

Image: © Carrie Mae Weems

# MEANING EMERGING FOR AN ART VIEWER AS A CREATIVE PROCESS

*experiencing emotionally challenging art as a creative act encourages a viewer to make meaning in new and insightful ways, which can lead to personal transformation*

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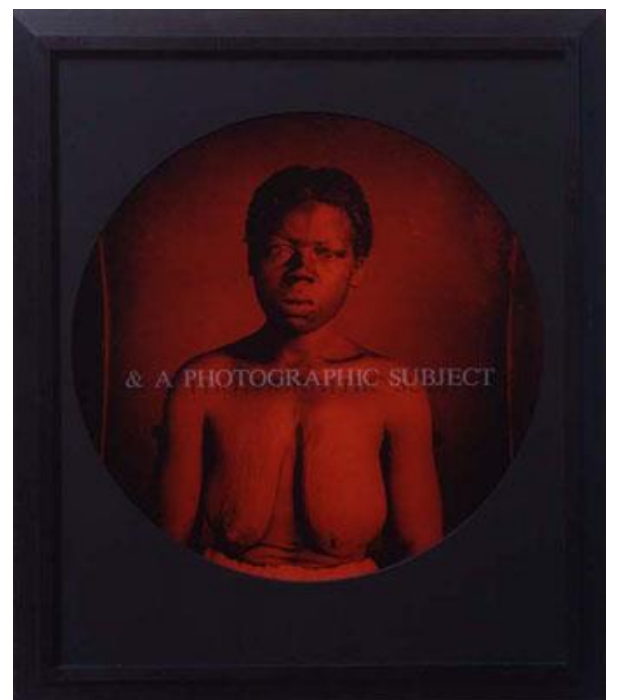
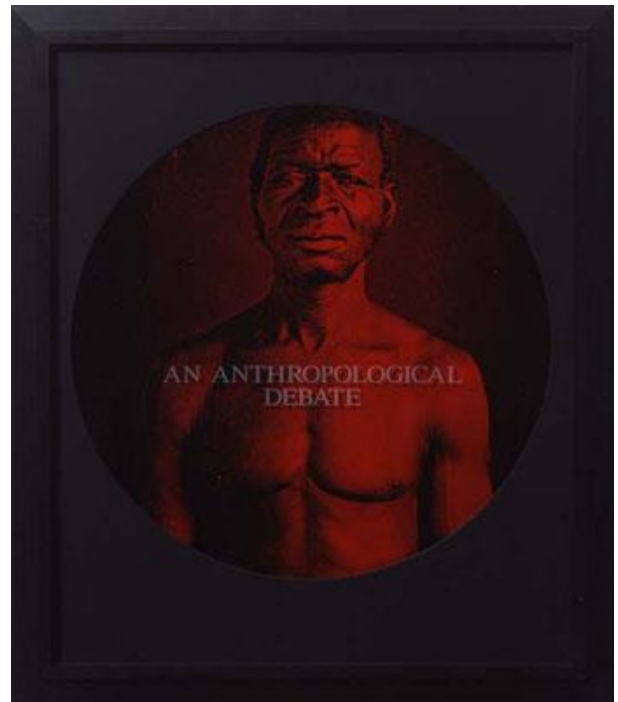
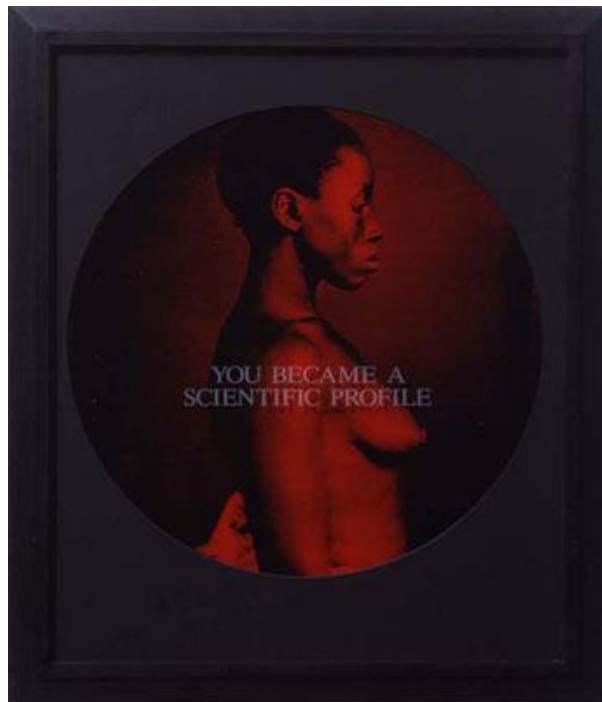


Figure 1 – Selected images from *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*, 1995-96, Carrie Mae Weems, as installed at Tate Modern, January 2018 © Carrie Mae Weems

In July 2017, on a visit to the Tate Modern, I come across American artist Carrie Mae Weems's *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*. Thirty-three tinted photographs framed by circular black mattes and overlaid with text etched into glass fill the walls of the square space. A wall panel informs me that these are photographic plates from archive images depicting African Americans from slavery through the Civil Rights era. Red-tinted images are bookended by two large, unmatted, blue-toned 1920s portraits of the wife of a Mangbetu chief in the Belgian Congo. The narrative begins with block-letter etched words: FROM HERE I SAW WHAT HAPPENED...; and ends on the adjacent wall with the image reversed and the words ...AND I CRIED. In between, the images begin: YOU BECAME A SCIENTIFIC PROFILE; then AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL DEBATE; and so on.

This artwork isn't easy, isn't comfortable. As I follow the narrative slowly around the mostly empty room, I take in the artist's interventions and reconstructions, take in the faces and bodies of people long dead and with whom I share no direct story. Except, by the end, I feel like I do. My eyes well with tears, and *something* happens – I experience a shift that opens me to new meaning about a shared national history. None of the information presented is new to me, but I feel something different, a sense of greater understanding of the weight of that history, an empathy for a people whose identity had been stripped away and whose descendants still fight to reclaim one. I am shocked by the depth of feeling, and understand that something profound has happened that has connected me to a deeper truth about the world and a particular experience. This artwork and I have had a conversation, and I am changed.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper began as an exploration into creative practice as research, or how artists make sense of difficult experiences through art-making; as an artist working with my own medical and life experiences, I have built my practice around these ideas. However, the encounter with Weems's artwork at the Tate Modern compelled me to shift perspective from the *artist's* to the *viewer's* experience with emotionally challenging artwork as a creative act, a meaning-making that is as intuitive and necessary to the viewer making sense of their experience in the world as the artist's work is to them. It speaks to a holistic functioning of art – the artwork becomes the fulcrum between the artist and viewer, exerting its influence and inviting creative action from two directions. As an artist making work with the intent to provide opportunities for connection out of potentially difficult experiences, considering the viewer more deeply as a part of the creative process will influence how I shape my work and practice.

Approaching art from the viewer's perspective asks a similar set of questions to the artist's around creativity and aesthetics, experience and meaning; much of this – including what qualifies as 'emotionally challenging artwork' – is subjective. In this essay, I aim to gain a sense of how we as viewers currently experience emotionally difficult art to make meaning in our lives by reviewing current trends in art engagement and carrying out both autoethnographic exercises and qualitative analyses of viewer surveys. I've chosen to highlight artists' work crossing subjects and media, encountered within very different circumstances, and which elicited deep personal reactions, prompting me to ask the question: What is happening for a viewer in these encounters?

In this essay, I first look at meaning-making for a viewer engaging art today, drawing on contemporary philosophy to consider aspects of aesthetics and embodiment. I highlight conditions that influence a viewer's art experience and meaning-making, and adapt cognitive psychologist George Wallas's model for creative stages to describe how viewers' experience of art itself is a creative act through which meaning is made and transformation can occur. To understand the mechanics of this process more fully, I use the adapted model to analyse my own and others' experiences with works by two contemporary artists: American multi-media artist Carrie Mae Weems's psychologically painful piece about slavery and identity, *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*; and a series of self-portraits documenting American painter William Utermohlen's visual response to his physical and mental decline.

## 2. THEORY: ELEMENTS OF MEANING-MAKING

*'Aesthetics is the key to understanding human meaning-making...it is in art we can see this process of meaning-making in its fullest, most consummated realization'. Mark Johnson<sup>1</sup>*

### a. Viewing Art Is an Embodied Aesthetic Experience

Philosopher Mark Johnson (2007b) argues for an embodied theory of meaning,<sup>2</sup> and considers body and mind, art and aesthetics within this context. He takes a broad view of aesthetics, defining it as 'concerning everything that goes into our ability to grasp the meaning and significance of any aspect of our experience, and so it involves form and structure, the qualities that define a situation, our felt sense of the meaning of things, our rhythmic engagement with our surroundings, our emotional interactions and on and on' (p89). He argues that all meaning, creativity and knowledge are situated within and emerge from an embodied experience with the world.

Sutherland and Acord (2007) discuss knowledge as an embodied phenomenon, active, subjective and embedded in context.<sup>3</sup> They point to an increasing emphasis on process in creating, mediating and encountering art, distinguishing knowledge as experiential – a 'knowing' which emerges from an interactive encounter. This emphasis supports the shift away from traditional views of artworks as knowledge holders, and situates artworks as active parts of the viewer's present reality: 'Art indeed alters the way in which one experiences the world, and knowledge production emerges in the connection between oeuvre and daily life' (p129). In considering how meaning emerges for a viewer as a result of an encounter with an artwork, it is therefore important to consider that encounter as an embodied experience.

But to *experience* an artwork begins with a look, what English art critic John Berger calls 'an act of choice' (1972). This is not a look away from the self, but evolves into a *seeing*, a bouncing back and forth between the artwork and our inner selves, '...always looking at the relation between things and ourselves' (p9). It is a tacit phenomenon that involves the whole body: physical sensation, thought

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, 2007b, p91

<sup>2</sup> Johnson's embodied theory of meaning considers the quality of a person's interaction with their environment; holds that meaning is relational and connects to qualities or events beyond the present moment; meaning is continuous, and involves emerging images, patterns, qualities, feelings and emotions; meanings can be coded; and an embodied view is naturalistic – meaning emerges from an organism engaging its environment. For a more detailed reading, see Johnson (2007b).

<sup>3</sup> See also Barrett (2007), Johnson (2007a) and Dewey (2005) for interesting discussion around embodied knowledge and experience.

and emotion. It is direct, open and embodied in nature, and is an act that requires a level of personal investment, intention or involvement, but which is accessible to anyone.<sup>4</sup>

For Berger, *meaning* in art resides in the relation between what we see and what we know. Indeed, on a physical level, as the eyes shift and focus when looking at art, the mind, body and emotions mirror those actions, and a deeper awareness or understanding of experience emerges. This begins as something beyond cognitive understanding, akin to what Berger and Johnson's contemporary, cognitive psychologist Eugene Gendlin calls a *felt sense*, but which can be put into words.<sup>5</sup> Gendlin posits that the depth of knowledge carried in our bodies and minds is well beyond what we can consciously access; new meaning emerges from these depths. Johnson refers to this process as 'having' or being 'caught up' in meaning, before experiencing it reflexively (2007b, p99). To understand how an art viewer makes meaning and is transformed by an encounter with an artwork, we must consider how the experience prompts her to tap into those depths.

