

The 10th International Conference on

Conservation of Architectural Heritage (CAH)

📍 Polytechnic University of Turin

📅 08 – 10 SEP, 2026



Material Diplomacies: Tracing Material Provenance, Memory Ethics, and Strategies of Repair in the Temple of Peace and Health

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MATERIAL DIPLOMACIES: Introducing the Authors

Plenary

1



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MATERIAL DIPLOMACIES: Introducing the Temple



Photo of main elevation of the Temple (left)

Institute of Welsh Affairs © Sourced at: <https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2022/08/a-new-mecca-the-temple-of-peace/>

Video of the Temple's opening day (right)

Cymru Global © Sourced at: <https://cymru.global/cymru-global-news/cymru-global-history/the-story-of-minnie-james-and-the-temples-mothers-of-peace/>

MATERIAL DIPLOMACIES: Presentation Structure

Plenary

3

PART I. Past Diplomacies

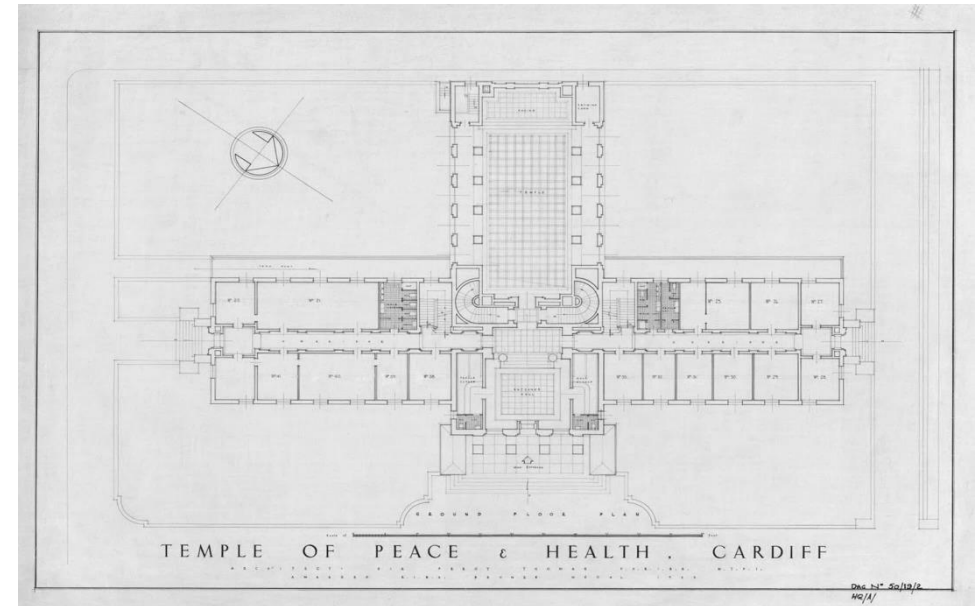
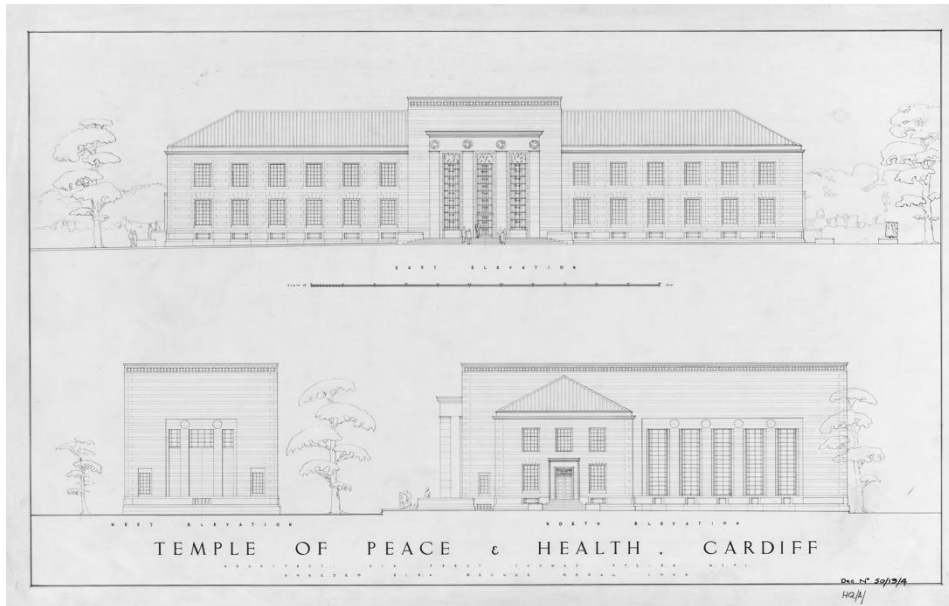
PART II. Present Diplomacies

