

Call to Tender:

Audiences for the Digital and Public Realms

INTRODUCTION:

One of the benefits of Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture has been an unprecedented level of co-operation between arts organisations. Collaborative groups and projects such as Liverpool Arts Regeneration Campaign (LARC), Visual Arts in Liverpool (VAIL) and Small and Medium Arts Companies (SMAC) are working together to improve programme and practice, which is enabling them to take advantage of both the methods and economies of collaboration. This also means that Liverpool's visual arts organisations are uniquely positioned to explore issues and solutions which have proved challenging to the arts.

Amongst these challenges are the difficulties of understanding audiences for digital and public realm work. Audiences for both practices are, in many cases, dissolute, transient and ill-defined, mainly due to issues around where work is based. Work may be approached by anyone at anytime in environments that make it difficult to collect information. Additionally, expectations and understanding of such works from stakeholders and opinion formers are often quite different from the reality of the projects.

Therefore, a number of VAIL partners are proposing to lead a project to begin to fill the gap in knowledge about audiences for digital and public realm work and to co-ordinate this research with other projects, including the national framework for audiences in the gallery sector and the impact research for the European Capital of Culture year.

PROJECT AIMS:

- Provide greater insight into audiences for digital and public realm work
- Improve methodologies for understanding audiences
- Inform and link methodologies to the national framework for audiences

The underlying objectives of the project are to engage larger audiences more deeply, to inform programming and to attract more resources through a better evidenced case.



Currently, most of the visual arts organisations in Liverpool collect key audience and participation information. Additionally, most provide further monitoring in several key areas including age, gender, ethnicity and disability. Some of the VAIL associates commission extensive research to gather more information so VAIL has access to detailed information in the following areas, which provides a useful context in which to establish a picture of the visual arts audience for Liverpool organisations. This detailed information includes:

- **Audience Profile** - including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, employment, education, socio-economic grouping, household income, interests and usage of leisure time, and geographic origin.
- **Audience Behaviour** - including frequency and length of visits, primary motivation for being in Liverpool / visiting arts activities, and exhibitions and facilities visited, understanding engagement
- **Audience Perceptions** - including satisfaction with the product and marketing, likelihood of returning, relationship with the organisation's brands.

However, little of this information is directly related to digital or public realm work and the methodologies are not necessarily standardised or accepted through by all necessary stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY:

We are looking to appoint a consultant or research agency to work with the lead partners proposed to coordinate and manage a project to understand the environment for perceiving audiences and to test a mix of established and innovative methods for improving the knowledge base. This is a project funded by Arts Council England and seen in a context of acting as a pilot that could be rolled out nationally from 2009 to complement the rollout of the national framework for evaluating audiences for visual arts.

The process proposed is:

1. Review existing models of measuring quantitative and qualitative evaluation and research of audiences for digital and public art
2. Using these models, define a limited number of mixed-method models to test methodologies and results
3. Test these models on key projects during the 2008 Capital of Culture year
4. Gather and disseminate case studies which broaden understanding of audiences and impacts
5. Create recommendations to improve measurement and understanding of audiences for digital and public realm projects. This may include methods for linking these methodologies to national frameworks
6. Provide advocacy information to wider networks and influencers

A survey of existing models and knowledge held by Liverpool organisations indicates the limitations of existing efforts: incomplete knowledge of audiences due to lack of the resources and capability to mount comprehensive research, lack of shared methodologies that provide information which reflects audiences across a sector or artform, and the high cost of research and evaluation to individual organisations due to low economies of scale and the need to build benchmarks and methodologies for each investigation. The first stage of this project will create a more extensive



analysis of existing models and the scope of their application so that preferred models and applications can be identified and tested.

Many sources of insight into audiences are already used in arts organisations that create digital or public realm works and this project seeks to amplify the results by combining them into effective mixed-method evaluations.

