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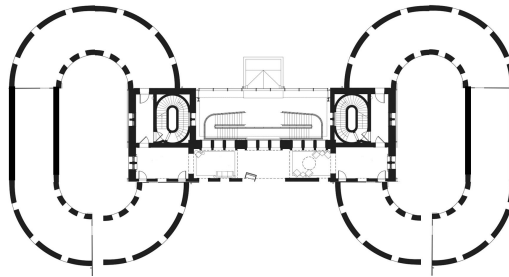
Introduction -

The exhibition "Mental" is created to simulate the feelings of the mentally insane during the Victorian period, by using 6 installments made by artists who have experienced mental disturbance themselves representing this through their work. The message of communicating the perspectives of patients living through mental distress has been curated by Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz and Mike Jay in Madlove's "Designer Asylum". This exhibit represents many of the Designer asylum's themes providing "a safe place to go mad", inspired by this concept I intend to host my exhibition in the "Abandoned State Asylum for the Insane". The asylum is the frame of my exhibition artwork.



The exhibit includes actors and requires participation from the viewers in alignment with the actor-network theory (Muniesa, F., 2015). This leaves the patients feeling the experience of mentally ill patients treated in the 1800s. I decided to use the venue for my exhibition because it felt like the best place to communicate madness and illness through the authentic experience, having the viewers assuming the role of a patient puts their foot first into the lives and living conditions of the insane.

The asylum started its construction in 1870, the period we are curating the exhibit to look like during the 18th century, mental illness was seen as a disease, and the corresponding dread of unreason further building the social attitude against mentally ill people and the view of madness (Horwitz, A.V. and Scheid, T.L. eds., 1999).



The exhibition comprises the entrance, dayroom, to connected tunnels through former patient wards. The painting themselves will be held in the tunnels approximately 12 Ft x 60Ft curved stoned tunnels decorated with fake blood, vomit, and spider webs with claw marks leading through the 5Ft thin walkway slightly lit with barred up windows to create the feeling of claustrophobia by simulating it physically and mentally feeling trapped in a dark place referring as a metaphor for being trapped in dark thoughts.



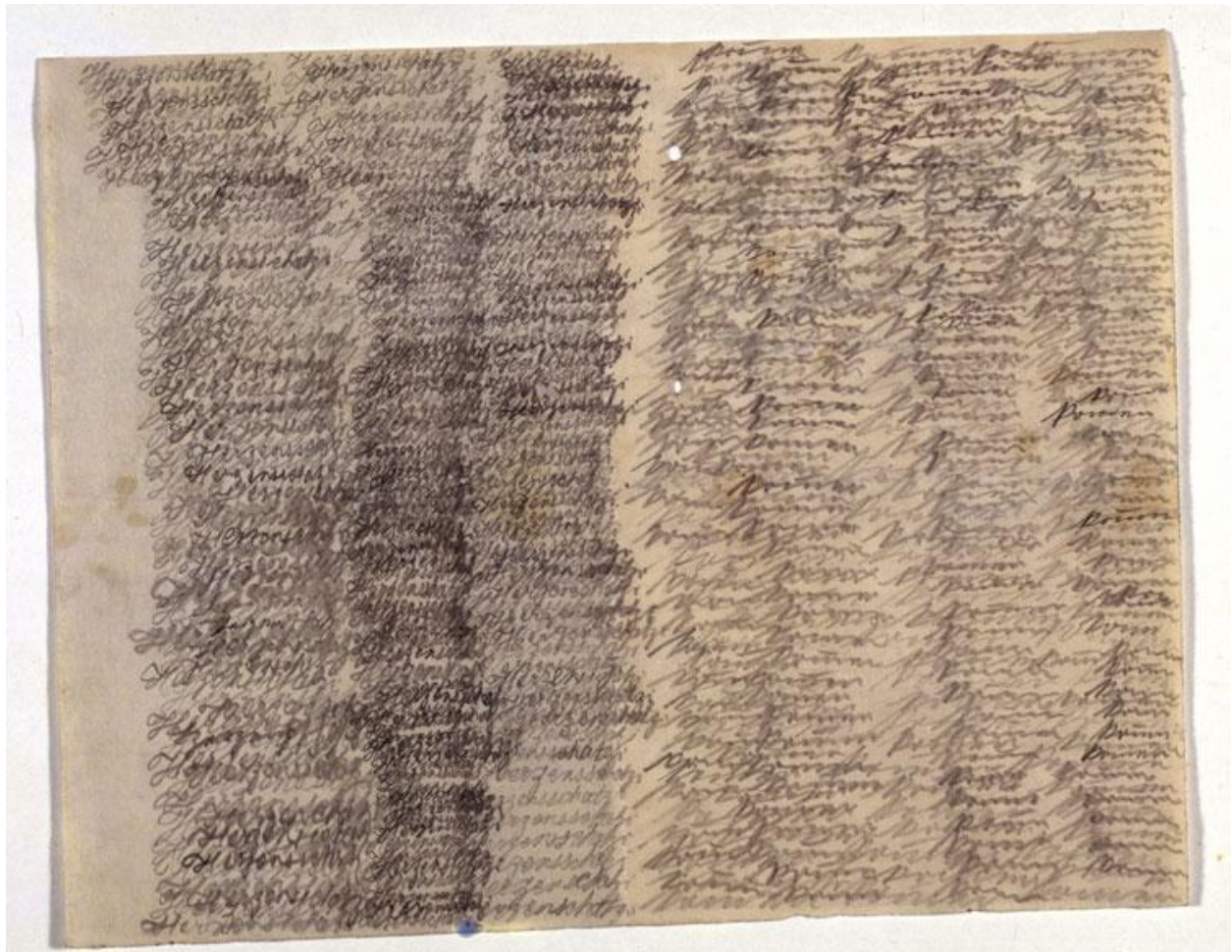
Spectators will walk through these tunnels informed to wear a human muzzle to increase physiological stress (Tian, Z., Kim, B.Y. and Bae, M.J., 2020). Inspired by the silence of the lambs (1991) directly referencing the characters pure madness and restraint of the muzzle further implying the sense of being controlled and not treated as a patient but as a criminal. By implementing these muzzles on the viewers as was customary at the time. As criminals were frequently committed to asylums as a means of isolating the unwanted from society "Until the 1890s, little distinction existed between the lunatic and criminal lunatic."Porter, R. and Wright, D. eds., 2003). This is further enhanced by echoes of background screams from actors posing as patients accompanied by the water droplets dripping from the tunnel ceilings to overall create a dark, cold, eerie environment.

