Derelict Peckham Fire Station becomes community hub

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A former fire station and sausage factory on Peckham Road has opened its doors as a contemporary art gallery and community space.

Peckham Fire Station is now part of the South London Gallery (SLG), which has its headquarters just across the road, following a restoration supported by £1.65million from the National Lottery.

Restoring a space for people

Built in 1867, it is the oldest surviving purpose-built fire station in London, which was also a sausage factory for seventy years before it became empty and semi-derelict.

In 2014, however its fortunes changed when an anonymous benefactor donated the building to the SLG to bring it back into use for the community.

Now, it is full of light, art and people. The large doors, which once enabled fire engines to come and go, can now welcome visitors.

“I think being able to offer any public space back to people which is free and accessible is really vital” explains Ben Messih, SLG’s Heritage Education Manager.

The building now has galleries for contemporary art, a community kitchen, a printing press and education spaces to enable SLG to continue and expand its successful education programme with local schools, housing estates and their youth group the Art Assassins.

Bridging the gap between art and heritage

Thanks to the project, Lucy Inglis became SLG’s first ever archivist. Her job was delve into the archives and build a story of the gallery, Peckham, Camberwell and the people who live and work there.

For Lucy, it was a case of knowing a little bit about a local landmark and then being able to use the archive to discover much more.

“There used to be a dance hall between the Peckham Fire Station and the Fire Station that was built in 1925 to replace it. I know it was called the Arlington Club, and I know it was set up around nineteen hundred…and I’d just love to find out more.”

People of all ages will now have the chance to make their own discoveries – from after school archive groups and workshops for families to an interactive map and community projects. If you have any memories of Peckham and Camberwell please get in touch with SLG to be added to the memory map!

Artist Shamica Ruddock has been leading a fascinating project at SLG – The Archive is Personal. For her, the fire station has given people a space to “bridge the gap between art and heritage”.

Peckham Fire Station is free to visit and will open its doors on Saturday 22 September 2018 with a weekend of fun events. KNOCK KNOCK: Humour in Contemporary Art is on view until late November. Take a look at the website to plan your visit.



Peckham Road Fire Station Andy Stagg



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Peckham Town Centre

Peckham’s historic town centre secures Heritage Lottery Fund investment