

At least the art was free

"I do not want art for a few,
any more than education for a few,
or freedom for a few."



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Artists used the fencing at the Arcade site to produce work expressing hopes for its future. See page 9 (c)

MORE than £5m of taxpayers' money has been spent on the Arcade site in Walthamstow so far, writes *Sarah Cosgrove*.

Council bosses have shelled out £170,000 on

security, £440,718 on demolition costs, £210,000 to "manage" the site, and £603,000 for external advisors, lawyers and other costs.

It also forked out

£3,958,569, almost £4m, in compensation payments to buy out businesses previously on the site, only for it to lie empty for a further two years.

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THE FUTURE OF THE ARCADE SITE

Could it be a thing of beauty?

CREATIVITY in the borough is so rife that two artists have even managed to make something beautiful of the Arcade site.

Alke Schmidt and Cath Hughes are showing collections inspired by the ongoing Arcade saga as part of the E17 Art Trail, which runs until September 16.

Ms Schmidt, of Aubery Road, Walthamstow, makes a political point by making photographs of the boarded-up site look pretty, using decorative techniques inspired by William Morris.

Ms Schmidt said: "Living up the road from the Arcade, it's my bugbear but I've transformed that into quite pretty-looking pieces. But if you dig deeper, the art points out what's not happening there."

It is a technique the artist has played with before, and previous work has focused on problems in Iraq and Palestine. But after living in the borough for six years, she realised that there were issues right on her doorstep.

Ms Hughes has also used



TRANSFORMED: Alke Schmidt hopes that life will immitate art and the Arcade will turn into something beautiful

(c)

the Arcade site and the EMD cinema as subject of some of her oil paintings, which can be viewed in her garden studio at 22 Douglas Avenue, Walthamstow.

You can see Ms Schmidt's work in the William Morris

Gallery, Forest Road, Walthamstow, between 10am and 1pm and 2pm and 5pm, Tuesday and Saturday.

It seems it has already struck a chord with residents.

One art-lover wrote in the

visitors' book: "We live in Cleveland Park Avenue and it is a wonderful joy to see the derelict site of the EMD and Arcade transformed into something beautiful.

"Now here's hoping reality follows art."