

Calum James

2003583

Contextual Studies : Portfolio of writing

Jonathan Pugh

Tasks in order I have arranged them.

Task 1: Observational writing = 564

Task 2: Manifesto writing = 571

Task 3: practice-based writing = 460

Task 1: Observational writing

Phrases such as *the new normal* (Cornain, 2020) have become common place whenever we consider the changes the pandemic has made on our society. Also, social distancing, self isolation and lockdowns have become a part of our daily lives.

We are now bombarded with signage of social distance measures, face covering and one way systems. Therefor, the role signs play in our lives are more recognisable and important than many would realise.

However, the signage this text discusses is literal but our role in understanding signs can be anything from images, words, objects, sounds, taste, to smells. Semiotic theory helps break down its meaning and why we need to understand them. There are many variations by leading semioticians in what 'the study of signs' means. Daniel Chandler proposes 'To interpret something is to treat it as a sign (2016, p.2).

The use of signs and symbols have been taught to us since birth (Berger, 1972). Our understanding of these signs, symbols and icons are fundamental to the way we live. The study of these systems creates meaning which helps us understand how we interpret them. Berger attests that how we see things is determined by what we know.

We all unconsciously interpret signs and Symbols on a daily basis. As of which this text will deconstruct the simple image of a face mask. While breaking down its meaning while considering its role before the pandemic to its role during.



The semiotics of an image has many theories and directions but a simple definition is the study of signs and how they are interpreted.

Before the pandemic we would normally associate the face masks with a surgeon or dentist, yet now it's the most pronounced symbol of the pandemic. It has reduced our reading of facial expressions and communication leading to an even greater importance of our natural unconscious of reading and interpreting signs.

We now share common knowledge before entering public areas in which face masks are usually a requirement. The simple blue and white icon of a person wearing a mask is found on nearly every shop window. American philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce defines a symbol as 'being reliant on conventional usage to determine meaning' (Huening, Drew 2006). It is culturally or societally agreed metaphor that provides shared understanding based on our prior knowledge of what it represents.

The face mask image is the denotation in Semiotic terms, translating what is the literal meaning of the sign. Interestingly, semiotically deconstructing the meaning of wearing one now has greater significance as seeing a person not wearing a covering when required brings confusion and judgment. When wearing one ourselves we take the refusal of others as carelessness. We constantly look and interpret these decisions which when broken down is read as signs. We look for signs from that individual on why they ain't wearing one, such as a medical condition?, Or if their position states they don't need to?. Our perception of others to read signals has increased massively where we have all began to pass judgement through a visual perspective.

While Ferdinand de Saussure who is considered the father of semiology and structuralism, treated language as a sign system. Arguing that our primary mode of communication is verbally and written.

Our mode of communication has been limited when in public spaces. Leading to our societally shared agreement of prior knowledge that keeping our distance from others is important during this pandemic.

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Task 2: Manifesto writing

1. Be original, even if it's traditional.
2. I will Create art that has a deeper meaning.
3. Overthinking leads to doubt, so just go with it.
4. You don't have to have a 'style'.
5. If you don't experiment, you'll never know.
6. Managing time is THE MOST IMPORTANT part.
7. I aim to create art that makes people aware of environmental, social and political issues and see them in a different away.
8. Manifestos are outdated and artists don't need to have one.

For most artists, myself included, putting into words our beliefs, work, and practice and why we reach for whatever it is that makes us create is surprisingly difficult. We simply do it because we enjoy it. It's not until someone poses the question is when we really discover the truth of our creative value. Even more dauntingly the tasks of writing a manifesto. According to Merriam-Webster, a *manifesto is a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives or views of its issuer*. Declaring one's beliefs and practice publicly brings into question whether we publicly declare what people want to hear or whether we are even being honest in fear of judgment. However, my eight declarative statements are a true representation of my beliefs and practice.

My first being 'be original, even if it's traditional' is my personal battle when it comes to drawing traditionally in pencil. I mostly use this medium and will always begin my work with. Despite the age where art is dominated by the use of computers programmes, i.e., Photoshop, Illustrator and Procreate. I find myself battling to find a voice against the precise and efficient use of computers. Not that I have anything against the use of them, i know from experience that learning to create art on a computer programme takes just as much skill and practice as it would in any medium. I simply feel there's nothing more impressive or inspiring when seeing a hand drawn piece of art. This leads me to my next point, originality. Its difficult to find artists with a unique voice of originality when it comes to traditional pencil drawn work. However, artists such as Greg Ruth and Laurie Lipton brings me inspiration as I feel the work wouldn't be as effective if it were done on a computer. Also, this is the type of art I want to create, as author Austin Kleon states, *start copying what you love, copy, copy, copy. At the end of the copy, you will find yourself*. That's where I aim to evolve my practice around the belief that's going back to basics and not reliant on machines to instruct my practice and find a voice in the age of machines.

Secondly, style. Too many artists fight to have a 'style'. Does having a particular style matter in the ever changing world?. If an artists passion is, for example character design, fashion or film, the artists value will soon be the forefront of their work. Then in theory you could call the artists style of art the type of work they produce. This shouldn't limit them on creating all kinds of art. Should artists/illustrators focus on more pressing issues over commercialism. Paul Bowman the author of *Educate, Agitate, Abdicare*. Declares in his manifesto that,

Professional wage-earning illustrators, must start not to consider what shall I represent for this subject matter but is the subject matter with being represented.

