

MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Project Agenda and Skills:

'SenseScape' is partnering with the Manchester Museum and the University of Manchester to design a dynamic, multi-sensory learning space for children. We'll develop architectural plans and atmospheric concepts for future investment. During "Action Weeks," we'll collaborate with you and the client to refine and present this proposal, creating a sustainable, biophilic, and culturally relevant museum experience for young visitors.

Sensory design

Diagramming

Presentation techniques

Biophilic principles

Model making

Community engagement

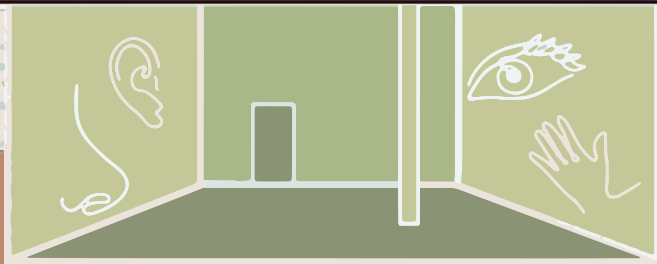
Participatory design

Illustration & graphics



Team:

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Huaixuan Tu
Jessica Coapes
Nour Elzawi
Yuran Wang



SENSESCAPE

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MSA
LIVE 25

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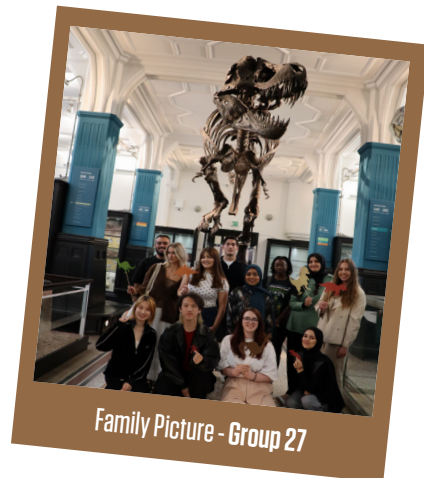
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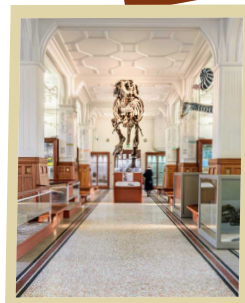


Partners

Our partners on this project are the Manchester Museum which is part of the University of Manchester (it's one of the largest UK's University Museums). It has a collection of over 4 million objects which span subjects from Archaeology to Zoology. The goal for the Museum is to build understanding between cultures, create a more sustainable world and to guide their projects by their values of care, imagination and inclusion.

We are working collaboratively with representatives of the museum: Hannah and Wendy. A little bit of background for them is that they both have a history of working in multiple sectors some of which include: arts, history, health, culture, and so much more.

Their collective hopes for the project is to create a space where children are free to explore and develop their sensory processing skills.



Introduction

SenseScape

'SenseScape' is collaborating with Manchester Museum to design a dynamic, multi-sensory, and multi-functional educational space for children. A key aspect of this project is to approach the brief with a high standard of professionalism, ensuring the resulting space is inclusive and accessible to a diverse range of users. Including parents, carers, and children. Particularly those with additional needs such as wheelchair users or individuals with sensory sensitivities.

Project Aims and Objectives

This project aims to develop a series of atmospheric concepts and architectural plans that will serve as a design statement for future investment opportunities. Ideally incorporated into the design would be to consider different climatic aspects such as noise levels, lighting, ventilation and heating. As well as potential thinking at different scales and levels. Taking into account the users safety requirements through the careful consideration of regulations, precedents and safeguarding procedures.

Based on user-friendly analysis the project will be both health conscious and easily maintainable. While keeping in mind the Museum's mission and educational objectives the project will remain sustainable and environmentally friendly throughout. Feedback will be used to redefine the project's progression within the design process. This feedback will be from clients, users (we'll receive feedback from user representatives - Pinc College) and stakeholders (Museum team).



