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On the Popcultural Life of Historical Works of Art in Humorous Advertising

Introduction

Any discussion on the relationship between art and advertising should be preceded by the statement that "visual culture is a necessarily historical subject, based on the recognition that the visual image is not stable but changes its relationship to exterior reality at particular moments of modernity."[1] The same holds true for the ads which feature historical works of art to catch the consumers' attention and boost ads' likeability; in such advertisements, the cultural experience is "popcultured" and starts to serve promotional purposes, feeding on art in order to sell goods thanks to "the spillover of luxury perceptions from the artwork onto products with which it is associated."[2] Simultaneously, visual and multimodal ads often introduce humorous elements to render the advertising content more attractive and make the audience adopt a positive attitude towards the products offered. This may be achieved in a number of ways, *inter alia*, thanks to the clash of registers, surprising juxtapositions or incongruous pairings which may elicit humorous responses.

[1] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "What is Visual Culture?," in: *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), p. 7.

[2] Henrik Hagtvedt, Vanessa M. Patrick, "Art Infusion: The Influence of Visual Art on the Perception and Evaluation of Consumer Products," *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 45 (2008), p. 387.

Following the line of thought offered by humour research, and by studies on multimodal advertising and visual culture, the primary objective of this article is to discuss the popcultural life of historical works of art in advertising, based on a collection of ads in English, in which visual art is used to produce humour thanks to the presence of script opposition and resolvable incongruity. The paper touches upon the linguistic and intertextual aspects of advertising discourse, discussing popcultural representations of art and showing how humorous ads contribute to the (re)creation of cultural experience. It therefore focuses on the workings of humour elicitation resultant from the ongoing displacement of historical works of art from their relevant contexts and their transference into the pop-cultural and advertising realms.

A few Words on Incongruity-Resolution Theory and Script Opposition

It seems germane to start with a brief overview of the incongruity-resolution theory of humour. It is a cognitive theory which holds that "humour is seen as a consequence of the discrepancy between two mental representations, one of which is an expectation and the other is some other idea or a percept."[3] The theory posits that humour is about "shifting [...] a sign (a word, an action) from its context,"[4] which results in a "comic collision of or oscillation between two frames of reference ~ worlds of discourse ~ codes ~ associative contexts."[5] Therefore, the bedrock of the incongruity-resolution theory is the contrast between what one expects and what one actually encounters. It is a distinct mismatch between these worlds of discourse or associative contexts that leads to a cognitive "conflict" between the perceiver's expectations (mental patterns) and the elements of discourse/context which are deemed less accessible or less salient, and hence incongruous in comparison with the more or less fixed mental patterns.

In general, researchers in the field agree that, to engender humour, incongruity needs to be resolved for the perceiver to realise its funniness;

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[3] Göran Nerhardt, "Operationalization of Incongruity in Humour Research: A Critique and Suggestions," in: *It's a Funny Thing, Humour: Proceedings of The International Conference on Humour and Laughter*, eds. Antony J. Chapman, Hugh C. Foot (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1976), p. 47.

[4] Gillo Dorfles, *Artificio e natura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1968), p. 101.

[5] Arvo Krikmann, "Contemporary Linguistic Theories of Humour," *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore*, Vol. 33 (2006), p. 28.

this mechanism seems to be best captured by the two-stage process which involves (1) incongruity *per se* and (2) incongruity-resolution.[6] First, one finds his original expectations about the elements or concepts involved disconfirmed and then, during the stage of incongruity-resolution, he "engages in a form of problem solving to find a cognitive rule"[7] which governs the incongruity to decode it properly, and thus, reconcile the incompatible concepts. "Accordingly, having completed the incongruity and resolution stages, the interpreter re-appreciates the nature of the incongruity and its resolution."[8] This is due to the fact that new perceptual data alters the perceiver's previous assumptions and this thought-perception mismatch is seen as funny.[9] Therefore, it is the realisation that one has made a mistake that results in mirthful pleasure.

