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**Student number: 2001173**

**BA Course Title: Photography in The Arts BA (Hons)**

**Module: ADAD4018**

**Ways of Thinking Lecturer's Name: Ryan Moule and Alex Duncan**

**Tasks in the order I received them:**

**Task 1: Observational Based Writing:**

**Introduction: 190 words**

**Semiotic analysis: 468 words**

**Task 2: Practice Based Writing**

**Introduction: 187 words**

**Virtual vs Gallery exhibition and evaluation: 888 words**

**Task 3: Manifesto Writing**

**Manifesto: 212 words**

**3 areas of exploration: 582 words**

**Portfolio of Writing**

**Task 1: Observational Based Writing**

## A semiotic analysis of the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1968 Black Power Salute Photograph by John Dominis

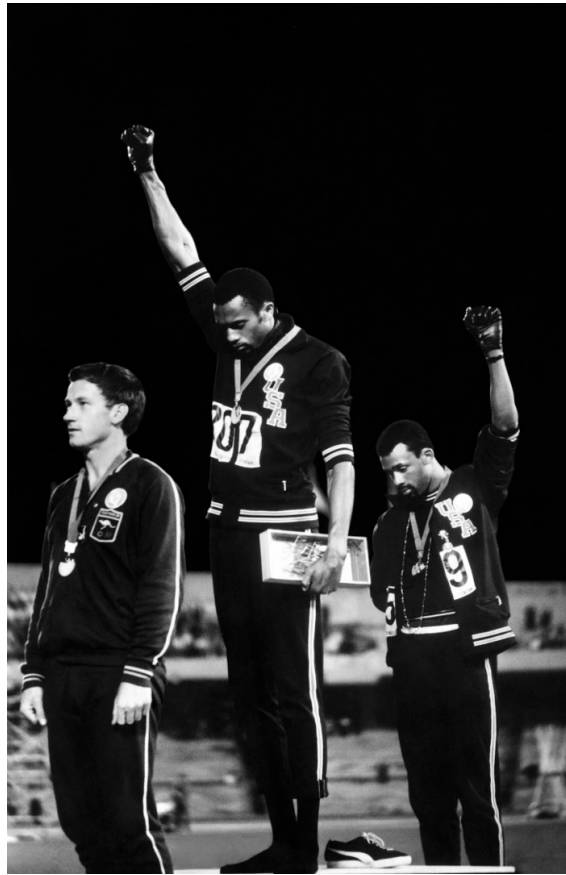


*Fig 1, 16<sup>th</sup> October 1968 Black Power Salute, John Dominis (1968)*

### **Introduction: Semiotic Analysis – a Context**

A Semiotic analysis is essentially a deconstruction of an image that revolves around the signs and signifiers shown in the photo which can either be interpreted as fact according to the photographer's perspective or as something completely different to the viewer. My understanding of Semiotic analysis has developed from consideration of approaches to interpreting images articulated by commentators such as Benjamin (Benjamin, 1936), Berger (Berger, 1972) and Debord (Debord, 1968). The concept was first defined by Ferdinand de Saussure in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Saussure, 1916) and enables to understand the meanings behind an image. The key concepts associated with Semiotic analysis are listed below:

Denoted: a sign of something

Connoted: an additional meaning to something

Signifier: the signs physical form e.g print word from, sound or image

Signified: the meaning of idea expressed by a sign

Sign: an indicator or foreshadowing of something yet to come

Symbols: a mark or sign that indicates that is understood as representing a idea, object or relationship.

Literal: taking a word in its most basic for without the metaphor or exaggeration.

Symbolic: something that serves as a symbol

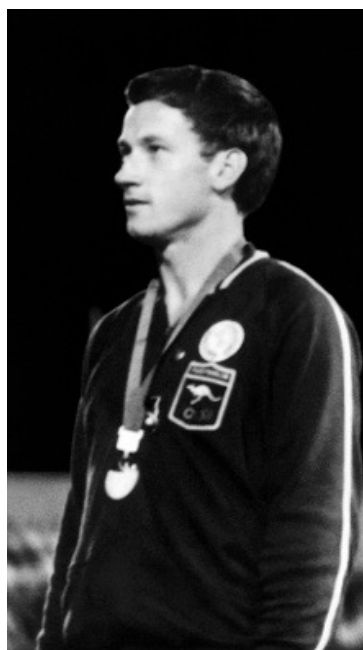
### **Semiotic Analysis of John Dominis' Black Power Salute Photograph October 1968**

