

The background of the entire image is an abstract composition of soft, out-of-focus light spots. These spots are primarily in shades of deep blue and teal, with some warmer, yellowish-gold highlights scattered throughout, creating a bokeh effect. The overall texture is ethereal and dreamlike.

DESIGNING CONTROVERSY

Marwa Charmand

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Designing Controversy

By Marwa Charmand

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2015

A thesis submitted to Western Sydney University as
partial fulfilment for the Bachelor of Visual Communication
(Honours) degree

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Marwa Charmand

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marwa Charmand', written in a cursive style.

17 / 9 / 2015

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination into controversy within visual culture. It will discuss and analyse the process and meaning of controversy from its roots within the art and design discipline. The thesis consists of five chapters that address five aspects and questions on the topic.

The first chapter comprises of a series of discussions revolving around the causes of controversy. It investigates creative pieces that have caused uproar and aims to examine what issues and topics cause controversy.

The second chapter discusses and argues how and if controversy can differ and if controversial creative pieces are produced with different intentions and motives.

The third chapter explores how censorship can play a role in creating controversial images. It investigates how ordinary artworks create controversy through censorship from those with the power and ability to apply it.

The fourth chapter investigates the role that cross-mediation plays in creating and amplifying controversy within visual culture. It discusses how cross-mediation has a major effect on creative pieces and how the crossing of multiple media platforms allows a change in context from the original intention.

The fifth chapter analyses the process of creating a controversial artwork using my own creative pieces that were produced alongside the research. Using the outcomes of the creative pieces, it aims to understand and explain the process needed to create a controversial piece.

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INTRODUCTION

Visual culture is everything that is seen, produced to be seen by a culture that communicates through images (Mitchell, 2002). In a society that is constantly surrounded by images, art and design is created to make the audience think or feel a particular way. Each image takes the viewer on an experience that the creative may or may not have intended. With the wide variety of creative pieces, no other works cause more of a reaction than those that trigger controversy.

Controversial issues appear regularly across various media platforms. Television and the internet have allowed for infinite numbers of images to be shared rapidly. While controversy is created across many disciplines, art and design have always held a different rank. Though people are exposed to images everyday, creatives tend to receive the backlash when an audience deem their works as inappropriate.

This thesis is an examination into controversy within visual culture. It investigates issues and ideas that other studies have failed to perform. The reading by W.J.T Mitchell, *Journal of visual culture: Showing seeing: a critique of visual culture* (2002) provides valuable insights into the impact cross-mediation plays on visual culture, however it fails to provide a profound analysis on how it causes controversy, along with the other sectors that led to the outcome. While *Outrage: Art, Controversy and Society* Howells, R., Ritvoi, A., &

Schachter, J. (2012), most closely relates to this investigation, again it fails to draw upon aspects such as the process of a controversial work. This thesis stands unique as the research was conducted alongside creative pieces that were tested and used for investigation. This allows for this research to close the gap that previous studies have missed.

While it is known that artists produce controversial works, investigations are always conducted on the creative piece itself. However, it is important to examine the vital roles that help cause controversy. The research conducted is important to the art and design discipline because it provides a constructed investigation not only focusing on the creative piece or the artist, but the idea of controversy as a whole.

In order to achieve the aims of the research, this thesis consists of five questions. Each chapter discusses and analyses a distinct question. The questions are:

- What causes controversy?
- How does controversy differ?
- What role does censorship play in creating controversy?
- What impact does cross-mediation have on creating controversy?
- Is there a process for creating a controversial image? If so what is it?

Though this thesis consists of five questions, the research aims to show how each sector connects with another to create controversy. Whilst the research aims to expose the vital roles that are played and help contribute in the creation of a controversial image, the most essential factor of understanding controversy, is knowing what causes it.

METHODOLOGY

To address the topic of controversy within visual design, this project necessitates a qualitative approach. Although controversy crosses many disciplines, this research focuses on controversy specifically within the art and design disciplines. Despite ongoing controversy produced by images, there remains a significant gap in the understanding of the creation of controversy. Previous study such as *Outrage: Art, Controversy and Society*, Howells, R., Ritivoi, A., & Schachter, J. (2012), examined and investigated controversy however, this source fails to investigate the issues from its roots. Controversy within visual culture is known to be caused by the artist. However, this project also turns the mirror on major sources and factors that create, label and influence controversy; the audience.

The motivation behind this thesis has developed from my experience within the visual art discipline and the experiences I have encountered around the idea of controversy. Now experiencing and learning the design discipline, it sparked thoughts of why topics and issues constantly cause uproar, leading to the creative being viewed as the culprit. This led to the idea of creating controversy within visual design. It is an area and topic not focused on when learning creative disciplines. This triggered the idea of researching the topic of controversy and shedding light on the issue as it is an important topic that impacts the visual art and design disciplines.

In order to collect and analyse data for the research, it was decided that the most effective method would be to produce a creative series of works intended to be controversial. This would not only allow for an investigation into the reaction and outcome that is received, but also shed light on the process itself. The challenge of creating controversial images as an artist along with research into the topic has not been investigated in sources that have been researched. As a result, this research would allow this project to be a unique investigation.

Before the creative pieces were produced, it was decided that receiving results would be best done under an unidentified street artist like name. Fink was chosen as it fit the description of the work and the research. The reason and process will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Once the creative pieces were produced, the images were uploaded onto social media networks using the Fink Art pages. Because social media users are constantly sharing and commenting on posts, the unidentified pages were thought to it make easier and encourage people to share their opinions.

Keeping in mind the limited time for the research, it was understood that creating these controversial images would come with limitations. The limited time frame provided for the research, meant chances of creating controversy or a controversial image were also restricted. Because the pages that were created were unidentified, the task to build an audience also impacted the exposure of the images. Therefore, the data collection relied on the audience to interact via social media by voicing their opinions about the works of art. Essentially the reactions and interactions of the audience would then provide a unique analysis and investigation for the research project.

CHAPTER 1

MAKING WAVES

What causes controversy?

Controversy in visual culture is not restricted to any particular form of art. Outrage can be triggered from paintings, billboards, posters, photographs, street art and installations. This chapter aims to understand what it is that causes works to become controversial. To understand how an image can cause uproar, it is also important to analyse the factor that labels a work to be controversial; the audience.

In their book *Outrage: Art, Controversy and Society* Howells, R., A., & Schachter, J. (2012) analyse how art, controversy and society all connect and result in a change in each field. This means that each field reflects and impacts on the other causing constant change. Howells, Ritivoi & Schachter (2012) support this by indicating that although controversy starts with art itself, it is further amplified by society as a whole. In order to spark controversies, the work must pass from the self-contained art world and into the heavily disputed public sphere (Howells, Ritivoi & Schachter, 2012). However, social and cultural views also have an impact in the reaction of an audience (Mitchell, 2002). This must also be considered when researching and analysing the idea of what causes controversy.

Australian war artist and filmmaker George Gittoes has encountered controversy over the years, due to the confronting nature of the work he produces. In an interview,

Gittoes describes his works that depict the harsh realities of war as “too real for people” (Roger Levy, 2010). He states that his real depictions are very confronting for people, particularly those living in the western world (Roger Levy, 2010). Gittoes believes that this is due to the western world living in a comfortable place having never experienced what it is like to live in war zone and have their lives at risk every minute of the day (Roger Levy, 2010). Mitchell’s (2002) statement regarding how social and cultural views impact visual culture, can be related to Gittoes view on why people find his works controversial. Due to his works depicting the harsh realities of war, Gittoes claims that this has resulted in him being labelled as the “bad guy” (Roger Levy, 2010). Gittoes (2010) states that this is because he depicts issues that are considered by the western audience to be “too real”, and what is too real is war. However, Gittoes is not alone with his claims of reality issues being too real for people.

Olivero Toscani, most renowned for his controversial work for the Benetton company campaigns during the 1980s and 1990s has also, like Gittoes, discussed how there are no such things as shocking pictures, only shocking realities (Tomkins, 2010). These ideas are supported by Mitchell (2005) who states that the reason that images appear offensive or insult viewers, is because viewers fear or hate the subject matter. Similarly, Toscani argues that his photographs put viewers in a position to view a reality, which most of the time viewers do not want to see (Tomkins, 2010). As Donald (2006) argues, art that reflects society has always been controversial. This idea can be demonstrated when analysing how Toscani shocked the world with his campaigns for the Benetton Company that focused on issues such as dying AIDS patients to anorexia (Tomkins, 2010). Controversy that followed the works of Toscani, were all creative pieces reflecting society. However, producing such controversial

images can come with major consequences.

Although Toscani pushed boundaries with his photography series, the breaking point was a campaign that featured large advertisements of death row inmates. In the documentary *As it happened: Blood, Sweat and Sears* (2001), Toscani claims that the uproar caused by his photography was due to people not wanting to be disturbed and forced to see the world in another way. The campaign 'We, on death row', images depicted portrait photographs of the inmates with the slogan 'Sentenced to death' (Figure 1) (*As It Happened: Blood, Sweat and Sears*, 2001). Toscani argued that the campaign addressed his disagreements with death row and did not aim to prove the innocence of the prisoners (*As It Happened: Blood, Sweat and Sears*, 2001).

The misunderstanding of the photographs caused viewers to get upset and label the work as inappropriate. As Toscani claimed, people did not want to acknowledge the problem, rather uproar is caused due to the new perspective shown about the issue (*As It Happened: Blood, Sweat and Sears*, 2001). Because of the harsh critique and controversy surrounding the campaign, it resulted in Benetton ending an advertising partnership with Toscani that lasted 18 years (Tomkins, 2010).

As analysed and discussed with Gittoes and Toscani, it can be claimed that harsh realities of life when put on display are quickly deemed inappropriate. This idea is proven by Gittoes and Toscani who have both fallen victim of being labelled controversial artists. The label is from the result of audiences who do not wish to see their works because it is outside of their comfort zones (Tomkins, 2010; Roger Levy, 2010). Though Toscani was commissioned to produce works for Benetton with no restrictions from the company, how is another artist able to create as much controversy while



Figure 1. (Oliverio Toscani, 2015). 'We on Death Row' Advertisement.

having no form of commission or companies to promote his work? How has this artist created such uproar that it has led him to become one of the most wanted graffiti artists in the world, all while keeping his identity a complete mystery (GraffitiStreet, 2015)?

