



Leeds Canvas wins £500,000 London 2012 Cultural Olympiad commission

Arts Council England and London 2012 announced today (Thursday 22 October) that **Leeds Canvas** has been selected as the **Yorkshire region** winner of a £500,000 commission for *Artists taking the lead*, one of the major projects for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

Leeds Canvas was selected by an independent panel of Yorkshire artists and producers from the **five** projects shortlisted in August out of a total of **133** regional entries.

The winning project will transform Leeds. Internationally acclaimed filmmakers and artists the Quay Brothers will use the entire city as the 'canvas' for a series of art interventions and installations, building up to a spectacular one-off event centred around the city's Dark Arches. The project will be led by a partnership comprising Opera North, Northern Ballet Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Yorkshire Dance, Phoenix Dance Theatre, Leeds Met Gallery and Studio Theatre, Situation Leeds, Leeds City Council, and Leeds Art Gallery.

Leeds Canvas is one of 12 commissions that will be realised across the UK over the next three years, each inspired by their location and celebrating the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. There is one commission for each of the nine English regions and the nations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Leeds Canvas can't wait to get started on the project. Yorkshire Dance's Executive Director Wieke Eringa, on behalf of the partnership, said: 'Leeds Canvas is delighted to be given this unique opportunity to breathe life into this exciting collaborative project which we plan to build on for many years beyond 2012. We are deeply thrilled about the possibilities created by working with these inspirational, internationally renowned artists, and look forward to working with the people of Leeds and beyond to make it an unforgettable, enchanting experience. Leeds will never be quite the same again.'

The Quay Brothers said: 'Initially we were both frightened and yet flattered by this invitation to be the first directors of the Leeds Canvas. For us it is a fabulous opportunity to use the city of Leeds as a vast scenographic space. We have the entire city to create an unexpected marriage between all these different artforms.'

Nima Poovaya-Smith, Chair of the selection panel, said: 'All the shortlisted projects were exceptional but the powerful and highly imaginative vision of Leeds Canvas and the unique partnership at its core, that includes the city of Leeds' leading cultural organisations all working together for the first time, made it a compelling choice.

'Led by critically acclaimed artists with a worldwide reputation, the winning project will give individuals and communities across the Yorkshire region the opportunity to be actively involved in and enjoy the arts.

'Using the characteristic features of the urban landscape in Yorkshire, Leeds Canvas will be a celebration of our region presenting unexpected art in unexpected places. Through the programme presented in 2012 and in future years, it will also build a meaningful legacy of major cultural commissions in the area.'

London 2012 Chairman **Sebastian Coe** said: 'The winning commissions will be the catalyst for a truly national showcase of culture inspired by the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Each project will explore the nation and region's creativity as part of a UK-wide celebration of London 2012.'

Ends

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Notes to Editors

About *Artists taking the lead*

Artists taking the lead is one of the major projects of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Arts Council England is managing the project on behalf of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Wales.

The other winning commissions across the UK are:

East: On Landguard Point, Pacitti Theatre Company

East Midlands: Lionheart, Shauna Richardson

London: Bus.Tops, Alfie Dennen and Paula Le Dieu

North East: Flow, Ed carter and The Owl Project

North West: Projected Column, Anthony Mccall and Fact

Northern Ireland: The Nest, Brian Irvine and John Mcilduff

Scotland: tbc

South East: The Boat Project, Lone Twin

South West: Nowhereisland, Alex Hartley

Wales: Adain Avion, Marc Rees

West Midlands: Godiva Awakes, Imagineer Productions

The winning commissions will be developed across 2010 and 2011 in close collaboration with local communities. All twelve will take part in a final unifying celebration, prior to the opening of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

The value of the commissions awarded to the winning artists is:

Nine English regions	£500,000 each
Northern Ireland	£190,000 (Lottery funded)
Scotland	£460,000 (Lottery funded)
Wales	£230,000 (Lottery funded)

The winning commissions for each nation and region were selected by independent panels of artists and producers with a range of experience in commissioning major arts events.

The panel for the Yorkshire region was: Nima Poovaya-Smith, Cluny Macpherson, Tessa Gordziejko, Nicola Stephenson, Lateisha Lovelace-Hanson, Sohail Khan and Andy Wood.