SCOPE:

The research and testing elements of the project will be conducted during 2008 around projects originating or based in Liverpool or Merseyside. Suggested projects to form the basis of the research are:

Digital			
FACT TV & Archive	On line engagement	From September 08	On-line TV channel and digital archive featuring artists' work and exhibition related content.
Tenantspin – Open Tate	Streaming and live on-line engagement	December 08 for 6 weeks	TV studio built in gallery, live webcasts and You Tube/Tate broadcast
Public Realm			
Turning the Place Over	Permanent Public Art	Current	Richard Wilson's architectural sculpture located at Cross Keys House, Moorfields Station
Made Up 08	Temporary public art	September 20- November 30 08	15+ installations around city centre
BBC Big Screen	Public art	Current	Artists work exhibited on BBC Big Screen in Clayton Square, Liverpool City Centre
Another Place	Permanent Public Art	Current	Antony Gormley's installation on Crosby Beach
Audio Vision (Kinetic Fallacy)	Temporary public art	16-20 September	Projections onto the side of ventilation shaft near Pier Head

Case Studies and methods will also be co-ordinated with Impacts08 to ensure that the projects are interlinked and mutually supporting.

TIMEFRAME and CRITICAL DATES:

Appoint consultant: end August

Beginning September Start

Preliminary Report: end December



Final Report: end February
Dissemination of results: end March

PARTNERS:

The project will be guided by Visual Arts in Liverpool (VAIL), an association of Liverpool visual arts organisation who work collaboratively to generate new resources, market cohesively and build strong, widely-held positive perceptions of the visual arts in Liverpool. VAIL champions Liverpool's visual arts offer to ensure that the city is known and respected nationally and internationally by key audience groups for the quality, ambition and scale of its year round offer.

The project will be lead and substantially delivered by FACT and Liverpool Biennial as the leading organisations in Liverpool for digital and public art. Impacts 08 is researching longitudinal economic and social impact of Liverpool Capital of Culture in conjunction with the university sector and will be a key partner in this project.

Arts Council England is funding and supporting this project.

BUDGET:

In the region of £22,500.

For further information and to respond to this tender please contact:

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APPENDIX

VAIL ASSOCIATES EVALUATION METHODOLOGIES

A FOUNDATION

A Foundation gathers audience data by counting in all audiences and also compiles detailed information through an audience questionnaire which people have the choice to fill in. Audiences are also able to join a mailing list, which captures further data.

FACT

FACT uses the following methods to gather data on audiences: visitor surveys, e-newsletter, event feedback / evaluation forms, clickers on both galleries and main door entrance, membership sales and event ticket sales.

LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL

Liverpool Biennial commissions a full evaluation for each Biennial festival from The Mersey Partnership. The evaluation analyses the number of participants, socio-demographic profile and their approach to art generally, the types of visits in terms of group structure, motivation, length of stay etc.... The research incorporates all Biennial partners.

OPEN EYE

Open Eye collects audience information from a variety of sources including audience counts, mailing lists and surveys. Profiles are further analysed according to the gallery's target groups.

METAL

Metal gathers statistical information on number of audience members; participants; artists; workshops; exhibitions; and participating schools, community groups and arts partners. Participants, audiences and artists are analysed according to location, deaf and disability status and BME category.

NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL

NML conducts extensive research and evaluation into the number of visitors to National Museums Liverpool's venues and their profile and behavior through admissions, internal studies and commissioned studies by consultants and university research.

TATE LIVERPOOL

Tate Liverpool gathers information about its audience in three main ways: counting them in with automatic counters, box office and visitor research (an annual programme undertaken by The Mersey Partnership). The key objectives of the TMP study are to provide more information on gallery users. Information is collected in terms of visitor profile, visitor behaviour and visitor perceptions.

THE BLUECOAT

The Bluecoat will collect information about audiences, participants, artists and education sessions. Information will include demographic breakdown (especially by age, BME, deaf and disability status), participation, training and employment.

