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2019–2022

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NATIONAL  
PARTNERS  
PROGRAMME



Arts Council  
Collection



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Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens



The Exchange



Firstsite. Photography © Richard Bryant

# Introduction

In spring 2019 the Arts Council Collection announced a new partnership with three venues based across England: **Firstsite**, Colchester; **Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange**, Penzance; and **Sunderland Culture**. As a partnership, we aimed to build on the success of the first iteration of the National Partners Programme (2016–2019), continuing to raise awareness of the Arts Council Collection through ambitious exhibitions and events, as well as adding greater value to our relationships with our local audiences and communities. Our programming was formed around the desire to bring new voices into our spaces and to open up the curatorial process to our communities, to ensure our exhibitions and events reflected the diversity of our local areas.

A lot has changed since 2019 but the partnership between our four organisations has been a constant, a steady ship in often turbulent waters. As a collective, we've had to adapt to the changing circumstances, but – if anything – the uncertainty of the world only added strength to the partnership and our ambition to support those around us. Although each organisation has had their own priorities and faced their own unique challenges, the Partnership has become a collective, working to promote, support and critique each other's projects, as well as influencing and inspiring each other in the approach we take to working with others. The Partnership has allowed time, space and resources to experiment. It's allowed us to take risks: to try new things and reflect on the results.

Throughout the Partnership we have been consciously **community centred** – placing people at the heart of what we do. We have been actively **responding to need**, something which became of particular importance when the coronavirus pandemic struck in 2020. Over the course of the three-year programme, we've investigated the **meaning of partnership**, both with each other and with the communities we serve. We have been **sharing ownership** over the Arts Council Collection and the partner galleries, as well as supporting our communities in taking ownership over their voices and lived experiences. Finally, these new approaches to working have led us all to be **future-focused**, to consider the long term potential of co-production, and to question how we continue to build on this work and nurture these relationships in the future.

**Jodie Edwards**, *General Manager, National Partners Programme*

Great short-documentary  
Elsa (James)

I hope Black  
voice grows louder  
and kill racism with  
Art. Lots of Love,  
K







Installation view of *Super Black*, 2019. Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of *Super Black*, 2019. Photography © Anna Lukala



# Firstsite

*Super Black* was Firstsite's initial foray into equitable curating. At the time, we were feeling our way within the National Partners Programme – figuring out new ways of co-making between professional and non-professional curators. We started by approaching those we already had a connection with – the organisers of African Families in the UK and Colchester Black History Month. We learnt of S&S Caribbean café in Colchester and its place at the heart of the Caribbean community, leading us to visit and talk with Yasmin and Simone. This project also presented a perfect opportunity to deepen our existing relationship with Southend-based artist Elsa James, following our hosting of her first solo exhibition *Black Girl Essex*.



Installation view of *Super Black*, 2019. Photography © Anna Lukala



Sketchup showing layout of *Super Black*

Regular meetings were set up, working around the schedules and needs of the group. There was a lot of trial and error about what methods of communication worked best and we as a gallery had to reconsider how we kept in touch with the group – not everyone likes emailing! The conversation evolved organically, coming to a focus on the question ‘What does it mean to be Black in Britain today?’. The title of the exhibition came about after a conversation between Elsa James and her daughter, where her daughter had revealed a London-based cousin had told her she was not ‘black enough’ simply because they live in Essex. This prompted the group to consider questions such as ‘how do other people define us?’, and ‘how do we define ourselves?’. We made a working area in the gallery so the project, and the conversations around it, could be transparent and visible. The group selected a range of work from the Arts Council Collection either by black artists, or work that explored the wider themes. *Super Black* presented nineteen artworks from the Arts Council Collection alongside new work by Elsa James, and opened with a vibrant and noisy event, with a much more diverse visitor profile than we had ever seen before.

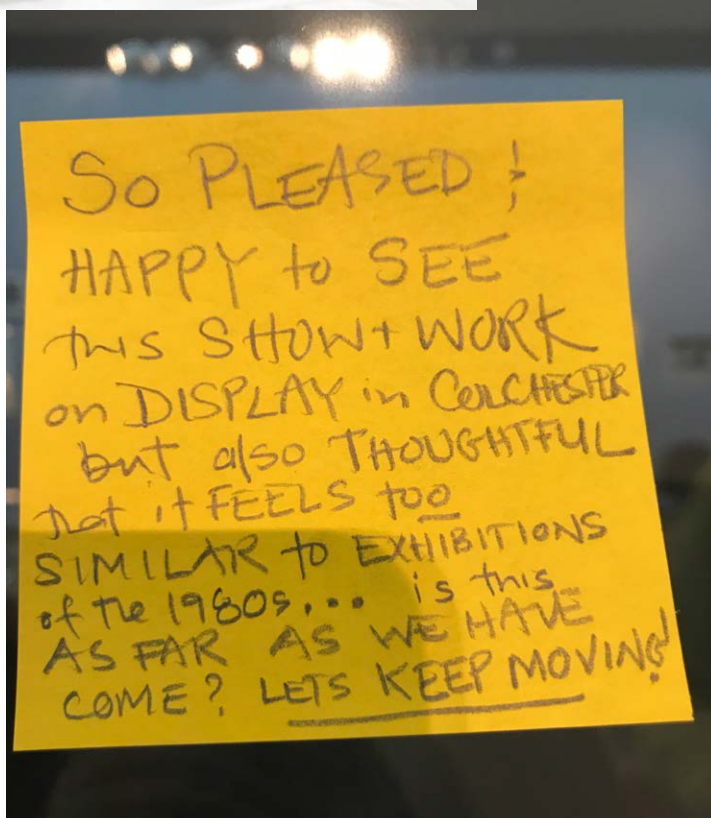
Following the exhibition, the relationships remain. The group have been involved with Firstsite in many ways since and some of the group members will be working on their next exhibition in 2023.



*Super Black* opening event, 2019. Photography © Maddie Pierce



Members of the Super Black curatorial group visit the Arts Council Collection store. Photography © Rob Hill



Visitor comments. Photography © Emma Howe



# Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange

Using the National Partners Programme as a catalyst, we wanted to use the gallery in different ways and develop more questioning and challenging ways of working.

Our mission with the National Partners Programme was to bring new, previously unheard, voices into the gallery and open up the process of curating exhibitions. We asked: what would happen if we invited different people with different lived experience to curate exhibitions? What if we gave others as much freedom as we could, and our role was to facilitate instead of curate? What kind of response would that receive from audiences and participants? Would you get more diverse outcomes?

**“ALL IT TAKES IS FAITH, TRUST AND PRIDE DUST.”**

– Seen Collective member

**“It was good to get together through art.”**

– Comment from a member of the Seen Collective



Seen manifesto



Seen Collective member, Riley, speaking at the *Seen* exhibition opening event



RTiiiKA, *Trans Liberation Mural*, 2021



*Seen* installation view © SHARP, 2021

**“I love being part of this art group.”**

– Comment from a member of the [Seen Collective](#)

## SEEN

*Seen* was an exhibition co-curated by SHARP and young LGBTQIA+ people from Cornwall aged between 11 – 23, working in partnership with the LGBT+ charity, Intercom Trust.

## What does it mean to be seen?

Through workshops and conversations about contemporary art, the young people explored the importance of **representation** within art and culture and the many sides of what it means to be seen. It became apparent that most of the young people didn't engage with contemporary art or visit art galleries, and couldn't name any LGBTQIA+ artists. Instead, their references were musicians and social media influencers. When exploring the Arts Council Collection, we started by highlighting the LGBTQIA+ artists within the collection and used this in workshops to introduce the subject of Queer art. This involved an important history of reclamation, resistance, love, and freedom and often included personal experiences as well as depictions of LGBTQIA+ cultures.

Outreach work played a particularly important role in this project. Cornwall is a vast, rural county where groups of people can become isolated, so going out into the community was essential to bring more people into the project and ensure it was as inclusive and accessible as possible for young people. SHARP initially worked with over 300 young **LGBTQIA+** people, working in partnership with the Intercom Trust to visit schools and join in with LGBTQIA+ groups which met during lunch breaks. It was from the school groups that we got our title for the exhibition, *Seen*. Many lunchtime discussions centred around what it means to be seen, and what the pros and cons of being seen can be.

### “Art has brought us together.”

– Comments from members of the SEEN Collective

The Seen Collective, a core group of 10 young LGBTQIA+ people, formed during the first national lockdown in 2020, when the project had to be taken online. Working remotely brought new challenges, but also some of the most fun and honest conversations of the project. We held drag workshops and, influenced by the work of Derek Jarman and David Robilliard, had conversations about AIDS and HIV; something which also linked to the TV programme, *It's a Sin*, which many of the group were watching at the time. This connection between art and popular culture brought a deeper understanding of the work and the project as a whole.

### “I’ve never been in a group like this before.”

– Comment from a member of the Seen Collective

For *Seen*, the group wanted to **celebrate** LGBTQIA+ culture and create a **safe** space for the Queer **community** of Cornwall. It was important to them to only have LGBTQIA+ artists in the exhibition for true representation and visibility, and to put trans and non-binary artists at the forefront. We undertook a process of **queering** the whole gallery, creating additional content to compliment the exhibition. This included having works by young, queer artists for sale in the shop, hanging LGBTQIA+ **flags** at the gallery entrance, and commissioning a large mural for the gallery wall and windows. We wanted to make sure the exhibition was outward-looking, and had as much local visibility as possible.

### “Seen is to be connected and not alone or remote.”

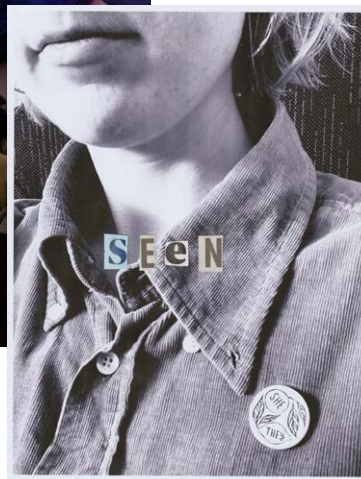
– Comment from a member of the Seen Collective

During the exhibition, part of the gallery became a community space which hosted talks, performances and events. **Resources** were brought into the gallery space and made available online, including a free reading library and a community noticeboard. We also created an interactive digital noticeboard, where people could respond to the question ‘what does it mean to be seen?’ by creating artworks for the online gallery. Through conversations with teachers, it had also become apparent that they wanted a way of opening up conversations about LGBTQIA+ history with students, so we worked with LGBTQIA+ organisation, Decoder, to create an **educational** resource which could be used by schools as a way of introducing the topic to their students.





Seen opening event



Georgia Murphy, *SEEN*, 2021. Commissioned for sale in the shop at The Exchange

### **“Comfort in solidarity.”**

– Comment from a member of the Seen Collective

Through this project, we saw how important it was to work with community partners. For *Seen*, we worked with the Intercom Trust, who enabled contact with and offered support to the young people and the gallery staff involved.

*Seen* was always so much more than an exhibition. The impact of the project was evident at the opening event with the performance by the Seen Collective of a rainbow colour throw, and throughout the exhibition, with older members of the community saying how they wished this exhibition had happened when they were young, and how things might have been different. These experiences only highlighted our initial thoughts around the importance of representation, and for art, culture and collections to be fully representative. *Seen* was a celebration and the LGBTQIA+ community of Cornwall and beyond felt **SEEN**.

**“It’s important to have space, so to have someone come in and go ‘actually here’s what you can learn about art, here’s what you can learn about other LGBT+ people throughout history’. This is a space where you can feel safe and comfortable and enjoy the space while learning about all these people who have done amazing things for our community or have even just put a bit of paint on a piece of paper, is absolutely amazing.”**

– Riley, Seen Collective

# Sunderland Culture

From the beginning of the National Partners Programme, Sunderland Culture knew that supporting our traditional museum audiences to engage with contemporary and modern art was going to be one of our biggest challenges.

From our past experiences of hosting contemporary art exhibitions at our city centre venue, we were familiar with some of the barriers that might prevent our audiences from choosing to engage with this kind of artwork. Overly complex 'art speak' which sometimes dominates exhibition label text, as well as the clean, echo-y white cube spaces associated with art today can make families with young children (our main audience at the museum) feel uncomfortable and excluded.

Contemporary art can also be self-referential, requiring audiences to have existing art knowledge to penetrate layers of meaning, which can lead to visitors feeling like they 'don't get it', or are 'too thick' to understand.

At Sunderland Culture, we truly believe that art has the power to reveal new ways of looking at the world, and that engaging with art can bring people together. So we knew that our first priority with the National Partners Programme was to transform the image of modern and contemporary art, moving it from something exclusive and disheartening into something that empowers audiences to feel confident and welcome in our gallery spaces and when talking about art.

