

Student Name: Katie Leah Baugh

Student ID Number: 2000620

Programme of Study: BA Illustration

Module: ADAD4018

Ways of Thinking Lecturer's Name: Jonathon Pugh

Tasks in the order I received them:

Task 1: Manifesto Writing = 535 words

Task 2: Observational Writing = 550 words

Task 3: Practice-based Writing = 550 words

Task 1: Manifesto Writing

1. I believe that illustration has a responsibility to help others, either practically or in some cases mentally, in terms of mental health
2. I believe that illustration should have a purpose- it's purpose is up to the artist
3. I believe that art should be easily accessed by everyone
4. I believe that art should be enjoyable- to both the artist and the viewer
5. I believe that art shouldn't be censored
6. I believe that illustration should involve skill
7. I believe art should mirror the artist- you should be able to see the artist in the work
8. I believe that art has inherent value in our society

3 areas of exploration:

I believe that illustration has a responsibility to help others, either practically or in some cases mentally, in terms of mental health

I believe that illustration has the responsibility to help others. Illustration is meant to illuminate, make known what was previously unknown (Vocabulary.com, no date). Whether this be something purely informative, like illustrations for an instruction manual, or whether the help is more emotional, like the work of Charles Mackesy (Comerford, 2020). His work helps people on a level deeper than simply practicality, as is shown by the inclusion of his work in a Public Health England video (Comerford, 2020). About the video, the article states its "an NHS initiative supporting mental health, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic". During unprecedented times, organisations such as the NHS turn to art to help for issues such as mental health. Furthermore, according to an interviewee in the report 'The Public Benefits and Value of Arts and Culture', they state "We have seen the arts save

kids' lives and give adults renewed sense of purpose. It's real." Therefore, my illustrations will help those who view them.

I believe that art should be easily accessed by everyone

I believe that art should be accessible to everyone. According to a study in 'Ways of Seeing' (Berger, 1972, p.24), when asked what an art gallery reminds people of most, 66% of manual workers and 45% of skilled workers claimed that it reminded them of a church. The essay claims that "they believe that original masterpieces belong to the preserve (both materially and spiritually) of the rich" (Berger, 1972, p.24). It isn't a holy artefact, and it shouldn't be exclusive (Berger, 1972, p.21). I do not want my art to be associated with a ruling upper class and cultural superiority; my art will be available to be seen by anyone. In an interview with illustrator Charles Mackesy in Luux magazine (Hodge, 2020, p.40), it claims "he distributed these pieces solely via social media, delighted that this enabled him to bypass the gallery system". In general, the non-profit art organisations are seeing a downfall in public interest (Rabkin and Sidford, 2015, p.2). Rabkin and Sidford state "Unless more people more highly value cultural programs and cultural organizations, the future of such cultural resources will be threatened". My art will be accessible to all, as this will benefit both myself and the general public (Rabkin and Sidford, 2015, p.3).

I believe that art has inherent value in our society

I believe that art has value in our society. My art and my life as an illustrator will prove to people that art and illustration has purpose in our society, and it has value. In a report called 'The Public Benefits and Value of Arts and Culture', after researching the issue, found three possible ways the arts could benefit the general public. These included individual development, economic impact and quality of life (Rabkin and Sidford, 2015, p.3). It listed

the economic benefits of the arts as “generating jobs and spending, attracting tourists, and making places attractive to businesses and their employees” (Rabkin and Sidford, 2015, p.3). This demonstrates that the arts add value to society on a practical, economical level. In a report by CEBR (2019), it explains how £10.8 billion a year is added to the UK economy by the arts and culture industry. This proves my belief that art has value in this current age, and my art will add to this.

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Task 2: Observational Writing



Fig. 1

The original poster (fig.1) created for Star Wars (1977) was made in 1977 by illustrator Tom Hung (Screencrush Staff, 2015). He incorporated earlier designs by Greg and Tim Hildebrandt (Screencrush Staff, 2015). The poster includes two of the main protagonists, Luke and Leia, as well as the antagonist Darth Vader. As the poster was made in 1977, it is easy to see that it is very structuralist. Luke and Leia, the protagonists, are in white, a colour that connotes goodness and purity (Wolchover, 2011). This makes it clear that they are the protagonists of the movie, along with their placement in the foreground of the poster. On

the other hand, Darth Vader wears all black, indicating that he is associated with death and mystery, therefor being the antagonist (Natalie Wolchover, 2011). Ferdinand de Saussure explains this using signifiers and the signified (Chandler, 2007, p.14): the signifier is Darth Vader's black helmet, the signified meaning that he is mysterious, obscured, evil. An article called 'How did white become the metaphor for all things good' (Krishna, 2020) explores why white and black have become what they mean to the present society. It states that:

Metaphors are a cognitive tool allowing people to comprehend what they cannot see, taste, hear, smell or touch. They help people understand difficult, abstract concepts through simpler, more tangible, paradigms

(Krishna, 2020)

What this quote shows is that people use metaphors to understand these concepts to make them simpler. This could also explain why the artist behind the poster, Tom Hung, plays into these pre-established metaphors to quickly and efficiently communicate to the viewer who is good and who is evil.

