

Considering the journey of my relationship with Welsh Art

When I was an art student in the 1980s I didn't have the opportunity to explore the visual language nor ideologies related to the visual language of my culture. At the end of my degree, I wanted to write a dissertation in Welsh, on Welsh Art and wasn't able to construct something meaningful that had any academic integrity. During my research I visited the National Museum in Cardiff and at the time neither contemporary nor historical Welsh art was on display, I was offered one dusty old book that I didn't even open but instead sat there in a darkened room and contemplated. This event led me to meet with Peter Lord who at the time was just beginning on his amazing quest to save the history of the visual language within the cultural context of Wales both in writing books and as it turns out today to save the works themselves.

During our meeting we were able to discuss the book that I was presented with and the difficulty of accessing any meaningful information. I think my dissertation could not have been very good and though I have no idea what mark I received I probably challenged the system for it to have any relevance to my non-Welsh tutors in Cardiff at the time.

My student experience and the meeting with Peter Lord was a seminal moment for me and eventually, once I ended up in teaching, enabled me to be determined that other students should not be in the same position as me at the time in not being able to discuss the visual language and culture of Wales with any academic integrity.

It's great to see now the wealth of information in our museums and galleries related not only to the visual culture but also to the Welsh language and the access that our students have to this readily available information. I am in the fortunate situation as a lecturer at Swansea College of Art to be able to read the diverse information presented both in Welsh and in English and to be engaged in the research that our students undertake at all levels. I love the questioning, the exploration, and the confident engagement that our students have, it has been an exciting time for me over recent years to see this growth.

During the summer at the Glynn Vivian as part of Owen Griffith's exhibition *Thinking Green* (8 April 2022 - 18 September 2022) I attended a Welsh language event devised by Owen in collaboration with academic and poet Mererid Hopwood and writer and curator Robyn Tomos, we as the attendee participants were enabled to think about the edges, the edges of language and the meeting of words within the themes that he presented within the gallery space. The edges of things is a huge area of interest for Owen where I think he considers the edges as being the places that are most abundant. Like the edges of rivers or the edges of rail tracks and the wealth within nature that those edges offer. This event has made me reflect on the excitement of the edges of my language and culture, the wealth that our students can explore whether they are Welsh or not and to also reflect on the edges of my Cardiff student days that led me on this journey via Peter Lord and the exploration of Historical and contemporary Welsh art on the edge of Global Art History and to consider my language and culture in relation to the visual.

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