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2005220

Photography in the Arts

Ways of Thinking: ADAD4018

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Tasks in the order I received them:

Task 1: Observational Writing: 496 Words

Task 2: Manifesto Writing: 500 Words

Task 3: Practice-based Writing: 494 Words

Task 1: Observational Writing

What is Semiotics? When I think about Semiotics, I think about it in a form of a jigsaw puzzle, as Debord (1995) expressed in *The Society of the Spectacle*, “The world at once present and absent that the spectacle holds up to view is the world of the commodity dominating all living experiences.” With a jigsaw puzzle, you are given pieces to assemble into the picture displayed on the box. Each piece of the jigsaw puzzle represents each aspect of an image, the colour, the people, the environment, and most importantly the meaning behind it all.

If you were to look at Semiotics from an artistic perspective, you would notice the different features of the image. You would look at the model, how the model sits, or stands, their posture, their facial expressions, their hands if they were placed in a certain way. The choice of clothing, or eye contact, all these little features make us question the image itself, and its aspect in terms of creative thinking. Does it have a symbolic meaning? When was this image created? Was it taken in a certain time period?

A great example I came across was in Pearson (2013) *The Semiotics of Photography*. Semiotics in the world of photography would be an image of a dog. If we look at the image and the visual sign of the image, we see that it is a ‘dog’, that is known as ‘denotation’. We would then add concepts and a meaning to the image, in a subjective culture a ‘dog’, a loyal pet and companion, in other cultures a ‘dog’ is often food and sold at market, that is known as ‘connotation’.



Fig 1. *Homeless*, 2019

This image was taken in America, whilst taking a drive along the streets of Idaho, I came to notice this person sitting on the sidewalk. Looking at this young woman it raised a number of questions to myself. What if this was my sister, or my daughter? What in her life had happened to end up in this situation? Does she have any family to turn to for help? Is she married, or divorced? Does she have kids? Maybe she has lost contact with them? She could have run away from a family situation. We could also question her personal hygiene the dirt on her fingers and face, as well as her clothes which are all disheveled and filthy.

Has she lost hope in everyone and everything? We might come to the conclusion that she may be homeless from her appearance, her hands fiddling with the floor, her head facing downwards. What you see is nothing unusual in the United States, as stated by The Council of Economic Advisers (2019), there are over 552,830 homeless citizens in America alone. We may even question the society itself. Is it a brutal society? A don't work, don't eat society. Not working can result in not

eating for yourself, or for your own family. Are the government even concerned about homelessness?

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Figure 1. Homeless, Pemberton, S. (2019) [Photography] Artist Collection

Task 2: Manifesto Writing

1. Photography is a passion, not a hobby! If you think that photography is a hobby, then you need to rethink your profession.
2. Think Black & White! Photographers have different perspectives on what photography is to them, to me it a world of black and white photographs.
3. The whole world is your studio, choose wisely. It is all about location when it comes to shooting a photograph, choosing the right scene will create the right tone for the image.
4. Always go with your gut! You have to be confident with your photographs!
5. Make a story with your inspiration. Turning your thoughts into a photograph has never been simpler with modern and classic photographic technology.
6. Experiment, experiment, experiment! when it comes to trying something new in photography, it is always important to experiment.
7. There is a positive and a negative when it comes to a photograph! Remember this, there is no right or wrong in photography!

3 areas of exploration:

Photography is a passion, not a hobby!

To me photography is not a hobby. If you think that photography is just a hobby, you wouldn't put as much effort into it as you would, the creativity, the energy, and most of all the passion. Taking photographs is about expressing yourself through pictures, and not through words. As "a picture is worth a thousand words" (Frederick, 1911), anything and everything can be expressed through the art of imagery. "The fetishism of the signature, the notion of the original, the limited edition, the technical qualities inherent in the singularity of a photographic print," (Fontcuberta, 2013, p.173), therefore photography inherits many different aspects that create an image.



Fig 1. Few of my Analog Camera, Dicky Jiang. 2018

Think Black & White!