These key concepts of semiotics can provide a framework for interpreting John Dominis' iconic Black Power Salute photograph from the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games as it contains signs and signifiers that, according to *Time Magazine* (Time Magazine, 2020), denote the various elements of protest taken by Black athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos. Firstly, the iconic black gloved fists punching the sky as a sign of Black Power and unity; the glove worn by Smith on his right-hand representing power whilst that on Carlos' left, unity. Secondly, they wear no shoes with black socks as symbols of the poverty suffered by Black Americans. Next, Carlos' open jacket signifies wider solidarity with the working classes. Lastly, the beaded necklace worn by Carlos additionally represents the many African Americans who were lynched.

In an article in the *Washington Post* (L.Brown, 2018) on 16 October 2018 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the photo, DeNeen L. Brown summarises its long-term significance and impact on wider culture as follows:

'Dominis's photograph would freeze that moment of silent protest. The picture would slingshot around the world, capturing all the angst and anger of 1968. The photo would become an iconic image of the Black Power movement and an emotional reference point among NFL players who kneel during the national anthem to protest police brutality.... Other photographers, standing in the media-holding pen a few feet away, also captured the moment. But Dominis seized on searing details that made his image more powerful'.

When analysing Dominis' photo in the context of the works of Berger, Benjamin and Debord some interesting new perspectives also emerge. Both Benjamin and Berger focus on how images can be



manipulated in the age of technology, with their meaning or, in Benjamin's term 'aura' changed as a result. What if, for example, the photo was edited to show only the white athlete, Peter Norman?

Fig 2, Black Power Salute cropped 1, James Peaple (2020)

How would that change its aura? It would now appear completely unremarkable. Similarly, cropping the photo at Smith's waist would remove the imagery related to poverty and the working class, reducing an element of its meaning.



Fig 3, Black Power Salute cropped 2, James Peaple (2020)

In relation to Debord, the actions and symbolism captured in Dominis' photo - depending on the ways of seeing it - could be interpreted as a Marxist rejection of the 'spectacle' – and the social and economic inequalities associated with consumerism and capitalism. The photo was of course taken a year after Debord wrote 'The Society of the Spectacle' with 1968 being a year of protest across the world, and political and social unrest intensifying in the United States after the assassination of Martin Luther King in April of that year.

## Bibliography

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Debord, G., 1968. *Society Of The Spectacle*. 9th ed. Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books.

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Saussure, F., 1916. *Course In General Linguistics*. 1st ed. Geneva: University of Geneva.

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## List of figures

*Figure 1, 16<sup>th</sup> October 1968 Black Power Salute, John Dominis (1968) Accessed from: [Black Power Salute | 100 Photographs | The Most Influential Images of All Time](#) [Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020]*

*Figure 2, Black Power Salute cropped 1, James Peaple (2020)*

*Figure 3, Black Power Salute cropped 2, James Peaple (2020)*

## **Task 2: Practice Based Writing**

### **The 'Women & Photography: Ways of Seeing & Being Seen' exhibition Oxford**

#### **Introduction: Context and Background**

The 'Woman & Photography: Ways of Seeing & Being Seen' exhibition was hosted by the Photo Oxford charity (Photo Oxford Festival, 2020) and supported by OVADA, an artist-led organization (OVADA, 2020a), as part of a wider themed exhibition spread across three different venues in Oxford.

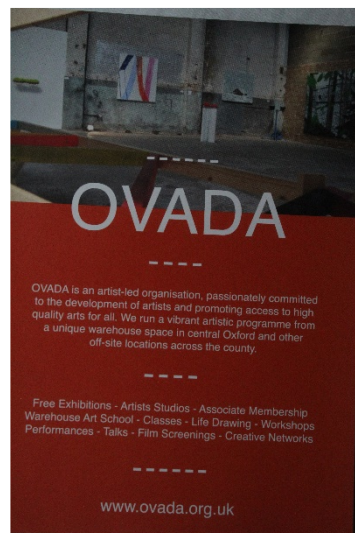


*Fig 1, OVADA Leaflet, James Peaple (2020)*

The exhibition, which is both online and gallery-based, makes use of images submitted by photographers from the UK, Europe, USA, Australia and Asia. According to (OVADA, 2020b) these images were then run through OVADA's 'expert panel' which included 'acclaimed British artist Cornelia Parker; Dr Lena Fritsch, the Ashmolean Museum's Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art; Taous Dahmani, PhD Fellow, the Panthéon-Sorbonne University in Paris; Katy Barron, the Michael Hoppen Gallery photography curator and senior director; Alamy stock photography agency commercial director Alan Capel; and Sian Davey, fine art photographer and humanist psychotherapist', who then selected the photos for the exhibition. The idea of the exhibition was to celebrate 'women in front and behind the lens' which ranges from the many women who are 'photographers, photographic subjects, curators, researchers and collectors.'

