

Interactive Documentary

NORTH WEST 200

Visual Essay



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INTRODUCTION

What is an Interactive Documentary?

What is an Interactive Documentary? Tanya Chopp of the Voice.com, states that with an Interactive Documentary “the audience or the ‘user’ is able to modify their journey through the documentary based on how they choose to interact with the full complement of multimedia tools including video, photographic, audio and digital assets” (Chopp, 1997).

Common issues a documentary maker can face are:

How will the documentary be distributed? Which medium do you intend to reach your target audience via? with this project we know it will be via the internet in the form of a website. This in itself poses more challenges, but modern times require a different approaches. Being able to collaborate with a team with different skill sets to complete a successful project.

Skills such as editing, graphic design, proficient in an array of software, coding ability, effective camera work, photography, sound engineering, interview techniques, journalism, investigative, researching, camera work, to name but a few. How can you ensure that people will pay attention?

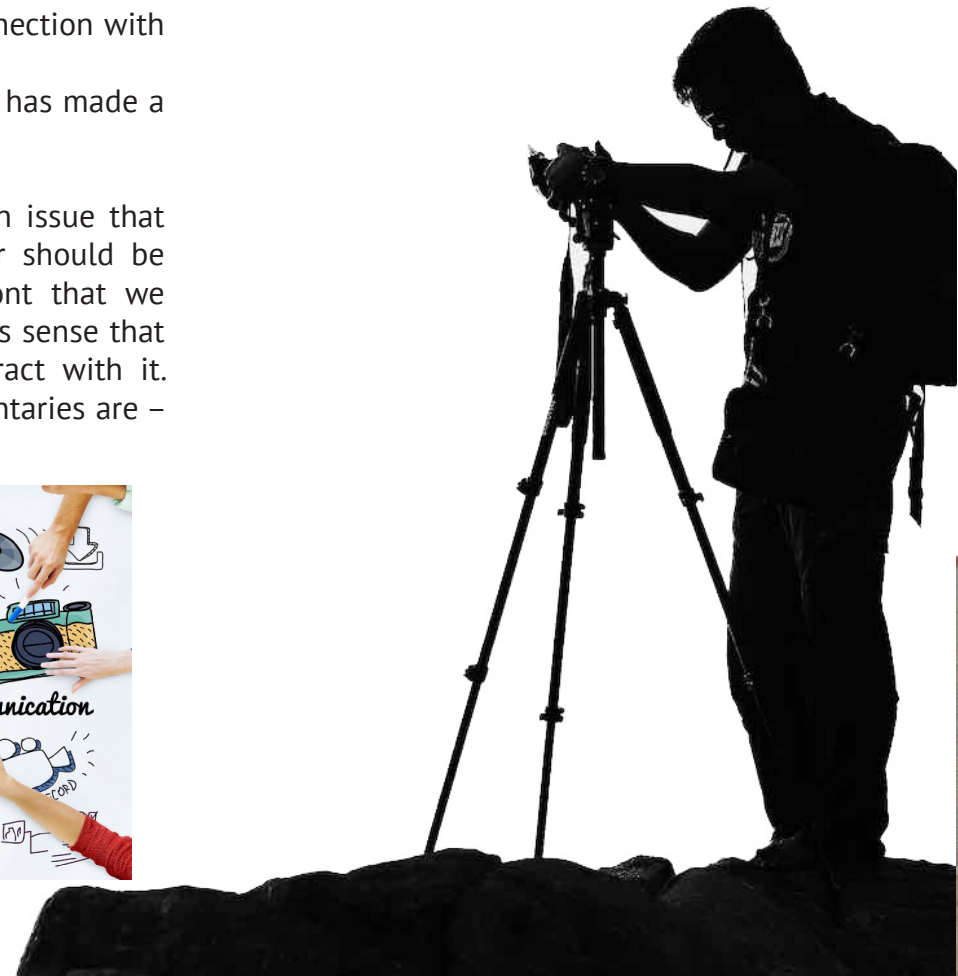
How can you create a personal connection with the audience?

How can you be sure your message has made a lasting impression?

“A strong documentary discusses an issue that should either affect everyone – or should be bringing something to the forefront that we should all think about. It only makes sense that audiences should be able to interact with it. And that’s what interactive documentaries are – direct engagement.” (Chopp, 1997).

The big difference between the traditional documentary format and an Interactive Documentary is, Interactive Documentaries “Encourage Participation”.

The user will be able to choose their own path and at their own pace. Bringing together all the elements shown right at the users own choice, evidently proves to be a much more fulfilling experience.



NORTH WEST 200

Chosen topic

The North West 200 is Ireland's premier motorcycle race, established in 1929 on the north coast of Northern Ireland. The track takes in just under 9 miles of public roads along 'the triangle' as it's known.

The three towns of Portstewart, Portrush and Coleraine make up this triangle, and this street circuit is one of the fastest in the world. Average speeds of 120mpg and when conditions are just right, a top speed of nearly 210mph on the part of the track coming in to Portrush.

The race was originally run over two hundred miles as a handicap race, hence its name, but the new format covers 4-6 laps during the Saturday afternoon.

Visitors flock from all over the world to watch this event, spectators of around 150,000 each year is common.

The North Coast is a hive of activity during race week, and this is a well-loved tradition for many.

Ethan Hill and myself partnered up to make a bid to be able to cover the NW200 as our project. We were successful in our pitch, and due to our local ties to the event, we hope to present an interactive experience that will do this event justice.

We're hoping for some quality content from the Causeway Coast and Glens Museums department to allow us to draw an in depth narrative.

