

A bronze sculpture of a nude female figure stands on a sidewalk. The sculpture has a weathered, patinated appearance with some reddish-brown markings on its chest and torso. In the background, a person is walking on a sidewalk, and a person with a bright pink helmet is riding a bicycle across the frame.

Beyond their walls

*Ten major London arts
and cultural organisations
share experience of working
in the public realm*

Ten major London arts and cultural organisations share experience of working in the public realm

In June 2008 Arts Council England launched *New landscapes*, a national plan for the development of high-quality outdoor arts activity across England, to include both performance and temporary installations.
www.artscouncil.org.uk/newlandscapes

With an eye on the 2012 Olympics and a desire to increase engagement with the arts among all sections of society, *New landscapes* makes a number of recommendations to improve the working environment for outdoor arts, build a clearer picture of working practices, gather evidence of the impact of the work and increase the longer-term sustainability of the sector.

This series of dialogues focuses on significant cultural organisations across London, from the Royal Opera House to the British Library, some of which are experienced in the art of working outdoors and some of which are unaccustomed to working in public spaces. It captures a range of thoughts from some of our leading cultural voices and illustrates ways in which the arts sector is working to offer audiences new experiences, transform places in unexpected ways and ignite artistic creativity.

Each dialogue also contains valuable guidance for organisations planning to embark on artistic journeys beyond their walls. Although the projects are very diverse, many of the benefits are universal.

This publication identifies both opportunities and challenges that lie ahead as artists seek to animate new outdoor locations and engage people with the unexpected and the transformational.

Andrew Nairne
Executive Director, Arts, Arts Council England

Introduction

In spring 2009 we embarked on a series of interviews commissioned by the Arts Council England, London to uncover work that national arts and cultural sector organisations have been creating and promoting in the outdoors. As professionals working in this field, we knew that we would discover the genuine passion that this kind of work provokes.

However, in addition to this, our interviewees were keen to tell us about the impact that working outside their walls has had on them and the way they work. What resulted was a range of fascinating insights that uncover not only some exciting and engaging arts, but also some real clues as to how building-based arts companies can promote audience and organisational development.

We would like to thank all of the inspirational people that agreed to take part in our interviews for their insights, honesty and willingness to share. While the diversity of experience was striking, the passion and enjoyment for outdoor work was universal – as was a desire to share the experience with a wider audience.

Colin Beesting and Bill Gee
December 2009

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Singing River, Southbank Centre, 2007
Photo: David Parry courtesy of PA

The Barbican

*Louise Jeffreys, Head of Theatre
and Robert van Leer, Head of Music*

For the Barbican, Europe's largest arts centre, working outdoors has been a natural evolution of its changing programme and underlines a desire to interact with local communities – one that has started to change the organisation itself. Louise Jeffreys and Robert van Leer are two senior members of the programming team who have spearheaded this drive.



*Spiral, Lone Twin,
the Barbican, 2009
Photo: Molly Maslund*

In 2009, the Barbican has been developing a new programme of 23 events to take place throughout June and July. A grant of £200,000 from Arts Council England to broaden access, has led to the establishment of some key partnerships and a programme of events held in east London. Venues and outdoor spaces including Victoria Park, Hackney Empire and Gillett Square have been utilised in an accessible and creative programme.

Both Robert and Louise felt that working in this way was part of a natural development of the Barbican's programming ethos – one that was clearly linked to an artistic ambition to reach out.

The appointment of Sir Nicholas Kenyon as the new managing director, additional funds for community engagement from Arts Council England and east London's central position in the 2012 Olympics has enabled the Barbican to think very seriously about the international communities on their doorstep and how they could be linked with the international artists it programmes.

They were both very confident that programming outdoors is not simply about a desire to work in new spaces – although this was an exciting factor, which poses new artistic possibilities. It was a natural consequence of a desire to link with the communities of east London and work in partnership with other organisations who facilitate this.



A virtuous cycle is now developing in which working with local communities is linking the venue to the people. While working outdoors with organisations across east London, the Barbican has been reminded of its status as an international leader, whose importance to local people is demonstrated by their willingness to work in partnership. They are also encouraged by the communities' readiness to come to the venue and to enjoy the uniqueness of seeing something in which they have been involved, in an international concert hall.

The Barbican's commitment to this way of working is so strong that other programme elements have been suspended in order to develop the work of which outdoor events are a key element. Robert van Leer described their commitment. 'For 2009 we have decided to suspend our *Mostly Mozart* programme in order to put our resources into outdoor and community work.'

One of the challenges for the Barbican in developing outdoor work has been the lack of infrastructure in outdoor spaces – a park with no performance framework is immediately more difficult and expensive to work in. This has meant partnership working is even more important. Many of the Barbican's outdoor programmes slot into pre-existing events where the infrastructure already exists, such as Tower Hamlet's Paradise Gardens in Victoria Park. The Barbican's contribution is one of world-class artistic presentation.



*Les Grooms, Barbican, 2009
Photo: Ludovic Des Cognets*



A venue such as the Barbican also has the opportunity to work on its 'estate' – the immediate area in which it is located. This opportunity is severely limited by considerations of noise and health and safety in an area which is largely residential – however, several visual arts interventions and projects which worked closely with the Barbican residents have allowed the venue to interact with those who live on its doorstep.

These have included the installation of large snowballs containing 'treasures' which were revealed as the ice melted, by Andy Goldsworthy, *Bassline* by Graeme Miller where an immersive installation from a walk by 20 local people was installed within the Barbican's underground car park and an ongoing relationship with Lone Twin, a company noted for their ability to work in unusual spaces and engage audiences on new levels. All artists working on

