

PORTFOLIO OF WRITING

Task 1. Manifesto writing

Task 2. Practice based writing

Task 3. Observational writing

One essay submitted (1781 words

'ART IS A LANGUAGE'

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Course title – BA FINE ART – studio site and
context

ESSAY WORD COUNT – 1781

ART IS A LANGUAGE

This essay begins with a 'manifesto' describing a community of artists. This inclusive community would have a shared language.

'US'

A manifesto – a

“Published declaration of the motives or views of the issuer”

is counter intuitive to 'US'.

Wikipedia – Dictionary.com – archived 6th August 2012

We harness the generosity of spirit in individuals and their desire to engage with others, and we provoke change. This movement encourages people to welcome another person or culture into their consciousness which can be challenging.

Memory (historical and personal) plays a part in re-forming attitudes and opening minds to change. The shift required to move forward and allow influences to alter ways of thinking can be a slow process – particularly for those who have painful memories. We do not wish to shut people out by issuing a manifesto with clear opinions and intentions – we only ask that members engage with and listen to others.

Social Media and other modern communications bombard us daily. Fake news creates an intentional cacophony of noise and doubt. We are encouraged to live life at speed and to embrace consumerism. We are able to react instantaneously to what is put before us – sometimes with little or no thought, and the results can be catastrophic. Responses can be

made in private and reach a global audience in seconds. Details of world and other events are constant and often graphic and numbing and we are in danger of losing those qualities that make us human. Empathy could be drowned in a sea of information.

‘Us’ offers a free dialogue in response to art and other creative pursuits and this dialogue could go in numerous directions. “Why is this necessary?” “What can ‘US’ do about this?” “How does this make ‘US’ feel?” “How can ‘US’ change this” “Who does ‘US’ approach”. On a personal level this sharing of ‘self’ might lead people (including the artist/maker) to enhanced wellbeing and creativity.

‘US’ encourages free speech using creative arts as as a platform to generate discussion.

An elected committee holds 'US' to the ethos of the group and steers meetings.

Work generated by 'US' should appear in public spaces and record responses. 'Us' work should also be shown in museums and galleries - and other locations where it is possible to sell. Despite controversy over these institutions (with regard to exclusion and consumerism) they have played a key role in enabling millions to engage with art and culture. They have encouraged dialogue and new ways of thinking which is why so many regimes have tried to shut them down. There is no point speaking without speaking out and these institutions give creatives a voice, and also of course - artists have to eat!

The journey into large institutions begins in small ones.

‘US’ is a global community – inclusive and non judgemental – of people who use art and other creative fields as a tool to create a cohesive society.

‘US’ respects the planet – wherever possible using found and reused materials.

Matisse – a Fauvist (the Fauvists had no manifesto only a shared ethos) – said:

“When I put a green it is not grass: and when I put a blue it is not the sky.”



Henri Matisse

The Snail

1953

Fig.1 www.tate.com

Join 'US' and find out why!

The 'language' associated with art is complex, however the process of endeavouring to learn about semiotics (the language/science of signs) has enabled me to understand its value. It is important (outside academic circles) to ensure that this language is easily understood. The creative arts should sit comfortably at the heart of the community, thus ensuring that art belongs to the whole of society. However the understanding and the use of visual signs or signifiers (icons symbols and indexes) - other than written language - is the way to convey intention in a creative work.

One of my reasons for studying fine art was to learn it's 'language' – I then thought I would ignore it in my own practice, however I now realise that I was mistaken. It may not be enough

for me to convey, solely through my own choices of colour and form etcetera, my thoughts and intentions. There may be further tools I can deploy in order to create dialogue. I was already – up to a point - using these tools without realising it or understanding how or why. I have to understand the language of semiotics before I can read about or fully understand artistic practices since that is the language in which everything is written.

Some responses on the part of a viewer may be conscious or obvious, however perhaps I can enrich my practice by instigating a subconscious more subtle response.

I have chosen to analyse the following painting

Whitney Museum of American Art

Menu



DEREK FORDJOUR:
HALF MAST
SEPT 24, 2018–MAY
5, 2019

Fig 2 WWW.Whitney.org.uk

Fordjour is an African American of Ghanaian descent.... his painting in terms of colour, shows his connection to his heritage and perhaps to those whom this painting is referring.

Here it is (above) placed in an urban setting in public view. It is talking about an issue that exists in society, and that is papered over

and ignored, in favour of presenting a contented picture. The problem is hidden in plain sight.



