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CENSORSHIP IN ART IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CULTURE.

Censorship in art in the context of global culture.

(An investigation into the impact of social change and political power in art.)

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Summary of topic:

An investigation into the impact of social change and political power in art, questioning governmental authority to censorship of artwork, and where the line should be drawn on the censorship of art. Drawing narratives from historical and contemporary art works and practices. Bridging the gap between intercultural relations in art.

Introduction

Philosopher Raymond Williams affirmed that “The struggle for freedom of expression, and the invention of means to control it, are both of course very old.” (1981, p100) Within today’s society this statement is still true. Censorship of art is still putting artists and their work at liberty. Organisations of political power are forcing their own bureaucratic, moral and aesthetic regulations for art upon artists work. Most artists that feel the need to self - censor their work do so through a conservative belief system, or out of fear of being prosecuted. When self-censorship should come from a sympathetic place of self-identity. Questionable governmental authority to censor artwork is exploited in order to make people easier to govern. By censoring an artist’s work those with political status are awarded the power of deciding what art people should be susceptible to in daily life. Therefore, stifling the freedom of expression not just in the arts, but it’s viability to the general public, altering the ordinary. Especially those members of society that may be more responsive to artwork that is deemed problematic by governmental officials, forcing the hand of political discourse. In his essay’s on power and knowledge, Michael Foucault declared that “The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power.” (1980, p52) This is evident in the case of censorship in the arts as developments in the documentation of culture and politics has exposed the reality of protestors and artists being forced into political imprisonment. These generations of silenced voices have led to artists revolting against the censorship of art. Fighting for power and freedom of speech.

Focusing on addressing the disingenuous ways artists' works are regulated to suit governmental personnel and silence individuality. With a focus on fighting for the indispensable primitive right to freely express one's own consciousness, and subsequently revel in humanity. "Making assertions for individual freedom even in the slightest or most silent forms." (Beus,1980)

However, a total lack of censorship within the arts threatens to cause social disrupt. With works running the risk of being morally politically or aesthetically offensive. Generating an alteration of morals and therefore a decline of proper ethics in the fight to create unforgettable work that shocks the audience, in a desperate clamber to create sensational artwork that will go down in history. This will Eventually lead to popular artists asserting their dominance by using fame, money and power to abuse their morals as social influencers. Consequently, forcing lawless behaviour within the negatively influenced population.

The question must be asked, is it right to censor artwork? If so where the line should be drawn on artistic censorship and who should have the right to decide when art should be censored?

Censorship During the Chinese cultural revolution

Fuco Stated that “You determine one moment as being central in the history of repression: the transition from the inflicting penalties to the imposition of surveillance.” (1980, p38) The existence of artistic censorship has been rife in China for generations. Although it reached its most extreme levels during ‘The Chinese Cultural Revolution.’ The Revolution began in 1966. Instigated by President Mao Zedong, in an effort for the Chinese communist party to install “Core socialist values- patriotism, harmony and civility, among other things.” (Yuan, 2019, p.1) The brutality of the oppression imposed by the communist party became catastrophic for the Chinese as a nation. Over the span of ten years, later referred to as ‘A Ten-Year Turbulence’, more than ten million families were searched, and stripped of all earthly possessions that were deemed to confront the sacred word of Mao. Innumerable artistic artefacts that bared resemblance to Western influences were confiscated and destroyed. Winnowing out individuality and generating a mass exclusion of foreign artistic influences in China. It was determined that “Art should be used to serve the masses.” (Jiehong, 2008, p.27) And so artistic freedom was abolished in an attempt to re-write Chinese history.

There is no record of any art exhibitions taking place during this supremacist reign as museums, art schools and public art catalogues were shut down. This was compassed with the intent of stifling any progress in individual artistic development. The only acceptable art to create would be pro-revolutionary advertisements, that celebrated Mao’s status as ‘The Peoples Liberator’ (Jiehong, 2008, p.48)

Transforming art that was once a means of self-expression and integrity into 'Political instruments of no aesthetic importance'. (Jiehong, 2008, p.31) The dangerous act of depicting art that was deemed to criticize the image of Mao would result in obscenity charges, political imprisonment and humiliation for the artist and their families. Challenging this regulation was considered an extreme cowardly act of upmost artistic rebellion. The exploitation of art regulated by these new corrupt customs ensured that the masses had no difficulty deciding between serving their own individuality and serving the management of President Mao's dominant sociological values.