SITE OVERVIEW



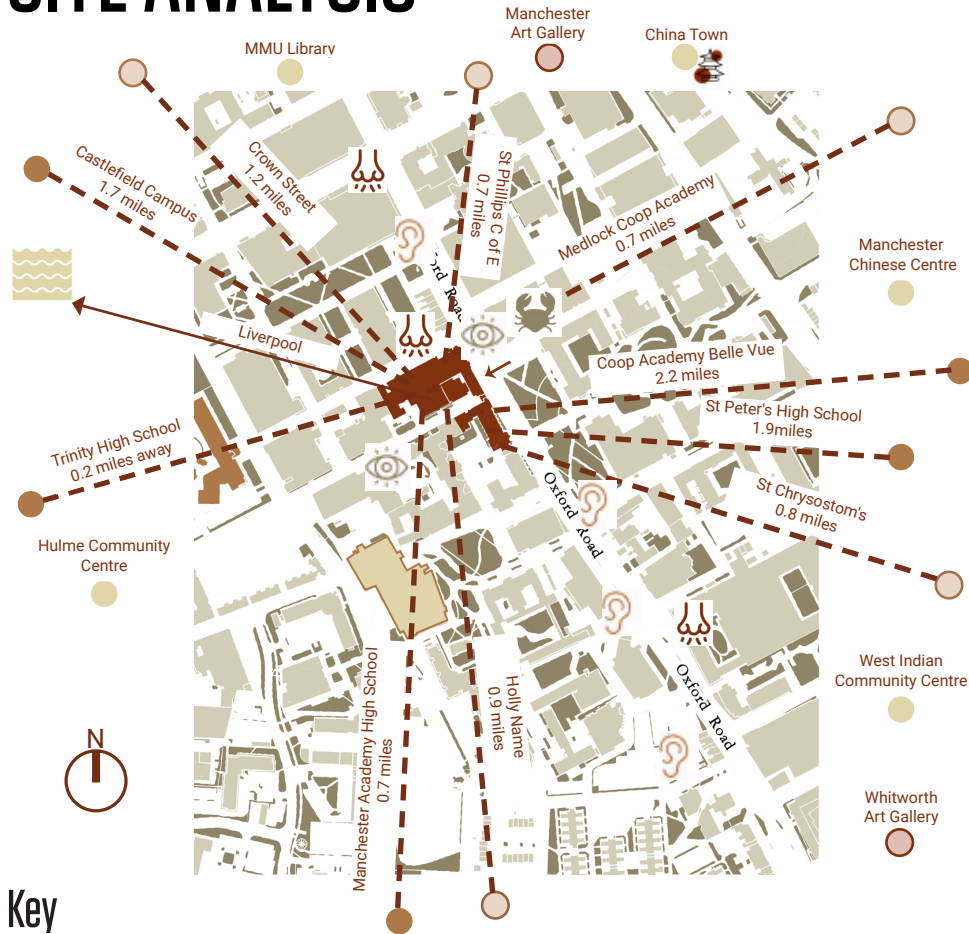
On our first day of the planned action weeks we decided to go on a trip to the site to better understand the brief, straight from the clients. We wanted the project to reflect the experience which we had journeying through the exhibits.

To get into the sensory brief we devised an icebreaker which relied on teamwork to understand the importance of senses in our everyday life (even if they do look like plasticine animals :D). The activity required reliance on their teammates as each member was lacking a sense, i.e. sight, hearing and voice.

ACTION PLAN



SITE ANALYSIS



Key

Map Characteristics

- The Manchester Museum
- Green Spaces
- Buildings

Features - Potential Users

- High Schools
- Primary Schools
- Cultural Links
- Museums

Features - Senses

- Smells
- Noise
- Visual connections

Features - Exhibits References

- Museum's Icon
- Coastal Line

Context

Site analysis was necessary for better understanding of the brief, we collected data which linked to the project brief.

