

An Exhibition 'Take To The Streets' Exploring Sexual Harassment

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I intend to curate an exhibition featuring five pieces of work by five different creators. I will be exploring the theme of sexual harassment which has escalated recently. A Wales Online article announced that nine assaults were reported within 5 hours here at Singleton Park in Swansea (Lewis, 2021). I intend to hold my exhibition through the main street in Swansea city centre, with a rectangular shape to it. My reason for this is to create a reality effect. Walking through a busy street is certain for catcalling and harassment. It would make the audience realise that this is where it happens. Putting people in a day to day situation would hopefully put into reality the severity of the problem, for the audience. Obrist (2014) states "Exhibitions need not only take place in galleries, need not only involve displaying objects. Art can appear where we expect it least.", this suggests exhibitions can be different and bold, exploring in real life and public spaces.

I will be looking at the Psychogeography concept and how this has influenced my reasonings for my exhibition. Psychogeography explores the effect of a geographical location on our emotions and behaviour, in order to explore this Marxist theorist Guy Debord invented the term in 1955 (Tate, 2020).

In 1985, Hakim Bey, an anarchist theorist, decided that the way to take action against modern life was through the creation of temporary autonomous zones (TAZ). Which are "socio-political tactics of creating temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control" (Souzis, 2015). It is questioned why only a temporary zone? (Bey, 1991) states in the text *Taz: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* that "Like festivals, uprisings cannot happen every day – otherwise they would not be "nonordinary". He is saying that events like festivals cannot happen within daily life or they will become the 'norm' and not feel so special. So, by curating my exhibition in a public space, outside of a typical gallery space I am creating something exciting and going against the 'norms' of an exhibition. It is most likely to be remembered by the visitors this way, this is my aim.

Mischel (1966) emphasised the importance of the social learning theory and how it highlights gender socialisation, the process in which girls and boys learn, from their environment, feminine and masculine identities. For example, young boys are given toys such as guns, army soldiers and toolboxes to play with. Whereas, girls are given dolls and fluffy animals. It is clear that boys are taught to be strong and aggressive, it could be argued that this creates a superior position in mens' minds. From such a young age, it is clear to have a huge impact on them, so no wonder why we are and have been living in a patriarchal society.



Fig. 1 *Three Weeks in May Recreation* (2014)

Three Weeks in May Recreation (2014) is a re-enactment of *Three Weeks in May* (1977) which was a three week performance on the theme of rape in Los Angeles. The piece is a large scale map of the city, in which was marked with a stamp the daily police reports of rape in the city (Lacy, 2021). Inspired by this installation, the visitors would recreate this idea by stamping on the map of rapes in Swansea, to make the exhibition interactive. It would also underline the reality of the issue, further conveying my message across. Lacy (2021) questioned herself when she was going to exhibit her work in a gallery, “Why would you put it on the wall of a gallery? Do it outside in the public space because public space is where it will have the most impact”. This is the reason I chose to hold mine in the public space, hopefully making a huge impression. This will be placed along the right hand side of the exhibition facing inwards.



Fig. 2 'Untitled' by Jasmine Holt

The purpose of Jasmine Holt's installation in my exhibition is to create power. I would place this at the beginning so that people can enter and pick up a placard and walk through the exhibition as if in a protest. This would be so powerful. I want the women/any victims that happen to be in my exhibition to feel strong, powerful and that they are fighting back. I would like to think that my exhibition encouraged them to push forward to start speaking up, especially if they were hesitant before. The colours used are very strong and bold, very striking to be the first thing you see as you enter. Hopefully, it would raise excitement and encouragement to 'fight back' during my exhibition.

The pure impact the feeling of a protest would make on my exhibition, and also to the public outside of the exhibition just walking on the street would be unforgettable. It would draw attention and educate people further than those in my exhibition.



Fig. 3 'Know' by Nicole Gault

One of the pieces of work in my exhibition is 'Know' by Nicole Gault. I will place it on the left hand side. This artwork is a take on a comfort blanket, which has been illustrated, collaged together and then stitched onto a blanket (Haidrani, 2019). What inspires me to include this piece in my exhibition is the theme of comfort that it gives off, acting as a comfort blanket to victims. By having a variety of pieces that give off different emotions in my exhibition, this will provoke a range of feelings for the visitors. The atmosphere at my exhibition would be very comforting. Looking at the colours of the work, they are very cool, calming colours. Blue means serene and calming and relaxing, while deep blue can signify strength and power. Pink represents femininity, sensitivity and care (Lundberg, 2019). Therefore, I believe Nicole Gault used these colours together wisely to give of a desired feeling and atmosphere. The colours here strongly contrast the bold colours of fig 2, but they don't have to contradict each other. While the people feel strong and powerful, they are also reminded that they are comforted and cared for when it comes to their experiences. That is my aim of my exhibition, the mood and feelings can fluctuate throughout, it is like a roller coaster of emotions.

Haidrani (2019) states "The play on the word 'know' was integral to the creation of the piece" meaning no means no. It is almost a relieving chant that reassures victims. One of my aims for using this piece of work in my exhibition is to actually educate people, ideally people who haven't been victims, or those who have assaulted people themselves.



Fig. 4 *What Were You Wearing On That Day?*

The exhibition 'What were you wearing on that day?' displays outfits that people were wearing when they were raped (Ejiofor, 2018). It is to highlight the fact that it is assumed that the clothes you wear determine whether you should get harassed or not. This exhibition proves that it is not the clothes you wear, some of these outfits are very basic or non 'provoking' you could say. This exhibition makes a bold statement of it is no ones fault but the rapist's.



