

Extended Essay - *Art as Therapy*

Intro 500

Context 3023 - **WRITTEN CHUNKS YET TO BE PIECED TOGETHER**

Commonalities:

- Relationships
- Mindset
- Traumas
- Associations
- Viewers experience
- Visual communication

EXPERIENCE 786 (1500)

Art as Experience is a major writing on aesthetics, the science which deduces from nature and the rules and principles of art, by John Dewey. In his work Dewey (2005) defines life as being an aesthetic experience once personal knowledges, feelings, and circumstances become a coalescence (Dewey, J 2005).

Dewey (2005) explains that art involves both the artists and the active viewer whereby each of their personal experiences and cultures become relational to one another, making art the involvement of multiple human experiences and communication between both the present and unrepresented souls (Dewey, J 2005).

John Dewey's poem Space-time explains that 'space and time are spatial and temporal always together' (Sullivan, A.M, p.327). Artists who realised this discovered that everything would have to exist arbitrary with no relations. Artists and designers consider how to represent and create new relationships between ideas, materials, and differing forms of the arts hence, 'if movement alone were perceived in music and rest alone in painting, music would be without structure and pictures nothing but dry bones' (Sullivan, A.M, p.327). Considering that the conception of art being designed with both personal and knowledgeable value enables the viewer to observe the work as a physical experience. A work can acquire sensuous properties which can be enhanced by tactility. Art that stimulates the physical senses can be seen to be relational to the prompt of the emotional senses. This brings clarity to the understanding of artistic expression within a piece, giving the artist visual means to portray their own narrative (Dewey, J 2005).

Installation works are demonstrative of art as an experience. The Tate (2022) explains that installation artworks must 'occupy an entire space where the spectator has to walk through in order to engage fully with the work' (The Tate,

2022). Installation art often carries a strong desire and common theme to 'provide an intense experience for the viewer' (The Tate, 2022). 'Experience teaches that in visual perceptions there is a discrepancy between physical fact and psychic effect' (Birren, F, 1976, p.106). Contemplation of the installed art experience and its occasional fragility becomes an experience within both the mind and physically for the active observer.

Case study - Olafur Eliasson - In Real Life exhibition: visited on 1st October 2019 at the Tate **unsure on how much 'I' to use**

When I visited the Olafur Eliasson exhibition at the Tate Modern 2019, I felt so consumed and involved in his work. His use of colour, process, technique, materials, the time, and planning that went into each piece was astonishing, his use of scale, how he interacts with his audience personally and how he makes us interact with one another was overwhelming.

Eliasson's research explores 'cognitive neuroscience, interaction, play, collaboration and intersubjectivity' (Godfrey, M, 2019, p.154). Eliasson (2019) explains his awareness of an experience being a mingling of culture, biology, and psychology. He believes an experience has a before and after and that its importance lies in that continuation and flow (Godfrey, M 2019).

The importance of making information accessible to the viewer was demonstrated in abundance during the exhibition. Birren (1976) explains this further by stating how 'human beings have a definite sense of illumination (Birren, F, 1976, p.107) which becomes an independent factor in vision. It is suggested that 'an experience scenario can be seen as a form of simulation about what is happening in the world' (Godfrey, M, 2019, p.155) and the experience has largely to do with our expectations of the world. The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Art and Artists (1990) relates expressionism, the visual act of expression, to art that 'raises subjective feelings above objective observation, reflecting the state of mind of the artist rather than images that conform to what we see in the external world' (Chilvers, I, (1990, p.203). This welcomes the questions 'is what we see reality? Or is the world about us a construct of our eyes and brain?' (Birren, F, 1976, p.245). Upholding the idea that that gained from an experience is a personal discovery.

