



The Balfron Season was a creative reflection on the life of a building, drawing on stories of past and present, and aspirations for the future.



Ernö Goldfinger, Architect 1968



Jimbo, Caretaker 2010

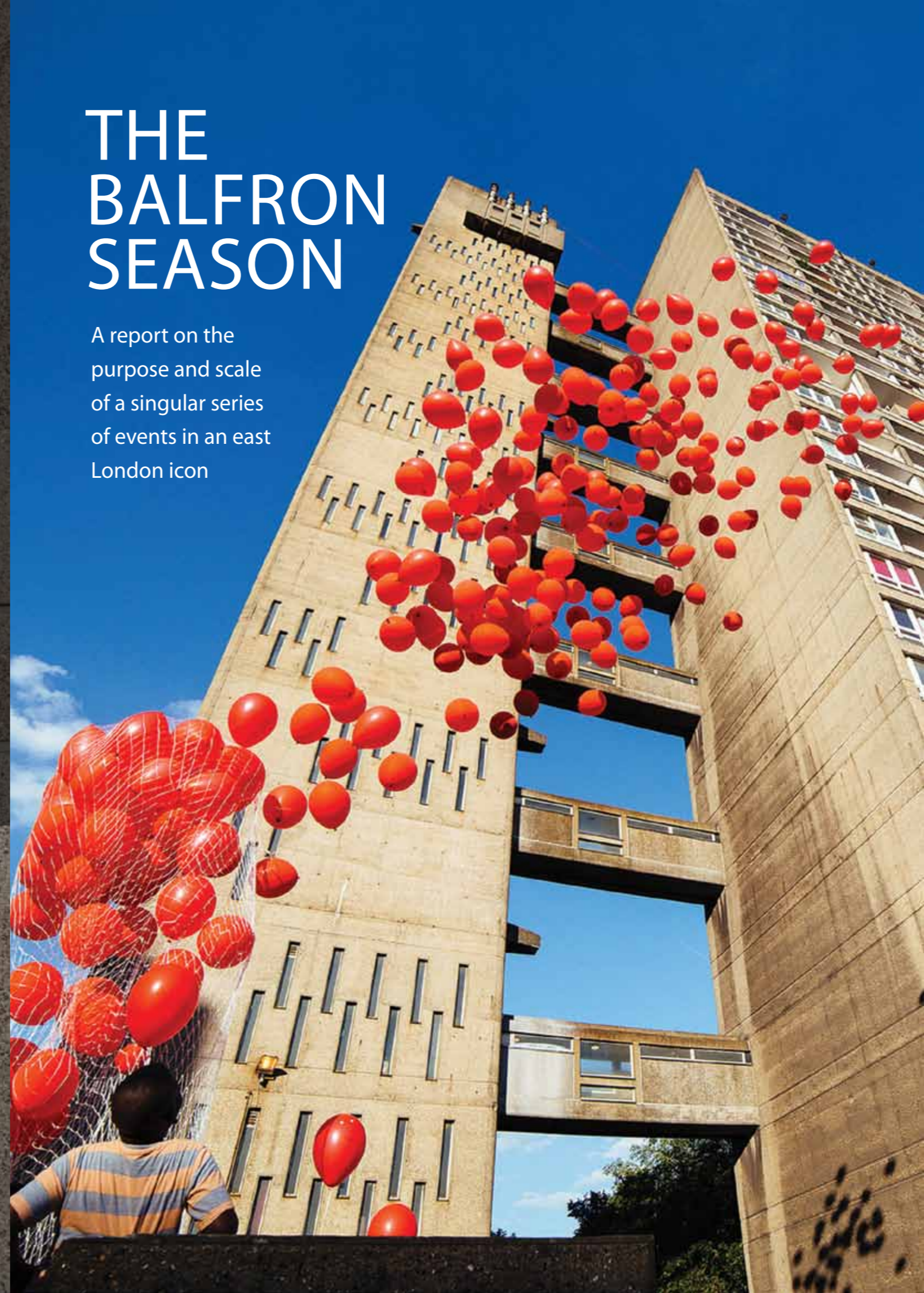
BALFRON TOWER

Balfron Tower, London E14 0QT

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Design by John Garland

THE BALFRON SEASON

A report on the
purpose and scale
of a singular series
of events in an east
London icon





THE BALFRON SEASON

IT'S VERY MUCH LIKE LIVING INSIDE A SCULPTURE

- Simon Terrill, artist



Artists in Residence at Balfour Tower 2008-2015

Ross Adams
Bevan Agyemang
Esther Ainsworth
David Aird
Robert Aldous
Sarah Arriagada
Tessa Baird
Louie Banks
Sam Baws
Jules Bishop
Wolfram Borger
Alison Boulton
Jack Brennan
Adam Butcher
Season Butler
Rebecca Carson
Peter Cattinach
Ana Cavic
Paul Charbonneau
Russell Cliffe
Paul Coombes
Rob Crosse
Christopher Daly
Shane Davey
Sofia Dawe
Emile Denichaud
Giles Dickson
Haidee Drew
Frances Edgerley
Lee Edwards

