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Task 1: Manifesto Writing

Manifesto

1. Seek beauty in imperfection, impermanence, and that which is incomplete. Find belief in your own abilities through discovery and learning. You are no better or worse than any other person, despite your faults.
2. Explore, gain new knowledge, learn new techniques, learn more about what you thought you knew and about and what you never understood, or wanted to learn about before.
3. Use new and past experiences, dreams, ambitions, nightmares, and emotions to inspire you. Do not ignore noise. Embrace it. Noise will trigger anxiety and distress, but it also provides context. Calm will follow.
4. Be careful of believing your own propaganda. Never assume that you (or anyone else for that matter) are right, or wrong. Don't rely on opinion, you need evidence.
5. Step out of your self-imposed boundaries. Transform yourself. Make the journey towards expressing yourself through your work and practice. You will gradually understand more about who you are, but that's when you will understand that you need to learn more. Your experience is gold.

6. It is not always virtuous to demand your rights. You will learn more through your mistakes than always being 'right'.
7. Press; pull; scratch; strike scrape; shave; smooth; plane; rasp; bind; slice; plait; weave; stitch; join; construct; deconstruct; repair; make. Seek quality, but realise that the dogged pursuit of facts that you feel are of overwhelming importance to the world may lead to madness (Pirsig, 2004).
8. Don't try to solve the World. Give something back.

Overview

1. *Seek beauty in imperfection, impermanence, and that which is incomplete. Find belief in your own abilities through discovery and learning. You are no better or worse than any other person, despite your faults.*

Wabi Sabi is an intangible aesthetic philosophy said by Juniper (2003, P. 10), to be the artistic mouthpiece of the Zen movement, deeply shrouded in centuries of mystery.

According to Juniper, Wabi Sabi art calls on us to put aside our perspectives of beauty and to rediscover the intimate beauty to be found in the finer points of nature's artistry. Finding confidence in our own artistic practice and belief in one's own abilities requires different ways of thinking about success and failure and possibly 'unlearning' a previously fixed mindset that sought perfection in a different aesthetic sense.



Figure 1: Black Raku Tea Bowl. Maker Unknown (Date Unknown) Early 17th century. Momoyama period (1573–1615)

Researching the origins of the Raku method of firing pottery (fig.1), has rekindled the author's interest in the contrasts between Eastern and Western philosophies and culture.

For the author, born and brought up in the United Kingdom, some fascination with, if not exactly an understanding of Japanese culture, began with the practice of martial arts from the age of about 8 years old. Shuffling along the tatami (*tatami mat, Japanese straw floor coverings*) JapanDict (2023a), in bare feet, dressed in a 'gi' (*keikogi, or practice suit*) JapanDict (2023b), bowing; kneeling; meditating; practising kata (*set sequence of positions and movements in martial arts*) JapanDict (2023c), was at odds with the prevailing culture in South Wales in the early 1970's. Dominated by long hair, platform shoes and flower-patterned shirts the cultural constraints in this era may have contributed to the fixed mindset that the author seeks to shake off.

5. *Step out of your self-imposed boundaries. Transform yourself. Make the journey towards expressing yourself through your work and practice. You will gradually understand more about who you are, but that's when you will understand that you need to learn more. Your experience is gold.*



Figure 2: 'Porco Miseria!', Ingo Maurer GMBH (1994)

The Porco Miseria! Chandelier, constructed of arbitrarily broken ceramic plates, is a celebration of slow-motion filmed explosions which expresses the Ingo Maurer company's rebellion against "slickness of contemporary design" (MoMA, 2022), exhibited at The Design Museum in London as an example of surrealist art (Fig. 2). Stepping out of the self-imposed boundaries of a rational world on a journey to learn about art through creating and making involves reaching into the imagination. Marlow (2022) asserts that rebellion against tyranny and rationalism drove the emergence of Surrealism in 1924. Johnson (2022, P. 7) observes that Surrealism recognises "dreams and desires as constant companions" drawing attention to the surrealists' emphasis on the bizarre and crazy artistic concepts and their importance in understanding reality and how we experience our existence. The author's conclusion is that these 'constant companions' in the fusion between dreams and reality or "*surreality*" (Breton, 1924) includes nightmares. Understanding more about who and what we really are in a surreal context suggests that we will always need to learn more about ourselves and our

thoughts, dreams, nightmares, ways of thinking, to enable us to transform and express ourselves in a surreal world.

7. *Press; pull; scratch; strike; scrape; shave; smooth; plane; rasp; bind; slice; plait; weave; stitch; join; construct; deconstruct; repair; make. Seek quality but realise that the dogged pursuit of facts that you feel are of overwhelming importance to the world may lead to madness (Pirsig, 2004).*



Figure 3: 'Brick Man' (Jacquard, 2002)

Pirsig, (2004, p. xii) describes a fictional personal battle with his alter-ego in trying to find truth in the world and realises that the world is trying to kill him for his trouble. Feeling socially destroyed and silenced in this struggle, he realises that he, himself, is the source of the conflict that has almost driven him insane. An artist's feeling of isolation, fragility, brittle vulnerability and the ultimate futility of his work is expressed in the work of Max Jacquard. *Brick Man* (Jacquard, 2002) represents a sort of protective shell, made with the irony that its construction of fragile glass accentuates the futility of the activity.