Despite agreeing with that statement, manifestos are outdated and artists don't need one. This leads me to my final statement. Just as Co-editor of Freeze magazine Jennifer Hicky believes, manifesto's sound bombastic and anachronistic and have no currency in the art world.

Manifesto's are the opposite of listening, they are bold statements that can come across egotistical. Manifesto's are often found as statements by politicians and the their party. They are also periodic and in the current art world people wouldn't take it seriously and can find them ironic. Novelist Tom McCarthy believes a non ironic manifesto is deeply problematic in this era and would be moving towards fascism.

Greg Ruth



Laurie Lipton



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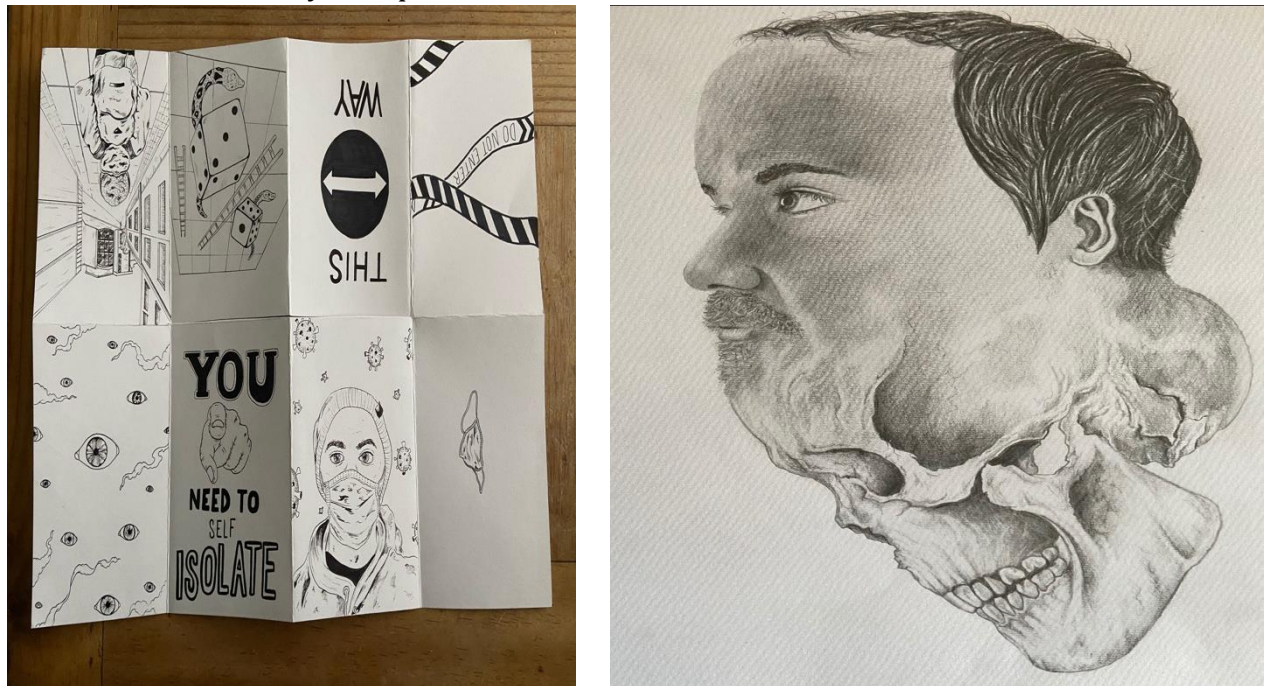
Task 3: practice-based writing

When faced with a new task, whether it's a new drawing or a written assignment, trying to conjure a new idea is often the most challenging issue. However, I find drawing on past experiences or something I'm currently feeling provides a useful source of inspiration. I often reflect upon what I've experienced to create my art in which according to Kolb's reflective cycle is active experimentation, which is planning/trying out what I've learned. For me to begin my work I need the experience and have the right mindset before I work. As (Moon, 2004) states, *critical thinking is a process of learning but emphasis on 'thinking' is on the re-processing of material that has been learnt*.

When beginning a new project it provides great excitement bringing to life the feelings or issues we collectively face is what inspires me to create. Professional practitioners such as Laurie Lipton or Greg Ruth who are currently my main source of inspiration attempt simple yet effective ways to highlight political issues. Greg Ruth for example produces work for film and music, which is an area I have a passion for. I want to correlate these subjects within my own practice. “The only way to find a voice is to use it. Its hardwired, built in. Talk about things you love. Your voice will follow” (Kleon, 2012). This is where I strive to find authenticity while these artists directly correlate to my practice. The face mask, whether it's the image or the object itself, has played a crucial role in our lives over the last 9 months and has influenced my current work.

While it can conjure up many emotions such as fear, anger, judgment, or safety, they all can have impactful emotions when attempting to represent it on paper.

My own personal work



These examples of my recent work are direct impacts of the pandemic. However, I have learnt that there are many areas I would improve or change. Professor Graham Gibbs believes in structure to learning experiences. His reflective cycle framework focuses on repeated experiences in (arts practice). Allowing you to learn and plan from things that either went well or didn't. While Donald Schon proposes a difference when reflecting and how professionals think in action. 'In action is reflecting on the behaviour as your doing it whereas 'on action' is prior knowledge and experience. Which would be to evaluate and analyse. With my practice I constantly analyse every mark when. Therefore, reflection fits into every area in my personal reflective cycle. I also, critically evaluate my work once concrete marks are made and question myself. This lends itself to Christopher Johns area of reflective cycle, "could I have done it better". Meaning what other choices were there and what were the consequences.

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