Introduction

This Exhibition encapsulates the essence of the project: *Multi-Faith Spaces: Symptoms and Agents of Religious and Social Change*, a three year collaboration between the Universities of Manchester and Liverpool. It has been designed in partnership with the North West based creative agency *Thoughtful*, and is founded upon thirty two key themes that emerged from our study.

Funding was secured through the *Religion & Society Research Programme*, a £12million cluster of research projects funded by two UK research councils, the AHRC and ESRC.

Our Aim is to exhibit research findings in an approachable, reflective and stimulating manner. It is hoped that the exhibition will appeal to those with little prior knowledge of multifaith spaces (MFS), as well as those with an interest in, and understanding of the complex relationship between design, diversity and faith.
Our Research

The project *Multi-Faith Spaces: Symptoms and Agents of Religious and Social Change* was developed to highlight the material, spatial and architectural dimensions of faith related practice. We have examined over two hundred multifaith spaces (MFS), mainly in the UK but also in ten other countries, including Germany, Macedonia, Switzerland, Ireland, the Netherlands, the USA and Canada. To date the project has amassed over 14,000 photographs, and we have undertaken nearly 200 interviews.

We define ‘multi-faith spaces’ flexibly, as spaces that often exist in the ‘eye of the beholder’, where a range of spiritual activities can be undertaken, either together or apart. In addition:

- They are created spaces, that have undergone some form of deliberate design.
- They may resemble ‘single faith’ buildings, consecrated spaces or secular facilities.
- They are spaces within places, often located within a larger context, such as an airport, hospital or university.
- They are largely defined through use; customary activities including prayer, meditation, contemplation, reflection, study, rest and relaxation.

We investigate MFS as not only as symptoms of social and religious change, but also as potential agents of change. We view the relationship between social themes (how multifaith is understood) and material issues (how multifaith space is actually used) as an intricate two-way process. This supposes a number of questions:

- How might MFS influence relationships between religious and secular worlds?
- Who are the key individuals involved in the development and management of these spaces?
- Can MFS encourage pluralism and social cohesion, or do they simply ‘house difference’?
- Are these spaces worthwhile social and economic investments?
- Can guidelines and assessment criteria be established to reveal and promote good practice in MFS design?
- Could an architectural language of shared spirituality emerge through these spaces?
- Does religious and ethnic mixing occur best within certain types or styles of MFS?
- What might be the long-term effect of these spaces?
Exhibition Details

The exhibition will visit a number of sites within the UK, before touring mainland Europe and North America. **We are always eager to hear from individuals or organisations who are interested in our research, or who would like to host this exhibition.**

Exhibition Parameters

**Modular:** Comprises of 8 (8’x 4’) panels (approx. 244cm x 122cm); that can be subdivided into 32 (4’ x 2’) sub-panels (approx. 122cm x 61cm).

**Flexible:** Can be displayed in a variety of settings. **The full exhibition consists of a decagon with eight double sided panels, held by a self-supporting wooden frame.** It includes an entrance, exit and stand-alone threshold. A basic set-up would see the separate panels (or sub-panels) displayed against a vertical surface.

**Comprehensive:** Grouped into eight themes, each comprising four sub-themes, making this a comprehensive introduction to the topic of multifaith space.

**Lightweight:** Made from easy to transport *Dufaylite.* Without the supporting wooden frame and three thresholds the basic set-up weighs around 25kg; the full exhibition weighs 400kg (275kg + 125kg standalone threshold).

**Basic Assembly:** Utilising a simple framed modular system, incorporating hinges. The full exhibition would take two laypersons around two hours to assemble, and considerably less for the basic set-up (without the wooden frames). Disassembly is similarly straightforward.

**Reproducible:** If required, the *Dufaylite* boards can be reproduced on site to reduce travel costs.

**Adaptable:** Exhibitors can personalise the exhibition, utilising their own materials and faith specific objects within the inside of the decagon.

**Interactive:** A variety of audio-visual add-ons are currently being trialled by the project team.

**We value feedback,** please contact us at mfs@manchester.ac.uk and visit us at www.manchester.ac.uk/mfs

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**Photographs** were taken by Dr. Chris Hewson, Dr. Andrew Crompton & Dr. Ralf Brand between December 2009 & February 2012 (except where specified).

**The Text** was written by Dr. Chris Hewson, Dr. Ralf Brand, Dr. Andrew Crompton & Rev. Dr. Terry Biddington.

**Disclaimer:** Whilst we have made every attempt to ensure balance, with a topic as wide-ranging and potentially controversial as ‘multifaith space’, there will inevitably be disagreement around approach, interpretation and recommendation. Whilst this exhibition is based on data derived from a number of fieldwork visits and interviews, any inaccuracies, omissions, or misinterpretations remain the responsibility of the authors.