

PEACE IN RUINS

A PRACTICE-BASED VR THESIS ON CONFLICT, MEMORY & IMMERSIVE WITNESSING.

Agenda

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(01)

"Peace in Ruins" is an immersive VR experience that designed to bring the realities of war closer to home by reimagining peaceful urban spaces as potential war zones.

It's a project about memory, proximity, and the fragile boundary between peace and destruction.



CONCEPT OVERVIEW

MA VIRTUAL REALITY
PROJECT PITCH



“Peace in Ruins” is an immersive VR project (360° or 180°) that explores the fragility of peace through the lens of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. Set in London—one of the world’s most stable and iconic cities—the experience begins by capturing peaceful, familiar urban scenes using photogrammetry scans and rendering. These tranquil environments are then transformed into haunting war zones using real-world data from Ukraine: 3D scans of bombed cities, archival audio, news reports, recordings of the battlefield and fragments of civilian recordings.

This layered approach bridges personal space and global conflict, making the distant horrors of war feel immediate and deeply personal. By inserting traces of destruction—taken directly from Ukraine’s invaded cities—into the streets of London, this work aims to draw a stark parallel: what happened there could happen anywhere.

Overall, it challenges audiences to confront the proximity of violence in a world teetering on the edge of a larger scale conflict.

The piece unfolds in two acts—first, a peaceful, everyday London scene; then, the same scene repeated, but overlaid with destruction, decay, and war textures. This repetition becomes the emotional gut-punch. Viewers realize that what felt safe is not immune. It's not a glitch or surreal transition—it's a direct contrast.

(03)

CONTEXT & RELEVANCE

MA VIRTUAL REALITY
PROJECT PITCH



This project is directly inspired by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, one of the most consequential and visually documented wars of the 21st century. As Russian forces continue to destroy homes, schools, museums, and monuments, artists, citizens, and journalists have responded by digitally preserving the physical and emotional ruins through 3D scanning, audio diaries, and media archives.

“Peace in Ruins” aims to respectfully incorporate this material—sourced from open-access platforms—into a new spatial narrative. The goal is not to dramatize, but to re-contextualize these raw, powerful fragments within an unexpected frame: the quiet, everyday landscapes of a Western capital.

(04)

STRUCTURE

This piece stems from an emotional contradiction: the comfort of living in a peaceful city while watching another be destroyed in real-time online. The constant flood of images and videos from Ukraine during the war often creates emotional distance rather than empathy. Peace in Ruins seeks to counter this by collapsing spatial and emotional distances through immersive design.

By bringing digital ruins from Ukraine into London's peaceful topology, I aim to generate a sense of ethical discomfort and introspection. The work is a spatial meditation rather than a story-driven game – a digital requiem, not a newsreel.

**IMMERSIVE VR
(360°/180°)
EXPERIENCE**

**TRANSFORMS INTO A
WAR ZONE USING
REAL DATA FROM
UKRAINE**

**STARTS IN PEACEFUL
LONDON**

**TWO ACTS: PEACE →
RUINS**

MA VIRTUAL REALITY
PROJECT PITCH

(05)



REAL DATA FROM UKRAINE'S

REFERENCE

3D SCANS



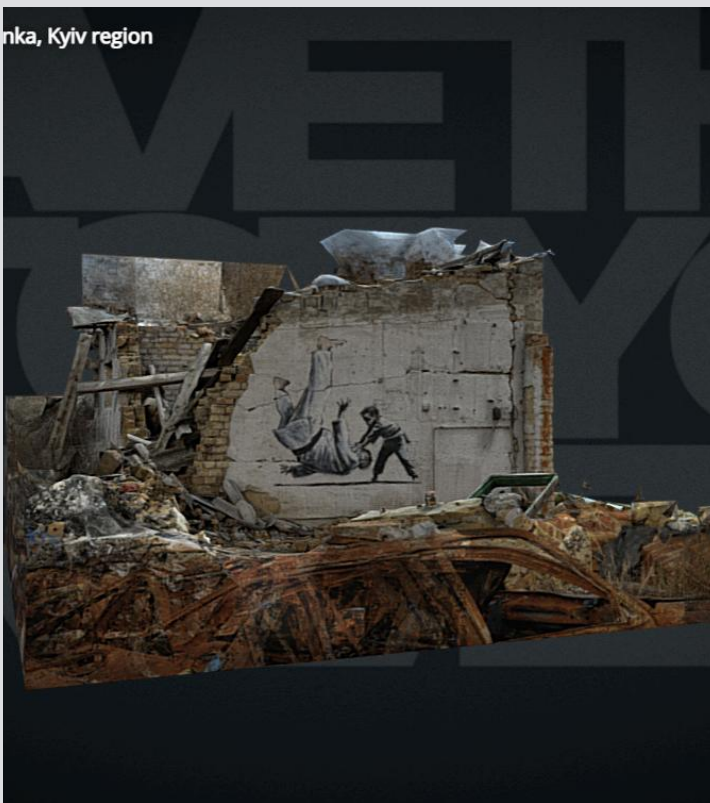
**BUILDING
DESTROYED BY
SUICIDE DRONE,
ZHYLIANSKA
ST., KYIV**

[Link](#)