For nearly two decades, the infamous street artist Banksy has caused chaos and controversy worldwide with his subversive epigrams, dark humour and political graffiti. Banksy has managed to create some of the most controversial contemporary graffiti pieces while keeping his identity a complete mystery (Biography.com, 2015a). As part of a residency in New York, Banksy produced a new piece of work every day over the period of a month. This created complete chaos in the streets with his audience. As the news spread of the residency, the New York police were quick to announce that Banksy was now a wanted man (Cockerton,

2013). Since graffiti art is by its nature ephemeral, Banksy aims to create as much chaos and discussion in the limited time his work is available (Johnston, 2014). He is able to achieve this by producing work that Donald (2006) believes most art is, metacognitive. Metacognitive art engages in self-reflection of both the artist and society (Donald, 2006).

In October 2014, Banksy produced a graffiti piece in England addressing the idea of immigration (Figure 2). The image depicts a group of five pigeons holding up signs that write, “go back to Africa, migrants not welcome, and keep off our worms” (Johnston, 2014, para. 3). These signs are aimed towards a colourful migratory swallow also depicted in the image. The graffiti piece sparked outrage and controversy from the public who claimed it contained “offensive and racist remarks” (Johnston, 2014, para. 4). As a result of the uproar, the work was quickly removed by the council. This is an example of a metacognitive work that was a self-reflection on society (Donald, 2006). Although the work was reflecting issues occurring throughout society, the piece managed to create controversy purely by stating the truth.

In August 2015, Banksy launched his new exhibition titled Dismaland. The exhibition was a large scale theme park installation that plays on the opposite idea of the world famous amusement park Disneyland. Banksy created a whole theme park filled with artworks ranging from installations, paintings and sculptures. The artworks included works from Banksy as well as 58 well known artists from around the world (Brown, 2015). The “bemusement” is tagged as “the UK’s most disappointing new visitor attraction” and advertised as a theme park not suitable for children (ABC News, 2015, para. 2).

As the news quickly spread, it wasn’t long before Banksy’s Dismaland received worldwide headlines. Whilst Banksy is



Figure 2. (Banksy, 2014). *Pigeons*.



Figure 3. (Movie Pilot, 2015). *Cinderella's pumpkin carriage carnage*.

known for his controversial work, it took little time for the artist to cause uproar. As images of the exhibition leaked, one featured a take on the famous story of Cinderella. The sculpture, that was created by Banksy, was quick to cause controversy due to the dismal take on the fairytale. It depicts a crashed carriage with deceased horses, while the blonde princess spills out of the window of the crashed carriage. The piece is lit up by a motorcycle light and a flock of paparazzi wearing motorcycle helmets, whose flashing cameras continuously take photo after photo of the crash scene (Figure 3) (Robinson, 2015a).

Soon after the Dismaland was open to the public and more images were released, the blonde princess crash scene picked up further attention. It was claimed that the tragic scene made a reference to the death of Princess Diana (Baker and Glanfield, 2015). In his review of the exhibition, Richard Smith described the installation as “jaw-dropping”, while a commenter wrote that the installation that echo’s Princess Diana’s tragic death is “disgusting and in such bad taste” (Robinson, 2015a, para. 18).

Though some may argue that the installation is inappropriate in the references it makes to the death of Princess Diana, it is these works that provoke deep thoughts. Paco Pomet, one of the 58 artists involved in Dismaland, stated that these works discuss and show the world we live in today (Baker and Glanfield, 2015). He claims that works like these are critical in understanding and being aware of how the world is rapidly changing (Baker and Glanfield, 2015).

In a time where technology allows for exposure to every form of imagery. It is the realities of everyday issues that are generally swept under the carpet that cause uproar. The issue Banksy addresses in his Cinderella like installation, represents what it feels like to be a real life princess (Robinson,

2015b). Though controversy was started due to its parody of the death of princess Diana, it in fact, reflects reality. While it is confronting for some, again as Gittoes and Toscani stated it is when the audience feel out of their comfort zone that a piece is labeled inappropriate (Roger Levy, 2010; Tomkins, 2010). As claimed previously, it can be observed how social-reflective art falls victim to controversy (Donald, 2006). However, not all works that create controversy need to involve images or sculptures, reactions from audiences can also be managed without a single use of an image.

Swiss artist Christoph Buechel managed to cause controversy on the opening of the Biennale Art Fair in the Italian city of Venice in May 2015. The installation piece created by Buechel, saw the artist turn a disused catholic church into a mosque. Buechel’s installation was labelled by the president of the Veneto region as a “provocation” piece (AFP, 2015, para. 10). Although there was no use of images throughout the whole installation, it still managed to create uproar and was used to promote fear within society. Authorities were quick to state that the newly transformed mosque would be at risk of attack by anti-Muslim crowds, or Islamist radicals (AFP, 2015). Buechel (2015) claimed that the installation aimed to bring attention to the historical links the city has with the Muslim world and aims to highlight the absence of a mosque in the historic area of Venice.

The fear of knowing the truth, or seeing things from different perspectives play a role in why people find works controversial. This idea is supported by Michaelson (2012) who states that people fear and hate the truth. While the truth can help with our education, it results in offending people’s ego (Michaelson, 2012). Although the creatives discussed have managed to cause outrage using a range of art forms, there is a clear connection between the reasons

they caused controversy. What seems to be considered controversial are harsh realities of life displayed to people who wish not to see or know them (Roger Levy, 2010), (Tomkins, 2010).

Research conducted has shown that realities of life cause controversy, these findings were then used to create the creative pieces. The creative pieces work alongside the research to further help understand the sense of what causes controversy.

What causes controversy was discovered in creative pieces that were produced for the research. The topics were carefully selected and investigated to see if these issues would provoke audiences to respond. Although there was not a significant number of responses, the comments received are enough to argue on the question of what causes controversy. The images that received responses consisted of topics of race and religion.

'Surprise' (Figure 4) and 'Oppressed' are both design pieces that managed to create controversy by the statement placed within the images. The reactions received from this images clarifies how controversy can be achieved with a familiar image but unusual statement (Figure 5). It confirms that people find images inappropriate not only depending on their cultural and social view, but also in the viewers actually understanding the image. This is also shown in the reaction of users 'liking' the image and praising it with comments, while others reacted with negative comments. Not only do social and cultural views play a particular role in what people find controversial, but also on the viewer's interpretation of the image.

Once the image was uploaded on various pages, the Fink Art Facebook page received messages from users regarding

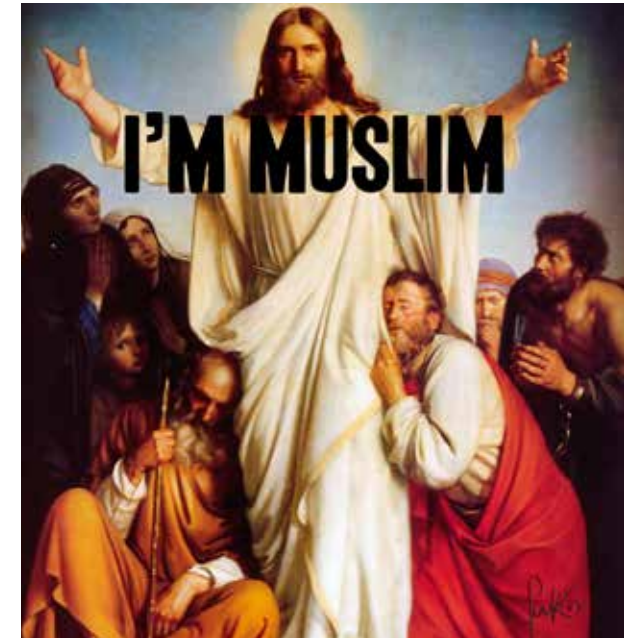


Figure 4. (Charmand, 2015). *Surprise*



Figure 5. (Charmand, 2015). *Responses to Surprise.*

the 'Surprise' creative piece. One user stated that the image was inappropriate and did not belong on Facebook. They then asked if the image could be removed from the page. Whilst another user asked for the Fink Art page to stop spamming their page with the image. On the Fink Art Instagram account one user claimed that misusing the image of Jesus would lead to punishment.

Surprisingly, one creative piece that did not contain an image managed to cause discussion. 'Social Calculator' managed to spark conversation with viewers after it was uploaded on a breaking news update (Figure 6). Though the artwork contains no images, it managed to cause a stir with the audience due to their misinterpretation of the piece. The artwork displays how society labels individuals based on their race and religion. One viewer claimed that the image was trying to manipulate the conversation, while another argued that the image brought race and religion into an area that had nothing to do with the report (Figure 7). The work of art reflects on how society are quick to stereotype individuals based on their race and religion. Though the reactions that were received disagreed with the image, I believe this was due to their misinterpretation of the artwork and because of the reflection of society it portrayed.

'Whose land' was a creative piece that also caused a stir on social media. While I believe it has the ability to cause controversy, this would have been better achieved if all the responses were received within the same location. Though the image was not labelled as inappropriate, it did receive mixed interpretations of the piece. The mixed reviews included viewers reacting emotionally, with obscene images of religion, comments about religion and race, blocking, while only one user correctly understood the piece's intention and reacted to the image with a practical statement.

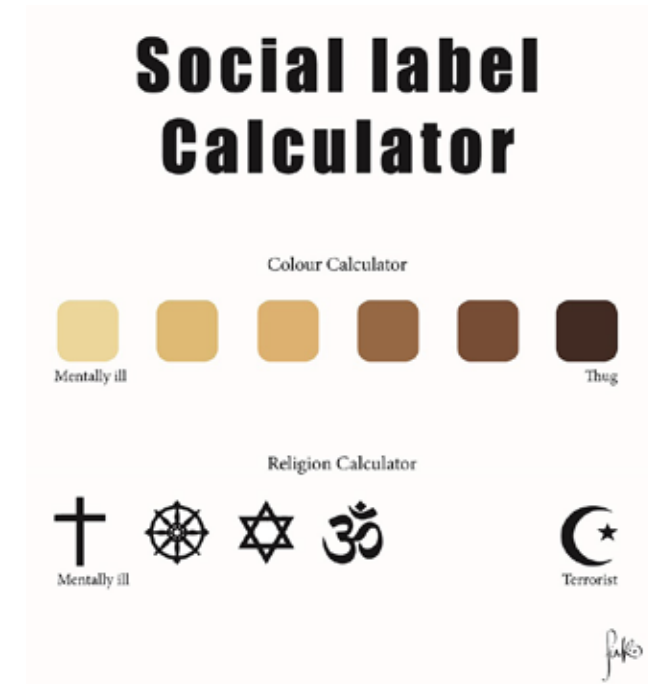


Figure 6. (Charmand, 2015). *Social Calculator*.



