

Curatorial Pitch

Category: Uncategorized

written by s2814160 | 22 February 2026



1. Project Premise

The central question of this project is straightforward but difficult: for whom is public space actually allowed to function? I am interested in how openness is arranged, limited, and unevenly experienced, rather than assuming that public space is naturally shared. The issue cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between residents and tourists. What matters is how tourism, infrastructure, commercial visibility, and managed movement work together to shape public space. Some people remain at ease. Others are pushed towards the edge.

2. Curatorial Format

The project is designed as a self-guided outdoor exhibition linked through Edinburgh's public transport network. Route 35 functions as the main structure connecting the sites. The bus is not only a practical device. It is part of the curatorial argument. The exhibition unfolds through infrastructure rather than simply taking place beside it.



Lothian Bus Route 35 in Edinburgh. Screenshot used to indicate the public transport route proposed as the connective structure of the curatorial project. Source: Lothian Buses / route information screenshot.

3. Why This Structure Is Necessary

The project adopts a non-linear structure because it should not depend on one fixed route or one authorized order of interpretation. Viewers may enter from different points, decide how long to stay, and connect the sites in their own way.

At the same time, readability still matters. A project without one dominant sequence can easily become fragmented. For that reason, route design, site prompts, and interpretive tools need to work harder. The main challenge is clear: the structure must be strong enough for dispersed entry to remain meaningful.

4. Main Concerns

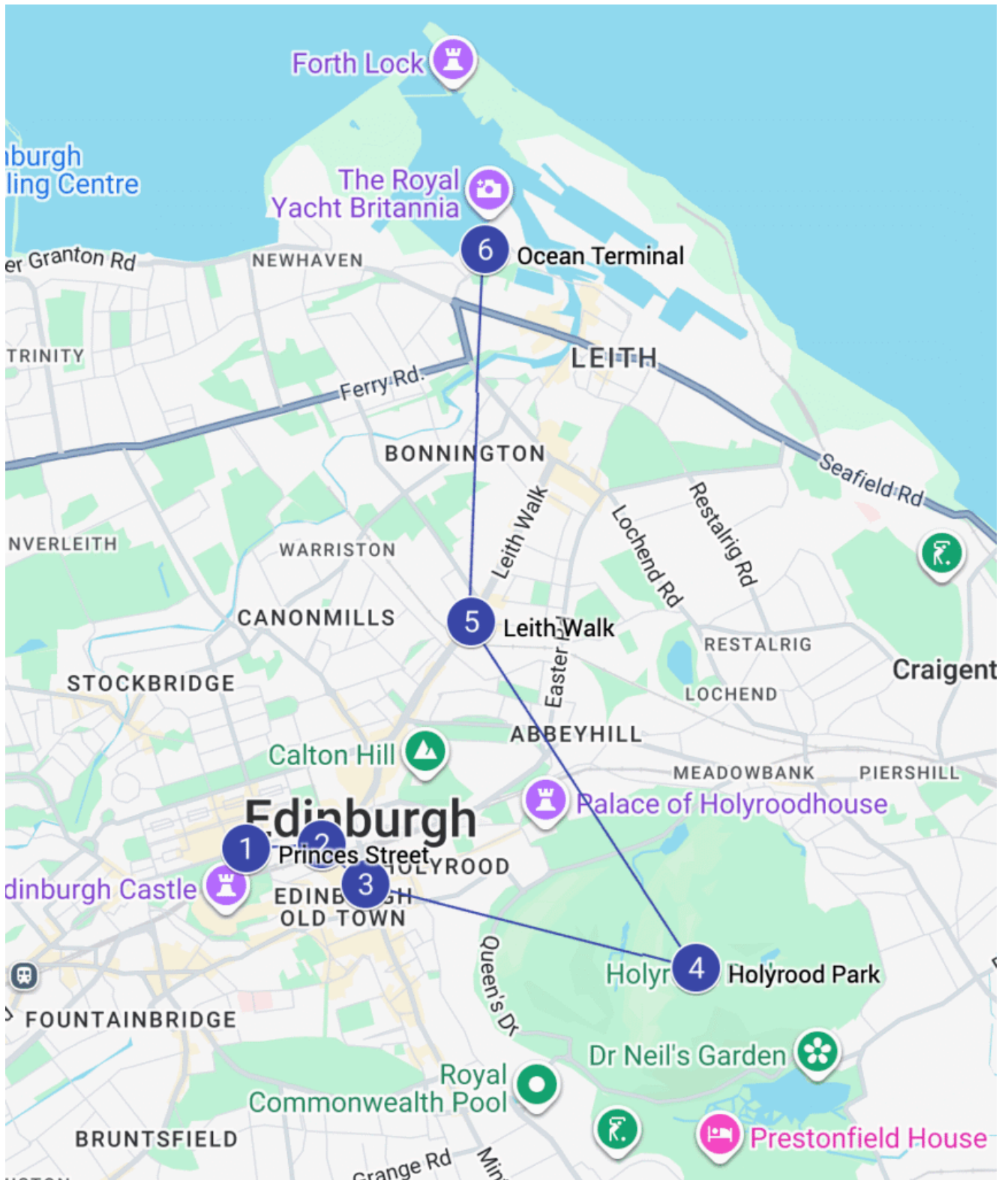
The project approaches its main concerns through three points of entry. First, it examines how tourism reshapes everyday public space, especially where commercial attraction starts to outweigh public need. Second, it focuses on rules that are rarely written down but still affect who feels able to stay, pause, or return. Third, it treats public space as socially produced rather than naturally neutral, and asks how management, infrastructure, and repeated patterns of movement organize space in practice.