#### **b. The Art Viewer Is Now Considered a Maker-Creator in Their Own Right**

The idea of viewer as a producer of meaning (rather than simply a consumer of ideas) has spread as technology has advanced and we've gained the capability to also produce, copy and manipulate images.<sup>6</sup> Across modern philosophy and within many sectors of the art world, influential opinion leaders are increasingly seeing art less as a transmitter of meaning and more as a tool that helps art viewers make their own meaning out of the encounter. Philosopher Alain de Botton (2013) describes four common perspectives through which viewers read art: politically, historically, technically and for shock-value. But he suggests a fifth reading that considers art as a tool, an 'extension of the body' that can facilitate thoughts and behaviours that might not otherwise occur. Clarity and meaning can emerge for a viewer through an embodied dialogue with an artist's work, De Botton argues, noting that in this way, the work of an artist can open us up to insight and deep knowledge by providing an unusual or unexpected experience.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Dewey (2005) for an interesting discussion on the distinction between *experiencing* something and something that is *an experience* ('Having an Experience', p36-59.)

<sup>5</sup> To illustrate a person paying attention to the felt qualities of experience in order to guide them to a deeper level of awareness, Gendlin uses the example of the poet looking for the right line to continue a poem, for something he senses the poem needs, waving his hand about in the air as he searches and then rejects certain ideas, expressing a felt sense that comes with rereading the lines he has written over and over until he hits precisely on what it is he intends (Gendlin, 1993; Gendlin, 1991, cited in Johnson, 2007b).

<sup>6</sup> For more on the history of the viewer becoming a producer of meaning, see Sutherland and Acord (2007) and Berger (1977).

<sup>7</sup> De Botton describes seven functions of art that address correlating human 'frailties': remembering, hope, sorrow, rebalancing, self-understanding, growth and appreciation. Art is 'a therapeutic medium that can help guide, exhort and console its viewers, enabling them to become better versions of themselves.' This is not art therapy, which is an art process undertaken in the care of a trained therapist, and not the domain of artists alone but rather of every human being.



Figure 2 - #41, 2002, Georg Gudni's ethereal horizons





Figure 3 - *Self-Portrait*, 1991, Helen Chadwick

Johnson too recognises art's role as a tool for the viewer's use rather than as an object of focus: 'Good art reinvigorates our felt sense of the situations out of which meaning and thought emerge. It helps us to be more attentive to what our bodies tell us. It invites us to listen to our embodied experience ... It challenges us to gather the embodied meaning of our situation' (2007b, p102). I see this in artworks spanning from paintings like Georg Gudni's Icelandic landscapes (Figure 2) – which aim to draw us out of our world and into the quiet ethereal space hovering between us and an invented horizon, providing opportunity for self-reflection and sensorial engagement – to British artist Helen Chadwick's raw, visceral *Self-Portrait* (Figure 3), pushing the viewer to reconsider her identity, to recognise and feel what it means to be made of flesh, as a time-bound mortal animal.

British installation artist Charlotte Jarvis (2017a) takes the concept of using art as a tool to enable meaning-making for a viewer further than most by including the viewer in an active engagement with her installation addressing cancer and mortality. In *Et In Arcadia Ego* (Ever in Paradise I am Here), a tumour grown in a lab by mutating her healthy cells is exhibited down a corridor from an invented anxiety-inducing waiting room (Figure 4). Jarvis includes documentation of the project's development pinned to a board and one-to-one sessions for discussion between herself (installed in the waiting room whilst wearing a hospital gown) and the viewer. The conversations are opportunities for viewers to discuss the project and their personal experiences with the artist, to experience the work by physically becoming a part of it. Jarvis now describes those and related conversations as 'the best part of the project'. Through such a personal interaction and interpretation, the artist and viewer share a role in re-creating the artwork in a new way.

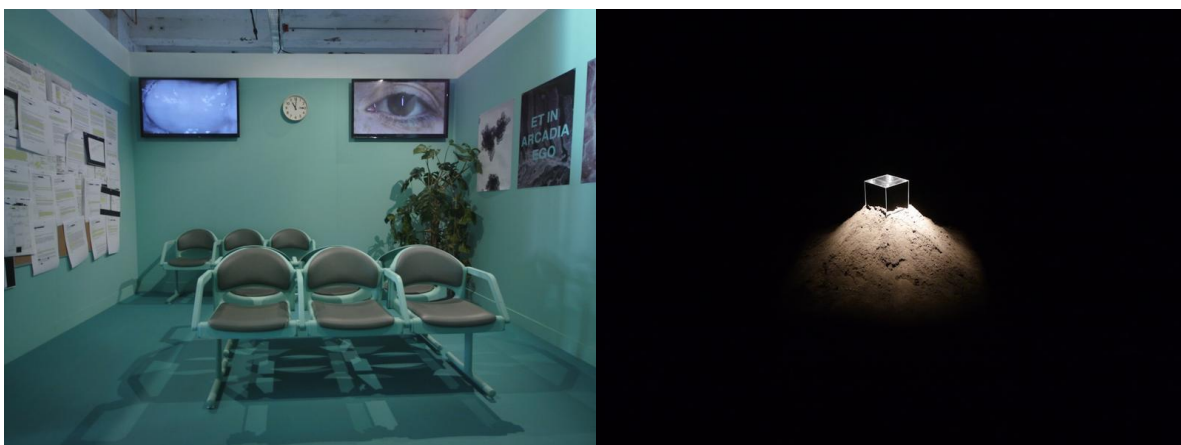


Figure 4 – *Et In Arcadia Ego*, 2015, Charlotte Jarvis, 'Body of Matter' installation in Eindhoven (Images: James Read)

Today, museums like the Tate Modern and the National Gallery<sup>8</sup> (among others) are embracing many ideas of viewer-led interpretation of art. In 2014, the Tate Modern rebranded its public engagement department from ‘interpretation and education’ to ‘learning’, a shift in vision with an eye to empowering viewers (McSwein, 2017). The Tate’s initiative is to inspire viewers ‘to look and think deeply’ while engaging art inside the museum and beyond, giving viewers the tools (conditions and context) to identify with something in an artwork and make their own meaning from it. The Tate’s curators want us to bring our emotions into dialogue with the artworks, looking, feeling, thinking, creating, making our own meaning rather than absorbing transmitted knowledge. Rather than asking what knowledge is presented in an artwork, a viewer is encouraged to engage it as a form of experiential learning (Cutler, 2014).

### **c. Art-Viewing Is a Creative Act**

If we can agree that art-viewing is an embodied aesthetic experience and the viewer is a participant within an active exchange, the logical next step toward asking how a viewer makes meaning as a result of this exchange is to consider the art experience as a creative act, an act from which something new emerges.

Social-psychologist Graham Wallas’s 1926 writings on the ‘Art of Thought’ proposed a framework delineating clear cognitive stages for the creative process, based on his own observations about creativity and accounts of inventors and polymaths. His model includes four main cognitive stages: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. A fifth middle stage, intimation, is often overlooked, but is useful to understanding the viewer’s experience, so is included here<sup>9</sup> (Sadler-Smith, 2015).

In applying this model to the process of art-viewing to make meaning (rather than how it might traditionally be applied to art-making), I will need to modify the framework in a few respects to account for fundamental differences in the two processes. While these five stages may overlap, be repeated or revisited in practice as newer or evolving meanings emerge, for the purpose of clarity, I will discuss the proposed adapted stages in a sequential way.

Although Wallas’s model has been criticised for its linearity and expanded upon over the decades by a number of more nuanced theories of creativity, its structured simplicity remains foundational in

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<sup>8</sup> The National Gallery has also been exploring ways to help viewers experience art and make a connection with what they see on the wall before them (Hart, 2017). In 2013 an experimental project allowed visitors to sit for five minutes in darkness and silence with a painting, as part of the ‘Vermeer & Music, the Art of Love & Leisure’ exhibition events. Viewers responded that the experience in that setting was visceral and phenomenal.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed discussion on arguments for including this fifth stage in Wallas’s model, see Sadler-Smith, 2015.

creativity research today (Sadler-Smith, 2015, p342).<sup>10</sup> I will use it as a lens to explore how art-viewing manifests as a creative process. But first, I will introduce conditions that influence a viewer's art encounter as part of this process.

#### **d. The Viewer, Artist and Curator All Create Conditions that Affect If or How Meaning Is Made**

Personal reactions are grounded in everything that is going on in and around us as we view an artwork – a potentially limitless set of factors, including (to name just a few) past experience, subconscious or conscious memory, likes and dislikes, mood, self-identity, and context provided about the artwork and the environment around us.

In *Practices of Looking*, Sturken and Cartwright (2009) describe multiple factors that influence the production and emergence of meaning through art, recognising the active participation of the artist, the viewer and those involved in the presentation of an artwork. These include both internal and external elements, such as the artist's background, codes or conventions embedded within an image, how the viewer interprets the image, and the conditions related to the exhibiting and viewing of the object (p49).

Drawing on Sturken and Cartwright's research into how viewers make meaning and Jacob and Baas's (2009) anthology of essays on experiencing art, I will highlight three overarching conditions that influence the viewer's embodied art experience. These are: what the viewer brings to the encounter (the 'viewer's mind'), the context presented to the viewer about an artwork, and the physical environment within which the artwork is exhibited.<sup>11</sup>

The viewer's mind: In 'Unframing Experience', Baas (2009) states that we think through patterns and analogy; art facilitates this by reminding us of things we've encountered or experienced, or things within ourselves. Broadly speaking, a viewer brings everything that she knows and believes to her encounter with an artwork – preconceived notions, expectations, the viewer's history and her experiences. This may include reflections on the past, emotional fears or more immediate states, such as her current mood or the lingering effects of something experienced just before encountering the artwork.

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<sup>10</sup> The model's simplicity and longevity drove the choice to adapt this creative framework to explore the viewer's experience, nearly 100 years after it was conceived.

<sup>11</sup> A separate fourth condition worth acknowledging (but for which I don't have sufficient space to explore here) is the creative traits possessed by a viewer. Passion, daydreaming, openness to experience, mindfulness, sensitivity and turning adversity to advantage are a few of the qualities demonstrated by highly creative individuals. I believe these are equally conducive to creating conditions for meaning to emerge when engaging art. For further reading on creative traits, see Kaufman, 2013.

