

## DO WE MARK TIME OR DOES TIME MARK US?

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### ABSTRACT

The paper presents how creative technologies were explored to create site-responsive immersive installations within the fabric of the architecture of Chirk Castle, Wales, to correlate sound with light. It explores how the performative, immersive exhibition simulated a new perception of place, fusing together and reflecting a moment in time within Chirk Castle, abstracting a connection to the landscape. It will discuss how themes of time and place were explored in response to the architectural framework and the geologically - sculpted landscape of Chirk Castle, during an artist residency located at the castle. It will discuss how technologies, materials, process and scale have been explored to create the sensory environments within *Golau (light)* – a site – responsive exhibition. Intrinsic to this residency, was the collaboration between artists working from different disciplines (film, dance and sound); this served to enrich my personal practice and generate multi-sensory and multidisciplinary responses to the memory of place.

The paper will reflect upon cultural identity of place and self and how, by embarking on these poetic geographies, I begin to define my place in time. It will further explain how these traced networks were transcribed into the art forms installed within *Golau*, to create a situation and moment for collaboration in response to communicating landscape as identity.

### BOUNDARIES OF TIME

This paper will present the methodologies and collaborative approaches to creating a site-responsive exhibition and performance that I directed within a heritage site in Wales. This will be discussed in three parts; it will discuss the background and the context of the research, using examples of my own work, it will specifically discuss the technology used for one of the pieces - *Eirlysiau*. Finally, I will reflect on the resulting public event.

### LANDSCAPE LINES

AAs stimulus to prompt an investigation into my location, I reflected on Christopher Tilley's '*Phenomenology of Landscape*,' where he states: "*The landscape is the fundamental reference system to which individual consciousness of the world and social identities are anchored.*" [1]

I explored the landscape of Wrexham, North Wales during a residency at Chirk Castle – a medieval fortress in North Wales on the border between Wales and England. [2] I considered the boundaries between past and present landscapes and the territorial space defining the borderline town of Wrexham. For this residency, I invited a group of artists to participate in my thematic, resulting in a number of site-specific installation and performative works that emulated my experience of the landscape and responded to the fabric of the castle.



Fig. 1. Offa's Dyke Path, 2013, Angela Davies, Photograph, © Angela Davies.

Figure 1, references a small stretch of Offa's Dyke - a geographical border defining England and Wales. I traced a section of the 170 mile defensible terrain during my investigation, layering time to reconstruct patterns of human behavior across the earthwork boundary. Michel De Certeau expresses, 'mythic geographies' allow us to see the ways in which representations of space and place are intimately bound up in the 'nexus of power-knowledge.' [2] I considered space and place systems within the landscape as I traced footsteps along the Dyke. In an *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault argues: [...] *the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of divisions, of limits; it is no longer of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations.*" [3] By embarking on these poetic geographies, I reflected upon contemporary narratives that drew upon traditional values, to consider geographical identity. To me, this conveyed an emerging cultural dialogue between past and present. It was through these experiences that the work was conceived and translated within the castle, to subsequently inform multi-disciplinary responses, which are represented within the exhibition at Chirk Castle.

*Golau Map* (Fig. 2), translates from Welsh to light, it unravels a drawing of place. The translation of ancient pathways are interwoven with a personal navigation of the landscape, to illuminate permeable boundaries and thresholds of space that reflect physical geographical boundaries and passages of time. The new network lines that have been created act as 'new foundations,' to represent my place in time.

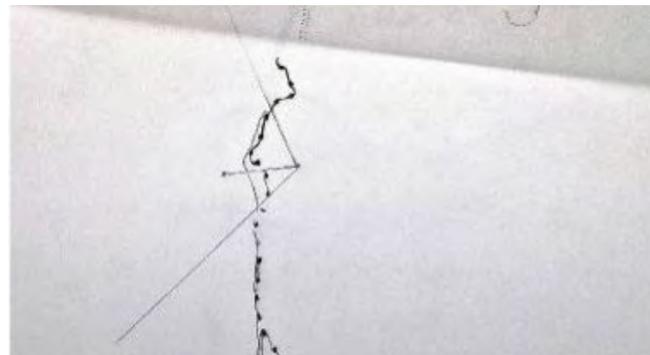


Fig. 2. Golau Map, 2014, Angela Davies, Drawing on paper, © Angela Davies.

### MULTI-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

Creative technologies had a strong role to play during the multidisciplinary collaboration. Within each of the collaborator's work there was an aesthetic that mirrored an element of my practice. *Golau Map* (Fig. 2) was shared with collaborators, which subsequently informed the multi-sensory response, represented within the exhibition. The interdisciplinary exchange, involved taking chances and risks within the castle (Fig. 3) – responding intuitively to place. One artist's response to the other informed an acknowledgement of the fabric of the space. It is the system of navigating space to discover the hidden intricacies of life that connects to my work. These elements were considered, interpreting physical landscapes to create new landscapes. This therefore enabling the user to navigate and explore the interior of the castle, emulating an experience of walking within the landscape. Whilst each of the exhibits will be discussed, there will be a particular focus on *Eirysiau* - a sculptural sound and light installation and the technology explored and applied to create this site-responsive installation within the castle.



