

# **Performing Shell**

**The relationship between surface and substance**

**Young geum Cho**

**Master exam**

**Jewellery + Corpus**

**Konstfack**

**2012**

**Tutor: Christina Zetterlund**

## Abstract

Through my study and observation of American jewelry house Tiffany, I could notice how the iconic little blue box contains not only jewellery but also the brand's myth. The function of the Tiffany box, goes beyond what we normally associate with packaging as wrapping of a product. Therefore, I question what is the function of packaging in commercial culture.

Tiffany's little blue box not only is the container of jewellery but also of the whole Tiffany brand identity and myth. This brand's myth is basically illusion. It legitimizes the story by itself. It's the wholeness. It does not bring up any question, instead, we enjoy the fantasy it generates. To achieve one's dreams of beauty, self-distinction and love, seems more possible by buying a piece of the brand's myth.

Visual language is commonly used to communicate a myth, since the sensual and artistic language is a persuasive tool when narrating desires and dreams. In this sense, Cindy Sherman's collaboration with Mac and Marc Jacobs is a good example, which broadens the idea of the so-called 'aestheticization in commercial culture'.

The visual expression of brand myth, was displayed and it has developed into package in the present days. Nowadays, customers are "educated" by commercials to perceive the package as the symbol of brand myth. Packaging is regarded as being as significant as the actual substance of commercial products. Even more so, packaging has become more significant than the actual content. It is more important for brand companies that their customers remember where the product is from, than what it actually is.

Since brand packaging has a strong connection with brand jewellery, the shape of packaging is used as a symbolic language. Norman Weber's work, *'jewellery houses'*, represents, in this sense, an evident example. Moreover, packaging and jewellery shapes have been used as a symbol of commercial culture; an example of this is evident in Jeff Koons' works *'blue diamond'* and *'hanging heart'*.

Based on this notion, I combine jewellery and packaging in my work in order to make my own statement about the relationship between packaging and jewellery in commercial culture. I previously stated that packaging related to brand myth, has been growing to the extent that it became more relevant than the actual content in the context of commercial jewellery culture.

With my artistic statement about packaging, I am at shaping a critical discussion on the overwhelming illusion of consumption related to brand myth in commercial culture.

**Keyword:** Commercial culture, Aestheticization, Tiffany, Brand fantasy, Visual language, Packaging, identity, Alienation

# **Contents**

**Abstract**

**1. Introduction**

**2. Aestheticization in commercial culture**

**3. 'Packaging' in commercial brand jewellery**

**4. Jewellery in the jewellery box; an artistic statement about  
commercial culture**

**5. Conclusion**

**References**

# 1. Introduction

Once, I asked a shop assistant in a Tiffany shop if I could get one of their boxes. The shop assistant flustered. I actually expected such reaction, as I knew that the package nowadays is part of the product. Packaging takes up a significant part in the production process of contemporary culture and its role is growing bigger and bigger. The package has become an important vehicle in telling the brand narrative to such an extent that it nowadays constitutes the product as much as the actual substance. The fact that packaging has become equally important as the actual substance, has led me to be willing to research the relationship between packaging and substance. I therefore pose the question of what is the function of packaging in commercial culture.<sup>1</sup>

In order to answer this question, I make three case studies. The first one deals with Cindy Sherman's play of identity in commercials. In this case study, I compare *Cindy Sherman's* commercial works to her self-initiated artwork. This case study is interesting as it gives a good example of how commercial culture has contributed to develop a sense of aestheticization, which is at the base of the growing importance of packaging. We will see how everything in commercial culture is "packaged" as it has to stand out among thousands of similar products. Sherman "borrows" methods developed in the context of her artistic practice and applies them to the commercial context. I will investigate two different commercial campaigns, Mac and Marc Jacobs, and analyse how Cindy Sherman's work translates through the different campaigns.

My second case study deals with the jewellery brand *Tiffany* that makes of its packaging, the iconic blue box, a prominent component in communicating their brand narrative. Tiffany constitutes an interesting case study in order to research the question of how packaging has grown in importance.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the brand gained its name value, to display their products, the jewellery, at fairs and shop windows was its main marketing tool. I will illustrate how the marketing strategy has shifted from display to symbolic packaging, by examining how the little blue box today is used as an important symbol for the brand identity. I will do so by looking at the brand's presentations, such as ad campaigns and show-window display. An important ingredient in the contemporary Tiffany story, is represented by the iconic image of Audrey Hepburn in the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. I will end my case study by discussing the film's main character, Holly Golightly, and by providing an own interpretation in which I expand the relationship between *Holly Golightly* and *Tiffany* to the relationship between consumers and commercial culture.

My last case study brings the essay in to the field of art. I will look at two artists, Norman Weber and Jeff Koons, who use jewellery and package as a symbolic sign of commercial culture.

Finally, I will conclude my essay with my artistic statement about packaging in commercial culture.

