

Ways of perceiving

Student number: 2300454

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Tutor: Julia Lockheart

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This exhibition is entitled 'Welcome' comprised of five different objects and artworks, all of which serve a symbolic and/or objective purpose, to allow the viewer to explore their relationship with space and what occupying space means for themselves. The underpinning theme I will be focusing on is social proxemics, as defined by "how we perceive and manage our interpersonal space." (Marquardt and Greenberg, 2015, pg.10) and how that affects the space itself while exploring boundaries and the power of spaces on our relationships with each other, understanding that "... space can only be discerned by how we sense it and what we feel we know of it." (Conley, 2012, pg.1) posing the ultimate question of what do we make of space?

This exhibition is in a rectangular room, roughly 10 metres wide and 20 metres long with the roof at standard height. The room is not well lit, the room will only be lit by five lights, which are situated directly above the displays. There is a pre-determined walkway, including 'notations' (Hall, 1963, pg.8) that correlate to the system created by Hall, shaped like a keyhole, the entrance is the widest part before narrowing so that only one person can comfortably pass at a time, two can squeeze through, if they can and wish to do so. There is a circular viewing area closest to the displays, there will be a column, to force people against each other and to purposefully obstruct view of other displays. I will be forcing strangers to consider each other by forcing into each other's intimate and personal space defined as 'zero to four feet' (Hall, 1966, pg.8) I want to see if Hall's observations are correct and can be applied to other cultures too. Hall (1968, pg.2) identified Americans struggling to adjust to cultural differences overseas, particularly during conversations and sharing space, the Americans found that people stood 'too close' during conversation and when Americans moved away, they were seen as 'stand offish' and cold. This is to challenge the spectator's pre-conceived notions of conversational distance and allow an introspective dialogue when that space is perceived to be impeded upon.



Fig. 1 (Portable Ramp)

The first object I have on display is a ramp; I specifically picked this ramp as it is designed to be a transportable ramp however, it does not meet regulation standards in the UK, it would need to be five to six metres long for the gradient to be suitable. But it is a tool used by wheelchair users all around Britain. In doing so, we legitimise half measures in accessibility and prevent full access to space. This is a problem in many urban environments. For example, in Sweden, authorities are laissez-faire with legislation and requirements, with the appropriate authorities deciding it is the business owner's shared responsibility with the disabled individual. "The combination of portable ramps, handrails and doorbells was stated to be the 'only way' to ensure access for wheelchair users to establishments with staired entrances" (Egard, 2021, pg.19) Further noting that this is "The temporary solution" (Egard,2021,pg.19) with no permanent solution being offered. Such barriers "prevent disabled people's ease of access to a range of places and are implicated in denying disabled people the right to determine where they want to go" (Burch, 2021, p.7) This places the burden of access on the disabled individual and it prevents the disabled individual from accessing a space they could contribute to.



Fig. 2 (Table)

For my second object I have chosen a table, this is to show the spectator that physically being in a space does not always mean you are there in the space. I want to focus on a

phenomenon that uniquely affects d/Deaf individuals engaging in a conversation among a hearing group known as ‘dinner table syndrome’ due to different social rules “typically hearing individuals use turn-taking rules that differ from those commonly used by deaf individuals” (Meek, 2020, pg.1) characterized by d/Deaf individuals missing out on conversation and therefore, narrative, suspending them in a place, not a space. So, what *is* being there? It is driven by our perception of space and our ‘immersion’ in it, what I believe to be our personal meaning and our ability to create a narrative of it, incorrect or not, informed by the place itself, “process of cocreating meaning re-lates to space and place.” (Pilkington, 2006, pg.1) even when we ignore it in our ‘narrative immersion’, “when doing activities such as painting, meditating, or playing a game, individuals often give full attention to the task, ignoring stimuli from their physical surroundings” (Chen, 2024, pg.2) Further evidencing that space can absolutely be a heterotopia where two contrasting realities exist at once, “between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience,..” (Foucault, 1984, pg.46-49) Tables are also key instigators of such group narratives and experiences, playing board games and sharing stories are often how space is shared.



Fig. 3 (Everyone I Have Ever Slept with,

Tracy Emin, 19663-1995)

To share space with people has become a topic of debate in the last decade, especially relating to the pandemic. In the context of the pandemic to share breathing space was not a welcome interaction, “As I sat, with a mask on, I took shallow breaths counting down the stops until I could breathe fresh air again.” (Macauley, 2022, pg. 155) to share space with stranger, despite space between, was still a source of anxiety for many. However, this piece is everyone that Emin has slept with, people who shaped Emin’s identity by sharing such close and intimate space, as it falls under 18 inches (Hall, 1966, pg.8) In this piece, Emin invited spectators to interact with the tent itself, to

become familiar and share this cramped intimate and primitive space with the names of everyone she had ever slept with, all of a sudden, spectators are sharing a suspended space with each other, just as Emin did with everyone she had slept with. But within primitive and intimate spaces, we open ourselves to a roundness, of life lived completely present,

“...that it *seems round* is to keep a doublet of being and appearance, when we mean the entire being in its roundness. In fact, it is not a question of observing, but of experiencing in its immediacy. Full contemplation would divide into the observing being and being observed” (Bachelard, 2014, pg.233) It is this ‘roundness’ that Emin evokes in the spectators as they interact with this display, provoking them to ask themselves why they are in this space and how intimate space can be.

