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BA Film and TV

Rob Jones and Ryan Moule

“Blame”

For my exhibition titled “blame” I plan to play a short self-made documentary film showing a timeline of the covid-19 pandemic, combining this with a voting system to determine the opinions of those attending both before and after viewing the documentary film. This will help to explore Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's idea that, “The best artworks convey, by sensory/perceptual means, the deepest metaphysical truth.” (Hegel, Introduction III (p. 4). I will combine the documentary screenings and voting system with relevant sculptural pieces by other artists who focus on themes similar to those in the film.

Those attending will be asked to vote by placing a token in one of four transparent plastic containers, each representing a different option of government to blame for the poor response to the covid-19 pandemic. This will take place as the audience enter the exhibition as well as when they leave, but they must reuse the same token in order to change their vote.

The contrast between the idea of art as an expression of absolute truth and the subjective interpretation of data by an audience is the main purpose of using documentary film as the medium. The “absolute truth” being a timeline of events

from multiple sources, and the initial vote as well as the reaction of the audience when presented with this data (something that will no doubt vary greatly from person to person) being the subjective interpretation.

Pat Le Riche said, "At its simplest, the act of observation is part of the process of looking, seeing and understanding a reality." (Le Riche, 1998, p18). I would like to explore whether observing an otherwise unknown reality or set of events will change any preconceived ideas in the audience.

Audience participation is key to this exhibition. With most installations it is up to the art to portray meaning to the audience, but with this the audience will directly add meaning to the data presented in the documentary by providing and making public their reaction via the voting booth.

The exhibition will take place in an outdoor venue such as a park or beach but will be inside of a portable building that will need to be constructed in each location. The space will be set up across two rooms. The first is the corridor leading to the main exhibition space. This will house a small voting booth where voting will take place before and after the viewing. The second is the main theatre space that will house a audio-visual equipment as well as no more than nine people. The smaller space will be 2x6 metres. The second larger space will be 12x12 metres.



Figure one

A nod to the interactive nature of the exhibition, the first piece of another artist's that I would like to use in the space is a piece of interactive art.

According to an article from the Tate gallery ,“Interactive art emerged in the late 1950s in parallel with artists’ desires to find less alienating and exclusive environments in which to show art.”, and it is this inclusive environment that I would like to promote in making the audience part of the exhibition.

The piece is called “Desire of Codes” and is by Japanese art professor Seiko Mikami. The piece is made of over 90 wall mounted cameras that follow you as

you move in from of them, producing an eerie grainy image on a nearby display.

This will be placed in the hallway and will watch attendees as they enter, exit, and cast their votes. My use of this piece means that the exhibition will interact with the audience, providing a level of inclusivity that borders on an invasion of privacy. Mikami says the piece poses the question, "What new desires do we have, now that we live in an information-oriented environment and have perceptions shaped by that environment?". With that in mind, the use of this piece helps to bring Hegel's ideas on the subject of absolute truth and subjective

interpretation up to date with the technological modernity on which it now tends to rely.

