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BA hons Illustration

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Exhibition Title: The 'F' Word

Ways of perceiving: The curation of an Imagined Exhibition.

'The F word' is an exhibition I have curated to protest sexism and the corruption that still exists within art, politics and society to this day. I decided on the title 'The F word' to express how the word 'feminism' can almost be too 'scary' to talk about amongst men and 'non' feminists alike. As stated in the book *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*: 'It Would be naïve and wrongminded for feminist thinkers to see the movement as simplistically being for women against men.' (Hooks, 2000, P.9). I would like to use this platform to exhibit the feminist movement as something everyone can engage with. The place I would hold this exhibition is the Tate Liverpool as I have visited the gallery on many occasions, its large rectangular rooms can be easily split into different areas in which the visitor can immerse themselves. I also like the idea of holding it in one of the many Tate galleries as they have been home to many powerful women's artwork such as Cindy Sherman and the Guerrilla girls. I would like to keep the walls and flooring in my space very simple, it is important to keep the audience drawn to the artwork and nothing else, adding too much decoration can make the area quite fussy and overcrowded. I would like to split my exhibition in to 3 areas: the first area showing famous artwork from very popular feminist artists, Barbara Kruger and Mary Beth Edelson. The second area is dedicated to body positivity and celebrating the natural female body. Finally, I would like to put the largest most striking exhibit at the end of the exhibition as the 'showstopper' piece. I decided on 'The Dinner Party' by Judy Chicago as it is large and striking installation sending the exact message I would like to share, celebrating women and proving all feminism is not to slander the male existence.

