

# INCLUSIVITY



A luminarium, by its nature, gives access to a very broad audience. They are appreciated by all ages, all cultures, all abilities and can be accessed by the elderly and wheelchair users.

AoA originally grew out of a theatre project for people with learning disabilities. Accessibility to the widest audience has always been central to our work and we have always encouraged host organisations to exploit the accessibility of the luminaria.

This exploitation has usually taken the form of the publicity announcing the luminarium is wheelchair accessible and inviting special needs schools down at quiet times in the week. But there have also been some significant collaborations with hosts who have been particularly focussed on the needs of people with disabilities.

Since 2006 AoA has pursued a collaboration with Salamanda Tandem which has entailed workshops and performance with groups of people with special needs in Nottingham, Telford, Redditch and Leicester.

More recently AoA has adopted a model that has been employed successfully in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands. Typically a centre, such as a centre for people with disabilities, has been the host to an exhibition that is also open to access from the general public. This has proved to have enormous benefits for the host organisation – promoting social inclusion and integration with the wider community. And, in addition, the public have appreciated not just their experience of the luminarium but also their experience of entering into the world of the host.

Architects of Air are keen to talk with prospective partners who want to capitalise on the unique attributes of a luminarium to offer something special to their community. In particular to those who may be disadvantaged in terms of their participation in the arts – sectors such as the elderly and people with a learning disability.

We aim to tour to settings where there is the optimum opportunity for people with special needs to access the work, whether this is at a festival, day centres, residential homes or a new space. We are looking for hosts to develop the potential of the luminarium as a unique sensory environment in which all can share a quality experience.

*“I was overwhelmed by the luminarium brought to Autscape this year which was far more wonderful than I could have imagined. As a person with aspergers i am greatly affected by colour and this was like a dream come true. I have memories of just wandering through, of singing in there, of gently spinning (my daughter did too), of conversations with the people running it. It was a very special experience”.* **Trish Jubb, visitor at Autscape**

## Quotes from Presenters and Visitors

*"You are experts in generating a truly inclusive creative experience."* **Shona Powell, Lakeside Arts Centre, Nottingham, UK**

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**Trish Jubb, visitor at Autscape**

*"For handicapped people and their parents or friends a luminarium is an ideal place to be. Both can do the same inside: enjoying, being amazed and relaxing."*

**Henri van Wezel, Prinsensichting Special Needs Centre**

*"I wanted to contact you and let you know what a great week we all had. Every one of our team felt it was a real privilege to have had the opportunity to work with AoA. We can't praise Exhibition Managers highly enough. Lastly of course the amazing experience and sense of wonderment the luminarium afforded."*

**Helen Chesters, Arts Development Officer, The Borough of Telford & Wrekin**

*(joint project with Salamanda Tandem)*

*"Parents very emotional, seeing their children relax for the first time in one case in almost 10 years. Some parents brought to tears seeing the effect on their offspring. All reactions were extremely positive. One extremely violent client was seen to be smiling for the first time ever, while visiting Amozozo."*

**Hans Gerbensma, S'Heerenloo, Julianadorp**

*"In many "street" based festivals the experiences from the performances and events is frantic and rushed – fireworks, street theatre, etc – it can often be noisy too. The unique quality of the luminarium was to bring a wholly different experience to an outdoor setting. To challenge people's expectations of our festival."*

*"I was surprised by the number of and variety of social and cultural groups of general public who visited the luminarium. It was a great "leveller" of an experience."*

**Jon Hogan, Gloucester City Council, UK**

*"...a really immersive, inspiring, spiritual and accessible space – transformative for audiences – combined with the presence of a large, curiosity-inducing structure next to the cathedral. A great way to engage a diverse range of local communities as well as attracting the passing tourist trade."*

**Maria Bota, Director, Salisbury Festival**

*"Being inside a luminarium is, for an autistic person, not just a pleasant experience that allows his brain to relax and relieve stress, but also promotes a therapeutic process as a whole, since it generates primary emotions supported by the luminarium's organic form that imitates the feeling of being inside a "womb". This combination of feeling protected and receiving multiple sensory experiences, is what makes the luminarium so wonderful."*

*"When I first had the opportunity to be inside one, I could not get enough of it. I kept going back and spending as much time as I could absorbing this pleasant sensation."*

*"The people that worked there were very helpful and did everything to create an atmosphere that helped everyone relax before even entering the luminarium. Thank you all, for making this unique experience one I will never forget."*

**Perla Messina**

*"We have had a fantastic time in a magical space, a time and place to be inspired."*

**R Newbould, Action Space Mobile**

*“Thank you very much for bringing **Arcazaar** over to us. As you will know the exhibition went very well going over capacity in terms of audiences and fitting in beautifully with the wider work of the festival. We very much look forward to working with you again.*

