Portfolio of Writing

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Task 1 – Manifesto - 506 words

Task 2 – Observational Writing - 500 words

Task 3 – Practice-based Writing - 498 words

Manifesto

1. Prioritise sustainability
2. Good design should be affordable
3. Take inspiration from nature
4. Strive to create joy for others
5. Fulfil your creative destiny
6. Make time to play
7. Embrace failures
8. Value yourself and what you create

1. Prioritise sustainability

Fig.1: *Dead White Man,* Hutchinson, 2023

A staggering amount of textile waste is created every year, with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe stating that “85 percent of textiles are sent to landfills, i.e. 21 billion tons a year” (UNECE, 2018). We need to value textiles and stop wasting this resource and considering it

throw away commodity. In the Cloth Cultures podcast, Jeremy Hutchison explains that he named his piece *Dead White Man*, because in parts of Africa the second hand clothes that arrive are referred to as a phrase which translates as “dead white men’s clothes”, because that seemed to be the logical explanation of why perfectly wearable clothes were arriving from the global north (Butchart, 2023). As designers we have an important environmental and socio-economic responsibility. Materials should be carefully chosen to create products which can be turned into something else at the end of their life, preventing anything from going to landfill. Circular fashion has been suggested as being the future, as this involves manufacturing clothes in a way that uses completely recyclable resources to avoid waste (De Baere, 2022, p. 161).

4. Strive to create joy for others

Fig. 1: Happy Hints, 2025

Everyone should be able to feel the powerful effects of joy. Experiencing this emotion does more than simply effect your happiness - it has a positive effect on your brain, as well as your circulatory and nervous systems (Brand, 2020, p. 15). It is scientifically proven that well-conceived art and design can bring joy. Studies have shown that by simply looking at art that you like, dopamine can be

released in your brain and evoke similar feelings as when you are in love. It is interesting to note that disturbing art does not have this positive effect (Farnsworth Art Museum, 2024). As artists and designers we should feel inspired to make a positive difference to the lives of others through what we create. After all, if we get it right then we have the ability to make a deep, profound impact on those who experience our work.

7. Embrace failures

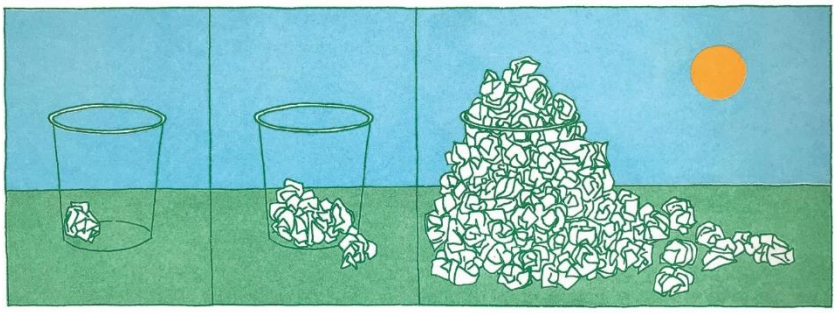

Fig. 3: Elephant, 2020

To achieve great things we cannot be afraid to make mistakes, as the more mistakes we make, the more potential opportunities we can discover. We must allow ourselves to go out of our comfort zone and accept that sometimes this will result in failure. Stephen Bartlet emphasises the importance of failure leading to feedback, which in turn gives you knowledge and therefore power, stating “the higher your failure rate, the higher your chances of success” (Bartlet, 2023, p. 198). It is clear that in order to be our best selves and achieve our goals we must keep on learning, and embrace failures as a vital part of the process. In an interview for Forbes, David Hieatt said “to overcome your fear of failure, reframe it for what it truly is: accelerated learning” (Furr, 2025). We should all take this concept to heart, and use this as momentum to try new things and make discoveries that would otherwise remain undiscovered had we been too reserved to even try, out of a fear of failure.

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Observational Writing

Fig. 1: *Community,* Law, Toledo Museum of Art, 2018

Semiotics can be defined as "the study of signs and symbols, what they mean, and how they are used" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce are considered to be the founders of semiotics. According to Saussure, a sign is made up of a signifier – the physical form of the sign, and the signified – the concept that the signifier represents (Chandler, 2022, p.22). Pierce went on to classify signifiers into three types: icons, indices and symbols. Icons bear physical resemblance to what they represent, indices have direct tangible links, while symbols have no relation other than social convention (Hébert, 2019).

