

Title: Beauty is On the Street (A curatorial project based upon Community)

Student Name: Sarah Grounds

P Number: 2005771

Programme of Study: Documentary Photography and Visual Activism

Module: ADAD4019

Word Count: 1543

Lecturer's Name: Ryan Moule



BEAUTY IS ON THE STREET

(A curatorial project based on Community)

By Sarah Grounds

Curating an Exhibition

‘If we understand artistic activity as a form of communication, it’s clear that art galleries and international art fairs are vital.’ (Birmingham-Reyes, 2019)



(Fig 1. Roots by Sarah Grounds, 2020)

My work explores four themes, Politics, Community, Loss and Isolation. I based my exhibition on one of these themes, Community. Communities and the rebuilding of them, is the most important thing to change our society for the better. (Bookchin, 2007)

How do I communicate this through an art exhibition and how can that exhibition reach ‘normal’ people?

There has been a great deal of movement towards trying to make art galleries more accessible to the general public in the 21st Century. But people still feel intimidated going into these institutions and still see art as something separate to them. The art World is mainly dominated by rich, white males, despite many galleries recent attempts to try and address this. Such as the MOMA’s complete rehanging in 2019 (Higgins, 2019)



(Fig 2, Rehanging in MOMA, 2016)

‘in the re-opening of the Tate Modern, London, in 2016—of the three hundred artists represented in the re-hang of the permanent collection, less than a third were women and fewer still were non-white.’ (Reilly, 2017)

So how can we make art relevant to people? This led me to research different ways art can be shown.

Willem Sandberg, who directed the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam from 1945 to 1962 set out to create a new, more inclusive museum. Rejecting the normal discipline of displaying art by epoch, he wanted art to look to the future, to have meaning for people in their everyday lives. He encouraged this link by opening a café, holding workshops in the museum, and in 1954, building a new wing with glass walls, so that the outside world and the inside of the gallery could ‘communicate with each other’. (Cagol, 2021)



(Fig 3. FACE2FACE in Gaza, 2007)

In 2007, street artists JR and Marco organised the largest illegal art exhibition in history. This was

Face2Face, an exhibition showing blown up funny portraits of Palestinians and Israelis. It was shown on

various streets that had seen conflict in Palestine and Israel. A light-hearted work with a deep message of how we may be divided by religion and nation. But we are joined by joy and humanity. (Maria R, 2016)



(Fig 4, Passages Insolites, Quebec 2019)

Passages Insolites or Unusual Passages is an annual art festival in Quebec curated by EXMURO arts Publics. The intention is for the art to surprise, delight and get people thinking, by creating artwork in unexpected places. (Harrouk, 2019)

This research inspired me, especially the two street exhibitions. They are both fun; have deep messages and the possibility of being seen by people who would not normally go into an Art Gallery. Could I make my own exhibition reach the same people by placing it in an unexpected, ‘normal’ place?



(Fig 5, High Street, Swansea, 2021)

I found a small line of shops on a housing estate in Swansea. The shops are boarded up and this is where I decided to have my exhibition. (Dex, 2021)

The Exhibition

The Exhibition will be presented in three of the shops.



(Fig 6, The Three Shops, 2021)

The first two shops, the Tribe and Dance rooms, speak of the fundamentals of being human. The final shop is the 'Community' room.