Context: Recognised codes and symbols embedded within art can elicit emotional responses and may be revealed through varying levels and presentations of context. But most art viewers are no longer adept at deciphering the internal codes of an artwork as they were in times past; today, a viewer's perception depends almost entirely on her own way of seeing, which is uniquely individual. But an artist or curator can still exert a great deal of influence over the viewer's expertise by providing supplemental information about the subject matter – within the artwork itself or strategically placed near the artwork.

Although it is up to the institutions and artists to make formal determinations about context, there are no longer strict conventions for how context is presented, forcing curators to wrestle regularly with questions around how much information to give and in what tone, deciding in each instance whether a viewer should be fed information or guided to create their own. In addition, increasingly autonomous and active viewers are determining what type of audience they want to be – how much and what type of context they are choosing to take in with the artwork during a single visit.<sup>12</sup>

The exhibiting environment: A viewer's response to an artwork happens within a space (physical or digital) that is designed and impacted by others. Viewing is relational and social; it may happen publicly or privately, or in wide open spaces or a small, cramped room, and responses will change accordingly. For example, art critic Jennifer Doyle writes: 'Few places will make people more self-conscious of their reactions than a museum or an art gallery. Museums and art galleries are like schools: they are spaces in which we encounter culture, usually on someone else's terms' (2013, p5). But museum and gallery environments might equally precondition some viewers to be more open to having an emotional experience – we go to these places expecting something, even hoping to be moved.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Oguz Tatari provides an interesting analysis of four types of modern viewers or audiences: *disguised*, *vigilant*, *liberal* and *rapid*. A *disguised* audience learns through others' experiences, eliciting their opinions, comments and appreciations about an exhibition but then deciding for themselves what to see. Their experience with the exhibition as a whole is filtered, but artworks are experienced in a unique way by the individual. The *vigilant* audience looks at everything, moving from piece to piece rather than curating their tour. They take notes, take photos and might use a map to document their progress. They are open-minded, but their own critique carries weight. They try to experience and finish the exhibition by adapting their progression through it. The *liberal* audience blur the boundaries between art and life. They may spend a long time with one artwork. They create their own experience; their goal is to enjoy their time. The *rapid* audience follows a predetermined route to view specific works. They may move between artworks quite quickly, perhaps taking a quick photo or making a note. They are more likely to be with another viewer, and are efficient in their process (Eidelman, Tatari, and Bernstein, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Art in these environments may also elicit physical reactions, such as the public's responses to Olafur Eliason's 2003 *Weather Project*, where visitors congregated and lounged in the Tate's Turbine Hall to take in the enormous recreated Sun – what Baas calls evidence of 'the expanding realm of aesthetic experience' (2009, p227); or, negatively, the public's rally against the Barbican's *Exhibit B*, which highlighted the horrors of slavery in an installation including black actors in chains and cages – the exhibition was shut down after public protest (Muir, 2014).

Today we also have the advantage of instant digital access to view and experience artworks in settings of our design or choosing, perhaps allowing a more intimate response. Virtual reality technology promises to expand the options almost indefinitely for how to present an artwork to a viewer. A viewer has more opportunities than ever before to find the space to experience art on her own terms.

### 3. PRACTICE: HOW ART VIEWERS MAKE MEANING

*'We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves...'* John Dewey<sup>14</sup>

#### a. A Model of Creativity Explains How Viewers Make Meaning Out of Art Encounters

Considering together Wallas's stages of the creative process, the primary conditions for meaning-making and the empowered position of the viewer to engage artwork as an active participant, we can begin to understand how a viewer might be transformed as the result of the creative process of engaging with art. Figure 5 shows how the art viewer experiences Wallas's five stages of creativity.

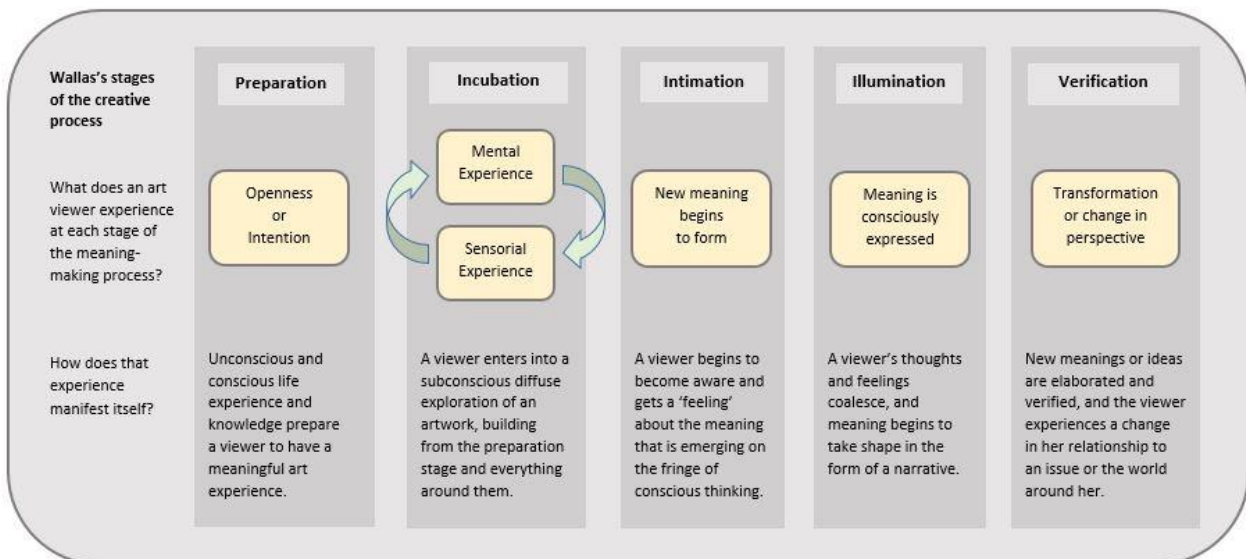


Figure 5 - The viewer's art experience as a creative process

<sup>14</sup> Dewey, 1994, cited in Ross, p214.

I will now discuss how these individuals experienced the different stages of the creative process during encounters with emotionally challenging artworks by Carrie Mae Weems and William Utermohlen.

### **b. Revealing the Viewer's Experience Using the Framework**

How and when meaning occurs for a viewer can be challenging to identity, so I first looked inward, using Helen Chadwick's *Self-Portrait* (Figure 3) as the basis for an autoethnographic exploration of how the viewer's mind might arise and evolve within the framework (Appendix A). This was an exercise in a combined reflection/stream-of-conscious response to the works, reflective and raw. I later repeated this exercise with the Utermohlen self-portraits (Figure 6); these experiments then helped shape questionnaires administered to other viewers.

I administered a questionnaire (Appendix C) to 11 viewers about their experience with Weems's *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*, as well as directly observing how viewers engage with an emotionally difficult exhibition in a public space. In the gallery, we witness a woman witnessing the oppression of her people, and through her, we are conversing with the past. Most of us are aware of the historical and cultural contexts. We are pushed to take a position – the explicit 'I' and implied 'you' of the title: I saw what happened to you... We become complicit within the narrative, part of the dialogue within a continuous history. We end up where we started, the physical cyclical tour of the work is reflective of a historical one. We do all this not in isolation from the world outside, but by bringing a variety of unique experiences that demand we create our own meaningful experience from the encounter.

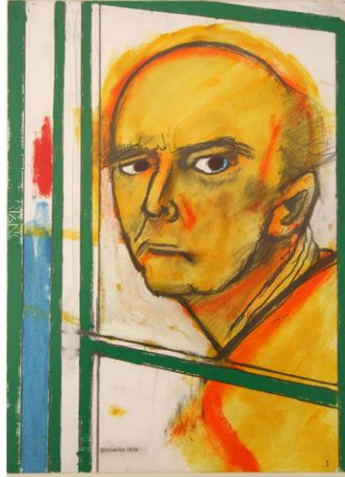
In an online questionnaire, I also asked 14 people about their experience viewing a series of self-portraits created by Utermohlen over five years as he descended deeper into the grips of dementia. The artist was diagnosed with Alzheimer's late in his career as a painter, at age 62. Through a succession of self-portraits from 1995–2000, we witness the disintegration of the artist's identity and abilities in his struggle to continue to communicate and create. We watch as his facial features eventually refuse to take shape on paper, reflecting our own potential for illness, fears and the unpredictability of life.<sup>15</sup> Viewers were asked to record their thoughts and feelings responding to the images with no prior context, then again after a level of information was revealed about the artist

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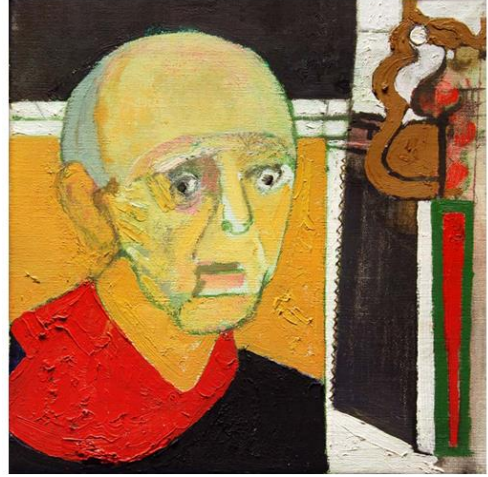
<sup>15</sup> These works became both artistic and medical documentation providing insight we are not often privy to because of increasing difficulties communicating as dementia progresses. Neurologists providing care observed that Utermohlen's creative instincts and emotional vocabulary allowed his communication skills to extend well beyond normal expectations. The artist lived another seven years after he lost the ability to create art (Adams, 2012).



1967



1996



1997



1998



1999



2000

Figure 6 - Selected self-portraits by William Utermohlen tracing his experience with the progression of Alzheimer's, following an early comparative image.



and artworks, and again after a second reveal provided information about Alzheimer's and the artist's experience with it.

### *Stage 1: Preparation (Openness or Intention)*

If meaning is to emerge from an art encounter, a viewer must first approach an artwork with an intention or openness to engagement – Berger's 'act of choice'. Stage one of the creative process is a period during which the creator would investigate a problem with intent and breadth, through research and planning, motivation and mind set. It is here that the foundation for creative development is laid. Wallas proposes this stage as conscious (Sadler-Smith, 2015), but when it comes to the creative process of art-viewing, I would extend this to include aspects of the unconscious and sensory, or what the individual brings to the art encounter: expectations, knowledge, experience, memories, biases and felt emotions – built up in the moments, days and years leading to the encounter. The viewer's mind is a critical component of this first step toward meaning-making in a creative process.

