

Portfolio of writing

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Module: Ways of Thinking (ADDA4022)

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Task One: Manifesto – 492 words

Task Two: Observational Writing – 501 words

Task Three: Practice-based Writing – 516 words

Manifesto

1. Stand up to the Mother.
2. Feel absolutely everything, this is painful but powerful.
3. Let the torture be your garden. Grow and blossom.
4. Break the cycle.
5. Let the unseen be seen – reveal all that has been censored.
6. We are not imposters.
7. Speak loud and clear.
8. Make a spectacle.

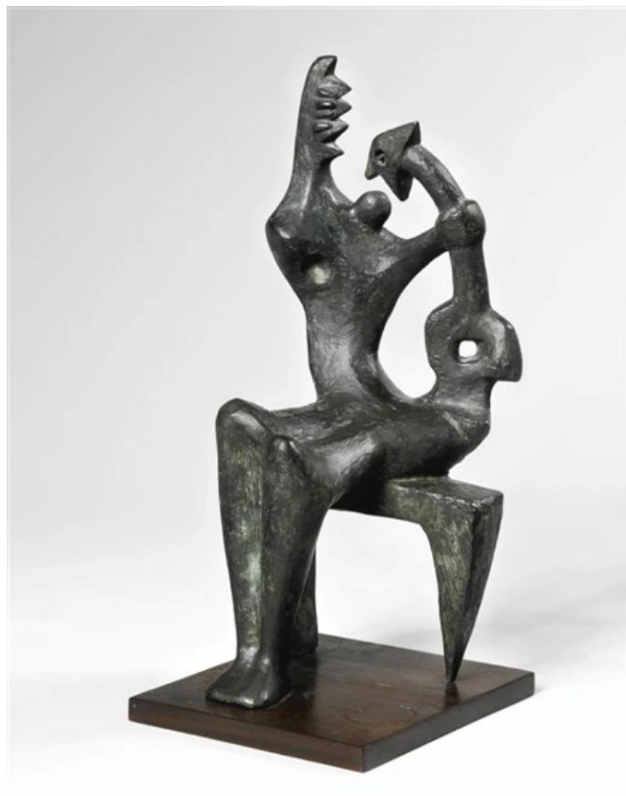


Fig 1. *Mother and Child* Henry Moore 1953

1. Stand up to the Mother. Some parents are a child's biggest cheerleader. Some will suppress and hinder the development and confidence of the creative child. "It is incredible how fear is built into you, by your parents and others surrounding you. You are so innocent in the beginning; you do not know." (Abramovic, 2016, 01:21) Those who have been emotionally crushed by their parents need to find their power and break out of self-destructive patterns "One of our chief needs as creative beings is support. Unfortunately, many artists never receive this critical early encouragement. As a result, they may not know they are artists at all." (Cameron, 2022, 01:34:18) Some artists, like Yayoi Kusama, always knew that they were meant to create, and fought against their whole family from an early age to follow their path. (Bagheshirin Laerkesen, 2015) Indeed, we may not have had the great statue of David, if Michaelangelo had not stood up to his father. (Storey, 2016).



Fig 2. *A Thorn amidst the Roses*, James Sant (1820-1916)

3. Let the torture be your garden. Grow and blossom. I believe that the trauma of our past can be the growth of our future. You can use your own pain and suffering to open to new ways of seeing the world around you. "Pain is a door. A secret door into a different state. Without these doors you cannot reach it. Afterwards, you no longer fear pain." (Abramovic, 2016, 3:12:09) We need to be ourselves and use the experiences and emotions from your past to propel us forward, if they be negative or positive. "We listen to the ugly voice inside our minds that tells us that we can't do it, that it's not worth trying, that nobody will care anyway – the voice of perfectionism, self-doubt, creative block, fear of failure, procrastination. And then we tell that voice to quieten down." (Werker, 2014, p49) We must find ways to grow resilience and strength from the dirt up.



Fig 3. Grayson Perry (2019)

8. Make a spectacle! If you feel like there is someone flamboyant inside of you, do not be afraid to express yourself fully and let this inner part of you shine. We are encouraged in the book *Start Painting Now* to “have a think about what is expected from you and try doing something different for a change.” (Powell and Moore, 2022, p60) Can we express ourselves through art and design? “When you experiment with stitching, sometimes you have to go it alone, on blind faith. One small stitch builds on the next.” (Prain, 2014, p.158) How can you be your true self? Maybe your confidence is quiet in nature and your gestures are small. Maybe you are big and bold and loud. Either way, let us not live in fear of who we are. “I was once afraid of people saying “who does she think she is?” Now I have the courage to stand and say, “this is who I am.”” (Winfrey, 2014, cited in Powell and Moore, 2022, p.26).

