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The Big Question

An interactive event hosted with *Arts Research Digest*

Programme

On 23rd October 2008 Impacts 08 jointly hosted *Arts Research Digest's* 2008 interactive event, 'The Big Question: The Changing Role of Research in Bidding for, and Measuring the Impact of, Large-Scale Cultural Events'.

The morning session was opened by Sir Bob Scott, and included presentations on the changing attitudes to research in relation to big events. In the afternoon, Beatriz García presented for the first time Impacts 08's findings on the impact of Liverpool's nomination as European Capital of Culture 2008 on inward investment to the city. This was followed by a panel discussion, chaired by Sara Selwood, that explored the kinds of research organisers of big events needed.

Speakers

Sara Selwood, cultural analyst and Visiting Professor at City University

Sir Bob Scott, leader of Liverpool's bid to be European Capital of Culture 2008, Chairman of Manchester's unsuccessful bid to host the Olympic Games and of its successful bid to host the Commonwealth Games in 2002.

Dr Beatriz García, Director, Impacts08, European Capital of Culture Research Programme

John Gold, Professor of Urban Historical Geography, Oxford Brookes University

Maggie Gold, Senior Lecturer, Arts and Heritage Management, London Metropolitan Business School

Stella Hall, Creative Director, culture10, NewcastleGateshead Initiative

John Kennedy, former Director of Cork, European Capital of Culture, 2005

Pat Abraham, Arts Consultant, Arts Council England Assessor Capital of Culture Bids 2008, former Executive Director of Dance4.

Overview

Twenty four years ago, Liverpool hosted Britain's first international garden festival. Every other year for the next ten years, international garden festivals (involving a significant input from artists) took place in Stoke on Trent, Glasgow, Gateshead and Ebbw Vale.

From 1992 to 2000, the Arts Council of Great Britain (as it then was) nominated a different city or region to organise a year-long celebration of a different art form, culminating in a UK-wide Year of the Artist in 2000.

In 1985, Athens was the first city to be nominated European City of Culture. Renamed European Capital of Culture in 1999, a different city (and since 2007 more than one city) has competed for the title every year. Liverpool was European Capital of Culture 2008.

What role has research played in the process of bidding for, and measuring the impact of, large-scale cultural events? How, if at all, have attitudes and practice changed over the past 20 years? How relevant is research to the people who plan, run and pay for such events?

The Big Question was a one-day event, organised by *Arts Research Digest* to find out what cultural sector managers, policy makers, funders, regional and local authority officers (in arts, leisure, regeneration, economic development), consultants, researchers and academics think.

The event offered a rare opportunity for participants with a shared interest in large-scale events and research to come together to:

- share their experience of commissioning and using research to bid for and evaluate big events
- ask questions of others with more or different experience
- look at the ways in which our use of research in this context is changing.

The event combined short, stimulating presentations, questions and answers, panel discussions and facilitated discussion groups. All participants received in advance a copy of *Measuring the impact of major cultural events*, a literature review commissioned from the Impacts 08 team.