Report: Site-Specific Exhibition

Name: Joe Bunyan

Site Specific Exhibition Title: Public View / Golwg Pwblic

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.

There are a number of reasons why the streets could be meaningful – the angle our group took was concerned with the people of Swansea. Although this focus came gradually, as initially we began to explore the history of the town centre. The archives had a wealth of historical images, particularly from the years following the Second World War when the city was being rebuilt. We had a vague idea of using archival images and putting them back into the environment where they were shot. However, we noticed that in many of the images you could see passers-by staring at the camera. This moment of eye contact across time made the material feel more personal and suggested a way to connect the present-day street with those who lived and walked it in the previous century. This observation guided our shift from a purely historical project to an exploration of memory, identity, and community.

The Kingsway in particular is one of Swansea's main thoroughfares, so it seemed like a good space to focus on. During our visits to the archive, we were able to piece together a visual lineage of the street starting from the end of the war when it was being rebuilt. The Kingsway then went on to be a major shopping and nightlife hub with many nightclubs and bars. More recently the space has a lot less going on, with many of the shop fronts empty unfortunately. If there was one street that could represent the whole of Swansea with all its variety and quirks – the Kingsway would be the street. In our work, we wanted to bring people from various parts of its varied history back into the street. By reintroducing people from different eras of its past back into the space through archival images, we aimed to highlight this continuity — bringing together past and present residents in a shared, familiar environment. In this sense, the site itself becomes the link between generations and a platform for exploring the relationship between memory and community.

This interaction between past and present people was the main concept behind the work. The site being the link between those from the past and those walking the streets today. With this main concept we branched into other areas as a group – with the eye being the symbol that linked all of our work together - Malachi and Seren using the eye to

comment on surveillance of urban areas and the feeling of being watched. Me and Emma's side of the project with the archival imagery does this as past Swansea inhabitants 'watch' those of the present.

The positioning of our prints was a crucial element for our concept as well. Finding natural frames (such as empty poster slots, spaces where ATM machines used to be, panels of electricity boxes etc.) meant that our work would fit more naturally into the environment. Of course, we made sure that our prints would still be eye catching (using a variety of sizes, some of them being very large, making sure there we had the quantity to be noticed, and considering which spaces in the street are hard to miss even for the unobservant pedestrian), although we wanted the photos to blend into the street rather than to stick out like a sore thumb – which they would have done if we were to, for example, cover a blank space of wall with ten large images as if it were a mural. Spreading them out in more subtle locations meant that our work could exist in space without disturbing it.

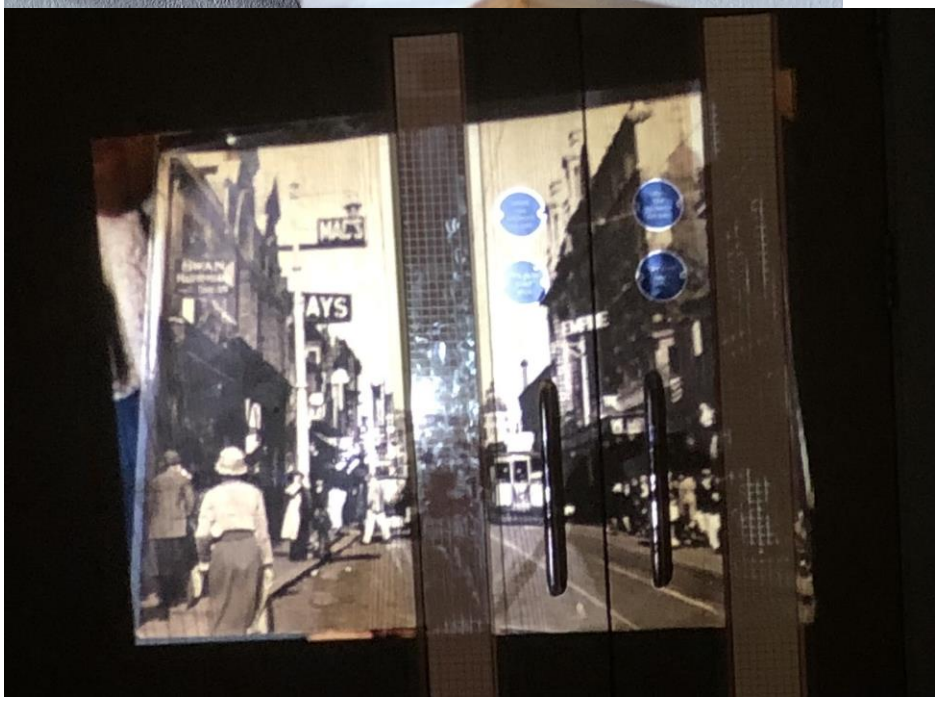
A Summary of the Research

- 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.)
- Use visuals!

