

Portfolio of Writing

1. Semiotic Analysis – 533 words
2. Manifesto – 509 words
3. Practise-Based Writing – 489 words

1907972

Illustration BA

Jonathan Pugh

Semiotic analysis



Smiley

From a young age we're taught the myth that a smiley face has connotations of being happy. "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak." (Berger, 1972, p7)

It has two small dots for eyes and a long, upturned line for a mouth. Resembling a human face while smiling. It's incredibly simple but still a very widely known symbol in all societies to show happiness. The denotation of a smiley face is cheerful and jolly, regardless of your spoken language. 'Denotation' tends to be described as the definitional, literal, obvious or common-sense meaning of a sign.' (Chandler, 2007, p137) So, in this case the denotation (signifier) of the smiley face would be an ideogram of a smiling face generally used to present happy feelings/emotions. Its body is made up of a luminous yellow circle, the colour yellow is most commonly associated with joy, sunshine and positivity therefore giving it that further 'happy' element.

'The yellow smiley icon was born in 1963 in Worcester, Massachusetts, when the graphic designer Harvey Ball was approached by State Mutual Life Assurance Company to create a morale booster for employees.' (Silzer, 2020) Proving that from day one its purpose was to convey a message. Smiley faces are used frequently, social media is a good example of where they are used often. On social media there are a range of 'emojis' used to visually depict one's words, this could also act as a code of modern/online communication. Although, there's no specific dictionary with all the meanings, they all portray emotions so we use them as a way to put one's feelings across. "Emoji's are primarily used to add emotion to digital communications" (Kerslake/Wegerif, 2017, pp.75-78). Even back in the early days of social media it was common to use the smiley face symbol.

“Semiotics could be anywhere. The shortest definition is that it is the study of signs.” (Chandler, 2007, p20) Our societal concept of visual communication using symbols is a prime example of every day semiotics. Something as ‘simple’ as a ☺ (smiley face) can be recognised, even if presented by itself proving the quote to be true. The knowledge of the symbol could have been acquired in numerous ways, whether through meanings that we’ve learnt in society, through experiences (physically seeing raw emotions) or through definitions, the meaning is the same.

Bibliography / Reference list

Berger, J. (1972), *‘Ways of seeing’*, British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books

Chandler, D. (2007), *‘Semiotics – The Basics’*, Second Edition, Routledge/Taylor and Francis

Chandler, D. (2007), *‘Semiotics – The Basics’*, Second edition, Routledge/Taylor and Francis

Kerslake, L/Wegerif, R. (2017), *‘Media and Communication’*, Volume 5, Issue 4, Cogitatio Press 10.11.20

Savage, J. (2009), *‘A Design for Life’*, The Guardian, Available at - <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/feb/21/smiley-face-design-history> 10.11.20

Sizler, (Updated - 2020), *‘The Staying Power of the Smiley face’* CNN, Available at – <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/artsy-smiley-face-origin/index.html> 10.11.20

Personal Manifesto

- 1) Art should be free, not censored.
- 2) Art helps with mental health issues.
- 3) Art is the best form of expression.
- 4) An artist’s best work won’t always be their favourite.
- 5) Illustrations speak louder than words.
- 6) Art is subjective, nothing is good or bad.
- 7) Your illustrations are your voice.
- 8) Adding colour changes the illustrations.

Statements I’ve chose to elaborate on –

- 1) Art should be free, not censored.
- 2) Art helps with mental health issues.
- 3) Art is subjective, nothing is good or bad.

1) Art should be free, not censored.

Censoring art set limits on what an artist is able to create. Forcing boundaries onto a subject that revolves around the freedom of expression should be banned.

'Censorship and wrenching art from its original context are barriers to seeing and thinking'. (Moss, (2015). When expressing one's emotions, thoughts, and feelings there should be no restraints. Everyone has their own opinions, and as unfortunate as it is you can't please everybody. If we censored everything the public got offended by there would be no art left. The pieces that spark outrage and controversy could be a starting point for change. "Freedom of expression is essential to the arts" (Farrington, (2013). However, I can understand in some instances there needs to be certain rules in place to stop overly offensive/illegal compositions from being publicised, for example – child pornography, art made in support of the Nazi's, etc. Nevertheless, without those minor instances we should have the right to make/create/produce what we please.