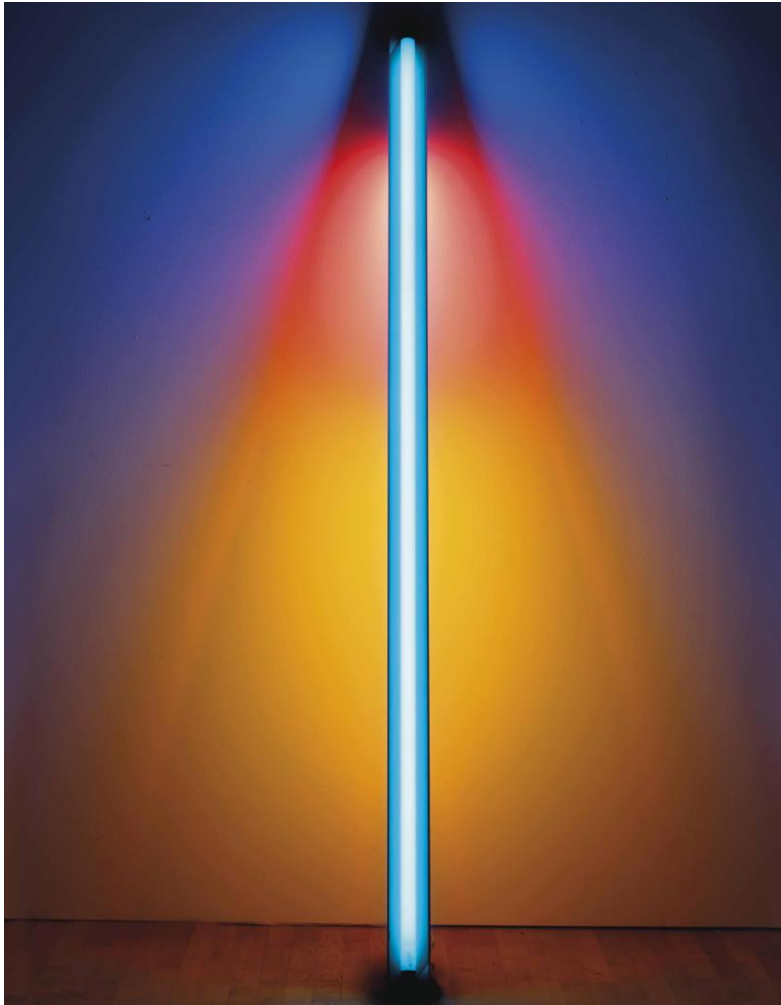


Figure two

The second piece is an untitled piece by Dan Flavin. The piece consists of a single shocking blue fluorescent tube light leaning against a wall. The artist's idea of this piece and the others like it was that it lacks permanence because the fluorescent

tubes will degrade and one day stop working entirely, saying, “One has no choice but to accept the fact of temporary art. Permanence just defies everything.”. This links to Le Riche’s ideas on observation. How can art be permanent if it cannot be seen or understood?

By contrast my use of this piece will place it just in front of the entrance to the theatre space and will have it represent a disinfectant method, giving a subtle nod to one of the many controversies that have arisen during the pandemic. The small size and every day nature of this object (a standard fluorescent lightbulb) will contrast with the unusual presence and large scale of the first instalment that the audience will have seen as they entered the exhibition, hopefully providing a sense of security after they have casted their vote

The third and final piece will be the projection of the documentary film itself along with the audience space which will be separated in the same manner as most shops during times of social distancing. This will mean that every person must be at least six feet away from one another. The audience space itself will represent a familiar reality for an audience who will have only recently become used to more relaxed social distancing measures.

Jennifer Jerit and Jason Barabas in their paper “Partisan Perceptual Bias and the Information Environment” argue that, “Perceptual bias occurs when beliefs deviate from reality. Democrats and Republicans are thought to be especially susceptible to this type of biased-information processing. And yet we know little about the pervasiveness of perceptual bias outside the domain of “performance issues” (e.g., unemployment, inflation) or how individual-level partisan motivation interacts with the information environment” (Jerit/ Barabas, 2012, p.1). The purpose of the film is to present a timeline of mixed sources that can hopefully represent an unbiased and objective reality of the events that transpired in the run up to and during the pandemic. The vote will show whether people change their opinions after interaction with an information environment, and whether

that exposure allowed them to become less partisan in their decision making.

