

Ways of Perceiving, Curation Essay

Erin Nia Moran

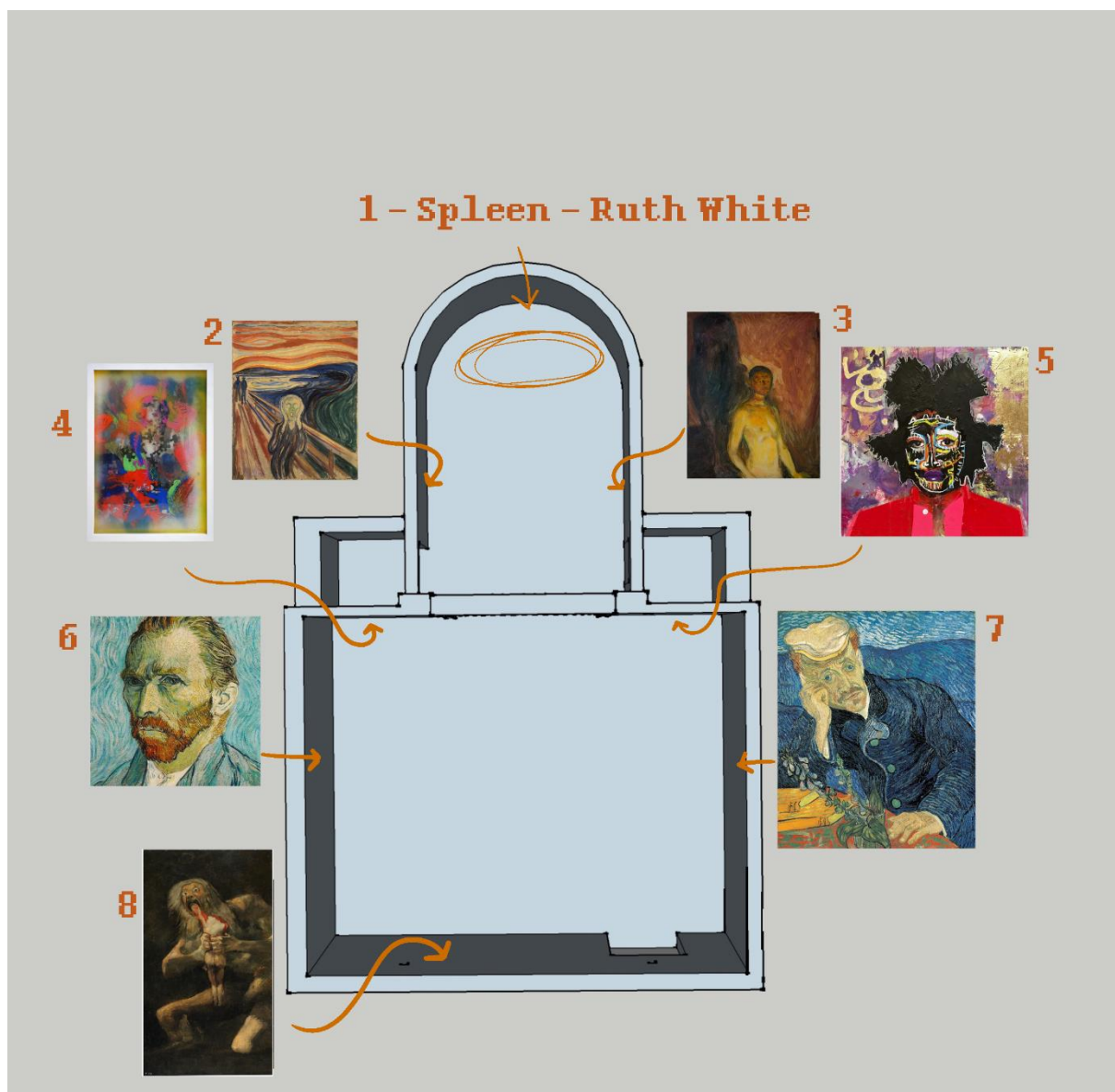
Submission date: 12th May 2020 (12/5/2020) – 12:00pm

Erin Moran: 1901829 – Creative Games Design

Tutor: Ryan Moule

Word count: 1443

Character count: 8,097



For this exhibition I intend to curate an exhibition centred around mental health, thus I will be calling the exhibition; 'State of Mind', collaborating with 6 artists for whom poor mental health has been a large part of their lives or they express what poor mental health feels like through song.

