



# CHAIR'S WELCOME

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this summary of all the work which Sunderland Culture completed between April 2019 and March 2020. As the incoming independent Chair of the Sunderland Culture Board it is a great joy to see all the achievements which have been delivered for the people of Sunderland. As someone brought up in Sunderland, it's a huge privilege and a pleasure to be able to come back to see the city in such great shape, and it is powerful to see what the efforts of Sunderland City Council, University of Sunderland, and MAC Trust have made happen.



I must start by paying tribute to my predecessor as Chair of Sunderland Culture, Graeme Thompson. Graeme has been a towering figure in the development of Sunderland Culture and without his commitment and drive, we would not be in the fortunate position we find ourselves today. On behalf of all my board colleagues, thanks for all you have done Graeme.

The achievements of the last year are not just the responsibility of the partners at Sunderland Culture, but are based on the huge – and ever growing – wealth of artistic and creative talents within the city. The thriving music scene, the developing support for creative and cultural businesses, and the work on developing audiences have all played their part in the successes reported here. Thanks to all the artists who have shared their skills and expertise with us. We pay tribute to all of you – whatever art form you practise, we salute you for your energy and dedication.

As you read through the report, you'll see that there are some world-class venues within Sunderland showcasing work, but I hope you'll also see the work which is going on within communities across the city area. Our work with older people, and with people from ethnically diverse communities is all contributing to the richness and diversity of the city. And the work which is undertaken in local communities is another important part of offering opportunities across the population.

***“Our work with older people, and with people from ethnically diverse communities is all contributing to the richness and diversity of the city.”***



We couldn't achieve much of what we do without the support of funding from national partners. Sunderland Culture has been very successful in attracting funds for projects from Arts Council England, and we thank them sincerely for their support. We have also been fortunate to be supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund, and it's their support - along with many others - who have made some of the cultural high points of the year possible.

As you will all be aware, in March 2020, we were forced to close our venues because of the pandemic. Whilst this was a major blow, everyone has worked tirelessly to focus on what we can do and how we can deliver on our mission for the future. Thanks to all the staff and volunteers, as well as my board colleagues for keeping the faith and producing some amazing work.

Read on to see some of the highlights of what we have done, and we look forward to engaging with you on even more cultural highlights for the future

**Jane Earl**  
Sunderland Culture Chair



Top left - Chinese New Year celebrations at Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens

Bottom left - *Museum Pieces*, five short plays by local writers, was staged at Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens

Middle top - Erin Dickson *Coronet*, 201, National Glass Centre Collection. Photograph: David Williams

Top right - aerial action from Celebrate Different's takeover of Arts Centre Washington

