Report: Site-Specific Exhibition

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Site Specific Exhibition Title: Entr'Acte

Rationale

As the person who chose the site, I did a lot of research from talking to people working at the Palace Theatre as well as online research. The Palace Theatre has had a lot of history from it changing business over the years. For example, it was once a gay night club, police station, theatre and now a coffee shop. The main part of its history that comes to light is the most recent when the place burnt down. In 2019, the fire which transitioned the past to the present happened. The fire caused lots of smoke around the ground and fourth-floor windows which alerted the public and eventually the Fire and Rescue Service. 5 years later the building reopened under a new company called Tramshed Tech which is owned by the Swansea Council, helping pay to transform the place. Within this a small café can be found and displays paintings of different areas in Swansea from the past. Using this important part of history, our group wanted to bring the past to the present and create pieces of work showing eras of the site as well as representing the building being empty for 5 years before reopening.

As a group we decided to focus on the past of the building and represent the events that were in the building. However, with this being said Me and Jamie wanted to include an interview with a worker about his views on the site and how the site has influenced him and the work that goes on there. This was also one of our ideas to link the community within the site as Zed is part of a community in the site and sets up workshops for the public to experience. We wanted to show the community through the interview with Zed. Unfortunately, this idea didn't go ahead, however we still did the interview for personal research and our visual studies. Along with the Interview, Jamie created a short silent film which included shots within the site along with cut scenes to break the main shots up. I was lucky enough to help Jamie film some of the shots to help connect the site to the film. One reason why Jamie chose to make a silent film is due to the research of the first silent film that was shown in the Palace Theatre and so he wanted to represent that through creating his own.

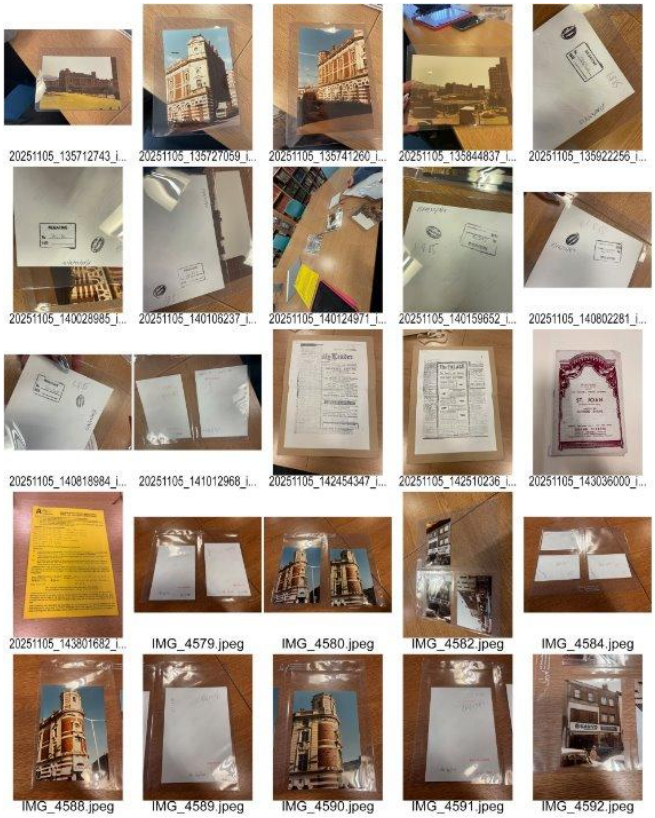
Rebecca chose to focus on the times when the building was empty and chose to use projection and images to distort reality and create an empty exhibit piece. Her projection showed still and moving images of what seemed to be nothing at first glance but as you watched it was unclear what it was yet there was something there, representing how the building was still alive but empty and dead at the same time.

Millie and Amelia chose to focus on the past history of the building. This included using vinyl on coasters and chairs within the site. This allowed the customers of the café and audience of the exhibit to learn about the history and past of the Palace Theatre. Millie used old marketing posters while Amelia made a collage of old photos taken within the site.

My exhibit piece was a series of slow shutter speed images put into one video with a slow transition in between each image. I did this to show a distorted version of outside and tried to bring the outside in taking the barrier of the building's walls away. While the video was playing, I had recorded a sound recording of the outside and overlapped it onto the video. This helped bring the idea more to life as it allowed the outside to be experienced inside while the audience could also hear cars go past in real time distorting them more and adding them to the exhibit piece.