The revolution was dominated by the use of the colour red, as it was used as a popular tool in communist propaganda. Red is an ideological colour in Chinese history. Acting as a representation of prosperity, peace and heritage. 'The Communist Party' adopted this tradition and altered it to suit their own image, along with President Mao's slogan of "To Rebel is Justified" (1966). Supporters of the Communist Party were encouraged to carry a red book in support of Mao and were aptly named 'The Red Guards.' The actions of the red guards quickly became referred to as 'Red Terror.' The positive connection between Chinese history and the colour red created an effective visceral impact upon Chinese citizens, bargaining their support for President Mao's 'communist utopia.' (Jiehong, 2008, p.36)

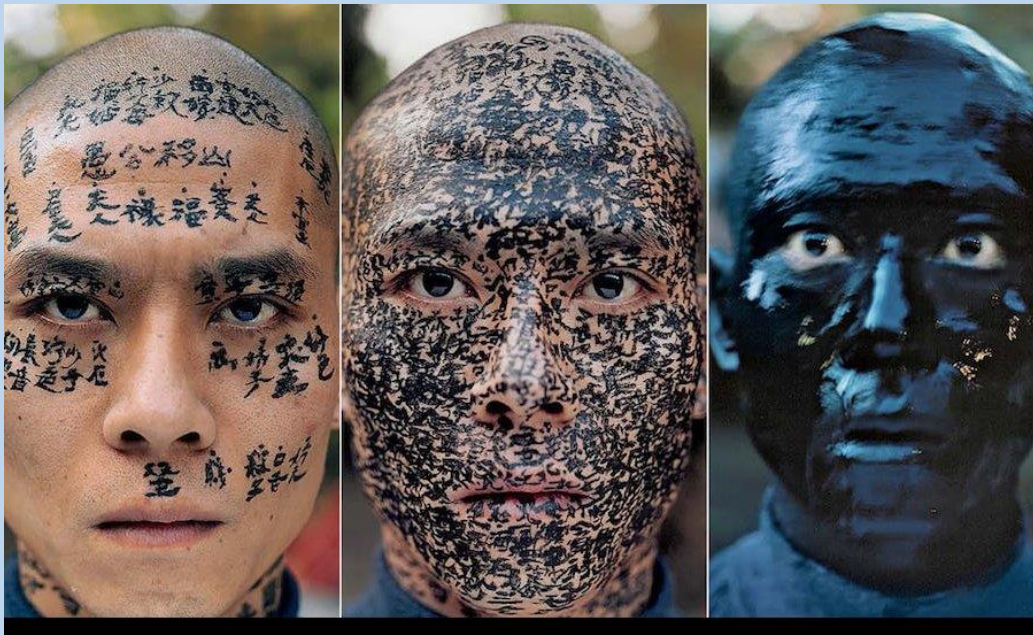
The 'Ten Year Turbulence' of 'The Chinese Cultural Revolution' came to an end with the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and has since been considered a total misadventure of sociological discourse. During these lost years almost 5000 sacred cultural and historical locations were dismantled along with ten lost years of artistic development and freedom of artistic expression. Nonetheless, China's struggle for freedom is still under threat today.

The Stars Group

Following the horrors of The Cultural Revolution no art exhibitions were held in China until 1971. Be that as it may, no recognisable Chinese art groups were identified across the globe until 1979, when a young collective of artists named 'The Stars' instated Chinese contemporary art. That year, on the 27th of September 'The Stars' hung their paintings on a fence surrounding the Beijing national art gallery. This was done in protest of the extreme levels of artistic censorship that the Chinese government continued to instil upon its citizens. The paintings that the artists displayed depicted modern Western influences, still considered politically inappropriate and morally incorrect within Chinese art, as a result of the harsh regulations practiced during the Revolution. The Stars, along with their artwork were considered outlaws of artistic rebellion, and advocates for political change. The Exhibition lasted two days before the artists were forcibly evacuated by the police. The stars revolted this expulsion though organizing a demonstration on the anniversary of the founding of the 'Chinese People's Republic'.

Calling themselves 'The Stars' to "Emphasize our individuality,"(Zee Stone Gallery, 2019, p.1) the group of young artists that included Ai Weiwei, Li Shuang and Qu Leilei, believed that they acted as a voice for subdued Chinese artists, starved of the right to express themselves freely. Art historian 'Li Xianting wrote in a review for the art exhibition 'The Revolution Continues' that was displayed at Saatchi Gallery in London during 2008, that by forcing their way into the public sphere 'The Stars' generated "A critical awareness of politics and culture, and a symbolism based on

the fundamental techniques of realism” (2008, p.108) Within the short time that the exhibition was on display it attracted almost 200,000 members of the Chinese public. It was clear that this exhibition represented the beginning of an age of freedom of expression and democracy in China.