We had three categories of exploration:

- Culture (links to museum exhibitions)
- Senses (link to project brief)
- Potential Users (local education facilities)

ATMOSPHERIC DEVELOPMENT

Collages



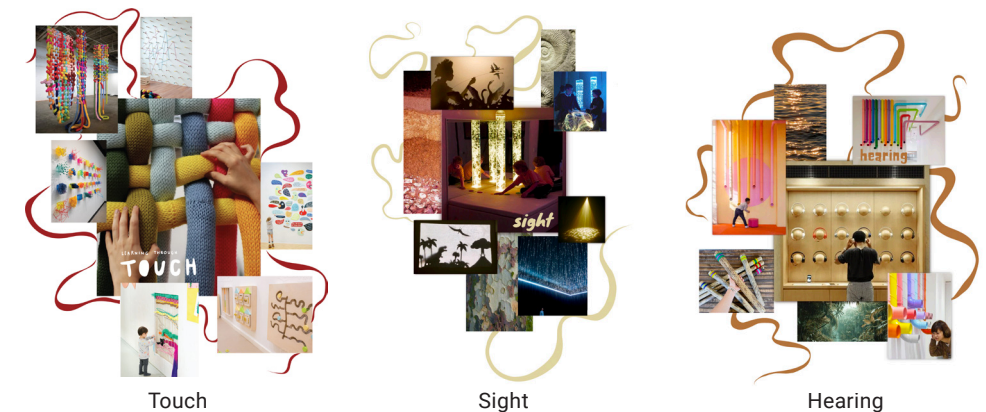
The collages on the left are representing different zones in the room.

The collages were created to better understand the atmospheric aspirations for the room. They seek to link the museum's existing collections with the new character of the designed space.

Themes

- Earthy
 - Natural
 - Palaeontology
 - Cultural
- Palaeontology
 - Natural
 - Soft
 - Textured
- Calm
 - Natural
 - Astronomy
 - Comfort

Precedents



Touch

Sight

Hearing

PRESENTATIONS

16th May



Client and user feedback was important in collecting data for further improvements for the space. We presented to Pinc College (user) and stakeholders/ clients and received very different feedback from both groups which was invaluable for our design development.

Pinc College :

- Soft elements
- Isolation pods
- Art Zone
- Audio control (through noise cancellation of variable settings)

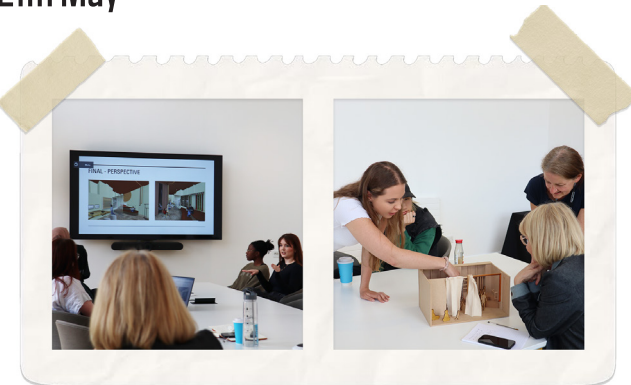
Stakeholders and Clients :

- Better accessibility consideration
- Safeguarding (visibility)
- No level changes
- Addition of railings

Final presentation to the client went very successfully they appreciated how we took their feedback from the previous session and implemented in our design.

- Elimination of the second level (for inclusivity).
- Changes to our colour palette and textural palette for better sensory experience
- We reduced the storage capacity as this was unnecessary for their requirements.

