

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION - Essay/Assignment Cover Sheet**

**Name of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Molly Molloy** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Course:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fine Art & Education** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Submission Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **09/1/2023** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Lecturer/tutor** - \_\_\_\_\_ **Silvia Loeffler** \_\_\_\_\_

**Essay/Assignment title -** Homelessness through the eyes of an artist.

Criteria	EX	VG	Good	Fair	Poor	Comment
Introduction (statement of problem, response to task)						
Range and use of appropriate sources						
Development of argument (analysis, interpretation)						
Conclusions (application, findings, outcomes)						
Presentation, language, academic conventions						

**Please tick Y/N for Profile of Needs**  
**General comment:**

**Indicative grade:**

**Tutor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



National College of Art and Design

## School of Visual Culture

I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

Signed: *Molly Molloy*

Programme / department: *Fine Art – TAA- and Education*

Date: *09/01/2023*

## **Table of Contents**

### **Illustrations**

### **Introduction .....**

### **Chapter 1: Artists that Portray Homelessness**

1.1 :	Chemical X .....
1.2 :	David Hammons .....
1.3 :	James Early .....

### **Chapter 2: Homelessness around me.**

2.1 :	Homelessness in my area, Monaghan.....
2.2 :	Homelessness in Dublin.....
2.3 :	Homelessness in Vancouver, Canada.....

### **Conclusion**

### **Bibliograph**

## Illustrations

- Fig 1- Louis Vuitton - Chemical X, Skid Rodeo Drive – The Street Where Luxury & Poverty Meet, 2019
- Fig 2- Gucci - Chemical X, Skid Rodeo Drive – The Street Where Luxury & Poverty Meet, 2019
- Fig 3 - David Hammons - David Hammons, Puzzling Times – 2021
- Fig 4 - Photo Janelle Zara - Everything is going to be all right.
- Fig 5 - Stop and Cross - James Early, Homeless series, Stop and Cross, 2017
- Fig 6- Shadows - James Early, Homeless series, Shadows, 2018
- Fig 7 - Cheap / Free stuff Monaghan Edel Sweeney, Facebook group, Cheap Free stuff Monaghan, 2012
- Fig 8 – Dan Toulgoet, How do you explain Vancouver’s Downtown East Hastings to tourists? It’s complicated... , 19/08/2019

## **Introduction**

In society, the lines between what is considered rich and poor are clearly drawn. Our society significantly contributes to how we understand homelessness. **Homelessness in the eyes of an artist** is what I have seen and experienced from hitting adulthood. Why is homelessness so bad in Ireland? Is Ireland the problem? or are other big cities the same as Dublin? Does the artist's work and basing their theme on homelessness help awareness? It condemns strategies that either don't offer much to our understanding of the humanity of homeless people or that ignore, misrepresent, or undermine that humanity. It specifically opposes "epidemiological" methods that, inasmuch as they see the position of those people primarily as a "social fact," must be explained in terms of causal variables or "risk factors" of various kinds and deny the possibility of agency for homeless people. In order to make sense of the homelessness study findings, it assesses the idea of homelessness routes. It debates ethnographic techniques centred on "homeless culture" and criticizes realist approaches that claim to find "underlying" mechanisms that "create" homelessness. My essay underlines the necessity to view homelessness as multifaceted and storied throughout, and it ends with a need for greater research on artists who portray homelessness both positively and negatively, rather than focusing only on particular instances of homelessness. I will research artist that linked their own ideas and thoughts of the word "Homelessness" through the eyes of an art form and how this helped society view the crisis of Homelessness in our world.

## **Chapter One-**

### **Artists that portray homelessness.**

Artists produce works in an effort to reduce homelessness. Given that it demands constant attention, the problem of homelessness is one that is very easy to get numb to. Although they don't pretend to be doing so, they do hope that the artwork may increase awareness. Empathy motivates behaviour. It's a little presentation that raises awareness of a significant problem: the thousands of "hidden homeless" who are staying in temporary housing, sometimes on a friend's floor, and occasionally rough sleeping.