As the spectators walk through the tunnels they will hear a gramophone emitting jazz music from the 50s. The hope is to complete differentiation of mood, tone and unnerve the viewer with its upbeat welcoming tone which creates the opposite effects. The gramophone will be situated in the ward section which will consist of creaky wooden floors, peeled damaged wallpaper, disarray of medical equipment, hospital beds where actors will be tied down and performing as a distressed patient by screaming, thrashing around, trying to escape. This is inspired by a former patient of this asylum's past treatment "You know my first night I was chained to the bed by sheets, so I was naked as basically a human 'X'. My arms and legs were tied by twisted white sheets to the four corners of the bed." (Buckley, E. 2018). The cluttered hospital equipment that will be strewn across the ward will be made to look and smell rotten to mimic the poor unsanitary conditions of the asylum back when it was at its prime and crowded conditions "The smell of urine so deeply impregnated the furnishings and floors" (Dalrymple, T., 2005).



Exiting the ward section the participants will be filtered into the next tunnel which is curated the same as the first tunnel thereby perpetuating the feeling of being confused, lost, and wandering in a trapped repetitive cycle of emotions, corresponding to that of a Victorian mental patient. "You can't escape the history of that place and you can't escape the terrible things that were done at that place - you can't escape the way people were treated at that place." (Buckley, E. 2018).