Miriam Elia
Chantal Faust
Jane Fawcett
Chris Fielden
Susan Finlay
David Fletcher
Hailey Ford
Keira Fox
Ellen Freed
Earl Gateshead
Gretchen Geraets
Paul Good
Sarah Grainger-Jones
Sigrun Gudmundsdottir
Michael Hamblin
Richard Hards
Rebecca Harper
Lucy Harrison
Ollie Harrop
Renata Hegyi
Lucia Hennessey
Monika Henzlova
Katharine Hibbert
Sian Hislop
Melissa Hobbs
Ellie Howitt
Kerry Hughes
Mathew Lee Hunter
Lucy Hutson
Pete Inkpen

Daniel Kelly
Paul Knight
James Lander
Jody Leach
Maria Lisogorskaya
Silvia Marquez Lerin
Paul Macgee
Katherine MacGregor
Nadja Maniscalchi
Kathryn Maple
Bex Massey
Michael Mc Hugh
Katie McCain
Alan McPetridge
Alex McIntyre
Rosanna Mclaughlin
Matthew Miles
Andrew Mitchelson
Alexander Neumayer
Sandrina Nicoletta
Erin O'Connor
Matthew O'Dell
Renee O'Drobinak
Eleonora Oreggia
Sara Pantoli
Ralph Parker
Lisa Margreet Payne
Ksenya Pedan
Kate Keara Pelen
Leon Pozniakow

Jerome Redfarn
Matthew Richardson
Colin Rose
Jesse Tadini Rybolt
Tom Sander
Dan Saul
Rebecca Savage
Necole Schmitz
Armelle Skatulski
Rosa Slade
Remi Smith
Alex Smith
Tamsin Snow
Ruth Solomons
Eleni Stefanou
Amy Stickland
Simon Terrill
Evan Thomas
Bea Turner
Bryan Valdivia
Anneke Van Mol
Benjamin Walker
John Walter
Simon Reuben White
Jeremy Willett
Kirsty Wood
Alex Wood
Jon Wright
and more...

The Balfour Season was an unprecedented series of artistic events situated in and around the Grade-II listed Balfour Tower in the Poplar district of London's East End. The Balfour Season featured exhibitions, debates, tours and happenings and ran from mid-September to mid-October 2014. It had an incredibly diverse programme, featuring a huge range of responses to this famous east London landmark, from the familiar; such as debates and open days to the unusual; pop-up dining, architectural charrettes and temporary museums. Another key component were the Open Studios strand in which over 22 Artists in Residence who have lived and worked in Balfour Tower over the last 6 years opened up their residency workspaces to the general public.

This report will also look at how this singular event came to take place exactly where it did. The Balfour Tower is perhaps the most striking example of Brutalist architecture in east London. It is a massive presence that dominates both the local area and the A12 to which it is adjacent. Its separate service tower sets it apart from every other structure around it. Yet

the Balfour Tower is also part of the housing provision under the charge of the social landlord Poplar HARCA. Recently this body announced that the building would be refurbished and as a result they gave Bow Arts the opportunity to celebrate not just a wonderful piece of architecture but also the work that artists supported by the Trust have produced. The event was supported by Poplar HARCA but it also featured major contributions from other bodies such as the Legacy List, the National Trust and the British Council.

To really appreciate the significance of this project we first have to understand the unique status of its organisers, Bow Arts. We need to appreciate the significance of the building in which the event was hosted as well as the fascinating social context in which the Tower was built and in which it now lives. We need to know something of what the partner organisations saw in the project and why they wanted to be involved. We really need to know something of the artists who stayed in the Tower and contributed so fully to the Balfour Season. Their biographies will appear throughout this short report.

BOW ARTS



Bow Arts is an educational arts charity established in 1995. Founded on the belief that artists can work successfully on both a local and international level simultaneously, Bow Arts has championed the engagement of young creative professionals with communities throughout the East End whilst also providing them, through cheap rent, with the opportunity to create their own work. Bow Arts now provides affordable, secure, creative workspace for over 400 artists in east and southeast London. The Trust also manages a nationally recognised education programme, runs the Nunnery Gallery and champions the commissioning of international award winning public art.

In 2007, Bow Arts entered into an agreement with Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association (Poplar HARCA) to occupy a number of flats in Balfron Tower, east London. HARCA, a social housing landlord and the owner of the Tower, had decided to refurbish the Tower and this required the decanting of the tenants. Bow Arts would take on empty flats temporarily and let them as live work studios for artists. The arrangement, originally expected to last for 18 months, extended to over 6 years, providing homes and studios for 70 artists at the peak of the project.

Artists aged 23 to 30 in general earn an average of £18,000 a year, according to Bow Arts' own surveys. Most artists throughout this period will stay at the tax threshold for 10 to 15 years, earning less than 10% of their annual income from selling their art, making up a living wage from selling their skills elsewhere. Balfron Tower therefore provided invaluable cheap live work space for artists who typically budgeted on spending £400 or so a month on housing costs. In return, the project brought a skilled, talented, socially aware and committed community into the heart of a deprived neighbourhood.

There was great enthusiasm among the first generation of artists to respond to the drama of the building and its context: Balfron rises from Poplar's tightly-knit neighbourhood but peers out over the Olympic Park Canary Wharf and across to the City of London. The artists hosted an international residency programme, established pop-up galleries, ran monthly showcase events, hosted shows and formed 'the BAT pack', a project that created exhibitions and took them out on tour. Some residents, engaged in negotiations about their own future and also understandably concerned to sustain a quiet neighbourhood, sought to tone down on-site public events.

