

Report: Site-Specific Exhibition

Name: Cae Phillip Leslie

Site Specific Exhibition Title: Foxtrot Hotel

Rationale

- Clearly articulate why the chosen site is meaningful. What historical, cultural, or social importance does it hold? How do these attributes align with the conceptual framework of your work?

Swansea Airport is a site that holds great meaning in a number of different ways. Rich in its history Swansea Airport originally RAF Fairwood Common, opened June 1941 the airport was used mainly for air patrols, defense over South Wales, the Irish sea, Southwest England and for the occasional facilitation of raids into Europe during the second world war. With an uncertain future after the end of the war, Swansea Airport officially opened as Swansea Airport in 1957, Cambrian airways ran flights to Jersey and Guernsey whilst Morton air services offered flights to London Gatwick. However, in 1969 all scheduled and commercial flights ceased operations at Swansea Airport. Limited private flying and charter flights were the only activity in the 1970's and 80's until the 1990's when HeliAir Wales moved to the airport, providing helicopter training. In 2000 entrepreneur Martin Morgan bought the airfield, in 2003 Swansea Airport was then bought by Air Wales' owner Roy Thomas with Air Wales basing their headquarters there and running short flights to Amsterdam, Dublin and London before pulling out and moving to Cardiff Airport due to a lack of demand at Swansea Airport. The airport continues to be active holding a skydiving business, cafe, Thai restaurant and flight training, being owned by Swansea council but run by Swansea Airport Stakeholders Alliance (SASA) who are made up of aviation enthusiasts volunteering to keep the airfield running and developing grand plans for the future of the site. The airports importance and significance to the community that keeps it running but also to the communities on the Gower surrounding the airport cannot be understated, seeing an unbelievable amount of dedication, hard work and hope for the site by the volunteers and hearing of the plans, history and enthusiasm it's safe to say Swansea Airport holds a real emotional and communal importance, enough to have a dozen or so volunteers spend an absurd amount of time not only to keep it running but to plan developments, events and to spruce it up nicely to attract more positive attention.

- Conceptual/Contextual Ideas: Discuss your group and individual interpretations of the broader themes your exhibition explores, such as identity, memory, community etc.

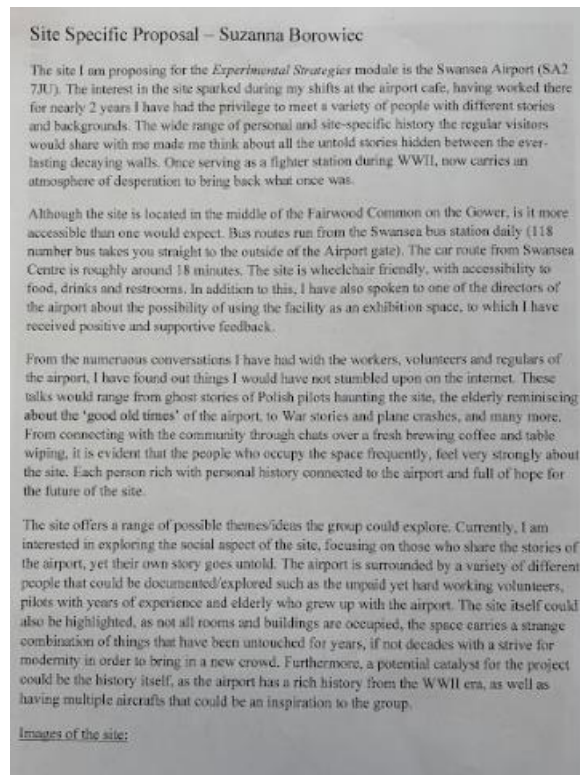
In terms of how the meanings, history and people influenced the framework of the exhibition, and influenced the themes and interpretations of the exhibition, we collectively decided that we would try to tie in a main theme of community and progress. As a group we felt we should do a service to our site and the volunteers who run the site

by creating works with positive themes, whilst the history of the site had some early influence on our ideas as a group and on my ideas individually it was the themes of community, rejuvenation, progress, experience and hope that had the most impact and influence on the development of my work and ideas. My piece of work 'Nubes' explored specifically the themes of hope and progress, the idea that the Swansea Airport like the sky and clouds above it are a grand and emotional piece that affect people at a core and personal level, a meaning that while can be shared and understood is deeply personal and individual to that one person. Like how I perceive the sky and its clouds as an extension of God's beauty and as a signifier of great hope and motivation, the volunteers see their airport as a grand project, a dream to fulfill and a community to grow.