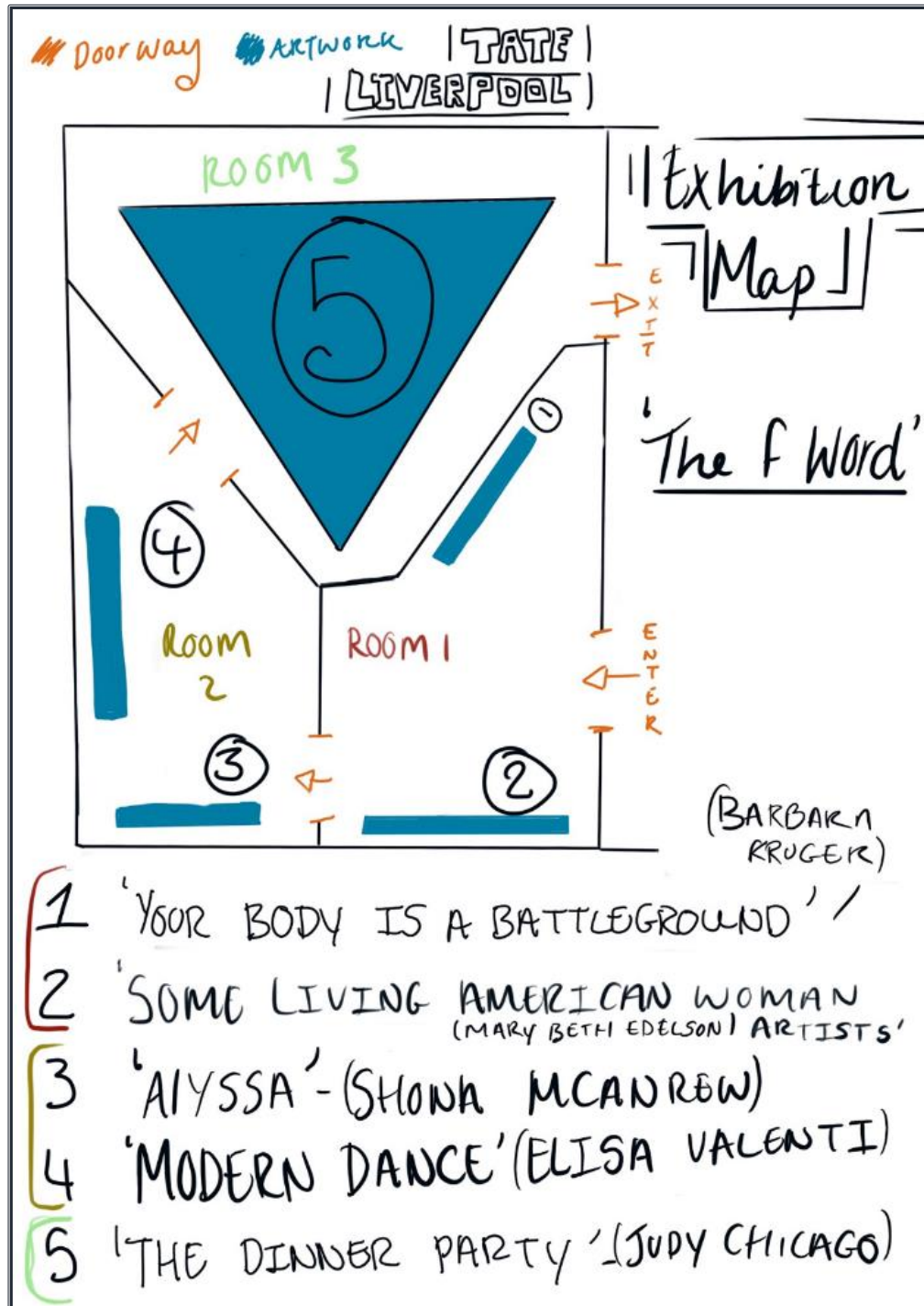


Figure 1: Exhibition Map (created on procreate 27/04/2020)



Figure 2: Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground), [silkscreen on vinyl], Barbara Kruger 1989.

The first piece of artwork you would come across when entering the exhibition would be 'Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground)' by Barbara Kruger. I chose this piece as I believe the first artwork should be bold, striking and clearly show the message the exhibition is attempting to convey. 'Half of the woman's face is white on black; the other half is black on white, juxtaposing an internal division that presumably lies within her.' (Brzuzy and Lind, 2008, P.13). Kruger gives a strong message expressing the struggles that women often face internally, being made to feel like they must strive for perfection to fit in with society. 'One of the central concerns of early second-wave feminism was with the misrepresentation of women in the fantasy images circulated by the media.' (Thornham, 2007, P.84). The way women are misrepresented through the media is still a huge issue to this day despite decades of protest.



Figure 3: *Some Living American Women Artist*, [cut and pasted prints with crayon and transfer type on printed paper with typewriting on cut and taped paper], Mary Beth Edelson 1972.

The second image I have chosen to display is 'some living American women artists' by Mary Beth Edelson, who was one of the pioneers within the feminist art movement. 'Mary Beth Edelson's best known and most widely distributed work may be *Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper* (1972) in which she replaced and framed Christ and his disciples in Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* with photographs of more than 80 women artists.' (Griefen, 2019). One of the most important parts of the feminist movement is celebrating incredible women, women who have fought for success despite inequality. 'Mary Beth's collage is modest in scale, but it has a kind of energised participation with the faces of the women artists obviously cut out and posted over those of the disciples, interlopers to the party.' (Moore, 2016). I chose this piece to display in my exhibition as I would like to make it a celebration of women and the fight against inequality, I find it extremely important to distribute a positive message and educate those who believe the feminist movement exists only to calumniate men. This piece alongside Kruger's 'Your body is a battleground' will be displayed in the first room amongst a clean black and white colour palette.



Figure 4: 'Alyssa', [Acrylic on canvas], Shona McAndrew, 2019.

