

Raising the Game

Schools, creative organisations and the challenge of the London 2012 Games

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Creative Partnerships

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Front cover image:

Pupils from St Stephen's Primary
School performing in *Dance Captures*:
East London Dance and Laban

Photograph: Hugo Glendinning

Since the launch of the Creative Partnerships initiative in 2002, our work has focussed on developing the creative skills of young people, integrating creativity across the curriculum, and realising opportunities for teachers and creative practitioners to work together in new and innovative ways which excite and encourage students to participate in their learning in a richer and more meaningful way.

The values of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games focus on the aspirations of young people. Welcoming the world to London and the UK presents us all with an opportunity to understand ourselves in a new way, developing models of working together in a vision where culture and education will stand side by side with sport at the heart of the 2012 Games. Creative Partnerships London East and South is interested in exploring how creative learning can realise these ideals.

Creative Partnerships London East and South is geographically and philosophically well placed to explore the opportunities the Games offers to schools, creative practitioners, young people and their teachers. The London East and South team is based in Stratford, Newham, and is metres away from the construction of the Olympic Park. Four of the boroughs we currently work with are Olympic boroughs and many of our schools and partners are exploring how best to align their offer and practice to the Olympic opportunity.

In 2005 Creative Partnerships London East and South delivered the *FriendShip Festival* schools day for the London 2012 bid team, and since then has been involved in a series of discussions and initiatives with its core stakeholders which continue to explore how best to work with and contribute to this extraordinary moment in the history of London and the UK. *Raising the Game* by Alice King-Farlow builds on the Demos research *The Biggest Learning Opportunity on Earth*, which explores how schools and their partners can engage with this opportunity.

Raising the Game describes the experience, learning and understanding developed by a number of stakeholders involved in a series of projects as part of a programme of work delivered during the summer of 2007. All the projects illustrated were commissioned to encourage development and exploration for all involved. Alice King-Farlow's research focuses our thinking about how best to develop work that connects schools from across London with a larger international opportunity, and begins to explore how to encourage young people to engage with the city in which they live. The document examines what the work looks and feels like, the learning involved and how it can be developed. It is our intention that this research raises the profile of the 2012 Games as a concept for schools and partners to engage with creatively.

Now that Creative Partnerships funding has been confirmed for the next three years, we will continue to develop our thinking, model our practice, share our learning and explore how best to embrace the possibilities of work aligned to the Olympics as schools and their partners prepare for the 2012 Games. We are currently working in partnership with the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games on a large-scale piece of work with 20 schools in the five Olympic boroughs exploring the theme of welcoming the world to London. We are committed to encouraging schools and their partners to approach the Olympic opportunity with creativity, imagination and innovation. This document is our starting point and we hope you find it useful.

Steve Moffitt

Director, Creative Partnerships London East and South

Executive summary

Raising the Game was a programme commissioned by Creative Partnerships London East and South to explore the opportunities for creative projects in schools inspired by the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Raising the Game was an invitation and, as the name suggests, a challenge. The invitation, to seven creative and cultural organisations and 18 London schools, was to develop a series of creative projects in response to the 2012 Games, building a lasting legacy of skills and project models. The challenge is broader and on-going: what role should creative and cultural organisations and schools play in a Games which promises to raise the aspirations and achievement of a generation, not just in London but across the UK and the world?

The projects in *Raising the Game* were commissioned by Creative Partnerships London East and South – based in Stratford, east London, at the epicentre of Olympic development – as part of its on-going exploration of the opportunities offered by the Games. Each project found its own approach to the question of how the Games might act as a stimulus to young people's creativity, and how creative activity can enable young people to develop their own personal and imaginative connection to the Games and the changes they will bring to their city.

Creative practitioners and young people explored connections between creativity and sport, perspectives on the city they live in, and broad themes of change, diversity and aspiration. Outcomes from the projects were shared in two events at Stratford Circus: a reception for teachers, creative partners and other stakeholders, and a series of workshops for young people.

This report was commissioned by Creative Partnerships London East and South to record some of the themes and outcomes of the projects. It is based on observations of the six projects and discussions with the young people, teachers, artists and creative partners listed at the end of the report. It is necessarily partial: in the space and time available, it was not possible to visit all 18 schools or to document each one of the rich variety of outcomes from *Raising the Game*. It is hoped, however, that the brief detail of the projects and their themes will spark other ideas, approaches and questions, for both schools and creative organisations.

A summary of each of the six projects is given in part one. Part two describes some of the key themes and approaches developed by creative partners, and teachers' and young people's responses. A final section considers some of the questions raised by the projects, and the broader challenges and opportunities for creative and cultural organisations in engaging with the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Introduction

6 July 2007, two years to the day since London won its bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In a studio at Stratford Circus, a venue just a few hundred metres from the site of the Olympic Park, groups of young people from schools across east and south London explore what the Olympics might mean to them and to their city. Medals are awarded to favourite parts of London, icons like the London Eye and the O2 Arena, but also a local park, school or home. A short film made by primary school children, *Zeus TV*, presents stories of personal achievement in music, sports and art. Groups explore London in words and metaphors, working with poets Francesca Beard and Baden Prince in an installation of Olympic rings and astro-turf track. The walls of the studio showcase Olympic-inspired artwork made with and by young people: animated photographs of bodies in motion, children dancing in unexpected places, brilliantly-coloured monoprints of young people playing sports. Festooned around the space is a growing paper-chain of Olympic wishes, for self, future, family and friends: imagining the opportunities and changes the next five years might bring.

