

From CBGB to F21: The Ramone's Band T-Shirt and Its Representations in the Mainstream Culture

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Abstract : This article aims to present an analysis of rock band t-shirts as an element that claims a certain identity in modern-contemporary culture. This work focuses on the study of t-shirts that display the name, related elements and the logo of punk band The Ramones, because of its strong presence in the collective mind along the last decades. As we shall see, it is possible to observe a phenomenon of symbolic transition from the original cultural place of that object. At first, it was a piece of cloth that had been part of a specific subculture and then it became just a generic item diluted by the mainstream. This symbolic transitional phenomenon is significant in many ways and will be discussed furthermore. For the analysis, we begin with a brief introduction to the history of the band, followed by the study about the vintage rock band T-shirts and their meanings. From there, we will turn to a historical contextualization of band T-shirts as a subcultural item and to its redefinition after the appropriation made by the mainstream. To guide this reasoning, it will be used theories about the styles, subcultures and youth culture and about material culture from an anthropological perspective. In addition, we shall see the theories and concepts of social representations in order to understand the ways of using the Ramones's T-shirt as a representative element of a fashionable style. This T-shirt, after being resignified by the standardization and the massive consumption, no longer symbolizes the punk movement, its behavioral motivations and original policies. Also has little to do with the rage the working class suburbs of London or New York. It seems to be a mute and vague sign of a restricted rebellion, foreseen and framed establishing a stylistic contrast to the designer clothes and good behavior predicted by establishment. It's an item that composes a specific style available on the market, but at the same time is accepted by the mainstream and provides a subcultural association that has some prestige in society. Another perspective is that of resignification loop. As the same way that punk resignified the conventional goods for their own social standards, fashion resignifies what was said to be an object of a subculture and absorbs in their own mass culture standards. Therefore, outsiders to the punk phenomenon wearing Ramones's T-shirts can be perceived negatively by subcultural members, but at the same time are well received by those who are partially unaware or completely out of subcultural context. For the general public, the stamp of the Ramones's logo happens to be appreciated as a diffuse allusion to a punk style, since its original meaning has being entirely neutralized.

Keywords : social representations, subcultures, material culture, punk

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