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For this assessment, I confirm that I have not used Generative AI to support me in structuring my submission, including creating a draft argument structure, identifying parts and headings. I confirm that I have not used Generative AI to create text for my submission. I confirm that I have not used Generative AI for creative materials, such as images.

The political history of Wales told through art.

This exhibition has been thoughtfully assembled with the intention of presenting the political injustices Wales has faced throughout history. Every piece either depicts Welsh culture, or an injustice the Welsh encountered through the ages. “If they have never erased the original Welsh Culture, they have undoubtedly modified it, adding new elements to it, and possibly removing some original ones” (Scaglia, 2012, p.14). Welsh history is often overlooked, and many people underestimate its value and impact on Welsh culture today. The purpose of these artworks is to highlight these injustices, and hopefully this exhibition can tell the untold story of Wales’ political history.



Fig 1 (Clark, 2015, *Albert Dock Liverpool*)

This exhibition would be shown all over the Albert docks in Liverpool, following the famous injustice Wales faced when an entire village was flooded to provide drinking water for Liverpool. My main aim is to get non-Welsh people educated on the event, and by situating it in Liverpool next to a source of water in a tourist heavy area, it can get more people talking and informed on the matter.

As a result of the flooding of Capel Celyn village, 48 Welsh-speaking residents were forced to leave the village and surrounding farms as the River Tryweryn, in the River Dee catchment, was dammed in order to create Llyn Celyn, a reservoir with a capacity of 81,000,000 m^3 intended to provide water for the population of Liverpool. (Griffiths, 2014, p.421)



Fig 2 (Large, 2021, Owain Glyndwr)

The first piece of this exhibition is a painting by Welsh-born artist Nicola Large depicting Owain Glyndwr, our last native-born prince of Wales, in one of his many gruesome battles. As a strong political icon within the Welsh's cultural history, and as explained by Henken "a national hero, who once almost won independence for Wales", his story needed to be included within this exhibition. Especially considering the fight for independence that he was leading in the 15th century is still an ongoing battle fought by the Welsh today.

In the painting, we only see a brief blurry image of the prince in battle, this reflects the brutality of the fight for independence, because not only does it represent the physical fight that Glyndwr fought but also the political fight that is currently happening. Without question, Glyndwr is one of Wales' biggest heroes, his actions and accomplishments certainly triumphant of a lot of English princes. As Breverton states, "Glyndwr, the essence of Welshness, is one of the greatest heroes in two millennia of British history: a cultural and learned linguist, a lawyer and not least a warrior" (2009, p.1343) - however, how many non-Welsh people know of his existence? Large has purposely left Glyndwr's body less blurred than the rest of the painting, with that and the use of colours used, to any Welsh person, this is clearly an image of the nation's last prince – whereas context would be needed for any non-Welsh spectator. For this reason, to educate others, this is an essential painting within this exhibition.



Fig 3 (Walters, 1936, *A Welsh collier*)

Leaning towards a very different and a much later part of Welsh history here, with this oil-painting piece of a Welsh collier by artist Evan Walters. Coal mining was a crucial part of the South Walian economy and identity, with it being the most productive coalfield in the world in the early 20th century. However, disaster struck the area when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher shut down these mines. “For the communities of South Wales valleys, the closure of the coal mines was devastating. The 1980s and 1990s saw high unemployment rates and outmigration, as residents left in search of better economic prospects” (Price and Rhodes, 2020).

Despite this painting originating from a couple decades before the closure of the mines, I believe that this painting represents what it truly means to be a Welsh collier, with the

textured and raw perspective on the piece reflecting what it's like to be a collier, and overall creating an emotionally resonant depiction.

When looking at this portrait, it challenges the viewer to consider this collier's story, as well as every other Welshman that put their lives at risk each day to fund their family, as well as keeping the nation's economy alive.

The coal dust on his face represents the hidden danger this job held. However, Wales was always a second thought and poverty was high, and so danger was a mere thought in these colliers' minds, as it was more often than not their only source of income.



