

Ways of Perceiving
'Symbolism – The Hidden Message'

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I intend to curate an exhibition featuring 5 different artists that heavily featured symbolism in their artwork therefore my Exhibition is going to be called 'Symbolism- The Hidden Message'. I am going to be placing this exhibition in the Mission art gallery in Swansea as the location is perfect for students to attend with the University located very near. I think art students will hugely benefit from this exhibition the most by taking inspiration from very successful artists work. Focusing on 'John Berger' – Ways or Seeing theory and applying "seeing comes before words, the child looks and recognises before it can speak", I will not include any explanation next to any of the art in my exhibition to let the audience's minds have full control over itself. I will allow everyone to write down their thoughts and they are able to share them at the end; this will give an interesting insight in to how everyone sees and thinks different. Also the fact that images have different meanings to different people depending on their culture, age and sometimes even gender, which is why symbolism is so heavily used within artwork because it is personal to everyone in their own way.

Symbolism with in art is the idea of using symbols in artwork that could portray many meanings, 'artistic imitation or invention that is a method of revealing or suggesting immaterial, ideal, or otherwise intangible truth or states'(Definition of SYMBOLISM, 2020). Symbolism is so important to be discussed as it is a theme that will never go outdated, artists and writers will always use symbolism in their work as it gives them 'the freedom to give different interpretations of one thing in their work and it also evokes the readers interest to find out the insight in to the creators mind' (write a writing. 2015)

Van Gogh is one of the artists I will be featuring as his artwork is so well known however there is hidden messages in his work that a lot of people aren't aware off and it will be interesting to see what people notice when they take time to specifically find hidden meanings through symbolism, according to David Hockney through an interview he said Van Gogh's 'paintings are full of joy' and that he was hugely inspired by Van Gogh as an artist himself (David Hockey on Vincent Van Gogh | Full interview, 2019).

I will be using David Hockey as one of my featured artists in my exhibition. I find David Hockey very inspiring myself as he looks at life differently to an average person which is how he resulted in so much success. He hides images in his artwork that an average person wouldn't be able to notice which leaves hidden meanings that are there to find.

Michelangelo is the next artists' work I will be featuring in my exhibition. A lot of people don't know this but Michelangelo used to dig up corpses from his local church graveyard to study the anatomy of the human body and then hide different anatomy in his paintings that only a few people could notice, which to me is very strange but also fascinating at the same time that he used to put that much time and effort in to his work.

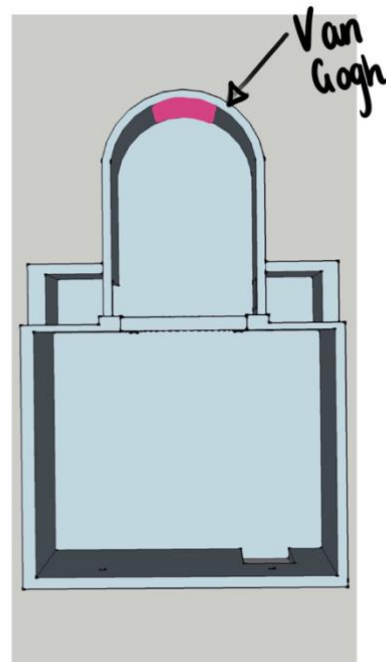
The fourth artist I will be featuring is Leonardo Da Vinci who is best known for his painting of Mona Lisa which has been 'steeped in mystery and has been baffling researchers for art historians for centuries' (Docevski, 2020). It is known that he hides numbers and letters in his paintings.

The last artist I will be featuring in my exhibition is Edvard Munch who is best known for his painting 'The Scream'. A lot of his work was heavily resulted by his childhood trauma as he was 'overshadowed by illness, bereavement and the dread of inheriting a mental condition that ran in the family'. (Edvard Munch, 2020) As a result of his childhood he hid a lot of dark hidden messages in his paintings using symbolism. I believe that this was his way of coping with it as artwork is very similar, if not, the same as a photograph and linking to Susan Sontag 'on photography theory' that states 'each still photograph is a privileged moment, turned in to a slim object, that one can keep and look at again'; by painting his thoughts he was able to look back on his work and see what he has overcome.



