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Product and Furniture Design

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Upon deciding to curate an exhibition based on dreaming, I appointed myself to explore dreaming through the lenses of Sigmund Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams"(1899) and Revonsuo's "Threat Simulation Theory"(2009), as the two observations examine dreams in different, yet critical perspectives. This essay will aim to not only consider and scrutinize both theories, but also compare them, not to reach a definitive conclusion of one's legitimacy, but to identify and hopefully portray how they both play out in the minds of those who dream. Four artists have been chosen to embody the exploration of dreams within my curated space, as well as to employ them to better understand the theories that will be explored in this piece of writing.

The first lens of exploration will be Freud's interpretation and studies of dreaming. At the forefront of psychoanalytic dream theory, Freud is one of the first people who decided to explore the world of dreams. He argues dreams to be "a liberation of the spirit from the power of external nature, a freeing of the soul from the bonds of the senses" (Freud, 2010). I intend to capture and explore Freud's idea of dreams existing as the subconscious or even higher-self of the dreamer through the inclusion of Johnson Tsang's sculptures. I will be utilizing three of his sculptures to convey my message of the seemingly abstract, yet meaningful fibre of dreams.



Figure 1
Falling in Love (Tsang, 2018)
30 x 22 x 4 cm



Figure 2
Remembrance (Tsang, 2018)
27 x 20 x 18 cm

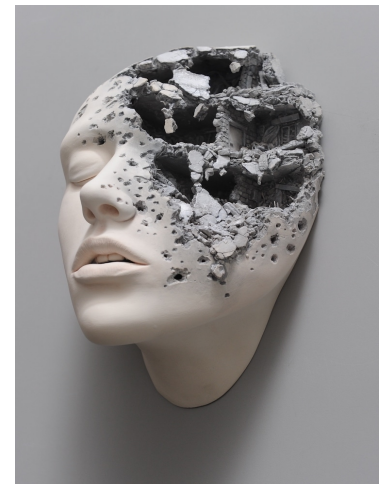


Figure 3
Here and There (Tsang, 2018)
25 x 19 x 11 cm

These sculptures come from a series titled "Lucid Dream II" in which "Johnson Tsang taps into his subconscious to reinterpret reality." (Richman-Abdou, K., 2019). Much like Freud, Tsang explored surreal imagery one can see when they dream, and while Tsang is a unique creator in his own right, there are some comparisons to be drawn between his sculptures and the fourth chapter of Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams", titled "Distortion in Dreams". Tsang's sculptures portray distortion through alterations to what seems to be his beginning canvas (plain face). Being a policeman for two decades, Tsang was subjected to seeing a lot of bodily disfigurement, which he combined with his dreaming experiences to create this series of sculptures.

Initially, my personal criteria for the location and space of the exhibition into was based on the size of my chosen artwork. Delving into research about theories of place, “Place and Placelessness” by Edward Relph was a piece of literature that stood out to me in terms of its exploration of attachment and identity that humans have towards different places. Relph closely studied human experiences in a research method he described as “a phenomenology of place” (Relph 1976, p.5). He declared the idea of place as far more than just a geographical location, but “The essence of place lies largely in the unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence.”(Relph 1976, p.36). Therefore to apply his theory, my gallery space has to be considered as an area which must invoke human emotions, as opposed to a plain gallery space. With this in mind, I decided to place my imagined exhibition in the Phoenix Observation Tower, a building designed to be a 128 metres high observatorium. The plan to build it has been abandoned, therefore I had to rely on planned models to visualise it.



Figure 4
Phoenix Observation Tower (Bjarke Ingels Group, 2012)



Figure 5
Phoenix Observation Tower
(Bjarke Ingels Group, 2012)

