



ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ

Faculty of English

Understanding discourse of art - a reception study report.

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1. MuCADA explained
 2. example analysis in accordance with MuCADA
 3. reception study* analysis in accordance with MuCADA
 4. brief discussion of the findings
-



Funding for the reception study



The European Society for the Study of English

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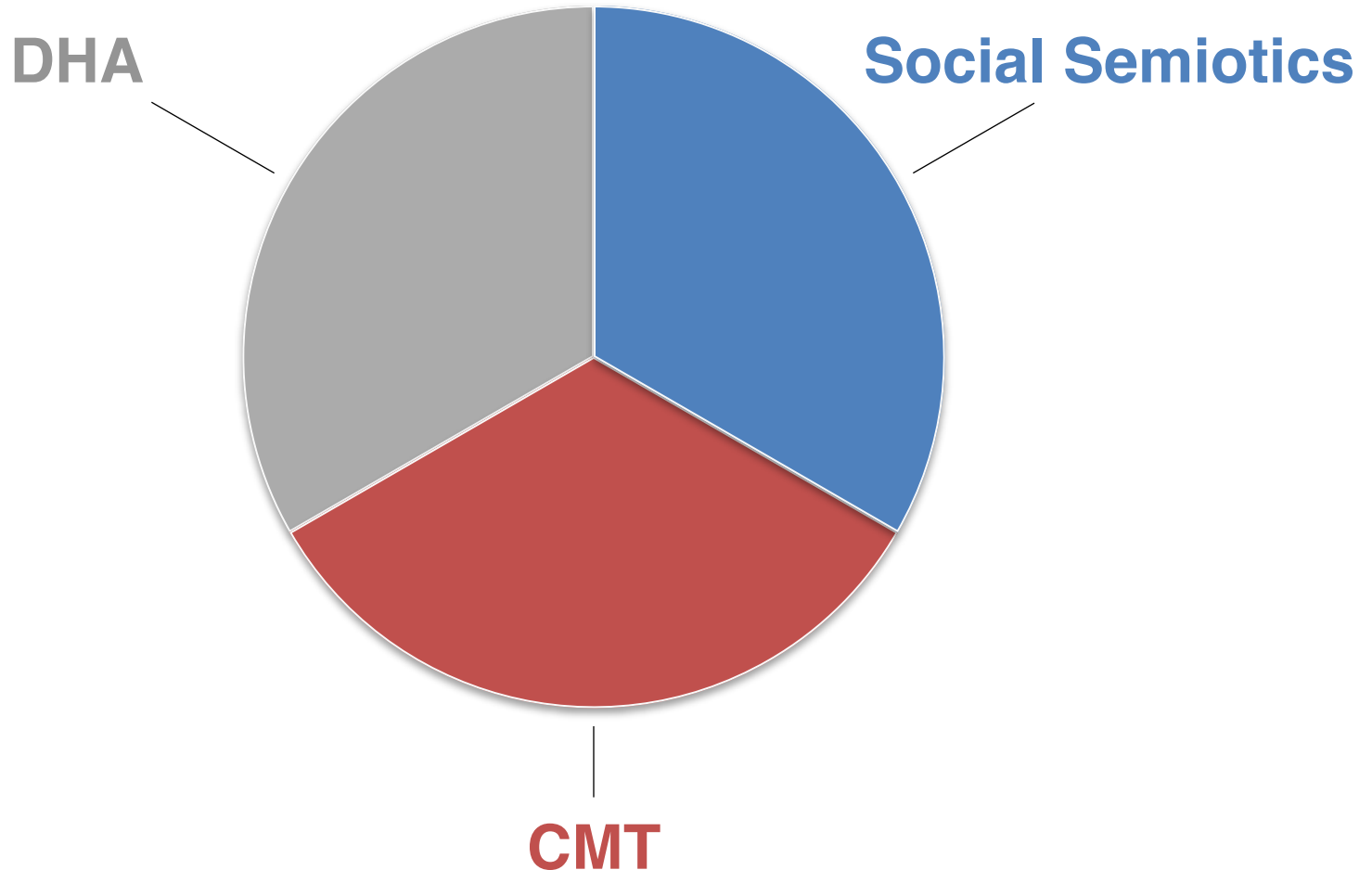
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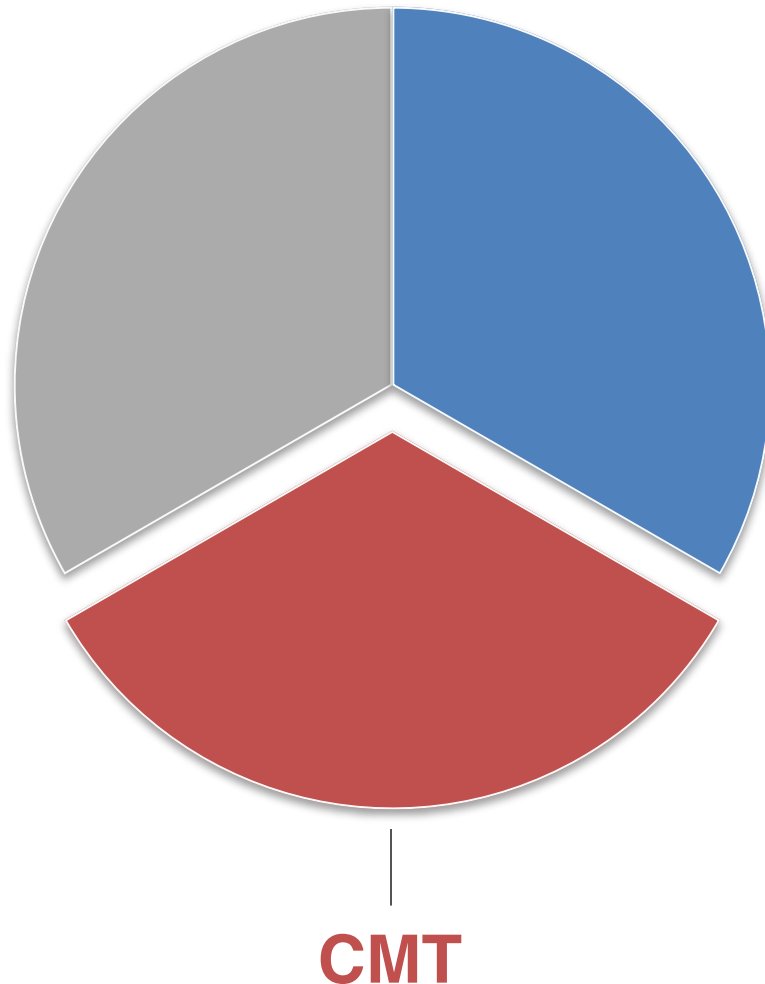
Type A Bursaries

