

2007
In Warsaw and Kaunas



So they went forth and walked awhile,
having a pleasant prospect on every side.
Then said the shepherds, "Shall we show
these pilgrims some wonders?"

from The Pilgrims Progress, John Bunyan, 1678



The Seven Wonders

Introduction from
Brendan Jackson

The original list of the Seven Wonders of the World were all man-made monuments selected by Philon of Byzantium in 200 BC – his choice was essentially a travel guide for fellow Athenians. These ancient wonders were cited as evidence of the ability of humans to change their surrounding landscape by building massive and beautiful structures, and a celebration of religion, mythology, art, power and science.

More recently, Britain's foremost contemporary sculptor, Antony Gormley, proposed that the M1 - the six lane motorway which runs from London to Leeds, originally constructed in 1959 - should be designated one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. 'For me,' he said, 'the M1 is the modern equivalent of the megalithic monuments of Stonehenge, the Ring of Brodgar or Silbury Hill. Those charted the movement of planetary bodies – whereas in modern life we are obsessed with the movement of human bodies.'

The Wonders of... acts as a simple framework for cultural animation activities, a mechanism to reveal and celebrate unusual and hidden aspects of everyday life – in which your observations, annotations, evocations and examinations can provide a contemporary profile of the industrial, cultural and social heritage of any given area.

The work is created through consultation and dialogue with interest groups and residents of an area - and with each other. It can be of a temporary nature and experimental; it can create content for an exhibition or for a performance; it can nurture and generate a positive self-image of the people and culture of a particular location, whether that be a street, a market, a school, a factory, a park, a block of flats. Together this creates an alternative and intriguing 'map', with a different perspective - which describes something new, unexpected or extraordinary.

'Wonder' is defined as the state of mind produced by something new, unexpected or extraordinary; amazement, awe or bafflement; the quality of being strange, unexpected or awesome; a strange, astonishing thing or happening, a marvel; a miracle...

- from artist notes

Wonders workshop,
ul. Dobra, Warsaw



Background to The Seven Wonders of Warsaw...

I remember having a conversation with an English guy who had been to Warsaw a number of times, for the British Council installing shows at the Centre for Contemporary Art at Ujazdowski Castle. "I don't like Warsaw," he said, "You know, it reminds me of Manchester in the 1970's. Grimy. Grey. Industrial. Warehouses. Depressing. Rags and riches. You can see why they need to drink vodka all the time..." Ah, Manchester in the 1970's... the city that harboured the Northern punk rock explosion... the Electric Circus, The Buzzcocks, The Fall, Joy Division, The Hacienda, The Smiths, etcetera etcetera. I liked this comparison to Manchester. "So much to answer for." Gritty. Hard working. A tough veneer and a darker side. A youth revolution waiting to happen, a city about to be transformed, and new capitalism inexorably stepping forward.



What is Warsaw like for you? Magnificent building and past splendours? Quiet corners and parks? What defines Warsaw? The river? The Moscow-Berlin road? The Arcadia shopping centre?

Perhaps a Turkish restaurant in Saska Kepa? The cakes at Misińska, the cafe in a converted toilet in Park Skaryszewski? Or Varna, a Bulgarian restaurant? Hot chocolate at Wedel? The old national stadium? Legia, of course? The Baryczkowski crucifix, famed for its miraculous powers? Perhaps *The Battle of Grunwald* by Matejko, hanging in Museum Narodowe, or the palm tree on Al. Jerozolimskie? A Bar Mleczny in Praga? Or the oligocen water wells, with their architecture, guards, local customs; stories by Miron Białoszewski – the train to Otwock, Tarczyńska street and many others; Warsaw fountains; the old marketplace – Różycki in Praga Polnoc? Perhaps a street corner, a shrine, a shop, an individual?



During the Institute's *Festival of the Word* in September 2005, I undertook a workshop with their students outside the University Library on ul. Dobra. The task of this workshop was to demonstrate how to engage with people, complete strangers, in a public space. We made seven small boxes. Six of the boxes contained objects, photographs and text describing a specific *Wonder of Warsaw*. For example, my personal favourite was ul. Kubusia Puchatka (Winnie the Pooh Street). The seventh box was empty. Passer-bys were invited to consider these *Wonders* and to nominate their own, marking on a large map of the city. There was also a questionnaire for people to fill in, with more detail explaining what they considered to be interesting, intriguing or wonderful in the city. Their personal nominations filled the seventh box. Interestingly, the vast majority of the nominations were for places on the East side of the river.

'Looking for the Black Redstart'
near Black Lake Metro stop,
West Bromwich



We propose to help you develop a Wonders programme in your locality, in Warsaw, to encourage your curiosity and the desire to look differently at our everyday surroundings.

