

Narrative, Story and Discourse: The Novium, Chichester

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Abstract

This paper seeks to engage with the notion of *discourse*, and to test and apply ideas from literary and film theory in the analysis of architectural - and particularly museum - space. It seeks to explore the complex set of relations between *narrative*, *story* and *discourse* as manifest in a particular contemporary museum: The Novium in Chichester, UK. This new museum was opened in 2012 and designed to contain the remains of Chichester's Roman bathhouse. The piece considers degrees of synonymy between 'story' and 'discourse', or 'medium' and 'message', as encountered during visitors' journeys through the space of the museum.

Keywords: Narrative; story; discourse; content; expression; museum space; materiality; distance; time

Buildings are important. One can always put a book away. ...a building and the city are always present across time, across history. The act of building itself transforms the culture of a city.¹

Daniel Libeskind; Daniel Libeskind: Traces of the Unborn

Introduction

This paper seeks to explore the barriers of space and time inherent in the Novium museum in Chichester, and the design strategies used to bridge these for the creation of spaces of meaningful encounter. It considers three key moments of the building's *promenade architecturale*² - a processional strategy 'of which he [architect, Keith Williams] is so fond'³. In so doing it explores the conflation of 'now' and 'then', 'here' and 'there', and 'us' and 'them': or time; space; and empathetic distance. This article takes the 1978 text *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* by Seymour Chatman as a principal frame of reference, and considers a literary and film theory contained in relation to the three-dimensions of urban, architectural and exhibition design.⁴

¹ Daniel Libeskind quoted in LeCuyer, A.W. 1996. *Daniel Libeskind: traces of the unborn*, 41. Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan.

² The concept of the architectural promenade – or the observer's pathway through built space – was central to the work of Le Corbusier.

³ Powell, K. 2009. Architecture of the specific: the romantic rationalism of Keith Williams. In *Keith Williams: Architecture of the Specific*, A. Hall, ed., 14. Mulgrave, Australia: The Images Publishing Group.

⁴ Chatman, S. B. 1983. *Story and discourse: narrative structure in fiction and film*, 26. London: Cornell University Press.

Norrie acknowledges ‘...the agency of architecture to construct rhetorical and spatial narratives that are central to both experience and the perception of meaning’,⁵ and such stories at the Novium are explored here. Chatman outlines the constituent parts of narrative:

Structuralist theory argues that each narrative has two parts: a story (*histoire*), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (*discours*), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated. In simple terms, the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*.⁶

This distinction, recognized since Aristotle’s *Poetics*, is explored in each of the three key architectural moments along the *promenade architecturale*. Chatman contends that ‘[s]tory is the content of the narrative expression, while discourse is the form of that expression’,⁷ and this division is explored and at times problematized here. Varying degrees of congruence between ‘story’ and ‘discourse’ are considered, in an attempt to unpack the complex relations between the medium and the message.⁸

A particular case study - the Novium in Chichester, West Sussex - is critiqued to further this exploration. The new museum building by Keith Williams Architects was opened in July 2012,⁹ and is sited in the heart of both Roman and twenty-first century Chichester; it straddles a sizeable existent portion of a Roman bath house complex. The contents of the museum and stories of the place are clearly visible in a deep archaeological pit, ‘which now reveals the Roman remains, 1.5 metres below street level, enclosed by glass cases holding the bits and bobs dropped by the last bathers almost 2,000 years ago: dress pins, ointment and oil jars, a regimental badge’.¹⁰ The museum’s remit is to explore the history, people and places of Chichester and the surrounding district, and as such, the museum is a reflection of the city and vice versa. This article will explore the extant architectures present on, and adjacent to, the site, in relation to both Chatman’s ‘story’ and ‘discourse’. The ‘manifestations’ of Chatman’s discourse are architectural, but also include interpretive layers of urban response, text, graphics, audio and film. For example, as the French Structuralist Claude Bremond believes, ‘[i]t [the story] may be transposed from one medium to another without losing its essential properties’.¹¹ The enquiry will be particularly focused on moments of temporal overlap between Roman, Medieval and contemporary Chichester: both materially and conceptually.

