

Balancing Alcohol Consumption

Ways of Perceiving, Curation Essay

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Titled 'Corpse brew' this exhibition covers the topic of alcohol abuse and portrays a whimsical approach to drinking excessively by the creation of 'The Corpse Brewery' complete with illustrated beer bottle labels and packaging.

There are a multitude of reasons as to why a person drinks alcohol, from celebrational drinks to night out adventures featuring the allusive drink itself as a catalyst to enjoyment. However, as human beings, we are easily tempted and thus need to find a balance to consuming it. This is important as the more we drink alcohol, the more addictive it can be and thus leading to a range of risks whether short-term or long.

Alcohol can affect a person in a multitude of ways. According to the official NHS Alcohol misuse website, the short-term risk is that it can lead to accidents requiring hospital attention and treatment depending on the severity of the incident itself. This is because in a drunk state, one is not always aware of their surroundings and reaction times are much slower than a person who is sober. Due to this, accidents that can be easily avoided may occur as the brain is not able to function normally under the influence of alcohol.

Additionally, if large amounts of alcohol are consumed during a short period of time, this can lead to poisoning that may lead to unconsciousness, vomiting and seizures.

(*Alcohol misuse, 2020*). Long-term misuse of alcohol can also lead a person to become dependent on drinking thus effecting their quality of life. This is because even if they try to quit, they may acquire withdrawal symptoms making it difficult and may relapse (Alcohol misuse, 2020). Persistent misuse of alcohol over many years will also take a toll on various organs of the body. Heavy drinking increases blood pressure and cholesterol levels which both contribute to the risk factors for strokes and heart attacks. The immune system can also be weakened over the years making you vulnerable to infections. (*Alcohol misuse, 2020*).

However, there can also be some psychological benefits to drinking at a moderate consumption. According to *Cynthia Baum-Baicker in 'The psychological benefits of moderate alcohol consumption: A review of literature'* they suggest that a reasonable amount can decrease the feelings

of tension as well as insecurity and self-consciousness whilst increasing the feelings of confidence and happiness whether it being carefree or overall feelings of joy (Baum-Baicker, 1985). This suggestion may have its merits relating to modern day consumption as according to researchers at the University of Oxford suggests that the reason why drinking was adopted was due to the benefits of social drinking relating to health and especially social bonding (Dunbar, 2017). As alcohol allows you to feel more confident, the anxious feelings that you may have will decrease and thus allowing the ability to communicate effectively without those emotional walls. Due to this, conversations can be made with ease and so forth the ability to socialise when needing that extra support. Due to these, the ability to balance the consumption of alcohol is increasingly growing as with the strains of modern-day society.

The artwork chosen for this exhibition displays the dark truth of the risks against drinking excessively by portraying illustrated corpses in various fruity beers (Figure 1– 4).

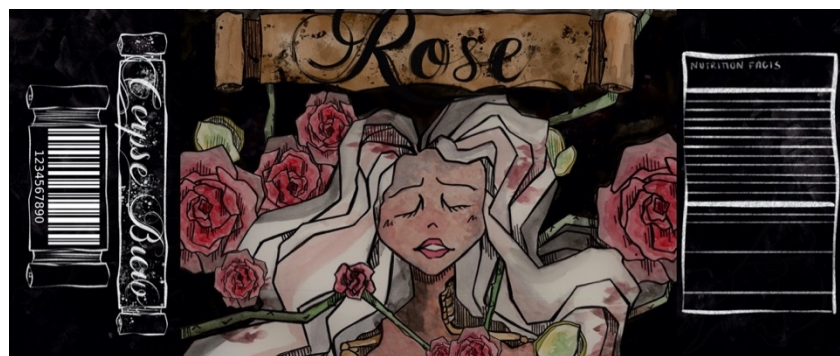


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

However, as these are staged as an “existing” beer brewery it can also depict that essence of being able to socialise without emotional worry. The ability to be carefree with the support of alcohol but to also take into account the risks if misused. An exhibition similar to this idea ‘This bewitching poison’ by the Royal college of Physicians explores the contradictions of alcohol and how its role over the last three hundred years was something that was ever changing (Royal College of Physicians , 2014). This idea is still in effect today as although there is strong evidence as to how it can wreck your body