2) Art helps with mental health issues.

Art is one of the most powerful ways for you to express emotions and be your true self. Giving someone the ability to speak without using words could be a vital way for them to communicate. 'They provide ways of addressing painful feelings and difficult experiences without talk about them.' (Arts and Creative Therapies, (2018). Using art as a form of therapy has been beneficial in numerous ways, an example could be – Helping people who suffer with dementia to reconnect with certain parts of themselves. "Engaging in art activities empowers people living with dementia, and enriches life for them and those around them." (Ryan.N, (n.d)). Giving them a chance to regain independence in a particular part of their life will also boost self-esteem and confidence. By doing something therapeutic such as an art practise can promote a positive mindset and helps to reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. Art can also be a release for stress, setting yourself time to develop your practise and let your creative juices flow will be a great help to your day in terms of taking care of your mental health.

3) Art is subjective.

Our preferences generally tend to be based off our own personal tastes, opinions, or likes and dislikes. Something that's inspiring for one person may be unstimulating and boring to another. As observers we view and analyse the subject subconsciously based on our personal opinions and preferences. Our unique perspective allows us to interpret pieces of artwork differently and come to our own conclusions of whether its 'good' or 'bad'. "Subjectivity in art is the word we use to explain how different people can respond to a work of art in different ways. Subjectivity is based on personal opinions and feelings rather than agreed on facts." (Jones, C.P. (2019). The problem with subjectivity in the art world is - how are we supposed to properly determine what's good and what isn't? The beauty of a piece could always be debated. Perhaps you just need to be open to seeing beauty from another person's perspective.

Bibliography –

'Arts and creative therapies', (2018), Mind, Available at – <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/arts-and-creative-therapies/about-art-and-creative-therapies/>

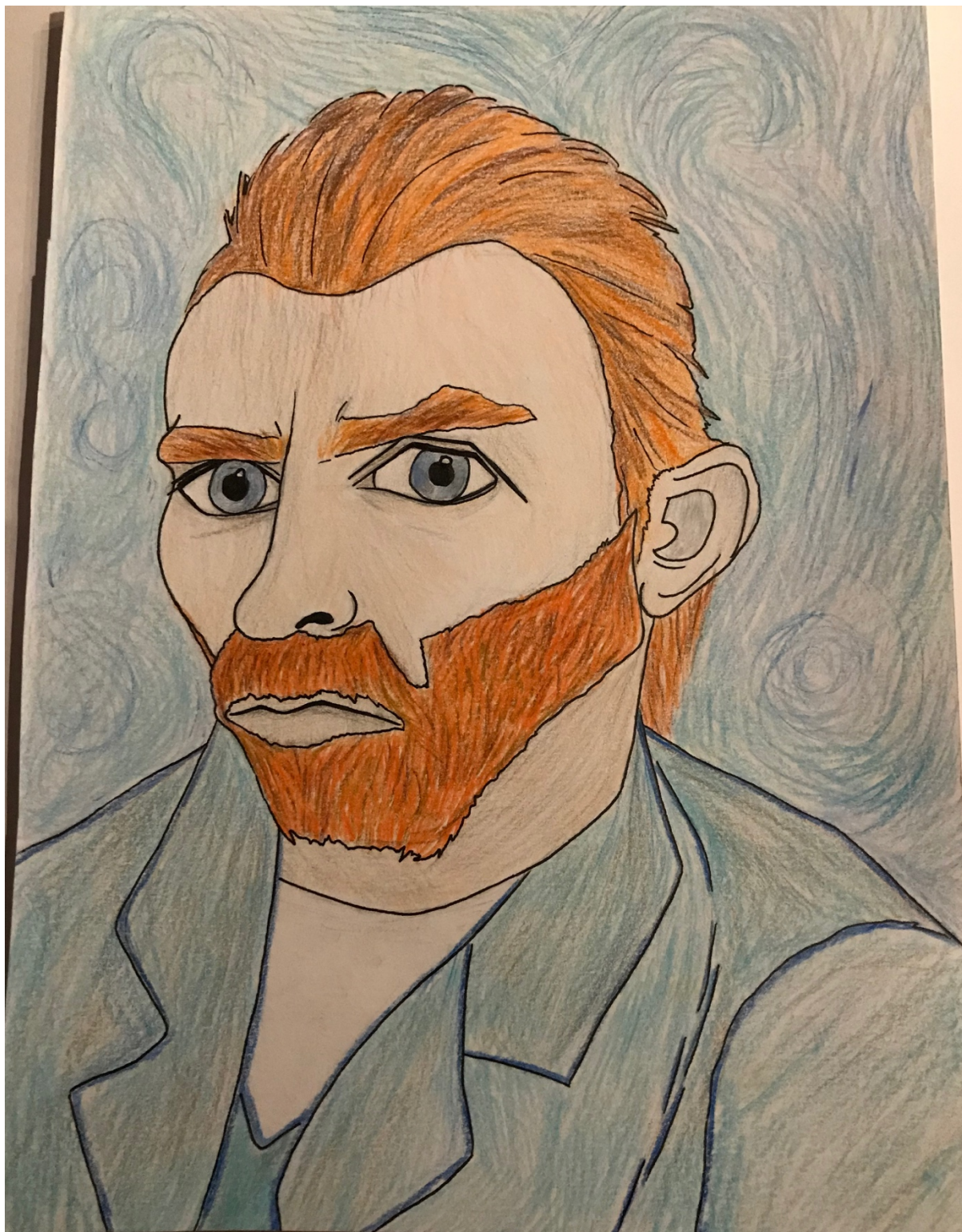
Carlton, M. (2017) *'The Healing power of Art'*, Harvard Health Publishing, Available at – <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mental-health/the-healing-power-of-art>