Weems viewers reflected the richness of prior experiences they were drawing upon when experiencing these emotional works – both unconscious and conscious preparations across extended time. One viewer, a Swedish photographer, linked this work to her own culture, reminded of 'scientific' photos taken of indigenous Samis, who had their skulls measured, land seized and language banned. Another viewer suggested some of the elements reminded him of Jazz, such as 'the way the text inspires conflict with the different pieces'. A third said 'the one-dimensional depiction of the slaves' reminded him of a 'powerful' scene from the TV programme *Game of Thrones*. Together these reflections, and others, show how individual art viewers bring unique prior knowledge, experiences, feelings and memories to bear when encountering an artwork.<sup>16</sup>

Context provided about an artwork plays a role in how the viewer prepares to experience the work. A wall label in the Weems exhibit primed viewers for what they would see – as the curators have chosen to frame it.<sup>17</sup> The text highlights the personal nature of the project to the artist, uses emotive language to describe the conditions for those photographed. It nods at the 'powerful, poetic

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<sup>16</sup> Responses to the Utermohlen self-portraits provides a second example of the way viewers bring a broad range of thoughts and personal experience to viewing the evolution of his self-portraits. One viewer said the works reminded her of body dysmorphic disorder and 'how it can distort how you see yourself – concentrating on certain pieces of yourself that you physically don't like, until that's all you can see and think about'. A 73-year-old viewer made multiple references to God and spirituality; religious faith is an important part of her viewer's mind. She also said, 'As I age, this situation with William could evoke an element of fear...' personalising her connection to him by using his first name, and indicating that a concern with getting older informs her conversation with the work and her relation to the world around her. These responses are examples of the biases and emotional states that shape the way we may engage a work.

<sup>17</sup> Only 2 viewers read the label *after* experiencing the work.

commentary' and Weems's boldness. This preps the viewer's mind in a deliberate way for the experience they are about to have, in this case setting the stage for the narrative overlaying the images to 'guide' a viewer around the room. Most viewers said they found the context provided to be helpful, using words like 'useful' or 'effective', although one person claimed there was too much text on the artwork itself, suggesting viewers were 'baby fed information' and not able to come to their own conclusions about the images.

One Utermohlen viewer wrote that the lack of context when she first viewed the self-portraits online allowed space for a response to their aesthetic that would have otherwise been suppressed by an intellectually driven response to dementia. She enjoyed the process of not knowing upfront what she was looking at, but being offered context after seeing the artwork. She said: 'Gallery experiences might be much more interesting if they did it this way instead!' Another viewer said the exercise made her feel like the initial experience of the art might be 'ruined' with too much early context about the artist. 'You inflict your external knowledge on the experience of the painting (or story or film)', she said. But added, 'It also makes me feel that knowing the biography of an artist is important – but only AFTER you have experienced the art in and of itself.' It seems clear that viewers may not always be aware of how context mediates their experience, but they do want access to information about the work, and appear open to guidance about how to engage an artwork to get the most out of an experience.<sup>18</sup>

### *Stage 2: Incubation (Subconscious Mental and Sensorial Experience)*

For Wallas, the second stage of creation is an elusive process of unconscious mental exploration, which effortlessly takes place during mental rest or distraction from the issue at hand (Sadler-Smith, 2015). I propose that the art viewer may have an immediate physical or emotional reaction or she may begin to engage an artwork through subconscious associative thinking, and the two modes of experiencing (sensorial and mental) will propel one another forward in parallel. This stage could involve, for example, staying with the artwork but not consciously analysing it, physical movement of the eyes and/or body, stepping away to look at other artworks, or allowing the aesthetic experience to unfold before an artwork – doing nothing. This stage may occur in the quiet space of a few minutes, or may continue to happen for some time after a work is encountered.

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<sup>18</sup> Most viewers responded that they generally read the label first and then look at the artwork. I believe this is a matter of conditioning, and an experiment to change this behavior, to 'train' visitors to enjoy an artwork's 'reveal' could be worth trying.



Figure 7 - Visitors to *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*, 1995-96, at the Tate Gallery, January 2018

Wallas considered this stage to be involuntary and not open to introspection (Sadler-Smith, 2015), but I believe an external observer can see signs that an art viewer may be experiencing incubation. It is important to consider the exhibiting environment at this stage, as the choices made about the physical space in which the artwork is presented can have a profound impact on the viewer's subconscious process as they move about the room.

When viewing an emotionally challenging artwork, quiet space often supports a viewer's ability to fully experience it, as it allows for retreat into an internal space where subconscious processing can take place without distraction or interruption. 'As long as it's not too crowded I'm fine, because I feel like I'm in my own bubble anyway', one viewer said. But in a busy room she said she'll likely turn off and disengage. Another wrote that because the installation was sequential, he was aware of waiting for the person in front of him to 'move on'. He said he would have liked to have seating in the room to allow him more time to reflect. Another viewer said she walked into the gallery's centre at the end 'to help recapture what [she] had seen.' Emotionally challenging artworks require time and commitment for meaning to emerge for a viewer. Space to sit and reflect – consciously or unconsciously – could enhance the exchange with the artwork and increase the likelihood of a meaningful experience.

I observed anonymous visitors as they moved through the exhibit space. Many went straight to the wall text, then followed the narrative sequence. Others wandered in midway through the narrative from the opposite gallery entry, glancing about as they passed through. Some suddenly stopped, caught by an image; their bodies stilled, they became quiet and moved in closer. These viewers often read the wall label after looking at several images, and sometimes then restarted the narrative as a cycle. The physical movements of those who remained in the room felt fluid, as if the viewer was in a state of flow and not consciously thinking or moving; I believe I glimpsed the embodied art experience in action.

### *Stage 3: Intimation (Awareness Grows)*

Wallas describes intimation as a period that takes place at the fringe of consciousness, when a person has a feeling that they are about to have a breakthrough or insight (Sadler-Smith, 2015). It can be conceived as a train of associations, thinking that arises naturally without conscious intervention. For the art viewer, intimation recalls Gendlin's idea of the 'felt sense', as ideas are coalescing and the viewer's immediate insights and judgments allow them to home in on their feelings. Here especially, we find a strong interplay of conscious and unconscious thought, part of a fully embodied response.

Responses to the Weems exhibit hinted at some viewers' internal processing as they connected to the work. For example, one viewer indicated moments of change both during and after visiting the exhibit. 'I felt pensive afterward,' he said, 'and during the viewing I felt detached from emotion because the art presentation forced me to detach the word from reality if that makes sense.' But the images themselves seemed to interrupt this detachment. He said, 'I felt empathy and anger when I deliberately looked at the faces'.

Clearly moved by the work, one viewer said: 'The strength and pride of the woman at the start and end of the photos...reminded me of the dignity of the people leaving the Kibera slum in Nairobi [Kenya] in pristine white shirts'. An awareness of his own experience was emerging through his connection to hers. Another viewer said: '...As a white male, it's difficult to "stand in solidarity" with this demographic because of shame engaging with history. In this way, there were aspects of the experience where I was glad to think of how we've moved on as a race.' This viewer seems to be wrestling with concepts related to his own connection to cultural history. Weems created a piece whose aim is to elicit an emotional reaction with the aid of a narrator/narrative, and these viewers are in dialogue with their own experience along with the artwork – and feeling their way toward expressing new meaning.

#### *Stage 4: Illumination (Meaning Emerges)*

In the fourth stage, Wallas (Sadler-Smith, 2015) observes that a person will have a moment of conscious illumination as a specific idea or knowledge is revealed as the culmination of the associations processed in the intimation stage. It is often experienced as a flash of insight or emotional reaction. Although some may associate illumination with a 'eureka' moment, I'd argue it can also manifest as a slow or subtle dawning for the art viewer. It is at this point that a viewer moves from experience to perception<sup>19</sup> and begins to craft a narrative that explains something important. Here we can say meaning has emerged.<sup>20</sup>

Emotions are at the heart of this artwork, and drive the meaning being made. One viewer shared insight into her emotional journey and what sounds like a process of moving from intimation to a moment of illumination: 'There was [a] sense of unease that I became aware [of] about halfway through the sequence. It grew as I carried on, but somewhat oppressed, and at the last photo "and I cried" it felt that my emotion was released as if I also cried.' Although she said the artwork was 'not very closely related to my life', she also hinted at the meaning that became clear in that moment of illumination – and the verification to follow – observing, '...the artwork provides a way for me to connect to the people and that history', and, '...addressing individuals as "you" was important and transformative for me'.

The Utermohlen responses demonstrated more clearly moments of illumination, as viewers' reactions evolved and were recorded in response to changing context.<sup>21</sup> After learning that the artist had dementia, several of the viewers' initial emotions like disgust or dislike changed to pity or sympathy. One viewer said she felt guilty for her earlier judgements. Several used terminology linking what they'd 'felt' (before the reveal of context) to what 'makes sense' with the new information. One viewer expressed her interpretation of Utermohlen's state of mind after learning of his illness: 'At first I feel sad for the artist that he was no longer able to use painting as a method to communicate passionately as he had before dementia, but I realize he could have been just as passionate about the later paintings as his earlier ones.' All the viewers had something to say about

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<sup>19</sup> Sensation (ongoing physical feeling) and perception (mental process and knowledge that generate recognition) may have developed separately but often occur simultaneously. Perception involves analysis and framing of objects and events based on past experience; experience (sensation or feeling) is grounded in the present moment (Baas, 2009, p218).

<sup>20</sup> Narrative is a ubiquitous practice of meaning-making, and is the way we frame and understand human experience. For more on narrative, how we shape it and it shapes us, see Brockmeier and Meretoja (2014); Frank (2013); and Freeman (2016).

<sup>21</sup> Many viewers expressed delight at noticing how their opinions were changing – how context was affecting the meaning they made. I was particularly surprised by the responses to how the reveal made them feel about their own process; they had conscious awareness of the insights and meaning they made as they made them, and they loved it.

the artist, but many were equally intrigued observing their own illuminations as new meanings emerged.

#### *Stage 5: Verification (Transformation)*

Wallas (Sadler-Smith, 2015) describes this final stage as conscious processing, testing and evaluating of the ideas that have emerged, refining them to a specific answer. For an art viewer, this takes place in the moments after we become aware of this new knowing, when the experience is consciously reflected upon and filtered into specific ideas or beliefs. This can take place immediately, or might emerge through repeat visits or after further contemplation or discussion. It is here that we can put into words the results of what has been happening below or at the edge of consciousness in the previous stages. Verification may signal big- or small-scale transformation, or a permanent shift in perspective.<sup>22</sup>

In practice, meaning emerges for a viewer through the process of (re)interpretation as she elaborates the narrative that began to form in the illumination stage. Of course, as ideas are established, they are also revisited, and meanings often change in the process of interpreting them; negotiations take place and experience may be reshaped. But the final result of verification is a new understanding or sense of self in the world.

For the viewer, meaning-making morphs into transformation when a more permanent change occurs in her understanding of or personal connection to an issue or her place in the world – an opening up, deepening, broadening or evolution in thought and feeling, like I experienced with the Weems exhibit. The challenge in collecting data to understand whether transformation has occurred for other art viewers is that change might be experienced some time after the art encounter.

