Ways of Perceiving (ADAD4019)

UNVEILING MEMORIES

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Unveiling Memories is an exhibition that explores the complexities of memory and identity construction through art. The exhibition aims to question how memories are curated and preserved, often veiling certain aspects of the past that are judged as unacceptable or painful.

Through various artistic mediums, the exhibition encourages the audience to confront their own veiled memories and embrace their flaws as an integral part of their being. It also aims to bring to light the societal pressures that influence identities and memories, prompting the viewer to unveil and challenge these influences to become more complete versions of themselves.

The exhibition draws from the works of renowned artists such as René Magritte, Claude Cahun, Barbara Kruger, Tony Oursler, Daniel Rozin, Chiharu Shiota, and Kexin Tan, presenting a diverse range of artistic approaches to memory, from the surreal and dreamlike to the conceptual and introspective. *Unveiling Memories* is structured around three main themes: personal memory, collective memory, and the dark side of the memory.

The exhibition's first section focuses on personal memory and features artists whose works explore the intimate and subjective nature of memory. Chiharu Shiota, a Japanese installation artist known for her intricate webs of thread, is one of the key artists in this section. Her installation *The Key in the hand* (Shiota, 2015) is comprised of thousands of keys hanging from red threads, symbolizing the ties that bind us to our past and ancestors.

Fig 1. Chiharu Shiota, *The key in the hand*, (2015).

This use of symbolism echoes the ideas presented in *Mythologies* by Roland Barthes (1993), which emphasizes the role of symbols in constructing our identities. Such an approach to art draws inspiration from surrealism, a movement that often uses symbolic and dreamlike imagery to tap into the power of the unconscious mind (Danchev, 2011). Through her work, Shiota encourages viewers to contemplate their memories and the connections that define their lives. As she states:

> Memory is something we cannot touch or see, but it is very strong… Everyone has a universe inside of them and I think it is our goal to connect our inner universe with the outside universe.
>
> (Bogdan, 2023)

Claude Cahun, a French artist and writer known for her photographic work and surrealist writing, is another artist featured in this section. As an artist, Cahun challenged conventional notions of gender and identity through self-portraiture, inviting viewers to consider how their sense of self is constructed. Cahun's photographs often convey a dreamlike atmosphere that reflects the subjective and fragmented nature of memory, with moody and introspective tones.

One of Cahun's most famous quotes highlights the complexity of identity: "Under this mask, another mask. I will never be finished removing these faces" (Cahun, cited in The art history, 2023). This sentiment reflects the way in which memory can shape and redefine the sense of self over time.

Fig 2. Claude Cahun*, Autoprortrait (variante I'm training),* (1927).

Fig 3. Claude Cahun, *Auto portrait aux orchidées,* (1939).

Fig 4. Claude Cahun, *Selbstp*orträt, (1928).

Fig 5. Claude Cahun, *Self-portrait,* (1927).

Fig 6. Claude Cahun, *Self-portrait,* (1927).

Fig 7. Claude Cahun, *Self-portrait with cat*, (1927).

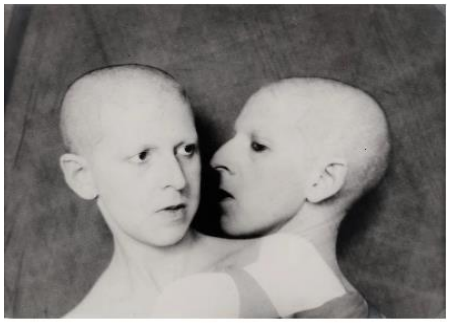

Fig 8. Claude Cahun, *What do you want from m*e? (1928).

Fig 9. Claude Cahun, *Auto portrait*, (1928).

Fig 10. Claude Cahun, *Auto portrait,* (1929).

Cahun's work is particularly relevant to the exhibition's theme of memory and identity, as the exhibition seeks to explore the ways in which memories shape who we are. By challenging the conventional notions of gender and identity, Cahun's work highlights the fluidity and malleability of identity, as well as the importance of memory in shaping the understanding of self (The art history, 2023).

Cahun's work is closely connected to the surrealist movement, which emphasized the importance of exploring the unconscious mind and the power of symbols and dreams. As André Breton, the founder of surrealism, wrote in his 1924 manifesto,

> We are still living under the reign of logic... Surrealism aims to overthrow this reign and introduce us to the pure unbridled imagination.
>
> (Danchev, 2011, p.243).

In her photographic self-portraits, Cahun often employed surrealistic imagery and symbolism, such as mirrors and masks, to express the complexities of identity and memory.

The interactive *Pompom mirror* (2015) of Daniel Rozin is also featured in this section. Rozin, an Israeli American artist, creates mirrors out of various materials that respond to the viewer's movements, generating distorted reflections. The mirrors are a playful and engaging way to explore the theme of memory and self-image, viewers see their image reflected in a distorted and fragmented way. Rozin's mirrors provide a unique experience that allows the viewer to become a participant in the artwork.

Fig 11. Daniel Rozin, *Pompom mirror,* (2015).

According to Hans Ulrich Obrist in his book *Ways of Curating* (2014), the curator's role is not limited to collecting and exhibiting works of art but rather involves creating a space that encourages public interaction with the art and with each other. By encouraging viewer participation and interaction, Rozin's work embodies this ethos, inviting viewers to engage with the artwork in a more dynamic and immersive way. Rozin explains, "I'm interested in creating an experience that is interactive and that allows the viewer to become a participant in the artwork" (Mancuso, 2006).

The second section of the exhibition focuses on how memories are shared and constructed within families and communities, featuring works such as Kruger's text-based installations and Magritte's surrealist images.

Barbara Kruger, an American artist, and graphic designer is known for her textual installations that challenge the relationship between image and language. Kruger's works, such as *I shop therefore, I am* (1987) and *Know nothing, believe anything, forget everything* (1987) invite viewers to reflect on collective memory and political identities.

Fig 12. Barbara Kruger, *I shop therefore I am,* (1987).

Fig 13. Barbara Kruger, *Know nothing, believe anything, forget everything,* (1987).

In her analysis of texts, Kruger has shown how advertisements create self-doubt and guilt by comparing people in real life with unattainable ideal people, potentially eroding people's perceptions, and security of self (Public delivery, 2019).

This concept is explored in *Ways of Seeing* by John Berger (Berger, 2008), which examines the relationship between image and reality and how visual images shape our understanding of the world. Berger argues that the way we see things is not neutral but influenced by cultural and political forces. This idea relates to the concept of surrealism, which also sought to disrupt conventional ways of seeing and thinking.

Through her art, Kruger invites viewers to reflect on how language shapes the understanding of the world and the impact of consumerism on the construction of the self. As she states, "The existence of self becomes embedded with the act of consuming" (Public delivery, 2019). Kruger's work highlights the power of language in shaping collective memory and invites viewers to consider the ways in which their own identities are constructed and shaped by external influences.

