

Portfolio of Writing

Student Name: Jack Thomas

Student Number: 2004978

Programme of Study: Film & TV

Module: ADAD4018

Ways of Thinking Lecturer's Name: Robert Jones

Tasks in the order I completed them:

Task 1: Manifesto Writing = 400 (not including statements before expansion) words

Task 2: Observational Writing = 555 words

Task 3: Practice-based Writing = 614 words

Total Word Count (excluding references, titles, etc): 1,569

Jack Thomas

Manifesto Writing

Introduction

In this writing I will outline eight of my foundational beliefs for productivity, creative development and learning. Each belief will take the form of a statement, out of the eight statements, three statements will be expanded upon by a mix of academic sources, supporting evidence and my own previous experience linking to said statements. The aim of this is to critically analyse and overview my own personal beliefs and ways of thinking about my chosen subjects.

Statements

- A basic knowledge of the technical aspects of filmmaking are essential for working in the industry.
- Practical industry experience is vital for improving as an artist.
- whether that be jotting down notes, outlining scripts or creating character profiles for potential ideas is the best way to combat writer's block.
- As a creative artist, branching out beyond your speciality can often help you develop your fundamental creative skills even further.
- Collaboration is the one of the most effective ways to develop a creative skill because they always provide the most learning opportunities.
- Outlining your creative work in a clear and concise manner is essential to maintaining a consistent creative vision.
- When initially concepting an idea, music can help spark inspiration and lead your ideas in new directions.
- constructive criticism is the most powerful tool to learn and develop any project as a creative artist.

Statements Expanded

Based on my own personal experience, technical skills are essential for a career in filmmaking. In order to have a in-depth understanding of the filmmaking process, you must have a basic knowledge of the equipment and usage techniques of production in order to effectively communicate your creative vision or work with another person to develop theirs. A lack of technical understanding makes communication more difficult when you are working with a group of collaborators on a project. (Muncatchy, n.d.)

Listening to upbeat music has been linked to decreased levels of anxiety and stress in some people (Thoma et al., 2014) which can help stimulate creative thinking and aid creative artists in the production process when initially conceptualizing an idea. Music can help spark inspiration and lead your ideas in new directions, creating a playlist of music that mirrors the desired tone of your project may help you generate further ideas to incorporate into said project. Music is always my first and constant stream of inspiration.

Experience is key. Throughout my studies, I have constantly been told that experience is essential for improving as an artist. Going out and working in the industry at an early stage in a person's creative development is vital, as it helped me discover the areas in which I primarily specialise, and it helped build connections which lead to numerous future opportunities. Beyond this, studies suggest that there is a correlation between practical experience and retaining knowledge in terms of tasks. (Abrahams and Millar, 2008)

Conclusion

To conclude, the aforementioned statements about creative development, productivity and education have given me an opportunity to reflect upon my own techniques and have allowed me to examine my own methods of gaining inspiration, learning and my own personal beliefs. I have gained a more detailed insight into the inner workings of productivity and understand my own beliefs to much greater degree. I am pleased with what I learned from researching these topics.

References

- Muncatchy, M., n.d. 5 Skills Every Filmmaker Needs – The Los Angeles Film School.
[online] The Los Angeles Film School. Available at:
<<https://www.lafilm.edu/blog/5-skills-every-filmmaker-needs/>> [Accessed 6 December 2020].
- Thoma, M., Zemp, M., Kreienbühl, L., Hofer, D., Schmidlin, P., Attin, T., Ehlert, U. and Nater, U., 2014. Effects of Music Listening on Pre-treatment Anxiety and Stress Levels in a Dental Hygiene Recall Population. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, [online] 22(4), pp.498-505. Available at:
<<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12529-014-9439-x>> [Accessed 8 December 2020].
- Abrahams, I. and Millar, R., 2008. Does Practical Work Really Work? A study of the effectiveness of practical work as a teaching and learning method in school science. *International Journal of Science Education*, [online] 30(14), pp.1945-1969. Available at:
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248974487_Does_Practical_Work_Really_Work_A_study_of_the_effectiveness_of_practical_work_as_a_teaching_and_learning_method_in_school_science> [Accessed 8 December 2020].

Jack Thomas

Observational Writing

Photography as a medium has been utilised as a documentation device for decades, capturing some of the most pivotal moments in modern history. This writing will attempt to analyse a key documentative work from Swiss photographer Robert Frank. 'Trolley' from 1955, uncovering the semiotic meaning and gaining a deeper understanding of themes communicated through this photographic work.

The word 'Semiotics' refers to the study of signs, the way in which we perceive the world around us. An example of Semiotics is colour association; Red for passion, green for luck and blue for sadness. "Semiotics, in terms of the latter, this can be defined more precisely as the use of Signs to relate, depict, portray or reproduce something perceived, sensed or imagined" (Danesi, n.d.).

Semiotics are utilised constantly in all forms of media from photography, to film and literature to subconsciously communicate ideas or themes to the public. Semiotics implant a deeper meaning into visual representation, the expression "A picture can say a thousand words" is the most basic way to summarise semiotics in media.



Robert Frank used semiotic symbolism in his photography to provide cultural context and reflect the current socio political landscape that his subjects were living in at the time. His most famous work, 'Trolley', from New Orleans in 1955 depicts a bus or 'Trolley' full of passengers.

