

The background of the slide is a photograph of several people sitting around a table, possibly in a cafe or meeting. They are looking at their smartphones and tablets. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent purple gradient overlay. The title text is centered in a white, serif font.

Instagrammism and Photo-Sharing Culture



By: Grace, Hannah, Rosa, & Harrison

“How do we characterize a style in general?”



cultural identity

Instagrammism

'gestalt'

состояни

е

Kinfolk

mise-en-scene





‘gestalt’

noun

an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.

or

the general quality or character of something.

“Slow lifestyle” ^{—*—}cult magazine Kinfolk

- To Manovich, a perfect example of the type of visual culture he’s focussing on.
- Also helps Manovich as he tries to highlight the differences and similarities between commercial and personal photography in this context.
- The framework that sorts Manovich’s answers to the questions he poses is **form** and **content**.



**“Sensability, attitude, and
tonality.”**

Instagram



- Instagram was started in 2010
- Different from then existing photo-sharing services b/c it came with filters and other image editing tools available within its mobile app.
- Democratized the creation and sharing of good-looking images
- Eventually adopted by millions of young people around the world to display their photography, narrate their ideas and experiences, and connect to each other.
- Infographic of Instagram's history:
<http://wersm.com/the-complete-history-of-instagram/#prettyPhoto/0/>



Form and Content

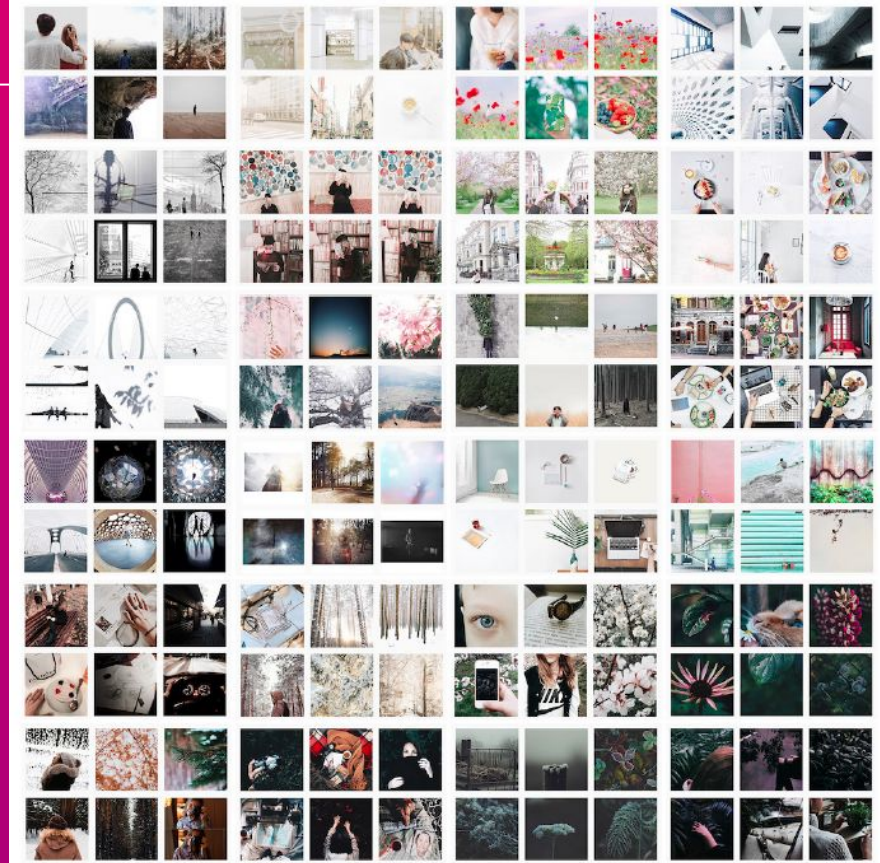


The media form that combines lens image capture and design techniques goes along with particular content. And together, these elements create particular “sensibility,” “attitude,” or “tonality,” (Manovich 3)

a.k.a
Aesthetic

Instagrammism: a combination of media form and particular content to form a **narrative**

Figure 3. Sample images from 24 Instagram users from 8 countries: Vietnam, China, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus. 6 images from each user is shown.



