

London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and Youth: Inspiring a Generation

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The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad committed to placing young people at its centre, dedicating the majority of its programming to young people and creating new opportunities for young people to be involved, not only as audiences, but as producers and performers of the work. This paper looks at the Cultural Olympiad's engagement with children and young people, examining what kind of projects developed, and whether any common themes emerged in relation to changes in practice and outcomes for both young people and partners.

The research on which this paper is based looked into six case studies:

- *Stories of the World*, a major national project involving over 60 museums, in which young people created their own exhibitions
- *Creative Jobs Programme*, a programme for unemployed young people which created 40 traineeships in cultural organisations across London
- *Blaze*, a youth led creative programme based in Lancashire, which resulted in young people delivering their own two-day festival
- *Next Generation*, National Portrait Gallery's development project for young artists linked to the annual BP Portrait Awards
- *The Itch of the Golden Nit*, a partnership between Tate, BBC and Aardman Animation, in which children created their own feature film



Somewhere to, photo by M. Sethi

- *Big Concert*, one of the opening events of the London 2012 Festival, which saw children from the Big Noise Orchestra in Raploch perform with Gustavo Dudamel and the Simon Bolivar Orchestra.

The case studies were based on a documentary review of application forms, evaluation reports and reports to funders from each project; face-to-face and telephone interviews with project managers; and in some cases through focus groups and telephone interviews with participating young people.

Young People and the Cultural Olympiad

Children and young people were enabled to participate in a wide range of creative activities under the umbrella of the Cultural Olympiad. A variety of approaches were taken to programming for children and young people across the country. There were events attractive to children and young people staged across the UK, from children's opera at Belfast Zoo (*Noye's Fludde*) to BBC's *Hackney Weekend 2012*, which was the UK's largest ticketed free music event, broadcast live across BBC Three and Radio One. Within the *Unlimited* programme, a short film and a new play were commissioned, both written to be accessible to deaf and disabled children. Many events across the

Cultural Olympiad and throughout the London 2012 Festival appealed to people of all ages, including children and young people.

Beyond the programming of accessible events within the Cultural Olympiad, a large number of projects involved children and young people as learners, collaborators and creators. Many of the strands of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival had learning and engagement programmes running alongside, such as the World Shakespeare Festival's *Shakespeare Challenge*, which was linked to Arts Award. The Reading Agency ran *Story Lab Summer Reading Challenge* in 2012, involving 750,000 children and 98% of UK libraries. Children were encouraged to read at least six books over the summer holidays, and also participated in a diverse range of events including storytelling and crafts. *Film Nation Shorts* offered young people aged 14 to 25 the opportunity to make their own short films, and submit them in competition, with the winners being shown at a final awards ceremony at BFI Southbank. *Somewhereto_* was a national programme which linked creative young people with the spaces they needed to make their ideas happen.

In the North East, the Legacy Trust UK-funded regional

programme was strategically focused on young people, investing over £1 million in 15 projects with aims to bring about a shift in the relationship between young people and the region's cultural institutions. Across the rest of the country, all of the regions included young people in their Legacy Trust UK funded programming. For example in the South West there was a focus on young people volunteering, London ran a dance programme within the capital's schools, and East Midlands staged *World Event Young Artists*, a four day festival which brought together 1,000 young international artists for a ten-day event in Nottingham.

All of the projects case studied here aimed to involve young people actively in developing their own creative work, and provided platforms for them to show it to others, whether online or at live performances, exhibitions and events. Most experimented with social media as a tool for planning and communication, and as a marketing tool.

Children's projects were largely concerned with developing new creative skills (such as animation or music) and sharing them with others. When projects focused on young people (typically aged 14 and over) rather than children, there was an emphasis on developing young people as leaders of their own projects, and projects were framed as an equal

collaboration between young people and cultural organisations. Progression routes were developed and in some cases paid work opportunities were created within the projects.

Key Themes

Whilst approaches to project delivery varied widely across the case study cohort, the research has identified some key ways of working which featured in a number of the projects. These were:

- Creativity and Showcases
- Co-production
- International projects
- Digital technologies
- Leadership development
- Paid work and progression
- Hard-to-reach young people

Creativity and Showcases

All of the projects placed a strong emphasis on children and young people developing their own high quality creative work and then sharing it with others, whether through live events and exhibitions or online.

Interviewees highlighted as a significant feature the fact that children and young people were able to learn and develop their skills through contact with professional artists. Children and young people were able to make work to a very high standard,

which was then showcased on high profile platforms, something which would not have been possible without the impetus and funding provided by the Cultural Olympiad.

