

NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF ARTS

MP

MASTERS PROJECT

CRITICAL
EVALUATION

IEVA KAMINSKAITE

1902642

2020

Contents

Foreword	3
Critical Evaluation	4
Bibliography.....	10

Foreword

When studies were postponed until September, I had high hopes to walk in through the door. I hoped it will be different and I will be able to learn in person, not only from tutors and technicians but also from my peers.

Unfortunately, virus has a mind on its own.

Even though I am thankful for internet and its capability, the creative process felt lonely. I often found myself a little more lost in the process. Comparing with home studio and university studio work, it was harder to work at home as I did not have opportunity to step back, not to see my work, for example, over the weekend and then after coming back, look at it with fresh eyes. Furthermore, change of environment – tall ceiling and white walls like perfect blank canvas used to help with inspiration. I know we were able to book spaces but since I live a little further away, I decided rather not to travel if not necessary.

During this period, I had plenty of time to think. One of the thoughts made me concerned – how us as students will be seen in the job market? Is pandemic going to affect our value? Are we going to be called lazier - students attending lectures in pjs and dressing gowns? Or something completely opposite – quick to learn, to adjust to new situations and being able to change plans and ideas accordingly. I hope instead of being called laid back, we increased our value by changing how we think and adapt.

I wish everyone to stay strong, keep mind occupied with something inspiring and rather bright than dark.

One day we will meet again.

Stay safe

**Not included in word count.*

Critical Evaluation

It has been three years since I painted my first pancake face. Even though it did not have exactly round shape or bright pink cheeks, I was convinced that they have a great meaning and uniqueness. Their grotesque expressions – combination of darkness and humour – leading towards unknown scenarios. During my time in MA, not only I expanded my creative work from depicting pancake faces as imaginary portraiture, but I also created a figure, and worked in 2D and 3D. For my Masters Project I decided to paint three paintings and to make a sculpture. And I picked one of the paintings from ASU2 term. My whole MA was a continuous inspiration of literature, my Lithuanian heritage and folklore, also, human interaction with environment. A creative process with no rules, letting me be in charge by following my artist's instinct.

The creative process of the MP was very direct and I tried to follow MP proposal as it seemed to be a good tool for organising not just my thoughts but also the rhythm of the work. Even though it was said that unfinished work is acceptable, I felt the need for completion. Luckily, just from first sitting down to it I knew exactly what and how I would like to do for my Masters Project. My final project was inspired, I would like to say, by only one word – *malevolent*. Adding to it - (*folklore*) *story* - and I created a scenario, or a story and placed pancake faces into positions. To completely express myself and feel out the process, I also created a poem. The idea of the poem happened at the same time as first sketches and later by being inspired of the final work I finished writing it. Quick doodles were followed by more detailed sketches for paintings. I decided not to waste time and finish them in colour to save time deciding the colour palette and details later. Before painting it was necessary to look for some information, research ideas. For example, vintage candy shop style. I used Pinterest for visual research which helped me pick right colours and decorations. I also played around with translating a few words from English to French, to see how it would work on a painting. Even though I already had my sketches I still was not sure which paint to use - oil or acrylic. To help me decide and to be sure I was ready for big format paintings, I painted 30x40 cm '*Pancake Parade*' with oil paint. However, at the time it did not seem I am confident enough with the medium, also, the outcome was different than I expected. In addition, I think I was more confident with acrylic paint because of my experience, the variety of paints I had, and I was feeling less experimental with quite tight schedule and outcome. In a way I was relieved I can work with acrylic paint. Despite we were having debates with the peers, that oil paint is more sustainable and even though it is used with turpentine, where acrylic paints are made from plastic, I would still think that it is about an equal amount of waste or harm. Even though the smell

of oil paints and turpentine is associated with art studio and top-class artists I would have to agree with something I read on Artsy:

'You've probably heard stories about artists who are so committed to painting that they used their bedroom as their studio. But one of the most costly aspects—for both your finances and your health—is that oil paints require a ventilated area. Oil-based paints carry many hazardous health concerns, and if there's no ventilation, solvents like mineral spirits and turpentine fill the air with fumes.' Hill, E. (2018) *5 Reasons Why You Should Try Painting with Acrylics Instead of Oils*. Available at: <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-5-reasons-painting-acrylics-oils> (Accessed: 04 Dec 2020).

