

Research And Practice

Module Code: ADAD5004

Lecturer: Paul Duerninckx

3 key words By Chloe Barnett (2218430)

3 chosen key words: Emotions, Trauma, Expression

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Introduction:

In this proposal, I will be overlooking a minimum of three keywords of my choice that reflect on my inspirations and interests throughout art. The three key words chosen are emotions, trauma and expression. Also, I will be reflecting on how these three key words are expressed through fine art and how it can help artists like myself to grow emotionally, mentally and to make us viewers to feel a certain way, whilst looking at different pieces of artwork or a specific piece. In addition to this I will be selecting 3 artists which all have a strong connection with each key word selected. The artists which will be mentioned in this proposal are Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo and Francis Bacons. From looking at these particular artists chosen I will relate some of their artwork to the key words, to show how they express one of the key words in their work and how it made the viewers feel. I will research artists, philosophers and critical thinkers to provide a more of an understanding on each key word assessed. These three key words that have been chosen for this proposal will touch upon to a question that I will further expand on and conduct research for my final dissertation.

First key word: Emotions

For my first chosen key word which is 'Emotions' I will research how artists use their practices through emotional responses. The term emotion can be commonly known as a complex experience of consciousness, a bodily sensation and behaviour which can reflect on the personal significance of an event, a thing or a state of affairs (Solomon, 2024). An example of an emotion can be a feeling of happiness, fear, love, anger or hatred, which can all be caused by the situation that an individual can be in or the people they are with. All these emotions can be felt by someone when responding to a piece of artwork all depending on the emotions of the viewer.

Art has a powerful effect on people's bodies and emotions, some spectators may experience negative emotions such as, anger, frustration or contempt (Gural, 2024). Sadness is also another factor which can be caused by someone becoming touched or moved by certain artworks presented to them (Gural, 2024). Also, some observers who share differing

experiences to the artist can cause confusion over the message in the art piece presented, or wholehearted disagreement and even cause outrage (Laura, 2022). This means some people glance at artwork and feel negative emotions towards it; therefore, they can't quite understand the piece or the message the artist is trying to share. However, experimental evidence can suggest that when a piece of artwork was accompanied with a description or, poem or statement underneath the art piece (Laura, 2022). The observer had a better comprehension of the artwork which resulted in the spectator enjoying and understanding the piece of art more effectively than a piece of artwork with no explanation behind it.

Furthermore, an artist which expresses many emotions he is feeling in his work can be Pablo Picasso. An example of this can be from the origins of Picasso's Blue Period which can be tracked back to a tragic time in the artists life. When his friend passed away, Carlos Casagemas in 1901, Pablo experienced a profound sense of grief and sadness. This tragedy heavily influenced his artistic expression, which led him to create works to deal with his sadness he spent many years painting sad pictures in shades of blue to help cope with the grieving process (Picassos blue period, 2024). What truly sets Picasso's Blue Period apart is the true emotional depth and symbolism installed in his artworks (Artlifegallery,2023). The colour blue was a powerful symbol of sadness he was feeling, it helped him convey the horrible emotions he experienced during this time in his life. Painting themes of blue served as a vehicle for him to express his 'inner turmoil' and the use of universal themes of human suffering and vulnerability were used to show the sadness he was going through (Artlifegallery,2023). An example of one of the Blue Period art pieces by Pablo Picasso, can be the Blindmans Meal (1903) painting, which represents his feelings of sadness by creating melancholic themes and somber blue tones in this piece (Picassos blue period, 2024).

Later, on in life he fell in love and his painting style changed again to shades of red and gold, which shows he was changing emotions through many years of his life, and it can be seen in his artwork. From researching on this particular artist which showed the various emotions Pablo Picasso went through from suffering and happy experiences in his life. It can truly show his emotions were embodied into his work , this allowed him and helped him through the healing process and from his sadness in his work it caused a great outcome by Picasso creating some of the most famous painting's in the world to be displayed for everyone to see his emotions of how he was feeling in his work.

Second key word: Trauma

After researching into depth upon the key word 'trauma', within art I have come to realise that many artists express past trauma throughout their artwork. From researching the term trauma, it is commonly known as an experience which can cause an individual to become stressed, frightened, distressed or distraught by events which have occurred and are hard to cope with or are out of control (Mind.org, 2024). Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, crime, disaster, neglect, physical or emotional abuse (Park et al., 2017). For instance, one incident or an ongoing event that could have taken place over a long period of time, can be considered traumatic (Park et al., 2017). In addition to this, trauma can be caused by life threatening events, such as a rape, being stabbed, war, a serious accident or even gun violence, all which can cause serious mental damage to people (Guggenheim, 2023). Examples which have been taken from the history of art can indicate that pieces of art can draw attention to the traumatic experiences of the artists with frequent motifs and portrayal techniques. For example, sun, mother images or objects which can refer to the person lost, motifs of either violence or symbols (Park et al., 2017).

