

Ways of perceiving Curation Essay, Ryan Moule

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Film and TV

“This is hell?”

“This is hell” is something I’m sure we have all said at some point in our life. Whether we are in a lesson that appears to never end in comprehensive school, or we are ‘trapped’ in our house for weeks on end due to a pandemic. It is a very commonly used phrase, but what does hell mean to different artists through time? I have decided to curate an exhibition featuring some of my favourite works and I am going to discuss them and offer my thoughts and feelings.

When thinking about setting up an exhibition, probably one of the most important steps before even thinking about the art, is the location that you want to use. For my exhibition, I have decided to hold mine in the Mission Gallery. I have chosen to hold it here because it is very versatile and spacious, but small enough not to be overwhelming to people who are not used to seeing art in person and going to exhibitions.

Before I get into discussing the selected works, I would like to talk more about my theme. We have all heard the term “Unprecedented” (Boris Johnson, 2020, BBC News) more in the past three months than we probably will ever hear again. We are constrained to our homes by an invisible enemy and we are all scared. I am of course talking about the covid-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown that has come with it. To some people, having their freedom taken from them in such a way is the worst thing to ever happen to that individual. Being someone who wasn’t sociable before the lockdown, it hasn’t affected me too much, but it has stop and made me consider those who it has affected. Our key workers for instance. They are the soldiers of our generation, marching off into a hospital ward to try and get the upper hand on the enemy. Our shop keepers, who strive to provide us with all our essentials. The list could go on and on. Are these the angels of our world? The ones who will rescue us from this hell that we are trapped in? Are the scientists working on vaccines playing the part of god? Is the virus, (which there is much debate as to where it came from) the devil that is putting fear into the lives of our grandparents and children? This fear and apprehension is my idea of hell. I now want to look at other peoples depictions and talk about how they can be applied to todays society.

Fig 1

Hans Memling, ‘The Last Judgement’



'The last judgment' by Hans Memling is probably my most favourite piece in this curation. It shows three points in time. The first panel shows people entering the gates of heaven and being greeted by God. The second shows people during the time that Jesus is on the earth and the last panel shows people burning in hell. As well as being extremely beautiful, this piece of art represents something deeper about our society.

This work in my opinion represents three points in time. The first panel is when everyone was human. What I mean by this is when everyone cared for one another and we actually used to take time to slow down. This point in time is when the world was at it's best. Animals and humans lived harmoniously and cleanly.

The second panel represents a time where we stopped being kind to each other. A time where we as humans would tear down rainforest and burn harmful materials. All in a bid to become the superior creature on this planet. Jesus is representing the technology and science that we have become so reliant on. Just as in the bible we became reliant on him to take responsibility for our sins.

The last panel depicts our world as we see it now. We are trapped. Trapped in the house that we worked so hard to afford. In mercy to the devil. The world, even though we have stopped abusing it out of fear, is still burning around us. And it's all our fault.

I have chosen to place this piece where I have put it in the diagram because I want it to be the final piece that people see before they leave. Almost like their final judgment!

Fig 2

Francisco Goya 'Saturn devouring his son'



The most disturbing picture in the gallery without a doubt. I'm sure that a lot of people have heard the Greek myth of 'Chronus'. The titan that was told his son would usurp him and be more powerful than he ever was. To prevent this from happening, Chronus would swallow every child that his wife Rhea would bring into this world. The children would remain alive in his stomach. The legend has been depicted beautifully by various painters throughout history. But the reason I have chosen to display Francisco Goya's version is because of how horrific it is. A father is literally eating his own son as if he is just a piece of meat that he has picked up from his local butcher. The manic look on Chronus' face is disturbing and deranged which adds heaps and layers to the overall story. People describe this piece as being the most disturbing picture they have ever seen.

The work was created after Francisco Goya had started going deaf and his mental and physical health started deteriorating. The work was found on the wall in his dining room along with 14 other equally disturbing paintings often referred to as the black paintings.

Looking at this painting you can almost hear the noises that are being implied. "The crunching of bone, the squirting of blood. It is quite frankly, disturbing" (Nerdwriter, 2018, YouTube)

My reason for having this piece of art displayed is because it can very easily be flipped to talk about us and the virus. The virus is literally eating us alive and we are as helpless as Chronus' children.

I have chosen to place this piece here so that it is the first thing that people see when they enter my exhibition.

