

Ways of Perceiving, Curation Essay

Meet The Parents

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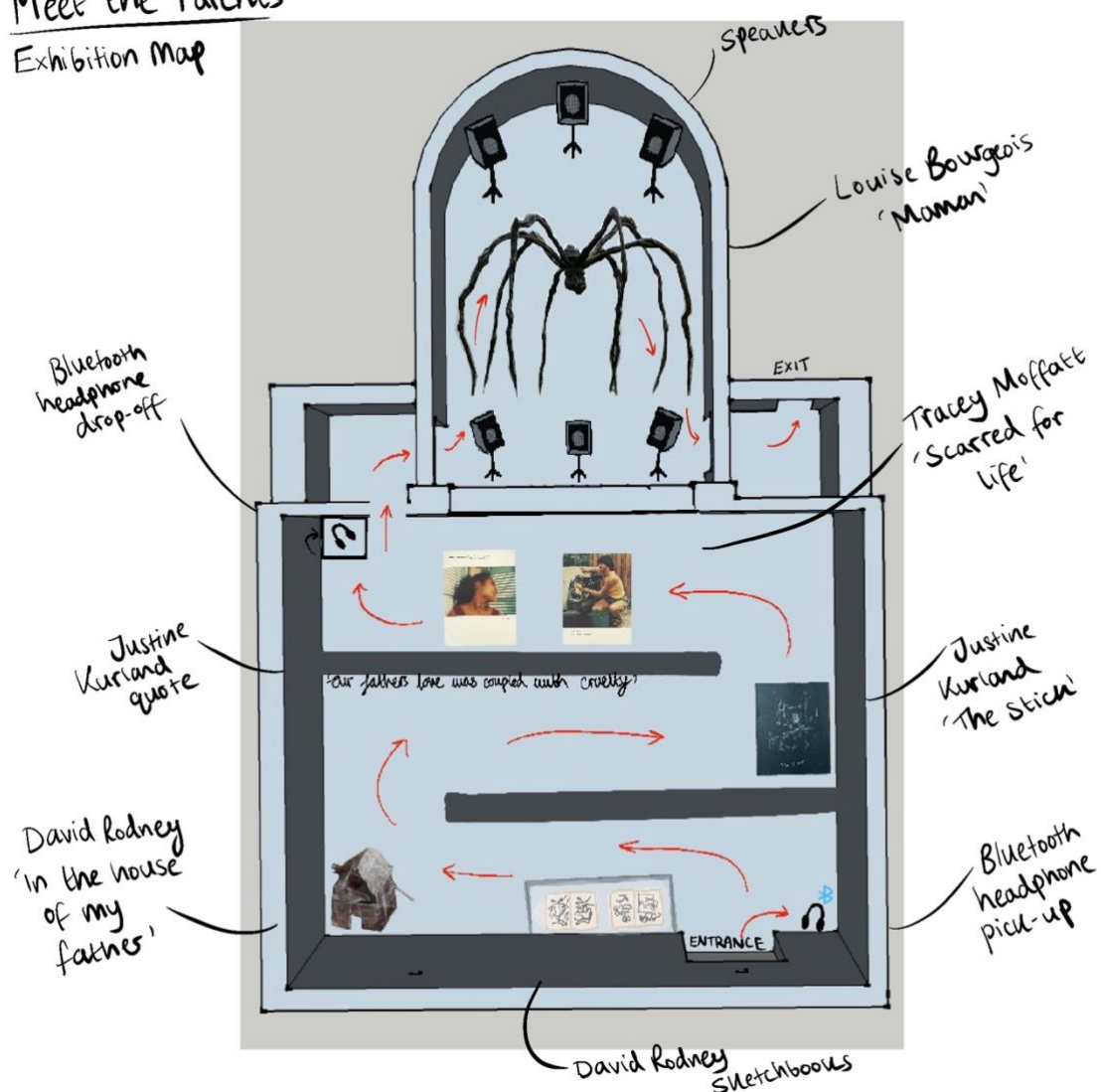
Julia Lockheart

Meet The Parents

This exhibition is centred around the relationships between children and their parents. The exhibition will be titled 'Meet the Parents' which I intend to display at the Mission gallery and will include five art pieces which have been created by four individual artists. My aim for this exhibit is for my chosen designs to successfully portray the contrasting theories of child parent relationships and emotionally provoke my audience through curation. This is an important topic for an exhibition because, although it may not be a major societal or political issue, we do not discuss these familial relationships enough, especially if we are not lucky enough to experience the positive kind.