Farrington, J. (2013), *'Taking the offensive'*, Index. Available at – <https://indexcensorship.org/takingtheoffensive/>

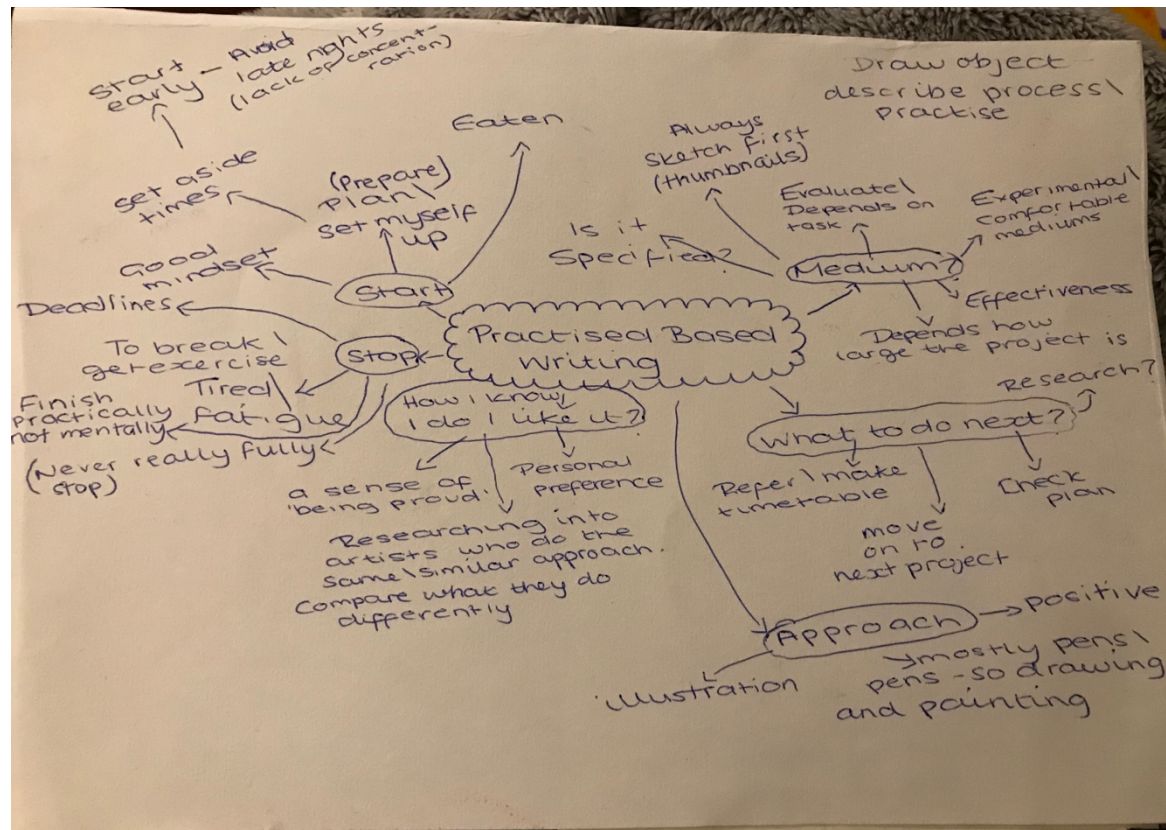
Moss.S. (2015), *'Should we censor art and books to fit our times'*, The Guardian, Available at – <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/16/censor-art-books-times-rijksmuseum>