5. Theoretical Framework

The project is informed by critical spatial theory. Henri Lefebvre's argument that space is socially produced gives me a way to understand public space as something built through power, use, and repetition rather than given in advance. Doreen Massey pushes this further. Her writing treats space as relational, contested, and always under negotiation. Together, these frameworks allow me to read Edinburgh as a city in which wider tensions become sharply visible.

6. Site Logic

The project is currently organized around six sites in Edinburgh, linked through bus travel. The six-site structure is intended to register different forms of invisible boundary. Movement between sites is equally important. It creates comparison. It exposes uneven experience. It prevents the project from collapsing into a single example.



Exhibition Site Overview Map for the proposed project in Edinburgh, showing the six selected sites connected through the Bus 35 route. Map prepared for curatorial planning. Source: project planning screenshot by Hazel Ren.

7. AR as an Interpretive Method

AR is proposed here as an interpretive method. I am using it because it can bring different spatial layers into view at the same location and from the same perspective. At selected sites, viewers would be able to access simple AR overlays on their phones. A place that now appears stable and familiar could then be re-read as the result of commercial pressure, redirected movement, spatial replacement, and selective visibility. The point is not technological novelty. The point is to interrupt the assumption that the present condition of a site is natural.

8. Indicative Artist Candidates

The project now has a relatively clear shortlist of artist candidates. These names function as realistic references through which I can test how different forms of intervention might support the argument of the project.

Chris Johanson

Chris Johanson is relevant because his work attends to everyday texture, emotional colour, and the relation between ordinary life and environment. What matters here is not formal similarity. His work offers a way of addressing subtle and affective tensions in public space, especially in places where daily urban life collides with commercial visibility.



Chris Johanson, Impermanence #9 (Ron from the past says hello to me in the present), 2025. Acrylic and house paint on recycled canvas, 57.2 × 76.5 × 2 cm. Source: exhibition image.

Toby Paterson

Toby Paterson is currently the strongest visual reference for the project. His abstract language responds directly to spatial structure, movement, and urban rhythm. The project needs a way to make pathways, circulation, and infrastructural order visible without falling back on simple explanation. Among the three candidates, his practice aligns most closely with the spatial and visual logic of the project.



Toby Paterson, installation view, *The Modern Institute*, Aird's Lane Bricks Space, 15 November 2024–15 January 2025. Source: exhibition image.

Clara Ursitti

Clara Ursitti opens another valuable direction. Her scent-based work refuses to keep spatial experience within the visual. Smell can shape the atmosphere. It can also shift attention. At certain sites in this project, where managed public image and lived environmental experience do not fully match, sensory contrast may be a productive way of making that gap perceptible.



Clara Ursitti, scent-based installation work. Source: exhibition image.

9. Publics

The project is aimed mainly at local residents and visitors. It also addresses commuters, passers-by, and those who move through Edinburgh without necessarily questioning how that movement is organized.

10. Practical and Ethical Conditions

The proposal is intended as a temporary, low-impact, and accessible project. Interventions should remain lightweight. Routes need to stay publicly navigable. Accessibility must be treated as part of the curatorial method and considered from the start.

