

"Vulnerable"

The show is intended to invite the audience to the philosophy that to be vulnerable is to be brave. I want to explore this idea through a feminine lens with recurring themes of sex, relationships, and pain within the ideology. I think this is an important theme to be discussed in relation to now because of the ongoing historic respect and courage associated with traditional patriotic masculinity. Regardless of gender roles to be vulnerable is to be weak in our society and I would like to dismantle and challenge this theory through my hypothetical exhibition. Artists that I found impactful in context of this idea were Cecily Brown with her work surrounding sexuality and Christina Quales with her exploration of the body in relation to identity. I also want to include an installation by Tatyana Fazlalizadeh who explores racism and women's issues from a protest and street art perspective as well as Sarah Lucas' 3D pieces where she plays on humour to explore the human experience. All the artists I am interested in featuring are very intentionally different within their themes and practises.

The idea for this concept was heavily inspired by Casper White's exhibition '*Come Fail at Love*' which I found to be impactful, he really amplified the softness of what he was painting about by literal use of soft materials. His exhibition in *figure 1* amplified a lot of these qualities that I am interested in exploring. The exhibit itself is about relationships, love and finding strength within weakness. Researching White's exhibit is what inspired my curational ideas as an extension of this exhibition is something I am interested in exploring with a collaboration of artists.



FIGURE 1 New York. Oil on Aluminium, 2020 Hand rolled died and embroidered silk. variable size. 2019 Installation for VOLTA, (Art Fair)

The courage to be – *Paul Tillich* explains the origin of the word for courage. In Greek it is *andreia* translating to 'masculinity' and the Latin word for courage *fortitudo* also translates directly to mean 'power'. What I found interesting about the translations of the word courage was the use of these words in a military format to describe the attitude of a brave soldier. The connotations of masculinity and hardness surrounding these words I think contradicted the philosopher Paul Tillich who spoke on the bravery of vulnerability and the origin of the word courage which comes from the French word '*Coeur*' and its literal translation to the word 'heart.'

From a social psychological perspective, 'gender and emotion' - *Fischer A.H, 2000* address the western stereotypes painting a picture of the rational man and the emotional woman. Femininity is still associated with expressing emotion and empathy whereas masculine roles are defined as the ability to control and suppress emotions. This is a stigma that continues to alter perspectives within a modern society and with this in mind, the intention of the exhibition would be to challenge the stereotype of weakness within femininity and the stigma surrounding vulnerability representing weakness at all. I intend to do this through art I find linked to this philosophy of vulnerability.

In terms of curational technique I am interested in the atlas as a curational strategy to provide a clearer link between the pieces exhibited. My only doubt with this technique is the diversity in the body of work of my selected artists, this could be potentially confusing to the viewer but upon researching curational techniques, the atlas is organised in a way that helps the reader remember a large amount of information. By providing helpful visual links



FIGURE 2, Pauline bunny 1998 - Sarah Lucas

between the selected artists, my theory is that it will help the viewers to see the exhibition as a continuous connecting artwork despite the differences of the individual artworks.

Artworks I would like to feature and explore within the exhibition include some of the sculptural work of Sarah Lucas, specifically the piece "Pauline bunny" and the continuation of this sculptural movement in her "bunny" exhibit (figure 2&3) This includes a series of sculptures of household objects and stockings displayed with the intention to hyper sexualise the female form. My thoughts initially were this speaks on vulnerability as a direct link between nudity and weakness. Upon exploration to Lucas' work, the over sexualisation of the 'female form' within this piece is

asserting dominance over male desire by presenting as the seductress, implied by magazines like playboy or the porn industry, but also the

sculptures are seen to be positioned on a chair playing on this idea of psychical weakness and secretarial submission.

Within this exhibit Lucas explores the idea of the male sexual lens and power dynamics within that lens such as the battle between empowerment and exploitation. I think it's an

important piece to feature within the exhibition exploring vulnerability because it plays around with the male gaze and the vulnerable position that puts women in 'to be trapped in femininity in a game of masculine skill' – Tate 1998. The original exhibition took place in 1998 and the relevance of this timeline links with the uprise in availability of adult content and the impact that had on the way women were viewed, which I think is consistently important in a modern society.



