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The Horror of Fascism: Art as Resistance

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Fine Art

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The Horror of Fascism: Art as Resistance.

Exhibition Proposal

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Bachelor of
Arts (Hons)

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Abstract

The Horror of Fascism: Art as Resistance is a collation of artists that make meaningful work as a protest to the uprisal of fascism within society. Going over the past, present, and potential future of fascism within our communities and governments, this exhibition proposal examines key theories around how to prevent fascism and how to build a resistance to it through both art and horror. The inherent political nature of art and horror media makes them a powerful duo to communicate ideas between the working class, strengthening bonds and uplifting spirits during unfortunate times. The threat of fascism is very real and very close to home, but through independent exhibitions like the one proposed here, ideas and support can spread like wildfire through our communities and support the push towards a socialist future.

Introduction

‘Artworks may inspire us to experience hope and possibility at a time when despair and hopelessness seem inevitable’ (Kaushall, J. 2018, p.16)

The current President of the United States of America is a fascist. Let’s make a painting about it.

It is entirely fair, understandable, and just for you to think that that is a terrible and ineffective way to make yourself, or anyone else for that matter feel better about that fact. The fact being that Donald John Trump is not only the 47th President of The United States of America but is also a self-proclaimed fascist and Hitler idoliser (Loftus, J. 2025). On that joyous note, I have curated this exhibition dissertation to support the idea that art is actually one of the most effective and inspiring techniques for bringing people together under the threat of fascism (Kaushall, J. 2018. p. 14). Hosted by Hartwood Psychiatric Hospital in Shotts, Scotland, a fitting venue as in itself it is a reminder of the consequences of fascism, this exhibition will feature a range of artworks by artists from different decades, countries, and artistic mediums. All artworks included are united by a common denominator: Fascism, and the horror it instils. In their own ways, they are all providing commentary on how different people and cultures respond to and cope with the rise of fascism within their societies. The exhibition will aim to leave attendees with a stronger sense of community and inspire them to go away and filter all their thoughts and feelings into their own artwork, knowing that just making art is its own act of defiance against the fascist machine.

Looking at the etymology of the word “fascism,” it goes back to the Latin word ‘fascēs’, the name given to a tightly bound bundle of wooden sticks, often with an axe blade within (Britannica, 2025). I find this to be representative of how the body of the fascist movement works. If you bring people together around this fear of an artificially manufactured false threat and then use that scared and manipulated mob to hurt the “dangerous other”, then *technically* you never explicitly told them to do that. You just happened to gradually build-up fears that have no basis in reality until a point where you could get away with killing off an entire culture of people and come away with the approval of your pre-cultivated brainwashed fascist followers, ready to start a new day. You were never actually holding the axe, only the bundle of sticks.

The fascist system thrives on a uniform body of people being so deluded by their regime that they have no desire to deviate from it, therefore having no individual urges to create and question. By keeping your mind sharp and being aware of the warning signs of fascism, by creating for the sake of creating and having fun despite the everyday horrors of life, and by questioning the policies and statements of politicians, you are swatting the flies that prerequisite fascism's rotted, bloated revival.

Keep it up.

Chapter one: Curatorial thesis

1.1: Horror as a coping mechanism for life

Do you like scary movies? With the recent increase in box-office hits in the genre, such as *The Substance* and *Terrifier 3* (Greenwood, I. 2024), I'm willing to bet you do, at least a little bit. Why is it that horror movies surge in popularity when the rest of the world feels like it's getting worse and worse? You would think that distracting yourself from the constant stream of horror that is life with a constant *fictional* stream of horror on your TV is not the best thing you could be doing to relax, but you'd be surprised. Studies suggest that we are drawn to horror because we get that fight-or-flight adrenaline rush without being in any real-world danger (Bantinaki, K. 2012). This controlled release of hormones allows you to have a positive experience with anxiety and fear and rewires your brain to not always associate anxiety with threat to your own life or livelihood, or, of course, the unrelenting outpour of horrific world events that stream from your phone if you dare to even glance at the news.

Similar to the concept of exposure therapy for treating disorders such as PTSD and anxiety, horror is equally effective for introducing sources of terror in a safe and controlled environment. Whether it's as a creative outlet, a film, a haunted house or a video game, horror is a useful tool that medical professionals have produced fruitful research on in recent years. Trauma is a difficult problem to deal with as everyone has a different experience with it and therefore will have different needs when it comes to managing and eventually overcoming it. It has been found that horror oftentimes allows trauma survivors to re-experience an event with total control over their situation, a crucial step forward in trauma therapies (Scriver, C., Johnson, J., Kjelgaard-Christiansen, J. 2021). Recontextualization of fears and traumas is far from the only benefit horror can have within therapies. As horror is often consumed alongside peers – think rollercoasters, online game groups, horror movies with friends – it removes the isolation and loneliness that people often experience during and after traumatic events. Having that new bond with someone from being scared at the same time as each other replaces the original experience of isolated terror, changing associations from negative to positive over repeat sessions (Scriver, C. 2020).

I would like to note that using horror as a coping mechanism or therapeutical technique is not a one-size-fits-all situation. Some people will not benefit at all from re-exposure to traumatic events and it has the real potential to worsen certain symptoms, and if it does work for someone it will be most effectively used alongside “traditional” methods such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) (Shapiro, F. 2017). Further research is in progress in the medical world to dive deeper into the most effective ways to integrate horror into treatment plans and make it more widely recognised as a valid complementary treatment to other techniques.

Another way horror provides a coping mechanism for not only mental health and traumas but for life in general is found in how you feel after it. When the movie is over; when the game is won; when the rollercoaster stops; you step out of that fear-ridden environment with feelings of strength and resilience (Carole, K.O. 2025). You are able to look back on what you’ve just completed and say that you survived. You’re still standing despite how scared you were. I believe this is one of the more widely applicable benefits of horror to the general population. No matter where you’re from or who you are, if you are struggling under current government legislations or are worried about the revival of fascism in your community, eventually you will be able to look back on these times and say that you survived. So many artists have made work that despite being mainly inspired by a rough time in their lives, are like trophies for them in some way (Brummer, C. 2020). They can look at the art they’ve made and appreciate that they were able to make the work at all because they survived that time. Once you get past the initial scary exterior of horror, you can look deeper into it and realise that it is often made from a place of hope for the future, and relief that the past is done.