**"I think art is for everyone and it is inside of us waiting to come alive – it's got nothing to do with class, gender or anything else."**

– Jackie, Art Champion



Josie Brooks, *The Unflinching Lens*  
(Illustration for Art Crush). © Josie Brooks, 2020

Through an open call, we recruited a new group – The Art Champions – to be our ambassadors for art in the city and to help us overcome some of the barriers to engaging with contemporary and modern art. Our ten Champions were a diverse group – our youngest member Maanashi was 10 when we started, and loves art at school. Jackie works for the local council, Martin used to work with the police, and Kim supported Charmain, who has a brain injury, to join in. Bukky, an aspiring dance artist and mother of young children, teamed up with Tracey after meeting through a dance project in Sunderland, and they both joined the Art



Josie Brooks, *The Truth Seeker* (Illustration for Art Crush). © Josie Brooks, 2020

Champions together. Debs and Jo are both creative, but neither felt comfortable around contemporary art, while Anth is a 'very proud, born and bred Mackem', and loves working on projects that inspire pride in his city.

Although none of the group had experience working with or interpreting modern and contemporary art, all were interested in finding out more about the Arts Council Collection, and willing to share what they learned with others. With our friends at Second Draft film company, we made a documentary of their journey with us called *Welcome to the Collection*, to help audiences to see the Collection through the eyes of other local Sunderland residents.

### Exploring the Collection in Yorkshire and London

**"I'd never seen a sculpture live in front of me."**

– Maanashi, Art Champion

Our Art Champions travelled across the country to Yorkshire and London to meet curators, technicians and other arts professionals from the Arts Council Collection in 2019-2020. With exclusive behind-the-scenes tours around the stores which house over 8000 artworks, and lots of opportunities to look at and think about artworks, our Champions grew in confidence and developed their own sense of what they liked, and what they didn't!

**"If I don't like something, I'll tell someone I don't like it. If I like it, I'll be raving about it... that's what you do."**

– Kim, Art Champion

### Opinions Matter

As the project progressed, we realised how important it was to encourage the *disliking* as well as the liking of artwork. Developing their personal taste and preferences for what kind of artwork they liked (and didn't like!) enabled our Art Champions to keep exploring exhibitions to find pieces that they liked, and not to feel like it was their fault if they didn't respond to an artwork.



**“You could put a load of pressure in thinking you have to walk out understanding and you often don’t. So long as the feeling of being there makes you feel good.”**

– Jo, Art Champion

The ‘Art Personalities’ that developed in each of the Art Champions went on to inform our App, *Art Crush*, which enables users to explore artworks in the Collection through a dating-app style ‘swipe right if you like it’ system. Each artwork is categorised with a different art personality, and when you have liked enough artworks, the app reveals what kind of art lover you are!

### **From Critiquing, to Curating... to Creating!**

Our Art Champions went on to curate a small exhibition of prints from the Arts Council Collection to display in Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens and in 2021, worked alongside staff at the Museum to select and interpret artworks for the exhibition, *Where We Are Now*, which reflected on the COVID-19 pandemic. Their discussions about the artworks, held over Zoom calls, directly informed the text panels that sat alongside the pieces in the gallery space, and their quotes were included throughout the exhibition as larger vinyl text pieces.

For this exhibition, we also asked the Art Champions to create their own artwork for the first time. Working creatively with poet Kirsten Luckens, the Champions created collaged palimpsests and free writing, which was displayed in the exhibition alongside Arts Council Collection works. The group commented on how proud and how valued they felt to have their works properly framed and treated in the same way as the works from the Collection next to them.

### **Bringing the largest work in the Arts Council Collection to Sunderland**

When the Art Champions visited the team at the Arts Council Collection stores in Yorkshire in 2019, they were given the opportunity to hold some of the figures from Antony Gormley’s *Field for the British Isles*. We were told that each of the 40,000 figures were made by a community of 100 people in St Helens, by forming a simple figure in the space between their hands, using the end of a pencil to make two eyes. The figures then come together en masse to fill up a gallery space which is always installed by volunteers from the place where they are exhibited.



Josie Brooks, *The Storyteller* (Illustration for Art Crush). © Josie Brooks, 2020



Art Champions visiting the Arts Council Collection store, London. Photography © Second Draft

For the Art Champions, there was something magical about holding the figures, feeling the indentations of someone else's handprints, and the personality that each one conveyed so strongly. They knew this was something they wanted to share with the people of Sunderland.

**“I think there’s something really unique about a piece of art that’s created by lots and lots of different people. I’ve longed to see this in person. If it did come to Sunderland, I think it would be tremendous.”**

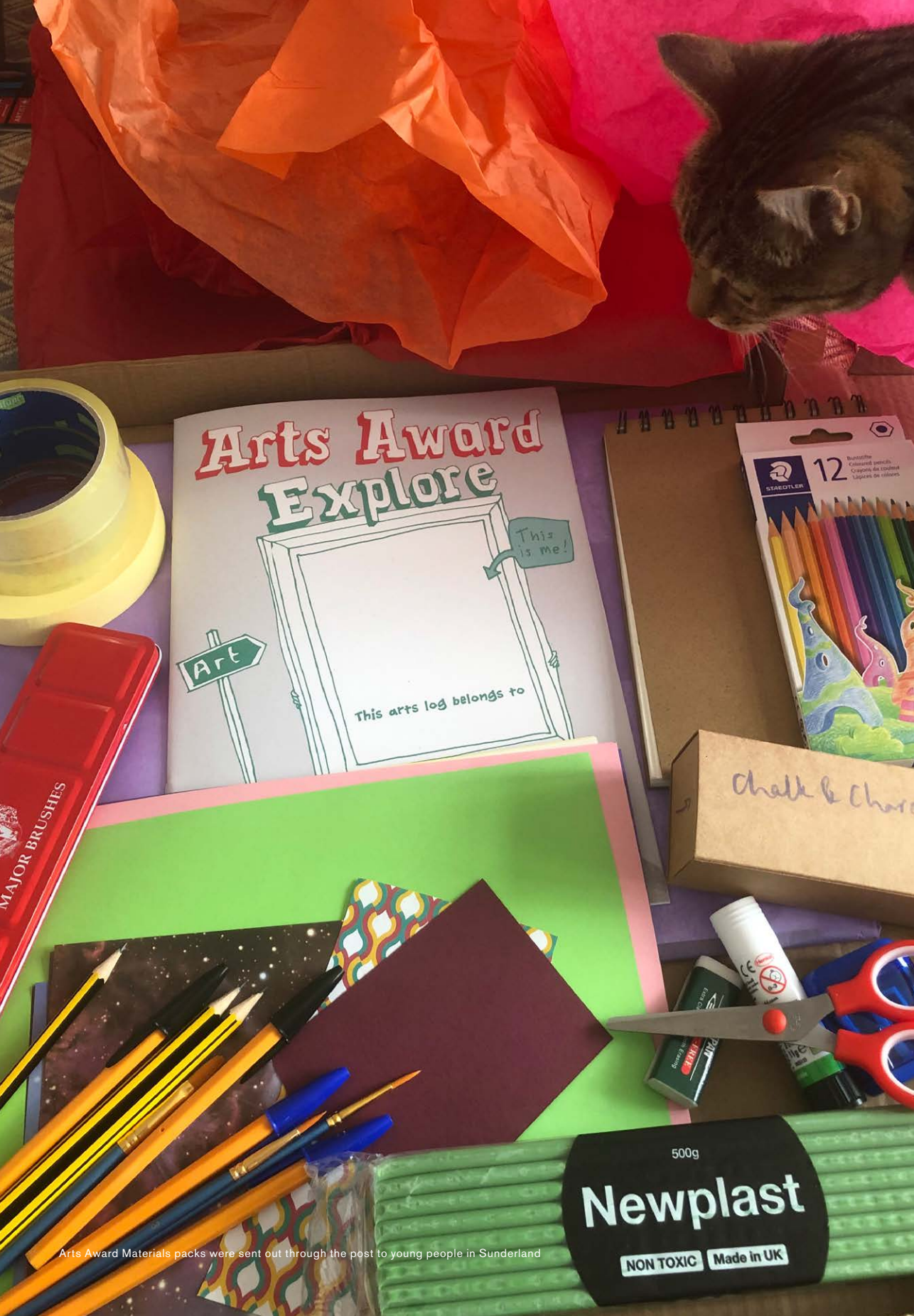
– Martin, Art Champion

With their enthusiasm, they advocated for the work to be brought to the city, and it's because of them that *Field for the British Isles* came to Sunderland in 2021.

We set out to make contemporary art more accessible to Sunderland audiences at the start of this project, but we didn't expect the profound impact working with the Art Champions would have on us as a staff team and as a wider organisation. The energy and enthusiasm of the Champions has encouraged us to pursue new ways of working with art and our local communities, pushing our practice forward and reminding us why we do what we do in the first place.

**“Being an Art Champion has opened new doors to another world that I thought was out of my reach. The people involved have made me feel that my opinion really matters and the group are trailblazers in making contemporary art more accessible to everyone.”**

– Debs, Art Champion.



# Arts Award Explore



MAJOR BRUSHES

12  
Staedtler  
Buntstifte  
Coloured pencils  
Crayons de couleur  
Lapicils de couleurs

Chalk & Charcoal

500g  
**Newplast**  
NON TOXIC Made in UK

Arts Award Materials packs were sent out through the post to young people in Sunderland







Installation view of *Art for Life*, 2021. Photography © Anna Lukala

Co-production by its very nature responds to need. It asks the people that the gallery serves to work with us so that our collective wants, interests, needs and desires, are reflected in the programme. It is also born from need, and in this sense all of the projects in the National Partner's Programme are united, sharing the common demand that our museums and galleries are relevant and shaped by everyone in society.

Nothing showcased this more than the COVID-19 pandemic, which challenged everyone, including the entire arts sector, to be reactive to the needs of communities in an unprecedented way. Firstsite took up this challenge, becoming a supplies hub for the local charity, Community 360, by designing and distributing a series of artist-made activity packs, and through developing the project *Art for Life* with a group of twenty-one key workers, including NHS front line staff.

The exhibition was commissioned by the North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, who approached Firstsite in June 2020 to make a project that recorded the recent experiences of NHS employees. The project started with a simple question published on Firstsite's website: 'tell us about your experience of the pandemic' and led to a series of artist-led workshops that invited people to talk about and creatively respond to how they were feeling. The resulting exhibition featured twelve artworks from the Arts Council Collection, together with artworks made by four artists affected by the COVID-19 virus, as well as creative responses made by the key workers themselves.

The exhibition expanded the usual care-giving dynamic, to include the needs of those usually giving the care. Not only did this give viewers a unique insight into the experiences of our health and wellbeing professionals amid an international medical emergency, but it also called attention to the benefit that art and creativity can have in opening up critical subjects and gently posing alternatives.

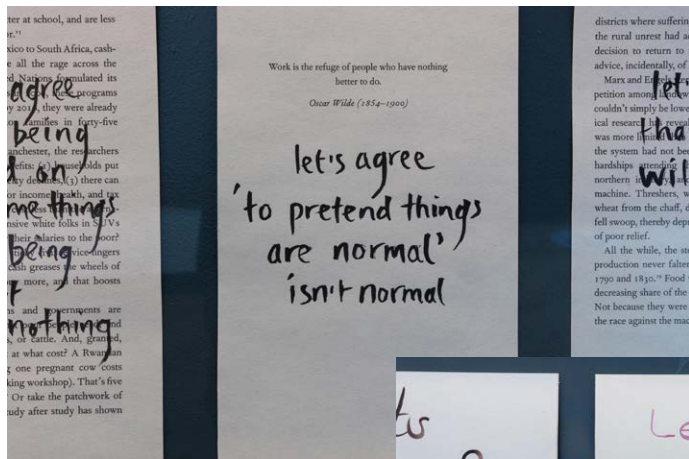
As Firstsite moves forward, we will be thinking about how to continue to serve the needs of our communities. We remain committed to co-production as a process to be expanded across the whole organisation, what we do, how we do it, and who with. Firstsite has always been agile, but COVID-19 has taught us how we can reach beyond the gallery space to make connections with new audiences and participants, while also maintaining the intimate relationships we've formed closer to home.