Van Gogh – Café Terrace At Night (1888) – figure 1

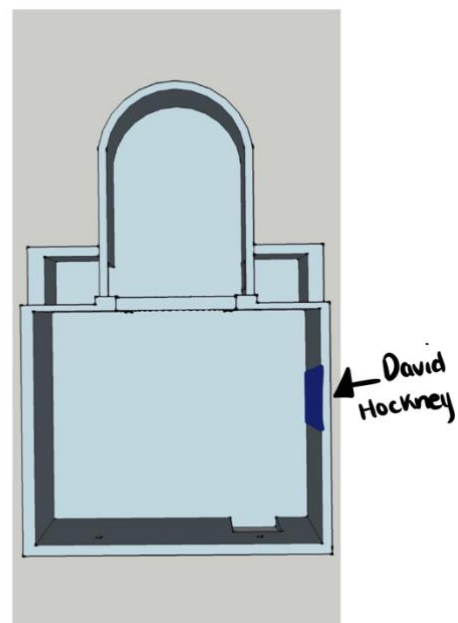
This is one of Van Gogh's most famous paintings that was painted back in 1888 where religious paintings were extremely popular for artists. If you look at the painting it looks as though it's just a street scene with a café and people drinking, however people people that this is Van Gogh's 'portrayal of the last supper' (Docevski, 2020) The mass amount of yellow used in this painting goes along with this belief as yellow can be used to portray very conflicting emotions, with it being the last supper there would of be positivity and optimism in the atmosphere as they believed Jesus was getting crucified for all of our sins however the conflicting emotion would have been sadness which is also represented by the colour yellow & the dark blue.





David Hockney – The big splash (1967) – Figure 2

David Hockney featured a lot of swimming pools in his paintings which people often wondered why he was so obsessed with swimming pools, however after doing more research in to swimming pools there is a high possibility that swimming pools were used to symbolise a deeper meaning. 'A swimming pool symbolises your inner feelings and thoughts, of you are encountering some serious feelings or you are worried about a certain life stage then this is a common dream, it also means 'change' is ahead'. (Dream Of Swimming Pool, 2020) Therefore this leads people to believe that David Hockney was painting his dreams/nightmares and using symbolism to tell his thoughts without having to actually say because it's only been in recent years that men have really been able to speak about their mental health without being judged.

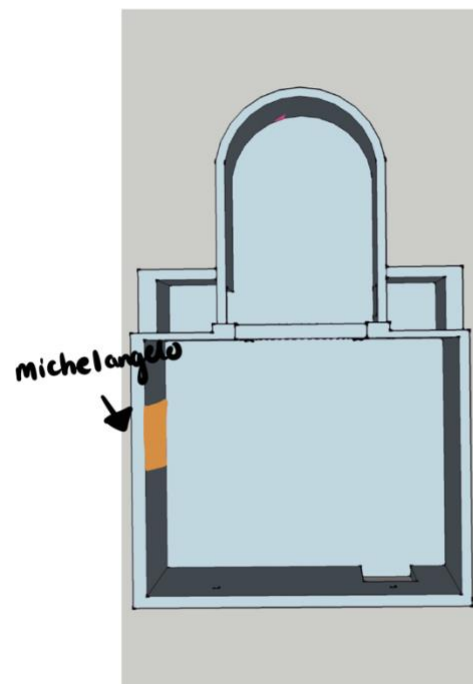




Michelangelo – Separation of Light from Darkness, the Sistine, Chapel Ceiling (1512)

