

Ways of perceiving- imagined show



Figure 1



Figure 2

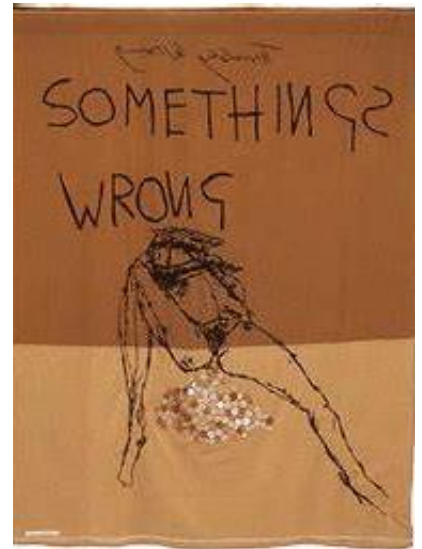


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

My imagined exhibition is going to be about feminism and specifically women artists who have made artwork that explores how women are viewed and challenging this through personal experience. The theory I will investigate is the male gaze theory and how this has affected women's life experiences. In feminist theory, the male gaze is viewing women in a sexualized way from a male perspective. The philosopher John Berger first explored the term 'male gaze'. 'Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at' (Berger, 1972, pg.42) This is important and relevant to look at right now because it is still an issue women face in the 21st century. Men turn women into ownable items to possess and use as they please which is evident in the current-day article (Vanbuskirk, 2021). It is necessary to break out of this to teach women they are allowed to fight for their rights even if it is normalized to them and to teach women that the male gaze is a prison, not a goal. I will look at the artists Paula Modersohn-Becker, Paula Rego, Tracy Emin, Sarah Lucas, and Jenny Saville. Overall, the theme for the exhibition is art made by women for women.

I have chosen the theme of art made by women for women because the people who know about misogyny and the male gaze the most are the people who have directly faced it so women have a better understanding of how it feels and how big of an issue it is. I will be displaying artwork that captures what these women have been through and how they have used their art to convey this. This theme is important to explore because women are a minority in society due to inequality in gender and women are seen as inferior compared to men and it simply is harder to be a woman than be a man in this world and this has been a problem all throughout time including in today's society. This point has been shown in (De Beauvoir, 1949) as Simone explores how misandry has led to expectations for how women should act and the fact this world has always belonged to men. Through my exhibition, I am going to tackle this by educating an audience about how harmful male validation is and why feminism is so important.

The male gaze towards women has been consistent all throughout history, which is evident in the ideas explored by (Koedt, Levine and Rapone, 1976). These authors explore how women are put into misogynistic standards as soon as they are born and there is no escaping this fate. Also, they explore how women must behave in a specific way to fit in with a society ruled by men because men see women as overemotional, weak, crazy, and sex objects. 'We have had our mental and emotional feet bound for thousands of years' (Koedt, Levine and Rapone, 1976, pg.26)

This quote demonstrates the issues women face due to the male gaze even within the 20th century. This proves my point that the male gaze has been an issue for a long time and this is not a new issue in today's society, it is something we still have to fight for.

Furthering from this point, the male gaze and misogyny is still an issue that is present today which makes this exhibition more important as it is relevant to current issues that women face and are tackling. Women are still unequal to men and this is a fight that is going to be around for a long time into the future as it has been in the past. There has been progress in some elements of inequality throughout history but women are still fighting for their rights due to the fact women and men have different experiences because of their gender. This shows that women are just viewed in a separate way due to the male gaze and are oversexualized and seen as objects even if we have more rights now. 'A woman's clothes can incite sexual assault' (Dyer, 2016, pg. 68). This is showing how society blames misogynistic occurrences on women due to their over-sexualization and objectification of them. Men see women's clothes as dressing up for their attention which is an excuse for when it ends in rape and sexual assault but this is a problem caused by men because they see women as prey regardless of what they are wearing which is because they are looking through the eyes of a male gaze.

An artwork I am going to be including in my exhibition is Modersohn-Becker, Paula (1907) *kneeling mother and child* (figure 1). This is a painting that explores the fascination between the bond of a mother and a child. It is about the suffering Paula went through as a woman. In the painting, her breasts are highlighted and her face is in the shadow which shows how in a male gaze society, her body is more valued than who she is due to the fact women can give birth (Heiti, 2017). This piece is Important in my exhibition because it demonstrates how difficult it is being a woman because her body went through a lot of pain and she lost herself within it. 'Women in a rapidly changing world in which their gender disadvantaged them' (Hope,2022 pg.21)

Another art piece I am going to include in my exhibition is Rego, Paula (1994) *dog women* (figure 2). This piece represents submissive women and how men view women as pets due to their primal urges which links to the male gaze theory. Rego is presenting feminine empowerment in this painting as the dog woman is aggressive which is a sign of fighting back (Victoria, n.d.). This piece is suited for my exhibition theme because Rego is showing her thoughts on the male gaze and fighting for her rights. 'Experiences of women in a world shaped by conflict' (Flavia Fossa Margutti and Achenbach, pg.134)

