

**Nature**

Hurt video

Bubble gum video

Imagery of bright blue sky

Synthesis

Cfierce butterfly backpack

Light stick design

How Sweet Video
Flowers in factory hideout
in supernatural
Bunny-shaped UFO
invasion

Digital tech/superflatness

Murakami collab

Powerpuff girls collab

Wearing manga-style
illustrations of themselves
on themselves



the majority of newjeans' visual universe is synthesis
It's like biting an apple

“Idol” has dehumanization built in

Idols can be recognized with a few undetailed signifiers, *icons*: Haerin's cat ears, Hanni's short haircut

Iconography and idolization are intractable from technologies of reproduction and dissemination

Via Walter Benjamin: exhibition value becomes more significant than cult value. AKA, the highly reproduced/reproducible images are more powerful than singular ones

Iconography must optimize for observability and simplicity according to the diffusion of innovations theory

K-Pop groups are best analyzed as commodities more than artists

As commodities, K-pop idols produce an affective reaction on an aesthetic basis rather than a human one.

The girls being iconographic more than specific/human makes them easily translatable into powerpuff girls, murakami cartoons, and funkopops; similar to Warhol's screenprints of Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe, there is an eclipse of the person by the persona.

Unlike K-pop, Warhol's work was somewhere between bleakly amoral and intensely ambivalent

Idolization is love which grows more powerful with distance

Distance > intimacy / idolization is simultaneously ancient and modern.

Ancient in the sense that myth is significant and hyperreal for “traditional” societies (mircea eliade). The most remote (not present physically nor temporally) is more real than physical, embodied, profane reality

Modern in the sense that technologies of image distribution create more encounters with the icon than ever

In the West, there has been a shift away from the untouchable icon of the Hollywood studio system. It's been replaced by the compulsory authenticity (Byung Chul Han).

Parasociality relies on constant disclosure to simulate IRL companionship.

Newjeans and kpop in general are antithetical to this, it preserves the distance from the star

The NewJeans girls are natives to the spectacle.

According to Debord, the spectacle is one unified thing - everything which is a mediation/representation of reality is linked despite different independent organizations all having a role in the production of media. The reason it's fully coherent is that one always encounters it in the same way, at the same place - the screen. (Previously, it could have been through print media or billboards which still are based on the same encounter of a mediated image)

Therefore, it's not contradictory to say that NewJeans is native to utopia *and* NewJeans is native to the spectacle

The screen is the literalization of the boundary between reality and the spectacle

This separation is important for the production of desire and the sustaining of attention - what Barthes would call “the amorous distance” in “Leaving the Movie Theater”

Idols usually go by only a given name. This severs them from mundane reality (and even birth and death, their parents) and makes them more easily inserted into the spectacle/the universe of their creative directors

NewJeans' world - a frutiger aero world, is a plastic; things can change shape, laws of physics can be bent or suspended



NewJeans presents a version of Superflatness that does not stamp out reality, but combined with reality, they are all watched over by machines of loving grace (poem)
 NewJeans understands that this utopia should not be depicted as hardware with plants and animals, but that technology projects an immaterial, ideal, weightless world, and that's the utopia.

NewJeans synthesizes materiality and immateriality.

Utopia is nature/materiality meets digital technology/weightlessness

Nature without decay, technology without arduousness, surveillance, boredom, practicality

They often wear cartoons of themselves

In theory, the sign exists because the referent is not present, but signs are uniquely powerful above and beyond their referent. Equally, you can say that the girls themselves are icons and not really referents (*real*) at all

Cuteness and deferred enjoyment/interpassivity

Kawaii developed in Japan because only young women could enjoy the fruits of a productive economy while everyone else labored.

Young women's tastes shaped consumer aesthetics, and also people who were not young women associated young women and their aesthetics with enjoyment and freedom

We feel compelled to enjoy but cannot meet that requirement. We need to believe someone is out there enjoying, though it does not have to be a specific person

Young women are those who enjoy on behalf of everyone who can't

This connects to girl as vessel, superficial phenomenon (without negative associations with superficial)

The cuteness/beauty of a young woman can produce a certain affect which does not rely on projecting or recognizing external features/gestures as flowing from an interior.

