Student Name: Anna-Georgina Lynch
Student Number: 2304016
Studying: Product and Furniture Design
Module: ADAD4018 Ways of Thinking

Task One: Manifesto (370 words)
Task Two: Semiotic Analysis (550 words)
Task Three: Practice-based writing (602 words)

Total word count: 1522

Task One: Manifesto.

1. In the age of technology, strive to be present in reality.
2. Stay firm and unwavering against media alt-facts.
3. Emotional intelligence is as important as academic intelligence.
4. Political ambitions of the military industrial complex are impacting the creativity of the youth.
5. Art is to be interpreted differently by each viewer.
6. Neither nature nor nurture should be the only defining components of the self, choice is the hallmark of the individual.
7. Art lets us express ourselves in a form no government can control.
8. Designers have a duty to create beauty with discoverability and understanding.

1. In the age of technology, strive to be present in reality.

In the age of social media trends, viral videos and shortened attention spans, it is paramount we strive to remain present in reality. Not only is this vital to maintain our real-life connections, it is also important to appreciate the world around us for all its varying forms of beauty. If we focus on "the interplay between technology and people to ensure that the products actually fulfil human needs" *(the design of everyday things, Don Norman, 1990)*, technology then gives us the ability to contact those on the other side of the world or check the weather. However, it can never replace the need for physical human touch or love in a way that cannot be replicated on a screen.

2. Art is to be interpretated differently by each viewer.

Art is subjective to each viewer, whilst some emotions can be clearly portrayed through art, art is still subjective to the individuals' own emotions and opinions. Could you view a piece of art one thousand times and interpret it differently each time? Would there be consistency to how you interpret the piece? How easily are we influenced by the opinions of others and the artists own wishes for how we perceive their work? Art is made for each individual and their own interpretations. I believe that this is how art should be. Not everyone will like your design, and within those who do, there may be a wide array for how everyone perceives the design.

3. Designers have a duty to create beauty with discoverability and understanding.

The design of an everyday object should be aesthetically pleasing. However, it should also be discoverable, it should be possible to figure out what actions are needed and where and how preform them. As said by Louis H. Sullivan *(1896) "form follows function*", which are words to live by when creating a good design. Similarly, "Two of the most important characteristics of good design are discoverability and understanding" *(the design of everyday things, Don Norman).* I believe that whilst the beauty of a design is vital, the use of a design is the key factor to consider when creating the design.

Task Two: Semiotic Analysis.

In November of 1985, Stephen Wright photographed The Smiths outside of the Salford Lads Club. The club was intended to be a place for the young men of Manchester to frequent, to mitigate the violence of local organised gangs by providing *"positive alternatives to the teenage street gangs of the time." (Salford Lads Club, no date)*. To anyone from outside of Manchester in the 80's, this image simply depicts four young men stood outside of an unremarkable building labelled "Salford Lads Club", only holding significance to fans, as the image was used as an album cover.

In contrast to the immediate denotation of this image, there is a distinct cultural relevance in which the infamy of The Smiths impacts how the image is perceived. The significance of this may be most prevalent through the music scene as the band had made international headlines yet still wanted to show their roots, as if to say, 'we are proud to be Mancunian'. This emphasised the importance of Manchester in the music scene at the time and how The Smiths were an integral part of the musical and societal revolution that went on to become the "Madchester era". As said by Nick Crossley *(Connecting sounds: The social life of music, 2020) "Music is not 'in' society ... It is of society; a form of social interaction embedded in the wider network of social interactions that comprise society".*

During the mid 1980's, a large portion of Manchester was in disarray, this was largely due to the city's industrial decline under Thatcher's government. The youth at the time felt unheard and trodden down by larger society. These socio-political differences which led to a lot of street violence were eventually expressed through music. The Smiths, having already made a name internationally, then showing their roots to the world created a larger sense of community and helped to open the musical opportunities of Manchester.