Figure 7. (Charmand, 2015). *Responses to Social Calculator*.

As stated, this creative piece has the ability to cause controversy if placed in an environment with a mass audience. This is suggested in the various reactions and comments the image caused. If exposed to a larger audience, controversy would be triggered. The creative pieces that generated reactions were all works of art that were a social-reflection on society. This result confirms Donald's (2006) claim on how art addressing social issues results in controversy. While the image aimed to address issues from unfamiliar perspectives, it resulted in reactions with those who found this idea inappropriate.

As suggested by Mitchell (2002), social and cultural views can be seen in the reactions of viewers 'liking' the image and praising the artwork with positive comments. It is these results that help confirm how social and cultural views have a major impact on what is found controversial. Motivation for the creative pieces were for research purposes, however how can producing controversy vary?



Figure 8. (Charamnd, 2015). *Oppressed*.

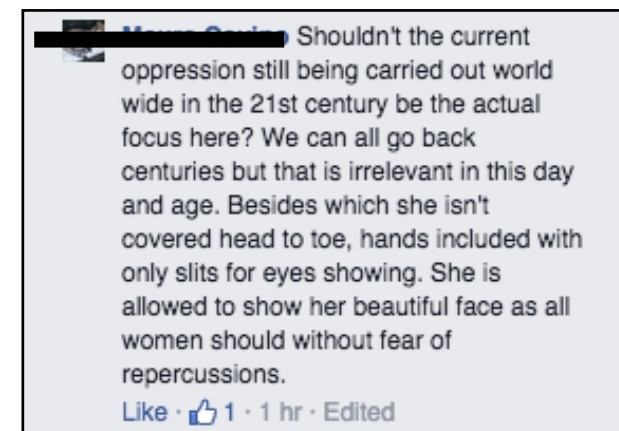


Figure 9. (Charmand, 2015). *Response to 'Oppressed'*

SAME SCRIPT DIFFERENT CAST

Does Controversy Differ?

Artists and designers who create controversial works unquestionably have a motive behind them. This chapter will discuss and investigate how controversy can differ. Gittoes (2012) describes his motive to create such confronting works as it has “only ever been as means to either alert the world to the atrocities or to make an important point”. He discusses the difference in controversy between himself and another controversial artist, Damien Hirst. Gittoes (2012) claims that he feels Hirst’s intentions for creating controversy are designed to shock for no other reason than sensationalism. Because of this, Gittoes (2012) believes that this has worked to make him internationally rich and famous. These statements help put into perspective how controversy in the creative discipline can differ. The idea of creating controversial work with intention is crucial to understand not only how controversy differs, but also why creatives choose to produce them and with what intentions.

Controversial artist Damien Hirst is most renowned for his glass tank installations of deceased animals. His most ground-breaking work consists of a 14-foot shark placed inside a glass tank preserved in formaldehyde (Figure 10). Sending shock waves in the art world, news quickly spread of the provocative piece. This piece would lead to Hirst’s career breakthrough within the art world (Biography.com, 2015b). The installation created much discussion surrounding his

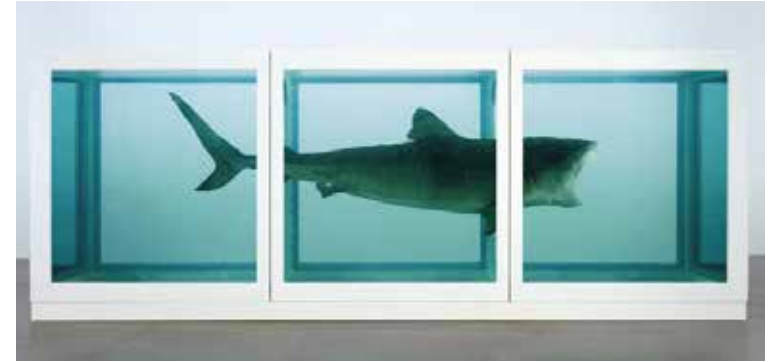


Figure 10. (Damien Hirst, 1991). *The Physical Impossibility of death in the mind of someone living.*

works, that then led to Hirst being commissioned by Charles Saatchi to create any further installations (Biography.com, 2015b).

It came as no surprise when Hirst continued to produce installations of animals preserved in glass tanks. ‘Mother and Child Divided’ consisted of a cow and its calf cut in half and again preserved in formaldehyde within glass tanks. Again, this caused outrage and uproar within society. This steered Hirst being labelled as a controversial artist and becoming one of the most famous artists in Britain (Biography.com, 2015b). These works undoubtedly played a major role in Hirst’s rise to fame, due to the coverage of the installations and the discussions surrounding the artist. Feeding off this fame and publicity, Hirst’s most talked about work to date involved 8,601 flawless diamonds, weighing in total 1,106.18 carats (Martin, 2015).

‘For the love of God’ is Hirst’s most questionable and skeptical work to date. The sculpture was produced in 2007 and consisted of a real human skull which was covered

with 8,601 flawless diamonds, including a pear shaped pink diamond encrusted in the forehead and was said to have cost between 12-15 million pounds to produce (Figure 11) (Biography.com, 2015b). The sculpture created controversy and uproar, which once again put Hirst in the limelight.

Hirst's motives to create such polemic work can be questioned. The editor of the British Art Journal, Robin Smith, stated that Hirst's artworks are all publicity stunts but, 'For the love of God' is just an additional expensive piece (Martin, 2007). Surrounded by constant publicity means that every new work Hirst produced is expected to create greater controversy. It can be argued that Hirst's continuous reasons to shock the audience was purely driven to gain more exposure. This can be analysed in his piece 'For the love of God'.

Although Hirst's intentions of the sculpture is a celebration of death, research has shown another motive was also intended for the piece. In production 'For the love of God' was known to be the most expensive piece of art ever created (Owen & Dunbar, 2007). Once the piece had been finished, Hirst stated that the artwork was up for sale for an astounding \$100 million (Martin, 2007). It can be argued that Hirst's intentions of producing such a controversial and expensive piece served primarily to amplify his name in the art world, while raising his works value as a whole. This idea is supported by editor of art magazine The Jackdaw, David Lee, that claimed the price and the work was a publicity stunt used to help enhance the value of his other works (Owen & Dunbar, 2007).

It can be seen how Gittoes (2012) claiming that he feels Hirst's intentions for creating controversy are designed to shock for no other reason than sensationalism, when discussing Hirst's work, 'For the love of God'. It is easy to

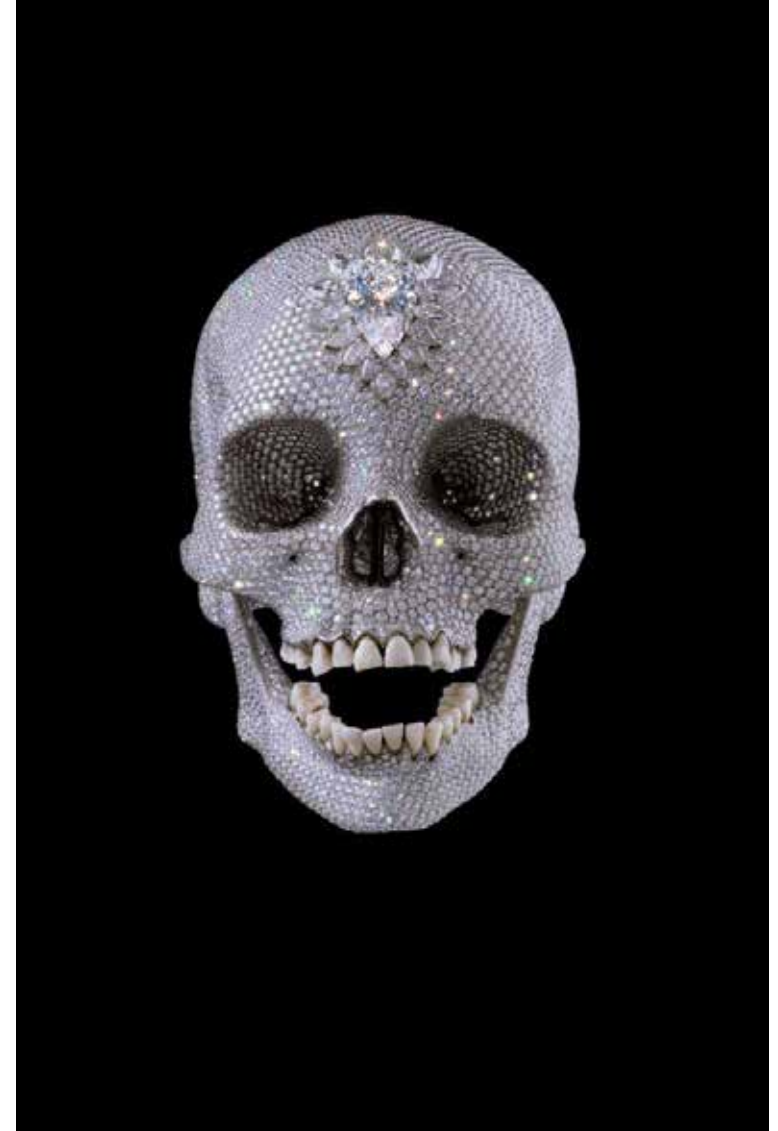


Figure 11. (Damien Hirst, 2007). *For the love of God*.

argue that Hirst's motivation to create controversy is purely driven by the publicity, limelight and subsequent sales he receives. Howells, Ritivoi & Schachter (2012) discuss how art institutions also play a key role in courting controversy in order to gain publicity and financial gain. It can be argued that art institutions would maintain exhibitions that include controversial artists such as Hirst, in pursuit of their exposure and profits. This associates with why artists such as Hirst would continue to produce polemic work when art institutions provide further exposure for the artist. However, not all controversial works are created with the same intentions, some artists are labelled controversial and receive publicity when the initial motive is to spread a message.

Artist and designer Barbara Kruger is most known for her black and white photographs overlaid with declarative captions. Her works highlight social issues and events that started in the late 1970's (Arthistoryarchive.com, 2015). The controversy caused by Kruger's work was not primarily the images she used but rather the themes and issues she addressed, that caused a stir within the art world (Calak, 2008). Kruger focuses on issues such as women's rights, issues of power, religion, sex, racial and gender stereotyping and consumption (Arthistoryarchive.com, 2015). Bartush (2015) states that addressing these issues allowed Kruger to create visual dialogue between herself and her audience. Analysing and understanding how her audience were effected, Kruger was then able to reshape her artworks around the audience.

