

THE AWARD FOR CIVIC ARTS ORGANISATIONS CASE STUDIES 2022



CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION
UK BRANCH

KING'S
College
LONDON

Foreword



Arts organisations are at a crossroads in 2022. In many ways, the sector has been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic. But the past two years have also provided an opportunity for organisations to reflect, flex and evolve in ways that illustrate the creative sector at its best. The case studies and articles you will read in this publication showcase what is possible when the arts and society become interdependent, and when community is placed at the heart of culture.

They provide indisputable evidence that this is a sector fundamental to UK social wellbeing and prosperity, and at the forefront of innovation.

Yet we are in no doubt that it has been another challenging year for the arts. The Award for Civic Arts Organisations was launched last year to raise awareness of and applaud the vital work many small, medium and large organisations were doing in their communities to persevere against the odds and provide connection and joy when they were needed most. The theme of the Award also reflects a movement that began long before the pandemic – with arts organisations fostering positive social change by playing a civic role.

Through the Award we aim to provide a lever for organisations to scale, secure additional funding and develop partnerships. Last year's recipients told us the Award has increased trust from their communities and given them confidence in their social purpose. However, we firmly believe this clarity of purpose can be achieved across the sector when organisations fully embrace their civic role and if funders, partners and communities support them to do this.

This year we received over 200 submissions, and I was struck by the diversity of the activities but the commonality of their missions. Many of the organisations bridge divides between people, issues and beliefs, and most, if not all, focus on co-creation within their communities. This co-creation has enabled them to deliver outstanding experiences that reflect a rich social tapestry and artistic talent in many forms, while connecting communities in new and powerful ways.

We were impressed by the quality of all the entries and are grateful for the expertise of the panel and our partners in running this second edition with care. The ten shortlisted organisations are strong examples of how the sector can adapt and be at the forefront of addressing current and future social challenges. They provide fuel for hope.

Louisa Hooper

**Interim Director, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
(UK Branch)**



The Civic Arts Award was created to highlight the commitment of artists and arts organisations to meet the needs of their local communities and to celebrate the remarkable creativity, flexibility and resilience they demonstrated in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. King's College London is the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's academic partner and it's an honour to have been invited to chair an exceptional and insightful panel of judges for this second edition. This

year, the award invited organisations across the UK to tell us what they learnt from the experience of working through the pandemic years: what has changed as a result, how they are rethinking their relationships with local communities and what they will do to ensure the lessons are embedded and sustained.

In considering the submissions, it was a privilege to hear the myriad examples of co-creation with communities and of partnerships forged and nurtured with services across the third sector. Over and over, we saw how arts organisations consistently championed the needs of left-behind communities, providing a platform for those people who struggle to have their voices heard and a place to consider issues that are too often overlooked. We heard directly from community participants about how they had developed new skills, increased confidence and enhanced wellbeing. And we sought to understand how change would be not just embedded, but amplified in each organisation's future plans.

With difficulty, we whittled an inspirational longlist to a list of ten and, ultimately, to a winning three that, we believe, exemplify the civic role of an arts organisation. But every applicant had a compelling case to make and so I am delighted that, once again, students from King's College London have had the opportunity to undertake case studies of all ten shortlisted organisations, celebrating their stories and creating a legacy from their learning.

Arts organisations, like all public-facing organisations, have had to rethink their purpose, and delivery of that purpose, as the world turned over the last two years. Despite the challenges, our winning organisations demonstrated how living through and learning from that experience has accelerated positive change and led them to reimagine and recommit to their civic role. We are thrilled, through this award, to celebrate their achievements.

Baroness Deborah Bull

**Vice President (Communities & National Engagement) and
Senior Advisory Fellow for Culture, King's College London,
Chair of the Judges**

Introduction

Launched by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch) in partnership with King's College London in 2020, the Award for Civic Arts Organisations celebrates arts organisations playing a civic role and their response to the pandemic.

The Award is open to UK arts organisations in receipt of public funding, providing funding totalling £150,000, as well as further support for the recipients to embed their work and share learning.

This second edition of the Award focused on how arts organisations are emerging from the recent constraint and disruption. We wanted to consider how arts organisations are changing and how they are now embedding learning into their future plans as they interpret what it means to take their civic role seriously. We aim to reward the outstanding practice of some organisations and encourage many others to rethink their own relationships with the communities they serve.

In late 2021, an independent panel chaired by Baroness Bull selected a shortlist of ten organisations from over 200 high-quality submissions. This publication introduces those ten inspiring organisations through a series of case studies that have been written and researched by King's College London MA students.

In highlighting a few organisations, whose practice our selection panel believes to be exceptional, the Award seeks to incentivise the wider sector to make the fulfilment of a civic role a common key priority.

Together, this year's shortlisted organisations present a snapshot of the many ways arts organisations can work with communities to reimagine and reshape society in the UK and beyond for the better.

Impact of the Award

We are proud to have supported recipients of the first edition of the Award for Civic Arts Organisations to expand their community work, partnerships and reach.

'The award has made a huge impact on the work we do and most significantly has meant we have been able to flex, widen our reach and work with our community in more meaningful ways. The past two years have been challenging but have shown how organisations can connect and bring people together in difficult times if they let go, listen and put into practice what their communities really want.'

Mark Williams, CEO/Artistic Director, Heart n Soul



Mark

'We were honoured to receive the inaugural Award for Civic Arts Organisations. In the year of COP26, it gave us the opportunity to explore our civic role in the climate crisis and the unique position we are in to facilitate an urgent conversation in the Highland community. Thanks to the Award, we were able to kick off that conversation with our Climate of Hope season, an environment-themed programme of arts and community engagement.'

Alison Logsdail, Head of Fundraising and Philanthropy, Eden Court

Alison



'We are in a turbulent post-lockdown period, and the role of civic arts organisations is more important than ever. The Award for Civic Arts organisations is highlighting the brilliant work done by arts organisations around the UK and being an awardee has been a huge honour. It has had a massively transformational impact on everything we do.'

Matt Turtle, Co-Founder, Museum of Homelessness

Matt



'Being one of the recipients of the Award has enabled us to continue vital work with local partners and given us confidence to expand projects like School of Creativity, an experimental, shared workspace to celebrate creativity and to test out ideas. The space is not an exhibition. It is a constantly evolving civic space, reacting to the needs of its users.'

Ed Watts, Head of Civic Engagement and Education, The Whitworth

Ed



Reflections from the panel

An independent panel selected the shortlisted organisations and recipients.



Sukhy Johal MBE

Director of the Centre for Culture & Creativity, University of Lincoln

'The ten shortlisted applicants are outstanding examples of dynamic and aspiring cultural organisations adapting to the challenges and new operating horizons brought on by COVID. As panel members, we were all inspired by their remarkable journeys of transformation and discovery. At the heart of their innovative approaches, they demonstrated bold leadership, agility and an enterprising mindset, anchored by deep co-creative approaches in engaging with the communities they serve. They thoroughly deserve the recognition and adulation of being shortlisted for this coveted award.'



Briana Pegado

Co-Director, We Are Here Scotland

'What is clear is the amount of innovation that is taking place within creative communities across the UK. Civic arts organisations are deeply questioning what their role is in their communities while taking radical action to model what this change can look like in practice. There were so many organisations doing important work, and we feel the selected applicants demonstrated an exemplary spirit in their vision, execution and process of co-creating a brighter future led by the needs of their communities. What a pleasure and honour it was to judge the applicants we received!'



Mark Williams MBE

CEO/Artistic Director, Heart n Soul

'The entire process has revealed just how much resourcefulness, resilience and responsiveness there is in the sector. I have been intrigued and encouraged by hearing how some organisations have moved to a more values-based way of listening and engaging with what their audiences and communities really want; how they have reimagined their role and purpose in new ways. It is heartening to feel that there is some positive change and hope coming out such a long period of collective trauma.'



