

The Bloomsbury Festival returns to showcase the areas diverse talent

The Bloomsbury Festival is returning for its second year this October when once again an eclectic mix of music, theatre, literature and arts will be on show, highlighting the diversity of Bloomsbury, its businesses, organisations and residents.

Running from the 19th-21st October, the Festival will engulf the streets of Bloomsbury with the area's creative organisations putting on a series of over 150 events and activities. With over 28 venues involving 70 organisations, this year's festival once again promises to be a highlight of Autumn. Allied London, the re-developer of The Brunswick Centre, that sponsored the first Festival in its entirety, continues to be the headline sponsor in 2007.



Bloomsbury is one of London's best kept secrets. The area has been the home to artists and intellectuals for generations and is still at the forefront of artistic and cultural innovation today. The Festival will demonstrate the continuing artistic, intellectual and philanthropic interests of the area while at the same time providing entertainment for the whole family.

The Bloomsbury Quarter has always been an area in which well known artists and craftsmen have taken an active role in their local community. In the Eighteenth Century, the artist William Hogarth and the composer Frederick Handel helped open The Foundling Hospital for abandoned children. In the mid nineteenth century, Doughty Street was home to the writer Charles Dickens, a famous social reformer, and in the late nineteenth century an innovative group of Victorian artists, including William Morris, established the Art Workers' Guild on Queen's Square, which attracted a distinguished membership including most of the prominent younger architects, painters, sculptors and designers of the period.

The area is still a training ground for a new generation of artists, architects and designers, and the Festival aims to showcase work that is made by people in the area, or by people with an interest in the area.

Festival Director Roma Backhouse comments:

"Bloomsbury is an incredibly rich and diverse area that deserves to be celebrated - and that's what this festival is all about. We hope that the Festival will once again integrate a variety of cross disciplined businesses, groups and organisations while at the same time building links for the future in this unique and varied part of London."

"Through a wide range of partnerships which encompass businesses, artists, schools, hospitals, craftsmen, musicians, retailers, museums, galleries and charities, the Festival offers opportunities for people within Bloomsbury to work together and have fun, while discovering the range of remarkable talent and activity that the area continues to produce today."

This year's 'not to be missed' performances and activities include the Aerial Theatre Company Scarabeus which will be performing breath-taking aerobatics; the Literary Garden Party which will include bookstalls and readings from Bloomsbury writers; as well as unique musical collaborations between genres such as folk, jazz, hip hop and classical music. There will also be an exhibition of photographs showing the "hidden face" of Bloomsbury.

The October Gallery; The Dickens Museum; The Art Worker's Guild,; Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Foundling Museum will all host "open house" showcasing the heritage and history which runs through Bloomsbury.

Press Officer from The Foundling Museum explains the beauty of the Festival,

“We had over 1000 visitors to the museum last year and the Festival has really enabled us to increase our presence in Bloomsbury. It is a great opportunity for Londoners to explore an area that is often overlooked and the whole weekend brings Bloomsbury to life.”

Rosalind King from The October Gallery comments:

“We have all sorts going on during the Festival including a short story competition on the Saturday, a family day on the Sunday and we will have a stall showcasing various pieces of art in Queen’s Square throughout the weekend. The festival is great for the area, it brings the community together and draws more people into the district.”

Elsbeth Dennison from The Art Workers Guild said,

“We will be running poetry readings as well as having a book stall which showcases new material and artists. The festival acts as a brilliant way of raising the awareness of Bloomsbury, the areas creative talent and all the brilliant organisations working in the area.

Schoolchildren from the area will participate in a Festival of Light parade, bearing lanterns created in workshops with community arts group SameSky, and many Bloomsbury retailers will host "artists-in-residence", providing a platform for their work.

For more information on the Festival please visit www.bloomsburyfestival.org

Southampton Row thrown into turmoil as major road works begin

Major road works being carried out in Bloomsbury over the next 4 months have already started to cause major disruptions to traffic, local businesses and residents in the area.

The works being funded by Camden Council and Transport for London are taking place to improve the road surface and to strengthen the structure of the roadway which runs above a disused underground Victorian tramway. The £1.2 million project means resurfacing will take place along Southampton Row from Russell Square to the Kingsway junction with Kemble Street. The works which started on the 20th August are expected to be completed by December 2007.