Fig 4 (Williams, 1816, *Merthyr Riots*)

Here we have a painting from the realism movement in the 19th century, portraying the 1815 Merthyr Riots. Painter Penry Williams depicts the military trying to reimpose order within the strike protest. According to People's collection Wales, a strike that was ignited due to poor working conditions in the iron mines and the worker's wages being cut by the ironmaster (2010).

Some could argue that this painting shares the spirit of Social Realism (a subcategory in modernism), as it spotlights the exploitation of the working class in these times, as well as the strict enforcement of structure. Through the humble lens of a young Welsh artist, it captures the imbalance between the power and the powerless, the brutality of the mines and the enduring symbolism of the strikes throughout Welsh history. "Modernism used art to call attention to art" (Fascina, Harrison and Paul, 1982, p.6)



Fig 5 (Thomas, 2024, *The Valley in Liverpool*)

Referring back to the flooding of Capel Celyn, here we have photographer Geraint Thomas' artwork titled 'The Valley in Liverpool'. A very important piece within the exhibition as it's representative of Wales' most famous political injustice. As stated by Thomas in an article with Cambrian News, "The nationalist awakening in Wales was kick-started by the drowning of Cwm Celyn. In November 1956 the residents of Capel Celyn marched in protest through the streets of Liverpool" (Vale, 2024).

The painting is inspired by Geoff Charles' iconic photograph of the people's protest (Vale, 2024), the fact that it's an exact replica of a real photo and not a painting created to provoke thought and emotion says a lot. Techniques such as textured brushwork and monochromatic colours are used by the artist to amplify these emotions, however it is the photo itself that shows the cry of personal loss of this community. "The history of art is, in no small part, a history of photography" (Pugh and Stuber, 2023)

Modernism is also evident within the painting, "...one sees a Modernist painting as a picture first. This is, of course, the best way of seeing any kind of picture...but Modernism imposes it as the only and necessary way" (Frascina, Harrison, Paul, 1982, p.6), by seeing this painting as a picture firstly, the true message is portrayed correctly – especially with the subject matter being a social realism (a subset of Modernism) and depicting a genuine historical event.



Fig 6 (Ffwligans, 2018, *Hunaniaeth*)

This final piece is not necessarily representative of a certain event in the history of Welsh politics, but rather representative of the lurking threat of losing our language – a threat that has seemingly been fought against since the Middle Ages, where English kings such as Edward I were conquering Wales.

“Even official documents were driven to concede that ‘the peoples of England and Wales have been at loggerheads for a long time’; in other words the tension between them was seen as national and popular, not merely as a result of the intransigence of individual princes” (Davies, Herbert and Jones, 1988, p.3).

However, despite the king’s successful conquering, the Welsh language lived on, surviving multiple other threats like the ‘Welsh Not’ that was used primarily in the 19th century, “by

which a child, caught speaking Welsh in the school precincts, was compelled to wear a board inscribed W.N, and if he could not get rid of it by catching another child in the same offence, was whipped by the teacher...” (Thomas, 1966, p.76).

But what connection does these events have with this poster? In the poster we see a deliberate stylization of a war time propaganda poster, with a direct call to action for people to “speak Welsh” (siaradwch cymraeg) and that “without language” you are “without identity” (heb iaith, heb hunaniaeth). This indicates that it has been a war trying to keep the language alive, but a war has not finished.

We also see a strong use of Postmodernism here, as Pastiche is used. The poster is mimicking propaganda but reflecting it onto a cultural cause rather than a political regime. “Postmodern art is fundamentally ironic, often quoting another work in order to imply a meaning indirectly” (Wheale, 1995, p.4).

Following these historically thought-provoking Welsh art pieces, my aim is to educate non-Welsh people on all the grievance we have faced as a nation throughout the years. By placing said exhibition in a heavy tourist location, that also has a connection to one of the exhibition's pieces, I am reaching the target audience of people who have never heard of these stories before in their lives. I want this exhibition to be a memorial, but also a call to remember. “Who speaks for Wales? That is both the problem and the encouragement” (Williams and Williams, 2021, p.47). Hopefully, this exhibition can highlight this problem for others as well – the ones who need to know.

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