

# **Contextual Contrast and Aesthetic Experience in Commercially Reused Historic Buildings:**

**An Autoethnographic Exploration of  
Malmaison Oxford and Pitcher & Piano Nottingham**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The use of unused or underused historic buildings in the UK has provided companies the opportunity to create unique and extraordinary brand experiences. The creation of unique and differentiated commercial experiences within reused historic building has been explored by the 2019 work of Tresidder and Deakin. Despite arguing that the reuse of historic buildings differentiates the experience from other standard market environments, they claim that identifying the intangible contributions of historic buildings to those experiences is largely not possible. In response to this claim, this paper asks: how can the intangible contributions of the physical context of a historic building on the observational and affective experience of the consumer be identified?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to utilize a more complex view of experience through the inclusion of aesthetics and a phenomenological methodology. This enables critical engagement with the topic of affective and personal experience within reused historic buildings. Given the phenomenological and experiential research philosophy, an autoethnographic research method contributes the data for analysis. Through my own experience at the Malmaison Hotel in Oxford, UK and the Pitcher & Piano restaurant in Nottingham, UK, I conclude that the experience of environmental and affective contrast, contextual contrast, between the historic building and the new commercial function contributes an intangible quality of deepening and elevating the experience had within to resemble and aesthetic experience.

Aesthetic experience elevates engagement with an environment from passive viewership to one of meaningful, memorable, and evocative engagement. For commercial businesses housed within reused historic buildings, this level of engagement differentiates their business from a competitive market within the experience economy. Expanding upon this research with more case studies and other first-person accounts may reveal more intangible contributions of reused historic buildings.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Review of Literature</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 – Introduction	3
2.2 – Adaptation and Historic Budlings	3
2.3 – The Economy of Experience	4
2.4 – Experiential Potential of Historic Buildings	5
2.5 - Conceptualization and Evaluation of Experiential Space	6
2.6 - Experiencing the Aesthetic	8
2.7 - Elitist vs. Everyday Aesthetics	9
2.8 - What is an aesthetic experience?	10
2.9 – Conclusion	13
<b>3. Methods and Methodology</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 - Introduction	14
3.2 - Methodological Justification & Legitimation	14
3.3 - The Power of ‘I’ – Autoethnographic Data Collection	15
3.4 - Site Selection & Data Collection	16
3.5 - Data Explication	17
3.6 – Conclusion	19
<b>4. Data Explication</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1 – Introduction	20
4.2 – Malmaison Oxford	20
4.3 Pitcher & Piano Nottingham Birmingham	23
4.4 – Extract general meaning for themes	26
4.5 – Conclusion	26
<b>5. Discussion</b>	<b>27</b>
5.1 - Introduction	27

5.2 - Key Findings	27
5.3 - The Aesthetic Experience Contribution	29
5.4 - Limitation and Further Research	29
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Table of Figures</b>	<b>38</b>
Figure 1: Travelodge Standard Room	
Figure 2: Dakota Hotel Leeds Standard Room	
Figure 3: Malmaison Carpet	
Figure 4: Malmaison Pillow	
Figure 5: Malmaison Sign	
Figure 6: Malmaison Room Art	
Figure 7: Stained Glass Window	
Figure 8: Communal Showers Alcatraz	
 <b>Appendix 1</b>	 <b>41</b>
Table 1: Modes of Attention and Kinds of Aesthetic Experience	

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and enviroining conditions is involved in the very process of living.

- John Dewey, *Art as Experience*

Every day we have experiences through our interaction with the world around us. In western capitalistic society much of these experiences are carefully orchestrated and designed to impart an experience with the goal of consumption. Despite the best efforts of marketers and companies, the pure quantity of images and environments consumed has desensitized us to a life of passive viewership and unimpactful experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). How then do companies that strive to differentiate themselves revive a society that looks yet rarely has the experience of seeing the world? One way commercial experience can be differentiated is through placing the observer/consumer in the physical context of reused historic buildings.

The United Kingdom retains as shocking amount (400,000) of buildings that have been identified by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as having uniquely architectural and cultural significance (Historic England, 2021). From the ruins of a twelfth-century abbey (Kirkstall Abbey, Leeds) to a 1980s post -modern pumping station (Isle of Dogs Pumping Station, London) the UK is abundant with noteworthy buildings (Historic England, 2017). The cultural and aesthetic value they provide is invaluable, but they must also prove to be a profitable economic choice to be preserved. These buildings present an opportune context for commercial ventures to differentiate their space and their customer experience.

The work of Tresidder and Deakin's (2019), *Buildings and the Creation of Experiencescapes: looking to the past for future success*, makes a key contribution in the field of adaptive reuse of historic buildings. Through the analysis of the Malmaison Oxford hotel and the Pitcher & Piano Nottingham they conclude that the context of historic buildings does differentiate the commercial experiences within them. The “unquantifiable element” in an historic building works to enhance experience of the guest/consumer with the brand from service based to experiential (Tresidder and Deakin, 2019). Despite their contribution they refrain from identifying these unquantifiable

elements. They go as far as to suggest that the contributions of the historic buildings on the elevation of customer experience is not distinguishable.

However, Tresidder and Deakin (2019) fail to acknowledge the significance of experience itself. They, like others in retail studies (Bitner, 1992), conceptualize experience as impact driven. For example, the design and layout of an entry way impacts the guest/consumer to engage or disengage with the brand or with others. It is necessary to complicate our philosophical understanding of experience to tune into the nuances of the interaction between building and the self. Suggested here is that the contributions of the historic building can in fact be hypothesized when experience is understood as phenomenological.

Therefore, it is argued here that the intangible contribution of historic buildings is the development from contextual contrast to aesthetic experience. Firstly, the historic building provides a contrasting visual and affective context for the consumer. Through this visual and affective contextual contrast, the guest/consumer is challenged to take up greater and more focused attention to the environment/object's form. It is this uncommon attention that enables for an aesthetic experience. This type of seeing contrasts the passive and fleeting looking that is pervasive in the experiences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century consumer.

In order to make the above argument three areas of literature must be examined in chapter two. Firstly, the field of historic reuse and its values. Following this, the current economic climate that is driven by experience will be presented. Finally, and key to the argument, is an examination and compilation of literature on aesthetics, aesthetic experience, and the aesthetic characteristics of experience.

Chapter three demonstrates the research paradigm; from what perspective and how the research was approached. Overall, the research was approached with phenomenological methodology while using more autoethnographic data collection methods. Chapter four acts as the analysis section. As will be outlined, the term analysis is not used for its implication of breaking apart the experience data into pieces. Instead, chapter four is under the heading of data explication. Utilizing the data collected and explicated, the main argument is then presented in chapter five. Throughout the discussion chapter, chapter five, the philosophical grounding presented in chapter two will begin to be used to hypothesize the intangible contribution of a reused historic building. Concluding remarks include suggestions for further study as well as the potential for real-world applications of the contrast and aesthetic experience argument.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 – Introduction**

In order to justify the methodology and subsequent argument of this paper, background literature on the adaptation or reuse of buildings in the UK, the experience economy, and aesthetic experience are considered. The current state of adapting and reclaiming underused or disused buildings presents economic, cultural, and ecological benefit to communities (Historic England, 2019). Since not all of these spaces can be preserved as museums with little revenue, utilizing the buildings for commercial use presents profitable ventures.

A considerable element necessary for the argument of this paper is a philosophical grounding in aesthetic and aesthetic experience. To say the field of aesthetics is vast is an understatement. The works included below were chosen for their relevance to phenomenological experience. Additionally, this paper functions under the assumption that aesthetic experience does exist to bypass a considerable amount of philosophical debate.

### **2.2 - Adaptation and Historic Buildings**

The UK has around 400,000 listed buildings, with “special architectural or historical interest” as recognized by the Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (Historic England, 2017). Regardless of their status of being listed or not, historic buildings represent aesthetic, communal, and cultural value. Therefore, the historic buildings that act as the place of inquiry of this work, even if not listed, are buildings that hold a unique aesthetic character and can be adapted for new uses.

Breitling and Cramer (2007) define the adaptation of an existing building as “a change of use or fundamental building works” with a particular focus on creative transformation (p. 119). Historic England, the public research and management body for listed buildings, uses the International Council on Monuments and Sites definition of adaptation; “changing a place to suit the existing use or a proposed use” (Australia ICOMOS, 2013). The change of function is central to both

definitions. Function can be understood as the use of the building where use is the nature of activity that occurs at the place and/or are dependent on the place (Australia ICOMOS, 2013). These terms are all used here to explore the aesthetic characteristics of experience within the two selected adaptive reused historic buildings.

Key here is a blended definition for the adaptive reuse of historic buildings. As used here, the adaptive reuse of historic buildings is the reorganisation of the function of the place of a historic building. Place is used intentionally given its definition as the geographically defined area of a historic building including the tangible elements but also the intangible (Australia ICOMOS, 2013). This reflects proceeding understanding of these adapted buildings as both the physical elements of the new function as well as the experiential impact on consumers.

