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Imagined Exhibition Space: SATURATION

SATURATE; soak thoroughly; cause to absorb the maximum amount of something (Collins, 2006). The postmodernist world, now the land of the lost. A daily bombardment of the senses, as existence skim reads over the incomprehensible truth, the mind knows not of ease. Information obliterates the eyes and perforates ears, knowledge is not lost; life is simply engulfed within the infinitive depths of it. We resided within the postmodern complex. The timeline of life is a linear path, while the absorption of knowledge, although expands in tandem with life's path it is exempt from linear formation. Who resides in control of what the individual *is to know*? Does the mind know of limits; do humans have a saturation point? Is the postmodern existence a paradigm of the true saturation point, the white noise disjuncture?

The Artifacts

The selected artifacts within the saturate exhibition have been selected to explore a deeper understanding of the sovereignty of the *gallery space* as an “idealized transforming space” (O’Doherty, 1999, p.45), in which to deconstruct the *white cube affect* by exhibiting futile surface patterns that have been created with intent for mass reproduction of domestic use to be placed within the gallery context. Each four-sided square room throughout will exhibit one pattern design per wall “using conceptual spatial determinations to define pattern relations by viewing surface patterns as spatial definers” (Kristensen, 2017, p.7) each print framed in a traditional style inclusive of the gallery format, accompanied with a coordinating wallpapered background (Figure 2). This maximalist approach is intended to present a contentious visual confrontation with the viewer, in an attempt to oversaturate the senses. Intended that the viewer goes to efforts to rationalise the saturated visual information before them; as a personal response to the postmodern complex, knowledge is not lost we simply find ourselves lost within it.

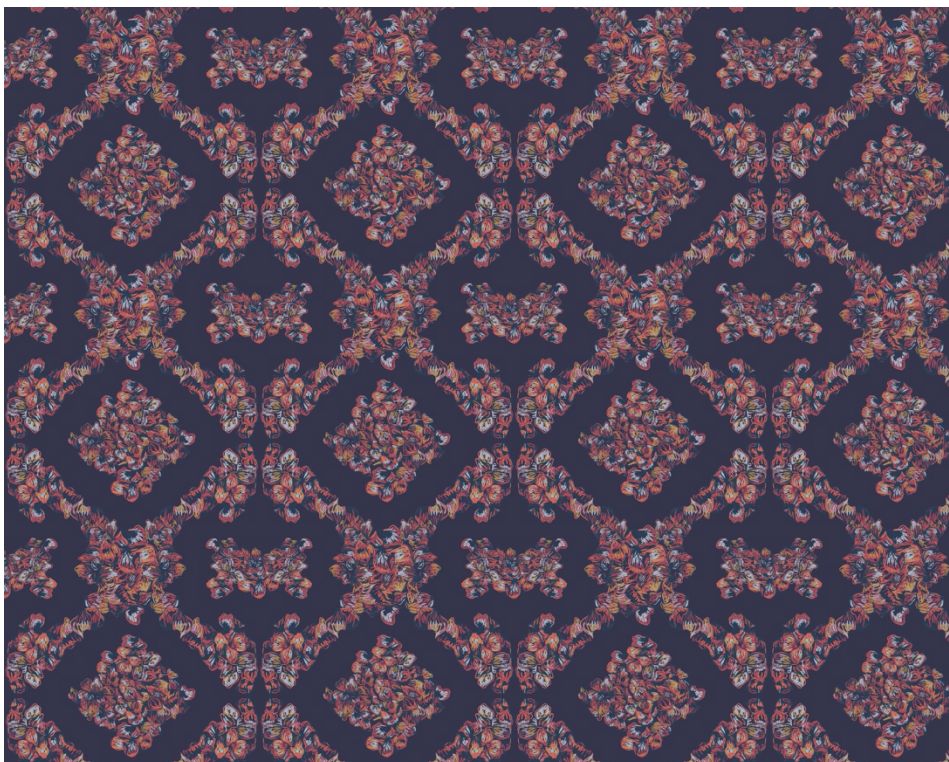


Fig 1. Emily Elias, *Sense of Abstraction Anstey Wallpaper Submission for iDott*, 2021.

