

## Personal Intimacy & Emotions: Individual Approaches

### About Emin

‘There should be something revelatory about art. It should be totally creative and open doors for new thoughts and experiences.’ - Tracey Emin

Emin’s work is and has always been profoundly personal, exposing her memories, emotions, and experiences in a raw, soul-baring way. Her work not only shocks the audience by its candor but also makes them think about their own personal journeys. This is what brought us to Emin as an artist.

A graduate of the Royal College of Art, London, she was part of the loose collective Young British Artists, which are a group of artists (primarily graduates from Goldsmiths College of Art, London) in the late 1980s and who had no strong stylistic similarities other than their experimental nature and openness to different forms art can take - which included the use of daily objects as a canvas. YBAs soon became a label and a marketing strategy not only for the artists who were a part of it but also for the period’s British art in general. Some notable names from this collective include Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas, and Cornelia Parker. Emin didn’t become as established as her contemporaries until the *Minky Manky* show in 1995 where she displayed *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With* (upon a challenge by the show’s curator and also her partner at the time, Carl Freedman) that she received a lot of attention. The work consisted of a tent on which she had stitched the names of everybody she had ever slept with,

sexually and literally. This created a stylistic precedent for Emin's work - largely raw, reflective and revealing. This work was later acquired by Charles Saatchi, an art collector to whom Tracey refused to sell directly because of his support for Margaret Thatcher. A fire destroyed this work along with other major works that were a part of Saatchi's collection. Over the decades, the artist has refused to recreate this piece.

### The Artwork in its contemporary artistic context

Jenny Holzer and Tania Bruguera, one of the well-known contemporary artists whose artwork are presented in the Tate Museum, the same place where Tracey Emin's artwork is displayed.<sup>12</sup> The important role of text in art is also demonstrated in Jenny Holzer's artistic production, where the text is the center of each individual artwork. Embodied in LED signs, the texts are sometimes contradictory, but utterly straightforward and powerful.<sup>3</sup> Conveying strong messages through her words, the artist aims to create an invoice of human mental capacities in the dark side and social justice.<sup>4</sup> The appearance of the human body of the artist herself in the artwork is also present in Turbine Hall commission in Tate Modern directed by Tania Bruguera, a Cuban artist, and activist.<sup>5</sup> Configuring into several gestures with emotional background music, she performed a series of delicate performances that invited the audience to become a part of her artwork. Associating her body posture with imprints of human body forms projected on

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the ground, the artist aims to bring attention to the uncertainty of danger and the large population of immigrants in the immigration crisis.<sup>67</sup> All three artists have in common, coming from their own culture, the specific issues that they personally relate to, leaving their artwork open to the public for unlimited approaches.

### Sad Shower in New York

Tracey Emin created *Sad Shower in New York* in 1995 and it is a part of her monoprint series. It belongs to the Tate Collection and was presented by Patrons of New Art (Special Purchase Fund) in 1999. The series has a journal-like approach to it (using text and an informal drawing style) and conveys events from the artist's past. They are usually displayed as a series and are more effective as they provide a whole view of the Emin's different emotional journeys.

Emin began using printmaking as a medium for her art from the 1980s being heavily influenced by Egon Schiele. This particular artwork was made when she was feeling "dejected and despondent" on one of her travels to foreign cities for exhibitions. This closely relates to her other works as depictions of raw emotional pieces inviting the viewer in her private and vulnerable place.

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The context in which this print was made is during Emin's travels in 1995 while exhibiting *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With* (mentioned above) alongside the Young British Artists.

In a 2004 display of this work in Tate, viewers got to caption the image - captions ranging from 'Badly drawn Emin', 'Exhibit removed for cleaning. Temporarily replaced by a copy drawn by Hannah, age 3, during her school outing to the gallery' to 'Good use of space to emphasize a sense of loneliness. With the figure looking outwards over her shoulder, you also begin to gain a sense of sadness within the simplicity of the form.' were reported by the BBC News. This was an attempt by Tate to create an interactive experience for the audience.

### Our Work

With three individual artworks, we aim to recapture the nature of intimacy and emotional turmoil as depicted in Tracey Emin's monoprint, *Sad Shower in New York* through our own takes and individual narratives.

Stay - Yvonne Wang by Priscilla Yang

Displaying a collection of Yvonne Wang's personal photos on a black curtain, in a dark space with pink neon light creating a moody atmosphere, becoming an important part of the piece as a whole. Some photos contain a line of text, adding a narrative to the scene

captured by others or herself. These photos show an intimate part of her relationship through a glimpse of different points in time. The audience does not see the full picture but can experience feelings from the specific photos chosen in the display. The photos, some presented with one or more lines of text, seem like fragments of a film. The storyline starts with a clear sight of the streets from the top view, the artist questioning their encounter, waiting, meeting each other conveyed through the touch between hands, parting from each other, showing her personal space, reflecting on the worthiness of waiting for the person, and ends with a blurry view of the city. Rather than following the artistic style of the original artwork, Wang emphasizes the reveal of privacy also present in *Sad Shower in New York* by Tracey Emin.

*Unpredictable Rain in Paris* - Priscilla Yang by Aditi Somani

*Unpredictable Rain in Paris* is a series of illustrated cards that come framed inside a larger folded sheet. The illustrations deal with a figure (the artist herself) and her journey with her umbrella - both negative and positive. The illustrations are supported by poems on the other side of the card of which there are eight in total. The artist comments on the ironic placement of the shower as a shelter in *Sad Shower in New York* by making parallels between the shower and the umbrella, the tool that protects her at times and fails to do so the other times, ultimately teaching her life lessons.

Yang's illustrative and poetic voices are clear and neat in its communication. There seems to be a gentle melancholiness to the words like in, 'I felt blown away by the wind/ On the street corner/ It came unexpectedly/ And blew my hair,/ Blew my coat/ And all that was

left of me'. Here we can imagine the frailness of the human body, and maybe the spirit, against the natural forces. The poems also begin to feel like lessons to be taught with the ominous voice Yang takes, for example in, 'I see the sun/ the moon/ And all of the universe ahead of me'.

These voices communicate the tone as an ode to Emin in the quietness of the voice which seems to cover the viewer in a blanket of the both the artists' narratives.

*Things I Could've Said* - Aditi Somani by Yvonne Wang

*Things I Could've Said* is an installation piece consisting of a shower curtain hanging on a rack. Dropping down to the floor, the translucent curtain welcomes daylight which softens the texts written with charcoal. The words 'things' flow on the curtain; some are erased but the traces left still can be seen clearly, as if the words appear and fade away spontaneously. The main text 'Things I could've said but didn't' is in the center of the composition, surrounded by the charcoal marks and the smudge. There's a sense of overwhelming through the repeating text, while a sense of void comes from the empty space she left and the negative space between the rack and the curtain. The chosen materials shows the vulnerability and the unstableness of personal thoughts in the shower space with a organic form and style.

Inspired by the piece *Sad shower in New York*, Somani demonstrates the time alone in a private space with simple elements as Emin did. Revealing her own voice in a subtle way, the viewers cannot tell what were the 'things' really on her mind but perceive a strong

and intimate affect through her authentic means. We can reflect on our internal experience by having a glimpse of both artists' emotional journey.

Together, three personal perspectives provide space for the audience to interpret the meaning behind these intimate documentations.

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