physically if abused, psychologically it can also have social benefits. These pieces were first designed as a graphic design and illustration project titled 'Four Beer Bottles Sitting on the Wall' this brief was to develop our illustrations to be able to create something that could be used and seen physically, in this case it was to appeal to the illustration beer bottle industry. In addition to the labels, this artwork also includes a carry case for the bottles themselves as it demonstrates what the full product could like when fully constructed. (Figure 5)



Figure 5

For this exhibition, I have chosen for it to be features in Swansea's Mission Gallery. This is because this area is well known to me as to have visited many times over the years and is a gallery that I have experienced on a personal level with various artist shows and their artworks displayed. Therefore, I understand through involvement where I am able to place artworks and how it could possibly be perceived in such a place. Although knowing its history in the way that it used to be a church, I feel that this space will still be able to portray the atmosphere and feelings expressed by the work.

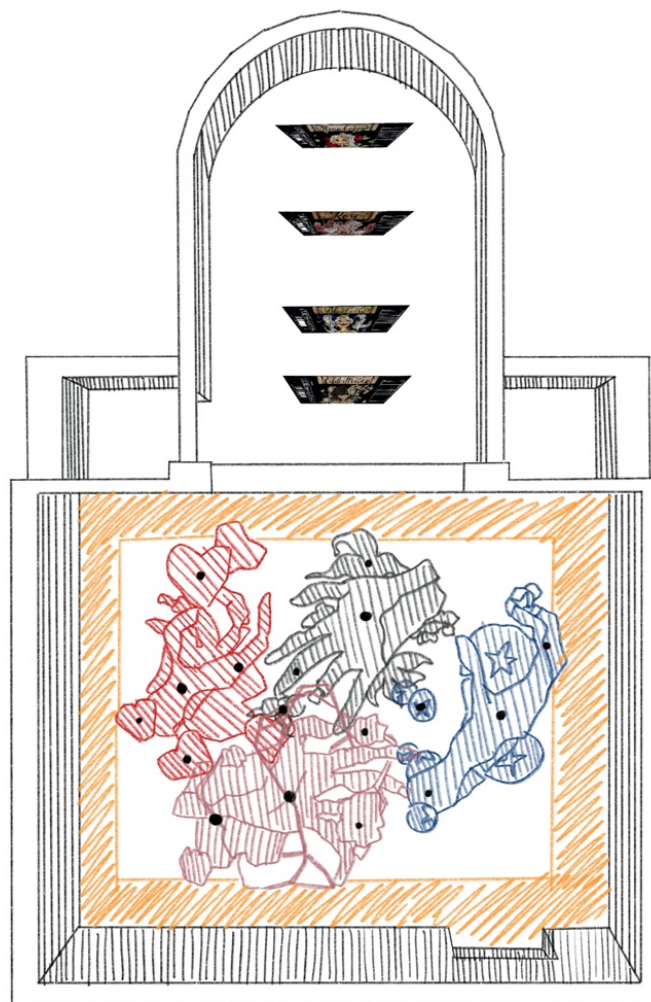


Figure 6

As such, I have drawn a plan of how and where the artworks would go (Figure 6). From the reference, you can see that I plan to hang the labels themselves in the back room and shall be evenly spaced from one another. Furthermore, the labels will be the size of a2 and will hang down to the ceiling. I have decided to hang them from the centre of the room, instead of placing them on the walls to be able get the viewers closer to the artwork and have a close contact sort of atmosphere. Much like the artist Anni Albers who works with weaving textiles and hangs



Anni Alber,AA. 2018. Art Review: Anni Albers, Tate Modern 'A Revolutionary Gets Her Due'.