External Relations: The Museum Artefact

...(the museum is) the most typical institution of the metropolis, as characteristic of its ideal life as the gymnasium was of the Hellenic city or the hospital of the medieval city.¹²

Lewis Mumford; The City in History

⁵ Norrie, J. 2013. Urban narratives: museums and the city, 216. The University of Melbourne: Ph.D. thesis.

⁶ Chatman, S. 1978. *Story and discourse: narrative structure in fiction and film*, 19. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

⁷ Chatman. 1978. *Story and discourse*, 23.

⁸ Marshall McLuhan’s assertion that ‘the medium is the message’ is of relevance here.

⁹ The museum is Phase 1 of the overall project, with a residential development to the north of the site – the construction of which is yet to be begun - constituting Phase 2.

¹⁰ Kennedy, M. 6 July 2012. Guardian.co.uk, accessed Tuesday 15 January 2013.

¹¹ Bremond, C. 1964. Le message narrative. *Communications*. 4: 4-32.

¹² Mumford, L. 1961. *The city in history*, 561. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.

The Novium's *promenade architecturale* begins out in the city, far beyond the walls of the museum. It is the discourse between the museum building as artefact within the wider urban context which is of particular interest here. The museum sits as an object within the urban landscape; as the latest addition to the 'crystallized history'¹³ of the interpretative terrain of Chichester.¹⁴ Indeed, from its origins as a military base at the outset of the Roman occupation of Britannia, through its prolonged history as a provincial market town, Chichester has become an archaeological and architectural palimpsest. Its aggregated layers speak concurrently of the people and events of the town's many pasts.¹⁵ In this sense, Chichester is analogous to Geddes's Edinburgh: 'Geddes [having] believed that cities can be understood ... as 'Open-Air Museums of the Centuries'.¹⁶

Insert images 1 & 2 here

Keith Williams Architects faced both opportunities and threats from the museum's richly layered and fiercely protected urban context. As a result they chose to deploy a range of associative references, interestingly 'both constructed and construed', or intentional and unintentional.¹⁷ As such, they were portraying the 'story' or 'content' of Chichester's built and lived heritage through their designed 'discourse' or 'expression'. Most obvious here, perhaps, is the architectural referencing of the cathedral's bell tower. The bell tower stands to the south of West Street within the cathedral precinct, and terminates the southern vista at the end of Tower Street on which the Novium is sited. This tower, which has its origins in the fifteenth century, is the only extant separate bell tower in any English cathedral. Unlike the cathedral itself, which was predominantly constructed of relatively hard-wearing Caen stone transported on boats from France, the bell tower utilized an inferior stone from Ventnor on the Isle of Wight. As a result it appears to be considerably more weathered, and hence older looking, than the cathedral. The Novium design clearly references the bell tower, with a taller extruded structure to the north of the museum, as seen in images 2 and 3. This is emphasized by: the layered façade, protruding at second floor tower level and in a frame around the entrance portal, but recessed elsewhere to create contrast and articulation of parts to whole; the dark strip glazing at first floor level below the tower, and the vertical slit window on the tower's street façade. The Novium's tower is also in dialogue with the cathedral tower itself, produced to the designs of George Gilbert Scott following the collapse of the earlier tower and spire in 1861. This dialogue becomes much clearer, as we shall see, at a later point in the *promenade architecturale*. Additionally, in accordance with the two-way flow implicitly required for discourse, the architects explain how the tower form is as concerned with proclaiming itself as deferring to its surroundings: 'At its northern end, the museum's main elevation incorporates a cubic turret to introduce variety and accent to the street scene and to announce the museum to both West Street and the approach from the city walls to the north.'¹⁸

¹³ This reading of the nineteenth century city was forwarded by Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), the Scottish biologist, sociologist, geographer, philanthropist and pioneering town planner. It led him to advocate 'conservative surgery' – or the adaptation of historic urban fabric to accommodate the needs of the present.

¹⁴ Geddes, P. 2001. In Howard, D. Edinburgh. In *Cities for the new millennium*, M. Echenique and A. Saint, eds. 151. London and New York: Spon Press.

