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Programme of Study: Contextual Ways of Thinking

Module: ADAD4018

Ways of Thinking Lecturer's Name: Martin Bush

Tasks in the order I received them:

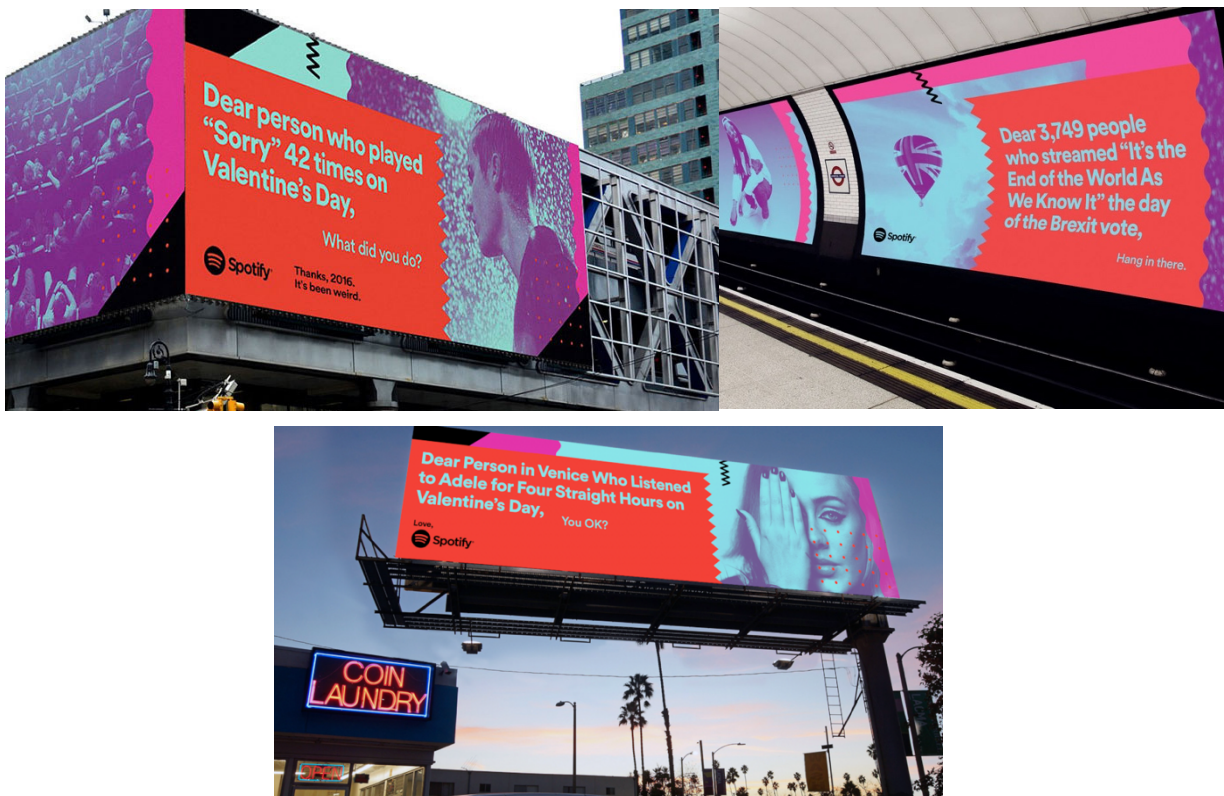
Task 1: Observational Writing = 529

Task 2: Manifesto Writing = 532

Task 3: Practice-based Writing = 529

Task 1: Observational Writing

The communicative significance of symbols is vital in our world today. Semiotics is the study of these symbols and signs and how we use and interpretate them (Berger, 1972). One idea surrounding semiotics is semiotic theory, proposed by René Magritte's *'The Treachery of Images'* (1929). Magritte's work understood the concept that the perception of images is directly related to the perceiver's "personal experiences and understanding of that object" (Pound, 2017). This furthermore supports Berger's thoughts that what we see is determined by what we know.



The 2016 Spotify campaign 'Thanks 2016, It's been weird' contains various signs, something Charles Sanders Peirce defines as "anything which is so determined by something else" (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2010). I will conduct a semiotic analysis to deconstruct this campaign.