Zhang Huan, *'Family Tree'* (2000)

Breaking the silence on post-revolutionary conceptual art, 'The Stars' group generated a surge of new modern art groups across China. Influenced artists were given the confidence to practice and experiment with work inspired by Western techniques. However, the current exertion of economic and political power in this country is still having a huge impact on the censorship of art in China today. President Xi Jinping's strict new regime has seen a vast increase in the amount of money now going into the Chinese art market. However, Chinese collectors are not investing in work produced by modern Chinese artists. Fearing that the work may not be popular and will come under pressure from governmental authorities. The Chinese government has a massive impact on the growth its economic art market. Negative attitudes towards thought provoking modern art alludes to censorship of self-expression. Halting Chinese artists from expressing their individual feelings of what they endured during The Cultural Revolution, sweeping stories from the 'ten-year turbulence' under the rug to be forgotten about. This leaves members of the community of the arts across the globe unacquainted with the bitter reality of working

as a contemporary Chinese artist. Often forcing contemporary Chinese art to appear “Sudden and radical to outsiders.” (Jiehong, 2008, p.27)

Today many Chinese artists are still unaffected by the impact of Western art altogether. However, activists for freedom of expression such as performance artist Zhang Huan are fighting to end the stigma that follows Western art within China. Zhang Huan’s contemporary artwork effectively marries traditional Chinese narratives of Eastern art, with modernist Western expressionism. “Born in imitation, but nurtured in allegory, popular art and utopianism.” (Dierra, 1987 p.2-9) Zhang Huan’s artwork produces an interesting narrative between the historical Chinese techniques of ink drawing and performance art. Calligraphist Wu Shanzhuan affirmed that “The Chinese character is the most significant element, in terms of its ability to shape peoples thinking or to influence the national psychology.” (2008, p.75) Supporting Zhang Huan’s use of utilising traditional Chinese characters develops a dynamic relation to the evolving optic elements of daily life in China during and post the cultural revolution. Consequently, reminiscing the power Chinese Characters held within the political indoctrination of the revolution. Chinese characters are so prominent within the makeup of Chinese history and society that it’s symbolism directly shapes the thought process of Chinese citizens. In his early 2000’s performance ‘Family Tree’, Huan adequately abuses the sacredness of the Chinese written character. Through a documentative process Huan covered his body in Chinese symbols. Alluding that his body has vanished, stressing the independence of the written character and rejecting the importance of the individual, rendering his body imperceptible, and striking the essence of calligraphy in an attack on Chinese culture.

The difficulties contemporary Chinese artists must face are increasingly becoming more stringent under president Xi Jinping's regime. There is a sluggish fickle procedure of approval all artworks that artists must undergo before showing work at galleries, establishing that any artwork that the government deems to be inappropriate is censored. This ensures that artists such as Zang Huan are not internationally recognised or given the attention they deserve. The Chinese government is not equipped to be in control of the Chinese modern art scene. This is since the government only approves of art that it deems to be appropriate or supports only their own messages. Therefore, allowing Xi Jinping to impose his updated approach of commercial domination. Philosopher Karl Marx supported this notion, stating that "Under capitalism the greatest work of art is worth so many tons of manure." (2013 p.115)

An effective method of determining what art is acceptable or not in China is by observing the 'Shanghai biennale'. In the 2018 biennale, works by Louise Bourgeois, Francis Bacon and George Baselitz were turned down as they were considered too radical, sexually explicit or were thought to ridicule Xi Jinping's leadership. This level of censorship effectively displays China's firm grasp on the limit of artistic freedom. By awarding the power to censor art to the government, it becomes mainstream that only art supported by the governmental authorities is accepted. Therefore, only advocating artwork that supports governmental propaganda. This troublesome system has been described by artist Nam June Paik as "A substance of the conception of so-called freedom." (1963 p.27)



Charles Saatchi, *'Sensation'* (1997, *The Royal Academy of Arts, London*)

The first Sensation exhibition first took place on the 18th of September 1997 at the Royal Academy of Arts in London and is deemed to be one of the most momentous art shows of the 20th century. Collector, Charles Saatchi organised the exhibition by combining artworks that confronted the generic trend of what was acceptable within the artworld. Furthermore, challenging the acceptance of graphic, R-rated modern artwork. Saatchi's personal passion and obsession for contemporary art paved the way for a new, unique art economy for unfamiliar art. The exhibition held 119 different artworks created by 44 individual artists. Crowned as the 'Young British Artists' and patrons of Charles Saatchi, the YBA's were considered the iconoclasts of contemporary art. Members of the YBA's such as Damien Hirst, Tracy Emin and Gavin Turk were later considered some of the most infamous artists of British art history. The Young British Artists made art that was entertaining, with the hope of adapting the traditional ideology of historical art though, altering the everyday person's attitude towards modern visual culture. Pushing boundaries and exploring the general consensus of punchier, outrageous modern art. Author Michael O'Tool wrote that "Art has a crucial role in building a new social semiotic of collective effort

and communal consciousness in opposition to the old fertilization of individual creativity and personal gain.” (1994, p.195) This supports the intention of the ‘Sensation’ exhibition, backing its consensus of providing sustenance to the freedom of explicitly political individuality.

