

NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF ARTS

SNU

Self Negotiated Unit

EVALUATION

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## Foreword

We are experiencing difficult and different times. We were affected globally by invisible monster with such common symptoms. We had to cancel or change many of our life events.

We did not get a chance to visit London and people who were supposed to go to Berlin, had to stay at home.

These times brought so much uncertainty for students, how it affects their tuition, finances and mental health.

Being fine art student, I wish to show my artwork in person, to make sure full experience of the viewer. For example, to feel weight of bronze sculptures, to smell varnish on canvas, to see how work changes in different light.

When I placed my artwork and research on my website, it rather became flat and looked lesser. In my mind I am comparing it to my last trip to NUA studio, when I picked up as much as I can of my work and materials and still had to leave some behind.

I hope it will reflect the true value of it.

I hope that everyone's effort to make this situation less stressful will be successful.

I hope that we, as artists, had a creative point of view in this situation.

Stay safe

\*Word count not included

## Evaluation

For my SNU (Self Negotiated Unit) I did two smaller projects and one main one. I would not be able to recall chronological order for them as I was working on most of it almost in the same time period. One of them was an air-drying clay *pancake face* sitting figure in a chair made of pegs. I simply wanted to explore *pancake face* figure and experiment with air drying clay. It was a complicated decision when deciding which unit it should be assigned to. I believe my choice was right as it was unusual approach to depicting *pancake faces*. Another piece was a *pancake face* head made of plaster of Paris. I was inspired to experiment with this medium by Frank Sidebottom which I researched last term and the curiosity of how it is made and how it would impact my creative path. And I believe my leading project for this unit was painting *pancake faces* "Last Supper" on a mirror. There are a few really important factors which led me towards this experiment. I believe by choosing to paint over old mirror I am supporting sustainability by giving it a different purpose. By experimenting with different paints and mirror surface I am gaining knowledge which I can I apply on future projects. Looking at subject of the painting which is traditional and one of the most popular and recognized paintings in world, it introduced me to the meaning of appropriation. Harris (2020, p. 2) states that "To compare oneself to such masters by copying their work was to elevate and situate oneself accordingly – to define oneself within and against the canon."

This unit invited us to "Get your hands dirty". I consider it to be the best way to find out what helps me to achieve better results and what might be not as successful as I aspire. As I was already familiar with working with air drying clay, there was not much of the difference. I must say, though that it helped discussing variety of it at the NUA shop and narrowing it down to one that meets my current needs. By making clay sculpture, I was mostly exploring the opportunities of alternative *pancake face* physique. Last term I was exploring the figure shape for *pancake face* as well. By comparing them I realise that each of them is unique and the creative process dictates character's proportions.

Before I had an idea to make plaster of Paris *pancake face* head, I watched both movies from the library and a lot of videos on YouTube about Frank Sidebottom. Both – character and creator – were inspiring, fascinating and nutty. Influenced by it and inspired to make as a *pancake face* head, I watched tutorials online, however, most videos included a real

person as a mould. As for *pancake face*, I just needed a round shape. I used a beach ball (Ø 51 cm) because of its quite durable surface and possibility to deflate. In that way I make sure that project is sustainable, and I can reuse existing mould in the future. Facial features were created by taping hand formed foil tin onto the ball. This plaster head supposed to be as steppingstone for one more head (Ø 107 cm) which I was debating to make either in plaster of Paris or fabric covered in "Paverpol". However, due to not being able to use studio space I decided not to go any further with it. However, wanting to explore a new medium I applied to other projects and used it for ASU2.

My leading project for SNU *pancake faces* "Last Supper" was most time consuming and required most experimentation. Before starting to paint it, I purchased small mirrors to explore which paint (acrylic or oil) works best on the surface and I get the desired result. I also was puzzled about the use of varnish. On one of the experiment paintings I applied varnish before painting just to analyse the effect. I was fond of the vivid colour outcome by painting with oil, however, drying time and smooth surface did prevent the paint from to the surface of the mirror, in result, I had difficulties painting in detail. While the intention of recreating one of the most recognisable artwork in the world led me to research about art appropriation. As an artist who seeks to be unique, it felt like stepping back by adapting my created theme to already existing work. Then came across an e-book that put my mind to ease, quoting:

"'Appropriation' in this sense is beyond the legalistic understanding, locating it in the vicinity of "plagiarism". It is not so much the ownership which is pointed to here, but rather the dimension of *proprius which* means something that is characteristic, that is part of oneself." (Lindner O. and Nicklas P., 2012 p.6)

Perhaps, it is liberating to know that even if it draws a fine line between appropriation and plagiarism, artists are still able to apply previous ideas to new artwork, and probably, have more attention.