Kruger's reason for creating controversial works had a major role in the art world that opened doors to other female artists that can be easily connected with artists today (Bartush, 2015). Her aim, like Gittoes, was to create

works purely driven by her intention to address the issues she believed needed to be brought to public attention. As a result, her works were branded controversial. However, some intentions behind the creation of controversial works like those of Hirst, can be questioned.

Olivero Toscani (2001), claims that his motives behind his controversial campaigns were due to the harsh realities of life that he cannot turn his eye away from. He supported this by discussing how the motivation behind his 'We, on Death Row' campaign was due to his disagreements with the death penalty that he believed needed to be addressed (As It Happened: Blood, Sweat and Tears, 2001). Though it can be argued that Toscani had further intentions for creating his controversial images.

The outrage Toscani caused, was the stepping stone that led him to fame and this breakthrough from the controversial campaigns continues to follow him throughout his career (Sydney Morning Herald, n.d.). With this in mind, it can be debated whether Toscani knew that purposely causing outrage through controversial works would eventually help in his rise to fame. Motivation behind some artists to produce controversial work are purely to address issues that they feel the public need to be aware of.

The motives behind the works of Banksy clearly suggest that he produces his pieces in order to make statements that promote change within his audience. Choosing to remain unidentified indicates that he has no intention of revealing himself for fame (Ellsworth-Jones, 2015). This can also be seen in how Banksy chooses to produce his art. Creating his art on the street puts his work in the hands of his audience. They are then free to choose what to do with it or how they interpret it. As a result, this allows his audience to cut out, steal the work and sell them for large amounts money for

which Banksy receives no financial gain (Ellsworth-Jones, 2015).

While there are multiple reasons why an artist would choose to create controversial pieces, the Fink Art images that were produced alongside the research were created to address issues in a provocative manner. The motives behind the creative pieces was to provide a new evaluation for research. The images were not produced to gain an audience following for future limelight, rather they were made to allow viewers to see social issues in a new perspective. They aimed to inform and highlight subjects in a way that would provoke the audience to respond to the piece. While delivering the message was a major aspect for creating the pieces, provoking the audience to get a response was needed, in order to help for other sectors of the research project.

Analysing how controversy can differ in various ways provides further perspective and these ideas are important and of much benefit to not only this research, but also to the art and design disciplines. Creating works of art with the intention of being labelled controversial is an important aspect into the investigation of controversy. Motivation behind creating controversial work shows that some creatives are labelled controversial without intention in being labelled so. While some purposely produce provocative work in order to help gain fame and attention. Others produce work without the intention of being controversial, and fall victim to controversy through censorship, as will be discussed in the next section.

SAFE AND SOUND

What role does censorship play in creating controversy?

Censorship has a major impact in everyday life that help shape and influence perspective of their viewers. Television, billboards and online media are all effected when it comes to the rules of censorship (Sharma, 2014). Art and design are not exempt from this. This chapter will investigate the role censorship plays in creating controversy.

In today's society everything from galleries and online social media networks have strict guidelines that their participants must adhere to. However, these rules and guidelines are questionable. It is easy to ask why certain issues are required to be more censored than others. People in charge of these rules are able to apply them in order to censor topics that only they themselves wish to censor (Sharma, 2014). This idea is support by Howells, Ritivoi & Schachter (2012) that discuss how works of art are a victim to censorship merely because of groups that disapprove of the artwork.

Larissa Sansour a London based artist, claimed she fell victim to censorship after her photographs were expelled from an exhibition. In December 2011 Sansour's commissioned photography pieces were disqualified due to censorship issues made by the French clothing brand Lacoste (Abunimah, 2011). Sansour was among eight artists sponsored and commissioned 4000 pounds to participate in the prestigious 25,000 pound Lacoste Elysée Prize exhibition

(Abunimah, 2011).

The photographs that were accepted revolved around Sansour's Nation Estate Project that addressed the clinically dystopian and deadlock in the Middle East. While promoting the event, Sansour's name appeared on all literature relating to the prize as an official nominee on the website (Abunimah, 2011). It was when an issue of the ArtReview magazine introducing the nominated artists that her name was withdrawn from all the writings (Abunimah, 2011).

Sansour was contacted and asked to accept a statement on her behalf declaring that she withdraw "in order to pursue other opportunities" to cover the reasons of her dismissal (Abunimah, 2011, para. 6). Sansour (2011) refused, and stated that she was being silenced and censored due to Lacoste's prejudice. A press release issued by Sansour (2011) reported that Lacoste refused to support the artists work labelling it "too pro-Palestinian" (para. 2).

This form of censorship is not uncommon. In 2013 award winning photographers Andrew Quilty and Jodi Bieber both claimed an act of censorship after having their images removed as part of the public Vivid Festival exhibition, held at Circular Quay (Harvey, 2013).

Quilty's thirty photographs consisted of the aftermath of natural disasters that had recently occurred in Australia. These disasters included the Victorian bushfires, the Queensland floods and cyclone Yasi (Harvey, 2013). Although not a single photograph displayed deceased or wounded people, the images were claimed to be too distressing to be presented in a public exhibition that was promoted to be "family friendly" (Harvey, 2013, para. 3).

Bieber (2013) argued that major censorship had occurred while, Quilty (2013) claimed that the idea behind the

festival was to allow people to see photographs that society would not necessarily see without an exhibition such as Vivid Festival. Research has indicated that issues involving ordinary occurrences are a prime target for censorship.

Social media outlets have received outrage over their actions of suppressing images. Although each social media network provides guidelines to their use, it is the network themselves that seem to create controversy by censoring.

Most known for his United Colors of Benetton's 'UnHate' campaign, which featured doctored photos of world leaders making out, Erik Ravelo fell victim to censorship back in 2013. The Cuban artist and director caused controversy over his photography series "Los Intocables", which translates to "The Untouchables" (Figures 12-15) (The Huffington Post Australia, 2013, para. 3). Ravelo describes this series as a "human installation" that address numerous issues that torment children around the world (The Huffington Post Australia, 2013, para. 3).

The photographs that caused uproar feature a child and adult posed to highlight evil in today's society. In each image a child is being crucified on the back of an adult focusing on issues ranging from, gun violence, molestation, to the threat of nuclear war (The Huffington Post Australia, 2013).

With each image addressing a separate issue, every image depicts the loss of innocence in every child. Ravelo states that the images caused so much uproar and outrage it resulted in people writing to the artist and threatening him (The Huffington Post Australia, 2013). Ravelo explains that although the images led to outrage that got out of hand, his work is simply a form of art communicating to its audience (The Huffington Post Australia, 2013). However, social media network Facebook tried to prevent his works from doing so.



Figure 12. (Erik Ravelo, 2013).
Los-Intocables - USA.



Figure 13. (Erik Ravelo, 2013).
Los-Intocables - Siria.



Figure 14. (Erik Ravelo, 2013).
Los-Intocables - McDonalds.



Figure 15. (Erik Ravelo, 2013).
Los-Intocables - Priest.

According to Ravelo, Facebook responded to the photographs by applying a form of censorship. The artist stated that the once the photographs were uploaded they gained a significant amount of exposure achieving 18,000 likes within a few days (The Huffington Post Australia, 2013). Facebook then halted further likes the images could receive, then banning Ravelo from uploading additional photographs.

Ravelo claimed he had no intention in fighting the censorship issue, stating that he was more focused on promoting his work (The Huffington Post Australia, 2013). However, censorship received from social media networks are not always taken lightly by artists. Artists that fall victim to censorship also have the power to gain more exposure as a result of being censored.

In March 2015 photographer and poet Rupi Kaur made international headlines on social media for sharing an image from her photography series 'Period' (Figure 16). The photograph that was uploaded on Kaur's social media network Instagram, depicted a fully clothed woman lying on a bed with what appears to be menstrual blood on her clothing and bed sheets (Zhang, 2015). The social media network removed the image due to it violating the community guidelines. Kaur replied by posting the images a second time and informed her followers of the removal of the image. This resulted in the photograph receiving much more attention from not only her audience but other social media networks, which started debate between various audiences over social media. The image was removed for the second time and once again Kaur was quick to defend her work that caused uproar leading the image to go viral within a few days (Zhang, 2015).

Kaur (2015) stated that the reaction received from the image was as the artist expected when addressing the



Figure 16. (Rupi Kaur, 2015). *Period*.

issue of menstruation. While the dispute continued over the following days the audience responded by sharing the photograph resulting in the censorship issue to go viral. Due to the uproar of the public, Instagram reposted the image and stated that a member of their team accidentally removed the photograph and apologised (Zhang, 2015). It is not only higher people in charge that are able to apply censorship. Censorship can be applied from users that have access to the right tools.

Social media networks have allowed everyday users to control and apply censorship. Users that choose to create Facebook pages are permitted to censor unwanted and inappropriate images they do not wish to have displayed on their page. The user is able to block individuals from liking, commenting, and uploading posts to the page. As part of the creative process undertaken with the research, the creative

pieces produced also fell victim to such censorship.

The Fink Art Facebook page gained exposure and an audience by following group pages that had constant interaction with their followers. Creative pieces were uploaded on posts that were relevant to the image or posts that received large audiences. Images were also uploaded on pages and posts that audiences were known to have strong opinions and react to comments. This required constant monitoring of the posts to observe reactions received from the audience.

As the Fink Art page gained a stable amount of pages to follow, images were uploaded and instantaneously censorship followed. Though images would receive opinionated comments, it took little time for further action to follow. In some cases, the users in control of the page would comment, then block Fink Art from any further access to upload pictures or comment on the page (Figure 17).

The Fink Art Facebook page followed 77 pages, with not all pages allowing images to be uploaded initially. Out of the 77 pages the Fink Art page was banned, blocked and censored from 21 Facebook pages. Images were censored on pages that held strong opinions on race and religion and did not take kindly to the creative pieces that presented other perspectives. The images do not display as for or against issues, they were simply new viewpoints that the users found provocative.

Arguing that the users found the images provocative can be seen in the actions that were taken by users. The users that have access to manage the controls of the page censored images from gaining any additional exposure or resulting in unwanted comments. Therefore, the creative pieces as stated, fell victim to censorship. Although it is a small case of censorship, it shows that the issue is there. It also



Figure 17. (Facebook, 2015). *Censored, before and after being blocked from Facebook pages*

demonstrates how easy censorship can be accomplished by the people in charge to do so.

