

Student Name: **REUBEN HARRIS**

P Number: **1901084**

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Module: Ways of Thinking Writing Portfolio ADAD4018

Task One: Manifesto (Julia Task) = **455 words**

Task Two: Semiotic Analysis (Ryan task) = **555 words**

Task Three. (Jon Task) = **554 words**

Task One: Manifesto (Julia's Task)

1. No newspaper can be objective. Question every publication!
2. Art must provoke emotion in a viewer, or it is not art.
3. We must not fall into the trap of investing any truth into an image until we have considered the artist.
4. Social media images are a work of fiction. Seeing is not believing.
5. We are in many ways desensitised to visual images in today's world. Little shocks us.
6. Colour connotes much of the feeling in an image.
7. Push your boundaries and step outside your comfort zone both in what you see and what you create.
8. Creativity is enhanced by globalisation.



KEY WORDS

social media ... fiction

The 'artist' behind every social media post is being creative. Instead of these images conveying a reality to the viewer, they are carefully constructed to convey a life less ordinary. Facial expressions are selected from a wide range, in all probability and flaws are hidden away. Artistic tools are employed to correct imperfections and enhance the reality whilst objects and backgrounds are chosen to portray the sort of person the account holder wishes to be. Even the Pope has recently cited the dangers of taking these images at face value, discouraging us from passively encountering these images without real understanding or thoughts "*we don't know how much of all this is really 'history', an experience that can be communicated and endowed with purpose and meaning,*" (REUTERS 2017)

Psychologists' research tells us *'For obvious reasons, people do not advertise their negative traits on their social profiles, nor do they pose unflattering pictures. Because of this strict control of the way we are viewed, we are often fooled into believing other people's lives are much better than our own. What is essential to remember is they too wear masks, the way I do, the way everyone does.'*(1)

colour connotes ... feeling

Artists have already for a long time understood how colour can affect moods and emotions in a big way. Colour is a very powerful tool for communicating and can be used to indicate an action, affect the mood and cause reactions in people's mind. Some colours can actually raise your blood pressure or increase metabolism. Your own feelings about colours can of course also be very personal. Colour meanings may have something to do with your past, your experiences or your culture. For instance, while the colour white is often used in many Western countries to represent purity and innocence, it is seen as a symbol of mourning in many Eastern European countries. This is where colour as a signifier will depend on your social conditioning, which all stems from your cultural perspective.



creativity ... enhanced ... globalisation

The unstoppable march of globalisation in the last 50 years has perhaps blurred our perception of what is real and what isn't. As Aldous Huxley suggested we are 'drowning' in information so that we cannot any longer distinguish the truth. However, before individuals has such ready access to other cultures and experiences, artists could only draw on what they knew of their own boundaries to create. Now, there is access all areas in contemporary life and this can breed some highly interesting cross cultural creations.

Brendan Tang was born in Dublin, Ireland, of Trinidadian parents and is a naturalized citizen of Canada. Tang borrows from asian ceramic culture, western pop icons, blinding colours, manga aesthetics, kitsch references and blends them to create something new and thought-provoking.



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Task Two: Semiotic Analysis (Ryan's task)

Semiotics explores the reception of what we visualise, how the various components of what we see act to signify something to us. That signifier will be determined by our personal knowledge and experience, so the truth we attach to something will be highly subjective, a product of our state of consciousness and many theorists believe that state of consciousness is generally a state of passivity. Or even what Marxist theorists would call a 'false-consciousness'. George Orwell was concerned by this concept and in his novel 1984 portrayed a futuristic society where images were forcibly displayed in every home, affirming certain 'truths' about society. These truths were accepted passively and through careful construction of truths in the media, objectivity in the population was eradicated. This must not ever be so easy.

An image will always be something different to each viewer. And often, those doing the interpreting are accepting their own truth without real thought about what it could mean to others. As O'Sullivan suggests, there are very few 'genuine encounters' with an image. Those only occur when we see an image in a way which 'ruptures' our habitual way of seeing the world, so it doesn't just affirm what we already know, instead it offers us a new perspective. In contemporary society, we are bombarded with information and images, it is difficult to objectify and try to 'genuinely encounter' all that we see. But it is important to try, or the truth will always evade us.



