

VISUAL DIARY

BA PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE ARTS Y2

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Site Specific Art

"As a site-specific work of art is designed for a specific location, if removed from that location it loses all or a substantial part of its meaning. The term site-specific is often used in relation to installation art, as in site-specific installation; and land art is site-specific almost by definition."

- TATE (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/site-specific>)

Site-specific art, the focus in this semester, is inherently linked to the location that the art itself takes its place. As mentioned in the quote above, if this art were to be removed from its site, then the meaning of the work would lose all or some of its intended meaning to the audience. This is largely what separates it as a practice from the rest of the art world, where the creator has intended you to experience their piece then and there, in that location or under those conditions.



- Face 2 face, 2007, JR

Sun Tunnels by Nancy Holt

Sun Tunnels is by Nancy Holt, located in the Great Basin Desert in Utah, is an installation consisting of 4 large concrete tunnels with holes drilled along their structures. What makes this work so site specific are that the drilled holes were done so with the intention of creating the constellations matching their locations. These are the constellations of Draco, Capricorn, Perseus, and Columba. The location of these tunnels was carefully planned and researched over 4 years, taking into consideration not only their location but also how visitors of the installation could interact and immerse themselves in the art while walking around the site.

Looking through the centre of the tunnels during the winter and summer solstices, participants in this artwork would be able to see that the tunnels have been purposefully aligned with the sunrises and the sunsets of those days. These facts are what make this work so impactful in its location, in any other location one or all aspects of what went into the work would lose its effect and as a result us as an audience wouldn't be able to share in Holt's vision for the piece.



Season's Greetings by Banksy

Season's Greetings is a graffitied work of the anonymous artist Banksy, located on the corner of a garage in Port Talbot, Wales. Done close to Christmas, this work depicts a boy with his arms out enjoying the snow on one side of the wall, while around the corner you can see that the illusion is shattered by the snow turning out to be the ashes of a dumpster fire. There was a lot of backlash around this piece directed towards the artist because the council argued it perpetuated a bad reputation for the town that wasn't truly reflective of them.



Whether it was right or not for Banksy to make work surrounding the topic, the site-specificity of the piece is indisputable as it touches at a core issue surrounding the town chosen. Even the placement of it being on the corner makes the viewer shed light on their own understanding of the work as they walk around it. They can choose to face the boy, face the dumpster fire, or look at the corner where both sides of the story can be seen to make one work.

Memory Wound by Jonas Dahlberg

Memory Wound was a proposed memorial by Jonas Dahlberg, as a way to commemorate the lives lost in an extreme-right terrorist attack on Utøya island and Oslo. His concept was to take a portion out of the island itself, with a place underground to stand and read the names that would be displayed across from the visitors. It would be a physical representation of what was lost, as if a part of the island itself is gone with the people killed in the attack as a powerful reminder.

This was unfortunately something that could never properly be executed, despite how strong the impact of it would be, due to multiple factors of the environment and logistics. Actually removing a section of the island would be incredibly impossible, and expensive, as you have the foundations of land to have to move. On top of that, it would impact the current of the water surrounding the area, not to mention potentially disrupting the aquatic and land habitats for fish, insects and other small animals that live in the ground and water. However, this is still an incredibly strong site specific work, as it is an excellent example of how the impact of a piece would lose some of its significance when relocated.



Initial Health and Safety risk assessment (Glass Houses)

Within the first week, Ren and Katie of our group went to the Botanical Gardens to look around our assigned site for our exhibition. They also went to inquire about the use of the site, the Glass Houses, where the groundskeeper pointed us in the direction of contacting the council about the space. While there they documented the sight and noted down some initial health and safety concerns of the site and the location of the garden itself.

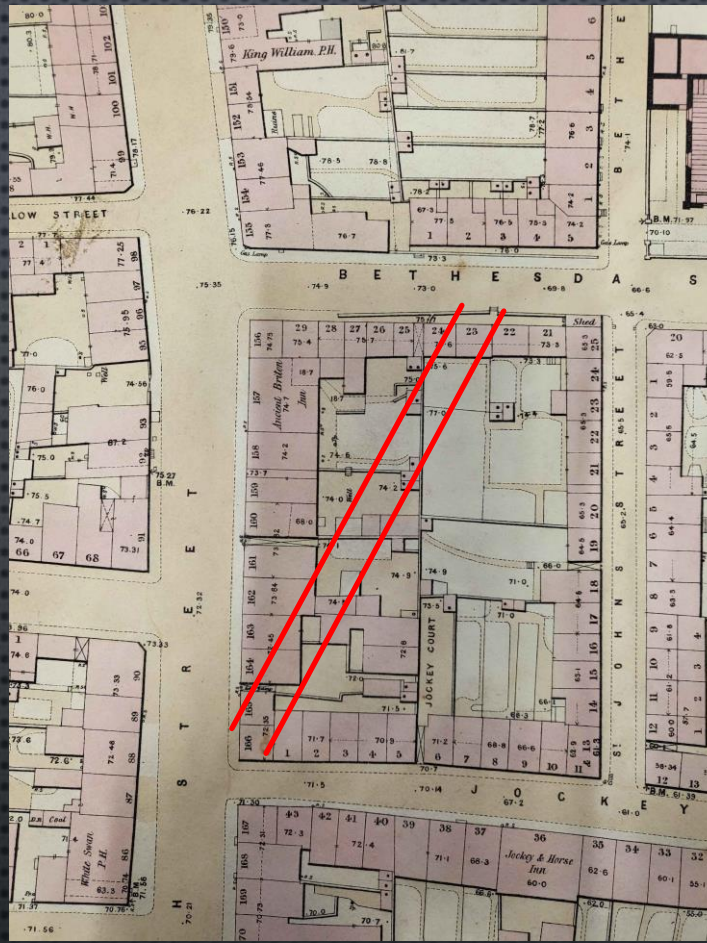
- Weather (Most of the area is outside, risk of getting any equipment we use getting wet)
- Allergies (Allergic to any plants or bugs in the gardens)
- Pets and unsupervised children (Touching any equipment, breaking it)
- Trip Hazards (wires from equipment potentially, area with plants that may extend beyond flower beds)
- Accessibility (Narrow paths may not fit all wheelchairs, low hanging plants or plants overlapping pathway issue for vision problems)
- Cactus glass house (Pricked on plants if careless)
- Tropical house climate (Stuffy and humid conditions may effect anyone heat sensitive, causing fainting)