Still, some viewers indicated at least a potential for transformation from their encounter with the artworks. One Utermohlen viewer said after the experience: ‘You can see from the artwork how clarity, precision gradually faded into imprecision, confusion, frustration and incompleteness. It has broadened my understanding of what someone with dementia might go through...which may help me better assist should I ever need to.’ Another said: ‘Honestly, I think it makes me want to do more, be better, stop stressing over everything so much, because how sad that everything he was as an artist had no bearing on the last 7 years of his life!’ After engaging Utermohlen’s personal experience in the artwork, she is pausing to re-evaluate her own life.

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<sup>22</sup> While in many cases verification would be tied to members of a field, a peer group, etc., as gatekeepers legitimizing new meaning or knowledge, the art viewer is making meaning about her relation to the world as an individual, and she is her only gatekeeper (Sadler-Smith, 2015).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Applying Wallas's model of the creative process to the art viewer provided an interesting conceptual framework within which to consider how meaning is made through a viewer's embodied experience with art. Through it, we understand how a viewer's holistic experience, context provided about the artwork, and the physical exhibiting environment influence her process of creating meaning – as subconscious mental and sensorial experiences trigger a felt sense, which eventually emerges into a conscious awareness of something, which a viewer eventually comes to understand more clearly as a new narrative forms in her mind about her sense of or connection to that thing or idea.

Finding the right questions to ask viewers to try to elicit information about their subjective experiences with aesthetics and meaning-making was itself a challenging but rewarding process (still ongoing). The responses to the questionnaires – particularly for Utermohlen – were incredibly insightful and demand more analysis; in a sense, this essay is now a launching point for me. A new round of more developed questions will help me to home in on some of these ideas, and the richness of the responses already received will carry me into further research. My first step in that direction will be an event later this month focusing on objects in the Wellcome Collection's Reading Room (including work by William Utermohlen), interrogating how various levels of context lead viewers to different kinds of insights.

Considering art engagement as a creative process brings together the art viewer, artwork and artist in a way that reflects our time. Outside the gallery, we more easily make the leap to appropriating images, to see ourselves as creators capable and authorized to make interventions in our interactions with art. It is time to recognise how this is happening inside the gallery too. We can have meaningful or transformative encounters with artworks when the conditions are right; if artists and viewers understand these conditions and viewers feel empowered to take an active role in the art experience, art viewers will have more meaning-making experiences more often. A model like the one discussed could be useful in empowering individuals to reimagine their role as an art *viewer* to merge with the role of meaning *creator* – to design experiences to help viewers engage art on their own terms and in a meaningful way. This seems like it would be particularly valuable for artists – such as myself – who create artwork with the aim to empower viewers to engage with emotionally challenging subjects.

People respond to art differently, and emotionally challenging art adds another lens we much each bring into focus. This is a subjective, emotional, embodied process that is unique to each person, each situation and each piece of art in any particular time and place, which makes critiquing art –

especially emotional, personal work – quite hard. De Botton shifted the object of aesthetic judgement from the artwork itself to what an individual gets from engaging an artwork – whether it is good or bad for us, whether it fulfils an internal emotional ‘need’. One way to consider the effectiveness of art is to consider whether new meaning emerges for a viewer, what each individual takes away from the encounter. An artist today might see herself much more as an enabler of meaningful experiences than as a storyteller. But a clearer understanding of how a viewer creates meaning out of an encounter with art can help the artist anticipate how her choices may influence viewers’ experiences. It certainly will for me, as an artist engaging views on emotionally challenging subjects like illness, risk and our place in the universe (Figure 8).

After testing positive for a genetic mutation that often causes breast cancer to develop, I spent four years collaborating with a photographer in the examination of internal mental struggles, bodily changes and social issues related to preventative surgeries (Figures 9, 10). In our project we’ve created an archive of work to draw on, but I have struggled to edit it down, to maintain the personal emotional experience while bringing it into a more universal context and illuminating the essence of an (not *my*) experience. The project aims to allow for one individual’s experience to evoke larger questions about life and society – to provide an opportunity for others to make their own meaning out of these difficult experiences. I now see that *how* the work is presented to the viewer is as important as *what* I am presenting, and installation work is becoming a part of my evolving practice.

This research essay has helped underpin my practice with contemporary theoretical thinking around embodiment, aesthetics and the evolving relationship between the viewer and the artwork – a relationship which must extend out to the artist herself. I have a new understanding of how viewers think about and engage difficult artworks, and how certain conditions may affect viewer-made meaning. Rather than understanding an artwork, I sought to understand the experience of the viewer in order to inform my own art creation – to increase the chances of making impactful work that will move others to make meaning and create unexpected connections to the world around them.





Figure 8 – *We Are All Made of Stars: Matters of Scale*, 2017, Jill Mueller; created using a sky-mapping photo negative and a digital photograph of my breast tissue



Figure 9 – *Untitled*, post-surgery, 2015, Jill Mueller and Maja Daniels (photographer)



Figure 10 – *The BRCA Mutation: 2190delA*, 2017, Jill Mueller

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## LIST OF IMAGES

Cover image: *From Here...*, opening image from *From I Saw What Happened and I Cried*, 1995-96, Carrie Mae Weems

Figure 1: Selected images from *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*, 1995-96, Carrie Mae Weems, as installed at Tate Modern, January 2018 © Carrie Mae Weems

Figure 2: # 41, 2002, Georg Gudni's ethereal horizons

Figure 3: *Self-Portrait*, 1991, Helen Chadwick

Figure 4: *Et In Arcadia Ego*, 2015, Charlotte Jarvis, 'Body of Matter' installation in Eindhoven

Figure 5: Model of the viewer's art experience as a creative process

Figure 6: Selected self-portraits by William Utermohlen tracing his experience with the progression of Alzheimer's, including an early comparative image

Figure 7: Visitors to *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*, at the Tate Gallery, 1995-96, January 2018

Figure 8: *We Are All Made of Stars: Matters of Scale*, 2017, Jill Mueller; created using a sky-mapping photo negative and a digital photograph of my breast tissue

Figure 9: *Untitled*, post-surgery, 2015, Jill Mueller and Maja Daniels (photographer)

Figure 10: *The BRCA Mutation: 2190delA*, 2017, Jill Mueller



## APPENDIX A

*Using Helen Chadwick's Self-Portrait as the basis for an autoethnographic exploration of how this meaning-making model might be applied to a viewer engaging art as a creative act.*

Helen Chadwick (1953 –1996) was a British sculptor, photographer and installation artist known for challenging viewers' perceptions of the body and identity, often interrogating or fusing binary oppositions (male/female, interior/exterior, seductive/repulsive, etc.). Along with a range of unconventional materials, she often used her own body as the subject of her work. *Self-Portrait* (1991) belongs to the series 'Meat Lamps', a long-term project investigating what it means to be made of flesh. The oval-shaped photograph of the artist holding a human brain sits backlit between two glass plates, the brain hovering above folds suggestive of fabric, flesh or deli meat.

Preparation (Openness or Intention): I first came to *Self-Portrait* online as research for this essay. As an artist working on projects related to the human body, I carried a number of personal experiences to the encounter: recent investigations into the mind-body connection as part of an art residency; creating artwork from images of microslides of my breast tissue, exploring the self and interior; and a memory of holding a brain at age ten – sitting in a circle in a darkened room, the brain passing slowly from one set of hands to another so that we could feel its weight. I brought likes and dislikes: a reflective disgust for slimy things; an intellectual fascination with the human body; and a proclivity for science-based art. These were the primary components of my viewer's mind.

The accompanying text provided further context about the artist, and since I was viewing the piece online, I took the opportunity to search for articles about and images from her practice. I was prepped for a meaningful experience.

Incubation (Mental and Sensorial Experience): This stage primarily occurs unconsciously; the reflections to follow provide a sense of the connections that might have been happening as I encountered the artwork, without my conscious input. (Perhaps consider the 5<sup>th</sup> stage, intimation?)

I have a vague sense of the feeling of holding a brain, though I recognize that the brain I held when I was 10 was not as lifelike as this one; it was not marked with veins, and had the colour of Formaldehyde. I think those hands could be my mother's hands – her remission from cancer over, ever closer to death. I look down at my hands in my lap, past my breasts, and back to the image. I recall a flash of shock that accompanied seeing a photograph of my own breast surgically removed from my chest and sitting on medical cart, and I wonder why this brain is outside its body. Is that wrinkled fleshy cloth beneath it? The circular shape of the image gives the impression of a mirror,

and I think about body image after surgery. The image is aesthetically pleasing – and I find aesthetics and medicine problematic in practice. I feel a tightening in my chest. But an opening up too. My body feels the tension between the title, *Self-Portrait*, and the recognition that the hands are the artist's, but the brain couldn't possibly be.

Illumination (Meaning Emerging): There is a sensation, a dawning, almost beyond putting into words – an emergence of a single thought. The brain could be my brain; it could be any of us... This will develop into more than that thought, more than a feeling. But at this moment it is both a finishing and starting point.

Verification (Transformation): I put words to the emotions I've been feeling. Conscious thoughts emerge and I shape them into a narrative about my reaction to the image and what might have influenced it. I have a strange sense of myself as human, animal, mortal and fragile, resilient and awe-inspiring. I feel death; I feel life.

This is something beyond the artwork's context, the artist's intent. Beyond anatomical knowledge. It is a feeling, a deep-seated understanding and connectedness to a deeper sense of humanity. A sadness for the brief time we have among the living. A stronger awareness of self in the world. This is a particular knowledge or knowing produced through experiencing this artwork.

## APPENDIX B

*Questionnaire responses to the viewer's experience with William Utermohlen's self-portraits*

**QUESTION 1(a):** Write a few sentences or short paragraph recording your thoughts, feelings, reaction. Example: Do you like the work? Why or why not? Does it provoke an emotional response? Does it remind you of something from your past or present? What do you think it might be about?

**Viewer 1a:** In the portrait from 1967 I see a determined Idealistic young man, ready to take on the world with his art. Thirty years later it seems that age or events in his life have left him disillusioned, and each year thereafter he struggles to maintain his ability to live in and deal with a world of his making. I see suffering and a distorted view of his reality. I like the first three portraits as they tell the first part of the story, but the last three leave me with a feeling of unease and sadness for whatever happened to him.

**Viewer 2a:** I do not like any of the pieces mainly because I do not like abstract, nor do I like portraits. Out of all them the 1967 one is the best, and they get progressively worse as they move through time. 1998 through 2000 gross me out – 1998 looks like an orc from Lord of the Rings, and the “nose” on 2000 almost looks like a deformed penis.

**Viewer 3a:** I do not like the works. I find them unpleasant to look at and they make me feel uncomfortable. The pictures 1996 through 2000 appear to me to be ugly.

