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Programme of Study: Photography in the Arts

Module: ADAD4019

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Word Count: 1530

Representation

For this Exhibition I'm looking at going against stereotypes. Things like this are important to talk about now as many people are still scared about being themselves because it doesn't fit the people's norm around them. In the exhibition I am going to be looking at Cindy Sherman, Claude Cahun, Juno Birch and Nan Goldin. I am also going to be talking about representation, Queer art and gender roles/ women's history with photography. By doing this, it will then show what the work of the artists that I have chosen represent to me and also to other viewers. In addition, I'll be talking about where my exhibition is being held and how and why I am displaying the artwork the way I am.

I am using the Mission Gallery as my layout as I feel like it's not too big but not too small, most of the pieces of art I have chosen are small making the space perfect. One of the things within 'going against stereotypes' is how it has changed throughout time, so I am going to be showing the photographers in time order so then you can see the difference between the photos. This will show how people show/represent themselves and others like them throughout time and how that changed depending on what their audience was and how common it was for people like them to be producing art to be seen. The photos also then go from being black and white to colour showing the development of photography as well.

Going against stereotypes is the main correlation between the artist, with the majority of them going against what was normal at the time such as gender roles and sexuality.

One theme that goes throughout the pieces of art and photographers is representation. Representation means 'the act of presenting somebody/something that shows or describes

something'(Oxford Learners Dictionaries,2021). The artists are representing a concept/ thing that is important to them and that should be shown to the world. Claude Cahun, Nan Goldin and Juno Birch representing the LGBTQ+ community and Cindy Sherman representing females in the creative arts industry. 'Meaning is thought to lie in the object, person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions like a mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world'(Hall, 1997), and creative arts are these artists language and way of speaking about something important to them. They use objects or aspects of the art to help them show what they are representing. These objects can be different things to everyone as 'We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves'(Berger,2008, p.9), people will relate to these pieces of art depending on whether they are in a similar situation or not. Over time these meanings could change for people as people become more accepting of people and aspects of their lives.

LGBTQ is also a big part for the majority of my chosen artists. In the time of when Claude Cahun was producing work, a visual code was developed; it was open to interpretation but signified queerness (Ingram,2018) which meant that people were able to show themselves without getting into trouble. Queer art mainly started in the '60s and '70s; when people were starting to come out, with then art about HIV and Aids being made in the '80s and '90s(Green,2019). Over time, queer art has been more accepted, with now having many projects and exhibitions just for queer artists, where they can express their feelings.

Gender roles is an important topic with some of the artists, particularly Cindy Sherman and her *Untitled Film Stills*. When photography first came around, women from higher class would use photography as a hobby, but it was rare for women to become publicly successful. It was

more common that women would be in front of the camera and not behind it (Latimer and Riches, 2013). Throughout the first half of the 20th century women were still having careers in photography, with more women doing photography than when it originated. But when photography was becoming a medium of fine art, photographs taken by women were rarely put in galleries and exhibitions (2013). Over time this has changed with many female photographers becoming successful and have become well-known names in the photography world.

For the artist, I decided to have a large time frame between the oldest artworks to the newest artwork so then it showed how people would represent themselves in a different time period with stricter laws and opinions than what we have today. Over time, pieces of artwork like these have been accepted into the art world and women have been accepted into the more professional side of photography.

Claude Cahuns work is the oldest from my chosen artworks. I am going to be using multiple of their staged self-portraits. Claude Cahun was the first photographer I thought of when I came up with the concept of the exhibition because they very much went against stereotypes of the time ('20's). Even just the look of their photos was different from other photos of the time as staged/theatrical looking photos were uncommon.



Fig 1. *I am in Training don't kiss me*, Claude Cahun, 1927



Fig 2. *Claude Cahun in Barbe Bleue*, Claude Cahun, 1929

The photos that Claude Cahun produced were very different to what other photographers of the '20's produced. One of the main photos I have chosen shows Cahun dressed up as a weightlifter, which is a very masculine profession, but with the way Cahun has dressed up and is sitting with their legs crossed it give a feminine look and feel to the image. These images are the smallest of my chosen photos; being about 11cm x 8cm (Reverseau,2013), which is expected as they are the oldest photos, but they have some of the best detail out of all of the photos.

Cindy Sherman is a female photographer whose career took off in the late '70s and early '80s with her *Untitled Film Stills* where she posed as stereotypical female characters of the times (Koetzle,2017, p.526).



