



A national conference exploring outdoor arts practice and its impact on people and places

Thursday 11th and Friday 12th June 2009
Peel Park, Bradford, West Yorkshire

Conference Report

Delivered by:



In association with:



Funded by:



Supported by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

GREY CLOUDS IN THE DISTANCE...



11-06-09 09:46

AFTER ALL THE RAIN LAST NIGHT I DIDN'T THINK I'D BE WEARING SUNGLASSES TODAY. HURRAY FOR WEATHER!



TOP OF THE
**QUEST
TENT**
(OUTDOOR ARTS
IN PRACTICE)

BUESKY,
STIFF BREEZE.
CRACKING FLAGS.
IN THE DISTANCE I
CAN SEE WIND TURBINES





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Image by Soundwave



Executive Summary

Discuss the genres of practice
(eg Circus, Street Arts and Carnival),
how work is created and its impact on
people and places

Background

- The Quest conference was Arts Council England, Yorkshire's response to the Arts Council England's Outdoor Arts Development Plan – New Landscapes – and Yorkshire's Elemental exchange. The Elemental programme was a series of conversations about Outdoor performance and Circus Arts held at Arts Council regional offices which had the aim of improving knowledge about the sector with Arts Council and Local Authority Officers..
- The event was supported by Arts Council England, Yorkshire and delivered by Faceless working in close association with Promenade Promotions, Swamp Circus and Bradford Mela.
- The conference ran for 2 days and was hosted by Bradford Mela in a series of tents on the Mela site on the Thursday and Friday with the Mela itself starting on the Saturday
- The aim of the conference was to create critical debate about the genres of practice (eg Circus, Street Arts and Carnival), how work is created and its impact on people and places.

Objectives

- Host the conference over 2 days to maximise opportunities for delegates to network and socialise
- Bring in inspirational speakers, facilitators and artists, the majority of whom are practitioners
- Ensure ethnic diversity in the programme and representation across the genres of outdoor arts, circus and carnival

Programme

Quest explored of the following key questions:

- What are the influences of, and the linkages made, by Outdoor Artists and their work?
- How do the various practices influence and affect a change in the lives of its audience?
- How do we encourage feedback and effectively use critical opinion to develop the art form?

Outcomes

- 74 people attended the conference of which 54 were practitioners
- The conference unified the sector
- A wide range of participants of varying ages and disciplines attended
- The discussion was generally of high quality which reflected a positive movement in the quality of critical debate for the art form

The future

- Arts Council England, East Midlands offered to provide space for artists to experiment together as part of their hosting of the ISAN conference in Derby in November 2009. Mike Lister said that he would be willing to organise and it was noted that NASA may have some funds to support this.
- Arts Council England, Yorkshire have secured further managed funds to run a second conference for the Outdoor Sector in 2010.
- The steering group discussed possible themes and agreed that they would like to look at content and emotional depth in outdoor work.
- The conference expressed a need for new outdoor work to be critiqued to improve quality. This came from the Artists experience of presenting new work at Gayurty and then talking to about it to peers and eminent and experienced practitioners
- Marketing on the conference was delayed due to programming delays it was noted that in future we should publish a "Save the Date" in advance then programme



Image by John Welding



Pre event Organisation

How do we encourage feedback and effectively use critical opinion to develop the art form?

a) Rationale

In December 2007, as part of the culmination of a 2 year Arts Council funded programme of work called The Art of Engagement, Faceless delivered a conference in Wakefield called [pARTicipate – Outdoor performance and Community Arts as Tools for Social Change](#). The conference attracted approximately 75 delegates from across the UK who were artists, programmers, arts officers and from voluntary groups. Building on the success of pARTicipate, the Arts Council and Faceless began to discuss ideas around the delivery of another event particularly focused on the outdoor arts practice.

In May 2008, the Arts Council launched [New Landscapes: Outdoor Arts Development Plan](#) which articulates a strategy for the support and development needs of outdoor arts in England between 2008 and 2011. An action step from New Landscapes is to “Campaign and advocate for an increase in the opportunities for outdoor arts work to take place and therefore improve the longer term sustainability of the outdoor arts sector”. The Arts Council’s national office decided to implement this action by commissioning Fierce Earth to deliver [Elemental - a series exchanges about Outdoor Performance & Circus Arts](#). Elemental was a series of discussions at Arts Council regional offices for Local Authorities and Arts Council Officers to improve knowledge about the sector. In Yorkshire, Arts Council’s Performing Arts Officer, Alison Andrews, had already sewn seeds with Faceless about another outdoor arts sector specific conference in the region and thus it was agreed that “Elemental Exchange” in Yorkshire would form part of Quest.

b) Quest: Aims and Objectives

In October 2008, having secured Arts Council investment, Alison Andrews brought together an artist led steering group comprising Tony Lidington (Promenade Promotions /Poppets Puppets), Tim Woolliscroft (Swamp Circus) and Bev Adams (Faceless) to realise the Quest conference, with Faceless acting as lead organisation.

In the first meeting it was agreed that the group would prefer the event to happen in the outdoors and not a venue traditionally used for conferencing. A model for a series of themed tents, where delegates could move between spaces was discussed and possible dates were muted around existing events who could act as hosts as they would already be putting outdoor infrastructure in place for their events. The group decided to approach Bradford Mela (June 2009) or Connecting Youth Culture’s Annual Youth Arts Festival in Pickering, North Yorkshire (2nd - 4th July 2009).

It became clear from initial discussions that we wanted to have a debate about the genres of practice (eg Circus, Street Arts and Carnival), how work is created and its impact on people and places, rather than debating organisational or funding issues.

We also agreed that we wanted the event to run over 2 days, to maximise opportunities for delegates to network and socialise.



Image by Soundwave



Pre event Organisation

How do the various practices influence and affect a change in the lives of its audience?

c) Date & Venue

By the end of the year, Bradford Mela had expressed a strong interest in hosting the Quest event as a forerunner to the Mela, which would be celebrating its 21st anniversary in June 2009. The steering group discussed at length, the timing of the conference and aired concerns that, to hold a conference in Mid June in the height of the outdoor arts and one week after XTRAX showcase in Manchester, could limit numbers. However, we felt that linking our event to the Bradford Mela – arguably the biggest multi-cultural, multi- art form festival in Yorkshire - with the infrastructure we needed to run our conference - seemed like an opportunity too good to miss.

Early in the New Year, 2009, the steering group met with Ben Pugh, Creative Producer at Bradford Mela to agree that the Mela would provide an area with 5 tents (one being a central marquee), AV support, Stage Management, a separate marquee for a sit-down lunch, a space for the Quest Cabaret, parking and toilets. The Mela would ensure that this infrastructure would be ready on the greater Mela site by the time of our conference. We were aware that other areas of the site would be being installed during our conference and liked the notion that delegates would witness some of this major task in progress. It was also fortuitous that Steering Group member, Tony Lidington was already engaged by the Mela as programmer of the family area – The Hive – which was the area the Mela had identified for Quest. This meant that some acts Tony was booking for the Mela could be programmed at the Quest cabaret planned to take place in a Yurt, later called Gayurty.

A meeting was arranged with Helga Henry from Fierce Earth in early February to agree how Elemental Exchange could be imbedded in the Quest Conference. It was agreed that, as Yorkshire was one of the last exchanges to take place, Helga would present an overview of the exchanges from other regions and that Elemental would sponsor the programme in the “Mechanics” tent at Quest.

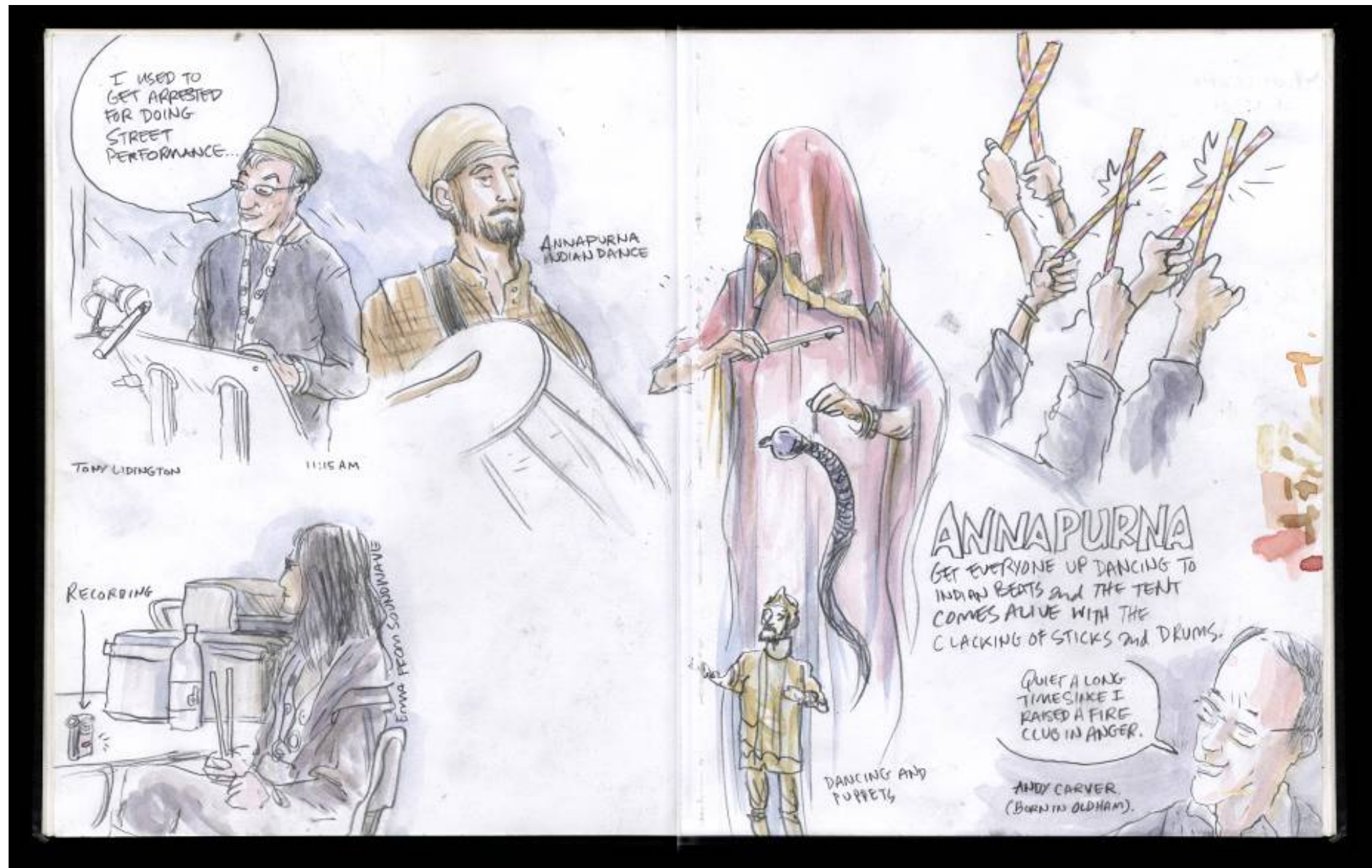


Image by John Welding



Pre event Organisation

What are the influences of, and the linkages made, by Outdoor Artists and their work?

c) Programming & Marketing

Once the date, venue and Elemental involvement had been agreed, Faceless began programming key note speakers and facilitators, engaged marketing consultant (Amanda Crowther) to create branding for the event, engaged web designer (Neil Mills) to add an extra page the Faceless' website with online booking form and completed the design of a bookings database. Branding was agreed by the committee in March and an initial flyer for distribution digitally via Arts Council and the Steering Group's networks, and in print via Arts Professional and NALGAO, was agreed with Arts Council England, Yorkshire in April.