Whilst looking back at old photographs of the nw200 would be engaging for the user in itself, we feel there's a story to be told that many are not aware of. A story of an event who's future is not guaranteed. An event in financial hardship due to lack of sponsorship, insurance difficulties, the impact of covid-19 causing it to be cancelled for 2 years running.

Our aim is to raise awareness to these issues yet allow for a nostalgic glimpse at the past and show how far this event has really come in terms of advancing technology and human endeavour.



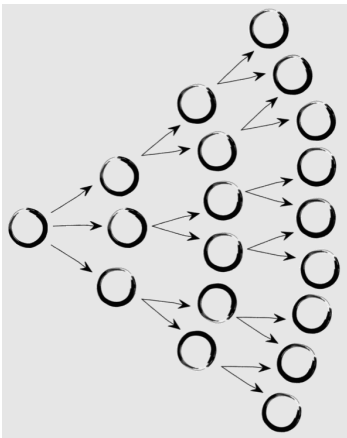
NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

The 6 types



The above diagram shows a 'Linear Narrative'. As you can see, the step-by-step fashion shows how the narrative would be run. Things would progress in a straight line as the name suggests. With a beginning, middle and an end.

(M.T. Wroblewski, 2020)

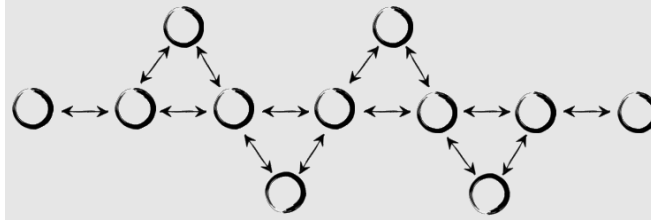


This diagram shows a 'Branching Narrative'.

This would be considered a nonlinear structure in its simplest form. Each stage of the narrative you will be presented with different options or avenues to explore. You can imagine, as a

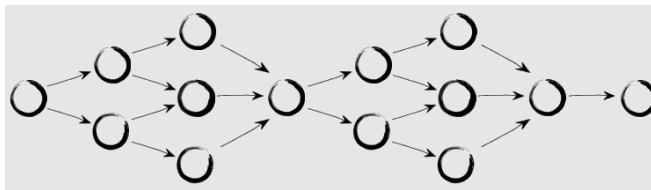
writer of a story with this structure, the amount you would have to write increases exponentially.

(Nelson, 2015)



The 'Fishbone Narrative' as the name suggests, would be made up of a main spine of the story giving the option to branch off to explore sub stories but always returning to the central narrative to get the the end. For an interactive documentary like our project, this would be a good structure to follow to allow for more immersion yet keeping the user on a pre set route.

(Munday, 2016).

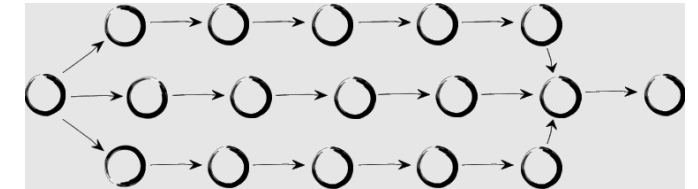


The Parallel Narrative

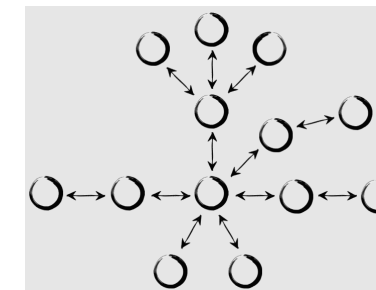
Blending fishbone and a branching narrative structure, the parallel presents the user with different choices, still bringing them back to a central point in the story. As such, the overall immersion of the story is much greater when

the user is presented with a 'choose-your-own-adventure'. This control over the user journey can make things seem much more complex and 'free' than they necessarily are.

This will be the narrative structure our project will try to follow.



The threaded narrative, according to Digital Worlds "The course of the plot does not follow a single path in this form of structure. Rather, the story is comprised of a number of different threads that develop largely independently."



Lastly, the Concentric Narrative, where the structure orbits around a central point. Essentially, the home page would be this central point, where users would

branch off to explore the documentary and return via the home page to explore another path. Very similar structure to our site map.

NARRATIVE & CONTENT

Due to the limited content, we received from the museums department, we felt the need to dig a little deeper in search of content that would do this project justice. We managed to get our hands on this 90th anniversary book for the NW200. It is filled with a more photos and content than we could ever use.



Limitations with using any of these photographs was always going to be the copyright issue.



We reached out to the author of this book, Ian Foster, who has offer to set us up with introductions to the owners of any photographs we'd wish to use.

He has already been so helpful. He also encountered the same copyright issues when making this NW200 book, which is a shame, because there are some beautiful photographs from this event through the decades that fans deserve to see without having to pay a fortune for.

If nothing else, it has been an important lesson in having to work within the set boundaries.

Our aim for this project is to take the feeling of nostalgia inspired by looking back at old photographs like this book does so perfectly.

The feeling you get when you see that in 80 years, you still recognize that exact point along the track. How that exact wall or house has barely changed. That feeling is mesmerizing, and we hope to be able to get that across in our interactive experience. Not to overwhelm the user with visual effects, but to use them subtly by combining music, visuals and spoken word.

As Ian suggested, this event is desperate for the extra publicity. The future of this long-established event is not guaranteed. In fact, even before Covid stopped the race running for 2 years in a row now, it has been in financial struggle. Lack of sponsorship, insurance and the health and safety issues that are increasing every year.

This will be the story we want to drive home to the user. The hardship of such a huge event and the very real possibility that this might be the end for the NW200, or at least a severely scaled back version of what it used to be.

