Holy Hiatus

ritual and community in public art

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edited by Ruth Jones

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Ruth Jones

Ask anyone and you'll be assured, 'Sure, ritual has its place'. Like a dutiful servant, it should know that place and stay there. It ought not to be springing up underfoot, as if its place were everywhere.[1]

Experiments with Living Rituals

In May 2008, five temporary art events took place in public spaces in Cardigan as part of the project *Holy Hiatus.* Some people locally and from further afield knew about the events through publicity material or word of mouth, and made an active decision to attend, while others came across interventions unexpectedly whilst going about their daily business. A few people living in and around Cardigan became collaborators through their involvement in the artists' projects. The temporary, mobile and in some cases understated nature of the works meant that the impact was often subtle, but the artworks nonetheless created a ripple of effect for both active and incidental audiences, leading witnesses to wonder what they had just seen and to what extent they had knowingly, or unknowingly, participated in it.

In meditation and spiritual practices that involve ritual pattern making, 'holy hiatus' refers to the crossing of the boundary between inner and outer consciousness. The purpose of such practices is to allow inner processes to manifest as outer design or forms – a method that has strong analogies with art-making. *Holy Hiatus* focused on social ritual, community and public places to explore threshold, or 'liminal', states and examine the ways that artists can draw audiences into different, often unexpected, experiences of place through ritual. Liminal was originally an anthropological term referring to the central aspect of any ritual during which participants may have a transformative experience and is associated with both positive change and uncertainty. More recently, the word liminal has

Arbrofi gyda Defodau Byw

Ym mis Mai 2008, cynhaliwyd pum digwyddiad celfyddydol dros dro mewn mannau cyhoeddus yn Aberteifi fel rhan o'r prosiect *Holy Hiatus.* Yr oedd rhai pobl leol ac eraill yn gwybod am y digwyddiadau hyn drwy ddeunydd cyhoeddusrwydd neu wedi clywed sôn amdanynt, ac wedi penderfynu mynd i'w gweld, ac roedd eraill wedi taro ar y digwyddiadau ar hap. Daeth rhai pobl, a oedd yn byw yn Aberteifi a'r cylch, i gydweithio ar brosiectau'r artistiaid. Gan fod y gweithiau'n rhai dros dro, symudol a chynnil weithiau, cynnil hefyd oedd eu heffaith yn aml. Serch hynny, llwyddodd y gweithiau celf i blannu hedyn ym meddyliau'r gynulleidfa, y rhai a'u gwelodd yn unswydd neu ar hap, gan wneud iddynt feddwl am yr hyn a welsant ac i ba raddau yr oeddynt wedi cymryd rhan, boed o fwriad neu'n ddiarwybod iddynt.

Mewn arferion myfyriol ac ysbrydol sydd yn ymwneud â chreu patrymau defodol, mae 'holy hiatus' yn cyfeirio at groesi'r ffin rhwng yr ymwybod mewnol ac allanol. Pwrpas ymarferion o'r fath yw caniatáu i'r prosesau mewnol eu hamlygu eu hunain yn gynllun neu ffurfiau allanol – yn debyg iawn i greu celfyddyd. Yr oedd *Holy Hiatus* yn canolbwyntio ar ddefodau cymdeithasol, cymunedau a mannau cyhoeddus er mwyn archwilio'r cyflwr trothwyol (sef profiadau sydd rhwng dau le) a gweld sut y gall artistiaid dynnu cynulleidfaoedd i mewn i brofiadau gwahanol o le drwy ddefod, a hynny'n aml yn annisgwyl. Term anthropolegol yn wreiddiol yw 'trothwyol' (*liminal)*; mae'n cyfeirio at agwedd ganologol unrhyw ddefod y gallai pobl gael profiad trawsffurfiol drwyddi ac fe'i

entered into cultural thinking in a number of different disciplines, particularly theatre and performance, but it can refer to any experience during which the normal linear and day-to-day experience of time and space is suspended and a different state of consciousness is achieved. 'Ritual' often conjures images of traditional religion or social occasions that reconfirm traditional authority, and while ritual can be conservative, this project hopes to demonstrate that ritual acts can also be creative and dynamic, having the capacity to introduce innovative understandings of identity, on both a personal and a social level, and to re-present places, often familiar ones, in new and invigorating ways.

