enjoy looking at naked women. The mirror lessens their guilt when she looks at herself as well. In an ironic twist on Genesis, Paris awards an apple to the most beautiful naked woman. The King's mistress is painted naked, which shows her to be submissive to him and the envy of his guests.

Naked and nude are distinguished in that nudity is a form of art, according to the author Kenneth Clark, but naked is without clothes. Several conventional ideas about nakedness and nudity originate in traditions of art and lived sexuality. Naked is as one is without clothes. The nude is to be seen naked but not as one is. A person may be seen naked, but a nude is an object to be viewed. Nakedness lacks disguise, but nudity is a type of dress that is not naked. In a nude work of art, the painting is focused to exhibit a nude for the benefit of the spectator. For example, Bronzino's painting of Cupid kissing the lips of Venus' tilted head displays her body in a sexually provocative way to the spectator, not to Cupid. The nude females offer a sexually stimulating gaze to an unknown male spectator looking at them. Cupid is a surrogate lover for a spectator to either ignore or identify with.

Another style of European oil painting that presents unclothed females is that of women who are loved by the painter who displays their nakedness. Her lover is the painter and their relationship is on display, not her naked body. This presentation of the naked body is itself pleasurable while at the same time reassuring and confirming of the maleness or femaleness of a body. A clothed body is mysterious until naked. Becoming naked makes a body with some clothes less ordinary. A still naked body does not stir desire for sexual fantasy like a nude. Rubens' painting of his young second wife, partially clothing her still naked body, causes a dynamic sense that transcends her bare banality. The individual expression of women as either an object or an abstraction is a contradiction. The artists' work ought not to turn her naked body into an object on display as the nude. Traditionally and culturally, the display of a woman as object by a painter or spectator-owner is deeply ingrained in European art until the mid-nineteenth century.

Impact of the Camera's Invention on Traditional Oil Painting

The spectator traditionally is seen as a center of the visible universe and central to the perspective of a single view through which reality converges. The invention of the camera disproves the concept of a center and single view. The camera is free from the boundaries of space and time, since it is able to move anywhere and see anything from any point of view. Historically, a painting is considered a unique aspect of its location in a building. With the invention of the camera, however, the painting can be reproduced and presented in more than one location at the same time. The two major developments that occurred with the camera's invention are the breakdown of single point perspective into many-faceted points of view and the ability to create many reproductions of a visual image that once was unique to one location.

The Impressionist and Cubist schools of painting were able to immediately reflect the changes in perspective by presenting the visible from many eyes rather than one single view from the perspective center. Secondly, the ability to produce several reproductions at a time diversifies and fragments the painting into various environments; for instance, as a painting broadcast on a television screen. The meaning of original painting is detached when images are reproducible and can be transmitted like any other information. Images that are reproduced can be used or ignored for many reasons. A painting seen in all its elements by a viewer can be reconsidered in a different set or order of elements. A movie film camera can take and arrange many different images in several series to present an understanding that the image-maker wants and the viewer cannot reconsider. A painting is a static image that can be reviewed, but a movie film is dynamic. The extraordinary significance of paintings is that an artist spends days and weeks of time putting oil on canvas that four hundred years later could simply be snapshots taken by a camera or even by a cell phone and digitally transmitted.

Changing Cultural Perspective from Oil to Photo Imaging in C

Publicity images reaffirm choices by presenting the contrast between the world it promotes and the real world. For example, the ad for "a badedas bath" illustrates an example of the contrasts produced by the publicity culture. Publicity is significant because its narrow imperative to buy is compelling and excludes all other offers to purchase. Just this one product or service at a time promises to provide the happiness desired above all others. Publicity is the life flow of a capitalistic culture. Publicity is a tool of capitalism that entices a majority of viewers to narrowly define their interests by deprivation or by false standards of the desirable. Berger et al propose a metaphor that the European oil painting tradition is a wall safe into which ways of seeing are deposited. An obsession exists with property and art in the European society and culture that is natural to the development of traditional oil painting conventions.

The European oil painting way of seeing has common similarities and differences with publicity images. In some cases, there is a direct relation by a publicity image that uses an oil painting to promote a product or experience. For example, Manet's pastoral picnic setting is reproduced with an old phonograph record machine and the caption "We could all use a little romance". Artwork, sculpture, and paintings contribute to the aura or attractiveness of a product or display in publicity images. Art can bring a sense of wealth and cultural authority to publicity. The authors claim that publicity practitioners can understand and use cultural traditions of oil painting more effectively than art historians. Publicity images use the relationship between art and the spectator-owner to encourage spectator-buyers. The objects in publicity images are effective to the extent they suggest learned behavior and icons. Commonly known historical but vaguely understood icons whose images have a glamorous effect on spectator-buyers are used. Texture, tangibility, and contrast present with European oil painting is re-introduced with color in publicity images that lead spectator-buyers to feeling and having the reality of color images.