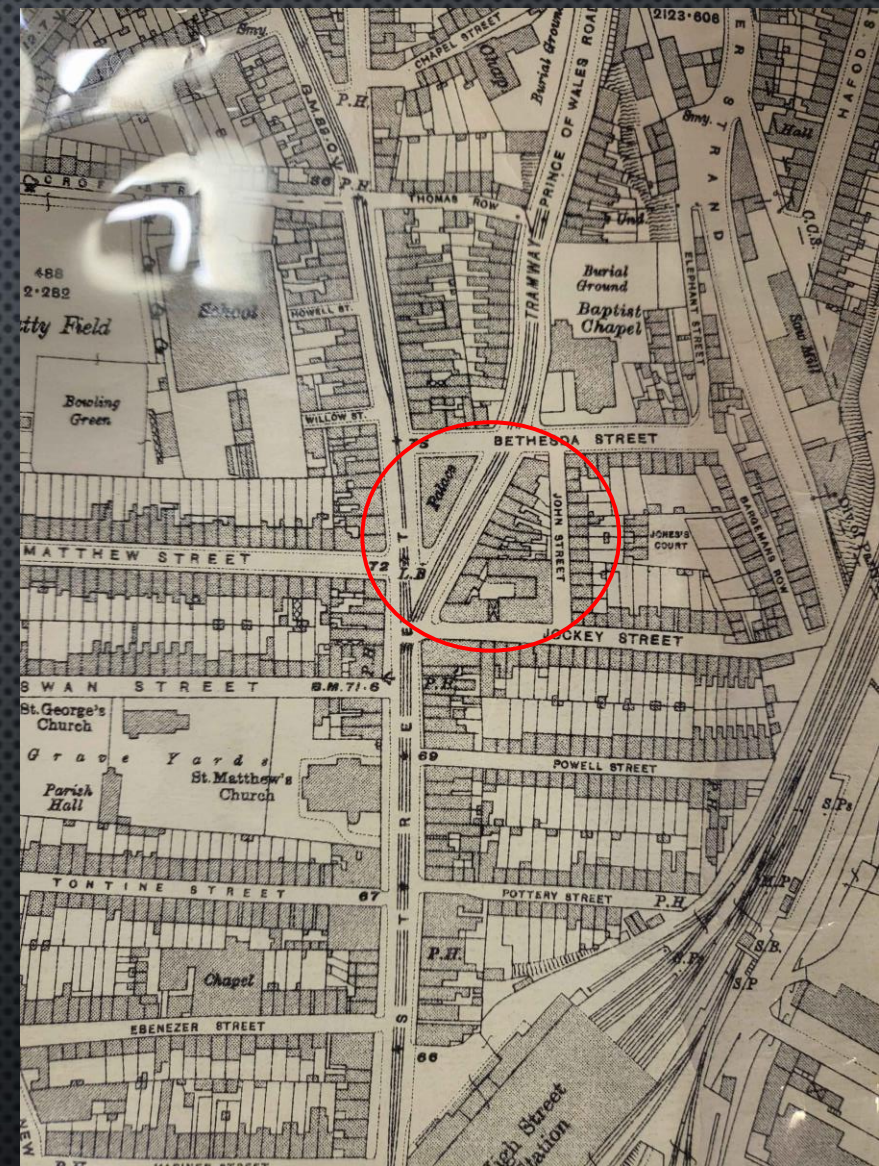
Archive Visit

Split into 2 groups, we paid a trip to the Archives in the Swansea Civic centre. Here we were allowed the opportunity to look at maps of what Swansea had once looked like dating back to the early 1800s, as well as images of constructions that no longer exist or have been partially taken down. I found the train lines that had spanned the bay front particularly interesting, as well as learning how the blocked off bridges by Victoria park had served a purpose that was null and void once the train tracks had been removed. I also learnt that The Strand had been the edge of where the River Tawe originally ran, but as the demand for bigger docks arose with the increasing sizes of ships they were built elsewhere, which resulted in the abandonments and eventual repurposing of the area.

Whilst there, I took the chance to ask the archivist to help me find the location of my suggested exhibition site the Palace Theatre. Fascinatingly enough I found out they had created an entirely new road that split a grouping of buildings, allowing for the Palace Theatre to be built in the odd triangular space the split had created on the corner.



The image above is of a map from the early 1800s. The Palace Theatre wasn't constructed until 1888 hence it isn't shown. The red lines mark where the built road split the block of buildings, and the map to the right lets you see that same block of buildings with the newly added Palace Theatre and road.



Seminars

The 2 seminars I signed myself up for today were discussions of the questions:

"How and why is site-specific different to a framed photograph?" and "How could a work be transported to another site, changing its purpose/impact?"

One work that was shown as a good discussion point was the work of Olafur Eliasson, and his installation *The weather project*. Particularly in reference to how a site-specific work is different to a frame photo, the large-scale solar lamp is something that likely was done no justice by just an image. The full impact of that piece would have to be in person, surrounded by other people and seeing their silhouettes when approaching the piece. This relates to the *Sun Tunnels* that I intend to explore in these questions, where the installation was made with an active audience in mind. Holes have been drilled to eye level, so when you pass by you can still have an angle of the work, and they're structures visitors can walk through and physically feel the temperature difference from the world outside.

With the latter question, a classmate of mine brought forward a work they'd been looking into for their own report. *Fallen leaves* by Menashe Kadishman is an installation commemorating the Holocaust, involving the act of visitors walking over hundreds of metal masks. They had one perspective of how the meaning would change if moved to a country other than Germany would lose the fact it almost holds those who visit accountable by being in the country that led the suffering. It made me consider that, regarding *Season's Greetings*, whether to some degree the artwork being in Port Talbot was the factories there being held accountable for the pollution in the area that, inevitably, would have an impact on the children who've grown up around it.

Site Specific Report

How could a work be transferred to another site, changing its purpose/impact?

Site-specific art is work that, innately, has had an influence taken from its location to produce the work. Whether it reflects the history of the site, uses materials from that area, or it can only be fully realised in the decided space, these all undeniably will be what make the artwork complete. I'll be using 2 works that capture my interest to explore how they may change in purpose or impact if transferred to a different site, specifically *Season's Greetings* by Banksy and *Sun Tunnels* by Nancy Holt.



