

## Hidden Presence – a [fotogallery](#) project

### Learning resource – Chepstow School

#### The Participants

35 Year 9 students for 3 days

#### The Project

Theme: Looking For Nathaniel Wells

Working with the Art Department. This school is the closest to Piercefield House, the country seat of Nathaniel Wells, with the school ground backing onto the estate, meaning it was highly relevant and allowed us to walk from school directly to the house.

#### Aims

- To construct a collective composite portrait of Nathaniel Well, as no confirmed visual depiction of Nathaniel Wells exists
- By visiting and photographing Piercefield Walks and House the young people learn about black presence in rural Wales, specifically local and relevant to them
- Through exploration of Nathaniel Wells story young people learn about identity, opposing sides of self and empathy
- Learn new practical creative skills and [visual literacy](#).

#### Planning

Planning for the project was done with the Art Department who put together a class of Year 9 students who were highly motivated, most of whom were planning to take it for GCSE. Some of the students had previously studied the story of Nathaniel Wells in History.

#### Outcomes

- [Gif Portraits of Nathaniel Wells](#)

#### Discussion

The class was divided into 5 groups, with each group given a stage of Nathaniel Wells' life to discuss, from his childhood enslavement on the island of St Kitts through inheritance to marriage, acquisition of Piercefield and old age. As the students had varying levels of background knowledge on Wells, those who had studied his life were invited to share their knowledge with those who hadn't.

Students were asked to discuss in groups how Nathaniel may have felt at that point in his life, and made mind maps, which were informally presented to the rest of the class.

Sample prompt questions:

- How would you feel if you were born into slavery?
- What would you wear/eat/do?
- What would your education be like?
- What would experiencing freedom for the first time feel like?
- Why do you think Nathaniel did not free any other members of his family?
- Why do you think William Wells chose Nathaniel to inherit his fortune? How would that make you feel?
- What was Nathaniel's motivation for buying such a famous estate as Piercefield?

### **Making a portrait of Nathaniel Wells**

Students were asked to make collages and paint portraits of Nathaniel. They then photographed these in pairs at a station set up in the style of a [rostrum](#) camera. One young person would operate the camera whilst the other added the collage elements to the painting one by one, taking a photo each time. See [How to: Stop Frame Animation](#)

### **Gif editing**

The students were shown how to crop and edit their photos then make a short moving animation from the still photos, all using [Adobe Photoshop](#). An Animated Gif (Graphic Interchange Format) is a series of photographs that are contained within the one file in order to create an illusion of movement. They can be looped infinitely and work well viewed on the web. See [How to: Gif Animation](#)

- **Piercefield Walks & Spheres**

The students did a site visit to Piercefield House, photographing their journey using digital photography. Photos were then edited with online software Microsoft Photosynth to create otherworldly animated walks through the woods.

See [How to: Photographic Walk with Photosynth](#)

Students also made 360 panoramas using iPads and the Sphere app. See [How to: 360° Panoramas with Sphere](#)

- **How Did We Get There?**

Students were asked to draw the route from school to Piercefield House and back from memory. The maps didn't have to be geographically accurate but had to include points of interest – what they remembered seeing – along the way, and this had to be illustrated visually. This is a very useful [psychogeographical](#) exercise for remembering a route, as every participant's map will be different to the next, as we experience a journey differently. The students recorded audio of themselves explaining maps aloud and then traced maps of the walk printed from Google to compare and contrast the difference between scientific maps and individual experience.

### **Impact on Learning**

The students had never used ICT or editing software in the Art Dept so this was a new experience for them, and broadened their horizons in terms of contemporary visual art, in particular the use of iPads for photography.

The students improved their oracy skills, developing and presenting information and ideas. Animation improved coordination and team skills.