

## **Brent Museum and Brent Archives: Exhibitions and Projects 2010**

### **Ernest Trobridge: Visionary of the Suburbs**

This exhibition ran from 18 February - 19 September 2010.



Most Kingsbury residents would recognise the picturesque thatched cottages in Slough Lane, Stag Lane and Buck Lane, or the blocks of flats disguised as castles which dominate the junction of Buck Lane and Highfield Avenue. What they may not know is that these buildings were all designed by one architect, Ernest George Trobridge, in the 1920s and 1930s.

Ernest George Trobridge was a talented local architect and an important innovator of 20<sup>th</sup> Century English domestic architecture. He has been recognised and applauded for his pioneering approach to housing design. Many examples of his houses can be found in Kingsbury, but also in many other parts of southern England.

#### **The original publicity for the exhibition ran as follows:**



*Scattered around Brent are some unique buildings among the most interesting in Britain. Visit Brent Museum and explore the fascinating designs of the exceptional local architect Ernest Trobridge.*

*Through a collection of plans, photographs and artefacts learn how, throughout the early 20th century, Trobridge's architecture helped to shape North West London. Examine original documents and investigate how Trobridge, building on his strong Swedenborgian beliefs,*

*strived to provide good quality and affordable housing for the people who needed it most.*

*Ernest George Trobridge was born in Belfast on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1884. His father, George Trobridge, was an accomplished painter and the head of Belfast School of Design. Ernest Trobridge followed his elder brother Frank into architecture and in 1908, at the age of 24, won the Lanyon Memorial Prize, a travelling scholarship which took him to England. He was a man of strong moral convictions and firmly believed that not only the rich but ordinary people should have a nice house to live in. He made a point of employing disabled ex-servicemen, paying trade union rates to his builders and supporting building co-operatives. His designs provided good quality affordable housing for the people who needed it most. He was a lifelong vegetarian and died in 1942 after suffering with diabetes, being a vegetarian he had refused to take insulin which was then produced from slaughtered cattle.*

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## Kilburn Kultures

This community-curated exhibition, coordinated by the Granville Plus Youth Arts Centre, ran in Brent Museum’s Community Gallery from 5 March – 12 September 2010.

Kilburn Kultures was a heritage project aimed at young people aged 11-25 living in Brent.



The participants created a museum collection, a book, and a film based on their own and others' lives over the past 100 years. Organized by Granville Plus Youth Arts Centre, a youth arts and training facility provided by Brent Youth Service located in the heart of South Kilburn. Young people worked with curators, archivists, local historians and media artists as well as local residents to document South Kilburn’s cultural history to explore the idea of life in the area in 1910.

Their work resulted in the creation of a photographic collection which would inform future generations of life in South Kilburn in 2010. Their work was shared with local people, community groups, schools and partnership organizations to promote the local community, its history, values, buildings and culture.

"This is a unique project for, and by, young residents,

introducing them to archival work, historical research, and oral history with professional heritage workers, local residents and artists," said Cllr Bob Wharton, Brent Council Lead Member for Children and Families.

The museum installation was exhibited at Brent Museum from February to May 2010. It will be held by the Brent Youth Service and used for travelling exhibitions and displays in other venues.

### **The original publicity read as follows:**

*The Kilburn Kultures Exhibition is the culmination of a year-long project at Granville Plus Youth Arts Centre, where young people aged 11-25 years have discovered the cultural heritage of South Kilburn from 1910 - 2010. Quirky and moving histories are brought to life through photography, documentary film-making, creative writing, archival research and curating.*

*“This is something I will always remember and I am happy that I got to play a part. It gave me the experience and confidence I needed to go out in the world and film as well as learn new techniques in art. So, a big thank you to the whole of the Kilburn Kultures team, and finally a very big thank you to the Granville Plus Youth Arts Centre for giving a young guy like myself a chance to show my talents, and for my voice to be heard.’*

- Lyle Ashun, 21, Kilburn Kultures participant.

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## 175 Years of the Welsh Harp Reservoir

*In partnership with Church Farmhouse Museum, The Canal Museum, Welsh Harp Education Centre and the Natural History Museum*

This touring exhibition, originally created by Church Farmhouse Museum in Hendon, ran in Brent Museum's Community Gallery from 16 September 2010 – 31 March 2011.

To mark the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Welsh Harp, Brent Museum hosted a touring exhibition from Church Farmhouse Museum about the reservoir, an oasis of wildlife in north-west London. The display also included objects and images loaned from the Natural History Museum, Canal Museum and Brent's Welsh Harp Education Centre. The display aimed to show not only the history of the Welsh Harp as a reservoir but also its importance as a sanctuary for wildlife, a venue for canoeing and sailing enthusiasts and a popular destination for walkers and picnickers alike.