For example *Big Concert*, which launched the London 2012 Festival in Scotland, was televised live on BBC Four and shown internationally, and featured extensively in the broadcast and print media. *The Itch of the Golden Nit* had a cinematic release and Leicester Square premiere, as well as being shown on CBBC, and winning a number of awards, including a Children's BAFTA for Interactive.

Co-production

A key feature of many projects was the development of teams of young people, often described by project managers as 'co-producers' or 'co-curators', who worked alongside arts organisations, museums and heritage venues to create events and exhibitions. *Stories of the World* museums commonly took this approach, as did *Blaze*. This approach offered young people intensive opportunities to build skills in teamworking, to understand how cultural organisations work, and to learn about the practicalities of project management. This way of working resulted in strong impacts for both the young people and the organisations.

Young people became more confident, more independent and developed skills and knowledge. Organisations gained valuable insight into how to make their work more attractive to new audiences, were open to working in new ways, and in some cases have changed their policies and practices in response.

International projects

A number of projects developed international exchanges and other collaborations. The entire *Stories of the World* project was themed around objects from around the world in British museum collections, and thus most projects involved young people in research and learning about other cultures. For example in Brighton Museum, a project looking at football culture worked with young people in Brighton and Mali. *Stories of the World* also engaged young people from 'source communities', living in the UK but with personal connections to some of the objects under consideration. The children who took part in *Big Concert* performed with musicians from the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, developing strong ties which may lead to further collaboration.

Two case studies explore the benefits of international residencies. Members of *Blaze's* festival production team volunteered at Trastock, a well

established youth led festival in Sweden, which helped them to think about the practicalities of running their own event. Young people from Luton travelled to Pakistan to learn more about the culture of truck art.

Interviewees described these international contacts as having a profound impact on participating young people, some of whom had a very limited outlook and little previous experience of travel.

Digital technologies

Tate's film project, developed in partnership with the BBC and Aardman Animations, made extensive use of digital creative technology, and introduced children to a range of ways to draw online, and learn animation techniques through their workshop programme. They also created learning resources to support teachers to use digital creative software at school. The hub of the project was an online forum for children, so that any child in the UK could take part in the project by joining online and posting their pictures to the website. Moderated forums enabled children to have online conversations with each other. However in other projects, staff reported that young people were ambivalent about the use of technology. Museum staff talked about their surprise that young curators were reluctant to use computer based interactives on

gallery and were more interested in simpler, hands-on approaches to interpretation.

The research found that projects made varying use of digital technologies, as tools for project management, communication and marketing. Commonly, Facebook was used to communicate with project participants, while Twitter feeds were used to reach audiences and to create networks of stakeholders. Most projects established a webpage or stand-alone website, but often they were not viewed or updated, and Facebook and Twitter enabled projects to become much more dynamic and responsive online. Blaze created a team of bloggers who created an online platform to share content on Facebook, Twitter and You Tube, livestreamed events, and trained other young people in filming and blogging. For some organisations, this was the first time that they had created separate websites or Twitter feeds for individual projects. There was a common trend towards using video clips online instead of text.

Interviewees highlighted that working with new technologies was a learning curve, and in longer-term projects the pace of change meant that their use of technology was constantly evolving, for example in response to the increased affordability of smartphones.

Leadership development

Projects working with young people aged between 14 and 25 focused on developing young people as leaders, providing a structure for projects, and a programme of training and support, so that they could then take responsibility for shaping the direction of their project and making decisions. In Leeds Museum, young people were responsible for curating the venue's summer exhibition, which explored the origins of objects in the museum's collection and how they had reached Yorkshire. This involved them in considering a range of sensitive ethical issues. Similarly, the Geffrye Museum in London developed a youth panel which worked alongside curatorial and other staff to create an exhibition themed around objects found in the home and their international connections. Blaze offered young people a range of ways to take responsibility in their projects, including shortlisting and interviewing freelance artists and the evaluation consultants.

This had considerable benefits for young people, building their confidence, a wide range of practical skills, and a sense of achievement. Some contrasted the experience positively with the way they are taught at school or college. One practical outcome of this approach was that they could use their experience in applying for university or for jobs.