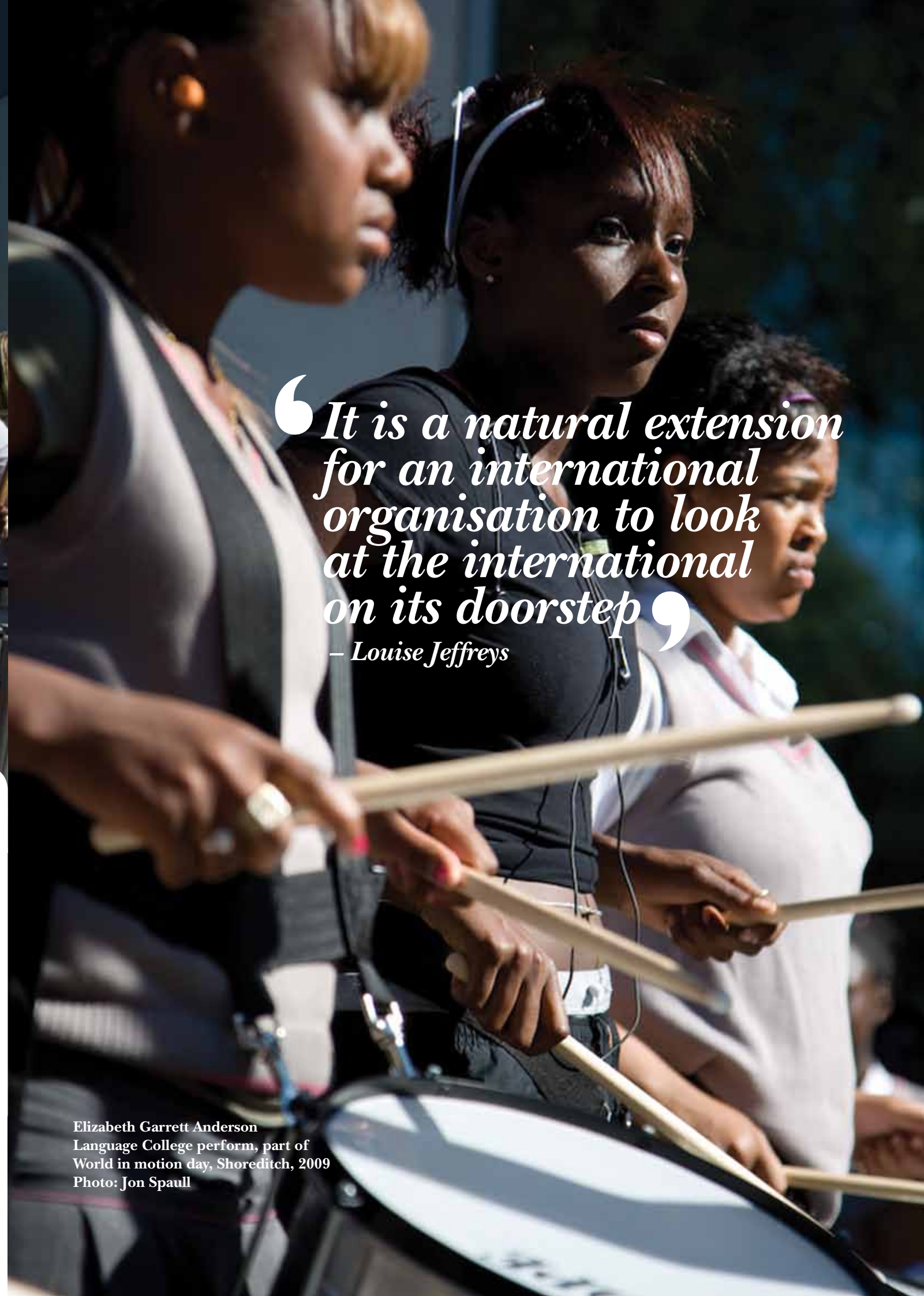
the Barbican estate created a sense of place and engaged the community – both genuine benefits to working in this way.

The main challenges for the Barbican have been ones of building new relationships and developing genuine partnerships which would stand the test of time. The Barbican's marketing department has also had to look differently at how it reaches audiences and what working in partnership means for the Barbican's brand – a brand which itself is changing as a result of working in new and different ways.

Working outdoors has enabled the Barbican to put education and community engagement at its heart. An emerging artistic policy that puts contact with local communities as central to the process has helped an internationally respected venue find links with those who live in its vicinity.

“It is a natural extension for an international organisation to look at the international on its doorstep”
– Louise Jeffreys

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson
Language College perform, part of
World in motion day, Shoreditch, 2009
Photo: Jon Spaul



British Library

*Jon Fawcett,
Senior Events Officer*

The aim of the British Library's live events programme is to illuminate the library's collections and exhibitions. Engaging audiences both inside and outside, the programme is expanding the notion of what it means to be a national library and drawing in audiences who may not otherwise visit.

Jon Fawcett cited some examples of how collections are being given depth and meaning through opportunities which allow deeper engagement.

One great example of this was the 2007 exhibition *Sacred: Discover what we share*, which was supported by a vibrant outdoor programme of live lunchtime and evening concerts linked to themes inspired by the religious books on display.

A key focus of the events was *Sacred Ways* – a day of free art experiences and performances inspired by the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths. The festivities included outdoor performances, open workshops, food, crafts, installations and displays reflecting on sacred places, journeys and traditions.



As with many of the British Library's outdoor events, the day took place on a public holiday. For Jon, this has the advantage of drawing a broad audience while not impinging on the library's traditional use for study – always a key factor in the staging of events in the space.

While the modern building has good soundproofing, the events team are keen to be considerate of academic users and ensure that any outdoor events are not intrusive. To deliver *Sacred Ways*, the small events team engaged external help in the form of a specialist company, who they worked with closely to deliver an event that was complementary to the exhibition's themes and attracted many thousands of additional visitors.

While the outdoor courtyard area of the British Library appears to be an ideal space for events, there are other restrictions in addition to noise considerations. Jon was at pains to point out that the courtyard operates as the ceiling to many holding rooms for the library's collections and also hosts a range of air vents and other fire safety mechanisms. 'Unfortunately, the ability to construct a stage or any other major installation is severely limited.'

The event's programme enjoys support at all levels of the organisation and is frequently cited in reports as an innovative element to the library's activities which brings in a diverse audience. While the staging of outdoor events in a setting that is predominantly used for study poses challenges for both staff and audiences, outdoor activities are largely welcomed by the library's many visitors.

The British Library's foray into outdoor programming has not been without challenges. However, as a national institution whose image for many is one of silent academia, the live events programme – both inside and outside the building – is beginning to reposition the library as somewhere with a broader offer.

The British Library continues to see its outdoor activities as an important means to engage with the nearby communities including residents, institutions and businesses. In the summer of 2009 it ran a jesters project teaching the techniques and history of Tudor court fools to local school children, who performed the results on the British Library piazza.

In February 2010 it is planning the mass participation photography treasure hunt organised in partnership with the developers of the King's Cross Central site – the forthcoming home for the University of the Arts. This aims to inspire people to view the area surrounding the British Library in fresh ways and capture it creatively on camera.

*Kinetika, Sacred Ways,
British Library, 2007
Photo: courtesy of the
British Library*

British Museum

*Richard Blurton,
Head Curator*

One of the British Museum's first ventures into its public and outdoors spaces was the climax to a much larger project, which had begun life several years earlier. Richard Blurton masterminded the revelation of some of the museum's most striking collections and with it, created a dramatic live happening.

The British Museum's *Voices of Bengal* season took place in 2006. Curated by Richard and his team, the exhibition explored the objects, symbols and history of Bengal, bringing many of the cultural traditions of Bengali people to life. The centrepiece to this was the construction of a large clay goddess in the museum's famous covered Great Court. Richard invited four skilled craftsmen, who had travelled from West Bengal, to construct an image of the goddess Durga. In front of a visiting audience over several weeks, the goddess 'grew' before their eyes to become a structure measuring 20 feet high.

Richard describes the process they went through to ensure support from London's Bengali community. 'Throughout the development of the exhibition the British Museum had been very careful to work closely with local Bengali communities, and in particular The London Durga Puja Dusserah Committee, who have been hosting a Durga ceremony for Hindu Bengalis in the UK since 1963. This ensured that traditions and religious beliefs were adhered to and a close relationship with the community was developed.'