René Magritte, a Belgian surrealist painter, is also featured in this section. His enigmatic paintings often feature everyday objects in unexpected and surreal contexts, challenging the viewer's perception of the world. Magritte's works question assumptions about memory and reality, suggesting that perceptions are shaped not just by individual perspectives but also by collective cultural and social contexts. As Magritte famously said, "Everything we see hides another thing, we

always want to see what is hidden by what we see" (cited in art theory, 2018).

Fig 14. René Magritte, *Memory,* (1948).

The work on display *Memory* (1948) depicts a white bust tainted with blood, representing a traumatic and painful memory that in this case, the woman must bear. This work highlights the integral role of memory in shaping who we are and our daily reality. Without memory, we would be lost.

The third and final section of the exhibition explores the difficult and painful aspects of memory. One of the key artists in this section is Tony Oursler, whose multimedia installation of *Talking heads* (2019) delves into the dark side that exists within each of us. Oursler's works offer a reflection on the real or perceived stumbles of life that can both impose a pause and open new possibilities, perspectives, and thoughts. Oursler's exploration of the darker aspects of memory, such as trauma and loss, contributes to the exhibition's overall exploration of memory's multifaceted nature (Sfmoma,2019).

Fig 15. Tony Ousler, *The dark side*, (2019).

The link between memory and self-image is also an important theme in this exhibition. The works on display highlight how a distorted self-image, often rooted in traumatic memories, can lead to detrimental behaviours and attitudes. This echoes the ideas of *Psycho-cybernetic* by Maxwell Maltz (1969) who argued that problems in communication and self-image can lead to psychological disorders.

> Understanding the psychology of the self can mean the difference between…love and hate, bitterness and happiness.
>
> (Maltz, 1969, p.1)

Kexin Tan is a key artist whose illustrations reflect the surrealist fascination with the unconscious mind and the power of dreams. In a manner reminiscent of surrealist artists who sought to depict their dreams' strange and irrational imagery, Kexin's work explores the ephemeral nature of memories and their ability to resurface in unexpected ways (Lim,2023). Her illustrations reflect the concept of "wabi-sabi," which values beauty in impermanence and imperfection.

Fig 16. Kexin Tan, *Tear*, (2019).

Fig 17. Kexin Tan, *Pond*, (2019).

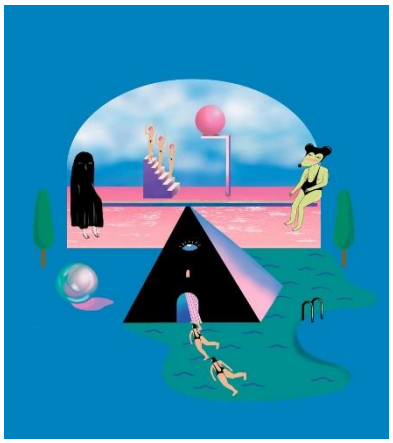

Fig 18. Kexin Tan, *Reality,* (2019).

Fig 19. Kexin Tan, *Butterfly-effect,* (2019).

This connection between Kexin's illustrations, surrealism, and wabi-sabi offers a compelling reflection on memory's ever-changing and mysterious nature and the human experience. As Tan notes, "Our life changes throughout time but the imprint of our memories is impossible to wipe away." (Kexin, 2019). Kexin's work showcases the interplay between the inner self and the reflection of the outer self onto the universe, a theme that both "wabi-sabi" and surrealism revolve around, according to Kexin.

In conclusion, the exhibition's curation highlights the importance of engaging and thought-provoking displays that encourage visitors to question their assumptions and perceptions. This reflects the principles of contemporary curatorial practices that aim to offer engaging and immersive experiences that go beyond simply displaying artworks. By connecting the themes of memory, self-image, and surrealism, the exhibition offers a compelling exploration of the complexities of human memory, its impact on lives, and the ways in which the imperfect and the transitory can be embraced.

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LIST OF FIGURES.

Fig 1. Shiota, C. (2015) *The Key in the hand* [Exhibition].

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Fig 2. Cahun C. (1927) *Autoprortrait (variante I'm training)*.

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Fig 3. Cahun C. (1939) *Auto portrait aux orchidées*.

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Fig 4. Cahun C. (1928) *Selbstporträt*.

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Fig 5. Cahun C. (1927) *Self-portrait*.

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Fig 6. Cahun C. (1927) *Self-portrait*.

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Fig 7. Cahun C. (1927) *Self-portrait with cat*.

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Fig 8. Cahun C. (1928) *What do you want from me?*

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Fig 9. Cahun C. (1928) *Auto portrait.*

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Fig 10. Cahun C. (1929) *Auto portrait*.

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Fig 11. Rozin, D. (2015) *Pompom mirror*.

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Fig 12. Kruger, B. (1987) *I shop therefore I am*.

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Fig 13. Kruger, B. (1987) *Know nothing, believe anything, forget everything*.

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Fig 14. Magritte, R. (1948) *Memories*.

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Fig 15. Oursler, T (2019) *The Dark Side*.

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Fig. 16. Tan, K. (2019) *Pond*.

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Fig. 17. Tan, K. (2019) *Tear*.

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Fig.18. Tan, K. (2019) *Reality*.

Available at: https://www.thesundaily.my/style-life/feature/tapping-into-the-subconscious-mind-AF4227893 (Accessed: 01 April 2023).

Fig.19. Tan, K. (2019) *Effect-Butterfly*.

Available at: https://www.thesundaily.my/style-life/feature/tapping-into-the-subconscious-mind-AF4227893 (Accessed: 01 April 2023.)

APENDIX

- **FLOOR 0 (PERSONAL MEMORY)**

  - **ATRIUM:**
    - INSTALLATION:
      - Chiharu Shiota, *The key in the hand*. (Structure to hold the treads, two boats in the centre of the Atrium)
  - **GARDEN:**
    - MIRROR (Add two temporary white walls both sizes of the mirror for the effect):
      - Daniel Rozin, *Pompom mirror*. (121.9 X121.9X 45.7 cm) (octahedron)

    - PHOTOGRAPHS:
      - Claude Cahun, Auto portraits. (The original size of the prints will be respected. The prints will be exhibit in frames of the same size to give consistency).

Claude Cahun*, Autoprortrait (variante I'm training),* (1927).

(10.5 x 7.6 cm)

Claude Cahun, *Auto portrait aux orchidées,* (1939).

(10.2 x 7.8 cm)

Claude *Cahun, Selbstp*orträt, (1928

(275 x 21 cm)

Claude Cahun, *Self-portrait,* (1927)

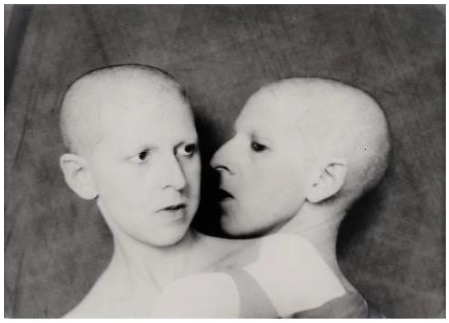
(24.5 x 19.3 cm)

Claude Cahun, *Self-portrait*, (1927)

(18 x 13 cm)

Claude Cahun, *Self-portrait*, *with cat,* (1927)

(10.7 x 7.5 cm)



Claude Cahun, *What do you want from me*? (1928).