Word Count (Manifesto Writing): 537

Task 2: Observational Writing (Deconstruction)

The willingness of some artists to draw attention to their own fragility in their work is contrasted by the willingness of advertisers to create myths around sexuality and perceived invincibility through use of stereotyped images to promote the sale of perfume fragrances. An example of this type of advertising is a video promoting the Invictus Aqua fragrance (Paco Rabanne, 2018).

Key Aspect 1 - Denotation

At the denotative level, the advertisement for the Paco Rabanne Invictus Aqua fragrance uses the image of Australian Model and professional rugby league footballer, Nick Youngquest entering a crowded sport stadium through the players' tunnel, surrounded by paparazzi.

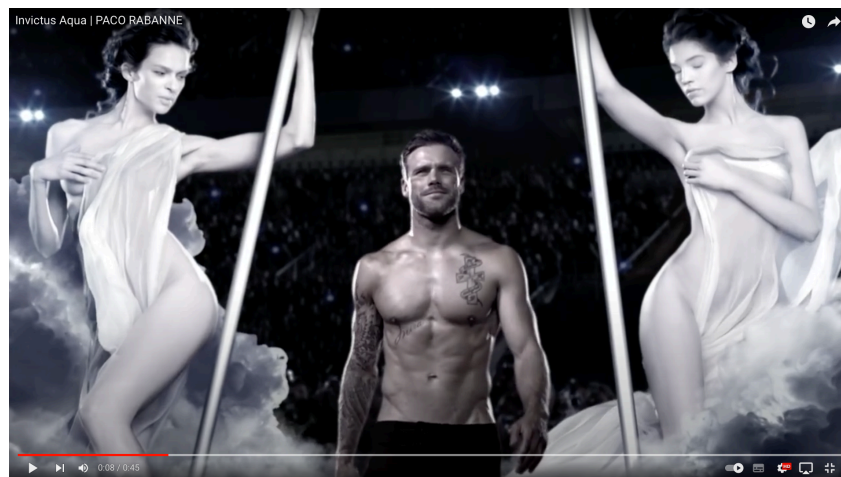


Figure 4: Paco Rabanne (2018). *Invictus Aqua*. 0.08.

Figure 4, shows the protagonist naked to the waist, sporting a honed physique and tattoos. Youngquest is attended by nymphs, or maidens, heralding his entrance clothed with little but

silken sheets. Background rap music accompanies the entrance, along with loud cheering from adoring fans.

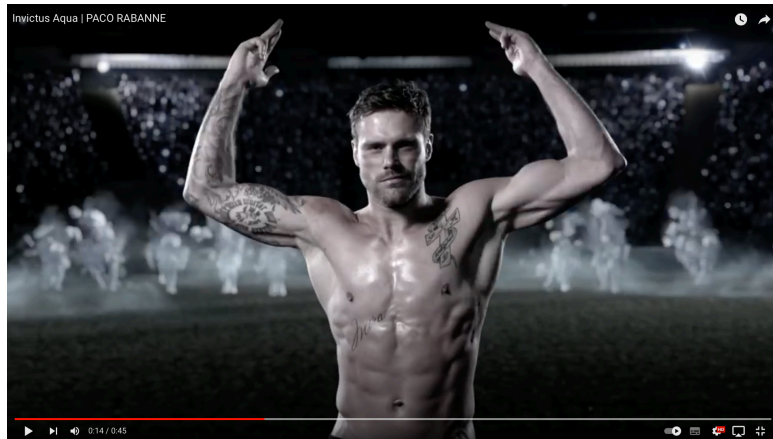


Figure 5: Paco Rabanne (2018). Invictus Aqua. 0.14.

In Figure 5, Younquest points to the sky with both hands, causing the statues running towards him across the playing field to shatter. The name of the perfume fragrance appears above him as shown at Figure 6.



Figure 6: Paco Rabanne (2018). Invictus Aqua. 0.18.



Figure 7: Paco Rabanne (2018). *Invictus Aqua*. 0.24s.

A 'nymph' points at Younquest with adoring looks, as if selecting him. In Fig. 7, 'gods' strike the ground with staves to summon the stars to fall and decorate Younquest (Fig. 8).

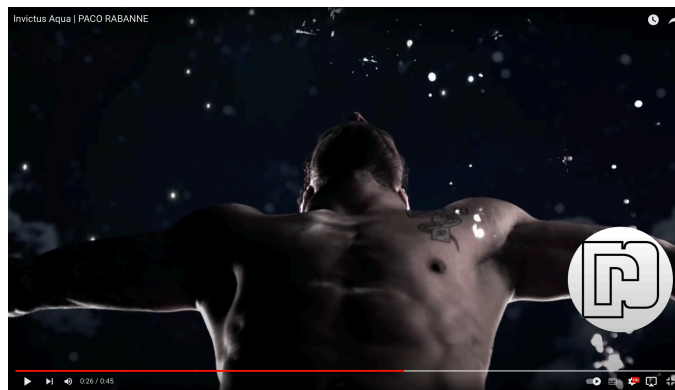


Figure 8: Paco Rabanne (2018). *Invictus Aqua*. 0.26s.

