

Kitsch as a Conceptual Strategy in the Work of Liliana Porterⁱ

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Like art itself, of which it is both an imitation and negation, kitsch cannot be defined from a single vantage point. And again like art – or for that matter anti-art – kitsch refuses to lend itself even to a negative definition, because it simply has no single, compelling, distinct counterconcept. (Matei Calinescu 232)

There is a wonderful quote by Borges, where he says that the aesthetic experience is the imminence of a revelation. I have always felt very close to Borges. My intention was to make visual art in the same way that he wrote: to include in the text a commentary about grammar, a meditation, an awareness of the artificiality of the medium. (Liliana Porter qtd. in Guinta 54)

This essay examines Liliana Porter's use of kitsch as a conceptual tool to further explore the fundamental tautological base of her work defined by Mari Carmen Ramirez as, "the confirmation on the part of the viewer of the gap between image and object, illusion and reality" (17). In order to address the ways in which Porter employs kitsch as a conceptual strategy, I define kitsch as it is used in the artist's oeuvre. Next, I will examine Porter's later work as an outgrowth of her conceptual practice. Finally, I will examine the theoretical and philosophical goals of the artist through the writings of a variety of post-modern theorists paying particular attention to the art historical precedence for her use of kitsch.

Porter's production took on a conceptual cast during the 1960s and 1970s, particularly the prints she completed during the years of the New York Graphic Workshop (NYGW).ⁱⁱ What is most striking about much of Porter's recent work is the artist's use of kitsch, defined here as objects associated with popular culture, cheaply produced, easily recognizable, and widely accessible. Porter deploys an army of objects to populate her videos, paintings, prints, and photographs. In the introduction to his volume, *Conceptual Art*, Peter Osborne identifies the "four revolts of Conceptual Art."ⁱⁱⁱ Porter's work does not fit neatly into Osborne's scheme; her work does deal with the issues raised by other artists working in conceptual modes. These include her attention to the vagaries and ambiguities of language, her interest in political and ideological concepts, her use of the ready-made, as well as her interest in relations of power which connect her work to theories of conceptualism.

In an interview published on the eve of the group's exhibition held at the Plástica Gallery in Buenos Aires, Porter described the mission of the NYGW,

Printing in editions, the act of creating an edition, is more important than the work carried out on the printing plate; this attitude opens the way to molding, cutting, folding, and using space. The time has come to take responsibility for developing our own images as printmakers, conditioned but not destroyed by our techniques. (Porter qtd. in "Dureror, industry, Object, Week-end" 41)

The above quotation illuminates the similarities between Porter's early conceptual printmaking and her recent forays into photography, painting, and film. Her desire to collapse the space between image, reality, and language is the thread that ties her entire oeuvre together (Dolinko 31). In her photographs, paintings, and films she returns time and again to a stable of objects creating a group of images, which resemble the editions produced in traditional printmaking, reproducing the visage of singular or multiple figures. The artist's video works, formulaic in construction, each begin with a quotation followed by vignettes demarcated by text screens that introduce each segment. In each movie, Porter works with the musician, Sylvia Meyer, who composes music for the film in collaboration with the artist.^{iv}

As Matei Calinescu suggests in the epigraph to this essay, kitsch is difficult if not impossible to define because the majority of the studies on the subject focus on the aesthetic qualities of kitsch. In his article, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* published in the Paris Review in 1939, Clement Greenberg stated,

Kitsch, using for raw material the debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture, welcomes and cultivates this insensibility. It is the source of its profits. Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money – not even their time. (Greenburg 116)

Following Greenberg, the majority of discussions of kitsch throughout the modern era primarily meditate on the notion of quality. Within this debate, kitsch has become synonymous with bad art. In his book-length study, Tomas Kulka describes kitsch as parasitic in its ability to manipulate and prey upon the emotions of the viewer.

