

National College of Art & Design

BA Fine Art Painting & Joint degree with Visual Culture

Sara Cywner: In a Capitalist Image Culture Context.

By Heather Barker

**Submitted to the School of Visual Culture in Candidacy
for the Degree of BA (Hons) Fine Art and Visual Culture
2021-2022**

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

School of Visual Culture

**I declare that this research project is all my own work and that all sources
have been fully acknowledged.**

Signed: Heather Barker

Date: 30 January 2022

Student Number: 19379141

Word count: 5610

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Illustrations.....	page 3
Abstract.....	page 4
Introduction.....	page 5
Chapter One.....	page 7
Chapter two.....	page 13
Chapter three.....	page 17
Conclusion.....	page 26
Bibliography.....	page 29

Title of:

Chapter One - Findings That Communicate The Artist in the Context of Capitalist Image Culture.

Chapter Two - Who is Sara Cywner and What is Capitalist image Culture?.

Chapter Three - Her Work and Other Artists That Relate.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Sara Cwynar.....	page 9
Sara Cwynar.....	page 10
Sara Cwynar.....	page 11
Sara Cwynar.....	page 14
Sara Cwynar.....	page 17
Sara Cwynar.....	page 19
Sara Cwynar.....	page 20
Sara Cwynar.....	page 22
Sarah Charlesworth.....	page 23
Kerry James Marshall.....	page 24
Hans Halbein.....	page 25
Sara Cwynar.....	page 25

-ABSTRACT-

Capitalist Image Culture is a vast issue in feminist studies. The concerns surrounding this subject put feminist art into perspectives of contemporary thinking. As an artist, I have been gathering contextual information on popular image culture, feminist objects, magazine poses and of course artists that provide insight into topics of my interest. Sara Cwyner is a brilliant artist that has captivated these ideals in fantastic ways. This research essay explores Sara Cywnar in the context of Capitalist Image Culture. Although this is not the main or only objective of Sara Cwynars' work, I have decided to use this context as it is an insightful part of the practice that asks about objects' value versus our value of humanity. I first noticed the term Capitalist Image Culture in an article entitled, "Sara Cwynar on the feminist art of smashing capitalist image culture". This quickly became the focus of my research. This essay hopes to convey that there is a strong relationship between the artist and this term and it encapsulates all of her terms into one or as a whole. This terminology will be explained further to define the relationship (O'Regan, 2019).

In this essay, I will be exploring how women are objectified, sexualised and used as a catalyst to induce consumption on a mass excessive and sometimes material scale. The history of why and when women noticed these capitalist ideals of consuming 'woman objects'. Also, the key theories highlight this subject and more. A case study directed at the stemmed artist Sara Cwyner will produce answers to some of the earlier questions. Analysis applying my theories to this case will induce critical thinking.

Finally, to conclude through all of this research, Capital Image Culture does indeed affect Post-Feminists in our society today. In the world around us, there is a lot of money to be made. We have all heard that ‘sex sells’ but do we know why? To have equality in Capitalist Image Culture is a bigger task than you would believe. Fashion, product design, fine art, media, etc. all have a huge part in our own identities, especially as girls, gays, or theys (feminine identifying people). No one can escape these ideals if you want to be a part of society. Another reason I am writing this is that I explore this in my studio practice. I feel very passionate about these issues and explore this through my research and painting practice.

-INTRODUCTION-

This research essay will explore research based on the ideology of the artist Sara Cwynar in the context of Capitalist Image Culture. The title of this essay is extracted from O’Ragan’s article entitled “Sara Cwynar on the feminist art of smashing capitalist image culture”. This article captivated a clear understanding of Sara Cwynar’s work and how intriguing it is from a feminist point of view and as a consumer (2019).

The essay will fall under three main chapters. These chapters include Sara Cwynar’s history and definitions of Capitalist Image Culture.” “Her work and other artists related to capitalist image culture”, “Finding that communicates the relationship between Sara Cwynar and Capitalist Image Culture”. The artist's work spans from 2014 to 2021, a short but very vibrant career in the art world. Her work is colourful and unique and some of which will be studied and articulated in this research essay.

Detailed information of the artist's education, career and approach to her practice is produced in chapter one as it is important to understand where the artist's life journey has brought her to these incredibly detailed artworks.

Other artists include Sara Charlesworth and Kerry James Marshall. These renowned artists that inspire her work will also be mentioned to lend more information on how her work communicates with Capitalist Image Culture visually. A look into Milan Kundera's view on Kitsch will be explained in detail as it is an important part of Cwynar's process in collecting, sourcing and collaging images. Cwynar is influenced by Kundera's perspective of kitsch and quotes him in her book entitled *Kitsch Encyclopaedia*. This essay will argue that kitsch is a part of Capitalist Image Culture as it is images bought by consumers that are trending and quickly discarded (Kundera, 1984).

