

news

from arts council england,
west midlands

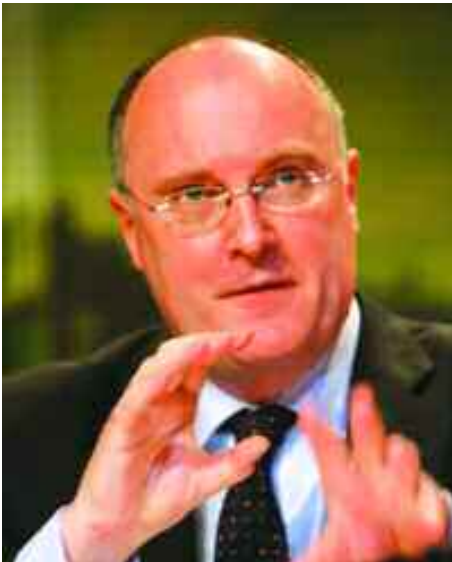
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



Pukou Launch Ceremony, 0319 from
Ming Jue, Photographs of Longbridge and Nanjing
by Stuart Whipps exhibiting at the
New Art Gallery Walsall 4 April - 1 June 2008.
© Stuart Whipps

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- excellence and innovation:
our £141 million investment strategy
for the arts in the West Midlands
- *mac* and *sampad* building project update
- The Big Picture – be in it



Alan Davey. Photo: Getty Images

Message from Alan Davey Chief Executive, Arts Council England

Arts Council England has set out its investment strategy for the next three years, one that has at its heart excellence, ambition and judgement. It's the most significant change to the Arts Council's portfolio in the history of our organisation.

Between April 2008 and March 2011, Arts Council England will invest £1.3 billion of income from government in arts organisations and strategic arts initiatives.

We will fund 888 organisations in total, of which 266 will get more than inflation. These include established organisations like the CBSO, the National Youth Theatre and Yorkshire Sculpture Park and younger organisations such as Kneehigh and the Arcola Theatre.

A total of 487 organisations will receive rises in line with inflation and there will be 81 new RFOs including Hofesh Shechter, Punchdrunk, and Artichoke.

These increases in funding will enable arts organisations to develop excellent art and deliver it to the widest range of people. They also empower those organisations to take artistic risks.

There are an exciting few years ahead as we respond to the McMaster report, ensuring that excellence and high quality arts experiences remain at the heart of what we do. The arts are about exploring possibility; making excellence possible is what we are about.

After receiving further evidence, deliberation by Regional and National Councils, and examination of the 126 responses received from arts organisations, we revised a total of 17 funding proposals. The details of those revisions, and of all our funding decisions, are available from our website www.artscouncil.org.uk.

I want the Arts Council in coming months and years to use this investment strategy to build its relationships with practitioners and the public, to build on the political consensus that is emerging that the arts really matter.

Change of this nature is inevitably difficult, but no change would have been the easy option. I'm convinced that this is the right thing, and the right strategy to build a healthier, bolder, stronger arts environment in this country.



Photo: Flair Photography

Introduction from Sally Luton Regional Executive Director

Welcome to the latest edition of *news*.

Since our last issue we have announced an investment of just over £141 million to 67 arts organisations in the region over the next three years.

As Alan Davey, our new Chief Executive explains we have taken this opportunity both nationally and regionally to make bold choices. In the West Midlands, 40% of the organisations we fund have received increases in excess of inflation and we have also provided funding for three organisations, new to the portfolio.

In this issue we put a spotlight on just three of the organisations who have benefited - Birmingham Jazz, Stan's Cafe and Tindal Street Press.

Each of these organisations was awarded significant increases to reflect the quality of their work, which has gained them regional, national and international acclaim.

The additional investment will enable them to build on their artistic achievements and develop new audiences confirming the West Midlands' reputation as a centre of artistic excellence and innovation.

In addition to rewarding excellence our intention has been to ensure that our investment reaches communities across the region. To this end we have provided above inflation increases to a range of organisations in the Black Country including Wolverhampton Arena Theatre and Bilston Craft Gallery.

In Staffordshire we have provided additional funding to the Borderlines project in Newcastle-under-Lyme for its work with young people at risk and B arts in Stoke, who provide a range of opportunities for community engagement in the arts.

It is also our ambition that investment should reach diverse artists and audiences. Punch, an urban arts development agency will receive regular funding for the first time and above inflation increases have been awarded to Black Country Touring for their excellent South Asian programme and to Chitrleka Dance Company and DASH (Disability Arts in Shropshire).