A Summary of the Research

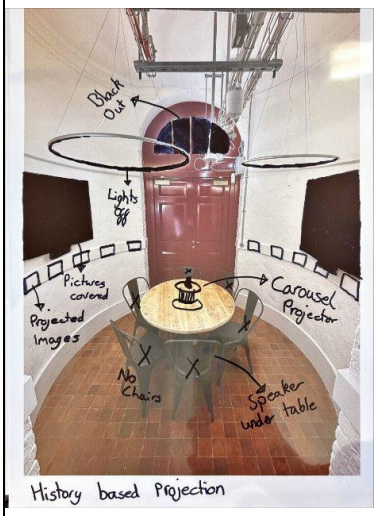
One of the biggest research resources we used was the Archive. Although personally I couldn't visit due to personal reasons, the rest of my group did. They gathered resources like photographs of old marketing posters; pictures of how the building looked in its earlier days and finally pictures of paper with dates and stamps on them. Using these we could gather a sense of the atmosphere within and around the building. We studied posters and the fonts that were used back then to incorporate them into our marketing designs and help link them with the history of the building. We created a contact sheet of research images that they gathered from the archive to help look at the research as a whole and not individually. This allowed us to pick the best fonts and images to use as inspiration for our exhibit pieces. As stated earlier I also talked to the workers for their view on the history and the building along with doing online research.



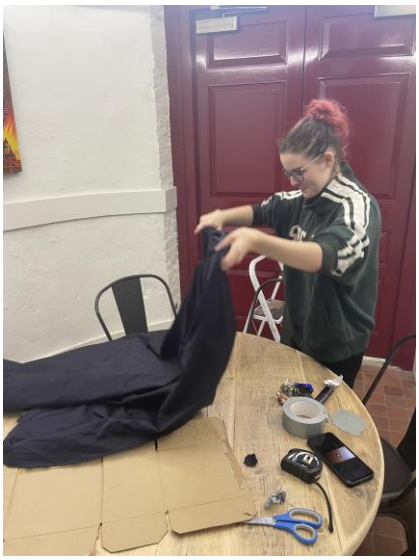
Over the course of this module, I have used both primary and secondary research. Primary research was shown when me and Jamie interviewed Zed for his views on the building and the exhibit as well as any research he had. The secondary research the group did was visit the archive which I have talked about above. Interviewing Zed has given me confidence to carry out the same process in the future when needed. Along with these research methods we also visited the site to learn the layout of the building and their opening/ closing times. These were important to know as it would affect the things we could put into the site without blocking fire exits or disturbing the café functioning. By knowing the site opening times it meant we could plan what days we could set up/ down and the opening times of our exhibit. It was also useful when our lecturers came to visit as we weren't then rushing through the discussion feedback with them and we could take our time on each of our works.

When we visited the Palace Theatre, we decided to take images in which in a lecture the week after we drew sketches on top of them to help us visualize the exhibit. We each took one room/ image and drew our designs onto them and shared them as a group for any adjustments and opinions. From these sketches we could take them to Zed for his opinion and see what was allowed and what wasn't. For example, the image on the right shows vinyl going round the poles. Unfortunately, this wasn't allowed and they were worried the paint would come off and ruin the building's design. Due to it being an older building, it was more fragile than others, hence why they were more worried for us to go ahead with it. With this the group adapted and worked around it and ended up coming up with different ideas that didn't involve vinyl on the walls.

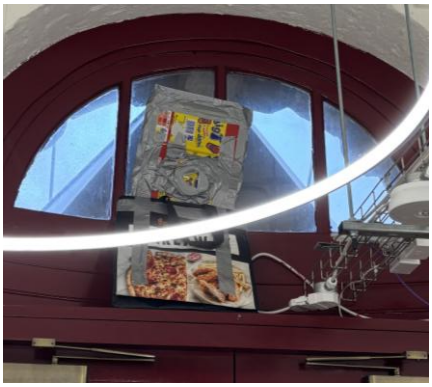
Techniques Developed for the Production of Your Body of Work



For my body of work, I went through multiple ideas including a carousel of sliding images, camera obscurer and a slow shutter speed image video. To begin with the first idea, the group decided to do a joint work by using a photo carousel which will flip through images with a ticking sound with every photo change. However, after looking up prices and seeing that we were unable to get ahold of a photo carousel we decided to change the idea as we didn't have enough time to try the idea. This led into my second idea for the round space.