**BANKSY STREET
ART IN
BORODIANKA**

[Link](#)



**UKRAINE HOTEL
DESTRUCTION,
CHERNIHIV**

[Link](#)

(06)

A blend of photogrammetry, LiDAR scans to build hybrid spaces. Peaceful locations (parks, stations, markets) will distort and fragment into digital ruins—subtle at first, then overwhelming.

VR WORKS



CLOUDS OVER SIDRA



CIVIL WAR 1864: A VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE, IN THE TRENCHES: THE CONFEDERATE LINE

Places users in the midst of the American Civil War.



CARNE Y ARENA - FLESH AND SAND

A groundbreaking and immersive virtual reality experience explores the human condition of immigrants and refugees.



AFTERMATH VR: EUROMAIDAN TEASER TRAILER EN

An immersive documentary project about Euromaidan revolution in Kyiv, Ukraine.

ARTS REFERENCE

(07)

REAL DATA FROM UKRAINE'S

TECHNICAL APPROACH

- Scene Capture: Photogrammetry of London using Polycam & Luma AI
- Assets: Real war-damaged 3D models sourced from open archives
- Engine: Unreal Engine 5 for scene assembly, lighting, navigation, and shader transitions
- Audio: Layered field recordings of London with archival war sounds (sirens, silence, collapses)
- Platform: Vision Pro / YouTube VR
- Visual Style: Hyperrealistic environments with poetic transitions—starting with realism and gradually shifting into atmospheric destabilization

(08)

REAL DATA FROM UKRAINE'S

This is not intended for commercial gaming audiences but rather for the following:

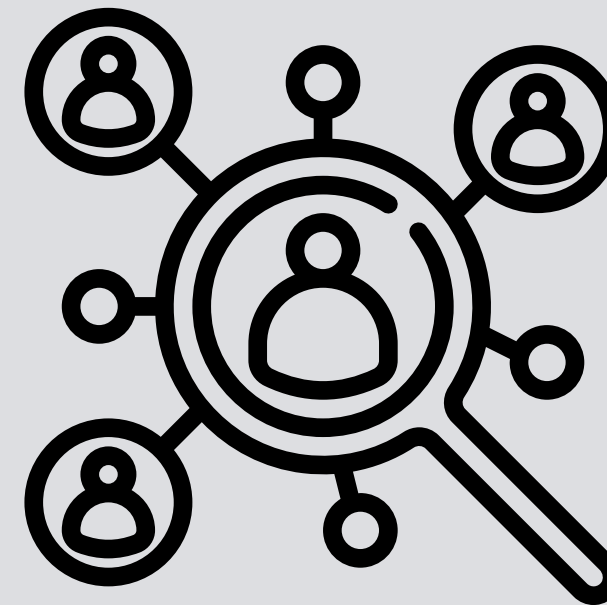
Primary Audience:

- Art & design students.
- Museum or gallery visitors.
- Individuals Interested in Peace & Conflict.

Impact Goals:

- Challenge emotional detachment from distant war.
- Promote discussion about memory, peace, and loss.
- Offer a non-verbal, immersive experience of empathy.
- Contribute to new forms of digital memorialization.


TARGET AUDIENCE & INTENDED IMPACT



(09)

REAL DATA FROM UKRAINE'S

SOUND DESIGN PLAN



Spatial Audio:

Creates immersive, realistic environments through carefully positioned sound sources, enhancing the user's sense of presence.

Blending Soundscapes:

Combines ambient London city sounds with authentic Ukrainian field recordings, battlefield audio, news fragments, and civilian testimonies.

Tools:

FL Studio, Fairlight

(10)

Element of Music

SOUND DESIGN PLAN

Sound is critical in shaping emotional response. There will be no speech or narration — only layers of real and fictional ambience.

Spatial 3D sound will guide the viewer's attention emotionally, not functionally.

Silence is used as a powerful narrative device in the final scene.



Ambient Life

London sounds: footsteps, buses, wind, trains.

Transforming Space

Transition layer: subtle distortions, metallic echo, slowed reverb.

Ruined Silence

Quiet but weighted sounds: distant artillery, building creaks, wind over rubble

Ethical Considerations

This project engages directly with war imagery and data, and must do so ethically and respectfully.

Key Ethical Principles:

No glorification or gamification of war.

No characters, violence, or dramatization.