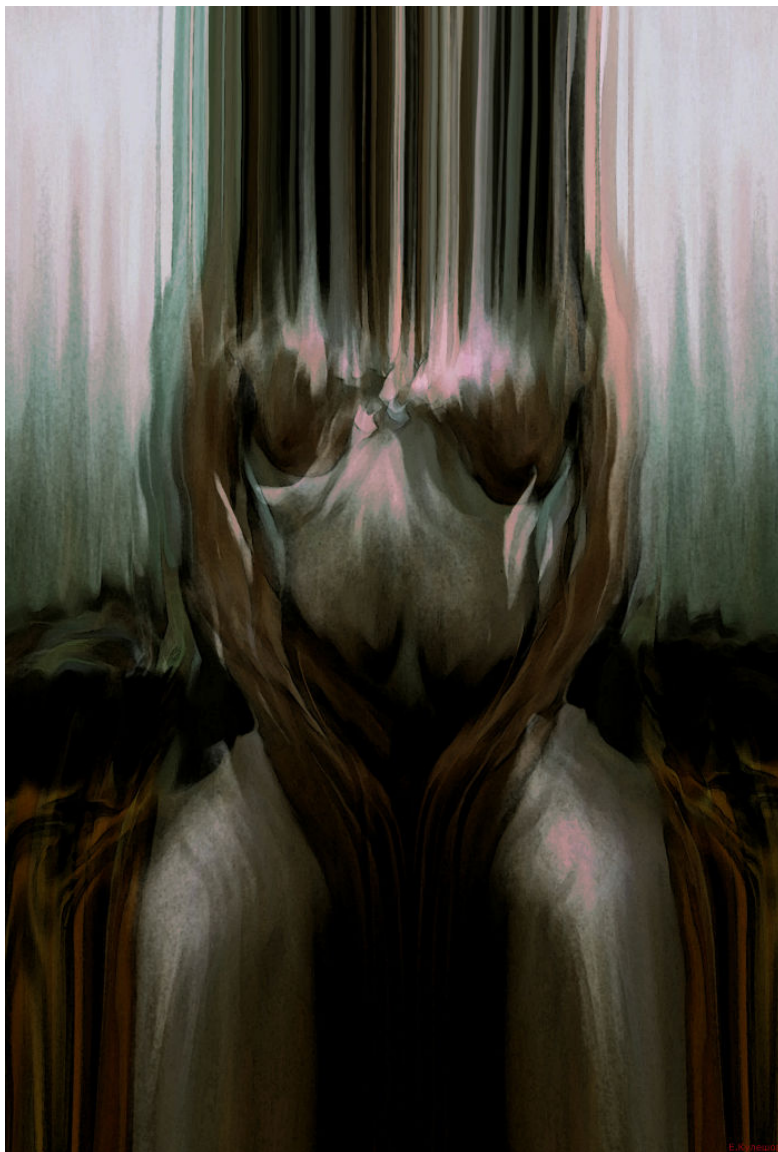
Figure 1 -



The path starts from the East wing corridor through the labyrinth tunnels starting with the first piece. The piece I have chosen is a Letter from Emma Hauck, a former patient at this asylum titled "Letters to husband" (1909) the dimensions of the art piece is not disclosed however is preserved in glass for

protection due to age and will be framed on the stoned curved wall at the entrance of the tunnel. The writer suffered from schizophrenia who was admitted to the psychiatric hospital of the University of Heidelberg in Germany, these letters represent her desperate obsession to reach out to her absent husband despite never receiving them and though illegible some sentences read “Herzensschatzi komm” (Sweetheart come, 2011). I chose this art piece to be included in the exhibit because it is a heartbreaking projection of this person's deteriorating mental illness, by including this piece I hope to show the empathetic human side of reaching out for help and not receiving it

Figure 2 -



Following the letter in the same tunnel, is the next piece entitled "Depressed" by MOPPAA (2015). This piece will be resized from a 2261 x 3333 Pixel digital design to a 2 Ft x 3Ft canvas which will be nailed down by rusty pins on the center of the tunnel wall. I intend to have this piece be so large to make the viewer feel lost in its abstract concept, further enhancing the patient's experience of feeling burdened, pressured, and feeling weighed down by emotions. This piece is not visibly clear to what the matter of the subject is, however it can be perceived uniquely from a skull to a person on a bed melting to non-existence, perhaps a metaphor for the artist's depression. (Depressed by moppaa on DeviantArt, 2015)

Figure 3 -

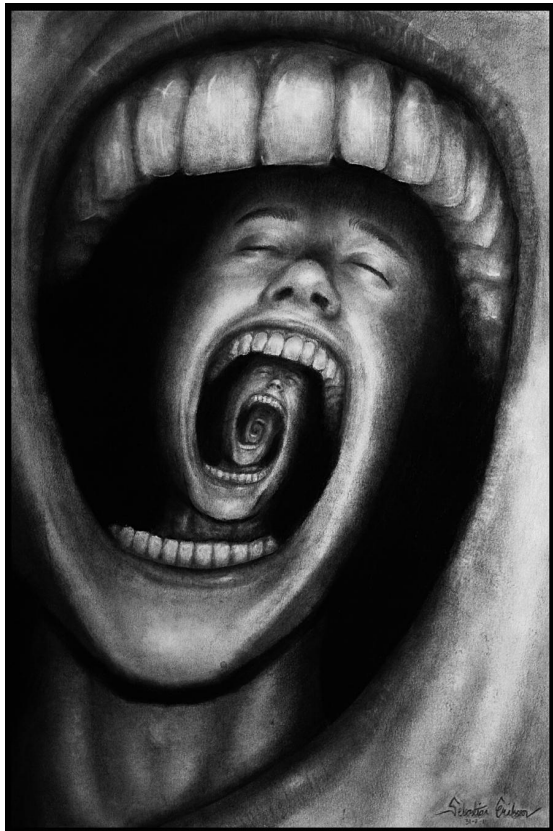


Ending the east tunnel before approaching the wards is the next piece entitled "Falling" (2014) by Claralieu, the dimensions are 48inches x 36 on a

