

New Audiences and Visual Arts

One successful national campaign is **Architecture Week**, which received several New Audiences awards totalling £381,695 between 1998 and 2003. **Architecture Week** is a national partnership initiative involving Arts Council England, CABE and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). It has grown dramatically over its five-year life, becoming recognised as a regular and valued feature of the national arts calendar. It aims to introduce contemporary architecture to new audiences, especially those who might not otherwise take part in discussions about the development of the built environment. It seeks to do so through a national programme of events 'which is involving, informing and fun'. It also aims to provide a national focus for the promotion of good design.

In **Architecture Week** 2002, Arts Council England formed a partnership with the *Saturday Mirror* and retailer MFI, to run **My Dream Home**, a national competition to highlight the week, gather research from people in an imaginative way and engage a new audience to architecture. The evaluation notes that by placing the competition with the *Saturday Mirror* tabloid, the project 'had the opportunity of reaching approximately 1.9 million people. This figure does not include "pass on" readership which can equate to approximately three people per issue'. The competition format with the lure of a £10,000 kitchen engaged 1,700 readers into answering a series of questions about architecture, and an independent research project collated the findings. The partnership was very successful, garnering two double page spreads within the *Saturday Mirror* for both 2002 and 2003 **Architecture Week**, gaining exposure for architecture without recourse to advertorial costs.

New Audiences funded major evaluations of **Architecture Week** in 2002 and 2003, which showed that the event is growing in scope and popularity. They revealed that the **Architecture Week** 2003 programme included 350 events, developed and hosted by organisations throughout the UK. This represents a 71% increase on the 204 events staged in 2002. Visits to the **Architecture Week** website also increased significantly, by around 120%. The evaluations found that the week is valued both by audiences and events organisers. It has become a key tool in the development of a more diverse audience for architecture and the built environment. Whilst the week creates a valuable focal point for the promotion of architecture, it also has its limitations. Some participants see the compression of events into a week as impractical. The **Architecture Week** approach also presents the challenge of how to sustain audiences for this artform for the rest of the year.

New Audiences also allowed the Arts Council to develop broadcast partnerships to explore the cutting edge of arts practice and new media technology. A notable example was **Slot Art**, a three-year collaboration with Channel 4. Its main objective was to provide a television platform for artists' work. In 2001, 16 artists were selected through open submission to make short, three-minute artists' films for television. In 2002, **Slot Art** shifted its emphasis to explore how television might help stimulate an audience for art on the internet. Four three-minute profiles of web artists were broadcast in April 2002 under the series title *I>dent/net*. These complemented and introduced new web-based works commissioned by the artists on the theme of identity. In 2003, the focus of **Slot Art** shifted once again. This time the work of young contemporary painters was promoted through a series of four three-minute artists' profiles.

New Audiences commissioned research found that **Slot Art** was exceeding its target audience of 300,000 by over 100%. The average viewing figure in 2001 was 648,000. In 2002 this rose to 783,000. Research into *I>dent/net* showed a significant crossover between the television and the internet audience. Almost half of external referrals to the *I>dent/net* website were from the Channel 4 website. 43% of all visitors to the website returned at least once.

Slot Art was broadcast on Channel 4 at 7.55pm in the three-minute gap following the Channel 4 news. This same slot in the schedule was also secured to profile a further New Audiences funded project, **Self Portrait**. A partnership between Channel 4 and Media 19, an arts venue based in Sunderland, **Slot Art** invited people across the UK to create their own self-image. 8,000 people were stimulated to take up the challenge. **Self Portrait** proved to be a very inclusive project, working across gender, disability, age and race. It involved 'ordinary' members of the public as well as distinguished artists and celebrities. The project, which had a presence on television and on the web, ran over 12 months and culminated in 12 short films featuring 12 members of the public. The self portraits produced are touring UK galleries during 2003 and 2004, and feature on the Channel 4 web site. The project won a Royal Television Society award.

Arts and new media

At the experimental interface of digital and live art practice, the Arts Council collaborated with the BBC on **Shooting Live Artists** (SLA). This digital broadcasting project explored how live artists could reach new audiences through a combination of the internet and other forms of presentation. 12 artists' commissions, created using a variety of media and methods, were made between 2002 and 2003. The most lauded was the BAFTA-nominated and Ars Electronica award-winner *Can you see me now?* by Blast Theory. The most controversial was *Skin/Strip Online* by Claire Ward-Thornton, Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett, which

invited the public to contribute anonymous photos of their own bodies. Analysis of traffic on the website showed a huge peak in visits shortly after it had received coverage in the popular press. The website hit rate of around 3,000 per week rose dramatically, to over 17,000, after the publication of articles in *The Mail on Sunday* and *The Sun*, demonstrating the impact of high profile media in stimulating audience awareness.

