National College of Art and Design

BA (Hons) Print

The Production of Shame and its Impact on the Creative

By

Rachel Kenny

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NCAD DUBLIN

National College of Art and Design

School of Visual Culture

I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

Signed:
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Introduction

This research document aims to explore the definitions and psychology of shame by drawing on the findings of specialised researchers in the field. The intention of this thesis is to broaden an understanding of shame beyond a common interpretation of its affects and consequences. The questions being investigated are as follows:

1. What is shame?

2. How is shame produced and who is it produced by?

3. How can shame impact creativity?

In deepening an understanding of shame, it becomes possible to see the multifaceted ways in which shame surfaces within the creative field. In chapter one, '*What is Shame?',* the definition of shame is expanded upon in relation to psychologists and specialised researchers within the field. Gershen Kaufman is considered one of the forefathers of investigating shame and its impacts, an established psychologist with much academic research on the topic. The selection of Kaufman as the primary source of inquiry was a conscious decision made on the basis of his treatment towards the subject matter. In an introduction to *Shame: The Power Of Caring* (Kaufman, 1992), Silvan Tomkins comments on Kaufman's conscious, perceptive response to shame in contrast to Lucien Freud who was considered to be more matter-of-fact and rather crass in handling the subject; "We are indebted to Gershen Kaufman for his special sensitivity to the role of shame and its contribution to affect theory, requiring as it did conjointly, affect sensitivity, personal integrity, cognitive depth, and not least, personal courage in exposing his own self to the professional community." This sensitivity to shame was integral to the research. In chapter two, it is evident some of the topics and artworks

mentioned deserved a level of delicacy in writing them thus, Kaufman's work is crucial in relating to them.

When looking at question two, *'How is Shame Produced and Who is it Produced By?'*, the discussion centres around the avenues in which shame is produced and imposed upon the artist. It is important to note that in a broader sense, no one person or system can be entirely responsible for another's emotions. However, when inquiring about external factors that can invoke shame, it is evident that what is followed is inaction by virtue of avoidance behaviours which will be discussed in more detail in chapter one. Furthermore, when observing the definition of shame (verb), the research finds that it is in fact a plausible argument worth questioning. In chapter two, the writings of Andrea Fraser regarding institutional critique and Hans Abbing on the economy of the arts, provide a backing for shame induced with regards to financial and societal factors. Andrea Fraser has many critical writings on these topics of the antagonism and inequality within the art world. These writings are primarily with a foundation in institutional critique and this thesis is arguing that these critiques are not at all distant from observing the impacts of shame.

Chapter three will reference the manifestation of shame in creativity, in relation to Andy Warhol and David Wojnarowicz. In response to question three, *'In What Ways Can Shame Impact Creativity?',* the discussion looks exclusively at these selected artists referenced in Olivia Laing's *The Lonely City* (2016). Laing explores the topic of loneliness in her genre-crossing reflective research-based book. Instigated by a personal experience of loneliness - which she reveals through anecdotal introductions - she investigates the apparent or underlying presence of loneliness and shame in many infamous artworks. In some examples, what is categorised as shame may be originally referred to as loneliness; Laing

uses the two words interchangeably. Moreover, from the research gathered in defining shame

in chapter one, the correlation between the two becomes apparent.[1]

Chapter One: What is shame?

<u>1a. Shame Expanded</u>

SHAME   noun

<div align="center">

1

</div>

a: a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety
b: the susceptibility to such emotion

have you no *shame*?

<div align="center">

2

</div>

a: a condition of humiliating disgrace or disrepute : IGNOMINY

the *shame* of being arrested

<div align="center">

3

</div>

a: something that brings censure or reproach

also : something to be regretted : PITY

it's a *shame* you can't go

b: a cause of feeling shame

(Merriam-Webster, unknown)

The most debilitating emotion, the most devastating in its consequences, and the most difficult to talk about.
(Dr Harriet Lerner in HMP, B. 2020)

