

Understanding MATERIAL CULTURE

group: A

Understanding Material Culture

1. What is material culture studies?

What is being studied? (Max 100 words)

Material cultural studies is the study of objects

where each object carries a cultural meaning and that helps to understand culture as a whole.

Studies of material culture have as their primary concern the mutual relations between people and objects. (p.14-16)

2. Name 2 critical approaches to study

material culture, and the key scholars/thinkers that are associated with these? (Max 100 words)

The marxist approach and the theoretical approach.

Marx thought critical objects were important because

they represented capitalistic processes of the society such as the alienation, and estrangement from parts of human nature. Objects have two principal functions, first, they incorporate capitalistic labor relations and secondly objects cause a false consciousness

within social classes. He concludes that what matters is the material world. He wants people to understand that they create this objective world and that it should not be taken for granted (p. 36).

The semiotic approach describes objects as signs referring

to other things. Material culture has the ability to communicate to others. Barthes gives the

example that giving someone roses, is within the society seen as a romantic gesture. But these kinds of messages objects symbolize are not always directly assumable (p.58).

Another theoretical approach is the structural approach.

Smith outlines that the focus of this structuralist approach is that the language of the culture works according to certain rules of the social life (p.61).

3. In Woodward's Understanding Material

Culture he writes about D.W. Winnicott's idea of the 'transitional object' as an important statement in object-relations theories.3

Could you explain the following concept 'potential spaces' ?

Potential spaces

is a type of an intermediate space, somewhere

between a subject and an object. It is not solely about the individual subject, nor the external object environment. It is the spaces of play and creativity that are created when both meet.

Winnicott says that potential space is at 'the interplay

between there being nothing but me and there being objects and phenomena outside omnipotent control' (1971[1953]: 100) (p.140)

Woodward is also inviting another voice in this paragraph:

“ A couple of fundamental psychoanalytic processes are at play in all types of human relations with objects”.⁴

Could you tell a little about these processes; projection and introjection? By doing this give 2 examples of objects that you think could relate to these processes. (Max 150 words)

Projection

is simply when we project, we use our own personal feelings, beliefs and parts of oneself into another person or object. For example the infant's doll. Where the relation between the two appears addicted. As D.W Winnicott describes further, *the object they attach to*

offers deeper psychological gratification (p.139)

Projection has also been described

as the early stage of introjection.

Introjection

describes where elements of a specific object are taken into the self. (p.140) It is also described as the process by which the subject replicates behaviors, attributes and perhaps other attributes from the outside world, more specifically from other objects.

It is also considered as a self-stabilizing defense mechanism, commonly used when there is lack of full psychological contact between a child and the adults. In other words, it commonly occurs when a person internalizes the ideas or voices of the other. It

is simply how we shape each other.

1. <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/introjection>

2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introjection>

4. Who is Ian

Where did you get the information?

(max 3000 words - or 3 sentences :)

Shortly said:

cultural sociologist. He is Australian, based in Denmark

Position: Professor

Affiliation: Consumption, Commerce and Culture' research unit, Department of Marketing and Management, University of Southern Denmark, Odense He writes about cosmopolitanism, materiality, aesthetics, consumption and music.

<https://portal.findresearcher.sdu.dk/en/persons/iawo>

<https://www.instagram.com/iwoodward/>

PS: Attached are the questions we asked

- What could be the danger of meaning making processes with objects?
- Who benefits from the structuralist approach?
- Is Adam Smith correct in his reasoning about the origins of corruption in society?
- Does an object naturally have meaning or is it something we give it?
- Does an object need meaning?

GROUP B

MCS = Material culture studies

it is not just a matter of individuals pondering what objects might mean, but individuals reading objects in relation to other individuals within complex intergroup networks patterned by social status and role, and space–time contexts.

:thinking about like how we use object to portray status, how does a famous rich person (kanye west) draw inspiration from homeless ppl?

-context, depends on who designs, makes the object

: Why do we humans have such an important relationship with objects?

-social status, objects are social status. job interview

-it's shallow, it's consumerism, For rich people it is their standard to have to spend a lot on objects.

I am = What I have and What I consume

Self identity in the eyes of others.

Q:

If we were to look around our rooms and think of the things you actually need instead of things you don't need, our rooms would be super empty.

:

discuss the word taste in context to the book.

Self-expression, identity formation & aesthetic principles.

depends on who you are and how you interact, it can be simple minimalist, stylish,

The taste reflects a lot in a person, it can depend on genetics, how we were raised, having our own style can be about control as well. perfectionism, EXCELLENCY,...

What makes us have our home the way it is? a specific style that reflects our tastes, personality and background.

:

objects where the meaning can't or most likely won't change over time?
-food maybe, it depends on the person,...

1.

What is material culture studies? What is being studied? (Max 100 words)

the influence objects have on humanity, culture, society. objects and the associations we give them.

denotations and connotation of objects and how they colorate with our identity

How materials are interpreted and associated in different fields (Anthropology, sociology, history, psychology)

Relation between materials and one person to others.

Understanding how materials and modernism are related and developed with mankind.

"If your house is burning and you can only save one object, what do you save?"