An exhibition at the Site Gallery, Sheffield, brought the work commissioned for **SLA** together in one place, and this was well attended. Visitor figures of 3,102 exceeded the Gallery's average by more than 10%. The evaluation of **SLA** showed that from the perspective of a commissioned artist, the project was a welcome opportunity to develop an audience for live art. 'It brings both online and off-line audiences together and makes live events much more accessible. Hopefully, it creates new audiences through cross-pollination.' (artist, *Evaluation Report for Shooting Live Artists 2002/3*, Prevista Ltd, September 2003)

Targeting a defined audience for web-based work is often not feasible. The breadth of the audience is potentially huge, but it may also be tiny. This mirrors a salient feature of how the web is used: by a mass general audience and by small interest groups linking up over long distances. Many internet-based arts projects seek to tap into both kinds of audience by including actual alongside virtual, linking exhibitions and launches with interactive happenings.

A number of organisations seized the opportunity provided by New Audiences to work with digital artists, or to distribute the work of artists more widely through digital channels. The Focus Gallery in Southend commissioned artist Simon Biggs to develop an ambitious new work **The Library of Babel**, 'a site-specific work for a non-physical site'. Launched in July 2001, it employed the Dewey Decimal numbering system, the system used by libraries to catalogue books, as a metaphor. Along with a website www.babel.uk.net, a series of interactive installations were developed for libraries around Essex. The 'three-dimensional website' also functioned as a web browser, so that the user could enter the websites of libraries around the world, from the Louvre to an American high school. From July 2001, an average of 2,000 visits was made each month to the Babel website, indicating a sizeable potential audience for this type of art.

Evidence throughout the New Audiences Programme has demonstrated the need for arts organisations to make fundamental changes to their existing practices if they are to engage with a broader range of audiences. Through the New National Partnerships funding strand, New Audiences funded a major new research study **Not for the Likes of You** (NFTLOY), which aimed to show how cultural organisations can change their overall positioning and message.

The project was jointly commissioned in early 2003 by Arts Council England, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (formerly Resource), the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. A preliminary audit of barriers to access and existing research, *Not for the Likes of You: A Resource for Practitioners*, was undertaken by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries. This then led to a further piece of work (with Morton Smyth associates) focusing on what really makes the difference in audience development and helping to define what organisations most need to do if they want to attract a wider audience.

The report document, *Not for the Likes of You*, published in 2004, is the culmination of this work and offers a fascinating survey of good practice and step-by-step approach to becoming genuinely inclusive. Consultants worked with 32 organisations right across the cultural sector that wanted to make, or had already begun making, fundamental changes. They studied models of good practice and identified key success criteria for those in the early stages of the change process. An important milestone was a *Learning and Innovation Forum*, where 60 people from the participating organisations came together to discuss initial findings and share their experiences to help shape the final stages of the project.

The importance of leadership behaviour was particularly emphasised within the report, stressing that good leadership is the only really solid foundation on which sustainable success can be built. Key success factors underpinning effective change management included the existence of a clear vision, which has audience development as a focus; the creation of systems and structures that fit the organisation's maturity and culture; and the nurturing and development of skills and attitudes of staff. Risk and mistakes are managed in a positive way, standards are set high for everyone in the organisation, and there are strong internal support structures.

The management philosophy permeates all aspects of the organisation's strategy, and those organisations that had successfully repositioned themselves to attract a broader audience were seen as exciting to engage with by all stakeholders, from staff and funders to audiences themselves. Far from suffering as a consequence of taking access seriously, the product was seen as vibrant and relevant in helping to connect with people in a meaningful new way.

The benefits of this research study can be evidenced by the resounding praise received by the project's participants:

'NFTLOY has been a unique opportunity to learn from other arts organisations creative ways of really engaging and widening audiences for the arts. It has given us the chance to reflect on what we are doing well and where we want to go next with the support of experienced professionals who share our passion for access. I'd recommend it!' (Kate Brindley, Wolverhampton Arts and Museums)

'The NFTLOY project and the recent Learning Forum has been deeply inspiring for Tamasha. It's helping us pinpoint areas for development, where to be bold, and how to approach change step-by-step with a steady determination.' (Joe Moran, Tamasha Theatre Company)

Case study

M6 Group, Hotspots

In 1999/2000 the M6 Group was awarded £20,000 to coordinate **Hotspots**. Established in 1996, the M6 Group is a consortium of 10 visual arts venues in the West Midlands. Guided by research carried out in 1998, each venue identified target 'hotspots' where under-represented audiences were not being reached by current marketing activities. The group developed a campaign of 'taster' events to attract new audiences from these areas. The majority of venues tested the effectiveness of direct mail by sending special invitations to targeted mailing lists. Others tested a personal approach by telephone to attract organised groups in particular geographical areas.