The aforementioned incongruity can be described in terms of script oppositions. Scripts can be defined as chunks of semantic data or as rudimentary mental representations of particular situations and their interpretations.[10] They are said to be the frames organising concepts that form mini-narratives[11] (i.e. the patterns or scenarios human thinking follows) and can be divided into three fundamental types, namely: the actual/non-actual, normal/abnormal, and possible/impossible script oppositions (SOs).[12] These classes delineate the most basic oppositions between real and unreal situations in discourse but are by no means exhaustive, as SOs can be expanded to encompass also the life/death, good/bad, obscene/non-obscene, or high/low oppositions.[13] The richness of binary script oppositions does not end here, for one can draw many others, such as necessary/unnecessary, much/little, and absence/presence.[14]

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[6] Marta Dynel, "Creative Metaphor Is a Birthday Cake: Metaphor as the Source of Humour," *Metaphorik. de*, Vol. 17 (2009), accessed April 7, 2017, http://www.metaphorik.de/de/journal/17/creative-metaphor-birthday-cake-metaphor-source-humour.html.

[7] Jerry Suls, "A Two-Stage Model for the Appreciation of Jokes and Cartoons: An Information Processing Analysis," in: *The Psychology of Humor*, eds. Jeffrey H. Goldstein, Paul E. McGhee (New York: Academic Press, 1972), p. 82.

[8] Dynel, "Creative Metaphor Is a Birthday Cake," p. 29.

[9] Matthew M. Hurley, Daniel C. Dennett, Reginald B. Adams Jr., *Filozofia dowcipu. Humor jako siła napędowa umysłu*, trans. Rafał Śmietana (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2017), pp. 86–98.

[10] Victor Raskin, *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), p. 46.

[11] Andreas Musolff, "Metaphor Scenarios in Public Discourse," *Metaphor and Symbol*, Vol. 21 (2006), p. 23.

[12] Raskin, *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*, p. 111.

[13] Ibid., pp. 113–114.

[14] Władysław Chłopicki, *An Application of the Script Theory of Semantics to the Analysis of Selected Polish Humorous Short Stories* (unpublished MA thesis, West Lafayette: Purdue University, 1987).

Nevertheless, as research on humour advanced, it became apparent that SO is often not enough to make a specific text or multimodal artefact funny. The two elements that enter the incongruous relation have to be different while still bearing some similarity to the other script, which has led to the hypothesis that the prototype theory may prove helpful in explaining the intricacies of humour. In short, people use categorisations to make sense of the world and sort objects, individuals, and ideas into groups/classes based on the features they share; such sets of common criteria (called classes or categories) simplify thinking and processing since, thanks to cognitive resemblance, they allow clear-cut distinction between various entities, provide expectable scenarios, and hence make it easier to communicate. As developed by Rosch, the said prototype is the most central member of the category which best represents a given concept and comes first to the perceiver's mind, i.e. is the first stimulus to be associated with the category.[15] Thus, the prototype takes a salient position and is "foremost on one's mind."[16] The more features shared with the prototype, the more likely a unit is to be classified as belonging to a given category.

In tune with this line of reasoning, a given element is said to belong to a class which is simultaneously available and relevant in a specific discursive context because of its similarity to the class type encountered.[17] Consequently, when faced with a unit which is less prototypical, i.e. is perceived as less salient or retains less relevant features, the perceiver sees a clash "between the cognitive status of the prototype (the unmarked member) and the marginal status of the marked member,"[18] and is therefore forced to change his previous interpretations resultant from his (proto)typical ways of thinking, which shape his expectations. According to humour researchers, this process is similar to incongruity-resolution, for it involves two different units, which meet in the mind of the perceiver. There has to be a prototypical core scenario and a non-prototypical scenario, which diverges "in several unidimensional qualities from the typical elements in the class"[19] to produce humour. The very verb *diverge*

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[15] Eleanor H. Rosch, "Natural categories," *Cognitive Psychology*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1973), pp. 328–350.