Although a familiar and somewhat colloquial term, our understanding of shame is equally as prevalent as our acknowledgement and receptivity to it.[2] The lack of dialogue is no error. Gershen Kaufman states in *The psychology of shame: Theory and treatment of shame-based syndromes* (2004, p.4); "Why is shame consistently overlooked? Because shame remains under taboo in contemporary society…Indeed there is a significant degree of shame about shame, causing it to remain hidden". Shame is considered a self-reflective, evaluative emotion. (Tangney, 2003, cited in Terrizzi and Shook, 2020) In that regard, is it any wonder

there is a tabooness around shame, thus a lack of discourse surrounding it? Shame naturally

incites the intention to *hide* feelings of shame as stated by Schmader and Lickel (2006,

p.44-46); moreover Silvan Tomkins (in Kaufman, 1992) posits the reluctance to disclose a

personal feeling of shame is induced by the deeper, more fearful feeling of inferiority. Shame

is highly personal and antagonistic in the ways it diminishes the value of the self to the point

where avoidance and suppression are seen as preferable; the severity of shame is

characterised by resulting in" global self-condemnation." (Tangney, 1991; Niedenthal et al.,

1994 cited in Terrizzi and Shook, 2020).

> Shame is also acutely disturbing to the self. In fact, no other affect is more deeply
> disturbing. Like a wound made from the inside by an unseen hand, shame disrupts the
> natural functioning of the self.
> (Kaufman, 2004. p.5)

Furthermore, shame encourages "self-evaluative ruminations that are degrading and pervade

all aspects of the self." (Terrizzi and Shook, 2020, p.2) I repeat the words above from

Gershen Kaufman (2004, p.5), "shame is acutely disturbing to the self" - the consequences of

it being that the perception of the self is as being "innately flawed". (Terrizzi and Shook,

2020, p.2) In the vast majority of academia investigating shame, the outcome is consistent; 1.

Shame causes poignant distress and hurt upon the self; 2. Shame *promotes* shame and a desire

to hide; 3. It is conclusively a paradigm of pain.

1b.The Products of Shame: Decision-Making and Avoidance Behaviours

Society is becoming ever-more fast-paced - particularly in a world post-COVID-19 - and the

imposing modern culture of productivity is increasingly competitive, that of which most

cannot match. Kaufman elaborates on this further: "The continuing evolution of our technological society is creating ever-new pressures that individuals are increasingly responding to with shame." (2004, p4) If we are responding to these competitive standards within society with shame, how does this impact the creative class, a field known for its lack of stability? I refer back to Silvan Tomkins excellent introduction to *Shame: The Power Of Caring* (Kaufman, 1992), which elaborates on how feelings of shame are amplified within cultures that place considerable value on achievement and success. Kaufman (1992, p.32) further investigates the shame culture in the Western world, speaking of how an expression of a uniqueness in personality is heavily shunned. Furthermore, "in a culture which esteems popularity and conformity, individuality is neither recognized nor valued…To avoid shame, one must avoid being different, or seen as different." (Kaufman, 1992, p.32) It is becoming less desirable to chase authenticity and yet authenticity is what is most highly sought after, particularly in the viewing, purchasing and collecting of art.

> The self-conscious moral emotions can exert a strong influence on moral choice and behavior by providing critical feedback regarding both anticipated behavior. (Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek, 2007, p.3)

Shame is often used interchangeably with guilt, its sister emotion. While both shame and guilt are classified as self-conscious emotions (Tangney, 1995), they differ in their emotional experiences and thus behavioural outcomes. (Terrizzi and Shook, 2020) J.P. Tangney (1991, p.598) discussed the theoretical and empirical usefulness in distinguishing the behavioural outcomes between the two. Shame is closely linked to avoidance behaviours. Toni Schmander and Brian Lickel in *The approach and avoidance function of guilt and shame emotions: Comparing reactions to self-caused and other-caused wrongdoing* (2006, p.43) contest "avoidance motivation is typically associated with behavior designed to avoid losses". It is often deemed a necessity to separate definitions of guilt and shame, yet they continue to

be often used interchangeably. Schmander and Lickel composed an experiment to compare feelings of shame or guilt felt for the actions of oneself in contrast to feelings of shame or guilt arising from the actions of others. Their hypothesis is that "shame and guilt will be more motivationally distinct when the causal agent of the wrongdoing is someone other than the self." In other words, when observing the perceived "wrongdoings" of others, a shame response is triggered more so than guilt, whereas in relating to oneself shame and guilt can often overlap. Their findings uncover that in both cases, shame instigates a desire to withdraw from one's own misdeeds, whether it is self-caused or other-caused.[3] (Schmander and Lickel, 2006, p.54)

