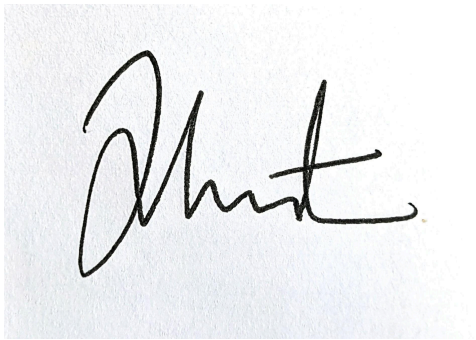


Regarding Ways of Perceiving Essay due 28/4/2026

AI ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Fran Rushworth'.

Fran Rushworth 2243365

PRECARITY

Precarity signifies the imminence of sudden, radical change that dismantles old structures, beliefs or paradigms. Precarious times are upon us. On the exhibition poster, The Tower tarot card encapsulates Precarity, shown forcing, rather than inviting, major transformation. Although it appears destructive - depicted as a tower struck by lightning - the card also represents a necessary, albeit painful, liberation from delusions.

In the twenty first century, truth has been forsaken. Collectively, humanity is sailing towards rocks we seem unable or unwilling to face. To provide some small countermeasure, this exhibition draws upon the educational philosophy of Mezirow (1997). Recognising the futility of a didactic delivery of unwelcome facts, *Precarity* functions as facilitator and provocateur, aiming to trigger transformative learning. Multiple senses are stimulated as part of a holistic experience, enhancing the impact of the artworks. These are chosen to heighten awareness of the precarious illusions we prefer, point toward the inevitability of their collapse and remind us of our capacity to survive revelation.

The exhibition takes place in that most precarious city, Venice. It begins with Chihuly glass and Dali sculptures, inducing the pleasures of the dream. In the second room, a work by Andy Goldsworthy exposes material reality, while in the third room, Claire Curneen's ceramics invite us to reflect, to set fear aside and learn from our wounds.

