

Proposed question for Independent Inquiry:

'How does an artist effectively communicate their message to a large audience?'

1. Keywords; Conceptual Jewellery, Glass & Tactile
2. your Student Number; P137226
3. Your BA course title; Design Crafts
4. Word count; 2310
5. Tutor's name; Julia Lockheart
6. research question; be 'how does an artist effectively communicate their message to a large audience?'

To prepare for my independent enquiry I have chosen 3 key words that reflect what directions I take as a creative practitioner. These 3 words are the foundation of which I use, to gain inspiration and grow my ideas. The words I will be exploring are Conceptual jewellery, Glass and Tactile. Within this essay I introduce artists and designers that inspire my work. I discuss the importance of Conceptual Jewellery and how it impacts the wearer/viewer. My research then, lead me to talk about the many forms of Glass and how versatile glass is in my practice. Towards the end of this essay I discuss how a designers/makers sense of touch aids their creative process.

Conceptual Jewellery is the first of three key words in this essay. Though conceptual jewellery does not have an official definition, to understand the key word in the correct format and to get a basic understanding of conceptual jewellery, we can look at 'conceptual art'. which in turn can be deciphered and adjusted to the area under discussion.

A concept or a conceptual thought is difficult to pinpoint, this is because they are based on abstract sentiments. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2020) a concept is an, 'idea or principle that relates to something abstract.'(Oxford Dictionary, 2020.) Conceptual, means 'to be related to or based on an idea.' These explanations convey that the initial idea is loosely threaded by another idea or principle. The two ideas are joint by a common ground.

The Dictionary Of Critical Theory (2020, p.95), describes conceptual art as a 'non-representational form of art.' This statement suggests that the physical artwork is not the centrepiece of the artists thought process. In fact, the art is not complete without the audience's reaction to the object. The definition in the dictionary of critical theory goes on to explain that the finished piece does not take centre stage. It is the idea, that kindles within the onlooker which is the ultimate goal. is an interesting notion because it seems that without the

viewer to interpret the piece. The artists' work suddenly becomes meaningless. The definition connotes that conceptual art becomes complete, each time a viewer interacts with it.

To illustrate this notion further, Glass Artist, Felekşan Onar, (see Fig. 1 below) constructed a beautiful display, showcasing her mold-blown glass swallows in the V&A Museum in 2018. The V&A states on their website that 'Perched' refers to the way these refugees have landed in a chaotic city but are unable to fly or move' (V&A, 2018.) Felekşan Onar was responding to how these refugees were plucked from their home country, Syria, to Istanbul, where they were unable to lead a normal life.



Figure 1

The swallows represent the refugees that were brought to Istanbul for refuge. Though they are free from the terror from their own country and have the means to feel at ease. As seen on fig. 1 the wing-less bird creates the impression of entrapment and seems to be disabled from its natural ability to fly. A report by Lizza Leghtas 'INSECURE FUTURE: DEPORTATIONS AND LACK OF LEGAL WORK FOR REFUGEES IN TURKEY' (Leghtas, 2020)

explains that refugees can gain a working permit however, gaining a permit comes with a costly fee for potential employers do not want to deal with. As stated below:

Turkey introduced a work permit system for Syrian refugees in 2016, but permits must be requested by employers, who are often reluctant to cover the costs and face the administrative hurdles of hiring a refugee or are uninformed about how the process works. - (Leghtas, 2020)

With the lack of support for legal work, most refugees are stuck in a flock like position that the artist has illustrated in her exhibition. (see fig 2.) As shown in fig 2, the artist has made a relation between those refugees and their inability to go back to normality in a new state and the wing-less birds. In this paradigm, the use of Conceptual Art, as a platform, allows onlookers to view an issue that they may/ may not have been aware of, in a different light.



Figure 2

The difference between conceptual art and Conceptual jewellery appears to be that a statement is made on the human body rather than a gallery space or place. Author, Marjan Unger, stated ' a jewellery item is like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle in how a person demarcate their identity and reveal themselves to others' ... 'they testify to the human joy of decoration or they help keep memories alive'(Jewellery in Context,2019, p.16) this extract beautifully portrays how a jewellery piece that is featured on a persons body can be used to express their identity further.

To illustrate, Conceptual Jewellery, Artist and Jeweller, Vivian Bedwell, created a series ' body language'(2019) of adornments that touched upon the way society treat the disabled and the sick. (see fig. 3) Made from silver, Bedwell, indented braille symbols onto each fingertip ring to spell 'touch'. Ilaria Ruggiero, founder of website and blog for adornment-jewelry.com, which is a site that explores and celebrates conceptual jewellery design, explains that the sentiment behind her work. 'The wearable objects explore spatial and bodily senses as a conceptual reflection on the ways in which these provisions are not always correctly placed or maintained creating a barrier, which is inequitable.' (Ruggiero, 2020). By understanding the significance of the work of Vivien Bedwell and Felekşan Onar, it can be assumed that both artists are set to send a conation to the viewer. However, Felekşan Onars, 'PEARCHED' is set in a gallery space where it is protected by a glass casing whereas Vivien Bedwells, ' TOUCH' is show cased in a photograph of a hand wearing the fingerprint rings. Philosopher, Pravu Mazumder (Jewellery in Context,2019, p. 117) expressed that jewellery is related to the human body, whereas art, on the other hand does not. This idea can suggest that relating an object to the human body can produce a personal relationship between the object and the wearer. As stated previously a piece of jewellery is like an added feature to one's identity. The process allows the wearer or viewer to connect with the object

in a personal way, which in turn, they would conclusively react to the initial idea as to why that piece was created.