I wanted to create an immersive experience for viewers by blacking out the room with cloth and creating a camera obscurer bringing the outside into the space. This was the inspiration to my final piece as I wanted to break the barrier of the separation between the outside and the inside. The camera obscurer was made from a lens and a small hole in a piece of cloth which acted like an aperture for a camera. This controlled the amount of light entering the lens allowing the outside to be seen inside like a projection. However, after trying the idea, I was unable to get the cloth to stay up without using tape. I was not allowed to use tape as one of the site rules was that we couldn't use anything that could damage the walls and rip paint off and so with that I had to adapt to follow the site. The tape that you see in the photo to the right was used to attach the lens onto the cloth as well as cardboard. I tried this to give the cloth more structure to see if it would stay up better, however unfortunately it didn't work and I had to move onto a different idea.



The image on the left shows when I tried fixing the camera obscurer with a shopping bag and cardboard as the cloth wasn't working however it was still too flimsy and wouldn't stay up properly for it to work.

My final idea for the exhibit was to use a variety of slow shutter speed images which distorts the view of the outside and present them on a tv in a blacked-out room. I wanted

to keep the idea of bringing the outside in from the camera obscurer however I wanted to take a different approach which is less complicated but more effective for the exhibit and the site. Luckily, Uni had all of the equipment I needed and so by using my camera and premier pro I was able to make my video. I took a limited amount of images as I knew people wouldn't stand there for ages and watch each image and so I decided to loop the video and sound instead. By doing this it also means that there wasn't a beginning or end meaning that there was nothing missing if a viewer only saw 2 photos which were in the center of the video. I made the images clear enough for people to know where they were taken with a couple exceptions to break them main images up. During set up, I borrowed, a tv, extension cable, media player, blue tack and black paper.

For my piece of work for the exhibition, I decided to use an old tv attached to a media player. This led to me having a lot of wires around causing trip hazards for the viewers of the exhibit. In order to reduce the risk, I taped the wires down, however because the building was old the workers of the café didn't want us to use strong adhesive tape due to the damage it could cause to the walls and tiles. To work with them and not use strong tape, I experimented with using blue tack to stick the wire to the wall and then use safety yellow and black tape (which wasn't strong enough to damage anything) to tape the wires onto the floor and table so they are out of the way.

Figure 1Wire is blue tacked to the wall to take away the risk of a trip hazard

Another part of my exhibit piece I needed to work on was blacking out the window in the room. In order to do this, I had to borrow a ladder from the university and set it up next to the doors. In order to use the ladder safely I had someone holding the ladder while I was up there. Occasionally, I would swap with someone on the ladder so I could see if I had missed a space and light was seeping through. In order to black out the window I used some old black paper (it was originally the backing paper in the studio) and blue tack to ensure I wasn't taking any paint of the frame.

Over the course of the first semester, I have attended workshops in the lectures including projection and ways of display. Although, I didn't use projection or any vinyl it was still a fun skill to learn for the future. It also allowed me to help Jamie with his projection and what was needed to set it up and get it working. The image to the right shows us in the workshop trying to project onto a black curtain. That was when we learned that projectors work on white walls instead of black

due to the black just absorbing the light. This helped me and Jamie find a suitable spot for the projector to work on and show the silent film.

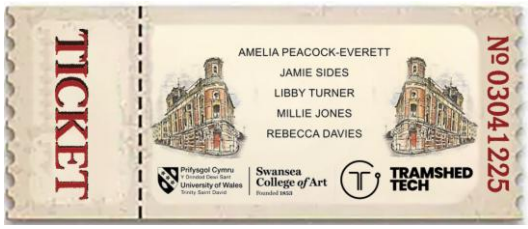
The ways of display workshop was helpful to see the extent in which vinyl could be used. For the workshop I brought in a tile from the Palace Theatre in which Zed had given us to experiment with. With this me and Jamie printed a vinyl image of the old flooring in the building and pasted it onto the flat side of the tile in hopes to pick up the texture of the back. However unfortunately it didn't work out as well, once back in the workshop room after showing Joe, we decided to cut some of the floor print out to create a pattern of what's vinyl and the back of the tile.

Individual and Group work overview

To produce the final site-specific exhibition, we all started by working on our own work and once completed we then went around and helped one another. When setting up, unfortunately my set up took longer than everyone else's and so I didn't have a lot of time to help others however Jamie and Millie finished setting theirs up and came to help me black out the windows within the room I chose.

Within my group I took the initial role of emailing the site back and fourth to ensure we had permission to use the site along with the materials we could use. We emailed them before going in and taking photos to ensure that we weren't going to be in the way of anything and that they were aware of our plans that day. While at the site, I helped communicate to the staff and the group our initial plans and when we planned to do them by. This meant everyone involved was kept in the loop of what was going on.