Community was a site-specific art instillation at Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio in 2018 by British artist Rebecca Louise Law. The image of this installation is initially puzzling as you try to understand what you see. It has an ethereal sense of grandeur, evoking feelings of awe and wonder, making you wish you could step into the image to immerse yourself in an "overwhelming vision of nature" (Phaidon, 1999, p. 506), as though you were walking into an impressionist painting. While initially clouded in mystery, this art installation can be better understood through the theory of semiotics.

520,000 dried flowers were suspended on copper wire to make up the instillation. Achieving this was a collective volunteering effort, made by many hands across many communities, including in Toledo where this exhibition was based. Knowing this, the sheer scale of these flowers become an index signifier, as the artist highlights the communities it references and the people it unites across the world to demonstrate the power of art to bring people together.

The flowers are carefully preserved to be displayed in a glorious shower of colour and beauty. Law explains how she wants to “take in and observe nature, and the beauty that we are given on this earth” (Toledo Museum of Art, 2018). It is striking how the artist treasures these precious flowers, as they are usually considered an ephemeral object, soon to be thrown away. By capturing this in such a powerful way, Law is symbolising how a deep respect and value for the material is at the heart of what she does.

Law throws nothing away. The flowers used are the entire collection of 15 years of material since she began working as an installation artist, combined with 10,000 new flowers from plants that were then replanted into the local community. On the face of it, this extraordinary display of flowers may seem to just signify nature. However, by digging a little deeper, it is clear that this zero-waste working practice is an icon for sustainability.

Semiotics allows us to decode and reach a deeper understanding of art, as well as many other aspects of life. While on a surface level this artwork could be considered merely a display of flowers and colour, we can now appreciate the true sentiment behind the piece, and begin to understand the perspective and motivations of the artist.

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Practice-based Writing

Fig. 1: *Wire Daffodil*, Eden, 2025

During a workshop, I was set a task to create a line drawing image out of wire, using the technique of spot welding to fuse the joins together. This was not something that I had done before and I was initially apprehensive about whether I would make something I actually liked on my first try. However, I was keen to learn how to apply my existing love of line drawing and elevate this in a new way, regardless of the outcome, as I always enjoy trying something new. The benefits of learning through doing are backed by experiential learning theory, which emphasises the importance of actually doing something and then reflecting on this to harness the learning potential (Gibbs, 1988, p. 14).

I began with a line drawing of a daffodil to use as a reference image to then recreate in wire. I found the process of bending and shaping very peaceful and mindful. I really enjoyed the tactile nature of

this way of working. Around halfway through my making process I began to feel discouraged that it wasn't looking how I imagined. I realised I had not been paying full attention to my reference image and had gone off track, with my work needing some adjustments to pull it back together. It is easy to get carried away and go off on a tangent, but when trying to depict something lifelike, it is always key to remember that the main skill involved is the ability to look (Felder, 2005, p. 10).

Fig. 2: Komater, The Arty Teacher, 2019

I really enjoyed working with this new process, and particularly liked how a 2D drawing could be turned into a 3D object, almost as though it had leapt off the page and come to life. Working with wire was something that I was interested to explore more, so I went on to research artists working with this material. I felt particularly drawn to the work of Diane Komater as she has such a wonderful way of capturing the energy of life. I feel inspired by her saying "don't listen to people telling you

what to create" (Finley, 2024). It is a powerful reminder to follow my own path and stay true to my own passions and inspirations in my own practice.

Kolb's cycle of learning is a useful tool to consider how the understanding of a new experience can be used as a guide to navigate future experiences to continue learning (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1987, p. 12). Now that I have experienced spot welding and working with wire I can see how I could refine processes and introduce different tools and handmade jigs. I can see that this technique could be combined with other processes to create different outcomes and I would be interested to explore ways of combining the wire with different textiles. It will be key to continue to understand and make sense of things, as well as regularly evaluate, to enable me to improve and develop throughout my learning and making process.

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