

Symposium explores cultural engagement in Chicago and Birmingham

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The University of Birmingham will co-host a cultural engagement symposium at the Chicago Cultural Center on Tuesday 8 May 2012 focused on connecting cities, universities and international partners in arts and culture.

Entitled *Local and Global Cultural Engagement: Connecting Cities, Universities and International Partners*, the symposium will identify best practice for cross-sector partnerships between cultural institutions and academia, and explore the potentially dynamic relationship between local and global cultural engagement agendas.

Opening the symposium is Commissioner of the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Michelle T. Boone. The programme includes a session on university cultural engagement, led by Professor Larry Norman, Deputy Provost for the Arts at the University of Chicago and Professor Ian Grosvenor, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Cultural Engagement at the University of Birmingham. Other sessions will cover cultural heritage; cross-sector collaborative research and new technologies; and public libraries and cultural learning from the perspective of both the Chicago Public Library Commissioner and his Birmingham counterpart. Directors from the Chicago Shakespeare Theater and the University of Birmingham's Shakespeare Institute will also lead a session on the legacy of the playwright both in the Midlands and in the US Midwest.

Chicago and Birmingham have been sister cities since 1993 and, building on this relationship, the University of Birmingham and the City of Birmingham have initiated a range of development activities with institutions and organisations based in Chicago and the Midwest. The emerging Chicago Cultural Plan and Birmingham 'Creative City' initiative provide a strong framework in which to discuss various forms of cultural engagement and collaboration.

Professor Ian Grosvenor, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Cultural Engagement at the University of Birmingham, said: "The symposium and associated visits will enable us to share details of how we understand and address issues around cultural engagement, but also to listen and learn from what is happening in Chicago. A vibrant, sustainable and diverse cultural offer is central to the future of Chicago and Birmingham and the visit provides a great opportunity for building new cultural partnerships, which can only benefit the two cities'.

Professor Larry Norman, Deputy Provost for the Arts at the University of Chicago, said: "The University of Chicago is fortunate to be situated in one of the most culturally rich and diverse cities in the world. Over the past ten years, the University has focused on strengthening relationships with neighbourhood arts organisations, the City of Chicago, and international cultural partners. The University is excited to build on our role as a cultural partner and maintains a firm commitment to strengthening connections locally and around the globe."

In addition to the University of Birmingham and the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, the symposium is co-hosted by the University of Chicago, Chicago Sister Cities International, and the National Public Housing Museum. It will take place at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, IL 60602.

Notes to Editors

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