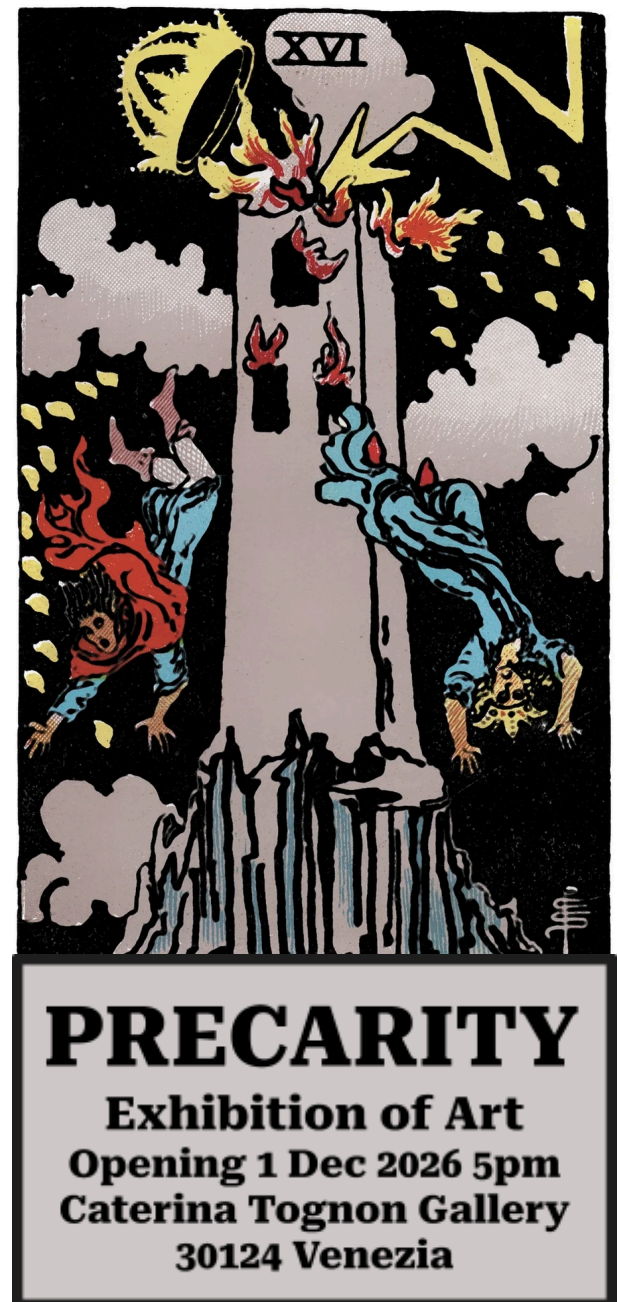


Figure 1. Exhibition Poster based on the Tower 1909 Rider-Waite Tarot card design

Travelling down the Grand Canal, visitors to *Precarity* disembark in the oldest part of this ancient, sinking city. Reaching the Caterina Tognon Arte Contemporanea for the opening of the show, they pull their coats closer as twilight falls and the rising tide laps at the buildings. Through modest double doors, a blaze of colour and light pours out of the gallery into the grey paved courtyard. Our visitors enter, accepting a glass of Prosecco and a set of headphones.

Inside the first room, the vaulted roofspace is packed with Persian glass forms, illuminated from above. The artist, Dale Chihuly, intends his audience to be overwhelmed. Leaving no space for thought, each individual piece of blown glass is so rich in organic detail, frill, and stripe, that the visitor can absorb only a fraction of their abundance. The soft cream walls glow with projected colours and through the headphones, the melody of Offenbach's Barcarolle lilts and swells.

Please follow this link to play as you read on

 Anna Netrebko & Elīna Garanča – ...

A very Venetian magic is at work. The Barcarolle is based on a gondoliers song, the prosecco now swirling in the visitors' blood is unique to the Veneto and most seductive of all, such glass as this has been the genius of Venice for over a thousand years.



Figure 2. Persian Ceiling from Chihuly Garden and Glass, Seattle Center website

Dale Chihuly is an American contemporary glass artist who first came to Murano in 1965 to work and study with Venetian glassmasters.

At this critical moment in his formative artistic development, Chihuly responded to the skilful manipulation of hot glass - the sheer thrill and physicality, the style, the panache with which Italian makers more than any other do the performance (Opie, 2001, p.21).

The forms of the Persian series arose from his interest in ancient glass and in the words of his collaborating glass sculptor, Martin Blank;

When you are working with glass you are fighting that edge of being in control and out of control and it's very poignant when you're creating a Persian, because you have to get the glass so hot that it wants to spin out and destroy itself by getting too thin or not hot enough and be a boring, round plate (Chihuly Garden and Glass *Persian Ceiling* interview).

