

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

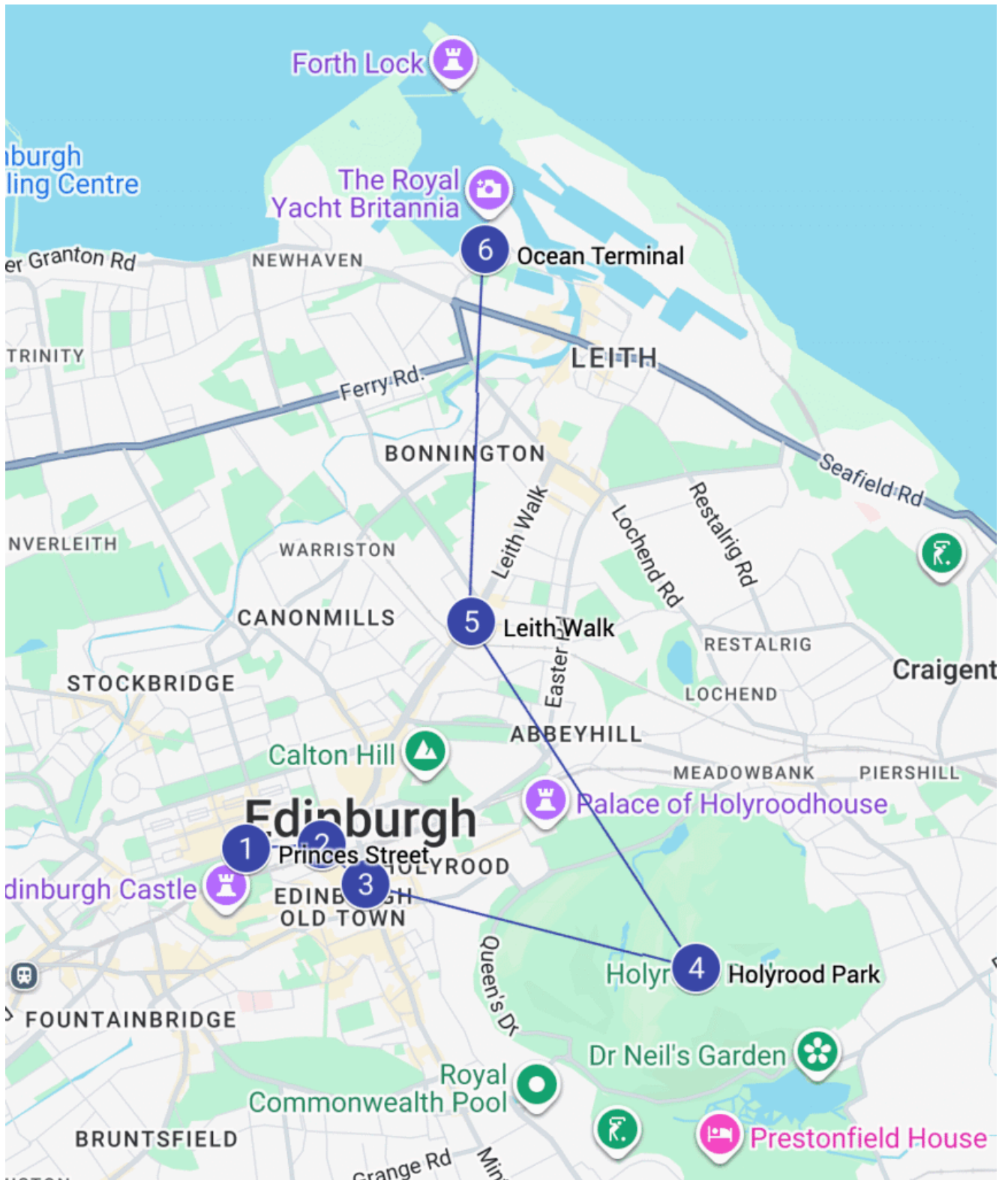
The project approaches its main concerns through three points of entry. First, it examines how tourism reshapes everyday public space, especially where commercial attraction starts to outweigh public need. Second, it focuses on rules that are rarely written down but still affect who feels able to stay, 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.

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

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written by s2814160 | 22 February 2026



This week, the development of my individual curatorial project focused on two connected areas: artist selection and public feasibility. As the questions raised over the previous weeks became clearer, I began to define my criteria for selecting artists. Because the whole project is structured around non-linear viewing, I did not begin by asking whether an artist “fits the theme”. Instead, I looked at whether their practice treats space as an experience in its own right, rather than simply as a backdrop for the work. In this project, how audiences move, how they enter a site, and how they form a viewing experience through routes are all direct parts of the exhibition structure.

