

Julie Huckle: Creative Piece and Rationale

Temporal Connection



Evaluation

Attempting to illustrate the submitted Temporal Connection image through the medium of conceptual art (Tate 2022) where the idea is foremost to the finished piece, created divergent opportunities and challenges. And the potential possibility for the viewer to imagine the juxtaposition of huge mountains of non-recyclable waste and the need to act fast, in order to limit climate change, as the human relationship to time in the future is not sustainable.

I needed to consider both the slow process of construction from the artistic perspective and the Slow Art principle of allowing time to slowly explore the artwork from the viewers perspective. Collecting leaves during Autumn walks, followed by a slow drying process, where the leaves were pressed between sheets of recycled paper and weighed down with books was relatively simple. But the original intention to draw images of the natural world on the leaves, exploring art through the limited lifespan of the leaf and therefore temporality from a

different perspective, changed as the leaf structure became too fragile to draw on. On reflection, had time been created earlier in the process, this may have been possible. Whilst, considering the possibility to label each plant, and explain the concept, was also rejected, apart from within this submission, so that the focus would be on the viewer's experiential experience without additional information and reflect the original concept of Slow Art.

The image is planned as an extension of task one, Journey with Ancient and Notable Trees, reflecting the stories and art throughout time, trees have influenced, and the suggestion to create new stories and art. Trees without man's interference connect and sustain each other by sharing nutrients and water through a network of underground mycelium and when felled, the connection is broken (Holewinski, 2022). Ancient trees, communicate and act as mother trees for younger saplings, responding with additional nutrients delivered through the mycelium (Wohllben, 2016) but there is no legal protection within the UK, that cannot be overridden in the name of progress and speed (Woodland Trust, 2022). The 200-year-old rare Cubbington Pear (Bond, 2020) in Warwickshire, was felled in 2020 to make way for the now in question HS2 breaking the connection of human and nature and although Zhang (2022) argues time is fluid and conceptual, the temporal relationship to the Cubbington Pear is altered from present to past.

The leaves of Common Beech, Field Maple, Golden Sycamore, Norway Maple, Silver Maple, Tulip Tree, and White Poplar symbolise individual trees on a landscape connected by mycelium. The dried petals a wild species rose with clearly visible veins, represent the hyphae threads of mycelium and in growth act as a guide to pollinators to find the source of nectar.

The image is digitally manipulated from colour to monochrome, reflecting progression rather than a return to traditional practices, therefore more faithfully aligning with the Slow Movement (Cittaslow, 2022). And the original work is intended to be compostable, reflecting the natural world's ability to sustain through decomposition with the return of nutrients to the soil.

## Rationale

The conceptual image Temporal Connection aims to draw, both on wider Slow concepts and the original intention of Slow Art as an experiential experience for the viewer but this aspect of the image is not yet measurable. And demonstrating the experience from the perspective of artistic concept and construction, draws on the possibility of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) as the submitted work is bounded by rules, yet offers the potential for absolute absorption through slow reading, advocated by Kingsley (2010). Organised planning does create a greater understanding during the research, construction and reflective analysis stages. But freedom from the consciousness of time in the longer term, may be constrained by the time frame of multiple university submissions.

The Slow Art movement attempts to align with Clancey's (2017) analysis of the origins of Slow and the Slow Food movement as "a reemphasis on time as a path towards intense and authentic experience" (Clancey, 2017:7) and is designed to encourage the use of the senses, translating for the viewer as a meditative experience (Shimamura, 2014). Although, Slow Art has expanded more recently to incorporate the wider church of the creative arts, including literature, film, poetry, dance, theatre, television and photography, the original concept of Slow Art is attributed to one man's creative vision. Albeit, a man who is CEO of a collaborative organisation, where the bottom line is to marketise to the consumer. Rather than altruism, and whose business model is customer focused, and peer supported (Collaborative Gain, 2022) aiming to simplify problem solving with convergent and divergent thinking.

The vision to change the way artwork within museums and galleries is experienced, changing from a fast cursory glance to a slow observation has now expanded through wider museums and art galleries. Instead of the additional use of guiding notes or labels, the aim is for the viewer to spend Slow time with the artwork, fully exploring the image to gain an awareness and personal interpretation, which may also become collaborative and discussed (Tishman, 2017., Brown, 2022., Slow Art Day, 2022) and the idea reflected in the unlabelled Temporal Connection image.

Davies (2017) reviewing, the recent Arden (2017) book, *Slow Art*, argues the concept distinguishes between art for *entertainment* and art which is deemed highbrow and deserving of Slow looking. But the concept of Slow Art to encourage a way of looking with curiosity and greater insight and therefore slowness, is not new and similarities can be drawn to Berger (1972) who introduced art to a wider audience with the BBC documentary series *Ways of Seeing*, accompanied by a book of the same title. Although, with the intention to make art accessible to a wider audience, whilst introducing new and influential concepts, including the gendered concept of gaze. The difference, however, is marketisation and potentially a commodification of the principles of the Slow movement. As in order to increase revenue within museums, galleries and public spaces and the subsequent churning out of mindful art to be consumed, can simultaneously compromise artistic integrity (Kosmala, 2011).

Where again, similarities can be drawn to the criticism of commodified mindfulness, when the practice is encouraged to simply cope with the daily grind created by neoliberalism rather than address the root causes of human pain (Carne, 2016). Financially, mindfulness is a hugely profitable industry (Magee, 2016). The *McDonaldization of Mindfulness*, argued by Brazier (2016) reflecting Ritzer's (1983) theory of the *McDonaldization of Society*, is also the point Petrini (2011) makes, cheap fast food means more money can be spent on other mass-produced commodified goods, rather than on good, clean, and fair food. Which may stand as a warning, if the growing field of Mindfulness can be compared to the emerging concepts of Slow, including Slow Art. As this is contrary to Honoré (2005) who Magee (2016) reports, believes bandwagons of Slow may be transparent to the public.

The burgeoning business of mindful Slow Art, conflating both Mindfulness and Slow Art is also marketed as a mental health tool (Thinking Museum, 2021). However, questioning mindfulness, Mooneyham and Schooler (2013) suggest, the act of mindfulness, may inhibit creativity born from positive mind wandering and instead suggest further research is needed to investigate the effects. Which in the context of this assignment reflects both the time for artistic conceptualisation and the viewers personal Slow Art interpretation and experiential response. Both of which may involve creative mind wandering, rather than a meditative, non-judgemental moment to moment awareness, as mindfulness is defined by the father of modern secular mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn (2013).

The Temporal Connection image is also intended to create an apolitical statement on human commodification of the natural world, *using* the medium of leaves, reflecting the Slow principles and philosophy to cut across political ideology. And as a response to the recent report The Economics of Biodiversity (Dasgupta, 2021) where the natural world is financially evaluated for human benefit. In turn the image attempts to reflect the potential commodification of Slow Art, as art is restricted by “legitimation for production, distribution and viewing and which amounts to commercial profit and personal gain under creative industries discourse” (Kosmala, 2011:67). Whilst I also acknowledge the potential for personal gain within a university education system. However, reclaiming time and actively choosing one’s own pace (Molz, 2010) and locality (Kosmala, 2011) to construct or interact with Slow Art offers the potential to subvert the notion of time and space within late modernity as proposed by Giddens (1991).