Roland Barthes is another influence that the artist shares with us that has helped her develop into the artist she is today. Barthes' philosophies, critics and theories on popular culture translate into her work as references, quotations and add layers to her contemporary art practice. Barthes will be mentioned in this essay in the context of Capitalist Image Culture (Cwynar, 2019).

Finally, in chapter three, Barthes communicated the findings in which Sara Cwynar and Capitalist Image Culture emerged together. This included works that are enraptured with ideologies of how popular images control or mesmerise the consumers. Social media's influence is one part of how Sara Cwynar's work defines how capitalist image culture affects the world around us, how we value objects and

intern how we value people and our western ideals of beauty and sense of self (Huppertz, 2011).

-FINDINGS THAT COMMUNICATE THE RELATIONSHIP OF CAPITALIST IMAGE CULTURE TO THE ARTIST-

The term Capitalist Image Culture that I am referring to in this essay is being defined as the accumulation of capital that comes from industries such as beauty, feminist objects and images that we see in visual culture. This term takes form in magazines, social media and in our day to day life as feminine consumers. The culture in capitalist image culture is the trends that follow and how this has created set aesthetics and unnecessary pressures emotionally and financially. The feminism I refer to in this essay comes from the new wave of post- equality and post- feminist 2000 to 2022. As social media has become more a part of our lives, the accessibility to feminist information has taken shape in this contemporary feminism that is completely controlled and undivided from Capitalist Image Culture. To understand the term is to see an advertisement aimed towards the youth of today whether it is ethical or not it is there in the extreme.

It's common knowledge that the swapping, sharing and searching of images dictates how we operate in the world — from life decision-making based on Instagram envy to selecting real life romantic partners and finding healthy dinner options — as we live in the age of Instagram grids, Facebook videos, Pinterest spaces, online dating apps and Google Image archives. However, despite the fact that we spend a lot of time scrolling, swiping and flicking through photographs, the individual effect and strength of each image is rarely given the attention it deserves. Sara Cwynar, the artist whose

exhibition *Image Model Muse* just debuted at Milwaukee Art Museum, enters the fray. Cwynar intervenes in the pixelated fuzz through video, collage, photography and installation to make meaning of the stream, the continual image flow, the assault of images inevitable for everyone living in the twenty-first century (O'Regan 2019).

In the millennial or Gen Z generations, attention spans have condensed so the information provided has to be considered and easy to digest to get any recognition. Cwynar takes this into account and recognises these issues in most of her work and talks about this in her interviews. In one interview with Marie-Isabella Rogers, she explains that her work, therefore, needs to be more effective to accomplish a universal relativism. This holds the viewer for longer and makes them at ease as it is the same format of phase in which they interact with social media. The art that she makes combats this by meaning more on a human level that is easy to understand without being too literal. Effectively, this attempts to communicate broadly in the first place. The world of television and smartphones drive her digital art to familiar content in which people interact within our world today (Rogers, 2021).

Likewise, social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter come up in the artist's practice a lot physically and conceptually. In that interview with Roger's she is asked about the issue of subsuming these technologies. Sara replies that Facebook and Twitter specific impact will change our political future in our real world. Platforms end up wreaking havoc in ways we did not expect them to. The ease of utility and the way they make our life faster and easier leaves us giving up to the race of capitalism. This obsessive Capitalist Image Culture is not a bad thing in Cwynar's eyes. It is just

the way the world is rapidly heading and her work is a product of this new age of information (Rogers, 2021).



Figure 1. SARA CWYNAR, COURTESY FOXY PRODUCTION “*Tracy (Grid 2)*,” 2017.

Cwynar states in an interview that:

The effect of images changes how we see ourselves in our heads, even in ways that we might not be able to recognise on a daily basis — all the images that come at you through the internet and through books are really important in shaping what we think the world is. But often they are coming from really skewed sources. I’m trying to break some of that down, but I’m also trying to come from an individual or personal approach within all of that. And I’m trying to also think about: what does it feel like to be a person living with all these things and choices and images? (O’Regan, 2019).

Cwynar's efforts to deconstruct the hegemonic nature of images — typically using visual tactics associated with advertising and design, have far-reaching implications for feminist art. The artist, who describes herself as "always a feminist," is particularly interested in how we assign value to things from a feminist standpoint, as well as the objectification of women under suffocating capitalism. The video *Cover Girl* (2018), which investigates how beauty ideals are placed on women, is one among the works on display at the Milwaukee exhibition (O'Regan 2019).