---

<sup>1</sup> "A third definition of pop culture; it is a commercial culture, mass produced for mass consumption." , John Storey, 2000, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, p. 36

## 2. Aestheticization in commercial culture

We can see in different brand commercials that the brand is portrayed as the perfection or wholeness of itself. Commercials simply suggest consumers to buy the brand as a way to perfection. The brand can project an image about wholeness of self, wholeness of beauty, wholeness of happiness and so on. In a recent promotion campaign of makeup company Mac, Cindy Sherman merely acts as an iconic artist in order to convince consumers to purchase Mac. We find the root of this act in her early work, *Film still*. (1977-1980)



In her 'Film Still' (Fig.1-3), Cindy Sherman investigates visual narrative in association with films. She played and staged herself in different characters. Through the costume, makeup, and the setting of the photographs, viewers attempt to connect various movie characters to Sherman's characters. However, Sherman's characters are not illustration of certain movie characters. She made this series of work inspired by films, but the characters in themselves are fictitious. The single stills imply a powerful storytelling in association with the rich narrative in films. She places herself in the middle of the narrative. Therefore 'Film Still' is about her appreciating the experience of films which are shared by people in her generation.<sup>2</sup> Also, the work is about observing her various personas because her work in general is based on self-portrait. It is a play with identity. She is all those different characters, but still herself. When we regard her *Film Still* as self-portraits of herself, we meet the question of identity: who are those characters? And who is Cindy Sherman?. This identity play is easily translated into a commercial world, fact that is proven by the many advertising campaigns Cindy Sherman has participated in.

The latest one is the Mac's promotion. The makeup company asked Sherman to make portraits by using their line of products in order to illustrate the brand narrative in the pictures. By doing so, she was expected to fantasize the wholeness of the brand. She completely disguised herself as a garish heiress (Fig. 4), a doll-like ingénue (Fig.5) and a clown (Fig.6). In this series of commercial photographs, her exaggerated make-up and the high contrast colour combination of the photographs themselves, are quite stark and this way, they emphasize the makeup. This weird image is a tool to fantasize the brand's fairy tale: the wholeness of beauty. Quoting one of Mac's slogans: it is 'forever asking why not when it comes to the miracles of makeup.'<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Arthur C. Danto, 1991, *History Portraits*, Rizzoli International Publications, p.6

<sup>3</sup> *Cindy Sherman for Mac 2011 make-up collection*, [http://www.makeup.becomegorgeous.com/makeup\\_products/cindy\\_sherman\\_for\\_mac\\_fall\\_2011\\_makeup\\_collection-053.html](http://www.makeup.becomegorgeous.com/makeup_products/cindy_sherman_for_mac_fall_2011_makeup_collection-053.html), (visiting date: 2011/10/19)

In this commercial, the visual idea that a person can change completely by wearing make-up, is given an artistic aura by involving Cindy Sherman as a creator. Make up becomes an artistic practice in order to create “miracles”. The unusual commercial images by Sherman, show the consumers a new and distinctive type of beauty, and in turn, hint at the brand as the wholeness of beauty.

The story of changing one’s identity by wearing different make-up, also brings up the philosophical question of what is identity, just like Sherman’s *Film Still*. Following the Mac’s promotion, the notion of identity is nothing more than the idea of distinction. The promotion invites Cindy Sherman, in quality of icon of a distinctive person, to the commercial story. By doing so, it suggests consumers to buy this brand as a solution for achieving individual distinction. Yet, Cindy Sherman’s artistic question or statement about the self is absent. Her method of performing characters is a mere visual expression in Mac’s promotion. The self-portrait of Cindy Sherman supports the fantasy of Mac’s wholeness.

The Mac campaign can be compared to another campaign also featuring the artist. Cindy Sherman worked for the Marc Jacobs’ ad campaign, in which she is even more invisible.



Cindy Sherman, in collaboration with photographer Juergen Teller takes promotion photography for Marc Jacobs’ spring 2005 campaign.(Fig. 7-11) Sherman and Teller perform various characters: from office workers, clowns, to couples following the story of this campaign which is ‘existing ideas of American stereotypes’. This story is the illustration of Marc Jacob’s brand.

Bunny, publisher of the book ‘*Juergen Teller, Cindy Sherman, Marc Jacobs*’, describes Marc Jacobs’s brand as “Experimentation, fun, and fancy ...that being the trademarks that have separated Marc Jacobs from most American designers.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, he defines the works as “ugly and complicated in these portraits.”<sup>5</sup>

In Marc Jacobs’ commercial work, the concept of the performance has a connection to Sherman’s early artistic practice. However, Marc Jacobs itself has a connection to her. Her experimental and reckless images are what Marc Jacobs wants on its ads . As a result, we can find that not everything remains as Cindy Sherman used to do. Looking carefully, we cannot agree that this commercial work has the same ugliness that Bunny defines. Rather, we see that the clowns and workers are portrayed as beautifully as the models in regular commercials. Also, her trademark background that set the stage for each of her previous stories, here totally disappears. There is only a white and clean background waiting for customers. Because of these changes, we see no Cindy Sherman in this commercial.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Bunny, 2006, *Juergen Teller, Cindy Sherman, Marc Jacobs*, Rizzoli, p.11

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

As observed in this example, even ugliness is used as the visual language of Marc Jacobs' brand narrative: the visual expression or visual language is now perceived as a business tool within the so called "consumer engineering" that studies promotion strategies within the field of merchandizing.<sup>6</sup> Within this field, artistic or sensual language is defined as a persuasive tool for telling a story to consumers about dreams and desires.