Despite its poor reputation, kitsch remains largely undefined in the literature. Furthermore, theorists and critics, like Greenberg, who were and are so quick to denigrate kitsch fail to adequately explain its appeal; an appeal at once broad and undeniable. Saul Friedlander's exploration of kitsch and its use by the Nazis during World War II identifies the power of kitsch in its ability to deliver messages to the viewer in a simple manner relying on a harmony of form and content which is direct and thus able to evoke immediate and powerful emotional responses. This power to communicate comes from kitsch's reliance upon iconic objects and individuals making art which employs a kitsch aesthetic at once iconic and indexical (Lundquist 329-343). It is the multiple layers of meaning contained in kitsch objects that Porter exploits in her work. She notes,

I think that little by little, from constantly looking at and analyzing the object and its reality, I got closer to the fictionality of the object, of the touchable object (the one that, thanks to our sense of humor, we call "real"). Now I realize how fascinating it is for me, that is, the fact that the reality of an object represents another thing. Imagine a little pig made in ceramic or a plaster

saint. The toy essentially is a metaphor. (qtd. in Bazzano-Nelson 99)

Kitsch provides Porter an ideal vehicle to highlight the gap between reality and illusion in her work. It becomes the medium through which she can complete this task by harnessing what Charles Merewether called, “the vertiginous power of reproduction to effect and transform our relation to the real” (46).

In her discussion of the use of religious kitsch by contemporary artists, Celeste Olalquiaga creates a hierarchy dividing the category of kitsch into a three-tiered system (277-88). Though Porter’s work is not strictly religious in nature, Olalquiaga’s classificatory system creates an incisive structure to examine Porter’s use of kitsch. Porter’s work falls into the third category that Olalquiaga establishes. The author describes third degree kitsch as capable of producing meanings that go beyond the indexical referents of the objects themselves to create new associations. In this discussion, Olalquiaga draws on the work of Walter Benjamin; she writes,

Walter Benjamin wrote in a brief essay that kitsch is what remains when the world of things becomes extinct. Comparing it to a layer of dust that covers things and allows for a nostalgic recreation of reality, Benjamin believes kitsch – the banal – to be more accurate than immediate perception (thus favoring intertextuality over indexicality). (284)

In following the logic of Benjamin, in a postmodern world saturated with visual imagery, Porter uses kitsch to create new meanings. In his essay on Pop, Jean Baudrillard argued Pop Art snapped the tether between objects and moral or psychological values allowing them to take on importance as autonomous elements (45-78). The world Porter creates is unreal yet simulates lost experience particularly of the imaginative nature of childhood.

Jackie O.

A black screen appears and the sound of swirling wind, blowing leaves, and thunder rolls as though a storm is about to begin. Blurry images begin to interrupt the blackness of the background. They reveal a car seemingly speeding across the screen. The credits of the film begin to role revealing the title of the film *Matiné* (2009) and its creator. As the credits continue, a siren can be heard in the background as a storm, signaled by the role of thunder and the sound of falling raindrops, begins to rage. A title screen appears reminiscent of those used in silent movies to indicate dialogue or action; it reads, “Lincoln Continental.”

Slowly the light comes up to reveal the front end of a toy car, a dark blue Lincoln Continental decorated with American flags. The film cuts to a close-up of a face immediately recognizable as John Kennedy. The camera pans back and the picture becomes fuzzy and unfocused revealing a blurred figure dressed in pink. As the shot comes back into focus, Jacqueline Kennedy emerges from the haze. The convertible top is open. Six passengers sit in the automobile. Four with their arms raised, frozen in a perpetual wave. This Lincoln Continental is a memorial replica of the car in which President John F. Kennedy and his wife

rode on November 22, 1963. The model car contains the young and popular President Kennedy, his companions, among them Governor Connally of Texas and his wife, all seated happily smiling and waving. Porter shows the car from a variety of angles, taking close-ups of the figures, studies of the hands of Jackie Kennedy, the tires of the automobile, and a shot of the car moving across the screen as if in slow motion. The film unfolds against the backdrop of an ominous soundtrack featuring a persistent drumbeat seemingly at the precipice of a crescendo. Finally, a human hand appears which moves the car along the suggestion of a road, indicated by two hand drawn lines. The hand pushes the car back revealing the mechanism by which the car can be wound up to propel itself forward. The screen fades to black, the music shifts, and another title card appears.