It was always the intention, to have a web based booking system, where, at point of filling in a booking form, delegates would decide their workshop choices and tell us about specific needs. This meant that the booking process was directly linked to programming. In order to provide interest for artists, arts funders, academics, programmers, local authority officers, and voluntary groups our ideal programme needed to:

- i) Represent the genres of Outdoor Arts, Circus and Carnival
- ii) Fit with the agreed themes of the tents – Impulses, Mechanics, Think Tank and Emergence
- iii) Reflect cultural diversity in the sector
- iv) Provide opportunities for artists interventions during the conference
- v) Provide opportunities for social interaction and networking

It took some time to finalise all these elements with the on line booking process finally going live at the end of April.

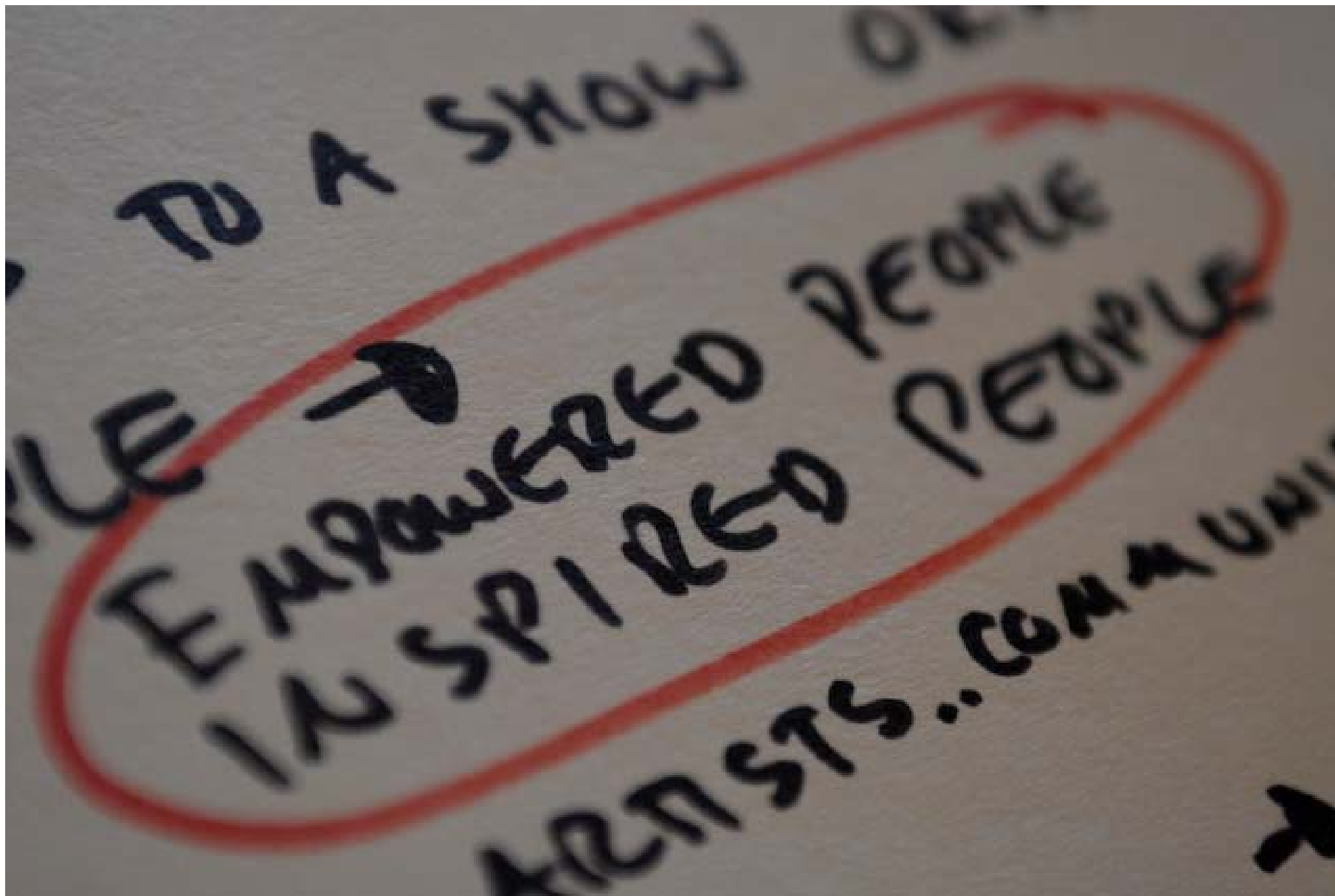


Image by Soundwave



The Conference

The importance and reach of the small scale

a) Programme

Convened within a tented village and initiated by Arts Council England, Yorkshire, working in partnership with Bradford Mela and regional artists, Quest was a 2 day exploration of the following key questions:

- What are the influences of, and the linkages made, by Outdoor Artists and their work?
- How do the various practices influence and affect a change in the lives of its audience?
- How do we encourage feedback and effectively use critical opinion to develop the art form?

The Village included a number of themed tents and delegates were encouraged be to visit and contribute to each tent at least once during the conference, meet new people and leave inspired with new ideas for the development of the Outdoor Arts Sector.

DAY ONE 11th JUNE 11am – 5.30pm (registration from 10am)				
The Hive				
10.00	Registration			
11.00	Tony Lidington (Chair) - Welcome to Quest			
11.15	Artists Intervention – Annapurna Indian Dance			
11.30	Welcome to Yorkshire - Andy Carver, Executive Director, Arts Council England, Yorkshire			
11.45	The impact of Bradford Mela on the city and its communities - Cllr Anne Hawkesworth , Environment & Culture Portfolio holder, City of Bradford MDC			
12.00	Highlights of UK -wide Elemental conversations on street and circus arts - Helga Henry, Fierce Earth Ltd			
12.30	Questions			
13.00	Lunch in the VIP marquee			
14.00	Mechanics elemental	Emergence	Think tank	Impulses
	Collaborative cross art form legacy projects for the Cultural Olympiad - Ali Pretty, Artistic Director, Kinetika & Imagination; our Nation	Providing time and space for professionals and communities to explore outdoor work - Richard Sobey, Executive Director, IOU & Bev Adams, Artistic Director, Faceless	Performance as a State of Encounter - Alice Bayliss, Lecturer in Applied Theatre (Educational, Community & Interventionist Contexts, University of Leeds)	How does the art form touch, influence and affect a change in the lives of its audience - Hilary Westlake, Performance Writer and Director
15.00	Refreshments			
15.30	Repeat of above sessions			
16.30	Feedback from workshop sessions			
16.50	Speed dating market place			
17.15	Artists intervention - John Welding, Illustrator			
17.30	Close			
Yurt				
8pm-10pm	Gayurty! Informal cabaret evening in a Yurt hosted by Jenny Wilson's Drag King, with Pete White, Institute of Crazy Dancing & Pakistani Ghazal from Naj & Shabaz.			

