4 Story Content

This chapter explores some of the ways narrative content is understood from a theoretical perspective and how it is sourced and shaped in practice in the design of narrative environments. It examines how story content is defined in narratology as event, character and setting and explores how these three core story elements play out in narrative environments. Events can be represented literally in image, text or video or embodied in, and enacted through, the physical environment. Characters may be human, but they may also be non-human actants, for example, in stories about the technological, the historical or the political. What is more, spatial environments can also become characters themselves, for example, the landscape, fauna and flora on nature trails. Settings are also crucial to framing the narrative by providing context and modulating the pace and structure of the unfolding drama. The case studies below show some of the roles, processes and techniques used in the commercial and cultural industries to develop narrative environments, and, despite having very different goals, they both emphasise the importance of adopting a strategic approach and employing expert facilitation to enable multiple stakeholders to find consensus in the content development process.

The Elements of Story

Narratologists argue that the word 'narrative' is used to refer to both story (histoire) and telling (narrative discourse). The relationship between the story and its expression has exercised many theorists and produced other terminology such as 'fabula', to mean the story, and 'sjuzet', to mean the way events are woven together (Propp 1968; Shklovsky 1917). MA Narrative Environments has adopted the terms 'story content' and 'story telling'. The relationship between story content and story telling can be exemplified through the various tellings of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Originally a play, it was also the basis for Prokofiev's ballet in 1935 as well as over 24 operas, numerous films, a real-time series of tweets in 2010 by the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Mudlark Production Company, and, in 2018, as a walk-in immersive experience staged by Secret Cinema. Each time, the content of *Romeo and Juliet* took a different form, but nevertheless it remained recognisable as the same story. This demonstrates the versatility of story content. Story content and story telling cannot exist without each other: a story does not exist until it is told, and telling cannot take place without the story content. Even so, it is useful to look at them separately in order to uncover some of the ways narrative environments are generated and structured in principle and in practice.

From a theoretical perspective, structuralist and narratologist Seymour Chatman (1978) asserts that the key elements of story content are event, character and setting. There will be constituent events that move the story forwards and supplementary events

Figure 4.1 The dependency among events, character transformations and overall story message.

(Barthes 1977: 79–124; Chatman 1978: 53–6) that act more as context. Settings also provide context but can sometimes act as characters. There may be multiple characters who sometimes change roles. As characters experience events, they are transformed. The accumulated character transformations infer particular messages, morals or arguments. In narrative environments, there is always a consideration of the overall message, moral or otherwise, and meanings may have psychological, social, ethical or political dimensions (Figure 4.1).

Taking events first, the representation of events, or changes of state, is crucial to narrative environments. Story events are depicted in narrative environments by the use of timelines, text, pictograms, illustrations or photographs; as objects acting as evidence of events; as video showing the events; as scenographic staging of atmospheres to convey events through holograms, AR or VR, architectural and material interventions, or the addition of sounds and smells; or interactives, live performances and the behaviour of other visitors. All or any combination of these representations of events can move the story forward, but those which are spatial, material and sensorial signify the agency of the setting. The visitor or inhabitant experience is formed as a series embodied events, as people move through the narrative environment, experiencing changes in their surroundings as they proceed, sensing and reading the cues and consequently interpreting the story being told. This bodily movement and engagement does not happen in text-based, television, theatre or film narratives, where the audiences stay still.

In most narrative environments, physical changes to the space, a change in lighting, sound, temperature, dimension, materiality, for example, are designed to correspond to the events in the story and create a parallel set of physical events experienced, in the present, through the sensing body of the visitor. An example is the increasing scale in the Pink Floyd exhibition, which re-marks the increasing fame of the band, as discussed in Chapter 3. From a theoretical perspective, there is a question posed by geographer Doreen Massey (2004) about whether space itself should be considered as event. Massey critiques the popular assumption that space is static, a backdrop for chronological happenings. She sees space as dynamic, constituted by the overlapping trajectories and flows of people, politics and money. Taking Massey's perspective, thresholds, zones and edges all constitute events, since these are where moving humans encounter changes in spatial phenomena and atmospheres.

Massey's perspective provides grounds for arguing that narrative environments extend the double temporal order or the chronologic of narrative, as Chatman (1978) calls it, by which he means the disjunction between the time taken to absorb the narrative and the time represented in the narrative. Reading a book or watching a film may be a matter

of minutes or hours, but the time the narrative represents could be years or decades or, alternatively, just a few seconds. In narrative environments, the moving visitor also experiences designed, embodied spatial events. The physical environment and moving body in narrative environments add an additional layer to the reading or interpretation of the narrative. The physical experiences are of a different order from the intellectual reading of the story and they take a different amount of time to absorb and accumulate. Thus, the physical nature of narrative environments gives rise to an additional spatio-temporal dimension of narrative experience. Creating an engaging spatio-temporal rhythm, therefore, is an important skill in the design of narrative environments.

H. Porter Abbott (2002) says that, in written or verbal stories, settings are not always necessary. It follows that setting would take the third place in the hierarchy of events, characters and settings. However, the word 'setting' needs further interrogation in the design of narrative environments, where environment plays an active part in the story, as an actant. This is evident in the example of the Gobbins walking trail in Northern Ireland, which is discussed in Chapter 6 and shown in Plate 6. The intrepid visitor walks along bridges suspended high above the sea, along paths hugging the cliffs or tunnelled through the rock. The geology *is* the story and the landscape *is* the entity that has undergone and is still undergoing transformation, grasped through bodily experience as the walk progresses.

Moving on to the role of characters in narrative environments, as in literature, theatre, film and television, human characters play an important role in the content of stories. According to scholar Marie Laure Ryan (2004), who compares literature to other narrative forms, literature allows the inner thoughts and feelings of human characters to be communicated and therefore is very well suited to stories based on psychological development. The reader identifies and empathises with the character, following the character's emotional journey. While in theatre, film and television, audiences also identify with characters, they do so in a more visual and visceral way. Usually, in theatre, film and television, characters act out their feelings through gesture or facial expression or discuss them explicitly in dialogue. There are exceptions where the audience has access, through breaking the fourth wall, to the characters' inner thoughts or to the contextual framing that cannot otherwise be said or acted.

