

REVELATION at Gunpowder Park

Maureen Kendal introduced the FATBAND multimedia project at the developing Gunpowder Park in Lee Valley.

'Revelation' is a multi-media interactive digital project that is site-specific, temporary, and both globally and locally distributed. It is one of the first art projects commissioned for Gunpowder Park.

FATBAND is a team of multimedia artists and producers proposing potential research projects, serving the community and using innovative digital technology. 'FATBAND', conveys a sense of distributing rich and deep multimedia, an experience that is something beyond the narrowband or broadband experience of the World Wide Web. We are based at City Campus, in the computing department C.C.T.M. at London Metropolitan University, where a major proportion of our students come from the East End. Lee Valley Regional Park lies east of London's East End.

FATBAND's research interests lie in innovative use of digital technology, experimentation with language of multimedia and interactivity, and methods of public involvement. We had different experiences to offer: Paul St George with his work on inventions, camera technology, and aesthetic theory; Fiona French's involvement in game development and internet applications and David Chapman from the University of East London, School of Innovation and Cultural Studies, as our sound producer with his background in video, music and digital arts. As a digital artist, my work sets out to realise a poetic and artistic vision – that extends and goes beyond documentation, into an art form in its own right. I am intrigued by 'the experiential' rather than the object. Working with the medium of multimedia, we set out to deliver process, product, and participation with the public, which interprets Gunpowder Park, locally and globally.

Multimedia engages the user's visual, textural and multi-sensorial experience, but most importantly enables the user to

explore and navigate a physical site through a website. Multimedia offers opportunities through which the user can explore a range of pathways or journeys through a multi-sensorial interface. Our medium enables different modalities of image, sound, text and the experience of interactivity to work together, using computer-based technology, to be distributed online as on the web, or off-line on DVD-video or CD-ROM, or embedded in everyday objects such as a mobile phone or wearable computing.

Previous experience of the FATBAND Team included site-specific projects in public spaces, interactive multimedia projects with



Inspiration: Paul with split stone.

digital distribution channels and web accessibility, active involvement of the public, creative experimentation with visual and audio language and innovative use of digital technology,

At the L&A Network's first 'Land Art and Land Use' conference in 2000, hosted by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, at Three Mills Studios, I was introduced to Tony Beckwith, the Arts Development Officer for Lee Valley Regional Park. The Lee Valley extends from the urban multi-cultural East End of London through North London via urban Tottenham into rural Hertfordshire. Artists are commissioned to produce site-specific work to enhance the expe-

rience of the park, promoting the Lee Valley. Gunpowder Park is one of Lee Valley's most important new initiatives: located near the M25, the Park comprises 225 acres and a multi-purpose Field Station devoted to arts and science.

We had brought with us a wide scope of creative concepts. However, we needed to experience the site and meet the stakeholders, such as park rangers and members of the local community, to identify their interests and put forward a relevant and realistic proposal.

One dank day in April 2002, we stood on top of a mound that was to become the Field Station, Paul St George picked up a rounded white stone; it cracked in half revealing a glistening flint. The moment captured on camera signified the potential that emanates from a simple stone. Tony Beckwith pervaded the scene of mud and drizzle, inspired with a vision of the future:

a park with natural beauty, areas of farmland, rolling hills, mysterious marshlands and woodland, set aside for the local communities of Enfield, Hertfordshire, and people of North East London. Tony envisaged site-specific temporary artworks and events of national and international interest. Our imagination was finely tuned and we created our proposal for the REVELATION project.

Our concept was driven by the experience of the site and the vision for its future. We observed a diversity of terrain, thresholds between regions, landmarks, lines of

sight, different perspectives, close-ups of textures and species, landscape and panoramas, the site caught between the urban sprawl of north London and rural rolling hills of Hertfordshire. Our methods included different mappings of the site and public participation. Some of the public we contacted had been employed within the site. Interest groups included local video makers, a local ecology group, and Lee Valley Regional Park Rangers.

We set out to experiment using aesthetics in the language of multimedia, innovative use of technologies, and engaging with members of the public.

Photograph provided by Maureen Kendal for FATBAND



'Revelation' is a virtual park offering a multimedia interactive experience through web access. This media-rich site is by choice-driven, allowing different users to choose media appropriate for their needs. The interface is through the web: a virtual experience, making the inaccessible accessible.