Eliasson (2019) expresses how he has formalised the 'elicitation interview method' (Godfrey, M, 2019, p.156) where the questions asked lead back to a previous experience. This technique encourages the realisation that you can gain access to many more levels under one 'apparent layer of momentary subjective experience' (Godfrey, M, 2019, p.156). 'So, an experience seems to be neither a passive stream of information into the body nor a set of expectations about the world; it is closer to being a form of space that you can delve down into' (Godfrey, M, 2019,

p.157). Eliasson (2019) explains that this third model experience is like a 'universe that can help you revisit the experience and deepen and transform it' (Godfrey, M, 2019, p.157). This coincides with the idea of art as therapy, exhibiting how space and time become catalysts for emotional awareness, discoveries, and healing.

DRAWING 923 (1500)

The healing value of image making, and drawing is reminiscent with that of therapy. It encourages emotional findings and unconscious feelings to appear at the forefront of the mind, acting as a visual way to bring awareness to feelings of an unsurfaced state within the mind (Oswald, I 1993). Edwards (2013) explains that the practitioner experiences an altered consciousness state of feeling transported when creating. Highlighting the power drawing has in evoking emotions and feelings.

Each drawing medium can be seen to have its own intrinsic properties which, in interaction with drawing methodologies and tools, forms the makeup of this individual visual language. Hence, the visual language acts as a gateway to encourage spoken words and conversations, focussing on 'forces and materials rather than form and content' (Ingold, T, 2015, p.18). It becomes the way in which to communicate to the soul through visual stimuli rather than literal symbols or words. Edwards (2013) expands on this, noticing that the better a practitioner is at drawing, the more clearly the viewer can see them, and the more they will be able to learn about themselves.

Material choice as a designer influences the evocative capabilities of a piece of work. The physical properties and marks created by a drawing material will produce an atmosphere. Depending on the purpose of the work, material choice and the techniques used to demonstrate the material will influence how, what, and who it communicates to, as well as how well it does so, by the atmosphere it creates.



Figure 1: Guston, Monument (1976)

Philip Guston was the progenitor of New Image Painting whereby the artist often manipulates an image giving it the ability to be experienced as a 'psychological associative, an ambiguous quasi-narrative, or a vehicle for formalist explorations' (Chilvers, I, 2020,

p.419). Guston's paintings heavily feature sections of overlapping garish colours where scenes of extreme social and political themes are presented in a cartoon style.



Figure 2: Schnabel, Homo Painting (1981)

Neo-expressionists, like Julian Schnabel, create vastly figurative works whereby the image can often appear lost amongst the mass of the surface activity. Neo-expressionists 'became the most scientific of all schools of colour' (Birren, F, 1976,

p.106) where their works 'deliberately cultivate crudeness for its emotional value' (Chilvers, I, 1990, p.416). The pieces habitually feature 'violent or doom-laden subjects' (Chilvers, I, 1990, p.416) because of the heroic scale and layers gestural brush strokes.

Juxtaposing the ideas behind Neo-expressionism, collage as a drawing method is often used to introduce ideas and starting points. It is seen as a form of 'self-expression, a means of uncovering unconscious content, and a vehicle for more developed art making' (Moon, C.H, 2010, p.30). The ideology of collage repurposes and revives the 'detritus of life' (Moon, C.H, 2010, p.31) transforming its identity. Collaging presents itself as a vehicle to facilitate the revelation of the viewers and designers' conflicts, defence mechanisms, and styles of functioning. It can be seen as a symbolic act of creating order out of fragmented aspects of life or chaotic feelings, represented through the broken materials used to build a collage (Moon, C.H, 2010).

For the designer, collage engages them through physically layering materials, which reflects 'the symbolic layering of inner experiences, images, emotions, thoughts, and ideas' (Moon, C.H, 2010, p.31). The impermanence of an unfixed collage is appealing to designers who fear making mistakes. Collage gives them the creative freedom to 'arrange and rearrange the elements on the ground until they are satisfied with what they see' (Moon, C.H, 2010, p.31). This methodology deemphasizes verbal orders and relies on the materials to create a new visual structural framework for digesting and communicating ideas and thoughts.

