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Module: ADAD4018 Ways of Thinking

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Task One: Manifesto = 538 words

Task Two: Semiotics = 509 words

Task Three: Practice-based writing = 496 words

TASK one - MANIFESTO

8 STATEMENTS

1. I believe that art from the past should belong to the artist, unless otherwise stated, and the artists wishes should be adhered to after they are gone.
2. I believe in creating art that connects me to where I come from and who I am.
Art is a bridge that connects all the generations of a culture.
3. I believe losing touch of the child in you will mean losing touch of a big part of what makes you an artist
4. Everything is a medium to create with and from.
5. Ancient art should be returned to the cultures that they were stolen from.
6. There should be no such thing as a starving artist. The phrase “starving artist” should cease to be used up to the point where it should not exist in the next generation.
7. The commercial part of creativity should be taught in a big way in schools - as soon as the child learns about money and spending; and should be reinforced over and over again through their education.
8. I wonder if the purpose of museums should be re-evaluated to reflect the current global community

Keywords – Generational Art

2. I believe in creating art that connects me to where I come from and who I am.

Art is a bridge that connects all the generations of a culture.



Hector Garcia Salvador (1995) *Illustration of the world*

Cave paintings are a form of art where the artist was passing down information to those that will come after them. Research conducted by Laura Van Broekhoven about creation stories and visual arts in Mexico, saw her witness the relationship between the generations as she was collating the stories.

“the young artists became more and more involved in the oral history research I was conducting... They would then use this newly acquired knowledge as inspiration for their art-work. Through this process, the gap between the generations was bridged by the young artists’ interest in their parents and grandparents’ (hi)stories and knowledge, and by the parents and grandparents’ pride in the young artists’ visual art expressions.” (Van Broekhoven, 2009)

Keywords – Stolen ancient art

5. Ancient art should be returned to the cultures that they were stolen from.

Personally, I had learned about the Benin bronzes from my culture growing up but couldn't see them as they had been requisitioned by the British colonial empire. Along with the Benin bronzes that are spread over 100 museums all around the world, there are others like the Parthenon sculptures and the Rosetta stone whose ownership are in constant contest.



Benin Empire, (early 16th century) *Queen Mother*

The Sarr-Savoy Report which was commissioned in 2018 by the French government found that “up to 90% of sub-Saharan Africa’s material cultural legacy is outside of the continent” (Felwine Sarr and Benedicte Savoy, 2018). I do not believe anything significant has been done by the French government regarding this report but what I do know is that the German government has pledged to return many bronzes back in the year 2022.

Keywords – Starving artist.

6. There should be no such thing as a starving artist. The phrase “starving artist” should cease to be used.



Vincent Van Gogh (1888) *Sunflowers*

An artist's passion for their work comes with an abandon of other factors that enable them function in a practical sense, which has resulted in an industry that feeds off the 'martyrdom associated with artists whose preoccupation with producing art appears to supersede business judgement' (Slay.C, 2021). A popular example of this is 'Van Gogh who had to rely on his family for support during his lifetime though his oil on canvas painting sold for \$39million almost 100 years later in 1987'. (Clines, F. 1987)

"The starving artist paradigm finds its roots in the realm of the visual arts ... yet many of the artists who gave us these treasures often died in ignominy, recognised posthumously as cultural icons whose achievements often failed to reflect financial success during their lives." (Slay 2021, pg 196)

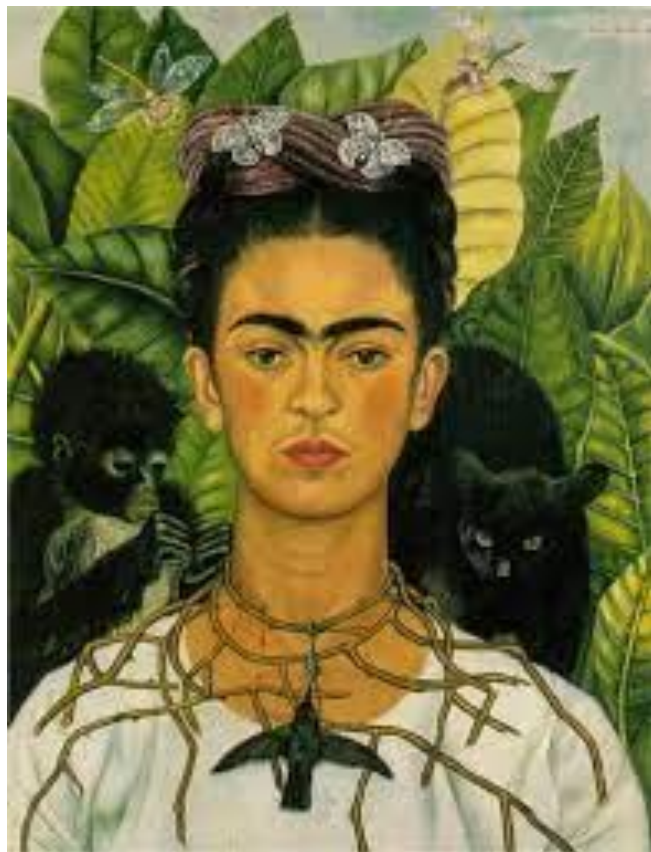
Cheryl Slay (2021) stated It's possible for an artist to work on their knowledge in order to be business smart in the field. An example being Ray Charles' business judgement in the area of his ownership of his audio recordings. At a time where it was unprecedented, he calculated his label relationships and owned his own masters through his business competence.

Task two - Semiotics

An artist creates a piece of work to represent something or someone that has had an impact on them, a feeling or an emotion that they might want to convey, or even as a means to get a point across to the public or their patrons.