What might your Wonder be? Ask yourself these questions. What do we find interesting? What has stimulated our imagination? How do we think about the places we inhabit, the value we place on them, the stories we choose to remember and share?

The Seven Wonders of Warsaw will be developed with Laundry (UK), Studnia O and The Institute of Polish Culture (Instytut Kultury Polskiej) at Warsaw University. A secondary programme, The Wonders of Kaunas will also be developed with Vytautas Magnus University (Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas) in Lithuania. We will be undertaking planning workshops at both institutions to develop and define the project – and undertake the work with participants between May 2007 and March 2008.

This is part of an overall programme of cultural animation - Animator - an exchange of skills, experience and knowledge, between students and practitioners.

Studnia O will be also undertaking workshops in schools across seven areas in Warsaw, using different media with a final presentation of the *Wonders* they uncover, sharing their ideas, stories, music and food.



Studnia O performance



Wonders workshop,
ul. Dobra, Warsaw

“The Wonders projects put me in the mood to be sensitive to leaks in the everyday life; to notice things that are special, funny, weird only for me and mark my space but also make me who I am. Sharing your own explorations with others and finding out that you are not the only person who hunts for doughnuts in odd shapes, buys shoelaces for the sake of surreal conversation with the street stall owner or prefers old Jelcz to any other bus somehow connects you stronger with your city and makes you think that this is where you belong.



As a Wonder I would nominate Street stalls :) The more I think about it more I am sure that it is something that is very very ‘Warsaw’ like and will disappear: people selling stuff on the street. Not only strawberries during summer, but medicines, plastic bags, socks, kettles. There are number of places where you can see it. I lived at Dolny Mokotow and this was my favourite area to buy or just look at stuff on street stalls. But then you also have it in the very city centre, by Rotunda. H&M and Esprit on your left, and stall with shoe laces on your right. The more I think about it... it is not WHAT is on these stalls but WHO sells stuff. Very interesting kind of people.”

- Ania Bas, participant in The Wonders workshop and project

“Wonders mushroom outside of Unesco-listed sites, old towns and theme parks. They feed on the banal and the everyday and particularly like the neighbourhood of dirt, poverty and middle-of-nowhere-ness. They are like a glimpse of magic, cause a sudden thrill in your spine.. they are like a door to a magic theatre in a brick wall that you could swear wasn’t there before. Some of my wonders would be wild rabbits grazing on dark green grass entrusted with white china pieces on a site of a former china factory just outside of Stockholm’s city centre; or a XVI century shrine in the middle of a potato field between Szczepankowo and Mikolajki and a legend about its builders; or an imagined conversation with a stripe-suited and white-collared stranger on a commuter train; or a home-made herbal tea and ghost stories served by an old woman in the middle of winter Belarus...

Being able to see these Wonders is about curiosity in looking at the world. The Wonders project is about finding those magic moments, people, situations and places and capturing them. It’s about exploring and developing that ability in yourself and encouraging others to stop and join in.”

- Alijca Rogalska, participant in The Wonders workshop and project

'Library of Unwritten Books'
High Street, West Bromwich



Artist projects for The Wonders of West Bromwich and Warley 2002 - 2006

The first Wonders programme was undertaken between 2002 – 2006, in the West Midlands in the UK. The programme was devised and directed by Brendan Jackson, curated by Geoff Broadway, and supported by Graham Peet. It was commissioned by Jubilee Arts and The Public, with funding from Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Arts Council England and British Waterways.

Artists from diverse disciplines were invited to explore the history, myths and reality the old constituencies of West Bromwich and Warley, two district councils - in the midst of the Black Country - combined in 1974 to form the new metropolitan borough of Sandwell, an area with six distinct towns and a population of nearly 300,000. The artists found inspiration “in both the ordinary and the extraordinary, the sacred and the profane, in historical events or persons, or physical spaces and buildings, with local groups, events and activities.” What follows is a brief description of these projects. We hope that they will inspire you to make a project of your own, a new Wonder of Warsaw – whether in a day, or a week, or a month.

'Barges in our Basements'
The Netherton Tunnel



.... The concept and identification of particular Wonders was seen to be such a broad area for potential engagement that it was felt that it would be better understood as an 'attitude to' rather than something inherent in 'the thing itself'. The term 'Wonders are in the eye of the beholder' was held to be a good description of what our starting position might be on this. This led us to agree that Wonders can be found almost everywhere: from much celebrated landscapes and 'monuments' to near invisible social processes and relationships, from a revelation of the creativity embodied by people in their everyday lives to hidden histories of a specific place or cultural group.