Devinda de Silva

Head of Collaboration, National Theatre of Wales

'This was always going to be a hard decision and in many ways I'm glad it was. Words like 'co-creation' have become common in the arts, but it was a joy to witness so many projects and organisations that genuinely embodied the term. The sheer quality and depth of the work carried out across the UK, and across art forms, were refreshing to see, and the winning organisations were truly exceptional. Personally, I learned a great deal – not only from all the shortlisted organisations but also from my fellow panellists and the staff at the Foundation, whose support, good humour and knowledge made this such an enjoyable experience.'



Isabelle Schwarz

Head of Public Policy, European Cultural Foundation

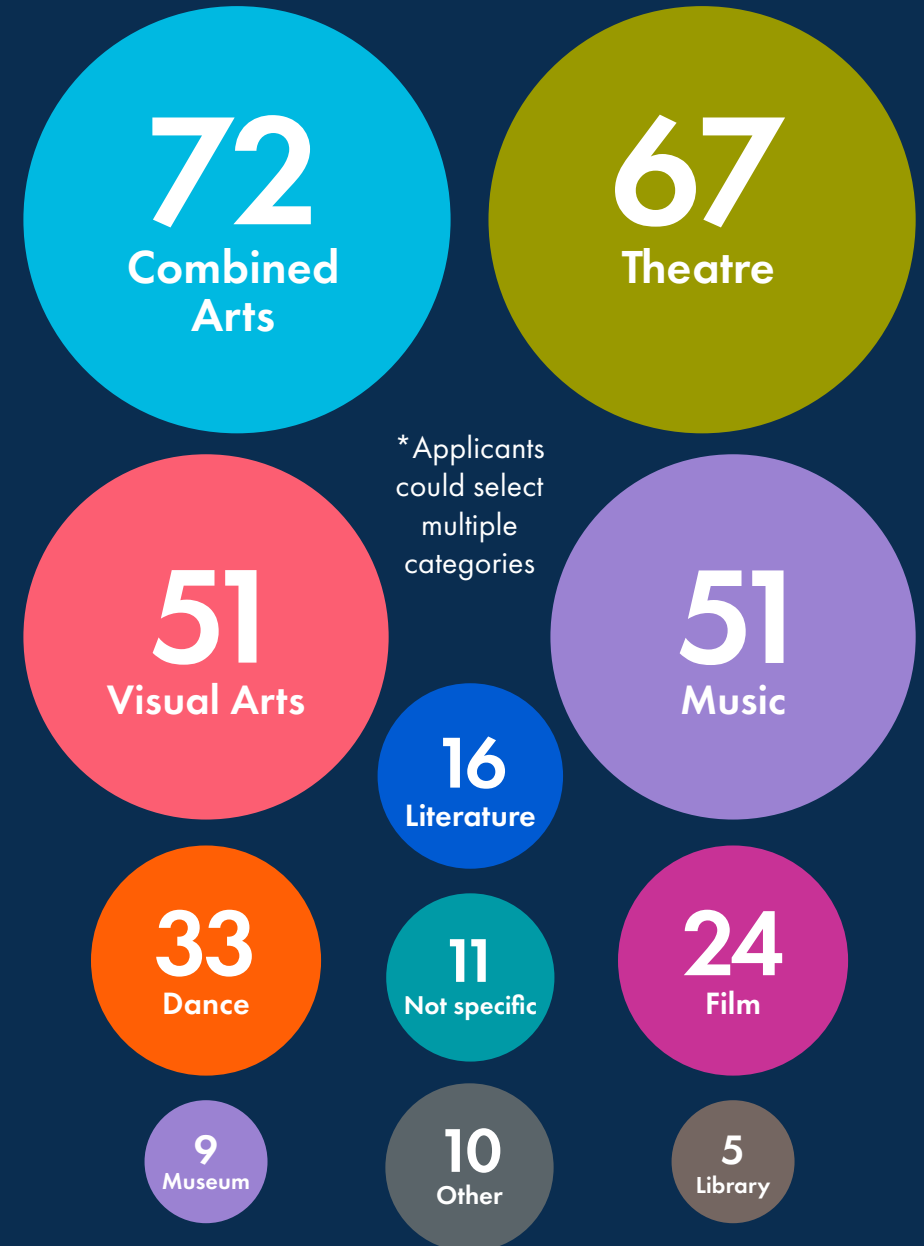
'The pandemic has been a collective, global experience that has impacted every individual and community. It has left deep scars that need care and healing. Art plays a significant part in bringing us back together, in transforming trauma into hope, and despair into joy. The Award for Civic Arts Organisations is a unique initiative that sheds light on organisations which have distinctively and powerfully contributed to this healing and transformative process. I have been moved by the authenticity, humility and genuine sense of civic responsibility of the selected organisations. They have not only remarkably responded to immediate needs of their communities, for example by turning their venues into shelters, foodbanks and healthcare centres, but also profoundly reimagined their connection to their communities. In challenging times such as ours, it has been a wonderful experience to witness such meaningful work, commitment and dedication. All of them are contributing, in their own way, to making the world a better place.'

About the applications

Applications for this second edition of the Award reflected how arts organisations in every region in the UK are embracing their civic role. The following infographics give insight into what these organisations do and how they have adapted to the pandemic.

St. Tropez Beach,
HM Prison Bronzefield
©Koesler Arts

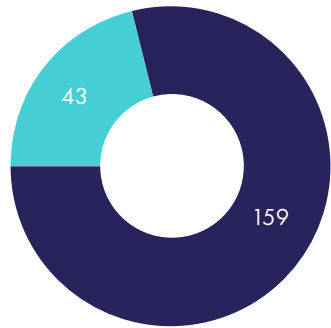
Art forms*



About the organisations



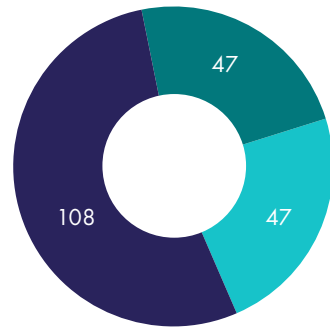
Registered charity



■ Yes (79%) ■ No (21%)



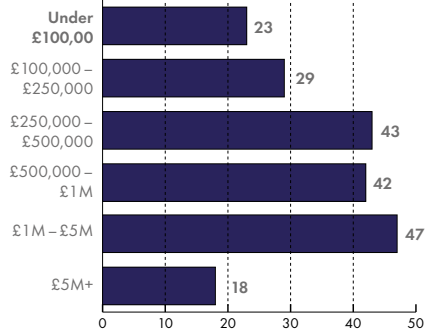
Organisation size



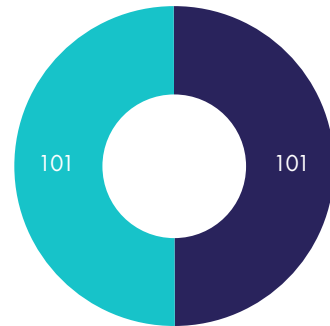
■ Small <10 members of staff (54%)
 ■ Medium 10-30 members of staff (23%)
 ■ Large >30 members of staff (23%)



Income of organisation 2019-20



Community of focus

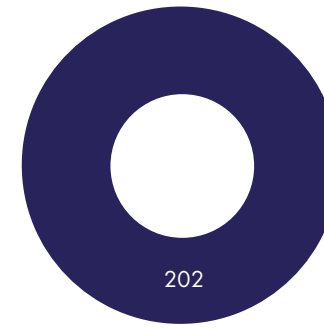


■ Targeted community (50%)
 ■ Open community (50%)

Impact of the pandemic



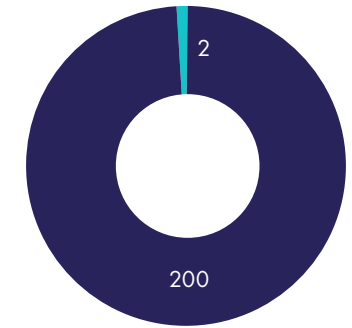
Have you had to adapt the way you work during the pandemic?



