

MONTAGE AND DIALECTICAL HISTORY: THE ACCESSION DAY TILTS, WHITEHALL AND EMBODIED PARTICIPATION

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MONTAGE AND DIALECTICAL HISTORY

The meaning and use of montage in this discussion references the nineteenth-century French word which denotes ideas of assembly from prefabricated parts. This notion of plurality where new meanings are produced through juxtaposition and adjacency are explored through the sixteenth-century Accession Day Tilts. These jousting tournaments were a fundamental aspect of Queen Elizabeth I's Accession Day and celebrated in the tiltyard of Whitehall Palace. The experiences of the festivities were simultaneously informed by the ephemeral qualities of the proceedings and the prominence of the architecture of the Palace where material characteristics still exist. While the appearance of the building has completely changed, there are still similarities in the positioning of the former tiltyard and current Horse Guards Parade ground in relation to the spatial qualities of the architecture.

In this paper, montage as an interdisciplinary tool is used to explore the conception of three-dimensional spatial environments and especially participation dependent eidetic experiences conveyed through different modes. Additionally, the notion of an intellectual montage is employed to engage the users and encourage active participation in the dynamic process of constructing the work and/or experiences.¹ As the meanings of heritage are cumulative and fluid, this notion of dialectics foregrounds the role of the user and enables the understanding of the work to shift through different levels of engagement. Most importantly with each transformation, the shifts and gaps in knowledge are accommodated and the multiple facets of history, both tangible and intangible, are juxtaposed and exploited to resist fixed readings and meanings.²



Figure 1. Horse Guards Parade grounds flanked by the Horse Guards building



Figure 2. Outline of the current Horse Guards building drawn over part of Henry VIII's tiltyard

MONTAGE AND PERSPECTIVE OF MEANING

The notion of dialectical history, articulated as non-linear and conveyed through the techniques of montage, fragments and allegory begins with the English Reformation and the Royal Family as tantamount with the Church of England. This portrayal extended to the Queen's carefully constructed image as 'Supreme Governor'.³ Hence Accession Day was marked with copious celebrations and the imagery of the Tilts was designed to establish the 'political and theological position' of Protestant England.⁴ There are no surviving images and these festivities are largely depicted through poetry and literary references.⁵ Significantly, a piece of work hailed as a reflection of these significant celebrations is the Ditchley portrait, c. 1592.⁶ The use of didactic allegory in the building of Elizabethan mythology is evident in this larger-than-life-size painting which depicts the Queen standing on a globe with her feet on Oxfordshire, positioned as a figure between England and God.⁷ The celestial association is reinforced by the portrayal of her ability to control the weather through dispelling storm clouds and ushering in sunshine. This technique of arranging individual objects to create a picture is also referred to as perspective of meaning and/or Elizabethan vision. This was manifested through issues of conveyance and included the construction of visual symbols embedded with allegorical references as well as allusions to specific narratives.⁸ In 'The Allegory of the Tudor Succession', c. 1572, the people in this painting consist of both living and deceased members of the Tudor family as well as representations of mythical figures, thus enabling the painting to be read in various ways. For instance, the four Tudor monarchs depicted can be read individually with regards to their political roles in relation to the Tudor dynasty. Likewise the mythical figures of Peace, Plenty and Mars have been depicted with the necessary embellishments and attire to convincingly convey their symbolic roles. The use of Elizabethan allegory through the individual symbolic elements and the composition of the figures serve to reinforce specific aspects of the narrative depending on the assembling of different combinations. Hence the primary aim of the state portrait was not to portray the Queen as an individual but to 'invoke through her image the abstract principles of her rule'.⁹

Consequently, the Tilts were not only a means for the monarchy to articulate their position, but also enabled the public to experience the architectural space of the tiltyard on that one particular day a year at the height of the festivities.¹⁰ Likened to some aspects of montage, this ability to understand the intention and meaning of the work through reconciling the mental and visual gaps between specific elements enabled a deeper appreciation. This presentation technique also allowed the sixteenth-century audience to understand the implied meanings. However, the use of didactic allegory in these visual compositions and staged performances meant that despite the different readings afforded to the participant, the intended meanings were similar. Dialectical allegory in contrast facilitates the creation

of new, multiple and individual readings where meanings are solely reliant on the users' interpretations and required to complete the work.