(18 X 23 cm)

Claude Cahun, *Auto portrait*, (1928).

(11 x 8.5 cm)

Claude Cahun, *Auto portrait,* (1929).

(18 x 23 cm)

- # FLOOR 1 (COLLECTIVE MEMORIES)

  - ## ROOM 3:
    - BIG PRINTS:
      - Barbara Kruger, *I shop therefore I am*. (281.9 x 287 cm approx.) X4 (print them to fill the walls).
      - Barbara Kruger, *Know nothing, believe anything, forget everything*. (163X39) X5 (print them to fill the walls).

    - PAINT:
      - René Magritte, *Memory*. (99.7X 81.3 cm).

- # FLOOR 2 (DARK SIDE OF MEMORY)

  - ## ROOM 8:

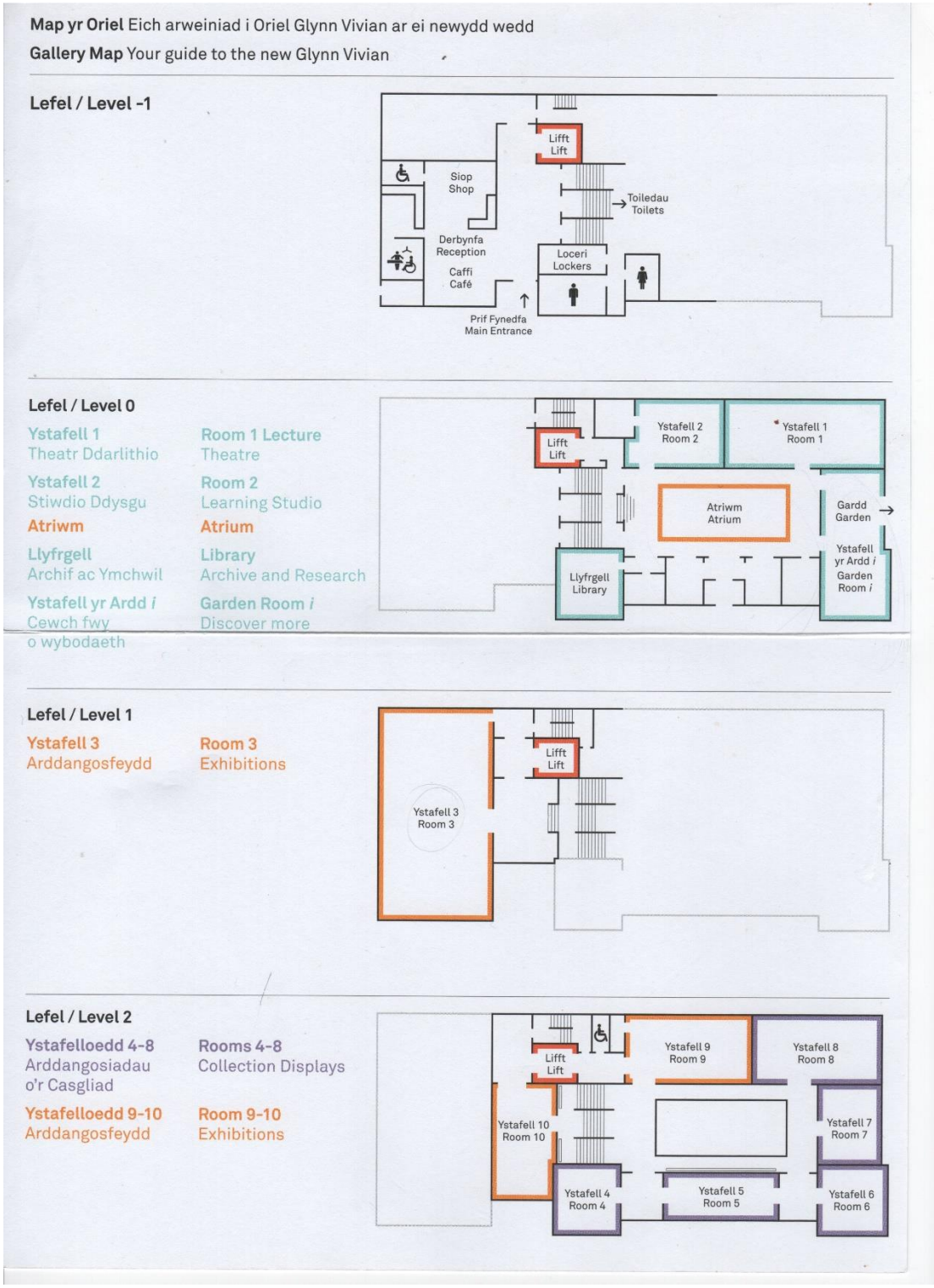
    - INSTALLATION:
      - Tony Ousler's, Talking Heads (Black walls, projectors and sound).

  - ## ROOM 10:

    - PRINTS:
      - Kexin Tan (Print on big white sheets)
        - *Tear* (fabric big format, hanging form rope)
        - *Pond* (fabric big format, hanging from rope)

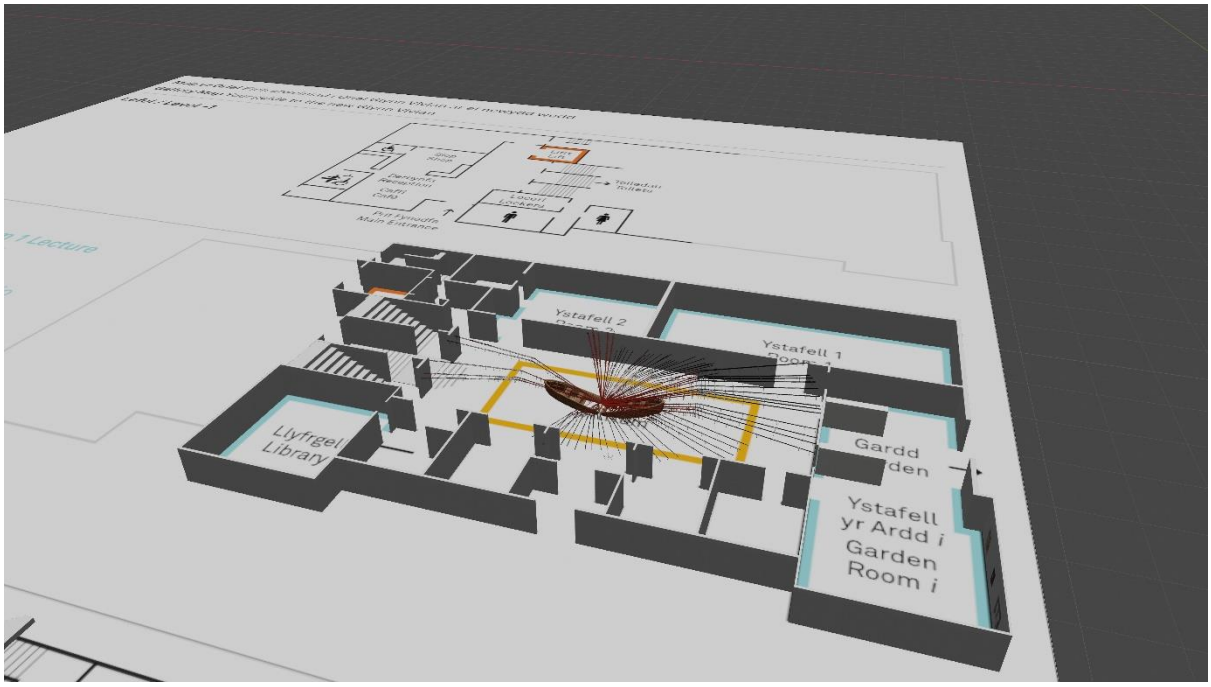
      - Kexin Tan (Print on paper)
        - *Reality* (on paper) (60 x60cm)
        - *Butterfly-effect* (on paper) (45 x 60cm)