In this exhibition there will be 8 pieces of art, all reflecting the artists struggle with mental health. The gallery in which the exhibition will be held is the Mission Gallery, located in Swansea. The reason I chose this gallery lies in its layout and small scale, which for me replicates the feeling of poor mental health, the feeling of being held in a small space and surrounded by intense emotions and feelings, a claustrophobic feeling to be precise.

The choice was influenced by a newspaper report about an exhibition called Déjà Disparu. A quote from the South China Morning Post says; *"What this show successfully displays are depictions of a claustrophobic Hong Kong."* – **(John Batten 27th August 2013)** this quote inspired me to use the Mission Gallery for this exhibition.

I will be placing 7 pieces on the walls of the gallery in a sort of reverse rainbow.

First will be a piece by Francisco Goya called 'Saturn Devouring His Son' which will be placed next to the door, the reason for this location is the colouration of the piece, dark and foreboding, absorbing all colour – the end of a rainbow and exit into the "real" world.

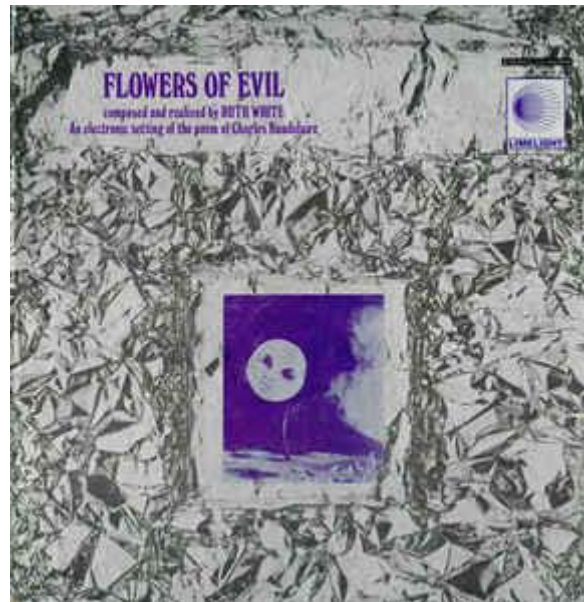


Fig 1

At the back of the gallery and the four corners of the first area near the entrance I plan to place small speakers on the ceiling. These speakers will play 'Spleen' by Ruth White (figure 1). Having the speakers in these locations, the song will surround the patrons of the exhibition making them feel the sense of dread the song expresses.

The song comes from the album 'Flowers of Evil' and evokes feelings of fear and despair, and if one was to stand at the back of the gallery and just close their eyes these feelings would be increased.

The 'song' is cold and empty and truly portrays someone with depression, one form of mental illness.

The sound of White's voice in this song is as if she is speaking through an old radio, an echo from the past that creeps up and makes you feel very uncomfortable. The sound of her voice and the distorted noises behind it, along with the lyrics, give a feeling of insanity to the listener. It makes you feel as if you are falling deep into madness, a feeling that no one wants but sadly some people have no choice, and this is their psyche every day of their lives.

Having this song follow you around the gallery is a sure-fire way to invoke to the patrons a small iota of how people with mental disorders feel. However, I am aware that a caution sign would need to be displayed outside the gallery due to the sensitive nature of both this song and the other pieces in the gallery.

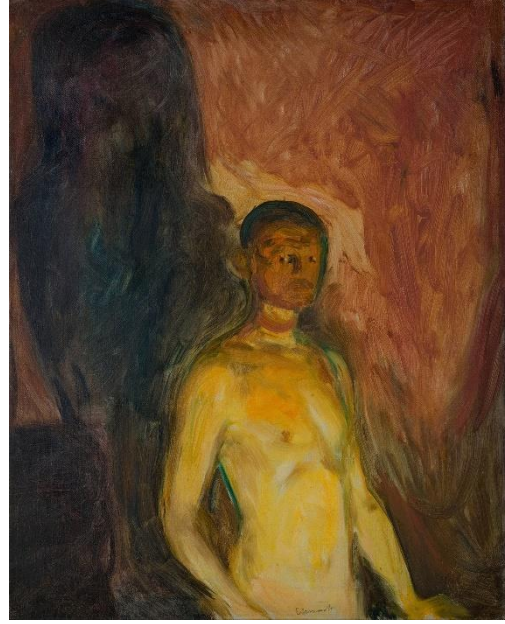
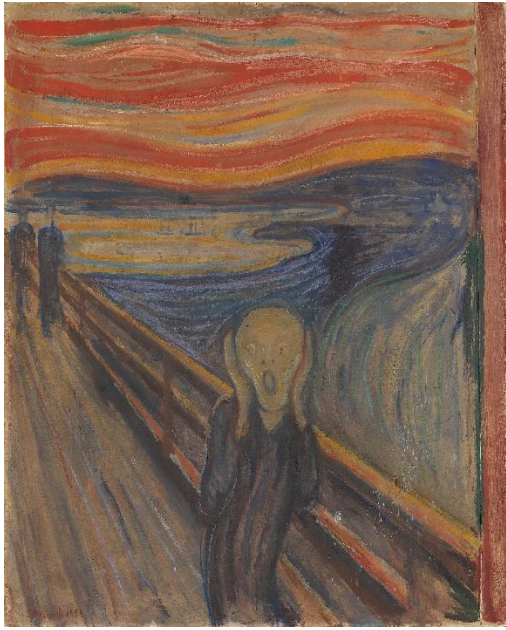


