

Graphic Design

Ways of Perceiving (ADDA4023)

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Essay: Curating an Imaginary Exhibition

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Curating an Imaginary Exhibition:

Losing Everything

The topic of loss is a broad matter, but it is something everyone experiences at least once in their life, whether it be literal or metaphorical. It is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it can help humans grow, taking the experience and learning from it, but on the other, it can cause lasting trauma, causing mental problems for the person in question. An example is that a study had found out of 3,500 children who likely had experienced traumatic events, 16% of them developed PTSD. (Trickey, D., Lawson, V., 2023, p. 9). Some would say that loss does more harm than good, especially if a person has a close relationship with a certain person or thing; to quote Kathy Shear, a psychiatrist in Columbia, *"grief is the form love takes when someone we love dies."* (2016, p.14-18).

The topic of grief and loss are very interconnected and can be used interchangeably, but grief comes from loss; grief is just the result of loss. Loss is a broad definition different from person to person, and the severity also differentiates. When a loss happens to a person, especially if it is sudden, people want to find a reason, a meaning, to why it happened. Some people are unable to comprehend that such a scenario occurred and try to reject the fact that it happened, a coping mechanism (Davis and Hoeksema, 2001, p.4). One of the many ways of coping with loss is art. According to *Art Therapy and Creative Coping Techniques for Older Adults* by Susan Buchalter (2011, p.19), it teaches people "how to think abstractly" and "become more open-minded" to quote from the book, Buchalter has also said that it helps with better communication along with better coping skills.



Fig. 1. Corn Exchange, Brighton Dome, Brighton.

Source: bbc.co.uk

The exhibition, *Losing Everything*, is held at the Brighton Dome in the city of Brighton, commissioned by Prince George IV and designed by architect William Porden in 1803, as written on the official site (Brighton Dome & Brighton Festival, 2006). The area was chosen because of Brighton's creative culture; it is where the famous street artist, Banksy, was born (Manco, 2002). The choice came from a Van Gogh themed exhibition held at the location, which coincided with the theme of loss due to having him famously losing his ear and the artist himself dealing with grief and loss.

Keith Haring, Unfinished Painting (1989)



Fig. 2. Keith Haring. *Unfinished Painting*, 1989. [Acrylic on canvas]. Art Gallery of Ontario.

Source: artnet.com

Famous American pop artist, Keith Haring, born on 1958 in Pennsylvania had moved to New York in 1978. He spent his life in New York making public art pieces showing raising social awareness about topics such as drugs and the practice of safe sex. Haring was open about his homosexuality according to an *Out* magazine (2005, p.46), which was also incorporated into his work. In 1981, the HIV/AIDS epidemics broke out and affected millions of people globally. Keith Haring had been caught with the virus infection and show cased the struggles and warnings of HIV/AIDS in his works before his final one in 1989, *Unfinished Painting*. The painting depicts his iconic style only painted in one corner of the canvas and the rest is purposely blank to represent the people who have lost their lives during the HIV/AIDS epidemic and how much the virus had affected his strength before ultimately becoming deceased. The deliberate choice of leaving it unfinished can be seen as a testament to his loss and others, emphasising the sadness behind the meaning of this piece if taking to account by an analysis of the concept of unfinished art by Benedetta Richi (2020).

Ivan Seal, *Beaten Frowns After, Pittor Pickgrown in Khatheinstersper, Hag, Giltsholder, Eptitraxisticemestionscers Descending, Necrotomigaud* (2014 - 2018).



Fig. 3. Ivan Seal. *Beaten Frowns After, Pittor Pickgrown in Khatheinstersper, Hag, Giltsholder, Eptitraxisticemestionscers Descending, Necrotomigaud*, 2014 - 2018. [Acrylic on canvas]. Private collection.

Source: lhsledger.org

English Painter Ivan Seal focuses primarily on Abstractionism in his works and is quite well known for his style of abstract, a style of art that was pioneered by Wassily Kandinsky in 1911 according to the official Tate Museum website (2018). Abstractionism focuses and emphasis the use of shapes and colours and “does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality”, also written on the official Tate Museum website (2017). In 2016, he collaborated with music artist, Leyland Kirby, to create the illustrations for the album, *Everywhere at the End of Time*. The album was released to give listeners a reflection of what it would be like to have Alzheimer’s disease, with each work by Seal corresponded with the progression of the disease as the album progresses. Though there is not a lot of information about the pieces, some have speculated the meanings of the works. Such as, written on the music reporting site, Tinymixtapes.com,

That grey scroll rests on an empty horizon, blank and unravelling into folds like the creases of a brain or a newspaper. It seems petrified as a statue, stuck in the pose of discomposure, without

revealing anything of its history. Its timeline is erased; in its roll is shadow. The simple artwork is foreboding for the bright compositions found here. (Pat Beane, 2016.)

It is safe to assume that the pieces are supposed to give a sense of familiarity but unable to pinpoint what the object is, which further simulates those who experience Alzheimer's disease, slowly losing memories. The use of the abstract art style and how it focuses on more on shapes and colours emphasises the viewpoint and gives onlookers a better understanding of the insight of an Alzheimer's patient.

