

Ways of perceiving (ADAD4019)

Female Artists That have been overlooked By History

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Entitled 'Forgotten' I intend to curate an exhibition featuring female artists who have been overlooked by history. Focusing on John Berger's theory of 'Surveying and Being Surveyed: Gender Aspects'. In which Berger expresses the concept that women are perceived as only objects of vision. 'An object- and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.' Berger (1972, p.47). The exhibition will be held in Swansea's Palace Theatre, a structure that has been abandoned and forgotten in recent years. I believe the vacant energy of the building will enhance the message that I am trying to express. I have selected what I believe to be relevant artworks that showcase the capability of the artists. My intentions for this exhibition are to expand the general public's knowledge of female artists and I hope to prove why they should be as renowned as their male counterparts.

Using the stage area, I plan to build a large boxed room with a short narrow doorway. The outside and inside will be painted black, there will be dim light fixtures that will illuminate the artwork from below, this will represent the artists rising from the dark and finding the light so they can be seen once again. The overall gloomy atmosphere will make the room feel like a dark void. I want it to feel this way to emphasize the fact that the artists have been forgotten and left in the dark. The smaller door will lower the light pollution and serve as a representation of the small percentage of those who may know of the art being exhibited already. As the audience grows, the door will expand, and the lights will grow brighter. This will show that the artists can now be observed and critiqued by all. For audio the names of the artists will be played in the background very much like quiet whispers, quotes from Berger's book will also be heard. 'Women are there to feed an appetite, not have their own'. Berger (1972, p. 55). I believe these quotes will help others understand what these women were and are challenged with. I hope those who are brave enough to enter the derelict building leave with a better knowledge of how the world has and continues to treat women.



Fig One

As you enter through the narrow door you are met with darkness, to your right is a poorly lit painting. 'Night creatures' (1965) by Lee Krasner. I have chosen to include Krasner in this collection because of her attributions to the American abstract expressionism movement, which have been eclipsed by those of her husband. Better known as 'Mrs. Pollock' Krasner was married to Jackson Pollock a world-renowned artist. 'Krasner "practiced in the idiom when Jackson was still in the regional style"'. Cooke (The Guardian, 2019). This implies that Krasner's was an expressionist painter before Pollock, and it is said that Krasner's work inspired that of her ex-husband's style in which he became so well known for.

The piece itself comes from her series 'Night Journeys'. I believe it shows an array of emotions and confusion perhaps the 'Night creatures' are the thoughts that ran through the artist's head during the afterhours. The eyes and figures may represent harsh critiques, maybe jealousy and confusion are present. I believe it's a very complex piece and I think an audience could take a lot from it.



Fig Two

The next piece situated on the righthand wall is another piece by Krasner. 'Another Storm' (1963) 238.8cm x 447.7cm. This large-scale piece I believe will grasp the attention of an observer, I believe its size and colour scheme are demanding. This is the intention for the exhibition to capture the eye of the public. The hues of the painting are very representative of a women's spirit. 'Light red represents joy, sexuality, passion, sensitivity, and love. Pink signifies romance, love, and friendship. It denotes feminine qualities and passiveness. Dark red is associated with vigor, willpower, rage, anger, leadership, courage, longing, malice, and wrath.' Fiore (2010, p.164). I think this piece is key to show the complexity of women.



Fig Three

Artemisia Gentileschi is said to be the most celebrated female artist of the seventeenth century but is still unknown to most. During her career she faced great difficulties, she studied under Agostino Tassi a family friend who raped her and because of the time her reputation was questioned. She however used this traumatic experience to inspire her art. 'She used biblical stories to portray, in exquisite paintings, her fury at the sexual violence she herself had endured.' Murray (2018) Her most successful painting is 'Judith slaying Holofernes'. I have chosen to include Gentileschi's 'Susana and the Elders' (1610). Susana and the elders is a biblical story on sexual abuse. While the artist created the piece, she was struggling with her own sexual assault. 'In works on a similar theme by male artists, Susanna is generally depicted as "asking for it," appearing flirtatiously coy and seductive. In Artemisia's painting, Susanna sits naked apart from a white cloth across her lap. Above her are two old men, lasciviousness oozing from every pore. She twists her head away from their pointing fingers, her hands raised in a gesture that clearly indicates, "Go away and leave me alone."' Murray (2018). In most male works the female is in the nude to be seen. 'To be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be

seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself.' Berger (1972, p. 56). Gentileschi has created a painting where the female does not want to be seen, to be gawked at.



Fig four

Another painting by Gentileschi 'Self-portrait as St. Catherine of Alexandria' (1616). This painting has been included because of the message behind it. St. Catherine was martyred and tortured by being tied to a wheel with iron spikes as can be seen in this piece, she was saved by 'divine intervention' and the wheel was broken. In the painting she is touching the wheel as a symbol of her resilience to come out on the other side of her hardship. The same can be said for Gentileschi, which is why she has created as self-portrait, she is implying that she too has overcome the hard times that she endured.

