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Tasks in order I received them:

Task one: Semiotic analysis (Ryan's task)

Task two: Manifesto (Julia's task)

Task three: (Jon's task)

Task One: Semiotics (Ryan's task)



Pintura Habitada by Helena Almeida, 1975

In *Ways of Seeing* John Berger wrote that “Seeing comes before words”, from the moment we are born we see before we even have the words to explain these sights. When we do acquire the language to begin explaining what we see it is “Affected by what we know or what we believe” (Berger, 1972, p.8). Considering this, in an age where it is easy to receive miss-information, how do we begin to deconstruct a piece of art? Within my semiotic analysis I am going to focus largely on the depiction of women in art and how depictions of gender differ largely. I will also look at narratives and colour to begin and deconstruct my chosen reference.

When deconstructing a portrait, we interpret a lot from the person within the image and in this case Almeida herself, “Images help us to believe that people are innately aggressive, intelligent, loving or lowly- according to their sex or race”, (Jo Spence, 1995, p.31). We can clearly see Almeida has

positioned herself in front of a mirror, which is of great significance. Growing up women are persistently concerned with self-presentation to the outside world. "She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself" (Berger, 1972, p.46), it is this constant awareness of appearance that invades a woman's minds daily, the belief that she should be a sight to be seen by others and everything else is of less importance. Almeida is confronting this notion in her self-portrait. It's important to note the significance of the mirror within this image, what does this object signify? "The mirror is an opulent object which affords the self-indulgent bourgeois individual (...) to exercise his privilege" (Baudrillard, 1968, p.22), throughout art history the mirror has also been viewed as a symbol of vanity, for example the painting *Vanity* by Memling, 1435. The mirror is saying that it's okay for you to view her as an object for she is doing so herself. She is considering her worth based on how others view her worth. Helena is purposefully looking away from the mirror, although her face is partially hidden, we know she is looking at the spectator, as if challenging them to stop gazing at her.

Centuries of women being depicted as lustful objects within art and culture is certain to deeply embed a sense of existing for others, "...presented culturally as objects (...) had an effect on women, on the way they see themselves- as a sight, a vision" (Allwood, 2017). It makes sense that now, in art, we see a lot of work that challenges this notion. The colour within this photo has more importance within a context than it does alone. The specific blue can be noticed as "Klein blue". Yves Klein is widely known for his work *Anthropométries*, in which he uses naked women as live brushes, directing them onto his canvases. Many viewed his work as simply using women as objects, he is literally in control of them. So, it could be said that Almeida's work may be a reaction to this. However, simply deconstructing the image will not tell us this. It makes me consider how important context is when deconstructing art.

Applying semiotics to a piece of art of any kind will allow for the deconstruction and deeper understanding of the symbolism within said piece. Although, cultural differences and upbringing will

allow for differences in readings, with reference in Berger in the first paragraph, we all have a capacity to deconstruct a piece of art, even though we may not have the same reading as someone else.

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Task Two: Manifesto (Julia's Task)

1. I will never view my work as complete or fixed.
2. I will never claim other's perspectives as my own.
3. I will never stay constant; the world is in constant flux as am I.
4. I will explore identity and gender through my own perspective.
5. I will never be a form of entertainment for others. I do not exist to fulfil others and neither does my work.
6. I will freely create art that creates a clear boarder between what is real and what is not.
7. I will never put the concept and matter after the technical.
8. I will use my own body as a way of self-expression through performance.

Keywords and Images

Complete/Fixed



Yoko performing Cut Piece, 1964.

1. I will never view my work as complete or fixed.

Leonardo da Vinci (as cited by Thornhill, 2019), said that "Art is never finished, it's only abandoned". When we think about art it's easy to think of the before (the making) and the after

(the completion), but to me, my art is never complete. I view each photograph as a progression onto something else, a flow that never ends. It's important to know when to step back from your art, but also considering it as a flow. If I complete a set of photographs I never feel as if they are complete, nothing is complete, everything is in continuous flux. "The artist's reparative work is never finished. One has to know when to stop and say the rest in the next one" (Segal, 1990, p. 73). What Segal is saying here is that the work will be carried on in future, meaning that the work that was "finished" isn't in reality "finished". When I see something I don't like within my work I consider the imperfections as a reminder of this flow, "'Flaws' are essential to make the work feel alive" (Segal, 1990, p.72).

Self/Performance

8. I will use my own body as a way of self-expression through performance.



Untitled A, 1975, Cindy Sherman

Performance for the camera is a well-established way of capturing concepts. However, as well as capturing others I will always use self-portraiture as a form of expression. When performing for the camera it's as if you are suddenly aware of yourself, "I began to conceive myself as a set of signals or signs, all of which 'meant' something to the viewer" (Spence, 1988, p.95). It's this detachment that allows me to perform for the camera, while also expressing a sense of self through my images. In a way, self-portraiture is a form of

performance art, you are acting out your art and the camera is merely a bystander.

