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Faces of Freedom Exhibition by Alexandra Kremer-Khomassouridze

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My housemate and I were fortunate enough to be able to attend the opening of this exhibition at Asia House in London. It was a wonderful evening and we got to speak with some of the models and the artist herself! It was great to be inspired by the wonderful women involved in the project and hear their take on what Faces of Freedom meant to them.

Issues of Freedom of Expression by Alexandra Kremer-Knomasouridze

For the artist, Alexandra Kremer-Knomasouridze, the message of her faces of freedom exhibition was a clear politically, religiously and ethnically motivated issue. She addresses the freedom, or lack of, of choice regarding the wearing of religious dress. Each piece takes the same format. Each woman is photographed in 'western' attire, then in the Hijab and then in the Niqab and the three images are displayed alongside each other. For me, however, I saw something different in these compositions. Despite knowing that the same person featured in each set of three photographs, I felt as if I was looking at different people in each one. The image below was one where I particularly felt this. The model's smile in the last image really stands out against

Roxanne, Photographer.



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her relatively plain expression in the other two photos. This may have contributed to it, but I felt that I was looking at someone much younger in the last photograph. This is particularly extraordinary when you realize that in the center and the right photographs one is wearing the exact same clothing except for the addition of the mask in the final photograph. Another image that I found particularly striking was the image included below of the series of photographs of Julia, the business woman. Despite overall interpreting the pieces differently as a whole, which I shall elaborate on further in this critique, this series stood out for a more politically motivated reason. This image was particularly striking because, unlike most of the other subjects, Julia is white. My reaction to this really got me thinking about what I actually understood from this collection of images. Personally, I saw themes of disguise,



Julia, Business woman.

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the features of creed, colour and class. I also included a selection of quotes by the subjects that were included in the exhibition catalogue that agreed with this idea of choosing to hide and reveal things to create a certain image or identity. The highlighted part particularly stood out in this sense. The idea of exploring the unseen behind the seen epitomises the message that I hope to portray in my own pieces.

"It is so strange, but I feel myself completely secure. You can do whatever you want nobody sees you. For me this is the complete freedom."

"This is the first time I am wearing it. I never saw myself like this.
For me it "squeezes me out".

"My face is the place where I expose who I am.
When I cover my face it is like I am loosing my "self."

<https://shonnieisobella.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/scan-17.jpeg>

As I have discussed the concepts explored and the effectiveness of these collections in my sketchbook annotations, I will not reiterate them here again. However, I feel that it is important to mention that I was really inspired by the images I saw at the exhibition and by all the women I spoke to. There are concepts in these pieces that are not too far from what I am trying to explore through this project, much less the political and social aspects of the themes, but in terms of the emotional issues explored, this has definitely been an eye-opener!

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