FIGURE 3, 'bunnys' 1998 -Sarah Lucas

female experience by speaking on everyday life and her own experiences with walking down the street. Her piece 'Stop telling women to smile'- 2012 figure 4 is originally indented to be a black and white poster featuring a series of drawn portraits and bold text responding to gender-based harassment. I would include this and the surrounding street art posters for this project within my exhibition because the artwork speaks on the internalised vulnerability of simply walking down the street as a black woman. The location of her current exhibits being outside and for the public eye, I think is very powerful because not only is she is putting herself in a psychically vulnerable position by facing the general public, Fazlalizadeh is also breaking down the limitation that to make impactful art it needs to be in a

Tatyana Fazlalizadeh explores the black female experience through political street art, she explores vulnerability in a different sense of the



FIGURE 4, Stop telling women to smile 2012 - Tatyana Fazlalizadeh

gallery space. It becomes available to everyone and impossible to avoid. I find her work very powerful in this sense and her message to be extremely bold. The intention of then putting Fazlalizadeh's work, intended for the public eye, into a gallery space is to break that boundary again and create fluidity between street art and gallery art. I think her art speaks strongly about the subject theme of vulnerability.

Cecily Brown paints oil on canvas. Her paintings are fluid, and they show more expressive brush strokes than intended realism. Pieces I would like to feature include *'fast hard and beautiful'*- 2000 (figure 5) which is essentially a sexual painting intended within its dramatic illusion of motion to resemble or resonate with viewers as two lovers rolling around on a canvas. Her use of suggestive brush strokes and shapes to resemble erotica takes the idea of vulnerability and feeling in a different and positive direction, beautifying another subject often deemed at taboo. Another piece of Brown's work that I would like to exhibit is *'the pyjama game'*-1997 (figure 6) which uses colour that resembles flesh and equally as erotic imagery to explore the idea of sex through a feminine gaze.



FIGURE 5, Hard, Fast and beautiful 2000 – Cecily Brown



FIGURE 6, the pyjama game 1997 – Cecily Brown

Brown compares the textures of painting with the physical sensation of touch. In relation to how this links in with the theme of vulnerability and courage, I would suggest the connection through the exposure associated with the naked form, in relation to the courage of taking that out of the privacy of conversation and onto a canvas to be explored by the viewer.

Christina Quales' paintings look at bodies and the vulnerability of being in an ambiguous way, her paintings don't make a lot of sense at first glance and personally that is a big part of the appeal. Some artworks that I would feature

include *'yew brought it up 2018'* (figure 7) and *'for a flaw/ for a fall/ for the end 2018'* (figure 8). Quales explores the idea of identity through humanoid figures, reflecting her own experience of being misread or misrepresented as a queer mixed-race woman. Surreal acrylic paintings of sexually ambiguous bodies described as the experience of living in a body rather than looking at a body is an interesting take on the idea of the vulnerability of being and the heteronormative ideas western society acknowledges contrasting many individuals' existences. To exist takes courage. To express to emote and to speak on these issues the

