



What is Free Range? Europe's largest graduate art and design show...

Whether members of the public or industry are looking to buy new art for investment, employ new staff or are simply lovers of objects d'art, there is no doubt that graduate art shows and Free Range in particular are fabulous hunting grounds for hot new talent.

Of all these shows, Free Range is the biggest and has become a destination point in its own right. It has a unique feel about it; hosting a plethora of courses from across the UK. Staged annually throughout June and July, it is held at The Old Truman Brewery, in east London's Brick Lane.

Just to put the event size into perspective, the venue covers an 11 acre site; the same size as the V&A Museum. Free Range's sheer scale over one location and the fact that it is free entry means that it is a very popular one-stop shop to view, buy and head-hunt the latest talent.

Each college creates their own tailor-made show as part of the larger event. The shows rotate weekly over an 8 week period, in several venues, broadly covering 4 disciplines: design, photography, art and interiors. The application process is on a first-come, first-serve basis - welcoming colleges great and small from all over the country.

The focus is to maintain the quality of Free Range, give the students and their colleges the credibility they deserve, grow visitor numbers year on year and attract more leaders from public, media and industry. Lastly but by no means least, it is essential to retain the energy and fun atmosphere, celebrating all that is good about art and design as well as being the home for graduating students.

In the late 1990's, it became apparent that UK art and design colleges needed a centrally located creative hub where students could show off their work and meet potential employers, the general public and media. Around the same time, a few forward-thinking Universities and colleges started to show an interest in The Old Truman Brewery, now an established arts and entertainment venue, complete with its own streets, community of bars, cafes, shops and restaurants as well as 200 tenanted businesses. With the venue's growing reputation for hosting gritty and inspirational events, (Bodyworld's, Hell's Kitchen, Art Car Boot Fair and London Design Festival), plus the fact that The Old Truman Brewery is situated in an area known to have the largest concentration of artists anywhere in Europe, it became the perfect choice.

As an ex graphic design student herself, Old Truman Brewery Event Manager Tamsin O'Hanlon recognised the need to mount a bespoke event. In 2001, with the support of the landlords who wanted to initiate artistic grass roots projects, Free Range was born. Tamsin has almost single handedly championed and grown Free Range, from its inception to the beast that it has become today. Moving into its 9th year, Free Range 09 will host over 3,000 students in 60+ shows with anticipated visitor numbers exceeding 170,000.

As Free Range Director Tamsin O'Hanlon aptly explains, "Free Range is an explosion of talent on a massive scale. This is the best opportunity for industry players and the general public to discover artists in fledgling mode before reputations and prices soar! The Old Truman Brewery is a truly exciting venue and the perfect platform to showcase Free Range - in fact, almost anything."