[16] Rachel Giora, *On Our Mind: Salience, Context, and Figurative Language* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 15.

[17] Nerhardt, "Operationalization of Incongruity in Humour Research," p. 47.

[18] Rachel Giora, "On the Cognitive Aspects of the Joke," *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 16 (1991), p. 465.

[19] Ibid., p. 50.

implies separation from a route, course or standard and going in a different direction from a certain point of divergence, which suggests that the scripts need to satisfy two conditions: (1) they have to be in opposition to one another; and (2) they have to overlap to a certain extent.[20] What follows is that it is essential for one of the elements juxtaposed to be non-prototypical but still available in terms of class inclusion in order to engender humour.[21] The workings of this hypothesis are shown in the study to follow, based on selected ads which rework art for humorous purposes.

"Popculturing" Visual Art in Advertising

Advertising is parasitic on other types of discourse and on culture as well; it therefore comes as no surprise that various works of art are incorporated into ads to serve as potent signification systems, embellishing devices or attention-getting ploys. Given the power of the pictorial, which "offers a sensual immediacy [...] a written text cannot replicate,"[22] goods are heavily advertised via images. They are much faster to decode because the visual component in advertising performs both the literal and the symbolic function.[23] Not only do pictures provide factual information in the form of actual photographs of the goods themselves, but also are capable of connecting pictures with other, more symbolic meanings (e.g., connecting a car with prestige or a washing powder with love for your family). The market is based on images which are central to managing the audience and its needs through the construction of symbolic visual environments.[24]

Such an environment can be created thanks to the incorporation of visual art into advertising, for instance, when reproductions of famous paintings or sculptures are "popcultured" and used in ads.[25] While addressing the issue of visual art in ads, it is vital to mention the influence of visual art on the perception and evaluation of consumer products;

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[20] Sajjad Kianbakht, "Towards a comprehensive theory of culturally constructed humour," *The European Journal of Humour Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2020), p. 4.

[21] Giora, "On the Cognitive Aspects of the Joke," pp. 469–470.

[22] Mirzoeff, "What is Visual Culture?" p. 9.

[23] Vanessa M. Patrick, Henrik Hagtvedt, "Advertising with Art: Creative Visuals," in: *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, eds. Mark Runco Steven Pritzker (Amsterdam and Boston: Academic Press, 2011), pp. 18–23.

[24] Jonathan Schroeder, *Visual Consumption* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 5.

[25] Parenthetically, it should be noted that it is reported that high-culture images (or rather reproductions thereof) actually reach more people through advertising than through museums, exhibitions or other media (see: Barry Hoffman, *The Fine Art of Advertising* (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 2002).

"art somehow has the power to influence consumer perceptions"[26] since "artistic elements may successfully be employed in marketing to influence consumers in a favourable way […]."[27] This can consequently make the perceiver develop liking towards the ad which contains reference to high culture and thus becomes a kind of an "intertext" because it establishes intertextual connections between the content of the ad and the work of art used for the purpose of this ad.

In fact, intertextuality is of key importance as far as the link between visual art and advertising is concerned.[28] Ads which employ works of art play with signs and codes to build new signification relations based on the ones that have already achieved wide circulation thanks to references to existing styles, works of art or themes. Through intertextuality, one can imbue the message with additional, oftentimes symbolic meanings and introduce humour too. In this sense, advertising can capitalise on art in a twofold manner. Firstly, the ad can benefit from the halo effect thanks to which certain features of the artwork (e.g. superior quality, luxuriousness or stylishness) are mapped onto the goods with which it is associated. In such a way, "the visual past provides a vocabulary of representation that is with us today."[29] Secondly, advertising can make use of a pinch of humour by means of changing the original work of art with a view to parodying it. It is important to stress that "parody uses signals, which can only be recognised by an audience familiar with the original,"[30] thus building the bridge between different contexts.

