

What Implications do Relativism and Otherness have upon Artist's Responsibility of
Published Art?

Ashley Price [1703125]

Word Count: 6390

Julia Lockheart

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA (Hons)
Illustration University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea 18th of December 2019.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	2
Summary	3
Introduction	4
Chapter I	7
Chapter II	18
Chapter III	28
Conclusion	35
Bibliography	36
Additional Reading	41

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Mapplethorpe, R. (1978) *Self-Portrait with Bullwhip* [Photograph]. Available at: <https://collections.lacma.org/node/222918#14>

Figure 2: Fuseli, H. (1781) *The Nightmare* [Oil on canvas]. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-01-26/henry-fussell-painting-the-nightmare/10746944>

Figure 3: Kruger, B. (1981) *Untitled (You Construct Intricate Rituals)* [Photograph, gelatin silver print]. Available at: <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/35582>

Figure 4: Eisenstaedt, A. (1945) *V-J Day in Times Square* [Photograph]. Available at: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=e0gEAAAAMBAJ>

Figure 5: Varini, F. (2007) *Three Ellipses for Three Locks (The Barrage Circles)*
Available at: <http://www.varini.org/varini/08agra/dos2007/003-agr-07.html>

Figure 6: Banksy, (2002) *Pulp Fiction* [Stencil]. Available at: <https://www.myartbroker.com/artist/banksy/pulp-fiction/>

Figure 7: Harvey, M. (1995) *Myra* [Acrylic on canvas]. Available at: https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/aipe_marcus_harvey_myra.htm

Through understanding the principle of relativism, as exemplified by otherness, the responsibility of an artist can be better explained. Without the discussion of the relativistic philosophy, the assumed responsibility the artist would undertake would be undefined and unclear.

What Implications do Relativism and Otherness have upon Artist's Responsibility of Published Art?

This essay aims to analyse in-depth and answer the query, "What Implications do Relativism and Otherness have upon an Artist's Responsibility of Published Art?"

Firstly, it is important to establish what each component of the question means.

Relativism is the principle that individual truth can be authentic without being the only correct perspective. A person's otherness can be defined by the attributes that make them differ from the expected norm or majority. When bringing these two factors into this critique of art one must ask whether it is the responsibility of the artist to avoid causing offence within their work. To hold the artist accountable for the responses garnered may sound ideal but it could come at the cost of artistic freedom, increased censorship and limited subject matter.

My personal interest in the subject matter of relativism was piqued by the artwork *Three Ellipses for Three Locks*, otherwise known as 'The Barrage Circles', painted by artist Felice Varini (2007). This piece is the first anamorphosis I had personally viewed, initially sparking confusion as I found the image, or lack of, nonsensical given my inability to view it from the precise vantage point. It stands as a physical representation of the relativistic principle; that whilst one may commonly accept a single viewpoint as fact, it would be naïve to dismiss all other interpretations as nonfactual. To further illustrate this point, other artworks shall be critiqued to evaluate relativism through time so that both space and time are explored. In

response, the photograph entitled *V-J Day in Times Square* is a point of interest due to its evolving connotations and understanding.

The topic of otherness has always been important to me as I grew up feeling unrepresented because of my own differences. I had noticed from an early age that mainstream media failed to exemplify any qualities that were outside of their perceived norm. I noticed that the artwork in the galleries I visited most commonly depicted subject matter that was Christian; invariably straight, white, respected men and submissive women. This has had a strong impact as I felt abnormal and alone due to the failure to recognise an existence outside of the established confines of acceptability. To represent otherness the artwork of Robert Mapplethorpe, a prominent homosexual photographer who focussed upon the erotic subculture dubbed BDSM, standing for bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism. Other artists that shall be discussed will be Henry Fuseli and Barbara Kruger as they have strong similarities with the work of Mapplethorpe and incite discussion on the topic of othering. The power and pleasure represented through this image is supported by Foucault (1978, p.44).

I feel the responsibility of an artist is a topic that has personal relevance and importance to my chosen field. In my personal projects, I have often had to gauge the appropriateness of my work. The balance that must be struck between freedom of expression and creating appropriate discussion can be delicate and difficult to determine. To assess and understand the expected responsibility I shall investigate the response to controversial artists. Such artworks include Banksy's assorted graffiti upon the Palestinian wall and *Myra* as painted by Marcus Harvey. The concept of responsibility of the artist is further blurred by the aforementioned relativistic principle

as it creates ambiguity surrounding the specifics of how an audience may interpret a singular piece of art. To further illustrate the relationship between relativism and responsibility the topic of otherness shall be evaluated. Through othering, we can better understand how different the views of distinct groups or individuals can be and thus exemplify their role through relativism on an artist's responsibility and better conceptualise the differences that can be found within an audience.

Chapter I



Fig. 1: *Self-Portrait with Bullwhip*

The Othering of a group has been historically well documented; oftentimes an “other” would be persecuted by the “norm” that it is held against. As “Jacques Derida has argued, there are very few neutral binary oppositions. One pole of the binary, he argues, is usually the dominant one” (Hall, 1997, p.235). Homosexuality remains a controversial topic and many who identify as, or are categorised as homosexual are ostracised by the dominant oppositional group, heterosexuality.

To discuss the subject of Otherness thoroughly it is important to consider the context behind the art, the content itself and the response it elicits. Visually, this photograph is shocking. It's unabashedly confronting our expectations of what is appropriate in the world of art. However, it's purpose is just as important as it's aesthetic.