These investigations are a key role in the research because, it is important to consider different effects censorship has had in the creative discipline. Discussing and analysing how censorship and controversy connect are an aspect that have been overlooked in previous studies. Investigating censorship by producing creative pieces alongside research is also a new analysis that allows this argument to be unique.

It is through these findings that the questions of what is censored and why, are raised. Research has shown that censoring images is another way of sparking controversy about an image. The images chosen to be censored in this investigation are topics and issues which occur in everyday life and are displayed in the media. In some cases, such as Kaur, the opinion of an individual has the ability to label an image inappropriate and that can lead to uproar. One major aspect that helps understand controversy within the arts, is not the artwork itself but those in power (Donald, 2006). This key role of power influences other individuals to then also label the works as controversial, when initially those thoughts were never present.

TRANSLATION OF ONE

What impact does cross-mediation have on creating controversy?

Art and design are no longer restricted to one particular medium, due to visual culture dramatically evolving over time. In a time where technology is thriving, controversy can be achieved over multiple media platforms. Multiple media platforms include television, internet, newspaper and any form of media that display images. Of all aspects this research investigates, cross-mediation is the most extensive sector when examining controversy. This chapter will investigate and argue how cross-mediation plays a role in creating controversy.

The crossing of multiple media platforms can result in an artwork becoming controversial. This can be analysed in media platforms such as television and the internet. The news is undoubtedly one of the strongest cultural constructions used within media. News stations are able to influence the thoughts and opinions of their audience to shape their perspectives. This is supported by Donald (2006) who states that technology has the power to alter and change the nature of the work of art that is produced. This opinion also relates to Mitchell's (2002) theory of vision being a cultural construction that aims to influence the audience. Such power allows media platforms such as the television to manipulate the perspective of their audience and create an idea that initially the public are unaware of.

Media platforms such as the news are able to construct views of their audience through bias opinions that influence them to feel and think a particular way. As Howells, Ritivoi & Schachter (2012) state, controversy within the arts is great news for the media. The media is known to stroke the fires of controversy, that always tend to make for a good news story (Howells, Ritivoi & Schachter, 2012, p.5).

The constant discussion and various opinions throughout cross-mediation, result in a change of the original context of an artwork. It permits media to showcase particular news events that they believe are suitable for their society and culture in order to help gain a larger audience.

Social and cultural views must also be considered when aiming to understand how works of art are interpreted. Mitchell's (2002) statement discussing how social and cultural views have an impact in the reaction of the audience, must be considered when discussing controversy within visual culture. The key to understand and demonstrate this argument, is to investigate how the audiences react to works of art that are commonly considered controversial, when placed within a unique society.

These arguments will be revealed through analysing and discussing controversies in visual culture. It will argue how cross-mediation has caused and influenced controversy due to their crossing of various multiple media platforms. While this issue can be discussed with an abundant number of works, I will focus on three case studies of cross-mediation that have led to controversy. This allows for an in depth investigation and analysis on the topic and offers a diverse insight into controversy within visual culture.

Edward Snowden Sculpture

Edward Snowden became a subject of controversy after

he leaked classified information from the National Security Agency of America to the mainstream media and public around the world, starting back in 2013 (Biography.com, 2015c). In early April 2015, a group of unidentified guerrilla artists erected a statue of the controversial whistle-blower.

The artists managed to sneak unnoticed into Brooklyn's Fort Greene Park, which housed a group of monuments to national heroes and martyrs. The artists then placed a four-foot-tall, 100-pound plaster sculpture on an existing vacant column (Figure 18). Accompanying the sculpture were block-letters mounted on the monument spelling out 'Snowden' (Daily Mail, 2015). Brooklyn's Fort Greene Park honours and remembers more than 11,000 American prisoners that were killed during the Revolutionary War. The pillar, in which the sculpture was placed, was part of the Prison Ship Martyrs Monument.

The following morning many pedestrians passed by the installation in the park where it went unnoticed. Once the installation piece was recognised by the park rangers, the news about the artwork began to spread. As the media rushed to report the controversial piece, the sculpture was covered with a large tarp upon their arrival (Figure 19). Less than 12 hours after the sculpture had been erected, it was covered from the public and eventually taken down. The reaction to the piece received various opinions, but again the media focused on controversial points about Snowden, rather than the meaning behind the work.

The unidentified artists stated that the installation highlighted figures who sacrifice their own safety to fight against modern-day tyrannies (Daily Mail, 2015). The artists further mentioned that the location of the sculpture was chosen with intention (Daily Mail, 2015). As the memorial park reflects the ideals the prisoners fought for, the artists



Figure 18. (Daily Mail, 2015). *Edward Snowden sculpture*



Figure 19. (Daily Mail, 2015). *Edward Snowden sculpture covered*

believe that figures who strive to uphold these beliefs today have been cast as criminals rather than being celebrated with a bronze statue (Daily Mail, 2015).

So how can Mitchell's (2002) idea of cross-mediation within visual culture be analysed with a controversial piece such as this? After the discovery of the installation, the media were quick to break the story over television news programs and online news media, causing the news to go viral. It is easy to argue that it was the persona used in the installation that caused controversy due to recent headlines in the media.

The ABC7 news station were quick to report the story of the installation, however it can be observed how the media are able to influence thoughts and opinions. Rather than opening the report with reference of the installation, the reporters opened with a question of whether the audience views Snowden as a traitor or a hero (ABC7, 2015). Further influencing opinions can be seen when reporters then describe Snowden as a "spy" and "whistle-blower", then discuss that he has again managed to cause another form of controversy (ABC7, 2015). The first opening lines of the news report mention nothing of the installation or message behind it, but rather remind their viewers of the controversial behaviour behind the figure.

As Mitchell (2002) discusses, the effect that cross-mediation had on the installation resulted in the change of the meaning behind the work. The cross-mediation allowed media platforms such as the news to change the context behind the piece that would better suit their program, while influencing the way their viewers saw and interpreted the piece.

Yet the crossing of multiple media platforms also resulted in inspiration. With help of the media breaking the news of the statue, the removal of the sculpture inspired other artists to



Figure 20. (Guerrilla Shout, 2015). *Edward Snowden hologram.*

create a following installation. Just hours after the removal, an art group who call themselves 'The Illuminator' used laptops and projection equipment to create a hologram of the Snowden sculpture where the previous installation was erected (Figure 20).

The artists responsible stated that the message behind the hologram was to address the role authorities played in censoring the previous installation (Ries, 2015). Although the hologram lasted for a few hours, the impact that cross-mediation played on the original sculpture influenced 'The Illuminator' artists to take action. However, this would not be the end to this installation movement through cross mediation.

After the 12-hour chaos their sculpture created, the unidentified group of artists behind the first installation announced a new way to share the statue through cross-mediation. To keep the installation alive, the artists produced a 3D printable sculpture of Snowden, being the same sculpture installed in the park, and made it available to people around the world (Figures 21-22). The 3D printable version of the statue is another way the artwork was able to cross into a new media platform and allowed the audience to become part of the work itself. The audience were encouraged to print and install the sculptures in an area of their choice.

Without the crossing of media platforms, the installation would have gone unnoticed and not received further action or support. Due to cross-mediation that created controversy around the world, it led to movements of the installation that allowed the work to cross further media platforms reaching a world wide audience. However, controversy created by cross-mediation can have an impacting and tragic outcome.

Charlie Hebdo & the Draw Mohammed Contest

The Charlie Hebdo attack in France, left 12 people dead after two men forced their way into the newspapers building in Paris, early in January 2015. The newspaper Charlie Hebdo is known for its satirical and controversial cartoons that mock religion, culture and politics. The controversy first started after the newspaper published cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed in 2006. Although the newspaper is known for its wide variety of controversial cartoons, the newspaper feeds off the publicity received by its yearly illustrations of the Prophet Muhammed (Read, 2015).

It can be argued that the tragic attack in 2015 was an event that the newspaper had been warned of numerous times.



Figure 21. (Wired, 2015) 3D print Edward Snowden sculpture



Figure 22. (Wired, 2015) 3D print Edward Snowden sculpture #2

This is due to the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammed causing frequent warnings of repercussions from the police dating back to 2006. They had their website hacked and office firebombed in 2011, after a controversial front page publication of the Prophet Muhammed (Read, 2015). Despite numerous warnings from the police urging the newspaper to think before its future publications, Charlie Hebdo continued to produce more controversial cartoons of the religious figure and fed off the publicity it was receiving (Read, 2015).

By taking advantage of their cross-mediation that spread over newspapers, television and the internet around the world, Charlie Hebdo was able to amplify the controversy they caused. As Donald (2006) states, art is created with an intention to influence the minds of an audience. The newspaper had little trouble influencing their audiences with their controversial views that then influenced minds alike to continue with more controversy resulting in further tragic events.

Just months after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, in May 2015, another exhibition titled the Draw Muhammed Contest was held in Texas, that aimed to promote “free speech” in memory of the attacks in Paris (Price, 2015, para. 9). The event was advertised through various media platforms such as the internet, newspapers, and news stations. Promoting the event also included numerous interviews with the creator of the exhibition Pamela Geller, on television news stations and online news including an interview on the Mike Gallagher Show. The main concern was the risk of an attack, similar to the Charlie Hebdo events in France just months prior to the exhibition, due to the controversy surrounding a drawing contest based on the religious figure (Mike Gallagher Show, 2015).

One can assume that this topic in art has led to major

controversy and tragic events in the past. It then becomes questionable as to whether people and events aim to purposely provoke their audience with such controversial issues. Rather than discussing the argument of free speech, the publicity this event received was promoted in a way that only depicted a violent result and displayed ideas of Islamophobia. When discussing the contest, Geller stated that “of course, this event will require massive security”, this reveals that the event organiser knew very well the high level of repercussion the contest could bring (Price, 2015, para. 10).

The cross-mediation of these events changed the context of the exhibition. Rather than focusing on promoting free speech, the media amplified the idea of tragic violent events that may occur. As a result, two armed gunmen were killed by police as they approached the exhibition on the opening night. It can be argued that, if this event had not received such high advertising in the media, or was promoted and discussed in a way that did not involve a result in tragic events, then these situations could have been avoided.

So why do people such as Geller, create controversial events in order to promote an idea or change? It can be said that events such as these are created to purposely provoke and push buttons of their viewers rather than promoting a positive change. These ideas can be seen in the following step Geller took to voice her opinions.