The above image from an advertising campaign in 2018 by the charity Greenpeace literally denotes a duck with a straw down its throat, but symbolically this image is much more powerful. Roland Barthes makes distinctions between the 'denoted', or literal reading of a sign, and the 'connoted', its implied meaning. The viewer invests their knowledge of the contemporary climate into this image so that the meaning it generates is far more alarming. The photographer has constructed this to elicit guilt and alarm - and knows that the viewer is likely to have a certain world view which will attribute certain colours to certain feelings. The duck is white, signifying innocence, encouraging

us to feel guilt at the harm it is receiving. The grey background is symbolic of doom, so we are urged to be concerned for the future. The straw contains streaks of red, signifying danger. These colours work effectively in constructing a narrative of frail victim and a need for the receiver of the image to act heroically, before it's too late.

The size of the plastic straw is cleverly enhanced, appearing to dwarf the bird, symbolising the overwhelming problem of plastic in the ocean. The metaphor in the slogan works, the straw is sucking the life out of the ocean literally in the photo, just as we are doing by using plastic products which are killing sea life. Lakoff and Johnson discuss a number of different kinds of metaphors in semiotic coding. Ontological metaphors interpret life in terms of common objects and substances. This is what this advert uses to help us understand how wrong this is. The straw, a plastic, man-made object is also starkly contrasted with its natural surroundings so it seems almost anachronistic, reminding the receiver that plastic has no place in the ocean. There is little text/font on this image as it doesn't need many words, only the reliable Greenpeace logo in the corner.

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Task Three Reflective Practice (Jon Task)

The theme explored here in the reflective study area has to be, for me, greek mythological art. This is something which inspires me in my own art, as the scale of the influence of greeks myths in art is fascinating, especially in Western Culture. Classical mythology in post-classical art can be traced back at least as far as the Renaissance, when Greek and Roman stories and statues became the lifeblood of art, and classical mythology became modern. It seems to me that greek myths have remained a vital part of our culture in the western world ever since, aided by the fact that poets and

dramatists use so many of the mythological stories and characters in literature to this day. 'Myth seems to demand to be transplanted into the present, reinterpreted according to present-day ideas or anxieties' (1).

My first artefact is from the early years of the Renaissance, when artists portrayed subjects from Greek mythology alongside more conventional Christian themes. Among the best-known subjects of Italian artists are [Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*](#).