Being an artist who is using one of the rooms in the house as a studio, nevertheless, it has more functions to it – guest room, *I don't know where to put this* room or occasional laundry drying room. Throughout the year I noticed that if I am painting something in a smaller scale, I tend to use my hand as a brief palette – something that is closer, quick to access and there is no need to break the intense work. And in this case, it is less harmful for my health using acrylic paint than oil paint. I believe I have plenty of great reasons to sticking to acrylic paint for now and or occasional try-out and practise with oil paint. As an artist I must say favourite time is always when working on physical material, like we just said for SNU (Self Negotiated Unit) – getting hands dirty. And while working on research and such I romanticize the process of making art but when finally doing it I keep finding difficulties. The ideas that looked so simple in the sketch were so challenging while painting. For example, in my painting '*Freedom Handler*' I depict a net full of little pancake faces and it took me at least three evenings to get the result that I was aiming for. In a way it is a battle with myself when at first, I love the outcome and next, I question my ability and talent. Even though I added a painting from previous term to include to MP, I feel like my new paintings are more mature, my painting technique moved way further, and I feel more confident with the final outcome. The curious part of Masters Project was making of the sculpture. In a way I was preparing for it whole year, when just in the very start I made sketch that combines many masks that comes to a relief type artwork in a shape of the bird. And yes, I still call it a mask even though the life of the mask, at least in my opinion, ended as soon as I glued paper onto the eyeholes. It becomes a unit and it serves different purpose and it is no longer wearable accessory. When I started painting them, I used only store bought, however, while spending time in 3D studio at NUA, I decided to make a plastic mould, just in case I need to make more myself. When I made up

my mind with the sketch of the sculpture, I started thinking how to make more of them. Naturally, I tried to follow the example of store-bought product. I used plastic mould for shaping pieces of paper and cardboard glued together with PVA and water. To my disappointment it had a long drying time, the structure seemed too thin and surface was wrinkled after drying, almost like it was shrunk at places. That obviously was not good enough for me to continue. And I am grateful that one of the peers suggested to use plaster of paris instead. Since I had two original masks left and two moulds, I was able at once to make four masks and the drying time was not so terrible. I think this way I made another 12 masks. The surface was not exactly smooth; however, it was an alternative plan that worked good enough. Due to plaster being a bit flaky and made mask structure seem fragile, I decided to cover surface with material called 'Paverpol' which I used in previous term to stiffen fabric for 'Dead Body'. It made surface shiny, smoother and it did not have that delicate feeling. To be sure to witch direction my creative work of masks/units is going, I made a mood board, so that I could follow the progress. While working on them started planning how to make an egg-shaped base. To help me truly see the size of it I drew it on a piece of paper. Gradually from H90cm it shrank to H60cm. At first it just looked too big and I tried imagining it along paintings. At 3D studio at NUA I agreed on last measurements, which was more convenient because of blue foam sheet measurements. I think it turned out very well, even if it decreased in 20cm height and width. It was wonderful to see how from just plain blue foam sheets appears my wished shape. Because it was made in long halves, I had to glue them together. I am very thankful for technicians' help throughout the process as it was quite complicated, especially in this difficult time of pandemic. So, when it was finally at my home studio space and hanging, I had to decide how to fix masks on to it. At first the idea was to fix them onto with insert method, however, almost immediately I changed my mind and decided to use glue. The process became very messy very quickly, but then something almost clicked, and I was just following my artistic instinct rather than rules. It was a liberating feeling; I was just enjoying the performance. Almost deliberately I poured glue over the masks. It gave more grotesque look; I was creating a 'Transegging' piece and it developed to something that reflects my creative work very well. In comparison of processes of painting and making this sculpture, I think paintings were planned in advance and that could be a reason why it felt unlike creating a sculpture of purely following a creative instinct.

While working on my Masters Project, I also decided to purchase a lino cutting and printing kit. I was hoping to be able to learn that in university, however, due to these circumstances, I was not able to. But I was determined to do it while at my MA. I was greatly inspired by Mark

Hearld. His 'Workbook' just appeared in my hands and I was fascinated by the prints. This book was bursting with love for nature and British landscape. Even though our creative styles might have its differences, there is plenty to discover and put to use.

During these uncertain times which brought us - artist and creatives limitations of how we can show work. It is frustrating, on the other hand, it is forcing us to improvise and look for alternative ways to be out there and gain some recognition. My ideal plan was to have a small MP exhibition in King's Lynn (as it is closer to home) at 'Greyfriars Art Space' gallery. I first contacted them in the end of the summer, to make sure I have space to when I will be ready. I did not receive any answers. I kept my spirit up and emailed them again. To my deepest regret, I found it to be closed permanently. It is unfortunate to see how little rays of light disappear from the horizons from smaller cities. I was hoping to rather be ignored and talk my way into the space than seeing it shut down.

It is difficult times for exhibiting physical work, especially if it must be shipped overseas. However, creative communities solving problems in original ways. As I have seen on Instagram, some galleries exhibit in their windows, some invested great effort to move all the exhibitions online. Which was exactly my thought after it did not work out with the local gallery. I looked at some of the online exhibition building websites. I chose Artsteps as it was free membership, I was able to build my own space and the ability to have an audience. I imagined a small space exhibition. Instead, of putting my artwork into spacious art galleries with never-ending white walls, I created something small, what I exactly could afford to rent for some time. I believe created small space complements artwork and it gives a better feeling of the scale. Unfortunately, I was not able to make a 3D model for the online exhibition, instead I placed an object in the middle to help to imagine where it would be and how it could be accessed.