■ Yes (100%)



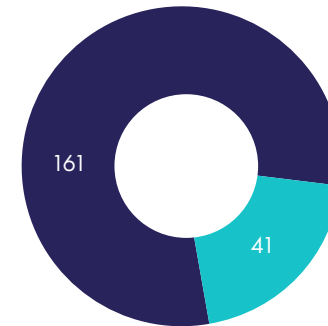
Have you developed your work as a result of the pandemic?



■ Yes (99%) ■ No (1%)



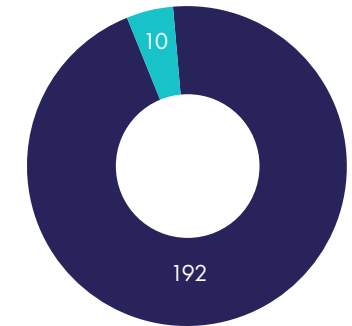
Would you have done this work if the pandemic had not occurred?



■ Yes (80%) ■ No (20%)



Is your board aware that you have entered?



■ Yes (95%) ■ No (5%)

Longlist

The 32 organisations longlisted for the Award were selected from a competitive pool of 202 applicants.

BIRMINGHAM

PUNCH

BLACKPOOL

Blackpool Grand Theatre

BRISTOL

Paraorchestra

CAMBRIDGE

Junction CDC Limited
(Cambridge Junction)

CARDIFF

Wales Millennium Centre

DARLINGTON

Cleveland Independent
Theatre Company Ltd T/A
Theatre Hullabaloo

EDINBURGH

Artlink Edinburgh &
the Lothians

FARNHAM

Farnham Maltings

HASTINGS

Project Art Works

ISLE OF PORTLAND

b-side

LINCOLN

Zest Theatre

MANCHESTER

Manchester Camerata

SICK! Productions Ltd

NOTTINGHAM

Nottingham Contemporary

REDCAR & CLEVELAND

Festival of Thrift

SALFORD

In Place of War CIO

SHEFFIELD

Arts Catalyst

STAMFORD

Art Pop-Up

WAKEFIELD

The Art House

WESTON-SUPER-MARE

Theatre Orchard &
Culture Weston

WOKING

Intergenerational
Music Making

LONDON

ACAVA (Association for
Cultural Advancement
through Visual Art)

Aurora Orchestra

City of London Sinfonia

Hackney Showroom

Koestler Trust

Outside Edge Theatre
Company

Stockroom Productions Ltd

Streetwise Opera

Synergy Theatre Project

Theatre Centre Limited

Union Chapel Project



Case studies

Shortlisted organisations

Researched and written by students from the
Department of Culture, Media & Creative Industries at the
Faculty of Arts & Humanities at King's College London.





CASE STUDY

ACAVA (Association for Cultural Advancement through Visual Art) London

ACAVA is a charitable arts organisation that empowers communities by engaging with visual art, creativity and culture.

Formed in the early 1970s by a group of artists based in West London, ACAVA was set up to provide creative practitioners with affordable studio and exhibition space in which they could showcase their work, host workshops and co-create arts programmes with people living in the areas around the studios. This progressive ethos remains central to the organisation today.

ACAVA's 'creative hub' in North Kensington is a two-site campus which combines artists' studios with co-created socially engaged programmes in the local community including family arts workshops, craft skills courses, exhibitions and an open makerspace.

North Kensington is home to communities from a broad range of backgrounds. As well as financial disparity, communities in this neighbourhood also face inequality in health and education provision.

ACAVA's creative programmes address this disparity through inspiring people to participate in the arts, promote confidence and wellbeing and learn new skills. Highlighting their work, ACAVA's CEO Tom Holley notes that ACAVA's programmes are 'fuelled by the aim of wanting to improve people's lives through creativity.'

Bringing communities together

Socially engaged practice forms the core of ACAVA's philosophy. Its creative programmes are co-designed with artists and creative practitioners working in social settings and are aimed at engaging local communities in innovative ways. 'We like to think that we are on a journey with the communities we collaborate with and are constantly inspired by the people we work with', Holley says, describing ACAVA's projects.

The devastating Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 further exposed inequalities in North Kensington. Recognising the need to support local communities during this time, ACAVA created programmes that supported local people, bringing

ACAVA (Association for Cultural Advancement through Visual Art)

them together to participate in creative activities.

The Grenfell Memorial Community Mosaic, in partnership with Al Manaar Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, is an art project that brought diverse communities together to make a public mosaic – including church groups, mosques, schools and tenants’ associations. The mosaics have been installed on the hoardings around Grenfell Tower to remember the lives lost during the fire. A new piece will be unveiled along the route of the ‘Silent Walk’ to mark the fifth anniversary of the tragedy in June 2022. ‘Memorialising the fire in this manner draws communities together, creating a safe space for groups that wouldn’t otherwise come together,’ notes Holley.

Responding to an evolving situation

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic compounded the existing challenges. Holley reflects that local communities, many of whom lived in overcrowded residential environments, were faced with further trauma, lack of space, isolation and disruption to their daily lives.

ACAVA responded to the situation quickly. Even as it adapted to online programme delivery, it recognised that not all members of the community had internet access or mobile phones. Ensuring they maintained in-person contact, members of ACAVA’s staff delivered equipment and materials to programme participants so they could continue creative projects from home.

ACAVA also ran in-person programmes throughout the pandemic. Flourish in the Forest was a response to the need for access to safe outdoor space for local families. Set in an enclosed urban garden, the project provided the opportunity to create, play and engage with nature, for example by building insect and pollinator environments. Cultivate Create is a new programme launching in Spring 2022 that has evolved from the success of Flourish in the Forest. It will create a biodiverse edible garden and explore horticulture and conservation, blending ACAVA’s interests in wellbeing, environment and creative play.

Another project that remained open during the pandemic was Maxilla Men’s

ACAVA (Association for Cultural Advancement through Visual Art)

Shed. Part of an international movement, the Shed is a vibrant community workshop and makerspace. Designed to engage socially isolated older men, it also welcomes women and community groups to make and learn new skills in a supportive social context.

Motivating and reassuring people to participate in the programmes amidst the fears of the pandemic was vital and only possible due to the trust that had been built up between ACAVA and local communities over the past 20 years of co-creation and collaboration. Holley credits the ACAVA team for reinforcing this trust through the safe delivery of its programmes, expanding referrals, the quality of communications and providing in-person delivery, resulting in positive outcomes in wellbeing, mental health and overcoming social isolation.

ACAVA is committed to continuing to evolve and present programmes that respond to the needs of its communities. It hopes to build on the successes of previous projects to understand and tackle community challenges, while amplifying its impact both within its community and

with new communities in different social contexts.

Sankriti Santhanakrishnan is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King’s College London



Community workshop, photo by Zute Lightfoot (above); Grenfell Memorial Community Mosaic project, photo by Jason Garcia (previous) ©ACAVA



CASE STUDY

Art Pop-Up Stamford

'Firstly, we need to know the community better. We needed to actually go out and talk to them,' says Sam Roddan, Director of Art Pop-Up, a contemporary arts organisation in Stamford, Lincolnshire dedicated to bringing the community closer together.

After noticing there were certain groups within the community who were more isolated and digitally excluded than others, Art Pop-Up was determined to understand and support its community better by engaging with people and building capability, capacity and networks.

Through their Stamford Connections project, Art Pop-Up realised the disconnection and divide within the community. At the same time, it identified existing assets and the potential for creative collaboration. By reaching out and having conversations with schools, seniors, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, it was able to deliver workshops and projects during the pandemic tailored to the community's needs during this difficult time. This crystalised its civic role

as a hyperlocal organisation, and learning from this approach in Stamford, Art Pop-Up is collaborating with other nearby local communities, extending the impact of its methodologies.