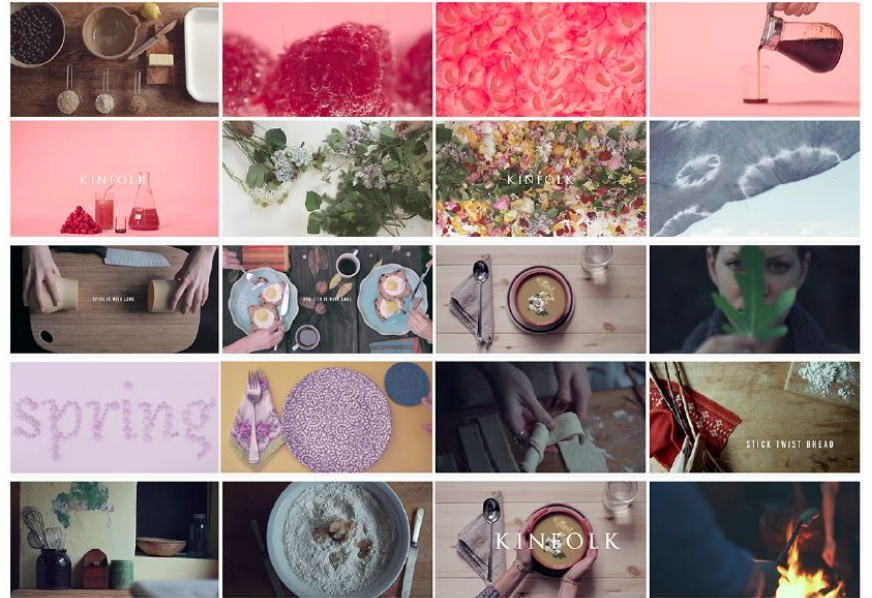
Kinfolk



- Kinfolk started in 2011, one year after Instagram
- Kinfolk developed and popularized new aesthetics
- It had a large effect on growing Instagram themes, and Instagram users popularized these themes further

#kinfolk, #kinfolklife
#kinfolkmagazine

Figure 1. Frames from selected Kinfolk films. Source: <http://www.kinfolk.com/films/>.





“The Kinfolk look has become so influential that every over-styled, washed-out Instagram photo of a succulent or a cup of coffee is now deemed to be part of its visual bandwagon.

- Dan Howarth

(interview with Kinfolk co-founder Nathan Williams, March 2, 2016).



“Kinfolk also came into existence just as we started using platforms like Instagram aspirationally, translating the aesthetics of the glossy print page onto the even glossier screen and making them our own in the process.”

- Kyle Chaka

(“The Last Lifestyle Magazine: How Kinfolk created the dominant aesthetics of the decade with perfect lattes and avocado toast,” March 14, 2016.)

Mise-en-scène



“What matters in a film is the desire for order, composition, harmony, the placing of actors and objects, the movements within the frame, the capturing of a moment or look... Mise en scène is the technique invented by each director to express the idea and establish the specific quality of his Work,” (Manovich 10).



Instagrammism and film



“Instagrammism here refers not to any particular narrow aesthetics, but rather construction of scenes and images that are atmospheric, visually perfect, emotional without being aggressive, and subtle as opposed to dramatic,” (Manovich 10-11)

Instagrammism and Film (cont'd)



- Even the most artistic, visually pleasing, and well crafted films and photographs of the 20th century ultimately had ulterior motives: to help sell something.
- No matter their context, images are part of a larger narrative and part of a larger “story”, both in the case of Instagram and film.