For organisations, the experience of developing a youth-led approach differed widely depending on the existing culture. Some were starting from scratch, having done no previous youth work, others had done previous one-off projects but using a very different model of participation. For many organisations, enabling genuinely youth-led approaches necessitated a change in management culture, and some projects offered more responsibility to young people than others. This practice has been embedded to varying degrees. The Geffrye Museum stands out as having been particularly successful, and is involving young consultants extensively in the development of a major HLF capital bid.

Paid work and progression

Creative Jobs Programme, led by the Royal Opera House and funded by a consortium of Legacy Trust UK, ACE, and BP, created 40 six month traineeships in cultural organisations across London. The roles ranged widely and trainees were placed in departments including front of house, retail, marketing and design. The programme included masterclasses and a project to enable the trainees to get together as a cohort, with some completing Arts Award alongside their job role. Other projects developed paid

roles as progression opportunities for project participants. In Lancashire, *Blaze* developed the *Ignite* programme, which offered seven hour a week 'alternative Saturday jobs' in cultural organisations across the county, alongside a mentoring and training programme. *Stories of the World* museums varied widely in their approach. The Geffrye paid some young people from their Youth Access Panel to carry out further research and planning, and employed a trainee through the Creative Jobs Programme to work specifically on *Stories of the World*. London Transport Museum also paid young people to be consultants, and is continuing with this model.

Those projects that tried out paid work for young people found that young people responded well to the extra sense of responsibility which came with being paid. The drop-out rate for paid placements was very low. Focus groups with trainees found that the roles boosted the self-esteem and confidence of young people, making them more aware of how to behave in a workplace and improving their skills. They felt more confident that they could perform well in future interview situations.

Hard-to-reach young people

The projects took a variety of approaches to defining and

working with hard-to-reach young people.

The *Stories of the World* programme aimed to work with hard-to-reach young people, with individual museums choosing how to define them depending on their local circumstances. This was also the approach taken by Tate, which left individual partners to decide how best to target local activities.

Some organisations took the view that because young people were under-represented in their audience, all young people were by definition hard to reach. Others sought out partners who could link them with young people facing specific challenges, for example Norwich Castle worked with looked-after children and young people on their *Stories of the World* project, and Brighton Museum developed a project with young people experiencing mental health problems.

Across all of the projects, there was a broad agreement that young people were developing content not just for other young people but for everyone. *Blaze Festival* reached a very broad family audience. Museum exhibitions delivered through *Stories of the World* also were designed to appeal to all visitors. At museums in particular, there was a view that it was not realistic to expect *Stories of the World* to make a significant shift

in the makeup of the audience, especially where the museum charged entry. However some interviewees felt that there had been an upturn in young people visiting the *Stories of the World* exhibitions, possibly because their friends had been involved and there was a word-of-mouth effect.

The Cultural Olympiad

The research identified findings related to the projects being situated within the Cultural Olympiad. These were:

- The Olympic brand was viewed positively by many young people, and in the early stages of some projects it helped to attract participants. Young people assumed that projects connected to the Olympics would be big, high quality and high status, and wanted to get involved. This contrasted with the findings from case study research looking at projects with deaf and disabled people, where project managers had to address concerns from disabled audiences about Olympic and Paralympic values and the way disabled people would be represented through the Games.
- The Cultural Olympiad, the sense that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and that it was time-limited, acted as a powerful driver for bringing partners together, and helped maintain momentum in longer projects as they built towards 2012.
- Participation in the Cultural Olympiad, and the availability of funding, enabled projects to be creatively innovative and ambitious as there was a general expectation that Cultural Olympiad programming would involve a departure from organisations' standard practice.
- Project managers found it difficult to think and plan strategically because of the complex funding and partnership arrangements set up to deliver their projects, and the ongoing restructuring and funding cuts happening in many partner organisations. The need to report different information to multiple funders, and the negotiations around how partners should be credited and acknowledged given the strict (and changing) branding requirements associated with the Cultural Olympiad, were felt to be time-consuming and stressful.

Legacies and lessons learned

Through the research process, a number of shared lessons emerged in relation to the development of excellence in youth arts programming. These ranged from the strategic to the practical. Interviewees talked about the importance of consultation with young people and involving them in project planning. This helped to address issues such as the timing of projects around exams and

holidays, transport arrangements and the provision of expenses. Many interviews and project evaluations made reference to the importance of keeping young people fed in order to keep them engaged. Direct discussion with young people had helped to deal with tensions within their groups – for example two interviewees made reference to the wide age range of their project teams, with young graduates working on an equal basis alongside those who hadn't yet done their GCSEs.