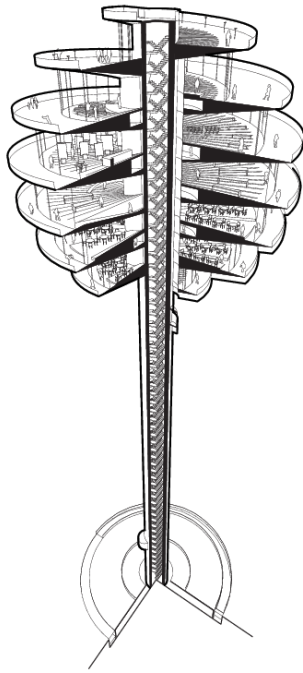


Figure 6

Phoenix Observation Tower, perspective section

The gallery space easily conveys the extended “Dreaming” theme of the exhibition, set very high up and overlooking a cityscape. I would like the viewers to be faced with the view of the sky as they view the artwork, so that it is so serene it feels surreal. The height of the building may even mirror the commonly occurring universal dream experience of falling down or flying in an open space in the air. While describing what atmosphere I want to create is difficult due to the incomprehensible nature of dreams, I am aiming to portray their vivid, spiritual and even utopian ontic, through utilizing the height of the building and the views it harbours. My advantageous use of the structure to create meaning in my exhibit does not stop

there however, as I also decided to use the spiral stairway and the levels of this structure to reference *Inferno* and the *Divine Comedy* by Dante. I will do so through utilizing the work of one of the first artists who explored dreaming, William Blake, as he made paintings inspired by *The Divine Comedy*. In the poem *Inferno*, hell has nine circles, which are laid out as vertical levels, just like in the Phoenix Observation Tower. I decided to include three of William Blake’s paintings, which artistically express the three parts of the *Divine Comedy*, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. Including William Blake’s work is important to me, as its subject corresponds to the theme of dreaming and the structure of the exhibition space I chose. Making artistic references to a literary masterpiece based around a dream can add another layer of meaning to my exhibition. The paintings I decided to include will be “The Simoniac Pope”(1824–7) to correspond to the first part of the *Divine Comedy*, *Inferno*, “Beatrice Addressing Dante from the Car”(1824–7) to illustrate the second part which is named *Purgatorio*, and finally “The Deity, from whom proceed the Nine Spheres”(1824–7), to correspond to the third and last part of the *Divine Comedy*, *Paradiso*. The works of William Blake combined with Johnson Tsang both support Freud’s theory on dreaming, with that conveying the theme of the exhibition.



Figure 7
The Simoniac Pope (Blake, 1824-7) 37.0 x 52.5 cm



Figure 8
Beatrice Addressing Dante from the Car
(Blake, 1824-7) 37.0 x 52.5 cm



Figure 9
The Deity, from whom proceed the Nine Spheres (Blake, 1824-7)
52.5 x 37.0 cm

If my chosen gallery space and artists combined together to create a peaceful and serene atmosphere, I want to subvert from that in a dramatic shift of tone. I have already utilized Freud's dream theory about how dreams are a gateway to one's subconsciousness, therefore for a change of tone I decided to use a theory which is critical of Freud's. Revonsuo and Valli's

Threat Simulation Theory "...states that dreaming about threatening events has a biological function" (Valli, K., Revonsuo, A. 2009). According to Revonsuo, dreams create potentially dangerous scenarios to prepare humankind to react to them. He states that dreams instruct us through constructing and developing a range of different and unique plots to ready people, for example to escape physical conflicts. Therefore to illustrate and convey this theory, I will implement the work of an artist who portrays forms that are in some way realistic in their craft, Henrique Oliveira. Henrique is a reality bending artist who uses natural forms, such as wood, to create his installations. I want to install "The Origin of the Third World" into my exhibition, in order to transform a level of gallery space. The installation alludes to Revonsuo's Threat Simulation Theory through its use of raw materials such as plywood and metal and simulation of an environment.