Once constructed, it is traditional for the clay goddess to be offered to the gods through a sacred ceremony – the Durga Puja – in which the unbaked clay statue is cast into a river. Her straw and clay form means that she literally 'melts' into the water. To facilitate this element of the ceremony Richard passed control to the local Bengali community but remained very engaged. Having conquered the

challenges of transporting a large but delicate goddess from the court area to a community centre in nearby Euston, she was then transported westwards across London to Putney and finally offered to the River Thames.

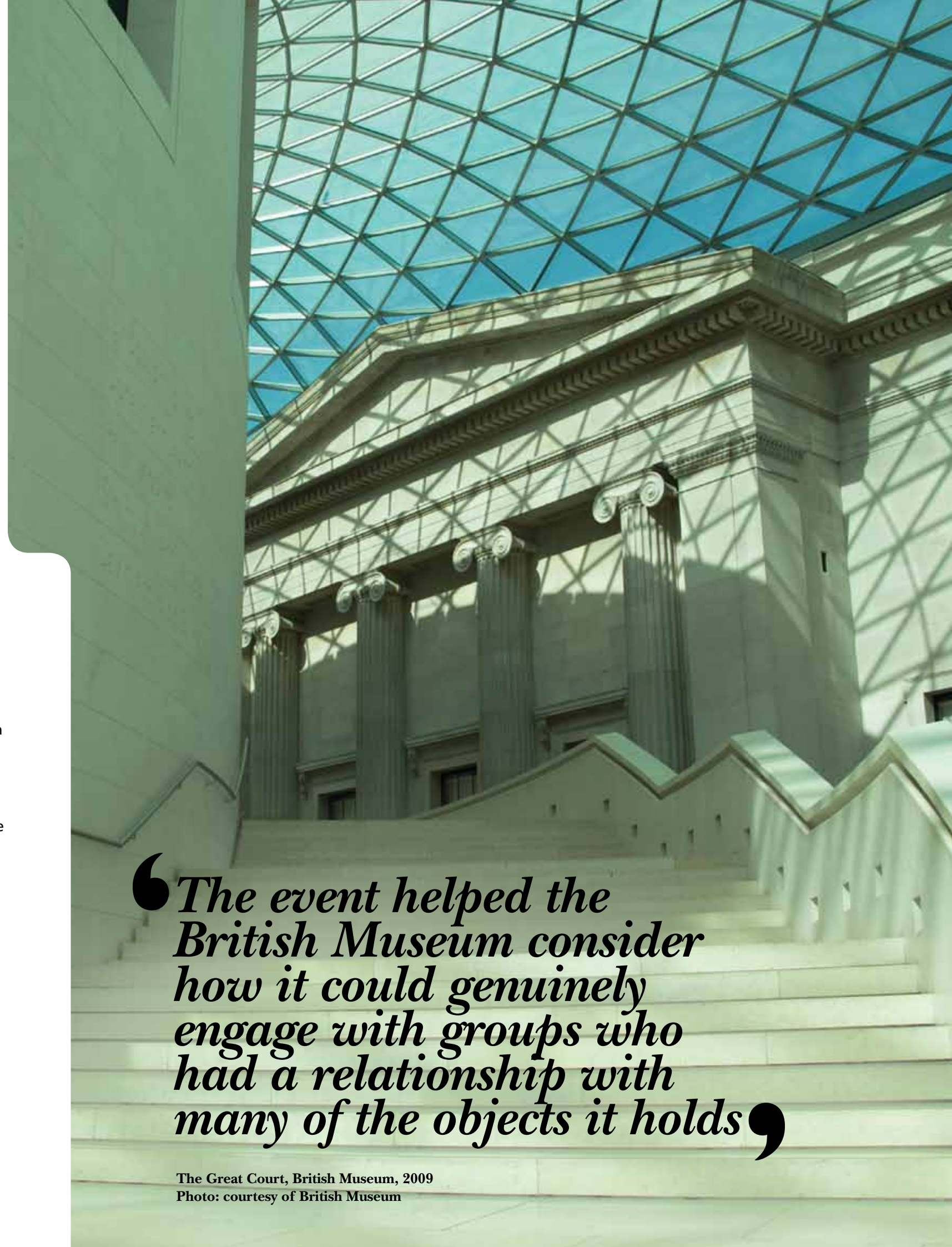
For Richard and the British Museum, working outdoors was not about performance, but about completing a religious ceremony that had become key to the staging of an exhibition. Connecting with the community had been central to this process and took time and dedication to ensure that tradition was upheld. The practicalities of building the goddess in a public area also challenged museum staff to address health and safety issues and manage a daily event that was new to the environment.

Richard was also certain that the exhibition had brought a much larger south Asian audience to the museum and helped it to engage more deeply with a key local audience group. The event helped the British Museum consider how it could genuinely engage with groups who had a relationship with many of the objects it holds.

Following this exhibition, the British Museum have not yet had the opportunity to repeat this kind of event. However, the challenges of staging a major piece of work that blurred the boundaries of traditional exhibition, performance and religious ceremony opened the museum's mind to exploring what might be possible in the future.

‘The event helped the British Museum consider how it could genuinely engage with groups who had a relationship with many of the objects it holds’

The Great Court, British Museum, 2009
Photo: courtesy of British Museum



Exhibition Road Cultural Group

*Sally Tallant,
Head of Programmes,
Serpentine Gallery*

The Exhibition Road Cultural Group is a collective of cultural organisations based in South Kensington, London. Home to the Natural History Museum, Imperial College London, the Science Museum, the V&A, the Serpentine Gallery, the Royal College of Art and many others it hosts remarkable collections and some of the greatest research institutes in the world. One of the group's trustees, Sally Tallant, described how the collective creates a sense of place with outdoor events.



*Priceless, Moti Roti,
Exhibition Road, 2006*

This collective of organisations decided to move outdoors in an attempt to take away the walls from institutions in which great thinking was taking place and expose it to the public.

The group has been formed with some key objectives that are overtly playing to the shared strengths of this unique group of organisations and benefiting from the sum of the parts exceeding the whole. Marketing and brand objectives are the core of the group's activity with the aim of creating a new cultural brand that is identified with the specific geographic area around the institutions.

For Sally, working together is about providing additional visibility for the area and making an ambitious statement about the locale as a destination in its own right. With this in mind, the group commissioned London-based international arts organisation, motiroti to develop *Priceless*. Sally described the event: 'Each institution selected an object or idea that they considered to be priceless and introduced it to a group or community they were interested in working with.'

'Together they developed a series of presentations that met the objectives of the project. The resulting work included installations, large-scale projections on the side of buildings and mobile floral 'pavilions' which housed some of the work.'

'The Royal Geographical Society selected Scott's shopping list for the North Pole and worked with a group of sixth-formers. The V&A chose a jade object and worked with the Chinese community exploring the significance of this stone for the people.'

*Ebony Bones, Exhibition Road, 2006
Photo: courtesy of the Exhibition
Road Cultural Group*



For Sally and the group, the scale of the resulting work was crucial. Massive soundscapes and visuals were created to fill the outdoor space around Exhibition Road and became an attraction in themselves. The work was not owned by any single institution or community, but was the result of a collective effort.