Some narrative environments are also human character-focused, such as the homes of famous figures. At the Freud Museum, London, for example, the visitor can enter Sigmund Freud's consultation room, see the famous couch and imagine themselves being treated by Freud or perhaps even being Freud. Freud and his family are evoked through the authentic interior fit-out of the house, itself a re-creation of Freud's Vienna home, deploying the furniture that they used, objects they collected, photographs, text panels and written labels which describe the objects. Tours, events, videos and lectures are used to tell stories verbally but the physical objects make visitors feel close to the character and this enables them to transport themselves back in time in their imaginations (Beneker 1958, Bedford 2004). The act of imagining yourself in the past, prompted by the environment and the historical objects, creates a sense of being in another world which, in turn, creates a sense of narrative temporality. Visitors may well know aspects of the character's story which they may replay in their heads but, in many ways, the character in this kind of narrative environment is more like a setting in which visitors immerse themselves. Examples of such spaces exist all over the world, such as, to name a few, the Frida Kahlo Museum, Coyoachan, Mexico; Leo Tolstoy House Museum, Moscow; the Jackie Chan Museum, Shanghai; and Graceland, Elvis Presley's home, Memphis, Tennessee.

Another example of using character in an inventive way is the character in residence programme for Rainham Hall, an eighteenth-century merchant's house in Havering, London, owned by the National Trust. From 2013 to 2016, Creative Director Sam Willis led the development of Rainham Hall. Based on initial social and site research and concepts developed by MA Narrative Environments students, Willis commissioned architectural practice Studio Weave to work with her. The team immersed themselves in the local environment, developing participatory approaches to content development involving the local residents and creating a community of interest that would live on after the project. Rainham Hall presented a dilemma. It had no collection of objects. This was unusual for the National Trust, a charity first and foremost concerned with the conservation of its buildings and their objects. However, the lack of a collection allowed Willis and Studio Weave to move away from conservation as their key driver. They looked into the lives of the people who had lived at Rainham Hall rather than looking at the collections they had left behind them. Willis (2018) explained she and the team devised the overall strategy 'Who's living at Rainham Hall?' that worked particularly well because of the large number of different people, over 50 in total, who had lived in the house. Normally, at historic houses, multiple and changing occupancy would be viewed negatively because a large number of inhabitants suggests that the sites will have been bastardised, lost their authenticity and clear lineage. A rolling programme was devised whereby different inhabitants would be in residence for two years, consequently updating the display regularly, thereby attracting repeat visits. The strategy also allowed the National Trust to bring in other collections, for example, in the first two years, they brought in loans from the National Maritime Museum. In addition, the strategy allows the freedom and flexibility to change and respond to different audiences and current issues.

French artist JR uses characters as well. He is renowned for pasting giant black and white photographic portraits of ordinary people at an architectural scale in the urban environment. The monumental images often occupy the same space as the very people he is depicting. He pastes on walls, rooftops, the side of trains and container ships. His work sets out to address urgent social, political and environmental issues. He has worked all over the world. One of his early works, 'Women Are Heroes', took place in cities in Africa, Brazil, India and Cambodia. Huge images of women's eyes stare out across the city in a dramatic and thought-provoking way. JR says the goal of the project was to "highlight the dignity of women who occupy crucial roles in societies, and find themselves victims of wartime, street crime, sexual assault, and religious and political extremism" (JR 2008). Although 'Women Are Heroes' is very dramatic and resonant, a more fully narrative intervention was 'A Child Caught Between the US-Mexico Border', which took place in October 2017. JR installed a 70-foot image of a one-year-old Mexican boy peering over the border fence. Hundreds of people came to see it from both sides of the border and exchanged cameras through the fence to take pictures for each other. JR then instigated a cross-border picnic with a table extending on both sides. During this performative narrative environment people from each side of the border sat together, shared the same food and the same water in a gesture that symbolically dissolved the wall.

Returning to narrative theory, an enormous amount of thought and discussion has gone into the thinking about characters and their roles in stories. In the seminal book *The Morphology of the Folk Tale,* folklorist Vladimir Propp (1968) analysed 100 Russian folk tales. He concluded that all the characters could be categorised into seven broad character functions: the villain, the dispatcher, the helper, the princess or prize, the donor, the hero and the false hero. His structuralist approach to narrative was very influential in subsequent narratological research, such as that of A. J. Greimas and Gerard Genette,

both of whose theories are used in the design of narrative environments. Propp's character functions have also been very influential in media education and the film industry.

American scholar of mythology and comparative religion, Joseph Campbell (1949) believed all mythic narratives were variations of a single story or monomyth. In his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* he maps the movement of the hero in 17 stages and 3 acts. In the first act, the hero moves from the ordinary world into the special world or unknown world of adventure. In the second act, the hero, battling against enemies and adversity, wins a decisive victory. He then crosses back, in the third act, into the ordinary world with heightened knowledge, awareness and freedom to live. In the 1970s, Hollywood script analyst Christopher Vogler (1998) synthesised Propp's analysis and Campbell's model of 'The Hero's Journey' to create a practical guide for scriptwriters, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*. Numerous related tutorials have since proliferated on the internet. 'The Hero's Journey' has become part of the infrastructure of film making, with standard screenwriting software using 'The Hero's Journey' as a template. This has led critics to argue that Vogler and story consultant and author Robert McKee (1997) are simplistic and formulaic (Yorke 2013) (Figure 4.2).