GALLERY PLANS

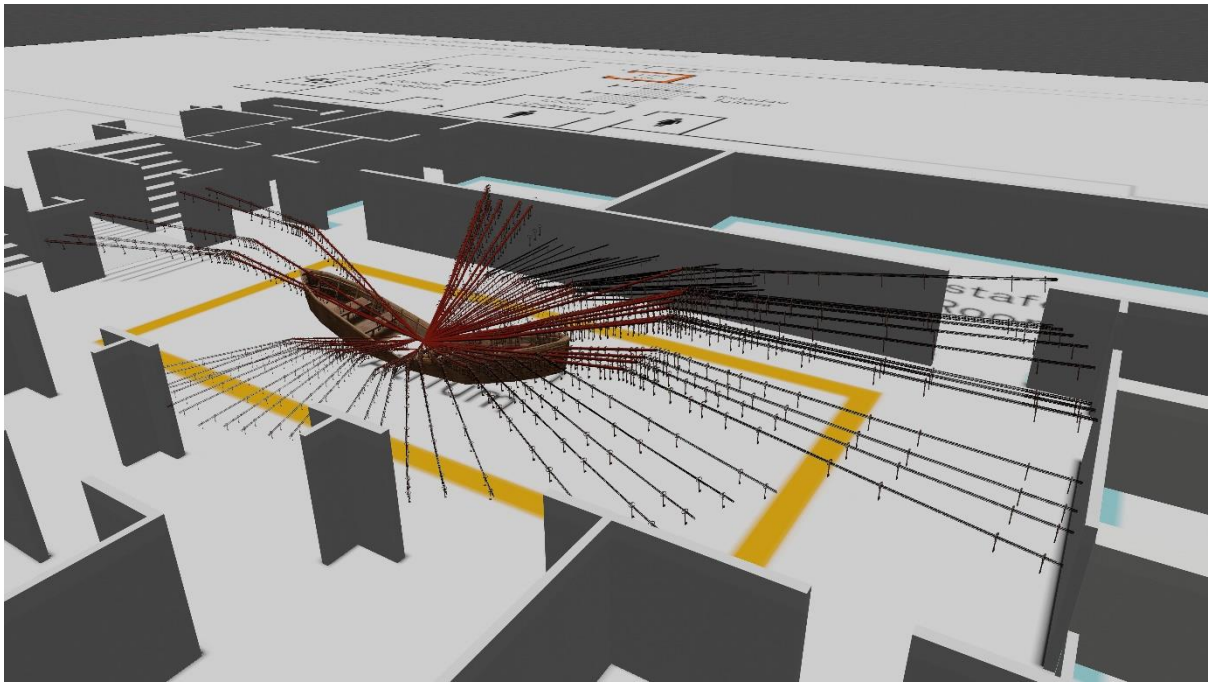


It will be used the space available for temporary exhibitions.

LEVEL 0: GENERAL.

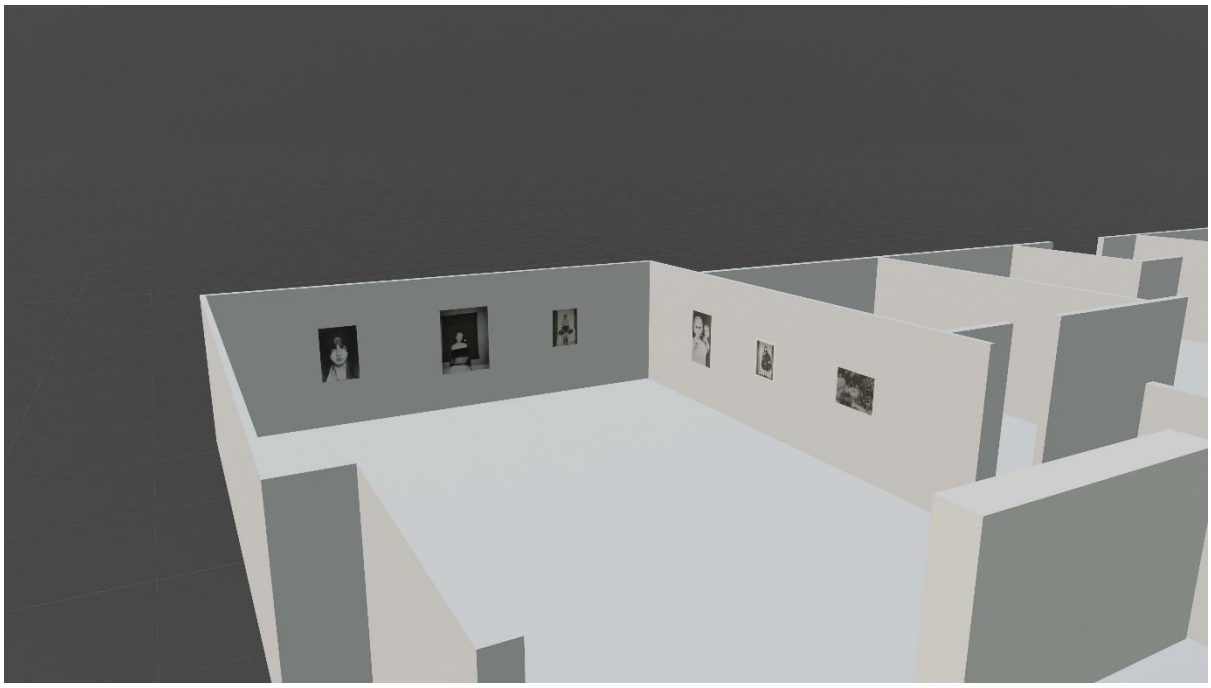


LEVEL 0: ATRIUM (Installation).