The panel judged the submissions based on the quality of the ideas and how they met the four core aims of the project:

- ideas that are original and led by artists
- ideas that reflect or are inspired by the location in which they will take shape
- ideas that show a legacy for communities and artists beyond 2012
- ideas that celebrate London 2012 and reflect the values of the Cultural Olympiad.

For further information see www.artiststakingthelead.org.uk

About the Leeds Canvas project

Leeds Canvas will present a first time ever citywide collaboration between artists and arts organisations which will use the buildings, streets, and people of Leeds as the 'canvas' of the project.

Leeds Canvas has invited internationally acclaimed artists the Quay (pronounced 'kway') Brothers to be artistic directors of the project.

The driving force behind the project, also called *Leeds Canvas*, is a partnership between Opera North, Northern Ballet Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Yorkshire Dance, Phoenix Dance Theatre, Leeds Met Gallery and Studio Theatre, Situation Leeds, Leeds City Council, and Leeds Art Gallery, all of which are based in the city and work across the Yorkshire region.

The Quay Brothers propose the work is centred around the Dark Arches – an enclosed area underneath Leeds station which was created during the building of the station and which is the main gateway into the city centre from the south and the motorway. It will consist of a month-long series of interventions, including fragments of film and sound and movement, in unexpected places throughout the city, followed by week-long installations, building up to a large-scale one night event on the waterfront under and around the Dark Arches.

The project will be realised by a central production team and utilise the considerable expertise, personnel and facilities of all the partner organisations – who, in turn, will work with local people, community groups, educational organisations and individual artists.

Leeds Canvas is the first in a proposed series of citywide collaborative projects which will take place every four years led by different artistic directors and provide a lasting legacy for the Yorkshire Region after London 2012.

About the Quay Brothers

Born near Philadelphia in 1947, they have been resident in the UK since the late 1970s. Identical twins, they studied first at the Philadelphia College of Art and then later at the Royal College of Art in London. They have influenced a generation of artists from right across the arts – cinema, music, theatre and dance – and are hugely respected for the integrity and consistency of their work. As well as making their own projects they have also collaborated widely, with festivals, theatre directors, opera houses and choreographers, and they are always in demand for their designs for live performance.

Film: The Quays are most celebrated for their beautiful and enigmatic animated films, which often use a great deal of music and puppetry. '*Street of Crocodiles*' (1986), considered by many as their masterpiece, was acclaimed by director Terry Gilliam as one of the top ten animated films ever made.

They have also made documentaries on the composers Stravinsky and Janaček, as well as music videos and commercials, and live action films, including '*The Piano Tuner of EarthQuakes*' (2006). They have just finished a short documentary film in Poland called *Inventorium of Traces* and are currently working on a short film for the Polish Cultural Institute in London on a short story by Stanisław Lem called *Maska*.

Opera, Theatre, Dance: They have a distinguished history in large-scale theatre, dance and opera. Their work with the celebrated theatre company Complicite earned them a Tony Award nomination in 1998, and most recently they have designed the ballet *Pinocchio* and *Wind in the Willows* with choreographer Will Tuckett for the Royal Opera (ROH2) and Richard Ayres's contemporary opera

'*The Cricket Recovers*' for Aldeburgh and the Almeida Opera Festival. Their work also includes decors for opera and theatre productions and directing for Channel 4.

Visual Arts: Tate Modern commissioned from them a film based on Steve Martland's *Street Songs* and for the Wellcome Trust they made *The Phantom Museum* which was shown at the British Museum. They have completed installation pieces and exhibitions nationally and internationally.

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England works to get great art to everyone by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives. As the national development agency for the arts, we support a range of artistic activities from theatre to music, literature to dance, photography to digital art, and carnival to crafts. Great art inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves, and the world around us. In short, it makes life better.

Between 2008 and 2011, we will invest £1.3 billion of public money from government and a further £0.3 billion from the National Lottery to create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

About the Cultural Olympiad

The Cultural Olympiad is a national celebration of culture which is happening now and is about:

- Giving everyone in the country a chance to be part of London 2012
- Bringing sport and art together on a scale that has never been done
- Using the power of the Olympic Games to inspire creativity across all forms of culture, especially amongst young people.
- Making a real impact which will leave a lasting legacy well beyond 2012