

COOLTAN ARTS MIDNIGHT LARGACTYL SHUFFLE JUNE 2010

At the entrance of the Tate Modern on 19 June 2010 at midnight, walkers-by were surprised by an unusual gathering of a good 60 people. People were meeting for CoolTan Arts Summer Solstice Midnight Largactyl Shuffle, a guided cultural walk from the powerhouse Tate Modern to the home of contemporary psychiatry, the Maudsley Hospital.

So why a night walk in June? On the Midnight walk, CoolTan Arts celebrates the ancient tradition of Summer Solstice, aka Midsummer. In pre-Christian times, people believed it was a healing and fertility night and picked the herb Calendula. Christians called the night St John's Eve / St Peter's Eve and thought it is the night when the 'evil spirits' begin.

Until this day, people associate Midsummer with neo-Druids and Stonehenge and for many it's a magical night. 21 June is the shortest night of the year - from now until 21 December the nights will get longer.

On CoolTan Arts unique Summer Solstice Midnight walk, participants had a chance to explore the urban psycho-geography of South London, and learn about local history and familiar landmarks in a light they had never seen them before.



People from all over the world took part in this procession – visitors from Australia, Global Xchange volunteers, local residents and CoolTan participants. One of the walkers said they saw the event in TimeOut and decided to come along, wondering what it was all about, curious to explore Southwark by night and learning more about the history of an area where you usually would not walk around at night time.

They were not disappointed and said they will not forget the stories and quirky facts walk leader Ari mentioned on the walk. However, it was not only the walk leaders Ari Henry and Michelle Baharier who did the talking; the narrative includes audience participation and many of the walkers shared their own stories about Southwark and mental health.

CoolTan Arts Largactyl Shuffle



Along the way walkers are given the sort of information you won't find in guidebooks – site specific insights into, for instance, the time when Charlie Chaplin's mum was sent to the asylum for being a single parent. There's Dickens, Shakespeare, Dr 'lexicon' Johnson and Chaucer being a few of the better known writers with associations to Southwark. Hospitals come in too; some of the world's oldest are along the route as some of the first to change the face of medicine, bringing Southwark's position to the forefront of research.

The Largactyl Shuffle brings together all the elements of CoolTan Arts, a charity that believes mental wellbeing is enhanced by the power of creativity. It exists to inspire the wellbeing and creative participation of a diverse range of people through the production of quality art, and is run by and for people with mental distress.

It operates a vibrant arts centre in the lively Walworth Road, near Elephant and Castle, with



a public art gallery and urban garden. Providing a programme of activities run by and for adults experiencing mental distress. Creative workshops, exhibitions, fashion shows, public art projects, monthly Largactyl Shuffle walks, volunteering opportunities, self-advocacy training and websites.

They empower participants in their own lives and helps break down the stigma of mental distress. Doing this through quality arts education with professional outcomes such as public exhibitions, and social enterprise principles.

CoolTan Arts is looking to work in partnership with other service providers and is taking

commissions, service level agreements and referrals. They hire and sell high quality pieces of artwork to other organisations, hire its workshops and provide professional tutors to run multi-disciplinary art workshops and advocacy / self-advocacy sessions.

UPCOMING WALKS:

Every third Saturday of the month

- 17 July 2010 – architectural walk
- 21 August 2010 – family treasure hunt/quiz
- 18 September 2010 – artist Austin Spare, The 20th Century Blake
- 9 October 2010 - sponsored walk at 11.30am.

For more information about CoolTan Arts and the Largactyl Shuffle, please contact: Kathrin Kirmann on 020 7701 2696 or 0798 565 8443, kathrin@cooltanarts.org.uk or www.cooltanarts.org.uk