

REVANS UNIVERSITY
Postgraduate Diploma in Arts Tourism (8 ALQs)
Prestoungrange Set 1 – 2003/2006
Set Adviser: Dr Karl Schutz

ALQ # 3:

LEARNING @ LINDSAY CA USA

Lindsay was reached from Carson City, Nevada, and a fine passage through John Muir's Yosemite National Park. By the time we arrived in Lindsay by a side road route through irrigated desert lands, with its orange and lemon and olive groves, it was clear why Tulare County in general and Lindsay in particular had felt the urge to deploy murals as a catalyst for economic regeneration. We had been pre-warned that Lindsay only had one motel and we soon found it offered little choice for eating out in the evenings. But first we stopped at Exeter and found that town had a rich mural tradition and a prospering city economy including antique shops, and an excellent Wildflower Coffee shop right next to the Murals' Information Center ... and at that point we happened to bump into our colleagues from Scotland with our Set Adviser in his Butterfly-mobile. So we lunched together and chatted to Jennifer who owns the Coffee Shop and argued she should come to Scotland in 2006.

Success with 2006 Sizzle Selling but no Sales Yet Closed

... and that of course was our covert agenda at the whole Lindsay Seminar. How could a delegation of four from Scotland be there at a Californian Regional Murals Seminar, learn a lot, and by example and propaganda make everyone present want to put Prestoungrange 2006 on their holiday/ mural viewing schedule.

We had three scheduled moments to shine, all allocated to myself: a lunchbox briefing on Prestoungrange 2006; a Panel Contribution on Economic Development using Murals; and a second Panel Contribution on Marketing Strategies for Murals. We had myriad other networking moments as well of course and that was where the other team members had their role to play. That involved participating in all the sessions including bus outings to Tulare and Exeter, wandering and chattering at the Arts Fair in The Grind; and taking keen interest in the 10 Murals in a Week and 1 Mural in a Day activities. And in that latter process seeking and signing up additional Set members for the Diploma if possible.

With the help of Kristine Cunningham, Pauline Jaffray and Matthew Boffin, the strategy to 'sell 2006' had been articulated on a carrier bag printed (with the wrong concluding date) in Bulgaria and shipped at considerable expense direct to Lindsay's only motel. And there was an outstanding 12pp extravaganza of a brochure printed in East Lothian. *Brushstrokes # 5* from the Lord Mayor's Visit July 23rd was also included as was the Coal Trail leaflet. The strategy was to sell the sizzle *not* the sausage. Murals, "*Yes Indeed We have them!*" But Prestoungrange IS a destination. It's a Gothenburg pub with a microbrewery but better still .. its Scotland. Its whisky. Its golf. It's the Edinburgh Festival ... The Military Tattoo. John Muir country and Trail... Bonnie Prince Charlie ... Kristine's Scottish Freedom Fighter!

Simply put, it worked. It was successful. It was good marketing and good execution. The carrier bags were carried by one and all for days around the Seminar. Indeed we felt a tad guilty about upstaging Ely 2004 where the 5th Conference will succeed well in August. And interestingly enough our confidence to pursue the 'sizzle not the sausage' textbook marketing strategy came directly from 'listening to the comments at Moosejaw, Saskatchewan at the 4th Conference in 2002. When we mentioned Scotland, and wore the tartan and passed around the Glenkinchie after winning the 2006 Rights to host the 6th Conference .. there were few questions about murals .. they were all about golf and whisky and the imagery of *Braveheart* and *Monarch of The Glen*. Some image to live up to in 2006!

No sales of places yet; just talk of discounts for those who go to Ely and of reasonable \$US 85 Green Fees at the Royal Musselburgh for Golf Competition Entrants. And the fees to be fixed at Ely where Registration Campaigning will commence. Thus far then we have built Awareness globally amongst the potential travellers inwards to Scotland that will be a truly vital component of its excitement and success. Much if not all remains to be done to close the sale. But we have recruited Bill Drennan, the Seminar Chair and Leader, as our California Sales Agent. That's a considerable start.

