

Assignment Title: Imagined Display Space (article, chapter, exhibition, festival, paper, or event)

Student Name: Luke Wingrave

Student Number: 2203882

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Lecturer Name: Martin Bush

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Beyond Colour

The Beyond Colour exhibition aims to provide a space for people to abstract themselves from loudness of the outside world allowing them to feel a sense of tranquillity. The exhibition itself will explore a variety of ways in which monochrome colour is used in the world of art & design, not just for its physicality and spirituality. The emergence of modern culture during the 20th century meant that people developed new ways of thinking about the world. Popular new ideas emerged such as consumerism, communism, and discoveries in science influenced people to live life in different ways, rejecting old ideas of how the world should work and paved a path for what we know today as modernism (The Media Insider, 2022). Modernism gave rise to one of the most influential artistic movements today 'Abstract Art', known for rejecting the influence of history and conservative values. This form of art has a tendency for abstraction; stripping the work down to its bare bones in favour of experimenting with shape, line, and colour to create innovative forms (Tate, 2017). With the rise of abstract art and its forms of abstraction, many artists started experimenting with the abstraction of colour by creating paintings with only one colour or hue. Monochrome paintings stood as a source of spiritual purity for artists allowing them to experience a sense of tranquillity when in a state of creativity. Some artists also experimented with monochrome as a way of bringing the attention to the

physicality of the work, removing the need to think about what a piece means or does, and instead to just to observe what is Infront of you (Tate, n.d).



Fig 1. *Guggenheim Museum Bilbao* in Bilbao, Basque country, Spain. Designed by architect Frank Gehry.

The exhibition will be held at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, in Basque Country, Spain. The museum was designed by Canadian American architect Frank Gehrt and was constructed between October 1993 and October 19. (Guggenheim Bilbao, 2019). The buildings architectural design shares many of the same qualities as abstract art, adopting the idea of abstraction by having the building constructed out of these simplistic flowing cube-like forms, and the use of stone and metal materials gives the building a monochromatic hue.