Due to not being able to exhibit in a physical space with walls, I decided that I would like to place my MP artwork in the background of the forest. I wanted to see how it looks like in the different light, how they interact with nature. In my opinion, they do not look natural, however, it was a good chance to see their scale, how they look all together. I believe it was the best place to take pictures of the sculpture. The misty forest worked very well with the idea of grotesque object and complemented each other. I also gained some attention from passers-by.

I came with a realization that face mask is great space for artwork. A person wearing it becomes a walking exhibition and a promoter. I believe it also increases value of the mask and it could be a solution of them being often disposed and sadly ending up in land waste. I checked out several companies. Even though the ones I chose are made from neoprene are far

from being made from natural materials it might still have a positive effect and be cherished. To my disappointment small print always leaves out important information. Such as: these masks are not suitable for medical use and does not protect from viruses, and no liability for the effectiveness. It raises a question so what is the purpose of such product, how to be more aware of small font and how to eliminate cheap, unnecessary production.

I think best way to gain an audience is through closest people, the ones that truly believes in my work. Continuously improve social media, website, work on SEO and make sure I am acknowledged by Google and easily found. I think it is important to have portfolios created in recognized websites and to make sure artist name is well spread in web. Also, it is important to have a screening process for gallery invitations, especially if they have participation fee. As much as exciting they are, some could be tricky and hide important information in the smallest of fonts. All the ideas above are still very valid for my own practise and I should invest more time in making some changes in the future.

When I look at my creative work, I believe it lacks reflection of the current issues. Such as gender, race or politics. The only meeting point would be human and environment interaction. However, I believe I raise a more *forever issue* of humanity's as a unit struggle. In my eyes this is how the idea of art should be - unifying us as people, not separate us into different sections. Although media is tediously determined to put label on everything.

During my whole MA I was following 'Human – walking bird' fragment from Lithuanian poet A. Baltakis poem. It let me explore my heritage and folklore, I came to conclusion that I was unconsciously inspired by Lithuanian traditions. This outcome of the research made me prouder of where I am coming from and what I have to offer as an international artist. As I wanted my creative work to have more flexible meaning. I decided to read about British folklore. I was surprised how much similarities I have found. It made me feel more connected to my current residency. Throughout my MA work I depict bird as a symbol of freedom. Furthermore, I found more meaningful symbolism which could help define my creative work while reading about British folklore:

'Birds, as lords of the skies, are often regarded as messengers of the gods. Since ancient times their flight patterns have been used for divination, their innards for prophesy and their behaviours interpreted as dire omens or predictions of luck.' Chainey, D.D. *A Treasury of British Folklore Maypoles, Mandrakes & Mistletoe* (2018) p.51.

The first birds I depicted were seagulls, mostly inspired by Jonathan Livingston Seagull, written by Richard Bach. Without any strategy I depicted a cuckoo for a painting for ASU2. I was not seeking it to be its exact appearance, it was more made by my imagination. However, the concept of cuckoo as a negative creature was confirmed:

'While other birds are diligently and charmingly building their nests and rearing their young here comes the cuckoo, which lays its egg effortlessly, and when its gross young hatches it does its best to starve and murder its baby hosts.' Fisher, C. *The Magic of Birds* (2014) p.110.

Accidentally I added a contradictory character to my creative work as if I wanted to complicate the dilemma of what side to pick.

Since I moved towards more illustrative work for my MP, I was also looking at fairy tales which were described by Zipes (2013, p.6) as manifold types that keep us returning to them throughout our lives and hoping that they might open the portal to another world. This is exactly the task that I am I want to apply to my artwork; I want audience to be able to disconnect and experience something that is not being broadcasted through all the channels. I was also looking for inspiration while reading and listening to audio of Allan Edgar Poe, as well as Grimm Brothers. Because of the strong connection with literature I decided to write a poem myself. I wanted it to clarify my work but remain mysterious. I believe artist's narrative is important, however, I wish for audience to make their own stories and open their mind to creative thinking.

In conclusion, I believe my Masters Project was successful. I followed well my MP proposal's schedule and I was able to make all the components on time. I am happy with the outcome and I think hard work paid off. I wish it could have been exhibited more promptly, however, I am thankful for the welcoming forest, especially in the current times. I believe there is always room for improvement and or different approach, but I would leave that for the future self-development. As an artist I wish myself to make artwork that feels liberating and is challenging as that is the way to move forward.

Bibliography

Chainey, D.D. (2018) *A Treasury of British Folklore Maypoles, Mandrakes & Mistletoe*. London: National Trust.

Fisher, C. (2014) *The Magic of Birds*. London: The British Library.

Hearld, M. and Martin, S. (2012) *Mark Hearld: workbook*. London: Merrel.

Hill, E. (2018) *5 Reasons Why You Should Try Painting with Acrylics Instead of Oils*. Available at: <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-5-reasons-painting-acrylics-oils> (Accessed: 04 Dec 2020).

Zipes, J. (2013) *A Fairy tale is more than just a fairy tale*. Book 2.0, Vol. 2 Issue 1/2, p113-120, 8p