> In this sense, parody is a parasitical form, which cannot exist without its "host," but this need not mean that it cannot be original or creative. This consciousness of form is sometimes termed self-reflexive—the text encourages the reader or listener to focus on the style itself and be aware of a conflict or dialogue between the old style and the parodic version.[31]

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[26] Hagtvedt, Patrick, "Art Infusion," p. 379.

[27] Ibid., p. 386.

[28] Although the term *intertextuality* is used to refer to the relationships between texts, especially literary ones, while talking about multimodal content, one also deals with a kind of a text, though composed of the verbal and visual. Advertising is predominantly multimodal in nature, i.e. it is based on various combinations of distinct semiotic modes, all of which combine to form one meaningful unit.

[29] Schroeder, *Visual Consumption*, p. 20.

[30] Alison Ross, *The Language of Humour* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 48.

[31] Ibid.

Just like parody needs its "host" to build upon other texts, a script needs another script for the humorous incongruity to emerge; in both cases, the intended effect is based on interdependence and "conceptual tension" between previous, original texts/scenarios and their intertexts/oppositions. That is why it may be claimed that "intertextuality—in one form or another—lies at the very heart of humour."[32] The aim of the following sections is to bring to the limelight the effects of the interplay between humour and intertextuality in art-related ads.

Art-Related Multimodal Ads—Research Objectives

The aforementioned form of relation, conflict, and dialogue is particularly noticeable in art-related multimodal ads. That is why the present study sets out to investigate selected instances of popculturing and funification which occur in tandem in art-related multimodal advertising. By popculturing we mean the process in the course of which an artefact, here a historical work of art representing high culture, is incorporated into modern popular culture transmitted via the mass media. Funification, on the other hand, will involve the use of said artefacts for humorous purposes. The following analysis will show the new, popcultural life of several works of art in selected ads. It will also check the respondents' familiarity with these popcultured works of art, as well as look into ad liking and perceived funniness. As a result, it will be possible to (1) demonstrate the ways in which high and pop culture interpermeate in advertising discourse, (2) check the effects such funified ads have on research participants, and (3) establish whether the mechanism of script opposition is a sufficient determinant of funniness.

Art-Related Multimodal Ads—Research Design and Participants

A collection of thirty press advertisements in English in which visual art is incorporated into advertising content for humorous purposes was investigated. The materials for this study were retrieved from simple searches in Google Images in the year 2018, i.e. on the basis of search

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[32] Villy Tsakona, Jan Chovanec, "Revisiting intertextuality and humour: Fresh perspectives on a classic topic," *The European Journal of Humour Research*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2020), p. 2.

results obtained in response to the following search terms: *art in advertising*, *humour ads art*, *paintings advertising*, *funny ad art/painting/sculpture*, and the like. It was necessary to filter out the results which did not seem potentially humorous, that is, which did not rely on script opposition. The ads selected were subject to qualitative content analysis before ten of them were randomly chosen and included in the survey that was distributed to research participants.

The group surveyed consisted of 70 students of English philology of the University of Silesia, Poland. The survey was aimed at gauging the respondents' familiarity with several well-known works of art used in selected ads, inspecting their feelings and attitudes towards the ads presented (i.e. ad liking and perceived funniness), and thus checking whether the mechanism of script opposition alone always proves humorous enough for these ads to be rated as funny. Hence, the informants were asked to identify the original works of art and their authors, and then to indicate their feelings and attitudes towards the ads on the Likert-type scale. As for ad liking, research participants were requested to decide whether they like the ad, dislike the ad or cannot decide. When it comes to perceived funniness, they were asked to rate each ad as either very funny, funny, neutral or not funny, so that the range captured the intensity of their feelings for a given ad. In what follows, the ads are discussed in the order of their appearance in the survey.