Although, I always want a clear boarder between myself in reality and myself when I am the subject of my self-portraiture. It allows me freedom to express aspects of my personality through performance and aesthetic. "Artists (..) have used combinations of performance and

self-portraiture to achieve political aims” (Greenberger, 2013), this statement basically says that self-portraiture is a tool for expression.

Identity/gender



Claude Cahun, self-portrait as Elle in Barbe Bleu, 1929

Identity and gender are complex things. Our identity is formed from the moment we are born, from the norms we are taught by our families and I’m interested in challenging these norms that are spoon-fed to us by our family and the mass media in both my work and life in general. “...the self splits, merges, fractures and becomes so performed and so constructed that nothing authentic remains (...) a true self is nothing more than a fabrication and a void” (Bright, 2010, p.9). I am unwilling to accept a fixed self, for no one is such. Identity and gender are far deeper than surface level. The “void” Bright refers to would be to lay down and not consider the complexities of the self. “The medium of photography yields the perfect arena for the play of gender and sexuality” (Blessing, 1997, p8). Within my work I will always explore the facets of being, because it is something I struggle to explain and have a need to express.

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Task Three: (Jon's Task)



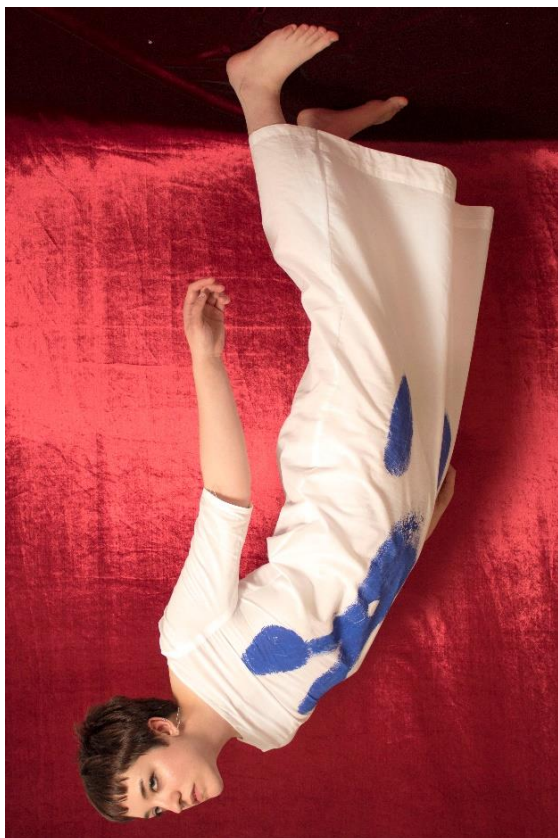
Anthropometrie de L'Epoque Bleue (Anthropometry of the Blue Period, 1960, Yves Klein)

I am going to be reflecting on Yves Klein's Anthropométries. What impact did his work have?

Usually when we think of performance art we look more towards the 70s, this is the decade where it became "accepted as a medium of artistic expression in its own right" (Goldberg, 1988, p.7). Klein was arguably one of the pioneers of performance art, combining mediums. Performance art freed artists to express themselves in ways that wasn't limited to the palette, turning to it as "one means among many of expressing their ideas" (Goldberg, 1988, p.7). Klein did exactly this, he wanted to find a way to express beyond the studio. Klein wanted to "find a vessel for a 'spiritual' pictorial space (...)" which led him eventually to live actions" (Goldberg, 1988, p.144). During the time Klein was producing these works many others were also focusing on the human anatomy within art "...viewers were transformed (...) into voyeurs" (Goldberg, 2004, p.95). He covered his models in paints and directed them on his canvas, during which a live orchestra would play as upper-class audience members spectated. "They became living brushes (...) the flesh itself applied the colour" (Goldberg, 1988, p.145), merging performance and paint. Klein's use of the colour blue was so well-known that

the particular shade he would often use became known as International Klein Blue, “blue so intense and deep that it is reflected in the eye as the sky over the sea” (Menrad, 2018). There’s no wonder that Klein has been dubbed “the bluest artist of all time” (Mavor, 2013, p.23). During the time this performance it was like nothing seen before, a way for art to be consumed collectively as it unfolds in front of an audience.

However, when we look at Klein’s work it’s important to make note of the other impact it may have and how reflecting on his work from more than one perspective is very important. As a woman, when I look at this work I can’t help but think about how Klein used the female anatomy as “live brushes” during a time when women weren’t as prominent in the art world, it’s as if it can be viewed as a literal visual representation of a patriarchal society. “Klein has ultimate control over his female



Untitled (self-portrait), 2019

subjects, thus limiting the female body not only as an object for the male gaze, but also as a tool for representing, expressing, and enforcing patriarchal values” (Russell, 2011).

In this self-portrait from a project I did in 2019 I printed my own body but instead of having it stand alone I made a dress, literally putting the print back onto the body. This can be viewed as way of reclaiming it, I used my own body, directed myself, instead of using someone else to do so. Reflection on how we conduct ourselves and others within a

creative context should be something every artist

thinks about. While I’m sure Klein had no intention of his work being read as controlling women, maybe it is something that should have been considered and addressed?

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