

# Ways of Perceiving, Curation Essay

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Titled 'Phobias of the Human Psyche' I aim to create an exhibition presenting 5 pieces of art from different artists that either represent fears or trigger them. I first got the idea for this theme when I saw Louise Bourgeois' 'Maman' and since I myself and many people have a fear of spiders looking at 'Maman' made me feel uneasy thinking of standing next to a 30 foot spider but at the same time I always find I can't look away from the sculpture. I decided to show a number of common fears in hopes of getting more of a reaction from more people than I would if I included more uncommon fears like Alektrophobia (Fear of Chickens). I plan to hold this exhibition at Mission Gallery as the space is the right size for what I have in mind and could possibly add to the atmosphere of the exhibition.

Phobias and fears are very similar but at the same time rather different, a fear is "a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain" (Dictionary), where as a phobia is "an overwhelming and debilitating fear of an object, place, situation, feeling or animal" (NHS) phobias are more likely to affect a person's everyday life due to their deep rooted fear, for example, someone with Agoraphobia can be scared to leave their home and this will affect personal relationships and that person's own wellbeing and will change other people's perception on them and eventually alienate them from social situations. Phobias and fears develop over time most phobias are developed in childhood; however, some phobias are developed through trauma such as being attacked by a dog or a near death experience. Phobias can also be bad to physical health as the stress of the anxiety that comes with phobias can cause "nausea, sweating, heart palpitations and dizziness" (NHS). If a phobia is too much to handle and is severely impacting on someone's lifestyle treatments are available but this will be done by counselling and psychotherapy and more simple phobias

can be treated with “ gradual exposure to the object, animal, place or situation that causes fear and anxiety” (NHS), however treatment doesn’t always guarantee a cure, and those people . Medication can be given to help with the affects of anxiety but not the phobia itself. I feel this exhibition is not suitable for those with complex and severe phobias but more for those who are able to mentally cope better with their phobias. This exhibition isn’t intended to terrify the viewers and to cause trauma it’s simply made to get their adrenaline running while also being in an obviously safe environment to keep them at ease and could possibly help in them overcoming their phobias.



Spider – Louise Bourgeois - 1994

In the small room at the back of the building I would like to place ‘Spider’ by Louise Bourgeois. I feel very strongly about making this piece a part of the exhibition as Arachnophobia is a very common phobia and coming from my own personal feelings, a 15ft spider sculpture is sure to inflict a bit of fear into people with this phobia. However, the meaning isn’t half as terrifying as the sculpture itself. Bourgeois says she sees the spider as a “Maternal figure” (Natasha Adamou, Tate, 2016) and shows this in her sculpture as the spider is carrying a large egg made of marble just below the body. Bourgeois also made a

poem about the piece explaining how she feels the spider is a friend and the lines that stand out to me are, “The friend (the spider-why the spider?) because the best friend was my mother...” and “She could also defend herself, and me...” (Tate Modern 2000, P.62) these quotes I feel really help show the similarities in maternal instincts in both humans and spiders. This sculpture also looks menacing as “The angularity of the thin legs and their different heights give the impression that the spider is crawling.” (Tate) which to some people may come across as threatening. I feel this piece in particular will bring the fear factor to the exhibition that I’m aiming for but to also bring a sense of motherly comfort.



The head of Medusa – Peter Paul Rubens - 1618

On the wall to the right as you come into the gallery space I decided to display ‘The head of Medusa’ by Peter Paul Rubens. Unlike ‘Spider’ by Bourgeois, this painting was made with the intention of inflicting fear into people and “such depictions were disseminated to a certain extent.”. The Head of Medusa has been used to bring fear to people for centuries, Michelangelo painted wooden shields with a design of Medusa “inspiring terror” (Codart). I specifically chose Rubens’ painting for the exhibition as the large tangle of snakes for hair would definitely trigger someone with a fear of snakes and could also trigger any other fears

associated with blood, insects, death and spiders. Rubens saw the head of Medusa as a “symbol of a demon” and making this the main subject of a painting issued out a warning to people that going against the word of God was a grave sin.



Found drowned – George Frederick Watts – 1848-1850

I intend to place this painting on the far-left wall of the entrance as the painting is around 7ft x 3.11ft and needed a larger space. This painting I find interesting to add to this exhibition as at first glance it doesn't come across as something to be afraid of but the backstory behind it is quite unsettling. The painting was inspired by the poem “The bridge of Sighs” (Thomas Hood, 1844) which is about the suicide of a pregnant homeless woman, she throws herself off London's Waterloo Bridge, the painting symbolises “the wreck of a girl's life” (Foundling Museum). I chose this painting to display as drowning is another common fear some are deeply effected by this fear and others see drowning as a way they do not wish to die, but both responses show uneasiness, this painting brings out that uneasiness as you, the viewer, put yourself in her place for that small moment in time.