¹⁵ Lockton, G. P., ed. 2008. *Walk into Chichester's past: the definitive guide to Chichester's visible history*, a brief history of Chichester. Emsworth, Hants.: Chichester & District Archaeology Society.

¹⁶ Welter, V. 2003. The return of the muses: Edinburgh as a museion. In *The architecture of the museum: symbolic structures, urban contexts*, Giebelhausen, M., ed., 147. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

¹⁷ Norrie, *Urban narratives*, 171.

¹⁸ Hall, ed. *Keith Williams: architecture of the specific*, 145.

The architects discerned another key dialogue present on the site of the museum, which informed their design approach:

Chichester's character changes markedly just north of West Street and its freestanding medieval bell tower. The immediate vicinity of the museum site was irrevocably altered during the 1960s and 1970s, when many of the historic buildings that once formed the street scene were swept away. Consequently, few buildings of evident architectural significance survive, beyond those listed on Tower Street to the south and opposite the museum site. The site for the museum is currently a brownfield car park, beneath which are the remains of the city's Roman baths.

In response to this setting, Williams' museum and residential project attempts to establish a new urban grain¹⁹ by creating a unified block with a new set of buildings along Tower Street and Woolstaplers setting up a new coherent streetscape.²⁰

This identified 'hinge' nature of the site became an important starting point, with the design addressing the south and west aspects rather differently than the north one:

The city's set-piece public and religious structures such as the market cross, cathedral and bell tower are all constructed in pale stone in a city that is otherwise brick or render. The new museum will be clad in pale reconstructed stone, establishing its architectural and cultural connection with Chichester's grander public structures and creating an architectural accent among Tower Street's otherwise brick buildings. The residential development is seen as fulfilling a supporting role to the museum and is composed of red brick with a set-back attic storey consistent with the typical housing model of the city.²¹

Here different 'expressions' are applied to different site 'contents'. The reconstituted stone facades of the museum express the building's civic and cultural standing and create an architectural association with the historically significant city core and its monuments to the south. Meanwhile, the brick facades of the second phase residential development to the north are an attempt to respond to the more everyday, vernacular character of place, as well as the more fragmented nature of the surrounding residential and commercial urban morphology. The Novium's design attempts to maintain coherence across these two major elements, with largely unbroken and historically derived street frontages, and consistent height lines both within the two museum elements and beyond to the surrounding built environment. The other major exterior element of the scheme is the glazed cut-away entrance at ground floor level, which with its clear 'shop front' typology, acknowledges Chichester's commercial heritage, introduces a narrow passageway common to the urban grain of the city, and sets up subtle and suggestive reflections of the surrounding buildings.

Insert image 3 here

As Norrie contends, '... the museum itself is an artifact whose history can be read, provoking new institutional and urban narratives that evoke relationships between the past, present and future.'²²

¹⁹ or morphology

²⁰ Hall, ed., *Keith Williams: architecture of the specific*, 143.

²¹ Hall, ed., *Keith Williams*, 145.

²² Norrie, *Museums and the city*, 137.

This vital counterpoise between the discourses of past, present and future stories, is acknowledged by the design team: 'The new museum, when realised, is intended to achieve a delicate balance between the contemporary and the historic. The museum will be a new symbol [of] a city that is proud of its heritage but recognises that, like all cities, it must also embrace cultural change.'²³ In order to promote pride in the city's past, the designers have incorporated 'associative references [which] underpin the formal composition; some are deliberately constructed and others can be interpreted through active engagement.'²⁴ 'While these metaphorical associations are not necessarily intended to be perceived as part of the museum experience, they are central to form generation and inherently affect the character of the spatial composition and the nature of the visitor's experience'²⁵, and they '...demonstrate the continuing 'unshakeable intimacy' between the museum and the city and highlight a gamut of ways of understanding the relationship between the institution and the city.'²⁶

