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Assignment Title: Imagined display involving Curation and Space (Exhibition, festival, performance etc.)

Word count: 1,294 words

Artefacts/artworks. Theme: Gothic.



For the Love of God'- Damien Hirst

This artefact is a £50 million platinum and diamond skull where Hirst has succeeded in turning something 'cheap' into one of the most expensive works of Art. If I were to sum this artefact up into five words, it would be 'bold, piercing, striking, decorative and haunting'. Hirst uses juxtaposition in his work; the theme centering around death. This means that he creates something positive out of something that is perceived as negative. It is interesting that Hirst managed to turn an object, found in a taxidermy shop, into something magnificent. In order to achieve the full effect, Hirst had to find a specific skull that he found to be nothing more than a skull so that the power of what really could be would shine through.

Skulls in halloween shop windows are appealing to me as I find what scares me intriguing. They are also nostalgic from past halloween experiences, also an eventful time to look forward to every year in relation to autumn and the shorter days, making towns with narrow lanes and sharp corners seem haunting.

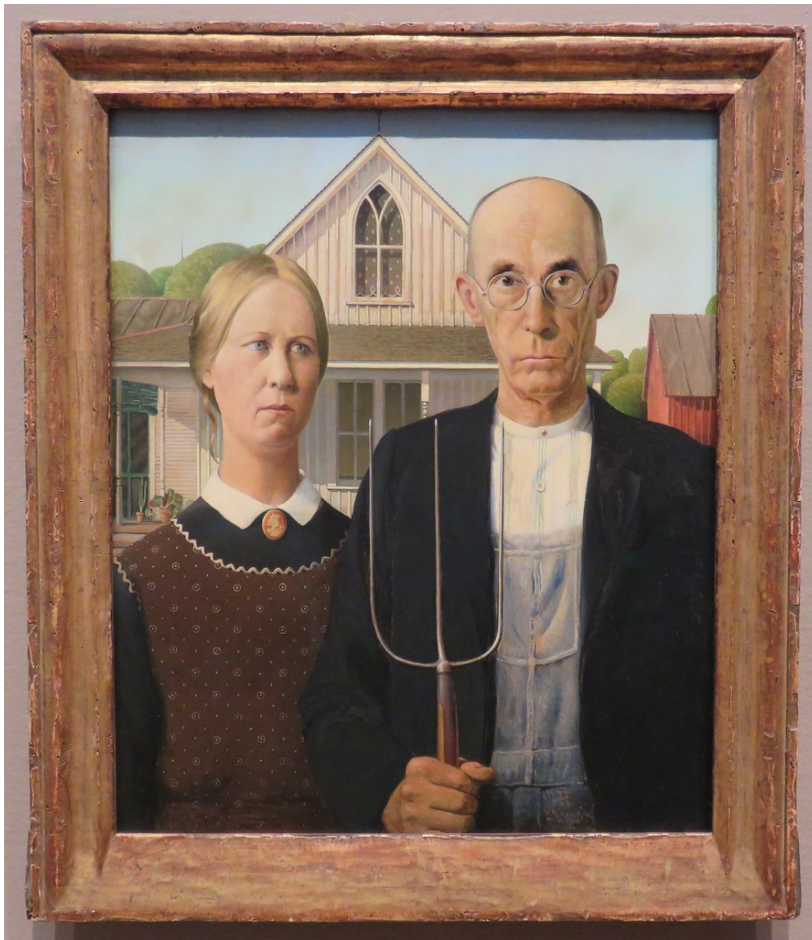


'The Aps'- Nicola Milan

I was drawn to this illustration piece by Nicola Milan as it is simply an introduction to these characters, which is an ongoing theme in her work. The haunting stare of the eyes captures your attention and the warped and surreal body proportions were what caught my interest. It is also black and white, creating more emphasis on the story of these two characters, without context, so we can embody our own depiction of the story.

For Milan's steampunk "quirky" goth characters, she has used the social media platform 'Pinterest' to find influences, e.g. an influence of a pose. She will then work to put her own spin on the photograph or image she has chosen. She will draw a basic rough outline and then uses pastel, charcoal, prisma coloured pencils and copic markers to create intricate details that really capture the haunting essence of the characters from their clothes to the shadows on their face.

I am really interested in the juxtaposition as the artist uses something dark and makes it "cute". The Victorian, Tim Burton aesthetic is appealing in this way.



