

Oversimplification as Remediation: Roy Lichtenstein's Paintings and 1960s Comics¹

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Introduction

Within the Pop Art scene, Roy Lichtenstein's work has unquestionably been associated with the language of comics. From the spring of 1961 when he first painted canvases inspired by the characters of Mickey Mouse and Popeye, up until his latest work in the 1990s, Lichtenstein never ceased to draw from the cheap and reduced palette, the schematic drawing, and the narrative cliché of the comic strip style. Throughout his career, innumerable art critics and scholars have dedicated laudable studies to this topic by comparing his paintings with their comics sources, or by arguing about the gender questions raised by his stereotyped feminine subjects.² In light of its explicit and close relationship with comics, Hal Foster recently considered Lichtenstein's work as a form of reflecting on the process of "mediation" through which the consumer society re-elaborates events and objects as artificial images (Foster 62-108). According to Foster, not only did Lichtenstein appropriate the comic subjects but also their way of "mediating" a fictitious reality through their images and style.

By following up on Foster's studies, nowadays it would be possible to further rephrase Lichtenstein's interest for the visual "mediation" of mass media into new terms. Indeed, the notion of remediation, introduced by Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin (Bolter, Grusin 21-50), may better enlighten the doubling act of Lichtenstein's painting, which tries to mediate, once more, something (the comic strips) that is in its turn already a mediation. Lichtenstein always followed a meticulous process of transposing the comics' practice of mediation into painting by reversing the original process between the two media: while comics used to make handmade images reproducible, his canvases turned those comic pictures into unique, painted images. By doing so, his technique basically combined appropriation and reproduction, handcrafted work and mechanical assistance.³ It is well known that Lichtenstein used to find his source images by

¹ Translation from Italian revised by Caterina Guardini.

² I will here mention three paradigmatic examples from the bibliography: Waldman; Lobel; Whiting.

³ Lichtenstein clarified in several interviews his technique of painting. In a 1991 documentary, Lichtenstein left the camera recording him while he was leafing through and selecting some images from

leafing through comic books. Once he had cropped and filed those found pictures in a personal album, he selected one of them (or a combination) and made a small sketch to recompose them. After this preliminary process, he projected the resulting image onto the canvas and started to again adjust the source by retracing its contours, correcting and coloring it by hand. What Lichtenstein emphasized about his technique of transposition is mainly how it allowed him to properly modify his source images: “I don’t draw a picture in order to reproduce it”—the painter stated in one of his seminal interviews in 1967—“I do it in order to recompose it” (Coplans 198).

Leaving aside the controversy about the originality and/or artistic dimension of Lichtenstein’s work,⁴ his paintings suggest a further comparison with the process of remediation which is typical of new media, that is to say, by considering it as a matter of selecting, cropping, combining, recomposing, transferring, transcoding, and so forth. In these terms, Lichtenstein’s paintings emphasized not only the mediation of comics as such—it is not just a matter of mimicking the stylistic effects of comic panels—but rather a “mediation of a mediation,” which means to reposition painting within a modern field of interactions between different and new media.

In their book on Remediation, Bolter and Grusin carefully analyzed these interactions between media by debating on their quest for immediacy and hypermediacy, which they generally defined as the “double logic of remediation.” According to these scholars, this “double logic” can function explicitly or implicitly, and it can be restated in three principal ways: as a “mediation of a mediation;” as a form of “inseparability of mediation and reality;” and as a “reform” of a medium which refashions or rehabilitates another medium (Bolter and Grusin 55-6).

To a certain extent, the relationship between painting and comics established by Lichtenstein calls into question all three aforementioned ways, even if some differences are very relevant here. First of all, in Lichtenstein’s case, it is the older medium that is trying to remediate the newer one; and secondly, the “double logic of remediation” implies that two media should be in competition for a similar aim (i. e. immediacy or hypermediacy), although this would be very complicated to argue when comparing painting and comics at the beginning of the 1960s.

In the modernist era, painting proudly rejected the competition with new media and mass media in order to achieve a broader audience. According to a painter like Lichtenstein, who was educated to modernist tastes, representation and narration were values specifically pertaining to

comic strips. Regardless of the *mise en scène*, this documentary is quite interesting for understanding Lichtenstein’s technique. Roy Lichtenstein, directed by Chris Hunt, movie, 49’, 1991.

