

Ways of Perceiving

Jordan Blake

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Jon Pugh & Martin Bush

Existentialism is the philosophy that focuses on the individual. It explains how humans have the ability to develop their own individual meanings in life due to the freedom of choice they have. Titled 'The Existential Experience', this will be an exhibition about how existentialism has shaped art and how it's been interpreted by artists. Their art will provide us with another person's viewpoint of life, giving the audience the opportunity to become open minded and learn about other people's beliefs. Understanding that individuals have different viewpoints is important as you are able to feel more connected with the society you are in. As well as this, you may also feel more connected with yourself as you may want to think more about what your beliefs are. I have selected five pieces of art from four artists. The artists are Alberto Giacometti, Paul Cézanne, Wols and Francis Bacon. Two sculptures and three paintings will be placed in a white, dome shaped exhibition outside of Søren Kierkegaard's old house in Copenhagen. This is because Søren Kierkegaard is said to be the first existentialist philosopher. I chose the shape of a dome to replicate the shape of a head. When you walk into the exhibition it will be as if you are stepping into the mind of an existentialist. In this exhibition a mirror will be placed in the centre of the ceiling, looking down on the person looking at it. It's there to focus on the individual, which is what existentialism bases their beliefs around. Designing the exhibition with more meaning will make the experience for the audience more enjoyable, interesting and it will be easier for them understand the theme of the exhibition. "Even when we are not there, spaces that belong to us or come under our control still communicate through the way we have laid them out and decorated them" (Lawson, 2001, p.2).