The two protagonists are represented in contrasting ways. In the book *Ways of Thinking* (Berger, 1972), one essay summarises quite accurately what is going on in the poster. When talking about how men are presented in images, it states "A man's presence is dependent upon the power which he embodies...The promised power may be moral, physical, temperamental, economic, social, sexual- but its object is always exterior to the man." (Berger, 1972, p.45). Applying this to the poster, Luke's pose, along with his open shirt revealing a muscular body, shows that his presence is one of strength and power. Using Ferdinand de Saussure's theory on semiotics (Chandler, 2007, p.14), a muscular body might be signified as being powerful and desirable. Alternatively, when talking about women, the

Berger's essay says "Women are depicted in a quite different way from men...because the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him" (Berger, 1972, p.64). Although here Berger is referring to oil paintings, the same could be said about a film poster who's primary audience would be male (Young, 2015). Tom Jung relies on her sexuality rather than power or might to signify Leia as desirable. Again using Saussure's theory on semiotics, it could be said that the signifier of Leia's bare leg could be signified as sexual to a Western audience. While Luke stretches his light saber into the sky and looks up valiantly, Leia looks out to the viewer, almost aware that her role is to be subservient and give in to the demands of those looking. To summarise, the Berger's essay states "men act and women appear" (1972, p.47).

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Figure 1. Star Wars poster (1977) *'Star Wars' Posters: A Visual History*. Available at: <https://screenrunch.com/star-wars-posters-gallery/> (Accessed: 20 October 2020)

Task 3: Practise-based Writing

To begin an illustration, I first need to be inspired or have a want to illustrate a particular mood, emotion or event. I am largely inspired by my own thoughts and experiences. In this way, my work is autobiographical, as I often allow my emotions and personal life to dictate what I draw. My work becomes more emotional and more impactful because of this. I would liken this to being self-aware- at least self-aware of my own emotions. In the book

'Emotional Intelligence' by Daniel Goleman (1996), he stated (when discussing the idea of self-awareness):

it manifests itself simply as a slight stepping-back from experience, a parallel stream of consciousness that is 'meta': hovering above or beside the main flow, aware of what is happening

(Goleman, 1996, p.47)

Goleman discusses the idea of a "parallel stream of consciousness" (1996, p,47), and I see this as me the artist, and I am illustrating me the person, or the experiences I go through; the two are separate. For example, the illustration 'Torn Apart' (Fig 1) was made in response to my personal feelings about lockdown in March 2020.



Fig. 1

I was aware of how I was feeling at the time (isolated, confused, separate) and I translated this onto paper in the form of an illustration. An artist who heavily featured in their own artwork is Frida Kahlo. Her painting 'The Two Fridas' (Fig. 2) reminds me of my own work

because she was an autobiographical artist. Kahlo very much created art centred around her own experiences.



Fig. 2

According to an article called 'What the Iconic Painting, "The Two Fridas," Actually Tells Us About Frida Kahlo' (Halliday, 2020), the painting 'The Two Fridas' contains many symbolic gestures to Kahlo's personal life, largely about her divorce from her husband Diego Rivera. Being able to be self-aware of her own emotions allowed Kahlo to create striking works of art- therefore I will continue to use this method to influence my own practise as an illustrator.

After I have my initial inspiration, I make a series of thumbnail drawings to get my ideas to paper. This allows me to work out the composition of the work. Once I have settled on a composition, I start to collect reference material. In an article called '10 Contemporary Artists Talk About Their Creative Process' (Park West Gallery, 2019), one artist in particular shared a similar process to mine. David Le Batard stated in the article "I do a lot of sketches, I do a lot of reference work and gather a lot of source material" (2019). As my work is autobiographical, I tend to feature in a lot of my own art. Therefore, I take photos of myself

to later use as reference for the final illustration. For example, the illustration 'Shut In, Shut Out' (Fig. 3) featured myself three times, where I incorporated three separated photos of myself into one drawing.



Fig. 3

After I have finished my work I think about it critically to assess whether I achieved my goals for the drawing. In an article called 'What (I Think) Makes Good Illustration' (Yang, 2017), it stated that for Illustration to be considered 'good', it needs to have a reason or a purpose for existing. Therefore, as long as my illustrations suit their intended purpose, I consider them successful.

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Figure 2. Kahlo, F. (1939) *The Two Fridas* [Oil painting]. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City

Figure 3. Author's own (2020) *Shut in, Shut Out* [Pencil on paper]