1. Meaghan Ayano Blanchard, BAAHE, Pragmatic markers in native and non-native Englishes: A study into the use of and attitudes to pragmatic markers
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5. Stefano Rosignoli, NAES, The ethical impetus towards a Libertarian individualism in the early life and work of James Joyce

MuCADA - Multimodal Critical Analysis of Discourse of Art



MuCADA - Conceptual Metaphor Theory



analyzing figurativeness of artworks
(Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999, Cienki 1998, Kennedy 2008, Dancygier and Sweetser 2014, Forceville 2011, 2013, 2017, El Rafaie 2015) **which I examine along 3 levels of figurative meaning-making** (Kwiatkowska 2013: 63-73)

- **figurative in general** (artwork + title)
- **figurative in component parts** (artwork + info on dimensions and materials)
- **figurative in totality** (artwork + expert comment + info from outside the catalog, e.g. biography of the artist)

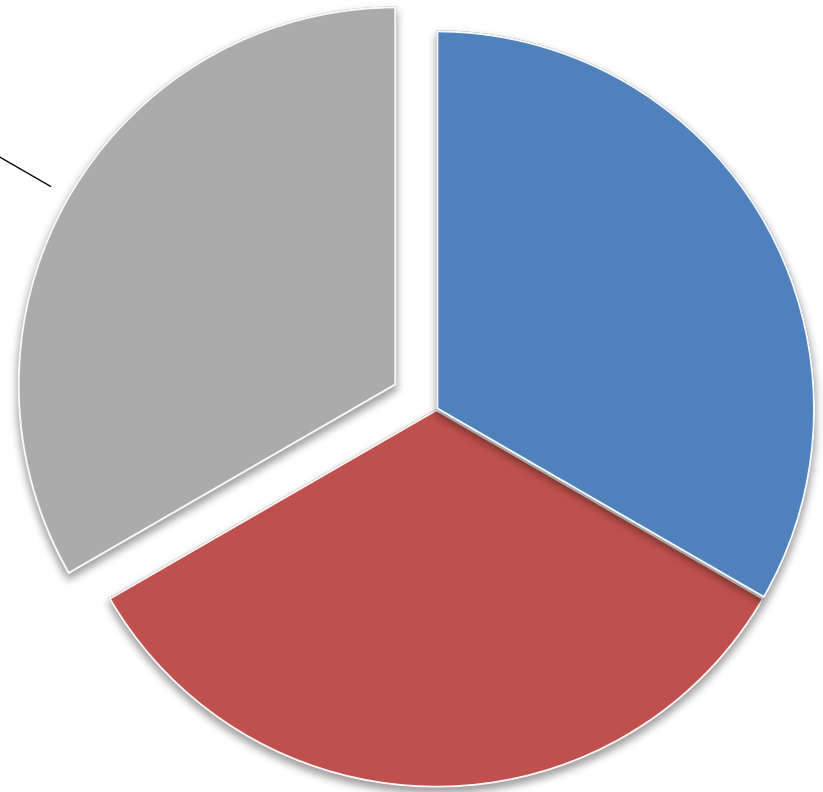
MuCADA - Discourse Historical Approach

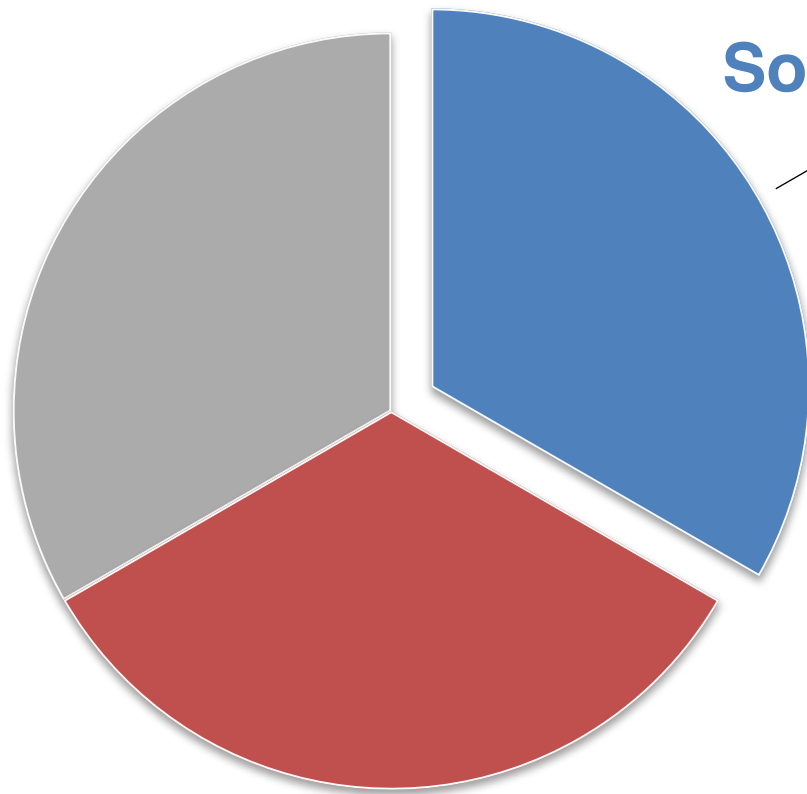
4 layers of context allow me to analyze the discourse that surrounds the artwork

(Reisigl and Wodak 2009)

1. The linguistic (semiotic) level of co-text
2. The intertextual and interdiscursive level
3. Social context of the situation (producer-recipient interaction)
4. Broad socio-political and historical macro-context

DHA





Social Semiotics

3 meaning making functions
of artworks

(O'Toole 2011, O'Halloran 2008)

Representational function — abstract or concrete figure, object, place or event, either mythical, historical or contemporary

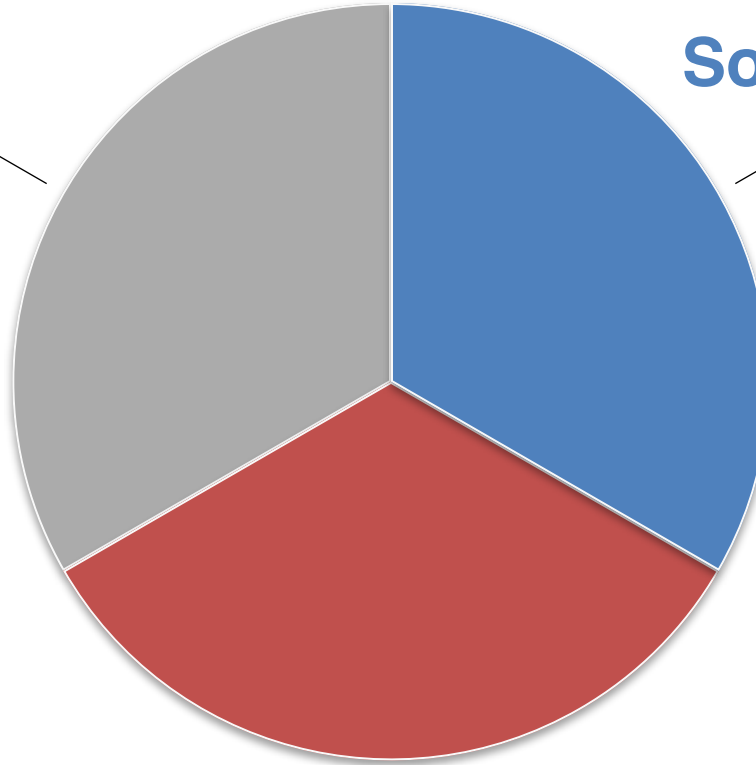
Modal function — features such as perspective, framing, highlighting that attract viewers