BOW ARTS NOW PROVIDES AFFORDABLE, SECURE, CREATIVE WORKSPACE FOR OVER 400 ARTISTS IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST LONDON

Despite this, artists made imaginative contributions to community life throughout the period, exemplified by the arts educational work in local schools and public art. Personal relations between artists and residents developed and in some instances prospered in much the same way as with incomers in any neighbourhood. However, once the final social housing tenant had left the Tower in 2014 it was possible to conceive, once again, of a public programme of events to celebrate the role of the artists in the neighbourhood and the special bond that had been formed by the community in the Tower. The idea for the Balfron Season was hatched.



"The Balfron Tower means many things to many people but one thing is for certain, it demands a response and manages to outdo buildings from the same era for its sheer sculptural presence and architectural drama. Not only that but it also acts as a lightning rod for all the political and social and aesthetic debates that affect many artist working in east London today.

So for us it was never really in question that we would want to be part of celebrating this rich history and we knew that in partnership with our artists, who live and work in the tower every day, that we were the best placed to do it... Our attitude is simple: we are not here to observe the community, we are part of it, just as culture is part of it.

A huge amount of respect has to go to all the artists who were involved and brought the project to life and to the Bow Arts team who eagerly scaled every barrier to bring the project together."

Marcel Baettig, Chief Executive Officer, Bow Arts

THE BALFRON SEASON



THE BALFRON TOWER



The Balforn Tower demands a response and manages to outdo buildings from the same era for sheer sculptural presence and architectural drama. After the Second World War architects had successfully argued for a privileged position within a system that was delivering the new buildings and structures required by a new welfare state. In the Architectural Review in 1943, one of these architects, Ernö Goldfinger, suggested that because urban space would be segregated into space used by pedestrians and space used by cars so the experience of a building might be segregated. First, a free standing building would be considered as a sculpture, then when it filled the gaze of the approaching visitor it would be a picture and, only lastly when it was entered, as a space.

The Balforn Tower is a sculpture, particularly the separate service tower joined to the residential part of the buildings by walkways. The separation of the two structures is ostensibly to isolate the noise of the lift machinery and rubbish chutes. However the separation permitted Goldfinger to create the effect of a citadel. The boiler house which sits at the top of the tower is dominated by four chimneys which, from a distance, gives the effect of a crenellated battlement. The narrow windows look like arrow slits. Other famous Brutalist structures took their formal cue from landscape features. Park Hill in Sheffield for example reaches out from the contours of a hill to present itself as a sheer cliff to the city.

During the 1970s and 1980s the Balforn Tower became a cypher for a wider debate about sink-estates. These estates were poorly maintained, lacked basic amenities

and were expected to receive the least fortunate members of society in massive numbers. The buildings themselves rather than the society that cared for them were blamed. George Tremllett, head of the Greater London Council housing policy trashed the concept of high rises to a conference of architects in 1978 that high rises. "Their basements have become haunts for thieves drunks and dossers. If you doubt it tiptoe through the mess beneath Balforn Towers and see the legacy your profession has left," he said. It is still a contentious statement and yet one can see that the undercroft and immediate apron of the Balforn are architecturally problematic.

Perhaps it is only because the building is so monumental that it is the subject of such scrutiny. Or perhaps there is something more. The Balforn Tower has also been the subject of media attention since it was first opened. Famously Ernö Goldfinger and his wife lived for two months in flat 130 on the 25th floor after the building opened in February 1968. This temporary occupation received a great deal of coverage in the national press and was dismissed in some quarters, particularly the letter pages of the Sunday Times, as a public relations exercise. However, Goldfinger did use his research to tweak the design of the Trellick Tower, a virtually identical tower in west London built after Balforn. Its iconic status has both dogged and enriched it. It exemplified so much, crystallised so many ideas and provided a viewing point to look across a whole cultural and social landscape. To ignore its strange beauty or pretend the questions it poses don't exist is not an option.



PRINT- MAKING IS SIMILAR TO CONSTRUCTION BECAUSE YOU ARE WORKING WITH LAYERS

- Leonie Lachlan

ARTIST PROFILE

Leonie Lachlan

Leonie Lachlan was in residency in the Balforn Tower throughout the whole of September 2014, running both print and adult drawing workshops on one hand and doing her own work on the other. Leonie who, graduated in Fine Art from Newcastle University in 2008 before completing The Drawing Year at the prestigious Princes Drawing School, explores the means of capturing the 3D experience of the city in the 2D experience of drawn or printed media. She says she uses "drawing to work out and interpret space; how it fits together and as a means of deciphering structures." For her, "print-making becomes similar to construction because you are working with layers." Although her printed work is on a flat surface, it is often embossed or layered or, at the very least, has a sense of being built.

Whilst her experience of the building has been shorter than other artists, her response has been immersive and contemplative. She attempted

she said to become "a cog of the place" and that her residency has given her a chance to "think about the further way this space has been constructed and the reflection of what is beyond." Although her work seems to deal with the Balforn Tower in a purely abstract fashion, she says that "the simple act of looking out of a window here is about a multiple experience. You also understand that this collective experience of looking would have had a new thing living in a tower block in 1960," she says. Aesthetics and politics combine. "My interest is in how do we want our cities to be composed and that has come together here very strongly," she says.

Leonie's open studio showed some of the prints she had made on site, a view of the buildings structure which when repeated captured the very unique sculptural power of the building. In a very direct way Leonie is taking her architectural concern forward with a further residency at the Venice Architecture Biennale.

