The Museum and Multivalences of Place

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Introduction

> 'Museums and galleries, of course, no longer shun the outside world, the contingencies of its light and life ...' (Caiger-Smith 2011: 38).

Recent significant shifts in the political sphere are prompting the reframing of personal place identities. At a 'meta' scale, political events - most notably the referendum vote for Britain to leave the European Union and the subsequent triggering of Article 50, along with the U.S. election victory for a 'Populist' and protectionist administration - have been seen by many critics as challenges to the pervasiveness of globalisation and decades of dominance of centrist politics. These events have questioned long-standing national and international alliances and identities, and in so doing, have set in train the entrenchment or reimagining of personal place identities. With this increasing questioning and potential fragmentation, or even dissolution, of supranational organisations, the national and local appear to be gaining ground, as evidenced by the Scottish Parliament's March 2017 majority motion giving the First Minister authority to approach the UK government to request a new independence referendum. Within this fluctuating landscape, place and identities of place are taking on greater significance, and as a result the museum visitor may be attempting to re-assimilate their own biographical connections to and understandings of place. This chapter explores the possibility that an increasing exploration and privileging of *place* may define one future direction in the making of museums and galleries. Could such foregrounding of place identity

and experience in museums be seen as a reaction to current pressures on visitors' own sense of geographical and cultural belonging?

This projected privileging of place would naturally lead to a greater degree of cultural specificity within the museum/gallery. The reassuringly familiar, and inherently placeless 'pan-national' white/black box museum model has become increasingly scrutinized, with a concomitant intensified attention to *sitedness* in museum and exhibition design. As a litmus test of cultural consciousness, the museum is uniquely positioned, providing encounters with the unique object, the reality of its physical context, and with the people of that place and far beyond. Moving forward the visitor may be more attracted to a distinct experience of place in the museum; and in turn may be more engaged and even challenged by it.

As museum design evolves in the twenty first century and museums and galleries often strive to make distinct offers to their visiting publics, audience experience may be increasingly inspired by *place identity*. Interpretive designers are being charged with an amplified social responsibility - to curate and enhance the 'site' of the museum in order to create both connections and collisions with visitors' own personal place identity constructs. This chapter aims to explore current practice of such *enhanced situatedness*, through a range of contemporary British architectural-exhibition designs: The Novium, Chichester; the Pier Arts Centre, Orkney; Nottingham Contemporary; and Turner Contemporary, Margate. Although these cases vary between complete new-builds, a new-build housing archaeological remains, and an extension to existing historic structures, all are significant museum or gallery commissions completed within the UK within the last dozen years. They all demonstrate the conscious engagement with site propounded, and the possibilities and pitfalls for designers and the museum visiting public of this enhanced situatedness both now and into the future.

Revealed and constructed narratives deployed by the design teams will be critiqued, particularly in respect to the notion of multivalency. Multivalent approaches are those having or susceptible of many applications, interpretations, meanings, or values, wherein, it may be argued, lie both their strengths and weaknesses. A number of affective moments of cross-scale, empathetic and sometimes multi-media narrative encounter with place will be interrogated to better understand their emotional and intellectual hold, and to address their inherent dangers. Through scrutiny of the material 'stuff' of the place, the chapter will assess the various meanings, values and appeals - or *multivalences* - of place in these cases, and will consider the future directions and usefulness of such a sited approach to exhibition and museum making. It will be questioned how this approach can challenge and satisfy contemporary audiences, and remain relevant and revealing into the future. In particular, the chapter will differentiate between a *heterogeneous* mode of place multivalency, compared with an *integrated* approach. Here, the former heterogeneous mode is shown to exhibit a number of independent, distinct responses to place at a series of bounded physical (and interpretive) locations across the site of the museum/gallery. Meanwhile the latter, integrated, approach concerns itself with a single site vested with multiple or layered place meanings and interpretations. Overall the chapter aims to expose and elucidate these strategic responses to place, and to point to their increasing potential in future museum and gallery making.