The encoding of the text, otherwise the text's intention, gives insight into the real people of the world and the emotions they feel. Rather than telling us how the 'person/people' are feeling, Spotify shares with us that person's most-played music, creating a mood of humour. For example, the association of song 'Sorry' with Valentine's Day is something the observer relates to possible relationship issues. The relatable context of the campaign, addressing personal and known political matters, introduces us to the concept of 'Naturalism', as introduced by Roland Barthes (1977, p67). Naturalism aims to connect the observer to the brand through this common ground of experiencing personal/relationship issues and frustration over politics. Spotify makes light of how the average person in Britain may be feeling, encouraging the observer to see this in a comedic light, too.

Each advert contains an image, such as the image of artist Justin Bieber. The indexical sign of the advertisement is the relationship, that must be recognised by an observer, between this image of the artist and the song specified in the text, 'Sorry', to allow understanding.

Decoding, otherwise interpretation, of the text, occurs when this relationship is understood by the audience.

The campaign has cultural elements and therefore contains arbitrary symbols, due to Spotify's assumption that the observer knows of 'Valentine's Day' as it is in western civilisation, and of British political matters such as 'Brexit'. Many cultures and religions may not celebrate Valentine's day or perhaps have other names for the celebration, as it originated with a connection to Christianity, believed to begin as 'St Valentine's Day' (BBC, 2020). In addition, the campaign assumes understanding of artist Justin Bieber, who may be more understood and known in certain cultures than others. The target audience is likely the British public as it attempts at a connection through politics, and therefore has cultural

connotations. In addition, the advertisement majorly relies on the observer to read the text in order to create meaning, which may produce limitations concerning cultural and language barriers. Therefore, the campaign as a whole seems less likely to be understood by non-western cultures and is henceforth an arbitrary symbol.

Any sign can be deconstructed via semiotic analysis to allow us to comprehend the meaning. I can now recognise Spotify's possible reasoning for inclusion of various elements of the sign and conclude that an understanding of semiotics is essential in the thorough interpretation of signs and symbols.

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Task 2: Manifesto Writing

1. I believe design should be a tool for promoting awareness of climate change and eco-friendly behaviour, as this is an issue that nowhere near enough people prioritise in their lives.
2. Everyone should strive to be kinder to one another and make the world a warmer place.
3. All design should be driven by passion and feeling in order to produce powerful work.
4. Design is an influential way of communication, of visually displaying a mood, atmosphere or message to the rest of the world without spelling it out.
5. I believe we as humans have a responsibility to protect all animals from cruelty, and as designers we must advocate this.
6. I believe we as people and designers have a responsibility to actively promote liberal beliefs about different prejudices in the world, such as racism and homophobia.

7. Travel is knowledge and can have powerful influences on a person's outlook to life.
8. Mental health awareness needs to be more prominent in today's world and attitudes towards it must be changed through improving understanding. In turn, designers must advocate this in their work.

3 Areas of Exploration

Caring About Our Natural World: I believe design should be a tool for promoting awareness of climate change and eco-friendly behaviour, as this is an issue that nowhere near enough people prioritise in their lives.



Fig 1. Snow Globe, Greenpeace.

The way in which we as designers visually communicate using various aesthetic styles could have a powerful influence on an observer's outlook to helping the climate change issue (Manolas *et al.* 2017, p77-78). This also states that two methods of communication exist: strong emotion, and values. The first attempts to trigger feelings of fear in order to impact an observer and help the matter spread. For example, the Greenpeace poster aims to unease the observer to think about how drastic this issue could be within our lives. It provokes a powerful sense that the world as we know it could drastically change in the near future, if human attitudes are not modified in the present. The 2018 talk Good Design for a Bad World (Fairs *et al.* 2018) highlights how we are now entering an era of human dominance over the natural environment, the "Anthropocene". The talk discusses the potential of designers in preventing this irreversible global change, as "saving the planet is now a design project".

Fighting Prejudice: I believe we as people and designers have a responsibility to actively promote liberal beliefs about different prejudices in the world, such as racism and homophobia.



Fig 2. I can't breathe, Greg Bunbury, 2020.