The cultural competence of the designer when producing art to act as therapy must include 'awareness of the differences in artistic modes of expression' (Moon, C.H, 2010, p.26). Materials register themselves in a 'number of domains of thought and practice by which patterns of culture are sustained and bound into the interstices of human life' (Ingold, T, 2015, p.18). The designer fosters 'awareness of internalized cultural imperialism, expressed through culturally bound aesthetic tastes' (Moon, C.H, 2010, p.26) that prompt the designer to have preferences and reject certain materials and media. This idea of perception invites opportunity for complications with telling and receiving the story the way it occurred and was intended to be received. 'Much of what we see is changed, interpreted, or conceptualized in ways that depend on a person's training, mind-set, and past experiences' (Edwards, 2013, p.24). As a designer, it is imperative to conduct an 'ongoing self-education about the multiplicity of ways that art can be constructed and construed in a number of contexts' (Moon, C.H, 2010, p.27). This permanent learning process allows the designer to become aware of their internalised biases. Although a designer can consider how to visually represent a story, they cannot control who views it. Therefore, they cannot be certain if the message will be received the way they intend as they are unaware of the viewers 'mind-set and past experiences' (Edwards, 2013, p.24). Edwards (2013) explains this notion stating that decisions made on what we see is not a conscious process. Hence making the act of drawing ambiguous. Understanding and working with this, as the creator of art with the aims of acting as therapy, will help the designer 'articulate their ideas in a diverse language of expression through both media and materials' (Moon, C.H, 2010, p.27). Consequently, the togetherness present in the creation process will breed otherness (Ingold, 2015) therefore, the message of the piece will become confused in interpretation regardless of whom it may be interacting with.

COLOUR 823 (1500)

Design can be seen as a visual and symbolic communication whereby the same topic can be illustrated just as successfully, despite it being visual, in contrast to verbal. The artistic symbolism behind colour and the metaphors and connotations

each possess brings clarity to the ideology of art acting as therapy and features heavily in design language (Oswald, I 1993). 'In both figurative and abstract painting, colour can be used for its decorative beauty, to create mood, and to express or arouse an emotion' (Aleid, 2016). Edwards (2013) explains that skilful use of colour requires seeing it as expression and having imperative value. 'The science of colour must be regarded as essentially a mental science' (Birren, F, 1976, p.106). Symbolist painters aim to appoint visual expression to sensuous emotional forms, by recognising that colour and line possess such expressive and mental qualities (Chilvers, I, 1990). 'Th experience of colour has an amazing degree of independence of external physical facts' (Birren, F, 1976, p.106). Seeing colour and its symbolic values as a way to express is a development that Van Gogh exhibited widely in his work.



Figure 3: Van Gogh, The Starry Night (1889)

Van Gogh used 'colour and line emotionally' (Chilvers, I, 1990, p.203) to express his passions, beliefs, and feelings. This transaction between the designer and the viewer of the work is at the core of this therapeutic action and forms the foundation of any emotional discoveries that may occur.

'The painting is rooted in imagination and memory, leaving behind the Impressionist doctrine of truth to nature in favour of restless feeling and intense colour' (Google Arts and Culture, 2022). Van Gogh ensured that his works were seen as touchstones for all subsequent Expressionist painting.

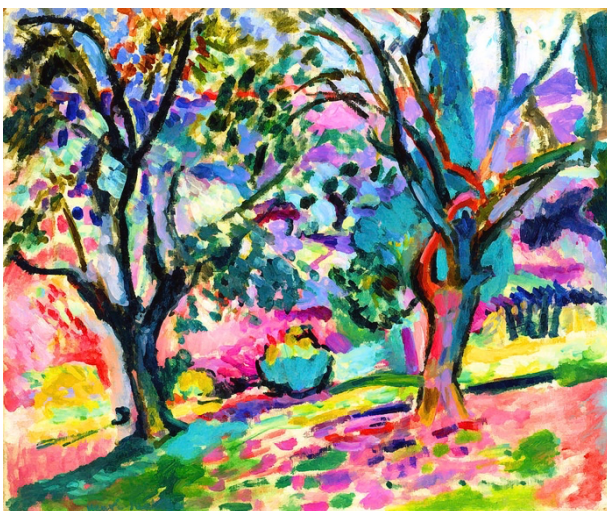


Figure 4: Matisse, Olive Trees (1906)