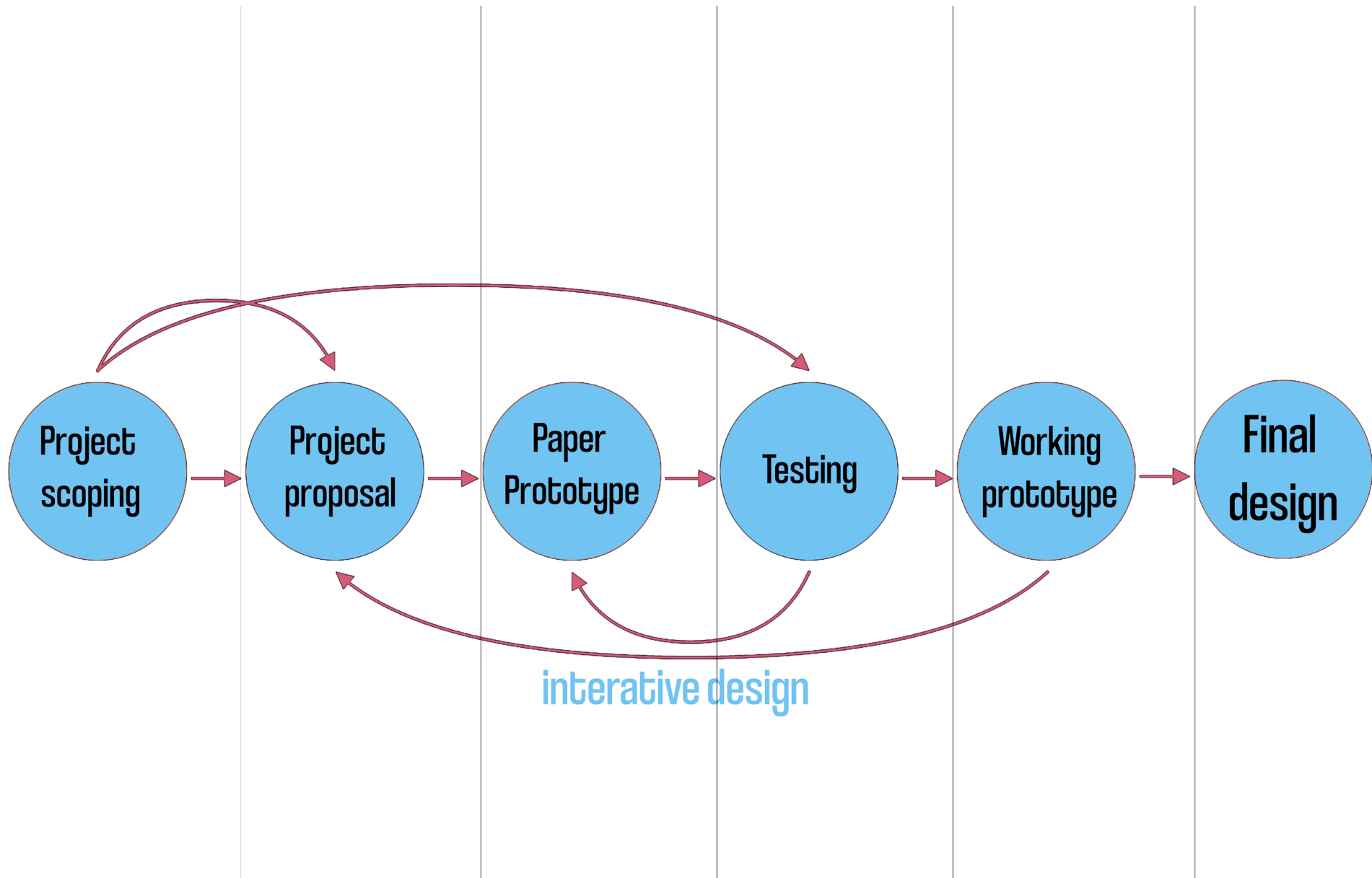
If more fans were aware of the issues the nw200 is facing, it might help the event get back to its glory years.

We intend to include a short film or a series of clickable short films within the documentary.

We have scheduled an interview with a past racer of the nw200. Another interview with an organizer of the event and local fireman who provides safety cover during race week, and another interview with a local business, warden of Juniper Hill Holiday park that's along a popular section of the track.

With these 3 subjects we'll hope to cover the nostalgia aspect of the event. "what it was like back then" how things have changed, points of view etc. The business aspect of the caravan park can speak directly to the negative economic impact that covid has had on this event, the demand that still exists for coming to stay during race week and opinions on the future of the event.