Fig 3. *Untitled Film Stills* #21, Cindy Sherman, 1978



Fig 4. *Untitled Film Still #6*, Cindy Sherman, , 1977



Fig 5. *Untitled Film Still # 92*, Cindy Sherman, 1981

The three that I have chosen are some of my favourite photos from the series, with how the photos are framed and with Sherman not looking at the camera, they very much look like they could be a frame from a movie. At the time, many films would have been made by men and showed females how they see them and not how females see themselves. Having these

photos as self-portraits and being made by Sherman, it gives it more of a feminine point of view. It was also uncommon for a female to be in mainstream photography at the time.

Nan Goldin is a female photographer who gained recognition in the late 70s with photos she took of the LGBTQ community (McCord,2017). The series of photos I am going to be looking at are photos she took of Jimmy Paulette getting ready for a parade.



Fig 6. *Jimmy Paulette after the parade*, Nan Goldin, 1991



Fig 7. *Misty and Jimmy Paulette in a taxi*, Nan Goldin, 1991

These are some of Goldin's later works. At the time that these were taken drag queens and people in the LGBTQ+ community were not still full accepted. If Goldin took these at the start of her career; in the late '70s, they would probably have been seen as wrong. This work addresses the lives of drag queens and LGBTQ+ community and what they went through just to be themselves. These will stand out against the others as their colour and not perfectly lit like the others.

Juno Birch is a trans drag queen who creates sculptures with similar looks to how she does her own makeup. In many of her sculptures she puts male features onto female bodies/faces which very much represents her being a drag queen and a trans woman.



