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Tasks:

Task One: Semiotic Analysis – 542

Task Two: Manifesto - 520

Task 3: Observational Writing - 542

For this assessment, I confirm that I have not used Generative AI to support me in structuring my submission, including creating a draft argument structure, identifying parts and headings. I confirm that I have not used Generative AI to create text for my submission. I confirm that I have not used Generative AI for creative materials, such as images.

Task One: Semiotic Analysis



Figure 1 Mulan, 1998, Jeff Kurtiis

This poster is for Disney's animated film Mulan 1998; a story about a young girl who disguises herself as a male soldier to prevent her father from going to war and she saves China. This semiotic analysis applies the framework of Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, which involves icon/index/symbol.

An icon is a sign that signifies its meaning by qualities of its own; it is like the thing it represents (e.g. the icon of a trash can on Apple and Windows computers), index or indexical sign points to or indicates something else, and symbol is something that stands for or is symbolic of something else which is also called purely conventional. (Umri and Pratiwi, 2023, page 3)

This poster shows Mulan, who has disguised herself as a male soldier. The armour that she wears can be seen as an indexical sign, it denotes that she needs to be protected from the dangers she encounters. However, in this poster, Mulan has her hair down and it is loose, it is a perpetuating myth that a physical feminine attribute is that women have long flowy hair, so it connotes that Mulan is proudly fighting as a woman.

The iconic sign of the dragon is polysemic, it serves as an icon for serpents and as a symbol for protection. The dragon shown is golden, which connotes that the dragon in this movie and culture views dragons as a purer form of life or a form of favourable and wealth. The dragon could also be a symbol for Mulan. If this is the case, then the symbol of the dragon would be a version of *la parole* which is the language we use to help others understand what we say. (Cassidy, 2022). In the case of *La Parole*, if we look at the symbol of the dragon through the lens of Chinese culture which is Mulan's heritage where dragons are represented as benevolent creatures compared to Western media where dragons are viewed as monsters and evil, we can see very clearly that the dragon is a symbol of Mulan.

The horse (Khan) is also polysemic, it serves as an icon of animal companionship and a symbol of Mulan's independence. The horse could be *Disney* reaffirming the myth that horses represent loyalty and companionship, this would be affirmed due to Khan's gaze being in line with Mulan's gaze. However, Khan also serves as a symbol for Mulan's independence as in many Disney fairytales the 'prince charming' rides in on a horse and saves the 'damsel' but in this picture, it is Mulan who is on top of the horse taking the 'reigns', which connotes that she is an independent woman and being who she is and not trying to fit into a stereotypical role.

After analysing this poster using semiology my view of this poster has not changed further from the first glance. Analysing this poster using semiotics reinforced my thoughts on Mulan as a hero. "Semiotics is concerned with meaning-making and representation in many forms" (Chandler, 2002, pg2). The artist carefully handpicked elements that gave Mulan more depth

and represented her accurately choosing significant aspects that the audience consciously or unconsciously understood through the lens of symbolisation of those aspects.

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Task 2: Manifesto Writing

1. Intention doesn't matter
2. Change is constant, don't fight it
3. Start moving now
4. Authenticity over approval
5. Truth doesn't need believers
6. Respect is earned
7. Stop avoiding conflict
8. Stop giving the power of your choice to other people or circumstances

2. Change is constant, don't fight it



Figure 1 – Woman and Wolf, Yarrow, 2020

The only constant in life is change. It is inevitable, whether it is our relationships, careers, technology, or ourselves, everything is always changing and evolving, and it should not be feared, but rather embraced. For example, we would not be here if it

weren't for change. Even when change isn't to our advantage it allows development and provides further understanding of everything involved, whether it is a relationship, a circumstance, or even yourself. While it is the brain's natural way of protecting ourselves from the unknown, it is vital to go into the unknown world. We know the current circumstances very well, but we do not know what exists out there. Novosel says

Instead of greeting it with an open mind and offering a warm welcome at the door, we run to our comfort zone, our familiar, our tried-and-true safe area. We tighten our embrace of the status quo (2024, pg 1)

Change is disruption and especially in an artist's world, disruption is always needed, it is why you are here.

