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Illustration

Module ADAD4018

Task One- Jonathan's Task (549 Words)

Task Two- Ryan's Task (539 Words)

Task Three- Julia's Task (513 Words)

Reflective Writing- Jonathan's Task

It was 2008, it was my first time in the Louvre Museum of Art and my eyes honed in on the sign that said 'African and Oriental Art' and I was so excited at the prospect of viewing these famous artworks that depicted scenes of exotic, new places before they were disrupted by colonialism. I've always been intrepid and I spent hours looking at these pieces in awe.

At the time I had never heard the term 'cultural appropriation' as many people had not a decade ago.

Cultural appropriation is defined in the Oxford English dictionary as-

'the taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another. It is in general used to describe Western appropriations of non-Western or non-white forms, and carries connotations of exploitation and dominance.' (Stevenson, 2010)

But at what point does a piece fall under the category of cultural appropriation? As someone who travelled Uganda and worked there, I was incredibly inspired by their traditional art. I wanted to document my time there and desperately wanted to use their colours and traditional patterns to recreate the atmosphere that I was experiencing at the time, yet with the way that the world has become, I am terrified to do so publicly. With fear of being branded a racist, is there actually any room for cultural appreciation?

On the other hand, I am of Cinti gypsy decent, very similar to the Romani, and I myself become irked by the misuse of gypsy culture. I feel it is not as recognised as other ethnic groups as there are significantly less academics from this culture. People wear 'gypsy skirts' 'peasant tops' and hashtag 'gypsy' if they document a mysterious pose wearing hoop earrings. What about the art world? Gypsy music is enjoyed by everyone even if they don't know it. Many people do not appreciate that flamenco music, and Balkan brass music such as the number one hit 'Bom Bom' by the Ducth/British music group Sam and the Womp (2012) are actually tunes of gypsy culture, and the detestable song 'Gypsy' by Latin American music sensation Shakira which includes the lyrics-

"I might steal your clothes and wear them if they fit me, I never make agreements, just like a Gypsy." (Shakira, 2009)

This begs the question, what do I feel about the label of cultural appropriation being used in the art world and what influence does this have on my practice? In Saudi Arabia alone there have been over two hundred books written in criticism of the subject, and in my opinion, social documentary must be accurate. When one aspect of a culture, or when the actions of one person from a culture is used to define and shape a societal view of said group, it must not be presented as a factual insight into

their world. There must also be a strong description to accompany said pieces, such as 'influenced' or 'inspired' by, for example, one should never claim to produce Native American or Aboriginal artworks unless they themselves are from that group.

To conclude, cultural appreciation is a beautiful thing, without inspiration from Greek culture art could not be what it is today, it is a matter of respect and sensitivity which I will always take into consideration.

Bibliography 549

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Semiotic analysis- Ryan's Task

"To remain innocent may also be to remain ignorant."
— John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

In John Berger's profound essay, 'Ways of Seeing' it is brought to our attention that what we think that we are viewing, is not always what it seems. We are bombarded by new images every day and it is important to be aware of the psychological impacts this can have on us, and how they can influence our views in the post truth era.

Semiotics are the hidden symbols within a piece of art, some that can seem obvious and others that might take longer to decipher, for example, a certain colour being used to represent various emotions that the artist would like the viewer to empathise with, perhaps red for danger or anger. There are often layers beneath everything we see, we know that they are there, but *why* it is there can be a more challenging question.

"The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sun set. We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight."
— John Berger, Ways of Seeing

I am going to explore the work of late pop artist Keith Haring. Famed for his colourful street art in the 1980's Haring was a social advocate, tackling issues such as the class system, racism, police brutality and homophobia.

"Art should be something that liberates your soul, provokes the imagination and encourages people to go further." Haring

The best way to this is by using a semiotic language. The symbols within his works can teach us much about what he was trying to achieve as an activist, and once you have acquired an initial curiosity, there are no boundaries to what you can notice.



Figure 1- Keith Haring *Untitled*, (1981)

"I was always totally amazed that the people I would meet while I was doing them were really, really concerned with what they meant. The first thing anyone asked me, no matter how old, no matter who they were, was, 'What does it mean?'" Haring

Haring really did develop his own language. For example, in this untitled piece (Fig. 1) he used symbolism that ran throughout many of his works, such as the dots on the his signature genderless and raceless character, to symbolise 'otherness' being an outcast in society, in his case due to his AIDS infection and the stigma attached to this at the time, as well as the crosses which represent the figure as a moving target which many people in New York city empathised with at the time.

"I am intrigued with the shapes people choose as their symbols to create a language. There is within all forms a basic structure, an indication of the entire object with a minimum of lines that becomes a symbol. This is common to all languages, all people, all times." Keith Haring

I admire Haring so much for his bravery, the unique language he created and his thoughtful use of semiotics. Through creating this work, he will never be forgotten, and by taking a closer look at artworks that on the surface seem straight forward we can sometimes find deep and important messages.

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Task Two: Manifesto (Julia's Task)

1. Always understand both sides of the story before forming an opinion, especially if it is to be used as inspiration for an illustration.
2. Always respect other cultures. Use other cultures, nationalities and traditions with care and accuracy.
3. Never use social media as a way to find the truth. It's a shiny veneer in an unpolished world.
4. Do not be afraid to be controversial, it's not my problem if someone doesn't like my style. If ones focus is on pleasing the masses you're probably not doing enough.
5. Appreciate the strife of minorities in gender, sexuality, race, class and never take their fight to allow to be who we are today for granted.
6. Ignore all news articles that use a country, religion or race as a title for one of or a group of individuals actions.
7. Make pieces that people feel and understand through the power of emotive imagery without having to be literal.
8. Do not follow the crowd, just because something is trending does not make it relevant to your message

4. Do not be afraid to be controversial, it's not my problem if someone doesn't like my style. If one's focus is on pleasing the masses you're probably not doing enough.