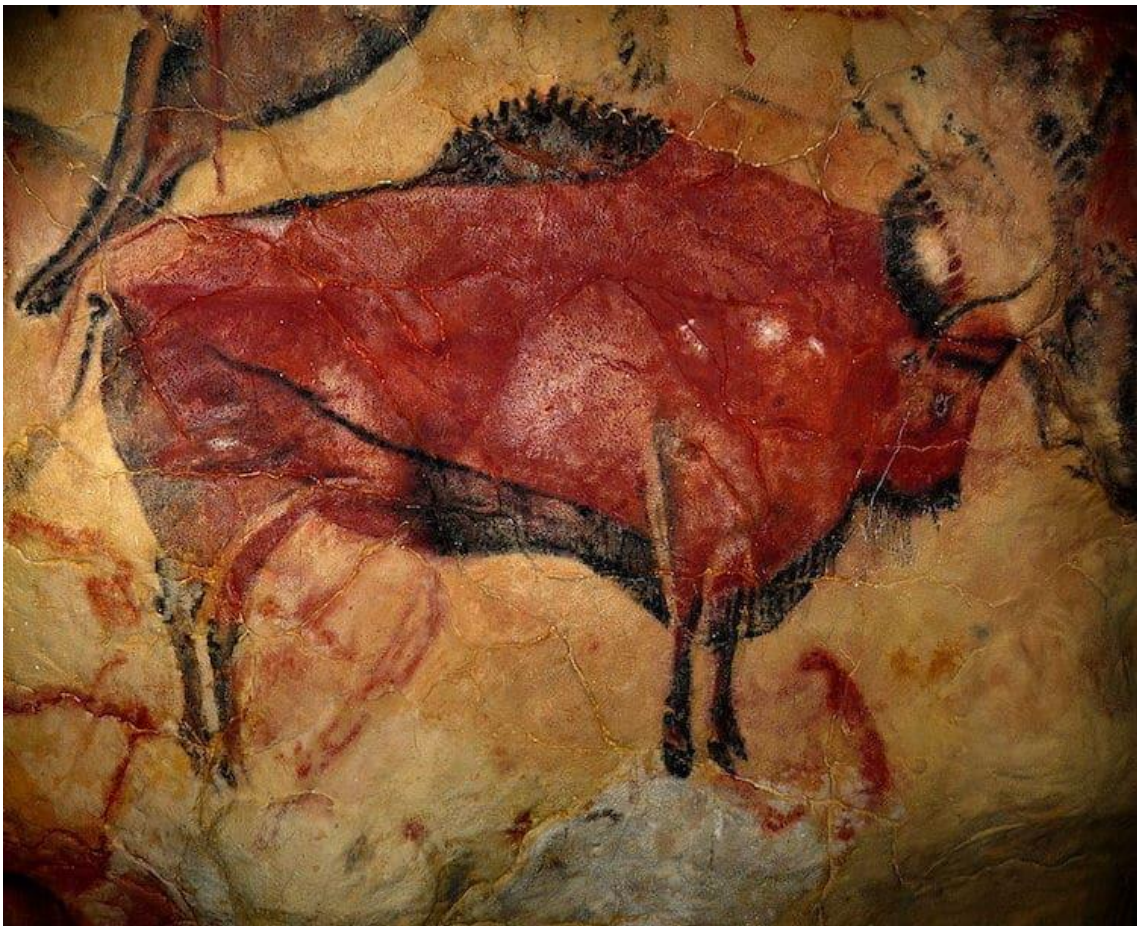
(Fig. 7 Map of Exhibition, 2021)

The Tribe Room

The Tribe room is multi-sensory, exploring humanity's beginnings. The whole space is a mock cave, replicated on the walls are the paintings from The Altamira caves in Spain.

'Picasso himself came out of the cave impressed: "After Altamira," he said, "all is decadence."' (Dowson, 2020)

The paintings in the Altamira caves were the first to be discovered in Europe. The caves were owned by Marcelino Sanz de Sautola. Whilst excavating in 1879, his eight-year old daughter, Maria, discovered the paintings. (Dowson, 2020)



