

An Archaeological Model for St. Mary's Field Museum

Collaboration between UEL Unit A and L - P : Archaeology working for Fusion-JV on behalf of HS2

In June 2021, six UEL architecture students engaged in a work experience programme on an active construction project, they designed and digitally manufactured physical archaeological representation models to help communicate the findings from the excavation project of St. Mary's Church in Stoke Mandeville (Buckinghamshire). The archaeological site was being excavated as part of the construction of HS2.

The UEL students visited the excavation, were briefed by the archaeology team and museum curator and worked to a detailed brief for the design and development of the models. During the design phase, the students produced numerous drawings and prototypes and attended design reviews with the archaeologists and the museum team. Because this was a live project which happened alongside the excavation itself, the challenge was to represent the spatial conditions and changes of the site and landscape in relation to space and time, translating this relational understanding into tactile and interactive models that, despite being physical, had to still remain open to interpretation and to possible changes in order to incorporate the new findings as they were uncovered.

The final models were designed in acrylic, using layers, colours and transparency to overlay the different phases and features of the site. The models were also designed to be played with, and to be arranged in multiple constellations. This multi-dimensional approach helped to communicate how the spaces of interest had changed over time, as well as enable the team of archaeologists to creatively explore the site and its surrounding landscape, supporting the process of interpretation and understanding of the site during the excavation, an unexpected but highly appreciated aspect of the students' model.

The project for the St. Mary's Field Museum's models resulted from a collaboration with L - P : Archaeology, as part of their delivery of SEE (Skills, Employment and Education) and Public Engagement programmes for HS2. It provided a real life project experience for the UEL students who had to respond and deliver the project using the tools

offered by their architecture training, architectural language and critical design thinking, while learning: how to work in a construction environment; archaeological practice; historical phases and building typologies; and most importantly, learning how to engage in a collaborative process of trans-disciplinary knowledge exchange.

The models were presented to the team of 65 archaeologists and construction professionals by the students and exhibited to the public at the St. Mary's Field Museum, a pop-up museum on site, between July and September 2021. During the exhibition, the representation models became key elements of the exhibit and proved to be highly popular with public audiences of all ages. It was seen by more than 1700 visitors. Some parts of the models featured in the BBC's 'Digging for Britain' programme on BBC1 and BBC i-player (Series 9- Episode 2).

Awards:

- Archaeology Achievement Award 2021 (highly commended)
- Public & Community Engagement Award 2022 (winner in partnerships category)

Project Lead: Carsten Jungfer and Fernanda Palmieri (Unit A degree unit)

Degree Student Participants: Aya Nasr, Busthana Nusren Odayapurath, Claudiu Theodor Cazan, Haleema Ahmed, Michael Ngam, Muhammad Tawfik

Special Thanks to UEL staff Paul Nichols, Rob Pyecroft, Daryl Brown, David Morgan and Mark Sowden.

Also, special thanks to Guy Hunt (L-P), Rachel Wood (Fusion-JV), Lily Hawker-Yates (L-P) and Susan Greaney (English Heritage) for making this collaboration project a reality.