canvas painted with lithographic rubbing ink. The piece is painted with emotion using harsh, broad, choppy strokes and although is not portraying something specific it can be interpreted as a faded person coming to an end of their life on their knees ready to lay down smudges representing the life taken away. The medium is a thick, sticky, greasy intense black ink which I believe could have been used to represent the heaviness and permanents of depression as it is not easily removed and is unforgiving.

The stickiness and thickness of the material, this links to depression as it can be described as not easily cured and erasable. There is no erasing with lithographic rubbing ink, every mark is permanent and it's hard to work with and not forgiving. (Falling: Emerge - CLARA LIEU, 2014).

Figure 4 -



Upon departing the ward section viewers entered the second tunnel leaving to the fourth art installation by Sebastian Eriksson Entitled, 'His endless screaming makes his own mind eat him up.' (2011). The dimensions are 42cm

x 59.4cm of which depict a spiraling illusion of a person screaming endlessly, the reason I picked this piece to cooperate with the actors screaming throughout the exhibit thereby perpetuating the themes of insanity, madness, and chaos. The artist is a surrealist whose artwork enhances the experience of an abstract, disorganized world to which the patients would relate to. (KIM,E. 2011)

Figure 5-

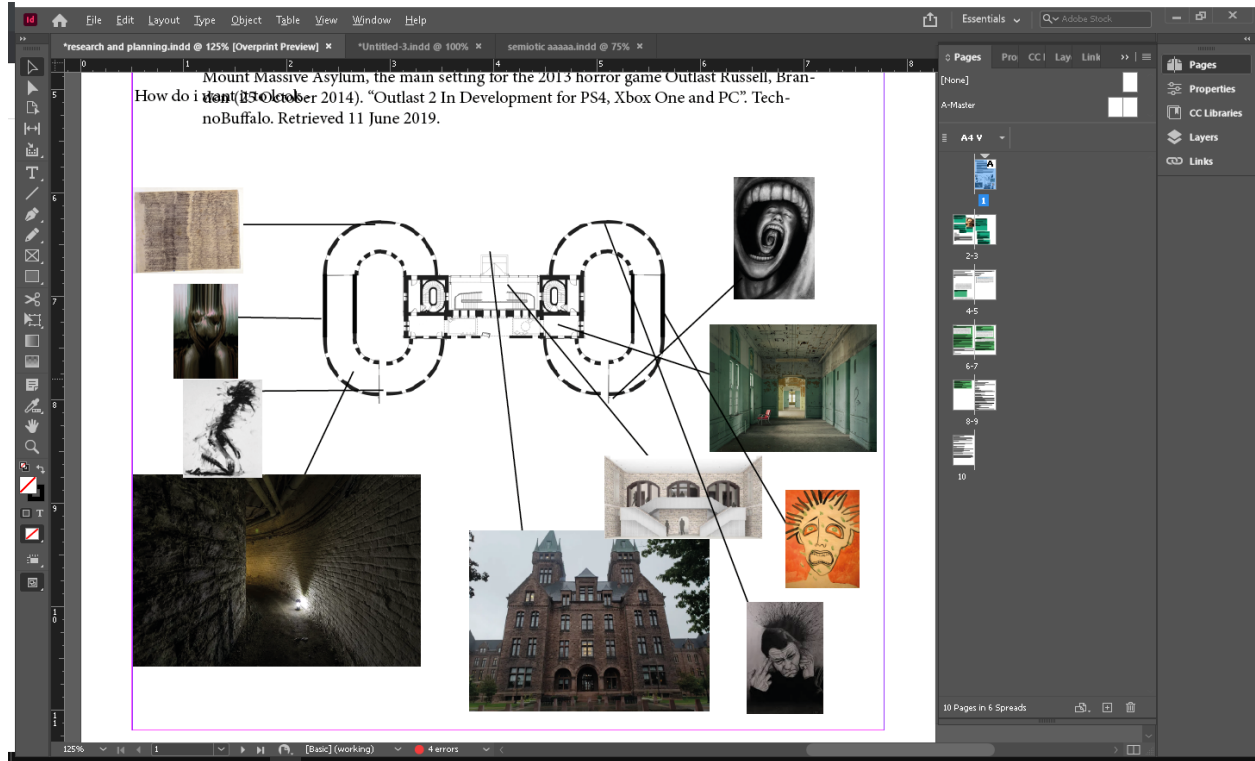


The next painting is located in the center of the west tunnel, Cri de coeur (1984) by Mary Bishop who spent more than 30 years hospitalized at Netherne (Dimensions unknown). The painting represents the person's perception of having PTSD attributed to responsibilities assumed during the second world war, her paintings depict