A Summary of the Research

- Provide a concise overview of the research you have conducted over the past semester that has led you to the production of your site-specific intervention.
- Demonstrate your understanding of primary and secondary research skills taught over the past 18 months in developing your ideas from concepts to final installation. (Site visits/ practical experimentation, data collecting etc.)
- Use visuals!

The first delve into research of Swansea Airport would have been Suzanna's initial site proposal, with Suzanna working at the airport and being able to gather firsthand research and information from the site and its volunteers through discussion with customers and volunteers or by looking through the various physical materials on site such as pictures, posters, books and objects.



Plenty of research could be done online with plenty of information to be found, online articles, webpages and news outlets gave a great amount of historical information about Swansea Airport from its origins as an RAF base to its short commercial flying stint to being owned by private owners and the issues that soon arose to being handed to the Swansea council and now currently run by volunteers attempting to buy it with grand plans. Along with this online sources provided images and videos of the site and its previous activities.

Also known as:	Fairwood / Fairwood Common Aerodrome / Fairwood Common Airport / RAF Fairwood Common / RAF Station, Fairwood Common / Swansea Airport
County:	Swansea
Current Status:	Aviation
Date:	Opened June 1941
Current Use:	Active
Used By:	RAF (main user) / RAF (Czech) / RAF (Dutch) / RAF (French) / RAF (Norwegian) / RAF (Polish) / Civil (main user) / RAAF / RCAF / RNZAF
Landing Surface Type(s):	Paved
Aircraft Role(s):	Air ambulance / Airliner / Air-sea rescue / Anti-aircraft co-operation / Fighter (main role) / Fighter-reconnaissance / General aviation (main role) / Military development/support / Trainer

Fairwood Common, now known as Swansea Airport, opened on 15 June 1941 and was quickly home to No 10 Group of Fighter Command. Hawker Hurricanes from No 79 Squadron were the first to move in and within a few months the airfield became a Sector station. Aircraft from Fairwood Common provided aerial cover for the south of Wales and part of the south-west of England by both day and night. Bristol Beaufighters of No 600 Squadron were briefly here as well in June, replaced quickly by Hurricanes of No 317 Squadron, and yet more of No 504 Squadron soon joined. These units were among many to fly from Fairwood Common that supported raids over Europe.

Further, we planned a trip down to the Swansea civic centre archives to find additional historical information along with physical/digital materials such as maps, interviews, historical photos from the 1940's, and logistic information. While purely historical themes were not what we had in mind for our exhibition the visit provided us with a great idea on how impactful the site had been for so long and how its decline has only further resolved the determination of its current caretakers to bring it back into the light and bring their planes back into the sky.

Finally, the numerous site visits and in person discussions with the exhibiting group and several volunteers provided insight into how we could make our works not only site specific but how our works could do a service to the site and the people there, visiting the site and talking to volunteers had the most influence on the development of my ideas and the want for my work to be video and projection along with the main themes I would later choose to write into my artist statement and show in my video sequence. Along with this talking to the volunteers gave us the definite space we could use for our work early on and helped us to develop our work to those spaces in particular.

Techniques Developed for the Production of Your Body of Work

- Outline the tools, materials, or methods employed in creating your work. Highlight innovations or adaptations that you have considered to align with notions of 'site specificity'.
- Practical Application: Describe how these techniques contributed to the final exhibition and supported its conceptual aims.
- Use visuals!

For the creation of my work, I used a projector, media player and extension cord borrowed from university stores along with adobe premiere pro as my video editing software when sequencing my images and videos. My first test and experience with projector was in a projector workshop, soon after I borrowed a projector and media player for a site visit test and to experiment with settings, this led into the concept for my work and the gathering of images and video footage to develop and edit for my final piece. When editing my chosen video and images I worked with adobe premiere pro to cut my video and splice it with other video and image, along with this I applied a lens distortion affect to the images to give them the illusion of movement, I also slowly faded between each image and segment of video so that the transitions between would be slow, seamless and unintrusive/unobstructive.

These techniques contributed to the final exhibition by allowing me to create a unique piece of work that uses and fits to a limited space to further exaggerate the site-specific feeling of the work, these new skills also allowed for a continuous development of my idea and helped to create it so that it would work on site without major changes needed.



Individual and Group work overview

- Provide a summary of your contribution to production of a final site-specific exhibition.
- What role did you take in the group?
- What have you found challenging throughout the process?
- How have you overcome any hardship that you have dealt with both in the making of your work, and working with others.
- What team and personal skills have you learned/practiced that might be useful in your professional development for future career opportunities?