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Observational writing

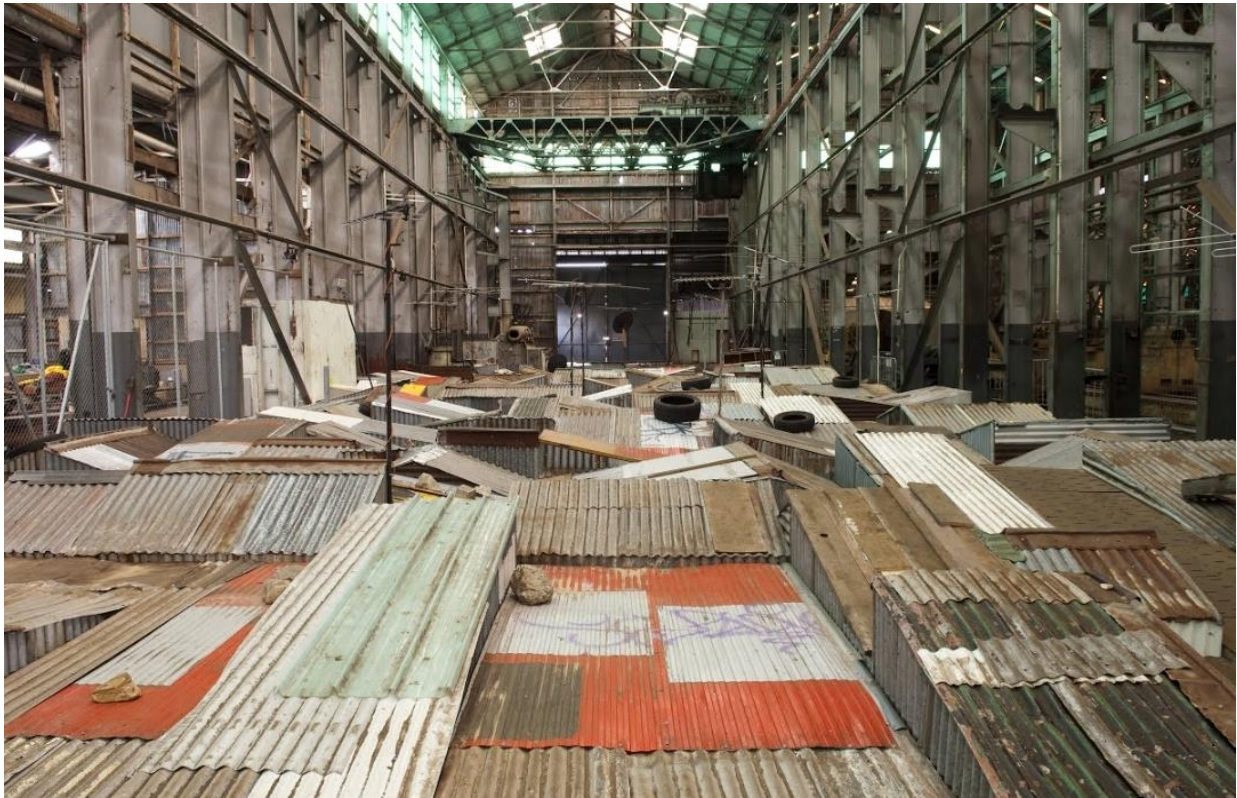


Fig 4. *Kasbah* Kader Attia 2009

Semiotics is simply put, the study of signs and symbols. It is used by everyone in their everyday lives without awareness. When we are hungry, we may look for the sign of our favourite fast-food restaurant, such as the iconic MacDonalds golden arches. If we need a toilet, we look for the male or female human silhouette. There are signs and symbols all around us. We can make signs with our bodies, such as a thumbs up which symbolises good. Or we may wear a colour to symbolise support of a specific sports team or political party. These signs can take years to become part of a universal meaning in societies or they can be individually symbolic, such as the Rorschach inkblot tests, used in psychology. The more you investigate semiotics though, the more you realise that it is anything but simple and its origins are scattered over time. It has links to semantics, philosophy and linguistics amongst other things, and to great thinkers such as Barthes, Saussure and Peirce. (Chandler, 2022)

The image above is taken of an art installation by Kader Attia, and it takes place in a vast industrial looking building. There is a patchwork of corrugated sheets and other materials which seems to symbolise the roofs of a shanty town which can be seen in many parts of the world. I see metal, wood,

paint, rust, stones, car tyres. It is a mish mash of mismatched materials, pieced together to create an uneven surface. I noticed that the outside has been brought inside and the top is now on the bottom. This artwork, that represents what would normally be a bustling, busy, noisy and maybe dusty, hot and smelly living area full of life, looks quiet, still, and soulless.

