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Graphic Design

**Ways of Thinking
ADAD4022**

AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

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Task 1: Observational Writing (546 words)

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Task 1: Observational Writing



Fig 1 Falmouth University (2023) *St Tropez self-tan advert* ^[3]

Semiotics is the study of meaning behind signs and symbols. Pioneered by philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) and linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), creating the framework for theories we study today. In *Semiotics: the basics* (2022), semiotician Daniel Chandler writes, "It represents a challenge to the 'literal' insofar as it questions the possibility of meaning what we say or saying what we mean, and of perceiving or representing 'the way things are.'" (p195)

I have chosen to analyse an online advertisement for St Tropez Self-Tan. The designer ^[3] has not only created it to sell a product but to change its perception and caution the dangers of sunbathing.

The commonly held opinion of self-tan being undesirable is a myth. It has contributed to ideologies in society with its perceived unnatural appearance and association with certain people. "Fake tan is mockingly associated with the Tango shade of orange, and permatanned celebrities - like [...] the entire cast of ITV's *The Only Way Is Essex*" (de Castella, T., 2011)

Anthropologist Roland Barthes' (1915-80) model of anchorage is described, in relation to images, as "always related to and, in a sense, dependent on verbal text." (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006 p18) The anchorage in this piece, 'Fake is better than real', gives needed context to the preceding water pistol. The anchorage and image combine to create a fixed meaning that connotes real guns are deadly, the plastic version a signifier connoting a safe option. However, in this advertisement it's contextualised as a metaphor for the same notion regarding natural tan vs self-tan. "Artificial tanning is now seen as a public health issue accounting for about half a million new cancer diagnoses each year in the United States of America, Europe and Australia." (WHO, 2017). By comparing sunbathing and tanning beds to gun violence, the poster denotes the seriousness with which these associated cancer diagnoses should be taken, persuading the interpretant to instead use their product.

The hierarchy of the advertisement holds the water pistol and anchorage above the product, aiming to capture the interpretant's interest by using colourful imagery and a bold statement to persuade them to read on and decode its meaning. The colours and the water pistol are signifiers of happiness and fun, (symbolising summer, vacations, parties) which are used to subvert the myth around self-tan's association with an undesirable aesthetic.

The Interpretant is next directed to the product image and true purpose of the advert.

Chandler describes symbolism as “based on a relationship that [...] must be agreed upon and learned” (2022 p 42). A culturally acquired opinion of small things (like babies and small, cute animals) is that they are harmless. The designer has made the bottle the smallest thing on the advert symbolising its harmlessness, and further subverting the myth that it is something to be avoided. The benefits of using St. Tropez are what is denoted from the last piece of anchorage present in this piece - ‘No melanomas. No Carcinomas. No Sarcomas.’ - emphasising that unlike sunbathing, self-tan won’t give you cancer.

While I align myself with the myth about self-tan’s unnatural look, the semiotics of this advert and subsequent research were so effective that my opinion has softened because I came to realise that it’s the only safe way to tan.

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Figures

1 - Falmouth University (2023) *Fake is better than real. Advert for St Tropez*. Available at: <https://www.falmouth.ac.uk/news/what-creative-advertising> (accessed Dec 3, 2024)

Task 2: Manifesto Writing

1. Move sideways to move forwards
2. Even if you don't agree, try to understand
3. Listen, think, act
4. It costs nothing to be nice
5. Communication is key
6. You don't have to know it all right away
7. If you can't say anything nice, say something constructive
8. Always make time for joy

1. Move sideways to move forwards



Figs 1 and 2 (Lionsgate Media, 2022, The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent)

When you hit a creative block, do something completely separate from your task, even if it seems like a sidestep. It could allow you to see the issue from a different perspective. The stills show Nicolas Cage and Pedro Pascal arduously climbing over wall, only to find there was a much simpler way around it.

You can find inspiration in the most unlikely places, so going out and experiencing the world could spark the fuse that reignites your creative fire. This was some very good advice given to me by John Morris from the Performing Rights Society, giving a talk on navigating the music industry, and I spoke to him afterwards about my band that I'd been playing with for many years, and how we had gotten into a slump, and we didn't seem to be progressing in our music career.

