

Student name: **Joseff Lloyd Williams**

Student number: **1907538**

Course title: **(BA Hons) Graphic Design**

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Tutor: **Martin Bush/Jon Pugh**

Exhibition name: **Space A/Space B**

1589 words

My exhibition will be exploring the idea of confinement and space. I will be looking at the affective quality of art and confined spaces on the human experience, and exploring ideas of atmosphere, affect theory and simulation. This is a timely discussion amid the imposed reality of confinement brought on by the coronavirus outbreak. What affect does being confined to the enclosed walls of our homes have on the human experience? How will we perceive the freedom of open spaces once lockdown is lifted?

In his report, "Affect theory and the concept of atmosphere," Professor Steven D Brown states that:

"Our emotions are a response to the way we culturally perceive the world around us. They are an echo or reflection of our powers of thought that comes back to us as cultivated feeling," (2019, p. 3)

I will demonstrate the effect that "the world around us" has by influencing my audience's internal response as they perceive the exhibition experience. I will do this by separating it into two spaces, Space A and Space B. It is important that the names of the spaces have an element of anonymity. Naming the areas "Space A and B" prevents any preconceptions of what the spaces may hold as to not persuade or pre-empt an internal response before entering. The idea is to affect the audience in contrasting ways between the two spaces by having them experience the vastness of Space A, the enclosure of Space B, and then perceive a heightened sense of freedom upon re-entry of Space A.

The audience will start the exhibition experience in Space A, an open field where they can experience fresh air and freedom to roam. This will also be where the audience will wait to enter Space B. From the outside, Space B will look like a white cube, with walls that are 7 foot high x 7 foot long. The audience will enter the simulated space through a wooden door similar to the interior doors of a house. Inside, the floor will be carpeted and will have a shaded lightbulb hanging from the ceiling similar to the room of a contemporary house, but there will have no windows. This is inspired by artist Bill Viola who created a simulated bedroom space in his installation "The Sleep of Reason" (Viola, 1988). The presence of a wall affects us by producing possibilities and limitations, and enclosed walls affect us by stopping our progress (Waller, 2019). Whilst the walls of a home would usually provide comfort and safety, in Space B, walls signify limitations on our freedom. Once the audience have entered the space, the door will be locked behind them. They will not be able to leave this room for forty minutes.

Philosopher and aesthetician, Mikael Dufrenne, believed that aesthetic objects emit an "atmosphere" that elicit feelings or emotions in a viewer or listener. This feeling "completes"

the aesthetic object and “surpasses” it (Dufrenne, 1973). When discussing the ideas of Dufrenne in “Affective Atmospheres,” Professor Ben Anderson states:

“Rather than re-present a world, a perceived work of art expresses a certain bundle of spatial-temporal relations – an ‘expressed world’. Atmosphere is the term Dufrenne uses for how the ‘expressed world’ overflows the representational content of the aesthetic object as “[a] certain quality which words cannot translate but which communicates itself in arousing a feeling”” (2009, p. 79)

This suggests that the content of the “expressed worlds” conveyed in my curated pieces will be intrinsically linked to the atmosphere they create. Therefore, I have intentionally chosen to fill Space B with pieces that display confinement, anxiety and claustrophobia in order to create a similar atmosphere. Whilst my chosen pieces do not have the power to objectively assert an response from my audience in of themselves, when perceived within the simulated environment of enclosure I have already created, it is my expectation that the intensity of the pieces will be perceived by the audience more effectively.