As a project early in the life of the group, it was key to helping a diverse combination of organisations learn how to work together. It also exposed the potential of spectacle and how this could be employed to build the brand. However, large scale requires investment and the group secured £70,000 from Bloomberg, which was released specially for the project along with additional Arts Council funding. Releasing additional resources was more challenging for the smaller organisations, however as a membership organisation, the group was able to add some additional collective funds.

Common resources had to be employed to deliver the project, in the form of an external producer, who ensured logistics such as road closures across two boroughs were taken care of and that the production was fully coordinated.

The area already receives millions of visitors each year so large audience numbers was not a key objective, however how audiences experience the area and encouraging crossover between institutions was. The group were also keen to reflect the diversity of London in the audiences they reached and engage with the communities who live right on their doorstep; to a large degree this was successful.

'Since the project, the group has grown in confidence,' Sally explained. A recently appointed chief executive for the group will be tasked with continuing to build on the foundations of previous projects. Looking to the future, the group are keen to continue developing the destination brand by making bold statements through outdoor events and performance.

They are also keen to extend the use of the area once the doors of many of the museums close, using outdoor spaces to extend the cultural offer into the night. The desire is to build this kind of programme so that they can fulfil the challenge being offered them by London's Olympic status in 2012.

Exhibition Road Cultural Group is made up of the leading cultural and educational establishments in and around Exhibition Road, London. The group is:

- Austrian Cultural Forum London
- Goethe-Institut London
- Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens
- Imperial College London
- Institut français
- Ismaili Centre
- Natural History Museum
- Royal Albert Hall
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Royal College of Art
- Royal College of Music
- The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851
- Royal Geographical Society with IBG
- Science Museum
- Serpentine Gallery
- V&A
- Westminster City Council

Royal Court Theatre

*Dominic Cooke,
Artistic Director*

Dominic Cooke's staging of outdoor work was a modest but symbolic expression of a desire to work outside the walls of the historic theatre.

Dominic presented Look Left Look Right's *The Caravan*, which was the winner of a Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival in 2008. A moving show that documented the lives of victims of the 2007 floods to an intimate audience of eight, Dominic explained that the audience experience the show while sitting in the caravan, encountering the characters' lives in a naturalistic theatre piece.

The Caravan was situated on Sloane Square – opposite the theatre – giving the show a firm link to its host. Audience members arrived at the theatre and were escorted to the show, which played several times each day. Dominic was at pains to point out, 'As a new piece of writing by an important voice, *The Caravan* sits squarely within the Royal Court's existing artistic policy'. He also explained that the

“*Staging work in new venues has had a positive impact on the Royal Court, bringing staff closer to audiences and opening up a new dialogue*”

theatre was keen to stage work in new spaces, an expression of the theatre's desire to extend its reach beyond its walls. *The Caravan* offered an indoor space outside the traditional auditorium of the Royal Court.

While not exposing the audience to the elements in the way that other outdoor projects do, it did bring the immediacy and intimacy that many outdoor performances offer. Tickets sold out weeks before the show opened and a real buzz was created by the installation of a modest but incongruous addition to the streetscape of downtown Chelsea. It also challenged audiences to think and feel differently – removing many of the intellectual comforts of a familiar environment.

Dominic's desire to reach new audiences and present work in new contexts also led him to stage a recent play *Oxford Street* in Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. While not strictly 'outdoors', Dominic faced many of the challenges associated with outside performance. The show was sparsely staged and simply lit, with audience members sitting on makeshift seating.

Dominic explained how the new setting added a different dimension to the play and also challenged the performers to adapt to the new space. 'The developing relationship with new spaces leaves us with a clear choice between staging work in the theatre or in new settings – our resources won't allow for both – however it is a choice we make happily'. Dominic explained when asked about the opportunity-cost of undertaking this kind of work. 'Staging work in new venues has had a positive impact on the Royal Court, bringing staff closer to audiences and opening up a new dialogue,' Dominic reflected when asked about the advantages of working in new spaces, confirming that it is something he is keen to continue in the future.



The Caravan, Sloane Square, 2009
Photo: courtesy of the Royal Court

Royal Opera House

*Deborah Bull,
Creative Director of ROH2*

The Royal Opera House has been engaging audiences in outdoor spaces for over 25 years and in recent years has extended its reach across the UK. Its outdoor screenings of popular operas and ballets now take place in up to 25 city centres and are considered part of the arts calendar however they do not come without their challenges.

For many years, the Royal Opera House's outdoor screening in London was staged in Covent Garden. More recently it has relocated to Trafalgar Square, a space which has become increasingly recognised as a stage for cultural events.

Opera and ballet are broadcast live from the stage of the Royal Opera House to an outdoor audience of thousands. On-screen presenters, one at the Royal Opera House and one among the crowd, form the link between the indoor and outdoor audience, creating a dialogue between the two and acting as hosts to the event. Additional programming is also created for the outdoor audience to watch during the interval and before and after the performance, giving an insight into the work, behind the scenes footage or a deeper understanding of a key area of the Royal Opera House's programme.

Some live activity may also be provided by local partners, giving audiences the chance to watch live performances from local ballet schools, for instance. The Royal Opera House is always looking for new ways to encourage audience members to get involved in the action, for instance, by trying on some dramatic opera costumes during the interval.

The production of the event is managed in-house, with the Sound and Broadcast unit working closely with the Royal Opera House's wholly owned media production company, who can capture the performance on film as part of their annual programme of filming.

This way, the footage from the live broadcast can be released on DVD or used for different purposes on a later date. The additional element is produced by a freelance producer, working to Royal Opera House direction, and the outdoor events themselves are also managed by freelance staff with specialist skills in staging this kind of event, again working to overall Royal Opera House direction.

Staging the events has become such a regular part of the Royal Opera House programme that they are scheduled much like any other performance and are a regular part of how the organisation plans. Additional BP sponsorship supports the activity and while the relationship with BP is such that they may sponsor other elements of the programme, their focus on this event in particular allows them to offer exclusive screenings to their staff in Aberdeen and Sunbury.

Finding out who the audience is remains a real challenge as the events are free and not booked in advance. However, anecdotally, the venue knows that it is reaching an audience demographic beyond those who would visit the theatre. The opportunity to see free, top-quality performance in a social setting has wide appeal.

As the number of screenings has increased, the Royal Opera House has not been in a position to allocate additional marketing money to the project and relies on a creative approach to marketing, with partners such as the BBC spreading the word about the event. This has been successful, with UK-wide screenings enjoying large audiences.

Deborah is enthusiastic and committed to the screenings, and is mindful of the fact that they make a clear statement about the Royal Opera House, communicating a message of openness and accessibility. She also advocates the use of the outdoor arena as a means to open the organisation's mind to further artistic possibilities. This gives rise to a desire to work with creators of new works, who may see this arena as somewhere to take their live performances.