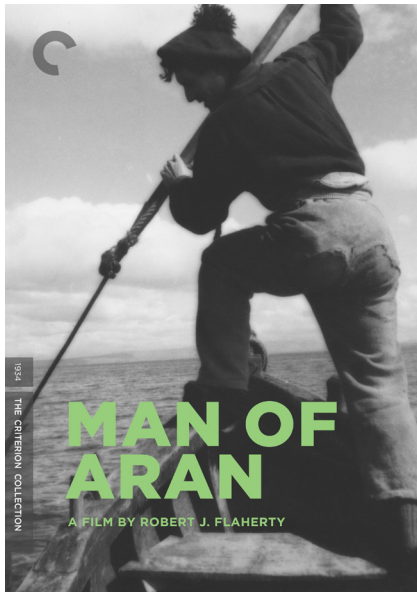
PRODUCTION SCHEDULE



6 DOCUMENTARY TYPES

Project Scoping

Poetic

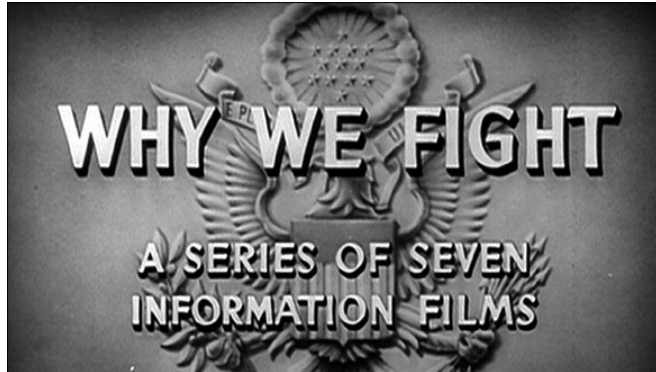


Having a clear linear narrative isn't entirely necessary for a Poetic Documentary.

The primary focus is geared towards creating a feeling or mood in an abstract or experimental way rather than driving a traditional storyline.

Some classic examples would be 'Rain' by the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens, made in 1929. Godfrey Reggio's 1982 'Koyaanisqatsi' is a timelapse style documentary. As pictured, the 'Man of Aran' by Robert Flaherty, was a ground-breaking project which captured the daily life of people living on the Aran Islands off the coast of Ireland. Released in 1934, Flaherty used his artistic license to almost romanticize life on the island, and it was a fellow film maker who coined the term 'Documentary' in describing Flaherty's style. (masterclass, 2020).

Expository



Expository documentaries are sometimes referred to as 'essay' films due to the amount of research that goes into making them. Their aim is to explain a certain topic, current events, issues, cultural dilemmas or literally exposing information in a journalistic fashion, requires the documentarian to go through research with a fine comb so as to educate the viewer. Pictured is the expository documentary from 1942-43 Called "Why We Fight". This was a series of propaganda films commissioned by the government to explain the U.S involvement in WWII.

Other classic expository films, Mark Twain," 2001; "The Dust Bowl," 2012 by Ken Burns. This style of editing will be something this project will try and recreate. (Biesterfeld, 2020).

Reflexive



Pictured is the cult classic, 'Spinal Tap' by Rob Reiner from 1985.

Referred to as a 'rockumentary' this falls into the Reflexive type documentary.

This type of documentary tends to challenge assumptions and expectations about the form itself by having the audience questioning to overall authenticity of the project. Watching this 'mockumentary' for the first time, you could be forgiven for thinking the band was actually a real band from that era.

Other examples; Dziga Vertov's "The Man With A Movie Camera". What the audience is watching in this documentary is not reality but rather a construction of reality. Vertov gives us a sense that the film we are watching is being assembled right before our eyes. (Biesterfeld, 2020).

6 DOCUMENTARY TYPES

Project Scoping

Participatory



Bill Nichols describes the participatory documentary as “when the encounter between filmmaker and subject is recorded and the filmmaker actively engages with the situation they are documenting.” (Nichols, n.d).

In a somewhat journalistic, investigative fashion, Michael Moore, pictured above, is documentarian well known for projects like Bowling for Columbine and Fahrenheit 9/11. He has gained a reputation for pulling no punches as he tackles these hard hitting topics.

However, this approach can seem biased when the film maker’s point of view is all the audience will be presented with. (Biesterfeld, 2020).

Observational



Pictured is Frederick Wiseman’s 1968 documentary “High School,”

More often known as a “fly-on-the-wall” style, this observational documentary offers a straight up peek inside a Philadelphia public high school, with no intervention by the filmmaker, no narration, script or guidance from the director, the scenes really speak for themselves. Although, it’s evident that for a documentary in this style to be effective, subtle communication between the crew needed to be well rehearsed as to not interfere with the unfolding action. This was the case between Wiseman and his cameraman.

Wiseman is considered to be the most authentic maker of observational documentaries. (Biesterfeld, 2020).

