Shifting Ethnographic Narratives & Narrations

Storytelling in Two Distinct Museum Spaces

Megan Coyle Sutton

Words: 35,673 Pages: 76

Supervisor: Dr. D.M Peluso

Master's by Research in Social Anthropology

School of Anthropology and Conservation

University of Kent

2019

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Daniela Peluso for her invaluable insights, patient support and uplifting encouragement.

Sincere thanks to all those connected with Canterbury Museums, with particular thanks to the staff and volunteers who so graciously welcomed me and gave up their time to help me.

Thanks, also, to the FormAtlas and Compromised Identities teams from whom I have learnt so much and who continue to dazzle me with their passion and commitment to their work.

Lastly, special thanks to all the special people: Jack, Mum, Dad, Matilda, Gabriel, Alison and Aliya.

Introduction **1**

1. Fieldsites and Methodology **3**
Museum Space Fieldsites 3
Methodology 6

2. Museum Spaces, Intermediary Spaces, Storytelling **9**
People Tell Stories 9
Museum Space Meanings 11
The Between Space 16

3. The Local Museum Space **19**
Between People and Objects 20
Hidden Objects: Dormant Stories 21
The Responsive Museum Space: Objects Tell Stories 25
The Participatory Museum Space: Museum Storytelling for Living 28
Objects, Memory, Meaning: Storytelling through Exchange In the Museum Space 30
Interpretation in Action: Making Stories in the Museum Space 32
Narratives Absorbed: Becoming part of the Museum Space 35
Telling Stories To Live: Meaning-Making in the Museum Space 37

4. The Concept-Generated Museum Space **40**
Telling Stories of Trauma 41
Collaborations: Building Narratives 44
Narrations of Making: FormAtlas 47
Empathy through Immersion 48
Bricolage: Ongoing Processes 53
Storytelling as Technique: Safeguarding Futures 54

5. Conscientious Storytelling **58**
Decolonising the Museum Space 58
Levelling the Museum Space 62

Conclusion: Reflections on Museum Space Meanings **65**

Bibliography **67**

Introduction

There have long been strong visible links between museums and the academic discipline of anthropology. Museums, traditionally viewed as cultural institutions and gatekeepers of curiosity, aim to operate as spaces that showcase the wider world, and can impart meaning and understanding to those who engage with them. Museum spaces, like ethnographic texts, possess the power to invoke the rich diversities and idiosyncrasies of human lives across the world to those who enter them.

Museums exist in myriad forms and function in myriad ways for ever-increasingly diverse audiences: heterotopic spaces that can exist as refuge; as institutions that safeguard and actively produce meaning(s); as providers of alternative and extra-curricular learning, and spaces that inspire curiosity, provoke dialogue and stir new ideas and ways of thinking. Museums can broaden perspectives, foster empathy, and tell us multiple stories about ourselves, other people, and the world we live in. At the same time, museums represent institutions of authority and power, and thus have a duty to be accountable for which stories they tell, and how they tell these stories.

Frequent visits to The Horniman Museum in Forest Hill as a child sparked my own personal affection for museum spaces. Bound in nostalgia and the magical sheen of half-forgotten memories that, with time, seem to take on a fantastical quality, my encounters at The Horniman punctuate so many of my childhood recollections. My experiences at The Horniman feel preciously formative: from the way I am still perversely drawn to taxidermied animals - stopped in time to be eternally gazed upon - to my first terrifying existential realisations about the inevitably of death provoked by human remains displayed in a toddler-high glass case, the Horniman remains an entire world of its own in my mind, brimming with multiple meanings, realities and possibilities. My experiences serve as one microscopic and singular example of the power of museums to make meaning.

This thesis examines the multiple meanings of storytelling in the museum space. Through comparative ethnographic analysis of two distinct kinds of museum spaces contextualised against a backdrop of theoretical analyses of the social implications of storytelling; a history of the critical viewpoints on the meanings of museum spaces; a conceptual application of liminal space and limal experience; and a critical examination of current debates surrounding the efficacy, relevance and futures of museums spaces. The term museum space is applied to encompass narrative-led public engagement spaces: ‘museum space’, as term, reaches beyond conventional images of traditional museums as storehouses of objects and custodians of privileged knowledge. Museum space translates as space that tells stories.

Chapter 1, *Fieldsites and Methodology*, outlines the origins of the project and describes the two fieldsites and my research activities within them. *Fieldsites and Methodology* also determines my research methodologies and accounts for the limitations and shortcomings of the project.

Chapter 2, *Museum Spaces, Intermediary Spaces and Storytelling*, is a tripartite examination of the existing ideas surrounding museum space meanings; an overview of the social, political and philosophical implications of storytelling as human social activity; and provides an informed interpretation of the concepts of ‘heterotopia’ and ‘liminality’ in the context of museum spaces. *Museum spaces, Intermediary Spaces and Storytelling* serves as contextual backdrop to the project

and thesis grounded in literary research drawn from museum space scholarship, social anthropology, philosophy and biological anthropology.

Chapter 3, *The Local Museum Space*, is a detailed ethnographic account and theoretical analysis of my research experiences as volunteer and researcher at a local authority museum in Kent. The fieldsite of *The Local Museum Space* was broad in scope for analysis; this chapter includes a depth of ethnographic description that attempts to uncover and extract the multiple myriad meanings I observed being made and remade in this particular museum space.

Chapter 4, *The Concept-Generated Museum Space*, follows a similar structure to Chapter 3, describing and analysing my experiences as researcher and employee within a collaborative team tasked with crafting a new museum space exhibition. The *Concept-Generated Museum Space* explores museum space meanings made in processes of collaborative production and examines the museum space as powerful narrative tool of social proactivism.

Chapter 5, *Conscientious Storytelling*, situates and contextualises my findings in ongoing debates surrounding past, present and future activities of museum spaces - taking issues of ethics, efficacy and legacy into consideration.

Fieldsites and Methodology

This project is based on nine months of ethnographic research conducted across two primary research sites of distinct and contrasting forms of 'museum spaces'. The term 'museum space' is used to encompass and typify both fieldsites and can be broadly defined and understood as narrative-led exhibition spaces that are open to the public. Here I will describe my fieldsites and the methods used.

Emerging from a long-standing enthusiasm for museums and a desire to better understand the social value, potential and impacts of free, local community-oriented museums in combination with my own personal working knowledge of exhibition and interpretation design, this project is an anthropological examination of the practices and impacts of storytelling in museum spaces. Led by a variety of robust ethnographic approaches, the project seeks to fundamentally focus on the people who operate in and engage with such museum spaces. My research is based on participant-observation, unstructured interviews and archival and literature research. These methods ground and situate my findings and ideas in existing theories, arguments and current debates. While my position at each fieldsite was markedly different - at one I was a paid employee and an integral member of a creative team - at the other I was a volunteer who had approached the organisation as an unknown individual without any prior connection - I found myself applying similar methodological approaches: utilising participant-observation as key to both fieldsites.

Museum Space Fieldsites

The first research site, Canterbury Museums, is primarily a regional heritage museum in Kent with a large community offer of participatory programmes and events. Canterbury Museums' main focus of activity is found in its primary site - The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge. Locally referred to as 'The Beaney', the museum is situated in the centre of popular tourist destination and iconically historic city of Canterbury. It is open six days out of seven and is free to enter, apart from some temporary touring exhibits and its satellite Roman museum. The Beaney has an eclectic permanent collection spread across eight titled and categorised rooms as well as two temporary exhibition spaces, one of which houses touring temporary exhibits across a variety of themes, and a more community-led exhibition space that showcases exhibitions relevant to the local area and community. Exhibitions in this room might, for example, showcase work by local schools, universities and further education institutions, NHS-referred therapy groups, charities and local artists.

The Beaney's main permanent galleries house a range of objects typical of regional UK museums: a large natural history collection of taxidermied mammals, fish, insects, animal bones and rocks and minerals; a variety of artworks, the majority of which are paintings of local landscapes and aristocratic portraits; a collection of ceramics and glassware; a fair amount of somewhat random and varied 'ethnographic' objects from a variety of non-European locations that range from everyday household items to weaponry; a collection of artefacts pertinent to the local area - including the work of a 'national treasure' who lived in the city, and a collection of objects associated with a local British Army regiment. The museum also possesses a collection of British 'social history' items, most of which is not on display but housed in the museum's vast collections storage. The offer of Canterbury Museums is made a little more exceptional by its vast collection of

Roman objects excavated in the area, including pottery, jewellery, glassware, mosaic and the impressive remains of a Roman townhouse discovered and excavated during the Blitz and now permanently on display in the Roman Museum. Like many other UK regional museums, The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge was founded on philanthropic principles as a community resource by Sir James Beaney in 1899. The building has, since its opening in 1899, also comprised a local lending and reference library. Undergoing a significant Heritage Lottery Fund and local council-funded refurbishment in 2009 and reopening in 2012 following a consultation project with a range of local stakeholders, The Beaney now also houses a café and educational spaces.

I selected Canterbury Museums - with a view to focus predominantly on The Beaney - as a potential primary research site in the summer of 2018 after drawing up a rather broad research design proposal. This proposal aimed to look at a range of aspects of a regional UK museum's operations, aspirations, impacts and responsibilities situated in the context of the current shift in the meaning and resultant accountability of local museums in the UK. I approached The Beaney to offer my services as a volunteer. Going through the channels suggested on the museum's website, I drafted an email to the Collections Manager, Chris Bawden. Attaching my proposal and outlining my skills and work experience, I felt confident I'd be seen as a desirable volunteer, perhaps even valuable asset. I naively and arrogantly imagined that my interests would flatter the museum and that I'd receive an eager and prompt response. Several months and many follow-up calls, emails and visits later, I didn't appear to be getting anywhere. I worried that I'd have to drastically change tack, then vowed to persevere and utilise the experience as a first insight into the culture of the museum. By September 2018 I had managed to secure an introductory meeting with Chris' assistant, Clemmie, along with a guarantee that I was 'in' as a collections volunteer. At this early stage, I expressed a keen but basic interest to be 'as involved and as helpful as possible'. While true, this was also a slight attempt to conceal that my research aims were yet to be solidified. While I felt confident that these would work themselves out as my research progressed, my hypothesis at this early point was simply that museums were a good thing; positive community assets with much to offer but with some work to do in driving and diversifying their audience and in making the most of their spaces and collections. Clemmie was kind, enthusiastic and empathetic. She earnestly agreed to facilitate my research beyond my weekly volunteering duties, agreeing to introduce me to the other museum staff and put me in touch with specific individuals relevant to my research; pass on my requests for face-to-face interviews and conversations; circulate specific questionnaires; and pass on the museum's visitor feedback data. I, in return, would volunteer for two hours a week assisting with the collections team with their store move, which involved moving the museum's vast catalogued collection from one storage facility to another. Volunteering with the collections team gave me behind-the-scenes insights and enabled me to meet and engage with other volunteers as well as better understand some of the day-to-day museum dynamics. As other museum staff popped in and out during our sessions, opportunities to 'network' arose, and I was thus able to gain further access to a broader range of individuals connected to the museum.

Keen as I was at this early stage to gain as much access to as many volunteers, staff and visitors as I could, communications appeared slow, and responses to requests to meet with individuals or participate in certain activities sometimes took weeks to cement. In January I met with The Beaney's Programming Manager, Miranda Goddard, who facilitated access to the museum's broad community health offer and put me in touch with the coordinators of various programmes, and thus the doors to The Beaney's 'Wellbeing' offer were opened and I was able to integrate this vital

aspect of the museum's social role into my research. Through similar chance opportunities while volunteering with the collections team, I was able to ingratiate myself with the learning team. I offered my services as a volunteer and was able to conduct further valuable research by participating in and observing some of the museum's educational offers.

Like these chance opportunities that change the course of lives and research projects alike, my second research site became part of the project by means unplanned. The second research site takes the form of an in-progress project to develop, build and facilitate the movement of a touring exhibition titled 'Compromised Identities' that will showcase narratives of perpetration and complicity in the Holocaust. A few months into my research at The Beaney, I was contacted by a previous employer, David Shelby, creative director of a small but high profile interpretation design agency FormAtlas who specialise in the museums and heritage sector. I had previously worked for David at FormAtlas' Kent offices and during this time had gained some knowledge and experience of the museums sector.

In December 2018, David asked if I would be interested in working on a tender for a contract with a Russell Group university research team to deliver the design and build of the Compromised Identities exhibition. David and I had kept in touch since I had left the company in 2014. He knew about my social anthropology degree and recently acquired knowledge, and felt my expertise would be what was needed to give FormAtlas an edge on the competition. Although the project was fascinating and important, the brief was dense and challenging, calling for the translation of huge bodies of heavily academic work to be condensed into a small-budget, small-space touring exhibition that aims to 'pose wider questions about individual responsibility in systems of state sponsored collective violence, and reflect on recent and present-day conflicts, making the exhibition relevant beyond the Third Reich and the Holocaust.' (CI Team, 2018). David and I conducted our own separate research and then came together at several points to share our ideas, 'brainstorm' and talk through how we might innovatively and thoughtfully deliver the project. This collaborative method would set the tone for how we would continue to work, as our tender was successful and FormAtlas was awarded the Compromised Identities contract.

It was at the point of FormAtlas winning the contract and offering me a position to assist the design team that I considered the possibility of incorporating my work with FormAtlas and the Compromised Identities research team into my own research project. Whilst there were some glaring contrasts between the Compromised Identities and Beaney contexts, there also appeared several pertinent connections. My work developing original and creative interpretation strategies for Compromised Identities was to be a cognitive exercise that, in part, utilised my education in anthropology and happened to take place in the same 'museum space' sphere as my volunteer work at The Beaney. As I grappled with the concept of how I might synthesise any analyses of the two 'spaces' - one definitively tangible in its inhabitability, full of people and things; the other only thus far existing in the minds of a handful of individuals and in their word documents and PDFs - the concept of the making and meaning of exhibition narratives emerged as a theoretical nexus - a thread that strongly and clearly ran through both potential areas of research and from which my discussions of both 'museum spaces', the comparisons and contrasts between them, and my own analyses could coherently emerge.

Methodology

A method of participant observation has been the methodological driver of all the primary research of this project. I have been an active, involved participant at all stages of my research and across both fieldsites. I also found an immersive method of participant observation to be incredibly useful in developing deeper connections with the groups and individuals I worked with, which led to me elucidating the tacit cultural meanings I was searching for (Musante & De Walt, 2011, p.239). Ensuring I fulfilled a specific, useful role at each stage of research became a crucial technique for me, as I realised this approach was remarkably valuable in developing trust and facilitating an exchange of information, in what felt a thoroughly authentic way. Participant observation, as Malinowski famously demonstrated (1961), crucially presents the best path to gaining trust, fostering positive cooperation and forging stronger relationships. All of these things make it easier for the anthropologist to do their work: greater access is granted, more is said, heard, revealed, and shown. Deeper meanings are revealed as deeper relationships develop. A method of participant observation can be critically equalising, and when successful, is both rewarding and productive for both anthropologist and their subjects of study.

The project is informed by a substantial amount of secondary source literary research. Initial library research was drawn from the realms of anthropology, the anthropology of museums and museum ethnography in an attempt to look, first, at the interactions between anthropology and museum spaces. Secondary research was also conducted on the history of museums, museum studies, museology and design studies within the context of exhibition spaces. Current museum industry publications, mainstream news/media/public opinion outlets and some social media and blogging platforms also inform the project in order to situate the project in real-time debates surrounding the functions and futures of museum spaces and include a broader scope of the voices of practising museum professionals beyond my own research experiences. My secondary research also encompasses social theories and analyses of storytelling and an exploration of the liminal as both space and experience.

Canterbury Museums, The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge and Canterbury Roman Museum and all of the programmes, workshops or exhibitions attached to these sites bear their real-life names and titles. The names of all individuals described in this thesis have been changed to protect their identities. While this anonymity was only formally specified by Canterbury Museums and not by FormAtlas or the Compromised Identities team, I have changed all names for the sake of consistency. FormAtlas is a fictionalised company name for the interpretation company I worked with to deliver the temporary touring Compromised Identities exhibition. The Compromised Identities project has retained its actual title for the sake of intellectual integrity: this title is encompassing of project's unique approach to the stories it will tell, to adjust it would have obscured vital meaning. Prior informed consent has been obtained at each stage of the research process and all fieldnotes, recordings and data obtained during research is private and protected. While the project has been assessed to present no risks of harm to any individual or institution concerned, every effort has been made to conduct good ethical practice throughout, formally adhering to the ASA's Ethical Guidelines (2011).

The tone and style of this research attempts to reflect my arguments about the ways in which museum spaces should be communicating with their audiences: museum spaces should be telling

stories that are rich, evocative, honest, layered and broadly accessible. This deliberate attempt at presenting a text that is simultaneously engaging, astute, interesting and accessible also speaks to the anthropological community's trend towards esotericism which, on principle, I reject. In practice, I consider these attempts a work in progress. Communicating complex ideas is easier to do in complex terms. Translating sophisticated theory into readily comprehensible prose is the large task given to both museum spaces and anthropological texts, if both are to remain relevant and valued. The project also seeks to employ a definitively 'thick' ethnographic descriptive style that attempts to utilise the form of creative writing to deepen meaning and reflect the themes of storytelling discussed in the text; storytelling is symbolically embedded in the text as ethnographic description. I have made a conscious effort to hone my own writing craft throughout the project, conducting additional literary research and drawing on a range of fictional and anthropological influences. The thesis also employs an 'autoethnographic' (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011) and phenomenological approach. My own personal experiences and what they might mean are described and elucidated upon, as relevant threads that contribute to the social significance of the encounters in the pages that follow.

The project was certainly limited by a number of factors and I ran into some minor difficulties throughout my research. Access at The Beaney was intermittently problematic. My initial preconceptions and unfounded ideas of a 'museum culture' had led me to believe The Beaney would be extremely open and accommodating. In reality, there was a level of suspicion among some staff members, other volunteers and Wellbeing session users about my position as researcher. Some people mistook anthropology for a form of psychology, others made wary comments about being observed. In response, I always attempted to be as present and involved in any activities as I could manage; immersive participant observation techniques were deployed with fervour.

The general pace of work at The Beaney, although hard to obtain a real picture, appeared generally moderate from my observations. This affected the pace of my research as any progression seemed to take weeks, sometimes months. My attempts at gaining access to a broader scope of the museum staff to conduct interviews and gain a clearer sense of the museum's operations and dynamics were restricted for a significant amount of time without any reason. I was led to believe my requests were being passed on for many months before I was casually told by Miranda in a verbal conversation that I 'wouldn't be able to ask their staff those questions because we've never asked them those questions ourselves'. I was left to work out for myself why this wouldn't have been appropriate. Gaining a real sense of visitor responses, reactions and perceptions of the museum also proved difficult. At other points, the obstacles I encountered were simply as a result of the difficulties of motivating people one doesn't know to do things for free or out of their own good will. There also appeared, at times, a perceptible dynamic of uncomfortable interdepartmental politics that rendered some of my attempts at 'networking' - in order to gain access to other parts of the museum under my own steam - faux pas.

Straddling the positions of employee, team member and researcher as part of the Compromised Identities project was simultaneously positive and negative. My position afforded me a certain amount of credibility as well as full access. Fulfilling any research objectives was, however, limited by a predetermined structure and not my own design. Professionalism had to be maintained, the Compromised Identities research team were our clients who we had very limited meeting times

with. The Compromised Identities exhibition is also, notably, still very much a work in progress in the early stages and it is a shame that I have been unable to provide an assessment of the finished exhibit. Similarly, The Beaney's current displays are set to be updated and it would have been valuable to include an analysis of how successful the new storytelling is.

I will, however, continue to work with both my research sites beyond the writing of this masters thesis. I will continue volunteering at The Beaney, participating and assisting in the Power of the Object dementia group sessions and contributing to the refresh project. I am still working as a freelance interpretation development consultant for FormAtlas. A detailed, tightly-scheduled programme of delivery stretches ahead of us to ensure the finished Compromised Identities exhibition is ready to begin touring in May 2020.

Museum Spaces, Intermediary Spaces & Storytelling

People Tell Stories

> Time comes into it.
> Say it. Say it.
> The universe is made of stories,
> not of atoms.
>
> (Excerpt from *The Speed of Darkness* by Muriel Rukeyser, 1968)

In visualising the universe as made of stories we see the potency and vitality of the implications of stories and storytelling for our human lives. Stories - like minute, innumerable atoms - form the essential, elementary matrix of all our individual and interconnected human cosmoses. Stories are the threads from which we weave relationships. Stories connect us with each other and our natural and material environments. Stories exist, primarily, in patterns of speech exchanged between human actors. Yet, as human technology advances, so the form and shape of our stories multiply. Stories are inextricably linked to human persons, and vice versa. Stories and social identities are mutually dependent: stories cannot exist without people to make them, and cannot function without other people to listen to these stories. On the other hand, stories are productive; stories can do things. Stories can tell us who we are, who other people are, and give meaning to the world of things.

Biological and evolutionary theses of storytelling posit storytelling as a crucial strategy for survival. Citing storytelling as an enduring, essential facet of human sociality, investigators of the role of storytelling in human evolutionary terms variably determine its function. Boyd's 'On the Origins of Storytelling' is an investigation into the evolutionary origins and cognitive purposes of storytelling. Boyd suggests that storytelling, as art, improves human cognition, cooperation and creativity (2009). Examining the benefits to both storyteller and story-listener, Boyd suggests the rewards are significant for both: storytelling, for teller, can serve to elevate one's social position; storytelling, for listener, can enhance an understanding of the world and one's place within it.

Sugiyama corroborates Boyd's line of reasoning where she proposes that stories are:

> '...a form of (not necessarily factual) social intelligence. Storytelling can thus be seen as a transaction in which the benefit to the listener is information about his or her environment, and the benefit to the storyteller is the elicitation of behavior from the listener that serves the storyteller's fitness interests.' (p.411, 1996)

Defining storytelling as 'a psychological artifact - a verbal tool that appears in all cultures' (1996, p.404), Sugiyama's literary analysis of storytelling utilises a detailed ethnographic record, citing cross-cultural examples to validate her arguments. Sugiyama's analysis characterises storytelling as responding to more base and selfish motivations. Her article leans towards stories told as a social strategy that primarily serves the interests of the storyteller, as either a tactic to self-preserve and ensure survival, or as an egoistic approach designed to benefit storyteller through the manipulation of others.

Smith et al.'s quantitative ethnographic study of the Agta hunter-gatherer population of The Philippines comes to similar conclusions, although places emphasis on storytelling as facilitator of cooperation. While Smith et al explain that successful storytellers among the Agta are preferred social partners and achieve greater reproductive success, they go on to credit storytelling techniques as crucial to fostering egalitarianism in the group and promoting cooperation between members by 'broadcasting social and cooperative norms to coordinate group behaviour' (2017).

To turn to more philosophical elucidations on the function and meaning of storytelling, we find scholars in this field giving similar focus to the equal significance of the roles of storyteller and story-listener. Benjamin's essay on Russian fiction writer Nikolai Leskov merges the roles of teller and listener, pointing out that all stories are passed on to be told anew, in the unique voice of each storyteller:

> 'When he is caught up in the rhythm of his work, he listens to the stories in such a way that the art of telling them descends on him of its own accord. In this way, the web is woven in which the gift of storytelling is embedded.' (Benjamin, 2019)

Citing a meditative state of rural boredom as a lost key to good story-listening and as fruitful for (subsequent) good storytelling, Benjamin makes a crucial point that good stories leave space for interpretation; anyone who has enjoyed literary fiction will understand the incomparable richness of stories fleshed out in one's mind. This need for an interpretation is especially felt in contemporary approaches to museum space storytelling, where deeper understanding can be achieved through a more plural and open-ended approach than has been traditionally employed.