My main role in the group, apart from the production of my individual exhibition piece, was to help with marketing. Specifically, I ran an Instagram account for the exhibition's marketing campaign. I posted development of work images before posting the final images and artists statements along with a Welsh translation with tags to the artists for each post. Finally, I posted the poster and logo image along with information about the exhibition such as date, time, location and the overall exhibition statement also with a Welsh translation. When it came to the digital design of marketing materials, I contributed ideas and revisions to the materials we chose, Boarding Pass, Brochure, and Poster. I created initial drafts of a boarding pass and poster and kept in constant communication with the entire group so that we would produce the final marketing materials to suit everyone's desires/needs and the themes of the exhibition and its works. The challenges I encountered with marketing firstly was a lack of experience in running a brand new social media account for the purpose of interactions and impressions along with my lack of skill and experience in digital design itself when creating drafts for physical marketing materials, to overcome these challenges I asked for frequent feedback and ideas from the rest of my group and made sure to research, learn and put into practice articles and video tutorials online about my subject matters (Social media campaigning and digital design) this along with creating draft posts to make sure the final would be perfect in spelling, grammar, content and theme helped me to mitigate and eliminate different challenges.

For the site and the exhibition, I contributed by being in frequent contact with volunteers/workers at the airport and relaying that information to the rest of my group either in person or through our WhatsApp group, I discussed at length with the volunteers on which spaces we would be using, what materials of theirs we could use in terms of photo's, video and the space itself. Early on I took photos and a walkthrough video of the space so that we could clearly see the available spaces and how they would fit/suit different types of work. As a group we all worked to help the development of ideas for each of our individual pieces and provided support to each other in the creation and fruition of our works. As a group I believe we were able to learn and practice how to professionally and thoroughly communicate and negotiate with the workers/owners of the site we wanted to exhibit in. As well we learned how to properly assess a non-exhibition dedicated site for an exhibition along with how to risk assess and put the risk assessment into a professional format and form. As an individual I learned, practiced and

developed my skills in using a projector and editing/sequencing video to create a coherent and artistic piece for my exhibition, specifically I learned how to size video with different sized images and videos along with how to fade between each image/piece of video to fit with my vision for my work. I also learned how to cut it effectively and then stitch different parts together. Finally, I learned how to remove audio and then export video media properly with the settings of my projector for my chosen space in mind.

When developing my work the main hardships/challenges were at first coming up with an idea for a piece of work that would be site specific, site specificity and exhibiting as a whole was very new to me and I found it difficult to grasp and understand the concept of what a site specific work was and how I could create one for my site. Eventually I figured out how to understand the meaning and how to try and use it to my advantage when developing my piece, this was largely due to the help of Steve Allison in my group talking me through his work and how it was site specific along with what could make a work site specific to Swansea Airport. After this the other hardships was my lack of experience and skill in projector work and video editing which I overcame through working and discussing my idea and concerns with my tutors and my group and then having people run me through video editing and projector key stoning whether one on one or in a workshop session. In terms of any difficulty working with people, I personally had none and found my group to be an invaluable help to fall back on and to push me forward when I gained momentum with my work.