Working with the medium of multimedia, we set out to deliver process, product and participation with the public, interpreting Gunpowder Park locally and globally.

FATBAND facilitated active participation with community groups enabling image data to be collected through 'hunter cameras', 'hidden cameras' and extracts from video sequences.

'Hunter camera' refers to the accepted way of pointing, framing and shooting an image where the camera is hand-held by the photographer who controls position, framing and other variables. The process is controlled by the 'hunter-photographer'. FATBAND used the 'hunter camera' to capture hundreds of photographic images of the park under development throughout the seasons.

This controlled method is in contrast to the 'hidden' cameras that incorporated a high level of chance. 'Hidden camera' refers to the invention of self-contained camera modules that will respond to a 'natural' event, such as movement, the passage of time, rainfall, wind or footsteps, and record a digital image of moving animals or the changing environment. FATBAND offered an adopter scheme for the 'hidden cameras', and Park Rangers Andy Hayes, Sarah Brooks and Dawn Richardson participated in this scheme. The adopter looks after the module, setting up its position and triggers and tending to it on a regular basis, but leaving it on location to collect images, leaving the process open to chance. FATBAND offered weekly

support for data collection, queries or technical repairs, aesthetic appreciation, interest in wildlife sightings, and keeping the rangers informed of the progress in the project as a whole.

Groups such as local video makers preferred to take photographs by 'hunting' and FATBAND offered opportunities for guided dawn and nocturnal site walks for these groups and collaborated with them, digitalised and collected material from three video makers (Sid Dawkins, Stan Lane and Edward Judd) from Enfield Video Makers, a local community group.

FATBAND joined a local ecologist group headed by Brian Dawton for a bird-spotting walk. Their knowledge of species, location and birdsong could be mapped using multimedia technology in a further development.

An interactive interface enables the user to explore a two-dimensional map, accessing depth and complexity via photographs, both 'still' and in sequences, from random and hunter cameras and samples of sound, both accessible and inaccessible, distant and near. The user's

THE PROPOSED CONCEPT:

'REVELATION' – it reveals the inaccessible in Gunpowder Park.

Revelation, a virtual park will be distributed over the Internet.

An interactive multimedia experience will reveal views and sounds of the site that may otherwise be invisible or inaudible.

Images, sounds and data will be collected by methods of hunting, gathering and recording over time.

FATBAND, members of the community and the Park will work together as collectors.

Some images will be recorded using self-contained camera modules.

These cameras will respond to a 'natural' event such as movement, the passage of time, rainfall, wind or footsteps and record a digital image of moving animals or changing environment.

These camera modules will be adopted by wardens and by volunteers from the local community.

exploration is enhanced by extensible and interactive 'jelly text' – a synthesis of software and poetic text, stimulating the poetic and the semantic.

We experimented with visual and auditory language in terms of mapping seasonal change, 360 degree panoramas, juxtaposition of 'the framed still' of close-ups, to landscapes and 'random' sequences

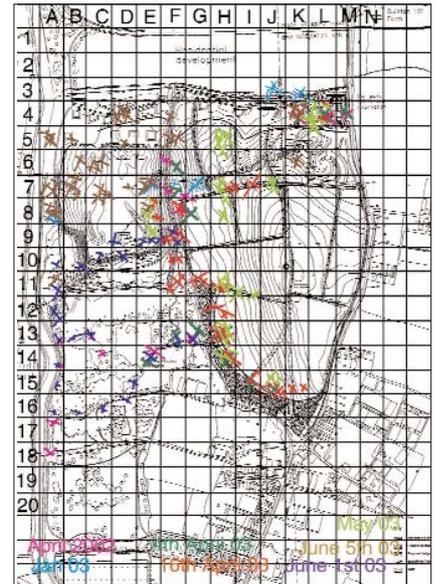


Image: Maureen Kendal for FATBAND

Gunpowder Park: site map with tracking marks

of images using triggers of time and motion, sequences of moving images from community contributors, sound inaudible to the human ear such as bats, and underwater sounds.

Aspects of land form and land usage were changing perspectives, juxtaposition of terrain, creation of thresholds between different regions, meander through spaces, fixed paths and space between rows, clumps, dots and clusters. A specific time and space co-ordinate is enriched and extended.