Figure six - Diagram of Exhibition

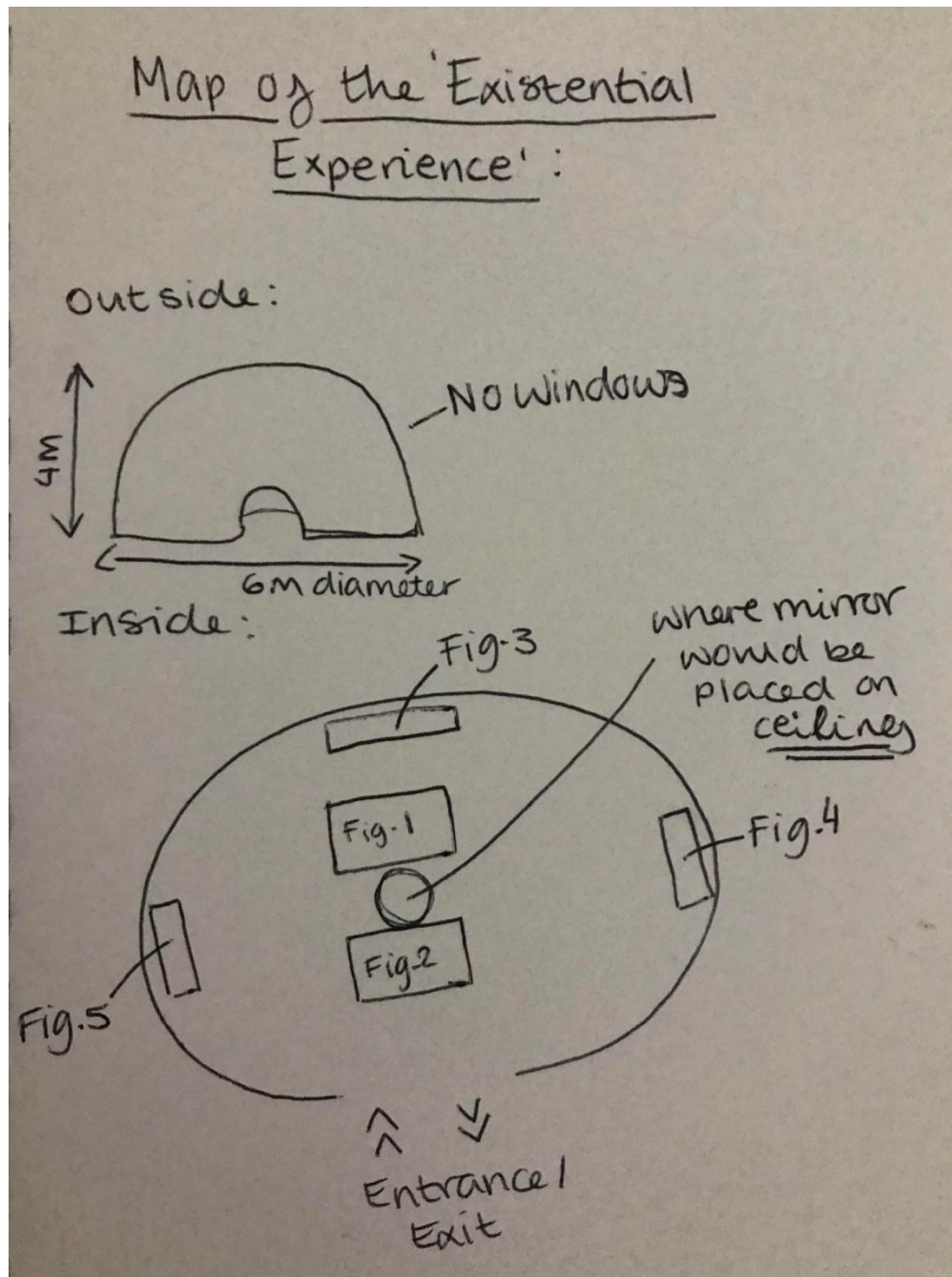




Figure one



Figure two

Figure one shows us 'The Walking Man I' by Alberto Giacometti. The bronze sculpture captures a man with his right foot in front of his left. His arms and legs have been slimmed down and elongated however, this makes his hands and feet appear to be the heavier looking parts of his body. His fragile figure doesn't have a detailed face but has a rock-like texture and stands at 6 foot. Figure two shows 'Figurine'. This is a lone bronze figure that stands with a confident posture, contrasting to its brittle looking structure. It has a rocky appearance and resides on a block with the same texture. Born in 1901, Giacometti was an artist from Switzerland mostly known for being a painter, printmaker, draftsman and sculptor. His career began in 1922, starting out in Paris but occasionally going to work in Borgonovo, his hometown where his family still lived. 'The walking Man' was created in 1960 whilst 'Figurine' was made in 1956. They were post war pieces of art that linked with ideas of existentialism. After the second world war people wanted to grasp more opportunities in life due to their new-found freedom."He is condemned to be free. He must make some kind of choice as to how he shall live his life" (Coats, 1953, p.231). This is shown in

figure one by the man walking forward and leaning in that direction. Although this man's scrawny body has a rough texture, which could link to the trauma he has been through in his life, the act of moving forward symbolises positivity and confidence. He is hopeful about his future and wants to take control of his freedom. This is also shown in 'Figurine' (figure two). The individual is alone and isolated, emphasising the fact that each human is in their own world and reliant on oneself. Their battered body symbolises their strength and choice to stand tall even though life may have negatively affected them.



Figure three

Figure three shows 'The Card Players - 1890-92' by Paul Cézanne. This oil painting depicts 3 quiet looking men sat around a small table playing cards while another man, with his arms crossed and a child standing behind them, watches the game. In the foreground, the colours used are rather bland however; there's some warmth to the men's faces. This is a painting with light colours and a patchy texture. Paul Cézanne was born in France in 1839. He was a post impressionist meaning he wanted to convey emotions through his work rather than focus on realism. "Rather than striving to recreate appearances, the new painters aim at achieving a "new," deeper reality through a peculiar attention to form"(Kostkowska, 2011, p.80). In fact he's said to be one of the main links between late 19th century impressionism and early 20th century cubism. In this piece he portrays feelings of alienation by the lack of communication between the men. Existentialists believe that these feelings are what makes an authentic life. This art work represents the freedom of choice and the individual experience. "He will never find any meaning in life except what he himself is able to put into it" (Coats, 1953, p.231). All three men playing seem to be concentrating on their cards only and no one is talking to each other. This means that it's up to each individual person to

choose a card based on their inner thoughts. There is no influence from any of the other people in the room. Usually, a scene depicting people playing a game of cards is rowdy and filled with drama suggesting that the people playing would have been influenced by others, or usually alcohol, preventing them from making sincere decisions.