Derek Fordjour (b. 1974), *Half Mast*, 2018. Collection of the artist; courtesy Night Gallery, Los Angeles

Fig 3. Fordjour Derek 2018 - 'Half Mast'

I chose this painting on 3rd November 2020 – the day of the American election. I wanted a contemporary work that carried an Important message.

The brightly coloured image with its diverse crowd, balloons and teddies appears to suggest 'joy'. It appears to connote a happy stillness, a peaceful expectation of something – perhaps a carnival or party is about to start. However if one looks further at the signs or signifiers it is clear that there is something sinister hiding in plain sight. Black silhouettes are a signifier of absence or death – describing the absence of those who should be there. We come to realise that the 'inclusive and diverse' crowd is not actually engaging with each other – in fact people are not looking directly at each other at all. The crowd is depicted in profile or seen from behind nobody is looking straight out at the viewer. This anticipatory stillness is not a peaceful scene and the passive apathetic disinterest becomes

disquieting. We are beginning to denote that there is a sinister undertone. The targets on some people are symbolic in the sense that they suggest weaponry and lead us to think of gun crime – signifying those that are destined to die. The intertextuality in the work is misleading - the colours balloons and teddies that give a ‘party’ air are not – when we unpick the signs present – the atmosphere or message intended in this work. Now we begin to see that the teddies and balloons are not symbols of childhood and innocence, but rather, in this context, are representations of memorials and grief for those who have died - they are signifying loss and death.

This painting urges us to consider the ugly truth of gun crime and injustice we are persuaded to

do so in a way that does not appear brutal and there is no apparent desire to shock. The use of semiotics draws us in and persuades us to climb out of the 'comfy chair' of our perception and question how life is for many and we deal with truths in modern society.

I have mentioned the manner in which this painting is shown in fig 2 and this brings me to the concluding part of my essay exhibitions.

An exhibition is charged with expectations – those of the makers (even if the exhibits are artefacts) through to the 'viewers'. It is a performance with a huge cast poised in the atmosphere. Complex decisions are made to create the desired experience. Spectators play a pivotal role in this performance. The frisson of their reactions as they relate to the work and each other can be

'led' by how the work is curated. Accessibility and experiences in terms of positioning, colour and sound etcetera create the desired ambiance. The desire to buy (where appropriate) is important. White walls minimalist exclusive chic – “can you afford this?” the yellow sunny walls that Grayson Perry chose for the Royal Academy – “All are welcome here”.



Fig 4. WWW.Royalacademy.org

The space that an exhibition occupies and the exhibits therein, remain fixed in time. Even if the space no longer exists, the diverse records made by countless people will remain, or perhaps an indelible mark might be made on one mind.

In 1942 Duchamp disrupted expectations with his 'mile of string' and in 1967 Roelof Louw gave control to his audience with his 5.800 oranges. Over centuries the role of exhibitions has been questioned with regard to inclusivity and motive.

