

DIPLOMA IN ARTS TOURISM

SET 1

ASSIGNMENT ALQ # 2

THE LINDSAY EXPERIENCE

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2 February 2004

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In part fulfilment of the Diploma in Arts Tourism programme.

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1. Impact of Lindsay

After a long, but comfortable flight we arrived at Fresno airport, which was completely deserted except for the very cheerful face of Karl Schutz to greet us. Communication had not worked as well as had hoped. We were not expecting Karl to meet us at the airport but to contact him the following day to arrange for the trip to Lindsay. But, we were tired and to see him was a lovely surprise, although we did feel very guilty to have kept him waiting for several hours due to delayed planes. Karl ever cheerful and the perfect gentleman took us to our hotel near to the airport. He himself having to find somewhere to sleep, made sure we were safe and sound in our hotel first.

Exactly how we got our extremely heavy luggage, ourselves and a copious supply of brochures, leaflets and other promotional material into the “Butterfly Beetle” still amazes me. After arriving at the hotel it was a case of unloading the “Butterfly Beetle”, struggling up the stairs because no lift or hotel porters were available to help us, and collapsing in the room. Catering facilities had ceased at the hotel so we rummaged in our bags for the odd morsel we had picked up on our travels and ended up with an apple and a piece of chocolate brownie! After a good night’s sleep, Karl was waiting bright and early next morning to take us to Lindsay. A lovely journey through the orange, lemon and olive groves.

On arrival at the only motel in Lindsay I was relieved to see too large boxes of carrier bags, albeit with wrong dates on, waiting for us in Reception – their journey’s end from Bulgaria. The next few hours were spent collating the contents of the carrier bags ready for distribution at the Symposium.

Fortunately, we had allowed ourselves an extra day before the Symposium commenced to get our bearings and casually acquaint ourselves with Lindsay. On entering the Town we saw the American Spirit mural painted by Wie Luan, which depicts the September 11th atrocity and a little further into the Town we saw Lindsay’s very first mural on the walls of the Community Theatre facade in Trompe L’oeil style.

With Karl as our guide he took us to Lindsay Chamber of Commerce to meet the organisers and to see at first hand the eight competition murals in their initial stages of creation. We met the artists hard at work and I was particularly in awe of their work and the amount of talent and enthusiasm that was present was overwhelming. There were six 8x8 murals being created in a relatively confined space and two 8x8 murals being painted in a corridor. Not wanting to interrupt the artists for too long we made their acquaintance and then went along the street to see Art Mortimer busy on the outline of the “Mural in a Day”, getting ready for the mass of artists to finish a few days later.

Although the Symposium wasn't due to start until the next day, I did find it rather unusual that there was very little activity on the streets and very few local businesses open or even trading at all. I wondered, “Where are all the people?”

2. Learning from the Sessions/Scotland Comparisons

As you can see from the attached California Mural Symposium Conference Schedule it was an interesting combination of presentations and networking opportunities. Some sessions held more interest for me than others and I would have liked to see more audience participation. Perhaps this is because I have been trained over the years by action learning. I also feel that putting participation (action) into sessions keeps the audience attention. It was evident from some of the sessions that members of the audience had fallen asleep! For me the lowest point of concentration was during the session on paint. The most interesting sessions for me were Marketing, Spray can art and Trompe L'oeil.

Paint

The session on Paint, I think was too detailed and technical for a majority of the audience and more suited to an audience of artists who would understand and gain benefit from the technicalities of paint. Although I say it was the least interesting for me, I did learn that there is more to paint than I had ever thought before. I felt that our artists in Scotland would have benefited from the session and learnt a lot about others experiences of selecting the right location, surface and paint to be used. These being evenly balanced and explained as three points on a triangle. An aspect we had

not fully appreciated in Scotland was the ongoing damage to the murals of the pigeons and sea gulls bearing in mind the majority of our murals are on a sea wall. A lot of consideration had been given, on the other hand, to the tides and the salt from the sea. Our mural on the Salters having particular relevance to the conditions! It was also fascinating to hear about the peeling off of a mural from a wall and putting it on canvas elsewhere. Also to put varnish on a wall before painting to help prolong its life.

