

**Dress For Our Time at the Science Museum
August 17th to September 4th 2016
Evaluation report quotes and comments**



Image: Holition

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Dress 4 Our Time

Helen Storey Foundation
Science Museum
London, September 2016

Evaluation by, Cindy van Rees

Exhibition Title.

'Our Lives In Data 'running 15th July to 4st September.

General notes:

People were approached for a conversation if they seemed genuinely interested in the dress. Usually this was when they stood there watching for approximately over two minutes. Most conversations took quite a while, around ten minutes on average.

The list with all people passing by is not exhaustive, as people might have been missed when having a conversation with one of the visitors.

Wednesday August 17th – 09.00 – 13.00

General information on the day

Weather outside: Warm, a typical warm summer day.
Antenna room occupation: Quite busy, approximately three people per station.

Conversations

Conversation 1, woman and her son (teenager) from Lebanon

Those two Lebanese tourists were filming the dress and seemed really interested. They really wanted to know what the projection meant and after explaining, they were enthusiastic and impressed by the story about the tent (they were curious to what happened to the family). The son thought this was a great way to engage people with the matter. Also, they were excited when the countries started to become recognizable, so that seemed to work really well. Also, the mother was very much interested in UNHCR and what they do.

Additional nice observation:

Two cleaners are looking at the dress for quite a long time. Both cleaners are male and in their 30's. Eventually a third cleaner, a woman in her 40's or 50's, comes along and they excitedly explain everything to her, too.

General comments:

- Almost all visitors today were families.
- Younger children look at the lights mostly.

- Parents explain the story to the children, or talk about it with partners, they usually do this while standing in front of the info panel.
 - Many people were taking pictures, usually with mobile phones. This might increase the chance of people discussing the dress later with family or friends.
 - Usually everybody tries to analyse the data, nobody seems to 'just watch'.
 - When people come out of the IMAX video thing, they don't usually pay attention.
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Sunday August 21st – 11.00 – 13.00

General information on the day

Weather outside: Warm, especially for British summer; a lovely summer day.
 Antenna room occupation: Quiet, stations were usually occupied by one person per station,
 at 11 o'clock. At 11:30 it went really quiet, with only about 10 people in the whole room. It became slightly busier again after 12.30.

2-minute count at 11.00:

Male: 4 Female: 6 Children: 2 | Total of 12 people

2-minute count at 12.00:

Male: 2 Female: 2 Children: 0 | Total of 4 people

2-minute count at 13.00:

Male: 1 Female: 2 Children: 1 | Total of 4 people

Conversations

Conversation 1, woman from Yorkshire, in her 50's, excerpts, British

"It is very powerful, and very effective."

"The artist must be very intelligent and talented."

"I didn't immediately know what it was about, I just thought it looked wonderful."

"It goes straight to the heart now, as it also says on the info panel, that is very powerful. The video also really shows it, and the model, she moves so gracefully."

"It really is a great way to address an issue like this, especially with the data, those streams really show what is going on, so you can feel it, not just read about it as information."

Also, the woman was interested to know that Helen had made the dress, so explained the whole process to her.

Conversation 2, two young men, in their 20's, Italian

The two men looked really interested, but felt really uncomfortable talking as they didn't speak English well. They basically kept pointing at the info trying to explain that they were reading. Unfortunately, having an actual conversation was not possible.

Conversation 3, young man from Dublin, in his 20's, Irish

The young man was a student who was on a holiday with his parents. He was especially interested in the data, and figuring out the countries. He was more interested in the data and its background than in the dress, which was different from most people I had spoken to earlier.

He was wondering why the USA was not on the projections and thought that was a shame. Also, he thought the projection would be clearer when projected on a flat surface instead of on a dress. His opinions were probably connected to the fact that he was a mathematics student.

Similarly, he really wanted to know where people were fleeing from, how many people still lived in Syria, etc. Therefore, we talked about the matter a lot.

He stated to not feel a lot, but mostly wondered about everything he could see on the dress. Which is an interesting approach as well.

