

History of Shed Use

Way of Perceiving (ADAD4019)

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The main theme of this exhibition is the shed and its contents. As such a shed will be used as the location of choice. The Oxford Dictionary defines a shed as “a Small building, usually made of wood, used for storing things”(Buchanan, 2010) and has long been a treasured symbol of eccentricity (Wilson, 2005).



Fig. 1 Grandpa's Hut, 1968 (Campbell, 2012)

A shed can be depicted as a simple place to store your tools or hide unwanted belongings usually an afterthought. According to Cornelia Parker “Where you store things you cannot quite throw away, a place where objects tend to congregate” (Tate, 2000).

According to the annual Cuprinol survey, Shedonomics around “three quarters of British people own a shed of those who don't 44% would like to (Smedley, 2017). Smedley further discusses that a shed is not for just keeping tools in but a place to follow hobbies.



Fig. 2 Shaun of the Dead (2004)

This allusion to storage is supported by the horror spoof Shaun of the Dead reaffirming it as a place for storage, which is then forgotten about. In the film Shaun with his friend fight the zombies with household items, however when this does not work the question occurs “what’s in the shed, its locked”, “Why is it locked?” “it’s always locked” (No author, n.d.).

The 'Shed Reimagined' is an exhibition in which artefacts will be placed on the objects they are associated with, which acts as the display method. Natural lighting will be important to deconstruct the objects through light and shadow. As you walk through you can go in either direction suggested by the Roald Dahl (2013) *Book on a Desk* route or Tracey Emin's (2000) photography art and then additionally walk around Cornelia Parker's (1991) *Cold Dark Matter* and then lastly Shaun Greenhalgh (2007) fake Egyptian Amarna Princess statue.

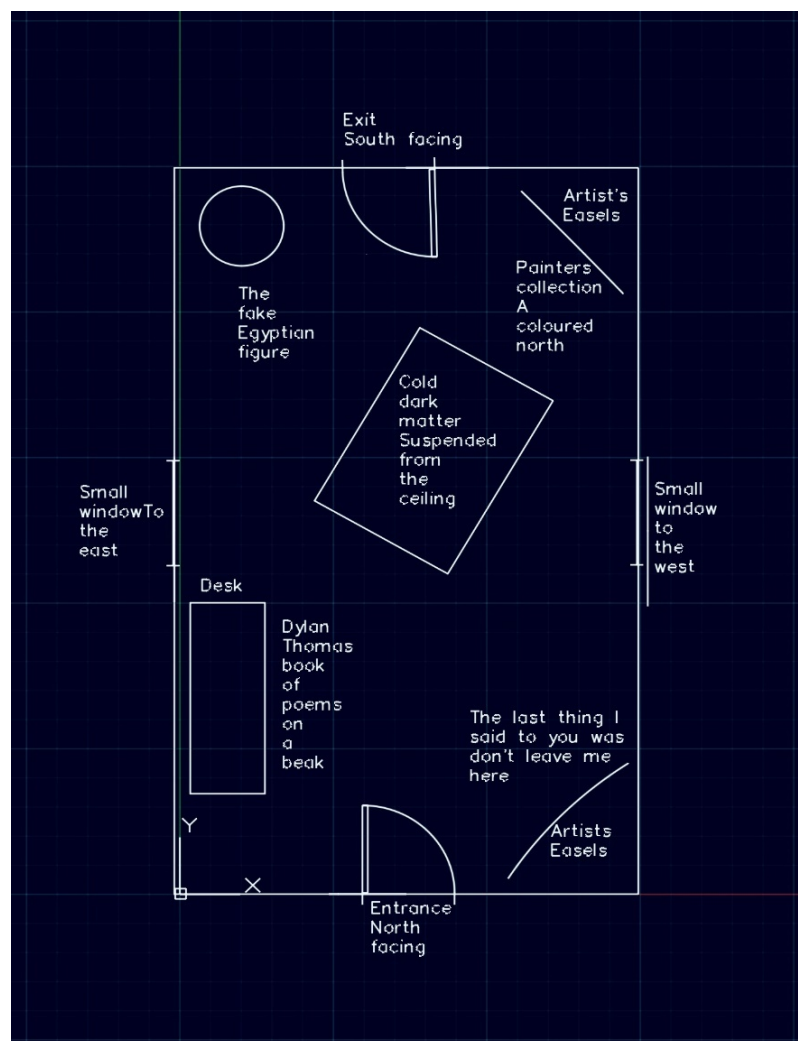


Fig. 3 The Gallery Map



Fig. 4 Writing shed, Little nest (David, 2013)