Because the project depends on connections between different sites, permission strategy, route planning, and risk awareness

also become part of its critical structure. A public-space exhibition has to remain ethically and conceptually coherent if it is to hold together at all.

| Exhibition Stop No. | Exhibition Theme Positioning | Real Bus 35 Stops (Ocean Terminal Direction) | Walking Connection (Shortest Measured Route) | Accessibility Guarantee |
|---------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Stop 1 | Tourism Capital Boundary (High-Risk Area) | National Museum of Scotland, Old Town | 8-minute walk (via George IV Bridge to Princes Street core); or 1 stop transfer via Bus 22/26 | No steps on the walking route; wheelchair ramp available for detour |
| Stop 2 | Transportation Power Node (Level 1 Transfer Hub) | South Bridge, Old Town | 5-minute walk (via North Bridge to Waverley Bridge transfer core area) | Underground passage with accessible lift, directly leading to Waverley Train Station |
| Stop 3 | Heritage Landscape Boundary (High-Risk Area) | South Bridge, Old Town | 3-minute walk (directly to Royal Mile core, near High Street) | Flat walking route with no obstacles |
| Stop 4 | Nature/Urban Boundary (Low-Risk Area) | Scottish Parliament, Holyrood | 5-minute walk (to Holyrood Park main entrance, near Arthur's Seat) | Wheelchair access at the park entrance; walking route is a gentle slope |
| Stop 5 | Class and Community Boundary (Social Boundary) | Kirkgate Centre, Leith | 2-minute walk (directly to Leith Walk south core, junction of commercial and residential areas) | No steps throughout; tactile paving on the connecting section |
| Stop 6 | Future/Current Boundary (End Point) | Ocean Terminal, North Leith | Direct access (Bus 35 terminal station, no walking required) | Seamless connection between bus station and shopping mall; dedicated wheelchair entrance/exit |

Core Route Table for the Bus 35 self-guided tour, showing exhibition stop number, theme positioning, nearest bus stops, walking connections, and accessibility information. Prepared for curatorial planning by Hazel Ren.

References

City of Edinburgh Council. "About the Edinburgh Visitor Levy." Accessed 14 April 2026. <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/business/visitor-levy-edinburgh>.

City of Edinburgh Council. "The Scheme for the Edinburgh

Visitor Levy.” Accessed 14 April 2026.
<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/business/scheme-edinburgh-visitor-levy>.

Kester, Grant H. “Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework for Littoral Art.” *Variant 2*, no. 9 (Winter 1999/2000).

Fitzgerald, William, and Efrossini Spentzou, eds. *The Production of Space in Latin Literature*. First edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. London: Sage, 2005.

McGillivray, David, Alba Colombo, and Xavier Villanueva. “Tensions and Disputes over Public Space in Festival Cities: Insights from Barcelona and Edinburgh.” *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* (Abingdon) 14, no. 3 (September 2022): 229–41.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2022.2032109>.

Week 5 – Artist Selection, Public Feasibility, and Curatorial Method

Category: Uncategorized

written by s2814160 | 22 February 2026



This week, my individual curatorial project developed in two connected directions: artist selection and public feasibility.

I began to set clearer criteria for selecting artists, based on the questions that had emerged over the previous weeks.

Because I am designing the project around a non-linear viewing structure, the first thing I need to consider is whether an artist's practice can respond to space as experience, rather than simply treating space as a background for the work. In my project, the way audiences move, enter a site, and form their own understanding through the route is already part of the exhibition structure.

As I am placing the project within the politics of public space in Edinburgh, artistic practice also needs to help me address questions such as who is more able to stay, who is more visible, and whose movement is treated as legitimate. This leads to my second criterion: whether an artist can make invisible structures more perceptible, especially those linked to movement, atmosphere, and the organization of everyday life.

My third criterion comes from my interest in how invisible boundaries become normalized through daily use, and how AR might make these covered-over changes visible again. For that reason, I need to consider whether an artist's method can support the project without fixing the exhibition too early within a single sensory or visual language.

At the same time, I also need to think about a more practical question: what does it actually mean to curate in public

space? Since the project is moving away from the traditional gallery model, I need to carry out a risk assessment in advance to make sure it can work in reality. Public space is not an even or constantly available display container. Different sites have clear differences in the rhythm of use, so the form of intervention needs to be adjusted according to different risk conditions.

| Risk Level | Representative Areas | Area Characteristics | Protection Advantages | Risk Tips |
|-------------------|---|--|---|--|
| High-Risk Areas | Princes Street, Royal Mile | Dense pedestrian flow, complex personnel composition | No special protection | Artworks are prone to being touched or damaged |
| Low-Risk Areas | Holyrood Park, Community Squares | Relatively small pedestrian flow, mainly local residents | Low risk of damage | No obvious potential safety hazards |
| Protected Areas | Waverley Station, Shop Windows Along Bus Routes | Fixed venues with management | Equipped with security or glass protection, strong natural protection | Good protection conditions, low risk |

Risk-level classification table for potential exhibition sites in Edinburgh. Prepared by Hazel Ren for project development, 2026.

