

Ways of Perceiving

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My curated exhibition is titled '*La Vie En Rose*', a French phrase literally translating to '*life in pink*', or more commonly '*life through a rose tint (rose coloured glasses)*'. My main theme for the exhibition and space is heavily drawn from this phrase, and how it can be contrasted in context to a large social issue in the art realm- fashion.

The fashion industry- particularly fast fashion brands- is one of the biggest contributors to the destruction of our planet, and many poor communities in south and east Asia- "Often, they are sent to India, joining a global second-hand trade in which billions of old garments are bought and sold around the world every year. Specifically, to Panipat in northern India which is known as the world's "cast off capital"." (Kannan, 2017)

Morgan Mcfall-Johnsen wrote on the *Business Insider*: "The fashion industry produces 10% of all humanity's carbon emissions, is the second-largest consumer of the world's water supply, and pollutes the oceans with microplastics" and in addition to this continued to write "85% of all textiles go to the dump each year... The equivalent of one garbage truck full of clothes is burned or dumped in a landfill every second." (Mcfall-Johnsen, 2019)

In 2020 there is masses of information about the detrimental effects of 'throw-away fashion', yet billions of us are still purchasing from brands- such as Zara and H&M- that fall into the fast fashion category.

In recent years fashion, in the form of traditional exhibitions, has been much more widely received- "Before even opening its [Victoria & Albert museum] doors, the [House of Dior] exhibition had sold 37,000 tickets and just three weeks into its initial six-month run, all pre-bookable tickets were sold out" (Pinnock, 2019). I therefore feel there very much is a market for the exhibition I want to curate.

To help highlight issues on sustainability in fashion, my exhibition will take place in an empty retail location- like stores you would find on busy high streets in London, with high ceilings and large windows.

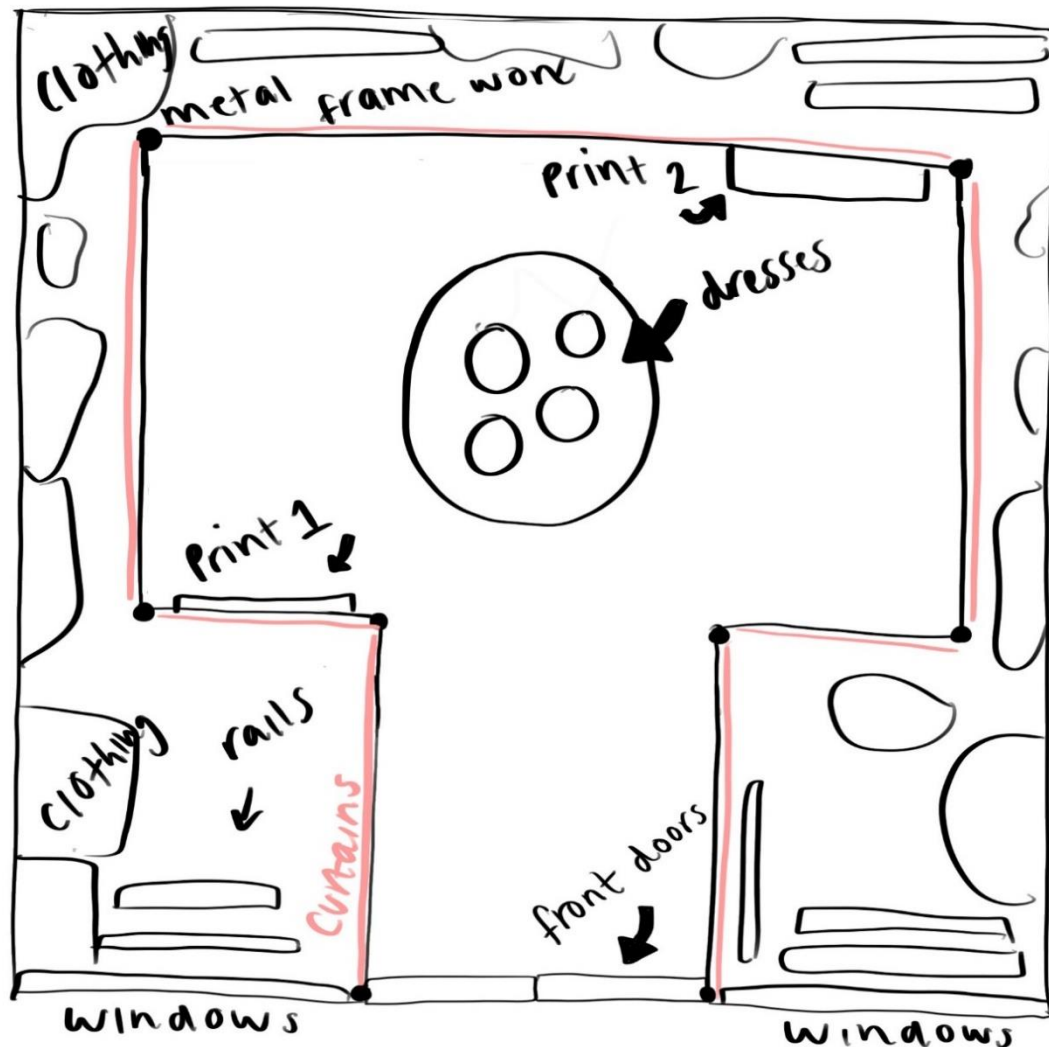


Figure 1

The basic birds eye view drawing shown in figure one helps convey my layout. The large glass front will show both sides of my theme to outside viewers, and the double doors will also mean it is easily accessible for anyone who wishes to view it.