Roald Dahl's (2013) *Book on a Desk* is inspired by Dylan Thomas' Writing shed in Laugharne, in which Thomas (2016) called it "my word splashed hut". This inspired Roald Dahl after a visit to see Dylan's shed in 1950 where he decided to create one of his own that he called the "little nest". With similar dimensions, he would surround himself with inspirational quotes and pictures similarly to Thomas. He realised he needed space away from distractions. When Dahl's widow visited Dylan's shed "she said: It was so similar-to Roald's hut. Everything was very simple, and Roald was like that, he wanted a simple life, he was a countryman, again, like Dylan" (Ballinger, 2016). The similarities between the two authors and their writing spaces are notable.



Fig. 5 “My word splashed hut” (Ballinger, 2016)

However, both take inspiration in opposing ways, Thomas had a large window to take in the views of the beautiful estuary, in contrast Dahl drew the curtains in semi- darkness to lock out the external environment (Fig. 9). Dahl said, “When I am in this place it is my little nest, my womb” (Ballinger, 2016). Dahl used a chair with a wooded plank straddled across the arms, on one side for rejecting pages, therefore, reaffirming “a shed is a safe place to make mistakes” (Campbell, 2012). The evidence suggests that they both needed different creative places; Dahl a quiet, dull down world around him in order to create new worlds, in contrast, Dylan needed inspiration or input from the surrounding world to inspire his creative words.



Fig. 6 The Last Thing I said to you don't leave me here (Emin 1998))

Tracey Emin used a shed as part of an exhibit along with two photographs (Taylor, 2003). Before further research the sense I get from this photograph is a feeling of stark abandonment, sadness, from the way she is crouching I get a sense of the submissive and the shed dark a place, according to Rachel Taylor "the photograph looks like both the staged reconstruction of an incident from the artists past and attempts to derive some peace from a distressing memory" (Tate, 2000). However, it has similar connotations with the work of mural *Alphabets* 1976 by Bianca Pucciarelli Menna (Benson, 2019). Emin depicts child-like qualities, shamed or to mimic the male gaze; a woman as fragile, passive and a sexual object (Mulvey, 1989), reinforcing the women to become the passive surveyed (Goffman, 1979 pp.3-31).

