

BRISTOL 650



RHIZA STUDIO

Rooted in Community, Growth with Purpose



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At R-H-I-Z-A Studio, we are more than architects—we are storytellers, collaborators, and innovators. Our designs are driven by the belief that architecture should be an experience that inspires, connects, and endures. By blending creativity with purpose, we craft spaces that resonate deeply with the people who inhabit them.

CONTENTS

This report created by RHIZA Studio is a reflection on our experiences working in collaboration with Local Learning towards the Bristol 650 project.

This report captures our experiences, our creative responses, and our ideas for continuing the legacy of the Bristol 650 project beyond RHIZA Studio' involvement.

All photographs and illustrations unless otherwise stated were taken or created by RHIZA Studio.

- 02** RHIZA Studio
- 04** Bristol 650
- 05** Bristol's Shapeshifting History
- 06** ENSAP Bordeaux Visit
- 07** Following the Frome
- 09** Memory Mapping
- 14** Tales of Space and Entanglement
- 18** Bristol as a Twin City
- 20** Exchange Past and Present
- 21** Legacy - The Bristol 650 Exhibition
- 25** References

BRISTOL 650

2023 marked 650 years since Bristol became an independent county. To celebrate this milestone, the forces of Visit West, Bristol Ideas, Bristol One City, and Bristol BID were brought together in the most ambitious multi-partner heritage project in Bristol in over a decade - Bristol 650.

Rhiza Studio' intervention rides the wave of the 2023 celebrations, playing a small part in the much larger project that enveloped the entire city.

'We are a city of individuals, each with our own talents, skills, stories and opinions. We come together as a collective to make the city of Bristol – a city that is rebellious in spirit, collaborative, diverse and welcoming.' - Bristol Ideas

The charter of 1373 made Bristol a county in its own right. The independence granted important rights and privileges for the city allowing Bristol to develop with its now unmistakable identity, by the passions and spirits of its locals.

Bristol 650 was a celebration of the city, from where it was then to where it is now. It is about the people who have come and gone, and looks forward at how the people of Bristol might shape their future together.

BRISTOL'S SHAPESHIFTING HISTORY



Fig. 1 (Bristol Archives, 1940)



Fig. 2 (Evans, 1990)



Fig. 3 (Bristol Archives, 1950s)



Fig. 4 (Evans, 1991)



Fig. 5 (The Tarring Collection, 1930s)

As part of the Bristol 650 celebrations, Local Learning were appointed to create a community atlas exploring Bristol's growth over the last 650 years. The atlas tells the story of the many different vibrant and thriving communities that come together to form Bristol as we know it, created through activities and conversations with the communities and exploring community heritage as a tool for shaping the future of the city.

ENSAP BORDEAUX VISIT

Bristol is twinned with seven different cities around the world. One of Bristol's first partnerships was in 1947 with Bordeaux.

The students at ENSAP, higher education school of architecture in Bordeaux, spent the week at UWE as part of an exchange programme which seeks to strengthen the bond between the two cities.

In our week-long collaboration we explored Bristol through its grounding to the River Frome, and concluded with an exhibition - Bristol Metropolitan Trails.



FOLLOWING THE FROME

UWE campus to The Create Centre is roughly seven miles when following the path of the River Frome. The route passes through Stoke Park, Eastville Park, under the M32 into the city centre, through St. Pauls, Castle Park, onto Queens Square, and across Spike Island to the most western point where you can catch a glimpse of the Clifton Suspension Bridge. On the first day of the ENSAP visit, we took this walk together.

We took this as an opportunity to get to know the ENSAP students, talk about life in Bordeaux, and spot the similarities between Bristol and Bordeaux's lives on the river.

We finished the day at The Create Centre, creating sketches of our experiences on the walk. We thought about the places we had visited, the memories they bring back and the emotions we feel. Our sketches were a starting point, a debrief of the day, in preparation for the further analysis and reflection throughout the week.