Hannah Arendt illuminates the paradox of the human condition in our existence as plural beings both as 'other' and as 'distinct' as everything and everyone else. Arendt says this plurality 'has the twofold character of equality and distinction' (p.175, 1958). Storytelling functions dually: to both demarcate one from another, and can also bind individuals and groups together. In whichever form it takes, the act of storytelling is a profitable one that produces relations between persons. Arendt sees storytelling as a sense-making act, a way of negotiating the world around us, and crucially, between us:

> 'These [worldly] interests constitute, in the word's most literal significance, something which inter-est, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together. Most action and speech is concerned with this in-between...' (p.182, 1958)

Jackson extrapolates Arendt's theories at length in his ethnographic investigation of the politics of storytelling among Iraqi and Somali refugees in New Zealand in the late 1990s. Jackson posits storytelling as a vital and perennial human social act. We tell stories (and listen to stories) to make sense of the often complex and fraught world around us; we tell stories in order to exert a sense of control over the inexorable circumstances the world enacts upon us; and, perhaps most importantly, we tell stories in order to relate to one another within the world. Jackson stresses the dual value of storytelling for both our internal and external worlds; storytelling functions to both furnish us with agency in our singular inner lives, and produce a 'mutuality of being' (Sahlins, 2011) in our external social lives: 'while storytelling makes sociality possible, it is equally vital to the 'illusory, self-protective, self-justifying activity of individual minds' (Jackson, 2002, p.34).

Where Jackson's elucidations of Arendt's theses are most radiant, is in his demonstration of storytelling as an intersubjective act of meaning-making that can distinguish as well as collectively unite. Storytelling has the potential to exclude or include. Storytelling can 'confirm otherness as to be denied or call [the] status quo into question.' (2002, p.43) Telling stories also 'reinforce[s] or degrade[s] boundaries that normally divide seemingly finite social worlds from the infinite variety of possible human experience…' (2002, p.43).

To carry the intersubjective function of stories further, if we understand storytelling as producing relations and relatedness between persons, we can look to theories of personhood. Where Jackson tells us that 'being is thus not only a belonging but a becoming' (2009, p.33), we can interpret personhood as processural in nature. Arrived at through ongoing ontogenetic processes punctuated by recurrent transitions and transformations, personhood relies, foremost, on other people to make it (Pina-Cabral, 2017; Strathern, 1988). Where Geertz tells us that 'human thought is consummately social: social in its origins, social in its functions, social in its forms, social in its applications…' (p.361, 1973) and Leenhardt's ethnographic enquiry of the Do Kamo of Melanesia says that 'persons exist explicitly in relationship to other persons… personhood is constituted in a web of relations' (p.156, 1979) we can arrive at the conclusion that the critical component in making persons, is other persons. In essence, people need other people to become people, and this 'becoming' takes place throughout our entire lives, as facilitated and produced by the world around us and our relationships with other people within it.

If stories function to produce this relatedness between persons, and this relatedness is the key to *making* persons, we can see the crucial implications of storytelling for all of our human lives: we can see how stories might be the atoms that constitute everything. Just as persons require other persons to become people, so stories require people to become stories:

> 'The writer cannot do it alone. The unread story is not a story; it is little black marks on wood pulp. The reader, reading it, makes it alive: a live thing, a story.' (Le Guin, 1989)

Following this, we can arrive at the conclusion that museum spaces, too, need people: to both tell their stories and receive them. Where Arendt suggests that storytelling happens to mediate between the public and private (1958), we can see museum spaces as elaborations of these processes, providing a collective public platform through which we might expect to find collective voices and groups articulating their stories to one another. Stories, it appears, have a powerful agency that can both facilitate cohesion, foster empathy and promote cooperation as well as serve to divide, disempower and oppress. Museum spaces, as spaces of representation and communication, have a similar power and agency in their capacity to harness and transmit such stories.

Museum Space Meanings

Museum spaces, like stories, also possess the dual agency to exclude or include; museum spaces can act as powerful forces to empower or oppress through the stories they tell, the way they tell them and who they represent within these narratives. There exists a wealth of literature, research and opinion concerning the history, role, significance, and implications of museum spaces. The

following offers a brief overview of the perspectives of some of the key thinkers, critical issues and most pertinent themes applicable to an analytical examination of the way museum spaces tell their stories, what stories they tell, and what these methods and resultant narratives might mean. What I hope to demonstrate, in this next section, is that we find many of the critics and supporters of museum spaces in consensus; the themes resurface again and again, the analysis posits the same theoretical conclusions as well as many of the same solutions. What feels particularly salient, in a consideration of the most recent literature - from the 1990s through to the present - is the fact that little progress seems to have been made. The criticisms of the 1990s are echoed in the perspectives of the late 2000s. As the final chapter of this thesis will demonstrate, museum spaces are still suffering from a crisis of relevance and ethics that threatens their future. Yet, as the literature simultaneously demonstrates, museum spaces are still deserving of attention due to their enormous potential to act as a force for social justice and human wellbeing.

Graburn characterises museum spaces as having undergone three significant transitory historic periods: from their initial emergence as tools and demonstrations of European power and status; through to an education of the masses; to a final stage as instruments for the empowerment of native peoples and local communities (1991, in: Gonzalez, Nader & Jay Ou, 2001). It is this final stage that many museum spaces still striving to encompass, and many would argue that museum spaces, on the whole, are still juggling all of the practices associated with these three stages.

The emergence of the traditional museum space occurred in the so-called 'Enlightenment' period of the 18th Century (Lord, 2006) that saw an explosion of secularism, self-determination and the pursuit of knowledge. Bennett's 'The Birth of the Museum' (1995) argues that 19th Century museums sought to reorganise the 'curiosity cabinets' that typified the earliest European museum spaces. In demonstrations of Victorian rationality and regulated knowledge systems, these early museum spaces exhaustively classified the natural world as well as so-called 'primitive' peoples into determinate taxonomies. Including a comparative analysis of world fairs and international exhibitions - purportedly also hegemonic demonstrations of state power - Bennet elucidates how early museums spaces embody and mirror a thoroughly violent desire to dominate, control and order.

Hooper-Greenhill echoes Bennett in her in-depth analysis of the shifting meaning(s) of museum spaces over time, making the important point that taxonomies possess a certain potency through their reinforcement of hierarchical ways of knowing. Taxonomies automatically signal authority and rarely reveal their rudimentary, intuitive beginnings. Taxonomies in the museum space, Hooper-Greenhill importantly reminds us, are socially constructed via an 'ethos of obviousness' (p.5, 1992). Pointing out that dismantling socially constructed classification systems - too often revered as predetermined and irrefutable - enables new ways of thinking to emerge. She sheds light on her point with a quote:

> 'This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought—our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography—breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continued long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other. This passage quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g)

> stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camel-hair brush, (1) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies'. In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing that we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of this fable, is demonstrated as the charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking that.' (Foucault, 2005, p.xvi)

These words are found again and again in critical discussions of museum space meanings. Hetherington points out that this thinking was the basis for Foucault's definitions of heterotopia, which germinated in his considerations of language. (2011) Foucault's application of Borges' Chinese encyclopaedia to the problem of classification - although already so often quoted - is too flawlessly precise in its illumination of the arbitrary nature of taxonomic systems as socially constructed and necessarily fluid and mutable across time, space and context.

Jordanova covers similar ground in her contribution to Vergo's oft referenced 'The New Museology' (Vergo, 1997), which elucidated many of the museum meanings that have shaped the sector's attempts at a critical reflexive turn in the decades since. Jordanova points out that the links between museum spaces and ways of knowing and knowledge systems are inextricable but problematically narrow with respect to visitor subjectivity: museum spaces have historically presented too narrow a view of the world that harmfully excludes.

Where Bennett also makes the point that early iterations of museum spaces produced formalised, rule-bound authoritarian ways of being in these spaces (1995), Hill corroborates these perspectives in her historic analysis of the emergence and significance of municipal museums in Victorian England. Situating museums spaces within the industrial syntax (2005, p.10) of English society to legitimise the activities of the government and perform a disciplining role in English society, Hill suggests local museum spaces functioned in an attempt to control the middle and lower classes. Municipal museums, as public museums, formed the basis of the museum as public space and public service that endures today:

> 'It was an institution, in which a variety of discourses about the world, such as the scientific and the aesthetic, were articulated; and a variety of power structures, including the governmental, the social, and the professional, were articulated. It was also, though, an institution in which such discourses and power structures could be developed, challenged and even ignored. Thus it could simultaneously be viewed as an 'improver' of the working classes; or as adding to the reputation and civic pride of the town. It may be seen as a public story which towns, and primarily the middle classes, told about themselves, although not all museums told the same story, and not necessarily about the same middle class.' (2005, p.15)

To turn to examinations of the interactions between the discipline of anthropology and the museum space, Ames, in 1992, calls for both spheres to turn their critical lenses inward in an exercise of reflexive evaluation, saying that both the museums sector and academic anthropology 'need to be reformed if they are to play a role in contemporary democratic society' (p.xiii). In a somewhat confusing manner, Ames highlights the two as tainted by the same problematic colonial history that afforded traditional museum spaces its 'far-flung' objects and anthropology its subjects of study - whilst also stressing that both museum spaces and anthropology 'must reconstitute their relationships to the 'Other' as a legitimate object for study and discussion'. Despite the call for reflexive examination, Ames, along similarly unambitious and outmoded lines

of thinking, suggests museums must remain neutral spaces that focus on 'objects rather than issues.' (1992, p.2)

Jones' review of the critical issues facing anthropology in the museum space resonates with Ames' work, building a picture of the condition of museum anthropology in the early 1990s:

> 'The time has come for academics to rethink museum anthropology in recognition of the breaking of the dusty, dated molds of past representations. The new critical attention to museum practice should be an issue of instruction, debate, and scholarship in departments of anthropology as it has become in departments of history, area studies, art, literature, education, and law. There is an openness to criticism, to new perspectives, and to risk that promises a challenging and exciting (not to say explosive) future for anthropology in museums.' (Jones, 1993, p216)

Jones' optimistic tone is echoed in Nader, Gonzalez and Ou's chapter that features in Bouquet's *Academic Anthropology and the Museum: Back to The Future* where they stress the value of a 'revitalised, ethnographically-informed interest in museums and museum exhibits' (p.106, 2001) from the anthropological community. Citing museum spaces and anthropology as potentially mutually valuable, the authors stress the efficacy of anthropologists in the museum space for the benefit of the museum space as providing crucial methods for interrogating, equalising and opening up the museum space. They also point out the museum spaces can provide fertile and stimulating ground for the anthropologist.

Bouquet's later contribution to the literature concerning the relations between anthropology and the museum space covers a multitude of issues, ideas and problems involved museum anthropology through an insightful array of international case studies. *Museums: A Visual Anthropology* (2012) offers a more contemporary lens on modern museum space practices in the context of shifting global dynamics. Bouquet champions the museum space as both valuable educational asset and powerful tool for 'reinvigorating social relations' (2012, p.188).

MacDonad's comprehensive *Companion to Museum Studies* provides a wealth of insight into the spectrum of 'museum meanings', containing a broad and diverse range of critical essays from museum professionals and academic thinkers. *Companion to Museum Studies* elucidates the variety of shifting implications of museum spaces across a diverse scope of types of museum spaces to ultimately propose museum spaces as important, useful and productive spaces that are worthy of critique, examination and preservation. MacDonald stresses the cruciality of multidisciplinary approaches that incorporate a plurality of voices as the key to conscientious, competent and impactful museum work:

> '...understanding the museum requires moving beyond intra-disciplinary concerns to greater dialogue with others, and to adopting and adapting questions, techniques, and approaches derived from other areas of disciplinary expertise. All of this has contributed to museum studies becoming one of the most genuinely multi- and increasingly inter-disciplinary areas of the academy today.' (p.6, 2006)

Fyfe's historical sociological overview of the history and shifting meanings of museum spaces demonstrates the fluidity of museum spaces as heterotopic mirror-like spaces that reveal things about the social processes taking place in and outside of them. Echoing many of his peers, Fyfe

further illuminates the ways in which museum spaces have agency; to reproduce damaging dominant ideologies or to legitimise and strengthen oppressed or underrepresented groups by challenging or subverting this power. Fyfe contributes the point that as social relations shift over time, so too do these dynamics that shape museum spaces:

> 'The claims of new visitors, of non-visitors, and of indigenous peoples are indications that the museum as a relationship of cultural classification is a process and that museum meanings are continuously constituted out of the flux that is the shifting interdependencies between groups.' (Fyfe, 2006, p.45-46)

Crane similarly sees the museum space as a 'malleable and ever-changing institution' (2006, p.98) and feels this is crucial to maintain in any thesis of the meaning of the museum space. Once again valuing the inherent power of museum spaces, Crane draws the familiar conclusion - in a temporal context - of museum space meanings as simultaneously static in their enclosures of fixed time; and as agents of representing change and transformation. Crane makes the important point that museum space meanings are not innate and irrefutable, and certainly only endure with the effort of those who reproduce them:

> 'Meanings, embedded in narrative, rely on repetition, context, and memory for their posterity. Time endures, but meanings only endure with continual effort.' (2006, p.107)

Bal elucidates the ways in which museum meanings are made in the spaces between objects, curation and people as visitors, demonstrating the ways in which museum spaces inevitably and intentionally interrupt the gaze and 'pure' aesthetic encounter of the visitor. Bal says museum spaces must bear in mind the plurality of their visitors in order to avoid 'generalizing assumptions [which] encourage the development of strategies that facilitate a diverse interaction between viewers and the objects on display.' (2006, p.524).

Practice in the museum space - as in, work that actually takes place to make meanings happen - is determined as processural by Silverman (2014). Citing that best museum space practice is collaborative - engaged in empathetic and attentive dialogue with its communities - and ready to encounter the failures of this necessarily nuanced and discursive methodology, *Museum as Process* endorses failure as productive and fertile encounter from which unexpected and often valuable meanings emerge. The authors of this volume reveal the invaluable ways museum spaces can function to 'translate' (Silverman, 2014, p.4) distinct and seemingly incompatible systems and bodies of knowledge through social processes.

Watson's account of her time at Great Yarmouth Heritage Partnership sheds light on the challenges of translating museum practice as theory into museum practice in action. Illuminating the difficulties of collaborative, inclusive museum work within a local museum space setting, Watson reveals why, perhaps, so many museum spaces so often fail as spaces of equitable representation. Watson's chapter describes the myriad obstacles to creating a museum space in servitude of all members of its community, and exposes the rifts and prejudices within these communities that affect the capacities of museum spaces to satisfy and support all. Conflicts of class, aesthetics, ways of seeing and being, and just who museums spaces are for run throughout the text - raising the important point that museum spaces are faced with multiple challenges in their attempts to represent all.

Golding's *Learning at the Museum Frontiers* similarly includes details of her own museum work and draws on this in shaping the analysis that characterises her text. Golding's book is thoroughly rooted in impressively uncompromising museum practice that seeks to consistently challenge, critique and ultimately decolonise the museum space. Golding is a formidable and important voice in the museum meaning literature, and *Learning at The Museum Frontiers* critiques and celebrates the museum space in equal measure; pointing out the harmful legacy of museum space practice and suggesting a plethora of strategies and techniques - grounded in practice - for conscientious, representative and empowering museum space storytelling and learning. Golding's propositions for museum space storytelling place people - many of whom are not formally embedded in the institution of the museum space - at the centre. Golding details several of the important ways her work has demonstrated a commitment to filling the museum space with a plurality of voices belonging to bodies with a plurality of lived experiences. Golding's 'frontier' functions as a metaphor for something enclosed as well as something to be discovered, and learned from: '...a zone where learning is created, new identities are forged; new connections are made between disparate groups and their own histories…' (p.4, 2009)

The Between Space

> 'From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.' (Foucault, 1984, p.4)

Purportedly a universal category, existing across cultures, Foucault's conceived category of the 'heterotopia' is defined as a place that exists within real space and simultaneously encloses a suspended, alternate form of that space within. While Foucault's application of the term is broad and varied - suggesting spaces as seemingly disparate as cemeteries, brothels and prisons all functioning as heterotopias - with some thinking, we can see the application of the term synthesises a set of principles that renders these spaces analogous. Heterotopic space functions both within and outside the space and time external to it to act as 'counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.' (Foucault, 1984, p.3)

Foucault himself defines the museum as a heterotopia, and we can confidently apply the term to museum spaces in line with Foucault's definitions of heterotopias as associated with breaks in time; museum spaces often seek to embody or represent a static time-space. Foucault also determines a heterotopia as enclosed, 'presuppos[ing] a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable.' (1984, p. 7); museum spaces are bounded areas of space with clearly determined entrance and exit points. Lastly, Foucault describes heterotopias as both utterly different from, but functioning in relation to, the space that remains outside of them.

Hetherington presents a succinct exposition of Foucault's heterotopia that includes a trajectory of Foucault's own 'working out'. Hetherington says the term originates in Foucault's critical inquiries of language, where he first describes a heterotopia as representational of the 'outside as a fold within'. (Foucault, 1989, p.xviii) Hetherington explains this as having to do with the meanings found between things:

> '[in the heterotopia ways of saying] are spaces of the non-relation in which we encounter the visibility of the outside of thought doubling back. In such a space subjects confront themselves as subjectivity outside of themselves. Heterotopia, therefore, make visible the workings of this outside of thought.' (2011, p.464)

Applying the term category of heterotopia to a museum space context, Hetherington suggests that museum space as heterotopia - as a realised idea of utopia in society - can function as a 'microcosm of how society sees itself, or would like to see itself in its totality.' Hetherington goes on to explore the processes of the production of subjectivity within the museum space, suggesting authority in these spaces is fluid and uncertain by way of these spaces being subject to dialogic negotiation and renegotiation as the elements that make up a museum space necessarily shift and flux over time.

Lord's exploration of museum as heterotopia covers the historic origins of traditional museum spaces as culturally hegemonic institutions that existed to classify, control and demarcate the desirable from the undesirable. Importantly, Lord explains that the museum as heterotopia is valid in contemporary considerations of museum spaces because 'it has the potential to shift the definition of the museum away from objects and collections and towards difference.' (2006, p.3) This definition is what gives museums their inherent potential to do good work in representing a challenge to the status quo, or simply in telling the lesser told stories. Where museums function as heterotopias, both within and without, we can see museums as possessing the potential to both represent and contest. Lord suggests the museum as heterotopic space is a more appropriate definition to determine the essence of museum spaces, which she sees as less pragmatic (concerned with the day-to-day operations of museums) and more philosophical, concerned with the deeper meanings inherent in museum spaces.

Heterotopia, embodying a juxtaposed, contradictory set of characteristics, represents a liminal space. A fluid space of contested meanings and representations, museum space as heterotopia can be viewed as epitomising the liminal: a between space of plurality and contradiction that is, crucially, a fertile and creative space to make, remake and negotiate and renegotiate meaning.

Where Lord determines the museum space as productive for challenging the status quo, we can see the museum space as a place of transformation. Turner, following Van Gennep's theses of rites of passage as a human social universal (1960), provides a detailed analysis of the significance of the liminal in-between stage found in all ritualised rites of passage (1967). Turner's text points to the contradictory, conflicting symbolism present in many cultures' rites of passage rituals: huts and tunnels, wombs and tombs, the waxing and waning of lunar cycles, images of snakes shedding their skins and bears dying a kind of death in hibernation, Turner illuminates the structure of rites of passage through these metaphors of death, decay, birth and rebirth (1967). Turnbull's ethnographic account of the Mbuti of the Congo elaborates on the implications of the liminal phase

further, taking the concept to deeper conclusions in determining the liminal beyond threshold, as bounded, productive experiential transformation. Echoing Turner's contrasting metaphors, Turner speaks of the 'thisness' and 'thatness' (1990) of liminality which is, he says, 'itself the process of transformation at work, the technique of consciously achieving transformation'. (1990) Turnbull illuminates the locus of the liminal space as a site for meaning-making:

> 'Liminality is a subjective experience of the external world in which 'thisness' becomes 'thatness'. It is integrative of all experience; in the liminal state disorder is ordered, doubts and problems removed, the right course of action made clear with a rightness that is both moral and structural since the inevitable discrepancies between the belief and practice in the external world are among the many problems ordered and removed in the liminal state' (Turnbull, 1990)

Jan Beringer, a Digital Experience Strategist for digital narrative experience developers NGX Interactive has expounded on the implications of narrative museum space as liminal space further, to highlight that museum space as liminal space serves to function as a passage through which visitors are transformed by the learning that takes place in museum spaces. Visitors embark on a journey of knowledge-acquisition, from 'not knowing' to 'knowing', and it is in the museum space itself where this knowledge manifests (2017). Beringer's elucidations suggest the museum space as simultaneously embodying liminal space and liminal experience; a bounded site suspended, as Foucault's heterotopia, and a site where things happen: meanings are made, people are transformed.

The liminal space also often represents a borderland space, a space of otherness suspended between supposedly legitimate spaces. Where Berdahl says 'borders feel like places of intense and inflexible lucidity' (1999), we can see the parallels between borderland spaces and liminal spaces as fertile interstructural sites for meaning-making. In this way, we can further see the value of the museum space to both represent and advocate for marginalised identities. Museum spaces are currently undergoing a re-evaluation in terms of their place in the world. Museum spaces' positions as either complicit in the exploitation of disempowered groups or as severely underrepresenting marginalised identities are currently under heavy internal and public scrutiny, with many in the latter group feeling museums are no longer useful or relevant. (See: Chapter 6 *Conscientious Storytelling*) Museum spaces understood as liminal spaces points to their potential to enact transformation from both within and without, to change themselves and change lives. This thesis contextualises the museum spaces detailed in my research as liminal spaces: sites of creative, productive meaning-making through the cross-fertilisation of stories, ideas and identities. This symbolic treatment serves to deepen an understanding of the value and potential of museum spaces and museum space storytelling.

The Local Museum Space

In the UK, local museums represent the secondest largest majority of all museums, at almost a quarter of all kinds of museum spaces (Museums Association, 2018). Local museum spaces in the UK arguably embody the most traditional understandings of museum spaces. Viewed by some as antiquated, outmoded spaces that only reinforce uncomfortable notions of class and taste and house random assortments of objects; from crumbling natural history specimens to pilfered artefacts. Local museum spaces are also seen as valuable regional assets in service to their communities to preserve local history and memory, educate, and unite. Local museum spaces can also function simply as space: a focal location in a community, a meeting point for its members.

Canterbury Museums, comprising two sites - The Beaney and Roman Museum - less than a mile apart, can be understood as embodying a traditional local museum space. The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge is Canterbury Museums' primary site and the hub of the majority of Canterbury Museums' activities. Most of the experiences detailed and analysed here took place within its walls. Situated in an imposing and unusual red brick Tudor-revival style building, bearing an ornate facade and central stone staircase that leads up to the heavy wooden doors of its entrance, The Beaney resides in the centre of Canterbury High Street. The Beaney was built in 1889 by Dr. James Beaney to provide a public lending library and educational museum for the 'working men' (Canterbury Museums, n.d) of Canterbury. The Beaney continues to house a public library alongside its museum collections. The Beaney's inception, as philanthropic institution for the education of its local working class community in the late 19th century, can be interpreted as an attempt at reformation and control of the working classes by the upper classes as suggested in Hill's historical analysis of the emergence of municipal museums in England during the Victorian era (2005). A visit to The Beaney today might leave one with a different impression: the museum's 2009 refurbishment incorporates bright, modern spaces as well as a tourist information desk, and a cafe that appears consistently lively with activity. The Beaney also houses Canterbury Museums' staff and educational spaces. Canterbury Roman Museum is found less than a five minute stroll away, through increasingly narrow cobbled streets flanked by crooked timber-framed buildings. The museum is situated in a thoroughly local context: the museum houses the remains of a Roman courtyard house within which the site actually sits, and an abundance of locally excavated Roman artefacts. Canterbury's history as a once thriving Roman market town has made the city an important site of interest for archaeologists, and the museum also includes the stories of Canterbury's important archaeological history.

