

Below are some examples of the feedback we received after the Fuzzy Surgeries in June and July 2008.

Invitation to Feedback

Dear ... ,

Thank you for taking the time to attend a Fuzzy Surgery at BAC. In September we will be producing a briefing document in partnership with Haworth Tompkins Architects which describes our process and a draft plan for the Old Town Hall. Now that you've had time to let some of the ideas simmer, we would really appreciate any feedback. This could be anything at all, 5 to 500 words; a memory, an idea you have formulated since leaving the fuzzy, your impressions of the actual surgery, your thoughts on the ideas expressed or your feelings on the future of BAC and the Old Town Hall. By sharing your response, you are helping us to preserve what is precious about BAC while developing an extraordinary 21st century resource for audiences, artists and staff.

Looking forward to your thoughts.

David & David

Member of Staff: Andrew Field (Press Officer)

Hi,

Thanks for inviting me - it was a really interesting meeting. A few things I remember:

The idea of inventing our own history - of self-mythologising. The idea that in 20 years time people will still be talking about going to the Seance Room long after they've forgotten that it was only called that for a show. Fiction bleeds into reality. Playing can really change the world.

That thing that Lyn said about how much the building *already* works. How great the atmosphere was in the place during BURST and how that showed us that changing the building is as much about putting the right things in it at the right time.

What Jo said about an awareness that sometimes saying no can be as productive as saying yes. I remember someone talking about problem solving/braintstorming and saying that actually sometimes the best way of doing things is actually by giving yourself *more* problems to solve - apparently it opens up new areas of the brain - your thinking becomes broader. This also feeds into the idea that sometimes the most creative/resonant space is a space that almost actively doesn't want you to be there (like the children lined up down one side of the grand hall corridor). So the challenge is *how do you actively tailor a space to resist those people trying to work in it - how do you build an art centre that almost doesn't want to accomodate its art?* Again this feeds back into Lyn's point about not doing anything. That actually there's something brilliant about the space in its current form.

The wonderful brainstorming session about roofs. People's memories of roofs - of rooftop bbqs and rooftop gardens. That wonderful feeling that comes from waving to someone on another roof. The idea of art made for travellers on planes or trains, who will never know what it is they saw - just that they saw something fleeting and beautiful. The most generous and magical kind of art.

Thanks again,

Andy

Other Venues: Sunita Pandya (National Theatre)

Dear David and David,

Thank you for the letting me attend the Fuzzy Surgery, it was really inspiring and interesting.

The one thought I had as I left, was how much I would love to see BAC become a type of Creative Incubator; with so many rooms and spaces, it would be great if BAC had the physical and creative capacity to become a space where artists and companies, of all levels of experience and ability, could come and know there is a space for them to read a script (without having to buy a latte from Starbucks), where there is a monthly surgery for up and coming producers to meet with experienced producers and ask them any questions that worry them, where a set designer had the chance to experiment with new designs, colours, textures – both with paints etc and digitally.

BAC already is a creative “hub” for so many people, and it is this fantastic reputation that we could build upon (in the literal sense too) for future generations to see BAC as a living, breathing, porous space where their imagination can run wild!

Thank you again!

Sunita

Board Member: Chris Harper (Stage Entertainment)

Dear David and David

The plans are incredibly exciting and stimulating and I was thrilled to have played a part at this early stage, so thank you for inviting me.

My thoughts are about issues such as where the box office is and how the practicalities of ticketing for all these events and new spaces fits in to the structure of the building. I.e. how many more tickets do you anticipate selling? Will that require more box office staff? A call centre even? I think about large volumes of people collecting tickets at the same time...how queues are managed that kind of thing.

At the board meeting I did ask about how the 450 seat theatre might fit into to the brand of BAC and how it will be managed both in terms of resources and in positioning. Punchdrunk were a genuine partner and a great fit but other companies might not be as 'friendly' so my question is how you might feel about that? I remember very well the unease and disruption companies like DV8 and Complicite could create when they played at the National for both audiences and staff.

Love the bedrooms!

Love the boat!

Best wishes

Chris Harper

Local Community: Sarah Rackham (Katherine Lowe Settlement)

Dear Davids,

Thanks for your message and for including me in the Fuzzy Surgery. I really enjoyed being part of it, although I was somewhat conscious of being rather older and full of nostalgic and wistful memories of a different Battersea. I love the idea of a place for everyone to play, but I would like to stress the importance of really pro-active outreach and the need for free or very low cost activities. Also to ensure true equality of opportunity for the whole community care must be taken to provide childcare, transport, support workers and lots of well-in-advance notice of events. If these basic things are in place it makes it more realistic for the people that come to Katherine Low Settlement and other similar centres to connect with you. I realize this is all about priorities, planning and organization and not the physical structure of the building, but I think these issues need to be incorporated at the heart of your thinking from the out set . I really loved the idea of the ship in Town Hall Road!

