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Untitled
Water based oil paint & acrylic paint on canvas

My collection of paintings is based on my study of the trauma and self implicated restrictions or practices used by artists how they can affect the creation or how people view it. The idea of artists utilizing different extreme strategies to push creativity stood out to me in the production of this project, initially basing my process to create these works on the idea. For these pieces I decided to limit my sleep while creating, getting less sleep every night until I completed my works and seeing if it would affect my attitude, style, or even the understanding of my paintings. My goal was to experiment with my own mental state while creating to see if it would initially affect my creation. Throughout my process of painting I took inspiration stylistically from Egon Schiele and Lucian Freud. Creating these paintings was very fun and a very exciting test of the semi extreme on myself. Look closely and see if you see any difference in the three.

Thanks!

Trauma in Art, Artificial and Not.



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Art is a diverse range of activities and creations that can be a channel for expression of ideas, emotions, experiences, and, notably most important: trauma. Expression through art can show itself in various forms, including: visually, through performance mediums, or auditory. At its core, art is a means of communication and expression, allowing oneself to convey their perceptions, beliefs, and feelings, as well as to explore and interpret the world around them. It serves both aesthetic and functional purposes, being able to enrich cultural heritage, critique, provide reflection, and, most importantly, foster creativity. Artists' works are regularly characterized by their creativity, originality, and technical skills with form, color, texture, and other elements to either create meaning or invoke emotion or meaning in oneself or others.

Although creating art is commonly categorized as a positive, fun, and creative activity, art can have very negative effects on the human mind under certain circumstances. For some artists, creating challenging or driven work can be very emotionally taxing, leading to stress, burnout, or madness in some cases. The pressure to create “meaningful art” can destroy artists. While the pressure to create “meaningful art” can motivate and inspire artists to push their creative boundaries and achieve artistic excellence, it can also be a destructive force that undermines the creative process of artists, damaging mental and emotional well being and erodes authenticity, due to the unhealthy reliance on external validation and comparison to other artists. The pressure to create “meaningful art” can contribute to many mental health issues among artists. The internal pressure to meet high expectations and achieve artistic excellence can lead to stress anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Artists may sacrifice their physical and emotional well being in pursuit of their artistic goals.

A main driving force for creating art is past or present trauma in the artist's life and mental well being. Artists who have experienced trauma may channel their emotions, memories, and

experiences into their art as a form of catharsis. The relationship between art and trauma is to help overcome, process, or transform. Art has always been used as a powerful tool for processing, communicating and healing from trauma and navigating the emotional and psychological impacts of traumatic experiences. Artistic expression can serve as a healing outlet for individuals to process and cope with trauma, allowing oneself to externalize and communicate their experiences through art in a safe manner. Creating art can help individuals gain insight and new perspectives on their experiences and emotionally heal. A specific example of professional treatment utilizing art and trauma is art therapy; art therapy uses creative expression to help individuals process trauma and facilitate personal growth and healing. Artistic exploration of trauma can also be a deeply personal and transformative process for artists, allowing them to explore and make sense of their own experiences of trauma, and to transform their pain and suffering into sources of inspiration and creativity. Artists may channel their emotions of trauma into their work to create powerful art that resonates and connects with audiences on a profound level.

In itself, creating art based off of trauma can be used as healing but also as a way of producing a specific outcome that can be sought after by the art world.

Artificial trauma, a term for a self navigated response or actions an artist will inflict upon themselves to produce a specific outcome; an example being Corey Taylor's process to achieve the screams in the heavy metal band Slipknot's 2nd album, Iowa. Taylor was very dissatisfied with how the band was functioning at the time and how his vocals were sounding on the final track on the album, Taylor proceeded to go into a recording booth naked and cut himself with broken glass from bottles and scream into the mic, achieving the sound he was going for, being a prime example for artificial trauma, inducing something negative upon himself to achieve

something emotionally inducing. Trauma, whether from personal experiences or societal pressures, deeply affects how art is made. By exploring these real life struggles and external pressures, we uncover how trauma molds the themes, emotions, and styles with artistic creations. A common theme with great artists is to distort their reality in their work to convey their unique perspectives and emotions, creating a subjective interpretation of the world around them as well as projecting their inner trauma. For example, Van Gogh's use of vibrant colors and swirling brushstrokes within his paintings help reflect his distorted inner reflection, madness, and perception of reality. The use of escapism can serve as a coping mechanism for trauma wounded artists, being a coping mechanism and escape, as well as providing a means to navigate and make sense of experiences. Although, even if the escapism is used purposely to inflict more emotion upon your art, being only with yourself and your emotions, it may negatively affect one's mental health, causing unrealistic expectations and self-deprecation. The distortion of reality in art definitely highlights the subjective nature of perception inside the mind of the artist. In Van Gogh's later years, he went through a manic transformation due to the isolation he put upon himself, eventually leading to psychosis and "mystical revelations" which allowed him to have a creative outburst and make some of his most well renowned paintings.

