

Chelsey Phillips

Being a Woman of the Male Gaze

The Panopticon as a Way of Seeing

Sources

- Dreamworlds 3 – Sut Jhally
- *The Mobilized and Virtual Gaze in Modernity* – Anne Friedberg
- John Berger's "Ways of Seeing"
- "The Codes of Gender" – Sut Jhally
- "Killing Us Softly 4" – Jean Kilbourne
- "Cracking the Gender Code" - Melanie Stewart Millar
- Jackson Katz's book, *The Macho Paradox*

As well, many of these ideas are similar to material presented in Dr. Jennifer Peterson's lectures in COMN 3316, 3393 and 2312.

Dreamworlds 3

- Watched on class Oct.5
- Created by Sut Jhally
 - Professor of Communication at the University of Massachusetts and founder and Executive Director of the Media Education Foundation



The Media Education Foundation (MEF) produces and distributes documentary films and other educational resources to inspire critical thinking about the impacts of American mass media

Dreamworlds 3

- MTV was created to show videos as commercials for record companies
- Ads with noise and clutter: for attention
- The attention stands out in culture, sex stands out

“What story do videos tell about sexuality as they try and sell us CDs and tapes?”

- Sexuality is part of being human
- WHO gets to tell the story?
- 90% are written and directed using a male perspective
- Male sexuality versus
- Female sexuality
 - Whose stories are not seen or told
 - Women's body as currency

Definitions

- Sex
 - Biological differences
- Gender
 - Differences put into a cultural context
 - Transgendered – show these cultural creations

Creation of...

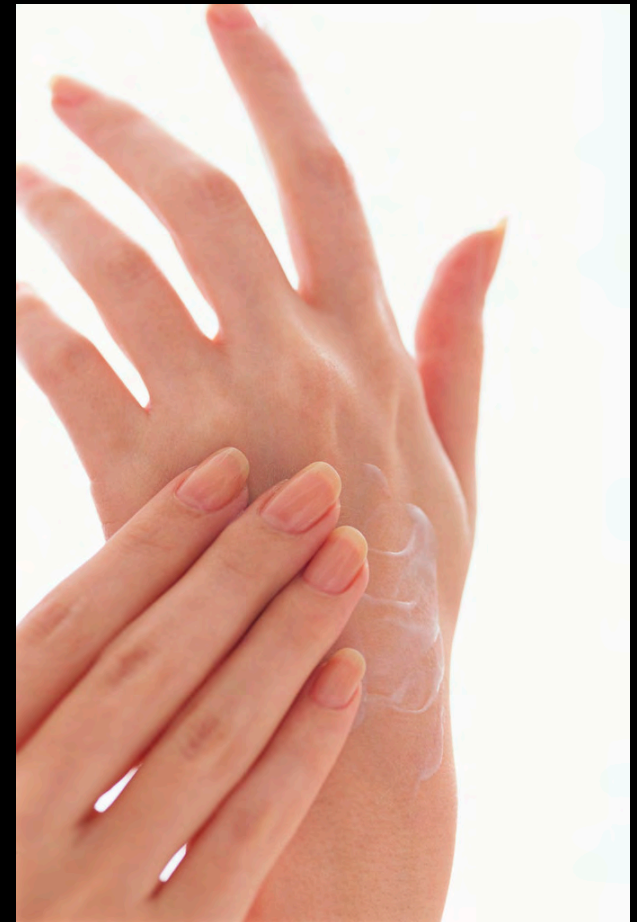
- Gender is performed
 - Choice
 - Codes seen in culture
 - In ads
 - Commerical realism (could be real)
 - » What they (media) define as normal
- Example: “man hands”

“Man hands”



Strong vs. weak

- Men: mold and manipulate
- Women: resting, cradle, delicate, not in control
- Unequal comparison



Body as a means of communication

“Normal”



“Abnormal” - feminine



identity + body + sexuality

- Most popular in music videos
 - Normal, norm
- How culture teaches
 - Socially accepted through stories
- Women desire sex, aggressors
 - Mothers?
 - Sexy & innocent; experience & virginal
 - Impossible double standard: leads to problems