With an organizational overlap with the DCMS the conservation and promotion for adaptive reuse of historic buildings suggests an economic motivation. The benefits of adaptive reuse have been well established in heritage studies and is not the focus here. However, it is because of the proposed social, economic, and environmental benefits that companies are betting on the innate value of these buildings and their use in the experience economy.

### 2.3 - The Economy of Experience

An exploration of the aesthetic experience potential of adaptive reused historic buildings must acknowledge the economic context that champions consumer experience above all else. The experience economy hailed in at the end of the twentieth century established a commercial motivation to take up residence in historic buildings.

Leading up to the turn of the millennium, economists Pine and Gilmore wrote multiple articles and two books on the shift away from a goods and service-based economy to one ruled by the experience provided to consumers (1998). The experience economy transformed the buyer to a guest, the seller to a stager, and buying goods or services to buying sensations (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, p. 98). Through the experience economy, businesses' success became dependent on their ability to present environments primed for multi-sensory experiences. The use of an existing building with its own unique and differentiated aesthetic character lends itself well to the experience economy.



The transformation of customer to something resembling an audience member in an interactive theatre piece begins to establish the spaces of retail, hospitality, and commercial operations as co-constructive. Co-constructive in the nature that the experience itself is not solely determined by the environment and its intentional design but also by the consumer themselves. For clarity, individuals who interact with business in reused historic buildings will be labeled as consumer. By using consumer, these people can be understood as consuming the tangible capitalistic elements but also the intangible elements like aesthetics and historical aura.

The experience economy is defined by the economic belief that experience is separate from service and goods and therefore has its own unique and marketable advantages. For Pine and Gilmore an experience occurs “when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event’ (p. 98). This shift or reorganization echoes Lefebvre’s work in *The Production of Space* (1999) on the movement from absolute to abstract space (p. 48).

Absolute space exists for the truly base functions of religious and political organization (Lefebvre, 1999, p. 48). Abstract space more reflects the places of the service economy and therefore experience economy as it is defined through its function as a capitalistic space of commodities, accumulation, and consumption (Lefebvre, 1999, p. 48; Marx, 1981, p. 307). The unique value of reused historic buildings is in the very shift from absolute to abstract space through the reorganization of function. Having defined the background economic context and its relation to place and the reuse of historic buildings the following section addresses the key conversations around the crux of the forthcoming thesis; Servicescapes, experiencescapes and the aesthetic characteristics of experience.

#### 2.4 - Experiential Potential of Historic Buildings

Robert Merton Solow, a Nobel Prize winning economist, writes “over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest, most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any” (cited in Licciardi, Amirtahmasebi, 2018). Historic buildings have been central in location specific economic regeneration. Between 2012 and 2018 the occupation of listed buildings in the UK has increased by 173% for eating and drinking brands and 154% for retail brands (Historic England, 2019). The 142,000 retail, hospitality, and

commercial operations in listed buildings benefit from the “positive atmosphere of the surrounding area” and it “provides a positive exterior appearance” (Historic England, 2019). Differentiated tangible environments go a long way to establishing a space fertile for unique and differentiated consumer experiences.

Quantitatively, the use of historic buildings for commercial operations is a well- established business strategy with positive economic results. In a 2018 study 81% of 1,043 surveyed UK adults agreed that “everybody should experience beauty on a regular basis” (Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission, 2019). In a separate 2018 study by YouGov, 1,731 UK adults were surveyed with questions regarding the quality and attractiveness of historic buildings versus new builds. 68% agreed that historic buildings were built to a “high standard” (YouGov, 2018). Contrastingly, only 27% agreed that new buildings were built to a “high standard” (YouGov, 2018). Additionally, 87% agreed that finding new uses for historic buildings is better than demolishing them and 71% stating they were interested in local history (YouGov, 2018, p. 8). All these numbers point to a public who believe in the value of historic buildings and want to engage with their commercial reuse. Beyond the economic, the intangible cultural, historic, and aesthetic draw of these buildings places the retail, hospitality, or commercial operations within these buildings at an advantage in the experience economy.

## 2.5 - Conceptualisation and Evaluation of Experiential Space

Another significant aspect of the argument presented in this paper is how the spaces and places within reused historic buildings are conceptualised and evaluated. As explored earlier, the theoretical constructs of space and place encapsulate the ephemeral and physical elements of inquiry here. On a more specific level, it is necessary to create a distinction between the physical objects of commercial function and the affective experiential environment. Much of the existing literature reviewed reflects a duality and interaction between physical/function and intangible/experiential; this is a key theme that is central to the discussion forthcoming.

In their work *Historic Buildings and the Creations of Experiencescapes: Looking at the past for future*, Tresidder and Deakin consider the role of creative reused historic buildings in creating “unique and extraordinary” guest experiences within the tourism and hospitality industries (2019, p.193). They usefully present and expand upon the terms servicescape and experiencescape which are central to this paper.

Firstly, servicescapes are the physical and material representation of the tourism, hospitality, or the commercial<sup>1</sup> product (Tresidder and Deakin, 2019, p. 194). Understanding the concept of servicescape is to understand the function or product being sold or offered. It may be useful to discuss this topic with the aid of photographs. The figures 1 and 2 show two different hotel rooms. Both serve the same function; to provide a place to sleep and shower when away from home. Figure 1 shows a bedroom in a budget hotel. There is little else, physically or design wise, that is extraneous to serving the function. In contrast, figure 2 shows a bedroom in a high-priced hotel; both are in Leeds, UK. Figure 2 has the same objects that serve the function of a hotel; however, it clearly continues to add more and more objects that go beyond the base function of lodging and communicate the brands self-identified function of providing a luxurious experience. Both hotels have servicescapes that communicate the brands' self-reflective purpose of service.

The work of Bitner (1992) aids in understanding what is included in a servicescape. While aiming to understand the impact of service environments on customers and employees Bitner identifies three categories that make up the environmental dimensions of a space. Environmental dimensions include ambient conditions (music, temperature, scent, etc.), space and functions (layout, equipment, furniture, overall design, etc.), and signs, symbols, and artifacts (signage, specific objects, overall aesthetic of space, etc.) (Bitner, 1992, p. 60). This broader understanding of what a servicescape entails assists in discussions in distinguishing the co-constructive experience by consumers with these elements and the historic building.

The shift from servicescape as argued by Pine and Gilmore (1998) is reflected in the shift from viewing commercial spaces through a service lens (servicescape) to one shaped around experience. Tresidder and Deakin (2019) and O'Dell (2016) define experiencescapes as a place where "human interactions, pleasures, entertainment and enjoyment can occur"; this in turn result in experience. Some authors (Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2003); Binkhorst and Dekker (2009)) suggest that the experiences occurring within these spaces are co-constructivist (qtd. in Tresidder and Deakin, 2019).

Unlike servicescapes, experiencescapes are not grounded in the physical world. Like the distinction between space and place, the servicescape exists in and around the environmental dimensions of the servicescape. The intangible nature of the experiencescape is unsurprisingly tied to individual perception and affective appraisal. The emotional elements of enjoyment and pleasure that O'Dell (2015) defines experiencescapes by require a body to *have* that experience.

This co-constructive nature between environmental dimensions (and by extension Bitner's environmental impact view of space) and the intangible experience is key to exploring and identifying how the adaptive reuse of historic buildings creates unique and extraordinary experiencescapes.

For Tresidder and Deakin (2019) the industry shift to experiencescape allows for consideration of the immaterial imbued character and connoted meaning of the historic buildings in tandem with the servicescape. Their contribution to the field is the term *servicescape+* (Tresidder and Deakin, 2019). By contextualizing servicescape and experiencescape within adaptive reused historic buildings Tresidder and Deakin (2019) argue that the "aesthetic attributes and imbued historic connotation associated with the building help create unique and extraordinary 'experiencescapes'" (p. 193). A *servicescape+* is both an experiencescape and a servicescape existing in a creatively adapted historic building (Tresidder and Deakin, 2019, p. 196). Such semantic juggling may be a hinderance to defining possible contributions of these buildings as it presumes there is already some sort of separation. Therefore, the terms servicescape and experiencescape will be sufficient in the coming discussion.

This section has reviewed two key terms (servicescape, experiencescape) and the shift away from evaluating the impact of environmental dimensions on consumers to a conceptualization of space. Tresidder and Deakin's findings focused on how reused historic buildings can create differentiated hospitality experiences. Here though the focus is on how the potential for elevated experience is created in these historic buildings. To understand what potential elevated experiences may look like, the next section covers definitions and theories of the experience of aesthetics and aesthetic experience.

## 2.6 - Experiencing the Aesthetic

This section discusses a breadth of definitions, theories, and models about aesthetic experience. Tresidder and Deakin (2019) focused on evaluating the differentiation between hospitality experiences in reused historic building and mainstream hospitality experiences. After laying out an argument for the value of this differentiated experience they conclude that while the historic building contributes something intangible it is "difficult to really identify" what they contribute (Tresidder and Deakin, 2019, p. 198). The argument of this paper is that these

intangible contributions can be identified is dependent on an understanding of what an aesthetic experience entails.

