



PRESS RELEASE

Let's Build with Brixton House

Press View: Wednesday 29 March 2023, 10am-12pm

A co-created temporary performance space will be erected at London's Brixton House this month, to engage and inspire Brixton's young community.

The space is not just *for* Brixton's young citizens; it's also been conceived and engineered *by* them.

Let's Build is a MATT+FIONA *BUILD* developed with Y4-Y6 (8-11 years old) primary school children who are local to Brixton. The children have set the brief, designed, and will now build the structure themselves at the newly opened purpose-built Brixton House in Theatre 2.

Brixton House is a ground-breaking and inclusive theatre space for young people, community members and marginalised artists, writers and performers. Prior to its move from Oval to Brixton, the theatre commissioned MATT+FIONA to develop an outreach project which would actively engage youth in Brixton, ahead of its arrival in the neighbourhood.

The crowd-funded project is supported by 145 generous backers through Spacehive Crowdfunding, a pledge from the Mayor of London's Crowdfund London campaign, and a grant from the Co-operative Foundation. The performance space will stay in the theatre throughout the month of April and will be made available to local youth groups and schools for performances and activities.

The project has been a truly collective endeavour. The engagement process and initial conception of the design began in 2019, when 20 school children from four primary schools, Christ Church Streatham, Hillmead, Richard Atkins and St John's Angell Town, determined the brief and began designing the space. Beset by delays due to the pandemic, the baton was handed on in 2022 to a second cohort of children from the same schools, who have developed the original concepts, working them up to a technical resolution.

The timber and plywood design – which is beautiful and colourful, fully accessible and interactive – has emerged from this series of workshops, and a multitude of contributions. The children will now physically build their performance space over a five-day build, with support from MATT+FIONA and a group of over 60 volunteers. They will learn how to measure, cut timber and create complex frame structures. Working as a team will be key.

Performance and play bring people together, activate communities and engender a sense of belonging and purpose, and in a landscape altered by the COVID-19 pandemic, when children faced severe levels of loneliness and isolation, this project brings opportunity to nurture creativity and rebuild the confidence and aspirations of the young people involved.

MATT+FIONA's tried and tested model of engagement has a clear pathway of briefing, design, build and use, with children and young people at the centre of every stage of the process, for a life-transforming experience through which they feel ownership from start to finish and see first-hand how they can directly shape their world.

Their work would not be possible without the support of their inaugural industry champions, engineering firm Buro Happold and architectural practice Jestico + Whiles. As well as financial and project support, they also provide valuable volunteer hours to the organisation.

Let's Build with Brixton House is a MATT+FIONA *BUILD* project, one of three strands of the social enterprise's practice, which also includes LEARN and CONNECT.

Matthew Springett and Fiona MacDonald, Co-Founders of MATT+FIONA, said:

"Having worked with these four primary schools in Brixton for the last 5 years – before, during and now after the pandemic – we cannot wait for the children to finally see their performance space realised. Their vision for the space and its contribution to their community has been unwavering throughout. It will be a testament to their perseverance, resilience and creativity, skills we need now more than ever. We hope that projects like this will become far more commonplace for schools across the UK."

Delia Barker, Managing Director of Brixton House, said:

"It has been a wonderful privilege to work on this, and to see it through to its exciting conclusion. Everyone involved has stayed committed to supporting young Brixton residents over the lifetime of the project and it's thrilling to get the build to this point. We are so pleased that they will finally get to see, feel and explore their work. Encouraging children to imagine spaces is a great way to engage creatively with young people."

Press View

Members of the press are invited to attend the build, to experience it first-hand and interview the children and volunteers on site during the construction. This will take place at Brixton House Theatre on Wednesday 29 March 2023 between 10am and 12pm.