My whole world is black and white, to me there is a positive and a negative side. “The persistence of the word photography distorts our expectations.” (Fontcuberta, 2013, p. 188), as our digital world of photography often makes us forget how photographs originally started, black and white films, made with classic, vintage film cameras. I take inspiration from old, classic movies, *Casablanca*, *The Kid*, *Schindler’s List*, *Ed Wood*, and *The Gold Rush*, the depth, the diversity, “if you photograph people in black and white you photograph their souls, but if you photograph them in colour you photograph their clothes.” (Grant, 1999, National Gallery of Canada), as colour is all around us black and white photography gives a greater emphasis to the subject.



Fig 2. Filming of Casablanca, Warner Brothers, Inc. 1942.

The whole world is your studio, choose wisely.

Every field, every nature trail, and everyone around us can be turned into a story. Our surroundings are filled with glorious and natural aspects of the world, depending on your inspiration and ideas, the scenery will make a big impact in your photograph, as well as the subject matter, the story behind the photograph, or models included if you choose too. “A good photograph is knowing where to stand” (Adams, 2015), instead of going through the effort of building a studio, the surroundings around you is your stage.



Fig 3. Earth, NASA Goddard, 2019

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Figure 2. Casablanca, Film by Curtiz, Steiner, M (2014) Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available at:

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Figure 3. August 19 is World Photography Day. Mader, R (2019) [Photography] Available at:

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Task 3: Practice-Based Writing: A reflection of Dafydd Williams's exhibition '*Malum*' at the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea, Wales.

This local Swansea based artist has taken the inspiration of Michelangelo (1475) and Caravaggio (1571) and created an exhibition that has become a personal favourite of mine. For me it is the particular way he captures a delicate, but poetic setting of partnerships. This artist has always had an interest in documenting his relationships, and perhaps his dating lifestyle. During his studies at Swansea College of Arts, he started having questions towards the LGBT Community. Why? Why are they being discriminated?



Fig 1. Malum, Dafydd Williams, Glynn Vivian. 2020

Where does it come from? Why does it keep happening? So, he started looking into countries who discriminate against LGBT. He came across Russia, who have very strict rules against same sexed couples, being against their religion, and their traditions, and I suppose they're afraid of the LGBT

Community taking away all those aspects. The history behind the inspiration for this exhibition was the most fascinating source I had ever heard, I just had to research more in depth, the *Myth about Jupiter and Ganymede* (2010), knowing how past tenses can influence our modern perceptions, and our society, how it can have very much of an impact in terms of being accepted for your sexuality and indifference.



Fig 2. The David. Michelangelo. 1501-1504

His series of work is titled 'Malum', which translates to both 'apple', and 'evil' in Latin. These words also refer back to the biblical stories of the forbidden fruit, and the attitude towards being different in terms of your sexuality. This series of photographs contains all sources of natural light, such as mimicking, and chiaroscuro. They also include the artist himself, and his partner in a contemporary male-male domestic relationship. The indoor exhibition contained a series of photographs, which were framed and hung at eye level, as you walk through the exhibition, you will find that the

photographs immediately capture your eye. You have a range of feelings as you gaze upon the historical aspect, the depth, the features, and how he has mastered the concept of lighting.



Fig 3. The Rape of Ganymede, Rubens, P. P. Madrid: Prado Museum. (1636-1638)

I noticed when browsing through his images that there is a very high contrast within the background, but the body figure itself stands out so clearly. How he has captured the light directly on himself, and his partner. When you look at these photographs, your focus is immediately diverted onto the different features, how they both stood out. To me it was their facial expressions, how the hands were placed on his face, their body language, and how all those features express the lust they have for each other, it is a very striking series. I think the artist himself was very particular on where everything was placed. In order for him to tell the story of his images, he had to take the viewers on a journey through his mind. How he thinks and feels as a photographer. What he is trying to tell us? To me, the message of this series is 'do not discriminate', 'don't be afraid to be yourself', being different is not forbidden.

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Figure 2. The David. Michelangelo (1501-1504) [Sculpture] Accessed from: <https://www.italymagazine.com/dual-language/story-behind-michelangelos-david> (Accessed on 20th November 2020)

Figure 3. The Rape of Ganymede. Rubens, P. P (1636-1638) [Painting] Madrid: Prado Museum. Villa

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