In May 2015, soon after the Draw Muhammed Contest, Geller launched and sponsored an anti-Islamic ad campaign across New-York City subways and buses. One of the designed posters consisted of a quote stating that “killing Jews is worship that draws us closer to Allah” (Bever, 2015, para. 1).

The language Geller chose to use in the posters offered

no form of positivity and spread hate messages across the city. There is a clear connection that these works are aimed to provoke specific audiences rather than prompting any form of positive change. The cultural construction within this controversy are not only seen by Geller's exhibition and posters, but also the role that the media played in helping to create and promote this idea.

The media played a major role in the controversy Geller aimed to create with her strong views. Using these forms of media allows these works to be promoted, not in the name of art, but rather to provoke, stereotype, create protests, hate groups and worst of all, run the risk of tragic events. It also plays a role in the construction of cultural views, and allowing stereotyping to become acceptable.

However, not all art aims to provoke for the same reasons. Other creatives create work to provoke deep thoughts and make important issues aware to the public while calling for change. Yet again the crossing of multiple media platforms, changes the context of the work resulting in a misleading idea of the artwork and artist.

Banksy

As discussed in previous chapters, infamous street artist Banksy has managed to cause controversy with numerous artworks he has created. Though his works are analysed and investigated numerous times within this research, the study of Banksy has played an important role in the aim to expose how each segment of this research reflects onto the other. Banksy's work provides significant insight when discussing how cross-mediation plays a role in creating controversy and changing context of works of art.

In 2013, Banksy produced a graffiti piece 'Better out than in' that hinted and promoted the start of a new series. On



Figure 23. (Instagram, 2013) *The street is in play*

October 1st he announced residency in New York over a period of a month with a promise to create a new piece of work every day. This would become arts biggest scavenger hunt ever created.

As promised, on the 2nd of October 2013, Banksy kick-started his residency by uploading an image of his first work via social media network Instagram, with words that hinted as to where the artwork lay (Figure 23). Using this method to promote street art was a new approach, as the series did not start when he produced the first piece of graffiti; it started when he posted it.

Mitchell (2002) claims that images are now a cross-mediation visual content that appear in multiple forms, can be understood with the works of Banksy. Although he produces street art, it is the crossing of multiple media

platforms that made the series so unique. While many artists have created various works on multiple media platforms, this series crossed all media while using the same works produced on the street.

It wasn't long before the news of the infamous artist spread across the world causing headlines on the news, newspapers and across social media, resulting in a hunt for the artist by the NYPD. This is how the artist managed to again cross over to a new media, which again changed the context of his works.

Crossing all media made the series become distinctive however; it can be argued that because of this, the message of the works resulted in little meaning with the audience. Once the artist had posted an image of his latest graffiti piece, the audience then begun the hunt to find the artwork in the streets. Crowds would flock to the location and race against time to see the work before the piece was either painted over, destroyed or stolen (Figure 24). If the audience were able to view the piece in time, the audience participation became part of the work itself, and made it come to life.

Mitchell (2002) argues that vision and ways of seeing, is a cultural construction, which is learned and cultivated, not simply given by nature. This means that visual culture is a construction of images that are produced for a specific society, to influence the beliefs, culture, thoughts and ideas of the audience. How can this be compared and understood?

This can be seen in Banksy's works by analysing his artworks in a society with different cultural and social views. The western world is familiar with the works of Banksy, and because of international headlines about the artist, the western world's visual culture has been taught and informed of the value and popularity of his work. Opinions have been influenced



Figure 24. (Life and Times, 2014) *Crowds flock to see Banksy artwork*

and cultivated by the audience within the western world due to the large presence of visual culture. This is supported by Mitchell (2002) who claims that these cultural constructions play an important role in how the audience interprets images. Because of this, it can be seen how controversy is created within media platforms when analysing works of Banksy created in a changed environment. Banksy's impact creates a vast contrast when his works are placed in a society with different cultural and social views.

In February 2015, Banksy revealed images of his new work that he produced in Gaza; a place the artist has visited previously to highlight important political issues. However, the reaction of this society is remarkably contrasting. Rather than hundreds of people rushing to the piece to photograph or steal it, it is merely just an image amid destruction. Unlike the works produced in New York, the audience stopped and

viewed the piece and took time to 'see' it and understand its meaning (Mitchell, 2002). The people go on with their day, seeing it just as any other work of art. However, the cultural construction of visual culture within this society is not informed of the value or significance of Banksy.

Ayed Arafah (2015) from Bethlehem's Dheisha refugee camp stated, nobody knew who Banksy was. He claimed that people realised the artworks worth when many foreigners came to see his graffiti pieces (Knell, 2015). This idea can also be seen in recent events that took place after Banksy's visit to Gaza. The door that Banksy created his piece on belonged to a man who had lost his home due to the conflict. This door was the only thing remaining as it stood amongst the ruins of his home. He was later approached and offered a mere 120 pounds for the door (Figure 25) (Knell, 2015). The gentlemen had no knowledge of the true value of the artwork which would sell for over \$500,000 (Knell, 2015).

Some of Banksy's most important and celebrated works have been created in Gaza because of their important messages. However, the visual culture in America is aware of the value of the works and disregards the meanings behind them, rather displaying the artist as a controversial figure. Because of this, the meaning and importance behind the works are neglected. As Mitchell (2002) states, it changes the impact of the artwork and represents a new meaning from when it was first created.

The impact of cross-mediation was also assessed and investigated with the creative pieces produced alongside the research. While the research arguments prove the power of media, the creative pieces provided insight to see it unfold in its process.

Due to the limited time available for the research, it was



Figure 25. (Banksy, 2015) *Graffiti on door, Gaza*

understood that the creative pieces must have an immediate impact with the viewer. To achieve this, the artwork must be simple and clear with its message. However, the creative pieces that caused reactions were frequently misunderstood and taken out of context, even though their messages were clear and simple.

Because of the ongoing issue in Australia concerning native title and the owners of the land, 'Whose Land' (Figure 26) was created as a response to that issue. As stated by Donald (2006), the artwork was a metacognitive work because it engages in both self-reflection of artist and society. While the image leaves the interpretation open to the viewer, it was understood that responses would differ depending on the social and cultural views of the audience.

'Whose Land' was one of the most popular images that

generated responses. The image contained the statement 'My Land' within the image, and in no aspect did the artwork depict the topic of religion. However, surprisingly, numerous reactions received responded with strong opinions about religion. It is easy to see how cross-mediation can change the context of the works. The responses received with strong opinions about religion came when the image was placed in an environment filled with strong racial views. Once the image was placed in locations with a more open social view, the context of the image once again changed. It can be said that because of the issue the artwork addresses, it became a target for viewers to voice their strong critics that did not relate to the image itself. This idea is supported by Howells, Ritivoi & Schachter (2012) claiming that, controversies are not fueled by the artist or the artwork itself, rather it is about the strong social and cultural views in a society.

Research has shown how a simple image can fall victim to the impact of cross-mediation. The image received responses stating that it was "brain-dead art" to "an exaggeration" of the issue (Figure 27). While others went on tirades about bringing up issues from the past and labelling Aboriginal people as constantly playing the victim.

However, once the same work was posted with the title, the context of the image changed again. Posting the title of 'Whose Land' resulted in the only response that appeared to actually be reflective of the artwork. The user took the time to analyse the artwork and its aims. This was shown in their response that stated that the land does not belong to people, rather the people belong to the land. Though it did not receive substantial responses, the responses that were provided indicates the various effects cross-mediation has on images.

The majority of the viewers replied with comments and

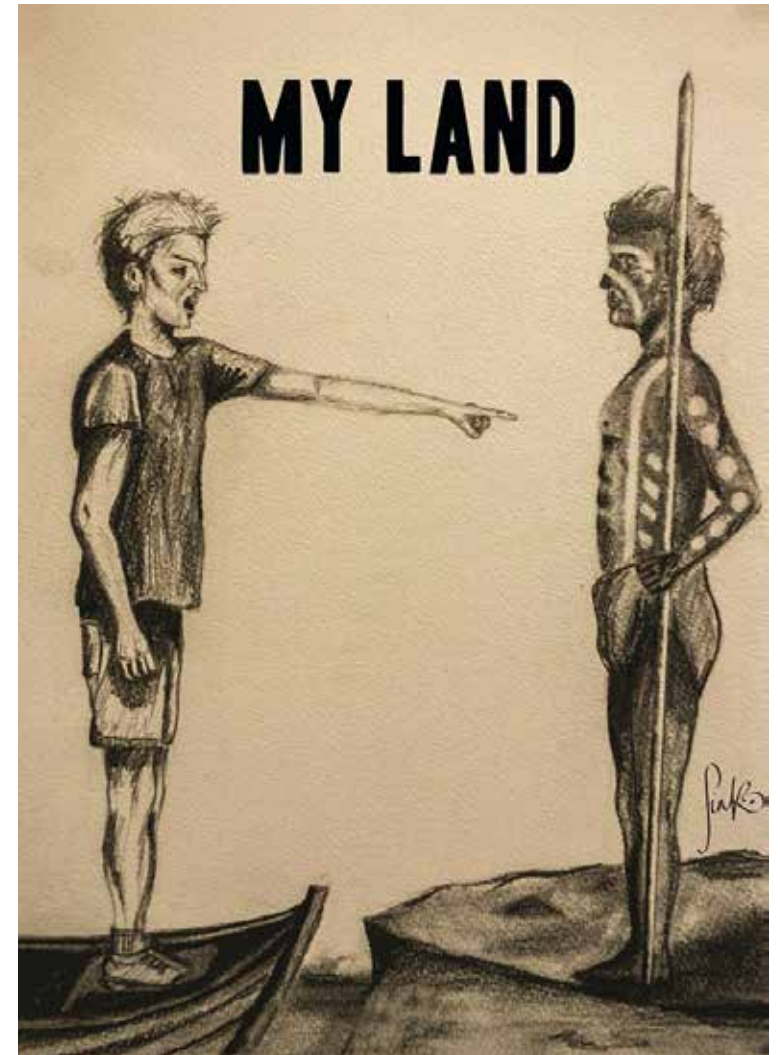


Figure 26. (Charmand, 2015) *Whose Land*

images that were irrelevant to the artworks presented. Using the creative pieces as form of study, displayed how easily artworks can be misinterpreted. The interpretation and opinion of one viewer can then impact on how the next viewer observes the artwork. Producing the creative pieces to investigate how cross-mediation plays a role in causing artworks to become controversial, has proven to be a unique way to investigate the issue. While at first the process of creating a controversial piece seemed possible, it was not only a challenge to create a controversial artwork, but also an experiment in how to gain exposure for the image.