1.2: Our impending return to fascism

Now, the “F” word has been a touchy subject recently. Many social scientists would argue that fascism should be contained within a certain time period, and that what seems to be on the rise in current political spaces is actually *populism*. That being said, there are an equal quantity of other scholars and theorists who would argue that fascism can still come back, just not in its classical 1920s and 30s form that most would recognise. Federico Finchelstein summarises the debate as ‘populism being fascism adapted to democratic times’ (Finchelstein, F. 2014. p.85). Populism as a term, although it is valid standalone concept, has often been mistakenly used in place of fascism

due to how ‘on-the-nose’ a lot of people tend to find it. I believe that this fear around saying fascism outright is letting the far-right symptoms of fascism grow and bloom far more than they should before being culled. As the British Transport Police so eloquently puts it; ‘See it. Say it. Sorted.’ (British Transport Police, 2025). If it sounds and acts like fascism, chances are it probably is, and we should not hesitate to label it as that.

Far-right “activists” such as Stephen Yaxley-Lennon - better known by the pseudonym Tommy Robinson - and Andrew Tate are doing the exact same thing that Nazi fascist paramilitarism done back in the 1930s – preying on the malleability of young men and boys. (R.O. Paxton, 2004. p.144) The “Lad” culture of today can easily be twisted and turned to become something similar to the Youth Leagues of the Nazi regime. As boys aged 8-16 are named the “Young Lions” by middle-aged right-wing organisers, I can’t help but think of how Nazi regimes ‘notion of masculinity praised youth, beauty, and violence’ (De La Torre, C. 2025. p.19). These similarities are not coincidental and should not be treated as such, young boys are some of the most vulnerable people to fascist propaganda, and much of the “lad culture” promoted by people like Yaxley-Lennon and David Tarbett – who I will introduce to you properly later - is just thinly veiled recruitment tactics. (G.L. Mosse, 1999. p.71)

You can find many similarities between Fascist figureheads and the right-wing leaders of today. Take Stephen Yaxley-Lennon for example. From what is written on the blurb of his book, you can see the same tactics being used by him as were used by previous fascist names. He says that he was ‘growing up in a town blighted by Islamic extremism and criminal gangs’ (Robinson, T. 2015), leaning heavily into the notion that he’s ‘just like everyone else’. Carlos De La Torre writes in *Fascism: The Return?* (2025, p.22) that leaders will often ‘even when they don’t, claim to come from humble and working-class origins and to be like regular people. Due to their hard work, superior intelligence, and interest in serving their nation and their people, they transformed their ordinariness into extraordinariness.’

By now I’m sure you’re used to reading and hearing about how politicians and billionaires such as Trump and Musk are evil and are leading the world back towards fascism, so much so that I’m sure that if I join the crowd and write about them as well then this dissertation won’t make you truly realise how important it is to be able to recognise the symptoms of fascism and combat them.

So, because I want you to know just how close to home fascism is before it's too late, the rest of this chapter is exclusively based on elements of fascism shown by people in Dundee.

Take for example, the self-proclaimed 'Dundee Patriots' group that reside on Facebook. Their bio says 'We will always stand up for women and children in our communities and are against far-left race baiting agitators' (Dundee Patriots, 2025), yet there is a prominent member of their group who has had multiple complaints to the police made against him from women whom he has continually harassed. This same group member has also been charged for firing fake machine guns at teachers and children in the past (BBC News, 1999). Funnily enough, this is what his "fellow patriots" have been spreading fear about. They scared many parents into removing their children from schools as they made up a complete lie of immigrants planning to come into local schools to hurt their children, going so far as to say their children would risk being beheaded if they returned to school in September (Nota, J. 2025). Examples as blindingly obvious as this should make it clear to people that fascism is right on your doorstep, but it is easy to automatically trust people when they've been around your communities for so long. All it takes is a quick dig into someone's history to find out the truth of who can be trusted. Another small example of fascist dog whistles coming up within Dundee would be in David Tarbett's Facebook bio. He calls himself 'just plane old chico nothing more nothing less' (Tarbett, D. 2022), yet another thing that was noted by De La Torre as a fascist calling card: 'embodying the people means that the leader performs their ordinariness by acting and talking like common folk'. (De La Torre, C. 2025. P. 20).

1.3: Can art actually do anything to stop it?

You may think it's naïve to make and engage with art with any expectations of influencing the political climate of the world. After all, it's just art, no politician or world leader is going to stop and change their whole ideology based off one pretty picture. But change doesn't start at the top. It starts with us; the common people, the students, the working class who have to actually deal with the consequences of these Big Men and their Big Stupid Decisions. As Justin Kaushall states in his article for *Philosophy Now*, 'Can Art Fight Fascism?', art 'doesn't need a large audience to have some destabilizing effect' (Kaushall, J. 2018. P.15). All it takes is a particularly potent artwork to light a fire under someone, or for one person to realise the true effects that fascism has within

society and how it manages to seep its way into life before you even notice it's there, and they will start making those changes that matter and have rippling effects in the communities around them.

That is not to say that we should all make art that is exclusively about politics and fascism, as that would be giving it all the attention that it would revel in and leech off. Making art in spite of fascism is where we hold the true power to do anything about it (Stanley, J. 2024). Refusing to let these returning ideologies get a grip on our communities and continuing to make art despite it all is finding joy in an otherwise dreary situation. Which is exactly what fascism *doesn't* want you to do. All art is inherently political by nature, it brings people together in a way that doesn't rely on traditional methods of communication (Steyerl, H. 2017. p.181). They can use their own almost secret language that is up to the personal interpretations of each audience member. If an artwork makes you think about politics, the state of the world, fascist history and its terrible comeback, any personal experiences you've had even if you don't know if they relate to the artists' intentions at all, or even something that you can't describe in words, then that artwork has succeeded. It has made someone *think*. It has made someone consider their own opinions and their own experiences instead of going along with the capitalist-turning-fascist's societal ideals.

As Philosopher Theodor W. Adorno says, *'every work of art is an uncommitted crime.'* (Adorno, T.W. 1951. p.111) Create more work that challenges the status quo. Create work that makes people want to come together. Communities can be built from one person having the drive to challenge the structures that we are expected to follow blindly.

Chapter two: Curatorial choices.

This haunted-house-inspired exhibition will be held in the grounds of Hartwood Hospital in Shotts, North Lanarkshire. The group of 10 artworks will be on display within the leftmost wing of the residential building of the now abandoned hospital. The films and artworks that have been selected are excellent examples of everyday subjects that, due to the context they were made and/or displayed, invoke feelings and associations of horror, and were created with varying levels of influence from a fascist rule. To let the exhibition have the most impact possible on visitors, a few artworks have been selected to be displayed outside the chosen section of the hospital, occupying the overgrown walkways directly outside. The opening times must be between 1800 and 0000 as to not affect the visibility of any of the works, particularly the film piece that will be shown. The locations for each artwork were selected to both work with the current state of the building, and to enhance the impact of the work itself.