McKee's criticises 'The Hero's Journey' for being, in essence, a spiritual quest. He argues, instead, that a story is a problem-solving process involving numerous characters. Maureen Murdock (1990) has also highlighted that the Hero's Journey presupposes a male protagonist acting in a stereotypically masculine manner, devoid of ethnographic context. In response, she developed a 10-stage Heroine's Journey where the Heroine battles prejudice against women. For the design of narrative environments, the Hero's and Heroine's journey can help to question and develop a story structure. However,

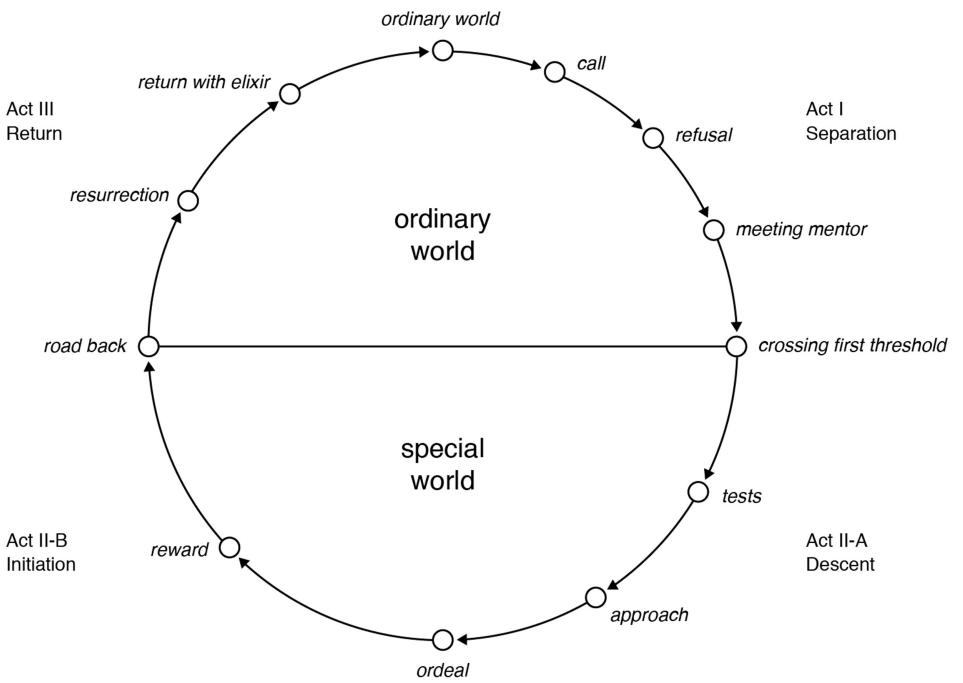

Figure 4.2 The Hero's Journey.

a slavish adherence to the formula will only produce predictable results. Furthermore, the formulaic structure of the Hero's Journey lacks the capacity to respond to the spatial and material qualities of narrative environments. Finally, the Hero's Journey needs to be treated with some caution so that it does not become a tick-box exercise that perpetuates certain societal biases and clichés.

Another reason the Hero's Journey does not provide a universal model for the design of narrative environments is that, in narrative environments, characters can often take the form of more abstract phenomena such as locations, regions or whole countries. The notion of hero is too anthropomorphic to deal with this understanding of character. One example is the enormous scenographic exhibition about India at Mumbai Airport (Shah 2014). Objects, architectural fragments and images tell stories of Indian culture in a highly textured and elaborate display and visitors are engaged in a complex, multi-level history on a sensory level. Similarly, visitor centres, science centres, art installations and brand experiences tend to focus on entities rather than human characters. Such narrative environments may focus on non-human actants in stories as aspects of topical issues. To capture the human and the non-human manifestations of characters and entities, the design of narrative environments uses the notion of actant, borrowing it from the work of Greimas (1987) and Latour (2005).

The two detailed examples below show how story content plays out in the practice of the design of narrative environments. Looking at the practice raises additional questions: How is content sourced and analysed, and how is it shaped in the design of narrative environments? Who is responsible for the narrative in narrative environments? How does the practice vary across different sectors and institutions? The first example is from the commercial sector and the second from the cultural sector. These spheres of practice differ in their priorities and purposes. Commercial narrative environments, such as brand and hospitality experiences, need to produce an explicit business benefit to the companies or investors involved; cultural narrative environments, such as exhibitions and cultural events, set out to fulfil their mission to educate and inform. It is interesting to note, however, that their respective challenges, methods and goals overlap. They foreground narrative but show how the other two nodes in the tripartite network, environment and people, are implicated through the narrative. There is a common concern for engaging audiences by communicating content through embedding stories into spaces and often creating spaces which prompt further storytelling. All the case studies incorporate story as a key driver in contrast to style-led, technology-led, finance-led design or purely functional design.

Cisco House, London Olympics 2012, and Casa Cisco, Rio Olympics 2016

The client in the first case study is the global technology giant Cisco, which develops, manufactures and sells internet infrastructure, communications hardware, high-tech products and services. Cisco designed and installed the network connectivity for both the London Olympics and the Rio Olympics and, as sponsors, sought to create at each Games, exceptional VIP hospitality experiences to influence their stakeholders. Cisco holds annual, place-based 'Cisco Live' events hosting tens of thousands of their employees, suppliers, partners and clients. These events offer hundreds of simultaneous activities, such as talks, courses, student programmes, workshops and networking sessions. However, for the Olympics Games, Cisco envisaged a different model, a hospitality hub targeted at C-level executives, that is Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) and Chief Technology Officers (CTOs), for example. In the

past, hospitality tents staged by some companies would put a drink and a sandwich in people's hands and then take them to the Games. For the 2012 'Cisco House' at the London Olympics, Cisco wanted an inspirational showcase and a marketing opportunity. Cisco called in their long-term partners, the global experience marketing agency George P. Johnson (GPJ), to lead on the concept development, design and installation of the bespoke experiences. The questions were: What content would help create an enthralling experience and how would that relate to the location of the hospitality hub?

Andy Bass, Creative Director on both the London and Rio hospitality hubs, explained the development and delivery process. The foundational principle was to create a 'Strategic Experience Development Map'. This is a tool invented by David Rich from GPJ, who was at that time the Olympic global account management lead on GPJ's relationship with Cisco and later led the Casa Cisco project in Brazil. The Strategic Experience Development Map crystallises the client's picture of success in terms of a business outcome. In a nutshell, it describes what the visitors need to feel, think, know and do before, during and after the event to be moved to the desired perceptions and actions. In this case, Cisco sought outcomes such as enhanced brand affiliation, new brand ambassadors, renewed commitment to the brand from employees and increased purchases from customers.