In established organisations which had chosen to run projects with young people, there was a general agreement that in order to achieve excellence, the projects had to be delivered as part of a strategic programme of organisational change. Several organisations, notably the museums, were using their Cultural Olympiad youth projects as a way of testing and improving their core visitor offer and training staff in new, more collaborative ways of working with communities.

Those projects which had involved young people as 'co-producers' identified that developing youth-led approaches was a very steep learning curve for all of their staff. There was most impact and learning when young people worked directly with curators, designers, marketing and communications and web teams, rather than all contact being buffered by

learning and participation staff. However this required a significant cultural shift which had to have buy-in at every level including the senior management team if it was to work successfully. Freelance artists and creatives brought into projects also had to be comfortable with this approach.

The interviews also highlighted the importance of partnership working, which enabled projects to draw on a wider range of professional expertise and skills, and increased opportunities for young people. For example free runners with *Blaze* were able to perform at 10 Downing Street through a connection between *Blaze* and *Somewhereto_*. All of the projects were developed through partnership working at local, national and sometimes international level, and while this complicated management processes for staff, there was a general acknowledgement that it had enhanced the experience for young people. There were lessons learned around the need for clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each partner, and for agreements to be drawn up in advance, but some project managers also stressed that in long projects, there was a need for flexibility in partnership agreements.

The projects identified the importance of expecting high quality from young people and trusting them to deliver, as they

rose to meet the challenge when they felt a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for their projects. The opportunity to work with professional artists was also highlighted as a significant factor in pushing young people to achieve excellence.

A number of organisations highlighted the importance of the right staff to lead work with young people, and recommended involving young people in selection processes. There were mixed feelings about the value of mentoring. While all of the projects which included mentoring as a development tool could point to examples of relationships between young people and mentors working very well, there were also many mentoring relationships which had petered out, or difficulty in matching young people to appropriate mentors. Provision of training and team building activities was generally considered to be more valuable, especially those which involved a residential stay or intensive process.

Several of the projects are drawing up toolkits and reports as they believe there is a value in disseminating their practice and evaluation findings to others.

Most project managers interviewed felt that it was far too early to assess the legacy of their projects for participating children

and young people. They saw the ultimate aim of their projects as the creation of the next generation of artists and cultural producers, and saw legacy as something that would emerge over the next ten or even twenty years, as young people moved on from their first experiences of performing, curating or creating, to the establishment of careers in the arts. They felt that the value of their projects also lay in the creation of a new generation of enthusiasts for culture, and in the development of young people's confidence, and skills in communication, negotiation, teamworking and attitudes to work. Some could point to examples of young people becoming more entrepreneurial, developing their own constituted groups or small businesses as a next step from the end of their projects.

They also defined legacy in terms of changes to their own organisations' practice, and to the wider cultural sector. Networking and partnerships between arts organisations had been strengthened, and arts organisations had much improved links to other agencies working with young people, such as local authority youth services, Job Centres and FE colleges. Organisations had changed their policies as a result of the learning from their Cultural Olympiad youth projects, and in some cases were restructuring staff teams to embed new ways of working.

Each of the case study organisations was actively planning for the continuation of their work with children and young people. Some had successfully identified funds to go forward, such as National Portrait Gallery, while others were integrating young people into their core activity, for example London Transport Museum. *Blaze* is going through a transitional phase, with the support of its current partners, with the longer-term aim of creating an independent youth-led cultural organisation in Lancashire.

Selected case studies

The Big Concert

Since 2008, Sistema Scotland has been ‘transforming lives through music’ in the community of Raploch in Stirling. Children from across the community have participated in an immersive musical education programme, which involves their families and the wider community. In June 2012, the Simon Bolivar Orchestra, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, visited Raploch to perform an open air concert, with some of the programme performed alongside 116 children from Raploch’s Big Noise Orchestra, launching the London 2012 Festival. Such an event was unprecedented in the history of the Raploch estate,

and the concert was preceded by an extensive community outreach programme. Evidence from audience evaluation of the concert suggests the *Big Concert* has had a strong impact on local pride and confidence, and on external perceptions of the community, which may have a significant impact on the life chances and aspirations of local children.