Councillor Mike Greene, Executive Member of the Environment for Camden Council said,

“This is one of the busiest roads in the borough and it is vital that we improve and strengthen the road to meet the demands of traffic conditions, now and into the future. When the road was designed over 100 years ago, the authority could never have expected it to be as busy as it is today. Whilst the work is going to cause disruption for a short period now, it will take away the need for regular repair work which would inevitably cost more time and money.”

Already delays have been affecting Southampton Row from Russell Square down towards Holborn station with traffic being slow due to the road being cut down to one lane. Diversions have been in place and although pedestrian access has not been affected, crossing points have been moved to different locations.

For businesses in the area the works have already proved a major inconvenience. Owner of Verdi restaurant on Southampton Row, Mr Ruggero said,

“Don’t get me wrong, the work men are doing a good job and seem to be progressing very well but the works have caused all sorts of problems for us in terms of running the business. Deliveries have been very difficult as the vans can’t get access outside the restaurant. Trade has also been very slow as people are keeping away from the area affected by works and you can’t really blame them as it is dusty and noisy outside. Finally as you can’t cross the road in certain sections it stops potential costumers venturing over to check out our menu, instead they just walk straight on.”

The Council ran a drop in session to inform local residents and businesses about the works and the problems that they might cause. The session was a chance for residents and businesses to find out more detailed information about the timetable of the work, planned lane closures and diversions but Denise Akbulut owner of Denise’s Restaurant thinks the council could have done more.

“The works have been very disruptive to our business. It only seems like 10 months ago that the Victorian water pipes were having work done on them, which at the time caused a decline in our sales. Now these current works are bringing us to a standstill. We are lucky that we have various regulars because in terms of pulling in new customers, it just won’t happen with all the noise and dust. I would have liked to have seen the council pay each business affected a personal visit prior to the works starting. At the end of the day it’s my livelihood at stake.”



Councillor Green commented:

“We understand that the works will have an effect on local businesses and residents so we are making every effort to minimise disruption. We will be working with them during the construction period to ensure they are up to date on the progress of the works.”

To minimise disruption to businesses and residents in the long run, the Council will also be undertaking works to waterproof a section of the disused tram tunnel that runs underneath Kingsway in Holborn. The double decker tram lines were used up until 1952 and provided a link between the north and south of Kingsway as well as connecting the area to Waterloo Station. Unfortunately, as cars became the transport of choice for the majority, the Kingsway tram tunnel was closed as did the majority of the other underground tram lines.

As the steel structure of these old tunnels provide vital support to the road above, the works are being carried out in order to stop the deterioration of the structure. The waterproofing only applies to the section of Kingsway between Theobalds Road and Kemble Street.

For further information on the projects and planned diversions visit www.camden.gov.uk/kingsway

Michael Finney Antique Books and Prints

Sex, scandal and celebrity may be threatening to take over today's media but Britain's love affair with controversy all began in the Eighteenth Century. A remarkable shop in Bloomsbury tells us everything that Jane Austen forgot to mention.

As you wander along Museum Street's refined cafes and shops, an unruly Georgian mob is preparing to catch your eye, befriend you and make for your wallet. Scandalous politicians, disreputable clergymen, quack doctors and voluptuous debutants can all be found in Michael Finney's establishment. Two hundred years ago, this might have meant a bawdy tavern or a coffee house. But nowadays these colourful characters have their final place of refuge in Michael's remarkable antique print shop.



Entering this Aladdin's den of rare prints and books, visitors are immediately drawn to the colourful caricatures which line the walls. The art form began in Seventeenth century Italy, where the word caricare means "to load", referring to the artist's ability to load as much meaning onto their images as possible.

Michael trained as an artist himself and took an immediate interest in print making. Now surrounded by his artistic heroes, William Hogarth (1697 – 1764) and James Gillray (1757 - 1815), Michael knows all too well the challenges they faced. "Artistically their work is unparalleled and their satire carries such tremendous bite. They were genius print makers."

During this golden age of satirical print making, no-one was safe from their ridicule or criticism. Royalty and politicians were, of course, obvious targets - their corrupt, extravagant and often depraved behaviour made them impossible to resist. But caricaturists found ample material among ordinary folk too. The streets offered up lecherous old men, drunken fools, pompous dandies and hair-raising women of the night. London was not a place for the faint-hearted but caricaturists like Gillray found timeless comedy in the grotesque and they have been copied ever since. Recall Les Dawson's Ada Shufflebotham, Thatcher's cabinet in Spitting Image and any of the characters in the League of Gentlemen, and you see the legacy.

