Amelie Warner Ways of Perceiving

Title: Occhiolism: (n.) The awareness of the smallness of your perspective of being in the world.

My exhibition is about bringing forward and celebrating the female artists, specifically looking at instillation. My exhibition is a feminist exhibition but is not inherently seen as so to the viewers, shifting the bias of those who have a lesser appreciation for feminism or female artists. The exhibition also tries to prevent female artists' art being labelled feminine just because a women made it. I think it is important to push the works of female artists into the art world, so they are not repressed within representation. I think installation art is incredibly impactful in galleries and bring a lot of interaction with the audience to the pieces. This exhibition is less about the meanings of the pieces and more about representing great female artists.

The exhibition came from research on female representation in galleries. As presented on the national museum of women in arts website, 64-65% of UK graduates in creative arts and design are women (www.liveandlocal.org.uk, n.d.), however, in top commercial (profiting) galleries in London 68% of artists are men. To support this in an interview Kate Hessel discussed how her interest of female artists come from the lack of knowing any "not being taught any and going to museums and seeing none on the wall" (Hessel, 2022, p. 519). There has been a shortage of exposure to female artists. Occhiolism questions that there may be some sexist discrimination in the art field. To understand this further I want to discuss The Guerrilla Girls piece 'The Advantages of Being a Women Artist' (figure 2). Here they use humour to list a range of negative parts of being a female artist and jabbing at the prevailing male artists. "Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labelled feminine". To label anything feminine in fact does not have a definition, there is no style of art that can be called so. However, as a Female artist it is often a worry to be put in a box that all your work is about being a woman when we have so much more to say. Each of the artists I've chosen have similar ideas in their pieces which don't all hold many attributes to femininity or being female. We can't truly identify what feminine art is, Linda Nochlin in her book 'Why Have there been no Great Female Artists" (Nochlin,1971). Nochlin explains how the cubist movement has a clearly recognised style, but this is not the case with a feminine style as there are no feminine qualities linking all female made art. Some may say the stereotypical 'gentle' or 'soft' but to look at the artists chosen and their pieces there is nothing inherently gentle or soft about them.

Another statement by the Guerrilla Girls "working without the pressure of success" links perfectly with the statistics on art graduates. In Nochlin's book she states that "there have been no supremely great women artist" but I feel for not for lack of trying it is in fact the institution that the art is created in that has bias. It's not that there haven't been amazing women artist it that they have not been given the chance to go further with their work the way a man would of. It is not common knowledge of a female artist in history whereas many people will know the name Picasso or Kandinsky. As Nochlin's book was published in 1970 since then we have society has changed but the 2022 graduate statistics show there is still a way to go. It is also discussed by Rozsika Parker and Griselda in their book were they talk about the twentieth century society where there is advertised to be equal opportunity for

genders but women are held back by “constraint, containment and oppression” (parker and pollock,1987). Nochlin saying there have been no great women arts could be offensive, but she is simply saying we cannot accept the few women who do make it as proper change. By not giving women a platform for there are we cannot have great women artists in the history books.

The artists and instillation artworks I have chosen all look closely at materials. The pieces will be put into the Tanks space in the Tate Modern and they are by Cornelia Parker, Phillyda Barlow, Chiharu Shiota and Nnenna Okore. R. Parker and Pollock’s book questions whether to make a change in representation we must put efforts into getting into galleries with men or create only female run spaces. Occhiolism supports the latter as this is an attempt at growing the number of spaces for female artists. These four artists are all connected to eachother by their ideas of material.

Nnenna Okores is a big environmentalist and believes there are strong connections with nature and women. Okore’s piece is called *Ùtútù,* which is Nigerian for morning/something new. It is made from wax and wire intertwined together hanging above brown leathery “belly forms” (Haven, n.d.) with red and purple paper inside. They are casts of Okores pregnant belly at three months, taken to document the memories. Okore made this piece to focus on the belief that women and the natural world are connected but also putting light onto ‘undervalued materials’. What people will not know she went home every day to see her children referencing the idea that just because she has children this does not mean she cannot do something with her life, unlike what Barlow’s teacher said to her.

Okore’s *Ùtútù* will sit in the same room as Barlow’s piece called *Stage* made in 2011 (Figure 3.0). Barlow used sticks of timber as the legs and polystyrene boards as the horizontal surface at the top (db,2012). Okores workflows nicely into Barlow’s via the connection of both reusing found material in their pieces like. *Stage* is about reforming these materials in an “exhibition space”(db,2012). Phillyda Barlow studied at the Slade where she was told by her tutor that ‘he wouldn’t be talking to her much and that she would be having babes and making jam by 30’(www.royalacademy.org.uk, n.d.). Barlow had 5 children and was made a dame as well as being nominated for many awards in the art field. The prior perspective of the female artist has changed but it puts forward that women have had to fight for years to reach modern standards of equality.