Performative

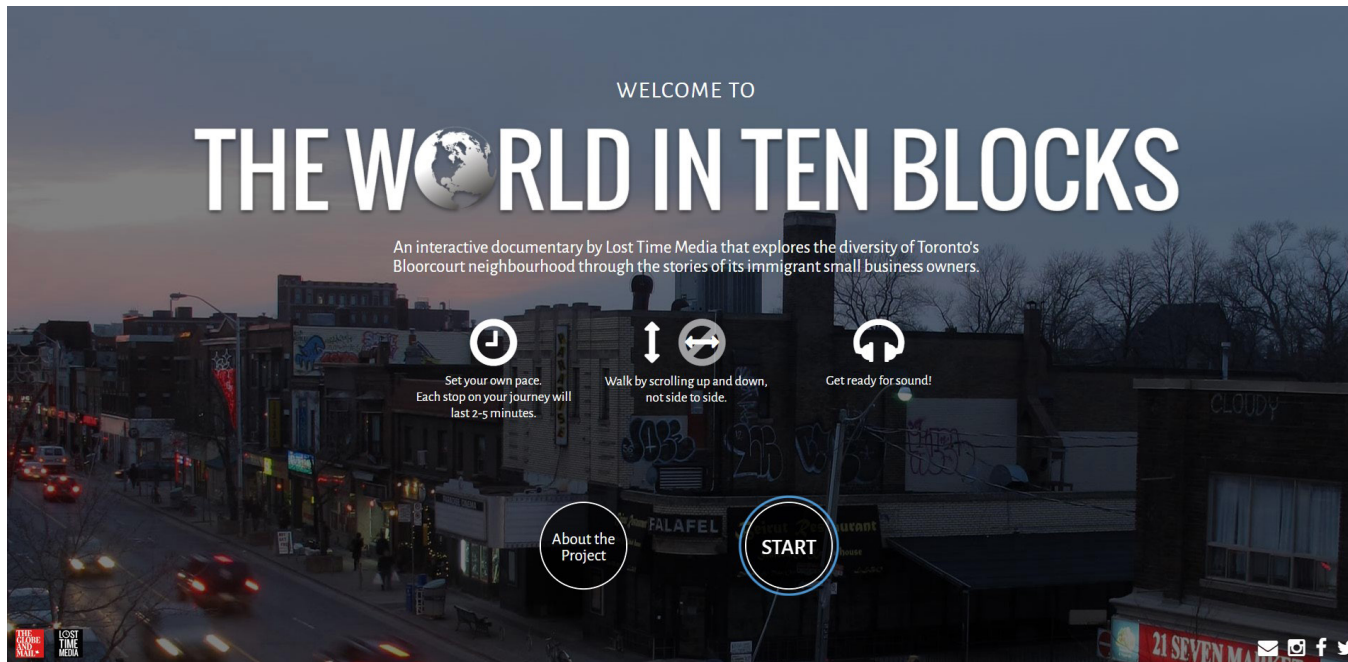


In performative mode the filmmaker gives a “what’s it like to be there” perspective on a world. More immersive than the other types, capturing raw and unfiltered emotion, the filmmaker becomes the personal guide through the narrative. The filmmaker plays an important role as they’re interaction with the subject will be apparent. (Biesterfeld, 2020).

Almost the direct opposite of the Observational style.

Pictured, above “Paris Is Burning” Jenny Livingston 1991, documents the ‘ball culture’ of New York City and the African-American, Latino, gay, and transgender communities. 2016 seen it preserved as it is considered “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant”. (Green, 1993).

INSPIRATION & EXAMPLES



This project, created by Marc Serpa Francoeur and Robinder Uppal co-founders of Lost Time Media, “The World in Ten Blocks is an interactive documentary that provides a glimpse into some of the hidden stories of sacrifice and triumph, hardship and joy behind the world’s most diverse city”.

This extensive award winning project is comprised of a half hour linear documentary and an interactive web documentary like we’re trying to create ourselves.

All in all, the interactive documentary has 90 minutes of self-guided content.

The opening tag is “Welcome to Bloorcourt, the ten blocks of Bloor Street between Crawford and Dufferin, an area known for the incredible diversity of immigrant-owned small businesses that are the heart and soul of the neighbourhood”.

(The World in Ten Blocks: An Interactive Documentary - Bell Fund, 2020)

The creators of this project asked themselves a number of important questions which we should



take note of going forward.

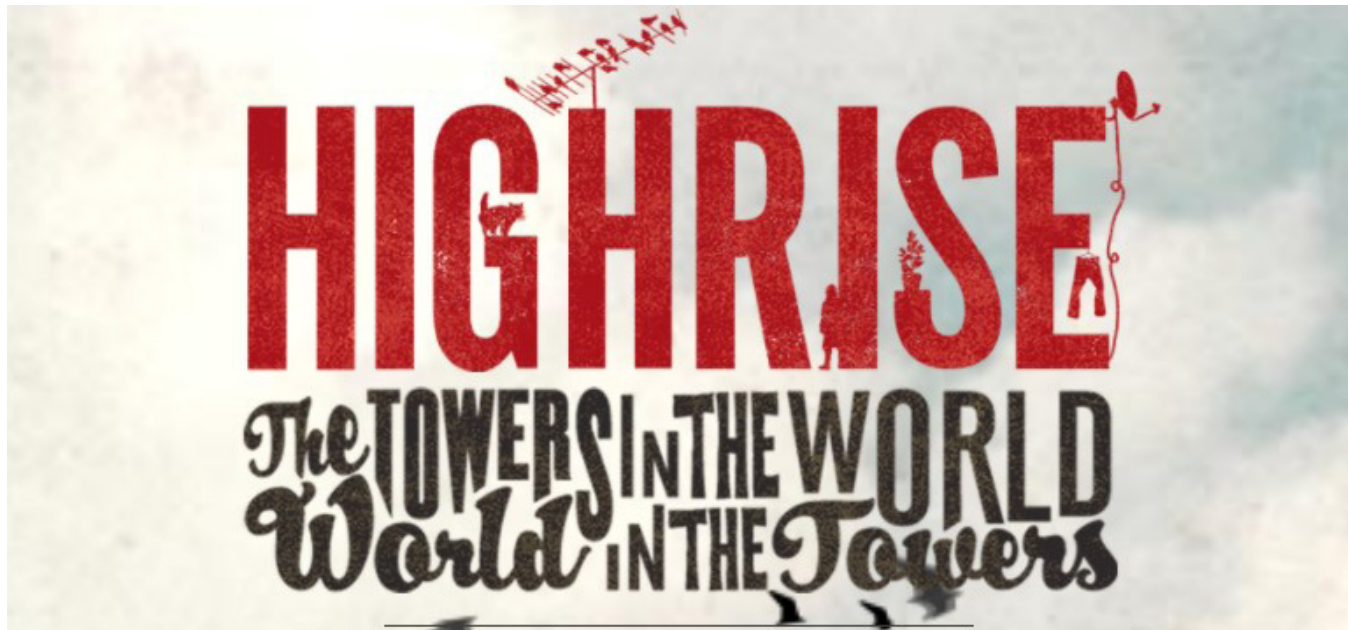
With the user experience being paramount, how they will interact with the experience, what devices, the chance they may not experience the whole project. How can you ensure they will want to follow the narrative through to the end.

They had faith that the content would resonate with the target audience.

