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Graphic Design

ADAD4018 Ways of Thinking

Tasks in order:

Task One: Semiotics Analysis = 521 Words

Task Two: Manifesto = 488 Words

Task Three: Practice-based Writing = 503 Words

Task One: Semiotics Analysis

Modern society is filled with new forms of imagery. Imagery which will have been created by new Graphic Designers and could very well be misinterpreted by others due to “Graphic Design education and it’s lack of broad visibility.” (Storkerson, 2010, p. 3). Using Semiotics however, we can decode the true meaning of images and any connotations that the image may hold. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, and how meaning is created using these tools. During this first task, I will aim to analyse and deconstruct a popular film poster and open a different way of reading and seeing said poster.

The theory of semiotics has two major figureheads that have both proposed different outlooks on the study, American philosopher Charles Sander Peirce and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Particularly, Ferdinand de Saussure is hailed as the “Father of Semiotics”. Saussure’s semiotic concept was that a sign was split into two separate ideas, the signifier, which is the physical part of the sign, as well as the signified, being the concept that the sign projects. For example, a red traffic light would be the signifier, but the knowledge to stop would be the signified. This concept is often pitted against the “relatively elaborate” (Krampen et al, 2013, p61) semiotic theories of Peirce.

Another interpretation of semiotics is that how we view an image is dictated by what we know. This was popularised by author John Berger of whom wrote “The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.” (Berger, 1972, p1). For example, to a person living right now, a green man at a crossing would mean to go, we know this due to modern

practices being installed into us since birth, but to a person from the Middle Ages, this would simply mean nothing. These practices can be applied to design also.

In 1994, the Crime/Thriller 'Pulp Fiction' was released worldwide. Along with the film was released what could be considered one of the most iconic movie posters to ever be produced. On first look at the poster, it gives a cheap and run down appearance, which directly relates to the title of the movie. Pulp fiction is typically a series of interconnecting stories that have been mass produced but not considered to be of high quality. This falls in line with the plot of the film as throughout the film there are separate stories which all intertwine into a larger plot. Also on the poster, we can see the female lead holding a cigarette sat in front of a gun. Instantly, this connotes a sign of danger or threat, but looking at it from a semiotic angle, we could consider that the gun being in the centre of the poster could hint to its bigger meaning within the plot of the film, and the woman bolstering behaviour that is seen on the poster could link to the powerful role that she plays in the film. This poster is effective in what it is trying to do because it can "include a range of concepts and references" (Ambrose & Harris, 2008, p76)

Fig. 1, *Pulp Fiction Movie Poster*, 1994

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Figure 1: Pulp fiction movie poster, 1994, Available at: https://www.themoviedb.org/movie/680-pulp-fiction/images/posters (Accessed 6th December 2023)

Task Two: Manifesto

1. Always choose productivity over procrastination.
2. Physical forms of music will remain superior until the end of time.
3. Money comes and money goes, happiness is the true currency.
4. Always strive to help other people.
5. Mistakes are a part of human nature, do not shy away from making them.
6. Adapt to your environment, but always remember your basic values and ideals.
7. Aim to achieve excellence not perfection. Your best is good enough.
8. Keep an open mind to other cultures, creeds and practices and incorporate them in your own ideas for design.

1. Always choose productivity over procrastination.

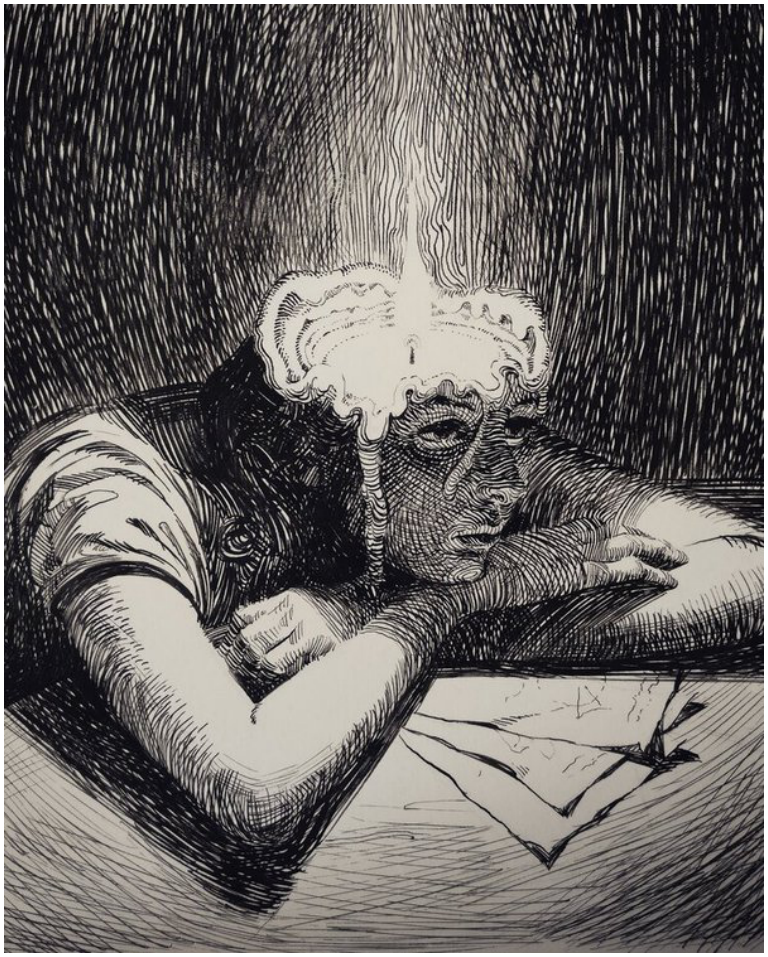

Fig.1, *Burning the Midnight Oil*, Miles Johnston

In the past 20 years, humanity has adapted to living alongside technological advancements, advancements which at face value would benefit normal everyday life. These advancements have led to an increase in procrastination as “tasks and activities that we used to do manually are now being automated” as said by Raza (2016). Though easier said than done, we as humans should strive to choose to be active and productive with whatever task we are facing in life, instead of living in a state of avoidance. “Choosing to voluntarily delay despite our intention reflects a basic breakdown in our self-regulation. This breakdown

