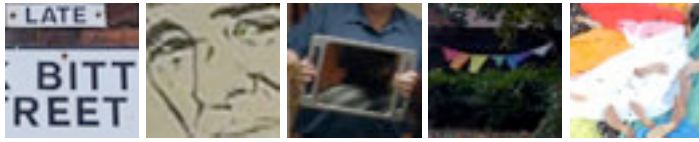


Back Bittern Street (1 of 3 pages)



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Back Bittern Street is just one example of urban marginalisation in Liverpool. The project offered the area a unique opportunity to re-engage with Liverpool's energy and international focus. Liverpool was voted Capital of Culture because of the people and its communities.

In the immediate area of low rise flats of Back Bittern Street there is the Metropolitan Cathedral, a local training centre, two primary schools, children's library, convenience shop, barber shop, brothel, specialist book shop, two independent hotels, Liverpool's Irish Centre (now closed) Science Park and units currently under renovation. These people shared their stories and creativity with an international audience engaged in music, writing, and the visual arts. From knocking on peoples' doors to hosting Scouse suppers, the artists positioned themselves as the collectors of stories – self-conscious mediators and extrapolators, these memories will be developed and fictionalised further – the mini operas are a physical manifestation of a community that has multiple and at times conflicting tales to tell. With Ron Noon working as the historian on the project, the past, the present and the future of this small slice of Liverpool's history is being explored. In this sense, the mini operas were an oral history project.

Artists Mackinnon-Day and Carpenter focused upon lead characters in the area: a madam from a brothel in Cathedral Walk and a barber from Mount Pleasant as the basis for mini operatic interventions performed in the back yard of Back Bittern Street. The final gathering of artists and residents culminated in two mini operas the *Scarlet Bittern* and the *Barber* and a *Scouse Meal* hosted by The Feathers Hotel which backed on to Back Bittern Street.

The Scarlet Bittern Produced and Directed by Mackinnon-Day and Carpenter

Patricia MacKinnon-Day



The Barber Produced and Directed by Mackinnon-Day and Carpenter



Patricia MacKinnon-Day



Like soap operas and Latin telenovelas, it is the small-scale stories of characters negotiating their life that captivates the audience. All great human stories contain love, lust and loss: this opera is no exception and the local brothel, barbers and a hotel bar have provided the context for the first part of the project. While idiosyncratic and three-dimensional, the characters of a successful opera are generically applicable outside of the microcosm of the street, community or historical era in which they are originally presented. We all know someone who has had an affair or been involved in some shady business, we know people who have come to the depths of despair – we empathize and connect. Opera monumentalises these experiences. It shapes a narrative around them that places centre stage the internal drama of an individual's life.

-Laura Sillars, Senior Curator (Collaboration Programmes)
FACT, the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology in Liverpool.