All data sourced under Creative Commons or with permission.

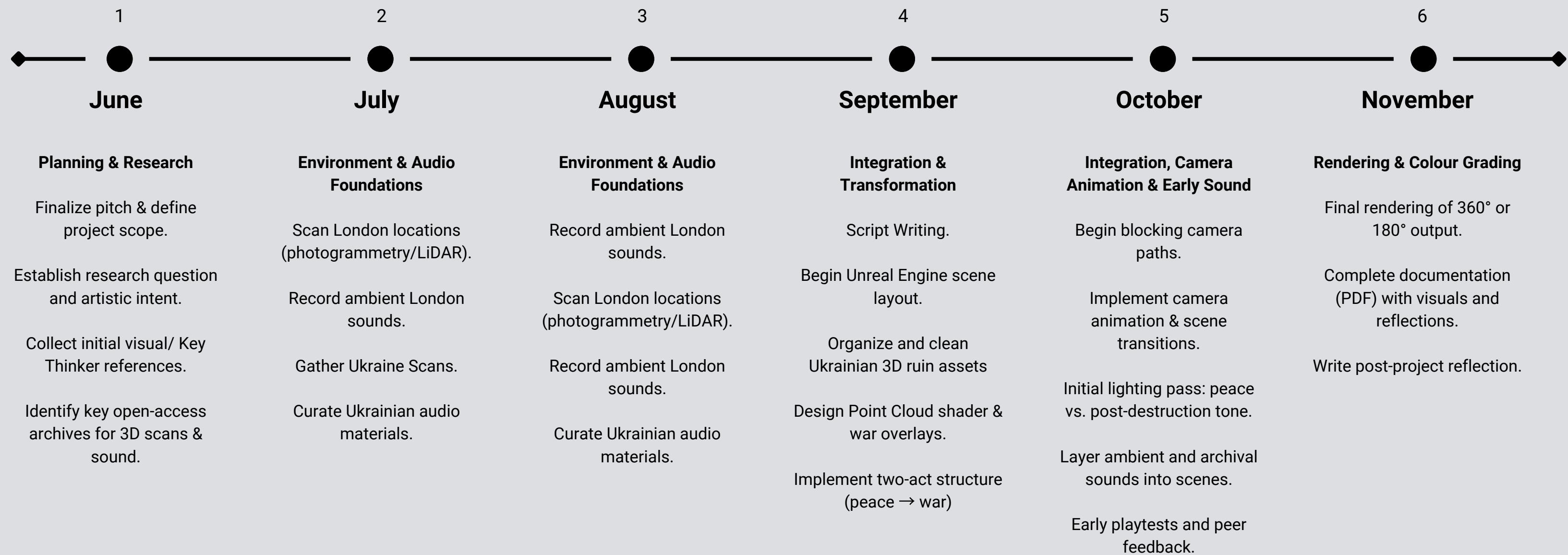
Transparency in attribution – clear credits for all 3D scans and field recordings.

Viewer agency respected – a content warning will precede the shift into the ruin scene.

(12)

Roadmap

Timeline



BUDGET & RESOURCES

<div>Backup Ukraine 3D Assets</div> <div>£0</div>	<div>Vision Pro (Headset)</div> <div>£3,500</div>	<div>Sound licensing & mixing</div> <div>£100 - £250</div>	<div>Total</div> <div>cost ~£4500</div>
<div></div> <div>£100 - £350</div>	<div>Polycam Pro (Photogrammetry tools)</div> <div>£20/month</div>	<div>Transport & site access</div> <div>£50</div>	

RESEARCH QUESTION

A New Realism (plausibility)?

Exploring the Authenticity (objectivity) of Conflict (zone) Representation in VR and Photography.
(Video/films)



RATIONALE AND FRAMING:

This research critically examines how conflict zones are depicted differently through Virtual Reality (VR) and traditional photographic journalism or film. Specifically, it investigates how these mediums construct perceptions of authenticity and objectivity, considering the ethical implications tied to the act of witnessing.

Authenticity and Objectivity:

- Investigate how authenticity and objectivity are constructed differently by photography and VR. Is VR's immersive plausibility a new form of realism, or does it introduce new ethical challenges and narrative biases?



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research Focus:

How do VR and photography construct or challenge realism when representing distant conflict zones?

Key Ideas:

- Spatial realism vs. framed realism (VR vs. photo)
- Emotional proximity vs. journalistic detachment
- The tension between documentary evidence and affective experience
- The evolving ethics of digital witnessing

This framework examines how form and medium shape truth-claims in visual conflict narratives.



PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR MA RESEARCH REPORT (6000 – 8000 WORDS)

Title Page

A New Realism? Exploring Authenticity and Objectivity in Conflict Zone Representation: A Comparative Analysis of VR and Photographic Media.

