CRITICAL REVIEW/ Final Major Project

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Fashion & Textiles

FMP Title: Unspoken Dialogue

To be handed in alongside your FMP hand-in

1. Briefly describe the context of your project and how you used a range of critical perspectives and approaches to initiate your idea.

My project inspiration stemmed from my experience of the Ravensbourne environment and how I had felt that surface level judgements of personalities were constantly made in ignorance of the fact that we as humans communicate at all times with our whole self in the sense that we all are constantly thinking, repairing and developing ourselves everyday. My own perspective of how I believe it is such a shame that more consideration is not taken towards the depth of someone's psychological make- up caused me to want to create a fine-art and wearable outcome that alluded to an overwhelming wealth of detail in people's personalities that is unexplored and wanted to represent this with a visual style of my own, inspired by psychedelic and abstract visual connections towards emotions and concepts.

2. Describe how research, analysis and evaluation helped you to feed ideas and develop concepts?

I made sure to differentiate my project into several different stages that were individually supposed to inform separate parts of my development. This meant that research into the psychology of cognition told me the factual details of how individuals interact with each other based on human nature, whilst looking at abstract expressionism showed me how artists portray intangible concepts in a visual way that has significance to them. Therefore, I interpreted science and applied it to case studies of human interaction with my own abstract visual connections of what I experienced from these sources. This worked as a refinement process of analysing whether my illustrations and experiments reflected the scientific theories I had become informed of through reading or the connections I made to personal experiences and visuals. Once I felt that this was achieved, I could finish the stage of my project dedicated to visuals and begin applying this to a commercial fashion context. When this reached a fashion context later on, I used designers and research that aided my aesthetic regardless of whether the context that projects were based on coincided with my own.

3. What specialist skills and methods did you use to realise your project?

From the very start of my project, I retained a visual theme involving my personal style of using wet-on-wet ink techniques and various mark making tools to make textural and action inspired responses to different stimuli like film, photography, music and interviews. I believe all of these processes involved applying a synesthesia of my own perception towards creating visuals that represented my own thoughts. I wanted to illustrate mental health issues like anxiety in my own way, giving the project a uniquely personal visual response that could tie in largely with my passion for 2-D mage making. This graphic design passion has previously been something that i have translated onto garments through heat-transfer and other printing techniques like screen-printing, and in my FMP I essentially set up my project to be able to do this transfer of digitally adapted imagery onto textiles on a much deeper level.

4. How did you integrate practical, theoretical and technical understanding to solve complex problems within your FMP? Please use examples.

Throughout the project, my practical understanding of my image making techniques involving inks, paper, photoshop and prototyping machines like laser cutters or sublimation printers developed as I experimented. I began these explorations, very much in my comfort zone of using the simplest formats and combinations of processes in a way that could become more complicated through the expansion of the theoretical and contextual supporting elements. For example, my illustrations of Phosphenes were initially focused on exploring simple concepts or one individual's personality, yet towards the finalisation of my designs, I was illustrating an abstract response to scenes of entire rooms of people, interacting with one another and experiencing the same stimuli involved in drum and bass raves. This meant giving a stronger attention to detail for complicated, confusing yet still linked together visuals, informed by more further contextual research and a development of technical ability. This came together especially when solving the issue of how my art would be translated onto my garment, opting for a laser - engraving method that contextually allowed for a confusing subtlety and ambiguity that had to be actively explored by a viewer and technically provided an exact translation of my imagery onto my textile to achieve detail.

