

Portfolio of Writing

Student Name: Ellen Rehmatulla

Student Number: 1905081

Programme of Study: Illustration (BA)

Module: ADAD4018

Ways of Thinking Lecturer's Name: Jonathan Pugh

The Order of Task:

Task 1 – Manifesto Writing: 533 words + bibliography

Task 2 – Observational Writing: 494 words + bibliography

Task 3 – Practice-Based Writing: 546 words + bibliography

Task 1 - Manifesto Writing

1. Depression creates emotive art, yet it is getting the motivation to create.
2. Art should not be compared – everyone's skillset differs.
3. Over-thinking can either be a creator's best friend or worst nightmare.
4. "Meaning" is not necessary to create a work of art.
5. Art is multi-disciplinary; there is no obligation to adhere to a singular profession.
6. Success is based on personal-contentment.
7. Artistic boundaries are a deluded perception.
8. Art has no authority.

Depression creates emotive art, yet it is getting the motivation to create.

For hundreds of years, there has been a correlation between mental illness and creativity. Some of the most prolific artists to date suffered through the darkness of poor mental health; from Michelangelo (1475-1564), whom was posthumously determined to have depression and "exhibited signs of bipolar manic-depressive illness" (Paul L. Wolf, 2005), to Edvard Munch (1863-1944) and the "illness, insanity and death... (that) accompanied me (him)" (Editors, 2017, p. 275) throughout his life. However, depression comes conjointly with a multitude of creativity-crushing \symptoms, such as a lack of energy and concentration, and losing interest in the things you love (MIND, 2020); which, for an artist, is stereotypically producing works of art. This lack of motivation and absence of goals forms a hopeless, grey-scale mindset. The possibility of one creating when they cannot fathom the courage to get out of bed is sparse. Depression drains the colour from the world and abolishes any

thought of a healthy creative outlet. Yet, blue tones, universally symbolic of melancholy, can combine to create the epitome of upset; a raw insight to the artist's emotions. On the other hand, a vibrant, multi-coloured approach may be taken in a vain attempt to brighten and embrace a dull existence.



(Picasso, 1902)



(artedelle, 2014)

Success is based on personal contentment.

Success is most-commonly defined by prosperity, materialism and flourishing in the workplace – being at the top of the corporate ladder. However, success is a personal concept based on what makes you feel fulfilled. The definition of success varies from person-to-person; some may simply be content with their own home while others strive towards a materialistic lifestyle. We assume success (the stereotypical kind: wealth) will bring us joy, yet, after achieving, “instead of being happy, we just set new goals” (Pasricha, 2017, p. 27). Success “is about the grand goals; the big dreams and aspirations” (Mourdoukoutas, 2012); while sounding promising, this statement is disagreeable. As humans, we put too much pressure on ourselves to be someone – to be a part of something bigger than an individual. But

this is neither necessary nor healthy. Success revolves around our contentment in our environment and a positive mentality.

Artistic boundaries are a deluded perception.

If there were ever any boundaries within art, they were broken long ago. Humanity's creative journey has evolved from palaeolithic cave paintings and '*The Bayeux Tapestry*', a historic masterpiece; estimated to be commissioned in 1070 (Editors, 2017, p. 75). Artistic knowledge and techniques have grown through the intricacy of the Rococo Period, past the life-like nature of the Realist Movement. The nonconformists of the Abstract-Expressionism Movement were "characterised by a spirit of revolt against tradition" (Chilvers, 2009, p. 4); clearly meaning they quashed societal norms and the illusion of boundaries within art were conquered yet again. Presently, art, and the production of such, varies massively; painting, ceramics, performance art – the list is endless. As creators, we are determined to convey messages and manipulate emotion in a unique fashion. A prime example of this is Maurizio Cattelan's '*Comedian*' (2019); a banana taped to a wall. A simple concept, yet it has sparked compelling controversy, making the world question is or is not classed as art. "Development is eternal" (Fontana, 2011, p. 309); therefore, art will progress and adapt, leaving the hypothetical ruins of artist boundaries in the conventional past.

Bibliography

artedelle, 2014. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.deviantart.com/artedelle/art/Colorful-Depression-464671091>
(Accessed: 2 January 2021).
Chilvers, I. (2009) *Dictionary of Art and Artists*. 4th edn. London: Oxford University Press.

Editors, S. (2017). 'Romanticism to Symbolism' in S. A. Georgina Palffy. (ed.) *The Art Book*. London: Dorling Kindersley Limited.

