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BA Graphic Design

ADAD4018 Ways of Thinking

Task One – Semiotics Analysis = 464

Task Two -Manifesto = 483

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Task one - Semiotics Analysis

“Semiotics can be anywhere” (Chandler, 1944). The following piece will include an analysis of three components of a graphic design image, exploring the importance of semiotics and its value within graphic design. Semiotics is the interpretation of signs and symbols, which play a vital role in conveying messages through visual elements (Chandler, 1944). Creating visually compelling and communicative designs by incorporating cultural, contextual and social meanings associated with visual elements (Chandler, 1944). Humans become habituated to symbols, signs and gestures from a young age and recognise and adhere to their purpose – for example, stopping at a stop sign, or proceeding through a green light at the traffic lights.

In 2023 the ‘Warner Bros’ released the award-winning film ‘Barbie’ and along with it came an advertising campaign by the design team at ‘Warner Bros Studios’ (Rubin, 2023). I will be semiotically analysing the poster used to advertise the movie in three elements, starting with the colour.

The colour pink is a strong feature within this design, which is followed by a pale blue. The pink acts as a more prominent statement colour with tones of lighter pinks to accompany it. Historically, pink has been mostly associated with feminine traits (reference and date – the barbie essay should have one) (www.adobe.com, n.d.). The signified meaning behind the idea of using pink as the main focal colour is to idealise femininity and the anchorage femininity with a definition of a colour and tone (www.adobe.com, n.d.))

The second component I will review is the typeface. The typeface is easy to read and follows the iconic barbie branding set as refurbished in 2009 (Enina Bicaku 2023). The typeface has soft lines which generates a gentle aroma and defines the feminine brand (Enina Bicaku 2023).

Finally, I will focus on the symbolic colour blue. The blue within this design is limited and used as a secondary colour alongside the main primary pink. However, the importance of the blue is uncanny leading the anchorage of the two colours together to show that pink overpowers the blue within this concept (www.adobe.com, n.d.). Blue is said to be “calming, soothing, and symbolizes the positive (www.adobe.com, n.d.) Bright blues inspire ideas of loyalty, confidence, security, and reliable authority.” (www.adobe.com, n.d.).

To conclude, while deconstructing this poster many elements complimented each other in allowing one final anchorage. The significance each element has on one another throughout the design, leads the viewer to see the signs of femininity through a visual manor. It is easy to combine an idea of what the film will portray by viewing the key elements of this posters as each sign leads to viewers to a clear understanding of what it could be. Semiotics is

everywhere and breaking down the simplest elements can lead to success in understanding a visual in more depth.



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Task two - Manifesto

1. Equal rights.
2. Be your own person.
3. Unrealistic beauty standards.
4. The universe.

5. Design can drive positive change in society.
6. Diverse perspectives.
7. Uprise in social media.
8. How social medias impact in wellbeing.

Key words and images

Beauty Standards.

The unrealistic standard of beauty set within society.



(Hahn, 2019) <https://millardwestcatalyst.com/10919/opinion/the-toxicity-of-beauty-standards/>

Womens features are constantly under the surveillance of societies expectations and norms.

These pressures can lead to distress and worsening in women's psychological and physiological wellbeing (Kumari and Singh, 2023). Foo (2010) suggested that 'beauty is timeless', yet the standards change depending on 'fashion' and recent trends, making women's ability to conform to the new and improved beauty standards impossible, and in some ways, unrealistic (Winch, 2016). The beauty standards set within society has lost touch

with the beauty of celebrating individual differences in society, instead it leads men and women to see women who do not conform to the set norms as ill-favoured (Kumari and Singh, 2023). Since the development of social media and the use of photoshopping applications, the prescribed beauty standards and social norms have been set to an unachievable level. The concept raises questions regarding the possible effects that these unattainable standards may have on people's perceptions of their bodies, self-worth, and general well-being. Being a woman, I recognise the constant demand to adhere to beauty norms, I also recognise the importance of not setting unrealistic unattainable expectations, to avoid significantly impairing my mental health. I believe there needs to be further development in accepting beauty in all shapes and sizes and removing the unrealistic expectations set on women across the world.