The bulk of the research we conducted happened on site and in the archives. Early in the project our group spent time wandering around the town centre discussing locations to exhibit our work and how we would respond to this environment. From these walks and discussions, we came up with our idea to seek out natural frames in the street. As soon as we found one of these spaces to put a print in, we started to see more and more. (The image below shows a photograph taken on one of these walks with some early display ideas drawn over the top).

At least for me and Emma's work our response to the environment came from spending time in the archives sifting thorugh old photographs of Swansea. Looking at these photographs, we began to notice little things that woulld crop up in a lot of the images – things suchh as different adverts on the same billboard in photos from different time periods, and the fact that in many of the images you would get passers-by who would be staring directly at the camera. Spending time going through these images slowly was important for us, becuase it helped us form ideas around a unique way to incorporate this imagery – as opposed to simply using the photos as we found them (example below).

Another piece of research that was important for our development was the projection workshop. During this session we experimented with our imagery could interact with the space. The streets have a wealth of different textures and shapes that could produce interesting outcomes when projected onto. In the end, we decided to abandon the idea of projection becuase it wouldn't have been very effective during daylight hours. During the night it would have been effective, however there is much less foot-traffic at night, and our target audience was passers-by – additionally, we would have had to man the projector during the nighttime so that it wouldn't get stolen, which seemed a bit impratical. That being said, the workshop did get us to think more outside the box with regards to how our imagery could be incorporated into the environment.



Me and Emma did briefly research beetroot printing, a natural method of darkroom printing which we were intending to use on leaves. This was an idea which we abandoned early on – our intention was to print our images from the archives onto hundreds of leaves and then disperse them on the street – the wind would take them all over the place. My intial idea was to use liquid light to do this, however as we didn't want to release any chemicals into the environment, we started to look at beetroot printing as an alternative. We never ended up trying this technique as we decided shortly after to make vinyl prints instead, however knowing about beetroot printing could be useful in the future.

Another element of our project which required a lot of research was our council proposal, which introduced an entirely new form of research for me. I had never written a

council proposal before, so a significant part of my research involved understanding the conventions, expectations, and formal language associated with this type of proposal. Unlike academic or creative writing, council proposals need to be clear, concise, and highly practical, demonstrating that the project is both feasible and beneficial to the public. Learning this style of writing was a new challenge, and it required me to think about our work in a more structured and outcome-driven way. Getting our ideas onto paper, in a way that sounded proffesional and coherent was a challenge, but the lecturers' guidance and ChatGPT proved very helpful for this.

To write the best proposal we could we had to review guidance on public art applications, and identify the essential components such as aims and objectives, community benefit, accessibility considerations, health and safety measures, timelines, and installation plans. At the same time, we had to research the practicalities of working in a public space: which areas of the Kingsway were viable for installation, which bodies owned or managed particular surfaces, and what surfaces we would be able to stick the vinyl print onto. Alongside these logistical concerns, we also researched the cultural and social justification needed for a council submission, using the history of the Kingsway and its changing role in Swansea to demonstrate how the project could contribute to local identity, heritage, and community memory. Ultimately, the project had to benefit the public in some way, so this is what we tried to emphasize throughout the proposal.

The last bit of research was on installation – how to apply vinyl properly (starting at one corner and gently apply downwards to avoid any creases or airpockets), making sure all our chosen natural frames were measured correctly and looking out for any surfaces that the vinyl may not stick to.