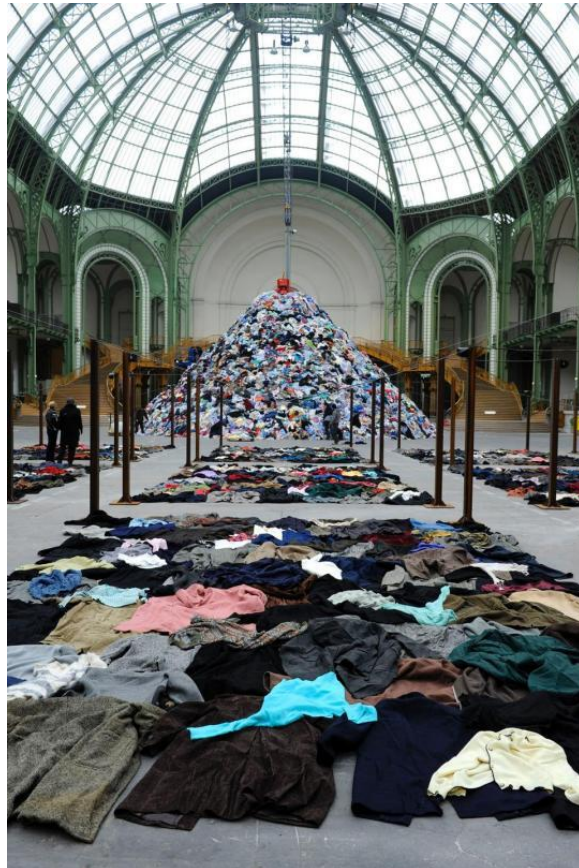
In the centre of the location will be a 6x 6 metre space, each corner of the square will be metal poles of a 10-foot height, and the top of each pole will be connected to create the square. There will be a walkway to the centre from the front doors.

From the overhead poles will hang floor length gauzy, chiffon, pale pink curtains, translucent enough that the viewer of the exhibition will be able to see through into the rest of the area. I want the curtains to act like loose barriers, as if they are trying to shield you from the truth and lead you to the beautiful textiles and imagery ahead of you instead.

The romantic side of my exhibition will be warmly lit compared to what is in the rest of the space. I plan to do this by having warmly lit bulbs in the centre of the ceiling, lining up with the space and walkway, and then brighter white lights only in the corners of the room. That way I have created a colder feel to the reality I want to convey but it will also still be lit and visible.

The surrounding walls of the retail space will have a mixture of multiple clothing rails and mountainous piles of second-hand clothing. I will borrow these from a warehouse where

the garments would be waiting to be sent to an incinerator or landfill. This decision was influenced by Christian Boltanski's 2010 *Personnes* piece which featured a 10-tonne mountain of clothing (below):



(<https://contemporary-art-blog.com/post/134071398555>)

The collection will have examples of beautiful dresses, and illustrative imagery hung within the space. My hope is that the collection of works I have curated juxtaposes the reality of what is outside the whimsy curtain framing, and that it will help viewers be more conscious and less passive with their

fashion buying habits.

Within the centre of my curtained area I intend to place a shallow podium, roughly 30cm, and on it will be 4 mannequins, each displaying a beautiful dress.

I want the garments to be the first thing you see as you walk through the front door. I felt very inspired by the way Frida Kahlo's dresses were displayed in her 2018 'Making Herself Up' exhibition at the V&A museum in London:



<https://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/postgraduate-study/postgraduate-community/stories/unveiling-frida-kahlo>

Co-curator Clair Wilcox said about the exhibition that it is “A

countercultural and feminist symbol, this show will offer a powerful insight into how Frida Kahlo constructed her own identity.” (Relaciones Exteriores, 2018). When I attended the exhibition, I felt that walking through the narrow hall into the larger, colourful room was extremely effective and awe inspiring. I felt the weight and importance of the dresses. I think by replicating this in my own exhibition, it will help make my contrast just as powerful.



Figure 2



Figure 3

I've chosen two dresses from popular New York Designer Lirika Matoshi. I felt these dresses helped to convey the romantic theme I invisioned for the exhibition.

Much like the Kahlo exhibiton, I have chosen to put the dresses center stage to, as I want them to be the focal point

for the viewer. I think the style of the two dresses deliver the fantasy, the femininity that the fashion industry markets to us. Especially the different shades of pink which is almost always attributed with femininity- “Both red and pink represent love. The color red represents heat and passion, while the color pink represents romance and charm.” (Bourne, 2010)



Figure 4



Figure 5

I have also chosen two dress from the brand 'For Love And Lemons', created by Laura Hall and Gillian Rose Kern in 2010,

to accompany the two previous dresses. I specifically chose garments from this brand as I think the dresses from both designers sit beside each other extremely well. The four dresses have a similarity in the materials used, and also the colours all integrate with each other.

