

Student Name: Megan Cox

P Number: 2000710

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An Overwhelming Space: The Bigger Meaning

After a period of consideration and research, I have decided to base my exhibition on space and the loneliness that comes with it. Space is said to be such a spectacular thing, some people would love to go into space and others are nervous about what else could be out there, it is a widely discussed and interesting topic. But in reality, space is lonely, imagine being in space on your own, it is not like living on your own, it would be just you, and no one else. Loneliness is something that many individuals experience, but have they experienced it like this? The emptiness is unimaginable. Emptiness that no human could ever face, it is something that would be unbearable for them. Surrounded by darkness and nothing else.

After reading a story about space on discover magazine, where a scientist talks about an asteroid which flew past earth, he explains how space is very much empty, the reason that he went into this is because he wanted to talk about the myth that space is full of rocks and the like, explaining that it is not. He done this by speaking of an asteroid that flew past earth that was considered to be close but was actually millions of kilometres away.

Looking into space and finding where space and photography can come together, I immediately think about astrophotography. This form of photography is very beautiful, and I personally feel that it is not spoken about enough. I have been doing photography for over four years and have never once investigated astrophotography as it was almost never spoken about when I was doing photography in school for both my GCSE's and A-Level. I feel it is important for these artists to get the recognition that they deserve as they are very dedicated to their work and some images can take hours, if not days to capture. This form of photography can also be very expensive and complicated to master. I feel that when people discuss photography topics, astrophotography is not one that will come up.

Looking further into astrophotography, I find that this topic significantly relates to air and light pollution. Pollution is a very important topic; it is affecting our world every day and we are the only ones that can stop it. When thinking of pollution, I immediately think of plastic pollution and rarely acknowledge any other form. Air pollution is a substantial matter and affects a lot of things. When going out at night we should be able to see thousands of stars in the sky, but we do not, this is a result of air pollution. This is a very pressing matter, the air we are breathing is extremely polluted and nothing is being done to prevent it.

I have done research into air and light pollution and found many things. I knew before how threatening air pollution was to humans, but never once thought about the plants and wildlife that need clear air just as much as we do. I also never thought of air pollution being the cause of someone's death, simply because it is not talked about. I found out that there are thousands of people dying each year due to air pollution, and that is just in America. One thing that I found the most shocking is that air pollution is much worse indoors than outdoors. Most lung problems and illnesses are due to air pollution. Light pollution is also a very huge concern, there are so many factors that come with light pollution, we no longer live in the dark, there is light everywhere which also means that the sky is not as dark as it used to be.

I have researched into astrophotography and found some amazing images and even more amazing artists. I came across three artists who particularly stood out to me, Mark Gee, Vanessa Marsh and Michael Shainblum. Gee is a self-taught photographer who is based in New Zealand, his work is created through many years of experience, this photographer enjoys challenging himself which is what led me to choose him as he's an inspiration of mine. Marsh's work is the most unique out of all three photographers, her images do not