Multivalency of place: a heterogeneous approach

A heterogeneous approach to multivalency of place is in evidence at two contemporary projects at either end of the British Isles: the Novium museum in Chichester, West Sussex, and the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness, Orkney. The creative production of these moments,

with their embedded memories, contemporary meanings and implicit guides to future practice, will be explored.

The Novium museum, which opened in 2012, demonstrates a strong connection to its place in distinct ways at different points on the visitor journey. It is grounded in its context through the adoption of different, largely discrete, narrative approaches in different locations and galleries. The museum, sited in the heart of both Roman and twenty-first century Chichester, has the remit to explore the history, people and places of Chichester and surrounding district, and it provokes conversations across time and space between the museum building as artefact, the wider urban context and hence the many communities engaged with the museum. Keith Williams Architects chose to deploy a range of associative references, both constructed and construed, in an attempt to portray the story of Chichester's built heritage and lived experience through their design. Three rich extant buildings on or near the museum site form the basis of this approach.

Externally, on the museum's Tower Street façade, the architectural referencing of the cathedral's bell tower is most apparent (Figure 6.1). The bell tower, which terminates the southern vista of the street, has its origins in the fifteenth century and is the only extant separate bell tower in any English cathedral. The Novium's design clearly references this bell tower structure, with a taller extruded element to the north of the museum (Figure 6.2), the correspondence being 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. However, the tower form is as concerned with proclaiming itself as deferring to its surroundings: '[a]t 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' (Williams 2009: 145). A challenge with such referencing, largely met here, is to avoid a stultifying replay of past forms, and to instead see: '… the museum itself [as] an artifact whose history can be read, provoking new institutional and urban narratives that evoke relationships between the past, present and future' (Norrie 2013: 137). Multiple design moves have been incorporated to make a single reference to a single form; the Bell Tower. As a centuries-old civic landmark, the bell-tower is a part of the cognitive make-up or mental mapping of Chichester's residents, and an important physical and intellectual way-finding monument for visitors (Lynch 1960: 78-82). Its referencing speaks to both these constituencies: drawing on the former's biographical memories and hence identity; and the latter's openness to new intellectual and visual stimuli, or 'information' (Prak 1977: 15).

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The next location of interest in this heterogeneous approach to place apparent at the Novium is the main Roman bath house exhibition space. The unexpected discovery of extensive Roman remains beneath a car park in 1974 led to the conception of the museum and its eventual opening thirty eight years later. The museum building straddles a sizeable existent portion of a 1300 square metre Roman bath house complex, 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' (Kennedy 2012). The

presence of these archaeological remains is congruent with the museum's overall objective to tell the story of Chichester and its people over the past 500,000 years, and self-evidently informed Keith Williams Architects' structural and overall design response, with the authentic materiality of the site connecting directly to its past narratives. Without interpretation, however, the remains are largely mute to the non-expert - creating, in Sverre Fehn's terms, 'a dance around dead things' (Fehn 1992: 160).

So, the design team incorporated a series of interpretive layers to reveal the past lives of the site. One element was a film projected onto the concrete back wall of the gallery space, which attempts to 'recreat[e] the glory days, when the city was an important and wealthy Roman base, with fountains, marble columns, statues and frescos' (Kennedy 2012: 2). Its mix of objective architectural information with reenactments of life in the Roman bath house allows the visitor direct insight to a particular projection of the narrative of life in the place, and encourages empathic connections, particularly between residents past and present. However, the familiarity of the Romans and their social life to contemporary audiences, as well as their wide geographic influence, also connects visitors from far beyond the city and region to the displays. Indeed, this portrayal of the city's former immigrants may resonate with contemporary immigrants.

The introduction of a dramatic narrative inevitably produces a more bounded experience, potentially less 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 demonstrate a congruence or sameness between place and exhibition content. They are displayed in glass cases adjacent to the glazed banister overlooking the bath house remains, with the interpretative film playing in the background, thereby achieving a strong and

internally integrated - if single-themed - relation to place. The overlaying of personal artefacts with in-situ structure and social dramatisation provides a compelling sited social agenda, connecting to the personal, civic and social identities of the twenty first century onlookers.

