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Illustration

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Tasks in the order I received them:

Task One: Jon reflective (550 words)

Task Two: Ryan semiotic analysis (469 words)

Task Three: Julia manifesto (534 words)

Task One: Reflective (Jon)



I have chosen to reflect upon the work of Gunther von Hagens, and his plastinated people.

In 1977, Gunther von Hagens asked, regarding the preservation of biological material, “why the plastic was poured and then cured around the specimens, rather than pushed into the cells which would... literally allow you to grasp it?” von Hagens Plastination(?). This epiphany led to his ground-breaking work with preserving biological material and invention of Plastination, a method of preservation whereby the organic matter is treated with different chemicals and plastics which affect it on a cellular level, so that the “bodies can be preserved indefinitely and can be manipulated and shaped” (Goeller 2009 pg. 271) whilst the natural colours also remain unaffected.

Von Hagens’ decided to create a travelling exhibition to educate the public and display his work. Whilst wildly popular, “more than 34 million people throughout the world have visited BODY WORLDS exhibitions” (2012) Gunther Von Hagen’s work has “provoked strong moral and ethical reactions” Bouchard (2010) over the years. Many find his work morbid

and voyeuristic, believing that there is a sacredness to life and death that von Hagens is disrespecting. Whilst I understand this, I do believe that the process of plastination, is just as sacred and respectful as any ceremony to do with death, religious or otherwise. The bodies have been treated with the utmost care, transformed from decayable flesh into immortal beings for the world to see that will educate and inspire generations of people.

While von Hagens work started out as an educational tool it's become so much more. It's an exquisite example of the beauty of human anatomy and what humans are capable of.

Whether intended to be art or not, the links between his work and his predecessors is indisputable. Andreas Vesalius the 16th century anatomist created a set of books *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* (1543) which illustrates dissected human bodies in great detail, whilst also taking a certain amount of artistic licence with the poses as they are drawn as if still living and moving, which I can't help but notice is very reminiscent of von Hagens work as he also places his figures in active "theatrical and performative" Bouchard (2010) poses. Vesalius was a pioneer of his time with his books being the first major advancement in the field of anatomy since Galen (129-210 AD) much like von Hagens with his process of preservation.

William Hunter, another of his predecessors created *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi Tabulis Illustrata* (1774), a book filled with incredible photo-realistic chalk drawings of fetuses in utero which revolutionised obstetrics for the better. Hunters work much like von Hagens is morbidly beautiful, they both depict incredibly gruesome examples of humans which in some cases can be very emotional to witness. Both have also been questioned about whether they got their bodies legitimately, in hunters' case if they were 'Burked' (i.e. murdering to order) Shelton (2010) or from grave digging, executions, and poor houses

(slightly less nefarious options but still not great) while von Hagen's claims all his bodies come from volunteers some are sceptical.

Through looking at von Hagens work I strongly feel that even if it was never his intention, he's created something that is worthy of being considered art because of the powerful emotional response they evoke.

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Task two: Semiotic Analysis, Ryan



We live in a time of fast spreading misinformation. While a study found “that users mostly tend to select and share content related to a specific narrative and to ignore the rest” (Del Vicario et al 2016) is a problem we face today, it should be noted that misinformation had been a problem in the past as well. In this first task I will deconstruct the illustration/public health warning from an 1870 newspaper and touch on how this propaganda like image has helped propagate misinformation on corsetry for the last hundred odd years and how it reflects today's misinformation wildfire.

The image has an agenda and that is to warn people that corsets are bad for your health, the anchorage text is a literal non coded iconic message ‘Death through tight lacing’ is very obvious and self-explanatory and explicitly states the word ‘death’ to impact the viewer and

leave no room for interpretation. The symbolic coded iconic messages are in the form of a skeleton, a symbol for death, doing up her laces; whilst the woman leans on a desk also known as a 'vanity' with beauty paraphernalia littered across its surface implying her vanity, her need to be beautiful, will kill her.