Figure 2. Gold - NYT April 22, 1979 (Alphabet Stickers) 2013 Chromogenic print.

The image of the watch advertisement (1979) from the New York Times in the Flat Death collection in MOMA, is a great example of how Sara Cywnar's work is related to the context of Capitalist Image Culture. The tacky gold becomes kitsch with the addition of more gold and letters in gold. In this work, she used the stylised objects as a view of novelty capitalism. How gold can become kitsch so quickly (Cwynar, 2013).



Figure 3. Sara Cwynar's first series Flat Death (2013-2014)

Continuing the communication of Capitalist Image Culture to Cwynar's work, there is an obvious tone of feminist aesthetics that contribute to her beautiful works. *Girl Culture* controls the narrative of consumerism for females in our present day. This global phenomenon is empowering and consuming. To be up to date with the hottest aspects of pop culture is to be a successful female in many ways. Popular culture suggests to women that there are rules in place that they must catch up with or fall behind. Trend forecasting has never been faster or more lucrative than today. This can all be calculated and predicted up to five years in advance. (Driscoll, 1999).

In a 1990's view of feminism, this has always been connected to popular culture because there is a heavy interest in modern life's effect on women. The feminist current view on popular culture affects it and vice versa. In *Girl Culture*, feminists encourage women to be less passive about their consumption. Instead, it is encouraged for women to be active in the deployment of popular culture. Why do certain texts, forms and practices belong to women? Questions like these let women or more accurately feminists, pick and choose what is relevant in *Girls Culture* (Driscoll, 1999).



Figure 4. Sara Cwynar: Kitsch Encyclopaedia

In Cwynar's work *How to Marry a Millionaire*, the artist explores how beauty is constructed to encourage an image of power over others just like status or wealth. Beauty products contain illusions of a different face, different skin, colour or shape. Once you have thin eyebrows, the trend goes back to thick. If the insecurities aren't there then the companies that produce the products make far less. Only some will receive privileges in these strange made-up rules (Rosen, 2021).

Roland Barthes is one influence Sara Cwynar has mentioned in her book *Kitsch encyclopaedia*. His influence on her work is founded on the grounds of their shared interest in critical reflections on postwar popular culture. Barthes' work *Mythologies* aided in the development of an understanding of how created objects function in a mass consumer society (Huppertz, 2011).

Likewise, Kitsch generally relates to highly emotional or melodramatic art and so to aesthetics. *The Unbreakable Lightness* by Kundera's perspective is mostly political, difficult and even sinister or violent. Sara Cwynar attached to this image of kitsch whilst also leaning into the original artist's perspective, sentimental and hokey art (Kundera, 1984).

-WHO IS SARA CWYNAR AND WHAT IS CAPITALIST IMAGE CULTURE?-

Cwynar won the Sobey Art Award in 2020, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award in 2020 and the Shpilman Photography Prize in 2021. She graduated from York University with a Bachelor of Design in 2010 and Yale University with an MFA in 2016. She received the Printed Matter Emerging Artists Publication Series prize in 2014, and Blonde Art Books published her debut book, *Kitsch Encyclopedia*, in 2015. Aperture with the Remail Modern released *Glass Life*, a book of Cwynar's art, in 2021.

Cwynar's work has been shown in museums across the world, including the Remail Modern in Saskatoon (2021) and the Guggenheim Museum in New York (2021).

Cwynar's work has been shown at international museums and galleries such as the Remail Modern, Saskatoon (2021); The Guggenheim Museum, New York (2021); LACMA, Los Angeles (2020); Museum of Modern Art (2019); Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (2019); Milwaukee Art Museum (2019); Oakville Galleries (2018); Minneapolis Institute of Art (2018); Museum für Moderne Kunst (2017);

Fondazione Prada (2016); and MoMA PS1 (2015), among others (2014). Her work may be found in permanent collections at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the SFMoMA in San Francisco, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, and the Dallas Museum of Art (Dallas), The Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Milwaukee Art Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art are all located in Minneapolis (New York). Cwynar is presently based in Brooklyn, New York, and works there (Lensculture, 2021).

Sara Cwynar (b. 1985), a Canadian-born, Brooklyn-based artist, explores the issues of colour and design, as well as the ways in which they act politically, socially, and historically, particularly in the context of how we define beauty, using cinema and photography (Herzfeld Centre for Photography and Media Arts, 2019).



