

## 'Individualising the terrain'. Mapping the impact of the Cultural Olympiad in geological metaphor

Jonathan Adams and Caterina Loriggio

Artist Jon Adams was commissioned in 2009 by the Creative Programmer for London 2012, Caterina Loriggio, to 'creatively' engage with Deaf and disabled artists as part of the South East Cultural Olympiad. The project was also hoping to notice any shifts in attitudes in or towards the Deaf and disabled artist community.

In the guise of a 'field geologist' the artist gathered 'data' and presented in a model using a 'geological metaphor' a series of artefacts and artworks; collected October 2010 - December 2012. A central 'geological' map in digital format is the anticipated main outcome supported by works, books, text and diagram due in the Spring of 2014.

By mapping minute and supposedly insignificant details of each day alongside incidental time recordings, a rich

'geological' language of folds, faults and layers enables the understanding of the Cultural Olympiad activity on a 'micro-scale'. Recorded 'observation' mixed with collecting everyday items as 'fossils' enables reinterpretation through geological annotation and rigour to both tell the artist's 'autobiostratigraphy'<sup>i</sup> and build the map of activity.

The project's unorthodox approach broaches questions of the predeterminations around the measuring of Cultural Olympiad's impact and as an activity provides for refreshed attitudes to inclusion. The project seeks to determine and record, through an individual's engagement, a more lasting change, as the 'Look About' project, as a dialogical process, is not purely passive but actively influences the participation it seeks to map.

## Introduction and context

The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and its finale, the London 2012 Festival, formed a significant and large celebration of arts and culture potential the largest that the UK has ever seen. Spread over four years, it gave everyone a chance to join in the celebrations as London made good on its 'bid promise' to deliver 'Everyone's Games'. It was delivered across the UK by a team of 13 Creative Programmers based in the Arts Council offices of the Nations and English regions. The flexibility of the original London 2012 cultural programme, with its commitment to empowering grass roots activity, enabled each region to determine an appropriate and individual strategic direction. Regional strategy was influenced by the goals of the various bodies supporting the Creative Programmer posts: Department of Culture, Media and Sport, London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, Arts Councils, Regional Development Agencies, Museum Libraries and Archive Council, Screen Agencies and in some regions, English Heritage.

In the South East of England the Cultural Olympiad was seen as an opportunity to celebrate the region, enhancing sense of place for those who live and work there as well as attracting more visitors. Underlining these aims however was one very clear objective, namely to use the London 2012

framework to capacity build the cultural sector, driving more ambitious work and a more knowledgeable and challenging market place. Other regions had their own specific goals, such as to generate cultural tourism or up-skill young people through cultural practice.

The South East Creative Programmer, Caterina Loriggio, devised priorities for the region and built consensus following three months of consultation with regional partners. Four areas of work where there was genuine commitment as well as real potential to develop national profile, expertise and leadership were highlighted; these were: Outdoor Arts, Disability Arts and Culture, Sports Heritage and Higher Education Institutions.

In terms of Disability Arts, inspired by its unique heritage at Stoke Mandeville, birthplace of the Paralympic Movement, and supported by its Legacy Trust UK programme, Accentuate, the South East worked with and commissioned more Deaf and disabled artists than anywhere else in the UK. Around one third of the cultural programme was delivered by or genuinely included Deaf and disabled people. 31 disabled artists and 10 disabled-led organisations underwent leadership training. Three toolkits inspiring accessible practice in street arts, carnival and heritage were produced and over 90 practitioners were trained in how to deliver more accessible

events. Access and integration were key themes for stakeholders' in the South East and the region consequently saw developed inclusive practice in all programming strands which led to a variety of different work in all sectors (cultural organisations, Local Authorities, Universities etc.). Arguably, as a consequence, within the region there has been a genuine shift in attitudes towards disabled people and a climate has been created where disabled artists as well as disabled young people can increasingly more effectively develop contributions to the culture.

As part of this programming emphasis, 'Look About' was one such project. It was commissioned by Creative Programmer, Caterina Loriggio, from artist Jon Adams. The aim of the project was to facilitate the disabled-led artistic work delivered as part of the Cultural Olympiad and through co-funder Accentuate's programme, and if possible to note and deduce any 'cultural shift'. The concept of cultural shift was especially important to Accentuate which consisted of 15 projects across the arts, film, tourism, business, sport and heritage with the aim of promoting the talent of and developing opportunities for Deaf and disabled people. Within such a context it was important that this work was led by a disabled person and preferably a creative one.