## 1.1- Chemical X

Skid Row was presented to Beverly Hills by artist Chemical X in May 2019. To bring attention to the homeless situation, he and his Instagram followers drove opulent tents down Rodeo Drive. *"Skid rodeo drive – The street Where Luxury and Poverty"*.

Well-known fashion Chanel and Gucci emblems, tw well-known premium brands, were displayed on the tents. *"Skid Rodeo Drive - The Street Where Luxury and Poverty Meet"*, this difficult artwork is designed to bring the expensive brands of Rodeo Drive directly into contact with the local homeless of Skid Row, the most underprivileged area in LA.

To produce this twelve tent piece, the artist collaborated with locals, artist, and leaders of the community. In the heart of Skid Row, on. San Julian's Street, tents decorated with the logos of some of the most famous well-known fashion brands like Louis Vuitton, Hermes Paris, Gucci, Chanel, Ralph Lauren, Prada, Dolce & Gabbana and Versace.



**Fig 1- Louis Vuitton  
- Chemical X, 2019**



**Fig 2- Gucci  
- Chemical X, 2019**

*“ I didn’t want to make poverty porn: I wanted to try to find something that replicated the way I felt,” In a rare interview, the artist told the Observer. “ I wanted to make something that you’re not going to see, that’s what makes it powerful and confrontational”*

**Doward, J (2022) Chemical X’s protest against poverty: ‘Chenel’ tents on LA’s Skid Row.**

*“I find Radeo Drive pretty offensive, but Skid Row is just obscene. Not the community but the fact that these places exist in the same town only a few miles apart. Luxury and poverty side by side is a very uncomfortable but powerful image” Chemical X.*

The Los Angeles Community Action Network, an organisation that supports the homeless, will get all proceeds from the sale of Chemical X artwork.

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYX9qFY43E0>**

**(<https://fb.watch/gzpzbyIY-J/>, 17/09/2020)**

## **1.2 - David Hammons**

Once, David Hammons said that “ Outrageously magical things happen when you mess around with symbols” In the past 50 years, Hammons has developed a language of common symbols and experimented with them in prints, drawings, performances, videos, sculptures made of found objects, and paintings. In spite of the fact that many of the results have been outrageous, they all share a certain kind of magic that comes from the transformation of commonplace items into allegories of what it is like to be an outsider in today’s society, even if that person is an artist or not, or a person of colour.

Hammons artwork in a way is linked to the homeless people’s views of Chemicals X artwork on Skid row. One homeless man said in an interview *“Let me tell you one thing the no face, people think the homeless or nobodies, they think we don’t have feelings, they think we don’t need respect, everybody needs respect, everybody needs love, everybody needs a name”*

**(<https://fb.watch/gzpzbyIY-J/>, 17/09/2020),**

**Fig 3- David Hammons**  
**- David Hammons, Puzzling Times – 2021**



That line stood out to be as Hammons uses objects and symbols to portray his artwork, do these have feelings? My personal feeling is that he is leaving it to the views thought and opinions. Hammons turned White's socially conscious, hand-drawn realism into a contemporary realism of found objects and materials, but not opting to create in a conventional realistic approach.

*"I would like to be a myth, be on the invisible side of things. The shadow. When you are always seen people get used to that and you aren't a mystery anymore. I've seen it*

*happen many times."* (hammons, n.d.) **David Hammons Paintings 2022**

Hammons has a deep interest in towns and areas, and a lot of his work attempts to address the social, political, and cultural uniqueness of those locations by bringing art back to the street, where it may be appreciated in more democratic manner. The artist said *"I like doing stuff on the street, because the art becomes just one of the objects that's in the path of your everyday existence. It's what you move through, and it doesn't have any seniority over anything else"*.





Fig 4- Photo Janelle Zara

**-Everything is going to be all right.**

Installation view of “David Hammons” at Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles. – Photo Janelle Zara  
**Aranke, S., 2021**

The tents are the most direct metaphor among others that are more buried in physical and conceptual layers of opacity, welcoming exhibition guests with Hammons’s scathing style of institutional satire, both of the racial undercurrent underlying American society and the follies of the art world. The artist allows the viewer to have their own ideas and thought process of what they feel and think the story is behind his art. He allows the viewers to portray their own feelings with no explanation of his work in the form of useful checklists or an artist statement. This was usual for Hammons to decline to do the work for the viewer.