Conversation 4, man, 30's, Former Kingston University Graduate, Interior Design, 2008, British

"It is a really engaging piece"

"You quite immediately get what it is about, mainly because of the UNHCR logo, but to really understand it, I needed the background information."

We talked about the six streams, as he wanted to know where refugees came from, and we talked about the background of the data, in which he was really interested. He was impressed by the fact that the data was real and so up to date.

He wanted to know where the dress will go next and how it will develop over time.

Conversation 5, young woman, 20's, British

This girl was into fashion, and thus knew everything already. She followed Helen on social media and had even worked with Helen through LCF (?).

"I already knew that it was incredible, I just really wanted to see it."

Conversation 6, museum employee, man, British

"I was here when they filmed the video and I was just so curious. It was so strange when they filmed it, they all said it was okay and safe, but I just thought 'What is this!?', so I really wanted to see it now."

"Also, when they filmed there was such a special atmosphere, and the model walked so slow and is so tall. Somebody said that she looked like a bride, and that really was quite true."

"Now it is really clear to me. But I also really liked that magic from when the filming took place. Also because you couldn't see any camera's because they were so far away."

"It is really good to see it in this setting, with the projection. It is nice to understand it now."

General comments:

- Some people walked straight past the dress, which did not really happen on Wednesday.
- Similarly, less people were taking pictures with their phones.
- The audience was really different from Wednesday; They were much less interested and all pacing by quickly. Some were really trying to tick off museums as soon as possible, and were already walking through the museum with Natural History Museum and Victoria & Albert

Museum bags. Still, there were people who were genuinely interested.
- There were times when there was nobody around the dress.

Wednesday August 24st – 12.00 – 14.00

General information on the day

Weather outside: Hot! Very warm and sunny
Antenna room occupation: All stations were occupied with around 1 or 2 visitors.

2-minute count at 12.00:

Male: 0 Female: 2 Children: 0 | Total of 2 people

2-minute count at 13.15:

Male: 3 Female: 5 Children: 4 | Total of 12 people

2-minute count at 14.00:

Male: 0 Female: 3 Children: 1 | Total of 4 people

Conversations

Conversation 1, mother and son (about 7 years old), British

The mother and son were just wandering around the museum killing time while the father was visiting an exhibition he really wanted to see. They were British, but not Londoners, they were visiting family here. The son mostly liked the video, he thought it was surprising. When I asked how he would feel if he would have seen the dress on the street he said 'Confused! There would suddenly be a tent on the street; tents don't belong on the street!' What was interesting about this, was that this 7-year-old boy realised that the dress was a tent. The boy talked excitedly about the museum and was, after a few minutes, most interested in finding a lava lamp in the shop. The conversation was ended abruptly when another son showed up who wanted to move on. The mother told me that she really enjoyed the work before she left.

Conversation 2, mother and four children (three approx. 6 to 8 years old, one approx. 3 years old), British

'This is cool!' 'This is epic!' 'This is scary!'

The children were really attracted to the dress in the beginning. We talked about the dress being a tent and how every piece of light represented real people, something that seemed to impress the children. The mother was mostly interested in where the tent came from and how it got here. She really wanted to know if it was real and if it really was not needed in Jordan anymore. All of that was explained to her, which seemed to make her even more interested.

Conversation 3, museum guard, woman, 30's, British

'It is sad. We are all human. We all have the same lives.'

This guard saw when the dress was being filmed and was curious about how it would look. She was very impressed by the filming, the model and with the result now. 'It makes me feel the problem, and not just see numbers or bad stories on television.' This guard really wanted to cover this spot so she could look at the dress. Also, she loved the data. 'This is so powerful, it is more than just pretty, there is a whole story behind it.'

Conversation 4, jewellery designer from Barcelona, woman, Spanish

She loved how the dress looked. She thought it was very aesthetic, which she recalled to be extremely important with fashion and art. She said she was intuitively attracted to the piece by the aesthetics, but that she didn't understand what it was about exactly until she read the info panel. She knew that it was fashion as she recognized the atmosphere of the work.