Style

Perspective

The perspective presented by the authors of Ways of Seeing is that of the reader. John Berger and his coauthors describe in Chapters 1, 3, 5, and 7 with words and images the changing perspectives available to a reader. As the technology of a society advances, its culture adapts over time. The authors present the reader's changing perspective based on the interdependent and interactive environment that affect it. For example, an oil painting historically is the only pictorial depiction of a person, thing, or landscape. It is created by the artist from his point of view. However, invention of the camera enabled a second way to create a pictorial representation or image that replaces the artist's point of view. Consequently, perspective of the reader/spectator is no longer limited to the point of view of the oil painter, but is expanded to the point of view of the picture-taker with a camera. Since the camera can be held and photographs taken from virtually any point of view, the reader's perspective is expanded by the camera's eye, as demonstrated by the co-authors. The change in perspective also produces a change in the art world, from classic European oil paintings of Realism to Cubism, Surrealism, and other schools of modern art.

Image only, in Chapters 2, 4, and 6, offers the reader a direct perspective experience of its change over time. The absence of any words or description of these images by the authors provides the reader with an opportunity to understand and expand his own perspective as the viewer/spectator. The reader is expected to understand and evaluate the perspective and point of view throughout the image only chapters. The last line on the last page of the book makes its message clear. "To be continued by the reader . . ."

Tone

The tone of the Ways of Seeing is an historical, objective, non-biased, and neutral presentation of the development of perspective over time. Although the subject matter is objective, its understanding and perspective is a function of subjective perception. The book subject is all about how the medium of visual presentation changes over time and technology. These changes affect how the viewer perceives and what the society does with its use of images. The authors use glossy black, white, and gray tone images that minimize the viewers' distractions by color and texture. The black and white images illustrate a world of art and visual imagery from fourteenth through twentieth centuries that focus the readers' attention on the essence of imaging and its use over time. Little attention is given to styles in historical periods except as they appear in black and white.

Specifically, Picasso and Modigliani both have works titled "Nude" painted in oils at the turn of the nineteenth century. Their reproduction, alongside of a photograph depicting a woman wearing no clothes, highlights the objective and subjective tonalities. Picasso, the unidentified photographer, and Modigliani all have as their objective subject a

woman wearing no clothes. Subjectively, however, Picasso's Cubist period nude requires that the viewer accept his fully subjective point of view to see a female body compared to either his contemporary Modigliani's nude or the photograph. The author makes the objective point by presenting three styles of nude females, but leaves it up to the reader to make his own subjective determination about their relative appeal.

Structure

Ways of Seeing is the title of a 166-page book, including an eight page list of reproductions. The work is comprised of seven untitled but numbered chapters referred to as essays in the authors' "Notes to the reader". There is no table of contents that lists titles, numbers, or topics of the seven sections. The book is uniquely structured, since the first chapter is comprised of words and images, but the second is comprised of images only. The third and fourth chapters alternate similarly, as do the fifth and sixth as well. The seventh and last chapter is comprised of words and images and followed by an index "List of Works Reproduced", with page numbers on which the reproduction is shown. Most pages of text have at least one image and many pages have several images. Several reproduced works also have detail insets on the same or nearby pages. Except for the front and back covers, all written words, reproduced works, and other images in the book are in black and white, bold or gray shade on glossy paper stock.

The book also begins uniquely with its core message on the front cover continued on the back. Seeing establishes our place in a surrounding world and at the same time unsettles it in ways the words used to explain it never resolve. The book blends words and pictures to illustrate an interrelated dynamic environment. The work is composed by five authors whose final message converges on its last page "To be continued by the reader . . ." The book is published in 1972 by the authors in a joint venture with the British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books.

The four chapters of intermixed words and images range in size from nineteen to twenty-nine pages that alternate with three chapters of images alone that have eight, sixteen, and fourteen pages. The writing is dense, pithy, philosophical, and enlightening. Reproduced images are similarly densely placed in miniature format, with several placed on each image page. Much of the writing in the words and images chapters relates directly to the surrounding images on the same or adjacent pages. There is virtually no writing in the image only chapters. The index lists name and page of each reproduced work with location at publication date. Although original images are assumed to be in full color, they are reproduced in black and white in the book. Presumably, this style of monochrome presentation is selected to enhance the message and avoid any distraction from full color presentation.

