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Programme of Study: Photography in the Arts

Module: ADAD4018

Ways of Thinking Lecturer's Name: Ryan Moule

Tasks in the order I received them:

Task 1: Observational Writing = 529 words

Task 2: Manifesto Writing = 476 words

Task 3: Practice-based Writing = 495 words

Task 1: Observational Writing

Semiotics is the study of theories that is often applied to Art and Design. When you look at a picture you mainly see what is literally in the image, but with the theories of semiotics you have to see the true/deeper meaning of the image: which is not always obvious. “The way we see things is affected by what we know and what we believe” (Berger, 2008, p.8) is a great way of describing why people see different meanings behind images. The way we grow up in life affects the way people see the whole world, so it is going to affect the way people look at pieces of art. “We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice” (2008, p.8) is a great way of saying that people never go looking for a meaning but just take the one we notice first and only start noticing the others when we want to.



Fig 1. *All Is Vanity*, Adad Hannah, 2009

In 2009, a photographer called Adad Hannah produced a photographic recreation of a drawing by Charles Allan Gilbert called *All is Vanity* (Cain, 2009). The original drawing is just a black and white drawing whereas Hannah decided to do his recreation in colour, meaning that he could use colour to send different messages.

The image is a double image, one of the ‘lady’ (pair of identical twins) looking into a ‘mirror’, and one of a skull. Within the image we have a background which is a red curtain, then we have our main element of the image, the woman sitting at her vanity looking into the mirror. But instead of using a mirror the

photographer had used a set of identical twins with a piece of white cloth as a reflection of a wall and an oval piece of wood as the frame of the mirror. But if you look into the deeper meanings of the elements you get very contrasting meanings. The red of the curtain could represent lust which goes against the meaning of the white meaning purity. The white daffodils also add to the meaning of purity; with them being white, but they can also mean “desire for a transformation. It leads a person away from the selfishness and vanity, to a purer way of living” (Flower Meanings, 2019). The only white element that does not suggest purity is the skull shape, (which is created by the white material in the centre of the image) as it can mean death or horrors.

With similar photos, certain people only see one of the images, but others see all, depending on where you look and focus your eyes you can see one or the other but it’s hard to see both at the same time

In conclusion, I feel that the image is trying to depict both inside and outside views of a person, as the close surrounding areas of the figures is white, but the background is red showing purity and lust. But aspects of images are going to mean different things to other people depending on your background, which could include culture, religion, or the area you grew up in.

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Figure 1. *All Is Vanity*, Adad Hannah, 2009, Accessed from: [https://adadhannah.com/2009-all-is-vanity-mirrorless-version#:~:text=In%20All%20Is%20Vanity%20\(Mirrorless,historical%20drawing%20as%20a%20video.&text=Gilbert's%20drawing%2C%20entitled%20All%20Is,mirror%20of%20a%20wooden%20vanity](https://adadhannah.com/2009-all-is-vanity-mirrorless-version#:~:text=In%20All%20Is%20Vanity%20(Mirrorless,historical%20drawing%20as%20a%20video.&text=Gilbert's%20drawing%2C%20entitled%20All%20Is,mirror%20of%20a%20wooden%20vanity). [Accessed on 7th December 2020]

Task 2: Manifesto Writing

1. You don't have to follow trends, do what you want to do even if it's not popular at the time.
2. Not everything has to have a specific meaning.
3. Keep fighting for something you believe in even if the world has stopped paying attention.
4. You don't have to please everyone, there are going to be people that love your work and some people that won't love your work.
5. Use your art for a good cause.
6. You don't need to change your appearance just to satisfy others.
7. Do what makes you happy.
8. Be kind to others.

You don't need to change your appearance just to satisfy others.

Editing the way people look has been a thing since the start of photography but since photo editing apps have become more accessible, people are able to edit themselves to the extreme.

"It's human nature to compare ourselves to others" (Flynn,2018) and with editing now being possible, it means that people are able to change the way they look to make themselves look more attractive. The problem with this is that you are in a sense lying to yourself and other people. In 2019, the *Mental Health Foundation* stated 'one in four girls and one in ten boys have edited photos of themselves in order to change their face or body shape because of concerns about their body image'(2020, p. 3) after doing a survey of 1118 teenagers, which shows that many people; especially teenagers, are scared about putting up unedited

photos of themselves. Even some celebrities edit the bodies and faces to look slimmer as they feel like they need to seem perfect.

