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FINE ART: STUDIO, SITE, AND CONTEXT

WORD COUNT: 1757

RYAN MOULE

NEUREGULIN 1

The concept of the tortured artist is a long-standing stereotype associated with some of the greatest productions of art throughout our time. In modern times this idea has been disputed; considered harmful due to the implied romanticization of the idea that mental illness incites creativity. It seems that it is human nature to be infatuated with the feelings of struggling and suffering- to an almost pervasive degree. The tortured artist: a myth born out of humanity's strange obsession. Or is it? Recent studies state that there is substantial evidence showing that genius and so-called "madness" are physically linked, embedded in our DNA. The *neuregulin 1* gene, when mutated, is known to cause cases of psychosis or schizophrenia, but this gene also coincides with blossoms of creativity- it can be argued that the gene that is directly implicated in psychosis and altered brain function is also directly correlated with creative expression (Kayser, 2013). This exhibition is meant to delve deeper into the experience of the legendary tortured artist; works that allow the audience a glimpse into an altered world that few experience. Artworks that urge feelings of paranoia, doubt, depression; imagery of the hallucinations that most will never experience but that some see as reality. The works of the outsiders breathing the same air as the work of masters.

Lining the left and right walls of the exhibition are the works of Francisco de Goya; a master of his own time as well as modern day. Originally a portraitist commissioned by nobility, royalty, and others of misplaced importance, de Goya was given little room to experiment in his work. The twelve pieces bordering this exhibit were not the pieces found in the houses of the rich. These are works from the series "*Los Caprichos (Figures 1-12)*," a series of 80 images that took him three years to complete, starting in 1796 and ending in 1799. It is said that there are two era's of de Goya's work, the years before his illness marking the first, and the years that followed forming the second. Having gone deaf at the age of 46, de Goya also suffered from

hallucinations and delirium. Along with the famous works of “*Saturn Devouring His Son*” and “*The Pilgrimage to San Isidro*,” which also came about from his second era, “*Los Caprichos*” are held in high regard due to the creative liberation and pure self-expression that they seem to emanate. Francisco de Goya’s self portrait (*Figure 1*) was the first in the series of the 80 works. It is also the most grounded; those that follow depict witches, monsters, violent scenes, and fantasy- evoking the feelings of worry, anxiety, and a nightmarish reality that was faced by de Goya (Voorhies, 2003). One of the most well-known works that is present is “*El sueño de la razon produce monstruos*” (*Figure 2*)- translated to “The sleep of reason produces monsters.” The world inhabited by de Goya, van Gogh, and Munch was a world where reason was wobbly. The images of “*Los Caprichos*” are not pleasant- they’re not meant to be. In the second half of his life de Goya had become pessimistic- the effects of war and illness became extremely prevalent in his work. De Goya most likely wished to express this frustration, anger, desperation, and sadness to others and found that the best way to do this was through his art.

In order for the audience to have a more atmospheric experience, the exhibit will showcase the work of Nathaniel Mellors, a contemporary English artist focused on cinema, photography, and music. Projected onto the wall directly to the right of the exhibit entrance will be Mellor’s “*Ourhouse, Episode 1: ‘Games’*” (*Figure 13*), a short film with a 36 minute duration. The film will be playing on loop with full audio. The audio is especially important for the exhibition; auditory hallucinations are one of the most well-known effects of psychosis and schizophrenia, and can range from the voices of loved ones all the way to random, sudden noises. The constant playing of the audio along with the erratic, staccato way of speaking performed by the actors will hopefully immerse the audience in the theme of the exhibition and make it easier for them to relate to the artists being showcased. The effectiveness of Mellor’s work not only comes from odd speech patterns but from his obsession with psychedelic, absurdist theater. If one were to watch “*Ourhouse, Episode 1: ‘Games’*,” they would experience

a unique displacement of reality. The rules of our reality do not apply to the world projected onto the wall. Just as hallucinations are viewed as real-life to those who experience them, these characters see nothing wrong with their behaviors and view them as completely normal- not in any sinister or malicious way, but just in the way that they go about their lives. Their reality simply skims above the rest.

Now coming around to the two sculptures occupying the far hall of the exhibit- one tucked into an almost closet-like space to the left, the other proudly displayed in the center of the curved hall- are the works of Camille Claudel, an incredibly influential artist in the movements of feminism and the artistic exploration of self and relationships. It is said that the work of Claudel looks forward to the expressionist career of Edvard Munch and the post-impressionist journey of Vincent van Gogh (Seiferle, 2017). Like de Goya, there appears to be two eras of Claudel's work; the first being her promising journey as a young artist- receiving mentorship from Alfred Boucher and working closely with Auguste Rodin (even helping him with his famous works, *"The Kiss"* and *"The Gates of Hell"*), and the second beginning with her separation from Rodin. Having worked closely together the two of them formed a romantic connection, but due to Rodin's refusal to leave his current partner Rose Bueret, both their personal and professional relationships crumbled. This caused a mental break in Claudel and, after years of paranoia, isolation, and the creation of some of the most impactful works she has ever produced, Claudel was sent to an asylum by her estranged mother and siblings. There Claudel halted her work in sculpture and, following 30 years of loneliness in the asylum, Claudel passed away, buried in a mass grave unclaimed by her family. The two works exhibited come from the two eras of Claudel's life; *"Shakuntala (Figure 14),"* created during her partnership with Rodin (and possibly the piece that truly started her personal career), and *"Maturity (Figure 15),"* one of her most significant works showcasing the anguish and frustration experienced by Claudel during her separation from the French sculptor.