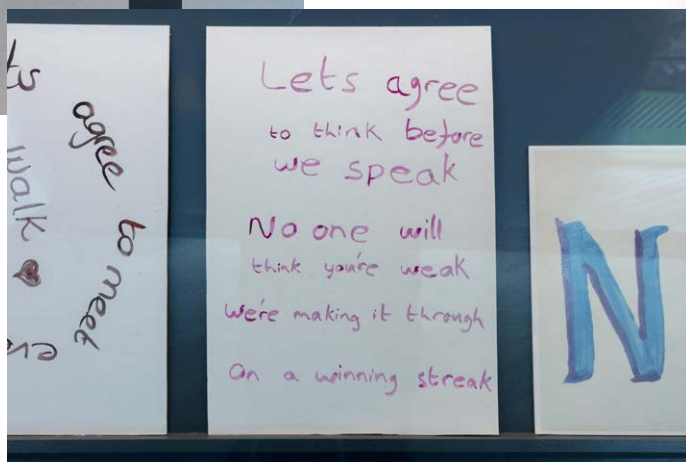
Hannah Devereux and Alec Finlay, *Counterpane*, 2017. Photography © Anna Lukala



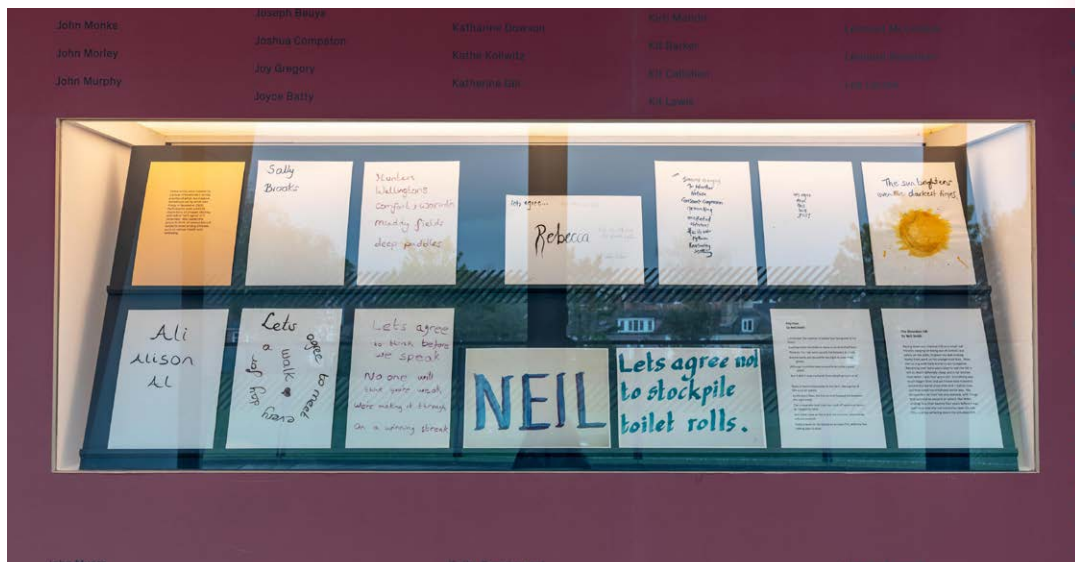
Installation view of *Art for Life*, 2021. Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of Art for Life, 2021.  
Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of Art for Life, 2021. Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of Art for Life, 2021. Photography © Anna Lukala



### **'let's agree'**

Text written collectively by Alec Finlay and workshop participants,  
November 2020

*let's agree what the pencil begins the brush finishes*  
*let's agree to look at beauty*  
*let's agree the birch leaves light it up like a lamp*  
*let's agree that the problem with rules is rulers*  
*let's agree what I would see if I were a tree*  
*let's agree to think before we speak*  
*let's agree that 'to pretend things were normal' isn't normal*  
*let's agree to walk in moonlight as well as daylight*  
*let's agree to find the blue-tit's nest*  
*let's agree to be calm, not stressed*  
*let's agree the more you're a threat the louder the bees get*  
*let's agree that Death is the final tier*  
*let's agree it's not just the virus that's contagious*  
*let's agree to enter the unknown*  
*let's agree to meet in the middle*  
*let's agree to embrace uncertainty*  
*let's agree to dress for the weather*  
*let's agree on fields and wellies*  
*let's agree the shoe-rack is a muddy harbour by the door*  
*let's agree to meet every day for a walk*  
*let's agree to help each other*  
*let's agree that this will pass*  
*let's agree to really listen*  
*let's agree that help given may return as harm*  
*let's agree that nature is a soothing companion*  
*let's agree that a jar of kefir puts the fizz inside us*  
*let's agree that nature marches to its own rhythm*  
*let's agree to agree*  
*let's agree that this has worked*

# Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange

*What Lies Behind* was a mixed exhibition featuring works from the Arts Council Collection selected by a core group of 10 participants, referred to the project through social prescribing initiatives in local GP practices. In a series of online meetings, the group chose works that reflected their personal responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and their hopes and dreams for the future. By working in partnership with Social Prescribing link workers the project aimed to bring **health** and **arts** together for all involved.

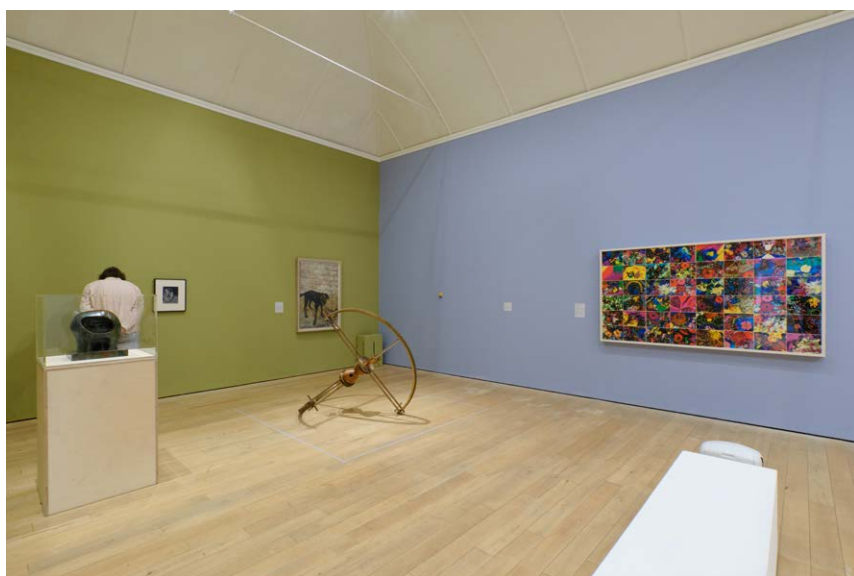
To begin with there was some uncertainty at the gallery and at local health organisations as to what the benefits of working together might be, and what we could offer each other. James Green, Director at Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange, approached the network of social prescribing link workers based in Penwith, and introduced the idea of working on a project together at the gallery. Two local surgeries came back to us full of enthusiasm for the project, and for the opportunity to work in collaboration with the gallery. 17 people with an interest in art and culture were directed to us, and formed the curatorial team for the exhibition.



*What Lies Behind* curatorial team



Installation view of *What Lies Behind*, 2021. Photography © Ian Kingsnorth



Installation view of *What Lies Behind*, 2021. Photography © Ian Kingsnorth



A group workshop in the garden at Newlyn Art Gallery

Initiated during lockdown, the curatorial team met regularly on Zoom to discuss their ideas and share their experiences. Many of the group were vulnerable and isolating due to COVID, so the meetings offered an opportunity to safely meet new people and have regular contact with others in similar situations. In the midst of the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, the project took on a new relevance, not just in its focus on health and wellbeing, but in its role in connecting people through art and culture.

Arts Council Collection Curator, Beth Hughes, joined the meetings and introduced the group to the Collection. Through individual research and group discussions, the curatorial team each selected a number of works which felt particularly relevant and personal to them.

The experiences which had brought the curatorial group together through the social prescribing initiative were diverse - some were isolating, some seeking refuge from abusive relationships, some adjusting to long term health problems. We didn't ask about their experiences, but through sharing thoughts and feelings about works in the Collection, people began to share their individual stories. As the project progressed, the group's **confidence** grew and new friendships formed. Group members described being both nervous and excited when it came to finally being able to meet in person in the garden at Newlyn Art Gallery. For one of the team, it was their first meeting with another person in over 18 months.



As the exhibition developed, the benefits for those involved became increasingly **profound**. One of the curators was living in a women's refuge and had spoken about taking her life. The project, and the new connections and friendships it presented, have helped her to carry on.

For others the project has allowed them to become more **social**, and to feel part of something. Many of the curators had never been to a gallery before, and didn't consider art to play a role in their lives. The project has allowed them to find a voice through art, to learn new things about themselves and to feel **happier** and more **comfortable** in their own skin.

Some members of the curatorial group now continue to maintain a relationship with the gallery, either by volunteering in the space or by joining our regular Tea, Cake and Art sessions. Out of a place of isolation, the curators have not only found a creative **community** and forged new **friendships**, but have been able to participate in an activity which has benefited their own mental health and **wellbeing**. It has also led to new opportunities, with the group being invited to curate an exhibition at a local National Trust site.



The curatorial team oversee the unpacking of Simon Starling's *Project for a Rift Valley Crossing*, 2015



*Collecting Covid:* A masked man walks with his head down in front of a shuttered shop front. Photography © Alan Brown



Gilly Rogers and Creative Age, *My Hug*, 2021. Photography © Colin Davison

# Sunderland Culture

## **Adapting to the changing needs of our audiences in the face of the global COVID-19 Pandemic.**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns which forced the closure of Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens in 2020 and 2021 had a massive impact on the exhibitions and learning programmes planned for the National Partners Programme. We had to adapt our ways of working very quickly and adopt new approaches to engaging our audiences as well as finding ways to support the most vulnerable people in our communities. Despite our lack of digital skills and limited technology for staff now working from home, we began the process of flipping the offer to digital from April 2020, enthusiastically launching into the first lockdown by creating a full Easter holiday programme for families online. We shared craft videos recorded in our staff's bedroom offices; activity packs to download; treasure hunts; creative challenges... everything we could think of to help Sunderland families through those difficult times.

In the early days of working from home, we thought it would be a matter of weeks before we would reopen our doors to the public – but it soon became clear we were in this for the long haul. We knew that lots of families weren't able to access online content, so found ways of creating and distributing physical worksheets and activity packs as well as keeping up our digital offer. Along with the rest of the country, it was a steep learning curve transitioning to online delivery of our programme. We learned how to film and edit video content and how to work with even the most tech-phobic groups over Zoom – with lots of help from our networks of artists and freelancers.

We developed a free online Arts Award Discover, posting regular videos of creative makes for families, as well as an Arts Award Explore focused on the Arts Council Collection for young people, where we posted out materials and held Zoom sessions with an artist facilitator.

Over the summer holidays in 2020, the Learning team distributed printed family activity packs complete with materials directly to Washington Community Food Project, Hetton New Dawn and Sunderland Soup Kitchen. Without the restrictions of an exhibition, we used images of artworks from the wider Arts Council Collection to create 'Taking Art Everywhere' – a pack which used artworks and artist-designed activities to explore and lead conversations around some of the challenging emotions and feelings that families were reporting as a result of lockdown, with guidance from local mental health charity Washington MIND.

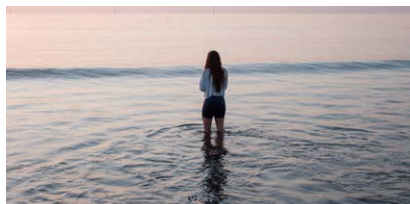


Art Champion, Jo, and her daughter Dixie take part in a creative session hosted on Zoom

In summer 2020, Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens launched an open call to ask Sunderland residents to submit photographs which represented their experience of lockdown for a new contemporary collecting project, *Collecting Covid*. A total of 390 images were submitted by people of all ages from across the city.

Responding to the community submissions, these photographs became the inspiration for a new exhibition of artworks at the museum, *Where We Are Now*, which opened in August 2021. This exhibition drew from the themes that emerged from *Collecting Covid*: the renewed importance of nature and gardens; community, family and friends; isolation and empty streets; care for ourselves and others; and grief, illness and loss.

Working with five community groups over Zoom, including Creative Age, Art Champions, Young Carers, Older Womxn Artists Collective and the Pharmacy School, to select and interpret Arts Council Collection artworks from the perspective of their personal experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic was both powerful and emotional. Learning staff worked with Washington MIND to develop strategies and support systems for these difficult conversations with groups about subjects including grief, loss and social isolation. The groups also developed their own creative responses to the pandemic including artworks and writing which was displayed alongside the Arts Council Collection works, creating the most inclusive and democratic exhibition the Museum has ever hosted.



*Collecting Covid*: A moment of self-reflection at sunrise. Photography © Ellen Walker



**“Finding out that other groups went through this same process (of selecting artworks for the exhibition) - it makes me feel that our views matter. I think that’s what’s empowering about this process.”**

– Padma, Older Womxn Artists Collective



*Collecting Covid: A woman covers her face with a disposable mask and a clear visor. Photography © Debra Clark*

## JOURNEY STICK

**1. GATHER YOUR MATERIALS**  
*colour, colour, colour!*

Inspired by the rainbow colours of Tony Cragg's 'New Stones - Newton's Tones', we've collected a rainbow of yarn, thread and ribbons for our Journey Stick.

**2. HEAD OUTSIDE!**  
*breathe in that fresh air!*

We found a stick at Backhouse Park for our Journey Stick!

**3. BEGIN COLLECTING**  
*be careful: wash your hands after touching plants, feathers or soil. Don't touch anything if you don't know what it is!*

**4. TAKE YOUR TIME, ENJOY YOUR JOURNEY**  
*What will you choose to collect?*

Every time you stop to collect something new for your Journey Stick, notice where you are. What can you smell? What can you see? What can your hear? Use your yarn and ribbons to attach your collection to your Journey Stick.

**5. TIME TO REFLECT**  
*story time*

At the end of your adventure, you'll have a collection of objects that hold memories about your journey. Tell a friend or family member the story of your journey. Settle in for story time!

**COLLECTIONS**  
*why collect?*

The job of museums is to collect and look after objects that tell the story of our past and the world around us. Objects can hold memories, feelings and ideas. When we go to a museum, we can learn about ourselves and our place in the world. By creating our own collections, we can shape our story. We've gone through some challenging times over the last few months. Why not start a record - a journal or diary, a collection or a blog - to remember and make sense of these big changes?