3. Start moving now



Figure 2 – Chaos Helmsman, 1948

I believe that exercising your body is essential to life, whether it is a long walk or being at the gym, it is a commitment to aid yourself in both mind and body. It is no new fact that exercising benefits us in the long run, whether it is cardiovascular health or even help with confidence levels when achieving new levels of strength or stamina. Exercise helps the mind body and soul for a large group of people to not exercise. Mikkelsen et al says

The general outcome from research indicates that exercise can bring about many physiological changes which result in an improvement in mood state, self-esteem and lower stress and anxiety levels. (2017, pg 1)

People see going to the gym as a punishment as it is about pushing your body to new limits, they do not see it as a form of self-love or self-care which is what it is, it is a practice of resilience and self-discipline.

4. Authenticity over approval



Figure 3 – Cougar, Lanting, 1997

There is nothing that commands respect like authenticity, being authentic in an “increasingly fake world” (Morin, 2010) is as rare as it gets. It is a vital part of our existence to be authentic, it takes true strength to understand ourselves so that the world understands us. (Gino et al, 2020, pg1). Whether it is a business or even you not being authentic will have consequences whether it is big or small. Everyone always tries to make a good impression when first meeting someone, this often involves shaving off the not-so-good parts of us, however, a research study by Gino et al says

although people believe that catering to a target’s interests and expectations is more effective in assuring a good impression than simply being oneself, the opposite is true: authenticity in interactions with those we are trying to impress can lower anxiety and perceived instrumentality, and improve performance (2020, pg 16).

It is always braver to choose authenticity over approval.

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List of Figures

Figure 1: Yarrow, D. (2020). *Woman and wolf*. <https://davidyarrow.photography/>.

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Figure 2: Helmsman, P. (1947). *Chaos*. <https://www.philippehalsman.com/>. Accessed: 22 November 2024

Figure 3: Lanting, F. (1997). *Cougar*. <https://lanting.com/>. Accessed: 22 November 2024

Task 3 - Observational Writing

For the reflective piece, I chose the cover of the menu I created in A-level in my final year as shown in Figure 1 below. There was a lot of thought and intention when creating this piece. I wanted it to be an Asian-themed restaurant as that is my heritage, but I wanted to take it further

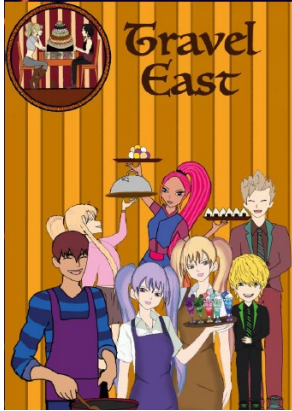


Figure 1, Menu cover (Own art, 2022)

and have dishes from all Asian cultures, hence the name 'Travel East'. I did a lot of research so that it would look like a real menu, a lot of them had a similar layout or aspects, such as a logo and presentation of the food. Many aspects of this piece involved me looking at research, experimenting with different layouts and art styles as shown in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 below, and going beyond what I usually stick to.



Figure 2, Chibi style experimentation (Own art, 2022)



Figure 3, layout experimentation (Own art, 2022)



Figure 4, layout +chibi experimentation (Own art, 2022)



Figure 5, Research (Own image, 2022)

I think it was a good choice to experiment with different art styles, even if I chose to do the style, I'm more comfortable with. I experimented with posing and took photographs of myself in different poses and based the character's pose on that, as Kolb says, "By consciously following a recursive cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting, they can increase their learning power" (2008, pg 1).

However, I think the opposite can be true at the same time. Gibbs says “It is not sufficient to have an experience to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience, it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost.” (1988, pg9). In the future, if I were to redo this project, I would take my time creating my characters, I’d also try to do it in a new art style such as the chibi work, I think it was a good decision at the time to do it in a comfortable style of art however I think I stepped into the over-learning aspect that David Schön was talking about. This rang true in my experience as I looked at the menu I created. As the art style never evolved into anything else, after a while it just became lifeless.

I think a massive takeaway from reflecting on my piece is to investigate works of hierarchy with layouts, take time while experimenting with more art styles, and develop the experimentation a lot further than I did at the time. While I did like some aspects of the cover, such as the logo which is shown in Figure 8 shown below, I think a lot more could be improved. I thought that this was one of my greatest creations, however having looked at in now nearly 3 years where I have developed my craft further, I can see a range of ways I could have improved what I created, for example, I want to create characters that are more diverse in skin colour like it is in Asia and not



developing the experimentation further. Reflecting on this work helped me realise that you are never at the height of your craft, you can, and you will always do better when reflecting.

Figure 8, Restaurant logo,
(Own art) 2022

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