Hogarth was the first British artist to excel in this area. He was also the first artist to mass-produce his own work, in the form of engravings, for sale to the public. His satires on the follies and vices of his age—beginning with *A Harlot's Progress* and *The Rake's Progress*—were a great success and set the tone for all future work. He savaged political corruption, deplored cruelty to animals and lamented the general abuse inflicted upon the most vulnerable in society. Hogarth's successors differed from him in two respects; they had their work reproduced by etching rather than engraving and they were more concerned with political propaganda and pictorial jokes than with moral themes.

James Gillray is widely recognised as the father of modern political cartoonists. The Guardian's Martin Rowson considers him a hero and a major influence in his work. A number of Gillray's most cutting satires were directed against George III but when he viewed them, he could only complain "I don't understand these caricatures". Ridiculed and outwitted in one.

Gillray's political influence was tremendous, although he was neither a loyal Whig nor Tory. In 1798, Lord Bateman told him "The Opposition are as low as we can wish them. You have been of infinite service in lowering them, and making them ridiculous."

Over 1000 caricatures have now been attributed to Gillray and prices for his work have been climbing steadily since the 1970s. Several important prints, including the iconic "Fashionable Contrasts" have recently fetched more than twenty thousand US dollars. Michael Finney has an impressive collection of original Gillray's starting at around £600. If you are looking for a less expensive taste of Eighteenth Century satire, however, Thomas Rowlandson (1756 –1827) and Isaac Cruickshank the

Elder (1748 – 1811) produced hilarious work of their own. Rowlandson comes a close second to Gillray and carries a deserved price premium over Cruikshank, whose works start at around £180.

This is a wonderfully niche market. Michael Finney has a small but loyal customer base and they tend to know what they are looking for. "People who buy these caricatures have done their research. They know the artists and they usually know their history. Personally, I enjoy these works for their artistic skill but it's a very personal thing. For example, doctors love the medical scenes, politicians love the images of William Pitt and the patriotic sort like to see John Bull mocking the French."

So if you are taken to art, satire or simply want to see where some of the roots of the British wit and humour originated, pop down to Michael's Antique Books and Prints.

Address: 31 Museum St, London, WC1A 1LH
Website: www.michaelfinney.co.uk
Tel: 020 76313533

(NB – shop is closing down in December so this the last chance to see it in all its glory!)

The Bloomsbury Ballroom Scoops New Venue of the Year Award

The Bloomsbury ballroom, one of London's most spectacular art deco venues has been restored to its former glories and has won the RSVP Magazine award for the New Venue of the year for 2007.

London's unique and most opulent venue which has finally re-opened after having extensive renovation, won the award after fending off tough competition from Roundhouse and Sound London.



The RSVP awards, running in their first year were an opportunity to showcase the top operators in the event hospitality industry. Jeremy King, Editor of RSVP magazine said,

"All the companies shortlisted in the awards were deserved finalists and worthy of recognition in their own right. However, there had to be winners and I think you will agree the nine judges did a marvelous job in choosing them. For the New Venue of the Year award it was hard to look past the beauty of the Bloomsbury Ballroom."

Situated at the intersection of Southampton Row and Bloomsbury Way and owned by Mean Fiddler founder Vince Power, the building's neo-classical façade dominates the entire east side of Bloomsbury Square and is already popular with business functions, weddings (for which it is fully licensed), awards ceremonies, charity balls, film shoots, bar mitzvahs, catwalk shows and live music.

Owner Vince Power commented on the restoration: "We wanted to restore the ballroom carefully to take it back to a big on era of glamour and class. The majority of the budget was spent making the space functional by replacing the air conditioning and completely rewiring the electrics but detailed work also took place on repairing the art deco façade. We never expected to win an award so close to the renovation being finished but we are ecstatic about the award. It shows what a quality venue it is."

A breathtakingly impressive ballroom built in the late 1920's, it is a Grade 11 listed venue. With a stunning design by award winning architect Stephen Donald and furnished and decorated by Shaun Clarkson, the Bloomsbury Ballroom is once again one of London's most exciting venues, located just a few minutes walk from the West End and the City.

The versatile venue can hold cocktail parties for as little as 80 guests, dinner parties for 250 and live concerts holding 800. Additionally the venue is furnished with a superb Art Deco Crush bar as well as a Longbar that stretches the length of the Ballroom. The main ballroom offers a fully sprung floor, two storey high ceilings and a vast stage area equipped with the latest high quality sound and lighting equipment. The room itself can easily be dressed to a particular theme, however untouched, it still remains extremely impressive with delicate hues of purple in the colour scheme offsetting the original chrome art deco filigree work throughout the room.