I look forward to helping you consult more widely as things progress.

With best wishes,

Sarah

Artists: Lundahl and Seidl

David and David,

First of all we would like to thank you for inviting us to the surgery. We find the project extremely interesting. It is amazing that you have arranged a project like this, must be a dream project for the architects to!!!

From our point of view the project is an interesting contribution to the ongoing debate on the notion of temporality in performance and architecture. In this meeting, the 4th pillar on Trafalgar Square was referred to, which is a good example on how public sculpture can be self-critical and extend beyond its medium. At BAC it seems like the discussion will be around the use of space and the transformation of space over a duration. In our head this could be described as a project that explores architectural processes where the virtual space of the mind is overlapped and extended out into the physical world. This might be a process where everyday transformations within a building, interventions and performances, allows for a cognitive realignment within its residents - where the lived space of the building, produce memories that extend out and sustains in the remembered present.

We are interested how a collaboration-project like this can involve professionals from areas that are philosophically linked to one another or somehow sharing an impetus but are separated by different economics and areas of producing.

This proposal allows also for a production guided by a heuristic-principle: where the program is completed through sensitive interaction between designers and visitors, where the notion of a product or result extends over time as a series of events.

---jump a bit

Over the last 10 years we have seen the rise of 5D design for the orchestration of processes (space, time, action and the relation between people). One is today much more aware how infrastructures, frameworks and platforms influence how people interact. Designing user platforms, intranets and communities online have led to using design methodologies for designing new human communities. -How has increased virtual presence online changed how we navigate and experience presence in a physical building? What knowledge can be exchanged from someone creating virtual architecture online in for example second life.

How does the human imagination play a part in our experience of space?  
What is the space of imagination? How could for example a cognitive neurologist be involved in exploring this?

This text is a bit thrown out, and does not describe things further, so if you find this text a bit fragmented please ask us questions!

Thanks again for a very inspiring meeting!

Kind regards,  
Christer and Martina

Funders: Nick Williams (Arts Council England)
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Some further thoughts following on from surgeries.

- The more I think about it, the more I think that the side entrance should be used more. Its light, less imposing, has a bigish area, built in box office and feels like its much more at the heart of the building. That's not to say that the front shouldn't be used but it does impose a certain Victorian grandeur onto the audiences which could be intimidating. It also always feels a bit dark and dingy which probably couldn't be easily improved upon. How you get people off the main road and around the side though I'm less sure about. Maybe all of the doors along the sides of the building could be used or be opened/openable to allow people access in and out from multiple points.

- More bars! If more and more spaces will be available for performance spaces, then a range of 'demountable' bars could be deployed across the building to foster a convivial atmosphere, facilitate scratch discussions post-show or allow for an informal performance feel like is achieved at a lot of gigs/cabaret. Obviously having a bar open during the show won't be appropriate for everything but that's the call of the producer. It also will help people inhabit the building more as they get used to being able to access (nearly) all areas.

- Can the cafe have direct access from the front of the building? It might do wonders for that intimidating frontage.

- WIFI throughout the building - for artists working with multi-media this could be extremely useful, for others looking for hotspots it would be helpful and pretty much every public space is going in that direction. Obvious but I think essential now.

- Might there be a problem in terms of physical access for sets etc. Whilst a lot of people make their sets in situ in the current spaces, how difficult would this become in some of the newer spaces? Is there going to be a need for a service lift somewhere?

- Airflow - having done a show in studio 1 in a hot and wet summer, I know how uncomfortable some of these spaces can be. I'm not advocating air con (environmentally unsound) but I am advocating some sort of airflow system for the spaces that will get lighting rigs as they are inclined to get very warm and the windows are usually boarded over to give blackout. there must be some sort of clever idea for dealing with this in that building.....

- A daytime space as well as an evening space - I'm sure that the use of the halls is large in the daytime but public use of the front of the building during the daytime might also be a development of the building as a community focus. Places like Polka do this successfully due to their approach to wrap around activity to their shows (garden, playground, dressing up box, teddy bear collection) and whilst I'm not advocating this as an essential addition, there is something about providing something interesting that people might pop in for (cafe plus something for the kids) during the daytime. This could be a commission or installation which kids can interact with whilst the parents use the cafe or animated activities or something else entirely. Obviously getting the mix of day time and night time activity and how they interact also becomes essential.

Think that's enough of the musing from me.

Nick

Press: Lyn Gardner (Guardian)

Dear David and David,  
Thank you for the lasagne and the discussion at Fuzzy Surgery.