Quotes

"Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak." Chap. 1, p. 7

"Soon after we can see, we are aware that we can also be seen. The eye of the other combines with our own eye to make it fully credible that we are part of the visible world." Chap. 1, p. 9

"The invention of the camera changed the way men saw. The visible came to mean something different to them. This was immediately reflected in painting." Chap. 1, p. 18

"The National Gallery sells more reproductions of Leonardo's cartoon of 'The Virgin and Child with St. Anne and St. John the Baptist' than any other picture in their collection. A few years ago it was known only to scholars. It became famous because an American wanted to buy it for two and a half million pounds." Chap. 1, p. 23

"What the modern means of reproduction have done is to destroy the authority of art and to remove it - or, rather, to remove its images which they reproduce - from any preserve. For the first time ever, images of art have become ephemeral, ubiquitous, insubstantial, available, valueless, free. They surround us in the same way as a language surrounds us. They have entered the mainstream of life over which they no longer, in themselves, have power." Chap. 1, p. 32

"The art of the past no longer exists as it once did. Its authority is lost. In its place there is a language of images. What matters now is who uses that language for what purpose." Chap. 1, p. 33

"One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight." Chap. 3, p. 47

"In the average European oil painting of the nude the principal protagonist is never painted. He is the spectator in front of the picture and he is presumed to be a man. Everything is addressed to him. Everything must appear to be the result of his being there. It is for him that the figures have assumed their nudity. But he, by definition, is a stranger - with his clothes still on." Chap. 3, p. 54

"In the art-form of the European nude the painters and spectator-owners were usually men and the persons treated as objects, usually women. This unequal relationship is so deeply embedded in our culture that it still structures the consciousness of many women. They do to themselves what men do to them. They survey, like men, their own femininity." Chap. 3, p. 63

"Nor can the end of the period of the oil painting be dated exactly. Oil paintings are still being painted today. Yet the basis of its traditional way of seeing was undermined by Impressionism and overthrown by Cubism. At about the same time the photograph took the place of the oil painting as the principal source of visual imagery. For these reasons the period of the traditional oil painting may be roughly set as between 1500 and 1900." Chap. 5, p. 84

"Oil painting did to appearances what capital did to social relations. It reduced everything to the equality of objects. Everything became exchangeable because everything became a commodity. All reality was mechanically measured by its materiality. The soul, thanks to the Cartesian system, was saved in a category apart. A painting could speak to the soul - by way of what it referred to, but never by the way it envisaged. Oil painting conveyed a vision of total exteriority." Chap. 5, p. 87

"Works of art in earlier traditions celebrated wealth. But wealth was then a symbol of a fixed social or divine order. Oil painting celebrated a new kind of wealth - which was dynamic and which found its only sanction in the supreme buying power of money. Thus painting itself had to be able to demonstrate the desirability of what can be bought lies in its tangibility, in how it will reward the touch, the hand, of the owner." Chap. 5, p. 90

"From the tradition a kind of stereotype of 'the great artist' has emerged. This great artist is a man whose life-time is consumed by struggle: partly against material circumstances, partly against incomprehension, partly against himself. He is imagined as a kind of Jacob wrestling with an Angel. (The examples extend from Michaelangelo to Van Gogh.)" Chap. 5, p. 110

"In the cities in which we live, all of us see hundreds of publicity images every day of our lives. In no other form of society in history has there been such a concentration of images, such a density of visual messages." Chap. 7, p. 129

"Publicity persuades us of such a transformation by showing us people who have apparently been transformed and are, as a result, enviable. The state of being envied is what constitutes glamour. And publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour." Chap. 7, p. 131

"The spectator-buyer is meant to envy herself as she will become if she buys the product. She is meant to imagine herself transformed by the product into an object of envy for others, an envy which will then justify her loving herself. One could put this another way: the publicity image steals her love of herself as she is, and offers it back to her for the price of the product." Chap. 7, p. 134

"Publicity is the culture of the consumer society. It propagates through images that society's belief in itself. There are several reasons why these images use the language of oil paintings." Chap. 7, p. 139

"Publicity speaks in the future tense and yet the achievement of this future is endlessly deferred. How then does publicity remain credible - or credible enough to exert the influence it does? It remains credible because the truthfulness of publicity is judged, not

by the real fulfilment of its promises, but by the relevance of its fantasies to those of the spectator-buyer. Its essential application is not to reality but to daydreams." Chap. 7, p. 146

"It is this which makes it possible to understand why publicity remains credible. The gap between what publicity actually offers and the future it promises corresponds with the gap between what the spectator-buyer feels himself to be and what he would like to be. The two gaps become one; and instead of the single gap being bridged by action or lived experience, it is filled with glamorous daydreams." Chap. 7, p. 148

"Publicity is the life of this culture - in so far as without publicity capitalism could not survive - and at the same time publicity is its dream." Chap. 7, p. 154

Topics for Discussion

Identify and define the differences that the author describes between naked and nude.

Describe and discuss the author's interpretation of the environment in which an oil painting is viewed.

Describe the awareness that develops after one realizes he can see. Describe and discuss situations in your own experience that fit the awareness.

Describe some of the significant aspects of how the camera changed how one sees. How does its use relate to new perspectives in Cubism?

Describe and discuss how a man sees differently than a woman.

How does publicity function as an example of an image?

Describe and discuss how the development and appreciation of oil paintings has changed since its beginning around 1500.

Describe, list, and discuss the perceptual differences that occur in one's thoughts and perceptions by imagining a traditional European nude such as Titian's Venus if it were redone by him as a male nude.