*“This could be u. This could be u and u.”* Hammons artwork has the same link as chemical X artwork. Both artists portraying the same subject matter.

## 1.2- James Early

This artist James Early utilizes his work to bring attention to problems including homelessness, mental illness, and conflict. James wants his art to roar and demand attention. He wants to make the unseen apparent. With his moving and passionate studies of homeless people, war victims, and religious martyrs in 2015, his work took a different direction. Like chemical X and David Hammons, Early artwork has a lot of emotion and feeling. *“ I have been told by many to change subject matters to those that would look nice on a person's wall. I do not want to. When someone purchases one of my paintings they are purchasing a bit of me, a canvas battleground of emotions. This is my calling. ”- James Early.*

(Early, n.d.) <https://www.jamesearleyartist.com/about/>



**Fig 5 - Stop and Cross**

**-James Early, Homeless series, Stop and Cross, 2017**



**Fig 6- Shadows**

**-James Early, Homeless series, Shadows, 2018**

*“I have met some of the nicest and most genuine people on the streets, people who smile and laugh when their physical and emotional pain almost forbites them, if I can raise awareness of this issue through my art then I am truly happy man as I have achieved what I was told to do”*

- *James Early*. (Contributor, n.d.). <https://realismtoday.com/painting-portraits-homeless/>  
I feel that James Early portrays society's problems in a true and honest way. It facilitates communication for us to use our own unique languages. For everyone, but especially for individuals that have poor communication skills or difficulty expressing themselves, a painting is a huge benefit. Early is an artist who uses his skills to capture the light, spirit and possibilities of hope in one painting. Through these paintings, he expresses perspectives of individuals who are dealing with social problems like homelessness, mental health illness and addiction that people might not otherwise be able to see. Although James Early's paintings are free, vibrant, street art influenced, and contain some realistic surrealism, it was the social utility that was woven through his technique that drew my attention. Yet this artist had the same subject matter as Chemical X and David Hammons he had a totally different way of portraying his subject matter to the viewers. His artwork is very pure and honest and he expresses what he sees through his paintings.

Although most families around the world has or is dealing with someone in their family or themselves that suffer from social problems like homelessness, addiction and mental health illness it is very hard for an artist to grasp what a family or oneself is feeling through artwork.

Research on homelessness has a tendency to concentrate on the issues that homeless people face, sometimes ignoring the root reasons and reinforcing generalisations about the population. A more thorough model of homelessness would take into account individual, social group, and socioeconomic context – level influences on homelessness.

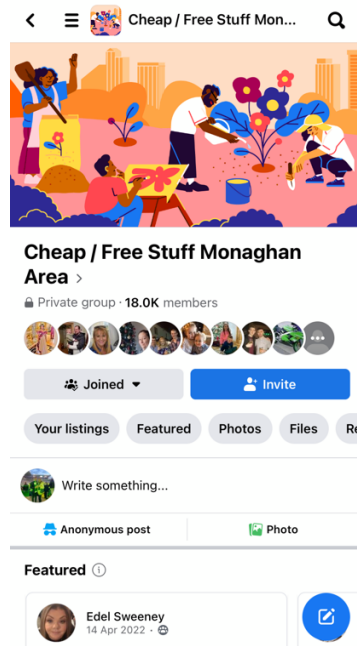
## **Chapter 2**

### **Homelessness around me.**

This social research offers a distinctive perspective on homelessness. I investigate why homelessness continues even while earlier study seems to have identified the causes of it, developed methods to address it and been put into practice. I will take a fresh look at the factors that contribute to or cause homelessness, analysing the occasions and patterns of life that frequently contribute to, mitigate against, and forecast the risk of homelessness in a person (or roofless). Growing awareness of the social and economic causes of homelessness, more sophisticated methods for identifying "risk" elements, and improved skills in assisting those who are trying to relocate were all observed in 2000.