Physical change is beginning nearby, as work on the Olympic Park gathers pace, but the 2012 Games promise more than a new landscape for east London. Young people were at the heart of London's Olympic bid, and engaging young people's creativity, aspirations and skills remains a central theme in London's vision, as expressed by Sebastian Coe: 'to reach people, young people, all around the world; to connect them with the inspirational power of the games'¹.

Based in Stratford, and with a remit extending across the Olympic and Olympic gateway boroughs in east and south London, Creative Partnerships London East and South has been exploring what role creative and cultural organisations might play in this vision since the early days of London's bid. In June 2005 young people from six London boroughs set sail with Creative Partnerships and Jude Kelly OBE² on a symbolic journey up the Thames, sharing 'cultural cargo' on the theme of aspiration and friendship.

More recently the think tank Demos was commissioned to research the approaches of previous Olympic host cities to culture and education and explore young people's expectations of the Games. Charlie Tims' report, *The Biggest Learning Opportunity on Earth*, identifies a disconnect between the objectives of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) to make the Olympics 'a catalyst for change in children's lives'³, and young people's perceptions of the Games as being of little interest or relevance to them. The report sets out a challenge to creative and cultural organisations to bridge that disconnect by finding new models for projects that will enable young people to participate fully and creatively in the changes around them:

The renewal of east and south London that will occur through the Olympics is not a project that will run alongside young people's creative activity and personal forms of expression. The creative activity of young people will be at the heart of its renewal⁴.

¹ Quoted in C Tims, *The Biggest Learning Opportunity on Earth*, Demos 2007, downloadable from www.demos.co.uk: p17 or from www.creative-partnerships.com/londoneastandsouth

² Jude Kelly chairs the LOCOG Culture, Ceremonies and Education Committee

³ Nick Fuller, Head of Education, LOCOG: speech at *Raising the Game* reception, Stratford Circus, 5 July 2007

⁴ Tims, p60-61

Part one

Six projects, six approaches

Olympic paperchains,
Raising the Game Event –
Stratford Circus, July 2007
Photograph: Stephanie Gill

Creative Partnerships London East and South commissioned *Raising the Game*, a series of six projects and two celebratory events at Stratford Circus in July 2007, to explore that challenge. The organisation invited seven creative and cultural organisations to develop a series of pilot projects exploring how the Games might act as a stimulus to young people's creativity, and how that creative activity might enable young people to engage with the Olympics: to make their own personal and imaginative connection to the Games and to the changes they will bring to their city.

The brief for the partner organisations was to develop projects involving Creative Partnerships London East and South associate schools⁵ which would address the three broad Olympic values set out by LOCOG:

- to celebrate London and the UK welcoming the world, and London's internationalism and diversity
- to inspire and involve young people
- to generate a positive legacy.

The following themes were suggested for exploration:

- sense of place
- welcoming the world to London
- the relationship between sport and art
- young people's experience of the regeneration of their city
- mapping London.

Working within this framework, partners were free to develop projects which met their own artistic, educational or strategic objectives, and the needs and interests of the participating schools. The six projects, detailed in the following pages, demonstrate the breadth of the Olympic theme.

⁵ affiliated to Creative Partnerships London East and South, but not part of the core group of partner schools in the 2006/07 academic year.

Dance Captures was a dance and photography project developed by Stratford-based dance development organisation [East London Dance](#), and [Laban](#), the contemporary dance conservatoire in Deptford, two of four partners in the recently-formed London Thames Gateway Dance Partnership (LTGDP). Through LTGDP both organisations are already addressing the role of dance in the regeneration of east London, in particular through developing the skills of dance artists and teachers in the region. *Dance Captures* was the first in-depth collaboration for the two organisations: a cross-river partnership, involving two Newham and two Lewisham primary schools in a term-long workshop programme to develop dance performances exploring the theme of people and place. The project included a number of exchange visits for the four school groups, including a public performance of work-in-progress at Stratford Circus, as part of the Newham Arts Festival, a visit to Laban, and a final performance of the four dance works at the Canary Wharf Arts and Events Summer Gala. Children also took part in a photography workshop and location photoshoot with dance photographer Hugo Glendinning, whose photographs of the children dancing on London sites earmarked for regeneration were projected behind the live performances.