The Runaway boy and clown, Norman Rockwell, 1922

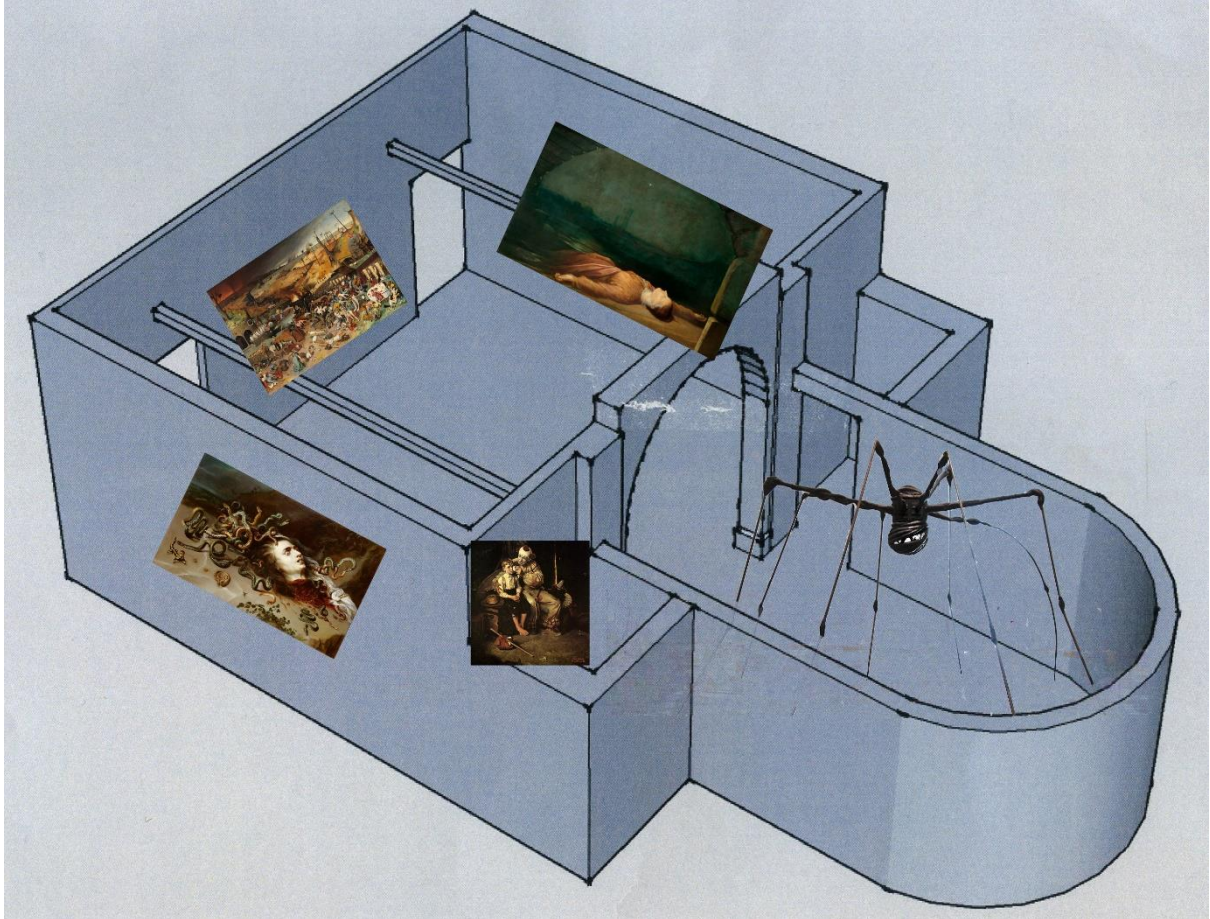
I couldn't find a lot of information on this piece but I would still like to include it in the exhibition as I find it unsettling for people with a fear of clowns. This painting was the cover of Life Magazine for June 1 1922. This is one of many clown paintings Rockwell made in his life time but this one in particular makes me uncomfortable, firstly the clowns face is frowning through a painted smile and tells me he isn't the character he's trying to portray which makes me distrust him. I also find it rather upsetting as the young boy is crying, the name of the painting tells us he's run away from home but why is he crying? Is he lost and wants to return home? Does he wish to join the circus and got turned away? I also find it unsettling that the background is really dark to the point the clown's black dog is almost invisible.



The triumph of death – Pieter Bruegel – 1562-1563

I would like to add this to the exhibition as this painting shows a fear, I'm sure a lot of people have, death. It shows barren land with death in every corner, there are skeletons raging war on the living and turning it to the land of the dead, "The latter are led to an enormous coffin with no hope for salvation" (Museo Nacional Del Prado). This painting has an apocalyptic scene and being in the times we are now some people will very much relate to this painting. This painting was inspired by the "Medieval tradition of the Dance of Death" which was "a symbolic dance in which Death, represented as a skeleton, leads people or skeletons to their grave." (Dictionary). I feel this would fit in well to the theme of the exhibition as death can be terrifying especially if it happens in the way this painting depicts.

# Exhibition Plan



## Bibliography

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