

# news

from arts council england, london



## Summer in the city Art outside in the capital...

We look back on some of the festivals, carnivals, exhibitions and performances that took place across London in summer 2007.

# Bad weather... great summer!

Looking back over the last few months it's fair to say that we haven't had the finest weather in the capital. But that didn't stop many thousands of Londoners getting out and about to enjoy the extraordinary array of outdoor arts events right across this great city.

In this issue of *news*, we look at how some of our investment has been supporting art outside, bringing alive public spaces, both large and small, in many different ways and for many different people.

From the spectacle of iconic summer events such as The Notting Hill Carnival and the Greenwich+Docklands International Festival, to growing events such as the Shoreditch Festival or Bonkersfest! in Camberwell, our streets, parks and open spaces have been filled with activities. And of course this summer also saw the re-opening of the Royal Festival Hall. The opening Overture weekend, with



every event free, was an almost overwhelming array of activities from early morning to late night, involving over 18,000 performers from across London and way beyond. And the sun shone!

From Croydon to Clapham, Colourscape provided a beautiful and captivating way to enjoy great music and performance in outdoor spaces, while the London Literature Festival literally spilled out onto the Southbank. This summer's Serpentine Pavilion, by Olafur Eliasson and Kjetil Thorsen, and Anthony Gormley's figures on our streets and rooftops, as part of the *Blind Light* exhibition at Hayward Gallery, made us look again - both at ourselves in this city, and at the city itself. Dan Harvey and Heather Ackroyd's *Fly Tower* - a sensitive dressing of the National Theatre's outside wall in grass was more pause for thought and reflection on our environment and surroundings. LIFT's *Eat London* in Trafalgar Square was yet another.

We also go behind the scenes of one or two of these summer events. To check out not just how they get put together, but also to give you a few possibly unknown facts. I suspect few who enjoyed Feast on the Bridge recently at this year's Thames Festival will know about the massive outreach programme involved, including the 50 primary schools that grew pumpkins for the occasion!

Some of the projects we have been supporting taking art to outside spaces have been much further afield - highlights include Kinetika's recent performance on the Great Wall of China and Cape Farewell's expedition to the Arctic. Both showing off the great



Above: *Dancing City* featured at the Greenwich+Docklands International Festival 2007. Photo Briony Campbell  
Opposite page: *Feast on the Bridge* (page 8) , Mayor's Thames Festival, London 2007. Photo Hayley Madden

range of talents in London's young people. Just as we had hoped, following the transformation of the streets last year by *The Sultan's Elephant*, brought to us by Royal de Luxe and Artichoke, both artists and audiences appetite for great outdoor arts events has just grown and grown. In breadth, range and ambition. This summer, we had so many examples. Both of what is possible now, and what this city is capable of in future.

And looking ahead, don't forget that the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be handed over to London from next year. See page 18 to see how you can get involved.

We are also leading on one of the 'bid projects' set out in London's submission to host the 2012 games; *Artists Taking the Lead*. Twelve commissions that will be delivered in partnership with the other UK Arts Councils from 2008. One commission

for each of the nine regions of England, and one for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. These can be in any artistic medium and have artist's voices at the centre of projects across the length and breadth of the UK. They will celebrate the individual and collective creative landscape of this country through the arts. If you want to be part of showing the world what this is, get in touch through [vision2012@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:vision2012@artscouncil.org.uk)

We are still waiting for the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review to see what investment will be available for *Artists Taking the Lead*, but the ideas need to start now. The lead up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and its legacy will be a fantastic opportunity for the arts and a great cultural as well as sporting event... whatever the weather.

**Sarah Weir**  
Executive Director

# Music and colour

Eye Music Trust (formerly Nettlefold Festival Trust) has been running a Colourscape Music Festival on Clapham Common for 18 years. Proudly claimed to be the only music festival to take place entirely within a sculpture, everything happens inside a large walk-in labyrinth of colour and light. Simon Desorgher of Eye Music Trust explains.

It is difficult to describe the experience of being absorbed inside colour, surrounded by all the colours of the rainbow. The enthusiastic public filling the space every year resort to poetry:

'like being wrapped in a rainbow'  
 ...'I felt I could breathe the colours'  
 Colourscape visitors

The principle of Eye Music is to encourage a wide public to participate in contemporary music and art. By putting Colourscape in a public place people are drawn through curiosity and media coverage. Once inside they discover that music often thought 'difficult' is actually very enjoyable.

This year's Colourscape festival took place on Clapham Common from 15-23 September and included icons of contemporary music such as Evan Parker and a commission from Barry Guy including dancers, mime artists and a live video projection of the day's events.