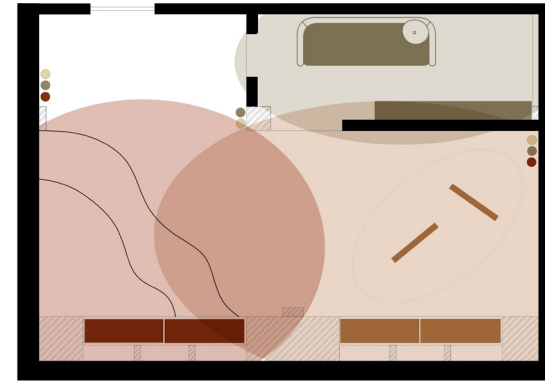
21th May



PLAN DEVELOPMENT

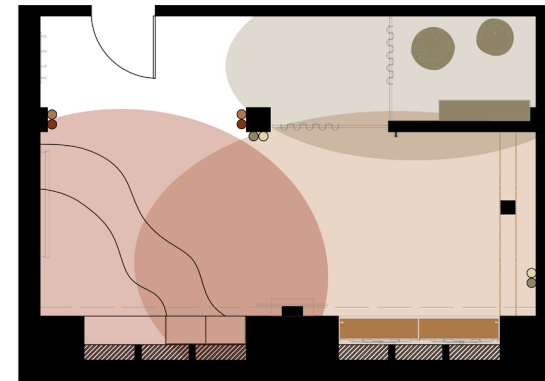
Version 1

- Three zone division: active, transitional and quiet
- Random hanging elements from ceiling
- Sand boxes
- Sofas and other large furnishings
- Lots of music tubes
- Multiple levels



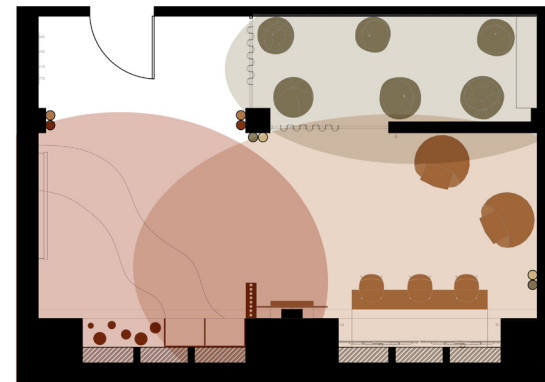
Version 2

- Three zones still however quiet zone became calm zone (after user feedback)
- Regular hanging elements from secondary support beam (ropes)
- Reduced number of sandboxes
- Reduction of larger furniture but keeping seating element
- More music tubes

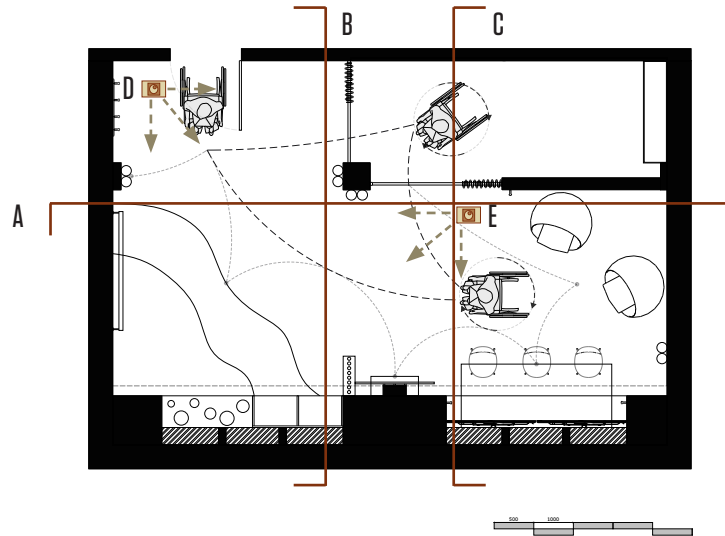


Version 3 (Final)

- No more hanging element from ceiling, changed to smaller removable intervention
- Addition of bubble tubes
- More soft seating options (i.e. beanbags, seating pods and art stools)
- New art space added (after user feedback)
- Spacing out activities for better accessibility of wheelchair and ambulant users



FINAL PLAN AND SECTIONS



We wanted to maximise the room's capability for wheelchair users. So we minimised the activities in the middle of the room for better moveability.