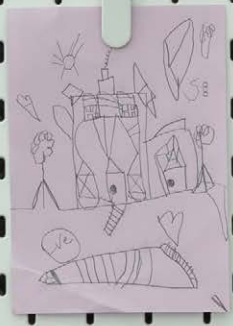
Pages from *Taking Art Everywhere*, a family activity booklet featuring works from the Arts Council Collection and accompanying activities



Hello

Woods, Jim, Cheryl, the  
Hill and the other...

I've always had trouble to see any of my  
grand / family but very great but for  
because I was able to I am not and  
even though I was and family and when  
I was able to see people again I was very  
happy -



How do you  
do it?

by  
Evan

Have you ever seen

Let me  
choose  
what's  
the best  
for me!!

How I am in  
this puzzle  
today?

Family our  
house







Installation view of *Tell me the story of all these things*, 2020. Photography © Anna Lukala

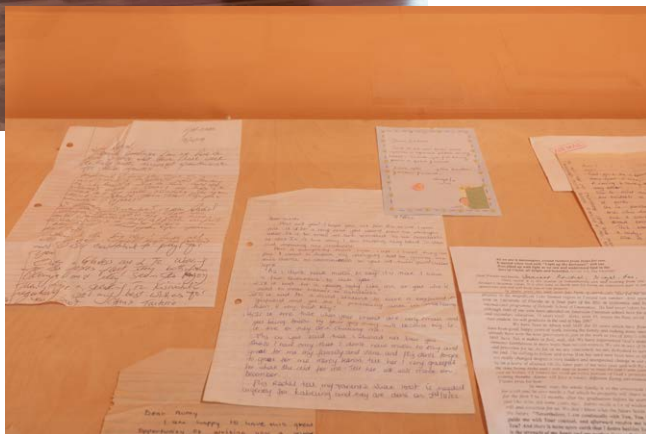
For Firstsite, the National Partners Programme has enabled a range of new partnerships to form, as well as supporting and strengthening existing ones.

In 2020, we were able to build upon an existing movement and bring a group of women together to curate the exhibition *Tell me the story of all these things*. The formation of the 'radical women' of Colchester had started in 2018, when Firstsite's Director Sally Shaw invited a group of women who had contributed significantly to the development of Firstsite and Colchester to see the unveiling of the statue of Millicent Fawcett in London. The exhibition became a re-creation of the 'crowd' of stories, experiences and voices that gathered at the foot of the statue - inviting visitors into a similar experience, but one authored by the next generation of Suffragists. What emerged from many hours of conversations and extremely lively debates was a compendium of stories about female experience and, above all, about equality. Each artwork selected by members of the group told a story – about suppression and isolation, about connectivity, about empowerment and about joy.





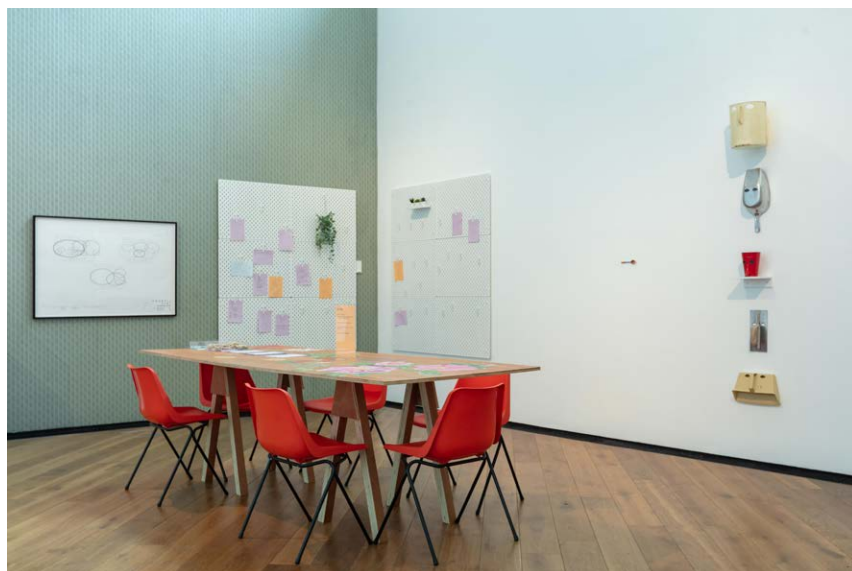
Installation view of *Tell me the story of all these things*, 2020. Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of *Tell me the story of all these things*, 2020. Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of *Tell me the story of all these things*, 2020. Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of *House Share*, 2021. Photography © Anna Lukala

What would encourage people to come? Choose three of your words that mean the most to you. Mentimeter

relatable intrigued relate  
curiosity  
different curious  
accessible safe  
inviting commonality  
sharing

5

Brainstorming question for *House Share*

The exhibition was due to open the week the entire nation went into the first lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and ended up opening when the country emerged, and Firstsite reopened in June 2020.

Also opening following a lockdown was *House Share*, Firstsite's iteration of the partnership-wide project working with young people. *House Share* articulated the group's shared experiences of being at home during the COVID-19 lockdowns. The theme of domesticity formed the link between the selected artworks, along with guiding the look and feel of the installation.

This is the project where we really spent the most time thinking collectively about the meaning of partnership. In doing so, we learnt some valuable things. Partnership has to have benefits for each partner - We were keen for the young people at the three different venues to work together, but this push came from us and not from them. We learnt about new online tools such as Menti and Google Jamboard, allowing us to think creatively on Zoom and removed some of the pressure to speak openly which intimidated some of the young people. We and our group of young people also worked closely with the Arts Council Collection team, something we saw the benefits of during the development of the exhibition, *My name is not Refugee*. Working with the Arts Council Collection curators meant that our young people had access to a lot more information about the artworks and could make decisions more easily. We also responded creatively to the challenges of the pandemic to make something collaborative – working with sound artist Frazer Merrick on a sound piece featuring sounds recorded by young people from all three partner venues.



Still from Rita Castanheira, Emily Mulenga and YAK, *Our House*, 2021

# Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange



Abi Hutchinson in front of Denzil Forrester's *Witchdoctor*, 1983. Photography © Greg Martin



Visitor's pledge to help end racism. Photography © Steve Tanner



**“The effects the Black Lives Matter movement has on our local people, and their stories that go hand-in-hand, show us that racism still exists and we still have a long way to go in fighting this battle. I strongly and wholeheartedly believe every voice raised against racism, chips away at its power.”**

– Abi Hutchinson, Black Voices Cornwall Cultural Director

The Arts Council Collection has enabled us to not only work with new agencies like the Intercom Trust and the Social Prescription network, but also develop and expand existing relationships, like WILD Young Parents Project for the Simple Truths exhibition, and with Black Voices Cornwall, for *Captured Beauty*.

Black Voices Cornwall was founded in the summer of 2020 after the murder of George Floyd, to make a positive change to racial inequality, and enable Cornwall to become an actively anti-racist region. We invited this new group to speak at a webinar Black History in Cornwall and the Southwest, and followed with the offer of an exhibition at Newlyn Art Gallery to display signs, placards, photos and testimonies from the summer's protests, titled *The Silence is Deafening*.

From early conversations with Black Voices Cornwall about a main gallery exhibition featuring works from the Arts Council Collection, Abi Hutchinson, their Artistic Director, was very clear that she wanted to use this opportunity to fill the gallery with people from the global majority community.

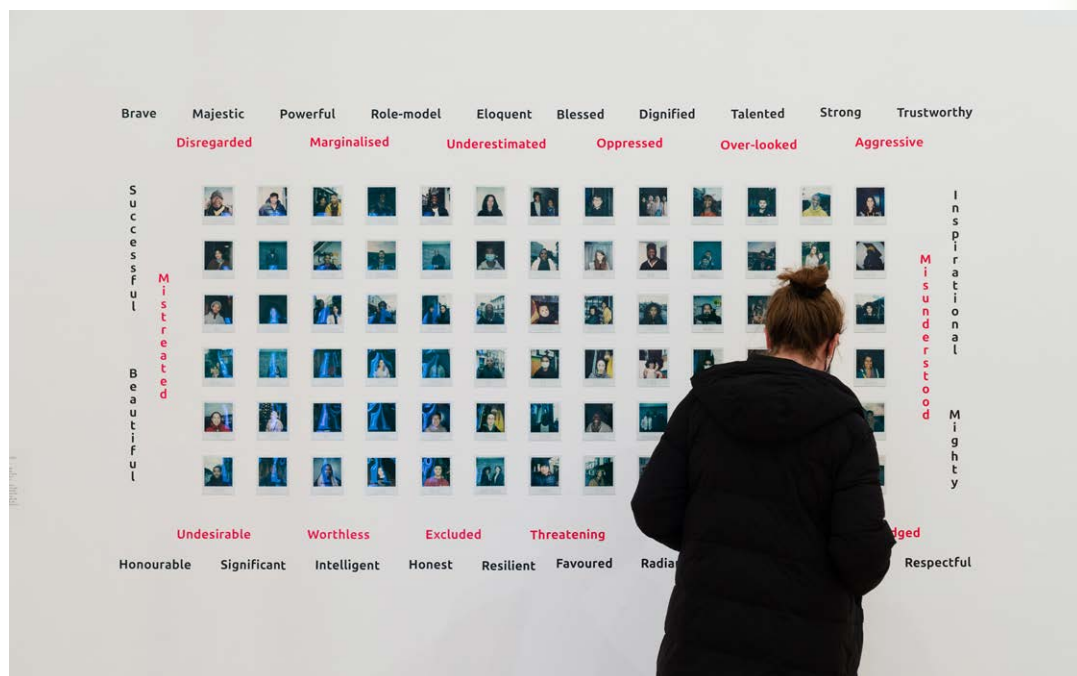
**“The idea of this exhibition is to make the invisible, visible. The pieces I have selected show a range of people, all from ethnically diverse backgrounds. These are people we may pass every day but don't consider their life, or their struggles. When I say struggles, I mean the burden of racism. Looking at the faces of the people featured, I can feel and relate to what they may be going through, or what they will go through. Throughout the exhibition, my wish is that the viewer connects with the artwork, the person depicted, and tries to put themselves in their shoes and to question, ‘how would I be feeling, in that moment, with that colour skin?’ I hope that each and every person viewing *Captured Beauty* also has an awareness of how resilient people from the ethnically diverse community are... or have to be. The people within these pieces are captured, yet beautiful, strong, yet overburdened at the same time. My question is, ‘should it always be this way?’”**

– Abi Hutchinson, Black Voices Cornwall Cultural Director



Installation view of *Captured Beauty*, 2022. Photography © Steve Tanner

Once a selection had been made of Arts Council Collection works, Abi made contact with and met artists of colour based in Cornwall. *Captured Beauty* includes work by Oreoluwa Ahmeed, Leona Campbell, Sigourney Hutchinson, and Catherine Lucktaylor. Abi was adamant that this exhibition shouldn't be a passive experience, but inspire action from visitors, and two provocations feature prominently: **How might your life be different had you been born another race?** and **What will you commit to doing to help end racism?**

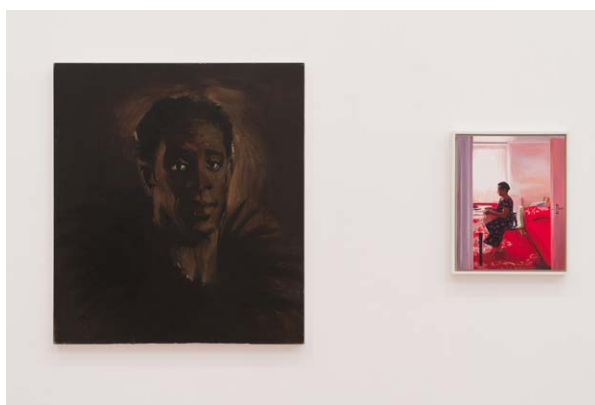


Sigourney Hutchinson, *We are who we are*, 2022 © Sigourney Hutchinson. Photography © Steve Tanner



Oreoluwa Ahmeed, *Out here*, 2020 © Oreoluwa Ahmeed. Photography © Steve Tanner

As well as a series of exclusive and inclusive events devised by Black Voices Cornwall, *Captured Beauty* also inspired a drawing workshop by Denzil Forrester, exhibiting artist and resident in Cornwall since 2016, with pupils from Newlyn School – the primary school across the road from Newlyn Art Gallery, who inspired the virtual *Palace of Culture* and are partners in Think, Talk, Make Art.