RSVP and press enquiries:

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Professional photographs of the build available upon request.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Project facts

Location:	Brixton House, 385 Coldharbour Lane (at Somerleyton Road), Brixton, London SW9 8GL
Funding:	145 donations via Spacehive, Mayor of London's Crowdfund London campaign, and a grant from the Co-Operative Foundation
Dates of the BUILD:	Monday 27 – Friday 31 March 2023
Dates of the display:	Monday 3 – Friday 28 April 2023

Project credits

Co-creators:	Brixton House and MATT+FIONA
Designers:	Students aged 8-11 at Hillmead, Richard Atkins, Christ Church Streatham and St John's Angell Town Primary Schools, and Lucy Eccles, Tilly Jeganathan, Fiona MacDonald, Rosie Murphy and Matthew Springett (MATT+FIONA)
Project managers:	Lucy Eccles, Tilly Jeganathan and George Pope (MATT+FIONA), Oluwatoyin Odunsi and Michelle Adia Scarlett (Brixton House)
M+F Industry champions:	Jestico + Whiles, Buro Happold
In-kind material support:	Builder Depot West Hampstead
In-kind technical support:	Brixton House Technical Team

MATT+FIONA

MATT+FIONA is a social enterprise founded in 2016 and led by architectural educators Matthew Springett and Fiona MacDonald, supported by a small core team. We share a deeply held commitment to change design education and the built environment for the better. We empower young people and enable their ideas about the world around them to be expressed and made real.

BUILD at the National Trust (Sutton House, London, 2016) was our first child-centred build project. Since then, more than 30 high-profile and ambitious projects around the UK have followed. We are currently engaged in delivering projects in partnership with the Greater London Authority; Waltham Forest Council; Lakeland Arts, Windermere; the Built Environment Trust; and the Amsterdam International Community School.

Our work is currently supported by our industry champions Buro Happold and Jestico + Whiles.

www.mattandfiona.org

Twitter: MattFionaBUILD
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Brixton House

Brixton House is a modern venue in the heart of Brixton, South London. Formerly Ovalhouse, the theatre has a long legacy of ground-breaking theatre and being a home for artists and a new generation of makers, artists, writers, producers, technicians and audiences, inspiring new experiences that develop community solidarity and passion for social change. Continuing its legacy of championing innovation and creative expression, Brixton House presents work that is rich in stories that resonate with its local, international, and intergenerational communities.

A place for people to come together, to create and enjoy performances, the venue houses two studio theatres, performance spaces, several rehearsal rooms and multi-use meeting rooms, as well as public spaces, a café and a bar. Brixton House is generously supported by London Borough of Lambeth, Arts Council England, Garfield Weston Foundation, The Wolfson Foundation, Cockayne Grants for the Arts, London Community Fund, The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust.

www.brixtonhouse.co.uk

Twitter: @BrxHouseTheatre

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Jestico + Whiles

Jestico + Whiles is a collaborative practice of architects and interior designers with studios in London and Prague. Founded in 1977, the practice has built its reputation for design quality and innovative solutions to challenging briefs. As pioneers of employee ownership, the practice runs as a trust for the mutual benefit of everyone at the practice. We have always been proud of the diversity in our workload, with proven expertise across a wide range of sectors: housing, hotels, education, offices, retail, research, transport, and cultural facilities. Many of these are within schemes involving major urban regeneration, refurbishment of historic buildings or low energy designs. The practice has recently completed a number of high-profile projects including a new co-working hub for the University of Cambridge, the restoration of a historic hotel for Mandarin Oriental in Switzerland, and a major new cultural hub as part of The Island Quarter masterplan in Nottingham.

www.jesticowhiles.com

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Buro Happold

Buro Happold is an international, integrated consultancy of engineers, designers and advisers, with a presence in 37 locations worldwide, over 80 partners and 2,500 employees. For over 45 years it has built a world-class reputation for delivering creative, value-led solutions for an ever-challenging world. As a truly interconnected community of experts, Buro Happold values human wellbeing and curiosity, embraces mutual responsibility and genuinely cares about the impact and legacy of its work.

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