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Ways Of Perceiving

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The intention to curate an exhibition, that consists of many painters to collaborate the portrayal of war, and its effects. My location of the exhibition is to be held in the 'Mission Gallery'. The themes discussed in my exhibition will be on Picasso's late cubist painting 'Guernica', Jackson Pollock's earlier figurative 'war' painting, Francis Bacon's surrealistic horrific Greek god furies, Robert Motherwell's 'An elegy to the Spanish republic', Eddie Addams 'Execution of Nguyễn Văn Lém' photograph as well as John Berger and his analysis of agony in photography and how depictions of the Vietnam war were being shown in the newspapers and gradually over time the public becoming desensitized to the extremely violent and abhorrent imagery captured, Hans Ulrich Obrist and his book on the 'Ways of curating' studying forms of curation and how they can be conveyed and made in any form.

My goal is to invoke a sense of emergency with the unjust and barbaric nature of wars, the thing we as a society continually pursued by people in power, to be sending people to war unjustly by forces of which we're in no place to be able to change due to powers that were in place, due to most being of lower class systems and never having the choice regardless, Black sabbath bring this to a point, in their single 'War Pigs' in which they said *"Politicians hide themselves away, they only started the war, why should they go out to fight, they leave that role to the poor"* again indicating a criticism even at the time of the Vietnamese war that ended five years later in 1975. As of recent, this is a new edition in this moment in time there is another war, where the east has invaded the country of Ukraine, and the exact same thing repeats with the people in power hiding away, getting their own people to fight for them. In terms of construction on the exhibition, the intent is to leave everything as is, but with lighting only on the paintings and everything else completely shadowed. The intention would be, to have audio of several hundreds and thousands of interviews playing through speakers of the exhibition describing what these people went through, the reasoning behind this is to a point of that being is we've gradually become more as human's immune to the actual ugly face of warfare and destruction that it does cause either through the news or social media as described here *'one might argue that these newspapers believe that readers have become inured to violent*

images and so now compete in violent sensationalism' Berger. (2009). About looking. Bloomsbury.



Figure 1 - 'Guernica (1937)'

I intend to have Picasso's 'Guernica (1937)' painting into the exhibition. The reasoning for this painting is due to its extreme highlighting of the realities of wrongful casualties in World War 2, most of the subjects in the painting were of innocent lives, women and children being killed, *'The picture becomes evidence of the general human condition'* Berger. (2009). About looking. Bloomsbury. Also wanting to add to where this placement and it's history of real life relevance in modern warfare, on the 5th of February 2003 in the speech of Colin Powell delivering a speech on the 'weapons of mass destruction' had the Picassos Guernica originally in the background of the viewing, but was covered up due to

a diplomat saying, *"It would not be an appropriate background if the ambassador of the United States at the U.N., John Negroponte, or Colin Powell, talk about war surrounded with women, children and animals shouting with horror and showing the suffering of the bombings."* Which again gives a height of hypocrisy and corruption in the higher powers that be, in that years later we find out they never took any data of the innocent lives lost in Iraq.



Figure 2 – ‘Three studies for figures at the base of the crucifixion (1944)’

This painting is collaged as a triptych of ‘The furies, ancient Greek goddesses’ painted by world renown surrealist painter, Francis Bacon speaking from the

date he painted it, this was painted in 1944, using oil paint on three boards, what the date of it being painted on tells me that this was painted when Bacon was during World War 2. The work addresses again multiple standpoints, one of the biggest being I think being the circumstances of the times, again as the exhibition is primarily about the effects of war, I think these paintings depict the inherently awful and furious nature of it, the wrapped bandaging around one of the figures, indicating tunicate's or what a use of what a medic would do in the battlefield of his comrades being shot, the muddied dead grass underneath, depicting the ruined wildlife and the amplification that even the grass that grows is dead, I think it fits perfectly in this exhibition. And although Bacon himself didn't exactly see the front, or fire a weapon or rifle into someone, he did work in the ARP for which duties were of rescuing the dead and firefighting *'Bacon's asthma meant that he was pronounced unfit for active service in the Second World War. He did, however, volunteer for a role in Civil Defence where he worked in ARP (Air Raid Precautions), whose duties included firefighting, civilian rescue, and the recovery of the dead' – (francis-bacon.com) (13/03/2022)*