Ritualization of Subordination

- How bodies define the broader social idea of what the culture defines as feminine has a subordinate relationship to what the culture defines as masculine
 - What is feminine is not masculine, vice versa

Advertisements

- Average American
 - 3,000 ads per day
 - 2 years of life, watching commercials
- Ads can be tuned out
 - “They don’t affect me”; normalcy
 - Quick, cumulative, subconscious
 - 8% is conscious

- Women outnumber men
 - Visual strategy
 - Modern fantasy
 - Homosexual women, show male perspective
 - Again, multiple women
 - African-American women
 - Show one part of body

- We must NOT look at what is good or bad, but in WHOSE story is being told
 - Pose invites look of the viewer
 - Willing display
 - Or watch selves in a mirror
- In a music video, person being watched is regarded as passive (to be consumed)
 - Camera explores at will

Panopticon

Anne Friedberg

- A machine of the visible
- Unseen seer looks upon a controlled visible subject
- Produces a subjective effect
- Seer sees all
- Seen has a disciplined surveillance
- Established scopic control
- Created for prisoners to feel constantly watched, therefore more well behaved

- Power through the visual register;
permanent visibility



The Male Gaze

- Same idea
- Virtual with new technologies
 - Camera
 - Screen
 - Man's eye
- Collective observer
- “objects of the look”
- Through ads, visualized experience turns into a commodity
 - Forcing women to fall victim to the promises to look better for the male gaze
- What was once everyday seeing, life is now a spectacle, a constant show, social manipulation of images

Becoming Invisible

- Dehumanized – eventually violence
- Focus on one part of the body
- Breast implants
 - No longer feel sensation, no female pleasure
- Size 0, nothing, non-existent
 - Eating disorders, death
 - Images retouched to fatten up women
 - < 5% of the population (USA)