Another piece that will be up in my exhibition is Emin, Tracy (2002) *Somethings Wrong* (figure 3). This piece is a monoprint self-portrait of her laying back with her legs open. There is a focus on her legs and vagina as this is primarily what you can see which compromises her identity. This sexual pose represents her history of sexual abuse and sexual diseases. This piece is well suited for my exhibition because Emin is exploring uncomfortable topics about what women go through. 'Address difficult subjects such as rape and abortion' (Chadwick, 1997, pg. 27)

Next, an art piece I will be having in my exhibition is Lucas, Sarah (1999) *Cigarette tits* (figure 4). Lucas uses the cigarette as a rebel accessory and as a phallic symbol. She represents femininity and humour in her work to challenge stereotypes and question female body objectification (artuk.org, n.d.). I will be using this art piece under my exhibition theme because she challenges the audience to question how they view women.

Finally, I am going to be including two art pieces by the same artist which include Saville, Jenny (2004-2005) *Passage* (figure 5), and (2003) *Reflective Flesh* (figure 6). Saville is a feminist artist who creates uncomfortable artwork that breaks boundaries and taboos. The first piece is an oil painting of a possible trans woman and this links into my theme because she is making awareness for what a woman is and fighting for the rights of all types of women and not just what society thinks a woman should be. Her second piece is an oil painting of a nude woman with her legs open showing her vagina. This piece is taboo as the pose the woman is in is seen as unflattering and she does not meet modern beauty standards. Saville is challenging the idolized portrayal of nude women. (Graf, 2022). Saville's pieces are important pieces for my exhibition because it breaks away from the male gaze and challenges the audience's perception of how they should view women.

I have chosen these artists for my exhibition because they make work about their first-hand experiences in relation to the male gaze and the challenges they have faced as a woman. Also, their work each individually educates an audience about the relevance of the fight for equal rights which is what my theme links to.

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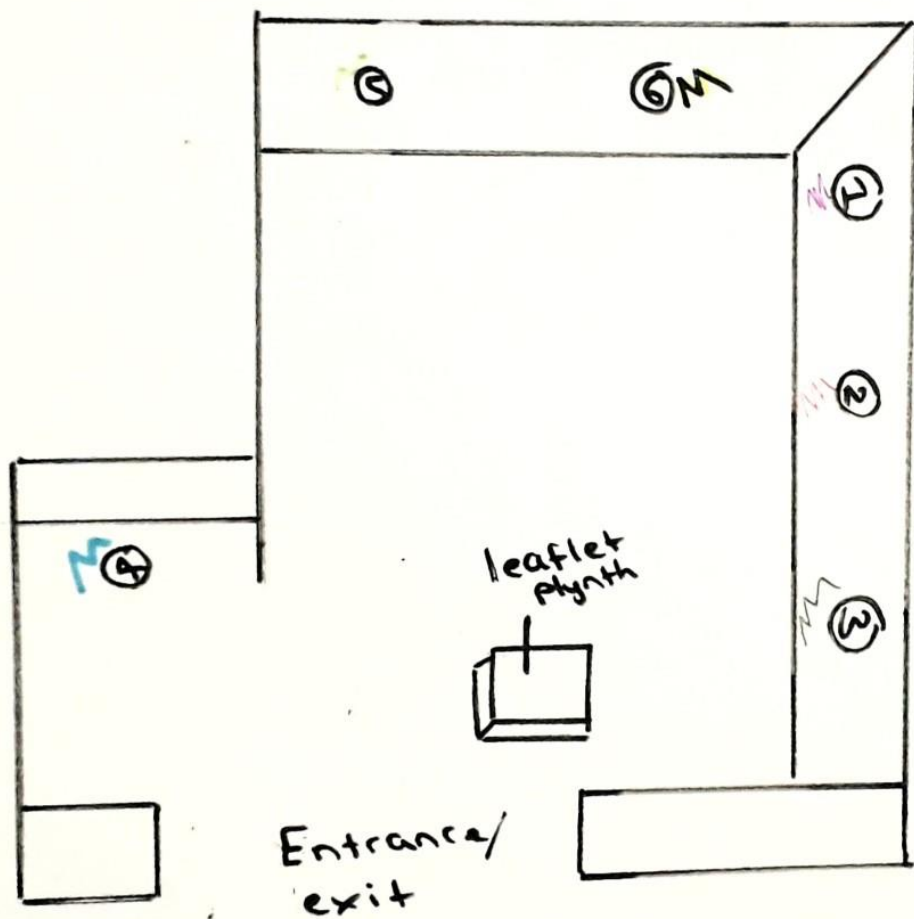
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Exhibition notes: paint the walls red to emphasise female rage and dim the lights during the exhibit to show how dark and gloomy misogyny can be.



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- Figure ② *MM*
- Figure ③ *MM*
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- Figure ⑥ *M*