occurs most often when we are faced with a task that is viewed as aversive" (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013, p5). Judging by this statement, we choose to procrastinate based off our judgement and emotional response of whatever situation we are facing. It would be impossible to stop procrastinating entirely because "procrastination is part of the human condition" (Dryden, 2021, p2) however we should choose to look at new challenges with a positive mindset to increase our productivity and benefit ourselves both physically and mentally.

7. Aim to achieve excellence not perfection. Your best is good enough.

Fig. 2, *Summit*, Hailey E Herrera

Perfectionism is a long-debated subject which divides many theorists as to whether it is beneficial or harmful to a person's mental well-being. "Perfectionists are driven to attain the impossible, if we accept the axiom that no one is or can be perfect" (Hewitt, Flett & Mikail, 2017, p2), this describes the infinite loop that striving for perfection can create, perfection cannot truly be achieved as nothing in this world is definitively perfect. In contrast, wanting to achieve excellence in your field and accepting that sometimes you cannot finish a project to its absolute best is a much healthier and positive goal to strive for. Coming to accept that the harder you try to be perfect in whatever you may apply yourself, the further away from your best you will be, is a hard truth to accept but a fact that will lead to more positive mental health.

8. Keep an open mind to other cultures, creeds and practices and incorporate them in your own ideas for design.

Fig. 3, *Open Mind,* Johnson Tsang

In design, keeping an open mind to other ways of seeing or completing your project is in my opinion, and essential skill to being a successful designer. Williams Hare says in his book '*In Defence of Open Mindedness'* that "The chief virtue of open-mindedness is that it makes possible the assessment of claims to knowledge", this is a perfect example of the true value of keeping an open mind because it is impossible to expand your knowledge of a subject if your mind is reluctant to accepting new practices. Johnson Tsang captures having an open mind perfectly in one of his series of sculptures*,* "Tsang incorporates hand gestures and metaphorical materials like growing leaves and rippling water to convey a sense of open-mindedness in his sculptures" (Staugaitis, 2018). Accepting other designers' practices is essential to the development and evolution of design, this is only possible through all designers keeping an open mind and taking influence from others.

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Figure 1**:** *Burning the Midnight Oil*, Miles Johnston, accessed: https://www.artsy.net/artwork/miles-johnston-burning-the-midnight-oil (Accessed on 6th December 2023)

Figure 2: Summit, Hailey E Herrera, accessed: https://fineartamerica.com/featured/summit-hailey-e-herrera.html?product=poster (Accessed on 7th December 2023)

Figure 3: Open Mind, Johnson Tsang, accessed: https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2018/03/johnson-tsang-open-mind/ (Accessed on 7th December 2023)

Task Three: Practice-based Writing

In this section I will be reflecting on and giving critique to the front cover of an LP I designed for a client.

When discussing what was wanted out of this design, I was told that the ideal outcome would be a front cover that is bright and instantly recognisable, while also tying into the vintage and classic feel of white label vinyl covers from the 1990s/early 2000s while also incorporating an image that was of great meaning to the client. I agreed with the use of the image because I believed it created a deeper connection for the client because like John Berger states “An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced.” (1972, p.3). I was also told that the artwork would have to be suitable and ready to be submitted to online streaming platform. This led me into researching the guidelines for what is considered acceptable on large streaming platforms, I found researching this extremely

useful because it also led me into proper recommendations for colour settings, sizing, and what language to use on the cover.

When I was designing the cover, it came to me quickly that the client's image had to be the central focus point of the cover, which was not my original intention. I decided I wanted to use bright, popping colours so that the cover would stand out and instantly catch someone's eye who may be coming across the single online. My original idea was to also keep text minimalistic on the cover, I experimented and sampled many ways of positioning the text, and the sizing of the type as well as trialling different typeface's. After communicating with the client however, they decided it was best for the title of the single to be the centre of the image, which does create a hierarchy where you instantly see the name of the song, but it was against my original idea. I found that one thing I was insistent on sticking to throughout was the want to base my design off original white label LP covers. I found that because I was so reluctant to try new ideas however, I was often stuck trying to find other ways to change the cover which the confines of the white label design would not allow.

At the end of the project, I was happy with the outcome of the cover. I believe it is a professional looking job and the client was thrilled with the result. This being my first real client-based project, I believe it strengthened my communication as a designer and how I adapt to change my ideas to fit an ever-changing brief, being a successful designer "demands great versatility and the need to communicate effectively" (Ambrose & Harris, 2008, p12). Schon once stated that "Self-reflection is the key to successful design" (Quoted

in Culley, 2001, p.463) and I believe looking back and evaluating this project will impact the way I look at future projects and how I critique them so I can improve.

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