The database of assets was gathered with reference to a map-grid of the site. Organisation of this database conveyed experiential aspects rather than educational information. Our brief was an artistic interpretation. The site contains four distinct areas: farmland, man-made hills which are shaped like exploding matter, 'Osier' wet woodland

and the marshland and ponds within Osier wood. We divided the area into 15 regions of different terrain and, using the grid system, into 200 different squares, the original map having been provided by the landscape architects.

Maps were used to chart the walks and location of assets, noting point of views east, west, north or south. Andy Hayes, the

Ranger, had identified a need for the public to be aware of orienteering and map comprehension, so the map was used as a means of navigation through the website.

An interface for both the broadband user and the non-broadband user was developed by testing both vector and bitmap technologies. Factors determining the design were download time from the Internet versus the aesthetics of the image and sound.

Camera invention was developed by Paul St George and tested on site by the Park Rangers.

Tony's vision for the site includes site-specific temporary artworks and events of national and international interest.

The team met with Tony Beckwith in the autumn of 2001 and the first site visit was in April 2002. The proposal was put forward that year, so that the 'Revelation' Project was able to kick off in January 2003. However, the funding was only made available three months later delaying the development of the camera invention. The hidden cameras were located in the summer instead of late winter / early spring. Additional regular and extensive 'Hunter' images were captured instead, so that seasonal change and the development of the park would be revealed.

The duration of the project was set up to run for just over six months from January to July. Due to the delay, it has extended into the autumn of 2003. Since the Park opening is not until summer 2004, the deadline for assets and the release of the website has been moved forward. The management of moving deadlines is challenging, but needs to be expected in this type of project. The creative product will be the realisation of iterative problem-solving and hybridisation of visions and technologies.

Revelation, the virtual park will go live in the spring of 2004: www.fatband.org. Until then try www.leevalleypark.com/revelation or contact info@fatband.org

YSP: The Place and Its Mission

Anna Bowman, Head of Education at YSP, took the floor on Saturday morning and gave delegates a brief insight into the history and underlying philosophy of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

The Yorkshire Sculpture Park was established in 1977, as the country's first permanent sculpture park and enjoys a national and international reputation for the siting of sculpture in the open air and for the quality of its exhibitions. The Park is situated in the 500 acre, 18th century Bretton Hall estate and receives 350,000 visitors each year – over 40,000 of whom are school children. The absence of an entry charge means that everyone can enjoy what YSP has to offer and ensures a wide range of visitors.

An average of ten exhibitions, displays and projects are curated in the indoor and outdoor spaces each year. Usually around half of these involve international artists, some showing in Britain for the first time.

One of the great assets of Yorkshire Sculpture Park is that the outdoor 'gallery' spaces dramatically differ from each other in terms of size and character. They range from the linear, enclosed Formal Terrace and wooded areas to the open, rolling Lakeside. Trees, shrubs and architectural features enclose these spaces within which sculpture is sited to form extensive exhibitions or specific installations. Projects are selected or developed for particular areas of land so

that sculpture and place are considered and allowed to work together for their mutual benefit and purpose.

Where Yorkshire Sculpture Park markedly differs from other sculpture parks is in its commitment to curating a programme of temporary open-air exhibitions, rather than



Heroes de Lumiere – Bylgor Mitoraj – in an autumn landscape at YSP.

Photograph: © Jonny Wilde

the establishment of a permanent collection. This means that there is always something fresh and interesting to see on each visit.

The exhibitions and displays programme aims for a balance between showing work by international, mid-career and younger artists. Support for artists is provided in many ways, including exhibitions, installations, residencies and research projects. All curatorial work is fortified by

Yorkshire Sculpture Park – Mission Statement:

Yorkshire Sculpture Park seeks to provide a centre of regional, national and international importance for the creation, exhibition and appreciation of modern and contemporary sculpture.

Aims

- To offer artists from Britain and overseas the opportunity and resources to work in the historic landscape of YSP, and to facilitate residencies, exhibitions, publications, commissions and other projects.
- To provide an accessible and stimulating resource for the whole community, and to offer equal opportunities for the practice, understanding and enjoyment of sculpture.
- To promote the study and appreciation of diverse sculptural practice in a variety of educational contexts for both general and specialist audiences.
- To protect and enhance the historic landscape of the Bretton Estate as a space in which both artists and visitors can explore and enjoy art and nature.
- To contribute to the artistic, economic and social life of the region.

