

An Art exhibition on Alienation and Elements of Death

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The name of my exhibition will be 'A deformed Reality' I see this as being an art exhibition exploring the themes of alienation and death. I chose this theme because it is a very prominent theme in life right now. Especially since we are going through a global scale pandemic with the Covid-19 virus and it is especially important to discuss, because it seems the entire world is in panic right now. There will be 5 paintings in my exhibition. All of which by the Polish painter and photographer Zdzisław Beksiński. I will be discussing the theory of alienation in other's and in one's self with this exhibition. Looking at philosopher's and studies on theories of alienation in society. And my own experiences with alienation during this time of struggle. I will also be touching on the subject of death, which is on the rise in this pandemic, and how people deal with it in times of struggle.

The theme of alienation is one that is quite prominent in today's world. During this covid virus people have been distancing themselves from other human interaction. Afraid of what they could catch from anyone they come across, not knowing whether they are a danger or not, looking towards their fellow man as a thing to avoid, a monster that could harm them and their families. A fear of the unknown. "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (Lovecraft, 2013 p. 1)

The theme of alienation is one that I have chosen because of the current time. There have been many times I have been out to go to the shop or go for a walk and people do not look at me. They avoid eye contact as if I am not there, and if they do look, they do not look for long. As if I am something nasty and dangerous, something inhuman. This global pandemic has changed the lives of millions, how they see the world. They are not leaving their homes. Places that were once filled with life have been reduced to hollow shells of what they once were. There's panic in society. People are dying. The government are telling the public to stay indoors, do not have contact with anyone for fear of illness. And that scares people they do not want to leave, they do not want contact with anyone. "All publicity works upon anxiety" (Berger, 1972, p. 143)

“Death, in most instances, is perceived by those who grieve as a shattering experience” (Beder, 2005) Death is another theme I am going to touch upon in this exhibition. “The moment you were born you began to die.” (Teller, 2000) People have always know death, its natural. But the way people deal with death differs. Some fear it, some do not. It changes from person to person.

“Alienation is the precise and correctly applied word for describing the major social problem in Britain today.” (Reid, 1972, p. 05). Even though this quote from James Reid is from 1972, it still has prevalence today. The people of Britain have been alienated from each other not wanting to be around one another in fear of developing a virus. “The second alienation is from other people, and that means we have less contact, we have less intimacy, we have less trust” (Maté, 2015, 21:52 – 22:00)

The exhibition will be held in singleton park, in an area with a large amount of space with the paintings forming a straight line going up. With exactly 2 meters in between each piece. I have chosen singleton park because it is a big open space where lots of people go. It looks small from the outside but when you get in it turns into this massive lush green area filled with tree’s and grass. The reason behind having them exactly 2 meters apart come back to the current pandemic. In where people are being ordered to stay at least 2 meters apart from everyone else to reduce the risk of contracting the virus. “Most importantly, this includes the key advice that you should stay two metres apart from anyone outside of your household” (Gov.uk, 2020) There will also be markers on the floor indicating where you should stand to view the paintings, much like they have in super markets during the pandemic, to keep the

distance in check and not let people be near each other. I decided to do this to simulate what it is like during the lockdown, the restrictions on human contact to create that sense of space and loneliness even though there are people there with you.