This section will explore my findings as a volunteer at Canterbury Museums, with a focus on The Beaney defined as 'local museum space'. The following experiences and analyses focus on how museum storytelling happens in this space of contested, multitudinous meanings. This section will examine how Canterbury Museums are telling their stories, the wider implications of these stories, and the way they are produced. This section explores the local museum space as part of and in servitude to the people of its local community to look at how local museum spaces are remaining relevant and useful through the stories they tell.

Between People and Objects

> 'The house becomes a physical encyclopedia of no-longer hers...
>
> She won't ever use (make-up, turmeric, hairbrush, thesaurus).
>
> She will never finish (Patricia Highsmith novel, peanut butter, lip balm).
>
> And I will never shop for green Virago Classics for her birthday.'
>
> (Porter, 2015)

These lines from Max Porter's novel *Grief is The Thing With Feathers*, where we read the bereaved protagonist achingly reflecting on the material objects and ephemera that will never again come into contact with his recently deceased wife, serve to demonstrate the intensity of potential force imbued in the objects of our material world. The weight of grief Porter refracts through human connections with everyday objects reveals a critical observational insight into the myriad, diverse (in shape and form) relations between people and the material things we make, buy, find, give, inherit, receive, steal, cherish, break, consume, and dispose of. All the things we carry from place to place in our daily lives, the stuff we move in and out of our homes over a lifetime. All the objects that make up our human worlds; our relationships with this material culture manifests one of the distinctions that defines our species (Coward, 2016). Things with function or without, things ephemeral or perennially treasured; objects form a tangible thread in the fabric of our social worlds. Appadurai, believing that persons and objects are not necessarily discrete categories, elucidates the fundamentally perpetually entangled relations between persons and objects (2006) Where Appadurai stresses the significance of the transaction of objects between persons as invested with social relations, we can carry this further to see how objects are imbued with an agency that can actually produce relations. As Busse confirms, 'objects are both part of how people exercise their social agency and composites of the social relations in which they have partaken' (2008, p.193).

In this way, the power of objects is revealed. Pearce highlights the dual power of objects' capacity to 'be simultaneously signs and symbols, to carry a true part of the past into the present, but also to bear perpetual symbolic reinterpretation which is the essence of their peculiar and ambiguous power.' (Pearce, 2017, p.27). Objects mean things, but these meanings are never static and never singular. Across time and geographic space, what objects symbolise and communicate is fluid and mutable. What thoughts, emotions and responses objects elicit in the minds of people that interact with them will always be multiple, varied and dynamically changeable. Museum space objects, therefore, are always open to human interpretation, no matter the interpretive work already performed by the institution they reside in.

Traditional museum spaces can be thought of as the institutional chief hoarders of these material things. These are institutions that house, catalogue, organise and display the paraphernalia of human lives, and Canterbury Museums is one such museum space. Max Porter's physical encyclopedia tells a story about a person to whom these things once belonged. Museum spaces often act as physical encyclopedias, too, and traditionally stood as premium examples of taxonomic classification systems that represented privileged knowledge systems that reinforced a troublesome kind of cultural hegemony (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992).

Increasingly, local museum spaces are abandoning a traditionally taxonomical approach to the organisation of the objects within their displays, opting instead to adopt a narrative-space approach to museum storytelling. Canterbury Museum's vast and diverse collection of objects - symbolising and communicating a cacophony of stories, a multitude of meanings - no doubt presents a challenge if it is to successfully utilise its collections 'to bring communities together, promote health and wellbeing, explore issues of place and identity, and equip people with the facts and understanding that are relevant to contemporary issues' (Museums Association 2019, p.6) as recommended by the Museum Association as part of a collaborative research project 'Collections 2030' - whilst retaining the section of its audience who value museums spaces as formal and traditional gatekeepers of privileged knowledge systems. Canterbury Museums symbolises and signifies a multitude of sometimes divergent meanings in its broad and varied collections, its multifunctional spaces and the diversity of its community. I wish to argue that this plurality of meaning serves to strengthen the museum's capacity to tell good stories for social change.

The objects in museum spaces can also make them 'dead' (Adorno, 1981), alienating and problematically stagnant. This is most sharply seen where part of a museum space's collection is 'ethnographic', featuring objects from communities that are not in communication with the museum space. Finding these objects in museum space contexts presents a tension. While I feel Canterbury Museums still has some work to do to in updating and revitalising some of its collections, displays and storytelling, I seek to argue that there exist significant examples of the objects in Canterbury Museums being 'alive' (Busse, 2008). These objects are productive, instilled with an inherent agency that is animated and co-opted by the people who engage with them, and tell new stories with and about them. These objects are 'alive' in their relations with the people who use them to make meanings.

Hidden Objects: Dormant Stories

My first volunteering experiences with The Beaney took me away from the museum itself to the collections store, where weekly volunteering sessions took the form of assisting the collections team with their store move: moving all the objects not currently on display from the original building (that had been sold to a private buyer by Canterbury Council) - an old Oast house overshadowed by the dramatic but abandoned ruins of a Norman castle - to the new warehouse-style storage facility on an industrial estate. 'The Oast' was charming but significantly less fit-for-purpose.

October 2018

I am lost on the industrial estate. I keep looking down at my phone, which shows me that the red marker on the map on the screen is within the pale blue circle that is supposedly determining my location, so I know the store is nearby. According to the map, in fact, it is right in front of me. Clemmie, my newest and, as of yet, most accommodating contact at the museum, had mentioned in her email that the new storage facility won't be easy to find, there's no signage, but that she will be waiting for us (myself and two other volunteers) outside. I move fifty yards in another direction and keep track of the map, past Homebase for a third time, and loop back around. I notice some signage that says 'Canterbury Archaeological Trust' on the side of a boxy, modern red brick

building and remember that Clemmie had mentioned that CAT are the new store's neighbours. As I move closer, I notice an open fire door on the left of the building and see Clemmie moving boxes around in the bright artificial light.

This is my first volunteering session with Canterbury Museums. After months of sporadic correspondence (and no concrete answers to my repeated requests to volunteer) with Clemmie's manager, Chris Bawden, I was passed on to Clemmie. Clemmie is Collections Assistant for Canterbury Museums (which encompasses both the Roman Museum and The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge) and has been in her role for the last year after having volunteered with the museum since 2015. She has, so far, been extremely helpful, as well as seemingly genuinely friendly. During our first meeting, which took the form of an informal chat in The Beaney's cafe, we agreed that I would attend three-hour weekly volunteering sessions with the Collections department on a casual and indefinite basis, usually in the company of a couple of other volunteers, to assist with the move, and Clemmie would do her best to facilitate my research; she has said she will put me in touch with other members of staff and volunteers and collate and pass on whatever visitor and audience information data I might require. During the end of this first conversation, Clemmie had also said that if I was looking for any additional advice on 'getting into' the museums sector she'd be willing to pass this on in her own time.

I find Clemmie halfway up a ladder and surrounded by high racking shelf units and hundreds of brown shoebox-sized boxes, some piled up in even bigger boxes on pallets on the floor. She explains that it will just be her and I this morning, she had forgotten that the other two volunteers were away this week. Volunteering duties, I will come to learn over the next few months, are viewed casually and graciously, we are always thanked; sometimes apologised to for the monotony or physical strain of the session's efforts and there is never any obligation to attend. Clemmie is strong, determined and energetic. Some of the boxes are a struggle for me to lift above my head for very long, but Clemmie, still up the ladder, easily and swiftly heaves these onto the highest shelves as I hand them to her. She is enthusiastic and efficient, quickly making decisions about what goes where. I sense that the organisation of the new store has not been planned prior to the move. More pallets are delivered every half hour or so, and so we attempt to decant the smaller boxes and have them organised and on shelves in this time so the people delivering can take the large boxes away on their next trip. Somewhere around mid-morning the delivery crew arrive with Chris, the Collections Manager who had seemed so reluctant to take me on as a volunteer. Clemmie introduces us and I realise Chris is unaware that I am the anthropology student who has been pestering him since July. Once Chris arrives, the pace of work slows. There is lengthy deliberation about what should go where combined, conversely, with this deliberation often ending in a: ‘just shove it there for now, let's not overdo it' from Chris. As Clemmie and I follow Chris' instructions and all three of us shift heavier items that require the strength of more than one body, Chris is repeatedly apologetic about the nature of the work. I cheerfully reply that I am happy to help. He asks me what I do, and when I tell him that I am currently undertaking a masters by research in social anthropology, he immediately looks up at me:

'Ahhh, that's you, you're the one who wants to observe us all.'

(I conceal my frustration in laughter and implore that my interest is nothing sinister, willing myself to avoid the use of the word 'research'.)

'Well, I've been working in museums for twenty years. You'll observe that I'm very cynical.'

In the months that follow, Chris warms up but remains dry and humorous. Clemmie's green enthusiasm and energy is a sharp contrast to Chris' jaded apathy, and I notice that she becomes less buoyant in his company. Having since reflected on the marked difference in Chris and Clemmie's approach to their museum work, I have wondered if the worst aspects of the museum sector have ground Chris down over the years. The museum sector is notoriously poorly paid, consistently underfunded, littered with bureaucratic obstacles and pulled at from all angles of the diverse needs of its public(s). Local museums are typically heavily reliant on government funding (Museums Association, 2019). External funding - from charities and organisations such as HLF - facilitates much of the work that museums spaces are able to do. This external funding takes vast amounts of time and labour to apply for and is always subject to intense competition, with multiple arts and cultural organisations vying for it. In the case of Canterbury Museums, we can observe the presence of external pressures on staff resources where we see the local council selling off the Museums' storage facility. The newer location may seem, to my untrained and inexperienced eyes, a more appropriate facility, but I could readily see that the store move was a serious drain on the time and resources of the museum. Chris and Clemmie regularly grumbled about it. The physical move took months and demanded huge amounts of time, money and labour that would probably have been expended elsewhere.

Chris leaves for lunch around midday with the movers and Clemmie gives me a tour of the store. A large proportion of the museum's collection is archaeological, the result of excavations conducted prior to local building projects. I recognise many of the locations on the boxes. Clemmie and I wander through the rooms and she tells me what will go where. Ceramics; small finds (glass, organic, metal); ethnography; natural history; social history; a tucked-away set of shelves for the 'respectful' storing of human remains. We talk conversationally about Clemmie's career, the museum and her life in general. She studied archaeology and Roman history; she cites the esoteric tendencies of academia as the reason she has thus far resisted a PhD; she wrote a chapter for a book about an archaeological excavation in Aleppo; she resents the 'infantilising' treatment of Iron Age people in the current Roman Museum displays; she thinks that the museum has some way to go in addressing colonialism and the acquisition of some of its objects; she has recently started weight training and that's why she's probably better at lifting boxes than me. When we leave she thanks me for the opportunity to talk about her work, she says it is nice to be able to 'think about why she does what she does'.

Volunteering with the Collections department of Canterbury Museums was at times tedious; I sometimes worried it was too removed from the research I felt I needed to be doing to uncover anything useful; some sessions were incredibly slow-paced and myself and my fellow volunteers seemed surplus to requirements. I sometimes wondered if we were more of a strain on the time of the museum staff who supervised us. But, as the store filled over the weeks and months that followed, I found myself valuing the behind-the-scenes insight. Experiencing the collections store was like looking under the water at the rest of the iceberg, and it fleshed out my understanding of how the museum told its stories.

Simply being in the Canterbury Museums collections store was an experience in itself and one that was often unusually contemplative, yet eerie. The store is a large warehouse-style space housed in

a modern building at the edge of a large industrial estate. The floor is dusty, bare concrete. The rooms are several meters high allowing for looming aluminium shelving units. I was once a few minutes late for a volunteering session and wandered around, assuming that everyone else was certain to be found somewhere in the building, getting on with the morning's tasks. I unknowingly set off alarms as I moved from dark room to dark room. Used blue latex handling gloves and discarded coffee cups littered shelves and floors, as they did every week. I resisted the urge to tidy up, as I did every week.

A large proportion of the objects in Canterbury Museums' collections are stored in uniform parcel brown archive boxes, so I never get to see these objects. The boxes get piled up on the aluminium shelving, their labels bearing familiar geographical locations the only clue to their contents; all are the artefacts have been unearthed in local archaeological excavations. A vast collection of broken and faded pottery fills a corner of the store. I sometimes reflected on my ignorance of these objects in contrast with Clemmie's specialised knowledge of Roman archaeology. Her knowledge means she can readily read these items upon seeing them to know their previous contexts, their life histories. To her, the pottery tells its stories of place, time, people. A vast part of the store is taken up with Canterbury Museums' natural history collection, most of it taxidermied mammals awkwardly posed in glass cases with dark wooden frames. An assortment of animal bones, some terrifyingly huge, line the shelves in the natural history section. These bones more readily told me a story: of life and death. The bones carry a memory of when they moved in things that lived - animated, warm, surviving - then died, after which flesh and hair decayed, leaving only these chalky white shapes remaining. Old weapons of war form another part of the collection - these are imbued with a sense of menacing agency: the guns feel like they might go off, the spears and swords might spring into action. The social history store - housed in the cosier upper part of the building - was most fascinating in its mundanity. Here, old dusty bits of furniture are crammed in among dolls; kitchen appliances; ancient computers; a selection of hoovers that look well-used but still operational are wedged behind a huge Victorian pram. A crumpled box of Bagpuss-themed Christmas crackers that still bore their 99p price sticker always caught my eye, looking so woefully forgotten. Some objects in the store eluded my attempts to determine their function. In my ignorance I once asked Molly how anyone could 'manage to do any fighting in these things!' as I heaved hefty iron half-cylinders from floor to shelf, assuming they were some sort of ancient leg armour. Clemmie revealed that these objects were, in fact, mounted machine gun covers. The three of us laughed heartily.

The collections store was a bizarre and melancholic space. Many of the objects housed within its bare breeze-block walls were broken, tarnished, dusty, and lived in permanent shadow. Canterbury Museums' collections store is brimming with the flotsam and jetsam of human existence that carries a strange weight of lived lives; so much time gone past. One of the staff at the museum had once gleefully told me, in a soft and kind display of camaraderie that assumed a shared sentiment: 'We work in museums because we just love to be surrounded by all this stuff!'. To a degree, I share her dedication to objects as meaningful things with an enduring agency to provoke curiosity, but I would argue that these meanings are only fully realised when objects are brought to life in their interactions with people. The allure of the cold, dark, mausoleum-like stasis of the collections store escaped me.

The collections store, in fact, turned out to be less static and redundant than I had first thought. 'Brexit at The Beaney' was an internally curated temporary exhibition that ran from April to June 2019. The exhibition encompassed a dedicated case of objects specifically selected from the collections store, and continued throughout the museum in the form of additional label text added to other objects and artworks to create a narrative thread.

The Responsive Museum Space: Objects Tell Stories

February 2019

It is a Thursday morning, unsettlingly warm for February. Molly, Clemmie, a volunteer I've not met before - a history student called Gus - and I are walking from the Oast to the new store. We three volunteers are carrying plastic boxes filled with polystyrene packing peanuts. The boxes are light but awkward, they put distance between us and make conversation difficult as we try to navigate the busy pavements. Every so often the wind catches someone's peanuts and scatters a handful in the gutter. It is slightly farcical. Clemmie says not to worry about the spilled packaging and so we leave a sparse trail along our journey.

We have been back and forth between the new and old stores several times already this morning, clearing out the last of the collections before the sale of the Oast is finalised. The old Oast is chaotic and dusty. As we move around shifting boxes, wheeling out vats of silica gel and bubble-wrapping withered-looking snakes preserved in alcohol, I am repeatedly drawn to the human toddler-sized model figures of Rupert Bear and his family, once on display in their own small museum space in Canterbury, now scattered on the floor in front of the almost empty shelves.

Molly is reminiscing about last week's session. She, Clemmie and Chris had been collating a selection of items for a new upcoming exhibition at The Beaney. Of late, our volunteering sessions have revolved around digging objects out of the collection for use in specific exhibitions. We are given lists with brief descriptions and item locations and left to compile them for a couple of hours. It is much more satisfying a task than the futile slow moving of endless blocks of heavy granite or ferrying splintered, cobwebby planks of wood from container to shelf. One list asked for various objects and ephemera that related to Canterbury's experience of the Blitz, another a set of very specific maps of parts of Ashford and its surrounding countryside. It is pleasurable to sift through old ephemera and odd little objects, to wonder about their histories and attachments to people and places. Molly is always frightened when we come across old bombs and guns, she says she thinks it's silly for her to be but she can't help it.

Last week, Molly had been asked to locate objects that will feature in the museum's 'Brexit at The Beaney' case. Molly and Clemmie are grinning as they remind each other of the objects they'd been pulling out. I am straining to hear them over the traffic, quickening my pace to join in.

Molly "What else was there? *The Race Game*! That book, *You and the Refugee... Kan-u-Go...*"

Megan "What was this for?"

Clemmie "*The Race Game* is a game about horse racing, let's be clear… (She turns to me) Oh, we wanted to do something in response to Brexit so we're putting a case together for the atrium."

Megan “Ahh, wow, that'll be interesting”

Clemmie “It's an experiment, I don't know if it will get much of a response...”

Megan “No, it’s great, it's current. And it sounds quite... tongue-in-cheek?”

Clemmie “Yes, we've been playful with it, it's not very serious, we'll see...”

I am impressed and interested and suddenly flooded with questions: who commissioned this? Whose idea was it? Can I speak to them? How you did you decide on the tone and style? How long will it run for? But I have noticed that unless I am alone with Clemmie, she is much less talkative about her role and the museum. On this occasion her response to my enthusiasm about the Brexit exhibition seems deliberately down-played. And so, I simply ask if it was her idea. She says that the curation of Brexit at The Beaney was a collaborative effort.

Molly continues to reel off the names of the objects destined for the Brexit case. The source of her and Clemmie's amusement all seem to be old board and card games that I have not heard of. The significance of their titles alone, as abstracted words and phrases - *'The Race Game'; 'Contraband'; 'Sorry'; 'Kan-U-Go'; 'What's Wrong?'* - are immediately comprehensible in the context of a consideration of Brexit. I imagine these slogans laid out in a case in a regional UK museum and reflect on what sort of stories they might tell. Gently provocative, they allude to the contentious themes of nationhood, immigration and belonging.

On this morning in late February 2019, almost three years have passed since the referendum vote saw 51.9% of the British voting public declare their desire for Britain to end its membership to the European Union (BBC, 2018b). On this morning in late February 2019, the UK is supposedly due to finally depart the European Union, one way (or deal) or another, in a month's time. The sociopolitical climate seems, from what I have observed, to have shifted a little in this time – where once the UK was violently divided along the lines of leave or remain, we are by this stage, a little more united by a weary consensus. Three years of seemingly circular negotiation and disagreement has taken place on faraway political stages, consistently fed to the public in repetitive, tiresome media coverage. This fatigue and slight sense of apathy is tangible as Clemmie, Molly and I joke about the objects in the Brexit case. Although at no point do any of us offer up our personal opinions, there is a perceptible sense that we are in unspoken agreement about where our feelings lie on the issue of the UK leaving the European Union.

> 'Since this whole Brexit thing is turning out to be a bit of a big deal, we've put together a thought provoking, historic and humorous display with the hope of promoting meaningful discussions about this oh-so divisive subject.' (https://twitter.com/the_beaney, 2019)

I visit the museum a few weeks later to see the Brexit at The Beaney display for myself. The atrium case is located within the bright white space at the back of the museum. This part of the building sees significantly less traffic than the front entrance. The case is located in the central part of a space which acts as a thoroughfare leading to the museum’s secondary temporary gallery space, and also functions as the finale to The Beaney’s museum space experience, holding a staircase that leads out of the building. The contents of the case aren’t immediately interpretable at a distance, and even closer inspection requires some critical thinking to piece together a narrative understanding of themes at play. The Brexit at The Beaney exhibition continues beyond the case,

with an additional layer of label text (visually encoded as part of the Brexit exhibition) having been added to pertinent objects throughout the rest of the museum, creating a narrative thread that integrates the temporary exhibition with the permanent displays, and shrewdly demonstrates the fluidity and malleability of museum space interpretation: objects and their meanings can change.

I linger around the atrium case hoping to catch some response and opinion, without success. All the other visitors to the museum today are speaking in other European languages. Hearing snatches of German, Spanish and French as I move through the museum space reflecting on the narratives of Britain's relationship with Europe feels profoundly ironic.

> 'Our Brexit display utilises a mixture of historical insight, humour and unusual juxtaposition of the objects to do this, offering a fresh perspective on the key issues such as democracy, identity, self-determination and movement of people whilst inviting responses from you, the gallery visitor. Regardless of your political allegiance or your views on Brexit we hope this display gives you the opportunity to consider new ways of looking and thinking about some of the themes around this very current and divisive topic.' (Brexit at The Beaney Label Text, 2019)

Nicholas Thomas, director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge and the author of *The Return of Curiosity: What Museums are Good for in the 21st Century* champions the museum space collection, saying 'in whatever form, via whatever technique or practice, the activation of the collection is the museum's beating heart.' (Thomas, 2016b). Brexit at The Beaney demonstrates Canterbury Museums' creative and astute approach to museum space storytelling. The exhibition utilises its vast store of objects, bringing these out of shadow and into the museum to tell a new story. Canterbury Museums are revealing the nature of context, the thrill of creative approaches; we can see the Museums, their store, and their staff as a sort of toolkit: expertise and objects come together to make something entirely new. As revealed by both the Brexit at The Beaney exhibition and my research experiences, Canterbury Museums are consistently engaged in a process of new storytelling, as objects are pulled in and out of the store to be utilised in different exhibitions, to enhance different stories.

An examination of Brexit at The Beaney in the context of Brexit-induced anxiety among the wider museum sector reveals the simultaneous cruciality and potential esotericism of the exhibition. Sharon Heal, director of the Museums Association, corroborates the value of exhibitions like Brexit at The Beaney, pointing out that:

> 'Museums can play a vital role in exploring identity and place, and are uniquely placed to provide context for some of these contentious discussions. When the public and civic realm is shrinking, museums can be welcoming places to heal divides and forge new and interesting partnerships.' (Sharp, 2019, p.9)

An earlier Museums Journal article exposes the gap between museum space professionals and their missing audiences, revealing that a public survey found 'visiting galleries and museums was the strongest indicator that someone was likely to have voted remain' (Kendall Adams, 2018, p.15). Canterbury Museums' declaration of a hope to stimulate discussion and provoke new ways of thinking about the divisive topic of Brexit is an honourable one, but if this dialogue only takes place in an echo chamber of like-minded opinions - the opportunity for maximum impact is woefully missed.

> 'So long as we engage in art, culture, history and science, museums can never be neutral' (Bryant-Greenwell, p.47, 2019b)

As Bryant-Greenwell has argued, museums have a vital role to play in contributing to social justice. Greenwell succinctly argues that a position of neutrality is a position that sides with injustice and oppression. The legacy of inertia that haunts museums exposes the opposite of neutrality. It is a political stance in itself that seeks to champion and reinforce the inequitable status quo. Brexit at the Beaney, while attempting a balanced approach to a divisive topic, addresses a definitively non-neutral and polarising political issue. I would argue that a deep analysis of Brexit at The Beaney discloses a political stance deftly concealed in its light-hearted interpretation. The names of the games mentioned earlier hint at a mocking of an anti-immigration stance. The label text for a Huguenot refugee bible functions similarly:

> 'The Huguenots and Walloons… arrived in Canterbury in the 16th century. Named the 'Strangers', they settled around the River Stour, and established weaving workshops. Their Bayes, Grograines and other fabrics brought great prosperity to the city.' (Canterbury Museums, 2019)

This text, attached to a bible that belonged to Huguenot refugees who fled France by 'open boat' after King Louis XIV's criminalisation of Protestantantism in the late 17th Century, speaks to the plight and dangerous flight of persecuted refugees, gently alluding to a pro-immigration stance. The fact that the text mentions that Huguenots and Walloons originally referred to as 'strangers' by indigenous Britons, in combination with a description of their positive contribution to the economic prosperity of the city, gently points out the often positive, mutually beneficial effects of migration and cultural exchange that represents a similar positive stance on cultural exchange and migration.