Figure 27. (Facebook, 2015) *Responses to Whose Land*

PROVOKE DEEP THOUGHTS

Is there a process to create a controversial image? If so what is it?

This research until now has identified and discussed key elements of controversy within the art and design discipline. To enable this research project to stand distinctive with its investigation, it aimed to investigate the process of creating a controversial work. In order to achieve this unique outcome, the examination was conducted by producing a series of creative pieces that went alongside the research. The process of producing and exposing the works of art along with analysing the reactions, were intended to help answer if there is a process to create a controversial work.

Though there are numerous ways controversy can be caused, the one-year time frame of this research must be considered in relation to the studies presented. In order to achieve results for this investigation, a resource was needed that would provide fast and efficient outcomes. Producing posters to display in streets was considered, however it was uncertain if they would provide the insight and results that were needed in the limited time available. Because of this, it was decided that in order to accomplish the aims of the research, social media networks would be used due to their ability to reach large audiences quickly while providing the necessary feedback that could be received from the audience.

Before any creative pieces were produced, controversial

works of art were analysed in order to understand how controversy is sparked. As discussed in chapter 1, much controversy has been generated when artworks portray society in a perspective that audience deem inappropriate. It was decided that the influence of the creative pieces would come from controversial pieces that addressed issues within society.

In order to gain an insight into issues within society, constant monitoring of current news events on news programs as well as social media platforms were conducted. This proved to be a major process before producing the creative pieces. Major news events helped shape the direction of what topic the creative pieces would address. As news is delivered at an overwhelming rate, examination into issues that regularly occurred within society were also monitored. Due to the vast issues that news programs cover, it was decided that the creative pieces would address one ongoing issue within society. Narrowing the creative pieces down to one issue was aimed to increase the chance of reactions. Due to the works of art addressing ongoing and similar topics, it was thought that eventually opinions from the audience about the issues would arise.

Ongoing monitoring of the news displayed the reoccurring issue of racism within the Australian society. Much controversy stemmed from statements regarding race and religion. These issues included, Indigenous AFL star Adam Goodes war dance that led to the player being constantly booed in matches, anti-Islam protests, refugees and ongoing racial attacks on Australian public transport (9 News, 2015; Aly, 2013; Nightingale, 2015). Although religion does not necessarily fall under racism, there has been much discussion and controversy in Australian society surrounding this issue. Due to these topics constantly receiving headlines

and sparking controversy, it was decided that the works of art would address the issues of race and religion under the the hot topic of racism.

The next step was to create a street-artist like name that would be used to make social media network pages. It was discussed that remaining unidentified would possibly increase viewer interaction due to the audience not knowing who they are addressing. This would allow and encourage them to feel more comfortable to share their honest opinions.

While the thought of creating a street-artist like name seemed to be the uncomplicated part of the process, it proved to be otherwise. It was a challenge for a number of reasons, including finding a name that reflected on the creative works that would be produced and trying to restrict the name to one word. Lists were produced of potential names, and the first chosen name was 'Meek'. However, in order to stand alone as an artist name, research into the potential street name linked with a well-known Australian graffiti street artist based in Melbourne, known as Meek (National Gallery of Australia, 2004). More research was conducted for potential names and the next chosen name was 'Fink'. Research into the name revealed a musician, artist and social groups who are known under this title. However, the musician and artist had small audiences/followers, and the creatives were based in other countries around the world. Though the name was in use by other creatives outside of Australia, it was decided that this would not impact the works of art and was suitable for the research project. Fink was then chosen as the name the creative pieces would be produced under.

Fink, meaning a person who is considered a whistle-blower, snitch, or a person who informs others of bad behaviour, related to the idea behind the creative pieces ('Fink', 2015). Since the works of art aimed to inform the audience of social



Figure 28. (Charmand, 2015) *Please explain*

issues in an approach that was controversial, the name seemed suitable to the task at hand. The artworks aimed to inform viewers of racial issues within society in a whistle-blower fashion via social media networks, Facebook and Instagram, under the chosen artist name of Fink.

The series of creative works were produced in art and design forms. Half were illustrated with pencil on paper and the other half were digitally produced. A total of ten images were produced and uploaded on social media networks. To help keep the artist unidentified, the pages started slow with a limited audience. Finding new ways to promote the works

were accomplished by what the social media networks allowed its users to do.

Technology has allowed news to travel around the world as it is breaking and social media is a major platform in delivering the information, as shown and discussed in previous chapters. As technology allows its users to constantly update information, there is no shortage of news to be found on the internet. Not only has this discovered how quickly information is delivered but as well as how quickly it can be forgotten.

As mentioned previously, due to the research time frame to achieve the outcome of creating controversial images, the works of art needed to reach the broadest audience that was probable. Social media networks Facebook and Instagram provide exposure to images with what each network allow the users to do. Because of their mass audience, it has the ability to allow the image to travel virally around the world if the mass audience interacts. This would allow the images to reach the largest audience in the limited time frame and was deemed the most suitable to help with the investigation.

The social network Facebook allows its users to create fan pages. Using this, the Fink Art page was created. Once the page was created, the user was able to invite people to the page and share it on other user pages, to help boost its audience. Facebook allows its users to comment on posts throughout newsfeeds. This is achieved by the users following pages allowing for their updates to appear in their newsfeed. Depending on the users' settings, other users are able to also attach images in the comment section. This allowed an additional way to help promote the page and the creative pieces.

Once the Fink Art Facebook page was created, the 'Art



Figure 29. (Charmand, 2015) *Terror-Vision*

by Fink' page was then created on social media network Instagram. While it was preferred that the two pages would be under the same name, Fink Art was taken by another user based in Dublin. Art by Fink was the user name available that was most closely linked to the Facebook page.

Instagram allows its users to use hashtags to help promote and share their images. This idea was carefully considered when posting images and attaching relevant hashtags on the Instagram account. Research was conducted into the busiest times of Instagram in Australia, as well as what the most popular hashtags were. A study conducted on 61,000 posts analysed the busiest time and the best time to upload

images to gain the most attention. Research revealed the best times to upload images on Instagram were between 2am and 5pm (Beres, 2015). Posting an image at 5pm would engage people who had finished their work day and checking their phones as they leave work or wait for public transport (Beres, 2015). This research provided valuable insight to help boost the exposure of the creative pieces. This was an important factor of the research as it also allowed the images to be posted in the busiest time social media networks were accessed by their users.

To help gain a mass audience, people and networks with large online followers who fit the brief were contacted and asked to share the images as part of the research. They were informed of the research, its aims and were asked to simply share a picture from the Fink Art account. A total of twelve Facebook pages were contacted ranging from, Australian comedians, professional journalists, Australian artists, television networks programs including channel ten and the ABC, and art pages.

Though twelve users were contacted, a total of five replies were received. Replies included, “good luck”, from one user while another referred an email address for people who dealt with stories for their program (Facebook, 2015). An Australian artist recently brought to the public's attention due to his successful art campaign based on refugees was contacted. The creative pieces ‘Real Australians Are Racist’ were motivated by the campaign the artist had produced. The artist was asked to share the images to see how his audience would react however, he stated that he does not share works of art unless he himself has produced them, or been involved in the project.

One particular individual was contacted to help with the outcomes of the research. The user located Sydney, gained



Figure 30. (Charmand, 2015) *Cover up*



Figure 31. (Charmand, 2015) *Real Australians*



Figure 32. (Charmand, 2015) *Real Australians #2*

a mass audience due to his comedy videos that went viral and resulted in a large audience following. Because of the users large interacting followers, the individual used this to regularly address issues in Australian society including racism.

The individual was contacted and informed of the research project and its outcomes. The user was interested and agreed to share at least one image once they had been sent over. Four of the works of art that were produced were sent to allow the individual to choose an image and see a glimpse of the series. After the images were sent across, no reply was heard and no images were posted by the user.

Print newspapers were also contacted and informed of the research. Along with the email were some images attached from the creative series. The email hoped for professional feedback from those in charge of publishing images both online and print newspaper. They were asked to only provide feedback about the images and their thoughts on the audience's reaction if they were published in a hypothetical situation. The email was ignored and no comment was made on the artworks.

It must be stated that these individuals were contacted due to their audience constantly responding and interacting with their posts. It aimed to help achieve responses in the limited time of the research. In no form was reaching out to individuals with a large audience conducted for fame purposes for the Fink Art pages.

The aim behind these creative pieces were to cause controversy while addressing issues that needed to be brought to light. As study has shown, reality is a target for controversy. The works produced were merely a depiction of surrounding society.

The reactions received by the audience indicate that the process taken to create controversy was successful. Though the images were produced to be straightforward, this investigation has identified that there is an issue with the audience misinterpreting and misunderstanding the intention of artworks. Because of this, it can be claimed that one aspect of controversy is created when the viewer does not understand the image. This can be seen through the comments that were received after posting the images.

People would leave hate filled comments on the page or under the image then quickly return to delete them. At times, images of these comments were captured and others the comments removed by the user before an image could be taken. This suggests that people find it easy to leave their comments and opinions on Facebook pages under images, however if there is no mass audience to encourage or help debate that comment or opinion, it would be removed. It can also be claimed that the comment could of been removed because the individual realised that they have misinterpreted the image.

Research has also shown how controversies are quickly started and fuelled over social media. However, due to the overwhelming posts that occur daily, as quickly as a controversy starts, it ends. The matter is then forgotten until the next hot topic is up for debate.

The most effective creative pieces from the series produced were the 'Whose Land' and the 'Surprise' artworks. The audience were quick to comment their opinions on the pieces. As these pieces revolved around current hot topics, they managed to grab the attention of audience members.

After posting images on social media pages, it didn't take long to trigger silent reactions. Silent reactions consisted of no

verbal exchange, but rather steps taken to show disapproval of images. Pages who found works inappropriate were quick to respond by barring and blocking the unidentified artist page. Some would allow access to their comments, but had blocked the Fink Art page to comment. While others completely blocked any relations to comments, posting on pages and things shared.

Though there are many ways to create controversy, it is understood that this investigation has analysed only one method. So is there a process to create a controversial work? If so what is it? The process of producing works of art addressing racism, has shown that one process to create a controversial work is to produce artworks that reflect current topics in society. Although many works of art can reflect society, it is when society is reflected from a new perspective that discomfort amongst viewers occurs and controversy arises.

