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BA Set Design – John Hill

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Ryan's Task – Semiotics



An iconic, yet not so popular photograph of World War 2 – The Raising of The Flag on Iwo Jima brought about hope, strength and the will power to survive and win out the war for the patriotic American military and civilian population at the time. It symbolised how America was becoming a superpower country and showing others that they're never willing to back down. But how and why? One way to look at this is through the possible signs and symbols the photograph produced towards those who consumed it.

Firstly, for a consumer to understand the communications the photographer is trying put across then individuals must understand a basic layout this being a three-part relationship (Barthes, 1974) that makes up a semiotic analysis with the consumer having to understand the signifier and the signified to make the possible sign. In this instance the consumer of the Iwo Jima image can convey that having a signifier of the 'American flag' and the signified idea of 'strength' within the image could spark the understanding and feeling of patriotism this ultimately being the sign. Barthes even states in his essay '*The Photographic Image*' that the press photograph is a message (Barthes, 1977) with this being something the press was trying to show to the public when the photo was placed in newspapers. However, I believe an underlying issue presented in Graham Allen's essay titled '*Roland Barthes*', Allen explains how early theorist Saussure described that there can be a "duplicité or double-ness" to signs. Meaning people may just see it as military men putting up a flag, but to the American public it shows bravery, commitment and patriotism. This sort of analysis from consumers is what causes different views and opinions. For example, when looking at the photo from a contextual and historical view Japanese press would release this to be a diabolical defeat and major issue causing a negative reaction from consumers unlike the American press which as stated before would portray it to be a far greater and more positive. Language has an individual and social aspect (Saussure 1857-1913) which evidently plays a part through the image – although its not being

communicated through speech the theory can be implemented to the image with the idea of it effecting someone personally and socially can somewhat been shown and this respectively produces ideas, thoughts, and opinions that the consumer will make up.

On a personal level, I saw the image to be somewhat a piece of war propaganda, however after researching the way audiences consume the information that's being shown is given a different outlook onto what it is trying to convey to the public eye. The image brings about a sense of hard work, determination and grit. And shows the effort that the men had to go through just to take the image itself. By being able to construct a sense of meaning behind the photo allows myself and audiences to see this clearly.

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Julia's Task – Manifesto

1. Actors don't work enough with set designers.
2. Set Designers feel under pressure with the task set by production.
3. Set Design isn't given the full career credit it deserves.
4. There's not enough people taking set Design as a career path.
5. Set Design isn't being portrayed as being as important as it is.
6. Audiences should be looking deeper into how a set is made rather than focusing on actors and story.
7. Set Design has evolved to fit the cultural differences today.
8. Set Design allows individuals to build up their skills in a manner of different ways.



3. Set Design isn't given the full career credit it deserves.

The importance of set design to a play, musical, or movie is paramount (The Princeton Review, 2019) and without the craftsmanship of set designers most shows, films, and theatrical performances wouldn't get the true recognition they receive. So how come Set Design and Set Designers aren't given the full career credit despite the huge impact it has on production? Ultimately its due to how 'behind the scenes' it is as a career, and its not got as big as an impact on the public due to this. People don't understand the long hours of thinking, creating, disassembling and creating again until the perfect set is created and the hard work and effort that goes into it.



4. There's not enough people taking set design as a career path.

The one main idea that springs to mind when looking at a career is a good salary, and ultimately set design doesn't start off with high pay, which I believe is the main reason as to why the career path isn't the most popular. According to the website (PlanitPlus) the typical pay for a set designer is between £15,000 to £20,000. However, being a freelance designer allows you to be your own salesperson (Moody 2002) meaning the individual can negotiate a fair price rather than being set a salary there not happy with. Secondly, another issue that I believe causes concern as to why the career option is so low is due to how busy you can be. Although it's a good opportunity, set design isn't based in one area and involves large amounts of travelling. However, 'we live where we choose' (Moody, 2002) positively states. And personally, this is something that I agree on. People worry about moving away from friends and family; however, I believe it's up to the individual to make the effort to travel, or the decision to move away. Being flexible as a set designer means bigger opportunities could show up and sparks the interest of those possibly looking for someone for a certain task.



7. Set Design has evolved to fit the cultural differences of today.

Although it doesn't seem very important, being a set designer and involving the cultural differences of today's society within the practice is a big part of the practice. With production companies mixing to create films with both the culture of one country and the culture of the other. With one big notable mixing being that of Western production companies mixing with Asian production companies. For set designers, this means having to adapt to new ways of producing something, having to be more culturally accurate than what they might be used to certain colours, icons, images might be used to relate itself to the culture. This doesn't just account for audiences though, it must also fit that of the cultures in the production. An example of this is the film 'Theeb' produced in 2014, in Jordan. It tries to show what 'Jordanian culture is and to retell the history that has shaped the country' (Nashef, 2018). By using different cultural images, words, languages, clothing, it allows the audience to be transported into the lives of the character and how they view the world through

their eyes. It's an underlining factor for a set designer to be able to follow these kinds of regulations to the best accuracy that they can, and all down to the last detail.

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Jon's Task – Reflective Writing

'Design discipline serves as the basis for debate and the development of new theories, methods and concepts' (Engholm, 2017) states. The whole process of designing and creating something new involves this strand of bringing in new ways to find solutions to work around problems and create something unique and different that will please the eyes that you are creating for. With focus on Engholm's statement and other research I have gathered on the matter of 'design discipline', I will analyse and reflect on my own work explaining how 'design discipline' could be incorporated into my practice and work.

As a Set Design student, I must learn to overcome problems that could potentially arise not only during my academic years but also through a career and professional view too, and being a designer means I must be able to make 'conscientious choices for a desired outcome' (Boevers, 2018). What will allow me to do this is by I being able to focus on shaping 'culture and society and accept responsibility' (Schellhas, 2010) for the outcome of my work, and begin to start looking at the ways my work could be interpreted and used by those around me. For example, one project I was tasked with doing was to design an accurate, to scale technical drawing of an art exhibition for school children. This involved me on having to shape different ideas that would best benefit the children when they view the exhibition i.e. making the surrounding area interesting and fun, bringing the artwork down to a level in which the children can view it etc. The full impact of design discipline played a huge role within this task due to it being a first-time thing for myself, and involving a continuous motion of thought, so I was constantly creating new ways in which I can expand on the task and developing new ideas which could benefit the school children. Furthermore, by focusing on the demographic it allows myself as a designer to think far more clearly and benefits the work outcome, through a combination of both trial and error. To continue, I had to implement psychographics, by allowing myself to think like the target audience it allowed me to innovate new ideas and methods beneficial to the task.

Overall, this class of discipline allowed me to push myself to the edge of my design barrier until I had implemented every idea, method, and correction until I got everything right and to the highest standard. I take a large amount of inspiration from the statement 'design has the power to change the world' (Schellhas, 2010), because of how symbolic it is to not just set design, but design as an entirety.

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