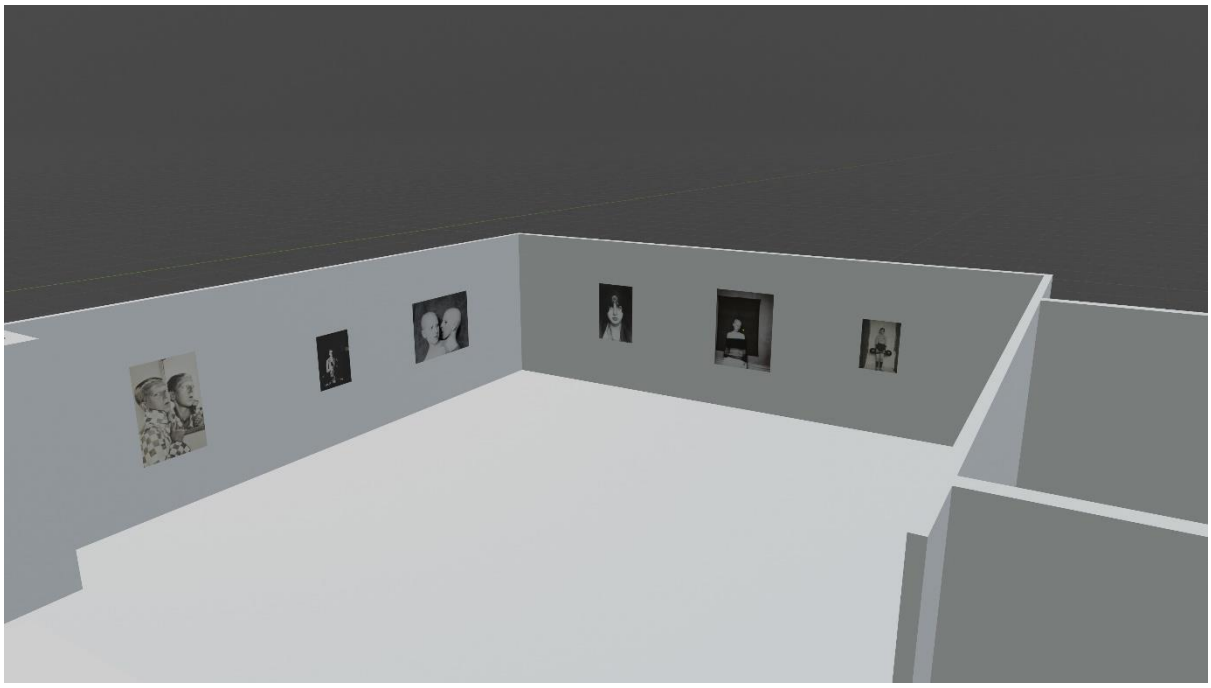


LEVEL 0: GARDEN

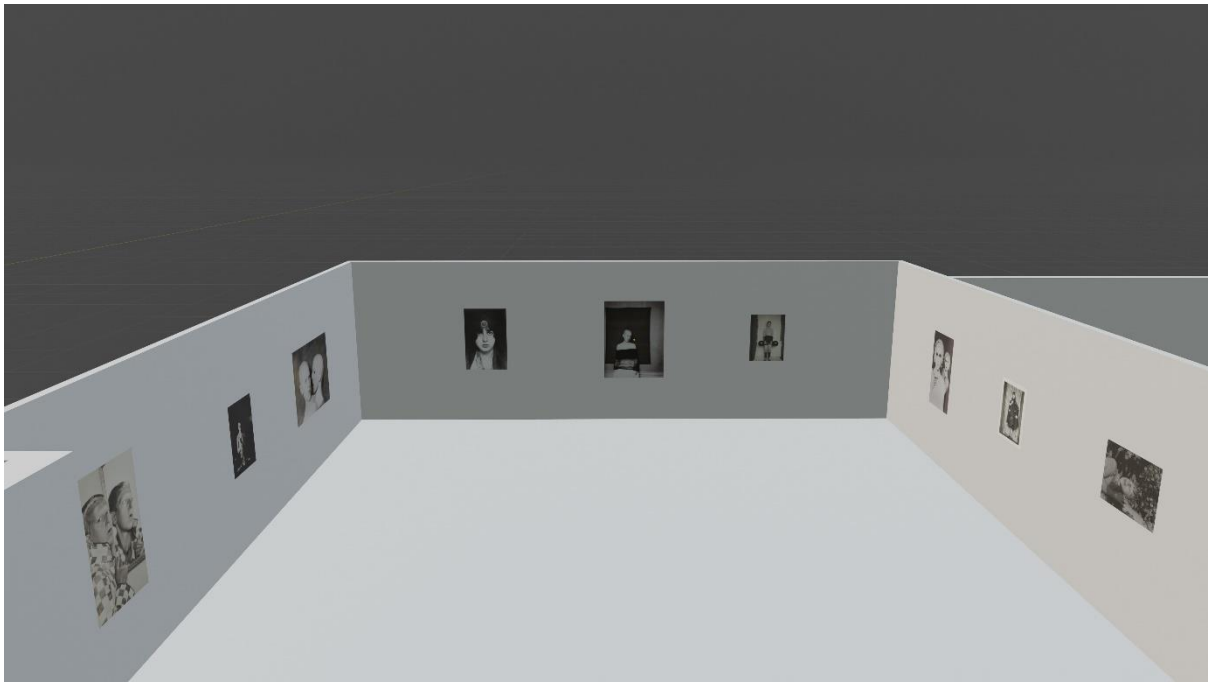
PORTRAITS 1 (same size frames).