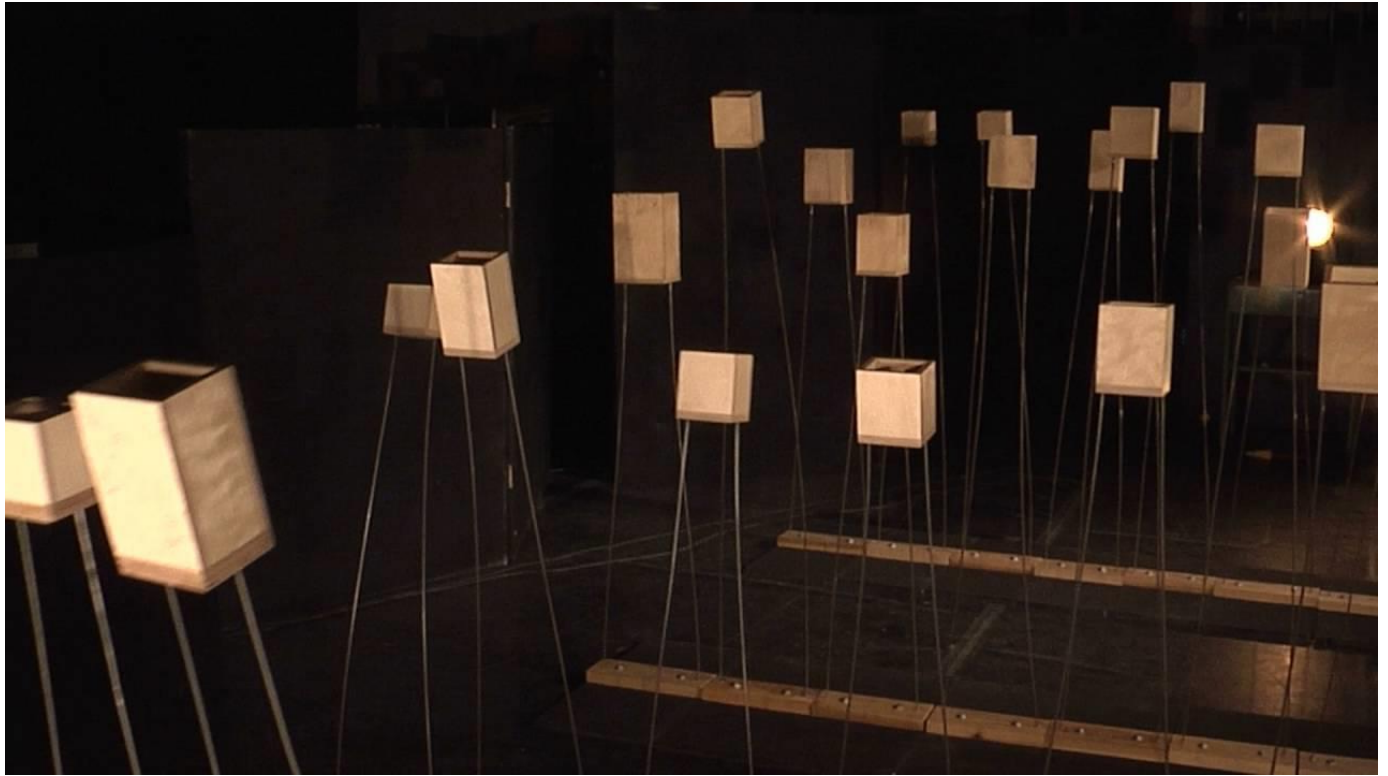
(Fig 8. Altamira Caves, 2020)

The dates of the paintings span over twenty thousand years. With the earliest paintings being simple hand forms, to the stunningly detailed bison created in the Magdalenian Age. Many paintings were painted over old paintings with paintings merging with an age gap of ten thousand years. (Stewart, 2020)

This is a beautiful statement of humanity, a coming together through ritual spanning over thousands of years.

The cave will be dimly lit with inset spot lighting and in the middle of the room is the sound installation, Field of Flowers.

[LINK TO FIELD OF FLOWERS ON YOUTUBE](#)



(Fig. 9, Field of Flowers, 2020)

Field of Flowers is by Daniel Schmidt & Paul Dresher, a duo who invent instruments and create interactive sound installations. It is a simple design of wooden boxes placed on top of two spring steel rods. In each box is a large ball bearing. When the box is pulled back, it makes a noise. Each box and ball are different sizes to make different oscillations and they are presented at different heights. (Dresher, 2020)



(Fig. 10, Field of Flowers detail, 2020)

I choose this work to present in the cave as it creates a beautiful sound to go with the cave paintings. It's very tactile and visitors will be encouraged to interact with the piece to create sound.

The Dance Room

This room will be the complete opposite to The Cave Room. The walls will be plain white with a wooden floor and bright lighting. On the furthest wall will be hanging, 'The Dance 1' by Henri Matisse.

The Dance was commissioned by Sergei Shchukin, a Russian businessman and art collector in 1909.

The Dance 1, now hanging in MOMA, was just a preliminary sketch for Matisse, despite its very large size.

The painting speaks of freedom and unity. The fluid lines of the dancers merging, forming a ring, the never-ending circle of life. (Henrimatisse, 2021)



(Fig 11. The Dance by Henri Matisse, 2021)

In the room music from around the World will be played. There will be a dance instigator who will dance themselves and encourage others to join them. Emphasising free movement, the dancing will be an inclusive activity.

A lot of participatory art views singular authorship as a bad thing and collective authorship as good.

(Bishop, 2012) The dance instigators in the exhibition explore the idea of having a balance of both.