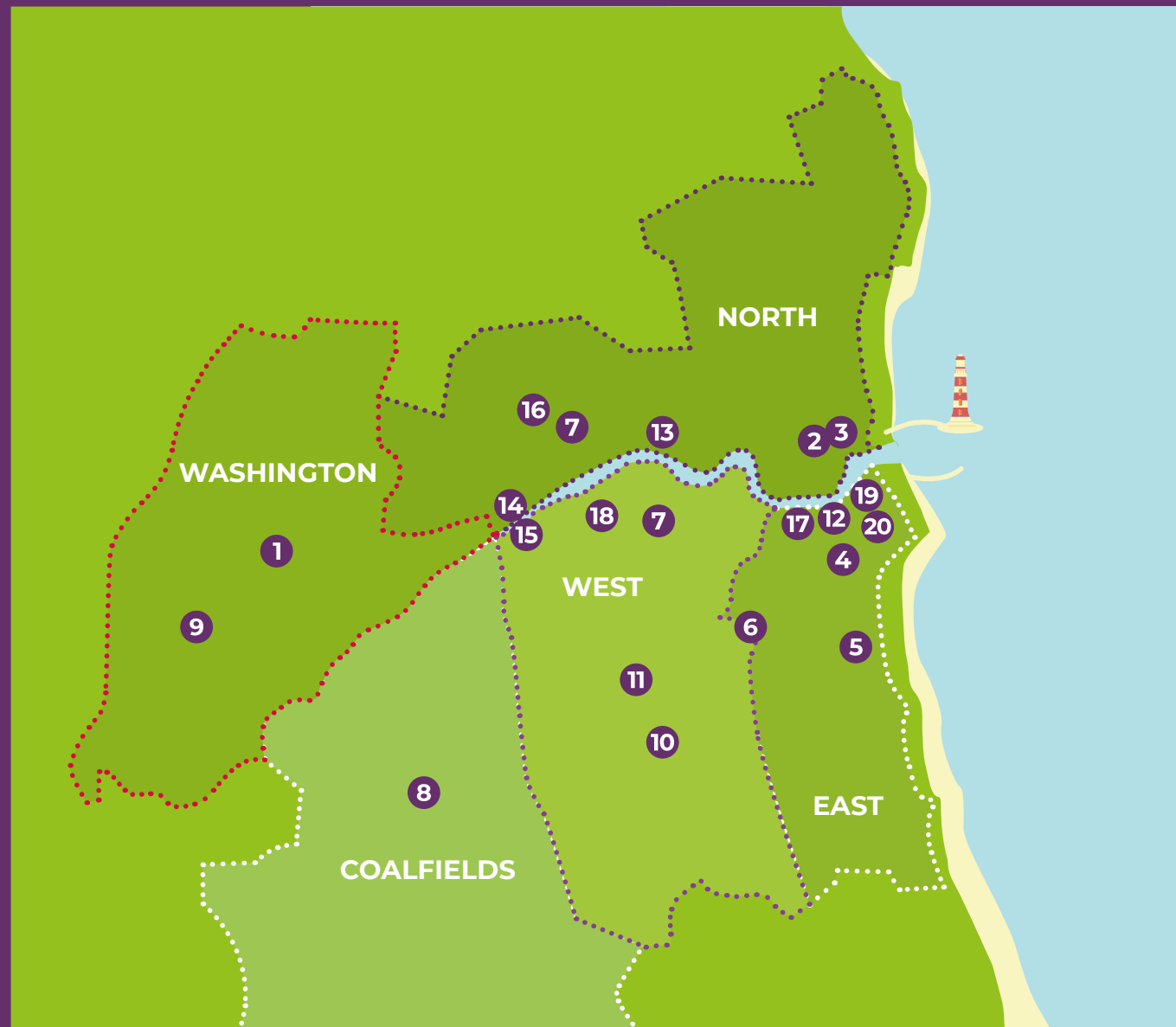


After four years as founding Chair of Sunderland Culture I am delighted to introduce Jane Earl as my successor. Jane's experience as a chief executive in local government and as a director in Whitehall will be invaluable. And her leadership experience in - and enthusiasm for - the arts is infectious. I look forward to supporting Jane in my continuing role as a University of Sunderland trustee on the board. I'd also like to thank my board colleagues for their friendship and support since we came together in 2016 to create Sunderland Culture. The city's partnership approach to culture-led regeneration is the envy of towns and cities throughout the UK and I can't wait to see what this remarkable organisation will achieve over the next four years.

**Graeme Thompson**  
Outgoing Sunderland Culture Chair



## OUR VENUES AND PROJECTS



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## DELIVERING STEP CHANGE THROUGH CULTURE

Sunderland Culture brings together Wearside's most important cultural assets and activities, and works to realise the ambition of a city brimming with creative potential. We deliver the creative programme in National Glass Centre and Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, Arts Centre Washington and The Fire Station, as well as with communities across the city.

We bring together the investment of the three main funders of arts provision in the city, Sunderland City

Council, University of Sunderland and Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust into a single, independent, and resilient delivery model. In 2018 we became an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

Our mission is to improve life for everyone in Sunderland through culture. To do so, we are driving five step changes: improved profile and reputation of the city; more vibrant creative economy; raised outlook and aspiration of young people; improved health and wellbeing; and a more socially cohesive city.