The theoretical literature concerning aesthetics and aesthetic experience is extensive. It is necessary before proceeding to place theoretical boundaries given the scope. Much of the saturation around aesthetic inquiry focuses on the debate on the very existence of the aesthetic experience. The time and space allotted to the current research does not permit the inclusion of this section of aesthetic inquiry. Therefore, the subsequent argument and research functions under the informed assumption that there exists a unique and definable experience of the aesthetic.

First and foremost, aesthetics must be briefly defined on its own. German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762) introduced the concept of aesthetics in 1750 (Nanay, 2019, p. 2). Derived from the Greek word *aisthesis* meaning perception, Baumgarten used aesthetic to mean the study of sensory experiences (Nanay, 2019). Even from its' beginning, the aesthetic has been dependent on the experience of an object by an individual. The history of aesthetics became tied to the valuation of beauty resulting in a finite typology of objects worthy of aesthetic inquiry.

## 2.7 - Elitist vs. Everyday Aesthetics

There is a misconception that aesthetics only exists in discussion in philosophy classrooms, or the whitewashed walls of a multi-million-pound art museum. The misnomer is a result of the unfortunate historical association with taste. While stretching back to Aristotle's discussion of the human soul, human senses and their importance in making judgements of the world around them, taste and aesthetics truly became intertwined in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Spicher, n.d). Anthony Cooper's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) believed in a "universal standard judgement of beauty" (Spicher, n.d.). This standard of judgement was tied to the morality of the viewer and the ability to grasp the aesthetic was intrinsically tied to one's virtue. Historical moral elitism commissioned the elitist high-brow art that continues to permeate aesthetic discussions.

Another hurdle to observing commercial spaces of the everyday through an aesthetic lens is the synonymous use of aesthetics and philosophy of art. It is therefore not so much a discussion on taste but of class and the elitist examples of art used in discussing art philosophy. Philosophy of art is about the businesses of categorizing and identifying differences between works (Nanay, 2019, p. 4). Aesthetics, on the other hand, is about the experience between spectator and visual object.

Separating the aesthetic from the philosophy of art and using it as the study of subjective experience allows for the investigation of the aesthetics of the everyday.

Non-elitist or everyday aesthetics became a theory of everyday visual experiences (Duncum, 2002, p. 10). In *Theorising Everyday Aesthetic Experience with Contemporary Visual Culture* (2002) Duncum writes, “Everyday life includes routines and our taken-for-granted experiences, beliefs, and practices. If science and philosophy attempt to offer lasting truth...then everyday life is characterized by general opinions that are ground in through endlessly repetitive, social rituals” (p. 4). Living in the visual age places complacent viewership of the bombardment of the visual into the routine and ritual. Contemporary routines, experiences, and beliefs of 21<sup>st</sup> century life is overtly visual. Mirzoeff (1998) aptly hails that in the visual age the everyday life becomes visual culture. The current economic environment of the experiential latches onto the everyday visual culture and capitalises upon it.

The environments of everyday aesthetics can include shops, the local high street, and the waiting room for the doctors. As Dewey puts it, “Experience occurs continuously because the interaction of live creatures and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living” (1934). Therefore, daily environmental interactions are rooted in the aesthetic because of our internal sensory evaluation of those environments. The acceptance of the everyday aesthetic and our experience of it motivates companies to invest so much capital on their environments of consumption.

## 2.8 - What is an aesthetic experience?

It is necessary to define aesthetic experience prior to recognizing its mark in reused historic buildings. However, this is not straight forward. Despite a variety of theoretical perspectives with which these definitions come from, the similarities that exist speak to elements of a definitive definition.

John Dewey represents the modern philosophical grandfather of experience and aesthetic experience. In his seminal 1934 work *Art as Experience*, he speaks of aesthetic experience beyond the realm of art. An aesthetic experience, while unique, is not an entity that exists on its own. Rather, for Dewey it is the evolution of other types of experience that flow from one to the next (1934). It is through this view that Dewey argues that an aesthetic quality can exist beyond the

viewing of art. Without the need for a separate origination of aesthetic experience the everyday experience can become aesthetic.

While Dewey (1934) refrains from explicitly defining aesthetic experience he identifies what inhibits aesthetic experience. He writes, “The enemies of the esthetic are neither the practical nor the intellectual. They are the humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure” (Dewey, 1934). These elements place an aesthetic experience into the realm of the unique, the jarring, and the aim of many experiential driven businesses.

A more explicit definition of aesthetic experience comes from Monroe C. Beardsley (1969):

A person is having an aesthetic experience during a particular stretch of time if and only if the greater part of his mental activity during that time is united and made pleasurable by being tied to the form and qualities of a sensuously presented or imaginatively intended object on which his primary attention is concentrated (p. 5).

Beardsley emphasizes the need for a level of mental engagement to have an aesthetic experience. This relates back the Dewey’s enemies of the aesthetic that all inhibit this mode of attention. How often do we pay close attention the qualities of the floors of a grocery store as we do our shopping? The everyday creates a lack of attention that inhibits an aesthetic point of view. As discussed above, this does not mean that the everyday is not aesthetic, rather our perspective desaturates any aesthetic quality of the world around us.

Essential to understanding Beardsley, and the methodological approach of this paper, is his phenomenological theoretical perspective. There is well-documented correspondence between Beardsley and fellow philosopher George Dickie regarding the most appropriate theoretical perspective to use in discussion of aesthetics, art, and experience (Iseminger, 2003, pp. 99-116). In the footsteps of Dewey’s concept of experience, Beardsley’s definition functions largely within a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is “characterized primarily by ‘what it is like’ to undergo an experience (Iseminger, 2003, p. 100). This is the more commonly accepted understanding of an experience. An experience is something you have and therefore something that affects you during that time.

Dickie on the other hand believed in an epistemic understanding of experience. An epistemic perspective is rooted in experience as knowledge. It is because Dickie sees experience as determinant of preexisting knowledge that he disavows the existence of an aesthetic experience. Dickie (1974) defends this statement by arguing that any affective features that result from the

observation of an aesthetic object are a result of the preexisting knowledge, or experience, of what an aesthetic object is. The lines between phenomenological and epistemic concepts of experience were blurred for Beardsley throughout his career. However, in order to research the aesthetic experience potential in reused historic spaces the aesthetic experience must exist and therefore must be understood as phenomenological.

In later work Beardsley suggest five aesthetic characteristics of experience that provide the causality and results of the type of intense observing necessary (1982). These characteristics are (i) object directedness, (ii) felt freedom, (iii) detached effect, (iv) active discovery, and (v) wholeness (Beardsley, 1982, p. 288). Each of these work to unite observer and object and to create pleasure, both of which are key in Beardsley's definition of aesthetic experience.

Firstly, object directedness is the agency and influence of the objective properties of an object to hail the viewer to willingly submit to the guidance of mental states and processes (Beardsley, 1982). Could this in the colloquial be expressed as the sense of hypnotization sitting in front of a piece art or listening to a song? The observer willingly attends to the object's objective properties that subsequently guide them in that very observation (p. 288). While Beardsley is open to negotiations of the necessity of the last four characteristics, he holds that object directedness is the gateway to having an aesthetic experience.

It is important however not to place complete agency of control on the objective elements of the object or environment observed. Through the object directedness the mode of attending to the object can be established. Think of this as the moment a store front window makes you stop to look at the product. After stopping, the level of attention, focus, and investigation of the qualities increase dramatically. Object directedness can be understood as a catalyst to break from the enemies of the aesthetic experience. The four remaining characteristics continue to intensify the observer focus through feelings of detachment from problems of our everyday, the chance to discover new elements on our own, a sense of reverence towards the object, and a level of satisfaction (Beardsley, 1982, p. 289). These characteristics or the way in which they function are reflected in industry models of experience.

Harper in *Entrepreneurial Aesthetics* (2020) presents a model of the modes of attention in aesthetic experience and through that a differentiation in types of aesthetic experience. Beardsley (1969) uses the term *mental energy* to describe the way or intensity of attending to an object or environment, Harper (2020) uses attention. As shown in diagram 1, attention is separated into type and what is being attended to. The detached effect conceptualized by Beardsley is reflected in



the level of engagement with the object but not the properties of the contemplative aesthetic category. Similarly, through a doubly distributed type of attention, ecological aesthetic experience, felt freedom is greater as the viewer expands beyond what is there. This type of knowledge allows for highly intentional experiential environments to be designed; through the manipulation of how consumers are encouraged to see.

In a similar industry focused model Pine and Gilmore (1998), attempt to model experience types. They focus on types of experience within the experience economy but do not seem to accept the aesthetic potential of all experiences. Despite this, they use scales of absorption/immersion and passive/active participation (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, p. 102). As with Harper, we can see Beardsley's aesthetic characteristics of experience reflected in how Pine and Gilmore understand experience. Absorption and immersion are reflections of object directedness. Absorption being what Harper might relate to a focused attention to the object with a dispersed attention to the properties; immersion being the opposite. Both Harper and Pine and Gilmer can be seen as the extrapolation and separation of Beardsley's characteristics. All these models, specifically Beardsley's, are important because they represent the inner mechanics of what aesthetic experience is and how these elements can be manipulated to incite an aesthetic experience for the benefit of a commercial venture.