Use your art for a good cause



Fig 1. *Game Changer*, Banksy, 2020

Art is a good way of showing what you believe in, so why not use it to help bring attention to a cause that you believe in? This could be a charity or a protest you believe in. Many artists will auction off the artwork where either a portion of the proceeds or all of the proceeds will go to charity. Some artists create work to bring attention to a cause such as Banksy's NHS Artwork.

The artwork is going to raise money for the NHS by being auctioned off but is remaining at Southampton Hospital until that happens (Gompertz, 2020). Artworks such as these bring attention to a cause relevant to the times. Eventually they will remind people of an event that happened. Over time you could create whole collections to auction off for charities you have worked with over your career, you also then introduce your work to potential future buyers.

You don't have to follow trends, do what you want to do even if it's not popular at the time.

We see trends a lot in the creative industry, such as fashion, art, make-up, music, technology. Trends never particularly last for very long, they eventually get pushed back by a new trend. By following trends, you might never find your own style of art, following a trend might then make it harder for you to get noticed among all the other artists doing the same thing. Many artists are known for their unique style, like Picasso, Cindy Sherman, and David Hockney. By coming up with your own unique style or producing work in a style that you think works well with your art, means that you are not trying to please people with what is popular but with what you love. Coming up with your own ideas will make your work unique and stand out against all of the identical pieces of art because you moved away from what everyone else was doing. Having individuality and being yourself is good.

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Fig 1. *Game Changer*, Banksy (2020), Accessed from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-52556544> [Accessed on 1st December 2020]

Task 3: Practice-Based Writing

The exhibition I am going to respond to is *Annie Leibovitz 'The Early Years, 1970 – 1983: Archive Project No.1'* at Hauser & Wirth. The exhibition is a reproduction of an exhibition of the same name in France in 2017.

Leibovitz curated the exhibition herself, choosing photos from a time period that she believes was a significant time in her career (Hauser & Wirth, 2019). There are about 4000 photos and contain many famous faces, but also photos you wouldn't normally see from Leibovitz (Appleford, 2019) as she is most known for her portraits. The photos that she chose are from the time that she got hired by *Rolling Stone* Magazine which eventually she became Chief Photographer of in 1973 (Martin, 2019). Some of her early to mid 70s photos are political, such as the 1972 and 1976 American Presidential elections (Hauser & Wirth, 2019). She also photographed musicians such as Rod Stewart and Aretha Franklin (Pogrebin, 2019).

A timeline was produced to be shown at the exhibition explaining events through-out 1970 and 1983. It starts off with the Vietnam war and the increase of troops (Turner, 2019). This is important as it then gives the viewer a sense of time and information about the photos, people can then relate to the images when looking at them. Also having a timeline can help the viewer understand why the photographer created the photo in a particular way.



Fig 1. 'Annie Leibovitz. The Early Years, 1970 – 1983: Archive Project No, 1', Annie Leibovitz, 2019

The exhibition is in a white walled room with a wood beam structure of the roof exposed. None of the photos though are presented on the white walls, the work was presented on wooden boards with the photos laid out in a grid like format, which makes it look like a photobook/scrapbook or a contact sheet of her career as a photographer. Push pins have been used to hang the images making it feel homemade and maybe familiar to some of the viewers. What enhances this feel is that the photos are not mounted or framed and have been pinned to the boards. What I like about this is that it feels more personal to Leibovitz and it doesn't separate the images from each other as they are closer together and the bright white wall is not in between them. Having the layout this way makes it memorable as it separates it from the classic white room exhibitions.

Overall, I feel like this was a very personal exhibition for Annie Leibovitz mainly with her curating the exhibition herself but also with the number of photos she used. By looking back

at photos, we can see how far we have come but for the photographer/artist they are able to look to see where they came from and what inspired their work to be here today. The time period in which Leibovitz is presenting shows the journey of her becoming the well-known photographer she is today.

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