Worth noting, also, is the fact that the exhibition narratives were crafted using a top-down traditional curatorial method. Although the process involved a degree of collaboration between internal museum staff and hopes to stimulate participatory and discursive processes in its public engagement, the exhibition did not involve any outside co-production that engaged its local community - all of whom are, crucially, members of the voting public.

Ultimately, Brexit at The Beaney is a positive example of a museum space doing good work. It demonstrates a commitment to nuanced, creative and critically relevant storytelling. Its approach is contemporary and innovative, employing adept interpretation strategies that use objects to tell stories; utilising both objects from the museums' collections store, demonstrating a dynamic approach that keeps the collections store relevant and 'alive' - and its current permanent displays which tells new stories and adds further layers of potential engagement with Canterbury Museums' collections. Brexit at The Beaney also demonstrates Canterbury Museums' commitment to its local community. Brexit at The Beaney, as responsive exhibition displayed in real time, tells stories for the sake of representing issues that affect lives and creating a vital space for dialogue and exchange. Lastly, Brexit at The Beaney represents an uncompromising approach to engaged, non-neutral storytelling that communicates empathy and challenges the notion of local museum spaces as static institutions of monolithic power.

The Participatory Museum Space: Museum Storytelling for Living

> 'A life without speech and without action… is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men.' (Arendt, 1958, p.176)

In early 2019, Clemmie put me in touch with The Beaney's Programming Officer, Miranda Goddard, whom I met with to discuss The Beaney's extensive health and wellbeing offer. Proclaiming itself a 'pioneering therapeutic museum', The Beaney's health and wellbeing programmes are all free of charge. They include: weekly 'mindfulness' sessions designed to promote awareness of mindfulness techniques for mental health through 'slow' methods of looking at and responding to art and objects; a monthly session for dementia and social isolation sufferers and their companions called 'The Power of the Object' (this session is gallery-led and incorporates object handling); monthly sessions for visually impaired adults that utilise the museum's objects and stories; an NHS-referred art therapy group for mental health; and an extensive programme of varied live music performances that take place in The Beaney's galleries. The museum is also engaged in an ongoing project to expand its health and wellbeing offer, regularly commissioning artists, musicians and performers to collaborate with the museum to utilise the museum space and its collections to enhance the health and wellbeing of its community.

The emergent potential of museum spaces utilised in the promotion of the health of their local communities is articulated succinctly in the work of Camic and Chatterjee, who illuminate museum spaces' unique capacity to act as therapeutic spaces: '...they are nearly always non-stigmatising settings in that they are not institutions where diagnosis and treatment of medical and mental health problems occur, nor are they settings where one experiences embarrassment, shame or criticism for attending.' (2013). Chatterjee and Noble's work on the value of museums for health determines that museums can change lives, providing, among other things, 'calming experiences, leading to decreased anxiety; increased positive emotions, such as optimism, hope, and enjoyment', as well 'increased self-esteem and sense of identity' (p.115, 2013).

The Beaney is a member of the 'Happy Museum Project', an initiative with the aim of promoting museum spaces as having a vital role to play in health, wellbeing, sustainability and social cohesion of their local communities. The Happy Museum Project aims to provide museum spaces with resources and training to help them develop 'holistic approaches to wellbeing and sustainability. The project re-imagines the museum's purpose as steward of people, place and planet, supporting institutional and community resilience in the face of global financial and environmental challenges.' (Happy Museum Project, n.d)

The museum's Health and Wellbeing programmes are part of the crucial work that museum spaces are doing to cement their place in the future of public lives. It seems that museums must continue to reassess their aims and objectives and consistently re-evaluate what they are doing for their local audiences and beyond. Local museum spaces are uniquely valuable to communities and can represent crucial community assets. In the following chapters I will attempt to demonstrate how Canterbury Museums health and wellbeing programmes not only improve the lives of its participants, but also how the engagement of individuals who participate in these programmes creates a feedback loop. The participatory activities of people who engage with the museum, its collections and myriad narratives strengthens both the value and efficacy of Canterbury Museums as museum space.

Meeting Miranda was a crucial moment that allowed me to step further into the Canterbury Museums universe. Miranda helpfully sent out a round of emails introducing me to the facilitators of the various Health and Wellbeing Groups. Of those that responded, I made important

connections with Shirley Miller, a long-term volunteer and chief facilitator of the Power of The Object dementia and social isolation group; Julie Aster, professional art therapist and facilitator of a programme of art therapy sessions for NHS-referred patients suffering from mental ill health; and Fiona Cheriton, a member of Canterbury Museums staff who was involved with all of the Health and Wellbeing programmes. Connecting with these three individuals, I was able to observe as well as get involved with the work all three are doing to creatively utilise the multiple stories and narratives within their own local museum space in therapeutic ways. The work of these individuals and the wider social groups they connect with represent innovative, alternative strategies for harnessing the power of museum storytelling to improve lives. Interacting with these groups, I was able to observe how the museum, its collections, and the stories it was telling effected positive social change across a broad spectrum of impact. The benefits and positive social outcomes of the therapeutic work Canterbury Museums does reaches beyond the lives of the people it seeks to help through its health and wellbeing programmes: these effects feed back into the museum space itself through the engagement of its participants.

Objects, Memory, Meaning: Storytelling through Exchange In the Museum Space

July 2019

> 'It's always difficult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen. Memory is the past rewritten in the direction of feeling and anything processed by memory is fiction. Therefore our memories are fictions.' (Kotting, A. 2016)

I have been attending the Power of the Object sessions for the last few months. Over these sessions attendance has fluctuated among volunteers, attendees and their carers. The first group meeting was bustling with activity - museum staff were in the room conducting surveys and a large number of volunteers who I do not see again had come together to spend a final session with someone who was departing for good. It seems there are no particular prerequisite skills needed for voluntary participation in the Power of the Object; an interest and a willingness gains access. The sessions always take place in the stark bright space of the 'learning lab', the museum's educational space which is housed in the more recently refurbished part of the Beaney building. The room is flooded with daylight from huge windows that look out over central Canterbury's lesser-seen rooftops. I always take comfort in the views offered by this room; the crumbling, crooked chimney stacks feel like rarely-seen hidden places. The sessions always begin and break with unhurried sessions of tea-making and biscuit-eating. During my first session I refused any tea or biscuits and busied myself making everyone else's. I had eaten lunch, I rarely drink tea. As I handed out the last of the cups I realised, with embarrassment, that these tea breaks were important acts of commensality that were integral to the session. Made aware of my impatient pragmatism by how uncomfortable I felt at being the only one not partaking, led me to recognise the crucial social function of the tea breaks; my discomfort was created by my opting out and setting myself apart from the group. From then on, I relaxed and always made myself tea and ate a biscuit or any of the other sweets other participants had brought, immersing myself in the social experience, becoming like everyone else. These repeated acts of eating together functioned to bring us closer together. Fausto tells us 'commensality is a vector for producing kinship among humans' (2007, p.497) and these tea breaks served to cement our fictive kinships as members of the same group.

Sal is leading today's session. Shirley and another volunteer, Latoyah are also present. Deidre and Patrick, the warm and animated couple I have been the most drawn to since I first began attending, are here. We welcome a new attendee, Phillip, who appears articulate and reserved. Three other older women who are always in attendance are also present; Anne and Jean are similarly reserved. Jean can even sometimes seem surly, and Anne has on occasion seemed sardonically uninterested in the session's topic. Pam, on the other hand, is always smiley and affable, and seems to engage with the session topics and the other attendees and volunteers with ease. Sal introduces today's topic which is 'miniatures'. We talk about childhood and learning, about toys often representing miniature versions of adult objects, and thus functioning as teaching devices. I voice my love of both miniatures and things oversized; the satisfying neatness of objects made small, and joy of the disruptive, dissonant qualities inherent in sculptural representations of things made giant.

Some people have brought in objects related to the session topic, as is often the case. We pass around miniature objects and share stories about them. Deidre tells us about the unusually tiny seashells she collected from a beach in Greece and how fascinating she finds them. Sal has brought in a miniature magnifying glass through which we take turns observing the little objects gently passed between us, Shirley wonders aloud at the original provenance of a miniature portrait of a regal-looking man given to her by her brother, as she holds it aloft between thumb and forefinger. Anne says she 'doesn't really like small things' but has brought in some very miniscule flowers cut from her garden anyway. Anne's miniature flowers are unnaturally beautiful in their tiny perfection.

We venture out into The Beaney's galleries in search of more small things. We talk conversationally about the things we find, and follow each other from case to case, pointing things out: miniature portraits; a miniature Noah's Ark filled with miniature pairs of animals. Part of The Beaney's displays include a brightly-lit case filled with dolls' house furniture; we marvel at the detail. In the furthest gallery, set among tiny Egyptian figurines, Shirley points out the 9th Century dragon pendant that is one of the most well-known and loved objects in The Beaney's displays. The bright gold Anglo-Saxon dragon head is impossibly small, and we have to each shift around to let it come into focus behind the magnifying glass in the case. Sal had previously lamented the fact that the museum's displays did not hold a ship in a bottle, which she feels is a classic example of something made miniature. Patrick finds one in this last gallery and calls us all over to see it, pleased with himself.

Back in the brightness of the Learning Lab, after the second round of tea, Sal unloads her materials into the middle of the large table we are all sat round. The Power of the Object sessions always culminate in a making activity. This time, the task is to make something miniature of our own. Sal has some fimo - a crude brightly coloured modelling clay - among her materials. Some of the plastic-wrapped fimo has already been opened and mushed together. I tear off a chunk of mixed black and white that has already begun to marble. Sal tells me to go ahead and open a new colour if I like, I don't have to use those old bits. I tell her I like what's happened here, as I roll the rest of the colours together to variegate the strata further. I am reminded of a tiny pebble I have owned for years that, together with other objects collected from various shores over years - stones and shells and shards of seaglass - sits on a shelf in my bathroom. I see that my mind has made the connection between the marbled modelling clay to the way my pebble looks - a deep grayblack streaked with white, and then linked again to miniature things - my pebble is tiny, no bigger than

half the tip of my littlest finger, yet perfectly smooth and worn. I have often taken pleasure in how it looks like a shrunken version of itself, what should be palm-sized chunk of basalt made miniature. Patrick is making a little man who sits on a crudely constructed paper chair and holds a fishing rod. Deidre is making a tiny garishly-decorated cake. She is focused and determined. She appears wholly unselfconscious and committed to the task and easily jokes that it 'feels like being back at preschool!' We all laugh. I ask her why she has chosen to make a cake, she says it's 'all the rage with young people these days, they make all these fancy cakes.' I don't know what she means and wonder if her grandchildren, who she often mentions, are the 'fancy' bakers she knows. Phillip, our new member, has used one of Sal's premade sugar paper miniature frames. I notice that he has sketched an impressively anatomically-accurate beetle. Phillip talks about his career as a biologist that took him to the rainforests of South America. I make one tiny fimo pebble to match the one in my bathroom, then another slightly larger, and so on. I pile the fimo pebbles on top of each other, creating a miniature cairn. I feel out the activity, letting my memory carry my mind and my making hands. The pebble first takes me to a warm, breezy walk from Kingsdown beach to Deal Pier during which I first found the pebble. The cairn transports me to a drizzly hike in the Black Forest. The hike had been long and eerie, we saw no other people, hearing only distant chainsaws and an occasional woodpecker, and the constant dripping of the forest after rain. All along the path were piles of witchy-looking stones. As I remember that the cairns in Germany were made of craggy, dusty pale yellow rocks, I come back to the present moment to admire the sea-smoothed pile of beach stones I have made. They are colour and texture of orca.

Interpretation in Action: Making Stories in the Museum Space

A critical aspect of many museum spaces' public engagement activities is their educational offer. For local museum spaces typically embedded within local contexts whose activities center largely on engaging their surrounding communities, a programme of educational activities for local school children is an incumbent aspect of the work these museum spaces do. These educational offers normally include a range of educational, sometimes curriculum-specific, participatory workshop-style activities that engage schoolchildren with particular parts of the museum space's stories. The educational offer is multi-functional: it serves to showcase the museum space and tell its stories while building new relationships with potential audiences; the educational programmes are usually fee-paying, and thus, on a practical level, they generate revenue for these museum spaces. Participatory educational activities also facilitate the flow of a dialogic social exchange of ideas within the museum space.

Canterbury Museums offer a broad and diverse range of learning activities afforded by the museums' combined varied and eclectic collections. A more recent addition to the museum's learning offer is the Mindfulness programme, which feeds into and sits within the realms of museum's health and wellbeing programmes, functioning as both therapeutic and educational.

> 'Come and take part in a mindful journey through the museum. Learn how to relax and take time to take in your surroundings and look slowly at pieces from the museum's collection. Discover that you can experience the benefits of art without needing expertise. Unlock your inner passion and creativity by taking time to slow down, journey around The Beaney, and be inspired by the museum's collection.' (Canterbury Museums, n.d.)

June 2019

Today's Mindfulness Tour is being facilitated by Fiona, the museum's Health and Wellbeing coordinator and Oliver, a Canterbury Museums Visitor Services Officer and Health and Wellbeing ambassador. The attendees are a local Year 5 (9-10 year olds) primary school class, accompanied by adult chaperones. I meet the tour in 'The Study', the dimly-lit foyer space at the top of the museum's central ornate staircase. Fiona and Oliver take it in turns to recite what sounds like a well-rehearsed introduction to the history of the museum and the concept of 'mindfulness', frequently breaking to ask the children questions. The children are attentive and seemingly engaged, many of them raise their hands at the appropriate junctures and offer up their thoughtful answers.

The class is directed to the 'Explorers and Collectors' gallery and split into two groups. Fiona and Oliver lead the two groups to opposite ends of the gallery. The chaperones and I split ourselves up and follow. The children dutifully cluster cross-legged on the floor before the glass cases which are filled with an eclectic array of objects. Blown-up graphics of out-of-date maps form the backdrop to the cases, suggesting 'exotic' international voyages of old. At first glance, the cases are an aesthetically pleasant miscellany of textures, colours, sizes. They invite curiosity - a closer look, a deeper investigation of the functions, origins and provenance of the objects. They also invite contemplation, admiration and interrogation.

Fiona has adopts a placid, slow tone, like that of the narrator of a meditation recording, as she tells us that we are 'going to explore The Beaney together to discover some fascinating stories about the collections we hold'. Fiona explains the concept of mindfulness as a therapeutic technique and tells the children about 'slow art day'. She begins the exercise by directing the children to look at an object in the case, pointing to a brown oblong item that I can only speculate the function of. The object labels are covered by sheets of A4 paper blue-tacked to the glass.

Fiona slowly recites a list of questions about the object. She rings a gentle-sounding brass bell and invites us to close our eyes at certain intervals:

'Who do you think made this object?

Why do you think they made it?

What century do you think it was made in?

How long do you think it may have taken them to make?

How do you think it feels?

What do you think it would mean if this object had never been made?

What aspects interest you and why?

How big is the object?

What colours can you see?

How does it make you feel?

Does it remind you of anything… or anywhere?

Do we still use this object now?

Is this an object that you might collect?'

I am certain that the object is made from brown leather. It is worn - made soft and pliable-looking - and bears yellowing, frayed stitching. At first I think it could be a mitten, before I notice it looks like it has a handle. I wonder if the object could be a hairbrush, or a crude iteration of a handheld mirror. After our five minutes looking, thinking, and meditatively reflecting, the students are asked to share their thoughts and ideas amongst each other. I get out of my seat and crouch to hear a cluster of students nearest to me, and join in their conversation. They are polite and seemingly engaged, but not overly enthusiastic. They seem to answer my questions thoughtfully but dutifully. When we reconvene to share our thoughts as a group, a pupil raises her hand and suggests the object is a 'spanking paddle'. The chaperones exchange glances and I watch their shoulders shake with silent laughter, unseen by the children. Fiona doesn't seem phased by this bizarre response from a ten year old, and nods enthusiastically: 'Yes, it's a bit like that! It's a actually a face slapper, from a prison in Kashgar, in China…' she glances at her notes… 'for slapping the faces of naughty women!' Another child asks: 'Why women?!' in a curious and mildly indignant tone. The 'face slapper' has no doubt been selected for its aesthetically elusive qualities; its provenance and function aren't readily graspable. Yet, I can't help feeling the revelation of its unpleasant function - conjuring images of gendered violence and incarceration - disrupts the calming, meditative purpose of the exercise.

The Explorers and Collectors gallery is one of the most problematically traditional galleries in the museum. The displays showcase the museum's 'ethnographic' collection of objects, yet the graphics panels - featuring textual narratives and portraits - contextualise these objects in the stories of the powerful and wealthy European men who collected and donated them. The life histories of these objects is subsumed by the narratives of the individuals who collected them, and object-specific interpretive labelling is strikingly minimal. Unfortunately, Explorers and Collectors epitomises a traditionally authoritative, outmoded and hegemonic approach to museum space storytelling. All of the children are quiet and still in their movements and speech in the Explorers and Collectors gallery, and I wonder if this is because of the uptight reverence that traditional museum spaces incite. Like libraries and churches, some traditional museum spaces seem to silently demand hushed voices and self-conscious movement. These 'techniques of the body' function as a form of social authority, reinforcing the authority of the spaces they are performed in (Mauss, 1973). Intrinsically linked to formalised learning styles and the power over the production and retention of knowledge systems (Foucault, 1977), these bodily techniques function as culturally encoded symbols (Geertz, 1973) that respond to authoritative spaces. The meaning of these bodily techniques in museum spaces (and their storytelling techniques) is revealed in the children's visible ease as they move into the friendlier galleries. The other galleries are brighter, more interactive, and present opportunities for play that interacts with the narratives present in these spaces. The children's responses to the activities in the other galleries are distinctly more animated, and when Fiona asks which exercises they prefer, a significant majority raise their hands in favour of those that took place in the less traditional museum space galleries.

Fiona and Oliver lead the two groups, converged again as we move back through 'The Study', into 'Camouflage and Colour', a narrow corridor full of taxidermied animals, insects and rare looking geological gemstones, rocks and fossils; venturing further through 'The Drawing Room', a bright pale blue space containing delicate pencil sketches, many of Victorian impressions of the local area, to arrive in 'People and Places', the largest gallery of the museum. The majority of the children don't appear to notice their surroundings at all. A few are drawn, briefly, to the petrified animals and iridescent butterflies. Most seem glad to snatch the few seconds to break their scholarly compliance; voices are relaxed and raised, they smile and joke with one another, jostling

and loosening. As we move from one side of the museum to the other, the spaces seem to open up and brighten, the dingy formality of 'The Study' and 'Explorers and Collectors' morphs into brighter lights and more colourful displays.

'People and Places' is perhaps the most confused yet arguably most interesting gallery in the Beaney. Encompassing a jumbled collection of themes and points of interest: it is here visitors can see three huge slabs of pink marble rumoured to be found at the tomb of murdered Bishop Thomas Becket and imposing statues of the Barons of Magna Carter. A section of the room is devoted to art and objects concerning Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, the rest of the walls are adorned with a varied collection of art and objects: regal portraits of wealthy individuals; local landscapes and a handful of more distinctly modern pieces. A central display case is filled with old toys, including the original Bagpuss created by 'local treasure' Peter Firmin. A dress-up station for children - featuring text that invites them to become versions of the characters they see around them and view their transformed selves in an uneven mirrored surface - is attached to the end of this case.

All of us are directed to a large painting on the left side of the room. The children quietly plant themselves on the floor again while the chaperones and I fetch chairs for each other. The text panel next to the painting is covered as the object captions before. Fiona once again leads us all into meditation, asking the children to this time focus on their breathing. She adopts her calming tone and talks the children through the practice of mindful breathing.

The exercise follows the same routine as before, we are instructed to look at the painting for five minutes while Fiona offers up a series of things to questions to ponder in relation to the painting. The painting complements the exercise well; it is calming and serene. Large enough to almost step straight into, it features a view from the top of a large field of roses in bloom. The roses are depicted in warm fleshy hues: pinks, whites and reds. The field slopes down slightly and in the distance is the distinctive form of Canterbury Cathedral. The light and sky suggest a warm, windy day. The sky is dramatically heavy with huge Cumulonimbus clouds - rising up in the distance, they look like huge chalky mountains. I assume the scene has been painted with oils, the surface of the painting as object is tactile: a chunky texture blobbed with crusted bits of paint. A figure traverses the field, hard to make out. The cathedral fixes the painting in a familiar local reality, while the openness of the landscape transports to a wholly different place in time where the city in its current sprawl doesn't exist. I first assume the past. Then I wonder about the possibility of a different narrative. I imagine a still-living artist has created the piece as a fictitious prophetic vision, centuries into the future. I continue to feel out the daydream through the painting: perhaps after the catastrophe of climate breakdown has resulted in the collapse of capitalism, the destruction of cities and our current modes of living. Maybe 'It Was The Time of Roses' portrays an idyllic vision of the emergence of a new way of living, after the storm of unrest. A return to the land and a simpler way of life? The cathedral, for whatever reason, remains. I immerse myself in the exercise, feel out the narrative I have created, relish the freedom of my own interpretation - my own story.

Narratives Absorbed: Becoming part of the Museum Space

Julie Aster was one of the first individuals to respond to Miranda's introductory emails, and her initial email was thoughtfully lengthy and detailed, explaining Julie's background and the origins and operations of her art therapy practise 'Canterbury Art Studio'. Canterbury Art Studio relies on ongoing external funding to do operate. Canterbury Art Studio functions as an art-therapy group open to NHS-referred sufferers of ill mental health and operates within The Beaney universe and takes the form of a group programme of a ten-week course of art therapy sessions that take place

in the Beaney's Learning Lab, culminating in a group show of some of the work that has been produced throughout the course of the sessions. Canterbury Art Studio's incorporation into The Beaney's museum space is integral to its efficacy; incorporating the artworks into a formal public show within The Beaney's museum space formalises the work and serves to promote the artists' professionalism that Julie tells me is designed to encourage the artists to continue to pursue their creative identities beyond the group therapy sessions. Julie also makes the crucial point that 'the siting of the building and the societal value of the institution where the groups took place have a profound effect on a sense of societal inclusion.'

Canterbury Art Studio is closed to visitors to maintain a safe, enclosed and familiar environment for the artists, but Julie invited me to attend the opening event of Canterbury Art Studio's 2019 exhibition. After my repeated offers of voluntary service, Julie enlisted me to perform the task of welcoming the artists, their families and friends as they arrived at the show and to capture their consent by way of data protection forms.

May 2019

I am making my way through the middle of the city on a wet May Saturday afternoon. The streets are busy with tourists and shoppers. Umbrellas crowd the pavements. I arrive at The Beaney to find it is similarly bustling with pleasant activity. The space is warm and bright, the sounds of voices, clattering crockery and clinking cutlery echo in the steamy cafe. I sign in at the front desk as a volunteer. My volunteer's lanyard, although up close utterly generic, brings me comfort. I am suddenly defined as belonging to this museum space. As I make my way to the Front Room, the Beaney's temporary exhibition space, I notice a man and a woman in front of me. She carries a bunch of sunflowers in brown paper, he carries their coats. Their movements seem to signal something of their purpose here: they are hurried and distracted, not ambling and absorbing their museum space surroundings. They turn into the Front Room and I catch them up. Julie hands the man the sunflowers as I introduce myself; this is the first time we have met in person.

The Canterbury Art Studio 2019 show is titled 'Making Our Mark'. The opening passes with ease, the artists' arrival is advantageously staggered which means I am able to take my time greeting them one by one them at the door and run through the forms with them. The room fills up, artists and their families and general visitors mill around, commenting on the artwork, picking at the buffet food and helping themselves to glasses of wine. Julie makes a speech thanking the artists, the funders, the museum. The abundance of bodies and noise is pleasant, the artworks have a large, friendly audience on their first day on show. I wander among people, look at the work and find myself paying most attention to the artist statements. I engage in conversation with the artists and their friends and family. There is a jubilant, hopeful energy in the room. Everyone is keen to exchange comment and opinion on the work. I leaf through the visitor book that is already full of warm congratulations, encouragement and praise.