The day that this image was captured Mapplethorpe had been conducting a photoshoot wherein one male inserted his fist into another male's anus. Mapplethorpe created this self-portrait in response to his model's comment, "you wouldn't want to be considered somebody exploiting people and not being able to exploit yourself" (Mapplethorpe, 2016). In an effort to dissuade the belief that he was exploiting homosexuality and sadomasochism, Mapplethorpe photographed himself in an obscene and, for the era, extreme position.

The staging of this particular photograph has Mapplethorpe himself staring directly at the camera, creating the feeling that the viewer has intruded upon him. The polished floorboards provide a hazy reflection of his portrait and create a series of lines that lead to the vanishing point and directs the viewer to the subject, his anus. The whip is used as a leading line to draw the audience into his act.

Just under a decade prior to the exhibition of this photo, New York City was met with violent uproar from LGBT+ groups in the face of police raids. These riots, dubbed the Stonewall Riots, were instrumental in bringing about change both legally and socially for those who identified as homosexual.

The provocative nature of Mapplethorpe's work is unquestionably intentional. Mapplethorpe's career coincided with the political climate of New York City, the location of his birthplace, home and career. The topic of homosexuality was fuel for

his career and he was able to launch his work and political statements into the limelight, due to the outrage and curiosity of the public. With thanks to the timing and location of his emergence into the art world, “his work also claimed its place among the art resistance of its time, expressing the urgency of a political climate in which cities were failing, lives were being lost to Aids, and government response was to turn a blind eye or to be openly antagonistic” (Moore, 2015).

When Mapplethorpe created and published this photo, a part of his *Portfolio X* series, some years prior to homosexual relations being decriminalised in New York and shortly before the AIDS epidemic. Not long after the portfolio’s creation, the collection was exhibited at the Entrance Gallery at LAICA under the title *Bondage and Discipline*. In response to both the artworks and a confrontation with the curator, Robert Smith, a long-time supporter of the exhibition space, Marcia Weisman, decreased her involvement with the gallery. This took place when Weisman visited the exhibit and, despite being quoted in saying that she was “pretty much game for anything,” she expressed her view that the imagery was upsetting (Linkof, 2012). This incident proved to be the beginning of the controversy that would surround the portfolio when in exhibition.

To understand Mapplethorpe’s intentions with this image his motivations and circumstances must first be analysed. Mapplethorpe was raised under Catholicism and his work often incorporated and commented upon religious themes and beliefs (Tate, 2019). Mapplethorpe’s pose is mapping onto other, well-known historical symbols and artworks; the imagery within this photograph is reminiscent of both the Devil and a small selection of mythological creatures. Within Catholicism, the Devil, also known as Satan or Lucifer, is a fallen angel who defied

God. The term devil originated from the Greek word διάβολος; meaning accuser and slanderer (Hartman, 2003). The impish nature of the image invites comparisons between Mapplethorpe and that of a fallen angel; as Mapplethorpe turns his back within the photograph one sees him physically turn away from his religious upbringing and, through his sexuality, defy the teachings of God. His open and brazen use of homosexuality through his obscene photography is interpretable as an attempt to defy and refuse to adhere to those religious teachings.

Mapplethorpe's character is similar to that of other, mythological creatures and demons. Notably, there is a likeness between his presentation in the image and that of a satyr; a beast from Greek mythology that is characterised as a lustful, mostly-human animal with the ears and the tail of a horse. Whilst Mapplethorpe does not directly present himself with any horse-like features there are many aspects of his clothing and presentation that link him with the promiscuous and "good-for-nothing, prankster Satyrs" (Litchfield, 2007). The leather chaps are often associated with cowboys, an animal herder traditionally on horseback. The whip appears tail-like and his hairstyle is not dissimilar to that of a classically depicted satyr.

In Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* the subject of the punctum and studium is addressed. The term studium is used to describe the contents of the image similar to that of the mise en scene: the composition, subject matter, lighting, and method or style of work are all components of the studium that creates the image. In contrast, "punctum is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole-and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me" (Barthes, 1980, p.27). The

punctum is the small detail that transforms the photograph from being interesting to being thought-provoking and having a lasting impact.

In the case of *self-portrait with bullwhip* the punctum is interpretable as more than one, singular detail. If the photograph is compared to similar imagery found in the pornographic industry then the punctum would be his facial expression. When posing for such photographs wherein the model is in an equally obscene and shocking pose one can expect an expression that suggests genuine engagement with the act. Contrastingly, Mapplethorpe chose to stare challengingly at the camera, creating a unique tone for the image that could otherwise appear to be purely pornographic. This proved to be an important component of the image during the exhibition's obscenity trial held against Dennis Barrie, director of Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center (1990), for displaying the controversial work of Mapplethorpe. Furthermore, Judith Reisman, the sole individual called to testify as an expert witness for the prosecution in the trial, felt the lack of emotion displayed by the subject meant that the images were pornographic and not artistic.

Additionally, by looking at the viewer Mapplethorpe challenges an audience's expectation that a nude and exposed subject should be vulnerable. Art is typically at the mercy of the viewer; vulnerable to the audience's critiques of the subject, composition and even, at times, the creator. However, Mapplethorpe's turn to the audience challenges their anticipated dominance and power over him. His direct gaze gives the impression that the viewer is engaged in the act, regardless of their willingness of individual participation. His stare creates an air of superiority over you through his persistent eye contact, similarly to how animals perceive and engage with threats to assert dominance. This also subverts the roles of submission and

dominance within the context found between a viewer and artwork. Similar to the depiction of a Satyr is that of the Greek god Pan; later depictions of Satyrs had their animalistic features resemble a goat instead of a horse as they became confused with Pan. Pan is affiliated with fertility due to his strong association with sex. The connection between the aesthetic appearance of each of the bestial and powerful mythologies and their association with sexuality and deviance are characteristics that are undeniably similar to Mapplethorpe's self-portrait and reputation.