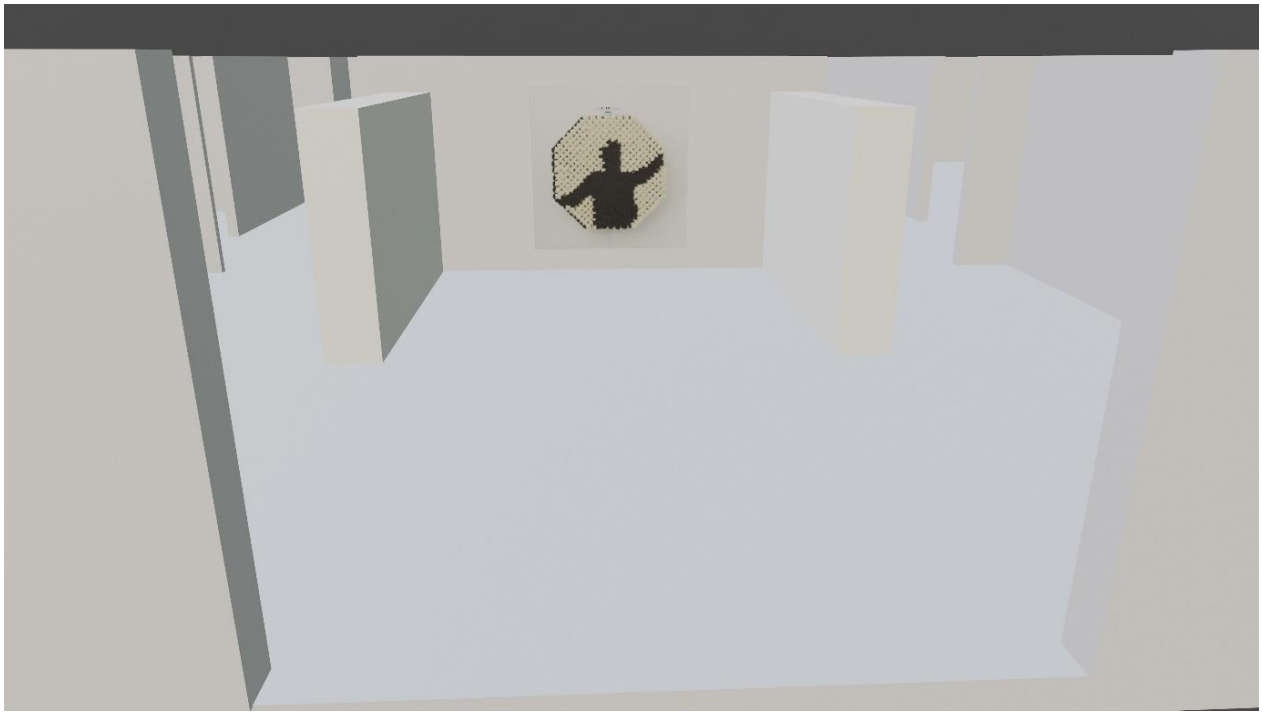
PORTRAITS 2



PORTRAIT 3



MIRROR (two white temporary walls).



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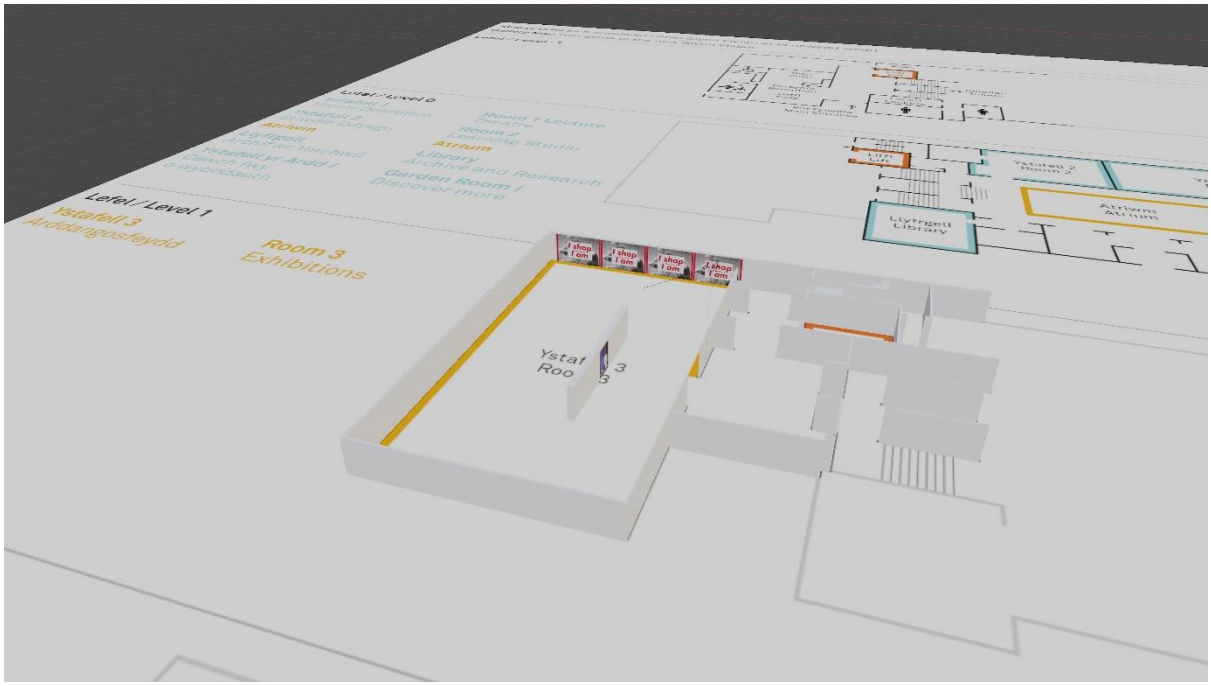
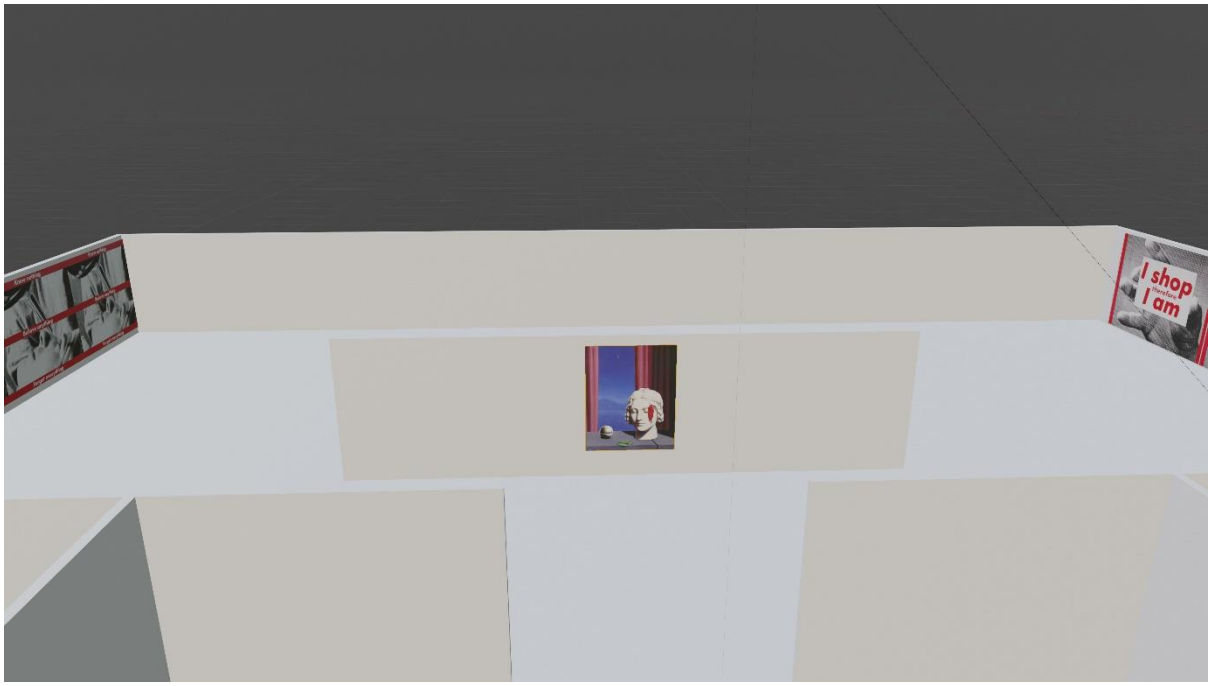


