

# ART & SPORT

**“The political fissures between disabled sportspeople and artists are well ingrained, and each have operated in silos in the past. London 2012 is seen as an opportunity to bring these two communities together.”**

**Jamie Beddard, Our View**

**Accentuate**, a transformational programme of 15 projects, inspired by the Paralympic Movement, seeks to change perceptions and offer opportunities to showcase the talents of deaf and disabled people. Accentuate is funded by Legacy Trust UK, creating a lasting legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games across the UK, SEEDA and the regional cultural agencies. Screen South is the home of Accentuate.



# ART & SPORT an introduction

**We are living in momentous and contradictory times. Against a backdrop of economic and political uncertainty, the dreams of a few will become realities as the Olympics and Paralympics approach. We need to ensure that these benefits become collective, and that 2012 marks a shift in the representation of, attitudes to, and aspirations of, disabled people. The programme of work delivered by Accentuate is inspired by the Paralympic Movement and is testament to the breadth and quality of the work and performance of disabled artists and athletes in the South-East.**

**Our View** is a group of deaf and disabled people who sit at the heart of Accentuate and ensure the views and contributions of disabled people inform every level of the programme. Accentuate works across the spectrum of arts, sports, film, heritage and tourism. This is both a strength and a challenge; how can people with different perspectives and from different disciplines be united under one banner?

Until now there has been limited in-depth discussion or analysis around the differences and commonalities between the disability arts and sports sectors.

ART



## FOREWORD Jamie Beddard

As a young disabled person, 'the arts' were not on my radar, with yearly visits to pantomime being the sum total of my creative pursuits. Through a bizarre set of circumstances I was jettisoned onto a film set, and a journey through the hinterlands of performance began. I had no training or support, and no clue as to the realities of this alien world. My wide-eyed trespassing went unchecked, and I soon discovered other like-minded people determined to upset apple-carts. Since the 1970s, this trickle of interlopers has spawned a thriving Disability Arts movement, intent on telling our stories, celebrating our identities and creating great work.

Previously, disabled people had barely been seen on stage, television or film. High-profile portrayals of

disability were (and unbelievably still are) shortcuts for non-disabled actors to secure Oscars – Tom Hanks in 'Forrest Gump', Al Pacino in 'Scent of a Woman', Holly Hunter in 'The Piano' or Daniel Day Lewis in 'My Left Foot'. These characters are predominantly defined by their impairments, stripped of complexity, subtlety and humanity. Authenticity and truth are sacrificed for saccharine misrepresentation, maintaining the concept of 'them' and 'us' – disabled and non-disabled – and consolidating one-dimensional stereotypes of disabled people as brave, evil or helpless.

Against this backdrop, putting disabled people on stages, or in front of cameras, is explicitly political, giving voices and platforms to those previously unheard and unseen. My own break came in the groundbreaking television film, *Skalligrigg*, in which maverick producers came up with the enlightened concept of casting disabled people in disabled roles. Fortunately for me, there were not enough disabled

SPORT



## FOREWORD Kristina Veasey

Sport has always been a part of my life. My childhood summers were spent at the tennis club, my winters at the badminton clubhouse. I captained every sporting team my school had, attended county trials and swam in national competitions. If I wasn't running about, or climbing trees, I was being a menace on roller boots. It was all about physical exercise, getting sweaty, feeling the burn of pushing my body to its limits. Above all it was fun!

When I started to lose mobility, my sporting life began to grind to a frustrating halt. I lost the adrenaline buzz I so loved, I lost contact with team mates, and despite desperately trying to keep up and join in, my sporting ambitions and identity seemed to be slipping away.

Fortunately, I soon discovered a whole sporting community of disabled athletes, and the opportunity to feel included and resurrect my sporting self.

With hard work and support from coaches and team mates I progressed quickly and was selected to represent my country at the Sydney 2000 Paralympics. I can't describe to you the utter exhilaration of entering the stadium for the opening ceremony, the deafening roar of the crowd, the blinding camera flashes and the ridiculous grin across my face. It was incredible!

Being an elite athlete is a way of life. It encompasses every part of our daily routine from what and when we eat, to the temperature of our recovery showers (as cold as it gets!). The paralympian's quest is not about trying to be 'normal', but about recognising our differences, working with, and despite them. We strive to get the most out of our bodies and push ourselves to the limit, training twice a day, six days a week.

Each sector has negotiated their own path, their own way of working and their own place in society.