> 'By making our mark using art materials we have an impact on the world outside ourselves. This powerful metaphor enables people to develop a stronger sense of self and increase self-esteem. In doing so people are enabled to discover that they can have an effect in other areas of their lives.' (JA, 2019)

Canterbury Art Studio as Transformative Journey: Three Statements from Three Artists of Making Our Mark, 2019:

> *1. 'During the group I lost one of my rats.*
>
> *The day he passed I walked to where I scattered the ashes of my previous boys. I got very rained on and took a picture which I based this piece on.*
>
> *The three weeks it took to complete this piece took me through losing him, getting him cremated and scattering him, returning to the sight and finding it blazing in sunlight.*
>
> *Painting this helped me move through my grief.' (Anon, 2019)*
>
> *2. 'Painting is an art form, a collection of shapes and colours arranged on a canvas, arranged by you alone, and it's this skill at work, your talent, your gift, and it's your imagination that creates all these myriad compositions. They work. You know it. You're sure of it. And so others can see it within you.*
>
> *I am a painter, and an artist of course, but above all I am a creator, a magician, a conjuror inside of the illusional spaces we call the picture plane.*
>
> *I knew I was safe once I realised my potential to overcome adversity and danger, loneliness and ugliness, rejection, and the loss of loved ones. Family, pets, friends, places and faces long gone. All of the memories that go to make you who you really, truly are.' (Anon, 2019)*
>
> *3. 'Art is like a balloon ride. You never know where it is going to take you, so start the ride and enjoy. It changes with every movement you make so stand back. Look and move around the room and see the picture change.*
>
> *This is how I have found the group and my experience in it. Journeying into the unknown I am still on that road now and will stay on it and carry on expressing myself.' (Anon, 2019)*

Telling Stories To Live: Meaning-Making in the Museum Space

What I observed during my time spent participating in Canterbury Museums' Wellbeing programmes was a mutually strengthening process of reciprocal, dynamic storytelling. The Wellbeing experiences detailed here narrate a process of people engaging with museum space stories while simultaneously telling new stories in the museum space. The museum space here functions as both contextual backdrop and physical space. The two processes are intrinsically connected: people engage with the stories, exchange these stories and make new stories. Sociality, reciprocation, exchange and dialogue is at the core of how the Wellbeing programmes function. These processes are facilitated by the museum in two contexts: as space-that-tells-stories, as well as physically embodied space.

The Power of the Object dementia group manifests as storytelling in the museum space in order to remember. I heard from many of the volunteers throughout my time with the Power of the Object group that their long-term members had transformed over the course of their attendance: participants gained confidence, spoke more, engaged more. My own experiences in the group revealed its efficacy: in participating in the creative, social and dialogic activities, I found neural pathways firing up; new memories were made as old ones were recollected. The Power of the Object facilitated acts of remembering alongside expressions of participants' identities. What

people made and spoke about during the Power of the Object took root from the session's topic but always flourished in the direction of their own experiences: people told stories about their lives, and made things that were connected to them.

The Making Our Mark exhibition represents a group of individuals empowered by both the Canterbury Art Studio art therapy programme and empowered by their incorporation into the museum space. The final show was professionally framed and displayed to the public as a formal part of the Beaney's programme of temporary exhibitions for eight weeks, during the museum's busiest Summer months. The Canterbury Art Studio participants were empowered by their capacity to tell the stories they chose to, as formally incorporated into the Canterbury Museums public space.

Taking the liminal to mean both space and experience, all three programmes and the experiences depicted represent symbolic encapsulations of liminality at work. Where the museum space is liminal space itself - embodying a fertile site for meaning-making as location that transforms those who step into it - so the journeys embarked on by the participants in these programmes represent the experience of liminal transformation. All of the participants, through their participation, are engaged in processural transformation, and not by accident. The Wellbeing programmes are designed to enact change for good, to aid participants and improve their lives. In the case of the Making Our Mark artists' statements, all the statements tell stories of journeys and of transformation - of a beginning in darkness, then a period of healing, to a final emergence into light - facilitated and produced by their work within the Canterbury Art Studio Therapy Group.

Entrenched in and engendered by social relations between persons, we see how these Wellbeing activities provide opportunities for intersubjective exchange, reciprocal reinforcements of participants' humanity and personhood. Where personhood is processural (Pina-Cabral, 2017) and museum space work is also processural (Silverman, 2014), we can see how both processes overlap, converge and intersect in the museum space, representing processes of constant, ongoing transformation. The museum space and the identities of the persons who engage with it are subject to ongoing shift and renegotiation: they are made and remade by one and other. If, as Jackson (2002) and Arendt (1958) argue, storytelling is a political, socially engaged act that produces social relations, we can see how the Wellbeing programmes facilitate these vital processes.

The Mindfulness session directly utilises museum space objects and the potentiality of stories they can tell. The Mindfulness session obscures the narratives of objects (as determined in permanent displays) in order to encourage the emergence of new stories. The Mindfulness workshop facilitated the production of new stories in the museum space, and highlights the multitudinous wealth of possibilities for interpretive museum space stories. The Mindfulness workshop highlights the cruciality of museums as a toolkit - to be self-determinately utilised by visitor or participant - and in this way importantly rejects the notion of top-down hierarchical approaches to knowledge production (Watson, 2014). Instead promoting an egalitarian, non-hierarchical approach to learning (Brown and Heigashi, 2015) and being in the museum space.

The Wellbeing programmes at Canterbury Museums represent an egalitarian, collaborative, participatory range of activities designed to improve lives. I would argue that where these

Wellbeing programmes improve the lives of their participants, the participation of these individuals also improves Canterbury Museums. A reciprocal flow of knowledge and information is passed between people and museum space in a loop, mutually empowering both persons and museum space.

Canterbury Museums, from my observations, engage in good museum practice, nuanced storytelling and representative programming. Harnessing and utilising the power as well as maximising the value of a local museum space, the narratives within Canterbury Museums are multiple and varied. Canterbury Museums' offer is broad, diverse and continues to change. Where Canterbury Museums' displays have been criticised for being too eclectic (Wright, 2015), I interpret this broad and diverse collection of objects and their multiple meanings as productive for the kind of work Canterbury Museums do; the diversity and scope of the collections facilitates the dynamism of the space.

Some of the displays at Canterbury Museums still present problematic or simply dull narratives that are no longer relevant or interesting. The curatorial staff at Canterbury Museums do, however, seem committed to redeveloping and reviewing their collections and interpretation strategies. The Explorers and Collectors gallery, which remains a painfully outdated ode to empire, is scheduled for a reinterpretation aimed at achieving (what Miranda called) a 'decolonised celebration of world culture'. I hope that Canterbury Museums approach this reinterpretation as collaboratively as some of their other projects, to achieve a people-focussed decolonised display that embodies a non-hierarchical approach to knowledge production.

Canterbury Museums as a whole presents an example of a thoroughly non-static, dynamic and egalitarian museum space that is embedded in a complex but productive network of social relations. It is through this network that its storytelling is realised in myriad ways. These stories and the people who make and use them are what contribute to Canterbury Museums' dynamism. The stories of, in and around Canterbury Museums are fluid, connected, and productively flexible.

The Concept-Generated Museum Space

Where Canterbury Museums embody a more traditional understanding of museum spaces - imbued with multiple meanings and symbols, objects and stories that seem to infinitely cross and overlap to interact with the many human social actors engaged with these kinds of spaces - there also exist other, less traditional kinds of museum spaces that can provide important examples of innovative strategies for museum storytelling. These alternative museum spaces, created outside the monolith of the institutional museum setting, are often afforded the ability to tell the kinds of stories that conventional museum spaces are not. This part of the thesis examines some of the processes involved in the creation and crafting of museum space narratives in one such alternative museum space. The discussion of the 'concept-generated museum space' presents a more behind-the-scenes examination of the social processes of creating an entire exhibition from concept alone. The exhibition in question represents a real attempt at telling previously untold stories for the purpose of effecting positive social outcomes, and thus provides a crucial insight into the ways in which museum spaces can reflect, affect and speak to the wider social world around them. The exhibition in question presents an example of where I believe the future of museum spaces should lie: a museum space that rejects political neutrality while examining and articulating the nuances of lived human experiences; a museum space that does not shy away from difficult and painful histories; and a museum space that has, from the outset, definitive aims to inform, educate and shift perspectives. The process of crafting this concept-generated museum space also speaks, symbolically, to the metaphoric thread of liminality which runs throughout this text. The creative process(es) examined in the following pages represent a processural journey of transformation. The final museum space itself will also function in liminal terms: as a suspended, transformative space: a narrative space that seeks to affect change in the people who move through and experience it. In the following encounters and experiences my role is distinct from the one I held at Canterbury Museums: I am a paid employee and a designated part of the team, albeit at a junior level and in an assistive position.

Some months after I had begun volunteering at The Beaney, I was contacted by a previous employer, David Shelby. David is the Creative Director of an interpretation design consultancy that specialise in the museums and heritage sector. Before I began my undergraduate degree in 2015, I had worked for David for two years as the office administrator at FormAtlas' Kent offices. It was here that my passion for museums, and museum storytelling in particular, flourished. During the first Summer term of my undergraduate degree, after I had left the company, David offered me a freelance contract to coordinate and develop a small exhibition showcasing the history of a Royal Naval hospital in Malta and the stories of its patients and staff. This project called for me to collaborate with FormAtlas' client in Valletta to collate existing source materials and conduct further research. I subsequently formed a narrative for the exhibition using our agreed-upon source material and object list, and produced the written content. I then worked closely with FormAtlas' graphic design team to produce the graphic panels and digital interactives for the exhibition. It was interesting and rewarding work that I had time for in the Summer break of my first year of studies, and furnished me with the knowledge and experience necessary for David to offer me further work.

Telling Stories of Trauma

December 2018

In December of 2018, David gets in touch to ask me if I would be interested in helping him with a tender that he's been invited to, saying that if FormAtlas win the project, he'd like me to assist him with the delivery. A few days later, I receive the documents. I scan through the multiple (though standard) pages of comprehensively numbered and lettered legal obligations and contractual details in search of the description of the exhibition themes and content. The proposed exhibition is provisionally titled: 'Compromised Identities? Reflections on Perpetration and Complicity under Nazism'. The quotation documents state that the content material will be drawn from a collaborative interdisciplinary project undertaken by four Russell Group university academics who are all conducting research on discrete aspects of perpetration and complicity in the Holocaust. I note that the exhibition outline and background information is lengthy and written in rather dense academic prose, but value the exhaustive detail. The four academics are each due to publish a book of their respective areas of research, along with a fifth edited volume of essays amalgamating these themes. The exhibition narratives will be driven by the content of their research and has broad and challenging aims in terms of what it hopes to communicate and achieve. The proposed exhibition content is made possible by the research specialisms and outputs of the four academics in question. The reasons for translating this content into a public engagement project stem from a percieved lack in the depth and breadth of current Holocaust education, musealization and commemoration. The Compromised Identities project argues that in the majority of Holocaust education and memorialisation, attention is primarily given to victim voices and the highest echelons of power and repression. A 2016 survey conducted by the university's centre for Holocaust studies evidenced 'a serious lack of understanding and knowledge of these issues among young people in the UK' (Compromised Identities Team, 2018, p.16). Reading this, I reflect on my own secondary and A-level History education: I studied - not of my own choosing and no doubt due to some sort of flaw in the curriculum - Nazi Germany several times. Yet, aside from ten minutes of horrific video footage that left a classroom in tears, the realities of the mechanisms of the collective violence that facilitated the Holocaust were obscured by political trajectories, historical timelines and the biographies of a handful of the most famous and powerful of the perpretrators. The Compromised Identities exhibition attempts to illuminate the spectrum of acts of violence committed during the rise and rule of the Nazis and beyond, to 'promote a better understanding of the ways in which people who have become entangled in state-sponsored violence later reframe their biographies, justify their actions to themselves and to others, and create stories about their lives that deal with the difficult legacies of a compromised past.' (Compromised Identities Team, 2018, p.17)

The exhibition brief describes how the Compromised Identities project and exhibition will be relevant beyond the content material and will address issues of collective violence more widely, reflecting on recent as well as current conflicts to 'stimulate critical discussion and facilitate understanding of complex issues... and promote understanding of how genocide is possible.' (Compromised Identities Team, 2018, p.17). The subject matter is weighty and deserving of thorough explanation and considered examination. The subject matter is also, for me, utterly fascinating, and I am pleased that David has asked for my input. I drop him a quick email: *'Had a*

look at the docs, really interesting proposal. I wonder, have you ever come across an exhibition with aims like this before? Seems super ambitious but really important work…' Notably, he replies that he hasn't, as far as he can remember, confirming my initial speculation that the exhibition is rare in terms of the complexity of both its content and aspirations. I am impressed by the exhibition proposal and thrilled by the challenge it presents. The concept of the Compromised Identities exhibition is particularly motivating for three reasons: firstly, Compromised Identities reinforces the notion that exhibitions can be effective tools to spread and share knowledge. Compromised Identities will showcase extensive academic scholarship where this work so often runs the risk of never making it outside its institutional echo chambers. Secondly, the exhibition will attempt to communicate these complicated ideas in accessible ways. Translating complex ideas into readily digestible, broadly accessible forms of public information is challenging yet rewarding work with the vast potential to empower and improve lives. Lastly, Compromised Identities is unflinching and wholly *uncompromising* in both content and approach: it proposes to tell the stories of the perpetrators of a violence that belongs to a painful and notorious cultural legacy in a partial attempt to prevent this kind of insidious collective violence from happening again.

After reading the quotation documents I embark upon familiar processes of reflection, brainstorming and researching the initial thoughts sparked by what I have just read. My mind reaches for half-remembered academic texts: theories of violence and stories of trauma recounted in distant, abstracted prose. I reflect on the tremendous difficulties and ethical implications of representing narratives of human pain and suffering, how often the realities are diluted and muted in their retelling. Mertz has commented on the inadequacies of scholarship in describing lives lived amongst the chaos of violence:

> '…by the time we have told the story in the removed voice of social science narrative, our very account has tamed–and thus obliterated–much of the immediacy and lack of structure that characterised the events. Indeed, the control and closure that result from telling the story of what happened as a narrative with a known ending–about an event of a certain type–move the readers away from an essential aspect of the lived experience.'. (p.361, 2002)

Without personal or familial attachments to the events of the Holocaust, I attempt to imagine the realities of lives lived under Nazi government. I find that the realities of a life lived in the midst of genocide are beyond my grasp and note the importance of deferring to the voices of experience, but I reach for empathy in feeling out the weight of the subject matter. The background information provided in the quotation documents gives the statistics: up to a million people are estimated to be involved in committing atrocities against the victims of Nazi ideology. These raw numbers, set against the contemporary cultural legacy of the holocaust, are shocking. Compromised Identities as body of research - a synthesis of the cause and effects of collective violence during the Holocaust - and its concomitant public exhibition, will strive to shed light on the lesser told stories of these million or so individuals embroiled in the state-sponsored persecution of Jews, Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, the mentally and physically disabled, political opponents and other victims of Nazi violence during the 1930s and 1940s.

I attempt to outline what I think the design and spatial elements should reflect and how FormAtlas might translate the complex messages of these stories into some sort of physical framework of representation. I am reminded of Primo Levi's grey zone theory. A survivor of Nazi concentration camps, Levi's personal experiences led him to theorise that the roles of perpetrator and victim are

less distinctly delineated and defined than the majority of Holocaust history suggests (1986). Levi's work speaks to the core theme of the exhibition: that the way collective violence happens is infinitely complex, nuanced, and cannot always be reduced to dichotomous stories of good and evil. Inspired by Levi and the idioms of 'black and white' - suggestive of straightforward moral choices - and 'shades of grey' - suggestive, conversely, of a morally ambiguous spectrum of potential choices and consequences - we carry these visual cues, as what we hope to be subtle symbolic signifiers, into the tender submission. Interestingly, throughout the process of crafting the exhibition, the colour scheme proved to be a more significant element for consideration than I had anticipated. Colour(s) - and all their attached symbolic social meanings - were debated and discussed at length, time and again.

In our final tender submission document, FormAtlas' proposed interpretive approach also placed emphasis on the perspective of the visitor, stressing the need to arouse empathy through immersion. We also highlighted the importance of posing questions directly to the visitor throughout their navigation of the exhibition. FormAtlas' final tender submission reflects our attempts to communicate an understanding of the brief and demonstrates a sensitivity and deeper comprehension of the gravity of the subject matter. The tender submission also details FormAtlas' working style and went on to propose a choice of design solutions appropriate to the content, budget and portability needs:

> 'FormAtlas believe in team effort. We form close working relationships with your project team to deliver the best possible design. We develop an in-depth understanding of the subject, collections, environment, audience, stakeholders and client brief.
>
> Our projects are concept driven. We believe that through ideas-based installations we can tell engaging stories. Having read the brief we have identified the following key aspects that will inform the design development.
>
> **1. The exhibition deals with challenging and sensitive material and ideas**
> We feel the design should be arresting and engaging, making a strong impact, but should also avoid leading visitors emotions through visual implications. In a sense, neutral but powerful, bringing the voices from the project to the fore.
>
> **2. The exhibition must be modular and flexible**
> The approach to layout and media will need to be flexible to enable re-configuration in the various venues whilst retaining an ability to meet the needs of group and individual visitors.
>
> **3. Media**
> The design needs to accommodate both graphic and digital media and enable visitor contributions/feedback.
>
> **4. Transportation**
> The exhibition must be easy to transport and assemble on site, without specialist knowledge or equipment.
>
> An approach that situates the visitor within the mindset of the complicit. An ordinary average person - neither victim nor notable Nazi war criminal, in order to promote understanding and empathy… fostering a sense of responsibility (for the future) within and immersed rather than observer

The design must:
- Visually engage the visitor
- Offer ways into the content, way-find and hold interest throughout the narrative
- Conceptually support the overarching theme of the exhibition

Design concept:
A visible grid presents the exhibition content as a series of choices creating routes though the narrative - a metaphor for the life of an ordinary citizen living under a violent totalitarian regime. Seemingly black and white, right or wrong, the grid expands and contracts revealing 'shades of grey' the complexity and multitude of decisions made and the resulting levels of complicity.'

(FormAtlas, 2019)

Collaborations: Building Narratives

In January 2019, FormAtlas were awarded the contract and we scheduled to meet the Compromised Identities team at their university campus in early April. The following discussion and analysis focuses on some of the key themes that emerged from FormAtlas and the Compromised Identities team's early collaborative processes to craft the exhibition. Due to the fact that these processes are ongoing, with the exhibition tour scheduled to begin in Spring 2020, the ultimate outcome of these collaborative creative efforts is yet to be evaluated.

The travelling exhibition forms part of the public engagement and impact activities stipulated by the larger Compromised Identities project's funding body. The decision to create an exhibition is born from the aforementioned of a lack of understanding of the nuances and implications of the Holocaust as evidenced by the university's 2016 study. The budget available is £21,000 for the design consultant to deliver design consultancy, design and build the physical exhibition and facilitate the tour. The Russell Group University team will determine and allocate touring venues. A minimum 50m^2 ft space, with some inevitable variation, is specified. The exhibition will be absent of any objects or artefacts and all narratives will be delivered through text, archival photography, video and audio. Some audience feedback data is imperative as specified by the body who awarded the original funding, although the content of which is not specified or restricted. The project to design and build the exhibition commenced in March 2019 and the exhibition is due to open in its first venue location in May 2020. All of these details and specifications - budget, potential venues, space, content specifics and audience feedback are mentioned as they are crucial to how the exhibition narratives evolved, what the exhibition will look like and the collaborative processes at play throughout the journey that FormAtlas and the Compromised Identities team have embarked upon to create and shape the exhibition. The journey of this creative process traces and traverses a vast time-space: from the events that occurred within real lived lives, and the multiple, varied fragments of the impacts of choices and consequences permanently embedded in numerous lives - to subsequent countless retellings and reminagings - both in real lives as well as in an array of media throughout decades. This cacophony of stories is collected, collated and interpreted - condensed and then elaborated on, shaped and reformed and moulded, over and over again. The processural, collaborative nature that characterises the journey of crafting Compromised Identities is pertinent to include: our nuanced and cooperative approach

to the exchange of knowledge and expertise allowed for the emergence of deeper mutual understanding and innovative methods of storytelling.

March 2019

> 'In my opinion, every process definitely begins with a dialogue about content.' (Kossmann.dejong, 2010, p.45)

David and I are half running through the central square of the university's campus, caught in a sudden heavy downpour of blustery rain that drives hard in all directions as the wind blows it about. We briskly navigate the students swirling around us, and they navigate us. Everyone's movements are characterised by the unexpected, unpleasant shower: swift and determined. We find our way through the bustling corridors, up a stone staircase to locate the meeting room. As we linger outside an empty classroom that David thinks is the right place, I see four figures walking towards us. As David and I take turns to shake hands with the team, we exchange greetings and grumblings about the weather. In the empty classroom we sit spaced apart at tables arranged in a circular fashion. We each introduce ourselves and our roles within our respective organisations and the project. The Compromised Identities team are a multidisciplinary group of academics with research interests that intersect in German history. Conrad and Sara are the team's research associates. Conrad's specialism is in post-war interrogations, trials and corresponding media coverage about acts of perpetration and complicity in the Holocaust, and Sara specialises in the oral histories of individuals involved in Nazi violence. Sarah is co-investigator and teaches German-language film and literature. The team is led by principal investigator Margaret, Professor of German history.

Throughout this first meeting I observe an emergent dynamic of colliding spheres of specialist knowledge and modes of thinking. Not always opposed - but often distinct in form and origin - there is a multitude of expertise and disciplinary knowledge at play in the collaborative, in-depth dialogue that characterises these meetings. The approach to crafting the Compromised Identities exhibition can be termed as 'slow' (Silverman, 2014); with an emphasis on arriving at meaningful connections and, ultimately - unanimous and appropriate decisions that ensure the most successful outcomes for the Compromised Identities exhibition.

David's spatial and design-led expertise embodies an overarching and encompassing approach to the project; David is both bricoleur (Kossmann.dejong, 2010) and translator (Benjamin, 1996). David's expertise lies in the tangible elements of design: form and build, as well specialist knowledge of holistic, engaging public storytelling through these physical elements. Margaret, Sarah, Sara and Conrad possess erudite and intricate understandings of their subject matters. They all embody a thoroughly academic mode of functioning in our discussions: dates, events, literature, notable figures of historical significance - are recalled and discussed with impressive fluidity and ease. They are articulate and unhesitant, revealing their sincere commitments to these deep bodies of knowledge. I feel myself metaphorically straddling these two modes of operating, or at least possessing some knowledge of the demands of each of these distinct spheres of activity. Yet, without the depth of knowledge or experience of any of my colleagues in their respective fields, I have junior status in the enterprise of crafting of the Compromised Identities exhibition. This interstructural apprentice position enabled me to better observe the dynamics and processes

that characterised the formation of the Compromised Identities exhibition narrative. Important to note is that both the FormAtlas design team and the Compromised Identities team of academics sit outside an institutional traditional museum space setting. This freedom from many of the restrictions and obligations that are often attached to established permanent fixed-location museum spaces (Parry, 2019) contributed to the unhindered and uncompromising way in which the exhibition narratives were allowed to develop. Compromised Identities will represent a political, non-neutral and simultaneously nuanced set of stories. The FormAtlas and Compromised Identities teams' status as not being entrenched museum professionals also liberates the exhibition from potentially singular and monolithic institutionalised approaches (Bryant-Greenwell, 2019b) to the narrative(s).