The second area of the exhibition is dedicated to celebrating the female body. 'Although Female attractiveness was once epitomized by a plump body shape, the contemporary ideal, at the close of the twentieth century, empathised a slender body.' (Wykes and Gunter, 2005, P.7 – 8). Many feminists and body image activists are fighting the idea that you need a specific body shape to be beautiful. My first image 'Alyssa' by Shona McAndrew is a colourful representation of a natural body. It is extremely important to celebrate a healthy, natural and realistic body image as the media can create a very unrealistic representation of what a 'good body' looks like. 'Epidemiological research has indicated that women's preoccupation with food and body shape is widespread, while the incidence of eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia is on the increase' (Wykes and Gunter, 2005, P.1). the misrepresentation of the 'perfect' body has caused a huge spike in eating disorders around the world, especially within young people.



Figure 5: 'Modern Dance' [Acrylic on canvas] Elisa Valenti, 2019.

Keeping with the body positivity theme, the next image I have chosen is 'Modern Dance' by Elisa Valenti. 'It's always a good time to celebrate and promote body positivity, as we still largely live in a culture where one narrow standard of "beauty" is pushed on us everywhere we look.' (NYC Gallery Promoting Body Positivity with New Contemporary Art Exhibit "Body Beautiful" - GirlTalkHQ, 2019). I have decided on this particular image as the artist is extremely passionate about promoting body positivity and loving the skin you're in, On her website she gives a brief introduction to why she has gone down this route, 'I grew up in a time when eating in public was shameful, stomach rolls made you unworthy, and shopping for clothes was traumatic. I grew up before being plus size was normal. My work reflects the images I wish I had seen—beautiful, luscious women doing ordinary things, just like everybody else. They are a reflection of my own battle with body image and my journey to mental health.' (Valenti, 2020). I find it interesting that the artist has had her own struggles with body image which she unveils in her work. The room displaying 'Modern dance' and 'Alyssa' will be completely white, I would like the room to bright and inviting with a modern feel to reflect on the more contemporary pieces in the room.



Figure 6: *The Dinner Party* [Mixed Media] Judy Chicago, 1979.

‘Judy Chicago’s installation *The Dinner Party*, the most monumental work of the 1970’s feminist art movement, has been praised, damned, celebrated, and denounced since its debut in 1979.’ (Gerhard, 2013, p.1) The huge installation is a perfect example of celebrating incredible women. ‘Three large tables (Each forty-eight feet long) are arranged in a triangle. thirty-nine places are set for a grand dinner party for women’ (Gerhard, 2013, p.1) The visitor is able to walk around the large triangular exhibit and learn about a variety of important figures, ‘Each place setting commemorates a women of historical significance, and each features an oversized china plate carved and glazed in the shape of a vulva or butterfly, designed to represent the women commemorated’ (Gerhard, 2013, p.1). The incredible installation is full of detail that the visitor can look at from all angles. The room will be completely dark with a spotlight illuminating and putting all focus onto the main attraction.

Overall, the exhibition I have curated should have a more positive feel to it despite the negativity that can sometimes be associated with feminist protests. I want to share the feminist movement in a different light that can attract a variety of people, not just feminists. I carefully chose 'The F word' as my title as it is short, witty, and leaves the audience wanting to find out more. Each piece of artwork I have selected from a range of talented female artists highlights the important message I would like to give without being too forceful. 'Masses of people think that feminism is always and only about women seeking to be equal men and a huge majority of those folks think feminism is anti-male. Their misunderstanding of feminist politics reflects the reality that most folks learn about feminism from the patriarchal mass media' (Hooks, 2000, p.1) The prime aim of the curated exhibition is to dismiss any misconceptions about feminism and to share that there is so much more to the movement than just striving equality in the workplace. The movement also focuses on defeating many other serious issues such as sexual harassment, rape, reproductive rights and body shaming. Most importantly feminism is a celebration of the female body and mind thriving despite the challenges they face daily. 'Come closer and know first hand what the feminist movement is all about. Come closer and you will see: Feminism is for everybody' (Hooks, 2000, introduction.) Feminism can be celebrated by all, if looked at in a completely different perspective.

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