Fig. 2: *The Nightmare*

The Nightmare is an oil painting that was created by Henry Fuseli in 1781. Sat atop a woman that appears to be asleep, and presumably dreaming, is a demonic-looking incubus. The term incubus comes from the Latin *incubare* meaning “to lie upon” and *incubo* translating to “nightmare” (Oxfordreference, n.d.). An incubus is a mythological creature that was first referenced as a creature that had sex while it’s victims are asleep. The painting was inspired by art, science and folklore and created a new interpretation of sexual imagery. (Tate, 2019.)

When first exhibited the artwork received mixed reviews and understandings. One critic from the Morning Chronicle states that the subject of the painting “is unfit for furniture or reflection” whilst simultaneously commending the work for having “strong marks of genius” (1782). Similarly, Mapplethorpe’s self-portrait is brilliant from a design point but the subject matter is controversial.

There are comparisons to be drawn between both *The Nightmare* and Mapplethorpe’s self-portrait and notably the similar reactions they both garnered. Firstly, both Fuseli and Mapplethorpe works depict a sexual situation in a new light. Where *The Nightmare* broke new ground with its subject matter depicting a mythological creature conjuring a hidden sexual dream for the woman, Mapplethorpe undertook the same task by bringing homosexuality and sadomasochism to the forefront of his artwork with his self-portrait. These similarities between Mapplethorpe’s *Self Portrait with Bullwhip* and the painting *The Nightmare* are not necessarily intentional but, regardless of if it is a coincidence or deliberate reference, it highlights the unmistakably calculated symbolism within the imagery. Both artists depicted a challenging sexual image wherein the subject itself confronts the audience directly; the incubus stares over its shoulder at the audience and Mapplethorpe shares a near-identical pose.