LEVEL1: ROOM 3.1

LEVEL 1: ROOM 3.2



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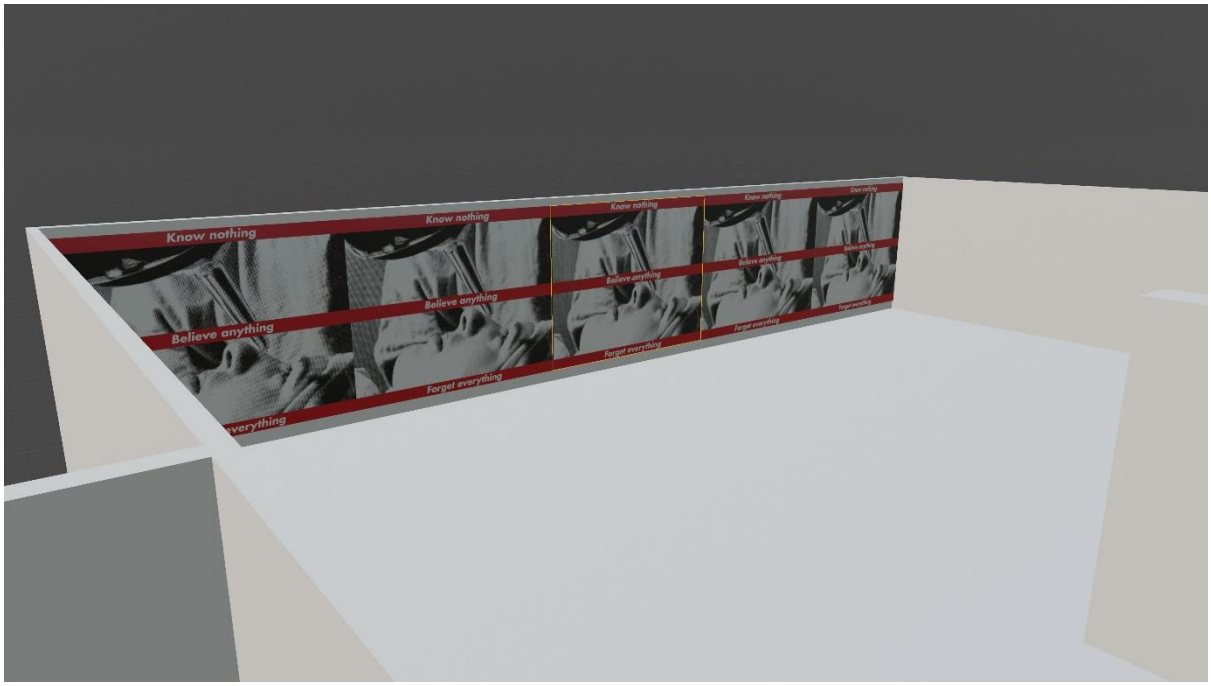

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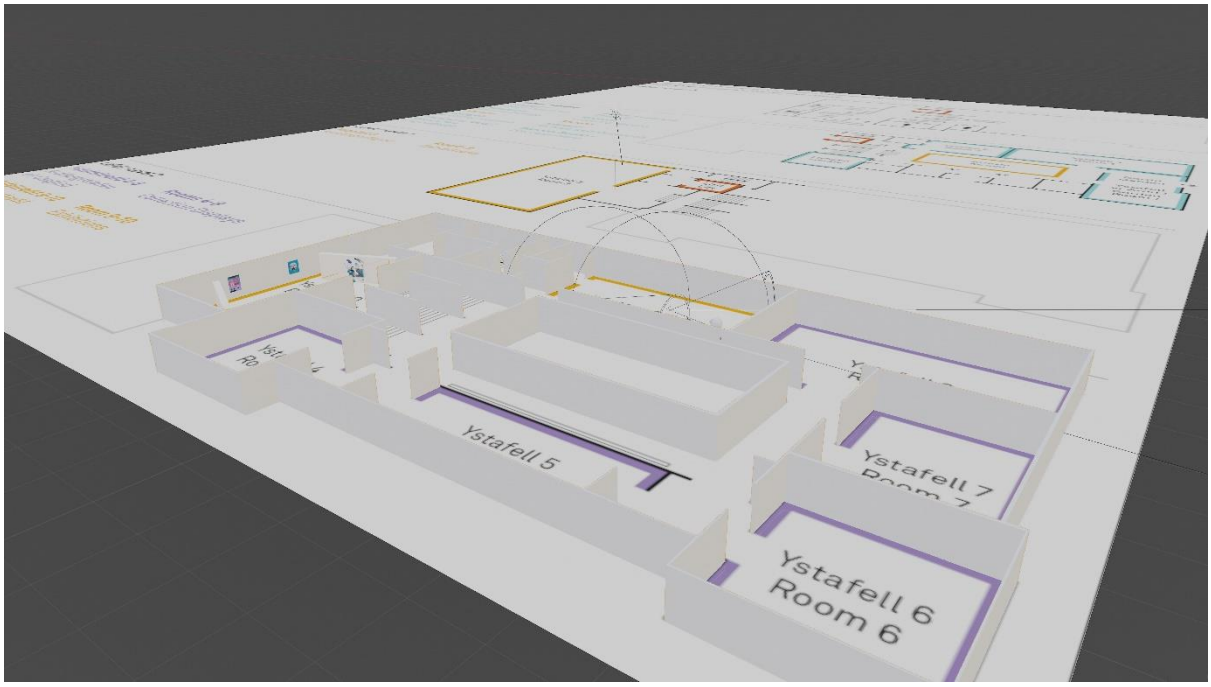
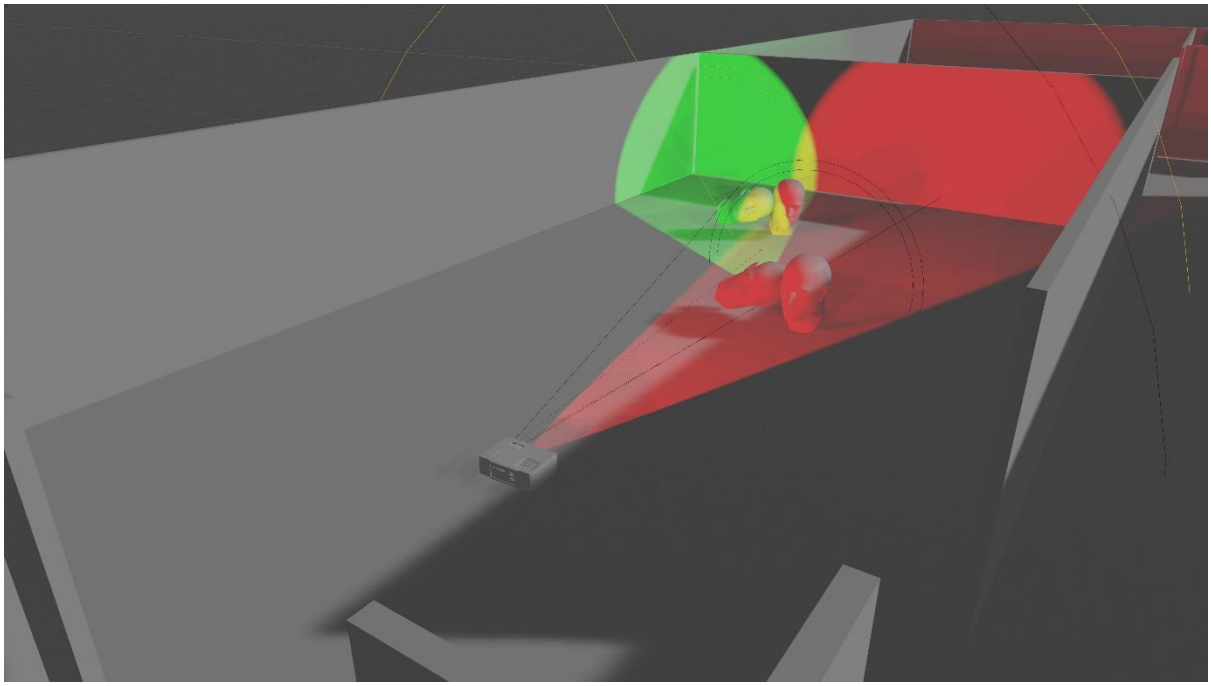
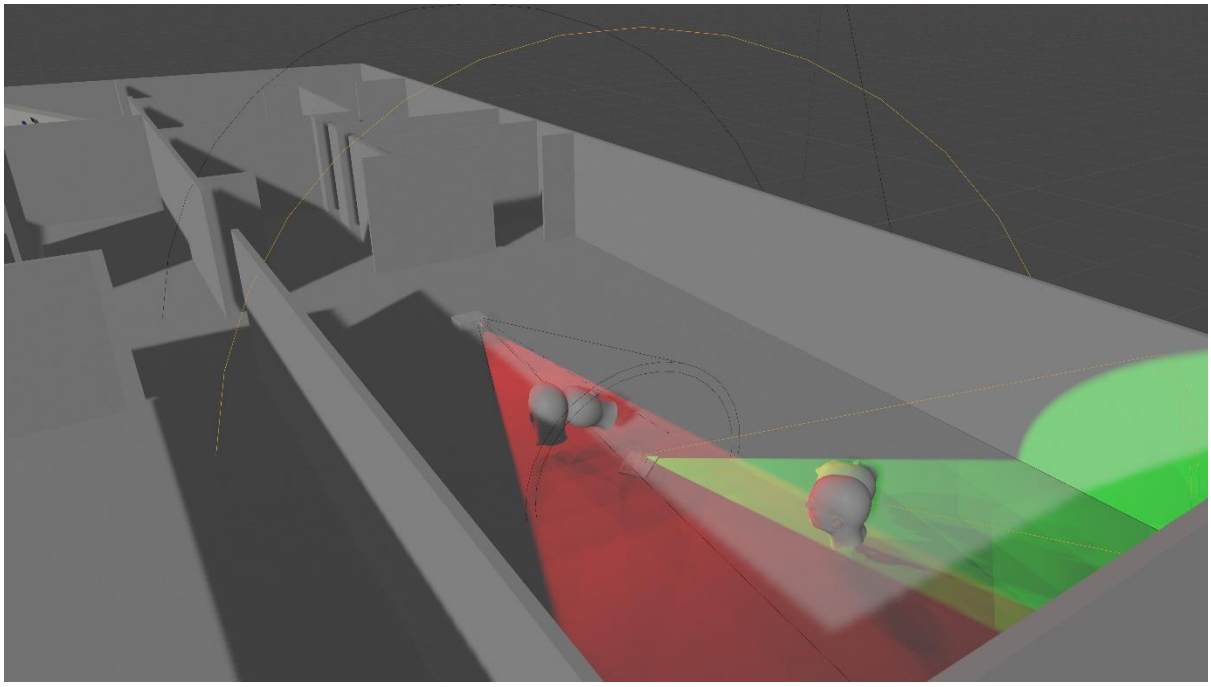


