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**BA Level 1 Creative practice**

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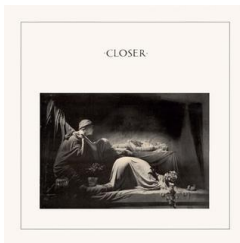
In this assignment I am going to be showing and describing an art exhibit that I have created around a certain theme, the one I have chosen is mental illness, it is a feeling and expression that many people feel within their lives, I myself have also, it has been depicted in various artforms, and examples of these I will be showing within this exhibit. This will be a representation into the continuing and worsening of a person's mental state due to illness, I have chosen three musical pieces and two films, I wanted a difference in the media as both auditory and visual senses enable the viewer to possibly experience different emotions and contexts as they walk through the gallery exhibit.

. The Name of this exhibit is.

**‘A Decent into the void.’**

The artworks that I decided to use were

- **Joy Division – In a lonely place**
- **Giles Corey – No one is ever going to want me**
- **Joy Division – The Eternal**
- **The Elephant man – David Lynch**
- **Johnny Got His Gun – Doltan Trombo**



**The Art that I have chosen -**

**In a lonely place –**

This track's lyric is one that is wrapped in a melancholic metaphor, Ian Curtis, the singer and lyricist, suffered greatly in his life, with the pressures of family, epilepsy and the growing fear that came with becoming a successful artist, he purposefully ended his life, within the parallels of his life, contrast with the lyrics of Joy Division's music, I feel is a representation of feeling hopeless.

Even the recording of the song adds to the chilling atmosphere that envelops the listener, the pounding drums, lurking bass and stabbing synthesizers, alongside the mournful, monotoned vocal of Curtis, is a well written indicator to the despair that he felt towards the end of his life, aside from this, much of the post-punk music from Manchester was a reflection on the dirty, grungy and restless attitude of the city as a whole. It would make sense that a combination of this type of nature and illness could result in the band capturing and performing the essence of the mood of the city in which they lived.

### **No one is ever going to want me –**

Dan Barrett is able to capture the essence of misery within this track, the whole build is like a crescendo, the breaking point of one's mental state, with the explosion at the latter half of the track. The start of this piece has an extremely melancholic feel to it, the layers of reverberated vocals feel like ghosts, chanting as though recounting the life that they had previously lived, with the mourning chorus that sounds as much like a wail of despair as much as singing. The instrumentation has a feel of trepidation to them, with the constant click of a tapping drum throughout, carrying the sound rhythmically, even with the erratic build of the momentum. In the later part of the track, the group chorus of vocals shouts. - "I want to feel like I feel, when I'm asleep". This is a reference to wanting to cease to exist, rather than carrying on in the state of depression that the album's protagonist feels.

*“No One Is Every Going to Want Me” begins in that same amorphous form, but eventually experiences a radical change in dynamic as it congeals into a propulsive and high energy fuzz folk song. The turbulence that the song undertakes, and the speed with which it changes shape help emphasize the dark and dramatic nature of the subject matter. Capello. C, (2011), Lewis and his blog.*

### **The Eternal –**

This song is yet another insight into the idea of hopelessness, but unlike the previous track mentioned, this shows the feeling through a more isolated perspective. There is a funeral march feel to it, akin to Chopin’s Nocturn Op. 55, No. 1 in *F minor*. The solitude ridden atmosphere created from the reverb coloured and yet heavily bass induced instrumentation, almost feels like a weight on the listener, a storm that they are in the middle of.

Again, Curtis’s vocals have a mourning and somber tone, with his voice sounding strained, almost breathless, in Joy Division’s later album, ‘Closer’, Curtis talked about how the lyrics were deep in his subconscious.