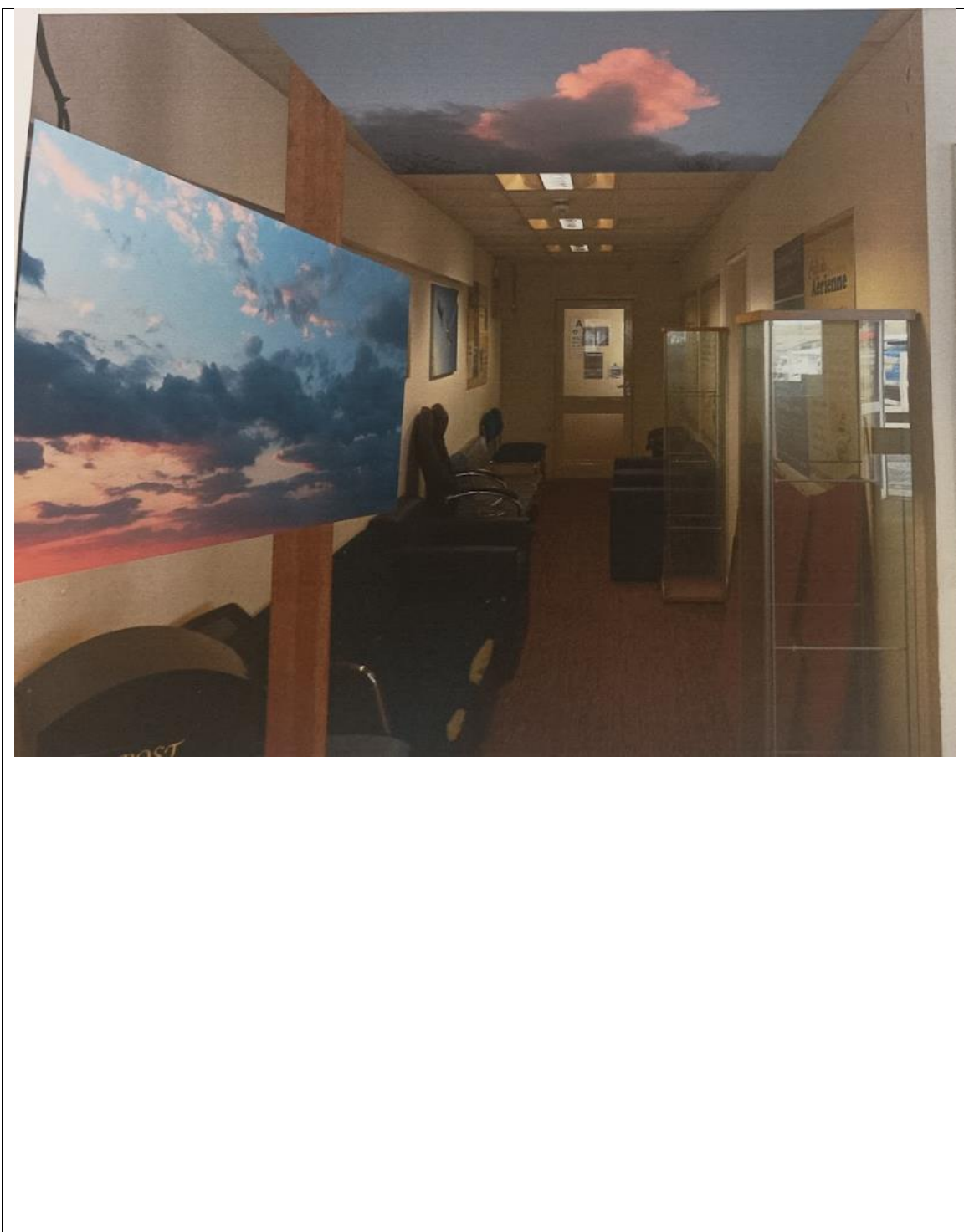
Evaluation of the Exhibition

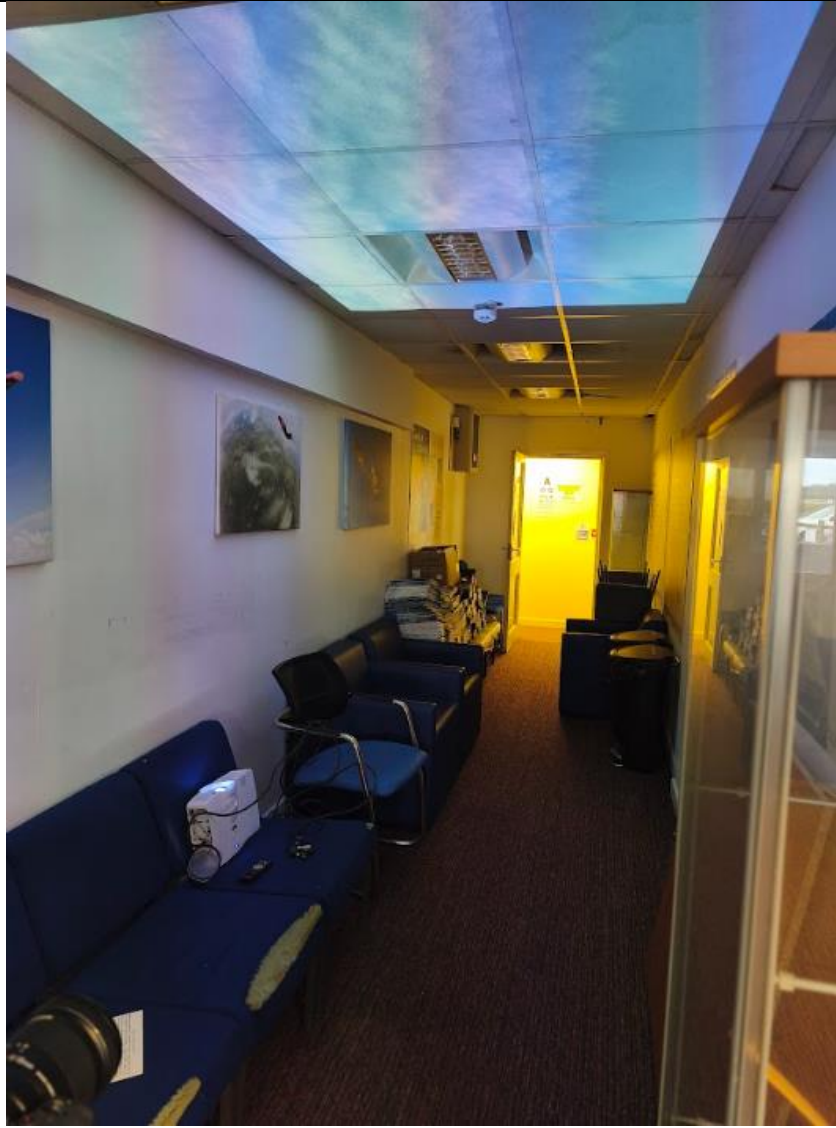
- Execution: Assess the success of the exhibition in addressing the site's history, community, or spatial dynamics. Provide install shots of your exhibition work.