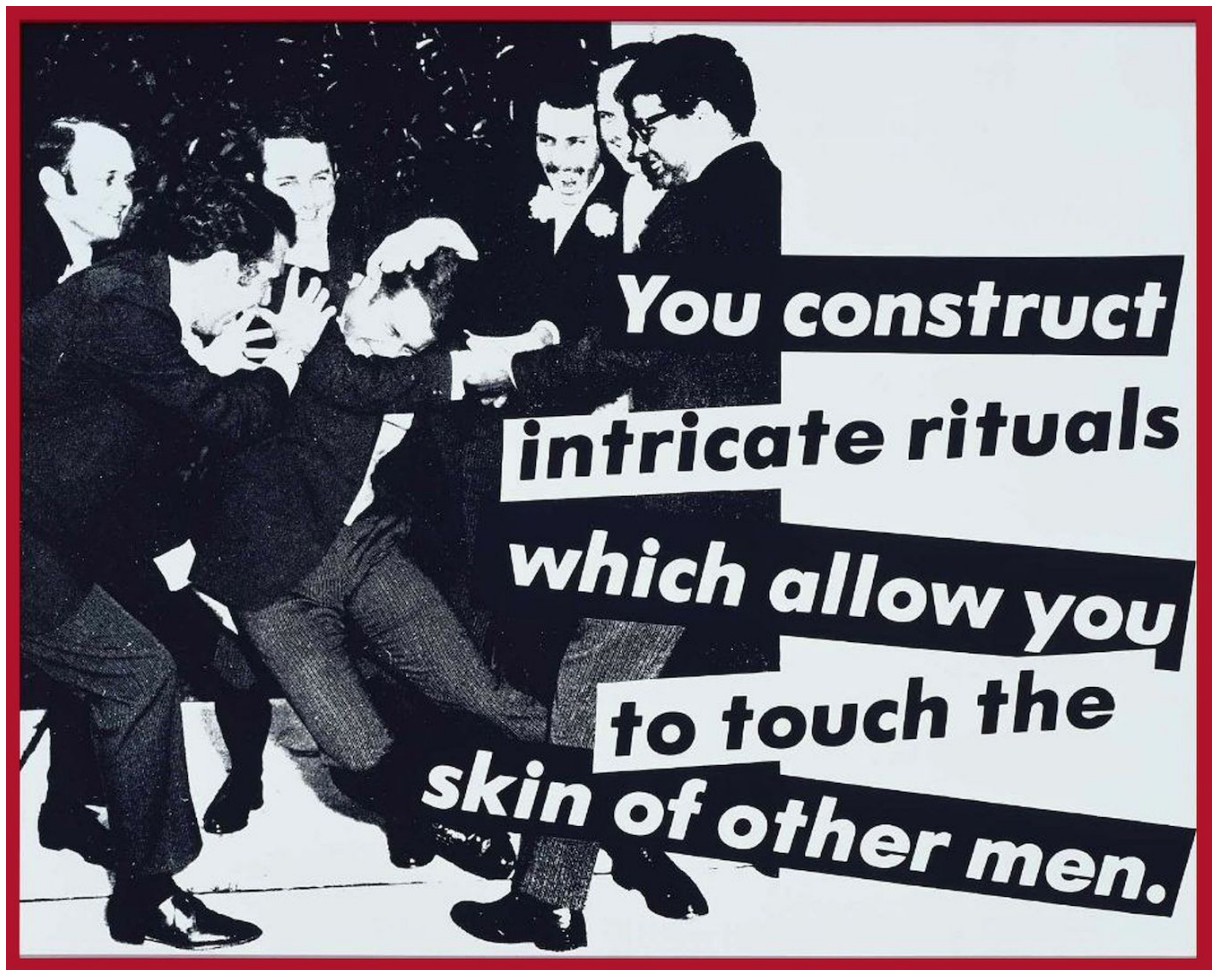


Fig. 3: *Untitled*

Barbara Kruger is a collagist whose work mainly consists of red added to black and white photographs overlaid with text. She uses her work to make political statements that address the public or other entities directly. There is a stark contrast between the content of Kruger's work and that of Mapplethorpe's despite their visual similarities. Whilst both artists work within the photographic medium and notably lack colour there is an absence of any additional likenesses. However, they do have one further attribute in common: they both create a commentary upon the subject of otherness through their artistry.

When Barbara Kruger created the work *Untitled* in 1980 it had been two years since the first exhibition of Mapplethorpe's self-portrait. At the time of publication,

Mapplethorpe's photo is glaringly sexual in contrast to the photos you will find of other men. Kruger's work comments on the "intricate rituals" men will create to justify touch and engagement with each other so as not to appear gay. Despite their vast differences, their art both comments upon the topic of homosexuality as seen by the public.

Throughout her career, Kruger "used the language of the media to criticize, for more than four decades, aspects related to the consumer society and gender relations". She used her artwork to either highlight or subvert the male-dominated narrative, mimicking the design style of tabloid newspapers to compose a feminist question.

Kruger's work confronts the social understanding that males who engage, socialise, and have contact with other men are inherently gay. The commentary supplied with the photograph directly participates with the discourse surrounding the perception and othering of homosexuals within the male community. Within the male gaze, as defined by Andy Simmons, "the woman is visually positioned as an "object" of heterosexual male desire" (Cubero, 2012, pp.315-325). Kruger has created an image that showcases the evolution of this ideology into hypersexualising beyond the woman. The gaze has created such a hyper-sexualised view that men can no longer engage in touch and intimate interactions without a sexual commentary being applied.

Both Kruger and Mapplethorpe make a comment on being publicly viewed as homosexual. However, where Kruger is focussed on the repercussions of an anti-homosexual society that straight men faced, Mapplethorpe's image does exactly

what the aforementioned straight men create rituals to enjoy: the freedom to interact and engage as they please.

Chapter II



Fig. 4: *V-J Day in Times Square*

Relativism is a broad philosophy that follows the principle that a singular statement can be simultaneously true and false depending upon the perspective and context one can apply. Relativism has been described as “what appears on the surface to be an absolute claim (the ascription of a monadic predicate) is really a relational claim.” Furthermore, ‘Ascription of a monadic predicate’ can be described as the cause relating to a singular subject, (Stalnaker, 2014).

The publication of the photograph, *V-J Day in Times Square*, was on the 27th of August 1945, a week after the photograph had been taken by Alfred Eisenstaedt. This image reflects the principle of relativism as it, unintentionally, has evolved to bear a new understanding through time.

To accompany the image was the text “In New York's Times Square a white-clad girl clutches her purse and skirt as an uninhibited sailor plants his lips squarely on hers” (Life, 1945). The image had also been situated between additional photographs depicting girls who had been “[swept] off their feet” by sailors (Life, 1945). At the time of printing, the consensus was that this image captured a romantic moment between two individuals; however, with a shift in what is societally accepted, it has come to be a depiction of sexual assault. As Greta Friedman, arguably the most credible woman who has claimed to be the nurse depicted, stated in an interview, “it wasn't my choice to be kissed. The guy just came over and kissed or grabbed [me]” (Redmond, 2015). As sexual assault is defined by its lack of choice from the victim, Greta's statement directly contradicts the previous understanding of the photograph.

The photograph was taken in New York City on August 14th, the same day that victory was declared over Japan as they surrendered, signifying the end of World War II. As described by Michael Kimmelman, the image “combined all the right elements: the returning soldier, the woman who welcomed him back and Times Square, the crossroads that symbolized home” (1997). At first look, this is an accurate description of the photograph and, understandably, this interpretation was considered the truth of the image.

From a technical standpoint, this photograph’s composition is dynamic; it uses one-point perspective which focuses the viewer’s eye on the kiss and, in particular, the sailor’s dominant role in the pose. It lines up the meeting of the two streets in the background with the meeting of the couple. The white cap of the sailor and the black arm that locks the woman in place is reminiscent of the overlapping and intertwining of the yin yang symbol suggesting a symbiotic balance. Due to the framing of the image, the word “BOND” is significant as the only legible piece of text contained within the image. This text echoes the bond found within the figurative pose itself. Although the image depicts a crowd gathering on the streets of New York to celebrate the end of the war, the composition is constructed in such a way that the viewer’s attention is focused on the duality of the couple involved. These components within the image connote romance and happiness found in celebration; one immediately expects this to be a couple on first reuniting now that the war is over.