She said that she couldn't see that it was a tent, especially not from this angle in the museum (that might be something to keep in mind for future exhibitions). She also thought it might be good to distinguish where people come from by colours, so that you could see people from which continents end up living where.

Overall, she was really impressed and interested in Helen as a person and what she does as LCF. This woman would love to do similar things in Barcelona and would stay up to date about HSF.

Conversation 5, Ellen Vaillencourt, fashion designer from Vancouver, Canada

Ellen came to London especially for Dress 4 Our Time and to see Helen (she was originally only going to France). She also sent Helen a tweet about this. Ellen studied Fashion and International Relations / Conflicts (?) and focused on Islamic culture. She now works in ethical fashion and found all of her interests coming together in D4OT and therefore really wanted to meet Helen. She felt she and Helen would have a lot in common. She was incredibly interested and enthusiastic about the dress and loved the projection and video.

Also, Ellen was looking to study for an MA, and thought she would love to study where Helen teaches. Which was another reason why she was visiting.

Overall, we had a long conversation, which was really interesting. She wanted to know everything about the project and we thus talked about almost every aspect of the dress.

(A picture of Ellen's business card was sent earlier, and the actual business card can be found in the notebook. I also gave her HSF contact details.)

Conversation 6, man around 60, British

This man thought the project and content were really interesting. He was particularly intrigued by the projection and how it looked too perfect. He wanted to know about the technical details; such as if the projection came from inside or outside the dress. We mostly talked about the technical parts, as he told me that was 'his thing', but that he also thought that the matter was interesting.

Conversation 7, with Rebecca, who has worked with HSF before

We mostly talked about little things, as she of course already knew everything.

Text sent to Caroline later: 'Just been – working beautifully – very moved – It looks stunning – How it's moved on since St. Picasa – congrats to u all'.

Sunday August 28st – 12.00 – 14.00

General information on the day

Weather outside: Warm, but cloudy and even some rain.
Antenna room occupation: Quite busy, 2 visitors per station. From 12.30 on, it became really busy for a while and there were people everywhere.
Then, from 13.30 on, it suddenly became very silent and most people were having lunch in the restaurant.

2-minute count at 12.00:
Male: 5 Female: 3 Children: 4 | Total of 12 people

2-minute count at 13.00:
Male: 1 Female: 4 Children: 3 | Total of 8 people

2-minute count at 14.00:
Male: 1 Female: 1 Children: 2 | Total of 4 people

Conversations

Conversation 1, young couple; Bonnie, who worked for Holition before, and her boyfriend, British, Londoners.

Bonnie came specifically for the dress as she knew about it because she had worked for Holition previously. She now works at UCL at a data department.

She loved the projection and was really curious what people had said about it and what the comments were, so we talked about that for a while. She thought it looked really good and worked well. When talking about people's responses and analysing those, she did understand that there were people who wanted colour to be added to be able to keep seeing from which continent the refugees came and where they end up.

She was also really interested in how UNHCR and HSF worked together, and she thought it was a really good match.

'The project works really good and is really clear.'

Conversation 2, father (end 30's / 40's) and son (approx. 13 or 14 years old), tourists Icelandic

The first thing these visitors talked about was that Iceland was not on the map, but that Iceland recently took in 50 Syrian refugees. They knew that this wasn't enough to have a pixel, but they still would have loved to see Iceland on the map. The man was interested to know when the data was, because if it was accumulated data (e.g. including former Yugoslavia refugees) Iceland would have enough refugees to be on the map. I explained the data to him and he understood.

'I'm curious to how many people will stay and how many will go back. Because from the former Yugoslavia refugees, the majority moved back eventually, at least from Iceland. I am curious to how the map will look in a few years' time.'

Both the father and the son were impressed by the fact that the data was real and loved that.

Conversation 3, two young women, 20's

The women were initially taking pictures of the dress. 'It is beautiful, such a nice way to talk about an issue like this.' 'It is really moving.' Both women loved the video and that the model looked so mixed so that she could not easily be traced back to a country or ethnic origin.

Also, they were curious to if the data was real-time, and where it came from. They were really impressed when I told them that the data was so recent. Similarly, they loved the tent and that a family really lived in it.