Ideally, the Strategic Experience Development Map lays the ground for the content development and physical design, which are therefore rooted in a strong understanding of both the client's objectives and the human dimension of the project, the visitors' needs and desires. Rich developed this tool in the mid-1990s after he had noticed that, all too often, companies were leaping to design decisions, for example, deciding on a thematic focus or production elements, based on personal preferences. They would come to a decision before identifying what would be most effective for the attendees and discussing, developing and agreeing the key strategic, experiential and business goals. With no clear and agreed rationale some clients would, shortly before the critical moment of delivery, request changes that did not align. Last-minute erratic changes, Rich explains, overload the development team, causing undue stress that puts quality execution in danger; create contradictory, confusing, or ineffective messaging; and produce additional costs and potential overruns. When combined, these factors generate considerable business risk. He points out, "The commercial world is unforgiving. In projects like these, millions of dollars of investment are at stake and livelihoods are on the line" (Rich 2018). Rich realised that a Strategic Experience Development Map with staged sign-off was needed to reduce risk and ensure greater success. The process would involve the whole team including the client using "strategy as a tool of governance" (Rich 2018).

Bass (2019) and Rich (2018) explain that successful marketers always look first at audience needs in relation to business objectives and brand. Audience research is vital to achieve their business objectives. The experience marketing team also have to bring new concepts to the table, otherwise people will tend to refer back to previous or well-known examples of experiences. Rich explains that very skilled facilitators are needed to enable senior business people, leading experts in their own field, to embrace perspectives they had not expected and to suspend their personal preferences. Rich's team run iterative charrettes with up to 30 people at a time from all over the world, meeting to clarify objectives for each audience segment, analyse audience status and needs, brainstorm ideas and then meeting again to filter and focus on specific ideas. The London Olympics hub, Cisco House, was a two-year project and the Rio Olympics hub, Casa Cisco, was a three-year project. During these periods of time there were several changes in the client

team, so being able present the Strategic Experience Development Map was essential to create continuity.

Nevertheless, in Cisco House London the key variables, site and budget, were unknown at conception, and content was continuously juggled for 18 months, during which time Bass produced numerous experience concepts and visuals to keep people's imaginations engaged and the project on schedule. Bass explains that the site was important as its affordances and location would shape the content to some extent. Bass's team visited a great number of potential sites around London looking for one that provided a logical link to both Cisco and the Olympics and eventually settled on the Westfield Shopping Centre, next to the Olympic Park. Cisco installed a new two-floor, 20,000-square foot, semi-permanent pavilion. The Cisco House balcony gave visitors a panoramic view of the Olympic Park, a dramatic moment for the visitor experience. The construction was a technical challenge but, with a team of up to 60 people working on it every day, the building was completed in 70 days. A Cisco high-speed, state of the art network was installed to support digital interactives, live streaming video, early forms of augmented reality, a 3D 'Tube Train' experience, an 'Innovation Tunnel' and a 360° 'Future Theatre' with a wrap-around screen.

As soon as the venue was decided, content had to be developed as a parallel process to determine the visitor experience. Although the client knew they wanted a VIP hub which functioned as a showcase, they needed facilitation from GPJ to focus on what content would be included and how it would unfold through the building. There were many ideas from a huge range of experts in Cisco but an organising principle was needed. Bass pointed out that the audience would ostensibly be visiting the Olympics. This was a day out for them; they would want fun, and many would be dressed in shorts and t-shirts, often accompanied by their spouse. They would want to soak up the euphoric atmosphere of the Games and often that was just as important, if not more important, than seeing a particular sporting event. In this context, Bass argued that visitors would not be seeking technical demos but an exciting experience. He therefore proposed that inspiring case studies should serve as the heroes of the story. Screens and interactives showing the impact of Cisco technology also aligned to the central concept that the GPJ team identified as core to Cisco's message, "it's not what we make, but what we make possible". The view from the balcony and the visit to the Games themselves served as a live expression of the impact of Cisco's capabilities.

Bass recognised that visitors would be coming from all over the world and would possibly be unaware of how the Cisco House location fitted into the overall context of London and the Games. He conceived a threshold orientation experience where guests walked across a large floor graphic showing the river Thames, their hotel, the Games and the Cisco offices. The graphic was accompanied by augmented reality views of London that aimed to orient and connect visitors to the network of sites shown on the floor. All experience elements were hosted, with host scripts as conversation starters. This set the tone for the whole experience to be a series of social interactions. Hosts were positioned in all the zones.

After the threshold experience, visitors went up to the first floor of the pavilion. Two extra steps were designed so that people entering could see over others' heads to the balcony. On the balcony, the view was augmented by live camera views of the Olympic Park and overlays which guests could touch to bring up information about the Games in that location. Guests could then work their way down ramps to the bar, lounge and balcony, looking at the displays and talking to the hosts and each other as they descended (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Cisco House at the London Olympics, 2012.

At the end of the ramp, visitors were allocated to a group and given time to do a tour, the immersive media element of the experience. Bass adopted the London Tube as a metaphor for the core Business Transformation Experience, making a parallel between one of London's iconic features and Cisco as the architect of a transformative digital network. A 3D film took visitors on a journey viewing a number of projects where Cisco had supported business transformation before they were pulsed through an Innovation Tunnel taking them on a trip to the future, showing a timeline of Cisco's development. This brought them into the 360° Future Theatre which displayed information about the coming digital revolution and the effects of big data, AI and 3D printing, which were all cutting-edge ideas at the time.

The tour, which was the peak of the experience, was quite quick and when it was complete guests were free to go into the Olympic Park or back upstairs to the balcony and lounge. In summary, the experience interlinked four zones with an overall theme of the transformational power of networks, while delivering subsections about London, the infrastructure of the Olympics as well as the live video of the Games, case studies of the way Cisco had impacted the world, the company's history and a vision of the future. In parallel, visitors were able to grow their business networks: 13,000 invitation-only, executive guests visited Cisco House while it was open over a period of five months. It was an award-winning project that led to Casa Cisco at the Rio Olympics.

