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P Number: 1605987

Programme of Study: Surface Pattern Design

Module: ADAD5004

Module Name: Research in Practice

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Wordcount: 2321 Words

Three Words: Blue, Draw, Crack.

This text is a tool to unveil a greater understanding as to whom the designer (myself) *is*; With cause to analyse my contextual approach through the decoding of the words of Blue, Crack and Draw. By implementing such themes within the body of this text, will allow space for contextual expansion, “And what they seek to overcome in their rhetoric is the lingering influence of a way of thinking about things” (Ingold, 2009, p.92) that is contributory to unpicking the personal perspective of my own epistemological understanding.

To challenge my own personal knowledge with use of the approach of abductive reasoning, in tandem with the contextual framework underpinning the methodology within my own artistic practice. For it is not the words chosen for assessment which will define the representation of my personal practice for the independent inquiry, but the methods, themes and practitioners used to dissect and assess my contextual interpretations of the world, which will reveal; *what is the true lens that my creative interpretations are beholden to?*

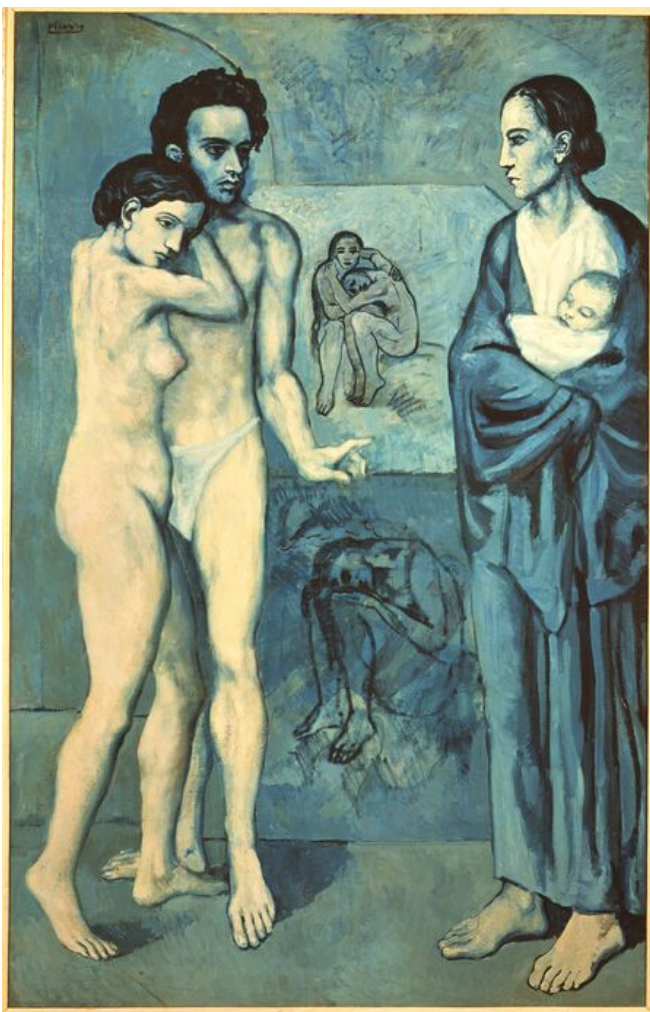


Fig 1. Pablo Picasso, *La Vie (Life)*, 1903.

Blue; of a colour intermediate between green and violet, as of the sky or sea on a sunny day; (OED, 2023). The representation of blue throughout time within popular culture holds the weight of a “visual language with historical dimensions” (Berger, 1972, p.140). The movement of Modernism established how colour can be interpreted as a language beyond the value of aesthetic contribution, the intention to sense make the human existence in an abstracted fashion. With the use of a looser visual and metaphorical language, colour becomes a part of, “a system of signs” (Sassure, 1916). Picasso highlights the ‘informal’ definition of the colour within work from his ‘Blue Period’ (Fig 1) meaning,

“(of a person or mood) melancholy, sad, or depressed” (OED, 2023) the use colour becomes a tactile tool, “Picasso’s use of blue to communicate pain” (Gotthardt, 2017) connecting the emotive power of sadness, *feeling blue* with a visual reference. This allows both spectators and future artisans to understand that Blue is the signifier, while the emotions it exhibits become the signified.

Blue, one of the three primary colours; shares a numerical similarity with that of the Christian Holy Trinity, (the father, the son and the holy spirit) all collectively representing the same thing (that of colour) just as the three states of water, solid, liquid and gas. While each interdependent element is definitive of the collective whole, each isolated element is self-serving. Just as in colour theory, blue is not a colour that can be made from the sum of other colours, but it is the sum of this colour that has the power to conceive other colours into being. While blue represents the element of water, “the purer the water, the deeper the blue” (Mavor, 2013, p.72), as in colour theory to add depth or to darken a colour is to add blue; this further enforces the symbolic representations the colour embodies of raw, deep, unfiltered emotions.