Our adventures through Bristol

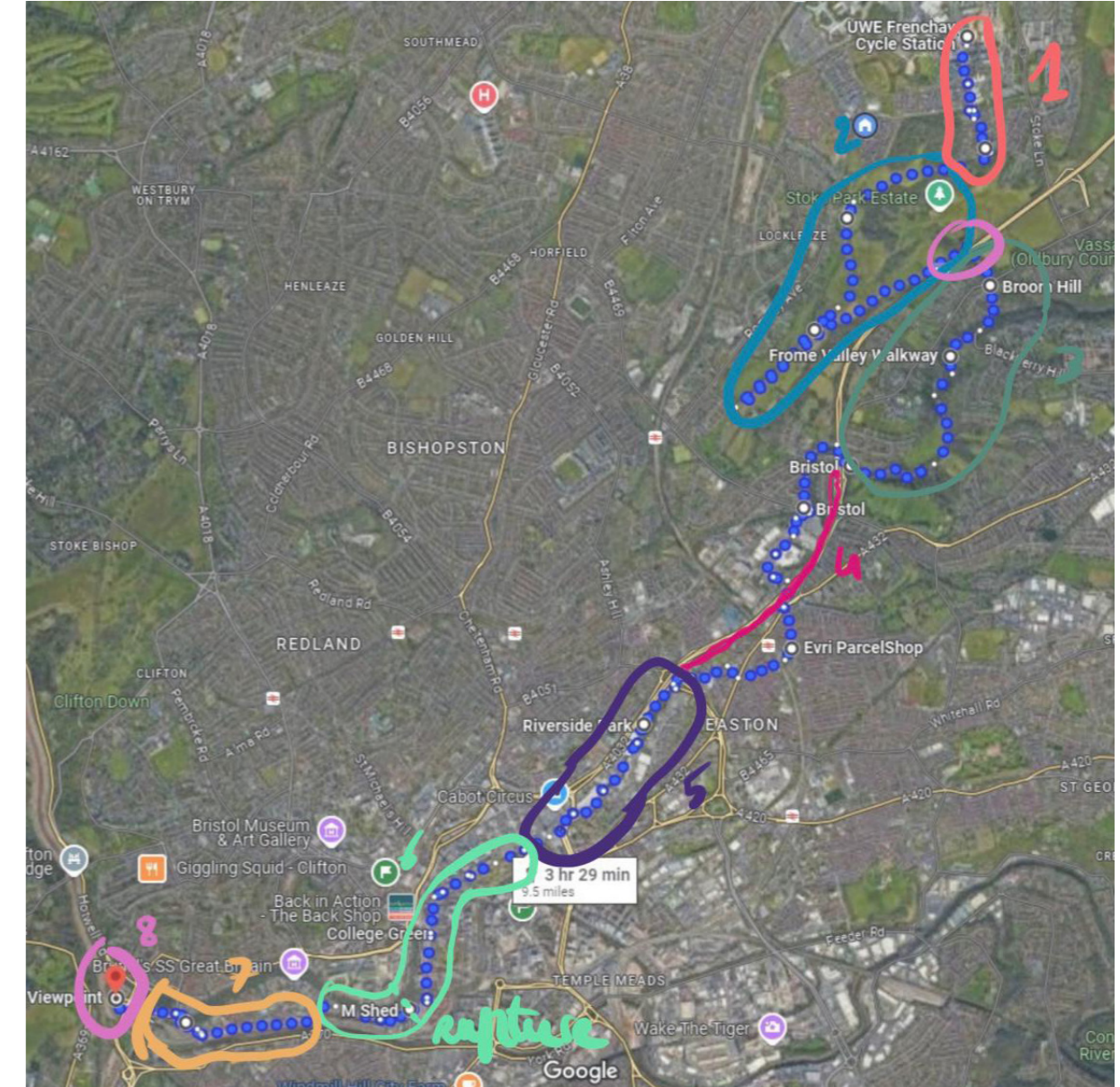
MEMORY MAPPING

The ENSAP students analysed their journey through Bristol, looking at the areas we had visited and the varying experiences as we went from place to place. We divided the journey into eight distinct parts, areas of urban separation where moving from one area into the next felt like a reset.

These are those eight areas:

- UWE Campus
- Stoke Park
- Eastville Park
- M32
- Easton
- City Centre
- Spike Island
- The Docks

The next few days were spent reminiscing about our journey, discussing the different areas and what made each part unique. Some areas had similarities with Bordeaux, some were very different. Some spaces were green, open, tranquil, whilst others were busy and full of life.