In this scene, Porter creates a scene of delicately layered meaning evoking nostalgia and confusion. The title card indicating the beginning of the sequence reads merely, "Lincoln Continental," identifying the classic American automobile produced by the quintessential American automaker, General Motors. As the scene progresses, the viewer comes to recognize the specificity of the reference. The language of the title card refers, not just to the brand or model of car, but to the particular conveyance which carried the thirty-fifth President of the United States along the parade route in Dallas, Texas on the fateful day Lee Harvey Oswald shot and killed Kennedy. Thus, the film refers to one of the pivotal moments in American history, a deeply felt moment of national tragedy. Crises marred the following years such as the later assassination of Kennedy's brother Robert as well as civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., the expansion of the Vietnam War, and a series of social clashes culminating in 1968 with riots against governments, not just in the United States, but around the world. The assassination of JFK represented the beginning of a traumatic and painful epoch in American history. Thus, the apparently innocuous object carrying the plasticized likenesses of the people involved in the incident takes on social and political dimensions. Porter's slow motion shot of the car driving across the screen, the continuous drumbeat of the soundtrack, become allusions to the impending catastrophe and the calamitous decade to follow.

The scene operates on a variety of levels, evoking a multitude of images. First, Porter engages with language to reveal its ability to imply meaning as well as ambiguity in the mind of the viewer. The second is her use of sound and music, the evocation of a gathering storm, to evoke contrasting emotions or at least a sense of foreboding in the watcher. Finally, the artist selects an image which recalls a whole suite of images associated with the event alluded to by the use of this particular iconic moment: the archival footage of the Lincoln Continental driving slowly along the parade route, the sight of Kennedy slumped over having just been shot, the picture of Jackie Kennedy and her children watching their father's casket being laid to rest, and the young John Kennedy Jr. saluting his father's funeral procession.

Porter's minute and a half long segment also succeeds in eliciting connections to a broader history of art. In particular, Porter's intimate attention to the smiling figure of the President's wife, wearing one of her iconic pill-box hats, recalls the image of Jackie Kennedy rendered by the preeminent representative of American Pop art, Andy Warhol. Portraiture is a genre loaded with history and meaning. Portraits arrest their subject in a moment in time removing them from reality, transforming the sitter into object, icon, and index (Steiner 173). Warhol's image is a snapshot that removes Kennedy from time. In contrast, Porter's film defies the stasis associated with portraiture by activating the subject, allowing the viewer to imagine

Kennedy alive, literally moving through history. Even in his repetitive portraits of icons such as Marilyn Monroe, Warhol intended to maintain a sense of artifice and the gulf that separated the viewer from these icons of American culture (Steiner 174). Porter's intention is the opposite. Porter lends the portrait a sense of humanity through her use of kitsch. The irony intrinsic in the toy replica obliterates the reverential nature of the icon inviting the audience to imagine an active subject.

The Legacy of Surrealism and Pop

Porter's oeuvre consistently meditates upon Baudrillard's concept of the simulacra and the ways in which memory can replace experience (45-78). In her series of still-lives begun in 1983, Porter incorporated objects of popular culture, comics, and reproductions of famous works of art. The artist's use of objects and images from popular culture draw on the precedents established by Surrealism, specifically the work of Belgian artist Rene Magritte, and Pop Art. Surrealism and Dada, its immediate predecessor, were artistic movements born of disillusionment that drew heavily on the history of art. In response to the brutality of the early twentieth century, Surrealist art sought to reject existing artistic principles and philosophy grounded in rationality and logic. Surrealist artists used visual production to illustrate life as they perceived it, inherently bizarre and puzzlingly ambiguous. Part of Porter's attraction to Magritte was the way in which his works revealed the artificial or arbitrary nature of language (Bazzano-Nelson 43-62). In her videos, like Magritte, Porter creates impossible encounters between inanimate objects.

The inanimate objects which populate Porter's films and recent work in other media run the gamut from Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck figurines to reproductions of Italian Renaissance paintings and golden Jesus lamps to wrist-watches bearing the smiling face of the Mao Tse-tung. In working with these objects, Porter employs a spectrum of kitsch. The common denominator unifying the objects is their ability to be easily identified and illicit immediate emotional or cerebral responses.^v Porter's concern differs from the issues motivating the use of kitsch by artists associated with American Pop, who meditated on ideas of value, media, or concepts of beauty. Like the Pop and Surrealist artist from whom Porter takes some of her cues, the artist is interested in raising questions. Yet her use of kitsch is dissimilar in that her work incites awareness of modes of perception. Porter draws on the Surrealist strategy of juxtapositions of familiar but dissimilar objects to produce an uncanny effect; she rejects the desire to bewilder her audience in favor of proposing or creating relationships between objects.