Considering the works of Berger, regarding the reproduction of the image “In the age of pictorial reproduction the meaning of paintings is no longer attached to them” (Berger, 1972, p.24), what potential is left for the surface pattern designer? With a “focus on the ‘objectiveness’ of things” (Ingold, 2009, p.97) acknowledgements of the surface pattern craft become increasingly diluted. Contrary to the essays of Berger, the creation of the original image and the reproductive quality it possesses, remain constantly in tandem for the surface pattern designer, as the design is appropriated to attribute to versatility made possible for reproduction (Figure 1). William Morris would argue the craftsmanship of the surface pattern designer would carry forward into the imprinted object as information becomes enhanced through a new life within that of the artifact and not lost. The exhibition presents itself as an opportunity to showcase the work of surface pattern designers, this text becomes an enquiry into to assessing the transformative powers of the gallery space, questioning if the reproduced image typically used in a domesticated setting, can attain “the aura” (Benjamin, 1969, p.4) within exhibition conditions at a culturally established gallery setting such as the National Gallery in London, to further comprehend the trajectory of the white cube effect.



Fig 2. Emily Elias, *Visual Example of the Gallery Space Using Own Print*, 2021.

The Gallery

In order to understand the cultural “myth” (Barthes, 1957) surrounding the intrinsic value placed upon gallery space, embedded within it is a, “a system of signs” (Saussure, 1916) metanarratives of the gallery consistently allude to the idea that, “museums are full of holy relics which refer to a mystery” (Berger, 1972, p.24) a culturally established narrative the gallery is equal to that of a holy building. Therefore, the gallery is the signifier while the reproduced artifacts within the *gallery* context, become the signified. An imperative factor that there is no anchorage text, name or descriptive context to the exhibited works to assess the true transformative potential of relationship between the work, the audience and the gallery space. “The meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it. Such authority as it retains, is distributed over the whole context in which it appears.” (Berger J, 1972, p.29) The artifact, signified by an anchorage which affiliates itself to have acquired a now relic-like value.

The altering of the artifact is exclusive to the reliance and power of audience contribution, the works of Marcel Duchamp an exemplar of this as the audience completes the art work (Elger, 2016). To understand the power of the aura relies on deconstructing the collective ritualistic features upholding the narrative. Where the gallery becomes the church “The purpose of such a setting is not unlike the purpose of religious buildings” (O’Doherty, 1999, p.7) the curator becomes the priest in the act of merging all contributors. The word curation derives itself from the medieval Latin word “*cūra*”, meaning spiritual oversight supports from a historic notion of the spiritualistic (Collins) holy value placed upon the gallery space. The exhibition becomes a service of which is completed by the congregation of viewers, such conditions allow for the transubstantiation of the artifact; as water transforms into the blood of Christ (*transubstantiation*), in completion of the sacrament, the artifact then embodies the aura, the glorified state.

Walter Benjamin discussed the notion that the aura of the artifact remains limited to the ritualistic state, as one cannot come into being without the other “that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value.” (1969, p.6) The aura cannot exist without the necessary external factors and conditions that are embedded within the societal metanarrative of the gallery, within the completion of the ritual, only then does the artifact become the relic.

The Space

Fig 3. *The National Gallery, Trafalgar Square.*

The exhibition space is located within National Gallery London, a grade one listed building an internationally established home for western art. The importance of selecting an exhibition space inhabiting a culturally established institution to contribute to ideal conditions in order to comprehend the powers of *the aura*, in doing so the audience already are in possession of a preconceived knowledge. The modernist understanding of the building indicating a preliminary valuation of the artifacts ahead of visual observance.

Within a post coronavirus existence the conscience of society has been provoked to reassess the capabilities of space and of distance, there is an induced understanding that increase of the empty space between one life and another inhabits an invaluable protection, therefore each participant will navigate through a series of boxed off rooms alone as “Boxing up the space (or spacing up the box)” (O’Doherty, 1999, p.73) allows the participant and authentic impartial experience as, “space allows us to reengage with the delicacies of the world” (Burgoyne, 2011) the artifact becomes solely relational to the participant and not of their peers.