On further inspection of the image, one sees the elements of the pose that directly contradict the initial interpretation of a romantic and celebratory embrace. Whilst the deconstruction can read the pose as personifying dominance and

subordination through both interpretations they differ from being acceptable to a representation of sexism. Where Mapplethorpe subverted expectations of dominance, this image played into the stereotypes; placing the woman as weak and compromising to a strong man with complete control. The vast differences between the two images include the staging; wherein Mapplethorpe is in a studio, composed and preplanned, Eisenstaedt's photograph happens during a spontaneous event, the result of a man's instinctive and unthought response. This is, perhaps, a part of the reason for the acceptability of the two photographs: where Eisenstaedt's image is a documentary, not necessarily reflective of the photographer's politics, Mapplethorpe's is calculated and provoking through his intention and removal of an acceptable facade to veil the meaning.

The sailor has positioned himself to dominate the female through his tight grip on her waist, leaning into the pose so that she appears off-balance, and his arm locked around her head awkwardly. In contrast, the nurse appears similar to a ragdoll; off-balance, mid-stride, arched-backwards, and compliant. This connotes to the viewer a submissive nature regarding the nurse, a view that is supported by the inherent understanding of the stereotypical role held by women in the 40s.

During World War II women were permitted to enter the workforce as there was an increasing and paramount need to replace the working men who had joined the military efforts. Additionally, approximately 350,000 American women joined the armed forces, working as nurses, truck drivers, and within clerical roles. The propaganda utilised to promote these roles to women showed women undertaking traditionally masculine work. Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, suggested that those who created the propaganda, the experts and print material

producers, shaped the role within which women were expected to confine themselves to for the sake of femininity (1963). However, in spite of the initial encouragement to enter the workforce and their showcased ability to work in place of men they were often fired from their jobs once the war had ended (Khan Academy, n.d.). From this act one can infer that, despite being permitted to work, there had been no change in the societal view of women; women were still to be subservient to men and their role remained that they existed for men.

With this understanding in mind, the interpretation of the image as romantic makes sense. The depiction of the nurse as subservient and accommodating to the man's will is expected and, given this attitude, romantic. This understanding extends to explaining Eisenstaedt's decision to seek out and photograph this moment. In explaining the photograph and the actions leading to this event Eisenstaedt stated, "I saw a sailor running along the street grabbing any and every girl in sight" (1985). In the current social climate, by contrast, such a sight would be abhorrent. Within recent decades a great shift has occurred in regards to how society views women. With the prominence of feminism leading to increasing women's rights, and what is considered acceptable behaviour by men in regards to women has changed. Women are now viewed as equals and, with their newfound equality, are allowed the option of consent and choice when engaging with men. To grab and kiss women in a similar manner would have legal repercussions as this would constitute sexual assault.

With the rise of technology and social media, society has on a global scale, had increasing avenues to promote new ideologies. These developments have given feminism newfound momentum, entering into what is now dubbed "fourth-wave feminism". Whilst these online perceptions do not always replicate one's experiences

of the real-world, they are not to be dismissed as they share valuable insight into the goals and aspirations of those campaigning. In 2015, whilst only 18% of Americans polled considered themselves a 'feminist', a large portion 85%, did believe in "equality for women" (Kliff, 2015).

Through the use of social media various demonstrations were born, one of the most notable being the Me Too movement. This particular campaign was created through the use of the hashtag '#MeToo' with the aim of bringing awareness to the subject of sexual abuse, particularly against women, by sharing individual stories and experiences. Whilst the use of the term dates as far back as 2006, it only became viral in 2017 following a tweet from celebrity Alissa Milano, stating "If all the women who have ever been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, then we give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem" (Chuck, 2017) (Ohleiser, 2017). From the prevalence of this campaign, it can be inferred that the value of a woman's consent has dramatically increased.

Interestingly, the '#MeToo' movement collided with George Mendosa, the man verified as the sailor in the photograph by photo analysis expert Richard M. Benson. A statue had been created, *Unconditional Surrender*, that brought the pose to life. In February of 2019, shortly after Mendosa's death, the statue had been graffitied with the phrase "#MeToo" in red covering the length of the woman's left leg" (Griffith, 2019). The decision to paint it upon Greta Friedman's likeness connotes that she is the victim in sexual assault announcing her story. This directly conveys the message that the imagery has newfound meaning that denounces its previous romantic connections.

Coupling this change in perspective with the statements made by both the photographer and the subjects, this image has become representative of archaic beliefs centered around the romanticisation of violation against women. Such statements reported by those involved were; from the photographer (Eisenstaedt, 1969), “just as I'd hoped, the sailor came along, grabbed the nurse, and bent down to kiss her,” in comparison, the sailor George Mendosa, asked to explain why he kissed a stranger “I had a few drinks,” (2013), and the victim Greta Friedman commented during an interview “That man was very strong. I wasn't kissing him. He was kissing me” (Callahan, 2012). Each individual has, in the time since the photographs original publication contributed testimony that illustrates the narrative of sexual assault. It should be noted that it took time for these statements to be published as in Eisenstaedt's haste on 14th of August, 1945, he failed to obtain the names or any identifying or anecdotal information from either subject (Lewis, 2016). This lead to a slow process wherein the subjects came across the photograph and then attempted to verify their claims amongst others who asserted themselves as the sailor and nurse involved.



Fig. 5: *Three Ellipses for Three Locks*

In contrast to the previous image, *V-J Day in Times Square*, which represented relativism in relation to public perception over time, this image of *Three Ellipses for Three Locks* (2007) by Felice Varini, is representative of relativism through its use of perception in space. Painted upon the locks located in Cardiff Bay Barrage, this artwork adds a new layer of meaning to site-specific art. Where the phrase is usually defined as a “work of art [that] is designed for a specific location, if removed from that location it loses all or a substantial part of its meaning” (Tate, n.d), this artwork as a whole is only viewable from such a specific location in that if the viewer moves the image becomes distorted and disconnected.