Fig 3

William Blake, 'The good and evil angels'



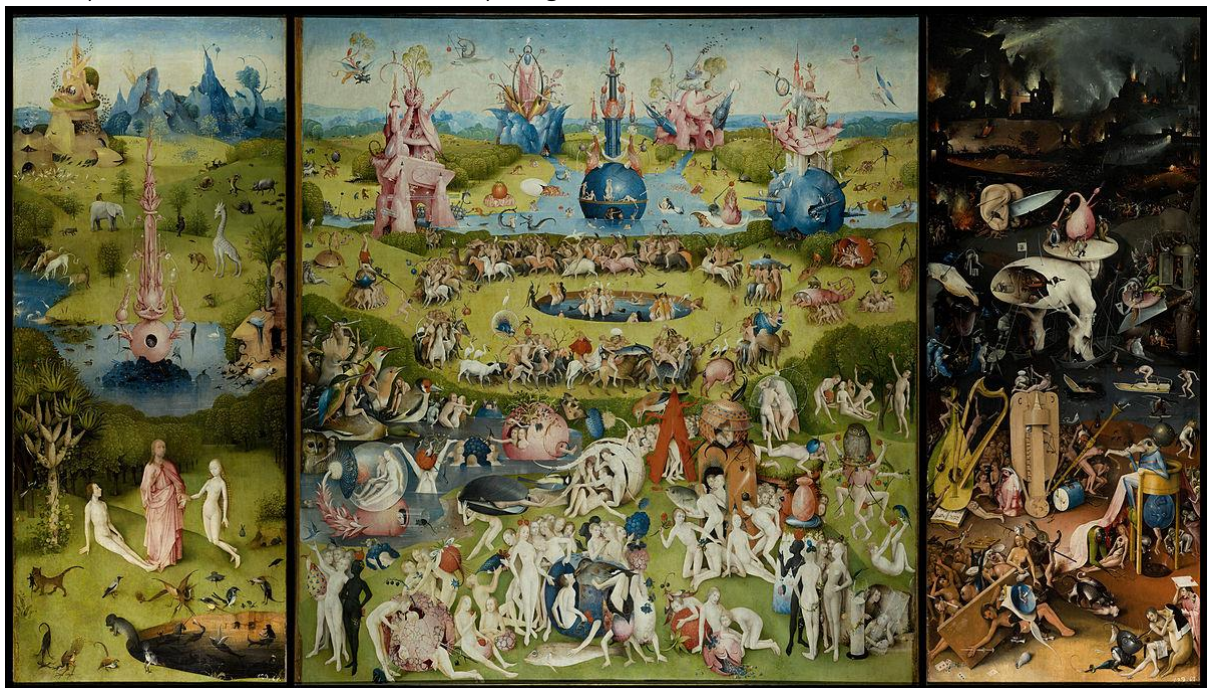
“Active evil is better than passive God” (Blake, 1805, Tate.org) is the way this magnum opus of water colour was described by Blake himself. Depicted is an evil spirit or “Satan in his original Glory” (Sandy blake, 2017, sandylayton.com) who is threatening to take possession of an infant and take them to the depths of hell while an angel keeps the baby out of reach. Being a father myself, I can understand the anger and frustration that would come with someone trying to take my child. As well as being visually striking, the picture tells us a much deeper story. A story of a bulwark between good, and evil. On first the meaning of this painting may be obvious, but on further inspection there are lots of questions that come to my mind. Is the angel protecting the baby from the demon? Or is the angel stealing the baby from the demon to lead a better life? We can see that the demon and the baby look very similar so this looks like the most plausible explanation.

My reason for including this in my exhibition is because of how it applies to the current covid-19 crisis. If we replace the demon with a virus, and the angel with our NHS workers and the baby with our elderly generation and we have a very striking image in our minds. The nhs workers are protecting us from the virus, keeping the elderly out of the jaws of hell. I think this is a very beautiful metaphor.

I have chosen to place the painting as per the diagram because it is my personal favourite and I feel that it should be one of the first paintings that the viewers see because of what it means to me and how I perceive it.

Fig 4

Hieronymus Bosch 'The Garden of earthly delights'



Where to begin

Probably the most famous depiction of “hell on earth”. Hieronymus Bosch has taken the meaning of hell and transformed it into a super natural gem of uncomfortable viewing for any child going to an art gallery with their parents.

In the first panel, we see Hieronymus Bosch’s depiction of paradise with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. With God “looking like a mad scientist” (Sally Hickon, 2014, khanacademy.org) In the middle panel we see the garden itself with “mankind gone mad for sin” and lustful. In the last panel, we see

hell in a more supernatural way than we have ever seen in any other depiction. It looks like another planet. The middle panel shows mankind as it is now and the two ways that you can go when you die. The fact nearly everyone in this piece is naked in my opinion shows that we are all vulnerable and without a shield to protect us from the virus.

My reason for choosing to display this piece is similar to fig 1. The first panel shows how the world used to be, the second shows how it was before the pandemic and the last panel shows the world now being punished for its sins and us as sinners, trapped in hell.

