

Nia Davies

2203190

Fine Art Studio Site and Context BA Hons

Lecturers: Alex Duncan and Paul Duerinckx

Research in Practice (ADAD5004/C)

**Word count: 2,405 (Excluding title page, table of contents, list of figures, subtitles,
in-text illustration title and list of references)**

**AI Acknowledgement – I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated
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Introduction

For this essay I have chosen the subject of self-expression, as this is the main basis for my studio practice, exploring my personal experiences and emotions through mediums and marks. I use art to process difficult times and emotions driving a curiosity as to how viewers may be affected by my work or interpret it. Through exploring other artists work, such as Tracey Emin's and Egon Schiele's, it has helped to solidify that my practice and processes involved are shared by others. I want to explore further how these artists personal pieces can affect modern society and the way art is perceived by the world as a whole. From this I have chosen to focus on the three keywords, Identity, Materials and Emotion. Each of these three words relate to my practice whether that be the subject I explore within the work or what tools I use to create it. They each help to define my practice, exploring and developing my self-expression.

Within my own practice, I focus on my personal experiences and using art to process the emotions I go through. Over the last couple of years, through my artist research I have become more confident in what I create, finding validation from the artists I have previously mentioned such as Tracey Emin. Validation from the people around me day to day such as my parents and lecturers, and validation from myself have grown my confidence. Working in such a supportive environment, with people who think in a similar way and understand the importance of art is very useful for stimulation.

However, in tandem with this, I have found more that society is less accepting of art and its impact. I find that the majority of people who don't directly interact with the art world don't see its value and are very dismissive of its worldly impact. I find this sad and infuriating as this means that there is less and less support and funding for the arts.

Referring back to how art impacts society, and the basic things it alters, the lack of recognition for the arts can lead to limited awareness and discussions on world issues and situations in communities. I believe that this information has made an impact on my work and outlook as an artist in today's society. It has fuelled the need to create and express my opinions more, so that I can further share with others who may not understand. My practice is not usually about the final image, sculpture or installation, but the process and thought behind it. However, I have learnt that having a final outcome to be put on display, can draw in an audience that can experience and interpret the work in their own way as well as discussing with me about the reasoning and process behind it.

Materials and Influence

A part of the process is the materials used. These are just as important, being the tools that connect me as an artist to the work. Working with materials such as charcoal, ceramic and ink allow me to feel more physically connected with the work and the world, as they all come from the earth, with limited chemical changes made to them.

This connection allows me to feel more grounded with the work I am creating, with physical touch and textures of the mediums flowing in their own ways as well as the processing and manipulation of them by me. This combination between the direct manipulation and natural flow of the materials creates more of an abstract outcome, which in turn allows viewers to interpret the work in their own ways as intended.

Through developing this method of creating and research, I have come to the realisation that I am not the only person to use their practice to self-express. Artists such as Tracey Emin and Egon Schiele both use art in this way, making their experiences and emotions

public. Self-expression and art in particular, are of value today as it has been for centuries, showing people how we used to and currently live. It is a major part in recording information and how we individually view the world. Many people today do not value this practice as much, believing art isn't something that contributes to society. This view however could be seen as flawed, as art is a key part of society, promoting "unity, diversity, and social change" (Wilson, 2025). This can be seen in many different ways, with different artistic groups doing different things to further improve society, such as Situationist International, an artistic group that "played a major role in the revolutionary Paris events of 1968 by exposing the divisions between artists, consumers, and the means of production" (Tate, n.d.). As artists, how we view the world is just as relevant as anyone else, as our work will be looked back on by future societies.



Figure 1. 'My Bed' 1998, Tracey Emin.



Figure 2. *'The Last Thing I Said to you is don't leave me here' 2000, Tracey Emin.*

An artist that I have admired for the last few years is Tracey Emin. Her work mainly focuses on her personal life and experiences, being quoted as “autobiographical and confessional” (Tate Gallery, n.d.). Emin’s work ranges over several different mediums, with a few such as painting, sculpture and photography. I was first drawn to her etching works, finding the simplicity of line and choice of subject matter beautiful. However, I now want to explore her larger more sculptural pieces, such as ‘My Bed’ (Figure 1) a work that displays Emin’s own bed, an intimate display of personal items with her bed, displayed as if it were in her bedroom. These installation works make me look at my own work in a similar way, where I am trying to propose to the audience my own emotions and life events. Emin’s installation works give viewers an opportunity to get an insight into her lifestyle and personal experiences. This rawer approach to art is becoming more common, helping people to learn that they are not alone and there are