Caterina first met Jon in 2008 when his career as an artist was just developing; he had recently been appointed Artist in Residence for Southern Trains through Art Plus (funded by Arts Council England and SEEDA). This was Jon's first professional appointment as a conceptual artist. He had previously worked as a book illustrator following completing a degree in Geology at Kings College London. It became clear to her that Jon's Aspergers status enabled him to see and systemise patterns and connections that were not immediately obvious to the more neurotypical. Sharing a train journey with Jon and seeing his ability to map conversations, landscapes, movement of people etc. it became obvious that Jon could be the one to undertake engaging with an ever growing disabled led artistic programme and to do so in a distinctive way.

Whilst, at the onset of the commission it was not clear what approach would deliver the desired end result, the geological metaphor came about as Jon discovered he could pull together his geological know-how with his artistic ability not to culturally map in a more conventionally understood sense, such as described by Lee and Gilmore (2012) but to create an abstract and innovative conceptual construct.

Although geological knowledge is an asset to artists working with raw materials

(Dove, 1997), 'Look About' conceptualises established geological principles applied to the undertaking of process and the nature of recording and its documentation.

Look About as a new project gained additional funding from Arts Council England who prioritised London 2012 and from the University of Portsmouth where Jon was made Artist in Residence in 2008. With their support and that of ArtSway, Jon and Caterina worked together to create a delivery approach and a series of exhibitions that would build momentum towards the final outcome, a new 'map' of the activity that had taken place in the South East, due in Summer 2014.

## Methodology

"The object of a reconnaissance is to gain an appreciation of an outcrop or area sufficient to know where the best sections are situated, their limits and weathering profiles, the general accessibility and local problems (including permission to enter the land), what tools, recording and photographic equipment are required and whether or not special techniques, such as peel making, are likely to be needed." Goldring, 1999

A field geologist looks at what is there and then derives a story from the evidence collected and presented, all the time aware that the evidence can lead to a range of differing interpretations. Jon quite literally applied geological reconnaissance techniques to 'Look About' keeping multiple field notebooks marking everyday incidents and project observations against the backdrop of 24 hour time instead of marking physical geological and geographical material.

Brodaric, Gahegan and Harrap (2004) set out to show that the interpretation of geological data is an art as well as a science. In this case, the South East Cultural Olympiad and Accentuate's artistic programme became the 'geological' area and within that area a range projects led by disabled artists and disabled-led organisations were exposed as 'geological' sections within the disability arts 'geological' outcrops. Recording of these projects took place through the creation of graphic logs, photography, sound recording and the collection of 'fossils' (ie. souvenirs, see later section).

All the works of the project were measured against a comparable and equally detailed daily recording of Jon's day-to-day life. The innovative experiment thus used the artists 'daily' experiences as a 'reference' against which to plot the wider 'data' thus partly incorporating

or making visible the observer in the recording of the 'observed' in order to potentially map and distinguish between genuine initiated or imposed 'cultural shifts'.

Criteria for inclusion within the mapping focussed on being a Deaf and disabled artist working within the South East Cultural Olympiad or Accentuate programme. It was not critical to the mapping project that the artists had previously been defined as disabled. Work was not judged on artistic quality, scale of work or the profile of the artistic leadership. Because the volume of work generated by disabled artists was so large, a random selection of work from within both the South East Cultural Olympiad and the Accentuate programmes was included in the mapping process, covering visual arts, outdoor work, youth engagement, dance, public art, theatre and carnival. Additionally Jon mapped the project and toolkit launches, 2012 related meetings, Torch relays, opening and closing ceremonies as well as his own work as a disabled artist.

In total Jon recorded over 700 days of data logs whilst interacting with 16 Cultural Olympiad projects. It was important that Jon visited projects repeatedly over a period of time in order to produce multiple recordings which he could then compare. Additionally he produced work

for all four 'London 2012 Open Weekend's<sup>ii</sup> (plus recording the Open Weekend 2011 for 'Look About') and created and led a national Inspire marked project based on his personal experience of dyslexia in 'Dysarticulate', which ran concurrently to 'Look About' and was therefore included within the mapping exercises.