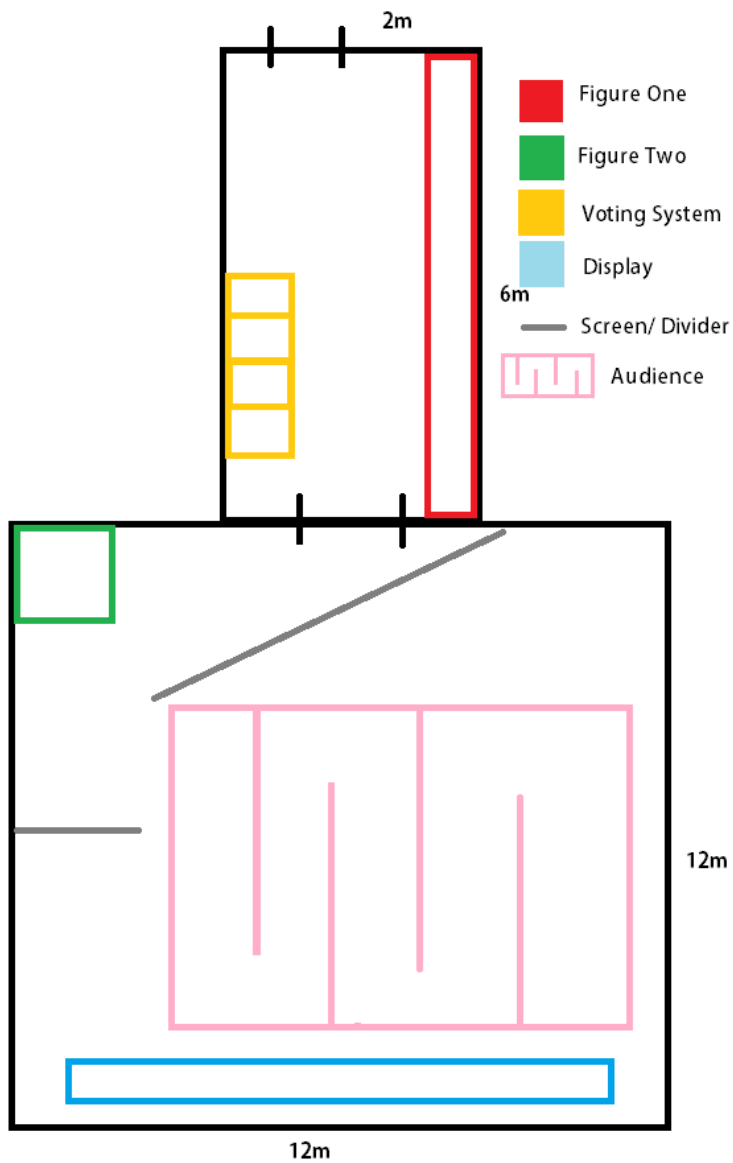


Figure Three

Figure three shows the floor plan for my exhibition.

When the audience enter the corridor they are greeted by Figure One, Seiko Mikami's "Desire of Codes" to their left and the voting boxes at the end of the corridor to their right. This sensory experience of someone watching them, albeit a sort of machine, will provide an uneasy feeling that will cast doubt in the voting process and in the motivations of the exhibition as a whole.

At the end of the corridor they will see the sterile blue light given off by Figure Two, Dan Flavin's untitled piece, and reflected on the room dividers placed near the entrance.

As the audience enter the main exhibition space they will be forced to pass very close to Figure Two, and will then make a sharp turn almost one hundred and eighty degrees behind them in order to enter the area where they will watch the documentary film. This sharp turn is analogous of the potential for a complete reversal of opinion that viewing the documentary may provide members of the audience when considering who to place the blame on.

In the main exhibition space will be a series of lines painted on the floor intended to help instruct viewers where to stand. This will be in line with the UK government's rules on social distancing that were present during the initial phase of lockdown. This aspect of the interaction can help to build a camaraderie among

those attending, bringing them together to share memories of their experience of the pandemic, whether that is a shared experience like queuing two metres apart or a more personal experience like the loss of a loved one. This will happen as the viewing area reaches capacity, and only when it is at full capacity will the film begin to play.

Bibliography;

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- <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/i/interactive-art>
- Mikami, S. (2010) Desire of Codes (Sculpture, Mixed Medium)

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<https://www.ntticc.or.jp/en/exhibitions/2011/mikami-seiko-desire-of-codes/>

- Flavin, D. (1972) Untitled (Sculpture, Fluorescent Tube) Christies, New York

<https://www.guggenheim.org/conservation/the-panza-collection-initiative/dan-flavin>

Figures;

- Fig. one: Mikami, S. (2010) Desire of Codes (Sculpture, Mixed Medium)

Intercommunication Centre, Tokyo

- Fig. two: Flavin, D. (1972) Untitled (Sculpture, Fluorescent Tube) Christies,
New York

- Fig. Three: Cooper, R. (2020) Exhibition Floor Plan (Digital Image)