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Ke eper(s) Mission Ga llery

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Work Owen
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Work Owen Griffiths ing Materials A Collective Archive on How to Navigate Mission Gallery

How are locations stored and used in the brain? What processes and which parts of the brain are involved in remembering the spatial and temporal context of spaces and in finding one's way about? Humans communicate through speech, vision, gesture; how does experience shape language and the brain?

The Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience

St

Nicholas

Church...

connected

to the

space

How does my knowledge and understanding of the gallery, as a work related space, affect my experience of the space (outside work); its every nook and cranny; what the square footage is; what the temperature is; what paint to use on the floor; what is behind these masked walls, these hidden doors and false surfaces...

How does my experience of the space, shape my memory and how does my memory space recreate it in my mind?

Amanda Roderick

Uncovering material history, rather than the anecdotal - a history of texture, form and space

A history of space most of all, expanding and contracting around the work.

The layering into the walls of many inhabitations is in my mind in the gallery, but, like accumulation of actors' marks, I recall stepping through a doorway, leaning on a wall, standing at a certain distance from someone or something - my physical uncertainty in the space mapped onto the temporary geography of the gallery.

I remember:

Owen's soup and drums and drawings.

All our drawings and a just-painted floor.

The fear of breaking expensive ceramics.

Always the light and a sense of possibility.

Intrigued later by the knowledge of the spatial complexity of several staircases behind the scenes.

Bella Kerr

Thoughts from a member of the 70s working party.

Saturday mornings forever transforming an Old Seaman's Mission from a picture-framing factory into an Arts Centre. Knocking down walls or plastering (you learn as you go) removing false coiling to reveal original wooden, high dome.

What shall we do with this Lamb of God painted in the apse? Cover it with protector film and paint over! Still hiding there, waiting...

What shall we call it? Swansea Arts Workshop, Exhibitions, Lectures, Ted Hughes, John Ormond, Tam O'Shanta down Gloucester Place Concrete Poetry, Fancy dress party – today a realised dream.

Muriel Clement

there was once an altar
a focus for prayer and belief
a place where we can now stand
and the height, the height.

Fern Thomas

2.0.0.7. I'm wearing a black bin liner walking down the pleasant mountain...its dark and the rain is pouring down...JP drives past in a silver Micra and gives me a lift to the gallery...an alternative dialogue with the past is a possible future...all the doors will open in 1.9.7.7. within a collection of drawings under a dark star...the windows in the apse are blocked and barricaded and there's a fallen lamp post nearby..there is a huge surge of sea sculpted polystyrene with soft foam under foot there's a swarm of birds in the space above our heads...we walk through a pitch black maze and the (Wild) one who is with me is afraid of the dark confined space...we have to crawl through the hatch over a soil mandala on the floor to get out into the space/craft..where we are consumed by a visionary flood of free alcohol..tiptoeing around as if sea sick to the low distant sound of unheeded opening speeches...breathing only in the moments of silence.

Jonathan Anderson

My husband Ronald Cour was the president of the Swansea Art society (established 100 years ago) needed a permanent home to meet and exhibit. He discovered the Mission in a dreadful state of repair - some sort photographic warehouse. He took on the lease and a small band of members took on the restoration - working at weekends. The cupboard labeled 'Ronald Cour Tools' has disappeared - the space is part of the shop area.

We plastered and painted and knocked holes in the walls. I painted the ceiling of the apse on scaffolding. Often, cementing done on the wall one week, would be discovered on the floor the following week. When painting the walls of the apse we discovered a lamb, part of the old wall painting we carefully preserved it - it is under the present white - we know where! There are only a tiny handful of the original founders of the gallery alive - (but very much alive). Just Muriel Clement, myself Glenys Cour and Alison Lockhead.

We were lucky to have expert help in the venture. Members Robin Campbell and Dick Wakelin, both architects knew how to lay floors and knock holes in walls. Student members Keith Bayliss joined in the venture - Jane Phillips eventually becoming coming the curator. Among the events held there were - flame swallowing, poetry, life drawing, painting, sculpture and many experimental and performing arts - including bicycles.

Our title the Arts Workshop stayed for years and remained as such until we became Mission Gallery.

Glenys Cour

A small space shaped in the form of an hour glass
once sacred, now charged with creativity
the ebb and flow of people swelling this little vessel
...now it's quiet again reflective

Nathalie Camus

I am not from here, but I am at home. Mission is a safe place of new friends that seem like old. We share connections to past people and places and a togetherness in a belief of each others dreams, and of staying afloat.

During the exhibition 'when the moon fell out of orbit' my Aunty died. A story that my grandmother wrote for her aged two was read at her funeral, she has kindly shared this with us.

Safe Journey by Liz Hoad

Having tucked her tightly into her little bed so that it felt like a boat and filled it full of her favorite dolls and soft toys, we choose her favorite things to eat for her journey to the island of dreams. As soon as she began to nod off I pretended to light the lantern of the mast before pushing the boat across the lake to the land of dreams gently kissing her goodnight and whispering safe journey darling. Today we are all part of this dream story. Safe journey.

For me my grandmother's words are embodied in this building, Mission is a mooring point to our dream stories.