Season's Greetings is a piece that appeared in the Welsh town of Port Talbot not long before Christmas of 2018, made by the anonymous graffiti artist Banksy. As can be seen in the image above, it details a young boy standing and tasting the snowflakes that fall from the sky. However, around the corner you will see the 'snow' is actually ashes from a burning dumpster that the boy is entirely oblivious to. By creating this on a corner, you can experience the work in full by standing diagonal or in 2 parts by moving yourself to see it from various angles, making the viewer engage themselves more with the work and its surroundings. Port Talbot is a town that's unfortunately renowned for its high pollution due to the steel works in the area that were active at the time of the piece being done. Though the area was wrongly given the title of the most polluted area in the UK by WHO (ITV News, 2018), there is no denying the fact that the town was built with the foundations of the steelworks. Children have been raised and provided for by jobs in a factory that actively polluted the place they grew up in, which reflects in the graffiti work.

Sun Tunnels is a piece installed in the Great Basin Desert located in Utah, created by the artist Nancy Holt. It consists of concrete tubes with various patterns of holes drilled through them that have been brought and arranged in their specific spots. As the sun is in the sky, the holes allow the light through and projects into the shadows of the inner tube, creating constellations that encompassed the globe: Draco, Perseus, Columba, and Capricorn. Holt orchestrated these tubes to align with the timings of the winter and summer solstice, wherein the sun can be seen to perfectly inside the tunnels from its place on the horizon on those days.



Both these pieces have their method of interacting with the artist's selected site, though in different ways. *Sun Tunnels* comes most to life with the positions of the sun and most uniquely in its location during the solstices of the summer and winter, whilst *Season's Greetings* is much more dependent on the history of the town it was created in and the associations of the area that were highlighted at the time. I believe the work of *Sun Tunnels* would lose most of both its purpose and impact if it were to be moved to a different location, as the intent is to be able to align with the sun from their designed location. Nancy Holt (1977) states "*The idea for Sun Tunnels became clearer to me while I was in the desert watching the sun rising and setting, keeping the time of the earth. Sun Tunnels can exist only in that particular place—the work evolved out of its site.*", reinforcing the fact that the site, and even its coordinates, is integral to how the piece serves its purpose. Banksy's *Season's Greetings* could, theoretically, still serve its intended purpose of commenting on the pollution of a town's air and the danger it poses for young generations; however, it would lose the full extent of its impact if not in Port Talbot. With the WHO air pollution report that had been published earlier that same year, the title was fresh in the public's heads, and the industry background of the area that has directly helped raise and support the families settled there commentate on a reality that is unique to few places.

I find these reasons go to show how site-specific art primarily gains its full impact from the surroundings chosen by the artist. Whether it be from the positions of the art within the landscape, or the context and history of the area, site-specific work can only have its full intended impact when in its chosen location.

Bibliography

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ITV News (2018) *World Health Organisation wrongly names Port Talbot one of the 'most polluted areas in the UK'* Available at: <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2018-05-04/world-health-organisation-wrongly-names-port-talbot-one-of-the-most-polluted-areas-in-the-uk> (Accessed 19 October 2024)

Team Meeting – October 23rd

- Figuring out the theme of our show. Come to a mutual agreement on which aspect of the garden will be our baseline of inspiration.
 - How the garden has been used in the past. Claire and Katie will do some further research into this.
 - Consider if, using the education space provided, we do something more workshop oriented/informative rather than display
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Team Meeting – October 31st

- Katie has been working on a website to host a trail of QR codes around the garden, using the history of the area to create a quiz.
- My own work of lumen printing within the gardens will be further developed, this time being more mindful of the size of my prints and how aspects of the space can influence that
- The concept to, potentially, create an exhibition within an exhibition. If we were to something closer to a workshop what would we be hosting? (e.g. planting, photography, history, etc)

Viewing the space

With the Educational space inside the Flower House provided as our exhibition site, myself, Katie, and Claire took pictures of the new space we would be using. It was reassuring to see we had a lot of space to work with, as well as a projector already there if we wanted to use that in our work. The tables there were foldable ones so, if we don't need those for anything in our final collaboration, they can be temporarily folded up and placed out of the way.

Whilst there there's also a kitchen available, which we'd have access to, in the event we need a place to put our bags or any food/drink of our own to keep us going throughout our invigilation of the space.



In the lecture today we were encouraged to use the pictures we took of our sites to plan out what our exhibition would look like. This was done simply by placing an acetate over the printed images and using a marker to outline what it could be. As a group we knew we wanted to all be inspired by the fact the gardens had been previously used as a growing site for food during WW2, with their "Dig For Victory" slogan encouraging people to volunteer for the work. It was suggested then while talking about this that the idea of us putting on something closer to a workshop that was turned into an exhibition could be done (drawn out in the bottom left). My own contribution to the space would be outside, for when visitors are first approaching the space. I have since turned away from that idea of hanging things under the shelter because there's nothing to safely hang it from.



