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Illustration (BA)

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Imagined Display Space (Exhibition, Festival, Performance etc)

Sarah Everard was murdered “as she walked home alone” (BBC, 2021) initiating the nation’s women to speak against sexual violence. Therefore, I decided to curate a non-traditional exhibition concerning sexual harassment and abuse that females have to endure every day. Sexual violence is “any behaviour thought to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consent” (Direct, n.d.) I want to contribute to the cessation of the victimisation of females as “97% of women aged between 18-24 years old have been sexually harassed” (Choudhury, 2021) Therefore, the aim of my exhibition, simply titled ‘Being Female’, will illustrate the anxieties of women revolving around sexual violence. This concept was solidified by the fact that, between March 2019 and March 2020, 58,856 cases of rape were reported to Welsh and English police forces. However, only 2,102 cases were prosecuted (Team, 2021). This leaves approximately 56,754 sexual predators stalking the streets for fresh prey. This is not including the cases that go unreported, in fear of victim-blaming, embarrassment and the miniscule chance of a successful prosecution. Thus, the aim of my exhibition is not only to pay homage to Sarah Everard, but to create awareness of victimisation of women due to sexual assault.

The exhibition, ‘Being Female’, will be situated on Kings Street; the lane between The Kings Arms Tavern and Volcano Theatre on High Street in Swansea. This may seem an unconventional venue, but as a woman, walking alone at night down Kings Street is rather intimidating – favouring the long route if ambulatory silhouettes are visible. The attendees will enter on Orchard Street and the art will be displayed on the left-hand side as you walk down Kings Street, to exit on High Street. The exhibition will only be open at night, as that is when women are seen as most vulnerable – especially when alone. There will be dull lights on the floor, pointing up at the art to create an eerie atmosphere to simulate the apprehension and anxiety women experience nightly. The exhibition will be aimed at adults due to the graphic and suggestive nature of the art. However, only 3 people will be allowed in at a time, using a one-in-one-out system; this is to mimic the emotions women are susceptible to, such as fear, uneasiness and uncertainty. Displayed below is a digital photomontage to portray the envisioned exhibition, ‘Being Female’.



Fig. One

1. 'Don't Worry About It: Around Here RED MEANS GO' by Lady Skollie
2. 'Tell Me You Love It' by Suzzan Blac
3. 'Touches' by Emma Krenzer
4. 'A Collection of Body Parts' by Alicia Tatone
5. 'Let Me Speak' by Devon Bragg

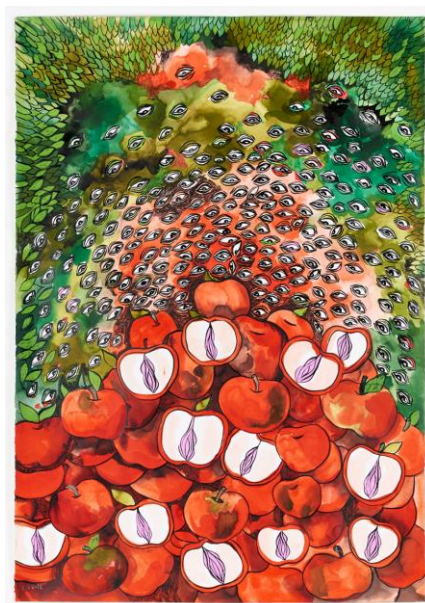


Fig. Two

Upon entering Kings Lane, the first painting displayed will be 'Don't Worry About It: Around Here RED MEANS GO' by South African feminist and artist, Lady Skollie, "born Laura Windvogel" (Mohale, 2017). The aim of this piece is to address the lack of consent in South Africa and "to

intervene on rape culture” (Mohale, 2017), made from “ink, crayon and Fabriano” (Nataal, 2017). However, it is universally applicable. Sexual assault is not country-specific; it is an atrocity endured everywhere at varying degrees. The image depicts a pile of red apples – a portion cut in half to expose labia – which has strong connotations to Adam and Eve, in which Eve succumbed to the serpent’s urges to eat the forbidden fruit, persuading Adam to try too (Britannica, 2020). This illustrates women have been seen as temptresses since Genesis. However, women are now perceived as walking temptations – merely apples for men to take a bite of. The depiction of apples symbolises the male perception of the disposability of women, as fruit has a limited shelf-life – especially when cut and exposed. The quantity of eyes and their close proximity to the apples creates a feeling of discomfort, exemplifying the vulture-like qualities of some men, preying on the vulnerabilities of women.