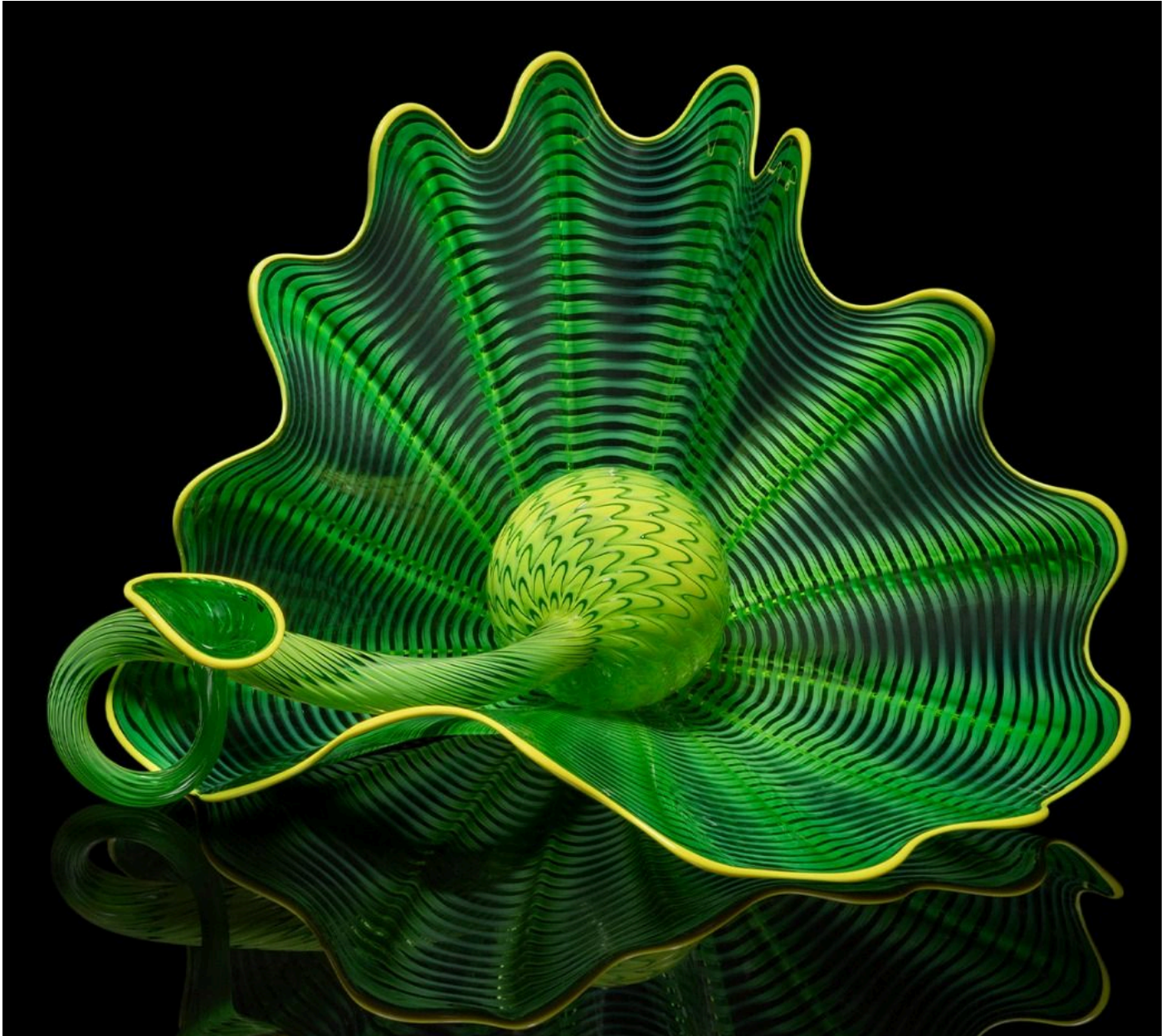


Figure 3. 2025 Green Apple Persian Chihuly Studio Edition www.chihuly.com/shop

Even when it has cooled into perfect form, glass is a notoriously precarious medium. It suits both the theme and the location of this exhibition as perfectly as the bubbles in the Prosecco. Dale Chihuly's Persians are first and foremost a theatrical display and like Offenbach's music, seek chiefly to enchant their audience.

When the visitors' gaze finally drops, they will see four bronze sculptures, identical casts of Salvador Dali's *Space Elephant* arranged nose to tail, in procession toward the next room. Each is almost a metre high and marches along a raised dais. Conceived in 1980, the *Space Elephant* design is based on paintings made in the 1940s. However one might analyse or psychoanalyse their meaning, they are undeniably uncanny. Dali proposed that the Surrealists consciously explore Freud's concept of the subconscious through their art. Johnson (2016) maintains that this actually missed the point, intention itself robbed their art of explanatory power. Be that as it may, the *Space Elephants* do generate unease, such thin, multi-jointed legs could never support the heavy bodies, let alone the floating obelisks they bear. This troop of elephants can walk only in the fields of dreams, their serene journey is unsustainable. They warn that to awaken is to fall.