PART III. Future Diplomacies

PART IV. Conservation as Material Diplomacy

PART I. PAST DIPLOMACIES: Architecture as Ideology

The Mecca of Peace and Health



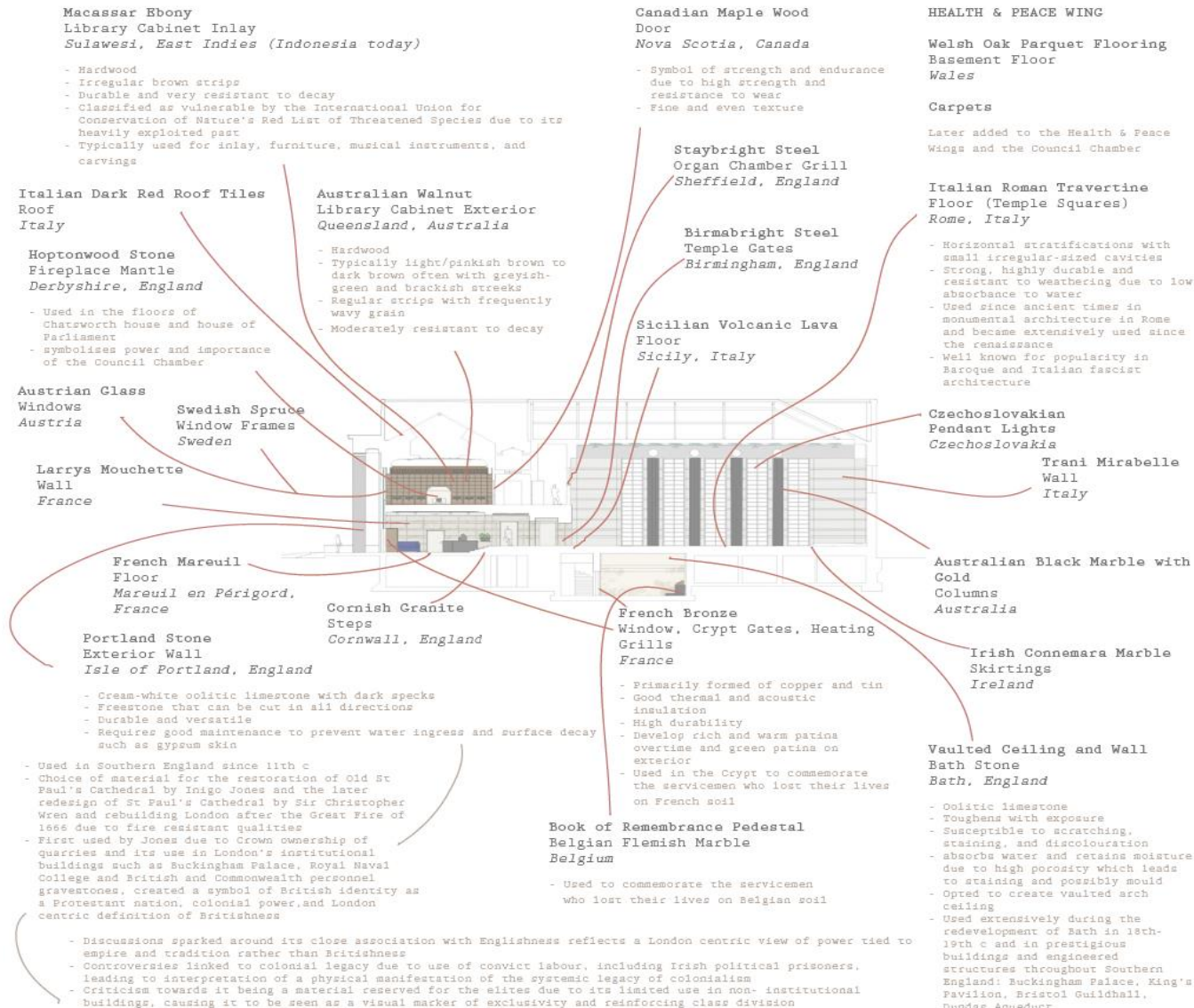
Elevations (left) and Groundfloor plan (right) 1950, Cymru Global ©

