



Audiences London

Wish you were here... Cultural Tourism Symposium

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Case Study: Regenerating King's Cross through cultural festivals and destination marketing

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About Create KX

Create King's Cross is an independent charity, with offices based in the British Library. Their mission is to inspire, motivate and grow the creative community living and working in Kings Cross. They are supported by Arts Council England, and the London Boroughs of Camden and Islington. There are 2 members of core staff who are supported by an active team of trustees.

About King's Cross

King's Cross is historically a very deprived area – high on indices of deprivation: has high unemployment, and the stigma of being inhabited by prostitutes and drug users. The geography is also physically challenging: there's no sense of there being a centre and the location is broken in half vertically by the railway and horizontally by Euston Road. This all combines to give the area a reputation as a transport hub that you pass through rather than a place to visit in its own right. Having said this in terms of the people living there, while there are high levels of transience, there is also a long-term, active community. King's Cross is also home to a range of cultural organisations including The British Library, The Place, The Wellcome Collection and Library and The Gagosian. Regeneration in recent years has prompted new business, new neighbours and new cultural venues including Kings Place and the Hub and soon The House of Illustration and Central Saint Martins will also be relocating there. There are also large numbers of students using the area while studying at a range of institutions including Birkbeck, University College London, Central Saint Martins and City University.

What Create KX have done

Create KX endeavour to capture the opportunities in King's Cross to create an interesting and creative destination where people want to live, work and visit. Create KX have focused on –

- **Creating a place**
research, advocacy, intelligence for companies Local Authorities, national agencies. Public art programmes – residencies. Assistance for cultural venues to sustain and thrive.
- **Creating Learning Opportunities**
linking with Higher and Further Education, employers with artists, businesses with local communities.

- **Creating Enterprise Opportunities**
supporting businesses through training, and networking
- **High-impact and high profile Events:**
celebrating local creativity, raising the profile of area: 2007 Arrivals, 2010 Reveal

Arrivals 2007 and Reveal 2010: What for and why?

The concept was to raise area profile through a high quality cultural programme. It was agreed that a series of 'milestone celebrations' would be more effective than producing a single one-off festival to create sustained growth in cultural tourism, for a regeneration area undergoing unprecedented change.

Arrivals, November 2007 – launched with the opening of St. Pancras station.

3-tier programme

- Major commissions: St Pancras. Circus events in railway land
- Partner projects: British Library, Wellcome Collection, The Place
- Community programme

289 artists, 762 participants 29,500 audience members

Successes:

- Great relationships developed & sustained
- Established KX as a place to experience high quality art
- Participants overwhelmingly wanted more, as did project partners so relationships were built on.

Drawbacks:

- Had to hit the ground running. Inherited lots of existing projects, and existing problems!
- It was all tied to one large commission venue.
- Difficulty in selling the overall concept, instead of venue/specific projects.

Reveal 2010: The Approach & Model

- Improved starting point: excellent understanding of the specificity of KX identity and good working relationships with local partners.
- Solicited feedback and buy-in very early – consultation/brain-storming took place over a year beforehand. Ideas and event name generated early. Inclusive discussions took place across grass roots community, cultural and corporate sectors.
- A versatile model developed which could take place as a biennale, or more frequently, as a 10 day extravaganza or a 2 day pop-up – depending on suitability and resources.
- 3 tier model continued as with Arrivals.
- Brand: King's Cross cultural identity developed as a brand of its own, with a narrative for a multi-layered place – detached from a single organisation.

Major commissions:

1. Periplum – an edgy narrative trail around St Pancras exploring music and King's Cross itself - received incandescent praise.
2. London Sinfonietta – music and animation responding to the midland goods shed.
3. Richard Sharples - Magical mechanical aquarium overflowing the derelict rooms of the old fish&coal

Partner projects:

UCL beacons of engagement: food junction – festival of food at Camley street. CSM hosted exhibition, Jazz in Lumen

Community programme:

Cubitt: enchanted gardens and older people; new horizons youth club: photography, art installation and open day – new shed.

4th tier: fringe programme: allowed local venues and artists to participate and profit from extra publicity via the website: clubs, music, exhibitions. raised wider awareness of area – multi level and diverse.

Partners: wide range well-established/new, large/small, cultural/non etc

British Library, Lumen, UCL, CSM, Wellcome, Camley Street,

Funding & support

ACE, Garfield Weston, Cripplegate, Camden/Islington councils

Marketing**In advance:**

It was a challenge to market the identity as a whole programme.