I also took on the role of creating the risk assessment for everyone's work. Although it was challenging at first due to the different formats that were given to us, I was able to still create one to the correct standard with minor adjustments which I made after a tutorial with the lecturers. To create the risk assessment, I had to communicate to each member of the group to find out the equipment and issues that they will have with their ideas. With this information I inserted it into both an excel template and word to help understand the risks better. I used the excel template as it allowed me to find out how big of a risk it was and how we were going to make it less of a risk for the final exhibit. These were both presented to the lecturers and were signed off after the adjustments were made.



Finally, I took on the role of creating the tickets for the marketing idea we had. The plan was to hand the tickets out to the public as they viewed the exhibit. I worked closely with Rebecca who helped give me the font templates while I put together the design and the details. After the ticket design was finished I proceeded to share it among the group to get input for any changes. When the final design was finished, I worked with Ann and Daf to print 50-60 tickets off. Once printed, I then hand cut each one and dented the ticket line to be more like a ticket and feel more realistic.

At first, I found the challenging part to be entering the location and asking permission, however luckily this was the least challenging part due to how lovely Zed was to work with us. One of the biggest challenges I found was my original idea not working. I had first

decided to create a camera obscurer within the space however, when it came to executing it, it didn't go to plan as I couldn't dark out the room enough and reach the windows in order to create the effect I wanted. With feedback from lecturers, I decided to change my idea. I wanted to keep the context of bringing the outside in and so decided to take experimental photographs of slow shutter speed which ended up being my final piece. From when I had to change my idea, I had around 1-2 weeks left till the exhibit, so I was limited on time and how long I had to spend coming up with an idea. This put a lot of pressure onto me, however in the end I think it turned out better than expected.

The group worked well together so luckily, we didn't have any hardships. However, it was hard to create equal work for everyone. For example, I started by doing the emails, however Millie ended up taking over without really talking to me about it and so I had to find another job within the work to put my work in, so it was fair. This led me into doing the risk assessments and the tickets. There were a couple of times were it felt that people were taking too much control and wouldn't let anyone decide, however we all adapted to it, and it worked out in the end. The reason why I believe it worked out was due to how everyone got 1/2 things that they knew how to do, for example Rebecca knew how to create a good poster and so took that marketing idea and due to past experience I knew how to do a risk assessment and so I was able to take that on with everyone's input on what risk each of their work had.

One of the main personal skills that I will carry forward is the approach to new people and asking for permission along with sharing ideas with them. As someone who hates talking to new people it was a huge step for me to communicate to the café workers and ask for the permission needed. Luckily the workers were amazing and explained the situation and allowed us to communicate back and fourth to make it work. This also links to the skill of communicating to different people, whether that be in the group, to lectures and the public. I have learnt the different ways to go about each conversation and what information is most important to share with said person.

Another team skill is dividing tasks among each person to make the work even for everyone as well as learning how each person works to incorporate that into one team. From doing group work I have realized that there will be disagreements due to everyone having different opinions, however it will work out in the end. Along with this having different opinions is sometimes a good thing cause then you are able to get different views on the topic. By being in the group, I was able to change and adapt my processes and thinking to work well within the team. This has given me experience for future group work whether that be in university or a work setting.

Evaluation of the Exhibition

As a whole I believe the exhibition went as well as it could have. We were all able to work together to produce work connected to the site in different ways. Even with each of us producing a different set of work, I feel as though they all portrayed something to do with the site and linked together well. This was possible as we all worked with one another and helped the ideas come to reality and produce them.

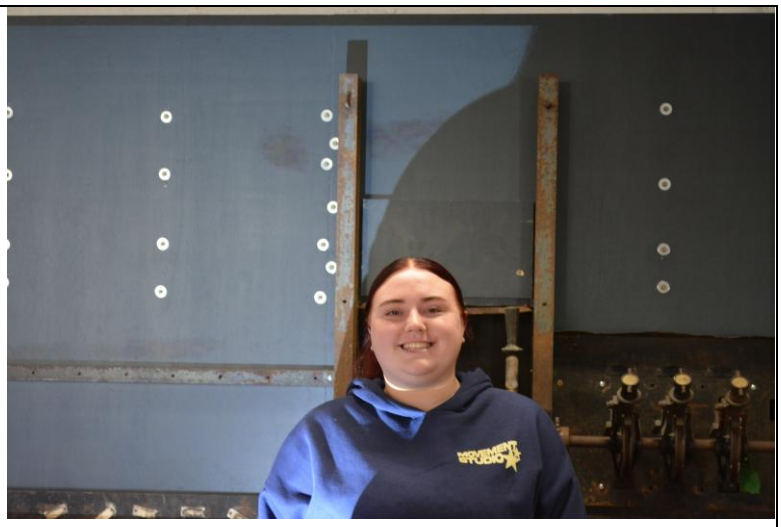
Millie’s Vinyl:

Millie chose to bring the past to the present by printing old marketing signs and placing them on the front of all the chairs. At first Millie was going to place vinyl on the poles in the site however due to restrictions on placing things on the wall she decided to go with the chairs. Overall, I feel as though they fit well within the site as her work was on something that gets interacted with everyday and so allows easy access for visitors to see her project work.