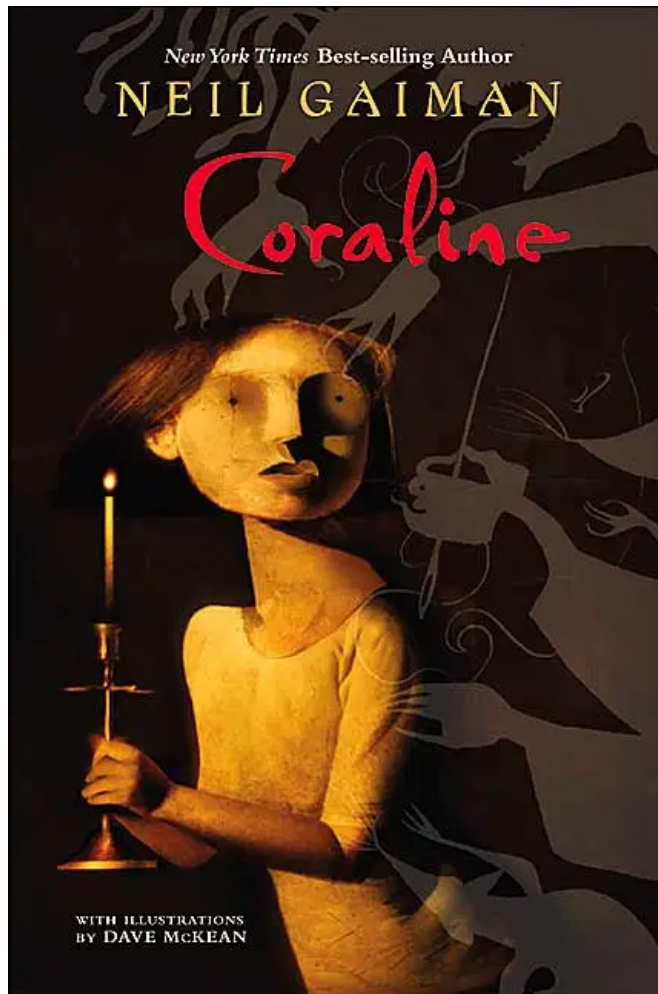
'American Gothic'- Grant Wood (1930)

An iconic American oil painting from 1930.

Grant Wood was inspired by 'Impressionism', 'Pointillism' (there are hidden repeated patterns and lines of symmetry in the painting) and the 'Flemish Renaissance' such as Jan Van Eyck's work with long flat faces.

Wood found a house in Eldon, Iowa and saw something gothic and something American. He wanted to combine the two themes together. He wanted to capture the idea of an American couple. The idea was to find two people that would fit into such a home (the artist's sister and dentist).

What makes this painting so interesting is that it is difficult to know for certain what the artist's true intentions were behind this image. Therefore, it is open to interpretation and it is controversial and mysterious. It has also been perceived as a "joke", appearing as spin-offs in advertisements, cartoons, films, etc. I am very interested in symmetry and pattern in works of art. There is also a lot of symbolism for semiotic analysis. For example, the Pitchfork that the dentist is holding is used on Halloween as a symbol of dark forces. This painting reminds me of houses on Halloween and the thrill of knocking on doors of unrecognisable houses. This piece is subjective and holds accountable for my beliefs and values about what art means to me.



'Coraline'- Dave McKean

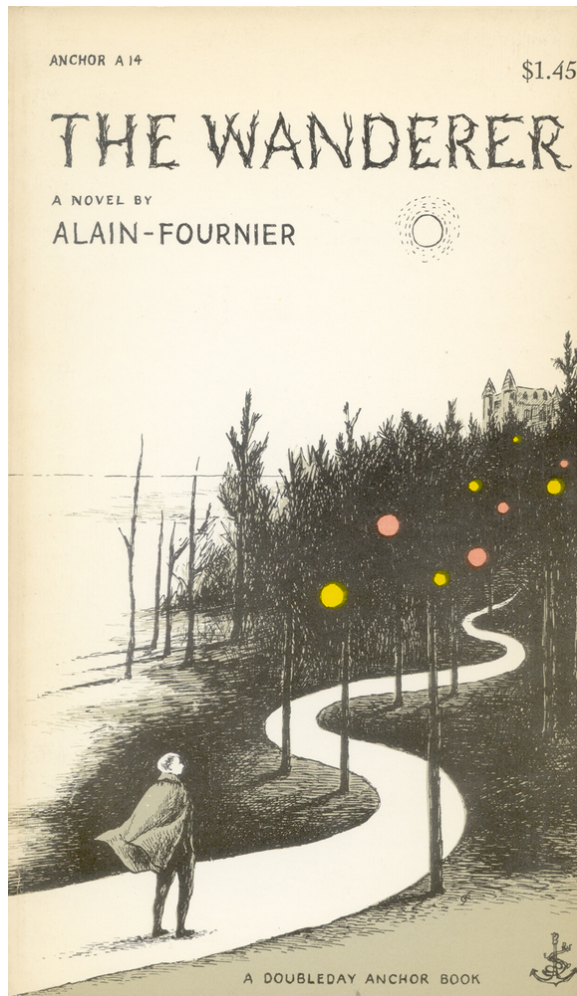
Dave McKean creates graphic novels that involve rough shapes, feelings and then refining through layers and collages which are scanned onto the computer. "You get an accumulation of textures, images and life." His dark, mature and disturbing illustrations add to the chaotic atmosphere of the scenes he creates.