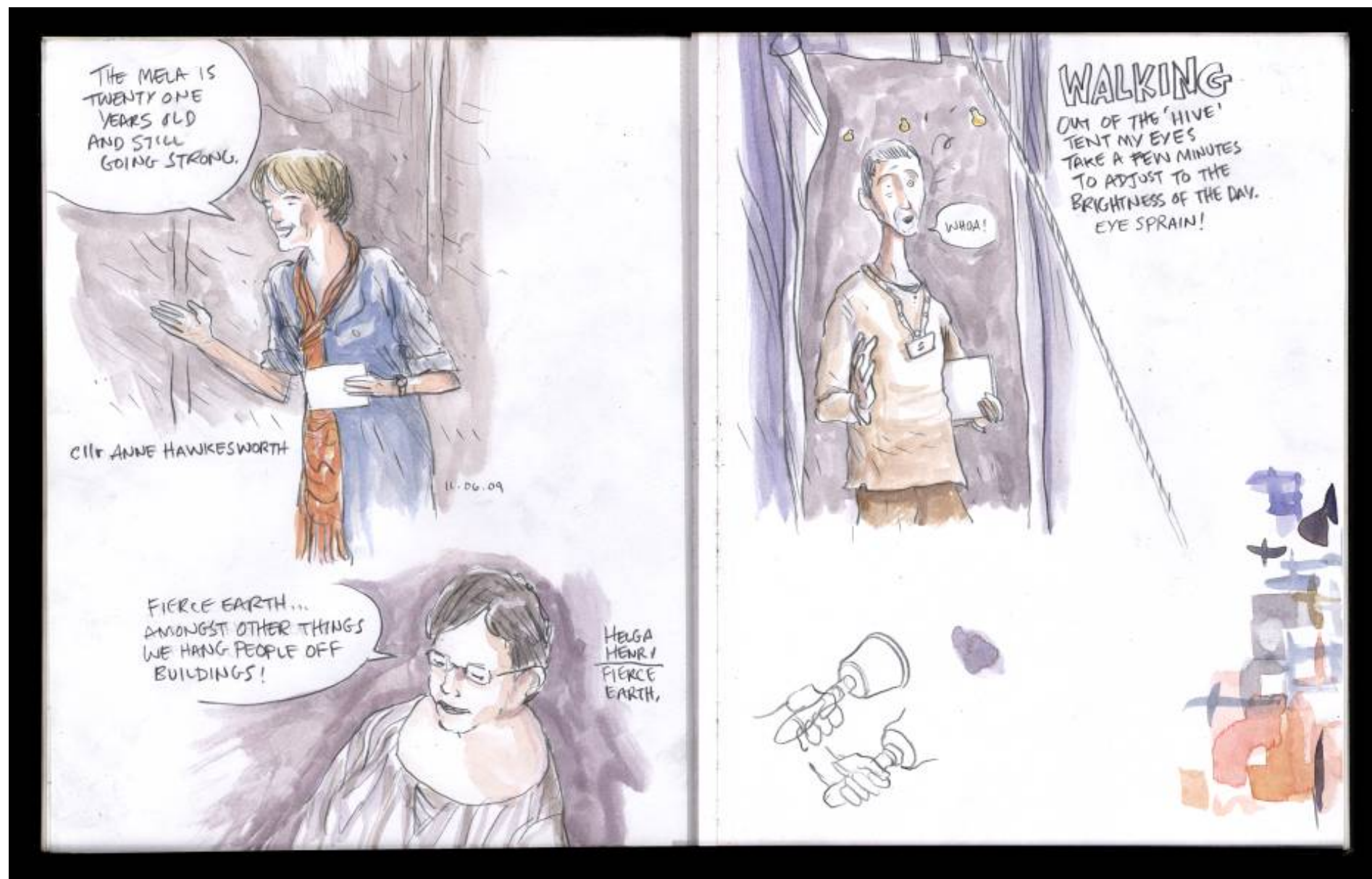


Image by John Welding



The Conference

A new role for the artist

Programme - Continued


DAY TWO 12th JUNE 9.30-4pm (arrival from 9am)				
The Hive				
9.00 onwards	Refreshments, Registration & Networking			
9.30	Tony Lidington (Chair) - Welcome to Quest day 2			
9.45	Artists intervention - Godfrey Pambalipe, Sigopanda Pan African Dance			
10.00	National Association of Street Artists UK – Chloe Dear, NASAUK			
10.15	Independent Street Arts Network - Julian Rudd, ISAN co-ordinator			
10.45	Questions			
11.00	Refreshments			
11.30	Mechanics 	Emergence	Think tank	Impulses
	Professional development programmes for circus artists and directors, Leila Jancovich, co-founder Circelation & Senior lecturer LMU	A wet Saturday afternoon in Batley. The importance and reach of the small scale – Tony Lidington, Showman & Director, Promenade Promotions	International cross cultural collaborations & Emotional and dramatic depth in outdoor work- Mike Lister, street theatre specialist & co-founder, Avanti Display	A New Role for the Artist - John Fox, Founder & Artistic Director of Welfare State 1968-2006 & Director (with Sue Gill) of Dead Good Guides
12.30	Lunch in the VIP Marquee			
13.30	Repeat of above sessions			
The Hive				
14.15	Refreshments			
14.45	Feedback from workshop sessions			
15.05	Final thoughts & suggestions from the conference			
16.00	Close - Tony Lidington (Chair)			



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

Embark on a quest ... a journey in search of something

b) Day 1 Summary

i) Welcome from the chair – Tony Lidington

In his welcome speech, Tony explained that the Quest conference aims to reflect UK outdoor arts as a sector at this moment in time. The conference is held at the setting up of one of the largest outdoor events; The Bradford Mela. A Mela is a gathering of people and Quest has gathered people on the Mela site to embark on a quest, a journey in search of something - not sure what – but it is bound to be interesting, exciting, provocative. The conference may not come up with answers, but we hope that together we will move things forward.

Having performed in the streets for the best part of a quarter of a century, he stated that he was amazed at how far we have come. As a street performer, he was once considered a vagrant, now he has become the darling of cafe society. The Arts Council now snuggle up to outdoor events as outdoor arts help to meet their targets for engagement of audiences and animation of the public realm.

He then went on to explain the themed tents:

IMPULSE –where we hope to stir it up thoughts

MECHANICS - the Nuts and Bolts and the practicalities of creating work

THINK TANK - academic debate

EMERGENCE - training, the small scale and the conditions for the realisation of new ideas.

ii) Artists Intervention - Annapurna Indian Dance

Annapurna provided a 15 minute warm up which began with a dancing presentation reflecting the spirit of India through dance with precise and beautiful movement performed by 2 company members after which they got the entire conference up on its feet, beating a rhythm with sticks. This participatory activity provided an excellent way to break down barriers to communication at the outset of the conference as artists, funders, local authority arts officers and programmers clashed their sticks together with broad grins on their faces.



Image by Amanda Crowther



The Conference

The Arts needs to reclaim
our public spaces

iii) Presentations

Outdoor Arts in Yorkshire - Andy Carver, Executive Director, Arts Council England, Yorkshire

Andy Carver mentioned his background as a performer/circus practitioner and drew comparisons between UK and Europe and its engagement with Street Arts, noting Europe's penchant for celebrating everything as a street festival. He explained that he believed that UK is in the process of building new traditions from our multi-cultural society and as a result of the Outdoor Arts Development plan, outdoor arts is now a key component of the cultural portfolio.

In addition, Outdoor Arts, continue to deliver admirably against the Arts Council recently published plan for 2008-2011 *Great Art for Everyone* and the quality of street arts is publically assessed by the audience as they vote with their feet. However, the implementation of strict health and safety regulations, the privatisation of public space and cultural consumption in the UK makes it harder for performers and events organisers harder to claim spaces for cultural activity and he made a call for ARTS TO RECLAIM THESE SPACES.

He concluded by saying that outdoor arts is important to the Arts Council and Quest is an important opportunity for Arts Council Officers to integrate with outdoor artists.



Image by Amanda Crowther



The Conference

Welcome to Bradford!

The impact of Bradford Mela on the city and its communities - Cllr Anne Hawkesworth, Environment & Culture Portfolio holder, City of Bradford MDC

Anne offered delegates a warm welcome to Bradford and explained the city's rich cultural heritage: home to David Hockney, Delius, The Brontes, JB Priestley, Saltaire – a World Heritage Site, and, most recently, its success in being named as first Unesco City of Film.

Bradford has a number of established festivals (Ilkley, Saltaire, Howarth and Keighley), the international market welcoming 20,000 visitors in 2006 and the Mela celebrating 21 years in 2009. The current development of large scale and local events is working in tandem with regeneration initiatives as the council is continuing to develop infrastructure in parks and public spaces. Events make use of refurbished and new bandstands / fountains / crosses and local festivals provide focal points for communities and help them to cohere.

In autumn 2009, work will begin on the City Park which is an events space in the city centre capable of holding up to 10,000 people with a mirror pool in the centre, the size of a football pitch, which can be drained in sections to create differing sizes of events space.

Anne ended by inviting delegates to enjoy their time in Bradford over the weekend, to enjoy the Mela and to come back and visit Bradford over the summer for more fantastic events.



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

Everything starts with a conversation

Highlights of UK -wide Elemental conversations on street and circus arts - Helga Henry, Fierce Earth Ltd

Helga Henry, General Manager of Fierce Earth and Producer of Elemental, opened her presentation with a question of whether street arts provided value for money. Peixos' performance in Poole cost £25,000 and brought 3,200 spectators (equivalent to 15 duck houses at the cost of the item claimed by an individual in the recent MP expenses scandal). The cost of £25,000 equates to just over £7.50/head a sum most spectators would probably spend in the town on food and drink on the evening of the performance. What is the monetary value of social cohesion when a million strangers become a community? Street Arts have proved their value as crime figures drop and we are able to reclaim our squares from security cameras and loud drunks!

Fierce Earth, based in Birmingham, co-produces and presents a range of events and new work, often in unusual locations. They have produced events which hang people off buildings, are outdoor installations or site specific works . Fierce Earth won an Arts Council tender to deliver Elemental.

Elemental is an initiative taking place across England , featuring speakers and conversations from the inspirational practice of UK and international practitioners. The aim of the project is to give all those who attend (from the [Arts Council England](#), relevant regional agencies and Local Authorities) the tools and opportunity to explore the delights and challenges of programming Street arts and Circus work and to make new and interesting links to people who can make the work happen. Each region, chose a theme

Everything starts with a conversation. Each regional conversation aims to contribute to a major body of know-how and interest, forming a unique snapshot of the state of street arts and circus today, providing fertile debate and contributing towards their future growth. For detail of each regions Elemental conversation (the Mechanics Tent at Quest is Yorkshire's), please go to the full transcript of Helga's presentation.



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

How do we get our local authorities to engage with the outdoor arts sector?

iv) Questions from the floor

Question to Andy Carver

How is the Arts Council responding to police charging for policing events?"

Andy explained how the Arts Council was looking at how consistently this is being applied. He understands it is a major issue and would hope that the Arts Council can act as an advocate to represent and understand implications and try to influence government policy. It appears that, contrary to initially thoughts, police are not so interested in revenue but are overzealously applying H & S considerations

General question to panel and floor

How do we get our local authorities to engage with the outdoor arts sector?

The conference answered:

We need to:

- Make ourselves indispensable, so they come to us.
- Attend to local and national government conferences.
- Speak to key people by reaching out to them.



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

Re-imagine the future

v) Workshop/Breakout Groups

Mechanics - Collaborative cross art form legacy projects for the Cultural Olympiad - Ali Pretty, Artistic Director, Kinetika & Imagination; our Nation

Thoughts are sown, dreams are planted and ideas are seeded
 Puppets are born
 They explore the UK
 They re-imagine the future

Kinetika has initiated Imagination; Our Nation, a five-year project that will culminate in 2012 with a major event at Victoria Park in East London. The project runs for 5 years under a series of developmental themes:

2008 focused on “Germination” – Sowing seeds for the future - A London 2012 Inspire mark project. Germination worked with partners from 6 regions created 14 performances involving 3,500 participants It is about the initiation of ideas, with people in one place creating small puppets, creating a strong network and development of a cohesion. By 2012 the imagination our nation project will develop in line with the Olympic timescale.

2009 focuses on “Fascination” - Champions are born and wake up to a world of opportunities, providing the chance to use the process to bring people together to create a new form and a series of small puppet figures are created who explore their communities and discover their potential. 17 partners create their champions at the National Residency

2010 brings “Determination” each community finds its theme. The Champions embark on their journey of exploration. Larger puppets make choices and follow a path of preparation.

2011 ; Illumination, each region creates a 20 foot figure with a magic tool to change the world. Teams of champions work together to find solutions.

Larger puppets train, with the support of their community and international partner.

By 2012 it is hoped that the project will have drawn out art forms from their staid context into new areas. 5 Champions, 1 each from North, South, East , West and London lead a procession to Victoria Park. 5 extraordinary puppets, each a champion of a sport and an art make the journey accompanied by communities along the way.