Ryan,N. (N,D), Dementia Research Centre, University College London Available at - <https://arts4dementia.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/>

Practised Based Writing



Vincent Van Gogh Self Portrait (1889)



As part of my practice I decided to create my own water-coloured pencil version of a Van Gogh painting. Gogh is a great inspiration of mine, his story and the way he tells it through his practise is breath taking!

To start this piece, I researched into artists that I take an interest in or key words I thought would help to find a good subject to draw, through my exploration I ended up choosing an 1889 oil painting of Van Gogh (which was one of his last self-portraits before his death). Although, the palette used was relatively light, the overall undertone and sad mood of the picture speaks volumes. 'his eyes having a determined yet weary start, and his emaciated face showing a closed-off expression' (Lloyd,T. 2019).

After fully analysing the piece, I knew I was ready to begin so I prepared my worked space properly and collected all the necessary items needed. I started to lightly sketch the shapes out with a 2b pencil, making sure to get the over-all outline.

Personally, I find the best way to start the practical side of a project is to start drawing first. 'Van Gogh believed that drawing was "the root of everything."' (Stein,S.A. 2015). Once the basic form was there I began to add features and colour. If there's one thing I learned while emulating this piece was the colour is vital to the essence of the painting. Without the blue's and greys the picture wouldn't give off the same impression. Which is why I tried to get the pencil colours for my own piece as close to the original colours as I could. I feel as though it had a story, his lifeless

expression and sad eyes speak for the painting and that is what I've tried to capture within my own piece.

Another thing I considered to be important when drawing was the background, Gogh has a certain style that I wanted to recreate. 'his work reveals that the story patterns in many of his painting are uncannily like real turbulence' (Ball,P. 2006). Although, I as well as others would dispute that it's a hint to his mental health. 'Some critics believe this points to Van Gogh's psychotic mental state at the time' (Lloyd,T. 2019). The portrait is very stylised which Gogh usually created using the 'Impasto' technique which involves thickly layering oil paint so that the texture is visible. However, it's difficult to recreate that same texture using a 2D piece (paper, pencils) so next time I'd definitely attempt it in the same media or at least with a form of paint perhaps even to get a three-dimensional effect similar to the original. The drawing gives off a face that's too emotive, almost character like, with bold colours. The colour of the pencils came out brighter than initially intended, which has caused the theme of the picture to be more positive than its mean to be.

Bibliography –

Ball,P. (2006), '*Van Gogh painted perfect turbulence*', Nature, Available at – <https://www.nature.com/news/2006/060703/full/news060703-17.html>

Lloyd,T. (2019), '*The Life of Vincent Van Gogh and Self Portrait (1889) Explained*', Singulart Magazine, Available at – <https://blog.singulart.com/en/2019/11/18/the-life-of-vincent-van-gogh-and-self-portrait-1889-explained/>

Stein,S.A. (2015), '*Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890):The Drawings*', Metropolitan Museum of Art, Available at – https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gogh_d/hd_gogh_d.htm