UWE CAMPUS



The start of our journey at UWE Campus - a bustling student campus surrounded by a contrast of noisy vehicles and peaceful parks.

STOKE PARK



'Parks within a Park', in such a large open space we feel so small, like tiny ants. A park for walking, a park for living, a park for nature.

EASTVILLE PARK



Haven in the foliage. Two pockets of green separated by the bus lane, slicing through the landscape. Two entirely different yet equally as peaceful parks. A pond, a tiny pocket of the sea. Something never found in Bordeaux.

M32



Spaces made by road. A skate park, a centre for graffiti, the negative space left behind by a world designed for cars. Hostile, yet inhabited.

EASTON



Life and soul. A place of many cultures and communities. Places unique and instantly recognisable. 'I remember being there!'

CITY CENTRE



The city centre. Dense, busy, the vibrant heart. A market full of life and good food. A rich history to be discovered.

SPIKE ISLAND



Colour and light. Historical yet modern. Separated by water. A bubble of lunching, brunching, socialising.

THE DOCKS



Heavy industrialisation. Vast expanses of river and brick.

TALES OF SPACE AND ENTANGLEMENT



EXHIBITION

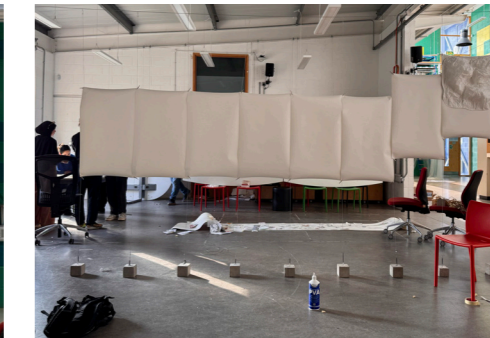


TIMELAPSE

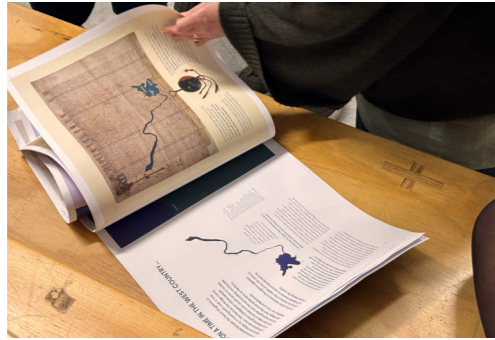
Scan the QR codes above to watch the exhibition come to life



The week of exploration culminated in an exhibition in the Architecture studio at UWE, a chance for us to share our realisations in 'Tales of Space and Entanglement'. Together we reflected on our experience of Bristol, sharing feelings and moments through sketches, textures, sculptures, and words.



Preparing for the exhibition - A week of sketching, collaging, photographing, painting, and sculpting all comes together.



The official launch - Project facilitators, tutors, and the students at UWE Architecture are invited to hear the ENSAP students talk about their week.

The final exhibition - Bristol Metropolitan Trails in Tales of Space and Entanglement

BRISTOL AS A TWIN CITY

Bristol is twinned with seven different cities around the globe, fostering friendships worldwide.

After World War II, the Bristolians reached out to various European cities devastated by the conflict. This led to the formation of two of the UK's first formal twinning relationships in 1947 - Bristol/Hannover and Bristol/Bordeaux.

These relationships have continued to flourish, as three cities continue to benefit from their connections today. The relationships have developed into cultural and educational exchanges with "many schools, associations, sports clubs, musicians, researchers and businesses visiting each other's cities every year." (Visit Bristol, 2024)



BEIRA

Twinned since 1990.
The Bristol Link with Beira (BLB) in Mozambique provides practical community benefits

HANNOVER

Twinned since 1947.
The Bristol Hannover Council (BHC) coordinates a wide range of initiatives between the two cities.

TBILISI

Twinned since 1988.
Supported by the Bristol Tbilisi Association (BTA).

BORDEAUX

Twinned since 1947.
The continued relationship is supported by the Bristol Bordeaux Partnership (BBP)

OPORTO

Twinned since 1984.
The Bristol Oporto Association (BOA) coordinates many Portuguese-themed events.