Visual poetry in film



- It is rare to find a film where visual poetry and narrative play an equal role in the development and success of the final product

Figure 5. Top: stills from *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (Parajanov, 1965) and *The Color of Pomegranates* (Parajanov, 1969). Bottom: stills from *Red Desert* (Antonioni, 1964).

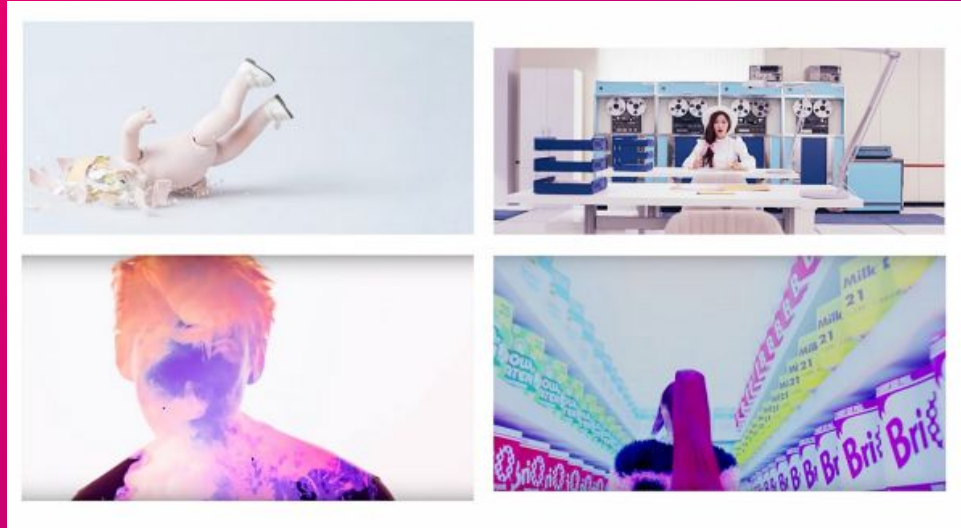


Music videos and aesthetics



“Hundreds of k-pop music videos produced in the last few years have excellent visual design. [...] and some recent (2014-2016) Russian and Ukrainian music videos with equally strong visual aesthetics and contemporary “cool” sensibility and attitude typical for the Instagram generation” (Manovich 12-13).

Convergence of pop music and design



Stills from three K-pop music videos. Top row: Dumb Dumb (Red Velvet, 2015). Bottom row: The 7th Sense (NCT U, 2016), Gotta be You (2NE1, 2014).

Poetic design

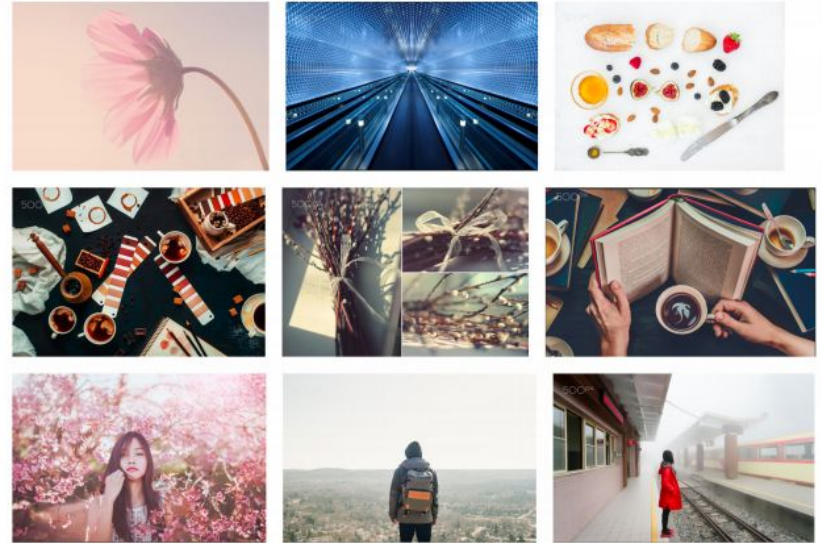


- Poetic design and poetic realism as movement in cinema and photos without narrative
- Cultural and social production of poetic design: Russia, China, Korea, and Japan

Poetic Design (Cont'd)

- Little focus on objects and commercial goods, but rather an atmosphere or a mood; people and objects are “props” rather than the focus of the image
- Nothing in particular is trying to be “sold”

Fig. 9. Selection of more “Instagram-like” images from 500px.



