Art As A Way Of Communication: Edouard Manet, Jackson Pollock, Claes Oldenburg

The structural frame is concerned with identifying signs and symbols artists may use in their artwork and further examines the visual and formal qualities of an artwork, media and techniques. For artists, art is a way of communication. It allows an individual to open up and express themselves through certain qualities that specifically relate to the message they want to convey. This is shown in Edouard Manet's, Olympia (1865), purposely provoking the audience through his subject matter in his artwork as a response to his world Jackson Pollock's, Autumn Rhythm (Number 30) (1950) was made to communicate his sense of freedom in art. Claes Oldenburg's, 7-UP from The Store (1961) was his way of communicating his interests in consumerism. Through the use of signs and symbols, as well as formal and visual qualities, each artist has been able to create their own personal message through their artwork, whether it is a response to their world or people in their world.

Edouard Manet's Olympia, belonging to the Realism period (1840's – 1870's), is a painting that was used to communicate Manet's interest in the people of Paris. He was fascinated by Titian's "Venus of Urbino" (1534), but wanted to take a realistic approach and produce his own version of Venus. Manet was a French modernist painter, famously known for his works 'The Luncheon on the Grass" and "Olympia". Olympia was painted by Manet in 1865 of a young female courtesan. Shown is Olympia lying on a bed with her legs crossed wearing only shoes and a black necklace tied like a bow, hinting the idea of a present awaiting to be opened. Olympia has a strong and direct gaze at the viewers, placing the audience in the role of clients. Manet received negative feedback from this artwork as many found the subject and idea controversial2. Manet wanted to create an artwork that was influenced by his personal ideas of women, such as the treatment of 'real' women in Paris 3. "It is not enough to know your craft - you have to have feeling." This quote by Manet demonstrates the emotion he guarantees in his paintings. Although the brushstrokes in Olympia are quick and rough, they were intentionally painted like so, to create the idea that they are not invisibly painted, which is a commonly used technique artists use to draw you deeper in to the artwork, but rather are visibly on the surface of the canvas to allow you to stand back and experience the painting as a whole. Manet wanted to create his work to express his idea of courtesans in his time, rather than having them elegant and idealised in Titians Venus of Ubrino, he wanted to show that the women of Paris were not as glamorous as the one that Titian depicts in Venus. Instead of a wealthy woman, lying back covering her genitals and staring in an obedient way, Olympia has been perceived as a woman dressed in accessories that hint her exoticism, with spider like fingers implying a sense of physical attraction towards her, and bed sheets that are stained to suggest her profession as a courtesan. In conclusion, although Olympia received an unwanted sort of attention, Manet was able to speak his truth through his artwork. He created Olympia as a way to share his opinions on the way society perceives women of that time, and ultimately open up the minds of the audience viewing his kind of speech.

Jackson Pollock is an American painter, distinguished for his artwork produced during the Abstract Expressionist period (1940's – 1965). Pollock was extremely influenced by his past of viewing Native American artwork, which he was exposed to early on with his father. Specific techniques, such as laying the canvas on the floor and pouring a medium on top has been

copied and produced but have also been individualised by Pollock. Autumn Rhythm is an artwork that Pollock used thinned paint to pour on top of a 266.7 x 525.8 cm canvas, enveloping the audience. Pollock created his artwork with influence from Native American art, such as appropriating the technique of pouring sand on to a canvas, but rather, paint. Pollock lays the canvas flat on the floor and carefully and thoughtfully pours thinned paint on judiciously. Pollock does not state any particular meaning behind his artwork as he preferred the audience to title and create the meaning behind his work4. Through the use of a banal title and little description of his work, Pollock is able to communicate the idea of a free imagination. Although he aimed for the audience to think freely and openly about his work, many found shocking as it was seen to be a radical form of painting unlike anything ever seen before. Alfieri, a critic at the time commented on his work calling it “chaos; absolute lack of harmony; complete lack of structural organization”. As many saw his artwork as a canvas with paint thrown on it recklessly, Pollock carefully controlled the flow of paint and colour on the canvas. “On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting”. This quote from Pollock describes the deep emotional attachment he felt towards the making of his artwork, whilst showing the authentic and sincere approach he took. In conclusion, Jackson Pollock wanted to communicate his personal idea of freedom of thought by creating an artwork with limited explanation. This allows viewers to take a revolutionary approach to art, intended by Pollock.

Claes Oldenburg is Swedish artist, living in America. His artwork belonged to the Pop Art movement (1950’s – 1970’s) and was best known for his appropriation of everyday objects5. Oldenburg exhibited The Store in 1961 as a happening. He made objects such as food and clothes and placed them inside a rented store as if it were real life, in doing so, Oldenburg was able communicate his fascination in consumerism in America in the early 60’s.The Store was placed in the lower east side of Manhattan and was filled with objects that were distorted and unruly. Oldenburg wanted to make the happening seem as real as possible by setting hours of when the store will be opened, one to six PM, he also was able to create business cards, posters and even stationary to help get the word out. Self-promotion through art is a subject that Oldenburg studied during the making of his happening. He was fascinated by consumerism and the power it had upon society during that time, leading him to the idea emulating his world and what he saw, and to him, it was The Store. Inside was filled with contrasting objects. There was a large plump cake, large in size (1.48 m x 2.9 m x 1.48 m), and right next to it would be an average sized pair of running shoes. One object that stood out was the crushed up 7 UP. It was a sculpture made out of enamel on plaster. The technique of using enamel meant that as it is drying, some edges would melt and start to drip on the sculpture, mimicking the same ideas used in Abstract Expressionism, the then dominating art movement. Oldenburg has also used bright colours used in advertisements, as well as a crumpled surface to recreate the idea of the messiness of street trash. Through these techniques, Oldenburg was able to communicate his interest and fascination in consumerism of his time. “I am for an art that imitates the human, that is comic, if necessary, or violent, or whatever is necessary.” This quote by Oldenburg displays the attentiveness he presents towards his main interests in his subject matters, which is humans in general and the appropriation he likes to show in his art.

In conclusion, Claes Oldenburg created The Store to speak on behalf of his curiosity in human activity. It is his speech and his way of communicating the large consumerism in his society and how, in that period of time, many were focused on the idea of buying materialistic objects.

Therefore, Edouard Manet, Jackson Pollock and Claes Oldenburg have all created art to speak

their minds and communicate their ideas, such as pointing out the flaws prior artists have omitted to create idealised fantasies, as well as the freedom of art and common interests in humans and consumerism.