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Course Title: BA (Hons) Graphic Design

Module: ADAD4018 Ways of Thinking

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Tasks in the order I received them:

Task One: Semiotic Analysis = 508 words

Task Two: Manifesto = 571 words

Task Three: Practice-based writing = 523 words

Task One: Semiotic Analysis

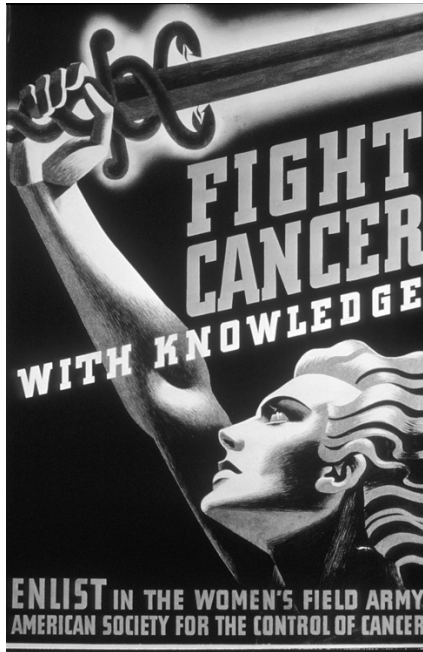


Fig. 1, Fight Cancer with Knowledge, National Museum of American History, 2001

The 1930's was a bleak decade of historical significance with two major atrocities within the decade: the Great Depression and World War Two. Not only did this have a major impact on humans, but it also permeated into the art world. At the beginning of the decade artists used dark colours that reflected the somber times. Then came white, which represented light, happiness, and the sun (Cullen, 2001). The artist here is using these two opposing colours to represent darkness and light, depression and hope, sickness and health. These symbolic signs are repeated in the poster with juxtapositions of black and white, strength and weakness, army and women.

Umberto Eco explains that the original meaning of a symbol isn't fixed and when it comes to semiotics, etymologies aren't wholly true. Symbols are vague and open to interpretation, with no set meaning (1931, p.4). In Greek Mythology Medusa means to guard or protect, although her image took on a new meaning when Sigmund

Freud referred to her as a terrifying defiled cursed woman (Hedgecock 2019).

Medusa is a great example of how arbitrary signs are born out of myth (Hedgecock 2019), and this poster feeds off that myth using Medusa's likeness, the womanly figure who looks like she is made from stone, to convey strength.

The snake on the sword as well as the long-tapered hair strands also imply Medusa's likeness. There are connotations of evil when we talk about snakes, because they are often paired with Satan in scriptures. The snake also signifies health due to its DNA double helix shape, as well as the caduceus which was modelled from Hermes staff and is now a ubiquitous symbol in health care. Charles Sanders Peirce was interested in the signified and how "the meaning of a sign is created by the interpretation" (Lanir 2019). Peirce's theory explains that not all parts of a sign are needed when interpreting and not all elements are of equal value (Lanir 2019).

The figure is looking up at the anchorage text 'FIGHT', drawing the viewer to the words, telling us that she is ready to 'fight cancer', with her sword already drawn. The word fighting is often used in relation to illness, especially one as serious as cancer. Berger explains that "the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled" (1972, p.5), so the viewer must decode the anchorage text. The addition of text 'WITH KNOWLEDGE' is contradicting the indexical signs, but reminding the reader the obvious, that they are going to fight cancer with knowledge, not physical strength.

'ENLIST IN THE WOMEN'S FIELD ARMY' is included in the poster as they were prolific in their advocacy of the National Cancer Institute. They had uniforms, rank and earned achievements, whilst raising money and educating the public (Darby and Santora 2021). This reinforces the myth that women have more of a peripheral role in regard to fighting and creating change, "men act and women appear" Berger (1972, p.42).

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Figure 1: *Fight Cancer with Knowledge*, National Museum of American History, 2001
Access: <https://visualsonline.cancer.gov/details.cfm?imageid=1815> (Accessed on 15th October, 2021)

Task Two: Manifesto

1. Be mindful of your impact on the environment, whether it directly affects your future or not
2. Never stop learning; your mind is a muscle that also needs to be exercised
3. Technology shouldn't be feared, it's there to help not hinder
4. Not everything has to be a competition; go at your own pace
5. Everything is temporary, so make the most of it
6. Visual interpretation is flexible, meanings aren't fixed
7. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, use them to grow
8. Being in nature will always trump accumulating 'things'

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 1. Be mindful of your impact on the environment, whether it directly affects your future or not**

Consumers tend to rely on information to make effective sustainability choices which can often be misleading or inaccurate. This information could come from packaging design, materials, graphics, advertisement, and stylistic choice. Consumers can perceive these various indicators as a company being environmentally aware when they might not. So, even those with the intention of shopping sustainably can in effect end up making poor choices through no fault of their own (Steenis *et al*, 2017, p. 286).

This then raises the question on who is responsible for adapting design to ensure sustainability and minimal impact on the environment. Clients and consumers may

not have the knowledge of their impact, and persuading them to make changes can become costly and time consuming. Unless there are rules and regulations to account for environmental impacts, the onus is often left on the designer, but this doesn't create a long term and effective solution to sustainability in design (Gething and Puckett, 2013, p. 7).

