

# **Ways of Perceiving – Curation Essay**

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## **Introduction and Analysis of Theme & Context**

The exhibition I will be curating will be held at the Mission Gallery, Swansea, and the theme of the exhibition will be surrounding the concept of loss and devastation in an attempt to ensure remembrance of historical loss and devastation the area of Swansea was victim to in World War Two. This is an important theme because the Mission Gallery is one of the few surviving buildings from the Three Nights' Blitz that occurred on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> February 1941, 81 years ago (Swansea Council, n.d.). The devastation and loss was immense with 857 properties destroyed, 11,000 properties damaged, 230 people killed, 409 were injured (Swansea Museum, n.d.).

Furthermore, the importance of this theme is extremely prevalent in today's world with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the wide spread information that is available on it, because of today's technology. We can easily open our phones and see videos of Ukraine's buildings and culture being destroyed, as well as innocent people being killed. Exhibitions and themes like this need to be made to remind people to look back at history and see how we can learn from our mistakes and not repeat history, because loss and destruction are not achievements or good memories for anyone.

I will be curating the exhibition with various types of media with before and after photos of the Swansea area after the blitz provided by the West Glamorgan Archive Service online catalogue (Swansea Council, n.d.), a SoundCloud radio play based on the Three Nights Blitz of Swansea called Goat Street Runners by Adrian Metcalfe

and produced by The Lighthouse Theatre (located in the Mumbles, Swansea)  
(Metcalfe, 2021) and finally, water colour paintings by Will Evans (Glynn Vivian,  
n.d.).

## Artists and Artworks

### The Mission Gallery Layout -

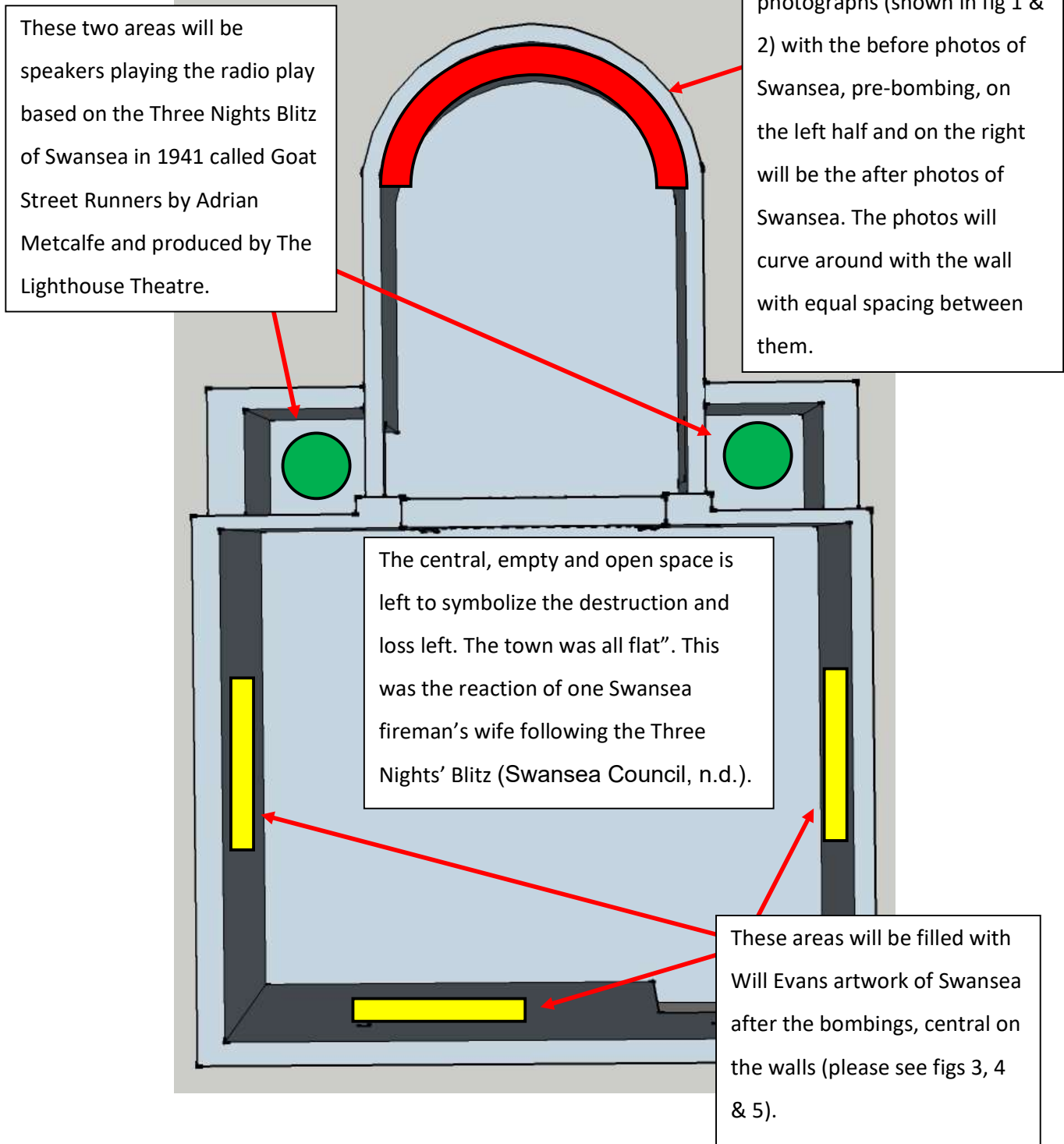


Fig 1 - Swansea Pre Blitz Photos (Swansea Council, n.d.) –



Fig 2 - Swansea Post Blitz Photos (Swansea Council, n.d.) –



The figures 1 and 2 are photographs taken before (fig 1) and after (fig 2) the Three Nights Blitz in Swansea that resulted in the devastating loss and destruction. Due to the fact these photos were taken at the time it gives them a huge emotional and historical value as a record of what happened and the visible impact which strongly links in with the theme I am trying to create (Swansea Council, n.d.) & (Swansea Council, n.d.).