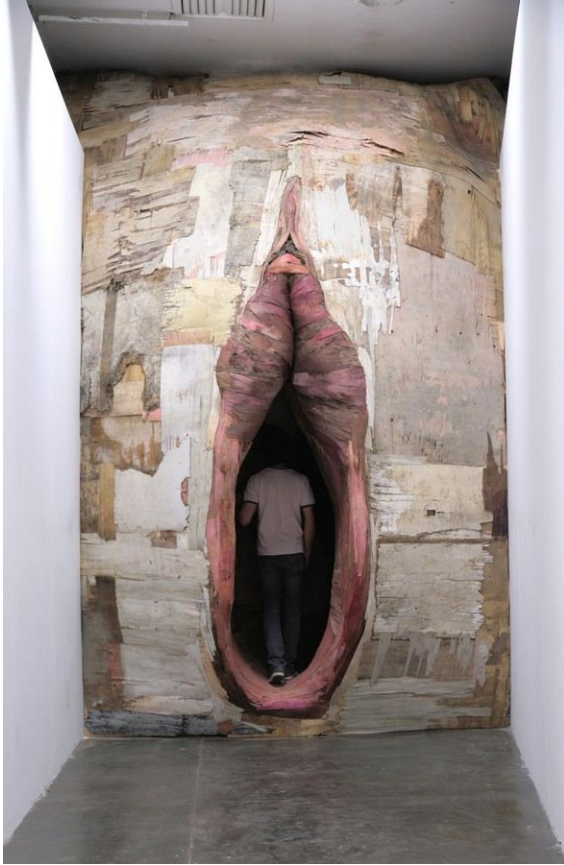


Figure 10

The Origin of the Third World (Oliveira, 2010) outside view, 490 x 4500 x 500 m



Figure 11
The Origin of the Third World (Oliveira,2010) inside view

Finally, as a combination of the two theories, Eric Siemens, whose paintings capture the light and fluid motions of a dream through the rhythmic and elegantly shifting movements of his subjects. Siemens' paintings however contain higher contrasts and they use a lot of darker hues, as a result of which creating an atmosphere of uncertainty. This combined with the abstract subjects of his paintings which are hard to identify, can allude to the idea of a nightmare. This is the shift I want to portray, to explore not only dreaming, but also nightmares. Suddenly the serene and surreal placement of the gallery takes a more sinister and an acrophobic turn with the grey and stormy clouds. Freud's theory of the subconscious can be found in the abstract cloudy backgrounds and softly flowing shapes, as the viewer may try to decipher their meaning in their own way. The interpretations may vary with one's experiences and views, much like the Rorschach test. At the same time, the smeared and blurred terrains and natural forms correspond to Revonsuo's Threat Simulation Theory, offering a surreal simulation of reality, as while the natural forms and terrains are abstract, they do resemble real subjects, and more specifically natural views.



Figure 12

A Settle in the Cornice Downs (Eric Siemens, 2018), 182.9 x 365.8 cm



Figure 13

Rhumb Reckoning II (Eric Siemens, 2018), 111.8 x 162.6 cm



Figure 14

In Harboring Crux II (Eric Siemens, 2019), 213.4 x 162.6 cm

The following pictures and diagrams display the previously discussed layout. As I have explained the placements and their reasonings of the artwork that will be displayed, the diagrams aren't detailed, but instead aim to clarify visually the space.