Really loved the workshop, learnt a lot of new techniques and the whole experience was very inspiring for some other projects I have done since."

Eleanor Begley, Print workshop participant'



POPLAR



According to the Office of National Statistics, the wider borough of the Tower Hamlets was the fastest growing area in the entirety of the UK over the last 10 years, with a population increase of 27%. To understand what made the Balfron Season such a significant event one must appreciate how this incredible surge of demand has played itself out in a landscape with the largest concentration of post-war social housing in the country. In the 2001 Census, Tower Hamlets had 52.5 per cent social sector tenancies which was over twice the London average. Furthermore, the London-wide figure for occupancy under a registered social landlord was 88% double that in Tower Hamlets. The largest social landlord in the area is Poplar HARCA who were founded at the same time as Bow Arts and with whom the arts body have developed a close working relationship.

It was estimated in 2005 that 83% of tenants in Housing Choice groups who had selected a partner registered social landlord (RSL) to work with were living in homes that fail the Decent Homes standard. To pay for the improvements the RSL had to consider which homes to sell-off to generate revenue, given that this was not available to them from the state. So if it seems strange

that the make up of housing in the area in which an art event takes place should be so significant, one must remember that one of Bow Arts aims is to improve the lot of those who find themselves living in this area of unprecedented social and economic pressures: both in providing support for artists in a market in which housing is increasingly expensive but also ameliorating problems caused by social housing being partially occupied as tenants are moved out. Vandalism is more common in a partially occupied estate.

Within this local condition, a wider aesthetic trend comes into play, making the Balfron Tower even more of a charged structure, if it is possible. Brutalism has gone from being a type of architecture associated with social failure to being one that is enjoyed aesthetically by a new generation with money to buy houses. The Balfron Tower is a particularly stunning example and has been acknowledged as such with Grade II listing. Accordingly Poplar HARCA, the largest tenant run social housing agency in the country, chose it for refurbishment and sale, with the idea that the revenue would bring about improvements to the building, which is in a poor state, and others in the area. Poplar HARCA, as part of a

process of moving tenants in and out of buildings, have moved social housing tenants from Balfron to other areas of the estate. Bow Arts proposed that artists could take on empty properties on short-term leases by backfilling what would have been empty property.

The first artists took a temporary lease in a flat on the Leopold Estate in 2007. This estate is now decanted and awaiting demolition before it is rebuilt, as part of a much larger transformation. The crash of 2008 slowed down a lot of the natural regeneration which gave Bow Arts an opportunity to move across the borough with Poplar HARCA. The first artists took out leases in Balfron in 2008. That community has grown in size to the extent that at the beginning of the Balfron Season, 35 flats in the tower were being leased by artists.

So although the Balfron Tower is a small part of the social landlord's Poplar HARCAs portfolio of properties and of the Bow Arts work, it has the highest profile. It provides a lightning rod for all the political and social and aesthetic debates that operate around the issues touched on above and as such when Poplar HARCA considered celebrating its history as social housing as its new tenure



“Balfron Season was a great success for us. It allowed people to access Balfron Tower, meet some of the artists in residence and see Goldfinger’s architecture for themselves.

The events were well organised by Bow Arts and the vast majority of media coverage - in print, online and in social media - was positive, providing an advertising value equivalent of well over £1.5 million.”

**Bree Sims, Communications Consultant
Poplar HARCA**

was announced, Bow Arts felt they were best placed to celebrate its rich and complex history. Thanks to their proven ability to work with different artists who knew the building well they felt they were in a unique position to mine the rich layers of meaning that the structure had accrued over time.

Of course, the simple fact that the building was designed for housing the least affluent members of society and is now to be housed by private owners has understandably caused a great deal of comment and debate. Although some of the residents were happy to be rehoused others were less so. Although this occurred because of the wider estate management issues faced by Poplar HARCA, it was small consolation to some who see anyone related to the process, including the artists under the aegis of Bow Arts, as somehow complicit in that. This is something that is rejected by the artists themselves. Indeed it is the artists who have brought this debate to the public’s attention, in a manner which appreciates that a simple didactic statements fails to appreciate the complexity.

PARTNERS



POPLAR HARCA

Poplar HARCA (Housing and Regeneration Community Association) is a registered social landlord and the owner of Balfron Tower. HARCA owns and manages around 9,000 homes in Poplar, East London; the majority of these were transferred from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets back in 1998. Since then, HARCA has refurbished all those homes and built almost 1,000 new ones. HARCA's mission is to make Poplar a place where people choose to live, work and enjoy life. Poplar HARCA plans to refurbish Balfron Tower as part of the regeneration of the neighbourhood.



THE LEGACY LIST

The Legacy List is a charity dedicated to the improvement of the areas surrounding the Queen Elizabeth Park, the site of the London 2012 Olympic Games. The Balfron Tower is very much within that region and the List's successful work together with Bow Arts has been one of the highlights of that body's work in the post-Games era. The Legacy List funded a project Lucy Harrison which was called 'Home on High' and was one of the high points of the Balfron Season in September 2014.

Lucy's work was the product of around six months intensive research this year, enabled by a grant from The Legacy List. She says that the aim was "to focus on the buildings as homes, rather than as iconic pieces of Goldfinger's architecture." When Lucy arrived most of the former tenants had left the block. As a consequence she looked to the rest of the estate and sought out the opportunity to work closely with a handful of participants. Using writing workshops of different kinds she was able to support 3 individuals in articulating their memories of the wider estate around Balfron. In the end her work focused on Danny an elderly Polish man who lived in Balfron Tower until 1979, but now lives elsewhere on the Brownfield estate.