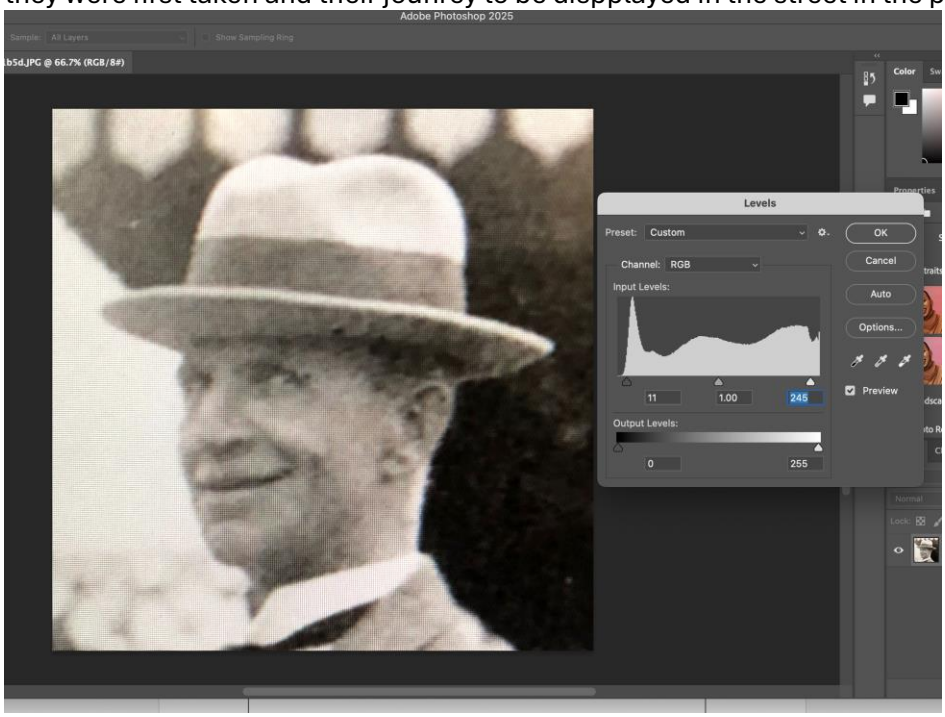
Techniques Developed for the Production of Your Body of Work

- 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.

- Use visuals!

My tools, materials and methods for creating the work are as follows: access to archive imagery, photographing relevant images from the archive without glare, uploading them to the computer and shooting them off the computer and then reshooting them off the computer to create a pixelated effect, using photoshop to touch up the images (picture below of me using the levels tab to adjust black, white and grey values). This entire process links back to our concept of time passing through a site. The images have experienced a journey from analogue print in the archives, to iphone copy, to a computer file, back to an iphone image, and then another touched up, cropped computer file. This slightly long-winded process acts as a metaphor for the passing of time between when they were first taken and their jounrey to be dispplayed in the street in the present day.



When it came to the installation of the exhibition it was important to keep all our things organised, so that we could install quickly and effectively. To do this I created a document with all our locations, and which images were to go in each space. In Addition to these I printed out little thumbnails of was each print was which I cellotaped onto the

rolled-up vinyl. This meant that when we got to a location it would be easy to find which print we need. With near to thirty prints, it would have been hard to write a little note on each one – I thought an actual thumbnail would work much better.

In developing the council proposal, the main tools and methods we used were research-based and organisational, but they played a crucial role in shaping the site-specific nature of the project. Because I had never written a council proposal before, I first had to learn the formal structure and tone expected in public art documentation. This involved reviewing council guidelines and using these as practical reference tools to understand how to communicate our ideas clearly, professionally, and with an emphasis on feasibility. We also used mapping and visual documentation as essential materials. Taking photographs of potential installation points and creating mock-ups on photoshop

(pictured below) allowed us to evaluate the physical characteristics of the Kingsway and demonstrate exactly how our work would respond to the site.

To link back to site-specificuty - justifying our installation choices encouraged us to adapt the work to the existing architecture of the street, such as using empty poster frames or unused infrastructure panels. In this way, preparing the proposal became a method of refining the project, ensuring that every decision was grounded in the realities of the site.

I want to also talk about vinyl as a material. Our main reason for choosing to use vinyl was that it is easy to cut to specific sizes and can be easily de-installed, leaving no trace (the council needed something non-destructive). Initially we had talked about using wheatpaste, which is definately a more robust adhesive (Malachi put up some test posters using paste), however when it came to trying to appease the council we needed to settle for a material that would damage the street when we took the exibition down. Vinyl is also good becuase it is relatively quick to put up, meaning a quick installation. Becuase we didn't have time on our side during the installation day (between the weather and our posters getting taken down) vinyl proved to be the best option.