Art-Related Multimodal Ads—Data Analysis

To begin with, Ad 1 for Lufthansa presents Mona Lisa wearing tacky make-up and a pink feather boa. The slogan says: "My God, France is so cheap these days" and may refer either to France's losing its sublimity and showing poor taste or to cheap flying tickets. The humorous results from the clash between high and low culture, incarnated in the figure of Mona Lisa, as well as from the double meaning of the word "cheap." At first glance, the ad leads the perceivers to an incorrect categorisation of Mona Lisa, as the slogan implies that she is cheap and the pictorial evidently likens her to a prostitute. Nonetheless, the actual message is that travelling is not expensive with Lufthansa.[33] Given its recognisability, both

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[33] Adeevee | Only selected creativity - Lufthansa German Airlines: Mona Lisa, Guard, accessed October 22, 2018, http://www.adeevee.com/2007/12/lufthansa-german-airlines-mona-lisa-guard-print/.

the painting and the author himself (Leonardo da Vinci) were correctly identified by the respondents. Ad liking was relatively high, as 89% of the informants declared to like the ad, and funniness ratings were also high—67% of research participants said they found it either very funny or funny. The recipients were hence aware of the evident conflict between the scripts high culture/low culture and a noblewoman/prostitute, and intertextual relations were relatively easy to read for them.

Next is Ad 2 for Lego which refers to *The Creation of Adam*, a fresco painting by Michelangelo, with the hand of Adam replaced by the hand of a Lego figure. Hence, the message is that a child becomes the creator of Lego bricks—a person with powerful, God-like, creative potential.[34] The ad's funniness stems from the playful/serious and mundane/holy SOs, though it is possible to enumerate more SOs, such as God/man, God's creation/Lego bricks. The informants were able to access previous intertextual experience (the fresco) and contrast it with the new, incongruous script (Lego bricks), which resulted in humour, for the non-prototypicality of the hand of a Lego figure in the context of a biblical fresco is rather conspicuous. The informants identified the fresco itself but some of them mistook Michelangelo for da Vinci. The ad met with unanimous approval (100% ad liking); unsurprisingly, funniness ratings were very high too (78% of funny and 22% of neutral responses).

The same work of art was used in Ad 3 promoting Sviezia Kava. This time, the hand of Adam is replaced by an udder (perhaps metonymically referring to fresh milk for the coffee, as suggested by the slogan "Coffee with milk renaissance"), which received mixed results in terms of ad liking.[35] The humorous is based on the actual/non-actual SO and on the unexpectedness of the milking scenario involved. Nevertheless, while the scripts are in opposition to one another, it seems that they were not seen as overlapping by the informants. The inter-category contrast between the fresco and an udder instead of a hand was too stark; therefore, the ad was not deemed especially amusing and produced inconclusive results as regards funniness ratings (22% very funny, 33% funny, 22% neutral, 22% not funny).

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[34] #Lego #Create Campaign Inspired By "The Creation of Adam" From Michelangelo | Art of Advertising, accessed October 22, 2018, http://advertising.trsty.com/advertising/lego-create-campaign-inspired-by-the-creation-of-adam-from-michelangelo.

[35] Sviezia Kava Print Advert By Milk: Coffee with milk renaissance | Ads of the World™, accessed October 22, 2018, https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/sviezia_kava_coffee_with_milk_renaissance.

Moving on to another example, Ad 4 for Traid features an ancient statue of Hercules dressed up in modern clothing that is advertised as "Classic Vintage Clothing." Therefore, the ad distinctively derives its visual input from classical art.[36] Although the informants found it difficult to identify the author and name of the sculpture (more often than not mistaking the statue for *David* by Michelangelo), they generally appreciated the clash between the ancient and the modern. The ad received positive feedback from 77% of the respondents but, in general, was rated as neutral and its perceived funniness was marginal (only 22% of research participants claimed it was amusing). Several informants said that they found it difficult to accept an ancient sculpture as a model; it can be hypothesised that the concepts of fashion and ancient times lacked sufficient common ground for them. What follows is that the concepts involved were probably unavailable in terms of class inclusion, that is, research participants did not see the scripts overlap, as the connection between them was too feeble to engender humour successfully.