Fig 8. *Alien Beauty*, Juno Birch



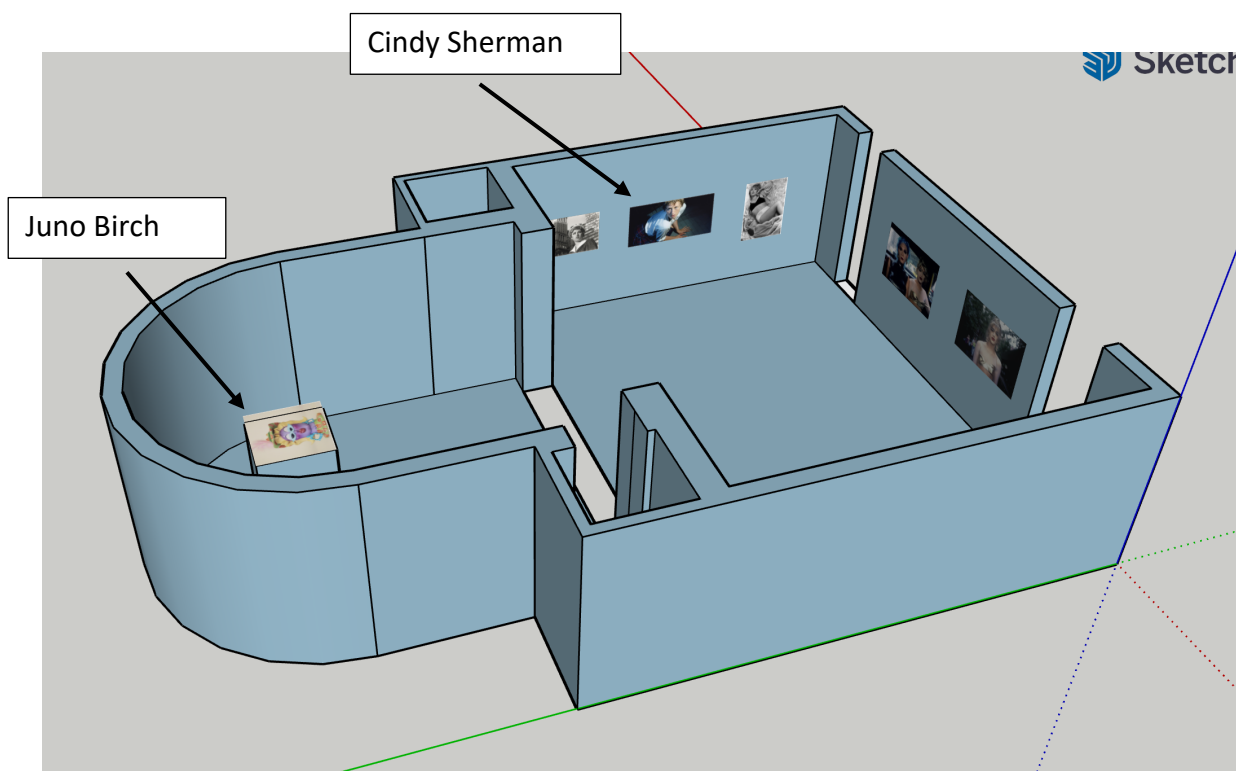
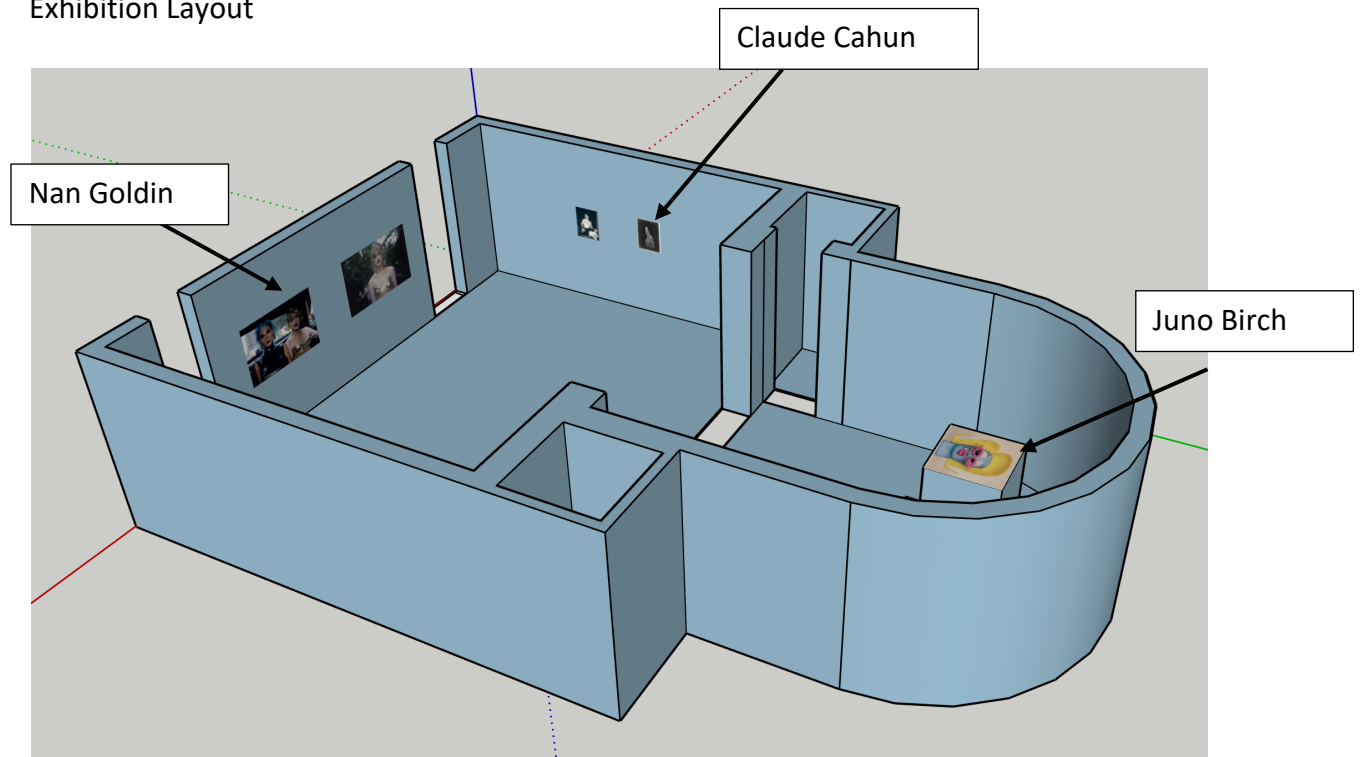
Fig 9. *Lady Disco*, Juno Birch

With these, Birch is very much representing herself and not being shy about it, which helps with spreading the message about being yourself. With these sculptures being on the small side, its useful with having the bright colours as they then stand out against everything else. These will also stand out against the other pieces of artwork as the colours used are very bright and being abstract busts.

These artists are wanting to show how they want themselves, or others to be seen. It's better to be individual than just copy everyone else because it's popular. By representing for people like yourself; especially if you are part of a society that isn't fully accepted, it will make them feel seen and noticed. Over time, the meaning of these pieces might change, depending on how the world views people that are different and don't fit the norm that shouldn't really exist.

People will become more comfortable with themselves and not think there is something wrong with them because they are slightly different to other people.

Exhibition Layout



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