Figure 3. Space Elephant (1980) Salvador Dali Bronze

As each visitor exits toward the next room, a great crash of breaking glass is played through their headphones. The wine glass is lifted from their hand, the headphones are removed and the dream of the first room collapses. Le Cornu (2005 p.174) writes that 'an experience of disjuncture provoked by an unfamiliar situation is accompanied by a raising of consciousness – a type of stepping out of the continuous flow of time experienced by a low level of consciousness – and a momentary freezing of time. This combination initiates consequent learning.' The exhibition uses this powerful moment to deliver its wake up call.

The small second room has the word PRECARITY! graffitied onto the walls over and over again. Chill air flows through the open window and one white floodlight strobes into the body of a massive snowball. This is a new work commissioned from Andy Goldsworthy, a land artist who creates site specific sculptures using natural materials.



Figure 4 Midsummer Snowball Book Cover Illustration

Goldsworthy (2001 p33) wrote of an earlier work;

Part of the reaction to the snowballs is likely to be a sense of shock and bewilderment provoked by the feeling that nature has emerged in a place where it doesn't belong...

and in Friedman (1992 p.116)

Snow and ice is on a journey - it falls from the sky, forming drifts, thawing into the earth or grinding its way through a valley in the form of a glacier. Movement is part of its nature... When snow melts things hidden slowly emerge.

For *Precarity*, imagine Andy collected snow from the Trentino and hid within it a profoundly symbolic red ochre, *Rosso Veneto*, mined locally, and historically used by artists as a pigment. "I have worked with this red [ochre] all over the world ...[it is] a vein running around the earth." (Goldsworthy, 2001 p 29) That vein will bleed in Venice as this snowball melts, dripping into a great metal tray. Underneath lies a huge sheet of paper. Over the coming days, a watercolour will be created. Future visitors will experience not so much the shock of the snowball's collapsing presence as of its absence.



Figure 5 Source of Scaur (1991) by Andy Goldsworthy from V&A website Explore the Collections

A few steps along the corridor, visitors enter the third space, sound proofed, painted indigo blue from floor to ceiling and filled with the scent of sandalwood, used for centuries to aid meditation. This muted place prompts a pause for assimilation, the making of meaning, associated by Le Cornu (2005 p.175) with the process of reflection that may progress to the internalisation needed for transformational learning.



Claire Curneen is a ceramic artist now living in Cardiff. Two of her porcelain figures stand, white against the blue. *Splinter* (2018) draws on the classical myth of Daphne transformed into a tree to escape being raped by Apollo. The branch seems more to penetrate than to erupt, the sag of the torso and the raised arms capture the brutal instant, yet somehow the figure appears acquiescent, transcendent. A visitor might find here a model for sustaining the shocks they have felt themselves.

Figure 6 *Splinter* (2019) Claire Curneen porcelain 70 x 30 x 50cm

The second figure is one of Curneen's many depictions of St Sebastian, a Christian martyr who survived being shot with arrows. Crichton-Miller (2017) describes how our attention is drawn to the interior space of her figures, the tears in their flesh painted with precious gold or cobalt blue glaze. These traditional signifiers of value in the history of ceramics, when coupled with the gentle exploration of delicate fingers, seem to imply a value, not so much in suffering as in the ability to recognise wounds, to accept, to learn and to heal.



Figure 7 personal photograph from the exhibition *Between My Finger and My Thumb* (2026) Claire Curneen, Eton Library, Eton

The final piece is Curneen's monumental work in porcelain, *Tending the Fires*. Described by Crichton- Miller (2017) 'This 2.3m long panorama offers us a world blown apart, broken, jagged, dismembered. And yet there is also resilience - figures propped up on crutches, a simple house intact ...'



Figure 8 Detail from *Tending the Fires* (2016) Claire Curneen porcelain, V&A Collection (background altered to indigo blue)

