

So you think you know Brentford?

Nancy Groves hears about the Brentford Biopsy, an unusual addition to Waterman's Arts Centre

Imagine being able to look at a map of your local area that not only charted streets, parks and buildings but feelings, thoughts and dreams as well.

Welcome to the Brentford Biopsy: a large-scale collaboration between Watermans Arts Centre and artist-designers Christian Nold and Daniela Boraschi.

A huge banner measuring 10m in length, the Biopsy looks at first glance like an unnavigable mess of doodles and flow-charts. On closer inspection however, it emerges as a community art project that cuts to the heart of Brentford life.

"The Biopsy is another way of talking about place," says Nold, who has worked on similar projects in cities as far removed as San Francisco and Stockport. "The central metaphor is a bodily one, which is a good way to connect people and place. A lot of the issues in Brentford concern both things."

The project is the result of a 12-week residency at Watermans, during which Nold and Boraschi worked with more than 200 residents. The activities ranged from getting participants to draw answers to simple questions about Brentford - Where do you meet people? What do you see in your future? - to biomapping, a method

of recording bodily reactions to a place with equipment that incorporates lie detector technology with GPS SatNav.

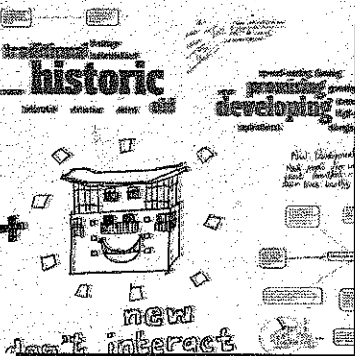
"People go for a walk and it records their physical arousal," explains Nold. "This can be positive or negative but it registers as a measure of intensity. It might be how they feel when they cross a certain road junction, a run-down housing estate or a posh area. Or perhaps there is just an attractive girl on the opposite corner."

Collating this visual and sensory data, Nold and Boraschi have mapped the smells, sounds and emotions of Brentford, as well as people's visions of the past, present and future of Brentford.

And the results are extraordinary. If Google Earth shows you into people's back gardens, the Biopsy illuminates what is going on in the back of their minds.

"Most people think local places are simple and slightly banal," says Nold. "But really they are complex entities, full of different opinions and agendas. We are trying to pull these things out into a visual structure which people can then use to prompt a discussion about Brentford's future."

What does the Biopsy have to say about Watermans? "It is critical in terms of cultural activity," says



A new style of map: One part of the Brentford Biopsy

Nold. "But lots of people talked of how socially divided Brentford is. And there are still people that Watermans could reach out to."

Projects like The Biopsy should help. The map is on display until Sunday and is searchable and downloadable at publicbiopsy.net. Nold is also inviting suggestions of where it can be moved to next.

As the website states: "This map is for anyone who cares about Brentford or who really ought to care about it."

The Brentford Biopsy, Watermans Arts Centre, 40 High Street, Brentford, Thursday, June 12, visit watermans.org.uk or publicbiopsy.net

A rarely performed Shakespeare...

Richmond Drama School students have chosen one of Shakespeare's lesser-known comedies to perform as part of their annual showcase.

Pericles: Prince of Tyre by William Shakespeare focuses on the Athenian figure of Pericles and his island-hopping trips around the Mediterranean.

As well as being one of Shake-

Theatre

By Claire Holt

speare's least performed plays, there is also some uncertainty as to whether it was written by the Bard or another playwright, George Wilkins.

Nevertheless, this fast-paced

play features myriad locations and characters, and is sure to keep you on your toes - especially when it is in the hands of one of London's finest drama schools.

Shakespeare Showcase, Richmond Adult College, Parkshot, Richmond, Thursday, June 26 to Saturday June 28, 7pm, £5, call 020 8439 8944, visit richmonddramaschool.com

dios.co.uk

The Six Wives of Timothy Leary. Until June 26. Six women meditate on the highs and the 'highs' of being married to counter-culture revolutionary and psychedelic messiah, Timothy Leary. £10-£15. ROSE THEATRE,

Heading Room. June 22. Choreographer and director Jonathan Lunn has brought together an amazing array of artists from the worlds of film, dance, music, literature and opera. £10-£14.

The Burial At Thebes. June 24-28. New version of Sophocles' Antigone presented by Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company. Lucy Pitman-Wallace directs the UK premiere of this

WATERMANS, 40 High Street, Brentford. 020 8232 1010. watermans.org.uk

Ho Sakta Hai Do Aadmi Do Kursiyaan: Could Be Two Men, Two Chairs. June 25- July 5. A premiere of a contemporary experimental theatre piece. Using two chairs and two actors to tell a number of stories which will be performed in Hindi and English on alternate weeks. From £8.

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