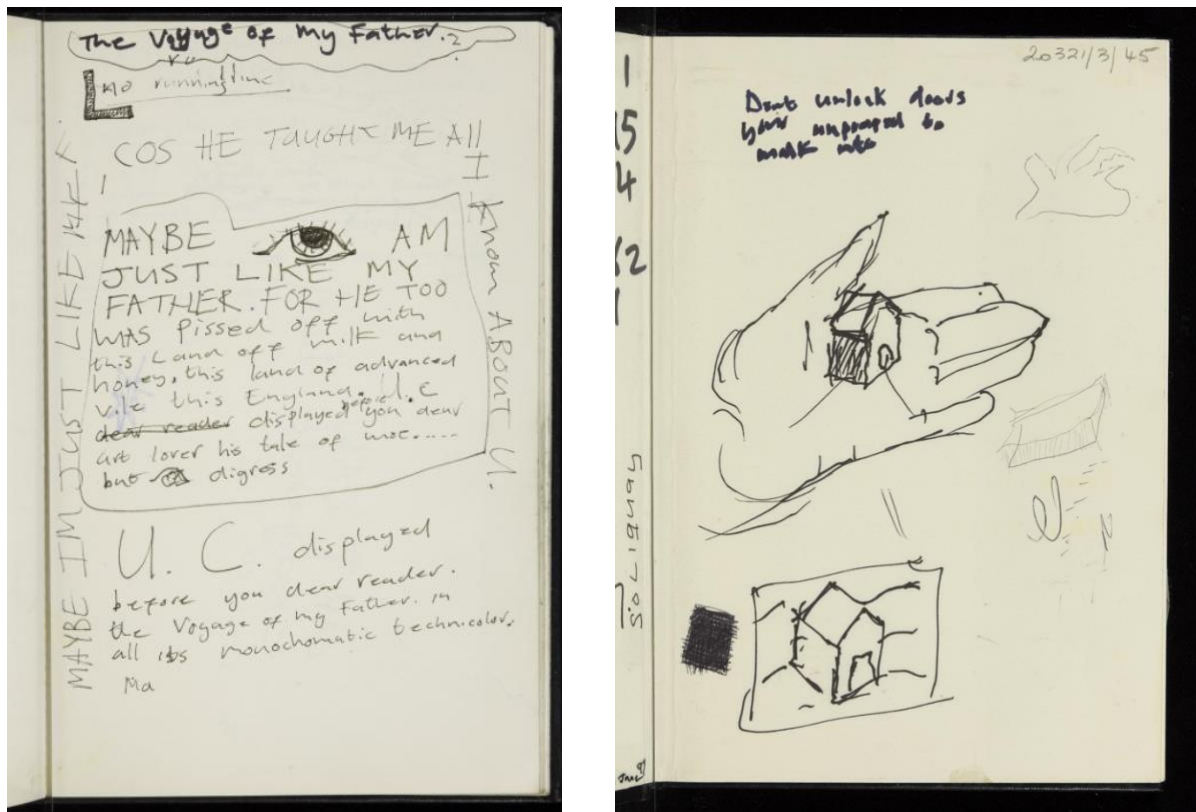
Growing up has connotations of a linear progression, so in order to counter this, I plan to install large dividers inside the gallery space which direct visitors through the exhibition in a snake like pattern. This can be seen below in figure one, this also enriches the audiences experience of the exhibition as they are forced to focus on one piece of artwork at a time. Hans Ulrich Obrist discusses in his book, 'Ways of Curating' the methods in which curators arrange art and says, 'The encounter between the spectator and one work dominated' (Obrist, P.29). This supports the layout of my exhibition and will result in a more intimate experience between the viewer and the individual piece of art.