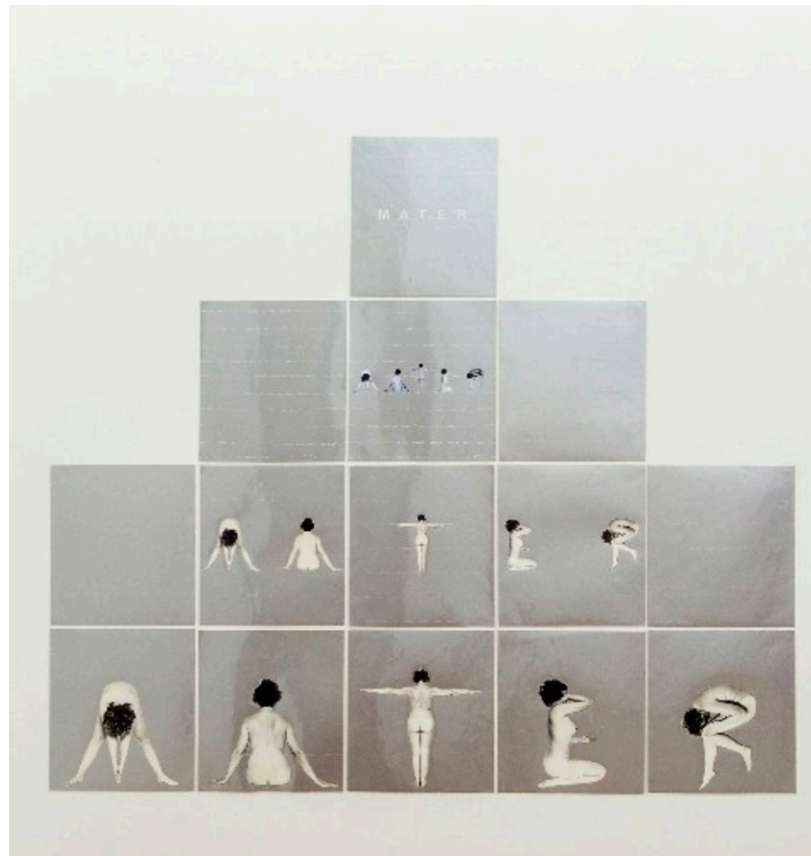


Fig. 12 Mural Alphabets (Menna, 1976)

Additionally, Emin is not portrayed as a “feminine touch”(Goffman, 1979 p.29) nor does she touch her face, nor smile for the camera to be “surveyed” (Berger, p.49) for man to fulfil the role of surveyor. Goffman (1979, p.40) states historically the classic stereotype of a woman is to physically lower themselves, evidence from historical portraits right up to modern advertising reinforces hierarchies that oppress women and the privileged gender of men. Emin personifies the female gaze, later the shame becomes a kind of display, her shame is in relation to one as the spectator (Berger, 2008 p.47). Furthermore, Berger (2008, p.49) supports this as “The Subject (a woman) is aware of being seen by the by spectator”. However, Emin does not perform for the spectator (Tate, 2000). Emin suggests the spectator is left to draw his or her own conclusion about what happened in the shed.



Fig.8 Cold Dark Matter: Exploded View (Parker 1991)

Cornelia Parker deconstructs a shed by explosion and reconstructs the objects to recreate a moment in time, she refers to her work as “cartoon violence”(Parker, 1991). The shed contained additional ephemeral objects, some of which are of personal significance to Parker. Capturing the explosive moment creates shadows, filled with positive and negative space. The shed is the precipice of the mundane with its sanctuary-like quality, this meaning is significant to the work. By blowing up the shed Parker takes away safe place, the place where an individual’s pass of time, no longer in use, nor moderately finished, creates a new space (Tate, 1991).

The fragments distribute far and wide, some never found these were collected and laid out on the floor, devastated and unserviceable reeking of death (Tate, 2000). Furthermore, Bakunin (1971 p. xv) suggests “The urge to destroy is also a creative urge”. Parker suggests these items are laid out similarly to bodies within a mortuary. According to funeral guidance, laying out a body who has died should be done as if they are still a patient with compassion and gentleness (Funeral guide, 2018). Parker carefully organising each object with equal compassion as if they were dead people (Tate, 2000) strategically through the manipulation of the fragments.



Fig. 9 Layout of objects (Tate, 1991)

This reference to death changes dramatically when the space that elements occupy are changed as the objects were strung up in order. They start to lose the sense of death. Reawakened once suspended, they are altered. They are rejuvenated and rather than provoking revulsion, they can be contemplated (Parker, 1991).



Fig. 10 Installation (Tate, 1991)

Parker allows the boundary lines to be blurred between both content, space, viewer and the sculpture itself. Objects of the installation cast melodramatic shadows across the gallery (Tate, 2000), adding an extra sense of denotation.



Fig. 11 Fake Egyptian Amarna Princess Statue (M.E.N, 2007)

Shaun Greenhalgh served a sentence of five years for fakery of art. He creates these artefacts in his garden shed, according to the Metropolitan police Art and Antiquities Unit they believed Greenhalgh to be a 'failed creator' despondent about his lack of artworld network and art school connections (Ward, 2007).