Reaching out and encouraging connections

'It was really challenging for me, trying to instill confidence in putting down on paper anything to represent what you're feeling at the time...it was like a light going on inside me, wow, it was very, very interesting, creative and frightening, learning how to get over that and how to incorporate the positive feelings in daily life' (anonymous participant).

Staying true to its identity as a hyperlocal organisation, it not only supported its participants, but also local artists. Working with artist Kelly Barfoot, it carried out workshops to create cyanotype handprints around the community.

Roddan explains that Barfoot's idea of handprints came from wanting to encourage connection after the isolation that many in the community felt during lockdown: 'You wave with your hands,

you shake hands with somebody, give people a hug.’ One hundred cyanotype handprints were created and displayed as an exhibition at the reopening of the local art centre. Out of the participants involved, 50 percent were people the organisation had not engaged with before.

Art as a mechanism of conversation

Interested in the work its partners MindSpace had done to introduce the ‘5 Ways to Wellbeing’ concept into the curriculum of local schools, Art Pop-Up collaborated with them to launch a creative journaling project in the midst of lockdown. Working with poet Chris Martin, it embedded the wellbeing concept and practices with both staff and pupils (2,500 total). Through the medium of creativity and creative journaling it gave them a ‘toolkit’ for reflection and to practice this positive mental health skillset.

Ninety-seven percent of school staff found journaling to be a valuable method for pupils to explore individual creativity. And 91 percent found the creative expression significantly improved pupils’ understanding of the ‘5 Ways to

Wellbeing’, and how this can help them look after their mental health.

To share their methods and learning, they produced a card deck as an extension to this project. The card deck includes prompts and illustrations that will aid schools in using arts as a method to teach and discuss mental health.

Building networks and closing the divide

Going forward, Art Pop-Up’s aim is to continue its civic role as a hyperlocal organisation, tailoring programmes to support the community’s evolving needs. The first step was to start conversations with a really broad range of people, ensuring that everyone had a voice. The next step is to continue to build relational trust with participants and carry on the work engaging the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Building networks through partnerships with other organisations is the key to realising these objectives, utilising art and culture as the convener to bring the community of Stamford closer together, reducing division and ostracism by listening,

facilitating connections and embedding the principles of Asset Based Community Development. The Connections project identified the community assets so Art Pop-Up can continue to work as a community builder. It will mobilise the less-recognised assets with projects such as connecting the little-known community orchard with disadvantaged pupils at the nearby primary school through a creative engagement programme, in order to generate local social improvement.

‘The aim is very simply to work with the community to try and overcome the divide...and to support them on the journey going forward...towards this idea of a creative, cohesive community’ (Sam Roddan).

Ho Kwan Yiu, Lorianne, is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King’s College London



Stamford Connections 100 Hands exhibition (above); Creativity for Positive Mental Health workshop (previous) ©Art Pop-Up



CASE STUDY

In Place of War CIO Salford

What do you have to do when the world seems to forget you? Especially when there is a pandemic which forces you to stay distant? The existence of discriminated communities in a 'World Power' is unbelievable. Yet, this is the reality of post-COVID-19 United Kingdom. Tackling this bleak scenario is In Place of War (IPOW).

Emerged as a research project exploring the role of arts in sites of conflict, IPOW developed a global network of change-makers. When the phenomenon of isolation arose in the UK in the last two years, the In Place of War team could not sit still. How could it help the youth of its own country? Through Art, of course. 'Creativity is our tool to conquer conflicts,' says Director of Research Teresa Ó Brádaigh Bean, 'because Art saves people's lives.'

Educating the young entrepreneurs of the world

The first pillar of the IPOW mission is: education and entrepreneurship. 100

Agents of Change was an opportunity for younger people to learn how to become cultural activists. Who are these 'agents of the future', then? In essence, everybody. From black to disabled people, to the LGBTQI+ community and refugees. 'People who are suffering yet feel the urge to improve the world they live in,' says Rozenn Logan, creative producer at IPOW. The four major themes it explored were: *Art as Power*, *Cultural Production*, *Activism+Action*, *Entrepreneurialism+Leadership*. The goal? Teach the new agents-of-change how to break free and unleash their creativity. *Mural painting & graffiti for creative activism* was no clickbait. Directed by Jeihhco, a hip-hop artist and founder of Casa Kolacho, the workshop was in perfect 'IPOW style'. From his experiences working in Medellín, he educated the young cultural managers to create and think outside the box. Global North learning from the Global South. Is this a more hopeful future?

Co-designing the role of art in times of conflict

The second pillar of the IPOW mission is: artistic collaboration. IPOW constructs and embraces knowledge exchange through peer learning. In the case of *100 Agents of Change*, the participants had to turn into active players. It should have been easy for an organisation which has spent years co-creating in the Global South, but the fear of failure loomed large. How could it engage people from privileged backgrounds? This brought about the birth of the *Youth Advisory Board*. Composed of a group of selected young people, the board was key to making sure the project worked effectively. As spokespeople, IPOW wanted leaders involved in every aspect of the programme. From design to communication, from funding to online accessibility. It was not only working for them, but IPOW was eager to work *with* them. 'I have felt inspired and humbled by all the stories that I've heard from all over the world.' says one girl. Did conflict turn into art, then?

An accessible cultural space

The third pillar of the In Place of War mission is: cultural spaces. What if the space is not physical, but digital? The team had to design the residency programme as a virtual 'pandemic venue'. All its encounters happened in a virtual promenade, where neither physical nor intellectual barriers existed. When working with marginalised audiences, the theme of accessibility becomes critical. In an eternal return, co-creation again became their tool. Listening to the requests of its participants was its turning point. 'We don't make assumptions, they understand their reality better than us,' continues Teresa Ó Brádaigh Bean. Being online was the first step towards accessibility. But it went above and beyond. It lent out devices to those who did not have one. Or, as DASH – one of its partner organisations – suggested, it added a visual component to its panel for people learning in different ways. Thanks to this creative and safe environment, 90 percent of the young people were ready to start making changes. And who knows? From

this experience, they could reach diverse audiences even in the 'South'.

Art is not the product, but the process that give sense to the world. In a future where young people interrogate the world they live in, creativity will always conquer conflict.

Maria Chiara Falduto is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King's College London



Mau Mau Arts, Street Art Graffiti (above);
Break dance programme in Uganda (previous)
©In Place of War



CASE STUDY

Koestler Trust London

'Being creative, especially in lockdown, has really helped me with my mental health. Being in prison is hard, but being inside and in full lockdown, well that's a lot harder. My artwork has kept me going.'

The charity Koestler Arts helps people in the criminal justice system and secure settings transform their lives through creativity. Since its foundation in 1962, the organisation has inspired prisoners, secure patients and detainees to take part in the arts. Moreover, the foundation works to increase public awareness and understanding about the benefits of arts in the criminal justice system.

Koestler Arts believes that arts and creativity can support these people to learn new skills and gain the confidence to live more positive and productive lives. Through its Koestler awards programme, the organisation gives participants feedback and encouragement to help them build their self-confidence. Starting with just two award categories, the organisation now receives creative work from more than 3,500 entrants in 52

categories. Moreover, the organisation runs an arts mentoring scheme for ex-prisoners who wish to develop their work and pursue their career.

An immediate response to the pandemic

The pandemic was an opportunity for the organisation to think differently about helping people in secure settings keep doing what they had been doing. Since art tutors weren't allowed to visit prisons, prisoners weren't able to receive teaching and often had to be in their cells for 23 hours a day. So the organisation found new, imaginative ways of getting into the prisons. It started by producing activity sheets online, called Art Aid, as an initiative that continued to inspire people in those settings.

Art Aid monthly activity sheets contain simple creative tasks that need a pencil and some paper to get started. The organisation commissioned and paid former award winners to create the sheets and use feedback from entrants to improve them each month. As prisoners often don't have online access, prison

education provider Novus helped distribute the sheets through in-cell screens and paper packs.