2.1: Artworks displayed in the ground floor space.

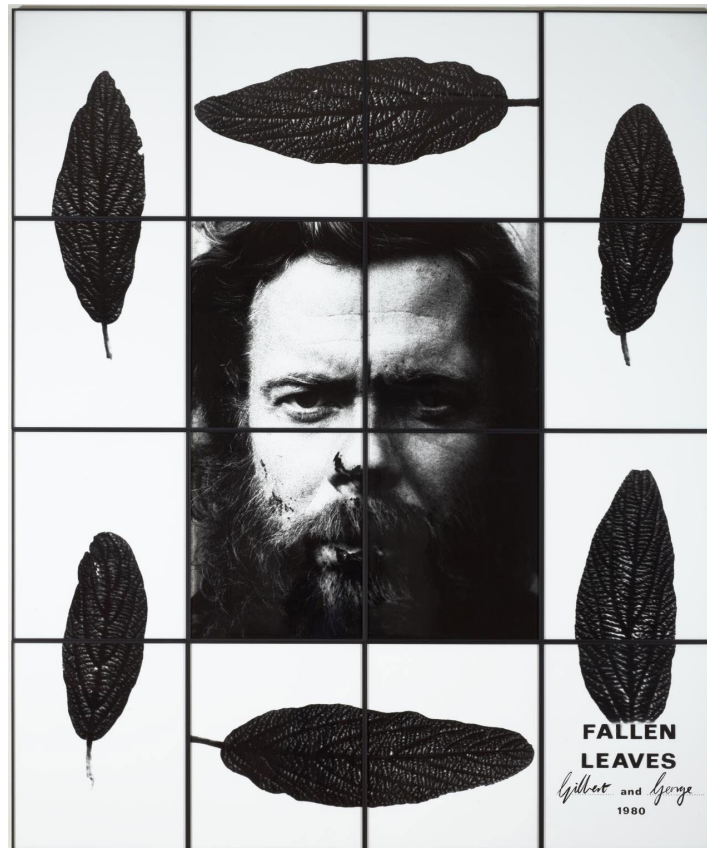


Figure 2.1.1

The first work to be seen by those visiting this exhibition will be the series of 16 gelatine-prints titled *Fallen Leaves* by Gilbert and George (1980). These prints are a small snippet of their larger collection, titled collectively as *Modern Fears*. The work will be on display in middle room on the left as you enter via the central downstairs door. Displayed directly ahead as you enter the room, the prints take over the majority of the wall, engaging the viewers with how the work fits in and interacts with the space; the leaves that are a naturally random mess in the space are now seen as a neat and organised group, arranged deliberately around that central face with a piercing gaze. The intensity of the look and the unnatural arrangement of the leaves give an inherently unsettling feeling to the room. The work was made as a response to the evolving state of the Western World and its impending downfall as a result of fascism. The unnatural neatness of the leaves can be seen as a symbol of how fascism wishes to create a sterilised existence – taking that which goes about life in a way that is natural to them and ripping it out of that life to rearrange it to better fit the “aesthetics” of what fascism idealises.



Figure 2.1.2

Merry-Go-Round by Mark Gertler (1916) will be on display in the room at the end of the corridor from the entryway. Once again, it will be the sole object of focus within the room, allowing visitors to sit with the piece with minimal distraction. Gertler made this piece during the first world war, highlighting the obscenity of having “funfairs” to celebrate those soldiers who returned wounded, not just physically but mentally due to the inherent trauma of war. The subjects in the painting are sat, ‘mouths agape in horror as they surrender to the realisation that their ride, like the war, does not seem to have an end in sight’ (Riggs, T. 1998). Art that was made during and around wartime I find is often incredible at depicting horror within everyday life, as those surviving during that time were living in relentless horror for years at a time. A particularly important part of the exhibition, *Merry-Go-Round* provides an insight to the effects of fascism on everyday life, and as the world seems to be swinging back around once again to more fascist ideology within governments, we need to see more art about and against those movements.



Figure 2.1.3

Working with the unfortunate state that the Hartwood Hospital buildings are currently in, *Concert for Anarchy* by Rebecca Horn (1990) shall be displayed hanging from what remains of the roof structure of the building. Strong steel cabling will run from the roof beams, through the first floor and down to the ground floor via the collapsed flooring, where the work shall be situated mid-air. Horn herself views this piece as being alive, 'having freed itself from the psychiatric clinic, it is now composing its own music.' The unnatural position of the piano brings up similarities of how it feels living in a society that is spiralling at a concerning rate back down the fiery pit into fascism. Upside down, stranded in mid air with your guts exposed to the world, do you scream and beg for something to change, or do you use your blood to paint something beautiful in hopes that it inspires someone to think?



Figure 2.1.4

Leaving the downstairs section of the exhibition, visitors shall come across the next selected work just before they reach the stairs to the second floor. *Inverse Reverse Perverse* by Cerith Wyn Evans (1996) is a large mirror that drastically changes the image of whoever is viewing it whenever they move even the slightest amount. The intimidating size of the mirror compared to the relatively small space that it will be situated within almost forces exhibition goers to face their distorted selves and surroundings all the way through the lower section of the stairwell. For those who feel helpless and stranded in a hostile society like the one we live in, the mirror can be seen as a literal representation of how it feels to be unable to change anything about your community when fascism is distorting it. As you stand there waiting to walk up to the second floor, you cannot avoid the distortion of what you used to recognise around you, all you can do is move away and consider what the most effective way is to break the mirror.

2.2: Artworks displayed in the first-floor space.



Figure 2.2.1

Reaching the top of the stairs, an installation of *Corridor with mirror and White Lights* by Bruce Nauman (1971) shall be on display within an artificially narrowed main corridor. Taking up almost the entire length of the building, the work invokes a slightly nauseating feeling, one of claustrophobia and paranoia. As you look down the long, narrowing corridor, taken abruptly out of the dingy darkness of the old building by the blinding-white, fluorescent lights, you can expect feelings of dizziness and vertigo. The corridor is so unnaturally bright, and it is hard to tell how long it truly is due to the mirror at the end being placed at an angle that doesn't reflect whatever is at the entrance, but instead reflects the corridor itself, creating the illusion that the corridor just keeps going. Although it is just a corridor, the work invokes feelings of fear due to the uncertainty of where the end of the hallway is, and the way the work pulls you into it can make returning to the rest of the gallery quite jarring. The effect that this installation work has upon the building can be seen as yet another metaphor for the effects of fascism. The straight and narrow that fascism aims to send everyone down has no certain end in sight, and halfway down you can't help but regret ever stepping foot in this uncomfortably constricting corridor.