And no strategy is yet anywhere near in place to involve the local citizenry of Prestonpans or the artists in our neighbourhood and the economic development fraternity. That still requires deep thinking, searching for the discrete sizzle for each of those discrete markets.

Little Choice for Eating Out in Lindsay - the 'Economic' Message and the Deeper Lessons

The first Lindsay night, arrival night, was in crisis before the Seminar began. The one motel, Super 8, offered no catering and the adjoining diner was dry! Goodwill and camaraderie contained the matter but a lingering foreboding hung upon us all. How would we fare for the rest of the week? But our concerns were not the substantive learning point. That is seemingly the nature of balanced economic regeneration in a community.

There is no point in painting murals to attract destination visitors, improving the sidewalks, building a plaza to linger in .. if there are inadequate opportunities for visitors to spend and for the community's economic multiplier to bring leverage. Next day the former City Manager confessed that the city had lost four restaurants in the past 12 months and we suggested that was careless and he had to agree. The suggestion that we could dine well in Exeter or Tulare gave it all away: game, set and match.

This accordingly became the theme peg for my personal contribution at the Economic Development Panel. But it did much more than that, because as we sat and talked on the Panel the scales dropped from my eyes. Yes we have murals; yes we are devoted to Arts Tourism. But our true allies in the social and governmental community are not the artists or the Cultural Services team. We are their competitors in fact. Our true allies are those committed to economic development, and additionally in our case to tourism, and it is with them and to them that we should relate. And as chance would have it the economic development team in East Lothian had been putting out positive

signals ever since we first commenced our initiatives, but we have been unhearing. In comparison with the sensitive listening claimed in respect of sizzles not sausages for the 2006 client segments internationally, we had been woefully inadequate in our analysis at home.

This conclusion led to consideration of how the 'wrong' direction had been taken. As argued in ALQ # 1 and 2, the initial anticipation had been to find harmony and support from the Cultural Services area. Looking back the 'red' signals have been consistent. (i) A Request for a Feasibility /Study; (ii) "Some of your ideas have merit but you should at no time assume they will have our support"; (iii) No activity on the Museum site that is not 100% owned by the Council – no to the Scottish Tartan Society as tenants or the restoration of the BathHouse and no to building a Kiln; (iv) No to painting a mural on the BathHouse as previously agreed after consent from the planners; (v) Convincing planners to say no on environmental grounds to murals as 'advertisements'.

In comparison, the initial meeting with the economic development officers had suggested how investment could be injected; and the second had explored six or more ways from tourism leaflets to street signage to assist and ended with a request to keep in touch with all the plans so that they could pinpoint where help might be specifically forthcoming.

'Balanced investment for economic regeneration' was for me again a wholly fresh but wholly logical construct to adopt. It was not articulated. It arose for me serendipitously. Piecemeal it might seem, or frankly be, at times as differentiated and earmarked funding becomes available, yet the master plan must be inescapably understood as:

- Murals are only the draw card initially, but ***must lead on to artistic product line extension***, to the thickening up the arts offer or the repeat visits will be desultory or not at all. What shall it be? Casino and Spa as in Moosejaw? Arts Theatre as per Chemainus? Gothenburg Pub and Microbrewing School as per Prestoungrange? Antiques shopping as per Exeter and Kati Kati?
- ***The way people spend their time and their money during a visit must be postulated and facilitated to maximise income.*** If they do not wish to eat or drink, there is no need for eating or drinking facilities but if the destination event (like our 3 day Seminar) does so require they must be there;
- The paradox of arts tourism is: ***Which comes first – the arts or the facilities?*** Clearly there will be a lag but it must be minimised by focussed planning. Letting vital eating facilities go out of business, or under-providing for accommodations, whilst building a \$10 million sidewalk and plaza seems less than appropriate although it must at once be stated that the sidewalks and plaza are excellent and a STEP program (Store-front Enhancement Program) is also in full swing in Lindsay with 50% support for expenses incurred and the impact is dramatic;
- ***The economic multiplier requires planned maximum use of local resources*** at all levels and avoidance of leakages. Local artists, local produce, local staffing ... all recycle the new externally derived income from incoming visitors to the micro-economy enabling double, treble, fourfold benefits to accrue.. They also ensure that spending by members of the micro-economy

stays within that economy if they do not need to travel outside for the products and services now available within.