As its name implies, the 'Cathedral View gallery' on the museum's second floor, similarly draws on the form of a specific surrounding historic building, Chichester Cathedral, again incorporating museum artefacts and interpretive layers. The cathedral on the skyline acts as exhibition artefact, given particular expression through a range of interpretive strategies. Via the glazed light box design, the cathedral is drawn into the narrative of the museum and the visitor becomes the assimilator of this urban display. As Giebelhausen 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' (Giebelhausen 2003: 9).

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 nature of the architecture and the staging' (Beltraimi and Zannier 2006: 14). Here, it is the city's key iconic monument which is being staged, ensuring a bond between the Novium and Noviomagus Reginorum,[1] and encouraging audience reflections on the power of place and

belonging: ‘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’ (Norrie 2013: 173).

The methods of interpretation are multiple. An audio narration focuses primarily on Chichester Cathedral’s medieval and modern history, encouraging the visitor to rest on the benches provided and drawing their gaze out into the city and story beyond the confines of the museum. Through this actual and imaginary gaze, the physical and conceptual gaps between the Novium and the city which it is ‘curating’ are narrowed, as is that between the contemporary audience and the former ‘actors’ on the city’s stage. Another interpretive expression is simple, yet effective: the designers applied a transparent film with sketched silhouette of the cathedral to the glazing of this light-box viewing gallery in an attempt to create a dialogue between inside and out, institution and urban realm, museum and city, and present/future audiences with past residents, in order to re-contextualize the museum’s collections in light of the surrounding civic context (Figure 6.3). Comparisons here abound, to Surrealism and Mannerism, the latter of which is not new to the work of Keith Williams. Indeed Kenneth Powell writes 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 demonstration of this tendency (Powell in Williams 2009: 14). Here the visitor is encouraged to seek multiple physical, ocular perspectives, but cognitively the landscape is somewhat static, and in terms of a multivalency of applications, interpretations, meanings and values, the display appears to be finite.

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A last interpretive strategy of *spoliation* sees the display of fragments. A range of masonry fragments, tiles, and other architectural elements from the cathedral precinct are displayed on the east wall facing the stairs, creating a high degree of coalescence between museum content, civic context, and the critical interpretation. Most of the fragments are displayed in a similar orientation to their original positioning, strengthening this integration or lack of interpretive barrier, creating a dialogue across interior and exterior space. Against the west wall are a series of decorative chimney pots: with the sacred facing the secular; the civic, the domestic. The everyday here acts as a common lived entry point for visitors to the grander, civic narrative evoked by the cathedral. Despite this foray into life beyond the cathedral, the story here again is largely discrete and autonomous, fitting with the heterogeneous model of place experience.

The multivalency of approach at The Novium could be described as heterogeneous, as different moments of the visitor journey have individual, distinct relations or connections to place. In each instance, it is an extant historic monument which forms the subject (or object) of the connection: the Bell Tower and Chichester Cathedral remote from the site; and the Roman bath house located within the site itself. The design and curatorial approaches across the three sites vary greatly in material/media and interpretation, but all strengthen the museum's position as the latest addition to the 'crystallized history' of the interpretative terrain - or archaeological and architectural palimpsest - of Chichester (Geddes in Howard 2001: 151). All also encourage the notion of a continuous community, providing vignettes into the life of the place. And in drawing attention to this shared past, they implicitly question the coherence and direction of Chichester's contemporary society and civic life.