Spaycan Art

As mentioned above one of the most interesting sessions for me was Spraycan Art, which some might call Graffiti or Youth Art. It has a definite style and I considered very talented. The session demonstrated that young talent should be nurtured and turned into an art form. This Andrew Crummy, one of our main artists in Scotland, has done when a youth group from the local community and an invited group from Bromley-by-Bow in London were invited to paint a mural on the seawall at Prestonpans. They began to paint on the foreshore, which was considered to be the start of unwanted graffiti but when speaking to Andrew he said that his intention was to encourage the young people to transpose their creativity from the foreshore onto the seawall. If he had shown objection to the painting on the foreshore it could have caused an adverse effect on what he was trying to do i.e. channel the talent and energies of the young people in the right direction. Also by having the local youngsters involved in the murals it has proved to prevent unwanted graffiti on it. They actually “police” the murals for us as they would know who had vandalised “their” mural. They now have ownership and a pride in their community. It has also been proved around the world that the murals are very rarely vandalised and on the occasions where this has happened they are repaired and very seldom defaced again. Hereby, graffiti is being turned into art to be appreciated by all.

Art Mortimer – Mural in a Day

More lessons were to be learnt from the session run by Art Mortimer also to see his managerial style when coping with the number of artists and volunteers painting the “Mural in a Day”. Team work is of the utmost importance. He believes that the artists and volunteers should be looked after and for the community to look after them. They were all offered snacks and refreshment. After all it is the artists who are

working for the benefit of the whole community and to “build a community through murals” He had run a Workshop prior to the actual Day for painting the mural so that all the artists “hit the wall running”. The volunteers were given guidance on the day and ready mixed colour and a small template. All had total involvement in the finished mural and with that an immense sense of achievement and pride in the fact that their efforts will remain for many years. Art did inform us that he sometimes asks the artists to submit copies of their work so that he can allocate the right sections according to their style. He has no guarantee how long it will take and a lot rides on “it must be done” because painting “A mural in a day” is usually followed with celebrations and a ceremony. This also applies to the Competition murals which had to be finished for them to be judged at the Gala Dinner.

Trompe L’oeil

I was particularly interested in John Pugh’s work and his session where he showed us the stages building up a mural and how he gets the 3D effect. This was one of the highlights of the event for me. As with all the works of art, how they start with a plain canvas and produce such works will never cease to amaze me. Also to have such vision is a definite Wow for me.

3. Networking

There were opportunities for networking and I tried to make the best use of them, and we are hopeful that Venessa Sykes, Economic Development Manager at Stony Plains, Alberta, Canada will join this Diploma in Arts Tourism Set very soon and others.

The whistle stop bus trip to Tulare was disappointing and did not have many opportunities to get out of the coach and look at the murals but a lot of chatting was done on the bus.. In comparison Exeter was far better as we had a good tour. The only drawback was that the group was large and so not everyone could hear the explanation of the murals. For 2006, I suggest we have more than one guide and smaller groups, or find another way and learn from this experience.

When speaking to the artists, they were very keen to come to Scotland and paint murals for us, but this is not our objective. We pride ourselves that we only use local

artists. This appears to be different from the murals in Lindsay, Exeter and Tulare which I understand are not all painted by local artists.

Another comparison with Scotland is that we have a theme for our murals which is local history and support them with historical educational booklets and are adamant that each mural is linked to the history of Prestonpans. In Lindsay the theme for the competition was “Western” and I could not understand why that theme was chosen.

At the Gala Dinner, another opportunity to network, the Competition murals were auctioned and I thought it was sad that the murals would be taken away from Lindsay. May be it might have been better for those present who wanted to buy the murals to “adopt the mural” instead and let it stay in Lindsay. By keeping the murals in Lindsay they would have added to their portfolio of murals. Having said this, we were delighted to have acquired the “Cat Fight” mural for transportation to Prestonpans. The subject of the mural could have been designed specially for the Gothenburg with previous use of one of the areas as a “ladies” bar. Comments were also made that it was embarrassing for the artists that their works of art were sold for so little.

4. Marketing Scotland from experiences at Lindsay

An observation from Lindsay and something that we should learn from, was the lack of shops operating and how we should try to ensure that impression is not given in Prestonpans. It is probably easier said than done, but those shops which were closed and could have operated missed a major opportunity to make sales – in particular in the restaurant and catering areas. This meant custom leaked outside of their community. On our visit to Exeter they had set up a good reputation for shops and dining paying special attention to Price – Service – Quality. Also in Prestonpans there are several shops closed, which is a casualty of a depressed town and at what point, I do not know, would the shopkeepers come into Town and see the opportunity for themselves that increased tourism will bring to a profitable business and open the shops. How do we find the entrepreneurs to reopen the businesses in Prestonpans between now and 2006 at least? As in Lindsay, there is no hotel close to

Prestonpans. Having experienced the consequences of this in Lindsay we need to address the issue for 2006 early on.