We've gotten to the point where we haven't gigged in 2 years. Since then, I worked on songs that didn't fit the band's style for a solo project, I've travelled and started many other projects great and small. "Perspective is the way individuals see the world. It comes from their personal point of view and is shaped by life experiences, [...] the more perspectives you get, the closer to reality you get." (Surdek, S.,2021)

All these tangents have given me ideas and perspective that I am utilising in my band. I'm happy to say that we're back together and much more productive than before.

2. Even if you don't agree, try to understand



Fig 2 (Chris Whitehead, 2005, *Rival fans at football match*)

It's impossible for everyone to agree on everything, so inevitably you will encounter someone with an opposing viewpoint. The world today is extremely divided, to the point at times, of being tribalistic. A perfect example being rival football fans. Fig 2 shows an idealised version of fans getting along despite their differences.

When you discover that someone's opinion doesn't align with your own, remember that this is only one facet of their being, and not to boil them down to just that. Instead, ask them to elaborate. Find out why they think the way they do. You might come to agree with them. Or you may know something they don't, in which case politely give your reasons and help them understand you. "Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." (Marie Curie 1867–1934) ^[1]

Instinct often causes us to fear what we don't understand. In these situations, lashing out or declining to engage doesn't resolve any discourse. This is by no means advising ignoring or

condoning dangerous or harmful opinions, it is only meant to start friendly dialogues with the aim of better understanding each other.

5. Communication is key

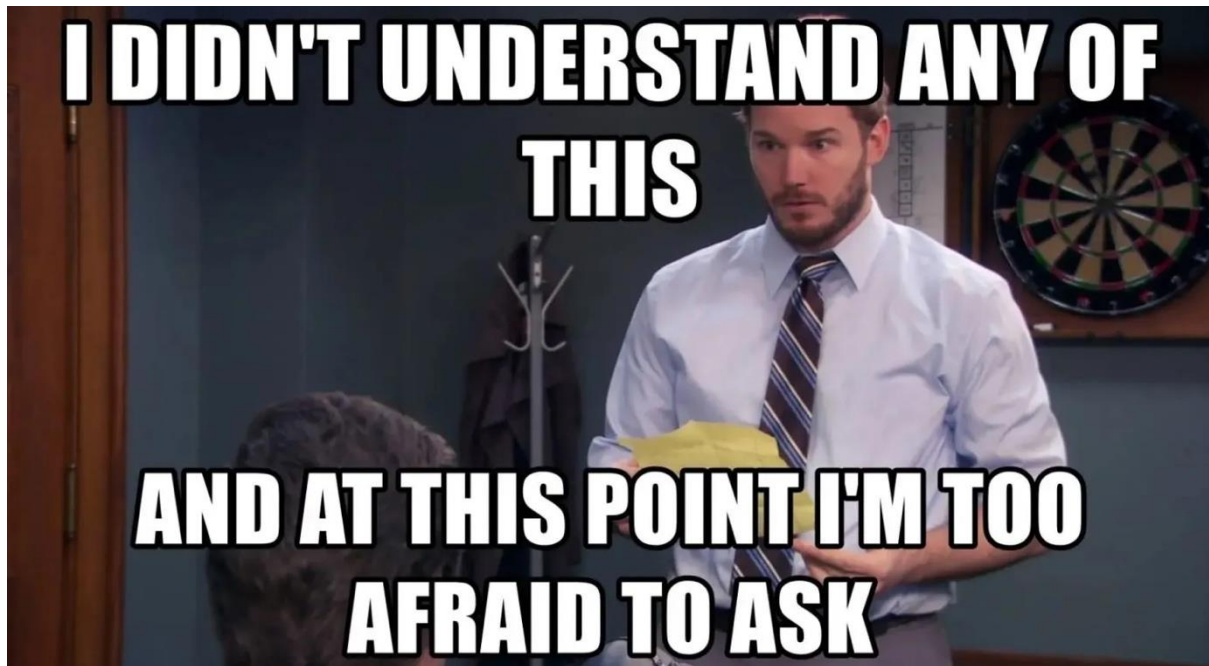


Fig 3 (Metaflix, 2021, *Parks and Recreation*)