Finally we are increasing our investment in the regional visual arts infrastructure by 11% in 2008/9, reflecting the Arts Council's national strategy for the visual arts, Turning Point. You can find out more on page 11.

Our strategy in the West Midlands has been to support effective and thriving organisations and we will be expecting them to achieve increased engagement through the work that they do. In May we will be holding a series of meetings with our regularly funded organisations to discuss the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead and how we can work together to achieve our shared ambitions.

For a full list of Arts Council England, West Midlands' regularly funded organisations 2008-11, please visit www.artscouncil.org.uk



Stan's Cafe

Here in the West Midlands, we continue to invest in those who push artistic boundaries with their work.

Stan's Cafe is a perfect example of an organisation that consistently breaks new ground through their inventive and experimental practice.

The performing arts company based in Birmingham specialises in new theatre work delivered in unusual places, including street settings, galleries, festivals and non-arts venues.

Stan's Cafe works are varied in both content and scale - ranging from *It's Your Film*, a four minute theatre performance enacted exclusively for one member of the audience at a time, to the presentation of its acclaimed show *Of All The People In All The World* for Theater der Welt 2005 in Stuttgart, which featured over six billion grains of rice, one for every human being on the planet at that time, with a total weight of 104 tonnes.

'We've never stuck to the conventions of traditional theatre,' says James Yarker, who co-founded Stan's Cafe in 1991 and is now its artistic director. 'If we think something is a good idea, we'll do it, regardless of whether it seems like theatre or not. There are common themes for those who look hard but most immediately all the shows are intellectually rigorous and highly rewarding for all audience members.'

The company, which has been an Arts Council regularly funded organisation since 2003, received a significant uplift in its funding this year from £50,913 to £103,063 to support further development of the company and its artistic programme.

'The strides Stan's Cafe has made in the last four years can be traced directly to the impact that regular funding had on the company when it was first introduced,' explains James. 'This further investment is highly valued and will reinforce our ability to deliver high quality innovative art to audiences across the UK and abroad.'

Stan's Cafe also provides a wide range of educational programmes, from running short film-making courses with schoolchildren, to making large-scale theatre productions with university students.

Plans for this year include presenting their latest work *Dance Steps* at venues around the UK. The work, which was commissioned by mac to mark the venue's 18-month closure for building work (see page 13), is inspired by 'teach-yourself-to-dance' floor mats and encourages the audiences to perform the show themselves.

A full-scale world version of the hugely successful *Of All The People In All The World* installation will take place in Birmingham in September. In addition, the company will continue to tour extensively internationally, including shows in the USA, Australia and across Europe.

www.stanscafe.co.uk

Birmingham Jazz

Regular funding from Arts Council England, West Midlands is enabling music organisations to provide high quality artistic experiences for a diverse range of audiences and participants across the region.

Our investment strategy for 2008-11 recognises the excellent work being delivered by music-led organisations in the West Midlands. It also significantly broadens the musical scope of the portfolio to support a wide range of genres including choral, urban, gospel, symphonic and contemporary classical music, in order to reflect the musical landscape and wider demographics of the region. All of the organisations supported deliver world-class music to audiences and participants across the West Midlands.

Birmingham Jazz is one of those organisations and this year it sees its funding increase by over 300%, in order to support its ambition of becoming a national jazz development agency.

Birmingham Jazz is already one of the UK's leading jazz promoters, presenting up to 110 contemporary jazz events per year in a variety of venues. The organisation celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2006 and throughout its existence has worked hard to bring the best contemporary jazz from around the world to the region, as well as developing new audiences for jazz.

'I set up the organisation simply as an enthusiast who wanted to put on jazz events in Birmingham,' explains Tony Dudley-Evans, artistic director and founder of Birmingham Jazz. 'Since then, with the help of an incredibly supportive board of directors, as well as Arts Council funding, we have been able to develop our musical programme and

incorporate national tours and a highly successful education programme'.

The organisation promotes a concert series at various concert halls and arts centres, including the CBSO Centre, mac and the recital hall at Birmingham Conservatoire, as well as presenting jazz programmes in club venues that appeal to a largely young audience. Birmingham Jazz also runs the popular Rush Hour Blues commuter jazz sessions every Friday at Symphony Hall.

'We take a broad definition of 'jazz' because we want to support the development of contemporary jazz' says Tony. 'We take a proactive role and commission new work to help artists develop their careers. We've commissioned 20 new pieces of work in the last ten years and are really interested in collaborative projects that draw on other musics'.