[online]. [May 4, 2020]. <http://www.victoriasadler.com/>

her work from the ceiling, I would also like to approach this design layout featuring my labels (Fig 7). This composition of hanging the work is aesthetically pleasing as well as ensures that the viewer can see it from all angles. My labels, however, are landscape and so I will need to

ensure that they hang a lot lower so that they are eye level with the viewers. As said previously, I hope to portray that close contact so the small size of the backroom and layout of hanging the work from ceiling should be able to represent this well. As I have experienced Anni Albers work in person in her Tate Modern exhibition 2019, I find that I much enjoy this sort exhibition layout than the standard wall composition as it allows the ability to take into account other work with it. For example, if you were to exhibit a range of pieces that are grouped together this would be a great option as you can physically see and feel that in the space. They are all hung closely whereas if they were to be placed separately against the walls, it may take away from the overall theme. As I want the viewers to think about the balance of alcohol, I want them to see labels as a group rather than see them as individual artworks. Although not shown on the plan, I hope to also include the beer bottle model itself and add that to the very back of the room containing the beer bottle labels. They will be showcased on its own platform. The idea of encasing the model came to mind, however I feel that having it open to the viewers will make more of an impact on generating thought. I have decided to add this to the collection as this rounds the entire idea as well as shows where it originated from.

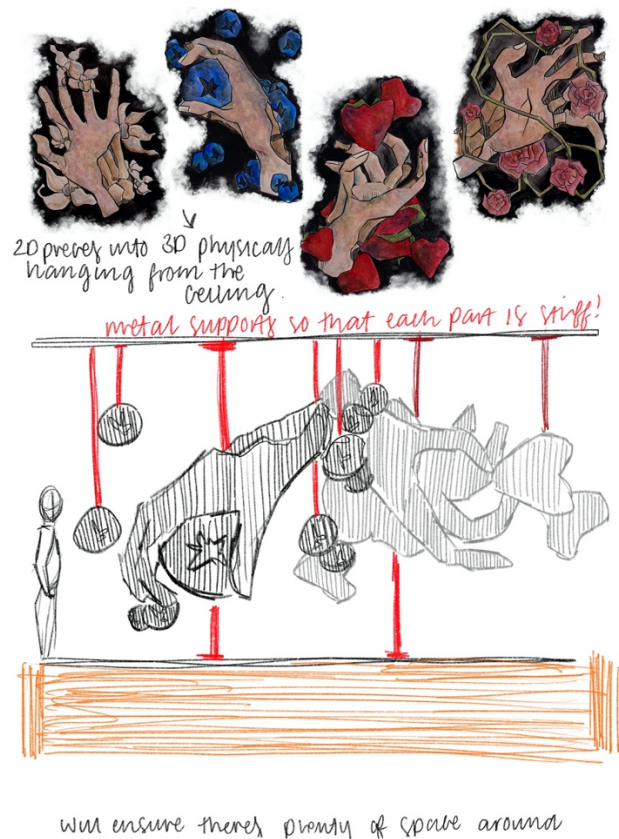


Figure 7

In addition, I have decided to use the hands in the carry case and transform them into these large structures that will be held up by supports both from the ceiling as well as from the floor (Figure 7). I had the idea of first hanging them down slightly past the viewers height so that they could weave through increasing the close contact sort of atmosphere, however I have decided against it as there would be some safety risks such as injuring oneself if not careful enough. There will be plenty of space around the structures and as I do not intend to create a line of distance, viewers will be allowed to get as close as they would like. The colour of the walls and floor will stay white and how it is originally set up as I do not want to take further attention off the works itself. For example, if I were to paint everything black, due to the

nature of the artwork as well as the colours used, this could take away the attention from the pieces and thus the overall feeling of the work.

In conclusion, I hope to generate thoughts of alcohol consumption through whimsical pieces allowing the viewers to think about the balance of alcohol and to think about why it could benefit socially, but to also remember its risks if misused.

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