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Ways of Thinking Lecturer: Jonathan Pugh

Tasks in order:

Manifesto writing - 527 words

Observational writing - 500 words

Practice-based writing - 481 words

Overall word count: 1508 words

Manifesto writing

1. Artists must strive to learn new techniques and information to continuously improve their art.
2. A piece of art does not have to contain a message to be of value.
3. Art is subjective – there is no such thing as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ artwork.
4. Fair critique is vital to improve artwork.
5. There are no such things as completely original ideas. All artists build their work from artists before them.
6. Creativity and imagination are the most important qualities for an artist to have.
7. Having a distinctive style is not as important as everyone makes it out to be.
8. Other artists' work should not discourage us, and instead should be used to inspire our own work.

Overall, my manifesto focuses on self-expression and personal improvement. The statements I would like to explain in more detail are statements one, two, and eight.

Personally, I believe that artists cannot create effective pieces of artwork if they do not seek out new information or practice new techniques. For example, how is an artist supposed to create a piece of work about a fantasy world with rich and believable lore if they themselves have never consumed any fantasy-related media? Or how would they create a piece symbolic of feminism if they have no idea what the key beliefs of feminism are? This is why I believe that regularly learning new information is so important for artists.

Additionally, how are artists supposed to improve themselves and their work if they are unwilling to try new mediums and techniques? Even if their attempts are unsuccessful, at least they will have an awareness of their failings and they can use these realisations to further improve their work. I think it is also really important for artists to pick up alternative mediums than the one they are most comfortable with to avoid any possibilities of feeling burnt-out. This can, of course, pose a massive setback for artists.

I am also a very strong believer of the idea that a piece of art does not have to have meaning to be valued. I think that in general people are very overly focused on dissecting the meanings of every piece of art they come across, and are often quick to dismiss any piece of art that is made simply because it could be made. My problem with this is that I think a person's art should reflect whatever the artist wants it to. If someone wants every piece of their work to have a deep and complex hidden meaning then that is perfectly acceptable, however those people should not then shun others who create art with no discernible meaning simply because making art is what they enjoy doing.

I think that critics are often too focused on looking for messages or themes behind each piece of art. This can be very intimidating for many artists, and could cause them to lose their passion or creativity. Because of this notion, perhaps some artists ask themselves why they should even create art if it is without meaning or does not invite critical discussion, rather than make art because they simply enjoy it.

Finally, I believe that artists should have a positive outlook on themselves and their artwork in order to be successful. I think it is much more beneficial to look at an artist's work that you admire and think ‘I will keep improving until I am as good as this artist!’ instead of looking at their work and telling yourself ‘I will never be as good as this artist’. We should use

the work of others to inspire us to create newer and better pieces of artwork, and to make us strive to be the best artists that we can be. In my opinion, an artist who is constantly comparing themselves to others in a negative way is an artist who is setting themselves up for failure.

Bibliography of manifestos that helped to inform my own:

Baker, H., 2015. 10 Game-Changing Art Manifestos | Blog | Royal Academy Of Arts. [online] Royalacademy.org.uk. Available at: <<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/ten-game-changing-manifestos>>

Takac, B., 2020. 10 Inspiring Art Manifestos | Widewalls. [online] Widewalls.ch. Available at: <<https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/art-manifestos>>

Observational writing

The image I will do a semiotic analysis of is the painting *Saturn Devouring His Son* by Francisco Goya.



The clearest aspect of this painting for analysis would be the story that is being communicated through it. The painting depicts Saturn, one of the Greek titans, devouring the body of one of his sons. This is from a well-known story in Greek mythology which states that Saturn, after overthrowing his father, is informed that he too would one day be overthrown by one of his own sons in the same fashion. Saturn becomes obsessed with this prophecy and decides that the only way to prevent it from coming true would be to eat each of his children as they were born. The painting stays true to the tale up to this point, however there is one part of the painting that deviates from the story.

In the original Greek tale, Saturn would eat each of his son's whole, resulting in them still being alive as they reached his stomach. Goya's painting, however, shows a crazed Saturn chewing the bleeding body of his already dead son, which makes us question what the real message of this painting was supposed to be. Saturn's huge frame and wild grey

hair make him look more animalistic than human, he is posed in a way which suggests he has pounced and attacked his son in the way that a beast would, and the look in his bulging eyes shows a mixture of desperation and insanity. It's also important to note that Saturn's son is depicted as an adult in this painting, meaning that he would have been fully aware of the fact that his father was consuming him alive.