AMAZING DEALS
PayPoint

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?

During the lad up to the final exhibition, I cut our vinyl prints and organized them all. During installation I helped to locate and apply prints. That is, until the council van showed up and told us we couldn't put any more prints up. I helped to try and reason with him slightly asking whether it would be alright to continue installation if we took them down in a few hours. It turned out that he wouldn't budge at all so we turned the exhibit into a performance piece, where I helped hold one of the prints.

My main roles in the group have been contributing to discussions regarding concept and ideas, scouting for natural frames to exhibit work, getting in touch with the council and creating a proposal and risk assessment with Emma, editting archival imagery and sizing it to the relevant locations, organizing our material for installation and installing the work.

The biggest challenge we faced during this project was trying to get council permission for the exhibit. After quite a few weeks of back-and-forth emails we weren't able to obtain full permission in the end – which ultimately effected our final exhibit. Despite this I learnt a lot talking with people in the council and would feel quite confident to do get in contact for future projjects. My writing skills definately improved though doing this – in particular, writing in a proffessional, clear and convincing tone. I also had to change the way I explained the conceptual side of the project. Prior to this project, I'd only written about the conceptual side of art/photography to be read by lecturers and teachers, so I had to consider how it could be best understood by those not from an art background.

Another challenge I faced was organisation within the group. I don't think any of us in the streets group stood up as a group leader, so especially during the first few weeks of the project our organisation wasn't the best. Malachi had quite a strong idea of what he wanted the project to be, yet didn't explain to the rest of us what he intended to do exactly. This meant that our ideas were all a bit separate to begin with. We started to create some work individually to begin with- then later on we sorted out this issue by bringing together all our indiviual work and finding common themes – from there

building a concept which encompassed all of our work. I learnt a lot about teamwork during this project – how to mould your own work around the needs of the group and how to comprise with ideas and concepts. It was really important to give equal consideration to everyones ideas so that we could work out a sort of middle ground where everyone was able to contribute to the wider idea.

The last challenge we faced was trying to communicate with Caitlin who wasn't able to join us this semester. Caitlin was a part of our whatsapp grouchat, so was able to see all our discussions. However, we found it very hard to share our ideas over text messages. I would say that a larger percentage of our work was discussed in person, and although we updated Caitlin regularly, it was very difficult to get our ideas across. Caitlin's role in the group was supposed to be marketing – so none of the rest of us put much thought into that side of the project, until we were told that Caitlin would be participating anymore. This meant that it was a slight rush to come up with some marketing before the exhibition. Personally, I didn't mind as I think that minimal marketing fit into the idea of a lot of street art being anonymous. We didn't create any social media, but we did make some posters leading up to the exhibition. We also created flyers to give out during the exibition with a QR code on the back, which took you to a page with more information about our concept and everybodies individual work.

Evaluation of the Exhibition

- Execution: Assess the success of the exhibition in addressing the site's history, community, or spatial dynamics. Provide install shots of your exhibition work.

Audience Interaction: Discuss how the audience engaged with your work and the site. Provide photographs that document this process.

- Reflection: Identify areas for improvement and potential future directions for your practice.