The El Sistema approach, pioneered in Venezuela, teaches music through immersion, offering music education for children from a very young age, providing daily tuition and including children in an orchestra from the start so that they can learn together. The system is designed to create social change in the wider community, as well as for individual young people. There are now a growing number of music education programmes worldwide influenced by El Sistema, including in the UK, USA and Portugal. In Raploch, a community in which many residents face social and economic disadvantage, the Big Noise project has been established by Sistema Scotland and aims to transform children’s lives through music and empower the community. The project focuses on the community’s primary schools, but also works with pre-school children and adults living locally. Big Noise Raploch has created a range of musical ensembles, which come together regularly as

the Big Noise symphony orchestra. This was the first project in the UK based on El Sistema. There are close links between Sistema Scotland and El Sistema in Venezuela, and Gustavo Dudamel is a patron of Sistema Scotland.



The Big Concert, photo by Marshall Marcus

The *Big Concert* was developed in response to the opportunity provided by the Cultural Olympiad to create once-in-a-lifetime events. Rehearsing alongside the Simon Bolivar Orchestra, and performing with their hero Gustavo Dudamel, was a huge opportunity for the participating children, and potentially a significant turning point for Raploch. The concert was held at a specially constructed venue on an empty site in Raploch. It was broadcast live all over the UK on BBC4, on BBC Radio Scotland, and at Live Sites across the UK, and was the subject of a separate documentary. There was an audience of 7,000 for the event itself, around 2,000 of whom were local residents who had been given free tickets. An audience survey carried out by Sistema

Scotland indicated that 23% of audience members attend classical concerts once a year or less, suggesting that the event had succeeded in reaching a new audience for classical music. The Simon Bolivar Orchestra was 'in residence' in Raploch for a number of days before the concert, and every child in the community had the opportunity to watch them rehearse.

Sistema Scotland recognised the potential significance of such a high profile event happening in Raploch, and placing the community in the national spotlight. They developed an extensive outreach and communication strategy to build excitement and generate interest locally, including poster campaigns and door-to-door visits. A wide range of events for Raploch residents took place ahead of the concert, from a 'mini Olympics' themed community day to a 'practice-a-thon' for orchestra members. The *Big Concert* was a unique opportunity to turn around public perceptions of Raploch, and to establish its reputation as a place people come to for music. The organisers were keen to ensure that the community was represented positively in media coverage, and that stories focused on the positive – how music and regeneration were driving change – rather than on the negative, a strategy which was very successful.

This was a project that emerged through discussion between LOCOG, Sistema Scotland and Gustavo Dudamel, and would have been very unlikely to have happened without the Cultural Olympiad, although the delivery of some sort of exchange project with Venezuela had long been an aspiration for Sistema Scotland. It was placed very prominently, as one of the London 2012 Festival's opening events, because it encapsulated many of the key messages about the Cultural Olympiad and the Games – the celebration of world class excellence and the opportunity for young people to develop their skills through mentoring by world class artists and showcase their creativity and talent on a national and international stage. The event was also significant as its location signalled clearly that the London 2012 Festival was a UK wide celebration. Major funders Creative Scotland and Event Scotland committed to the project once support from LOCOG had been secured.

While interest in the Simon Bolivar Orchestra is high in the UK, it seems clear that the level of national media coverage, particularly on television, was directly linked to the positioning of the concert as an opening event for the London 2012 Festival. While this did not drive ticket sales, the online and TV audience certainly will have included a large number of people who have been introduced to El Sistema as

a result of the Cultural Olympiad, and whose first introduction to Raploch has been related to its reputation as a centre of musical excellence.

Organisers are confident from the formal and informal feedback they have received that the event created huge pride, excitement and confidence amongst local residents. This has the potential to create a longer-lasting legacy of continuing engagement with music, with all of the positive personal and social impacts that can achieve. Since the concert, Big Noise Raploch have delivered an intensive four week summer school, and are looking at how to develop some of the orchestra members as young leaders in their community.

The other significant legacy of the Big Concert may lie in the organisational development process which Sistema Scotland has undertaken in order to deliver such a big event, and the range of partnerships which are now in place at a national and international level. Relationships with local, national and international music partners are now firmly established and tested through project delivery. The Venezuelan Percussion Ensemble visited Stirling in October 2012, the only UK date on their European tour. There is also a strong likelihood that Sistema Scotland will be able to build on the success of the *Big Concert* to expand their work to other

communities. Funding has now been secured for a new Big Noise programme in Govan Hill, Glasgow.

