Disturbing the meaning

By Marie Brenneis

1st year Practice led PhD student at Cass (London Metropolitan University)
The Rules are in your head - 2013
Help, I am drowning- 2015
My Research Field

Visual Culture

Conformity
Beauty / Class
Rules
Social Approval Taste

Categorisation
Meaning
Norms

Cognitive Linguistics

Metaphor
Unabashed-2016
What are the values that underpin conformity?

• http://www.guzer.com/videos/elevator-psychology.php
My questions on Conformity?

• Why do a majority of people conform?
• Why follow others rather than trust our own individualism?
• Why do we get a social approval when we follow?
'Conform' etymology definition

**conform (v.)**
- mid-14c., *confourmen*, from Old French *conformer* "conform (to), agree (to), make or be similar, be agreeable" (13c.), from Latin *conformare* "to fashion, to form, to shape; educate; modify," from *com-* "together" (see *com-*) + *formare* "to form" (see *form (v.*)).

- Sense of "to comply with the usages of the Church of England" is from 1610s; hence *conformist (1630s), opposed to non-conformist or dissenter*. Related: *Conformance; conformed; conforming.*

Noun

• Compliance with standards, rules, or laws. 
  *synonyms:* "conformity with the law"

• Behaviour in accordance with socially accepted conventions.
  "a word of praise or an encouraging smile provide rewards for conformity to social norms"

*Synonyms:* conventionality, traditionalism, orthodoxy, fitting in, following the crowd, conservatism, formalism,

• Compliance with the practices of the Church of England  - BRITISH *historical*

*antonyms:* eccentricity, rebellion
‘Conformity’ Definition

• **Conformity** can also be simply **defined** as “yielding to group pressures.

http://www.simplypsychology.org/conformity.html
So far in my research

• So far in my research, I have found that:
  – beauty, rules and social approval underpin the values of conformity.

• This social approval I find really interesting, and I will come back to this later on in my talk.
Categorisation

• My questions:
  – Good & bad, who chooses what is good & bad?
  – How is categorisation and taste linked?
  – How categorisation forms social norms?
  – **What are the dangers and realities of classification?**
  – What social approval comes with categorisation?
  – What is the connection between metaphor, cognition and categorisation?
  – **How does categorisation affect our imagination?**
Pierre Bourdieu: On Distinction, 1984, states:

• ‘Taste is used as a social weapon’
Pierre Bourdieu: On Distinction, 1984, states:

*Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier.* Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed
Values that underpin categorisation

• So far within my research I have found meaning, norms, cognitive linguistics & metaphor underpin the values of categorisation.

• Today’s dominant aesthetic seems to be minimalism — I believe that the values that underpin minimalism, is social approval, fitting in to the current trend/norm, and group peer pressure.
My methods

• In my art practice, the tools I work with are binaries: Absurdity & Serious, Maximalism & Minimalism, Rational & Irrational.

• Binaries of good & bad, I am attracted to the binary that does not come with a social approval (I am currently looking for one)

• Jacques Derrida was inspired by Nietzsche’s approach to otherness. “Derrida purpose was to deconstruct binary terms revealing their dependence upon each other” Christoper Kul
Juxtaposition

- Juxtaposition allows for complex collisions that go against rational objectivism, importantly it challenges conditioning layers of meaning and cultural norms.
- The artist Mona Hatun with her work, talks about ‘manipulation of materials and their metaphorical potential’ (Tate Modern – Mona hatoum show 2016)
You’ll never own me - 2016
Sorry, I can’t afford it - 2015
Albert Camus

• ‘Absurdity is a divorce between two ideals, it is a conflict with reality’ (Dodds 1999).
Maximalism

• Kitsch, breaking the harmony, excessive, hysteria, wrong, is the opposite to minimalism, here is an examples of my work
• Minimalism values are simplicity, minimal, organic, high taste, Order, Utilitarianism, simplicity, little colour, representing the real world,
Homogensation sucks.........2014
Sorry for todays Blandness - 2014
• Lastly, My work is a reaction to today’s utilitarian spaces and the built environment, which I believe increasingly conditions our visual freedom and imaginative potential.

• My future hopes would be in un-categorising objects and spaces, in particular making them look wrong.
“Can we be trained into a new visual classification? Which could help us to ‘humanize’ the intricate and ugly shapes with which industrial civilization surrounds us”
Bibliography

• Christopher Kul (2010) *Introducing Aesthetics*

• Gombrich (2002) *Art and illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation:*

• Pierre Bourdieu (2010) *On Distinction*

• Dodds (1999) *Breaking the Boundaries of High Art, Dancing Times*

• Images can be found at [www.mariebrenneis.com](http://www.mariebrenneis.com)