
The Located Practice Evaluation: “Segmented Worlds”

Installation by Bethany Tompkins

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Final Artwork Directory: <https://betomfineart.wixsite.com/online/segmented-worlds>

Introduction

For the Located Practice, I created an immersive installation named ‘Segmented Worlds’. This installation was conceptually proposed inside my accommodation turning the kitchen, hallway, bedroom and en-suite into different elements of this installation. In the Statement of Process, the installation is proposed to be most enriching in environments such as the ‘Life Science Centre’ in Newcastle, or the ‘Welcome Collection’ in London.

This installation was inspired by my personal interpretation of what life is, life being separated into different ‘realities’ and their own ‘worlds’. A similar analogy could be considered to planets in the solar system, they have their own unique identities and worlds but still balancing together around the sun and being a singular solar system in our galaxy.

The final installation featured a range of different artworks, with different mediums, locations, and installation set ups, to reflect their reality versions. These worlds consisted of:

- Every day public bubbles
- The everyday, public environment
- The everyday of self-isolation
- Dream
- Fantasy
- Microscopic
- Private

A similarity between all of these ‘worlds’ was the use of darkness throughout the installation and final artwork, which was to create a sense of suspension of disbelief. In addition, there was a main feature ‘Terrarium’ that used each element of the different worlds throughout the installation. This was to emphasise the link that they all have in creating a complex relation with life.

Finally, I will be self-evaluating with the guidance provided by the Arts Council for self-assessment throughout this report.

Artist Vision: Aims, Inspiration and Contextual Importance

The Statement of Process states the contextual importance of prior work and depicts to the audience a consistent theme of inspiration of immersion and realities as mentioned in previous contextual work - 'realities' refers to personas, perceptions, and alternative realities. There is a clear interest in this subject matter on a general perspective, however, there is little development or clear reasoning for why these are of interest or how these general themes are specific enough to be entirely consistent. The mediums used to depict this inspiration also ranges from paintings, to websites, video performance, and to this particular installation. There could be improvement on reasoning for while there is similar themes, there is no direct link through mediums or specific subject matter other than immersion and the realities of the subject.

The overall Statement of Process has insufficient amount of communication: there is no specific demographic; how it is beneficial to society?; the artist mentioned is neither expanded on, nor is there any other cultural context included or detailed reasons for interpretation of 'worlds' or why they were included.

Other cultural contexts which could have been expanded on include:

- TeamLab and their large-scale installations, inspired by the relationship between humans, nature, and the digital.
- Pierre Huyghe's works involving ecosystems and bioactive installations: After Alife Ahead, 2017. Nymphéas Transplant (14-18), 2014. Zoodram 2, 2010.
- The Body World touring exhibition by Gunther von Hagens called 'Vital'; this was featured in the Life Science Centre in 2014. The exhibition used darkness to assist the immersive and morbid environment, emphasising that darkness with black walls, and occasional bodies were posed, to focus on entertainment over classical formal observation. Thus, potentially this may have been an interesting comparison and inspiration for the lighting and environment for my installation process.
- While not fundamental to artistic context, YouTubers such as 'SerpaDesign', 'Jartopia', Dustin Pak, or 'Life in Jars?' should have been included in the Statement of Process for personal inspiration, and cultural knowledge of ensuring the terrarium and ecospheres were safe, secure and functional for the build and bio-active setup.

There is referral to inspiration of artistic cultural context for Ilya Kabakov and his notion of 'Total Installation'. The statement of process only briefly mentions him and this type of immersive installation, on a psychological perspective over literal, physical, immersion. There is a lack of clear intention of how this is incorporated into the final artwork. There should have been clearer intention and discussion over how I interpreted the quotes, as there is no expansion from this context.

There is a lack of concise planning on the installation structures and practicality depicted in the statement of process before the actual practical work is put into action. This led to poor finance management on this project after original plans had practical flaws, not realised earlier, this is seen by the construction of the terrarium and trying to create the public spheres works.

The risk assessment and analysis of the potential hazards had been appropriately considered and there were a few technical issues that got quickly resolved:

- 'Microscopic World' Projection angle and footage, needed to be pre-recorded rather than live.
- 'Lockdown World' Artwork tilting and cardboard bending from weight – adding tension and creating a pillar out of a cardboard box and a diet coke can.
- 'Dream World' Strobe light angle needed to use the wooden board from protecting the countertop, along with the draw storage unit which was originally intended to be placement for survey and card holders. These objects were also secured into place for health and safety by tension and gardening wire.

Participation, Interaction and Relations

The process of this artwork was primarily independent practical work, due to Covid-19 restrictions along with the scale of the featured terrarium being unable to be moved once built. Due to these circumstances there was little retrospective on teamwork within already established collaborations within this project. There was minor assistance with moving material to the accommodation or assistance with the technical set up of the strobe light and attaching the spheres with elastic onto the ceiling. However, in hindsight it would have benefitted to have contacted the 3D technician to inquire about recommendations and advice for the practical construction of the terrarium, as that could have been more effective with cleaner construction.

I have been able to interact with a fellow fine art 3rd year student to receive feedback and critique during the process which benefitted to get an alternative perspective over the course of this project.