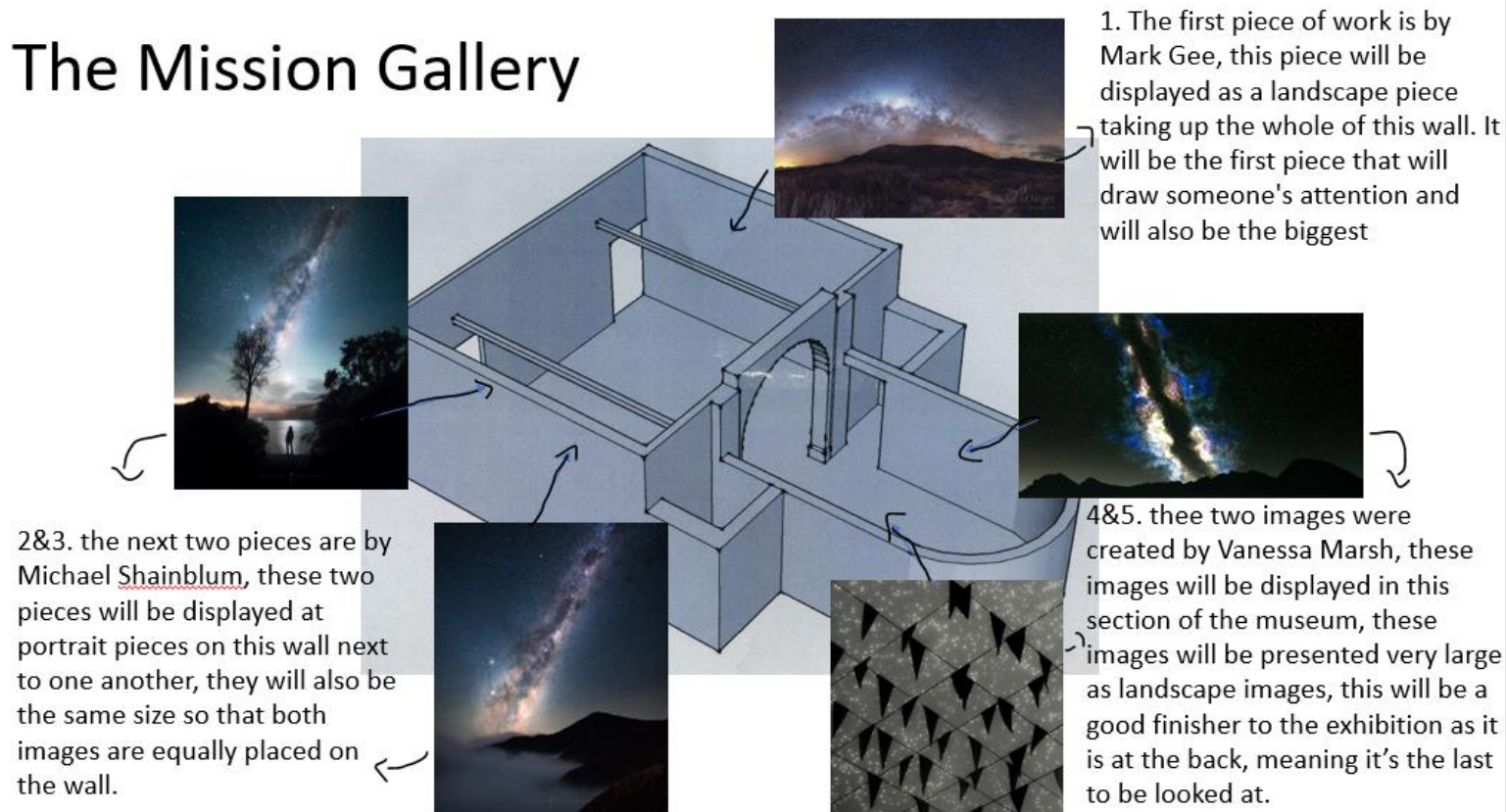
only include the stars, but also includes shadows of trees or fairground rides, and many more. Something that I found shocking when doing research was that all of Gee's work was created in the dark room, she never took images of the stars, she made them, which is shows great creativity. Lastly, Shainblum's work stood out to me because he does a variety of different things, a lot of his work is normal landscape photography, while some of his work is astrophotography.

The first piece of work that I am going to look at is by Mark Gee, a very strong image which is full of detail. Such an image instantly drew my attention. As well as being a photographer he also works in the film industry. His goal is to bring together the beautiful landscape of New Zealand with the sky. The image that I selected is called *The Art Of Night*. This image is full of colour which is why I chose it.

The next two images that I chose were both created by Vanessa Marsh, her work is the most interesting to me because they look like they've been taken outside at night, when in fact they were made in the dark room. The first piece that I chose by Vanessa Marsh is from her project called *Falling*, which consists of photograms. When creating her images, she never left the dark room which makes this is very different piece from the others. The piece that I chose is full of bright colours which stood out to me. The second piece is from her exhibition called *All At Once*, these are drawings/photograms that she created. This image that I selected is a far different from the others as this one has a silhouette of objects from a fair ground. These pieces were created by drawings which were then layered and made into films and then exposed onto photographic paper. The image that I chose from this exhibition is full of flags and lines which add depth into the image and create leading lines which help move my eyes around the frame.

I chose two more images from Michael Shainblum to finish my exhibition, both pieces are found on his website under *The Magic of New Zealand*, this section of his website is full displays many different images such as landscape photography, but the astrophotography photographs stood out to me the most. The first image that I chose is called *finding the stars*. This image drew my attention because of the detail in the sky, but also because of the silhouettes present in the image. In particular, the silhouette of the tree is the most interesting to me, it looks as if the tree has been put there on purpose, the end of the tree branches is where we begin to see the stars, the angle of the tree is also moving with the stars which is very appealing to look at. There is also water in this image which is distinct to what I have looked at so far, this means that there are also some reflections in the image. The second image is called *Infinity*. This image is much different because of the clouds, it looks like these images have been taken high up in the mountains as the peak of the mountain is taller than the clouds, the colours in this also stood out to me like all the others. The silhouette in this image is the least attractive one that I have looked at when compared with the previous images. With that being said, I feel this makes the image a lot better as my eyes are naturally drawn towards the stars and nothing else. Comparing both of these images, the way the stars are moving is of interest to me, as both are going in the same direction.

The Mission Gallery



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