Picasso, Pablo. *Guernica*. 1937

I consider myself to be a controversial artist. I strive to confront issues that I have been confronted with in my life, that many may have been fortunate enough not to have witnessed. I have endured growing up in a household gripped with addiction, I've lost friends to drugs and suicide. I have lived in sub-Saharan Africa, where I experienced corruption, the mafia and had to endure the constant sight of child abuse every day. I use it as fuel to try and make a difference.

When Pablo Picasso created arguably one of the most famous artworks in history, *Guernica*, he wanted to push the absolute horror that his country was experiencing onto the unexpectant masses. He wanted to make a statement to everyone. He did it to fight, it was his way of confronting fascism head on, with complete audacity and a need to evoke emotion. When asked about this piece Picasso quoted-

"Art is the lie that tells the truth," (Picasso, 1981) meaning that through abstraction, you can confront a social issue without having to document it, Picasso's art indirectly invokes the pain of the situation. It doesn't contain any exact references from said atrocity, but is a fictional depiction. This is the stance I wish to take in my illustration.

5. Appreciate the strife of minorities in gender, sexuality, race, class and never take their fight to allow to be who we are today for granted.

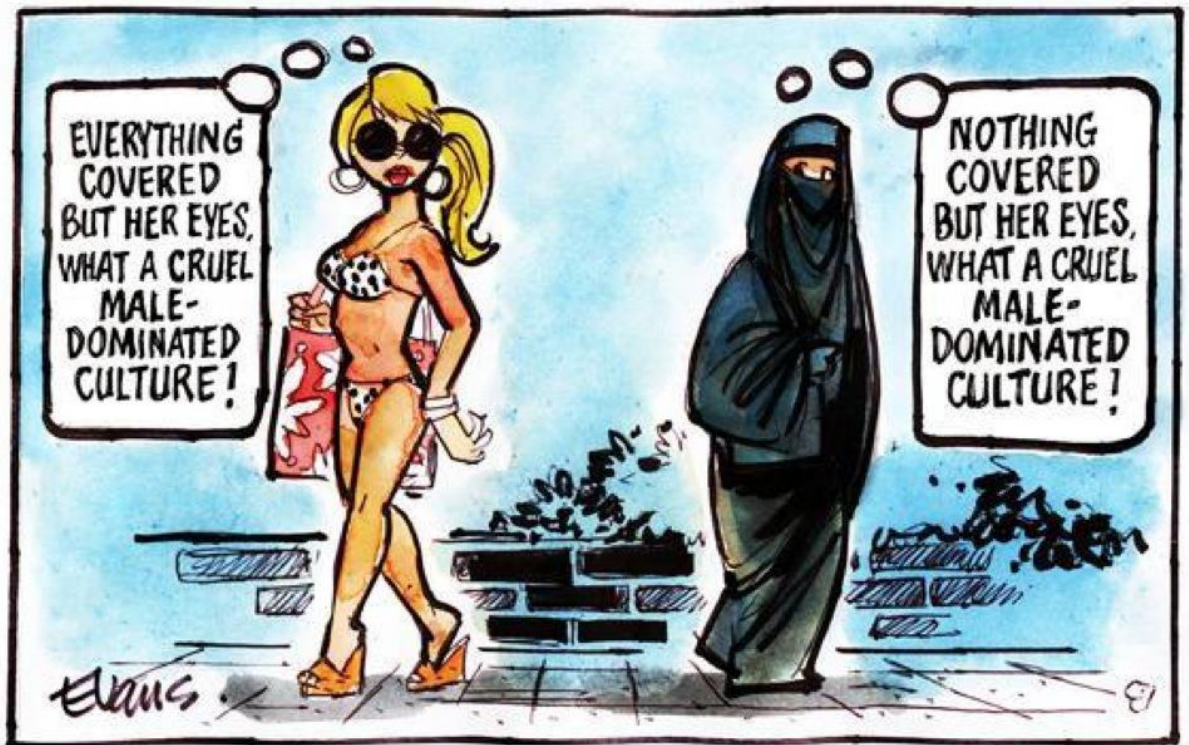


Haring, Keith, Ignorance=fear 1989

We live in such a beautifully tolerant society. In history we have never experienced a place in which people can be themselves with relatively little fear. It is so important for us to never forget the work that was made with the intention to fight discrimination, to encourage and support those of us who are of different origins, orientations and simply abnormal in the eyes of a typically judgemental society.

One of my biggest inspirations in life is the late Keith Haring, as an out gay AIDS sufferer, he spent his last years on earth creating graphic pieces to confront the wrongs that he witnessed and experienced in New York city, be it racism, police brutality, but most commonly homosexuality and the otherness that one feels when suffering with HIV/AIDS. Society was cruel, and it's heroes like Haring that must never be forgotten. If I truly believe in something, as he did, I must do what I can to confront it.

1. Always understand both sides of the story before forming an opinion, especially if it is to be used as inspiration for an illustration.



Evans, Morgan (2011) What A Cruel, Male Dominated Culture!

Having an opinion doesn't always make it right. If someone is allowed to legally make a choice and nobody is being hurt, we must respect those choices.

Two opposing viewpoints both often have elements of misunderstanding, and by analysing both extremes critically it helps one to create a balance in the middle for society's contentment. Sometimes it is only by placing two extremes in conjunction that one can notice the hypocrisy and similarity between them. I feel that discussion is important. I don't think it's ever fair to tell somebody that what they believe is wrong, but more importantly we should try and understand why they feel the way that they do, by engaging someone in respectful conversation it is the only way to confront the 'us and them' society that has been reiterated constantly by the media.

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