“As the children of immigrants, many of the themes explored in the project have long been very close to our hearts” ~ Marc Serpa Francoeur



INSPIRATION & EXAMPLES



Directed by Katerina Cizek and produced by Gerry Flahive, Highrise is a 'multimedia documentary project' about life in residential high-rises across the ages.

It is an extensive project, made up of 5 interactive documentaries, The Thousandth Tower, Out My Window, One Millionth Tower, A Short History of the Highrise and Universe Within: Digital Lives in the Global Highrise.

This project has won multiple awards for its innovation.

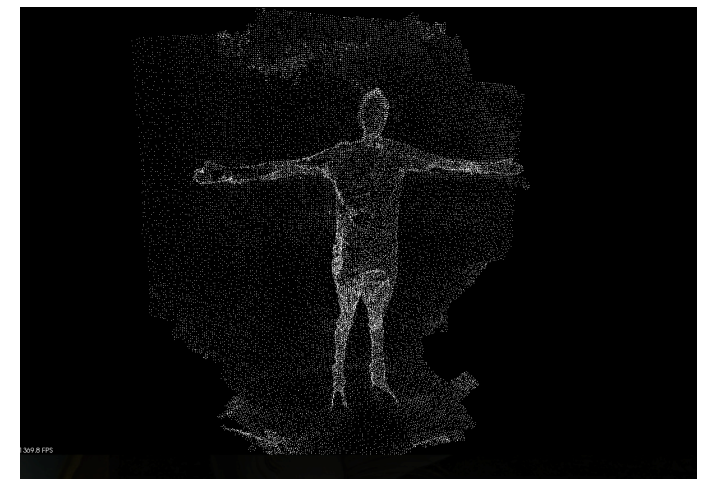
On March 8, 2016, Universe Within received the award for Best Original Interactive Production Produced for Digital Media at the 4th Canadian Screen Awards. (Wong, 2016).

At the 2016 Webby Awards, Universe Within received the Webby for Online Film & Video/Best Use of Interactive Video. (Mullen 2016).



Above, the Universe Within is the arguably the most technologically advanced of all the Highrise projects.

It uses 'point cloud data' to create the avatars through a collaboration with Highrise Technical Director Branden Bratuhin and Toronto-based digital agency, Secret Location. (Manori, 2015).



AUDIENCE RESEARCH

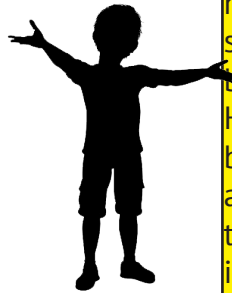
To be in the vicinity of this track during a race is an experience to behold. It fills you with a level of excitement and nervousness that you can't properly describe until you're there. It's visceral. The noise, the smell and the absolutely insane speed that just doesn't make sense. How can a machine go so fast. Because the demographic for the NW200 is so broad. I have captured a few of the different types of people that I have encountered, and who this Interactive Documentary will be designed for.



56 year old, father of 3. Comes with his wife every year. 3 kids used to watch alongside but now they watch from different parts of the track so they can have a few drinks with their friends and enjoy the races too. They have a holiday home in Portstewart. Coming to the NW200 was a major contributing factor in buying this house.



74 year old retiree. Owns fishing boat. Still goes out fishing with his son. Every year without fail they watch from the bay. One year the BBC helicopter zoomed in on them and broadcast this. He was so proud to see their boat on BBC 1. Not computer literate, but his son will show him the old photos which he'll love.



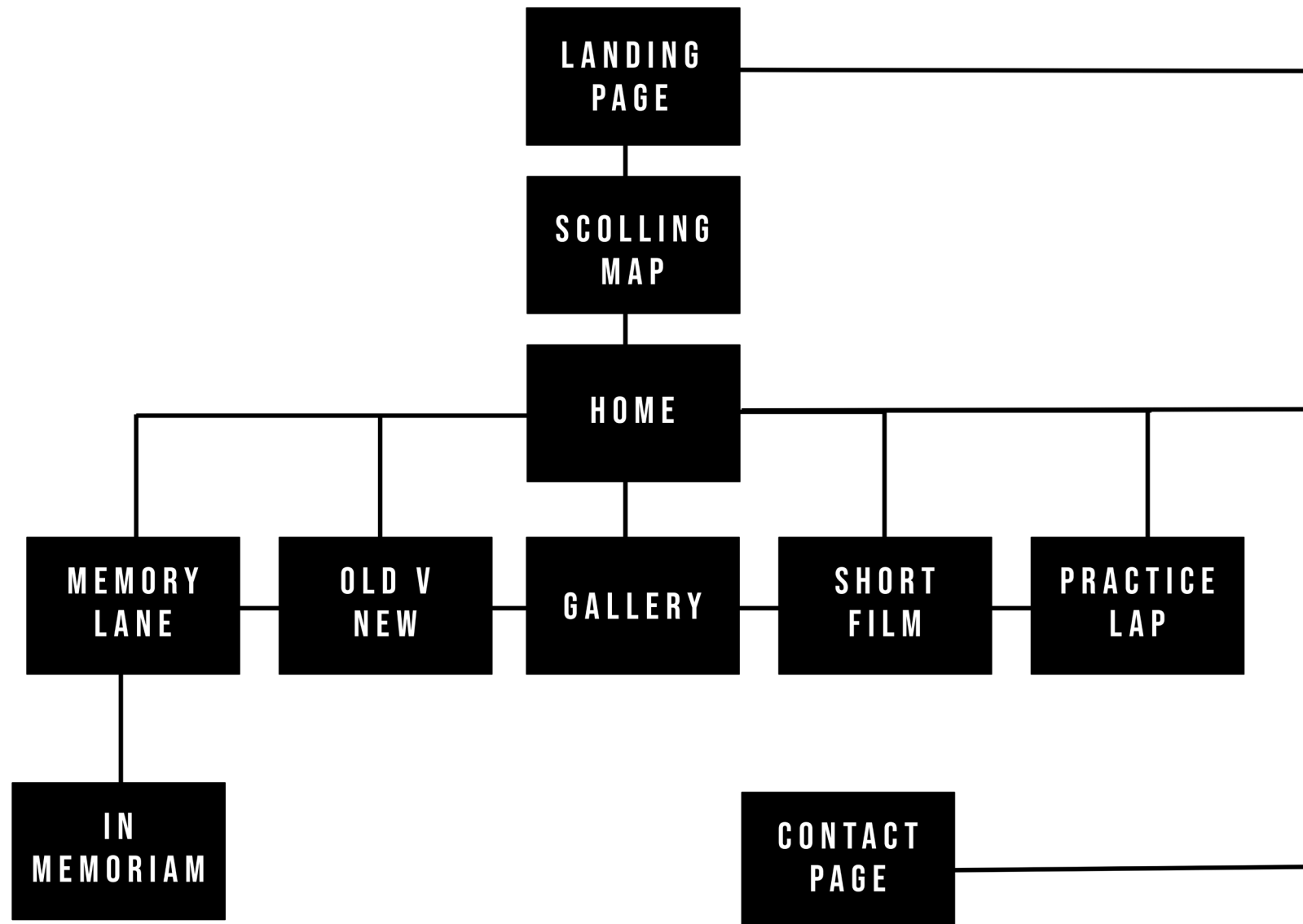
10 year old boy whose grandfather has brought him to every race since he was old enough to not be startled by the noise. Loves it. His grandfather's grandfather also brought him along to the races as a boy. This little boy will experience the interactive documentary and instantly be taken back to race day.



