

Ways of Perceiving, Curation

Essay

CONDITIONAL

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BA Surface pattern and textiles

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CONDITIONAL:

The exhibition CONDITIONAL displays pieces of work in separate rooms which explore different viewing conditions exploring whether the viewer perceives art differently when in different environments. I have looked at artists that create perspective illusion art to help demonstrate how composition and placement can affect the viewer's perception on the image by the angled look at the art. I have selected theories that work with the composition of my exhibition space. My aim is to demonstrate how composition can affect the viewer's perception of the art displayed, as well as changing the environment of the displayed art. This exhibition is entitled CONDITIONAL as each room and each piece of art is affected by the conditions that they are placed in. The condition of something is referred to as appearance, quality and factors affecting the surrounding environment or people. 'A particular mode of being of a person or thing; state of being(Oxford dictionary,2002)'

CONDITIONAL is at the old library at the ALEX building on Alexander Road in Swansea (See Fig. 1). Set within the Round reading room it is constructed of five compartments within the circular space. This layout accentuates the flow of the exhibition to show the difference and similarities between each artwork. 'Human beings have a prodigious ability to memorize spaces. The plan is very much about archives-for the medieval mind, space was also a way to store memories(Obrist,2016,p.45)' The condition of the space will pre-determine the impression of the art and how they continue to view the art moving forward. Having it set in an old library has the ability to challenge people's ideas, as it goes against conventions and expectations for the setting, whilst feeling like a familiar place to most, which many people will have memories of visiting at some point in their lives. The library symbolises a collection of memories that are stored for people like an archived record like their connections of memories of particular spaces, which have been created by an emotive reaction to each. 'Permanent installation offers an encounter with a particular work of art within a given space where change is brought about not by new juxtapositions(Serota,2000,p.53)' Nicholas Serota shows that the surroundings of the art can have juxtaposition as much with the art as much as the art has juxtaposition and contrast in itself. Space and condition challenge people's perception and make them view things in a different way, or create a barrier to having an open mindset towards the art. The first impression is created by the space and the piece together. That is why it is vital to have art that is cohesive with its surroundings to help guide the viewers to the meaning of the art so they can clearly understand the artist's view on their work and the message they are trying to portray.

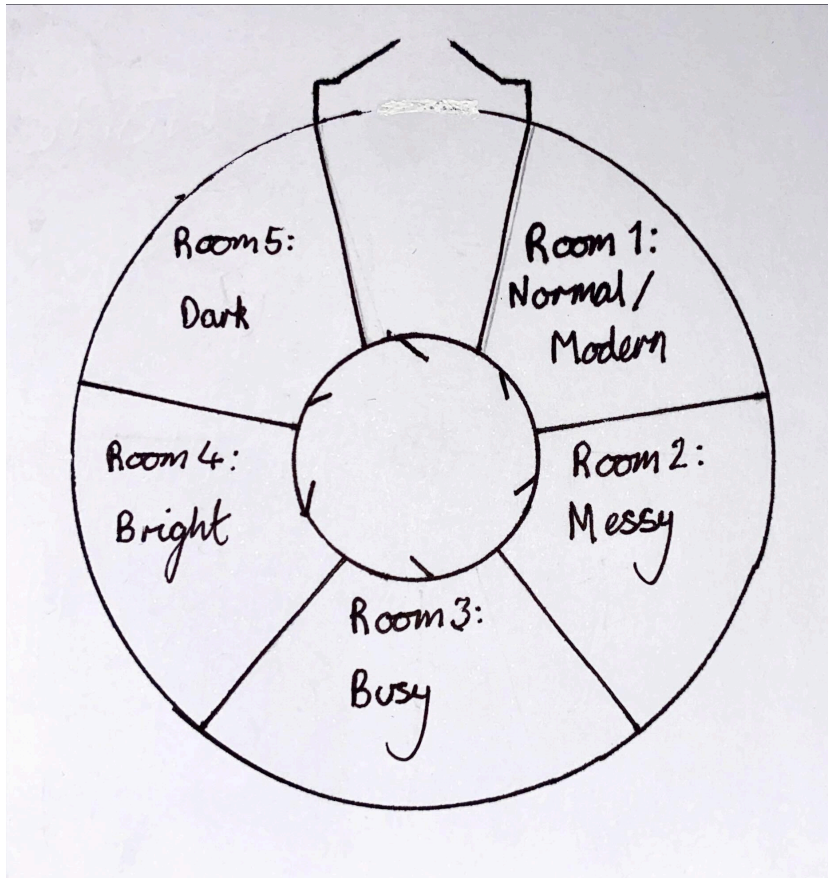


Fig1, drawing room plan (Eve

Merriman,2024)