Figure 5 . Sara Cwynar (2018) *Sara Cwynar in her Brooklyn studio*. [Photograph] Cultured.

Sara Cwynar analyses the issues of obsolescence, consumption, technology and labour that underpin capitalist civilizations, probing them all "through the prism of colour." Her photographs frequently feature collage, appropriation and a kaleidoscopic take on the image, in which shots are rephotographed and arranged in rich layers (Karp-Evans, 2018).

Cwynar's work is ultimately an examination of image-making and how it relates to how we go about our daily lives. "It appears like our culture's incapacity to communicate any truth or accomplish anything is at the forefront right now," she explains. A terrifying insight, especially given that society is still trying to accept the image's untruth, which is broadcast to us on a regular basis by firms like Apple (Karp-Evans, 2018).

In an interview with Sheila Heti, Cwynar's *Image Model Muse* artwork is defined as exploring image design through colour and design operates politically, socially and historically, particularly in the context of how we conceptualise beauty. The three films *Soft film* 2016, *Rose Gold* 2017 and *Covergirl* 2018 are discussed alongside other photographic works that develop an understanding of reality and its reproduction (Milwaukee, 2020).

When Sholette writes about untangling art's relationship with capitalism, he questions the UAE's. Although this is not a part of Cwynar's work it's important to understand the light in which art is helping capitalism and how this culture affects the art and images we see. He states that in an age of easy access to an influx of overloaded information online, the powerful and wealthy one percent hold the narrative about the

”deep humanist value of art and culture”. These one percent groups are as we know CEOs and philanthropic capitalists that don't know much about art other than ownership. To relate back to Sara Cwynar, the values of which we see these objects or photographs that she beautifully presents is built on the idea in which it is art and therefore holds value. Cwynar gives these forgotten objects a new life, new value, in a personalised and politically humanist approach (Sholette, 2017).

The narration in Sara Cwynar’s work experiments with who gets listened to and this is a part of her approach that makes her own voice be taken seriously as a female artist making it in the artworld perfectionally. She found a voice actor when she was studying her MFA in Yale and has used his “encyclopaedia voice” because it has an authoritarian sound that is striking and factual with no real bias fluctuating the tone. She combats this with her own voice as a mediator that corrects and reinforced the language audio. This is to convey who the real voice behind the work is. In most of her videos, there is this duality of male and female presents. Now in her videos, she is starting to only use female voices as they speak through proxies. Sara Cwynar is finding her own voice and figuring out what exactly she wants to say through her work. By finding new voices in the world such as through the use of post-it notes , the artist has found a symphony of volume or tone. She tells us that post-its or writing directly onto a piece comes across as loud and demanding almost as if this small passage of writing in the visual art is forcing you to listen (McNelis & Russell, 2015).

Sara Cwynar is an artist that explores many different feminist themes. One that she heavily focuses on is Capitalist Image Culture. Cwynar is a New York based artist that works in the New York Times as a graphic designer. Her work demonstrates her

personal view of how a woman like herself or her friend and muse Tracy, who often models for her, are working as important women that can be seen as sexual objects of desire. Tracy is one of many objects of desire displayed. The clothes she is wearing in the works are of her own style and day-to-day wardrobe, this leaves the work feeling timeless, her own style is hard to place an era onto, this creates a new world of unknowns (Sayej, 2018).

-HER WORK AND OTHER ARTISTS THAT RELATE.-

“Using objects to talk about other things”. This is one of the ways Sara Cwynar provokes questions about capitalist or popular image culture. Her objects are carefully chosen and collected over many years and most of them are previously loved items from the 1950s that have fallen out of popularity. She explains that this love for these objects is unknown to even her. One thing she is certain of is that these objects are usually domestic, feminist, trending or kitsch. These objects have been idolised and then have fallen from their preloved pedestal.

One such item the artist has collected large volumes of are plastic cups bought on



eBay.

Figure 6. *“Rose Gold,” (still) 2017.*SARA CWYNAR, COURTESY FOXY PRODUCTION

These are basic, practical and were made to be indestructible. This became false as over time the cups would stain or even break. This object, like all of the objects Cwynar uses, shares a common theme. They explain how their value is a lot like how we value each other or women. These are bought and loved just as fast as they are forgotten about and thrown away. The artist questions aloud in her video *Rose Gold* “They invented this colour, Rose Gold, and I’m mesmerised,” says a male voice. The rose gold iPhone was the main object that was loved and then scrutinised in the *Rose Gold* film (Cwynar 2020).