Another example of this heterogeneous approach may be seen at the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness, Orkney. The Centre originally opened in 1979, and in 2005 a new £4.5million extension was opened to house the collection of Abstract art produced in the middle decades of the twentieth century. At its core are the early works of Hepworth and Nicholson, and by far the major part of the collection comes from painters and sculptors closely associated with St. Ives in Cornwall. As at the Novium, three historic structures have primarily informed the design's relation to its site. However, in this case rather than off-site references, they are the buildings of the centre itself: a pier, house and shed. The morphology of the town of Stromness evolved with '[t]he houses, built gable on to the sea, belong[ing] to merchants … [being] accompanied by such outbuildings and piers as were necessary to sustain their commerce', and this wider development is exemplified at the Pier Arts Centre site (Gillespie 2007: 34). The architects Reiach and Hall's response to the primary site conditions of 'pier', 'house' and 'shed', was to augment the distinctive spirit of place by retention, extension and addition: retention of the pier; extension of the existing streetscape; and addition of another 'shed' to the pier (Figure 6.4).

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Cramer and Breitling suggest that buildings are often used as 'bearers and points of orientation in individual collective memory' and as with the Roman remains in Chichester, the existent architecture here becomes both memory repository and connector to local people past and present (Cramer and Breitling 2007: 18). The piers have been at the heart of Stromness's social life for centuries, with fishermen and women working exchanging news over the catch. They have also acted as viewing platforms for numerous and various 'performances', from the launch of the lifeboat, to the traditional fisher-girls' tub racing. As

such, these piers have become important sites of an individual yet shared past, and in this way, the existing pier at the Pier Arts Centre is a site of connectedness, and can be understood as a material bridge to the past of the place. Such a site of community engagement is also highly appropriate for the current agenda of the Pier Arts Centre; to be an institution inclusive to and welcoming of all local community groups, as well as visitors from around the world. Such congruence between the site's community past and current social agenda is useful in promoting its acceptance and use.

In the original house building, which contains the entry, administration, library and meeting rooms along with the artist's studio and flat, biographical clues to the past are evident at the scales of room and detail. The first floor of the former merchant's house, which fronts on to the main street of the town, Victoria Street, has been given over to a display and meeting space. But through the retention of the still tarnished grate and fireplace, skirting boards, wooden panelling, and domestic furniture, it reads very differently to the other gallery spaces, and its former life as a merchant's drawing room is clearly recalled. The art in this space is also hung as in a normal domestic interior, which heightens this connectivity to the past. More subtle and abstracted links between the existing and contemporary elements of the scheme can be seen with the mirroring of door widths - from old to new - across the plan, and the use of small deep-set openings into new from old, matching the exterior windows of the original building. The sensitive, vernacularly-treated extension of the existing house perpetuates the urban identity of Stromness. However a somewhat uncanny 'memoryscape' is created though the white-washed façade and the at once familiar, yet distorted, positioning and proportions of the openings. This approach seems fitting; both resonating with visitors' memories of the streetscape, whilst hinting at a new, edgier artistic and institutional agenda.

In the project's major design move, a contemporary 'shed' slides alongside the original shed gallery, and - in the urban tradition - presents its gable end squarely to the harbour front. Reiach and Hall were strongly influenced by the surrounding vernacular light-industrial morphology. With its pitched roof and chimneyless harbour-front gable end, the formal inspiration on the new pier building from adjacent sheds along the historic waterfront is literal. However, traditional sheds along the harbour were of stone construction with raftered roofs, but Reiach and Hall favoured a steel frame with black patinated zinc cladding, which whilst evoking the black tarred roofs of the sheds, is lightweight and contemporary. The new north-facing glazed façade is characterised by the repeating vertical zinc fins, which recall the rafters of the boat sheds, but are now displaced to the elevation, and set up a rhythm, revealing and concealing the landscape to the passer by (Figure 6.5). Where openings in the original sheds were kept to a minimum to protect against the sometime fierce elements, this solidity is replaced by transparency down the entire north-facing façade, and a large swathe of the gable façade. Most clearly, this material displacement or inversion demonstrates the contemporary disregard for previously form-determining concerns of weather, but the glazing also reveals the workings of the building to the outside, expressing its public nature; in contrast to its previous private function. The design reads as simultaneously familiar yet unusual, industrial and closed yet cultural and open, vernacular yet progressive, and it is in these ambiguities that its appeal lies. This new building then practically acts as a conduit to both existing buildings, solving previous circulation issues at a stroke, and aesthetically, as a conduit to the past.