From October 2011 to September 2012 Jon exhibited his work in 19 different shows in galleries across the South East of England and at the British Geological Survey in London.<sup>iii</sup>

In 2013 he is analysing all his collections in order to create a digital map illustrating a complete geological history of the past two years of the Cultural Olympiad. The map and accompanying collections will be exhibited Spring 2014.

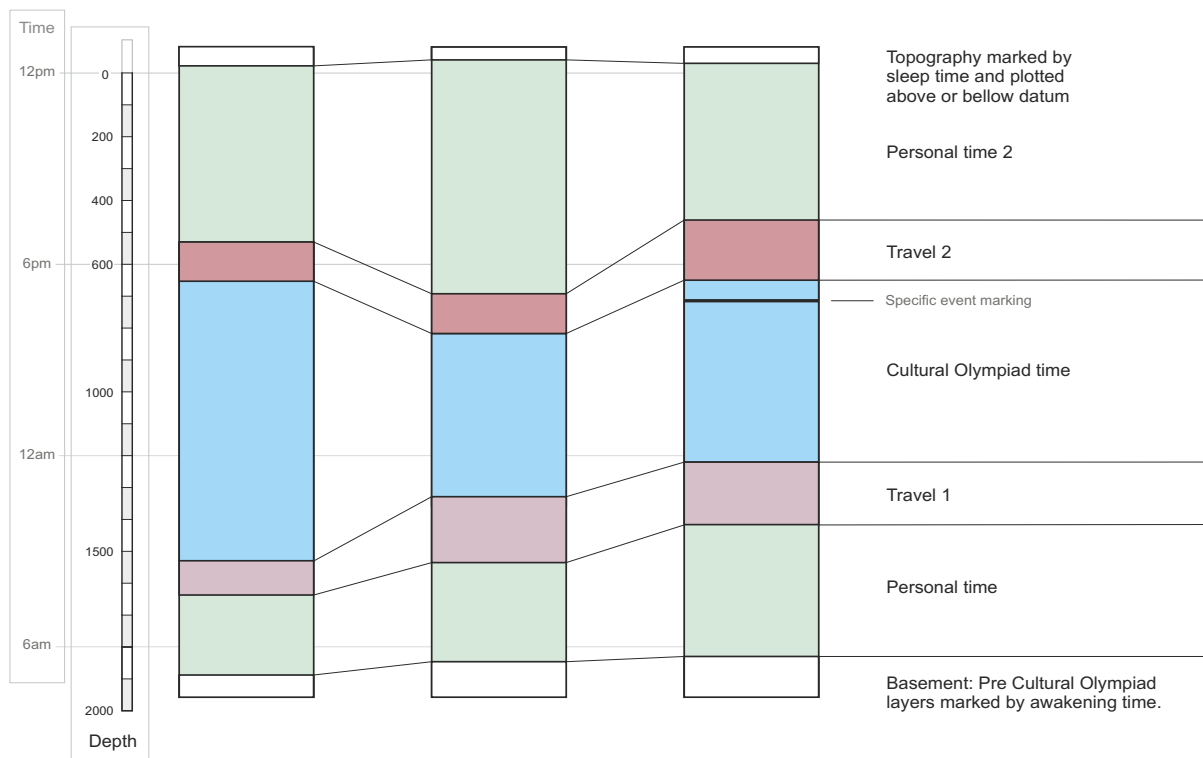
The reader must keep in mind that this approach is only made possible through Jon's latent talent as a highly functioning individual with Aspergers to systemize, observe and digest extreme detail and reassemble this information into new patterns and systems to create an alternative understanding of the whole composition. Research into systemizing by Baron-Cohen, Ashwin, Ashwin, Tavassoli, and Chakrabarti (2009) proposes and reviews evidence that it is this *hyper-systemizing* that predisposes individuals to show such talent.

### Field graphic logs

Each day was mapped as a series of layers or in geological terms, strata within a graphic log, analogous to measuring an exposure or drilling an exploratory well. In this case, the engagement with the '2012' framework projects, alternated with layers of personal detail. Jon used time as a system of measurement relating minutes to metres (one minute equals one metre). This gives an increasingly accurate measure of a section rather than an arbitrary measure judged by Jon's personal opinion. Preconception can also shape geological reasoning (A. Miall; C. Miall, 2000) as well attitudes to disability.