In the next room on its own will be *Dark cold matter* by Parker, made in 1991. Again, Parker uses found everyday objects such as tools, children’s toys, personal items, things from car boot sales and friends. The main material is fragments of a shed that Parker and the British army exploded. The work was made by hanging these pieces and the found objects from the ceiling forming a cube like shape with a lightbulb in the centre. The light causes shadows across the walls like mid-explosion. Parker connects to this idea of memory linking to Okore’s work by playing with the idea that a shed is where you store memories, we cannot get rid of. Destroying this safe place but holding it at that second before it’s gone to preserve the moment showing it has “still got some life” (Parker, Tate, 2017). Cornelia Parker initially said she stayed away from being labelled a feminist artist, after hearing Germaine Greer (a big voice in radical feminism from the 1970s) talk about how there is less women artists Parker

wanted to make moves to change that. Parker said she thought the best way to deal with this problem personally was to “be a woman and to be a good artist” (Wroe,2013).

Memory is also a big theme for Chiharu Shiota, like Parker and Okore. I have chosen to display *In Silence,* 2019 (CHIHARU SHIOTA,2013). Shiatsu uses red string in some of her pieces to connect an idea of femininity and the body, but she mainly likes to focus on exploring human existence through various dimensions of her instillations. Silence is created from a memory she had of a next-door neighbour’s house burning down in the night, it is also a metaphor for silence(QAGOMA Blog, 2022). Much like Parker, Shiota found the piece in destroying something else. A burned piano sat in at the front of audience chairs and surrounded with black thread. Shiota’s piece is a site-specific piece so will be made to fit the room.

The Whitechapel Gallery’s exhibition *action gesture paint* focused on celebrating women abstract artists (Whitechapel Gallery, n.d.). The abstract expressionist movement is mainly said to of started in the USA, but *action gesture paint* (2023) highlights that abstract expressionism in fact came from all over the globe. Occhiolism is trying to provide insight into the wide range of female talent in the contemporary art world. Occhiolism shows the range of female instillation artists from around the globe- Parker and Barlow are from Britain, Shiota is Japanese and Okore is from Nigeria but works form Chicago. Each piece is a great physical presence representing the existence of the female artist, each piece contradicts the idea that the female artist’s work will be stereotypically ‘feminine’ looking.

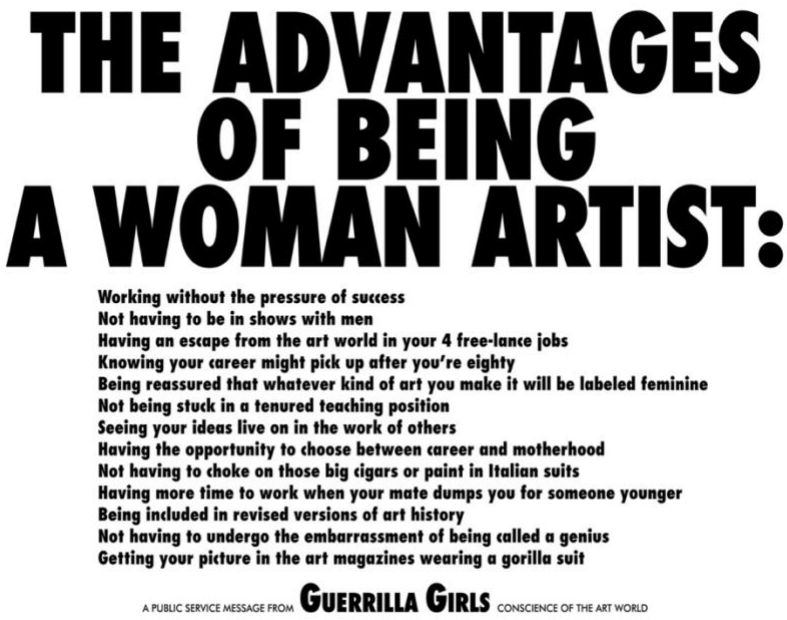

Figure 1.0 The Advantages of being a women Artist(1988) The guerrilla girls
https://www.artbasel.com/catalog/artwork/54813/THE-GUERRILLA-GIRLS-The-Advantages-