Secondly, because the project is explicitly concerned with the inequalities in Edinburgh’s public space produced by tourism, movement, and institutional management, I need artistic practices capable of addressing spatial conditions that are not directly visible, yet continue to shape who can remain, who becomes more visible, and whose actions are treated as legitimate. What I am looking for, then, is not simply urban-themed work, but methods that can make hidden structures more perceptible.

From my current position, I also need to confront a practical question: what does it actually mean to curate in public space? This project does not follow the model of a traditional gallery exhibition, so its feasibility within the real city environment must be assessed in advance. Public space is not a stable, open, always-available display site. Different locations have different rhythms of use, and any intervention must be adjusted in relation to risk conditions. This is not

an extra technical step. It has to be treated as an inseparable part of the project's method.

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.

Edinburgh, as a major festival city, constantly reorganises public space through tourist volume, temporary events, and commercial pressure. Spaces that appear open often become subordinated to controlled patterns of movement. Risk assessment therefore, directly affects my curatorial judgement. I need to understand not only how workers enter the city, but also under what conditions public relations can actually be formed. Artist selection helps me determine what kinds of artistic language the project requires, while risk assessment helps me judge whether that language is truly workable in a real urban environment. Together, these two strands have made me more aware that public space is already a field of uneven use, and that curating within it means reorganising the relationship between viewing and access.

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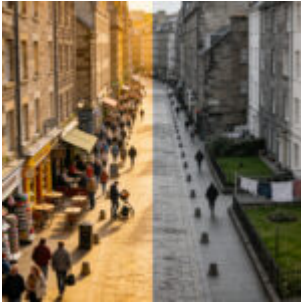
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Week 4 – Making Invisible Boundaries in Edinburgh's

Public Space More Visible

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Following this week's collective discussion, I continued to explore how invisible boundaries in Edinburgh are made in everyday life. They are generally not imposed explicitly. More often, they are produced through repeated habits, time patterns, and ordinary ways of using space, until they start to feel natural. Which is why they are difficult to recognize.

This was clear to me when I started to closely observe people's everyday use of space. In the Royal Mile and Princes Street, where the tourist presence is significant, local inhabitants tend to avoid the "busy" hours and instead move to other areas for recreation or relaxation. During festival periods, squares, streets, and pedestrian areas are reorganized by performances, tourist flows, and temporary structures. As a result, how these areas are accessed is transformed. After repeating the same use pattern a couple of times, unbalanced space use can be mistaken for being a matter of choice. These barriers, therefore, are not invisible because they don't exist, but because of their ubiquity.

I also started thinking of creating a light AR element. I did not want to use technology simply to make the project more up-to-date. I was interested in whether different surfaces at the same location could be recovered. So, if I made an augmented street scene, I might be able to see today's retail tourist scene and a trace of previous life. This natural and fixed place could, then, be viewed as the outcome of commercial

interests, choreographed movement, and controlled visibility. In this context, AR could be used to undo the idea of “this area has always been like this”.



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

We also had a private meeting with the collective about the title and manifesto, and that helped me to understand the public stance of the project better. I don't want high-profile commercial activity confused with the public. It might be crowded and commercial, but that does not necessarily follow that it will also be of equal public value. Nor do I want differences in rates of use, which vary by hour, day, or season, to be treated as an inherent part of public space. More importantly, I do not want the project to equate the problem with that of residents and tourists. Of more concern is the relationship between capital, management, and circulation that results in spatial hierarchy. Otherwise, there would be a risk of reproducing exclusions within the exhibition.

