Materiality and Popular Culture

**Materiality and popular culture**

1. Much of popular culture takes *material form*.
2. Mobile phones, clothes, wedding rings, greeting cards, toys, bikes, DVDs, game consoles, computers, iPad, iPod, magazines, football grounds, nightclubs, pubs, dress codes,
3. Most of our lives are *filled with material* objects – things we can touch
4. We interact with these objects in many ways
5. We produce then, *consume them, talk about them*, admire them
6. Sometimes the *material capacities* of an object may *transform* what we do

**Materiality as actor**

1. According to *actor network theory*, popular culture is not just people *acting and interacting*.
2. It is *people acting* and interacting with *material objects* and material objects interacting with each other.
3. Actor network theory treats *objects* as part of *social interaction*.
4. This is because it is assumed that these *objects make a difference to our actions*.
5. Our experience of popular culture is constructed and mediated with the use of material objects.
6. How something performs or is made to perform within a given network determines *how it is perceived*.

**Intermediaries and mediators**

1. Material objects can be both *intermediaries and mediators*.
2. *Intermediaries convey meaning unchanged* whereas mediators transform, distort and modify the meaning they are supposed to carry.

**Networks defined**

1. A *network is a string of actions* where each participant is treated as a full-blown mediator.
2. *All the actors act* in a network.
3. There are connections in which *actors make other actors act*.
4. In popular culture, when we recognise the interaction between the human and the popular culture.

**Meaning and materiality**

1. There are *material objects* as part of our existence.
2. We interact with them and use *them to interact* with others.
3. They go with us through our narratives.
4. And become the *material of our emotions* and thought.
5. The objects we encounter though, *have meanings*.
6. How they are made *to signify meanings*, informs how we *think* about them, *value* them and *use* them.

**Culture as doing**

1. Culture, therefore, is not *something we have*, but *something we do*.
2. The *social production and reproduction of meanings* realised in materiality and social practice.
3. Meanings are not in the materiality of things - but how things are **constructed to be meaningful**
4. The material properties of an object are not culturally constructed
5. What is **constructed is its inscription** and location in culture

**Meanings**

1. The material object then is expanded to include **what it means in human culture**
2. The human acts of making things mean, transforms them into **cultural objects**
3. The material world is **framed by culture**
4. the **material objects already exist**, but how they are understood is the **result of culture** and things that are **signified in relation** to representations

**Power**

1. The meanings that organise and regulate social practice
2. Come from those with **power** to make things mean in particular ways

**Material objects in a global world**

1. When **different cultures** share the same material objects
2. The cultural differences are the different meanings they have and how these meanings are **raised in social practice**
3. People from different societies use many of the same material objects
4. But **what they signify changes enormously**

**Coca-Cola**

1. Coca-Cola for example, is everywhere
2. The iconic bottle and logo are **globally recognised**
3. But to understand its status we have to move beyond that and think about it as an object of culture

**Film Form**

1. These are the **elements** that make a film
2. **Content** is what the film is about
3. **Form** is how that content is expressed
4. **Form and content are combined in film**

**Literary design**

1. These are the **elements of a film** that come from the script and story ideas
2. The design includes the **story, setting, action, characters, names**, dialog, titles and any deeper **themes or meanings**
3. Another broad aspect is the **mise en scène** which is everything that goes into the individual **shot** of the film
4. The **visual design** – choice of set, costumes, makeup, lighting, colour **actors performances**, arrangements of these before the camera
5. **Cinematographic design** – how the camera records the visual elements
6. Choice of frames, lenses, camera angle, movements – what is in focus and what is not

**EDITING**
1. The montage or **editing** is how the individual shots the camera records are put together to create the story

2. Most have **hundreds of shots and Audience identification** with characters can be **encouraged** or **discouraged** in this way

**Sound design**

1. The same type of choices are made with the sound track
2. The dialog of the characters is **easy to hear** whilst others is **inaudible**
3. Music also works to influence our understanding of film

**Stages of meaning**

1. There are two stages of making meaning within any given text
2. **Encoding and decoding**
3. Encoding is the actual **production of the text**
4. Often this is studied in **auteur (author) studies** –
5. By analysing a number of films made by the same auteur one can find common **stylistic choices and themes**
6. And then by implication for your interviews – maybe something that person identifies strongly with in those films

**Decoding**

1. This is the **reception** of a text
2. Those who use the texts- the audience – **decode the texts meanings** depending on a variety of things
3. This is where we can apply the notion from Stuart hall about **dominant, oppositional and negotiated readings**
4. These work in complex ways in relation to identities – how we perceive ourselves

**Film Cultures - spectatorship**

**Address and reception of films**

1. Film cultures and theories look at how **texts construct viewers**
2. And how those texts **may be read in different ways**
3. Meanings are **created and assigned** in complicated ways

**Film experience**

1. The film experience has been **talked of as an event** - Often group activity but maybe different these days.
2. Intensity make us more susceptible to the **power of the message**
3. Blurring of boundaries between **imaginary and real** – at the heart of cinema experience
4. Watching a film is similar to **dreaming**

**Film spectator**

1. **Psychoanalytic** theory has emphasised the **gaze of the audience**.
2. Reflected in its references to the audience as spectator.
3. Freudian theory – **power of the look is important**
4. Audiences **look and spectate**

5. The **voyeuristic look** - the voyeur is one who makes an object of those who are **caught in the power of their gaze** but actors know they are watched.

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**Ourselves on screen**

1. **Identify with or see ourselves** in characters on the screen
2. Screen heroes and heroines are held to offer a wish fulfilment
3. Two ways of watching:-
   a. Camera **becomes our eyes, we see the film as our perception** rather than someone else’s
   b. Or there is a **separation between audience and image**

**Lacan and the mirror stage**

1. When a young child recognises itself in the mirror and realise they have a **separate identity from their mother**
2. Hence the child begins to **construct an identity**
3. Children see a **representation of themselves (as we do in cinema)**
4. Narcissistic – seeing oneself reflected on the screen
5. Could argue that in the cinema, **we see everything but ourselves**

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**Fantasies**

1. Fantasy occupies a distinct place in psychoanalysis – It extends across the **boundaries of the conscious and unconscious desires**
2. The analysis of the cinema as a **form of fantasy**
3. In fantasy the **boundaries of biological sex or cultural gender or sexual preference** are not fixed and can be challenged when watching film

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**Post-Cinematic age**

1. **Post-cinematic technologies** include everything associated with the rise of interactivity  e.g. Gaming, multimedia, different internet platforms, new types of text such as music video
2. **There are new ways of consuming** these as well
3. Shaviro suggests this **has transformed our lives** in ways related to our day to day, moment to moment experience
4. The new technology **intervenes into, informs and transforms the cultural landscape**
5. **Gaming, music video and interactive and audio-visual technology** are **informed by cinematography**
6. Cinema itself **incorporates new technological advancements** within itself
7. Therefore the **material objects also transform the meaning** and highlight the importance of understanding the meshing of material objects with each other and humans.