'The increase in our Arts Council funding will allow us to take on a full-time development manager' he adds. 'That will really help us to develop programming and touring opportunities and increase participation through our education programme.'

www.birminghamjazz.co.uk

Susie Ibarra, Electric Kulintang at CBSO Centre, 7 March 2008. Photo: Russ Escritt





Catherine O'Flynn
Photo: John McQueen
johnmac14@mac.com

Tindal Street Press

Regular funding from the Arts Council provides important financial stability for arts organisations, allowing them to build on their successes and create and deliver confident, exciting and ambitious work.

One such organisation to benefit from sustained support is leading independent publisher of new literary fiction from the English regions, Tindal Street Press.

One of the smallest publishers ever to reach the Man Booker Prize shortlist, Tindal Street has received a significant increase to its regular funding as part of the Arts Council's investment strategy, taking its support from £43,286 to £50,000 in 2008/9.

The organisation has its roots in the Tindal Street Fiction Group (TSFG), a remarkably successful collective of writers who meet every fortnight at Tindal School to share their work. An arts lottery grant in 1997 enabled the group to publish and promote *Taking Doreen Out of the Sky*, a collection of short stories by Birmingham writer, Alan Beard after it was turned down by national publishers. The collection received favourable reviews in the national broadsheets and Picador instantly bought the rights.

'This showed us it was possible for a small independent publisher to make an impact on a national level,' says Alan Mahar, publishing director and co-founder of Tindal Street Press, 'and some of us decided to set up Tindal Street on the back of that success'.

Since then the organisation has published and promoted 37 titles, predominantly by writers from Birmingham and the West Midlands. Out of that, an impressive ten books have been listed for national prizes and in some cases multiple accolades.

'Long-term support and approval from the Arts Council has allowed Tindal Street to take risks by publishing manuscripts which

perhaps don't fit the conventional templates for commercial success' says Alan.

'Astonishing Splashes of Colour by Clare Morrall was passed over by 35 agents but we saw it as a 'good fit' for us and it's gone on to become our most popular title with 80,000 UK sales'.

'Likewise, we jumped at Catherine O'Flynn's *What Was Lost* which was overlooked by the big publishing houses, because we loved its humour, intelligence and its uncannily universal take on a regional setting. It won the Costa First Novel Award and was nominated for the Man Booker, Orange and Guardian First Novel 2007'.

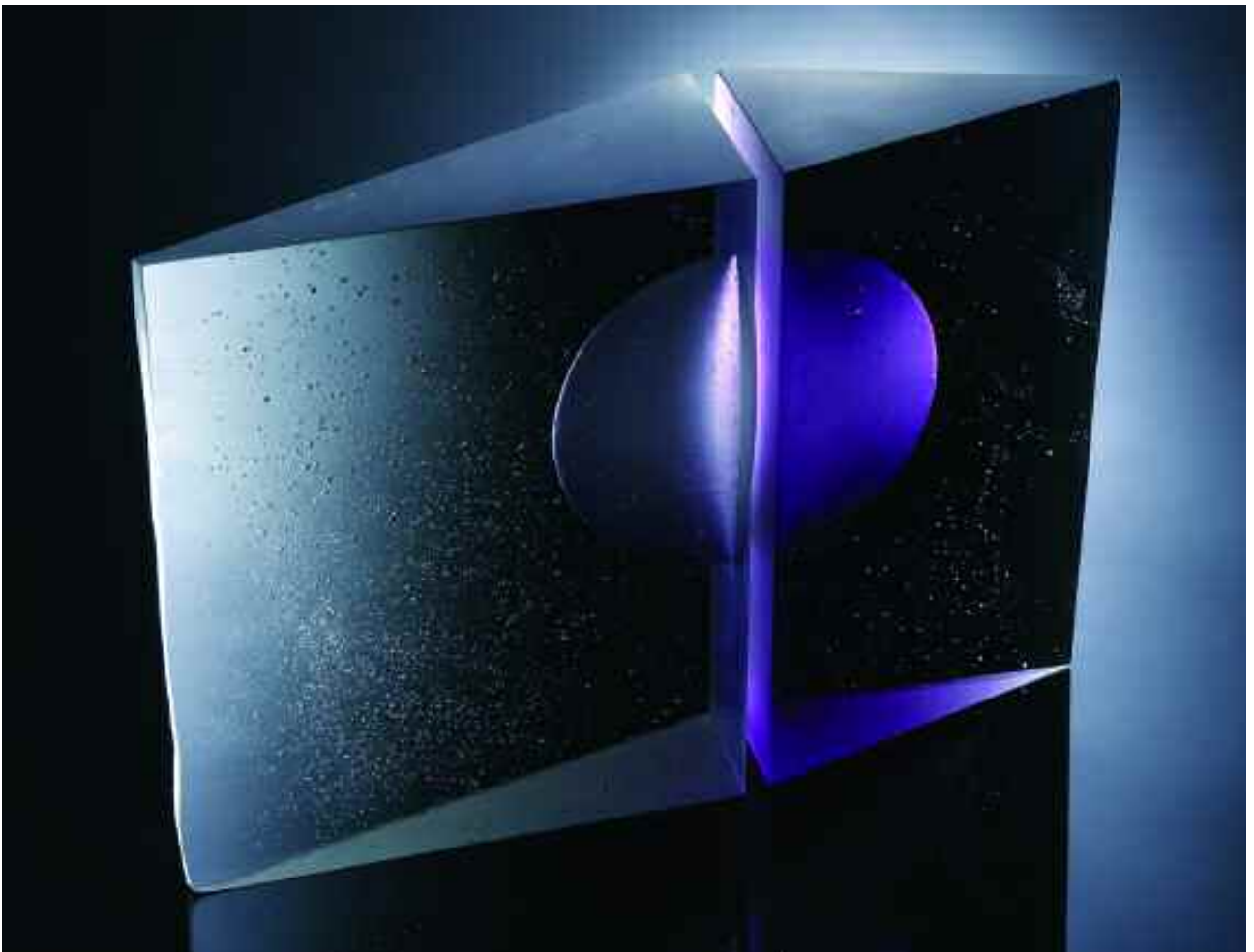
'We're very optimistic about the year ahead' he adds. 'Arts Council funding will help us to develop the content, and its accessibility, on our website and also enable us to publish six books, a number of which we hope may perform just as well as our two star titles'.