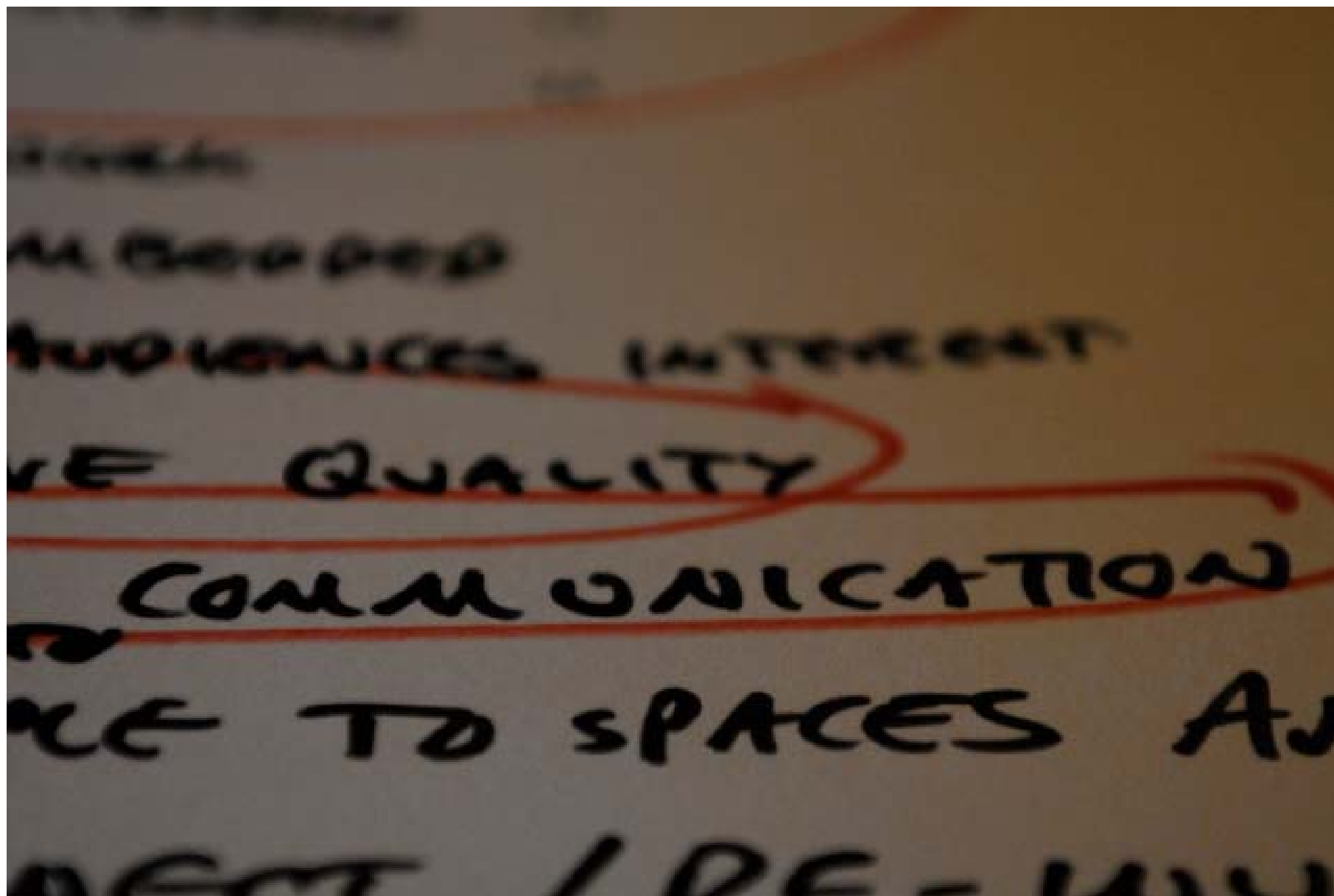


Image by Soundwave



The Conference

The power of the puppet as a community focus

The project has engaged 20 partners so far across the UK with a hope to see it rise to 36 by 2010. Partners have used their own funding.

Using Imagination; Our Nation as an example, Ali used the following questions to stimulate debate with the group

1. How do we use the Olympics, in the wide sense, can allow various groups to work together?
2. How do we use technology to move street arts forward, and then re-position the UK street arts globally for 2013?
3. What is the role of arts in social cohesion? Is this a vehicle for change?

Would there be joint funding bids, and what were the time constraints?

1. The lack of funding at the moment has brought up issues of having to charge for events.
2. How did the story come about? How important was it across the nation? The story created a point of cohesion for the various user groups. The power of the puppet as a community focus is easy for all to relate to.
3. How do all the events and communities link?
We are trying to put groups together and find different ways of working within their own concepts. The final event will see the giants converge on London from all over England, providing spectacles, like, for example, a 20 foot metal giant walking through the Lakeland Fells.

The group agreed that, despite lack of money available for projects, the Olympiad provides a focus for existing projects and helps bring various strands together to create a major project, which may provide benefits for larger scale work in the future and greater awareness of the company's work.

What was the digital input to the project?

The company is exploring the interaction between puppets and screens and light. Various conversations were taking place.



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

Finding a safe yet dynamic creative environment

Emergence - Providing time and space for professionals and communities to explore outdoor work - Richard Sobey, Executive Director, IOU & Bev Adams, Artistic Director, Faceless

Richard and Bev opened their session by first explaining a little about where their different organisations were coming from with regard to the topic

IOU's project **Space, Time, Tools and Advice** provides opportunities for emergent *arts companies and practitioners to develop ideas*

For periods of up to three months, successful groups are given space to work at IOU Studio, a small budget, mentoring and advice, calling upon IOU's wealth of experience in both the art and business side of producing creative projects. The scheme is free to successful applicants and the professional development programme is designed for collaborative groups of 2 to 5 wishing to produce creative projects with the prospect of continuing their working partnerships into the future.

IOU provides:

- An office/thinking/making space
- Access to IOU Studio space for trying out/rehearsing work
- Mentoring in arts and business tailored to your needs
- A small budget (up to £300) for your group to use on specified items
- The opportunity of working within IOU's base as the company produces its programme of work
- Access to IOU's archives

For the past 3 years, **Faceless** has been working on a project called **Conference of the Birds** which is a good example of a project where Faceless goes into a community space to provide space and time for that community to explore outdoor arts. The company takes a professional cast of 3 and all the production elements to works through a 5 day rehearsal process with the community to create a public performance on day 6.

During this week of rehearsals, often as guests in some one else's space, we:

- turn that space into a safe yet dynamic creative environment
- provide high quality, often first time experiences of outdoor arts
- manage the time to ensure:
 - the participating group has ownership of the work
 - skills are learned and developed
 - an ensemble is created for what at first could have been a disparate group
 - confidence is raised to enable a high quality performance



Image by Soundwae



The Conference

Opportunities to be risky
and dangerous

The value of this joint professional community model of creating work is great for our clients, the participants and the company. We enjoy providing positive first time outdoor arts experiences for our participants and feel that this model of working contributes to audience development and the development of our artists of the future.

Richard and Bev then divided the group in half and set each group task to address the following notion:

If the money fell out of the sky to provide time and space for artists and communities

Under this heading there were 4 sub-headings. Below is a brief snapshot of notes written by the participants in the workshop;

<p>a) What should professional artists and creative communities be doing in that space?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills Building , R & D time for artists and time to explore other influences Play Whatever they want to do Finding inspiration Exploring shared goals Having opportunities to be risky and dangerous 	<p>b) What is the value of providing time and space the Outdoor Arts sector?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accumulative quality Empowerment New ideas/products More considered/better products Innovation and growth Understanding contexts New partnerships
<p>c) What should emerge at the end of the time and space?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More mature work Stronger relationships between artists and communities Mutual respect and acknowledgement Empowered and inspired people New ways and models of working 	<p>d) What about ownership? Who decides?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depends who is paying for it Social ownership – not managerial ownership Range ownerships – range of people working in space



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

When we activate playfulness, the rules of engagement are flexible, and these performances encounters can 'jolt' us.

Think Tank - Performance as a State of Encounter - Alice Bayliss, Lecturer in Applied Theatre (Educational, Community and Interventionist Contexts, University of Leeds)

Alice is a teacher, having taught at secondary, further and higher education levels. In her present posts of teacher of Applied Theatre at Leeds University and AHRC Research Fellow, her work is split between research, teaching and practice. Her current research focuses on the club and festival scenes (festival is the new seaside!) through "beyond text" an AHRC funded initiative in which she is exploring performance in a festival context and her practice is delivered through "floorspace" using recent and under graduates to used as a testbed for research

Beyond text is the exploration of relational live performance which comes from unexpected places (i.e. at a festival it could emerge from the campsite, or the toilets; the shower block...) It is an interactive co-authored performance between the actors and the audience, and is very mobile. It doesn't conform, there is no fixed performance space; no warning and might start as a viral, tiny seed which would gather momentum and become part of the crowd.

A festival performance encounter is modelled on a 3 way split between the mobile performance, the relationship with the audience, and the festival itself. The 3 can be seen individually, but they can also interlink together.

When we activate playfulness, the rules of engagement are flexible, and these performances encounters can 'Jolt' us. Often, big events like festivals can almost numb the senses, and these little moments of interaction can reconnect us.

Key themes for Beyond Text are:

- Embodied knowledge – the importance of experiencing the world through **all** the senses, the body as a **whole**.
- A capacity of knowing and learning is held in the body
- How do we pass this knowledge on? How does it emerge/does it develop/is it transmitted?

Floorspace has 4 main features:

- Incongruity – working at a festival could be very grubby/muddy, so the performers would be wearing very sharp suits with slicked back hair, high heels etc
- Generosity – to embed a gift for the audience as part of the presentation
- Improvisation – working with the audience on the unexpected and accepting this
- Playfulness – enthusing the audience with a sense of play.



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

How inspiring is skill?

Impulses - How does the art form touch, influence and affect a change in the lives of its audience - Hilary Westlake, Performance Writer and Director

Hilary's presentation posed a series of questions which the group discussed to find answers.

HOW DOES THE ART FORM TOUCH, INFLUENCE AND AFFECT CHANGE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS?

Instant happy, short term, but can also have a controversial, longer impact. It's down to content. Instant reaction is instinctive, however, people will not form an opinion until they know more and understand.

SO, WHAT ABOUT CONTENT?

When you understand, you make the decision to stay or go. It's important to think past what you are seeing.

WHY OUTDOORS?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The streets have an important symbolic status • To change the way we see our cities and familiar spaces. • To change the way we think about social issues. • Access for people who would not normally see art. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaces excite performers • Audience has no expectations, but more impressed when it's good. They see things they would never pay to go and see. • Subvert reality, with mis-information. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

WHAT ABOUT QUALITY AND HOW INSPIRING IS SKILL?