There was no set programme of what was to be included; Jon purely recorded observations on the project events as they were taking place, that were personally of interest to him as well including when he observed repeating patterns. No decision was taken at this point as to what was relevant or important; moreover Jon did not read back any graphic log in order not to influence subsequent work. Seemingly insignificant events, such as the colour of a hat worn by a train passenger, were captured through the same process as life changing moments, such as the death of the artist's mother. One day's graphic log could be up to six pages of A4 recorded as both marks and words on graph paper.

Figure 1. Day log: Observation set against 24 hour clock.



A random selection of these strata logs was then presented in an easily digestible form as authentically drawn geological stratigraphic diagrams illustrating a section of one day's recording<sup>3</sup>. These diagrams were selected for exhibition throughout the region along with the display of 'fossils', digital work and sound recordings. The exhibitions were of course mapped and were also used as collecting points as part of the dialogical process.

Ultimately Jon will condense each graphic log in to one sheet of A4 and through delving into the layers accumulated he will systemise all information looking for correlations and patterns. These patterns will tell the story of the area in question which Jon will transform into the digital map. Njue (2010) proposes that accuracy, detail and precision are the most important qualities when collecting geological data for a map, hence Jon's need to record every waking minute.

### **Photographs and Sound Recordings**

Photographs and sound recordings were not taken in documentary format but instead as creative raw materials, to provide additional details not captured by the graphic log, (as in a geological peel or rock cross section used to determine clues as to the type of rock and environment).

Photographs and sound recordings were then digitally manipulated into art works. These have been displayed during the exhibitions and will add a layer of detail to the final presentation. Some of the patterns of outcrop on the final map will be cross-referenced with photographs collected.

### **Fossils**

Jon's love of collecting added the final element to the reconnaissance stage. Jon would randomly select souvenirs (fossils) of each day from the project events and other of his daily life events; things he found personally interesting or inspiring, again ranging from the seemingly bland to the extraordinary.

It was important for Jon to begin systemising fossils early within the Look About project. This enabled him as the field geologist to make correlations – two things in two different places means that there is a connection. Once Jon started making such connections his hyper-attention to detail enabled him to collate fossils from across the entire region according patterns. Such looked for patterns include hairgrips, food wrapping, train tickets and coffee stirrers. More random fossils include jewellery, a fur hat, children's toys and '2012' memorabilia. Interesting found fragments can become polished into a cultural object.

All naming on the 'mapping' has followed geological principle and guidelines, shadowing 'real' strata and stratigraphic rules for all layers and projects. Fossil names are Latinized, following conventional geological and Binomial nomenclature procedure. In principal names have literally been derived from the projects, visits, items, people and coincidences in addition to anagrams hidden within the project.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Process**

'Look About' thus exposes day-to-day detail of the Cultural Olympiad through the eyes of a disabled artist, which would have otherwise gone unnoticed. As discussed by Christensen (2004) within a musical context, the visibility of the process and participation is fundamental to the construction of the artwork. It is the process of capture and recording, which is itself the artwork, the final outcome of the digital map is purely the documentation of this process.

Using Patterns within the collected histories of each project, Jon searched for correlation to real examples from the Geological record that could be used as an additional analogy to explain how the project processed and was received. He sought to build the metaphoric story of both the bigger picture of where each project sat in the landscape as well as mapping small details