From this, emerged a new form of Manchester. Thanks largely to music and the culture surrounding it, the city was offered new opportunities for growth of identity. An influx of musicians and artists found a niche within the city, which solidified it as a cultural hotspot of England. In turn, this influx of creativity and passion helped lead to a bolstered economy and further growth not only in size and opportunity but in reputation. This can be seen through the development of infrastructure in Manchester, such as the Gay Village and Northern Quarter. This can be observed by Beatrix Campbell *(2009) "during the 1980s when government money poured into inner-city regeneration and cultural entrepreneurs played midwife to Madchester's pop renaissance."* The Smiths proudly stating their cultural roots was a major part of the foundation of this social revolution.

Despite the ignorance towards the Salford Lads Club, which was directly juxtaposed to the cultural phenomenon that was The Smiths and other Manchester artists of this time, the club stood as a landmark or icon of the city. As stated by the Salford Lads Club website *(accessed 2023), "fans make the pilgrimage from around the world to visit the club."* The chosen image holds significant social relevance not because of its intended use but because it is representative of the self-sufficiency which formed Manchester and is a key factor to the Manchester we see today.

Task Three: Practiced-based writing.

The infamous IKEA KALLAX unit is one of the best-selling products IKEA carries. It is also a prime example of contemporary and modular design. The KALLAX is designed with sleek, clean-cut lines which appeal to a buyer as it leaves room for their own personal adaptation to the product.

Whilst KALLAX is one of IKEA's best-selling items, their leading product is the BILLY bookcase, which in 2023 IKEA estimated one unit was sold every five seconds. One of the key appeals of IKEA products is their fair price point as the furniture comes flat packed and is easy to mass produce. This allows IKEA to access all corners of the market by having a price range that suits most budgets.

The KALLAX is the successor to the EXPEDIT unit which was beloved by many IKEA customers. The EXPEDIT was discontinued in the early months of 2014 to make good on IKEA's sustainability claims. The EXPEDIT never truly went away, rather IKEA changed the thickness of the outer edges of the products to cut down on material costs. According to IKEA *(website, 2022)* Europe provides 85% of the wood they use, with 28% of their wood coming from Poland. It is estimated that IKEA *"uses one percent of the planets lumber." (ABC News, 2016)*

Another key selling point of the KALLAX range, is the variety of finishes that the units come in. This again helps widen their market as they can appeal to the different aesthetics of their buyers. Another benefit of the range of finishes that the KALLAX units come in is that each product looks natural in its environment and varies in its utilisation household to household, helping to make the customer feel like they have bespoke furniture. The adaptability and versatility of this range of products is astounding. The usages and renovations of KALLAX means the consumers can truly incorporate the units into their lifestyle, needs and aesthetic.

The units come in a range of modular configurations from the smallest and cheapest 1x1 unit to a 5x5 option, IKEA also sell a variety of drawers, shelves and other in-unit items that fit within the KALLAX inner dimensions. This also aides the appeal of a KALLAX due to their customisation and their ability to fit into their domestic environment. The global success of IKEA means that their products often fit comfortably in with the buyers surroundings as they too, often include IKEA products.

My personal viewpoint of the IKEA KALLAX units is that they are versatile, unobstructive and simple, designed to fit the buyers needs and add to, rather than distract from their surroundings. They are not designed to be statement items, rather they are helpful, sleek additions to millions of households. IKEA have stated that *"Our objective is to be transparent about our journey, even though we don't currently have all the answers." (IKEA, website, 2022)*. As an individual and as a designer, I think IKEA's approach to transparency of sustainability is admirable. Whilst their practices are still damaging to our planet, I believe they are one of the most forward thinking and honest mass corporations operating today.

I believe that Designers have a duty to create beauty with discoverability and understanding. I also believe that the KALLAX range has met these criteria. Despite the assembly of IKEA furniture often being comically difficult, the products themselves are sleek, simple and practical. As said by Louis H. Sullivan *(The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered, 1896) "form follows function"*. The KALLAX unit has a vast range of functions depending on each buyers intended use, but the functionality of the KALLAX is indisputable.