Blaze

***Blaze* is a youth-led cultural programme for Lancashire, Blackpool and the Fylde Coast which forms part of WE PLAY, the North West Cultural Legacy Programme for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The project has supported young people aged 13-19 to become creative producers, commissioning and collaborating with artists to develop their own events. *Blaze* has created progression routes for young people, starting with participation in local youth arts projects and leading to paid work placement opportunities. This year, *Blaze* young producers from all over the North West region came together to create *Blaze Festival*, a celebration of urban art, music and performance delivered over two days at WE PLAY Expo in Preston. The project has had a significant impact on the young producers, providing an insight into careers in the creative industries and supporting them to become more confident and independent as they prepare for transitions to work, training or further education.**

Blaze was established as a partnership between Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council and the Creative

Lancashire economic development agency, in order to create a Lancashire-wide response to the cultural opportunity of the Olympic Games. They chose to focus on developing creative opportunities for young people, working in partnership with a host of youth clubs, youth theatres and larger arts organisations across the county. It was the intention from the start of the project that young people would be encouraged and supported to take on a leadership role in the delivery of cultural events and activities for the wider community, and over three summers of active delivery, *Blaze* has tested a variety of approaches and developed a model for developing young people as cultural leaders.



The Boom Bike Band in Burnley, photo by Brian Slater

Early activity was themed around the meeting of arts and sport, and in some cases this thematic link remained significant throughout. Projects included:

- **Boom Bike**, creation of a pedal bike with a sound system, which developed into the Boom Bike Big Band, offering young musicians their first paid gigs
- **Urban Culture Jam**, a celebration of free running, BMXs, skateboarding, urban art and music, based in the towns of Clayton-le-Moors and Accrington. Participants have now established a social enterprise, leading their own free running workshops.
- **360 Challenge**, a bike ride around Lancashire with a tie-in programme of arts events and creative activities (2011)
- **The Big Game** (2010 and 2011) in Nelson, a project which blended physical games and performance, with its own creative take on the opening and closing ceremony.

The trajectory of the project, building towards delivery of a showcase festival in 2012, was created of necessity because of the fixed deadline of the Olympic Games, and according to North West Cultural Programmer Debbi Lander, enabled *Blaze* 'to do in three years what otherwise would have taken seven'. The situation of *Blaze* within the Cultural Olympiad gave the project a status which attracted other partners, and ensured that the project withstood the impact of funding cuts and restructuring in youth and cultural services. Young people reported that the link between *Blaze* and the

Olympic Games made them excited and keen to be involved at the start, because they associated the games with high quality and aspiration. Being part of a wider cultural programme also drove audiences towards the *Blaze Festival*.

Blaze started by working with young people to deliver local events in their own communities. These young producers were supported to develop their own concepts and recruit artists they wanted to work with, leading to the delivery of a series of community events in 2010, and the first meetings of the *Blaze* Forum, made up of young people who had taken an active role in local projects. Building on this in 2011, young producers developed a larger scale and more ambitious series of events, and started to document the project using social media, posting to Facebook, Twitter and You Tube regularly and blogging from *Blaze* events. In 2012, *Blaze* ran local projects again in preparation for *Blaze Festival*, a youth led cultural festival which took place at the WE PLAY Expo.

The outcomes for young people, identified through an evaluation process which has run since 2010, have been defined in terms of development of confidence, becoming more independent, broadening young people's horizons in terms of opportunities to travel and experience culture across the

whole region and beyond, enhanced awareness of careers in the creative sector, and practical experience. Young producers felt that *Blaze* would give them an edge and make them stand out when applying for university places or work.

These outcomes can be attributed to *Blaze's* approach to making sure that activity was truly youth-led:

- *Blaze* paid attention to the development of progression routes through the project over time, and steadily increased the amount of responsibility given to young producers. There was a diverse range of roles and activities for young producers, including booking performers, marketing design and distribution, event management, artist liaison and front of house stewarding.
- Festival producers were recruited through a competitive process, and were given real responsibility for decision making and delivery of the festival at *WE PLAY Expo*, supported by a training and mentoring programme.
- *Blaze* established *Ignite*, a series of 'alternative Saturday jobs': paid work placements in cultural organisations and creative businesses across Lancashire, again supported by a training and mentoring programme.

- Ongoing Forum events allowed young producers to feel involved and consulted about the wider *Blaze* programme.
- The *Blaze Bloggers* strand of activity offered young producers an uncensored opportunity to comment and feed back about the project and control the way it was represented to the public.
- Young people helped recruit artists, other creatives and the evaluation team.

The *Blaze* experience has demonstrated the benefits of allowing young people to take the lead. However, the extent to which young people were able to develop and lead their own projects varied widely from project to project depending on the circumstances and abilities of individual young people and the groups. One of the key learning points from *Blaze* is the importance of being flexible enough to start at a point the group is comfortable with and move them towards more independence and responsibility.