Even though I had not one but several projects for this unit. I believe that most time consuming and despite interference of virus had been still fully completed, is *pancake faces* 'Last Supper'. Implementation of the idea was challenging, on the other hand, highly informative. I had great components thrown in mixer and hoping for the proper outcome. That's Leonardo Da Vinci's 'Last Supper' coming all the way from Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy, being an example of Catholic church admired and cherished; an attempt to make sustainable art by

painting on old mirror. As being inspired by giving a second life to objects that have been abandoned in the mass production world. By creating something on it, I believe I change the course of its journey and value; my created contemporary theme *pancake faces*, which I use as platform and experimentation for my creative work. In a doubt of how to collate something godly with humorous mockery. As Lindner and Nicklas states "In these attempts at definition, adaptation and appropriation are held against each other and defined in mutual respect to each other as two different intertextual strategies like pastiche and parody." (Lindner O. and Nicklas P., 2012 p.5).

From contemporary art point of view, I consider my version of 'last supper' is not as thoroughly modified. I left original setting, initial colour scheme of their garments, even most gestures and facial expressions. Looking at examples, I realise how widely this concept could have been used. However, I am pleased with result as my main goal was to introduce it to *pancake faces* theme and for the most part transform Jesus figure - to apply new humorous, a bit grotesque representation overall.

As from the difficult side of painting on the mirror, I looked into Gerhard Richter and his approach to this difficult surface. Some of the artworks were covered in plain reflective paint. Colour and the reflection on the surface were considered to be artwork. In addition, he used to photograph them and paint over creating a feeling of several dimensions.

As a result, I believe I am embracing the golden middle of fitting within contemporary art, introducing sustainable art into my practice and adopt features of dominant culture.

Experience of exploration and experiment within my creative practise was essential. It opened roads of new ways to express my creativity. It was beneficial to my created theme *pancake faces* and finding new approach. As for air drying clay sculpture I am sure there are many different brands. I would to try to work with kiln fired clay as well. I would be curious of different outcomes, not just figure, shape of the body but also surface and how it affects the artwork.

Even though I had the most exciting experience of making plaster head, I still feel that the field has so much to offer and as I barely touched the surface. In the future I would like to make more detailed mould to be able to distinguish facial features. As mentioned before, due to lack of space a project when instead of plaster I would use material called "Paverpol". It would be a curious approach and I would look forward to experiment with new mediums and hope for different and greater results.

As I call it – the leading project – *pancake faces* 'Last Supper' was the most challenging. The inner torn between feeling lacking of ideas and turning to appropriation. Even though in a book "Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation: literature, film and the Arts" Lindner and Nicklas states: "It is particularly important to realize that appropriation can be understood as part of the process of adaptation." (Lindner O. and Nicklas P., 2012 p.5). Moreover, internet is heaving with various interpretations of the 'Last Supper', so I should not be ashamed of exploring different ways of expressing my creative work. The amount of experiments I have done towards this project proved my determination towards result which pleases me. As any other project for this unit, I think there are still room to investigate and might come up with even greater results.

In conclusion, even though it was a lot of time and resources invested in this unit, I think it is still just the surface of what could be done in the future. Either if I choose to experiment more with sculpture, particularly with clay, maybe I could open online shop or look for retailers that would be interested in selling it in their stores. If I decide to experiment more with plaster of Paris and "Paverpol" and or other mediums and make enormous *pancake faces* heads, maybe they could find a place within art festivals or become stage decorations. As for painting on a mirror, either it is appropriation or not, that is an opportunity to make sustainable art on mirrors and find more new ways, more effective ways to expressing my creativity of *pancake faces*.

Word count - 1662

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