The final work, and most likely the least famous one, is a sculpture by Karl Brendel- an outsider artist featured in the collection of Hans Prinzhorn. Although Brendel is not especially well-known in the art world, he has an extensive line of sculptures; a skill that formed alongside his illness as a new form of expression- one that was able to progress beyond the boundaries of speech. All of the work featured in Prinzhorn's collection comes from mental health patients- a collection of over 20,000 works from 1840 through to 1940. From this collection came Prinzhorn's now infamous book: *"Artistry of the Mentally Ill"* which has been regarded as the "Bible of Surrealism." The painter Jean Dubuffet says it best, stating: *"We are witness here to the completely pure artistic operation, raw, brute, and entirely reinvented in all of its phases solely by means of the artists' own impulses."* Brendel's piece *"Three Head-and-Feet Figurines (Figure 16),"* is not showcased for the purpose of highlighting only the works of Brendel, but as a representative of the lesser-known authentic representations of art- purely art for the sake of art and human expression.

The placement of the pieces in this exhibition is meant to enhance the communication of the works as well as create an effective and immersive environment for the audience (*Figure 17*). Lighting, sound, and location are all working factors of this exhibit; the room will be very low-lit (near darkness), with the only light sources being bright, clear spotlights focused on the works. The intent is to create an 'empty' or 'disconnected' void with the artworks acting as almost imposing entities. The twelve works of de Goya (six on the left wall, six on the right) create a border, surrounding the audience in the space. *Los Caprichos*, most of which contain dark, *Brothers Grimm*-esque figures, will lend to a sensation of discomfort or unnerve. In the center of the room is Brendel's *Three Head-and-Feet Figurines*- having it occupy the center space forces its interaction with the audience. The center of the gallery also implies reverence and importance, not only to the piece itself, but to the idea of the lost, unknown, or uncredited

artist- forced recognition. The two sculptures of Claudel, *Shakuntala* and *Maturity*, will occupy the far room of the gallery. In the center of the curved room will be *Maturity*, dramatically underlit in bright, white lighting. This will hopefully emphasize the anguish, remorse, and anger felt by Claudel during its construction. Her most famous piece, *Shakuntala*, will be put off to the side in the smaller outlet to the left of the room, low-lit and downplayed. It still acted as part of her career, potentially being the piece that even started it in the first place, but it is a smothered side of the artist due to the mistreatment of her condition- a glimpse into the possible future that Claudel never actually got to experience. Finally, to the front of the gallery, directly to the left of the entrance, is Mellors' *Ourhouse, Episode 1: Games*. Playing constantly on a loop, the audio will fill the entirety of the space of the gallery- meaning that, even if the audience is not directly interacting with it, it is still a constant, lingering at the back of their heads. When turning around to exit the gallery, the audience will be confronted by the film again- drawing their attention once more before they leave. This exhibition is not just a display of art, but also strives to create the world inhabited by the tortured artist- a world that is wildly misunderstood. Even today so little is known about psychosis and schizophrenia, and the unknown incites fear- but the works created to communicate and express the feelings of those who experience the world differently have become some of the most important artworks of our time. They should be celebrated.

LIST of FIGURES (1-17)



Figure 1: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *Francisco Goya y Lucientes, pintor* (*Francisco Goya y Lucientes, painter*) [print/ aquatint, etching] Right-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 2: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* (*the sleep of reason produces monsters*) [print/ aquatint, etching] Right-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 3: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *Buen Viaje (Bon Voyage)* [print/ aquatint, etching] Right-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 4: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *¿Dónde va mamá? (Where is mama going?)* [print/ aquatint, etching] Right-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 5: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *Se repulen* (*They spruce themselves up*) [print/ aquatint, etching] Right-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 6: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *Ya es hora* (*Time to be off*) [print/ aquatint, etching] Right-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]