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In all, it appears that each of the three primary sites of pier, house and shed each embody discrete and different meanings, values and appeals. In this way the Pier Arts Centre adheres to a heterogeneous approach to place.

Multivalency of Place: an integrated approach

The following contemporary British galleries demonstrate a different approach to place multivalency, with single 'sites' being invested with multiple, often cognate meanings. A compelling narrative of place, derived from a 'fragment' remote from the site, was influential in the design of Nottingham Contemporary by Caruso St. John, that opened in the Weekday Cross area of the city centre of Nottingham in 2009. The story begins much earlier than this, however, when construction work was underway in the city centre for a new Marks and Spencer's store in the 1930s and a time capsule was unearthed. Amongst other items, this included a small sample book of lace, labelled 'Mallet and Birkin, lace manufacturers, St. Mary's Gate, Nottingham', which had been buried under the then newly created Albert Street in 1847 (Matthews 2008). Being situated on the edge of the city's historic Lacemarket area and only a very short distance from the place of origin of the sample book, the architects chose to use one of the retrieved patterns to inform their facade design. In a material inversion, the design team decided to impress the up-scaled pattern from the lightweight, delicate lace sample, onto large, solid and sculptural concave concrete panels, the resultant subtle patterning only revealing itself as the visitor nears the building. So, 'clad in verdigris scalloped panels pre-cast with a traditional lace pattern, over a pre-cast terrazzo base and capped with bands of gold anodized aluminium', the material treatment clearly references the fabric on which the urban quarter's prosperity lay (Harwood 2008: 96-7) (Figure 6.6).

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This use of ‘sited’ detailing was a departure for the architects and a challenge for some of the building’s users and reviewers, more used to the universalist model of twenty first century gallery design: ‘[i]nitially, this seems like one of those ubiquitous shallow gestures at contextualism (with the former lace mills nearby) which hide a slash and burn approach to urbanism’ (Hatherley 2010: 111). However, the material narrative of place here is powerful: in its serendipitous story; site specificity; historic continuity; and abstracted and ‘inverted’ architectural resolution, not to mention its bravely unfashionable embrace of a decorative approach. This association and its challenges and potentials was not lost on the critics:

> … Nottingham Contemporary seems to signify something unexpected, something pointed. While … other schemes try to wipe out the past, creating grinningly jolly containers for a perpetual present, here we have a visual amalgam of nineteenth-century industry – intricate patterns, made by underpaid workers on the inhuman machines of the nearby mills – and the twenty-first century’s semi-automated, out-of-town industries, the non-aesthetic of containerisation and its windowless warehouses. It’s a return of the repressed, the mechanical, the far from creative processes that occur in a real docklands. It’s alone in daring to court such pessimistic associations, but it feels the least dated … (Hatherley 2010: 111)

Crucially though, as Hatherley alludes to here, this material meaning was allied with formal references to the nearby buildings of the lace industry. The architects themselves acknowledged, ‘[o]ne inspiration was the surrounding Lace Market, specifically the bold, elegant design of the warehouses that serviced the city’s world famous trade in the 19th