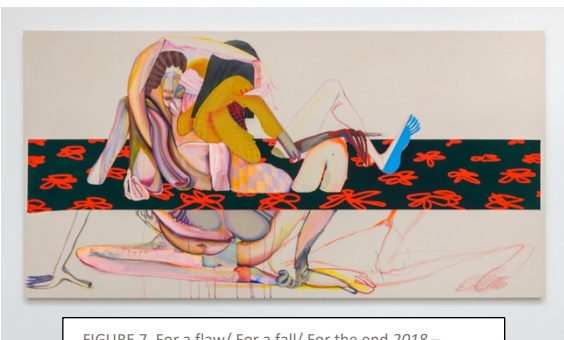


FIGURE 7, For a flaw/ For a fall/ For the end 2018 – Christina Quales

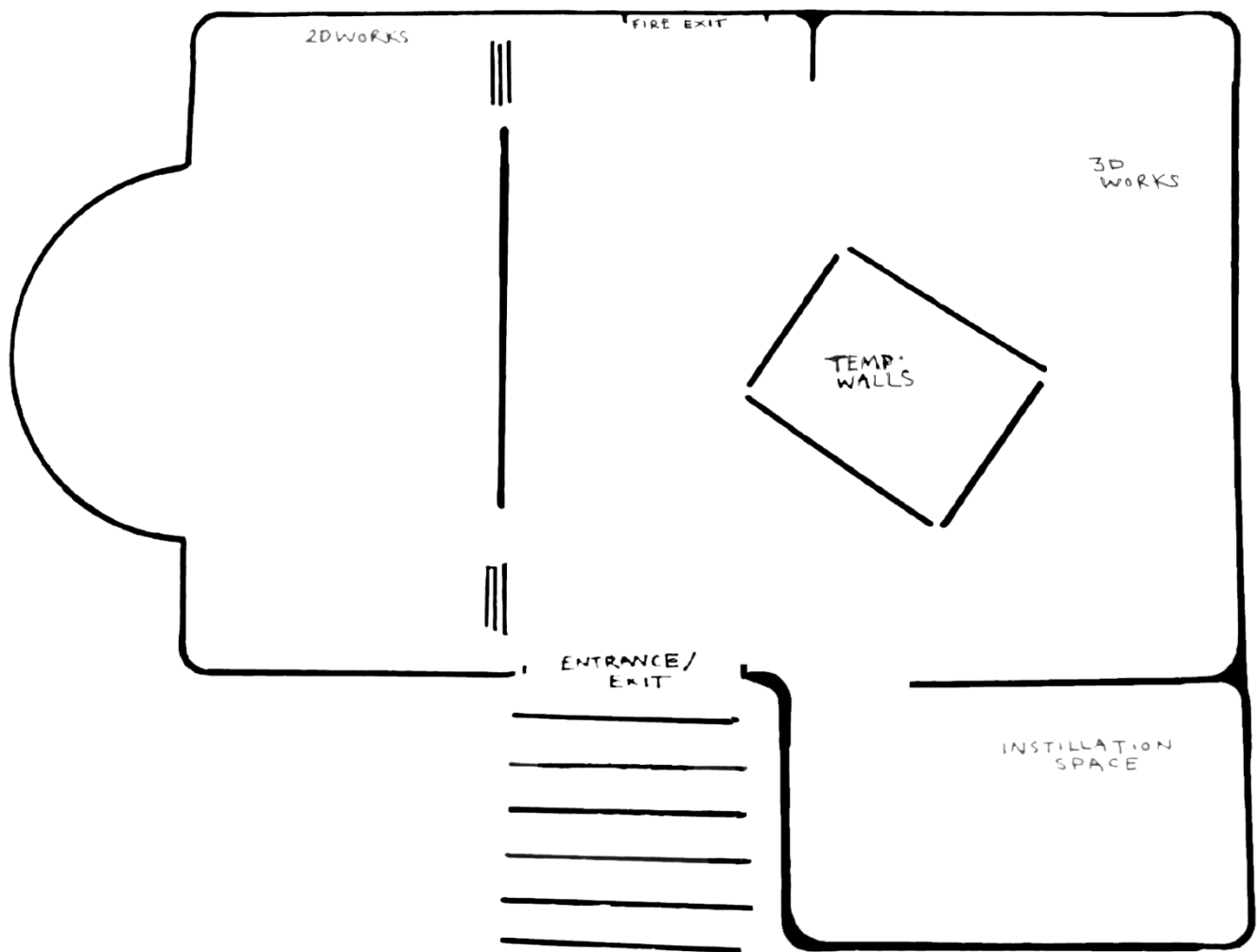


FIGURE 8, Yew brought it up 2018 - Christina Quales

way these artists have been correlates with Tillich's definition of what courage is and therefore is my intention for this exhibition.

floor plan

Elysium gallery, Swansea. Temporary walls and extra space of the far left to make room for selected art works.



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figure 2/3: Ruby, S. (2013). *Sarah Lucas's Pauline Bunny: Tate Etc. at Tate Britain / Artists' Perspectives*. [online] Tate. <https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-29-autumn-2013/sarah-lucass-pauline-bunny> .[accessed 26 Apr. 2023]

figure 4: tlynnfaz.com. (n.d.). *Stop Telling Women to Smile — tlynnfaz*. [online]
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figure 5: Sotheby's. (2022). *CECILY BROWN | HARD, FAST AND BEAUTIFUL | Contemporary Art Day Auction | | Sotheby's*. [online]
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