#### **Virtual Exhibition vs Gallery Exhibition**

There is a significant difference between viewing the exhibition online and seeing the exhibition in the gallery. For example, the virtual exhibition is presented in the more traditional 'white cube' layout with each photo presented in an almost identical layout to the gallery exhibition. However,

the online version is almost clinical with some minor differences such as the placement and size of the introductory text that explains the exhibition. This is obviously a key curatorial decision.

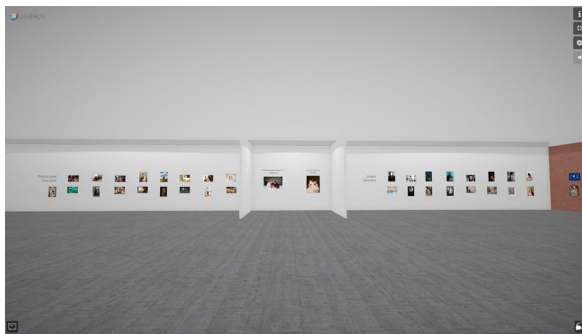


*Fig 2, Virtual exhibition 1, OVADA (2020)*

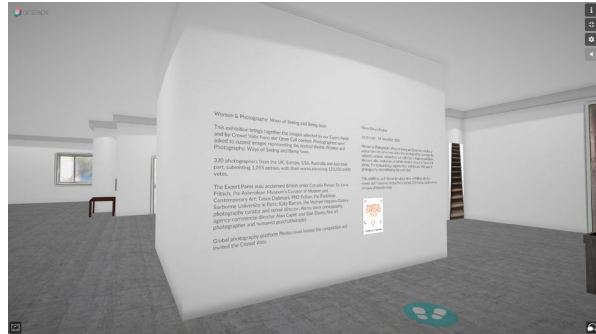


*Fig 3, Virtual exhibition 2, OVADA (2020)*

The gallery exhibition is located at the OVADA warehouse, Osney Lane, Oxford where after entering through an inconspicuous side door, on the left are the three sections of images presented across the warehouse wall with a white U shape unit in the middle of the wall. The images are presented on the wall with the photographer's name and explanation of their photograph placed beneath them. By contrast to the clinical white of the online exhibition, the walls of the gallery exhibition are marked with residual paint, showing that the space is also clearly a working artist's studio. In this respect it can be described as having a contrasting almost visceral feel. In the current COVID-19 environment, comparing a physical and virtual exhibition poses challenging questions if considered from the perspective of Phenomenology (What is phenomenology?, 2018). For example, can viewing a virtual exhibition be a 'lived experience' in the same way as a physical visit and interaction with the images in person?



*Fig 4, OVADA warehouse exterior, James Peaple (2020)*



*Fig 5, OVADA warehouse interior, James Peaple (2020)*

### **Personal Response**

I visited the Gallery Exhibition on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 prior to Oxford being put into Tier 2 restrictions. The exhibition warehouse was entered via an unlabeled side door with no clear signage indicating where exhibition was and there no obvious entrance to reception with no immediate staff presence to welcome or direct. As the following photos (Figures 6-9) show the exhibition photos had been stuck on the warehouse wall, which was considerably darker on the left-hand side of the wall making it harder to view the images on that side clearly. The hanging of the work in the physical exhibition was at one level, which I thought potentially signified an emphasis on equality, which was a key theme throughout the exhibition.