Figure 3

To conclude this segment of my essay, 'concept' is a strong foundation to which my practice is based upon. Conceptual jewellery allows designer/makers such as myself, to express social issues or explore personal enquires which can then be communicated to the viewer/wearer in a way that connects them to the piece of jewellery.

My second key word is Glass. The Oxford Dictionary description of glass is 'a hard, usually clear substance' (oxford dictionary, 2020) the examples that support the description are the familiar every day objects that we use such as glass bottles and windows. The Dictionary describes 'glass' in a very practical yet mundane manner. In the creative industry glass is used and manipulated in more ways than one. From stained glass, to glass blowing, lost wax casting and UV bonding.

My practice allows me to look at glass in a creative and innovative fashion. With techniques such as lost wax casting, which is 'anything that can be modelled in wax to be replicated in another material' (Watkins-baker, 2010, p.139). Watkin – baker outlines this approach as a way of modelling wax so that it can mirror an object in another material. In her book 'Kiln forming Glass, (2010)' she goes on to explain that the wax is then placed in a mold which will harden around the wax and eventually the wax will be melted though a cavity of said mould. Rachel Elliot, Glass Artist, had created a project solely from this one technique. Her project consisted of 50 miniature taxis to honour the 50th anniversary production of the iconic black taxi shape in Britain. (See fig.4)



Figure 4

Rachel Elliotts work is a strong example of what glass can be transformed into. The trinket type object is made from glass seems to have a frosted finish, which, in reference to its title allows the object to carry a ghostly atmosphere. The Glass Artists work is one of many examples that represents glass in a creative and quirky angle. Artwork such as Rachel Elliot's suggest that glass, as a material can be used and moulded into many forms. Richard Sennett, in his book, the Craftsman stated 'We become interested in the things that we can change'(Sennett, 2009, p. 120). This comment can be applied to that of glass, the more you learn about a material, the more you can learn about its properties and how to change or manipulate it. when applying a simple material such as glass to a pocket-sized taxi (see fig.4), it displays a sense of weight to the small object, allowing the mind on insisting to hold the object. which brings be to my last key word, tactile.

In their report 'Making sense. What can we learn from experts of tactile knowledge?' Camilla Groth, et al, stated 'The sense of touch is an essential element in the making process.' (Groth, et al 2013, p.1) As a designer/maker, being tactile allows a person to feel the quality of their work. Though it does not stop there. When holding an object, a designer/maker will consider the weight of an object. while the finish is noted by analytical touch rather than sight.

The report goes on to explain 'When our body is in communication with a material, the material also responds to our body. The imprint we make tells us about ourselves and our limitations.'(groth, et al, 2013, p.7). This notion suggests that as a maker, when constructing a piece of work, a bond is formed between the maker and the material that is being used. The authors expand on this idea by suggesting that the end product is an 'extension of oneself' as making is after all, self-expression.

The report mentions how 'We make concessions to the material and we make compromises with ourselves, due to the will of the material.' (groth, et al, 2013, p.8) this idea suggests how our bodys react to different materials.



Figure 5

Personally, being a tactile individual, allows myself to understand a material in a way that using the sense of sight would not allow. Growing up, I have discovered certain materials that I would steer clear from, such as cardboard. Specifically, torn cardboard. Working in a DIY store in my teenage years, I would replenish stock that was encased in cardboard that would need to be removed. cardboard is a dry, ridged, material. It was noticeable that my body reacted negatively with the material as my hands would start to become clammy as I felt the texture. however other materials such as silver or smooth materials allowed a more positive reaction. An example of this is a sterling silver Rolo that I bought a few years prior. The silver Rolo is the identical size of its chocolate equivalent. The concept behind this unusual keepsake is that giving your significant other your last Rolo was advertised as a loving gesture because the chocolate treat was so delicious a person could easily pop it in their mouths however, to share it was a romantic notion. The quirky object is smooth yet has a distinctive edge with a smooth surface base and a notable

weight. When holding the object, the materials smooth texture allows my hand to weave it from finger to finger. The Rolo brings a sense of calmness because of these factors.

Groth et al, explain in their report that 'It is as if there is communication with and through the material, and the outcome is an expression of this struggle or collaboration' (groth, et al, 2013, p.8) this remark examines how the outcome represents a makers relationship with the material though the final design. To illustrate, we can revisit the Rachel Elliots work on the 50 taxis that she produced (see fig 4.), the taxi in the image is highly detailed and produced with professional standards. We can see that she, as an artist, understood her material of choice and the materials that come with the process of developing her product. Without establishing a bond with the material and process, the end product could take a long time to get right. However, this can always be resolved though practice and using the sense of touch to recognise the quality of their work.

To conclude this preparation for my independent enquire I have identified conceptual jewellery which initially had to be broken down from Conceptual art. Within this section we looked at how conceptual jewellery allowed the viewer/wearer to establish more of a relationship with what that artist was trying to convey in their message. This conclusion has led me to understand why conceptual jewellery is a fundamental element in my practice. 'Glass', my second key word is an important material in my practice. We discussed how glass was an underestimated material in an everyday point of view and investigated techniques such as lost wax casting which allows one to see glass in an interesting and fascinating light. Glass Artist, Rachel Elliots work was the main inspiration for this section. The last segment of my essay was 'tactile.' As an artist I wanted to illustrate the importance of the sense of touch and how being tactile allows a

designer/maker to understand that the relationship between maker and material is showcased in their final product. With this new understanding the key words that play a strong part in my practice as a maker, I have established that I would like to investigate the relationship between the maker, material and conceptual idea. For my independent enquiry, my question will be 'How does an artist effectively communicate their message to a large audience?'

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