Dance is a fundamental attribute to humans and is not found in any other primate. Our desire to not only dance, but watch others dance and dance together is not fully understood. But it is proven that it not only helps people physically, but mentally and socially too.

‘The social aspect of dance means that it is also an effective way of improving a person’s emotional wellbeing by reducing loneliness and isolation and increasing feelings of value and worth through active participation.’ (Welsh NHS Confederation, 2019)

The Community Room

The final room is the Community Room. On the far wall there is a large Community art board, where people can share their art work. In the centre of the room is a craft table and an art instigator who’s creating work but also encouraging others to do so too.



(Fig 12, Community Art Wall, 2021)

The famous poet Dylan Thomas, lived not too far from Swansea. (Dylan Thomas Centre, 2021) An extract from his poem ‘Do not go gentle into that good night’ will be painted in large font across the wall in the style of Barbara Kruger’s work. (The Broad, 2021) The poem speaks of not accepting things quietly, always fighting and is something local people know and love.



(Fig 13. Dylan Thomas Poetry, 2021 / Fig 14 Barbara Kruger at Stedelijk Museum, 2021)

The shop window wall will be left uncovered so that people can see in and out. The final wall will have two pieces on it.

The first is a painting called “Figures before Eddy’s Fish and Chip Shop” by Norman Cornish. Norman was a working-class artist. He worked as a miner in Lancashire for thirty-five years, before becoming a professional artist. (Kelly, 2020)



(Fig 15. “Figures before Eddy’s Fish and Chip Shop” by Norman Cornish, 2020)

The painting portrays an estate of terraced houses and the everyday lives of ‘normal’ people. In this work, working class life is represented as beautiful.

The next piece is a black and white photograph by Tish Murtha. Another working-class artist who documented life in the North of England. (Tish Murtha, 2021)



(Fig 16. Juvenile Jazz Bands by Tish Murtha, 2021)

I choose a shot from her project ‘Juvenile Jazz Bands’ depicting children playing on a hill in silhouette. It speaks of dreams, hopes and potential and fitted perfectly to the feel in the Community room.

Conclusion

‘If images carry a lot of the blame for instilling sickness in our souls, they can also occasionally be credited for offering us antidotes.’ (De Botton, 2013)

My exhibition has ended up being a family day out. A rejoicing in humanity, creativity and community. I wanted to curate an exhibition that people would stumble upon, that people didn’t know they needed to see and leave smiling. We have forgotten that surroundings do not make a community, it’s people. I hope that my exhibition may be a little reminder of that.

References

- Birmingham-Reyes, Christy, (2019) Why are art galleries important?, *When Women Inspire*
Available at <https://whenwomeninspire.com/2019/03/01/art-galleries-purpose/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Bishop, Claire, (2012) *Artificial Hells*. London, Verso
- Bookchin, Murray, (2007) *Social Ecology and Communalism*. AK Press
- Cagol, Stefano, (2021) Exhibition History and the Institution as a Medium. *Stedelijk Studies*
Available at <https://stedelijkstudies.com/journal/exhibition-history-and-the-institution-as-a-medium/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- De Botton, A. & Armstrong, J., 2016. *Art as therapy*. London, Phaidon
- Dex, Robert, (2021) Capital leads the way in post-pandemic outdoor art boom. *Evening Standard*. 19th February
Available at <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/exhibitions/london-postpandemic-outdoor-art-boom-b919845.html>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Dowson, Thomas, (2021) Visiting Altamira. *Archaeology Travel*.
Available at <https://archaeology-travel.com/news/altamira-cave-re-open-for-visitors/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Dresher, Paul, (2021) About Paul Dresher. *Paul Dresher Ensemble*.
Available at <https://www.dresherensemble.org/about-pde/paul-dresher/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Dylan Thomas Centre, (2021) About Dylan Thomas. *Dylan Thomas Centre*
Available at <http://www.dylanthomas.com/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Harrouk, Christele, (2019) Public Art Exhibition on the Streets of Quebec. *Archdaily*. 13th August
Available at <https://www.archdaily.com/922941/public-art-exhibition-in-the-streets-of-quebec>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Henri Matisse, (2021) The Dance. *Henri Matisse*
Available at <https://www.henrimatisse.org/the-dance.jsp>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Higgins, Charlotte, (2019) Budge Up, Great White Males. *Guardian*. 16th October
Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/oct/16/moma-goes-global-with-an-explosive-450m-rehang>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Kelly, Mike, (2020) Shunned by some, underrated by others. *Chronicle*. 29th February
Available at <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/whats-on/norman-cornish-exhibition-artist-durham-17829846>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Maria, R, (2016) 15 Influential Political Art Pieces. *Widewalls*. 29th November
Available at <https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/political-art>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Reilly, Maura, (2017) What Is Curatorial Activism. *Art News*. 7th November
Available at <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/what-is-curatorial-activism-9271/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- Stewart, Jessica, (2020) 6 Incredible Facts about the Prehistoric Altamira Cave Paintings. *My Modern Met*. 13th January
Available at <https://archaeology-travel.com/news/altamira-cave-re-open-for-visitors/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)
- The Broad, (2021) Barbara Kruger. *The Broad*.
Available at <https://www.thebroad.org/art/barbara-kruger>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Tish Murtha, (2021) Biography. *Tish Murtha*
Available at <http://www.tishmurtha.co.uk/biography.html>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Welsh NHS Confederation (2019) Let's Dance! How dance improves physical and mental health. *Welsh NHS Confederation*
Available at <https://www.nhsconfed.org/-/media/Confederation/Files/Wales-Confed/Briefing-for-CPG-on-Arts-and-Health-18th-September-2019-Final.pdf>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