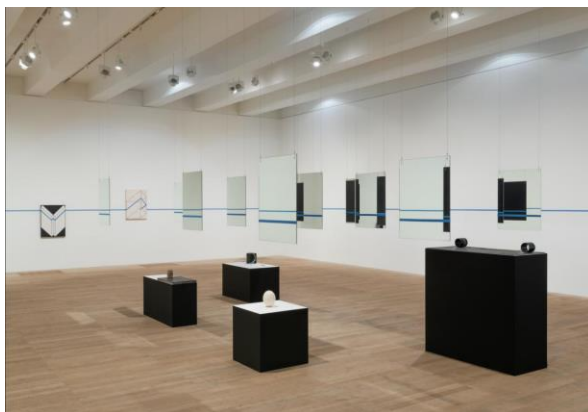


Fig. 4 (untitled, Edward Krasinski, 2001)

In this display I want to make my spectators think about heterotopias or other places in which space can be experienced, including thinking of themselves as a space and/or an embodied heterotopia. First this display is symbolic of the mirror as a placeless place, “In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; ...” (Foucault, 1967, pg. 46-49) and as a manifestation of a heterotopia, as the mirror is in the same reality but is also a displacement of the self despite not physically being displaced. Here we see the body play a key role in the observation of a heterotopia, but what if the body was an embodied heterotopia in itself? We can achieve this by putting art on ourselves by way of tattoos or make up, which people will see themselves having in this display, and our body being understood as the ultimate place we must live in. These actions alter the body into another liveable place, an artform particularly attractive to people who do not feel ‘placed’ within themselves, it is a means to feel like themselves. “...to enact her desire to feel better emplaced.” (Roux and Belk, 2019, pg.19) This allows the spectators to feel embodied within themselves and consider themselves a heterotopia to help themselves understand that space is not always what we consider a physical environment, it is the body and the reflection.



Fig. 5. (Meta Quest Headset)

With the final display I have chosen a VR headset to be placed upon a plinth, this is to guide the spectators into thinking about more abstract spaces, ones that cannot be felt but experienced and the body as a transformational space while engaging in a non-place, an experience of two worlds at once, "... we can see that the experience of a non-place as a turning back on the self, a simultaneous distance from the spectator and the spectacle is not always absent from it." (Ague, 2008, pg.155) But increasingly so, we see digital spaces as a manifestation of super modernity and how the space and the individual is defined changes, non-places are contradictory where the individual is in the space but is only identified when entering or leaving. There is a certain anonymity with the non-place, however, "The non-place is the opposite of Utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society." (Ague, 2008, pg.155) This makes the non-place incredibly attractive to the individual; however, the individual also becomes a spectacle when the world has the "domination of society by things whose qualities are "at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses."" (Debord, 2006, pg. 26) The user is engaging while being a spectator, anonymous and but identified when entering and leaving, and struggles perceive what the space is by their own senses, the embodiment of the non-place.

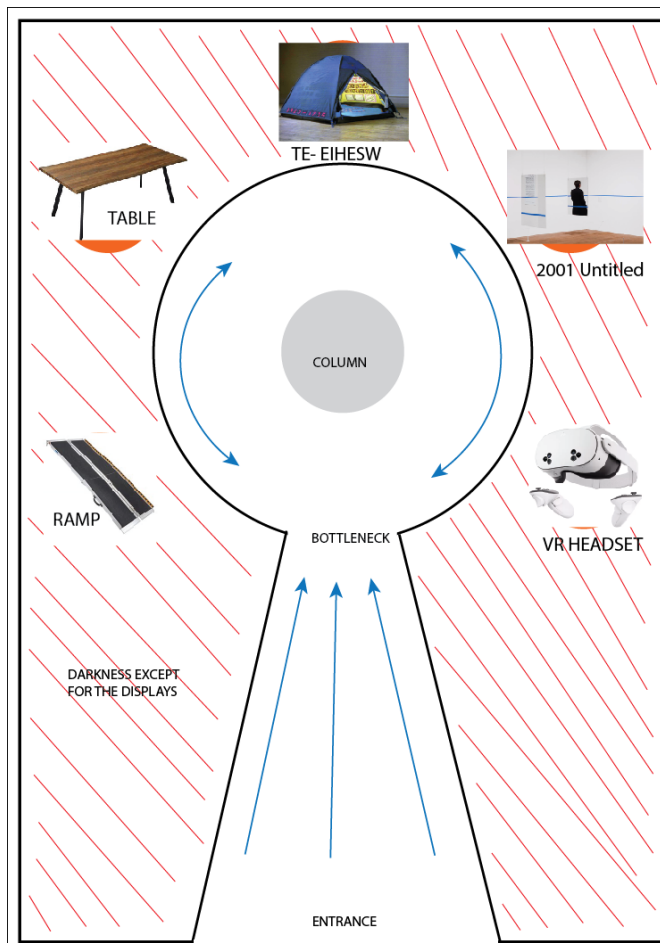


Fig. 6 (Map of Exhibition)

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Figure 3. Emin, T. (1963-1995) *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With* [Mixed Media Installation] Available at: [Tracey Emin - Everyone I Have Ever Slept With, 1963-1995](#)

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Figure 4. Krasinski, E. (2001) *untitled* [Installation] Available at: ['Untitled', Edward Krasinski, 2001 | Tate](#)

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Figure 6. Map of Exhibition. [Illustrated]

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Figure 5. Meta Quest Headset. Available at: [Buy Meta Quest 3S 128GB All-In-One Mixed Reality Headset | Virtual Reality Headsets | Argos](#)

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Figure 1. Portable Ramp. Available at: [HOMCOM Wheelchair Ramp, 152L x 73Wcm, 272KG Capacity, Folding Aluminium Threshold Ramp with Non-Skid Surface, Transition Plates Above and Below for Home, Steps, Stairs, Curbs, Doorways | Aosom UK](#)

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Figure 2. Table. Available at: [Findlay Rectangular Table & 4 Hadid Green Chairs | Julian Bowen Limited](#)