When defining shame, the layperson can describe it in words, and yet shame is an emotion which is felt in the body. So how does shame affect the body and how can that lead to decision-making? Silvan Tomkins (in Sarafino, 2002) states that "humans wish to maximise positive and minimise negative affect." More importantly, the consequences of this are often considered as the basis of motivation and thus affect becomes an integral determinant of decision-making processes. (Tomkins in Sarafino, 2002) Put simply, decision-making is primarily motivated by a desire to minimise negativity. If we revise the original definitions of shame at the beginning of this chapter, it is unquestionable that shame would be classified under "negative affect", thus corroborating the need to avoid shame at all costs. We can draw from this, the conclusion that shame promotes inaction by virtue of these avoidance behaviours.
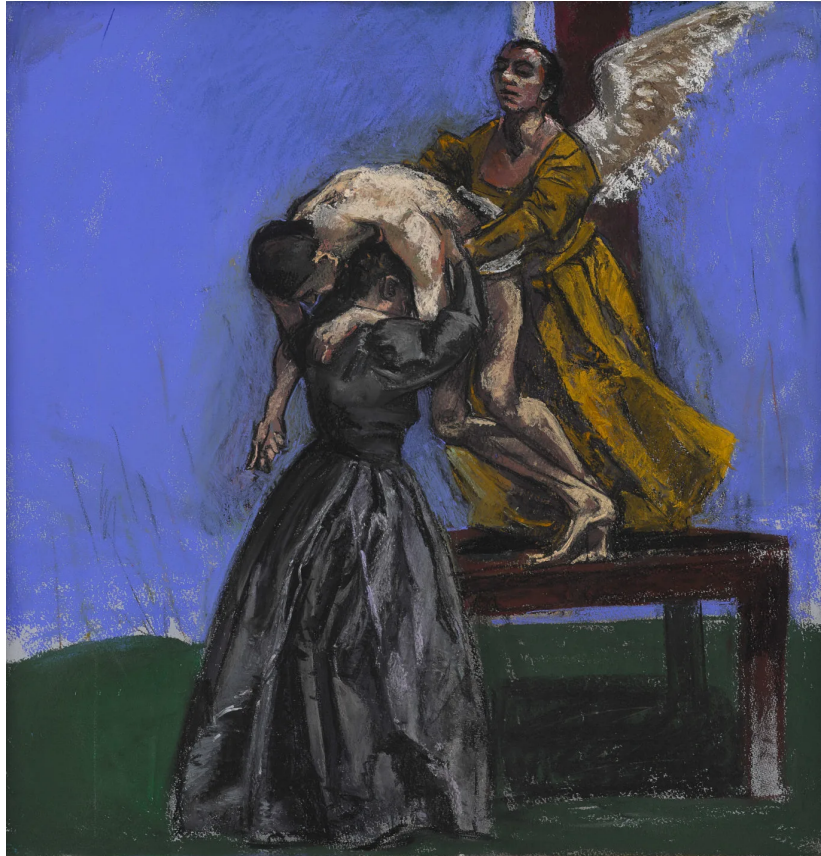
Figure 1: Rego, P. (2002) *Descent from the Cross*. [Pastel on paper mounted on aluminum].

Available at: https://online.victoria-miro.com/paula-rego-venice-2022/ (Accessed

09/01/2023)

The charm of knowledge would be small, were it not so much shame has to be overcome on the way to it.

(Nietzsche, 2013. p90)

Poets behave impudently towards their experiences: they exploit them.

(Nietzsche, 2013. p104)

Friedrich Nietzsche speaks of the usefulness of shame in *Beyond Good and Evil* (2013). Originally published in 1886, the book is a collection of two hundred ninety-six Aphorisms, described as being weapons of critique. (Marsden, 2006) Two of them speak of the usefulness of shame. The first explores how the fear of ignorance can be a motivating factor to avoid shame, presenting the argument that it is a necessary inhibitor for obtaining knowledge and education. In the many alternative editions of *Beyond Good and Evil* (2013), the phrasing of the second aphorism quoted above, alternates its wording between "impudently" and "shamelessly". It is this shameless activity I am interested in exploring, when considering the usefulness of shame for the artist.

Nietzsche wrote of the artist exploiting their hardship to enliven their work and bring authenticity to it. The role of the artist, one could argue, is to portray the world through a unique lens, an inadvertently exposing disposition - the rawness of a work relating directly to the personal experiences of the artist. Robert Wuthnow (2001) believes as artists, we can "offer insights into the ineffable aspects of the human condition."

