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BA title course: Illustration

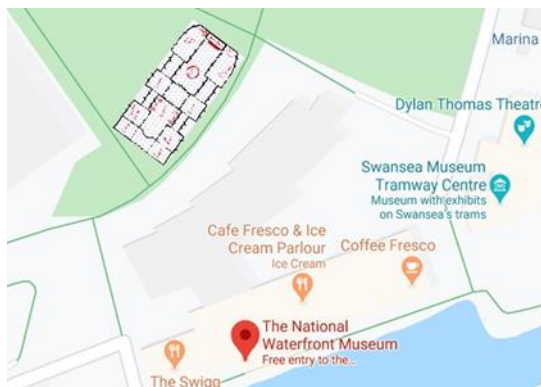
Word count: 1,499 (without quotes)

1,655 (with quotes)

Tutor: Jon Pugh and Martin Bush

EXHIBITION TITLE: The book fort

I intend to curate an exhibition displaying work from 5 different Illustrators as it relates to my own personal practice. The chosen space is The National Waterfront Museum, however because of the themes explored within the exhibition, the curated space is based outside rather than the inside. This space is a relevant venue to hold the exhibition because the museum is known for putting on different events and exhibitions as well as having their own instalment upstairs for children's books.



(Fig 1)



(Fig 2)

The exhibition will be based on themes involving how we perceive play in art and is supposed to invoke the discussion of de-valuing pieces in this way. I feel that this topic is relevant to be discussed now with the rise of exhibitions catered to being social media worthy. Technology is fast evolving and this effects every aspect of our lives, including art. The exhibits multiple displays will be interactive and get viewers to engage with exploring the intended themes. The works chosen and the display support the themes in a way that the viewer will be able to take something away from being a part of the exhibition.

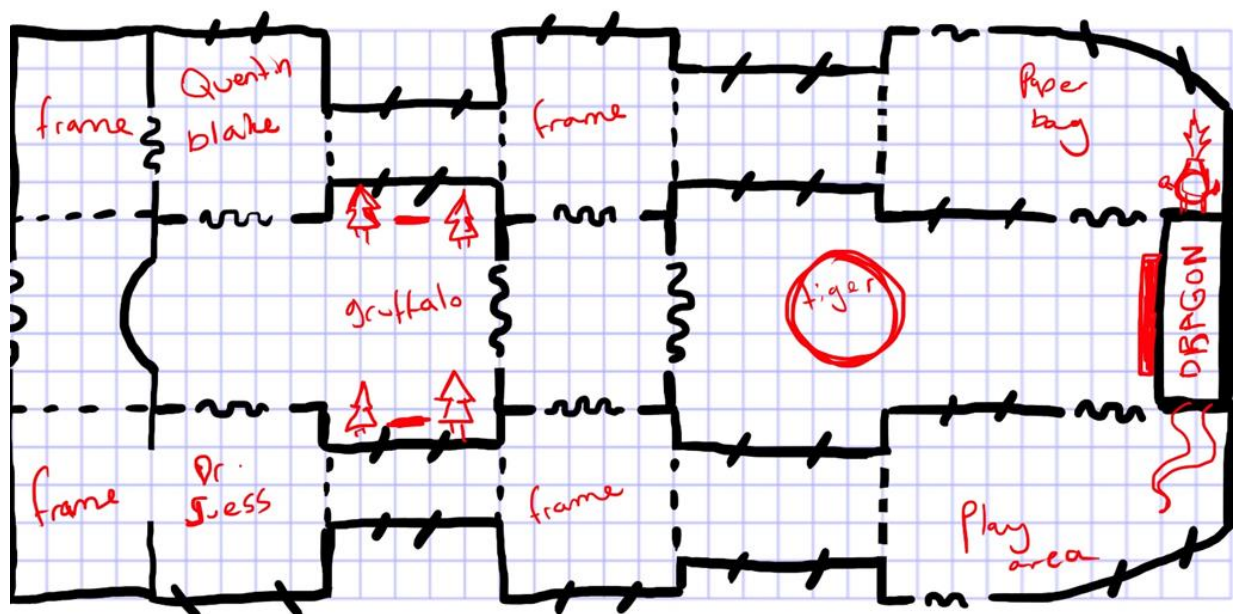
We use technology in everyday life so does this accessibility de-value artwork. Why do we have a growing need to share things online via social media? Is this a social connection or something less than? Points that I found similar to what themes I wanted to pick up on are explored in a talk by Jia Jia Fei.

“Described his work as non-vicarious any reproduction of that image is less than the experience itself and for that reason he requested that visitors not take pictures... social media campaign however indicated the exact opposite with 5,000 + photos shared” – Jia Jia Fei 1.

Taking pictures is now considered normal, but when going against an artists' wishes does this de-

value their intentions or the message for the piece. What new experience is created when viewing exhibits through a phone if any? In this sense does the viewer already de-value the artwork by blocking off their experience to it in this way, or will it enhance the discussion reached by sharing to many. The shift from a more formal environment to 'Instagram ability' (banana taped to the wall vs. works of the renaissance type) is increasing to keep up with popular demand. Does marketing de-value the art or increase it. With the trend of curating this type of social media worthy display are we unintentionally redefining exhibition and art. Maybe some time in the future art will no longer even be in a museum, but only on your phone.

I believe sharing it in this way can become a part of the experience. An interactive art piece encourages the viewer to be a part of the artwork akin to how a viewer will take pictures of themselves in the same space (putting themselves 'in' the artwork). This personalization makes for a more concrete experience. I don't think it de-values the artwork or how we view art has necessarily changed, just that the accessibility is more widespread.



