

Visual Narrative Technique in Modern Fashion Photography - Focusing on Philip-Lorca diCorcia's Works -

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I. Introduction

Fashion is a product of form expressing the socio-cultural mood and aesthetic value of an age. Owing to development of the mass media and diversification of arts under the influence of post-modernism in the 20th century, fashion has been more briskly expressed to be presented to the people.

In particular, fashion is expressed by the primary visual medium or photography, and thereby, not only the socio-cultural characteristics of the time but also designers' aesthetic senses are expressed by the photo artists with their own production techniques. As a result, the fashion photography has been established as an independent discipline featuring a variety of new and fresh ideas and attempts. As fashion photography is a visual medium combining commercial or economic elements and artistic ones, it is considered as an important and complicated tool of fashion expression.

With such basic conceptions in mind, this study was aimed at reviewing the fashion photography as visual medium. To this end, visual narrative techniques were analyzed and thereupon, Philip-Lorca diCorcia's fashion photography was examined.

The visual narrative may be defined as a kind of expression designed to express and signify everything for a scene by using not written language but visual language only. In this regard, photography may be a model visual medium using such a visual narrative. The visual narrative technique enables the audience to remember the scenes more easily, while allowing the photo artists to structure the scenes intentionally and emphasize an affordance of their intentions through visual language metaphors. In addition, the audience will be able to expect, engage and experience the dramatic structures of visual languages only to feel an emotional catharsis. Accordingly, the fashion photography using the visual narrative techniques will present the

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audience with a conceptual meaning intended by the author, and therefore, such a meaning is not statically consistent but simultaneously and variably consistent. In short, the fashion photography connotes diverse possibilities and implications.

II. The Method of Study

This study reviews such visual narrative techniques by dividing into visual and non-visual elements and thereby, examines the three-fold aspects of fashion photography expressions : Representative Level, Ground Level and Context Level. Also this study focuses on Philip-Lorca diCorcia's fashion photography in 'W magazine' which features portfolio form.

This study is progressed by previous studies, both home and abroad documents, fashion photography and so on. According to those materials, this study draws the last conclusion with researcher's subjective analysis.

III. Conclusion

Fashion photography's three-fold aspects have each function. The representative level consisting of the central visual languages appealing primarily to the audience is perceived primarily by the audience as visual elements, and at the same time, characters' socio-psychological state can be guessed through non-visual elements.

The ground level implying every detail element structuring the canvas helps to understand the representative level or plays the role of a kind of background informant. In other words, the audience will be informed indirectly of the canvas by this level, because representative level and context level can be linked consistently with each other by its stage role. Here, the audience will respond simultaneously to visual and non-visual elements and thereby, perceive the situation seen on the canvas.

Lastly, the context level exists only conceptually, unlike representative or ground level. Namely, it is not that the audience will perceive the visual the visual languages but that they will restructure the situation through the visual languages. Thus, the audience will understand and organize the context level in the context perceived from representative and ground levels, and at the same time, reinterpret them in the light of the context level. In this process, the context level will play a role of controlling the consistency of the visual expression aspects, while influencing representative and ground levels directly and indirectly.

This study which has analyzed the fashion photography using the visual narrative techniques have the following three implications at large.

First, such an analysis will help the audience to more engage and experience the fashion due to the casual relation and dramatic structure of the visual languages and ultimately, acquire and remember the objects more easily.

Second, the fashion photos expressed with the visual narratives tend to present the audience with a dynamic and consistent value system, and at the same time, urge the audience to

reinterpret the photos for themselves, while encouraging them to respond actively to the visual elements of the photos.

Lastly, through the visual elements informing them non-linearly and simultaneously, the audience will reinterpret and understand the visual narratives, and thereby, accept author's intended affordance flexibly and respond effectively to them.

As discussed above, this study analyzed the visual narratives shown in fashion photography and thereby, expand in diverse ways the fixed images of the conventional fashion photography commercials featuring beautiful models and exquisite costumes, and additionally, determined that fashion photography must be a kind of expression tool which could express not only the simple fashion but also the socio-psychological elements inherent in fashion.

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