

Ways of Perceiving

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Memory and Loss

When considering a gallery space the theme of memory integrated with loss is one that will quietly demand attention from the audience. This space will not only address 'memory loss' but also how memory can cause loss as well as how memory can help us to deal with loss. This theme is extremely relevant during this current time as every person has experienced some form of loss during this pandemic. Through all the varying degrees memory is something that remains as a constant, whether it is as simple as remembering what it was like to go to a concert or whether it is more complex such as the loss of a loved one, memory is something that is clutched onto. Through this exhibition there will be an eclectic selection of work including a painting by Turner and a beautiful video piece in form of a movie trailer for the film 'The Father', as well as other installation pieces and art works.

As people, we are often accused of living in the past however according to the '*Decay Theory*', (Thorndike, 1914) our memories fade over time and simply become a 'memory trace', therefore it would be more accurate to describe us as living in our own reconstructed false sense of memory. The idea of false memory is one that is discussed in 'Memory Illusion' where it is described '*Our past is a fictional representation, and the only thing we can be even somewhat sure of is what is happening now*' (Shaw, 2016), this brings the question as to why memory is so important to us as people and why are we not content to simply live in the now? Regardless of the reasoning it's an unavoidable fact that memories can bring a huge sense of comfort which is why memory loss is painful and difficult to deal with. The aim of this imagined show is to represent how this is something that affects us all in our everyday lives but also to delve deeper into how this all really has an impact on us.

This exhibition space is not intended to be fear inducing or sad necessarily, it will be an exploration and celebration of memory that will be juxtaposed by a couple of pieces that highlight how difficult it can be when our memories are stripped away, and we are left to figure out what that means. All of the pieces have a gentle feel to them which is intended to give the gallery space quite a relaxing place for people to absorb the work, however the video piece will be quite loud in a small space and is intended to fill the room with the music and words from the movie trailer which explores dementia and memory loss. *'Sound is ubiquitous, unstoppable, immersive, the agency through which spoken language is understood and music is absorbed'* (Toop, 2005) this description of sound within a gallery space shows how the sound will represent how this is an unescapable risk for all of us, not for us to be afraid but simply aware. The gallery space is intended to be an immersive space that will perhaps take people on their own personal mental journey during their time in the exhibition and give them the chance to reflect that they may not normally get chance to have. In the fast-paced society that we find ourselves in our brains seem to be holding a resistance where they are simply not ready to let go of the past and although technology is constantly evolving our sentiment for memories and nostalgia is ever growing stronger. It is important that we give ourselves chance to breathe and enjoy revelling in the past from time to time and this gallery space will provide a chance to do this. As well as this space being a passive one where people can reflect it will also be an active one which will create its own memory. In the centre of the room there will be disposable cameras which the audience will be encouraged to use to document their visit from their own perspective this will help the show to become interactive and to carry on the theme of the exhibition even after it has finished being displayed.

As the audience enters the space the first piece that they will meet is the trailer for the film 'The Father', the use of a moving image piece will draw people into the exhibition. An approach involving time slots may work



well for this type of environment in order for people to experience the beginning of the piece and have experienced the context to it, however the exhibition theme also lends itself to the space being a free-flowing room where people may not fully comprehend the experience until they have spent a prolonged time within it. This initial piece is intended to be striking and represent the idea of memory loss which may seem confusing at first but will be explained as people walk around and take in the environment.



The next two pieces that will be encountered will display how we use memory to keep alive a representation of things that have been and gone. 'May Dodge, My Nan' by Tracey Emin is a collection of the artists family belongings

which include a handwritten letter from her Nan, as well as a photograph of her. This piece delves into the ideas of memories being held within objects and we may use these to keep a person alive in the sense of a physical memory. They can be used to put together a story of their existence, a similar technique is echoed in Turners *Funeral of Sir Thomas Lawrence: A Sketch from Memory*. This body of work has been produced from his memory and therefore may have inaccuracies or less specific details to it. This painting is a good embodiment of how our memories work and how some things may seem clearer depending on where our attention focus was or what events were happening.



The theme of creating visual responses to our memories is revisited in the photograph by



Thomas Friedrich Schaefer that will be hung on the wall.

'All art has roots from within our memories' (Comptom,

2018), discusses the idea that no art can be created

without our past experiences , whether it is being

produced as a direct result of an event or perhaps it is more engrained within our sub-

conscious, our memories will have a part to play within shaping our work. This photo is one

from a series that the artist has produced when considering their childhood and the

perspective a child has of their world. The photograph displays bright colour which help us

to see through his childhood eyes, where there is little to worry about. This piece links

interestingly with Turners painting which will be hung opposite within the space, the work

has been produced based off similar principles, yet the photograph is far clearer and more

convincing than the painting.