The Roman Bath House

The next key station along the visitors' experiential route occurs on the ground floor of the museum, which occupies the site of a former Roman bath house from the Flavian period (between 69AD and 96AD). In the wake of Caesar's military expeditions to Britain from 55 to 54 BC, the Romans began establishing the settlement of Noviomagus Reginorum on the site of present-day Chichester in AD 46.²⁷ Soon it became an important outpost for trade and defense, with a ditch dug around the perimeter and a wall built from its spoil. The wall contains four cardinal checkpoints and encircling cruciform thoroughfares within.²⁸ Within this infrastructure, a strong civic base was established, with a basilica, forum and temple complementing the bath house. Following an array of different uses in succeeding centuries, it was not until 1974 that serious archaeological excavations took place. The site measured 1300 square meters in total; 4000 cubic meters of soil was removed, and 8 tons of pottery and 2400 small finds were unearthed. All this was done over 440 days, and almost all by volunteers.²⁹

The presence of these archaeological remains coincided with the museum's overall objective to tell the story of Chichester over the past 500,000 years. The remains significantly informed Keith Williams Architects' structural and overall design response. It will be argued that, in Chatman's terms, the bath house area demonstrates congruence between 'story' and 'discourse', or 'content' and 'expression', with the authentic materiality of the site connecting directly to its past narratives. Whilst the temporal gap inevitably remains, the physical gap was bridged in the design of the external museum artifact by architectural referencing. As such, the narrative may be deemed to have greater coherence and affective power.

However, without interpretation, it can be argued that the remains are largely mute to the non-expert - creating, in Sverre Fehn's terms, 'a walk around dead things'. So, Keith Williams, along with the Novium's curatorial team, chose to incorporate a series of interpretive layers to reveal the past lives of the site. This 'discourse' or 'expression' took the form of a film projected onto the concrete back wall of the gallery space, strictly below the line of the projecting staircase, which attempts to 'recreat[e]

²³ Hall, ed., *Keith Williams*, 145.

²⁴ Norrie, *Museums and the city*, 171.

²⁵ Norrie, *Museums and the city*, 206.

²⁶ Black, B. 2000. On exhibit: Victorians and their museums, 24. In *Museums and the city*, Norrie, 216.

²⁷ The name 'Novium' came from the conflation of the beginning of 'Noviomagus Reginorum' (new market of the people) with the end of 'museum'.

²⁸ Present day North, South, East and West Streets follow the lines of these former Roman roads.

²⁹ Information taken from displays in the Novium.

the glory days, when the city was an important and wealthy Roman base, with fountains, marble columns, statues and frescos.’³⁰ Its mix of objective architectural information with dramatic reinterpretations of life in the Roman bath house allows the visitor insight to a particular projection of the narrative of place, but is singular and closed, rather than multiple and stimulating of the imagination. Supplementing this digital layer are the Roman artifacts themselves. Many were found during excavation of the site, so they have a congruence or sameness of content and expression. They are displayed in glass cases adjacent to the glazed banister overlooking the bath house remains with the interpretative film playing in the background, which achieves a strong narrative through the integration of ‘content/story’ and ‘expression/discourse’.

The architectural palimpsest of the site is revealed through layers of different media then, but what role does the contemporary architecture play here? The building was constructed using pile foundations to protect the archaeological site and to allow the structure to span the classical complex. This new structure encases a double-height space which opens directly from the transparent street facade. The architectural language of concrete frame here is honest in its robust structural and material simplicity, thereby corresponding with the technically legible and adept constructions of the Romans, but lacking their showiness of façade treatment and detailing. Stan Allen suggests for the architecture of Enrique Miralles, that ‘each new project is an unfolding dialogue’ and the architecture seeks to ‘inscribe new traces, and overlay new traces, without erasing the old’, utilizing site strategies that allow ‘the city flow through the project’.³¹ At a pragmatic level, the architecture on the ground floor of the Novium does retain the old and allow the city to flow through the project, although its understated aesthetic may not have inscribed a sufficiently characterful ‘new trace’.

