



The BAR Gallery at Willesden Green
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – REVIEW

TESTIMONIES

A sound installation by Lorenzo Belenguer

Londoners Get Personal with the Olympics

20 September to 14 October
Open daily 2pm to 6pm – Free entrance

"For a sound installation, there's something surprisingly quiet about TESTIMONIES. At its barest, TESTIMONIES is a collection of interviews from Londoners who are talking about the Olympic and Paralympic Games, both the ones that happened in London in 1948 and then of course the ones that are to come next year.

At first there doesn't seem to be much to it, just some people talking as their black and white photo is projected onto the wall. But you find yourself listening all of a sudden to an Olympic hopeful, talking about how she's aiming to be on the Women's Football Team and about how much the Olympics mean to her and you find yourself smiling and nodding along.

What makes TESTIMONIES work is that that it is quite and understated. There's nothing forcing your attention, no bells, whistles or fireworks to drag you in. The transcripts of the TESTIMONIES are on one side of the room, the large photos projected onto the other. That, aside for the small detail of the voice recordings themselves, is it.

But by being securely and calmly quiet, these memories and stories get to breath and have an intimacy to them. You get a real sense of the person talking. London 2012 can seem to be this huge behemoth, causing nothing but road works and building sites, but here listening to Don talk about how his family got their first colour TV to see the Olympic Games properly , it's a reminder of what the Games are really about. Here are the people who've lived through the

Olympics and who will live through the upcoming one. What TESTIMONIES makes abundantly clear is that while these people all have great stories to tell, they're not so different from you and me.

In fact, the most interesting part of Testimonies is that it feels incomplete. You listen to Paulette remembering where she had been when she heard that London was going to host the Games back in 2006, and you find yourself remembering too what you were up to when you heard the news. Community's a difficult word, often feeling like an accusation or a challenge, but the community that comes up here is something quite natural and easy, something everyday. We're all going to be going through this historic moment and here are some people who are telling their versions of that. Again, the openness of the space created by Testimonies has that accommodating feel of a blank canvas where sure some people have already left their mark and written a bit of their account, but there's no hierarchy and your TESTIMONY is as good as mine.

Smartly, Testimonies builds on this, with post-it notes at the entrance for visitors to jot down their thoughts on the Games, a space at the back of the booklet to write a testimony down and even a twitter hashtag #ThisIsMyTestimonyLondon

Because the other, more challenging part of TESTIMONIES is that there's a sense of history to it already. These people have already managed to lay down their side of the Olympics, they've managed to take some control over their memories, even the memories of events that haven't yet happened. Staring at the still photograph of Sebastien talking about how excited he is as a football coach to see the kids he trains excited about next year, there's something almost out of reach, something that Sebastien has managed to create just by setting down what he feels about the Games. It's a reminder not just that we're all part of a community and that all of our stories matter, TESTIMONIES is also a reminder that we as Londoners will soon be looking at our own photographs of ourselves during the Games. And will we be trying to piece together what happened? Or will we have managed, like TESTIMONIES has, like Testimonies invites us to, to fix ourselves into this little and large slice of history."

It's also good to know that TESTIMONIES will be on the move: while it's currently showing at the BAR Gallery at Willesden Green, this is a fairly lightweight exposition, in terms of equipment only mind, and it will be featured in other venues across London. If you can think of a space where Testimonies might fit, the project's lead artist, Lorenzo Belenguer, is open to suggestions. For more information on Testimonies, visit <http://www.londonertestimonies.com/>.

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END

Notes to editors:

- High Resolution images can be downloaded from

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/LondonersTestimonies>

- You can also find out the latest contributions via:

Facebook: [Testimonies London](#)

Twitter: [TestimoniesLDN](#)

Join the conversation #ThisIsMyTestimonyLondon

Vimeo: [Testimonies London](#)

- **TESTIMONIES** is a £65,000 project with a £30,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and is supported by the Brent Council and Brent Artists Resource. It is one out of the eight projects in Brent that received approval from LOCOG (London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games) to be one of the Inspire Mark projects for the London 2012 Games. Testimonies can be broadcast anywhere around London and a 'Make your own Testimony' kit that will be provided to local councils and community groups.
- An Olympic and Paralympic first, the **London 2012 Inspire programme** enables non-commercial organisations across the UK to link their events and projects to the London 2012 Games in an official scope. From Wales to the East of England, from the South West to Yorkshire and Humber - more than 1000 projects and events have already been awarded the coveted Inspire mark for their work in one of six areas: sustainability, education, volunteering, business, sport or culture.
- **Brent Museum and Brent Archives** are based at on the first floor at Willesden Green Library Centre. The permanent museum display reveals the fascinating stories behind Brent's social history, and the exhibition galleries host in-house, touring, and community-curated exhibitions. The archives hold the records of Brent Council and its predecessors, as well as schools, religious institutions, businesses, and many other local organisations and individuals, and can help you find out more about the local area and its history, as well as research on many other subjects. We are delighted to have the opportunity to work in partnership with Brent Artists' Resource and display some of the material we hold relating to the 1948 Olympics as part of the Testimonies project.
- Using money raised through the National Lottery, the **Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)** sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 30,000 projects, allocating £4.6billion across the UK, including £868million in London alone.

For more information:

Please see www.LondonersTestimonies.com If you would like to be kept up to date on the project's progress, please contact LondonersTestimonies@gmail.com

For Brent Museum or Brent Archives to find out more about Brent's Olympic history, contact museum@brent.gov.uk or archives@brent.gov.uk or call 020 8937 3600 to find out more.