This is especially clear in a festival city such as Edinburgh. Research on public space in festival cities shows that such spaces are often reorganized around temporary events, tourist flows, and economic priorities. For my project, risk assessment therefore needs to address two things: first, how to protect the works from damage; and second, whether a site, because of high footfall or temporary infrastructure, might reduce participation to a controlled flow rather than a meaningful encounter.

Because of this, risk assessment is also beginning to affect my curatorial choices. A site that is too exposed may limit the possibility of sustained attention and reflection. A site that is too tightly managed may turn public participation into a controlled route. Even a place that appears open may still be unevenly accessible in temporal or social terms.

By this stage, artist selection is helping me understand what kind of artistic language the project needs, while risk assessment is helping me judge whether those languages can actually work under real urban conditions. Together, they have made me realize that public space is already an unevenly used field, and that my task is to think carefully about what kind of public relations can be produced there, and under what conditions.

References

McGillivray, David, Alba Colombo, and Xavier Villanueva. "Tensions and Disputes over Public Space in Festival Cities: Insights from Barcelona and Edinburgh." *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* (Abingdon) 14, no. 3 (September 2022): 229–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2022.2032109>.

Quagliarini, Enrico, Gabriele Bernardini, Guido Romano, and Marco D'Orazio. "Users' Vulnerability and Exposure in Public Open Spaces (Squares): A Novel Way for Accounting Them in Multi-Risk Scenarios." *Cities* 133 (February 2023): 104160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2022.104160>.

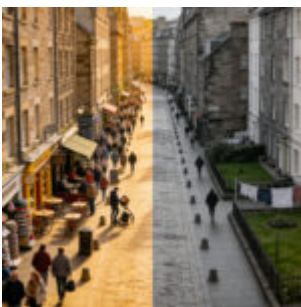
Richards, Greg, and Maria del Pilar Leal Londoño. "Festival Cities and Tourism: Challenges and Prospects." *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* (Abingdon) 14, no. 3 (September 2022): 219–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2022.2087664>.

Robazza, Guido, Jacqueline Priego-Hernández, Silvio Caputo, and Alessandro Melis. "Temporary Urbanism as a Catalyst for Social Resilience: Insights from an Urban Living Lab Practice-Based Research." *Buildings (Basel)* (BASEL) 14, no. 6 (June 2024): 1513. <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings14061513>.

Week 4 – Making the Normalisation of Invisible Boundaries Visible in Edinburgh's Public Space

Category: Uncategorized

written by s2814160 | 22 February 2026



This week, after our group discussion, I began to think more carefully about how invisible boundaries in Edinburgh become normalized. This is not a sudden act of exclusion. It is a slow process. These boundaries are difficult to notice because they are repeated through everyday movement, timing, and habits of use until they begin to feel ordinary.

I started to notice this process through everyday spatial

behavior. In areas such as the Royal Mile and Princes Street, where tourism pressure is especially strong, local residents often avoid the busiest times and move their daily leisure activities to less pressured parts of the city. During the festival season, some city-centre squares and routes are reorganised by performances, visitor flows, and temporary infrastructure, which further changes how local people move through and remain in these spaces. What interests me most is that, once these patterns are repeated often enough, unequal use of space can begin to look like a matter of personal choice. In that sense, invisible boundaries are not invisible because they do not exist, but because they have become part of everyday life.

This line of thought also helped me define the curatorial method of the project more clearly. In our collective discussion, I began to consider introducing a lightweight AR element into the exhibition. The main aim is to make different historical layers of the same site visible again through an AR reconstruction. At the same time, the novelty of the technology may also help attract the viewer's attention. For example, when a viewer scans a particular street scene, they might see the present-day tourist retail frontage alongside an earlier form of local everyday use. In this way, a space that now appears stable and natural can be re-read as something produced through displacement, reorganization, and selective visibility. Used in this way, AR can help recover spatial memories that have been covered over.



AI-generated mock-up for Lightweight AR Visualisations for Edinburgh. Produced as a speculative visualisation for project development.