Traumas can be the sources of motivation for some artists and can provide themes of artwork and can help contribute to effectively work through the traumatic experience they endured. Some famous artists use art as a metaphor and a mode of self-expression, which allows them to create colours, textures, shapes and patterns to symbolize exactly how they are feeling from past trauma experiences they have gone through (Guggenheim, 2023). Art is a form of a coping mechanism which can for some people to help them heal and allow them to move on in life from experiencing terrible times in their lives which caused them pain and anguish. Also, using the form of art is allowing many artists to see themselves for who they are, and to deal with sadness, the emotional trauma and really put the pain into perspective in their work (Guggenheim, 2023).

An example of an artist who deeply expresses her past trauma throughout many of her art piece is Frida Kahlo. Through her art Kahlo expressed her physical and emotional traumas, offering the viewers raw centred images of her pain she experienced in her lifetime (Edwards, 2022). From seeing a quote from one of Frida Kahlo's art pieces which states that "At the end of the day, we can endure more than we think we can" (Edwards, 2022). This quote has always inspired me with strength, and it suggests that everyone can endure more than we think, she is trying to express the pain she went through in her work. Throughout her life Kahlo endured many traumas which have caused physical and emotional pain (Edwards, 2022).

An example of a painting of hers which shows a very raw and bare side of her is the Broken Column, 1944. Pain and suffering are a constant topic in Frida's work in this painting, the Broken Column, she expresses her pain and suffering in the most horrifying and straightforward way possible. There can be seen nails struck into her whole body and face and a split torso which looks like an earthquake fissure (FridaKahlo.org, 2023). Also, there is a

broken column replacing her spine which appears to be on the verge of collapsing into rubble (FridaKahlo.org, 2023). The painting for the audience can see how much emotion and physical pain her injuries were causing her. Kahlo drew tears along her eyes and illustrated the complexity of her injuries (Edwards, 2022). This painting by Frida can truly show the amount of pain she has gone through, and she passionately expresses her past trauma in her work by showing exactly how she is feeling in this particular painting, by painting in such a way that can show anguish in such small details when the audience glances at it.

Third key word: Expression

Lastly, after researching into depth upon the key word 'expression', many artists express past trauma and emotions caused by past experiences which art has helped them express in their work their feelings. The key word 'expression' can be defined as the act or an instance of transforming your ideas into words or telling, showing thoughts and feelings. Art can be used as a means of communication for artists to express their feeling artist to viewer through certain external ways in their artwork. Artists can inspire people by expressing their emotional experiences by using their words, paint and brush strokes to embody their emotions in their work. This will allow them to stimulate the same emotion for the audience to truly feel what the artist is expressing in their work.

Art can also improve a person's well-being by enabling them to express their emotions, ideas and perspectives through creating various art pieces (Art as expression, 2024). As an artist I have come to realise that different ways and mediums of art is a special important tactic that allows us to express ourselves freely without having to speak or use any text or words but to freely use art as a form to express emotions by choosing specific colours like many other artists have in their expressionism works. An artist who has expressed their pain can be English painter Francis Bacon's who expresses his raw pain of agony and heartache. He created some of his most searing paintings in response of losing his longtime lover George Dyer, who had suffered a long battle with depression and alcoholism which led up to suicide in 1971 (Gotthardt, 2019).

Furthermore, Bacon's artwork was dominated by the human body, his way of portraying the human body was quite unique in his paintings, usually in isolation or at moments of extreme pain, he created distorted like figures which look like a fantastical nightmare and also shown a dysmorphic pattern which conveyed that Francis Bacon supposedly experienced paroxysmal alterations in a perceptible precepted way. Bacon had previously saved Dyer from numerous attempts of him trying to take his own life, but unfortunately this time he was unsuccessful (Gotthardt, 2019). From this Bacon created a series of triptychs showing Dyer's knotted suffering human body which represented the subject's pain and anguish. The painting which Bacon can be seen expressing his sadness and pain for the love of his life can be from the Triptych-In memory of George Dyer which was created in 1971. In this painting it

can show the suffering body represent the subject's pain as well as Bacon's feelings of grief and guilt from the suicide (Gotthardt, 2019). From looking at what Francis Bacon has gone through and seeing his suffering being expressed into his artwork, it truly does make viewers feel the emotions he has gone through because he paints it so well in his art pieces.

Conclusion

Overall, to conclude this proposal, from gathering various research on the three key words; emotions, trauma and expression. I have also discussed different examples from my own inspiration from each individual key word. There are a lot of evidential evidence of how these artists use these 3 key words in their artwork. These artists have a strong relationship to my current work practices, beliefs and artwork. Therefore, from finding artists who use these three key words in their art pieces and looking at examples of their artwork. I have learnt that through them expressing their emotions of sadness from their dark times in their lives. They have effectively managed to use their artwork as a canvas to fully express what they have gone through in their own special way of painting different ideas and themes of the suffering they have endured, and you can see that in their art pieces. Also, from researching from various academic sources I have found out that these famous artists have all been through tough times in their lives, which has somehow caused a great outcome by these artists creating inspiring and uplifting pieces of art which today are some of the most famous paintings which can be seen by viewers in museums and art galleries around the world. When viewers glance upon their artwork they can relate to it and feel some sort of resemblance to it, because if they are going through anything tragic these paintings can show them it's okay to not be okay and they will become inspired to have faith to get through it. Whilst I have learnt about these three key words, this has left me questioning 'why artists use art as a coping mechanism?'.

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