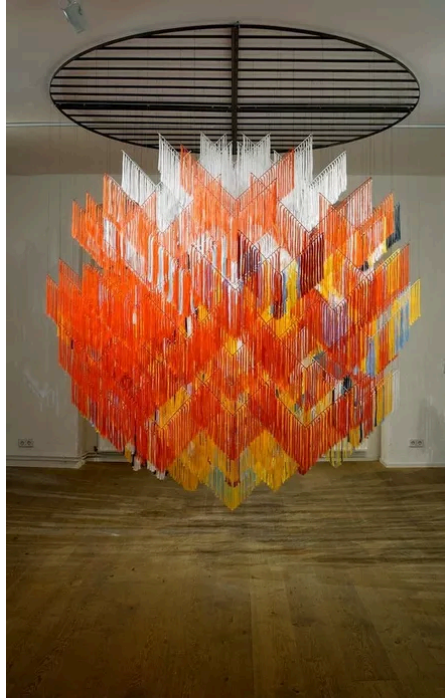


Fig 2, Outi Pieski, Tate, 2023

In the centre of the room hangs the installation by Outi Pieski (untitled). This will help to highlight how these “perfect” conditions of a typical modern gallery may not be subtle for every art piece and how this can affect the viewers’ perspective on the art. As stated by Hans Ulrich Obrist ‘Making art is not the matter of a moment, and nor is making an exhibition; curating follows art (Obrist ,2016, p.24)’. Obrist shows how he feels that art is not made for the gallery but for the personal expression of the artist and the art is not made for a specific gallery. Outi Pieski shows how although her work can be viewed in a modern gallery, Pieski’s piece would be best displayed in a nature inspired setting, as all of her work is heavily inspired by her heritage and native background. Her work heavily emphasises the importance of the connection between humans and the natural world. Pieski’s piece is however suited to this modern form of gallery space as the clean and clear background makes the art easier to view as there are no distractions.



Fig 3, Bernard Pras, Dail, 2004

For the next room instead of using a plain white room I intend to display the perspective sculpture in a room that is messy and covered in other scraps of art materials, to help see whether viewers are still as willing to enter the rooms to see the art if the room is unkept. I want the sculpture to look part of the mess until looked at, at the right angle to see if people will fully enter the room to look if the art is not initially in front of them to view. 'It's power that comes from the subtle sources of juxtaposition and arrangement (Obrist, 2016, p.32)' This art by Bernard Pras demonstrates how juxtaposition and perspective help to shape art, as from the side this sculpture looks like randomly placed objects however when together it forms a complex piece of art. This room helps challenge the viewer on why modern galleries are so empty showing that the condition is critical to the art.



Fig 4, Michael Murphy, Dolly

In room three the condition is busy, with actors walking around the space constantly to emulate the feeling of when viewing art in busy and overcrowded areas, such as the Mona Lisa in The Louvre. 'The condition of being on display is fundamental to the construction of the category 'art' in the modern western world...its definition as a specialised set of objects and practices set apart from the more mundane concerns of society- is bound up with the existence of the museum (Barker, 1999, p. 13)' Emma Barker shows how the feel of the museum can get set apart from the art when in reality the art is best viewed when the museum and the art feel like one and are cohesive together. The art should feel as though it belongs in the museum rather than oddly placed there in a room. Having this room busy allows viewers to see how lack of space around the art disrupts the cohesive nature and creates a barrier between the viewer and the art.