Fig. 5 'El tendedero/The Clothesline Project'

At the end of the exhibition I will place Monica Mayer's *Clothesline* installation. In 1978, she distributed hundreds of pink pieces of paper to groups of women in Mexico City. Written on the cards was "As a woman, what I most hate about the city is" and they were asked to complete this. Most of the responses were about sexual harassment stories. She contributed these paper notes to the exhibition "New Tendencies" where they were attached to rows of string by clothes pegs (Hernández, 2019). Not only is this installation very visually striking, it educates the reader. It would be so impactful to read true stories from women. I would also like to continue the interactive theme by allowing people to write their own responses and pin them up. My aim with this is to hopefully let people open up and leave my exhibition feeling not alone with their experiences.

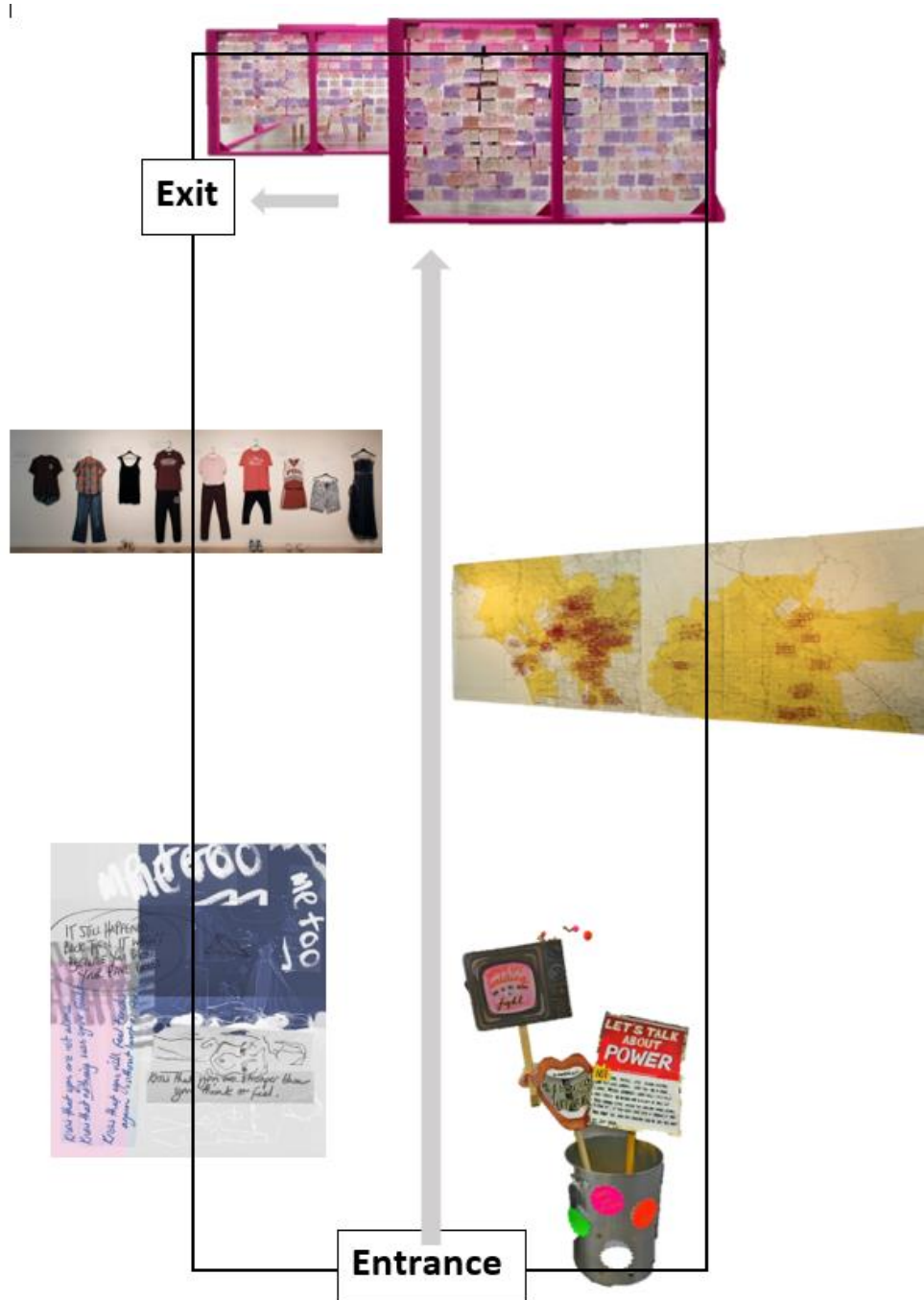


Fig. 6

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[Accessed 3 April 2021].

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Fig. 1 Lacy, S. (2014) *Three Weeks in May Recreation*

<https://www.suzannelacy.com/three-weeks-in-may-recreation/>

[Accessed 2 April 2021]

Fig. 2 Holt, J. (2019) *Untitled*

<https://www.stylist.co.uk/long-reads/sexual-assault-statistics-women-feminism-scotland-art-creativity-interviews/238947>

[Accessed 2 April 2021]

Fig. 3 Gault, N. (2019) *Know*

<https://www.stylist.co.uk/long-reads/sexual-assault-statistics-women-feminism-scotland-art-creativity-interviews/238947>

[Accessed 3 April 2021]

Fig. 4 Sprague, J. (2019) *What were you wearing on that day?*

<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2018/04/26/sexual-assault-art-exhibit-clothing>

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Fig. 5 Mayer, M. (2016) *El tendedero/The Clothesline Project'*

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Fig. 6 Eynon, A (2021) *Exhibition map*