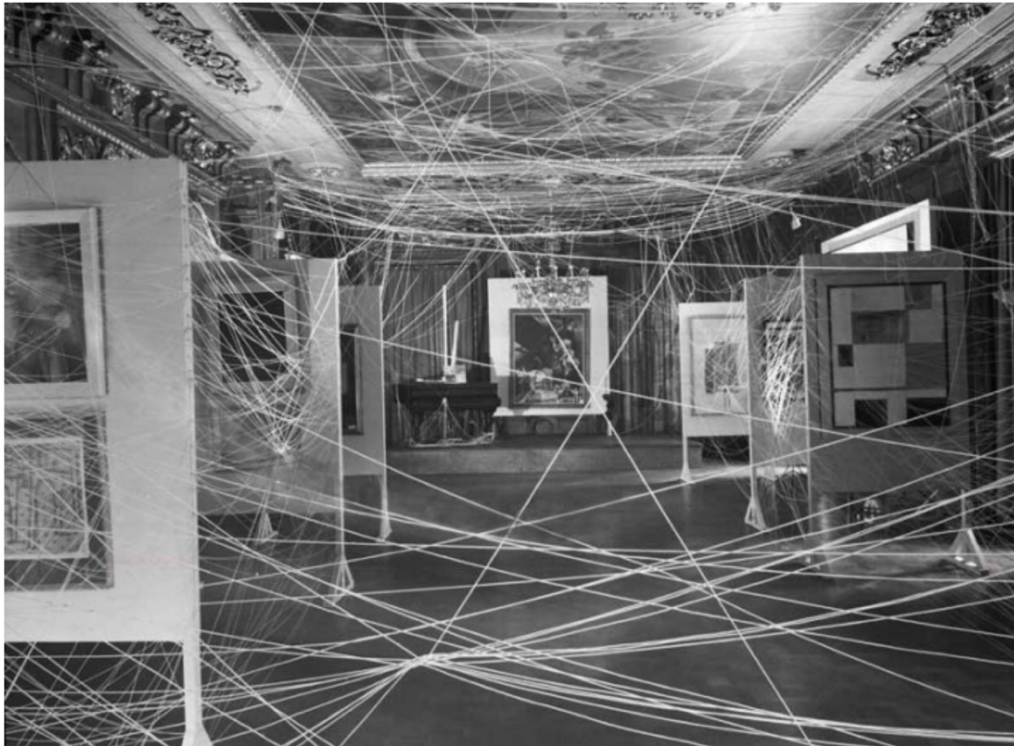


Fig. 1
John D. Schiff
Installation view of *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition, showing Marcel Duchamp's *His Twine*
1942
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Jacqueline, Paul and Peter Matisse in memory of their mother Alexina Duchamp
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Fig. 5. [WWW.Tate.com](http://www.tate.com)