The film was installed in Danny's flat in what had been his bedroom. Guests were met downstairs by local residents acting as tour guides, who then led them up to the flat via the lift. Visitors gained an intimate experience of the flat as a home, rather than an exemplary piece of architecture. "I enjoyed seeing people's reactions as they emerged from the screening room, to see the very same tiling in the bathroom that they had just seen in the film, and to realise that they were in the very same flat," says Lucy. The Legacy List proved to be the perfect partner for Bow Arts for considering the change that is taking place around them.



"The Legacy List was delighted to support Lucy Harrison's Home on High project, as part of the Balfron Season. Home on High explored the Tower's impact on several generations through film and accompanying supper clubs. A range of local communities were brought together to share food and insight on the area, and contributed to a sensitively developed and delivered project. We were delighted to have the opportunity to collaborate on the Balfron Season and commission Lucy to create a complimentary but distinct approach to the aims of the festival."

Claire Gevaux, Head of Creative Programmes, The Legacy List

I'M NOT HERE TO OBSERVE THE COMMUNITY. I AM PART OF THE COMMUNITY.

- Haidee Drew



ARTIST PROFILE

Haidee Drew

Unlike most of the artist residents in Balfron Tower, Haidée is a homeware designer. After graduating from the Royal College of Art with a Masters in Metalwork and Silversmithing she set up her interior accessories business designing for the High Street. She has sold her collections through Liberty and Heals as well as internationally. Haidée describes her experience with Bow Arts live work scheme as liberating and inspiring 'I always found it incredibly frustrating being in London but unable to live somewhere I could make my own, and this is especially important for a homeware designer. When I came across the Bow Arts scheme I saw it as an amazing opportunity to boost my business.' Haidée started on the scheme in Helen McKay House on the Aberfeldy Estate where she was able to remodel the apartment as a backdrop for all her marketing.

Haidée approach to Balfron Tower was much the same, during Balfron Season she set her flat up as a show home with her historically inspired products in every room. 'The show home was

a huge success, it was really exciting letting people snoop around the property and enjoy the flat as much as I have done. Haidée created the 'Balfron Box' especially for Balfron season, it's a truly unique interior garden piece, based on a Victorian fern case and accurately representing Balfron Tower.

Despite having a separate studio in Bow Haidée described being in the flat as incredibly inspiring and that she would spend hours designing there and enjoying the light created by the layout. 'The height of the tower and the views across London would make me feel connected to the rest of the city.' Haidée also works part time in a local school as an Advanced skills Design technician, where she has been for the past 5 years. When asked about some of the other artists approach to living in the tower and work produced by their observations of the community she responded by explaining that she is much a part of the community as anyone else, 'I am not here to observe the community, I am a part of it, I have lived and worked in Tower Hamlets for 9 years.'

PARTNERS

LONDON FESTIVAL OF ARCHITECTURE



THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND THE LONDON FESTIVAL OF ARCHITECTURE

The International Architecture Showcase is a key component of the annual London Festival of Architecture (LFA) and is organised by the Architecture, Design and Fashion (ADF) department at the British Council. The event brings together an astonishing array of exhibitions and events led by London's embassies and cultural institutes as part of the LFA. In 2014, the ADF department British Council, as part of its ongoing exploration of the exchange of ideas that takes place between the UK and the rest of the world, created a new format for the event by inviting international architects to participate in residencies with London-based practices.

This particular concern of the department's director, Vicky Richardson, shaped the International Architecture Showcase of 2014 as an exploration of the influence of émigré architecture on London. The Balfron Tower was a perfect venue to host this discussion as its architect, Goldfinger, was Hungarian-born. The Balfron became a hub for the International Residency Programme, and working in partnership with Bow Arts we will explore the impact Goldfinger's work had on architecture and the East End of London. The building became the locus of a debate which was continued on in the national pavilion at Venice Architecture Biennale.

To address the issue of housing, DK: CM (UK) and b210 (Estonia) proposed 'Crisis Point', a high-rise tower on the banks of Lee Navigation inspired by the iconic Centre Point of 1963. Karakusevic Carson Architects (UK) and BCVA (Denmark) meanwhile produced a master plan for

unlocking under-occupied housing across the borough and looked at how it may better connect with its surroundings. Duggan Morris (UK) and ZAV Architects (IRAN) investigated the history and culture of the area. Comparing and contrasting the formal and informal natures of London and Lagos, Studio TILT and MOE + took inspiration from the spontaneity found in Lagos, overlaying this on their site in Bromley-by-Bow to create a framework for a self-organising model. Through discussions with the public The Decorators (UK) and ISSS research & architecture (Austria) devised a game that allows participants to engage with and inform the multiple possible futures of Bromley-by-Bow.

Working on the site of the decommissioned gas works at Leven Road, Friend & Company and Jonathan Nsubuga (Uganda) explored ways that this area could be 're-wilded': building habitats for wildlife to thrive. Through an analysis of the Limehouse Cut, Muf Architecture (UK) and MoVe (Chile) proposed a new extended civic balcony for the waterway. Delvendahl Martin (UK) and GAISS Architects (Latvia) proposed that through temporary interventions and an annual festival, the waterway could be animated. Sarah Wigglesworth Architects and Kane Yanagawa (Taiwan) looked at the Empson Street Industrial Area. By investigating the way transition can be negotiated, Natasha Reid (UK) and Urbanworks Architecture and Urbanism (South Africa) suggested a new constitution that put the rights of those working on this site at the centre. The work was collected in a publication Possible Futures: 7 Days in Poplar.