Rose Gold is both a film and a collection of photos. The film has the tone and structure of an instructional film, similar to the documentaries made by the National Film Board of Canada in the 1960s and 1970s. The video’s complicated voice-over contains,

among other things, passages from or references to the works of Lauren Berlant, Toni Morrison, Judy Wacjman and Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as pieces from the Encyclopaedia Britannica and the Apple website. Featuring studio-based performances and travelogues of famous emblems of American growth, such as the Hoover Dam from the New Deal and Las Vegas' boomtown, as well as references to Silicon Valley (Cwynar, 2021).

Rose Gold as a title is utilised as a jumping off point to consider various "rose" topics, such as how colour is used to designate liberation movements throughout the world and as a marketing tool. Consider Melamine, a 1950s-era plastic cookware brand that came in a rainbow of brilliant hues with names like chartreuse, goldenrod, and blue rose. Despite being designed to be unbreakable and colorfast, they eventually cracked, discoloured, and faded, transforming from idealised, beloved things to forgotten kitsch, a destiny that the rose gold iPhone will almost certainly share (Cwynar, 2021).

The photos consist of studio portraits displaying Tracy, her muse of many years, with found items and images overlay; recomposed depictions of sets of armour; and a set of Avon presidential after-shave bottles from the 1970s without their heads; and a studio photograph of a bright pink peony on a green backdrop (Cwynar, 2021).



Figure 7. Still from Sara Cwynar, *Rose Gold* (2017), 16mm film on video with sound, 8 min.

In the context of desiring these objects, the attachment to objects is related to the attachment we give them. Materialism is a symptom of capitalist image culture. This blames the consumer more than the capitalists profiting. Objects of desire are neither good nor bad. To desire objects is to live and look forward to seeing said objects. What we project onto them is less about the objects and more about ourselves. This is our lasting or wilting magnetism to them (Berlant, L, 2009).

Glass Life, as the title suggests. The piece is a multi-voiced, immersive meditation on the relationship between pictures and self. The film wanders across advertising, art, fashion, design, philosophy and politics on various-sized projection screens, with three digital swimmers on monitors acting as witnesses and audience members. *Glass Life* investigates the limitations of nostalgia, looking back, looking forward, and back again, often all at once, as it poetically portrays the ways pictures may both threaten and provide pleasure (Foxy Production, 2021).



Figure 8. Sara Cwynar (2021) *Glass Life Instillation*. [Photograph] Foxy Production.

The title of the piece is derived from Shoshana Zuboff's recent book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, written by a philosopher and psychologist. Our current digital era, according to Zuboff, is one in which we live our lives behind glass, where everything we do is monitored, privacy is nearly impossible, and the only form of resistance is "the art and science of hiding"(Foxy Production, 2021).

In an extremely insightful podcast hosted by Adam Buxton, He interviews Shoshana Zuboff about her insights in all things Surveillance Capitalism. Zuboff shares with us the severity of the data protection and law enforcement or lack of. It is made clear by her that she believes we deserve to use and enjoy the great tool of the internet but warns against misinformation and passive content to websites. The authors used a

personal approach to support her highly researched theories. Zuboff reiterated a story of her recently burnt down house and how unpredictable it was for it to be set on fire by lightning. She compared this trauma of her own to anecdote how unpredictable new issues of data capitalization will be in our world and how we should all figure out what problems could lie ahead to save democracy and our own freedom. To know exactly what happens next and predict the future is not freedom. Certainty is a cage in which life can't grow or be curious. This term Surveillance Capitalism is really a part of capitalist image culture as it holds weight in how our predicted behaviours of shopping and face tracking is not good for us as human beings (Buxton, 2019).

Critic Lossin, uniquely describes the piece as an experience of rapt attention—a need to hear and observe every detail, to recognize and classify the pictures and objects that flash by (archival photographs, household appliances, spreads from old books, gleaming apples, floating eyes and tongues). I rarely pay attention and listen so intently. Throughout the piece, you might imagine a better internet: one that uses its abundance for wise juxtaposition, a place to stay rather than a doorway to commercial consumption. Even if the pictures are assembled, layered, and structured in ways that shake them loose from their practical, everyday applications or meanings, Cwynar's video—which may fairly be regarded as a realist depiction of the internet—is not a method to "go, go, go" from too much truth. The film begins with images of demonstrators from recent anti-government demonstrations, which is telling (Lossin 2021).