Colour has a profound effect on the viewer within design. Henri Matisse (1869-1954) 'mastery of the expressive language of colour and drawing' (The Tate, 2022) was recognised with revolutionising attitudes towards colour in art. 'The intense colourism of the works he painted brought him notoriety as one of the Fauves' (The Tate, 2022). Matisse used colour

within his work to conjure a balance of 'purity and serenity devoid of troubling subject matter' (Chilvers, I, 1990, p.378). A differing approach to the use of colour in works, seeing it as a tool to create an atmosphere of peace and calmness as an escape from the happenings within the mind, a 'mental balm' (Chilvers, I, 1990, p.378), using colour as a way to emotionally rest.

Monet, before Matisse, was frequently questioning the nature and validity of descriptive colours. He was captivated by the ever-changing reflections of light on water and used colour theory within his work with the aim of recreating these mobile effects. Monet was influenced by a French chemist called Michel-Eugène Chevreul who 'dealt with alternate and simultaneous contrast, afterimages and optical mixtures of colour' (Birren, F, 1976, p.106).



Figure 5: Monet, Red Boats (1875)

Monet demonstrated Chevreul's 'rules of colour harmony' (Birren, F, 1976, p.106) in the painting Red Boats. While colours that are close together on the colour wheel harmonise with each other, complementarians are energised and made visually demanding and vibrant through strategic pairing (Aleid, 2016). Orange boats and their reflections contrast with the green in the water. Similarly, yellow highlights on the posts are complementary to

violet shadows behind them.

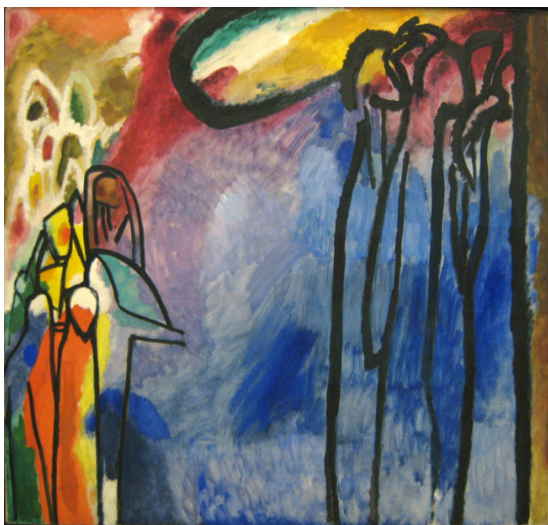


Figure 6: Kandinsky, Improvisation 19 (1911)

Colour is often used to express or engender emotion. Wassily Kandinsky (1866 - 1944) was a significant figure in the development of abstract art and was 'concerned with abstract colour expression' (Birren, F, 1976, p.106). He thought that artists should use form and colour to express emotion and arouse feelings in the viewer. In Improvisation 19, Kandinsky 'divides the composition so that the left side relates to worldly existence

and the right to the spiritual' (Aleid 2016).

The right side is dominated by a calming, restful blue intended to evoke feelings of peace and spirituality. It is not just primary and secondary colours that create a mood or atmosphere to a piece, tertiary colours are also evocative but are considerably more subdued. Colour determines a work's success, likeability, evocative abilities, power of its visual language and communicative abilities, as well as its ability to connect which is demonstrated in the works of both Kandinsky and Monet.