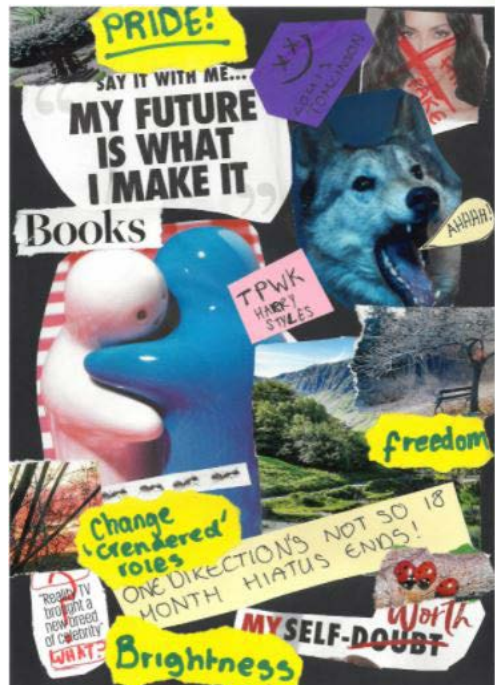
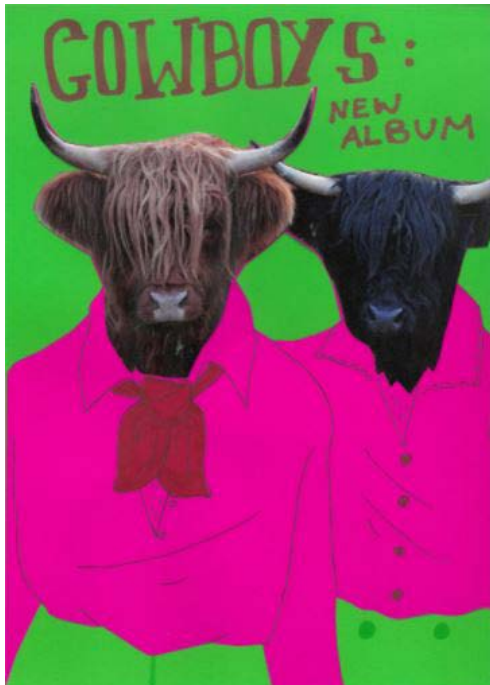


Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *L'Ortolan*, 2017 and Caroline Walker, *Joy, 10.30am, Hackney*, 2017 © the artists. Photography © Steve Tanner

# Sunderland Culture

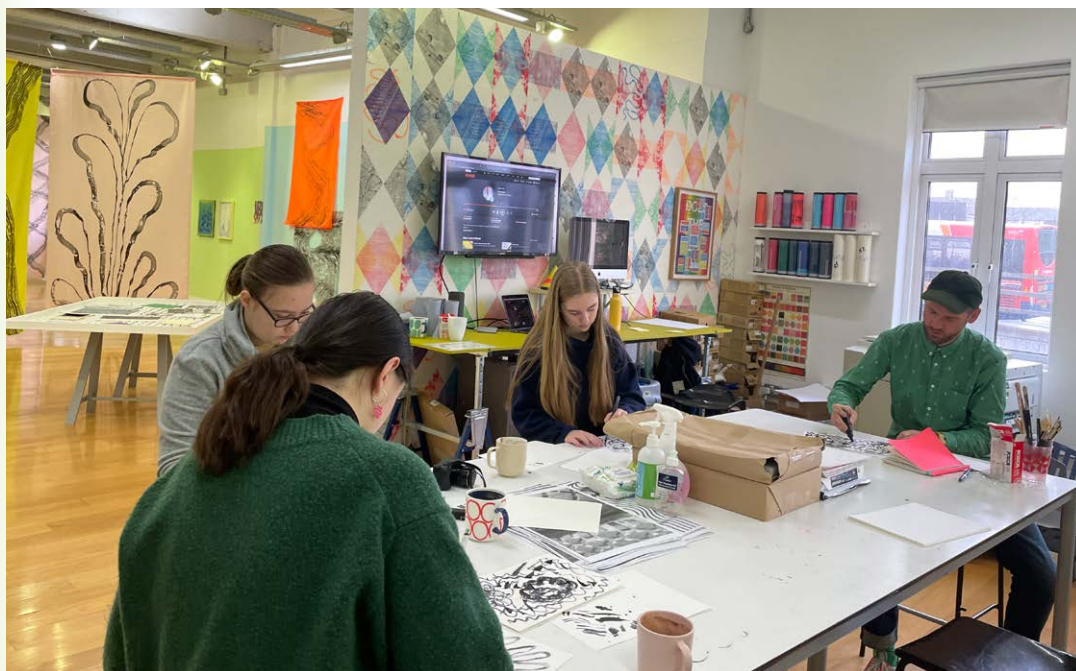
Our relationship with Arts Council Collection and the National Partners has extended our ability to work in new ways here in Sunderland. In particular, working on the young people's collaborative project in tandem with Firstsite and Newlyn Art Gallery & the Exchange has seen our partnership working skills develop and strengthen across the three years of the programme.

Setting out with the joint intention of creating spaces where young people were able to co-create with us and with each other, our teams have come up against, and overcome, some exceptional challenges. Being part of the partnership has enabled us to advocate for our young people's group, Celebrate Different Collective, and to work in a completely new way, moving decision making away from the organisation. Watching the examples set by our colleagues in Penzance and Colchester, and with the support and confidence from Arts Council Collection, we have learned completely new skills as a team, and experienced new ways of working with communities that we hope to embed into our practices in the future.



Zine workshops on Zoom with artist Melody Sproates helped bring together young people's views on gender identity across the partnership. The zine formed part of the interpretation for artwork *Boy, ?, Girl* by artist Hadrian Pigott in the exhibition *Where There's Space to Grow*.





Celebrate Different Collective working with Foundation Press to create their bespoke wallpaper.

The Kickstarter event in February 2021 involved young people from across the partnership working together on Zoom with Arts Council Collection staff, venue staff and facilitators from Rising Arts Agency. This helped to build relationships across the partnership and included collaborative working on a postcard roulette project led by artist John Walter. This was strengthened by monthly meetings of the collaborative project staff teams which led to invites from each group for young people to contribute to each other's exhibition designs and interpretation.

It's not just across the National Partners Programme that our skills and confidence in partnership working has increased, but it has created new opportunities for us to forge and develop relationships with partners closer to home. Collaboration between North East based artists and groups of young people was a key element of our young people's collaborative exhibition, *Where There's Space to Grow*, resulting in the creation of a zine, a new artwork, and a bespoke wallpaper for the exhibition.

**"It's important to work collaboratively because it creates diversity. You get lots of people's thoughts and talents."**

– Charlotte, Celebrate Different Collective

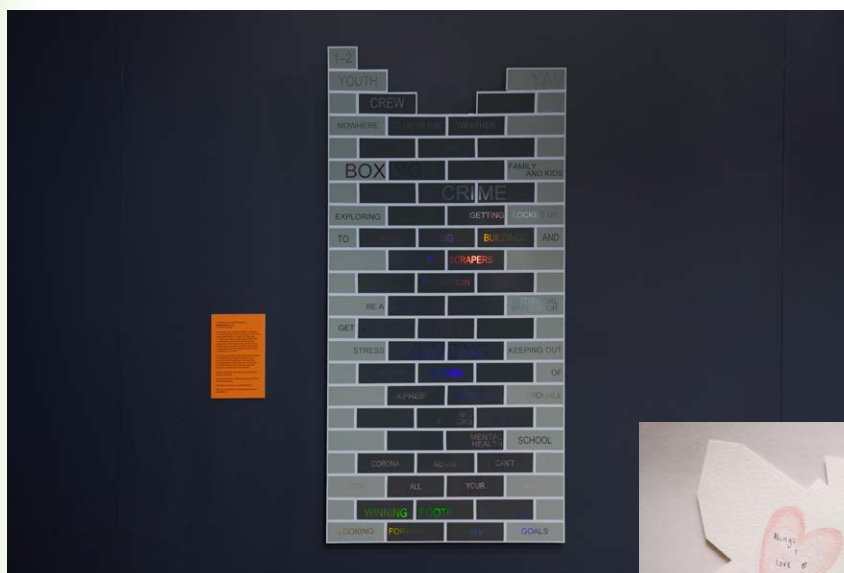


Socially distanced artist workshops with Celebrate Different Collective and zine artist Melody Sproates meant spreading out across the room and individual packs of materials to limit the spread of Covid-19.

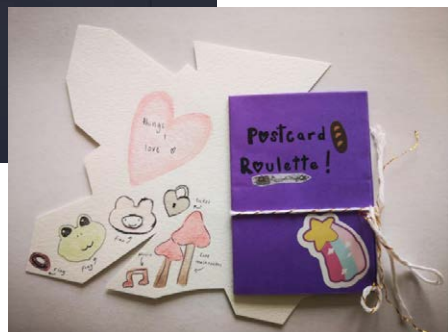
The National Partners Programme also gave us the chance to strengthen our partnership with local young people's organisation Young Asian Voices (YAV). The junior group worked with Museum staff to design postcards describing their experience of lockdown in summer 2021 to support the exhibition, *Where We Are Now*. Young men aged 14 – 15 years from 1-2 Youth Crew at YAV worked with artist Anna Selway to create an artwork in response to Liv Preston's *Casual(ty?)* which was included in *Where There's Space to Grow*. The artwork reflected their thinking about the barriers they face and their hopes for the future. Young people from YAV also selected Arts Council Collection works to be displayed in their community centre on long term loan, as well as choosing a small group of works to be shown in the Museum's Art Lounge space.

**“Collaborative work encourages creativity, diversity, different perspectives and opinions.”**

– Georgie, Celebrate Different Collective



Anna Selway, *De(Construct)*, 2021, created in response to the ideas of 1-2 Youth Crew at Young Asian Voices, Sunderland. Photography © Colin Davison.



The young people designed postcards to explore their sense of identity and to introduce themselves to the wider group.



A postcard designed by a member of Celebrate Different Collective.





Steph and Lijie from the Older Women Artist's Collective look at their works displayed in *Where We Are Now*.

Steph and Lijie from the Older Women Artist's Collective look at their works displayed in *Where We Are Now*.

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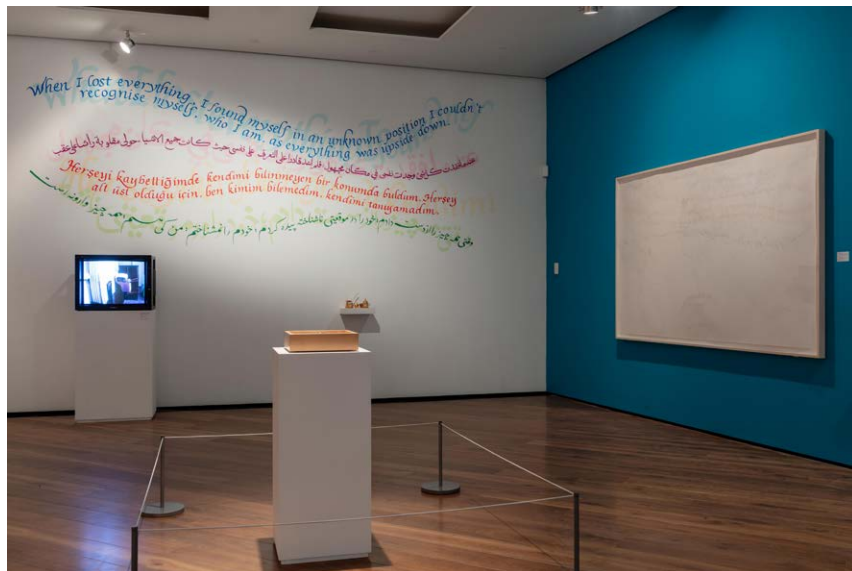
Steph and Lijie from the Older Women Artist's Collective look at their works displayed in *Where We Are Now*.







Installation view of *My Name is not Refugee*, 2021. Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of *My Name is not Refugee*, 2021. Photography © Anna Lukala

Firstsite and Refugee Action-Colchester (RA-C) first came together in 2016, when clients from RA-C ran a pop-up Syrian café alongside Firstsite's *Gee Vaucher: Introspective* exhibition. Following this, RA-C started to hold their monthly meetings at Firstsite and the space became well-known to their clients and families.

Firstsite staff started collaborating with a group of RA-C clients and volunteers in 2018, and worked together for a year and a half on an exhibition which came to be called *My name is not Refugee*.

We had learnt from previous projects that introducing the Arts Council Collection, or any art for that matter, may make the group feel uncomfortable, either because they would feel like they weren't 'arty people', or they were intimidated by the way most art collections present themselves online or in print. Instead, the process started with conversations, leading to three key questions written by the curatorial group: 'What is the main purpose of humanity?', 'Do we live by force or choice?' and 'How do we decide what is right and what is wrong?'. As these questions were explored with more clients of RA-C, certain common themes arose which were expressed and explored through the artworks selected from the Arts Council Collection. These themes were **belief, communication, environment, impermanence** and **journey**. Each artwork in the exhibition had a direct relevance to at least one of these themes.

As a group, we had to think carefully about how different people might experience the space. The exhibition included works which focus on violence and pain, and we needed to consider how to avoid re-traumatising people affected by this, but without avoiding the reality of violence all together. Works such as Christine Borland's *Blanket used on a police firing range*, where bullet holes in the fabric have been delicately mended by hand, allowed us to gently reference both trauma and the healing process.

We recognised together that expressions of art and culture vary hugely from the Western experience of the gallery, where art is traditionally hung on the wall. For this reason we included items commonly found in the group's homes in the show, giving them equal representation with the artworks. We already knew that food is one of the key things which ties people together, inspiring us to make a recipe-sharing activity in the exhibition space.