always people out there who are willing to listen and provide help. Another installation work of Emin's is 'The Last Thing I Said to you is don't leave me here' (*Figure 2*). A piece displayed in multiple galleries, of an old, tired beach hut along with two self-portrait photographs. This hut was bought by Emin and a friend in 1992, in Whitstable, Kent, which she enjoyed using as a summer retreat with her friend and boyfriend. The two photos depict Emin, naked in the corner of the hut, one sat cross-legged facing away from the camera and "the other, she is kneeling in the same place, with one arm raised and her eyes closed, as if mid-gesture." (Brun, 2022). Posing so provocatively implies of the intimate acts and moments that occurred within the hut, following her other installation works, of making a private space and moment public.



Figure 3. 'Death and the Maiden' 1915, Egon Schiele.

Another artist that explored their own emotions through their work is Egon Schiele. The Austrian painter's work is best known for "its intensity and its raw sexuality" (Wikipedia, n.d.), often using himself as the subject matter. Schiele's work reflected his experiences not just through the subject matter, but the style in which he worked. His earlier works display a more naive approach to life drawing, keeping within the 'rules' of art. Whereas his later works appear as if from a more developed artist, demonstrating that through creating and experiencing, Schiele developed a more independent style of creating. His twisted figures in his works show a time that isn't always happy and perfect, such development can be seen in his self-portraits. An example of the development of his subject matter can be seen around 1914-1915, while living in Vienna, Schiele noticed the middle-class family that lived across the street, specifically the two sisters. One of the sisters, Edith, he decided to marry, even though he already had a wife at the time. When he told his wife about this decision, she left him, leading him to paint 'Death and the Maiden' (Fig 3). Schiele, not long after his marriage to Edith was forced into conscription. While serving, his work grew in scale and detail with most depicting "linear drawings of scenery and military officers" (Wikipedia, 2025), as well as beginning to investigate themes of motherhood and family, with his female life drawings becoming "fuller in figure, and many were deliberately illustrated with a lifeless doll-like appearance" (Wikipedia, n.d.). This can only be speculated as a consequence of what he experienced during his time in active service.

Society and Art

Within society nowadays, art is perceived with little to no regard to contributing towards society. This became more prominent to me during my new year's 2025 celebrations

with friends. While playing a game where a statement would be made by one person, and the rest of the group would have to pick who they think would be most likely to be chosen by the card reader. One statement read was, “Who do you think will make the last impact to society?”. After a short thinking period, everyone concluded that I would make the least impact of society as I am studying art. This infuriating conclusion made me really think about the impact art has on society, and the difference between what people believe and the reality of it.

After a brief search, art has been shown to have a significant impact on society, reflecting history and culture, challenging perspectives and capturing emotions. For a while people have used art to document the world, using it to record events and important people, from monarchs to the artists themselves. It also encourages conversations about serious world issues, inviting changes to be made. Art is societies reflection of its identity, a clear reflection of the past and present.



Figure 4. 'Seasons Greeting' 2018, Banksy.

A well-known artist that has made an impact on society is Banksy; an anonymous, British street artist and activist, who's works have shed light on some serious, political topics, such as his piece in Port Talbot, 2018, titled 'Seasons Greetings' (Fig 4). This work painted on two sides of a garage, depicts a child enjoying the snow, trying to catch the flakes on his tongue. The other shows the harsh truth, with a bin fire emitting ash, commenting on the state of global warming and the harm we are doing to the world around us without necessarily realising it. By creating in the way he does, Banksy has brought about a mass following of artists and activists, paving the way for others to freely express their opinions in a similar way, with this term being coined the "Banksy Effect". In turn, the openness that has been brought around to these difficult topics, such as climate change and political controversies, has made the conversations surrounding them more likely to be discussed. Banksy states, "The people who run cities don't understand graffiti because they think nothing has the right to exist unless it makes a profit, which makes their

opinions worthless.”, in his book *Banksy Wall and Piece* (Banksy, 2006). This further opens pathways for change to be made by encouraging others, all coming from the work of an artist that freely expresses his freedom of speech and opinion publicly.