At the same time, because our collective was discussing a declaration, I also began to think in advance about the kind of public effect I want this exhibition to have. A declaration should not remain at the level of a general statement of values. It should be translated into working principles for the project. First, I do not want the project to equate commercial visibility with public value. A space may have high spending power within the visitor economy, but that does not mean it is more important in public life. Discussions around the management of public space in Edinburgh already suggest that such spaces should be understood through public need and principles of use, rather than through commercial attraction alone. Second, I want viewers to recognize that unequal patterns of use based on time, season, and peak visitor flow should not be accepted as the normal condition of public space. When some groups repeatedly adapt to spatial pressure by changing their routes, avoiding busy times, or temporarily withdrawing, that inequality can easily be mistaken for a natural choice rather than a structural result. Third, I want the project to reveal how capital, management systems, and patterns of movement work together to produce spatial hierarchy, rather than simply creating an opposition between residents and visitors. I am more interested in the structural logic behind the distribution of space than in reducing a complex issue to a conflict between two groups. Only on that basis can the exhibition remain critical without reproducing the very exclusions it seeks to expose.

References

City of Edinburgh Council. *City Centre Public Spaces Manifesto Update Report*. 2 June 2015. https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/Data/Transport%20and%20Environment%20Committee/20150602/Agenda/item_77_-

_city_centre_public_spaces_manifesto_update.pdf.

Kester, Grant H. "Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework for Littoral Art." *Variant* 2, no. 9 (Winter 1999/2000).

McGillivray, David, Alba Colombo, and Xavier Villanueva. "Tensions and Disputes over Public Space in Festival Cities: Insights from Barcelona and Edinburgh." *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* (Abingdon) 14, no. 3 (September 2022): 229–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2022.2032109>.

