

A nighttime photograph of a light festival. The scene is filled with silhouettes of people walking through a park-like setting. Several trees are illuminated from within, creating a warm, golden glow. In the background, there are large, glowing structures made of many small lights, resembling a large tree or a cluster of lights. The overall atmosphere is festive and artistic.

# déda | PRODUCING

Evaluation of the **On Site**  
Programme

April 2013

# 1 The Cultural Olympiad and East Midland's outdoor art

**The Cultural Olympiad was a key element in the success of the London 2012 Olympic Games, stunning huge audiences, both global and local, with the best of the UK's arts and cultural offer. Within the East Midlands region the 'Igniting Ambition' programme invested £1.61m of resources, supported by over £6m of of funding, most notably from Arts Council England. A major component of the Cultural Olympiad programme within the region was major outdoor arts events and festivals.**

The Cultural Olympiad spawned two major regional outdoor festivals. The SO Festival in Skegness which had been supported by ACE prior to 2009 to further develop as part of the 'Three years to go' London 2012 Open Weekend and is now in its fifth year. Derby Festé, which began in 2007 but has developed and grown through Igniting Ambition investment between 2008 to 2012. Derby Festé is now looking forward to its sixth annual billing in the Derby cultural calendar.

Other major investments in outdoor work included a performance by World Famous of the spectacular pyrotechnics show, Crackers, in Northampton. Mahogany Arts, also in 2009, delivered the opening festival of the GB Special Olympics in Leicester.

Déda Producing in the East Midlands was one of four national organisations to be awarded a Legacy Trust UK Community Celebration Award. This award allowed them to produce Games Time; a large-scale outdoor spectacular event which was premiered in Skegness as part of the 2011 SO Festival and the Open Weekend celebrations. The Skegness show was then developed in 2012 with participants from Loughborough, Northampton and Derby for performances during the summer of 2012, attended by a combined audience of 40,000.



Games Time, Déda Producing

One of the key legacies of the Igniting Ambition programme has been the development of two festivals in the region that heavily feature outdoor work, Derby Festé and SO Festival and other events such as Elemental Force. The Cultural Olympiad also brought to the table a range of partners to jointly invest in outdoor art, seeing it as a mechanism for delivering a range of social and economic outcomes.

It has also demonstrated that regional artists and producers can step up to the plate and deliver spectacular and high quality outdoor art work to a range of audiences. However, despite the additional investment and increase in capacity, the marquee moments of most major East Midland's (and much of the UK's) outdoor performances/festivals are still generally imported from mainland Europe, with outdoor work created in the UK often said to lack the spectacle and sophistication of work made there. Evidence from the On Site programme suggests that three quarters of the participants still delivered the majority of their creative output in the East Midlands and no artist declared undertaking international work.

The Cultural Olympiad programme developed a Creative Innovation programme to support the development of artists' capacity to engage in the Cultural Olympiad, the fore bearer of the On Site programme.

## 2 About the On-Site programme

**The On Site programme was supported by Arts Council England East Midlands to capture and embed the learning and good practice that the region displayed in delivering the East Midland's Cultural Olympiad through the staging and commissioning of major outdoor work.**

Despite the pockets of good practice, the region has historically not had the same depth of outdoor artists as other parts of the UK. Many of the region's highest profile outdoor performers tend to have limited local roots and a portfolio of work across the country. Below this level is a relatively shallow pool of artists that tend to work in localised arenas.

Déda Producing, who have played a major role in the region's Cultural Olympiad programme, were selected to develop and co-ordinate a programme of short-term development support with the East Midland's outdoor arts sector.

The programme has drawn upon regional, national and international expertise. The programme continues the ambition to deliver against some key long term objectives for the outdoor arts sector. These include:

- To deliver a high quality programme to support capacity in the Outdoor Arts sector in the region
- To support local artists to have a more prominent role in regional Outdoor Art work
- To support the development of Cultural Leaders and wider advocacy for the Outdoor Arts sector
- To identify additional specific ways of increasing capacity in the Outdoor Arts sector in the region

The programme has included a range of interventions designed to inform, inspire and develop arts organisations, businesses and individual artists within the East Midlands. The programme has included:

### Go See Visits

The Go See programme provided regional artists and producers the opportunity to see best practice in operation through technical and study visits to major UK and international outdoor events and conferences.

