

PRICE \$8.99

APRIL 5, 2021

THE NEW YORKER



KIKUO



Name: Ka Sin Cheung

Professor Lange

Class : COMD 3504

24 April 2021

The advertisement that I have picked is “Delay” by cartoonist Kikuo R. Johnson. The art was published as a cover in the New Yorker on April 5th, 2021. To be honest I saw this cover way before the assignment came up. The reason why I have chosen this cover is that I think it fits what Roland Barthes said in “The Rhetoric Of the Image”. In addition, it’s a great topic to talk about. The purpose of this cover is to point out the problem of Asian Hate. There are many Covid “hate crimes” being committed. Many Asian Americans have been attacked and harassed during this time. Since people are thinking Asians have brought Covid throughout the world, especially in America.

This cover has promoted the idea of Asian hate and insecurity in the bottom of Asian’s heart well under the linguist message that is being provided. According to The Rhetoric Of the Image by Roland Barthes, there are three types of messages in an image. They are linguist messages, symbolic messages, and literal messages. One type of linguist message is denoted messages. The denoted message stands for the direct message. In this case, the direct message is the title “Delay”. Another type of linguist message is connoted message. The connoted message

stands for indirect messages that are given by the photo or image. In this case, it's the whole cartoon.

The literal message, non-coded in the image. It's a girl, a woman, and a subway platform. Moreover, there are many symbolic messages being created by Johnson. The first symbolic message was the appearance of the two characters in the frame. Both of them have yellow skin tones and both of them have black hair. The appearances that are given by Johnson have pointed out that they are Asians. The second symbolic message is the woman is holding up her hand to look at the time from her watch. However, both of them are staring at their surroundings, with awareness in their expressions. Even if the woman holds up her hand for time looking, she's not looking at her watch. We can understand they feel insecure. The third symbolic message is that there are nothing surrounds them. Therefore, they are staring at something that's non-existed. Maybe non-existed danger. The fourth symbolic message is they are wearing a mask. It indicates they are in public, and it's during the time of the pandemic. Under these messages, it points out the coded iconic message of Covid hate crimes that happen toward Asians.

Moving on, Roland Barthes said there would be two possible functions that happen when there is a use of images. One is anchorage, and the other one is "relay". Anchorage is about the image itself can promote different meanings. However, under the text given, the image would only account for certain meanings. Moreover, relay means the image and text works together as a whole to promote a certain meaning. I think "Delay" was using "relay" as a function. It's because the word "delay" works well under the action of the woman holding up her hand for looking at

the time. Also, it brings up the question of what makes delay in subway matters. In other words of saying, what makes the delay in the subway special to an Asian mom with her daughter. Since delays in the subway aren't breaking news to us. It happens to us every day. However, within the expressions that are on their face, under the mask, the action, and the title "Delay". It tells the story of an Asian mother with her daughter feeling insecure when they were outside. They wanted to go home as soon as possible, and hoping they would be safe while they were taking the train.

In conclusion, this cover worked out well. Kikuo R. Johnson has pointed out the problem that we are having in today's society under the functions that Roland Barthes points out in "The Rhetoric Of the Image". I would say Kikuo R. Johnson has created this artwork attentively with many little details. This piece of artwork that impresses me the most is, Johnson turned a scene that's supposed to be normal into something special and attractive due to the details that he creates. I wish I can see more of his work later on in New Yorkers.

Work Cited

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