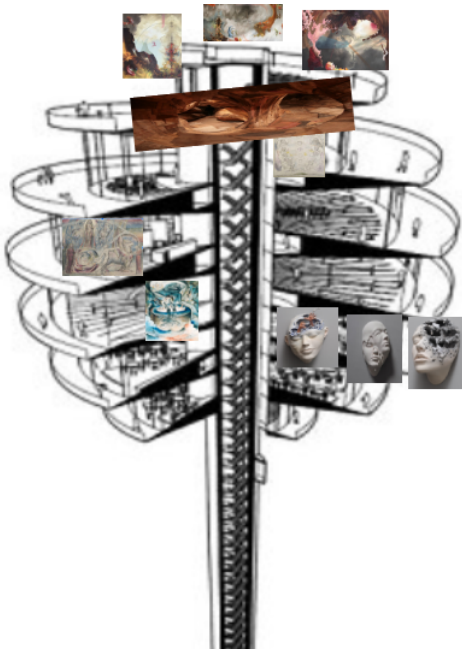


Figure 15

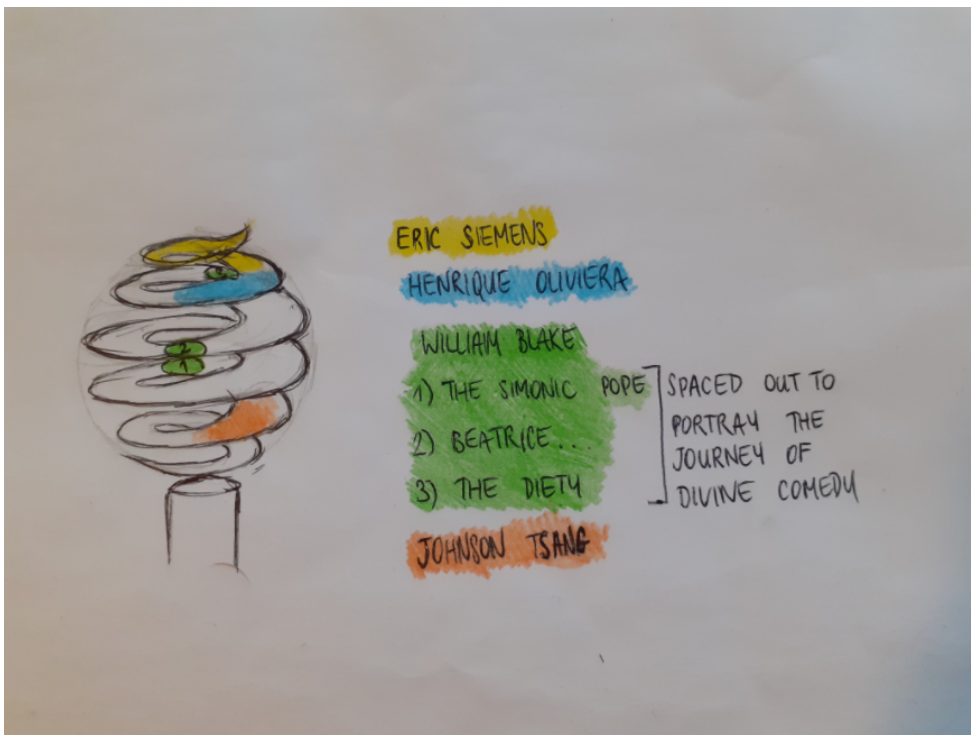


Figure 16

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Relph, E.,(1976). "*Place and placelessness.*" London: Pion, p.p.5.

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Richman-Abdou, K. (2019). '*Surreal Sculptures of Contorted Clay Faces Reinterpret Reality*', My Modern Day, 14/04/2021, <<https://mymodernmet.com/johnson-tsang-lucid-dream-ii/>>

Valli, K., Revonsuo, A. (2009). "*The threat simulation theory in light of recent empirical evidence: a review.*" The American journal of psychology vol. 122,1. p.p. 17-38.

Figures:

Figure 1: Tsang, J., (2018). "Falling in Love". [Clay]

Figure 2: Tsang, J., (2018). " Remembrance". [Clay]

Figure 3: Tsang, J., (2018). "Here and There". [Clay]

Figure 4 and 5: Bjarke Ingels Group. (2012). *Phoenix Observation Tower*. Available at: <https://www.archilovers.com/projects/72842/gallery?542151> (Accessed 18 April 2021)

Figure 6: *Phoenix Observation Tower, perspective section*. Available at: https://www.archdaily.com/310374/phoenix-observation-tower-big/50d32e2cb3fc4b0646000050-phoenix-observation-tower-big-perspective-section?next_project=no (Accessed 18 April 2021)

Figure 7: Blake, W., (1824–7). "The Simoniac Pope"

Figure 8: Blake, W., (1824–7). "Beatrice Addressing Dante from the Car"

Figure 9: Blake, W., (1824–7). "The Deity, from whom proceed the Nine Spheres"

Figure 10 and 11: Oliveira, H., 2010. *The Origin of the Third World*. [plywood, metal].

Figure 12: Siemens, E., (2018). "*A Settle in the Cornice Downs*". [Acrylic on canvas].

Figure 13: Siemens, E., (2018). "Rhumb Reckoning II". [Acrylic on canvas].

Figure 14: Siemens, E., (2019). "In Harboring Crux II". [Acrylic on canvas].

Figure 15: [file:///D:/New%20Project%20\(3\).png](file:///D:/New%20Project%20(3).png)

Figure 16:

https://cdn.discordapp.com/attachments/767056916970864654/838907628733202432/20210503_233704.jpg