Bass and Rich started developing Casa Cisco in Rio in January 2014 with much the same objectives as London: to foster brand loyalty, build relationships and stimulate new business. The geographic context was very different. There was no central Olympic space because the Games were dispersed across four different locations in the city. Cisco also knew that, although it had been operating in the country for two decades, as an American company it needed to stress the point that it was committed to and understood

the Brazilian market. Consequently, the team looked for an iconic Rio location that would become a fifth location for VIP Cisco stakeholders. They found a military officers' club on the beach at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain with a remarkable view of the bay. It was safe and not far from downtown and Copacabana beach. They negotiated with the colonels who managed the property on behalf of the government to gut it and fully refurbish it, making several additions over the two years leading up to the Games so that, as a legacy, they would leave an exceptional facility after the Olympics. One point of difference between the approach to London and this design was the blending of Cisco corporate design cues with authentic Rio visual culture. These cues identified Cisco as the host while reflecting the company's integration into the local culture and community. This entailed blending the corporate colour palette, Brazilian design forms and materials to make a custom-commissioned 80-metre mural that reflected the style of Brazilian street art, while depicting story elements of the Games. This created a thread of continuity in the tone of voice for the whole experience and proved so effective that the mural artwork served as the basis for the marketing collateral that supported the experience. Aside from this Rio look and feel, the GPJ/Cisco team followed many of the same principles as Cisco House in London. They provided first-class internet connection, security, a bar, a new gallery space, three new lifts for disabled access and a new balcony. However, they also disguised older parts of the structure and created new zones through the staging provided by the snaking 80-metre-long mural that created a thread of continuity for the whole experience. The space was hosted throughout in the same spirit (Figure 4.4).

The mural related to the cultural context. Casa Cisco needed to be designed to reflect the way business is done in Brazil, it needed to have local relevance and authenticity, but still communicate global messages. There would be a local audience, an international visitor segment, academics, press attendees and trade attendees, and the hub experience needed to resonate with all of them. Bass describes imagining Cisco as a Brazilian company, and therefore what their headquarters would look like. The elements were designed with the Brazilian context in mind. For example, the Boteca bar and its furnishings and service was designed after typical bars in Brazil where business conversations take place accompanied by plentiful food and drink. Bass also commissioned a local graffiti artist, 'Ficore', to design and paint the mural. In order to bridge cultures, Bass commissioned the artist to paint using the Cisco colour palette and crisp geometric forms so that the mural had the life and rhythm of Rio but also communicated a cool, crisp, corporate feel. The other strong Brazilian influence was Anderson Felicío, the local designer Bass commissioned to bring an authentic flavour to the make-over of the venue. As it turned out, Anderson Felicío also became a lynch pin for the production, overcoming language barriers and helping to source local suppliers.

GPJ developed and agreed to the Strategic Experience Development Map through an iterative development process early on in the project. Having identified a location early in the

Figure 4.4 Casa Cisco at the Rio Olympics, 2016.

whole process, Bass says the project was easier than Cisco House. The team knew that over the two years, things would change, and they decided to create Casa Cisco as a blank canvas with a beautiful location, knowing the content would be developed over time. Six months before the Games, they eventually ran with Cisco's new brand advertising message 'There Has Never Been a Better Time', which provided a strong creative direction for the content.

Casa Cisco was finally resolved into six chapters. First, a reception space communicated a warm welcome to come in and have some refreshments. Second, the Boteca bar had videos about Cisco and live coverage of the Games, while the street art wall continued along one side. Third, a Transformation Bar area featured interactives and immersive video that told the story of Cisco's digital transformation of Rio's Porto Maravilha area. Visitors came to a short flight of stairs which were modelled on the iconic Selarón steps in Rio. This was a popular photo opportunity. Fourth, upstairs, the global advertising campaign was brought to life through videos showing visitors the beneficial impact people like themselves were making around the world. In the penultimate zone, there were video kiosks and connections to live events at the Games with inset information about the Cisco technology used to create the connectivity and data flows tracking social media usage, indicating peak moments of mass excitement. There was an account of the real-time systems Cisco had developed for the Games set in this room which also had a graphic timeline on the wall showing the 22 years Cisco had operated in Brazil. This graphic flowed into a huge floor plan of Rio showing the locations of different projects. Finally, visitors moved to the balcony for refreshments and photos against the backdrop of the sea view.

Every care was taken to encourage visitors to chat and a great deal of thought was given to the positioning of the Cisco hosts. After the balcony, visitors could visit the Games or stay and make further use of the Boteca. The Boteca had a small stage which made the space very suitable for presentations over the course of the Games. At times, it was used for presentations by Olympic athletes who shared with Cisco's guests what it was like to compete in the most high-profile sports competition in the world, while at other times it was used by Cisco executives to welcome their guests with special presentations. The narrative environment was so successful in achieving its design goals of balancing a corporate and local feel, and creating a business setting with local hospitality features that prominent organisations, such as the Brazil Foundation, sought it out as the site for its annual, celebrity-laden celebration. The once run-down building is now a favourite place for community events and a favourite venue for wedding ceremonies and celebrations. In addition to achieving its business objectives, the programme garnered six premiere marketing awards, evidencing the value of taking the strategic approach.

Experience design of VIP hospitality hubs is a niche market but the award-winning Cisco House and Casa Cisco are clear examples for all sectors about the importance of a strategic framework in structuring such complex projects and developing relevant content. The case studies show just how important it is to align content with audience needs and desires, the physical space and a consideration of the timing and interaction. The examples highlight the need to negotiate and agree the overall narrative messaging at all levels with all stakeholders. A high-level organising principle and powerful metaphor is then needed to create narrative unity among the story sections unfolding in multiple zones. At this point, specific content can be sourced or developed. In as far as Rich's Strategic Experience Development Map gathers together narrative, visitor experience and a concern for venue and location in order to achieve business goals, it clearly bears a close relationship to the narrative environments tripartite model, indicating that the model can be used as a 'wireframe' from which a strategic plan can be developed.