The honest portrayal of emotion within an artist's work is often commemorated by its viewers. Hans Abbing writes of the growing value of authenticity in modern society in *Why*

Are Artists Poor (2008, p.26): "since the Renaissance, authenticity [within artworks] has gradually become one of the highest ideals in modern society." Shame, as Nietszche believed, can become a catalyst in exploiting that authenticity.

Furthermore, when defining shame it is important to note that within the English language, shame can be expressed in two ways, as a noun and also as a verb.

SHAME   verb
transitive verb

1

a: to bring shame to : DISGRACE
shamed the family name

2

a: to put to shame by outdoing

3

a: to cause to feel shame

4

a: to force by causing to feel guilty
shamed into confessing

(Merriam-Webster, unknown)

Maria Paula Figueiroa Rego, otherwise known as Paula Rego, is most famously known for her fairytale-esque paintings, often startling viewers with their unreserved and adult themes of violence and aggressive feminism. An interesting concept within Rego's work is the incentive to expose the viewer's shame. In 2002, Rego was commissioned by the President of Portugal to compile a selection of work inspired by the Virgin Mary's life; these works were further titled *Nossa Senhora* and contained eight works in the collection, among them *Descent from the Cross* (2002) *(figure. 1)* Keeping in line with her themes of feminism, Rego placed this worshipped, religious figure "into scenes of ordinary female experience,

represented with realistic intensity - terrible suffering in childbirth, for example - and consequently scandalized and repulsed many viewers… Paula Rego has drawn on [these themes] for their confrontation with abuses of power, their honesty about opportunism and injustice and rivalry." (Warner in Mitchell, J., 2019, p22)

Perhaps it is this commanding confrontation to shame as an artist speaking to their viewers that Nietszche was conceiving as exploitative, sincerely without malice but pure authenticity. One can note the sheer commendation when observing response to Rego's work; Marina Warner (in Mitchell, J., 2019. pp19) for example, states the following upon analysing Rego's work. She summarises; "The artist has commented that she 'paints to give fear a face', and her work looks deeply into the depths; but if she is giving fear a face she does so fearlessly, and the results have a raw honesty that can be shattering and sharply awakening to those of us who are admitted into these recesses."

Chapter Two: How is shame produced and who is it produced by?

Shame can operate in many ways, but its main purpose, according to Daniel Fessler, serves to maintain hierarchical social systems. (Fessler, 2004, p.249)

2a. What is "real art" and who determines it?

"The way people define art is an important preliminary subject for anyone studying the economy of the arts," according to visual artist and economist Hans Abbing in '*Why Are Artists Poor?*' (2008, p.32) The importance of analysing the economy of the arts weighs on the fact that the art world contains within it a very strict hierarchical system which is how and where shame is produced within the field. Abbing elaborates further on this, stating that the power to define art is not distributed equally among the social classes being that "art is aristocratic". (2008, p.27)[4]

> People in higher positions have a de facto larger say in the definition of art than people in lower positions. Whether they are aware of it or not, people in higher positions appropriate the definition of art.
> (Abbing, 2008, p.23)

Andrea Fraser - a renowned American artist known for work which attempts to expose the hypocrisies within the art world (Fraser, 2012) - has many critical writings on the subject of institutional critique that are important in providing context for the shame produced within these systems of control in the art world. In the words of Max Haiven in *Art and money: Three aesthetic strategies in an age of financialisation* (2015), Fraser contextualises the "all-too-intimate connection between contemporary, critical art and the financial elite" in her work. In the abstract alone from 'Why Are Artists Poor?' Hans Abbing (2008) states,

"financial hardship is an established source of shame"; the inevitability of the artist experiencing financial hardship - consider the stereotype of the struggling artist - makes the connection apparent.

The first wave of Institutional Critique began in the late 1960s, with artists such as Hans Haacke leading the way for artists of the second wave in the late 1980s. This brought with it a new perspective through the lens of Andrea Fraser. Institutional Critique is rather self-explanatory in its definition; it is a criticism of institutions. Within the art world, these critiques take many different forms such as in works of art, critical writings and activism. Fraser is an artist who fights against these institutions in a multitude of ways within her work. She utilises concepts of subordination in her work "as a form of counter-practice within the field of cultural production." There are works in which "[she feels herself] to be dominated" and there are works where "[she feels herself] to be dominant". (Fraser in Beshty, 2015. p.96)

> At all levels of the art world, one finds extreme wealth breezing past grinding poverty, from the archetypal struggling artist to the often temporary and benefitless studio and gallery assistants
> (Fraser, 2012, p.29)

The "winner-takes-all" market in the art world is precisely what Fraser was disputing within her work. Correspondingly, these cut-throat systems evidently detach themselves from even the slightest sense of compassion, a matter which does not sit well with those who are involved in the practice of institutional critique. Creatives such as Fraser speak for the artists who are angered by these hierarchical systems of control and wealth that diminish the efforts and care that goes into their work. Furthermore, they refuse to cooperate, thus potentially harming their own future success as they are entirely on their own.