Editors, S. (2017) 'The Medieval World' in G. P. a. S. Atkinson. (ed.) *The Art Book*. London: Dorling Kindersley Limited.

Fontana, L. (2011) 'White Manifesto (1946)' in A. Danchev (ed.) *100 Artists' Manifestos From the Futurists to the Stuckists*. London: Penguin Random House UK, p. 309.

MIND. (2020) *Depression*.

Available at: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/depression/symptoms/?gclid=CjwKCAiA8Jf-BRB-EiwAWDtEGvGldoxq-KmJw-r7J3Gbde1BQrnfsRY-eWpEfAa5VDSsnxM-cktKnRoCT4cQAvD_BwE

(Accessed: 1 December 2020).

Mourdoukoutas, P. (2012). *The Six Rules of Personal Success*.

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/panosmourdoukoutas/2012/02/11/the-six-rules-of-personal-success/?sh=cbbdbc62300e>

(Accessed: 24 November 2020).

Pasricha, N. (2017) *The Happiness Equation*. s.l.: Ebury Digital.

Paul L. Wolf, M. (2005) *The Effects of Diseases, Drugs, and Chemicals on the Creativity and Productivity of Famous Sculptors, Classic Painters, Classic Music Composers, and Authors*.

Available at: <https://meridian.allenpress.com/aplm/article-split/129/11/1457/63946/The-Effects-of-Diseases-Drugs-and-Chemicals-on-the>

(Accessed 24 November 2020).

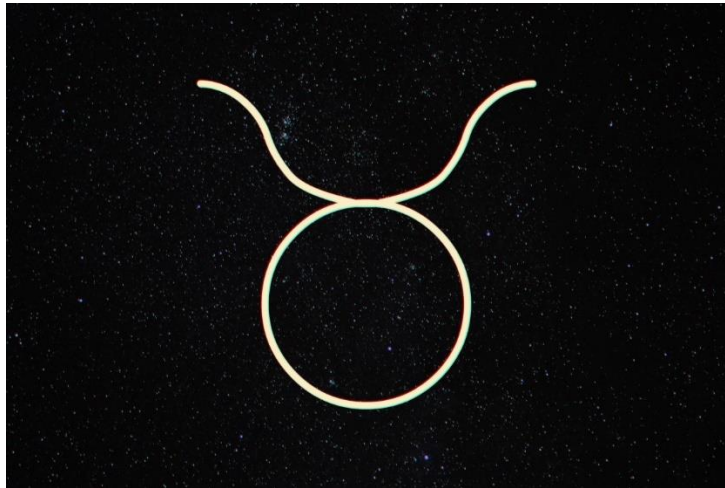
Picasso, P. 1902. *Femme aux Bras Croisés, 1902 by Picasso*.

Available at: <https://www.pablopicasso.org/femme-aux-bras-croises.jsp>

(Accessed 2 January 2021).

Task 2 - Observational Writing

An Exploration of the Taurus Glyphs Through Semiotics



(Urdinlaiz, 2020)

The Taurus symbol is one of twelve Zodiac signs and is classified as an Earth element (Heese, n.d.), following “the Western astronomical tradition” (Simple!, 2019). Taureans are born between 20th April and 20th May (Faragher, 2020). It is most commonly symbolised as an astrological glyph, portrayed above. The signifier is purely a circle with a dish adhered to the top. However, when aware that the glyph signifies a bull, the simple line design becomes an iconic sign: the circle suddenly connotative of a bull’s head and the dish is perceived as horns. The noun “Taurus” (Dictionary.com, 2020) is often paired with the glyph to ensure precise denotation. The bull has connotations of many myths and cultures such as Zeus’ transformation into the White Bull to “woo Princess Europa” (Stapleton, 2020), as well as the Cretan Bull, originating in Crete, arising “from the Mediterranean Sea onto the Greek island” (Anon., n.d.).

Unknown by many, the Taurus glyph is polysemic, uncommonly decoded as a full moon (the circle) and half-moon (the semi-circle). This is supposedly a connotation of archaic lunar calendars – establishing time through the positioning of the moon – used in prehistoric ages (Russell, n.d.). Archaeologists have identified the oldest lunar calendar to be from approximately “c.32,000 B.C” (Soderman, n.d.). As the moon was the basis of palaeolithic calendars and the glyph represents the moon, the simple lines can be seen as an out-dated indexical sign. However, in 5 BCE, the Babylonians developed the calendar by discovering the ecliptic – the track in which the earth orbits the sun – dividing it into 12 segments (months) and naming it the Zodiac (Simple!, 2019). Therefore, the image above is an arbitrary symbol due to the abundance of eras and cultures the Zodiac system has been scrutinized by.