Compositional function — geometrical interplay of pieces vectors within the frame

MuCADA - Multimodal Critical Analysis of Discourse of Art

DHA

4 layers of
c o n t e x t
(Reisigl and
W o d a k
2009)



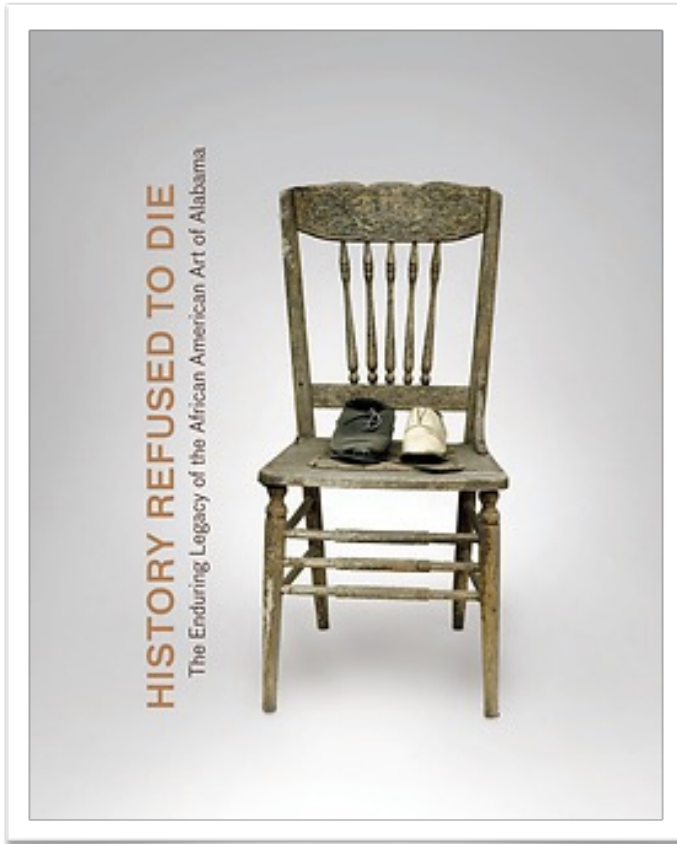
Social Semiotics

3 meaning
m a k i n g
f u n c t i o n s
o f
a r t w o r k s
(O ' T o o l e
2011)

3 levels of figurative
m e a n i n g - m a k i n g
(Kwiatkowska 2013)

CMT

Data set nr 1



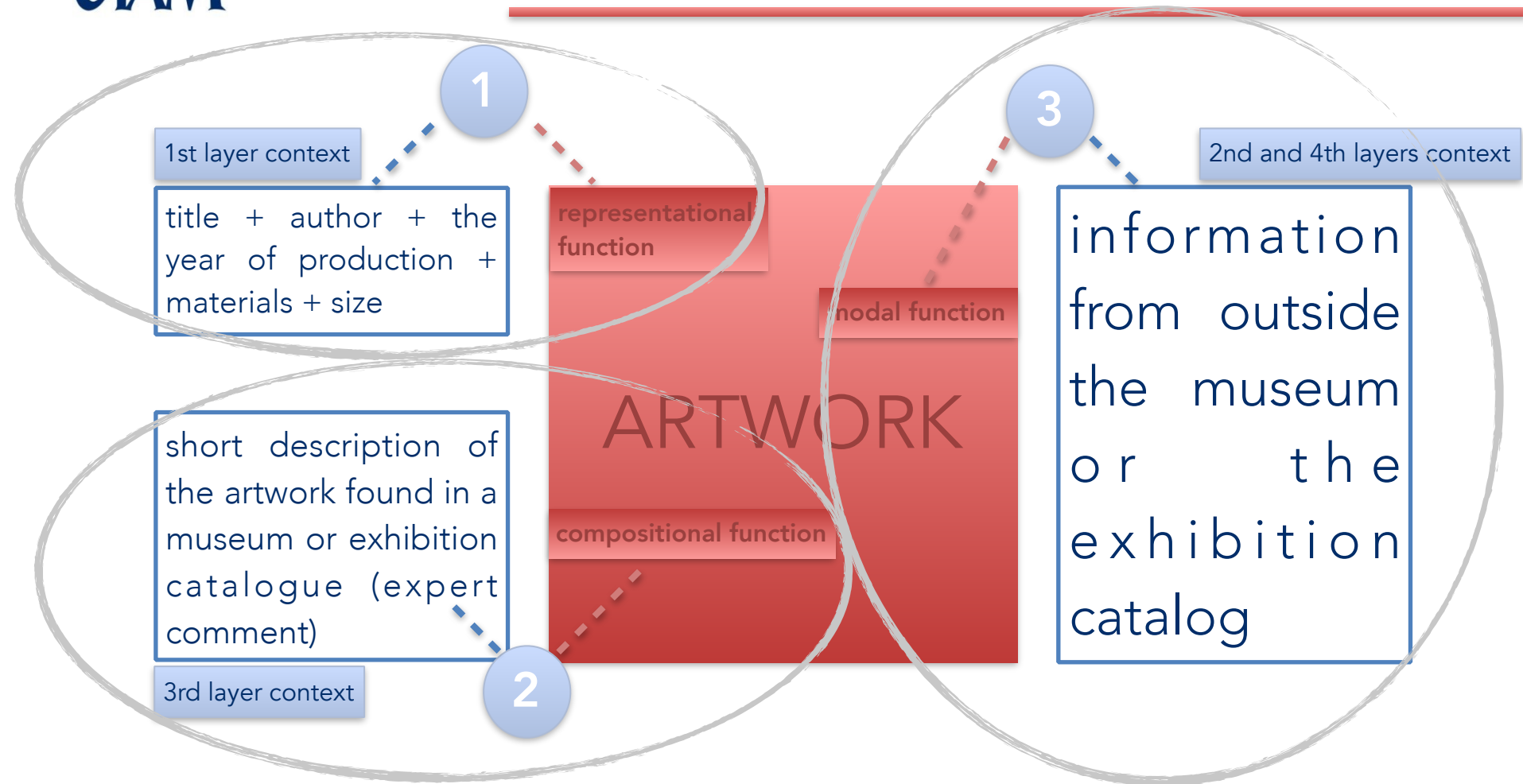
exhibition catalogue *History Refused to Die: The Enduring Legacy of African American Art in Alabama* (2015)