Whilst the Go See programme was limited by the timing of the On Site programme over the autumn/winter months, regional artists were given the opportunity to attend some high profile events including:

- Lyon Festival of Light: B Hodgson (artist), O Melia (Quad)
- Illuminating, York: G Hughes (freelance Project Manager)
- Fira Tarrega Festival, Spain: S Munn (Déda Producing)
- Royal De Luxe & Horslesmurs, Paris: S Munn
- Gun Powder Plod, York: G Hughes
- Enchanted Parks, Newcastle: S Munn
- Global Footprint, Northampton: S Munn, L Barber (freelance producer)
- Xtrax International Seminar, London: L Barber
- BAFA Conference for Festivals, London: L barber

Each attendee from the Go See events and conferences prepared a detailed debriefing report that has been included in the findings of this report, and some of the attendees have been interviewed. Two example debriefing reports accompany this document.

### Training and Production workshops

Four training and development workshops were delivered as part of the On Site programme, considering a range of components that artists and producers need to develop and stage high quality outdoor arts. The workshop themes included and were delivered by:

Creative Producing: Artist Focus – B Linstrum (Arts Agenda) & M Clarke (Xtrax)  
Creative Producing: Market Focus – Bill G & Mark Murphy  
Production: Management Focus – G Hughes & B Klinger (Walk The Plank)  
Production: Creative Focus – L Pugh & R Babington (Walk The Plank)

These workshops were attended by a total of 107 artists and producers from around the region and beyond and were delivered and facilitated by national and international figures within their respective fields.

### A range of mentoring for local artists

The On Site programme supported six regional artists and producers by providing an experienced mentor to work with them over a three month period to help them expand their creative processes, understand how to develop their practice further and focus their activity on what will make a difference as they look to expand and grow in their creative and management practices. The table below highlights who benefitted from the mentoring programme and who their mentors were:

Mentee	Mentor
Laura Barber (freelance producer)	Bettina Linstrum - Producer
Elaine Knight (Arts NK)	Bettina Linstrum
Alison Denholm (City Arts)	Bettina Linstrum
Katie Ward (First Movement)	Amit Sharma – Theatre Director
Richard Statham (Lakeside)	Gareth Hughes – Production Manager
Graham Callister (Northamptonshire County Council)	Bill G – Producer
Andy Jupp (Charity Shop DJ)	Bettina Linstrum
Stephen Munn (Déda)	Nigel Hinds - Producer

### A regional open network event

The On Site programme ended with a regional Open Network event in late February at Nottingham Playhouse. The Open Network gave all participants a chance to hear from the range of mentors and experts assembled as part of the On Site programme, share their experiences and best practice, discuss their ambitions and look at ‘what next’ for the outdoor arts sector in the region.

## Research

The final stage of the project is the research findings from the delivery of the programme. The On Site programme and the research findings are closely linked to activity that was commissioned in the West Midlands and the South West regions to look at the impact and legacy from their Cultural Olympiad programmes and draw common themes, issues and opportunities.

## 3 Evaluation of the On Site programme

**The findings of the evaluation of the On Site programme will have a considerable bearing on the development of the sector in the East Midlands. The current climate for investment into the arts and cultural sector has suffered as a result of public sector spending cuts, but Arts Council England has remained committed to outdoor work, with a major investment into the Elemental Force Cultural Tourism programme.**

As a response the evaluation has remained realistic in terms of the outcomes of the On Site programme and expectations of support for the sector in the current climate. Despite the current horizon, the sector itself in the region remains upbeat – something that came through clearly at the On Site workshops and Open Network.