PART I. PAST DIPLOMACIES:

Material Diplomacies

Material	Location within the Temple	Country / Place of Origin
Portland Stone	Portico, external façades, principal exterior envelope	Portland, Dorset, UK
Dark Red Pattern Roof Tiles	Roofs of the Peace and Health wings	Italy
Volcanic Lava Stone	Temple floor, used with underfloor heating system	Sicily, Italy
Bath Stone	Vaulted ceiling of the Crypt	Bath, UK
Mereuil Marble	Entrance vestibule floor	France
Larrys Mouchette Marble	Entrance vestibule wall linings	France
Roman Travertine Marble	Hall of Nations floor paving squares	Rome, Italy
Trani Mirabelle Marble	Hall of Nations walls	Trani, Italy
Black Marble with Gold Veining	Hall of Nations columns	Australia
Connemara Marble	Skirtings throughout the building	Connemara, Ireland
Belgian Flemish Marble	Pedestal supporting the Book of Remembrance in the Crypt	Flanders, Belgium
French Bronze	Book of Remembrance case, Crypt gates, Portico window grilles, heating grilles	France
Birmabright Steel	Main Temple gates	Birmingham, UK
Staybrite Steel	Organ chamber grille above Hall of Nations entrance	Sheffield, UK
Glass (Art Deco windows)	Windows throughout the building	Austria
Pendant Light Fittings	Hall of Nations lighting	Czechoslovakia
Australian Walnut	Council Chamber library cabinets and shelving	Australia
Welsh Oak	Parquet flooring	Wales
Canadian Maple	Internal doors	Canada
Swedish Spruce	Window frames	Sweden
Moroccan Leather	Binding of the Book of Remembrance	Morocco
Macassar Ebony (inlay)	Council Chamber library joinery	Macassar (Sulawesi, Indonesia)
Hopton wood Stone	Council Chamber mantelpiece	Hopton Wood, UK

PART I. PAST DIPLOMACIES: A Material Geography of Uneven Histories

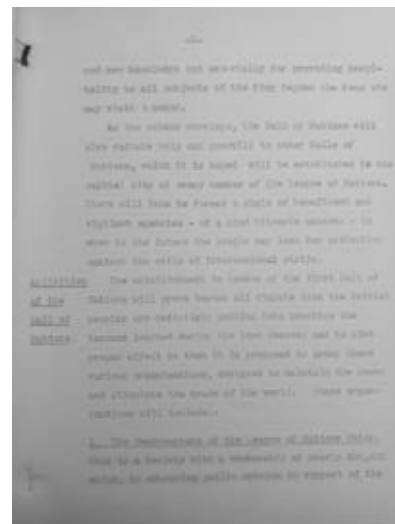
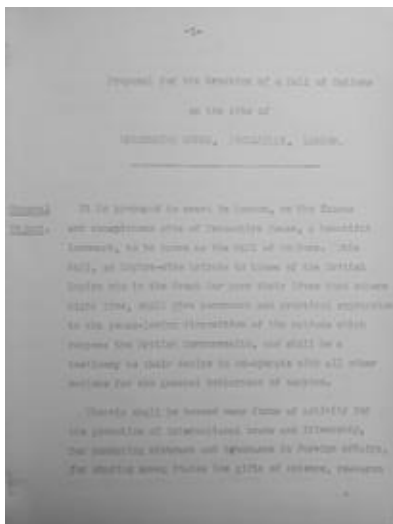
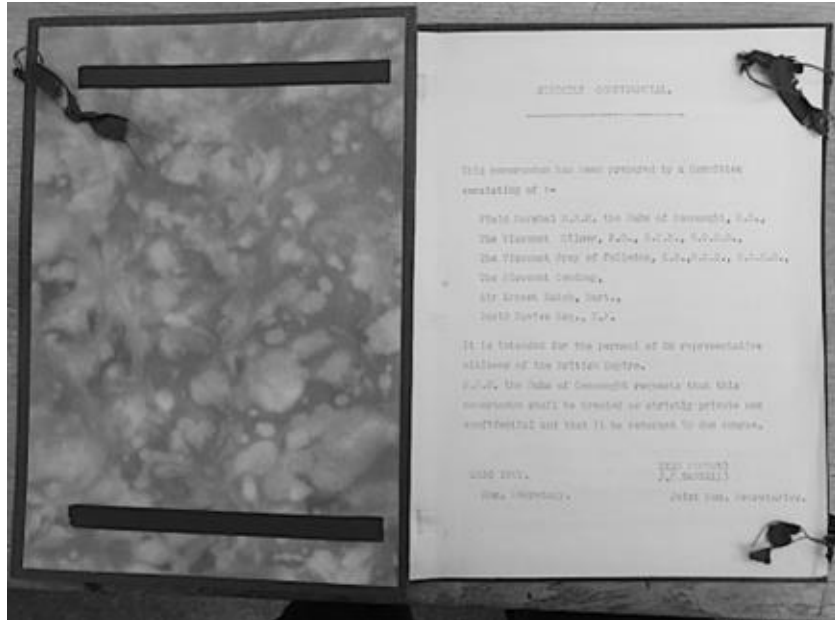


