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Programme of Study: BA Illustration

Module: ADAD4018

Tasks in the order I received them:

Task One: Jon Pugh-Reflective Writing: Do you know what you think? = 550 words

Task Two: Ryan Moule-Observational Writing: Identify an image and write a semiotic analysis = 548 words

Task Three: Julia Lockheart-Manifesto Writing: “What do I believe in?” = 517 words

Task One: Reflective Writing: Do you know what you think? (Jon's Task)

My first encounter with Damien Hirst's work was seeing an image of *Cock and Bull 2012,* which is situated above the tables overlooking the guests of the London restaurant the Tramshed. There the cow stands encased in formaldehyde with a cockerel on its back. This mockery of animals upset me and fuelled my research into Hirst's work, leading to this piece which saddened me more. Why must an animal, that was once free and living, be killed in the name of art?

Mother and Child (Divided) Tate exhibition copy 2007 (original 1993)

This sculpture of a cow and calf bisected, are stood within the minimalistic white exhibition room. The halves of each separated in a distance that the spectator can walk between to view their "interior landscape" (Hirst, 2003, p.7). The blue formaldehyde creates a cold atmosphere heightened by the visual reality of death. Their postures are unnatural, the necks outstretched and pained as the head is lined up with its back and the calf's front legs float above the ground. Both have sad half-

lidded unseeing eyes. However, Hirst (1995) claims “my cows cut up in formaldehyde have more personality than any cows walking about in fields.”

Hirst has created a series of animals encased in glassed steel frames and preserved in the toxic formaldehyde throughout his career under the title *Natural History.* The controversial artist has been influenced ultimately by his fear and fascination with death. His intention to shock and provoke the modern desensitised viewer, and with the help of Saatchi, his fame grew. His work became something of a dare to the public, poking at their curiosity. “The work relies on a fascination with the physical presence of death and reflectiveness on the part of the viewer regarding his or her detachment from the dead thing”. (Hirst and Gallagher 2012 p.24) By giving it a narrative, does that help overcome the shock by directing the mind? Thus, justifying the art and creating the detachment? As a result, Hirst has made his money from exploitation; viewers expect gore and they’ve become numb.

It has been suggested many times that his work is influenced by Christianity. This piece has been associated with the holy mother and child, however, “sculptures are paradoxical- as the artist puts it, ‘I try to say something and deny it at the same time’.” (Hirst,2003, p.7)

At face value, it could represent the human perception of animals; “art, with its unique undiminished authority, justifies most other forms of authority, that art makes inequality seem noble and hierarchies seem thrilling.” (Berger,1972, p.29)

To answer my question, Damien Hirst used animals in the name of art to shock, provoke and essentially elevate his work into the limelight, “publicity is always about the future buyer.” (Berger,1972, p.132) However, imbuing the sculpture with meaning does little to affect my relationship with it, to clarify, the morality is more important than any meaning projected onto it. A fake cow and calf, maybe wouldn’t have provoked the same reaction, instead having a scientific-educational purpose. Ordering an animal dead for this role would be pointless now when anatomical

maps are so accessible. Who knows whether he'd still be considered one of the most important contemporary British artists today if he'd have never used animals. We'll see in future how he continues his work as the world grows in a more compassionate way.

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Task Two: Observational Writing: Identify an image and write a semiotic analysis (Ryan's Task)

Understanding signs is key to understanding how meaning is made. Semiotics is the study of signs and one of the founders, Ferdinand de Saussure, a linguist, found how to break down the sign. Then called Semiology, from Greek Semeion 'sign', posited "the sign as a dual entity composed of 'signifier' (material substance) and 'signified' (mental concept)." (Cobley, 1996 p.2) Charles Sanders Peirce then found there should be 3 classes of sign; icon, which resembles a signifier, symbol, which represents an index, whereby the signifier is caused by the signified. Roland Barthes found that " all these 'initiative' arts comprise two messages: a denoted message, which is the analogon itself, and a connotated message, which is the manner in which the society to a certain extent communicates what it thinks of it" (Cobley, 1996 p136) This refers to how we are conditioned to think. "The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe." (Berger, 1972 p.8)

Season's Greetings, Banksy 2018

Here we look at graffiti artist Banksy's, *Season's Greetings*, on the right side the denoted image depicts, a stencilled graffitied child; arms raised, head tilted up and tongue out. The viewer clarifies in reading the signified signs that snow is falling above the child's head. As we know the sledge here an iconic sign, used for the fun activity of sliding down snow-covered hills, rests besides their feet. We note what the child wears; a wool hat, gloves and a coat to keep warm in cold weather. The child's gesture is one that most of us would recognise as doing ourselves to catch snowflakes, and so we resonate with them. The viewer concludes that the piece connotes a child playing innocently in the snow.

