

Ways of Perceiving – Curation Essay

Exhibition Title – Detachment from the Self

Jay Dowding - 1901505

BA Fine Arts: Studio Site and Context

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Ryan Moule & Rob Jones

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Introduction

I intend to curate the Exhibition entitled “Detachment from the Self.” The before mentioned space will delve into notions of what it means for a person to display what they are as individuals, both in a physical and mental sense. When asking the question of why it’s important to delve into and discuss this notion with context to the framework of the present. I believe as an intellectual species we have always scrutinised and critiqued our self-image and this timeless concept of exploring the Self has yet to be entirely probed and no more than ever with all the photoshop and “perfect bodies” on social media that make us question our self-image, there is need to delve into this theory more. This proposed Exhibition will showcase the works of five individual artists. I intend to explore themes and

theories of Self-image through the five individual artists I will be exhibiting at the site and how they have broken conventions of what it means to present in the contemporary framework.

Context

When Analysing the theme that I have chosen to explore through the curation of this exhibition. I must first speak about what exactly the theme is. The answer to that question is a simple one, the exploration of the self. Many artists have created work that explores notions of the self throughout the history of art from Leonardo Da Vinci to the present day by the likes of David Hockney and the divulgations into the self by the artists has been an ever-present and is highly pivotal, In particular, I came across an interview of Marc Quinn a British artist who when speaking, spoke about "Self, 1996." *"This almost redutant to the absurd of the self-portrait."* (Bloomberg, 2016.) This quote spoke to me and made me think of a need to break the conventions that surround the Self-Portrait and to question what it means to capture the self and explore this notion. When thinking about how the Self-Portrait is constructed, we presume with paint on canvas or a marble sculpture but why is this, why are merely content with just capturing figure, Why not push these boundaries, Why not paint with Blood, Faeces, and Urine instead of the conventional paint as these are part of our selves and represent a part of us. These are questions that have had a profound effect on my thinking and me wanting to curate this exhibition around this theme and context. When approaching the artists, I will be showcasing during this exhibition, I selected artists whose work I believed in one way or another have approached the theme I discussed previously concerning exploring the self in new and unconventional ways. The selected works of Marc Quinn, Egon Schiele, Jenny Saville, Francis Bacon, and Shani Rhys James will be showcased and further along in this discussion I will delve into my reasoning of the selected Artists, their specific work and in what way I believe their work links into the theme I've chosen to explore. When contextualising the self-image in the present era, we much

approach the impact presented by social media through applications such as Instagram and Snapchat. These applications present a shroud of imaginary perfections in which flaws have glossed over and Photoshopped away and this negates a negative impact on individuals that are conscious of their self-image and by seeing "apparent perfect bodies" causes people to question their self-worth and this effect harms their mental health. *Oakes (2019)* was a useful source of information. When looking at theorists that have explored the idea of the Self and I draw attention to firstly Edward Bernays, he was influenced by the works of his relative Sigmund Freud and his work on the unconscious mind and by reading and interoperating his theories, he was able to alter how the masses felt and created the illusion that "Man's desires must overshadow his needs" (*Lessig, 2015.*) Secondly, I draw attention to the French theorist Rene Descartes who uttered the phrase "I think, therefore I am" (*BBC Radio 4, 2015.*) in which he believed that if I'm capable of thought then I exist. Finally, I bring attention to Jean-Paul Sartre who in a 1945 public lecture was quoted as saying "Existentialism is a humanism" (*BBC Radio 4, 2015.*) In which he believed that the choices that we make create the very person we are.

Artist's and Artworks



Fig One

The first piece of work I've selected is "*Quinn, 1996.*" I selected the piece entitled "Self" by Marc Quinn because of how the artist has broken the usual conventions that surround the Self-Portrait by creating a three-dimensional form that is an exact replication of the artist made of the artist himself,

in this case in the form of their blood. The uniqueness of this piece, in my opinion, is truly astounding because of the artists use of their being to create a form of self-reflection, Even at the time of the creation of the work in which critics questioned the use of the “containing the transcendent within the impermanent” *“Romaine, N/A.”* When thinking about placement of the piece within the Mission Gallery, I would place the piece in the furthest room from the initial entrance on its own as I believe this particular piece needs to be viewed and speculated on its own without the distractions of other works as this isolation will allow the viewer to contemplate the meaning of the piece to a greater degree.