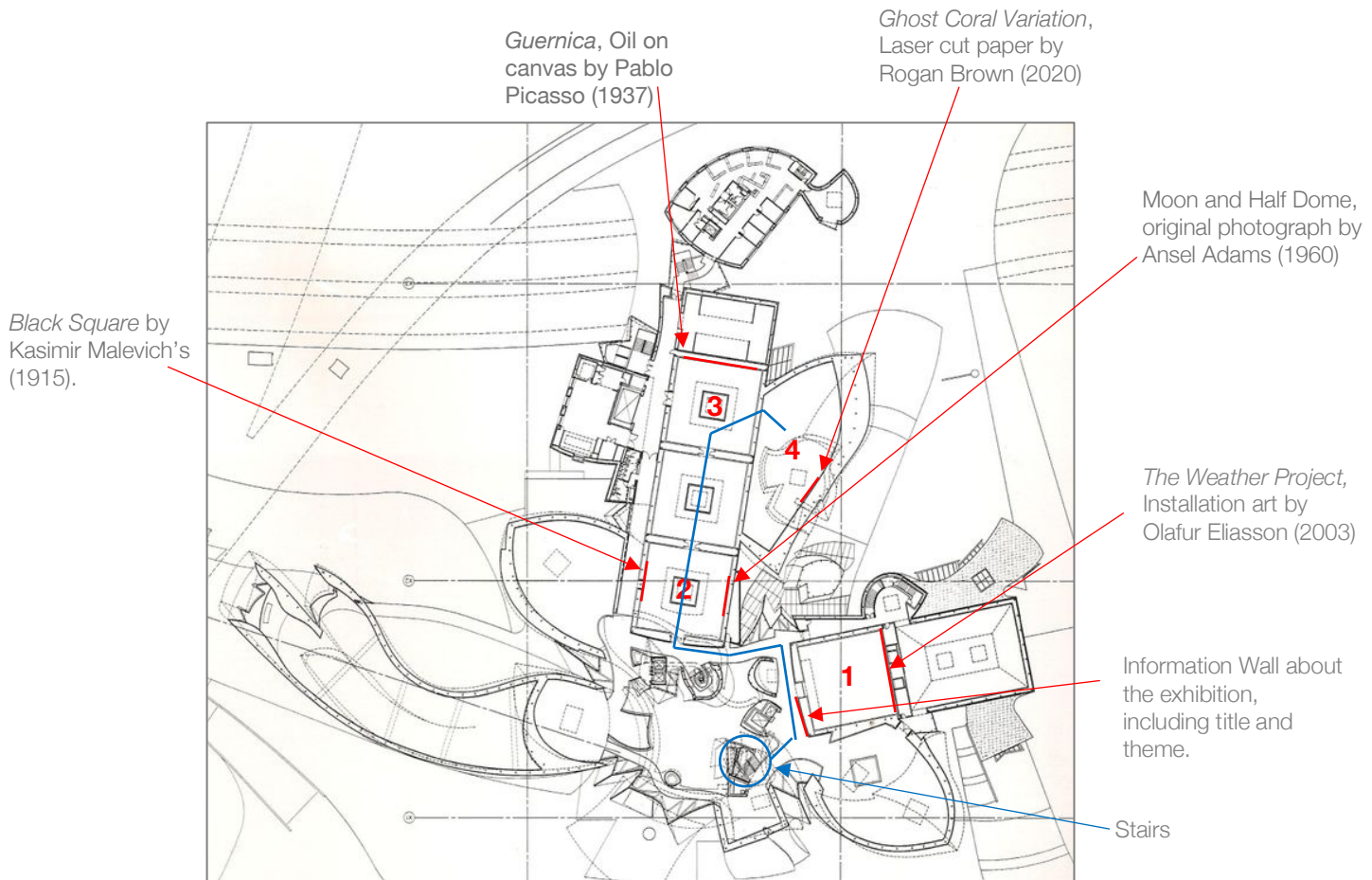


Fig 2. Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Floor Plan, First Floor.

The exhibition will take place on the first floor of the Museum, this is where all exhibitions are held in the building. Walking up the main stairwell the visitors are presented with an information wall for the exhibition, giving them the exhibition title and explaining what the exhibition is about. Visitors are then guided to room one, where The Weather Project by Olafur Eliasson is installed. This room was chosen specifically for this piece because of the lack of windows and natural light allowing the viewers to get the full effects of monochromatic light. Visitors are then guided to room two where Moon and Half Dome by Ansel Adams, and Black Square by Kasimir Malevich are displayed. These two pieces are paired together because they both use black as a form of abstraction complimenting each other's aesthetic. Visitors are then

guided to room three where Guernica by Pablo Picasso is displayed. The piece will be displayed on its own due to the subject matter behind the piece; being the most emotionally heavy piece in the collection. Finally, visitors are guided to room four where Ghost Coral Variation by Rogan Brown is displayed.



Fig 3. *The Weather Project*, Installation art by Olafur Eliasson (2003)

Olafur Eliasson is an artist who lives and works in Copenhagen and Berlin; his works feature installations, paintings, sculptures, photography, and film (Eliasson, 2010). Eliasson takes monochromatic colour to a whole new level with his piece '*The Weather Project*'. The piece uses 200 mono-frequency lights in the shape of a semi-circle pressed up against a ceiling of mirrors, creating a full circle: an illusion of a sun

(Eliasson, 2003). The mono-frequency light is essentially monochromatic light; it cuts out all the other colours because there isn't any white light present, it's the white light that reflects the colour back to our eyes. Eliasson abstracts the colour not just in the piece but from our own eyes, and in doing so he discovered people gain a heightened sense of attentiveness. The abstraction of colour actually allows us to see more of what we are looking at ('Olafur Eliasson: The Design of Art', 2019).