Cyanotype in print making uses light to reveal the negative image which emerges from the blue space that frames the motif inhibited by it, ‘To blue is to write with the light of the cyanotype’ (Mavor, 2013, p.103). This supports the notion that even the chemical compounds of blue, articulates the antithesis of the positive perspective. The naturally occurring pigment of blue takes up an omnipresent residency in the natural world, ‘Blue skies and seas ensure the colour as all encompassing’ (Mavor, 2013, p.141); it is the complete spectrum of blue which upholsters the canvas of our earthly landscape. Blue, both a feeling and colour which is completely immersive.

Throughout western art religious iconography prolifically depicts the Virgin Mary adorned in gowns of *Marian blue*, with the intent to symbolise the, ‘transcendence, mystery, and the divine’ (Kosloski, 2017) attributes of the virgin mother and, her life of devotion. With the established understanding of the affiliations the colour Blue has with sadness and melancholy, it is also indicative to note that the Madonna is also known as, ‘*Our Lady of Sorrows*’. For the faithful epitomise her as one of great sacrifice through witnessing the

passion of Christ (The Crucifixion), which endured her to a life of grieving and sadness. Furthermore, the *Marian blue* becomes a visual description overridden with the narrative that the Madonna and her existence was embellished with eternal anguish. The blessed virgin now embodies an ironic symbolic figure of comfort to the faithful as, “Men are the producers of their conceptions” (Marx and Engles, 1970, p.52) to find phenomenological rationale in their earthly sufferings as a test to the devotion of their faith.



Fig 2. Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna of the Book*, 1840.



Fig 3. Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude II*, 1952.

The Madonna is traditionally illustrated with a tilted head (Fig 2) which denotes a message of submission to the viewer, her visual direction is never in conflict with that of the viewers which supports the narrative of her subjecting obedience to a higher authority. Similarly, within the series of ‘blue nudes’ by Matisse, the cut out silhouettes are adorned in Marian blue and positioned with the same submissive slant in posture (Fig 3), “The poses taken up to denote stereotypes of women: serene mother (Madonna)” (Berger, 1972, p.138), both images become an echo of one another infringed in projecting the desires of men, known as

the male gaze. The metanarrative of blue is monopolised by the identity of men in popular culture, by doctoring these female depictions in this way; engulfed in shades of blue, propagates the notion that blue is the space in which the *pure* feminine ideal is to inhabit, at the service and ownership of men.

To Draw; trace or produce (a line or mark) on a surface; come to or arrive at a point in time or in a process (OED, 2023). Drawing derives from the act of making; Ingold discusses that, “To create any thing, Aristotle reasoned, you have to bring together form (morphe) and matter (hyle)” (Ingold, 2009, p.92). Therefore, is not limited to the action of pencil to paper, drawing for the designer must be understood as a looser, more expansive concept of expression. For the purposes of this essay an alternative example is, that painting is observed as a form of drawing, the descriptive qualities of the paint may differ however but the fundamental agenda to visually express the thoughts of the designer to a physical means remains the same. It is the output of ideas, the interaction between the practitioner, the material, and the outcome. The relationship between the artist and the drawing medium, becomes a perpetual cycle of intrinsic conversation as the production of work cannot exist without both ingredients.

Drawing is the physical representation of, ‘The production of ideas, of conceptions of consciousness’ (Marx and Engels, 1970, p.52) as a form of record making. Ideas within the conscious mind are limited to themselves remaining just as *ideas*. The ontological argument from the standpoint of abductive reasoning would suggest, without physical record (*The Drawing*) the idea ceases to exist. Drawing is how is the designer can communicate that their thoughts or innovations have exceeded the conscious mind. In the same way, if the designer is inert in the production of drawing or creating, they become striped of the title.



Fig 4. Georges de La Tour, *The Fortune-Teller*, 1630.

Drawing can also be observed as a form of record making. This is not to be confused with the visual information the image portrays, but the ontological proof of the makers reality, movement, and interaction with their environment indicative of a period in history, which becomes a hauntological by-product of the drawing. Berger states in *About Looking* that, “La Tour is never in the situations he paints. He is Distanced from it. The distance is the measure of his self-preservation” (Berger, 1980, p.114). Contrary to this, the works of La Tour (Fig 4) are never separated from his creations; this poses as a rule for all designers. The forms that arise from drawing are the result of kinetic intervention implemented by the practitioner. The hylomorphic model upholds the concept that the spiritual matter of the designer is, “interwoven with the material activity” (Marx and Engels, 1970, p.52) that configures the outcome as a whole, co-dependent body. It is the very outcome (*The Drawing*), which connects itself back to the maker.