However, the exhibition left many viewers shell-shocked due to its reflection of intensely political British issues, along with a diverse exploration into explicit pleasures solicited within energetic tensions and phobias. The hostility displayed by abounding spectators was charged by a bountiful display of freedom of expression. Contributing to a tremendous advance within the culture of the arts.

Philosopher Raymond Williams argued that the most successful artwork was those that “Relate to analyses of social material and social relations in art works” (1981, p.22) Perhaps this is why the ‘Sensation’ exhibition proved to be so successful within modern British art, as “The greatest images are those that invoke both reality and sensation.” (Rosenthal. 1997, p.11)



Marcus Harvey, *'Myra'* (1995)

Potentially the most influential artwork of the 'Sensation' exhibition was Marcus Harvey's portrait of child murderer Myra Hindley, infamous for her contribution to 'The Moor's Murders' of the early sixties. The colossal painting was created using the casted hands of children. This caused an outcry from many spectators who accused the painting of being abhorrent, with no moral or social values. The painting came under attack from unhappy onlookers demanding its exclusion from the show. Pressure group 'Mothers against murders and aggression' held demonstrations outside the Royal Academy of the Arts throughout the show's duration. The protests, led by Winnie Johnston, who's child was murdered by Hindley, demanded that the artwork be removed from the exhibition. The protestors sported banners stating, "They used to hang killers on the gallows, now they hang them in the gallery." (Blanchard, 1997, p.1) Even Myra herself asked for the work to be withdrawn from the show. The shocking artwork came under physical attack too. Protesters arguing the politically offensive nature of the work was morally inhuman. Irresponsibility

idolising a horrendous act undertaken by a child murderer and affiliating this these horrors within the community of the arts. Rocks were thrown through the academy's windows, along with ink and eggs that were used to vandalise the painting. The work was temporarily removed from the exhibition for repair; however, it was replaced with a plaque describing piece until the work was restored, fitted behind Perspex and placed under the watchful eye of security. The extreme measures that Charles Saatchi took to ensure the work remained in the exhibition, gives a clear impression of our relationship amidst contemporary art in Britain. Sir Norman Rosenthal, director of the Royal academy fought to protect 'Myra', arguing that "Harvey's painting was the single most important work of the sensation exhibition." (2008, p.1) In an interview conducted for this essay, 'Sensation' artist and member of the YBA's Jane Simpson stated that Harvey's 'Myra' "Was 'an extremely powerful, very timely piece of work.'" (Simpson, 2019, p.1) Simpson's sculpture 'Sacred' was positioned in the same room as 'Myra,' and was therefore overlooked by many of the spectators. However, Simpson argues that Harvey "Deserved the hype because it was such a good piece of work, and I don't have any problems with that." (Simpson, 2019, p.1) Perhaps the curation of the exhibition wasn't considered too heavily as the show was an exhibition of a previously exhibiting collection.

Harvey himself argues that he didn't create the painting of Myra with the intention of revolt in mind. Instead he disputes that his use of children's handprints to represent the notorious murderer's mug shot depicts 'The simplest image of innocence absorbed in pain.'" (Harvey, 2008, p.1) The shock reaction that 'Myra' summoned led to Harvey's refusal to exhibit further work or give interviews on the notorious artwork. However, the social debate that this artwork opened raises the question of what art is politically acceptable? And should artists self-censor their work if it may cause pain

to its spectators. In this case the families of the children that lost their lives to the hands of Myra Hindley.

The 'Sensation' exhibition transposed artistic culture across the globe. Granting artists, the confidence necessary to contribute to the enrichment of social debates and providing an effective impact to the operation of a democratic society. However, it must be questioned if this development of an acceptance of political artwork was Saatchi's intention? Or alternatively, if 'Sensation' was just an illusion to experiment with the publicity of conceptual art, and therefore to gain acknowledgement as the most outrageous art collector in history. 'Myra' came under yet again more scrutiny during 2012 as it was briefly shown in a video advertising London's vibrant culture that was revealed at the Beijing Olympics. The use of the painting was condemned, and the advertisement withdrawn. It was argued that the presence of the piece caused too much of a political disturbance and was considered visually distressing. However, the positive cultural impact that the 'Sensation' exhibition had on the art scene challenged the preconception that art needed to be beautiful or politically correct. It opened a new window for self-expression, allowing individuality to thrive.