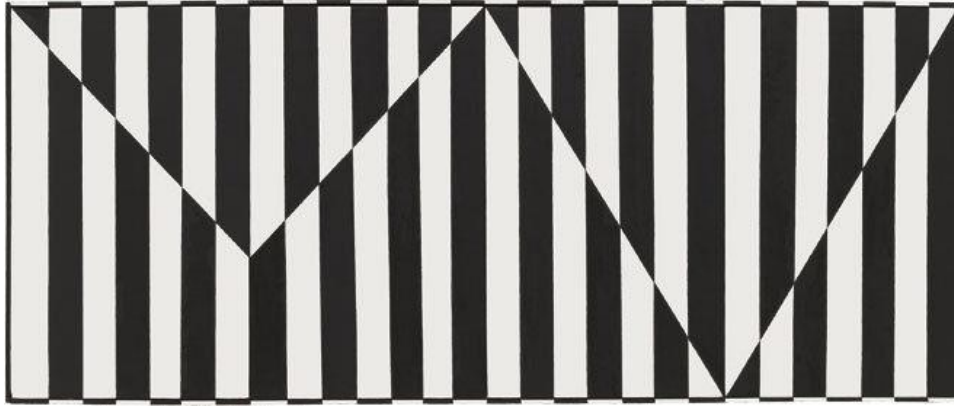


Fig five

Carmen Herrera is a contemporary artist at the age of 104. She sold her first painting at 89. She wasn't discovered until 2009. Herrera has spent most of her life in the shadows of the art world. I believe her art should have been appreciated from the very beginning of her career. "She said, 'You know, Carmen, you can paint rings around the men artists I have, but I'm not going to give you a show because you're a woman.' I felt as if someone had slapped me on the face. I felt for the first-time what discrimination was. It's a terrible thing. I just walked out. "Fried said she had to give the men shows because they had families to maintain.' Hattenstone (2016). Herrera talks about the hardships of being a female artist in the mid 20th century.

'Untitled 1952' is a minimalistic piece. Herrera's process of this piece of which the viewer must make sense of the image, makes the work interactive. It can be seen as many things but her love of city-scapes is present. 'There is nothing I love more than to make a straight line. How can I explain it? It's the beginning of all structures, really'. Miller et al (2016, p.22) I believe Herrera should be better credited for her contributions in the abstract movement. I believe the black and white is representative of how female artists are treated, that there is no grey area. They are either given the respect and recognition they deserve, or they are unacknowledged. "I began a lifelong process of purification, a process of taking away what isn't essential" Herrera (2005).

Fig six

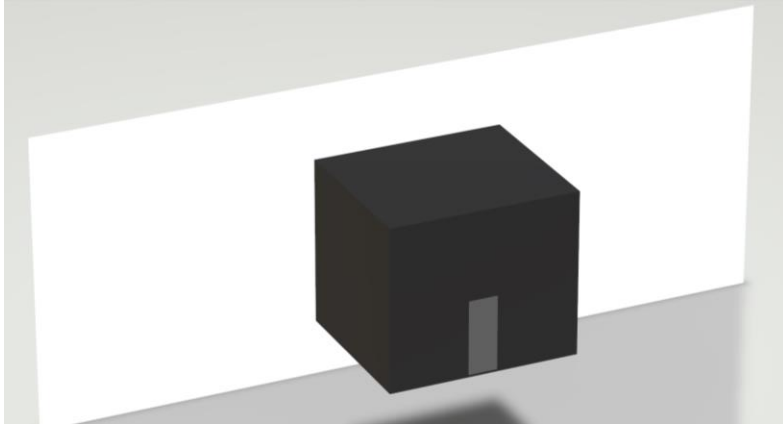


Fig Seven



Fig Eight



Fig Nine

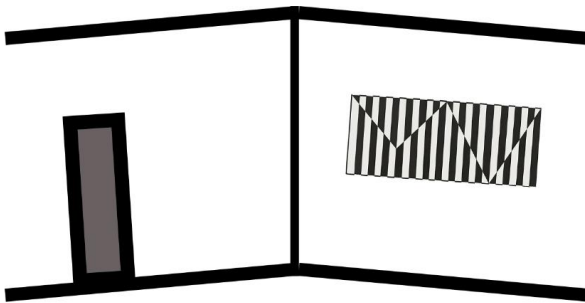
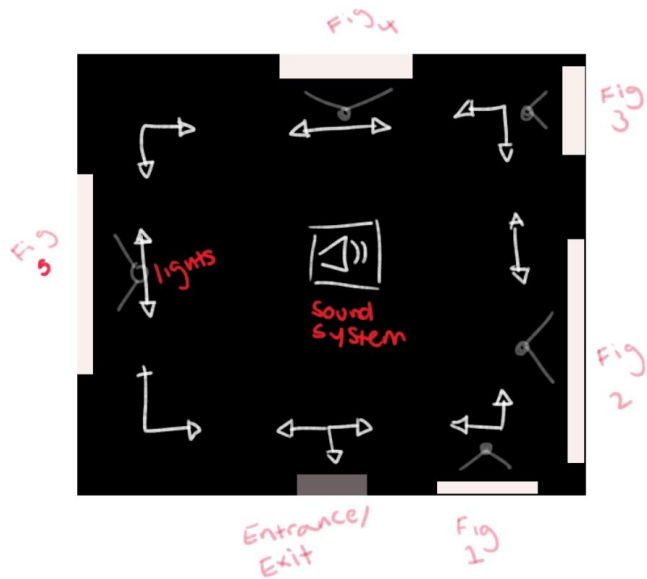


Fig Ten



This is how I plan the exhibition to look. The viewers may freely move around. In the middle is the sound system where the audio will output. There will be barriers in front of the pieces to protect the artwork behind the barriers the lighting will be casting up onto the work. There is empty space for the door to be expanded. With the door expansion more people will be able to enter and more will be able to leave enlightened.

Figures

Fig. One: Krasner, L. (1965) *Night Creatures*. The Met, New York.

Fig. Two: Krasner, L. (1963) *Another Storm*. Barbican Art Gallery, London, England.

Fig. Three: Gentileschi, A. (1610) *Susana and The Elders*. Schloss Weißenstein, Pommersfelden, Germany.

Fig. Four: Gentileschi, A. (1616) *Self-portrait as St. Catherine of Alexandria*. The National Gallery, London, England.

Fig. Five: Herrera, C. (1952) *Untitled 1952*. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York City, New York.

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