

Report: Site-Specific Exhibition

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Site Specific Exhibition Title: The Glory of Glowing Glass

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

St James was consecrated in 1867 and has survived a lot of Swansea's history including the Swansea Blitz during the second world war. The history behind the church is why this site is meaningful, and the church's glass holds a lot of history which is why we decided to focus our project on light. The glass of the church was blown out during the Swansea blitz and was later replaced and the glass at the entrance of the church was created by a student at Swansea college of art so we a connection to the glass and its important history within the space.

From initial research Carys conducted before we visited the space, we learnt that about the glass and its significance to the church's history and it was something that stood out to us throughout our research but the way we each interpreted this theme was different. From the perspective of the group, we took a more conceptual approach to the theme, using different photographic techniques that used light or placing our work in areas that the light would hit but individually, I took a more contextual approach to my work. Instead of using light to images, I put light into the space using different colours, and different types of lights. The theme for the Maps/ handouts was more literal, taking images of the church's texture that were often missed by people just walking through. The space.

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.)

Over the 8 weeks following up to the exhibition we did a plethora of research. Including both primary and secondary research. Before we visited the space and the archives, I did online research to gain knowledge on the site, so I had a better understanding of the space and so that I could view the space with the knowledge of its history to help me generate ideas from the moment we had access to the space. Soon after our first visit, we visited the archives as a group to go through the information they had on St James and there were some images of the street during the 18-1900's there wasn't much information apart from its historical attachment to St Mary's which through online research, we already knew.

Overall, there wasn't much historical information available regarding the church, so we moved away from secondary research and onto primary research. We first spoke to Margret, one of the people who worked at the church, and while opening the church for me she informed me about the glass on the entrance doors. As well as this, we spent the weeks leading up the exhibition talking to the church community on Sundays and discovered how important community is for the church.

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.

A lot of the tools we used were used for health & safety purposes, for example: gloves, first aider, tarp etc, but some were to make the pieces work or stay up. Some of the tools I used were lighters for the candles, batteries for the lights, and tape and sticky pads for the LED lights.

I used quite a few materials for my work since I didn't use images, some of the materials include black fabric, lights, candles and a clear box. Combining these materials created a concise piece that represented the light and stained glass used in the church.

I was originally going to use fake tealights but church's use real candles, so I changed and used real tealights to align my work more with site-specificity. I also planned to get coloured lights instead of warm/ cold lights to connect my work with the stained glass on the windows rather than just light so I got coloured acetate to lay over the lights and made sure to get LED strip lights that could change colour and used 4 different colours that were also used in the stained glass to further the connect with my work.

I knew I wanted to do my piece on light and stained glass, but I wasn't sure how and I didn't want to take photos of the glass since it was already in the space, so I used my personal connection with churches in general to create a piece about light and the veil between life and death. By using these materials, the piece become more about the veil between life and death as well as the stained glass rather than a piece about light. They created a work that felt more interactive and connected by people, it created a piece that was more abstract and not as literal as my initial ideas and were more striking to the audience, and provoked reflection. This resulted in a more site-specific piece because churches are often about reflecting on one's life as well as it being a space that is not often understood by those outside of the community. Without an artist statement, this work wouldn't be as understood and may even cause judgement, similarly to a church space.

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 delt 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?

Throughout the 8 weeks of this project, I contributed to a few things that helped the progress of the exhibition, one including research and contact. Through the beginning of the project, I helped with both online research, including artwork studies, and research in the archives. This research helped us decide on themes and the title of the exhibition. Through the 8 weeks, I also kept in contact with Joe and Ryan, emailing them with things like our risk assessment and assessment times to get feedback before moving forward with it. As well as this, I helped Carys with the handouts, making sure I was communicating my thoughts on what was being created as she was continuing. I also made sure to attend every group meeting and tutorial to make sure that if we fell behind, I wasn't at fault for not attending, I also attended to communicate my ideas and where I felt we should go next with our exhibition. The risk assessment and the audio were both completed by me. When they were brought up, I volunteered to do both since I was familiar with risk assessments and audio editing since I had done them both in college a few times.