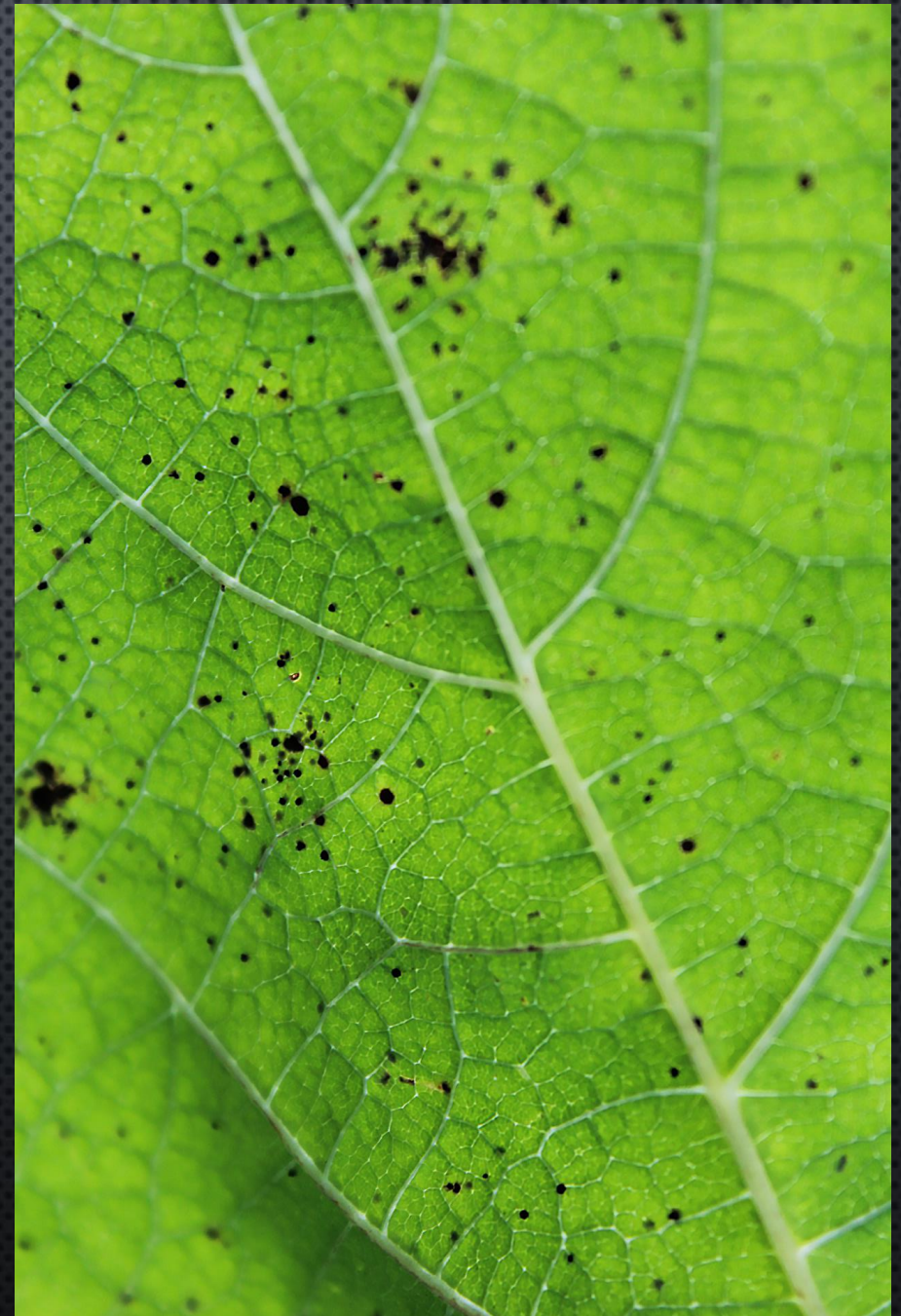
Use of Photoshop to visualise

As opposed to the physical visualisation of the acetate over the paper, one other way we've been shown to plan our layout is by using photoshop. You use the image of the space and insert the pictures of whatever will be displayed (in our case, we used the Dig For Victory posters to show where we would put up our reimagined versions). Being mindful of the angle of the photo, you use the transform tool to alter the corners of the images and wrap them to the perspective. This properly helps to communicate your ideas to other people beyond sketches, and if you have the work you can see it properly in the site you'll be using.

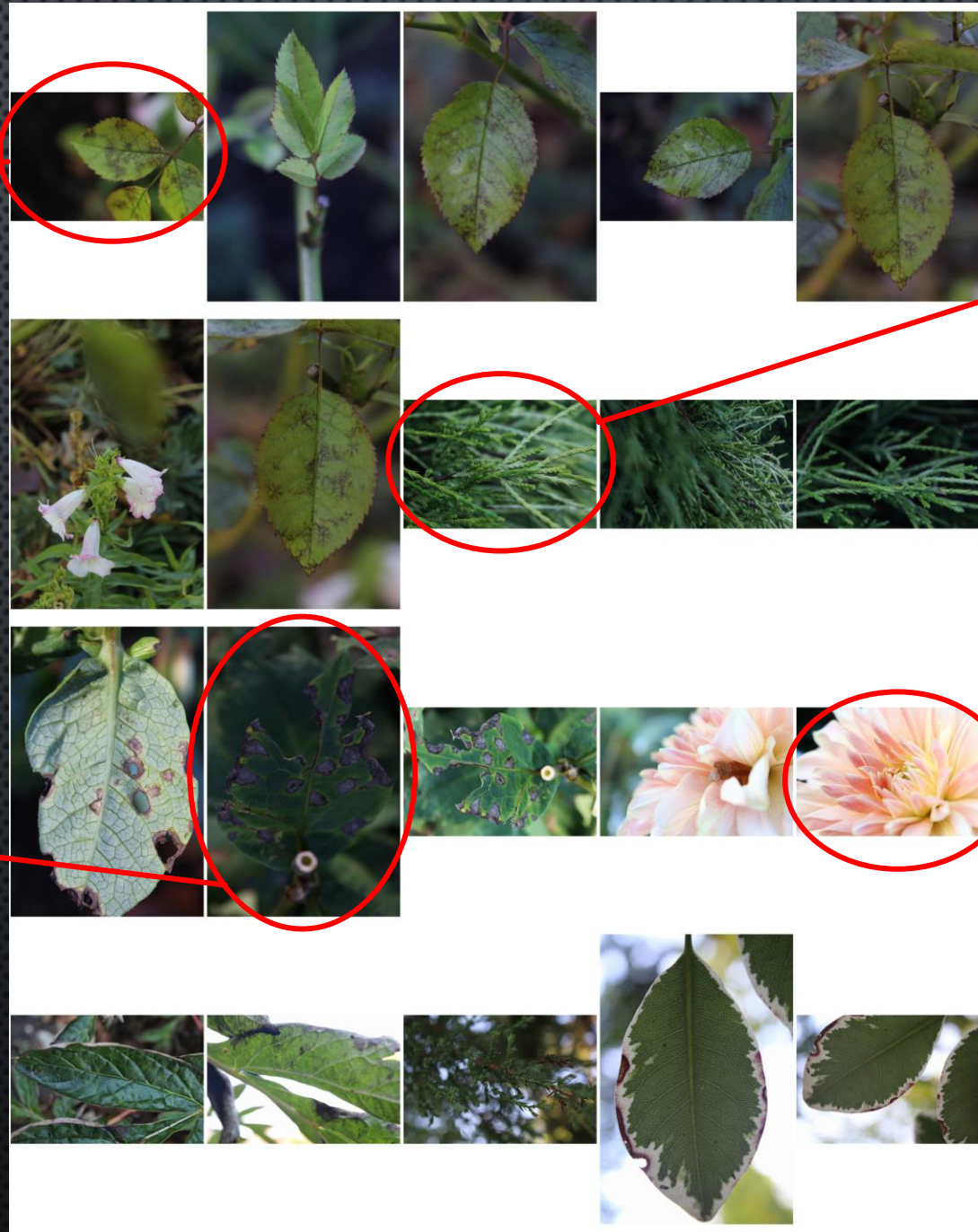


In and around the site

In the visit to the site today, my focus will be around the shapes and details of the area. Since I plan on experimenting with lumen prints in my work towards the exhibition, which will involve taking plants and debris around the site, I want to do a shoot that will encourage me to explore what the garden has to offer. The forecast is promising with good sunlight, so I hope it will make the veins on the leaves stand out for this shoot. I am also hoping to be able to take down some names of the plants in the growing beds, to potentially bring that forward with me into the lumen prints.