www.tindalstreet.org.uk





Chara by Bruno Romanelli, a member of the Contemporary Glass Society. Photo: Alan Tabor



Parallel Verve by Fiaz Elson, a member of the Contemporary Glass Society. Photo: Fiaz Elson

Visual arts in the West Midlands

In 2005 Arts Council England undertook its first ever national review of the visual arts, the findings of which informed *Turning Point*, the Arts Council's ten-year strategy for the visual arts, published in 2006.

The review drew attention to the extraordinary power and public appreciation of the visual arts – as evidenced by the success and popularity of landmark buildings such as Tate Modern - but it also highlighted the urgent need for further investment to ensure long-term sustainability and growth.

In order to address this, the Arts Council has prioritised the delivery of a strengthened visual arts infrastructure, as part of the *Turning Point* strategy.

In the West Midlands, this translates into significant increases to the regular funding of high achieving visual arts organisations in the region including the internationally-renowned IKON gallery and pioneering craft development organisation, Craftspace. In total, Arts Council England, West Midlands is increasing its investment in the regional visual arts infrastructure by 11% in 2008/9.

The Contemporary Glass Society based in Kingswinford, is a national practitioner-led organisation which provides support for glassmakers and plays a valuable role in expanding the crafts infrastructure.

The organisation has received confirmation of a 50% increase to its funding over the next three years which will enable it to respond to its increasing membership, sponsorship and partnership opportunities and continue thriving.

New Art Gallery Walsall has also received a significant funding increase which will help to support its new 4th floor exhibition programme, the new Art Library and

Archive, high quality education and audience initiatives, the artists' projects and residencies programme and the organisation's role in building and advocating for contemporary collections in the region.

There is additional investment in organisations such as Vivid, Bilston Craft Gallery and IXIA to increase their capacity and range of work and for The Public Gallery, which opens this summer. A new artist-led organisation called Eastside Projects, developed through a partnership between the Arts Council and Birmingham City University, receives regular support for the first time, as one of three new additions to the portfolio.

David Drake, Head of Visual Arts at Arts Council England, West Midlands, says

'The quality and diversity of contemporary visual arts and crafts in the West Midlands has been one of the region's best kept secrets. The time has come to recognise and celebrate the region's strengths and achievements in this area, and to build on them for the benefit of artists and audiences across the West Midlands.'

As well as helping arts centres and galleries to achieve larger audiences, our approach is to support the presentation of art in new and unexpected places and to encourage people who are not currently engaged in the visual arts to get involved, both as audience members and creative participants. We will also be offering increased support for regional artists to develop their talent and skills, enabling them to contribute to the creative economy and to gain national and international recognition for their work.'

