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COMD 3504

## **The Underground Mainstream**

Steven Heller

Looking at the reading by Heller we are given a strong duality between main stream versus underground cultures. The way that our society views what is underground at first comes from an outsider perspective that often times is a rebellion to the main stream ideas and fundamentals. These ideas are then eventually adopted by a population which then leads to these once underground ideas to gain traction with advertisers that turn into a way to communicate with the mainstream audience. “Invariably what begins as an elitist subculture follows a predictable trajectory from popular rejection to mass embrace” (Heller, Mapping the Future Pg.99).

The contemporary designer I have chosen to continue with is Rick Owens. Owens is considered to be a designer pushing the avant-garde aesthetic in areas such as fashion and furniture design. Owens work is so far out of the mainstream that it is seen as a vision of what the future holds at least from a fashion design perspective. Rick Owens likes to experiment with silhouettes that promote alternative ideas of beauty. Changing the strict standards of beauty and bringing in a new form factor to deviate from mainstream ideals this is a major driving force for Owens designs. Owens has cultivated a world for the outsider on the fringes of fashion that has slowly been more and more excepted and eventually celebrated by the mainstream. Owens states “To tell you the truth, it thrills me,” Owens says. “It’s either very flattering or insulting when it’s a blatant knockoffinsulting that they think I’m so insignificant that no one would notice. But it’s natural. When I started to design, you would be able to dissect and analyze my collections, too.”(Marsh, Lord Of Goth) Recently Rick Owens received the 2019 CFDA menswear designer of the year award as well as the FGI Superstar Award which was the nights top honor and was presented the award by Kanye West and Kim Kardashian West. Rick Owens an avant-garde designer known mainly in fashion and design circles was presented and admired by arguably two of the most well known and mainstream celebrities in our current era. This I feel is a great example of the underground and mainstream dynamic in play.

Owens states “It seems quite egotistical and there’s a side of me that’s kind of embarrassed about (the sculpture), But also it’s to remind people that this (label) is one person... It’s a one-man thing, It’s one person’s expression” he said.

### **Bibliography**

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