Figure 9. SARA CWYNAR SARA CWYNAR: GLASS LIFE 2021

Glass Life is a dynamic arrangement of photographs and film that the artist has amassed over the years on his hard drive. The artist uses her computer and various studio setups to make sense of her visual archive—and the world around her—from her studio. Food photos, political personalities, cinematic idols, sportswomen, Instagram models, huge artworks, cartoon characters, emojis, and self-portraits, among other things, compete for our attention. This montage has references to Euripides, Plato, and Shakespeare, as well as Albert Camus, John Maynard Keynes, and Virginia Woolf, as well as Frantz Fanon, Luce Irigaray, Kobena Mercer, and the artist herself (Foxy Production, 2021).

Another artist that shares similar ideals is Sarah Charlesworth. Sara Cwynar is influenced by her attraction to objects concerning desire, capitalism and figures' relationship to human value. Particularly in Charlesworth's series *Objects of desire*.

This is a five-part series that delves into popular culture's iconography and the wants and ideals it promotes. Each sub-series is dedicated to the colours and formal characteristics of a certain cultural arena. All of the pieces in the series are Cibachrome prints with lacquer frames that match. The language of gender and sexuality, popular notions of nature, religion and spirituality, and the framing of material desire are all addressed in these books (Charlesworth, S. 2021).



Figure 10. Figures 1983 Cibachrome prints with lacquered wood frames Diptych, 42" x 62".

Sarah Charlesworth is a photographer and visual artist who has shown internationally in the United States and overseas. A travelling museum retrospective with over forty different exhibitions. Charlesworth is a prominent person whose work has aided in the bridging of the gap between fine art and critical photographic practice. Public imagery creates a horizon of possibilities, impacting our perceptions of ourselves and the environment, as well as our expectations and experiences. Photography, as a special sort of common visual language, articulates values and ideas within the culture at

large, both formally and in terms of substance. She looked at how photography is used in popular culture to express models of sexuality, gender, and political stance, as well as psychological and spiritual ideas. This is a method of visualising the many conceptions of self and environment. We imagine the world via visual models (Brooklyn Museum 2021).

Her seductive photo-based works deconstruct and pervert mainstream images. They challenge viewers to explore what constitutes "news," how this affects one's perception of society both directly and indirectly, and what function images have in expressing these concepts. Her conceptualist approach to art is deeply ingrained in her work. The work's distinctive schematic fragmentation is reflexively informed by the content of each print (Steiner, R., 2017).

Another artist that has influenced Sara Cywnar's art practice and conceptual ideas is Kerry James. Like Charlesworth, James also exhibits concepts that have mutual ideas that can be regarded as falling under the term Capitalist Image culture. James's work explores a multitude of ideas. Kerry James Marshall's art exposes and challenges societal conceptions such as beauty, style, and status. Marshall has masterfully reimagined and updated the themes, compositions, and techniques of six centuries of representational painting, even plucking talismans from his forefathers' canvases and recontextualizing them inside a modern environment. The critical recognition of the circumstances of invisibility so long ascribed to black bodies in the Western visual heritage, and the creation of what he calls a "counter-archive" that reinscribes these figures within its narrative arc, are at the heart of his prodigious oeuvre, which also includes drawings and sculpture (Zwirner, D. 2021).



Figure 11: *School of Beauty, School of Culture*, 2012.



Fig 12. Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors* (1533).



In this artwork, Hans Holbein depicts a prospectively transformed skull that can be perceived correctly only from a specific point of view.

Figure 13. Sara Cwynar: *Kitsch Encyclopaedia*.

School of Beauty, School of Culture which draws inspiration from both his previous *De Style* and Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. In the painting we are drawn into the painting in a hair salon, where eight or nine ladies are conversing, preening, or standing and watching. On the far right, a big poster of a woman with a flower in her hair is from Chris Ofili's 2010 display at Tate Britain in London. Two young kids, one of whom is a boy, are in the foreground, peering at a distorted yellow-and-white shape on the floor that no one else seems to notice; it is an image that can only be seen from an odd angle, an anamorphosis in Marshall's painting. It is Walt Disney's. This image of sleeping beauty is much like the skull in Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533). Referencing popular culture in such a way that makes us think about what it is to be in our century and the world around us through images is much like Sara Cwynar's images of Dumbo or Bambi in *Kitsch Encyclopaedia* (Tomkins, C., 2021).

One of the many issues presented by this eternally captivating artwork is the concept of white female beauty as an unassailable ideal in Western art. Sleeping Beauty's extreme angle is portraying these real-world questions that are constantly played out in the media. Ideas of western beauty are another angle of capitalist image culture that Marshall and Cwynar share (Tomkins, C., 2021).