Quality has a direct correlation to audience involvement. The performance needs to touch the audience and engage them on both a cerebral and emotional level. It creates a powerful short term influence. Work needs to engage, challenge perceptions and provide the audience with tools to think. Participatory experiences add to the engagement mix, and participation makes an audience less demanding

WHAT IF IT IS ALL FORM AND NO CONTENT? IS IT AN ISSUE?

It is most important that it gives continuity afterwards.

TOUCH INFLUENCE EFFECT.....Are three different things.

Outside is more of a risk as a performance. Is danger a part of audiences participation? It provides the delight in chancing on the unexpected, shakes the routine. Feeling part of an event makes a connection.

Context fuels the content. Longer term installations have a greater effect and create a longer story for the audience, and create chances for inter-reaction.

DISNEY VERSUS CARNIVAL, COMMERCIAL VERSUS DIY?

Disney has a dedication to the audience. Public Arts has too many different factors to hit the mark every time.

Sincerity and integrity prevails if the performers are truly involved.

Witnessing, can change the way you think / feel about a place



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

Is offending someone risky?

HOW DOES ART COMPARE TO LIFE? IS STREET ARTS A GOOD GENRE TO IMPART INFORMATION?

It's a good forum for sharing.

The absence of politics in street arts is a reflection of society.

Funding and Health and Safety constraints can create limits.

IS OFFENDING SOMEONE RISKY?

Often there is little encouragement for challenging content. Surely a challenge is good?

People don't like to be made a fool of but don't mind being fooled.

Extreme arts can damage if you go too far

vi) Resident Artist – John Welding, Illustrator

Throughout the day, John used a giant canvas at the back of the tent to draw up the activities of the day. John captured the spirit and diversity of the first day's conferencing in his inimitable style.

vii) Speed Dating Market Place

The speed dating market place was programmed to afford companies and artists an opportunity to talk about their work. 8 companies originally booked a table in the speed dating market place but at the conference only 3 companies participated – Swamp, Pif Paf and the Circus Arts Forum. Each group had a table and 10 minutes to pitch to the delegates, the delegates rotated 3 times. The idea has worked at the ISAN ideas summit, however at Quest, it felt rushed and intense and the delegate's energy levels at this time in the afternoon were waning. On a future occasion if we were to run a session like this again, perhaps it should be programmed just before or after lunch.

viii) Gayurty - Cabaret

The Gayurty cabaret was highly entertaining and a great socialising experience for delegates. Gayurty comprised a number of acts already booked for the Mela and ranging from solo cabaret style acts to Kawa circus from Rajasthan as well as a band new work from newly formed due Jason and Tiago and new work from emerging solo performers. The work was diverse, varied and of varying quality. Some artists benefited from peer review and feedback on their work, taking advantage of the substantial expertise of the conference facilitators. This led to a recommendation from the conference of the value of seeing and then critiquing work. The timing of the overall conference programme to include Gayurty could have been better conceived. Day 1 conference finished at 5.30pm with delegates needing to be transported to the city centre to check into hotels and eat and return by 8pm. The logistics of transportation, ordering food, eating and paying all took far longer than the allotted 2.5 hours resulting in Gayurty getting started and finishing far later than anticipated. This had a knock on effect on day 2, resulting in a late start on this day too.

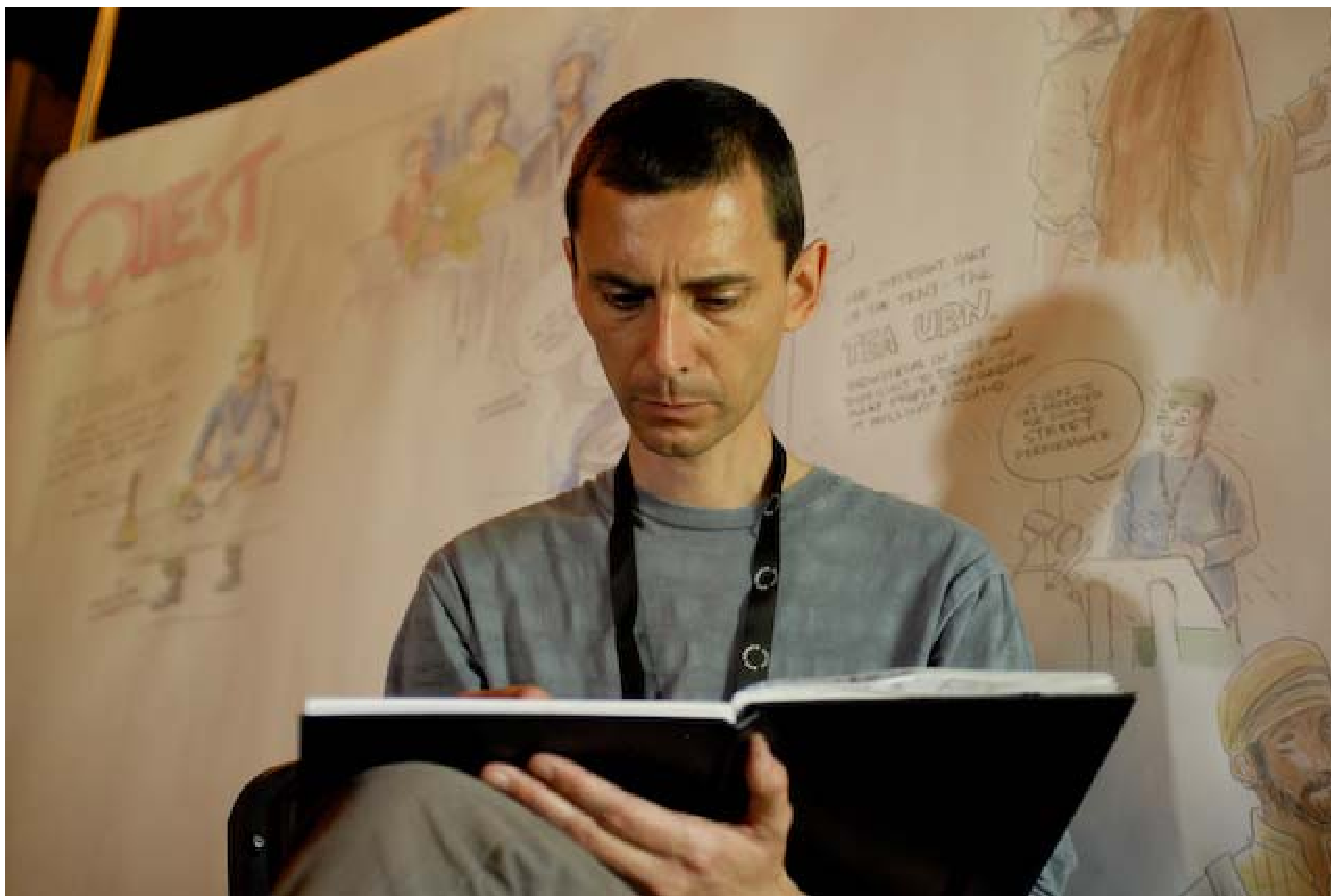


Image by Soundwave



The Conference

Artists need to get together to share experiences and information

c) Day 2 Summary

i) Welcome to Quest Day 2

Tony Lidington (Chair)

Tony welcomed newcomers to Quest and Questors from the day before, arriving late with sore heads caused by wine drinking at Gayurty

ii) Artists Intervention –

Godfrey Pambalipe, Sigopanda Pan African Dance

Godfrey warmed up the delegates with interactive song, dance and rhythm. His session provided a fun welcoming icebreaker for new comers to the conference as well as helping to wake up late night party goers.

iii) Presentations

National Association of Street Artists UK – Chloë Dear, NASAUK

Due to the resident artist needing the use of the large tent for the duration of the morning we decamped to a smaller tent. Due to the light and airiness of the smaller tent, it was more conducive to informal group discussion and it felt that during this session the conference cohered to debate positive ways forward for the sector.

Chloë began by explaining the nature of NASA as a “voluntarily resourced, artist led, membership network. It was born out of a need to for artists to get together to share experiences and information at a time when no such network existed. ISAN (Independent Street Arts Network) was not open to artists at that time.

Chloe talked about the projects NASA had delivered – the first Convocation which brought over 60 street artists together in Ulverston and subsequent, themed day long workshops on international touring and marketing as well as their recent Arts Council commissioned research project into the training needs of the sector. She went on to talk about some of the resourcing difficulties NASA had more recently experienced. When it was first established, the then steering group had time to volunteer, now their work commitment had increased and it was not possible to donate that time. NASA was now considering partnering with another organisation to deliver certain aspects of its programme and a new steering group is in place which is set to meet over the summer.

INFORMED
more than



The Conference

Invest in, and encourage
investment in, new work

Independent Street Arts Network - Julian Rudd, ISAN co-ordinator

Unfortunately, due to ill health, Julian could not make it to Quest. Frank Wilson stepped in to deliver the ISAN presentation.

ISAN is a regularly funded organisation of the Arts Council. As a voluntary organisation, ISAN has a normal board structure consisting of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. It is co-coordinated by Julian Rudd, and administrated by Mandy Meadon.

ISAN aims to promote Street Arts in all their forms and act as a forum of discussion, by:

- acting as a liaison organisation between funders, artists and promoters
- producing literature promoting the development of Street Arts
- investing in and encourage investment in new work.
- acting as a lobbying body for the art form to ensure adequate funding

ISAN :

- commissions and publishes strategic research
Specifically
 - Safety Guidance for Street Arts, Carnival, Processions and Large-Scale Performances
 - Setting the Streets Alive: A guide to producing Street Arts Events
 - Street Arts: A User's Guide
 - The Next Steps Forward: A Snapshot of Large Scale Street Arts in the UK
 - And has more recently commissioned a film to help with advocacy for the outdoor arts sector which will be launched at the forthcoming conference in Derby in November
- maintains a website providing up to date information on street arts; the activities of ISAN; contacts for members; calendar of street arts events, links to useful UK and international sites
- Provides opportunities for Networking and Discussion
- Holds Regular ISAN general meetings and presents at events throughout the UK
- Organises occasional symposia events on specific themes and runs a biannual conference
- Facilitates sharing of information between members on UK and international collaboration opportunities
- is an important independent voice for street arts. Making its views heard by Government, Arts Council England, local authorities and others.
- Is committed to improving standards and has a Code of Practice for all members to abide by



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

ISAN and NASA should find more opportunities to work together

Frank went on to talk about “Without Walls” a consortium of 8 of the UK's most strategically significant outdoor arts festivals who work together to break new ground in the development and creation of outdoor arts in the UK by providing exciting commissioning opportunities for UK artists and helping raise the bar for free and accessible outdoor arts, demonstrating that excellence and engagement can go hand in hand.