“Independent” and “Commercial” vs. “Art” and “Design”



- There is still a boundary between fashion and lifestyle photography vs. poetic design on Instagram





“As we can see, the distinctions between ‘Independent’ and ‘commercial’ still exist – although a significant proportion of photos can function equally well in either category. And this is no longer the question of ‘commodification.’ The ‘independent’ and ‘commercial’ continuously influence each other and borrow from each other.” (Manovich 18)

Instagrammism and its Aesthetics

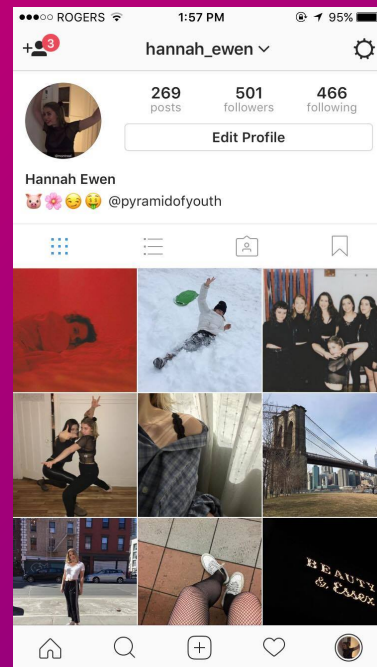


- 19th & 20th C concepts = too broad
- 21st C = Minimalism and Modernism
- Tend to develop “small variations” rather than something “very different” (18).

First Instagram layout



Newest Instagram layout



Culture Identity and Subculture



“Cultural identity today is established via small variations and differences” along with “hybridization among already established positions like minimalism in design” (18&19).

- 126 subcultures within “Instagram class”
- Group identity vs. Individual identity
 - Excluded from the “mainstream”





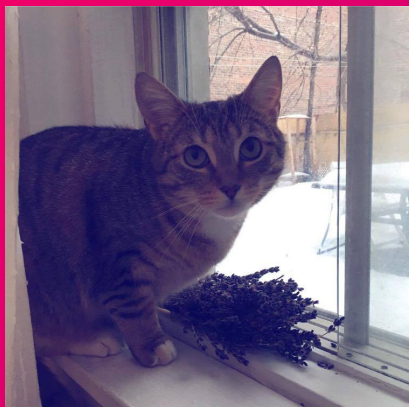
How can we make an individual identity?

Individuality in Instagram



“However, digital cameras and editing and publishing tools as exemplified by Instagram provide the crucial mechanism to further refine and “individualize” these basic “identities”” (20).

- Digital cameras, film cameras, VSCOcam, filters and more are used to produce individuality