PART I. PAST DIPLOMACIES: Semiotics of Unity



Hall of Nations (left), The Crypt (right): Semiotics of ornaments and emblems
Lucas Ferguson, Madeleine Jones, Lins Amritha Pius, Alexandros Telfer, © WSA

PART I. PAST DIPLOMACIES: A Programme for Peace & Health



'Proposal for the Erection of a Hall of Nations on the site of Devonshire House, 1919'

(Digitally Archived on Flickr from WLNU Archives, © NLW)

PART II. PRESENT DIPLOMACIES: Ageing Material Diplomacies



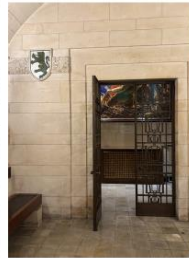
87. Crypt



88. Ceiling



89. Wall



90. Crypt entrance



91. North corner



13. WG08



14. WG08



15. WG08



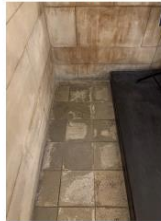
16. WG08



92. Radiator grill



93. Pedestal



94. Floor



95. Floor



96. Surrounding crypt WB22



17. Hall of Nations elevation



18. WG15



19. Gutter



20.



21. Vegetation growth through mortar joints



67. Portico



68. DG03



69. DG03



70. WF35



71. Entrance Wall, WG43



72. Portico column



73. East Corner of portico



74. Health wing



75. WB05, WG05



76. Entrance steps



77. WG01



78. WB02



79. North corner facade dropped ground level



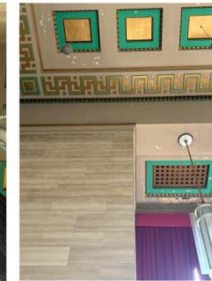
80. Portico ceiling



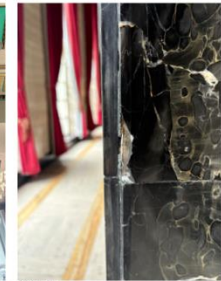
164. G04 Ceiling at North corner.



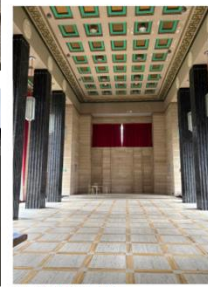
165. G04 Ceiling at East corner.