#### **2.1- Homelessness in my area, Monaghan.**

*“In my view homelessness is a cycle comes from a spilt family, not a secure home life, introduced to drugs feeling like you belong to a group getting high. Of course these people want to do it over and over again as they are crying out for love and attention & now they feel they are getting it.”* (**Cheap free stuff Monaghan., 2023, Interview with Edel Sweeney, 02 January**). This chapter addresses some of the ramifications for someone working with the community when policy and practice fail to take into account the individual's perspective and experience of being a “homeless person” and the connection that results from service providers. This chapter is based on a genuine account of a struggling family from my area, Monaghan. It discusses the value of asking for help when you need it and how doing so may improve your life in so many ways. This is a local page in my town.



**Fig 7 - Cheap / Free stuff Monaghan**

**-Edel Sweeney, Facebook group, Cheap Free stuff Monaghan, 2012**

It is called “Cheap / free stuff Monaghan area.” It was established on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2012. It was set up with the idea to help single partners, young families or just anyone in the Monaghan area with housing, decorating, selling, buying or just struggling in general. There are now 18.0K members in the group today. For my thesis, I wanted to reach out and have an interview with the lady herself who was the founder and the admin of this group. This lady is called “Edel Sweeney”. Although in Monaghan we don’t have anyone technically homeless as in on the streets in Monaghan we do have a lot of people sleeping on sofas, in cars or just in a different house each night. 2,756 one-parent families, or 83.4% lone Mothers and 16.6% lone fathers, are present in Monaghan. In Monaghan, 23.6% of the households are made up of one parent families, my family included in that 83.4% single Mothers.

**(Facts & Figures – One Family Ireland, 2022)**

**<https://onefamily.ie/media-policy/facts-figures/>**

*“I’m Edel age 39 and Mummy to three kiddies all on the autism spectrum. I admin a local buy and sell group in my community. I have been heavily involved with helping homeless charities for a number of years. The reason I got involved helping them was I needed some down time from being a full time carer, what better way to have a social out let outside the family home but being able to help others as well. (Cheap free stuff Monaghan., 2023, Interview with Edel Sweeney, 02 January).*

From speaking to Edel it made me think. We all belong to the same race, which is known as humanity, regardless of our skin tone, religion, or gender identity. The same thing happened to us all. We have all experienced hunger, coldness, and a yearning for empathy. This is a fundamental human right. The main distinction is that you aren't concerned about where you'll eat next, or where you will spend the night or how you will put food on the table for your children. As you see, homelessness frequently only lasts a short period of time. Sometimes this isn't the case but most of the time it is. Sometimes all they require is someone to assist them in standing up again. Some of them, contrary to common assumptions, are actually trying their best and making an effort. With this group, it assists them in resuming their productive role in society.

*"Sarah 40 Year old Mother of two girls contacted me in the early hours of Easter Sunday morning which read "Hey Edel, are you the lady that helps people". I saw the message the next morning and which I replied "Yes that's me, is everything ok?". She then asked me could I come over to her house so I got the address and off I went."* . **(Cheap free stuff Monaghan., 2023, Interview with Edel Sweeney, 02 January).**

You could have secure employment and a roof over your head. However, there is no assurance that they will be there tomorrow. The majority of people had employment and never thought or never planned on being homeless or a single parent. However, everything may alter in a split second. Life is like that, and you are not exempt.

*"I went in to an old damp house to meet Sarah and two most gorgeous little girls. Both under the age of 4. I sat down while Sarah gave me a class of water and Sarah proceeded to tell me. "I myself grew up in care and I never had a relationship with my birthmother I always felt a sense of rejection." She told Edel she was with the Father of her two girls and he was mentally draining her "who else would put up with you", "even your Mother didn't want you" was some of the insults he threw at her. Thankfully he was with someone behind her back and Sarah found the strength to reach out to me". The house was run over by mice and she pointed at a Easter display she had done for her two girls and the mice helped themselves during the night."* . **(Cheap free stuff Monaghan., 2023, Interview with Edel Sweeney, 02 January).**

At this stage of the interview, Edel said she felt so *"Deflated"* for Sarah. This is exactly how I feel when I see or read articles on homelessness.