The On Site programme has been evaluated through several approaches:

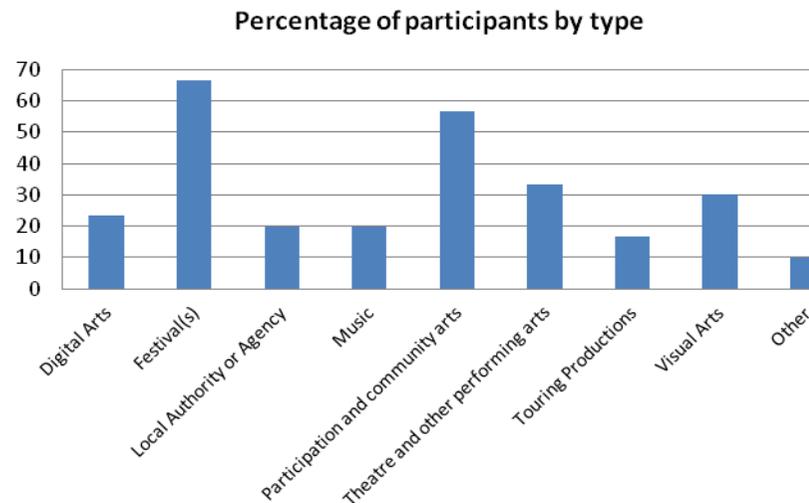
- Feedback forms at each of the workshop and network events
- Detailed reports from each of the Go See events
- Interviews with some of the key regional stakeholders and artists (see appendices)
- Direct participation in some of the events by the evaluators
- An ‘end of programme’ survey to all participants – to which there were 30 responses.

The evaluation aims to assess the following key questions:

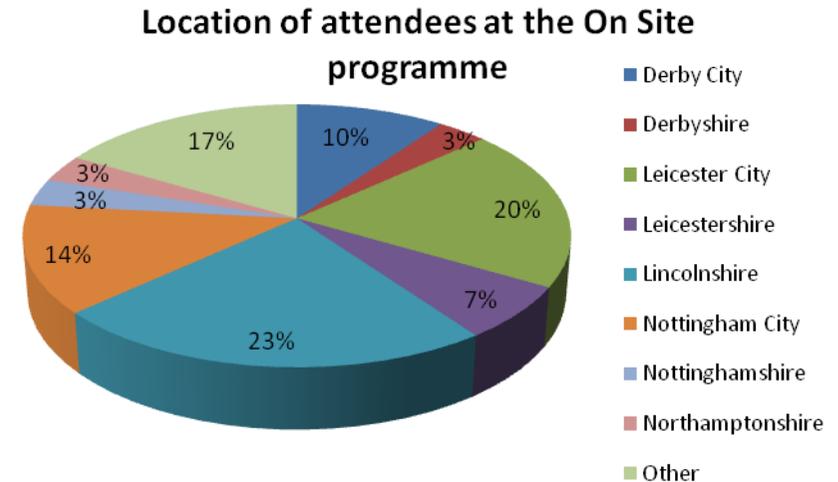
- Did the On Site programme provide a quality programme of development for the outdoor arts sector?
- Did the On Site programme deliver against some of the key objectives identified in section 2?
- Based on participants experience with the On Site programme, is there the need/demand for further intervention?

