

Ways of Thinking – Manaf Karim Portfolio Writing

1 Observational Writing: Identify an image, poster, cover, design, advertisement, or any other single

piece of graphic design, and write a semiotic analysis. Choose 3 key aspects of semiotics and use

them to simplify and focus your writing. Conclude by assessing how your understanding of your

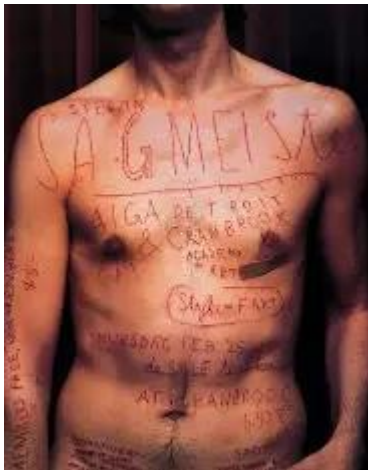
chosen image has changed.

Outcome: 500 words and images. Show your research with a bibliography and reference list which is

not included in the 500 word count.

Submit this as part of your single portfolio of writing.

Task One: Semiotics Analysis



(Figure 1 AIGA Poster, 1999s Stefan Sagmeister)



(Figure 2 Actions, 1970s Gina Pane)

I chose this work because Sagmeister's AIGA poster allows me to view his work in a way where it looks visual and empathic, as visible pain is being shown to a degree makes me feel discomfort which I find quite unique.

The semiotics of Sagmeister's 'AIGA' poster come from how he uses his body to send a message. The carved text works as both information and a symbol of pain. The raw photo style symbolizes culture, vulnerability, and sacrifice. Together, these elements show that design can be deeply personal and emotionally real.

Gina Pane's 'Actions' poster uses the body to communicate ideas. Her performances often involved cutting or marking her skin, and the posters for her shows captured these moments in a very direct way. This idea of using the body as part of the message connects strongly to Sagmeister's 'AIGA' poster. Sagmeister takes this same approach but pushes it into the world of graphic design. Instead of just showing the body in the image, he makes his body the actual surface for the text. The information for the event is carved into his skin, turning his body into the poster itself. This links back to Pane's use of real physical actions to express emotion and meaning. Another important part of semiotics in Sagmeister's AIGA poster comes from how the viewer may react when they first see it. The cuts on his body may instantly grab the viewers' attention because of its uncomfortable visual signs. Although the poster has cuts that look painful, he still stands relaxed. This creates a contrast between the cuts and his expression. The calmness makes the poster feel controlled and thoughtful instead of chaotic and dramatic. This interoperates with his pain not being random but instead purposeful. This clearly shows that the body is being used as a clear communication

tool.

Altogether, these elements work to show that the poster is more than an advertisement. It communicates that design can express real human experience and emotion. Sagmeister uses his own body to show that creativity can involve personal risk and genuine feeling. This makes the poster a strong example of how semiotics can turn design into a deeper message about work, effort and identity

Aside from the crazy use of texture and expressions shown within Sagmeister's poster. It's clear to me that you can view graphic design than more a visual functioning tool. His unique way of visualization continues to influence today's designers, showing how artists don't need constrictions within design boundaries.

Bibliography

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2 Manifesto Writing: Write a *manifesto* of 8 short statements regarding your beliefs, principles, and

design practice. Please submit these 8 statements, but do not count them in your 500 words.

With a particular focus on three of your manifesto statements, write a 500 word overview with images

of your beliefs.

Use a minimum of 3 books per task. Additional research sources could be journal/newspaper articles and/or quality online sources.

Outcome: 500 words and images. Show your research with a bibliography and reference list which is

not included in the 500 word count.

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Task Two: Manifesto Writing

1. Simplicity supports meaning.
2. Consistency builds trust in visual identity.
3. Design must put people first.
4. Design should communicate with clarity.
5. Always question the purpose behind each design choice.
6. Contrast and hierarchy guide attention.
7. Designers have a moral responsibility to society.
8. Typography and layout form the foundation of a good design.

6. Contrast and hierarchy guide attention.

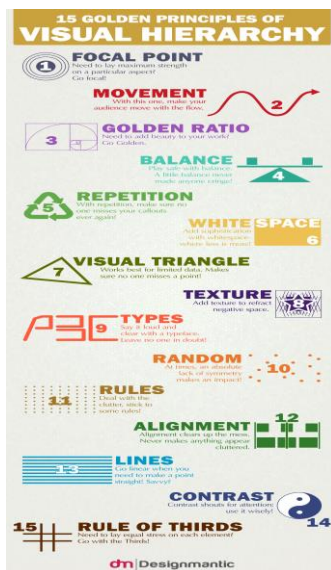


Figure 1, (PositiveThinkingMind, 18 Diversity Posters)

Contrast and hierarchy are tools that guide the viewer's attention. In text, layouts and images sometimes elements of the work may be important than the others when using things like weight, size and colour. Books like 'Thinking with Type' by Ellen Lupton explain that without things like hierarchy the viewer may not know where to look first within a design. This can potentially make the design feel a bit more overwhelming. Designers usually use bold titles, shapes or large text which can give a clear path to follow, whereas smaller text or elements can be seen as supporting elements. Contrast can also help split sections within

design or highlight key detail. This is why hierarchy and contrast are a key aspect to have in any successful design.