Calkins, an American advertising executive who pioneered the use of the idea of 'consumer engineering' stated that:

*"The first step toward making the advertising attractive was to make the goods attractive. It was frequently necessary to introduce the article sold into advertisement, or at least its package, and most products and packages were so ugly or so commonplace... to make his goods or packages worthy of being placed in an artistic setting. Bales and boxes and cans and wrappers and labels and trademarks were revised and redesigned."*<sup>7</sup>

This means that visual expression is used to improve the quality of goods just in the viewers' eyes. In other words, a huge part of consumer engineering consists of making a surface attractive. It influences goods, packages, shops and advertisements. Since this deliberate role of surface started to be acknowledged, the trend of image-making industry gathered pace, and finally the surface or image is empowered enough to exist by itself.

The Austrian historian Egon Friedell also insists that *"there are no realities anymore...neither are there goods anymore, but only advertisements: the most valuable product is the one most effectively labeled, the one that the most capital has gone to advertise."*<sup>8</sup>

Since the actual quality of cosmetic products is hard to be recognized by consumers' eyes, a certain brand needs distinguish itself by other means. Advertising is here an important tool. The Mac's promotion campaign is a very good example in that the brand finds a distinctive way of telling an imaginary story through Cindy Sherman. Even if the brand already has a strong distinction, it still has to continuously educate consumers about its distinctive trait, just like Marc Jacob using Cindy Sherman's image to portray the brand's characteristic.

Buying Mac's or Marc Jacobs' products doesn't only mean buying cosmetic product or fashion clothing in commercial culture. We buy the wholeness of the brands, which include the wholeness of beauty and the wholeness of self.

The German sociologist Simmel, also point out that consumption in contemporary culture is about dreams, desires, and communication. He stated that people consume to achieve distinction, which is more than just an economic activity.<sup>9</sup> He also said that shopping becomes a social activity of creating one's distinction in a commercial culture.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Stuart Ewen, 1999, *All consuming images; The politics of style in contemporary culture*, p.45

<sup>7</sup> Earnest Elmo Calkins, 'Beauty, The new Business Tool', *The Atlantic Monthly* 140 (1927, Aug), P.147-48, Citation from *All consuming images; The politics of style in contemporary culture*, p.47

<sup>8</sup> Egon Friedell, *A Cultural History of the Modern Age: The crisis of the European soul from the black death to the world war* (1954), 3:475-76

<sup>9</sup> Storey, John, *Cultural studies & the study of popular culture*, 1996, p.132

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

### 3. 'Packaging' in commercial brand jewellery

I look at commercial jewellery since it was the first industry, together with the one of the cosmetic products, to be affected by the makeover marketing method.<sup>11</sup> I will especially look at the exclusive jewellery brand Tiffany. The reason why I regard Tiffany as commercial jewellery is not because of the fashion, making process or way of expression, but because of its economic scale. I assumed that I can get tangible evidence of how the surface plays a role in contemporary commercial culture, by observing a commercial jewellery brand which is huge enough to have a specialized merchandising system.

We are familiar with the name of Tiffany & Co, American famous brand. Just like other exclusive brands, it has a long history since its foundation in 1837. Tiffany opened a small, fancy shop on Broadway in New York City, which, by the end of the civil war, had established itself as the financial and cultural capital of the United States.<sup>12</sup> At the beginning, the company sold imported jewellery, including imitations, and accessories from Europe. After a while, following its commercial growth, which had the same high-pace as the country's own growth, Tiffany's extended the range of imported jewellery to better quality goods. In order to overcome the disadvantage of being an importing business, at a certain point, Tiffany not only sold jewellery but also started to make its own jewellery.<sup>13</sup> Tiffany's brochure of 1876, reads: 'exhibit of their own make, artistic setting of Precious Stones and Gems, all Gold Jewellery, Chains, ect.'<sup>14</sup>

#### *Distinction by objects and craftsmanship*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, taking part in large exhibition was a prime tool of communication for Tiffanys as well as for many other companies of that time. In order to create seductive displays, the craftsmanship was important to make jewellery as perfect as possible so that they looked more like fairy-like objects rather than the result of man's handiwork. It was clear that the physical products, the craftsmanship and the lavish materials were the key-points.

By participating in different expositions, Tiffany became acquainted with the European design aesthetic, which came to constitute a point of departure for the 'American style'. In addition, thanks to the company's good financial situation and to a group of talented designers and craftsmen, Tiffany gradually improved its workmanship and design skills. Finally, the company started to outperform European competitors at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1867. Tiffany first achieved international recognition with the grand prize for silver craftsmanship.

