Panasonic

CASE STUDY

Projection with purpose: Pixel Sharp brings the Bayeux Tapestry to the White Cliffs of Dover

A single-night projection onto one of Britain’s most recognisable landmarks required Pixel Sharp to combine creative precision, careful logistics and dependable Panasonic projection technology.

Client: Pixel Sharp
Location: Dover

Product(s) supplied: PT-RQ35K2

Challenge

When the British Museum wanted to mark the forthcoming return of the Bayeux Tapestry to England with a message of thanks to France, the White Cliffs of Dover offered an unusually appropriate canvas. Nearly 1,000 years after the events depicted in the Tapestry, imagery inspired by the historic work appeared across the cliffs alongside a simple message: “Merci”

Solution

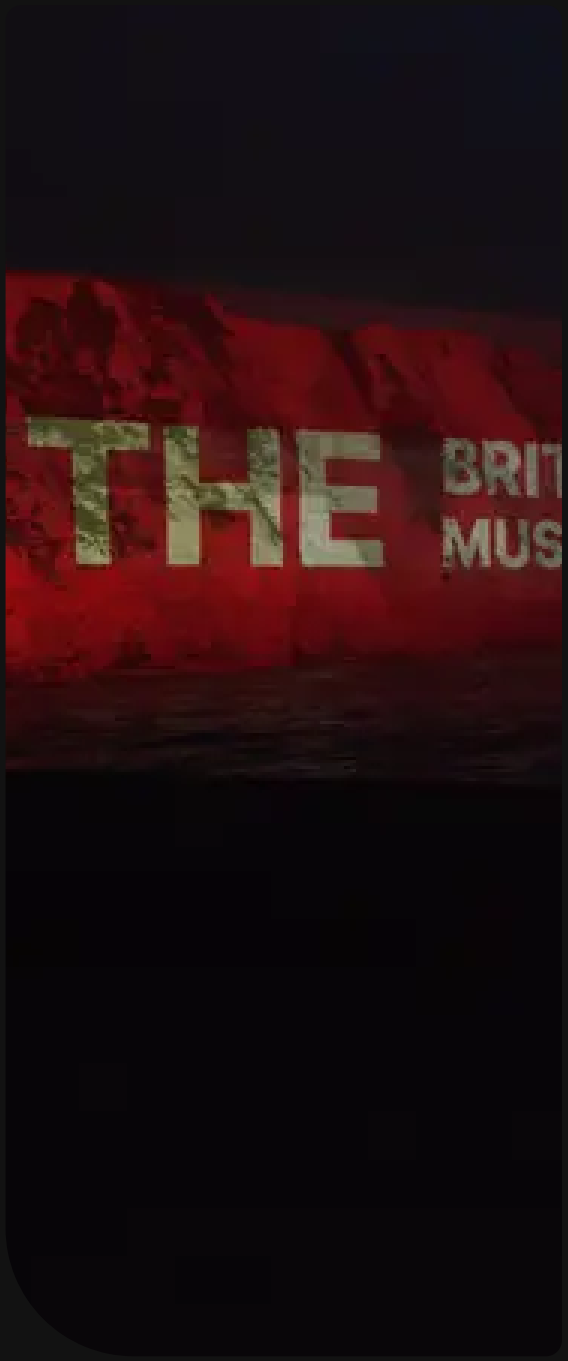
For Pixel Sharp founder and director Jon Sharpe, however, bringing the idea to life meant overcoming a remote location with no mains electricity, limited access, an irregular natural projection surface and a narrow nighttime operating window

Turning an idea into projection-ready content

Pixel Sharp became involved after Anthony Pickles, Director of Communications at the British Museum, came across Sharpe’s portfolio. The Museum had developed the creative concept, while Pixel Sharp advised on translating it into content suitable for projection across the cliffs.

Unlike a conventional screen, the White Cliffs are neither flat nor consistently white. Chalk, vegetation and variations in the surface can affect colour, contrast and legibility. “Projection is light,” Sharpe says. “You have to make sure that the colours are going to give you enough punch.”

Darker colours therefore required careful handling, while typography had to remain large and clear enough to work across the considerable scale and distance involved. Alternative content arrangements were also prepared so imagery and text could be repositioned according to conditions on site. The aim was to create something that remained visually coherent not just on a monitor, but when projected onto a natural landmark.



Powerful projection in a remote location

Logistics were equally important. Reaching the projection position meant transporting equipment through difficult terrain, and there was no mains electricity available. “When I choose technology, I’m always thinking about the logistics of installing it and how many people I’m going to need,” Sharpe says.

The system therefore needed enough output to illuminate a large projection area while remaining manageable for a small production team. Four Panasonic RQ35K 4K laser projectors were deployed in two double-stacked pairs, with the complete system operating from portable battery power.