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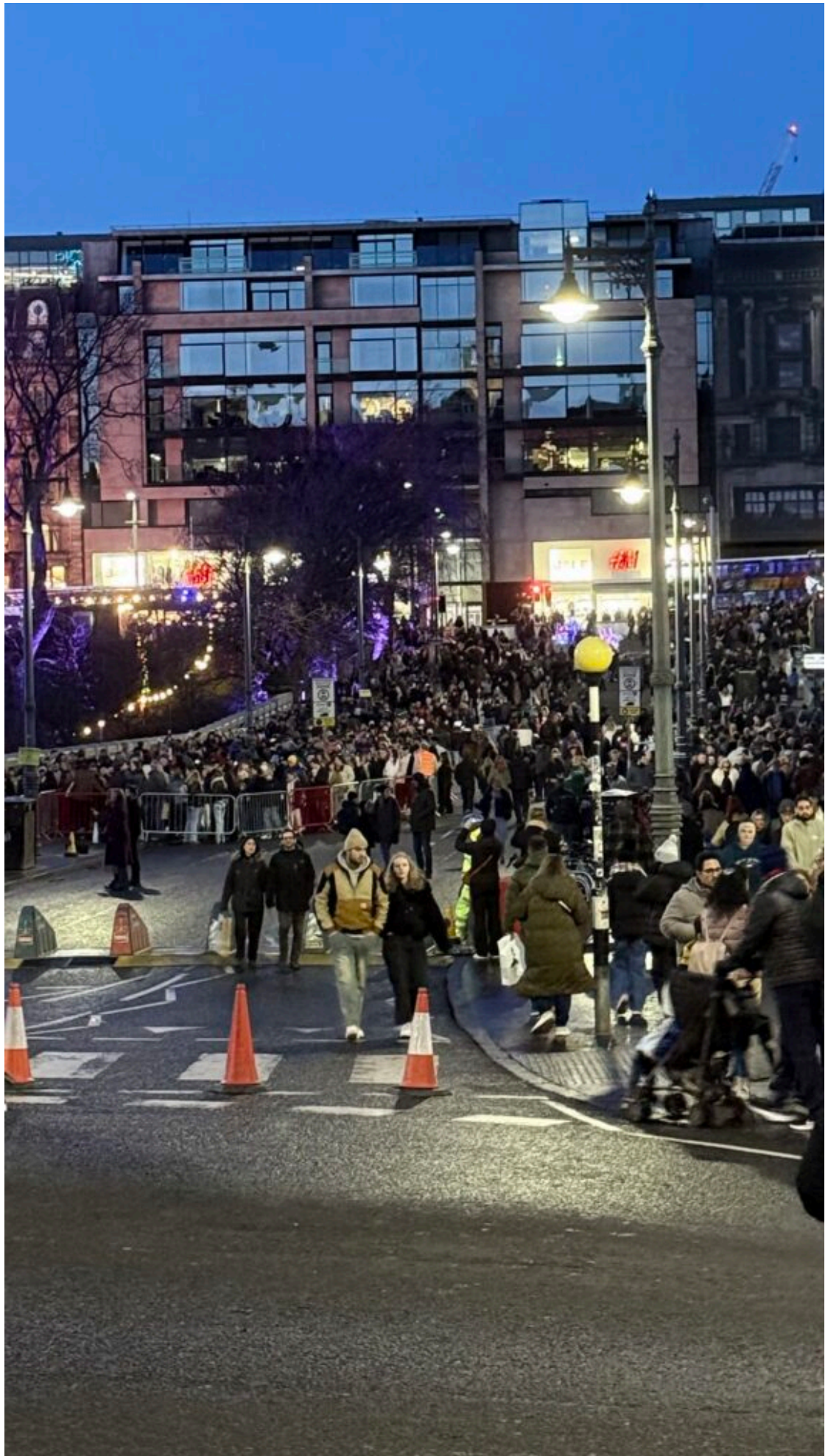
Week 3 – Edinburgh as a Mirror: Exhibiting Invisible Boundaries in Public Space

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This week's class on exhibition ethics, together with James's discussion of curatorial responsibility, helped me clarify the direction of my project. I chose Edinburgh as the site of the project because, from the outset, I understood its public space as a field of clear contestation, shaped by tourism, movement, accessibility, and institutional forms of use. Edinburgh is therefore not an accidental choice for a project about invisible boundaries. The deeper reason is that the pressures within the city have already been made visible in policy discussions. The forthcoming visitor levy is one direct and clear attempt by the city to balance two competing aims: maintaining attraction for visitors while protecting the city's liveability for local residents. The tension between liveability and the tourist economy offers a strong point of entry for discussing invisible boundaries.



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

This also helped me answer a basic question: why curate this project at all? What I want to make clear first is that I am not simply trying to criticise tourism or festival culture. What interests me is how public space is organised, who has greater capacity to remain within it, and who becomes marginalised. Edinburgh is not a self-contained case. It operates more like a mirror, reflecting wider questions of spatial inequality.

James's workshop also helped me understand more clearly why this exhibition format is worth exploring. I began to consider whether Edinburgh's public transport network could connect a series of exhibition sites, allowing urban transport itself to become an organic part of the exhibition. If audiences enter the exhibition by different routes and spend different amounts of time in different places, then the meaning of the exhibition will not be strictly controlled by a single path. In this sense, the idea continues the non-linear viewing model I had been considering last week, but this week it became more clearly and consciously linked to the politics of public space.

I also developed a more specific understanding of the audience. My primary audience is local residents, because they are most likely to feel the long-term effects of changing accessibility, crowding, and belonging in public space. At the same time, I do not want to reduce the issue to a simple opposition between residents and tourists. Tourists also matter, because they usually encounter Edinburgh through pre-set routes and standardised city images, and I want to interrupt that familiar way of looking. Students, researchers, and disabled people are also important publics, because accessibility is never only an economic issue; it is also shaped by bodily conditions, time pressure, and many other

factors. Different people experience public space differently, so the framework of the audience itself must recognise that difference.

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