Fig Two

The second Piece I've selected is *“Schiele, 1910.”* I selected the piece entitled *“Self-Portrait with Arm Twisted above Head”* by Egon Schiele because when exploring the works by the before mentioned artist, I would proclaim that his pieces have an aura of the unnatural and grotesque present within them and this evident when speaking about his before-mentioned self-portrait. When speaking about what makes this piece worthy of induction into this exhibition I would say the in which the Artist has expressed a rawness in regards to sexuality within the context of the self which I feel was ground-breaking at the time of the creation of his work in which people would describe his work as a form of “Pornography” Jones (2018.) When looking at pieces of Schiele's works that best encapsulate my thoughts of his works and best compliment the context and parameters of the exhibition I'm curating I believe this is the best example to showcase. When speaking about some of the more

formal elements within the piece and also present in various others of the artist's work that I appreciate and believe make the work stand out are first, his specific use of colour that has been used in such a way that creates an effect of decaying flesh and this fits in with the theme of the vulnerability of the artist with his sexuality with the pose he has chosen to portray, with this pose appearing to indicate a fear of expressing himself in a vulnerable state. Overall, I would describe the works of the artist as extraordinary and it's vital in my belief to showcase his work with his exploration of feelings to expressing sexuality of the perspective of the self as a model.



Fig Three

The third piece I've chosen to include is "*Bacon, 1972.*" I selected the piece entitled "*Self Portrait*" by Francis Bacon because of how he has been able to distort his likeness to a certain extent in which there is still a resemblance to the self but the distortion has allowed the artist to create a semblance of trauma and torture that keys into the animalistic nature that is underlying in our unconscious mind which links to the theories of Sigmund Freud in which he delved into the how the unconscious we have all these desires and urges that are repressed by the conscious aspect of our minds. *Cherry (2020)* was a useful source of information.

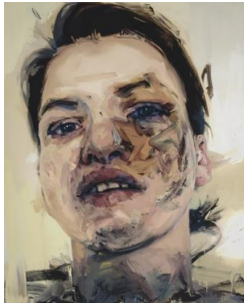


Fig Four

The fourth piece I've selected is "*Saville, 2007-13.*" I selected the piece entitled "*Shadow Head*" by Jenny Saville because of how she has been able to convey a sense of trauma surrounding the self through the use of particular colour and brushstrokes that create the image of bruising and this idea of portraying the self in its less glamorous state is one that needs to be showcased in contrast to the photoshopped images we see on social media. *Oakes (2019.)* Overall, the inclusion of more "realistic" bodies and their portrayal with all its rough edges regarding the self is needed.



Fig Five

The final piece I've selected is "*James, 1994.*" I selected the entitled "*The Mirror*" by Shani Rhys James because of how she has implemented a mirror into the piece to showcase the self and present, in my opinion, a sense of self-reflection, I also believe this particular piece fits in well with

ideas of “Existentialism is a humanism” by Jean-Paul Sartre in the way of the act of self-reflection and reflecting on the choices we made that in part make the person we are.

Figures

Fig. One. Quinn. M. (1996) Self (Sculpture) [Blood (artist's), stainless steel, Perspex and refrigeration equipment]

Fig. Two. Schiele. E. (1910) Self-Portrait with Arm Twisted above Head (Painting) [Watercolour Paints and Paper]

Fig. Three. Bacon. F. (1972) Self-Portrait (Painting) [Oil Paints and Canvas]

Fig. Four. Saville. J. (2007-13) Shadow Head (Painting) [Oil on Canvas]

Fig. Five. James. R. S. (1994) The Mirror (Painting) [Oil on Linen]

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Floor Plans and Exhibition Poster