The Our View blog on the Accentuate website has been an invaluable resource in reflecting these perspectives and has created a space to enable the development of ideas and understanding.

Whilst different approaches to disability have come sharply into focus, clearly there are also opportunities to learn from one another, and shared aims and objectives.

actors to go round, and I managed to snare a role. I played opposite the late, great Ian Dury, was pampered by make-up artists and became an integral component in an exhilarating and creative mix. I was immediately hooked on the adrenaline, life-style and possibilities of being a performer.

I left my previous existence as a mediocre youth-worker, contacted Graeae Theatre Company and a new journey begun. Having been stared at all my life, I now had the opportunity to confront, baffle and occasionally entertain audiences. The creativity which had been crushed by more prosaic pursuits in my formative years was now unleashed. I discovered I had something to say. I have been fortunate to enjoy a wide variety of experiences; in theatre and on film, with mainstream and disability arts companies and in disability-specific and non-specific roles. I have diversified into writing, directing and training; bartending was never a

We play sport because we can and because we love it. We are good at what we do, and we work hard to become more so.

There are so many inspiring stories from paralympic sport. There's the US sprinter, John Siciliano, whose prosthetic leg fell off mid-race; he slung it over his shoulder and hopped to the finish line, or Atajan Begniyazov the weightlifter from Turkmenistan who, unable to walk on his feet, walked around the stadium track on his hands to take centre stage in the Sydney 2000 closing ceremony. These showcases of grit and determination symbolise what many disabled people do every day; overcome barriers.

As 2012 approaches, I wonder what impact the Games will have, and what legacy it will leave disabled people across the UK. Whilst media coverage suggests we are a sport-loving country, sport, like art, is one of the first lessons to be cut in schools. Impressive stadiums and

The fanfare greeting the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics highlights the potential to draw together many diverse communities (whether elite, emergent or aspirational) and to offer the possibility of change and real legacy. Disabled people and their allies must ensure these opportunities are not lost, and that the struggles of the past can become springboards for the future.

### **What better way to start than by spotlighting the individuals, achievements and perspectives that form disability arts and sports?**

viable means of supplementing my meagre thespian income.

People in the mainstream continue to struggle with the straightforward concept of 'we are here, we have stuff to say and demand our right to say it'. New stories, perspectives and aesthetics have long been the lifeblood of interesting, innovative and important art. This places disabled people, so long excluded, marginalised or ignored, in a position from where they can deliver new work and invigorate the arts. While the poacher has not yet turned gamekeeper, and glass ceilings remain intact, the Disability Arts movement has made tremendous strides in opening doors and broadening horizons. We have a responsibility to ensure that the flag of progress is handed to younger generations, and that the scope for disabled people echoes that of their non-disabled counterparts.

arenas are being built, but will there be the infrastructure to enable disabled people to use them? The Paralympics may inspire future generations of disabled children, but will they have access to support and opportunities to help make those dreams a reality? As the number of disabled people grows and impairments change, can our existing systems support the momentum of paralympic success without becoming more exclusive?

The Paralympics brings us the chance to celebrate the achievements of our elite athletes, and the rich and diverse talents of disabled people the world over.

It is a chance to bring to the fore ideas that can be catalysts for change. So, with bated breath, I can't wait for it all to begin. As the Paralympic flame is lit and the cheers of 80 thousand spectators fills the Olympic stadium, I know I won't be the only one with goosebumps!

## Sport vs Art



### Camilla Brueton

Sport wears its categories on its sleeve – its winners and losers, the parameters within which the game is played are agreed from the outset; the distance to run has been stated. The art world is a place of subjective validation; through critique, endorsement, exposure and education. But what constitutes success within it? And when do you know if you have 'made it'?

### Sarah Playforth

Art and sport have one very specific thing in common. They both take us away from that hamster wheel of worry and anxiety that is so often part of life and allow us to achieve a "flow" that takes us to another place. One thing I am sure of is that we need both art and sport in all our lives.

### Kristina Veasey

I am an 'average' artist and a former elite athlete. With both sport and art, as with all that I do, I try to do my best, to excel and I do want to enjoy it even if that's not always the way it works out. A lot of it is about the effort you put in, a lot is about talent and a lot is about opportunity.

### Jamie Beddard

Art and sport are not mutually exclusive, they interact with people on numerous different levels, and play crucial roles in enabling us to make sense, and enjoy the world around us. Who would ask such a daft question as, "Which is better – Sport or Art?"