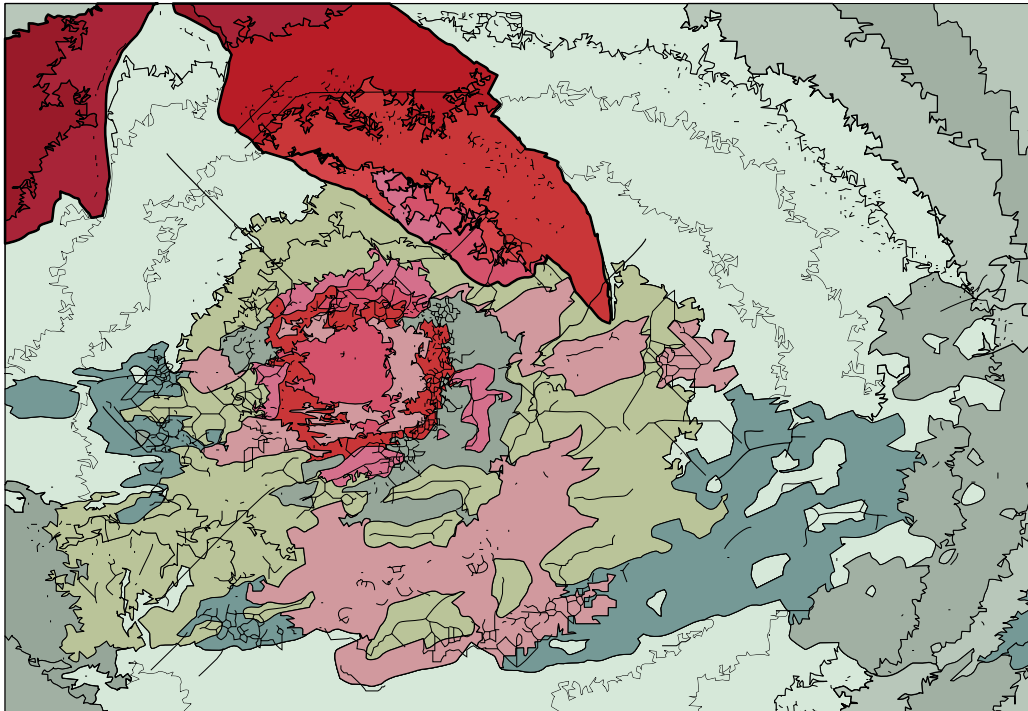
that would later become important. Comparison to the Geological record helped understand the observational process within each project. For example when a project started and progressed well but later became ineffective or developed difficulties it could be compared to examples from the Geological record. The climate changing and its detrimental effect on the biota can be found at many scales and levels.

Analogies of rock formation with each project will be framed within the final published map and stratigraphic story. For example, the productivity of a project was shown as lush coal levels or sea incursions into barren environments, and the failure or disintegration of a project was aligned with desertification of the environment or volcanic and landslide deposits. The addition of tectonic elements such as faults and thrusts in the graphic logs may be construed as negative by their very nature.

Through a two stage process, the original graphic logs were reviewed and condensed into separate but uniform rock layers and hence the construction of the project is charted as progressive layers in the newly derived autobiostratigraphy. From figures below it can be seen how this analogy operates.



Figure 2: Project inferred geology and analogy to real geological record



**Case study one:**  
**Blue Touch Paper Carnival:**

*Correlating a large evolving project from the inside.*

*Key Inclusion Criteria: Deaf and disabled participants + Cultural Olympiad, London 2012 Festival, Accentuate and Inspire Marked. Field style: Participant and observer.*

Three days as workshop Artist within Big Blue Draw: Participant/Guest artist. 9, 11 to 15 April 2011, six output (Horn) making days: Participant/Guest artist. 10 April 2011, Sound making day: Participant. 25 June 2011, Final outcome showing: Observer.

Blue Touch Paper Carnival is a new integrated carnival project run by West Sussex and linked to the Carnival Learning Centre on the Isle of Wight. The project's core mission is making carnival accessible so that everyone can take part. Traditionally disabled people and their families and carers feel left out of Carnival and this project aimed to change this. The project's first outcome produced costumes and artwork for the parade marking the opening of the 2011 Island Games held on the Isle of Wight.<sup>v</sup>

Jon worked as a visual artist on the project so was able to document for 'Look About' as an insider, not just as an observer. The project commenced with The

Big Blue Draw<sup>vi</sup> consisting of three one-day integrated workshops where ideas around 'belonging' and the 'importance of having a voice' were discussed and drawings made to represent these issues. The workshop outcomes were then gathered together and discussed, enabling themes to be correlated and an artwork planned by all four artists ultimately evolving into the final carnival costumes. The central artwork, 'The Horn', was made by Jon over seven consecutive days. Jon's involvement in the final parade was purely as an observer.

This project's value to Look About's stratigraphic process was distinctive by virtue that it enabled the artist to seek correlation between the days of planning and then making. The structure and layout of each day was similar, but the content evolved differently each day towards the conclusion.