Instagram vs. Kinfolk



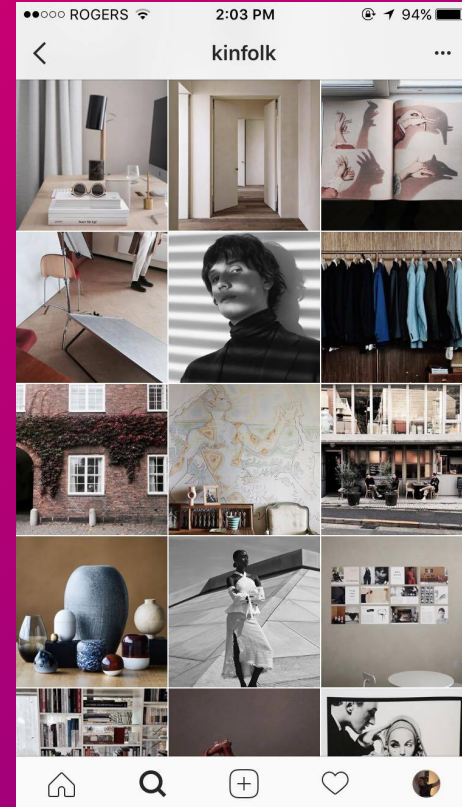
“Kinfolk is a slow lifestyle magazine published by **Ouur** that explores ways for readers to simplify their lives, cultivate community and spend more time with their friends and family. Founded in 2011, Kinfolk is now the leading independent lifestyle magazine for young creative professionals and also produces international editions in Japan, China, Korea and Russia. Published quarterly, Kinfolk maintains a vibrant contributor base from Copenhagen to Cape Town. Ouur is a lifestyle publisher and agency creating print and digital media for a young creative audience.” (<http://www.kinfolk.com/about-us/>, accessed May 27, 2016.)”

- Produce “Slow lifestyle” while feeding “young creative professionals” to be inspired by “good design”

Instagram & Kinfolk



- Both represent a lifestyle
- About:
 - Depiction NOT narration
 - Experience
 - Being rather than doing
- “Washed Out” filters
 - Metaphors for emotional contrast and cognitive dissonance (24)



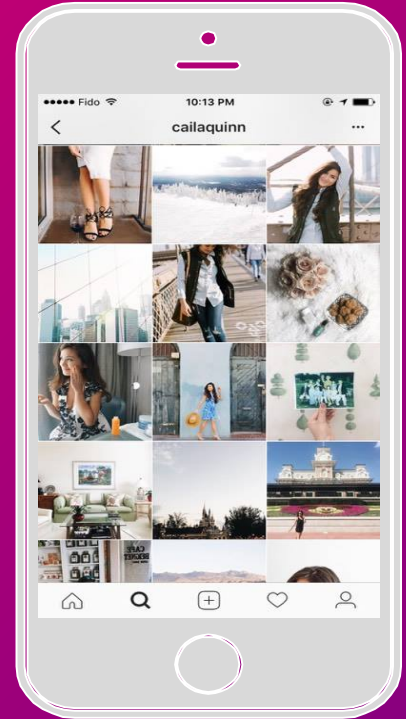
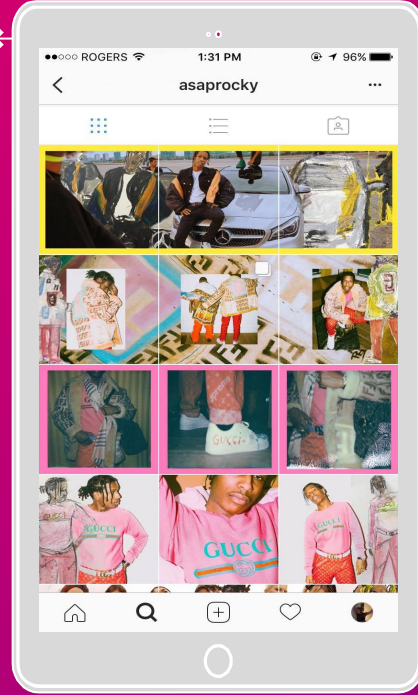
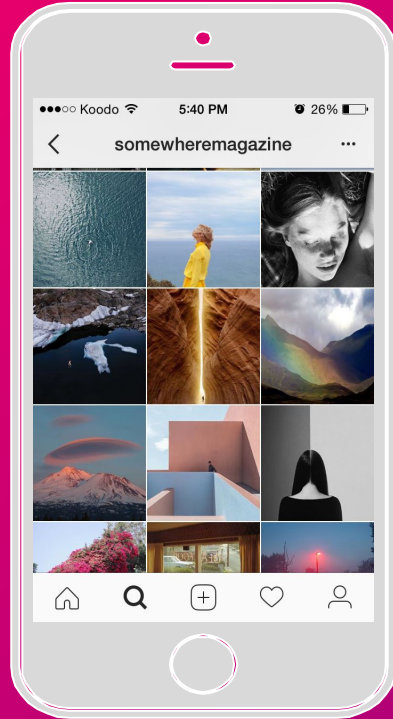
Instagram/Instagrammism