The already mentioned painting by da Vinci is also effectively used in Ad 5 for Nescafé; it presents Mona Lisa, her eyes wide open and protruding as a result of instant coffee's power, which stands in stark contrast to the original, unreadable expression of her eyes.[37] The work of art was identified correctly by all the informants, won unanimous approval, and elicited humour effectively since 67% of the respondents found it very funny and the remainder 33%—funny. The ad does not only subvert traditional "regimes" of culture, but also introduces the elements of play into the advertising experience, and clearly shows the way the product works. As posited by Chen and Jiang in their paper on multimodal humour and non-prototypicality, the degree of humorousness tends to be higher if the concepts simultaneously are salient and belong to the same category (or, optionally, to two adjacent categories).[38] Ad 5 constitutes a good illustration of the said theory since it seems that the scripts present in the ad (the actual/non-actual, possible-impossible, normal/abnormal, serious/

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[36] Anna Chan, "Artist dresses classic statues in hipster clothing," *NBC News*, September 15, 2013, accessed October 22, 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/pop-culture/pop-culture-news/artist-dresses-classic-statues-hipster-clothing-f8c11133474.

[37] Adeevee | Only selected creativity - Nescafé: Van Gogh, American Gothic, Mona Lisa, accessed October 22, 2018, http://www.adeevee.com/2014/09/nescafe-van-gogh-american-gothic-mona-lisa-print/.

[38] Qiaoyun Chen, Guiying Jiang, "Why Are You Amused: Unveiling Multimodal Humour from the Prototype Theoretical Perspective," *The European Journal of Humour Research,* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2018), pp. 62–84.

unserious, and sleepy/awake SOs) were activated as salient and pertinent; in other words, SOs fit one general category outlined by the context of the ad, which may be seen as "an inherent source of incongruity and therefore an important inducer of humour."[39]

Another example is Ad 6 for Lipton that makes use of the famous painting *The Persistence of Memory* by Salvador Dalí, which is widely recognised and frequently referenced in popular culture.[40] It seems worth noting that not all of the informants knew the title of the work but most of them could identify the painter. In the ad, the melting clocks are replaced by melting yellow Lipton labels, thus representing the actual/non-actual SO and profiting from the normal/abnormal one that is already present in the original work. For the ad in question, ad liking oscillated around 70% but the ad itself was not deemed funny, for it elicited 55% of neutral and 45% of not funny responses. The respondents understood that the advertiser wanted to stress the otherworldly taste of Lipton tea or, as some said, that there is always teatime. Creative as it is, the ad was not surprising to their minds. Despite the changes made to the original painting, replacing melting clocks with melting Lipton labels was seen as overlapping, due to comparison for similarity, but not necessarily as incongruous. It can be speculated that resemblance was at the forefront and, thus, the ad did not produce humour.

Ad 7 for Acme Sanitary Ware, on the other hand, shows the famous bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin on the toilet.[41] The male figure of *The Thinker* is often used to symbolise philosophy, which contrasts with something as mundane as using the toilet. Possibly, owing to the excrement/non-excrement SO (which is a specific realisation of the absence/presence opposition proposed by Chłopicki),[42] ad liking was high (78%). Few respondents were able to identify the work of art and the artist, which resulted in their inability to interpret the intertextual dimension 'properly.' Although it would seem that the context of the ad fits both high and low culture, thus engendering humour, funniness ratings were not spectacular

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[39] Ibid., p. 63.

[40] Stephen Hill, "Art in Advertising," *PMG - Digital Agency*, May 24, 2016, accessed October 22, 2018, https://www.pmg.com/blog/art-in-advertising/.