### Colin Hambrook

Much as I would like to think art isn't competitive, I know it is. And in ways that are often less honest than in sport. One of the big strengths of Accentuate, of disability art and of outsider art has been the aspiration to create a level playing field in which everyone is valued and can take part.

### Kristina Veasey

I remember in my basketball team's preparation for Athens 2004 balancing the demands of training, raising two small children, building my own career and fundraising £1000 per person. Again whilst this is often the case for many other non-disabled athletes there does seem to be a hierarchy in funding opportunities – with those who play as a team, are female, are disabled sitting at the bottom of the pile.

In terms of paralympic sport the classifications (mainly based on muscle use and control) within a sport may leave you in a position where you are never going to be better than others in your group however hard you train. Whilst the classification system tries to be fair, a line always has to be drawn somewhere and unfortunately that always leaves people in a position of being most or least able even within their classification.

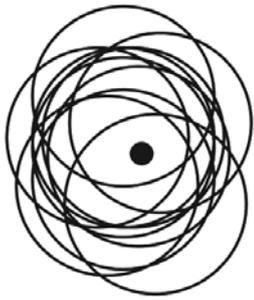
**People just don't fit in boxes!**

The images above are taken from the *Wheels of Glory* online game. This project, **Gaming!** was developed by young people as part of the Accentuate and Create, Compete, Collaborate programmes, and delivered by Creative Junction.

**Go online to play:**

[www.accentuate-se.org/gaming](http://www.accentuate-se.org/gaming)

## IPC Shooting World Cup



### Jon Adams

I was pleased to be invited to attend the IPC Shooting World Cup that Accentuate had helped to sponsor.

The targets were displayed on the big screen, distorting how small they

were in reality. Each shot showed as a circle superimposed and layered on top, building quite complex patterns. This immediately triggered off some ideas for artwork and I soon found I had some sketches in my pocketbook.

As a person with Asperger's, I like rules – what appeals to me is not just the feeling of 'safety within a boundary' – but when you know the rules you know where you can push and break them. This is also the stage where 'disability' sports and 'disability' arts come apart in a disconformity that also unites the two as opposite ends of a spectrum.

With the arts, well, at least as far as I am concerned it's an advanced 'social model' all the way but by necessity, sport follows a 'medical model' which seems to work, rather it has to. What I found interesting was that here, at every stage, person and item are both subject to rules and proofs. The gun has to 'conform' to sizes, weights, shapes and lengths and power and then there is the 'person'. You have to 'prove' a physical disability and conform to a rulebook several centimetres thick of 'what is wrong with you'. This is diametrically opposite to how we in the disability culture scene think.

Everything we hold dear in this 'Neue\* World' of deaf and disabled artistry with regards to the 'person and their work that counts not being defined by what's wrong with you' rapidly went out the window. But more shockingly I agree it has to be like that. It is this difference between arts and 'paralympic sports' that provides us with a commonality to work together. When you scratch beneath the surface you find we are all just people who try to the utmost of our being to do and be the best and to overcome the barriers others or 'nature' sets in front of us. Sometimes opposites do attract.

\* Neue is German for 'new'.

### Sarah Playforth:

Jon, your comparison of medical/social model so resonates with me – as you know I am steeped in the social model approach. Looking at a different approach as a member of Our View has been fascinating. In my work, I stress that social model is just one of several possible perspectives on disability and Our View is a wonderful place to explore these perspectives.

## Do I 'have a disability' or am I disabled?

### Colin Hambrook

Definitions can either divide us or unite us in our search for identity and validation. But it's not easy. How long is the piece of string we use to tackle ideas around the discrimination we face? I am referring here to the Social Model of Disability which challenges the idea that we 'have disabilities.'

I have been thinking about the conundrums Accentuate faces in steering the 15 projects and making a cultural shift in perceptions. Getting my head around the problem we face in finding points of commonality between two very different agendas – Sport and Arts – has been at the heart of it...

An interesting thing to think about is what values would underpin the games if the Paralympics were to suddenly be reinvented now...

## Your reply?

To read these blogs in full and to join the conversation, see

[www.accentuate-se.org.uk/our-view-blog](http://www.accentuate-se.org.uk/our-view-blog)

**This information is available in alternative formats by contacting Accentuate.**

**For further information or to get involved, please contact:**

**Email:** [info@accentuate-se.org](mailto:info@accentuate-se.org)

**Tel:** 01303 259777

[www.accentuate-se.org](http://www.accentuate-se.org)

Accentuate has created a platform that brings disability arts and sports together.

