Intertextual Textiles (Johannesburg, 30 Nov - 2 Dec 16)

University of Johannesburg, Nov 30–Dec 2, 2016
Deadline: Jul 21, 2016

Brenda Schmahmann, University of Johannesburg

Intertextual Textiles: Parodies and Quotations in Cloth

This is a call for papers, a selection of which will be identified for further development into 5000--word articles for a special issue of Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture. Hosted by the Research Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture at the University of Johannesburg, the conference will commence with a welcome event on the evening of 30 November 2016. Papers will be presented on 1 December and the morning of 2 December.

THE THEME

Images that refer self-consciously to other works of art or to well-known visual discourses have become increasingly commonplace in art since the late twentieth century. Labelled variously as quoting, borrowing, referencing, pastiche or parody, amongst other terms, such strategies may be seen as “part of a move away from the tendency, within Romantic ideology, to mask any sources by cunning cannibalization, and towards a frank acknowledgement (by incorporation) that permits ironic commentary”, Linda Hutcheon observed in the mid-1980s, noting also how their increased popularity could be related to an impetus to trouble ideas about originality and the concept that a work of art might stem from the unique vision of a single author (A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms. New York and London: Methuen, 1985, p. 8). In a world which has become increasingly connected through social media, and which has seen an explosion in the photographing and sharing of images, the possibilities for what the late Leo Steinberg called “inter-art traffic” nearly four decades ago have in fact increased exponentially in the new millennium.

Unsurprisingly, strategies such as quotation and parody have also been deployed in numerous works made from textiles – whether these are in needlework or are constructed via processes such as collage or screen-printing on textiles, for example. Perhaps because artworks and objects in fabric are often associated with group production (that is, via traditions such as the quilting bee and the embroidery guild) or with histories of unnamed makers producing items for domestic contexts, works in cloth are in fact particularly suited to a genre which implicitly disrupts the idea that a creativity stems from the unique visions of individual authors. But parodies, quotations or intertextual references in textile and cloth have been motivated by various other concerns and interests as well. The following are just some of these:

Gender and race

Parody and quotation have featured in numerous works in cloth by artists working in feminist frameworks. By parodying traditional samplers, for example, some artists have reflected critically or sardonically on discourses associated with female obedience (and, in the case of Elaine Reichek, colonialist inheritances). Or, by incorporating reference to specific artworks from the past within works including fabrics and sewing, artists such as the late Miriam Schapiro and Faith Ringgold have raised questions about the place of women in the art world, reflected critically on gendered hierarchies of “art” versus “craft” or commented on racialized biases within western art histories.

Nation and identity

One of the most widely parodied works of art is the Bayeux Tapestry. This may be not simply the result of its monumental status but also its adaptability to different kinds of narratives. By inverting and reworking the medieval work’s representation of events leading up to the Norman conquest of England to explore other kinds of histories, those producing new versions of the Bayeux Tapestry tend to reflect critically on the long-term impact of invasion and occupation on the identities of nations or groups.

Human rights

Parody, quotation and intertextual referencing have also been used in conceptually complex initiatives focused on questions of freedom and which are orchestrated to enable wide involvement. These include, for example, Cornelia Parker’s Magna Carta (An Embroidery), which parodies the Wikipedia entry on the Magna Carta and was exhibited in 2015 to coincide with a show of the original Magna Carta texts at the British Library. Another recent example which meditates on rights and justice, and which involves collaborative effort, is a collective based in Brighton that was formed in 2012 and has been involved in producing a banner based on Picasso’s Guernica as an anti-fascist statement.

PROPOSALS

Presenters are invited to focus on relevant case studies and examples from anywhere across the globe. Considering how parody or quotation have been deployed through artworks and objects made from or including textiles, they should suggest how such strategies have enabled engagements with, for instance, identity, nationhood, history, gender, race or human rights. The content of proposed papers must be previously unpublished, original and eligible for selection for publication.

A prospective participant should submit an abstract (between 350 and 500 words in length) for a 30-minute paper and a short biography (about 200 words) to Brenda Schmahmann (brendas@uj.ac.za), the conference convenor and host as well as guest editor of the relevant issue of Textile: Journal of Cloth and Culture, as well as Neelofir Nagdee (nnagdee@uj,ac.za), her administrative assistant, by 21 July 2016. Applicants will be notified of decisions by the end of July.

Participants whose papers are selected for development into articles for Textile: The Journal of

Cloth and Culture will be notified by the end of the year, and further details of deadlines provided. Please note that these articles will be peer reviewed.

FUNDING

Presenters will need to organise and pay for their own travel costs to the University of Johannesburg. They will not, however, be charged a conference fee. Additionally, international presenters and those from out of town will be provided with accommodation sponsored by the host on the evenings of 30 November and 1 December 2016.

TIMING

The conference has been timed to coincide with the opening of an exhibition of the Intsikizi Tapestries by the Keiskamma Art Project (works parodying the Hunt of the Unicorn tapestries in the Cloisters Museum in New York) as well as the launch of a new book, The Keiskamma Art Project: Restoring Hope and Livelihoods (Cape Town: Print Matters), on the evening of 30 November 2016.

Reference:

CFP: Intertextual Textiles (Johannesburg, 30 Nov - 2 Dec 16). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 18, 2016 (accessed Nov 20, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/13300>.