The corset has been blamed for causing dozens of diseases from cancer to curvature of the spine, deformities... displacement of the organs, respiratory and circulatory diseases, birth defects, miscarriages, and "female complaints" (Steele pg. 67 2001) plus many more both reasonable and utter nonsense. As is the well-known "fact" that women went to such extremes as to have ribs removed to achieve narrower waists. There are no recorded incidents of ribs being removed to better fit a corset. It's a myth, one that when you really think about it doesn't make sense. Anaesthetic wasn't invented until the 1840s, before that all surgeries were done without, usually to the great suffering of the patient. Even when anaesthetic was created rib removal would be an incredibly invasive probably life-threatening surgery, something no one would willingly ask for. When we look at stories in this way it's easy to realise how "we continually create false narratives which appear to be supported by the situations that surround us, rejecting them only when the course of events diverges from narrative prediction." (Phillips 2013)

Even now with plenty of research to the contrary, people still believe corsets were oppressive cages that women suffered in despite them being around for centuries. Which makes it so much easier to believe we as a society fall so easily for fake news stories little to no evidence, because if we are willing to believe women removed ribs for fashion why wouldn't we believe "Facebook is the largest social media service on the planet, with over 2 billion users — over a quarter of the world's population." (Gilbert 2019)

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Task three: Manifesto (Julia)

1. New interests make life worth living.
2. There is nothing wrong with liking the work you create. You made it so why shouldn't you like it?
3. There is a lot of bad in this world and not all that much we can do about it.
Focusing on it will only serve to make your life worse and nothing better. It's ok to take a step back and focus on the good, it's nothing to feel guilty about.
4. Understand the difference between opinion and fact, which is especially important in the world we live in today.
5. Do whatever the hell kind of art you want to do; use any material and technique you want to use; There is no box to be stuck in so go hog wild.
6. Illustration is not the be all and end all; get a hobby.
7. Social media is a cretinous invention. Use it sparingly and use it critically. When you start using it for other people or to spread "news" that's when it all goes downhill.
8. Don't cut off your nose to spite your face.

3) There's a lot of bad in the world and not all that much we can do about it. Focusing on it will only serve to make your life worse and nothing better. It's ok to take a step back and focus on the good, it's nothing to feel guilty about. We are living in a world that's stuck in a

strangle hold by global warming (IPC 2014), pollution, war (Guardian 2020), excessive wealth disorder (Krugman 2019) and it's all becoming far more extreme. Some of these examples have been present throughout history but only recently have they become so excessive. Its easy to get lost in the pain when we're constantly being bombarded with it on TV, social media, and in person. It's frustrating, anxiety inducing and depressing. We are told endlessly of new troubles and problems; that we should care about them and want change, yet nothing ever seems to get any better no matter what we do. It's impossible to care so much about everything equally all the time because it will burn you out. As hard is it may be, its vital to take a step back and spend some time looking for the positives purely so as not to self-destruct with all the negativity.

5) Do whatever the hell kind of art you want to do; use any material and technique you want to use; there is no box to be stuck in so go hog wild. Despite being an "illustrator", I am not, nor will I ever consider myself to be someone who just "draws pictures". I enjoy a multitude of different mediums and techniques and I intent to try them all, including but not limited to; glass blowing, sculpting, metal work, print, graffiti, and music, to name a few. I don't believe anyone should be held inside a box of their own or anyone else's creation. Art especially is too expressive to allow for rigidity and conformity. They simply do not go together.

7) Social media is a cretinous invention. Use it sparingly and use it critically. When you start using it for other people or to spread "news" that's when it all goes downhill. Massive digital misinformation is becoming pervasive in online social media to the extent that it has been listed by the World Economic Forum (WEF) as one of the main threats to our society (Vicario et al 2016). Whilst it is reasonable to say that social media has its benefits, I would argue

that it has an equal if not greater number of drawbacks. Social media may help connect people, share their work, and find jobs but it's also an incredibly large platform for right wing Neo-Nazis and uninformed morons to sprout off about how vaccines cause autism. I despise what social media has become and how it's used by people today. It negatively effects mental health by forcing allowing people from a young age to become obsessed and addicted to wanting other people's validation. The ability to stay anonymous and yet speak out gives people a horrendous god complex to say and do whatever they want on the internet without any kind of consequences. Stay away from social media at all costs.

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