Pupils from Morden Mount Primary School participating in *A Special Place*:
Emergency Exit Arts
Photograph: Christiana Franz



Artwork by pupils from Stewart Headlam and Bigland Green Primary Schools, *Bishopsgate Hoardings*:
Free Form
Photographs: Mara Patriche

[Free Form Arts Trust](#) specialises in public art, regeneration and community consultation. Artists worked with children in three primary schools in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Hackney to create artwork for hoardings around a prominent building site on Bishopsgate, at the east of the City of London. Children created collographs expressing their dreams and aspirations of the future, imaginative self-portraits as adults, and monoprints from photographs of themselves in sports and dance poses. From the children's images Free Form has created a frieze of figures and images, echoing ancient Greek stone friezes depicting the first Olympic athletes. These will remain on display in Bishopsgate until the completion of the building project.

Performance poetry organisation [Apples & Snakes](#) commissioned two original poems on Olympic themes as inspiration for primary school children and teachers from four schools, in Islington, Newham and Tower Hamlets, taking part in its cross-arts project *Starting Block*. As well as creating individual and group poems exploring young people's perceptions of their city and their locality, and imagining how it might appear to an Olympic visitor, children and teachers also used photography, drawing and map-making to explore ideas about London and sport. Poems and images were shared at a celebratory workshop hosted by one of the four schools. As with *Dance Captures*, professional development for teachers was an important aspect of the project, with on-going mentoring available in the autumn term following the project.

Welcome and celebration were the themes for *A Special Place*, a project developed by [Emergency Exit Arts](#) and linking two primary schools in Newham and Greenwich. To imagine how London might welcome the world in 2012, children explored how they might make guests welcome in their own environment. The theme inspired artwork from garlands and metal panels to decorated umbrellas, and children devised ceremonies, rituals and performances to greet their visitors and celebrate their school community. Both schools' projects culminated in a celebratory outdoor event.

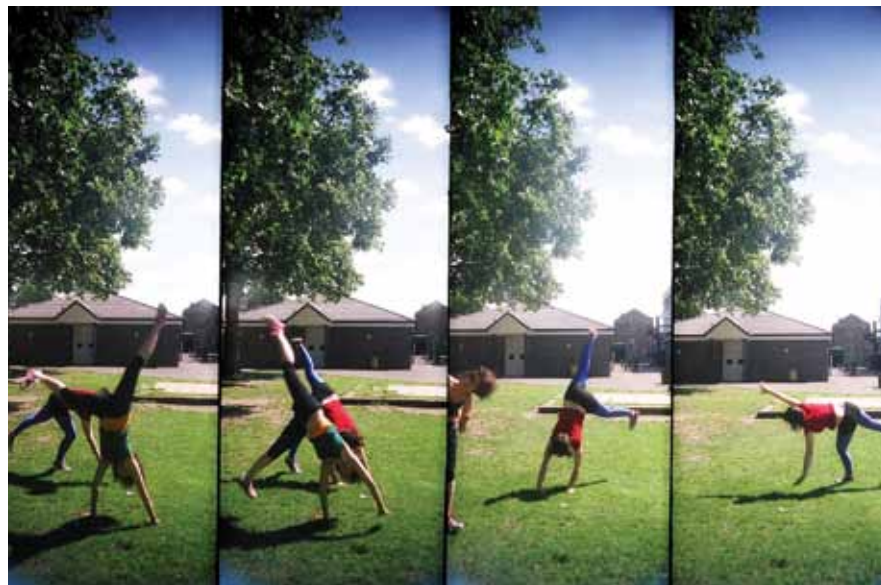


Photomotion:
The Photographers' Gallery
images by students from
Haggerston School



Students from Woolwich
Polytechnic School participating
in *2012: Our Olympic City*:
Greenwich & Lewisham Young
People's Theatre
Photograph: GLYPT

Lomography is a movement in photography using low-technology film cameras to photograph the everyday and accidental⁶. Lomo cameras include the 'supersampler', a multi-lens camera that takes four or eight exposures, seconds apart, allowing the photographer to capture a moment in time or a body in motion. These cameras inspired *Photomotion*, a cross-curricular project organised by The Photographers' Gallery in three secondary schools, involving GCSE dance, sports and art students and teachers. Working with two experienced lomographers, students devised and photographed motion sequences based on a range of different sports and dance movements, as well as the experience of being a spectator. A selection of the students' images have been collected in a flip-book, published by The Photographers' Gallery and available free from its bookshop. Animations of photographs can be viewed at www.youtube.com/photomotionlondon



Film was the medium for *2012: Our Olympic City*, a project with a Thamesmead primary and Woolwich secondary school devised by Greenwich & Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GLYPT). Linton Mead Primary School made *Zeus TV*, a film which presented their achievements in and outside school, their aspirations for 2012 and their perspectives of London – including a trip up the Thames from Greenwich to the London Eye. B-TEC Art and Design students from Woolwich Polytechnic School chose to take a documentary approach, interviewing fellow pupils, teachers, shoppers on Woolwich High Street and Councillor John Fahy of Greenwich Council to test public and official opinion on the Games. Students in both projects were involved in all aspects of film-making, including filming, directing sequences and recording sound.