Slums are named kasbah in North African cities, hence the title of the work. They are generally made from found materials. According to the French/Algerian artist his work addresses immigration, colonisation, and cultural identity. Dominance and exploitation. You can imagine the discomforting feeling of walking on top of people's homes, like "treading on the heads of the poor" (Elliot, 2018 02:56). What other feelings and thoughts does the artist want visitors to consider as they are invited to become part of the piece? "Walking tentatively over the work, one not only becomes part of it but also implicitly part of the economic and power matrix that creates these shanty towns." (Fiona, Designboom)

This artwork has been moved and recreated in different spaces. This greatly changes the look, especially when in more modern and clean settings. I would imagine that it also changes the experience of the people walking over and viewing the work. "It was the place, the cave, the building, in which, or for which, the work was made" (Berger, 1972, p32). I noticed more details in other images that I saw of the installation. There are several TV aerials and satellite dishes. These must have added an extra hindrance to the people walking across the roofs.

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Practice-based Writing



Fig 5. Elizabeth Mackenzie 2025

The image above was created from a task set on the 9th October 2025. It was one of my first pieces created at UWTSD. We were instructed to take a 5-minute walk around the university and sketch our journey along the way, after which we would create a collage piece, representative of our journey. We were left to interpret the method of note taking/sketching and the direction of our journey ourselves. I chose a sketchbook and pencil and started to draw objects on my route which to me mapped the way. I drew doors, stairs, lights, marks and patterns on walls and windows. I was a bit skeptical of this process to start with but as I started drawing, ideas for the final collage piece started to take shape. “Ideas are like fish. If you want to catch a little fish, you can stay in the shallow water. But if you want to catch the big fish, you’ve got to go deeper” (Lynch 2006 p.1).

We were then given a small selection of papers to use and did not have a lot of time to work with. I found that I enjoyed the process of making quick decisions and cuts into the paper provided without guides. I visually used my sketched ‘map’ to guide my knife cuts and trusted my instincts. I found that I

focused entirely on the process, forgetting that there was anyone else in the room. “For some artists, there may be no clear intention when they begin work in their sketchbooks. Ideas and developments may flow freely” (Greenlees, 2005, p.23).

I really like the outcome, the simple but effective shapes and placement. I am discovering and exploring my love of abstraction in many different forms. I found collage to be enjoyable and a good starting point in a creative process. I have gone on to use the shapes from this piece in other work, and used these shapes to inspire shape building from the world around me. I would like to use collage as a starting point for ideas again to see where this may lead me. Maybe using other papers or different materials and colour palettes. I am always interested in how my skepticism can lead me to inspiration and need to use this observation for future endeavors. Is this resistance a sign of possibility? Is this resistance a sign that I need to keep moving in that direction to see what possible outcomes may occur? “The most difficult thing is the decision to act. The rest is merely tenacity” (Earhart, 1897-1939, cited in Powell and Moore (2022) p.80).

I cannot recall using collage in this way before, although I do enjoy looking at collage art works. I like how Mark Hearld (2012) combines his cut paper collages with different types of paint and printing. I also like the textile collage work of Shelley Rhodes (2021) and am considering how I could take the collage that I have produced further by combining textile and stitch elements. I have learnt that collage can be used similar to sketching, leading to different possibilities.

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List of figures

Fig 1. *Mother and Child* Henry Moore 1953 bronze sculpture. Available at:

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Fig 2. *A Thorn amidst the Roses*, James Sant (1820-1916) Image credit: Manchester Art Gallery. Available at: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/a-thorn-amidst-the-roses-205975> (Accessed 2025).

Fig 3. Grayson Perry (2019) wearing a costume designed by London College of Fashion MA Costume Design for Performance. Rachele Terrinoni in 2019, to celebrate Perry's role as Chancellor for the University of the Arts London. Available at:

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Fig 4. *Kasbah* Kader Attia 2009. Available at:

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Fig 5. Elizabeth Mackenzie 2025.