Varini’s work often consists of abstract shapes painted across large spaces. Each painting has a singular, specific vantage point from which the image can be viewed as a whole. His use of abstract shapes allows for the focus of his work to

remain upon the perspective rather than the subject. When viewing the artwork from a different vantage point one will see stretched lines instead of a singular, cohesive image. Due to the visual differences in the subject, based upon the vantage point the audience experiences it from, it is possible for separate viewers to have completely different experiences of the physicality of the art. Consequently, the theory of relativism is presented in a tangible and physical way through the medium itself.

In 2018 a painting by Varini, *Concentric Eccentric*, incited controversy as locals were distressed to find the Carcassonne fortress, a building with great historical significance, to be covered in bright yellow paint. The residents of the area described the work as “an affront to the region’s prized heritage” and a petition was created for the removal of the artwork, garnering over 1,800 signatures (Samuel, 2018). This strong opposition is in stark contrast to the public response to Banksy’s graffiti despite their similarities, being painted on the exterior of buildings.

In creating his art Varini disregards the concept of an eventual viewer, beginning instead with his own viewpoint to create the work. On the surface, his method of working directly opposes the relativistic principle his art encapsulates as it focuses solely upon his view. However, it could be argued that this is in accord with an understanding that, given the concept of relativism, not all differences can be accounted for. No single vantage-point will work for all able-bodied and disabled individuals without extreme measures and thus to anticipate the viewer’s perspective would not be conducive to the production of art.

Through the selected work key themes including the perspective of time and the perspective of space have been discussed. Where *V-J Day In Times Square*

accidentally creates a commentary on relativism through its evolution over time

Three Ellipses for Three Locks conveys the same message through its intentioned use of space.

Chapter III

An artist's responsibility is an ambiguous principle built upon the idea that an individual is accountable for that which they create. An individual's responsibility stems from their accountability for the outcomes of their actions. As defined by philosopher Howard Richards, "that which a person causes, that which can be attributed to him as his action, is (if there are no excuses) that for which he is to be held accountable" (1966). A creator is responsible for the effect their creation has upon that with which it engages.

The assumed responsibility of the artist varies depending upon their practice, their audience, their subject matter, and their environment. At times, the responsibility of the artist is intrinsically linked with the art itself as the purpose of the art directly contradicts the socially acceptable guidelines. An example of such a case would be in medicinal illustration wherein the artist has a responsibility to draw factually so as to maintain the functionality of the project. These different factors can create confusion surrounding the culpability and accountability of the artist.

When an artist displays or publicises their work they can expect criticism from both the media and public alike. This is particularly true of artwork that is displayed in prominent places and domestic areas. As highlighted regarding Mapplethorpe, some artists anticipate this criticism and use it to garner attention for their art. However, just because it is effective for the artist does not mean it is responsible,

moral or even legal.



Fig. 6: *Pulp Fiction*

In response, Banksy is a graffiti artist primarily based in England. His work typically promotes a political agenda commenting upon current events. Whilst his work is popular, typically adding large amounts of value to the space that he uses, it often is created illegally, falling into the category of vandalism. Banksy does not typically seek permission from those who own the space he uses and thus violates societal and moral codes.

In spite of Banksy's choice to remain ethically ambiguous in his appropriation of public space, he has garnered large support from both the public, media, and governing bodies. One painting, estimated to be worth £300,000, was painted over by employees at Transport for London. The company stated that in covering the graffiti they had made London "a safer and more pleasant place for passengers" as

graffiti “encourages crime” (Stones, 2007). A local business owner had a conflicting view, firstly confirming the original work’s popularity with the statement that “people used to come from all over to see it and photograph it” before describing those who removed the art as “an idiot” (BBC, 2007). From this, we can infer that the choice to remove the Banksy was not popular amongst the local residents, small businesses, and tourists alike. This difference of opinion shows a disconnect between artist, locals and larger corporations and removes some of the clarity surrounding the notion of whether it was appropriate for Banksy to paint it on that site.

Further, in 2009 a work by Banksy was removed by Hackney Council. Whilst the council later stated that this was an error it seems likely that the error was not that they wished to remove it but that they did not allow the owner of the property adequate chance to refuse (BBC, 2009). This supports the previously established disconnect between the populace and the governing bodies.

The reason behind the favourable opinion towards the Banksy artwork held by the public appears to be exemplified by the differences between the work Banksy produces and *Concentric Eccentric* as previously discussed. Although both artworks are displayed in similar locations, on the sides of man-made structures, they have vast differences. On the surface, it would be reasonable to assume that the Varini artwork would be considered much more appropriate given that the artwork was created to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the City of Carcassonne being declared a World Heritage Site [La Depeche, 2018], whereas the work of Banksy receives no such formal commission or platform in association. However, it proves that the legality of the artwork does not strongly affect the favour in relation to public opinion. The act of painting upon a building with strong cultural significance appears to be a

greater factor of importance for community sentiment than that of the official authorisation. The choice to cover a historical building in his artwork is one that proved to be a source of controversy for Varini.