## 2.9 - Conclusion

This section worked to provide the economic context of which reused historic buildings represent experiential opportunity and to defend the aesthetic nature of the everyday thereby allowing for the consideration of aesthetic experience. Each enable the research to introduce the intangible contribution of reused historic buildings on the commercial ventures they house. Within the context of the experience economy the reuse of historic buildings has been a useful tool in market differentiation. Through a review of the process of normalizing aesthetics and aesthetic experience this work can move forward in analyzing these commercial spaces as holding aesthetic potential.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS & METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 - Introduction

This paper aims to answer a question that resulted from a claim of unknowability by Tresidder and Deakin (2019). After arguing that adaptive reused historic buildings do create unique and differentiated experiences Tresidder and Deakin (2019) write that “It is difficult to really identify what historic buildings contribute” (p. 198). I counter that the contribution of historic buildings can be known if approached with an alternate theoretical perspective and research methodology.

In correlation with the phenomenological theoretical perspective of Beardsley, phenomenology as a research paradigm is used here. This differs from the more empirical research of commercial impact studies like Bitner (1992). Bitner (1992) focused on the observable impact of the environmental elements of servicescapes. This progressed to a co-constructivist methodology to understand places of experiential consumption with the shift to experiencescapes (Binkhorst and Dekker, 200; O’Dell 2016; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2003; Tresidder and Deakin, 2019). If as Tresidder and Deakin (2019) claim that the intangible contribution of historic buildings to the differentiation of experience cannot be known, then a research methodology and methods should be used that can critically engage with the ephemeral, the affective, and the experiential. In order to accomplish this, a hybrid research paradigm of phenomenological methodology and autoethnographic methods will be implemented.

### 3.2 - Methodological Justification & Legitimation

Depraz (2014) writes, “What would be a phenomenological approach be that would not be a first-person one? Phenomenology is in the first-person or is not at all” (p. 127). A theoretical justification for this claim may be the necessity for a *someone* to have an experience. Experience is held within the individual and can then only be reported through the first-person.

German philosopher Edmond Husserl is considered the “fountainhead of phenomenology in the twentieth century” (Vandenberg, 1997). For Husserl, the external environments and the objects that make it up do not exist independently and cannot be known through information (an epistemic epistemology). Therefore, “Anything outside immediate experience must be ignored, and in this way the external world is reduced to the contents of personal consciousness” (Groenewald, 2018, p. 43). The experiences within reused historic buildings are then capable of being studied as an internal subjective reality because experiential realities are phenomena.

Phenomenological research, legitimized by Husserl’s theoretical perspective, is qualitative and “concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved” (Groenewald, 2018, p. 44). Phenomenology provides the opportunity to link the external environments and the experience had within those places. While phenomenology as research methodology provides the theoretical justification for this study, it does not provide a concrete method, and for very good reason.

Keen (1975) states, “...unlike other methodologies, phenomenology cannot be reduced to a 'cookbook' set of instructions. It is more an approach, an attitude, an investigative posture with a certain set of goals” (p. 41). The theoretical benefits of phenomenological research, the subjective and experiential, do not meld well with a set of methods (which is particularly challenging for novice researchers). It is for this reason that an autoethnographic form of data collection was used along with a bespoke elicitation model combining the phenomenological methods of Groenewald (2018) and established autoethnographic practices.

Autoethnographic research requires similar legitimation to phenomenology since it exists outside of much of the empirical qualitative research methods. One of the methods of legitimizing personal narratives as data is to adopt “existing qualitative constructs” (Rodriguez et. al., 2018). Bolstering the validity of this autoethnographic research is the more concrete data elicitation praxis of phenomenology. This bespoke method allows for the open and free consideration of experience during data collection along with the more rooted steps adapted from Groenewald (2018).

### 3.3 - The Power of ‘I’ – Autoethnographic Data Collection

Autoethnography is research based on the belief in the value of personal experience. Through different methods of recording and communicating those experiences greater cultural and psychological experiences can be analysed (Rodriguez et. al., 2018). Denshire and Lee (2013)

define autoethnography as “one approach to ontological research...[that] attempts to come to terms with social complexity through rejection of the hard-bound distinctions between the micro level of analysis (the individual) and the macro level (society as a whole)” (p. 232). The selection of the phenomena studied is rooted in problematization (Rodriguez et. al., 2018).

Problematizing is a way of creating objects for critical inquiry and a critical consciousness (Bacchi, 2012; Foucault 1977). Essential in an autoethnographic method of data collection, the problematization of a phenomenon like the experience in reused buildings is apt for three reasons. First autoethnography inhibits the critical focus on both context and details (Crotty, 1998). The central aim of this work is to understand the intangible contributions of the context and details of a reused historic buildings; therefore, a method of data collection that highlights both is advantageous. Second, autoethnography separates the experience and the analysis or criticism. The critical analysis of the experience occurs in hindsight (Crotty, 1998). This allows the researcher to focus on personal experience of the phenomena rather than the potentially distracting simultaneous analysis.

### 3.4 - Site Selection & Data Collection

As mentioned before, the work of Tresidder and Deakin (2019) provided the jumping-off point for this work. In that paper Tresidder and Deakin (2019) aimed to provide “a conceptual insight into the creative re-use of historic buildings... drawing on two examples of re-use in the UK” (p. 193). These ‘case studies’ were the Malmaison Hotel in Oxford and the Pitcher & Piano pub in Nottingham. However, Tresidder and Deakin (2019) make little attempt to present descriptions and analysis of these places to support their conceptual abstraction of *servicescape+*.

In an effort to counter Tresidder and Deakin’s claim of unknowability to the intangible contributions of the historic building, this work replicates their buildings of inquiry. While phenomenology and autoethnography are rooted in subjectivity the correlation of physical environments between the studies will provide a keen opportunity in the analysis to discuss similar environmental elements.

In addition to the two above mentioned buildings, two additional businesses were visited. The others were also part of the Malmaison and Pitcher & Piano Nottingham brands. The rationality of visiting these locations first was to experience the brands for the brands themselves. The autoethnographic data used is from the Oxford and Nottingham locations and therefore

analysis will not be based on comparison. Rather, the aim was to provide space for the researcher to familiarize himself with the servicescape and brand identity to better understand the experiencescape of the reused historic buildings.

Now that the sites of study have been established, the method of data collection can be explored. This research uses a reflexive narrative based autoethnography. At each location two two-hour experiential sessions were completed. For Pitcher & Piano Nottingham, this was completed in one day: two hours at lunch and two hours at dinner time. During this time the new function of the space, a pub, was engaged with in the form of ordering food and a drink. The Malmaison Hotel in Oxford was less structured given the participation required as a guest. Immediately following the check in process, a two-hour writing session was completed with focus on the communal spaces. The second structured writing time was within hotel room itself. There were times when observational writing occurred after the experience itself, however, this was done as soon as possible after any noteworthy thoughts as to lessen distortion of memory.

During these times, writing was open and along the lines of a stream of consciousness. As mentioned above, engaging in analysis during data collection would inhibit the experience of the phenomena itself so analysis was avoided. At times though allowing for the expression of analysis in the form of personal judgement did occur.

In addition to writing, some personal photographic elicitation was done. Images presented in the table of figures represent both images of the servicescape as well as images of other places I have observed that were brought up during the experience.

### 3.5 - Data Explication

The term analysis in phenomenological research is sometimes seen as in opposition to experience itself. “The ‘term [analysis] usually means a breaking into parts’ and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon [whereas explicitation’ implies an] investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (Hycner, 1999, p. 161 qtd. in Groenewald, 2004). In an effort to retain the experience as a whole explication will be used.

The data explication process used here represents an adaptation of Groenewald’s (2004) phenomenological explication process. Adaptations were necessary as unlike Groenewald (2004) phenomenological data collections were not used. The first step for Groenewald (2004) is

“bracketing and phenomenological reduction” (p. 49). This step is essentially an effort to ensure that the analysis is not coloured by the researchers’ presuppositions or theories. For Groenewald this makes sense as their data was the first-person accounts of individuals gathered through interviews. When using an autoethnographic method of data collection disengaging from the subjectivity of the researcher and the reflexive nature of the data is to abandon the method altogether.

Therefore, through an adaptation of Groenewald’s (2004) data elicitation methods, a bespoke method is used. Phenomenological/autoethnographic data elicitation method is defined by the process below.

1. Delineation of units of meaning of each location
2. Clustering units of meaning of each location to form themes
3. Extract general meaning for themes

Steps 1 and 2 will be completed for each location separately before proceeding onto step 3 where the units of meaning and themes identified will be considered as a unified phenomenon.