As he leaves the stadium carrying a trophy on his shoulder, the trophy provides a symbol in the recognisable shape of the bottle which contains the fragrance product (Fig. 9).



Figure 9: Paco Rabanne (2018). *Invictus Aqua*. 0.32s.

Key Aspect 2 - Connotation

Rose (2013, p. 76.) asserts that “the distinction between signifier and signified is crucial to semiology” and draws attention to complexity of semiology. In her analysis and comparison of visual methodologies Rose comments on “slipperiness and arbitrariness of signs” and observes that signs are stabilised by the meaning systems that give them sense to a greater or lesser extent. The meaning or intention of the sign interpreted by the author and one which could be decoded by audiences in the Invictus Aqua advertisement is that handsome, fit young men wear this fragrance and by doing so they will be incredibly popular, enjoy the invincibility of the gods, be successful at sports, and attract the attention of beautiful women. Rose (2013, P.80) also points out that semiology focuses in detail on images, as opposed to the audiences of the image and draws attention to the importance of explaining what has already been assumed, observing that this was not done by Williamson (1978) in her work *Decoding Advertisements*.

Key Aspect 3 – Mythology

Drawing on Greek mythology, the Invictus title refers to the definition of ‘invictus’ as unconquered, unsubdued, or invincible (Harper, 2022). The use of existing mythology to create a new system of significance around a product is explained by Williamson (1978, P.39), who refers to the essence of all advertising being the selection of elements, things, or people to re-arrange them into a myth around the product to conceive the intended “new world” through the advertisement. Williamson further comments on the function of an advertisement being to create a differentiation between products of the same category by providing the product with an ‘image’ (P. 40).

Word Count (Observational Writing): 528

Task 3: Practice-based writing

Keyword Definitions

Fragility. *noun* (Stevenson, 2015a)

“[*mass noun*] the quality of being easily broken or damaged: *osteoporosis is characterized by bone fragility.*

the quality of being delicate or vulnerable: *a film about the fragility of relationships | his emotional fragility.*”

Fragile. *adjective* (Stevenson, 2015b)

“(of an object) easily broken or damaged: *fragile items such as glass and china.*

easily destroyed or threatened: *you have a fragile grip on reality.*

(of a person) not strong or sturdy; delicate and vulnerable: *a small, fragile old lady | his fragile health somewhat improved.*”

Fragile. *Etymology.* (Hoad, 2003)

“XVII. — (O)F. *fragile* or L. *fragilis*, f. **frag-*, base of *frangere* BREAK.”

Brick Man, (Jacquard, 2002) was first shown as part of a figurative series of works in an exhibition called ‘*Solid Air: New Work in Glass*’, shown by The Crafts Council (2002). Now exhibited in the V&A Museum, *Brick Man* is a suspended form of the artist’s body constructed of slumped and sandblasted glass ‘bricks’ made from white coloured float glass, joined together with stainless steel wire and suspended from steel tension cable. The object label alongside Jacquard’s installation in the V&A quotes the maker’s view that “the object attempts to describe the sense of isolation, self-protection and perhaps a certain brittle

vulnerability felt by the artistic ego". Further works by Jacquard present other containers for the body made with glass fibre and other delicate materials.

The author's own artistic practice is currently focussed on the emotional fragility caused by physical and psychological trauma. First recognised in war veterans, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that may be induced by exposure to a traumatic event (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2022). The artist's perspective on Jacquard's work is that its comment on the fragile nature of the artist's psyche could be seen as the antithesis of the images presented in the Paco Rabanne 'Invictus Aqua' advertisement (2018) which, along with other similar advertisements, present a mythological and stereotypical perspective of successful people, specifically men, as being 'invincible' or indestructible and having certain physical and sexual characteristics. With art therapy being researched as a potential treatment option for PTSD (PTSDUK, 2022), understanding these conflicting perspectives of the male psyche could be important in understanding the role of creative expression through art in improving the lives of people who have experienced trauma.

May (1975, P. 8.) writes about the courage artists need to be able to participate consciously in forming society, even on a small scale, and when facing profound change, to preserve our sensitivity, awareness, and responsibility. Venturing to define courage in the context of creativity, May describes various forms of courage, namely physical, moral and social courage, comparing and contrasting these forms to illustrate his thesis. The Invictus character could be seen in the light of physical courage given May's description of the form being made up mainly of "myths of the frontier".

A prime characteristic of the courage that May describes in the context of creative practice is the requirement for centeredness within our own being, without which we would feel ourselves to be in a vacuum.

Word Count (Practice-based Writing): 518

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