Within the final artwork, there is little practical interaction with the artwork, as most of the artworks primarily use the sense of sight over touch, or other senses. This is limiting not only for the interaction the audience has directly with the work, but it could also hinder the immersive nature of the artwork.

To compensate for this, the use of light and shadows within the works assisted with interaction in the environment. This immersion of shadows makes it more engaging for the audience rather than just focusing on trying to force extra sensory experience, that may be seen as a 'gimmick' for the artwork.

In the risk assessment it mentions that for viewings of the conceptualised installation there would be signs warning of a slow strobe light, along with a warning on the 'Everyday Public' to "Do not touch". If this artwork was held in the 'Life Science Centre' or the 'Welcome Collection', extra precautions would be required. As this risk assessment would not be adequate if it was at a public viewing, especially for children, at the stakeholder's location. I would highly recommend and emphasise that the intended 'Everyday Public' world would be inside a glass display case, to prevent children from ignoring the signs.

Stakeholders: Impact of artwork

The 'Life Science Centre's' current audience and demographic is for families and events for children, specifically in interest for the application of science in life. The Centre holds workshops and class trips that can be arranged in interest from Key Stage 1 up to A-level along with adult masterclass workshops. As long as there are precautions in place, as stated earlier, this artwork should be okay for all demographics. The only option that may be concerning is the imposing nature of the 'Dream' world with the strobe light. However, the strobe effect could temporarily be stopped for young children.

With the Coronavirus and lockdown, the installation could be a benefit to this stakeholder as photos of the installation could be accessible online and promotional images could be used for social media posts to create traction. This could bring more audience members to the Life Science Centre, who may be interested in the intersection between art and life at a future date when cultural institutions re-open.

The 'Welcome Collection', however, is very orientated in art and life, so there would already be an existing demographic for the discussion the installation brings. However, this may bring more children and families towards the Welcome Collection, as this artwork is technically Bio-Active with it's use of woodlice, springtails and copepods. This may create more intrigue as a result to children rather than adults.

The Impact from this artwork would be to hopefully bring more attention to self-reflection, and personal perspectives. I hope with this work that there would be more observation of what is around an individual and how the world shifts constantly.

Another interesting impact of this artwork is the consideration of the work in a long-term aspect, as the bioactive environments (such as the Klein bottle), if balanced correctly, would be for majority, self-sufficient. The terrarium only needing to be watered or maybe given extra food if needed while it is establishing.

Final Artwork Outcome

For the majority of the work I am very pleased and confident in the quality of the work. The strobe light, with the background light, on the 'Dream' World, in my interpretation, gives a brief imposing view before disappearing – just as dreams quickly come and go but can be very memorable for the good or the bad.

While the small 'Fantasy' world in the cupboard seems to just be the opposite of the imposing corridor and 'Dream' world, seeing the small white dots floating inside the Klein bottle and the fake plants are high quality and the microscopic copepod's adapted to the environment, along with the moss and algae.

The 'Everyday Lockdown/Self isolation' is also of note for its high quality. The amount of detail inside the sculpture, and different layers giving slowly more heavier strings of hot glue, personally gave me a sense of pressure and mild claustrophobia. This was especially heightened with the lights shining through the strings that seem to be flowing yet unmoving. Overall, it was a really high-quality work despite sculpture's limitations of its resources.

It cannot be ignored though that the feature terrarium of this installation had poor application of silicone due to messy lines and very visible at the front of the terrarium, but due to the use of darkness doesn't make it as apparent as normal light during the final artwork. The lighting, however, should not be used to mask the obvious poor construction of the terrarium. It may have been easier, quicker, and less obvious of poor craftsmanship if instead of constructing the terrarium tank myself, I bought an aquarium tank and only cleaned it up with the wooden border. This alternative would have been more costly, along with not being the dimensions I required, thus I believed it would be similar and more controlled if I was able to create the tank myself, inspired by aquarium and paludarium builds and constructions on YouTube (such as by 'SerpaDesign').

While there could have been potential feedback from a survey responding to the documentation, this would have been primarily feedback on photography and video only, not the intended artwork. Theoretically there could have been three types of feedback given by the audience.

- Physical on-site survey,
- Survey on QR code on Business cards on-site,
- Online Survey

Due to Covid-19 and impracticality of visitation of the installation, the analysis of qualitative and quantitative responses was unable to be carried out.

Lastly, to be improved upon for future documentation, the video quality of the short installation tour was low quality and jarring in comparison to the cleaner photography provided.

Conclusion summary

Overall, I enjoyed the final artwork and its quality after the project had been completed. However, there is series limitations of this artwork. Though it is a shame that the feature of the installation has a clearly lower quality construction than the other artworks. This may have been avoided if I incorporated more teamwork within the project by contacting the 3D technician to ask for input and recommendations for cleaner application.

Regardless of quality though, the statement of process for this artwork is poorly made as the contextual and developmental process is missing key information and lacks clear communication to the audience about intentions, interpretations, reasons, and how the artwork could be relevant to the contemporary world.

There is clear and easy solutions for the quite simple errors I made in the Statement of Process of the work, but the fact of the matter is that these errors would have been noticeable from an external picture and the use of 'horizontal planning' but the fact that this is not incorporated and the theoretical side of the conceptual immersive installation that features heavily on the metaphorical representation is a enormous oversight that cannot be ignored.