

Fun Palaces 2014: Testimonials

Luton, Bedfordshire

"It was a total success and probably one of the best weekends of my life!!! It has been an incredible life-changing (yes, life-changing!) opportunity for me and then for the town / community we've had nothing but positive feedback and comments. So many creative connections have been made - many people also asked us to put something like that on monthly as they don't want to wait another year!! I've made so many new friends and have loved being able to give opportunities to young people - we found volunteer places for student technicians, photographers, DJs, scientists and so on to help out on the day and give them exposure in their chosen fields. We also discovered so many local charities and companies that we can give a boost to and watching my son fill with confidence as he gave Minecraft tutorials to other kids was just incredible!"

Liverpool Everyman, Liverpool

"What an incredibly life affirming weekend."

Croydon Fun Palace, London Borough of Croydon

"Building Croydon Fun Palace was a great way to bring some of the many interest groups in Croydon together to produce something really positive. It was important to us all to make something inspiring to showcase the energy, vibrancy and sense of innovation that characterises the area. Croydon Fun Palace enabled lots of residents, both young and old, born-and-bred and newbies, to unite and to highlight the wonderful things that happen here all year round. We hope that it has encouraged pride in the place that we all call home."

Lumb Bank, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire

"The event was important for our community for many reasons. Our neighbours and people local to Heptonstall and Lumb arrived in droves, all telling us that they had always wanted to see inside the house. Some thought it was a National Trust property and some a museum. I really feel as though we have been able to share our lovely house and grounds with people and offer them the chance to experience the spirit that is Arvon for themselves. I hope we have made many more friends in the community. It felt really special as if we were at the start of an arts resurgence."

Flying Fun Palace, Medway, Kent

"Our successes were transformative – the 80 year old man who has taken up Tai Chi, the photographer who discovered painting, and ALL the people who found that making art is for everyone."

ARC, Stockton-on-Tees, North Yorkshire

"We felt that it was really important to hand over the venue to the local community; local individuals and/or organisations were invited to take part and animate a space providing that the activity fitted with the overall philosophy of Fun Palaces. This ensured a wholly accessible approach and provided artists and organisation currently developing ideas with a platform to test out ideas, technologies and activities with new audiences in a family friendly setting."

Big Telly Theatre Co, Portstewart, Northern Ireland

"It was important to us to be part of Fun Palaces, because the concept matches exactly what we're doing through our Creative Shops Project, which is about using shops as shared creative spaces which offer new models of participation and a broader definition of cultural engagement. Genuinely inspirational."

Farnham Fun Palace, Surrey

"The making of the Fun Palace was an utter joy. It gave us the opportunity to learn, fail and achieve lots of new things. Meet new people (including lasting relationships). It was an amazing experience that gave us the guts to dare more and take on more projects. We hope to be able to bring more people to share the same life-changing (we mean it!) experience."

Royal & Derngate, Northampton

“Fun Palaces was such an amazing 24 hours of madness and our theatre saw so many new members of the community engaging with us and trying out new opportunities. All of the workshops and performances were completely booked out and all of the drop in activities were totally overwhelmed with the numbers of people – in fact this was something I underestimated – the sheer volume of families in particular who would like to take the opportunity to participate! The feedback has been wonderful from the community members dropping in and the artists who kindly gave their time and skills for free to this event.”

Whitstable Fun Palace, Kent

“The things I appreciated most about Fun Palaces were:

- The ‘have a go, it’s okay to try things’ ethos. To me a free event created in a short space of time gave me permission to try something. I learned loads, from running a workshop for kids for the first time, to talking to press, to putting in a grant application, to building a structure from boxes!
- The idea that a Fun Palace can be anything depending on the people involved. It was like being a curator of enthusiasm. We had a baker, a poet, a knitter, a Twitter expert, a writer, a cartoonist and a cardboard box fan involved, and all these things came together to make our event unique.
- The creativity of limited resources. It inspired us to do different things rather than paying for the same old entertainment.
- New friends. Meeting lots of likeminded people in my community was great, and especially seeing them shine by creating amazing things for our ‘Museum’.

Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, London Borough of Richmond

“Being able to make a Fun Palace at the Orange Tree was an absolute gift. Being able to enjoy and work in our rehearsal space in a new and different way, being able to engage with the 200 young people who cross our door every week, getting their families and friends in the building too, as well as members of our community who had never been to us before – all of this was and will remain priceless.”

Brockwell Lido Fun Palace, Herne Hill, London

‘In the film Field of Dreams, there’s a quote - “if you build it, he will come.” Well, we all built it and they came. I believe if you offer something to the community in the spirit of community (especially if it’s free!) they will come. We don’t do this nearly enough in the world. Think of all the expertise and knowledge we could be passing on.”

RSC, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

“Fun Palaces gave us an opportunity to open the doors of the Courtyard Theatre and invite people to come in and have a go at lots of different theatre based activities, from stage fighting to creating a fridge magnet poem, or finding out how quick an actor’s quick change really is.”

The Queens Theatre, Hornchurch, London Borough of Havering

“We were opening the doors and allowing our community to create their own environment in which to engage with each other. There was no theme, there was no agenda, it literally was an open platform to share skills and expertise with each other. This was liberating and fresh and seemed to create a different environment to other projects. It was important to us that our community felt ownership, they felt that their skills mattered and people wanted to engage to find out more.”

Proteus Creation Space, Basingstoke, Hampshire

“Fun Palaces was an incredibly important event to us being new into our arts building, as it eloquently described to the community what our integral vision of democratic, accessible arts participation is.”