> Much of art discourse, like art itself today, seems to me to be driven by the struggle to manage and contain the poisonous combination of envy and guilt provoked by that complicity and by participation in the highly competitive, winner-take-all market the art field has become, as well as the shame of being valued as less-than in its precipitous hierarchies.
> (Fraser in Beshty, 2015. p.70-71)

Andrea Fraser discloses above, the structures of competitive hierarchies within it. The extract, taken from an article of hers titled *There's No Place Like Home* (2012), speaks of a toxicity within the art world, a culture that, according to Fraser, values money above all. Fraser points out that a lot of the art institutions today, such as museums and galleries, are overseen by members who are more interested in improving their professional portfolios, thereby raising their own market value. (Haiven, 2020, p.352) Hans Abbing would argue that this goes entirely against the hope of the "selfless" (2008, p.28) artist in pursuing their creativity.

On the other hand, Abbing states that some would argue that "the selfless artist does not exist." (2008, p.82) It shows that capitalism and elitism is slowly turning what was once a "sacred" practice into empty white spaces and filling them with greed. (Abbing, 2008, p.105) The authenticity of the artist is becoming less attractive, begging the question of whether people *can* take the economic and social gamble to be authentic; or do they stay within certain boundaries to get by and not risk the shame of being criticised?

> The well-being of a commercial artist depends on external rewards like money, recognition, fame and not on the 'making of art'. A noncommercial artist, one

'selflessly' devoted to art, on the other hand, is only concerned with the 'making of art'. There are no external rewards..
(Abbing, 2008, p.82)

This extract from *Why Are Artists Poor?* (2008) speaks to that exact risk of authenticity in a brutally commercial, capitalistic world. It appears that in modern society the chances of "rewards" are in fact too slim to gamble on. Furthermore, the possibility of what is an institutional definition of failure, is high, thus promoting the aforementioned characteristic behavioural consequences of shame; avoidance. This risk of shame and poverty often outweighs the hopeful pursuit of the selfless artist. In the words of Hans Abbing: "However miraculous art may be, it cannot fill an empty stomach." (2008, p.213)

Chapter Three: How Can Shame Impact Creativity?

Figure 2 Warhol, A. (1962) *Campbell's Soup Cans*. [Synthetic polymer paint on thirty-two

canvases] Museum of Modern Art. Available at:

https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/andy-warhol-campbells-soup-cans-1962/

(Accessed 20/12/2022)

Figure 3 Rowntree, D. (1983) *David Wojnarowicz Painting at Pier 34*. [Photograph]

Available at:

https://www.queerspacestudies.com/new-york-piers?lightbox=dataItem-jblx95a5 (Accessed

14/01/2023)

Figure 4 Wojnarowicz, D. (1989) *Untitled (Peter Hujar)*. [Photography]. Available at:

https://glreview.org/portrait-of-a-face/ (Accessed 14/01/2023)

<u>3a. Shame and loneliness</u>

> What does it feel like to be lonely? It feels like being hungry: like being hungry when everyone around you is readying for a feast. It feels shameful and alarming, and over time these feelings radiate outwards, making the lonely person increasingly isolated, increasingly estranged.
> (Laing, 2016, p.11)

> People feel ashamed for who they are.
> (Schmader and Lickel, 2006, p.46)

The correlation between loneliness and shame is apparent as stated by Ethan H. Mereish; the effects of shame may be mediated through cognitive, inner processes (e.g., loneliness). (2015, p.7) A noteworthy example features within chapter three of Olivia Laing's *The Lonely City* (2016). In "My Heart Opens to Your Voice", its chosen featured artist is Andy Warhol and the topic is of the subtle hints of a shameful loneliness within his work. Perhaps the absence of shame in the discussion of Warhol's work can be explained: "Self-enhancement biases might lead one to avoid calling their own behavior shameful since doing so implies that one is somehow flawed." (Schmader and Lickel, 2006, p.54) This certainly ties in with Warhol, a person who overtly displayed self-esteem issues and would despise an acknowledgement of shame protruding from his work, and yet it presented itself nonetheless. In this respect, Warhol displays the characteristic traits of shame as a noun: denial and avoidance.

