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ALTERNATIVE SOUVENIR  
DESIGN & THE GLOBAL CITY  
CP5014 | CRITICAL & CONTEXTUAL STUDIES 2

# Millenni

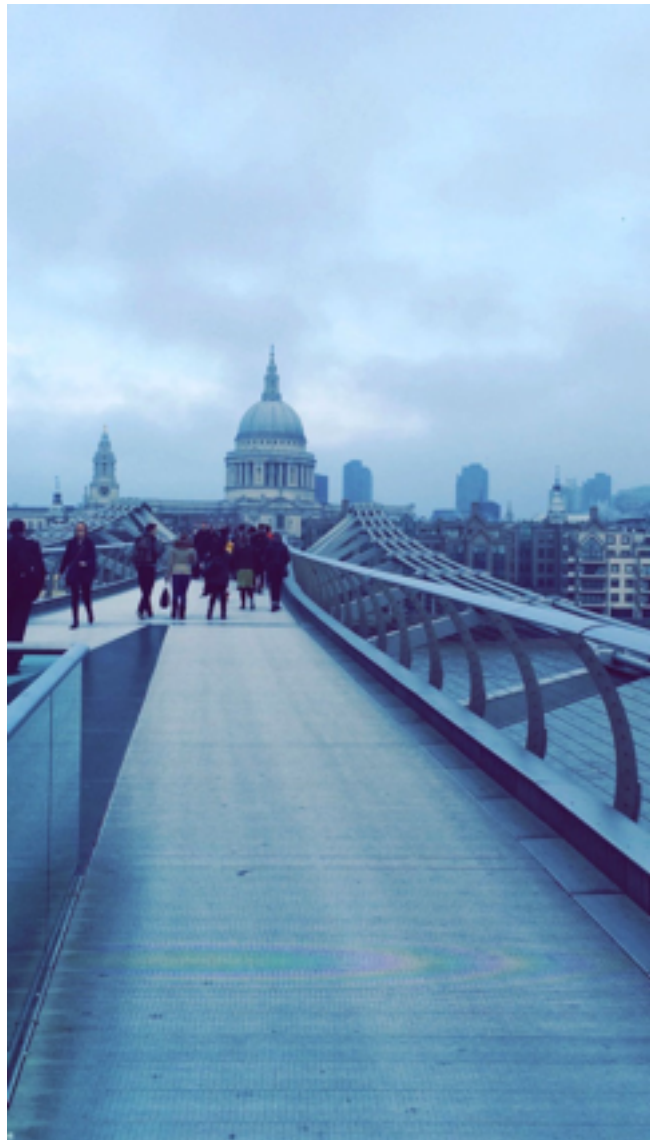
“A souvenir is a keepsake or a remembrance.  
A telltale sign. To remember, come to mind.”

- English Dictionary<sup>1</sup>

Souvenirs are personal gifts created to help us open our hearts and minds, treasuring and remembering the moments we are scared we may one day forget. A keep sake, a memento, a sentimental object, that recalls a certain place or a series of events, forever reminding us of the times we've spent living and visiting exciting cities and places. A miniature replica, a slice of history we can keep with us always. A sentimental, symbolic reminder.

My chosen place is the famous London Millennium Bridge. I have only visited the bridge twice in my life. After seeing this amazing infrastructure in one of my favourite films, Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows I was fascinated by how the film portrays the bridge as a moving object caused by the use of magic. CGI was used to create the illusion of movement and wreckage. I have been drawn to the bridge ever since. However, as we all know magic isn't real but an artists imaginative mind can create a detailed picture, reminding us of the feelings a special moment first brought us. Bringing back childhood memories. Visiting the attraction in person brings London to life, showing us the city from a completely different angle.

In 1996 the idea of the Millennium Bridge was founded and created. The Financial Times put together an exciting international competition in partnership with London's Borough of Southwark and the Royal Institute of British Architects to design a brand new river walkover, crossing one part of the Thames between Blackfriars Bridge and Southwark. Starting one end at the City and finishing linking St Paul's Cathedral and the well known art gallery Tate Modern alongside the New Globe Theatre.