- notes from artist workshop during planning for The Wonders of West Bromwich & Warley



Nettie Edwards - Barges in our Basements

Nettie Edwards developed a project that celebrated the Netherton Tunnel. In 1760, the Black Country had no navigable canals but within sixty years the area had hundreds of miles of waterways to move goods quickly and cheaply. Opened in 1858, Netherton was the finest of the great canal tunnels to be built in England. Nettie traced the line of the tunnel above ground, following the airshafts described locally as 'pepper pots', inviting people who live, work or play along this route to participate in the creation of a unique historical documentation. Her project recorded the sights and sounds of the tunnel route and the people and places that are linked by its unseen presence. To celebrate the involvement of the people living along the pepper pot trail Nettie invited local people to take a journey by canal boat through the tunnel from Tividale to Windmill End, Dudley.



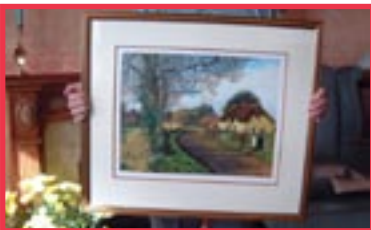
Harry Palmer - The Sirens Project

Harry Palmer and his collaborator, Olly Shapley, spent a week living and working on board the narrow boat Auriga that they transformed into a research lab and exhibition centre. Moving around the canal network of the Galton Valley they collected both factual and mythological accounts inspired by the local area. The boat contained models of semi-fictional water creatures and a collection of curious objects and artefacts, all of which related to the range of myths and legends that the artists had collected.

A small publication, *The Siren*, was also produced as part of this project. This contained many of the myths and legends and was illustrated with images collected during the project.

Richard Billingham - The Black Country

Richard Billingham created a series of photographic images of the immediate area in which he grew up, photographs by day and night, which formed the basis of a new publication, distributed by Cornerhouse, with an essay by Jonathan Watkins, Director of the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham.



Geoff Broadway - Elders

Geoff Broadway worked with eighteen elders from the area to explore their perception of life. Over forty hours of conversation that focused around such questions as the 'meaning of life' and 'sense of purpose and belonging' were recorded. Out of these conversations a dynamic sound and light installation was created that allowed others to share the diverse experiences of life in a rich and moving way.

Paul Rooney - In The Distance The Dawn Is Breaking

Paul Rooney created a video and sound based artwork, exploring the night-time worlds of West Bromwich High Street shops and shop workers. Displayed on the five screens in an installation in a disused shop were static video shots of High Street shop interiors at night. Accompanying the films were descriptions by the shop workers' of their night-time dreams, which have been layered to create an eerie singing soundtrack.



Rob Irving - Untitled

Rob Irving investigated the existence of local ley lines with whimsy, humour, photography and temporary historical blue plaques, engaging with local groups such as the Shree Krishna Temple in Black Lake.

Steve Page - Malcom X in Smethwick

In February 1966, just two weeks before his assassination, the controversial Black Rights activist Malcom X visited Smethwick in the Black Country. Steve Page made a short documentary film exploring this little known historical event, examining contemporary local responses and featuring Sandwell Youth Forum.



Richard Layzell - The Exchange

Using his performance skills, Richard created a series of gentle public relations encounters in the form of artistic dinners, with the diners invited from diverse sections of the community – brought together to talk about the meaning and significance of art and culture in a series of unlikely locations, whether a nature reserve for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds or a gazebo in the grounds of Haden Hill House.



Annie Mahtani - Sounding the Black Country

Annie Mahtani created a multi-channel sound installation in a shopping centre, which featured local people talking in their own words and dialect about what it means to belong to the area, along with a series of projected images.

Caroline Jupp and Sam Brown - Library of Unwritten Books

The artists collected new stories for their collection of 'possible' books, undertaking short interviews with local people about the book they dream of writing or making in various locales – the library, the shopping centre, a residential home for elderly, Sandwell Historical Vehicle Parade.



Ania Bas & Alicja Rogalska - Through the Eyes of Others

Finding inspiration in an Indian sweet shop, the artists worked with the owners, the Shergill family, and their customers to install a photo-text exhibition in their shop on the High Street of West Bromwich.

Mark Gubb - A Real Rock Archive

Visiting local pubs, fairs and events, Mark Gubb developed A Real Rock Archive, a personal scrapbook tribute to the West Midlands almost mythical status as the birthplace of heavy metal. Project curated by Trevor Pitt.



Claire Thornton - Looking for the Black Redstart

Excited by news that a very rare bird, the Black Redstart, had been spotted along the Metro tram line and nearby canals, Clare Thornton began her quest to discover what other urban wildlife wonders exist along this Black Country 'nature corridor'. She created a series of activities and art works incorporating public performance, picnics and wildlife rambles, photography/billboard posters and textile pieces. Project curated by Trevor Pitt.