Data set nr 2



self-taught and folk artists' collections
at Tubman Museum of African-American Art in Macon (GA)
and High Museum of Art in Atlanta (GA)

An example model analysis



Bessie Harvey (1929-1994)

Untitled

Wood/Mixed Media

representational function

general level of
figurativeness





general level of
figurativeness

- HUMAN is OBJECT
- PAIN is DEFORMATION
- metonymy: BLACK FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN



Born in Dallas, Georgia, Bessie Harvey lived most of her life in Tennessee. Harvey began making art as a tool for **perseverance**. A mother of eleven children, she also had to contend with an **abusive husband**. She created evocative sculptures using roots, tree branches, paint, glitter, beads, and sometimes pieces of her now hair. Harvey's creative process was a kind of **prayer**, through which she often **communed with God**. She began exhibiting her works in the 1970s. In 1995 she participated in the Biennale exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art. She was aware of the popularity of her work, but remained independent. In a 1989 interview for Antique Magazine she stated that "I've got a free spirit and I won't be under nobody's thumb. **Nobody will conquer me.**"

compositional function

component parts figurativeness





component parts figurativeness

- PAIN is FACE AND BODY DEFORMATION
- IMPORTANT is UP - ASPIRING TO GOD is UP

metonymies:

- WOOD for PERSEVERANCE
- STRENGTH for COLOR RED
- WHITE for BEING CLOSER TO GOD

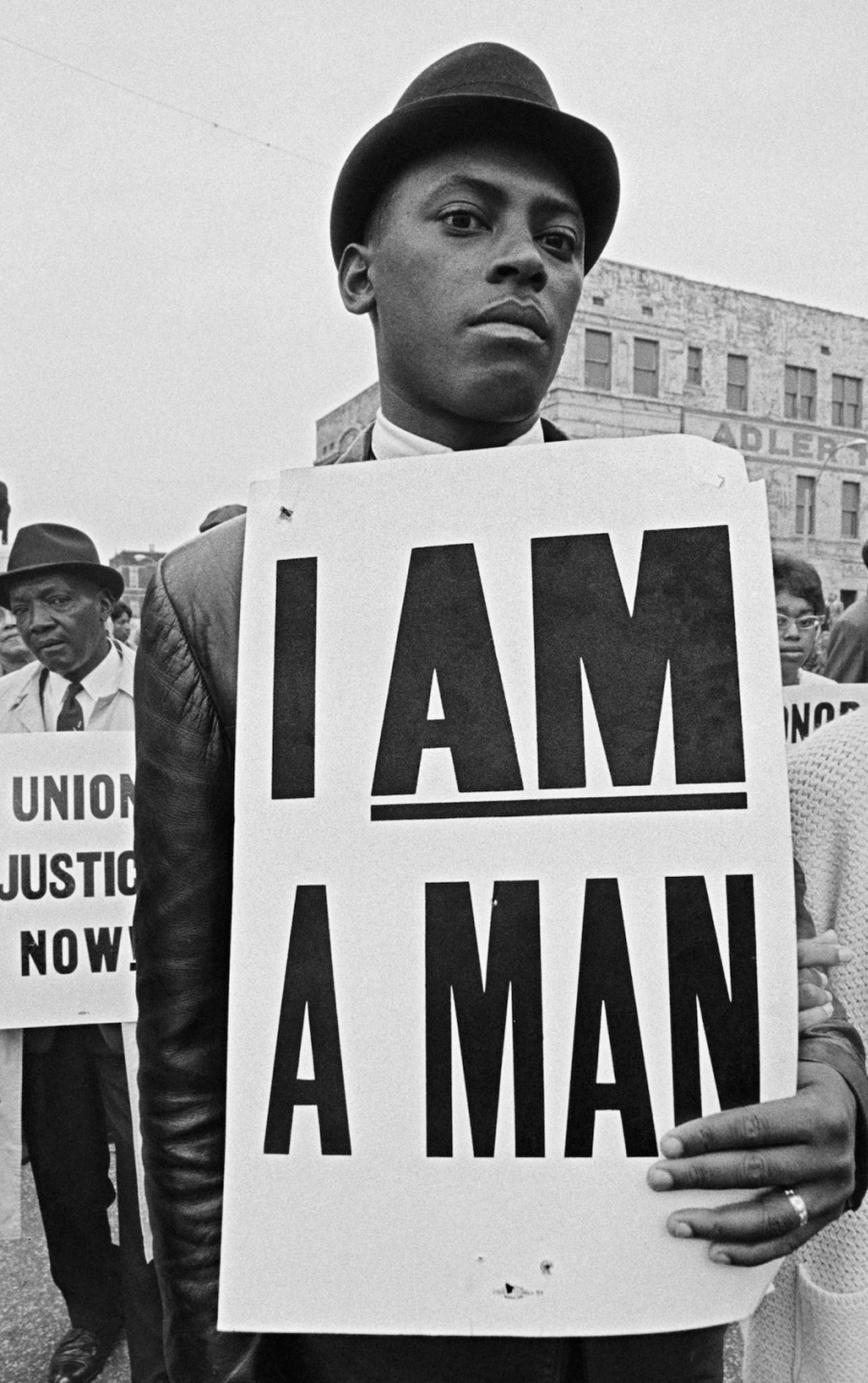


information from outside the museum or
the exhibition catalog