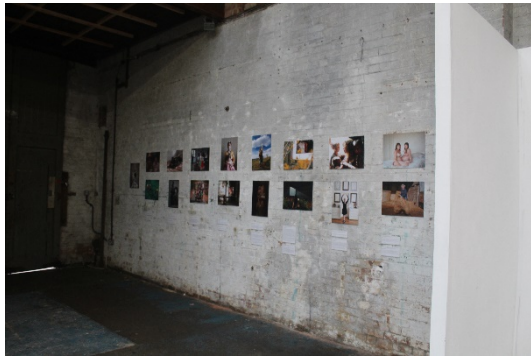


*Fig 6, Exhibition 1, James Peaple (2020)*

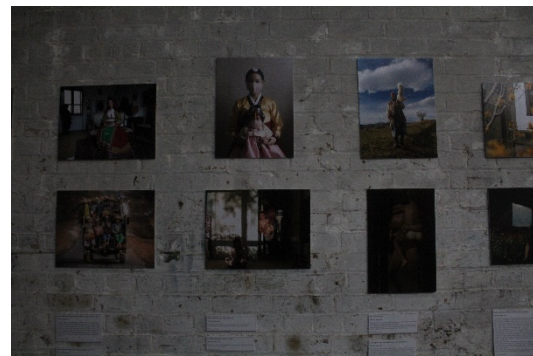


*Fig 7, Exhibition 2, James Peaple (2020)*

The images themselves are fantastic, but are in many cases, too small and clustered too closely together to be, in my opinion, fully appreciated. I do however appreciate that this may be down to this being a group exhibition and/or lack of facilities or finance. Nevertheless, I still believe this could have been executed in a way that did the images more justice. Some images had also come off and were left on the floor. The Photographers' explanations of their Images were interesting and understandable.



*Fig 8, Exhibition 3, James Peaple (2020)*



*Fig 9, Exhibition 4, James Peaple (2020)*

The virtual exhibition is many ways different to the gallery exhibition; however, there are some similarities. For example, the layout of the photos is almost identical to the gallery exhibition, but it is laid upon a virtual white wall design with the same u shape in the middle as the gallery exhibition.

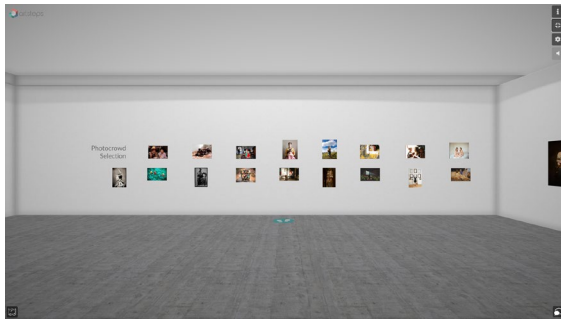


*Fig 10, Virtual Exhibition 3, OVADA (2020)*

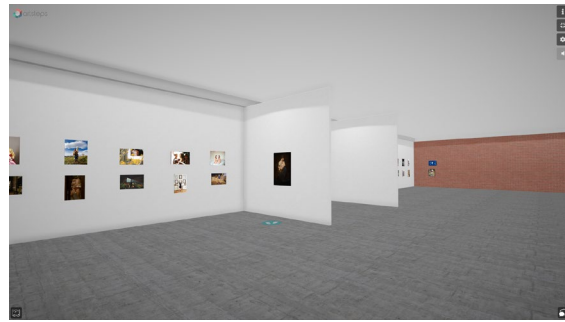


*Fig 11, Virtual Exhibition 4, OVADA (2020)*

Another difference is that to get the photographer's name and explanation to their photo, the viewer would need to click on the photograph to read the information in a text box. A further difference is the placement of the introductory text with the information about the exhibition and its purpose. Last but not least the first section of the display is labeled 'Photocrowd selection', the middle U shape contains the 'Photocrowd winner' and 'Judges Winner' and the last section is labeled the 'Judges selection'. This is less egalitarian than the approach taken in the physical exhibition.