The exhibition became a base for RA-C, starting with a wonderful opening event filled with music and food. We worked with a local calligrapher with links to RA-C, who painted words from the group directly onto the walls. It became a hugely personal space. As group members Mr and Mrs Al-Chahin said: 'This is not an art exhibition, but a place where you will actually feel those emotions that each of us is going through. It will speak a thousand words which will make you think - think about humanity, think about the wellbeing of your fellow humans, think about what is bothering you - is it justified?'



Installation view of *My Name is not Refugee*, 2021. Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of *My Name is not Refugee*, 2021. Photography © Anna Lukala



## Recipe card

Puff Puff

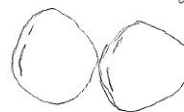
from: Ding Project

### Ingredients:

flour  
sugar  
yeast  
oil

Draw picture here:

not to scale  
not the size  
of it



### Method:

you need water water so first you add the  
flour into the water then you add the  
sugar and yeast you put the butter  
in the oil bowl and cover it and wait  
for it to rise then shape into  
small circles and fry in oil by one.

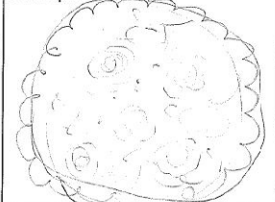
(Continue on the back)

## shamounia - Libya. Recipe card

### Ingredients:

dried  
garlic, chili, tinned tomatoes,  
eggs, salt + pepper, olive oil,  
turmeric  
(serve with roasted chopped  
potatoes)

Draw picture here:



### Method:

Shallow frying pan - oil + garlic + chili -  
Brown gently.  
Add tablespoon of turmeric, and tinned  
tomatoes, leave to simmer for 25 minutes.  
Crack eggs into 'holes' made in sauce  
mixture, poach until ready!

(Continue on the back)

## Recipe card

Sweet Birthday  
Dessert  
Buzzaire

### Ingredients:

1 tin condensed milk  
3 spoons of Nestle's chocolate powder  
1 spoon of butter  
chocolate granulate or chocolate

Draw picture here: Brigadeiro  
do Brasil



### Method:

in one pan put first the butter and wait to melt.  
after the condensed milk and stir, when is all blended  
add the chocolate powder and stir until start boiling  
will be time to turn off the heat. (you lost all the process)  
Put in the fridge and when is cold make like balls with  
butter in your hands and roll it into chocolate granulate

(Continue on the back)

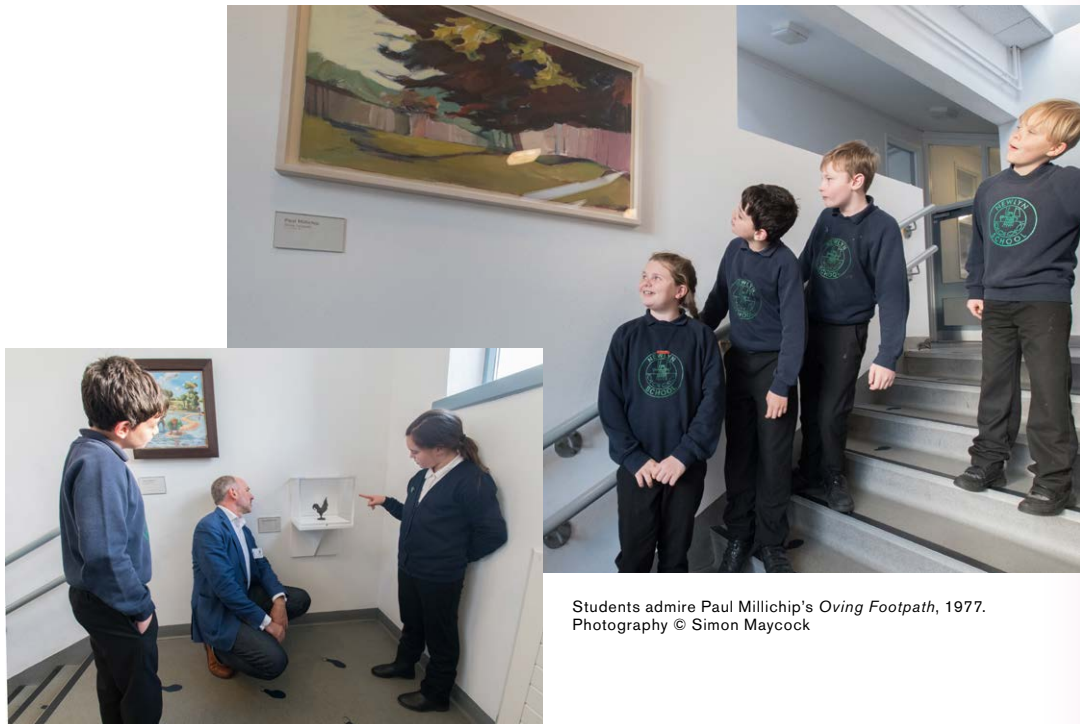
Recipe cards created by members of Refugee Action-Colchester

# Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange

## Art Galleries in Schools and a *Palace of Culture*

In response to the growing crisis in arts education in schools, we investigated what action we could take to support creativity as part of every young person's education. This led us to develop an ongoing conversation with primary and secondary schools in the locality, opening with the question '***How can we help you?***'. Newlyn School, whose pupils are regular visitors to Newlyn Art Gallery, asked if we could support the delivery of basic art skills within their curriculum.

We felt that an exciting way to do this would be through our partnership with the Arts Council Collection, in the form of a loan of works to the school for a whole year. We worked with a Year Five class who chose nine works they felt would inspire the school community. Their choices were thoughtful, and at times, provoked passionate discussion which they agreed would be interesting to continue during their stewardship of the works.



Students admire Paul Millichip's *Oving Footpath*, 1977.  
Photography © Simon Maycock

A student talks to James Green about Bernard Meadow's sculpture, *Cock*, 1953. Photography © Simon Maycock



We choose this one because it has blue and purple

I like this because you can see the blue, terracotta and purple in the picture and it reminds me of night time in a car

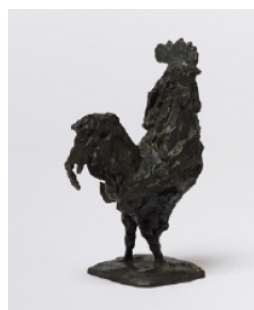
I feel it captures the blues and purples we discussed earlier.  
I like the images of cars looking out to sea - something I did with my son when he was much younger.  
I like the lights in the sky which remind me of stars.

Hyde Park by Julian Trevelyan, 1956



Bathing by Stassinios Paraskos, 1968

I choose this one because it shows the people in the sea jumping swimming and it looks like they are having fun.



Cock by Bernard Meadows, 1953

I chose this because it is a cockerel and it reminds me about nature and about life.

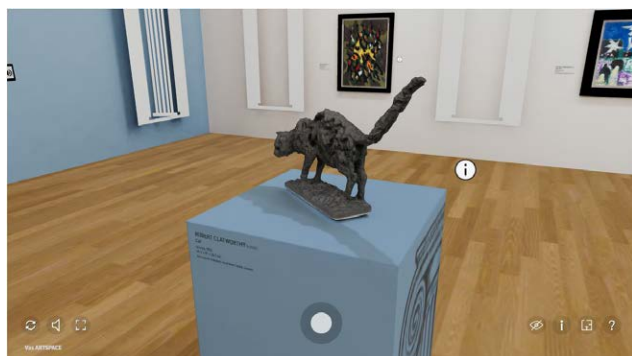
it reminds me of my uncle's favorite football team TOTTENHAM HOTSPURS

I like this sculpture because it reminds me of a cottage that I stayed in called Golden Cocks.

I choose this because I like chickens

Artwork labels written by pupils at Newlyn School

The intention with the loan had been that the pupils at Newlyn School would then, in turn, lend these works to us at Newlyn Art Gallery to help create a 'Palace of Culture'. The *Palace of Culture* would transform the gallery into an inspirational setting for three weeks of intense, art-based activity, programmed by artists - or Cultural Secretaries - as directed by the children. The nine works chosen by the children were to be a key visual element of *Palace of Culture*. Once the doors of the 'palace' had shut, and the works returned to Newlyn School, the school would retain some of the magic, inspiring staff and children to continue their artistic investigations.



Robert Clatworthy's Cat, 1954 in the *Palace of Culture*

**“I liked it as it gave me an idea of light overcoming shadows.”**

– Student from Newlyn School

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 and the national lockdowns, the artworks were never physically placed within Newlyn Art Gallery. Instead, we had to adapt the way we were working, giving us an opportunity to try out new approaches. With the support of the Arts Council Collection and virtual exhibition design company, V21 Artspace, we produced a virtual *Palace of Culture*, bringing the artworks and events together in one digital space. Creating a virtual exhibition in a virtual gallery space was something we hadn't done before, and it felt like a risk to take something usually so public and physical, such as games and workshops, into the virtual world. We were wary of losing the voices of the young people within the digital space, so included audio recordings of the children talking about individual works to ensure their comments and interpretation was central to the exhibition.

**“It really outstanced me.”**

– Student from Newlyn School

The *Palace of Culture* included a series of recorded workshops and activities designed by schools and delivered by local artists, each of whom had to select an artwork in the exhibition to respond to.

**“It reminded me of a view somewhere.”**

– Student from Newlyn School

The challenges of COVID-19 meant we had to rethink how we could connect with our audiences and continue programming, even while the gallery was closed. One way for us to do this was by moving our exhibitions online. It also opened up the possibilities for virtual learning through online workshops and new means of interpretation.





Georgia Gendall's *Kitchen Cupboard Automata* workshop as part of *Palace of Culture*

**"It's really nice because if it's a rainy day you can look up at that painting and feel better."**

– Student from Newlyn School

Although we had created 360 virtual walkthroughs of some of our previous National Partners Programme exhibitions, including *Hippo Campus* and *Go On Being So*, *Palace of Culture* was our first foray into creating a solely digital exhibition space. Being a part of the National Partners Programme allowed us to take a risk and try something we wouldn't have had the funds to do without the support of the Arts Council Collection.



Rosie Taylor-Hingston's online *Dance Choreography: Chance Method* workshop with Lillia Rowe as part of *Palace of Culture*

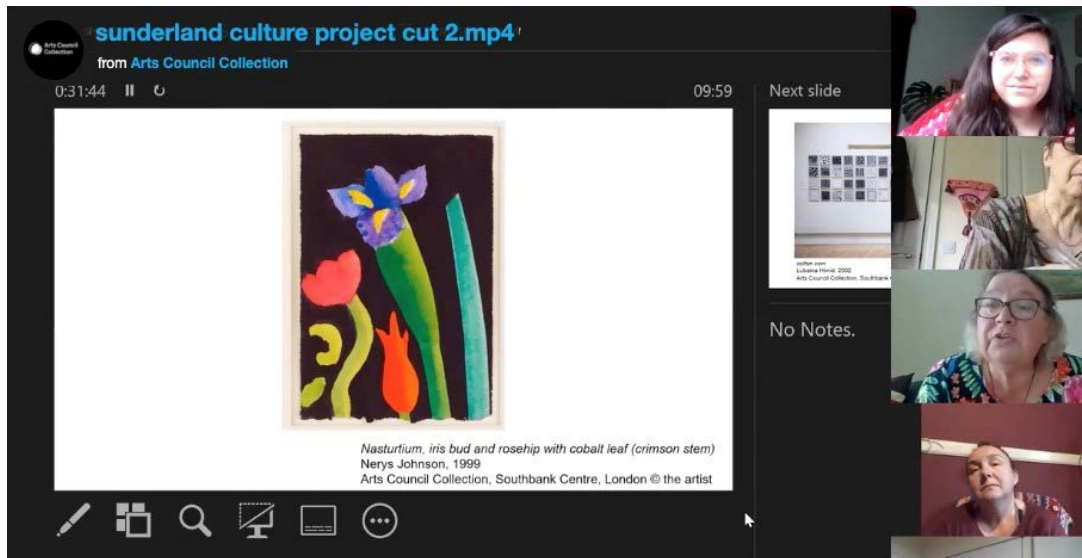
# Sunderland Culture

Our first exhibition of the National Partners Programme, *Received Wisdom*, explored the work of artists represented in the Arts Council Collection who were creating artwork in their later years. Interestingly, this revealed a discrepancy between male and female artists represented by Arts Council Collection, and our learning programme sought to examine this further.

**“Often I only hear other artists or curators points of view – professionals in the arts world. I want to hear what other people have to say.”**

– Steph, Older Womxn Artists Collective

Recruiting 11 older womxn artists living and working in Sunderland, we explored works by Rose Wylie, Nerys Johnson and Lubaina Himid together. We discovered overlaps and commonalities in the life stories of these women and the local womxn represented in our group. For many of the womxn we worked with, having children and taking care of their households, or needing careers with guaranteed income, had meant that their creative endeavours took a backseat for many years.