Within the space there will also be a large installation piece *'Untitled Rooms'* which once

again draws the attention back to memory loss in

a beautiful and eery way. When asked about why

the artist produced this body of work her

response was, *'I'm interested in the layering in*

buildings, and the traces that are left behind by

the change of use of places' (Whiteread, 2001). The sculptures represent the idea of an

apartment without really depicting clear shapes or ideas, as a result of this there is

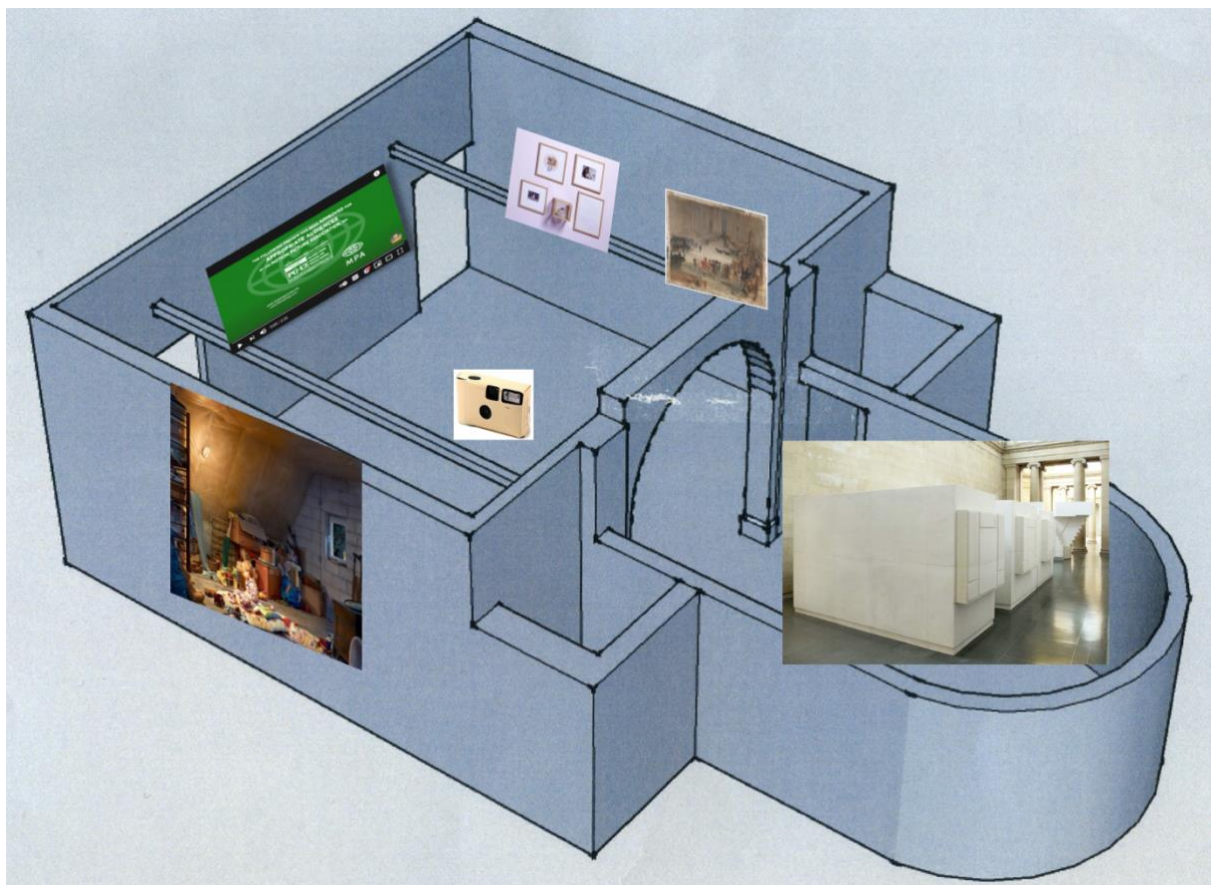
something recognisable and familiar yet clinical and somewhat distant about the piece.

This mirrors the sense of confusion created with the initial film trailer playing as you enter

the space and once again juxtaposes the theme of memory being positive throughout the



rest of the exhibition. This part of the space is intended to once again provoke the realisation of how much we depend on memory and why this is something that perhaps we should be appreciating more while we are aware of it. As this installation has no colours it should not be distracting but should draw the eye to contemplate the space. All of the pieces of work together should create an exhibition that is not only a place to admire work but an experience where people are able to look within themselves and discover what memory means to them. The selected artworks within the space will be a positive reminder of why our memories are important to us but also give a gentle nudge that perhaps we should look more towards the present in order to fully appreciate life.



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