While the creative pieces did not receive a mass response or gain a mass audience, the outcome of the investigation has shown a process to create a controversial work. However, this investigation has shown that the most important process and essential aspect to create a controversial work is to have an audience. Without an audience, controversy fails to exist.

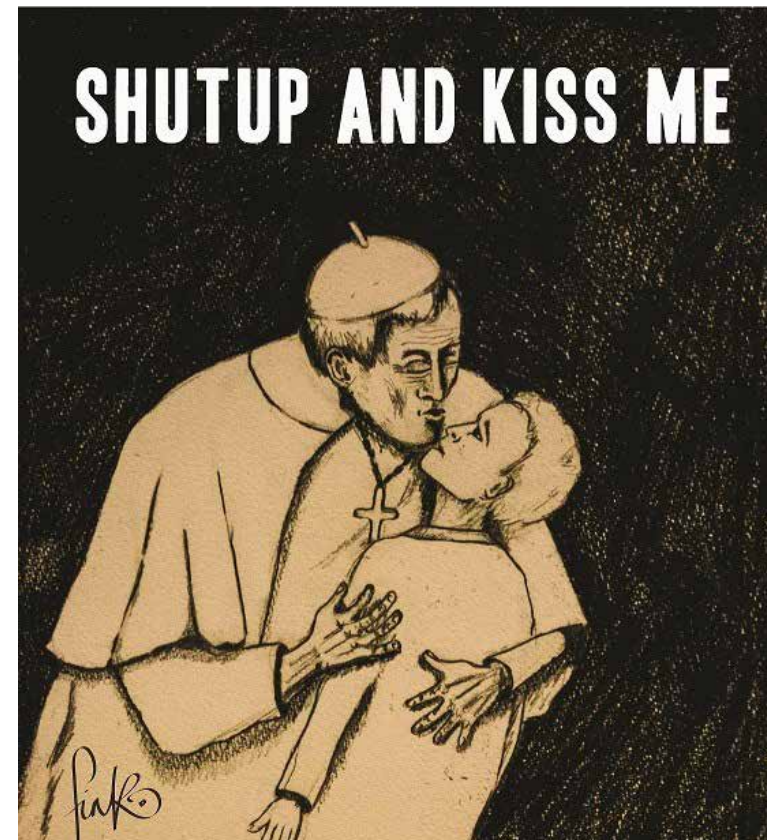


Figure 33. (Charmand, 2015) *Shhh*

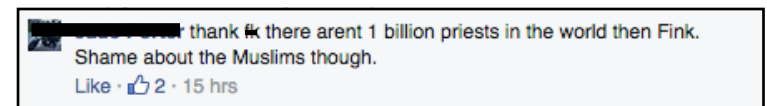


Figure 34. (Charmand, 2015) *Response to Shhh*

CONCLUSION

When starting the research, the creative pieces were believed to be the simple part that would be accomplished. It was believed that producing an abundant number of artworks would be the comfortable process of the research. This however, proved to be the most difficult part. It was through constant research and monitoring of controversial events that the significance and interest of the topic of controversy was realised. As a result, the research and writing process itself became the most pleasing and thought-provoking. The creative pieces produced became useful investigation tools to help shape and argue the research. It also allowed the research project to stand unique in its investigation into controversy within visual culture.

Reflecting back on the research process, the concept of how long it would take for one of the works of art created for the project to go viral, was there from the start. While not a single creative piece achieved this, over time the works of art gained more attention and reactions. This was an interesting concept that brought to light further ideas on the perception of controversy. Well known artists are able to cause controversy generally due to their status and history of controversial work. But how does an unknown artist do so without having a large reputation in the art world?

It can be claimed that unknown artists cause uproar when

the work of art gains attention and increased exposure over time. The more exposure the image receives adds various layers that eventually build up to create disputes. As research has shown, if the creative piece catches the attention of the media, it is the media that assists in amplifying the uproar.

The creative pieces provided additional insight in the minimal studies done around the idea of controversy within visual culture. Misunderstanding and misinterpreting the works of art that were produced played major role that resulted in reactions. Though the works of art were intended to be straightforward and easy to interpret, the reactions received undoubtedly displays how they were misinterpreted.

It can be suggested that one major aspect in creating controversy is the misinterpretation of the work of art. Though this research project has briefly discussed this concept, it is an important factor that must be considered when works of art are quick to be labeled inappropriate. Rather than focusing on the issue being addressed in the image, the audience focus on debating their opinions. As a result, the meaning behind the work of art is lost and all that remains are the strong social and cultural views of individuals.

Controversy in visual culture is an ongoing situation that regularly occurs. This was established through the process of the research. Constant updates were applied to sections due to controversies that were breaking within visual culture throughout the course of the research project. However, even though it occurs frequently, it still is a topic that has many aspects yet to be investigated. This research provides insight into the basic questions on the idea of controversy that have been overlooked in previous studies. But it has now opened other doors for investigation. Society may not realise how social and cultural views impact on what is

considered inappropriate, but these issues are embedded amongst us. Examination into the topic of controversy has also highlighted how frequently these incidents occur. Visual culture is part of our everyday life in the images that surround us, the technology we use and the programs we watch.

Although media platforms play a role in creating controversy, no bigger role is played than that of the audience. Controversy lies within the opinions of the audience. It can be claimed that there is no such thing as a 'controversial image', because what labels it controversial is the opinion of one that influences another. An image itself cannot be called controversial unless opinions of others have labelled it so. Allowing people to constantly share opinions and thoughts leaves room for controversies to be created with images that start conversation. This research has shown the large amount of controversy that is constantly caused by images and the short attention span the audience ultimately have for the controversies created, as they quickly move on to a new issue. Within a few hours' people have forgotten about the image, their opinion and moved on to the next 'hot topic'. As quickly as controversies are identified, they disappear.

The research process and investigations for this project revealed there is one major aspect that has generally been overlooked. Though artists are known to be controversial or produce controversial works, it is not the artist who chooses to carry this label. The artist is not able to label themselves as a controversial artist. This label is applied to them from the outside by people with the power and ability to do so; viewers, media and critics.

It can be said that controversy is a state of mind. This is because of the strong social and cultural views that impact and influences our thoughts and opinions. It is the state of

mind the viewer has at the time when they first see a creative piece that impacts their critique of the work. Controversy, it can be said, is a construction of strong opinions that never draws to a conclusion. In a sense, this also means that an investigation into the nature of controversy itself cannot come to a conclusion. As people claim that art is in the eye of the beholder, this investigation has revealed how art controversies are in the state of mind and opinions of the viewer.

APPENDIX A

The following photographs display the Fink art social media pages. The works of art can be viewed online on Facebook and Instagram. Searching for the artist name or using the website will guide you to the social media networks pages.

Instagram user name: art_by_fink

Facebook user name: Fink Art

Facebook website: <https://www.facebook.com/ArtByf1nk>

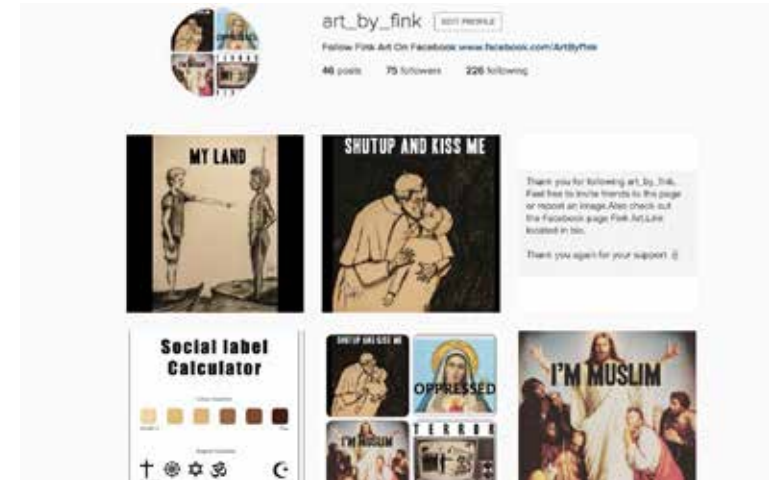


Figure 35. (Charmand, 2015) *Fink Instagram account*



Figure 36. (Charmand, 2015) *Fink Facebook account*

APPENDIX B

The following list contains all the Facebook pages the Fink art creative pieces were uploaded onto. The works of art were uploaded onto user sites that contained a large audience that constantly reacted to updates. These user sites allowed images to be uploaded to their updates while some allowed for images to be posted directly to their page. Also indicated throughout the list, are the pages that censored and blocked the Facebook Fink Art user site.

1. 2Day FM
2. 7 news Australia
3. 7 news Sydney
4. 9 News
5. ABC
6. ABC News
7. Against Islamic Terrorism and control
8. Aussie Pride - No Islam - No Shariah Law
9. Australian Defence League (blocked)
10. Australians against Islam - AAI
11. Bethel Church, Reddings
12. Blackfulla Revolution
13. Boycott Halal in Australia (blocked)
14. Calvary Chapel (blocked)
15. CBC Ottawas
16. CBN News
17. Christian evangelical TEA party members (blocked)
18. Daily Mail
19. EDL Bournemouth English Defence League (blocked)
20. End Islam
21. GOD is my Father
22. Greek Orthodox Daily posts for inspiration (blocked)
23. Guardian Australia

24. I love Jesus always (blocked)
25. I love Jesus Christ
26. Jesus Daily
27. Jesus Daily – Jesus Diary (blocked)
28. Jesus loves you
29. Juxtapoz Magazine
30. KIIS 1065
31. Kim Vuga
32. Left wing bigots and extremists exposed (blocked)
33. Let's Take a look at Islam
34. Marching to Zion
35. National Demographic party of Australia (blocked)
36. NBC News
37. NewSpring Church (blocked)
38. PDLA Patriots Defence League Australia (blocked)
39. Pro Christians
40. Reclaim Australia Rally – Adelaide and Surrounds (blocked)
41. Reclaim Australia Rally – Mackay (blocked)
42. Reclaim Australia Rally – Sydney CBD (blocked)
43. Reclaim Australia wide (blocked)
44. Rogue Infidels
45. Studio 10
46. Sunrise

47. TB Joshua Ministries
48. Terror Australis
49. The Australians speak out
50. The Bible Book
51. The Episcopal Church
52. The Great Aussie Bastard (blocked)
53. The Jewish Standard
54. The United Methodist Church
55. TODAY
56. United Patriots Front – Perth (blocked)
57. United Patriots Front (blocked)
58. We follow Jesus Christ
59. We Stand With Israel

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FIGURE LIST

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