⁴ A polemic article on this point: see Peccatte.

the art of comics. Therefore, it would seem legitimate to wonder why he reintroduced them in his paintings. Was it perhaps an unrealistic (or regressive) attempt to challenge mass media for obtaining more immediacy or more of one audience?

The aim of this article is to try to rephrase these questions by considering Bolter and Grusin's theories. Obviously, such a comparison between Lichtenstein and remediation will bring out a series of problems and contradictions that will be partially analyzed in this essay. In the first section I will try to describe the formalistic hybridization between comic style and the painting agenda carried out by Lichtenstein in the 1960s. In the second part, I will try to explain on which basis this hybridization may reveal modernist contradictions about mass culture and how Lichtenstein tried to reform some aspects of comics to reveal them. Finally, the third part will be dedicated to investigating the hypothetical audience (beholders, viewers) addressed by Lichtenstein.

Oversimplification

“I just simplify the whole thing in color as well as in shape” (Coplans 201)

Since the early years of Lichtenstein's production, several art critics have commented on the formalist aspects of his work. Underplaying his blatant mass media imagery, the artist has equally emphasized this point mostly in his interviews. One stylistic paradox often emerges from these arguments: from the print industry, Lichtenstein borrowed the technique of the simplification of popular images and turned it into a style of reductionist painting. By fluctuating between impersonal and authorial style, his “recomposed” versions of cartoons were often even more simplified than the original strips. This attitude—which the artist himself defined as “oversimplification”—was deeply inspired by the principles of commercial art: “I liked the idea of an apparent economic reason for making one color work as two colors. Sometimes commercial artists use blue lines with yellow or two colors overlapped in a certain way to look like three colors. Using a configuration which has arisen because of economic expediency—I like that” (Coplans 199). Alluding to the cheap industrial techniques for reproducing the natural (or artistic) halftones, among which the most famous was undoubtedly the Ben-Day dots system,⁵ here Lichtenstein seems to reassess many expedients of commercial style as a form of smart reductionism, or, so to speak, as a perverse and ironic purism. This process of oversimplification, which involved Lichtenstein's palette as well as his forms, is particularly evident in his

⁵ For the history of the four colors system in American comics see Gabilliet.

cartoonish versions of avant-garde masterpieces. Lichtenstein's *Woman with Flowered Hat* (1963) is a good example of this kind of cultured and ironic remake that was also defined as "intericonique"⁶. The source image came from Picasso's portrait of Dora Maar (*Femme au chapeau fleuri*, 1939-40, Neumann Collection). In this case, Lichtenstein condensed the whole of Picasso's palette into his typical minimal six color system (black, white, green, red, blue and yellow) plus two of Ben-Day's halftones (pink, which is made by red dots on a white ground; and gray, made by black dots on white). Any complicated halftones, such as the original purple of the hat in Picasso's version, or any irregular signs of brushstrokes and coat are immediately adapted into flat, uniform and apparently mechanical contours and colors—in Lichtenstein's words: "anything slightly red becomes red, anything slightly yellow becomes yellow" (Coplans 201). Furthermore, a humorous aspect of this "redux Picasso" is visible in the way Lichtenstein reworked the grotesque bluish face of Dora Maar as if she was the standard woman character of American comics, with soft pink skin, blonde hair and blue eyes. Talking about this kind of humorous d'après from Picasso, Lichtenstein once clarified:

I think Picasso the best artist of this century, but it is interesting to do an oversimplified Picasso—to misconstrue the meaning of his shapes and still produce art. [...] There is a kind of emphasis on outline, and a diagrammatic or schematic rendering which related to my work. It's a kind of "plain-pipe-racks Picasso" I want to do. (Coplans 199)

In these terms, Lichtenstein seems to stress the double logic of commercial oversimplification: a logic of stereotypization, a way of reinvigorating commonplaces and clichés; and, simultaneously, a logic of reductionism, legitimately based on formalist argumentation.