Yuko Tatsushima, *I Can No Longer be a Bride Anymore* (1999)

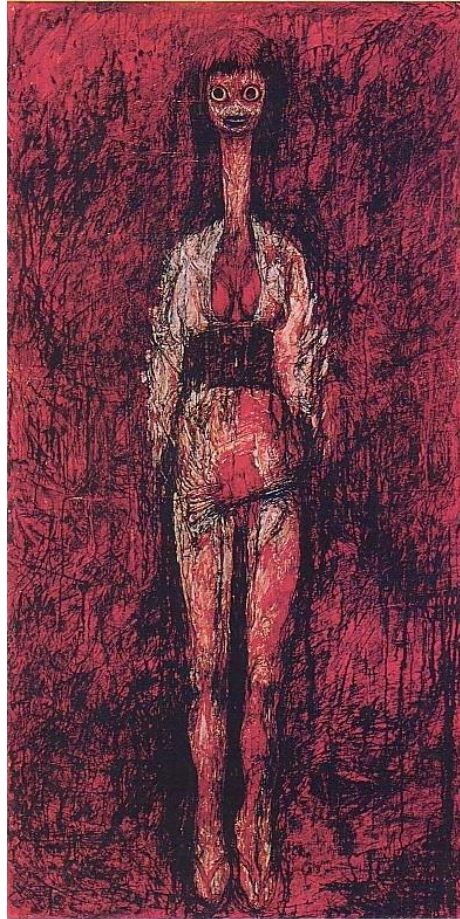


Fig. 4. Yuko Tatsushima. *I Can No Longer be a Bride Anymore*, 1999. [Medium Unknown]. Private Collection.

Source: undergroundfortress.web.fc2.com

Yuko Tatsushima is a Japanese artist from the prefecture of Tokyo according to the biography on her site (2009). Not much is known about Tatsushima other than what is published on her website. From the artwork, the painting gives an atmosphere of horror but also pain. The horror stems from the inhuman proportions of the woman and the rough, black markings. Focusing on the inhuman figure, it could be interpreted as a loss of humanity, not being able to feel human or recognize as human. Some have judged that the work is about sexual assault, as in a video by youtuber Stardust Sakura discussing about the painting and other horror content (2023). Just from the red stain at the bottom of the woman's

kimono and that her kimono provocatively shows her cleavage. With that theory and the title, *I Can No Longer be a Bride Anymore*, it could represent the loss of innocence and purity from the experience. In western society it is important for women and men to stay innocent, as it makes them closer to God and gives people self-control and self-respect (Geneva College, 2019), which is why the subject of innocence is a focus.

Barnett Newman, *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue III* (1986)



Fig. 5. Barnett Newman. *Who's Afraid of Red, yellow and Blue III*, 1986. [Oil on canvas]. Stedelijk Museum.

Source: barbaravisser.net

American abstract expressionist artist, Barnett Newman, painted primarily colour fields, a term for subgenre of abstract works in 1950s and 1960s that are large canvases, single colours (Tate, 2022), as other artist like him would. The artwork is part of a series of the same name, the name being a reference to a 1967 play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee (Fecile, 2019). In 1986, the painting as shown above was slashed by a man named Gerard Jan Van Bladeren with a box cutter across the centre, as to provoke a reaction and to make an artistic statement as stated from the previous mentioned

article. Restoration attempts were made but Newman had a unique painting technique that it was impossible to restore without it being clear that attempts had been done, making the original completely lost. Some have said that “the work has become a ‘prop’, a copy” but arguments have been made that “the basic concept remains” according to Barbra Visser who has made a documentary about the incident. Before the destruction, people were losing their minds over the painting stated in the same article, where Visser says “I got very angry” and “I ran out of the museum. I sat on the steps and was determined not to go in again.” and later in the article, people claimed that they were happy for the loss of the painting.

Edward Hopper, *Two Comedians* (1965)



Fig. 6. Edward Hopper. *Two Comedians*, 1965. [Oil on canvas]. Greenwich, Connecticut, Bruce Museum.

Source: edwardhopper.net

Edward Hopper was born in America and painted in the style of realism, a 19th century movement where paintings depicted the mundane life of the lower class (Tate, 2017). Hopper's previous works had always an atmosphere of melancholy and isolation, like in one of his popular paintings, *Soir Bleu*, it shows a sad clown smoking at a cafe surrounded by normally dressed people, the clown is isolated and the central focus, further isolating. Which makes *Two Comedians* different from the usual atmosphere as the performers are smiling, the contrast is why it's chosen and the bittersweet context behind the creation. Hopper's wife, Joseph, confirmed that the performers represent Hopper himself and her, she's included as an appreciation of her for being with him (Colton Klein, 2018). In a record written by her that talks about her husband's paintings, she wrote "a dark stage (and what a stage, strong as the deck of a ship) and two small figures out of pantomime. Poignant." (The Canvas, 2023). The use of the word 'poignant' to mean touching or moving could imply that she knew that this was his final painting before she would lose him, as a personal interpretation. The work depicts the two performers seemingly bowing to their audience, a metaphor for Hopper saying goodbye to the world and his wife before being deceased. This piece is included in the exhibition as a positive look on loss, leaving the world with a happy goodbye for those who loved his work, and those close to him who will inevitably lose him.