Figure 2.2.2

Entering the room on the right from the stairs in the upstairs section of the gallery, Martin Naylor's *Discarded Sweater* (1972-3) installation shall be displayed beside the steel cabling holding up *Concert for Anarchy* which come up through the damaged floor. This scarecrow like artwork has an uncanniness to it that may be reminiscent of ghosts and spectres, appearing in the dark and passing in hallways; a not-unusual occurrence for the exhibition space, which has a current reputation of being haunted by the past inhabitants and staff (World Abandoned, 2019). This artwork can be representative of the otherness that is often felt by people who refuse to accept that there is nothing to be done about the descent into fascism. Shadows are an essential part of Naylor's practice; he sees their potential when others would often overlook it, a mindset that in itself goes against what fascism wants you to do. Seeing the beauty in the everyday life even when that everyday life is a horror to live with is a special thing, and to build work like this from that mindset is a step in a better direction.



Figure 2.2.3

Robert Gober's untitled sculpture of a leg (1989-92) shall be on display on its own in the largest section of the first-floor gallery space. Sitting quietly in the furthest corner of the room, this sculpture is a particularly relevant piece to the history of Hartwood. Drawing from his mother's experiences as an operating theatre nurse, Gober created 10 different leg sculptures. This one especially relates to the grim history of how patients were often treated within Hartwood Hospital, being unjustly segregated from peers or being subject to cruel "treatments" (Gallagher, M. 2017. pp. 38-39). The regular clothing and footwear that the sculpture is portrayed in is a strong reminder that the people who lived and died in the grounds of the exhibition weren't actually these scary, crazed people that asylum patients are often made out to be, but were family members, neighbours, friends, and colleagues who didn't receive the treatment they needed and deserved (American Psychiatric Association, 2025). The othering of mental health patients is another particularly contagious strain of fascism. One of the most common tropes within media and fear-mongering news sources, those who struggle with mental health are one of the original victims of fascism's agenda of isolating the "dangerous other" from their version of a perfect society, removing them oftentimes through violent means. For mental health patients, this fascist violence comes in the form of horribly cruel medical exams and treatments such as lobotomies and electroconvulsive therapy, both of which were regularly performed at Hartwood (Burns, L. 2019).

2.3: Artworks displayed outside/throughout the gallery space



Figure 2.3.1

A performance of *Who Can Erase the Traces?* (2005) will be commissioned from Regina Jose Galindo, to be performed during the opening night of the exhibition. As Galindo walks throughout the grounds of Hartwood Hospital, leaving behind footprints of human blood, visitors will have to choose to ignore them and walk over them, somewhat erasing their existence, or to stop and avoid them, acknowledging the gruesome histories that lie in the foundations of the building. The original context of Galindo's performance was a protest to a genocide committing dictator's presidential campaign in Guatemala, and I feel it is potent once again as we see more incidents of fascism gaining traction within the UK political scene, and how it is seeping down into our communities (Kachroo, R. 2025).



Figure 2.3.2

Leaving the main gallery area and following Galindo's footsteps backwards, the exhibition continues with an installation of *Dialogue* by Xiao Lu (1989) in the overgrown grassy area between buildings. Capturing the fear of isolation and separation, *Dialogue* stands outside, away from other members of the exhibition. Lu made the original work to express her frustration with the difficulties of communicating with men, and how she often felt othered when in groups. These feelings are often shared by people struggling with mental health issues and would only have been fuelled further in the restrictive, lonely environment of psychiatric institutions. Exhibition goers are encouraged to spend time with *Dialogue*, reflecting on the work itself, the surroundings, and the remaining evidence of the two gunshots that Lu fired into the work during a public installation in 1989. The immediate detention that Lu was put under was an unfair decision made by China and only proved the point she was making about the lack of freedom to express within the arts, especially when it came to performance art (Solomon, A. 1998). The horrors of repression are just as potent in this work as the fears of isolation, and it is important that both are recognised and respected.

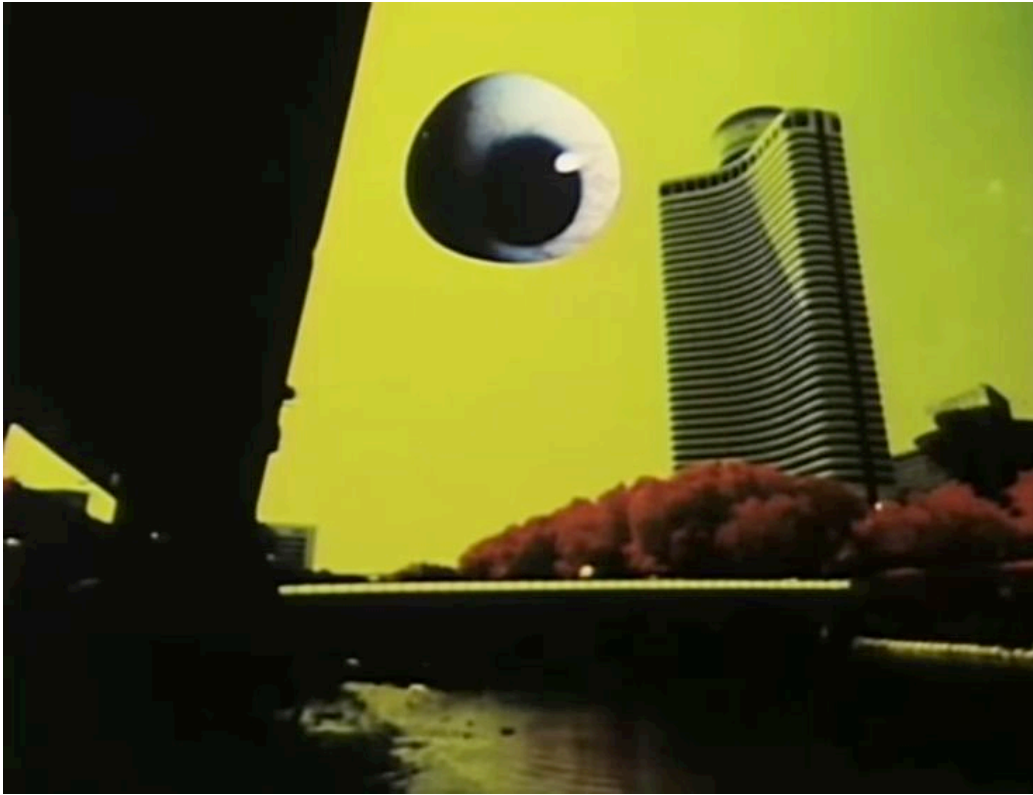


Figure 2.3.3

A repeating screening of *Phantom* by Toshio Matsumoto (1975) will be projected onto one of the remaining clock towers outside the main exhibition space. High above the grounds, visitors will have to look up to see the film, a perfect position for making eye contact with the looming eye that appears in multiple sections of the video. *Phantom* is a video depiction of the hallucinations and delusions of a young woman, who probably would've found herself in a place similar to Hartwood due to these visions. The piece has skilfully captured the unease and confusion that comes with hallucinatory episodes and makes it easy for viewers to engulf themselves in what it must be like to experience those things firsthand. The film also acts as a great representation of how it feels to live under an oppressive, fascist government. Constantly feeling watched and fearing judgment from a constantly overseeing force, fascism breeds fear within societies due to having the potential to be everywhere all the time.