This unexpected coexistence between formalism and popular taste was equally and implicitly claimed by art historians. Albert Boime was the first to overtly compare the original source images with Lichtenstein's canvases and show how examples such as *Torpedo... Los!* (1963) or *I Can See the Whole Room... and There's Nobody in It!* (1961) further simplified their original comic sources by rendering their outlines and forms more schematic and geometric: a regular circle frequently substituted for irregular curves, or a hieratic symmetry took the place of the more eccentric cartoon layouts. It is not by chance that many years later William Overgard—the original author of the comic strip remade in *I Can See the Whole Room*—explicitly claimed to be unconvinced by how Lichtenstein chose a square format, positioned the balloons and straightened the contour of his nose.⁷

⁶ See Arrivé.

⁷ See Overgard's interview in the aforementioned 1991 documentary.

Assuming this explanation, how could we consider this strategy of oversimplification from the perspective of remediation? Is this a competitive attempt to fulfill its double logic? At first glance, Lichtenstein's work seems to do exactly the opposite. If we conceive immediacy as a desire for an experience without any trace of mediation, we could assert that the Pop Art painter rather emphasized how comic strips could artificially mediate every image of the world, including painted images, by means of their codified language. As suggested by Foster, here the act of mediation is explicitly pointed out as such. However, we could further consider the fact that, while Lichtenstein's technique reveals the artificiality of the comics' practice of mediation, it simultaneously disassembles the artist's own act of mediation (the act of painting). By simulating a mechanical and impersonal style, Lichtenstein established an ambiguous kind of immediacy: on the one hand, he neglected painting's function of involving the viewer in an effect of unmediated reality; on the other hand, he adopted a specific strategy of immediacy by "removing the programmer/creator from the image" (Bolter and Grusin 28).

Moreover, as far as hypermediacy is concerned, a similar, conflicting attitude is evident. In Lichtenstein's case, the main medium (painting) reforms the subordinate medium (comics), but this process does not work on the basis of the former's ability to appropriate and reconfigure the latter into a broadened sensorial experience. On the contrary, his paintings tend to reduce the experience of vision by inhibiting those specific features of comics, such as the interaction between dialogue, plot, page layout and a series of images, that are notably multi-sensorial on the comic panels. Rather than enriching perception, Lichtenstein's oversimplification favors the trivial status of images in our consumerist society (cheap printing techniques, advertising instantaneous messages, etc.). Notwithstanding, his paintings still present themselves as an intelligible combination of multi-media, a mix of comic styles blatantly turned into large and magnificent canvases.

What Lichtenstein's oversimplification may call into question is under which historical and dialectical circumstances the double logic of remediation could function. Far from being ahistorical or acontextual, this double logic, meant as a desire for a multisensorial and unmediated experience, could be historically counterbalanced by an equal number of substructural forces, such as the logic of technical reproducibility or the maximization of production processes. While the entertainment industry of comics is the proper historical example for the 1960s, it is also possible to look for more recent instances of media oversimplification, such as the geometric design of video games in the 1980s; or the softened sound and the inadequate exposure provided by the speakers and the cameras of our

smartphones. Especially the latter example provides evidence of how the portability of the medium could overwhelm the better immediacy of a domestic hi-fi or a good quality photo-camera. Immediacy and hypermediacy are not always the crucial factors for substituting, reforming and remediating a medium. Other principles or contingencies may reconfigure the goals of a medium according to unexpected historical, substructural, material or economic reasons. At the beginning of the 1960s, for instance, the modernist background in which Lichtenstein was educated established a clear and effective distinction between avant-garde and kitsch, between the entertainment industry and high-brow culture. Influential art critics, such as Clement Greenberg, seemed to conceive an essentialist form of modernism specifically in order to protect fine arts from the overwhelming invasion of mass media. According to their theory, the opacity of a medium, a reductionist style or a formalist purism, should be among the adequate strategies for avoiding the illusionist effects and the hybridization of techniques carried on by popular media. Therefore, one of the decisive aspects of Lichtenstein's ambiguous oversimplification is that it encompasses pop imagery into painting as a way of escaping from the rigid theory of modernism. By showing common and formalist aspects that could unexpectedly relate modernist art to pop culture, Lichtenstein deeply questioned the former's supposedly medial purism and affirmed the condition of remediation in which painting still works.