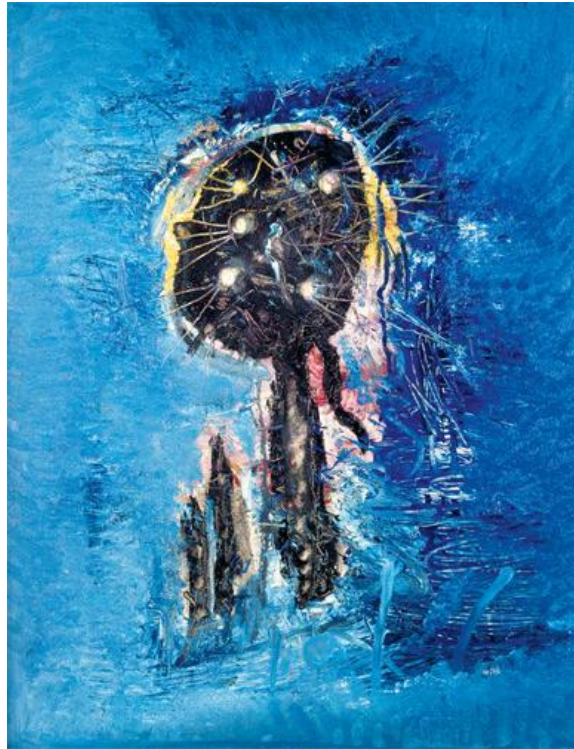


Figure four

Figure four shows 'The Blue Phantom' (1951) by Wols. In the centre of this piece a large area is being taken up by a black shape. The circle at the top of the shape contains 5 smaller circles with delicate lines that connect them to the bright blue background. The black paint then continues down the canvas from the circle but separates into different directions. The final result looks unorganised and rushed however this is all part of tachisme. "In France is was Tachisme, you've heard of Tachisme, their approach to spontaneity in painting"(Kirwin, 2016,p.232). This method was developed in the 1940s/50s and consists of random markings and splotches to create an abstract piece of art. Wols was a German artist born in 1913. He came from a wealthy family in Berlin but decided to move to Paris after travelling abroad to learn about art and photography. He was, and still is, well known for being associated with the tachisme movement and abstract art. This Piece was created during the post war period which was roughly 1945-70. Countries had faced years of trauma from the war which led to artists expressing their emotions in a more unique and abstract way compared to previous

movements. This creation was a response to Wols' feelings about his life after the war. As an individual, he created this piece to demonstrate the emotional impact of WWII by producing an image with spontaneous actions that were influenced by his emotions. "Each painting speaks for the solution the artist has chosen at that moment in time" (Braun & Doerschner, 2019, p.2). This emphasises existentialisms beliefs of the subjective experience.

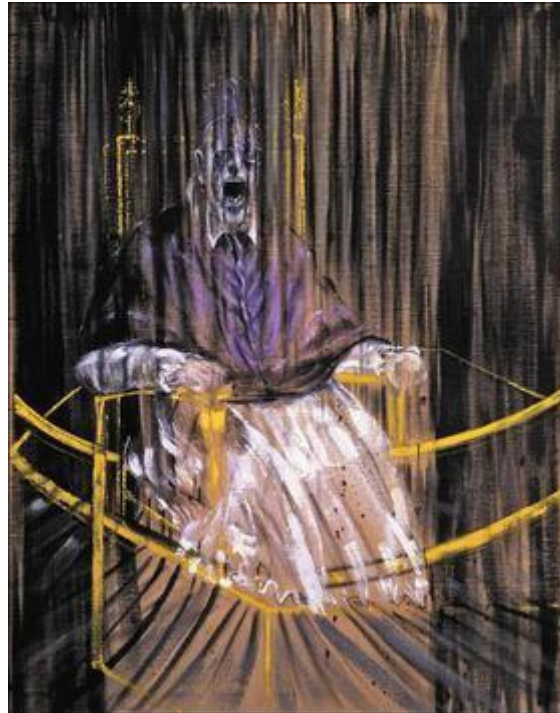


Figure five

Figure five shows us the Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X. In this art work we can see a colder and distorted version of the original painting of the pope. He looks terrified as he is being trapped within erratic brush strokes of purple paint. Gold bars have been added around him as if they're also trying to keep him in his place. Francis Bacon was born in Dublin in 1909. He travelled between England and Ireland with his family while he was growing up but in 1927 he decided to go to Berlin. During his stay, he visited Picasso's exhibition and was inspired to start creating art while visiting free academies. He became well known for making art that included aspects of expressionism, surrealism and cubism. This study in particular was one of many surrealism paintings he did. It was also created during the post war period and atomic age. Like many other pieces made during this time, it symbolised feelings of angst and distress. Nobody knew what would happen to society after the damage that had already been done by the war. The study addresses the suffering and pain that Francis Bacon was feeling at the time it was created. During an interview Bacon stated "at that time I was extremely unhappy emotionally"(The Canvas, 2020). This would

be considered as existentialistic as he is facing his anxieties head on in the form of art. The reasoning behind the pope is due to the clothes they would wear. Francis wanted to paint someone wearing purple and found that the pope was the only person known for wearing the colour at the time.

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