Porter's work with objects relies heavily on the concept of the ready-made introduced to Modern art in the work of the artist Marcel Duchamp. In Duchamp's work and the work of his Surrealist contemporaries, the ready-made represented the authorial voice of the artist and the assertion that the definition of art lay in the intentionality of the creator. In placing a commodity within the gallery or museum space, Surrealist and American Pop artists inserted consumer culture into the institution as a means of institutional critique as well as a comment on the commodification of modern life. Porter's conceptual use of the ready-made more closely resembles the conceptual strategies of Latin American conceptualists in the 1960s and 1970s. Brazilian artists of the New Objectivity movement, such as Cildo Meireles, also employed the ready-made but activated the object through interaction with the spectator. In

Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos (Insertions into Ideological Circuits) from the 1970s, Meireles' printed anti-imperialist messages on Coca-Cola bottles that he took to local bottling facilities to be refilled and recirculated. The messages, printed in white, became visible upon being filled with liquid (Alberro xxvii). Though Porter's work differs from Brazilian conceptualism, and other Latin American conceptualist movements in its engagement with overt political expression, her work also functions through the activation of the object.

The other movement most commonly identified with notions of kitsch is Pop, in particular the brand of Pop popularized by artists such as Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. Baudrillard argues that the logic of Pop art relies on its presentation of reality as it exists. Following statements made by Warhol, he argues reality needs no conciliation and that the object becomes art once isolated from the things that surround it (45-78). Though she embraces Pop art's fetishization of commercial objects, Porter rejects the impersonal and remote nature of the Pop puncturing the inaccessible veneer of advertising to encourage or elicit the affinities and emotions evoked by mass-produced objects.^{vi} Unlike Pop art's use of kitsch, which Andreas Huyssen views as a valorization of a culture of affluence, Porter employs kitsch to suggest an alternative to and remove the veneer of truth from perceptions of reality (79-110).

A World of Fantasy

In all of her videos, Porter displays a childlike sense of fantasy in her creation of an alternate universe in which the impossible or unthinkable transpires. Perhaps the most striking feature of the video series is Porter's ability to activate objects, not through actual animation or physical manipulation but simply through the addition of sound and by placing objects in contrast to one another. Her use of iconic or legible images to communicate subjective emotional states may draw on her fascination with Lewis Carroll's *Alice through the Looking Glass* in which the author subverts logic and reality by sending his heroine into a world of fantasy (Olalquiaga 54). An example of the artist's use of logical subversion occurs in *Drum Solo* (2000) that opens with a close-up on a ceramic pig playing a drum. The object is immobile yet the soundtrack that plays a drum-roll creates the illusion of the pig actually playing the drum. Despite the object's lack of movement and the impossibility that the sounds being made could be created by the object, the sound of the drum and the pig become connected in the viewer's mind; suddenly that which has no agency becomes activated. The scene closes with the drum-roll reaching its conclusion with the sound of a cymbal being struck. As the metallic resonance of the cymbal rings out, the camera cuts to a close-up of the pig's smiling face, its arms still raised in frozen action. At the conclusion of Carroll's tale, Alice is left to wonder whether the extraordinary adventure she experienced was real or merely a quixotic fantasy. Porter uses film to create a similar effect in the viewer.

Perception emerges as a central element in the artist's work. Thus travel or journeying appear as recurring themes in Porter's work. In her graphic work, Porter uses boats or the figure of Alice to indicate the idea of travel. Porter's devotion to the figure of Alice is telling for two reasons. First, Alice uses fantasy as an escape to defy or deny the reality of the adult world. Second, she reaches an alternate state of being by making a journey (Ramirez 17). In her films, the artist extends the metaphor of travel through literary references. Two of the video works, *Para Usted* [1999] and *Solo de Tambor* [2000] begin with quotes that refer to a

journey taken from *One Thousand and One Nights*.^{vii} The structure of the videos mirrors the episodic structure of the book. Porter's use of these particular novels indicates the centrality of the exploration of modes of perception to the artist's work.