For more information about *Turning Point* see www.artscouncil.org.uk/turningpoint



Birmingham Opera Company's production of *La Traviata* by Verdi

© Donald Cooper, donald.cooper@mac.com 00 44 1908262 324, ref/8049

Birmingham Opera Company shortlisted for RPS Awards

Birmingham Opera Company has been shortlisted for the 2008 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards in the Audience Development category for *La Traviata* at the NIA. The announcement follows confirmation of its revenue funding for the next three years, further to productive discussions with the Arts Council and Birmingham City Council which addressed previous concerns.

The annual RPS Music Awards are now regarded as the UK's most prestigious recognition of achievement for live classical music. Each award reflects the RPS's stated values of creativity, excellence and understanding.

The awards are decided by independent panels consisting of some of the music industry's most distinguished practitioners and honour a broad sweep of musicians, composers, writers, broadcasters and inspirational arts organisations. The winners will be announced in May at a dinner at the Dorchester Hotel in London.

Birmingham Opera Company, led by internationally renowned opera director Graham Vick, brought to the NIA his acclaimed production of Verdi's *La Traviata*, originally made for the 17,000 seat Arena di Verona. More than 300 people who live and work in Birmingham and the West Midlands got involved as singers and actors. With the CBSO playing for the performances it was a truly Midlands version of the production that took to the stage of the NIA in front of almost 10,000 people over 2 nights.

Starring American soprano, Talise Trevigne, singing alongside Birmingham Opera Company regulars such as Mark Wilde and Wendy Dawn Thompson and conducted by Italian conductor, Massimiliano Stefanelli, the performances attracted many audience members who had never been to an opera before.

www.birminghamopera.org.uk



mac and sampad Building Project update

Work on the **mac** and **sampad** building project in Cannon Hill Park begins in spring 2008 with the newly refurbished and much improved arts centre re-opening in autumn 2009.

Jointly funded by Arts Council England, West Midlands, Birmingham City Council and a **mac** and **sampad** fundraising campaign, the development will dramatically improve physical access creating a more effective and efficient arts centre. Put simply, in just two years time, the new centre will have lifts, bigger foyers, much more art and be greener and more energy-efficient too!

There will be a brand new, spacious gallery and the café and bar areas will be increased by over 40%. The building project will nearly double the number of toilets and install lifts which will link all parts of the building for the first time. All facilities will be family-friendly and there will be increased provision for families, with better baby changing and feeding areas.

The project also includes a specially

commissioned entrance bridge, helping to improve physical access to the building and the park beyond, particularly for disabled visitors. The amount and the range of educational work will increase by building new media studios and learning rooms so that **mac** and **sampad** can work with even more adults and young people. In short, the building project will secure the future of **mac** and **sampad** for the next generation.

For further information on the building project and to contribute to the fundraising appeal visit www.macarts.co.uk/ilovemac.



Artist impression of the mac and sampad building project.

EXPLORE

west midlands public art initiative

Explore is a dynamic pilot scheme to support the delivery of public art projects across the West Midlands. The scheme was set up by Arts Council England, West Midlands, in order to help build better relationships between those commissioning public art and the artists delivering the work.

It specifically aims to address the differences in language and working practice, while improving general collaboration and creating more choice and opportunity for innovative commissioning.

It does this by identifying and engaging

'Explore Advisors' from all manner of creative disciplines, who pass on their expertise to interested parties through tailored interrogative workshops, that aim to establish the best working relationships between artists and clients.

Three Explore workshops have already taken place in North Solihull, Stoke/Hanley and Longton. Further workshops are planned for Walsall Waterfront development, RegenWM, Birmingham and Sandwell housing pathfinder and Birmingham City Council.