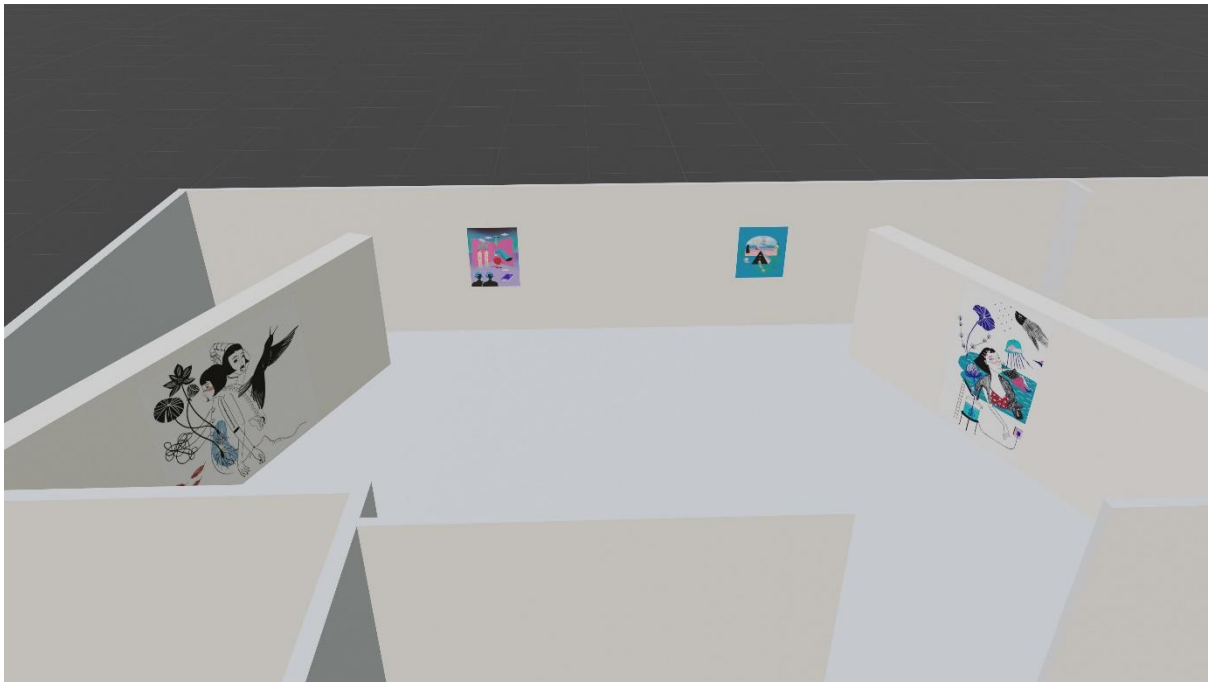
LEVEL 2: ROOM 8.1 (dark walls).



LEVEL2: ROOM 8.2



LEVEL 2: ROOM 10.1 (Two big prints on fabrics).



LEVEL 2: ROOM 10.2

LEVEL 2: ROOM 10.3