The second reason I have chosen this brand is because they are quite transparent with how they are trying to be a more ethical, sustainable brand. They are open about their warehouse in China and standards, “ the factory is approved by the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI), an initiative established by the Federal Trade Organization (FTA) for companies who wish to improve their social compliance. The BSCI is a standardized code of conduct with 11 categories that range from workplace health and safety to compensation to environmental and safety issues” (For Love and Lemons, 2020).

Since I am creating a exhibiton that focuses on textile waste and the downsides of fast fashion, I felt it important to reference brands that were more socially responsible, to further my contrast.

I think it is also important to show that fashion doesn't have to be awful for the planet. It's much more expected from

consumers that brands are sustainable in their business actions- “52% of consumers do want the fashion industry to follow more sustainable practices... 69% of Millennials say they look into claims of sustainability and eco-friendliness when researching clothing purchases” (Moore, 2019) – and therefore brands such as Lucy & Yak, & Other Stories, and Reformation, become increasingly popular (especailly to the younger generation).



Figure 6

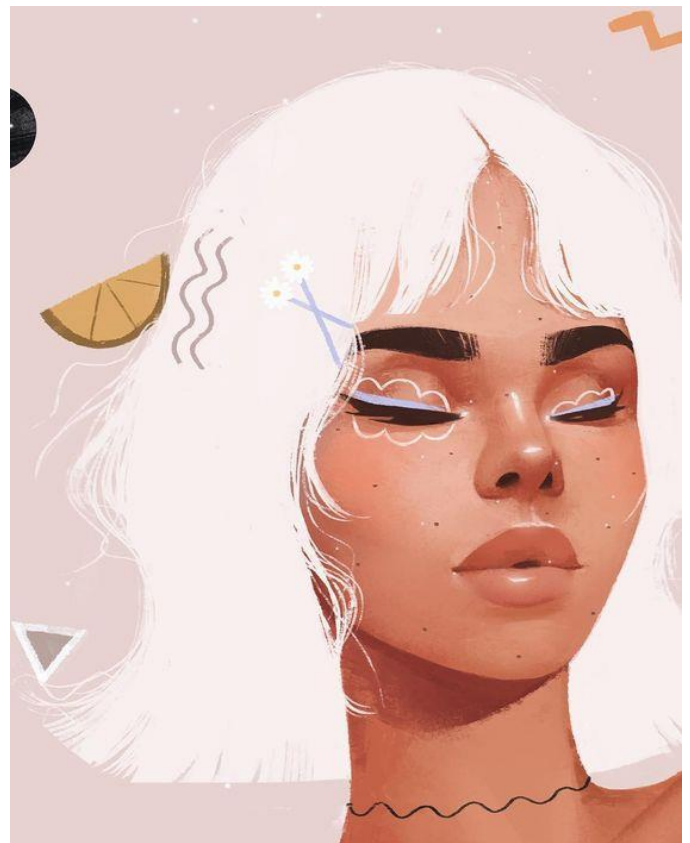


Figure 7

As an illustrator, I also wanted to include some pieces from my own discipline to sit along side the dresses. The two pieces in figure six and seven were created by an illustrator I admire, Janice Sung.

Since these are digital pieces I will be able to print them to a large scale. I would have them both blown up large, 1.5 metres in height, and suspended from the metal curtain rods. I would like the material they are printed on to be quite thick so that they don't move as freely as the curtains behind them may do.

The digitally created pieces are soft and natural in appearance, and I think the floral elements in figure six really aid the exhibitions appearance. The colour scheme of the illustrations are essentially the same pink and blue seen in the dresses, but they are more muted. I believe that due to this it'll help bring the attention still to the garments, whilst still having a large presence in the space.

I find that fashion and illustration compliment each other as art forms well. Illustration is an integral part of designing garments, "fashion illustration is a visual way of explaining different design ideas. They have played a critical role in

fashion designing since the evolution of clothes. In simple words, illustration is an art via which fashion can be explained, demonstrated, and communicated.” (Hamstech, 2019).

Figures:

Fig. One: Clements, S (2020) Exhibition Map [Digitally Created Image

Fig. Two: Matoshi, L (2020) Photograph found at:
<https://lirikamatoshi.com/collections/dresses/products/pink-sky-midi-dress-1>

Fig. Three: Matoshi, L (2020) Photograph found at:
<https://lirikamatoshi.com/collections/dresses/products/hearty-midi-dress>

Fig. Four: For Love and Lemons (2020) Photograph found at:
<https://forloveandlemons.com/products/cody-organza-jacquard-maxi-dress-icicle>

Fig. Five: For Love and Lemons (2020) Photograph found at:
<https://forloveandlemons.com/products/jasmine-rosette-maxi-dress-peach>

Fig. Six: Sung, J (2020) Photograph found at:
<https://www.instagram.com/p/B-fHQGrnm8Z/>

Fig. Seven: Sung, J (2018) Photograph found at:
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BoZafG7Bbiy/>

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