Outcomes

- across the West Midlands region 325 people attended seven different taster events involving eight galleries
- the invitation to dedicated events proved very successful – of the 233 invitations returned 135 respondents (58%) said they would be attending that gallery for the first time
- 35% of attenders had not visited a visual arts event in the previous 12 months
- the exhibitions were enjoyed by the majority of attenders with 72% rating it 'very enjoyable'
- the response to the experience was overwhelmingly positive. 92% of all respondents said that they would be much more likely to attend the gallery again

- over 90% declared themselves more likely to attend a similar event at the same or another gallery in the future

There was a relatively high cost in attracting new attendees in terms of print production, refreshments and transport costs. However, when available, the provision of free transport proved a major incentive to attendance.

Feedback on the personalised approach was overwhelmingly positive; it engendered a sense of being valued and wanted. Many visitors appreciated the fact that they also had a chance to meet directors and curators. The timing of invitations proved important. If they were received too early, then whilst initial take-up might appear good, this did not translate into actual attendance. If they were too late, potential visitors had already made other commitments. Although the targeting of specialist groups by two venues was successful, it took much longer to recruit people than anticipated as information had to go through committees.

The M6 venues felt that they benefited from the project's collaborative approach in terms of sharing experiences and joint problem solving.

Love Art Later, for example, involved nine London art galleries working together to raise awareness of their current exhibitions through a series of late night openings. A joint publicity campaign promoted extended evening opening times and sponsored bar nights at each gallery. This was enhanced by a sponsored media campaign in partnership with *Time Out*. New Audiences funded major research into the impact of this campaign.

190,000 leaflets were printed. 66,000 were distributed around bars, restaurants, cafes and clubs in London. This achieved an 89% pick-up rate. The remaining print was inserted into *Time Out* and distributed by the participating galleries.

The bar nights, which were the central focus of the campaign, attracted large audiences across the galleries. The bar at the National Portrait Gallery had a record attendance of nearly 800, double the normal evening opening level. The Dulwich Picture Gallery, which had no history of late night openings and therefore no regular audience, attracted nearly 200 visitors. Other partner galleries also reported higher than average visitor numbers for their evening opening.

Audience research found that:

- 67% of attendees said that the convenient timing appealed to them and 35% stated that this was the most important factor

- over 25% of the evening opening attendees were first time visitors to that particular gallery
- 56% thought that evening openings would encourage them to try new galleries
- the largest age group surveyed was 25–34 years olds, 32%. This represents a considerably higher proportion than current daytime visitors of this age group, 20%

The Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust sought in its **Time Out** project to mirror the success of the London galleries in attracting a younger adult audience to late night openings.

Case study

Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust, Time Out

In 2001/2 Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust (SGMT) was awarded £20,000 to deliver **Time Out**, a project devised to promote the major public visual arts venues in Sheffield – the Millennium Galleries and the Graves and Mappin Art Galleries – as places for ‘time poor’ young professionals to visit. The premise of the project was that more could be done to cultivate the city’s 20–34 year old audience. It set out to encourage first time and repeat attendees to the galleries through: extending opening hours; market research to identify barriers to attendance; partnerships with local businesses, leading to the cultivation of advocates (Time Lords); and introduction events linked to exhibitions.

The project evaluation found that:

- 1,330 visitors attended **Time Out** events across the venues
- new attendees averaged 41% (534)
- this target market and particularly first time attendees enjoy a social and more informal occasion
- 82% of respondents expressed an interest in events mixing visual art with music, film or performance
- 62% of visitors surveyed said that they heard about an event through word of mouth or a friend. This form of recommendation appeared to be more important to first time attendees
- 75% were interested in extended gallery opening hours, favouring a late night in midweek

- free events were more popular and attracted a higher proportion of first time visitors. Overall, however, it appeared that time is a bigger barrier than price
- time pressures experienced by the target group made a personal invitation and recommendation a relevant and appropriate approach

The Time Lords (advocates) represented an important focus for the project as they were real people from the target market, and although interested in the arts they were independent of the galleries. However, many of them were found not to be in the best position within their organisation to act as information points. In retrospect, it would have been more effective to recruit with the support of the human resources department.

Art and retailing: developing general audiences as buyers

Responding to The Henley Centre report challenge to make the arts fit better with people's lifestyle preferences, some New Audiences projects and evaluation looked at how audiences could be attracted to the arts as purchasers of art works. They showed that projects of this type can have a significant impact on the economy for the arts, as well as on its audience base.