-CONCLUSION-

In conclusion, Sara Cywnar's work in the context of Capitalist Image Culture is of extraordinary relevance to the world around us. Cwynar's work is so expansive that it covers the term Capitalist Image Culture as a whole. Through many interviews and her own artworks we can better understand how we value objects and how this relates to how we value humans. Her approach to the term is quite feminist and primitive in parts. Through photography, collage and video we see Cwynar's personal approach to pop culture and how it is capitalised. This narrative she provides is attractive and serious and she uses voices to entertain ideas around authority and who is heard in gender and colour.

“Consumer culture and the Internet have helped to create an image-world that exists on top of the real world and have in many ways subsumed it – and the possibility of finding ways out of this system by appropriating and messing with many of its tropes, using vernacular, throwaway materials and outdated imagery, to question the consensus of what is worth taking a picture of, and the glossy surface of so much that we see” (Sophia Satchell-Baeza, S. 2013).

The fetishisation of products and colours parallels society's fetishisation of women. The late stage of capitalism has brought us into a culture of images focused on the

fascination of subjective ideas of beauty. Cwynar expresses this through photos and the investigation of the informal image archives that have sprung up in the wake of these ideas of industrialization and capitalization. These photos, videos and collections of objects develop studio studies of her consumer purchases. Visually complex photographs are trademarks of modern post- pictures generation art. Although it can seem as though there is no way out of this continual circus of media conditioning and unequal image culture that supports all but the woman. There is hope and women have done and continue to make a difference in the media today. There are many examples of sexist, stereotypical and sexualised idiosyncrasy in entertainment media, for the claim that we are “post- equality” to be seen as anything other than clearly void (Thornham, 2007).

Sara Cwynar’s pursuit to discover and then unravel the various ways in which images help us better understand the world: the way we perceive ourselves and our past through a common image-based archive of cultural imaginations and photographic stereotypes.

The ability to playfully juxtaposition the commonplace with the extraordinary is a feature of Internet culture. This internet age with endless possibilities both personally and universally has taken on a new side to consumer culture. This has contributed to the creation of an image connected to and severed from our reality. It exists on top and has in many ways subsumed our real world. Using throwaway materials, the artist finds possibilities of achieving an escape from this system of the internet age. Her outdated imagery questions what is worth photographing, what are any objects true values and how does this relate to ideas of consumer consciousness? (Milwaukee Art Museum, 2020).

-BIBLIOGRAPHY-

Albarell, A. (2013) *The Ambassadors (1533) Hans Holbein: Specific point of view.*

Available at:https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Ambassadors-1533-In-this-artwork-Hans-Holbein-depicts-a-perspectively-transformed_fig3_283556973(accessed 20 Jan 2022.)

Brooklyn Museum (2017) Sarah Charlesworth. New York, USA. Available at:

https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/about/feminist_art_base/sarah-charlesworth(accessed 20 Jan 2022).

Buxton, A. (2019) Shoshana Zuboff. [Podcast]. 25 October 2019. Available

at:<https://soundcloud.com/adam-buxton/ep106-shoshana-zuboff> (Accessed 28 January 2022).

Cerbarano, D,R. (2021) The Making and Unmaking of the World • A conversation

with Carmen Winant. Available at:<https://www.vogue.it/fotografia/article/the-making-and-unmaking-of-the-world-a-conversation-with-carmen-winant> (accessed 18 january 2022).

Charlesworth, S. (N/D) Objects of Desire. Available at:<http://www.sarahcharlesworth.net/series/8/all> (accessed 28 January 2022).

Di Rica Cerbarano (2021) The Making and Unmaking of the World. A conversation with Carmen Winant. Available at:<https://www.vogue.it/fotografia/article/the-making-and-unmaking-of-the-world-a-conversation-with-carmen-winant> (accessed 30 January 2022).

Driscoll, C., (1999) Girl Culture, Revenge and Global Capitalism: Cybergirls, Riot Grrls, Spice Girls, Australian Feminist Studies,

Elizabeth Karp-Evans (2018) Sara Cwynar Investigates our Inability to Be Original. Available at: <https://www.culturedmag.com/article/2018/11/29/sara-cwynar> (accessed: 2 December 2021).

Gregory Sholette (2017) Delirium and Resistance: Activist Art and the Crisis of Capitalism. Edited by Kim Charnley. Pluto Press.

Herzfeld Centre for Photography and Media Arts (March 8–August 4, 2019) Sara Cwynar: Image Model Muse. Available at:<https://mam.org/exhibitions/details/sara-cwynar.php> (accessed 2 December 2021).

Huppertz, D.J.,(2011). Roland Barthes, mythologies. Design and Culture, 3(1), pp.85-100.

