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Task 1: Observational Writing – 517 words

Task 2: Personal Manifesto – 479

Task 3: Practice-based Writing – 516 words

Observational Writing

From studies by likes of Saussure and Peirce, semiotics can be defined as the study of the existence of signs and the actuality of signs in societal life. (Yakin, H. & Totu, A. 2014, p.1) Defined as “an action, or influence, which is, or involves, an operation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant.” (Pierce, 1931, p. 1874), in this text I will begin to semiotically inspect an extremely haunting and infamous image called 'The Hands Resist Him' by Bill Stoneham, to explore the apprehensive position in which it holds its viewers.

‘Semiotic accounts for everything that can be seen or be interpreted as a sign, semiotic is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign’, (Yakin and Totu, 2014, p.1).



*The Hands Resist Him,
Bill Stoneham 2002*

Raised in a western culture we read text, image, music, from left to right.

Intentionally challenging this second nature and placing the taller subject secondarily, we immediately stumble from the incorrect visual grammar. This is purely emotional signification we are attaching to the composition; the painting itself is indicating nothing, it is simply the way the children are stood. "Composition in the very broadest sense, then, is a social phenomenon – an order, and process of ordering, which is at once artistic and social in character" (Harris J. 2014, p. 59-60).

However, this interruption creates unease and the relationship between figures and ground being placed far back into the corner, almost hidden, evokes a conflict of emotions – mischief or malevolence?

Subsequently, our spectral eye is immediately drawn to the boy. This character initially denotes innocence. "It was during the European Renaissance that the concept of childhood began to emerge (in art). Rather than being seen as 'incomplete' or 'unfinished' adults as they had previously, children were viewed as individual beings in need of protection and nurturing" – National Galleries Scotland, 2018

Their shared frontality further supports this; nothing to hide. Simultaneously giving an air of discomfort, intimidation and almost menace created by the prolonged stare

from the boy, and lack of detail in their eyes. “Although most people like some friendly eye contact, prolonged eye contact is uncomfortable. Minimal eye contact can lead to inferences of nervousness, evasiveness, or defensiveness.” (Chandler, D. and Munday, R. 2020).

Our glance curve arrives at the ‘girl’, searching for the innocence lost from the boys’ expression. We are perturbed by a hollow eyed and absent shell, and her right-angled stance ignores us. Fear occurs as we notice her joints and limbs fitted together, the realisation of her misleading identity turns the air cold.

We feel we have looked long enough, when the observer may then notice the disembodied, ghostly handprints pressed against the glass behind the pair. The signifier of ‘handprint’ registers as desperate, final attempt to be noticed. Perhaps even assigning emotional values of helplessness. On the contrary, this could be jovial, playful; the kind made by beloved children in bright colours. Though, dulled by the cold and pallid tones akin to that of a ghost, the former realisation looms behind the individual regardless the outcome of this analysis.

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Personal Manifesto

- **No one is right. No one is wrong. Art is the ultimate in diplomacy, and that is why I chose it.**
- Comprehension and emotional intelligence are essential to meaningful engagement and creation
- Substantial power lies in the ability to evoke emotions
- **Skill ≠ creativity, creativity > skill**
- Art should not be a safe space. It should be your mentor in becoming fearless and unapologetic...
- ...That means *never* apologising for how you feel
- **Art is the door of which all forms of self-expression pass through**
- Art is a vehicle to respond to supposed boundaries in whichever force you feel necessary (this act of response is art in and of its own right)

No one is right. No one is wrong. It is the ultimate in diplomacy, and that is why I chose art.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder; what may comfort one may unnerve another. How one feels, another could not comprehend fully, no matter how emotionally adept. So how could we see the same artefact in the same light? In reference to Kant's Aesthetic Values, Reflective judgment is the process that allows us to decide whether something is beautiful. "Beauty is never experienced as a determinate thing. We do not experience beauty directly, although it is always implicated in our experiences of the world." (Salisbury University, 2006) Different backgrounds, disciplines and experiences affect us subconsciously in ways we could not name until the situation is upon us. "Interpretation is an art that utilises science... (it is) measured by our ability to send a message so that, when it reaches the recipient, inspiration and/or provocation are achieved... This "palette" is created through past experiences... the true art of interpretation happens when these attributes compose complete pictures of the resource for our visitors." (Stobie, P. 2013, p.25)

Skill ≠ creativity, creativity > skill.

Anyone can copy, no one else is inside your mind. Our creativity and imagination make us unique. As our sensory world grows, the more we can create and expand. However, we are facing a 'creativity crisis' in our children. Research at the College of William and Mary found creativity has decreased among American children in recent years. "Studies indicated preschool children have high levels of creative ability, and when they enter school, their artistic creativity tends to decline as they learn conformity." (Kim H. K., 2011, p. 285-295). This coincides with increased dependence on electronic devices in our parenting. children are no longer left to imagine and discover for themselves; the tablet has provided them with the answers. Expressed by J. Morrow in 2019, the most powerful computer we have is in our minds, the 'creativity' factor. The human element should never be stripped away as creativity allows us to open our human mind...combined with data and information, we have power. (Morrow, J. 2014)

Art is the door of which all forms of self-expression pass through.