GUANGZHOU

Sisters since 2001.
The West of England China Bureau (WoECB) continues to build relationships and connections.

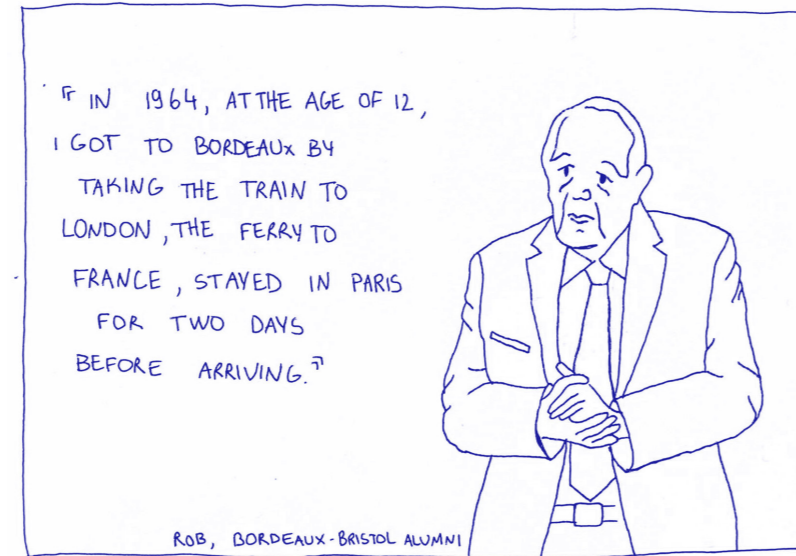
PUERTO MORAZAN

Sisters since 1989.
The voluntary association, Bristol Link with Nicaragua (BLINC) supports the connection.

EXCHANGE PAST AND PRESENT

Since the Bristol / Bordeaux twin first began in 1947, students from both cities have been visiting each other as part of the exchange programme. RHIZA Studio and the students from ENSAP Bordeaux had the incredible opportunity of meeting some of the individuals who took part in some of the very first exchanges all those years ago.

We immersed ourselves in their stories they shared, hearing about their fond memories of rural family life in Bordeaux in the 1940s and 1950s. Experiences that changed their perceptions and in some cases formed lifelong friendships.



LEGACY - THE BRISTOL 650 EXHIBITION

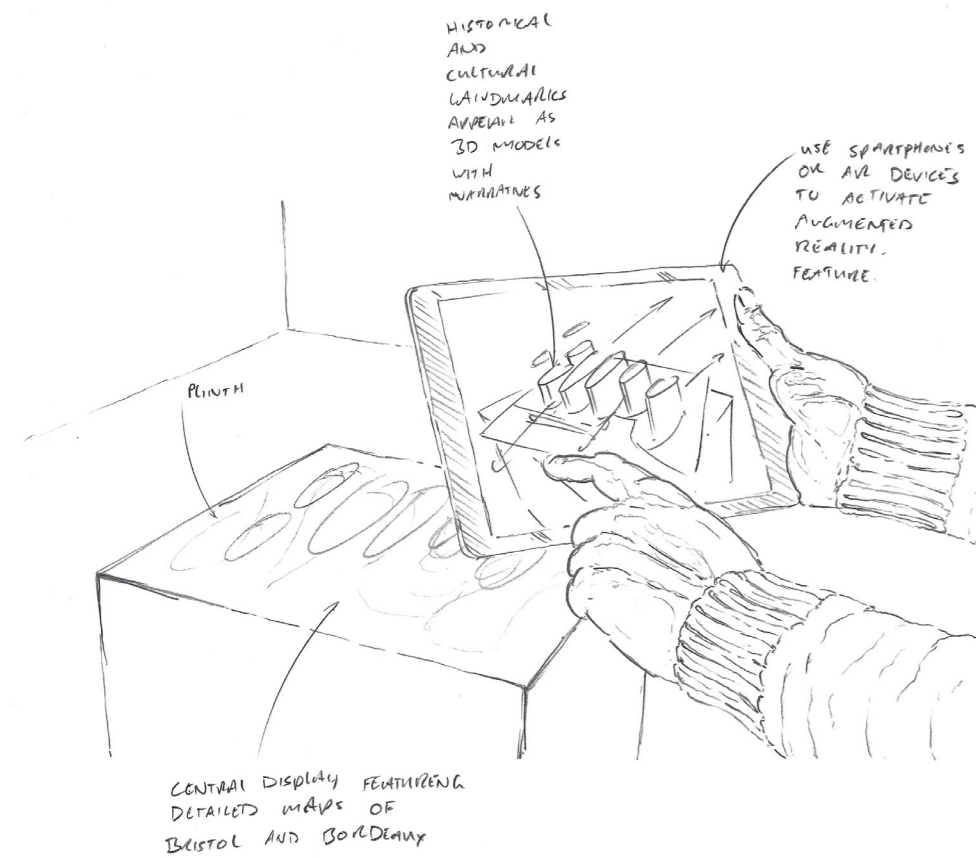
As a way of sharing our experiences of Bristol's twin relationships first hand, we propose *The Bristol 650 Exhibition* - a curation of interactive displays and experiences that celebrates the milestone year.