Berlant, L., (2008)Cruel Optimism: On Marx, Loss and the Senses. London. Iss. 63. 33-11.

Kathryn O'Regan (19 March, 2019) Sara Cwynar on the feminist art of smashing capitalist image culture. Available at:<https://www.sleek-mag.com/article/sara-cwynar/>(accessed 2 December 2021).

Kundera.M, (1984) The Unbearable Lightness of Being. Faber and Faber. UK.

Lensculture (2021) Available at: <https://www.lensculture.com/sara-cwynar> (accessed 18 January 2021).

Marie-Isabella Rogers (2021)Attention for One Second: A Conversation with Sara Cwynar. Available at:<https://www.inthein-between.com/attention-for-one-second-a-conversation-with-sara-cwynar/> (accessed 18 January 2022).

Martha Schwendener (Oct. 7, 2021) 4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now.

Available at:<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/07/arts/design/4-art-gallery-shows-to-see-right-now.html> (accessed 2 December 2021).

McNelis, A & Russell, L, (2015). The Origins of Nostalgia and some theoretical

Foundations of Photography. Bomb Magazine [Online], 17 February, 2015.

Available from: <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/sara-cwynar/> (Accessed: 29 January, 2022).

Milwaukee Art Museum (2020) In Conversation: Sara Cwynar and Sheila Heti. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwBN7ANriYQ> (accessed 30 January 2022).

Rosen, M., (2021) Sara Cwynar's Multilayered Exploration of Beauty and Consumerism. Available at: <https://www.blind-magazine.com/en/news/3548-sara-cwynars-multilayered-exploration-of-beauty-and-consumerism-en> (accessed 18 January 2022).

MOMA (2013) Sara Cwynar. Available at: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/401649?association=series&page=1&parent_id=401639&sov_referrer=association (accessed 17 January 2022).

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2016) Kerry James Marshall: Mastery. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2bmHE7MRQU> (accessed 20 Jan 2022).

N/A (N/D) Publication: Sara Cwynar's Kitsch Encyclopedia is in very good taste Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/publication-sara-cwynars-kitsch-encyclopedia> (accessed 30 January 2022).

Nadja Sayej (26, 2018) Artist Sara Cwynar on Perceptions of Beauty. Teen vogue. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/artist-sara-cwynar-beauty-perceptions> (accessed 18 January 2022).

R. H. Lossin (September 1–October 23, 2021) Sara Cwynar's "Glass Life".

Available at:<https://www.art-agenda.com/criticism/419771/sara-cwynar-s-glass-life>

(accessed 2 December 2021).

Rogers, M. I., (2021) Attention for One Second: A Conversation with Sara Cwynar.

Available at:<https://www.inthein-between.com/attention-for-one-second-a-conversation-with-sara-cwynar/>

(accessed 28 January 2022).

Scott, A, K., (2017) An Artist's Meditation on Color Reveals a Secret History of

Film. Available at:<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/an-artists-meditation-on-color-reveals-a-secret-history-of-film>

(accessed 30 January 2022).

Shmoop Editorial Team. (2008, November 11). *Kitsch in The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Retrieved January 19, 2022, Available

at:<https://www.shmoop.com/unbearable-lightness-of-being/kitsch-symbol.html>

(accessed 30 January 2022).

Sophia Satchell-Baeza (12 April, 2013) Nostalgia: it's delicate but potent. Sara

Cwynar at Foam. Available at:<https://www.sleek-mag.com/article/nostalgia-its-delicate-but-potent-sara-cwynar-at-foam/>

(accessed 20 Jan 2022).

Steiner, R. (2017) Tools and Magic Wands: In Sara Charlesworth. DelMonico

Books. New York.

Thornham, S. (2007) Women, Feminism and Media. Edinburgh University Press.

UK.

Tomkins, C (August 2, 2021) *The Epic Style of Kerry James Marshall*. Available at:<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/08/09/the-epic-style-of-kerry-james-marshall> (accessed 20 Jan 2022).

Unknown author (2019) About Sara Cwynar: Canadian Photographer. Available at:<https://peoplepill.com/people/sara-cwynar> (accessed 28 January 2022).

Zwirner, D. Kerry James Marshall: Biography. Available at:
<https://www.davidzwirner.com/artists/kerry-james-marshall/biography> (accessed 20 Jan 2022).

Zwirner, D. Kerry James Marshall: Books. Available
at:<https://www.davidzwirnerbooks.com/catalog/results?search=Kerry%20James%20MarshallThe%20Epic%20Style%20of%20Kerry%20James%20Marshall> (accessed 20 Jan 2022).