> '*Compromised identities**?***' is one of the things that makes our approach unique because of the various ways in which we consider how or whether identities have been compromised.' (Compromised Identities Team, 2018)

One of the first exchanges of dialogue that takes place at our first cross-team meeting revolves around the problem of the word counts of the textual content of the exhibition. Here a clash in approaches to storytelling in professional contexts is evident: all of the academics raise their eyebrows and exhale when David tells them the recommended word count for a text panel is no more than 150. 'Less, ideally', he adds. When quips are made about the difficulties presented by the restrictive word counts each and every time we meet the Compromised Identities team, I am reminded of Phillipe Descolas' insight into the esoteric jargon-y tendencies of academia that fears 'revealing the fragility of the scientific precepts on which [its] claims to truth are based' (1996, p.209) With this in mind, we can see how the narrative exhibition - if successfully executed - can be a powerful instrument in the transmission of academic concepts beyond their own fields. By engaging in a process of translation, narrative exhibitions such as Compromised Identities can reformulate complicated ideas or difficult histories into broadly accessible stories.

We ask the Compromised Identities team to talk through how they see their content working in the exhibition as physical space - how will the story be told? A decision is made to follow a thematic rather than chronological approach to conveying the content, which is important in terms of the way the exhibition will be able to be navigated and allows for layered engagement with the space and content. Kossmann and de Jong see the exhibition designer's role equal to that of the director of a film 'whose fundamental concerns are concept development, collection arrangement, spatial experience, target audiences, presentation methods, and optimal cooperation between various disciplines so that an effective and convincing experience develops.' (2011, p.7) David embodies the designer-as-director role throughout the process of crafting Compromised Identities, synthesising and streamlining these crucial elements into a cohesive and coherent whole. David and I agree to provide the Compromised Identities team with straightforward framework - a skeletal structure informed by David's professional opinion, experience and expertise that the team's content will be moulded around.

Some of the presentation we have prepared features graphic examples (borrowed from Pinterest, a tool that FormAtlas always use at the outset of a design project) of what the exhibition could, in theory, look like. These images serve as a jumping-off point for inspiration, and are intended to give visual examples of conceptual ideas and provide the team with a choice of possible routes.

These are initially misunderstood as visuals of the finished design. David clarifies and we talk the team through their potential options: they huddle round David's laptop screen and talk animatedly about which designs they like best: a custom-built frame-like structure is unanimously preferred; a system of interlocking graphic blocks is useful in its flexibility but too uniform in style. Conrad points out that it could end up looking wearily repetitive. When Sarah firmly vocalises a desire for the build materials to be sustainable and environmentally sound, David again talks through a list of options: reinforced cardboard is a possibility but we all agree it will detract from the content as it is unanimously felt that cardboard would too strongly signify a message about sustainability or the environment, thus confusing the exhibition's message. Wood for the frame is suggested as a neutral-looking and suitably sustainable, but then Sara asks how well wood might travel and wear, if being taken apart and rebuilt from location to location. She makes a joke about flat-pack IKEA furniture. David suggests scaffold poles. The team aren't keen and think this too harsh and industrial. David and I, on the other hand, both champion this approach, agreeing that a scaffold frame would, simply from a design perspective, be stylish, modern and unusual. David points out the option for softening the appearance of the scaffolding with colour - poles can easily be spray-painted. He brings up further visuals to illustrate his point. I support David and vocalise durability: the scaffold frame option will travel well and cope with repeated dismantling and reassembly.

The physicality of the design and build - or, simply put, how the exhibition will look - is an integral aspect in delivering the stories of Compromised Identities to the public. Without objects, Compromised Identities relies solely on the articulation of narratives within text printed on graphic panels alongside photographs and audiovisual content to engage visitors and communicate its stories.

Narrations of Making: FormAtlas

I am surprised the first time I listen back to the recordings of mine and David's first meeting. I can almost hear the figurative cogs turning: we speak in fearless free-falling streams of consciousness. We don't always make sense, we trail off, we stutter and pause and repeat ourselves. We are thinking aloud, and these thoughts tumble out in speech and are moulded and reformed in the open - with four figurative hands and two thinking heads. At some points we finish each other's sentences, and this is a relief to hear. In spite of what sounds like no more than rambling trails of thought, we had a mutual understanding of where our conceptual thinking was headed.

We had met to 'debrief' and reflect upon our first meeting with the Compromised Identities team and plan and brainstorm our creative approach to the exhibition delivery. This meeting was also intended for us to come up with a strategy to elevate the exhibition beyond a simple text and image panel installation. It was important to David that we devise an innovative added extra, something to bring the exhibition to life beyond the static panels of images and text. My memory of the lightbulb moment we arrived at the unique concept we hope will give the exhibition an edge beyond what we can easily deliver - good looking graphics, clear wayfinding and accessible communication - is remembered as a slick flurry of snappy exchanges. In reality, the verbal journey to this moment is clumsy and rambling. Nevertheless, these conversations proved fruitful for analysis of FormAtlas' approach to storytelling in museum spaces.

April 2019

David and I meet at his house, where he now has a home office. In response to the financial strain of running a rented studio of full time PAYE staff with no guarantee of incoming jobs from an increasingly unstable and underfunded museums sector, David was forced to close FormAtlas' Kent studio and make significant redundancies. David says it is mainly a relief. Now that he is able to employ senior, experienced professionals on a freelance basis without the unrelenting pressure of the wages of a less experienced full PAYE team, he feels the company is able to deliver a higher quality service, which has seen FormAtlas consistently win the jobs it needs to survive.

We sit at David's dining room table. His elderly dog, an English pointer with greying eyebrows and a creaky gait, pads around as we talk. David's home is aspirational and stylish. The walls bear a bold colour palette of ashy pink, deep navy and dark moss. On one wall an abstract hand-painted mural forms a backdrop to the fully open-plan downstairs area. David makes us coffee in his spotless kitchen where daylight bounces off expansive, glossy countertops. I take in the richness of my surroundings from my seat: I observe and admire multiple artworks that line the walls: varied and diverse pieces that look as expertly curated as the myriad clusters of objects that line the bookshelves and window sills. I admire a mirrored glass cabinet holds an array of true 'curiosities': photographs; shells, stones, and dried-out sea specimens; a pack of old buttons, still attached to their cardboard; a row of coloured glass baubles; two articulated dolls; a stuffed rabbit. The cabinet in particular demands looking: the provenance and significance of the objects is unknown, and I wonder which have been selected for their sentimental value and which are there simply for their beauty. I am reminded of a proposal David had once drawn up for a local museum. He had suggested this museum utilise some of the available space for public extra-visitor use (activities such as hot-desking, meetings and socialising) but integrate their museum displays into these spaces: *'...display some of the collection so the objects and stories are part of a mixed-use environment. Like you might do in your house.'* I remembered reflecting at the time, somewhat cynically, that this kind of 'at home' curation was surely only a practice of the middle classes: gatekeepers of the arts, quintessential museum-dwellers. Being in David's home reminds me of my original cynicism... and challenges it. This home's museum space aesthetic is gratifying; there is a pleasurably tactile richness to this space that invites reflection and curiosity about the stories of the objects it contains.

Empathy through Immersion

The following transcript focuses on one pertinent segment of a long conversation: the genesis of an interactive 'gamebook' concept to accompany the Compromised Identities exhibition. The transcript has been included for purposes of a demonstration of the dialogic exchange of experiences and ideas involved in collaborative creative processes.

> **David** *'The danger is, we could easily create a text-heavy, good looking graphic exhibition that you know (speaks from the visitor's perspective) 'ooh yeah, this looks really good, impressive'... it will be interesting and exciting from a design point of view... but it could be quite dull unless we allow some space to occur in it so people can think about things and we make sure it says some interesting things... and that's not necessarily just about having loads of content… so we're gonna end up with something that's got some screens and got some graphics in it… and we can design that, we can make it look great, but I think what we need is a concept, something that makes it different, makes it interesting…*

we've got these concepts of black and white and questions, which I think are good and could work well, but is there a… another… could we take that to another level of engagement is what I was wondering, I suppose. Or, is there a way that we can get people to… almost as if they were going to play a game?'

Megan *'To engage beyond just looking'*

David *'This is what I was trying to think of… could we create a moral game? Where you played the game by being given moral dilemmas, is there anything like that that already exists? You know, you progress through the game by making decisions…'*

Megan *'Have you ever heard of 'Papers, Please'?'*

David *'No?'*

Megan *'It's a PC game, you play the part of a border force agent in a sort of fictional totalitarian state, someone who says yes or no based on people's documentation'*

David *'Ah, as in, 'give me your papers, please'...'*

Megan *'Yeah, exactly, and it becomes increasingly complicated as you progress... and it's very moral... there are consequences for you and your family if you're too soft, but obviously the people coming to you suffer too, if you turn them away...'*

David *'Yes, something like that… if they've (the CI team) got particular, real stories about real people… Ok, let's make one up… say there's an SS or a camp guard, or maybe that's too obvious… I mean, there must have been really sadistic, awful people…'*

Megan *'Yeah, but there were levels, they (CI team) were talking about that...'*

David *'Yeah exactly, so there must have also been just ordinary soldiers who were just given that job. They were sent there and they had to do that. And so what do they do, do they meet out the same sort of cruelty… what decisions do they make… I don't know? The thing is, I think what's going to be a real challenge is, we're not going to be able to make things move, it's not going to be able to be that interactive.'*

Megan *'Yeah, it's more in the hands of the visitor'*

David *'Yes, it's got to be in how people decide to navigate [the exhibition]... maybe that could be a really good mechanism, if we take the principle of the dilemma, or the decision and adapt it to a simple guide to the exhibition… that… was a supplementary thing, maybe…'*

Megan *'So, in that way it's layered, [the visitor] can do this if [they] wish to take it further in terms of engagement, or they can simply just look at and read the panels...'*

David *'Yeah, exactly, so the exhibition is totally standalone, [the visitor] doesn't need to pick this thing up… but [the visitor] can navigate the exhibition with this thing, and it's almost like, er, it poses extra questions so you can navigate the story... So let's say you've got like, er, 'Gustav Heimmer', the concentration camp guard, and he's featured in their (CI team) research, they know a bit about his family, his life, the decisions he actually made in reality but he's also a character in the print thing… and it's like, in the exhibition you'll be told what decisions he made, so we can ask the visitor 'what decisions would you have made?' 'Given his circumstances?'*

Megan *'Yeah'*

David *'Which, you could simply do that, in a panel, you could ask that, but it's not that interactive, so if someone's got something that they can actually tick - would you do this, would you do that, would you do this… then... then they get the result of that decision, and then they get another result, and so on…'*

Megan *'Mmm, okay…'*

David *'That's something you can't do in a static graphic but you could potentially do in a booklet or some kind of thing like that. You could pick, maybe, a few different characters, a few different real people, and based on the knowledge that they have of them you could navigate to see what decisions you would have made had you been them and what potential outcomes those would have had... might have had… and then what they actually did...'*

Megan *'Yeah… erm…. Okay.'*

David *'So if you imagine it in its simplest sense, it's a book, you turn over each page, you're making another decision…'*

Megan *'It sounds like it could be… one of those books, you know, like, choose your own adventure… like... Oh! Like Bandersnatch? You know, you make a decision and you jump to page whatever and the narrative changes based on your decision…'*

David *(enthusiastically) 'Oh yeah, yes! It could be that, it could be that!'*

Megan *'Mmm… but, quite complicated? (I pause… then my tone brightens) But… it could also be good… I guess it doesn't have to cost more than anyone's time to devise it… I suppose, yes, it would be simple to work out… Mmm, maybe it really could work...'*

'Bandersnatch' (Slade, 2018) is an award-winning interactive film that forms part of fictional dystopian science fiction anthology series called 'Black Mirror'. David and I had both recently seen and discussed the film. Released via online media streaming platform Netflix, the film follows the narrative of a video game developer who is creating a choose-your-own adventure video game. Following the choose-your-own-adventure structure, the viewer is asked to make decisions on behalf of the protagonist at specific points throughout the film. These decisions affect the direction of the narrative, with multiple routes of narrative direction emerging. Bandersnatch has multiple endings. An interactive viewing of Bandersnatch is labyrinthine and jarring; the immersive storytelling enhances the sinister and psychologically disturbing atmosphere of the film.

As David and I continued to discuss the mechanics of a choose-your-own adventure interactive supplement to the Compromised Identities exhibit, I voiced concerns about the potential problematic levity of a gameification of the painful narratives Compromised Identities will communicate. David points outs out that with the knowledge and information provided by the Compromised Identities team, we can ensure the supplement will embody a theory-based storytelling approach, grounded in rigorous academic research. David points out that a choose-your-own-adventure supplement will directly respond to the brief, which determines: 'case studies could be individuals, places, institutions. Whichever is chosen, we need to engage the visitor in understanding dilemmas, exploring possible choices in changing circumstances.'

(Compromised Identities Team, 2018) Here we see the aforementioned colliding spheres of specialised knowledge meeting at a productive intersection: FormAtlas' commitment to creating engaging spaces combined with Compromised Identities' in-depth knowledge, research and analysis has the power to deliver a unique, immersive visitor experience that will strengthen and enhance the stories within the exhibition.

Critically, this print-based interactive pamphlet, supplied for visitors at the entrance to the exhibition, fulfills several important criteria. Firstly, it is low-cost, requiring only the funds needed for materials, printing and cost of labour to devise the story and write the text. The Compromised Identities budget is relatively small and we do not have the funds to develop complicated digital interactives. Secondly, the interactive print-based concept would provide an added layer of potential engagement. Acting, as we envision it, as a supplementary optional level for engagement with the exhibition, it provides an additional stratum for impact and understanding. Lastly, a print-based interactive will act as a vehicle for immersion, through which we hope to arouse empathy - a crucial objective of the exhibition. It is also worth remembering that Compromised Identities relies entirely on eliciting engagement and response through the strength of its text and photographic content. Where objects, with all their inherent symbolic and emotive power, are absent from this museum space, the interactive pamphlet as participatory activity strives to enrich the exhibition.

After research and development, we decided to call this interactive element a 'gamebook'; a piece of interactive fiction that allows the reader to participate in, interact with and shape the narrative. Choices are presented throughout the text instructing the reader to flip to a certain page number to 'make' their choice and resume the narrative. In its physical form, it will be a paper printed leaflet that can be picked up, put back or taken home. It will crucially provide the vehicle for capturing visitor feedback data, containing an optional visitor feedback form as a detachable element within. Allowing visitors to take the print item away will facilitate engagement beyond the physical space of the exhibition; the gamebook, retained, will stir memory, provoke deeper thinking; we might also envisage the gamebook acting as promotional material, reaching individuals who have not visited the exhibition; the gamebook will also facilitate discussion by including links to online social media platforms, enabling visitors to provide feedback beyond the form and engage in dialogue with each other as well as the Compromised Identities academic team.

Dutch exhibition architects and specialists in producing narrative space environments, Kossmann.dejong have both produced some coruscating examples of narrative space storytelling and have written crucial insights on methodological approaches to museum space storytelling. Kossmann.dejong corroborate FormAtlas' approach with regards to providing layered content for layered engagement, and where they speak of the art of connecting 'experiencing' and 'knowing' - as forms that strengthen each other - we can see the gamebook concept within the exhibition content as mutually reinforcing. Kossmann.dejong tell us that:

> '...one needs to experience something before wanting to know more about it. At the same time, an experience can be much deeper and more intense if one already knows a lot. This cycle has a feedback system: experience can stimulate the visitor to know more, and a cutting insight can ensure that the experience can be felt differently.' (2011, p.72)

The gamebook will feature a set of events presented in narrative form that evolve and develop from you - the visitor's - moral choices. These narratives, options and emergent consequences will be based on real evidence from the Compromised Identities team's research and arrived at in collaboration with the Compromised Identities team to maintain truth, sensitivity and intellectual integrity. Moral choices through interactive narratives will be based either on true historic events or enough factual evidence to support a potential outcome. An intellectually robust and ethically rigorous approach will need to be maintained in order to achieve this. The gamebook will situate the visitor as one of three specific characters with several choices and several potential outcomes that result from these choices. The narrative tone will be presented in second person to evoke empathy and stimulate deeper reflection on the complexities of moral choices under the circumstances presented. The gamebook will underpin, reinforce and enhance the Compromised Identities overarching concept of 'questions' in further depth, at a micro level. The gamebook intends to be focussed; 'played out' and therefore 'felt out' by visitors.

The gamebook can be seen as a 'G4SC' (game for social change) as described by Ilaria Mariani in her contribution to the DESIS Philosophy Talks on storytelling and design for social innovation. Mariani believes in the efficacy of immersive fictionalised gameplay for effecting positive social transformation:

> '...as players we immerse into fictional worlds wherein we live experiences that can be so meaningful and significative to raise our awareness and sometimes persuade us to reconsider and modify some of our prior preconceptions and preexistent attitudes.' (2016, p.54)

Mariani goes on to describe immersive narrative storytelling that functions both as ritual and mirror; 'modelling of' through their narration and representation of situations and contexts whilst simultaneously 'modelling for' by acting as positive forces for social change. Mulder's examination of the history of narrative spaces, chiefly the 'exhibition as spatial and narrative medium' (2011) echoes the eminence of this dual meaning for immersive storytelling. Citing churches and temples as the earliest examples of the narrative exhibition space, Mulder asserts that these religious sites served to both communicate both spiritual messages and divine narratives as well as physically transform and transport the visitor. (2010, p.15)

Placing emphasis on stimulating empathy through immersion and facilitating this immersion by way of participation, the gamebook - as concentrated, immersive narrative within denoted and self-contained immersive space - can be read as liminal subjective experience enclosed within itself. If the Compromised Identities museum space functions as heterotopic and embodies a tangible manifestation of liminal space in action: the fertile locus of meaning-making, the gamebook functions within it as a deeper submergence into the tightening spiral of the storytelling within the exhibition, thus developing a more profound sense of empathy and understanding in the visitor. The gamebook enriches the potential for transformation in the visitor by way of its operating as a liminal event of meaning-making - the gamebook as immersive experience enacts a change within the visitor, as they psychically become someone else in the suspended narratives - that will represent real historic events - within the gamebook. On completion of the experience of the gamebook, (we hope) the visitor is transformed by what they have experienced. Having been placed within the narrative to feel it, the visitor's knowledge is transformed by it, thus granting the

visitor a depth of understanding and empathy they did not have before they 'played' the gamebook.

Bricolage: Ongoing Processes

The next few meetings that David and I have with the Compromised Identities team follow a similar pattern to the first: the meetings are characterised by long, winding conversations: ideas are vocalised, considered, dismissed or kept hold of. Decisions are made, reversed, picked back up and discussed again. At the beginning of one meeting, the whiteboard in the empty classroom we were meeting in bore a list from a previous class, titled: *'WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?'* Margaret pointed it out as pertinent. During all meetings Margaret and Sarah are always the most vocal of the four Compromised Identities academics. Sometimes they verbally tussle and bicker in a way that leaves the room awkward, sometimes they share bizarre jokes that David and I never understand and Sara and Conrad don't laugh along with. One in particular is repeated several times throughout the course of two meetings, months apart. Margaret is very keen on the idea of the exhibition having interactive elements such as concealed content hidden behind lift-up flaps. Margaret and Sarah's joke involves the visitor lifting the flap to reveal a mirror. '*YOU are the perpetrator!'* Margaret jokes, thrusting a pointed index finger. On later reflection, I realise that they are playing around with the subject matter they know so well; grappling with the infinite flux of human social identities over time, the risk of acts of betrayal always within the realm of the possible. Margaret and Sarah are implying the 'instabilities and unpredictabilities that… actually render everyone vulnerable in frightening ways' (Mertz, p.361, 2002) Margaret and Sarah are addressing the chilling message at the core of Compromised Identities: we are all at risk of compromising our own identities.

The colour scheme for the exhibition was debated at length over the course of all our meetings and became a somewhat contentious issue. FormAtlas' initial visual concept centred around a definitive symbolic colour scheme: '...seemingly black and white, right or wrong, the grid expands and contracts, revealing 'shades of grey': the complexity and multitude of decisions made and the resulting levels of complicity.' (2018) As the decision to structure the exhibition thematically rather than chronologically was taken, this visual concept was abandoned. Driven by David's unwavering commitment to innovative museum space storytelling, creating an original and engaging visitor experience that showcased the Compromised Identities narratives was a consistent priority for the FormAtlas team. David was always content to spend hours discussing the design to ensure we delivered over and above the brief and was committed to delivering a final design that was distinct from other public spaces that address the painful legacy of the Hololcaust. Feeling a use of colour too problematic with regards to the myriad cultural signs of colours, yet feeling muted tones too conventional, we decided that a stark black and white colour scheme would be striking without being overtly emotive, and simultaneously confident and unflinching enough to reflect the content of the exhibition.

When we presented the new colour concept to the Compromised Identities team, Conrad visibly grimaced. The colour scheme was not, initially, received well by anyone. All members of the Compromised Identities team vocalised unease about the myriad negative meanings associated with black and white. Conrad was the most vocal on this occasion, feeling a black and white exhibition would allude far too strongly to symbolic representations of good and bad. David and I

attempted to justify our reasoning. I pointed to the graphic examples, highlighting the equal visibility of both colours. 'Think of it like a photo negative, like a chess board', I said. Conrad eased and nodded. Margaret supported our feelings that grey was too ambiguous, too non-committal. Sarah raised the point that black, red and white was to be avoided at all costs. David and I left this meeting feeling pleased and confident that we had successfully communicated our reasoning behind the bold black and white colour scheme. At our next meeting, the Compromised Identities team's advisory board had turned down the black and white scheme and had dictated the exhibition be blue - for the sake of neutrality. Black and white, it seems, is too contentious, too representative of dichotomous binaries, and contradicts the essence of the purpose of the Compromised Identities exhibition, which Margaret tells us will actively strive to further 'problematize and complicate' the already labyrinthine entanglement of issues at hand.

The colour of Compromised Identities may seem trivial in comparison to the weight of the painful narratives that the exhibition will represent, but it is these narratives that, in fact, make the issue of colour such a critical one. Colour is signalling, emotive, and universally so. Diane Young asserts that colour is a relational quality of the social world. Colours, as both agents and symbols, can reproduce power structures, transmit knowledge, communicate and effect complicated ideas and relationships. Young says colours can embody both a sense of becoming and of being. Colours can structure space, and, crucially, can both distinguish between as well as analogise categories (2006).

We can observe the agency and heavy significance of colour where Sarah articulates that the colours red, black and white are to be avoided. Red, black and white, in the context of a Holocaust exhibition, are as instantaneously legible as a swastika. Symbolism formed an extensive part of the Nazi party's propaganda machine. The Nazi aesthetic pervades in living memory, and still manages to embody and transmit a sort of potency. As outlined in the Compromised Identities brief, Holocaust education and memorialisation has so far given most attention to the voices at either end of the spectrum of Holocaust violence: that of victims, or the most notorious perpetrators at the highest echelons of power. The caricature of the evil Nazi, saluting before a red, black a white banner, is the story too often told. The significance of colour as agent and symbol is crystallised in Compromised Identities and FormaAtlas' desire to tell lesser told stories.

Storytelling as Technique: Safeguarding Futures

> 'A language of hatred is a danger... for whoever is targeted. Each time language is used like an axe we should act because soon killing will follow.' (Oz, in: The Independent, 2005)

Compromised Identities serves as an example of thoroughly non-neutral museum space. Politicised, nuanced and even uneasy, the Compromised Identities museum space is infused with complicated notions of morality and human identity. As far as my research has led me, it seems Compromised Identities is uniquely placed in its storytelling and methodology. Giving voice to the narratives of the perpetrators of the Holocaust - through immersive public museum space storytelling - across a spectrum of betrayal (Mertz, 2006): from active transgressors to those who were complicit through inertia, Compromised Identities tells the lesser-told stories of the painful history of the Holocaust. While victim voices and perspectives need always take precedence in recollections of past trauma, Compromised Identities serves a crucial social function in not shying

away from the complicated, insidious realities of how collective violence operates. Compromised identities will hope to act as storyteller, educator and, most importantly - to communicate a vital warning in turbulent times.