“Artists are looking for creative possibilities and there's no greater creative stage than the world outside – it just needs artists to want to populate that stage”
– Deborah Bull

BP summer screens,
Trafalgar Square, 2008
Photo: Laura Edwards



Sadler's Wells

Rachel Evans, Creative Learning Projects Manager and Suzanne Walker, Director of Programming

In 2006 a main house performance from Brazilian dance troupe Brasil Brasileiro prompted Suzanne Walker and Rachel Evans to create an event which spilled out onto the street to create a free Latin dance carnival procession and fiesta on Rosebery Avenue attracting 15,000 people. Part audience development, part community engagement, the dramatic event had an impact beyond the performance itself.



In total 450 performers – a combination of amateur and semi-professional dancers – developed a high-energy samba dance parade that was performed to coincide with The Big Dance, a national celebration of all dance-forms. Working with three pre-existing Latin carnival companies, who were joined by a large team of amateur dancers, the performance was developed through a series of workshops, resulting in a contemporary London take on this Brazilian tradition.

Suzanne was keen that the Sadler's Wells stamp of quality was put on the event, ensuring that the audience received the same calibre of experience that they would, were they seated inside the venue. From the participants' perspective, the organisation was also keen that those performing learned something useful.

Suzanne had several objectives. As well as an opportunity to develop an audience for the main house show, the carnival was an attempt to challenge perceptions of dance as an elite artform. By removing the barriers associated with attending a traditional performance, the venue embraced the opportunity to engage a wider audience, including those who live in the theatre's locale, but who would not normally cross its threshold.



“When you think about taking dance into a public space it opens up the possibilities of what we can do artistically”
– Suzanne Walker

*Brazilian carnival, Sadler's Wells, 2006
Photo: Andy Miller*

As first-time producers of a major outdoor event, the organisation decided to engage a highly experienced freelance production manager to deal with logistics such as stewards and security. Existing staff found themselves on a steep learning curve when dealing with the local authority, Metropolitan Police, London Transport and other bodies who had a stake in managing the closure of a busy London street.

One additional and significant benefit for the organisation was the effect it had on the staff. Teams who normally undertook regular duties inside the venue came together to work in a new way for this project. New skills were discovered and staff were challenged to think differently about their working relationships. This had a positive effect on how Sadler's Wells operated in the future.

Perceptions of the Sadler's Wells brand also shifted and the major television coverage of the event made possible by its association with The Big Dance ensured that the venue's message of openness and accessibility went beyond those who attended the event.

The organisation are keen to continue exploring working outdoors, although budgets are an issue. The Brazilian Carnival attracted modest funds from a local regeneration project, but much of the funding for the event came from Sadler's Wells' core budgets. The team are ambitious and optimistic about finding other ways to engage audiences outside the venue and the experience of working in this way has opened up an exploration of what else is possible beyond the indoor stage.

Southbank Centre

*Jude Kelly,
Artistic Director*

Following the multimillion pound refurbishment of the Royal Festival Hall, Jude Kelly was keen to reignite the original vision of a national venue as first expressed during the Festival of Britain. The animation of outdoor spaces has been central to this and has helped to redefine the entire site.

Jude oversaw a two and a half day event entitled *Overture*. Marking the Royal Festival Hall's opening week, *Overture* was a showcase of what the centre aimed to offer, with free activities spanning the whole 21-acre site, much of which used the outdoor space. Live music, installations and performance projects included *The Singing River* – a choir which floated down the River Thames, and Billy Bragg's *Big Busk* – which encouraged the shared joy of music in the outdoors.

Jude insists that quality is paramount to the Southbank Centre's approach to outdoor work. 'I believe that outdoor performance and installation should not be seen as a poor relation to its indoor cousin,' she says when talking about the artistic policy. As a curator she is adamant that the same principles of respect and professionalism are applied outdoor as in.

This principle has been extended to the spaces in which the work takes place and the programming team have embarked on an ambitious programme of development focused on outdoor 'venues' in locations such as the roof of the Queen Elizabeth Hall, improving the aesthetic and infrastructure. The vision is to create outdoor *Performance Gardens* where symbolic 'food' will grow through the staging of poetry readings, live performance and music.

Increasing interaction with outdoor spaces is informing the venue's ever-evolving artistic policy. Jude's team of programmers and curators are being asked to consider how outdoor spaces can be utilised in the same way as indoor spaces in the selection of work. This has increasingly prompted the venue to act not only as a programmer of work but also develop its role as commissioner and facilitator.

The centre is exceptional in having access to such a broad array of open-air spaces – something which Jude acknowledges and celebrates. She is excited by the challenge that this poses, as only through developing new work will she ever be able to fulfil her aspiration to animate the spaces every day of the year. To do this, the team are increasingly brokering new partnerships with national and international venues to collectively support artists from all artforms in developing new pieces of work.

The history of street arts is based in an unexpected interruption to the everyday. Jude enthusiastically speaks of 'calculating to have disruption all the time'. Acting as a hub of development and finding producers committed to working outdoors her intention is to continue working with the outdoor and street arts sector and supporting its growth both within and outside the Southbank Centre.

While not receiving any specific funding for its outdoor work, Jude is optimistic about the possibilities of sponsorship from increasingly sophisticated brand agencies who understand the potential that high-quality outdoor work offers for positioning and brand objectives. The work's ability to reach a far wider demographic – one which Southbank Centre has already successfully engaged with through its many outdoor events – also offers brands access to harder to reach audiences.

Southbank Centre's founding role as 'a people's palace' is once again alive and the collective joy of experiencing events in public spaces is increasingly bringing new and diverse audience groups to the site. The impact of this is that people feel that the space is theirs and have built an expectation that there would be always something happening on the site – an expectation that Jude and her team aim to fulfil.

“By creating spaces people can start building work to occupy them”
– Jude Kelly

Projections on the Royal Festival Hall during *The Overture*, 2007
Photo: David Parry

Will Gompertz, Director of Tate Media

For many arts organisations, working outdoors has been about starting to change perceptions of who they are. At Tate, outdoor work occurs because of who they are – and is almost always a consequence of how artists want to work.

Will Gompertz cites one example of Tate's approach to outdoor work – the 2008 exhibition of street art with new commissions from five major international artists which adorned Tate Modern's iconic riverside facade.

Will explained how applying artworks directly to the brickwork of a grade II listed building came with in-built challenges, which required ongoing dialogue with the local authority to gain planning permission. The application of a treatment to the brickwork to ensure that the works could be removed at a later date was also a major undertaking for a building on the scale of Tate Modern.

The curatorial team were careful to be sensitive to the politics of street art. Inviting international artists to create new work in a public environment risked negative responses from other local street artists – something that Will and the team were very aware of.

Fortunately these did not emerge and the works were broadly embraced. The works themselves also garnered a broad range of responses from audiences.

A work by the artist JR depicted a young Black man holding a camera that was easily mistaken for a gun, provoked a strong reaction. It highlighted people's tendency to react to images before taking in all of the available information – something the artist himself had intended to highlight.