Insert image 4 here

Keith Williams Architects have guaranteed the safe housing and longevity of Chichester’s Roman bath house remains with a robust and visually discrete architectural envelope or frame. Architecturally, if not financially,³² the museum is also accessible to all, with its transparent and welcoming entry sequence along Tower Street from the city center to the south. In this sense, the architects have adhered to the ideas of the influential urban thinker, Patrick Geddes, who ‘advocated a process of ‘conservative surgery’ that utilized both conservation and adaptation to enhance the historic pattern of occupation, and to allow for the layers of collective memory of the city to be retained and reinstated.’³³ What is as yet unclear is the additive value of the new twenty-first century layer to this multifaceted, aggregated site. The built response works for the past and present, but time will tell if - like the architecture of Eisenman et. al., according to Isenstadt - it has rich potential for the future: ‘Like Eisenman, Aalto, Scarpa, Utzon and Miralles demonstrate a form of projective ‘site thinking’ that conforms to Isenstadt’s ideal of ‘thinking through existing fabric, the sphere of the present, in terms of what is to come’.’³⁴ The Novium certainly offers up this possibility of projective

³⁰ Kennedy, M. 6 July 2012. Chichester’s new £7m museum displays Roman past. *The Guardian*, 2.

³¹ Allen, S. 2001. Mat urbanism: the thick 2-D. In *Le Corbusier’s Venice Hospital*, H. Sarkis, ed., 119. New York: Prestel.

³² The Novium charges a basic entrance fee of £7.00 for adults and £2.50 for under 16s. Entry is free for those under 4 years.

³³ Norrie, Museums and the city, 151.

³⁴ Isenstadt, S. 2005. Contested context. In *Site matters: design concepts, histories and strategies*, C.J Burns and A. Kahn, eds., 178. London: Routledge.

site thinking, or the potential connectivity between past, present and future, but the relative success of this will only be revealed with time.

Cathedral View

The third and final key stage of the Novium's *promenade architecturale* is composed of both destination and journey, the latter prescribed by a monumental staircase ascending through the building. Indeed, strongly articulated, processional stairs form a key component of several of Keith Williams Architects civic commissions, including the Unicorn Theatre, London, and Ireland's Athlone Civic Centre. The Novium is no exception. From the open span, double-height space of the first floor, the visitor enters a sculpturally separate, enclosed concrete staircase, rising uninterrupted to the third floor.³⁵ At this point the pit below becomes visible once again through a slit window onto the first floor. This retains an important physical and conceptual connection with Chichester's internalized past below, before the stair rises again - back on itself - towards the light above. In this second stair shaft, a roof light overhead, together with artificially-lit, thin, slit apertures on the side walls, provide subtle low-level lighting and a sense of enclosure from the building and city around. Both of these sensations are shattered at the top of the stairs with a flood of natural light into the third-floor glazed light box, and the dramatic revelation of the skyline of Chichester. Just as Norrie suggested, then in relation to the Museum of Scotland, '[t]he dynamic relationship between the museum and the city is enhanced by the shifting perception of separation and integration.'³⁶ The contrast between the decontextualization of the stairwells, and the intense site specificity of the viewing gallery is marked, and serves to heighten the visitor's experience of place and space. The choreographed route controls this experience, and '[b]y performing the ritual of walking through the museum, the visitor is prompted to enact and thereby to internalize the values and beliefs written into the architectural script.'³⁷

Insert image 5 here

Once the journey via the grand staircase up to the 'Cathedral View gallery' is complete, narrative is again revealed as a composite of both 'story' and 'discourse'. The city skyline provides the exhibition artifacts, or 'content', which are given particular expression through a range of interpretive strategies. The city is drawn into the narrative of the museum, and the visitor becomes the assimilator of this urban display. As Gibelhausen asserts, albeit in a different context: '...the panoramic view furnishes a more detached and picturesque perception that turns the city itself into an exhibit to be consumed visually and from a distance. This perspective renders the viewer at once a reader and godlike: according to Michel de Certeau, '[i]t transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes'.³⁸ Indeed the best architect-curators are always attempting to set scenes, as at Carlo Scarpa's Castellvecchio, where, '[t]he placing of the monument (Cangrande) was a fine example of one of the basic principles of the architect's museological work: the inseparable

³⁵ Please note that US floor level terminology is used here. These are the ground and second floors respectively in the UK.

³⁶ Norrie, *Museums and the city*, 174.

³⁷ Duncan, C. and Wallach, A. 1980. The universal survey museum. *Art History* 3, no. 4: 450.