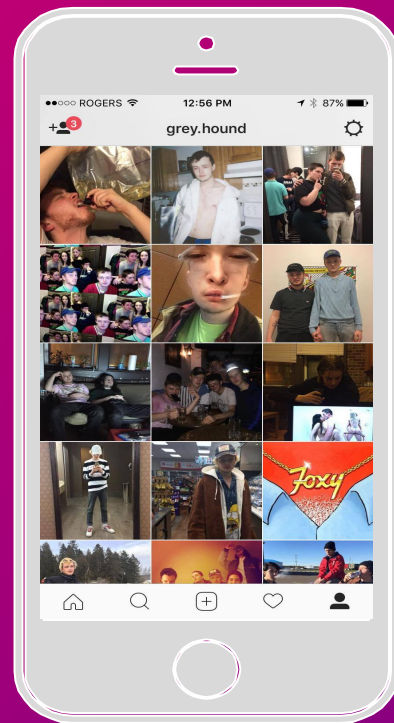
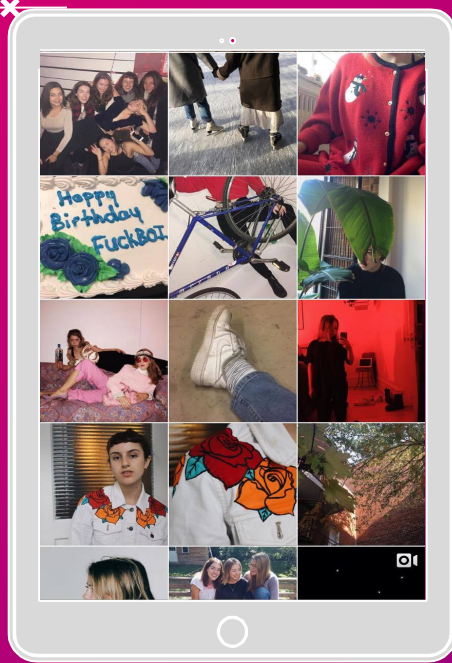
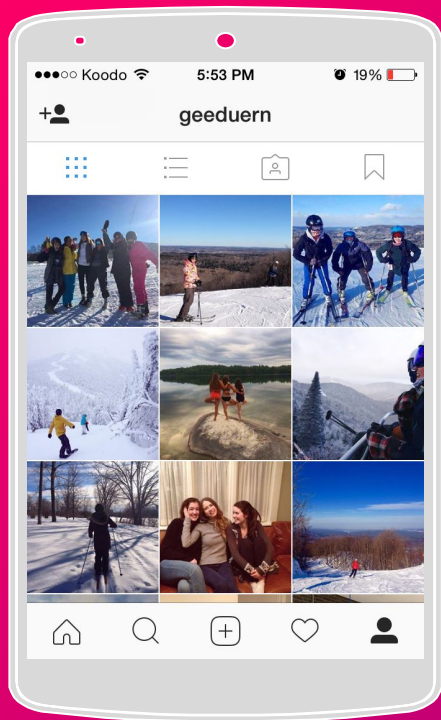
“Instagrammism is the style of global design class” (25)

- “Visual Voice” = Individual identity
- The power of:
 - Empty space
 - Visual intelligence
 - Visual pleasure
- Individuality is created through our images aesthetic and their context





Can you label the aesthetic?



Can you label the aesthetic?

Sources



Manovich, Lev. *Instagrammism and contemporary cultural identity*. Instagram and Contemporary Image, 2016. 1-25. Web.