Since prison visits were not allowed, Koestler Arts produced bespoke films for prisons to encourage entries for the awards. As a result of Art Aid and encouragement, the majority of work that made the exhibition in 2021 was made in cells, without support from education departments.

An opportunity to boost awareness

Over lockdown, Koestler Arts saw how valuable continuing to be creative was to prisoners and people in secure settings. The charity now sees the pandemic as a positive time, helping the organisation build awareness of various dimensions of its civic role, which is the core of the organisation’s work.

‘It has given me a feeling of fulfilment, purpose and drive. Creativity has given me a new perspective and confidence. It has opened a whole new door for me. It has helped me manage my time in prison and during the lockdown.’

As an extension of its awards, Koestler Arts curates and delivers exhibitions across the UK. It holds an annual exhibition at Southbank Centre, London and other galleries across the UK, providing a platform for people in secure settings to share their stories and challenge public perceptions about them. Their exhibition programmes across the UK involve local artists’ communities and artists in shaping the content, and allow more entrants’ families to see their artworks.

Celebrating 60 years of its awards, Koestler Arts is confident that its mission is alive and well. This year, it is expecting to attract a more diverse audience by holding an annual UK exhibition curated by world-renowned artist Ai WeiWei at Southbank Centre, London.

Haram Yun is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King’s College London



Boat of Freedom, Field House (above); *The I and the We* exhibition at the Southbank Centre (previous) ©Koestler Arts



CASE STUDY

Nottingham Contemporary Nottingham

Nottingham Contemporary's goal to offer 'international art, for everyone, for free' only scratches the surface of its cultural, creative and social impact. Opened in 2009, the organisation is a dynamic gallery space with a busy learning and events programme that hosts performances, films, talks and workshops. Its location is key – Nottingham Contemporary's space in the heart of the city reflects a deep connection with its surroundings and the communities that call it home.

When personal relationships became digital during the pandemic, maintaining this tight-knit community engagement presented clear challenges. Different ways of working, connecting and making quickly had to be found. Over the last two years, the organisation has boldly reimagined how it can continue to creatively and safely serve its communities.

Making an impact through outreach

With staff members from both the arts and community development, Nottingham

Contemporary creates social impact through different outreach projects. One is *Loudspeaker*, a creative programme with artists for women in difficult circumstances that has run for over eight years. These artistic workshops not only encourage creative expression in all its forms, but also provide social support, friendship and connection to women at a time when they are navigating complex issues in their lives. Through this work, the organisation shows making art facilitates much more than the creative outcomes hanging in galleries.

Over the last year, Nottingham Contemporary has worked with partners to raise £25,000 to provide every city school with a set of culturally diverse children's books. It has artists resident in city schools working with teachers to encourage child-led exploration, and children's voices within their learning, play and in their school. Students are given freedom that stretches as far as dismantling sheds and assembling the parts to create a new product.

Imaginative delivery creates continuity

While the pandemic briefly paused these programmes, Nottingham Contemporary was quick to reimagine its way of working in order to provide continuity throughout an already unpredictable time. Workshops were delivered online and physical materials delivered to doorsteps, artists video-called communities from the gallery and exhibitions were experienced through virtual reality technology, all contributing to a more informal, DIY approach to making art.

Changes caused by the pandemic also allowed the organisation to really put its communities first and think about their needs. For example, the issue of digital poverty was tackled by working with partners to ensure people had smart tablets and phones and support to use them. Even after programmes were relaunched in-person, individuals who felt unsure or vulnerable could find out more about what to expect through film and Zoom calls navigating the gallery, helping people to gauge whether they felt comfortable returning and building confidence.

An exciting new project launched by Nottingham Contemporary is WALKshop. These artist-led walks encourage the 'five ways for wellbeing': connecting, socialising, being physically active, learning and being present in the world.

Through sensory, creative practice, the WALKshops create space for refugees to interact with unfamiliar surroundings and forge meaningful connections to the city. But this is only the beginning. Nottingham Contemporary aims to work with partners to grow the programme into a city-wide network and has already started to extend its reach by developing walks with disabled groups and schools. Central to its impressive mission is using creative approaches to physically connect people to sites of care and grow a health network throughout Nottingham.

New beginnings for a brighter future

Nottingham Contemporary is both externally and internally re-evaluating its mission in the wake of COVID-19, with the new direction heavily focusing on collaboration and community. It is literally breaking out of the four walls of the

traditional art museum through increased off-site engagement.

Though its city-centre location has shaped its connection with Nottingham, it now aims to take that connection out of the physical building. Community partnerships are also blurring workforce boundaries. Rather than schools coming into the gallery, artists are now resident within schools, strengthening informal connections between those inside and outside the organisation.

All this feeds into Nottingham Contemporary's commitment to making galleries safe, accessible and inclusive spaces, and encouraging deeply interactive creativity. As staff member Amanda Spruyt puts it: 'We want to be a bridge connecting people across our city, and nurturing ideas and creativity.'

Sophie Brocks is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King's College London



Better Books Campaign workshop (above);
Activity with local families (previous)
©Nottingham Contemporary



CASE STUDY

Project Art Works Hastings

'There's a tradition of outsider art, and people being positioned over there,' says Helen Charlton. Development Director of Project Art Works, a Turner Prize-nominated collective of neurodivergent artists and activists.

The collective's studio in Hastings takes a holistic, artist-led approach towards achieving its goal of changing perceptions of the capabilities of neurodivergent people and the contribution it makes to cultural and civic life. People with complex needs are given freedom and support to have their own creative practice working collaboratively or independently in the studio each week.

Challenging perceptions through art

The term 'neurodiversity' has come to the fore in recent years. It is about acknowledging that we are all neurodiverse and process information and view the world in our own ways. Project Art Works collaborates with other cultural organisations to create platforms for neurodivergent artists' work to be

seen and valued. A strong aspect of this collaborative work is to deepen the understanding of neurodiversity and how organisations can bring neurodivergent people into their spaces, be it as artists, audiences or employees..

Fostering care and connections

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on people with complex needs. Project Art Works stayed connected with its community by adapting its output. Continuing to foster creative exchanges through digital and community-based creative practices, Studio B was set up to facilitate ongoing, in-depth collaborations. Through telephone and video calls, letters, postcards, emails, and art boxes, the collective provided creative engagement, support and social connection when it was needed the most.

They also used this time to meet public health, education, and social isolation needs, areas families, carers and people with support needs identified as being of particular concern. The Support Collective held online meetups, coffee drop-ins and training, enabling families and

caregivers to connect, share experiences and develop skills. For example, a big problem for people with learning disabilities was not to be able to visit hospitals accompanied. In response, specialist sessions explored Hospital Passports. These allowed those who could not advocate for themselves to be able to give hospital staff the information they needed on their health needs, interests, likes, dislikes, how they communicate and any support needs they may have. Project Art Works did not shy away from its duty of care, it embraced it.

Recalibrating and moving forward

When COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, it made its on-site studio spaces COVID-19 secure and offered a blended programme that incorporated Studio B remote interaction and studio-based creative practice.

This led to the creation of Art Freedom Care, an ambitious programme that delivers on two objectives: enabling continued creative practice for neurodivergent artists and in-depth support for families and carers.

Alongside the work that happens inside its studios, last year's Turner Prize nomination, the selection for the international arts festival Documenta Fifteen, and its ongoing partnerships with other studios and invested cultural organisations through the national project Explorers, Project Art Works is having a more expansive role in showcasing the abilities of neurominorities and reaching new audiences. As COVID-19 restrictions change, new concerns and anxieties will arise. Project Art Works plans to continue exploring models of care and support through The Support Collective. Continued free training, skills development and advocacy will all help families and caregivers develop their knowledge of health and social care systems and practical support for people with complex needs.

Project Art Works adapted, listened to the concerns of its community and acted accordingly, providing a lifeline to the collective including support and care during uncertain times. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic strengthened these relationships, which are closer than ever.