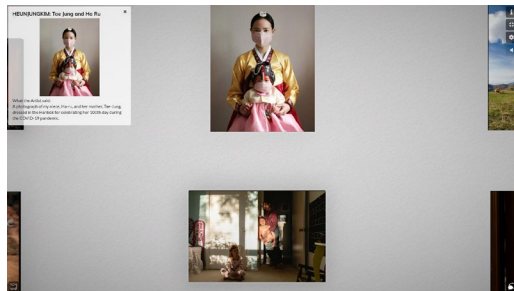


*Fig 12, Virtual Exhibition 5, OVADA (2020)*

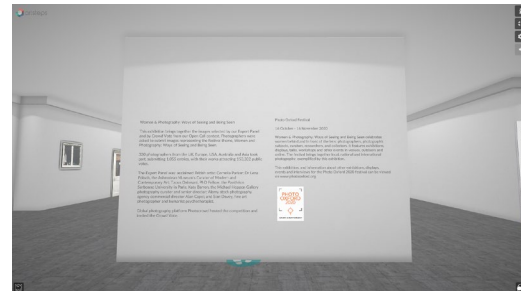


*Fig 13, Virtual Exhibition 6, OVADA (2020)*

## Evaluation

In conclusion, both the gallery and virtual exhibitions of the 'Women & Photography: Ways of Seeing & Being Seen' have some similarities but also significant differences in terms of the visitor experience, despite covering the same theme and content. 'Ways of Seeing' of course echoes a reference to the seminal work of John Berger, which focuses differing interpretations of images, dependent on the viewer's perspective (Berger, 1972). The gallery experience, being located in the warehouse was a concept I liked, and I think all the basic ingredients of an engaging gallery exhibition were there. However, I feel it could have been executed more effectively to give the subject matter full justice. There was, in my opinion, also some dissonance between the exhibition theme and its physical location; in other words, there was not an obvious connection between the two. For instance, none of the photographs appeared to be related to women working in an industrial type facility. The online virtual exhibition had the same qualities of the gallery exhibition however it was executed without the issues that held its real-life counterpart back, which in my opinion made it better experience overall to appreciate the quality of the work on display.

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## List of figures

*Figure 1, OVADA Leaflet, James Peaple (2020)* [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 2, Virtual exhibition 1, OVADA (2020)* Accessed from: [Photo Oxford Virtual Exhibition - \(ovada.org.uk\)](https://www.ovada.org.uk/) [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Fig 3, Virtual exhibition 2, OVADA (2020)* Accessed from: [Photo Oxford Virtual Exhibition - \(ovada.org.uk\)](https://www.ovada.org.uk/) [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 4, OVADA warehouse exterior, James Peaple (2020)* [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 5, OVADA warehouse interior, James Peaple (2020)* [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 6, Exhibition 1, James Peaple (2020)* [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 7, Exhibition 2, James Peaple (2020)* [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 8, Exhibition 3, James Peaple (2020)* [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 9, Exhibition 4, James Peaple (2020)* [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 10, Virtual Exhibition 3, OVADA (2020)* Accessed from: [Photo Oxford Virtual Exhibition - \(ovada.org.uk\)](https://www.ovada.org.uk/) [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 11, Virtual Exhibition 4, OVADA (2020)* Accessed from: [Photo Oxford Virtual Exhibition - \(ovada.org.uk\)](https://www.ovada.org.uk/) [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 12, Virtual Exhibition 5, OVADA (2020)* Accessed from: [Photo Oxford Virtual Exhibition - \(ovada.org.uk\)](https://www.ovada.org.uk/) [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

*Figure 13, Virtual Exhibition 6, OVADA (2020)* Accessed from: [Photo Oxford Virtual Exhibition - \(ovada.org.uk\)](https://www.ovada.org.uk/) [Accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

## Task 3: Manifesto Writing

### My Manifesto

#### James Peaple: My Artistic Vision

1.The qualities that I value in works of art are innovation, purpose, integrity and honesty, integration of technology, attention to detail and imagination - all of which leads to original and unique representations, concepts and interpretations.

2.The use of storytelling and general design aesthetic in various Manga/Anime, comic books and graphic novels has always been something that has interested me and is something I want to express more in my work in the future.

3.The design shape and form of mechanical and technological objects such as the Nissan GT-R, Gundam robots, and machine parts of objects such as computers and typewriters.

4.Photographers and artists such as Palla and David Bent who create imaginative and idiosyncratic works which use experimental techniques.

5.Various films, franchises and TV series which I enjoyed, and which influenced some of the work I created during GCSE's and A Level: 'Transformers', 'Fast and Furious', 'Marvel', 'Star Wars'.

6.My family and my teachers at school have played a key role in influencing me and work, whether it be their political views and values or teaching methods and techniques.

7.Digital experimental work which looks unique and has interesting details.

8.The use of colour in the works of artists like Hundertwasser and how colour is used for representation and to symbolise meaning.