---

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Ewen, 1999, *All consuming images; the politics of style in contemporary culture*, p.45

<sup>12</sup> Ulysses Grant Dietz, *Be Jewelled by Tiffany: A Gold standard for the Gilded age*, 2007, p.48

<sup>13</sup> Clare Phillips, *Be Jewelled by Tiffany: From fancy goods to a palace of jewels: The early decades of Tiffany & Co*, 2007, p.6-16

<sup>14</sup> Ulysses Grant Dietz, *Be Jewelled by Tiffany: A Gold standard for the Gilded age*, 2007, p.49





#13, #14

At the United States Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, Tiffany also created a remarkable display. The Boston Journal described it as the best display at the exhibition.<sup>15</sup> In this exhibition, the huge, glittering diamond necklace and diamond solitaire earrings were shown as to highlight their monetary value; next to them the unusual peacock-feather hair ornament, was displayed as to stress the jewelry's artistic expression. The colour contrast of the piece composed of the large yellow diamond surrounded by small yellow diamonds set in gold and further white diamonds set in red gold, created a sense of vividness over the entire display of Tiffany's booth. The small flower brooches set with pearls were laid as if they had been scattered by a gentle wind, this contributing to create a fairy tale-like atmosphere.<sup>16</sup>

Tiffany presented not only its artistic expression and craftsmanship, but also showmanship in its display. Tiffany tended to overload its display with many pieces of jewellery. This way of displaying was criticized by German critics stating that Tiffany's presentation was 'more like a shop than an exhibition.'<sup>17,</sup>

Despite the critiques, it was true that Tiffany's display had a magical power over visitors at the fair. Actually, it got so crowded in front of Tiffany's booth, that the company had to remove their display in order not to block the traffic in the exhibition hall.<sup>18</sup> In The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, it was commented: '*as the women catch glimpse of their glitter...with magnet-like force and velocity, and with bewildered eyes become as riveted and immobile in position as pillars.*'<sup>19,</sup>

Tiffany's 'overloaded display' made its jewelleries more glamorous and stick out among other competitors', in expositions. A German writer criticized this strategy of overloading the display and deemed it as Americans' vulgar desire of ornaments.<sup>20</sup> However, he did not notice that the overloading

<sup>15</sup> Boston Journal, 15 March 1876, *Tiffany & Co Archives, Clipping Books, 1858-77*, folder 1, citation from *Be jewlled by Tiffany*, p.31

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, citation from *Be jewlled by Tiffany*, p.31

<sup>17</sup> Ulysses Grant Dietz, *Be Jewelled by Tiffany: A Gold standard for the Gilded age*, 2007, p.33

<sup>18</sup> Boston Commercial Bulletin, 7 Oct 1876, *Tiffany & Co Archives, Clipping Books, 1858-77*, folder 2, citation from *Be jewlled by Tiffany*, p.31

<sup>19</sup> Tiffany & Co Archives, Photography, 'The Tiffany exhibit at the World's Fair', Jeweler's review, 1893, P.36, citation from *Be jewlled by Tiffany*, p.35

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, Frankforter Zeitung und Handelsblatt, 9 Jan, p.29, citation from *Be jewlled by Tiffany*, p.32

display originated from the idea of jewellery as a tool of showing-off oneself, which is the reality not only in America but also in Europe. For example, in an image of England's Queen Alexandra (Fig. 14), the opulent display of her glittering jewelleries just looks alike Tiffany's eye catching display (Fig.13).

### *Distinction by package*

Tiffany from the early age showed its distinction through displaying well-made craftworks, while the present-day Tiffany puts a greater emphasis on brand narrative in order to create distinction. In this narrative, the little box with its "Tiffany blue colour" is an important component.

The Tiffany blue colour was created as a part of the brand-distinction strategy in 1837. Pantone produced the colour as a private custom colour with PMS (Panton matching system) number. Since it is a trademarked colour, it is not publicly available and is not printed in the Pantone Matching System swatch books.<sup>21</sup> The colour is adopted for boxes, shopping bags and form of advertisement. 'Tiffany blue' was born to become an icon of 'Tiffany'.



#15

#16

#17

#18

As we can see in the photos of the Christmas campaign (Fig. 15), the whole image is toned down beside the little blue box. The box is a detail in each photograph; however it takes up a main role as a recognizable symbol. The same fact is recognisable in the shop-window display only containing the blue boxes and no jewellery (Fig. 16). In this shop-window, the blue boxes give enough information about the brand. The blue boxes used in an installation for an opening ceremony(Fig.17) also show how the blue boxes are an important symbolic element that stands in for Tiffany.

The *Tiffany blue* box is an effective promotion tool just as it is: we can in fact recognize those little boxes during an award ceremony in a Polo golf tournament (Fig.18), which is sponsored by Tiffany. This is because of its iconic colour.

The little blue box is the most internationally popular symbol. In a perspective of the company, this blue box is the representation of Tiffany's fantasy. Even though the physical jewellery is the material substance that it sells, the most important fact it sells to customers is the brand myth of Tiffany.

