

Name: Christopher Hughes (1702217)
Module: Ways Of Perceiving (M4X01559)

BEAUTIFULLY BLEAK

Introduction

To curate an exhibition is more than just figuring out where to put each piece, it has to be an experience for the audience, just like the editing process in the film industry. My exhibition will primarily be featuring landscape photography, it will link to different areas such as melancholy, the sublime and how something that looks bleak can still be beautiful. The exhibition will be heavily influenced by Andreas Gursky and the way his exhibitions are set up. The images on show will be scaled up so that the audience will feel like they are immersed in the image when looking at it. The exhibition will feature a piece from photographer Ansel Adams, with a quote from him under the piece to give the viewer an insight into his thoughts on photography. Other featured photographers include Josef Hoflehner, Andrew Merry and Yang Yongliang.

Yongliang's piece highlights the effects of industrialization on the natural environment and how mankind is destroying nature to make way for concrete jungles. One of the themes of the exhibition is melancholy, the gallery will be representing this theme by having quite dark tones and dark lighting etc. I feel the dark lighting will help draw people's attention to the pieces as they will be the main objects that will be lit.

Context

This exhibition will have 3 main themes melancholy, the sublime and how something that is bleak can still be beautiful. All of the pieces in the exhibition have melancholic elements within, the photographs from Ansel Adams, Josef Hoflehner and Andrew Merry link to the feeling of the sublime and finding the beauty within something others may find dull and boring. Whereas

Yongliang's piece will be mainly focused around the theme of melancholy, his work gives the viewer a melancholic feel as we are shown the effects of industrialization and also the past and future of the planet. Melancholy is defined as a sadness, a gloomy state of mind and links to depression (dictionary.com, 2018). The photographs I have chosen have this theme embedded in them, but Yongliang's piece may also be able to make the viewer feel melancholic as well, rather than just have the elements present in the image. The lighting and atmosphere in the gallery will also have a part to play in establishing that feeling. "When we call a landscape or a piece of art 'sublime,' we express the fact that it evokes particular beauty or excellence." (NextNature.net, Jos De Mul, 2011), the photographs from Ansel Adams, Josef Hoflehner and Andrew Merry link heavily into the theme and feeling of the sublime with they're vast landscapes. "Evokes particular beauty" this is where the underlying theme of the exhibition comes into play, the exhibition is called beautifully bleak, the aim is to be able to find the beauty in something that others may find bleak and boring. I have chosen these photographs because I believe they portray the feeling and notion of the sublime, while Yongliang's piece is slightly different to the others in the exhibition, it still complies with the notion but also having a very clear message.