century' (Nottingham Contemporary 2017). The conceptual and physical *integration* between the inspiration from warehouse forms and the more intimate association of the delicate, *hand*-made, -selected and -buried lace sample, produces a compound response to place, which is at once coherent as well as evocative. A single site of the museum's facade conveys multiple – if related – meanings, values and appeals. This approach echoes that of warehouses and factories of the Industrial Revolution, which became the company's advertisement, as at Templeton's Carpet Factory in Glasgow where, 'the flamboyant glazed brick, vitreous enamel tiles, red brick and terracotta of the facade evoke[s] the rich Oriental-influenced patterns of the carpets the factory produced' (Clyde Waterfront 2017). The project therefore has multiple 'hooks' for contemporary, plural audiences: from empathetic connections to lace workers; to 'pessimistic associations' with a repeating architecture of labour (Hatherley 2010: 111). Whilst not always easy, these aspects of the contemporary place experience are potentially meaningful to a more dispossessed current demographic, albeit less practiced in the ritual of museum and gallery visiting. In this case at Nottingham Contemporary, the design evokes unknown individuals - the lace producers - but in the final case, a particular person is portrayed and their life remembered.

Maybe at the Turner Contemporary, opened in Margate in April, 2011, we find the most compelling example of an integrated multivalency of place. The gallery was designed to 'celebrate … the Kentish resort's rich associations with the iconic English painter' (Ijeh, 2011: 21). Simply, as the gallery's website explains, 'Turner's connection with Margate was the founding inspiration for our organisation' (Turner Contemporary 2017a). Having first travelled to school in the coastal town at the age of eleven, the English Romanticist landscape artist became a frequent visitor to the place in adult life, drawn by the quality of light, the sea and the skies over Thanet which he declared to be, 'the loveliest in all Europe' (Ibid.). Indeed

the east coast of Kent inspired over one hundred of his works, including some of the most well-known seascapes. Another strong attraction to the place came in the form of Mrs. Booth, Turner's paramour and landlady of the Cold Harbour guest house at Rendezvous, where he stayed when visiting the town: 'He loved Margate for the sea, the skies, and his landlady Mrs Booth' (Ibid.).

The gallery building, by David Chipperfield Architects, has intentionally been sited on the same spot as this original guest house, meaning that '[f]rom the entrance foyer and ground floor gallery, large expanses of glazing plunge epic views of the North sea - as they would have been seen by Turner himself - deep into the interiors' (Ijeh 2011: 21). In an empathic conjunction, '[f]rom the gallery, everyone will be able to see the fine views over the harbour that Turner saw, capturing the same unique light that inspired his works' (Turner Contemporary 2017a) (Figure 6.7). Here, then, a sited biographical narrative - or personal association with place - was the raison d'être of the Gallery's inception and exact location. As a result there is congruence between the place (Margate, and specifically the site of the former Cold Harbour guest house), the museum building (in its siting and orientation in particular), and the museum's collection, which is largely comprised of works by Turner himself. The visitor experience draws on an historical landscape and memoryscape, and allows a rooted empathy or understanding between the observer (visitor) and the subject (Turner); with a shared vista or perspective across centuries. This phenomenological experience of Turner's life is an inclusive and affecting device, allowing easy physical, intellectual and emotional access to the building.

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Light is a common currency between art and architecture, and in the case of Chipperfield in Margate, is appropriately the essence of the design: ‘From the spacious naturally lit galleries to its opaque glass exterior, the building will absorb and reflect light to create a distinctive and inspirational building’ (Chipperfield in Wood 2010: 5). Indeed, as the Gallery’s Director, Victoria Pomerey, stated; ‘It had to be a building that balanced architectural merit with function and flexibility as an exhibition space, and one that ideally made use of the legendary natural light’ (Wood 2010: 2). This lighting landscape is variegated, interestingly determined by functional considerations and narratives of place:

> The double-height entrance hall window, ground floor events space with external terrace and first floor Clore learning studio all have large north-facing windows offering unrivalled views out to sea. These capture the ever-changing light conditions, reflecting the range of colours found in Turner’s paintings. The three first floor gallery spaces are lit by natural ‘maritime light’ from the north-facing roof and sky lights. The balcony on this floor cantilevers out over the ground floor gallery, again giving spectacular sea views. The ‘urban window’ of the reception area, café and shop faces the town to connect the building with its surroundings. To emphasise the changing and dramatic effect of light outside the building, a white opaque glass façade has been used. This will also resist storm and wind damage, humidity and saline intrusion (Turner Contemporary 2017b).