*"Sarah felt no choice only to stay in this house as her ex Uncle owned it and he sure had no problem reminding her of that. She would often go to bed and walk up to him on the sofa after a alcohol or drug binge, and of course he always had access to a key. So at this stage Molly I NEEDED TO GET STUCK IN. Every day for seven weeks we talked, we found out she was on the Local Authority housing list but had never been offered a house. I put my wheels into motion and sat with Sarah while we wrote letter after letters begging and*

*pleading with them, we made numerous phone calls to the housing section and we even got a local TD involved. After 7 weeks Sarah and her kids got the keys of a brand new two bedroom house”*

Steve Jobs acknowledged having been homeless in the past. Many well-known people, like Steve Harvey, Jim Carrey, Halle Berry and James Cameron, have all been homeless in the past. They overcame their challenges and sought and asked for help and became the prosperous people they all are today. Chan, D.V. *et al.* (2014) “Measuring Community Integration using geographic information systems (GIS) and participatory mapping for people who were once homeless,” *Health & Place*, 27, pp. 92–101.

*“Molly I cried that day. Not because I was sad but with total happiness for this little family. I then used the “Cheap free stuff Monaghan page” to get our hands on some second hand furniture, and from what I remember you actually give kids bed to her. She is now in her home four months and has started work and just last week started collage part time in the evenings”* (Cheap free stuff Monaghan., 2023, Interview with Edel Sweeney, 02 January).

As moral creatures, it is our duty to provide a hand to those in our society who are most in need. Even if your sense of morality isn’t very strong, doing the right thing is the right thing to do.

## **2.2- Homelessness in Dublin.**

People who lack a safe, comfortable, affordable and decent place to live are homeless. 11,397 people had access to emergency housing in Ireland in October 2022. *The figure, shown by the department of housing’s latest monthly homelessness report published today, includes 7,917 adults and 3,480 children.”* Bairéad, C. and Norris, M. (2022) 127, p. 103735

Homelessness in Dublin is a lot different to homelessness in my area. There are a lot of people who sleep on the streets of Dublin. There are concerns about Dublin's adult homeless population. An anonymous questionnaire was used by professional interviewers to gather the data over the course of five days. 64% of respondents responded. There were several different demographic sub-groups in the population. Nearly 80% of them smoked, 30% drank alcohol excessively, and 30% used illicit narcotics. Nearly half said their health was bad. Sixty-six per cent of persons struggled with one or more physical or mental health issues. 41% of



people reported having a chronic illness. Health issues differed according to behavioural and demographic variables.

**Bairéad, C. and Norris, M. (2022) “ Cities, 127, p. 103735**

Homeless people are more likely to get sick, and they experience comparable but more common health issues to the general population, but they don't always get the right kind of treatment for them.

From living in Monaghan to seeing no actual homeless people to then living in the capital of Ireland, this broadened my knowledge of the “Real World”

### **2.3- Homelessness in Vancouver, Canada.**

While the number of homeless people in Vancouver is increasing, Immigrants are still not widely apparent among them. The disproportionate number of immigrants within the group at risk shows that immigrant homelessness is still undergoing. All over Canada but especially in Vancouver has a growing problem with homelessness. According to (Goldberg et al., 2005) the number of homeless people in the area of Vancouver has nearly quadrupled from 1121 to 2174 in just the years 2002 and 2005. During the summer I had the opportunity to go and live in Vancouver and play GAA football for the summer. Although this was a lifetime opportunity it really opened up my eyes to the rest of the world and social problems.

*“Homelessness is not a sudden event in the lives of the most victims. It is more usually the culmination of a long process of economic hardship, isolation and social dislocation – what we regard as the cycle of homelessness”* **Wolch, J.R., Dear, M. and Akita, A., 1988. 54(4), pp.443-453.**

A lot of the problems in these cities are the lack of homes which results in homelessness increasing. Contrary to popular belief, it may be exceedingly challenging to locate homeless people when strolling through many downtown Vancouver streets.