Cardigan has been undergoing a process of regeneration for a number of years. In 2004 Theatr Mwldan reopened its doors in a purpose built new building, and helped to establish Cardigan as a focus in West Wales for art, theatre, world music and cinema. Following many years of involvement with community arts, the Small World Theatre raised funds for its own innovatively designed building, which was completed and opened to the public in 2008, Maura Hazelden's project for *Holy Hiatus* was the first event to take place in this space. Public opinion has been voracious, and often polarised over plans to regenerate Cardigan Castle grounds and house as a heritage site, and over the proposed semi-permanent public sculptural installation by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer in the River Teifi, supported by Channel 4's Big Art Project. It is not surprising, given the level of cultural activity taking place in this small town over the last few years, that its residents feel uncertain about its future. *Holy Hiatus* was an opportunity to explore this in-between or 'liminal' state of the town through a series of non-permanent, low-budget and place-sensitive events that attempted to bridge social and political differences through ritual activity that negotiates the space between tradition and innovation, between the past and the future, between

cysylltir â newid cadarnhaol ac ansicrwydd fel ei gilydd. Yn fwy diweddar, mae'r gair trothwyol wedi treiddio i'r meddylfryd diwylliannol mewn nifer o ddisgyblaethau gwahanol, yn arbennig theatr a pherfformio, ond gall gyfeirio at unrhyw brofiad pan fydd profiadau arferol a phrofiadau o dydd i ddydd o amser a gofod yn peidio, a cheir math gwahanol o ymwybod. Yn aml mae 'defod' yn awgrymu crefydd draddodiadol neu achlysuron cymdeithasol sydd yn cadarnhau awdurdod traddodiadol. Ond er y gall y ddefod fod yn geidwadol, mae'r prosiect hwn yn gobeithio dangos y gall gweithredoedd defodol hefyd fod yn greadigol a deinamig, ac y gallant ennyn dealltwriaeth flaengar o hunaniaeth, ar lefel bersonol a chymdeithasol, a chyflwyno lleoedd o'r newydd, rhai cyfarwydd yn aml, mewn ffyrdd newydd a chyffrous.

Mae tref Aberteifi yn destun gwaith adfywio ers nifer o flynyddoedd. Yn 2004 ailagorodd Theatr Mwldan ei drysau mewn adeilad newydd pwrpasol a bu hyn o gymorth i greu enw i Aberteifi fel canolfan yng Ngorllewin Cymru ar gyfer celf, theatr, cerddoriaeth y byd a sinema. Ar ôl blynyddoedd o ymwneud â'r celfyddydau cymunedol, cododd Theatr Byd Bychan arian i godi ei adeilad blaengar ei hun, a chwblhawyd ac agorwyd yr adeilad i'r cyhoedd yn 2008. Prosiect Maura Hazelden i *Holy Hiatus* oedd y digwyddiad cyntaf i'w gynnal yn yr adeilad hwn. Mae'r farn gyhoeddus wedi bod yn llafar iawn, a bu cryn wahaniaeth barn ynglŷn â'r cynlluniau i adfywio gerddi a thŷ Castell Aberteifi yn safle treftadaeth, ac ynghylch gosodwaith cerfluniol cyhoeddus lled-barhaol arfaethedig gan Rafael Lozano-Hemmer yn afon Teifi gyda chefnogaeth *Big Art Project Channel 4*. Does ryfedd felly, o ystyried yr holl weithgarwch diwylliannol a fu'n digwydd yn y dref fach hon yn ystod y blynyddoedd diwethaf, fod ei thrigolion yn teimlo'n ansicr am ei dyfodol. Yr oedd *Holy Hiatus* yn gyfle i archwilio cyflwr trothwyol y dref drwy gyfres o ddigwyddiadau dros dro, ar

permanence and mutability, and between selfhood and community.

The project also sought to address how public art and site-specific works can function in a rural environment. There is a tendency to believe that a number of factors work against the success of rural experimental projects like this, such as the problem of locating sufficient funding sources, and bringing together an audience that is geographically scattered. Precedents existed in rural Wales, such as *Strata*, an international site-responsive project curated by Ann Mulrooney and Tim Davies in Strata Florida Abbey in 2005, and the artists' collective *ointment* have carried out live and site-specific projects in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire since 2001, suggesting that innovative public art projects can reach local audiences. In addition, visitors will travel from cities or other rural places to attend these projects, demonstrating their contemporary relevance. *Holy Hiatus* focused on two inter-related possibilities: firstly, how to develop a better understanding of the relationships between art and ritual; secondly, can art that employs ritual contribute to a sense of community? Integral to these questions is the location of the project in a rural place where there is a complex relationship between traditional practices that retain elements of ritual (for example, farming and traditional religions) and contemporary lifestyles.