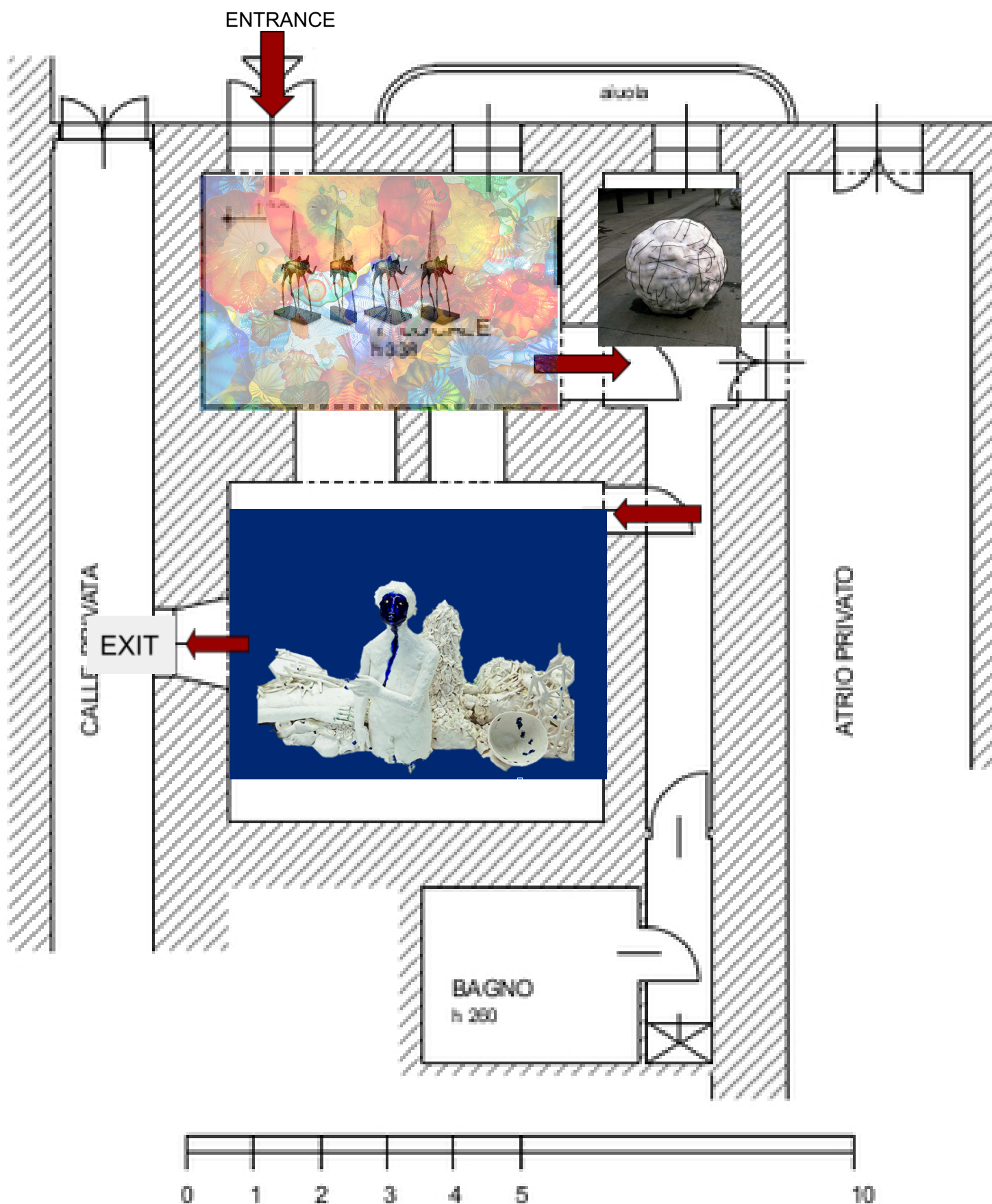
Music, light, flavour, colour, temperature and fragrance have all contributed to the immersive experience that was *Precarity*. Learning theory predicts that the most memorable parts will be the emotional peak, occurring as the snowball is encountered, and the very end, *Tending the Fires*. What the visitors will carry out into the evening might be confusion, maybe just a laugh and a shrug.

To become meaningful, learning requires that new information be incorporated by the learner into an already well developed, symbolic frame of reference, an active process involving thoughts, feelings and disposition. (Le Cornu, 2005)

It was art. There was beauty. Through memory, transformation may yet follow.

1531 words

Caterina Tognon Gallery Map



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