Social Media has impacted our wellbeing.

86% of adults in the US and 79% of adults in Europe use social media'(Brooks, S,2015).

Social media has quickly become the primary platform for communication, connections and sales and advertisement (Twenge, 2017). However, the influence of social media has not always been positive. Social media has been at the centre of research in considering its impact on emotional wellbeing and mental health. Braghieri, Levy and Makarin (2022) reviewed the relationship between social media and mental health. Their findings suggested that social media negatively impacted students' academic performances, which led to a decrease in mental health. They also found that students who were engaging with social media were more likely to experience poor mental health, particularly symptoms of

depression. This empirical research considers the rise and fall of social media and emphasises the importance of being boundaried with social media to maintain mental wellbeing.

Equal Rights

Many women around the world experience gender oppression, domestic violence, discrimination and femicide, only 14 countries in the world offer full legal protection for woman (Statista, 2023). A female experience in modern society continues to pose many challenges and despite the ongoing recognition and women rights movements there continues to be noticable differences between the treatment of women across the world (Gilman, 2023). Through personal experiences and through conversing with family members, I am aware of the progress that has been made towards creating equal rights, but also of the need for further development. This way we can strive together towards equality.

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Task Three – Practise Based Writing



Artwork – Created by Caitlyn Davies 2023

This piece of work was developed as part of a project following neo-stalgia and focusing on nostalgia combined by modern-day development. The piece highlights the issue following the

brand 'Barbie' and its "iconic" (Lord 2023) doll. I aspired to show the key issues of how society views feminine beauty standards throughout childhood toys and the impact which brands have on beauty standards within society, particularly in relation to women. As well as, developing a detailed understanding of the challenges childhood brands face when confronted with the issues of beauty standards in our society.

After reviewing 'Barbie' as a brand I developed insight into the brands aims and controversies over the years. In 1959 the 'Barbie doll' was born following "Ruth Handlers' idea of creating a doll that inspired women to become anything they desire" (Lord 2023). Ruth recognised the opportunity to create a three-dimensional "11-inch" (29cm) tall plastic doll with a figure of an adult woman, after being inspired by her daughter 'Barbera', as she watched her play for hours with dolls (Mattel Inc). Soon after, the 'Barbie doll' was a worldwide sensation, over time becoming a staple known for its iconic pink logo and plastic 'perfect' dolls. (Forman-Brunell, 2009).

'Barbie' has been recognised as a successful brand being compared to global brands such as 'Coca cola' when considered consumer capitalism (Lord, 2023). Although, despite its success Barbie has been faced with a number of controversies relating to the negative impact it has had on beauty standards within femininity. As recognised by 'Ziobro' (2016) despite leading the toy fashion doll market for several decades, 'Barbie' has been subject to several lawsuits and controversies. Finnish researchers discovered that Barbies body proportions were not realistic and how bodily functions would be inhabited if she were real, for example the lack of body fat would inhibit 'Barbies' ability to menstruate (Lord 2023). It can be said that the brand itself have set an unrealistic standards of beauty into children's minds at a young age by just promoting such a 'perfect' doll to a target audience so young with a little understanding of what a woman's body is idealised to vision.

My creation of an artwork that emphasised the salient features of the debate surrounding feminine beauty was motivated by this inquiry, with the intention of reaching a younger audience. Using a design that lets the viewer interact with it as they like, I wanted to demonstrate that nothing is as it seems. My basic idea was to use an ambigram of the phrases "save me," which, when reflected in a mirror, changed to the words "I'm fine." Since we often examine ourselves in a mirror, the usage of reflection was a created method to demonstrate that image isn't everything. To encourage individuals to recognise that beauty extends beyond appearances, the mirror displayed the depth of the work and words being reflected.

To take my design further and follow the design to aspire a younger target audience, following the artist Rachel McClean, and her project 'mimi upsidedown' I took inspiration and developed a frame like structure from wood to attract my main target audience. With inspiration from McClean's work, I was able to understand the elements of showing how things are in a unique way to express that not all is what it seems.

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