Fig. Three

The second picture at the ‘Being Female’ exhibition will be Suzzan Blac’s oil painting, ‘Tell Me You Love It!’. Suzzan Blac’s life has been traumatic to say the least; born in America to an abusive mother, Blac was offered a job in England, which she excitedly accepted. Blac was coaxed away from everything she knew and loved to become the newest victim of a London-based sex trafficking ring (Antislavery Usable Past Editors, 2012). Blac paints dark imagery as a way of coping with her turbulent past – an unadulterated therapy to unlock the traumas buried in her psyche. The painting chosen for the exhibition is a depiction of the first rape of many that Blac was forced to endure in Britain. Blac portrayed her face realistically; her features contorted to illustrate her undeniable terror. Blac’s attacker is portrayed as an inhumane monster-devil hybrid - the epitome of any man who feels the right to cause such harm. The bloody hooked claw protruding her skull symbolises the mental scarring such abuse can cause. The claw may also symbolise a “fish hook” (Wayne, 2017) as

Blac was baited by the promises of a successful career and reeled in with false kindness. Then, once in a foreign land, Blac was stuck, hooked on mental and physical anguish. This painting is so powerful as it gives a raw insight to the victims' experiences and the painful memories that haunt them daily.



Fig. Four

The third artwork in 'Being Female' will be 'Touches', by a 19-year-old student and sexual assault victim, Emma Krenzer (Andrius, 2017). It is a photograph layered with fingerpainting to create a visual "map of human touch of another human body to illustrate it's lasting impact" (Krenzer, 2017). This is a poignant piece of art as it exhibits consented touches and unwanted touches; therefore, connecting other victims through similar experiences. The red paint – symbolic of danger, blood and anger (Wolchover, 2012) – represents the undesired contact of Krenzer's attacker, which helps form a solidarity amongst other victims due to combatting comparable emotions. Krenzer is extremely brave for publicising such a personal piece. However, not only does the work unite victims, but also educated people who have never been sexually assaulted on the physical contact that may trigger negative memories or emotions for victims. Education on sensitive subjects, such as rape, is critical for creating an empathetic, receptive and vigilant society that looks out for one another.

The fifth, and final, image in the exhibition is 'Let Me Speak' by Devon Bragg, which amalgamates all of the derogatory and objectifying statements ever said to her "by both men and women" (Bell, 2018). The fact that both genders have said such things proves that inequality and victim-blaming have become a norm in today's society. Gender equality means "when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities" (UNFPA, 2005). Yet, women are still being classed as "naïve" (Raving, 2019) and get told that they are "asking" (Eric-Udorie, 2014) to be violated due to the time they are walking home or what they are wearing. This is an outdated mindset. Society is at an age where women should be able to wear and do whatever they want, act however they want, without being crudely branded. But this seems idealistic unless action is taken; hence why this poster is so important to the exhibition. It highlights the importance of talking about sexual abuse and inequality. These are necessary conversations to generate the awareness and change needed for a safe, fair country.

In conclusion, I believe the exhibition, 'Being Female', would be an effective method of creating awareness of the sexual abuse female have to face. The space chosen to curate the exhibition, Kings Street, is unique and atmospheric. Therefore, I think attendees will remember the exhibition and be impacted by the maltreatment of women, meaning they will hopefully begin their own discussions on sexual violence. An increase in awareness will increase the possibility of change.

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Available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/xy4eww/lady-skollie-fearless-feminist-artist-south-africa>

(Accessed: 5 May 2021)

Fig. Three: Blac, S. (2000) *Tell Me You Love it!* [Oil on Paper]

Available at: <https://www.deviantart.com/suzzan-blac/art/Tell-me-you-love-it-oil-on-paper-2000-you-can-s-335523438>

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Available at: https://www.boredpanda.com/sexual-assault-aftermath-art-project-touch-impact-emma-krenzer/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

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Fig. Five: Tatone, A. *A Collection of Body Parts*

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