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Module Information:

Name: "Ways of thinking" 2025 - 2026

Code: ADDA4022

Lecturer: Menna Buss

Word count:

Artist Manifesto = $177+165+150 = 492$

Observational Writing = 590

Reflective Writing = 531

MANIFESTO NAME: GOOD(ART + LIFE)

What to maintain?

- ❖ Integrity – Take pride in yourself and your ideas. Take in new ones but do vet them beforehand.
- ❖ Sustainability – The day our bodies are more micro-plastic than flesh is a day we should not wish to live in.
- ❖ Accountability – No point blaming gravity for a vase you broke.
- ❖ Nuance – for every fact is multi-faceted.

What to nurture?

- ❖ Conscientiousness – Start any project two days after it is assigned.
- ❖ Passion – If life has no meaning, then make one already.
- ❖ Humility – You know nothing, so listen to everybody. Even those you scoff at instinctively.
- ❖ Moderation – Maintain healthy work-life balance, so that Goldilocks does not come to break your kneecaps.

Sustainability – The day our bodies are more micro-plastic than flesh is a day we should not wish to live in.



Fig. 1, *Nipah Dennis, Getty Images, Photograph, 2022*

The 21st century artist has many a cause to advocate for, but a universal concern for the modern person is our impact on the environment – plastic pollution, extinction and loss of biodiversity, average temperatures rising steadily from year to year.

One field famous for its issues with sustainability is fast fashion and textiles. The industry's pain-point being recycling and reusing fabrics continues into the 21st century, with 4% - 9% of textile products destroyed without being used at all, as stated by the European Parliament (2020). Exporting excess fabrics is not a sustainable solution since 87% of said products are also burned or thrown in landfills (EU, 2020). Upcycling second-hand clothes would be the ideal, but the implementation seems slow, as the European Environment Agency claims that even with the assistance of modern technology only 1% of recycled clothes are used to make virgin fibres (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

Disposing unwanted clothes supplements the impact of creating clothes to begin with, so as artists upcycling second-hand clothes, recycling correctly and sourcing materials from dead stock is important.

Nuance – for every fact is multi-faceted.



Fig. 2, Julio Wolf, Unsplash, Photograph, 2022

Nuance, media literacy, critical thinking – absorbing information and using it wisely. With the rise of new types of media along with more people gaining access, especially younger people (Sperry & Scheibe, 2022), it is important to arm us all with tools that makes us question. Question not only external information but our internal biases, how they binarise complex subjects. Suarez-Alvarez’s paper for OECD “Are 15-year-olds prepared to deal with fake news and misinformation?” states that an average of 41% of the survey takers “had been taught how to recognise phishing or spam emails,” (Suarez-Alvarez, 2021), with those who come from countries with media literacy lessons in school having higher than average numbers (Suarez-Alvarez, 2021).

How to get better nuance and critical thinking? Beyond the typical fact-checking, honing problem-solving, questioning, and creative skills is effective (Sperry & Scheibe, 2022). Another method suggested by B. Oger’s “emphasise listening over argumentation,” (Oger, 2022) propounds discouraging competitive, inflammatory debate and advocates analysing others’ thoughts and why in its stead.

Moderation – Maintain healthy work-life balance, so that Goldilocks does not come to break your kneecaps.