According to Denise Meyer, creative director of Fruchtmann Marketing, an advertising agency that specializes in jewellery marketing: "*Tiffany wants you to forget the product and remember where it came from*"<sup>22</sup>

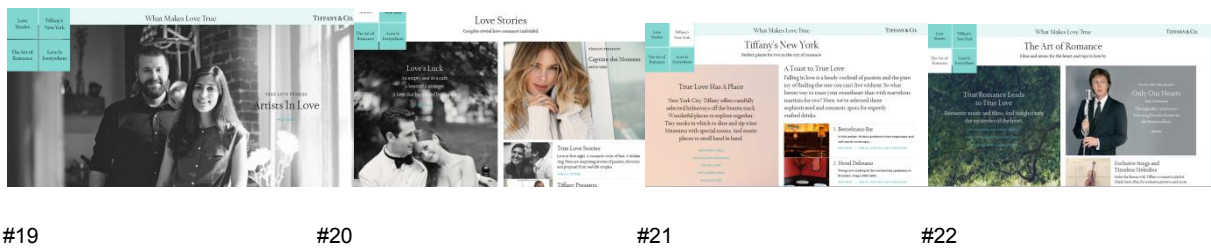
The little blue box is no more just a small package decorating the actual jewellery, but it's a

<sup>21</sup> As *Pure and elegant as the Tiffany blue*, 2011/03/17, <http://www.shoeling.com/uncategorized/as-pure-and-elegant-as-the-tiffany-blue.html>, (Visiting date: 2011/12/30)

<sup>22</sup> As *Pure and elegant as the Tiffany blue*, 2011/ 03/ 17, <http://www.shoeling.com/uncategorized/as-pure-and-elegant-as-the-tiffany-blue.html>, (Visiting date: 2011/12/30)

container of the whole Tiffany.

< The fantasy of Tiffany >



Let's look at the brand myth of Tiffany which is compressed in the little blue box.

The distinction of Tiffany is created within its brand story since jewellery has a strong connection to emotional value, love. To communicate brand distinction as a jewellery brand, making beautiful stories is as significant as making beautiful jewellery.

Tiffany as the wholeness of love is well described in its promotion campaign 'what makes love true.' The commercial campaign 'What makes love True' is made as a webpage which has four links. The first link, called *love stories*, presents personal stories by Tiffany's customers. The second link, *Tiffany's New York*, gathers information on how to plan a special date. The third one, '*The art of romance*', introduces films and music about love. In the last link; *love is everywhere*, people can join in the campaign by uploading one's photos and the location where their love happened.

The commercial campaign aims for connecting the fantasy of love to the brand myth of Tiffany. The webpage of the campaign creates an impression of Tiffany as a supporter of true love. However, Tiffany borrows the most spectacular moments of people's stories but does not support their entire love stories. Every real story is mutated into the Tiffany's edited version of a love story. Tiffany's version, consists of only two parts; the moment of falling in love with each other and another moment in which couples successfully get married with Tiffany's rings.

With this web-campaign, Tiffany 'educates' customers to fantasize the brand as the wholeness of love by showing stories of wedding couples.



The connotation of Tiffany in commercial culture, shows how Tiffany spreads its fantasy over consumers and makes people desire to participate in it. Tiffany has been mentioned in many cultural products, such as the novel '*Something from Tiffany*' by Melissa Hill (Fig. 24) and the TV series '*Gossip Girls*' (Fig.25). Perhaps the most iconic is the movie and novel titled '*Breakfast at Tiffany's*' (Fig. 23).

In the novel '*Breakfast at Tiffany's*' by Truman Capote the main character, Holiday Golightly, who later became an American cultural icon, shows how consumers fantasize about the commercial culture

as a way leading to perfection.<sup>23</sup>

Holiday Golightly is an 18-19 years old country girl who moved to New York. She has no job but goes to expensive restaurants or nightclubs accompanied by her rich lovers. As she writes on her mailbox "Miss holiday Golightly travelling", she takes her present life as travelling, a holiday, which is not heavy but light. For she is a traveller, she doesn't buy furniture, she has only a travelling bag in her house. However she says: "...home is where you feel at home. I'm still looking," which meaning that she is looking for the feeling of home and expects to get it someday.<sup>24</sup>

Actually, she often feels insecure, but then she goes to her only home-alike place: Tiffany's. For her, Tiffany seems a perfect world as she states that "*It calms me down right away...; nothing very bad could happen to you there, not with those kind men in their nice suits, and that lovely smell of silver and alligator wallets*"<sup>25</sup>

She has a desire of finding her self-distinction and, at the same time, of finding a perfect home. As she never felt calm in her home or with her family, she projects her fantasy of a perfect home onto Tiffany, believing that there must be a right place for her just like the Tiffany shop, where she can return to whenever she wants.

Indeed, Miss Golightly has a brother, the only important person she really cares about, but talks about him like she talks about the rest of her past, in a whitewashed and unclear way.<sup>26</sup> This means that she does not have an attachment to her past and family. She just wants to dump out her old history and get a new one.

In the end of the novel, she flies to Brazil after being abandoned by her rich lover, Jose. There is no one waiting for her. It was just a destination of her ex-lover. On the way to the airport, she dumps on the street the last of her possessions, a cat. We expect Holly to find her home one day, just like her cat finds one in the last scene of the novel.