There are 10 commissions in the Without Walls programme for 2009:

Ballet Boyz II, Punchdrunk, Stop Gap, Metro Boulot Dodo, Fittings Multimedia Arts, Mancunian Steam and Pressure Navigation Co., Marc Brew Company, Bootworks Theatre Co., Mimbire, No Fit State Circus

A general discussion followed the NASA and ISAN presentations which raised some meaty questions.

iv) Questions from the floor

Was there a place for NASA now that ISAN membership was open to artists? Was NASA sustainable with no funding and was ISAN better resourced to deliver on behalf of the whole sector?

Delegates felt that the NASA's email information sharing network was really valuable for artists and that ISAN did not always provide the right platform for artists to speak frankly about the sector when potential programmers (ie clients) were in the majority. It was muted however, that ISAN and NASA should find more opportunities to work together. It was also muted, that an opportunity for artists to have “experimental time” would be beneficial and delegates showed some interest in a joint NASA/ISAN project for the next ISAN conference in Derby in November. Jane Quantrill from Arts Council England, East Midlands and Mike Lister from Avanti Display expressed an interest in taking this forward.



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

support circus directors to start thinking beyond the 10 minute performance slot

v) Workshop/Breakout Groups

Mechanics - Professional development programmes for circus artists and directors, Leila Jancovich, co-founder Circelation & Senior lecturer LMU

Circelation grew out of a need for artists to network and view each others' work, and exchange artistic practice.

It started as a one off project to support circus directors to start thinking beyond the 10 minute performance slot to display the skill of the artist and it:

- responded to the Commonwealth Games cultural programmes and a sense of isolation from circus practitioners
- recognised a gap in available work in venues, corporate work is undemanding and mind-numbing
- had aspirations for helping to create more considered circus performance

Circelation now offers training to support to artist/directors on an annual theme which includes:

- Weekly Master Classes
- Weekend Taster
- A regular programme of workshops
- Information and resources
- Artists in residence ... if we're serious about building the talents of directors what do they then do?
- A programme of lecture and debates
- Consultancy

Circelation has also worked on a range of related project which include

- Research on youth circus by Arts Council
- Recommendation of circus development for Arts Council East Midlands
- Creative exchange circus
- Crying out Loud, London
- Professional development; Circus and Street Arts
- Information resource; how many people involved?
- Network and advocacy
- Research, is an developmental area for Circelation

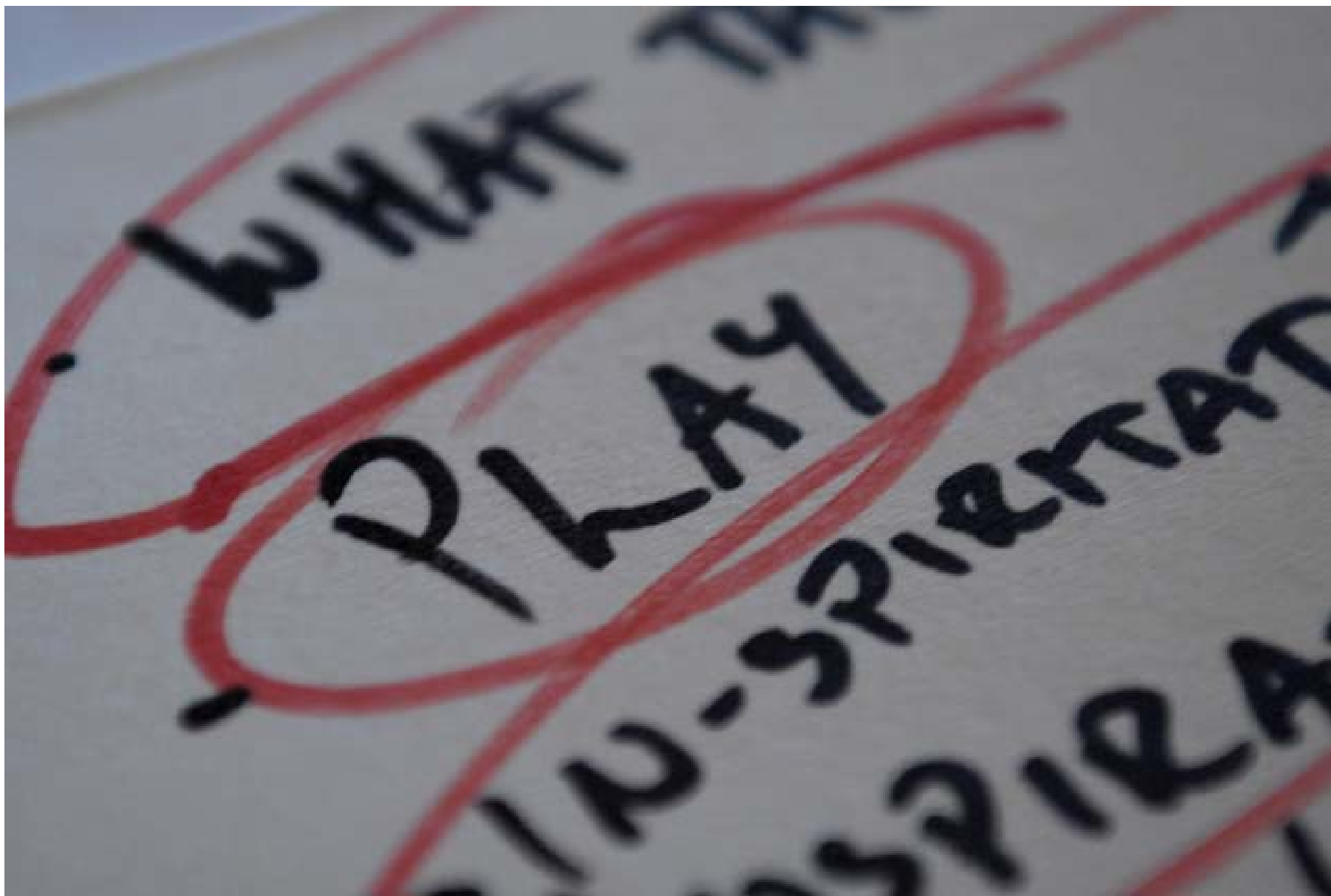


Image by Soundwave



The Conference

A circus performer's life is a solitary world

Collation of participant data reveals that the majority of participants are London based aerialists, 10% are non white, and 66% have over 5 years experience, 50% of participants attend every year, which is positive, but Circelation would like to attract new and younger people.

Those attending Circelation events list the following benefits:

- Improvement in performance/quality of work
- Raises profiles and credibility
- Provides opportunity for networking and cross-fertilisation
- Contributes to the generates new work

The following points came up in the general discussion at the end of Leila's presentation:

- Artists are scared of stepping outside their comfort zone.
- Circelation is considering a new course aimed at older practitioners , they have the life skills but are in danger of developing an act and then stagnating.
- Helping artists to sell their act is really important.
- A lot of companies are artist led and resist the idea of directors.
- A circus performers life is a solitary world
- Are performers aware of wider theatrical opportunities?
- Most artists don't want to learn management and would prefer someone to do it for them.
- There is a need for shared resources (Admin / office space /marketing support) for emerging artists
- There is a need for mentoring. This is happening in Glasgow, and opening up throughout the UK
- How do you get more people involved?? Outreach. What would make more Come?? Regional makes easy travel, but makes a project inward looking.
- Cross artform work is good for creativity good, the sharing of difference experiences enriches the work.
- People find it hard to talk about ideas
- Companies need to be mentored to help them move forward.



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

What defines a street artist?

Emergence - A Wet Saturday Afternoon in Batley. The importance and reach of the small scale – Tony Lidington, Showman & Director, Promenade Promotions

Individual buskers, Punch and Judy professors, face painters, hair braiders, jugglers and fire-eaters? What defines a street artist? Are they self defining?

Big events like the Sultan's Elephant now get recognition. How do we ensure recognition for the entire industry? Does it matter about the marginalisation of individuals?

The group was split into smaller groups of 3 to 4 people and asked to consider three questions:

1. **Money is being cut back but there is a commitment to continue to fund the infrastructure. How does the group define the term infrastructure? Is it bricks and mortar, the Arts Councils Regularly Funded Organisations (RFO's) , iconic institutions such as the National Theatre (Scotland's National Theatre has no building)?**

Infrastructure

is a mixture of buildings and people, is a system of networks, includes large institutions, the Arts Council's regularly funded organisations, heritage, organisations, museums.,is still London-centric.

2. **How does the little person benefit? Is their voice represented at conferences like this?**

There is a postcode lottery as far as how much voice a small person had. For instance, some district councils have no Arts officer while some have departments

Some people refuse to involve themselves on political grounds, and see the Arts Council as a top heavy bureaucracy with only a small percentage of its funding reaching actual artists

Artists, by their very nature, should have a voice

One size does not fit all.

3. **What is it that gives status to a piece of work?**

Location gives status, TV media coverage, association with Landmark events e.g. Olympics quality and audience give status but status is not a guarantee of quality or quality a guarantee of status.



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

Is politically challenging
outdoor work possible in
the UK?

Think Tank - International cross cultural collaborations & Emotional and dramatic depth in outdoor work- Mike Lister, street theatre specialist & co-founder, Avanti Display

Mike had use water in Avanti's street show Spurting Man and went on to design water effects for a piece on Trafalgar Square steps which became a touring show, Bollywood Steps, based on a Bollywood story. It was later promoted by Julian Rudd, and toured to outdoor spaces. During this time Mike was informed that the Infecting the City Festival was looking for international collaborators.

The Infecting the City Festival in Cape Town used as its branding an image of a burning man. During a recent spate of xenophobic violence in October 2008, immigrants were blamed for social problems and South African nationals took the law into their own hands. Somali shops were often looted by South Africans and burned out, the image of the burning man comes from a newspaper photo of an immigrant who had been set on fire. Within South African society there is a steep gap between the rich and poor, and there are concerns that South Africa is heading towards the Zimbabwean model. The festival was funded by Spier Wine Ltd, a commercial Vineyard. Their programme stated that 'funding the arts was their major investment in the community'.

