

Discovering Young Hackney

Headliners reporters were out and about in Hackney during half term, checking out the cultural offerings in this year's Discover Young Hackney festival

We love living in Hackney because of the many cultural activities going on in the borough. After the success of the first Discover Young Hackney festival last year, which many young Hackney residents took part in and enjoyed, we were looking forward to getting inspired again at this year's event.

This year, Discover Young Hackney '08 provided more chances for Hackney's young people to get involved in different leisure, art, music, dance and media activities – giving them the opportunities to express themselves in different ways, make new friends and share experiences. There were projects on everything from fashion to film and live performance to project management, with young people working alongside their peers as well as professionals to showcase the best of the borough in events such as the talent contest at the Hackney Empire.



During half term we went to visit a couple of these cultural activities in Discover Young Hackney, and spoke to young people taking part in them, as well as interviewing two of the festival's cultural ambassadors.

Signs of the City

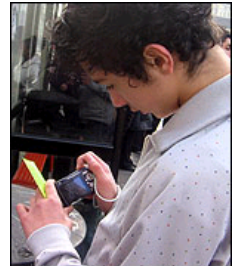


'Signs of the City' was a three-day workshop at Space, led by artist Douglas Nicolson, which consisted of taking photographs around Hackney to mark the specific locations in the borough that were important to the young people taking part. We were pleased to get involved in the workshop, walking the route they had mapped out and taking photos ourselves. We also interviewed the young people taking part.

We wanted to know what attracted these young people to attend Signs of the City. Georgia, 12, said "because I like working with cameras and computers. I like taking photos round Hackney but I don't have a camera of my own so it was quite a good opportunity."

Toby, 13, told us about the particular subject he wanted to photograph: "I really like the graffiti in Hackney, and my mum found this course, so basically I turned up and invited my friend Erik the next day. I think we've learned how to use the cameras more and how to take different types of shots".

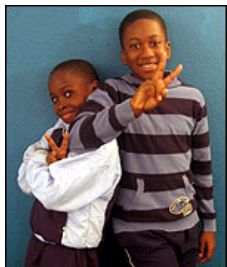
All the pictures from the workshop will be downloaded onto an official website (see www.spacestudios.org.uk/DYH) as part of an international project running in Barcelona, Berlin, Sofia and here in London. Young people in these cities will share the photographs online so they can start to compare the differences and similarities between each of these European cities. They will also be connected to a Google Earth map - as we took our pictures of different places and things, the geographical site was located with the help of a handheld GPS device which will enable a photographic 'map' to be created.



From Street to Screen

The second project we visited was a dance workshop at Hoxton Hall. This was one of a series of workshops involving young people between seven and 11 years in dance, video and graffiti activities led by teenagers aged 14-19. We spoke to some of the young people taking part.

Oliver, 10, wanted to do the workshop "instead of being bored at home." He is a keen dancer: "I've done street dance and break dance, but this is my first dance lesson. Yesterday we learnt Singing in the Rain. I know how to dance to that now."



Lamar, 10, was introduced to dancing when he was very young: "I have experience because when I was a baby I was raised into dancing in Jamaica. My garden has a big sound system and I used to play it loud and dance in the garden." Lamar, who is also a drummer, said "I think it's good to celebrate young Hackney. I think it's good because when school's out you can have some fun and get experience in how to dance. Maybe, if you did dancing, I think enough people would come to it and encourage their friends to come, that you could raise money and give it to UNICEF."

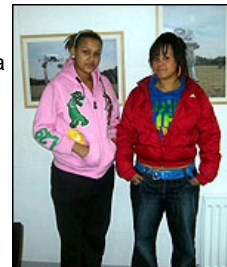
Meeting the Cultural Ambassadors

Did you know that young people played a big role in planning and promoting Discover Young Hackney as cultural ambassadors? Well, we went to meet two of these young people to find out more about their experiences.

Amelia, who is 14, explained what being a cultural ambassador involves: "We get young people to go to events, and we have to promote the Discover Young Hackney festival and go to workshops about how to promote the events and the festival."

It has been a good learning experience for Amelia, who told us, "It's been fun. It will hopefully help me...I'm becoming more confident about talking to young people and stuff." Naomi, who is 15 and also a cultural ambassador, said it also changed her perspective of her borough: "At first I thought Hackney was quite boring, but after the Discover Young Hackney project I've realised there's a lot more to it, and it's got a lot more for young people to do."

Having attended most of the events taking place in the festival, they had positive things to say about Discover Young Hackney. Amelia thinks "it's a good idea because there's too much crime and we need to get lots of young people in Hackney doing positive stuff with their lives." Naomi agreed, and explained that the festival is helping combat the negative image of young people: "I think it's a great idea because not only is it helping get people off the streets but it's helping them meet new people and it's showing adults that the youth aren't as bad as they come across; they're more interested in learning than anything else."



Naomi said that being a cultural ambassador "has taught me a lot of things", and she would recommend it to other young people – in fact, she has started a MySpace page to promote Discover Young Hackney and encourage others to get involved.

About this story

This story was produced by Gloire Ammany, 18, Sarra Said-Wardell, 12, and Shannique Smith, 14. It was published in Hackney Today.

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