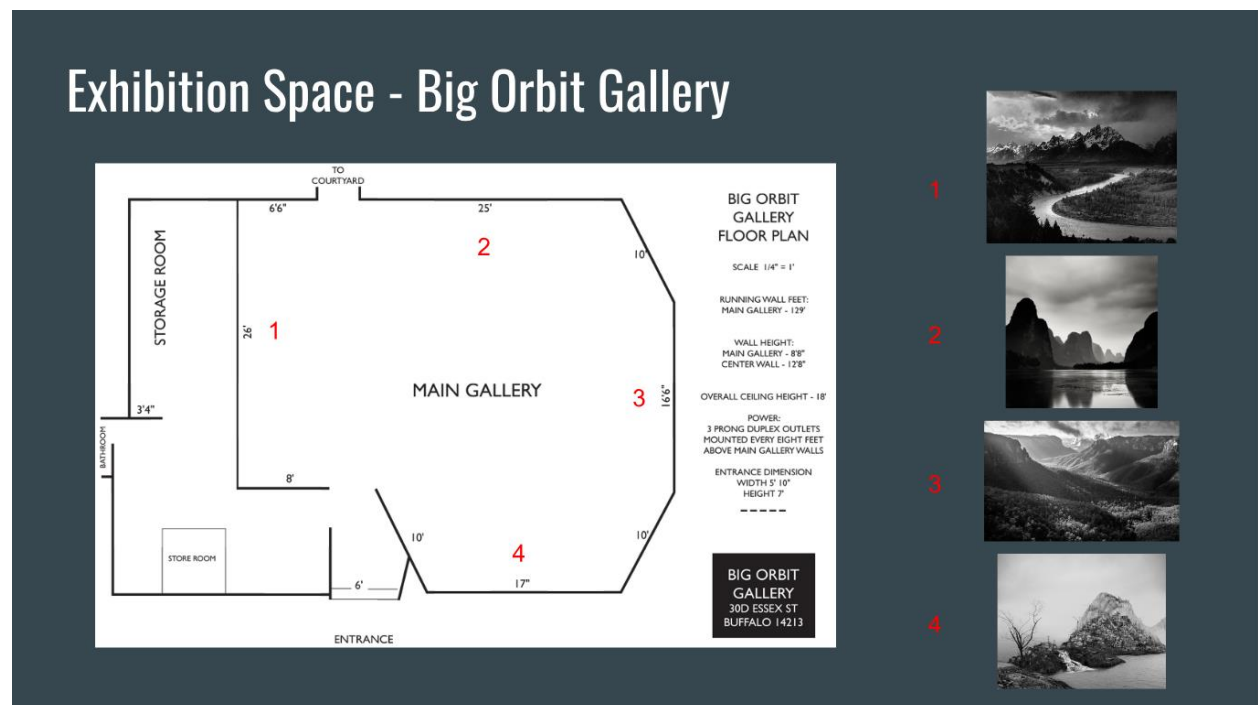
Artists and Artworks

For my exhibition, I only chose 4 pieces to be shown, this was due to the size of the pieces when they are on display. I believe each piece complies with the notions of melancholy and the sublime, the main themes of this exhibition. The aim is for the exhibition is when someone approaches the display they achieve the feeling of the sublime and also understand and see the melancholic elements present, while seeing the true beauty in the 'bleak' landscape. The first photograph I have chose comes from Ansel Adams, he was known for his black and white landscape photography, many of his photographs have melancholic elements present. The photograph was taken in 1942, showcasing the Teton mountain range and the snake river, the photograph is

titles 'The Tentons and the Snake River'. The landscape almost looks untouched coupled with the black and white, it has a calming tone. Some may say this is just a contemporary and dull landscape, my exhibition will hopefully battle these notions and open people up to looking closer at the image and hopefully encountering the feeling of the sublime. The photograph was taken in 1942, right in the middle of World War II, this photograph would almost give you that escape from the horrors of war. The calm and untouched elements of the photograph shows the complete opposite side of life during the war. This photograph mainly addresses the underlying theme of the exhibition 'Beautifully Bleak', where something that could be seen as bleak is still quite beautiful.

The second photograph I have chosen is from photographer Josef Hoflehner, it is of the Li River in China, showcasing the Karst mountains. It is also in black and white which adds to the theme of melancholy, because it is in black and white it gives us a different feel compared to if it was bright and colourful, we get more of a sadness rather than a happy average tourism picture. The third photograph in the exhibition is from photographer Andrew Merry, from his series called 'Extreme Sublime', "The series appropriates pictorial and romantic art movements and their obsession with capturing 'the sublime'" (amerry.com). The photograph is of the Grose Valley in the Blue Mountains, which is located in Australia. The black and white elements help bring out the light paths. This photograph is similar to the photograph from Ansel Adams, in that it has a calming element but also the feeling of the sublime, which can make it seem the photo is overwhelming to some. For the fourth and final piece I chose something that complies with the main themes of the exhibition while also having a clear message of their own to deliver. It is a piece by Yang Yongliang, a Chinese artist, known for superimposing cities onto mountain ranges and landscapes. The piece I chose is called 'Flooding' (2016), just like many other pieces from him it has modern cities superimposed on the mountains, but has one dead looking tree left, giving a clear message along with something that is visually pleasing. His work is very relevant right now due to the long debates over global warming, climate change, pollution, waste disposal etc. It helps give the important message that we need to change and start to

save the planet rather than keep destroying it. I'd like to think that a viewer of this piece would feel melancholic towards it, discovering the effects of industrialization of nature and the environment. This will be shown last to give people the chance to see the beautiful side of landscapes in the other pieces and then when they get to the end they see Yang's work and see the devastating effects we have on nature due to the modern age.



Bibliography

Dictionary.com. (2018) Melancholy, retrieved from dictionary.com
<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/melancholy>

NextNature.net. (2011, July 17) The Technological Sublime
<https://www.nextnature.net/2011/07/the-technological-sublime/>

amerry.com (2011-) Grose Valley: Extreme Sublime
<http://amerry.com/grose-valley-sublime/>