### **Case study two: StopGAP Dance Company:**

#### ***Observing the evolution of a commissioned output.<sup>vii</sup>***

*Key Inclusion Criteria: Deaf and disabled participants + Cultural Olympiad, Torch Relay Guildford, Accentuate and Inspire Marked. Field style: Observer between September 2011 and September 2012.*

Spun productions is StopGAP's second outdoor integrated work,

an ambitious piece of dance theatre. The work was performed as previews in 2011 and throughout 2012 as dual showings with a break in-between. At least seven showing days and 12 performances were attended during the preview and main tours, including the final public performance in London outside the National Theatre.

Choreographed to animate public spaces during The Cultural Olympiad, Spun Productions explored imagery, metaphor and sound, reality TV shows, with the central characters mundane life overwritten with unfulfilled dreams of becoming an instant celebrity. Staged in everyday public environments the piece successfully drew in passing audiences who may have never engaged with contemporary dance theatre. This engagement and other peripheral activities were noted in each day's graphic logs.

As the production ran to a soundtrack with fixed phrasing times, it required a careful juxtaposition of the observer's recording, as the performance provided an identical or cyclical layering. The focus became not only noting the thoughtfully layered performance for tiny disturbances or differences but also focussing on the differences before performance, in intervals and events afterwards with the whole suite providing an implied overarching structure. The dual showings of the performance

could be interpreted either as the same layer but geologically faulted to repeat, or as an environmental reoccurrence of the same conditions resulting in an identical stratigraphy.

### **Case study three: Olympic Torch Relay:**

#### ***Cultural Olympiad event showing contrasting day events and locations.<sup>viii</sup>***

*Key Inclusion Criteria: Deaf and disabled participants, Cultural Olympiad and several Inspire Marked projects included. Mapping style: Participant and observer.*

Four days leading Flag making:  
Participant. 15 July 2012 Relay Day 58 Portsmouth: Observer. 16 July 2012 Relay Day 59 Fratton Park, Portsmouth: Participant.<sup>ix</sup>  
20 July 2012 Relay Day 63 Stoke Park, Guildford: Observer.

The torch was hosted at various overnight locations. Portsmouth was one of the biggest celebrations in the country with around 70,000 people crowded on Southsea Common to welcome the Flame. The torch left the next morning after a celebration event at Fratton Park Football ground

where school engagement with the Dysarticulate project was showcased. Both the Torch Relay and the Dysarticulate events were mapped as one entity providing time based links and correlation.

Another overnight celebration event was observed at Guildford. This included other disabled-led projects being field mapped including performances of Stopgaps' Spun Productions. This was the last regional stop before touring London.

Special reference was paid to the fossils gathered on these days which included London 2012 branded items including sponsors' give-aways to be used as zone fossils.<sup>x</sup> The period starting with the Torch Relay through to the Closing Ceremony of the Paralympic Games was zoned using the four changing flavours of one of the sponsor's abundant free confectionary samples.

Playing with the themes of cauldrons and flames has led the artist to adopting a literalistic volcanic metaphor to represent the Torch Relay, consisting of lava flows, agglomerates and water borne ash deposits alternating with other projects such as Dysarticulate sediments on days 58 to 59 and 63.

Figure 3: Detail in geological metaphor from Torch Relay Portsmouth, 15 July 2012

