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Curating an exhibition

At the time of writing, the citizens of the UK are confined to their homes because of the Coronavirus pandemic, and it seems as if this will continue for the foreseeable future. According to the government, one should 'only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)' (UK Government Advice, 2020). For the majority, this does not allow them to venture beyond the constraints of their walls for any great period, and for some age groups, at all.

Hence, I propose the idea of hosting an exhibition within the home, using artificial intelligence (AI). During this current situation, it is important that people do not feel trapped in their homes – too much time indoors can have adverse effects on a person's health. This is of such concern that the NHS has provided useful guidance on how to 'take time to relax' (NHS, 2020). Utilising AI, one could transform a room in a home into a personalised exhibition space, whereby a person could change their mood, improving their mental wellbeing.

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Fig. 1: *Heydar Aliyev Centre in Baku, Azerbaijan*. Photo by Iwan Baan (2012)

For my interpretation of an exhibition, I intend to look at the work of architect Zaha Hadid. Pictured above is one of her most famous designs: the Heydar Aliyev Centre in Baku, Azerbaijan. To implement her work into my exhibition however, I will use sketches depicting much more conceptual work, to be explained later.

Coronavirus will certainly take its toll on the way we perceive and continue life afterwards. There is an increasing 'risk of recession' – the global economy is expected to 'shrink by 3%' (Jones; Palumbo; Brown, 2020). This, amongst other factors, will undoubtedly take its toll on those who are out of employment as a result. In response to the lockdown, 'More than 70% of private firms have furloughed staff' (Inman, 2020) all of whom will now be confined to their homes with little social contact. The mental wellbeing of these people suddenly becomes of great importance, hence why I

want to envisage something that could have a practical use too, tailored to individuals' desires and help them cope during this difficult time.

As aforementioned, the artist I would like to feature in my exhibition is Zaha Hadid. She was an Iraqi-British architect whose work is defined by flowing organic structures. Her fascinating drawings have a strong structural basis which the design is pinned to. To implement these drawings into something more tangible, AI could be used to project them into a room of anyone's house using just their mobile phone, turning that room into a gallery space.

Use of colour will also be an important part of my exhibition. It is known that different colours can induce different emotions in a person, and so being able to choose the colour for the individual's needs could result in a more calming or exciting environment.

More specifically, I own and use on a regular basis a Philips light that sits in the corner of my room. The light can be one of millions of colours in the RGB spectrum. It sets a mood. Switching it on can create a tranquil space; it can also stimulate a sense of excitement. Generally, I default my light to pink. There is such a thing as the 'pink effect' (Caragianis, 2016). This is referring to the colour pink having 'a calming effect on the nerves and helps relieve feelings of anger, aggression and neglect' (Caragianis, 2016). Having acquired this knowledge, it now makes sense as to why I default to the colour to pink – and why I am able to stay in the presence of it for hours at a time. Another effective colour that Caragianis mentions is blue. One can 'feel centred, relaxed and serene' (Caragianis, 2016) in the presence of it.

An interesting trait of these specific RGB lamps is that they use four separate bulbs to produce one colour. Each bulb emits a different colour. This means that when the light hits an object, the shadow created is split into the separate colours of the bulbs due to diffraction of the different wavelengths. Although this will not necessarily add to the calming effect I am going for, it does enhance the interactivity of the exhibition whereby changing the colour of the light source will allow the viewer to see how their chosen colour is broken down.

Using light and dark helps to 'intensify the optical illusion of form on a two-dimensional shape' (Krieger, 2001:74). In this instance, this is true as the object and surrounding environment will be viewed on a screen. Utilising the light source effectively will help to superimpose the exhibition into the viewers personal space, creating an immersible experience.