The Tower of London

The client in the second case study is Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), the self-funding charity which looks after six iconic royal palaces: Tower of London; Hampton Court Palace; Kensington Palace; Kew Palace; Banqueting House, Whitehall; and Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland. Historic Royal Palaces host over four million visitors per year. Their mission is to invite the public into extraordinary palace settings in order to explore how the monarchy has shaped British society. Historic Royal Palaces is a leader in experimental, innovative interpretation, creative programming and content creation. They are interested in broadening their reach, impact and relevance. An example of their innovation is the famous artistic commission 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red', the Poppies project, which took place in 2014, at the Tower of London. A sea of 888,246 ceramic poppies, commemorating all of the British soldiers who died in the First World War, encircled the Tower. The installation was described as "the most popular art installation as well as arguably the most effective expression of commemoration in British history" (Heathcote 2014). Historic Royal Palaces aims to pursue a culture of change and development so that in all areas and at all levels they have a mindset receptive to innovation.

The example below describes the development of a unifying, content-driven framework for revising the visitor experience at the Tower of London. The development of the framework took place from May 2015 to April 2016. The final Tower Core Story was launched in April 2017 and is now the Interpretation and Design plan that informs future projects at the Tower. Since then, Historic Royal Palaces has developed Core Stories for Hampton Court Palace and Kensington Palace and work is currently underway on the Banqueting House, Whitehall. Polly Richards was the Interpretation Manager who led the process at the Tower of London. Richards explains that, in the museum world, the curator has responsibility for the collection of objects and sometimes a building or group of buildings. Curators are seen as the experts or keepers of the knowledge while the interpretation managers make that knowledge accessible to the public. They tease out the nub of the story, matching the curator's vision with what might interest the visitors, bearing in mind initial briefings and discussions about who the visitors are. The key messaging is then tested with target audiences and the feedback is integrated into the scheme of content, as it is worked and reworked, so that the curator's goals and audience's needs are gradually brought into alignment. Richards (2018) says, "I want visitors to feel the passion that the curators have for their subjects". She believes successful museums provoke conversation among visitor groups and that museums should be places of inspiration.

Richards explains how this process worked at the Tower of London. The Tower has a 1000-year history and is known all over the world. However, audience research undertaken at the time revealed that visitors did not know very much about the Tower before they visited except that it is historic, that the Crown Jewels are housed there, that it was a prison and that executions and murders took place there. Audience research also showed visitors were not connecting these facts. Another problem was that, due to the long and varied history of the Tower, visitors were faced on arrival with a substantial volume of material and a complex set of buildings with numerous choices about which way to go. Visitor evaluations revealed excitement levels fell off after half an hour because visitors became confused by too much information that did not allow them to construct a coherent story for themselves.

In order to make the Tower more comprehensible to its audiences, Polly Richards knew she had to find a clear key message under which all other information could be clustered. She also knew visitors to historical sites, such as this, need to access and digest

content at speed because an average visit is no longer than two hours. The key message had to summarise the whole and serve as a reference point from which all aspects of the displays, event programming, internal and external communications could flow. The key message is sometimes called 'the hook' in the exhibition and museum sector, indicating that it is a way to capture the audience's attention, a means to enable the visitor to navigate and rationalise their experience as they move through the space but also a point from which all other aspects of the content can hang in the development and design of the experience.

When she started at the Tower, Polly Richards discovered, by chance, that her predecessor, Rebecca Richards, and curator, Sally Dixon Smith, shared a short-hand way of explaining the Tower, but had not actioned it as a content and communication strategy. Rebecca Richards said, "you do realise the Tower is a Fortress, a Palace and a Prison". Polly Richards realised this was the hook that could be shared with the visitor and that would provide an organising principle for the whole site. She explains that, in terms of the three-part identity, the Prison is the best known, but the Fortress is most important because the security it provided is the reason the Prison and the Crown Jewels are located there. The Fortress underpins the bulk of the history but it is the least dramatic part of the story. The Palace is the hidden aspect of the Tower.

Working with a core team that included curator Sally Dixon Smith, learning producer Megan Gooch and assistant curator Sarah Okpokam, Richards set up an inclusive process running 72 workshops with four to ten people at a time, over the course of a year. The aim, as far as possible, was to engage all stakeholders in a discussion of the key message, 'Fortress, Palace, Prison', and how it could be mapped onto the space, down to the detail of all stories in each location. The process was successful partly because it was not rushed and everyone had a chance to explain their point of view. In the end, consensus was gained through discussion. It is not well known that the Tower houses two museums, The Royal Armouries and The Fusilier Museum, which were engaged as critical friends. The Royal Armouries which is housed in the White Tower has the collection that relates to the Tower as a fortress. The Tower was the nerve centre for England's wars from the thirteenth century until about 1850. Military equipment was made, stored, managed, issued and shipped from there, taking advantage of the Tower's position on the River Thames. Weapons that had been used in wars or captured from the enemy were brought back as trophies. The Royal Armoury collection is the legacy of 400 years of the Tower as a military nerve centre.

The message 'Fortress, Palace, Prison' was also tested with visitors. Research consultancy Morris Hargreaves Macintyre conducted telephone and on-site interviews, and the same culture consultancy conducted accompanied visits and in-depth focus groups around the site with local residents and organisations in Tower Hamlets. The Tower of London wanted to build a more diverse audience profile that was more representative of the changing UK and local population, and specifically to engage more families, young people and visitors with access needs. Feedback showed audiences fully embraced the key message.

In terms of the visitor journey, there was no introductory space, so Richards and her colleagues had to work out how to communicate the top-level message to visitors before they even arrived. This meant foregrounding 'Fortress, Palace, Prison' on the website, on the visitor map and guidebook, on the signage when people arrived at Tower Hill, even in shops surrounding the Tower. 'Fortress, Palace, Prison' had to be right at the heart of all communications. 'Fortress, Palace, Prison' was then broken down into eight subheadings with associated stories (Figure 4.5).

