

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Visual and audio art exhibition celebrates diversity of language**

Visual, textual and audio materials exploring language comprise the latest exhibition at East Gallery, at the Stratford headquarters of housing association East Thames Group. The exhibition, which is open to the public for free, encourages visitors to explore their own languages and those of others.

*Living Language* celebrates the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of London, where more languages are spoken than any other city in the world. It is one of many celebrations of language taking place across the globe to mark 2008 as the United Nations' **International Year of Languages**.

Exhibits from international artists range from hand-carved inscriptions to illuminated calligraphy, from sound compositions to tactile works on canvas.

Visitors can contribute to the exhibition by writing greetings in different languages, as well as listening to, reading, touching and viewing the exhibits.

*Living Language*, sponsored by Axis, runs from 6 October to 10 January at East Gallery, 29-35 West Ham Lane, Stratford, London E15 4PH. It is open weekdays 8.30am-6pm and Saturdays 9am-2pm.

Many of the materials of the exhibition have been developed with partners in the areas of linguistics and language studies including: The Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, the Schools of Oriental and African Studies, the London Education Research Unit at the Institute of Education, London, CILT – the National Centre for Languages, the British Library; and the Princes' School of Traditional Arts.

Contributing artists include:

- John Wynne, exhibiting a 'composed documentary', *Hearing Voices*, exploring the endangered 'click languages' of the Kalahari.
- Denise Hawrysio, whose portraits capture the speakers of *Hearing Voices* recording their language for future generations.
- Fiona Zoble, whose tactile screenprints on canvas examine the accessibility and limitations of the printed word.
- Orkideh Sassouni, who exhibits photographs of friends and colleagues from the Deaf community in discussion using American Sign Language.
- Sabah Arbili, whose piece *Beauty of Goodwill* demonstrates the art of illumination through the geometry of Arabic calligraphy.
- Stefanos Pavlakis, who examines the importance of learning language in order to integrate into another culture, in his audio piece *A Sense of Belonging*.
- Annette Stirling, who exhibits examples of her hand-carved dual-language inscriptions inspired by Dutch poet Cees Nootboom

- Jen Fraser, an east London based designer and illuminator, exhibits an example of her illuminated documents inspired by Norse calligraphy.

**June Barnes, chief executive of East Thames, says:** “This exhibition is fascinating in the way it looks at not only the diversity of our languages and cultures, but also the common ground we all share. We’re really pleased to be able to bring this celebration of language to the diverse communities of east London. We would encourage local people to come along and explore the art work – especially the interactive features that allow you to contribute to the exhibition.”

**Natalie Palin, curator of the exhibition, says:** “Languages are such a fascinating area, and in London we all hear different languages spoken around us every day. Yet opportunities for us all to explore them in an accessible way can be difficult to find. We wanted to combine visual and sonic arts, with the materials from language experts to provide visitors with a new way of thinking about and valuing our diversity. You never know, with enough support for local exhibitions like this one, maybe one day London really will get its own House of Languages. “

**For more information please contact:**

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**Notes to editors:**

East Thames Group is a registered social landlord and registered charity, and is a company limited by guarantee. Its mission is ‘to make a positive and lasting contribution to the neighbourhoods in which we work’. With its three operating subsidiaries – East Homes, East Potential and East Living – East Thames Group is the largest housing association of its type in east London and Essex. [www.east-thames.co.uk](http://www.east-thames.co.uk)