My final economic learning point was one that has always been in a state of aestivation, waiting to blossom. It concerns self-esteem, both for the individual and the community. It became clear as one listened to so many Californian communities telling their tales of trial, error and success that in each and every context the murals program was an outward and visible sign that something was happening. It had the ability to act as the ostentatious standard bearer and by its historical contextualisation mobilised almost all levels of the community. 'If someone can do it, then maybe perhaps I can. At least I can join in and put my shoulder to the wheel as it starts to roll'. Murals programmes are truly observable as an instrument for securing socio-economic participation in new start up activities at the early stages of regeneration.

Everyone Still Thinks Publicity is Marketing

I know it really. After a lifetime as a marketing tutor I really deep down know that most folk always will believe that publicity or selling *is* marketing.

I was fortunate in that two weeks before I left Scotland a respected muralist colleague kindly observed to me that he had never hitherto in all his experience worked with a 'marketing' person. What he was reflecting upon he said was my obsession with defining what business we were truly in and what market segments we were seeking to appeal to. He had also noted how I did not seek publicity except for a carefully evaluated follow through purpose with a key segment. And finally I continually said that until we had critical mass of products and services to purchase and set the economic multiplier working, attracting large numbers of visitors was for us virtually pointless. Our mission was economic regeneration not fame or notoriety. I am obsessional that the Baron is *not* the story .. the story is what we are seeking to do and how. We are seeking social inclusion in our Prestoungrange Arts Festival programme that acts as the catalyst for economic regeneration.

So what of the non-spending celebrations when the Lord Mayor of Goteborg came to town? The objective was to get an external authority to emphasise that The Gothenburg will be returning to business in 2004 loyal to its original founders' ideals from 1908. We did not say it, an external authority figure graciously said it and by his presence on behalf of his fine city in Sweden he wished us well and endorsed our mission. He went back to Sweden and told all his colleagues in local government and Swedish journalists visited us to follow the story through.

The availability of The Gothenburg in Prestonpans as the centre of the Arts Festival, as an arts and crafts building with a community enriching socio-economic mission for the past century, was the sort of good luck we may have deserved but which seldom comes along. We necessarily grasped it with every limb we had. We were able in a single step to broaden our artistic product range, to restore its arts and crafts interior, to re-establish the old beer recipes from Fowler's Ales and a School of Brewing, and to have a venue for major destination events and our own many activities too. We did not have to 'hope' for events; we could engineer them ourselves.

In comparison with our potentially sound (yet never let it be said complacent) marketing thinking, and the controlled and balanced investment to achieve the right facilities to leverage the economic regeneration processes as well as to advance the arts, Lindsay's audience and panellists manifest an abundance of energy invested by intuitive entrepreneurs and gifted amateurs. Which sounds churlish but it cannot be so. The motives and the motivation for so many muralists is to do something for the community and in particular to enjoy the arts. Like the artists themselves the issue at stake is mural maquettes, copyright law, postcards and murals books. Yet that leaves to chance the fundamental purpose, the business we are supposedly intent on being in – economic regeneration. That is a topic bigger than art; art is the means, the very very attractive and intrinsically worthwhile, means to that end.

..... But true to form, one publicity tip we gave that created a stir was the 'nationalisation' of all the rest of the art in town that was there before our Arts Festival began. That led to some serious thought in particular as to how the Burns' Shelter, closed formally against all comers in Prestonpans, can be reopened for use or redesigned to be more effective. Perhaps a Kati Kati style 'Barry' seated outside, or Burns' himself? Or Sir Walter Scott? Or John Muir? Or better still a local competition for ideas on how to help it come alive again.