As well as commissioning the six projects, Creative Partnerships also brought together schools, artists and creative partners in two events at Stratford Circus in July 2007. An Olympic-themed installation designed by Sophia Lovell-Smith provided a context to exhibit young people's work, and a setting for an evening reception and a day of creative activity for schools. The events gave funders, creative partners, schools and young people an opportunity to share the projects and their outcomes and look forward to what might be achieved over the five years to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Raising the Game installation,
by Sophia Lovell Smith
Photograph: Stephanie Gill



⁶ See www.lomography.com



Part two

Exploration and celebration: project outcomes

Each of the six projects in *Raising the Game* took a different approach to inspiring young people's creativity, approaching the London 2012 Games as both subject and creative catalyst. Project outcomes varied from a carnival to a film, from a semi-permanent frieze on a hoarding in the City of London to a flip-book and a YouTube site. There were also shared themes across the projects – sport, London, welcoming guests – and some consistent outcomes. The exploration of those themes and outcomes in this section spans the different projects and includes responses from children, teachers, artists and creative partners.

Sport and creativity: connections across the curriculum

'The biggest school sports day in the world'

Girl, year 1, Marner Primary School

Sport, movement, physicality: themes which offer an immediate imaginative connection to the Olympics for young people of all ages, as demonstrated by a child at Marner Primary School, grasping the idea of the Games on her own terms.

Creative projects exploring sport allowed connections across the curriculum. At Archbishop Tenison's School, art and PE teachers both took part in the *Photomotion* sessions with artists from the The Photographers' Gallery, PE teachers helping students to devise movement sequences and explore unfamiliar sports, 'beyond football'. Photomotion also explored other aspects of sport, including what Head of Art John Rummens described as the 'fanaticism and agony' of the spectator. Iconic images of sports inspired photographs taken as part of *Starting Block*, where children researched different Olympic sports on the internet, used chalk to draw outlines of athletes on playground walls and floor, and photographed themselves within the outlines.

Free Form asked children to choose favourite movements from sport, dance or playground games for action photos, which they used to make monoprints. Baden Prince's poem *Bare Feet*, commissioned by Apples & Snakes as a resource for *Starting Block*, was inspired by Abebe Bikila, the Ethiopian athlete who ran and won the Rome 1960 Olympic marathon barefoot. Poet Francesca Beard explored 'the human drama of sport' with children at Arnhem Primary School, and discussed the idea of performance: the need for concentration, presence and focus, whether artist, athlete or student.

Ceremonies of welcome

'People from around the world will be coming to London, they want to feel at home'

Boy, year 6, Marner Primary School

The majority of the young people I spoke to were excited about the Games coming to London, and with it the idea of welcoming visitors from all across the world to their city: 'it'll be here in front of us', 'the whole world united', 'different countries coming here', 'I'm really glad it's London'.

The idea of welcoming the world to London opens up broad themes which move beyond sport and athleticism and allow young people to draw connections with their own lives and their immediate environment. This was the starting point for Emergency Exit Art's work with Marner Primary School in Newham, where year 6 children made explicit connections between a ceremony of welcome to the school, and London's preparations to welcome Olympic athletes and visitors. The project allowed the children to consider what they enjoyed and valued about their school and their successes there: decorations on umbrellas, fans and metal discs, story-telling and two short drama performances celebrated not just achievements in chess, hockey or reading, but also friendship and overcoming bullying or prejudice. A welcome ceremony was based in greetings in many different languages: reflecting London's multi-linguistic community as well as the languages of Olympic visitors. Thinking about their school and their part of London on display to the wider world appears to have reinforced children's sense of pride, connectedness and ownership of their school, at an important stage in their lives as they prepare to move up to secondary schools. 'I feel like a citizen of my school', said one boy, before the citizens of Marner – children, parents, staff and artists alike – ended their ceremonies of welcome with an anarchic and celebratory dance in the playground.

Artwork by pupils from
Morden Mount Primary School.
A Special Place:
Emergency Exit Arts
Photograph: Christiana Franz



Image projection at *Raising the Game*, Stratford Circus
(*Dance Captures*: East London
Dance and Laban. Original
photograph by Hugo Glendinning)
Photograph: Stephanie Gill



Navigating the city

'London is a city that some of them have visited'

Jeremy James, Artistic Director
Greenwich & Lewisham Young People's Theatre

Jeremy James was talking about the children of Linton Mead Primary School in Thamesmead, but his comment would apply to many of the schools involved in *Raising the Game*. Young people in both primary and secondary schools do not immediately connect with the world city that won the Olympic bid; their identification is with their local area. Several projects in *Raising the Game* addressed this theme, celebrating the familiar and the local as part of London's diverse landscape, while also enabling children to explore, both conceptually and physically, the wider city they live in.