Ai Weiwei, *'Grass Mud Horse Covering the Middle'* (2009)

Philosopher Edward T. Hall stated that “Artists do not lead cultures and create patterns; they hold a mirror for society to see things it might not otherwise see.” (1973, p.135) This is true of the work of Ai Weiwei, arguably the most influential artist of this century. Ai Weiwei is a perfect example of the impact ‘Sensation’ and the ‘YBA’s’ had on artists around the globe. Previously a member of ‘The Stars,’ Ai Weiwei is an avid protestor for freedom of expression in the arts. Disturbing the conformity of self-censorship within Chinese expression. His artwork often displays hidden meanings, and challenges China’s communist regime. An example of this is his ongoing ‘Grass Mud Horse Covering the Middle’ series. Which roughly translates through traditional mandarin to ‘Fuck You’r Mother the Party Central Committee.’ This blatantly direct documentative series portrays an image of Ai Weiwei posing naked. Impishly leaping though the air with only a canomia covering his gentiles. Through directly attacking the notion of governmental authority in China, Ai Weiwei has found himself within custody on countless occasions. Risking exile to create an artistic response to the oppression of the communist regime. “At its most complex,

the analysis of social material in art extends into the study of social relations.”

(Williams, 1981, p,24)

Pioneering protests against the influence of governmental authorities within contemporary art, Ai Weiwei is now considered a YBA himself, and an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Arts. Ai Weiwei's work also often engages with the migration crisis. In 2015 in an artwork named 'Syrian Child' Ai Weiwei recreated the scene of a dead Syrian refugee child on the Greek Island of Lebanon, a common access point migrants use to enter the European Union. Ai Weiwei mimicked the famous image of the drowned Alan Kurdi creating a “Defining symbol in the plight of Syrian refugees.”(Tan, 2016, p.1) The work that was initially created for Indian magazine 'India today' caused a mass uproar with viewers accusing Ai Weiwei of being insensitive, and commercialising the horrendous death of the child. However, Sandy Angus co-owner of 'The Indian art fair' where the photograph was exhibited claims that “It is an iconic image because it's very political, human and involves an incredibly important artist like Ai Weiwei.” (2016,1) Through using his notorious title of a member of the YBA's Ai Wei Wei's 'Migrant Boy' was propelled into British social media. Drawing awareness to the horrendous suffering the Syrian migrants are enduring and representing the crisis of migration. In support of this artwork, Ai Weiwei closed his exhibition at the 'Faurshou Foundation in Copenhagen' challenging a new law issued by Danish parliament that allows Danish authorities to take the few precious valuables and family heirlooms migrants smuggled with them on the journey to find freedom, The authorities, claiming the cost of the valuables would help pay for the expense of asylum seekers food and housing. Ai Weiwei argued that “The way I can protest is that I can withdraw my works from that country. It is very simple, very symbolic – I cannot co-exist, I cannot stand for these people

and see these policies.” (2016, p.2) Ai Wei Wei’s contemporary practice paves the way for a modern society. Raising the consciousness of political control and freedom of expression worldwide. Using modern techniques such as online blog posts to encourage his supporters to question communist ideology and the discrimination against human rights.



Christoph Buchel, *'Barca Nostra' ('Our Boat', 2019)*

Arguably the most notorious artwork of this Year's Venice Biennale was the collaboration between artist Christoph Buchel and the Italian Government. 'Barca Nostra' otherwise recognised as 'Our Boat' consists the salvaged body of a fishing boat that is considered the 'Mediterranean's deadliest shipwreck' (Rugoff, 2019 p.60). The wreck took place on the 18th of April 2015 on the Sicilian channel. Leading to the deaths of around 700 to 1100 asylum seekers. With only 28 survivors the wreck was salvaged by the Italian government in order to identify the people who lost their lives locked in the hold of the boat, where it was then purchased by Christoph Buchel and moved to the Arsenal to stand as a 'Monument and memorial to contemporary migration.' (Rugoff, 2019, p.60) Many people considered this work to be a corruption of freedom of expression. And so, the question arose of should this boat be considered art or a twisted manifestation of the abuse of marketed censorship, that analyses the viewers empathetic values within art. Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire stated that 'Politics and art today are increasingly submitted to moral judgement bearing on the validity of their principles and the consequences of their practices'(1987, p. 102) The scandalous association of exhibiting someone's

grave dominates the controversy associated with this work, as the families of the victims had no say in whether the monument should be displayed. Acting as a sombre reminder that the economic benefits attached to showing such a shocking monument, may outweigh the potential morals of the artist. Therefore, allowing the government to idolise the crisis of migration in a bid to get some extra cash.