45 year old amateur bike enthusiast. Has also been coming to the races since he was a young boy. Never misses a race. Annual holidays from work are always in May. His Employer knows this and there are never any questions. This is annual pilgrimage to watch the bikes and feel part of something. Bigger than Christmas.

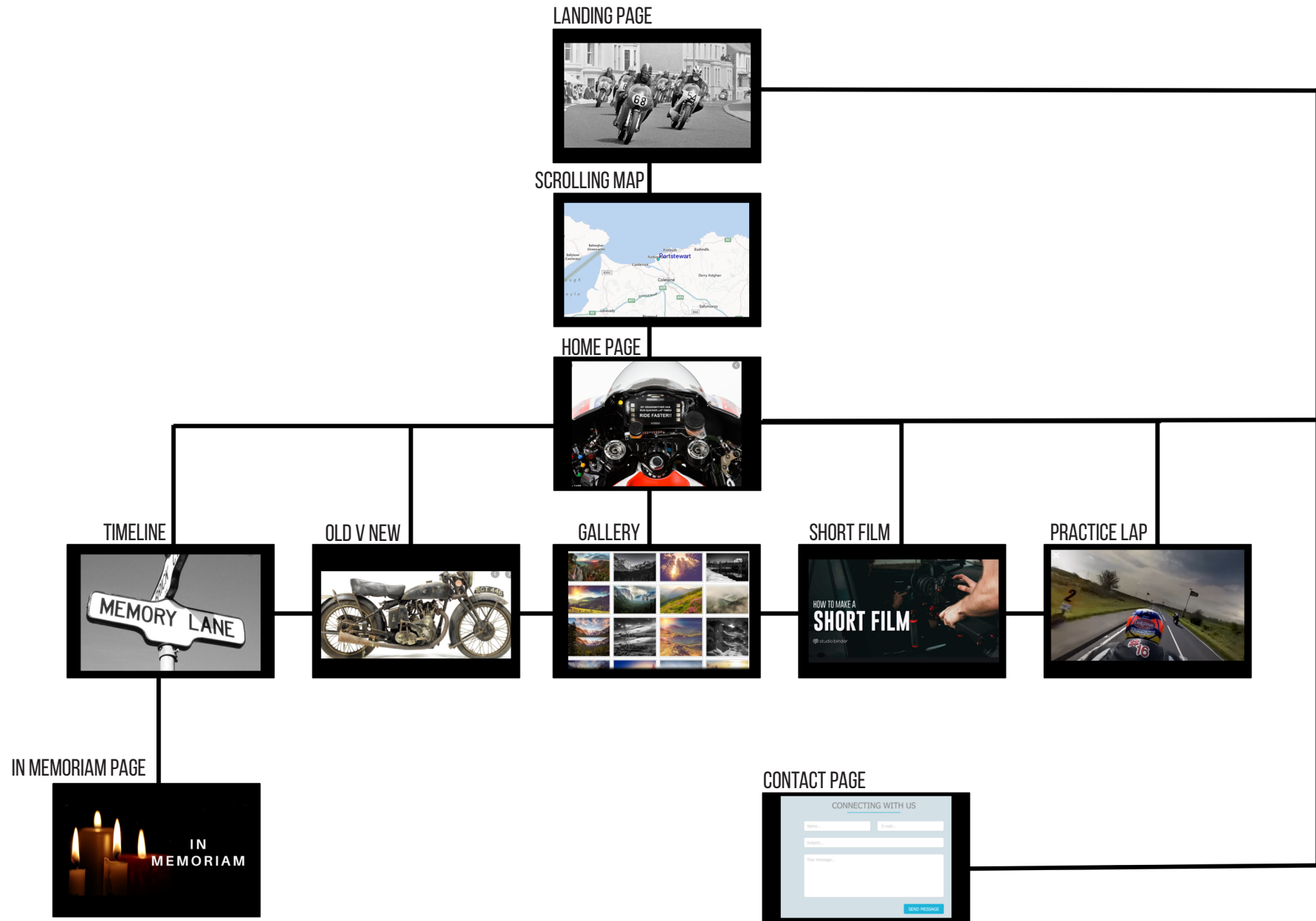


SITE MAP



SITE MAP

Potential Content Included



STORYBOARDS

Landing Page

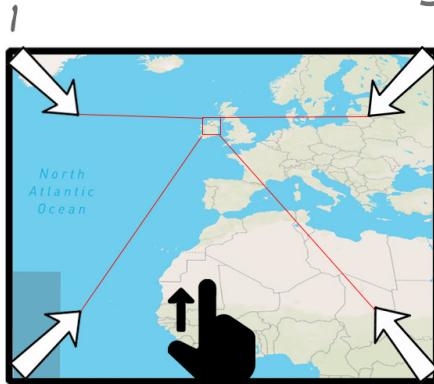
Using the classic 'Ken Burns' effect to give life to an old still image of the nw200. This technique, previously known as 'animatics' is a type of panning and zooming effect used in video production from still imagery. (Green & Dias, 2010).

We have used Photoshop to add layers to this image. By cutting the bikers and setting them in their own layer, we are able to use a Parallax scrolling effect, giving the image more depth. Using Adobe After Effects we are able to subtly pan and zoom the foreground and background elements, also fading the background to bring the bikers forward in the image. We find this very effective.



STORYBOARDS

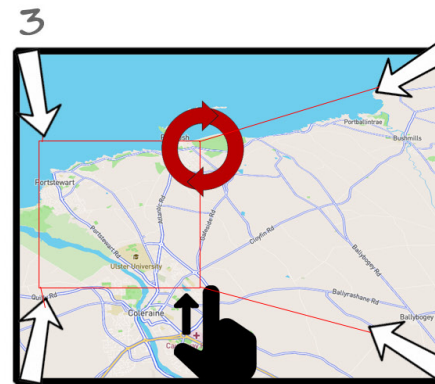
Interactive Scrolling map



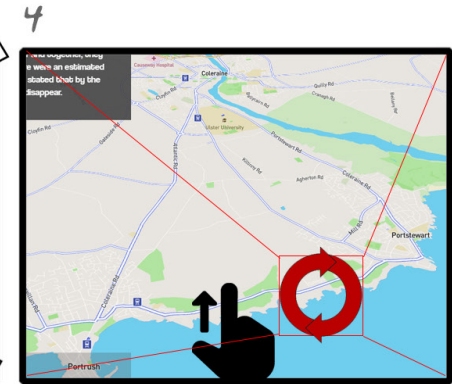
We have adapted code for an interactive map that will zoom to set locations when the user scrolls down.



We have set specific locations on the map to zoom in on the NW200 track.



At the users own pace, they can scroll down the map and read the snippets of information as they appear.



This map will be their own guided tour of the nw200 track. Essentially the most important element of this project.



Here, they will be taken to the pits, or the start and finish line. Scrolling further down will take them around the track to each bend and straight.



Track information will appear with bike speeds, incidents, top speeds etc, and interesting facts about the track in general.



We intend to cover this aspect of the experience in as much detail as we can without overloading the user with too much.