Figure 3 – 'War (1947)'

Jackson Pollock's painting, 'War 1947' standing in the dimensions of (52.4 by 66cm) is another prolific standing and interpretation of the time's that people were living in. Whereas Bacon went for a more surrealist approach, pollocks earlier figurative paintings were more akin to that of Picasso's cubistic forte than the later splatter paint paintings he was most prolific for, the painting depicts, as said in the title of the piece, war, again only one of the paintings he had ever

titled in his career. Again, in the circumstantial sense, Pollock wasn't technically enlisted in World War 2, but did indeed work in the WPA art project, due to *'depression and alcoholism'* that he had early on his life. What's seen in the painting is, a human and a bull being thrown into a pyre, giving again a notion to his later subjugated psychological additions, that were yet again made in his later works. This painting belongs in this exhibition, due it's similarity in yet again time and place, and yet again as similar to the subjects in the other paintings, completely bluntly get across the atrocities that were in World War 2.



Figure 4 'Elegy to The Spanish Republic 100 (1963-1975)'

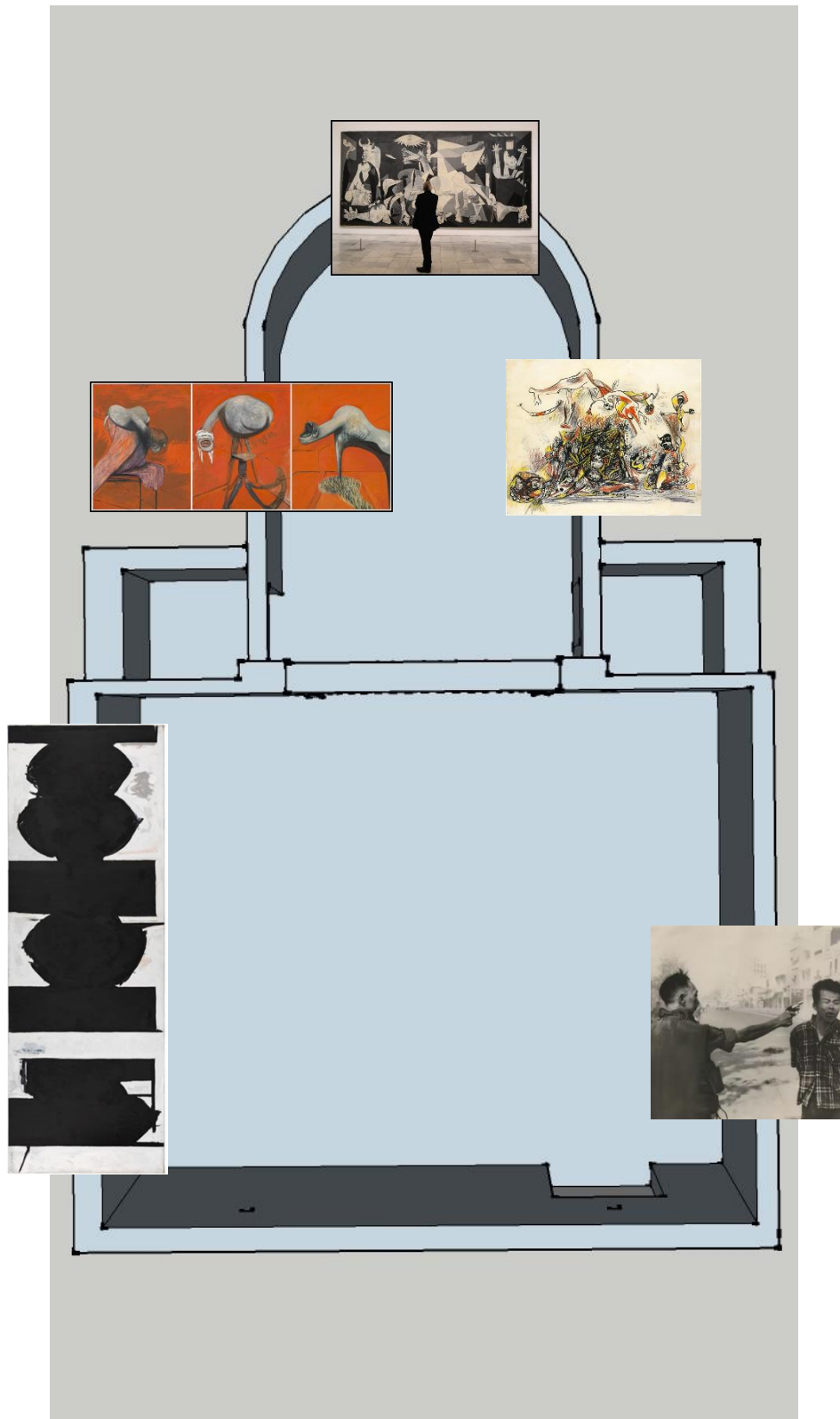
Robert Motherwell, American abstract expressionist born in 1915 Washington, had created this massive painting in a series, declaring them as 'Elegies' (Over a hundred variations). Now again some similarities to two of the artists being in this exhibition, Pollock being of the same movement of Motherwell that being of the abstract expressionist but again like Bacon as well, due to his use of multiple paintings in his triptychs. The underlying reasoning behind these paintings, although they're perceived as just blocks of colour, the inspiration for such interesting, masculine, contrasting compositions was that of the unspoken about Spanish civil war of the 1930's. The movement of abstract expressionism, was to be of '*emotion and expression*' now that being of a response to the civil war, is to express in my opinion the distress and the sorrow of war, Robert Motherwell himself said that the series of paintings were 'public laments, deeply