Audience Interaction: Discuss how the audience engaged with your work and the site. Provide photographs that document this process.

- Reflection: Identify areas for improvement and potential future directions for your practice.

The exhibition's response to the site's themes and space was a success though with some room for improvement. For how the pieces of works worked with the site's unique space both the vinyl works, and the singular projection work used the restrictiveness of certain parts of the site to work to the advantage of developing work, installing and then portraying the main themes of the exhibition. My projection piece took advantage of a relatively long, but thin hallway covered with furniture on the floor and objects such as menus and boards on the walls. I projected directly onto the ceiling only from the base of the hallway to around halfway down so as not to bother/hinder the door and rooms at the back and beyond the hallway and those working there. I projected a mix of moving images and still images of cloud and sky sequenced together to give the feeling/illusion that viewers would be looking up at the sky even though they were inside. My work addressed the themes of hope, wonder, purpose/meaning, and the dream of the volunteers at the airport. People often look toward the sky and its clouds as a source of wonder and hope, the sky and clouds also have a unique and important relationship with airports and those who work them, you cannot have an airport without a sky and the inherent human need to explore and experience grand emotion in such huge spaces has driven an industry many not so long thought could and would never exist, and yet despite this it does exist and thrives and inspires.





The way the audience interacted with my work was how I expected and wanted. Everyone who viewed my work went to the middle of the hallway and looked directly up, an action I was hoping for, to further immerse the viewers in my work and its themes. Many but not all the viewers took a seat on the chairs and continued to watch my projection until its completion and then looped back to the start. I was happy to see my work was clearly visible from the entrance and enticed visitors to stop and investigate the work however the placement of the artists statement board while clear to me and the rest of my group failed to capture the attention of the majority of visitors until they came to leave in which they then saw and read but did not further look at my projection. This would have had a dampened effect on the visitor's ability to decipher the contexts and themes and perhaps even could have confused some visitors when watching the projection, though I did not notice signs of confused viewers the point remains for a poor placement of my artist statement.

With the site itself visitors interacted as they usually do with the only difference is more time spent standing still viewing work and reading artists statements before continuing on to the cafe, out of 28 brochures printed we were left with 11 at the end of the second day of the exhibition giving us a good idea of visitor engagement and interest into our exhibition. Along with this there were a few visitors who stopped to chat to me and the other exhibitors about our work and the exhibition and site itself.





The areas in which I can improve are as follows, the placing of my artist statement in a more obvious and easily readable place, to further intrigue visitors and have them able to read my statement before or during the viewing of my work. The placing/organising of my cables on the first day of the exhibition while not a safety hazard was messy and distracting from my work. This was rectified on the second day by hiding all the cables behind the furniture. Finally, the development of my work towards the days before the exhibition was rather rushed and could have been managed better in terms of its quality and timing to the installation day.

For my future directions of practice, I would like to continue to take videos and learn a variety of editing techniques and produce moving image works along with some more experimentation of using 35mm Film and developing photos that way. Projection has given me some great inspiration and ideas for future projects yet I will need to hone in my skills and techniques before developing work. The content and main inspirations of my work will continue as the same, mostly working in landscape, flower and wildlife

photography and taking great inspiration from my Catholic faith and my want/need to create work with positive and hopeful tones and themes along with making work that ties into my emotional state of being.