Jessica Hoad

The loss of bell-tower,
a building, mute,
needs to call.

A giant (myrddin) pointing to the sea
(the Mount close by) "Giants
Round-Dance" – Chorea Gigantum.

these salt stained seamen
safe from the storm
in the nautical ark

In considering this building
while setting up a show
in a howling winter gale;
the inner strength, the calmness,
the outer and the inner.

Robin Campbell

In the daytime the new exhibition was hidden behind a thick, white curtain which separated the craft space and the exhibition space. (This entrance was much wider than it is now.) I remember looking at the curtain when I was working that day. The warm sunshine seemed to linger on the heavy cloth for many hours. The stillness of that is one of the things I remember the most.

After the opening event, which was much later the same day, a group of people sat in a sort of circle (or egg shape) on plastic chairs. Their faces were vague at first. I could remember bright pink and light blue clothes. After a while I could see lots of familiar faces. They have open, bright, smiling faces. I remember that we were positioned near the centre of the gallery, but that's quite strange because the boulders were there. (The artist had spent quite a long time contemplating their exact position.)

The floor, which had been laboriously cleaned was coated lightly in places with fine white dust. This somehow made the space look cleaner. I imagine a part of the floor where there is a thick pile of dust with clean footprints. Even though there lots of people at the opening, the dust in my memory never seems dirty. The dimensions of the floor space seemed wider than usual. The walls were cold white and felt like fresh plaster covering heavy stone walls without the many layers of paint underneath, which I knew were there. I can't remember the smell. It felt like an echoing space. (If I now imagined the sort of smell it would be I think of plaster and outside air.)

At our feet on the hard floor, were placed little glass beer bottles, thin wine glasses and bottles of wine. We talked quietly about Hiroshima and Jackie Collins. The little bottles had funny labels.

Lisa Jones
(Hideo Furuta exhibition)

I'd stopped going to games on a Wednesday afternoon. I expected something to happen, there'd be a reprimand, but nothing did happen, so I assumed my absence was relief to everybody. I was starting my work experience on Monday, I was 15. Things had been bad, no one at school understood the weird books I read, the strange music I listened to. I went on the mitch, rainy Wednesday afternoon, because I wanted to meet the people I'd be working with at the Mission Gallery.

It wasn't called that then, I can't remember what it was called. I'd wanted to work at the larger gallery, the Glynn Viv. I'd often go and hide there and eat my lunch. I felt safe, like I could commune with the people who made the paintings, sought solace in the glamorous artists' lives I'm sure they led. Unfortunately the Glynn Viv wouldn't have me, & arrangements were made for me to go to a smaller, modern art gallery, a little church by the marina. The way I see it now it was like a key turning in my life, a door falling open on that rainy afternoon on the mitch from games & everyone quite happy with that.

Through fate throwing me at this gallery I discovered there could be a family quite different from the one you had at home. There could be friends who were special just like you, who didn't judge you if you were having one of your Joni Mitchell afternoons or a Sylvia Plath weekend, I'd been drawn for a place that stood for sanctuary in my life ever since, & I can race this through my life because of its walls. What my 15-year-old self didn't know back then is that almost ten years later, in the aftermath of the disaster of my life, I would return friendless, desperate. Then I discovered even more people who were just like me, who didn't accept a humdrum, drab existence. That it is possible to have what the painters on the art gallery walls on the other side of town had: the glamorous artist's life. The imagination should not die at childhood, you can live life through colour, the wildness of sound, the strangeness of words. There are others like you, & you don't have to hide in galleries anymore - but sometimes it's nice to.

Joan

Usually a rented or borrowed room, marked with its own history, the solitude of the whiteroom is warmed by evidence of a previous occupation.

Bella Kerr

To live means to leave traces. In the interior these are emphasised. An abundance of covers and protectors and cases are devised, on which the traces of objects and everyday use are imprinted. The traces of the occupant also leave their impression of the interior.

Walter Benjamin

Acknowledgements

'The Arcades Project', Walter Benjamin, Edited by Rolf Tiedemann, Harvard University Press.

'Ruins', Edited by Brian Dillon Whitechapel Series, MIT Press, 'White Room', Bella Kerr, The Institute of Imagined Futures and Unknown Lands: www.imaginedfuturesunknownlands.org

Texts were written in response to this request:

I would like to invite you to participate in a piece of research. For an exhibition entitled Keeper by Bella Kerr, at Mission Gallery, a number of artists, practitioners and writers have been commissioned to create a text for Working Materials the accompanying publication. I have been asked to contribute a piece and would like to ask you to participate in the making of this work by providing a short text, which considers memory, observation and fact, based on time spent in the gallery. Taking inspiration from the work and proposals for the gallery, Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project and the recent exhibition When the Moon fell Out of Orbit by The Institute for Imagined Futures and Unknown Lands, by Fern Thomas, I'd like to invite you to think of a time spent at Mission. Perhaps you were installing an exhibition, perhaps you were involved in the creation of the gallery or have known it for many years. You may have spent some time in a particular part of the gallery, which remains with you. Think of its texture, Its smell and temperature. The process of adding and taking away, The layers of white paint and filler applied, Or the action of sanding back and making smooth its walls.

Owen Griffiths