#### 1. Delineation of units of meaning.

The field notes and narrative writing will be looked at individually at this stage. The goal of this phase is to highlight key statements that “illuminate the researched phenomenon” (Groenewald, 2004). All field notes and narrative writings will be compiled and read multiple times. Throughout this process the subjective appraisals of what stands out or is felt to be important will be highlighted or notated. Where Groenewald (2014) would suggest a removal of the researcher’s personal emotional response in this step, it is encouraged in this method. Because this process is looking at first person data of the researcher the delineated units of meaning are intrinsically linked to the shared experience between data collector and analyser. The adapted nature of this phase allows for the subjectivity that strengthens autoethnography.

#### 2. Clustering units of meaning to form themes.

This phase is about “rigorously examining the list of units of meaning” in an effort to “elicit the essence of meaning of units within the holistic context” (Groenewald, 2004). Where step 1 focused on the data as a whole this step concentrates on the key statements or units of meaning. This is not however to bifurcate the experience, which is what

phenomenological/autoethnographic avoids. Rather, the aim is to examine the distilled essence of the whole.

The rigorous nature of examination repeats the textual analysis of step 1 alongside word frequency analysis. Groenewald (2004) suggests a focus on frequency of words within the highlighted units of meaning to better understand the “the literal content, the number (the significance) of times a meaning was mentioned” (p. 50). The frequency of terms will assist in creating meaningful categories to cluster the units of meaning from step 1. In an effort to simplify the process of expressing this step a diagram of the clusters will be created (diagram 1, diagram 2).

### 3. Extract general meaning for themes.

This stage differs from the previous in that it will look at the meanings and themes established for each location as a whole phenomenon. This is the point at which themes go from the experience of the individual places to theories regarding the experience with reused historic building as a broad category of environments. The units of significance of both locations will be placed together and mined for further themes and meaning, with the aim of distilling themes from both locations that may present a hypothesis for the intangible contribution of historic buildings in the reused experiencescape.

### 3.6 - Conclusion

To effectively study experience within reused historic buildings methodology and methods had to be used that could straddle the ephemeral and physical. By utilizing a phenomenological methodology this research was provided validity in the exploration of phenomena. A narrative autoethnographic method of data collection emphasizes the power of the subjective that the experiential is rooted in. Finally, an adapted phenomenological data explication process contributes to the potential for more expansive theories of experience in reused historic buildings.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA EXPLICATION

### 4.1 - Introduction

Throughout my time at the Malmaison Oxford and Pitcher & Piano Nottingham my field notes grounded me in myself and the multi-sensual nature of these spaces. In alignment with the phenomenological methods of data explication, my field notes and the presented narrative writing are used as the raw data. Steps 1 and 2 of the adapted Groenewald (2004) process will be done in the sequence of steps as listed in 3.4.

### 4.2 – Malmaison Oxford

#### 4.2.1 – Narrative Writing

8/17/2021

Malmaison

Oxford

How is it that I feel exposed, vulnerable, and othered alone in a hotel bathroom? Is it the domed ceiling, though covered in white paint, still holds the imprint of the weathered bricks underneath? Or maybe it's that my expectations of hotel bathrooms use space economically? This space, because of my expectations seem expansive (so much so I can't even get a full picture of it from the doorway).

I don't immediately go in because I am shocked and struck by a feeling of surveillance. I don't know if communal showers at school are an adolescent nightmare here in the UK like it is back home but all at once I am both the petrified 13 year old and a criminal forced to bare his body in communal showers. Also, the toilette itself seems exposed. It's not any more than any other hotel room but the space around it makes me feel like there is space for an unwanted audience.

I said I wasn't going to overtly label certain moments as aesthetic in nature but to not in this moment would be dishonest. I surrendered to the visual impact of this



space, internalized it, was hailed to inspect from a fearful distance every aspect of the room.

*post shower*

When the functional elements of the new use of a historic building fail you are whiplashed into the buildings original function. There was no hot water, and the drain didn't fully work so the vast space was covered in water. My mom once told me about this idea of 'fantastic realities' where two things placed in relation to one another becomes something fantastic or jarring. She used an experience of a cigarette advertising display at a grocery store sitting next to one about the health benefits of vegetables. I remember this after 15 years and it's all I can think of in this moment. The fantastic reality I perceive is the expectation of luxury that coopts the architectural value/identity of an old prison and the complete lack of luxury for the original inhabitants.

I'm not here to judge the moral or historical attention to such conversion but are others having an experience of the past not only providing a differentiated hospitality experience but one of an eerie imprint of the past on their present experience?

(Thomas, 2021a).

#### 4.2.2 – Delineation of units of meaning

Taking Groenewald (2004) literally I started going through my field notes and narrative writing and highlighting words and phrases that 'jumped out'. Below is a list of everything I highlighted:

- atmosphere of the atrium was light and open while corridor was dark
- original function
- openness, freedom, and light. While still retaining the visual lexicon of a prison and incarceration.
- days of incarceration with hash marks on pillows and carpet in room
- weight of original use in contrast to the light and openness
- layouts of the organization of space I saw in Alcatraz.
- daunting and scary, the bathroom felt like a communal shower

- crime for admission, a willing surrender to capitalism.
- sense of surveillance
- despite unique building spaces still reflected Malmaison brand
- contrast between the velvet headboard and the exposed brick walls

The most common words mentioned were experience, exposed, original function, openness, light, and incarceration. From these words and reflection on highlighted and isolated elements I have identified five units of meaning: 1). Openness; 2). Original function physical prominence; 3). Emotional impact of prison history; 4). Capitalistic contrast; 5). Hotel theming.

#### 4.2.3 – Clustering units of meaning to form themes

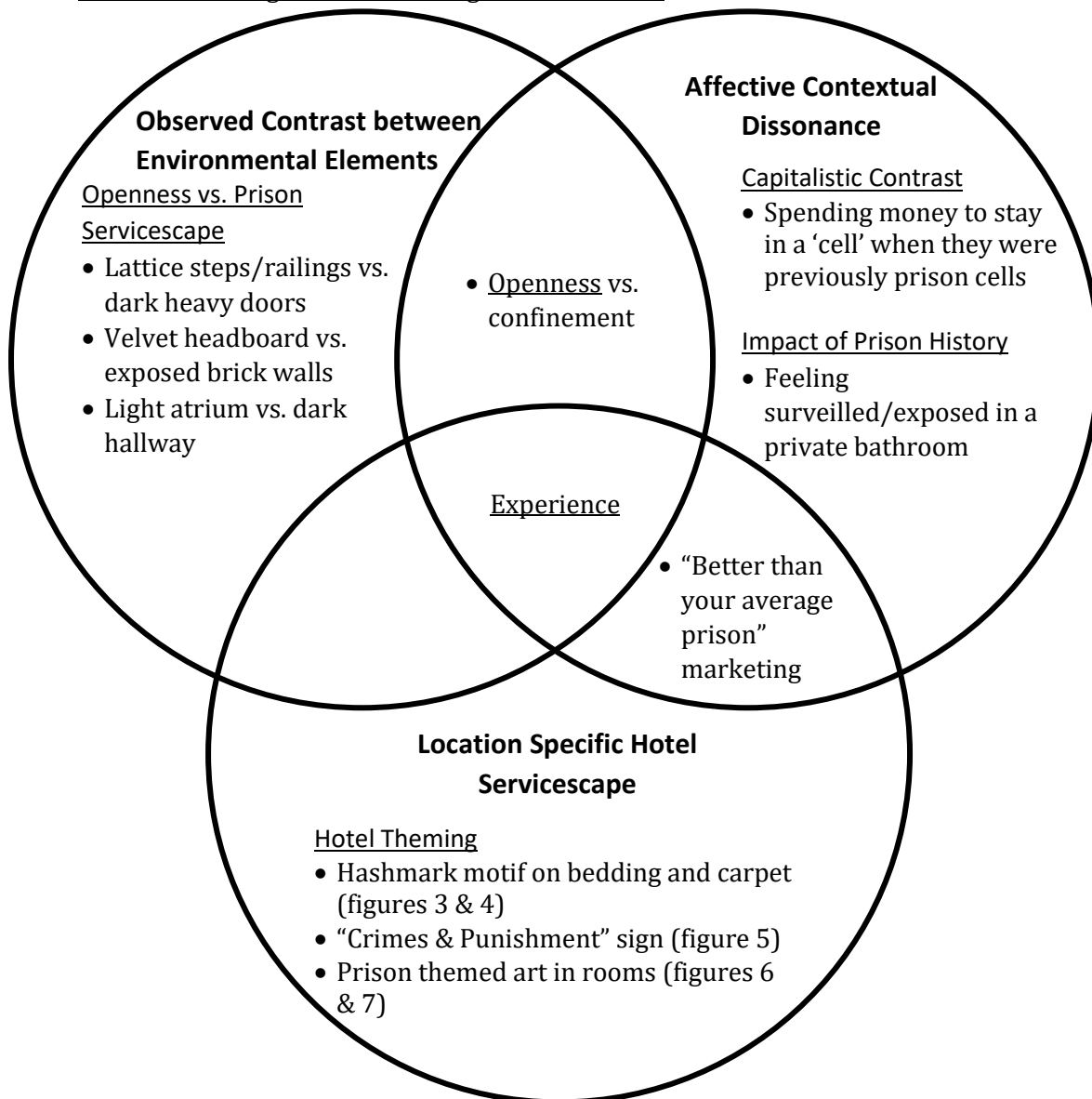


Diagram 1, Units of Meaning Cluster (Thomas, 2021); (Malmaison, 2021)

Diagram 1 shows the how I clustered the five units of meaning identified through step one. Through this process three themes were established: 1). Observed contrast between environment; 2). Affective contextual dissonance; 3). Location specific hotel servicescape. Observed contrast between environments is the contrast I observed between different environmental elements. Using Bitner's term of environmental elements allows me to place various types of objects of contrast under the same heading as it spans all elements of the servicescape. Key contrasts were the physical comparisons between the physical elements left over from the prison and the introduced objects for the hotel servicescape. This also includes contrast of ambiance between the lightness of the atrium and the dark hallway my room was on.