The international make up of the artists comprised 3 from Europe, 3 from Africa, 3 from African states outside Africa. These artists were split into 3 groups and asked to collaborate. Each group had some facilities provided, and a £5000 budget and were asked to respond creatively to the real life stories and issues from the recent xenophobia. The work started with an induction, with history and field trips to where the refugees were trying to get visas. Visas are only available by paying bribes. Whilst waiting to bribe the officials, participants were held within a barbed wire compound and given basic food and drink. What became clear was that the refugees were easy prey, often their food was stolen before it reached them.

After the induction, the groups had to create an outdoor performance from what they had seen and learned. One group employed refugees, to help them.

'If we never return to the place we call home, will we ever see our brothers and sisters again?'

Mike's group had 20 black dancers and 1 white singer. He was elected as director. His collaborator, Alfred Hinkle is a well respected choreographer in SA – artistic director of Jazzart Dance Theatre. A refugee guide, called Prosper, was another collaborator in Mike's group.

Prosper came from Zimbabwe looking for his sister, met with violence and ended up in a camp, though he did eventually find his sister. Mike's team based their piece on Prosper's story. His crossing of the Limpopo River and his near drowning in the water

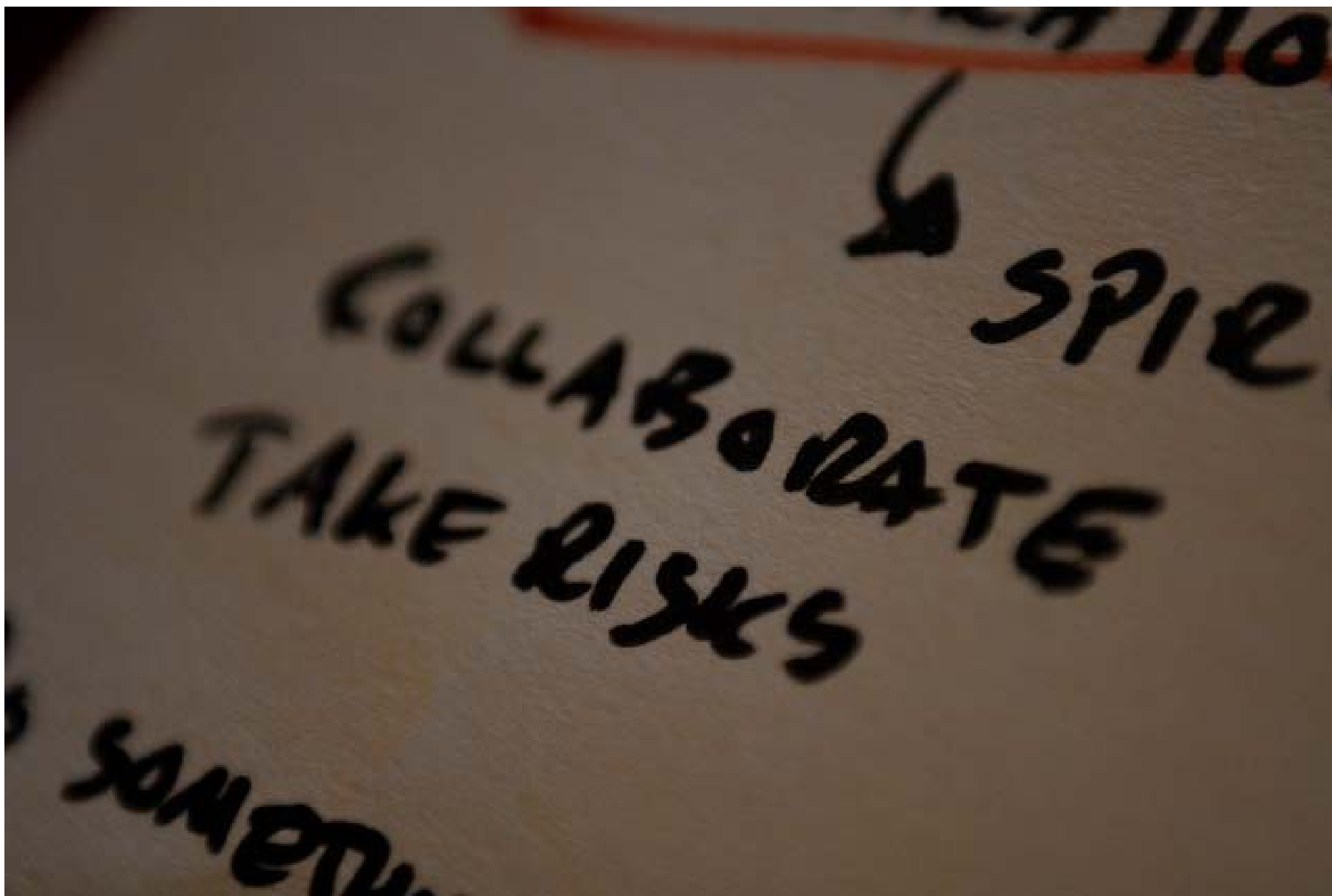


Image by Soundwave



The Conference

How do we really develop work with meaning and content when the market is entertainment driven?

The performance was staged in a civic fountain/lake at 1pm, a very hot time of day, but evening performances are not the norm because of a people's fear of danger when going out at night. Water cannons were used to symbolise gun fire, hosepipes were used as whips, a raft was created in the lake, and there was a particularly poignant scene with refugees in the lake passing their suitcases above the water. Prosper was also a wire modeller and he was employed to create a life size man to set on fire, as per the festival logo. This was quite controversial.

During production discussions, the cast agreed that there should be a positive outcome to the show. So the water was employed to fulfil this aspect, with dancers in the lake helping each other. When the white female politician figure in the water was helped out, it became a really emotional part of the show for many.

The audience understood the ideas behind the show. Zimbabwean workers on a roundabout knew of the show. Mike was in the audience and encountered the woman next to him bursting into tears, unusual when compared with the UK experience of street performance.

- Q. Did the groups work together, or was it separate groups working individually? Mike's group found that, after a few days, one person needed to be in overall control. The groupings were diverse, but the time-scale and subject pulled it together.
- Q. Was there a good amount of support for those from a different country? A little. A room was provided, two technicians helped with the PA. But some language problems made finding water pumps harder. There were few tools.
- Q. Was there rehearsal in the lake? Some rehearsals took place outside of the city using a community circus tent on wasteland. So the first time on the lake was difficult, this being a much larger area. Also the lake water was not too clean, and some degree of bullying was required to get it sorted. Two helpful engineers cleaned the lake. There were 3 days rehearsal on the lake area. There were 6 days of performance.
- Q. Who were the audience? The audience consisted of white middle class intellectuals, bussed in school children and others in the city. Traffic noise was not a problem, as it was first thought it might be.

The conference noted that there was no political work like this in the UK, Our outdoor work seems to be more spectacle or entertainment based. Is politically challenging work possible in the UK?

How do we really develop work with meaning and content when the market is entertainment driven?



Image by Soundwave



The Conference

How can we learn from the past to transform our futures?

A New Role for the Artist - John Fox, Founder & Artistic Director of Welfare State 1968-2006 & Director (with Sue Gill) of Dead Good Guides

How might artists be seen in the future?

This was a truly fascinating talk in which John took us through his personal journey as an artist. Several people, throughout the sessions expressed that as fellow artists, they were inspired by his words.

Historically art has been about 'museum culture', however funding is now growing for festival/circus and a range of outdoor art events.

Welfare State

Bradford played a very significant part in John's life, as this was where the company 'Welfare State' was created in 1968. It was created as 'an alternative way of art'; seeking to drag art from the elitist ghettos... A local authoritarian once said of Welfare State that 'it's not our job to disturb people!' They were involved with the campaign to save the Kirkgate Market in the 70's. The company wound up recently after its last show 'Long Line'. John explained that it had become an outmoded vehicle in today's artistic world – what had to be fought for so hard (in terms of alternative art) is now in every tick box.

Long Line

'Long Line', the last Welfare State show was presented in a circus tent (borrowed from No Fit State) and is a Carnival-Opera, set in Morecambe Bay. It was – a show for the punters; a celebration of Morecambe Bay; a gathering of community; an escape from the mundane – people's imaginations are given back to them. Community and the Arts can be part of the same thing.

Lyn Gardner (The Guardian) gave the show a 4 star review with various quotes as follows:

- 'Long Line is about people, not product'
- 'It comes from the community and speaks directly to it'
- 'So specific – inclusive in every way'
- 'How can we learn from the past to transform our futures?'

The show was based on a belief in the gathering of community – site specific art – the poetry under our feet.

