

You are now entering

Counter Tourism

Its time to take charge of your heritage experiences and transform your approach to "visits" forever...

Do you read the panels? When you go into an exhibition, you know the ones they are designed to be easy to read and understand and they set the context for the objects your about to see? Well I have a confession to make I don't, sometimes I feel a little bit bad about this, after all someone's spend a good deal of time writing this stuff. And sometimes I feel like I'm a rebel, that I'm breaking the mould, stand back world I am blazing a new path! But now I wonder my zone tolerance policy on panels is because I have in fact always been a counter tourist...

Counter-Tourism is for those who want more from a heritage site than a tea shoppe and an old thing in a glass case. Counter-Tourism is an invitation to you, to completely transform your experience of the heritage-tourism industry and its many sites. It provides you with a set of powerful lenses, bending a whole world of conventional tourism into a spiral of new perspectives and experiences.

And it is these tactics which lead me one crisp October morn bare foot with pockets full of plastic animals in my local museum

Crab man *The interview*

Counter-Tourism is the work of Phil Smith, A.K.A crab man who has a background in performance and music theatre [he has written more than 100 plays for companies including St Petersburg State Comedy Theatre, Opera North and Perpetual Motion, and is dramaturgy with TNT (Munich)]. From site-specific performances in South Devon beach huts, lidos, tea shops and other unconventional settings, to mis-guides in National Trust properties, to counter-tours and drifts in city streets. We also appear to share a love of Lidos and Zombies or at least we have both worked in and around these outdoor swimming arenas and undead brain munchers...another story you say, Anyway

This is the bit where I ask Phil Smith some frivolously flippant and down right obvious questions...enjoy

The question about how counter tourism came about?

I was exploring how to develop my alternative-guiding, my mis-guided tours - I was testing these out over three years of research with the help of 60 volunteers who were attending my tours and commenting on them... but two things changed the direction of my research - firstly, through desk-based study i became aware of the research work in Tourism Studies which had generated the idea of the 'agentive tourist' - that despite their image as passive consumers, tourists mostly create their own tourism - and secondly, my growing awareness that my volunteers were appropriating my mis-guidance tactics for their own

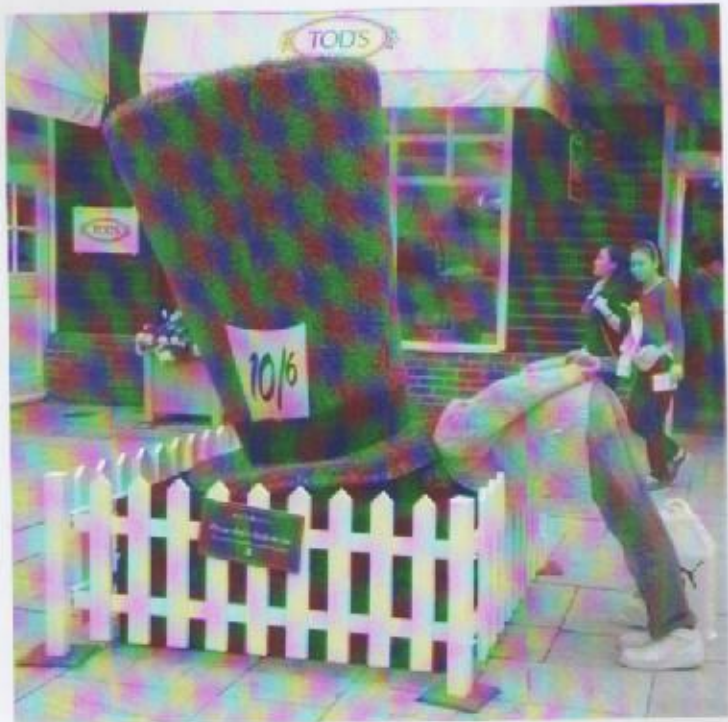
uses. I therefore changed gear and developed 'counter-tourism' which allows any tourist or visitor to deploy the performance-like tactics of 'mis-guidance' within the context of a visit to a heritage site.

How you would define counter tourism to IMTAL Members?

The hyper-sensitizing of the visitor to conventional sites - becoming aware of their abjectness and ironies - and then using that experience to 'play' in the sites, performing with the sites to get a better/different/new feel for them.

Please retell one of your own experiences trying out a counter tourism tactic?

