

Ways of perceiving

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Entitled 'Love my Gender' The exhibition I intend to curate will be featuring five pieces of work in collaboration with my chosen theme. The theme that I will be curating questions the concept of gender roles. Gender signifies to the characteristics of a female or male, that are socially constructed, and not their physiological and biological characteristics. This involves the norms, behaviours and roles associated with being both genders, and how artists can push boundaries and reverse gender concepts that people, in general, are conditioned to expect by society or culture. Art engages with the question of gender, and can introduce people to new experiences and the understanding of gender roles. Throughout this exhibition you will see a collective memorandum of five artists who use gender as the main resource of their work. I intend to use the mission gallery space to display the works of art. I will be focusing on theorists such as Linda L. Lindsey, Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood, who question gender development and gender in today's society. It is important to discuss gender because many people struggle to identify who they are, and feel they are labelled by societies traditional roles.

In today's society, there are many different types of gender, that were never known of in the past. This may be as a result that the fact that the traditional gender roles were societies expected norm, people were brought up to conform to traditional roles. Today there is a growing concept that gender roles are interchangeable between the sexes, making the more traditional expectations irrelevant (e.g., boys being brought up to fulfil masculine roles and girls feminine roles).

When a child is born, they are automatically given a name which is often gendered. This can influence the child to shape their perception of their expected gender role. Linda L. Lindsey stated "One of the most important social structures that organizes social interaction is status- a category or position a person occupies that is a significant determinant of how she or he will be defined and treated" (Lindsey, 2016). Individuals struggle with identifying their gender, and it is not acceptable for society to put labels on individuals that could determent their future. My intention is to show acceptance and understanding of the unique personalities and genders that individuals desire. That is why I have decided to choose a piece of work by Frida Kahlo, because in her work she embraces both her masculine and feminine side to undertake the barriers that are surrounding gender stereotypes and roles.

With identifying as both masculine and feminine individual, it didn't stop her to achieve what she wanted and believed in.

I will be discussing an artist called Paula Rego, who uses her work to reverse gender roles and show the viewers that nothing is always perfect and not a fairy tale. A quote by Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood stated "General differences between the behaviours of the genders are the result of the social roles they were placed in". (Eagly & Wood, 2015) Which is similar to the purpose of Paula Rego's work, placing characters in different gender stereotype roles. I will also be discussing a piece of work by Victoria Sin. She is a well-known Canadian visual artist, who uses drag performances and moving images to refigure the public's attitudes towards gender, sexuality and historical discourse of identity. Two other artists I have referred to, and who are involved politically, are Frida Kahlo and David Hockney, who are very different individuals but have one thing in common which is the support in gender and sexuality rights. The final artist that I have decided to choose is Greyson Perry, who considered himself as gender rigid, and isn't afraid to be himself and his alter ego which is Claire.

With the gallery being small I intend to place my work effectively; the walls will be white. I have associated the appearance of the white walls to further enhance the feeling of entering a pure space, that is openminded and a neutral. The space will be dim but there will be spotlights of the pieces of work.



Fig one

Displayed to the left of the entrance will be a portrait by Paula Rego 'Snow white and her stepmother', 178 X 150cm - fig one, that is a portrait with 2 figures. Rego creates portraits of Disney characters that are gender reversed. This links to my theme of gender and how gender norms can be reversed. Paula focuses on the female experiences, and the constructed myths that surround the idea of being a woman. Her approach is that she challenges the idea that woman must be simplified into being a wicked elderly witch or attractive young princess. This states that women are placed in a group, and what is expected by them, as their gender, is a female.



Fig two

In the bay of the exhibition, I intend to place the 'A view from elsewhere, Act 1, she postures in context'. By Victoria Sin – fig two. I decided to choose this piece of work to highlight gender fluidity, and reverse gender norms. In the space there will be a large white cloth with large stage lights beaming onto the cloth. Illuminating the structure will be a light which suggests an animated feeling. There will be a person lounging sideways, with a gaze. The portraits are taken throughout the 1970s, predominately pictures of drag performers. Their aim was to show the queer and trans history that were non-normative identities. My intention of this piece of work is to change the audience's perspective on beauty and gender roles reversed. Martine Gutierrez stated "we're living in an era where my existence is political whether I want to be or not. It's hard and emotionally taxing- humour is my saviour" (Gutierrez,2019). It's their intention as artists to influence the public on a topic that is taboo to some individuals who are narrow minded, also illustrating the modernity and concepts of gender.



Fig three

Displayed in the immediate right will be a painting by Frida Kahlo, that's called 'self-portrait with cropped hair', 40 X 28cm - fig three, 1940. In her self-portraits she is normally wearing feminine clothes, but in this image, she is wearing a large black suit. She created this portrait because she divorced her husband, and the portrait indicates the violence of separation and a newfound autonomy. I've decided to choose Frida because she represents freedom and gender. Her progressive attitude towards gender is apparent throughout her self-portraits. Throughout her life she was well known for being involved in politics, especially in the communist party. A quote by Lindsey stated,

"Gender roles highlight the junction between sociological theory and its usefulness to those working on a variety of issues in the name of gender justice, including economic equality, policies for the same sex-marriages and decreased violence against women" (Lindsey, 2016)

The gender that we were born with, might depict a positive or negative effect on what we politically believe in, and effect the process that could support our beliefs.

Although I intended to depict present day artists who challenged gender stereotypes, I choose Frida because her views on gender fluidity could be relevant present day. The work shown above addresses the fact that she is independent and can achieve any role and beyond that is expected by society.