Losing Everything: Exhibition Plan

Keith Harring
Unfinished painting

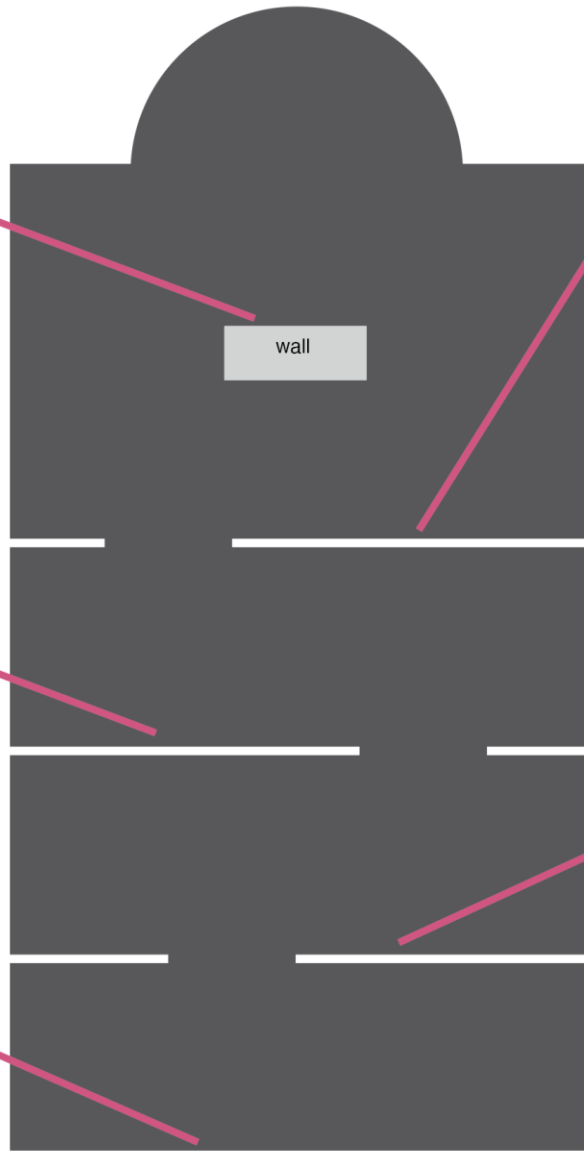
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Beaten Frowns
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Yuko Tatsushima
I Can No Longer be
a Bride Anymore

(red lighting and
projections)

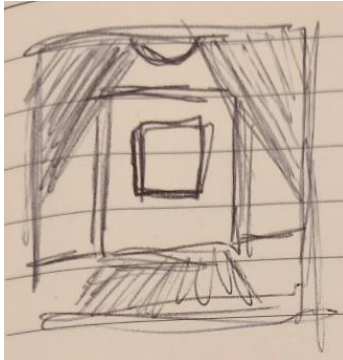
Barnett Newman
Who's Afraid of
Red, Yellow and
Blue III

Edward Hopper
Two Comedians



Losing Everything: Concept of rooms

Thumbnail sketches of how the works are to be presented to the audience.



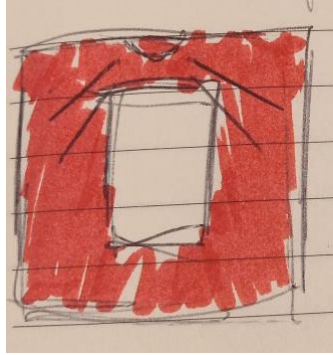
Spotlight over Keith Haring's *Unfinished Painting* in darkness



Ivan Seal's *Beaten Frowns After, Pittor Pickgrown in Khatheinstersper, Hag, Giltsholder, Eptitraxisticemestionscers*

Descending, Necrotomigaud, 2014 – 2018 displayed on the wall with a gramophone playing *Everywhere at the End*

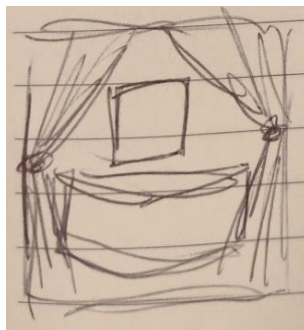
of Time by Leyland Kirby on the side.



Yuko Tatsushima *I Can No Longer be a Bride Anymore* 1999 in its own room with red lighting.



Barnett Newman *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue? III* 1986 hung on a wall with a screen playing Barbara Visser's documentary of the painting *The End of Fear* 2018.



Edward Hopper *Two Comedians* 1965 hung on a wall with curtains and a stage.

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Source: <https://barbaravisser.net/the-end-of-fear>

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Source: <https://www.edwardhopper.net/two-comedians.jsp>