"To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms . . . so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art" (Leo Tolstoy, 1896, pp.50).

Self-expression is a vital to our conscious experience. We can share, communicate, and present ourselves in whichever way we choose. Never have we had such freedom, and the digital age is only the beginning. Self-expression through art exclusively allows us to safely explore unfamiliar recesses of our mind in a healthy and productive way, providing us tools for meaningful reflection. 'It has been widely believed that art is an intrinsically valuable practice which improves human experience in a way that intercourse with other practices and their products do not. Art has a *normative* significance.' (P Crowther, 2007, pp.1)

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Practice-based Writing: A practical exploration of the Reflective Cycle – for artistic conception, development, and production

David Kolb published his Experiential Learning Cycle model in 1984. Its purpose outlines “the learners internal cognitive process” (McLeod, 2017). In 1988, Graham Gibbs published his Reflective Cycle model. In this text I will draw connections from those established to my own practice cycle which applies to my personal, professional, and educational process, while also explaining my creative method.

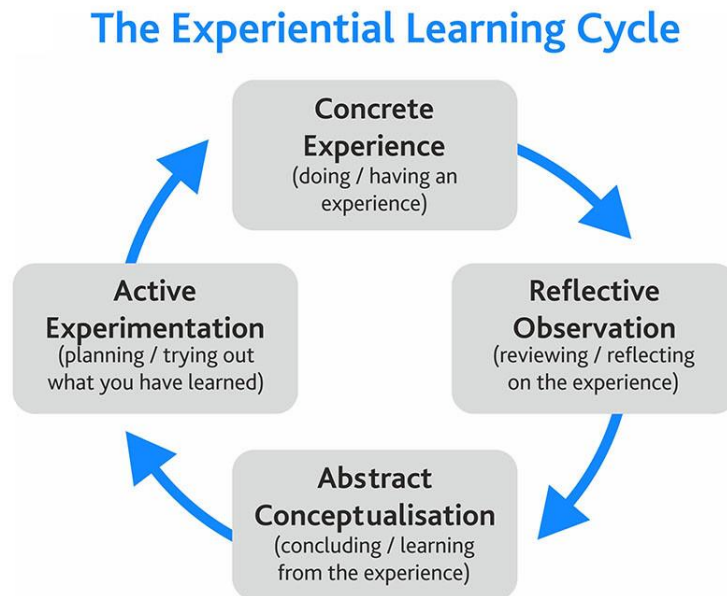


1. Gibbs Reflective Cycle (Stuart, 2015)

Given our age of advanced technology, application of this fundamental psychology on modern-day learning was something I was eager to investigate.

“Human beings are, therefore, both being and becoming, and these are inextricably intertwined since growth and development in the one affects the growth and

development of the other. Learning is, therefore, existential and experiential” (Jarvis, 2005, p.2)



2. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, Skillshub.com 2017

To further understand the model and Kolb's 'styles of learning', and for more explanation in this text, my research showed me as a 'reflector'. This learning style favours "gathering information, researching problems that can be probed in depth" and "strong elements of passive involvement such as listening to a speaker" (Chapman, 2006)

The 'active experimentation' (2) area follows, where concept grows from emotions and atmosphere. Influence comes from the gathering trait outlined in my learning style - journaling, dystopian literature, artwork, and film. I am almost always listening to a piece of music when working. In Gibbs' cycle, this is 'feeling'. (1)

I work digitally, providing me ergonomic, mindful techniques to capture everything I am thinking while experimenting in real time. Considering the themes of my work, this medium is rather ironic. Nevertheless, the human component is arguably *more* prevalent than when I am away from my drawing app, and this is of key importance. Benefits of digital mediums in art therapy were investigated in 2014 and included several factors such as the potential to create multiple outcomes of an image, concepts are easily translated into an image quicker and easier, provides distraction and has the potential to integrate therapy approaches such as CBT and narrative. (Choe, 2014, p. 148).



My intuitive development is driven by the ideology to create an atmosphere born of feelings, conspiracies, and romanticism. It is a safe and healthy outlet to explore my darker emotions and ideations. if I can capture it, I can share it, I can tackle it. And digitally, nothing is permanent.

“In expressing ourselves we manifest some part of our point of view...In central cases, artistic expression shows how an emotion or experience feels” (Green, 2007, p.1, p.17)

Next, I assess if this emotion is in the right environment. Gibbs’ cycle classes this as ‘evaluation’. Aesthetics are a secondary thought, but the most important step. They surround the essence.

Feedback is an integral part of my process – and what Gibbs’ labels as ‘reflective observation’. Reaction from peers is invaluable, and implemented, though my integrity always governs all decisions.

Before the cycle restarts, I finally engage in ‘abstract conceptualism’. What other emotions is this evoking, what happens next? have my emotions evolved or have they intensified, and what was learned from giving this thought place in the world?

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