This explains my interest in girl groups over boy groups

This explains why I adore the NewJeans girls without being interested in their personalities

This helps to differentiate idolization from love or attraction

The NewJeans girls, their cuteness and the cuteness of their world, is a part of their role as vicarious enjoyers of youth, friendship, and being beautiful. - the fantasy of being beautiful is often about not having to think about your body at all

Nostalgia, but more precisely, hauntology: nostalgia for what you thought the future would be at a point in the past.

NewJeans is often described as having a Y2K concept, likely because of the cyber optimism of their imagery. However, NewJeans' ethos is actually much closer to frutiger aero.

Y2k cyberfuturism anticipated a future that was completely, unrecognizably transformed by technology, hence no organic elements (i.e, the cheese grater music video set)

Conversely, frutiger aero announced the new present where technology is integrated into our lives and, when used correctly, results in positive outcomes and an opening of possibilities (fishing swimming out of computer screens).

While NewJeans' imagery is not the same as frutiger aero, its mentality is.

They live in the lost future that was the projected trajectory of y2k cyber optimism

Hauntology in a less political sense: rather than mourning the lost future of cyber utopia, NewJeans provides an opportunity for revising one's memories of youth. The depiction of youth by NewJeans is completely without conflict, friction, etc. Memories of youth are bittersweet because of the future you anticipated for yourself at the time. The future of your past self has been disenchanted by the fact that you have lived through it.

If no one's actual experience of youth is like NewJeans, then they're offering to replace our memories with better ones. And what does that new version of the past project for the future? A better outcome for the present?

Wonky relationship to the past and future: returning to the past to change the present and future

This wonky relationship with time is connected to the perpetual simultaneity of the spectacle. Because NewJeans girls live in the spectacle, they don't exist in any time, but a combination of past, present, and future. Their past, present, and future are of their utopia rather than of our world outside of the spectacle.

The K-pop system structurally and culturally guards against the potentially alienating qualities of performers, like ambition, attention-seeking, desperation/obvious desire for anything (for fame, success, approval), assertiveness (alienating in women). K-pop idols can't rub people the wrong way like theater kids do.

Desiring openly is embarrassing

Idols lacking desire - connected to how they "don't date". Prohibition on dating is not just about encouraging romantic attachment, it's because intimacy is the opposite of idolization

Compulsory expressions of gratitude.

Groups > individuals.

Training starts when someone is too young to be responsible for their actions. Auditions to become trainees are motivated by naive, childish interest

There's passivity in the position of a trainee. Past a single audition, their fate and activities are decided by others.

Idols are not seen as leaders of their own careers, they carry out someone else's project
The true thoughts and feelings of an idol are rarely expressed. They are given instruction on what to do and say, and interviews/behind the scenes videos rarely have a goal of authenticity. This sense of the repression of an idol's personality allows for enchantment, a sense that they are victims in some way, and guards against the idea that they become famous to receive some ersatz of love

Idols perform music about experiences they've never had. No demand of authenticity
Via Byung Chul Han: Rather than exposure of unique feelings and experiences, feelings and experiences are generic/generalized rather than specific

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CgUFAvSsNAu/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C1eCfevLNpZ/>

Pop music in general functions as an intimate public (via Lauren Berlant) - allows you to believe that your experiences are generic - this relieves a burden – “the personal is general”

Pop music as a shared touchpoint for the masses has a ceremonial or ritualistic quality; it gives a structure for feelings like love, heartbreak, celebration, that applies to everyone. Feelings are not individual, they're general. Participation in the generalized structure provides privacy, sense-making framework, and connection

Management of ambivalence, prevents disenchantment (to love)

the default is being nobody or, worse, being presumptively *all wrong*: the intimate public legitimates qualities, ways of being, and entire lives that have otherwise been deemed puny or discarded. It creates *situations* where those qualities can appear as luminous.