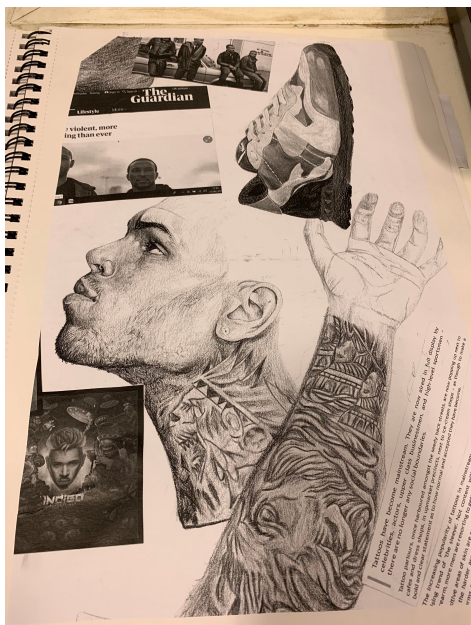
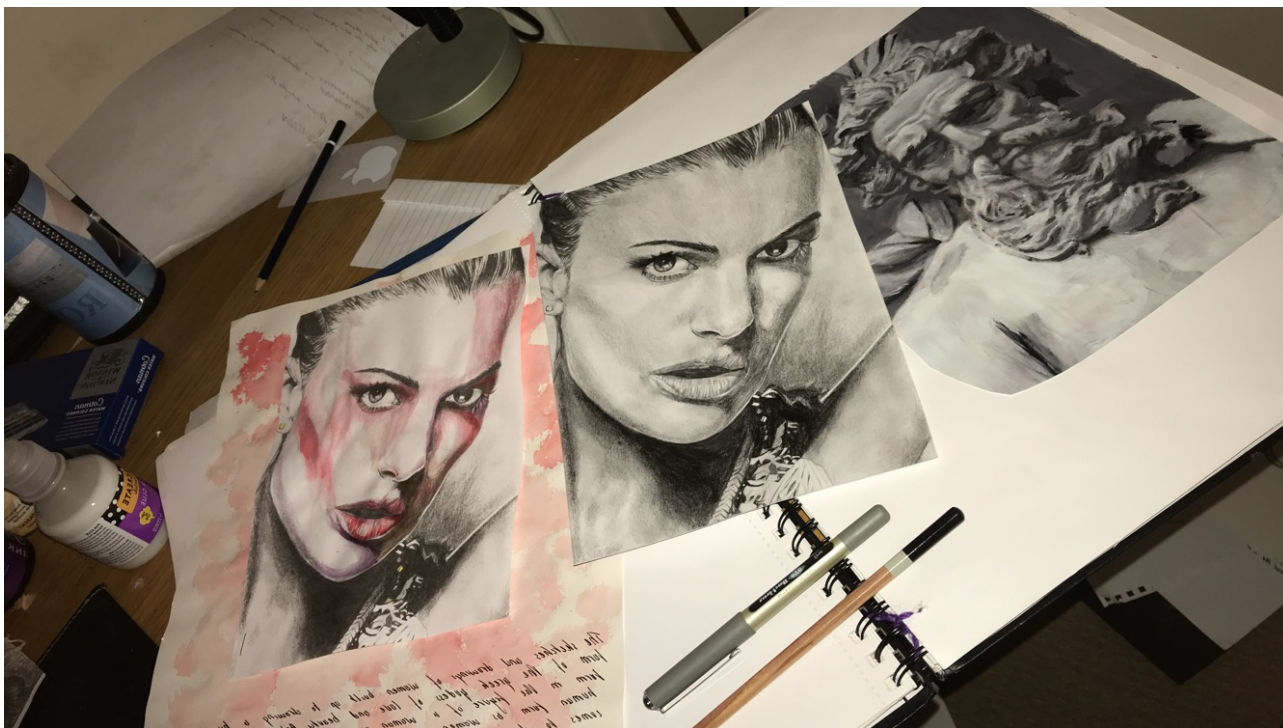


Sandro Botticelli (1445 - 1510) depicts a Roman goddess, Venus. He pictured her standing on a shell because Venus was said to have been born from foam on the sea in *Stanze per la giostra*, a poem written by Angelo Poliziano, again stressing the link between literature and art. The picture is painted on canvas a less expensive alternative to a wooden support, this would suggest that the Venus was intended for a less formal setting than a Palace. It hung at Castello in the country villa of the Medici commissioned by the Medici family. However, we do not know which member of that family was responsible for commissioning the painting. Botticelli has also taken some inspiration from a hymn by the classical poet Homer. However, it is an unusual subject for the time, as most Renaissance artists were commissioned to paint themes from the teachings of the Catholic church. What interests me is that in both the 20th and 21st centuries, artists have continued to refer to ancient stories, for example Picasso's *Minotaurs* to Louise Bourgeois' tabletop model of the Oedipus

myth constructed from scraps of pink fabric in 2003, to American conceptual artist Chris Burden's 1973 performance of the Icarus myth, for which he lay between two flaming "wings" of sheet glass, doused in petrol. Even, British artist Damien Hirst, best known for animals preserved in tanks of formaldehyde and giant "medicine cabinets," has create works inspired by myths, "Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable," in Venice in 2017. This included bronze and marble sculptures at various scales, and myriad artifacts in gold, silver, malachite, jade and other rarefied materials. One of the most common places to see art inspired by greek mythology in the 21st century has to be on human skin. Some of the most impressive tattoos today depict the classical art style images of Gods and stories of the Greeks.



My own tattoo is the face of Zeus, the Greek God of War, with the attention to detail found in many of the Renaissance paintings. This concentrated style drawing in black and white has been something I have enjoyed trying myself in recent months. Illustration is something I hope to utilise in the future, as drawing in such detail gives me great satisfaction.



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