Active plans are now being developed for the future of *Blaze*, which has strong political backing across Lancashire. While it is too early to say how *Blaze* will move forward post-Games, the ambition is to continue to deliver a youth-led arts festival annually in Lancashire, with linked local projects offering an entry point for younger

participants, and to continue to offer *Ignite* paid work experience placements. In the longer term, there is an ambition to see *Blaze* develop into an independent, youth-led cultural organisation for Lancashire.

BP Portrait Award: Next Generation

The National Portrait Gallery has been running an annual portraiture competition since 1979. *Next Generation* took the competition as a starting point, and built a project around it with the aim of engaging young people with portraiture and providing them with very high quality opportunities to develop their own artistic talent through a series of workshops and summer schools. Delivering this project has enabled the National Portrait Gallery to enhance its existing programme for young people, building on what had already been successfully tried and tested, and successfully building networks in East London through partnership working with the host boroughs. The project has had demonstrable positive outcomes for the young participants, notably an improvement in creative skills and confidence, and the learning management team at the gallery have been able to embed the project into future programming.

This project emerged from the National Portrait Gallery's long-standing wish to develop youth

engagement activity connected with the BP Portrait Awards. The gallery felt that the Cultural Olympiad was a good fit with the BP Portrait Awards. The competitive nature of the awards meant that they could make a clear thematic connection between the training and dedication needed to win at sport, and the constant practice required to reach a personal best in artistic practice. BP had a strong interest in *Next Generation* as the sponsor of the Portrait Awards and a Premier Partner of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival.



BP Portrait Award: Next Generation

Next Generation was essentially an outreach project, designed to encourage young people to try portraiture, and to reach young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the Host boroughs who would not ordinarily visit the gallery, or sign up for extra-curricular activities there. Engagement with the Host boroughs was at times

very difficult, with the project manager citing the difficulty of maintaining contacts when staff were moving around regularly, and the huge amount of other projects which were also recruiting participants from local communities. However they were able to increase the level of participation by young people in Host boroughs year on year through an intensive marketing and communications campaign which worked closely with schools and youth organisations in East London.



BP Portrait Award: Next Generation,
photo by Anthony Luvera © National
Portrait Gallery

The project consisted of annual taster workshops and summer school events, held in London and in Scotland. There was a strong emphasis on excellence, as the project sought to support and develop very talented young artists. The gallery recruited workshop leaders whose work had previously been exhibited in the Portrait Awards, to enable

young people to find out about professional artistic practice.

The project management team sought to link to the Games wherever possible. Some events were programmed to tie in with *Open Weekend*. Guest Olympian and Paralympian athletes were used as models during the summer schools, and gave inspiring talks about their sporting experiences which reinforced messages about the importance of consistent practice in achieving excellence. The project manager considers that this helped young people to understand the thematic link with the Olympics, as the link with London 2012 did not appear to have been a factor in young people's decisions to participate in the project.

Running alongside the events programme, the gallery recruited members of their youth forum to a *Next Generation Youth Crew*. These young people acted as a sounding board for the development of the project, for example advising on branding design, and took on a specific role in documenting the project and sharing it online. They recorded video interviews with participants at the summer schools, and created podcasts about competition entries which were filmed on gallery. Interim evaluation carried out by the gallery in 2011 suggests that

the project was successfully meeting its objectives, inspiring young people to make art, improving their skills, increasing their confidence, and building enthusiastic young audiences for the gallery. Around six or seven summer school attendees have since submitted work to the main competition, and several summer school attendees have joined the Youth Forum and attended other gallery events.

The project built on tried-and-tested approaches to learning at National Portrait Gallery, but did lead to the implementation of new approaches, particularly in relation to communications, and has proved to be a catalyst for change. For the first time, a learning project has been given prominent display space in the main gallery, rather than in dedicated education spaces. A former slide gallery has now been re-purposed as an editing suite.

Project staff implemented a thorough communications campaign to reach their target audience of young people. This included lots of face-to-face networking and provision of flyers and written marketing material to appropriate organisations and contacts in the Host boroughs. For the first time, the gallery provided a project with its own twitter feed and web microsite, allowing them to communicate in a less corporate style and to involve young people

in design decisions. This has allowed young people to take control of the website and populate it with content, including portraits by young people which have been uploaded to the site, as well as the podcasts and other content developed by the Youth Crew. As a result of this experimentation, there is now a dedicated post within the learning team for the development of digital participation.

