Shakespeare’s Influence in the Arts

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My curatorial project focuses on William Shakespeare’s lasting influence in the arts. Shakespeare is probably one of the most prolific writers known to man and has without doubt left quite a legacy through his literary achievements. His plays and poetry, in particular, remain popular around the world as they are constantly performed in various stages and are also a significant part of English literature. Yet, few people may realize that the extent of Shakespeare's relevance does not end with poems and stage plays. Through my show, my audience will learn that William Shakespeare's literary contributions have significantly influenced various fields of artistic expression, such as architecture, painting, music and film.

My project aims to allow my audience to view Shakespeare’s influence in artistic fields through paintings, architecture, films, music, etc. Many of my slides will include paintings by many famous artists like Sir John Everett Millais, famous English painter and illustrator, and William Blake, important figure in the history of both the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. It will also include the world famous Globe Theater whose creation was associated with Shakespeare’s plays. Many films will be included, too, like Gil Junger’s 10 Things I Hate About You which starred Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles. Finally, I will include how Shakespeare’s works have had a huge impact in songs, even in contemporary songs! For example, the English band Mumford & Son’s album, Sigh No More, was inspired by Shakespeare’s comedy Much Ado About Nothing.

After viewing my project, I want the audience to find an interest in my topic. I want them to feel satisfied with my work and possibly be intrigued in my subject. To many, Shakespearean work is considered very boring but through my show, I want my audience to leave with a new perspective on Shakespeare. Maybe they could find the subject to be more interesting than before they watched the show.
William Shakespeare
(1564-1616)

William Shakespeare was an English poet and playwright, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world’s pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England’s national poet and the “Bard of Avon”. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

Shakespeare is considered one of the most prolific writers known to man, and has undeniably left a legacy through his literary achievements. To many Shakespeare is well known for being the author of over thirty plays and hundreds of poems. Yet few realize that the extent of Shakespeare’s relevance does not end with poems and stage plays, but his literary contributions have significantly influenced various field of artistic expression, such as architecture, paintings, music, and film.
Many painters were inspired by Shakespearean dramas in their artworks. One such painter was Turner, whose paintings were not limited to imitations of the masters and biblical scenes. He is known for his depiction of Juliet in an imagined scene, entitled *Juliet and Her Nurse*, a scene that Turner transposed from imaginary Verona to Venice.

*Ophelia* is a painting by British artist Sir John Everett Millais, completed between 1851 and 1852. The painting depicts Ophelia, a character from Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet*, singing while floating in a river just before she drowns. The tragic destiny of Ophelia inspired many painters, as it has been praised as being one of the most poetically written death scenes in literature. This painting represents Ophelia being absorbed by dark water among luxuriant nature. It obtained an enormous success immediately.
Shakespeare’s Globe is actually a reconstruction of the Globe Theatre, an Elizabethan playhouse in the London Borough of Southwark, by Peter Street. The original Globe Theatre was built in 1597 by the playing company Lord Chamberlain’s Men, to which Shakespeare belonged. It was destroyed by a fire on 26 July 1611.

The Temple of British Worthies is located in Buckinghamshire, England and was designed by William Kent in 1735. The temple is filled with busts, half carved by John Michael Rysbrack, of John Milton, William Shakespeare, John Locke, Sir Isaac Newton, Elizabeth I, etc. The choice of who was considered a 'British Worthy' was very much influenced by the Politics of the time and whom Kent believed to be truly greatest of all mankind.
**10 Things I Hate About You** is a 1999 romantic comedy film. It is directed by Gil Junger, and stars Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger. The film is a modernization of Shakespeare’s famous play *The Taming of the Shrew*. Heath Ledger plays Patrick Verona, who is based on Petruchio, the male lead of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and his last name is a reference to his hometown, Verona in the play. Julia Stiles plays Kat Stratford, the “shrew” in the film. Kat is based on Katherina Minola in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Her last name is a reference to Shakespeare’s hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon.

**Shakespeare in Love** is a 1998 romantic comedy film directed by John Madden. The film depicts a love affair involving playwright, William Shakespeare, at the time he was writing his play *Romeo and Juliet*. The story is fiction, however several of the characters are based on real people. In addition, many of the characters, lines, and plot devices are references to Shakespeare’s plays. The main source for much of the action in the film is *Romeo and Juliet*. Many plot devices used in the film are common in various Shakespeare comedies and in the works of the other playwrights of the Elizabethan era, for example, the appearance of a “ghost” (*Macbeth*) and the “play within a play” (*Hamlet*).
Regina Spektor’s Pound of Flesh refers to Shakespeare’s play *The Merchant of Venice*. “A pound of flesh” is a figurative way of referring to any lawful but nevertheless unreasonable recompense, dated to the late 18th century. In the play, Shylock, the usurer, demands a literal pound of flesh as security when a merchant comes to borrow money for a friend. In the song, the singer is bedridden. She sings about Ezra Pound, an anti-Semitic writer during WWII, coming to pay her a visit. He asks for a “pound of flesh”, so that he could compensate for the harm suffered.

*Sign No More* is the debut album of Mumford & Sons. The title of the album is taken from a line in Shakespeare’s play *Much Ado About Nothing* and several other lines from the play appear in the lyrics of songs in this album. Sign No More is actually a song in the play sung by one of the characters about the unfaithful nature of man.