I've learned the hard way the consequences of poor communication. Being quite reserved. the confidence to speak up often eludes me. But I'm an excellent ruminator and know exactly when I could've said something that would've improved a past situation. "When communication is effective, it leaves all parties involved satisfied and feeling accomplished. By delivering messages clearly, there is no room for misunderstanding" (Stevenson, ND) So, if something needs clarification, adjusting, condemning, or you need to make yourself understood; do as I say, not as I, or Andy Dwyer (Fig 3)^[2] do: *speak up!*

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Figures

- 1, 2 - Lionsgate Media (2022) *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent* (2022) Official Clip "Goodbye Nicolas Cage" – Pedro Pascal. Available at: <https://youtu.be/-98T6KVWzF0?Xw9Wz9bgHfum3wnG> (Accessed Nov 25, 2024)
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Task 3: Practice-based Writing

Guitar stand (2014)



Figs 1 & 2 (Guitar stand, Jack Clements, 2014)

“The capacity to reflect on one's own strength and weaknesses, to learn from constructive criticism, and to practice critical reflection by monitoring one's own work performance and interpersonal interactions is essential to the ability to learn from experience and is the cornerstone of the journey to becoming a lifelong learner.”
(McNamara, J. & Field, R. 2007)

I will be reflecting on a guitar stand I made on my A-Level Product Design course. My brief was to create a decorative, functional piece of furniture that would sit nicely in a stylish living room, studio, etc. It consists of a solid MDF base for stability, with a polished flexi-plywood venire, and a protruding curved ‘spine’ on which a hanger is attached for a guitar to hang, as opposed to being supported by the body. The spine was initially made using several pieces of flexi-ply, glued and set in an MDF jig. Adhered to the front was another piece of flexi-ply in an hourglass shape, purely for aesthetics, acting almost as a frame for the guitar - wider towards the body, tapering in at the neck, then out again at the headstock.

During Easter, it was put in storage and the spine and decorative panel were snapped.

Consequently, a new spine needed to be made, and I opted for 3 thin layers of ash, which is

much stronger. Upon reflection I decided to go for a more minimalist look and exclude the front decorative layer, as I didn't feel it was effective in the realisation of my vision.



Fig 3 (Guitar stand, Jack Clements, 2024)

I believe it was an overall success. I was happy with how it turned out at the time and received good marks. The ash spine is much more effective, as the flexi-ply version would bend forward with heavier guitars.

Upon recent reflection, I've come to agree with the peer feedback I received years ago that the base of the stand is quite chunky and isn't very cohesive with the elegant spine. I will admit that the decorative panel did help soften this, because the bottom was akin to the width of the base, tapering in at the middle. But I still prefer the It's appearance without it.

Donald Schön's research involves the interconnection between 'reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action' which refer to our thought processes when carrying out tasks and applying our reflections in future. "In this way we are able to facilitate the integration of theory and practice – that is, to make sure practice is informed by theory, and theory is informed (and tested) by practice" (Thompson S., Thompson N. p15,16)

On repetition of the project, I'd design the base in a curved U or Y shape, with variation in height to look less blockish. The edges of the spine could be softened too. Tapering into an elliptical shape around the middle would be more attractive and tactile. I feel it would then better align with my brief - appearing more minimalist and considered.

I actually still have it in my living room continuing its intended function, and despite my criticisms, I have come to admire its simplicity, and the fact that I created something functional that's continued to last a decade on.

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Figures

1, 2 - Guitar stand, Jack Clements, 2014
3 - Guitar stand, Jack Clements, 2024

Footnotes

[1] The second part of this quote is often attributed to Marie Curie, but primary source is uncertain. Found widely quoted with both sentences, without citation.

[2] This quote from Chris Pratt's Andy Dwyer in the sitcom Parks and Recreation (S6 E16) has been paraphrased for use in a blog about something unrelated to the quote. I chose this one because it is more general than the actual quote 'I don't know who Al Gore is, and at this point I'm too afraid to ask' (Pratt, C. 2014) and fits my manifesto point much better.

[3] I believe this to be the work of a design student from Falmouth University. I found the image on their website uncredited. I tried searching for the image elsewhere, but this was the only site that it appears to be posted on.