‘Over a quarter of a million people experienced the resulting trail in a four-month period’



Street Art, Tate Modern, 2008
Photo: Jon Wearne

Street Art, Tate Modern, 2008
Photo: courtesy of Tate



Will also spoke of the creation of work from a further 15 artists, who were commissioned to develop a street art trail taking participants on a two-mile walk around the Bankside area, starting and ending at Tate Modern. To create the trail, the Tate sought consent from the owners of each building on which the artwork was to be created and secured permission from the local authority.

Additionally, they had to work closely with artists who have traditionally worked outside the usual health and safety frameworks, to ensure that their working practices would not leave the Tate at risk of prosecution. 'Over a quarter of a million people experienced the resulting trail in a four-month period – one of Tate's most successful ventures of this nature', Will confirmed, adding, 'Many of the artworks remain in-situ a year later for passers-by to enjoy.'

Tate's technical infrastructure has been established to respond to the challenges of presenting contemporary artworks and working outdoors is an extension of this. Working in partnership is core to Tate's approach to delivering projects, and external partners with specific expertise were contracted to deliver any elements of projects which Tate could not do itself.

One benefit of the street art project was Tate's ability to secure a major sponsorship deal with Nissan – one that they would not have attracted had they not developed the project. The brand alignment between Nissan's positioning and advertising, and the work that Tate were developing for the project meant that a partnership was mutually beneficial. Without this support the project would not have taken place.

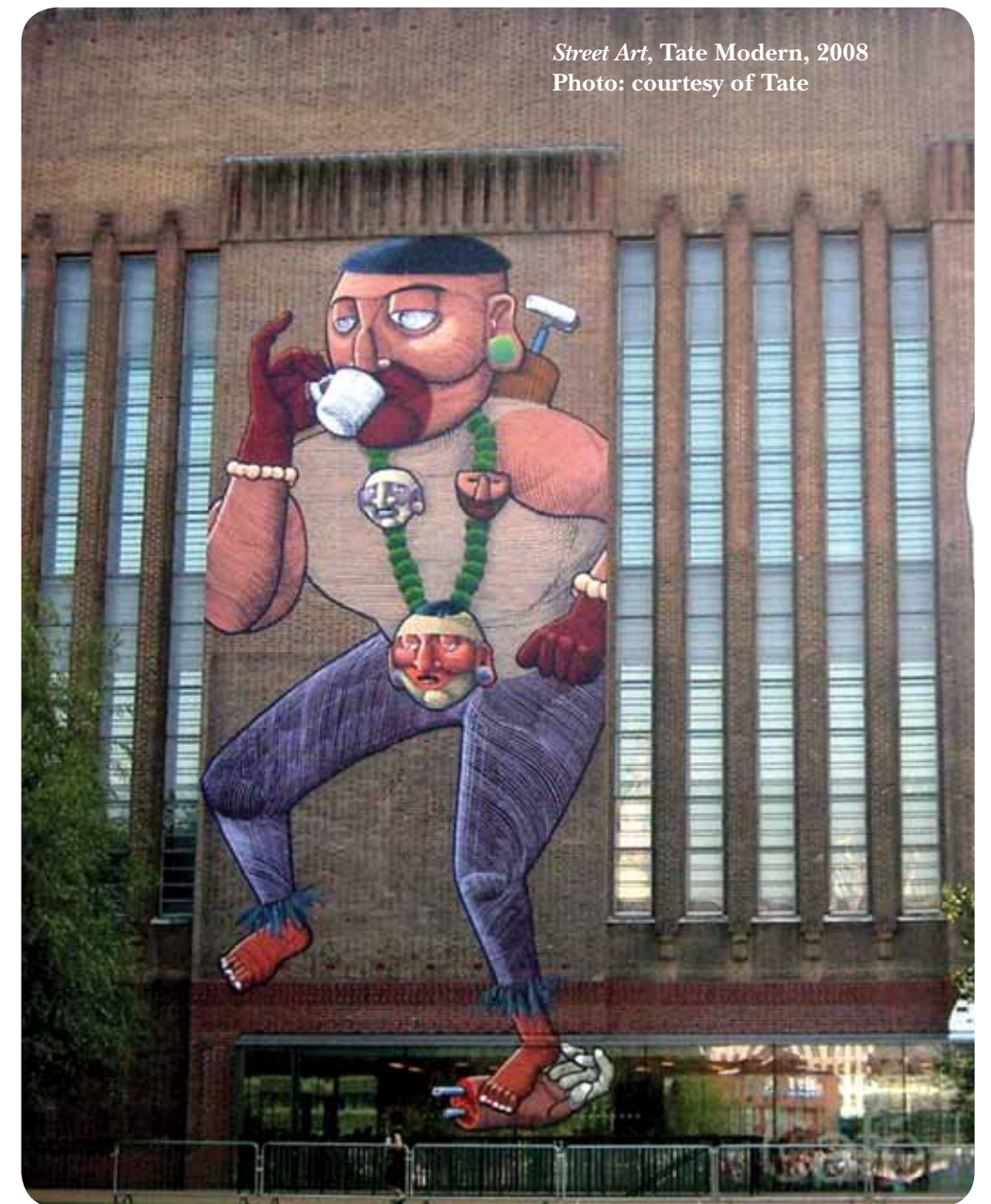
Street Art, Tate Modern, 2008
Photo: courtesy of Tate



Will and his colleagues at Tate continue to explore presenting work in the public realm, when and where artists demand it. This extends to recreating work which was not originally conceived for this setting. Will gave several examples of this, including the staging of Miro's *Puppet Circus* – a live art production of tableaux originally created by the Spanish artist. The pied piper effect of a procession of actors in large puppet suits, who paraded from Tate Modern, across the Millennium Bridge and back to the gallery, drew a large audience of people who had not been expecting to participate in a live art experience.

Will is keen to continue exploring the shared experience that outdoor art creates, in order to broaden audiences and bring a new perspective to contemporary art. He advocates a liberal approach to where art can be presented. 'The context in which art is presented has as much of a bearing on the audience's perception as the work itself and removing the gallery walls will always be an option for Tate when artists want to challenge commonly-held preconceptions of where art should be experienced'.

Street Art, Tate Modern, 2008
Photo: courtesy of Tate



National Theatre

Angus MacKechnie, Producer

The National Theatre's *Watch this space* programme started in the late 1990s – a response to then Artistic Director Trevor Nunn's desire to animate the outdoor spaces of the building. Eleven years later, Angus MacKechnie has developed it into an extended programme of British and international street arts.

Watch This Space runs for 10–13 weeks every summer, occupying the square outside the National Theatre. As a producer, Angus aims to embrace all forms of performance and constructs *Watch this space* by working with already established outdoor artists.

In recent years he has also begun to integrate the programme with the fabric of the National Theatre's core artistic activity, bidding for National Theatre Studio time and resources to support the development of new work and working with colleagues in the scenic workshop to create physical installations.

The National Theatre's ambition is to work ever more closely with UK-based and some international outdoor artists, commissioning new work and helping the form to develop.

