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PWR Photo Essay

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PWR Photo Essay Project

Reflection Letter

When I started out working on my research paper, the original topic I chose bordered on highlighting the damages caused by Mao Zedong and his control over the unstable Red Guards. For a research paper this thesis was covering way too much ground. But because there were no limitations of words for this assignment, I was able to accomplish a modified version of my original thesis.

I chose my photo essay to represent one aspect of the Chinese Cultural Revolution which people within China seldom mention in public. Behind the blinding lights and circuses Mao put up to capture the hearts of China, according to the current Chinese government, 30 million people died. Their deaths were caused by the ignorance of the mob and the hatred and chaos spread by the Red Guards. Deaths were caused by the massive failures of agriculture and production which led to China's inability to feed its masses. My rhetorical stance within my poster is clear. Mao Zedong and the influence of his propaganda are to be blamed for the cruel deaths of people during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

The poster is comprised of images of posters from the Revolution, images of children, images of the tortured souls, and images of Mao. Each represented an element which helped to create the unstable Red Guards. The outline of the poster's center is the shape of China and within the inside background is a continuous repetition of Mao's image overlaid with the Nike sign, the universal symbol of shameless advertisement. Together with the pictures depicting the elements of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the poster itself seems to reflect the chaos and lack of focus of the Chinese Cultural

Revolution. But what I did say within the poster mattered the most. On the top of the poster I wrote, “Mao’s Reign of Terror, The Chinese Cultural Revolution.” This phrase is the first the reader will see and establishes clearly that Mao played a large part in the devastation caused by the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Then on each side of the bottom of the poster I wrote a phrase which together read, “Starvation, Torture, Suicide, Mob Frenzy 30 Million Died.” This final part of the poster which I hope the readers will see last, sums up the extent of damage caused by the pointless worship of the power hungry Mao Zedong.

They say that an image is worth a thousand words. However what needs to be clarified is that those thousand words twist and turn from reader to reader and never remain the exact meaning. For instance, my image of Mao Zedong outlined in red represents a glorious leader and his ambitions and achievements to a loyal member of the communist party. To another person this image may represent the oppression and bloodshed which Mao brought onto the people of China. Things are further complicated when two images are brought together, each imparting meaning onto the other. In my poster there is the presence of many images which individually tell a story of the person or persons within it. However when these images combine, the individuality of the image is not lost but rather melded into the poster’s whole, enhancing and strengthening its rhetoric.

Overall, this project was very satisfying to make. I spent hours on Photoshop trying to balance out the images into conveying the feeling of chaos caused by the Mao and his propaganda and the people affected. I like to think that I did something during this process that obtained some justice for people such as those seen in the center oval of my poster, who lost their lives and sanity because of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.