Distorting the humanitarian intentions of Buchel and acting as a reminder of our damaged society. "History is dramatically pardoned, through romanticism, nostalgia and ignorance." (Rugoff, 2019, p.53)

However in his theory of politics and aesthetics, philosopher Jacques Ranciere argues that 'Critical art intends to raise our consciousness by inviting us to see the signs of Capital behind everyday objects.'(2012, p.66) Therefore demanding that the viewer of the work pays attention to the crisis of migration, by bringing them face to face with the terrors that asylum seekers must endure in their fight for freedom. This was supported by 'Sensation' artist and member of the YBA's Gavin Turk. In a recent interview conducted for this investigation, Turk stated that 'Barca Nostra' "Questions the whole sort of capitalistic society that props up Venice itself. So, I think that it actually does do quite a good job of deconstructing the platform that it's been given." (Turk, 2019, p.1) Turk proceeded to state that in his opinion "The work came out more positive than negative."(Turk, 2019, p.1) This support shown by a member of the YBA's puts the development of contemporary art and censorship since the 'Sensation' show into perspective. Creating an interesting comparison to the effect contemporary art has in everyday life.

Walter Benjamin wrote that "Nothing that ever happened should be lost for history." (1985, p. 255) This statement effectively supports the argument for the preservation of the boat, as it views the piece as an honourable illumination of the memory of the

lives that were lost. Spreading awareness of migration crisis worldwide by having It on display at the world's most infamous art show and encouraging the contemplation of the development of artistic and political freedom. The work also forces us to reconcile how much progress there still is to make, and our personal accountability to do so. Therefore, supporting the argument that funding only non- political, visually appealing artwork deprives artistic development, and stunts the potential growth culture.



Sun Yuan and Peng Yu, *'Can't Help Myself'* (2016)

Censorship at the 2019 Venice Biennale.

Another artist that received backlash at this year's Venice Biennale was Mexican conceptual artist Teresa Margolle. Margolle exhibited her work 'Muro Ciudad Jurez (2010)' which consists of an excavated, bullet ridden, concrete wall, that she claimed from Ciudad Juarez., The problem being the wall wasn't any wall but in fact the backdrop for an execution of innocent Mexican children. Margolle claims that her work explores the "Physical and ideological existence of boundaries." (Rugoff, 2019, p.75)' Studying the effect they have on controlling populations. However, the purpose of using the wall in question must be considered. Is it politically correct that the wall was stripped from its hometown, where it surely played a haunting memory in the minds of its community? Is it politically correct for it to be transported to a foreign country and space? Especially considering that the artist was not given permission from the families of the murdered children to do so. Arguably this shocking act of violence has been manipulated by the artist in this scenario, in order

to create a sensationally terrifying moral impact upon its viewers. Stressing the work's "Perpetuation of injustice." (Rugoff, 2019, p.186)

Although the work should have worked as a heavy reminder of the horrendous acts of violence the children in question endured at the hands of twisted politics, the piece was immensely overpowered by its next-door neighbour, in a similar fashion to the hype created by Marcus Huxley's 'Myra' at the 'Sensation' exhibition. 'Can't Help Myself,' an instillation by Chinese and Taiwan based artists Sun Yang and Peng Yu. Consists of a robot that the artists coded to act like a live animal. The robot is engaged in a Perspex box and is surrounded by an oozing substance very much akin to blood. The spectacle of this work relies on sensors that are placed around the cage, informing the robot where the blood is oozing away, and ensuring that in a panicked fashion, the eerily animalistic metal form shovels the substance under control and close to its 'body' at all times. The artwork effectively "Questions the different and interrelated vulnerabilities of the organic and mechanical." (Rugoff, 2019, p.209) The robot's seemingly careful consideration of pressured movements display a dark narrative that addresses the animalistic greed of humanity. However, it's placement directly opposite 'Muro Ciudad Jurez' generates an anxiety ridden arguably disrespectful atmosphere. Is this a flaw of curation or the effect that the artist desired? The curation arguably encourages a dismissal of Muro Jurez's politically powered artwork. And instead glamorises the sensational. Arguably mimicking the corrupt politics that plague many countries of higher and lower standing. The question now however is when did art begin to imitate politics? Art has always been at the forefront of cultural change, yet this curation would seek to perhaps brush the harsher humanitarian issues facing us all today aside. Encouraging instead the focus on the monumental and commercial.

Art in the context of social media and globalization.

Over the last decade, developing technologies has led to an increase of the use of social media within the arts, and therefore an advancement in Instagram culture. This response can be seen to be problematic for artworks as people taking selfies with politically charged artwork, or art that responds to a tragic event, can completely change the context of a piece. An effective example of this is 'Barca Nostra'. By insensitively posting posed images on social media, individuals are creating "some sort of weird sense of embracing and loving the boat." (Turk, 2019, p.1) Generating a disconnect between the intended sympathetic portrayal of the boat and a throwaway aesthetically pleasing Instagram image. Although the response to any piece of artwork cannot be controlled, presumably there should be a certain way to behave around scenes that talk of such horrendous events. As work such as 'Bara Nostra' are displayed in order to raise awareness of such disasters and reflect on them, instead of taking distasteful images. However, it could be argued that this recent debate over the associated morals between blog posting and sincere artwork can bring more attention to the piece, and therefore spreads its message further than initially intended. Artists such as Ai Weiwei use this trend to their advantage, adapting their practices to the surge of responses generated by social media to expose the artistic censorship of his work. Exploring the fragility of power structures through the power of sharing information online.