Translating the larger Compromised Identities project into a temporary touring public engagement exhibition adds a further layer to its efficacy. Where Mulder argues that narrative spaces are singular in their experiential properties and ability to enact transformation (2010), we can firmly justify the translation of this academic work into a public project. If the Compromised Identities team expect their work to educate, inform and reform, the representation of this work in narrative, immersive space is a clear choice:

> 'Aren't exhibitions as narrative spaces an exceptional and effective means of communication for the future? They not only bring the public in contact with knowledge and culture, but also offer solutions and insights to issues in a different forum… they create spaces where all the senses are engaged, where visitors physically can meet, share experiences and exchange opinions.' (2010, p.40)

The process of crafting the Compromised Identities exhibition is a social one with social outcomes. Characterised as collaborative, creative and wholly interdisciplinary, the process of crafting Compromised Identities as museum space represents best practice in museum space storytelling. Silverman's 'Museum as Process' talks about the positive outcomes of museum spaces collaborating with their communities. The examples detailed in the text include both local communities - on the proverbial doorstep of museum spaces, and their wider communities - groups from which museum space objects come from and to whom they might still belong. Silverman and his collaborators in 'Museum as Process' stress the critical value of processural, collaborative museum work however fraught, difficult or ultimately unsuccessful. Karp tells us that collaborative museum work, no matter the outcome, will always yield worthwhile results somewhere along the line (2014). As the experiences written about here demonstrate, the process of creating Compromised Identities was not always an easy one. Conversations about how to formulate the exhibition and its narratives were lengthy: ideas, opinions, experience and expertise clashed and wrestled. Mutual understanding was not always instantaneous and mutual agreement was not always reached. These challenges, brought about by our collaborative approach, did ultimately prove fruitful. Many of the creative solutions, which I feel are integral to the success of the exhibition, would not have been arrived at if it were not for the way we worked. Across FormAtlas and the Compromised Identities academic team, all individuals involved in this collaborative process demonstrated a fervent dedication to the project. This enthusiasm, passion and commitment to a slow, discursive process of idea-exchange was essential to us achieving what we have so far. The ultimate success of Compromised Identities as a museum space is yet to be evaluated as the project is ongoing, but we feel optimistic about the outcome of this relevant and urgent museum space.

Sodaro's 'Exhibiting Atrocity' speaks of nationally-owned memorial museum spaces that commemorate past violence for the sake of exercising of state power and as demonstrations of state responsibility. While we find Compromised Identities outside of any state-serving function, there are many parallels to be drawn between Sodaro's memorial museum spaces and Compromised Identities in both aims and the techniques utilised to achieve these aims. Compromised Identities serves as an example of 'prosthetic conscience' (Sodaro, 2018); a

technique of achieving transposed moral responsibility on visitors via empathy through immersion. Compromised Identities partly hopes, through its experiential techniques, 'to make visitors feel that they have had a personal experience of the past that will shape their present moral sensibility' (Sodaro, 2018, p.2).

Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre, Ukraine is due to open in 2023 and has the same aims as Compromised Identities: learning from the past in order to prevent future violence by eliciting empathy through immersion. Babyn Yar's Chief Operating and Strategy Officer, Yana Barinova, stresses the fundamental need for Holocaust memorialisation beyond honouring victims: '...when awareness of our past fades, we risk opening the door to the stirrings of bigotry and violence once again' (2019, p.38). Also functioning as a non-static museum space, Babyn Yar is an ongoing research facility to develop 'best practice commemoration language' (2019, p.38). Barinova corroborates Kossmann.dejong (2010) in believing that feeling is the crucial path to understanding, stating that appropriate location and situation specific commemoration delivered through unflinching immersion techniques is the master approach. Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre, like Compromised Identities, will serve as a thoroughly uncompromising museum space committed to telling the painful stories of a painful past to safeguard against future atrocity.

'Lande: Beyond the Calais Jungle' is a temporary exhibition that was installed in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford in 2019 that tells the stories of migrants and refugees stranded in the Calais encampments from 2015-2016. Employing an approach of 'contemporary archaeology' that expands archaeology's 'traditional focus on the undocumented past into the undocumented present' (Hicks, 2019, p.29) Lande is born of a collaborative, interdisciplinary project of dialogue and exchange between academics and the people whose stories the exhibition tells. Exhibitions like Lande and Compromised Identities - by way of their being temporary, purpose-built and external to the institutionalised practices and obligations of permanent museum spaces - are well placed to tell these difficult and politically charged stories. Temporary exhibitions like Lande and Compromised Identities, where they can become part of larger, established museum space environments (such as The Pitt Rivers in Lande's case) are able to communicate these important messages to larger, hopefully broader, audiences already acquired by these larger museum space establishments.

The process of creating the Compromised Identities exhibition presents a journey: the passage embarked on to make something fictive - existing in the mind - into something tangible that will exist in space. The process of making Compromised Identities is a metamorphosis: the transformation of one substance into another. Lived experiences; things that happened, become stories. The stories are examined and analysed, their meaning and significance extrapolated and drawn out: collated, retold, and shared by people who assemble these stories into a bigger story to tell other people. The journey continues and we see these stories transform from memory to voice to text. The text is integrated with photography, and video and sound recordings featuring human storytellers are made, and also integrated. Moving image and sound give flesh to the narratives of lived experience. The text and photographs are printed on plywood panels held together by a repurposed scaffold frame. The videos and sound recordings are uploaded to electronic screens that will be housed in their own purpose-built wooden frames in the larger frame that will comprise Compromised Identities as museum space. The exhibition as material object and spatial construct will travel across the United Kingdom, to dwell in various locations for a few months

each time. Compromised Identities will be museum space within museum space, one of a series of Matryoshka dolls of experiential space.

The Compromised Identities exhibition will exist in each location as a self-contained chamber of space, story and experience. Compromised Identities will be a spatial thing in and of itself waiting to be discovered; a cosmos of its own stories. In this way, in spatial and experiential terms, Compromised Identities embodies a liminal space with the agency to manifest the liminal experience in those who enter it. We can read Compromised Identities as both space suspended: at once inside and outside all other space, and as dynamic space of becoming: a space where things happen. Compromised Identities presents a duality of interconnected meaning: it is heterotopic space to subvert, challenge or simply reject the cultural or political hegemony that exists outside it. It is also liminal space; a fertile zone for renegotiating identities and generating new meanings.

Conscientious Storytelling

> 'The museum is the space in which the difference inherent in its content is experienced. It is the difference between things and words, or between objects and conceptual structures… the space of representation is the heterotopia.' (Lord, 2006, p.5)

The museum space, as powerful space of representation - to include or exclude, to reinforce the status quo or challenge it - is an enduringly important one. Museum spaces, as public spaces of storytelling, must be accountable for their operations and influences. A process of ongoing scrutinous critique, encompassing a breadth of perspectives and a depth of enquiry, is a necessary condition of museum space work. This part of the thesis seeks to contextualise my research in an examination of current debates among people to whom museum spaces deeply matter: museum professionals and communities engaged with museum spaces. This approach situates my findings in the ongoing present; examining the discussions, progress, strategies and hopes for the future of current museum space work and ideas. This chapter intends to represent a plurality of voices, beyond the scholarly voice, in an attempt to reflect the necessary plurality museum spaces should be striving to embrace. In the current climate that surrounds museum spaces and their future, it feels pertinent to include the voices within and surrounding the sector. This context is included to situate my findings in real time, make them relevant to condition of museum spaces today and communicate a belief that museum spaces are relevant and valuable to us all.

Decolonising the Museum Space

As this thesis has already addressed, some museum spaces - of the traditional, object-focused kind - present a problematic tension in their storytelling. The debates surrounding the colonial legacy of museum spaces have been ongoing for decades. In the most recent decade, we've seen these debates, and their consequences, gaining critical momentum. Calls to decolonise the museum space are being shouted louder, and by a growing number of voices.

Many feel the decolonising project is an utterly futile one. Gabrielle de la Puente, curator and co-owner of collaborative anti-elitist art writing and curatorial project The White Pube, vehemently criticises the museum sector's approach to decolonising museum spaces as shallow and disingenuous. Viewing museums as no longer relevant and actively harmful, de la Puente's fatigue mixed with fury is palpable in her break-up letter to museums:

> '...i'm not sorry for the knowledge that stops me enjoying the museum experience, i'm grateful to be here distrusting their activity. So much is stolen colonial property that museum directors now feel is their legacy to keep holding onto. mad. so much is art acquired by people back in the day who made their money off the slave trade & other exploits. even art that's arrived from other people's collections makes me feel iffy … I can't go to museums without thinking about money, the white powers that be, and the wider working environment…' (de la Puente, 2019)

Clair Le Couteur echoes de La Puente, highlighting the problem of museum spaces' shallow attempts at demonstrating inclusive representative programming only through temporary exhibitions. This, Le Couteur suggests, is revealing of a lack of commitment to conscientious storytelling in the transitory impermanence of temporary exhibits. Museum spaces that do this,

they say, are applying a surface treatment of the problem of representation that, in fact, only serves to expose museum spaces' disinterest in appropriately addressing their problematic pasts. (2019, p.272)

Sumaya Kassim's account of her time as as co-curator of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery's 2017-2018 exhibition 'The Past is Now' reveals the difficulties of achieving decoloniality in the museum space. Kassim details the emotional traumas of the process that saw herself and her co-curators - who were all women of colour of diverse heritages - often in painful opposition the permanent BMAG staff. Revealing that a nuanced, conscientious approach to representing decolonised narratives in the museum space is subject to a plethora of conflict, Kassim illustrates the resistance to an acknowledgement of the spectrum of privilege according to colour that still endures. Kassim stresses that collaboration, patience, and a commitment to dialogue and reflection is crucial to decolonising museum space storytelling:

> 'The legacies of European colonialism are immeasurably deep, far-reaching and ever-mutating, and so decolonial work and resistance must take on different forms, methods and evolve accordingly. However, one thing that I am sure of is that decolonising is a process we must all work on together. Curating #ThePastIsNow was hard – but I recognise in that difficulty something was changing within us all, that there was the possibility we could work through that difficulty together. The co-curators were learning how institutions work and think, and institutional actors were learning about how institutions can better serve their communities.' (Kassim, 2017)

Kassim also reveals the efficacy of collaborative decolonisation - however painful - in renegotiating relationships, attitudes and identities in positive, mutually beneficial ways. For all its achievements, The Past is Now was a temporary exhibit that tragically did not make it into the permanent displays at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, demonstrating that a permanent, inclusive approach to decolonising museum space continues to be a work in progress.

Former director of the Art Institute of Chicago James Cuno argues against museums as culturally hegemonic imperial tools to reinforce elite status quo, instead defending museum spaces as encyclopaedic institutions that showcase and celebrate the world's plurality and diversity. Cuno argues that Enlightenment aspirations of traditional museum spaces - education for self-improvement and freedom of choice - should be upheld as the prevailing central function of museum spaces. Cuno suggests that a neutral encyclopaedic museum space can empower visitors; giving them the tools to create their own narratives from abundant and varied museum displays that leave room for the visitor's own ways of seeing and interpreting.

Tristram Hunt, director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, echoed and cited Cuno's arguments in his article against the decolonising of museum spaces and repatriation of colonially-acquired museum objects. Where Hunt demands that we '...reimagine [the museum] as a new medium for multicultural understanding' (2018), we might agree. But Hunt's arguments seem to stem from a desire to preserve the status quo without recognising the harm that this status quo still causes. Hunt condemns current decolonising strategies as redundantly dichotomous, arguing that the Empire wasn't all bad. I would like to suggest that Hunt's arguments are redundantly petulant, exposing the supreme privilege that woefully characterises the highest echelons of the institutional museum profession.

What Cuno and Hunt seem to miss is the need for a shift away from top-down storytelling, away from the curator as sole or central storyteller. The neutral encylopaedic museum serves to facilitate a harmfully exoticising 'othering' process and displays objects so far removed from their original contexts as to render them lifeless. Museums may indeed hold rich and varied collections that can excite, educate, fascinate, and provoke dialogue, but if these museums do not situate these objects among a plurality of voices and acknowledge the asymmetrical power structures that facilitated such collections, they run serious risk of further alienation by reinforcing the image of museums as lifeless storehouses that serve to silence, oppress, or simply bore.

So, perhaps, there is a way to reconcile the painful and problematic pasts that museum spaces represent whilst retaining their remarkable collections. I propose that this might be achieved in two important ways: through a public, open acknowledgement of this past, and by giving voice and agency to the lesser-told stories of the excluded, oppressed or othered. Where Hunt misguidedly claims that to decolonise is to decontextualise, what follows is a realisation that what museum spaces, in fact, so desperately need, is to *recontextualise.*

Gopal suggests history is just as nuanced and complex as the present in her account of the lesser-known stories of Britain's colonial subjects as active and empowered by their own means (2019). Telling a new, yet true, story of Empire that she says will serve to foster unity and empathy among British people, Gopal illuminates the ways in which a deeper look - to reach a deeper understanding - of our shared past can reveal nuance and dynamics that can make us think about ourselves and each other in new and empowering ways. Venbrux's account of intercultural exchange and indigenous agency reveals some of the ways relations between colonisers and colonised could be manipulated to benefit indigenous peoples. Venbrux describes how Tiwi objects were manufactured and commodified according to demand from European collectors, and asserts that it was Tiwi who controlled how, where and which items were sold (2001). Venbrux states that a telling of these stories - of the true social relations that objects reveal - is necessary in their display, to tell empowering stories of the intricacies and realities of complex social relations.

Following this, we can see how exhibitions that might give agency to communities in addressing the realities of how objects were acquired, and subsequently, give voice to these communities in the display of their objects. Museum spaces of the traditional kind, with collections facilitated by imperialism, need to accept and publicly acknowledge this legacy, rather than attempt to bury it. An acknowledgement of a violent and oppressive past that is responsible for producing the inequitable systems of privilege that prevail, might be the first healing step in a process of reconstituting universal empathy and mutual understanding. Telling stories of indigenous agency and cultural exchange have the power to be similarly efficacious in promoting a sense of empowerment and equality.

The Horniman Museum's World Gallery in South London is an abundant space, brimming with voices, ideas, identities, objects and stories. The entrance to the World Gallery is dramatic: a narrow opening is flanked on either side by a tall grid system of glass cases, each containing an object of global provenance, chosen for its aesthetic or symbolic value; as simply interesting to look at and think about. Video screens project personal films of local people telling stories about objects that matter to them. The introductory text panel describes the gallery as an anthropological approach that attempts to exhibit a cross-cultural representation of social and

material worlds, rooted in telling the stories of everyday lives, that hopes to evoke a sense of shared humanity. Once inside the gallery, the jumbled taxonomy of the entrance point is reshuffled: the gallery space is organised by geographic region. The objects - of the past - are presented in new contexts that makes use of these objects to tell stories about the people they belong(ed) to, in the present. The objective tone of the curatorial voice is aligned with the multi-toned voices of indigenous artists and individuals via video footage, photography and text transcript. The displays transport and immerse without exoticising: the vibrancy of a modern-day Lagos market is alluded to in an assemblage of objects that sit alongside the museum's Benin Bronzes. A YouTube video of Tibetan hip hop artist Shapaley rapping about Tsampa loops among a display of artefacts and stories of Tibet; a large collection of photographs of '21st century charms' shared by a section of the museum's visitors in 2016 tells a story of modern English magic. And where the objects tell a story of a painful past, so too does the exhibition. The label text accompanying the display of the Benin Bronzes addresses the provenance of these items as stolen during the 1987 violent invasion of the city by the British and cites the Horniman Museum as in consultation with National Museum Lagos and Benin City National Museum about this display. The World Gallery attempts to represent the world as a whole, as opposed to a eurocentric traditional museum space approach that only represents the 'rest of the world'. A cloutie tree rises up above the displays cases towards the back of the gallery, offering space for visitors to pause, participate and share their thoughts and responses. Coloured card tags and pens are supplied for visitors to write on and tie to the tree; visitors are invited to interact with the museum space beyond looking and reading; to make new stories in the museum space, and become part of the museum space through the cloutie tree. The World Gallery at the Horniman utilises old acquisitions to tell conscientious stories. Simultaneously rich and interesting, and also inclusive and multivocal, the World Gallery's approach is conscientious in its egalitarianism, its acknowledgement of painful pasts, and its commitment to telling interesting stories. Without losing any of the richness and curiosity-provoking diversity that Cuno (2011) and Hunt (2019) argue is paramount to museum spaces, the Horniman has successfully recontextualised its collections in an equally unifying and diversifying celebration of shared human lives.

O Tempo Das Huacas is a collaborative project that superimposes the voices and work of living artists, academics and museum professionals onto an exhibit of the mummified bodies of two Chancay Amerindians at the Carmo Archaeological Museum, Lisbon, in an attempt to stimulate dialogue, provoke new ways of thinking and seeing, and crucially subvert and critique the historic power imbalances that created the conditions for these bodies to end up in such a museum space. O Tempo Das Huacas attempts to recontextualise these bodies in a new time-space that simultaneously acknowledges a violent past and speaks to prevailing systems of damaging power and oppression. O Tempo Das Huacas functions as a dynamic, innovative museum space experience. Existing as a website that includes a downloadable print guide which features short essays that give context to the project - describing the history of the bodies in the Carmo Archaeological Museum, the significance of this, and further providing essential critique and commentary to underpin the artworks. The website also includes embedded video art from Amerindian indigenous artists of the Guarani; Baniwa; Huni Kuin; Makuxi and Wanka people. (See: tiny.cc/Huacas-YT) These artworks have been made in response to the questions: *'How do you stand towards the exhibition of the two bodies in cases in the museum?*' and *'What could be done to dignify their memory and the representation of Indigenous peoples?'* Cordeiro and Mourao tell us that:

> '...all the videos potently affirm different ways of existing and resisting via performative acts, works that are poetic reinterpretations of the bodies on display in the museum, or that resonate for us as moments of sharing and informed reflection.' (2018, p.14)

O Tempo Das Huacas was also realised through collaborative a performance art piece that synthesised the works of the artists and took place in Room 4, where the Chancay mummified bodies reside. This performance embodies a creative, energised approach to conscientious decolonised storytelling, seeking to 'to make visible a time of power over the other and to replace it by another kind of time, a time of search for healing, dignity and empathy towards what was lived by other people, in another place, in another time.' (O Tempo Das Huacas, 2018)

The problem of museums in the West persists with regards to colonially acquired artefacts and an absence of voices. And whether by process of repatriation or by process of reframing these objects in contexts that empower, the process of untangling the legacy will undoubtedly be a lengthy and uncomfortable one. In spite of this difficulty, a nuanced and empathetic approach to decolonising the museum space, that utilises our human plurality and capacities for deep mutual understanding through sociality, looks set to be punctuated by significant rewards for those who partake in it.

Levelling the Museum Space

As the examples outlined above demonstrate, the survival of museum spaces relies on a future in which museum spaces are thoroughly egalitarian, representative spaces that can serve to empower groups and communities through their commitment to conscientious storytelling.

In September 2019, I attended the second day of the annual Museums Ideas conference. 'Museum Ideas 2019' showcased a programme of international museum professional speakers who discussed and elaborated on their own museum work and ongoing projects. Throughout the day, themes, ideas, and approaches appeared recurrent and convergent. I heard the speakers discussing their work as characterised by slow processes of collaboration and co-production. A need for critical reflexivity and a disruption of the institutionalised practices of museum spaces was repeatedly raised. Museum spaces' inherent power and authority was challenged. The future path of museum spaces as spaces of dialogue, nuanced representation and egalitarian curatorship was championed as the right one.

Eilish Clohessy, Assistant Curator of Making at Derby Museum and Art Gallery discussed the rewards of the museum's approach to making new exhibitions by embedding their audiences in the processes of production. This approach involved outreach work to engage members of the public in a non-museum space setting as well as opening up the collections department's research and cataloguing process by placing collections staff in the open museum setting and inviting dialogue and comment from visitors - about this work and the museum's objects. Clohessy illuminated the ways in which this process was mutually beneficial through non-hierarchical knowledge-exchange.

Joyoti Roy (Head of Strategy) outlined the obstacles and rewards entailed in CSMVS Museums' creation of a children's museum. Championing participatory methodologies in museums, Roy described CSMVS Museums' creation of a museum that hopes to serve the children of Mumbai: co-created with a 100 of the city's children through a lengthy programme of participatory workshops, the Children's Museum will tell the stories of children, by children, for children.

Kate Forde and Clare Barlow of the Wellcome Collection described their processural, dialogic approach to their redevelopment of their focal exhibition, 'Medicine Now'. A reinterpretation of Medicine Now, arrived at through a process of participatory public engagement activities, takes its stories from these activities and the individuals engaged in them, to produce an exhibition that attempts to problematise and complicate shifting perspectives of human health and the medical gaze in the 21st Century.

These presentations, and their associated museum space exhibitions, all demonstrate the rewards of co-producing museum space stories; all of the speakers describe the process as productive and enlightening. Opening up spaces, figuratively and literally, enables a flow of knowledge and information to pass between people and the museum space, and this knowledge is crucially shared to facilitate the emergence of new meanings made through a socially engaged reciprocal process of making.

Nina Finigan and Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell's respective presentations addressed the cruciality of the museum space as activist space: non-neutral, politically engaged and in support of equitable empowerment. Finigan's presentation characterised Auckland Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira as a politically-loaded site possessing a dual power to elevate or oppress through its storytelling. Championing transparency, accountability and a commitment to conscientious storytelling, Finigan stresses the archival work that museums do, what they 'remember' and 'forget' in doing this work, has serious implications for the people whose stories museum spaces keep hold of or discard. Bryant-Greenwell similarly advocated for museum spaces as socially and politically engaged, resistant spaces that strive to consistently challenge an authoritative status quo.

Jennie Carvill Schellenbacher, writing in Museum iD, corroborates this notion of museum spaces as possessing the power to mobilise and empower their communities via a socially-engaged activist approach. Situating the museum space as uniquely placed to stimulate, provoke, illuminate, subvert, critique and praise, Schellenbacher's article proposes four defining characteristics of the activist museum of the 21st Century. Her final characteristic, of the activist museum's need to 'offer space for oppositional opinions' (2018, p.105) crystallises the role of all museum spaces - with activist objectives or otherwise - as representational spaces of dialogue that invite critique and welcome criticism.

These elucidations from currently practicing museum professionals illuminate the role and activities of 21st Century museums and serve to demonstrate the cruciality of socially engaged non-neutral museum work that needs to be difficult, lengthy and fraught, but will, ultimately, produce colossal rewards for both museum spaces and their communities. The scope of possibility for museum space storytelling exists across a spectrum of urgency: from crucial decolonising projects and exhibitions like Compromised Identities that fearlessly tell difficult stories for the sake of safeguarding future lives, to local museum space stories that serve local communities as seen at

Canterbury Museums. It is important to remember that, while seemingly less pressing, the work of these local museum spaces - if properly undertaken as outlined here - serves to sow the life-giving seeds of social inclusion and empowerment, fostering the health and wellbeing of its communities.

Although I have partitioned these arguments under two headings for the sake of clarity, it must be noted that the issues are not necessarily all that discrete; we find themes, methodologies and potential benefits coalescing and overlapping again and again. The decolonised museum space, once realised, can be an accessible museum space that will invite further participation and go some way to healing trauma and reestablishing human connection. The socially engaged dialogic museum space can serve as an egalitarian community focal point to improve lives. As I have argued previously, the benefits of these approaches do not flow one way: museum spaces that represent and serve their communities stand to reap the rewards of the increased participation of these communities; a vital feedback loop of mutual understanding and mutual empowerment is created.