After securing another couple of years of funding, it looks forward to opening more opportunities for its community across cultural and civic life.

Adam Wheeler is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King's College London



Ignition: *The Exhibition* at Hastings
Contemporary (above); Studio B (previous)
©Project Art Works



CASE STUDY

Streetwise Opera London

'Collaboration and co-creation stand at the core of our work,' shares Martin Constantine, artistic director of Streetwise Opera. This community-driven organisation uses the arts to inspire and empower people who have experienced homelessness.

While social work and frontline services are vital for the reintegration of homeless people into society, these people must feel that they are heard and seen. As Streetwise Opera say on its website, 'The creative arts are a positive way for people to build confidence and skills and become part of a supportive and creative community.' As such, re-inclusion to society and community-making through creativity sets the ground for Streetwise Opera.

One of the main goals of Streetwise Opera is challenging prejudices towards marginalised groups. Streetwise Opera leads performance workshops and opera rehearsals, organises digital programmes and supports people who are homeless to help them reclaim their sense of worth and self-confidence. Productions are often

made in partnership with art organisations and homelessness centres around the country, to perform publicly and to present participants in a positive light.

Opera for elites or for everyone?

Within the cultural sphere, opera is often categorised as intended for the elite. Streetwise Opera believes that opera can be for anyone and seeks to reshape this elitist approach by inviting those excluded to partake in the creative process. 'Through our activities, we see people who have been defined by their homelessness embracing new identities as artists, singers, dancers and performers,' Constantine declares. 'At Streetwise Opera, everyone has a story to tell.' And, for once, the voices of those most often overlooked are heard and expressed through creative endeavours.

Shifting to the digital

The pandemic has caused major disruption to all arts and cultural institutions and industries, but one could argue that the performing arts have been hit hardest. Heavily dependent on human interactions

STREETWISE OPERA

and closeness, as well as tactile and vocal expression, like other performing arts organisations, Streetwise Opera has had to radically reshape its usual work processes and rehearsal structures over the past two years.

First, to fight the inaccessibility of internet and electronic devices, the team has distributed tablets, SIM cards and data to those in need and given introductions to Zoom. During the pandemic, the team has shifted its programme onto digital platforms and delivered virtual live sessions, holding conversations with its performers and recording compositions online. Between April 2020 and March 2021, the organisation delivered a total of 1,341 activities, including 101 livestreams, 6 new creative projects, 1,096 support calls, 181 Zoom sessions and 67 online workshops.

One such new project, *The Deer*, was composed entirely on Zoom under lockdown. Working with professional composers, participants created new music note by note, collaborating with other Streetwise Opera performers in Nottingham, Manchester and London,

and creating material that was then recorded by the world-renowned choral group *The Sixteen*. This crossover between professional artists and people recovering from homelessness is one of the most rewarding outcomes of the collaboration, clearly illustrating the organisation's core aims of dismantling prejudice and nurturing co-creation.

Have there been any positive impacts of the pandemic on Streetwise Opera? According to Constantine, one of the most fruitful takeaways of the digital sessions has been the possibility of connecting with performers from other cities, something which 'stretches [the organisation and its collaborators'] imaginations further.'

As well as this, care (for others and oneself) is crucial to Streetwise Opera, and participating performers have claimed that online programming has helped them overcome feelings of isolation and vulnerability. The lockdown has, nonetheless, been a massive challenge to everyone's wellbeing. Social groups already marginalised pre-pandemic have been further destabilised, highlighting some of the daily struggles faced by

STREETWISE OPERA

those experiencing homelessness, such as loneliness, lack of security and greater risk of mental and physical health issues.

Streetwise Opera's strength lies in its compassionate efforts to improve lives through community care and collective creativity. Working within the local disadvantaged demographics, and bringing novelty to culture and social work, Streetwise Opera and its performers are a civic arts organisation where people, as agents of art production, take a central role.

Agata Hosnova is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King's College London



Manchester cohort at the Royal Northern College of Music, photo by Rey Trombetta (above); Rehearsal, photo by Rey Trombetta (previous) ©Streetwise Opera



CASE STUDY

The Art House Wakefield

As Sydney Thornbury, CEO of The Art House puts it, 'creativity isn't about being an artist, it's about problem-solving.' During the pandemic, The Art House has solved typical issues related to community and artists through creativity.

Based in Wakefield, The Art House was founded in 1994 by a group of disabled artists along with a group of non-disabled artists. The aim was to create art studios that are physically accessible and adaptable for as many artists as possible. With core values of diversity and inclusion, the studios provide time, space and support for artists, makers and creative businesses, especially under the background of COVID-19. The Art House now houses the largest collection of visual artists in the area and became an important part of Wakefield's creative infrastructure.

Connecting the community

As soon as COVID-19 hit, both the organisation and the Wakefield community were exhausted – both

physically and mentally. That didn't stop people coming to The Art House to ask for help. When trying to help people and the community, Sydney explained, 'we found that the ways we could help the community were much more than we realised.'

The pandemic called upon The Art House to play a more deeply radical and transformative role in the Wakefield community. From March 2020, the organisation started to use all its resources, networks and knowledge to help the community get through the pandemic.

One of the initiatives was Lawfield Lane Primary Partnership Project. Lawfield Lane Primary School was chosen for its location and support from teachers. The Art House worked with the curriculum team and workshop leaders, to design a series of progressive arts curriculums for students of each year group.

In each year, students participated in four two-hour sections at The Art House, such as the Greek Pots Curriculum for Grade 4 students. Students worked with resident artists and used the art studios.

THE ART HOUSE

The first year of their project was 2021, with a total of 360 students participating. In future, the organisation will make this a long-term project.

The Art House also delivered a profound impact on public health, wellbeing, environmental sustainability and placemaking. It requisitioned the temporary use space to distribute food; it collaborated with three charities to provide an emergency NHS mental health drop-in service; it worked with the NHS perinatal mental health team to serve mums and babies; it created 1,000 handmade activity boxes for vulnerable families; and it planted 1,000 sunflowers to cheer up the locals. As Sydney Thornbury says, 'the pandemic taught us that when artists and the wider community work together, we can help to solve a lot of problems.'

Removing barriers for artists

From the very start, the organisation has aimed to remove barriers for creating and experiencing arts. The Art House now has 51 studios filled with practising artists, creative businesses and arts organisations.

In common with other arts organizations, Covid-19 seriously hit both The Art House and its artists in residence in it. Fortunately, The Art House received £380k of Small Business Grants and was able to pass on directly more than £300k-worth of grants and commissions to local artists and creative businesses who were falling through the cracks of government relief. As Sydney explains, 'we weren't just trying to save the livelihoods of people we work with, but also the local cultural infrastructure we rely on for business.'

The Art House supports high-quality professional development for artists. Each year, the organisation provides Solo, International and Graduate Residency Programmes to remove more barriers for artists. These programmes focus on those artists who have been traditionally marginalised and overlooked. The resident artists here benefit from professional mentoring, artist fees, material budgets and free accommodation, plus complimentary studio space.

Also, The Art House founded the country's first Studio of Sanctuary for asylum seekers who were artists in their

THE ART HOUSE

country of origin. An example is the Stamp Print Press Project. From March to May 2021, participants learned four printing techniques and created a digital and printed booklet. This studio uses arts, culture, and the creative process to bring people together and help those asylum seekers to rebuild their portfolio and establish themselves in the UK creative sector.

Under the context of the pandemic, The Art House connects tightly both community and artists, and makes them feel at home. In other words, the pandemic has galvanised the organisation to continue to explore its radical and transformative role in the community.

Xinyi Ou is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King's College London



Creative activity, photo by David Lindsay (above); Pick Your Own Urban Orchard, photo by David Lindsay (previous) ©The Art House



CASE STUDY

Union Chapel Project London

'We want to bring the community in and change what we do to better serve the community. And the best way to do that is for the community to tell us what they want,' says Michael Chandler, the CEO of the Union Chapel.