Just as light was probably the fundamental concern in Turner’s work, with the artist himself stating, ‘[l]ight is therefore colour’, so Chipperfield explained it as the gallery’s ‘primary material’, expressing the design concept as, ‘light explains form’ (Ijeh 2011: 21). Not only is there consonance between site, building and collection in this case, but the architect has also

used the medium of light to draw a parallel between the prodigious output of the proclaimed Turner and the work of his own contemporary architectural practice. The architectural arrangement simultaneously sets up powerful biographically-rooted views and carefully orchestrated interior lighting conditions in an integrated narrative of place. As such the site feels multivalent; having or being susceptible of many applications, interpretations, meanings or values.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the privileging of place in four contemporary museums and galleries, built or substantially extended in the UK since 2005. It is apparent that in each case the design teams have been substantially influenced by genius loci. The manifold *sources* of place association utilised by the designers have been revealed; across sites, degrees of completeness, and types. The locations of the design cues range from distant, off-site inspirations (a small sample of Nottingham lace), site adjacent influences (Stromness's 'industrial' sheds), and on-site, congruent sources (Chichester's Roman bath house remains). Their completeness differs from the adaptive reuse of existing buildings, to instances where material fragments - or even material memories - provide the design muse. Finally, their types again span spectrums; from the material to the immaterial, and the formal - or 'physiological' - to the biographical - or 'anthropological'. So the sources of inspiration utilised by the architects is extremely diverse - from fragments of fabric to twelfth century cathedrals.

Multivalence - or the quality or state of having many values, meanings, or appeals - is forwarded as a useful conceptual device to make sense of potential connections to site, and is

found to be in evidence in the selected designs. It would appear that this approach does have many strengths: providing compelling, legible narratives; creating cohesion of intent across sites, buildings and collections; and allowing strong personal and community identification with place and therefore institution, but also weaknesses: artificial neatness; historical sanitization; lost narratives; the privileging of particular epochs or moments; and the possible hegemony of the architect/curator. Beyond this, the chapter seeks to categorise two distinct design positions in relation to the multivalency of place: a *heterogeneous* approach and an *integrated* approach. In the former category, the museums and galleries exhibit multiple points of sitedness, each with single meanings. In the latter case of an integrated approach, a single site is found to evoke multiple meanings. Overall, the cases all promote the identities of their places; that much is clear. However, it might be argued that where the former, heterogeneous approach promotes clarity of intent and message, the latter promotes impact on a less intellectual, more emotive level.

Place currently informs the conception and design of museum experiences in many ways. Within a default modern condition of architectural universalism, with its globalised practices and agencies - and a similarly homogenised curatorial landscape - the museum is a site of real interest and significance. Culturally, a reaction to the dominant international art gallery aesthetic - be it black or white box - of *universal space*, seems inevitable. And socially and politically, a backlash against globalisation and supra-national organisations, and a seeming strengthening of national sovereignty and regionally devolved parliaments, may also point towards an increasing interest in and projection of local place associations. Such a shift offers significant opportunities to museum and exhibition designers, who - as we have seen - are already often deeply influenced by the spirit of place offered by the projects with which they engage. Such a distinct place identity offer may be an increasingly attractive proposition to

museum visitors over the coming years and decades, and as such, may offer a way forward for curators and directors in terms of strengthening exhibition and institutional narratives, and continuing and extending community engagement. It at once orientates the outside visitor to the particularities of the new place, whilst strengthening the locals' comprehension of and affinity to their own place. In terms of speculation as to how this 'placed' or 'located' design approach may develop into the future, the adoption of a *multivalent approach*, 'susceptible of many applications, interpretations, meanings or values', suggests itself as one potential avenue. In creating an impactful, *multivalent* interpretation of place, the designer-curator may be able to embody the essence of genius loci in an open, creative and unique way.

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[1] Noviomagus Reginorum was the Roman name for present-day Chichester.