"[Greenhalgh] realised he could make more money conning the art market. He wanted to show them up and to a degree he succeeded, they may have worked less for profit than to shame the art world "

(Ward, 2007)

Greenhalgh was an exceptional artist, who spectacularly fooled the Art experts. He relied on spectacle of the Pseudo-world supplying fake objects to a fake world playing on the greed and Pseudo-intellectual arrogance of others (Debord, 1984).

In 2010, the Metropolitan police had a fakes and forgeries exhibit at the V & A for National shed week showcasing Greenhalgh's shed and his faked artwork like the Goose sculpted by Barbara Hepworth (Johnson, 2010) and the 3,300 years old Egyptian Amarna Princess Statue and its reckoned there are still numerous fakes in circulation (Ward, 2007). However, showcasing his work has inadvertently endorsed the artist which has given legitimacy to the act of forgery. This discussion on 'Authorship' has numerous facets to the argument. As Barthes (1977, p.148) suggests "The Birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author". In other words, once a creator publishes the work it is no longer their interpretation but the reader/viewer to create meaning, to make up their own interpretations due to their culture, their views and will either accept or reject the art piece.

Regarding the intentions of the author of work to fully inform the viewer, Irvin suggests that through the works of the original author, the "appropriation artist" (Irvin, 2005 p137) still has the responsibility of the author, and despite the original demonstrating originality and innovation which is expected, there is nothing to say of the artists role that obligates the artist to produce innovative works. Despite the demand for originality, it is an existing or existed pressure directed at the artist by the current or past culture (Irvin, 2005, p137). Furthermore, Irvin suggests artists are the authentic authority of their labour whilst fakers are not (Irvin, 2005 p.123).

This essay has shown how versatile, creative a shed space can be. The shed is an intimate space to show the object, the artist and the work – a multipurpose place of space; shed art, art made in the shed or art made of sheds. Symbolically the shed has deep rooted tradition in British culture. Evidence suggests that the artists I have chosen, show an intimate relationship with the shed; allowing for inspiration, some using the shed as art, others as the space to create art, which fully reaffirms the British relationship with the shed.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Grandpa's Hut, 1968 vanda campbell: *What I need is a shed*. Available at: http://vandacampbell.blogspot.com/2012/07/blog-post_29.html (accessed 26.03.20).

Figure 2: Shaun of the Dead (2004) *Scene from Shaun of the Dead Shed*. Available at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0365748/mediaviewer/rm3260829696> (accessed 26.03.20)

Figure 3: Brown, M (2020) *The Gallery Map*.

Figure 4: David, S., 2013. *Roald Dahl's Writing shed, Little nest*. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/sep/13/roald-dahl-great-writers-imagination-lacey> (accessed 28.03.20)

Figure 5: Ballinger, L., (2016) *Dylan Thomas my word splashed hut*. BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-37342271> (accessed 28.03.20).

Figure 6: Emin, T., (1998) *The Last Thing I said to you don't leave me here 2* Available at: <https://www.tate-images.com/preview.asp?image=P11921> (accessed 22.03.20).

Figure 7: Menna, B., (1976) Mural Alphabets Available at: <https://elephant.art/tomaso-binga/> (accessed 22.03.20).

Figure 8: Parker, C., (1991) *Cold Dark Matter: Exploded View*. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/parker-cold-dark-matter-an-exploded-view-t06949> (accessed 22.03.20).

Figure 9: Tate, (1991) *Layout of objects, Cold Dark Matter: Look Closer* [WWW Document]. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/parker-cold-dark-matter-an-exploded-view-t06949/story-cold-dark-matter> (accessed 4.22.20).

Figure 10: Tate, (1991) *Hanging the installation, Cold Dark Matter: Look Closer* [WWW Document]. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/parker-cold-dark-matter-an-exploded-view-t06949/story-cold-dark-matter> (accessed 4.22.20).

Figure 11: M.E.N., (2007) *Unbelievable Story. Was Tricked Paying £440k Fake Statue Egypt. Princess Said Be 3300 Years Old*. Available at: <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/bolton-amarna-princess-fake-statue-16610167> (accessed 4.10.20).

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