The two women really felt that this was a great way to address an issue like this, that it was human and beautiful. Before they left, they took some pictures of the info panel, too.

Conversation 4, David Betteridge with his daughter

We only had a brief conversation. He was mainly here to take some pictures of how the work looked in the museum. He was pleased with how it looked in this setting.

Conversation 5, woman, 40's / 50's, British, used to live in London, not anymore

This woman was visiting London for the bank holiday weekend. She stated to be really intrigued and told me that she could look at the dress for a long time. 'You can keep seeing new things if you look closely.'

She was impressed by how such a complex subject was made so clear and easy to understand.

Conversation 6, young man, late 20's / early 30's

This man said he understood everything, but was interested in practicalities and also the tree that wore the dress. He basically said that he only had one question, about the tree, and said that he liked the data.

Conversation 7, young man, early 20's

This man was a tourist from Germany, who was visiting London with his mother. 'I was really drawn in by how different this looked from all of the other things in this room.' He loved the mix of different elements; the dress, the projection and the video.

In Germany, refugees are a hot topic, so he said he therefore liked this way of addressing the issue. 'It is not just numbers and statistics, but also not just people, it is somewhere in between.' 'The dress makes it very human, and the video as well, but the projection shows the numbers, the 100 people per pixel, and the movements.' He said that this was quite a step into a new direction.

He thought the work was easy to understand, especially with the info panel, but without it, too, although probably only when the countries start forming in the projection.

General comments:

- Everybody looks at the video and almost everybody reads the info panel; so people are genuinely interested enough to read it.
 - A lot of people look at the video long enough to finish it.
 - If people stay longer than 90 seconds, they usually talk to each other about the work, usually about the projection to figure out what it exactly tells them and how it works.
 - People are very much interested in where the data comes from, and are usually impressed when they find out that it is 'real' data.
 - Conversations with interested visitors usually take around 10 minutes, which means that people were genuinely interested.
 - A lot of people took pictures of the dress, which is proof that it really appeals to people aesthetically.
 - The lights work really well in the slightly darker space, both the projection and the video.
 - People liked how different the dress looks from the other things in the room.
 - People are really amazed about the fact that a family lived in the tent, that is a 'real' used tent.
 - The responses are very different than at St. Pancras. That is probably due to the context and that people are expecting certain things more in museum than on a train station.
 - Young children are attracted to the lights, but also to the lights on the wall above the dress, which results in them sometimes being distracted.
 - Comments for improvement usually are that people want to see the countries clearer and where people come from. (Want to see if people from certain area's also travel to certain area's.)
 - When people come or when they finish reading the info panel and try to understand the projections, when the projection is at its end, when the pixels are going 'back', they were more likely to leave than when the projection was at any other point. This is probably due to the fact that it takes quite some time for the pixels to go 'back' and be built up again until they are at a point where people can understand them. Maybe that part of the projection could run a little quicker.
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Personal quote

'I admired the power of the dress; to observe how it makes people think and how it really works as a catalyst of conversation and thought. Communicating such an important current topic in this human and subtle – but strong – way is truly impressive. The dress has developed so much further since its exhibit at St. Pancras; The projection really adds the more factual side to the intuitive actual dress and this combination is what makes the work so powerful. This was proven by the responses of the audience and the popularity of the work at the Science Museum.'



Dress 4 Our Time
Helen Storey Foundation
Science Museum, Antenna Room.
London, September 2016

Evaluation by, Paula Maynard

Exhibition Title.
'Our Lives In Data 'running 15th July to 4st September.

Invigilation dates; -

Wednesday 17th Press Launch (8.30 – 10.30), Saturday 20th (1-3pm), Wednesday 31st Science Museum Late night event (6.30 pm -8.30) & Saturday 3rd (1pm – 3pm).

Visitors.

Visitors differed significantly at weekend from those who visited the launch and the Museum late night event.

At weekends visitors were apparently families or dating couples.

During the school holiday period many visitors were tourists and City Break Holiday-makers compared to the more specific minded Individuals, professional and students that visited the launch and Wednesday night late events.