In the final plans there is still three zones: active, calm and transitional.

Key



Section A



Section B



Section C



PERSPECTIVE AND RENDERS

Visual D



Visual E

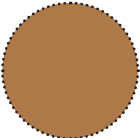


OUR SENSESCAPE

Material Palette



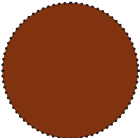
Floor - Wood Vinyl
(Oak finish)



Colour scheme /
Walls - Copper



Activity - Weaving
fabric strips



Colour scheme/
Ceiling - Sienna



Curtains - Red linen
(blackout)



Furniture - Walnut



Colour scheme /
Walls - Dutch White



Accent Wall -
Sedimentary layers



Colour scheme /
Calm walls - Sage



Furnishings - Red
soft texture

Atmospheric Aspirations

Atmosphere is very important for the Museum. A key part of the brief was the links to current exhibits. We achieved this by using colours commonly seen in the Museum (these are sponsored by a company called Little Greene).

The sketches to the left we done to show the feelings we hope to evoke within the sensory room. Done in a warm colour palette to emphasise the inviting nature we wanted to create.

We are using a very natural colour palette to create a calm environment which won't be overstimulating to its users. The materials used throughout the space are soft, light and comforting. They seek to create a sense of safety and familiarity, encouraging children to learn through extrinsic activities for a new way to experience the Museum.

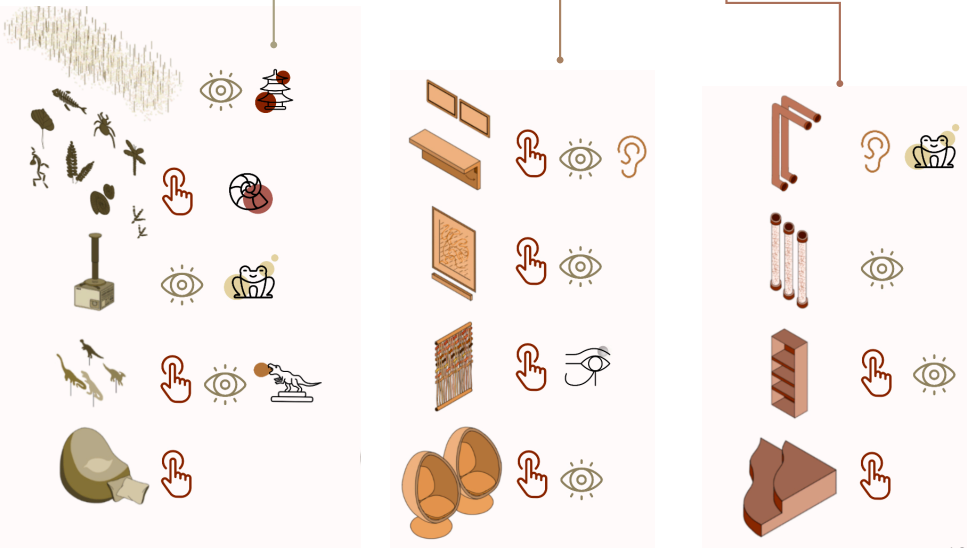
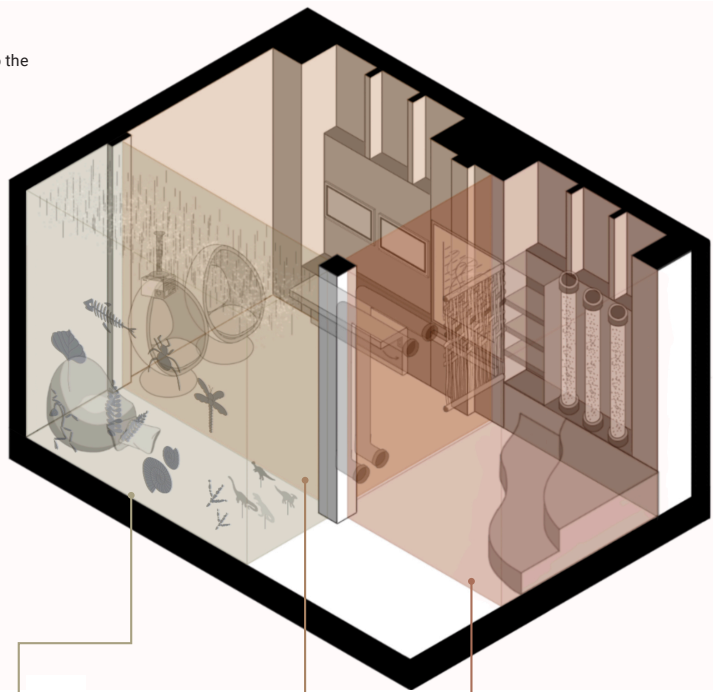