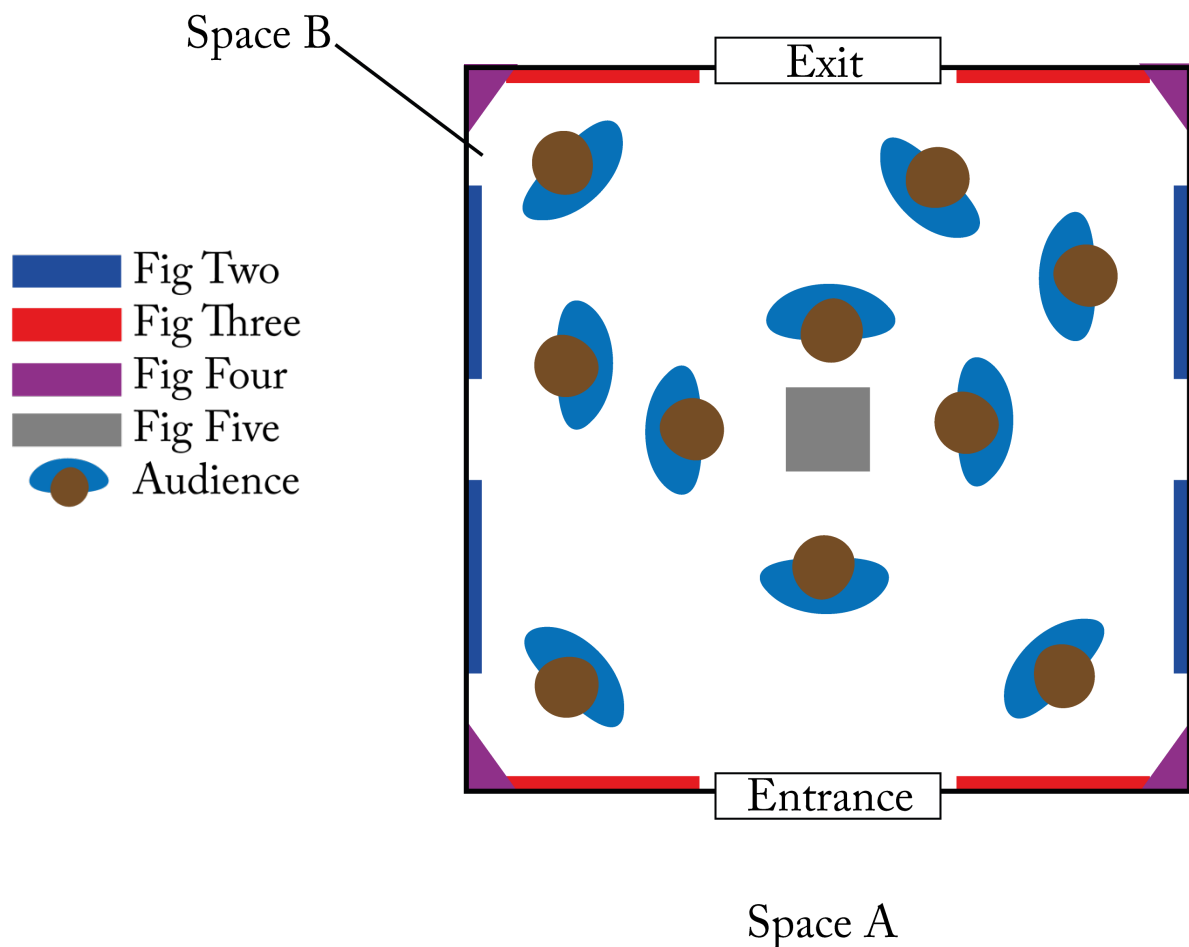


Figure One



Figure Two

The first works of art to feature in Space B are four 1.8-metre-high prints from “The Lockdown” (2020) series by illustrator Mariano Pascual. They will be divided in two sets and hung on opposing walls, two on the right and two on the left. Whilst it is the usual expectation for works of a collection to be placed together, positioning Pascual’s pieces on opposing sides will put the audience at immediate unease, and they will be unsure of where to look first.

Created during the coronavirus lockdown, “The Lockdown” expresses “some of [his] feelings during these crazy times trapped at home.” They are personally reflective of the artist’s own perception of enclosure, representing the “rooms of [his] mind,” (Bennett, 2020). The bright and uplifting colours juxtapose the distasteful objects, scattered untidily in cramped domestic spaces. I have chosen this piece because I believe the crowdedness of objects and colours in such small spaces will overwhelm the audience. The pieces will take up much of the wall space, further contributing to the perception of being in a crowded space.

In “Ways of Seeing,” John Berger explains that “The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe,” (1972, p. 8). The way in which the audience perceives Pascual’s work may be affected by what they know, remember or believe about being in the lockdown. Do these scenes evoke memories? Do they raise internal tensions? As a direct response to enclosure, I believe it is an important piece for the exhibition, as the audience may relive this experience vicariously through Pascual’s work.



Figure Three

“Kurz Davor” (2019) by Stefhany Lozano will appear in my exhibition. The title translates to “the moment before” and is a series of paintings based on the impending feelings before a panic attack. The paintings show characters confined in tight spaces. Similarly to Pascual’s work, “Kurz Davor” will feature as four 1.8-metre-high prints on opposing walls. The work is intentionally positioned so that wherever the audience turns, they are faced with images of confinement.

The represented space-time of the characters in Lozano’s imagined world is not handed to the audience objectively; they perceive it with subjectivity. Discussing her work, Lozano states that whilst the anxiety may not be completely apparent in the paintings, through the physicality and facial expressions of her characters the space of intensity will be perceived. Lozano says the audience will “get the feeling of it” (Milroy Maher, 2019). As we have established, the presence of walls produce possibilities and limitations (Waller, 2019) and the physicality of the figures pressed up against their spaces embody the feeling of entrapment and limitation I want my audience to experience.