While Carys fell into the role of leader, the rest of the roles were spread out, each person being a part of every role. At the beginning of the project, we all took part in researching the site. As far as I'm aware, Carys and I both conducted online research during the early days of the project and all four of us were at the archives to help go through the information quicker and discuss any ideas we had from the information. I also tried to do a lot of the more required stuff like the risk assessment that didn't feel like a major concern at the time but I knew how to complete them so I could do so quickly before continuing with my piece since my piece relied on bought items rather than images and printings.

Throughout the project there were a few things that I found challenging, but a lot was resolved through group meetings or time, many issues or concerns sorted themselves out with time. Since we were constantly doing work for the exhibition, most issues that arose were sorted out naturally through work being completed. A few issues that arose personally all began at the start of the project, one of which was working as part of a group. Throughout college, I did 2 group

projects and both times I was the only one doing work and communicating so working in another group made me nervous, especially since I wasn't too familiar with the people in my group but as time went on, I realised that this group did work and communicated better as each week passed so my nerves passed. It was also challenging working in a church, I am very stereotypically everything that a church may disagree with traditionally, so during the first few weeks, it was difficult to work in the space but as we spent more time there, that feeling left and it became easier to use the space after each visit. As a group, one of the most challenging things was trying to create art that was site specific in a church was there wasn't much known history available to us, most of the history was about St Mary's because of their connected history. But after our first group tutorial, those concerns passed as we learnt it didn't need to be historical work.

This project has taught and helped me to communicate effectively. Communication was a big struggle at the beginning of the project but towards the end we learnt what we needed to communicate about, and we did so effectively. I also learnt how to work as a group, a big concern of mine was working as a group as dividing work evenly, but we didn't have too many problems with one person doing too much work and another not doing enough work. I was also able to learn how to put personal feelings aside and work in a space that I am not comfortable in. Visiting the site so often helped me understand that this piece isn't/ doesn't have to be about me but the space, or the building and this taught me how to work in an uncomfortable space such as a church.

Evaluation of the Exhibition

- Execution: Assess the success of the exhibition in addressing the site's history, community, or spatial dynamics.
- Audience Interaction: Discuss how the audience engaged with your work and the site.
- Reflection: Identify areas for improvement and potential future directions for your practice.

We all managed to follow similar theme or work to create pieces that felt like one piece instead of 4 separate pieces and our work followed our themes successfully, they were good artworks that felt relevant to the themes we had as well as the church. Rather than just using the space for work, our pieces felt like they were a part of the church and represented different elements of the church and the community. We each worked with the space we had instead of working in it and created irrelevant work.

A lot of the people who visited the exhibition weren't sure how to interact with my piece and a few people didn't even interact with the box full of notes, many thinking it was just a part of the church rather than the exhibition, a few people asked if it was a part of my work when they walked past. One woman who did interact with it, did so in a way I didn't expect, she left a note underneath one of the tealights for everyone to see rather than in the box full of other notes. I also noticed that some people didn't pick up the maps, assuming the images were just a part of the exhibition instead of maps so we started letting people know they were maps as they came in, but a lot of people didn't take them, putting them back when they left even after being told they could take them.

To improve, I could attend the church more and interact with the community a lot more than I did. Towards the end, we started finding things out about the people in the community, for example Carys spoke to a woman who told her she did the calligraphy for the church, and we spoke about wanting to ask her to write our title, but we discovered this way too late to use it. So, talking to the community more could've helped a lot with our work. I also felt like my work didn't feel like art, I'm happy with how my work turned out and I'm glad I experimented outside of my comfort zone but the result wasn't something I was proud of and didn't feel like art so I would like to stick to images while also experimenting in future projects. I feel that the biggest issue for us was time, more time would've been ideal but when working with a short deadline I think getting work done quicker would've helped majorly. Getting the early days' work done quicker would've given us more time to experiment, visit the church and speak with the community more so for future project, I want to make sure I'm getting work done as soon as possible so I have more time to think of different ideas and complete the one I believe is the best.