Week 3 – Edinburgh as a Mirror: Exhibiting Invisible Boundaries in Public Space

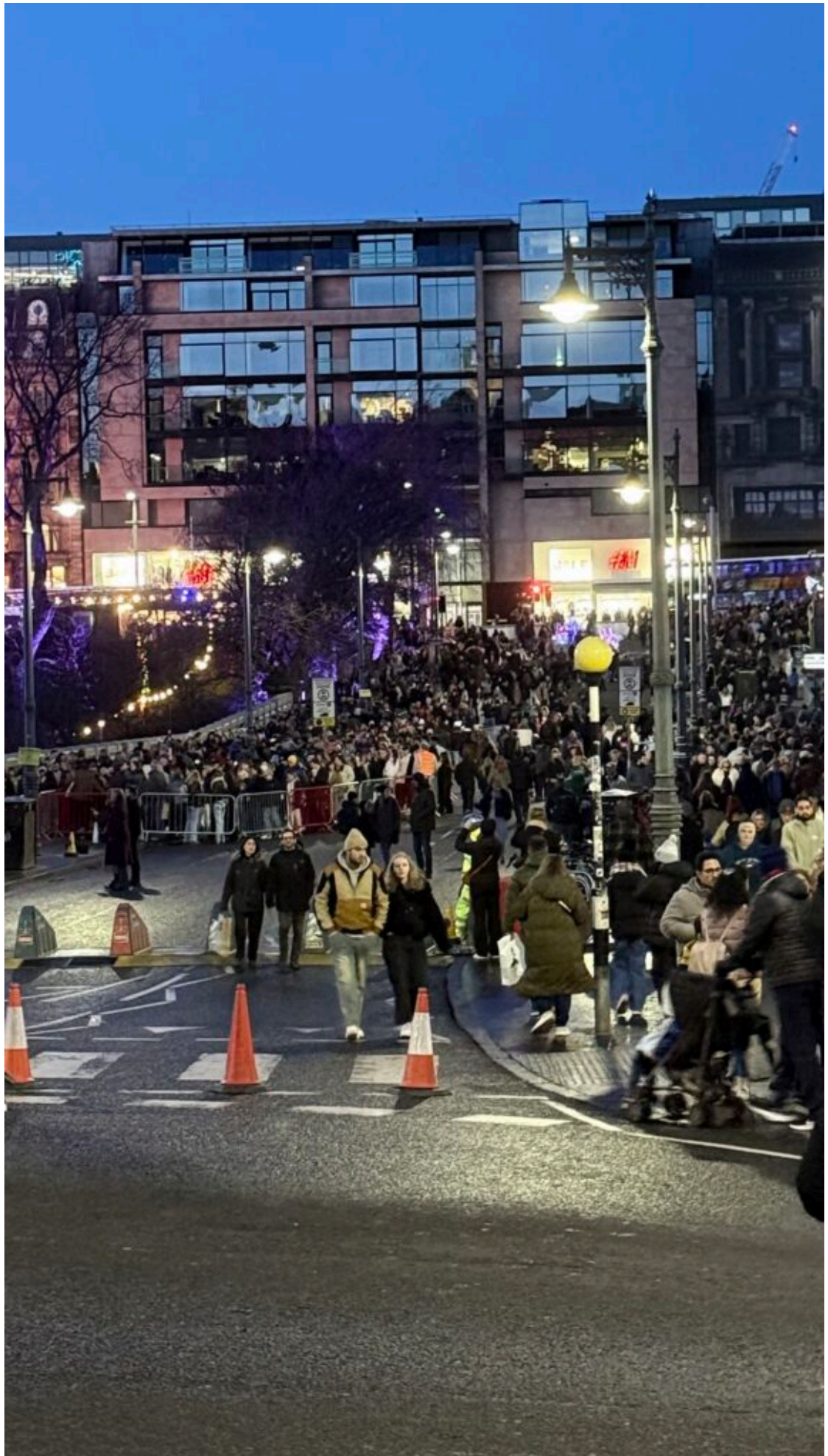
Category: Uncategorized

written by s2814160 | 22 February 2026



This week's teaching on exhibition ethics, together with James's discussion of curatorial responsibility, helped me define the direction of my project more clearly. I have chosen Edinburgh as the site for this project, and here I understand public space as a contested field shaped by tourism, movement, accessibility, and institutional use. Edinburgh feels like an appropriate place to explore invisible boundaries because current policy debates already make these pressures visible. The City of Edinburgh Council's visitor levy will apply to

overnight stays from 24 July 2026, and the policy itself is framed around the need to keep the city attractive to visitors while also preserving it as a livable place for residents. It is precisely this tension between livability and the visitor economy that made me see the value of examining invisible boundaries in public space.



Crowded Princes Street, Edinburgh, 2025. Photograph
by Hazel Ren.

This also helped me answer a basic curatorial question: why curate this issue at all? I am not simply interested in complaining about tourism or festival culture. What I want to explore is how public space is organized, who is more able to remain within it, and whose movement is treated as legitimate. Edinburgh is not just a single example of a popular tourist city. It can also serve as a mirror, making a broader problem visible.

James's seminar also helped me understand more clearly why this exhibition form is worth pursuing. I began to ask whether Edinburgh's public transport network could be used to connect multiple sites, so that movement through the city itself becomes part of the exhibition. If audiences enter the project through different routes and spend varying amounts of time within it, then meaning is no longer fully controlled by a single fixed path. This idea continues my interest in non-linear viewing from the previous week, but by Week 3, it had become more directly connected to the politics of public space.

My understanding of the audience also became more specific. My core audience is local residents, not because they are somehow more "right" than others, but because they are more likely to notice long-term changes in access, crowding, and belonging. At the same time, I do not want to reduce the issue to a simple opposition between residents and tourists. Visitors are also important, because they often experience Edinburgh through highly standardised images of the city and predetermined routes, and my project may interrupt those familiar ways of seeing. Students, researchers, and disabled publics also matter to this project, because access is not only economic; it is also physical and temporal. Public space

in Edinburgh is not experienced in the same way by everyone, so my audience framework needs to reflect these differences.

In terms of ethics, the key question for me is how this exhibition can avoid repeating the same exclusions that it is trying to reveal. First, I do not want to reduce the issue to a simple resident/tourist binary. Second, I do not want to turn crowding, frustration, or social difference into something to be consumed as spectacle. Third, I want to treat accessibility as a curatorial method, rather than as a technical requirement added at the end. Grant Kester's discussion of dialogical aesthetics is especially useful here because it suggests that the real question in public-oriented cultural practice is how relationships between the work and its publics are formed.

References

City of Edinburgh Council. "About the Edinburgh Visitor Levy." Accessed 14 April 2026. <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/business/visitor-levy-edinburgh>.

City of Edinburgh Council. "The Scheme for the Edinburgh Visitor Levy." Accessed 14 April 2026. <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/business/scheme-edinburgh-visitor-levy>.

City of Edinburgh Council. *City Centre Public Spaces Manifesto Update Report*. 2 June 2015. https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/Data/Transport%20and%20Environment%20Committee/20150602/Agenda/item_77_-_city_centre_public_spaces_manifesto_update.pdf.