Meet the Parents
Exhibition Map



With the theme of my exhibition being unique to everyone, I would like to restore the privacy by including Bluetooth headphones for visitors to wear throughout the exhibition which will play the song 'Goodnight Dad I Love You' by the experimental pop duo Wishing on repeat. This is an instrumental piece and is more sound than song, however, is soothing yet quite sad to listen to. I have chosen to include this in my exhibition due to the title, as well as it helping to create that wall between visitors so that they can still enjoy a personal experience. Brandon LaBelle points out in his book, 'Background noise : perspectives on sound art.' That to receive sound 'is to be involved in connections that make privacy intensely public, and public intensely private' (LaBelle, P.4). This supports the choice to install Bluetooth headphones in the public gallery space to play sound which will change the audiences experience to be much more private and personal.

Fig Two and Three



The first piece on display in this exhibition will be pages from two of Donald Rodney's sketchbooks in a glass cabinet. The first sketchbook that will be on show is 'Sketchbook number 11' on page 81 which is titled, 'The Voyage of My Father'. Rodney writes on this page, 'Maybe I am just like my father for he too was pissed off with this land...' (Rodney, P.81). The online paper, 'Parent-Child Relationship: Peculiarities and Outcomes' written by Leonid M. Popov and Ruth A. Ilesanmi, discusses the different theories on parent and child relationships, one of those being centred around the behavioural characteristics of parents and how this can affect the child whilst growing up. 'It has been shown that a given parent behaviour may have different effects on different children.' (Popov, Ilesanmi, P.1). This

suggests that Rodney's fathers' behavioural traits had affected him as he too was now similarly, 'pissed off with this land' (Rodney, P.81).

Although Rodney displays an element of anger for inheriting such traits from his father, the following sketchbook shows another side to how he felt towards him. The second piece in this cabinet is 'Sketchbook number 45' on page 3 which includes Rodney's design plan for his miniature sculpture 'In the House of My Father'. Rodney planned to produce this piece after his father had passed and so it is a tribute to his fathers' life despite the complications they had. These sketchbooks ease the audience into the exhibition, already displaying opposing relationships as well as foreshadowing the following artwork which is to come.