In today’s society, “over 90% of adults” (Campion, 2017) are aware of their Zodiac sign. They are virtually impossible to avoid; social media is rife with horoscopes, people getting their corresponding glyphs tattooed every day and there are even dedicated ‘emojis’. The Taurus glyph, and the other Zodiac glyphs, now have myth-like qualities, as a large quantity of people base their ideologies around their sign’s traits and daily horoscope readings. Model, Gigi Hadid has said “I’m a Taurus; I’m hard-headed” (Roberts, 2017); celebrity endorsement like this creates a larger engagement with the Zodiac, due to celebrities’ prominence and undeniable influence on their audience/fans.

Overall, the semantics of the Taurus glyph are interesting, yet complicated, and also rather controversial, due to the thousands of years of defining the Zodiac. After choosing to study an image of a Taurus glyph for personal reasons, there is an

element of shock towards the depths of the Zodiac; it's discovery, meanings and traits. To fully comprehend the semantics of this symbol would take an abundance of research and exceed a 500 wordcount. Whether the glyphs obtain their relevancy is unpredictable; purely relying on the future of societal fads.

Bibliography

Anon. (2020) *Information On Taurus Astrology*.

Available at: <https://www.astrology-zodiac-signs.com/zodiac-signs/taurus/>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020).

Anon. (n.d) *The Cretan Bull in Greek Mythology*.

Available at: <https://www.greeklegendsandmyths.com/cretan-bull.html>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020).

Campion, N. (2017) *How many people actually believe in astrology?*

Available at: <https://theconversation.com/how-many-people-actually-believe-in-astrology-71192>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020).

Dictionary.com (ed). (2020) *Taurus*.

Available at: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/taurus?s=t>
(Accessed at: 30 December 2020)

Faragher, A. K. (2020) *The Personality of a Taurus, Explained*.

Available at: <https://www.allure.com/story/taurus-zodiac-sign-personality-traits#:~:text=Taurus%20is%20an%20earth%20sign,love%2C%20beauty%2C%20and%20money>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020).

Heese, A. (n.d) *Taurus*.

Available at: <https://cafeastrology.com/taurus-symbols.html>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020).

Roberts, K. (2017) *9 Celebs Get Honest About their Belief in the Zodiac*.

Available at: <https://www.marieclaire.com/celebrity/news/g4929/celebs-talk-zodiac/?slide=9>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020).

Russell, J. (n.d) *The Origin of the Moon Calendar*.

Available at: <https://www.livingwiththemoon.com/origin-moon-calendar/>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020).

Astronomy, A. (2019) *Ancient Babylonian Astronomy - The Zodiac - why it was drawn* [video].

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwHcqQq31Ms&t=1s>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020)

Soderman, N. S. (n.d) *The Oldest Lunar Calendars*.

Available at: <https://sservi.nasa.gov/articles/oldest-lunar-calendars/>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020).

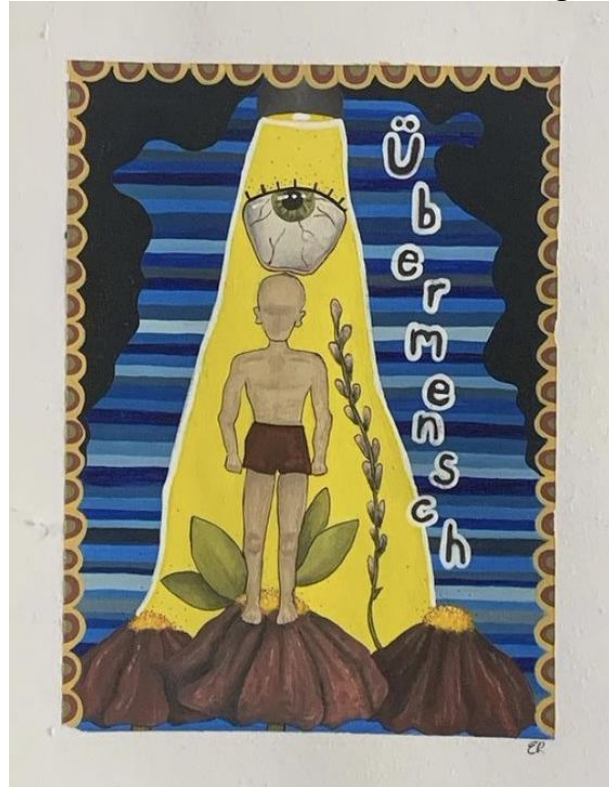
Stapleton, D. (2020) *Taurus Zodiac Sign: Characteristics, Dates, & More*.

