

Light

I went to two exhibitions over the first few weeks to explore how light impacted an exhibition- my favourite of the two was the exhibition at the Elysium gallery in Swansea, specifically the Madaraja arts exhibition (*figure 1*). The light set up lit the paintings from overhead which created a sort of glare which impacts the colours of the originally warm glow of the artworks. I think this adds to the image as the way that the light falls on to the wood

adds an angelic glow onto the painting. This contradicts with the warm base notes and colours found in the original portraits and potentially changes the meaning of the piece in the eyes of the viewer through the impact of colour.

One of the most interesting lighting set ups I found at this exhibition was a corridor leading off the main exhibition (*figure 2*). It was lit like a scene out of a horror film; a long dark blacked out corridor with a single light bulb glowing at the end. I thought the idea of light at the end of an unlit corridor or tunnel would be a really impactful idea to play with whilst creating my own art and ideas for a potential instillation. The shadow adds suspense and an ominous allurement drawing the viewer to the end of the corridor like a moth to a flame. It connotes with danger and mystery and I like the idea of using the light to put the viewer on edge and invoke emotion as an idea for a future project.

Contrastingly, at the national museum in Cardiff I wasn't very interested looking back at my photos of the artwork where I had been attempting to analyse the effect of light, but instead I was drawn to the natural history section and the pictures id taken of the animal skeletons and exhibits (*figure 3*). These were quite carelessly blasted with light to be viewed from a scientific point of view, not a creative one, and I was very interested in how the light distorts the shape of the skull and massively changes the shape and outcome of the image depending on where it's shot from.

This was something that I expanded on in my independent research and continued illustrating emphasising the shadows and contours that developed depending on the lighting (*figure 4*). I wondered if I could carry something to this effect into portraiture and with that idea in mind, I started to take portrait photographs using a torch and playing around with the position of the torch to create shadows in the face. To develop this experiment further I would recreate these images in paint on canvas and play around with the colours that can be seen through shadow as I found this was another observation I had made (*figure 5&6*). To conclude, the Elysium exhibition that I attended used a lot of bright obnoxious lighting which in my opinion impacted some of the exhibits by



Figure 1; the madaraja arts exhibition



Figure 2, the corridor



Figure 3, skulls at the national history museum in Cardiff

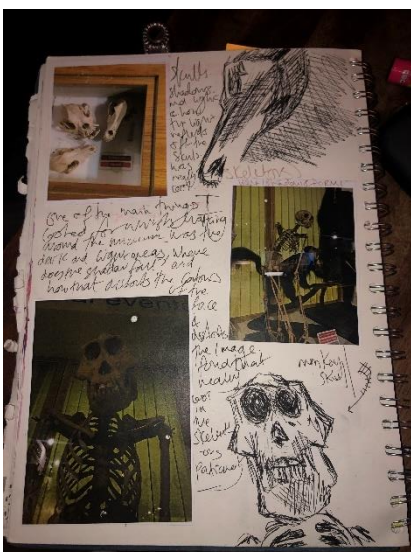


Figure 4, My sketchbook on light effecting the skeletons at Cardiff national museum

creating a slight change to the colours of the artworks and at the national museum of Cardiff the exhibitions were lit in a way that created shadows on parts of the exhibit, this in my opinion created a distortion in the photographs I took whilst I was there and I carried this observation into my continuous research on light and shadow.