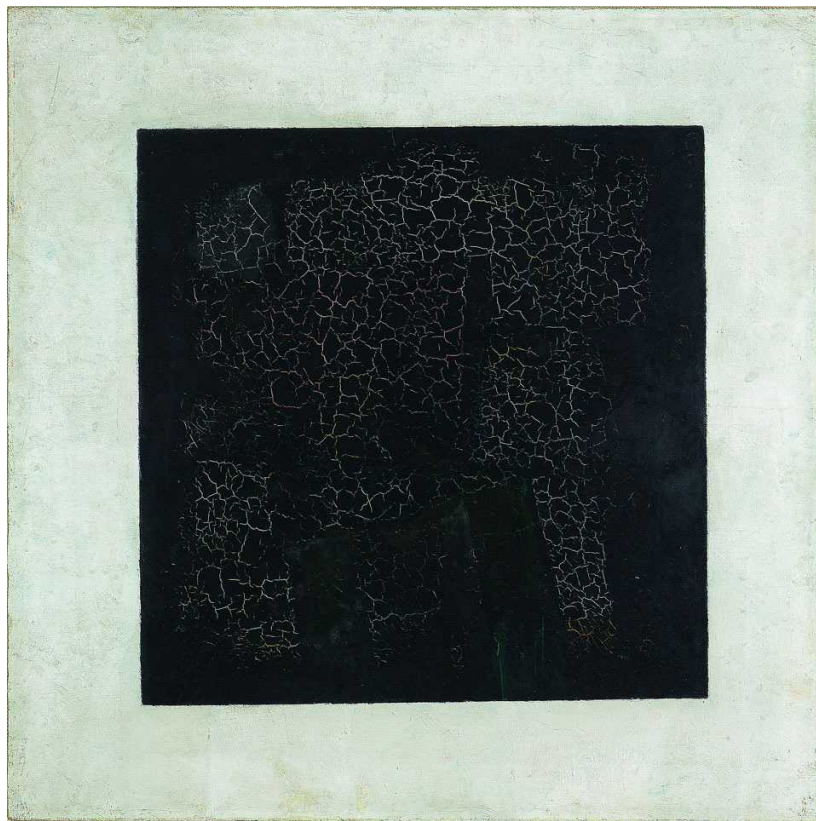


Fig 4. *Black Square* by Kasimir Malevich's (1915).

Kasimir Malevich was a Russian artist born in Kiev on February 23rd, 1879 (died 15th May 1935). His work was well-known for having a significant influence on the development of abstract art in the 20th century, that influence being the concept *Suprematism*. Suprematism is a form of expression that ignores the world around us,

taking no influence from nature, no form nor colour, allowing the viewer to focus purely on exactly what they see “the supremacy of pure feeling” (Tate, 2014). Using his form of expression Malevich created his piece ‘*Black Square*’, which is exactly what the title says it is, a painting of a black square. Malevich’s idea of total abstraction is further emphasised through the choice of using only the colour black. Black is often associated with the idea of abstraction, it represents a void, similar to blackness of space as there are little to no objects to redirect light back into our eyes. Even in brightly lit room you would still see a black square “*After absorbing all the colours of the light spectrum, a black object ‘reflects’ back to us a blank face*” (Tamayo n.d).



Fig 5. Moon and Half Dome, original photograph by Ansel Adams (1960)

Ansel Adams is one of the most well-known 20th century American photographers, for his iconic black and white photographs of US National Parks. His photographs have a very influential power to them, controlling how people view the natural world and his desire to protect its beauty is maintained through his work (Pound, 2023). Moon and Half Dome is just one of many of Adams black and white photographs but this photo in particular plays with the idea of abstraction; by using the blacks of the late afternoon shadow he can capture where the shadows cut parts of the light out, leaving black voids across the photograph. Ansel also positions himself so that the moon is near the top of the rockface. The highlighted moon, and top of the dome creates a relationship between the two, showing the impressive height of the rockface as if it's almost touching the moon (The Ansel Adams Gallery, 2021). If Ansel had taken this photograph in colour, it wouldn't have the same effect because shadows and light don't create the same level of contrast when colour is involved. By choosing to work in Black and white, Ansel has simplified his way of working and how the photograph looks, allowing him and the viewer to feel the sense of tranquillity from abstraction (La Force, 2009; Tate, n.d).



Fig 6. *Guernica*, Oil on canvas by Pablo Picasso (1937)

Pablo Picasso was a Spanish painter, sculptor, printmaker, ceramicist, and stage designer born on October 25th, 1881 (died on April 8th, 1973). To this day Picasso is known for being one of the greatest artists in history (McCully, 2018). Picasso's *Guernica* adopts his cubism style, depicting the 1937 bombing of the Basque town of Guernica by Nazi air force. The piece uses sharp fragmented shapes to create a sense of terror and anguish (The Museum of Modern Art, n.d.b). Picasso uses a monochrome colour palette to further emphasise the sense of terror and anguish; white representing the purity of the people and animals, whilst the contrasting black background represents the absence of hope, and death evoking an emotional response in the viewer (Hussain, 2021).



Fig 7. *Ghost Coral Variation*, Laser cut paper by Rogan Brown (2020)

Rogan Brown is a British Artist based in France whose work embodies innovative ways to create sculpture. Brown meticulously brings natural forms to life using paper (Contemporary Collective, n.d.). For this piece Brown used white paper as a way of communicating the detrimental effects that global warming and man-made pollutants have on the earth's coral reefs (Brown, n.d.). White is often used as a symbol for hope, but it can also be a symbol for death (Winsor and Newton, n.d.); white representing the colour the coral goes when it dies, hence the name 'Ghost Coral Variation'; ghosts are often depicted as white, being devoid of life and colour. The use of the colour white is also fixed result because of the material he uses. The white paper is used to simplify the organic forms of nature and the abstraction of colour intensifies the depth

in the layers of the piece though shadow. Using just white, Brown can simplify the natural world for the viewer to understand (Brown, 2019).

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