³⁸ Gibelhausen, M. 2003. *The architecture of the museum: symbolic structures, urban context*, 9. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

nature of the architecture and the staging.³⁹ Here, it is the city's monuments which are being staged, which fulfils the museum's remit to display the historical development of the city, and ensures a meaningful bond between the Novium and Noviomagus Reginorum: 'Views through and beyond the building create shifting relationships of adjacency and scale that reinforce the dynamic relationship between movement and visual spectacle, creating ambiguity between the inside and outside and the museum and the city.'⁴⁰

The first interpretive strategy, which takes the form of an accompanying audio installation giving a 'view over 1000 years of Chichester's history', is pared-down and factual, providing chronological progression and successful contrast from the Roman baths film on the first floor, allowing more room for individual interpretation and imagination. With the cathedral and bell tower most prominent to the south and west respectively, the audio narration focuses primarily on Chichester's medieval and modern history. The narration charts the transformations of the cathedral since its instigation in 1108, through the erection of a separate bell tower in the late 1300s and early 1400s, neglect following the Reformation, and restoration in the 1840s, to the cathedral spire's collapse in February 1861, and its subsequent redesign by George Gilbert Scott.⁴¹ The commentary encourages the visitor to rest on the benches provided, and draws their gaze out into the city and story beyond the confines of the museum. Through this gaze, the physical gap between the Novium and the city which it is 'curating' is narrowed, and via the audio guide, the temporal gap between the contemporary museum and the medieval and modern city is also reduced.

Spoliation, or the display of fragments, is another 'discourse' in operation at this point on the display route. A range of masonry fragments, tiles, and other architectural elements from the cathedral precinct are displayed on the east wall facing the stairs. This creates a high degree of coalescence between museum content, civic context, and the critical interpretation, or exegesis, provided. Most of the fragments are also displayed in a similar orientation to their original positioning, thereby further strengthening this integration, or lack of interpretive barrier. In dialogue across the interior space, against the west wall are a series of decorative chimney pots: the sacred facing the secular, the civic facing the domestic. A more outward-looking visual dialogue is also established, through the layered vista of chimney pots as museum artifacts, read in relation to the clusters of similar chimneys visible across the skyline beyond.

Insert images 6 and 7 here

The final mode of expression to be discussed is simple, yet powerful: the designers have applied a transparent film with sketched silhouette of the skyline to the glazing of this light-box viewing gallery. Comparisons here abound, to Mannerism,⁴² for example, which is not new to the work of Keith Williams. Indeed Kenneth Powell writes in his essay entitled, 'Architecture of the Specific: The Romantic Rationalism of Keith Williams', of the architect's 'mannerist leanings', and the shifting perspectives and plays of parallax here when trying to line up the real and the representational are a

³⁹ Beltrami, G. and Zannier, I. 2006. *Carlo Scarpa: architecture and design*, 144. New York: Rizzoli.

⁴⁰ Norrie, *Museums and the city*, 173.

⁴¹ The current tower, which is 82 meters in height, was constructed to the designs of George Gilbert Scott.

⁴² Mannerism is characterized by the use of motifs in deliberate opposition to their original significance or context. Keith Williams Architects' various formal, material, and symbolic plays on expectations relate to this design tendency.

demonstration of this tendency. The resulting composition of urban objects arranged along the museum's walls, or ornaments along a mantelpiece also recalls the work of the Surrealists, as well as Le Corbusier's Beistegui apartment roof terrace in Paris.⁴³ There;

[a]t one end there was a false Rococo fireplace, on the mantelpiece of which the Arc de Triomphe seemed to sit like an *objet trouvé* turned into a clock. Of course, Beistegui's sophisticated guests would have recognised the reference to Magritte's Surrealist paintings immediately they arrived on the roof, drinks in hand.⁴⁴

Here the *objets trouvés* are centuries old and integral to the overall narrative of the museum. Their stories are expressed and accentuated through the designed interpretation.

