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Visual Rhetoric
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Pinterest Project

My pinterest project focuses on digging up the true meaning behind the image. It is important to admit that these five images don't have much in common. The most unifying factor to these pictures is the need to look beneath the surface. They don't necessarily mean anything unless you look deeper.

For example, the picture of Zombie Boy that Brandon posted is at first misleading if you don't know the story behind it. He chose to focus on the "face paint" and the cigarette Rick Genest is holding in his mouth, seeing them as a social commentary on the dangers of smoking. However, that makeup is actually tattoos- Rick Genest, a.k.a Zombie Boy, is a professional model who has inked his entire body to look like the undead. He is not making a statement on unhealthy behaviors; however, because of our society's high exposure to "surgeon general warnings," we immediately associate his corpse-like appearance with deaths and diseases from smoking. When one realizes that the tattoos are just part of his identity, that he *is* Zombie Boy, the image loses all of its generic, supposed meaning.

The surrealist photo by Phillippe Halsman was the foundation for my project. Why? Because his multiple hands and the objects he finds himself preoccupied with perfectly represent the way we as authors and audiences must juggle visual rhetoric. We are constantly being distracted and bombarded by different messages, mediums, and all forms of communication madness. Somehow, we must learn to process it all *without* the option of extra arms.

The “generational division” of Brad’s punk-rocker pin is a perfect example of the hidden double meaning. I don’t think I can explain it any better than Brad did himself: the image works because it is simplistic: the “rebellious child” and his doting mother is a familiar American scene. However, the picture remains provocative because the mother is helping her boy to rebel by preparing him for the day, alluding to the idea that her actions have led to his ideals. With a little thinking, this raises the question of whether the young man’s attitude can actual be considered rebelling, or if he is just continuing what his mother has started.

The HIV advertisement is also important to consider. It is effective because it is highly sexualized, immediately commanding the viewer’s attention. However, when you look closer, you can see it is not just a run-of-the-mill public service announcement. Interestingly, the “he” pronoun as well as the fact that there are multiple MALE hands, means that the ad is targeted to females, something that we usually don’t see. By paying attention to these more subtle visual cues, we can appreciate the advertisement for both a creative and in-your-face design, as well as a message that breaks typical gender stereotypes.

The idea of breaking gender stereotypes continues on into the final pinterest image, the picture of a pink-haired fashion model smashing a cake into her open mouth. As Lauren rightly points out, the image contradicts the typical self-consciousness of most women, who don’t consider sweets and beautiful skinny clothes to go together. However, the fierce expression of the model as she gleefully devours her bakery prey, and the contrast between her dainty accessories and tattoo, all serve to confuse the viewer about what is expected of women and what can be possible if they ignore these boring standards.

In an attempt to show how they all fit together, I have created a composite image of all five pins. Melded together, they take on a completely different meaning. I have kept the basic significance of the founding pin: juggling visual rhetoric is a daily task; crossed with a newer meaning: this perennial circus act takes a toll on our identities; we are constantly in a state of flux as we decide what is important to us and who we really are. However, in keeping with this project's theme, perhaps this second meaning was there the whole time and my visual manipulations have simply brought it to the forefront of our attention.