(the intertextual level and broad socio-
political macro-context)

modal function

figurativeness in totality







In a 1989 interview for *Antique Magazine* she stated that “I’ve got a free spirit and I won’t be under nobody’s thumb. **Nobody will conquer me.**”



figurativeness in totality

- CONTROL OVER IMAGE is CONTROL OF THE BODY

metonymies:

- PHYSICAL DEFORMATION for RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
- PHYSICAL EXAGGERATION for RACIAL STEREOTYPING
- BLACK FACE FOR CULTURAL APPROPRIATION / RACIAL DISCRIMINATION / DENIAL OF VOICE
- BEADS for CULTURAL IDENTITY / SPIRITUALITY



Reception study in-situ

the dynamics of interpretation

to what extent the model of meaning-making resulting from a semiotic analysis (analyst's perspective) correlates with the meaning as constructed by the visitors to the exhibition (recipient's perspective).

analyst's perspective

VS

recipient's perspective



Reception study in-situ

surveys:

- semi-structured general questions about art and museums
- demographic information (age, gender, home state, ethnic identity, level of education and profession)
- coded responses
- written form

interviews (recorded):

- What do you think this artwork represents?**
What makes you think so?
REPRESENTATIONAL
- Is there anything in the piece that stands out?**
What is it? Does it remind you of anything?
COMPOSITIONAL
- What do you think or feel when looking at the presented artwork?** **MODAL**
- <after showing the the title of the artwork>**
Does it affect your interpretation? If yes, how?
- <after showing the placard information>**
Does it affect your interpretation? If yes, how?