This light versus dark also overlapped with the second theme, affective contextual dissonance. What I term affective contextual dissonance is the emotional sense of tension or discomfort resulting from the servicescape context. The discomfort I experienced within the shower was not a result of the physical elements of the bathroom but rather the context within which they existed. This theme also grew from the emotional response to the differing narratives of past occupants and me.

While the third theme, location specific hotel servicescape, relates the physical elements like the first theme, it is not defined by comparison. I found it unique that while many elements of the Malmaison servicescape were the same in Oxford as in other locations, specific design elements were added. Most notably the carpet and the pillows had a pattern of hashmarks. These hashmarks are symbols of counting down time in jail (as seen in many movies). The Malmaison brand intentionally chose to adapt their materials to communicate a narrative of incarceration within the luxurious servicescape. Also clustered under this theme is the continuation of the incarceration narrative in the artwork in the room.

#### 4.3 - Pitcher & Piano Nottingham Birmingham

##### 4.3.1 – Narrative Vignette

8/18/20201

Pitcher & Piano Nottingham

Nottingham

“Just one.” I told the host.

I’ve said that a lot in my adult life when I’m asked how many people were going to be eating; I’m saying it a lot on this research trip. Yet I don’t feel alone in this place of worship to the almighty lager, cider, and greasy burgers. Instead, I am joined by the Anglo Saxon version of the Greek muses from the animated version of Hercules. It seems that most stained glass windows are scenes or multiple people i.e., religious paintings. Here though on a background of emerald, green I see individuals, I’m guessing saints of some kind (bible school of my youth is long forgotten). Each of them exists individually separated from one another; full body portraits that are solitary in their existence in the window (figure 8).

It is because of this that I find them intriguing, relatable, and in conversation with the patrons below and with me. The humor of these pious individuals no longer existing in a place of reverence, but rather communal consumption of excess is enough to make me smile.

I begin to hear them narrating the drama of potential love affairs between the staff and the bird that shat on the part of window Phil lives on. I’m engaged by these images because they have lasted time to watch the religious rise and fall of the building and its reuse. If only I could interview them for this project.

The preservation of this window is just that, preservation of the environmental elements that denoted this space as one of religiosity. But when you use this character, you transport the experience of these elements into a time and context that made me engage with a stained glass window like I never had before. Because of this, I’m not so alone during lunch.

(Thomas, 2021b)

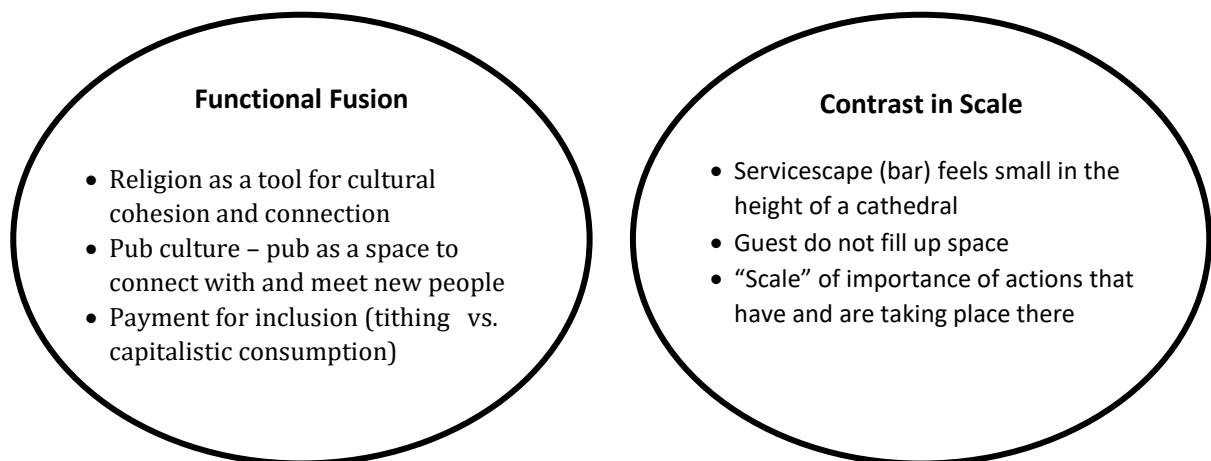
#### 4.3.2 – Delineation of units of meaning

As with Malmaison Oxford both the general journal observations and the above narrative were reviewed to highlight key themes. The non-redundant list is below.

- servicescape feels small compared to the cathedral

- sense of grandeur caused by open space
- unused space – sense of irrationality as a business choice
- fabric installations “in the heavens” of the cathedral sense of awe
- no longer cross like in Deakin and Tresidder photos
- continue craning my neck and contemplate the sounds of a choir seeping into the stone
- neon sign hanging opposite what would have been a crucifix across the hall
- Commune of people remains function
- stained glass windows of individual saints or biblical character
- iconography of religious space restricted to architectural elements
- 2-dimensional partly opaque characters
- looking down upon me and in conversation with one another
- reverence to whom?
- preservation of the environmental elements

From the above the list the most frequent words mentioned are space, commune/communal, and cathedral.



*Diagram 2, Units of Meaning Cluster (Thomas, 2021); (Malmaison, 2021)*

#### 4.3.3 – Clustering units of meaning to form themes

The theme of functional fusion is how in Pitcher & Piano Nottingham the original function, a place of worship, became present because of the similarities with the new function, a pub. Unlike Malmaison Oxford, my time here was less about emotional contrast but recognizing a sense of

connection to the timeless need to build and foster community. Also, while less idyllic the necessity for the exchange of capital. The contrast in scale was by far the most imposing observation at this venue. The separation between historic building and servicescape was clear. Where Malmaison Oxford aimed to integrate their servicescape with the narrative and architecture of the historic building Pitcher & Piano seemed to emphasize the difference.

#### 4.4 – Extract general meaning for themes

The units of significance or themes identified from both locations are: 1) observed contrast between environmental elements; 2) affective contextual dissonance; 3) location-specific hotel servicescape; 4) functional fusion; 5) contrast in scale.

Considering these themes, contrast is a definitive character of three of the themes. The contrast in scale theme can be absorbed into contrasting environmental elements. Functional fusion is also a part of affective contextual dissonance as this functional alignment can cause an adverse affective response. This affective response in turn creates a sense of dissonance. With this in mind contrast is identified as the main general theme. It can however be separated into affective and architectural/environmental contrast.

#### 4.5 – Conclusion

Utilizing the adapted data explication process established in chapter three, my autoethnographic data was distilled into the main theme of contrast. Both emotional and environmental contrast represents not only types of observations I made, but also act as a catalyst for many of the emotional responses. How do emotional and environmental contrast fit into the intangible contribution of the reused historic building? Tresidder and Deakin (2019) already established that these buildings create differentiated market experience, but how does the impact of the identified contrast differentiate the type of experience had within these walls? The next chapter will work to connect the data results to the aim of this paper and to argue a connection for the importance of contrast on imparting elevated experiences.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1 - Introduction**

The aim of this paper has been to respond to Deakin and Tresidder's analyses of the same spaces. Their work aims to establish reused historic buildings as tools for the differentiation of tourism and hospitality experience. They fell short at identifying the reciprocal relationship between the historic building itself and the experiencescape. In fact, they claimed it was unknowable. Through a shift in philosophical and methodological approach I have attempted to fill this gap.

The proposed impact of the reused historic building on the adapted experiencescape is rooted in environmental and emotional contrast. It is then through understanding contextual contrast and its connection with the aesthetic characteristic of experience that I conclude that the intangible contribution of the historic building can be known.