The New Audiences programme commissioned major research aimed at developing the market for sales and commissions of contemporary art. Very little research had previously existed to inform planning in this area. Three major issues informed the brief for the work:

- how to increase the sales of innovative, contemporary art and private commissions through various distribution points
- how to encourage artists to become more entrepreneurial in their engagement with the marketplace
- how to expand the audience for contemporary work through the purchase and commissioning of work

The research programme undertaken by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre involved speaking to over 6,700 people including over 400 artists, 80 suppliers and 1,800 existing and potential buyers, presenting a quantification, analysis and explanation of how the art market works. The research report, *Tastebuds*, and advocacy publication examining the art market, *Market Matters*, by Louisa Buck, will be launched in September 2004. A report on the market for fine crafts will also be available in 2004 and will follow a similar structure to *Tastebuds*, analysing makers, suppliers and potential and current buyers.

New Audiences also supported advocacy work for **Open Studios** where audiences can meet artists and buy their work at the place of production. The programme funded a conference, publication, and methods for making available new research. There were 32 **Open Studios** events across England in 2001. 3,000 artists attracted 250,000 visitors and made over £1.5 million in sales.

‘The scale, scope and location of these events mean that they are well placed to do many things. They can reach new audiences, create a market for art and act as a formal or informal education centre. They can also offer a focus for the training and development of local arts businesses, help to regenerate and re-brand neighbourhoods and stimulate cultural tourism.’ (Paul Glinkowski, *Open Studios: a gem worth polishing*, Arts Council England, 2003)

A groundbreaking project in 1999–2000 explored whether new audiences could be encouraged to take an interest in contemporary visual art through the chance to purchase, from Homebase, objects designed by artists for home use and display.

Case study

Colin Painter, At Home with Art

In 1999/2000 artist and curator Colin Painter was awarded £65,980 to coordinate **At Home With Art**. This project involved commissioning nine leading artists to make objects to be mass produced and sold to the general public through Homebase stores. These included a lamp (Anish Kapoor), garden trowel (Tony Cragg), peg (Antony Gormley), shower curtain (Permindar Kaur) and ceramic plate (Richard Wentworth). A national touring exhibition, a collaboration between the Tate Gallery, Sainsbury’s Homebase, Wimbledon School of Art and National Touring Exhibitions, launched at the Tate Gallery in 2000, displaying the objects and explaining the process behind the project at galleries throughout the UK. The aims of the project were:

- to reconsider the home environment as a context for contemporary visual art
- to explore the possibility of contemporary art reaching a wider public through work being made specifically for the home
- to make available to a mass market objects made by contemporary artists

The project was deliberately non-specific about its audience: it wanted to appeal to 'all those people who do not usually have a close relationship with contemporary art objects and, in particular, do not live with them in their homes'. (Colin Painter)

Different levels of audience awareness of the project were created through various means:

- 150 Homebase stores stocked the **At Home With Art** items over a period of about 18 months – items were also available to order from the other 148 stores
- Sales volumes were higher than expected – total sales by volume were 19,068 items
- an exhibition at the Tate Gallery subsequently toured to 10 regional venues
- a 50-minute BBC2 documentary *Home Is Where the Art Is*
- extensive media coverage, including a feature on Channel 4's *Big Breakfast*, items on five radio shows and 85 press articles, including *Elle Decoration*
- a publication by Colin Painter, *Contemporary Art and the Home*, was launched at Tate Britain in November 2002

'I just go in every day and look at it and there's a little chink of light in my brain.'
(purchaser, fork and trowel, from *At Home with Art: Research with the Public*, Susie Fisher Group, Arts Council England, 2002)

Indisputably, **At Home with Art** discovered a new audience, and had popular appeal. Most importantly, given that this was a commercial initiative, as it gained in profile, so the amount of work sold increased. The findings from the report by the Susie Fisher Group state that the project, 'engaged a new audience ... a group as yet unfamiliar with contemporary art'. Furthermore, in meeting its objectives the report says that 'a very wide public saw and engaged with these objects by contemporary artists. Their interest and sense of challenge was heightened by the hands-on experience and option to buy which is characteristic of retail stores'. Moreover, the report makes clear that the project reached a 'genuinely new audience' who had not previously been introduced to contemporary art.

- It is estimated that around 37,000 **At Home With Art** objects were sold. Many people made multiple purchases, and some did so for investment
- Of those taking part in a survey of Homebase shoppers the overwhelming majority was in favour of **At Home With Art**
- The market for **At Home With Art** as a whole grew by 50% during the main sales period

- 93% of those asked said they would consider buying an **At Home With Art** item

The project successfully engaged a new audience within Homebase. It revealed significant scope for art in the retail environment and suggested that in-store display combined with the opportunity to purchase is effective in opening up the shopping public to new ideas, whether or not they purchase works.