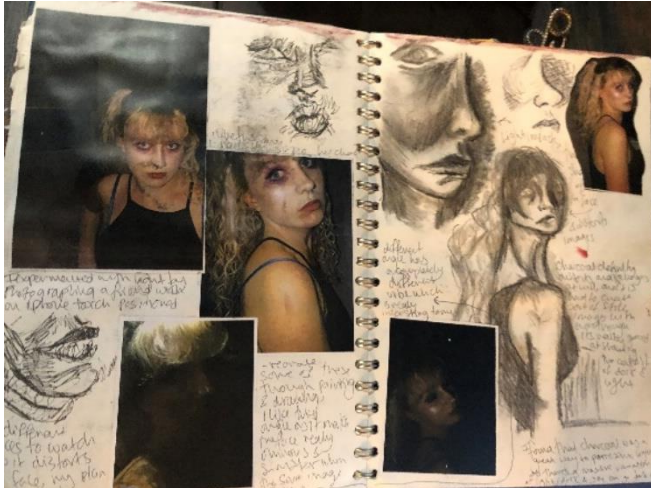


Figure 5, my sketchbook whilst experimenting with distortion created by shadow

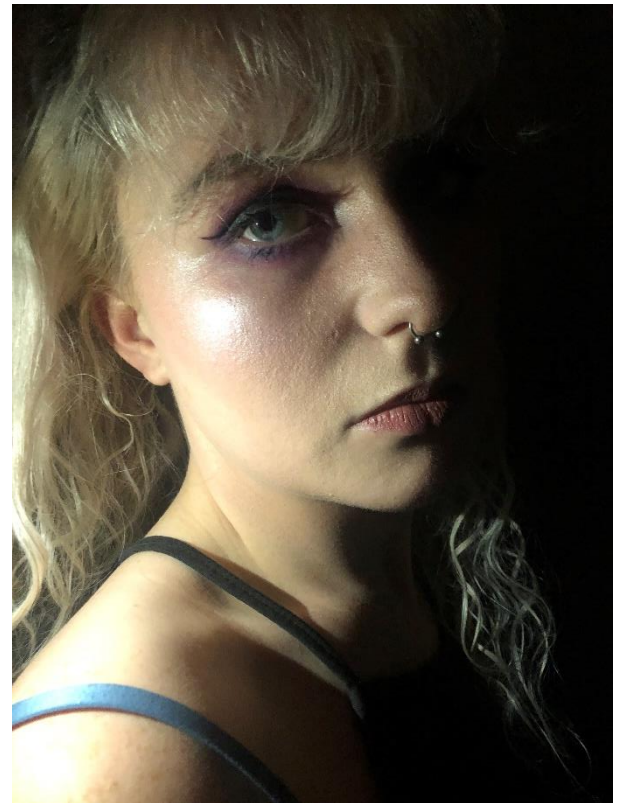


Figure 6, One of my portraits using an iPhone torch to place light and create shadows

The theme of light ran through into the workshops across the course of the first term and changed my initial perception when viewing a piece of art. One of my favourite workshops was the session of experimenting with light painting which is essentially the process of eliminating all light sources in a space and using a torch or another source of light to create images or words using long exposure. We had a range of light creating items such as fairy



lights, stage lights, phone torches etc at hand, these were some of the images that came out of this experiment.



Figure 7, light painting

What I like about these last two images is the intense saturated colour from the stage light contrasting with the dimmer fairy lights. The two light sources compliment each other in the dark space and when upping the saturation using photoshop these were the two outcomes I was most happy with. I found that I was drawn to the reflection of the figure on the floor. Alone without the context of the light reflecting on it, it's quite surreal. The glow of the fairy lights hitting the skin tone created this yellowish face shape on the floor beneath him. Society associates the colour red with danger and warning and it is often used in the context of horror art. Whilst the image itself doesn't, to me, come across particularly unsettling or intended to be creepy, the impact of the lighting has given the image a reflection that could be interpreted this way. It reminded me of the work of Li Hui, who creates instillation pieces using saturated colour.

One of my favourite images by Li Hui is "reincarnation" he uses red LED lights and lasers to invoke emotion in the viewer, the piece 'Reincarnation' (figure 8) is set up on a bed, so the association is with dreamland and nightmares. The concept behind this particular piece seems quite open ended which makes sense as the idea of a bed is a place typically where we think, dream and are with our thoughts. Hui recreates these feelings using the light in his instillation. The colour red, which we tend to associate with danger and violence, effects the theme of the instillation as it comes across as quite sinister and unsettling.

Another process that I used was cyanotypes, this was a process that didn't at all go as planned and ended up as a sort of blur of outlines and colours (figure 9) but what I took from this experience was the use of light exposure. In a dark room in the past, I had experimented with exposure



Figure 9, cyanotype attempt

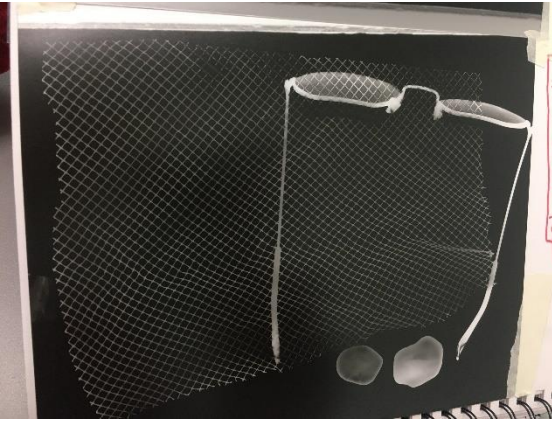


Figure 12, exposure in a dark room

and shadow by placing objects under a lamp and allowing the outline to be picked up by the light. I think the outcome of this procedure was very interesting especially when using reflective and slightly transparent objects like crystals and a pair of glasses (*figure 12*). It is definitely something I would like to continue exploring.



Figure 8, Li Hui's 'reincarnation'

The last thing I want to reference is my attempt at iPhone photography, as I used this idea of reflection and mirroring, which features in my images from the light painting session accidentally, in practice. In *figure 10* I used a window to reflect a mirror ball to play with this idea of reflection. What I liked about how it turned out was the way the mirrors picked up light from outside and ended up with still blocks of colour that don't coincide with the rest of the shape of the ball. And in *figure 11* I also played with the idea of reflection, but I used the shadow created by the natural night behind the camera to create the reflection of the transparent sweet wrapper, I ended up with a block of colour on the pavement and I thought it was really interesting the way the colour from the wrapper



Figure 11, the sweet wrapper creating shadow



Figure 10, the mirror ball

creates a coloured shadow. This is also something I plan on experimenting with in the context of light. In conclusion, the processes of experimenting with different ways of incorporating light into my practice will definitely continue into my thinking in future projects and ideas I explore.

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