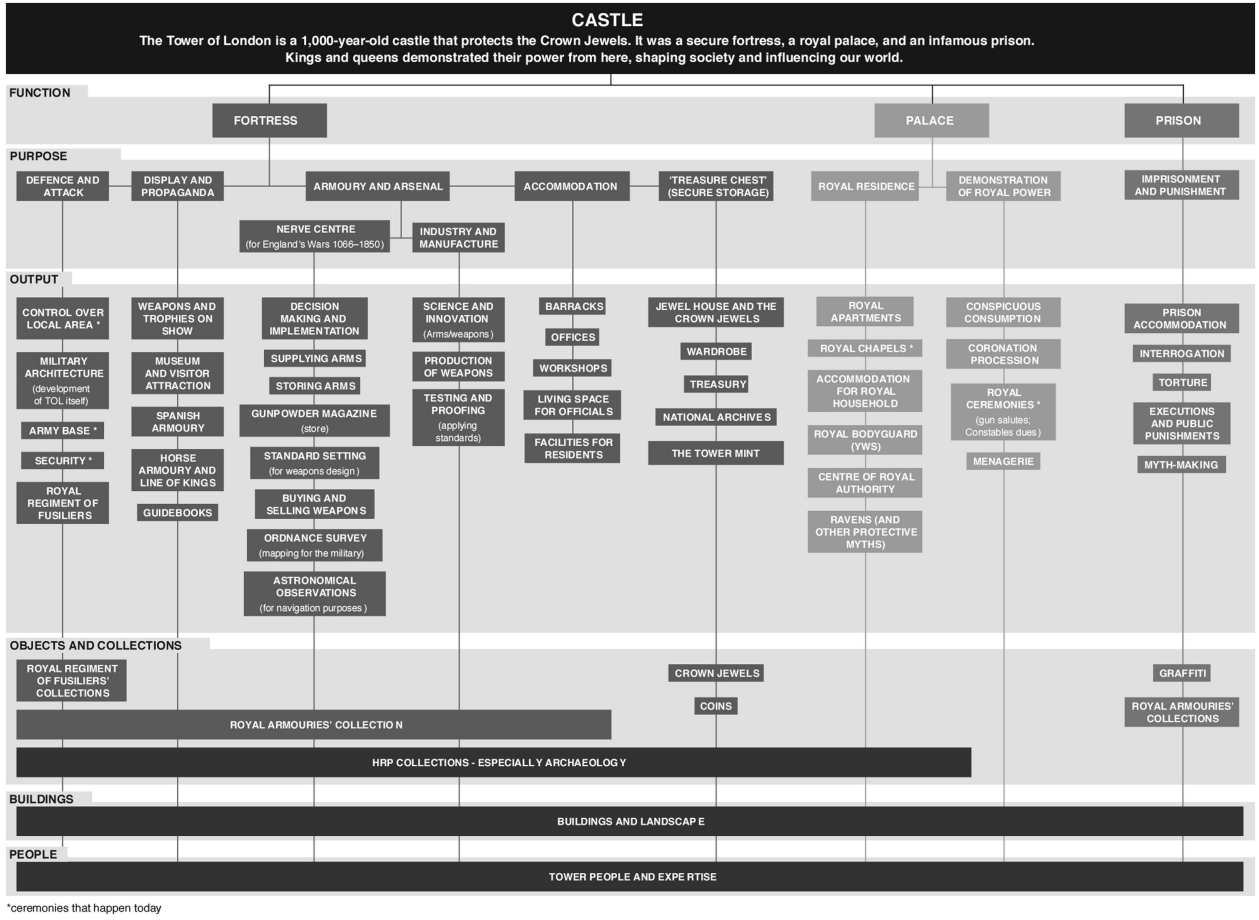

Figure 4.5 Tower of London Core Story Plan, 2016.

It was decided that each space would expand on an aspect of the framework, illustrated through two or three individuals' stories. For example, on entering the medieval palace, visitors learn about two monarchs, King Henry III and Edward I, and at the very least that kings and queens moved around a lot, did not stay at the Tower for very long or very often and what the different Palace spaces were used for. By contrast, in the Bloody Tower, the goal was to communicate high status imprisonment, showing an exhibition about Walter Raleigh on the ground floor and the imprisonment and presumed murder of the Little Princes on the upper floor. The story of the Little Princes is probably best known among the public and gives rise to the name the Bloody Tower. Research shows that most visitors presume Richard III ordered their murder but, as external stakeholders, the Richard III Society maintains that this is a popular myth and in fact there is no proof of his guilt. As a result, this was one of the first projects from the Core Story plan to be implemented. The Tower's Interpretation and Design team commissioned and installed a three-minute animation that explains the mystery and how the rumour mill has worked through time, encouraging the audience to consider the myth and question its assumptions.

The content or interpretive plan was worked and reworked with critical friends and all stakeholders. This produced many documents, for example, a content outline and a content matrix that maps the primary and secondary narratives for each space. A branding consultancy was also hired to integrate the new framework into the Tower's existing brand and to create guidelines to inform the design of any new communication, such as the website, wayfinding and map. This aimed not only to clarify the content but also demonstrate just how much there was to see and give the visitor a better sense of value for money. Everyone in the organisation needed to take the content framework on board because even one exception would cause confusion. From marketing, fundraising, retail and signage to the exhibition display and live interpretation through staged historic re-enactments, the messaging needed to cohere. As part of this process, the Core Story team worked with the Retail team on the redesign of the Tower's shops to reflect the framework.

In each exhibition space, the team needed to decide which moment in history to tell. The Martin Tower was first a place of imprisonment, then accommodation for the keeper of the Crown Jewels and finally displayed that the Crown Jewels were no longer in use. Story priority was decided in terms of telling history where it happened but also needed to consider the visitor journey and experiential sequence. For example, the wall walks are quite linear and suitable for single chronological stories. Research showed that visitors got confused if two periods of time and two parallel stories are featured in one space. The dimensions of the space also impacted on the story. The Bloody Tower is a very tight space, therefore there needed to be a shorter story and a shorter dwell time. As 50% of visitors are not English speaking, the communication needs to be predominantly visual and sensory. Outside the Bloody Tower, for example, the Interpretation team has recently introduced a display of herbal and other plants from Raleigh's garden, which he grew whilst imprisoned at the Tower to concoct his medicinal elixir. The team tried to avoid filling the space with text, using visual, tactile and multimedia means instead.

