



SCREEN HOUSE

Proposal for Re-Activation

Meshwork Worcester with Lee Hassall

SCREEN HOUSE, HYLTON ROAD, WORCESTER

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This is an artist-led proposal to re-activate the Screen House, which currently sits redundant on Hylton Road, Worcester. This proposal is intended to start a conversation about the important role the Screen House can play in constructing Worcester's status as an extraordinary city.

I. A glimpse into the future...

SCREENING

SIFTING

RECTIFYING

EXHIBITING

PERFORMING

PUBLISHING

The inaugural film, a collaboration between Meshwork Worcester, Worcester City Council, Sustrans and Lee Hassall, returned the building to its original function as a screening device. Presenting the city via a series of montages and fragmentary images, the film's interconnecting sundry tales and geographies reveal Worcester as glimpsed on the periphery of vision. What emerges is a city that tells various stories and histories and how these sundry tales and geographies can be interconnected: the Water Works at Owner Featherstone's Yard connected to an iron tank at Trinity Passage; a scold's bridle; swaged shoe marks in brick steps left by horses - unloaded from the train line on their way to the race track; the framed Cathedral and spires of the Worcester vista on the golden plinth of The Hive; the Pinch, notorious and insanitary, where the cholera first appeared in July 1832; the effect of climate on growing plants under glass; and other such speculative stories.

Like the film, the Screen House has an evolving role in Worcester's understanding

of itself and of its relationship to the River Severn. It is programmed as an ongoing series of events, initiatives and interventions in a changing programme that responds to the cycles of the River. The Screen House has become a place where debates around landscape, environment and site-specificity are presented, exhibited and performed, with each event being marked by a publication produced in co-operation with other research centres and institutions.

The name 'Screen House' (or 'Screening Tower') comes from the original function of the building which housed a water-screening process for the Worcester Corporation Power Station that once stood on what is now Cripplegate Park. As the name implies, the Screen House programme is about exchange, transfer and reciprocity across a mix of design and art practices that generates an integrated approach to chronicling, detailing, writing and making visible the 'Extraordinary City'.

2. The Proposal: 'Water Worcester Wider'

The location of the Screen House provides an array of possible starting points to animate the building and the surrounding area. The Screen House is about water – it is a building that can highlight Worcester's relationship with the River Severn through event programming and improvements to the immediate built environment.

The proposal is based on two over-lapping possibilities, the Screen House as:

- inter-disciplinary work and exhibition space
- landmark and orientation point.

2.1 As inter-disciplinary work and exhibition space

Water

Situated in the extremities of the flood plain 'Red Zone', the location of this historic building and its past function sets a precedent for exploring 'above and below the water mark' in relation to city-building. Experimentation at the immediate site falls under a wider study of this fluctuating environment, from the poetics of Worcester's intimate connection to water; to the pragmatics of addressing its relationship with our longest river.

Worcester

From the riverbank, the Screen House addresses the city. It is crucial to think of the city in terms of presentation and representation; the past as generative of, and constituted by, multiple and conflicting narratives. Within it, design and art practices work towards an integrated approach of exploring, chronicling, detailing, writing and making visible the material past and present. Exhibitions at the Screen House resonate powerfully to creatively inspire and consistently renew vision.

Wider

In 1807 the Commissioners agreed to erect a seven horsepower engine in Owner Featherstone's Yard at the South End of Pitchcroft, and that cast iron pipes should be laid to the reservoir in the Trinity.

The Screen House is more than just a remainder space. Beyond being just a physical space, it is a relationship or something that has been made room for – a conference or meeting or discussion. It takes on the role of an interdisciplinary work-site, functioning as an accessible and all embracing neutral territory to explore the full range of possibilities associated with the notion of Worcester as the 'Extraordinary City'.

A changing rota of contemporary 'commissioners', engaged in various approaches to city-building, foster a yearly roster of programming that informs, enables, advises and reviews action taken in the public realm, whilst sparking and consolidating new collaborative and productive alliances.

It becomes a space to understand, define and debate the reasons, if there should be reasons today, to erect a seven horsepower engine in Owner Featherstone's Yard to pump water to a 'reservoir' in the Trinity.