political in their condemnation of the violence of the Spanish Civil War and the isolationist fascism of General Francisco Franco' (Robert Motherwell: Elegy to the Spanish Republic, levygorvy.com).



Figure 5 'Execution of Nguyen Van Lem'

The last image in the exhibition you'll see is of this image taken by Eddie Adams, the reasoning for the choice is being throughout the exhibition you'll mostly only see depictions of war, you'd never seen the grit of it until the very end of it, you'll only at the end face a screaming image that's crippling sickening and horrific. As well as that, I think the impact of the image you'll see before you leave in the exhibition, will be this, the last finishing blow forever implanted in your head. The photo being taken during the Vietnam war, this was one of the images being sent back home into the newspapers, fuelling America's own movement back home fighting against the Vietnam war. I think another reason I chose this image is because it's always stuck in my head I can't get the image out of my head ever since I first saw it, I don't even remember where and when I saw it but I can always see that image, the blood blowing out, the nonchalant in the motion the mans putting the gun to the guy's head, it's catastrophically absolutely barbaric.



'The picture becomes evidence of the general human condition' Berger. (2009). About looking. Bloomsbury.

'One might argue that these newspapers believe that readers have become inured to violent images and so now compete in violent sensationalism' Berger. (2009). About looking. Bloomsbury.

"Politicians hide themselves away, they only started the war, why should they go out to fight, they leave that role to the poor" Sabbath, B. (1970). *"War Pigs."*

"It would not be an appropriate background if the ambassador of the United States at the U.N., John Negroponte, or Colin Powell, talk about war surrounded with women, children and animals shouting with horror and showing the suffering of the bombings." - <http://guernicaremakings.com/chilcot-iraq-and-guernica/>

'Bacon's asthma meant that he was pronounced unfit for active service in the Second World War. He did, however, volunteer for a role in Civil Defence where he worked in ARP (Air Raid Precautions), whose duties included firefighting, civilian rescue, and the recovery of the dead' – (francis-bacon.com) (13/03/2022)

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List of figures



Figure 1

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Figure 2 -Tate (2019). *“Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion”*, Francis Bacon, c.1944 / Tate. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/bacon-three-studies-for-figures-at-the-base-of-a-crucifixion-n06171>.



Figure 3 -Jackson-pollock.org. (2011). War, 1947 by Jackson Pollock. [online] Available at: <https://www.jackson-pollock.org/war.jsp>.



Figure 4: collections.lacma.org. (n.d.). Elegy to the Spanish Republic 100 | LACMA Collections.
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Figure 5 - Barnebys.co.uk. (n.d.). “Eddie Adams (1933-2004)/AP - Execution of Nguyễn Văn Lém Saigon 1968” | Barnebys. [online] Available at: <https://www.barnebys.co.uk/auctions/lot/eddie-adams-1933-2004-ap-execution-of-nguyen-van-lem-saigon-1968-i2els8wv82j> [Accessed 15 Mar. 2022].