Expressing opposition of prejudice through design for the public to digest is one step to igniting a desire to solve these deep-set problems. It is our responsibility as designers to educate those in ignorance. The visual influence of the Black Lives Matter movement has been astronomical, with social media users reposting the graphics all over the world as a show of support to the campaign. Greg Bunbury, a designer for the BLM campaign in 2014 and now in 2020 as above, once said that “graphic design should be a tool for social change” (Wong, 2020). Another designer with this same drive for change is Gilbert Baker, designer of the 1978 Gay Pride flag. He envisioned replacing the Pride design with a “symbol of gay

visibility and diversity” (Kirkus Reviews, 2019), one that doesn’t function as a “tool of Nazi oppression”, words from Baker himself (Gilbert Baker Foundation, 2019). In order to fight prejudice, graffiti artist Banksy’s work highlights feelings which are deeply held by society. This can be seen in Banksy’s very own support of the BLM movement with his most recent artwork (Banksy, 2020).

Perception of Mental Health: Mental health awareness needs to be more prominent in today’s world and attitudes towards it must be changed through understanding. In turn, designers must advocate this in their work.

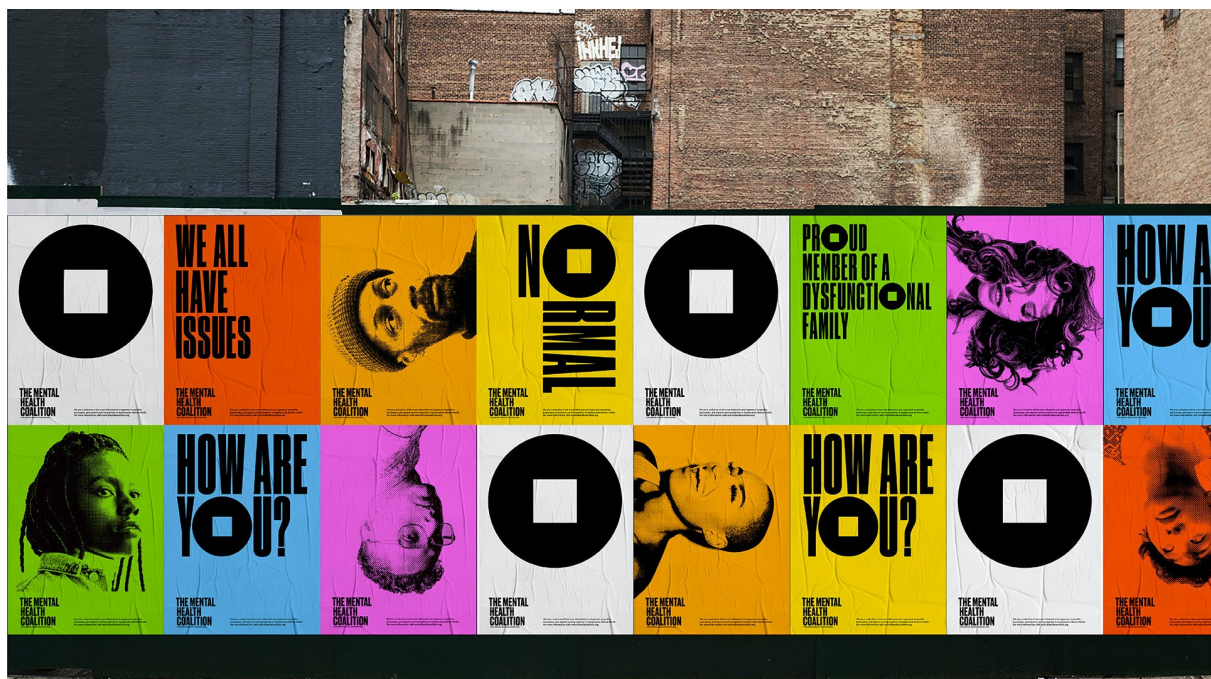


Fig 3. The Mental Health Coalition

Expressing awareness of mental health today is something I consider pivotal as it is not talked about enough in so many societies even in our modern world. Today, the Office for National Statistics (2020), tell us that 19.2% of adults in Great Britain are more like to experience some form of depression in this coronavirus pandemic. Now more than ever, we must encourage those around us to talk. I believe design is a powerful medium in doing this.

The intention of fig 3 is to spread awareness that there is “no ‘normal’ when it comes to mental health and that everybody fits” (Pentagram, 2020). I believe that designs like these should be abundant in plain sight in our everyday world, in order to normalise the talking of inner struggles that still seems so difficult in British culture and so many others. The graphics provided by Movember (2020) show the vulnerability of men today and their aims to improve this by 2030. This visually encourages men to take action and talk to those around them, for others as well as themselves.