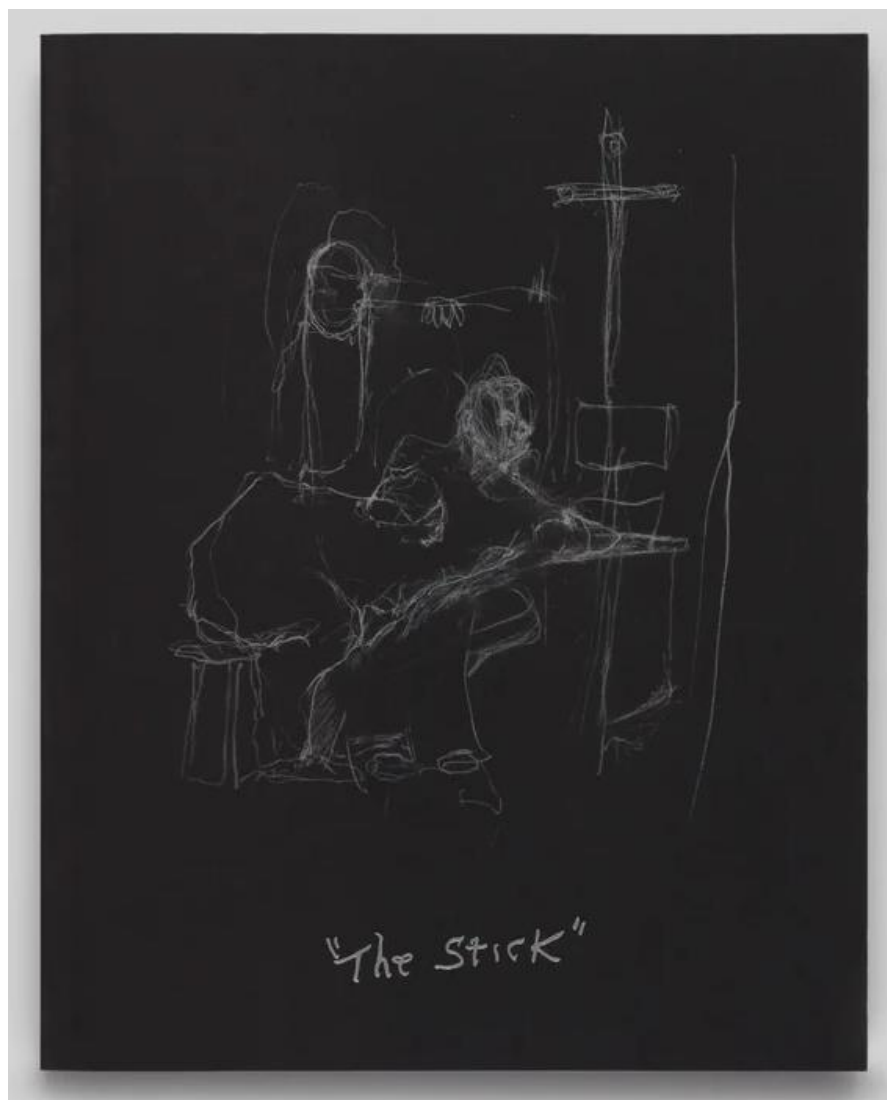
Fig Four



The second art piece in this exhibition is Donald Rodney's sculpture, 'In the House of My Father'. This sculpture is in the exhibition to contrast Rodney's previous piece and how he felt negatively about sharing traits with his father. As well as Rodney inheriting these behavioural traits, he also inherited the physical trait of sharing the same skin condition with him. This caused Rodney to undergo multiple surgeries where he kept pieces of his skin, and after his father had passed, he created this miniature house sculpture as a tribute to his father, thus displaying a more positive response towards sharing qualities. Rodney is

aware that he has become the person he is today due to his father and the environment which he grew up in, displaying an example of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory which Olivia Guy-Evans discusses in her article where she says, 'Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory posits that an individual's development is influenced by a series of interconnected environmental systems' (Guy-Evans, 2024). The overriding environmental system which can be seen through Rodney's piece is the microsystem, which is the first level of Bronfenbrenner's theory and suggests that the child's most immediate relationships, for example parental relationships in the home, influences the child and directly impacts their development whether that be positively or negatively. In Rodney's case this was a mixture of both positive and negative which creates room for the audience to relate and so this has been delivered through his artwork.