In popular culture, when conventionality is not being called a homogenizing threat to people's sovereignty and singularity it is seen as a true expression of something both deep and simple in the human. By “conventionality” I span the term's normative and aesthetic senses and claim that the mass mediation of desires in women's genres constructs a deep affinity between them.⁸

Feeling of belonging to a larger world

The mass ornament - Kracauer

“No longer individual girls, but indissoluble girl clusters whose movements are demonstrations of mathematics” “sexless bodies in bathing suits”

Personality perishes to serve calculability

gymnastic discipline. Rather, the girl-units drill in order to produce an immense number of parallel lines, the goal being to train the broadest mass of people in order to create a pattern of undreamed-of dimensions.

The end result is the ornament, whose closure is brought about by emptying all the substantial constructs of their contents.

contours of visible natural form. In the mass ornament nature is deprived of its substance, and it is just this that points to a condition in which the only elements of nature capable of surviving are those that do not resist illumination through reason. Thus, in old Chinese landscape paintings the trees, ponds, and mountains are rendered only as sparse ornamental signs drawn in ink. The organic center has been removed and the remaining unconnected parts are composed according to laws that are not those of nature but laws given by a knowledge of truth, which, as always, is a function of its time. Similarly, it is only remnants of the complex of man that enter into the mass ornament. They are selected and combined in the aesthetic medium according to a principle which represents form-bursting reason in a purer way than those other principles that preserve man as an organic unity.

“The aesthetic pleasure gained from ornamental mass movements is legitimate”

Abstraction - the aestheticization of mechanization - has no output or function

“Rational and empty form of a cult”

Dancing in synchronization is utopic - perfect communion , perfect communication - John

Durham Peters “communion of souls” pre linguistic

Communication is a tragedy because it comes out of apartness. - John Durham Peters:

“communication is marked by felt impasses”

NewJeans style of dancing is simultaneous, but simulates spontaneity

Dancing externalizes inward emotional states. Even if one is dancing a pre-choreographed routine and acting out the emotion, the affective power of music (music being the most affective art form) and the embodiment/acting out of the emotion leads to the actual inscribing of the emotion expressed. Part of the appeal of watching dancing is that it's not really the simulation of emotion, there's some degree of reality to it - summary: embodiment creates emotion

The hurt video showing only them, not even having an identifiable environment: the human body as an irreducible unit of nature around which everything else is superstructure
Edenic nature of unadorned body
(tee shirts are as close as the body can come to lacking signifiers in the late 20th and 21st centuries. It is more neutral than nudity)

They often play guardian angel/greek chorus roles which positions them apart from human turmoil - ETA, Supernatural, Cool with You, Ditto

Their beauty is unconnected with homosocial competition/male desirability
The fantasy of being beautiful involves the fantasy of not having to think about beauty/your body





Chimeras and plastic bodies:



Akin to medieval sculpture and marginalia often depicting chimeras: If God creates all creatures, then he could have equally made them any other way;

If the universe bends to no laws of function, then the state of things seems arbitrary - it could have been any other way

The NewJeans world is not our own - *it's highly plastic* - things are not defined by natural law nor utility, but have transcended, hence the presence of chimera creatures

WINGS : asap video, ETA performances, cfirece butterfly backpacks

BUNNY EARS : OMG

Cat: I'm sorry by petra collins silver cat ears hat, haerin cat ears/hair

Equally the flipside in the supernatural video: they are aliens but they appear human.

Much of their music is not about romantic love

https://x.com/NewJeans_ADOR/status/1551221918451245057

ASAP video seems reminiscent of nymphs in european art and mythology, but there is no figure who they are tempting (neither a figure in the video nor is the viewer of the video prompted to take on a gaze of voyeuristic desire). Their world is one of *beauty but no desire*. This is utopian because desire is terrifying to feel and to encounter, it's ugly, vulnerable, threatening, destabilizing. (Andrea Long Chu)

In the ASAP video, the girls' gaze into the camera is completely blank, suggests they're not recognizing the viewer

The gaze of the viewer is omniscient but not voyeuristic

The fantasy of it is that there is a utopian world where beauty exists, that beauty can exist without ugliness to define itself against, and there are no negative or ambivalent consequences to beauty