Whether we like it, or not human activity is “unequivocally affecting every corner of the planet” (Carrington, 2021), we must have an awareness of our impact on the climate, both as designers and human beings.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE DIGITAL ERA

3. Technology shouldn't be feared, it's there to help not hinder

The Futurist movement advocated for advancements in technology although, initially there was some hesitancy in how to control new technologies without them becoming too powerful or dangerous. Artists started depicting machinery in their work, showing advocacy and admiration for the newfound technology *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* (Encyclopedia.com, 2019). This fear of technological advancements has been around for many decades, long before the advancements that we currently have. Apprehension isn't always a negative but from looking at the past we can dispel this fear and see how technology has helped develop society and not destroy it.

This rise of technology is forcing designers to think about how their work is perceived. With the development of Artificial Intelligence, user experience can

become more emotional and personal in a way that traditional art forms cannot compete with. Not only does technology make design easier to access, with most of the population having constant internet access via their mobiles, it raises the quality of design and design tools with photo enhancing software, restoration, and colourisation Guest Blogger (2018). All these help transform the role of a designer and enable us to reach our potential, keeping the industry interesting and design more enjoyable.

MATERIALISM IS DEAD

8. Being in nature will always trump accumulating 'things'

Designers need to have an awareness of their impact to the consumer which can subsequently support harmful messages. Supporting consumerism has negative implications not only on human health but the health of the planet (Poynor, 2021). In the *First Things First Manifesto*, Garland *et al*, (1963) challenge designers to move away from unethical consumerism that is inconsequential and use their talents to create a more positive impact.

Similarly, Kandinsky (2012, p. 5) talks about a spiritual revolution that will allow abstract expression to prevail materialism and break the unnecessary connection to the material world. We have created a world where the material needs out way the spiritual needs. Capitalism is so powerful; everything is focused on accumulating goods instead of lived experience which Kandinsky (2012) described as "evil".

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Task Three: Practice-based writing

THE INCONVENIENT TRUTH

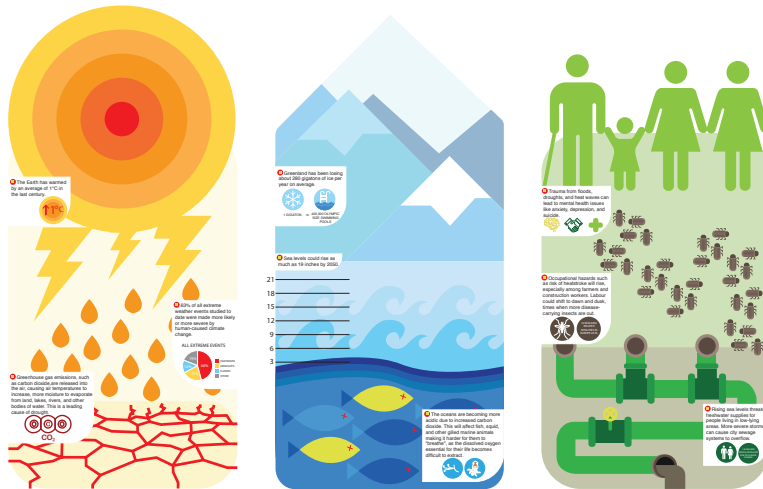


Fig. 1, *The Inconvenient Truth*, 2019

This is an A2 infographic that I designed for print in 2019 as part of a college assignment. The topic I chose was the climate crisis as it was an interest of mine but also had relevance, gaining media attention due to Greta Thunberg's school strikes.

I wanted to create something that was informative without scaremongering.

Repeated exposure to fear mongering makes it easy for people to become desensitised or despondent, believing the small changes they make won't have a great impact. I also felt that the information on the climate crisis was difficult to relate to unless you were directly affected.

Christopher Booker's *Overcoming the Monster* chronicles the odyssey of overcoming life's problems, using the monster as a metaphor. In defeating the evil monster, the courageous hero emerges with a new lease of life and self-actualisation, able to tackle anything that comes their way (2004, p. 21-30). The monster I had to overcome was the fear of creating something that was style over substance. My aim

was to educate and be informative and without these elements the artwork is rendered useless.

I chose the human and socioeconomic impacts to try and tap into the empathy of the reader. I think this was one of the greater successes, reading facts about displacement, mental health emergencies and occupational hazards are far easier to grasp than the consequences of the sea rising.

I wanted to create something that people could react and connect to. I tried to come up with a new problem to a solution, without regurgitating the same facts that everyone had heard for years. Donald Schön's theory explains how we "see new problems as a variation of old ones" which causes us to work on autopilot, using the same problem-solving tactics and thus not gaining new experience or perspectives (1983, p. 139).

Once seeing my artwork in context, alongside my classmates' work, I began to question my response. I had doubts whether I had come up with a creative solution, or if my peers would take an interest in my topic of choice. Education, learning, and community are interlinked, John Dewey viewed education as more than acquired skills and implementation (Quay, J. and Seaman, J, 2013, p. 84). I had questioned the effectiveness of my artwork; however, I did value the importance of it being created. The climate crisis is something I am passionate about and I wanted to bring awareness to an audience who might otherwise not engage with the subject.

Looking back, I feel that during the process of creating I learnt far more than I ever would have from reading an article or similar artwork. People learn through invested experiences and reflection. David Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* explores the four learning styles, detailing how knowledge is gained from experience (Kolb, 2015). His theory is more of a holistic approach than a traditional one, with emphasis on "process of learning as opposed to behavioural outcomes" (2015 p. 68). Knowing this, if I had to repeat the project I would approach it differently, selecting one subtopic and creating something that was interactive, or participation based.

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Figure 1: James, G. (2019). *The Inconvenient Truth*.