Visually, the notion or process of perception comes in the form of mirrors, shadows, and wrinkles, all recurring elements in Porter's oeuvre from the 1960s to the present. In an interview with Andrea Giunta, Porter remarked,

I began creating absence (using shadows) and thinking that I could use elements that were in themselves meaningless. What an impossible idea, right? But anyway, for me this meant using a small nail, a hook, a shadow, a folded paper. On the other hand, I became interested in the superposition of the image, the representation of something over the thing itself, shadow on shadow, wrinkle on wrinkle. (53)

Film allows Porter to further explore the connection between objects and their reproductions. The artist achieves this challenge to perception by using toys, memorabilia, postcards, and the other detritus of consumer society and activating them.

Through the manipulation of the objects, the addition of a sound track, the animation of the inanimate, Porter creates dialogues between disparate entities. In doing so, she enacts a world of imagination akin to the scenarios that might exist in the mind of a child playing with toys. The overlay of the object, the sound, and the photographic manipulation create a series of associations in the mind of the viewer. For example, *Fox in the Mirror* (2007) opens with a shot of a man singing, however, the figurine does not have a head. Obviously, the small statue cannot sing nor is it responsible for the music heard during the segment. Additionally, the figure, clearly a man dressed in a suit and wearing a tie, sings in a woman's voice. The irony is obvious; a man with or without a head cannot sing an aria. The suggestion of the film takes on an absurd and even frightening or violent connotation. Despite the fact that the adult audience knows the figure cannot sing, that reality is challenged by the combination of elements in the film. In this way, Porter's work reveals static or didactic imagery, with seemingly obvious or immutable characteristics when activated, can evoke an entire range of association and meaning.

Porter's interest in language and its ability to disrupt or call into question images and reality is also a constant feature of her video work. The artist peppers her films with language in the form of signage that serves to divide the scenes within her film. Her interest in semiotics is not limited to language but extends to symbols as evidenced by a sequence of segments that feature title cards with grammatical symbols rather than actual words in *Fox in the Mirror*. She calls attention to her fascination in linguistics explicitly in *Solo de tambor* (2000). In a segment titled "Linguistics," Porter films a stack of books, the top book featuring a highlighted passage which reads,

Well, the transition from the problem situation to the ideas follows a very curious path. Just as a matter of set theory, we know that there were infinitely many possible theories consistent

with the facts in a problem situation. And the typical phenomenon is either we think nothing, or else everybody more or less thinks of the same thing or at least kind of recognizes it as plausible.^{viii}

Meyer also sings the last line of the quotation over as the film closes in and then pans out on the stack of books. Porter states the quote comes from a text by Noam Chomsky though she is unsure of the exact title. Porter asserts she chose the passage at random which would appear profound but which remained on screen too briefly for the audience to be able to interpret its meaning.^{ix} Whether or not we believe Porter's claim about the random nature of the passage, as its content seems perfectly suited to the ambiguous content of the video, it highlights the artist's desire to invite the audience to make assumptions which cannot be supported by the work itself.

In order to understand the relationship between language and image it is important to acknowledge that Porter's work follows a Saussurean system of linguistic structure. Ferdinand de Saussure argued words gain meaning through their relationships to signifiers.^x Saussure allowed for the possibility that his theory of relational meaning extended to the entire world of social sciences. Indeed, later theorists such as Roland Barthes expanded on Saussure's logic by applying it to the world of images.^{xi} Throughout her video works, the meaning of the language or sign employed by the artist is contingent upon the context. The earlier discussion of the opening scene of *Matiné* highlights the ways in which Porter draws on the disjunction between literal meaning and perceived meaning.

Porter's films reveal the contingent nature of meaning upon context, showing that context itself can be read as text, and how the framing of language becomes as important as language itself (Bal and Bryson 174). Porter highlights the significance of framing through her use of the filmic medium that lends itself to the artist's manipulation of the context of images and language. The artist reveals not only the ambiguity of written communication but also the ability of sound to create disjunction. In *Solo de tambor*, Porter includes a segment entitled "Chinese Choir"; an assembly of ceramic Chinese figurines appears against a black background and seems to join together in singing a song played with an Asian tonal scale. However, upon closer examination the song reveals itself to be *Hava Nagila*, a Hebrew folksong played at festive occasions of Jewish life. Porter's work subscribes to one of the central concepts of semiotic analysis that acknowledges understanding and reception to be contingent upon the viewer. By using kitsch, Porter allows for a range of response to her artistic vision and thus avoids asserting an authorial voice.