A more recent artist that has drawn my attention is Bisila Noha, a Spanish Equatoguinean London-based ceramicist, researcher and writer. Coming across her while reading, ‘Body Vessel Clay’, an exhibition in London displaying the work of black female artists over three generations, who work with clay. I discovered that Noha’s work in this exhibition, journeys “into the legacies and histories of forgotten Black African female potters” (Two Temple Place, 2022). The hand build ceramics she displayed in the exhibition were done as a “celebration of unnamed women in a newly developed, site-responsive and research-in-progress work.” (Two Temple Place, 2022). Noha is a feminist activist who is aiming to challenge how society and western culture in particular, view arts and crafts and “to question what we understand as productive and worthy in capitalist societies” (Noha, 2025). Her ceramics take inspiration from her life experiences in other pottery communities and her heritage, trying to connect her to the past and the work of her ancestors, resulting in beautifully simplistic yet detailed ceramic sculptures and pots.

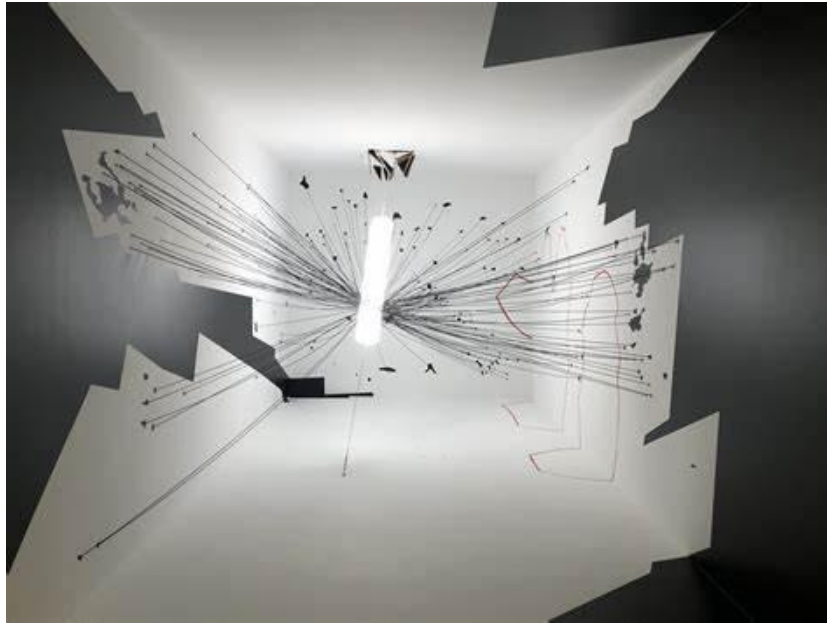


Figure 5. 'Drone Strike in Miranshah' 2014, Forensic Architecture.

An artistic group that brings to the front current world issues through art is Forensic Architecture. This artistic group is made up of multidisciplinary people such as architects, software developers, filmmakers and scientists, working collaboratively. The term 'Forensic Architecture', "refers to the production and presentation of spatial evidence within legal, political, and cultural contexts, and takes architecture to include not only buildings, but shaped environments at the scale of cities and territories." (Woo, 2025). By utilising everyone's different disciplines within the team, they use "digital modelling to reconstruct incidents of state violence and human rights violations" (Woo, 2025), along with other sources for information on these events all over the world. Only working on projects where the community or an individual has given permission, and the event has been affected by the violation of human rights. The first work by Forensic Architecture that I was introduced to, was an investigation in 2014 of a Drone Strike in Miranshah, Pakistan (Fig 5). "Commissioned by UN Special Rapporteur on Counter Terrorism and Human Rights" (Architecture, 2012), this work

was displayed as part of the 'Shaping Space' exhibition. The work specifically looks at footage obtained from a mobile phone that was "smuggled through military cordons before it reached employees of US news network MSNBC." (Architecture, 2012). This footage was comprised of two clips, the first showing the damage from an outside perspective on the 3rd floor of an adjacent building and the second, showing the inside of the damaged building, distinctively showing the damage from the missile. Using geolocation, 3D Modelling, Pattern Analysis and Image Complex, the Forensic Architecture team were able to map out the explosion and its effects, showing the general public the consequences of the drone strike in full.

Conclusion

Throughout my research, I have found that society can be heavily influenced by individual works of artists who self-express. From Emin sharing her personal experiences, allowing others in society who can relate to her work to not feel alone, to Noha who's ceramics allow reinterpretation of the way her culture and heritage are viewed. The influence of art on our society is significantly more prominent than I originally thought and plays an important role in bringing people together. I plan on continuing to explore this topic through research and experimentation in the future.

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