Modernist Complicity

One of the most uncanny features—and one characterized by the most sophisticated humor—of Lichtenstein's oversimplification is how it might be able to properly meet Greenberg's agenda on the specificity of painting. His artworks could show how aspects such as flatness, the use of pure primary colors or the uniform treatment of the surface could be paradoxically turned into useful expedients for the entertainment industry, in order to achieve a more maximized process and cheaper costs of production or simplified and instantaneous visual messages for its audience. The perturbing effect of Lichtenstein's painting lies exactly in the overlap between the principles of modernism and strategies of commercial art. His canvases show how a mere economical convenience, or a stereotyped narration of the mass media, could unexpectedly facilitate a practice of sophisticated reductionism and purism in style. However, the most provocative premise for Lichtenstein's art is that the opposite is quite plausible too: modernism was also as complicit as the entertainment industry in causing this oversimplification of the images in the consumer society. Whether unintentionally or not, the primary and unmodulated palette of Piet Mondrian strongly contributed to the process of selecting the most functional and showy effects

of chromatic contrasts for the packaging of a product. Similarly, the inventive, thick and flat contours of Pablo Picasso's figures inspired many cartoonists in the attempt to obtain more expressive faces or a simpler spatial organization for their panels.

Another hidden aspect which can associate comics with a formalist approach to painting derives from the beholder's standards of reception. The comic strips usually appeal to a kind of beholder who immediately needs to decode the pictures, while being totally absorbed by the plot and the characters' speeches. This kind of complex interaction between dialogue, narration and image directly affects the style, as well as the composition and the arrangement of the panels. When Lichtenstein selected just one scene of this narrative stream and isolated it on a big canvas, he was intentionally contaminating Lessing's notion of "the pregnant moment" (Foster 68) in traditional painting with the synoptic condition of the comic vision: the regularity of forms or the reduction of colors are primarily an aid for the gaze of the modern beholder.⁸ Paradoxically—from a modernist point of view—in comic strips the reader's absorption in the narration, the preeminence of the narrative interpretation over the act of viewing required a formal simplicity (flatness, primary colors, etc.), in order to favor the visual readability of the comic strips. To a certain extent, what interested Lichtenstein about this formal phenomenon was particularly how he could turn it into a painting rendition of "visual unity"—in his own words. According to him, contrary to technological media, painting still preserved a specific ability "to organize perception" (Lichtenstein et al. 108), to compose an image by accurately balancing some of its formal relationships (between peripheral and central parts, or figure and ground). When the painter talked about "recomposing" and "not copying" his (mechanical) source images, he was precisely alluding to this hierarchical ability of painting to correct and reform the comic forms by improving their formal arrangement—sometimes even by further oversimplifying it. In a seminal study, Michael Lobel outlined how this conception of painting came directly from Lichtenstein's training with professor, Hoyt L. Sherman, whose theories about the monocularity and the instantaneous perception of images he had learned at the Ohio State University (Lobel 75-103). Once again it is evident how Lichtenstein's work underlines an unexpected conjunction between the roots of modernism and the oversimplified style of comics. However, this conjunction is still based on specific historical premises: as a matter of fact, when the graphic novel progressively achieved the status of art through the recognition of authorship, or when it became more realistic and sophisticated, Lichtenstein never ceased to resort to the less elaborated comic sources of the 1960s, which still allowed him to develop his discourse on the complicity of modernism with mass culture.

⁸ On this point see Gabilliet.

As one of the most elusive aspects of Lichtenstein's painting, this involvement has emerged in various ways during his career: as a reconciliation between the opposite sides of avant-gardist and popular art; as a parody of modernist pretentiousness; as an ironic revenge of "low" culture; or, finally, as a disillusioned admission of the contamination between the two. At any rate, rather than competing with comics, Lichtenstein showed how, under the pressure of mass media, his work could try to pursue a double act of liberation: on the one hand, it dismissed the elitist snobbery through which modernism rejected any form of commercial art as kitsch; and, at the same time, it reaffirmed the intellectual preeminence of painting towards other popular media. By doing so, the painter played both sides of the fence: he admitted the idealism of modernist theory, which sublimated the role of the forms beyond any influence of economic contingency; and he exorcised the dominance of the mass media in the popular imagery.