Available at: <https://www.astrology.com/zodiac-signs/taurus>
(Accessed: 30 December 2020).

Urdinlaiz, D. (2020) *Astrological Symbols That Will Help You Learn More About The Universe And About Yourself*.

Available at: <https://thoughtcatalog.com/daniella-urdinlaiz/2018/10/astrological-symbols/>
[Accessed 30 12 2020].

Task 3 - Practice-Based Writing



As an illustrator, I value creativity, freedom, originality and the use of art “to go to places where words couldn’t venture” (Jones, 2019). More often than not, I have a gnawing urge to create; whether that is drawing, painting, or some other medium, depending on my present preference. However, I find my most comprehensive designs manifest while walking. A prime example of this experience is an acrylic painting I did, named ‘*Übermensch*’. I watched a YouTube video which touched upon Friedrich Nietzsche and his theory of the ‘*Übermensch*’, translating directly to ‘overman’, but most commonly known as ‘superman’ (Editors, n.d.). I then went for a stroll when I envisioned a male figure in a beam of light. Nietzsche believed that the ‘*Übermensch*’ “would emerge when any man with superior potential completely masters himself” (Britannica, 2020); a beam of light would portray the perceived

superiority. I also envisaged a singular eye to portray omnipotence as Nietzsche philosophised “God is Dead” (Cybulska, 2017); the ‘Übermensch’ has the true power.

When creating independent work, I seldom draw thumbnail designs; I find this process quashes spontaneity and the freedom of creating, as it limits your perception of ideas and potential. Instead, I delve into making the envisaged outcome, which is what I did for the ‘Übermensch’ painting. I prepared my workspace. Then, I used masking tape to create a rectangular boundary for the painting on A5 paper, as I enjoy the satisfaction of removing the tape, revealing a crisp border. Using a soft pencil, I vaguely sketched the outline of the male form, the light beam and flowers. I did not add facial features as I wanted the ‘Übermensch’ to be anonymous; the viewer can decide who he is. I did not have an intended colour palette or any idea of background details. The aim of this piece was to have fun and create something different from my usual style, inspired by Nietzsche’s theory. I began with acrylic paint to depict the blue-toned, stripey background and then portrayed the light beam with vibrant yellow, symbolising a spotlight in theatre. I used black and white typography to emphasize the painting’s thematic roots. I decided to portray the border through the use of off-coloured semi-circles to exaggerate the peculiar colour palette. The colours work together, but do not coordinate; there is no reason for this apart from the sake of experimentation.

In the words of Donald Schön, “In a good process of design, the conversation with the situation is reflective” (Schön, 1992, p. 79), which relates to the ‘Übermensch’ painting; the conversation being the research and thought-

process, the situation being painting in my free time. This piece is most definitely a reflection of both aspects. Reflecting on my painting has made it clear that my favourite element is the overlapping of the blue lines and the solid blackness, creating an eye-catching juxtaposition between the straightness of the multiple blue tones and curved block black. If you look closely, you are able to depict silhouettes of profiles of men; which I interpret as potentials for the next 'Übermensch'. A criticism is that the male figure looks small as he is standing on a flower. The meaning for this was omniscience; portraying the figure as the almighty – at one with nature and humanity.

Bibliography

Britannica (ed). (2020) *Superman*.

Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/superman-philosophy>

(Accessed: 31 December 2020).

Cybulska, D. E. (2017) *Nietzsche's Übermensch: A Hero of Our Time?*

Available at: [https://philosophynow.org/issues/93/Nietzsches Übermensch A Hero of Our Time](https://philosophynow.org/issues/93/Nietzsches_Ubermensch_A_Hero_of_Our_Time)

(Accessed: 31 December 2020)].

Editors. (n.d) *Übermensch*.

Available at: <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/Übermensch>

(Accessed 31 December 2020).

Jones, C. P. (2019) *What Artists Talk About When They Talk About Their Art*.

Available at: <https://christopherpjones.medium.com/what-artists-talk-about-when-they-talk-about-their-art-14373a87b452>

(Accessed: 31 December 2020).

Schön, D, A. (1992) *The Reflective Practitioner*. 1st edn. London: Taylor and Francis Group

Available at: <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/books/reflective-practitioner-donald-sch%C3%B6n/10.4324/9781315237473>

(Accessed: 31 December 2020)