## 4 Quality and Relevance of the On Site programme

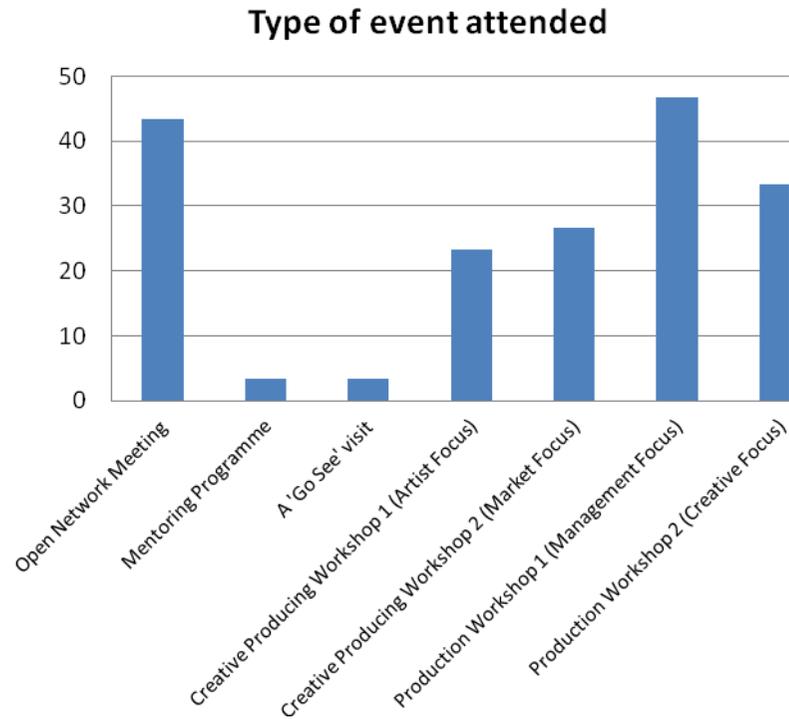
The main judge of quality has been the responses of participants to the end of programme survey, alongside their responses after individual workshops and events. In total 30 participants completed the end of programme online survey. Participants were from a range of art-forms and organisations as identified in the chart below, with the majority of participants being involved in festivals (67%) and participatory and community based arts (57%).



There was also a strong geographical spread across the region (and beyond) of participants on the programme, with all of the counties and unitary areas represented as identified in the chart below, which identifies the location of survey respondents. Participants from the major cities only made up 44% of the audience, with the rest coming from counties and outside the region.

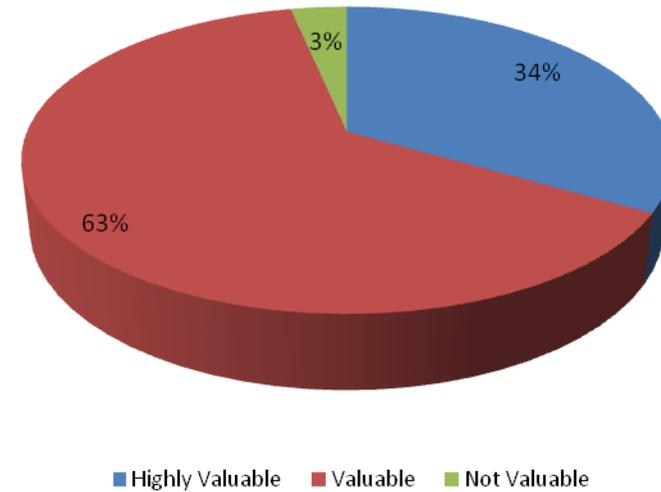


The chart below highlights the spread of activities that attendees at the On Site programme attended, with the majority of participants having attended the development workshops, most notably the Management and Creative Focus workshops. Over 40% of participants also attended the Open Networking session.



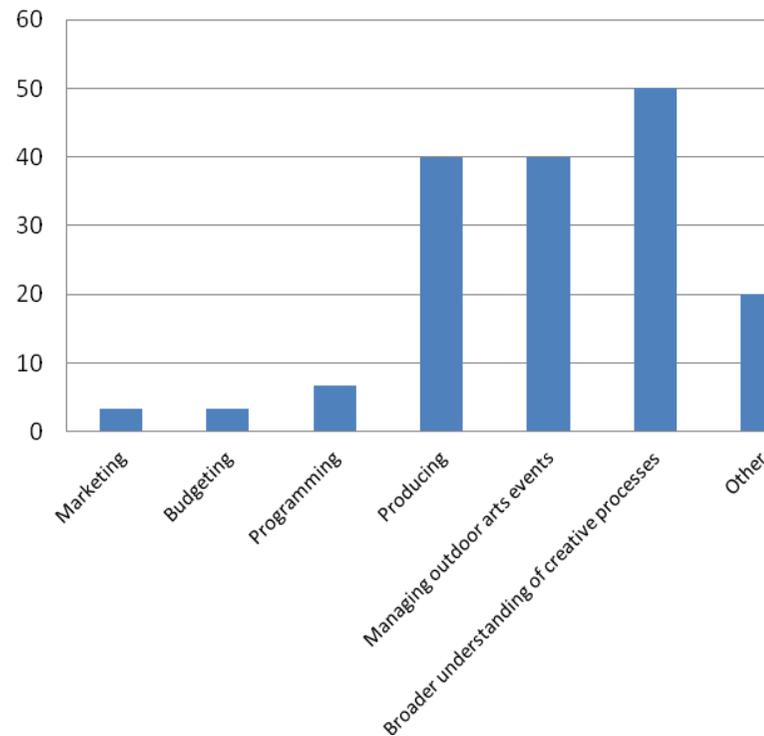
As part of the survey process, participants were asked to review the programme and state how valuable they had found it to their practice. In total 97% found the programme either Highly Valuable or Valuable. Organisations and artists that were involved in festivals gained the most value from the On Site programme, with 45% of the 20 respondents finding it highly valuable and the remaining 55% valuable.