Figure 2.0, approx. 7x2x3m. 2019 Ùtútù Nnenna Okore

Figure 3.0 (3.3x13.5x5.1m) 2011 Philipa Barlow – stage

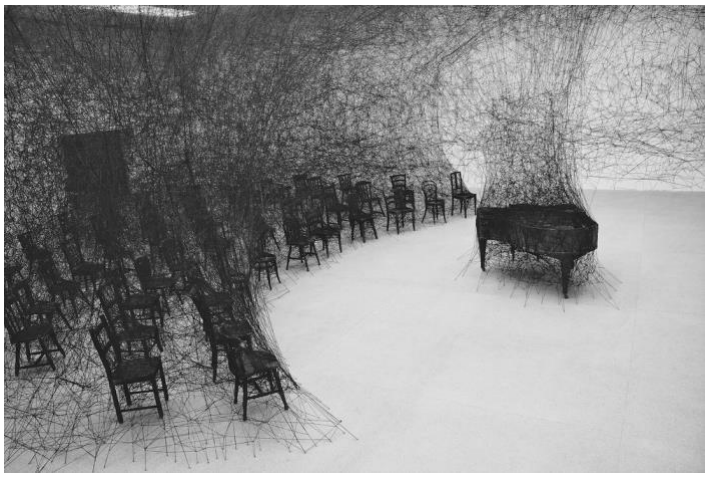

Figure 4.0 4x5x5m 1991 Cornelia Parker cold dark matter

Figure 5.0 (size is site specific) 2019 Chiharu Shiota In silence

Chiharu Shiota(2013).*CHIHARU SHIOTA*[ONLINE]. Availiable at CHIHARU SHIOTA–塩田千春 (chiharu-shiota.com) (Accesses: 30th April 2023)
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(parker and pollock,1987)

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(Whitechapel Gallery, n.d.)

