November 18, 2014

* 2nd and 9th:
  + 2nd: Essay is due.
  + 9th: Portfolio is due.
* Next week, on Friday, the 28th: The class will start with a presentation on portfolio submission by Illustration Faculty and Admissions people.

CLASS PRESENTATION:

* Superheroes and Superpowers: Capitalism and Illustration
  + What does superheroes have to do with capitalism?
  + Starts with religious and military leaders, and portraits showing their connection to god or their powerful relationship to the world and their subjects.
  + Rise of machines and consumerism… art became more commercialized in the 1900s (Warhol, pop art, etc.) Represents the consumer with advertised products, as people are seen as “heroes” for consuming.
* North Korean prisoners can be considered superheroes because they underwent amazing pain and suffering and survived to tell their stories.
  + Political prisoners depict human rights violations by North Korean regimes
  + Soldiers are often seen as heroes, but they perform many human rights violations in the prisons.
  + Information media picks and chooses what information to broadcast; which viewpoint is right/wrong when we are bombarded with so much?
* Clothing and fashion has a history of representation and ideology. Clothing can become a tool for transformation or change from one mindset to another.
  + The costumes for superheroes allow them to change from one person into another. Saving the world as themselves is not possible, but it becomes possible when they change their appearance.
  + Cosplay is an important way of trying new identities, especially for adolescents. The concept of identity and metamorphosis is important; dressing up allows them to explore different and more powerful identities.
  + A costume of a superhero is not a real thing… these costumes cannot be replicated by cosplayers exactly; it remains a fantastical ideological construct.
* Consumption Crusaders: Toys, Figures, Merchandising of Iconic Characters
  + Toys have existed for a long time, but the industrial revolution allowed them to become affordable to a consumer world.
  + National identity emerges and is marketed through toys; “Little green army men”. Children are “brainwashed” into becoming perfect citizens; “heroes”.
  + War toys allowed children to build their own armies against opposing troops, giving them the opportunity to feel like heroes.
  + “G.I. Joe” emerged from war toys to become a symbol of a US soldier that young boys could aspire to.
  + It wasn’t until thr 1970s when people began to turn away from War Toys; Vietnam war made people question whether war toys were appropriate.
  + Other toys and franchises sprang up to fill the merchandising gap: Power rangers became heroes. Sailor Moon, Samurai Pizza Cats, etc. Were all popular heroes and toys.
  + Toys are no longer mere objects; they are building blocks for a society.
* Brother, Who Art Though: Capitalism in Praxis
  + Maslow’s hierarchy of needs: You need physiological needs, safety, social, esteem, to achieve self-actualization.
  + Why does capitalism champion individualism so much?
    - The collection of individualized data allows companies to target specific demographics with their products to make more money.
    - Advertisements are tailored by our web usage to target specific people and make more money.
  + Our individuality is only useful as long as it is exploitable by capitalism.
  + Superheroes are also a product of capitalist interest.
    - We purchase products to represent our interests and tie into our ideology. We buy brands because something about that brand resonates with us. Our money gives them capital.
  + Escapism fills a void in our society. “Conceal, don’t feel and don’t let it show” in regards to her superpowers. When she finally “let’s them go” she can not control them.
  + Superman: the creators of the hero dreamt him up to attract girls and impress their friends.
    - In the superman world, justice would be served, criminals would be punished.
    - The idea of transformation or metamorphosis allows the constraints of the everyday to melt away so we can become greater. They show us promise of what can be, and what we often aspire to be.
    - Superheroes protect those who cannot protect themselves; but the idea of superheroes is exploited by capitalism who exploits those who cannot protect themselves.
    - We have been conditioned through ideology to engage with and further ideology.
    - We as artists have been given freedom to learn and be educated; we are given the unique ability to realize our unique potential and have control of the resulting outcomes of ideology.
* (There was a lot of very quick monotone reading of notes and paragraphs off a page, and lots of mumbling, so it was very difficult to take comprehensive notes.)

GROUP DISCUSSION:

* What were the 3 main aims and objectives of that presentation? And what’s one thing you disagree with?
  + 1. Superheroes are capitalist tools/symbols
  + 2. “Superheroes” existed throughout history in religious and political contexts
  + 3. Cosplay was a way of “hero-play” or allowing people to play with identities and escapism
  + 4. There are lots of interpretations of “superhero” (North Korean prisoners)
  + DISAGREE: Too much time spent on capitalism?
    - Maybe more time spent on relating it to superheroes better; how do superheroes represent capitalist ideology?
    - What about national identity? What values are being represented by the superheroes of that culture? Strong, white, male characters? What kind of evil are they fighting?
    - Power fantasies? Illegal immigrants? Superman’s home is destroyed and he is thrust into a strange world where he is the OTHER but also the HERO.

JAMIE’S PRESENTATION:

* Life Goals: A very rambling overview of things that sort of sometimes worked out ok