I have chosen to place this piece here because I feel that it is very ostentatious so it deserves to be in the most prominent and “extravagant” place.

Fig 5

John Martin, 'Pandemonium'



Anger and destruction is probably some of the words that come to your mind when you see this image. John Martin has painted a world after an apocalypse. My reason for choosing this image to display is because of how limited the use of colours is, sticking to only ‘warm’ colours.

Being in lockdown is like an apocalypse. No one walking the streets. Calmness and cleanliness can be felt. Completely different to how artists thought it would be. I want to show people this piece to show that ‘the apocalypse’ could have been a lot worse. We could all be dead and the victor (or the virus) as shown in this picture is the only winner.

“If your freedom comes at the cost of other people's lives, then that's not freedom, it's savagery.” (Abhijit Naskar, 2020, When Call the People: My World, My Responsibility , page 62)

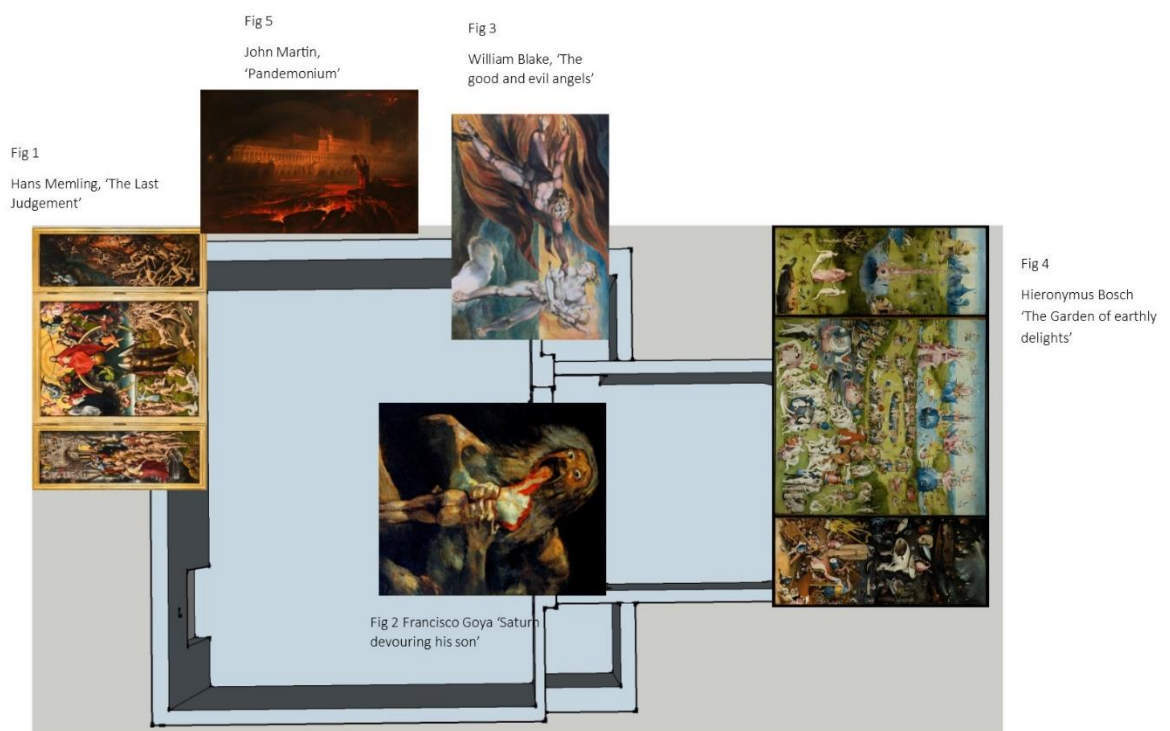
I have chosen to place this piece as per the diagram because I feel that it is almost like someone shouting. First the audience see 'Saturn devouring his son, followed by 'the good and evil angels'. Their eyes will then be drawn to the bright red and entice them in.

To conclude, the over all message of my exhibition is for everyone to stop and appreciate not just art, but also the world around us. I feel that us as humans can turn this very negative experience into a very positive one.

"Everyone has noticed that Skype meetings take less time than regular meetings. Board meetings which would normally have taken eight to nine hours we can suddenly do in two to three hours." (John Hallows, 2020, Euromoney.com)

We don't need long meetings and lectures to learn what we need to learn. What we need is to be there for each other.

Floor plan:



Figures

Fig 1:

Hans Memling, 'The Last Judgement'

Fig 2:

Francisco Goya 'Saturn devouring his son'

Fig 3:

William Blake, 'The good and evil angels'

Fig 4:

Hieronymus Bosch 'The Garden of earthly delights'

Fig 5:

John Martin, 'Pandemonium'

Bibliography

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“if your freedom...”

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“skype meetings...”

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