Photography by author, Millennium Bridge | November 2015

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<sup>1</sup> **Dictionary, English.**, Definition of the word 'Souvenir' (Published April 15, 1755)



Photography by author, Millennium Bridge South side of the River Thames | November 2015

A-Listed as one of London's biggest and best tourist attractions, it is known to be the first pedestrian footbridge river crossing designed for Central London in over a century. Amazing views of London City adds to my personal love for this piece of architecture. The bridge has been located in such a perfect place, linking the City of London through Art and Design to take us to Art and Design.

“The regeneration of the south side of the river” - Deyan Sudjic<sup>2</sup>

The Millennium bridge is surrounded by urban nature, including the well known London River Thames. The thames barrier is in control of it's water levels which protects London and it's famous architecture from being destroyed. As of today and the non controllible weather conditions and the amounts of rainfall -



Photography by author, Construction workers working on the Millennium Bridge | November 2015

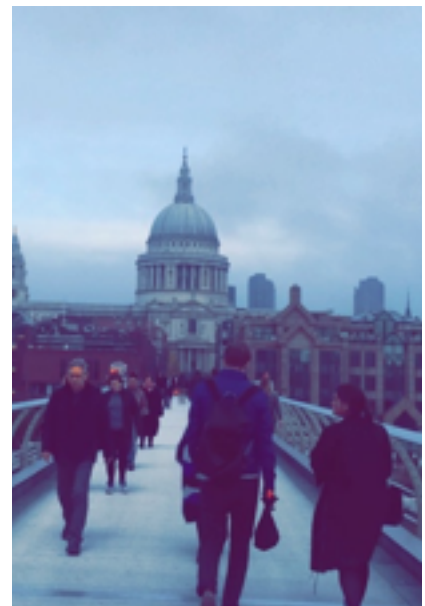
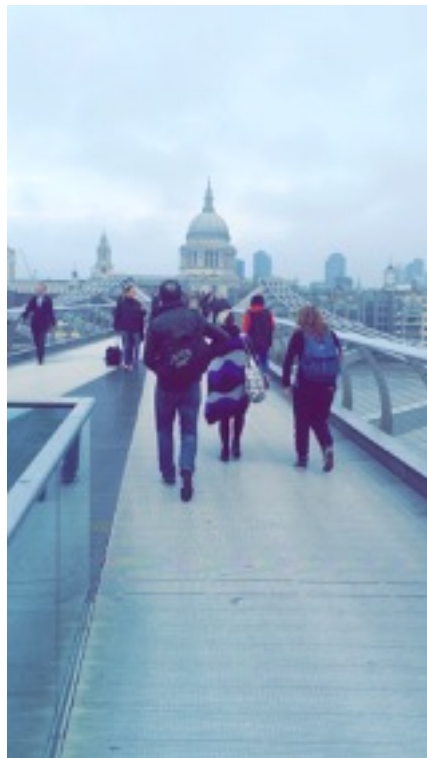
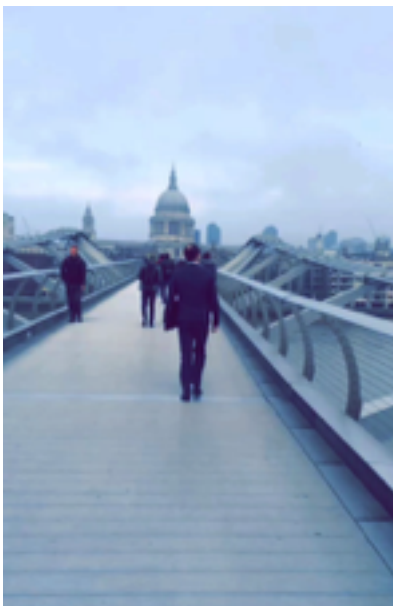
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<sup>2</sup> **Sudjic Deyan.**, 'Blade of Light: The Story of the Millennium Bridge' (Published February 28, 2002)

adding to the Thames, there is a fear that during high tide seasons more and more water will be added to the river by the sea and cause major floods in the capital. The Environment Agency released a detailed map in December 2013, showing and explaining how London could change and look if water levels continued to rise if the barrier stopped controlling the water. If the water levels change in anyway there will be a huge chance of flooding, potentially destroying places such as The Houses of Parliament, O2 arena, Tower Bridge and surrounding areas as far out as Southwark, Isle of Dogs, Whitechapel and West Ham.