2.4: Exhibition model and layout

To assist with visualising the exhibition space, a model was created to illustrate the position of the artworks within Hartwood Hospital. The overall dimensions of the model are 44cm by 50cm and is constructed largely from recycled materials. Cardboard forms the majority of the structure and balsa wood has been used for the details of the individual artworks as well as the floor.

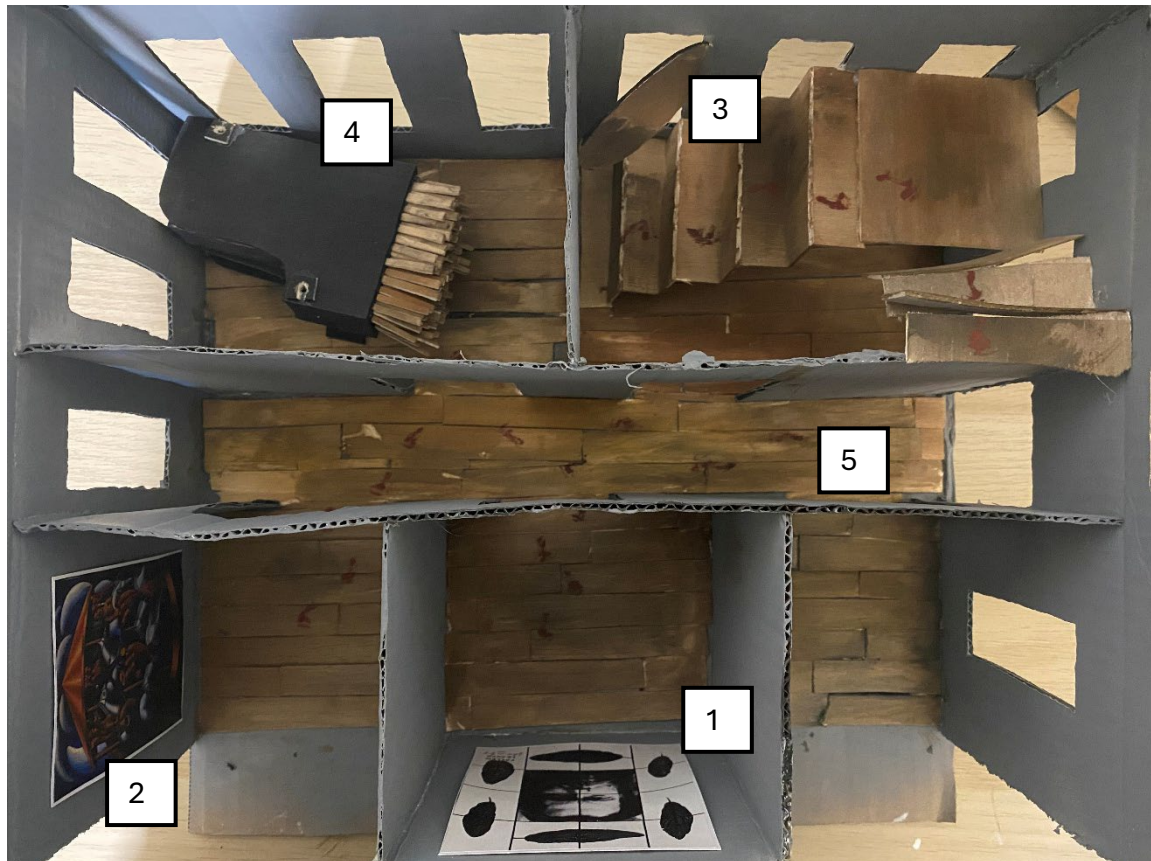


Figure 2.4.1

- 1 *Fallen Leaves*, Gilbert & George (1980)
- 2 *Merry-Go-Round*, Mark Gertler (1916)
- 3 *Inverse Reverse Perverse*, Cerith Wyn Evans (1996)
- 4 *Concert for Anarchy*, Rebecca Horn (1990)
- 5 The beginning of *Who can erase the traces?* performance, Regina Jose Galindo (2005)