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How to Survive Life in LOCKDOWN

- Self-care**

This pandemic has been hard on all of us, practicing self-love and treat yourself now and then, you deserve it.
- Tree of the day.**

Pick a tree every day that you can appreciate, share it on social media and spread the awe of nature.
- Stay connected.**

Keep in touch. We're all in this together.
- Try something new.**

For once, you have all the time in the world to try out new hobbies.
- Above all... stay safe.**

This will all pass.

The overall concept for this project came from my passion for increasing mental health awareness and

How To ... project

Video must contain:
My idea, your decision making
research + influences,
Using Photoshop + scanning
Illustrations, type,
composition + layout,
+ target audience.

Self-care:
Exercise (NHS Fitness Studio)
Relax
NHS

GOV.UK
What can help your mental health?
Exercise
NHS Fitness Studio
Daily routine
Connecting to others
Support others
Talk about worries
Take a break from News
Get goals
Hobbies

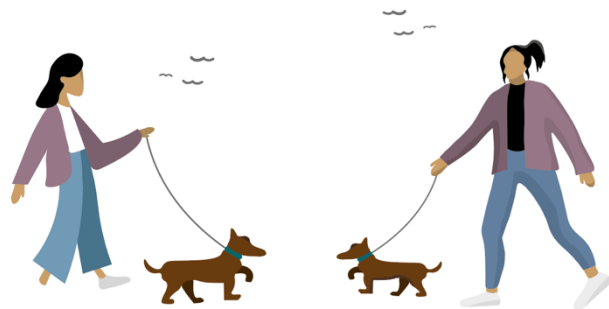
Research:
Harsh, Compelling Colours
Colour Scheme
Type: Bold + caps
Tone: Lack empathy, serious, Rational
Straight: Lacks reassurance, No friendly curvature/softness.
Imperative language - direct orders.
Kind tone.
Empathetic
Reassuring vocabulary
Language
How do I create a calming/reassuring mood?
Typography?
Grandma
Indie Flower
Math B
Bounce Script
Providence Pro
Soft hues
Pastels
Half normal, half dog-eat-dog
Brain filled with nature/objects of everyday life.
Brain held in hands (promotes self-care)
Brain drawn with flowers (connect to nature).
Simplistic/bodiless
Nature
Greenery
Brain held in hands (promotes self-care)
Brain drawn with flowers (connect to nature).
AIM: to give advice to those struggling mentally & emotionally on how get through lockdown life and even appreciate it.
MOOD? Calm, reassuring, friendly.
TARGET AUDIENCE: Anyone struggling during lockdown. (mental health focus)

I felt that beginning this project with a thorough mind map of my plan was an extremely productive way to start, and now allows me to reflect on what went as planned. Firstly, I feel I conducted strong mood boards to guide me in creating a soothing atmosphere. I also think the design process went more smoothly than was anticipated, considering it was my first time creating digital illustrations, using my photographs and sketches. However, I did free hand the clothing of the illustrations which sometimes presented disproportions and consumed time.



The choice of language used is something I could have more thoroughly researched, as it is easy to sound condescending concerning mental health. However, I did take inspiration from the casual wording style of the National Health Service on this topic, as seen in “It’s normal to feel a bit worried” (National Health Service, 2020).

I did not foresee how long it would take me to design the illustrations for each step, and I ended up redeveloping my first illustrations (left) to a more advanced standard (right). I found the concept of layers



sometimes confusing which set me back. However, it helped my time-management that I did not overestimate my abilities and created simplistic illustrations.

I realised that the 7 different steps I had planned to incorporate would not fit onto the poster, so I decided to eliminate 2 steps. This decision was backed by what I had learnt of better design often being stronger with a less is more look (Sretović, D. 2019).

I have now come to various conclusions about my experience. Firstly, I will need to continue to develop my Adobe Illustrator skills, specifically my understanding of the layers panel. Then, with this extra time I will save, I will conduct more focused research in future. Next time, I will not free hand any drawings before as it presented problems with disproportionality. Also, I will ensure I sketch out my poster as a whole before working digitally, as this will prevent unforeseen occurrences such as not having enough room to fit all planned illustrations. These are lessons that I will value and use for future projects. In particular, I will get myself into the habits of the design process, as skipping steps is something I must overcome.

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