www.exploreinitiative.co.uk

Update on the Cultural Olympiad

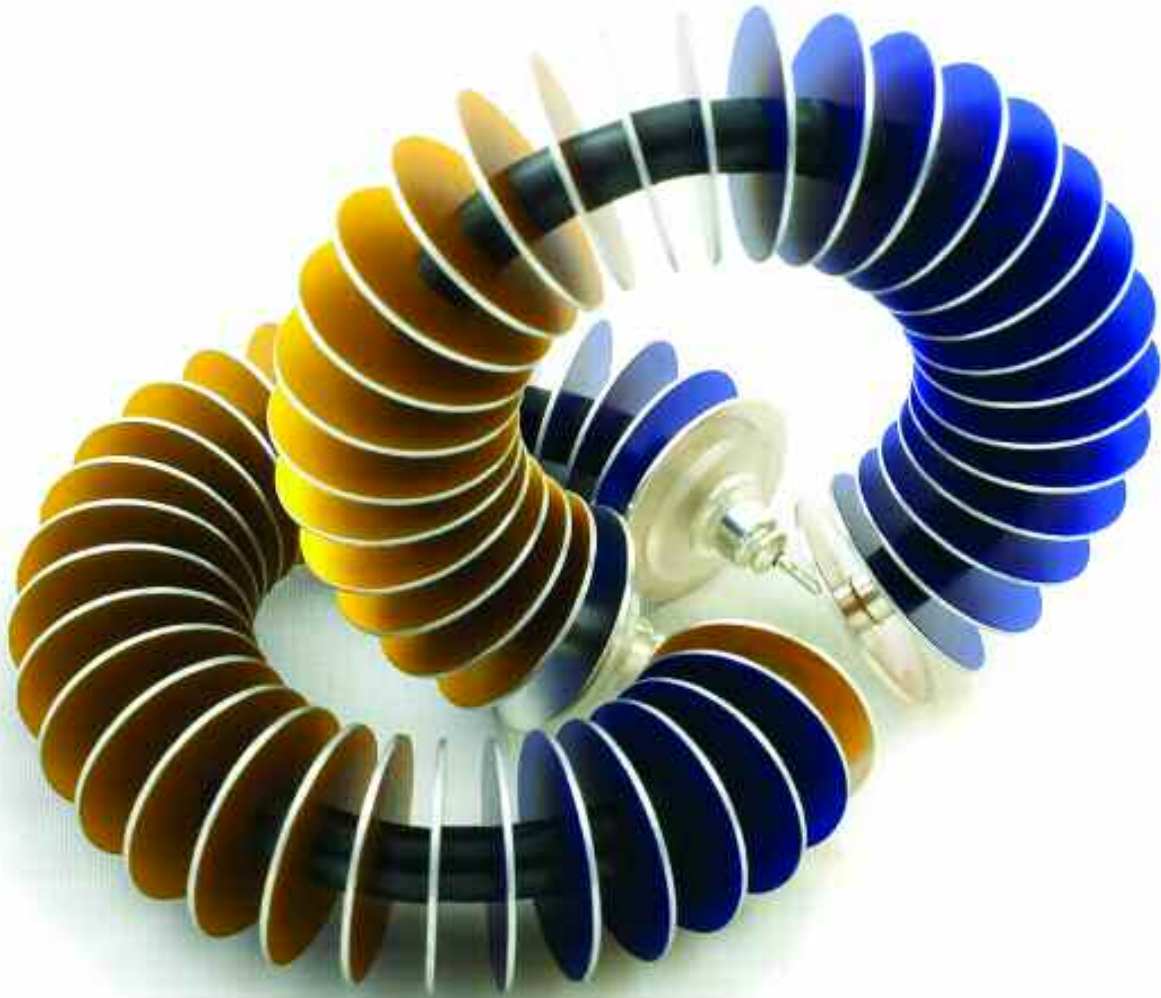
The four year Cultural Olympiad starts this Autumn in the build-up to London 2012. Cultural organisations in the West Midlands now have a number of opportunities to contribute:

- applications are now open to become part of the Cultural Olympiad and use the 'Inspire' mark. For full details of the criteria and simple application process visit www.london2012.com/beinspired. Cultural organisations should initially contact the West Midlands Creative Programmer, Paul Kaynes who can offer feedback on ideas and explain the application process
p.kaynes@culturewm.org.uk
- the Cultural Olympiad will be launched across the UK on the weekend of 26-28 September. Paul is interested in hearing from organisations who have events already planned which support the UK-wide core themes of the weekend: '*Light up*', where lighting is used to illuminate buildings, landmarks or simply to shine out from a window and '*Open up*' which allows unusual access to events or spaces across the cultural field, for free. Please e-mail Paul if you think you have an event or project which supports either of these themes during this weekend.
- cultural organisations who want to find out more about the Cultural Olympiad plans, both nationally and regionally, and contribute ideas have the chance to do so at one of four day-long workshops being held across the region in May. You can attend any one of the four workshops you like – you don't have to attend the one nearest to you, though if you do you're more likely to meet up with other people in your area who may want to collaborate on projects for the Cultural Olympiad. The venues and dates are:
 - Assembly Rooms, Ludlow 13 May
 - Gatehouse Theatre, Stafford 14 May
 - Cox's Yard, Stratford-on-Avon 19 May
 - Gas Hall, Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham 22 May

The approximate running time for each of these days will be 10am – 4pm with some variations. If you'd like to register for any one of these please e-mail Sam Stephens at Culture West Midlands at s.stephens@culturewm.org.uk.

If you have any other questions about the Cultural Olympiad, contact Paul Kaynes.