Internet presence: vital to have right places and right words. TWITTER, flickr, and blogs like the londonist and own event website launched March 2010.

During Reveal:

Important that information is available in the places a visitor will be when they get here - hotels, stations, or via travel agencies.

Social media/ online marketing were key, but also passionate and committed staff who were onsite to signpost and inspire. Carried out by 100 volunteers of all ages: briefed and enthusiastic.

Target Market/(s)

Local visitors and potential London visitors using St Pancras. Particular focus on 'early adopters': those who lead trends and like discovering new, cool, surprising, or 'out of the ordinary' places/events.

The intention was not just about attracting physical audiences, but developing the 'buzz' that the 'early adopters' make – talking to friends etc. The event emphasis was on REVEALing hidden secrets, underground and exclusive interactions, bubbles of activity popping up in unexpected places.

Evidence of success:

A full evaluation is currently being carried out, with audience numbers predicted to be similar to Arrivals. What is known so far is...

- All commissions were sold or booked out.
- Website: 18 000 unique visitors between March and May 2010
- Twitter (followers tripled)
- 100 volunteers (local residents), 200 participants.
- Immediate impact for partners: London Sinfonietta – off-site attracted a new audience.

- Lumen – prompted to create permanent arts-programme, Argent – public gained a more positive perspective of the site.
- Impact for King's Cross in general: created a wider appreciation of place – signs of becoming a destination.
- Imaginative press coverage: The Guardian and Metro grasped idea of REVEAL itself (not just individual events but King's Cross vibe). Time-out double-page spread on King's Cross, extensive Londonist cover.
- Amazing audience feedback, particularly for site-specific short-run projects. Indicated treasured experiences.

Audience members said:

For me, before today, King's Cross had been a transport interchange. A historic one as well as a current one, with the canal included, but it was a facility rather than a community. But this event has showed me peaceful streets close to the main thoroughfares; gardens, alleys, semi-derelict buildings and rejuvenated ones. You could say it has REVEALed King's Cross to me.

Just to let you know HOW MUCH I ENJOYED the performance on Saturday - an absolute treat and such great use of King's Cross. I have passed some of the venues a hundred times without seeing them.

All in all, one of the best things I've seen in a couple of years. I wonder where the funding for this festival comes from. Perhaps the upcoming development? It can't hurt to have a few thousand extra people thinking this would be a nice place to live.

Challenges:

- Site specific = real pull to audiences, but difficult to work in. Major health and safety concerns, and very limited audience capacity.
- Funding sources severely restricted by recession.
- Lack of resource to conduct full economic impact study. Evaluation process does include economic impact on partner enterprise services (cafes/shops etc).
- Huge undertaking – people immediately want to know when the next one is happening!

Key Outcomes:

- Culture Destination: created a concept of a 'destination' for a challenging area (historically negative reputation, transient, urban & polluted etc). Enlivening and revealing spaces between venues. Using arts/non-arts venues in new/exciting ways: creating interest from press and audiences.
- Audience Growth & Diversification: created a 'trail' for audiences to try new cultural experiences – developing new audiences for partners. Innovative partnerships and surprising spaces inspired a greater range of people to try new things.
- Branding & Cultural Platforms: Reveal in particular is now a concept/brand which can be used via different platforms to raise the profile of King's Cross – (ie can be expanded to become a massive event, or reduced to become a more intimate experience for target audiences).
- Good partnerships. Strong relationships with expert freelance staff.

Key Learning:

1. Success = understanding and working with the identity/geography/context of the area
2. Event series/ biennale/ milestone celebrations work better to create a sustained growth in cultural tourism, rather than a single festival. So recommend researching feasibility for this at the start.
3. Measuring the economic impact on area is a big challenge but funders are more likely to support interventions like this if you can demonstrate economic return.

Further information

<http://www.createkx.org.uk/>

<http://www.revealkingscross.org.uk/>

<http://blogkingscross.blogspot.com/>

<http://twitter.com/createKX>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/48001763@N05/>

Sian James has now left Create KX so for more information or a current contact please get in touch with Helen Ball, Head of Engagement Services at Audiences London
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Want more help reaching cultural tourists?

If cultural tourists are a priority target audience for your organisation, Audiences London can offer a surgery session to support your organisation to define its objectives, refine your messages for target groups and use your resources effectively.

For more information about Audiences London's resources or services please contact:

Email: info@audienceslondon.org

Tel: 0207 407 4625

Or visit the services section on the website www.audienceslondon.org