Trying out the tactic "walk a site as if it were a thin layer of ice" outside the now redundant Sizewell A reactor site. I attracted rather too much attention from the police who



The Counter-tourism Strategy goes as follows:

"Together, ordinary people can change the world of heritage-tourism by innovative consuming, intervention and even 'infiltration' that will transform the way that the heritage industry and its sites are visited, looked at, experienced, conserved, managed and changed."

Exciting stuff, but what does it look like, how does it feel and how does performance fit into all this madness? I set off to find out for myself

Armed with my Counter-tourism a pocket book I set out

to explore my newly reopened local Museum. I thought this might be the best way to start, I am prone to getting carried away and they do know me, they are aware of the Lindsey world effect, even if they do still call me Emma. again another story so thought it might be a safe places to start.

Reading the pocket book I am reminded of my own education and discovering Surrealism for the first time, experimenting with surrealist games in which, language and images have no set meaning and there are no right or wrong answers. Games in which you are empowered to reinvent the

continually patrol the boundaries of the power station, I decided to walk along the beach to Dunwich rather than retrace my steps. As I walked I knew I was being watched, but also that the further away I got the less interest I was generating, so that as I walked I felt myself turn back into the usual tourist spectator. I decide that to make this an active spectating, to see what thing my looking might conjure, so, mindful that beneath the sea at Dunwich are the remnants of a medieval city a third the size of London at the same time, and I attempted to summon the sunken city to rise. To my amusement a cargo ship hove into view, its outline not dissimilar to one of the 19 churches that the sea had swallowed here.

Any challenges you have come up against in being a counter tourist?

Only my own periodic stupidity and

clumsiness that lead me to miss opportunities – but mostly I find it a joy, always surprising and novel, sometimes whimsical and other times more serious – during Hurricane Sandy I had an enforced guided coach tour of Manhattan in an NYPD van at the height of the storm. This was novel – to see parts of tourism sites passing by in small pieces!

Any pet hates you have with regard to site practices?

Tour guides who are contemptuous of their audiences. Complacent managements who grind out the same few icons in ever-vaguer forms.

Quick! What's on your desk right now?

On my shelf in front of me now I have a Toby jug of John Barleycorn, brass vases brought back from India by my soldier-grandfather, a wooden fish I made as a 10 year old, part of the

Miles Memorial that I found at its base, a snow globe of Naples, playing cards based on Prague's esoteric history, a swan made out of a Special Brew tin that I bought for £5 from a homeless man, a model of the lobster-pirate from 'Pirates of the Caribbean'...

The 'your dream place' to visit, that you have not yet been to and why?

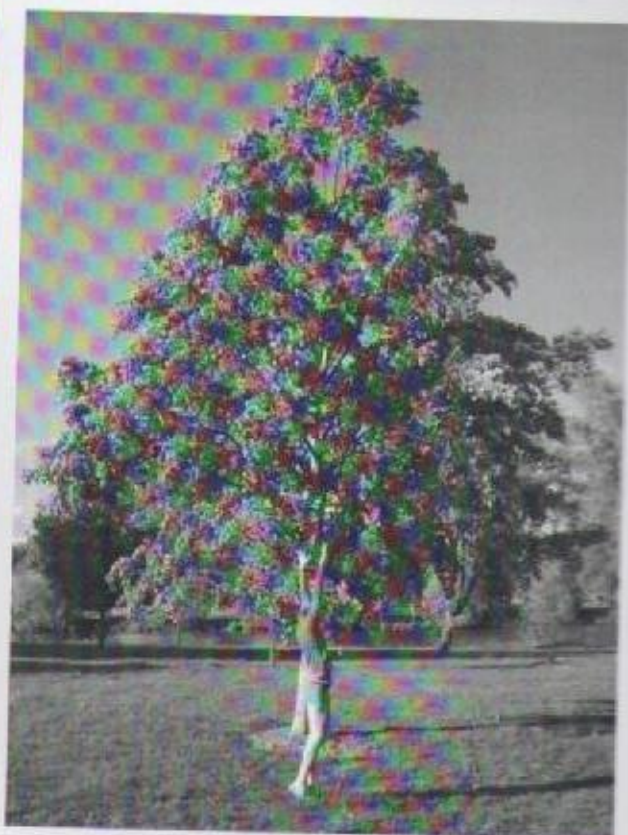
Rennes-le-Chateau – just to solve the mystery and find the Templar treasure, of course.