2.

Name 2 critical approaches to study material culture, and the key scholars/thinkers that are associated with these? (Max 100 words)

Marxism, Karl Marx : labour force exploitation to contribute to the wealth of capitalism. By understanding the objective world of things, humans can understand themselves (p.19)

Georg Simmel: how material culture defined the nature of modern experience. A foundation of his work was the insight that the modern economy dramatically produced a huge amount of things, objects and materials. He was interested in understanding the nature of relation between individuals (p.19-20)

3.

In Woodward's Understanding Material Culture he writes about D.W. Winnicott's idea of the 'transitional object' as an important statement in object-relations theories. Could you explain the following concept 3 'potential spaces' ?

Woodward is also inviting another voice in this paragraph:

“

A couple of fundamental psychoanalytic processes are at play in all types of human relations with objects”. 4 Could you tell a little about these processes; projection and introjection? By doing this give 2 examples of objects that you think could relate to these processes. (Max 150 words)

-The relation of an object and a person at different stages of their life, for example, your connotation as the denotation is different for a child as for a teenager. As a little child, I had a teddy bear that I carried everywhere, he was my friend and still is even though I do not carry him at all any more.

- One would usually “project” their feelings and emotions into objects that may be more humanoid or alive, like dolls or plushies. we give them personalities to reach our need for closeness to objects that mean something to us, but because that object can't. During my teenage time, I was engaged with books to satisfy the need of understanding the world around me and also my own emotional and characteristic development . “It suggests that people seek objects in order to cultivate/satiate desires and needs, and that particular objects are sought out because they are invested with particular meanings that tap into these desires, needs and fantasies.” (p. 140)

Examples: Books, teddy bears, snuttefilt (pacifier blanket)

4.

Who is Ian Woodward? Where did you get the information? (max 3000 words - or 3 sentences :)

- Cultural sociologist and professor
- Consumption and material culture studies
- Australian based in Denmark

GROUP C

Understanding MATERIAL CULTURE

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2. In Woodward's Understanding Material Culture he writes about D.W. Winnicott's idea of the 'transitional object' as an important statement in object-relations theories. Could you explain the following concept 3 'potential spaces' ? Woodward is also inviting another voice in this

paragraph: " A couple of fundamental psychoanalytic processes are at play in all types of human relations with objects". 4 Could you tell a little about these processes; projection and introjection? By doing this give 2 examples of objects that you think could relate to these processes. (Max 150 words)

1. Who is Ian Woodward? Where did you get the information? (max 3000 words - or 3 sentences)

2. Our questions

1. Material Culture? (MCS)

- Traditionally term has referred to smaller objects that are portable
- Nowadays, refers to objects of all sizes and scales (from coin to complex network object like shopping mall) (object has a physical, material existence)
- An area of inquiry into the uses and meanings of objects, its fields of research are:
 - i. evolutionary anthropology, (ii) modern sociology & social theory, (iii) marketing & psychological approaches to consumer behavior, (iv) consumption studies within sociology,
 - (v) the new anthropologies of consumption & economic behavior

(Source: Woodward, 2007, Understanding Material Culture; Pages 3,4,14)

2. Critical Approaches to study MCS

1. Marxism and critical theory
2. Structuralism and semiotics
3. Cultural and symbolic approaches

+ some key scholars and thinkers: Marx, Lukács, Lévi-Strauss, Durkheim, Mauss, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Fromm

(Source: Woodward, 2007, Understanding Material Culture (BOOK).pdf, page 2, Chapter 3,4,5)

3. Object-Relation Theories

Object-Relation theories (traditional psychoanalytic theory) within Material Culture

- within object-relations theory, objects can be people (such as one's mother, or partner), a part of another person or material things (such as so-called 'transitional objects' with which we form attachments)
- transitional object = material thing
- "potential spaces":
type of intermediate space between subject and object (not the individual subject, nor the external object environment) (the spaces of creativity and play that are created when both meet)

- e.g. infant and toy -> attachment to toy as an object offers deeper psychological gratification around the psychic satisfaction of learning Material Culture and identity about self, and others (engagements with objects occur within 'potential spaces')

Projection & Introjection:

"A couple of fundamental psychoanalytic processes are at play in all types of human relations with objects"

1. Projection: when we project, we put our own feelings, beliefs, or parts of self into another person or object (projection of one's own meanings, fantasies, desires, emotions onto object)
2. Introjection: elements of an object are taken into the self, unconscious psychic process by which a person incorporates e.g. an object into own apparatus

-> a dialectic transference of energies at play in people-object relations

EXAMPLES:

1. One's own house

Projection: dreams, security, money, safe-space, status, ... ("a house as a society needed object for happiness -> I'll be happy once I'm living in my own house")

Introjection: status, reflection of oneself through style, dreams, etc. ("My dad has always dreamed about building his own house of course it's my dream too." Or "If the house burns down I would not know how to go on.")

1. I-Phone

Projection: status, how one wants to be seen, connection, communication, dreams, etc. ("If

I have an I-phone others will see how cool I am.")

Introjection: status, reflection of oneself, etc. ("... because I've seen that the kids regarded as cool have an I-phone." or "The phone is a part of who I am as a person.")