Figure 3. *Ditchley Portrait*, c. 1592, attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger



Figure 4. *'Allegory of the Tudor Succession'*, c. 1572, attributed to Lucas de Heere

RECONSTRUCTING THE ACCESSION DAY TILTS

References to the idea of an annual feast in honour of Queen Elizabeth recur in Elizabethan literature. These literary allusions further suggest that the Tilts were a fundamental aspect of the aesthetic language during the late sixteenth-century. Works which allude to the Tilts include Edmund Spenser's epic *Faerie Queen* (1590–1), Sir Philip Sidney's novel *Arcadia* (1590–3), and Michael Drayton's *The Shepherds Garland* (1593). These literary examples, termed by Frances Yates as 'word pictures' to reflect the pageantry of the Tilts have served to establish the emphasis on enactment within a fictitious narrative focused on particular themes, and woven around a deity-like figure.

The most precise visualisation of these celebrations can somewhat be reconstructed through a reading of George Peele's blank verse 'Polyhymnia' (1590). Composed specifically for a tilt in that same year, it remains the most detailed and descriptive account. The event is introduced chronologically with the repeated depiction of the thirteen pairs of tilters, their names, staging, and costumes as they entered the tiltyard. Descriptions of the elaborate costumes, accompanying paraphernalia and methods of arrival by means of horses, corteges, and pageant cars denoted the roles assumed by the knights. The one portrait which is said to be a visual translation of Peele's verse to painting and has been hailed as a reflection of these significant celebrations pertaining to the description of 'great Empresse of the world' and 'Star of Englands Globe', is the Ditchley portrait.¹¹ These written allusions are studied alongside existing pictorial documentation like the sketch of the tiltyard pavilion, drawings of jousting armour and score cards.

The privy and tiltyard galleries of Whitehall Palace were established from the onset between 1530 and 1532.¹² The earliest existing layout drawings depict the Palace in the seventeenth-century and a 1670 plan shows the tiltyard gallery as 80 feet long and 19 feet wide, consistent with an earlier elevation drawing by Inigo Jones in 1623. The open space in front of Jones's Banqueting House, 1619–22, is labelled 'part of the tiltyard' and this is where the south wing of the current Horse Guards building sits.¹³ Hence Henry VIII's tiltyard would have occupied part of the current Horse Guards Parade grounds, making this space one of the surviving areas of Whitehall Palace to have retained any ceremonial function.¹⁴ The first Horse Guards building was commissioned by King Charles II in 1663 and until this day, remains the ceremonial entrance of Buckingham Palace.¹⁵ The current building is dated 1750–60 and serves as the headquarters of the London District of the British Army and Household Calvary, and further houses the Household Calvary Museum.¹⁶ The Museum not only introduces the history of the Guards to the public, but also allows visitors to experience aspects of the original building, which were restored during the design of the gallery spaces. Features include the original cobbled floor and vaulted ceiling of the stables. More importantly, the integration of an aspect of history into the present context is apparent in one of the galleries that contain the Queen's Life Guard stables. Horses are still groomed for ceremonies in these original eighteenth-century stables and this activity can be glimpsed via a large glass partition in the Museum. The presence of the sentries at the entrance of the Horse Guards building further allude to the historical significance of this space and its association with royalty. The large open space through the archway and located alongside St James's Park is the Horse Guards Parade where the jousting tournaments occurred.

