

Resit Professional Practice (ADAD5002)

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The quotation “If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.” from the American educator Booker T. Washington is one way of seeing how teamwork as a skill is beneficial. I will be exploring this regarding the visual arts and referencing to the Surrealist Movement as an example. Alongside this I will be explaining the benefits I have received when working in a team. André Breton wrote the first manifesto for the surrealist movement in 1924, outlining how he and the other members engaging in the group were to work as a collective. In the book ‘100 Artist’s Manifestos from the Futurists to the Stuckists’ by Alex Danchev, he states “Surrealism as he [Breton] elaborated it was a mélange of new insight and discoveries made elsewhere”¹. This is regarding how having a group of individuals working as a team can create unique and fascinating art or literature. Artist collectives such as the Surrealists can allow artists to develop their skills by working with other individuals who have a mutual goal in their practice. The idea of a collective means that everyone is working together to lift each other up. While Booker T Washington was not associated with the art community during his lifetime, he was an educator and a firm believer in racial solidarity. This fits with the idea that in a team no one is more important than the other, and every role is vital. This is reflected in the idea of artist collectives and working in solidarity rather than individually. This is seen in collectives as there needs to be an appreciation of a diversity of ideas from all participants involved. Teamwork in the visual arts can be seen and used in a variety of ways such as being in a collective or using group exercise to create artwork. The surrealist game Exquisite Corpse (also known as Exquisite Cadaver.) This game or creative exercise was started in Paris in 1925 by the surrealist artists Marcel Duchamp, Jacques Prévert, Yves Tanguy and André Breton. In the exercise Exquisite Corpse everyone draws a separate section of an artwork (often a figure), not seeing what the other people involved have drawn. This game using multiple artists working together leads to interesting and often quite nonsensical pieces that can inspire new works. This shows how teamwork and the sharing of ideas can benefit an individual while in the team and in their own practice. I myself have used the Exquisite Corpse as a vehicle to work in a team in a visual arts capacity. I found this game allowed me to experiment with my own techniques regarding drawing and broadening subject knowledge. It also highlighted to me what I liked in the other artists’ work and what I could use from them to influence my own practice. It also allows you to bond with the other people taking part as it is entertaining to see the outcome off a combined creative effort.

¹ Danchev, A., 2011. *100 Artists’ Manifestos*. London: Penguin, p.242.

Booker T Washington's quote "If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else" is brought into practicality by the Exquisite Corpse. A skill this game also can help develop is to trust the other members to do their equal share of the work. As everyone needs to work with the other participants for the game to be a success. An issue often seen when working as a team is that some people may do more work than the others. This can lead to a breakdown in communication and the ability to work efficiently for everyone within the team. The skills developed in using teamwork such as effective communication, mutual accountability and reliability are transferable to other professional areas. These are all skills that are important for working in any capacity and not just in the visual arts.

In summary, Booker T Washington's quote "If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else" is one way to describe the advantages of working as a team when put into practice. It pinpoints the need to work as a group for all our benefits in any context, including the visual arts.

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