- 1) I still quite like the village green idea, a place where the duck pond, the visiting travelling players, the memorial bench, the village cricket game, the WI cake stall, the BBQ, the pin the tail on the donkey game, the village swings and slides and even the village stocks all sit side by side.
- 2) I want BAC to be a place where I know that I will always be met by the welcoming committee, not the selection committee, whether I'm an artist or an audience member.
- 3) I want BAC to be a series of doors that can be easily be pushed open, whether you know everything about theatre or nothing, whether you are an adult or a child. There must be doors within the doors and wardrobes within each room allowing me to explore as far as I want to go, even as far as Narnia and beyond.
- 4) I want BAC to be visible outside of its walls. On Lavender Hill, on the roof, in my dreams.
- 5) I want it to offer illusions, not pipe dreams, and what we have not yet dreamed of.
- 6) I want it to always have the kind of buzz it has during Mayfest or during the Graduates festival.
- 7) I always want to trip over somebody doing something interesting—and sometimes perplexing-- on the stairs. A weekly resident stair artist would be lovely.
- 8) I want it to acknowledge the ghosts, but not to take too much notice if they clank about noisily in the basement. Other theatres are in thrall to=2 Othe ghosts in the basement, BAC doesn't need to be.
- 9) I want somewhere where going up to speak to an artist is as easy as swallowing a glass of water and the dynamics of the space need to facilitate that.
- 10) I want you to raise the stakes, and if you fail, fail better.

I hope that something in the above may be of use to you. Thanks for including me.  
All the best,

Lyn

Resident Companies: Stuart Heyes (Fuel)

I want to wander round the building at 2pm on the average weekday and have the impression that there are hundreds of artists working in every nook and cranny. I want it to feel like BAC staff are outnumbered by those artists.

More than one eating/gathering place/boozier: a lunchtime place distinct from the evening place perhaps.

A library/archive/study room: not a meeting place but the kind of place that Andy Smith might do a days' work in. A place where evidence is gathered. Where research is done and information is pooled. A librarian.

A surgery. A small room (broom cupboard) where once a week Richard or myself or whoever holds an MP style constituency surgery where people can come along with technical or logistical problems and discuss them and get advice. People can also post written requests or enquiries in the meantime.

A gallery of inspirations. Redefining MUSEum. Imagine something like a tudor long gallery along which an artist might walk after lunch. Now imagine it is filled with all manner of provocations; some commissioned, some found, that seek to reinvigorate the tired mind: A place to daydream. Maybe its as dense as some of Punchdrunk's stuff, maybe there are just a few well spaced exhibits that change regularly.

A resident maker of stuff in his or her grotto. This individual is not necessarily an artist but is a collaborator with artists to help fashion the 'item' that is required to move along a piece of work. Maybe its just a rough version to help with rehearsal. Maybe its a prototype of a mechanical device. Maybe its a fully finished item. Whatever, the important service to provide is that which gets the artist over the hurdle that stops them from realising a great idea.

A house: a home. Kitchens that rehearsing companies can cook in to save money. Daybeds where people can have a siesta. BAC bikes they can borrow to get home at night and back in the next day. BAC as Home should seek to help the artist survive on a very day to day level

An in-house weekly newsletter cum gossip rag that is placed on the wall in all the toilets. A3 one sided. Meant to be funny and inclusive rather than in jokey and in crowdy.

Cleaning your own home! Weekend get-togethers to do major jobs of decoration or re-leading the roof or planting a garden or cleaning the windows or whatever needs doing. Party to follow of course. Over time artists will leave a legacy in the basic fabric of the building: people will say "Sting painted that wall" or "Lenny Henry mended that"

Make every visitor who comes to see a show feel like they are entering a home. Have them greeted and hosted throughout. Plus lots of information about things delivered in person rather than in print.

Knock out that ceiling above the main hallway and create an atrium with lots of plants. Peacocks. Canaries even. Nature is an important inspiration

Sound proof rooms for musicians to crank it up or record in.

Artist: Kazhuko Hoki

Dear D&D

Thank you very much for inviting me to Fuzzy Surgery. It was really interesting. I realized the hip architects are not all shallow.

How about making the model of Town Hall (as you know I like miniature), and leave it in the foyer to provoke people's imagination. Maybe people/artists can decorate/renovate it according to the different theme every week or something? The imagination can go wild and I am happy to supervise!

BAC building investigative summer camp: you invite young ( or old) artists to stay at BAC for a few days camping. They can explore the nights of BAC and expand imagination.

The ideas which were in the meeting : sound proofed rehearsal studio, mobile equipment ( sound proof, lighting etc) etc were all good.

At the moment my idea stops here. If I get more, I will email you. As I am going in the hospital tomorrow it might take a bit of time to formulate more ideas, though.

After the meeting, I felt this process is in good hands. I am looking forward to seeing more development and I am happy to be more involved.

Best  
Kazuko