*‘As Curtis’s epilepsy worsened, he was treated with medication that produced severe mood swings. Sumner recalls that “while we were working on Closer, Ian said to me that doing this album felt very strange because he felt that all his words were writing themselves. He also said that he had this terrible claustrophobic feeling that he was in a whirlpool and being pulled down, drowning.” (Savage, J, (2007} Dark star: The final days of Ian Curtis by his Joy Division bandmates, The Independent.)*

*‘The funereal, guitar-less ‘The Eternal’ is absolutely chilling, with Curtis singing about being “possessed by a fury that burns from inside” over a sepulchral piano and the industrial crack of a snare drum.’ - (Nicholson, B, (2012), NME blogs.)*

### **The Elephant Man** –

This was a later contribution to the exhibit, the trials and tribulations captured by John Hurt in David Lynch's masterpiece, gives a chilling insight into not just the idea of mental strain and one perceived as monstrous or pitiful, but also that of the physicality of such. John Merrick's life was full of hardships, being ridiculed by the public at large for being different, ousted by his father and stepmother for not being equipped enough to work, and being shown to medical professionals as a sort of spectacle and freak. I feel that this has parallels to the mentality of a depressed and hopeless feeling person, as they too can feel the ridicule and pitifulness that society, medical care and even loved ones can show without a clear understanding of the persons illness and mental state.

### **Johnny Got His Gun** –

This is an extremely bleak film, with the main protagonist being blown up in the world war by a land mine, his limbs and face are blown off, leaving only his head and chest, but he is still alive. In this context, he is left within his own thoughts and world, into a state of delirium and derealization where he must figure out if he is dead or alive. The mentality and progression into the realization that he is alive and is not able to move physically or feel any time of sensation other than touch is palpable.

The five stages of grief can be clearly shown, anger at not being able to physically talk to people, this is comparable to the feeling of anxiety,

Denial, not being able to cope with the fact he is stuck in his mental state, can be compared to the denial someone may feel about their mental state and how bad they truly feel about being within their own mind.

Bargaining, in this sense, Johnny pleads with Jesus in his imagination, this is common with people who wish that they were someone else and ask professionals if they are able to take away their ailments in exchange for the progression of working on mental health.

Depression, throughout the film, he becomes more and more depressed after realizing that he is stuck as he is and is not going to be able to talk to people or use his senses, he can only imagine what is going on around him and he can only talk by banging his head on the pillow in Morse code, this is how people with depression feel, being stuck in a non-communicative rut and feeling like there is no way to be able to communicate with the outside world, so they are stuck in themselves with a negatively charged self-reflection.

Acceptance – At the end of the film, Johnny has a monologue about his acceptance of the fact that he is going to remain in this state for the rest of his life, in terms of comparing this to mental illness, this can be both a positive and negative, either a person can accept their mental state and start to make small changes for it to be more manageable, or they can accept their fate with a hopeless outlook and do something to harm themselves or possibly abuse substances, or in the worst case, take their own life.

*'Inside me, I'm screaming and yelling and howling like a trapped animal... and nobody pays any attention. If I had arms, I could kill myself. If I had legs, I could run away. If I had a voice, I could talk and be some kind of company for myself. I could yell for help, but nobody would help me.'* **Trumbo, J.D, Johnny got his gun. (1971), World entertainment, Cinamation industries.**

### **Floor plan**

For this exhibition, I specifically wanted the floor plan to be straightforward, a singular line with each artworks specific theme becoming more disturbing and upsetting, with it

almost feeling like a progression or a descent into the varying levels of despair, isolation and anxiousness, feelings and emotions that can be attributed to hopelessness.

Mental health can and will have varying degrees of impact and effect on peoples mind, physicality and their routine, so this is represented in the straight line, of course there are corners, shadows and the downward spirals that are mental illnesses, but I wanted this to be a more extreme form of the single downward slope, to show how quickly a person degenerates into the feeling of solitary confinement, something that deals with this deep and controversial of a topic in this direct and matter of fact way will hopefully give the viewer a short, sharp shock in terms of them looking at the stages through a different way.

## **Conclusion**

As someone who struggles with mental health, this was quite a personal subject matter to choose, it seems as though mental health, whilst slightly better understood by the public at large, is still not taken as seriously as it should be and I think that is a major flaw in our society, so much creativity comes from pain, but that is no excuse for people to have to suffer in silence.

It is a strange paradox how the worst of pain can create the most beautiful art pieces; the representation of suffering is something extremely personal and yet they can be passed down to generations with such an impact, it can cause members of mental health movements in society to question the norms, standards and how we look at illnesses with a different context. I hope that this exhibit will be that impact.

## **Bibliography & Reference**

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