“To prevent this, the barrier has been used at record levels” - Eamonn Forde, Freelance Technology Journalist<sup>3</sup>

Whilst crossing the bridge, I analysed the pedestrians crossing beside me. Their faces full of surprise, fascinated by the views. To both the left and right, construction workers walk along and hang off the bridges unsteady edges, their reflective florescent uniform attracting the attention of many. Tourists and students stopped to take pictures of the workers as well as the nearby surrounding. some walked by with their heads down as if this stunning walk with it's added entertainment was nothing special, just apart of their daily routine. Many people looked just as nervous as I felt, astounded by the workers and their bravery. As I push my nerves aside, I continue on my journey, focusing my interests on the stunning views surrounding the overwater infrastructure.



Photography by author, a collection of photographs titled Visitors Walk documenting the reactions of individuals | November 2015

“Logic would surely dictate that an efficient functional infrastructure is an essential prerequisite for any modern city to thrive” - Kerr<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> **De Castella, Tom.**, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-26133660>> (accessed February 11, 2014)

<sup>4</sup> **Kerr, Joe & Gibson, Andrew.**, London, from Punk to Blair, Infrastructure (Published 2003)

After analysing this stunning steel suspension and its in-depth history, I designed and created an item for lovers of jewellery and architecture, an alternative souvenir. Creating the bridge using only one material, silver copper wire, constructed using pliers. A bangle styled bracelet, outlining my favourite parts of the bridge. It's geometric styled shapes add structure to my design focusing on its detailed features, the way the bridge itself is held together securely, its slight sideways movement and the simplicity of its colouring. To many, jewellery is a very sentimental object as well as being personal and connected to a place of interest it can be used as a token of appreciate towards someone close to us.

I designed *Millenni* imperfectly linking the themes of infrastructure and personal feelings. Also adding a slice of history linking my souvenir focusing on the future of London and its water levels, I placed my bracelet securely in a transparent, water filled, glass container, similar to a snow globe. Creating a sub-aquatic reality. In the base of the container are small pebbles adding the effect of being underwater, reflecting on where The Millennium Bridge could be standing in years to come, a new way of exploring London city. Keeping the colours simple, I used only silver, replicating the colour of the bridge and connecting the frosty London weather, on November 3rd the date I revisited. Focusing on re-designing the well known infrastructure and submerging the realness of urban tourism and London's future.

"The body of lived experience is subject to change, transformation, and most importantly, death" - Susan Stewart<sup>5</sup>

The bracelet will most likely rust over time due to being underwater as it would in reality, similarly to the way one day our lives will end, our bodies will decay and we will become a distant memory. It is some what mournful to think that one day something so historical and beautiful will no longer remain, nothing can stay perfect forever. Everything is changing, people, art and design and especially the city around us. London is known for constant change, modernising areas, reconstructing and rebuilding. Over the period of the past 100 years so much has changed drastically.



Photography by author, Alternative Souvenir, Millenni | November 2015

"The Souvenir is by definition always incomplete" - Susan Stewart<sup>6</sup>

As Susan Stewart has explained in her book titled; *On Longing, The Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* being connected to things personally is important, there's a lot more to an object than just itself, every object has a story, a hidden history.



<sup>5</sup> Stewart, Susan., 'On Longing - Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection'; Objects of Desire, Chapter 5 (Published Dec 19, 1992)

<sup>6</sup> Stewart, Susan., 'On Longing - Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection'; Objects of Desire, Chapter 5 (Published Dec 19, 1992)

Also having many advantages. The bridge attracts the attention of travellers, tourists and many lovers of London. A free interesting attraction, an unusual walk over the water. No admission fee is needed which saves tourists and the people of the city money on travelling via public transport, a fundamental facility for on foot travellers. The views are picture perfect. Impeccably situated right at the centre of the Thames. I adore the way the sunshine and moonlight bounces off the metal exterior touching deeply on how stunning the overpass looks both day time and evenings, changing the atmosphere of the city. No matter what time of day you visit it's a day to remember, an experience not to be missed.

Millenni could potentially be purchased at many tourist attractions, well known London museums such as the Museum of London, The London Aquarium and many different gift shops in the city centre.

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