Sharpe and the wider Pixel Sharp network already had extensive experience using Panasonic projectors on large-scale projection and immersive productions. That familiarity helped when the team had only a limited evening window in which to position, align and map the projectors.

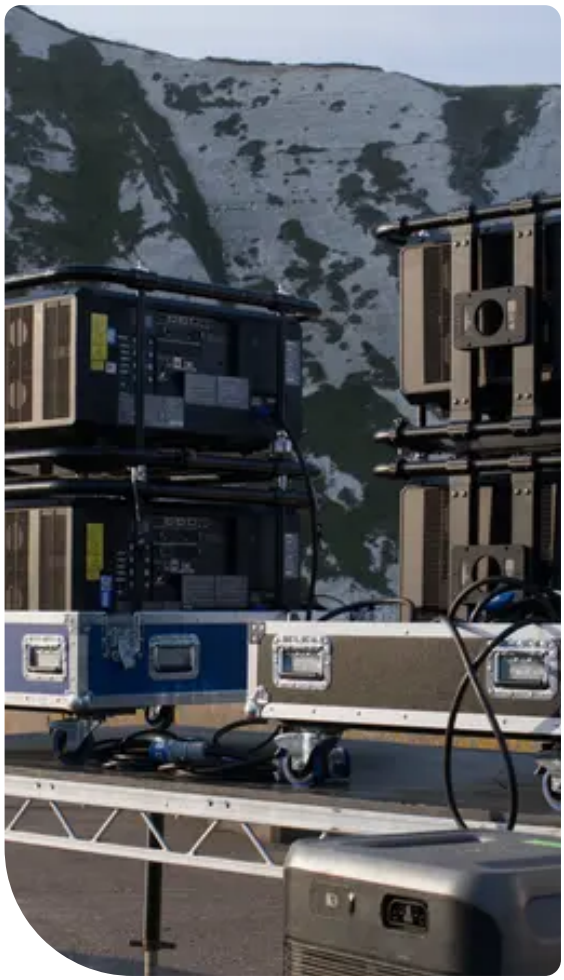
"We always use them. We love them! They’re super easy to use, and we’re very accustomed to Panasonic projectors."

Jon Sharpe
Technical Director & Founder
Pixel Sharp

For multi-projector mapping, Sharpe also favours 3-Chip DLP technology because of the importance of colour consistency and image uniformity across the complete canvas. “If you’re doing a mapping job with multiple projectors, we’ll always choose 3-Chip DLP,” he says. “The colours are going to match, the adjustments are going to be better, and the uniformity throughout the image is going to be cleaner.”

Portability mattered too. “For the power of that projector, three people can pick them up, put them on a desk and move them around,” Sharpe says. “Everything is quite straightforward.”

For Sharpe, this balance between performance and manageable form factor is becoming increasingly important as projection moves into more unusual environments. “People always want smaller units,” he says. “It’s about more power in a smaller package.”



Working against the weather

Once on site, the projectors could be positioned within a couple of hours, with approximately another hour and a half required for mapping, but nature proved less predictable.

A thick bank of fog drifted across the cliffs while the team was preparing the projection, reducing visibility and temporarily obscuring the surface needed for mapping. Conditions eventually improved, only for an electrical storm to begin approaching the coast. With electrical equipment and large portable batteries operating in an exposed location, the team captured the required imagery before shutting the system down earlier than planned.

The experience reinforced a central principle of outdoor production: some conditions cannot be controlled, making preparation, experience and dependable technology particularly important. “You make sure you’ve got cover, you make sure you’re protected, and you have backup plans,” Sharpe says.

"The whole value is that you can take your message and give it context by placing it on a location, or by changing the shape of how it’s viewed."

Jon Sharpe
Technical Director & Founder
Pixel Sharp

Giving history a new context

The completed projection combined imagery inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry with the word “Merci”, creating a highly visible gesture of thanks to France ahead of the historic work’s return to England. Images subsequently travelled far beyond Dover, including being shared by French President Emmanuel Macron.

For Sharpe, the public response reflected the continuing cultural significance of the Tapestry. “It’s something we learn about when we’re kids,” he says. “We all learn about 1066. It’s such an incredibly important piece of history.”

The project also demonstrates something broader about the role of projection technology. Audiences encounter digital imagery on rectangular screens every day. Projection can break that pattern by placing content directly into a physical environment and allowing the location itself to become part of the story.

When technology is used successfully to interpret culture and history, it can almost disappear behind the story it is helping to tell. “When you present something in a unique way, people are going to remember it,” he adds.

It is hard to imagine a more fitting illustration: a story nearly a thousand years old, cast in new light on the White Cliffs of Dover and shining across the Channel as a reminder that, however technology changes the way we tell our stories, the future remains illuminated by the past.

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