Since its foundation as a church 200 years ago by nonconformists – considered radical activists at the time – the Union Chapel has put social justice and change at its core. It always aimed to be a Friend to All, and more recently to become a leading community-based arts centre for all; the pandemic pushed it to move faster towards its long-term aspirations.

Over 2020, the Union Chapel saw an increased demand for support at different levels, from asking for help regarding housing and finances to mental health advice. When venues closed and lockdowns started, the Union Chapel used this as an opportunity to do better and achieve more by making communities and social justice its main priorities.

Offering support during difficult times

Before 2020, Union Chapel developed the Margins Project offering weekly drop-in crisis services and hosting a night shelter as well as a Supported Employment Programme. As the pandemic hit, the organisation escalated its community support, working with the Council and other partners.

It used one of its spaces as a Community Emergency Hub to receive and give donations to those in need. Since the pandemic, the team has noticed it is seeing three times more people coming to these drop-ins. This crisis support is also a 'gateway' for some, providing support to those in need and inviting them to get involved with the organisation and the different programmes it offers.

Encouraging people's experiences

Union Chapel is aware of its key role in providing community crisis support and empowering people through creative programmes. The Community Leaders programme came to life through work with people from the local community sharing lived experiences. Empowered to make

a change, these leaders produced a performance focused on the issues faced by the community. Using what's known as legislative theatre technique, they were able to engage and inform the audiences, and change how people view the issues. The work led to three policy commitments on homelessness and mental health services from the local council that could have a huge effect on the community. It has also informed the organisation's future agenda.

Similarly, another of Union Chapel's initiatives was the New Voices Programme, which focused on giving a platform to underrepresented young people from 18 to 25 years old. This made it easier for them to share their talent with the world, consequently opening paid performance opportunities. Now, Union Chapel aims to build their Supported Employment programme and bring those young people back to form a youth panel that would work alongside the community leaders to inform the organisation's work.

Becoming a blueprint

Union Chapel found other ways to reach its audience at home through lockdown. It hosted the first ticketed Livestream event in the UK with singer Laura Marling. The event was very successful, selling almost 6,500 tickets, and becoming a blueprint for ticketed Livestream events. After that, the 150-year-old Chapel welcomed live-streamed social justice events, debates and Q&As that reached 1.5 million people. The organisation aims to keep running these hybrid events that increase accessibility and provide a great platform for many artists, as well as paid opportunities to production teams.

Empowering and co-creating at its core

These programmes and initiatives helped Union Chapel understand the importance of co-creation with the community. During the pandemic, Union Chapel empowered 60 volunteers and 15 artists, and employed 10 people with lived experience. As an organisation for and by the local community, driven by making

a difference in the world, it managed to impact directly on 1,600 people.

Basing its new approach around co-creating and learnings from the community leader approach, the organisation aims to build its focus on addressing social issues and delivering change. A new business plan and strategy in which it uses its platform as a means to raise awareness will be used as an example to inspire other similar organisations.

Union Chapel wants to forge a safe space for all to gather, reconnect, share experiences and give their input on how they want to see change happening.

Filipa Chambel is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King's College London



Community Leaders at Co-Creating Change Festival 2021, photo by Piers Allardyce (above); The Whole Truth programme (previous)
©Union Chapel Project



CASE STUDY

Wales Millennium Centre Cardiff

The Wales Millennium Centre (WMC), or Canolfan Mileniwm Cymru, is the national arts centre for Wales. Over the years, WMC has exhibited works by many of the country's leading performing arts organisations. The landmark centre is located at the heart of the country's capital in Cardiff Bay. In recent years, WMC has shifted its role to producing work which reflects the community it serves and Wales as a nation.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, WMC was forced to close its doors until July 2021. With an 85 percent income loss overnight, the organisation was forced to stop all face-to-face productions and scale back its employees to skeleton staff. However, the pandemic granted a necessary pause. As the world fell apart, community became more important than ever. WMC was able to focus on co-constructive projects within its community.

Co-constructive work with young people

Ensuring a sustainable cultural future for young people has long been at the centre of WMC's outreach agenda. Its 'Together Stronger' programme worked alongside community development charity Valleys Kids, to engage with ex-mining communities in South Wales.

WMC's Creative Voice programme is an extension of this work. It offers a unique opportunity for young people to co-create an inventive educational programme. As James, Creative Voice Project Assistant makes clear, young people are given the amazing opportunity at WMC to 'engage in creative workshops with industry professionals.'

Their Youth Collective is a council of young leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds, who feed back to the board on the running of WMC, providing the future generation with a meaningful platform at WMC.

Working towards inclusivity

WMC also put its physical space to effective use. In response to the

Black Lives Matter movement, WMC commissioned Welsh artists to portray the world around them. Utilising the building's large windows as a gallery, WMC was able to use its external space. As Eyllt, Senior Development Manager of WMC, says, 'Naethom ni defnyddio'r adeilad fel canfas, i bobl gael gweld eu gwaith mewn adeilad cyhoeddus, yn agored i bawb'; translation: 'We used our building as a canvas, so people could see their work in a public building, open to everyone.'

In harmony with this collaborative spirit, WMC helped to host the Butetown Carnival. The historical procession took place around WMC building. WMC supplied resources for the festival, donating staff, operational facilities and even amenities. In this facilitating role, WMC was able to turn words into actions. The WMC recognises the importance of championing the diverse local community.

WMC kick-started its post-lockdown reopening with its own production of *The Boy with Two Hearts*, a play about a family fleeing Afghanistan to Cardiff.

Forty-seven percent of the audience were new to the theatre. As Emma, Head of Production, says, WMC is 'enabling people to tell their stories in the way they want to tell them.'

Changing the community from the middle outwards

WMC recognises that change needs to start from within. During the pandemic, WMC created paid opportunities for artists. The Creative Associates programme is an initiative to support a variety of artistic roles in equitable partnerships. Artists now guide the conversation at WMC.

Empty corporate meeting rooms have found a new lease of life as Maker Spaces. Maker Spaces are vibrant purpose-built areas which form a dynamic creative hub, such as the transformation of a formal event space into a dance studio with the addition of a sprung floor. These groundbreaking facilities provide a sense of ownership – belonging to the artists and young people who work there.

Young people can commence their creative careers at WMC. The

organisation offers paid internships and apprenticeships in several technical creative subjects. WMC also houses a fully operational youth radio station, providing a platform for young broadcasting employees.

Looking to the future, WMC will continue with a tailored action plan. WMC has teamed up with Jobcentre to design a fair hiring process. Through initiatives like anonymous recruitment and value-based interviews, WMC is providing equal employment opportunities in its community.

Anna Byrne is an MA Arts & Cultural Management student at King's College London



Your Voice exhibition (above); WMC Youth Collective (previous) ©Wales Millennium Centre

Beyond the bubble



The shortlist for the second Award for Civic Arts Organisations reflects the breadth of practice that now exists within the umbrella term, 'civic role'. Over the past four years I have been working with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to better understand the impact of its Inquiry and Programme for the Civic Role of Arts organisations. A series of stakeholder conversations and workshops last year suggested that this language and vocabulary are now well established across the sector.

Although people use the ideas in many different ways, the publications, conferences and events that the Foundation has produced have struck clear and timely chords. It has aligned with others' activities to establish a workable, shared understanding, even if that is sometimes not explicitly badged 'civic'. Indeed, our evaluation suggests that organisations sometimes prefer to avoid the term when working directly with local communities, as it can sound too institutional.

A survey by What Next? showed that many arts organisations have ideas relating to the civic in their missions. The pandemic showed this was key to organisations pivoting to a more civic delivery. In all, 97 percent of organisations said fulfilling a civic role was in some way part of their organisation's mission. Sixty-one percent said it was central, either implicitly or explicitly. Only 3 percent of respondents said the civic role has no relevance at all to their mission.