In "My Heart Opens to Your Voice", speech is at the forefront in discussing Warhol's work and the idea of being misunderstood or found to be unintelligible is its centre theme. (Laing, 2016, p.49) In explaining her own found sense of dumbness, Laing theorises it to be "a way of evading hurt, dodging the pain of failed communication." (2016, p.50) Though Warhol, through his speech, oftentimes appeared uninterested, his appearance suggested otherwise;

Laing describes him in a particular interview where his responses imply he is disengaged and yet "he looks almost sick with nerves, his make-up not quite concealing the red nose that was the bane of his existence and which he tried repeatedly to improve with cosmetic surgery." (2016, p.51)

Laing further discusses Warhol's problems with speech, beginning at a younger age, and how easily one could miss that much of his work in adulthood was devoted to human speech. Never one to be deemed as socially desirable, Warhol also suffered from physical awkwardness, an illness that left his face covered in red blotches and speaking English, his second language, with a heavy accent, marking him as among the lowest of the immigrant working classes. (Laing, 2016, p51-54)

Detailing the beginning of his artistic trajectory Laing states; "There he started…the arduous process of building a career as a commercial illustrator. The same rounds of magazine editors, dragging a portfolio, though in Raggedy Andy's case it was a brown paper bag. The same grinding poverty, the same shame at its exposure." (2016, p.55) Years later in the 1960s, Warhol found himself to be the most famous Pop Artist in the world. Most are familiar with his trademark repetitious style focusing on regular, mundane objects - such as can be seen in the infamous *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962) *(figure. 2)* - however, with the knowledge of his painfully difficult upbringing, *The Lonely City* offers, in a new light, the following observation:

> Sameness, especially for the immigrant, the shy boy agonisingly aware of his failures to fit in, is a profoundly desirable state; an antidote against the pain of being singular, alone, all one, the medieval root from which the word lonely emerges.
> (Laing, 2016, p59)

Warhol was fixated on the notion of becoming a machine, a phrase he repeated throughout his career: "The reason I'm painting this way is that I want to be a machine, and I feel that whatever I do and do machine-like is what I want to do?" (Warhol in Swenson, 1963). Laing explores this further, specifying that as a result of becoming a machine, one utilises "physical devices as a way of filling the uncomfortable, sometimes unbearable space between self and world." (2016, p.62)

Warhol struggled with intimacy; wanting connection and yet being so afraid of it - "I need B because I can't be alone. Except when I sleep. Then I can't be with anyone" (Warhol, 1977, p.5) - and he found that machines "liberated him from the burden of needing other people." (Laing, 2006, p.62) This leads to his tapes. Warhol's tape-recorder became such a satisfactory replacement for human connection, he nicknamed it "my wife" (Warhol, 1977, p.27). Laing describes the tape-recorder as "the ideal intermediary" in the way it served to maintain distance from others. (2016, p.67)

Warhol's book *a: A Novel* (1998) was a collaboration between he and his "wife", the tape-recorder. Originally it set out to follow American actor Robert Olive - known by his stage name Ondine - for twenty-four hours, however it soon became a collection of four taped sessions. A fascinating discovery that emerges from *a* (1998), is the distinction between over and under indulgence; giving too much and not enough. Ondine unwittingly exposes his inner critic in statements such as, "please shut it off, I'm so horrifying", (Warhol, 1998, p.264) whereas Warhol's stance as disciplinarian leaves him in a dominant position, revealing nothing. At times, others urge Warhol to disclose his own deeper feelings, which he invariably attempts to shut down. Laing describes this juxtaposition as: "Either you don't

communicate enough and remain concealed from other people, or you risk rejection by exposing too much altogether: the minor and major hurts, the tedious obsessions, the abscesses and cataracts of need and shame and longing." (2016, p75) Needless to say, *a* (1998) exposes the raw fear of judgement and shame in its star, Ondine, and its silent creator, Warhol.