Fig four

To the Right of the entrance, I will place a painting by David Hockney. 'Portrait of an artist (Pool with two figures)', 7ft X 10ft - fig four. In the image there are two figures, one is swimming in the pool whilst the other is looking down on the other figure. whilst on holiday with his lover, David took many photographs, then later decided to paint the image.

Hockney considers himself as gay, and some of his artworks depict the nature of gay love. In his most recent work, he represents same sex relationships and he is proud of himself and his sexual orientation. He stated "I suppose it's that gay men today want to fit in, well I don't care about that. I don't care about fitting in..." (Hockney,2012) This links to the theme of gender equality, showing acceptance to same sex relationships. It also shows the importance to express how you feel, who you love, and not to be afraid.



Fig five

In the centre I will place a ceramic piece of work by Greyson Perry, that's called 'Aspects of myself', 550 X 410 - fig 5. I intend for my exhibition space to be easily accessible, with a flowing sense of direction throughout the space. The object will be a large glazed vase, that has a patch of gold and yellow glaze on its surface, and depicts various figures, bringing a new sense of curiosity. The meaning behind the 'Aspects of myself' that it represents the several conflicting personae that make up Greyson's character. Perry stated, "Mirror myself awareness in that traits in my personality I previously attributed to 'mystical' outside forces I took ownership" (Perry, 2002). This piece of work addresses the fact that Greyson has been through moments of not knowing his identity, and through his work he can express himself and be proud of who he is today. In this piece of work, he expresses the different personae's he has, and the new found love of his alter ego, which is by the name of Claire. He expresses the acceptance of both feminine and masculine roles.

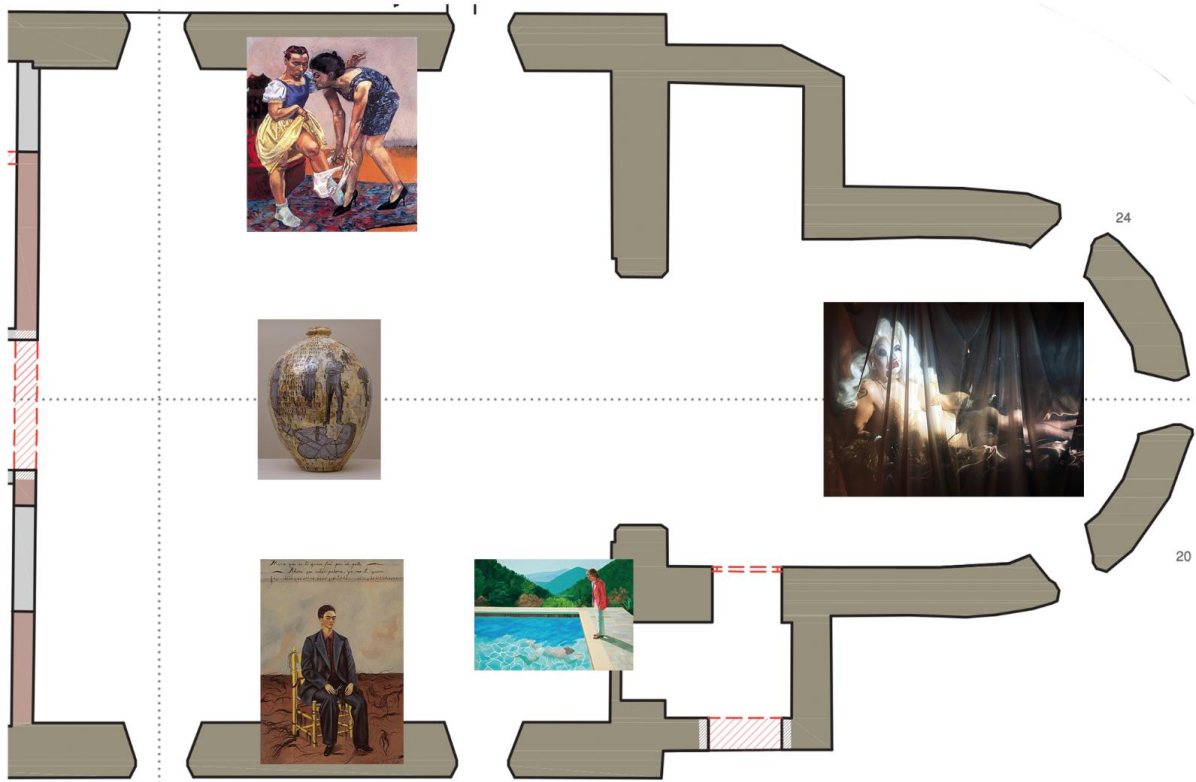


Fig six

As shown in Fig six, my exhibition space is curated to be an open and easily accessible space. The windows will be blocked, therefore there will be no sunlight in the space, the lights will be dim, but there will be spotlights on the pieces of work except the piece of work by Victoria Sin, there will be a projector. While the room is dim, it will enhance the curiosity to understand more intensely. By the exhibition taking place, it will be undoubtedly be shared on many social media platforms and the internet, which is my intention to the public becoming more understanding and show acceptance to present day gender roles.

Figures

Fig. One : Rego, P (1995) 'Snow white and her stepmother' [Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium] Courtesy of The Whitworth, The University of Manchester.

Fig. Two : Sin, V (2019) 'A view from elsewhere, Act one, She Postures in Context' [Installation] Hayward Gallery, London.

Fig. Three : Kahlo, F (1940) 'Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair' {Oil paint mounted on canvas] The Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

Fig. Four : Hockney, D (1972) 'Portrait of an Artist (Pool with 2 Figures)' [Acrylic on canvas] California.

Fig. Five : Perry, G (2001) 'Aspects of Myself' [Vase] The Tate Gallery.

Fig. Six : Mission Gallery (2019) [Digital Generated Image]

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