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## Fabric of a Nation: Textiles and Identity in Modern Ghana

*In partnership with The British Museum*

This exhibition ran in Brent Museum's Special Exhibition's Gallery from 21 October 2010 - 26 February 2011.



Fabric of a Nation was a fascinating touring exhibition from the British Museum. The exhibition focused on the use of printed cloths and their designs as expressions of cultural, social and political identity in modern Ghana. The exhibition revealed the integral role that fabric plays in many aspects of daily Ghanaian life from religious ceremonies to politics.

Through an extensive display of beautiful fabrics the exhibition explores the origins and the techniques used in their production as well as examining their economic importance.

To accompany this exhibition Brent Museum ran a series of community workshops with members of Brent's African community, in collaboration with artist Seiwa Cunningham. This group explored and recorded their lives in the borough. The resulting collection of objects, stories and a unique fabric artwork which they collectively produced was displayed alongside Fabric of a Nation, and has now become part of Brent Museum's permanent collections.

## Artist's Statement: A Nation's Fabric



Textile artist Seiwa Cunningham led workshops throughout summer 2010 with members of Brent's African community to produce a final artwork inspired by, and displayed alongside, the British Museum's touring exhibition Fabric of a Nation.

'Cloth is to the African what monuments are to Westerners. Indeed their capacity and application to commemorate events,

issues, persons, and objectives outside of themselves are so immense and fluid it even rubs off on other practices.'

- Ghanaian artist El Anatsui (2003,) citing the words of Sonya Clarke.

Fabric and cloth play such a huge role in African daily life and ceremony. We wear it, communicate with it, drape it and tie it. I couldn't think of a better way to represent the luscious, succulent women I would be working with, than with great swathes of luscious, tactile fabric. There are two kinds of traditional fabric designs in Africa: the ones with the cryptic names and titles that require one not only to know the proverb the design represents, but also to be able to interpret its complicated meaning. Then there are the ones that do exactly what it says on the tin. I'm talking about designs like the recent 'Ghana welcomes Obama' or the ones made to highlight disabled charities say, with a print of a person in a wheelchair.

I was inspired by both these features when creating this piece. On the one hand, you don't have to look too hard to figure out who's represented in the fabric; it's really quite obvious and in fact the viewer may have to take a step back from the piece, to take it all in. On the other hand, there are parts of each woman's story that are told so quietly, that you have to go right up close to the fabric to discover its secrets.

I was also inspired by Christo and Jeanne-Claude and their fabric installations. This pair of environmental installation artists are famous for 'draping' buildings and landscapes around the world, with thousands of metres of fabric. This forces the viewer to look at familiar objects in a different way.

The seven women who worked on this piece come from the Gambia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Jamaica, with lots of stops and crossovers in between by way of birth, study, marriage, work and chance. In the piece, their stories are positioned from left to right in the order of their country of origin on the west coast of Africa and Jamaica. As we stitched, drew and worked on this piece, we discovered the most amazing coincidences in our lives and worked out that we were basically all the same woman with the same story. We're all just telling it on different timelines.

If a pen mark looks unfinished, it's probably because it is. We left fabric edges raw and threads uncut.

This piece isn't finished. Life isn't finished and neither are our stories.

Seiwa Cunningham

**The original publicity for the exhibition ran as follows:**

*This autumn Brent Museum's Special Exhibition Gallery will be home to a striking touring exhibition of Ghanaian fabrics on loan from the British Museum. Fabric of a Nation explores the use of printed cloths and their designs as expressions of cultural, social and political identity in modern Ghana, as well as the origins of printing techniques and their economic importance.*

*A remarkable textile artwork designed and produced by members of Brent's African community will also be on display alongside the exhibition, as a visual exploration of the personal and shared cultural identity of those of African heritage who live in the borough of Brent today.*



**Stories of the World: This is Me, This is Harlesden**



'This is Me, This is Harlesden' is a project involving young people during 2010 to explore identity as part of 'Stories of the World', one of the major projects at the heart of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

The Cultural Olympiad began in 2008, and uses the power of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to inspire creativity across all forms of culture, especially amongst young people.

'This is Me' involved a group of young people working with a photographer and film-maker to explore fashion and identity.

The young people explored the subject through discussions, visits to the Brent Museum to explore their clothing collections, and interviews with local young people.

'This is Harlesden' involved a group of young people working with an artist to explore Harlesden's identity, both past and present, recording positive aspects of Harlesden through photography, sketching, writing poems and interviewing local people.

The young people then used their research as inspiration to create two banners which can be seen at Harlesden Library that show their journey through Harlesden, highlighting the history, colour and feel of the place.

[http://issuu.com/brentcouncil/docs/this\\_is\\_harlesden/1?e=0](http://issuu.com/brentcouncil/docs/this_is_harlesden/1?e=0)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9uEbwEoLM>