It is important to ask, what is meant when we talk about 'community' in relation to public art practice? Community is often referred to in the abstract as a place or group of people, whose existence is taken for granted but not examined closely, or alternatively as something lost from the past, to be mourned, which can never be recovered. *Holy Hiatus* drew on Grant Kester's approach to community and public art outlined in his book *Conversation Pieces*, in which he promotes the facilitation of dialogue and exchange through a process that can 'help us speak and

gyllideb fach, a fyddai'n gweddu i'w lleoliadau, ac a oedd yn ceisio pontio'r gwahaniaethau gwleidyddol a chymdeithasol drwy weithredu defodol sydd yn troedio'r gagendor rhwng y traddodiadol a'r newydd, rhwng y gorffennol a'r dyfodol, y parhaol a'r cyfnewidiol, a rhwng yr hunan a'r gymuned.

Yr oedd y prosiect hefyd yn ceisio ystyried sut y gall celf gyhoeddus a gweithiau'n ymwneud â lleoliadau penodol weithredu mewn amgylchedd gwledig. Mae tueddiad i gredu bod nifer o ffactorau'n gweithio yn erbyn llwyddiant prosiectau arbrofol gwledig fel hyn, megis problem dod o hyd i ffynonellau ariannol digonol, a dwyn ynghyd gynulleidfa sydd yn wasgaredig yn ddaearyddol. Yr oedd cynseiliau yn y Gymru wledig, er enghraifft *Strata*, prosiect rhyngwladol a oedd yn ymateb i'w safle, dan guraduriaeth Ann Mulrooney a Tim Davies, yn Abaty Ystrad Ffŷr yn 2005, a'r grwp cydweithredol o artistiaid, *ointment*, sydd wedi bod yn cynnal prosiectau byw'n ymwneud â lleoliadau penodol yng Ngheredigion a sir Benfro er 2001. Awgryma hyn y gall prosiectau celf gyhoeddus blaengar gyrraedd cynulleidfaoedd lleol. Yn ogystal, bydd ymwelwyr yn teithio o ddinasoedd a mannau gwledig eraill i fynychu'r prosiectau hyn, ac mae hynny'n dangos eu bod yn berthnasol yn yr oes sydd ohoni. Mae *Holy Hiatus* yn canolbwyntio ar ddau bosibilrwydd cydberthnasol: yn gyntaf, sut i ddatblygu gwell dealltwriaeth o'r berthynas rhwng celf a defod; yn ail, a all celf sydd yn defnyddio defodau gyfrannu at ymdeimlad o gymuned? Yn greiddiol i'r cwestiynau hyn mae lleoliad y prosiect mewn ardal wledig lle mae perthynas gymhleth rhwng arferion traddodiadol sydd wedi cadw elfennau o ddefod (er enghraifft, ffermio a chrefyddau traddodiadol) a ffyrdd mwy cyfoes o fyw.

Mae'n bwysig gofyn beth a olygir wrth inni sôn am 'gymuned' yng nghyd-destun celf gyhoeddus? Cyfeirir at gymuned yn aml mewn ffordd haniaethol fel lle neu grŵp o bobl, y cymerir eu

imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and the perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict'. He calls this process 'dialogical', and projects that adopt this approach 'unfold through a process of performative interaction'.[2]

Holy Hiatus could be seen as an experiment in 'performative interaction' and this publication aims to extend this dialogue beyond the actual artworks, which have left no physical trace, but exist in people's memories and as documentation in the form of images and sound, and in recorded audience responses to the works. The book also offers a contextual framework for the project within a field of cultural theory that ranges from contemporary art to anthropology, sociology and religious studies. There are four essays included in the publication**:** Bobby Alexander's essay has been adapted from his paper from the *Holy Hiatus* symposium and provides the social and anthropological context for the project, defining liminality and demonstrating how anthropologist Victor Turner's theories can be useful for art practices that employ ritual. My own essay draws on a series of interviews with audience members, who witnessed first hand the artworks for *Holy Hiatus*. The essay presents the differing, sometimes diametrical, readings of the artworks in relation to people's perceptions of ritual. The communal and participatory aspects of ritual are explored as well as the possibilities for achieving an altered state of mind during ritual action.

