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Programme of Study: Illustration BA (Hons)

Module: ADAD4018 Ways of Thinking

Tasks in the Order I Received Them:

Task 1: Manifesto = 538 Words

Task 2: Semiotic Analysis = 554 Words

Task 3: Practice-based writing = 544 Words

Manifesto

1. To see and create art should be available to everyone.
2. Art/illustration should be everywhere; on walls, floors, and ceilings. Artists should be paid to make art everywhere.
3. Children's illustration is not exclusively for children. Colourful exaggerated illustration is universal.
4. If avoidable, artists should never compete with each other.
5. Create because you see nobody making what you would make.
6. Every artwork is a collaboration with hidden influence, whether credit is given or not.
7. Art/illustration does not have to be serious to be great.
8. Cartoons and realism are equal in technical skill.

Keywords and Images

Keyword: Art Accessibility



Bob and Roberta Smith (2016)

2. Art/illustration should be everywhere; on walls, floors, and ceilings. Artists should be paid to make art everywhere.

To see works of art pasted on walls, floors, and ceilings is fundamental to the possible whimsicality of everyday life. Not only would this brighten spaces, it would provide a plethora of opportunities for artists' whose work exists in a colourful landscape. Architecture can often take reference from art and illustration, as argued by architect J.C.B Horwood (1991). American architects were to take inspiration from buildings in illustrated books (Lerner L.R. and Williamson M.F, 1991, p. 786). The inclusion of art as architecture as an integral part of society goes beyond just decoration however, as told by Bob and Roberta Smith's 'A People's Manifesto for the Arts' in which "all schools should be art schools" is the first declaration. (Bob and Roberta Smith, 2016) This presents art as something beneficial

intellectually, and is suggested to be implemented globally as a staple in the process of learning.

Keyword: Compete

4. If avoidable, artists should never compete with each other.

Any production industry has an inherent competitive structure, due to profit being a measure of success as well as a necessity. "In capitalist production, he is governed by the products of his own hand" (Marx, 1867, p. 772). With the commodification of art, creativity becomes a labour that is to be purchased under an industry fueled by competition. To compete with fellow artists is to encourage this lifestyle, and goes against the communication that is so necessary in any art practice. Development in art can be made swiftly in the absence of competition. However, Johnny Atomic, from *'The Art Career Project'*, argues that it is better to have weak competitors than no competitors at all. (Atomic, 2019) Which, under capitalism, is true because of a need to be a labourer to survive. Competition does not have to translate into spaces for artists.

Keyword: Serious/Greatness



The Plumb Pudding, Gillray (1805)

7. Art does not have to be serious in order to be great.

To produce satirical artwork that is realised in all aspects is a feat of great creativity and experimentation that realism simply does not involve, as witnessed in James Gillray's '*The Plumb Pudding*' (1805). This cartoon was awarded the title of "the greatest political cartoon ever" by cartoonist Martin Rowson, who is an illustrator for The Guardian (Armitage, 2021).

This does not diminish the impressive nature of realism, but instead recognises the difference in producing these images. The postmodernist movement was dismissive of the structural ideas of progression in modernism, and was the antithesis to its hierarchical standard of art (The Art Story, 2015). Christopher Butler argues that postmodernist artists' avant-garde and unstructured approach allows us to question our "intellectual response" to these works, which may not be encouraged through the literal nature of realism (Butler, 2002, p.2). Marcus Westbury claims that filtering art through a lens of seriousness equating to greatness only ostracizes a large portion of audience members. (Westbury, 2010) This idea prioritizes communication with the audience as a value in art, and the simplicity and down-to-earth nature of a cartoon, for example, can be more accessible than more abstract concepts.

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<https://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/do-we-take-art-a-little-too-seriously-20100201-ge88v0.html> (Accessed: 23rd October 2021)

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Figure 1: Bob and Roberta Smith (2016) *All Schools Should Be Art Schools* [Paint on wood]

Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/smith-all-schools-should-be-art-schools-t14774> (Accessed: 24th October 2021)

Figure 2: Gillray, J (1805) *The Plumb-pudding* [Ink on copper plate] Available at:

<https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/articles/the-15-most-influential-political-cartoons-of-all-time/> (Accessed: 23rd October 2021)

Semiotic Analysis

The late 19th century, referred to as the “second great period of English illustration” (Thorpe, 1935, p. 11), was a time of symbolic development. The newfound ease in reproducing images meant a dramatic rise in illustration in common media, such as news publications or books.

Due to the mass-production of illustration, the portrayal of signs became increasingly influential and desired by publishers. The controversial illustrator Aubrey Beardsley is representative of this change in print, and semiotic analysis will help to deconstruct his symbolic works. (Colloway, 1998, p.56)

Signs are indicative of the human experience. The signifier ‘hell’ is associated with pain and fire (Berger, 1972, p.5), which is demonstrative of the ability to create connotations to negative concepts through imagery. Beardsley, being rejected from publishers for pushing visual boundaries, presented negative signs throughout his work. (British Library, 2014) As theorized by John Berger (1972), seeing is a layered process, as we connect each thing seen to our personal experience and filter it through our perspective. To make a connection is a vital part of sight.