Dance Captures built an exchange between Newham and Lewisham Schools, and took children to Stratford, Canary Wharf and Laban – the extraordinary building by Herzog & de Meuron rising from the industrial past of Deptford Creek. Children also visited the Olympic site, and were photographed dancing in some of London's brownfield sites: vividly symbolic of the role that creativity and young people might play in the regeneration of their city. The children of Linton Mead Primary School took a bus from Thamesmead to Greenwich and a boat to the South Bank, viewed their city from the London Eye, and wrote a song celebrating 'Our London' – its landmarks, social life, shopping. Children from Ashmount School wrote a class Pantoum (a poetic form originating in Malaysia) with poet Francesca Beard, each child contributing a couplet in celebration of London:

I have been on the London Eye
The River Thames and there's Big Ben
In London there are lots of schools
I'm from the North of London

In another *Starting Block* workshop, children made hats representing aspects of London with photographer Andy Rumball, 'special head-gear which might be worn at the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics'. Based in Berlin, Andy has observed the impact of sudden and accelerated change in a city and sees creative projects like *Starting Block* as a means to help young people navigate change in their environment.

In schools which feel on the margin of London – serving disadvantaged communities, in areas of environmental degradation, or quite literally at London's current geographical margins – it is perhaps still more important to build young people's sense of connection and ownership of their city. For schools that will find themselves at the epicentre of change, as London's centre of gravity shifts to the east, this work is critical.



Pupils from Lathom Junior School performing in *Dance Captures: East London Dance and Laban*
Photograph: Hugo Glendinning

Celebrating diversity

'I would use the theme again... because it allowed children to explore where they came from'

Joanna West, year 4 teacher, Ashmount School

Which teams will you support in the Olympics? Britain and where else? Joanna West's class, taking part in Apples & Snakes' *Starting Block*, explored and celebrated their different cultural origins by talking about which Olympic teams they might support. Baden Prince's poem, commissioned by Apples & Snakes, takes the Olympic theme to Africa:

an African child wakes
sets off for school
bare feet stepping on
bare earth

...

As he runs
he dreams

Saleha Habiz-Khatun, class teacher at Bigland Green Primary School, talked about how the Olympic theme could extend beyond London to encompass other parts of the world. Exploring the involvement of athletes from Bangladesh would offer a means of celebrating the cultural origins of her students; the symbolism of the Olympic Beacon an opportunity to explore world conflict and peace. Both Apples & Snakes and Emergency Exit Arts explored and celebrated the different languages spoken by children in their projects.

Year 6 children at Marner Primary School were able to relate London's diversity to the success of the Olympic bid:

I don't think London was chosen because of money,
I think London was chosen because we welcome
more and more people from different countries.

My parents came here from somewhere else...
we don't push away people we don't know.

The 2012 Games offers a rich context in which to explore and celebrate young people's cultural origins, to reflect on the diverse city and nation that they live in, and to explore cultures across the world.



Pupils from Ashmead School performing in *Dance Captures: East London Dance and Laban*
Photograph: Hugo Glendinning

Olympic aspirations

'In five years' time I want to be a baton-twirler and a lawyer'

Girl, year 5, Linton Mead Primary School

Charlie Tims described how young people were already using the Olympics as a benchmark for their lives⁷: how old would they be, what would they be doing in 2012? Creative Partnerships London East and South asked young people and adults at Stratford Circus to consider the same questions of ambitions and dreams for 2012, and the theme ran through many of the projects in *Raising the Game*. Free Form asked young people to make storyboard collagraphs (collages) of dreams and aspirations, inspired by the artist Marc Chagall's dream portraits, from which they then made rubbings with different coloured pastels. Artist Laura Medlar encouraged children to play with scale, different textures and colours and create symbols: 'it didn't have to make pictorial, logical sense'.

In their film created with Greenwich & Lewisham Young People's Theatre, children at Linton Mead Primary School looked forward as well as back, making Olympic wreaths decorated with images celebrating past achievements, current skills and interests, and future ambitions. A girl announced at one session that she would be an ice-dancer in five years time, and by the following week had been taken for her first ice-dancing lesson. Aspiration is less explicit in the documentary created by students at Woolwich Polytechnic School but is nonetheless a theme of both the film and the project: students express the view that the Olympics will bring new opportunities to their generation, and one participant told me he thought the Games were 'a good way of catching young people's imagination'.

Ken Burgess, Head of Art at Woolwich Polytechnic School, described both the project and the Games as a means to open young people's eyes to broader opportunities and personal horizons beyond east and south London. Central to this is contact for students with professionals in different fields – a filmmaker, animator or director – and the expectation that students will themselves approach the project with professionalism and commitment. Ken talked about giving young people self-esteem, a spark of inspiration and a sense of direction: as evidenced by one participant who created animations for the film's title credits and afterwards independently arranged an interview for an art foundation course.

Pupil from Linton Mead Primary School participating in 2012: *Our Olympic City*: Greenwich & Lewisham Young People's Theatre
Photograph: GLYPT



Artwork by pupils from Marner Primary School. *A Special Place*: Emergency Exit Arts

Photograph: Dragana Ivanovic

Similarly, two students from Archbishop Tenison's School who had taken part in *Photomotion* agreed to visit The Photographers' Gallery and give a 20-minute public talk on their responses to the current exhibitions as part of the gallery's regular programme called *Teen Talks*. Both talks received extremely positive public feedback. Head of Art John Rummens emphasises the importance of creative projects as a step into the professional world, where students collaborate with artists as co-creators. Clearly this approach is not limited to Olympics projects: it is central to the educational practice of most creative and cultural organisations. But the Olympics theme offers a wider context for young people's ambitions and creativity: a broad public and political commitment to young people's aspiration and attainment, linked to large-scale change and development in their city. Both Joel Parkes of Free Form and filmmaker Jake Strickland, working with Greenwich & Lewisham Young People's Theatre, see the Olympics as a catalyst for the development of young people's skills, particularly in the creative industries and with young people who are harder to reach.

