

Evaluation, 601 (Dichotomy)

Bethany Thomas

I researched how our creativity is constrained through individual and cultural context as well as represent how the mind works using my mind as the primary focus. Through this piece an audience could gain an understanding of how someone else thinks and understand themselves better through this comparison. As in past modules I am looking at portraiture through representation of the self.

“The arts have given us direct access to our inner lives, offering us glimpses... of how we think.” (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018).

I was hoping to illustrate this repression of thought to a viewer that comes with mental health issues, presenting how choice is removed because of the constriction of this thought. In my thesis I argue that all art and human action can be predicted through patterns and social/cultural themes. This has influenced this work.

“How small a quantity of real fiction there is in the world; and that the same images, with... little variation, have served all the authors who have ever written,” (Boswell quoted in Booker, 2004). Humans have commonality in experience and thus seem to aspire to and value the same ideals.

“Adolf Bastian put forward the theory that the human mind seems to be so constituted that it naturally works in certain forms,” (Booker, 2004). Are we all trapped in this repeated pattern and history? John Yorke said “mental health... is about the ability to impose order.” Part of my aim was to show the circles of thought that take over when you have mental health issues such as anxiety or depression.

I am influenced by Mark Faird who proposed that “for 24-hours a day, for 28-days... (he would) wear a virtual reality headset, experiencing life through,” another, (Farid, 2018). “The point is to discover how adaptable the brain is to another physical body – and whether our self comes from inherent personality or cultural identity,” (Farid, 2018). How do people think and what can we learn from this, how solid is our sense of character when our body and movement is taken away?

The artists I focused on were Janet Cardiff and Sophie Calle. I loved the way they both tell and get involved in stories and wanted to bring this to my practice. Part of my work involves this imaginary space, and this imagined moment – it doesn’t feel real – the area doesn’t exist and never will in the same form again. I think this is shown well in Cardiff’s work as she creates echos with her walks.

I began ‘Dichotomy’ through looking at spontaneous action and happenings (specifically Alan Kaprow) I wanted to see how I can explain who I am and present my brain to an audience, how ideas manifest and how we behave when not seen. To show this build of ideas and this repetition I set up a camera and set to work with a clear mind.

I began by clearing the space – trying to bring this semblance of order to myself; wiping the slate clean. I reread the past ideas already written in chalk on the wall and then remove them - but nevertheless they remain. So, I get out the paint. I cover the wall and the paper on the wall and the chalk. I cover everything up but still the cracks show through. The painting is just another layer of thought. The layers are hard to disguise.

So I map my new concepts over the newly painted wall. I discuss new theories that just end up repeating the former. The same ideas are present just in a different order, just with a different angle and meditation. It is still me. The old work and paper still shows through but it is becoming harder to find.

Projecting this film over this same work area and wall means this thought process never ends. It creates a temporal space that endlessly repeats. But it is not spontaneous, it’s manufactured, a kind of front. I know the camera is there. I am conscious of my actions, of the watching eye behind me.

The tv on my desk plays a reflection. A reflection I was not aware of when I was creating my happening, so it is a different self. It is the hidden reflection of myself. The private vs the public persona. The reflection makes the space seem more real. This is an event that happened that will always linger in this zone. The ghost of me wiping, covering, painting and writing on and on and on. Never ending.

In my mind, everything is due to the Apollonian, Dionysian duality. This dichotomy greatly influenced this work. This is the notion of order versus chaos. Paglia argues that humans developed through revolt against chthonic forces of nature turning to the Apollonian trait of ordered creation (Paglia, 2001). Once we achieve a semblance of order (classicism for example) humanity gets despondent and revolts (romanticism).

We are driven by this dichotomy.

Humanity seems to “oscillate between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival” (Caruth quoted in Saltzman, 2006). Death informs life, fear or dread of life ending motivates us and holds us back, “(I’m) Afraid of not having done enough... of not living enough. I would say this drives me as much as anything. A fear of not living” (Clark, 2017).

Death appears in literature, theatre and every form of art imaginable, it unites every living being in our universe, and it is the only thing we can be sure of. “I’ve come to believe the fear of death drives all men” (Alexander, 2004). Death is then seen as chaos and life is an attempt to impose order. The wall is a metaphor for the ordering of chaos. While I try to control the area and the space chaos will always take over.

“We cannot accept chaos; we have to order it” (Yorke, 2018).

Word Count: 993

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