(Fig 3)

The whole space outside will be about 35 meters x 15 meters and will consist of a cardboard box (fort) structure. This allows viewers to freely 'play' within the space. The separate box compartments will connect and shut off each piece from another in a way that allows the viewer to view the artwork in an order that they find, making each journey throughout the exhibition personal to them. Hopefully the display layout will encourage the viewers to interact with not just the space, but with each other as the different displays can be discussed and shared. Throughout the space, crayons will be attached high and low for viewers to make their mark around the exhibition. There will be backgrounds catered to taking pictures for social media for the viewers to take part in as well. Through this accessibility and opportunity to de-value the artwork viewers will unintentionally engage with the themes I intend to explore within the exhibition.



(Fig 4)

Displaying the artwork in an interactive manner relates to feeling of childhood and play. Viewing artwork this way creates a fun experience for the viewer. Making each exhibit based on children's illustration pieces easily fits into the themes of the exhibition.

'Art is not an object, but an experience' - Reif Larsen when summing up an exhibition installation on Art and play at the Tate modern.

Each piece has been curated by me to include the most well-known book covers from each artist. All the box segments are visualised using cheap materials such as cardboard and foam. This is cost effective, but also makes the exhibit damageable, something that will be fun to watch over as the exhibition goes on. As the different viewers pass through and play, the more battered the exhibit will become and de-valuing it again in the process.

The entrance to the exhibition will be set up as a castle tower gate. In this space is the only part of the exhibit where the artwork will be in frames. Although the entrance is ideal for the 'real artwork displays' it can be completely ignored as there will also be access to the exhibit through doors in the last rooms.

'the only picture frames you'll see are right here, on smartphones... the room and you are the centrepiece, that's what makes it Instagram able... you are immersed in the actual art'3.



(Fig 5)

One of the first rooms will be based on Dr. Seuss' cat in the hat (first published in 1957). This relates to the exhibit because it's a well-known children's book. The cover artwork and illustrations will be displayed as blank line work and the room will be full of colourful foam, movable stairs like his style to enable viewers to reach artwork and colour it in. It will be padded with a jigsaw foam playmat for safety reasons too. This room forces the viewer into the act of de-valuing the artwork already.

Even though a lot of the exhibitions are purposefully aimed with the younger audience in mind, it doesn't mean that the adults won't take part in them either.

"If you never did you should. These things are fun and fun is good" - Dr. Seuss

As with all the displays, I intend to encourage play through interactive instalments for each room that anyone can take part in.



(Fig 6)

The adjacent room will be based on George's marvellous medicine Quentin Blake illustrations (1981). I chose these illustrations because it fit well with the interactive design. Quentin Blake is well known for illustrating a lot of Roald Dahls books as well as some of his own. More recently known for illustrating David Walliams books, his illustration style should be recognisable to most of the viewers already. This room will feature George making the medicine and a massive granny on the walls, with a shelf of blank bottles to colour in to take away or leave and paper for lists of ingredients in the medicine to put in Georges' pot.



(Fig 7)

The first open space will be based on *The Gruffalo* Axel Scheffler (1999), where the artwork and information will be displayed on forest trees. These illustrations will be the most recent so I chose the Gruffalo to be easily recognised. Viewers will have to try to find the mouse character in this scene. This should be the first exhibit scene after walking through the entrance, making it scenic is to immerse the viewer into childlike wonder and sets them up for the rest of the exhibition. It's also because out of all the illustrations chosen the Gruffalo will be the most recent and recognizable illustration to start with.



(Fig 8)

This open space will be based on *The Tiger who came to tea* by Judith Kerr (1968). I chose to display this because it is a popular children's book and Judith Kerr is a well-known artist. There will be a tea party set spread out to interact with. Books will be available from all displays on the floor in picnic baskets with picnic blankets to sit on or the tea party chairs.

The whole display is portrayed this way to encourage play from the viewers making it an ideal space to be social. That's why I've chosen to place books from all of the exhibits here, hopefully it will take advantage of evoking a social interaction, opening viewers up to discuss all parts of the exhibit.

"Because when you're playing you're in it, you're actually exploring" – John Cohn 4.



(Fig 9)

The last rooms will be based on the Paperbag princess Michael Martchenko illustrations (1980). The end part allows for the inflatable dragon design to stretch out while the fans will be hidden inside the end box. I chose to add this to my exhibition because the story was well known for rejecting the cliché fairy-tale roles. The whole style ties in well with the childhood play theme that I want to reflect with the cardboard fort.

The places marked as frames will be social media backgrounds and play spaces and will be based on the art of all five illustrators. These parts of the exhibit are solely for the purpose of viewers to be able to take pictures for social media and share the art with others.

“We remember events that are related to ourselves better because we encode them into memory more deeply by relating them to our highly developed self-concept” - Jon Simmons 5.

The inclusion of making specific areas intended for social media, ties in with the themes and the idea towards creating a solid experience personal to the viewer to remember. De-valuing the exhibit by catering to the act of sharing on social media will explore how well the exhibit itself/displays are remembered compared to the photo opportunities presented. Being able to look back on how successful the exhibit is in this way backs up the intended themes of de-valuing artwork and play.

Bibliography.

Images:

Fig1 – Google map image of street view look of the National Waterfront Museum.

Fig 2 – National Waterfront Museum floor plan.

Fig 3 – Imagined exhibition digital sketch by me.

Fig 4-9 – Imagined space digital sketch by me.

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