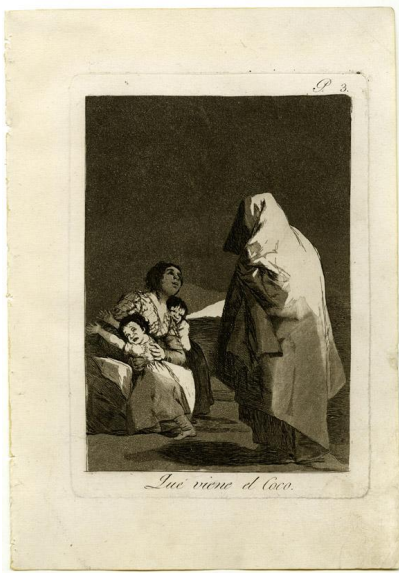


Figure 7: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *Que viene el coco* (Here comes the boogeyman) [print/ aquatint, etching] Left-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 8: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *Mala noche* (A bad night) [print/ aquatint, etching] Left-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 9: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *Volaverunt* (*They have flown*) [print/ aquatint, etching] Left-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 10: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *No te escaparás* (*You will not escape*) [print/ aquatint, etching] Left-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 11: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *¡Y aún no se van!* (*And they still don't go!*) [print/ aquatint, etching] Left-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 12: de Goya, F. (1796-99) *Duendecitos* (*Hobgoblins*) [print/ aquatint, etching] Left-hand wall of gallery [Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_caprichos]



Figure 13: Mellors, N. (2010) *Ourhouse, Episode 1: Games* [Video] Wall to the direct left of gallery entrance [Available at: <https://nomadprojects.org/project/ourhouse/>]



Figure 14: Claudel, C. (1886) *Shakuntala* [Terracotta] Small room directly off the left of the curved room [Available at: <https://www.tuttartpitturasculturapoesiamusica.com/2015/10/Camille-Claudel.html>]



Figure 15: Claudel, C. (1895) *Maturity* [Bronze] End of gallery; center of curved room [Available at: https://arthive.com/camilleclaudel/works/476643~Mature_age]

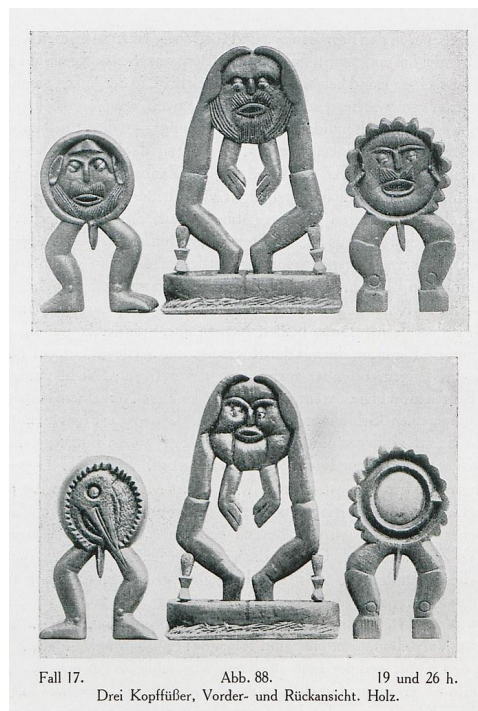
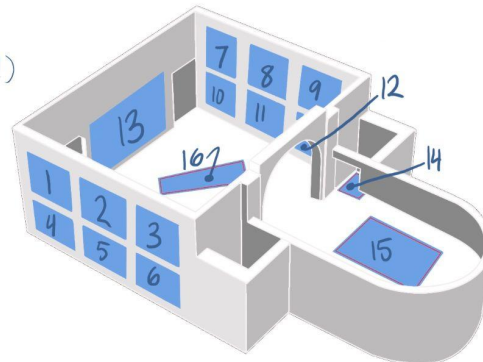
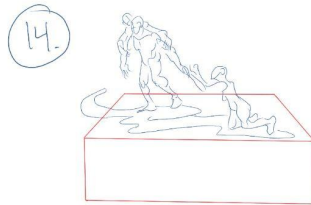


Figure 16: Brendel, K. (unknown) *Three Head-and-Feet Figurines* [Wood] Center of first room of gallery [Available at: <https://upload democraticunderground.com/12601348>]

Works 1-12: FRANCISCO de GOYA
"Los Caprichos" (1796-1799)

1. Self Portrait
2. "El sueño de la razón produce monstruos" (The sleep of reason produces monsters)
3. "Buen Viaje" (Bon Voyage)
4. "¿Dónde va mamá?" (Where is mama going?)
5. "Se repulen" (They spruce themselves up)
6. "Ya es hora" (Time to be off)
7. "Die viene el coco" (Here comes the bogeyman)
8. "Mala noche" (A bad night)
9. "Volaverunt" (They have flown)
10. "No te escaparás" (You will not escape)
11. "¡Y aún no se van!" (And they still don't go!)
12. "Duendecitos" (Hobgoblins)



Work 13: NATHANIEL MELLORS
"Duckhouse: Episode 1: Games" (2007)
Duration: 30 minutes
Film on loop

Works 14-15: CAMILLE CLAUDEL
14. "Mourning" (1898)
Sculpture on plinth [131 x 195 x 76 cm]
15. "Shakuntala" (1886)
Sculpture on plinth [111 x 80 x 41.5 cm]

Work 16: KARL BREUNDEL
"Three Head-and-Foot Figurines" (Unknown year)
Sculpture on plinth



NEUREGULIN 1

Figure 17: McWilliams, I. (2022) *Mission Gallery Exhibition Layout* [Digital]

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