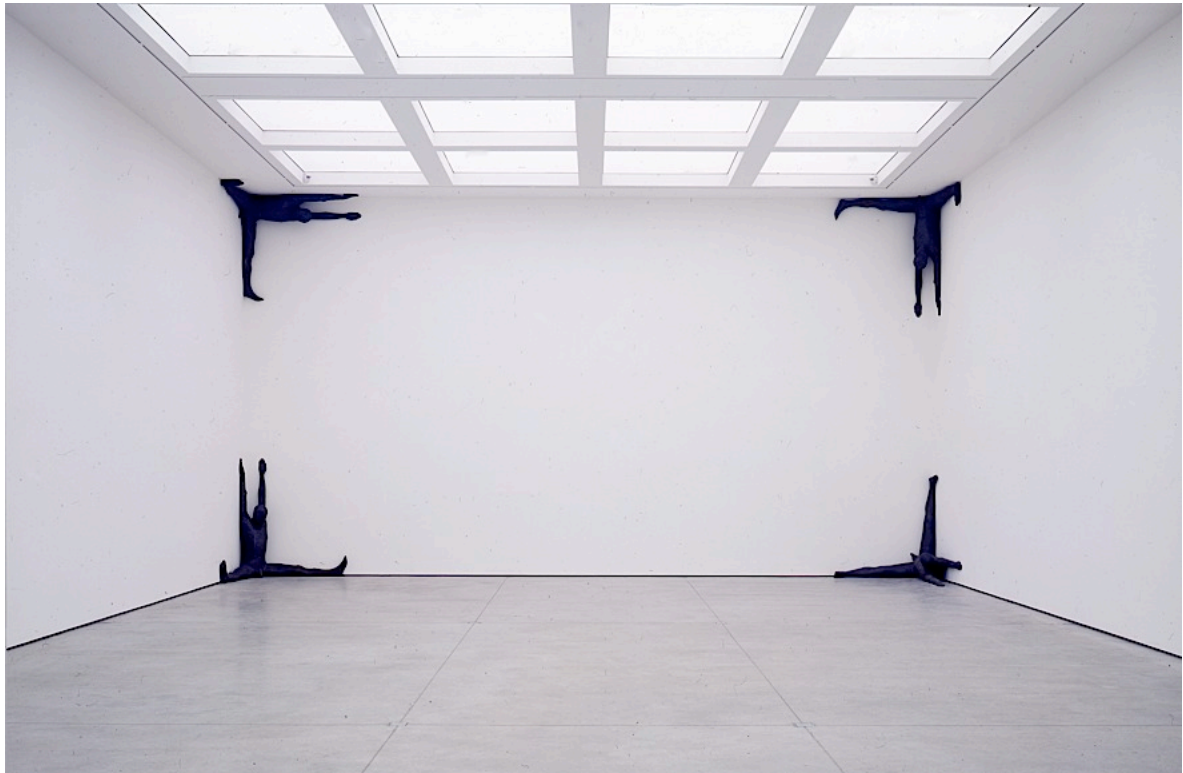


Figure Four

I have chosen to display several pieces by Sir Antony Gormley who is celebrated for investigating the relationship of the human body to space (Gallardo, 2016). In 2017, Gormley curated an exhibition of artwork from prisoners in confinement. Discussing the intention behind “Inside,” Gormley said:

“All of us as it were live within defined limits... We are all defined by our condition, by our context, but however conditioned we are our minds are always free,” (Gormley, 2017).

His sculptures from “Drawn” (2000) consist of eight cast iron figures installed in the corners of the space. They were originally made for the White Cube gallery and explore the relationship between the human body and architecture, “making the spaces of the constructed world 'felt' in unusual confrontational ways” (Gormley, 2000). I think this works well for my exhibition, as I also want to make the space of this constructed world “felt” in a “confrontational way.”



Figure Five

The second piece by Gormley to feature is his recent piece “Hold” (2020). It appears as a figure made from dark clay cradling its head between its arms, and feet turned inwards. “Hold” was created whilst Gormley was in quarantine during lockdown. For seven days, Gormley shared images from his workstation as part of a collaboration with White Cube Gallery. I will encase “Hold” in a glass case in the centre of the room. This figure is ultimately the most surrounded in the room – surrounded by glass walls, a staring audience, other works of art, the exhibition walls - I think this will evoke a strong empathetic response from the audience.

There is an element of compassionately reflecting the public in displaying this work. In a recent interview, Gormley says of this piece:

“I wanted to make this self-contained body, looking at itself, at the resource that one has within oneself.... I suppose that, for me, was trying to make an objective equivalent for the state that we're all in,” (Wills, E. 2020).

With this equivalent in mind, featuring this piece in the centre of the room puts the audience themselves at the centre of the exhibition. This enclosure is ultimately about them and their responses to it.