(Source: Material Culture; Winnicott, D.W. 139–40, 150 potential space 140 transitional objects 139–40; 16.11.2020, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/introjection>)

4. Who is Ian Woodward?

- Professor of Management Practice at "INSEAD" (business school, specialized in Leadership and Communication)
- Speaker, coach, consultant, executive educator who teaches and researches in the areas of leadership communication, leadership presence, strategic thinking, and personal transformation

(Sources: <https://sg.linkedin.com/in/ian-woodward-69b168a#:~:text=Professor%20Ian%20C.,You%20Business%20Is%20on%20Fire!&text=At%20INSEAD%2C%20he%20teaches%20and,strategic%20thinking%2C%20and%20personal%20transformation;https://www.iancwoodward.com/>, 16.11.2020)

5. Individual Questions

- To what extent do objects/consumption influence our feelings? (attachments to objects)
- What influence does advertising have on our consumer behaviour?
- Different interpretations of the same object -> how to respond to all of them as a designer? (know your target group)
- Can the body be considered an object as well?
- When do objects become subjects? -> Material culture of subjects
- Become words objects with the act of being written down? Words as material culture, a part of consumption.

GROUP D

Design Tools, 1DI176
Design + Change, Linnaeus
University Autumn 2020

Our answers to the study questions for the book "Understanding Material Culture":

Material culture is the study of objects in the sense of what an object is – its concept – and how we interact with and through these concepts as forming our social reality.

Two theorists who have affected material culture studies a lot are Karl Marx and Erich Fromm. Marx uses material culture as an analysis of society and, as the author of *Understanding Material Culture* (London: SAGE, 2007), Ian Woodward puts it, that: "(...) what matters is not merely the intellectual world, but the objective, or material world." (Woodward, p.36) Fromm has studied the psychological effects in how humans use objects in order to identify themselves. (Woodward, p. 45)

In *Understanding Material Culture* (London: SAGE, 2007) Ian Woodward writes about an interplay between an object and a subject which takes place in a space between the physical object and the subject. This potential space, which is not a space belonging to either the individual subject, nor the object's environment, is a space that is created when both meet, it is: "(...) the interplay between there being nothing but me and there being objects and phenomena outside omnipotent control." (Woodward, p. 140) He continues to explain that in human relations with objects there are two types of psychological processes going on, the first being projection, that is when you project your feelings, beliefs or parts of yourself onto another person or object, for example an heirloom or when parents buy toys for their children that are gender stereotypical, like cars for boys and dolls for girls. The second is interjection, where elements of an object are taken into oneself, an example for interjection would be the Bible. (Woodward, p.140)

The author of *Understanding Material Culture* (London: SAGE, 2007), Ian Woodward, is a philosophy doctor in sociology, a title he received in 2002 at the university of Queensland. Currently, he is a professor at the school of marketing and management at a university of southern Denmark. And as an author he has written multiple books and articles on the subject of sociology. (<http://southerndenmark.academia.edu/IanWoodward/CurriculumVitae>, 2020-11-16)

Sources

Woodward, Ian, *Understanding Material Culture*, London: SAGE, 2007

<http://southerndenmark.academia.edu/IanWoodward/CurriculumVitae>,

2020-11-16

Our individual questions about the book "Understanding Material Culture"

1. Is a book written in 2007 with most of its quotes originating from the end of the last century still relevant in the present day where social media influences most of the materialism, consumerism and capitalism? What is still relevant, what is out-dated and what is incomplete/ lacking because of the fast-changing world that we live in? Also, how did the further individualization of the world change how we see and use objects, what importance they hold, the role they still play, how replaceable they have become? And how online shopping has influenced this as well. He touched lightly upon this subject, but in the last decade and a half online

shopping has become extremely prominent and changed the way we obtain the objects and therefore must have an impact on how we interact with said objects.

2. If the nature of attachments and affiliations is different for every object for every human being, how is studying this relevant? If there are so many variables, how can you collect the data properly? If all of the data collected is vague, how is any of it useful?
3. Why is it that people buy a slightly advanced version of a product they already own and which still functions?

In addition to the first chapter¹ with what was said about objects as social markers, objects as markers of identity, etc., what symbols and cultural aspect/ appropriation do we give to our objects and why do some people give such an importance to objects? (such as the Bible, the Koran, crosses, altars,...) And when creating/designing our final object for the module can we use the text?²

1. Would we like to live in a world where objects have no meaning and what would be the consequence of that?
2. Can you wear clothes without sending out any connotations and how would you dress in order to do that?
3. Why do the book only cover sociological/psychological theories on object? What kind of other perspectives are there and how would that look like? (For example the designer, marketing, and biological perspectives)

¹ what book? what page?

² what text?

1. Kopytoff argued that "objects are never culturally fixed, but rather in a process of being and becoming" (p. 103). Do you believe that commodities have these "social lives" or is it simply just a fixed artefact?
2. Can objects tell about the social classifications that we are currently living in?
3. "Individuals participate in the world through navigating the universe of collective symbols" (p. 90). How do you see upon this in relation to objects?