The last museum or site you visited and how you would sum up the visit in three words,

The American Museum of Natural History, New York - three words to sum it up – "grand scale quaintness"

Your favorite place to visit as a child and why?

Alfred Herbert Museum, Coventry- for the display of exotic insects found in the imported fruit at Coventry Market

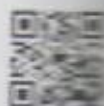


world through your own eyes and see what comes of it. And to ponder on what it says about your own subconscious. The mixing of fine art with games, play, surprise and the fantastic has stayed with me and I'm sure it was one of the reasons I so willingly signed up to be a counter-tourist, perhaps because I had all of the symptoms long before I came across its existence. To my eye it also has a dollop of Wabi-Sabi, the Japanese aesthetic that centres on the acceptance of transience and imperfection. It is fair to say for me learning of the beauty of things "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete transformed my approach to making and made me give up on striving for the expected understanding of perfect, tidy and good and other such silliness.

Counter-Tourism tactics presents a way of understanding

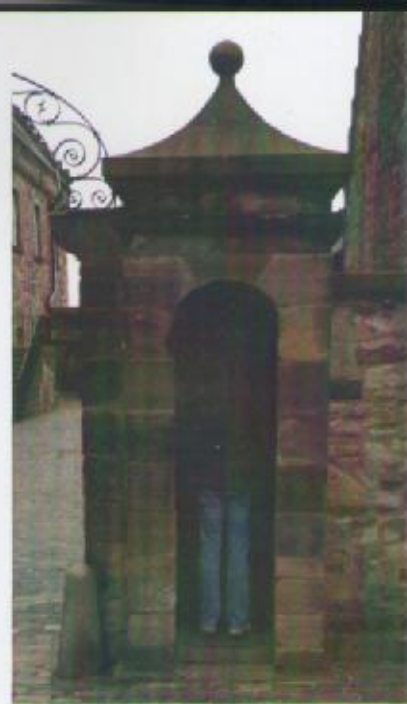
and making history – through pleasure and exploration – a new terrain where history, heritage, nation and identity are no longer carefully policed stories, but are landscapes to be explored, crime scenes to be examined, and sensual playgrounds in which to learn new tricks.

Its important to state that one thing Counter-Tourism is not about is 'sneering at tourism' Instead it celebrates the multiplicities of meaning in every heritage site and aims to upset the industry's attempts at meaning-control, we, the tourist are encouraged to "Embrace the cock-ups and the accidental poetry" as they may tell us much more than yet another information board, which is good to know, and remember next time I sneak past one and become transfixed by the fire door...



10 point guide

Tactics for Counter Tourists



The first five are from The Counter-Tourism pocket book and the rest are from the depraved mind of your editor Lindsey Holmes

1 Dr Freud

Visit a heritage site as if it were your patient and you were its psychologist. Find a nice Cough (or equivalent) and listen to its free associations.

2 Pocket Zoo

Carry small plastic animals in your pockets as prompts explore in particular ways. A lion – pad around. A spider – catch the place in a web of ideas. A giraffe – look only at the highest parts. An octopus?

3 Feet First

Walk a site Barefoot

4 Zombie Apocalypse

Zombies have taken over! You are stuck in this site/ museum, where could you hide and what could you use for weapons?

5 Welcome Home

Imagine the site/museum is your home, what would you keep or change, where would you sleep, eat and receive visitors?

6 Museum of Consumerism

Visit gift shops as if they were museums

7 How Rude!

See how much of a site you can be offended by if you try hard enough

8 Woof!

Imagine you are a dog, your sense of smell is all important, sniff your way round, describing by smell, where would you visit first? If you can't smell something, what do you think is should smell of?

9 Upside down

Lay on the floor and imagine the floor is the ceiling and the ceiling is the floor, how would the site be different?

10 Automatic Drawing

As you walk around the site/ museum draw a picture without looking at it, adding details as you pass them or based on how each place feels, you could do these on postcards as mementos of your visit post one home and see if people can guess where you have been!

Quick! Get out into the world and try these out, or have a go at creating your own. This magic box

will lead you to more information on and ways to purchase From The Counter-Tourism pocket book,

or you could go to <http://www.triarchypress.com/pages/Counter-Tourism-Pocketbook.htm>