Eye Music also takes its new creative ideas to outer London boroughs. Our new mobile ColourDome (a smaller version of Colourscape) has appeared in parks and town centres, attracting large audiences in Brent, Croydon, Barnet, Enfield, Wanstead

Alan Martin, dancer and musician, performing in Colourscape, 2003. Photo: Kippa Matthews





Barry Guy and Edwin Roxburgh performing in Colourscape, Clapham Common, London. Photo: Peter Jones

and Stockwell. Our transparent 'Tube' sound-tunnel has been in Sutton, Enfield, Hornchurch, Merton and Croydon town centres.

A key to building audiences and creators for the future, is involving young people. Our schools' workshop programme attracts about 1,000 schoolchildren to participatory colour and music workshops each year in Colourscape. We also hold outreach schools' workshops in sculpture and music in outer London boroughs specialising with disabled children and early years.

Always, the secret to our success in attracting the wider public to contemporary music is in taking events into outdoor spaces.

*A Symphony of Church Bells*, brass bands (on the roofs) and percussionists floating on the river in York attracted 80,000 people (police estimates). *Music of the Spheres* (musicians suspended in a giant bubble floating on water) attracted 8,000 in Exeter.

In 1995, the Arts Council funded the original Colourscape structure and also funded smaller structures to take to outer London boroughs. Eye Music Trust received £132,920 through Grants for the arts from Arts Council England, London in 2006/07.

## Conspicuous consumption

In 2006, over 650,000 people flocked to the riverbanks in central London for the annual Thames Festival. This year it is estimated that one million people attended. Festival Director Adrian Evans looks back at the range of education projects that have involved thousands of children in the themes and creation of the festival.

At this year's festival, strengthened by a major sponsor and with funds for a broader marketing campaign, we drew an even bigger crowd than last year - it is estimated that one million people attended the 2007 Festival. Those who attended saw over 100 groups in more than 25 performance areas. However, the crowds converging on the Thames on 15 and 16 September may have little knowledge of the education programme we deliver each year.

Over the years, Thames Festival has developed projects with an ever-increasing number of schools - this year with over 250. Selection is focused on inner London,

although one of our projects involves schools from all 32 local authority areas. Often these projects have a river link; they all integrate with the curriculum; they all have an output that can be part of the festival weekend; and they all share the festival's principal characteristics: celebration, transformation and participation.

Examples include a project with the arts group Lumina, which worked with 3,500 primary school children to create an installation from over 33,000 recycled plastic bags. Others include the Festival's mass choir, *Children Sing for Water*, now in its fifth year and working with 30 inner London primary schools, and Rivers of the World, which has been running for three years and links schools from across the globe.

This year we commissioned *Feast on the Bridge* to mark our tenth anniversary. Under Clare Patey's direction, for the first time in its history Southwark Bridge was closed to traffic and transformed by a team of artists into a series of extraordinary eating areas. An outreach and schools programme was a

Below: *Feast on the Bridge*, Southwark Bridge, Mayor's Thames Festival, London 2007. Photo Hayley Madden



valued part of the Feast. 2007 is the Year of Food and Farming and we wanted to engage with the healthy eating debate. We focused on the journey food makes from plot to plate and also ran a workshop involving 50 primary schools growing pumpkins for the Feast.

There were difficulties - from underestimating the resources required, to not anticipating that pumpkins need watering most just when schools break for their holidays! A wet July and August helped us enormously, as did the support from teachers and the excellent Brighton-based project gardeners Touch Wood.

Despite this being a tough scheme to deliver, we are keen for this event to become a core part of the Festival's programme. Next year we will pull out the plugs - whatever happens, you can be sure that all future Feasts will involve an education programme.

## Our reporter, 17-year-old Siân Mayhall-Purvis sampled the Feast on the Bridge:

I'm sure every child has made their fair share of gingerbread men, but few can have had the chance to make a life-sized gingerbread house! *Feast on the Bridge* had something for everyone's taste buds, the sweet-toothed, the vegetarian, the adventurous, and all with a touch of creativity on the side.

The first thing you saw was a smoothie van alongside a miniature beach, where children played in the sand and parents reclined in deckchairs. Further on, the sand changed to grass, where you could pick up a gingerbread tile for free to put on the giant house. I was surprised to see how few children were eating their creations - most were far more engrossed in decorating and adding to the enormous (and evidently scrumptious)



Above: *Feast on the Bridge*, Southwark Bridge, Mayor's Thames Festival, London 2007. Photo Hayley Madden

masterpiece. From here, you were back on normal ground, surrounded by couches and coffee-tables, before moving on to find banquet tables adorned with pumpkins and accompanied by pumpkin-wearing waiters (!) and a stall where children could make pumpkin hats.