Irish music venue owner Vince Power owns a host of top music venues, bars, restaurants and pubs in London including Profile, Odette's, Spiga, Bar 101, Powers Bar, Camouflage and Camel Bars. He opened his first venue in 1982, the original Mean Fiddler in Harlesden and since then has built a reputation for having staged the best and the biggest music events for the past quarter of a century.

The Bloomsbury Ballroom is one of the most versatile spaces in London and with the restoration complete, it now provides a beautiful and distinctive backdrop for a variety of bespoke events. For more information:

[The Bloomsbury Ballroom](#)

[Victoria House, Bloomsbury Square, London WC1](#)

www.bloomsburyballroom.com.

For venue hire enquiries please contact Marian Lindsay on 020 7827 3834 or email marian.lindsay@vpmg.net

What's On Autumn 2007

The Bloomsbury Theatre, 15 Gordon Street, WC1H OAH

www.thebloomsbury.com Box Office: 020 7388 8822

Josie Long and Friends

27 October 7:30pm

Josie Long, winner of the 'if.comedies' Best Newcomer 2006, hosts a show with some of her favourite comedians. She's joined by Tony Law, Perrier Award winner Will Adamsdale as the Human Computer, 'if.comedies' nominee David O'Doherty, and Isy Suttie.

Tickets: £13.50, concessions £12 for NUS holders and the over-60s

The Brighton Beach Boys

28 September 8pm

The Brighton Beach Boys are a 10-piece tribute band playing the best of Brian Wilson's music, from 'Surfin' USA' through to Pet Sounds, Smile and beyond. After a long time grappling with some of the most difficult harmonies and arrangements ever written in popular music, they've come as close as any musicians and vocalists ever can to the power and beauty of the originals.

Tickets: £15, concessions £12.50 for NUS holders and the over-60s

British Museum, Great Russell Street, WC1B 3DG
www.britishmuseum.ac.uk Box Office: 020 7323 8181

The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army
13 Sep – 6 April 2008

The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army will explore one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century, giving an insight into China's First Emperor, Qin Shihuangdi, and his legacy. The exhibition will include a number of the world-famous terracotta warriors from Xi'an, China, which were buried alongside the First Emperor in readiness for the afterlife, as well as some of the most striking recent discoveries made on the site.

Tickets £12, concessions (£10) for 16-18 yr olds & NUS holders, (Free admission for accompanied under 16's)

Pulse Contemporary Art Fair, Mary Ward House, 5-7 Tavistock Place, Bloomsbury, London, WC1
Telephone – 0207 099 9293

11th- 14th October

Running at the same time of the Frieze Art Festival in Regent's Park, American art fair Pulse which has already made its name in Chicago, New York and Miami will be descending on London to showcase work from 40 galleries with pieces on sale for up to £50,000

Rokeby Gallery, 37 Store Street, WC1E 7BS
Tel: 020 7168 9942 www.rokebygallery.com

Claire Pestaille solo exhibition
9 Oct – 13 Nov 2007

In her second solo exhibition at Rokeby, Claire Pestaille seeks understanding of both the history of painting and its subjects. By mixing contemporary and historical references from both art and literature, she maintains a synthesis of past and present which celebrates the magic of fantasy.

The Cartoon Museum, 35 Little Russell St, WC1A 2HH
Tel: 020 7580 8155 www.cartooncentre.com

Heath Robinson's Helpful Solutions
Ends 7 October

Heath Robinson's Helpful Solutions is the largest exhibition of William Heath Robinson's (1872-1944) humorous drawings for 15 years. It includes over 100 original drawings and sketches by the man who is one of the few artists whose name has entered the Oxford English Dictionary to signify 'any absurdly ingenious and impracticable device'. This exhibition displays many of the quirky, absurd and ingenious solutions that Heath Robinson developed to assist his earnest cast of characters.

The Cochrane Theatre, Southampton Row, WC1B 4AP
Tel: 020 7269 1606 www.cochranetheatre.co.uk

Aladdin
22 November – 24 November (7:30 pm)

A Pantomime in aid of the Starlight Children's Foundation
Tickets £30 Special Matinee performance on Sat 24 Nov - 3:30 pm (£15)