Good use of a low aperture to emphasise the leaves in the foreground,



Another good use of my camera settings, this time it brings out the detail in the plant's unique structure. Blurred foreground makes the middle ground that's in focus stand out and bring the attention to the centre

Poor exposure doesn't make the detailing of the dead leaf obvious and the focus is slightly off centre. It has my desired composition but is a bad example of observing the characteristics I'd wanted to

Good use of a low aperture to emphasise the leaves in the foreground, correct use of exposure makes the study of the colour pop how it was intended and sharp middle ground focuses on the centre of the flower where the line in the petals are visible

Focusing on the textures of the stem and body of the pumpkin. Specifically studying how the course, cardboard look of the stem flows into the shine of the outside skin



Dynamic composition with the focus following the main stem of the fern, and good use of low aperture as it brings the focus appropriately to the detailing unique to the fern leaves.

Observing how the shadows of leaves behind it and the sunlight cast created shapes within the shape of the leaf itself, particularly interested in the holes in the leaves behind breaking up the shadow with light

The most striking aspect of this image for me is the fact you can see the lines of the flower's pigmentation in the petals, where the pink deepens and lightens along the body of it. I brought this out best in photoshop by adjusting the sharpness of the picture to ensure the focal point of the shot would really catch the eye amongst the blurred foreground and background. Knowing I was going to be using a low depth of field I was conscious of keeping the centre of the flower in middle frame, but to make the colour pop more I didn't want the entire frame to be of the flower and kept some of the background scenery in frame. This way it'd be dark from the blurring and act as a contrast to the bright pink.





Using a low depth of field, I've made it so that the eye is drawn to what I was focusing on with this shoot, that being the detailing of the fern leaves. The sharp focus of the shot cuts effectively across the frame, particularly as it complements the direction of where the stem of the fern leads the eye. One critique I do have is that I would ideally wish for more of the foreground to be in focus rather than the midframe, that way the detailing along the leaf would take up more attention in the image.

Practical execution

In recent meetings, it has been established that a part of our project will include a workshop as was brainstormed a few weeks ago. The idea is to either hold a day where people can drop into our workshop freely as they pass by, or to invite a school or organised group to partake in the workshop that we would help to arrange. The activities themselves would be encouraging people to learn about the processes of lumen prints, as they innately need UV/sunlight for their creation much like how the plants require the sun to grow. If we are to take the route leaning more towards organising something with a school, then we would need to see how to reach out to them and the best way to be able to do so. Also, a workshop will require equipment such as UV lights, photopaper, and the appropriate amount of time to let them develop.



For my first attempts at lumen prints, I've picked up plant debris from the surrounding flowerbeds and the growing bed itself. After having arranged them either randomly (the sage) or with intention (the beetroot) I've then placed them in the vegetable growing beds to expose to the light. This is to make as many aspects about the process revolve around the site itself, as well as a nod to our joint theme inspired by the history of the gardens as a resource for food being grown during WW2. It's also why none of my selected plants will be from anywhere other than the site itself, as I feel strongly that using anything else would undermine the intention of my art.



Final Prints

'*Salvia Guaranitica*', the anise-scented sage, was scattered at random on my light sensitive paper. Since I'd found these fallen flowerheads on the grass around the plant itself, I wanted to emulate the feeling there wasn't a manmade hand in the composition – however they fell would be however they appeared in the final print. It gives the work an interesting composition, allowing plenty of negative space for the signature colour of the lumen prints to surround the flowers. A sense of aperture has also been created due to the rainy conditions this print had been exposed during, certain flower heads having significantly more detail pressed into the paper while others, where the droplets were heaviest, have had the light dispersed differently over their area and causing them to take a less focused form.





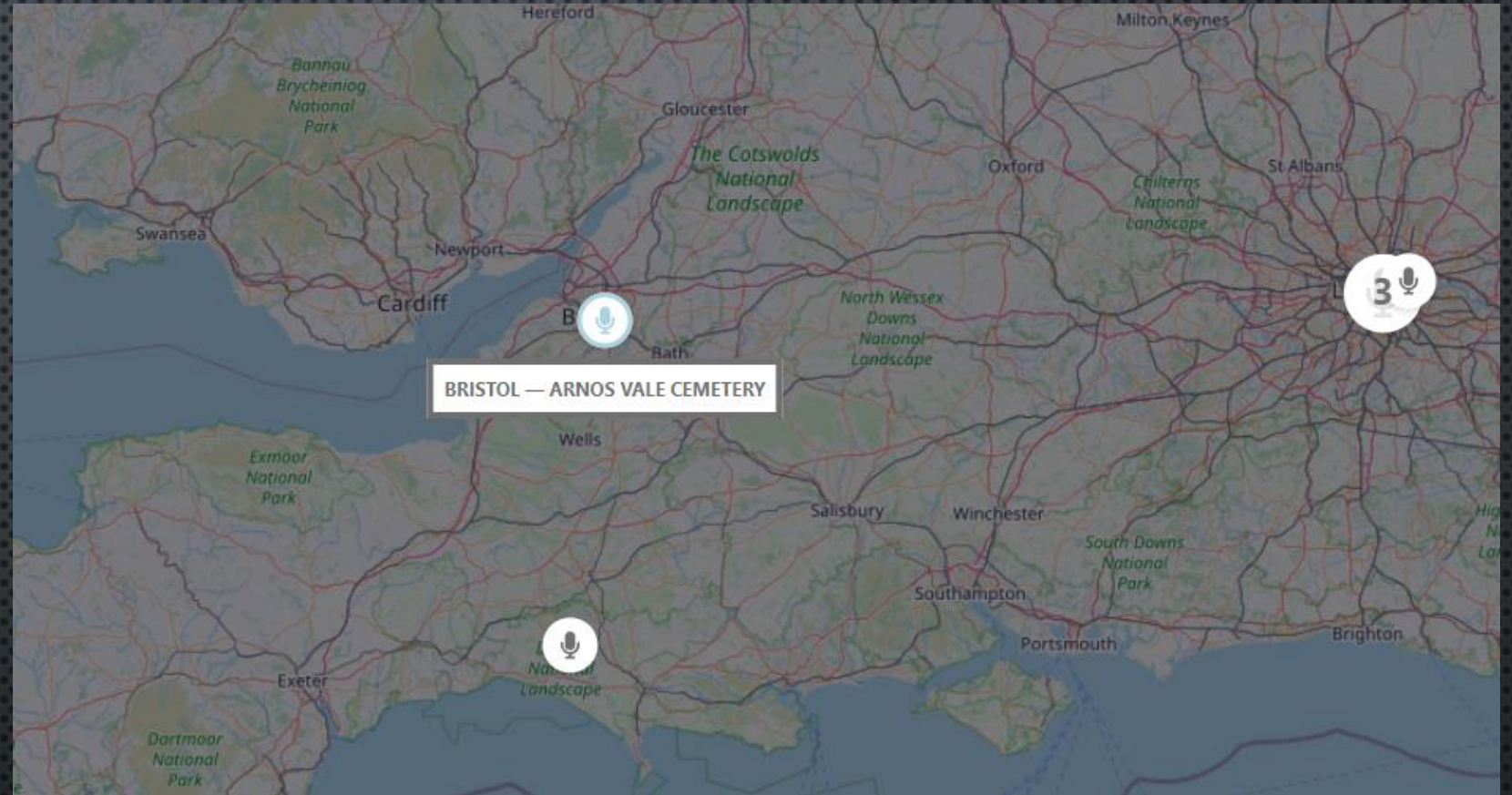
In this print '*Beta Vulgaris*', the common beetroot, I took the stems from the growing beds of the beetroot and laid them out across the paper. Unlike with the sage the composition of this was more intentional, seeking to cause overlap in the leaves and stems so that some parts would print clearer on the paper than others. What interested me most was the shapes of holes within the leaves themselves, so any stems with gaps were closest to the canvas as to catch their shape and have the detail come through in the contrast of the print. One flaw with using these stems however was that they were thicker than the flowerheads of the sage, especially when overlapping, so getting a tight press from the glass wasn't possible without risk of damaging the glass pane itself. An alternative in the future could be that I only use the leaves of the plant, so I can still get the details of their shapes while properly flattening them to the light sensitive paper.