I did feel there was more on offer for children than teenagers at the Feast, but still had great fun and thought it was a very innovative way of collaborating food and art.

The Thames Festival is regularly funded by Arts Council England, London, receiving £93,746 between 2006-08. It also received £60,193 through Grants for the arts towards *Feast on the Bridge* during 2007/08.

Below: gingerbread house at *Feast on the Bridge*, Mayor's Thames Festival, 2007. Photo Hayley Madden



# Oh my dog... it's Bonkersfest!

Since 2006, Creative Routes has held BonkersFest! - a free annual one day arts and music summer festival, illuminating and celebrating madness, creativity, individuality and eccentricity, combating stigma and promoting good mental health. It is a day of bonkers celebrations for everyone. Sarah Tonin from Creative Routes tells us more... in her own distinctive way of course!



Jo Brand opening BonkersFest! 2007 in Camberwell.  
Photo: Helen Maleed

For the second year running, London's sanity was half-baked into the boldly roaring proud madness of BonkersFest! 2007 - oh thank dog for the Arts Council! Art there was and plenty of it - the festival showcased the top shelf of the UK's mad, normal's and disabled musical and artistic talent.

Jo Brand opened the festival by firing hundreds of bananas out of a cannon, there was music and morris dancing, a virtual reality tour of the local loony bin made by mad inpatients, *The Big Nutter Video Diary*,

plus BonkersFest! opened a public space to bonkersness. This year was special too in that the mad diagnosed normality as a mental illness:

**a normal\***, n. slang. [Informal.] 1.[a]. Term to describe a person who conforms and blends in with society. Does not express any elements of individuality, flat and boring. Extremely straight and perpendicular person, cannot cope easily with chaos. Is oblivious to surroundings; Overt displays of emotions will disturb them. Difference will disturb them. Could also be described as the living dead. Does not dare express over the top displays of emotions in case they might be seen to be mad. [plural: 'The Normals']

Did they stand alone? No they didn't...not only did BBC2's *Balderdash and Piffle* take the definition to the Oxford English Dictionary, but BonkersFest! commissioned a market research consultant to investigate if madness is a marketable product.

Being mentally ill is one of the biggest taboos. Discrimination ruins lives. Given the chance, the mad can throw a good party. The baton conducting BonkersFest! lies firmly in the hands of the very very mad and the festival is supported by a consortium of organisations, prestigiously artistic, mad and disabled.

Is the de-normalisation of the public the next social and civil rights movement? At Creative Routes we are bananas, nuts, crackers, barking, bonkers and proud of it. We have all suffered shame because the label of enduring mental illness also labels you as abnormal and frightening. Us bonkerfolks don't want to aspire to normality - we think madness facilitates incredible creativity.

BonkersFest! is a celebration and allows us to experience the pure embrace of both art and madness working to a single end, the moral purpose that great art embodies. Look out for BonkersFest! 08 when a de-normalising zone system moving out in concentric circles from the centre will be implemented.

Creative Routes is an award winning interdisciplinary charity 'run by the mad for the mad'. Creative Routes celebrates and promotes the unique creativity of mad people, promoting mental well being, and creatively campaigning against discrimination and the acceptance of individuality in society.

Creative Routes received £40,000 funding from Arts Council England, London during 2007/08 through our Grants for the arts programme.



'Bonkerspage three girl' Liselle Terret of the BonkersFest! de-normalising team - also known as *The Laundrettas*. Photo: Hugh Hill

## *Shall We Dance*

by Ragroof Theatre, presented by Shoreditch Audiences for the Shoreditch Festival 2007. Photo: Duncan Kendall for Shoreditch Trust. Shoreditch Audiences is funded by Arts Council England, London and Shoreditch Trust. Arts Council England, London awarded Shoreditch Audiences £90,000 over three years in 2003/04 through Grants for the arts. This year, they were also awarded £20,000 towards visual arts commissions in the community.





Above and below: Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2007. © 2007 Olafur Eliasson and Kjetil Thorsen.  
Photo: © 2007 John Offenbach

## Summer at the Serpentine



The Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2007 is designed by the internationally acclaimed artist Olafur Eliasson and the award-winning Norwegian architect Kjetil Thorsen, of the architectural practice Snøhetta. Resembling a spinning top, this timberclad structure has a wide spiralling ramp that allows visitors to ascend to the highest point for views across Kensington Gardens as well as a bird's eye view of the chamber below.

The Serpentine Gallery Pavilion commission is an ongoing programme of temporary structures by internationally acclaimed designers. This year, it runs from 24 August - 5 November

The Serpentine Gallery are one of the our regularly funded organisations receiving £822,272 funding from Arts Council England, London during 2007/08. They also received £3,320,950 funding from Arts Council England through Grants for the arts between 2003-07.