Abstract

- Research question: Can VR offer a more emotionally authentic representation of conflict than photography?
- Motivation behind the inquiry: Examining the ethical dimensions and emotional truths in conflict representation.
- Theoretical framework: authenticity, presence, plausibility
- Summary of practical project (Peace in Ruins)
- Key findings and conclusions

Acknowledgements (Optional)

- Thank Ukrainian sources, contributors, and supporters of research and production.

Table of Contents / List of Figures & Tables



MAIN BODY (6000 – 8000 WORDS)

Part I: Theoretical Framework & Critical Inquiry (4000 – 4500 Words)

1. Introduction (300 – 500 words)

- Introduce central research question clearly
- Briefly outline "Peace in Ruins" as a practice-based investigation
- Provide overview of report structure

2. Context: Photography, Truth, and Visual Authenticity

- Historical overview: Barthes, Sontag, Azoulay
- War photography and ethics of witnessing
- Tensions between objectivity and subjectivity in visual media

3. Immersion, Presence, and Authenticity in XR

- Key concepts: presence, plausibility, embodiment (Slater, Lombard & Ditton)
- Paradigm shift from representational to experiential truth
- Case studies: Clouds Over Sidra, The Enemy, Aftermath VR

4. Comparative Analysis: Photography vs VR as Modes of Representation

- Differences: still vs. immersive spatial experience
- Emotional engagement, moral proximity, narrative framing
- Concept of the “virtual ruin”—emotional authenticity via digital reconstruction

5. Conclusion of Part I: From Image to Immersion

- Summary argument: VR reframes rather than replaces photographic realism
- Transition to Part II's applied exploration through Peace in Ruins



MAIN BODY (6000 – 8000 WORDS)

Part II: Practice-Based Research – Peace in Ruins (2500 – 3500 Words)

6. Creative Intent & Conceptual Foundations

- Purpose and goals
- Response to Ukraine conflict
- Connection to theoretical concepts: mediated memory, presence, witnessing

7. Methods, Sources, and Workflow

- Use of photogrammetry and LiDAR scans
- Ethical sourcing from Ukraine
- Iterative artistic process and technical choices

8. User Experience and Spatial Design

- User perspective: sights, sounds, emotional arc
- Movement, interactivity, attention guidance
- Transition from peaceful scenes to ruinous environments

9. Technical Choices and Challenges

- Software/tools: Unreal Engine, photogrammetry, spatial audio
- Addressing design challenges: resolution, emotional tone, comfort
- Artistic experimentation outcomes and compromises

10. Critical Reflection: What Did the Practice Reveal?

- Evaluation of VR's emotional authenticity
- Unique strengths of VR compared to photography
- Identified limitations and audience reactions

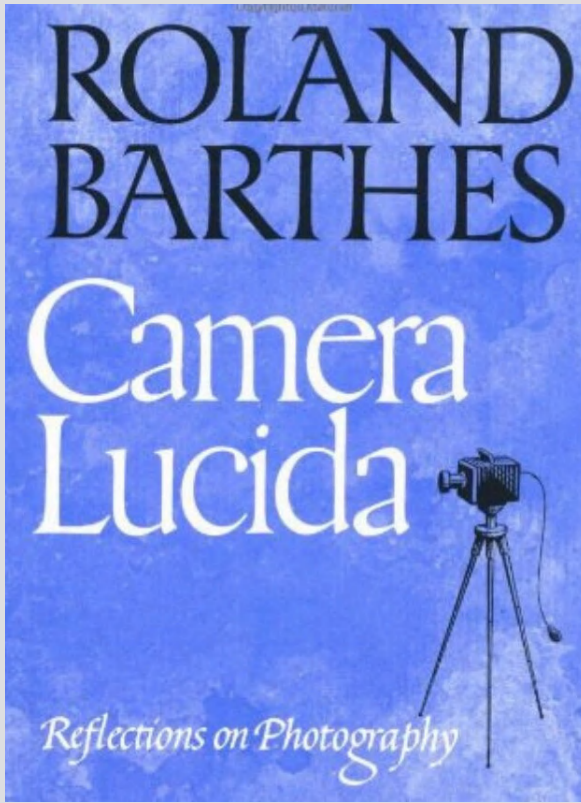
11. Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Work

- Recap findings and theoretical contributions
- Acknowledge limitations (technical, ethical, conceptual)
- Suggest future research directions



ESSAY RESEARCH QUESTION

KEY THINKERS



ROLAND
BARTHES



TOMAS DODDS



MEL SLATER

(21)

MA VIRTUAL REALITY
PROJECT PITCH

VISIT WEBSITE AT
WWW.REALLYGREATSITE.COM

PRESENTED BY
YAO HAN

NOT JUST THEIR WAR OUR SHARED FRAGILITY.