**Viewer 4a:** My gut reaction was one of disgust, although that sounds strong! Definitely not appealing to me, visually. Something about the colours (primaries, sickly beiges...), but also about the man's face which seemed some sort of combination of unpleasant things (grumpy...desperate?)

Also the chronological juxtaposition and the way the painting style evolved made me think of ageing and decomposition, which maybe was the point? There was something almost nightmarish about the paintings, especially as they became more and more figurative, with the nostrils and ears the only things apparent.

The first portrait, which is more traditional in style, was more appealing to me. I guess that says more about my conservative tastes. Probably important to say that the collective effect of the pictures was stronger than had I looked at them all in isolation. I might have given them more time based on their individual merits rather than reacting to overall feeling they suggested to me.

**Viewer 5a:** I like the first portrait but as the years passed the style changed and I liked the portraits less. The early art seemed more refined, distinct and clear but the later years seemed to lack that clarity. It kind of reminds me of the world, how it was initially created as a beautiful place, calm and then it suddenly became a chaos, ugly and sad. I had a sense of calmness, happiness from the early years but the later years brought sadness and uncertainty

**Viewer 6a:** The first word that comes to mind is “Disturbing” but not in a gross way, like confusing, upsetting. Because I know a little about it, I don't REALLY want to look at it.

**Viewer 7a:** Seeing all the pieces at once, I immediately thought of an artist who had nothing to say, so he looked in on himself. He tried out every possible artistic style to see if any “felt right” – I see a

guy who is full of talent and who has probably done a lot of schooling – he is incredibly adept at wielding nearly every style, but has no style of his own. Perhaps he is searching, perhaps he is just frustrated that he isn't famous. It's all about him though, so I didn't feel particularly moved by any of the pieces. The one that was most accessible was the one that was least representational of THIS GUY. I would say the most successful piece of art was the 1999 self portrait because it let me in. The 2000 one continued this theme but by using the stark red and green colors I ended up thinking of Christmas. And the self-portrait looked a little like a mug. Which then made me think it looked like a Christmas mug. And then I wondered if it was supposed to be some kind of joke. So I would say that portrait was not a successful piece. But the 1999 one was accessible (you knew it was a person) – it was strange (therefore interesting) and it raised more questions than it answered. To me, that was the successful portrait. One that was less about the self and more about opening the self to interpretation.

**Viewer 8a:** The work is interesting in that the amount of details disappears as time goes on. I wonder if it could have to do with how the artist sees himself as time goes on. Although I don't necessarily think the art is about this topic, it reminds me of body dysmorphic disorder and how it can distort how you see yourself. Concentrating on certain pieces of yourself that you physically don't like until that's all you can see and think about.

**Viewer 9a:** The paintings feel dark, angry and confused. The eyes are really important in the first three, but then actually disappear in the later paintings. I do not like the later five works as I do not understand what they are getting at and they do not make me feel good or inquisitive. The last one looks like something a 4 year old would do and the 1999 sketch reminds me of ogres.

**Viewer 10a:** I do not like the work or dislike the work, I do find it interesting though. Looking at the work from oldest to newest it seems as if they get sadder. It does not remind me of anything from past or present. I think that these pieces are self portraits of how the artist has changed overtime.

**Viewer 11a:** I stared at the first painting for a few minutes; it is interesting, the attention to some of the details but others just traced, the expression of the subject's eyes and on his lips make me think about what is in his mind.

Looking at the second work, I realized it is the same subject which caused me to follow the evolution of the artist's work. I was sad to realize it was not his style changing but his mind. I got the sense that he no longer saw what was in front of him as he had in his younger days. Overall this left me with a morbid curiosity as to what had happened to the artist. What caused at first a gradual but then complete loss of his sense of subject, sense of self.

**Viewer12a:** I do like it. There is a story to it. It makes me feel sad. From my past it brings up working with elderly people. I feel like this is about a man who is getting older and how the older he gets the more he feels like he is disappearing.

**Viewer 13a:** I do not really like the work. The picture from 1967 is good, but the rest is not my style. Not only with the angry colors but with the person. For me it seems sad and I get a sense of mental illness.

Becca's answers (her 11-year-old daughter): 1967 – looks serious; 1996 – angry; 1997 – looks happy; 1998 – more sad, just the look; 1999 – I have no idea what's going on there; 2000 – seems enthusiastic

**Viewer 14a:** I don't particularly like these works, but don't dislike them either. I feel like they depict a disintegration of some type in a particular man. I feel like it may be a downward spiral due to an emotional or physical problem.

**QUESTION 2(b):** Has anything changed in the way you respond to the artworks now? Do you see something new in them? Do they remind you of other things, or provoke deeper or different emotions? Do you identify with something in the images even though you may not have dementia yourself?

**Viewer 1b:** I sensed he was a victim of Alzheimer's or dementia but he kept on with his art struggling to find or keep and preserve his identity and sense of self. Along with my sadness I feel admiration for his spirit in continuing his love of expression through art. His art was who he was, and he always knew this. As he lost the ability to transfer his creativity to canvas or paper, I believe his higher self was still creating magnificent pieces of art. So the question is does he recognize the loss of ability and is frustrated or is he operating in another realm of beautiful creation. As I age this situation with William could evoke an element of fear but I choose to believe that God will help me through with my connection to Him and I will always see love and beauty.

**Viewer 2b:** I now have a sympathy for the artist. I don't see the paintings as his experimentation or an evolution in style, so something on purpose, but rather as a way to communicate.

**Viewer 3b:** Yes, I understand why they became more unidentifiable as a person. I feel sorry for the artist, and his ability to show a realistic depiction of himself. I do not identify with anything in the pictures.

**Viewer 4b:** Now I feel immensely guilty haha!! It definitely does change how you perceive the paintings because you are conditioned (and hopefully naturally) have a sympathetic response to dementia. My opinion had I known that information would probably have been 'oh how interesting, and how sad', and I would have overlooked my response to their aesthetic because I had an intellectually driven response. I often think about this in galleries because I see everyone reading labels next to paintings more than looking at the paintings. Gallery experiences might be much more interesting if they did it this way instead! It would provoke a lot more reflection rather than passively absorbing the information then judging the painting based on that.

**Viewer 5b:** I still feel the same about the pictures but I could maybe include frustration as he tried to remember how he used to paint. The paintings depicts his condition from being organized and precise to uncertainty and maybe confusion. This provokes a feeling of pity.

**Viewer 6b:** I find myself looking at everything except the face...looking for some hint that it's not as bad as it feels. See...I even said THE face, not HIS face! It makes me sad for the artist and what that must be like. How does he see his surroundings clearer than himself? To see what he was capable of before makes it quite terrifying to think about what dementia does. It makes it uncomfortable to look at...

**Viewer 7b:** Ah – that does change my experience a little bit. Instead of self-indulgent self-assessment, it seems like a desperate attempt to quantify the self. So the earlier pieces feel more like photographs “here is who I am, though I might lose this moment, I will preserve it here.” And the progression was a sad coming-to-terms with loss of self. It still felt reflective and self-centered. And nothing like the level of his actual art – I was thrilled by the painting of the home. What a great painting – the contrasts, the jumble, the warmth inside contrasted to the warmth outside. That IS his

voice and this series of self-portraits....well, that is more like reading a writer's journal, or looking at the sketchbooks of Picasso. This isn't the art that he was presenting to the world (even if he put that much effort in, he's obviously incredibly talented, so even a doodle is going to be phenomenal.) Still this series feels like art that was done as therapy – it was for him to digest his own internal struggle, not art that he was planning to present to the world. (even if he sells it later, I suspect he did not start the morning with “hey, I'm going to paint a self-portrait to sell.” Any more than most memoirists begin with “well, I need to write a memoir, since everyone is doing it” – though I guess we do have our share of these people and who knows maybe this guy was one of them).

**Viewer 8b:** The artwork progression makes a lot of sense after knowing it was while he was going through dementia. While it wasn't quite the disconnect that I felt originally, it is a type of disconnect between what was showing up on canvas and what the reality was. It makes me wonder how much of the paintings changing was due to loss of motor skills and how much was due to the picture he had of himself. At first I feel sad for the artist that he was no longer able to use painting as method to communicate passionately as he had before dementia, but I realize he could have been just as passionate about the later paintings as his earlier ones.

**Viewer 9b:** The sketches make more sense with the context of the Alzheimer's, but I still do not like them. They are more impactful and the childish and incompleteness of the last painting has meaning now that I know more about the mindset of the artist. I see hopelessness and loss in the images.

**Viewer 10b:** After looking at the art again, I do not respond the work differently. Somethings I have noticed is that the art styles have changed in the different years, along with color patterns, and even the flipping of the way direction the face appears to be looking. The first piece reminds me of Vincent van Gogh's self-portraits. No I do not identify with anything in the images.

**Viewer 11b:** Your description of the artist and his succumbing to the effects of Alzheimer's gives the answers to my questions of the artist's evolution, or really devolution.

I feel the artist, at least in the beginning was aware, and angry, of the changes happening to his body and mind. I see anger in all of the images past the first, artistic mastery faded but the anger remains.

It defines how fleeting youth and health really can be in the scope of a series of self-portraits.

**Viewer12b:** I don't feel like my response would be any different. I have seen first-hand what Alzheimer's does to people so this still makes me feel sad. I do have a little better understanding of why he felt like he was disappearing or losing himself.

**Viewer 13b:** Wow – that is powerful. It's as though the pictures spoke out of what he must have been feeling or going through.

Becca's answers (her 11-year-old daughter): 1967 – looks serious; 1996 – anger; 1997 – losing it; 1998 – sadness; 1999 – death; 2000 – the end

**Viewer 14b:** He must have done a pretty good job of depicting what was going on, as dementia or Alzheimer's was my top guess. It's a pretty scary depiction of what happens to a person.

**QUESTION 3(c):** Has your experience with these artworks changed anything for you about the way you see yourself, your relationship to dementia or the world? Has anything changed for you about your understanding of what having dementia might be like, or have your assumptions been challenged?

**Viewer 1c:** What has changed is for me to think about dementia or Alzheimer's not only with trepidation but with a sense of hope internally that we are communicating on a higher level – call it the higher-self communication to spirit (God). Physically we wear out on body and mind but never in spirit. The sentence that spoke about his creative instincts and emotional vocabulary went beyond expectations is proof that his spirit was still guiding him.

Also, I believe we all have that creativity inside of us but you must use it as part of your everyday life to be able to function without cognitive abilities. Your cells have memory and can operate without direction from the brain if something is habit or part of you. I have total admiration for this man and have a new concept in transitioning from the physical to the spiritual.

**Viewer 2c:** I seem to now analyze them more logically, not emotionally, and it makes me wonder more about the person. It is interesting that he uses the same colors in all but 1999. I wonder what happened at that time? Was it an emotional break or something physiological, or was it just that he didn't have his normal materials? In addition, not knowing all the details about Alzheimer's, it seems he declined fairly rapidly, but he actually survived seven years past his last painting.

