

Rosie Schaap, NY Times. June 27 2017
excerpt from
'The weird Mystic Pull of Southwest England'

Still, nothing prepared me for what I'd see the next day at the Timehouse Muzeum: The Time Travellers Museum and Narnia Totnes Shop. The unwieldy name put me off (and why that "z" in Muzeum?). But I'm glad I went. Housed in an 18th-century building on Fore Street — the lower half of Totnes's steep main drag, which slopes sharply toward the river — the museum is entered through the Narnia shop, which has little to do with the books by C. S. Lewis, and sells cool records, gifts, T-shirts and postcards. (A sign at the edge of town announces that Totnes is "twinning" with Narnia. The connection abides, and the creator of the Timehouse, Julie Lafferty, an artist and designer, recognizes that it is a draw.)

Exit the shop, and the museum begins. It is the most hallucinatory experience I've had since I gave up actual hallucinogens a long time ago. You start below ground and work up to the top floor, through a series of rooms designed to evoke major eras in recent history; many also include Ms. Lafferty's hypnotic films. I didn't feel so much that I was going back in time, but rather that time was suspended.

Period furniture and artifacts and original paintings, also by Ms. Lafferty, combine to tell a complex story about life and society, war and peace, art and music. Some sections — like the Moroccan tearoom, awash in rainbow light beaming through multicolored windowpanes — are achingly beautiful. Others, like a chamber next to the tearoom, loaded with imagery and memorabilia from World War II, are unsettling. The museum is essentially an art installation forged by a single creative spirit who might just be a genius.

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A little dazed, I stepped out of the museum into blazing sunlight. Still, I walked up the long stone stairway that coils around the mound on top of which the ruins of Totnes Castle sit, and surveyed the Devon countryside from its heights, breathing it in, steadying myself after the dizzying effects of the museum and the sunshine.

Image