

Student Name: Lucas Searle

P Number: 2005109

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Ways of Thinking Lecturer's Name: Ryan Moule

Tasks in the order I received them:

Task 1: Observational Writing = 533 words

Task 2: Practice-based Writing = 522 words

Task 3: Manifesto Writing = 498 words

Task 1: Observational Writing

What is semiotics? To put it simply Semiotics is how meaning and narrative is generated through signs and symbols (Berger 1972). It is about taking a slower look at things to analyse and deconstruct them. We can analyse the semiotics of all cultural products such as an image, film, song, written text, advertisement or even things like a colour or sound. When analysing something in this way you look at what is denotated, what is literally there and draw from that what is connotated, what is inferred (Barthes, 1977). Throughout our lives we have been conditioned by lots of different aspects like our families, schooling, peers, surroundings, culture, religion, politics, laws and media. This conditioning is explained well in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. These things have helped shape how we perceive and interpret reality. As human beings we make links between different objects and signs. There are things that are easily recognisable to most people, for example the colour red is used for road signs, in this sense it represents danger. It is also recognised as symbolising love. However, in a world of post truth and fake news it is important to note that representations are not always true. As Erving Goffman said, "The normal and the stigmatized are not persons, but perspectives." (2009, p.138). To me this highlights the fact that the way we interpret things can be subjective.

To demonstrate how we use semiotics I will deconstruct an image. I decided to take a look at *Women's Aid's* interactive *Look at Me* campaign. At first glance we notice that a plain black background has been used as to not draw too much attention from the subject or text. The colour black creates a serious tone, it can also represent darkness or fear. The white text contrasts with the dark tone of rest of the image which makes it eye catching. The colour white can signify safety, this juxtaposition represents the light within the dark or the

light at the end of the tunnel. The statement “Look at me.” Is very powerful and commands the viewers attention. Looking at what is denotated in the image there is a woman with a blank lifeless expression and a bruised face. What is connotated from this is that she is a victim of abuse. The text “We can stop it.” also reinforces this as it implies something negative is happening to the woman and action needs to be taken. The use of the word “we” is inclusive to the viewer and makes them feel more connected to the subject. Another interesting aspect about this campaign is that this image was placed on billboards and used facial tracking software to detect when people were looking at the screen. When people paid attention to the image the bruises on the woman’s face would fade and heal. The more people that were looking the quicker this would happen, this was to promote the message that domestic violence can only be confronted if people stop turning a blind eye (Hobbs, 2015). We can conclude that the overlying message of this campaign is to raise awareness of domestic abuse and inspire everyone to make changes and stand against it.

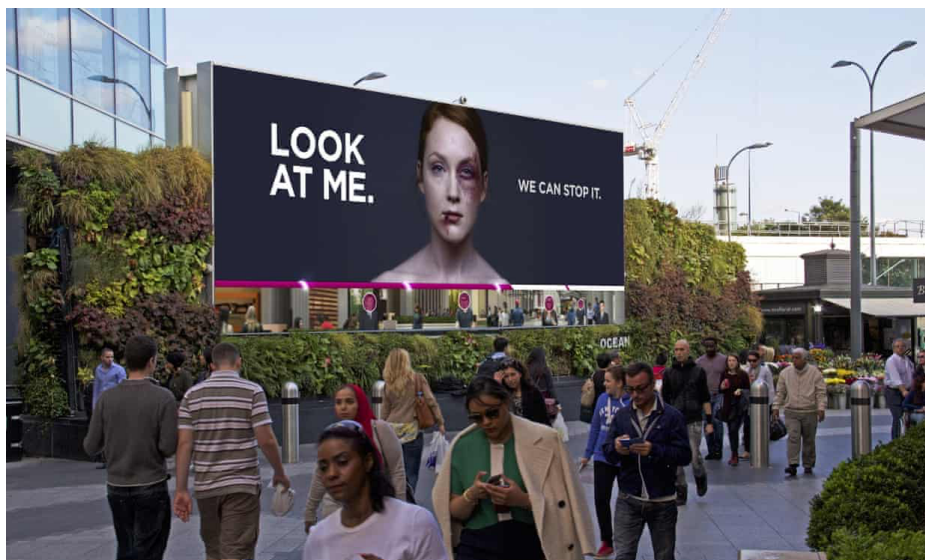


Fig 1. *Look at Me*, Women's Aid Campaign, 2015

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Task 2: Practice-based Writing

The purpose of an exhibition is for an artist or photographer to showcase their work and to create an unforgettable experience for the viewers. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic I wasn't able to go and visit an exhibition in person, many galleries were already integrating digital platforms to view work, however this been greatly accelerated by the global health crisis causing much bigger demand (Chloe Ashby, 2020). It is a great step in the right direction as in a time where people can't leave their house, they can still have the feeling of being present in an exhibition space.

I decided to take a look at The World Photography Organisation who host events throughout the year including the world's leading photography competition, the Sony World Photography Awards. "With the power to kickstart and shape careers, the Awards provide those working in photography a global stage to showcase their work.". The awards consist of four different competitions "Professional (for photographers entering a body of work or portfolio), Open (for photographers entering a single image), Student (for academic institutions) and Youth (for 12-19 year olds)." (World Photography Organisation, 2020). However, there are many different categories available to enter including but not limited to Still Life, Sport, Culture, Portraiture, Wildlife, Landscapes, Documentary and Street Photography.

