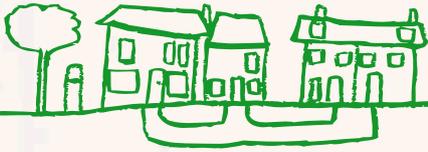


# Beyond Bricks



Multistory is a community arts charity that works with the people of Sandwell to make art that reflects their lives.

## Location

Birmingham and Sandwell



## Aim



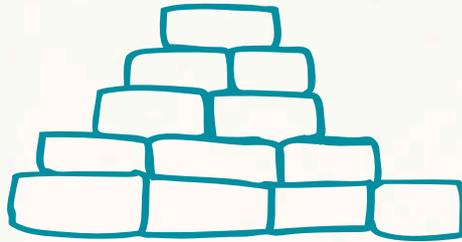
Engage communities using the creative arts



Photo by Lee Allen

Beyond Bricks was a programme of creative participatory projects that took place in large neighbourhood areas of Birmingham and Sandwell over a two-year period from 2008 to 2010. The programme was initiated and funded by Urban Living, (one of nine Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas in the UK) and Arts Council England. It was managed by arts organisation, Multistory.

Beyond Bricks aimed to bring a diverse range of artists and residents to work together to help strengthen connections with one another and develop a series of projects that reflected the ideas, talents and aspirations of local people. The project took place over a two-year period and included two separate phases comprising of 16 projects.



## Background

The downturn in the global economy has inevitably resulted in many large-scale capital regeneration projects being radically affected, with many projects either coming to a complete standstill or being terminated. This has subsequently led to changes in how we tackle regeneration, in order to find a more cost-effective, flexible approach. There has been a shift away from concentrating solely on the physical regeneration of a place and a recognition of the importance and value of arts and culture in regeneration and the wider role they play in helping communities make regeneration happen in other ways 'beyond the bricks' of capital building projects.

Using the arts and creative activities to engage residents in fun and exciting ways is becoming more widely acknowledged as a vital component in developing and supporting community-led renewal. Regeneration professionals, planners and Housing Market Renewal pathfinders such as Urban Living have realised that the physical transformation of a place is not enough to regenerate or create a sense of community in an area. Strong and well-connected communities are dependent on confident active citizens who need to be given the necessary resources and opportunities to connect with other people in their community. The interactions, dialogue and relationships that develop through programmes like Beyond Bricks help provide a framework that fosters confident citizens and therefore improve community cohesion and social capital.

Beyond Bricks shows how residents' attitudes, behaviours and ability to take ownership of their community are integral to building successful places and that people must be regarded as the most important asset in regeneration for it to succeed.



## Phase One: 2008-2009

The first phase of the programme took place in the Lozells and East Handsworth Ward, Birmingham in 2008. The intention of this phase was to establish an exciting and accessible approach to engage local residents through the arts and to develop imaginative projects which could easily be understood and translated to the wider community.





The programme set out to use a series of projects with clear and tangible outputs and outcomes so local stakeholders could easily identify how this way of working could benefit them and their community. Beyond Bricks aimed to develop relatively low-cost, process-based projects which encouraged participation and innovation.

This phase of the programme was fundamental in establishing local and strategic partners to help create a solid framework and programme of activities to advocate the role and importance of the participatory arts sector in community development and regeneration. We developed eight projects that used a wide range of art disciplines such as photography and film to showcase the variety of approaches using creative activities. This also provided local people with more opportunities to get involved in the programme.

Some of the Beyond Bricks projects in Phase One included:

### Ripple – Mother in Pain with Geese Theatre

Mothers in Pain is an informal, grassroots organisation that consists of a group of individuals who have had relatives killed or seriously injured as a result of gun and knife crime. Beyond Bricks helped Mothers in Pain find and work with theatre company, Geese Theatre and community filmmaking company, Reel Access, to produce a film about their experiences so they could use it as a teaching aid when working with young people. Following Beyond Bricks, Multistory found further funding to provide support and training to Mothers in Pain in order for them to devise a workshop toolkit and deliver an annual programme of workshops in schools in 2009-2010. The funding also enabled Mothers in Pain to set themselves up as a registered company.