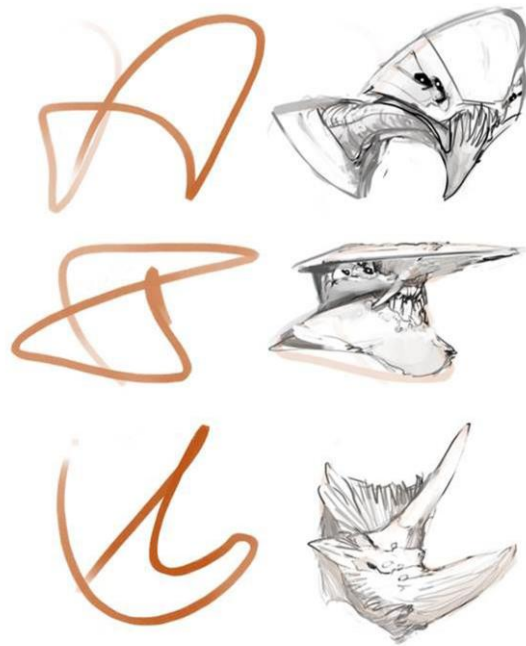


Fig 2: *Animal sketches*, Zaha Hadid

As a stand-alone image, these lines would look nothing more than if a child had got hold a pen and merely scribbled on a piece of paper. In some sense these lines could be viewed as 'scribbles' but there is a discrete beauty to them. This of course is subjective but, 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' (Wolfe Hungerford, 1878).

The use of line weight again features, giving some portions a greater sense of importance. Furthermore, the difference in tone creates a sense of depth. This is particularly apparent in the top figure as the neck of the eagle is set further back from the head whereas the rhino head is all in one perspective plane hence the line is a uniform tone.

All the shapes have closed defined formations, which induces movement around them. The figure of 8 features in two of them - a common shape - hence is not unnatural for the viewer. The main characteristic of its appearance is the ability to follow its loops round infinitely. Hadid features these closed shapes in her work as the are no distractions, she pinpoints where she wants the viewers' attention and as a result makes it very difficult to break free. 'Humans are more attracted to curvilinear shapes than angular shapes' (Schwab, 2017) is an important factor to consider for my space. Like Hadid's work, I want my space to have a comforting, calming ambiance to it.

