

Section 2  
Question 8

“The making of art is an intuitive act rather than a planned process”

The above statement is limiting in many ways. It suggests that all art work is constructed in terms of subjective feelings and intuition. It ignores all other approaches- a structural planned approach in which the artist uses symbols and signs to convey meaning; the cultural frame, where the artist relies on outside events to influence the form of their artwork or where they plan to represent a particular part of society; and finally it ignores the post modern approach, which is usually a planned response to subvert, appropriate or reform ideas. Through the following artists different approaches to making art are seen, showing that art is not only an intuitive act working within the structural frame, rather than a planned process- but that it can be both.

Judith Kentish is one artist that would seem to prove the idea that art is an intuitive act. She explores her own self- through the ideas of place of body, place of self, place of mind, and uses her intuitions to shape her artwork. However, in creating her artwork, for example *Silent Infestations*, she draws on Buddhist ideas of mindfulness and existential theories. Through this use of cultural influences it is evident that Kentish's artwork is not only intuitive, but a response to her outside world as well. She also uses materials as symbols for her meaning. This use of symbolism was planned, because the acts of “folding, forming, pulling and pleating” symbolised her exploration processes and became a planned response to her subjective feelings.

The Chinese landscape painters, in particular *Sesshu*, used the spirit of Zen to create their artworks. According to the Zen ideology inspiration comes in a lightning flash. Because of this it would seem that *Sesshu*'s artworks are based entirely on a flash of intuition, and were not the result of planning. However, the materials used- a brush and ink, and the techniques used- the flung ink style- indicate that before beginning an artwork *Sesshu* planned how he would do it. Also the Chinese landscape style was the result of many years of training, thus of planning. Even this style of painting, which ideologically was supposed to be instant and entirely unplanned, manages to prove that the meaning of art can never just be an intuitive act.

One artist that shows that the making of art does not have to have anything to do with intuition is *Jasper Johns*, especially in his early years as an artist. *Johns* knowingly rebelled from the subjective, intuitive ideas of the abstract expressionists of his time and formed ideas that were based on the ideas that

art making comes from outside influences rather than from inside oneself. He believed that people were only a reflection of their world, and could not create meaning from nothing- thus that intuition did not exist, and art was only based on social cultural influences. He also worked mainly with symbols, signs and semiotics. His painting "Target with Plaster Casts" is a painting of a target, and this, for Johns became not a painting of a target, but an actual target. These planned theories, and the explicit use of signs shows that art does not necessarily have to be an intuitive act.

Johns' painting style also moved away from the Abstract expressionist view that the spattering of paint was random and subjective. He painted with deliberate, planned brushstrokes, in repetitive circular patterns. His art work "Numbers" is one example of this painting style, and also incorporates signs and symbols- that are not part of intuition.

As much as Johns' work shows that it is not necessary for intuition to play a part in art making, other artists show that it can be a combination of both intuition and planned process. These artists include Frida Kahlo, Barbara Kruger and Rea.

Kahlo painted highly personal artworks and was part of the surrealist art movement. This means that her works were often subjective and formed as dream like images, indicating that intuition played a role in the creating of her works. However, as well as this she took her inspiration from her cultural surroundings, many of the symbols she used were both cultural and personal. "Self Portrait with thorn necklace and hummingbird" is a good example of the use of personal subjective intuition and meaningful, explicit cultural symbols that are obviously planned in order to create meaning. The use of a thorn necklace can be seen as both personal- representing Kahlo's physical disability- and cultural- representing her Catholic upbringing. The thorns symbolise Jesus and also the miracle of St Veronica, who after wiping Christ's brow is said to have found his image on her veil. This use of symbols show Kahlo's conscious effort to place herself within her society. Other symbols used in this work, such as the hummingbird and butterflies in her hair are symbols of her Mexican and Aztec culture- they symbolise the souls of dead warriors and Kahlo is perhaps trying to find her identity in these things. "Self Portrait with thorn necklace and hummingbird" shows the way Kahlo feels, subjective and intuitively, about herself, as well as the way she has consciously searched for meaning within the cultural frame and represented this through symbols and the structural frame. This shows that she is using both intuition and emotion to create her works, as well as planning her use of visual communication, in order to portray a certain

massage, This proves that art making is not an intuitive act RATHER that a planned process, but a combination of both.

Barbara Kruger and Rea both employ the use of their subjective feelings in order to create powerful statements. Kruger employs her feminist ideologies to create a statement against the media's portrayal of women in "Untitled (We have received orders not to move)". Rea employs her feelings about Aboriginal heritage and the fact that she is Aboriginal to create a statement about Aboriginal deaths in custody in "Resistance III".

These statements are both obviously a planned process, because both artists employ techniques of the post modern frame- appropriation and subversion of traditional ideas- in order to make their work and the meaning accessible to the public.

Kruger uses a billboard/ poster format to link her work to the media and strong words "We have received orders not to move" in bold print to create this statement. These words have been chosen carefully so they are able to represent her meanings correctly.

In "Resistance III" Rea employs appropriation of the classical sculpture pose- like that of Michaelangelo's David to create her meaning. This use of appropriation is obviously planned. She appropriates it to an anonymous photo of an Aboriginal

She also, like Kruger, employs the use of her social surroundings, indicating that her work is a planned process as well as a subjective response to deaths in custody. She uses widely recognised symbols of knots that will make a noose, and strong words- "knot" "blood" "loop", superimposed over the image. These symbols create meaning.

Use of colour is also obviously planned in this artwork, because it is used to further contribute to the statement Rea is making. The only colours used in the artwork are blue, red and white- the colours of the British flag. This indicates that the European invasion of Aboriginal land contributed and is still contributing to these Aboriginal deaths in custody. This use of colour is so explicit that it is obviously planned.

All of the above artists show different approaches to art making. Kentish is influenced by the explorations of her subconscious, but also by Buddhist and Western philosophies, Sesshu painted in the Chinese landscape style which was apparently inspired by a lighting flash of clarity- both of these artist work predominantly in the subjective frame, but not ONLY in it. Johns tried his hardest to escape any ideas of the subjective frame- showing that art does not have to be influenced at all by intuition. Frida Kahlo, Barbara Kruger and Rea were all influenced by their own personal feelings, but also by social and cultural happenings and by the desire to use symbols to make a

statement. Rea and Kruger worked within the Postmodern obviously consciously subverting previous ideals. This shows that while artists can be inspired by intuition, and art is to some extent and intuitive act, it does not have to be, and can also be a planned process.