Most of the projects in *Raising the Game* allowed young people to feel part of something larger. For some this was the connection to the Olympics itself: children at Marner Primary School felt that their work on welcoming guests was itself a contribution to London's Olympic preparations. For the children at Bigland Green Primary School it was the fact that their artwork would be on public display in the city. In other projects connections made between schools and creative organisations were a means of broadening horizons. Talking about their visit to Laban, children from Lathom Junior School in Newham described watching and learning from professional dancers and the fact that 'they didn't make a fuss'. Dance artist Victoria Igbokwe noticed a transformation in children's levels of concentration and ambition after the visit.

The children at Lathom gave another value to their exchange visit: that of meeting and working with children from another part of London. One boy described it simply:

We walked in with our friends from school, and walked out friends with people we'd never met before.

Some children in London rarely leave their immediate locality, postcodes acting as invisible boundaries. While the Olympics offers possibilities for exchange and connection across national boundaries, the projects in *Raising the Game* also demonstrate the value in crossing boundaries closer to home.

⁷ Tims, p48

Part three

Towards 2012:
questions for
the cultural sector

Pupil from Ashmead School
participating in *Dance Captures*:
East London Dance and Laban
Photograph: Hugo Glendinning

Raising the Game was commissioned by Creative Partnerships London East and South as part of an on-going process of experimentation and research into the creative opportunities for schools and cultural organisations offered by the 2012 Games. While the projects themselves explored how creative investigation of themes such as relationship to place, ambitions for the future or sport and movement might help young people develop their own imaginative connection to the Olympics, they were also an opportunity for the creative partners to start to define their relationship to the Games. What new project models or partnerships might be needed? How can creative and cultural organisations develop programmes of activity linked both to the Games and to their own artistic and educational mission and organisational strategy? This final section of the report briefly addresses those broader questions. It is informed by discussions with representatives of each of the creative and cultural organisations involved in *Raising the Game*, with Steve Moffitt, Director of Creative Partnerships London East and South and Moira Sinclair, Development Director of Arts Council England, London.

The Olympic vision for young people is ambitious. Speaking at Stratford Circus, Andrew Mutter, Arts Advisor for Newham, outlined the borough's objective that the Games should be a catalyst to 'increase motivation, attainment, self-esteem, aspiration and entrepreneurial skills'. Quoting Tessa Jowell⁸, Moira Sinclair described Arts Council England's vision for the Cultural Olympiad to tackle 'poverty of aspiration'. The title *Raising the Game* is in itself a challenge to develop creative projects that can meet those goals.

These ambitions demand projects that build on what we already know about best practice in creative learning. Projects designed to unlock young people's creativity need to be framed in a way that allows artistic experimentation and risk-taking, not the delivery of a pre-defined artistic outcome. Artists should bring high expectations of what young people can achieve, and balance working towards an end product or performance and the teaching of skills with the flexibility to allow genuine co-creation with young people – as many of the projects in *Raising the Game* did. Several of the projects demonstrated the value of young people's own experience or environment as a starting point for creative investigation, moving from what is familiar and tangible towards more abstract concepts. In doing so, these projects also celebrate and value young people's diverse lives and experience.

⁸ Tessa Jowell, Government and the Value of Culture, DCMS 2004: at http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2004/Government_Value_of_Culture.htm



Pupil from Mayflower
Primary School participating
in *Starting Block:*
Apples & Snakes
Photograph: Sam Wild

The relationship between artists and teachers is important to the success of any creative project, but even more so in projects which, like those in *Raising the Game*, have broad themes and ambitions. One aspect of this is the Olympics as a subject. Although the projects in *Raising the Game* set out to develop creative work in response to the Olympics, the aim was to help young people to think about what the Olympics might mean to them, rather than teach them about the Olympics. This nonetheless demanded that young people learned something about the Games: their roots in ancient Greece and their more recent history, the symbolism of the Games, the range of sports and nations involved, the development of the Paralympic Games alongside the Olympics.

One creative partner commented that 'it was difficult to wear an Olympics hat', and it is perhaps unreasonable to expect artists or creative organisations to develop expert knowledge of the Olympics. Resources will undoubtedly become available through LOCOG's education programme⁹ as the Games draw nearer, and there is also potential for contact with, for example, locally based athletes; but there is already a wealth of information available on the internet which young people could research and contribute to creative projects. Creative partners reported that in schools where young people used the internet for research or explored the Olympics with their teachers, they were, unsurprisingly, better able to respond to the theme.