Fig 2/3

Artist 2 will be Edvard Munch and the two pieces of his work that I have chosen are his more famous piece 'The Scream' -1893 and another piece called 'Self-Portrait in Hell' - 1903. These pieces will be placed opposite each other on the walls leading to the back of the gallery. It might be a bit cliché that I chose to put 'The Scream' (figure 2) into this exhibition but the portrayal of emotion, to quote Munch himself; *"I was walking down the road with two friends when the sun set; suddenly, the sky turned as red as blood. I stopped and leaned against the fence, feeling unspeakably tired. Tongues of fire and blood stretched over the bluish black fjord. My friends went on walking, while I lagged behind, shivering with fear. Then I heard the enormous, infinite scream of nature."* – **Munch, 1996, New York: Cameo/Abrams**. Munch truly explains the feeling of crippling anxiety, the turmoil and stress a person feels when their anxiety reaches its limit and turns into an anxiety attack.

Opposite 'The Scream' will be one of Munch's self-portraits; 'Self-Portrait in Hell' (figure 3). Not quite as famous as the previous painting but this expressionist self-portrait of Munch himself is a very good visualisation of a personal hell. An area in which you feel you cannot escape. Looking at this painting it's easy to visualize how someone with a stress related mental health disorder would feel. Enclosed in their own mind, feeling as if they're in hell itself.



Fig 4

This painting named 'Puzzled 2' by artist George Harding. It is an expression of confusion and having too many things going on in your head.

I feel this piece is a good visual expression of a sensory overload; something that regularly occurs in people with autism or ADHD.

Having patrons see this painting and have them visually "see" what someone with this mental health condition "feels" could help them learn and understand. My hope is that it'll be educational for people ignorant to how people with these conditions struggle.

The complementary colours of red, green, blue and yellow in this painting, which are splattered all over a more Renaissance style image, further enhance the perception of over stimulation for the patrons. 'Puzzled 2' will be placed on the left of the far wall in the first area of the gallery next to figure 5.



Fig 5

Figure 5 is a painting by Darren MacPherson of another artist named Jean-Michel Basquiat.

When it comes to mental health and traumatic experiences, Basquiat is a perfect muse for a painting or drawing. Just his expression alone fully expresses the feelings of a depressed human being.

His mother was in and out of mental institutions, his parents' marriage broke down when he was only 7 years old. The experience of having your parents separate is something quite a lot of people can relate to and having this piece in the exhibition will give some patrons a relatable subject.

The painting will be placed on the right side of the far wall of the first area of the gallery. The bright red of this painting along with the messy and sombre background give off a feeling of anxiety, dread and uneasiness. The eyes are painted in a very realistic style and are juxtaposed with the abstract of the rest of the face and hair making them really stand out, leading to impression of them following you as you pass and enhancing the sense of dread and unease.

