

Assignment Five – Presentation of *Lifting the Curtain*

Scope of Work

My final Assignment for my Your Own Portfolio course will deal with the how I plan to present *Lifting the Curtain*. This paper sets out the scope of work that I intend to cover.

I was very taken by this observation by Angela Kelly, which I read recently. It is from her essay *Book, Exhibition, Lecture, Website – Revisiting Catharsis: Images of Post-Conflict Belfast (1)* :

The photographer in the digital age no longer needs to work towards a single material form or end point. Work may gain new traction long after it was first conceived or developed. Each new context can suggest a new audience or can lead to a new interpretation of the work...

This opened my mind about the possible end-point for *Lifting the Curtain* in terms of presentation. As Kelly suggests this need not be restricted to a single form. Indeed, the best way forward may be to use two or more forms in parallel. I also need to be open to reconsidering the form of presentation over time should new opportunities and venues for showing the work emerge.

It has also become clear to me is that the form of presentation is generally dependent upon the venue (real or virtual) used for the 'show'. Considerations on layout for a book are quite different than those for gallery prints for example. And were I to go down the path of a gallery presentation, the nature of the gallery environment also impinges on the form of presentation. A tiny gallery on Brick Lane in East London, for example, would not be the right place for a large screen multimedia presentation. But if an opportunity to show my work at such a gallery came along would I turn it down? — I think not if this provided an effective avenue for getting my work out to the public. I would tailor my presentation to the venue. It is clear therefore that I need to consider both the form of presentation and the venue (real or virtual) within which the work will be shown.

My other concern is that I do not want my plan for presentation to be simply a theoretical exercise. I want to come up with a plan that I genuinely believe I have a chance of implementing. This means that my ideas need to be loaded with a heavy dose of realism. It is abundantly clear that one cannot move to directly exhibiting in Tate Modern. There are steps along the way. My aim therefore is to produce a plan that is both incremental and achievable.

Whatever the form of presentation it should enable the viewer/reader to interact with the work as I intended. To achieve this, the viewer/reader needs to be able to give careful consideration to both the image and the text; to 'get' that they are linked; to have the time to consider the social issues involved; and the time to reflect on the relevance of these issues today. As such there are a number of fundamental structural elements need to be in place: each image and text should be presented in close proximity — juxtaposition is needed for the viewer/reader to connect them; for each pairing the image and text should be perceived as having equal standing — neither should dominate the presentation; the reader/viewer should be able to decide how much time to spend viewing the work and be able to move backwards and forwards between each image and its associated text. Any form

of presentation meeting these fundamentals should enable the type of an involved interaction with the work I hope for.

With the above broad principles in mind, I have mapped out the scope of work to produce a plan for presenting *Lifting the Curtain*.

1. Consider and evaluate possible modes of presentation

This should include but not be restricted to the following:

- Photographic prints with caption cards
- Image/text panels presented as photographic prints
- Posters incorporating image and text
- Postcards incorporating image and text
- Prints with image and text on alternative substrates, e.g. newspaper, textiles and such like
- Video
- Book (in physical form)
- E-Book
- Internet site
- Lecture format

It perhaps goes without saying but it is vitally important that the form of presentation selected must 'fit' with the concept/strategy for the work and enhance its overall impact. In this respect I have already come up with a few ideas.

Charles Booth and his team were based at Toynbee Hall, a charitable mission in Spitalfields that is still in operation. Linking the presentation to Toynbee Hall is both relevant and creates a platform for promoting the work. This link could be established by actually staging an exhibition at Toynbee Hall or by using my work as a means of raising money for the charity. For example if I presented the work in book form I could donate £10 to the charity from each book sold.

Linking the presentation to the public library in Whitechapel (The Ideal Store) is another possibility. Booth's survey was in book form and presented information on poverty. Staging a book launch or a gallery presentation or a both at this venue would be an interesting prospect, as it would take the work to a public audience beyond that of the art gallery.

I have also been using the on-line archive of Booth's notebooks as a source for some of my quotations. This archive is maintained by London School of Economics. Linking my presentation to their database on some basis, possibly on-line offers another potential opportunity.

At a more detailed level it will be necessary also to consider the design of the presentation including the spatial organisation of image and text, the text fonts and sizing to be used, the typographical alignment, the size of the image/text panels, the size, aspect ratio and

orientation of the photographs, and in book form the layout, the method and costs of production etc.

2. Research and evaluate possible venues (both physical and virtual) for showing the work

Venues to be considered should include (but not restricted to) the following:

Group exhibitions and open competitions

Magazines (both physical and on-line)

Toynbee Hall (a charitable mission still in business today which was the original location of Charles Booth and his team in 1889)

Small galleries/cafes in Whitechapel and Spitalfields

The Idea Store Whitechapel – the borough's flagship library, learning and information service

Shops in Spitalfields as distribution outlets for a book

Dedicated website for online show

Distribution of book/E-Book via dedicated website with link to Toynbee Hall/Idea Store websites

Link with London School of Economics website (LSE maintain Charles Booth online database)

Exhibition in conjunction with London School of Economics Booth Archive (on-line)

3. Develop strategy for presentation

This will bring together my conclusions on modes of presentations and possible venues and take the form of a plan for taking the work into the public domain. This will include proposals on how I would promote the show in whatever form it takes e.g. exhibition, book, website and so on, along with estimates of costs and timescales

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4. Produce a 'Pro Forma' presentation for Assessment Submission to OCA

This will illustrate how the work will be presented and will include final versions of the presentation materials, e.g. prints, video, a book, website etc. What I present will depend upon the outcome of my research. In the event my proposed strategy for presentation includes a physical exhibition, I will also produce a plan of how the space would be laid out and details of supporting materials, e.g. catalogue, posters and so on, and if at all possible photographs/video of the actual installation (this is a long shot but something worth aiming for).

1) Wilkie T. et al (eds.) (2012) *Photography and the Artists Book* Edinburgh: MuseumsEtc Limited, p. 175