166. G04 Ceiling at North corner.



167. Column



168. Hall of Nations - G04



169, 170, 171. G04 Floor



PART II. PRESENT DIPLOMACIES: Patchy Repairs



190. Stairwell 2



191. WF19



192. WF19



97. Floor



98. Surrounding crypt



99. Floor



100. Wall



101. Wall



195. W/C



196. WG30



197. WG30



198. Conditions follow ceiling



289. Repair



290. Water staining



291. Roof meets North West wall.



292. Health wing Attic wall



241. F13 Wall / Ceiling



242. F13 Floor



143. Plaster board



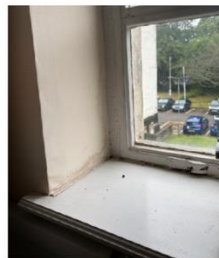
144. Room B24, WB34



145. North corner of B24



243. F15 Wall

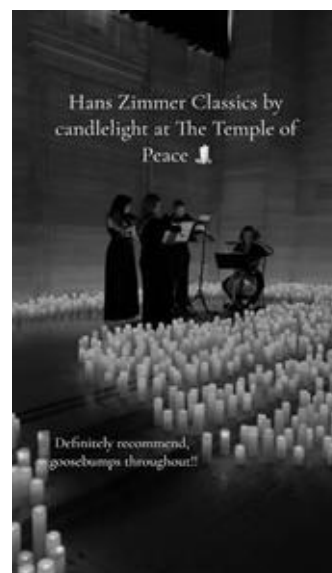


244. WF21



245. F15 Ceiling

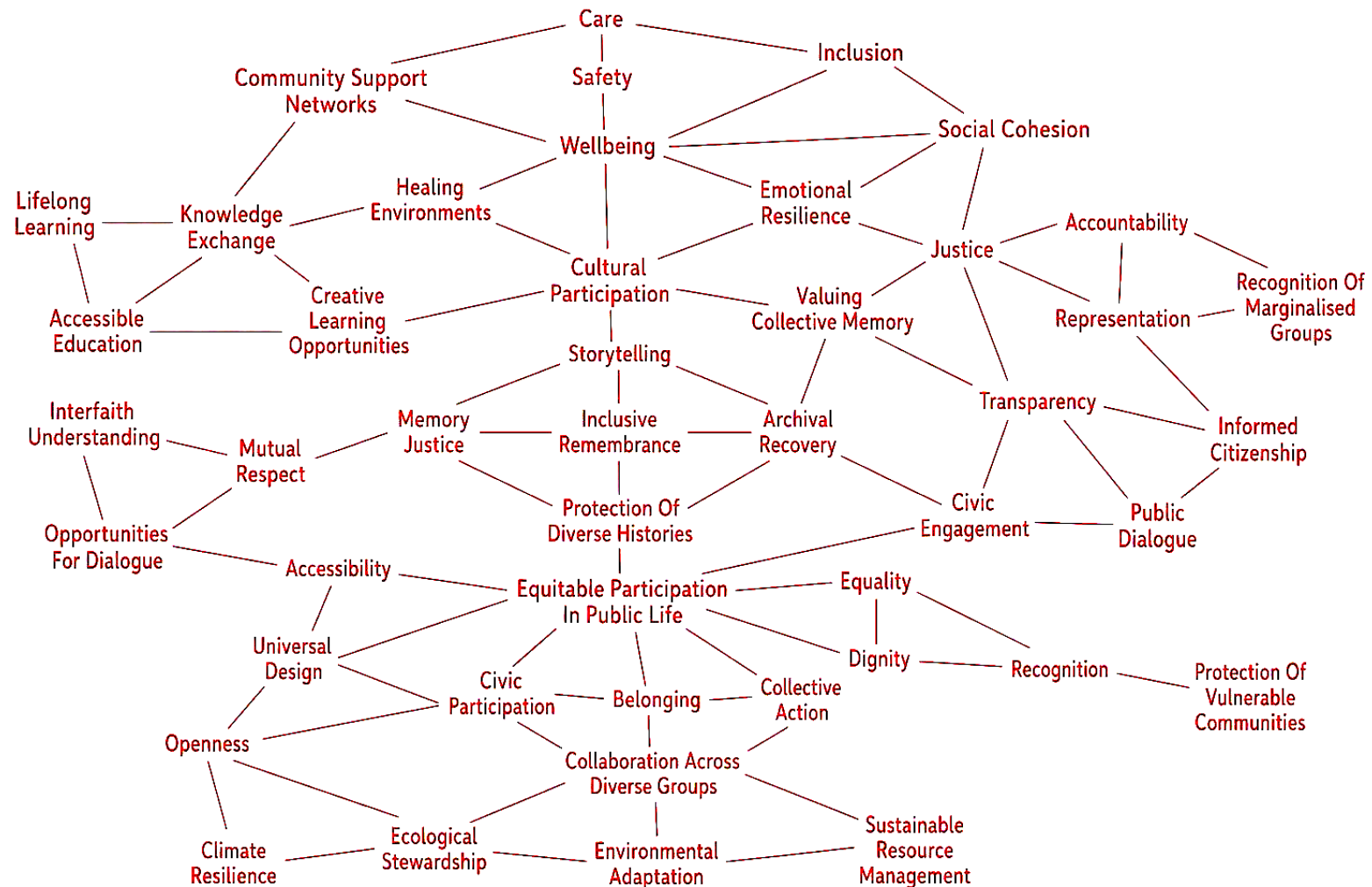
PART II. PRESENT DIPLOMACIES: Evolving Stewardships & EDI queries