Offended and fragile character, Holly Golightly is the portrayal of consumers in the commercial culture. The character very precisely reflects the consumers' naivety, irony and fragility. Her wish of finding her real home one day, is very similar to commercial story. It is the same fantasy that we saw in the previous example of the Mac commercial. In this novel, Tiffany is described, by Holly Golightly, as the perfect place where customers feel as home

Miss Holly, as a consumer, has no doubt about Tiffany's perfection and distinction. However, since this perfect image is a fantasy projected by Tiffany itself, Holly might not be able to find a homely feeling ever; or at least as long as she does not acknowledge that her imperfect family and past, instead of Tiffany's, is the ground of her self-distinction.

The Tiffany's shop is from consumers' fantasy. We don't expect anything bad happening because there is always a solution for us: consumption. However, the alienated feeling of Holly Golightly reflects the circumstance that consumers are supposed to fail in meeting their optimal desire.

---

<sup>23</sup> Tom Vallance, "*Dorian Leigh: 'Supermodel' of the 1940s*", The Independent (London), 2008/07/14.

<sup>24</sup> Truman Capote, 1958, '*Breakfast at Tiffany's*', p.41

<sup>25</sup> Truman Capote, 1958, '*Breakfast at Tiffany's*', p.40-41

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Cash, 1996, *A critical analysis of 'Breakfast at Tiffany's'*, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bcash/criticalanalysis.html>, (Visiting date: 2012/01/04)

Tiffany shop expanded to the real world; commercial culture, and Holly Golightly expanded to the real people; consumers want to be distinctive, needs packaging.

#### 4. Jewellery in the jewellery box; artistic statements about commercial culture



#26

#27

#28

#29

#30

I am convinced, through my observation, that the relationship between jewellery and packaging can be described as the symbol of commercial culture. Now, I would like to look at examples of artistic interpretation of jewellery and packaging in order to place my own statement about commercial culture within the field.

Norman Weber, the German Jewellery artist, made a series of brooches called '*jewellery houses*' (Fig. 26) in 1997. The pieces are wearable, metal, hollow boxes depicted as jewellery boxes. The boxes are made out of aluminium, plastic, steel, silver, or gold and they are covered with acrylic colours. The coloured boxes are decorated with existing labels and price tags bearing Weber's signature.

The visual expression of jewellery boxes is symbolic and recognizable. However, his signature, as an artist's contribution, suddenly interferes with the symbolic visual language and adds the question mark on the dominant value of commercial jewellery. The brand value is the main artistic question in this work.

He observed that the emotional value or monetary value of jewellery, becomes less important compared to the brand value in a commercial jewellery culture.<sup>27</sup>

I see the work '*Jewellery houses*' as contemporary art aiming for poking the fantasy about brand-value. Also, the combination of familiar motif and artistic idea, in this work, rises up the artistic value of contemporary art jewellery.

In fine art, the jewellery and package is used as a symbolic image of commercial culture.

We can see that the conventional image of jewellery is so dominant than any other aspect of jewellery, when it is mentioned outside of the jewellery art field. Actually, the reference to the jewellery shape is used in Jeff Koons' work '*blue diamond*' (Fig. 27), as a representation of commercial culture. This work is one in a series called '*Celebration*', which applies not only shapes derived from jewellery but also from packaging, as seen in '*Hanging heart*' (Fig.29) and '*Sacred heart*'

---

<sup>27</sup> Norman Weber, 2010, *Now: Jewellery by Norman Weber*, Arnoldsche, p.37

(Fig. 28), as visual references from the celebrations such as birthdays and anniversaries.

The choice of Jeff Koons, depicting a diamond and packaging shape, implies the stereotype of jewellery as a pleasant but superficial fantasy of commercial culture. The huge dimension of the sculpture dominates viewers' human scale, which speaks about the superficial image as a dominant communication tool in commercial culture.

## **5. Conclusion; relation to work.**

In commercial culture, visual language is the dominant communication tool. We believe what we see. It is evident in commercials that physical substances are hidden behind the aesthetic visual language of commercials. As observed in Cindy Sherman's case study, the artist's characteristic is compressed as a mere visual expression, the sign of distinction.

We observed the history of aestheticization in commercial culture through Tiffany's history. This aestheticization in commercial culture first applied only to making products, then to displays and now to packaging. Package is no more a decorative cover of a physical product, but the presentation of the whole brand. The little blue box is strongly associated with the brand name Tiffany. It is also associated with the brand myth; the wholeness of something. As we discussed, Miss Golightly believes that Tiffany is the perfect place, where nothing bad could ever happen. This is the brand myth that we are exposed to in commercial culture. Miss Golightly is the portrait of us. We learned that the illusion of consumption, in the commercial culture, is the way to perfection.

The characteristic of commercial culture is often mentioned in the art field. In the jewellery art field, a form of package is used as a symbol of commercial culture. Also the classical form of jewellery is directly used as a symbol of commercial culture in fine art, since jewellery itself has been regarded as body decoration with monetary value in association with the field of decorative art.

My work encompasses wearable objects referring to packaging. I make only rings since rings are the most common piece of jewellery which is connected to an individual's identity.<sup>28</sup> As we saw in the examples of different commercials of brand products, brand identity means individual's distinction for consumers in a commercial culture. Therefore, I choose rings as the best medium for the discussion on brand identity in relation with packaging.