Many of the broader themes address in *Raising the Game* are already important aspects of both curriculum and pastoral development in school: aspiration and achievement, environment, identity, diversity. As one teacher pointed out, three short and busy sessions do not give enough time for children to think deeply about aspirations. Joint planning between teachers and artists allows the exploration of these broad themes to be incremental and embedded, not superficial. It also allows the process to continue after the project, an important aspect of the project's legacy – itself a key theme of the London 2012 Olympics. Many of the projects in *Raising the Game* produced tangible outcomes to mark the achievement of the students: films, photographs, books, performances and poems. More subtle and more important is the legacy of skills and ideas: young people's and teachers' creative skills and confidence developed and supported, or, as in *Dance Captures*, newly developed workshop skills for four young dance artists.

⁹ A schools' pack, *On Your Marks*, is already available at <http://onyourmarks.london2012.com/>

As Charlie Tims¹⁰ points out, the 2012 Games will create an unprecedented focus on young people's participation and engagement, offering a number of opportunities to the creative and cultural sector. He suggests that one of them should be to co-ordinate and showcase the work created in Olympic projects. This would allow young people to feel connected to a larger purpose, and in doing so give profile to the excellent participatory work by the UK's creative and cultural organisations, which is so often invisible except to those who take part in it. *Raising the Game* brought together creative partners, funders and other stakeholders, and some of the participating schools at Stratford Circus: limitations of time and space meant that not all could attend. For those young people who attended, the day offered a taster of other projects and a chance to meet and work with different artists and young people from other schools. It is undoubtedly a model that could be developed in future projects.



Pupils participating at
Raising the Game, Stratford Circus
Photograph: Stephanie Gill

The internet offers another conduit for the sharing of work and experiences. Projects in *Raising the Game* built links between schools within London and across the boundaries of boroughs and the Thames, but none made connections outside London. While there is evident value in focusing on the host city of the Games, it is also important to think beyond London, both to the regions and nations of the United Kingdom and beyond.

Another area for further exploration is work with older students. The majority of projects in *Raising the Game* involved primary school children and took an age-appropriate approach to the themes of the project. Exploring identity, environment and aspiration with older young people, some of whom may be cynical about the promise that the Games will have a positive impact on their lives, will require a different and more sophisticated approach, perhaps linked more directly to further opportunities for progression and training.

¹⁰ Tims, p 52

All the creative partners valued the opportunity to work with Creative Partnerships on *Raising the Game*. It was a chance to develop and test their own approach to Olympic themes, at an early stage and in a research framework. Creative Partnerships provided a level of investment which allowed the development of large-scale projects and lasting resources. Importantly, it also offered a context in which the partners could begin to navigate their relationship to the 2012 Games, which, like those of so many creative organisations and in particular those dependent on public funding, are ambivalent. With the promise of extraordinary opportunity comes the threat of reduced funding; with change and development on an Olympic scale, and the continuing regeneration of the Thames Gateway, concern about how arts organisations can chart a route through what can seem like an approaching storm. 'We're at the epicentre', said one partner; another talked of the difficulty of navigating the multiple groups, committees and strategies mushrooming around the Olympics.

Creative Partnership's role is, in this respect, very important. It provides not only investment in projects, a partnership approach, and an opportunity to explore and develop new models and approaches to creative learning, but also a two-way conduit for information and learning between creative partners and larger strategic organisations such as LOCOG and Arts Council England. At the time of writing Creative Partnerships' future role and shape is under discussion; it is hoped that in its new form the organisation will be able to continue this critical role, particularly in the five years to the 2012 Games.

Raising the Game also raised interesting questions of objective and mission. What role should creative and cultural organisations play in relation to the Olympics? Is there any disconnect between artistic objectives and Olympic objectives? More fundamentally, what makes a creative project Olympic?

London's Olympic bid and LOCOG have been consistent in their message that culture is as much a part of the Olympics as sport. The key objective is inspiring young people, whether through sport or encounters with other cultures or creativity and the arts. *Raising the Game* offered a model for a large-scale Olympic project in which creative partners could plot their own approach to the theme and in which their individual artistic identities and strategic objectives were not subsumed. Janice McLaren, Projects Organiser at The Photographers' Gallery, argues that the role of arts organisations in relation to the Olympics should be a neutral one, to 'connect with

people's resistance as well as their interest'. Like the young people we work with, the arts sector is exploring and testing its own relationship to the Olympics, and our projects can offer a space to explore and frame ambivalence.

A key part of that ambivalence is the question of funding, an issue that is never far from the surface in any exploration of the role of the cultural sector in the 2012 Olympics. At the time of writing, funding for both the Cultural Olympiad and for the sector more broadly in the five years to 2012 remains unclear. Projects of the scale and ambition signalled by the 2012 Olympics, promising lasting change and development in the lives of young people, demand sustained investment, long-term planning and a joined-up approach across sectors. That is a challenge for Government, Arts Council England, and LOCOG and its funding partners, and not just to the resourcefulness of the creative and cultural and education sectors.