depression, anger, paranoia, and isolation by using unnerving colour palettes such as the yellow skin with green spots and crude brushstrokes suggesting illness and bright orange background causing an alarming effect invoking panic, in line with the exhibit's theme (O'Flynn, D., 2011).

Figure 6 -



Progressing to the last painting that will end the path tour at the exit of the right-wing corridor, "Imaginary suicide" (2019) by Denmon Studios, dimensions are 18 x 20 inches. The painting portrays a man in pain and anger holding his hand to his head imitating a bullet shot to the head with paint splatters exploding behind his head. The picture represents the last moments of a lifetime and therefore seems appropriate to finish on a climactic note with hopes of communicating visually the tragic end to individuals struggling with mental health who don't receive the help or treatment needed (Denmon Studios., 2019).



Summary -

Having the viewers witness the paintings expose them to increased levels of intensity represented by the paintings, in hopes of slowly increasing the individual's empathy to its content.

Following this pathway increases the sense of disorientation by mimicking how previous asylum patients would 'wander around' the dayroom/hallways. I hope that the experiences of feeling like a mistreated patient by empathizing with the paintings. This is to promote the message that health care towards patients is important and real and not caused by witchcraft, demonic possessions, or the wrath of an angry god (Szasz, 1960). Nor do they don't deserve to be treated as criminals or singled out as outcasts based on society, misinterpretation, and fear.

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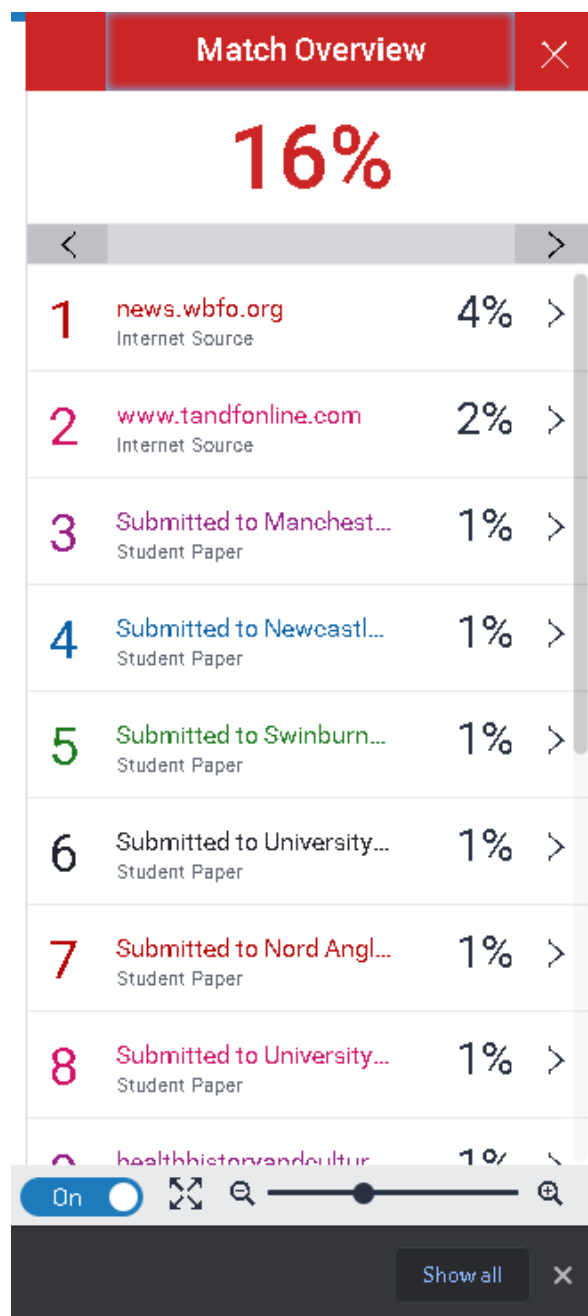
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