"Working with Bow Arts during the London Festival of Architecture was extremely valuable for our international residency programme. Bow Arts contributed extensive knowledge about the local context, which was crucial for shaping the brief."

The opportunity for our visiting architects to stay at the Balfron Tower and experience Ernő Goldfinger's architecture first-hand, gave the programme added resonance, and helped bring the theme of 'émigré architecture' to life.

Bow Arts made the participants feel welcome in Poplar and were always on hand to help and advise. The team coordinated local partners to embed the programme, meaning that the outcomes were relevant and meaningful. It was a pleasure to work with them."

Vicky Richardson, Director Architecture Design Fashion, British Council



THE NATIONAL TRUST

The National Trust are an organisation perhaps better known for managing country estates than rooms in tower blocks. However history moves forward and as we have said before the Balfron Tower is a testament to a moment when utopian post-war Britain coincided with a new architectural movement that was dedicated to monumentalising the home of the common man. Brutalism was heroic architecture that sought not just to eviscerate the poor housing conditions but to raise social housing to the status of a major cultural expression.

The Trust already cares for Goldfinger's own home in

"Working with Bow Arts on the Balfron Season was a privilege. They supported us in opening Flat 130 as a 'National Trust property' with efficiency, dedication and creativity, making the whole process far smoother and much more enjoyable than it otherwise could have been. We would have no hesitation in working with Bow Arts again; indeed, as I write we are busy cooking up our next project with them."

Joseph Watson, Programme Manager, National Trust

Hampstead, 2 Willow Road, and according to the Trust themselves "the Balfron Tower is the logical choice for our first foray into Brutalism." The Trust's involvement so far has only been a temporary venture. The interior of Flat 130, which was the one that Goldfinger spent two months in 1968, was furnished by designers, Wayne and Tilly Hemingway, in the style of that period. This was opened on a number of occasions throughout October 2014. The Hemingways went on to put many of the objects for auction on eBay with proceeds going towards defraying the costs of the project and a donation to the residents association.

LONDON URBAN VISITS

In a major report, commissioned by Culture Secretary Ed Vaizey on the future of architecture delivered in March 2014, Terry Farrell made a number of proposals to improve the planning culture in the UK. One of these was the creation of "urban rooms" in every city where issues relating to planning can be discussed by professionals and the public alike. London Urban Visits had already proposed the creation of such a room in the Balfon Tower using a flat made available by its owner. During the Balfon Season, LUV, an experienced team of planning, regeneration and economic development consultants, invited a number of senior planning and development professionals to informal discussions, based around a dinner.

Those that were invited included, Steve Stride, HARCA's Chief Executive and Richard Blakeway Deputy Mayor of London for Housing, Land and Property. Another visitor was David Barnett, Founder & CEO of London Newcastle, a top residential developer that has developed over 500 apartments and penthouses

in the capital in the last two decades. In addition David Lunts from the Greater London Authority came to discuss the planning of the city. Lunts is Executive Director of Housing and Land at the GLA. Eric Sorenson visited as well. Among many other roles he was CEO of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) until 1997.

In addition, LUV have run tours around the Brownfield Estate as part of the Open House weekend but also from Stratford to Canary Wharf with a stop off at the Balfon using an essay by Charles Dickens called "Londoners over the border" as a prompt. According to the men behind LUV, Ralph Ward and Michael Owens, these two and a half miles between the two hubs contain one of the strangest, most interesting, least known and apparently least penetrable landscapes in London. The tours explored the primitive origins of the area first as a floodplain, the farmland and then as an intense unmanaged Victorian industrial zone, mingled with dense working class housing.

ARTIST PROFILE

Simon Terrill

Simon's picture of the Balfon Tower at night-time captures a key moment in the recent lifetime of the building (see page 1). By chance, it was taken just after the social housing tenants had been told they were leaving the building. The picture is actually more complex than it first seems. On close inspection one can see that a number of the buildings tenants are in front of the building, others are on their balconies; some are gesturing, some are not. It is actually the record of a performance, supported by the British Arts Council as well as Bow Arts, in which the inhabitants are responding to a score. "It was both a celebration and a memento," says Simon. "It marked the end of a period in the life of this Tower."

Simon is perhaps the longest serving of all the residents at the Balfon. He moved in 5 years ago to use one of the apartments as a studio as part of an international residency programme. (Simon is from Australia). When the adjacent apartment was available for short-term rent he and his partner took it. His work is a mixture of media: photography, film, photo-montage, and drawing. The media tends to be selected to best reflect a particular situation. One of his works is

a montage of the Balfon's facade and Breugel's tower of Babel. His successful work at the Balfon has led to other successful work on the area. His residency at Bow Cross culminated in a hallucinatory video shot at night in which the people of a street effectively perform themselves under film lights.

Simon says he has benefitted hugely from the support of the Bow Arts. "Its a fantastic flat to live in and its cheap rent. Its facilitated our existence in London which might otherwise have not been possible. We've been able to make work here and work from here in other places. It's just been fantastic," he says. One senses though that Simon is also an unabashed fan of the Balfon Tower as a piece of architecture. He describes living in it as like living in a sculpture. He is however alive to all the debates that coalesces around the structure having hosted a number of debates and discussions around the Tower. He says: "there are so many competing voices around the Balfon Tower - some of them are a little bit too shrill."