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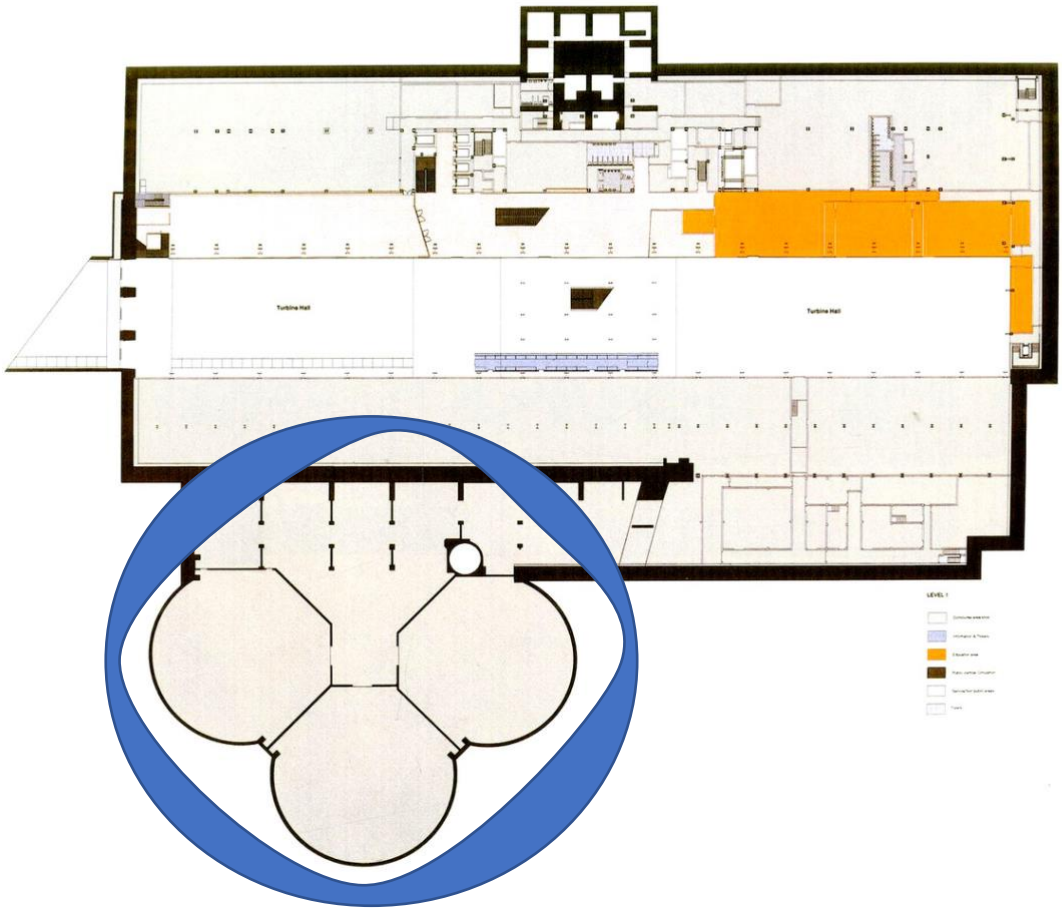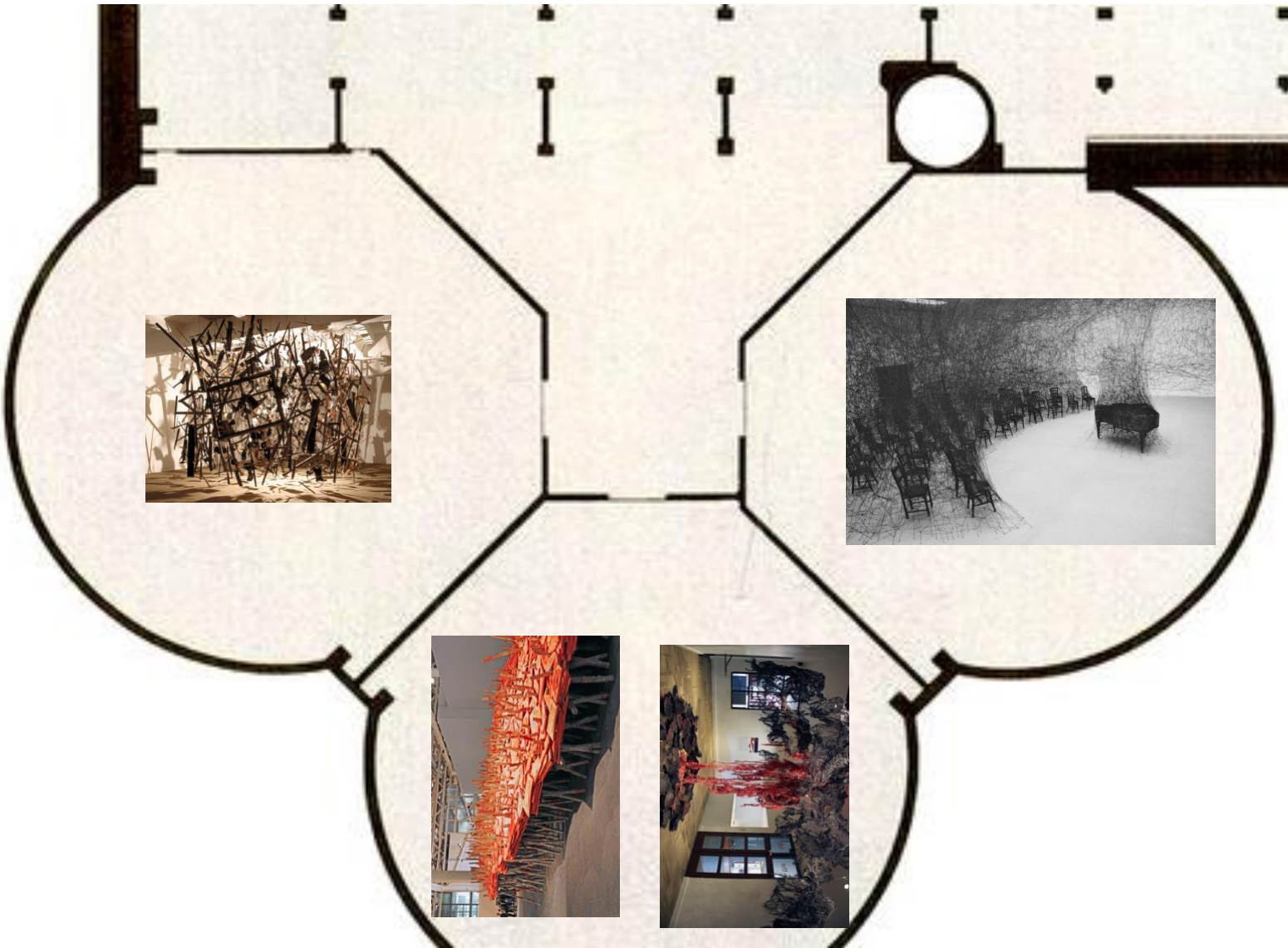
Map
The Tank rooms
in Tate modern
Size: 30mx7m