7. Designers have a moral responsibility to society.



Figure 2, (DesignMantic, 2014, Golden Rules of Visual Hierarchy)

I believe that design can influence how people feel, act, and think. Because of this most successful designers have to carry some sort of responsibility to create their work in a way that is ethical. Books such as 'Do Good Design' by David Berman explains how design can harm people if used carelessly as well as how it can help society. Every poster or advertisement does have the ability to encourage behaviour or even shape opinions. This mean designers really have to take in accountability of their target audience and who their work effects. A design should not reinforce harm as well as produce false information, it should be made with a purpose of positive communication . Alot of awareness campaigns show how design can contribute to health, inspire change and even raise attention to social issues. I believe that design should try to create positive speculation and not harm.

8. Typography and layout form the foundation of a good design.



Figure 3, (Behance, Design Culture Now Poster)

Typography and layout are two important details within graphic design. They create a path that can guide a viewer through the piece of work. Books such as 'Graphic Design: The New Basics' explains how grids, alignment and spacing help organise and make information look clearer. When typography is used in a thoughtful way decoding a message becomes much more easier to read and understand. Good typography can help create a flow of rhythm and hierarchy, without these details at show good design can even be showcased as messy or even confusing. A clear layout shows the viewer what to focus on as they can see what to read first. I personally try to look at how I would structure my work before adding other elements like colours or images as without structuring I believe my work will not come out feeling as strong.

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List of Figures

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DesignMantic (2014) Golden Rules of Visual Hierarchy

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(Accessed: 3rd December 2025)

Behance Design Culture Now Poster

Available at : [85bbf5136184451.61f4c875b3a1f.jpg \(1200×1902\)](#)

3 Practice-based writing: Write about a design, object, or artefact you have created yourself. The

intention is to explore and discover your thinking through writing. Think reflectively to develop your

understanding of your process by analysing your initial reactions, and your individual responses,

around the creation of this chosen piece. Use further reading to develop your understanding. Then

critically summarise the results of your design process through an analysis of your work.

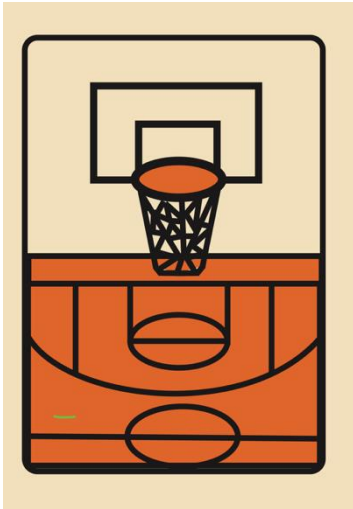
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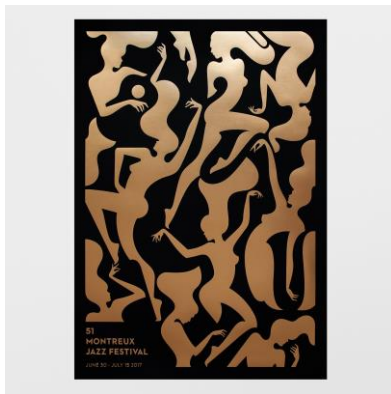
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Task Three: Practice-Based Writing



(Figure 1 Memory Project 2025, Manaf Karim)



(Figure 2 Montreux Jazz Festival Poster 2017, Malika Favre)

For this project I chose to reflect on a design I created for a different task. It began as a simple memory based idea but developed into something more personal as I worked through it. My final piece shows a basketball court with a hoop created on Adobe Illustrator. Even though I personally believe that it looks quite clean and simple, my process felt very complicated. I had many ideas at the start , and the finally outcome eventually became completely different to what I had imagined.

The design started from a class sketch that looked nothie scenng like my final piece. At first I drew a laughing emoji as that was the feeling I felt when thinking back on a few basketball moments I shared with my friends. But when I tried to create the emoji digitally it looked and felt lackluster. I decided to create the scenery I thought of as first as I started to create a basketball court. I struggled to create with shapes on Illustrator,

especially when I was trying to create floor lines as I couldn't visually properly how I wanted it to look. It took a lot of trial and error and I kept remaking shapes until I could understand the type of look I wanted the floor to have. Even though I was finding this process quite frustrating, it sort of pushed me to be a bit more patient and learn ways I can use the pen tool as well as shapes.

Creating the rim was another challenge. I originally wanted it to look as realistic as possible with things like metal and the correct symmetry, but I found it to feel a bit too complex for my skill level at the time. Instead I built the rim using repeated lines and shapes which I feel to be a more graphical type look. At first it looked too strange but I realised the unusual look of the rim sort of gave the design a more unique style to it. I feel that people may question why the rim looks different which gives my design a small sense of personality.

While working on this I looked at designers who use simple forms to create their pieces. Designers like Malika Favre who uses bold shapes and clean outlines. I took some inspiration on her festival poster (Figure 2) as I like her flat colours and structure, it makes the design seem more stylish in my opinion. I also found influence in Saul Bass's use of simple lines and Noma Bar's way of using shapes playfully. Their styles helped me to believe that simplicity can still hold meaning and maintain a good look visually.

If I was to redo this project, I would approach it differently as I would spend way more time sketching before going straight into Illustrator. I didn't really plan to my fullest which has now helped me to realise how important it is to plan, as I can have a layout to work from. I would also refine my rim with better accuracy, after learning a bit more about texture as well as give my court a bit more depth to it. Although my work has a few imperfections I appreciate my final piece as the creative process shows a lot of growth to be achieved and growth that was shown. I paid attention to how often I spent changing the decision of my work which shows me how much time is needed when designing. All the days I spent adjusting lines, curves and shapes taught me a bit of patience and that designs are allowed to take multiple days before reaching its outcome.

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