Crack; a line on the surface of something along which it has split without breaking apart (OED, 2023). For the purpose of this text for a crack to appear can be obtained in one of two ways; through the natural deterioration of ageing, or through the result of an impact/force. Each factor contributes to the meandering existence of the artifacts chronological timeline. Cracks are often viewed from a negative standpoint as a failure in construction should something crack then it is considered broken, often submitting itself to the devaluation of extrinsic and monetary worth. It is up to the designer to decode these cracks formed within physical structures as, "the closer our relationships with objects, the closer our relationships with people" (Miller, 2008) by pushing the boundaries of what is considered 'broken' to question what possibilities lie within the broken spaces and altered forms. *What do these cracks tell us about ourselves and what design dilemmas do they confront?*



Fig 5. *Paternity: A New Way of Seeing*, Page 181, 2015.

The causation of cracking highlights fragility, where the release of tension creates a separation, in order to apprehend the consciousness of materials. To consider the presence of a crack is to understand how it coexists with space and can be examined as the "physical relation between physical things" (Marx and Engels, 1970, p.51) of interdependent elements

that were previously one-dimensional. In contrast, while physical cracks alter somatic elements of the object, the object does not become self-exclusive to the original condition but inclusive of the phenomenological parameters the object now occupies. In the same way cracks are comparable to the wrinkles, scars, and creases of human skin. The self does not become disconnected from the wounds endured as this, “space allows us to reengage with the delicacies of the world” (Burgoyne, 2011) which bridges the gap between our consciousness and biological phenomenology, scars serve as a record within the ontological debate which acquire hauntological relations.

From a physiological standpoint, “Cracks are patterns that occur because of a feedback process provided by interactions between neighbouring cracks and the environment.” (Murray and Winteringham, 2015, p.180). The Study of Fractography, “is a method in failure analysis for studying the fracture surface of materials” (NanoScience Instruments). Cracks allow the designer to forecast weakness and design flaws by assessing how we engage with objects and in turn how they respond to us, developing a deeper understanding of material activity within the initial prototyping of design. Things must break for the designer to investigate better solutions and reevaluate the modifications required within the design process to peruse a more sustainable outcome.

Designers are increasingly encouraged to refer to materials that are already available to them; embodying the role of a design-conservationist by investing new life into broken objects, “because objects create subjects more than the other way round” (Miller, 2008). The subject of transforming what is considered broken and discontinuous of use, to reduce our wastage impact and as a result, the implications that are imposed on our environment.



Fig 6. The SPACE Gallery, *Kintsugi: The Art of Repairing*, 2022.

Demonstrated in (Fig 6) is the Japanese art of repairing ceramics known as ‘Kintsugi’, the method of using a gold dusted lacquer to adhere the broken pieces back together that introduces a uniqueness to the repaired item. From a designerly standpoint this practice encourages practitioners to lead more sustainably in tandem with the idea objects can adopt a *newness* once again. Integrating a high value adhesive bond, establishes a renewed life form of the artifact from what was once inoperative. The phenomenological possibilities of the repaired artifact in contrast with the paradigms of extrinsic worth of the *ideal condition* tell us more about ourselves than the artifact as, “genesis and growth that give rise to forms in the world we inhabit are more important than the forms themselves” (Ingold, 2009, p.91). Designers must lead the way to promote sustainable repair solutions to galvanise mending and creative reuse (known as upcycling) as common practice, to drive forward innovative methods of repair in order to eradicate our disposable society. Changing general attitudes of not discrediting fractured/broken objects as obsolete, as part of the solution to the sustainability crisis.

How we connect our experiences with materials to produce a physical representation of our consciousness can be reduced to a symbolic form. These symbolic references continue to upholster the creative space regardless of conscious or subconscious intention. Whether that is the use of colour, motif, material, or form. Berger discusses that, "The meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it. Such authority as it retains, is distributed over the whole context in which it appears." (Berger J, 1972, p.29) To *draw* from experiences and indulge in creative expression, is to communicate in a visual language that is suggestive of what we already know. The arguments surrounding epistemology question the theory of knowledge but I intend to further question how the meaning of imagery is translated through the visual perceptions that are presented to us.

These symbols become indicative of how we interpret and contextualise our earthly experiences, by objectifying them to an image or artifact is a direct conversation between establishing phenomenological rationale. It is important to note that on reflection of this text, the ambiguous nature of religious metanarratives underpin paradigms of the present day as, "It would lack both confidence and credibility if it used strictly contemporary language." (Berger, 1972, p.139) by sustaining theological references throughout time has facilitated the inclusive adaptation of even secular standpoints. On analysis of this text and the themes used within my own personal practice, always consult the viewpoint of theological sources within religious structures. Therefore, the question I present for my independent inquiry is: How is religious symbolism imposed on the visual language of western art? Discuss how metanarratives support the epistemological and phenomenological debate.

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