Colour plays an important part; this side is black and white apart from the child's tongue which is a symbolic dark pink. Like red, the colour we know signifies stop or resembles danger. Depending on how much the viewer considers this, they might subconsciously take this sign and then look up to see where this 'snow' comes from and why it could be a hazard to the child. The eye is drawn left, as the work wraps around the wall. This side depicts a graffitied bin on fire, emitting ash. The fire is the only element on this side that is in colour, so there is a colour connection creating an awareness of danger. What the viewer now learns is that the child is playing in ash and not snow, an indexical sign from the fire. The relation between the two sides now creates a new iconic connoted message.

"Location is everything; context and content are ultimately the most measurable difference between what is written in the bathroom stall and… the Brooklyn Bridge". (McCormick et al., 2010 p.51) Originally on the corner of a steelworker's garage and now residing hidden in an empty building in front of a window. It highlighted the effect that the steel industry has had on the people of Port Talbot, who last summer dealt with falling ash. Using signs and symbols, this piece was a response to draw attention to the environmental issues, of which we aren't always so conscious of processing. Through this deconstructed analysis, I have further clarified my understanding of the meaning of this piece.

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Task Three: Manifesto Writing: "What do I believe in?" (Julia's Task)

1. Not to exploit animals in art.
2. Using illustration to promote or initiate a positive idea or change. Provoke thought.
3. Strive at being at peace with imperfection. Finding perfection in imperfection.
4. Be more environmentally conscious when choosing materials and mediums.
5. Be a voice for the voiceless.
6. Use travel and experience to broaden ideas and knowledge.
7. Practice to address finding a balance with realism and tone with a more narrative and illustrative style, using my desaturated colour palette.
8. Prevent stagnation by not following a set of strict rules or limitations by embracing natural development.

Keyword and Images

Exploit

Bogart, Sheep age 16 (2013) and Babs, Donkey age 24 (2016)

1. Not to exploit animals in art.

Animals have been exploited and treated as a commodity; our compassion seems selective. We have constructed a hierarchy for the treatment of each species, with farm animals particularly getting the severest. Photographer Isa Leshko dedicated the last decade to taking photos for her project, *'Allowed to Grow Old'* where her elderly farm animal subjects were given the rare chance to live out the rest of their lives in sanctuaries, whilst most are slaughtered within the first year of life. Unlike some artists, she uses this medium with the physical inclusion of animals in a positive nonexploitative way.

She carefully takes her time for the animals to get used to her, selecting minimal equipment without a flash, and getting down on their level to understand their personality. "Each is an individual, and each experiences his or her own life in a very real and personal way". (Leshko et al., 2019 p.100) She is respectively aware not to exaggerate their ailments in her photos, conscious not to exploit animals with her art.

Keyword and Image

Experience

*Await,*2018, Heikala

6. Using travel and experience to broaden ideas and knowledge.

Experience in life shapes the way we think and feel and can have a much larger impact on our ways of working. Interest in travelling can greatly influence our practice, although it is important to make a conscious effort to understand the meaning of culture, history and art. To take inspiration from an environment means you need to understand what it is and how to use it in the right context. For example, taking a torii gate from Japanese culture and placing it incorrectly would be disrespectful. An artist I admire, Finnish watercolour and ink artist, Heikala expresses this in her book:

> "Discovering new places and experiencing a completely different environment through travelling has undoubtedly influenced my work. I love that I can bring my suitcase adventures back to my studio desk and incorporate them into my works. Some of my recent illustrations and their settings are directly inspired by the places I have visited."

(Heikala, 2019, p.44)

Keyword and Image

Imperfection

*The Hiding Place,*2019, Kelogsloops

2. Strive at being at peace with imperfection. Finding perfection in imperfection.

Finding peace in imperfection in a world that demands flawlessness is something a lot of people struggle with, myself included but maybe we should adapt our way of thinking to a much kinder mindset. This can be transcended through practice.

'Kintsukuroi' is the art of 'Kintsugi', meaning "mending with gold". (Santini, 2019 p.6) The Japanese idea of finding beauty in imperfection, derived from fixing broken pottery with gold lacquer to not only mend but create a new piece of art.

Kelogsloops, an alias name for an Australian artist, has been inspired by this idea and adapted it to his work. In his painting '*The Hiding Place*' Kelogsloops combines, with the use of two straight gold

leaf lines, the portrayal of emotion and feeling with 'Kintsugi' to create the essence of the narrative finding peace and accepting their flaws.

> "the transcendence of suffering is a recurrent theme in the arts. Tortured by demons and traumas, artists often use their pains to transmute them. They play with the sensitivity of suffering and make it resonate at the center of their art. The spectators' feelings thus echo the artists." (Santini, 2019 p.235)

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