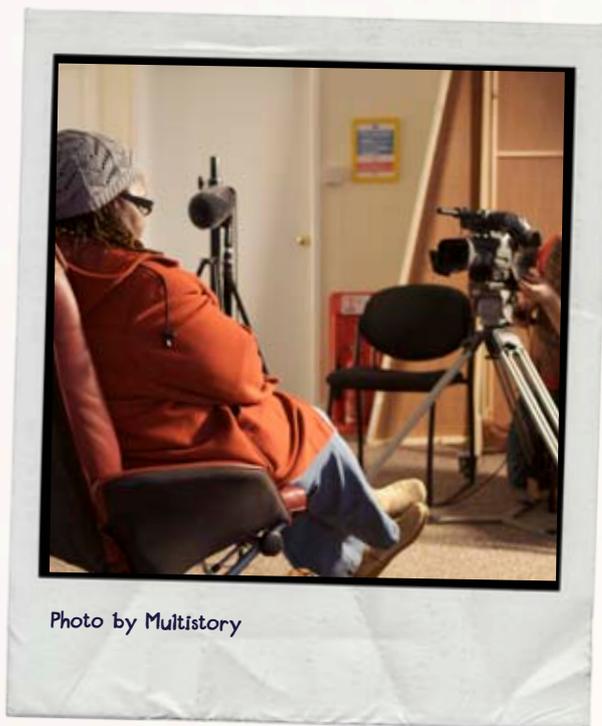


Photo by Multistory



## United Colours of Benny's Town – Redhawk Logistica

Redhawk Logistica worked with local professional decorators to help increase pride and improve the visual identity of the local area. Fifty households were invited to choose their own exclusive shade for their front doors from a palette of hundreds.



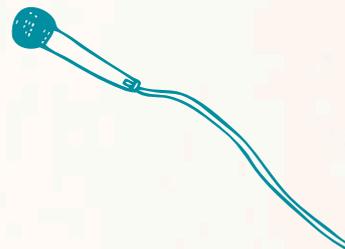
Photo by Multistory



Photo by Dave Remes  
Collective Media Agency

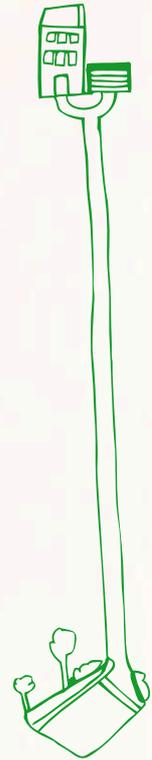
## Building Bridges – Sound It Out

Building Bridges was a community music project delivered by music organisation, Sound It Out. The project encouraged young people, their parents and community members to create their own music and lyrics, creatively reflecting on the area's diversity and the regeneration taking place in the area.



## Living in Lozells – Aspire and Succeed

Local organization, Aspire and Succeed worked with a filmmaker to train and support young people to produce a film about the place in which they live. This film aimed to challenge the negative images and perceptions of Lozells. This gave local people a platform to show what Lozells is really like and to present their neighbourhood in a positive light.



## Phase Two: 2009-2010

The second phase of the project began with a review of the first phase and this evaluation was used to inform and find ways to improve and develop the programme. We initiated the second phase by working with eight Neighbourhood Managers in Birmingham and Sandwell to devise projects that took place in eight separate neighbourhood areas. This allowed us to plan collaboratively with local stakeholders to ensure the projects were relevant and responded to local issues and needs. This process allowed Multistory to gain a greater understanding and awareness of the wider context of the area, such as its demographic profile and identifying other key partners and stakeholders to work with.

This targeted approach allowed Multistory to successfully develop projects that had a solid strategic framework rooted in a particular neighbourhood and that were supported through invaluable working relationships with the Neighbourhood Managers. As in the first phase, the programme continued to use a diverse range of art disciplines to offer more choice and options for residents to get involved.