Use of streaming in art

Within today's lecture the focus was on how we could potentially implement streams such as audio or a video stream within our exhibition sites, and considering the ways this could be applied in a site specific setting.

I looked into the website, Locus Sonas, to see the types of streams that were set up for listening to. Some had buzzing from wires in Pennsylvania, or the noise of rain on leaves in Hooke Park in South England.

The range of noises documented on sites like these would lend itself well to creating an atmosphere in a place elsewhere, and in theory could create an interesting contrast if paired with a video stream of somewhere more urban like a city (for the noise of leaves hit by rain) or of a forest (for the buzzing of electricity).



In the context of the Botanical Gardens

In our group we proceeded to consider what streaming or projection would look like within our site. We considered how the history of the site could be incorporated and recalled that the glass houses had been made using bricks, until they had to be closed to visitors and rebuilt in the 1980s.

One piece we felt could be executed at our site using this was to project the brick onto the now entirely glass and metal structure of the structure. It would be interesting to see how the light from the projector would interact and bounce off the glass now there, and whether it would make its way through to some of the plants close to the glass or if the light would disperse. Our current decided theming surrounding light would be appropriately reflected in this idea, however it strays from our attempt to engage with the community wholly.



Exhibition Posters

In designing these posters, I want to make sure to have the basic layout down. Primarily, I've matched the shades of the white and blue lettering to that of our handouts designed by Claire using a colour picking tool in photoshop. This is where the negative space left in my first prints is well used, since it leaves good space for the information anyone passing by will need to have if they have an interest (not all information is present as all the following designs are drafts).

Monday 25th and Wednesday 27th November 2024
Botanical Gardens Tŷr Blodau

LUMEN HORTUS

November 2024
Monday 25th and Wednesday 27th

LUMEN HORTUS

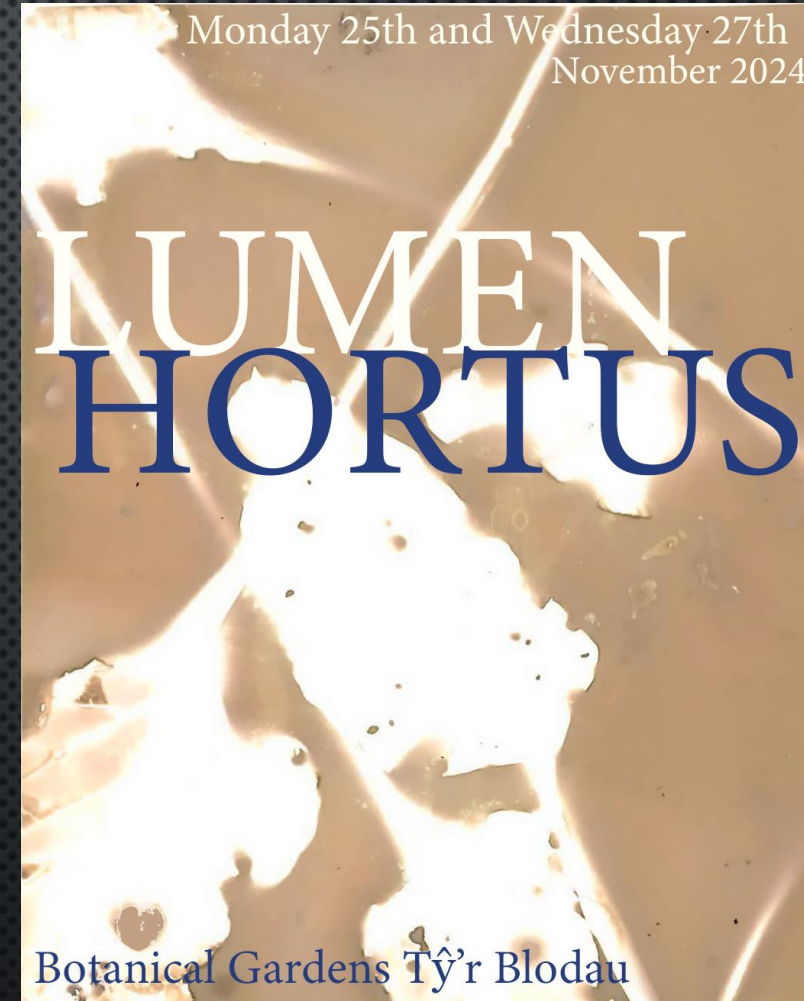
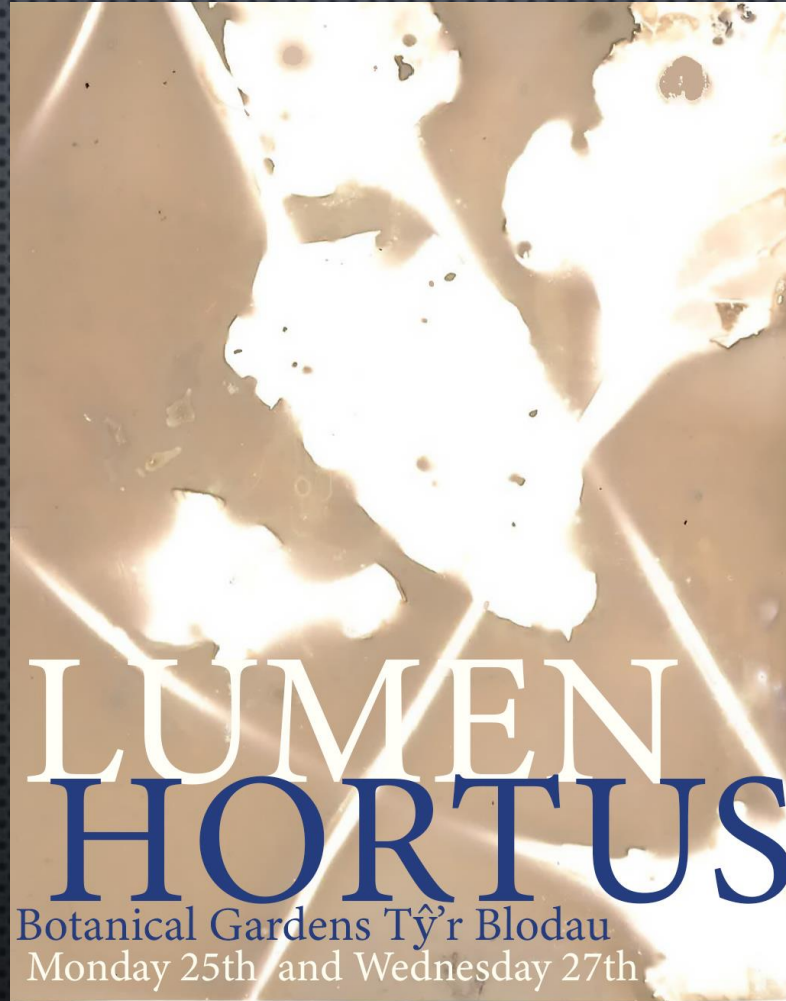
Botanical Gardens Tŷr Blodau