### **Art is creating with a sense of purpose and intention for change**

For me art is a way in which we combine the use of storytelling with a sense of purpose, creating a narrative or exposing political injustices. For example, I've always been fascinated by the visual aesthetics of Japanese manga and anime and how they use storytelling, and in manga in particular, panel by panel progression to create a narrative. I've tried to reflect this in my own work by using Photoshop and Publisher to shape composition. In this way I recently created a manga style page depicting the social impact of COVID-19 during lockdown (Figure 1). In relation to the imperative for political change, I also created a poster entitled the 'Imperfect Circle' (Figure 2) describing the history of civil rights and how it provides a context for today's Black Lives Matter movement. This in turn draws attention to the never-ending circle of injustice suffered by African Americans and the pressing need for change.

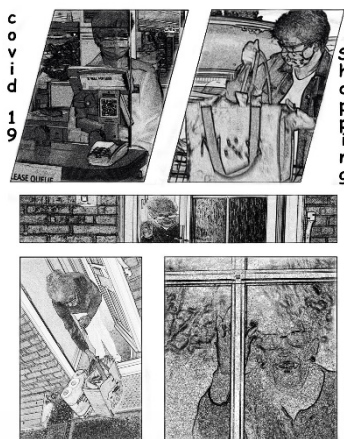


*Fig 1: COVID-19 Shopping Manga style page, James Peaple (2020)*



*Fig 2: The Imperfect Circle interactive poster, James Peaple (2020)*

### **Art is the relationship between technology and form**

"Art and Technology were associated with the period of late modernism in the twentieth century. The field suffered when it was rejected by youthful and aggressive post modernists who, like all

children, deny their heritage” (Brown, 2002). I strive to reconnect the two in my work as I believe there is far more relevance to - and impact on - contemporary audiences that we can achieve through their combination.

There are many forms of design that have inspired my artistic direction. For example, the design and wider cultural significance of the iconic Japanese supercar, the Nissan GT-R. It’s unique Gundam robot anime-inspired shape is highly distinctive and culturally resonant (Loo, 2007). This flows from my interest in the mechanical and a use of shape and form that has fascinated me since childhood. Growing up watching films such as *Transformers* featuring robots, technology, and the mechanical form continues to influence my work. It’s something that I have tried to express in compositions and shaped my final A Level Exam piece. This was influenced by the work of David Bent (David Bent Studio, 2020 A). I arranged to visit his studio in Swindon (Figure 3) where he showed me his “Aerobot” project: photos of aviation parts subsequently combined together to create “Bots” (David Bent Studio, 2020 B). Influenced by David’s work, I took photos of train and machine parts and architecture photos combining them to create my own “Bots” using Photoshop. These were then overlaid over my pallalink experiments to create my final piece (Figure 4).



Fig 3: James Peuple and David Bent holding ‘Ninja Bot’ print, Derek Peuple (2019)

Fig 4: A Level Final Piece image, James Peuple (2019)

### **Art is about translating influence into meaning and outcome**

The aim of translating influence into meaning is central to the final outcome of my work. My style has benefited enormously from the input of my teachers, my mentors - in particular David Bent - and my University tutors. However, for me the imperative is now to translate this influence into powerful works of my own, which convey important messages with impact. Most recently this was reflected in my first assignment at university, producing a poster to reflect the historical context for the BLM movement (Figure 2). This combined learning about new techniques from my tutors with personal passion and commitment.

### **Bibliography**

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2. David Bent Studio, 2020. *David Bent Studio - Art From English Artist David Bent - Buy Prints Online*. [online] Davidbentstudio.com. Available at: <<https://davidbentstudio.com/>> [Accessed 26 November 2020].
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4. Loo, E., 2007. *Nissan GT-R Coupe's Redesign Inspired By Gundam Anime*. [online] Anime News Network. Available at: <<https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2007-11-27/nissan-gt-r%27s-redesign-inspired-by-gundam>> [Accessed 26 November 2020].

#### **List of figures**

*Figure 1: James Peaple, COVID-19 Shopping Manga style page (2020) [Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020]*

*Figure 2: James Peaple, The Imperfect Circle interactive poster (2020) [Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020]*

*Figure 3: Derek Peaple, James Peaple and David Bent holding 'Ninja Bot' print (2019) accessed 5<sup>th</sup> December 2020 [Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020]*

*Figure 4: James Peaple, A Level Final Piece image (2019) [Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> December 2020]*