### Some of the projects in Phase Two included:

#### As I See It - Scott Farlow

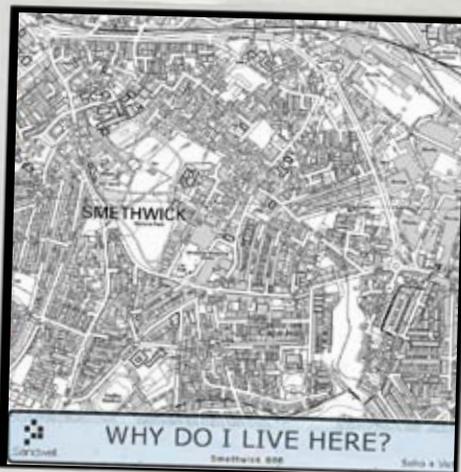
Scott worked with local residents from six streets to help them express what it's like to live there through a series of creative interventions. This included providing residents with cameras to document the 'everydayness' of where they live. These images then formed part of a mobile exhibition and consultation booth called 'mobilehome' which toured the streets. These creative interventions fed into a large master-planning and consultation exercise in Smethwick, Sandwell.



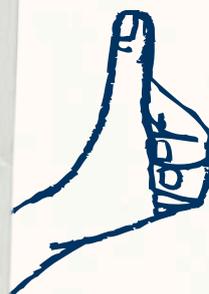
As I see it  
Photo by Scott Farlow



As I see it  
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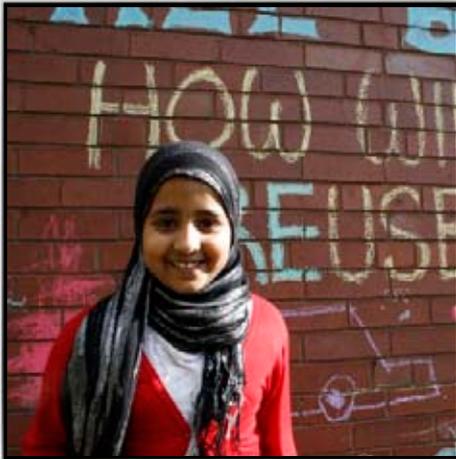


## Hands on Handsworth - Multistory and Homer Creative

Hands on Handsworth is a community magazine and blog produced by local volunteers in Handsworth, Birmingham. The community journalism project provided support and some basic training in photography and writing to enable the group to produce two quarterly editions of the magazine. Multistory gained further funding after Beyond Bricks to continue this project and produce another three quarterly editions. The volunteers are hoping to register Hands on Handsworth as a community-led social enterprise so they can sustain this project in the future.

## Make your mark in Lozells - Anna Garforth

Anna worked with local people to design and produce a Lozells' 'bag for life' to try and reduce the number of plastic bags used by local traders in the area. Through creative street interventions, Anna managed to get local people to draw and express what makes Lozells unique and to come up with ideas for what could be included in her design for the bags. 'Lozells Living in Unity' was the strapline used on 900 bags, which included many local people's drawings and sketches.



Local artist

Photo by Anna Garforth



Local artists

Photo by Anna Garforth



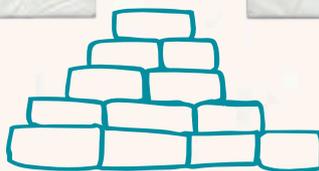
The Lozell's Bag for Life

Photo by Anna Garforth

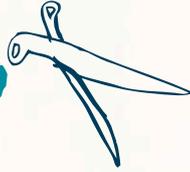


Local artist

Photo by Anna Garforth



# Techniques



Provide skills-development and training for participants

Arts-led consultation

Street Interventions

Community theatre and performance

Creation of Community Newspaper

# Key concepts



△ Help communities redefine themselves as positive, imaginative places to live and visit

□ Recognise that physical transformation is not enough

△ Use a diverse range of approaches and artistic disciplines