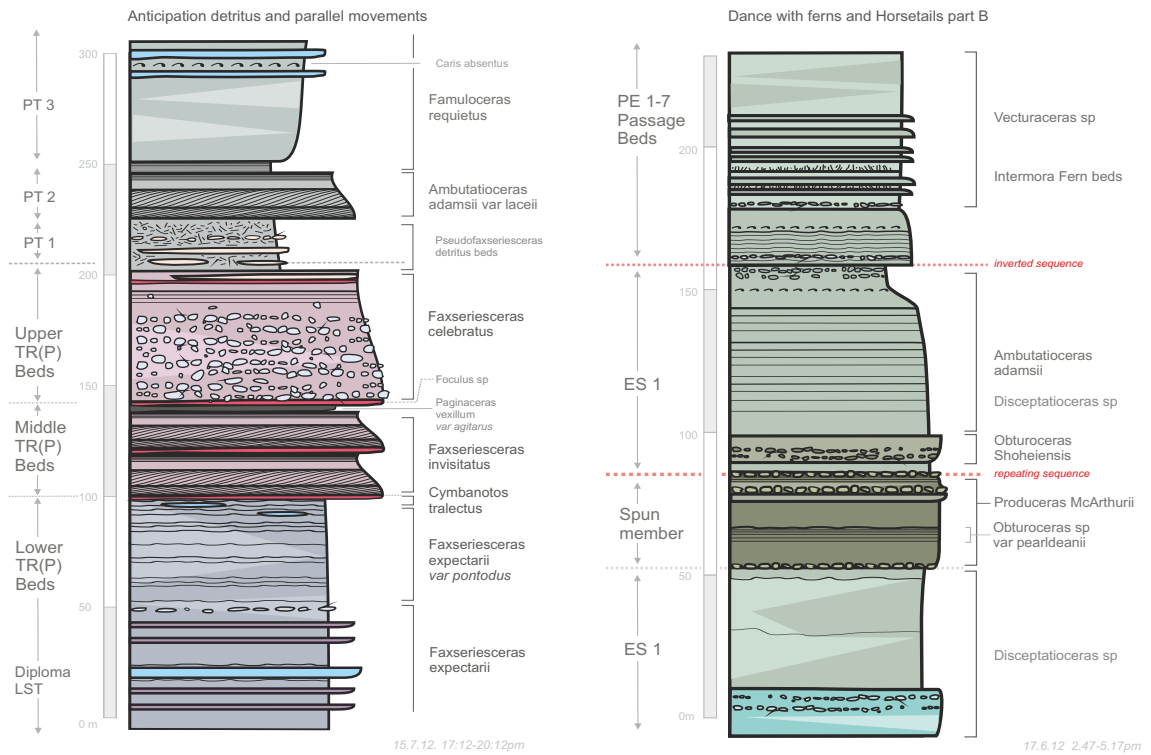
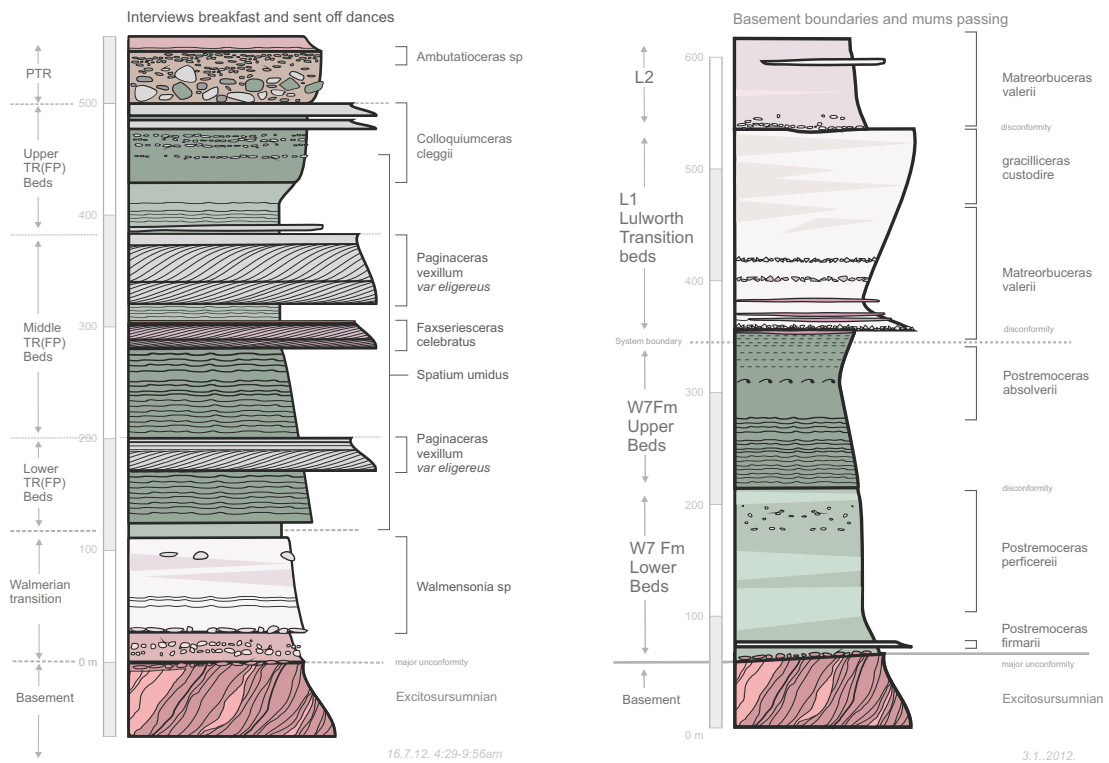


Figure 4: : Detail in geological metaphor from StopGap Spun performance 17 June 2012.