Amelia’s Coasters:

Amelia chose to work with Millie and work on the same meaning of their work. She decided to bring the past to the present by printing old images taken in the building on vinyl and placing them on coasters for visitors to use. Like Millie, Amelia made her exhibit piece interactive as customers of the café can use the coasters for the drinks they buy. She also made a collage of images which were cut up and distributed on coasters around the building creating a secret image when all coasters were put together.

Rebecca's Projection:



Rebecaa decided that for her project work she would create a projection video to represent the feeling of emptiness. She did this by putting videos together that didn't have a subject matter and had lots of negative space. She also played sound along with the projection to contribute to the feeling. She chose to show emptiness as she wanted to represent when the building was closed and empty for 5 years after the fire before reopening to what it is now.

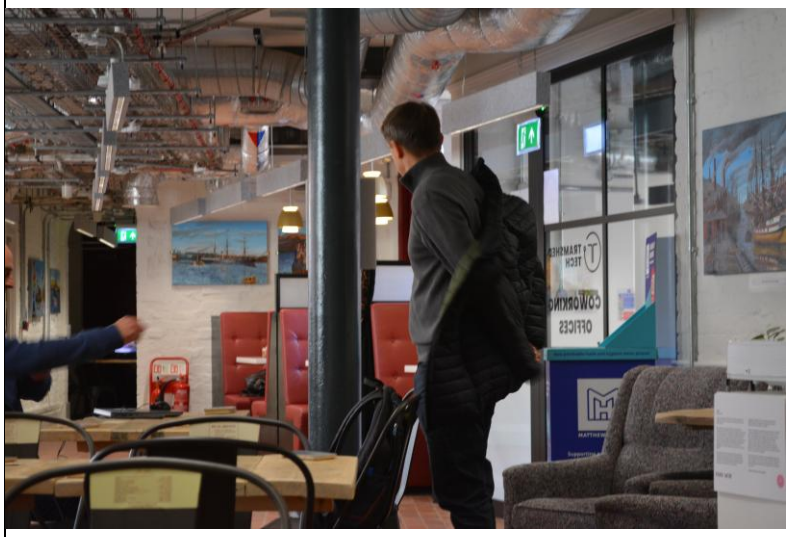
Jamie's Silent Film:

Jamie's silent film called Dream Palace was shown through projection. Using a plinth, he set the projector up facing toward a shelf and projected the video in between a set of glasses. The glasses added an effect to the film which Jamie liked and so kept it there. The silent film was aimed to capture the life that the building is now through a bunch of shots filmed inside and outside the Palace Theatre.

My Work:

My work called Porosity aimed to bring the outside inside and remove the barrier between them. Using an old tv I used a media player to show a series of slow shutter speed photos I have taken and placed into one video which is on a constant

loop. On top of the image, I have overlayed the sound of cars passing distorting the reality of what is happening outside due to being able to hear both the recording and the outside at the same time. My work was visible from the customers' side of the café as well as the other side of the room. This meant that it was visible enough for it to catch people's eyes. When viewing people walk over and stand at the café, I witnessed people watching the video as they were waiting for their order, which showed that my plan of blacking out the windows and having my volume loud caught people's attention more.



If I were to do my work again, I would improve the quality of the sound and record it on a proper audio recorder instead of my phone. That way the audio is more directed to one place, and you won't hear the sounds that aren't needed in the recording. One thing I wouldn't change is the placement of my work, by blacking out the windows and having a corridor to walk down to reach the work I feel like it gave a good effect on the work as when the viewer got closer the sound got louder creating an immersive environment

when in the room with the tv. Another thing that I think I would change was more prepared with blacking out the windows as it was a very last minute on the day job. However, I should have done measurements the day before and made the cutouts ready, so it was less stress on the set-up day. With this I would hope to use slow shutter speed in the future and test the limits with it. Overall, this was an amazing experience to create and would definitely love to do it again as it tested my creativity and ideas when one didn't work it made me have to come up with back up ideas.