The Our View blog has documented how these worlds overlap, collide, contradict and inspire.

This publication captures some of those conversations. Disabled athletes and artists share here their direct experiences of being involved in the production of culture.

ART

Disability art is art made by disabled people. This could be visual arts, performing arts, film – or a combination of media. In subtle or not so subtle ways, it is art that explores the physical, sensory or attitudinal barriers which are part of living with an impairment. Disability art often expresses creative ways of responding to the world and can be informed by, but is not about, impairment. It does not limit the artist by cultural and social experiences defined by

the medical model of disability. Disability art is not therapy and does not view disability as an impediment to creativity, or impairment as a condition which needs to be overcome. Instead, disability art reflects the artists' personal experience of disability and views this experience as appropriate and fertile subject matter for making art. It should also be noted that many disabled artists also chose to make work without reference to disability.

SPORT

The Paralympics has developed a classification system. This aims to pitch like against like in terms of ability, enabling athletes to compete on an even playing field. Athletes are classified through medical assessments and observations to see which category they fit in. Although this is seen as necessary to ensure fair competition, it does mean that those who don't 'fit' cannot take part.

Classifying disabled people in this way seems to be a medical model approach, but the spirit of the Paralympic Movement embraces the social model.

Sport is a drive to overcome challenges, and for disabled athletes the aim is to overcome the barriers presented by impairment and be at one with your body, however it works.

Disability sport is still in its infancy, only now becoming really visible in the mainstream. The current system removes barriers for the many thousands of disabled people who do participate. Further development and change will hopefully lead to a boom and trickle-down effect that brings sporting opportunities to many more.

## Social and medical models of Disability

The social and medical models of disability are different perspectives on the 'problem' of disability.

The medical model (sometimes called the traditional or individual model) sees the 'problem' as within the disabled person, calls it 'their disability' and views it as something that needs to be overcome or fixed, by the person or by other interventions, to enable them to 'fit in'. For example, a deaf child having a cochlear implant.

The social model sees the 'problem' as barriers in society facing people who have functional impairments. Disability (some people call it 'disablism' in line with racism or sexism) is not something someone 'has' but is the result of these barriers. For example information only provided in small print disables people who need audio or Large Print.

## This publication has been compiled by Our View

**Editor: Sarah Playforth** – access, diversity and equality consultant and trainer with over 30 years experience in the statutory and independent sectors.

**Co-ordinator: Camilla Brueton** – artist and Our View project manager, also a rugby player.

### Contributors:

**Jamie Beddard** – actor, writer and director. Previously Associate Director of Graeae Theatre Company. TV acting credits include Skalligrigg, theatre credits include Carrie's War.

**Kristina Veasey** – freelance equality consultant and former international wheelchair basketball athlete who represented Great Britain at the Sydney and Athens Paralympics.

**Colin Hambrook** – artist and editor of [www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk](http://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk) and Dada-News at [www.dada-south.org.uk](http://www.dada-south.org.uk)

**Jon Adams** – artist in residence at the University of Portsmouth and the official Accentuate Geologist.

# Art & Sport Timeline

**Shape** founded: organisation working to improve access to culture for disabled people.

**Graeae Theatre Company** founded: profiling and developing disabled performers writers and directors with physical and sensory impairments.

**British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP)** founded.

**London Disability Arts Forum (LDAF)** founded.

**Disability Arts in London (DAIL)** magazine – 1st edition.

**Heart n Soul** founded: music and theatre company for people with learning difficulties.

**International Year of Disabled People**

## Art

1924 1948 1952 1960 1968 1976 1977 1980 1981 1

## Sport

**Paris, France.** The first **'Silent' Games** 148 athletes, 9 nations. Now known as the **Deaflympics**, and **Winter Deaflympics** and held every 4 years.

**Stoke Mandeville, England.** The first sports competition involving World War II veterans with a spinal cord injury organised by Sir Ludwig Guttmann.

Competitors from the Netherlands join the **Stoke Mandeville Games** and an international movement is born.

**Rome, Italy Paralympics.** 400 wheelchair athletes, 23 nations. The first parallel Olympic style games, held every 4 years.