Toying around with where exactly the words don't clash with the background or fade too much in that the words are lost has been a challenge

Exhibition Posters

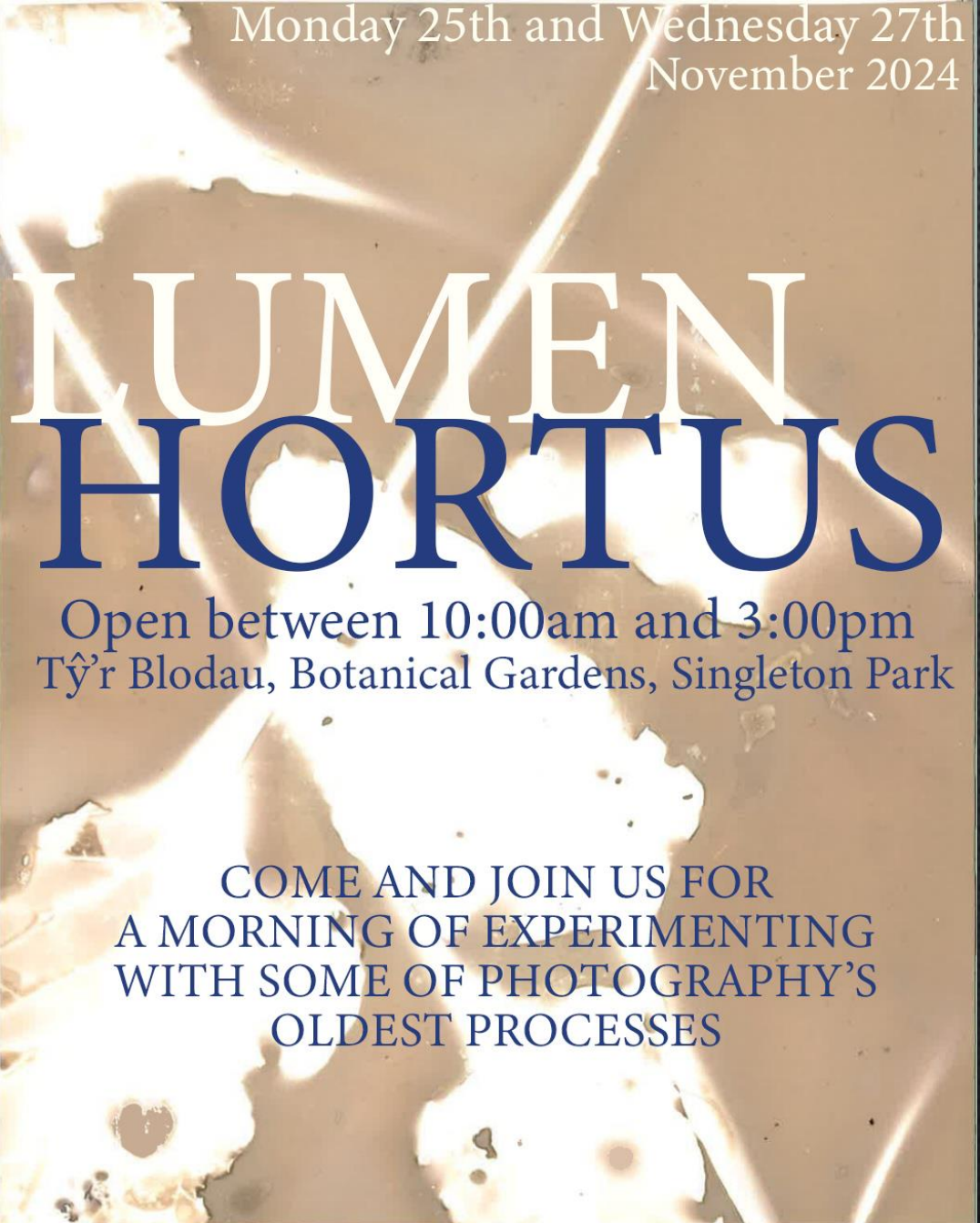
I want to also experiment with using the beetroot leaves as the background for the poster too, as the images each have their own pros and cons when using white text. For these, the positive space is in much closer bulks, which meant I had to be mindful when deciding where blue or white text went.