This imagined exhibition tells the stories of the people and communities who made Bristol the city it is today, and explores the relationships between Bristol and the people of its twinned cities.

RHIZA Studio have created a concept exhibition that takes place in The Create Centre, Bristol - focusing on the interactivity and play of each exhibition piece.



BEYOND THE SCREEN



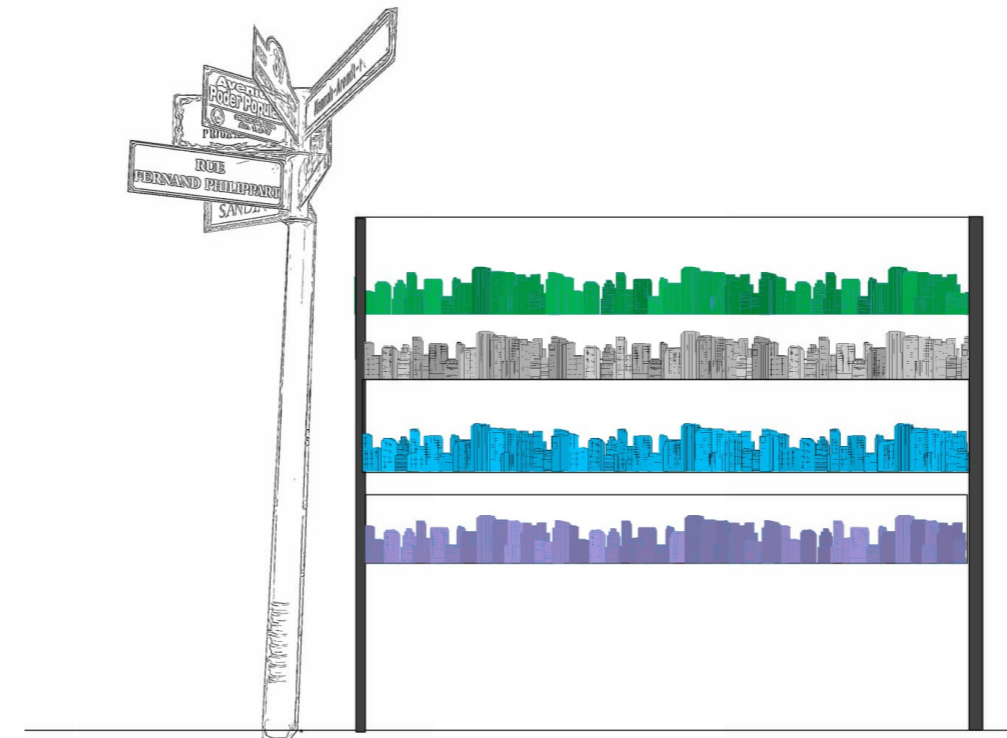
See the world in the palm of your hand - this display of interconnectivity uses augmented reality to explore detailed maps of Bristol and its twin cities. Historical and cultural landmarks appear as 3D models, each with their own narratives