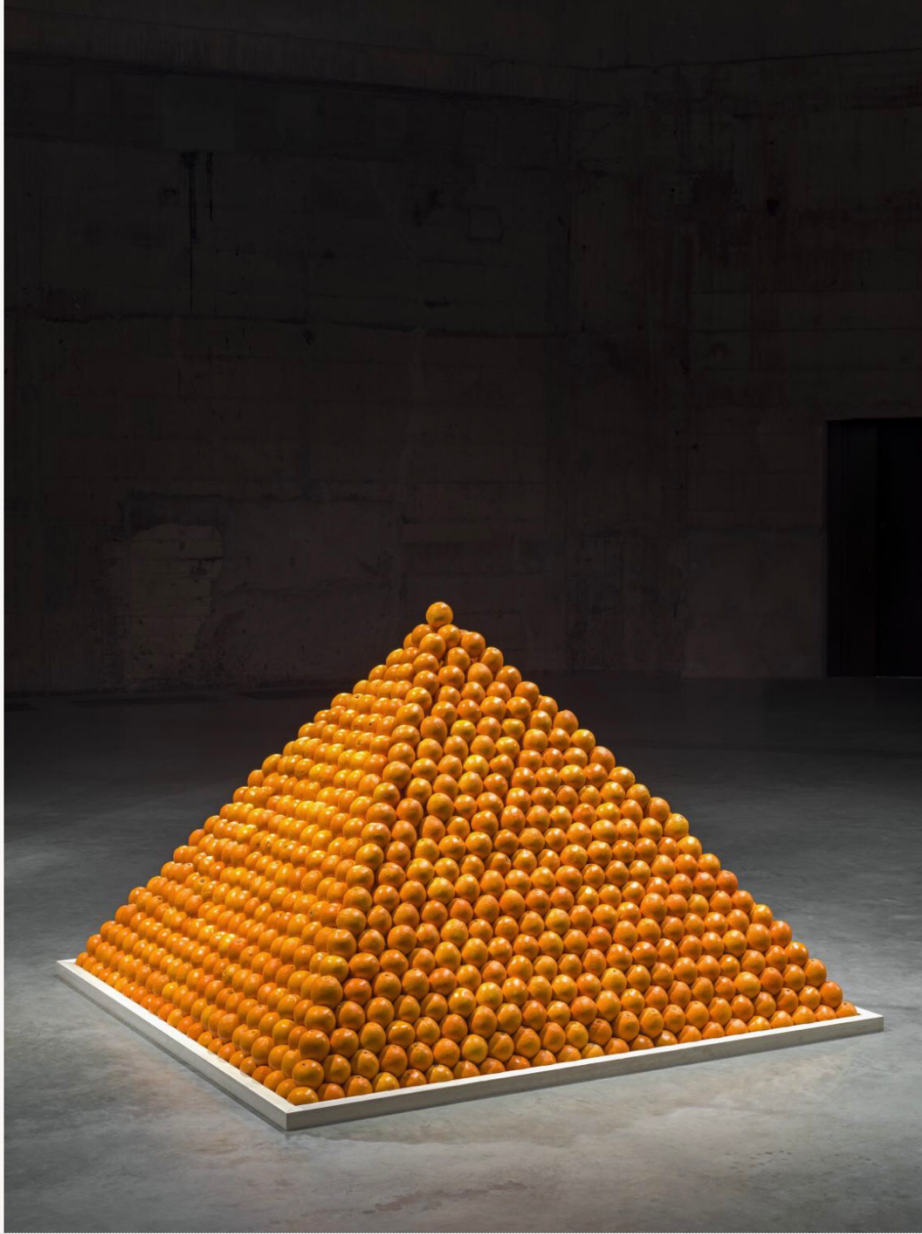


Fig. 6. Louw Roulof 1967 – '5.800 Oranges'

www.tate.com

Makers often want their work to carry more weight than merely existing – they want to share work - and others exist to facilitate this, as the promotion of ‘self’ can be counterintuitive to some.

The intentions of a piece of work can be altered, enhanced or even destroyed by the manner in which it is shown – and the meaning constructed and deconstructed countless times once it leaves the place in which it was made. We can come upon art in diverse ways sometimes avoiding the gaze of the ‘expert eye’ Perhaps a public place (recent Piccadilly billboards – Banksy) or we can perpetually see art in our minds eye. These

‘happenings’ may well be as a result of experiences or memories that exist in our subconscious, as a result of having been ‘shown’ art in a variety of ways. It is imperative that these opportunities exist.

I was about nine years old we travelled to London on a train it was a school trip

We were expecting chat and snacks a lovely day out

We were furious that it was going to be interrupted by a visit to the Hayward Gallery in London to see the work of some chap called Rodin

We were fired into a huge concrete cold austere and unwelcoming building

Feeling small confused lost and a bit grumpy

THE KISS it was partly the embrace and nudity
(naivety) I was overwhelmed by its presence
..... it's existence I was next to it I could
walk round it perhaps touch it imagine
running my hand over it

The Kiss

1901–4



Fig. 7. Rodin Auguste 'The Kiss' -

[WWW.Tate.com](http://www.tate.com)

I learnt - and have never forgotten, the importance of things that show us a world apart from the world we may be forced to inhabit in our daily lives. Those things that draw us forward and the joy experienced when beauty lifts us off our feet.

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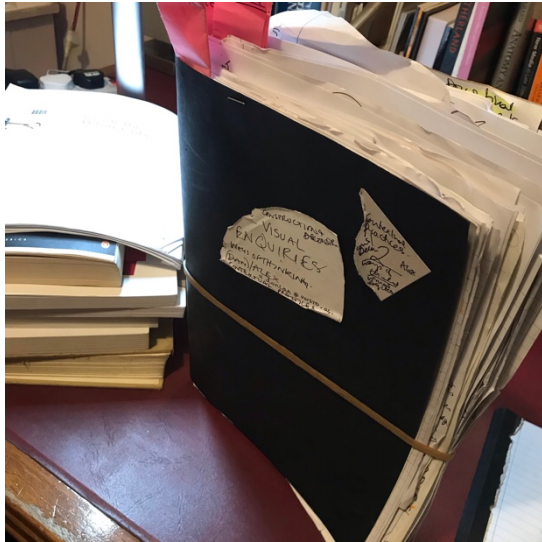
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Phaidon (MY ORIGINAL COPY FROM

SCHOOL!)



My sketchbook! Filled with notes etc made from lectures/preparatory notes for essays/research etc Have been unable to present these due to Covid/working

VARIOUS Newspaper articles and Utube videos and Tate shots and a lesson now learnt in recording all these sources in future.

LIST OF FIGURES

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WWW.Tate.com accessed December 2020

Fig 2. Derek Fordjour 'Half Mast' (2019)

WWW.Whitney.org accessed December 2020

Fig. 3. Derek Fordjour 'Half Mast' Night Gallery

WWW.Nightgallery.ca accessed December 2020

Fig. 4. Royal Academy Summer Exhibition (2019)

WWW.Royalacademy.org accessed December 2020

Fig. 5. Marcel Duchamp (1942) 'His Twine'

WWW.Tate.com Accessed December 2020

Fig. 6. Roulof Louw (1967) 5.800 Oranges

WWW.Tate.com Accessed December 2020

Fig. 7. Auguste Rodin 'The Thinker' (1880)

WWW.Tate.com accessed December 2020

