Art Critical Study Essay, Research Paper

Critical Study

When I began thinking about the critical study I was not sure what movement or particular variety of Art to study. I decided a good starting point would be what types of art interest me and what pieces attract me when visiting an art gallery. The first thing that came to mind was four works that I had seen at

the Sensations exhibition. This led me to reflect on my experience of A-level Art as a whole. Particularly on how differently I looked at pieces through my physical and mental development in Art methods and styles. My approach has changed gradually. My method is to simply react to the subject I am drawing, giving it meaning through my own personal reaction to the subject. A-level Art has enabled me to look at art on a deeper level. From my own experience as a student and observing younger students I have noticed how they as I did, judge a piece of work merely on how good a likeness it is, no attention would be paid to the scale or composition. They tend to take things as face value and not read into the work. Throughout all the things that I have learnt as an art students I now cannot help looking

at a piece without finding things that give information on the meaning and point of the piece and sometimes the mood or politics of the artist. I feel in the change from GCSE to Alevel my work has developed and so has my attitude. My work now involves reasoning and thinking behind it. I see my work as an extension of my identity. It is maybe my interpretation or reflection on the way in which I see things. My past experience of art as forced me to look at art in a different way. It has to make me react just as I react when creating a piece. I tend to look at the reasoning behind an artists work and I always ask myself why. Why certain images are included, why the images are structured and placed in the way in which they are, why the colours have been used in the way that they have and ultimately how all these factor accumulate to give the piece mood, message, tone and emotion. At first before visiting the exhibition I thought I would encounter a collection of superficial and pretentious pieces of art work. This alone shows how basic my attitude was. I found my mind was broadened into this area of art and the way in which the artist wanted the observer to think about and also

react to the pieces. What is interesting and has valid consideration for thought is the actual title of the exhibition . It give some sort of clue to what to expect and perhaps what is to be gained. Outlined in the gallery guide are the two interpretations of sensation: “stirring of the emotions- we can either turn away or look more closely at what the artist is saying” To do either is an instant reaction to the piece therefore the description of the exhibition describes what I personally believe every good piece of art should do. “Does he or she want us to reconsider an issue or merely seek to move us and influence our emotions” This definitely applied to a lot of pieces that I saw and was not really impressed with. Such as the sheep which was cut into half and the shark which is also cut. They invoked a reaction as they were visually very stimulating. However I didn’t find there was much to read into, other than they were made simply to be noticed. “consciousness of ones body or sensation or emotion. We respond to the works with our senses mainly with our sight but we are aware of texture and how it would feel to touch objects” A perfect piece to apply to this quote I feel to be

Marcus Harvey’s Myra . The piece made through the method of using children’s hands containing texture touching the canvas to create the image of the infamous child killer. This has a chain reaction effect on many “sensory reactions”. Due to the horrific reality of the subject matter many mixed emotions are thrown into battle. It got a huge reaction, both from the public and the media. It itself caused a sensation. This proved it has the ability to move emotions and certainly cause a response. What is the main interest in this piece and the factor that caused so much argument. Why did Harvey choose to use this particular image of Myra Hindley and create it in the way in which he did. Was the child abusers image simply used to upset the general public or it is reasonable to think Harvey had some actual logic behind the work? My reasoning or reaction is to the piece technically it is structured well. It was I considered the link that Myras image to the public and the way that she is seen by them is solely connected to children through her crimes. Harvey may have been displaying her as incased by or covered in her past (children). However I do believe his main intention in

displaying this particular painting was to cause public opposition and therefore media attention. This I believe was to raise awareness to the exhibition. This can be further justified by the collector of the art Charles Saatchi. An advertising genius a person well use to manipulating the use of media. In terms of sensations the Myra image has many issues surrounding it, e.g.: child abuser, murder etc., therefore it is this to blame, and not the actual painting. I would be doubtful that the same public reaction would be provoked if it was just a painting of a normal person. Harveys work is a cleverly put together I considered another possibility of what Harvey is trying to convey. The innocence of the children, a innocence representing the way in which society judges something, compared to the way a child does so. The children’s lives being the reason why she is perceived the way that she is. There were three other pieces in which really jumped out at me. I think that unlike the work of Harvey, Jenny Saville work is a personal exploration of perceptions within society. Savilles work to me, seems to be making a statement about how women are portrayed in society . She explores the

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common stereotypes of beauty. Saville seems to paint larger models and does so not merely to be different but to question societies conventions. Her peculiar perspectives and “large fleshy” paintings cause the observer to think about what is a normal figure, by challenging the stereotypical image of the female. My initial opinion (reaction)was that Saville was perhaps displaying that we are all individual and separate. Saville seems to explore this desire for beauty in her painting PLAN . This painting which seems to out line the lines drawn by a surgeon before surgery. Its large scale make the painting take on another form, almost conveying the image of contour lines on a map. The map of the human or female body. I think it could be exploring the way women are prepared to go under the surgeons knife in the quest to gain the body beautiful. The map image could be applied as a map is used to find the RIGHT way to go or in this case to be. The surgeons knife to a butchers knife and the way in which women can be treated like bits of meat in today’s society. The composition and structure of the piece may also link to this point. The vagina seems to be the centre of gravity and the closest thing to the viewer. The head face and so brain is placed far back as

if unimportant or irrelevant to the image of a women, or in societies perception of a women. This view is supported in her work, SHIFT Saville has placed the figures of women as if they were hanging in a meat market. Again many of the faces heads and brains are not included. Perhaps this conveys again that women are on display in society, looked upon like meat, mere objects and not as individual humans. She uses natural colours and although the images are well created the style of painting that she uses is quite messy. This I felt to be displaying the problem itself to be a messy one that is not clear cut at all. The sheer size and scale on which she works could also be conveying that the problem she is dealing with is also huge. Her female figures are truly life like and her perspective is also useful to note. In her work intitled, PROPPED she explores the angle of which her model is sitting. The emphasis on the lower half of the body and not her face is different to the conventional norms of figure painting. The whole image itself seems to be almost a reaction to the arguments and meanings of the previous to pieces. The subject matter is depicted as oddly obese and disproportional. She also looks quite unhappy, her hands seem to be clawing into her legs

along with her ‘Propped’ position seeming and perhaps symbolically uncomfortable. Her style of painting being different with the image of the physical form of a women almost rebelling to the ‘norms’ of a male society. Physically clawing at herself, unhappy and positively uneasy with her situation. This piece I found to have a lot of emotion, perhaps a little more than the other two, almost a messy conclusion. My study of Saville has led me to believe that she can provide both her own reaction to society but also introduce a feminist process into the viewer. The fact that I can now study an artist or exhibitions work is in itself my conclusion. It is my experience of A level art that has matured my skills and enabled me to read into works to look for technical processes as well as the messages and emotions. I feel I have proven my ability to do this and am glad that I could.

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