Family Groups.

The weekend family groups frequently had more than one young child with them, and often an elderly family member too, so much of their experience in the Antenna Room was 'distracted' and rather pre occupied with the whereabouts of their energetic children, food, resting their elderly parent's legs and seeing as much as possible all over the Antenna Room.

Most of the adults in the family groups with young families would linger at D40T but were not able to concentrate for long enough due to their familial distractions.

Dwell time was shortest with groups.

Children Under 7/ 8 yrs.

Children under 8 years of age struggled to concentrate but responded enthusiastically to the buttons, flashing lights, head phones and seats to climb and slide on around the Antenna Room.

Adults in Family Groups with older children & teens / couples.

Adults approach D40T firstly by reading the information board, then noticeably checking the information against the Dress and the film. The information affects them sufficiently to encourage the partners / or older children / teens to join them at the installation them to share thoughts and to appreciate D40T installation. They are compelled to discuss the installation amongst themselves.

I also noticed how readily the adult becomes teacher to the family group or their partner.

They comment and discuss amongst themselves and dwell for approx. 2-3 minutes.

Professionals / Students / Individuals.

Visitors in this group ranged in age from around 19 to 65 years of age. Often they had visited the Science Museum specifically to see the D40T installation and their interest ranged from visual arts, scientific, technological, humanitarian and fashion view points

These visitors were stimulated, actively interested and had more time or wish to talk with me.

Camera Phone versus Camera.

Speed Walkers - Many people 'speed-walk' the Museum taking rapid shots with their hand – held devices with (I assume) the intension to either 'post' on social media or to look at later. Interested Individual – dwells and studies the D40T installation, then takes a photo with either hand-held or full camera with the intension to discuss and show to another party at a later time.

Ethnic Groups.

Of the visitors to the Antenna Room about 70% were white, approx. 20% Asian and 10% Black.

Gender.

It would appear to me that D40T appeals to everyone.

Interaction.

Most, if not all Visitors approached the D40T installation by at first viewing of the Dress, then the film and then reading the info board. Many would walk around the installation to get a better view. Those, with a more lasting interest will take photos, read in detail and project a

more animated reaction to the piece. These are the visitor's types that I like to engage in conversation with.

The information board provided the physical location for any referencing and discussions. Those visitors who do dwell at D40T and whom take time to digest its content are noticeably impressed and are happy to express that verbally with me or others in their group.

D40T Installation.

The Dress, film, visualization and information board created a compelling and beautiful museum installation

The UN Refugee graphics were not immediately apparent to the visitor until they had walked around to the front of the dress which faced outwards and towards the back of the hall. A central position may have been more impactful.

Visitors were clearly affected by the content and clearly moved to comment or (hopefully) action. I wonder if we missed an opportunity to record these thoughts more freely by way of notes, hand prints pinned perhaps onto the blank wall / bench seat area adjacent.

A bit like lighting a candle at an altar to demonstrate that you are thinking about someone.

Attendance.

Wednesday nights 'late' event enjoyed the most visitors out of all of my sessions and it was very well attended with the busiest time correlating to Jonathan Chippendales speeches at 8pm & 9.30 where we had approx. 40 plus and 50 plus visitors listening respectively.

Sarah Hervey commented that the event appeared to be better attended than is usual That previous 'late' events had approx. 4,000 visitor attending

Invigilator.

Visitors were happy to engage in conversation about D40T and most were moved enough to want to find out more about the Dress, the film, the visualization and the artist involved.

Comments.

'Soft installation, hard subject.'

'The weight of the Dress reflects the weight of the issue.'

'I love that technology and art work so powerfully together.'

'I was drawn to the Film initially.'

'D40T is the best thing in the entire Museum.'

'The photo on the board that captures the final visualisation 'map' is excellent.'

'I love the fact that it is the people that define the clarity of the countries on the map.'

'The data projected onto the Dress gives you a clearer idea of the broader picture.'

'You can easily see where people are settling and understand how their numbers relate to the intake of refugees in other countries.'

'It is a map of human kindness.'