5. What systems/ tools did you use to plan your project and how effective were they to organise and develop your work?

The system I put in place to organise and decide the points at which I moved on from certain areas of my work involved splitting the project into three stages: research - development of art work - translation into a fashion context. This made the project very simplistic for me to follow and measure my development with, having the freedom to experiment and then refine within all aspects of this plan. The way I thought about it was as if the fashion stage of the project was a separate brand or studio that collaborated with the artistic part of the FMP to create an outcome that would let a deeply considered fine-art idea have a commercial appeal to an audience that is known to engage and be interested in a certain side of fashion. To measure this system along the way, I broke up these stages into differing formats of sketchbook and different visual styles that made sure I kept contextual elements of that stage on track with what I was doing. On top of this, I tried to be as regular and regimented as possible with the frequency of my blog posts as they were a perfect way to evaluate what I had achieved as a result of this system and what I needed to do next in order to fully realise each stage. I did feel like these methods organised my work in a very effective way, as I was struggling to articulate my concept throughout the project and knew it was necessary to provide very clear sign posting towards what points I had reached in my development.

6. What type of evaluative and reflective records did you keep? How did this help you develop your learning? Please use examples.

In terms of evaluation, I believed it was important to synthesise my reflections around my progress into clear spaces; these being my Wordpress blog and a research and response folder dedicated to providing a linear and all encompassing record of the experiments, sources and refinement involved in my artistic stage. With the blog, I made sure to adapt and build its format so that a reader can easily take themselves through each stage of development and not have to refer to too many external points like a sketchbook to completely understand what I would talk about. This involved a constant reference back to my developing concept and how i was attempting to meet its requirements both visually and contextually, meaning that I could compare each mention of my progress to the last and therefore see if my most recent reflections showed development and integrity. These posts would also feature formats of research and development that became integrated into the blog such as journal extracts of personal experience, taken from a specific isolated time like a rave and then analysed and developed upon in an evaluative state. With regards to the research/response folder that I curated, I wanted it to give clarity to the stage of my project that tried to inspire visual anxiety for viewers within other sketchbooks so that for an examiner, my thought process and development had a more professionally suited appearance. Once I started my A3 fashion sketchbook, I felt that containing this format would have simply been needlessly mirroring the well laid out format of that stage of my work.

7. Who is your intended audience? Describe techniques and methods you used to communicate your idea to them.

My intended audience is young people between the ages of 16-25, who are in some way involved in music events and rave culture in the UK. This is due to my overarching interests in marrying my own interests together where I feel that there is a gap in the market. Specifically, I believe this gap is found in the arrogance of most consumers within underground electronic music scene and I detailed the way I perceive these people in my research through observational writing. Therefore, I believed it was necessary to explore and amalgamate tropes of garments from rave culture and artists within the scene to allow for me to develop a conduit that would be appealing to those i consider ignorant yet simultaneously delivering a concept that explores a rejection of surface level ignorance. As my concept was largely found around entry points being an unfortunate substitute of what can be understood about a person, I hadn't wanted to involve constant recognisable tropes to achieve an unexplained iconic nature to the design until I had finished the garment itself. However after this, I used the branding of the word 'Phosphene' to create promotional images that featured a similar minimalism in composition as popular magazine and social media layouts to effectively market a more ambiguous project to an audience of young people.

8. Overall summary: Describe the key points to take away from this experience. In what ways will your approach to creative production change in future as a result

Despite several small mistakes and compromises to the project and final garment, I was extremely pleased with the result of my FMP, providing me with one of the most well-constructed pieces I have to show for. I believe it fitted my brief of becoming a commercial style piece that carried a visual theme from another contextual background. This is a method that I feel has a lot of merit in generating visually broad projects and is definitely an element I would take away to see the potential of and push to new extents in future projects. On top of this, the use of prototyping facilities to generate samples and experiments is an excellent way to expand a project, utilising equipment that's effect on textiles and artwork is largely unexplored by most students. And so the choice to use this equipment is a privilege and an inspiration that will most likely become more of a starting point for my future work as appose to a means to an end. Finally, I learnt that the repetition and exhaustion of variations of ideas within fashion projects does become a useful method of developing designs when the designing process overs several weeks. Originally, during one or two week projects I found processes like this where one drawing had to be exhausted over several pages of a sketchbook, lacking in creativity and distracting from processes that cause much more variety. However, in a project as long as the FMP, stages where this level of consideration was needed did positively develop my project and in my next courses I will plan these into my developmental stages to utilise their detail.