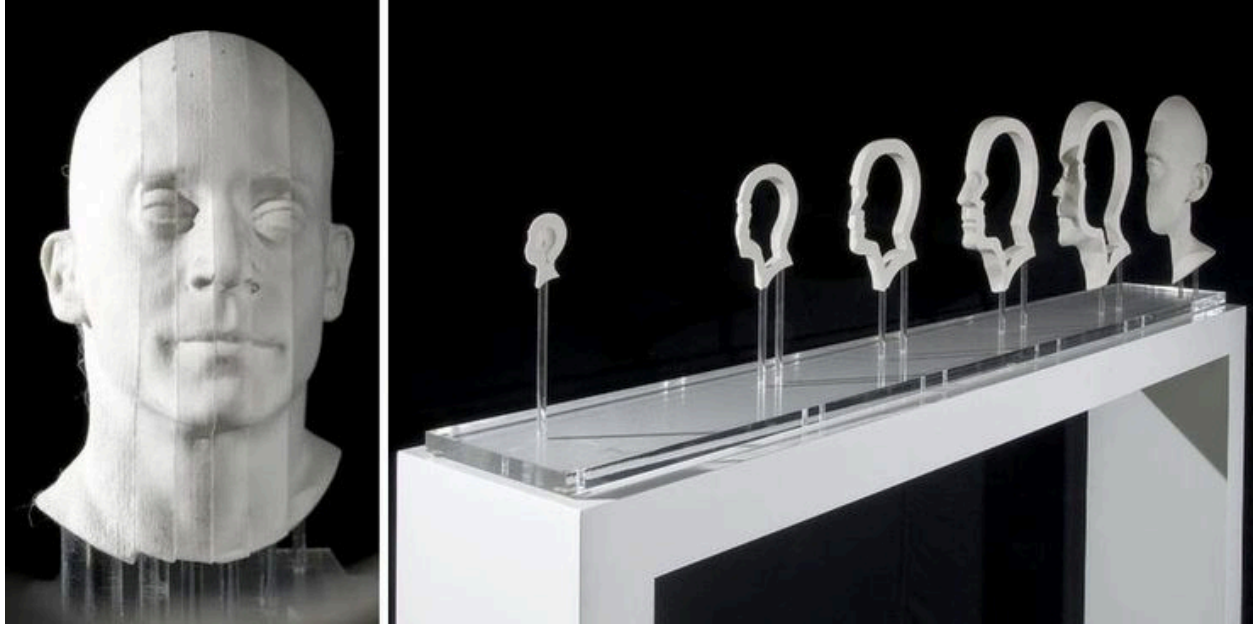


Fig 5, Jonty Hurwitzs, Bronze and Steel, 2009

Jonty Hurwitzs fills the fourth room with the conditions being extremely bright with an almost clinical feel to the room. 'It is a convention which gives absolute weight to the work of individual artists, which favours presentation over analysis and which undermines the traditional priority given to the curator as the person who exercises discriminating judgement over selection and display in the museum (Serota, 2000, p. 15)' This shows the artist deciding on the placement and conditions for their art, rather than the curator. This allows them to have more control over how they want the piece to be seen by others.



Fig 6, Marco Cianfanelli, Nelson Mandela, 2012

Marco Cianfanelli has created a perspective sculpture that when viewed at the right angle shows Nelson Mandela's face through the gaps. This works in the dark room as it has the doorway as the light source. 'We have now reached the point where we see not the art but the space first (O'doherty, 1986, p. 14)' My concept is to challenge the viewer to view the art with no distractions of the room or external space around to distract from the art. Cianfanelli's use of light in this sculpture makes it ideal for the dark room as o'doherty shows we are stuck in the view that a gallery must be a plane stark white space that the all art must fit into and has become stuck in this way of art must be viewed in a gallery that looks like every other. Placing this sculpture in a darker room makes the image only visible from the back of the room viewed through the light of the doorway to encourage the viewers to enter the room fully to gather the full experience of the art.

This exhibition helps show viewers how different conditions affect the art and the way in which we perceive pieces. 'Our aim must be to generate a condition in which visitors can experience a sense of discovery in looking at particular paintings, sculptures or installations in a particular room at a particular moment (Serota, 2000, p. 55)' When presenting work at exhibitions the art is often handed over to curators, this is what helps fuel the divide between the art and the

conditions that it is placed in as the artist and curators are operating as two separate parts, sometimes creating a lack of cohesion within the exhibition. Conditional challenges this perception that art must be viewed in a blank environment and that the condition of the room does not help the emotional connection and experience of viewing the pieces.

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Fig 4, Michael Murphy, Dolly <https://www.perceptualart.com/>

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