Reflections on Museum Space Meanings

What I have attempted to demonstrate in this thesis is, ultimately, that museum spaces are relevant, vital and productive sites that can enhance human lives. Museum spaces matter, and the stories told in these museum spaces are immeasurably meaningful. As I have articulated, museum spaces possess the dual power to both oppress and empower, and it is this power that needs to be harnessed and utilised for social good. Both museum space sites described and analysed serve as examples of the ways in which museum space storytelling can produce meanings that change lives. While thoroughly distinct in form, both Compromised Identities and Canterbury Museums represent the potential efficacy of museum space storytelling

The experience of crafting Compromised Identities within a diverse interdisciplinary team was fruitful for understanding the way museum space stories come about. Compromised Identities, as project and museum space in the making, embodies an example of a museum space that strives to deliver uncomfortable truths via stories and historical analysis - to as broad an audience as it is able - for the sake of social empowerment and the prevention of future violence. The process of making Compromised Identities was led by a collaborative, nuanced, slow process that facilitated the emergence of deep, significant meanings. These important emergent meanings were translated into the narrative exhibition.

Participation and engagement with the multiple activities taking place at Canterbury Museums fleshed out an understanding of the multiple, myriad meanings that flow in and out of local, community-orientated museum spaces. Canterbury Museums revealed the vital efficacy of a plurality of dynamic, fluid engagement in the museum, demonstrating just how mutually beneficial museum space engagement can be. Canterbury Museums corroborates the meanings uncovered within Compromised Identities: multiplicity is the key to rich, meaningful and worthwhile storytelling.

One striking parallel to be observed in a comparative examination of Compromised Identities and Canterbury Museums, is in the historical context of Compromised Identities: the Holocaust - and Canterbury Museums Brexit at The Beaney exhibition. These exhibitions - and their equivalent aims to aims to stimulate discussion, provoke reflection, create cohesion and evoke empathy - are especially pertinent to the United Kingdom today: in the context of shifting, turbulent, and arguably even ever-more precarious circumstances, Compromised Identities and Brexit at The Beaney speak to a history of Europe, fractured communities, rising intolerances and growing divisions. Where The Holocaust represented a cruical turning point for the definition of European identities (Chakrabarti In: The Independent, 2005), it seems Britain's departure from the European Union has implications for the reconstitution of identities and relations in Europe, too.

It feels pertinent to note - for the sake of vital critical reflexivity and transparent critique - that neither of these museum spaces are flawless with regards to the ethics of their storytelling. Canterbury Museums, as outlined, still possesses some significantly problematic narratives and narrative approaches. The strength of Compromised Identities with regards to its proposed impact, is yet to be evaluated. The process of crafting Compromised Identities could also be criticised for its specialised knowledge and expert-led approach, but I will stress that this knowledge was plural,

diverse and thoroughly interdisciplinary, and the process of production was driven by a prolonged, patient and exhaustive methodology of social exchange.

Where the two museum spaces present a stark contrast is in their audiences: Compromised Identities is yet to meet its audience and participants, whereas Canterbury Museums is already embedded in a diverse and multitudinous network of stakeholders with diverse backgrounds, needs and expectations. Canterbury Museums, as long established institution, has an arguably more significant reputation to preserve and a much bigger and more varied array of operations. Canterbury Museums also suffers from the problem of significantly more substantial financial needs and constraints.

Where we see the significance of both of these museum spaces converge, however, is in a vision of Compromised Identities appearing in one of Canterbury Museums temporary exhibition spaces. If Canterbury Museums were to include Compromised Identities in its programming schedule, it would be incorporating yet another set of stories, sparking another cluster of museum space meanings, and effecting positive social outcomes in its operational storytelling.

Liminality, as simultaneously symbolic and intangible yet substantial by way of its significance, is drawn upon as liminal space and liminal experience to communicate a sense of the productivity of museum space storytelling. Museum space storytelling is efficacious: it has the power to transform. The liminal - representing both space and experience - has been applied to contextualise both the creative, productive power of museum space storytelling, an invoke the depth of value in how meanings are made in the liminal museum space through liminal storytelling.

The nexus of this ethnographic examination - where all themes, experiences and stories connect - is found in people. The thesis, as diagram, holds human lives at its centre. Museum spaces need people: to tell their stories; to make new stories from, within, around and about them; to receive their stories and retell their stories; to know their stories and use their stories. Museum space functions as a vector, to facilitate reciprocal flows of human intersubjectivity and mutual understanding through its socially engaged conscientious storytelling.

Museum space storytelling should be harnessed as a critical instrument for empowerment and seen as a tool worthy of use. Museum spaces deserve our attention and participation, just as we deserve theirs. As I have outlined, I believe the flow of empowerment and energy between museum spaces and people is circular and has a potent capacity to be enduring. The museum space can no longer be a repository of lifeless things to be passively gazed upon or an authoritative institution that grievously denigrates certain ways of knowing, seeing and being. The museum space of the future should be envisaged as a dynamic, malleable hub for meaning-making that critically fosters empathy, tolerance and mutual understanding. Representational, egalitarian museum space storytelling will not be easy, but museum spaces should see this as both a responsibility and an opportunity to engage in these difficult, painstaking processes to secure their futures and reap the inevitable rewards of a multiplicity of engagement and representation. It must be remembered that museum spaces need people more than people need museum spaces.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adorno, T. (1981) Valery Proust Museum. In: *Prisms.* Trans. Weber, S. & Weber, S. pp.175-85, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Alberti, S.J.M.M (2005) Objects and the Museum. In: *Isis.* 96 (4) pp.559-571

Ames, M.M. (1992) *Cannibal tours and glass boxes: the anthropology of museums.* UBC Press.

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Anila, S (2017) Inclusion Requires Fracturing. In: *Journal of Museum Education.* (42) 2 pp.108-119

Appadurai, A. (2006) The Thing Itself. In: *Public Culture.* 18 (1) pp.15-22.

ASA (2011) *Ethical Guidelines for good research practice* [Online] Available from: https://www.theasa.org/downloads/ASA%20ethics%20guidelines%202011.pdf

Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bal, M. (2006) Exposing the Public. In: MacDonald, S. ed. *A Companion to Museum Studies.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Barinova, Y. (2019) *Feeling is Key to Understanding*. In: Museum iD 24. pp. 37-41.

Barnard, R.H. (2011) *Research methods in anthropology: qualitative and quantitative approaches.* Plymouth: AltaMira.

BBC (2018a) *Brexit timeline: UK's departure from the EU.* [Online] Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43546199 (Accessed 12/9/2019)

BBC (2018b) *Why is Brexit Taking Sooo Long?* [Online] Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43492937 (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Benjamin, W. (1993) The Task of the Translator. In: Bullock, M. & Jennings, M.W. eds. Walter *Benjamin Selected Writings Volume 1 1913-1926.* pp.253-263.

Benjamin, W. (2019) The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov. In: Titan, S. ed. *The Storyteller Essays.* New York: New York Review Books.

Bennet, T. (2013) *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics.* Routledge.

Berdahl, D. (1999) *Where the World Ended: Re-unification and Identity in the German Borderland.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Beringer, J. (2017) *Visitor Experience as Transformational Process Within the Liminal Space* [Online] Available from: https://ngxinteractive.com/visitor-experience-as-a-transformational-process-within-the-liminal-space/ (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Bertolotti, E., Daam, H., Piredda, F & Tassinari, V. (2016) *The Pearl Diver: the designer as storyteller.* Milan: DESIS Network.

Bouquet, M. (2001) *Academic Anthropology and the Museum: Back to the Future (New Directions in Anthropology)* Berghahn.

Bouquet, M. (2012) *Museums: a visual anthropology.* Berg.

Boyd, B. (2009) *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, cognition and fiction.* Belknap Press

Brown, S. & Heigashi, K. (2015) Tea, Cake and Conversation: Creating a Community at The Powell-Cotton Museum. In: *Journal of Museum Ethnography.* 28 pp.107-121.

Bryant-Greenwell, K. (2019a) *Break the Wheel: Museums Challenge the Status Quo*. At: Museum Ideas 2019: Museum of London, 12th September 2019.

Bryant-Greenwell, K. (2019b) Taking a Stand Against Neutrality. In: *Museum iD* 23. pp.44-48.

Busse, M. (2008) Museums and the Things in Them Should Be Alive. In: *International Journal of Cultural Property.* 15. pp.189–200/

Canterbury Museums (n.d.) *Canterbury Museums & Galleries* [Online] Available from: https://canterburymuseums.co.uk/

Chatterjee, H.J. & Camic, P.M. (2013) Museums and art galleries as partners for public health interventions. In: *Perspectives in Public Health.* 133 (1) pp.66-71

Chatterjee, H.J. & Noble, G. (2013) *Museums, Health and Wellbeing.* Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing.

Chavarria, A.R. (2015) Museum Anthropology: Continued Conversations in the Field. In: *Museum Anthology.* 8 (1) pp.3-14. rop

Clifford, J. (1997) Museums as Contact Zones. In: Clifford, J. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century.* London: Harvard University Press. pp.188-219.

Clohessy, E. (2019) *Co-producing the Collections Process for the Museum of Making.* At: Museum Ideas 2019: Museum of London, 12th September 2019.

Coffee, K. (2018) Cultural inclusion, exclusion and the formative roles of museums. In: *Museum Management and Curatorship.* 23 (3) pp.261-279

Cooke, S. (2018) ‘A modern chamber of horrors?’ Temporary Holocaust exhibitions as sites of memory: the1961 Warsaw Ghetto commemoration exhibition, Melbourne. In: *Holocaust Studies A Journal of Culture and History*. Pp.445-465. [Online] Available from: https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2018.1468666

Coward, F. (2016) Scaling up: Material culture as scaffold for the social brain. In: *Quaternary International*. 405 (A) pp.78-90.

[Compromised Identities Team] (2018) *[Request for Quotation]* (PDF)

Cordeiro, F. & Mourão, R. (2018) *O Tempo Das Huacas Unofficial Guide.* [Online] Available from: https://sites.google.com/site/otempodashuacasenglish/

Crane, S. (2006) The Conundrum of Ephemerality: Time, Memory, and Museums. In: MacDonald, S. ed. *A Companion to Museum Studies.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Cuno, J. (2011) *Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopaedic Museum.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

de la Puente, G. (2019) *Why Museums are Bad Vibes* [Online] The White Pube. Available from: https://www.thewhitepube.co.uk/why-museums-are-bad-vibes (Accessed 11/11/2019)

de los Santos, T.M., Smith, E.& Cohen, M. (2018) Targeting Truth: How Museums Can Collaboratively Address Social Issues. In: *Journal of Museum Education.* (43) 2 pp.104-113.

Descolas, P. (1996) A bricoleur’s workshop: writing Les lances du crépuscule. In: MacClancy, J. & McDonaugh, C, ed. *Popularizing Anthropology.* London: Routledge. pp.208-224.

Didion, J. (2006) *We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live.* New York: Everyman’s Library.

Douglas, K. (2009) How storytelling changed us. In: *New Scientist Archive.* 202 (2709) pp.44-44.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. & Bochner, A. (2011) Autoethnography: An Overview. In: *FQS*. 12(1)

Elsner, J. & Cardinal, R. ed.s. (1994) *Cultures of Collecting (Critical Views)*. Reaktion Books.

Fausto, C. (2007) Feasting on People: Eating Animals and Humans in Amazonia. In: *Current Anthropology.* 48 (4) pp.497-530.

Finigan, N. (2019a) In Search of Power and Resistance in the Archive. In: *Museum iD.* 24. pp.42-44.

Finigan, N. (2019b) *Turning the Lens Inward: In Search of Power and Resistance in the Archive.* At: Museum Ideas 2019: Museum of London, 12th September 2019.

Forde, K & Barlow, C. (2019) *Disrupting the Medical Gaze: Reframing and Redeveloping ‘Medicine Now’*. At: Museum Ideas 2019: Museum of London, 12th September 2019.

[FormAtlas] (2019a) *[Compromised Identities Proposal]* (PDF)

[FormAtlas] (2019b) *[Compromised Identities Presentation]* (PDF)

Foucault, M. (1972) *Archaeology of Knowledge.* London: Tavistock Publications.

Foucault, M. (1984) Des Espace Autres In: *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité.* (Online) Available from: http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf. [Accessed 5th April 2018]

Foucault, M. , (1989) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Tavistock/Routledge.

Fyfe, G (2006) Sociology and the Social Aspects in Museums. In: MacDonald, S. ed. *A Companion to Museum Studies.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* US: Basic Books.

Glaisters, S & Travers, T. (2004*) Valuing Museums: Impact and innovation among national museums.* National Museum Directors' Conference [Online] https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/valuing_museums.pdf (Accessed 11/9/2019)

Golding, V. (2009) *Learning at the Museum Frontiers: Identity, Race and Power.* Routledge.

Gonzalez, R., Nader, L. & Ou, C.J. (2001) Towards an Ethnography of Museums: Science, Technology and Us. In: *Academic Anthropology and Museums: Back to the Future.* New York: Berghan. pp.106-116.

Gopal, P. (2019) *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent.* Verso

Happy Museum Project (n.d.) [Online] Available from: http://happymuseumproject.org/ (Accessed 11/9/2019)

Harari, Y.N (2014) *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind.* Harvill Secker.

Hasted, E. (1800) Canterbury: The Castle. In: *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent.* 11 pp. 59-66. [Online] Available from: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol11/pp59-66 [accessed 11/09/2019].

Henare, A.J.M. (2005) *Museums, anthropology and imperial exchange.* Cambridge University Press.

Hetherington, K. (2011) Foucault, the Museum and the Diagram. In: *The Sociological Review.* 59 (3) p.457-475.

Hicks, D. (2019) Reframing Archaeology and Anthropology in Museums. In: *Museum iD.* 24. Pp.27-30.

Hill, K (2005) *Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850-1914*. Ashgate Publishing.

Hill, K. (2014) *Museums and Biographies: Stories, Objects, Identities.* The Boydell Press.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1992) *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. Routledge.

HM Government (2018) *Local Museums (Debate Pack)* CDP-2018-0059 [Online] Available from: http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0059/CDP-2018-0059.pdf (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Hunt, T. (2019) *Should museums return their colonial artefacts?* In: The Observer. [Online] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jun/29/should-museums-return-their-colonial-artefacts (Accessed 9/9/2019)

Jackson, M. (2013) *The politics of storytelling: variations on a theme by Hannah Arendt.* Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum.

Jones, A.L. (1993) Exploding Canons: The Anthropology of Museums. In: *Annual Review of Anthropology.* 22. pp.201-220

Jordanova, L. (1997) Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums. In: Vergo, P. ed. *The New Museology.* London: Reaktion. pp.22-40.

Kassim, S. (2017) *The museum will not be decolonised* [Online] Media Diversified. Available from: https://mediadiversified.org/2017/11/15/the-museum-will-not-be-decolonised/ (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Keene, S. (2006) *Fragments of the World: Uses of Museum Collections.* Routledge.

Kendall-Adams, G (2018) Sector fails to regard Brexit as a cause for celebration. In: *Museums Journal.* 118 (11) pp.14-15.

Kossman, H. & de Jong, M. Ed.s (2010) *Engaging Spaces.* Amsterdam: Frame Publishers.

Kotting, A. (2016) *B is for... Body* [Online] Available from: http://www.andrewkotting.com/ak%20web/BISFORBODY.html (Accessed 25/7/19)

Kreps, C. (2018) *Museums and Anthropology in the Age of Engagement.* Routledge.

Kuklick, H. (2008) *A new history of anthropology.* Blackwell Publishing.

Lassiter, L. (2005) Collaborative Ethnography and Public Anthropology. In: *Current Anthropology* (46:1) pp.83-106.

Le Couteur, C. (2019) *The Fictive Museum* [Online] London: Royal College of Art. PhD by Practice in Fine Art. Available from: http://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/3942/1/The%20Fictive%20Museum%20-%20Clair%20Le%20Couteur.pdf (Accessed 12/11/2019)

Leenhardt, M (1979) The structure of the Person in the Melanesian World In: *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World.* University of Chicago Press. pp. 153-169.

Le Guin, U. (1989) *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places.* New York: Grove Press.

Levi, P. (1986) The Drowned and The Saved. London: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

LOFT Publications (2006) *Exhibition Design.* Rockport Publishers Gloucester: Massachusetts.

Lord, B. (2006) 'Foucault's museum: difference, representation, and genealogy'. In: *Museum and Society.* 14 (4) pp.1-14.

MacClancy, J & McDonaugh, C, ed. (1996) *Popularizing Anthropology.* London: Routledge.

MacDonald, S. Ed. (2006) *A Companion to Museum Studies.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Malinowski, B (1961) *Argonauts of The Western Pacific.* Routledge.

Mariani, I. (2016) Games telling stories of and for social innovation In: *The Pearl Diver: the designer as storyteller.* 1. pp.50-61.

Mauss, M. (1973) Techniques of the Body. In: *Economy and Society.* 2(1) pp.70-88

Mendoza, N. (2017) *The Mendoza Review: an independent review of museums in England.* [Online] Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673935/The_Mendoza_Review_an_independent_review_of_museums_in_England.pdf (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Mertz, Elizabeth (2002). The Perfidy of Gaze and the Pain of Uncertainty: Anthropological Theory and the Search for Closure. In: Greenhouse, Mertz & Warren ed.s *Ethnography in Unstable Places.* London: Duke University Press, pp.355-378.

Mulder, S. (2010) Contexts. In: Kossman, H. & de Jong, M. ed.s *Engaging Spaces.* Amsterdam: Frame Publishers.

Musante, K. & DeWalt, B. (2011) *Participant Observation: A Guide For Fieldworkers.* Maryland: AltaMira Press.

Museums Association (2013) *Campaigns: Museum Funding* [Online] https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museum-funding/museums-in-the-uk (Accessed 11/9/2019)

Museums Association (2013) *Museums Change Lives: The MA's Vision for the Impact of Museums.* [Online] Available from: https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives (Accessed 11/9/2019)

Museums Association (2018) *Museums in the UK 2018 Report* [Online] Available from: https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1244881 (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Museums Association (n.d.) 2030 *Collections: Empowering Collections*. [Online] Available from: https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1262818 (Accessed 12/9/2019)

O Tempo Das Huacas (n.d) [Online] Available from: https://sites.google.com/view/otempodashuacas (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Parry, C. (2019) Permanent Change: Challenges of museums without their own space. In: *Museums Journal.* 119 (3) pp.59-61.

Pearce, S. (1994) *Interpreting Objects and Collections.* Routledge.

Pearce, S. (2017) *Museums, Objects, and Collections: A Cultural Study.* Leicester University Press.

Pina-Cabral, J. (2017) Chapter Four: Person. In: *World: An Anthropological Examination.* Chicago: Hau Books.

Pitt Rivers Museum (2019) *Inviting the world in A Quiet Revolution at the Pitt Rivers* [Online] Available from: https://vimeo.com/332644477 (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Porter, M. (2015) *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*. Faber & Faber.

Pope, L. (2013) *Papers, Please.* [Game] 3909 LLC.

Procter, A. (n.d.) *The Exhibitionist* [Online] Available from: https://www.theexhibitionist.org/ (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Ravelli, L. (2005) *Museum Texts (Museum Meanings).* Routledge.

Reprieve (2018) *Could YOU pass the test to leave Guantánamo?* [Online] Available from: https://act.reprieve.org.uk/page/content/guantanamo-quiz (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Roy, J. (2019) *The Future of Co-Curation in Museums - Stories from India and the UK*. At: Museum Ideas 2019: Museum of London, 12th September 2019.

Rukeyser, M. (1968) The Speed of Darkness. In: *The Speed of Darkness, Poems by Muriel Rukeyser.* Random House

Sahlins, M (2011) What is kinship (part one). In: *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute.* 17 (1): pp.2-19.

Savenije, G.M. & De Bruijn, P. (2017). Historical empathy in a museum: uniting contextualisation and emotional engagement. In: *International Journal of Heritage Studies.* pp.832-845. [Online] Available from: https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2017.1339108

Schellenbacher, J.C. (2019) Towards a Definition of the Activist Museum. In: *Museum iD 23.* pp.101-105.

Sentance, N. (2019) *Your neutral is not our neutral* [Online] Archival Decolonist. Available from: https://archivaldecolonist.com/2019/09/27/your-neutral-is-not-our-neutral-3/ (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Slade, D. (2018) *Bandersnatch* [Film} Netflix.

Sharp, R. (2019) Anxiety deepens over risk of no-deal Brexit. In: *Museums Journal* 119 (3) p.9.

Silverman, R.A. (2014) *Museum as Process: Translating Local and Global Knowledges*. Routledge.

Simms, A. (2019) The Museum of Rapid Transition. In: *Museum iD* 23. pp.77-85.

Sodaro, A. (2008) *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*. Rutgers University Press

Smith et. al. (2017) Cooperation and the evolution of hunter-gatherer storytelling. In: *Nature Communications*. 8 (1853)

Stanley, N. (1998) *Being ourselves for you: the global display of cultures.* Middlesex University Press.

Strathern, M. (1988) *The Gender of the Gift*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sugiyama, M.S. (1996) On the Origins of Narrative: Storyteller Bias as a Fitness-Enhancing Strategy. In: *Human Nature.* 7 (4) pp. 403-425.

Tassinari, V., Piredda, F. & Bertolotti, E. (2017) Storytelling in design for social innovation and politics: a reading through the lenses of Hannah Arendt. In: *The Design Journal.* pp. 1756-3062. [Online] Available from: https://doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2017.1352852 (Accessed 9/8/19)

The Empathetic Museum (n.d.) [Online] Available from: http://empatheticmuseum.weebly.com/ (Accessed 11/9/2019)

The Independent (2005) *What is the Legacy of the Holocaust?* [Online] Available from: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/what-is-the-legacy-of-the-holocaust-16993.html

Thomas, N. (2016a) *The Return of Curiosity: What are museums good for in the 21st Century.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Thomas, N. (2016b) We need ethnographic museums - whatever you think of their history. In: *Apollo Magazine.* [Online] Available from: https://www.apollo-magazine.com/we-need-ethnographic-museums-today-whatever-you-think-of-their-past/

Travers, T. (2006) *Museums and Galleries in Britain: Economic, social and creative impacts.* National Museum Directors' Conference and Museums, Libraries and Archives Council [Online] Available from: https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/museums_galleries_in_britain_travers_2006.pdf (Accessed 11/9/2019)

Turnbull, C (1990) Liminality: a synthesis of subjective and objective experience, In: R. Schechner and W. Appel, ed.s *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual.* Cambridge, University Press, pp. 50-81.

Turner, V. (1967) 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage' In: *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 93-111.

UK GOV (2019) *Visits to museums and galleries.* [Online] Available from: https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/culture-and-heritage/adults-visiting-museums-and-galleries/latest (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Watson, S. (2014) Communities and Museums: Equal Partners? In: Silver, R.A. ed. *Museum as Process: Translating Local and Global Knowledges.* Routledge. pp.228-246.

Wright, S. (2015) *The Beaney suffers dramatic drop in visitors.* [Online] Kent Online. Available from: https://www.kentonline.co.uk/canterbury/news/museum-suffers-dramatic-drop-in-visitors-186266/ (Accessed 12/9/2019)

Van Gennep, A. (1960) *Rites de Passage.* London: Routledge.

Venbrux, E. (2001) On the Prehistory of Baldwin Spencer's Collection of Tiwi Artefacts. In: MacDonald, S. ed. *Academic Anthropology:Back to the Future.* New York: Berghan. pp.55-74.

Vergo, P. Ed. (1989) *The New Museology.* Reaktion Books.

Young, D. (2006) The Colours of Things. In: Tilley, C. et al. eds. *Handbook of Material Culture.* London: SAGE. pp.173-185.

Zalewska, M. (2018) Selfies from Auschwitz: Rethinking the Relationship Between Spaces of Memory and Places of Commemoration. In: *The Digital Age. Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media.* [Online] Available from: https://www.digitalicons.org/issue18/selfies-from-auschwitz-rethinking-the-relationship/ (Accessed 9/11/19)