"It would be good to have Bow Arts measured version of their story".

BALFRON SEASON PORTRAITS



Simon Terrill



Kathryn Maple



Chantal Faust



Bex Massey

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Although the purpose of this report has been largely to bring together in one place a huge array of activity, one cannot help but noting a number of issues prompted perhaps by the luxury of being allowed time to consider the Balfon Season in its entirety. Firstly, one might note that the Balfon Tower, whether it was because of its iconic status or because of the media scrum around its opening, has always acted as a focal point around which wider issues relating to - for example - the social function of art or the role of the state in housing its citizens. It has also done so when the debate becomes negative. It is entirely in keeping with the cultural history of the building that a season of discussions should take place within its walls.

Secondly, the sheer drama of the building prompts a huge number of responses. In many ways these responses have never been truly recorded and whilst the Balfon Season arrives quite late in the building's life it has given us the chance to capture these responses for posterity. Thirdly the Tower will always stand at an intersection between various strands of cultural endeavour, art, politics, planning, culture, housing: largely because it was fully intended by its architects and its clients to stand there. Finally, if the building occasionally attracts the opinions and views of those who do not necessarily understand its history or its current status or the role of the Balfon Season in that, it is all the more important that those who do understand it speak clearly and in a fully-informed way in the debate that tends to swirl around this singular structure.

ARTIST PROFILE

Alan McFetteridge

Alan is a self-taught photographer born in New Zealand, coming to London when he was 19. He worked as an assistant to renowned photographer Tim Flach and has since gone on to build a successful career working predominantly in advertising, whilst working on a number of artist projects that include co-directing an artist run gallery space G&A studios, in Sydney, Australia. His work has also featured in many international awards, publications and exhibitions; including the National Portrait Gallery's John Kobal Portrait Prize, Association of Photographers, Communication Arts, Photo District News and the Royal Photographic Society.

Coming to Balfon Tower was an opportunity to develop work that reflected the conditions and faces of the community that inhabit the Tower and wider estate. "I am not so interested in the

architecture or architect" says Alan "My primary interest was to look at the effects that dilapidation and repair have on a largely hard working and family oriented community, and from this understand the wider consciousness of how uncertainty impacts on people". An issue that is particularly relevant with the absence of rent control or rent protection in London.

"I seek to create work with complexity and beauty to reflect the multitude of situations that exist for both the individual and the wider community and I hope that overtime changes will be made to protect future generations. Living in the Balfon has been a unique experience, provided by Bow Arts and has really helped me develop this piece of work".

Artist portrait, Renee

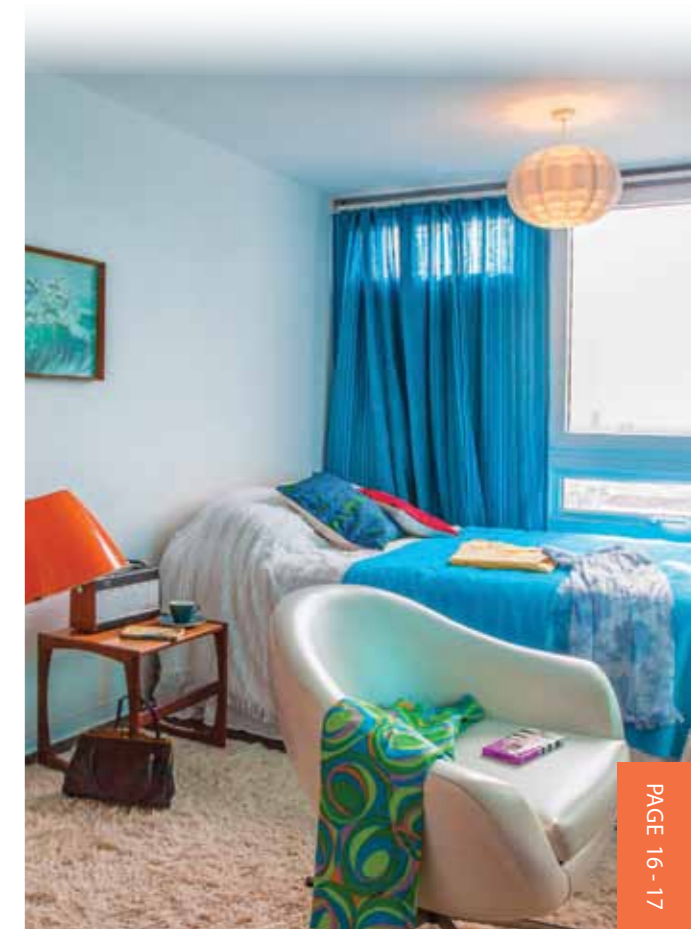


Re-creating Flat 130



The re-creation of Flat 130 has been led by Tilly Hemingway of Hemingway Design, assisted by her father Wayne Hemingway and working closely with Bow Arts.

The furniture, contents and decoration have been carefully curated to communicate how life might have been for the residents of the flat circa 1968, a family who – we could believe – moved in as the Goldfingers returned to Hampstead.



WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO WORKED ON THE PROJECT:

Bow Arts

Marcel Baettig	Chief Executive
Michael Cubey	Head of Creative Workspace
Michael Owens	Commercial Director
Lindsay Edmunds	Season Manager
Andrew Mitchelson	Open Studies Manager
Esther Ainsworth	Open Studies Manager

British Council - London Festival of Architecture - British Pavilion

Niamh Tuft	Programme Manager
Moira Lascelles	Curator International Architecture showcase 2014
Hannah Burgess	Programme Manager
Alastair Donald	Project Director, British Pavilion
Vicky Richardson	Director of Architecture, Design and Fashion

Legacy List

Claire Gevaux	Creative Director
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LUV - London Urban Visits

Michael Owens	Director
Ralph Ward	Director

National Trust - The London Project

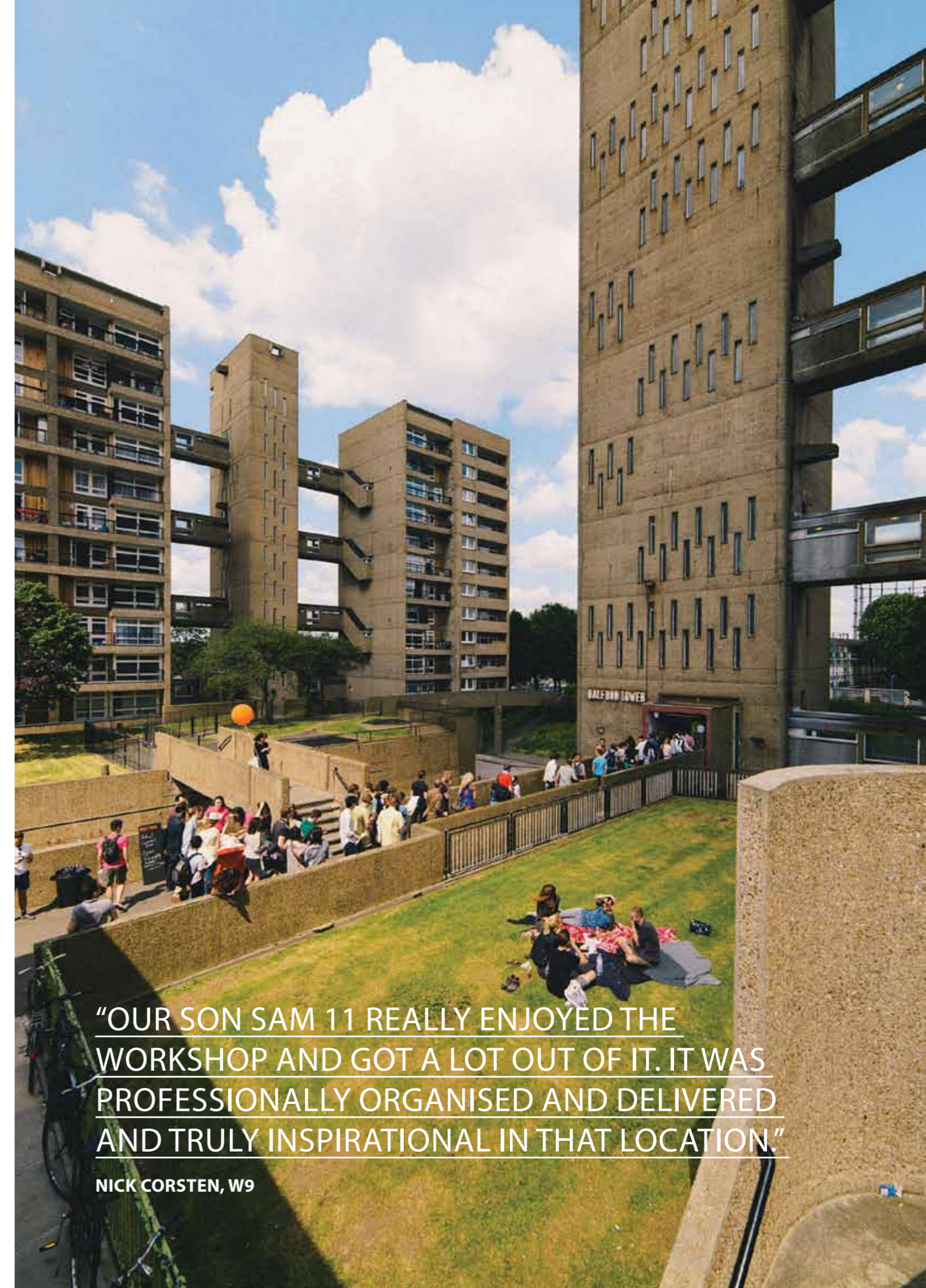
Joseph Watson	Project Manager
Ivo Dawnay	London Director
Tilly Hemmingway	Designer - Hemingway design
Wayne Hemmingway	Designer - Hemingway design
Chloe Nelkin	Marketing

Royal College of Art

Ab Rogers	Head of Programme
Emily Durant	Assistant studio Manager AB Rogers Gallery

Poplar HARCA

Paul Augarde	Head of Creativity & Innovation
Bree Sims	Communications Officer
Jimbo	Building Supervisor
All the residents of Poplar	



"OUR SON SAM 11 REALLY ENJOYED THE WORKSHOP AND GOT A LOT OUT OF IT. IT WAS PROFESSIONALLY ORGANISED AND DELIVERED AND TRULY INSPIRATIONAL IN THAT LOCATION."

NICK CORSTEN, W9