The Older Womxn Artists Collective met on Zoom during lockdown



*Little Women (Big Ideas), Kath Price*

Government enforced lockdowns in 2020 dramatically changed our planned programme with this group, and we began meeting regularly on Zoom for our discussions. We were even able to offer online digital skills training sessions through a local organisation, Media Savvy. The process of meeting regularly on Zoom with Sunderland Culture staff created a safe and supportive space for these older womxn artists to come together for the first time. It provided a platform for them to share their own artworks and practice, discuss the work of artists in the Arts Council Collection and describe some of the barriers they faced, including coming to art later in life after raising families; health issues; and caring for older relatives and lacking confidence to call themselves an artist. The group also discussed their frustration with the lack of spaces in the city to show their artwork and how artists were under-resourced and under-appreciated in the UK compared to other countries.

The group grew in confidence and began to own their online meeting space, deciding they preferred not to have a male facilitator from Media Savvy, and challenging our staff about being paid for their time. They wanted to know how Sunderland Culture would support the group after the project. Although unexpected, and sometimes tense(!), we saw that the group were challenging us because they felt empowered and powerful – an exciting and overwhelmingly positive outcome of the project.

One participant coined the phrase 'little women (on the Zoom screen) with big ideas'. This led to wider team discussions about how the group could be supported after the project ended, including bringing in other Sunderland Culture staff running artist support programmes to provide advice and guidance. The group were also involved in selecting and interpreting artworks from the Arts Council Collection on the theme of isolation and loneliness for the *Where We Are Now* exhibition, and showed their own work produced in response to COVID-19 alongside works from the Collection.

**“The word Curator is a powerful term. It’s like you’re doing something on behalf of the public, for the public.”**

– Padma, Older Womxn Artists Collective



The Older Womxn Artists Collective met on Zoom during lockdown





A member of the Older Womxn Artists Collective shows her drawing to the group

The group expressed how ground-breaking this approach was for them and for the Museum, and that we had raised the bar for devolving ownership of the exhibition space to communities. This has created a lot of discussion within the staff team at Sunderland Culture about the lack of space for community curated exhibitions in our venues and how best to manage these expectations in the future. The Older Womxn Artists Collective are now exploring how they will continue as an independent group with support from Sunderland Culture being provided through free use of spaces, access to Zoom and support with future funding bids and access to spaces for exhibitions in the city.

**“I think it’s more democratic. By using local people you are turning your Museum into something which is working from the grassroots up rather than top down. I think that’s something that makes me question what you do in the future – where do you go from here?”**

– Kath, Older Womxn Artists Collective



Installation view of *Keep Being Amazing*, 2022. Photography © Anna Lukala



Firstsite's National Partners Programme journey ends with the *Keep Being Amazing* exhibition, which opened in January 2022. The artworks included reflect our conversations with people who have attended Firstsite's Holiday Fun Programme over the past five years, as well as a reflection of the values and aspirations of the programme. Together they are a powerful representation of resilience, determination, support and love.

Firstsite's Holiday Fun Programme began in 2017 as a response to food poverty experienced by some families during the school holidays. The programme builds on the five ways to wellbeing (connect, be active, take notice, learn and give) and celebrates the positive impact of creativity on identity forming, self-worth, problem-solving and mental wellbeing, welcoming families to Firstsite to enjoy a free meal, take part in group sports sessions, make art and experience safety and community. Along with the National Partners Programme, this programme has been instrumental in affecting change in the way things are done at Firstsite.



Installation view of *Keep Being Amazing*, 2022. Photography © Jayne Lloyd





Installation view of *Keep Being Amazing*, 2022. Photography © Anna Lukala



Installation view of *Keep Being Amazing*, 2022. Photography © Anna Lukala



*Keep Being Amazing*, 2022 opening event. Photography © Anna Lukala



*Keep Being Amazing*, 2022 opening event. Photography © Jayne Lloyd



Holiday Fun Programme. Photography © Jayne Lloyd

As we come to the end of the Partnership Programme, Firstsite has been looking back at what we have learnt and formulating a vision for the future.

We will ensure art and creativity are valued for their integral role in shaping a happy and healthy society for everyone by:

- Championing creativity as a catalyst for positive change in society
- Celebrating everyone's imaginations as places to shape a better future
- Demonstrating the impact of art and galleries at the centre of everyday life in our award-winning gallery
- Prioritising collaborations with people who are most frequently underserved and under-represented in society and sharing the results with everyone.

We will do all of this through our key values of inclusivity, creativity, agility and responsibility. Over the next ten years we will work towards collaborative governance and organisation, shifting the balance of power and working together with our communities to affect change.



*Keep Being Amazing*, 2022 opening event. Photography © Jayne Lloyd



# Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange

The long loan of artwork from Arts Council Collection to Newlyn School proved unexpectedly impactful, most notably in terms of pupil's self-esteem and aspirations:

**“The biggest impact of the work in schools has been on pupil's self-belief – that they're actually ‘a good enough school’ to be allowed, to be trusted, to be rewarded - it's raised expectations. Other people come in and see the ambition of the school because of the artwork, including parents. It's also raised their expectations of the school and their child's place and prospects in it. There's a sense of broadening of horizons, both in a social, public health and civic sense, but also in seeing a potential for a career in the all-important Cornish creative sector.”**

– Isabel Stephens, Headteacher



Works from the Arts Council Collection and Cornwall Council's collection hang in St Mary's School, Penzance





Children from Newlyn School select their favourite artworks

One of our intentions for the future is to develop our work with schools, and continue supporting teachers and students across the county. We've been successful in receiving funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to extend our partnership with the Arts Council Collection, Newlyn School, and the wider community, through a two-year project entitled *Think, Talk, Make Art*. As a result of this new funding, we can now reach nine primary schools across west Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Putting art works, not only from the Arts Council Collection, but also now from Cornwall Council's Schools' Collection, into schools is providing the catalyst for a comprehensive programme of continuing professional development and learning for teachers, developing their confidence in teaching art, at a formative moment in young peoples' development. There is an ambition to bring together all of the works at the end of *Think, Talk, Make Art* and display them at The Exchange during summer 2023, showcasing the the project and its participants.



Rob Lane working with pupils from Nancledra Primary School

**“We are delighted to be part of this dynamic partnership that has been successful in our bid to Paul Hamlyn Teacher’s Development Fund. We are really excited to get started on this new initiative to develop high quality arts-based teaching and learning opportunities in the primary classroom, alongside our partners at Newlyn Art Gallery.”**

– Jenny Blunden OBE, Chief Executive of Truro and Penwith Academy Trust



Literacy specialist, Rob Lane, working with pupils at St Martins School, Isles of Scilly

The National Partners Programme has brought new resources and fresh ideas, and fed our ambition to set the agenda around the civic and societal role of galleries. We have learnt so much, developing new approaches to programming that have enabled us to welcome new people to our spaces, and to expand our digital content. We've gained confidence in our ideas and our ability to achieve real change for people in our communities. And this, above anything else, will drive all of our work in the months and years ahead.



# Sunderland Culture

We can see the positive impact of our community centred approaches to exhibition design in responses from our groups. Our participants and co-creators have talked about increasing their sense of belonging and ownership, building self-esteem, and feeling valued and part of a team.

**“The most exciting part of this project is being able to put together something that shows the quality of young people’s ideas and making it personal to ourselves.”**

– Izzy, Celebrate Different Collective

Working with community groups to select and interpret artworks for our COVID-19 response exhibition, *Where We Are Now*, and going on to co-curate *Where There’s Space to Grow* with our young people’s group Celebrate Different Collective, made a huge impact on our staff team, pushing us and the organisation forward in terms of future approaches to programming and delivery. But this process hasn’t been without its challenges, and we know we have a lot of reflection and learning to take from the National Partners Programme to embed sustainable working practices into our new styles of working with our communities.

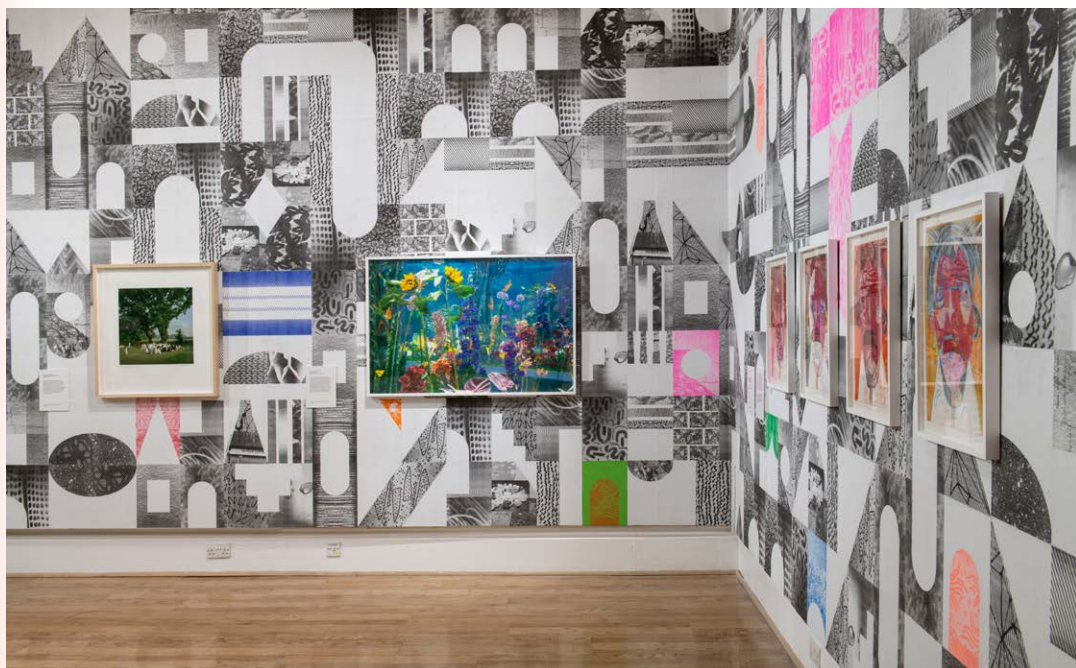
Traditionally in our organisation, the separation between curatorial and learning teams has been defined. Curators manage the exhibition programming, as well as the selection, interpretation and installation of artworks, and then the learning team work out how to engage audiences once the exhibition is finalised. The new approach to co-creating and co-curating with communities has turned this on its head. Now, learning teams start at the very beginning with community groups to design the exhibition, and so are involved in the full process from conception to installation – as well as designing and delivering a learning programme.

This is a much more intensive way of working, and has relied on the entire team working strongly together, including marketing, digital, curatorial, learning, Arts Council Collection staff and individual artists.

**“Museums and galleries should work with young people because they are excited about art and have new and interesting ideas that separate our exhibitions from typical ones.”**

– Charlotte, Celebrate Different Collective





Installation view of *Where There's Space to Grow*, 2022. Photography © Colin Davison

When we as a staff team have made this process work well, our community collaborators have been given support by staff members and experts with the right information to make informed decisions and have their views and opinions valued, leading to them feeling empowered and confident.

**“[The most exciting part of the project was] seeing it all come together with my contributions and work knowing I helped make it possible is so satisfying and it makes me feel proud and so happy to have been a part of it.”**

– Georgie, Celebrate Different Collective

When this hasn't worked well, the process has felt rushed and the approach to group decision-making tokenistic. We can admit that through this process, we have often struggled to understand our roles and how best to support each other and our community groups.

**“A fresh perspective and a new outlook breathes fresh life into exhibitions, creates new, innovative events and draws in new people. It appeals to the youth to see work created by their peers.”**

– Georgie, Celebrate Different Collective

**“Having given local people the chance to feel appreciated and to use their local expertise and interests and the contexts of their lives to be part of this – it makes us think that maybe, in a quiet way, there is a little revolution going on here.”**

– Kath, Older Womxn Artists Collective

More and more, the learning team and the groups they work with are now leading the curatorial process instead of curatorial staff - and that has led to a shift of power and responsibility within the organisation which has felt uncomfortable at times. Despite these difficulties, all staff members recognise the value of co-curation and bringing new voices into collections and exhibitions and we are seeking to learn how best to embed these approaches into our future work. Through building in time for reflection with the young people and staff team to evaluate the lessons learned and best practice to take forward, we have an ambition to embed this way of working into the organisation longer term.