I use two different categories of rings in my work. One group of rings is machine-made representing actual substances of commercial products. The other category of rings is by me fabricated and it references the shape of the packaging. I combine these two groups of rings in my body of work to rise up some critical discussion about the relationship between substance and packaging in commercial culture.

The action of actually wearing jewellery is important in my work. When each package-shaped ring is on the body, the ring is out of proportion in relation to the scale of the wearer's body. In the series of work, the size of the ring gradually gets bigger and, from the scale of a finger, it takes the whole body. This fact expresses how package has become more and more significant in commercial culture, at

---

<sup>28</sup> Nicolas Estrada, 2011, *New rings*, Thames&Hudson, pp.8-9

least as much as substance, or even more so.

I conclude with my statement on my work that we are overwhelmed by packaging in a relation to the powerful brand myth in commercial culture.

## References

**Blackburn, Stephanie, 2004/ 05/05, *A case study of Tiffany&Company*,**

<http://smu.edu/ecenter/discourse/blackburn.htm> (Visiting date: 2011/12/30)

**Bunny, Jan , 2006, *Juergen Teller, Cindy Sherman, Marc Jacobs*, Rizzoli**

**Calkins, Earnest Elmo, 1927/ 08, 'Beauty, The new Business Tool', The Atlantic Monthly vol. 140**

<http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/27aug/calkins.htm> (Visiting date: 2011/12/30)

**Capote,Truman, 1958, 'Breakfast at Tiffany's', New York : Modern Library**

**Cash, Mattew, 1996, *A critical analysis of 'Breakfast at Tiffany's'*,**

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bcash/criticalanalysis.html> (Visiting date: 2012/01/04)

**'Cindy Sherman for MAC Fall 2011 Makeup Collection'**

[http://www.make-up.becomegorgeous.com/makeup\\_products/cindy\\_sherman\\_for\\_mac\\_fall\\_2011\\_makeup\\_collection-5053.html](http://www.make-up.becomegorgeous.com/makeup_products/cindy_sherman_for_mac_fall_2011_makeup_collection-5053.html) (visiting date: 2011/10/19)

**Nicolas Estrada, 2011, *New rings*, Thames&Hudson**

**Ewen ,Stuart, 1999, *All consuming images: the politics of style in contemporary culture*, Basic books**

**Arthur Danto, C., 1991, *History Portraits*, Rizzoli International Publications**

**Gibson, Megan, 2011/08/24, 'Fashion Forward: Cindy Sherman for MAC Cosmetics'**

<http://lightbox.time.com/2011/08/24/fashion-forward-cindy-sherman-for-mac-cosmetics/#3>

(visiting date: 2011/10/19)

**Phillips, Clare, Tiffany & CO., 2007, *Be Jewelled by Tiffany*, Yale University Press**

**Simmel, Georg, 1903, 'The metropolis and Mental life', [http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/BPL_Images/Content_store/Sample_chapter/0631225137/Bridge.pdf)**

[/BPL\\_Images/Content\\_store/Sample\\_chapter/0631225137/Bridge.pdf](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/BPL_Images/Content_store/Sample_chapter/0631225137/Bridge.pdf), (Visiting date: 2011/12/30)

**Storey, John, 2000, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Harlow: longman**

**Vallance, Tom, "*Dorian Leigh: 'Supermodel' of the 1940s*", The Independent (London), 2008/07/14. (Visiting date: 2011/12/30)**

**Veiteberg, Jorunn, 2007, *Kim buck; it's the thought that counts*,**

**Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck**



**“Brand identity”**, Business dictionary,

<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/brand-identity.html> (Visiting date: 2011/12/30)

**‘As Pure and elegant as the Tiffany blue’, 2011/03/17,**

<http://www.shoeling.com/uncategorized/as-pure-and-elegant-as-the-tiffany-blue.html>,

(Visiting date: 2011/12/30)

## **Bibliography**

**Amanda, Cruz, Smith, Elizabeth, A.T, and Jones, Amelia, 1997, London : Thames & Hudson**

**Heartney, Eleanor, 2001, *Postmodernism*, Tate publishing**

**Koons, Jeff, 1992, *The Jeff Koons Handbook*, Rizzoli**

**Tungate, Mark, 2005, *Fashion Brands: Branding style from Armani to Zara*, Kogan Page**

## **List of Image**

**1. Cindy Sherman, Film Still #21,**

Amanda Cruz, Smith, Elizabeth, A.T, and Jones, Amelia, 1997, London : Thames & Hudson

**2. Cindy Sherman, Film Still #14,**

Amanda Cruz, Smith, Elizabeth, A.T, and Jones, Amelia, 1997, London : Thames & Hudson

**3. Cindy Sherman, Film Still #15,**

Amanda Cruz, Smith, Elizabeth, A.T, and Jones, Amelia, 1997, London : Thames & Hudson

**4. *Mac 2011 fall color promotion campaign,***

[http://www.makeup.becomegorgeous.com/makeup\\_products/cindy\\_sherman\\_for\\_mac\\_fall\\_2011\\_makeup\\_collection-053.html](http://www.makeup.becomegorgeous.com/makeup_products/cindy_sherman_for_mac_fall_2011_makeup_collection-053.html), (visiting date: 2011/10/19)