Figure 7: Picasso, Self Portrait (1901)

Pablo Picasso was reputable for his personal relationships with certain colours. 'Well-known for adopting certain pigments during periods of his career, the artist used these hues to express how he was feeling at the time. "Colours, like features, follow the changes of emotions," he said in the 1930s' (Doyle, 2020).

Picasso's Blue Period is illustrative of how he adopts one colour and its hues to portray a narrative. He became entangled with 'the miseries of poverty, deprivation and disability, old age and ill health, and psychological depression' (Chalif, D.J, 2007, p.412) and depicted how these made him and his subjects feel surrounding them with 'the gloom of a nocturnal blue' (Chalif, D.J, 2007, p.413). His works radiated a 'morbid melancholy' (Chalif, D.J, 2007, p.412) atmosphere, painting his subjects and himself as pained individuals.

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The practice of design is a therapeutic endeavour. Design is a common form of expression for the self and for wider political and social issues. Art and design are frequently used as mediums through which relationships develop. Ingold (2015) expresses how the budding of these relationships resonate with his knot analogy. 'Knotting is symptomatic of the binding of lives in relations of kinship and affinity' (Ingold, T, 2015, p.20). Although the production of the piece is at the core of the relationship, the feelings that develop between the viewer and designer are often concerned with transference. Ingold (2015) develops this notion using lines as the carrier of this transference, bringing it into the 'domain of human life' (Ingold, T, 2015, p.1). For continuation of life, we must mount the things we do and see within the life we're currently living (Ingold, T 2015). 'These lives enact a principle of correspondence that is fundamentally social' (Ingold, T, 2015, p.1). The social act of responding and relating to art allows for the diverse settlement of individuals.

Much like Ingold's (2015) knot, relationships, and people part, connect with new people and re-connect, and experience different and the same things. This mesh of relations continues to grow concurrently with the person, tying itself to 'lines extending from other knots' (Ingold, T, 2015, p.20) far and wide. Pieces created by artisans embody the condensation of the unconscious feelings they and we all possess, externalising them into visual entities (Oswald, I 1993). The process of creating these visual responses encourages the viewer to externalize, re-experience, and resolve conflicting feelings from an external perspective rather than internal. Repositing these feelings externally gives the work produced the responsibility of being the container of the emotions instead of the mind (Oswald, I 1993). This external container acts as a way of decompartmentalising issues the individual is facing, encouraging them to move forward with the issues 'without being intrusive or imposing preferences inconsistent' with their current coping strategies (Moon, C.H, 2010, p.24). Consequently, the issues will appear more achievable to solve and breakdown. Facing visual emotional stimuli will have exceedingly better effects and results in comparison to verbal or written starting points.

Designing sympathetically considering the diversity present can be realised as 'a 'living with' rather than a 'looking at' (Ingold, T, 2015, p.24) approach. Thus, the common ground of the 'interstices of things' and experiences (Ingold, T, 2015, p.24) becomes central to how best to construct a message within a work. 'In both carpentry and textiles, the form of a thing does not stand over it or lie behind it but emerges from this mutual shaping, within a gathering of forces, both tensile and frictional, established through the engagement of the practitioner with materials that have their own inclinations and vitality' (Ingold, T, 2015, p.24). The way in which the construction processes is performed will shape how and what the observer is able to feel when in contact with it.

Conclusion 500

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Figure 4. Matisse, *Olive Trees* (1906). Available at: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/1-olive-trees-at-collioure-henri-matisse.html>

Figure 5. Monet, *Red Boats* (1875). Available at: <https://www.1st-art-gallery.com/Claude-Oscar-Monet/The-Red-Boats-Argenteuil.html>

Figure 6. Kandinsky, *Improvisation 19* (1911). Available at: <https://www.wassilykandinsky.net/work-158.php>

Figure 7: Picasso, *Self Portrait* (1901). Available at: <https://www.pablopicasso.org/self-portrait.jsp>