### **5.2 - Key Findings**

Contrast is the major theme from the data elicitation. Both Malmaison Oxford and Pitcher & Piano Nottingham provided experiences of contrast between environmental elements and between affective responses. During my time at Malmaison Oxford, the environmental contrast was caused by the dissonance between the original servicescape and the new adapted reused servicescape. The original servicescape being things like the original cell doors and the staircase establishing a clear surveillance state. The new servicescape was defined by the large beds, the check-in desk, and the Malmaison branding signage. These modern amenities of luxury and comfort only became unsettling when placed in the context of a reused prison.

As a prison, the previous servicescape communicated discomfort and degradation of the humans within. The narrow beds in the cramped preserved cell display jarred me into recognizing the physical difference of my luxury experience. The same bricks behind that velvet headboard, even though veiled in a coat of paint, were an environmental element tool for confinement.

At Pitcher & Piano Nottingham the environmental contrast sat more in the void of space. A unit of significance identified was the contrast in scale. The servicescape of the restaurant was restricted to the center of the cathedral. From previous experience of other Pitcher & Piano

restaurants, I saw that the size of the bar area was not adapted to the height of the cathedral. This could be intentional to retain the architectural and aesthetic integrity of the space. Regardless of the motivations, the vast space from the bar servicescape contrasted with the void up to the domed ceilings. If cathedrals were built this way to impart a sense of awe and reverence the bar remained functional and not adapted by the brand to fit the space.

I had hypothesized that contrast between the historic building and the servicescape would play some factor in the impact of the building on the experiencescape. I did not, however, expect the prevalence of an affective response precipitating from the similarities of past and present function.

The narrative vignette from Malmaison Oxford mentioned the servicescape dissonance between communal showers and a luxury hotel bathroom servicescape; but overall, it is a recording of my emotional discomfort with existing in a space of connoted luxury in a space that echoed the elements of its previous function. I use functional synthesis to describe the feelings resulting from the similarities of building function.

These feelings hold value regardless of being positive or negatively valanced. Rosenberg and Sackris (2020) argue for a pluralist sentimentalist view of aesthetic experience. They suggest that a “single emotional mechanism [positive emotion] cannot account for all the various ways objects and events impress” (Rosenber, Sackris, 2020, p. 132). By adopting this view, even though my feelings were of discomfort, the history imbued in the walls of the building permeated and contrasted with the feelings of being in a luxury hotel.

While acknowledging the questionable moral implications of the reuse of a prison (and the marketing celebrating that) the function of showering existed in the prison servicescape and the hotel servicescape. This functional similarity caused me to compare the bathroom in my room to the images of communal showers I had established from a trip to Alcatraz prison in San Francisco, California, USA (figure 9). Through this functional fusion I not only compared the environmental elements but also the emotional contrast between myself and the prisoners who once lived there through an empathetic receptiveness. It was through the emotional responses and the environmental comparisons that “a greater part of [my] mental activity was directed to the qualities of the presented environment (Beardsley, 1969). It may then be possible to suggest that a contribution of the historic building to the modern experiencescape is its propensity to prime an individual for something resembling an aesthetic experience.



### 5.3 - The Aesthetic Experience Contribution

Contrast does not, in of itself, speak to the intangible contribution of the building. By identifying this, I only further specified the modalities of differentiation noted by Tresidder and Deakin (2019). To identify the intangible contribution, aesthetic experience must be included in the discussion.

An encounter with Beardsley's aesthetic characteristics in these spaces contributes to an elevated commercial experience. Observed and felt contrast between the historic building and the new servicescape act as the gateway to aesthetic experience. For example, it is through the contextual dissonance between a space of luxury existing in a space of incarceration that an emotional reaction was elicited. This shock of contrast elicited an experience that was elevated. Elevated beyond affective appraisal. Affective appraisal being a cognitive process of judgement of phenomena (Russel, 2013).

At Pitcher & Piano Nottingham the object directedness hailed by the stained glass resulted in something more than affective appraisal. An experience of phenomena that resembles one or more of Beardsley's (1969) aesthetic characteristics of experience, like object directedness, acts as path to deepening that experience beyond affective appraisal. The embodiment of one or more of these characteristics differentiate the type of experience had.

The contrasts discussed above are fully dependent on the architecture, aura, and aesthetic of the historic building context. It is clear that there is value in the reuse of these buildings given the number of reused buildings and the amount of academic literature. These contrasts do more than establish value through the experiential commercial differentiation, they differentiate and elevate the *type* of experience had in the spaces. The observational and emotional contrast caused by the historic building generate a space primed with the capacity to induce aesthetic characteristics of experience. This primed space, specifically the physical context of a historic building, interrupts our programmed viewership of certain servicescapes and encourages a meaningfully engaged experiencescape.

### 5.4 - Limitations and Further Research

This work is not about how to optimize the engagement with aesthetic characteristics of experience through the integration or lack of integration of the servicescape into a historic building. However, the interruption of our passive viewership must be established as a goal

in these spaces. Building upon the argued potential for aesthetic experience in commercial spaces caused by contrast perhaps furthermore practical studies can develop specific types of contrast that can be exploited through design.

Further study, specifically more data would be needed to confirmation of contrast as an intangible contribution of the reused historic building and potential practical design applications. The time and financial limitations of this project only allowed for the visit to two buildings. More site studies could work to identify other intangible contributions. Additionally, the expansion of participants would assist in the identifications of stronger patterns of experience. While this study used a singular voice as an asset, multiple first-person points of view would provide a richer narrative of the space.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The focus of this paper has been the reuse of historic buildings and the potential within them for elevated experiences. The large number of underused or unused historic buildings in the UK presents opportunity for commercial development. These buildings present an opportune context for commercial ventures to differentiate their space and their customer experience as seen in Malmaison Oxford and Pitcher & Piano Nottingham.

In response to Tresidder and Deakin's (2019) work, I aimed to identify the contributions of historic buildings. Through their own analysis of Malmaison Oxford and the Pitcher & Piano Nottingham they conclude that the context of historic buildings does differentiate the commercial experiences within them. However, they did not identify what the intangible or unquantifiable elements of the historic building were that created the differentiated experience. They argued that these contributions cannot be known or identified.

Utilizing a phenomenological and autoethnographic methodology I have aimed to prove that it is possible to identify these contributions. Through my own experience in these spaces and the recorded data I posit that contrast in the environmental elements of the servicescape and the historic building along with the emotional or affective response to the past and present uses differentiate the experience. The identification of these themes enabled me to hypothesize that AN unquantifiable contribution of the context of a historic building is its ability to make people stop, stare and truly be present in the act of looking. Contextual contrast represent the overall contrast between the historic building and the experiencescape within. This type of looking can be characterized using the five aesthetic characteristics of experience as presented by Beardsley (1969).

As established by Tresidder and Deakin (2019), reused historic buildings differentiate a commercial experience by providing a unique context for the servicescape. Beyond this, the experiential power of the context of a reused historical building is how it differentiates the *type* of experience held within it. The experience economy has driven an increase in the quantity and prevalence of memorable or commercially engaging experiences; it has not however emphasized the quality of those experiences.

I conclude that one intangible contribution of historic buildings to reused commercial experiencespaces is the development of consumer experience from observing and feeling

contextual contrast to having an aesthetic experience. First, the reused historic building provides contrasting visual and affective elements to the adapted function. Through this visual and affective contrast, the guest/consumer is challenged to take up greater and more focused attention to the environment/object's form. It is this uncommon attention caused by the discontinuous and unexpected need to process to understand these contrasting environments that enable aesthetic experiences. Enabling the characteristics of aesthetic experience to develop within the individual results in the quality of the experience to be heightened above and beyond other similar market servicescapes.

The scope of this essay was narrow in both object of study and the opinions or experiences evaluated. With Depraz's (2014) hailing of the first person as king in phenomenological I was both the researcher and aesthetic consumer. My experience and the written and visual recording of that allowed me to delve deeply and closely into the nature of these spaces. With this in mind, broadening both the places observed and the observations of others would prove valuable. Not only would it provide a chance to test the conclusions set forth here but also identify other ways, if any, the context of a historic building shifts how consumers see and feel their experience. It may also prove fruitful to complete a comparative study between identical servicescapes that exist in a built for purpose building and a reused historic building.

The reuse of historic buildings represents a unique form a cultural capital. It provides the opportunity to preserve the structures of our past through the functional reuse while Utilizing this study, perhaps businesses within reused historic building can design their servicescape to further encourage an experience resembling an aesthetic experience. Developing a practical framework to optimize the aesthetic and emotional contrast may change how servicescapes and historic buildings collaborate. Perhaps this will result in aesthetically aware, co-constructive enterprises that preserve the past through the present facilitation of uniquely poignant aesthetic experiences.