This is further illustrated by the response to Banksy's 9 stencilled graffiti works placed upon the 435-mile long wall that separates Palestine from Israel. Having painted a range of works depicting various scenes from tropical islands to a quaint lounge, Banksy's work used the placement to convey his political motivations. However, this placement proved to be the source of controversy as a Palestinian man, after describing the artwork as beautiful, told Banksy that, "We don't want it to be beautiful, we hate this wall. Go home" (Jones, 2005). The negative response the artwork received is solely based upon its location, not its stylistic or aesthetic attributes. This implies that when it comes to public assessment an artist should consider and anticipate how their artwork interacts with the political and social climate of its environment.



Fig. 7: *Myra*

Whilst both Banksy and Varini's artwork were controversial for their placement, other artworks have faced controversy purely due to their content and creative methods. One such example would be *Myra*, a painting created by Marcus

Harvey in 1995. The artwork depicts Myra Hindley, as pictured in her arrest photograph, a woman who gained infamy as one of the two killers responsible for the Moors murders. The painting is created from the handprints of children, a conscious decision made by the artist to portray an “image of innocence absorbed in all that pain” (Lack, 2008). This particular component used in the construction of the image exacerbated the public outrage as it showed an awareness from the artist as it draws from the nature of her crimes.

The public response to the artwork was further provoked as in late 1997 it was hung in the *Sensation* exhibit. This exhibit featured several highly controversial and hotly debated artists such as Jake and Dinos Chapman, Damien Hirst, and Tracey Emin (Saatchi Gallery, n.d). By placing these artworks, that each has individual claims to infamy, together they acknowledge their controversial nature but fail to address or correct any perceived wrongdoing. Unlike with the work of Banksy and Varini, these artworks have been appropriately placed in an art gallery, a space that is specific to public display. However, through public opinion, one can infer that there is a responsibility to the sensitivity of subject matter that is expected of the artist regardless of placement. By failing to reform any aspect of their makeup, the action of the artist, and through the gallery’s endorsement, thus connotes a strong conviction in their social and political stance.

In contrast to the social responsibility that; given the public response to the aforementioned artworks, artists are expected to shoulder there is a widely held belief amongst artists that the most important responsibility is the art itself. As explained by philosopher Jacques Maritain, “art by itself tends to the good of the

work, not to the good of man. The first responsibility of the artist is toward his work” (1960). The integrity of the artwork is the primary responsibility held by an artist.

Through comparisons between the responses garnered by each artwork, and the philosophy held by and towards artists, one can infer that there are several responsibilities that an artist is expected to shoulder. These responsibilities vary in their specific nature as the different social climates held in each unique environment limit the ability for the conception of rules and fixed responsibilities. Whilst there is ambiguity towards the particulars of the responsibility, an overview of the elements that are most important can be determined. The artist, to be responsible, must be aware of the purpose of their work, the delicacy of their topic and the social and political climate.

Upon reflection, the expectation of an artist's responsibility is intrinsically linked with the individual's viewpoints, as shaped by their experiences. With these unique viewpoints, the concept of relativism is inseparable from the realm of otherness. When evaluating the differences that exist between the categorisations of people the topic naturally lends itself to the principle of subjective truth. To elevate the portrayal of a singular individual and subsequently conflate it as representative of an entire group, inadvertently serves to misrepresent individuals within that category. Where homosexuality, as explored by both Mapplethorpe and Kruger, has exemplified this disconnect between subject and portrayal, additional forms of othering such as through race, class, and gender, can cause similar disparity.

With this relativistic understanding, the notion of accounting for all possible interpretations of any given artwork becomes an impossible burden to place upon the artist. Instead, the concept of an artist's responsibility is not to assume all potential reactions and opinions but to best convey their message in a method that is appropriate. To determine what is considered appropriate or not, the artist must undertake the task of researching the potential response by investigating the subject matter and environment of the artwork to a reasonable degree. To define that which is reasonable is ambiguous and remains a part of the artist's responsibility. It is through inaccurate assessment of the prospective relationship between the public and their artwork, as exemplified by Varini's *Concentric Eccentric*, a misguided celebration of a historic landmark that instead was interpreted as an insult to the importance of the site.

Bibliography

BBC News, (2007) *Iconic Banksy image painted over*.

BBC News, (2009) *Blur Banksy is ruined by mistake*.

Val Cubero, A. (2012) *I shop, therefore I am: Barbara Kruger. Cuestiones de Género: de la Igualdad y la Diferencia*, (7), pp.315–325.

Callahan, M., (2012) *The true story behind the iconic V-J Day sailor and 'nurse' smooch*.

Chuck, E. (2017) *#MeToo: Alyssa Milano promotes hashtag that becomes anti-harassment rallying cry*. Available at:
<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/sexual-misconduct/metoo-hashtag-becomes-anti-sexual-harassment-assault-rallying-cry-n810986> [Accessed Dec 2, 2019].

Hartman, L. F. "Devil." *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 4, Gale, (2003), pp. 704-705. *Gale eBooks*,
<https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/apps/doc/CX3407703193/GVRL?u=walam&sid=GVRL&xid=1b17bb1c>. [Accessed 2 Nov. 2019.]

Eisenstaedt, A. (1985) *Eisenstaedt on Eisenstaedt*. New York: Abbeville Pr., p.74.

FamousPictures (2013) *VJday Times Square Kiss*. Available at:

<http://www.famouspictures.org/vjday-times-square-kiss/> [Accessed 03 Dec. 2019]

Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality*, Volume. 1: An Introduction. New York: Random House p.44.

Friedan, B., (1963) *The Feminine Mystique*. London: London : Victor Gollancz Ltd.