What we can suppose about the ambiguous visual strategy adopted by Lichtenstein is how it resorts to remediation in order to show the theoretical, historical and social ambiguity of modernism. The close relationship between comics and Pop Art painting ended up discrediting some of the cornerstones of the modernist theory of media. The first contradiction concerns the relativity of the distinction between the opacity and the transparency of a medium, introduced by Greenberg.⁹ By remediating another flat medium, Lichtenstein's works both preserved the opacity of his medium, through the flatness or the use of unmodulated colors, and the transparency, by mimicking the code of an "illusionist" medium extraneous to painting—here, Lichtenstein was quite close to the ambivalent use of flags or targets made by Jasper Johns. The second ambiguity regards the opposition between narration and the self-referentiality of the medium. Lichtenstein may argue how the reasons for a better narration could bring the comics panels toward oversimplification and, thus, toward a sort of formalist reductionism. Disregarding its medium specificity, comics demonstrates how a medium should organize its hypermediacy—sometimes by simplifying certain aspects of the media it encapsulates. Furthermore, another important aspect is that, usually, comic strips are involved in a storytelling stream of consequential scenes, while easel painting has been commonly associated to self-enclosed narration since the eighteenth century. In this respect, Lichtenstein is a perfect example of how a single panel could be turned into a self-enclosed scene by exploiting narrative clichés and the comic system of genres (romance, war, etc.), particularly after the watershed of censorship in American comics (1954). Works such as *Whaam!* (1963) would perfectly give

⁹ Bolter and Grusin used the term opacity to emphasize the material aspects or the technical specificity of a medium, and the term transparency to characterize the effects of reality and illusionism provided by a medium (Bolter & Grusin 21, 42).

evidence of their self-enclosed story and setting, as well as their contextual situation: the apex of a flight battle between an American Air Force hero and his enemy.

All these ambiguities and contradictions, which Lichtenstein underlined, might mean that, in the era of mass media, the modernist strategy, or its autonomy and separation, does not work without contradictions. Its historical complicity with mass culture rather suggests a strategy of integration, an awareness of the complex processes of remediation that pervade consumerist societies, in order to preserve at least a role of theoretical and intellectual reflection for painting. In this sense, Lichtenstein was also ambivalent about reinforcing the complicity between modernism and mass culture, and about reaffirming a hierarchical, yet modernist, position of painting among the media as well.

Visual dualism

Despite focusing mostly on formal aspects, Lichtenstein's art anticipated the broader definition of the medium later provided by Bolter and Grusin, who also took into account the social and cultural practices that not only relate to it but also concur with its production and experience. From this perspective, Lichtenstein's painting does not limit itself to the interpolated formal, oversimplified, and iconographic features of comics. As a matter of fact, one of its more radical shifts was to change the social habits and perceptual conditions through which comics images were usually experienced. These social habits and perceptual conditions obviously were and still are dependent on the history of visual culture and, in many respects, Lichtenstein subtly played with them.

The most evident change determined by this process undoubtedly involves the context in which these images appeared. As in the case of Marcel Duchamp, it is quite accepted that, by introducing the comic imagery into the institutional spaces of art and to a cultured and specialized art audience, Lichtenstein arranged a new frame for those images, exposing them to the conventional act of contemplation, to the art-critical comment, to formal evaluation, and to other habits specifically related with fine arts. By giving to a single panel the scale of a big canvas and the uniqueness of a masterpiece, the Pop Art painter also altered the materiality of these images and their social destination: from mass circulation to the sophisticated dwellings of art collectors.

By doing so, Lichtenstein also called into question the problem of anonymity within art. After years of Abstract Expressionism, he consciously renounced a personal style, conceived as a bio-

psychic expression of the self, by maintaining his recognizability through an impersonal, even apparently mechanical, appropriation of mass images.¹⁰ The issue of authorship in painting was then compared to the condition of the authors of comics: especially in the pioneering age of the history of comics, before the rise of the contemporary graphic novel, authors of comics had progressively learned how to conciliate their claim to authorship with a mechanized, typographical, teamwork-based process of production.

Notwithstanding, it is my assumption that the most radical shift Lichtenstein performed in terms of social habits concerned the issue of his audience and, more broadly, of the audience of painting at the beginnings of the 1960s. In his recent study about Pop Art, Hal Foster takes into consideration one crucial factor of the visual culture of that time: the exclusively instantaneous attention paid to images by the beholders. “In short,” he argues, “the implication is that a targeting subject has arisen in the military-consumerist complex of postwar America in a way that complicates, even negates, the contemplative subject of the traditional tableau as well as the transcendental subject of the modernist painting” (Foster 103). Although Foster’s outline of a period eye—or better of a “period beholder”—should be a key concept when dealing with Pop Art, it is still uncertain whether this “targeting subject,” who is looking for an immediate satisfaction for her/his eyes, could be considered as the new and exclusive audience of Lichtenstein’s painting. That is to say, either the American painter explicitly addressed only such a “targeting subject,” or he also addressed those people, or those intellectuals, who were at the time critically aware of the rise of this new “targeting subject” in their own society. A definitive answer is almost impossible, and these questions may not be properly formulated. All things considered, does it still make sense to clearly distinguish between these two kinds of audiences (the “targeting subject” and the “aware” beholder)?