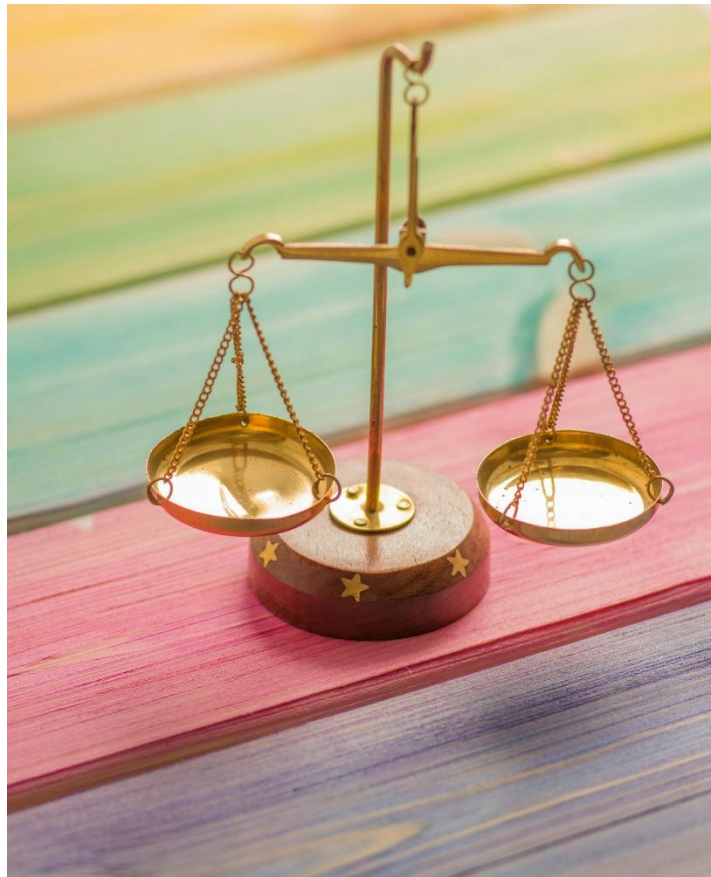


Fig. 3, Elena Mozhvilo, Unsplash, Photograph, 2020

The “some practical tips” chapter in Manuel Guillen Parra’s “Motivation in Organisations” has a fascinating perspective which focuses on work-life balance in a company environment. The writing seems applicable to – and in fact mentions – students' lives.

Guillen speaks of “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” motivations: one being “enjoyment-based” (Parra, 2021) versus external wants. Both are useful, for those motivated by the intrinsic passion tend to accomplish more, says Parra (2020), since the reward is closer to their genuine interests, while extrinsic motivations – when used effectively, allow us to power through dull tasks with “little intrinsic motivation.”

The work-life median balances these “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” motivations through several means such as allocating timeslots for work (HealthDirect, 2023). However, strict schedules do not work for everyone – regular breaks and detailed goals are just a few other methods (Mental Health America, 2025). Essentially, do not indulge fully in work nor play – live life in moderation.

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Fig. 1 –

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Fig. 2 –

Wolf, J. (2022) *Julio Wolf, Unsplash, Photograph, 2022*. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/photos/shape-OJEx8QPzRME> (Accessed: 22 November 2025)

Fig. 3 –

Mozhvilov, E. (2020) *Elena Mozhvilov, Unsplash, Photograph, 2020*. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/photos/gold-and-silver-round-frame-magnifying-glass-j06gLuKK0GM> (Accessed: 22 November 2025)

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Observation – Edgar Degas, *Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans*



Fig. 1, *Edgar Degas, Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans, Sculpture, 1880-1881*

Semiotics is analysis through the meaning of signs and symbols. Humorously critiqued by Paddy Whamel – film critic – as a system that “tells us things we already know in a language we will never understand,” (Seiter, 1992) it is vague and jargon heavy. To simplify, semiotics concerns itself with signs (signifier) and the meanings inferred by said signs (signified); examples include country flags (Chandler, 2021). Since artefacts are also a sub-branch of signs, in this essay I plan to analyse Edgar Degas’ *Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans* semiotically.

Degas’ wax statues were made for the artist himself, not for exhibition (Browse, *The Folio Society*, 1960), but “*Little Dancer*” was presented – a wax girl, standing in position with added costume in the form of fabric tutu and human-hair wig (NGA, 2015). As an

icon of 19th century ballerina ('icon' being a sign that looks like the object it represents) – a glamourised profession – the statue garnered shock for being unattractive. The National Gallery of Art (2015) writes, "Critics protested almost unanimously that she was ugly, but had to acknowledge the work's astonishing realism as well as its revolutionary nature."

Despite scandal and mixed reviews, the audience understood the connotations – this little dancer pushed in a world of tough manual labour, high expectations from a decreasingly appreciative crowd (Lipton, 1986) and prostitution. Ballet dancers in the French opera at the time were sexualised – the 'modelling' they did for clients was sex work and their abonnés "protectors" were exploiters (Lipton, 1986). This context along with the subject's youth contributed to the shock; the myth of the flashy, promiscuous ballerina subverted.

