

Oxford St / Regent St / Bond St West End of London, UK

PLAN
PROJ
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CLIENT Westminster City Council

PRINCIPAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Public Sector: The City of London Corporation, Transport for London, The ORB Inclusive Design Panel, Street Improvements Review Group (WCC)
- Developer Group: The Crown Estate, Cosgrove Group, Great Portland Estate, Land Securities, Marchday, Shaftesbury Plc, The Portman Estate, Grosvenor
- Associations: New West End Company, Regent Street Association, Bond Street Association, Marylebone Association, The Soho Society

SUMMARY Plan was appointed by Westminster City Council to produce an arts strategy as part of the ORB Action Plan; its purpose is to improve these streets both as public places and shopping destinations.

The commission sought answers to how public art could play a role in improving the physical environment of the streets. Rather than consider the principal streets, the study looked at nine 'urban oases' close, or adjacent, to these streets. The oases were, Old Quebec Street, St Christopher's Place, South Molton Street, Princes Street, Argyll Street, Kingly Street, Ramillies Street and Place and Great Titchfield Street.

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CONTEXT A key aspect of our strategy was considering how each of these places worked not only internally, but also within its wider urban context. Consideration was given to the morphology of the oases, and their identity as determined by the area of London in which they sit. Through this research, and a careful assessment of the urban design issues affecting each oasis and the public spaces around them, a series of specific ways were identified as to how they could contribute to improvements in the overall experience of the West End.

COMMUNITY The West End of London has a global audience; it was therefore not considered useful to engage in any direct consultation with the people using the streets as this would have had to have been large scale and strategic to have any real value. Such an exercise, while potentially useful, was beyond the resources of the project. Instead a wide range of expert stakeholders were identified and approached for their views and perspectives. Collectively, this group covers the retail community, the major landowners and developers as well as key public sector bodies.

VISION The vision that emerged from the study was to employ art within the public realm to create a joyful and stimulating experience for pedestrians in the ORB area by helping deliver a richness of character, by encouraging people to use the West End at their own pace and by making it easier for people to make new discoveries as they traverse the rich network of streets.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS The study put forward a complete public realm response to each of the oases and set out, in the form of 'outline public art plans,' an urban design framework for each. The key recommendation was to employ visionary public art practice firstly to enrich people's experience of the West End by delivering a range of urban design improvements and, secondly, by ensuring all the events devised as part of the programme were of the highest artistic quality.

We noted a whole range of other benefits may flow from these two heads and foresaw an opportunity for the study to dovetail with Westminster City Council's flagship cultural strategy, 'Strategy for Arts and Culture 2008 – 13' which sets out broader aspirations for cultural practice to deliver economic and social as well as environmental benefits. With this in mind, the OAS can be read as strategy for using public art to help deliver the physical aspects of a comprehensive programme of regeneration.



SOUTH MOLTON STREET