News in brief



Earrings from the VANE collection by John Moore
© Jewellery in Britain/BJA

John Moore wins the Kayman Award

Leamington-based jeweller, John Moore, has won the British Jewellers' Association's (BJA) Kayman Award 2008 for his work with mixed metals. Moore's coloured aluminium and sterling silver collection, called VANE, has won him a free stand at next year's Spring Fair.

Moore follows in the footsteps of his mother, Jane Moore, who won the Kayman

Award for her collection of enamelled silver pieces in 2005. Both jewellers have benefited from past funding from the Arts Council's *Grants for the arts* scheme funded by the National Lottery, to support their creative development.

www.johnmoorejewellery.com



Launch of The Big Picture – Photos: www.newsteam.co.uk

The Big Picture

21 January 2008 marked the launch of a massive, region-wide arts project called The Big Picture. The Arts Council project, which is being delivered by Audiences Central with support from the BBC, aims to inspire and encourage people within the West Midlands to take, use, view and manipulate photographs.

Since launching, The Big Picture has received coverage on regional TV, radio, press and online channels resulting in more than 21,000 photos being submitted to the Big

Picture website, www.inthebigpicture.co.uk, to date. By the end of June, The Big Picture aims to have collected over 95,000 photographs which will be used in a word record attempt to create the largest photo mosaic in the world.

If you would like to find out more about this project and how your organisation can get involved please contact Johnathan Branson at Audiences Central on 0121 685 2620 or by email johnathan.branson@audiencescentral.co.uk



The elephant in the room

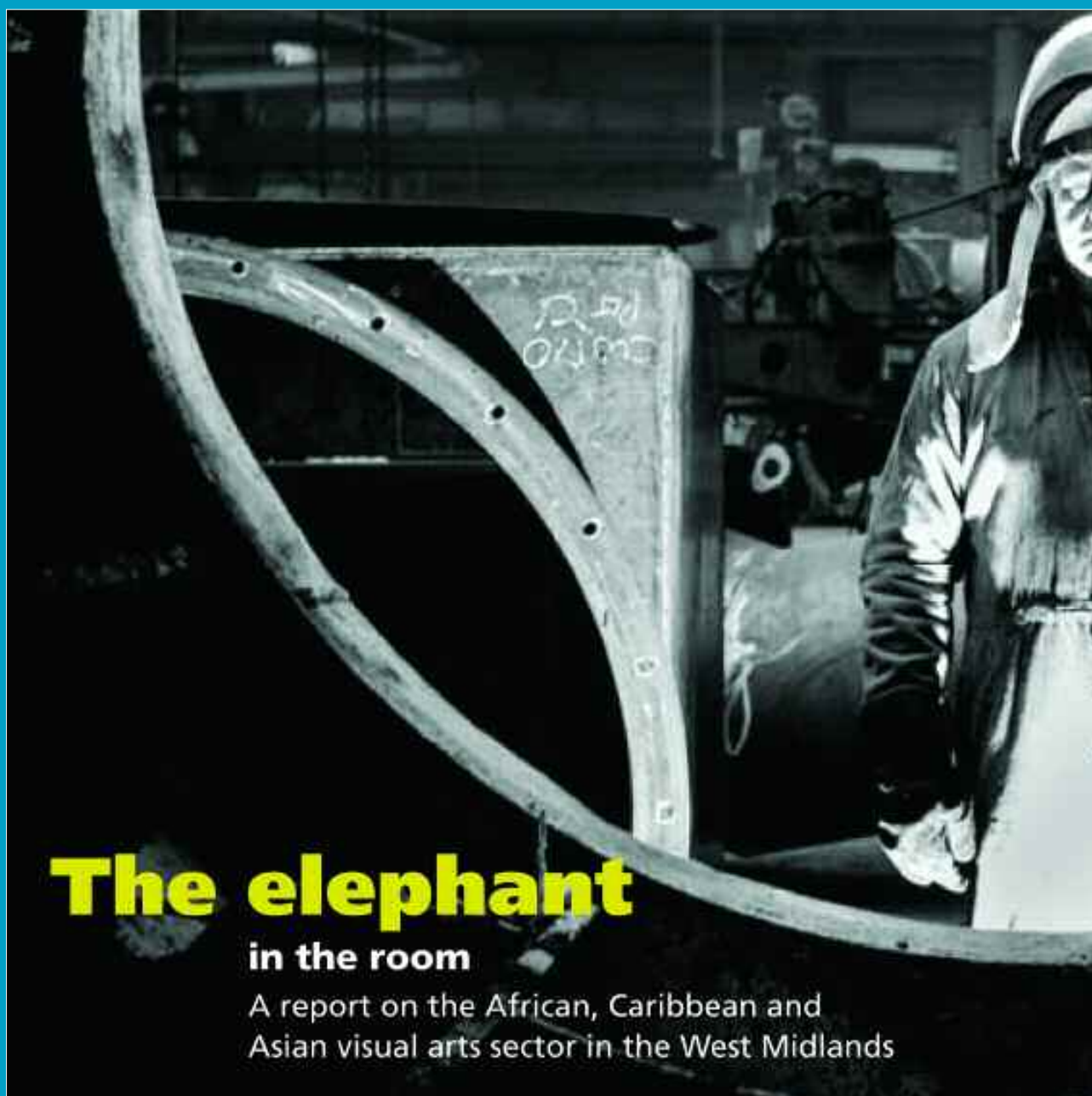
1 February saw the launch of a major new report on the African, Caribbean and Asian visual arts sector in the West Midlands.