Thomas Sebok (1994) states that a species capacity to make and understand signs and their ability to enable knowledge-based activity is the primary objective of semiotics. He calls this semiosis and representation which “is a deliberate use of signs to probe, classify, and hence know the world”. (Thomas Sebok, 1994, p.20).

Most of what we do as humans, be it a gesture, reading, writing or producing or looking at art we are participating in sign based representational behaviour.



Frida Kahlo (1940) *Self-portrait with thorn necklace and hummingbird*

“The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe”

(Berger J., 1972 p8). In Frida Kahlo's Self-portrait with thorn necklace and hummingbird (1940), there is a dichotomy of what the thorns represent depending on the personal belief of the observer. The painting is generally regarded as the artist putting her suffering as well as her strength on display as claimed by Lindauer (1999). The thorns represent the disgrace from her divorce and betrayal from her husband, but on the other hand, based on Aztec symbolism, Lowe (1991) describes the birds, cat and butterflies as the souls of warriors thus referring to Frida Kahlo as a warrior herself.

Kahlo as warrior is further implied in Herrera's account of Miriam Shapiro's description of Kahlo as a real feminist artist ...Kahlo is considered a Christ figure suffering for the sake of our sorrows. In other words, she is an icon, not just for women, but for anyone who endures emotional anguish or physical torment.” (Lindauer, 1999, p 164)

Symbolic (arbitrary) signs

The butterflies, dragonflies and bird may initially come across as a desire of freedom, but based on her culture, Lowe (1991) suggests they could be symbols of fallen warriors.

Sign

The thorns around Frida Kahlo signifies the pain and suffering she is going through.

Paradigm

As a female artist, especially now who was married to a famous artist at the time, she was expected to fulfil the role of what society expected of a good wife. Instead, in her pain, she showed strength. “She painted the kinds of agonies women in particular suffer, and she had the capacity both to be feminine and to function with

an iron will that we associate with masculinity. Her active (and therefore masculine), wilful rendering of so-called uniquely feminine categories and stigmas, according to Lowe, universalizes Kahlo's suffering." (Lindauer, 1999, p 164)

Previously I believed the animals had more to do with the surrounding tropical environment, somewhere where she believes she may have some sort of solace. Through semiotic analysis, I believe the thorns represent the turmoil she is entangled in, and the bird, monkey and cat represent those who are trying to help and support her – her warriors - and her desire to be free.

Task three – Practice based writing.

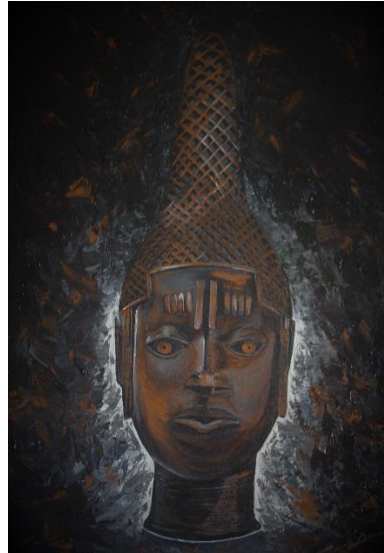
In order to represent the face of Idia lyoba – a warrior queen mother of the ancient Benin empire - a woman who was believed to be one of the strongest mothers among her people, I had to veer off the generalised modern western social acceptance of how a female beauty should be characterized. As a popular figure, her face is easily recognisable. My task is to create a piece that will show the warrior side of her without drifting into the realms of caricature. The piece shows a queen mother with a crown of woven coral on her head, denoting her status within her community and kingdom.

“How identity is constructed, and presence evoked, differs from culture to culture, subject to concepts on individualism, a prevailing aesthetic, and a host of other social or ritual beliefs particular to a given time or place” (Peffer, J., & Cameron, E. L., 2013)

During my initial sketches, I tried not to make the face too symmetrical so as not to lose the feeling that was to be sent across – not a conventional beauty. I did not to create a portrait that did not look realistically human upon final inspection. I wanted to focus on her status and try to create a person out of the bronze sculpture I was painting from. “Despite the mass of collated data on (aesthetic) experience in Africa... Beauty, for example, usually receives little attention – it is either dismissed as a distraction from the ‘important work’ of social and political activity.” (Peffer, J., & Cameron, E. L., 2013, p.287)

While researching through other pictures and artists, I noticed and took particular interest to how the appearance of a face changed depending on how it is illuminated. I was inspired by Caravaggio’s use of chiaroscuro and sought to implement the use of contrast to evoke a feeling of strength over beauty. According

to a textbook of painting techniques, strong contrast induces harsh impressions while low contrast induces feminine and delicate impressions (Chambers, Goldman, Habets, & Richlin, 2012).



Ejiro Lane (2021) *Idia Iyabo*

Having read on how the human mind attributes certain qualities to a portrait (*Sakuta, Y., Kanazawa, S. and Yamaguchi, M.K., 2014*), going forward, I believe a more subtle effect in regards to contrast will be good to experiment with. Also the angle at which the light reflects on the face, as opposed to the backlit effect on my painting, can be adjusted to create a more interesting composition. Further experimentation is needed in order to create a female portrait of a soldier unbound by societies depictions on what a beautiful woman should look like on the outside.

“The appearance of a face varies when the illumination changes. Many Western paintings effectively utilize the effects of lighting.



Circle of Rembrandt (c.1650) *The Man with the golden helmet*

For example, Rembrandt and Caravaggio are particularly well known for the strong contrast of light and shade in their paintings". (Sakuta, Y., Kanazawa, S. & Yamaguchi, M.K., 2014, p288)

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