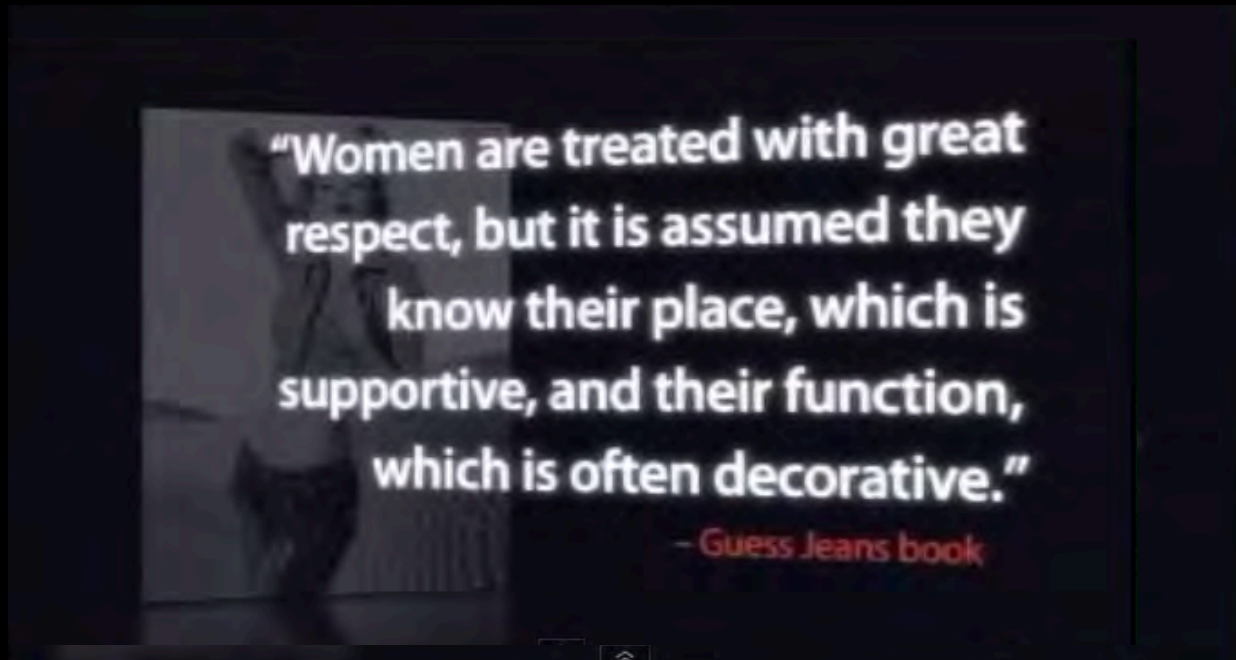
Perspective

- “The struggle to control the technologies of the new economy must begin with a struggle to control perception” – Heather Menzies
- John Berger – *Ways of Seeing* (seen in class)
 - Oil paintings, must look at past
 - Women looked at men who looked at them
 - Paint by men for men, women knew place, no rights
 - decorative

Paul Marciano

Co-founder of Guess

- Responsible for Guess' image



- Issue is with the creators
- Authored by someone
 - Camera needs an operator
- Must make it unacceptable or problem will continue

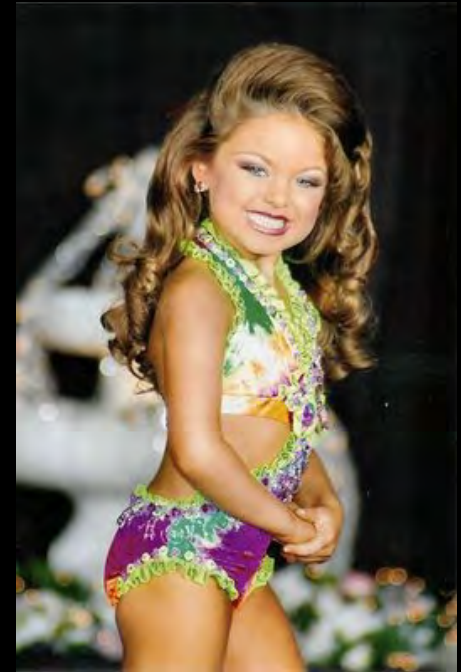
Creation of the Impossible



Ads sell more than products.

Sexualization of Children

- Little girls
 - Toddlers and Tiaras
- Children learn from seeing
 - Observation
- Sexual Education – now teaching protected sex opposed to no sex



Sexuality

- The act of making love changed
 - Less erotic
 - Less intimate
 - Fighting with an impossible image
- Pornography
 - Defined as obscene:
 - any matter or thing is obscene where a dominant characteristic of the matter or thing is the undue exploitation of any one or more of the following subjects, namely, sex, violence, crime, horror or cruelty, through degrading representations of a male or female person or in any other manner
- Children are learning a lot younger

A Sexualized Society

- pornography contributes in a general way to myths about sexuality and about women that ultimately make violence and degradation more acceptable to society as a whole
- consumers are desensitized or “numbed” by “soft” pornography, (sexual poses) that make other pornography more acceptable
- lack of consensus over the definition, contributes to difficulty in determining the pornographic
- material is more easily accessible than in the past
 - Internet has created new opportunities for downloading, exchanging and distributing
 - unique challenges for the enforcement and prosecution of law related to pornography
 - “often envisioned as being borderless”

**F E M A L E = SUBMISSIVE
SEXUALITY = POWERLESS
DEPENDENT**

**FEMININITY = F E M A L E
SEXUALITY
= SUBMISSIVE
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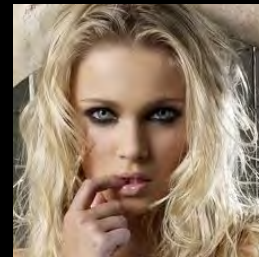
The non-Young

- Young women taught from young age
 - As objects
 - Sexuality is defined not by “you” as a person but by one aspect of “your” physicality
- Never leave childhood
 - Boys push with right of passage
 - Girls unfold, ads throughout ages are similar
 - Infantilized, never grow