This story board could be 10 pages long, but we wanted to highlight the main concept of the interactive map.

KEY DECISIONS



Above is the image we will be using for our home page which we will be calling 'the Pits' as a nod to the biker race format. This will be the central point where our user will come to explore the full documentary.

Notice the squares around the text. Hoping we haven't been too ambitious in this pursuit, but using an image map coding technique, we are able to change these squares into buttons. These buttons will act as our navigation method, ie home/pits, practice lap, memory lane etc.

The white text in the center, we aim to have this change to the appropriate text depending on which button the user is hovering over.

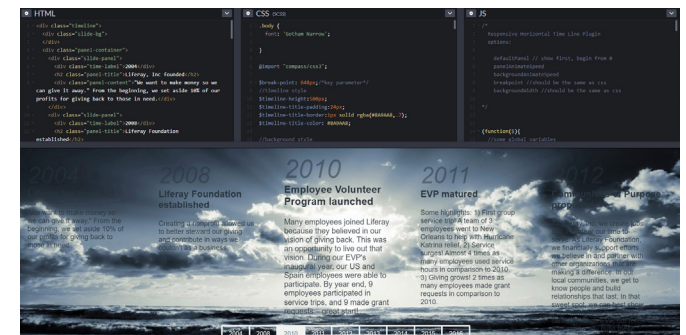


The 'Practice Lap' is a button link to a YouTube video of a rider taking an actual practice lap of the circuit, with a mounted 360 camera. Users will be able to scroll around and watch from any angle they choose.

We want to explore the option of possibly making this a background video to autoplay as soon as the page is opened. This will allow us to have other scrollable features to work over the top. I.e our own authored content. Audio, track information etc.

Limitations might be the copyright issue of using this content without permission.

We have emailed the owner of this video asking for the permission to include this in our site.



We're aiming to have 2 different styled timelines in our documentary.

One to highlight all the milestones of this event from 1929 to today.

We will have audio, narration and visual elements throughout this page.

Above is the timeline from codepen we're going to adapt to suit our project for the in memoriam page to honour the riders who have lost their lives during the race.

Limitations with this specific method are using some JS and Scss, which we very limited experience in using. Our coding classes will definitely be helpful in making sense of anything complicated.

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