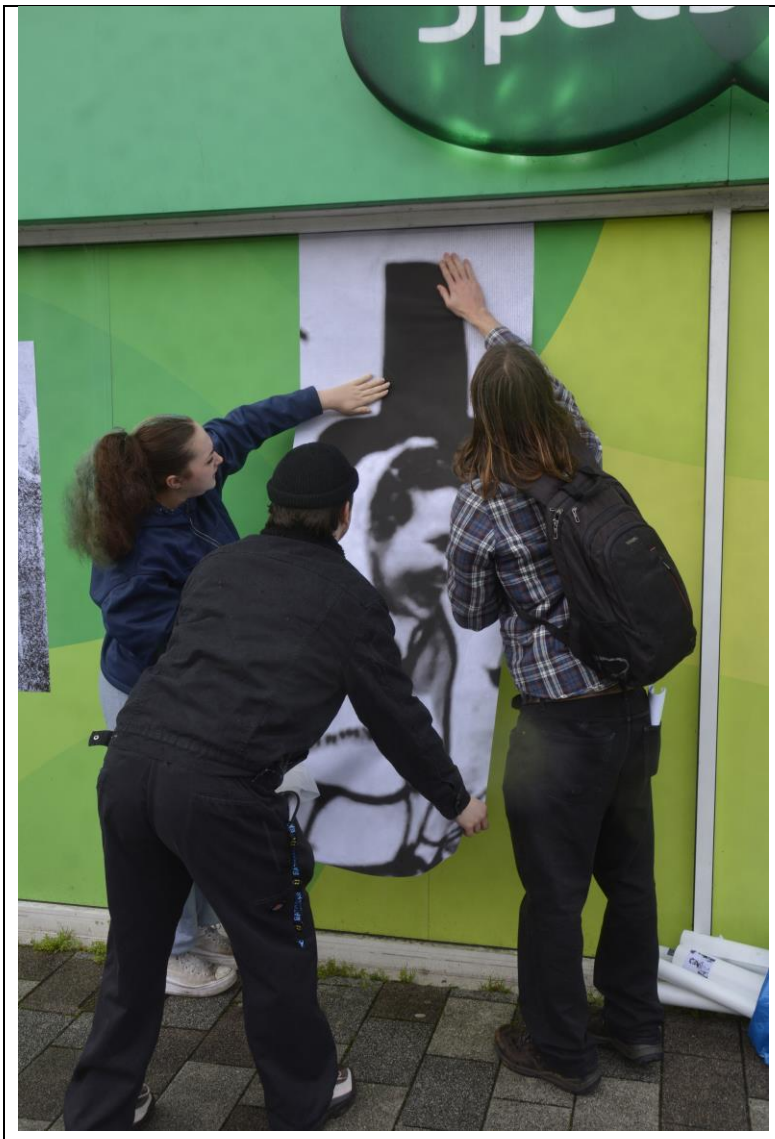
Despite some major setbacks we faced on the day of our exhibition, I still think it was successful. We had only put up a handful of our posters when some people from the council arrived and told us we'd be fined if we continued to install. Realising we couldn't complete the exhibition as intended, we turned the exhibit into a performance. While some shops allowed us to stick some more of our prints outside, we were left with a large number of spare prints. Luckily Emma had some friends she could call who helped us out with the performance. There was about ten of us altogether and we all took a print each and spread out along the kingsway holding the prints up.

The benefit of doing this was that we had far more interaction with the public. I'd noticed before when we were sticking prints up that people seemed to pay attention when we were installing (presumably looking to see if what we were doing was legal or not), but once they were up, most people walked past without noticing. When we were holding the prints we had a lot of passers-by coming up to us and having a conversation about the project. I think what this shows is that, were the exhibition to go ahead as intend we would have had to work a lot harder to get the public interested. As photography students, I think we are naturally very observant of our surroundings and potentially we overestimated how observant most members of the public might be. If I was to do another project in a public space, I would definately spend more time considering how the work could be as eye-catching as possible becuase many people will walk right past this kind of thing. - I must also say thank you to Rev. Steve in the church, who was very interested in our project and helped to get more members of the public involved.

Another setback we faced was the weather. We hadn't considered this factor until a few days before installation. Whilst theres not much you can do about the rain, there were some measures we took to ensure the installation ran as smoothly as possible. I brought some towels so that we could wipe down the surfaces we were applying the prints to. This worked fine for some surfaces such as marble and glossy paint, however some of the more pourous surfaces such as plywood and concrete had become quite damp – so for these we used duck tape for extra stick or placed the inteded print somewhere that would stick better. It seems silly looking back that we forgot to consider this factor until the last minute – had we thought of this sooner we would have reconsidered the materials we chose to use (wheatpaste is more resistant to the rain than vinyl prints, although this would have caused even more issues with the council!).

Something I would do differently next time is make sure that we have full council permission, even if it meant making big changes to our project. While we were able to salvage it and create a different outcome, this was very rushed and in a different project it may not be so easy to do this – so council persmission is an essential factor.

(All photographs below taken by Seren Davies).



MOUNT PLEASA
BAPTIST CHURCH SWA
SUNDAY
11am

Fferyllfa
well
Pharmacy
The Kingsway
JESUS
ALIVE

4
S.W