ISOMETRIC VIEW

The room is divided into 3 zones: active, transitional and calm.

Each zone corresponds strongly to the Museum's collections.

- Sight
- Touch
- Hearing
- Asian Collections
- Vivarium
- Dinosaurs
- Fossils
- Egypt & Sudan



PHYSICAL MODEL

We decided that to better understand the scale of the activities and user interactions with the environment we should make a physical model. The model is made using natural and rescued materials which we received from the museum and UoM workshops.



Photos

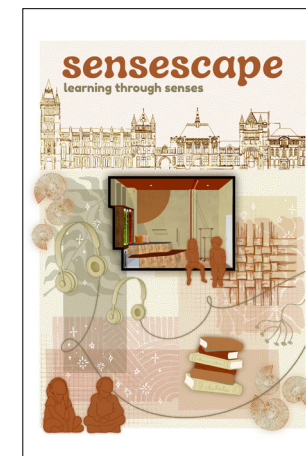


REFLECTION AND FUTURE

Reflection

Coming into these Action weeks was a little bit scary. After all the careful considerations made through planning meetings with the clients as well as working behind the scenes to curate a complex series of activities to keep everyone engaged.

All this planning was so helpful in the success we had over the action weeks, we kept to schedule and we got the opportunity to experience live feedback from not just the clients but additionally the stakeholder, and potential users. Working collaboratively came naturally to us after the icebreaker activity on the first day as we became comfortable working together as a team.



Future Plans

The collaborators (after the submission) want to present the ideas for the sensory room, showcasing our proposal to both users and stakeholders alike.

This will be done by displaying the posters in the room demonstrating the outputs aimed at stakeholders and out neurodivergent users.

ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1 and Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Resuse students with those in BA year 1 and year 2 and Masters Landscape Architecture 1 in mixed-year teams to undertake live projects with external partners to create social impact.

LIVE PROJECTS

All MSA LIVE projects are live. A live project is where an educational organisation and an external partner develop a brief, timescale, and outcome for their mutual benefit.

SOCIAL IMPACT

All MSA LIVE projects are for community benefit or have social impact. Social impact is the effect an organization's actions have on the well-being of a community. Our agendas are set by our external collaborators.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

MSA LIVE projects work with many organisations: charities, community groups, social enterprises, community interest companies, researchers, practitioners and educators.

STUDENT-LED

Our MSA masters students take the lead in the project conception, brief development, delivery and co-ordination of a small project. Other cohorts joined for an eventful 2 weeks of activities at the end of the academic year.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Working in teams within and across year groups and courses; MSA students participate in peer to peer learning. In addition, collaborators, participants and students engage in the transfer of tangible and intellectual property, expertise, learning and skills.

LARGE SCALE

This year approximately 650 students from 5 cohorts in MSA have worked on 40 projects with partners.

QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team:
msalive@mmu.ac.uk

BLOG

live.msa.ac.uk/2025

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