Another example of the adaptation of social media in art is the work of Richard Prince. Prince adopts the 'Instagram culture' within his work, taking screenshots of women's selfies, printing them on a large scale and selling them for thousands, labelling the images as art in auction sales. His work explores the basis that people no longer care about the value of art, but the value of likes connected to selfies, and

the staged realities of life that people portray online. Although his work also creates a weird paradox that addresses the subjective ownership of images once they are placed online. Surely taking somebody else's images without permission for your own personal gain, before hanging them around some millionaire's home is idiosyncratic and just plain creepy?

As the publicity of art increases and becomes more readily available to everyday people through social media, events such as this week's 'Art Basil' are making headline news worldwide. The work of Maurizio Cattelan shocked viewers around the globe with his comedic art piece that consisted of a banana taped to the wall of the gallery with duct tape. The piece was sold to a private collector for an incredible sum of \$120,000, before being eaten by the artist, stating that he "Would've done it sooner, but wasn't hungry yet." (Maurizio, 2019, p.1) The piece drew so much of a commotion that it had to be taken down, as crowds were fighting to get the best iconic snap of the work to upload to their Instagram. Will this this new Instagram culture generate the same breakthrough experiment that 'Sensation' had on the twenty first century?

Conclusion

In conclusion, the suppression of freedom of speech in the arts has proven to be heavily counterproductive. Often gathering more of a positive effect than negative, though causing counter debates within social media and therefore demanding the public's attention. This argument has been proven by events such as 'The Stars' protests and Saatchi's unforgettable 'Sensation' exhibition. However, the struggle against censorship in the arts still threatens the existence of the freedom of expression daily. Stunting the growth of culture and creativity. 'The United Nations General Assembly' states that "Artistic creativity demands an environment free from fear and insecurity." (2013, p.19) If this is the case, then why are governmental authorities still censoring artwork worldwide? Censoring self-expression and encouraging self-censorship has the potential to generate devastating effects within the community of the arts, as sterilizing individual identity diminishes healthy public debates. How do we expect our culture to develop a functioning democratic society if we don't support discussions generated by thought provoking art? Perhaps the censorship of art is encouraged by those who fear a disturbance to the comfort associated with traditional art? Alternatively, artists such as the YBA's suggest that the "Chief task of new art is to disturb that sense of comfort." (Rosenthal. 1997, p.10) Encouraging society to concentrate on the politics of today.

Holding demonstrations is an effective method of protesting against artistic censorship. But perhaps it may also be effective to encourage a development of difficult topics such as the censorship of questionable art in arts education. Another effective alternative to censoring art would be to correctly label artwork with warnings for sensitive audiences. Therefore, allowing the public to decide what art they wish to interact with, and what they would rather avoid. This method is effective as it allows

potentially offensive artwork to be controlled without the encouragement of self-censorship. After all, who said artists need their work to be moral? The art world is a weird insular thing, but it holds a lot of cultural importance because it's so current. But overall, it's clear that the censorship of art leads to the censorship humanity.

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Appendix

Interview with Gavin Turk – Conducted on November 16th, 2019 By Abigail Eckberg (1700673)

'Gavin Turk, Notes on Barca Nostra'

GT – So basically it was a boat that was impounded by the Italian government. And he's managed to get it back off them and he's re-presented it in where the Arsenal is. (broken audio) It has this sort of title and its quite low key. But it ended up being the most talked about piece in the exhibition.

AF – We saw it last week...

GT- I think the main problems ensued when people are taking selfies with the boat behind it. And it's creating this sort of weird sense of, of kind of embracing and loving the boat. But obviously the boat is a symbol of a broken world. It's almost like this symbol of... I mean it actually is just simply a boat. And lots of people just walk by it and don't even know what it is and you do actually have to be told the story, well this is the grave of how ever many migrants, I don't remember what number it was, but the amount of migrants that died on that boat. And so, it becomes symbolic really of just migration crisis. And I think actually strangely enough, it actually does do the job of making people question the migration crisis. And in a way question the whole, kind of, capitalistic society that sort of props up Venice itself. So, I think that it actually does do quite a good job of deconstructing the platform that it's been given. So overall, I'd say that it comes out, in my book, it comes out more positive than negative.

AF- Yea, I was really shocked when I went to see it because there wasn't a plaque or anything, and he didn't make it into too much of an artform sort of thing.

GT – Yea he's just repossessed it.

AF - Which I found really interesting. It's just there. As a sort of monument rather than a (indistinguishable audio).