PART III. FUTURE DIPLOMACIES: Current Challenges to Peace and Health



PART III. FUTURE DIPLOMACIES: Re-defining Peace and Health



PART III. FUTURE DIPLOMACIES:

From Temple of Peace to Assembly of Care

Programmatic Visions

Creative learning hub; craft production & community making

Women's refuge and daycare centre

Nomads' campus

(Anti-Oculus) Activist and spatial justice centre

Women Voices archive and memory centre

Cultural justice centre

Climate research and flood education centre

Inclusive national archive and educational hub

Social Justice research institute (Forensic Architecture)

Informal learning centre for neurodivergent students

Multi-faith centre and interfaith dialogue hub

Storytelling and healing centre for Cardiff's ethnic communities

Design Requirements

Workshops, archives, galleries, glulam insertions, Welsh craft materials

Therapeutic landscapes, courtyards, safety, prospect-refuge, privacy

Accessible entrance, ramps, bridges, sustainability, adaptive reuse

Axial disruption, surveillance critique, architectural protest

Acoustic chambers, recording spaces, labyrinth, listening rooms

Archives, exhibitions, corten insertions, visibility of marginalised histories

Water channels, rivers, rainwater systems, environmental adaptation

Exhibition spaces, debate chamber, archive infrastructure

Building cut, transparency, bridges, research labs, exhibitions

Curved interventions, workshops, sensory wayfinding, retreat spaces

Worship chamber, faith pods, ablution spaces,

Storytelling rooms, recording studios, theatre, performance spaces

PART III. FUTURE DIPLOMACIES: Conservation Priorities Localised

- Material provenance as part of an evolving Welsh identity.
- Enrich material diplomacies to enhance cultural representation.
- Crypt preservation, as continuation of original mission, silent core; forgotten voices restored
- Bring forth the room where NHS was conceived
- Council Chamber
- Hall of Nations and structure retained; reversible interventions
- Challenge dominating entrance
- Challenge neoclassical hierarchies
- Facilitate independent access to Crypt



PART IV. CONCLUSIONS

Conservation as Material Diplomacy

- Buildings are not static heritage objects but evolving civic, cultural, diplomatic artefacts.
- Conservation debates are shaped by past, present and future material diplomacies.
- Heritage values are not fixed or inherited unchanged, but continually renegotiated
- Your architects and conservationists have a strong ethical, political and wholistic view about cultural values and conservation priorities and see:

Conservation as the careful orchestration of change, shifting the focus from preserving buildings to preserving their capacity to remain relevant, inclusive and open to new needs and interpretations across generations.

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Thank you!

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The research/live project is supported by Welsh School of Architecture & Cymru Global

We wish to thank, Lian Faisal, Lucas Ferguson, Madeleine Jones, Jamie Lawrence-Etherington, Rhian Lewis, Phu Myat Zaw, Isobel McGurk, (Tito) Boluwatito Onakoya, Lihao Pan, (Lins) Amritha Pius, Anam Raza, Sophie Roche, Emily Sandoval De Freitas, Natalia Schmitt, Amos Shammai, Neha Syed, (Jasmin) Sze Chin Lau, Alexandros Telfer, Ayusha Thapa Magar, Kunal Wadhwa, Han Wu, Zhenkun Zhang, the contributing students of the UNIT 6 SALUS BSc3 design studio.