2.2 As landmark and orientation point:

Essentially, the Screen House is a 'box' on a much older plinth, adjacent to steps leading down to the River and in general proximity to the now lost medieval bridge. On the 'Welsh' side of the River, this 'box' has a sense of formal approach (Henwick Parade) from the later bridge, and from the city side it is an eye-catcher in the visual 'rammel' stretched out along the horizon of the bank to the start of a potential riverside 'linear park' that runs down to and beyond the Viaduct. The 'box'

announces the start of this 'linear park' from just South of the junction of Tybridge Road with Hylton Road. The 'box' also shares a physical and historical association with land that is now Cripplegate Park. There is an opportunity to punch a new entrance into Cripplegate Park with a new pedestrian crossing sprung from the 'box', at the 'pinch' where the 'approach' from the later bridge becomes the 'linear park'.

The position of the structure is such that it forms a marker on the transpontine. The visual presence of the Screen House can be enhanced to increase the possibility of its use as a visual leap and navigational aid from the city side of the River and on towards Cripplegate Park and St. John's. The position of the Screen House also brings into play the relationship between North and South Quays; the building acting as a refractor that guides the observer round the convex line of the River Severn at this point. In this way the Screen House helps to place people in the context of the city narrative, the built city and, most importantly perhaps, in relationship to the River.

3. Summary

In summary, the Screen House is the opportunity to develop a "clear set of objectives for the riverside [as] needed to inspire and guide changes to ensure that it becomes an integral and valued part of the city centre" through:

- landscape, environment and site-specific performance
- space, place and the cultural dynamic of art
- art, ecology and sustainability
- walking, drawing and drift
- performance, writing, installation, and images
- narrative and memory

4. Background

The Screen House (also known variously as 'Screening House', 'Screening Chamber' and 'Screening Tower') is situated on the west bank of the River Severn on Hylton Road near the junction with Tybridge Street at SO 845 548.

The current structure, designed in the neo-Georgian style by one time County Architect A.V. Rowe (1881-1940), was built in 1929. Water from the River Severn

was drawn off at this point and screened (i.e. filtered) before being pumped to the nearby Worcester Corporation Power Station for use in cooling. The 'waste' water came back into the Severn via a pipe a little downstream of the building. The power station (and Screen House) closed in 1978, with the power station subsequently demolished (1979) and the Screen House more or less neglected.

The steps and surrounding embankment, on which the Screen House sits, are slightly skewed and are probably legacy of an earlier slip and/or quay arrangement just south of the former Medieval bridge that dates back to John Doharty's plan of the city. Certainly, the present steps and embankment are shown on the 1886 Town Plan and the First Edition Ordnance Survey.

Notes:

Meshwork Worcester

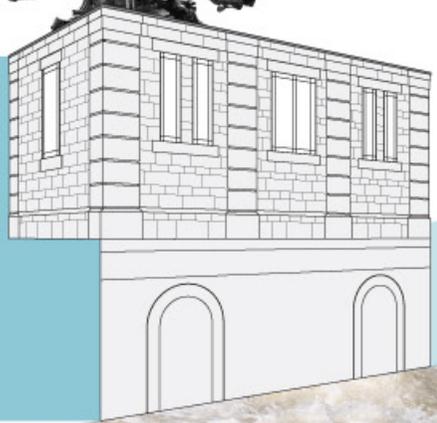
'Meshwork Worcester' is an artist-led initiative (Rob Colbourne, Stuart Mugridge, David Patten) Lottery funded by Arts Council England. The aim of 'Meshwork Worcester' is to invest artist thinking (R&D, action research, and infrastructure building) in the recent 'Master Plan for Worcester' 2011 (David Lock Associates) in parallel with the City Council's development of second level master plan studies in 2012 (which include Public Realm Strategy, Lighting Strategy, City History Trails, Active River Strategy, Public Art Programme, and Programme of Cultural Events).

Lee Hassall

Artist Lee Hassall is currently undertaking a practice-led PhD at the University of Aberystwyth, in the Department of Theatre, Film & Television. His starting point for his research is a set of drawings by Thomas Rowlandson made during a tour of Wales in 1797. The main focus of the enquiry is emptiness in relation to the sublime, with thesis chapters on: 'the sublime'; 'landscape'; 'the picturesque site'; and 'post-colonial absences'. His research proposes reclaiming a sense of the visual within the study of landscape and explores and contextualises articulation of the visual in relation to the performative. He is also Senior Lecturer and Course Leader for Fine Art at the University of Worcester.

PERFORMING
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SCREENING

skewing
penning
flooding
pumping
lifting
carving
flowing
crossing
ebbing
parking
slaughtering
treating
rounding
cultivating
mooring
dyeing
shunting
fishing
driving
tanning
sounding



SCREEN HOUSE



THE WATER WORKS