At present, the spatial and social practices of the Tilts are articulated through an asynchronous archive consisting of ephemeral aspects like theory and narrative, material history like the current Horse Guard Parade Ground and Museum, and most importantly the experiences of the users through historical records and current interactions. Hence, the appropriateness of montage as a tool that reconciles these archival fragments is demonstrated. New meanings of the Tilts are generated by different users through engagement with different combinations of these tangible and intangible material aspects and experiences. This inherent method of understanding history and expanding the collection of material to include different mediums, acquired through new working processes and practices will be extended to the present. In this instance, discussions concerning digital technology, virtual sensations and environments entail the construction and contributions of a sound archive.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND AUDIO FRAGMENTS

Through the precise use of advancing technology, the sounds associated with Accession Day celebrations and the Tilts can be digitally recreated as intangible auratic additions. In this instance, the vividly described ‘ringing of bells, lighting of bonfires and firing of guns’ by courts and parishes, as well as the cheering crowds and theatrical performances by the knights in the tiltyard as described in detail by Lupold von Wedel in 1584 can be interpreted and constructed as sound bites to enhance eidetic experiences.¹⁷ As there are no authentic recordings of these events, the audio fragments will have to be constructed from the onset.

As the language of the literary and fine art references discussed were specific to the period, the inventiveness of the audio aspects is approached through combining the precision of current technology with scholarly research. Working structures that enable these fragments to exist as autonomous units of meaning, individually addressing issues like authorship and narrative are important. This will require academic and practical knowledge regarding the materiality of the architecture, in particular the tiltyard as well as historical musical instruments and apparatus associated with sound production. Digital expertise will serve to facilitate the translation and empirical calculations of these scientific sound studies into recordings. The methods by which the synthesis of the different components become audio fragments that accurately depict the different instances of the Tilts are inventive and original. These sound bites not only enhance and extend the existing asynchronous archive, but the availability of process work with incomplete slivers will encourage participants to assume the different roles of composer, performer and/or listener, thus contributing to the plethora of multiple interpretations and personal experiences. Significantly, the work demonstrates the relevance and relevant use of technology.

In this instance, digital technology is not afforded greater importance and/or approached as an all-encompassing tool that overshadows the contributions of other archival material. Neither is it simply an organisational mechanism, structured as a framework to insert information. It is important to highlight that while these audio fragments serve to augment reality, they are not meant to foster the reenactment of complete virtual reality environments.¹⁸ This is because the diminution of the gaps and/or intermediate spaces which are the ‘productive forces in the generation of meaning through active involvement of a critical audience’, has already been initiated by the seamless amalgamation of pictorial elements into virtual images by way of digital rendering practices.¹⁹ Hence, consistent to the notions of montage and dialectics, these sound fragments are unmediated and exist as independent entities that simultaneously emphasise the gaps in history.

[N]ow approached the day, when on November 17 the tournament was to be held... About twelve o'clock the queen and her ladies placed themselves at the windows in a long room of Weithol Whitehall palace, near Westminster, opposite the barrier lists where the tournament was to be held. From this room a broad staircase led downwards, and around the barrier stands were arranged by boards above the ground, so that everybody by paying 12d. would get a stand and see the play... Many thousand spectators, men, women and girls, got places, not to speak of those who were within the barrier and paid nothing. During the whole time of the tournament all those who wished to fight entered the list by pairs, the trumpets being blown at the time and other musical instruments. The combatants had their servants clad in different colours, they, however, did not enter the barrier, but arranged themselves on both sides. Some of the servants were disguised like savages, or like Irishmen, with their hair hanging down to the girdle like women, others had horses equipped like elephants, some carriages were drawn by men, others appeared to move by themselves; altogether the carriages were very odd in appearance. Some gentlemen had their horses with them and mounted in full armour directly from the carriage. There were some who showed very good horsemanship and were also in fine attire. The manner of the combat each had settled before entering the lists. The costs (of such pageantry) amounted to several thousand pounds each. When a gentleman with his servants approached the barrier, on horseback or in a carriage, he stopped at the foot of the staircase leading to the queen's room, while one of his servants in pompous attire of a special pattern mounted the steps and addressed the queen in well-composed verses or with a ludicrous speech, making her and her ladies laugh. When the speech was ended he in the name of his lord offered to the queen a costly present... Now always two by two rode against each other, breaking lances across the beam... The fete lasted until five o'clock in the afternoon...¹

Figure 8. The eye witness account by Lupold von Wedel in 1584 remains the only description of the proceedings at a tilt. The audio aspects are highlighted

THE PRACTICE OF ARCHIVAL RESEARCH, HERITAGE AND EMBODIED PARTICIPATION

Montage as a technique enables a non-hierarchical framework that approaches the multiple depictions of the Tilts through an asynchronous archive where the disjunctions between tactile experiences of a tangible site, literary and pictorial material, and intangible auratic additions are juxtaposed to conjure up meaningful and individual experiences through active user participation. The gaps are celebrated, and meanings shift as contingent on the work being completed by the embodied user.