Reception study analysis - respondents

GROUP 1

- recording time: 11:12
- two people
- demographic info and interest in art museums info:

NR	AGE	GENDER	HOME STATE	ETHNIC IDENTITY	EDUCATION	PROFESSION
S5	18-35	MALE	BAHAMAS	BLACK	BA	FINANCIAL INSTITUTION EXAMINER
S6	18-35	FEMALE	GEORGIA	AFRICAN-AMERICAN/BLACK	GRAD SCHOOL (EdD)	PROJECT MANAGER

NR	FREQUENCY	TYPE OF MUSEUMS	TRENDS IN ART
S5 + S6	OCCASIONALLY	NO	NO



Reception study analysis - respondents

GROUP 2

- recording time: 9:23
- two people
- demographic info and interest in art museums info:

NR	AGE	GENDER	HOME STATE	ETHNIC IDENTITY	EDUCATION	PROFESSION
S16	36-50	FEMALE	GEORGIA	WHITE	MA	ARCHEOLOGY, MARKETING
S17	18-35	FEMALE	MISSISSIPPI	WHITE	BA	MILITARY ENLISTED

NR	FREQUENCY	TYPE OF MUSEUMS	TRENDS IN ART
S16	OFTEN	NO	NO
S17	QUITE OFTEN	NO	NO



Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 1: question 1

S6 FEMALE	well to me I think it represents... I guess ... to me, the strength of an african-american, I guess, how it was, built on ... it looks like it's on a piece of wood , so I'm thinking like, foundations , starting (?) this strength, I think it also... it's... showcase I guess how...we, somewhat have been viewed for a long time, like especially like with the dark skin, and some of the material that's been placed upon it , umm but... that's how I see it
S5 MALE	so I didn't see it when we were walking around but just looking at the picture it reminds me of like the minstrel kind of things , or .. I don't know what the term is, but umm...like sambo , or those
S5 MALE	you know, when they kinda exaggerate , umm... the skin
S6 FEMALE	the skin
S5 MALE	of a black person and they exaggerate the color of the lips
S6 FEMALE	yeah
S5 MALE	so that's kinda what it would remind me of, and the clothes seem kinda raggedy , so I guess the person is probably poor ... umm... maybe kinda wayward , or kinda like on a street , kinda thing, so that's how I would interpret that

QUALITY	BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS
PROCESS	
THEME	
PROCESS	BODY
BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS	
CONTEXT LEVEL 2	
CONTEXT LEVEL 2	
CHARACTERIZATION	
CONTEXT LEVEL 2	
CHARACTERIZATION	
DRAPERY	
PARTICIPANT	



Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 1: question 2

S6 FEMALE	I would say the red color stands out , umm... what also stands out to me is the blackface and the intense color of the white in the eyes and teeth , um... just looking at it, those would be the two things that really stand out, for me, looking at it	CHARACTERIZATION CONTEXT LEVEL 2 STRESS FACTORS
S5 MALE	and my answer was gonna to be the eyes and the teeth , yeah, that's what... grabbed my attention	STRESS FACTORS
INTERVIEWER	ok... why do you think that is?	
S5 MALE	just the contrast ,	EXPRESSIVENESS
S6 FEMALE	yeah	
S5 MALE	you know, those those eyes and those teeth might be just like everybody else's own, but just, when you put it against, the... you know... jet black, then it kinda stands out	STRESS FACTORS CHARACTERIZATION EXPRESSIVENESS



Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 1: question 3

S5 MALE	I think of min... like minstrel shows, sambo, that kind of exaggerations...	CONTEXT LEVEL 2
S6 DANIELLE M.WILLIS	yes	CHARACTERI ZATION
S5 TASUA ROMAIN	that's what comes to mind for me	
S6 DANIELLE M.WILLIS	same	
S6 FEMALE	yeah	



Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 1: question 5

S5 MALE	it, it added... the part that I read about her using her own hair , that that was significant , to me, that's kinda different , so now, like every piece becomes very personal , that's how I would view that	MATERIAL MODALITY MESSAGE
S6 FEMALE	I think it, for me, I think it confirmed me saying that it exemplifies the sense of strength , because that was... she used her talents, as well as, you know, using environmental stuff , using, using what was around her, to make these... umm... these artifacts , as well as, it was a way for her to, reading from the back, it was for her to communicate with god , so it was more on, not only a personal , but it was on a spiritual level for her too , and I think that was the... putting both of those together was her sense of strength , that... and that was her way of showing, through the, her artwork	MESSAGE BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS MODALITY MESSAGE
	CONTEXT LEVEL 3	



Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 1: metaphors and metonymies

On the general level: WOOD for FOUNDATIONS, WOOD for STRENGTH, RAGGED CLOTHES for POVERTY

On the component parts level: PHYSICAL EXAGGERATION for RACIAL STEREOTYPING

On the totality level: ART CREATION is STRENGTH, ART CREATION is SPIRITUALITY

Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 2: question 1

S16 OLDER SISTER	well, my first interpretation, or not interpretation, my first thought when I saw it was movement , you know, a walking stick come to life , you know it's not an actual walking stick but that kind of idea, that was, that was my first impression, (inaudible)
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	it's very tall and lean and kind of, umm... graceful ... I think there is a candle on top
S16 OLDER SISTER	yeah confused by all the rhinestones