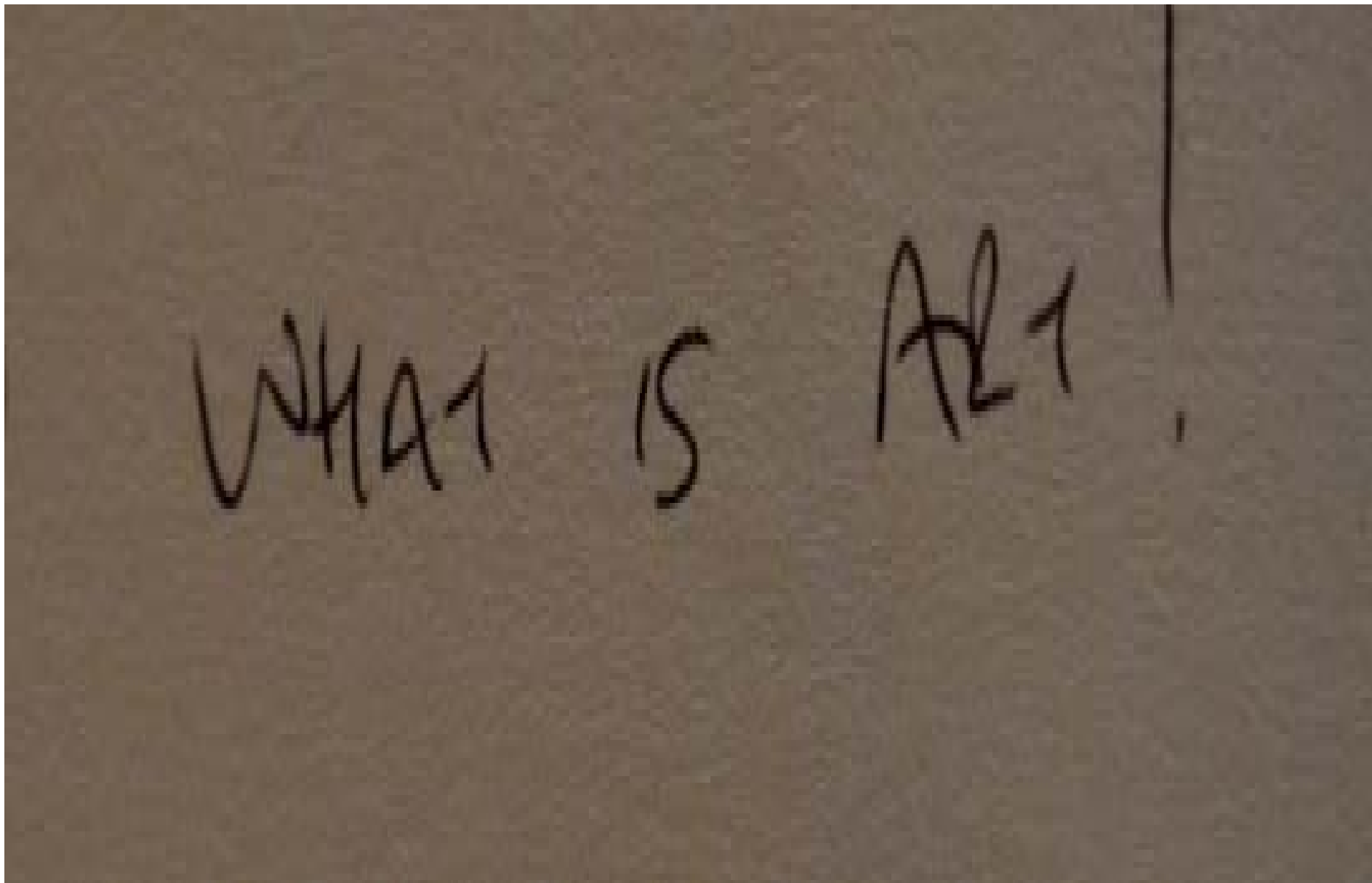


Image by Soundwave



The Conference

The duende is a soul with energy - with neither map nor discipline

Inspiration

Within art there is a danger of Jargon – where is the art? It can be lost in the roller coaster of funding.

The Herbert Read book 'Education through Art' is an inspiration – all people are artists – art through knowledge – it conveys a total human experience and the world.

Art also relates to Lorca's theory of the 'duende' (soul with energy – no English translation) – with neither map nor discipline

John's Art...

People have lost a lot of skills, but artists keep hold of these skills. What you do becomes an artistic expression of your being. "Can I make my life an artwork?" Looking for a new way to make art connect in a world of austerity. Our values fashion the ideal. Think with our hands. Live life more frugally.

John lives in a beach house on the west side of Morecambe Bay, and draws an enormous amount of inspiration from his surroundings. He has a studio in his garden. He says that 'drawing helps one meditate' and amongst other things has drawn a lot of 'dead things' – seeking to transcend mortality (Lorca – "The 'duende' is never far from death"). We live in a culture of too much pre-conception – we don't always acknowledge the reality of things. He showed an image of the cycle of life and death... reality – connection – wilderness – edge...

John's garden was a wilderness which had now been cleared – how far do you let your imagery be wild/tamed? The Garden is built as a 'Gift relationship' between himself as it's his garden, and the people who come to admire and enjoy it, who then, by helping out with the work, leave their own mark there. His garden contains Elderflower which has amazing properties ('the poetry under your feet') His wife suffered from Pneumonia during Longline, and the elderflower greatly assisted her recovery. He has 150 species of plant in his garden, visible from his back door.

Art is not about fixed solutions

John has created a series of Weather Vanes which stand on the beach near his house. They make the people on the beach into a new audience. The landscape of the beach has changed as well – there is a big rock there, once a marker point, which has since become partly silted up in the bay. He built a model of this rock – which could have images projected onto it, and a soundtrack... the Algae from the rock is 'an amazing world on a teaspoon' – the wonder under your feet – the DNA of our ancestors.

With Dead Good Guides, jointly run by John with his wife, they use art as a vehicle to connect people when they really need it Weddings Namings Funerals

about ownership? who a

GENEROUS DESPOTISM?

DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE?

Image by Soundwave



The Conference

Keep holding on to the ritual
of pure art

The artist becomes facilitator and fixer at these events. Rather than the commercial aspects of an 'organized' event that involves people who are unconnected (i.e. the undertaker etc...) Funerals are particularly a sacred art form. John has created urns for ashes which are made from salt – many people like their ashes to be scattered at sea, and so this urn, when placed into the sea, will dissolve into it.

Question & Answer

Q: How can you deal with doing work purely where the money is while retaining purity of spirit?

A: We are driven mad in everyday life! We live in the world of regeneration, and I feel privileged to have been party to so many things.

Welfare State never compromised politically, and were not out for the big buck, but instead out for the big adventure. 'What do you want to do? How best to do it?' It's always about trust, risk and belief. Need time to recharge and reconnect. Keep holding on to the ritual of pure art.

Q: Regeneration – What's going on affects what you feel – look at Broadway! – you can't always hang on to faith...?

A: Art as part of everyday, as a way of life – why – what – how? Politically and personally. Microbes evolve better than we have! We are primitive – do or die!

Q: As an artist – the process of being the pea (*re 'The Princess and the Pea' the pea which is under the mattress and disturbs the sleep – an artist can have a similar effect in life as the pea*) is being the 'Pea' inevitable?

A: Everyone has their own way, but it is a bit scary moving on sometimes! E.g. Welfare State... it's important to take the risk and find new challenges.

vi) Resident Artists – Soundwave

Soundwave, were in residence for 2 days of the conference. They brought AV equipment to capture images, sounds and sound-bites from the festival. They set up a 3D sound field in the Big Top and delivered a 15 minute presentation of the sounds and sights of the conference. It was a great way of reflecting back on the 2 days and because of the nature of the sound field - the audience gets different audio playback in different parts of the tent – it made delegates circulate in the tent for one final time, providing opportunities to have conversations with delegates that they had not yet had chance to talk to.



Image by Soundwave



Evaluation

One of the best conferences
I have been to

a) Summary of Delegate feedback

Information gleaned from analysing evaluations collated at the event revealed that the conference was (on average 82%) successful. On average, 79% of those who responded stated that event organisation was either good or excellent, specifically:

- 71% stated that the venue was either good or excellent
- 86% stated that the catering was either good or excellent
- 79% stated that event Information was either good or excellent
- On average, 86% stated that the content of the conference was either good or excellent, specifically:
- 79% stated that the overall content of the conference was either good or excellent
- 79% stated that the speakers were either good or excellent
- 93% stated that the opportunities for networking were either good or excellent

Some of the negative comments received included:

- The hot black tent that kept losing blackout when the flap was opened – it needed to be opened for air
- Not enough diversity, not enough new faces,, too many of the same conversations – we need to try new areas of discussion.
- More Space for finding out who's who
- Speed Dating too intense
- Excessive use of jargon and acronyms by delegates a barrier to communicating. Made me (practising outdoor performer) feel as though I could not understand the issues discussed and my comment would not be welcomed or relevant.
- Information was very late
- Could have been more time and focus to explore connections in outdoor practice across different contexts and platforms (Mela/ carnival/ street arts) particularly around culturally diverse arts practice and given venue was a mela site.
- Nice to be outside, but it was quite a noisy site. Difficult to find - Peel Park is big!! Surprised and disappointed by the numbers attending but then I'm sure you are too!!

We received many positive anecdotes, eg:

- Overall WONDERFUL please do it again – thank you for all your work.
- It was very, very useful for us. I would have liked more, though I dare say I wouldn't have signed up for a four day conference!
- Overall very positive feeling and I will do my best to encourage more of my contemporaries to come to a future event.
- Food good- discussions good – Enjoyed cabaret.
- I would like to extend my thanks and congratulations to the Quest Team for hosting and organising one of the best conferences I have been to. There was an excellent range of people there – practitioners and theorists. It felt inclusive and relevant and there was a genuine attempt to formulate the conference.



Image by Soundwave



Evaluation

74 conference participants of which 54 were practitioners

b) Outcomes /Suggestions from the conference

- more time and focus to explore connections in outdoor practice across different contexts and platforms (Mela/ carnival/ street arts) particularly around culturally diverse arts practice
- A practical look at funding larger scale events
- Providing practitioners the time and space to create together without the usual deadlines.
- more depth in discussion with a broader vision i.e. in relationship to the artform as a whole
- opportunities to show new work to peers for critique
- opportunity for NASA members to meet

c) Outcomes from steering group debrief

The group Highlighted the following successes:	The group noted the following areas that could be improved:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conference unified the sector • A wide range of participants of varying ages and disciplines attended • The discussion was generally of high quality which reflected a positive movement in the quality of critical debate for the art form • The lower numbers made for an intimate conference where most people got to meet each other • It was a very positive experience working with the Mela and good for the conference to make the links with such a prestigious event in Yorkshire. • Minibus transport for delegates was beneficial practically as well as socially, with the driver providing valuable feedback from delegates during the conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uptake from paying delegates was disappointing, resulting in the event not breaking even. • Speakers and facilitators were not ethnically diverse enough. This was addressed by having a larger proportion of ethnically diverse artists/performers at cabaret and in residence • Marketing for the conference needed to happen sooner • Power point presentations were tricky in the light tents and the black tent was uncomfortably hot and very dark to make goo audience contact • The Quest title proved problematic as it was also the title of the South West's Cultural Olympiad bid. An apology to the South West was made • The time allotted between end of conference day 1 and beginning of evening entertainment needed to be longer to allow people chance to eat and check into hotels • Conference needed greater presence from Local Authority arts officers



Image by Soundwave



Evaluation

Find opportunities to show new work to peers for critique

d) Action points and future plans

- i) Arts Council England, East Midlands offered to provide space for artists to experiment together as part of their hosting of the ISAN conference in Derby in November 2009. Mike Lister said that he would be willing to organise and it was noted that NASA may have some funds to support this.

ACTION: NASA steering group to meet in July, discuss possibilities and feedback to ACEY, E and Mike Lister. This would need to go to the next NASA steering group meeting

- ii) Arts Council England, Yorkshire have secured further managed funds to run a second conference for the Outdoor Sector in 2010. The steering group discussed possible themes and agreed that they would like to look at content and emotional depth in outdoor work.

ACTION: Steering group to meet and agree dates, venue and submit proposal/budget. Arts Council to release grant to Faceless for project management working with steering group for delivery of event in 2010

- iii) The conference expressed a need for new outdoor work to be critiqued to improve quality. This came from the Artists experience of presenting new work at Gayurty and then talking to about it to peers and eminent and experienced practitioners

ACTION: Build critique into ISAN/Arts Council England, East Midlands experimental programme [(i) above] or into the next "Quest" conference

- iv) Marketing on the conference was delayed due to programming delays

ACTION: Publish a "Save the Date" in advance then programme



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Thanks & Acknowledgments

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