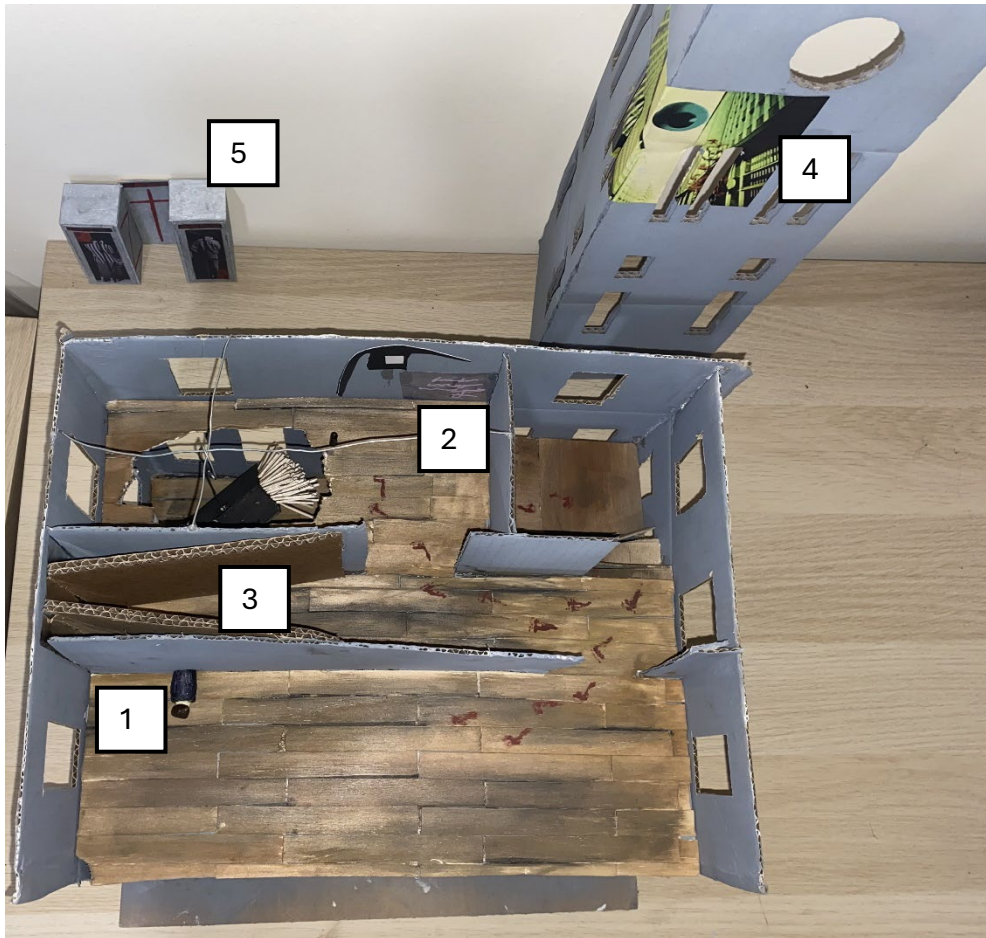


Figure 2.4.2

- | | | | |
|----------|--|----------|--|
| 1 | <i>Untitled</i> , Robert Gober (1989-92) | 4 | <i>Phantom</i> , Toshio Matsumoto (1975) |
| 2 | <i>Discarded Sweater</i> , Martin Naylor (1973) | 5 | <i>Dialogue</i> , Xiao Lu (1989) |
| 3 | <i>Corridor with Mirror and White Lights</i> , Bruce Nauman (1971) | | |



Figure 2.4.3



Figure 2.4.4



Figure 2.4.5



Figure 2.4.6



Figure 2.4.7



Figure 2.4.8



Figure 2.4.9



Figure 2.4.10



Figure 2.4.11

Chapter Three: Curatorial aims and influences.

3.1: Choice of venue

When considering venue options for this exhibition, I wanted to choose somewhere that has a rich and relevant history with the horrors of fascism, as well as being somewhere that I have a personal connection to. Hartwood Hospital in Shotts is just about perfect for providing the atmosphere I had in mind for the space. Being the first institute in Scotland to perform the lobotomy (World Abandoned, 2019), Hartwood's past is one that is as haunting as the spirits that are said to currently roam what remains of the hospital grounds.



Figure 3.1.1

The old psychiatric hospital gained notoriety after appearing in the 2022 film *'The Batman'* as the old Gotham orphanage (Williams, C. 2020). The hospital certainly earned its place in such a beautiful section of the film. It holds such a moving and emotional atmosphere, even as it falls further to ruin as the years go on. This inherent atmosphere that it has adds another layer to the impact of the exhibition. Standing in the ruins of a place that used to perform horrible medical

tests on mentally ill people is enough to move most to tears, and to have artworks bringing a new life to the building will push those emotions to the extreme.

The hospital grounds themselves could be considered an art piece much like the others. Standing in ruin after being shut in 1998, what is left of the once grandiose building serves as an example of the consequences of fascism. If you treat your community as poorly as the patients were treated in the hospital – as poorly as fascism wants you to treat your neighbours - no one will come to save you when it's your time to struggle. There is no long-term result of fascism. It is an inherently flawed structure that leaves only the ultra-wealthy politicians and upper class in any sort of liveable place. The fascist does not care about you and I. The fascist does not care about the working class. If you're not part of the in-crowd, they will throw you to the dirt without a second thought (Conway, T. 2024). The false narrative that people like to spin that people like Nigel Farage will “protect the people” (Hanna, S. 2024) is nothing more than a tactic to get votes up. As soon as they get any shred of power, they will do what they truly want: make the rich richer, and the poor poorer (Narwan, G. 2024).

3.2: Intended audience

This exhibition has been curated to appeal to the interests of many people. Having a mix of “traditional” painted works, sculptural and installation pieces as well as film work, I hope to bring in a wide variety of people who have an appreciation for art. The building itself already gains a lot of attention from thrill-seekers and ghost-hunters, so alongside the interest people will have in the location off the back of *'The Batman,'* I believe the exhibit will be able to catch the interest of people from many different areas. A lot of accidental footfall will also be gained from the hospital grounds being situated within close distance to a quite scenic nature walkway, one of the more popular trails around Shotts (Woodland Trust, 2025)

Being situated in Shotts, the exhibition will also aim to bring in the general public that is local to the area. I hope that through word of mouth and advertisement for the exhibit, people will come in from other towns around North and South Lanarkshire. A lot of towns within these areas are often overlooked and feel the brunt of neglect from both councils and governments (Smith, A). I

believe the exhibition will resonate strongly with them and encourage more conversations about what can be done to prevent the treatment of smaller, working-class Scottish towns becoming worse than they already are, and inspire more friendships and connections between members of these small, struggling towns.

3.3: Exhibition experience

Bringing people's attention to the truly dire state of the world and what we can do to come together and make it a better place for everyone is my primary goal with this exhibition. The vast majority of people are passively aware of the atrocities that occur on a daily basis all over the world but aren't paying enough real attention to just how close to home it is (Huff, C. 2022). Almost like a walk-through wakeup call, I want people to leave the venue with a newfound realisation of just how much people have suffered and how they will continue to suffer unless we make a meaningful change. That being said, this exhibition is not one of negativity, despair, or hopelessness. Instead, it is one of inspiration, positivity, and community. It stands to show that despite this suffering, people all over the world have not ceased in making art that inspires, uplifts, and provides some sort of catharsis for both themselves and those who can relate to their work.

I believe the uprise in independently run art exhibitions and shows is a brilliant indicator for how often people seek out community and local opportunities to socialise. As fascism grows and infects seemingly every aspect of life, from the media we consume to the opinions of our neighbours, artists develop an innate urge to create something of their own away from the big corporation funded large-budget productions.

Chapter four: Additional influences

4.1: Horror films

Horror films are as inherently political as creating art is, and they can both be used to support each other in helping people thrive and be happy despite what fascism wants (Cleary, S. 2025). In fascism's ideal world, no one is expressing themselves and we all exist solely to be a shell of a person used to continue the cycle of work-reproduce-spend. Women stay at home to do the unpaid labour of keeping the house clean, the children happy, and the husband fed while the men are out providing for their nation of all white, all heterosexual, and all middle-class packmates. Horror media is important as an art form for providing an outlet for people to express their fear, frustration, and fatigue that is caused by living in times where fascism is trying desperately to get a grip on politics and enact this terrifying future that it wants.