The framework and proposed narrative was tested on audience groups with positive results. However, the testing also revealed the stories that visitors wanted to hear, such as the story of Anne Boleyn. This was then developed as a live performance showing Anne Boleyn arriving by boat and being tried on the South Lawn, the former site of the Tudor Palace. The testing also revealed another big gap. More than 100 people live on site in the Tower, and one of the most surprising visitor experiences is to look down from

the battlements and see washing lines and little children playing outside. Although the Beefeater's tour explains that they live there, most visitors are not aware of this. It is now planned to open one of the empty houses for bespoke tours to tell the story of the Tower Community and how people have lived inside the Fortress walls over the centuries.

Questions also arose throughout this process about stories that the Tower team are now planning to address: how to deal with contentious issues such as imperialism, how to communicate torture without sensationalising the events and how to tell sensitive stories such as enslavement and the history of Jewish people at the Tower without provoking division and hostility. This forms part of the debate on critical heritage discussed in Chapter 8.

Although the two detailed examples, Cisco Hospitality Hubs and the Tower of London, spring from very different territories, motivations and content, they nevertheless share some characteristics. They both involve multiple stakeholders, their developments run over quite extended timelines of two or more years and they both require considerable financial investment. Both are subject to risk of reputational damage if their projects underperform. They both place the same emphasis on the initial content strategy. There is a focus on the importance of consensus to agree content. Content development is managed by designated people. Both have developed systems focused on an overarching message which creates an umbrella in which to nest different stories. They both show how teams need to condense communications to a simple message, theme or metaphor, to construct a visitor invitation and a path into the story. Complex structures of content are diagrammed, which the visitor never sees. The teams developing narrative environments need to attend to all nodes in the tripartite model to synthesise story, space and time with a thorough understanding of audiences' expectations and desires while balancing operational requirements and overall project goals.

The processes of collaboration in project management, content development and exhibition making are well documented in the book *Creating Exhibitions* (McKenna-Cress and Kamien 2013), which focuses mainly on examples of museums in the USA. These processes are under constant review by researchers. The design of narrative environments, as developed at Central Saint Martins and explained in this book, advocates greater integration of spatial design considerations from the beginning of the process and a more iterative exploratory approach. PhD candidate at Central Saint Martins, Julia Pitts, formerly of the Science Museum London and currently an Interpretation Manager at the Victoria and Albert Museum, has undertaken detailed research and, as a result, she proposes changes to the exhibition development process. Pitts (2018) explains that, in the current process, a short exhibition proposal is written by a senior member of the staff. This is reviewed by the audience researchers, who make recommendations, and the interpreters, who explore how to bridge the museum's aspirations and assets with the audiences' interests. These recommendations form the principles for the interpretation strategy. After two to three months of content and interpretation meetings, another written document is produced with the content message hierarchy, audience summative research and what is known about the space and the budget. The designers are then asked to pitch. Pitts argues that spatial considerations are treated as secondary, despite the fact that exhibitions are a spatial medium. From her perspective, the designers should be part of the team from day one. If that were the case, she argues, they could contribute their expertise in the material and spatial dynamics of the visitor experience to create more engaging exhibitions. In this scenario, the whole team could 'play' with the possible inclusion of, and configurations of, objects, lighting, sound and interaction in the actual space. Pitts suggests this process would resolve common conflicts between

content and design. All parties would thereby share responsibility for decision-making and audience engagement. Pitts argues for a more even distribution of attention across the tripartite network model of narrative environments.

A similar position is taken by Clare Brown, formerly Chief of Design at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History in Washington DC, who explains that, in her experience, large museums often start the exhibition process with academic messages, typically called key messages, which are developed by the curator and interpretive planners, also known as exhibit developers in the USA. These umbrella messages, designed to be relevant to the museum's target audiences, are often educational or fact based in character, not necessarily formulated as story. This is quite different from starting with an experiential approach expressed through a story arc. By contrast, design-led processes typically start with multidirectional research questioning the 'what, where, how and for whom?' of a project. Design-led teams are therefore likely to aim to envision systemic success as opposed to specifically aiming to evaluate whether they have communicated a particular message. Brown (2019) advocates using the language and methods from service design and Agile software design (Beck et al. 2001). She follows computer scientist Melvin Conway (1968), who suggests the process of development of products effects the final outcome. Brown extrapolates that if the processes of exhibition development are more collaborative, and led by experience design methods such as service design, that the products, or exhibition experiences, will be enhanced. Service design stresses the equal importance of considering the working methods and experience design for back-of-house operations as well as front-of-house experiences. In museums, the exhibition front-of-house is the visitor experience. The back-of-house concerns the resources required and the ways in which people work together. Brown's (2018) research reveals that inbuilt museum hierarchies, lack of face-to-face communication and assumptions about design as technical, rather than creative and strategic, lead to a devaluation of back-of-house processes. In large museums in the USA and elsewhere, the exhibition design team has to follow the curator's lead through a process in which a product is pre-determined and then implemented. This approach closes off opportunities to explore other options. She explains the Agile software development process is different. Using Agile, teams are allocated short periods of time, also known as time-bracketing, to develop specific ideas fully, yet rapidly, and test them. They are then given time to analyse and decide which path to go down. This is a process of discovery as opposed to obligation. Brown advocates for the recognition of the full potential of design as a mode of development work, rather than a technical service, and for design-led, collaborative change in exhibition processes.

Museums and the commercial sector both face obstacles in terms of process but should not lose sight of the crucial difference between narrative environments and other kinds of spaces. Narrative environments have content deliberately embedded in a story form. This is not to suggest that urban realm, architecture and interiors have no meaning. Spaces are replete with multiple meanings. However, narrative environments produce a particular kind of experience, based on communicating specific narrative content to specific audiences. That content is strategically developed to communicate a powerful story that carries particular messages, morals or value systems. Narrative environments can range from reinforcing convention to questioning normative values and they can make poetic or provocative interventions. However, successful narrative environments need content and an exploratory, iterative creative process to unite the content and the space and offer transformational experiences. The tripartite network model ensures this process is tackled by a diverse team and that the designer is not left in isolation.

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