The elephant in the room report was commissioned by Arts Council England, West Midlands and delivered by Hybrid and examines the opportunities and barriers facing the region's African, Caribbean and Asian visual artists and organisations, working in art forms such as crafts, photography, digital media, film and fine art.

56 delegates from across the region and the country attended a day-long seminar as part

of the launch and were treated to presentations by Sonya Dyer (artist/arts consultant), Shreela Ghosh (deputy Director, Iniva) and Naz Koser (Director, Ulfah Arts). The event was supplemented by a series of workshops, where delegates were able to contribute and comment on the recommendations presented in the report with a view to shaping their final outcomes.

The executive summary, full report and appendices are available as a download from www.artscouncil.org.uk



The elephant in the room

A report on the African, Caribbean and Asian visual arts sector in the West Midlands

Mark Ball appointed to Southbank Centre Board

Mark Ball, founder and former Artistic Director of Fierce Earth and the Fierce! Festival was appointed as a member of the Southbank Centre Board at the end of last year.

Mark set up Fierce Earth in 1997, specialising in the production and presentation of cultural events and went on to establish the Fierce! festival, now widely recognised as one of the UK's most vibrant

contemporary arts festivals. He was made a Clore Fellow in 2006/7 and holds posts at a number of arts organisations including Creative Republic, the Events and Festivals Theme Group, Live Art UK and Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Earlier this year he took up a new role as Head of Events and Exhibitions at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Craftspace and VSM (UK) Ltd win two Jaguar Awards for Arts & Business

Pioneering craft development organisation, Craftspace and its business partner VSM (UK) Ltd, manufacturers of Husqvarna Viking and Pfaff sewing machines, celebrated a double win at the Jaguar awards for Arts & Business at the end of last year.

The organisations triumphed in the Brand Identity Award category and also won the Employees Award for the most successful employee development programme using arts engagement and/or arts interventions to the benefit of the employees.

Mike Harris, Managing Director of VSM (UK) Ltd said 'Craftspace worked hard at

understanding our business, then tailor-made the project to maximise benefits for all involved. We gained far more than we expected. By introducing alternative ways of looking at our own skills, we have developed in totally new ways.'

Deirdre Figueiredo, Director of Craftspace added 'Our relationship with VSM has been characterised by a willingness to step outside one's comfort zone and make the effort it requires to build a genuine partnership based on learning, trust, openness to new ideas and ways of working.'

www.craftspace.co.uk

Director of Punch awarded MBE

Ammo Talwar, Director of Punch Records and a member of Arts Council England, West Midlands' Regional Council was awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Years Honours List for 2008.

Ammo set up Punch Records in 1997 as a record shop in Perry Barr, Birmingham, specialising in hip-hop, soul, garage and R&B. Organically expanding its remit to accommodate DJ competitions, intimate gigs and impromptu workshops, it soon cemented its reputation as an important hang-out for urban music devotees. Since then the organisation has become well-known for its high-quality education work and hugely successful DJ workshops.

Janette Bushell, Chair of Punch's Board of Directors commented, 'Ammo has worked quietly over the past decade making a real difference to the lives of many young people and musicians. As Director of Punch, his imagination and professional generosity has resulted in thousands of educational workshops and events launching new careers in the music industry. Many people who have worked with Ammo are now successful DJs, producers and workshop leaders in their own right, inspiring others to reach their potential.'

Earlier this year Punch was announced as one of three new additions to the Arts Council's regional portfolio of regularly funded organisations. The new investment will support their growth as a key development agency for urban arts in the West Midlands and the UK.

www.punch-records.co.uk



Ammo Talwar © Punch Records

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