Figure 3

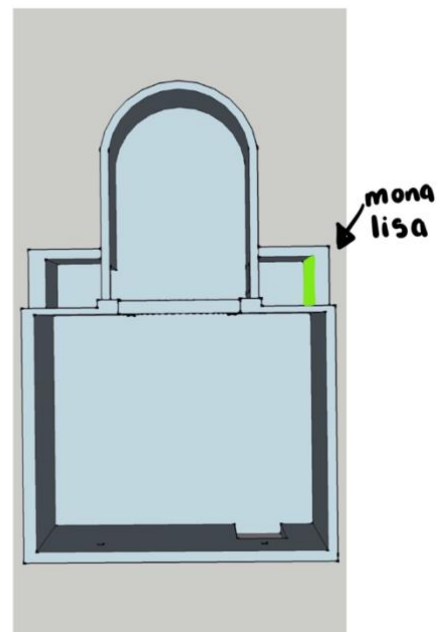
As I stated before Michelangelo used to have an interest in human anatomy so he would dig up a local grave yard to study human anatomy and from this he would hide different anatomy in his paintings that not everyone would notice. Besides the hiding of the anatomy this painting is actually 'divided in to nine segments, and each of them tells a different story from the `Book of Genesis'' (Doceviski, 2020) , which links back to a lot of artists creating religious paintings.





Leonardo da Vinci –
Mona Lisa (1503-06)
Figure 4

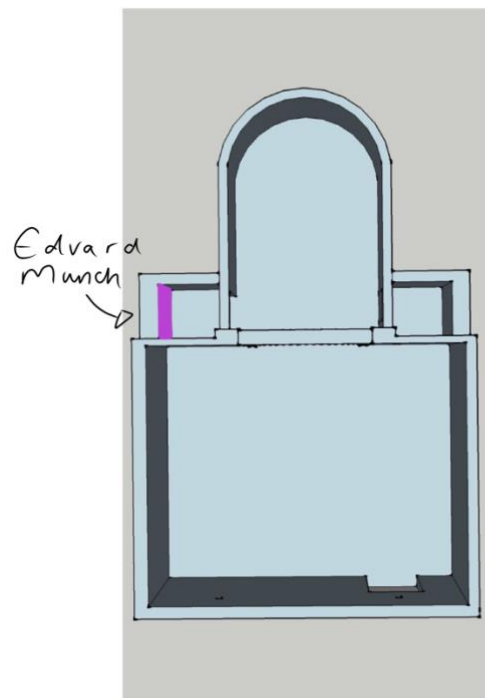
This is definitely one of the most famous paintings of all time, yet people don't really pay that much attention to it which is why I chose to feature this painting in my exhibition. Da Vinci actually hid a couple of tiny numbers and letters in this painting that can only be viewed under a microscope, 'it's possible to make out the letters LV in Mona Lisa's right eye'. (Docevski, 2020) There is also more symbols in her left eye but have not been visible enough to make out what they say, 'they resemble the letters CE or the letter B'(Docevski, 2020). I find it so interesting that there is hidden messages in the painting, even though there could be no meaning why he put them there, however it starts an open discussion and it makes your thoughts think of all the messages he could be trying to get across.





Edvard Munch – The Dance Of Life (1899) -figure 5

This painting by Edvard Munch is full of symbolism and he actually relied on symbolism to be able to tell a story within the painting. The painting is known as 'The Dance Of Life' as it represents the different stages within a 'typical' woman's life. 'The woman in white is a symbol for virgin' (Docevski, 2020) as white symbolises purity, 'the woman in red is symbolic for a carnal woman of experience and the black is satanic who is shown as the aged one' (Docevski, 2020) which is all obvious when you're looking for it but it will be interesting whether or not people will take those interpretations before knowing. The dance in the background also symbolises 'the eternity, vast unknown and finally death' (Docevski, 2020). The whole painting also paints the theme of isolation to show that at some point in your life you will feel very isolated.



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