Griffith, J,(2019) *Statue based on famous WWII 'kissing sailor' photo spray-painted with '#MeToo'*. Available at:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/statue-based-famous-wwii-kissing-sailor-photo-spray-painted-metoo-n973151> [Dec 3, 2019].

Jones, S.,(2005) *Spray can prankster tackles Israel's security barrier*. The Guardian. ISSN 0261-3077.

Khan Academy. (n.d.) *American Women and World War II*. Available at:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/rise-to-world-power/us-wwii/a/american-women-and-world-war-ii> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2019].

Kimmelman, M. (1997) *Assignment: Times Square*. The New York Times Magazine, [online] p.43. Available at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/18/magazine/assignment-times-square.html> [Accessed 24 Nov. 2019].

Kliff, S., (2015), *Only 18 Percent Of Americans Consider Themselves Feminists*.

Available: <https://www.vox.com/2015/4/8/8372417/feminist-gender-equality-poll>

[Accessed Dec 2, 2019].

Lack, J., (2008) *Jessica Lack on Marcus Harvey's portrait of Myra Hindley and censoring art*. The Guardian. ISSN 0261-3077.

Lewis, D., (2016) *The Woman in the Iconic V-J Day Kiss Photo Died at 92, Here's Her Story*. Available at:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/woman-iconic-v-j-photo-died-age-92-heres-her-story-180960435/> [Dec 4, 2019].

Linkof, R. (2012). *Robert Mapplethorpe's X Portfolio and Los Angeles, 1978 |*

Unframed. [online] Unframed.lacma.org. Available at:

<https://unframed.lacma.org/2012/12/03/this-is-going-to-be-exciting-robert-mapplethorpes-x-portfolio-and-los-angeles-1978> [Accessed 30 Oct. 2019].

Litchfield West, M. (2007) *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* p.293

Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures. (2016). [film] Directed by R. Barbato and F.

Bailey. America.

Maritain, J. (1960) *The Responsibility of the Artist* University of Michigan: Scribner.

No Author, (2018) *Carcassonne. Les bandes fluo de la Cité ne plaisent pas à tout le monde*. La Depeche.

Ohleiser, A. (2017) *The woman behind 'Me Too' knew the power of the phrase when she created it — 10 years ago*. Available at:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2017/10/19/the-woman-behind-me-too-knew-the-power-of-the-phrase-when-she-created-it-10-years-ago/>
[Accessed Dec 2, 2019].

Oxfordreference.com. (n.d.). *Incubus - Oxford Reference*. [online] Available at:

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100000633>
[Accessed 11 Nov. 2019].

Pop, A. (2015). *Antiquity, Theatre, and the Painting of Henry Fuseli: Classical Presences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.117

Redmond, P. (2015) *Interview with Greta Zimmer Friedman*. [online] Veterans History Project. Available at:

<http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.42863/transcript?ID=sr0001> [Accessed 3 Dec. 2019].

Richards, H., (1966) *The Social Responsibility of the Artist*. *Ethics*, 76(3), p. 221

Samuel, H. (2018) *Locals see red over 'fluorescent yellow' circles covering Carcassonne fortress in the name of art*. The Telegraph. ISSN 0307-1235. Available at:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/05/11/locals-see-red-fluorescent-yellow-circles-covering-carcassonne/> [Accessed 06 Dec. 2019]

Stalnaker, R. (2014) *Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stones, A., (2007) *Banksy's £300,000 film noir mural blacked out*. The Telegraph. ISSN 0307-1235.

Tate. (2019) *ARTIST ROOMS: Robert Mapplethorpe: Censorship and Freedom of Expression* | Tate. [online] Available at:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/artist-rooms/learning/resources/robert-mapplethorpe-broken/artist-rooms-robert-mapplethorpe-0> [Accessed 30 Oct. 2019].

Tate. (2019). *Gothic Nightmares: Fuseli, Blake and the Romantic Imagination: Room 1* | Tate. [online] Available at:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/gothic-nightmares-fuseli-blake-and-romantic-imagination/gothic> [Accessed 11 Nov. 2019].

Tate. (n.d.) *Site-specific – Art Term*. Available at:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/site-specific> [Accessed Dec 4. 2019].

Additional Reading

Barthes, R. (1980) *Camera Lucida* New York: Hill and Wang

Feldman, E.B., (1998) *On the Rights of Artworks and Other Ethical Issues in Art Education*. Journal of Aesthetic Education, 32(1), p. 81.

Grinberg, E. (2017) *The real story behind “An American Girl in Italy”* Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/30/europe/tbt-ruth-orkin-american-girl-in-italy/index.html> [Accessed: Dec 4. 2019]

Hubbard and Kitchin, (2011) *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE

Jagannath, T. (2018) *The Significance of Public Art to its Space: People’s Spaces, People’s Choices*. Available at: <https://www.newgeography.com/content/005916-the-significance-public-art-its-space-people-s-spaces-people-s-choices> [Accessed Dec 6. 2019]

Richards, H. (1966) *The Social Responsibility of the Artist*. Vol 76, No 3. Pp.221-224
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

Simpson, D. (2019) *Crowds, vandals, chaos: what happens when Banksy sprays your wall?* Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/jan/16/help-ive-been-banksied-how-we-coped-with-banksy-street-art-fame> [Accessed Dec 5. 2019]

Tusa, J. (2008) *Art in public spaces should be decided by the people* Available at:
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/artblog/2008/may/11/artinpublicspacesshouldbe> [Accessed Dec 5. 2019]