



**THIS IS
WHERE I
LIVE**

Rajiv Anand is Runnymede's Project Co-ordinator (Youth and Arts)

Photograph by Rickon Hussain of the Fitzrovia Youth in Action group used to publicise the London 16-19 project

A Sense of Belonging

London 16-19 (Capturing a snapshot of teenage life in London today)

On Saturday 20 September, the Museum of London hosted a special event, in its newly refurbished premises, as the culmination of their 'London 16-19' project. 'Capturing a snapshot of teenage life in London today' showcased the work of six youth groups – Fitzrovia Youth in Action, Croydon Youth Development Trust, 'A' Team Arts (Tower Hamlets), New Deal for Communities (Seven Sisters) and two poetry groups from Southwark and Wandsworth. The groups have used oral history, photography, writing, poetry and a fashion show to address issues that are important in their lives.

Sarah Gudgin, coordinator of the project for MoL in partnership with Runnymede, opened the proceedings by welcoming all the participants and declaring that: 'this project will enable people in the future to hear the voices and experiences of young people and will provide a record for the Museum of London'.

First up on Saturday was a fashion show from the 'Hands On' sector of 'A' Team Arts. Inspired by a fusion of cultures and images from nature, the collection was made up entirely from hand-painted silks in rich and earthy colours. Twelve young models displayed the costumes in a truly professional manner to an atmospheric soundtrack mixed with a voiceover from the Lebanese popstar Natasha Atlas.

A poetry session, led by a tutor from the library, was conducted by six young people from Wandsworth Library Reading Group. The poems, which looked at how the young people felt about living and growing up in urban London, were well structured and sometimes provocative. Towards the end of the afternoon a poetry workshop was conducted by Aoife Manix from Southwark Summer University. This session gave all participants a chance to be poets for an afternoon, and encouraged people to write something on a related issue.

Two of the six groups – Fitzrovia Youth in Action and Croydon Youth Development Trust – are also offering their contributions to Runnymede's 'This is Where I Live' project. 'It's very inspiring to see so many young people taking positive action towards improving their future,' said Jay from Fitzrovia. The project gave us an 'opportunity to go out and do things that we probably wouldn't – it made us find out more about our area', said Fizal.

The event was a success, and the afternoon was enjoyed by all who attended, participants of the project and the wider museum audience. See images from the project and more information on the Museum of London's new website [www.museumoflondon.org.uk/londonsvoices]. □



A Sense of Recognition

The Institute of International Visual Arts programme 10/03-03/04 is offering images to alter perceptions, including as part of its film programme: 'A Stone's Throw Away' (children growing up in the abnormal/everyday of Deheishe refugee camp); 'Eating Grass' (Alia Syed's 5 stories relating to Muslim prayer times, shot in London, Karachi and Lahore); and John La Rose in conversation with Horace Ové about his new film on Trinidad's diaspora 'The Dream to Change the World' to launch a screening on 10 December. For details of exhibitions, chatroom discussions and other presentations between October 2003 and April 2004 at 6-8 Standard Place, Rivington St, London EC2A 3BE, see TheSpace@inVA [tel: 020 7729 9616].

A Sense of Self

On 4 June 2003, our colleague Qaisra Khan's last official day at Runnymede, we were invited as a group to visit 19 Princelet Street, Spitalfields, a place of resonance.

The Spitalfields Centre, a post-Fire of London speculative building of 1719, a Huguenot master silk weaver's house, a Victorian synagogue, the building that housed 'Rodinsky's Room' – all of these and much more are expressed by the increasingly 'fragile' fabric of this Georgian structure.

It was placed on the 'At Risk' register in 2002, making activities aimed at stabilising and maintaining not just its structure but its unique atmosphere matters of the utmost urgency. Its central spaces currently house an exhibition created by groups of children from local schools. The children have been encouraged to reimagine the immigration experiences of children of any number of other nationalities, and to express and interpret them by means of many media – poetry, stories, objects and artefacts of all kinds. The theme uses suitcases – as containers, backdrops and catalysts – for thinking about what it means to leave home, to not have many (or any) possessions, to arrive with little or nothing to tell you who you were, are or may become. It is about what remains when all else is stripped away – a sense of identity. It is about what can be built from very small means – a sense of belonging. It is about one's life-chances, no more no less.

Not many buildings have the potential to do this. Not many buildings can offer this kind of experience, disregarding age, origin, religion, when they have at some time been put to such specific uses as no.19 Princelet Street. This is what makes it so specially worth preserving, as a container for a rich mix of emotions from which can spring 'the understanding needed for a truly diverse society', respectful of the feelings of others.

'Suitcases and Sanctuary' and 'Leave to Remain' (made by 3 contemporary artists, Suzana Tamamovic, Margareta Kem and Gonkar Gyatso) can be visited at www.19princeletstreet.org.uk and www.leavetoremain.org, respectively. The house will next be open at the end of October (Sunday 26th, 12-5pm) for Black History Month.