Fig. 3. Chirk Castle, 2013, Angela Davies, Photograph, © Angela Davies.

### EIRYSIAU (SNOWDROPS) INSTALLATION

*Eirysiau (Snowdrops)*, is an ephemeral site-responsive installation that captures an experience of nature - in relation to light and water. It is constructed of 50, suspended vertically-aligned sculptural snowdrops. Each snowdrop sculpture (Fig. 4) was embedded with an LED and suspended within the 'murder-hole' space within the tower of the castle. The installation displayed fleeting light within the tower, suggestive of an illuminated field of snowdrops inside a manmade structure. Landscape lines were etched into glass using CAD technology and water jet cutting. Thus revealing physical and illusionary networks of interaction with the landscape, to illustrate the passing of time. The fleeting light ignited each of the 50 individual lenses. Thus projecting the luminal line of place to magnify borders and threshold spaces in relation to political and geographical border. The cyclic light traveling through the installation interconnected place and landscape to give an illusion of time.



Fig. 4. *Eirysiau (Snowdrop)* sculpture, 2014, Angela Davies, porcelain, glass, LED, © Angela Davies.

To orchestrate a fluid flow of light through '*Eirysiau*,' exploration of coding and programming was implemented to correlate sound with light. To enable the work to interact with the environment in this way, I worked in collaboration with Ant Dickinson. It was necessary to draw upon his expertise of the visual programming, since it reached beyond my experience of using coding with electronics and arduino.

Pure Data Extended programming and Arduino microprocessing were used to fuse sensory elements. A custom made patch was created and written in Pure Data by Ant Dickinson (Fig. 6). This was implemented using the Pduino library. Pure Data is a visual mapping programming tool which allows networks and links to be connected and expanded. This was initialized through Pduino, thus allowing access through the inputs and outputs on an Arduino micro-controller from within Pure Data. To enable this to function, to communicate with the Arduino, *Firmata* was installed on the Arduino. To emulate a "twinkling" effect with the lights, a noise generator was used to create irregular fluctuations. This subsequently connected sound and light, ultimately generated by sound. This was sent to the Arduino and was sequenced across the 6 analog/ pwm outputs. Implementing Sinewave Oscillator and delays enabled the light to be "surged" across the installation. To support the fading light across the lights, a low frequency sine wave was rectified.



borders; boundaries and place systems through the castle. Thus resulting in an 'in-between' expression captured in film. This simulated a poetic response, which was characterized through the film projection and installations that were sensitively integrated within the tower. Through the three moving image installations: *Lateral Flight*, *Meander* and *Carved Through Stone*, the dancer, conveys movement, suggesting an illusion of time. *Lateral Flight* is a minimal ephemeral time piece where the film projection intensifies during the day.



Fig. 8. Live Performance, Chirk Castle, 2014, Angela Davies, Photograph, © Angela Davies.

To emulate research themes, there were live performances (Fig. 8) of dance and sound, on the opening of the exhibition, when a series of responsive performances took place across the tower. There was an interplay with the static installations and the live performances and the interaction with each of the light, sound and moving image installations. These captured the viewers' attention, so that they become a voyager on a transcendental journey through the castle.

## CONCLUSION

The rhythmical and performative experience of walking within the landscape was transcribed back into the space of initial inquiry, to create the immersive experience of dance, sound, light and moving image installation. The exhibition displayed an interplay between environment, users and the static and live performances. In reflection to the opening quote and from my perspective, as the viewer walked and meandered in and through the castle, an experience of the landscape unfolded. I believe this sought to challenge the viewer's perceptions of their surroundings, forcing

encounters with barriers and boundaries between time and space through the act of engaging in this layered experience. In reference to viewer experience, there were mixed feelings about the contemporary interpretation of heritage being displayed within the context of the castle. Some reviews were positive and people were curious and inquisitive about the curation of the contemporary art exhibition and the multi-sensory experience. In contrast, some users comments conveyed an uneasiness with the exhibition and found the interpretation challenging. Finally, the opportunity to engage in multi-disciplinary collaboration with other artists was integral to materializing my thematic. The works occupied a systemic network; for the viewer to navigate within the tower. The immersive audio-visual narrative, echoed a spatial dimension, that united themes of place and time, fusing together a multi-sensory experience of 'my location' within the architectural framework of Chirk Castle.

## REFERENCES

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2. Chirk Castle - Medieval fortress.
3. Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (Routledge, 1992).
4. Tilley, C, *A Phenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Berg Publishers, 1994), 40.