List of Figures

Figure 1. Grounds, Sarah, (2020) Roots

Figure 2. Muzikar, Jonathan (2019) Budge Up, Great White Males. *Guardian*. 16th October
Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/oct/16/moma-goes-global-with-an-explosive-450m-rehang>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 3. Maria, R, (2016) Face 2 Face project in Gaza. *Widewalls*. 29th November
Available at <https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/political-art>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 4. Harrouk, Christele, (2016) Public Art Exhibition on the Streets of Quebec. *Archdaily*
Available at <https://www.archdaily.com/922941/public-art-exhibition-in-the-streets-of-quebec>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 5. Google, (2021) High Street, Swansea, *Google Maps*. 23rd April
Available at https://www.google.com/maps/@51.6287142,-3.9419883,3a,90y,259.88h,89.94t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sPS8p27_PSinz5QADkRTtzQ!2e0!7i13312!8i6656
(Accessed on 23rd April 2021)

Figure 6. Google, (2021) High Street, Swansea, *Google Maps*. 23rd April
Available at https://www.google.com/maps/@51.6287142,-3.9419883,3a,90y,259.88h,89.94t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sPS8p27_PSinz5QADkRTtzQ!2e0!7i13312!8i6656
(Accessed on 23rd April 2021)

Figure 7. Grounds, Sarah (2021) Exhibition layout

Figure 8. Stewart, Jessica, (2020) 6 Incredible Facts about the Prehistoric Altamira Cave Paintings. *My Modern Met*. 13th January
Available at <https://archaeology-travel.com/news/altamira-cave-re-open-for-visitors/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 9-10. Drescher, Paul, (2021) Invented Musical Instruments. *Paul Drescher Ensemble*.
Available at <https://www.dresherensemble.org/works/invented-musical-instruments/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 11. Henri Matisse, (2021) The Dance. *Henri Matisse*
Available at <https://www.henrimatisse.org/the-dance.jsp>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 12. Santa Clarita Arts (2021) Community Wall, *Santa Clarita Arts*
Available at <https://santaclaritaarts.com/2020/06/16/community-wall-2/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 13. Good Reads (2021) Dylan Thomas Book Cover, *Good Reads*
Available at <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/6619539-do-not-go-gentle-into-that-good-night>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 14. Gert Jan Van Rooji (2021) Barbara Kruger at Stedelijk Museum
Available at https://www.gertjanvanrooji.com/content/BARBARA_KRUGER_at_the_Stedelijk_Museum_large.html
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 15. Chesters, Laura (2017) “Figures before Eddy’s Fish and Chip Shop” by Norman Cornish. *Antiques Trade Gazette*
Available at <https://www.antiquetrade gazette.com/news/2017/norman-cornish-and-mining-artists-get-new-museum-in-county-durham/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)

Figure 16. Tank Magazine (2021) Juvenile Jazz Bands by Tish Murtha. *Tank Magazine*
Available at <https://tankmagazine.com/tank/2018/07/tish-murtha/>
(Accessed on 19th April 2021)