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## **Table of Figures**



Figure 1: Travelodge. 2021. *Travelodge Standard Room*. [Online]. [Accessed 2 September 2021]. Available from: <https://www.travelodge.co.uk/>

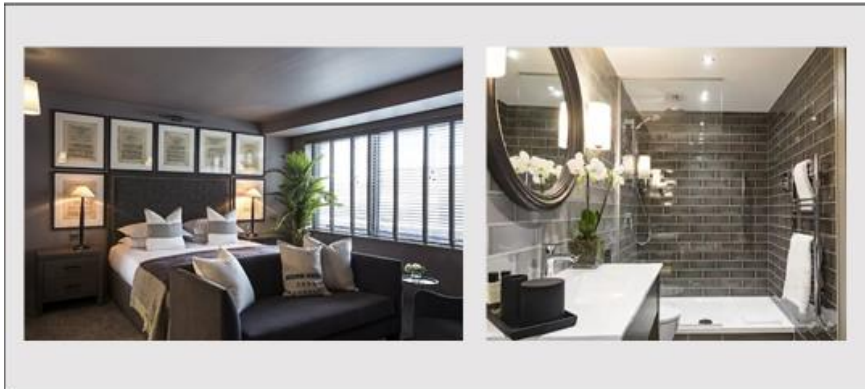


Figure 2: Dakota Hotels. 2021. *Dakota Hotel Leeds Standard Room*. [Online]. [Accessed 2 September 2021]. Available from: <https://www.dakotahotels.co.uk/>



Figure 3, Thomas, B. 2021. *Malmaison Carpet*. Oxford, UK.



Figure 4, Thomas, B. 2021. *Malmaison Pillow*. Oxford, UK.

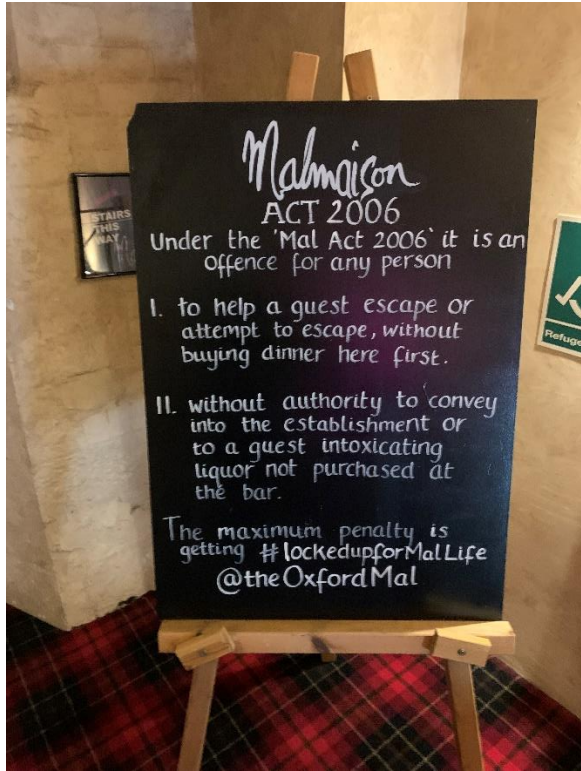


Figure 5, Thomas, B. 2021. *Malmaison Sign*. Oxford, UK



Figures 6 & 7, Thomas, B. *Malmaison Room Art*. Oxford, UK



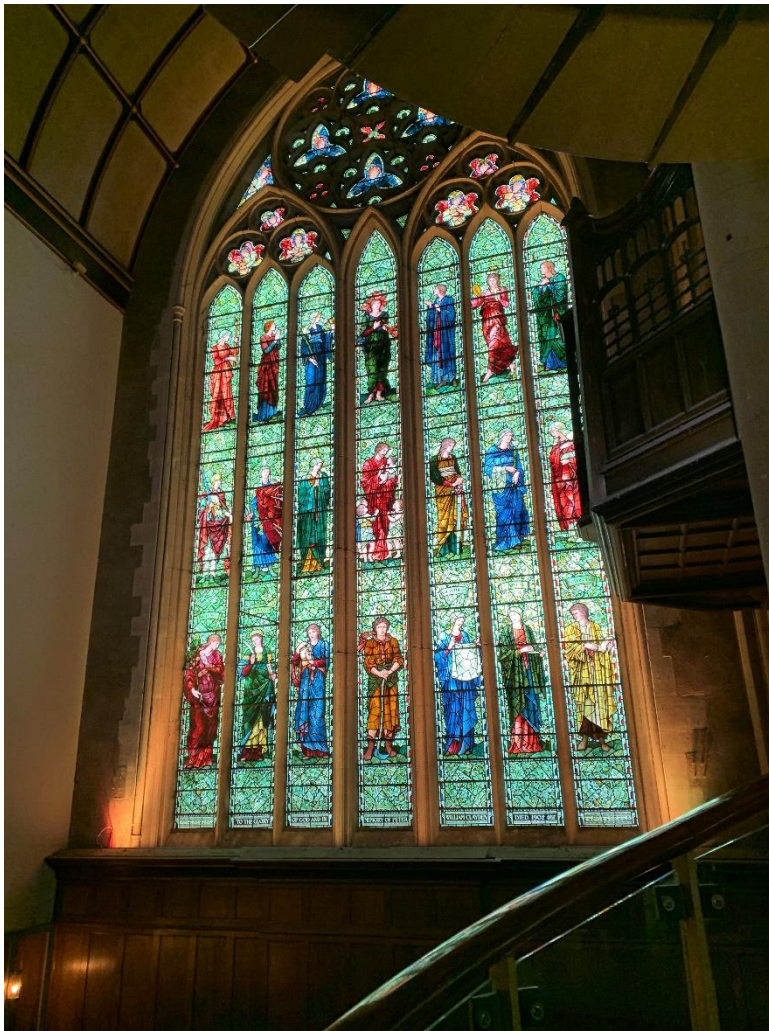


Figure 8, Thomas, Brian. 2021. *Stained Glass Window*. Pitcher & Piano, Nottingham, UK

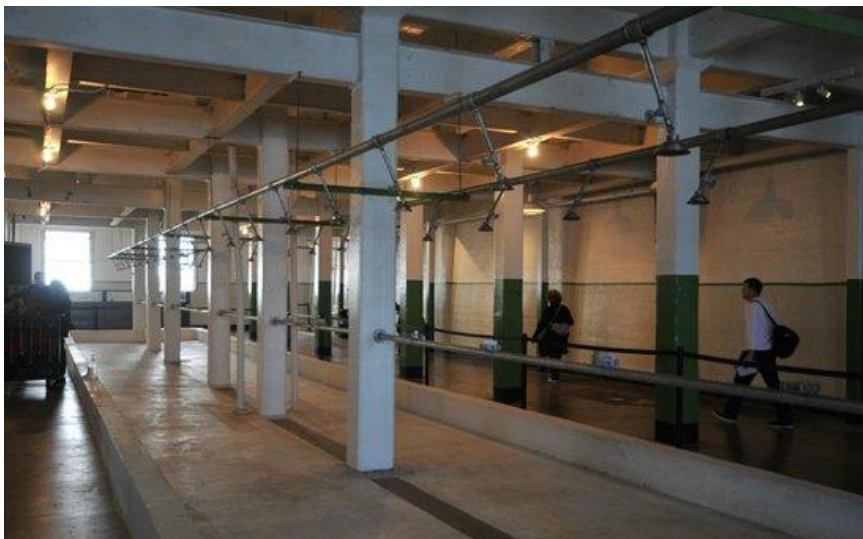


Figure 9, Tripadvisor. 2021. *Comunal Showers Alcatraz*. [Online]. [Accessed 18 October 2021]. Available from:

## Appendix 1

**Table 1** Modes of attention and kinds of aesthetic experience

Attention to properties is: Attention to objects is:	<i>Focused</i>	<i>Distributed</i>
	<i>Focused</i>	<i>Distributed</i>
<i>Focused</i>	<p><b>Pragmatic aesthetic experience</b> (Doubly focused attention)</p> <p>Practical use of a designed good that involves judging its fitness for its intended technical function Instrumental stance (practical purposiveness)</p> <p><i>Functional</i> beauty</p> <p>Paradigm case: designed objects (e.g. appliances, electronic devices)</p>	<p><b>Contemplative aesthetic experience</b> (Object-directed attention)</p> <p>Detached engagement with one particular item that involves appreciating a wide variety of its properties Autotelic stance (activity engaged in for its own sake, not guided by other practical purposes)</p> <p><i>Pure</i> beauty</p> <p>Paradigm case: artworks, entertainment, leisure activities</p>
<i>Distributed</i>	<p><b>Catallactic aesthetic experience</b> (Feature-directed attention)</p> <p>Searching, identifying, classifying and decision-making based on a few attributes (e.g. brand-specific stylistic features) among multiple items in a collection (e.g. a brand portfolio) or a consideration set</p> <p>Purposive stance</p> <p><i>Exemplary</i> beauty</p> <p>Paradigm case: brands</p>	<p><b>Ecological aesthetic experience</b> (Doubly distributed attention)</p> <p>Multi-sensory, immersive encounter that involves flitting from one item or feature to another in one's immediate surroundings</p> <p>"On-the-fly" stance (marked by lack of explicit purpose, salient goal or a definite plan)</p> <p><i>Ambient</i> beauty</p> <p>Paradigm case: flagship stores, department stores, malls</p>

(Harper, 2020, p. 67)