**Jonathan Cochrane, Theatre and Arts Development Manager, Redditch B.C.**

*(joint project with Salamanda Tandem)*

*“I write to thank you for the wonderful experience the students of our school had today as they visited and toured your structure at Highfields, Nottingham. I was so thrilled to see the joy, awe and wonder on their faces as we went around the space together.*

*“It was so easy to lose track of time and all other cares inside the structure and just observe the way in which the students - all of whom present with severe and profound learning difficulties - were engaging with this unique environment. Thank you for providing such a rich and rewarding experience for us all.*

**Jonathan Gray - teacher, Stanton Vale School**

*“The Luminarium was one of the highlights and became both a retreat when stressed and overloaded and (at other times) a social venue. I particularly appreciated your efforts to understand and adjust sensitively to autistic needs and priorities.*

**Autescape visitor**

*“I am a qualified Care Manager with experience in the field of Autism and Special Needs. The wrong sort of lighting can actually be painful to an autistic person whereas the right sort of lighting can be calming and restful. In the Luminarium a person can choose the colour light they want to rest in.*

*A lovely calming and meditative experience*

**Phillipa Sillitoe, visitor at Autescape**

*“A cultural Highlight which attracted lots of people who would otherwise never set a foot into our mental hospital. Finally we got 4500 paying visitors within 3 days and many, many children.*

*“Our board of directors is convinced that the luminarium has played THE leader role in our festival-program and is very happy about the fact that so many first-time visitors have come to our place to visit the clinic.*

**Susann Roßberg, Manager Marketing, Press and Public Relations, Psychiatrisches Zentrum Nordbaden, Wiesloch, Germany**

*“I loved being inside the structure (have to say that from the outside it looked a little daft!). It was weird how after a while in there the red lights began to look orange, and stayed that way until leaving. The pods were great - like having private space but be in with others enjoying the experience at the same time.*

*“I also like the feel of inflated plastic (I know that sounds weird so I don't tend to say it!). Leaning back against plastic like that provides wide areas of deep pressure that many autistics like myself crave. I was unsure at first if leaning against it might potentially damage it and I would be told not to - that could be made clear, perhaps.*

*“I enjoyed seeing the children in there and wonder how the experience will stay with them. I guess they won't consciously remember but it's bound to have a sub-conscious impression, this other world so far removed from what we normally see and touch, this impression of light and enveloping but not frightening shapes. An experience of a completely alien world, yet enclosed and awesome.*

**Ruth, Autescape visitor**

*“the amazing luminarium transported you through light, air and space into a world of peace and energy”*

**Wendy Keay-Bright, Reader in Inclusive Design, Department of Creative Communication, Cardiff School of Art and Design**

*“Thank-you for bringing the structure to Giggleswick for the conference last week. It was a fantastic sensory environment where I, and so many of the others attending, could relax and unwind from the stresses of the outside world.*

*I believe that the Luminarium had the single biggest influence in the meeting as a whole, and turned out to be one of the favoured destinations for people, whether socializing or just having to get away from it. With so many autistics having additional sensory problems, a haven like this is a glorious oasis where we can decompress and clear our minds from the chaos that is normal in dealing with life. The general ambience was wonderful and whilst I personally found the reds to be slightly too intense at times the way the colours merged and complimented the environment was fantastic.*

*Sensory issues are a constant menace in every-day life, and a lot of conscious energy is continually being drained away in dealing with it – either in trying to avoid situations or trying to fight through them. With the self-contained work of the inside of a luminarium this burden is taken away and replaced by a simple, yet intriguing aesthetic environment, the result of which is a refuge where people can truly escape and relax from the stressors of the outside world.*

*The inside of the luminarium could well be defined as a miracle – those who entered were magically transformed and reduced into a serene state of mind. A gentle meander around the structure often took in people lying or sitting in the pods, lost in the relaxing tranquillity of the moment. Above all other things that the luminarium yielded, it gave one thing so wonderfully precious and highly sought after freedom from the stresses and strains of life.*

*Many thanks again”*

**Visitor to Autscape**

*Really enjoyed it, the way the light (and the sounds) interplayed with the environment was a fantastic experience, and the ‘energy flows’ (not meaning to sound new age hippy but I don’t really know how else to describe what I mean) of the sculpture while walking around it were very interesting, especially how it seemed to drive me in certain routes, making some of the alcoves more or less inaccessible while going anti-clockwise around the Luminarium but easy to get to going clockwise. As was the gorgeous view of the red column you got when you sat at a pillar of one of the green alcoves so that the red column was directly in front of a blue alcove*

**Gizensha, visitor to Autscape**