## **Case study four: Closing Ceremony for Paralympic Games:**

### ***Cultural Olympiad event with personal significance:***

*Key Inclusion Criteria: Deaf and disabled participants, Cultural Olympiad. Field style: Observer.*

9 September 2012 Paralympic Closing Ceremony: Observer at Live Site Portsmouth.<sup>xi</sup>

Jon's Olympic experience had started in Portsmouth's Guildhall Square with the Beijing to London Handover events for both Games in 2008; then he created the Dream Birds artwork as part of Live Site based celebrations.<sup>xii</sup> It was important to the artist that the concluding of his Cultural Olympiad experience should also be performed in the same space, in order to complete the cycle. Within geology these larger cycles are represented as completion of 'systems', the topmost layers marking the very end or passing of an era.

## **Conclusion**

Echoing the artist's Jon Adams' own experiences and observation, Pappalepore (2011) found the tangible benefits of a Cultural Olympiad go beyond the visibility and publicity, but allows fresh and innovative new ideas to come to the fore. The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad

provided an excellent opportunity for catalysing cultural shift, but through a documenting experiment with an art science metaphor rather than more traditionally known cultural mapping. For the artist this resulted in a revealing and recognition of his latent systemising skills, a shift not anticipated at the project's onset.

'Look About' has not been purely passive but has actively influenced the change it sought to map. One to one observation and conversation with artists within projects has revealed spontaneous personal shifts in attitudes regarding their positioning. More importantly it has been very interesting to seek, find and note the tensions (faults) and disparities (unconformities) between differing projects, artists, audiences and external sectors. These shifts have been included within the data and will appear on the final map in the semblance of geological rendering. Observation and interpretation can be complex and dependent on the geo-fashions of the time. (A. Miall; C. Miall, 2004).

All 'Look About' materials including the full graphic logs will be available for re-evaluation and reinterpretation as with genuine geological data held in a digital archive. Ray (2012) discusses the challenges of traditional archives needing a mediator between the record and the user which 'Look About' will not require. This collection, and

digital archive, formed from 700 days accumulation may well have additional relevance to both cultural, social and science researchers as and when the United Kingdom hosts another Olympic games.

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## Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> A new term first used within Macpherson (2013), expanding on the term 'stratigraphy', which is the study of ordering, distribution and age (naming) of rock layers.
- <sup>ii</sup> The London 2012 *Open Weekends* were an annual, UK-wide three-day event running from 2008 to 2011, counting down to the start of the London 2012 Olympic Games. It included thousands of projects and aimed to maximise cultural sector involvement in the lead up to 2012.
- <sup>iii</sup> British Geological Survey London office, accessible through the Natural History Museum.
- <sup>iv</sup> For example, Spun member, derived from StopGAP's Spun Productions commission.
- <sup>v</sup> The 'Inter-Island' Games were born in the Isle of Man in 1985, with the intention of bringing together a number of small islands from different parts of the world in friendly competition. The bi-annual Games have high sporting ideals and foster friendship between member Islands.
- <sup>vi</sup> The Big Draw runs annually on 1 - 31 October where anyone can organise an event and is the world's biggest celebration of drawing.
- <sup>vii</sup> National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England who tour integrated dance theatre both nationally and internationally.

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<sup>viii</sup> The Olympic Flame arriving on May 18 2012 in Cornwall, Started Day one at Lands End 19 May and reached the Olympic Stadium after an estimated 8,000 mile journey around the UK 69 days later on the 27 July 2012.

<sup>ix</sup> Includes four days Flag making with school children for Dysarticulate 3.

<sup>x</sup> A fossil that specifically defines a certain time range or zone within a succession of layers or strata, these zones or faunal stages may be named after the particular fossil used.

<sup>xi</sup> Live Sites helped to make the Games a truly national event, each of which became the focus of local celebrations.

<sup>xii</sup> People of all ages wrote their wishes, ambitions or dreams on bird shaped paper templates which were released during the handover ceremony.