# Inside Out: Art and The Mind

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## Background

**Research Question:**

- How does art affect mental illness?
- How does art affect the stigma around mental illness?

**Introduction:**

- Mental illness is something many people struggle with in silence. Their experiences are very personal and can be hard to explain with words. This can lead to people misunderstanding individuals that struggle with mental illnesses and can cause stigma.
- Art provides a way for individuals to visualize these personal and complex emotions. This project explores how art affects people's perception of mental health and how mental illness can affect the artist themselves.

## Methods

- Visited an art gallery: *The Frick Pittsburgh Museums and Gardens- The Scandinavian Home: Landscape and Lore*
- Analyzed art works by 4 artists.
- Compared how emotions are visually represented.
- Developed an understanding of various time periods through art.
- Conducted an interview with artist, Norman Klenicki.
- Evaluated the impact on audience perception.

## Discussion

- Art can increase empathy by helping people visualize and connect with emotions.
- Representation varies widely between artists.
- Some art pieces can reduce stigma by promoting empathy, while others may unintentionally reinforce fear and stigma by being challenging to interpret.

## Art Pieces

Edvard Munch- ***The Scream (1893)***

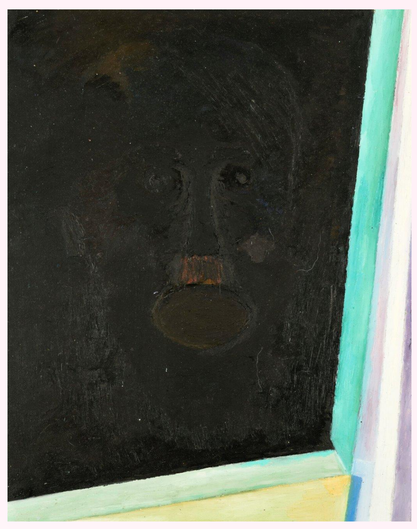
- Munch struggled with anxiety, and trauma throughout his life
- The Distorted figures and colors express anxiety and panic
- This makes the invisible emotion of anxiety visible to others
- Being able to see the emotion of anxiety can increase empathy for those who experience it, but this picture can also make things feel overwhelming.

Yayoi Kusama- ***The Souls of Millions of Light Years Away (2013)***

- Kusama experienced hallucinations and suffered through childhood trauma.
- Known as one of her Infinite Mirror Rooms this piece surrounds viewers with mirrors and countless small LED lights.
- Through these rooms, Kusama's internal hallucinations were able to become immersive experiences.

Frida Kahlo- ***The Broken Column (1944)***

- Kahlo's lifelong physical pain deeply influenced her artwork. She used painting to process her suffering.
- The muted color pallet is used to emphasize pain.
- The nails shown in the column replacing her spine symbolizes chronic pain and emotional distress.
- Despite her injuries she stands tall and is resilient
- While this piece shows Kahlo as a strong women, the graphic imagery can reinforce the stigma that mental illness is all suffering.



Norman Klenicki- ***Hitler at My Door (1990)***

- Klenicki, a child of Holocaust survivors, inherited trauma and suffered with depression throughout his entire life.
- The distorted figure of Adolf Hitler etched in the black background represents fear and trauma.
- This art piece can encourage dialogue about inherited trauma.
- On the other hand, the intense imagery in this piece can create fear and deter individuals from talking about their struggles.

- Scan the QR code to find out more about each artist.

## Special Thanks

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