It can be seen most clearly between the pre and post photos of what looks to be the same warehouse. The pre photo showing life, working day life, industry and the future and in sharp contrast the empty void of life, rubble and devastating results of the Three Nights Blitz. It makes you contemplate whether any of the people in the photo survived. The way I have chosen to place them within the exhibition should show this as you look around the curved wall and see time pass from the pre blitz to post blitz images (Swansea Council, n.d.) & (Swansea Council, n.d.).

### Goat Street Runners – Three Nights Blitz Radio Play –

Please see this linked below by Adrian Metcalfe and produced by The Lighthouse Theatre (located in the Mumbles, Swansea) (Swansea Council, n.d.).

<https://soundcloud.com/user-465494937/goat-street-runners-by-adrian-metcalfe>

(Metcalfe, 2021)

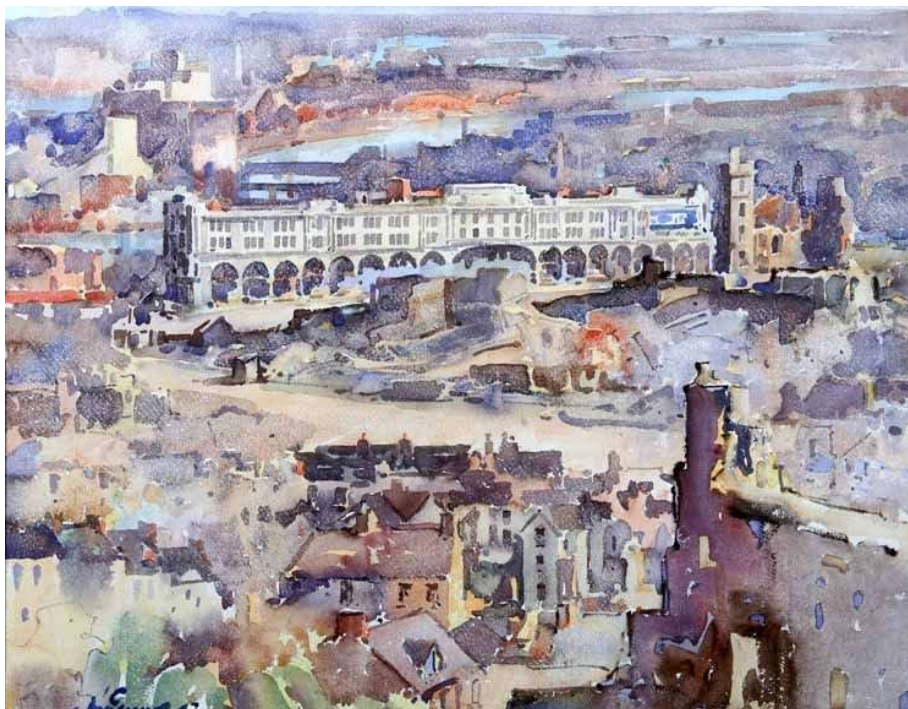
This radio play will be played on a loop during the exhibition and should hopefully echo through. The play goes through the emotions of speculation, anxiety, fear, loss and devastation. It will give a separate sensory image for people visiting the exhibition to experience, with the shock of explosions and stress of local people. It will give an extra context to the other artwork by hopefully helping people to imagine people in these photos really did experience this loss and devastation that's depicted in photos and other artwork from Will Evans (Metcalfe, 2021).

The play was made/finished only last year so is a modern interpretation of events, inspired by the history and real life experiences. The fact that it was produced within Swansea gives solid cultural credibility and emotional influence.

Will Evans fig 3 (Glynn Vivian, n.d.) –



Will Evans fig 4 (Glynn Vivian, n.d.) –



Will Evans fig 5 [(Glynn Vivian, n.d.) –



Will Evans artwork is sadly inspired by first hand experience and having a 'bird's-eye view over the city from his home' of the loss and devastation of Swansea during the Three Nights Blitz. His art work that I have chosen was done in watercolour on paper. The fact that he made these after the blitz that he witnessed gives them a deeply personal and emotion value to them (Glynn Vivian, n.d.).

The artwork go from depicting realism to shapeless forms illustrating the unrecognisable landscapes, destruction and loss. The artworks look almost identical to the compositions and landscapes taken in the photos that are also included in the exhibition. As you walk in you will see Will Evans work then hear what from the audio play what inspired these artworks and then walk through to the actual photos which

equally show the devastation depicted and that there was no exaggeration (Glynn Vivian, n.d.).

These artworks link together very well especially with The Mission Gallery because they all share cultural, contextual and emotional histories that link with each other seamlessly through this. They work together to create a broader emotional experience for the viewer on the themes of loss and devastation. Hopefully, this theme and these artworks work to provide a reflection on what has happened in the past and how scarily similar other parts of the world are repeating these events. It's a good theme to remind people of this because since the Three Nights Blitz Swansea has been rebuilt over 81 years and this should hopefully remind people of this.

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