The techniques of didactic allegory and allusion in the design and choreography of the Tilts were meant to allow active participation through composing different ways to understand the proceedings. Despite the similarity of the intended meanings, the work was appreciated on individual terms. This methodology extends to the present where personal readings of the Tilts are derived from different combinations of material available. As dialectical history advocates that the acquisition of knowledge is neither linear nor seamless, the ensuing experiences are not meant to be singular and continuous but fragmented and juxtaposed. Additionally, the framework for this non-hierarchical system is constructed through active sources with the critical intent to reflect participation and use. The nature of heritage is communicated through varying hybrid and interdisciplinary material that also employ didactic and dialectic allegories. The Tilts that occurred during Elizabethan England are presently devised to be experienced through these archival fragments which are acquired through different working processes and practices. The readings of the Tilts are transformed by the user and similarly, the resulting polyvalent experiences of overlaid histories transform the physical and digital archive of resources that enrich discussions concerning this particular aspect of English heritage. These conflicting discontinuous fragments that include archival material and the visual and tactile qualities provided by the permanence of the architecture enables half-a century of history to also be reflected in the tangible and intangible gaps, further facilitating the juxtaposition of intellectual stimuli.²⁰ The notion of an intellectual montage is thus created through the inherent complexity and layers of meanings, with the eidetic experiences celebrated on individual terms.

Significantly, the rejection of a dominant medium that dictates and/or generates a leading narrative creates new readings and meanings that function as critique, entertainment and/or education. These active resources operate as catalysts that facilitate the appreciation of history, but revisited in the present context. This ensures that the qualities of multiplicity, polyfocality and polyvalence through the multifaceted layering of experiences that occur at different moments in this space and as apparent in history, will always have relevance in the present.

Digital technology in this instance is not limited to sound and audio material but can be used to alter the workings of the existing archive and the manners in how different aspects are approached, used and presented, to demonstrate new dialectical ideas concerning participatory explorations. This current manner of engagement is very different to the intentions of the Elizabethan pageantry and Tilts, where the choreography was infused with particular themes to impress and remind the public who as loyal subjects, were expected to understand the meanings being alluded to. As public perception of, and loyalty to, the monarchy has changed over time, so have the meanings associated with the Tilts.²¹ Hence the term 'perspective of meaning' can be used to describe the ability to interpret, apply, and infer material regarding the Tilts. The practice of archival research and all material in this archive is distinct, fluid and non-hierarchical. This inventive way of engaging with architectural history would allow the past to be integrated in more accessible, precise, and nuanced manners. Most importantly, the archive transforms the readings of the Tilts associated with each aspect and similarly, the work and meanings produced transforms the archive.

