Case study 11 – virtual 360-degree tour
Using: Matterport, Seekbeak

Salisbury Cathedral Virtual Art Tour

On 28 March 2020, Salisbury Cathedral was due to open its largest Art Exhibition for two decades - Celebrating 800 years of Spirit and Endeavour - featuring leading 20th and 21st century artists including Henry Moore, Grayson Perry, Eduardo Paolozzi, Shirazeh Houshiary, Antony Gormley and Mark Wallinger.

The launch never happened because of lockdown. Plans were revised and a decision was made to create a **virtual 360-degree tour** to launch on the anniversary of the laying of Cathedral's first foundation stones - 28 April - eight centuries earlier.

Website: https://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/spirit-and-endeavour-virtual-art-tour

Technology:

The virtual tour inside was created by Patrick Price from Heads Above the Cloud, by 3D scanning the Cathedral and using a platform called Matterport which allows you to create navigation thumbnails, walk around a work in 3D, open windows with captions, and a link to the virtual catalogue entry for each piece.

https://matterport.com

The internal tour was linked to an external tour which had to be created using panorama technology called **SeekBeak**.

https://seekbeak.com

The captioning and links to the virtual catalogue had to be created differently and because, unlike the scan, you could explore the work in 3D, they added in a clickable link to steadicam shots around each work. They also used the same thumbnail system.

They also created a children's version of the Art Tour - with specially created project-based links to worksheets in place of the links to the virtual catalogue in the adult tour.

Timeline:

It took a day to scan the Cathedral and shoot the panoramas of the external work. They started working on the plan at the end of March. It took approximately 3 weeks with all parties working remotely and regular go-to sessions to work on the user experience. The company creating the tour had to fit it around other projects too. Estimating the amount of time in total, it was probably 5-7 days.

Cost:

The project cost around £3,000 for both tours.

Benefits:

The plan was never to monetise it, it was meant as a profile raiser and an opportunity to share something that would have otherwise lain dormant. It offered a huge PR and reputational opportunity and as a result they will be extending the exhibition into 2021 with the support of the artists and galleries.

It gave the Cathedral an initial ad value of £35,675 and stories covering it reached 511,190 – more specialist press like the Art Newspaper etc came later. On the first two days around 3,000 individuals took the tour and during May the virtual art page has had around 16,000 pages views.

More importantly it gave the Cathedral a profile on the world art stage that it would have been hard to claim under normal circumstances because it is such a competitive arena.

Experience:

It was important, alongside virtual worship, to have a tool for keeping the Cathedral open, alive and receptive.

Through this project, the team have learnt how to create a virtual experience which they can apply in other ways including touch screens in the future.

They gained a lot of user experience creating it and it was educative not just for the team but also for their curator who is going on to curate another virtual exhibition. It also allowed them to keep the Cathedral and its anniversary in the public eye after the yearlong programme of events planned for 2020 were cancelled.

It was important to support the artists and the galleries too - all significantly affected by Covid19.

The learning from it will be long lasting, but in the end, hopefully it will encourage visitors to see the art exhibition 'in the flesh'.