WISH YOU WERE HERE



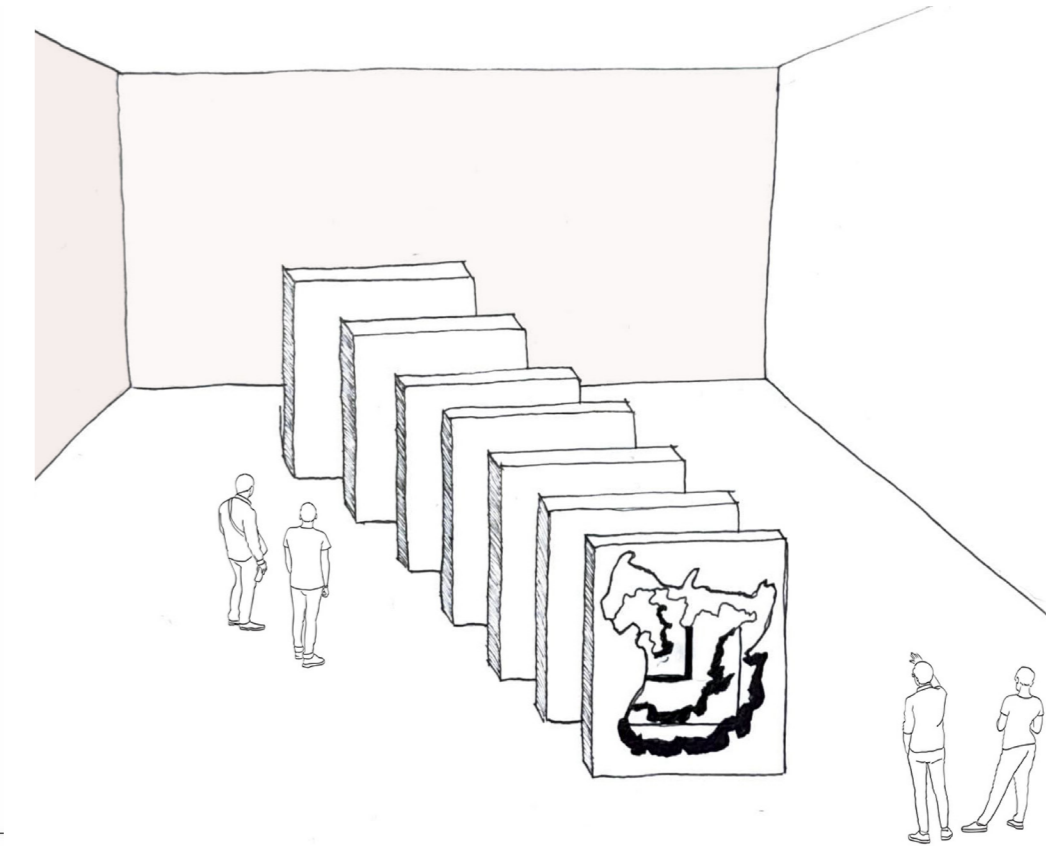
Postcards have been used since the 1800s as a way of communicating, sharing experiences, and preserving history. This interactive exhibit invites visitors to explore the interpersonal conversations between the residents of each twin city, learning through bite-sized messages about life around the world.

THE SIGNPOST



The idea for the drawing is to capture the similarities between the twin cities and bring to life the signpost by Bristol city council which goes unnoticed. The drawing consists of the signpost and next to it a stand which holds up a street view of each street mentioned on the signpost.