**Chicago, USA.** The first **Special Olympic Games** for athletes with learning disabilities.

**Toronto, Canada Paralympics.** TV coverage is broadcast to 600,000 viewers.

**Ornskolsvik, Sweden.** The first **Winter Paralympics.** 198 athletes, 16 nations.



"Simply one of the biggest factors is I love what I do... the sportsman in me makes me want to be the best at it! There is also nothing better than performing. It doesn't matter if I am in the wrestling ring or if I am on stage or in front of a camera. The rush you get from performing for people is... just awesome."

### Dan Edge, Pro Wrestler

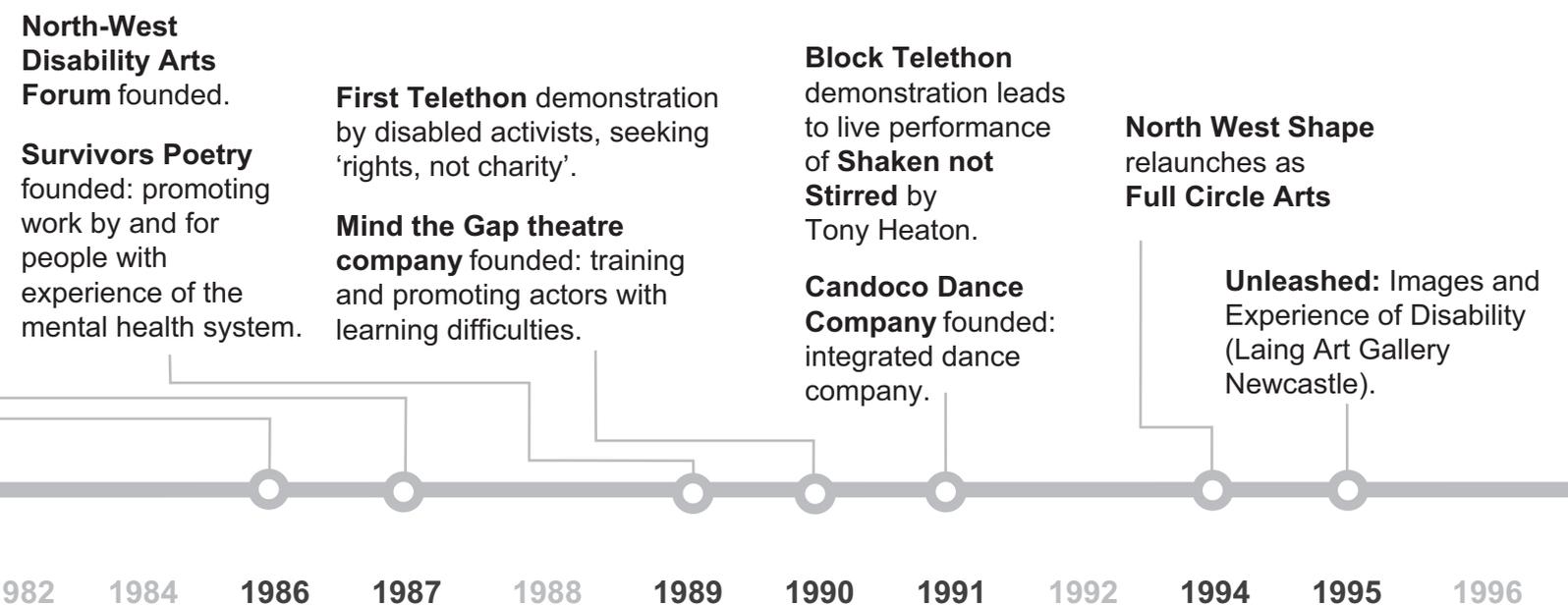
*Dan is the UK's only disabled Professional Wrestler. He has wrestled in the UK and USA and is a former World Tag Team Champion. Dan also works as an actor and model.*



"I'm driven by an obsession with telling stories, especially those not heard, experiences not shown. The rich fruity ragbag – and quite frankly contradictory – tales of disabled people do not truly register in the mainstream in all their difference and glory. I'm driven too by my personal love of language, of subversion."

### Penny Pepper, Writer and Performer

*Penny has been published extensively and showcased at the Edinburgh Fringe and National Theatre, and was a finalist at DadaFest International.*



**Seoul, South Korea Paralympics.** The term 'paralympic' is officially recognised. Games are held at Olympic venues, but access for athletes in wheelchairs has not been considered.

The **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** recognises the Special Olympics.