**Viewer 3c:** I am very sad to see how he viewed himself in 1999 and 2000, but it is good that he could still express himself better than others in his stage of Alzheimer's disease.

**Viewer 4c:** I think having this more detailed information adds yet another intellectual dimension to the way I looked at the pieces. In a way, it feels no longer like art to me, but an exercise in social advocacy or campaigning. Put in this context it definitely makes you think about dementia in new ways, there's something about being able to see/feel the artist's experiences through his painting which is a great empathy-building device. I also think back to my first feelings which was to reject this grumpy, scary looking old man, which I guess is a reaction many of us have to illness and difference. So the whole experience was very thought provoking and interesting! It would be really cool to see art being used in this way. I can see digital media as being a good way to conduct this experiment in the form of an interactive video or chatbot experience.

**Viewer 5c:** The artwork kinds of portrays the different stages of having dementia, you can see from the artwork how clarity, precision gradually faded into imprecision, confusion, frustration and incompleteness. It has broadened my understanding of what someone with dementia might go through and possibly may help to better understand people with dementia which may help me better assist should I ever need to.

**Viewer 6c:** Honestly, I think it makes me want to do more, be better, stop stressing over everything so much, because how sad that everything he was as an artist had no bearing on the last 7 years of his life! I keep looking at the artwork so that I don't contribute his loss being a waste.

**Viewer 7c:** Knowing his mental state makes me even more convinced that the 1999 portrait is the last one where he still has some grasp on his talent. By 2000 the disease has taken over and he can no longer make what he intends (either because of physical impossibility or mentally not being able to connect intention to action). I guess, I feel sadder about dementia? Because this series of self-

portraits does seem to indicate that the victim of it has an awareness that a large part of the self is going missing, and this desire to document what WAS is the same as saying this is what is supposed to be (similar to a bald guy constantly talking about how he used to have shoulder length hair as a teenager....) I had been under the impression that at a certain point in alzheimers/dementia it is only the people left behind that remember the person as a whole person. I thought that the person losing their memory tended to live in the present moment and not look back (or be unable to look back) to see what they lost. It is sad and frightening to think that they can and do realize they are incomplete.

**Viewer 8c:** I feel like my understanding of dementia has changed a bit by seeing the self portraits, but I also have so many more questions about what was going on in his head and how that was translating to canvas. I am happy that he was able to communicate longer and better by painting. My grandma was in early stages of alzheimers/dementia when she passed away and we were thankful she didn't have to go through too many frustrations with being able to communicate with us.

**Viewer 9c:** I certainly do not want to personally experience dementia or have anyone close to me experience it. I have been a few steps removed from people suffering from Alzheimer's so I already had that sentiment. Reading about the disease from the description above did not change my understanding of it or the impact of the art.

**Viewer 10c:** After looking at the artwork I realize it must be hard for people with dementia because you start to forget things that used to be so clear and it isn't something you can control but it effects everything you do in life and changes your ability to do certain things.

**Viewer 11c:** I've often thought of dementia as a fog that descends, causing the world to slip out of focus, but that the afflicted are unaware of the thickening fog. Much of the knowledge I have is from family care-givers. They tell of pain and hardship of caring for loved ones who are not "being present" with them, the afflicted are not happy/unhappy with their situation just confused or even unaware.

These works didn't say that to me; they told the story of someone who was aware and angry but lacking his former means of expression. Which makes me think this affliction is equally as devastating to those who are suffering.

**Viewer12c:** This makes me feel blessed to still have my mind working as it should. As I read through this I couldn't help but think about all the times that I forget things and how minor and silly they are compared to this. I have had a fairly good understanding of the disease from previous work experience so that has not changed much.

**Viewer 13c:** These did because we really don't know exactly what is going on in one's brain. However, I think the subconscious is aware of the feelings and anguish and this artist was still able to express this.

**Viewer 14c:** These pictures give insight to the disintegration a person feels as they progress through this disease. I can see that there is an intense feeling of losing yourself, distortion, and lose of identity.



**QUESTION 4(d): Is there anything else you would like to add or share about your experience?**

**Viewer 1d:** N/A

**Viewer 2d:** N/A

**Viewer 3d:** Dementia scares me, as I think it does everyone.

**Viewer4d:** N/A

**Viewer 5d:** N/A

**Viewer 6d:** N/A

**Viewer 7d:** I loved this exercise. It does make me feel that knowing the biography of an artist (or writer or filmmaker) ruins the initial experience of the art. You inflict your external knowledge on the experience of the painting (or story or film). It also makes me feel that knowing the biography of an artist is important – but only AFTER you have experience the art in and of itself.

**Viewer 8d:** N/A

**Viewer 9d:** No

**Viewer 10d:** N /A

**Viewer 11d:** N /A

**Viewer12d:** I worked very closely with a woman named Harriette who suffered with Alzheimer's. In her youth she was in perfect health, ran marathons had a long marriage and a family with two children. It's very hard to see someone have so much only to just lose it all. She often times would mistake me for her daughter Jane. Most of the time I corrected her but some times it was easier just to play along. She was a wonderful lady.

**Viewer 13d:** N /A

**Viewer 14d:** N/A

**QUESTION 5(e): Do you feel your responses may have been different if seeing these artworks in person?**

**Viewer 1e:** N/A

**Viewer 2e:** N/A

**Viewer 3e:** Maybe. I always like to see artworks in person. I like seeing the brushstrokes, thickness of paint, etc.

**Viewer 4e:** It would have depended how they were displayed - and how/when the additional information was fed to me.

**Viewer 5e:** I believe the pictures will be the same so will portray the same message. What may change is if they are displayed separately, then my responses would have been different. I may just see one as really nice and the others just ugly without having the background to inform my decision.

**Viewer 6e:** Online, I think it is easier to keep a little emotional distance. I think in person, I would probably be crying the whole time! The mind body connection would be too hard to separate. Like when someone is sad and you text or write to them, it's a very different experience than if you speak with them in person, or even on the phone.

**Viewer 7e:** I said no because there isn't a "maybe" – I think it would depend on how the art was curated. If I saw the portraits mixed in with his other works, I likely would not have had the strong reaction I had (that it was a search and a progression) nor would I have assumed wrongly that this was the only art he made (self portraits) and what he was known for. I will be looking out for these artworks next time I go to MoMA though!

**Viewer 8e:** My gut instinct is that I wouldn't have had a different response because I can study the artwork from here and get a good idea of what it is. However, sometimes seeing the artwork in person can help you notice other, smaller, details and evoke a different response.

**Viewer 9e:** I think the texture may have changed it a little, but not too much.

**Viewer 10e:** Yes, because if I saw the art in person it might not have all the background information that was provided so I might have thought of them differently or not understood the change in art over time.

**Viewer 11e:** Reproductions can be excellent but I like to see original art when possible. Digital images can lack the depth of hand produced paintings.

**Viewer 12e:** I feel like I was able to get a good understanding of the piece from just seeing the picture.

**Viewer 13e:** N /A

**Viewer 14e:** No, I think they would have struck me the same way. I may have appreciated the texture or color more if I had seen them in person.

**Demographics:**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Go to museums and/or galleries</b>	<b>Look at visual art elsewhere</b>	<b>Knowledge about the artist</b>
<b>Viewer 1</b>	F	73	Retired Massage Therapist	Rarely	?	?
<b>Viewer 2</b>	F	49	Quality Systems Specialist in the pharmaceutical industry	Rarely	Sometimes	Nothing
<b>Viewer 3</b>	F	73	Registered Nurse	Rarely	No	Nothing
<b>Viewer 4</b>	F	30	ICT 4 DEV designer/ content creator	Sometimes	Sometimes	Nothing
<b>Viewer 5</b>	F	40	Programme Manager	Rarely	No	Nothing
<b>Viewer 6</b>	F	43	Retail Toy Industry	Rarely	Often	Some
<b>Viewer 7</b>	F	49	Writer	Sometimes	Often	Nothing
<b>Viewer 8</b>	F	30	Warehouse Manager	Never	Sometimes	Nothing
<b>Viewer 9</b>	M	42	Associate Director in Higher Education	Rarely	Rarely	Nothing
<b>Viewer 10</b>	M	18	University student	Rarely	Sometimes	Heard about him
<b>Viewer 11</b>	F	50	Semi-retired. Volunteer food pantry manager and kindergarten aide	Often	Often	Nothing
<b>Viewer 12</b>	F	31	Assistant Manager	Rarely	Sometimes	Nothing
<b>Viewer 13</b>	F	42	Hospice RN	Never	Rarely	Nothing
<b>Viewer 14</b>	F	66	Retired teacher	Rarely	Sometimes	Nothing



reminded me of etched glass objects in general – eg windows in churches. The strength and pride of the woman at the start and end of the photos (large b/w photo of tribal queen with amazing hair) reminded me of the dignity of people leaving the Kibera slum in Nairobi is pristine white [unintelligible]. But the exhibit is about black experiences – which is not mine in any way.

Viewer 5: As a Scandinavian it reminds me of the ‘scientific’ photos taken by Swedes of indigenous Samis, who had their skulls measured, land seized, language banned, etc. And various other documentations of oppression.

Viewer 6: Civil rights movement in USA. It doesn’t relate to my life.

Viewer 7: Recently read *The Underground Railway* because set during a time of slavery in U.S. The exhibition reminds me of the extreme brutality of slavery depicted in the book.

Viewer 8: No personal experience came to mind. It reminded me of a scene in Game of Thrones where Daenerys is introduced to the leaders of the Unsullied. They are introduced with single words “that remind them what they are. Vermin”. I always thought that was a powerful scene and the one-dimensional depiction of the slaves reminded me of that.

Viewer 9: Not personally. It did echo other art I’ve seen about the Holocaust. Some of the elements are Jazz-like, namely the way the text inspires conflict with the different pieces. The colour mood and presentation also reminded me of minimalist Jazz –

Viewer 10: The work reminded me the situation, when my country was under the communism dictatorship and people didn’t have any rights for the freedom - they had to follow the rules of the communism – no free speech, no traveling to the Western countries, no reading Western literature, no listening Western music, no watching Western movies etc... However, the personalities on the photographs look very strong and confident to be represented as the object transmitting the message about the slavery.

Viewer 11: The artwork is not very closely related to my life, but I recalled some topics in an advertising class that I took previously. It was about the exploitation of race in advertising, for example Uncle Ben’s rice or Auntie Gemma’s pancake use images of an African American that reference that time, when they were given serving roles. After the class I couldn’t help thinking about this when I pass these products on supermarket shelves, but it is until seeing the portraits in the artwork that I feel related to these real people of those roles.

