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OLYMPIAD ARTISTS MOVE IN TO CREATIVE STUDIOS IN COVENTRY

The creators of a cultural project which celebrates the ideals of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games are the second local artistic group to take on a business lease in FarGo Creative Village - the city's creative business quarter, which is supported by Advantage West Midlands (AWM).

Imagineer Productions won the competition to produce the region's entry to Artists Taking the Lead, part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and managed by Arts Council England, which will see commissions in all 12 UK regions realised across the country over the next three years, each inspired by their location and celebrating the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Their entry, Godiva Awakes, will see regional, national and international artists and engineers construct a ten-metre high Lady Godiva figure, powered by 50 cyclists as she walks to London to play her part in the London 2012 celebrations.

Godiva will carry with her a giant book containing messages from young people in the region as she processes from Coventry to London.

The project will reflect the artistic and industrial heritage of the region and its themes will reflect Lady Godiva's humanity, as well as sustainability, in its construction and performance.

Imagineer have moved the 'nerve centre' of their Godiva Awakes project from the ICE Building at Coventry University's Technology Park to provide better office and administrative space. They will retain part of the old Daimler site as a large scale production space in which similar spectacular outdoor performance projects can be built.

The production company is encouraging local artists to learn new skills by producing carnival-type figures for the annual Godiva Carnival in Coventry which is on July 3 this year.

Imagineer have moved into FarGo Studios just after the award-winning shysters theatre company - an ensemble of actors with learning disabilities established in 1997. The shysters also have a training company for young actors with learning disabilities, the shystershadows, which was established in 2001.

The shysters' reputation for providing dynamic and exciting new ways to interact with both education and theatre has long been established. More recently the company's two award-winning film shorts My Bloody Valentine and The Raven's Tale - shot entirely on location in Coventry - have brought international acclaim to the company and City alike.

Jane Hytch, one of Imagineer Productions' directors, said: "Moving into FarGo is the latest stage in bringing this exciting and massive project together. It will involve the collaboration of thousands of local, national and international people. We desperately needed somewhere to meet everyone involved and FarGo - being at the heart of Coventry and the project - meets that need perfectly."

Sue Walker, the shysters' Company Manager, said: "For more than a year now we have been eagerly anticipating moving to Fargo Studios, the perfect location for our new rehearsal and office spaces. We are delighted that Andy Duncan, team leader Regeneration Services, pointed us in the right direction recognising not only the role Fargo could play in the shysters' organisational expansion but also the asset the organisation would be to the development."

AWM funded £200,000 to complete the three-unit studios. Development Manager Stuart Buckley said: "Nowadays, artists need to be businesspeople too. Having these visionary and hard-working artists in residence in the creative village embodies the whole spirit of the regeneration of this part of Coventry."

Cllr Linda Bigham, Coventry's newly appointed Cabinet Member for City Development, said: "Bringing these artistic groups together at FarGo is the obvious choice. It will allow them both to expand and build on their fantastic work to date, as well as inspiring confidence in Coventry's new creative business village.

"Far Gosford Street has a long and distinguished history as a trading post and its contribution to the city's economy is gradually being restored - this is another positive step along the way."

The FarGo Village initiative is a partnership between AWM, which owns the site, Coventry City Council, Coventry Warwickshire and Solihull Partnership, Far Gosford Street business and residents, and local developer Complex Development Projects Ltd.

The £30 million Far Gosford development scheme will also include a new hotel at the entrance to the street, offices and business space along Sky Blue Way, offices at the entrance to the street's main car park, refurbishment/redevelopment of the Gosford Industrial Estate, improvements to the fabric of existing historic buildings, and re-use of vacant or derelict sites.

ENDS

Notes for editors

Pix of Imagineer, Godiva Awakes and the shysters at links herewith.

Imagineer Productions is an independent creative production company based in Coventry, which produces large-scale outdoor events, carnival and site specific theatre. The team behind the name include: Jane Hytch, Kathi Leahy, Claire Maddocks and Andrea Simpson.

About Artists taking the Lead

Artists taking the lead is one of the major projects of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Arts Council England is managing the project on behalf of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Wales.

About the Cultural Olympiad

The Cultural Olympiad is a national celebration of culture which is happening now and is about:

- Giving everyone in the country a chance to be part of London 2012
- Bringing sport and art together on a scale that has never been done
- Using the power of the Olympic Games to inspire creativity across all forms of culture, especially amongst young people.
- Making a real impact which will leave a lasting legacy well beyond 2012

For more information visit www.advantagewm.co.uk/
www.imagineerproductions.co.uk/
www.theshysters.org.uk/

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We are making a difference - for every £1 invested by Advantage West Midlands, we now generate £8.14 in impact for the regional economy.

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