### How valuable participants found the On Site programme



Games Time at Derby Festé

### Most valuable outcomes of the On Site programme

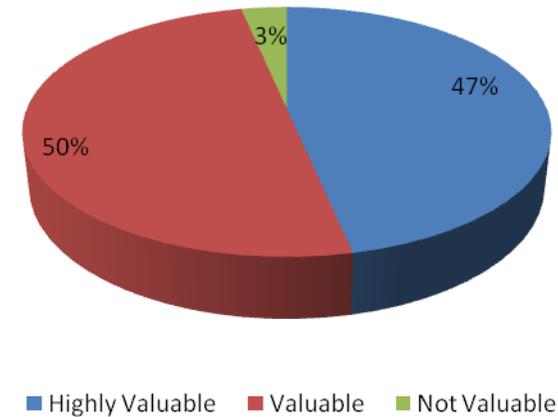


The chart above identifies which aspects of the On Site programme participants felt were most valuable to their practice, with the three key areas being Developing a broader understanding of creative processes , Managing outdoor arts events and producing.

“It opened my eyes to current thinking, established my knowledge base and reinforced my existing knowledge. Good networking and great to hear practical, realistic and large scale case studies.”

“Always inspiring to hear from great, successful practitioners who have bold ideas and the determination to deliver them.”

### How valuable participants found engaging national expertise



Another key component of the programme participants found valuable was the ability to connect and engage with key figures with national expertise in the field of outdoor arts. A total of 97% of participant found this element of the programme highly valuable or valuable.

“Great to connect with producers/festivals outside my region”

“The networking was useful and the insight into people's creative process was inspiring”.

## 4 Delivery against wider key objectives

The On Site programme has clearly provided a high quality and practical experience for its participants – as qualified by the responses to the evaluation survey. For many participants it has raised the ceiling of what might be possible within their own practice and shown them that there are opportunities available to secure commissions and develop new and innovative street art.

However, a step change in the quality and output of the outdoor arts sector cannot be achieved by just supporting artists through a short term development programme. There are some clear opportunities for outdoor arts in the future, notably around the ambitions of several parts of the region to bid for City of Culture or have their own distinct cultural celebrations (notably Leicester and Derby/Derbyshire).

If there is a desire to see more regional outdoor artists plying their trade on local and national high quality arts events, then there needs to be a more systematic process for developing talent, supporting this talent to be innovative in its artistic output, linking this talent to opportunities (locally and beyond) and then giving people the skills to fully take advantage of these opportunities when they present themselves.

It has been noted by several interviewees that East Midland's artists are noticeable by their absence at some of the key national showcase events (for example Mintfest). There is also a skills gap in preparing pitches and specific marketing aimed at producers. Whilst this was covered within the On Site programme (and highly valued) it was only really able to scratch the surface of the issue.

It was also noted that there needs to be more data captured on audiences at outdoor arts work. Positive steps have been taken on the major regional festivals and other activity such as Elemental Force, but it needs to be embedded across the whole of the outdoor (and indeed wider) arts sector.