3. Did you learn anything new or change your perspective about the topic or yourself? Were you surprised by anything?

Viewer 1: No – but found it quite blunt which was impactful.

Viewer 2: Surprised by how evoking the exhibit was. Didn’t expect to be so moved.

Viewer 3: No.

Viewer 4: I am not sure I got this right but it seems to imply slaves were called “spades” because of their work – completely dehumanizing – I hadn’t known where the derogatory term “spade” had come from.

Viewer 5: Not as far as I can remember now, except the particulars of the event described (about a certain tribe, I think?) My memory is a bit misty on the finer details.

Viewer 6: I was already aware of this history.

Viewer 7: (No response)

Viewer 8: I didn’t learn anything new / change perspective about the topic, but was surprised by the set-up of the art. I thought it was interesting that the light colour of the

words forces you to focus on the text, making you detached from the picture and the awareness that the words aren't a fictional story but in fact related to a real event.

Viewer 9: Not really. I think black history is quite pervasive in the liberal Western cultural cannon. The nude photo was a surprise – I'd say that's nothing to do with this exhibit in particular but social conditioning.

Viewer 10: I almost cried at the end of the work.

Viewer 11: There was sense of unease that I became aware about half way through the sequence. It grew as I carried on, but somewhat oppressed, and at the last photo "and I cried" it felt that my emotion was released as if I also cried.

4. Did you have an emotional response to the work? If so, in what way?

Viewer 1: Sad and anger.

Viewer 2: Sad / disappointed that this was a reality

Viewer 3: Naturally felt sad for the years of oppression and wrongs that occurred in history.

Viewer 4: Sadness for how many people's lives were subjugated – they couldn't have and fulfill their own dreams. Anger at the completely unjustified attitudes of the white society.

Viewer 5: I found it upsetting imaging how all these people had been forcefully stripped of their identity and turned into objects and possessions.

Viewer 6: Sad.

Viewer 7: I find it sad verging on painful to contemplate the issue of slavery and its continuing impact on society and individuals' experience of life.

Viewer 8: I felt pensive afterward and during the viewing I felt detached from emotion because the art presentation forced me to detach the word from reality if that makes sense. I felt empathy and anger when I deliberately looked at the faces.

Viewer 9: Response was mostly empathy. As a white male, it's difficult to "stand in solidarity" with this demographic because of shame engaging with history. In this way, there were aspects of the experience where I was glad to think of how we've moved on as a race.

Viewer 10: I have realized I should learn more about the history.

Viewer 11: I learnt more about a perspective towards the topic rather than about the topic's history. I feel it's a non-intrusive way of addressing, and the artwork provides a way for me to connect to the people and that history.

5. What was the room like when you visited the artwork (busy, quiet, could you see the work well, etc.)? Do you feel the environment impacted your experience, and if so, why?

Viewer 1: Busy but could still appreciate it.

Viewer 2: Quiet, moving – everyone seemed deep in thought.

Viewer 3: Good level of busy, could walk around and see all the art well.

Viewer 4: It was fairly quiet when I visited – 2-6 people in the room. It was very much something I wanted to go through 'in order', so slightly aware I was waiting for the previous person to 'move on'. Would have been harder to appreciate if it was busy. Some problems reading the etched glass text due to reflections. Would have like some seating to reflect on.

Viewer 5: It was fairly quiet, which worked well. It's a small room, so too many people would quickly feel crowded.

Viewer 6: Quiet. I could see it well. The writing was hard to read.

Viewer 7: Several people in exhibition. Some students [unintelligible]. Comfortable amount. Could see well. The room was perfect but the lighting a bit glary on some of the pictures.

Viewer 8: Quiet. I think the piece works best when you really have a chance of seeing it as a story, so a quiet environment probably helps.

Viewer 9: Very quiet. Ideal art-viewing conditions. I could see each piece clearly. At the finish I walked into the middle of the space to help recapture what I had seen.

Viewer 10: The room was quiet and empty.

Viewer 11: The room was not particularly quiet, but not too busy. I think if it was busier, it might affect my concentration to follow the narrative, as the text was somewhat difficult to read with the reflection of glass.

6. How do you feel about engaging a potentially emotional or challenging subject like this in a public space?

Viewer 1: Really important and powerful. It works well.

Viewer 2: Felt it was good, makes people think.

Viewer 3: Normal, just because the subject can be emotional or challenging shouldn't mean it should be hidden away from public space and pretend like it never happens.

Viewer 4: Fine if I am on my own (as I was) – but if I am with someone, I sometimes feel intimidated by the 'precious' atmosphere of art galleries – which would make it hard to discuss such a work.

Viewer 5: As long as it's not too crowded I'm fine, because I feel like I'm in my own bubble anyway. However, if I'm in a packed room I tend to turn off and disengage. Exception being if art is displayed on a big screen, like Richard Mosse's refugee installation at the Barbican (can't remember name).

Viewer 6: That is the purpose of art.

Viewer 7: I think is expected to be emotionally challenged by art and feel it is appropriate.

Viewer 8: Positive. I think it's a good thing and I'm comfortable in general when it comes to showing emotion in public.

Viewer 9: Fine – surely the purpose of art is to engage? This is difficult to do without evoking emotion: more so in the post-Gutenberg age where media dissemination across new platforms has decreased our sensibility.

Viewer 10: I think it is important if the artist represent feelings in the visual images or text and pass the message to the next generation.

Viewer 11: I think having a whole room for the artwork definitely helped, but having 2 doors in that room was a disadvantage, as people were walking in from both doors, and not necessarily started from the beginning.

7. Did you read the museum label before seeing the artwork? Yes / No

Do you usually read the labels with the artwork? Not usually / Before viewing / After viewing

Viewer 1: Yes / After viewing

Viewer 2: Yes / Before viewing

Viewer 3: Yes / Before viewing

Viewer 4: Yes / Before viewing

Viewer 5: Yes / Before viewing

Viewer 6: Yes / Before viewing

Viewer 7: Yes / Before Viewing

Viewer 8: Yes / Before Viewing – It depends on the set-up of the exhibition.

Viewer 9: Yes / After Viewing

Viewer 10: Yes / Before viewing

Viewer 11: Yes / Before viewing

8. What do you think about the amount of context provided for the work? For example, was there too much, or not enough? Why or why not?

Viewer 1: Correct amount. Left up to interpretation – this is more powerful.

Viewer 2: Good amount – maybe why artists decided to create exhibit

Viewer 3: Too much writing on each image, meant viewers were baby fed information and not able to view the images and come up with their own conclusions.

Viewer 4: In this case there was the right amount of info – the main board giving a good explanation – then the photos and text ‘explained themselves’. Usually I don’t find enough info about individual works in galleries – I like an explanation of when/how/why/who.

Viewer 5: I found it useful, but as I’d read the blurbs before and so had the context it would have been [unintelligible] without. But personally found emotional impact was greater.

Viewer 6: Some would work without context. Others not.

Viewer 7: Enough.

Viewer 8: I thought it was alright though the last bit about ending the exhibition with the same plate was unnecessary because it automatically made the picture the narrator. It would have been nice to have that open to your own interpretation.

Viewer 9: I think it was effective – less is more: I had the opinion that this was thematic.

Viewer 10: It was enough information for the work. Text beautifully anchored images.

Viewer 11: I think there was an adequate amount. Too much might have diverted emotions and more attention might be directed to process the facts.

9. Do you think you’ll tell anyone you know about this artwork or your experience with it? Yes / No  
If so, what would you tell them?

Viewer 1: Yes / It is an interesting way to show the journey of the slave trade

Viewer 2: No

Viewer 3: No

Viewer 4: No / I wouldn’t direct them to this specifically unless they had a particular interest in eg American history.

Viewer 5: Yes / I’d recommend people to go and see the work.

Viewer 6: It depends / If they mentioned Black slave history I would tell them about this.

Viewer 7: Yes / I would tell them that it consists of historically very important photographs presented in a beautiful way.

Viewer 8: Yes / Probably about the power of presentation, how it created detachment from the real injustice, and how that’s something we tend to do re. a lot of questionable things to live with them.

Viewer 9: No / Just mention that it was interesting – quite rare to see art with a calculated and cohesive vision in the Tate these days – I found a lot of it uninspired.

Viewer 10: Yes / I would tell them to go to see how the artist represented the piece of the history.



Viewer 11: Yes, I will tell about the perspective that the artwork provided me to view the topic and history, addressing individuals as “you” was important and transformative for me.

10. Is there anything else you would like to share or add about your experience today?

Viewer 1: (No response)

Viewer 2: Good exhibit

Viewer 3: No

Viewer 4: Reminds me how much I should go to the Tate more often (as I work nearby) and spend some time looking at a small number of artworks – it’s a privilege to live in London and have this opportunity.

Viewer 5: (No response)

Viewer 6: It was interesting to use old photos.

Viewer 7: (No response)

Viewer 8: Good luck with your dissertation.

Viewer 9: Not really, although I did wonder if the pieces were displayed in chronological order – it looked like they might be.

Viewer 10: (No response)

Viewer 11: No

11. A bit about you:

- Male / Female

- Age:

- Occupation / Profession:

- Have you encountered this work or artist before? Yes / No

- If so, how much did you know about them or the work before coming today?

Nothing / Had heard about her / Had some knowledge / Had in-depth knowledge

- How often do you go to an art museum or gallery in a year? Please circle:

Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often

- Do you look at visual art in other settings, for example: online, in books, in magazines? If so, how often? Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often

Viewer 1: Female, age 22

Profession: Research

Never encountered the work before

Sometimes goes to art museum or gallery

Rarely looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 2: Female, age 22

Profession: Buyer

Never encountered the work before

Sometimes goes to art museum or gallery

Rarely looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 3: Male, age 24

Profession: Transport Planner

Never encountered the work before

Rarely goes to art museum or gallery

Rarely looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 4: Male, age 60

Profession: Chief Technical Officer

Never encountered the work before

Often goes to art museum or gallery (10-20 times per year)

Sometimes looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 5: Female, age 34

Profession: Photographer

Never encountered the work before

Often goes to art museum or gallery

Often looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 6: Female, age 48

Profession: Artist

Never encountered the work before

Often goes to art museum or gallery

Often looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 7: Female, age 57

Profession: Midwife

Never encountered the work before

Sometimes goes to art museum or gallery

Sometimes looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 8: Female, age 26

Profession: Content Strategy

Never encountered the work before

Often goes to art museum or gallery

Often looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 9: Male, age 22

Profession: Admin Assistant (3<sup>rd</sup> Sector)

Never encountered the work before

Often goes to art museum or gallery

Often looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 10: Female, age 37

Profession: Artist

Never encountered the work before

Often goes to art museum or gallery

Often looks at visual art in other settings

Viewer 11: Female, age 22

Profession: Student

Never encountered the work before

Often goes to art museum or gallery

Often looks at visual art in other settings