Conclusion

For instance, I remember making a print [*Stich*] that was, for me, really satisfying. I made a soft-ground etching of a string and then attached a real string to the end of the printed image. I was not interested in the *trompe l'oeil* itself but in the situation. I must admit that I still like it, or rather, I like that sort of stupidity, that seems to be about nothing, no? Such a small presence, but at the same time, it generates a bunch of questions. – Liliana Porter qtd. in Giunta 53-4

In her video work, Porter creates a universe, using items drawn from her personal collection, in which inanimate objects are animated and high culture blends with pop culture. The figures displayed against stark white, red, or black backgrounds elicit both personal and universally accessible memories of childhood. Porter negotiates the difference between stasis, through the use of inanimate objects, and movement, by manipulating and activating the immobile. The surreal, child-like quality of the videos creates a space in which time is suspended and the viewer is transported by the evocation of involuntary associations. In each case, the interpretation of the work by the viewer is based upon perception rather than didactic representation. Through animation, the manipulation of the frame, and placing objects in dialogue, Porter is able to illustrate the imagined interior life of objects. The process by which the artist chooses objects exhibits her profound belief in the internal life. Porter insists that she bases her selection upon a personal, intimate response elicited by the object itself.^{xii} The associations, which Porter initially made by placing objects together or affixing them to canvases, become heightened through the medium of film. In essence, film allows the artist to create a story where one does not exist.

It is difficult to define where Porter fits into the spectrum of conceptual artists. Conceptual art is an art of ideas yet, in Porter's work, conceptualism becomes an art of questions dependent upon the activation of the spectator as well as the object. In her seminal work on the development of Conceptual art, Lucy Lippard discussed the way in which Conceptual art relied heavily upon the dematerialization of the art object. Porter's early conceptual prints explored this notion of dematerialization focusing on the process of printmaking as both notion and process. However in her recent work, Porter moves away from the material dematerialization of art in favor of an activation of the objects represented within her work. Yet, the challenge to the belief in the truth of objects remains, in that, through the invigoration of inanimate entities Porter succeeds in forcing the viewer to dematerialize their preconceived notions of language and reality.

Notes

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ⁱⁱ The New York Graphic Workshop was a collaboration between Porter, Luis Camnitzer, and Jose Guillermo Castillo. The NYGW was founded in 1964. The mission of the group was to redefine printmaking in conceptual terms.

ⁱⁱⁱ Osborne's four revolts of Conceptual Art are the negation of the material object, the negation of medium, the negation of intrinsic significance of the visual form, and the negation of established modes of autonomy of the artwork. For more information see Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 1-51.

^{iv} Liliana Porter lecture at the University of Texas at Austin on September 22, 2009.

^v Kulka identifies the emotional appeal of kitsch as one of its defining features. For more information see Kulka, *Art and Kitsch*, 27-42.

^{vi} In these statements, I agree with the discussion of the artist's work by Mari Carmen Ramirez in *Fragments of the Journey*.

^{vii} The *Alf Layla* (*One Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Nights*) is a collection of Arabian folktales. The narrative structure of the novel is episodic. The Scheherazade, a wife of the king of Samarqand, narrates each story. For more information see Richard G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh, *One Thousand and One Nights in Arabic Literature and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) or Ulrich Marzolph, ed., *The Arabian Nights Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006).

^{viii} Noam Chomsky, unidentified quote, information courtesy of the artist.

^{ix} Personal email communication with the artists, November 21, 2010.

^x For example, Saussure would argue the word red gains meaning from its relationship to other colors i.e. red has meaning because it is not yellow or green. *Ibid*, 191.

^{xi} *Ibid*. See also Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York, Hill and Wang, 1968) or Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (Frogmore, St. Albans, England : Paladin, 1973).

^{xii} Liliana Porter lecture at the University of Texas at Austin on September 22, 2009.

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