[41] Adeevee | Only selected creativity - Acme Sanitary Ware Co. Sanitary Ware: The Thinker, accessed October 22, 2018, http://www.adeevee.com/1998/10/acme-sanitary-ware-co-sanitary-ware-the-thinker-print/.

[42] Chłopicki, *An Application of the Script Theory*, p. 18.

(56% of neutral responses versus 44% of the positive ones), which may have resulted from the fact that the statue was unknown to many informants.

Ad 8 for Nike seems the most inappropriate one in the whole sample. Nike's famous Swoosh logo is added to selected 19th-century paintings, to religious, dramatic, and mystical scenes, thus creating something surprising but also questionable in terms of appropriateness.[43] The informants found it difficult to indicate the author of the work of art (William-Adolphe Bouguereau) and the idea of using *Pieta* was not appreciated, as only 33% of the respondents claimed to like the ad and as many as 78% found it unfunny. Thus, the clash between the religion and marketing script (holy/unholy) was such that it inhibited positive results.

The penultimate ad to be mentioned is Ad 9 for Samsung NX Mini campaign entitled "For self-portraits. Not selfies." In it, Vincent van Gogh uses the mobile to take a picture of himself, which, as can be seen on the display of his device, turns out to be his famous self-portrait.[44] The author was identified correctly by most of the respondents; liking for this ad, which makes use of the possible/impossible SO, was as high as 88%, yet the ad received mixed responses when it comes to funniness—46% of the informants claimed it was funny while 54% rated it as neutral. It may be assumed that the ad was not found particularly amusing because the ideas of taking a picture and doing a painting were not that different, that is, neither of them was perceived as deviating from the prototypical way of being immortalised, either on canvas or digitally.

This finds corroboration in Ad 10 for Lego which features the same artist and the same piece of art, this time shown against the realisation thereof created out of LEGO bricks.[45] The ad is based on the actual/non-actual SO and on strong similarity between the original painting and its Lego version. Again, although ad liking was high (76%), the ad elicited mostly neutral responses (78%), which shows it was not surprising enough to amuse the informants.

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[43] Swooshart by Davide Bedoni / "Just Do It" : Nike & Classic Paintings from 18th and 19th Century Revisited / Arc Street Journal, accessed October 22, 2018, http://www.arcstreet.com/article-swooshart-by-davide-bedoni-just-do-it-nike-classic-paintings-from-18th-and-19th-century-revi-121592327.html.

[44] Nicole Dahmen, The Collision of Art and Advertising | Visual Communication in the Digital Age, December 21, 2014, accessed October 22, 2018, https://nicoledahmen.wordpress.com/2014/12/21/the-collision-of-art-and--advertising/.

[45] Lego Print Advert by Geometry Global: Vincent | Ads of the World™, accessed October 22, 2018, https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/lego_vincent.

Concluding Remarks

The findings based on the surveys completed by over 70 respondents show that they were not proficient in recognising the names of paintings/sculptures or their authors unless the works of art referred to were frequently referenced in popular culture. What follows is that the popcultural life of historical works of art in ads is actually a fact to reckon with. By funifying, popculturing, and disseminating works of art as marketable items, ads become "extensions" of art available to the grassroots. The short overview of the ads offered above shows the ongoing displacement of historical works of art and their transference into the popcultural and advertising realms. In the examples provided, art is used as a "host" to new artefacts, which emerge out of the material provided by existing texts; additionally, new artefacts change the original meanings of those texts to suit marketing communication, thus potentially recreating one's experience of art.