Each summer, existing technical, marketing and front of house staff are selected to support the programme. Angus spoke of the development opportunity afforded by the event. 'For more junior members of the technical department *Watch this space* is seen as an opportunity to develop new skills and utilise existing skills that may not be used on indoor productions'.

The programme is financed from the National Theatre's core funds, and funders often cite the programme as a very positive element of the theatre's offer, fulfilling both artistic and audience objectives. In the past, the programme has attracted significant sponsorship support, but there hasn't been a major sponsor since 2004. However, the festival is able to access funds that may not otherwise be available, predominantly through the cultural institutes of non UK-based artists and companies.

These funds directly support the programme rather than being absorbed into the fundraising targets of the organisation. While being part of the theatre's positioning as an accessible venue, finance is never guaranteed and in response to funding constraints the scale of the event changes each year.

The National Theatre is in the enviable location of London's South Bank, an area of high footfall from both local and visiting audiences. The programme aspires to engage a wide audience – possibly one that may never buy a ticket for the theatre – and is actively promoted by the theatre.

However, major PR initiatives are approached with caution as health and safety considerations mean that at times, large numbers are undesirable. Angus is acutely aware of the impact that too many people might have, 'Large audiences sometimes impinge on the performance space and the audience's ability to enjoy it – so enormous audiences aren't always desirable'.

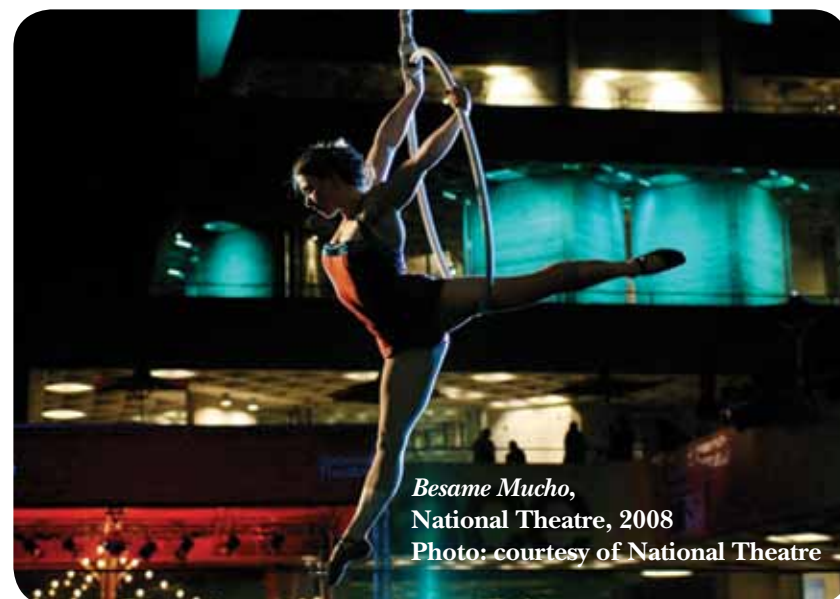
Until 2008, the *Watch this space* programme was completely free. In 2008 the theatre introduced a single run of a ticketed show to a second fenced space – a very successful move which gave them the confidence to stage a more ambitious month-long ticketed 'season' in 2009.

Angus spoke of the 'legitimacy' gained by ticketing outdoor events, one which has had 'a significant impact on the image of the programme and also led to greater profiling of the work' – a consequence of the need to generate ticket sales. As a result, the outdoor spaces are increasingly being regarded as a 'fourth auditorium' alongside the three indoor spaces.

Future ambitions include further developing outdoor spaces for ticketed work and also more fully integrating the outdoor programme into the artistic core of the National Theatre. There is also a desire to increase commissioning and encourage a crossover with the work of directors and artists who currently work in the indoor spaces to work in the outdoors and vice-versa.

The programme's ability to enliven the outdoor concrete space has become so much part of the fabric of the area that now visitors outside the season question its absence – yet again underlining the legitimacy of live work in the public realm and its ability to bring to life otherwise neutral spaces.

“the outdoor spaces are increasingly being regarded as a “fourth auditorium”



Besame Mucho,
National Theatre, 2008
Photo: courtesy of National Theatre



The Guardian Angels, Bångditos
Theatre, National Theatre 2008
Photo: Ludovic des Cognets

On reflection

The series of creative conversations that went on in the spring of 2009 and formed the bedrock for the case studies in this publication were an important opportunity for key leaders from the organisations to reflect on previous and current engagement with the outdoors and to look to the future.

The conversations themselves demonstrated a real engagement and willingness from the organisations to stretch themselves into new territories. Importantly we discovered that there was support and enthusiasm for these outdoor projects from the wider senior management teams. Though the conversations were centred predominantly on major cultural organisations in central London much of the rationale can be extended far beyond.

Against the increasing digital and virtual communications systems in the 21st century there has been a societal cultural shift towards the outdoors and a desire from diverse audiences to gather and share in 'the live' of an event. Festivals of outdoor work, outdoor festivals, large one-off outdoor events and major programmes of outdoor work as part of initiatives such as Liverpool '08 or Newcastle Gateshead Culture 10 programme are increasingly valued and something that people are looking out for. It was reported to us that many of the projects discussed attracted these large audiences.

