

Fuze — Nottingham, Derby and Leicester

The art of projection

GAIL Porter's backside aside, the projection of big art onto big public spaces is becoming increasingly fashionable.

And it's not difficult to understand why: you wheel out a digital projector of some kind and cast your static or moving art image on to a wall, square or other public environment. Result: your image is democratically seen by thousands in the open air, creating an immediate impact for relatively little hassle or cost.

And then when the show is over, or police officers have moved you on, you remove the projector and it's as if the "art" was never there.

A certain glossy men's magazine had the bright idea of revving up sales a few years ago by projecting a huge naked image of soon-to-be TV presenter Porter on to the side of the Houses of Parliament. Now more and more artists are projecting their images into public spaces, tapping in to technology which encourages mass accessibility by viewers while allowing the artists to temporarily alter the character of urban buildings.

This week, a new public art project called *Fuze* was launched at Broadway Cinema in Hockley that brings together the work of four diverse local artists. All are having their moving images projected on to the outside of the Broadway building.

Then, next month, there will be further projections by other artists on to the exterior of

Derby Cathedral and, in January, another projection at the old Leicester bus depot. Another *Fuze* opportunity should come next spring as part of Sideshow, the "fringe" festival accompanying the showing of the British Art Show in Nottingham.

And there's more: in late summer, the Mexican artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer will be transforming Nottingham's Castle Wharf area with an innovative and interactive public digital projection, titled



Underscan, which will cast ghostly moving images of people into the shadows of passers-by. As with *Fuze*, Hemmer is also creating public art for Leicester and Derby.

Fuze itself, in its Nottingham incarnation at least, features the work of Briton Jessi Ford, two Iraqi Kurds, Aria Ahmed and Siya, and Theresa Caruana, the project curator

and a multi-media artist originally from New York but who's lived in Britain for 20 years.

The projections reflect this cultural diversity. One features dreamy images of flying kites and sheep in green landscapes; another is like (or even is) a propaganda film for Kurdish woman, complete with stirring music; a third, produced by Siya, fetures five asylum seekers, from nations such as Belarus and Zimbabwe, starkly

telling the stories of the brutal treatment they received in their home countries which caused them to seek refuge in Britain. It's engaging and sobering material, although the audio track of the interviewees' voices is lost in the public projection.

This doesn't appear to bother the artist too much, however. "It's sort of an experiment at the moment," says Siya, who's lived in Nottingham for five years. "As long as people can see the image... well, that's the aim of the project — art for the people."

There's a purpose in the project to promote cultural diversity, hence *Fuze* as in a fusing of cultures; one of the *Fuze* backers is Long Journey Home, the regional organisation which works with artists from asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds.

However, for curator Theresa Caruana, *Fuze* is also about making art accessible to everybody by getting it out of art galleries, and to cast art on as big a canvass as possible as a kind of antidote to the power of mass media. "You have your media, your Press and TV, so what we wanted was to bring representations from artists into the public domain where they themselves could present people's lives and experiences," she says.

One of the other attractions for Theresa of projecting art is its very transitory nature. A public sculpture, for example, involves considerable cost, debate and negotiation — and even when it's up, most people might be hostile or indifferent to it. A digital projection, on the other hand, is cheap, may constantly change and yet can "re-invent a space", says Theresa.

"But it doesn't stay there like a monument. With digital art, you can inspire people to view a space or a building differently, but then it goes as if it was never there. The technology inspires people to be creative and think big ideas, but it's gone in two weeks."

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