**“Young people like us have contemporary and modern ideas that fit in with our generation and people of the future.”**

– Charlotte, Celebrate Different Collective



A member of Celebrate Different Collective designing the learning programme for their exhibition



Planning the layout of *Where There's Space to Grow*









# Firstsite

**1. *Super Black***

12 October 2019 - 12 January 2020

Yasmin Carr; Elsa James; Simone McLean; Lawrence Walker;  
Rachel Walton

**2. *Antony Gormley: Field for the British Isles***

16 November 2019 - 08 March 2020

Hetal Amin; Zoe Carlon; Andy Craig; Neil Darcy-Jones; Jack  
Dempsey; Jan - Alain Diaz; Em Drake; Ruby Francis; Evie Gadsby;  
Freya Gascoyne; Millie Gentry-Holmes; Fawzee Gulabkhan;  
Munevver Gulsen Ulker; Bajir M. Gurung; Ram B. Gurung; Surya  
B. Gurung; Udai B. Gurung; Tilly Hawkins; Phil Hitchins; Bushra  
Hussain; Jahanara Loqueman; Rosie Marden; Chris Mawson; Chin  
B. Pun; Lizzy Quaye; Karna B. Rana; Shanaj Rubin; Natalie Rudd;  
Amelia Sadd; Jagat B. Thapa; Imogen Wheeler; Dave Willett

**3. *Tell Me the Story of All These Things***

24 July - 02 November 2020

Yasmin Carr; Leanne Chalkley; Katie Francis; Fawzee Gulabkhan;  
Hana Loftus; Lorna Fox-O'Mahony; Solma Ahmed; Sonia Coode-  
Adams; Sue Hogan; Jahanara Loqueman; Iman Mortagy; Vibha  
Osbon; Rachel Walton; Maria Wilby; Julie Young

**4. *My Name is Not Refugee***

11 December 2020 - 06 June 2021

Mr & Mrs Al-Chahin; Elizabeth Curry; Münevver Gülsen Ülker;  
Diego Robirosa; Samia

**5. *Art For Life***

17 May - 05 September 2021

Sally Brooks; Asma Chaudhry; Julie Goddard; Shelley Henderson; Ali Hopkins; Alexis Johnys; Liz Jude and Olivia Batterham; Jacqui McDonald; Amanda McLauchlan; Bekezela Mugova; Claire Polito; Hattie Roebuck; Katie Santos; Alison Sexton; Neil Smith; Amber Sparrow; Ian Studd; Iain Tallentire; Sue Totham; Tracey White; Elyse Winnard

**6. *House Share***

25 June - 06 September 2021

**YAK:** Alicia Barnes; Chloe Barnes; Lydia Bell; Fiontan Connolly; Willa Coode-Robins; Lavina Doluner; Freya Gascoyne; Ria Hull; Freya Knopp; Scarlet McPherson; Genesis Smith; Kloe Smith; Mae Warner

**7. *Keep Being Amazing***

22 January - 05 June 2022

# Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange

1. ***Palace of Culture*** (part 1: Newlyn School)  
01 November 2019 - 31 October 2021  
**Headteacher:** Isabel Stephens  
2019's Year 5 class
2. ***Engine Room Film Programme*** (The Exchange)  
19 October 2019 - 04 January 2020
3. ***Go On Being So*** (Newlyn Art Gallery)  
15 February - 12 September 2020  
**Teacher:** Claire Dale  
**The MBA Collective:** Billy; Elsa; Ethan; Evie; Flo; Izzy; Josie; Katie; Kit; Lilly; Matt; Morgan; Rosie; Tallulah
4. ***Hippo Campus: Where We Learn*** (The Exchange)  
15 February - 19 September 2020  
**Filmmaker:** Rachel Jones  
Independant shops in Newlyn, plus Edge of the World Bookshop and Newlyn Books.  
**Lunchtime School artists:** Sovay Berriman; SJ Blackmore; Alan Butler; Matthew Cornford; Bekkie Graham; James Hankey; Alaster Mackie; Heather Scott.
5. ***ACC Films Selection by YAY*** (Newlyn Art Gallery and online)  
19 September 2020 - 02 January 2021  
The Intercom Trust; YAY
6. ***Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences***  
(The Exchange)  
03 October 2020 - 02 January 2021



7. ***Palace of Culture*** (part 2: Online Exhibition)  
14 June - 30 July 2021  
  
**Set Designer:** Anthony Crosby; Laura Drayson  
  
**Film work:** Alban Roinard  
  
**Artists:** Sovay Berriman; Lou Brett; Sophie Butcher; Ali Corder; Laura Drayson; Naomi Frears; Georgia Gendall; Olivia Lowry; Ro Robertson; Rosie Taylor–Hingston  
Made in consultation with children from Newlyn School.
  
8. ***Seen*** (The Exchange) Co-curated by SHARP and the Seen Collective.  
23 October 2021 - 08 January 2022  
  
Lesley Billingham; Cornwall Pride; Decoder; Helston Community College; Humphry Davy School; Intercom Trust; Jersey Heritage; Mounts Bay Academy; Morrab Library; Amy Pennington; Queer Kernow; Rebel Dykes; RoRobertson; Rtiika; YAY.  
With thanks to Cornwall's Queer community
  
9. ***What Lies Behind*** (Newlyn Art Gallery)  
23 October 2021 - 08 January 2022  
  
**Curators:** Carolle Blackwell; Joan Carne; Roger Davison; Wendy Dennan; Casey-Lee Gordon; Ann Haycock; Bonnie Jackson; Balwinder Kaur; Lowenna Kaute; Ellie Moseley; Jeremy Parker; Judith Parkin; Sylvia Penhaligon; Katie Shore; Gina Thompson; Imogen Wing
  
10. ***Captured Beauty*** (Newlyn Art Gallery)  
19 February - 04 June 2022  
  
Abi Hutchinson (on behalf of Black Voices Cornwall)  
  
**Artists:** Artists: Oreoluwa Ahmeed; Leona Campbell; Sigourney Hutchinson; Catherine Lucktaylor and Binrat and Niddy
  
11. ***Simple Truths*** (Newlyn Art Gallery)  
19 February - 18 June 2022  
  
**WILD Young Parents project leads:** Ian Graham; Luke Keast  
  
**WILD Young Dads:** Ben; Benji; Callum; Dan; (honorary Dad) Daisy; Jordan; Josh; Marcus; Mikey; Tom; Tyler

# Sunderland Culture

1. **Welcome to the Collection** (Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens)
  - a. **ACC Print Display Selected by the Art Champions**  
17 August - 01 November 2020
  - b. **ACC Print Display Selected by We Make Culture**  
21 November 2020 - 28 June 2021
  - c. **ACC Print Display Selected by Young Asian Voices**  
02 April - 05 June 2022

**Art Champions:** Deborah Doyle; Kim Hunter; Bukky Lawal; Anthony McDermott; Joanne McKinnon; Jackie Nixon; Maanashi Raj; Charmaine Thurtle; Martin Wallwork; Tracey West
2. **Received Wisdom** (Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens)  
01 February - 01 November 2020  

**Older Womxn Artists Collective:** Gaynor Clarke; Julie Easton; Carol Folwell; Anina Glover; Alison Naisby; Kath Price; Padma Rao; Stephanie Smith; Agnieszka Wood; Lijie Zhang

**Other partners:** Art Socials (Andrew Holder); Willow Brook; Donwell House Care Home; Hudson Road Primary; Little Onion Club (Vicky Calder, Kim Scott); Sandhill View Academy (Gemma Roche, Emily Careless)
3. **Heritage at Heart** (Online)  
25 August 2020 - 31 March 2021
4. **Art Crush** (Online)  
Launched 14 September 2020  

Bloom Digital; Josie Brooks; Sunderland Software City

**Artists contributing to the Taking Art Everywhere Pack:**  
Jade Blood; Emma Bird; Roma Yagnik

**Family Arts Award:** Chris Folwell; Sheryl Jenkins

**5. *Paint the Town in Sound*** (Online)

21 November 2020 - 06 July 2021

**Guest curators:** Field Music (David Brewis; Peter Brewis)

**Artists contributing to the family takeaway pack:** Rachel Brook; Kerry Cook; Elizabeth Kane; Amy Lord; Eleanor Matthews

**6. *Susan Philipsz: The Internationale*** (Sound installation, Mowbray Park)

12 February - 13 May 2021

**7. *Antony Gormley: Field for the British Isles*** (Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art)

24 July - 25 September 2021

**Volunteers:** Lucy Abraham; Steph Archer; Angela Ashton; Aiden Bell; Dixie Baker; Jan Broder; LynChapman; Peter Chapman; David Clark; Diane Cobb; Kerry Cook; Christine Dalton; Suzanne Davies; Su Devine; Lynn Donnelly; Deborah Doyle; Pam Dyer; Barry Fisher; Rita Griskonyte; Dale Hardy; Liam Haswell; Lydia Henley; Chrysi Kassotaki; Emily Kitching; Antonios Koutouzis; Jennie Lambert; Mili Marron; Natalie Martin; Anthony Mcdermott; Jo Mckinnon; Heather Metcalfe; Alison Naisby; Natalie Nichols; Jackie Nixon; Hannah Peverley; Bee Pope; Maanashi Raj; Sulosana Raj; Penny Riley-Smith; Frances Ross; Simone Rudolphi; Ian Shepperson; Alyson Stoker; Samantha Tweddle; Amanda Wadey; Martin Wallwork; Vishnupriya

**8. *Where We are Now*** (Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens)

21 August - 14 November 2021

**Creative Age:** Anthony Barstow; Pauline Barstow; Lyn Chapman; Wendy Costello; Sue Freeman; Elsie Hutchinson; Amanda Pariaros; Sarah Robson; George Svensson; Sheila Svensson; Becky Swirdells; Pat Swirdells; Vera Topliff; Anne Walton; Brian Wildsmith

**Art Champions:** Dixie Baker; Deborah Doyle; Kim Hunter; Anthony McDermott; Jo McKinnon; Jackie Nixon; Maanashi Raj

**Older Womxn Artist's Collective:** Gaynor Clarke; Julie Easton; Carol Folwell; Anina Glover; Maggie Hsiao; Alison Naisby; Kath Price; Padma Rao; Stephanie Smith; Agnieszka Wood; Lijie Zhang

**University of Sunderland Pharmacy School:** Paul Carter; Theresa Pack; Elena Perez; Paul Sambrook

**Sunderland Young Carers:** Jenna Green; Zoe Hewison; Jennifer Lincoln; Molly Roberts; Tracey Sassoon; Kate Thompson; Sam Wake

**Artists supporting community groups:** Sheryl Jenkins; Kirsten Luckins; Gilly Rogers

**Artists from the North East with work in the exhibition:** Duncan Allen; Graham Dolphin; Narbi Price

- 9. *Anthony Amoaka Attah*** (Commission and in-gallery/online exhibition)  
22 November 2021 - 05 June 2022

- 10. *Where There's Space to Grow*** (Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens)  
08 January - 13 March 2022

**Celebrate Different Collective:** Izzy Cameron; Georgina Donkin; Emily Findlay; Anya Hocking; Hannah Smiles; Charlotte Scott; Millie Temple

**Artists and Facilitators:** 1-2 Youth Crew; Theresa Easton; Foundation Press; Cllr. Juliana Heron; Tim Murphy; Adam Opie; Suzanna Petot; SEEN Collective; Anna Selway; Jon Sleigh; Melody Sproates; Laura Swaddle; University of Sunderland Environmental Society; Lesley Wood; Young Art Kommunity (YAK); Young Asian Voices

- 11. *Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences***  
(Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens)  
02 April - 05 June 2022

- 12. *Long loans to Young Asian Voices Community Centre***  
02 April 2022 - 01 April 2023



**13. *Island*** (Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art)

21 May - 11 September 2022

**14. *Arts Council Collection x University of Sunderland, School of Art and Design Takeovers*** (Mix of in-gallery and social media events throughout National Partners Programme exhibition programme)

Lucy Archer; Natasha Kerr Armstrong; Mohammed Arshad; Susan Bulley; Linda Howe Candler; Jasmine Davy; Brett Dickson; Kelly Dunlop; Simon Green; Alexandra Gould; James Hutchinson & Graham Mitchinson; Karine Jay; Rachel Jefferson; Mahmood-Cheema Khalid; Lyn Killeen; Lorraine Lawler; Jo Liddle; Cheyenne Moulin; Rayanne Noble; Kevin Rudkin; Caitlin Isabella Savage; Katie Stewart; Stuart Teears; Lisa Marie Thompson; Jess Watson; Jane Young



Charmaine encountering a figure from *Field for the British Isles* at the Longside stores. Photography © Second Draft



# National Partners Programme

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## **Arts Council England**

Amy Botfield, Helen Cooper, Peter Heslip, Monique Jivram, Dipak Mistry, Wendy Parry and Sam Peace

## **Arts Council Collection**

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## **Firstsite**

Mandy Fowler, Sue Hogan, Emma Howe, Beth Hull, Keita Lynch, Sally Shaw, Rachel Skillen, Stuart Tulloch, Kirsty White and Amy Williams

## **Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange**

Cat Gibbard, James Green, Kathy Hill, Heather Pasfield, SHARP, Blair Todd and Tamsin Young

## **Sunderland Culture**

Lucy Abrahams, Rebecca Ball, Jo Cunningham, Shauna Gregg, Gemma Grist, Rachel Hamer, Posy Jowett, Jennie Lambert, Alistair Robinson, Mahnur Roushan, Sebastian Trend, Dean Turnbull, Jonathan Weston and Rory Williams

## **Wafer Hadley**

Dan Hadley, Jennifer Hallam and Kate Wafer.

...and all our collaborators, communities and participants. Thank you!



**Texts:**

Emma Howe, Programme Manager, Communities (Firstsite)

SHARP, Programme Producer (Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange)

Jennie Lambert, Public Engagement and Learning Manager  
(Sunderland Culture)

**Design:**

Narrate

**Firstsite**

NEWLYN  
ART GALLERY  
& THE  
EXCHANGE



**SUNDERLAND  
CULTURE**

NATIONAL  
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PROGRAMME



**Arts Council  
Collection**



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