

Panopticonism

Sociology



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Panopticon is a scheme used greatly by the political hierarchy to manifest social order towards the underclass. It carries the expression of power and it is used as a mean of discipline through the exploitation of surveillance. Panopticonism is a way to control every man in to agreeing with the system that can take many different forms and fashions. John Berger and his views towards art historians mystifying paintings are branched from the panoptic schema used by the “ruling class” to inspect, sort, and oppress the public.

As indicated by Bentham, Panopticonism is “a great new instrument of government...; its great excellence consists in the great strength it is capable of giving to any institution it may be thought proper to apply it to” (Bentham 66). John Berger’s radical views on the way we appreciate art are great aspects on how artworks can affect us socially. An implication of one of Berger’s theory is that the ruling class enforces their own cultural control over the oppressed.

In this case, the ruling class (the government) establishes institutions to educate others (art historians) on how to focus and scrutinize artworks that are delivered to the subjugated (the citizens). Art historians have been taught by institutions to acknowledge certain artworks highly which can lead into the many reproductions distributed into the community. Janvier 2 Pop culture in society also plays a significant role in emphasizing the art historians’ views. Music, Movies, Theater, and other forms of entertainment greatly add weight into the standpoints of the art historians.

Songs like the jazz hit “Mona Lisa” by Rhythm and Blues legend Nat King Cole puts emphasis on the importance and principles of the painting. The lyrics in the song go as follows: Mona Lisa, Mona Lisa, men have named you
<https://assignbuster.com/panopticonism/>

You're so like the lady with the mystic smile Is it only 'cause you're lonely they have blamed you? For that Mona Lisa strangeness in your smile? (Mona Lisa, Nat King Cole) Known for her enigmatic and "mystic smile", Mona Lisa is a man-made name that can no longer be normal without the connotations that come with it.

Connotations such as "strange", "mystic", "light-hearted" and "enigmatic" were used by art historians to describe the "Mona Lisa" and those words are still in use today when most make interpretations of the painting. If old paintings are windows to the past, then power and wealth are the basis for the many reproductions made in most paintings. Can a woman's smile have so much importance in society? Would there be a different interpretation of Lisa if she was poor or black? What makes the "Mona Lisa" a masterpiece? The ruling class made the painting an exceedingly recognizable figure to establish an ideal "figure" in all of society.

However, celebrated artworks help society to better understand the role of the tower in this Panopticon. Although art historians may help generalize the public, the artworks that are well-known and thoroughly reproduced let all of society know what is being mystified. Janvier 3 According to Michael Foucault, this can also be a method used in the Panopticon. Foucault states, "In fact, any panoptic institution...may without difficulty be subjected to such irregular and constant inspections...any member of society will have the right to come and see with his own eyes how the schools, hospitals, factories, prisons function" (Foucault 233).

We in society notice that many of the well-known artworks came from the same repetitive European names such as Michelangelo, Da Vinci, and <https://assignbuster.com/panopticonism/>

Picasso. Way before the thirteen colonies were assembled in America, certain literature works and paintings were brought to America and remained through customs and institutions. Little or none of those works came from Africa and Asia. Because of traditions, many of the aspects looked for in an artwork (White, Wealthy, and Powerful) will continue to be depicted in this society.

The Panopticon system can be used in any form through the functions of different institutions. Society contributes in the procedure but also plays a major role in surveillance as well. John Berger and his critique on the art historian way of mystifying paintings is a perfect example of the Panopticon mechanism to suppress the rest of society. If art historians praise it through mystification, it remains eminent, but if disregarded, then it will be nameless.