Essentially, this painting was made to disturb, and many have speculated that it was Goya's way of representing his distaste towards humanity during the time of the Napoleonic wars in Spain. Also, as this painting was part of Goya's Black Paintings series, some people believe that it represents Goya's fear of his declining mental and physical health that came about at the end of his life, and others have even proposed that this was his twisted way of signifying the relationship that Goya had with his own sons.

The history of this painting also reveals some irony surrounding it. It was created to be a part of Goya's private collection of artwork which were painted directly onto the walls of his house. After he had passed away and his house was purchased, it was eventually found painted onto his dining room wall. Perhaps this is another indication of its hidden meaning.

In terms of using semiotic specific terminology to describe this piece, the signifier would be the painting as a whole, the signs would be details within the painting such as how Saturn is depicted or the colours used in the painting, and the signified would be the meaning behind this painting which I have speculated on previously in this section.

Bibliography

Najmi, Z., n.d. An Analysis Of Goya's "Saturn Devouring His Son". [online] Medium. Available at: <<https://medium.com/@zahraanajmi/an-analysis-of-goyas-saturn-devouring-his-son-9a65227dffb1>>

Francisco-de-goya.com.n.d. Saturn Devouring His Son By Francisco De Goya. [online] Available at: <<http://www.francisco-de-goya.com/saturn-devouring-his-son/>>

Totally History. n.d Saturn Devouring His Son By Francisco De Goya Facts & History. [online] Available at: <<https://totallyhistory.com/saturn-devouring-his-son/>>

Practice-based writing

The artist statement that I have chosen to look at is Sam Durant's. In his statement, Durant describes the overall themes, process, and subjects of his work. He states that his artwork takes 'a critical view of social, political and cultural issues' (Getting Your Sh*t Together, 2020) and 'explores the varying relationships between popular culture and fine art' (Getting Your Sh*t Together, 2020). In this way I find myself and Durant's practices to be quite similar. Although my personal art does not focus on a wide range of social issues, I do enjoy creating pieces based around gender stereotypes, and the characters I create usually defy these stereotypes and expectations to some extent.

Durant also mentions that he re-arranges familiar visual and aural signs to create 'new conceptually layered installations', (Getting Your Sh*t Together, 2020) which I find also matches up with my self-practice. I will often create female characters that look 'traditionally feminine', but then subvert expectations by giving these characters 'traditionally male' aspects to their personality such as wearing male coded clothing or being very strong. Although this is by no means a unique or new concept, I find it very enjoyable to be able to

create characters that are able to express themselves however they want regardless of whatever gender they happen to be - it is very freeing and fun for me.

Durant also states that his works are always linked by the subject matter regardless of what materials they are made of, and also that he often groups a number of singular pieces into one specific theme. In this statement he also mentions that he is always inspired to create his next body of work through the research that he does for his previous projects. In terms of critically summarising my own work through my processes, I would say that I am similar to Durant here too. If I want to create a detailed image, or an image that focuses on a particular theme, I will often do a lot of research before I begin so that I am fully informed on the topic I am trying to illustrate. This links back to my manifesto, where I mentioned that an artist cannot properly create work if they are not well-researched.

Often, like Durant, while I am researching for one illustration I will discover something that will inspire or be included in my next piece of work. I am also a big fan of working with different media depending on the project. Even though my primary discipline is illustration, I often enjoy incorporating it into 3D and textile projects. I love creating three-dimensional versions of my characters with fabric, and I often create embroideries of my illustration. Previously one of my projects has focused on creating traditional fantasy illustrations alongside embroidered pieces about the same topic. In this way, I can also see similarities between myself and Durant's creative practice.

Bibliography:

Getting Your Sh*t Together.n.d.Sample Artist Statements — Getting Your Sh*T Together. [online] Available at: <<https://www.gyst-ink.com/sample-artist-statements>>

Sam Durant | Artnet. [online] Artnet.com. Available at: <<http://www.artnet.com/artists/sam-durant/>>

Durant, S., 2020. BIOGRAPHY : Sam Durant. [online] Samdurant.net. Available at: <<https://samdurant.net/index.php/bio/>>