3b. Shame and Stigmatisation

> It is not surprising that one of [stigmatizations] main consequences is loneliness, which is further accelerated by shame, the two things amplifying and driving one another.
>
> (Laing, 2016, p190)

In contrast to Andy Warhol (an artist arguably unaware of his shame) David Wojnarowvicz showcases both awareness and defiance against shame within his work. Wojnarowicz encompasses many traits of the outsider artist, though not typically labelled as such, and yet his history would imply the same. Outsider artists are typically self-taught and untrained, usually suffering from mental illness and raised within systems of poverty and oftentimes abuse.[5] An unknown figure in his early twenties, Wojnarowvicz would become a pioneer in the queer community, giving a voice to diversity and equality within his art, focusing on how the "individual can survive within an antagonistic society." (Laing, 2016, p.99)

Olivia Laing, in her beautiful, prose-like style of writing, describes the story of Wojnarowvicz as "emphatically a story about masks: why you might need them, why you

might mistrust them, why they might be necessary for survival." (2016, p.100) The intensity and weight of the words is not misplaced, for Wojnarowvicz was tragically not unfamiliar with violence in his life. Born into a troubled household in September 1954, his parents's divorce became the catalyst of a string of inauspicious events; child abuse, kidnapping by his own father followed by abandonment followed by exposure to homophobic and sexist violence to name just a few. Upon entering mid-childhood, his circumstances remained steadily appalling. In his memoir *Close to the Knives,* (1991) he recounts instances of assault by his father; "I didn't think of what it felt like as a five- or six-year old being dragged down the basement stairs and having my head and body hit with a dog chain or a sawed-off chunk of two-by-four." The trauma he faced in childhood is unspeakable and respectively it is unthinkable to assume that this would not follow him into adulthood and furthermore his art.

The piers in West Side Manhattan, New York, could be classified as almost a sacred ground for the queer community in the late 1970s to early 1980s. Running along the Hudson river, the piers consisted of deteriorating buildings where many homeless squatted, and despite it being considerably unsafe - many murders and attacks happened there - there was a sense of infinite possibility in the landscape. Wojnarowicz's diary entries from *In the Shadow of the American Dream* (2000) take place over the time period of his sexual exploitation along the West Side piers.

The piers were a particular haven for gay men an that time, a fact that remained inconspicuous because of its taboo nature until the beginning of the 1980s AIDS epidemic in the United States. To understand what it meant to be not only a gay man at that time, but a gay artist, one must read the diaries of Wojnarowicz - or simply hear him speak; for example, in an interview with Matthew Rose, Wojnarowicz says "These artists do have a greater sense

of mortality, and it's affected what images they've selected." (Rose, 1988). By "these artists",

he is of course referring to those who had been diagnosed with the disease. To lose one's

friends and to bear witness to the devastation of disease; these are the facets that altered the

course of Wojnarowicz's work. In facing mortality at such a young age, he discovered a

passion for truth and speech.

> It's in the midst of my facing my mortality, I need so much in terms of what gestures I
> make in my work. I put all this stuff out there in a state, a whirl of sensory
> examination, and what is it I want or need? I want to open a window on my soul on
> my body on my loves and anxieties. I want to open a window on who and what I am.
> (Wojnarowicz, 2000)

Wojnarowvicz was persistently critical of mainstream U.S. culture, calling it the "Universe of

the Neatly Clipped Lawn" (Wojnarowvicz, 1991) This anger was only amplified by the

stigmatisation that followed the AIDS epidemic. To have been diagnosed at that time meant

you were suddenly an object of disgust, subject to disgrace and shame, rather than a person

who needed support and care. The AIDS epidemic only furthered to antagonise an already

marginalised group; it heightened homophobia and inflamed existing contempt. An

interesting observation from Olivia Laing; the stigmatisation of those diagnosed with AIDS

served to paint them as "literally untouchable" - the act of intercourse becoming even more

taboo. In doing so, shaming the act that was previously "the antidote to shame and isolation"

is quite a striking tragedy. (Laing, 2016, p.188-190)

Wojnarowivz documented with love, the world of the piers, a world of unadulterated

freedom, inhibition and authenticity, both in his diaries and in his art. *(figure. 3)* Following

the death of his friend and mentor Peter Hujar (b. 1934 - 1987) his work only intensified in its

passion and desire to spread his message of mortality and the frailty of life. "My feelings

about time are different, things have much more meaning" states Wojnarowicz, "It's a sense of pressure". (Rose, 1988) Anger and tenderness are words often used to describe Wojnarowicz's work at that time; anger at the system that was advancing the stigma against he and his friends; tenderness in the loving and gentle portrayal of those affected by the crisis. Such can be seen in "*Untitled,*" 1989, a collection of photographs at the hospital bedside of his dear friend Peter Hujar. (*figure. 4)*

Wojnarowicz's relationship with shame differs greatly from that of Andy Warhol's. The role of stigmatisation and childhood plays a large role in how these two artists contrast in both their behaviour towards shame and portrayal of it.