The *Next Generation* project is clearly viewed as a success by the National Portrait Gallery, and by the sponsors BP, who have committed funding for an additional five years of youth engagement work alongside the Portrait Awards. The gallery will use this to continue with the most successful elements of the project: the digital content development, taster session and summer school structure, and use of competition winning artists to lead workshops. The intention is to build on this foundation, in particular by developing an artists' network, building on some recent pilot work with schools, and widening out the marketing and outreach strategy to other boroughs.

Tate Movie

In 2011, Tate premiered a film, *The Itch of the Golden Nit*. The film was made by children across the country between 5 and 13 years old, who had written the script, developed characters and storylines, drawn assets and participated in their animation, performed the score, and made the sound effects. This was the culmination of a partnership project between some of Britain's highest profile cultural brands: led by Tate with Aardman Animations, BBC and creative agency Fallon. The project was one of Legacy Trust UK's national programmes, and also secured sponsorship from BP. The project had significant impacts on young people, strengthening their confidence in their own creative aptitude, introducing them to new technical skills, and enthusing them about careers in animation. It has also built the confidence of educators to engage with creative technologies. At the heart of the project was a commitment to making it accessible to the maximum number of children, on TV, online, and through direct face-to-face engagement across the UK. The project won a BAFTA in the interactive category of the 2011 British Academy Children's Awards.

The concept of using children's drawings as the basis for animation is not new. There are a number of animated TV

programmes for young children which are based on images made by children. However the *Tate Movie* project is notable for the scale of its ambition, with 1,897 children making contributions which were included in the final film.



The Itch of the Golden Nit

The project involved all children who wished to participate, developing a number of ways of reaching and engaging children. Working with partner galleries across the country, Tate ran workshops to create images and animation for the movie. They also went into primary schools, and developed a teacher resource pack which was distributed to 30,000 schools so that teachers and pupils could work on the project independently. A 'truck tour' went to a wide variety of locations, including rural areas with no local galleries. A large truck was fitted out as an animation studio, with areas for drawing, a technical suite for animation, and a recording studio for dialogue and sound effects. Children experienced drawing and animation workshops on the

truck. Over 9,000 children participated in these hands-on workshops.

At the heart of the project, a specially designed website was created to engage children who could not directly access the workshops. This was an interface between the film's professional production team and the children, used by the production team to request assets, content and feedback, and by children to upload their images and ideas. It was key to the success of the website that it enabled children to communicate with each other through forums, which were moderated so that parents could have confidence in their safety. All of the children who participated in the project were provided with a log-in for the website so that they could keep up with the progress of the film. The website was also promoted through occasional features on CBBC's Blue Peter programme, leading to large numbers of children discovering the project independently and engaging with the project online. More than 25,000 children signed up to become members of the *Tate Movie* website.

The project had a very wide reach, as in addition to the children who were able to engage directly, in workshops or online, many more watched *The Itch of the Golden Nit* during its cinema release, or on CBBC. It was the first time such a high profile

partnership had been formed to deliver a project for children, and this partnership was essential to the project's success, with each partner bringing expertise in a different aspect – Tate in gallery education with young people, Aardman in animation and film-making, and CBBC who could reach huge numbers of young people, while the individual local gallery partners targeted the project to hard-to-reach children who would not otherwise participate. Galleries were able to define hard-to-reach in the way which best suited their local circumstances, and as a result were able to fit the project strategically with their own community engagement strategies.

The opportunity provided by the Cultural Olympiad was vital in encouraging the project partners to think very ambitiously about the potential scale and quality of the project in the development stages, in pulling together such a high profile partnership, and in providing the project with a generous budget which enabled its extensive reach and very high production values. However the extent to which the Olympiad acted as a driver for participation is less clear, especially as the project was delivered in 2010 and 2011.

While it is too early to say what the legacy will be, the project has created a model for children's participation in animation and

film-making which could be rolled out in future, and tested a range of approaches to teaching these technical skills with a young age group. The dedicated website is now closed, and children are being directed towards Tate Kids online, and to Aardman's Animate It! Site. Tate are in the process of adding *Tate Movie's* animation software features to Tate Kids so that children can continue to make animation using Tate as a portal. The success of the project is likely to have a significant impact on how Tate work and communicate with children in the future.

Research credits

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<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/our-priorities-2011-15/london-2012/>