Growing up with a strong love for horror movies introduced me to the capabilities that horror has to cover anything and everything you could think of. It provides some sort of safe space where you can take on any topic – familial issues, politics, murder, violence, race issues – anything that you have complex feelings surrounding, if you put it through the horror movie machine, out pops a messed up yet hauntingly beautiful therapy session hosted by gross caricatures of your deepest fears.

Ruben Fleischer's 2009 hit zomedy film *Zombieland* is a particularly important influence on my standpoint within this dissertation. Released off the back of the 2008 financial crisis, *Zombieland* provides an excellent commentary on the unfortunate state of America caused largely by capitalistic greed. Working within the medium of subtext hidden beneath gore and humour, the film's overall message is something of a warning. As capitalism and fascism have what could be called a symbiotic relationship – capitalism cannot survive without racism and general bigotry just as fascism cannot survive without a capitalistic structure supporting it – *Zombieland* has a seemingly endless list of points to make regarding the future of America in its current flawed system. As the main character Columbus is only still living due to his seemingly non-existent social life and complete lack of friends, beneath the humorous mask he stands as a symbol of the benefits of staying away from the crowd. As so much of far-right recruitment is reliant on forms of peer

pressure and following blindly in the footsteps of your friends, Columbus is easily seen as a survivor of these recruitment tactics just as much as he's a survivor of the flesh-eating monsters outside his door. The tone of the movie serves as a disguise that allowed the writers to make serious observations of their country without facing such harsh backlash that they would've risked in a more "serious" film setting (Fourth Wall Writing, 2019). Many of the potent themes are brushed off as being funny or gory and gross and are easy for those that don't want to recognise them to continue ignoring the glaringly obvious subtext. Even as a child watching this film the first few times, I could tell that there were some obvious digs at the Western World being portrayed on the screen in front of me. Using horror almost as a secret identity for what the film is actually about is an excellent example of a scenario that writer Tananarive Due gives in a brilliant interview with Rebecca Clark-Callendar, 'Give me a funhouse mirror. Let me imagine that racism is a zombie. Now we can have a good time, okay?' (Due, T. 2024).

Horror films have opened my eyes to just how versatile horror in its entirety is for portraying serious matters in a way that is not blaringly obvious, as well as having space for some extra nuances and personal experiences from the writers to be included in their rendition of whichever difficult subject they're tackling. This lifelong inspiration is what sparked my initial ideas for horror within fine art settings and how it is such an amazing outlet for frustrations and fear as a result of rising fascism. Just as horror is a mask for films, it acts almost exactly the same for other artistic mediums. Having that freedom to express emotions and opinions in a way that people can simultaneously understand perfectly yet not at all can lift so much pressure from the artists shoulders. No pressure to make something necessarily palatable for the masses. Only true freedom to express.

As Wes Craven says, '**horror films don't create fear, they release it**'. (Kathan, J, 2015).

4.2: Dundee Socialist Workers Party

The Dundee Socialist Workers Party (Dundee SWP) is taking on the job of educating and spreading awareness to people about the dangers of fascism, and they are doing it incredibly well. By hosting regular, almost weekly meetings to cover a variety of different topics from the history of anti-fascism to disaster capitalism (Dundee Area SWP, 2025), they make knowledge easily available and digestible for the public and people who are only beginning to dip their toes into the world of Socialism. They have opened doors for so many people in our local communities to be

more informed on their rights as workers, bringing people together on the grounds of all being working class. One of the chants often heard at protests supported by the Socialist Workers Party is ‘one struggle, one fight’, a brilliant reminder of how essential the united front tactic (Stanley, J. 2024) is for making an impactful difference to a dire political climate. The United Front Tactic is the sole reason that the Anti-Nazi League exists. The historic 1977 Battle of Lewisham which seen all different left-wing groups and organisations put their differences aside to come together against the far-right National Front and put a stop to their violent, racism tirade (Working Class History, 2022) is the birthplace of the Anti-Nazi League and one of the most undeniable examples of how effective the united front tactic is for stomping out fascist revivals. The Dundee SWP advocating for the united front tactic to be actioned once more and educating people in what it is and why it works is an essential stepping stone for it being successful.

The point that stuck with me the most during the ‘Cable Street to the Anti-Nazi League: A radical history of anti-fascism’ talk hosted by the Dundee SWP on September 24th 2025 was that the vast majority of attendees at the 110,000 strong far-right rally organised by Stephen Yaxley-Lennon on the 13th of September (Vinter, R. Gecsoyler, S. Pidd, H. Ahmed, A. 2025) weren’t actually too sure what they were protesting. For being one of the largest marches in London’s recent history, to have so many of your attendees be unaware and uninformed of just how deeply racist and bigoted the event they’re supporting is, is not only embarrassing but incredibly concerning. Kurt Weyland summarises very well as fascist success being ‘based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganised followers’ (Weyland, K. 2001), which mirrors exactly what the Dundee SWP meeting states; ‘*Unite the Kingdom*’ will not work to any meaningful degree. Most people did not understand why they were there, and the demonstration didn’t achieve much other than large numbers.’ (Dundee Socialist Workers Party, 2025).

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the success that far-right predators find when capitalising on the “lad culture” of today is terrifying. The turnout that Yaxley-Lennon achieved for his march earlier this year is mostly an accumulation of months if not years of fascist ideals acting as a parasite upon lad culture. Young boys are without a doubt one of the most vulnerable to infection and far-right figureheads are aware of this and use it to their advantage. Dr. Craig Johnson hosted an excellent discussion around his book ‘How to Talk to Your Son About Fascism’ (Johnson, C. 2025) where he expanded upon many of the points he made within the text. He notes that fascism is a ‘uniquely male-orientated political ideology’ (Johnson, C. 2025) which creates this false

narrative that the “dominant” cisgender, white male social group is suffering from oppression and that violence is the only way to make a change in what they perceive as a damaged nation (Mosse, G.L. 1980). He emphasises the responsibility that parents have to open up conversations with their teenagers and understand that discussions had within online environments are just as influential as what they hear in real life. During the stage where children and teenagers are like sponges for new information and influences, it is essential that parents have open, friendly conversations as a family to ensure that they comprehend the true dangers of fascism despite whatever their friends may believe. To summarise the entire ethos of Dr. Johnsons book; ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure’. (Johnson, C. 2025).