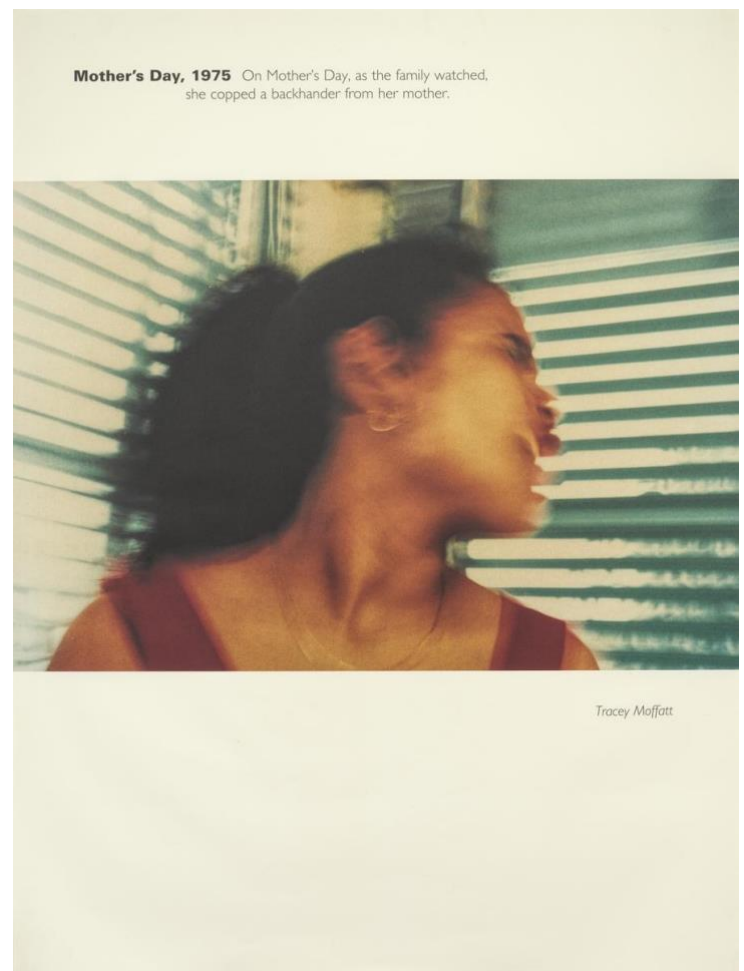
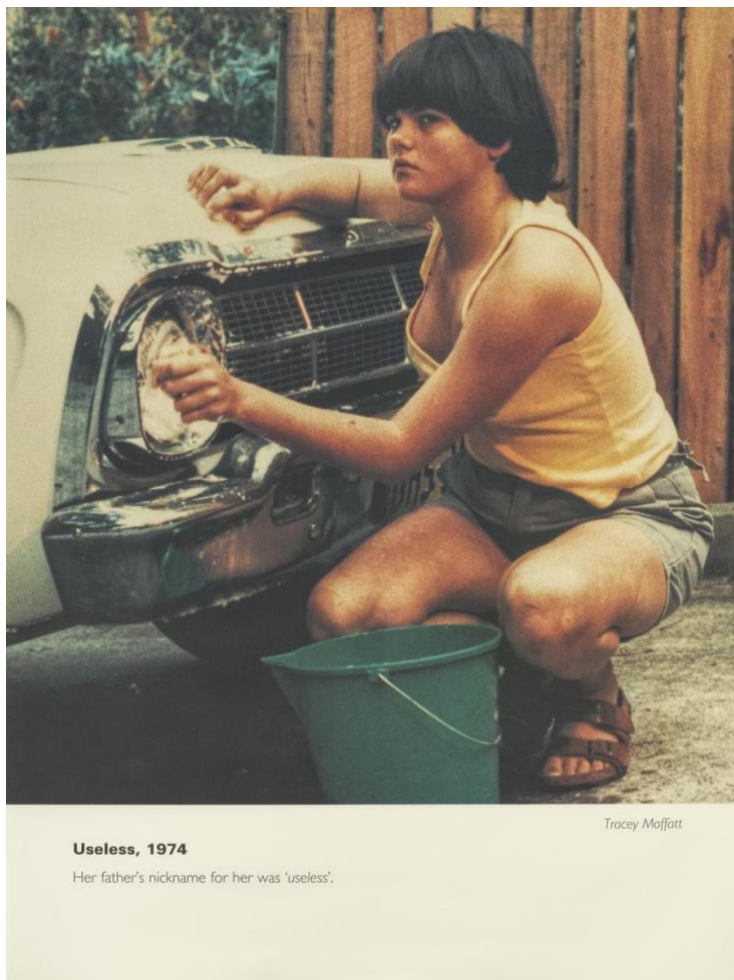
Fig Five



The third piece to be displayed is Justine Kurland's 'The Stick', and on the wall as you walk towards this piece will be the quote, 'Our fathers love was coupled with cruelty' (Kurland) which is how she describes her father to have been whilst she grew up. Her piece portrays her feelings towards her father, you can't quite make out exactly where he is which mirrors

how he was absent as a father whilst she grew up. This absence of a parental figure is discussed through Saul McLeod's article on John Bowlby's attachment theory. It has been researched that there is a critical period for children to develop attachment otherwise it may not develop further down the line, and so having a stable parental figure is extremely important during this time. McLeod says, 'If the attachment figure is broken or disrupted during the critical two-year period, the child will suffer irreversible long-term consequences' (McLeod, 2024). Kurland's piece depicts the complexity of relationships one may have with their father, she shares that she did love him and equally he loved her, however there were many times where the relationship wasn't so positive and so the uncertain shapes within her work mirror the reality of the uncertainty she had of her relationship with her father.