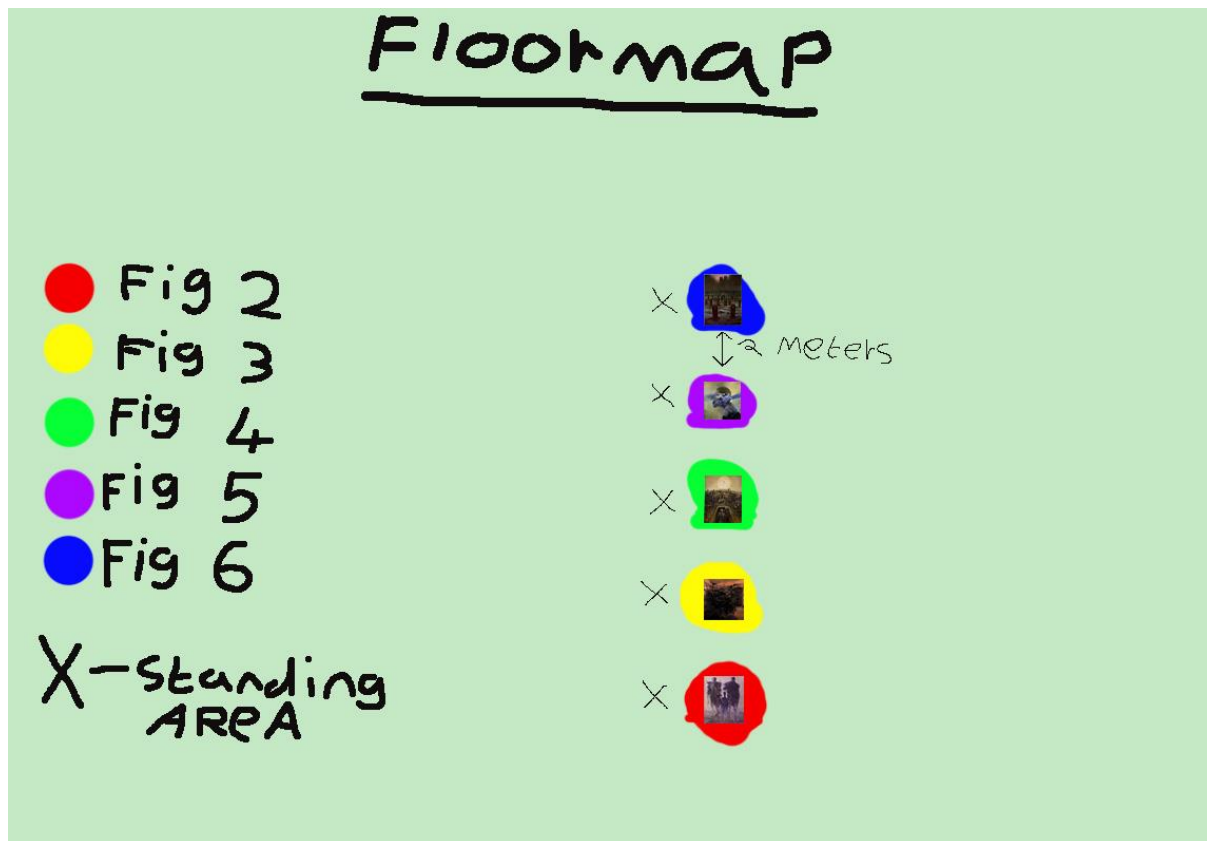


Fig 1

I selected the painter Zdzisław Beksiński to use in my exhibition because his “dystopian surrealism” (Gerakiti, 2019) approach to painting fascinated me. The dark setting and themes of death used in his paintings bond well with the surreal depictions of human bodies and faces. Creating a beautiful but almost nightmarish piece of art. I wanted to use these to address the theme of alienation because in the paintings I chose, there is not a single human body or face that looks “normal”. All of them are distorted and unnatural. It depicts the thought of looking at someone and not seeing another human being, but a monster you need to stay away from.



Fig 2

The first painting in my exhibition will be 'untitled' by Zdzisław Beksiński Which was painted in 1998.

Beksiński was a polish painter and photographer who was born in 1929 in the town of Sanok. He uses a very surreal painting style, a lot of dark colours and disturbing figures. In this painting it shows 2 people who are accompanied by what looks like a smaller child, maybe a son or daughter. All three figures are distorted depictions of humans, indicating a family that have all passed away together. Being born in 1929 in Poland, Beksiński grew up during world war two, which you can see somewhat in his paintings. The horrors of war reflect on his work. I have chosen to put this painting first in the exhibition to give a sort of start to the 5 pieces by depicting a family. A family that someone might see and avoid during the covid-19 pandemic, but they are the same. Human.



Fig 3

The next piece is another painting by Beksinski, also called 'untitled'. I chose this one because of the amount of stuff that is going on. From a glance it just looks like a cloud of darkness, but when you investigate it more it becomes a crowd of people. A crowd of distorted people and new things appear the more you look at it. Faces become clearer, different things happening in the photo become more noticeable. The reason that these paintings are all untitled is because Beksinski did not want to give them a title "All of Beksinski's paintings are untitled – he wanted to avoid any metaphorical interpretation of his paintings." (Culture.Pl, 2015). This is another thing I like about Beksinski's work, is that he leaves everything up to interpretation which in turn lets people decide what it means for themselves. "The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled."

(Berger, 1972, p. 7)

I put this in because it signifies death and decay, with the bodies almost leaving one plane of existence, and entering a different one. Something that is very real during the covid-19 pandemic.



Fig 4

The third painting I have in my exhibition is 'untitled' By Beksiński which he painted in 1970. This painting creates an unsettling aura. It shows a lot of disformed people kneeling to some sort of higher power, while two other figures are underneath them hiding whilst being surrounded by bones of already deceased bodies. This painting signifies the death and afterlife, as they are praying for something to give them help. It also relates to the pandemic theme, in which people are looking to the government for help, and to tell them what to do next. I have decided to use this for a feel of a lifeline, something to hope towards in the time of struggle.



Fig 5

The fourth painting in my exhibition is once again called 'untitled' By Beksiński. This picture I wanted to use to touch upon the theory of self-alienation, or Depersonalisation.

Depersonalization disorder is a psychiatric condition in which there is a pervasive change in the quality of subjective experience, in the absence of psychosis. The core complaint is a persistent and disturbing feeling that experience of oneself and the world has become empty, lifeless, and not fully real (Medford, 2012 p. 2)

This photo represents that feeling of Depersonalization by taking a regular head and deforming it but creating something unnatural and disturbed. Much like what someone with

depersonalization disorder would feel. This creates a thought on reality itself, and in times of crisis what can we deem natural or real.



Fig 6

For the last painting, I will be displaying in my exhibition is another piece by Beksiński Titled
'WZ'

This painting is a very eerie scene of a graveyard with dark sinister clouds hovering over the burial site, also there is no information on these tombstones, just carved out deformed heads almost like they have been left and forgotten. This signifies the horrors of death and eventually being forgotten by your loved ones.

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Figures

Fig 1: Elley, C. (2020) Exhibition map (Adobe photoshop cc)

Fig 2: Beksiński, Z. *Untitled*, 1998. Gallery of Zdzisław Beksiński, Sanok

Fig 3: Beksiński, Z. *Untitled*,

Fig 4: Beksiński, Z. *Untitled*, 1970. Gallery of Zdzisław Beksiński, Sanok

Fig 5: Beksiński, Z. *Untitled*,

Fig 6: Beksiński, Z. *WZ*, 1985. Gallery of Zdzisław Beksiński, Sanok