Conclusion

This exhibition proposal emphasises the importance of spreading awareness and the ability to recognise fascist warning signs within your communities and governments. More importantly though, it emphasises the immense joy and peace that can be found in making art and sharing it for your friends and neighbours to enjoy. Becoming united with your peers over a scary or frustrating situation is one of the few benefits of going through hard times. The truth of the world that we live in is that we will never be completely free of fascism. Under capitalism, it will always exist in some form or another. Socialism, when executed correctly, would be the fairest system for everyone. The power would be given to the workers of the country and decisions regarding working conditions would go to them first. Socialism prioritises the working class, giving the means of production to communities as a whole rather than being owned privately by investors, whereas capitalism focuses solely on how CEOs and out of touch millionaires can bring in the most profit at the expense of their workers. It is, of course, unrealistic to expect socialism to come into effect overnight. The work and effort that needs to be put into making changes as a society is substantial, but achievable. By having conversations with your friends, children, and neighbours to help more people be politically informed, you are helping build more bridges to bring the change to socialism within closer reach.

I can say confidently that both art and horror are criminally under recognised tools for strengthening communities and inspiring yourself and others. By providing opportunities to connect with people and have a shared experience together – whether that be experiencing the horrors of a film or of fascism – your local communities will flourish and grow stronger together. All over the world there are fascist ideologies trying their hardest to get into the roots of communities and families. It is vital that the warning signs of their arrival are recognised and extinguished to the best of our abilities before they are allowed the opportunity to have any real impact. By supporting local artists and creatives or becoming a local artist yourself, twisting the fascist hurt into something beautiful, you gain the power to help make knowledge and art more accessible to the public. Independent art shows have a critical role in spreading not only joy but the seeds of inspiration and awareness into people's minds. These seeds will bloom and form an armour around individuals and eventually your community, creating a safe haven free from the damage that fascism can and will cause should we let it.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Health & Safety Review.

The *Art as Resistance* exhibition being held in the grounds of Hartwood Hospital poses some obvious health and safety concerns due to the unstable conditions that the buildings have been left in. The opening of *Art as Resistance* will be in the evening of October 31st, 2025, marking the beginning of the Samhain festival celebrations and will conclude after 2 weeks on November 14th.

8 weeks of restorative work will be actioned prior to the opening night to ensure complete safety for all exhibition attendees. Work will focus on stabilising loose debris which would otherwise be a falling risk, as well as reinforcing foundations and load-bearing walls. Steel beams will need to be added to the roof section of the building to support the weight of *Concert for Anarchy*, ensuring it will not move or fall over the course of the two-week exhibition. The floors will be cleaned and restored to minimise trip hazards and potential danger from loose nails or rocks for both attendees and artist Regina Jose Galindo as she will be performing barefoot throughout the exhibition space. While the exhibition is closed between the hours of 0000 and 1800, tarps will be installed to protect any works from potential damage from weather as the building isn't an entirely enclosed space.

Art as Resistance is open to the public during late hours and as such will be quite dark overall. Guide lights shall be installed along the corridors of the building and along the path to the building as well as between the building and to where *Dialogue* is situated. The lights will be bright enough to provide sufficient visibility but not too bright as to damage any of the artworks on display or to affect the visibility of *Phantom* being projected.

Appendix B: Dundee Socialist Workers Party meeting sketchbook notes.

CABLE STREET TO THE ANTI-NAZI LEAGUE: A RADICAL HISTORY OF

1930s CABLE STREET 1936

ORGANISED COMMUNIST PARTY ~10000, HOWEVER,
 BUSINESSMEN FUNDING THE RIGHT ~50000
 CAMPAIGNED IN WORKING CLASS NEIGHBOURHOODS

FASCISM = ANTI IMMIGRATION, PRO-NAFION, ENEMY WITH US
 EXTREME NATIONALISM

LEFT PARTIES WERE AGAINST CONFRONTATION
 100000 OPPOSED THE FASCISTS.

TO FIGHT FASCISM YOU MUST CONFRONT IT DIRECTLY

1970s REVIVAL OF FASCISM

LATE 70s RECESSION,
 RIGHT WING LABOR PARTY
 "THE NATIONAL FRONT" OPEN
 FASCISTS. KILLED PEOPLE +
 BEAT PEOPLE IN STREETS.
 WENT OUT DRAPED IN US'S.
 PROTECTED BY POLICE.

1977. BATTLE OF LEWISHAM

LOCAL GROUPS CAME TOGETHER, NOT MAIN GOVERNMENT.
 BROAD MOVEMENT AGAINST FASCISM → ANTI-NAZI LEAGUE FORMED
 LESTER HAD NAZI COUNCILLORS. NEIL KINNOCK? LABOUR

NOTHING HAS WORKED TO DRIVE
 OUT FASCISTS IF THE UNITED
 FRONT TACTIC DIDN'T GET USED.

FASCIST INFLUENCE IN POP CULTURE
 ERIC CLAPTON, DAVID BOWIE.

ROCK AGAINST RACISM STARTED
 JAZZ COLLECTIVE AGAINST RACISM
 PUNK, REGGAE, SKA, CARNIVAL IN LONDON.

FASCISM + RACISM ARE NEVER BEATEN UNDER CAPITALISM.
 CAPITALISM NEEDS IT TO SURVIVE.

1950's WAVE OF IMMIGRATION
 POST-WAR.

UNITED TO FILL WORK GAPS
 "NO BLACKS, NO DOGS, NO IRISH"

RIVERS OF BLOOD SPEECH
 "WAS SACKED FOR THIS"
 ENOCH POWELL 1968

SOUTH AFRICAN ACTIVIST
 PAUL HOLESOVENSD

UNITED FRONT TACTIC.
 WW PEOPLE OVER TO DRIVE
 BACK NAZIS + FASCISTS.
 COME TOGETHER DESPITE
 OTHER DISAGREEMENTS

ANTI-FASCISM - SWP PUBLIC MEETING

"UNITE THE KINGDOM" PROBABLY WILL NOT WORK TO ANY
 MEANINGFUL DEGREE. MOST PEOPLE DID NOT TRULY KNOW WHY
 THEY WERE THERE. DIDN'T ACHIEVE MUCH OTHER THAN LARGE NUMBERS

WHEN POLITICS + STREET GROUPS COME TOGETHER, THAT IS WHEN IT'S
 DANGEROUS

MOST PEOPLE AGREE WITH SOCIALIST OPINIONS ON RACISM, BUT PEOPLE
 ARE SCARED BECAUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

"WE'RE NOT ORGANISED, WE'RE OUT-ORGANISED"
 SECTARIANISM WON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE

CAPITALISM ALWAYS HAS A BUDGET FOR WAR

Appendix C: Initial exhibition sketches.