Insert image 8 here

The Cathedral Viewing Gallery is an attempt by the architects to create a dialogue between inside and out, institution and urban realm, museum and city, in order to re-contextualize the museum's collections in light of the surrounding civic context. Furthermore, it curates the city by bringing it in to the heart of the exhibition. In these objectives, albeit in a modest way, it draws on the tradition of Geddes' Outlook Tower in Edinburgh, which, 'symbolised the way in which identity is forged from exchange, from two-way communication between our roots in our own community and our links with the wider world, and between our past and our present. It is not a static thing, but a constant process of mediation between fluctuating perceptions.'⁴⁵ Like the cathedral viewing gallery, the Outlook Tower '...identified the significant characteristics of the city: landmarks, particularly towers; consistent height and mass of buildings, use of stone and high quality workmanship.'⁴⁶ This reinforced Geddes' belief that 'the remembrance of the history of a city – is also the first step towards the city's future.'⁴⁷

Conclusion

The imagination can even perceive places where the feet cannot reach. ...Imagination extends greatly the realm of the moving body and the richness of path...bringing the body along on paths it can surmise but not achieve.⁴⁸

Pausing at three pivotal moments along the building's *promenade architecturale*, this article accepts Chatman's division of narrative into 'content' and 'expression', and seeks to explore the portrayal of the narrative(s) present at the Novium in Chichester through its stories and their discourses. Although

⁴³ This apartment was designed and built between 1929 and 1931.

⁴⁴ Curtis, W.J.R. 1986. *Le Corbusier: ideas and forms*, 110. Oxford: Phaidon Press.

⁴⁵ St. John Wilson, C. 1999. In G. Benson A. Forsyth, *Museum of Scotland*, 119. Edinburgh: August Media in association with Benson + Forsyth.

⁴⁶ The City of Edinburgh Council. 2005. *Old Town Conservation Area character appraisal*, 46. Edinburgh: The City of Edinburgh Council.

⁴⁷ Patrick Geddes' ideas described in Welter, *The return of the muses*, 146.

⁴⁸ Bloomer, K.C. and Moore, C.W. 1977. *Body, memory and architecture*, 88. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

two of the three critical moments along the curatorial route do have a primary display function, it is noteworthy that neither of the two main gallery spaces is included here. Gallery 1 on the second floor, and Gallery 2 on the third, both adhere to the traditional ‘black box’ model of display space, severing connections to the external context, and focusing inwards on the exhibitions themselves. These two exhibition spaces are inversions of each other, and are both antecedents of the cabinet of curiosity, with the second floor space containing a central ‘cabinet’ crammed full of artifacts relating to the types of places around Chichester that have shaped life there over the centuries, and the third floor space being lined with ‘cabinets’ around its perimeter, packed with thematically-arranged objects describing a range of human experiences and emotions.⁴⁹ Whilst the stories contained in these galleries are every bit as fascinating as those in the Roman baths and Cathedral view galleries, the more typologically predictable and less architecturally expressive nature of the spaces render them as secondary within the overall narrative of place.

In relation to the external museum artifact, Roman baths and Cathedral view explored, it appears that congruence is seminal to emotive experience. Both the bath house remains and the viewing gallery exhibit large degrees of congruence between site, story and discourse, and as such have a compelling coherence. The external artifact, however, has to rely more heavily on architectural association, making the design decisions less inevitable, but arguably more creative.

Where either Chatman’s story or discourse is closed, prescriptive or finite, the overall narrative experience is diminished. So, whilst congruence between content and expression certainly achieves clarity of purpose and message, open-endedness or uncertainty is also vital to the creation of a stimulating and creative experience. Scarpa advocated such a ‘speculative tension’ in which anticipation was as important as memory, and a tightly defined story and its discourse, such as in the bath house’s fixed film, may jeopardize this important dynamic.⁵⁰ It seems that, ideally, the museum’s terrain of engagement should break down barriers to achieve sufficiently connected sites, stories and discourses, but equally retain the space for gaps, disjuncture and uncertainty, for within this structured but partial landscape, the imagination can flourish.

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⁴⁹ Information taken from the official Novium ‘Museum map’ leaflet.

⁵⁰ Olsberg, N. et. al. 1999. *Carlo Scarpa architect: intervening with history*, 14. New York: Monacelli Press.