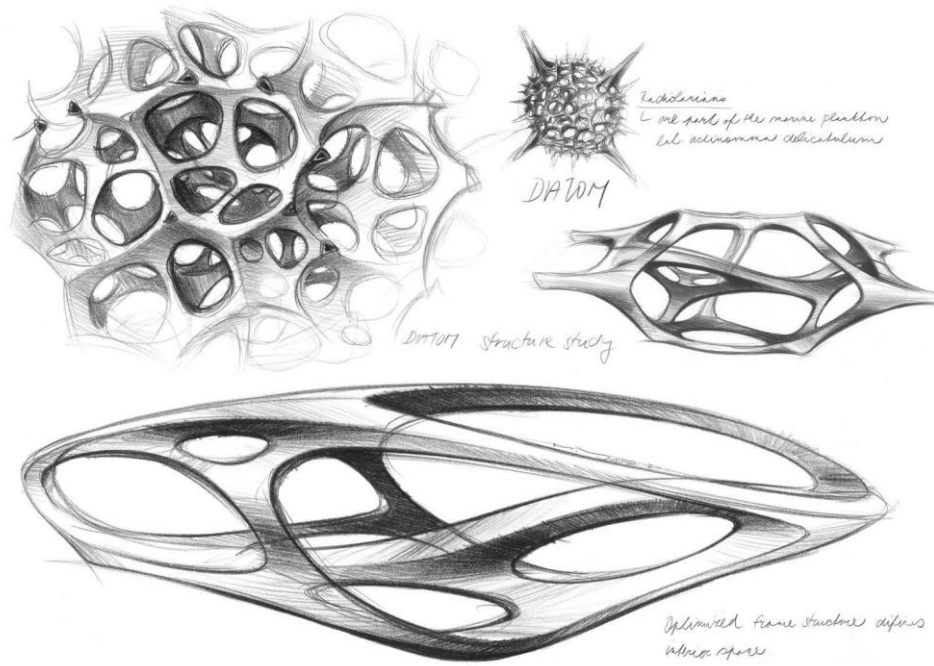


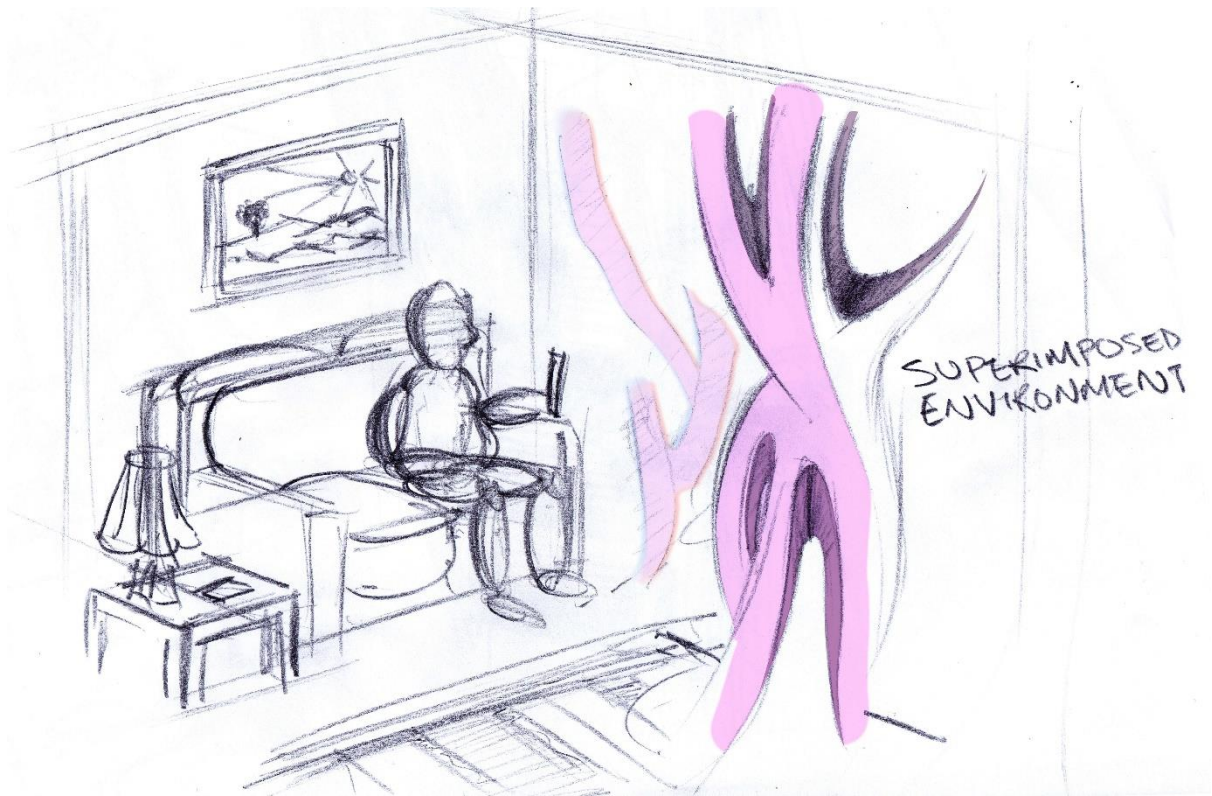
Fig 3: Organic sketches, Zaha Hadid.

The eyes of the viewer are never lost in these drawings. The structure in all of them provide a path that can be followed almost infinitely (which is reflected to an extent in some of her buildings). The interconnected spaces add to the fluidity and creates a sense of depth, making the object come across as 3D whilst being represented in 2D. The drawing has quite a skeletal quality – particularly a skull type shape – that instigates a perception of strength and robustness. Furthermore, it shows a complexity that few other bone shapes have.

The lines make the object look robust due to the weighting of them. The heavier lines highlight the more prominent aspects of the sculpture, as well as in some cases providing the darker shadow tones. This supplements the 3D quality of the drawing, adding to the overall effect. However, the lines in general are quite loose, which opposes the stereotype of any drawing by an architect where 'God is in the details' (New York Times, 1969:42). The top left in particular looks like a microstructure, or something cellular which suggests that Hadid takes inspiration from objects/organisms that are fundamentally similar with equally defined strong structures if on a very different scale.

It is evident from the drawings that the initial foundations are laid using rapid hand movements, allowing the artist to see and understand how the proportions of the object sit on the page. However, the lines become more refined, giving the impression to the viewer that they were more instinctive – the artist became progressively more relaxed, and its reflected in the drawing.

The shape itself seems quite spontaneous, it has a demeanour of coming from the hand rather than the head – it is very natural, the free-flowing form is quite mesmerising. Although I intend on viewing the exhibition through a mobile device, 'we don't see the world in a rectangular frame' (Taylor, 2014:10). Hadid's work can combat this as there is a sinuous movement instigated by it, even if it is not totally clear as to what the object is. However, for this purpose the structure does not 'need' to be anything. It is for admiring and therefore open to interpretation. Each person who looks at it will likely see something different and find enjoyment out of that which is ultimately why I have envisioned my exhibition to be this way.



A sketched interpretation of my exhibition. Alistair Barkley

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Figures

- Fig 1: Baan, I. (2012) Image available at <https://www.zaha-hadid.com/architecture/heydar-aliyev-centre/>
- Fig 2 and 3: Images by Zaha Hadid. Available at <https://www.zaha-hadid.com/>