The On Site programme has worked with a broad range of local artists and producers – drawing on national expertise to help develop local talent. One of the key themes of the programme has been trying to support participants to engage more with regional festivals and arts organisations. This approach was most prominent at the Open Network event, with a broad range of attendees and a good number of organisers of festivals having structured dialogue about where the region should go next and how more opportunities for local artists could be created.

The Cultural Olympiad created a much stronger platform (for example through Games Time) for regional collaborations on major outdoor work – and some of these relationships have been further cemented through the On Site programme. As the programme has ended, whilst some of these conversations have continued independently (most notably through a programme Facebook page), there is no forum to continue and stimulate new dialogue and collaborations.

The programme has also supported the professional development of many of the regions Cultural Leaders in the outdoor arts arena, giving them professional mentoring and a platform to exchange ideas. The value of being able to discuss and engage with key national figures was clearly one of the highlights for participants of the On Site programme.

However, given resources and timeframes, it has been impossible for the programme to advocate for the Outdoor Arts sector. There is clearly a need to further the case for outdoor arts across the region, with Local Authorities and other potential customers such as the National Trust, Canals and Rivers Trust and the private sector. The interviewees all cited the need for more advocacy within a region that has not traditionally had a sustained period of investment in outdoor art.

## 5 The case for further interventions

In total 60% of participants on the On Site programme said they felt there was a need for further support for the outdoor arts sector after the end of the On Site programme. Whilst this may not be an overwhelming majority of participants, it is still over half of the attendees and the overwhelming majority of whom valued the programme and its outcomes.

The rationale behind the On Site programme has also not diminished. If there remains is a genuine ambition to create a broader based arts sector in the East Midlands that can produce more distinctive and high quality work on more of a national and international footprint, more support and opportunities will clearly need to be provided to achieve this.

Arts Council England has indicated there may be some scope to support the future development of the outdoor arts sector through a 'Grants for the Arts' application but this of course cannot be guaranteed. There is a clear desire to see the sector expand and increase the quality of its output locally – with clear links established to the key priorities contained within '*Achieving Great Art for Everyone – 2011-2021*', with some potential to link to the growing agenda of cultural tourism.

It is also important that any programme does not duplicate current activity and networks, for example the Independent Street Arts Network (ISAN) and the British Arts Festival Association (BAFA). ISAN is a leading national membership organisation with over 100 members, working to further the strategic development of Outdoor Arts. ISAN is also an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

Based on the findings of the On Site programme, any future programme should clearly be targeted at supporting artists that have both the ambition and quality to benefit from the following areas of development:

1. There is an opportunity to create an opportunity for artists and producers to come together once a year via a Conference/ Seminar to hear national trends and engage in dialogue with key national figures, share ideas and provide a showcase for local artists to pitch their ideas to be part of future year's programmes.

There may be scope to link this event to the two larger outdoor festivals in the region – SO and Derby Festé, with the two events hosting each alternate year. This might provide an opportunity for longer term sponsorship and other income sources and to draw a professional artistic audience (including from outside the area) into the region's key arts festivals.

2. The mentoring programme has been particularly successful and would have benefitted from a much longer lead in and delivery timeframe so mentees can make the most out of their experience.
3. Provide a series of workshops aimed at supporting artists to develop a high quality portfolio for their work, develop a credible approach to pitching for work and develop a clear marketing strategy.
4. Work with some of the major regional infrastructure and venues (indoor and outdoor) to provide a test bed environment for street artists to test and perform new ideas, get feedback from key regional experts and test approaches with audiences.
5. Any future On Site programme needs to operate on a longer time horizon and engage a core of quality partners that can support the programme for its duration and that have strong and supportive links with a range of local artists with the potential to succeed.

## 6 Acknowledgements

The following individuals were interviewed as part of the evaluation of the On Site programme:

- Laura Barber, Project Manager, On Site programme
- Stephen Munn, Chief Executive, Déda
- Robin Morley, Magnetic Events, Festival Director - SO Festival, Chair of ISAN
- Geoff Rowe, Chief Executive, Big Difference Company
- Bettina Lindstrum, Co-Director, Arts Agenda
- Rebecca Blackman, Arts Council England



SO Festival, Skegness