Larkin: New Eyes Each Year

Notes on Design Development as of 19th May 2017

Anna met Craig Oldham (Designer) **Rachel Welch**

Operations Manager- Customer Services- University LibraryKathryn McIlveen our events team leader & John Bernosconi (BJL) & Laura (H17) on 17th May. The team also had initial discussions about installation with John (Surname?) from Hull Uni Estates department.

The design continues to develop along the lines previously discussed in AF’s proposal and CO’s initial computer sketches. The gallery will be divided into distinct sections/compartments that evoke the compartmentalization of Larkin’s life and relationships and his work as a poet, librarian and critic. The design of these compartments will evoke both a library and an English terraced house garden as seen from above. The experience for the visitor will be evoke a maze and a journey of discovery from the professional to the personal persona. It will not be possible for the visitor to see all of the exhibition from any viewpoint.

The exhibition will be object rich rather than text heavy. Larkin’s writings, as well as the many books, biographies and articles that have been written about Larkin, will be presented as objects in the exhibition. A selection of publications will also be available for sale.

Approach: Our approach will be constructivist rather than positivist – we will invite visitors to make connections with their own experiences, thoughts and feelings in response to our curatorial and design provocations. Visitors will be encouraged to explore and to draw their own conclusions from the juxtaposition and placement of the objects on display. We do not seek to educate, inform or persuade from any single authoritarian perspective.

We intend to build a gallery inspired by a library within the library gallery. To this end we wish to use key structures such as library shelving, and book reshelving trollies to shape the space and the visitor journey. We would like to display all of the books by and about Larkin, including the Library Committee Minutes, as well as his own personal collection of books. The anticipated regularity of shelving structures will be disrupted by spaces, viewpoints created through and beyond the facades of shelved books. Through these ‘portals’ we will glimpse the more private and frequently hidden elements of his personality and evidence of his relationships with friends, family and lovers as represented by domestic artefacts, clothing, letters and photographs. Shelf ends and book ends will be used to provide minimal contextual information, using the language of cataloguing and archiving and a graphic/font style that amplifies the approach.

Assets: The BJL has several book re-shelving trolleys and a large number of spare shelves and bookends that we are able to use to shape the gallery space. Two weeks are available to install and this will be required owing to the large number of objects to be displayed. The University has its own buildings team that will be available to assist with installation. ACTION: Key dates and an outline schedule to be agreed and circulated

Anna and Laura have been through most of the PLS artefacts that were moved from James Booth’s house. There is a large number of textiles to display, some hung ‘figuratively’ and some folded. There are also a smaller number of china ornaments/souvenirs, framed pictures, personal stationary and personal items. These need to exhibited using a form of ‘open display’ that takes security into account.

Needs: We have shelves BUT we need uprights and end pieces in order to be able to use the shelves. Once prices have been established for these peices based on an outline design, we will try to negotiate with the supplier. (It appears that they are keen to develop their library supply business and move into the museum/gallery and corporate markets). If a negotiated sponsorship deal is not achieved, we will explore ‘sale or return’ or short term hire or resale options.

Risks: Open display carries with it certain risks of theft. These will be mitigated by using visual deterrents and simple indicators (Head of Library, Michelle Anderson suggests fishing wire) as well as the deployment of several volunteers as interpreters and gallery invigilators

Volunteers: several volunteers will need to be deployed in the gallery for security and interpretation as well to support desk tasks such as evaluation and book sales. Volunteers will need to be recruited and trained specifically for the exhibition and rotas will need to be created that enable continuity.