Interview with Jane Simpson – Conducted on the 10th of December 2019. By Abigail Eckberg (1700673)

'Jane Simpson on 'Sensation' and the YBA's.

JS – The Most significant thing for artists in London about sensation was that it was the very first time that we felt truly disconnected to our own work. It was especially the opening.

AF- Is that because of Saatchi's name then? Because he was such a big influence?

JS- It was Saatchi, it was the Royal Academy, because of course it was shown in a very sort of established place, and then it was the hype. Because it was the beginning of the tv, programme interviews. You know, I was interviewed, friends of mine were interviewed, we were all on the tele, all the film cameras were there for the opening and you walked in and you didn't know anybody. You didn't know a soul. Which for years and years and years hadn't been the case, we'd gone to openings and we'd known everybody. So, it was really weird. I had a similar experience at the opening of 'Frieze' and that was also, what it was the work became about the collectors. Suddenly the whole activity became about the collectors, and not the artists, and that's what happened. It was that disconnect that was really significant. And of course, the best part about it was that Gavin, in his utterly fantastic Gavin Turk way made a comment on this. We were all so nervous about the private view, it was very hyped. We were only allowed like one ticket each or something, I think we were allowed like one ticket plus a partner. You know you couldn't get tickets for love nor money. And the irony for me of course, I'd been a student at the royal academy, so I knew all of the staff. Which in a way was lovely because they were very proud of me, and they let me in after hours to do stuff. I would sneak in the back door and they would let me in there, because I knew all the staff. But at the opening, Gavin's way of reacting to this was to come dressed as a tramp. And I don't think it's really been spotted as the greatest performance piece he'd ever done, but it was. At first, he just seemed to have a very casual shirt on, and he looked like he hadn't had a shave, a little bit prickly, a little bit day after, or even the day after that but a shadow. And then I said hello, and then we sort of chatted a bit more, and then I realised he smelt! (laughter) and I thought, Gavin – you've been on a bender. But actually, then I looked down and his feet were wrapped in newspapers. And he had you know – really, really, really scruffy trousers on. and the significance of it didn't really – I think it was several years until his comment really came home to me, what he was saying, and it is that homeless. The artists were homeless within that scenario. That we were no longer – for us, because we were the DIY generation. You know- we all left collage in 88' and then we all went off to do our MA's. And so, it was 1990, 1992-1993. And we were the DIY generation. Where there was a big recession on, so, the galleries were suffering but the collectors we were dealing with weren't going to suffer. You know, Saatchi might have lost some money in the recession but he didn't lose his empire. Basically, the rich in London were still pretty rich. So, they weren't going to be affected. But the middle of the road galleries were very affected. And there was very few opportunities for us, and so we were very, very, very much the DIY generation. And that's stayed with me till now, and I think it's been such an important part of my art life – The DIY thing, And I don't think that I could've done what I did without that background.

AF- How do you think having that sort of DIY experiment feel of sensation, how do you think it sort of effected the art today? Do you think it had a big impact on it because it was so controversial?

JS – I think it gave us a hand, a bit of distance. You'll still find that Gavin is that kind of artist. He's still very much slightly robin hood. He does all kinds of different shows, and it was very hard for him to be represented because he didn't tow the party line in that respect. He didn't just do all the shows

that he should be doing. So, you know, he is different, but he's very mainstream in some ways, in terms of collections and galleries and success. You know, but actually he's done it very much his way and I've always admired him for that. Others have fallen foul for it because they just believed it all. And have now just got the kind of mortgages that keep you and I awake for the rest of our lives, because they actually... So, yea.

AF- One last thing, what do you think about the whole Marcus Harvey's 'Myra' thing. Do you think it was encouraged? The whole controversy of it during the show?

JS – well it was a good piece! It was a really good, strong piece. But ironically, I was in that same room, but you wouldn't know it because all anyone would ever talk about in that room was his work. And on the Tv, they'd come in and they'd pan round the room and my dad would be going – "A bit more to the left, A bit more to the left!" Screaming at the tv! But it was such a good piece of work! It was an extremely powerful very timely piece of work. It deserved the hype because it was such a good piece of work and I don't have any problems with that.

AF- do you think they curated that on purpose then to create a narrative between your work and his then?

Jane- no, no, I think that's giving too much credit to Norman and Charles, they're not that subtle.

AF- That's really interesting because I've written a piece about the Venice biennale this year. There was a really famous piece called 'I just can't help myself' by a Chinese artist, and it was positioned right opposite this artist that took a piece of the Mexican border, and put it in the gallery and it was the execution site of all these children.

JS – Well absolutely I'm sure, that would've been deliberate. The thing about then is that he wasn't curating a show, he was curating a collection. That's the thing you've got to remember. He was dealing with an already existing collection and putting it in his gallery. So, it wasn't really, it wasn't really a curated project. It was more of a placing project.