Fig Six and Seven



The fourth piece in this exhibition is two photographs from Tracey Moffatt's series titled 'Scarred for Life'. These images are named 'Useless' and 'Mother's Day' which portray the mental and physical abuse which children go through from their parents, and how these stay with them into their adult lives. Moffatt's series also displays elements of Bowlby's theory of attachment and how a lack of positive parental figures can affect you later in life. Saul McLeod says, 'Bowlby concluded that maternal deprivation in the child's early life

caused permanent emotional damage.’ (McLeod, 2024) Hence being ‘Scarred for Life’. Incorporating photography in this exhibition reflects a much more explicit message compared to the more abstract art which has been previously included. As John Berger translates through his book, ‘Understanding a photograph’, photography is a way to send a message of the event which is being documented, ‘the message decoded means; I have decided that this is worth recording’ (Berger, P.18). In this case, Moffatt decided that capturing horrifying scenes in mundane ways would create this bond between the viewer and the person in the event being recorded, as Moffatt said, ‘everyone has a tragic tale to tell’ (Moffatt, 1994).

Fig Eight



The fifth piece for this exhibition is Louise Bourgeois sculpture titled ‘Maman’ which will be placed in the back room of the Mission gallery as the final piece. Maman depicts Bourgeois complicated relationship with her mother as this spider is terrifyingly large so portrays the harshness her mother had towards her. In contrast however, this sculpture is shown to be protecting its eggs which presents the caring bond which her mother shared with her. Paired alongside this piece, there will also be an immersive sound experience where visitors will be asked to remove their headphones before entering the final room which will have speakers circled around the perimeter. This experience is inspired by Janet Cardiff’s piece titled, ‘the Forty Part Motet’ but instead of an orchestral song being played through speakers, each speaker plays a different recording of sentences which the audiences’ parents have said to

them throughout their life and has stuck with them, following on from Tracey Moffatts, 'Scarred for Life'. The approach of merging sound and art was also inspired by Vito Acconci in his performance, 'Claim' where he created, 'a space of voices' (*LaBelle*, P.108). The audience had the choice to enter a room with him blindfolded with a steel rod or leave him to himself. Acconci's piece came to, 'emphasize and complicate a visitors position' (*LaBelle*, P.108). Similarly in this part of the exhibition, my audience is free to listen closely to the horrid things which have been said to them, or to enter the centre of the room which although intimidating with the large sculpture, they will not be able to clearly hear the negative words being said to them. Hans Ulrich Obrist speaks on the power of curation in his book, 'Ways of Curating', he says, 'Its power comes from the subtle sources of juxtaposition and arrangement.' (*Obrist*, P.32) and through my coupling of 'Maman' and the sound experience, I have created a personal and thought-provoking final element for my audience.

Fig Nine



Through curation I have successfully portrayed the different variations of child parent relationships. Nicholas Serota says in his book, 'Experience or Interpretation, the dilemma of the museums of modern art.' That through curation you are, 'establishing relationships that could not have existed in the minds of the makers of these objects' (*Serota*, P.8). This exhibition provokes memories and thoughts of the viewers childhood due to the artworks which have been chosen, juxtaposition of these artworks, and, how the space has been arranged.

List of Figures:

Fig. Two: Tate (n.d.). *“Sketchbook number 11”, Donald Rodney, 1986’, Donald Rodney, 1986 – Tate Archive*. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-200321-3-11/rodney-sketchbook-number-11/81> [Accessed 22 Apr. 2024].

Fig. Three: Tate (n.d.). *“Sketchbook number 45”, Donald Rodney, 1997–8’, Donald Rodney, 1997–8 – Tate Archive*. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-200321-3-45/rodney-sketchbook-number-45/3> [Accessed 22 Apr. 2024].

Fig. Four: Tate (2002). *‘In the House of My Father’, Donald Rodney, 1996–7*. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rodney-in-the-house-of-my-father-p78529>.

Fig. Five: TIS books. (n.d.). *The Stick / Justine Kurland, Bruce Kurland, poems by Lisa Jarnot*. [online] Available at: <https://www.tisbooks.pub/products/the-stick>.

Fig. Six: Tate (n.d.). *‘Useless, 1974’, Tracey Moffatt, 1994*. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/moffatt-useless-1974-p78105>.

Fig. Seven: Tate (n.d.). *‘Mother’s Day, 1975’, Tracey Moffatt, 1994*. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/moffatt-mothers-day-1975-p78106>.

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Fig. Nine: Miller, J.C. & G.B. (n.d.). *The Forty Part Motet*. [online] Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller. Available at: <https://cardiffmiller.com/installations/the-forty-part-motet/>

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