

Immersive digital technologies help bring the past to life

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'Memory of Theatre' aims to capture the memories of audiences, artists and performers who have used the Bristol Old Vic over the past decades.

Projects which aim to bring heritage attractions to life using immersive digital technologies will be showcased at Watershed, Bristol this Friday. Three of the collaborations draw on the expertise of researchers in the University of Bristol's Faculty of Arts.

'[Memory](#) of Theatre' and 'Reflecting the Past' are part of Heritage Sandbox, a scheme that brings together [academics](#), technologists and creative companies, funded by REACT, one of four [Knowledge Exchange Hubs](#) for the Creative Economy established by the Arts & Humanities Research Council. REACT is a collaboration between UWE Bristol, Watershed and the Universities of Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter.

'Memory of Theatre' is an innovative project to capture the memories of audiences, artists and performers who have used the Bristol Old Vic over the past decades. A collaboration between the theatre, the University of Bristol, Pyxis Design and theatre production company MAYK, the project uses unique binaural recordings, accessed by smart phone and utilising a new indoor positioning system, to create a dynamic, interactive archive of memories concealed in the ether of the auditorium and foyer.

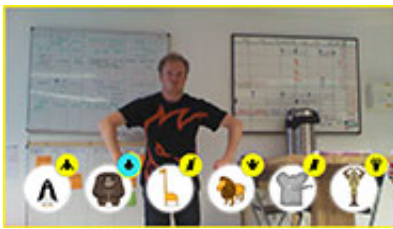


'Reflecting the Past' explores how 'augmented reality' mirrors can be used around museums and historical sites to provide a narrative, bringing the visitor and the past ever-closer.

The project's academic partner, Dr Paul Clarke from Bristol's Department of Drama: Theatre, Film, Television said: " 'Memory of Theatre' turns your smart phone into a listening device that enables you to hear people's memories of events that have taken place at Bristol Old Vic. As a visitor you wander around the theatre finding the stories that haunt the building, triggering them in the locations where they happened. Performance is transient but this is a way to make its impressions last, for theatre and its audience to leave a legacy for the future."

'Reflecting the Past' explores how 'augmented reality' mirrors can be

used around museums and historical sites to provide a narrative, bringing the visitor and the past into ever-closer proximity. Developed by Professor Tim Cole of Bristol's Department of History and Tom Bennett at Interactive Places, these mirrors employ directional speakers and a specially developed film over concealed monitors to create an immersive visitor experience that repopulates heritage properties with 'ghostings' of figure from the past. The visitor is taken back to another time through the illusion of figures who come to life in the mirror and appear to be in the same room.



ZOOM! utilises Microsoft's Kinect sensor to track each visitor as they roar like a lion or stretch like a giraffe or, in this case, stike a gorilla pose.

Professor Cole said: "We're trying to work out whether places have memories and if so, how we can help people relate to these memories. By combining mirrors with augmented reality technology, we can bring heritage experiences that much closer to the visitor who will be mesmerised by seeing his or her own reflection within a reflection of the past. It is quite a powerful effect and one that we hope will have applications across a range of site-based heritage programmes."

Also on display at the showcase is ZOOM!, a new interactive installation produced by digital agency Thought Den in conjunction with Bristol Zoo Gardens and Bristol's Department of History which is funded by the University's Enterprise and Impact Development fund.

The installation uses some of the world's latest gesture tracking technology to relate visitor poses to selected animals from the Zoo. Historic images relating to each animal, some dating back to the 1800s, are presented via a projector on a large screen. The Zoo's well-known characters feature, such as Alfred the gorilla, while discontinued activities like elephant rides through Clifton village are also presented.

The installation utilises Microsoft's Kinect sensor to track each visitor as they roar like a lion or stretch like a giraffe. By leaning left and right the visitor can explore the history of that animal in the world's oldest provincial zoos. The intuitive interface was designed with families in mind and encourages children to interact with the content in a playful way.

Provided by University of Bristol

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