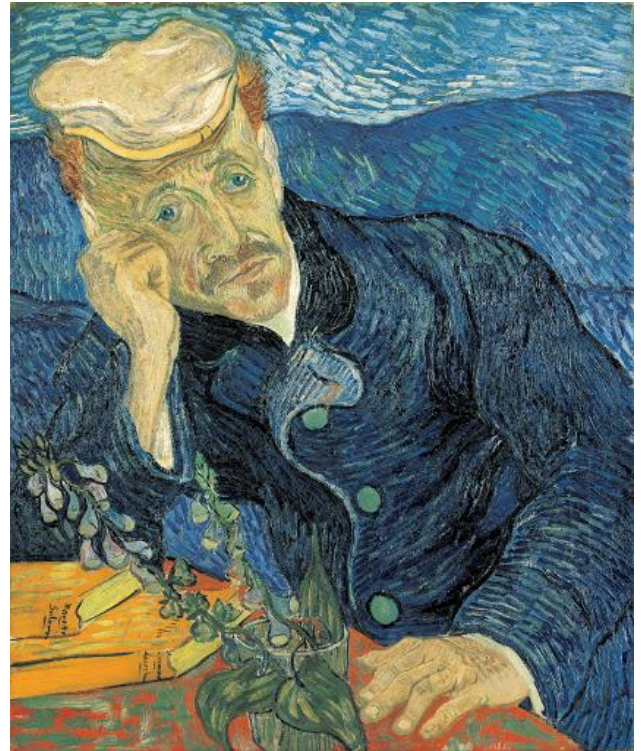
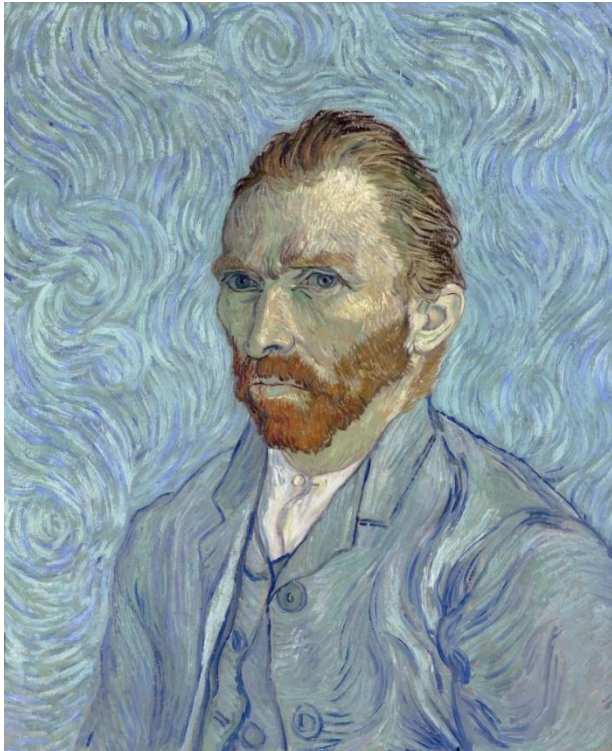


Fig 6/7

These two paintings by the famous artist Vincent Van Gogh are titled 'Van Gogh self-portrait' -1889 and 'Portrait of Dr. Gachet' – 1890.

The reason I have chosen these paintings is not for what they represent but for what the artist who created them went through. It is common knowledge that Vincent Van Gogh cut off his own ear possibly due to him suffering from bipolar disorder. However, not only did Van Gogh possibly have this disorder, but he actual had temporal lobe epilepsy. As someone with epilepsy myself I can relate to him on a very personal level.

Being able to relate to an artist and see through their artwork, through their eyes, is truly special. Having these pieces in this exhibition truly makes the expression of mental health more prominent and thus more relatable.

These paintings will be placed opposite each other at either end of the gallery's main room and will give a nice contrast to the paintings next to them (figures 4 and 5) whose main colour scheme is red and yellow. The hot red and warm yellow next to the dull blue truly expresses different kinds of emotions and different kinds of mental health problems. The yellow/red paintings giving a feeling of anxiety, fear and threat while the blue's portray sadness, depression and loneliness.



Fig 8

The famous Spanish artist, Francisco Goya, created this piece between 1819 and 1823 and titled it; 'Saturn Devouring His Son'.

The painting is an excellent representation of the decline of Goya's mental health when he became the royal court painter. From other people's accounts, he became ill with an undiagnosed illness which left him deaf, it also had a great impact on him mentally. He became very pessimistic and his work became progressively darker.

The painting above, is one of these darker paintings. Looking at this painting is enough to make a person feel defeated or lost; as if something really precious, that they cared about deeply, was destroyed right in front of them. While this painting is based on Greek mythology, the way it's depicted feels very real and just staring at it gives a feeling of unease. I think that having this in the exhibition would really add real atmosphere and mood.

Figures

Figure one: Ruth White – Spleen - <https://youtu.be/b7vWLz9iGsk>

Figure two: Edvard Munch – The Scream – 1893 - Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway

Figure three: Edvard Munch – Self-Portrait in Hell – 1903 – Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway

Figure four: George Harding – Puzzled 2 – 2017 – Zebra One Gallery

Figure five: Darren MacPherson - Jean-Michel Basquiat – (Date & gallery not given)

Figure six: Vincent Van Gogh – Van Gogh Self-Portrait – 1889 - Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France

Figure seven: Vincent Van Gogh – Portrait of Dr. Gachet – 1890 - Private Collection

Figure eight: Francisco Goya – Saturn Devouring His Son – 1819/1823 - Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, Spain

Bibliography:

Spleen - <https://youtu.be/b7vWLz9iGsk>