Conclusion

Upon first glance, it can be difficult to say whether, fundamentally, shame serves a purpose. As studied by Tangey and Fischer (p126), it is a maladaptive approach: The Cambridge Dictionary defines "maladaptive" as "having an adaptation (= changed feature) that is not suitable for particular conditions." (Cambridge, unknown) Thus translating shame as an inappropriate response. This aligns with Kaufman's research on shame, defining it as disruptive to the natural functioning of the self. (Kaufman, 2004. p.5)

The question arises then as to whether shame is merely a response to conditioning and judgement upon the self. Others such as Daniel Fessler, would argue that shame *does* serve an important function beyond that of self-castigation, such as in maintaining hierarchical social systems. When noting the observations of Andrea Fraser on Institutional Critique, one can understand the resistance against shame and its maintenance of these structures.

I would agree on behalf of Gershen Kaufman who offers a solution to the problem of shame: "Other cultures, for example, Eastern and Mediterranean, are organized more openly around shame and its counterpart, honor. What we need in our culture is to honor shame, and thereby redeem it." (1992, p.33) Olivia Laing states in *The Lonely City* (2016), the impossibility of intimacy if the participants are reluctant in making themselves known, to being truly seen.[6] Perhaps in Warhol's case, he was attempting vulnerability without truly risking himself and the hurt of shame - a very human thing to do. For Wojnarowicz, the shame that was produced upon him and his community within the piers was expressed in passionate, heart-rendering work.

Neither one portrayal is more correct than the other; what has remained is the ghost of two

utterly gifted and hurt people expressing their pain in different ways. Perhaps that is why

their legacy has left such a mark; the honesty of their pain ringing true in others hearts,

inciting empathy and compassion.

In the spirit of honouring shame, I believe it to be fitting then to conclude in the words of

Olivia Laing:

> Loneliness, longing, does not mean one has failed, but simply that one is alive.
> (Laing, 2016, p.280)

Notes

1. Perhaps, the tabooness of shame itself is the reason that shame is mentioned so infrequently. I mention this theory later in the essay with reference to psychologist Gershen Kaufman, who writes on the shame *of* shame itself within society.

2. In modern society, where the discourse surrounding mental health has progressed immensely, it seems as though a one-step-forward, two-steps-back approach has dawned. In Ireland alone, the facilitating of fundraising events have been instrumental for the exposure of hidden taboo topics. However, they are fruitless beyond the fundamental aspect that enables a universal healing: openness.

3. This was useful information when looking at question three, *How is shame produced and who is it produced by?*

4. *When looking at what is deemed "real art" by both classes:* "Research has shown that social classes are not only vaguely aware of each other's preferences, but that they order them more or less similarly. What is high for the editor is also high for the printer. Therefore judgments regarding art are largely similar between various social groups. They run parallel. However, judgments concerning each other's art choices do not run similar. On the contrary, they are asymmetrical…People have notions regarding the art of other social groups and they assess these notions. Group A puts down the art of group B, while group B looks up to the art choices made by group A. I call this the phenomenon of *asymmetric judgement* or *cultural asymmetry*." (Abbing, 2008, p.21)

5. In researching the definition of Outsider Art, I came across the following journal of philosophy, noting the issues in the terming and treatment of outsider art: "Artists who have been designated as outsiders rarely enjoy the fruits of their success. Indeed, the market value of outsider artists depends on their disenfranchisement; art dealers and investors are, therefore, motivated to keep them on the fringes of the art world. This situation invites exploitation of artists with disabilities. Moreover, the very notion of outsider art is deeply problematic." (Prinz, 2017, p.250) If possible, I would be curious to explore these issues further and investigate the link between outsider art and shame, however it is a topic the word count of this thesis would not allow for. Nonetheless, an interesting observation of the outsider artist.

6. Dr Brene Brown, who specialises in shame research, believes shame to be the core of unhappiness. Dr Brown, through thorough investigation, uncovers a group of people living in what she calls "the wholehearted way". These people do not suffer from the hurt of shame through what she deems as the antidote - their vulnerability and openness. Another key component to wholehearted living as stated by Dr Brown, was the necessity in cultivating a creative practice. This connection between shame and creativity is another fascinating correlation between two seemingly unrelated things and yet further proves their coexistence and relationship. (Brown, 2010)

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