**Harnosand, Sweden.** The first **World Games for Athletes with an Intellectual Disability** are held.

**1988–1993:** The **CISS** (The International Committee of Sports for the Deaf) abandons its attempts to incorporate the **Deaflympics** into the **Paralympics**, but retains IOC recognition.

**Barcelona, Spain, Paralympics.** The Organising Committee of the Barcelona Olympic Games believes Paralympic events may reduce credibility, so set strict rules to cut athlete numbers.

**Albertville, France Winter Paralympics.** Held at same venue as Winter Olympics.



"Sometimes people are surprised that I play sport; and even more surprised that I compete at a high level. It's as if they have an image of a disabled person – and every disabled person is the same as another. Disabled people aren't surprised at all unless they are young and sometimes think that they can't join in. Non-disabled people are surprised, but in a good way. Their response is normally 'wow, that's so cool'."

**Lucie Bouron, Table Tennis Player**

*Lucie recently played in the BTTAD National Championships. She began her sporting career at Stoke Mandeville through the WheelPower Primary Camps, National Junior Games and Junior Camps.*



"Passion, inspiration, commitment, hard work, focus and ambition drive me. As a dancer, I've been rejected at auditions because of my deafness and not been able to get an agent because they don't know how to deal with me. With determination and hard work, I've been lucky to perform in dance companies and worked with fantastic choreographers."

**Mark Smith, Dancer and Choreographer**

*Mark is the founder and Artistic Director of dance company Deaf Men Dancing. Previous work includes co-choreographing Shoes at Sadler's Wells.*

First **LDAF** Disability Film Festival.

First **Dada-Fest** in Liverpool.

Launch of **Attitude is Everything**: improving disabled people's access to live music.

**Heart n Soul** and **Graeae** appear at the Glastonbury Festival.

**Sealboy: Freak**, Mat Fraser's first play, tours to national and international acclaim.

First **Liberty Festival** showcases a day of disability arts events in Trafalgar Square.

First **Oska Bright Film Festival** of work by learning disabled film-makers.

The third **Xposure Arts Festival**, showcases disability arts in six London venues.

1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004

**Atlanta, USA, Paralympics.** Mass media sponsorship. INAS athletes with an intellectual disability compete for the first time.

**Tanni Grey Thompson** cannot accept her award at the BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2000 on stage because there is no ramp.

IOC and the **IPC (International Paralympic Committee)** sign an agreement to guarantee host cities will manage both Games.

**Manchester, UK, Commonwealth Games.** Disabled athletes are included as full members of their national teams, making these the first fully inclusive international multi-sport games.

**Ireland** hosts the first **Special Olympics** outside the US. 5,500 athletes participate.

**Melbourne, Australia Commonwealth Games.** Canadian Chantal Petitclerc is the first athlete with a disability to carry her country's flag in the Opening Ceremony.



"Rowing is a sport where if you strive to be the best you can be then you will be able to work with some of the best people in their profession ... I love the feeling of moving the boat through the water and it is exhilarating rowing with precise technique."