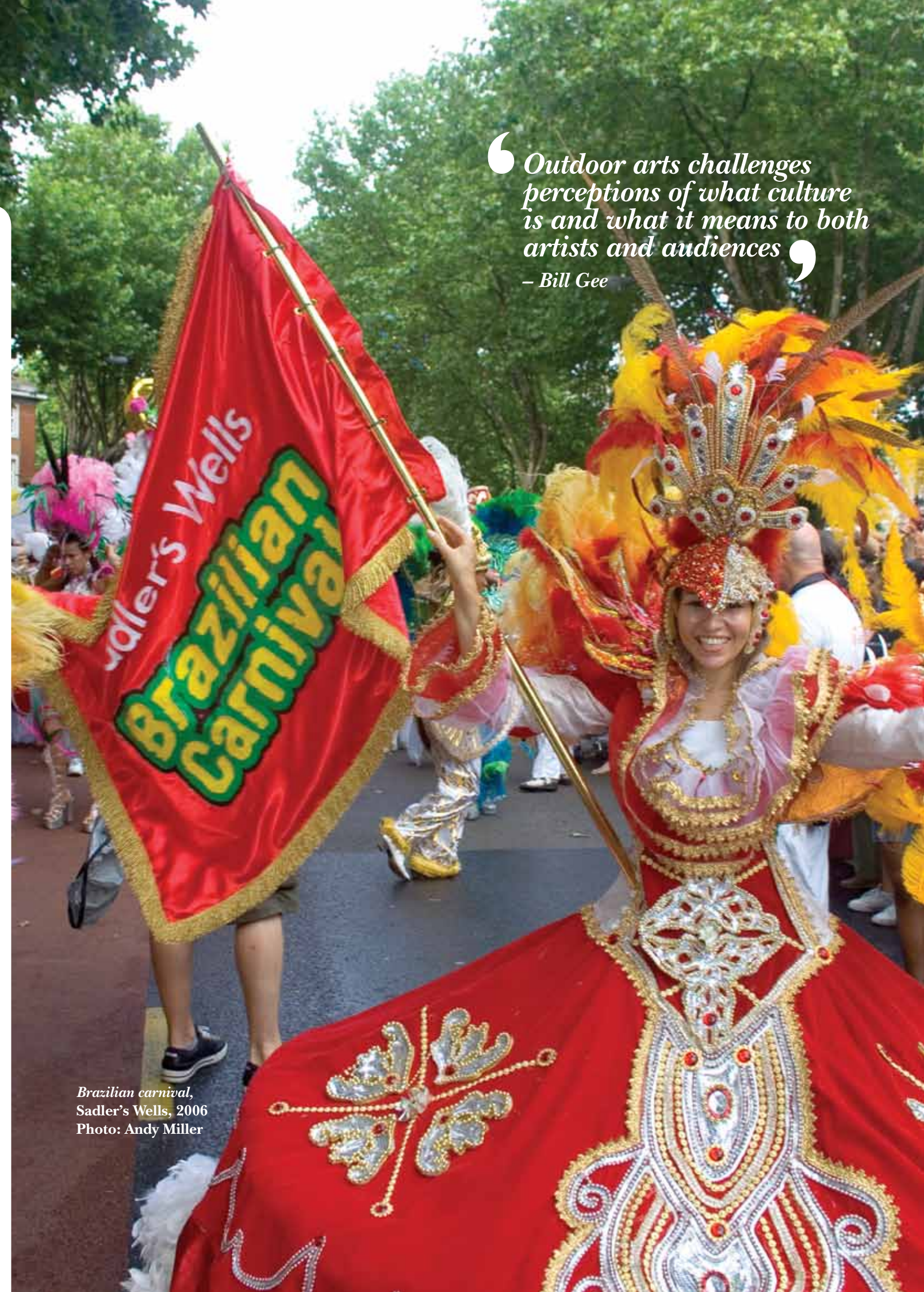
The quality of the artistic engagement when working outdoors was fundamental to all the people we met. For Tate it is a consequence of how and where the artists they have chosen to work with, themselves want to work. The Southbank Centre aims to ensure that within the organisation there is equality of respect and professionalism for artists working outdoors and indoors.

The National Theatre are clearly taking a lead with the *Watch this space* programme by engaging with both the UK and internationally established outdoor and street arts sector. Critically they have led with engagement from departments such as the National Theatre Studio to provide crucial early development support to projects. Sadler's Wells aim for the quality of the participation and engagement interaction to be equal to other levels of programming and thus worked with established artists and existing Latin carnival groups to deliver this.

Allied to this the National Theatre, Barbican and Southbank Centre are all working with established artists (who regularly work indoors) to support them on the journey to presenting and making work for the outdoors. Deborah Bull at the Royal Opera House sees the creative possibilities of the outdoors and wants artists to respond to the challenge.

Many of the interviewees identified that collaboration with technical and production specialists working regularly in the outdoors was necessary to delivering the event and supporting the organisation. The Barbican were very clear that by collaborating with others – particularly over staging requirements – more of their expertise could be directed to the artistic programming. There was also an acknowledged lack in the engagement with the UK artists, producers and presenters who regularly work in the outdoors. Sometimes this was due to the lack of time available within the programming departments, lack of knowledge and contacts. This was something which a number of the organisations were keen to work on.

“Outdoor arts challenges perceptions of what culture is and what it means to both artists and audiences”
– Bill Gee



Brazilian carnival,
Sadler's Wells, 2006
Photo: Andy Miller



Tracking, Stop Gap,
Southbank Centre, 2009
Photo: Bill Gee

For a number of organisations their engagement in the outdoors was the way of extending or completing a project. At the British Library the *Sacred Ways* day, by being inspired by many of the themes and actions of the ongoing exhibition, allowed for the active demonstration of aspects of the religious rites and ways of living, which related back to the core 'holy books' at the centre of the exhibition. For the British Museum, embarking upon the construction of the goddess Durga as the centrepiece activity of their wider *Voices of Bengal* was not a piece of theatre. It was an actual religious ceremony which had real purpose for the Hindu community.

Several of the conversations pointed to an unexpected and far-reaching impact on organisations, in how they thought about themselves and how doing something different prompted them to look at themselves and at organisational change. New relationships both across departments and within departments have been established through working on the outdoor events. The events themselves have offered possibilities for staff and skill development.

Many of the organisations have had to invest time and energy in building relationships. Agencies such as local authority licensing, roads, cleansing, police and emergency services, local and other grassroots groups have been crucial in ensuring the success of the projects. This engagement was often with very local communities – the people literally living or working next door – and was very important as it allowed for direct relationships and acted as a symbolic gate-opening which then has lasting benefit beyond the project itself. This is a common theme across outdoor events work, as often there is a more democratic sense of ownership of the outdoor and public space and thus some issues that are associated with territory are lessened.

Working in the outdoors is valued by many as an important stream of their audience development strategy. For Sadler's Wells the London Latino community came out to the carnival and many of them also came to the indoor show. For the National Theatre there is a knowledge that *Watch this space* partly attracts its own audience.

Coupled with other audience development initiatives the message can get through that there is something fresh and engaging about the organisation. This can lead to a change in perceptions and new audiences who have been attracted to the outdoor work being encouraged to come indoors.



Work in the outdoors is a very visible way in which organisations can demonstrate their innovation and accessibility to broad audience groups. Coupled with this 'brand development', organisations often utilise the imagery created at the outdoor events – large numbers in outdoor locations – to extend this message.

For the Exhibition Road group changing the perception and hence the brand is their key reason for working together, and the forthcoming redesign of Exhibition Road itself will be a physical shift of this brand.

While all the organisations have made very real investment from their core budgets into the outdoor programmes, at times events have helped development departments to secure funds from, for example, regeneration sources.

At Tate the content, profile and location of their *Street Arts* exhibition enabled them to secure a major new sponsor for the project. Balanced with this has been the opportunity cost of decisions to commit resources to outdoor work, which in some examples was made at the expense of investing in aspects of indoor programme. Such decisions are made within the wider artistic and business model of the organisation and none of those interviewed highlighted this being anything other than the right decision.

What was clear from all of our conversations was a shared passion and growing respect for the importance of outdoor arts and art outdoors and its role in developing increased engagement with the arts. Everyone we spoke to cited the ability to draw new audiences – those who do not necessarily see the arts as something for them – as a key reason for working in a different, often more challenging environment.

Outdoor arts challenge perceptions of what culture is and what it means to both artists and audiences. It is encouraging that this has been increasingly recognised by major cultural leaders. The future of the sector perhaps lies in a provocative challenge to producers and artists: utilise new spaces and respond to them by generating work which responds to the environment. For audiences, this can only offer increasingly rich experiences.

Sacred Ways, British Library, 2007
Photo: courtesy of the British Library



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