Once the forty minutes is over, the exit door will be opened, and the audience will be allowed to leave. They will be leaving the simulated confinement of Space B into the vast openness of

the un-simulated Space A. They will experience the fresh air and sounds of nature and hopefully a heightened experience of freedom. The affective quality of art and confined spaces is subjective to human experience, therefore, their perception to being released from the space will be subjective too. Some may leave quickly, wanting to exit the simulated enclosure as soon as possible. Some may have become accustomed to the confinement and linger to enjoy the space a while longer.

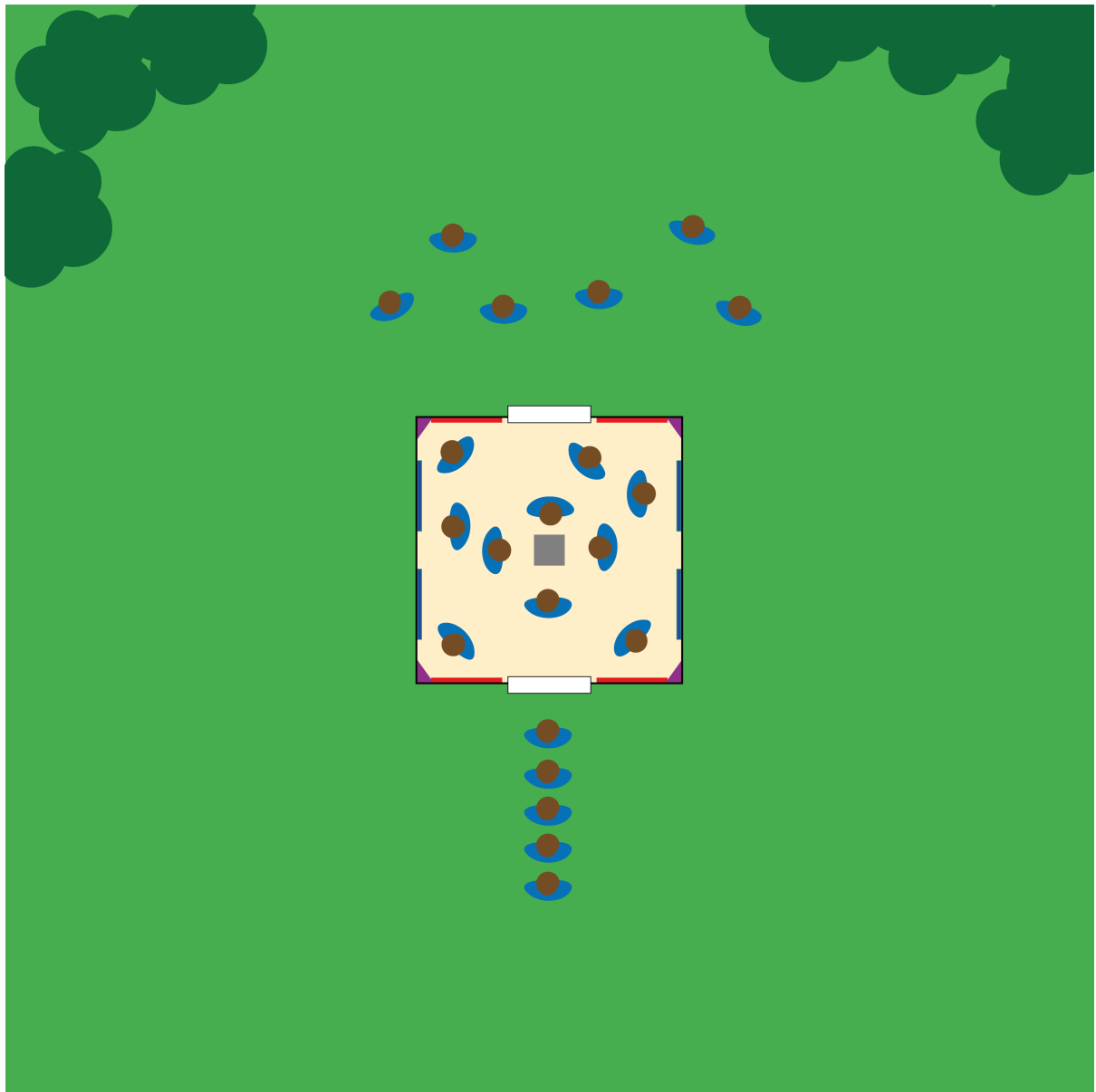


Figure Six

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Figure One: Williams, J. (2020) *Space A, Space B plan* [digital image] My own work.

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Figure Three: Lozano, S. (2018) *Kurz Davor* [Acrylic on paper] Accessed on 12th April 2020 from: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/stefhany-lozano-kurz-davor-illustration-140319>

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Figure Five: Gormley, A. (2020) *Hold* [Clay sculpture] Accessed on 30th April 2020 <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/04/26/antony-gormley-white-cube-instagram-lockdown/>

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