**Helene Raynsford, Rower**

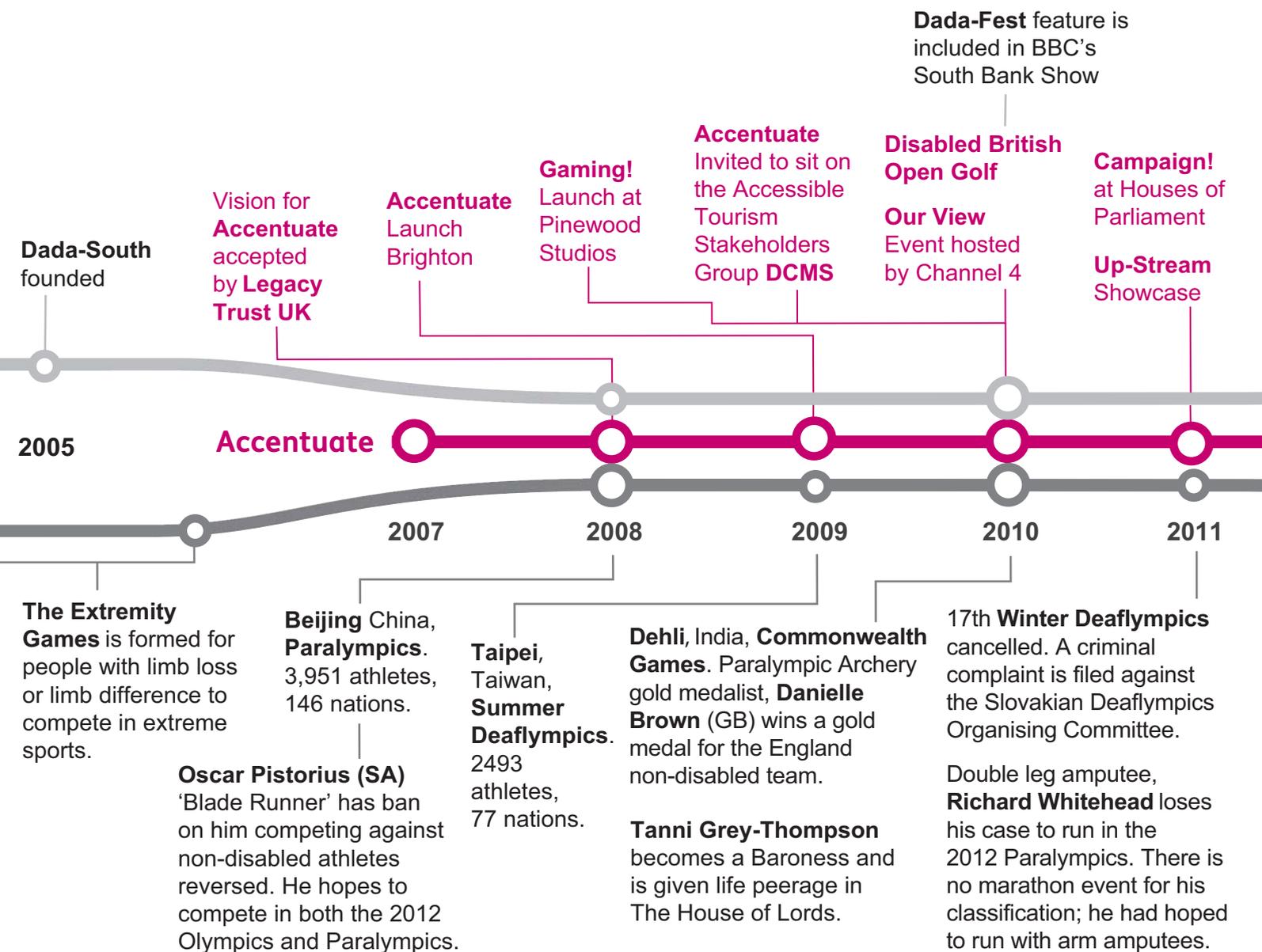
*Helene is the current Paralympic Champion for Women's Arms Only Single Scull She was the winner of the first ever Paralympic Rowing Gold Medal in Beijing in 2008.*



"Success for me is if I have done something I am proud of, or something that felt scary but I did it anyway, so some kind of personal achievement. From the outside, relating to public profile, this is more tricky. I've no interest in getting famous or being fashionable in the art world, but slowly trying to build up some kind of reputation through my work is important to me."

**Sally Booth, Visual Artist**

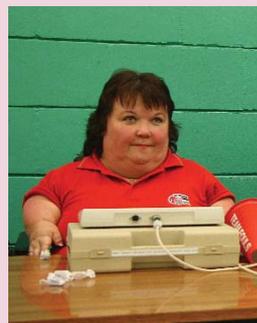
*Sally regularly exhibits across the UK and abroad and was selected by the Royal College of Art for a touring exhibition in Japan. Recently she was artist in residence for Creative Landscapes in Hastings and St Leonards.*



"I have always loved football – especially playing it more than watching. I joined Manchester City's disability team in 2009 when I was 34. It has changed my life. Man City's team is a mixture of physical and learning disabilities and I've never met such a diverse group of disabled people. We are like a band of brothers. The main thing for me is having fun... and beating the opposition."

**Gordon Hart, Footballer**

*Gordon Hart has been the goalie for Manchester City's disabled football team since 2009. He is also an Assistant Producer at the BBC and has worked many programs including 'A Question of Sport'.*



"There's more of a level playing field in officiating – it is knowledge based and everyone's sitting down. When I was younger and I told people I swam – they often thought it was for therapy, not sport. Now, when I am in my officials' uniform, it is a statement in itself. It prevents any need for discussion."

**Dinah Simmons, Basketball Official**

*Dinah is an English Basketball Level 3 qualified Table Official. As a teenager, she participated at National level in disabled competition swimming and shooting.*