I selected this year's French Exhibition to view, despite it being the French show the winners selected were from all over the world. The virtual gallery tour allows you to navigate around the room and click onto works for a bigger view, information and videos. This is one advantage of the virtual gallery as it makes the space seem less cluttered (Chloe Ashby,

2020). This space in particular was very contemporary, being vast and open, comprising of plain white walls as not to distract the viewer's attention from the works themselves and stay with a neutral theme. The works were all hung at eye height, spaced equally apart and sectioned in their appropriate categories. As a student myself one thing I found inspiring about this exhibition was to see student competition winners displayed at such a huge renowned awards event. A lot of the work on show was greatly different to the next piece but the work that caught my attention the most was that of which evoked emotion in me.

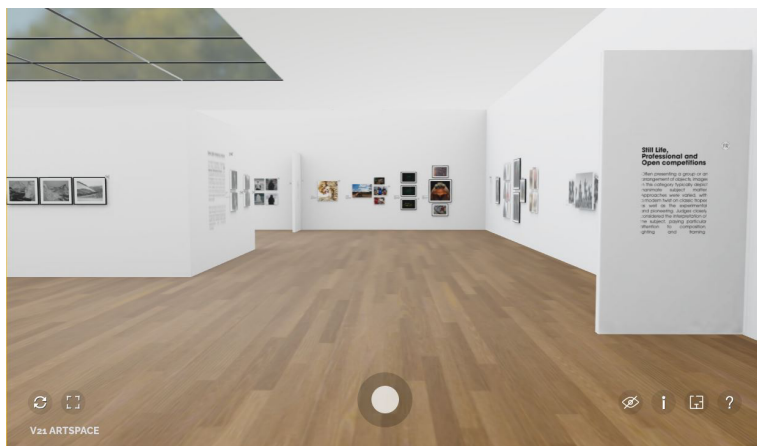


Fig 1. Sony World Photography Awards, French Exhibition, 2020.



Fig 2. *The Long and Difficult Path of the Mauritanian Women's National Football team*, Lucas Barioulet, 2020.

The work of Lucas Barioulet shows the newly founded Mauritanian women's football team. Society there is deeply conservative and women taking part in the sport is frowned upon (World Photography Organisation, 2020). The purpose of the work is to challenge convention and press for change, making positive portrayal important. I found it Interesting

to learn about other cultures and the oppression of women still existing in the modern world.



Fig 3. *Unsung Heroes*, Denis Rouvre, 2020.

Another piece of work that caught my attention was a project called *Unsung Heroes* by Denis Rouvre, it is a project about violence against women around the world. Rouvre himself says “I wanted to show the suffering experienced by these women, but also their strength and resilience”. I think he does an excellent job of capturing this by having the women posed confidently and looking straight into the camera lens.

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Figure 3. *Unsung Hereos*, Denis Rouvre, (2020). Available at: <https://v21artspace.com/sony-world-photography-awards-2020-french-exhibition> (Accessed 3 January 2021).

Task 3: Manifesto Writing

What I believe in as an artist:

- Aim to create work that is authentic and portrays things in an ethical manner.
- Create work that evokes an emotional response.
- Question everything, this is especially important in an age of fake news. Don't just take things at face value, always dig deeper.
- Always seek to improve your own knowledge and understanding. Learn from your mistakes and use them as an opportunity for growth.
- Create work that challenges conventions and presses for change. Do not censor yourself.
- Constantly experiment creatively.
- Be inclusive and tolerant of everybody. Aim to educate people as opposed to dismissing them.
- Don't just be a consumer, engage with content instead of just being a bystander.

3 Areas of exploration:

Don't just be a consumer, engage with content instead of just being a bystander.

“Traditionally social science has tended to regard consumption as a trivial by-product of production” (Miles, 2015). With the rise of social media in the modern world our culture is becoming a lot more passive. People will spend hours scrolling through lots of different information without actually thinking much about it. This links in with semiotics, to not just be a spectator but to engage more with the information we are presented with (Debord, 1931). Bertolt Brecht created Epic theatre as a way to make his audience think more objectively about what they were seeing and draw conclusions from it as opposed to getting caught up in the actions and emotions of the scene. He would use alienating techniques such as actors stepping out of character and getting the audience to ask questions (Britannica, 2020). These are lessons we can still draw from today to gain a better understanding of the whole picture as well as getting us to think more critically and consider more sides to an argument.

Question everything, this is especially important in an age of fake news. Don't just take things at face value, always dig deeper.

Fake news and click bait have become intertwined with our daily life. Click bait is when journalists use eye catching headlines in order to gain an audience. This also happened with newspapers but in an age of so much information being constantly posted to the internet it has become harder for people to distinguish a reputable source. The headlines are often misleading, and a lot of people don't actually take the time to read the full article which skews public opinion (Bom and Hansen, 2015). Even more dangerous is fake news, where the information is completely false or biased. “There's real danger that a lot of people don't

realise that just because it is up online doesn't mean that there are not serious mistakes or flaws in it" says Nigel Curtis (King, 2020). We can see how much this impacts society with President Donald Trump himself stating earlier this year that disinfectant would possibly be able to treat Coronavirus if inside the human body (The Telegraph, 2020). I think that's it's very important for us to do our own further research before declaring something as fact as spreading misinformation can be very harmful.

Create work that challenges conventions and presses for change. Do not censor yourself.

In 1863 there was an exhibition held called the *Salon Des Refuses*. Previous to this the original Salon exhibition would reject a lot of artwork based on whether they deemed it acceptable or not. The *Salon des refuses* gave all artists a chance to express themselves freely and was a revolutionary step for the development of contemporary art. Once it gained popularity artists began to set up many independent exhibitions (Chilvers, 2009). If convention had never been challenged in this way the world might be a very different place today, so I think that it is always important to push the boundaries. Work that brings light to issues like the billboard for the *Look at Me* Campaign can have a far much more positive and profound impact on our world than something that just looks aesthetically pleasing.

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