With 2006 as an ideal opportunity for Prestonpans to be “put on the map”, we have already set to work on our marketing strategy with the help of a PR Consultant being recruited. It is essential that our itinerary is action packed with:

- plenty of participation in painting murals
- tours – e.g. Glenkinchie, Edinburgh Tattoo, coal trail, mural trail
- creating an artistic piece facilitated by Andrew and Kate but ensuring locals are involved too – multi-cultural and giving them something as a reminder of their work to take home.
- lots of pre-announcements
- listed in tourist books
- finishing with a Gala Dinner to remember.

Prior to 2006, over the next 2 years we would want to spread the word and to:

- encourage the shop owners to stay open on a Sunday
- work with the Chambers and Economic Development Officers
- work with the Councils to keep the Town clean
- find opportunities where others can “brag” about Prestonpans rather than just us bragging out it.

From conversations in Lindsay there was great enthusiasm to come to Scotland.

For reason of not upstaging Ely, I feel we should have provided a provisional booking form for 2006. We chose to wait until Ely but some of those at Lindsay may not go to Ely. I believe Carolyn is/has given a list of all participants to Lindsay so all may not be lost.

I think we are particularly fortunate in Prestonpans with acquiring The Gothenburg, which will support the regeneration of the economy in Prestonpans and appreciate that other Towns are not so fortunate. We have been funded to this point but are fully aware that Prestonpans has to be self-sustaining and work towards obtaining further grants and other funding. Using the Gothenburg principle that all profits over 5%

ROI will be put back into the community projects through the arts, is a step towards the self-sustaining strategy.

Over the last three years we have been “painting a dream”. No-one knows how a dream will turn out and rarely turn out as planned, other forces affect our plans too and so have to learn to be flexible without losing site of our dream and vision. The slow process to get planning permission has been very frustrating. What we are trying to establish in Prestonpans is self-sustaining regeneration with economic regeneration as an objective. We are involved in the transition from the past to today - Renaissance = rebirth.

In Karl’s session he emphasized the supporting of one another. In 2006 we would want to help forthcoming Conferences and Symposiums by displaying their promotional material just as Lindsay helped us. We were conscious at Lindsay that we did not take the limelight away from the promotion of Ely. We kept the carrier bags back until after Gordon Prestoungrange’s marketing session. It was difficult because some people saw them and were keen to get hold of them and some thought they were the bags for their packed lunch!

Karl had remarked that some Mural Towns had not marketed their mural book. Prestonpans is currently working on a “coffee table” book, which will be available before 2006. Some Towns were apparently giving away Manual’s free of charge but this is seen as a missed opportunity and it should be published and sold.

5. Plans for the future

Now that planning permission has been granted on the extension for The Gothenburg we have everything to go for and that it will be nicely established well before 2006.

All efforts are to be placed on:

- finishing the extension as quickly as possible but not to lose sight of “quality”.
- giving attention to Price – Service – Quality within the Gothenburg.
- establishing a welcoming environment for both locals and all visitors.

For most of our Team we have not been involved in a venture of this magnitude before so have to rely on the expertise of those around us to make it happen. The expertise of the artists, authors, local community, Council officials for Economic Development all working together are essential.

By touring other Towns after Lindsay, Exeter and Tulare and learning from them both the good points and the not so good, we will hopefully have a recipe for success.

5. Conclusion

I would hope that within this assignment I have been able to demonstrate:

1. an evaluation of the Congress at Lindsay, California from my own perspective and how that information can be applied to the Prestonpans project.
2. what I found most interesting and not so interesting and why.
3. what I learned from the experience of visiting Lindsay, Exeter and Tulare.

The whole experience of Lindsay was very enjoyable, meaningful and educational. I met some very interesting people and gained a better understanding of art and how art and tourism link so harmoniously together. It is unbelievable what technicalities are needed to make up a mural and its perception by others, which might not be the same as mine.

As well as the interesting talks, I would like to have seen a demonstration of spraycan art and Trompe L'oeil. Also more opportunities to paint, being a non artist, with the experts.

I was very proud that some of the artists at Lindsay wanted to come to Scotland and paint a mural but, although flattering, it is not our strategy. Our whole operation is based on using the local community as far as possible both in painting murals, editorial support and in giving locals employment as far as possible.

Are we unique in our operation? Yes I think so, from experiences so far. We have been very fortunate with the Gothenburg's position opposite to the Baronial lands and the historical background of the Gothenburg. Also linked to the other many elements of historical interest in Prestonpans. The locals are gradually becoming part of our operation in such a short space of time and helping us fulfil our goal ensuring "social inclusion". They feel comfortable about calling in to see us and bring information, literature, family treasures and heirlooms.

I would like to think we have got it right so far supported by a lot of enthusiasm, commitment, talent and strong networks. I am looking forward to Ely and hopefully to call into Philadelphia, which I understand has over 3,000 murals. Also to learn not only about their successes and failures. Evidence so far says it works!