Samantha Hurn's contribution is based on a transcript of the conversation between Hurn and Anna Lucas during the symposium. Hurn introduces us to anthropological understandings of the complex social rituals surrounding our relationships with domesticated and wild animals, particularly in West Wales, and places these in context with Lucas's previous film works that explore human – animal relationships and her new film *Begail Foxwell Whip* created for *Holy Hiatus*. Iain Biggs's essay is in two parts**:** the first half is an academic

bodolaeth yn ganiataol ond heb ei harchwilio'n fanwl, neu fel arall fel rhywbeth a gollwyd o'r gorffennol, i alaru amdano oherwydd na ddaw fyth yn ei ôl. Yr oedd *Holy Hiatus* yn tynnu ar agwedd Grant Kester at gelf gymunedol a chyhoeddus a amlinellir yn ei lyfr *Conversation Pieces*. Yn y gyfrol hon mae'n annog hyrwyddo deialog a chyfnewid syniadau drwy broses sydd yn gallu 'ein helpu i siarad a dychmygu y tu hwnt i ffiniau hunaniaethau sefydlog, disgwrs swyddogol a'r dybiaeth fod gwrthdaro gwleidyddol pleidiol yn anorfod'. Mae'n galw'r broses hon yn 'ddeialogaidd' ac mae prosiectau sydd yn arddel yr agwedd hon yn 'datblygu drwy broses o ryngweithio perfformiadol'.

Gellid gweld *Holy Hiatus* fel arbrawf mewn 'rhyngweithio perfformiadol' a bwriad y cyhoeddiad hwn yw estyn y ddeialog hon y tu hwnt i'r gwaith celf ei hunan, nad yw wedi gadael unrhyw olion parhaol, ond sydd yn bodoli yng nghof pobl ac ar ffurf delweddau a sain, ac yn yr ymateb gan y gynulleidfa, a gafodd ei recordio. Mae'r llyfr hefyd yn rhoi'r prosiect yn ei gyd-destun ym maes damcaniaeth ddiwylliannol sy'n amrywio o gelf gyfoes i anthropoleg, cymdeithaseg ac astudiaethau crefyddol. Mae pedair erthygl yn y cyhoeddiad: mae erthygl Bobby Alexander wedi ei haddasu o'i bapur yn symposiwm *Holy Hiatus* ac yn darparu'r cyd-destun cymdeithasol ac anthropolegol ar gyfer y prosiect, gan ddiffinio'r trothwyol a dangos sut y gall damcaniaethau'r anthropolegydd Victor Turner fod yn ddefnyddiol o ran celfyddyd sydd yn defnyddio defodau. Mae fy erthygl innau'n tynnu ar gyfres o gyfweliadau ag aelodau o'r gynulleidfa a welodd drostynt eu hunain waith celf *Holy Hiatus*. Mae'r erthygl yn cyflwyno'r dehongliadau gwahanol, cyferbyniol weithiau, o'r gwaith celf o ran sut mae pobl yn gweld defodau. Mae agweddau cymunedol a chyfranogol ar y ddefod yn cael eu harchwilio yn ogystal â'r posibiliadau o ran newid cyflwr y meddwl yn ystod gweithgareddau defodol.

discussion, the second a loosely woven presentation of song lyric fragments and images relating to the England/Scotland Borders ballads. Together they suggest that greater attention to singing or hearing old quasi-pagan songs, perhaps almost as an everyday type of ritual, may help us better understand our communal place.

Interspersed between the texts are documentary images and texts relating to the five new artworks created for *Holy Hiatus*. The artists who were invited to participate in *Holy Hiatus* all have a history of responding sensitively to the sites in which they find themselves working. Their projects operated at many nuanced levels and were interpreted in varied ways by audiences, as will become clear throughout this publication, so a brief description will suffice here. Alastair MacLennan worked on the footbridge over the River Teifi for twelve hours, tying ribbon, greenery and paper boats to the railings and talking to curious users of the bridge. Simon Whitehead worked with dancers Kate Willis and Andrea Buckley to create an improvised dance, *Drift*, through the town over three days that followed the flow of the tides. Yvonne Buchheim created a public performance at Cardigan Swimming Pool in collaboration with two local swimmers and two singers. Maura Hazelden collaborated with acoustic singer Lou Laurens and created a six-hour performance in the Small World Theatre that explored ritual and prayer through repetitive movement. Anna Lucas spent three weeks meeting teenagers in West Wales who were actively involved with working animals, in order to gather film footage for a new video installation, *Begail Foxwell Whip,* that was exhibited in the Pendre Art Gallery.