Homelessness in all its manifestations is challenging to quantify and address. Homelessness among immigrants and refugees can manifest in ways other than being a part of the “streets” or sheltered homeless population.

Numerous Canadians are impacted by homelessness, which has serious health repercussions. People who are homeless are more likely to pass away early and have a variety of health issues, such as seizures, Chronic obstructive lung disease, musculoskeletal diseases, TB, skin and foot issues, and musculoskeletal disorders. **(Hwang, S.W., 2001. Homelessness and**



**health. *Cmaj*, 164(2), pp.229-233.)** The use of drugs and alcohol has been shown to be a substantial obstacle to escaping homelessness and worsening social exclusion. Homelessness for a period of time has been linked to substance use among those who are homeless. Additionally, a sizable number of homeless people with drug use disorder often have additional mental illnesses. **(Somers, J.M., Moniruzzaman, A. and Palepu, A., 2015. Changes in daily substance use among people experiencing homelessness and mental illness: 24-month outcomes following randomization to Housing First or usual care. *Addiction*, 110(10), pp.1605-1614.)**

When people ask me about my summer the first thing I talk about is East hasting street. "I was one of the 3000 doctors who descended on Vancouver, BC, in mid-October 2010 for Family Medicine Forum. My first trip to Vancouver meant there were many sights to see: Stanley Park, Chinatown, the waterfront, and Robson Street were all on my list. On planning my sightseeing, I asked the receptionist at the front desk of our hotel for directions to Chinatown. "Straight up Granville and then turn right on Pender Avenue—but whatever you do, don't turn down Hastings Street. Stay away from East Hastings," she said emphatically, and drew a big X through Hastings Street on the map. Her warning echoed in my mind, and from that moment I knew I needed to see what made Hastings Street so repellent." **Black, J., 2011. Avoiding East Hastings. *Canadian Family Physician*, 57(7), pp.811-811.**

Since the middle of the 1990s, the downtown East hasting's has been the centre of the HIV and drug overdose epidemics involving injectable drug users. Men without jobs began to seek sanctuary on East hasting street. Single guys who were unable to find employment were attracted to the area by the affordable housing and alcohol. In the 1960's Cocaine, other drugs joined alcohol as a popular drug of abuse.



**Fig 8 – Dan toulgoet, How do you explain Vancouver’s Downtown East Hastings to tourists? It’s complicated... , 19/08/2019**

*“I was here 20 years ago and it’s now very different,” Baumgarten says. “The people on the street. What happened?”*- **Dan toulgoet, How do you explain Vancouver’s Downtown East Hastings to tourists? It’s complicated... , 19/08/2019**

## **Conclusion.**

In conclusion to my Thesis **“Homelessness through the eyes of an artist”** Why is Ireland's rate of homelessness so high? Is Ireland at fault? Or are all major cities the same, like Dublin? Does the artist's work and using homelessness as the topic raise awareness? It rejects approaches that either doesn't contribute much to our comprehension of the humanity of the homeless or that downplay, mislead, or undermine that humanity. In reality to this, Yes is the answer. Sadly most cities are the same. Whether that be LA's Skid Row or East Hasting in Vancouver. Chemical X's work brought back memories of my summer in Vancouver. His work made me realise it's not just Ireland suffering from this awful way of society. From working very closely with people in my local area, Monaghan has made me more aware that simple human kindness can help someone like Edel Sweeney does for us. From my research homelessness cannot be characterised by a single reason. The problem has a complicated combination of societal and personal roots. A significant portion of the population is impacted by individual causes of homelessness, including those caused by addiction and mental health illness. Reduced availability of affordable housing and insufficient support has given the problem's severity have influenced homelessness. The public's perception impacts local and national solutions as well as the three artists I have discussed in my research, Chemical X, David Hammons and James Early. Homelessness can be reduced or eliminated by simply constructing cheaper housing and not much money into high-end designer stores, just like what Chemical X'S artwork was portraying. **“Homelessness through the eyes of an artist”** has made me view homelessness a lot differently as a young twenty-one-year-old girl who has travelled a lot.

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