This year's applications and shortlist is more evidence that the work being done in communities is building on elements of the civic role identified by the Inquiry. The practice reflects principles such as responding to local need, increasing social capital and building capability, and extends them to other areas. In particular, wellbeing is a core aspect to many projects, especially within local communities. Artists and small organisations have led the way in working and connecting hyperlocally. They are being followed by national organisations, often working in partnership to deepen their local civic roles.

This greater emphasis on wellbeing and co-creation is to some degree a logical response to the issues of the pandemic, but was noticeable before COVID-19. Networks such as Creative Civic Change and Co-Creating Change show how the 'civic' can be a co-created conversation, leading to greater emphasis on community need. Thirty-eight percent of organisations responding to a survey last year said their boards had discussed their civic role. This may reflect the make-up of those boards – and indeed, of those who had not discussed it.

There is less evidence so far that more fundamental shifts towards co-creation including changes at governance level are consistently influencing the civic conversation within arts organisations. At policy level, however, funders are increasingly emphasising this, sometimes specifically mentioning the civic role. This may influence future behaviour, as will the organisations celebrated in this publication.

While the civic role was not 'unthinkable' for many in 2016, some practices initially showcased in the Foundation's early work still felt radical. Turning your theatre into a foodbank? Letting local people decide programme and budgets? Such ideas have built on and developed previous practice, showing how the civic roles of arts organisations must go beyond the concerns of the arts sector alone and connect to those working for social change.

Increasingly the most exciting work is being done through co-creation practices in places where arts organisations are not simply bringing others into their activity but working on the shared priorities of local people, across sectors. Working on joint goals for a place, which might include combating homelessness, addressing climate change, well being or other issues, is how the civic draws on arts organisations, rather than, as some people we interviewed still suspect, the other way around.

The scale of the change needed to make this consistent is apparent from other data. Surveys showed that 'developing strong relationships outside the cultural sector' was still seen as the lowest priority by a high proportion of respondents. The Award should stimulate sharing learning about how to create time and space to build relationships beyond other arts organisations.

The Foundation's Inquiry and Programme for Civic Arts Organisations are generally seen as having helped move the window of debate: the civic is not marginal, but mainstream as an idea. Developing impact-focused partnerships beyond 'the arts bubble' may be the next leg of the journey for those working on their civic role.

Mark Robinson
Founder of Thinking Practice
thinkingpractice.co.uk

Mark has been an evaluation partner of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch) since 2018, working on the Civic Role of Arts Organisations programme.

The Civic Role of Arts Organisations

The Civic Role of Arts Organisations programme was created in 2017 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch) with an overarching aim to shine a spotlight on arts organisations that are reinvigorating their civic role in imaginative and stimulating ways. The initiative was influenced by the Foundation's previous Participatory Performing Arts programme, which revealed that a more holistic and democratic approach was needed across the arts sector. The programme's ambition is to build a movement of change-makers, with impact in their local communities, across the UK and internationally. It aims to connect all those who believe the arts are central to society and want their arts organisation to play a 'civic role'.

The initiative began with an initial Inquiry phase, guided by an expert panel and International Reference group, which aimed to increase awareness of the civic role that arts organisations play both nationally and in their communities. The Inquiry was carried out through a number of workshops, a survey, academic analysis from King's College London and The Institute of Cultural Capital, and 80 in-depth international case studies that all concluded in a digital report, *Rethinking Relationships*. As the programme transitioned into the next stage, the focus shifted to the question of what types of advocacy, influence and approaches need to be undertaken to bring about systemic change. Through five levers identified in the initial phase, the initiative galvanised networks and groups that embedded 'the civic' into arts organisations, arts funding and arts policy.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme sought to respond and adapt to the challenges presented by a sector in crisis, in which the importance of civic engagement has moved centre stage. In 2020, the Foundation initiated new projects, including a Culture Reset programme and the release of *Creativity, Culture and Connection* – new research with 100 cultural practitioners around the UK to understand the impact of the pandemic and provide recommendations for the sector. It highlighted that civic responsibility and social relevance are crucial for the arts and culture sector to remain sustainable and build resilience. The Award for Civic Arts Organisations was established in 2020 to celebrate the many examples of this resilience emerging across the UK and the creative ways in which the sector responded to the pandemic by adopting a civic role. Through additional funding and spotlighting of these selected organisations, the Award aims to identify successful models, encourage others to adopt these approaches, and help establish a thriving cultural ecology.

Programme partners

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch) greatly appreciates the contributions of our partners to the Civic Role of Arts Organisations programme.

ARTS & HOMELESSNESS INTERNATIONAL works with the international homelessness community to bring positive change to people, projects and policy using arts and creativity. We are supporting their creation of shareable resources.

BARBICAN CENTRE is an arts and learning organisation. We are supporting the amplification of its civic role through the Barbican Futures project, which seeks to provide greater access and opportunities for creative enterprise.

BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE (BAC) is a hub for everyone's creativity that supports people to take creative risks to inspire change, locally, nationally and globally. We are collaborating with BAC on the Co-Creating Change network.

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET (BRB) is a classical ballet company. We are supporting the West Midlands consortium, led by BRB, to create a Creative Academy to support young people working in the performing arts.

BRAP is a charity transforming the way we think and do equality that supports organisations, communities and cities with meaningful approaches to learning, change, research and engagement. We partnered with the organisation to develop the PACT Pioneer Programme.

CARDBOARD CITIZENS is the UK's only homeless people's professional theatre company. We are supporting Cardboard Citizens' project Cardboard Camps.

CENTRE FOR CULTURAL VALUE is a national research centre based at the University of Leeds. We are supporting their evaluation project on the impacts of COVID-19 on the UK's cultural sector.

CLORE LEADERSHIP is a dynamic and inclusive resource for leaders and aspiring leaders in the arts, culture and creative sectors. We partnered with Clore Leadership to develop work with the Cultural Governance Alliance.

COMMON VISION is a think tank working to change the narrative around our shared future. We partnered with Common Vision to create Creativity, Culture and Connection, a report on responses from the arts and culture organisation in the COVID-19 crisis.

CULTURE DECLARES EMERGENCY is a community of artists, cultural sector individuals and organisations who have declared a climate and ecological emergency. We are supporting the core costs of the movement.

DERBY MUSEUMS is an independent trust and organisation run for, and on behalf of, the people of Derby. We partnered with the museums to establish a UK version of the American Creative Community Fellow (CCF) Programme.

INC ARTS is a not-for-profit limited company whose mission is to diversify the workforce of the creative and cultural sector. We are supporting Inc Arts on the creation of an inclusive accountability framework for the UK's creative and cultural sector.

JASMIN VARDIMON COMPANY (JVC) was founded in London in 1998 and rapidly rose to become a significant element within the British dance theatre scene. We are supporting JVC creative laboratory.

LOCAL TRUST enables residents in 150 Big Local areas to transform and improve their lives and the places where they live. We partnered with Local Trust on the development of the Creative Civic Change partnership programme.

OF/BY/FOR ALL is a non-profit organisation that provides digital tools to help public institutions matter more to more people. We are collaborating with Of/By/For All on ReVision, a new online development programme for leadership teams.

PEOPLE MAKE IT WORK is a team of consultants, coaches and peers that helps cultural organisations and leaders to change and develop. We are supporting its CultureReset programme.

SLUNG LOW is an award-winning theatre company specialising in making epic productions in nontheatre spaces, often with large community performance companies at their heart. We partnered with Slung Low to establish a Federation of People's Theatre.

THE YOUNG VIC aims to create and present great productions of the great plays of the world repertoire to audiences of all ages and backgrounds and to nurture the talent of younger theatre professionals. We are supporting the Young Vic as a civic arts centre.

Cover image
'Empathy by the
Bucket' by Artmongers
in collaboration with
Heart n Soul



The Award
for Civic Arts
Organisations



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