Negative emotions can also serve as a fuel for creating art, allowing the artist to combine their experiences with their creative expression and create connections between audiences. Representation of trauma can help connect with more people and create a shared understanding with the art and the artist. Francis Bacon, an extremely distinguished artist mainly known for his haunting and distorted portraits, often explored themes of anguish, violence, and existential dread, all stemming from his frightful childhood. His raw depictions of the human condition resonate with viewers and challenge conventional ideas of beauty, mortality, reality, and

highlighting the transformative power of art proving thought in viewers. Bacon's art is characterized by its emotional intensity, distorted figures, and haunting imagery; it reflects his inner turmoil and psychological struggles, connecting back to madness being expressed in art. His paintings often feature contorted and grotesque figures, isolated with claustrophobic suffocating spaces, which convey a sense of existential dread and alienation. One of Bacon's most famous series of paintings is his "Screaming Popes." In these works, Bacon's tortured and anguished figures are distorted and contorted, their faces twisted in the silent screams of agony. These haunting images are often interpreted as reflections of Bacon's own inner torment and existential angst, as well as a commentary of the absurdity and brutality of his childhood with his father. Bacon's personal experiences of trauma, coupled with his fascination with the darker aspects of human existence, extend throughout his work, adding a raw and almost visceral intensity that continues to captivate viewers. His art serves as a testament to the enduring power of artistic expression to confront, explore, and transcend the traumas and tragedies of the human experience, offering a glimpse into the deep and distorted depths of his psyche.

Another artist that experiments with the limits of the human body and mind is Tehching Hsieh. Hsieh is a performance artist that is renowned for his rigorous works that directly challenge the endurance of time/space, and the limits of the human body. Throughout his career, Hsieh often pushed himself to extreme physical and psychological limits in the pursuit of artistic expression. One of his most famous works is his series of "One year Performances", in which he committed to a year long performances, each exploring a different aspect of time and human experience. In his first year long performance, titled "Cage Piece", he locked himself inside a cage in his studio for an entire year with zero contact to the outside world except for a friend who provided him with food and water. This extreme act of self imposed isolation and

confinement with oneself was an extreme risk and a prime example of an artist pushing the limits of their body and mind purely for the sake of expression.

Some artists push themselves to the limits, risking even their mental and physical well-being to create what they want in their art. Bands like Slipknot and artists like Francis Bacon are well known for their intense and self-destructive creative processes, reflecting the extreme pressures and sacrifices artists often face to achieve greatness. In the film “Whiplash,” the protagonist is pushed to his limits by a demanding teacher, greatly reflecting the external pressures artists often face from society, mentors, and themselves. The exploration of artificial trauma and the extreme lengths artists go to push their creative boundaries highlight the complex relationship between creativity, ambition, and mental health. It raises questions about the implications of artistic expression and the sacrifices made in the pursuit of perceived excellence. Despite the challenges and complexities associated with trauma in art, it can also be a therapeutic and healing process, offering artists and viewers alike to understand and cope with trauma. Art therapy is a recognized form of treatment that uses creative expression to help individuals process trauma, promote emotional well-being, and foster personal growth and healing. Vulnerability in art allows the artist and viewer to connect on a deeper level, fostering empathy and understanding. Art therapy utilizes the creative expression in art as a means of communication, involving various art materials and techniques to help individuals explore and process their emotions, thoughts and trauma in a safe and supportive environment. Research has shown that art therapy can be an effective therapeutic intervention for a variety of psychological and emotional issues with studies demonstrating its benefits in reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and trauma, improving self-esteem and enhancing overall emotional well-being.

Trauma deeply influences how art is created, shaping themes, emotions and style within artistic creations. While art can have both positive and negative effects on mental well being, it remains a powerful tool for self expression and for healing. By exploring the ideas and complexities of trauma, artificial or not, we can gain a deeper understanding of its impact on artists and viewers alike, highlighting the importance of vulnerability of the artist in question, and the understanding of the viewer, both in the process of creation and the appreciation. The exploration of trauma in art offers insights into the deep human condition, the power of artistic expression, and the importance of supportive artistic ideals that value creativity, empathy, and emotional well being over all.

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