The mixed media element of the sculpture is also iconic, states The National Gallery of Art (2015), with its unusual mixed media "pigmented beeswax, clay, metal armature, rope, paintbrushes, human hair, silk and linen ribbon, cotton faille bodice, cotton and silk tutu, linen slippers, on wooden base" (NGA, 2015). It is unconventional on the inside as well – x ray reveals that the sculpture is made of lead, but also rope, clay, wire, and old paintbrushes, as written by The National Gallery of Art (2015).

The use of wax in "Little Dancer" disturbed the exhibition-goers (NGA, 2015) – due to its connotations with museum figures, not high-art sculpture. "Little Dancer" was displayed in a glass case (Tate, 2019); uncanny with its painted wax warmth – it surely resembled taxidermy. This did not go unnoticed by the crowd, with contemporary critic Joris-Karl Huysmans' comment, "The terrible realism of this statuette makes the public distinctly uneasy, all its ideas about sculpture, about cold lifeless whiteness ... are demolished." (MET, 2020). The National Gallery of Art writes "The liberating idea that any medium or technique necessary to convey the desired effect is fair game may be traced back to this sculpture," (NGA, 2015); while we must resist crediting movements to a single figure, this sculpture certainly breaks the conventions of sculpture materials.

Surviving bronze casts of Degas' sculptures were done posthumously by his executors, for he himself believed "it was too much responsibility, they lasted for ever" (Browse & The Folio Society, 1960). Regardless, copies were cast in "Partially tinted bronze, cotton tarlatan, silk satin, and wood" (MET, 2020). Bronze statues are a human staple, found in all corners of the world ever since 2300BC (Halconruiy, 2025) depicting significant figures such as deities. A modern subject, a working-class girl in the opera ballet industry would have been an unusual subject for a high-brow sculpture. Not only would the statue shatter expectations due to the material used, but also the subject of sculpture.

Figure reference:

Fig. 1 –

The Metropolitan Museum of Art [MET] (2018) *Edgar Degas, Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans, Sculpture, 1880-1881*. Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/196439> (Accessed: 22 November 2025)