Girl = Woman

- Anxious and uneasy
- Finger in mouth, suck thumb, bite nails
- Dressed as dolls
- Little girl stands for womanhood
- Full blown sexualized subjects
- Bratz dolls



Men



- Objectified
 - “big”, “strong”
 - Conditioned that way: violence, tough, insensitive, non-communicative
 - Easy confidence
- All things feminine: qualities divided m/f
 - Devalued i.e. compassion, co-operation
 - Defined by what it is not
 - Reference both genders



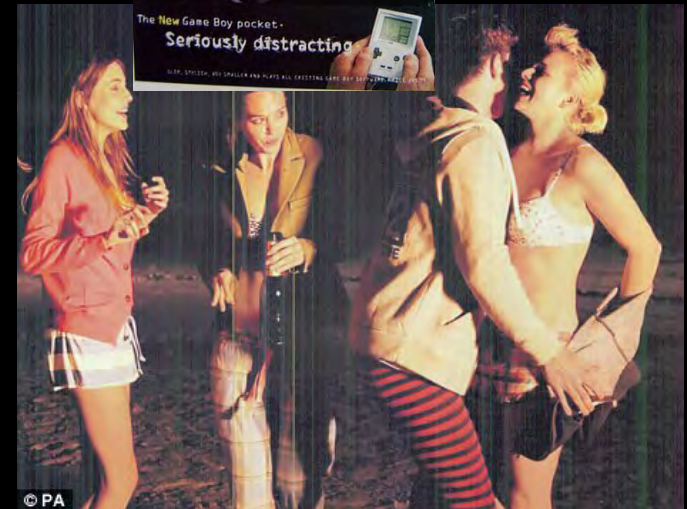
Unequal Comparison





- Just as women are weak and fragile
- Issue is that women are likely to be raped, harassed and abused
- Embrace or attack?
 - Violence or love?
 - Bound

Jack Willis Ad, British clothing





Poses

Lying down

- Difficult to defend
 - Dependent
 - Submissive
 - Powerless
 - Sexualized
 - Available

Only way around this:
Insert women into the picture to balance
- Buy like women due

Men

- Homosexual
 - Lying down is feminine
 - Therefore female



Bent knee



- Ungrounded
- Vulnerable
- Unprepared
- Off balance

Spaced Out

dazed zombies, not assertive

Awake

- Not attentive
- Dreaming
- Vulnerable
- Pouting



Sleeping



Difference between the two

Woman

- Mentally drift
- Wants body interaction



Men

- Always aware
- Anchor and protect
- Square on



The New Woman, Kind of...

Men

- Focus on abs
 - Athlete
 - Confident
 - Powerful
 - Vs. the anorexic woman
- Sell them anything



Female

- New action heros
 - Electra
 - Kill Bill
 - Angelina Jolie
- Yet traditional gender codes still exist
 - Sex scenes, shower, alone
- Same for female athletes



Danica Patrick

- Most successful female NASCAR driver
- Hard to compete with men
- Attractive
 - Poses
 - Not considered masculine



How Can We Fix This Issue?

- Men are afraid to support women
 - Most are not violent
 - Afraid to challenge society



What does this all mean?

- CONSUMERISM
 - Inescapable
 - Buy, buy, buy
 - Products, services, ideas
- The images are embedded so deep that they are subconscious
- Works for woman, and beginning to see it for men

Solution

- Its ok to want to feel sexy and attractive
 - But its wrong at the young age
 - Only option
- It affects everyone
 - Public health problem
- Citizen activism
- Education
 - German Brigitte – no models
 - Models with a certain BMI
- Make the invisible visible
 - Discuss and approach creators

- Need to understand the male gaze
 - The media gaze
- Confront the issues, and take a stand
- Whose interests are these practices benefiting?
 - Causing serious global health issues
 - Reality vs. image, representation
- Moving farther from intimate communication and will soon become complete individual consumers unable to experience an unmediated situation
- Maybe not a real war, but a war amongst ourselves with not only each other, but also internally