Fig 4. *Floor Plans of Sainsbury Wing, National Gallery London, 2021.*

When an adjoining room becomes vacant indication above the door will notify the participants, what exists beyond the doorway is unknown to the viewer, what becomes of the doorway is a pathway to existence and knowledge a metaphor for the understanding of phenomenology. The pathways of each participant completely unique, their comprehension extends no further than the internal parameters of the boxed space “the point where these things meet” (Gormley, 1986) the audience member has several choices all beholden to their own limitations. Should there be only one of the adjoining rooms vacant the participant has the *choice* to wait for another, if several of the four adjoining rooms are vacant the participant has the *choice* to choose from a selection, the structural curation of the exhibition is to provoke an awareness within the participant of how their pathways and decisions impact that of others (*The Butterfly Effect*). The participant also is uncertain of when they exit the exhibition just as in the way the *exit* of life is unknown to which the curation of our own knowledge ceases.

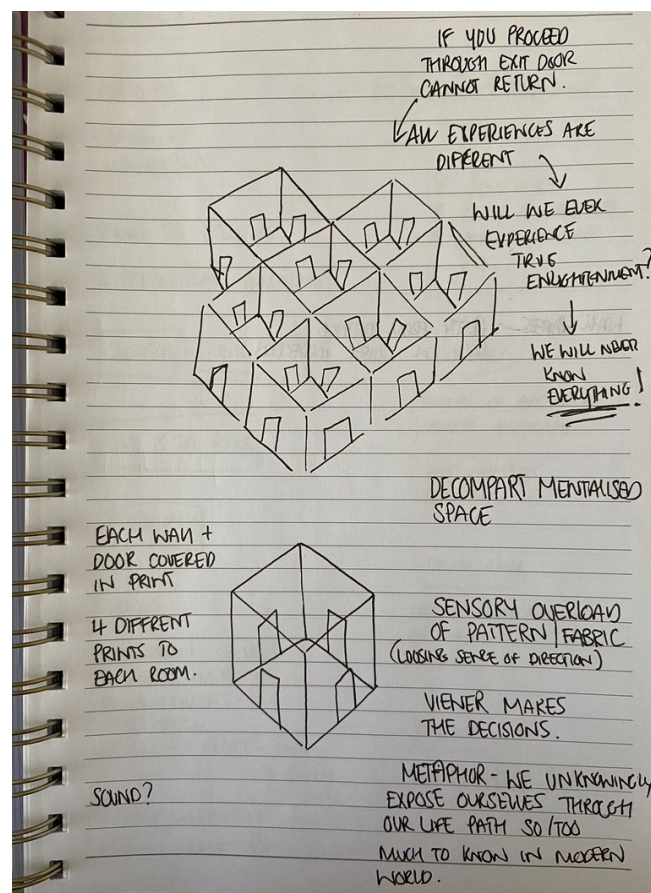


Fig 5. Emily Elias, *Sketch of the Exhibition Concept*, 2021.

We live within this interconnected existence, the frameworks of life set out by the space of which the third person inhabit; inclusive of physical, cultural and locational structures, “we affect each other, bodily and situationally, whether we sense it or not. My warmth or hostility will affect your ongoing bodily being whether you perceive it or not. You may find it there, if you sense how your body has the situation.” (Gendlin, 1992, p.351) Such structures embody the partitions of what is learned, what is to be learnt and what may never come to

be perceived as within Plato's teachings within *Allegory of the cave*, navigation of the gallery space becomes an interactive paradigm of epistemology.

Reflection

A personal reflection within *true postmodernist style*; (*of continual reflection*) of the text leads to a thought process that this curated space becomes a paradigm of conformity, reinforcing the power of the gallery. It is understood the gallery upholds a metanarrative, postmodernist principles would reject such cultural myths and power the gallery resides upon, it is appropriate to question this further, can the "gallery" enmeshed in metanarrative have the capacity to exhibit a true reflection of postmodernist art without effecting/impacting/irradiating the postmodern principles embedded within the postmodern artifacts, while the locational value of the gallery resides upon the beliefs of modernism.

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