

New Museum School Podcast Transcript– 2019/2020

PODCAST TITLE: *Memory Palace – Inspiring Dialogue*

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NMS Placement Site: *Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery*

SCRIPT

NMS INTRO STING

Section 1

Hi, my name's Denise, a New Museum School Trainee at **Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery** – the former country villa of the prominent English architect, Sir John Soane - and you're listening to my podcast, *Memory Palace: Inspiring Dialogue*.

I will be discussing a recent art installation at Pitzhanger by interdisciplinary artist, **Es Devlin**. Devlin is known for her striking installations within art and stage design in theatre and music. She has designed stages for significant contemporary musicians such as Beyoncé, Kanye West, the Weeknd, Lorde and many more. She's exhibited at major art spaces and has been commissioned for public art as well as by luxury brands such as Chanel. Devlin and her studio team sought to provoke dialogue and debate with their recent installation piece at Pitzhanger, and this is exactly what I hope to do in my podcast.

Section 2

Before joining the Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery, I was familiar with the work of a previous exhibitor, artist Anish Kapoor. But I had no knowledge of Devlin, whose work was on exhibition at Pitzhanger when I arrived.

Section 3

For the first few days at Pitzhanger, I was getting familiar with the area and the people I would be working with and adjusting to my new environment. But one day I took the time to go into the Exhibition. I was really intrigued by the vivid neon orange block of wall at the entrance. With a capacity of about four people at a time, you enter what looks like a white pod. The floor space is small, and the installation enlarges around you. It's like being inside a huge globe. I was hit first by the clinical whiteness of it all. No colour in sight. But as you turned to allow your eyes to read the room, you recognise this large atlas - its familiar landmarks, buildings, roads, and vegetation. This hugely ambitious installation was feeding me information and a lot of it! Human history reflected in a huge overhead mirror, emphasising the 18-metre wide installation, with a nod to architect Sir John Soane's mastery of light and space.

It's breathtaking! When you look up, you can see yourself inside the installation. Your eyes catch sight of the southern African caves in which humans made their first drawings, the study in Switzerland where the worldwide web was conceived, and the steps of the building in Stockholm where Greta **Thunberg** began her School Strike for Climate.

Section 4

The epic 3D Map of Human History is a subjective and personal ‘*Memory Palace*.’ The term ‘*Memory Palace*’ comes from the classical technique which catalogues memories within familiar locations. The installation is a chronological map of pivotal shifts in world history, with identifiable fragments of cities and buildings to create a personal atlas of the evolution of our species.

I definitely didn’t recognise all of the sights at first! Further investigation was needed. But the installation did what Art is meant to do: it brought inspiration, knowledge, insight, and emotion – and, most importantly, made me want to find out more. I was also intrigued by this artist, Es Devlin, whom I only knew by name and through this installation. I believe her work demonstrates the importance of community, of celebrating and showcasing the beauty in it, but also to remind us and teach us about the horrors of it all, particularly in these times of political and social upheaval. The installation really made me think - about what humans have inflicted on each other and on this planet, but also about what there is to celebrate, about the achievements that have shaped our world today.

Section 5

Leaving the installation, I walked across to the Manor. There, in Sir John Soane's library, I found a fantastic pile of books which Es and her team had collected. These were the books that had inspired her installation. Here you can read and learn and find out more about the landmarks in the installation and their history. It's exciting and intellectually stimulating as you explore thoughts, moments, and maybe memories that have been triggered by looking back. The installation is no longer on show, but you can find the list of books that inspired it online (<https://www.pitzhanger.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/MEMORY-LIBRARY-READING-LIST.pdf>).

For me, a fundamental role of galleries and museums is to expand your knowledge and that is what *Memory Palace* did - it enriched my thoughts, thoughts about life whether that be individually or collectively.

Section 6

Mesmerized by the exhibition, I later had the pleasure of listening in on Devlin's *Artist Talk*. I learned about the *Memory Palace* concept and the installation process, the inspiration behind it, Devlin's background and her previous works. Devlin was so charming and down-to-earth. She was just my type of cool. There was no ego - she was pure passion and intelligence, and she was funny.

Section 7

Cleverly and beautifully, *Memory Palace* as a concept fits perfectly within the space of Pitzhanger. The legacy of Sir John Soane has allowed his country villa to be a place where visitors can come to observe and partake in art, making Pitzhanger itself a memory palace in British history and heritage. As you explore Pitzhanger, you start to think about places, spaces, and objects familiar to you - creating your own memory palace.

Section 8

I am so grateful to be working in the art, heritage and design sector. It is what I am passionate about and where I want to be, and this installation sparked so much for me. I contemplate the space I'm in and how I can make an impact in a positive, successful way - because it is something I value. As I have grown within the arts and heritage sector, I have seen the lack of inclusivity and diversity. It saddens me because it means people are being left out of the conversations and spaces. I believe these spaces are for everyone. Everyone can, and should be able to, experience art and design. Everyone should feel welcomed as art is universal. It's part of human expression and can enlighten so much for an individual. My aim is to bring a wider range of voices – and new ones – into the conversation and the creative sector, and I'm inspired by Devlin's example.

Section 9

So go out to a creative space - you art lovers, you cultural conscious species, those of you who never visit museums, you skeptical individuals who think art is just for rich, white people! Because let me tell you, I am none of those things! But I am passionate about inclusivity and diversity within art and the stories that art has to tell!

NMS OUTRO STING

SCRIPT ENDS