As a matter of fact, one of the most disruptive strategies introduced by Pop Art in Western culture is probably the extremely effective ability to work with different and multi-layered levels of attention and interpretation. According to Lawrence Alloway, one of the most influential art critics of Pop Art, the entertainment industry already knew quite well how to give both an immediate pleasure or a delayed gratification, to provide both an intense or a superficial absorption, according to the will and engagement of each customer: “the repetitive and overlapping structure of modern entertainment works in two ways: (1) it permits marginal attention to suffice for those spectators who like to talk, neck, parade; (2) it satisfies, for the absorbed spectator, the desire for intense participation which leads to a careful discrimination of

¹⁰ On Lichtenstein’s trademark strategy, see Lobel 41-73.

nuances in the action” (*The Arts and the Mass Media* 8). Obviously enough, traditional fine arts can also create multi-layered meanings and interpretations, but the very important difference between the two systems relies on the fact that fine arts would rarely and hardly work with a distracted spectator.

What Lichtenstein found as already present in comic strips was the new possibility to engage a distracted spectator and, at the same time, to fulfill a modernist agenda, by reforming imperfect formal features thanks to the remediation made by painting. For the first time, Lichtenstein possibly supposed the coexistence of these different audiences in the 1960s, the “targeting” and the “contemplative subject” (Foster), or the “distracted” and “concentrated” spectator (Alloway) that modernism had previously separated: by using humor as a form of intellectual detachment, he admitted that the “contemplative subject” could still find something interesting in these oversimplified and banal images.

Arguing about the interaction between Pop Art and the graphic novel in the 1960s, Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey agree at any rate that the two media share two “rhetorical tactics”: the paradigm of appropriation, which boasts an established history in art since Dadaism and was subsequently adopted by graphic novelists; and the “narrative dualism” that was specifically developed by comic authors for bypassing the censorship (Baetens and Frey 40-53). The latter is probably the most revealing aspect of Lichtenstein’s attempt to change the social negotiations of his time which defined painting as such. Moreover, since the 1960s, readers can find numerous levels of meaning in many graphic novels that allowed this medium to be readable by two different kinds of audiences: unaware children, or younger teenagers, and the conscious adults who can decode the other implicit meanings (sexual allusions, drugs habits, etc.) encoded in the books. If such a consideration is transferred to Lichtenstein, it can be argued that he “demonstrated that comics could be reworked as one wished and twisted to attract new and different readerships and audience” (Baetens and Frey 44). The new audience sought by Lichtenstein was not a truly new young audience. In Lichtenstein’s work, the narrative dualism of graphic novels was rather expressed in terms of a new “beholdership,” so to speak, which entailed a sort of “visual dualism.” Lichtenstein’s painting is often about the coexistence of the superficial glimpse of the so-called “targeting subject” and the contemplative gaze of the specialist and connoisseur of painting, possibly including modernist art critics. As described in Alloway’s theory of mass media or in the concept of “narrative dualism”; Lichtenstein’s paintings could both satisfy the synoptic vision of the mass-culture audience and the cultured approach of the specialist who could appreciate its formal strategies of oversimplification and self-referentiality.

By combining these different audiences Lichtenstein might have consciously showed how complicity and ambiguity were becoming a way of survival for painting in the era of new and mass media. His attempt to reform comics was, obviously, one to revamp painting as well. Therefore, rather than competing with comics for a broader audience, Lichtenstein may have been thinking about how to preserve the “contemplation act.” Within a consumerist society, where the education to visual culture and fine arts could be an obstacle to the effectiveness of advertising and the entertainment industry, which were often based on subliminal perception, he possibly looked for a solution in the allowed coexistence of the contemplation act within the realm of ambiguity and multiple meanings.

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