PROCESS

BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS

THEME

CHARACTERIZATION

RHYTHM

BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS

BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS

Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 2: question 2

S17 YOUNGER SISTER	the red shirt, it does, it is a very powerful color	CHARACTERIZATION
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	the shirt	BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS
S16 OLDER SISTER	to me it's the legs	BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	and it's stark, contrast	EXPRESSIVENESS
INTERVIEWER	ok, do you think there's any like reason behind it?	
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	well, red is usually used in art for, like a powerful color, it usually indicates, like, umm...	CHARACTERIZATION
S16 OLDER SISTER	passion	
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	yeah, or authority, umm... yeah,	PROCESS
S16 OLDER SISTER	yeah, but to me this piece is all about movement, it is walking and, and being long and alive, so less about authority, and more about the experience of moving	PROCESS



Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 2: question 3

S16 OLDER SISTER	I don't know, old timey dance	CONTEXT LEVEL 2
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	It reminds me of stilts	CONTEXT LEVEL 2
S16 OLDER SISTER	Stilts , yeah... oh, like the... like a... the circus performers , the ones that are like on really really long long legs	CONTEXT LEVEL 2
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	really... looong ...it's like fluid legs CHARACTERIZATION DYNAMIC BASIC PHYSICAL FORMS	
S16 OLDER SISTER	yeah, yeah	
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	and they are walking really graceful ... or like in bohemian circuses RHYTHM	
S16 OLDER SISTER	or parades , that's kinda	CONTEXT LEVEL 2



Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 2: question 5

S16 OLDER SISTER	there's the red shirt
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	yeah
S16 OLDER SISTER	free spirit, not being under anybody's thumb
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	like... power
S16 OLDER SISTER	yeah
INTERVIEWER	so it changes a bit, the reading of of this piece, like, all the information there
S16 OLDER SISTER	i thought it confirmed it, instead of changed
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	like, standing up tall and being powerful, like like, over people, like, with or above...above...
S16 OLDER SISTER	repression ?
S17 YOUNGER SISTER	yeah... yeah ... standing up tall, and being proud

CHARACTERIZATION

BASIC PHYSICAL
FORMS

CONTEXT
LEVEL 3

MESSAGE

MESSAGE

MESSAGE

MESSAGE



Reception study. Analysis of responses

Group 2: metaphors and metonymies

On the general level: none

On the component parts level: COLOR RED for PASSION, COLOR RED for AUTHORITY

On the totality level: PRIDE is HEIGHT (UP), POWER is HEIGHT (UP)



Reception study - analysis of metaphor and metonymic mappings

	researcher	group 1	group 2
general	HUMAN is OBJECT AFRICAN-AMERICAN is COLOR BLACK PAIN is DEFORMATION	WOOD FOR FOUNDATIONS, WOOD FOR STRENGTH , RAGGED CLOTHES FOR POVERTY	none
component parts	PAIN is FACE AND BODY DEFORMATION IMPORTANT IS UP - ASPIRING TO GOD IS UP metonymies: WOOD for PERSEVERANCE STRENGTH for COLOR RED WHITE for BEING CLOSER TO GOD	PHYSICAL EXAGGERATION for RACIAL STEREOTYPING	COLOR RED for PASSION, COLOR RED for AUTHORITY PRIDE is HEIGHT (UP) , POWER is HEIGHT (UP)
totality	CONTROL OVER IMAGE is CONTROL OF THE BODY metonymies: PHYSICAL DEFORMATION for RACIAL DISCRIMINATION PHYSICAL EXAGGERATION for RACIAL STEREOTYPING BLACK FACE FOR CULTURAL APPROPRIATION / RACIAL DISCRIMINATION / DENIAL OF VOICE BEADS for CULTURAL IDENTITY / SPIRITUALITY	ART CREATION is STRENGTH, ART CREATION is SPIRITUALITY	none



Reception study - first takeaway

Personal experience and knowledge, as well as embodied cognition play a crucial role in the interpretation of artworks.

Access to more layers of contextual information allows the viewers to narrow down their interpretations

(cf. Kövecses 2015. Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor)



Reception study - second takeaway

clear differences between ethnicities: **cultural load**

African-American respondents were quicker to contextualize the art piece, to decipher hidden meanings, to provide **metaphorical and metonymic mappings** which would correspond to those proposed by the researcher or provide novel ones

+ no level 3 contextual information was needed to arrive at the component parts level figurativeness, (e.g. WOOD for FOUNDATIONS, WOOD for STRENGTH)

Reception study - third takeaway

Meaning construction takes place through dynamic interaction on all of the described levels simultaneously, where art's functions come together in most diverse configurations.

(Cameron and Larsen-Freeman 2007,
Mingers 1999, Maturana and Varela 1987)

MuCADA model identifies these analytical levels and does not specify the nature of their interactions (in fact, it assumes the default diversity of these interactions).



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