This is then the reason I've settled on the title being closer to a central location than any of my other drafts, since I feel the blue was able to comfortably stand out against all of the image, and the white of the title is still legible amongst the stems.



Final Design

After presenting all my suggested designs to my group, I asked for their opinions on a final layout. They have chosen the 4th one amongst my designs so, with the timings of our show recently confirmed, I have now properly put up the information regarding the time and a section from our handout in order to inform passersby of what our event entails. This did require some minor layout adjustments in terms of the blue text in the bottom left being lifted to centre with the timings, but I feel this makes the information much more appropriately displayed and easier to find the details needed to attend.



Monday 25th and Wednesday 27th
November 2024

LUMEN HORTUS

Open between 10:00am and 3:00pm
Tŷ'r Blodau, Botanical Gardens, Singleton Park

COME AND JOIN US FOR
A MORNING OF EXPERIMENTING
WITH SOME OF PHOTOGRAPHY'S
OLDEST PROCESSES

With this batch of lumen prints, I had decided to change the dimensions of the paper the work was on. This would be an appropriate way to match it to the environment I have been exposing the paper in, similar to the tags used to label what plant is which that are grown in the vegetable beds. For the plants this time, I asked a groundskeeper to be able to rummage through some of the debris in his wheelbarrow before it was cleaned up properly. There was an abundance of strawberries in there, and he was talking to me about how the wildlife love to pick them off and eat them. I was eager to use these next in my prints because I felt it resonated with the theme inspiring a lot of the materials I've chosen so far – how food grown in the Botanical Gardens was and is still used as a food source in the community, even if this was specifically the animals themselves. I was also interested at the possible shapes the broken and squished strawberries could make along with the juice they would leave.



As I had hoped the juice of the strawberries used have left a mark around the silhouette of the fruit, which is an interesting divergence from the shades of white and pinkish hues normally present in lumen print. It's also an excellent example of how the items you choose to use within the workshop we plan to hold can affect the final look of the picture, but this experimentation also has the simpler examples of how it looks without any liquids effecting the exposure of the paper below. These pieces have been cut a smaller dimension than my last round of lumen print experiments as I wanted to use sizes more akin to those of the plant tags found in the dirt of the growing beds, where these images were also developed.



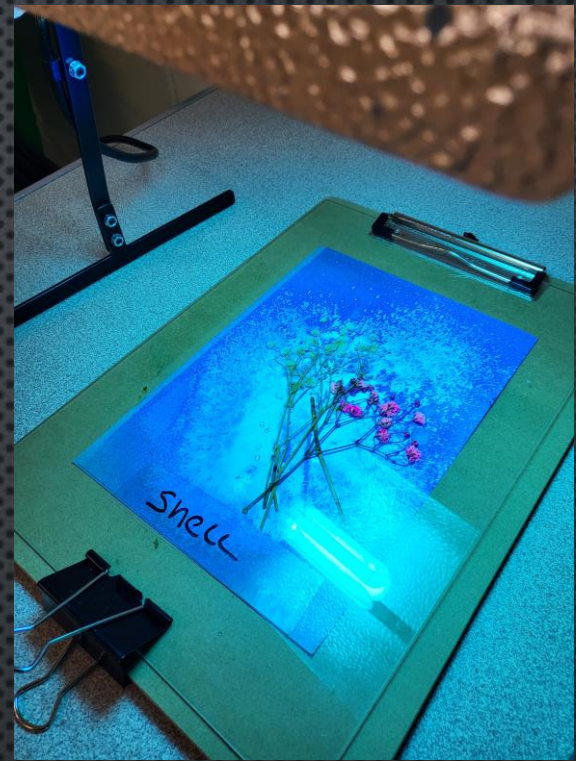
Exhibition Day 1



Exhibition Days

Opening at 10, myself, Ren, Claire, and Katie began to busy ourselves with the process of cyanotypes and lumen prints so we could make the best use of the space to develop site-specific work. Early in the day a group of carers came in to see what we were doing. Shell, a carer, had never tried the process before and Claire talked them through the options available to them while I made them something to drink. We encouraged the participants to write their names on a slide of acetate so they would be able to distinguish theirs amongst the others and that way we would be able to have written parts of the community who took part in the 1st day inside the book compilation we planned to make.

We had 2 other people who joined us from 12 until the end of the workshop at 3pm. They thoroughly engaged with the work, experimenting with both the processes in both natural light and with the UV lamps. We told them of the second day we'd be doing this exhibition and they expressed plans to come back and take their dried prints.



Exhibition Day 2



Exhibition Days



For our 2nd and final day, we had the work produced on the Monday to be able to bring out the exhibition aspect of the project. The work both our group and the members of the community created was displayed around the room, above the UV lamps and by the window near the entrance to ensure the eye would be caught by one of them went stepping into the room. Books were also printed of the cyanotypes and lumen prints as a nod to one of the artists that had inspired some aspects of our final decisions, Anna Atkins, who is widely considered to be the first person to include photographs in a book.

We had more people come in and participate in the workshop and let them take their prints home, so they could have something from the garden to remember our exhibition by. Even when some people didn't want to create any lumen prints, I had a long conversation with some passersby about the aims of our workshop, and explaining the processes to them with the provided examples.



My contributions



The key contribution I made towards the final workshop was to generate multiple examples of the type of work we would be producing during our project, so anyone interested had a final project to be able to reference for their own design. I stuck these pieces up on the window specifically as I wanted to take some consideration in how I displayed them, ultimately wanting to make the most of the light that was shining through the window. It lit up the pictures effectively, and my intention was to parallel how I created them using the sun exposure of the gardens and how I was now using it to display the pieces with it too.

As far as being good examples, I showed the range of shapes and details that could be created in the process. They were also effective in not letting the rain discourage anyone from wanting to use the natural light, as the two A4 pieces were both exposed while it'd been raining and I was able to show the range of blurring and detail that could be attained in those conditions.

My contributions



These are some examples of my favourite work I produced during our workshop. I made effective use of the resources we had, experimenting with how the grains of the spices left their own unique prints on the photopaper and what different uses of the vinegar and lemon sprays did to the paper itself. My preferred way to use the plants within the frame of the paper was to crowd the space of the paper, letting parts of it overlap and create dynamic areas of positive and negative space.

The prints to the left were especially fun to use in this practice since the photopaper used was about 50yrs old. It was a nice matte paper as opposed to the glossy look most of our other created pieces had, and the colouring of the prints left behind was a lot less saturated than that of the fresher paper. Since the pieces were smaller, I allowed for some leaves and objects to spread across the works, to make seemingly separated images that could be pieced together if you picked out the shared details.