While questions of funding remain uncertain, what is certain is that the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will take place, in London and elsewhere in the UK, over a period of a few weeks in August and September 2012. The challenge for organisations in the creative and cultural sector is in how to respond to that event: opportunity, threat, or irrelevance? *Raising the Game* demonstrates that Olympic themes can be imaginatively and creatively integrated with partners' own artistic, educational and strategic objectives. We can design our own models: it is not a question of conforming to an Olympic project template handed down by committee. Olympic aspirations for young people, and Olympic themes of development, diversity and entitlement, are ideals shared across much of the creative and cultural sector.

Steve Moffitt argues for an approach of 'positive opportunism'. The emphasis on young people, creativity and participation in the London 2012 Games offer an opportunity to raise the profile of the UK's unique tradition of participatory work in the arts. The challenge of scale invites organisations – creative, cultural, and educational – to work together and learn from each other, developing practice to make a lasting and sustained impact in the lives of young people. The focus on legacy, beyond the few weeks in summer 2012, offers a chance to embed creative and cultural organisations in the landscape of east and south-east London and the Thames Gateway region. An invitation, and a challenge, to raise our game.

Alice King-Farlow

October 2007

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Demos

Raising the Game partners
and participating schools

Bishopsgate Hoardings:

Free Form Arts Trust

Bigland Green Primary School
Gayhurst Community School
Stewart Headlam Primary School

Free Form provides the full range of arts and creative services for the built environment to place art at the heart of urban regeneration.
www.freeform.org.uk

Dance Captures:

East London Dance and Laban

(London Thames Gateway
Dance Partnership)
Essex Primary School
Ashmead Primary School
Lathom Junior School
St Stephen’s Primary School

East London Dance develops access, inclusivity and innovation across the east London boroughs producing a dynamic dance culture reflecting, encouraging and celebrating the whole community in its diversity of cultures, ages and abilities.
www.eastlondondance.org

Laban is the worlds largest contemporary dance school, and Europe’s leading centre for contemporary dance training, training dance artists at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.
www.laban.org

The London Thames Gateway Dance Partnership brings together four dance organisations, Chisenhale Dance Space, East London Dance, Greenwich Dance Agency and Laban, together with the 10 London Gateway boroughs. They aim to position dance at the forefront of social and urban regeneration within the Gateway and promote cross-borough working and exchange of artists’ practice.

Photomotion: The Photographers’ Gallery

Langdon School
Haggerston School
Archbishop Tennison School

The Photographers’ Gallery is one of the UK’s primary venues for photography and one of London’s most popular public galleries with over half a million annual visitors. Established in 1971, the Gallery was the UK’s first independent photographic gallery.
www.photonet.org.uk

Starting Block: Apples & Snakes

Ashmount Primary School
Mayflower Primary School
Avenue Primary School
Arnhem Wharf Primary School

Apples & Snakes is the leading organisation for performance poetry. We exist to stretch the boundaries of poetry in education. Performance through giving voice to a diverse range of challenging and dynamic poets.
www.applesandsnakes.org

A Special Place: Emergency Exit Arts

Marnier Primary School
Morden Mount Primary School

Emergency Exit Arts is one of the UK’s leading street arts companies producing celebratory events, participatory projects and unusual spectacle; a company of visual artists, performers, musicians, composers, puppeteers, pyrotechnists, designers and inventors.
www.eea.org.uk

2012 Our Olympic City: Greenwich & Lewisham Young People’s Theatre

Woolwich Polytechnic School
Linton Mead Primary School

Greenwich & Lewisham Young People’s Theatre provides a wide range of participatory youth arts, arts in education programmes and touring young people’s theatre productions for young people in south east London and beyond.
www.glypt.co.uk

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Creative Partnerships is the government's flagship creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills of young people across England, raising their aspirations and achievements, and equipping them for their futures.

We support thousands of innovative, long-term partnerships between schools and creative professionals, who inspire teachers and young people to challenge how they work and experiment with new ideas in all subject areas. This world-leading programme is transforming learning.

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www.creative-partnerships.com

London East and South were established as two of the first 16 Creative Partnerships areas in 2002, delivering programmes with schools in Hackney, Greenwich, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets over a four year period. In April 2006 the two areas merged to form one Creative Partnerships area delivering a joint creative programme in eight boroughs.

Creative Partnerships in London is changing. We want to build on past success and extend our offer to embed creative learning in more schools and local authorities across London. From September 2008, one pan-London delivery agency will be in place to deliver three new schools programmes.

For further details:

Email us:

londoneastandsouth@creative-partnerships.com

Visit:

www.creative-partnerships.com/london

Register to receive more information at:

www.creative-partnerships.com/future

You can download *Raising the Game* from the Creative Partnerships website, please visit www.creative-partnerships.com/londoneastandsouth

Creative Partnerships London East and South recently commissioned Demos to develop a piece of research around young people with learning difficulties and their potential engagement with the Olympic and Paralympic Games. *Making Your Own Rules* can be downloaded from:

www.creative-partnerships.com/londoneastandsouth

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