

## **Research Task 1**

### **From week 2 – Lecture 2 - Art, Artists and Audiences Topic - Art and Self-Information**

*'A real work of art destroys, in the consciousness of the receiver, the separation between himself and the artist—not that alone, but also between himself and all whose minds receive this work of art. In this freeing of our personality from its separation and isolation, in this uniting of it with others, lies the chief characteristic and the great attractive force of art'.*  
(Tolstoy, What is Art, 1987, p. 38)

For many great artists the call to create comes from a powerful force that resides within. They feel compelled to express themselves, through art, to understand their thoughts, emotions and experiences of the world. In Joann Sfar's 2010 film 'Gainsbourg: A Heroic Life', the provocative French musician, Serge Gainsbourg, claims to feel unbearable pain that can only be released through his creations. Through responding to internal forces, such as these, artists reveal their inner world in physical forms that - either purposefully or unwittingly - capture the emotional worlds of their audiences.

When artists portray their experiences in a manner that the audience relates to emotionally, they leave their audience feeling as though they have stepped inside their mind and given life to something they themselves could sense but not convey. The uniqueness of the details yielding to an experience do not matter. It is the artists' ability to create a representation of the lingering essence of an experience that the audience responds to. It is the essence that unites them.

Many people struggle with self-expression, due to political, cultural and personal restraints. Yet, they intuitively know that the ability to express themselves effectively is instrumental to their happiness. Within the artists' work, people find freedom of expression they long to find within themselves, yet cannot access. This creates a mutual feeling of empathy, between the artist and the audience. They reflect each other on an intimate level and through this reflection, repressed thoughts and emotions are set free.

Artists, like Gainsbourg, take risks in pursuit of freedom and understanding, which allow the audience to free their personalities without taking risks of their own. Gainsbourg wrote provocative lyrics that challenged the expression of sexuality in French culture. On one hand he offended the sensitivities of society; on the other hand, he captured the interest of an audience with a longing to express the same desires.

Challenging societal 'norms' is controversial and the artist is not always admired for risks they take. Gainsbourg's lyrical approval of dark skin and his bold introduction to Nigerian beats was not well accepted by all at the time. However, the progressive nature of his work captured the attention of a nation and he is now considered one of the most influential musicians of French culture.

Artist's expressions create a sense of community and socially constructed barriers, that seek to bring order and conformity, begin to break down. The artist ventures into the unknown, challenging conventions and belief systems, which opens up a safe space for the audience to express their empathy. Their sense of isolation melts away as they realise that their internal language is spoken not only by the artist, but by others who find their expression through the same art.

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