A year on, *Holy Hiatus* has spontaneously developed a life of its own, with two of the artists' projects extending beyond the initial events. In conjunction with Safle, Buchheim's performance in the swimming pool has led to an eight-week public audio installation during April and May 2009 titled *Earworms* in which swimmers

Mae cyfraniad Samantha Hurn yn seiliedig ar drawsgrifiad o'r drafodaeth rhwng Hurn ac Anna Lucas yn ystod y symposiwm. Mae Hurn yn cyflwyno dealltwriaeth anthropolegol o'r defodau cymdeithasol cymhleth sy'n rhan annatod o'n perthynas ag anifeiliaid dof a gwyllt, yn enwedig yng Ngorllewin Cymru, ac yn rhoi hyn yng nghyd-destun gwaith ffilm blaenorol Lucas sydd yn archwilio'r berthynas rhwng bodau dynol ac anifeiliaid a'i ffilm newydd, *Begail Foxwell Whip*, a grëwyd ar gyfer *Holy Hiatus*. Mae erthygl Iain Biggs mewn dwy ran; yn y rhan gyntaf ceir trafodaeth academaidd, ac yn yr ail ran ceir plethwaith llac o eiriau caneuon a delweddau o faledi gororau'r Alban a Lloegr. Gyda'i gilydd maent yn awgrymu y gallwn, drwy roi rhagor o sylw i ganu neu wrando ar hen ganeuon lled-baganaidd, bron fel rhyw fath o ddefod ddyddiol, efallai, ddeall yn well ein lle yn y gymuned.

Yma a thraw yn y testun mae delweddau dogfennol a thestunau sydd yn ymwneud â'r pum gwaith celf newydd a grëwyd ar gyfer *Holy Hiatus*. Mae gan yr artistiaid a wahoddwyd i gymryd rhan yn *Holy Hiatus* hanes o ymateb yn sensitif i'r mannau lle maent yn gweithio. Roedd sawl haen i'w prosiectau a chawsant eu dehongli mewn sawl ffordd gan gynulleidfaoedd. Fe ddaw hynny'n glir yn y cyhoeddiad hwn, felly bydd disgrifiad byr yn ddigonol yma. Bu Alastair MacLennan yn gweithio ar bont droed dros afon Teifi am ddeuddeg awr, gan glymu rhubanau, deiliach a chychod papur i'r rheiliau a siarad â defnyddwyr chwilfrydig y bont. Bu Simon Whitehead yn gweithio gyda'r dawnswyr Kate Willis ac Andrea Buckley i greu dawns fyrfyfyr, *Drift*, a aeth drwy'r dref dros dridiau yn dilyn llif y llanw. Crëodd Yvonne Buchheim berfformiad cyhoeddus ym Mhwll Nofio Aberteifi ar y cyd â dau nofiwr lleol a dau ganwr. Bu Maura Hazelden yn cydweithio â'r gantores acwstig Lou Laurens i lunio perfformiad chwe awr yn Theatr Byd Bychan a oedd yn archwilio defod a gweddi drwy ailadrodd symudiadau.

could hear snippets of audio recordings from her *Song Archive* transmitted through underwater speakers. Hazelden and Laurens have extended their collaborative venture by re-creating their performance using recordings from the original event and new live elements in the Small World Theatre on the same date in 2009 and in years to come. This unprompted evolution is what makes temporary public art so exciting and demonstrates that rituals are always being reinvented to reflect contemporary lived experience.

Treuliodd Anna Lucas dair wythnos yn cwrdd â phobl ifanc yn eu harddegau yng Ngorllewin Cymru a oedd yn gweithio gydag anifeiliaid gwaith, er mwyn casglu deunydd ffilm ar gyfer gosodiad fideo newydd, *Begail Foxwell Whip*, a gafodd ei ddangos yn Oriel Gelf Pendre.

Flwyddyn yn ddiweddarach, mae *Holy Hiatus* wedi datblygu ohono'i hun, gyda dau o brosiectau'r artistiaid yn parhau wedi i'r prosiect ddod i ben. Ar y cyd â Safle, arweiniodd perfformiad Buchheim yn y pwll nofio at waith sain cyhoeddus am wyth wythnos yn ystod misoedd Ebrill a Mai 2009 o'r enw *Earworms,* lle gallai nofwyr glywed darnau o recordiadau sain o'i *Song Archive* a ddarlledwyd drwy seinyddion o dan y dŵr. Mae Hazelden a Laurens wedi estyn eu menter gydweithredol drwy ail-greu eu perfformiad gan ddefnyddio recordiadau o'r digwyddiad gwreiddiol ac elfennau newydd byw yn Theatr Byd Bychan ar yr un dyddiad yn 2009 ac yn y blynyddoedd i ddod. Yr esblygiad digymell hwn yw'r hyn sydd yn gwneud celf gyhoeddus dros dro mor gyffrous ac mae'n dangos bod defodau'n cael eu dyfeisio o'r newydd o hyd i adlewyrchu profiadau'r bywyd cyfoes