McKean is interested in science fiction and horror, bringing elements of both genres into his work. He likes to create a psychological disturbance throughout his images and wants the images to tell their own story, without solely representing the text.

He starts by using a big piece of grunge watercolour paper, attacking it with scalpel blades, charcoal, and other traditional mediums and natural materials, in order to create the original feel of the book, creating the surface. He also uses music when he works which adds to the tortured atmosphere, and then scanning images and experimenting on Photoshop. McKean thinks carefully about what materials he uses that will express the right emotion and the tone of voice. For example, whether he wants a rough or smooth surface.

The artist believes that it is important to experiment with many different traditional mediums in order to convey an idea in the most effective way.

I am drawn to McKean's interpretation of Coraline on this graphic novel book cover. I love how shadow is reflected on one side of the face, like the main protagonist is being pulled into the darkness. The film came after the book and I was deeply.



'The Wanderer'- Edward Gorey

Edward Gorey is known for illustrating morbidly humorous gothic books with a child-like approach.

He grew up being inspired by gothic culture. An example of this is French film-maker 'Louis Feuillade'. Potted palms, pattern interior decor and veiled women found in his crime thrillers 'Fantomax' and 'Les Vampires' became elements that would appear in Gorey's illustrations.

His sombre palette and size of figures were inspired by illustrator 'Edward Ardizzone' and Japanese Ukiyo-prints.

Gorey's book often contained little to zero words as he wanted people to work with him in generating their own narratives to his books. They remained mysterious and ambiguous which further enhances his gothic macabre style. Darkness relating to unsettling times in history such as post war, or real stories of his friends have also been expressed or enhanced by this style.

There was a Broadway show of 'Dracula' that was based on Gorey's take on events and his personal style. Other influences include Tim Burton, and novels by Neil Gaiman (Coraline) and Lemony Snicket

This book cover caught my eye as the path leads somewhere that is unknown and contrast between black and white.

List of figures:

Figure 1: www.damienhirst.com. (n.d.). *For the Love of God - Damien Hirst*. [online] Available at: <https://www.damienhirst.com/for-the-love-of-god>.

Figure 2: Nicola Milan. (n.d.). *Artwork*. [online] Available at: <https://www.nicolamilan.com/artwork/> [Accessed 4 May 2021].

Figure 3: mymodernmet.com. (n.d.). *How a "Very Paintable House" Inspired "American Gothic" by Grant Wood*. [online] Available at: <https://mymodernmet.com/grant-wood-american-gothic/> [Accessed 4 May 2021].

Figure 4: [Amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk). (2021). *Coraline: Amazon.co.uk: Gaiman, Neil, McKean, Dave: Books*. [online] Available at: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Coraline-Neil-Gaiman/dp/0613673220> [Accessed 4 May 2021].

Figure 5: Otto, C. (n.d.). *Edward Gorey's fabulous cover art for "The Wanderer."* [online] Available at: <http://www.papergreat.com/2015/06/edward-goreys-fabulous-cover-art-for.html> [Accessed 4 May 2021].

Context of space and audience

My exhibition would last for hours but people can leave whenever they choose. The exhibition is going to be held at the National Museum in Cardiff and it would be open to anyone; all ages can appreciate and take different meanings- aesthetic, subjective (Ways of Thinking core values).

All art pieces will be at eye level (1.5m from the floor) with approximately 6 inches between each of the artworks. It is also important 'to make junctions, to allow different elements to touch'. (Obrist, 2016) The pieces will be hung up on the walls or stood up- 'allowing more space around important pieces encourages contemplation and appreciation, furthering the significance of a work.' What surrounds the artwork will also be kept simple- 'facilitating an environment to allow maximum potential for the artwork', so when you 'facilitate artistic intention' you 'influence viewer interpretations.' (Chester Arts Fair, 2018). It is also easier to interact with others in a physical space, so while considering whether to create an online or digital space, I thought if people can interact with one another they are more likely to leave the exhibition with an open mind, and people can gain knowledge and share experiences. The Mikhail Bakhtin theory (Polyphony) explains this- 'each of these voices has its own perspective, and its own validity, and its own narrative height' (Robinson, 2012).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have found that space is important for interaction and viewer interpretation. It allows room to appreciate that piece as a whole. I have also discovered that first impressions are important- "Curator has the role of welcoming visitors", "what does it mean to be physically here?" In an article on curating, Manuel Rosner quotes "physical space has a status quo because our bodies are part of this

reality.” The audience is what makes the art come to life. From personal experience, I know that when I step into a gallery or a museum, I enjoy and take in the space, allowing time to explore.

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