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REFLECTIVE WRITING –

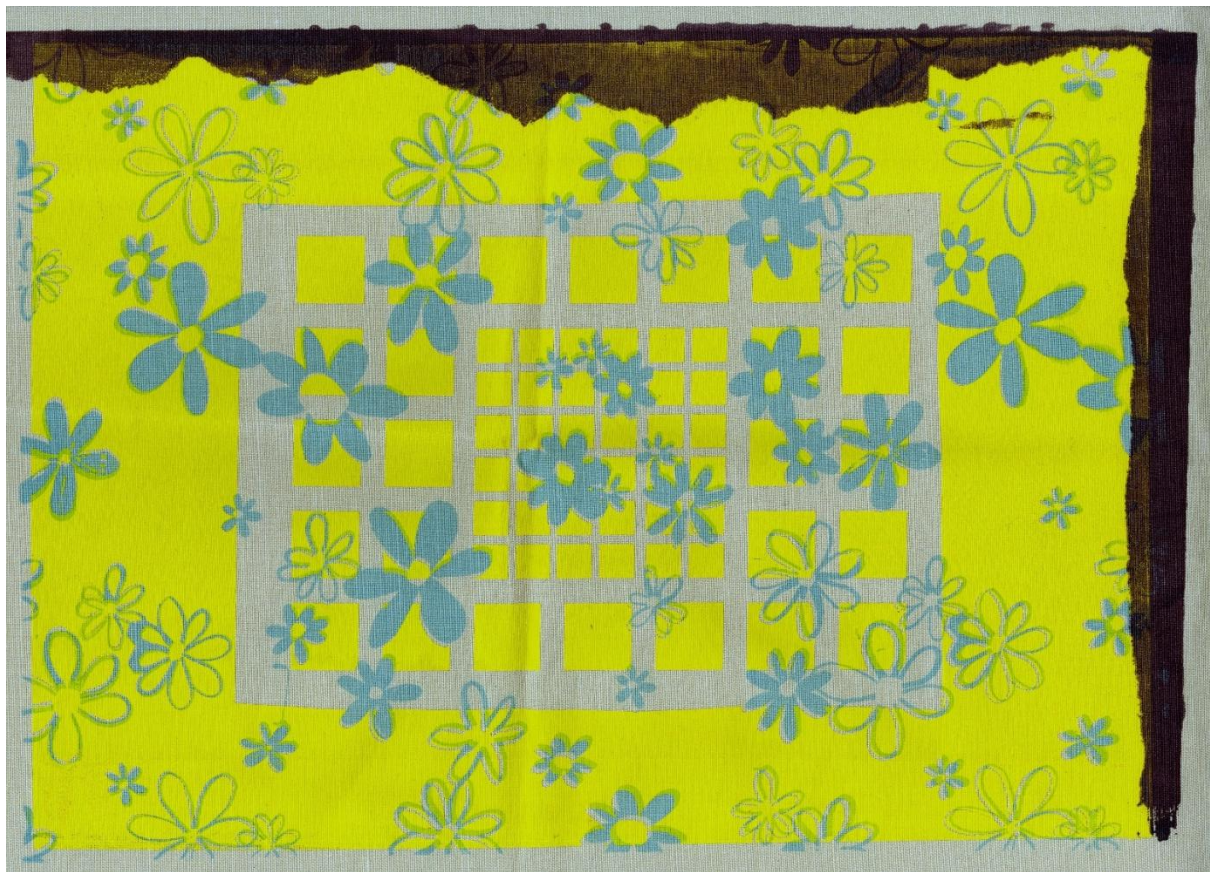


Fig.1 "Screenprint #1" (Cook, F. 2025)

Passive intake of knowledge seldom produces knowledgeable people. "It is not enough just to do, and neither is it enough just to think. Nor is it enough simply to do and think." (Gibbs. G, 1988) Theorists have concocted different models of learning and reflective learning is one genre of these models, emphasising experience – to plan a task, to do said task and process the lessons learned afterward. This manifests in diverse ways, such as "comparing notes, roundtable discussions, carrying out a post-mortem," (Boud. D, Keogh. R, Walker. D et al, 1987) – learning becomes a process, not an outcome (Kolb, D. A, 1984.) Boud, Keogh and Walker write that reflection is simultaneously "as natural as breathing," but also – referring to the words of Duley – "the skill of experiential learning in which people tend to be the most deficient."

My reflective analysis of the above screenprint will use CRAA (Concrete experience, Reflective observation, Abstract Conceptualism, Active Experimentation) as seen in Kolb's "Experimental Learning - experience as the source of learning and development."

For the first day of our course, the assigned task was screen printing with acrylic pigment using pre-coated screens and premade colours on linen. Learning how to coat, dry and iron the tables, to wash the screens and locating tools were the new technical

skills learned. The artistic process is like what was taught in the foundation course, though I was “rusty” and unused to the new equipment and locations.

I found the setup tedious but worth the decent results. The screens are of similar shape and size to the ones of my previous school, making the transition to a new course smoother. Using masking tape to keep fabric in place as opposed to adhesive spray on a board is interesting; though it is prone to moving it stops wrinkles from forming.

Composition was done intuitively, with emphasis on favourite colours, less on pattern. The pigment was applied by pulling against the screen with consistency and even pressure. Surprisingly the second screen was overlayed with precision – 90% of the flowers are neatly covered.

Cut paper was placed on top of the fabric to create a geometric negative space. I could have been more creative with the negative space but the contrast between smooth acrylic and woven fibres is something worth trying more. My classmates used the stencils more creatively, so I wanted to imitate by ripping paper to make a border.

This border is the obvious failure. It was originally purple, but the viscosity of the pigment was too loose resulting in uneven shape, opacity, and colour. These watery edges contrast against otherwise neat lines; I am not fond. In response the other half of the border was abandoned. The purple pigment used was prepared beforehand – though I am not responsible I could have checked beforehand.

The new things learned during this task were mostly technical. In comparison to the foundation course more precise measurements were introduced (1-5% dye, 95-99% binder.) In terms of future adjustments, I will test all pigments on scrap fabric and plan ideas beforehand – for it is easier to write the report later, more satisfying if it goes well and a good way to learn if not.

Figure reference:

Fig. 1 –

Cook, F. (2025) *Screenprint #1* [Acrylic pigment on calico fabric]

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