'It is such a great concept. Very 'meaningful.'

'You don't have to be a social scientist or a statistician to understand what is going on.'

'There is great power in its softly spoken tone of voice. It encourages people to lean inwards both in curiosity and to listen more clearly to what is being said. Were these hard issues of people displacement presented in a more conventional way visitors might shudder away thus preventing the magnitude of this issue getting through to them.'

'D4OT invites quiet reflection and thought.'

'I have seen first-hand how design can be a tool for raising awareness about current social issues.'

'Visitors are approaching it because it looks cool, modern and strange.'

'They approach it with excitement and curiosityso different to when we watch the news on TV, although the info itself might be the same.'

'Thank you for being an inspiration.'

'The data highlights the importance of what NOT said.'

'The data provides a Gods-eye perception of what is going on.'

'We are just trying to get our heads around it all.'

'Straighter facts than you'll get from any politician and much more interesting to look at.'

'I ask myself why someone with strong held religious beliefs take themselves and even their family through such danger and hardship to want to reach (specifically) the UK whose faith and values represent everything that they abhor. '

'You probably shouldn't write that down.'

'I think the UK has a global reputation for acceptance, and refugees feel sure that the UK will tolerate their belief and practice.'

'It seems to work for the men but not the women who continue to be oppressed and subjugated.'

Conclusion.

D4OT at the Science Museum was very successful in attracting interest, inviting thought, provoking conversation, and hopefully to rallying the kind of support that generates action.

Visitor Numbers Science Museum supplied by Sarah Harvey, Curator

Main door – 187,578

Groups entrance – 9,818

Lates – 3,211

Total – 200,607

Main door and Groups entrance total was 197,396

Working on the assumption that 30 % (observed from visitor flow and evaluators comments) made their way to the Wellcome Wing and the Dress. So this would mean **Approx. 59,218 saw the Dress or entered the space where it was positioned.**

At the late, from the 3 hours I was in position, that at least 1000 visitors saw the Dress that evening.

This would give a total of **60,218**

Comments and responses to Dress for our Time

‘A work of art that beautifully, heartbreakingly and unflinchingly expresses the reality of the refugee crisis.’

Susie Stubbs, Managing Director, Modern Designers, Manchester

‘... the feedback from staff members has been unanimously positive, in fact positively glowing!’

Sarah Harvey, Curator and Project Lead for Dress 4 Our Time at the Science Museum

‘I have been observing visitors today as they were looking at the dress, lots of them. They are approaching it because it looks cool, modern, strange? And they approached it with such an excitement and curiosity – so different from our attitude when we watch news on TV, although the info itself might be the same.’

Elisenda Losantos Graphic Designer Science Museum

Visitors to Late on August 31st

‘I love the fact that the people define the countries.’

‘The visual data helps you to better understand the broader picture.’

‘You can easily see where people are settling and clearly see how their numbers increase in one country in relation to the intake of refugee's to another.’

‘Is it a map of human kindness?’

‘I ask myself why would a person /a family whose belief or faith are in opposition to the those of the West and Europe go through such danger and hardship to reach the UK which stands

for everything they abhor.'

'I think the UK has a global reputation for acceptance and tolerance. Refugee want to come here because we tolerate all but it seems to work better for the men than the women.'
(This person then said that I should probably write this in my note book!)

'The data animation tells a much clearer and compelling story than the facts and figures could ever do alone.'

'It becomes possible to understand the 'values within the data and to be able to grasp more quickly areas of growth or decline.'

Evaluators comments

Paula Maynard

Ever the optimist, I feel hugely energised by the inspirational creative power that rises out of the catalytic collaboration between the talented artistic, scientific, and technological minds. That despite the issues that continue to drag our World down that these great minds can make ordinary people 'understand' without fear and those minds can hopefully help generate the ideas that will result in a positive outcome for all.

Cindy van Rees

Thank goodness you guys have a 'voice' that is being heard and that you have the Science Museum from where to make yourselves heard. But you are not shouting your thoughts and causing people to shudder and cover their ears but using the power of the softly spoken voice that encourages people to lean inwards to listen.