The Faculty Member's Critique of a Fine Seminar

There was no doubt at all in anyone's mind: it was an event well worth attending and everyone learned a very great deal. Especially myself.

Firstly the camaraderie that arises from the above criticised gifted amateurism makes the networking a joy. And to this add the American way of welcoming and sharing. Long may the gifted amateurs hold pole position from the nascent professionals lurking with their theories of economic regeneration. It was a social success and for Lindsay, as the Cinderella of the Tulare County Murals Trio, it raised self esteem much higher as the city looked Exeter and Tulare in the face.

Secondly. Lindsay's formula adopted for the Seminar was to seek and find highly gifted presenters and to provide ample time for question and answer. And since the Seminar was way out in the Valley at Lindsay these speakers stayed the three days and networked which was truly inspirational for many present. Success was guaranteed.

There is none better at Trompe L'Oeil than John Pugh and he spoke and he networked. There is no finer historian or author/ journalist/ chronicler of murals and of spray can art than James Prighoff and he stayed there the whole duration and networked. Top paint makers and restorers made their impact on artists. Art Mortimer introduced and led the Mural in a Day Painting with consummate skill; and artists as famed as Wei Luan shared in the 10 Mural Competition leading to the Saturday Gala Dinner Auction when, by popular acclaim amongst the Scottish team we necessarily acquired his 8' x 8' work, *Cat Fight*, for Prestoungrange.

So what do I think could have been done better? Here is my checklist:

- The Chairman should have relaxed and flexed his schedule rather than cutting off excellent discussions in their prime;
- The tours of murals were not well interpreted and what was said was inaudible much of the time. It seemed at times as though the medium was not the message at all;
- The tours in Exeter and Tulare were left in limbo by the Lindsay team who did not venture there aboard the buses – the School bus leg room being absolutely excruciating;
- The Auction of 10 Week long 8' x 8' murals was an 'embarrassing' event where good works were offered for sale to the wrong audience and realised ludicrously low prices for Lindsay's funds. Some excellent muralists were 'humiliated' by not even getting a commendation from a panel which chose a Winner;
- The Mural in a Day was a most considerable success throughout the day of which little was made at Completion Time. That should have been a big assemblage, bands playing and the rest. It went off with a whimper;
- The 'humbler' contributors in the Panels, which included myself, were wholly uncoordinated by the Chair. Each just said their bit and had never met together beforehand to assess how best to work or what each was going to emphasise. It was indigestible and at the conclusion no attempt was made to draw any summary or conclusions from the Panel's observations and no time was available for questions. Questions from the floor for the Panel to discuss under a strong Chair might have been more effective.

My Wish List?

I learned that I at any rate wished there had been more formal opportunities for the actual City teams to share what they do and how they succeed. An action learning, issues from the participants approach would have appealed to me and I believe I would have learned more of value as we advance at Prestoungrange. I know I wanted to hear more about Lompoc and the team that has achieved so much there, but the chance did not present itself. (Fortunately that City has volunteered to host the next Californian Seminar in 2005.)

We were overwhelmed by the sheer quality of the presenters and the professionalism of the formal organization of the Seminar. It was an excellent Seminar but not the sort of Seminar action learners organise. What shall we copy and what shall we definitely not attempt at Prestoungrange for our 6th Conference I wonder? Ely remarked that they felt daunted. They felt that Lindsay had set a cracking standard and they had to match or exceed it. But I urged them not to be daunted at all and certainly not to out-excel at what Lindsay did. Tell us all about Ely, and take pride in explaining Ely's history through its murals. Don't imply that its not worthy and that we need world class speakers to Wow us or it wont be worthwhile coming. Speakers like that certainly put sizzle into the Seminar but it was not too clear where the sausages were at the end of the day. No offence Lindsay. Just what I feel I learned by being there.