Two white passengers, a male and a female sit comfortably at the front of the bus, while two small children sit in the middle. The first four white passengers appear to have a somewhat agitated or uncomfortable expression on their faces, particularly one of the young boys in the middle. Behind them sits two black men, one staring blankly into the lens of Robert Frank with a chilling expression. The other shifting their attention away from the camera. This image is of course a bleak snapshot into the history of American segregation.

The most apparent semiotic element of this image is the composition, showing the two black men sitting at the back of the bus, a commonly known segregation method that was commonplace in America during the 1950's. However, this time period and sociopolitical landscape is further communicated through the difference in period appropriate clothing the subjects are wearing. One of the young boys appears to be wearing suspenders and a white shirt, while the other is wearing a tweed jacket and bowtie. Both outfits are concurrent with their timeframe, however when contrasted with the attire of one of the men at the back of their bus, the time and location becomes much more evident. The man that is looking into the camera appears to be wearing a boiler suit, suggesting a blue collar profession. At that time, blue collar jobs were generally the only ones available to black during segregation.

Each subject tells their own visual story and you gain an understanding of the time period and the ever-present tensions simply by looking at this image. Deconstructing semiotics can provide people with a deeper understanding of the themes and metaphors that are present in visual storytelling. Documentative photography by artists such as Robert Frank provides an unfiltered window into the past, a raw look at the history of cultures. The ability to analyse and understand the deeper meaning that is present in said photography is a skill many people are unaware they possess.

References

- Danesi, M., n.d. *Understanding Media Semiotics*. 1st ed. Bloomsbury Academic, p.7.
- Thoet, A., 2019. *The One Robert Frank Photo That Might Best Capture America*. [online] PBS NewsHour. Available at:
<<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/the-one-robert-frank-photo-that-might-best-capture-america>> [Accessed 8 December 2020].

Jack Thomas

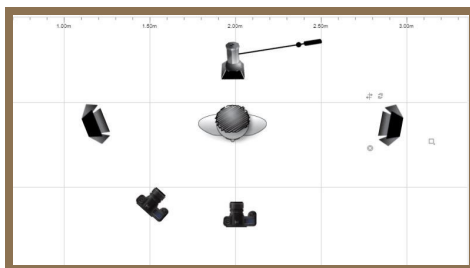
Practice-Based Writing

In this section of writing I will be comprehensively recounting the production process surrounding the Ospreys 'Pathways' documentary mini series, evaluating and analysing my production skills with the aim to explore and reflect on my reasoning for particular creative choices. I will be loosely applying 'Gibbs' Reflective Cycle' to my analysis in order to maintain a more concise structure.

When I was initially approached to be involved with the 'Pathways' I was eager to learn more about the creative direction of the project, however there was only a basic treatment that outlined a particular style with reference to other sporting documentaries. This loose guidance allowed me to develop my own creative vision which, in turn, made me feel more motivated to spearhead the project. Creative freedom with a basic structure is my ideal scenario, I enjoyed the ability to bounce ideas off of my colleagues and watch the project grow.

During production I was largely satisfied with the overall look and feel of the production, however a tight shooting schedule and under-equipped locations made me feel somewhat stressed. However, when production wrapped and I reviewed the footage for the edit, I was relieved to see that coverage was strong and lighting was solid.

Principal photography on 'Pathways' arrived quickly with very little time to plan the shoots. I was forced to employ a more 'Ad Hoc' approach to lighting and set design. Issues of unaffiliated company logos were alleviated by placing Ospreys banners in front of the for example. Reflecting on the production from an objective standpoint, I now realise that due to time constraints and Covid-19 regulations I was forced to use directional shotgun microphones instead of a Lavalier system, which resulted in poor audio quality. Despite using effects in post-production, the audio could not be salvaged and the final product is left



with subpar audio quality. In retrospect, I should have prepared for a situation such as this point and packed my own boom microphone kit.

However despite facing time constraints and, the lighting and camera work did not suffer as a result. I mapped out the lighting beforehand using a software called 'Sylights', which helped tremendously moving and setting up lights in different conditions. Without that diagram the lighting would have faced many continuity problems and resulted

in inconsistent lighting throughout.

My previous experience as a freelance videographer and media intern for Ospreys Rugby helped me understand the fast-paced working environment and effectively adapt my production plans to the changing schedule. Around what I thought was halfway through the shoot, we were unexpectedly told to vacate the room we were using as a studio. It turns out I had run overtime



and the room was scheduled to be used for something else. At that time I had not finished interviewing the previous subjects. However, within five minutes a colleague of mine found another empty room so we set up the light in a similar position to continue the shoot. This would not have been possible without strong communication with the crew and a proper knowledge of the building.

After production wrapped, the post-production process was straightforward and turned out a finished

edit after three drafts. Overall I believe this was a positive experience as it allowed me to gain a better understanding of the nuances of the workplace.

I have learned that being mindful of time is just as essential as communication with the crew, without the creative environment we fostered on set, I would have not been able to finish the shoot properly. Reflecting on this now I realise that my leadership skills are somewhat poor and I hope to learn new skills in this area as I progress through university.

References

Wain, A., 2017. (PDF) Learning through reflection (2017). Available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320342913_Learning_through_reflection [Accessed 15 December 2020].