It seems worth mentioning that the informants indicated that it is almost solely through contemporary media that they commune with the reproductions of art, which shows the impact of mass-mediated culture. So, while some may say that "the relationship between art and advertising is […] antagonistic, even exploitative,"[46] others will claim that it introduces the grassroots to the world of art, albeit on a much smaller scale. Consequently, reduced scale may "imply shorter and faster cycles of change of what a relevant reference group regards as the appropriate code—but it does not necessarily indicate the abolition of a code."[47] An important aspect to ponder over in this context is that "a sign carries within it a slice of culture's history."[48] If this slice is subject to change, then even culture, culture's history, and history itself are prone to distortions. This is not to say that one should avoid playing with codes or frames of reference but rather that the audience should be more aware of the processes in which meanings are (re)constructed. A full discussion of this complex issue is, nonetheless, beyond the ambit of one paper.

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[46] Shawn Wen, Frank Stasio, What Is the Relationship Between Art and Advertising? | WUNC, June 17, 2013, accessed October 24, 2018, https://www.wunc.org/post/what-relationship-between-art-and-advertising.

[47] Efrat Tseëlon, "Fashion and Signification in Baudrillard," in: *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*, ed. Douglas Kellner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994), p. 129.

[48] Marcel Danesi, *Of Cigarettes, High Heels, and Other Interesting Things. An Introduction to Semiotics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 10.

Playing with codes, signs, and meanings can be seen either as an impediment and abuse or as a contribution and an act of creativity. In advertising, popcultured works of art can lend the products their qualities and charm through mere juxtaposition; they can be used not only to attract attention, but also to amuse the audience, as it was the case with the examples provided. Although referring specifically to humour in classical art memes, Piata supports the claim that humour arises from the incongruity between different stylistic varieties, as well as from the incongruity between high culture (art) and pop culture (ads), for there occurs a collision between various frames of reference. In her discussion, Piata goes even further and states that, given the fact that stylistic incongruity cross-cuts modalities, one should treat such instances of recontextualising artwork in contemporary terms as "multimodal stylistic humour."[49]

As evidenced by the survey, SO is not always enough to elicit humorous responses on the part of the audience. The informants responded positively to many ads with incongruous juxtapositions but did not necessarily find them amusing. It can therefore be stated that incongruity tends to conduce to increased ad liking but is not always the source of humour, even if SO is evident, thus confirming the hypothesis that it is vital for one of the elements juxtaposed to be non-prototypical yet available in terms of class inclusion in order to engender humour.[50] The shared discursive context in which both scripts can coexist thus provides ground for humour. Representations of the works of art in the ads considered were humorous because they "fit" the context of the ads, i.e. were available for class inclusion although they remained discrepant and incongruous. This finds corroboration in the examples that failed to elicit highly positive responses from research participants in the study conducted.

Addressing the issue of humour, and human feelings in general, is one of the most elusive, albeit simultaneously the most basic aspects of our experience of being in the world. The ways in which humour manifests itself in art-related multimodal ads clearly shows that the topic is far from being exhausted owing to the dynamics of culture, with its codes and signs which are malleable and thus demand constant revision. This, in turn, makes us perceive advertising as one of the engines of popculture.

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[49] Anna Piata, "Stylistic Humor Across Modalities. The Case of Classical Art Memes," *Internet Pragmatics*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2019), p. 28.

[50] Giora, "On the Cognitive Aspects of the Joke," pp. 469–470.

Anna Stwora

On the Popcultural Life of Historical Works of Art in Humorous Advertising

The paramount objective of this paper is to discuss the popcultural life of historical works of art in selected humorous ads. Firstly, the workings of the incongruity-resolution theory of humour and script opposition are presented. Then, the author proceeds to the topic of popculturing visual art in ads. Finally, attention is paid to specific instances of popculturing and funification in several art-related multimodal ads, which makes it possible to see the mechanisms of humour elicitation resultant from the ongoing displacement of historical works of art and their transference into the pop-cultural and advertising realms. To this end, the author gathered a collection of ads in English in which visual art is used in order to introduce humour.

Keywords: multimodal advertising, popculture, art in advertising, humour studies, incongruity
Słowa klucze: reklama multimodalna, popkultura, sztuka w reklamie, studia nad humorem, niespójność