**5. *Mac 2011 fall color promotion campaign,***

[http://www.makeup.becomegorgeous.com/makeup\\_products/cindy\\_sherman\\_for\\_mac\\_fall\\_2011\\_makeup\\_collection-053.html](http://www.makeup.becomegorgeous.com/makeup_products/cindy_sherman_for_mac_fall_2011_makeup_collection-053.html), (visiting date: 2011/10/19)

**6. *Mac 2011 fall color promotion campaign,***

[http://www.makeup.becomegorgeous.com/makeup\\_products/cindy\\_sherman\\_for\\_mac\\_fall\\_2011\\_makeup\\_collection-053.html](http://www.makeup.becomegorgeous.com/makeup_products/cindy_sherman_for_mac_fall_2011_makeup_collection-053.html), (visiting date: 2011/10/19)

**7. Marc Jacobs’ promotion campaign, ‘*Juergen- Teller, Cindy Sherman*’,**

Bunny, Jan , 2006, *Juergen Teller, Cindy Sherman, Marc Jacobs*, Rizzoli

**8. Marc Jacobs’ promotion campaign, ‘*Juergen- Teller, Cindy Sherman*’,**

Bunny, Jan , 2006, *Juergen Teller, Cindy Sherman, Marc Jacobs*, Rizzoli

**9. Marc Jacobs’ promotion campaign, ‘*Juergen- Teller, Cindy Sherman*’,**

- Bunny, Jan , 2006, *Juergen Teller, Cindy Sherman, Marc Jacobs*, Rizzoli
10. Marc Jacobs' promotion campaign, '*Juergen- Teller, Cindy Sherman*',  
Bunny, Jan , 2006, *Juergen Teller, Cindy Sherman, Marc Jacobs*, Rizzoli
  11. Marc Jacobs' promotion campaign, '*Juergen- Teller, Cindy Sherman*',  
Bunny, Jan , 2006, *Juergen Teller, Cindy Sherman, Marc Jacobs*, Rizzoli
  12. *Marc Jacob's* commercial photography,
  13. Illustration of Tiffany display from Harper's weekly 2,Dec,1876,  
Phillips, Clare, Tiffany & C0., 2007, *Be Jewelled by Tiffany*, Yale University Press
  14. England's Queen Alexandra  
Phillips, Clare, Tiffany & C0., 2007, *Be Jewelled by Tiffany*, Yale University Press
  15. Tiffany's 2011 Christmas campaign,  
<http://www.tiffany.com/shopping/default.aspx?mcat=148204> (Visiting date: 2011/ 12/30)
  16. Tiffany's hosting the premiere of '*Bride wars*',  
<http://www.weddingobsession.com/2009/01/07/tiffanys-blue-bride-wars-reception/> (Visiting date: 2011/ 12/30)
  17. Tiffany's shop in Las Vegas,  
<http://www.worldpropertychannel.com/us-markets/commercial-real-estate-1/real-estate-news-las-vegas-citycenter-tiffany-company-dubai-world-mgm-mirage-luxury-las-vegas-retailers-bellagio-hotel-caesars-hotel-1736.php>  
(Visiting date: 2011/ 12/30)
  18. Tiffany's Sponsorship for *Polo* Tournaments,  
<http://www.tiffany.com/About/News/Article.aspx?id=17> (Visiting date: 2011/ 12/30)
  19. Tiffany's promotion campaign '*what makes love true*';  
<http://www.whatmakeslovetrue.com/> (Visiting date: 2011/ 12/30)
  20. Tiffany's promotion campaign '*what makes love true*';  
<http://www.whatmakeslovetrue.com/> (Visiting date: 2011/ 12/30)
  21. Tiffany's promotion campaign '*what makes love true*';  
<http://www.whatmakeslovetrue.com/> (Visiting date: 2011/ 12/30)
  22. Tiffany's promotion campaign '*what makes love true*';  
<http://www.whatmakeslovetrue.com/> (Visiting date: 2011/ 12/30)
  23. A scene from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*
  24. The cover of the novel *Something from Tiffany*
  25. A Scene from *Gossip Girls*  
<http://www.ramblingsofregan.com/2011/11/gossip-girl.html> (Visiting date: 2011/ 12/30)
  26. Norman Weber, 1997, *Jewellery houses*,  
Norman Weber, 2010, *Now: Jewellery by Norman Weber, Arnoldsche*
  27. Jeff Koons, 1994-2005, *Blue diamond*,  
Koons, Jeff, 1992, *The Jeff Koons Handbook*, Rizzoli
  28. Jeff Koons, 1994-2007, *Sacred Heart*  
Koons, Jeff, 1992, *The Jeff Koons Handbook*, Rizzoli

**29.** Jeff Koons, 1994-2006, *Hanging heart*,

Koons, Jeff, 1992, *The Jeff Koons Handbook*, Rizzoli

**30.** *Tiffany's blue box*

<http://hatterandhareevents.blogspot.com/2010/05/tiffany-style-sweet-16-part-i.html> (Visiting date: 2011/12/30)