NOTES

- ¹ Manfredo Tafuri, "The Dialectics of the Avant Garde," *Oppositions 11: A Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture*, v.11, (1977): 78.
- ² The historiographical approach references the work of Walter Benjamin and especially *The Arcades Project* (1999). This post-humous publication is described as 'the blueprint for an unimaginably massive and Labyrinthine architecture, a dream city in effect'. The basic essence and characteristics of the Paris arcades are effectively captured in a working system that respected the differences of the events juxtaposed within the spaces. The principles of montage are evident in the arrangement of the six chapters of the book, which are designed to operate independently and enable 'the work to be remade anew' by each reader. Howard Eiland, translator's foreword to *The Arcades Project*, by Walter Benjamin (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), viii and Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 108.
- ³ Roy Houston, ed., *Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family* (London: Dorling Kindersley Ltd., 2015), 151. The current monarch Queen Elizabeth II's role in the Church of England is a direct consequence of Henry VIII's actions.
- ⁴ Frances Yates, "Elizabethan Chivalry; The Romance of the Accession Day Tilts," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, v. 20, no. 1/2, January – June, (1995): 7.
- ⁵ A suggested visual reference is the eight Valois Tapestries that depict ceremonial tilting at the French Court during the time of Catherine de Medicis. This body of mid-sixteenth-century textiles are attributed to cartoons by Lucas de Heere.
- ⁶ The Ditchley portrait measures 2413 x 1524 mm, is attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger and is currently displayed in the Tudor Gallery at the National Portrait Gallery, London, UK.
- ⁷ Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 114 and Yates, "Elizabethan Chivalry," 9.
- ⁸ This notion set the tone regarding the commissioning and production of the portraits and images of Queen Elizabeth throughout her reign. Hence the term 'lost sense of sight' alludes to the fact that the ability to see and understand works of art presented in this manner is no longer common practice. Constance Lau, "A contemporary reading of the Accession Day Tilts in relation to festival and the Elizabethan notion of 'lost sense of sight'," in *Architecture, Festival and the City*, ed. Jemma Brown et al. (London: Routledge, 2019), 40. Additional reference, Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987).
- ⁹ Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 36.
- ¹⁰ Lau, "A contemporary reading of the Accession Day Tilts," 39.
- ¹¹ David H. Horne, *The Life and Minor Works of George Peele*, v. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952), 232.
- ¹² Simon Thurley, *Whitehall Palace* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with Historic Royal Palaces, 1999), 46.
- ¹³ The Banqueting House, which is located directly in front of the Horse Guards building, is currently used for state events. William III had this building converted into the Chapel Royal after the 1698 fire, a function it retained until the 1890s.
- ¹⁴ The Parade ground also currently accommodates the ceremonies *Beating the Retreat* and *Trooping the Colour*. The first event takes place in May and June when military music and parades are performed under floodlights. The latter is a pageant to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's birthday and takes its name from the regimental colours on display. This ceremony is preceded by an official parade along the Mall with the reigning Queen and other members of the royal household riding on horseback or by royal coach to the Horse Guards.
- ¹⁵ After the fire of 1698, the Court moved to St James's Palace and this building became the official entrance. By 1745, it was in disrepair, deemed unsafe and demolished. The current Horse Guards building consists of three arches with the central arch surmounted by the clock tower. The inscriptions of 'SMF' and 'StMW' on the main arch denote the historic parish boundaries of the churches St Martin in the Fields and St Margarets.
- ¹⁶ Emily Barber, *London* (London and Somerset: Blue Guides Ltd., 2014), 152. The Horse Guards building has been frequently attributed to William Kent. However, this account states that it was by William Robinson and John Vardy, 'influenced by the designs of William Kent'.
- ¹⁷ Roy Strong, *The Tudor and Stuart Monarchy, volume II* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995), 129–30. 'Accession Day was celebrated on a national scale, and court and parishes across the whole country responded with prayers, ringing of bells, lighting of bonfires, firing of guns and feasting'. The original source is noted as 'City of London Repertories, xxii, fol. 2v; an entry concerning the payments involved occurs on fol. 8' and Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 134–5. The original source is noted as 'Journey through England and Scotland made by Lupold von Wedel in the years 1584 and 1585,

Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, new series IX, 1895, pp. 258–9; V. von Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and Some Foreigners*, London, 1928, pp. 330–2’.

¹⁸ These ideas that are deemed more appropriate to the arguments in this paper, are raised alongside current discussions and opportunities concerning the metaverse and offer an alternative method on how digital technology can be integrated and contribute to ongoing research regarding history, heritage and culture.

¹⁹ “Delirious New York, 40 Years Later,” Martino Stierli, accessed July 24, 2022.

<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/2018/09/25/delirious-new-york-40-years-later/>. Additional reference, Martino Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018).

²⁰ Tafuri, “The Dialectics of the Avant Garde,” 74. The original source is noted as, S.M. Eisenstein, “Metocli di Montaggio.” *Film Fonn* (New York, 1949. Italian translation in *Fonna e fecnicci delfilm e lezioni di regia* [Turin: Einaudi, 1964]. p. 75).

²¹ Lau, “A contemporary reading of the Accession Day Tilts,” 46.

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