Peter Hill - Lighthouse

Peter Hill made a 9 metre tall Lighthouse that celebrated the legacy of the local Chances Glass factory – a 19th century innovator which, amongst a myriad of products, produced lenses for lighthouses still in operation across the globe.

Seven Inch Cinema - The 39 Steps

When the Tower Cinema opened in Carters Green in 1935, the very first film shown was Hitchcock's newly released 'The Thirty Nine Steps', which starred Madeleine Carroll, born and bred in West Bromwich. The film was described by critics of the day as "a narrative of the unexpected" and "a miracle of speed and light." Carroll was the first English actress to make a successful career in Hollywood and Hitchcock referred to her as his 'favourite blonde'. She gave up her acting career to undertake humanitarian work during World War 2 and after. On the 100th anniversary of her birth, film curator Ian Francis recreated the premiere of 'The 39 Steps' in West Bromwich Town Hall.



Jake Oldenshaw & Trevor Pitt - Talent Squad

Using guerilla theatre tactics, the Talent Squad descended on public gatherings and workplaces to uncover, investigate, document and celebrate hidden talents – from vegetable growing to gymnastics, Urdu singing to air guitar...



Studnio O - current projects

Life stories 2006 - 2007

Life is not a fairy tale, but a fairy-tale can be as true as life. "Life stories" is a project with elderly people from Zielonka, near Warsaw. Stories and songs from different traditions are intertwined with real stories from life, in moments which happen to all of us – common experiences of childhood and adolescence, mother and fatherhood, birth and death, forgetting and memory. Together with senior-storytellers from Zielonka we find things which make our lives unusual, unique, unexpected.



Storytellers' box 2007

Our ideal imagined space is a Mongolian yurt – a tent made of wood, covered with thick, warm materials and animal's skin, a mobile home, easy to transport. In the summer, an urban version of a yurt – a storytellers' box - will appear in different places in Warsaw; in parks, football stadiums, between blocks of flat, on old yards of Warsaw. A box big enough to host 40-60 people, a box with storytellers, musicians, food, a box for telling and sharing stories.



Music all over the world 2007

Our musical identity in Warsaw is very often connected with the (lost) past – traditional 'yard ensembles' singing ballads about lovers and murderers. But the new face of the city has appeared – Persian ney, African drums, Vietnamese zither, Indian kathakali dance, Turkish ud – this is the contemporary music of the city. Sounds connected with stories and food create a perfect opportunity for meeting the real multicultural Warsaw. This is a part of 'Open Storytelling Stage' in Stara Prochoffnia Theatre - meetings with 'unexpected sounds of Warsaw' for adults, children and all interested. This will take place every second Sunday V-XII 2007.



International Storytelling Festival 2007

Storytellers from different regions and cultures - France, Northern Africa, Siberia, Scotland, Norway, Iceland and Poland - will perform at the festival, combining the native storytelling traditions with challenges of the contemporary urban culture. The festival does not aim to uphold the tradition but rather to show us some inspired storytelling from participants who, despite numerous references to traditional art, are still the people of their time - multicultural, multimedia and global performers. 5 days of performances in November, with workshops, debates, meetings, presentations. And of course – "Storytelling Auberge."





Then 1989 and the fall of the Wall. Now Warsaw has M&S, unemployment and businessminded migrants: the Russian market, encircling a derelict stadium beyond the Vistula river, might have pitched camp on some imaginary trade route between Odessa and Ouagadougou, busy with merchants from Algeria and sub-Saharan; guns, mobiles and lethal scents by that legendary Paris perfumier, Max Gordon. The city is an architectural atrocity exhibition cut with pastel prettiness and aristocrat grandeur - downtown, Marszalkowska is thick with traffic and, all along it, flower girls ply rushhour crowds with bunches from yoghurt pots, mirrored in cheap fashion storefronts. The sky is a crazy cat's-cradle of tram wires, Cold War apartments looming, sticklebacked with balconies.

- The Wonders of Warsaw, Nick Redman, London Evening Standard, 24/11/03

Warsaw, the capital of Poland, and a city situated at the heart of Europe, is both a cultural and a business centre. By spending a few days in the city, visitors will discover a truly unique atmosphere, and will have no shortage of places to visit: charming suburbs, parks, buildings and monuments, museums and theatres, cafes and restaurants. In short, Warsaw is really worth getting to know.

- Warsaw Destination Alliance promotional campaign 2004

"Warsaw: experience the change"

The Seven Wonders of Warsaw
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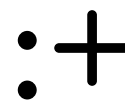


Edukacja i kultura

Leonardo da Vinci



Urząd Miasta
Stołecznego
Warszawy



:nstitut+eatralny
im. Zbigniewa Rozewskiego