

A black aesthetic: Visual psychology with cultural cues

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The aesthetic voice of culture is “as something distinct from other data of reality.” It speaks to the expressively real values present in the distinct choices among fundamental metaphors imbedded in the images diverse cultural groups create. Among cultural groups, this acuity for the metaphorical transfer of cultural knowledge denotes a level of perception of both sound and symbol which is sophisticated and may manifest in ritualistic ways. Erickson (1977) formulated a theory of perceptual features of culture in which populations share the tendency to favor one fusion of senses over another, resulting in the development of intuitive and occasionally abstract, traditional forms and understandings. Hoard (1990) factors in the empirical constancy of cultural attributes as cues within a particular visual aesthetic, and provides statistical evidence of “cultural sensitivities among patterned responses” by adult viewers of abstract and nonobjective art.

Biography

Adrienne Walker Hoard has an MFA in Painting and Design at the University of Michigan and an EdD in Psychology of Visual Perception at the University of Illinois. She is a former Fulbright Scholar to South Korea teaching in Seoul at Ehwa Women's University and Hong Ik University. As an UMSEAEP Research Fellow to South Africa, she has taught at University of South Africa in Pretoria and University of the Western Cape in Cape Town. She is a Member of the Council Board of “Harrington-Centre for Research and Experimental Development on Humanities and Social Sciences, London, UK. Her research on the presence of a Black Aesthetic produced an empirical study utilizing sorting methodology, which documented among black subjects an internal recognition of cultural visual cues in abstract compositions created by Black painters. Her design work, paintings and photography have been exhibited and sold widely in the USA, Africa, Asia and Europe.

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