MOVING THROUGH TIME

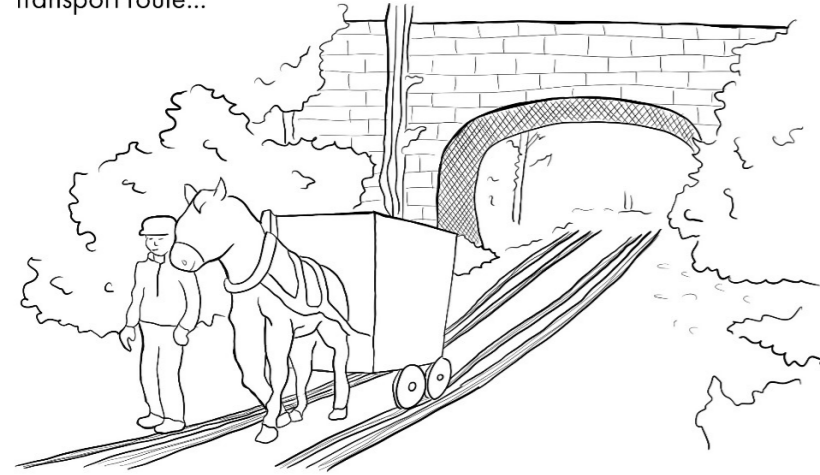


Making use of the research and visuals from the Bristol 650 Community Atlas - this exhibit invites visitors to literally move through time. These large scale maps of Bristol's borders over time are designed like portals to be climbed through, telling stories along the way.

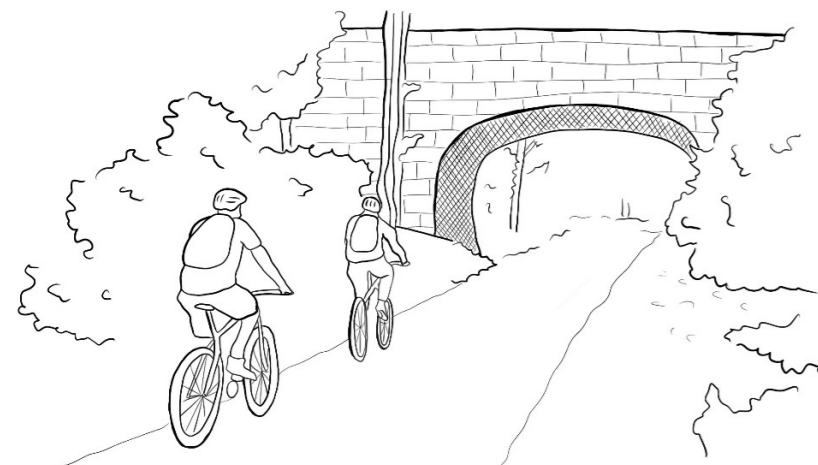
EVOLUTION OF TRANSPORT IN BRISTOL

THE BRISTOL AND BATH RAILWAY PATH

From early 19th Century Horse-Drawn Transport route...



...to late 20th Century Cycle Path

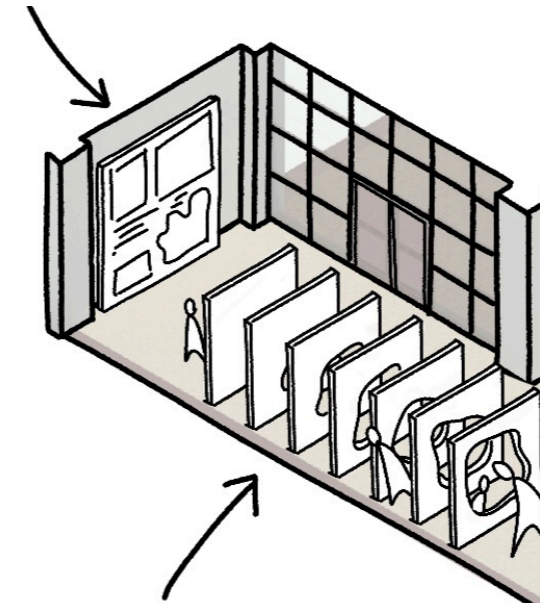


With images showing the change in use of Bristol's transport networks over the 650 years - this illustrated display makes you wonder life was like in Bristol all those years ago.

CONCEPT LAYOUT AT THE CREATE CENTRE

TRANSPORT IN BRISTOL

An illustrated display of the city's transport over time



MOVING THROUGH TIME

Exploring Bristol's changing boundaries

THE SIGNPOST

Street elevations from each twinned city

WISH YOU WERE HERE

Postcard from around the world

BEYOND THE SCREEN

Bristol's twin cities in the palm of your hand

REFERENCES

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Fig 2.
Evans, A., 1990. St. Paul's Carnival. [Photograph]
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Fig 3.
Bristol Archives, 1950s. Go Kart Racing at Hengrove Park. [Photograph]
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Fig 4.
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Fig 5.
The Tarring Collection, 1930s. Speedway Racing at Hengrove Racetrack. [Photograph]
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Fig 6.
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