J'ai baise ta bouche Iokanaan, Beardsley (1893)

In 1893, *The Studio*, Vol. 1, an illustration and arts magazine, featured an illustration by Beardsley, titled *J'ai baise ta bouche Iokanaan*. This publication introduced the artist to the industry, as well as becoming one of the most successful arts magazines at the time (Colloway, 1998, P. 56). The artwork is referential of the play *Salome* by Oscar Wilde, of which he made sixteen illustrations for the 1907 edition of the play by John Lane. This illustration was rejected by *The Pall Mall Budget Magazine* because of its gruesome depiction of the final scene of the play, in which Salome clutches John the Baptist's decapitated head (British Library, 2014). The illustration is presented in Beardsley's usually black and white, hairline style, which was ideal for the printing methods at the time (Thorpe, 1935, p. 5). Barthes perspective as a structuralist, in prioritizing form over content, coincides with the rejection of taboo in 19th century print (Willette, 2013). The extended cultural meaning in Beardsley's symbolism emphasized the cruel relationship between the characters,

as seen in the twining, snake-like hair that is reminiscent of Medusa. Both characters sharing this connotation signifies the joint menacing emotions that exude from this interaction. The hair of Salome is hovering above her head, while John the Baptist's hair slumps and wraps around Salome's arm. The signifier of the hair distinctly portrays the contrasting theme of life and death that has been signified. The power dynamic is present through the hair, but also the grueling stance in which Salome grimaces at the head, while John the Baptist's closed eyes convey his dead state. The intensity in the expression is representative of the emotive state that Salome is in, signifying her strong presence in comparison to John the Baptist's passive state. Signs of life are present throughout the illustration, with floral imagery that may be continuing to grow from the blood of the severed head, signifying Salome's perpetual life.

This analysis focuses on the signs of structuralist contrast, but this illustration features many relevant signifiers that are symbolic of both the play and cultural significance during the 1890s. Through this semiotic analysis, my perspective has been broadened through identifying the motif of life and death through the contrasting imagery.

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Figure 1: Calloway, S. (1998) *Aubrey Beardsley*. London, V&A Publications.

Practice Based Writing

In order to create a series of illustrations that tell a story, it is important to focus on continuity between each image that allow the viewer to create a connection. To make this link, I prioritise character over location. I find facial expression to expose more about the character's situation than an overly explanatory background, which I intend to be more of a contextual fill to the narrative. This idea is present in the painting *'Bed Bugs'* by Sophie Margolin (2018),



Bed Bugs, Sophie Margolin (2018)

The fearful expression of the figure provides little room for debate on the emotional narrative being told. The theoretical understanding of Chinese narrative illustration follows a similar fundamental step of 'filling in the blank' between images. American historian Hayden White (2002) states that narration is to "impose a structure and meaning on a sequence of events". He argues that it is a "universal experience" to want to create narrative form between visuals (Murray, 2007, p.8). My practice is reliant on this belief, as I aim to create somewhat complex stories through few illustrated events. As is Margolin's, who creates storylines

through a single image by displaying events at an expressive high point.



Colour and Emotion Project, Evan Elias (2021)

Julia Murray (2007, p.15) proposes three key components of narrative illustration . The first being concept based, claiming that portraying a story through “characters, its setting, significant props” could allude to narrative events without having to explicitly display each event. This theory coincides with Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory of signs, in which a signifier conjures a social or cultural link to the signified (Saussure, 1916, p.14). A consumer having the ability to relate a signifier to a mental concept is integral to narrative illustration, and is again something I rely on within my own work. A watercolour painting for a series of illustrations I completed involves both Murray (2007) and Saussure’s (1916) theories, as I wanted to create an atmosphere of fear. The use of characters, one in focus holding a weapon, and the other with their back turned, is narrating a story of murder, without being explicit in events. The setting, in which I exaggerated the perspective, creates a grounding for “significant props” as referenced by Murray (2007). These props being a treasure chest in one room, and a key in another. This creates a motive for the assassin character. The use of props as signifiers creates a connotation between weaponry and a reward. This element of narrative illustration is also followed by Margolin (2018). The expression of the character signifies an intense terror, with the dark eyes hinting at rage. The setting involves the signifier of a bed, which has connotations of relaxation and comfort, but the surreal nature of the “significant props” (Murray 2007) distorts this perception.

Colour as a means of portraying emotion is an integral part of my narrative series. As with Margolin (2018), the colours are symbolic of the feelings of the character, but also the atmosphere of the entire scene. Colour in itself is a signifier, and that through cultural association there is two ways of perceiving it, as an experience or as information (Ou, 2016, P. 401). Margolin and I used colour to present an experience through emotion.

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Figure 1: Margolin, S. (2018) *Bed Bugs* [Gouache and Coloured Pencil] Available at: <http://www.sophiemargolin.com/bed-bugs.html>

Figure 2: Elias, E. (2021) *Colour and Emotion Project* [Watercolour]