

“unconditional” – Exhibition proposal by John Brookes

“unconditional” is a mixed media examination of love in all of its many forms... joyful, painful, life-affirming, difficult at times, but always unconditional.

The wide-ranging, multi-faceted and often elusive qualities of love will be reflected by the diversity and range of images in the exhibition in several ways.

Firstly, the images will show a range of different subjects, different but united by the emotion of love. They will depict how love can be for a partner, a grandmother for her grandchild, a father for his baby, an owner for their dog, even a petrol head for their show car!

The images will focus on the different nuances of love exploring how, whilst love can bring joy and happiness, it also has a deeper, more self-reflective and pensive side; demonstrating that love exists in the head as well as the heart.

In a way, I wish to defamiliarize love and to reclaim its depictions in modern media – too often it is portrayed as sentimental, unrealistically romantic (though there is always room for romance of course!), or focused on tragedy and used as a vehicle to highlight social issues, such as partner abuse, divorce rates, infidelity etc.

Similarly, love in society seems to be stifled by current trends to equate love with dependence or inequality in a society that increasingly highlights independence as an aspiration. Even talk of love can elicit embarrassment and awkwardness - we are losing awareness of its value. My contention is that there is still room for genuine feelings of love in an increasingly isolated society that interacts through social media posts, texts and Instagram videos. Yet love comes at a price.

Love is, among others, a fundamental emotion that makes us human and we need to preserve it whilst embracing new technology and new cultural and identity politics. This exhibition therefore is apolitical and non-didactic; it simply seeks to present love in its raw form.

The range of examples used in the exhibition will be loosely based upon “The Colour Wheel Theory of Love” – a concept created by Canadian psychologist and theorist John Alan Lee, that describes three primary love types, describing them in the traditional colour wheel. The three primary types are Eros, Ludus, and Storge. ¹

Eros is the Greek term for romantic, passionate, or sexual love, from which the term erotic is derived. Lee describes Eros as a passionate, physical and emotional love feeling of wanting to satisfy, create mutual emotional / sexual contentment and provide a safe space for the aesthetic enjoyment of others.

Ludus means "game" or "school" in Latin. Lee uses the term to describe those who see love as a desire to want to have fun with each other, to do activities indoor and outdoor, tease, indulge, and can encompass those who are passionate about hobbies, feel deep affection for their pets or are in the first flush of love with another.

¹ Lee, John Alan. *The Colors of Love: An Exploration of the Ways of Loving (revised)*. New Press, 1976

Storge is the Greek term for familial love. Lee defines Storge as growing slowly out of friendship and based more on similar interests and a commitment to one another rather than on passion. More directly, there is a love between siblings, spouses, cousins, parents, and children. Storge necessitates certain familial loyalties, responsibilities, duties, and entitlements. The elements of responsibilities and duties can also encompass caregivers, such as a wider and non-judgmental love of humanity expressed, say, through a patient / nurse relationship.

I will also include the Subjects of my works within this discourse: each artwork featuring quotes/copy written by the Subject and contextualizing my work with their own views of love.

In the spirit of community engagement, the Gallery whilst predominantly featuring my work will solicit and incorporate public submissions ('Sharing the Love'). The movable wall defines this duality, placed facing the entrance with a large striking image and key message as visitors enter.

Right of the entrance will be an AV scrolling gallery of public submissions, with the exhibition proper featuring my artworks on the three permanent and 1 movable wall.

Creativity will be encouraged and may be in the form of visual arts, poetry, design works etc. Submitted works will also be shown throughout the exhibition as a scrolling gallery on the 'unconditional' website. There will be a prize for People's favourite winner, forming a media 'hook' in itself.

Further community engagement will be via several workshops by the artist entitled 'Who Do You Love?', discussing how societal changes have changed depictions of love in art over time, and encouraging attendees to discuss the Exhibition, whilst creating their own love-themed artwork.

There will also be a discussion of the theoretical concept underlying the Exhibition by revisiting the Colour Wheel, exploring different stages of love during our lifetime as we move through the Colour wheel - receiving familial love (Storge) in childhood, making friends and fledging relationships in the Ludus phase, maturing emotionally and physically during the Eros era, before the wheel comes full circle in our later years with a new dynamic of 'Storge', where the nurturing comes from the younger generation as we look to the dutiful love of offspring and carers to sustain us; thus the cycle of love comes full circle.

Thank you for giving this your time and consideration...

I love you.