**Sunderland City Council**

I want to thank everyone who helped organise, contribute and, of course, who visited our ever improving and varied programme of culture and events in 2019/2020. The growing numbers of visitors is telling a very strong story. Sadly, as we all know, other matters began to have their influence as the year drew to a close. However, even when people were not able to attend events we quickly engaged many with a fantastic digital programme that reached thousands.

I want to also thank my predecessor John Kelly who has stepped down from his Cabinet Culture role after nearly ten years in the post. John was always devoted to raising our cultural profile and I like others applaud him for his strong leadership, his drive, and his determination in all matters of culture. A lot of progress and big steps forward were made with John and we all have every intention of continuing the good work that he and others have achieved.

**Councillor Linda Williams,**  
*Sunderland City Council's Cabinet Member for Vibrant City*



**University of Sunderland**

Sunderland Culture gave us much to celebrate and enjoy in 2019/20. A highlight for me personally, as well as for the University, was the 21st birthday of National Glass Centre. Based on our Sir Tom Cowie Campus at St Peter's, National Glass Centre is an exceptional exhibition space. But behind the scenes, there is a warren of studios and creative spaces, inhabited by our glass and ceramics students, teaching staff and research academics. So it was particularly pleasing to see the exceptional work of many of our current and former staff and students represented, alongside that of other glass artists from around the world in the exhibition marking the Centre's 'coming of age'. Also housed in National Glass Centre is the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art. Among its solo exhibitions during 2019/20 was the work of two artists connected to the University: Marjolaine Ryley, who is an academic based in our Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries, and alumnus John Askew. Finally, among the other brilliant work delivered by Sunderland Culture, and detailed in these pages, is the Unlock programme. This initiative has opened up many opportunities for those in the creative industries to show or sell their work, build networks and more.

**Sir David Bell KCB,**  
*Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University of Sunderland*



**Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust**

2019-20 was another successful year for culture in the city. At the Fire Station, Dance City delivered a range of programmes including its MA in Dance and Live Tales allowed children to explore and develop their creative writing. Auditorium construction began in September and, when open in 2021, will provide a further step change in Sunderland's cultural provision. The Trust again supported the *Summer Streets* festival held each July, bringing a diverse programme of music and spoken word to engage people of all ages and it continues to partner with University of Sunderland and the Customs House, in the Cultural Spring, the ACE-funded Creative People and Places programme that has been a catalyst for significant cultural activity, working in communities to help deliver exciting cultural projects and classes.

**Paul Callaghan, CBE, DL, FRSA,**  
*Chair of Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust*

## ACHIEVING OUR MISSION



## THE YEAR IN FIGURES

**798,399**

visitors to our venues and programmes

**63,421**

participants

**20,597**

family participants

**42,824**

adult participants

**313**

exhibitions,  
performances  
and events

**261,867**

social media engagements

**17,967**

school visitors

**375**

volunteers

**284,004**

visits to our website

**74,236**

social media followers



## NORTHERN GALLERY FOR CONTEMPORARY ART



Kelly Richardson's *Pillars of Dawn*



Above: John Peter Askew, from the series *We*, 1996-2019



Left: Artist Marjolaine Ryley, whose exhibition *This Is What I See* was presented at NGCA. Photo courtesy David James

In 2019-20 Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art created a programme of new exhibitions, publications, events and acquisitions that balanced its international outlook with strong support of local talent.

In March 2019, the gallery revealed newly-commissioned work by Vancouver-based Kelly Richardson. *Pillars of Dawn* combined high-tech 4K cinematic projection with monumental photographic prints. Richardson is concerned with imagining our possible environmental future. Her painstakingly created imaginary landscapes were covered with millions of individual crystals – roughly one for each species extant in our lifetimes. The project drew together leading academics from Canada, the US, Scotland and England and NGCA toured the work from Southampton to Dundee.

In the summer, the gallery awarded a one-person exhibition to University of Sunderland graduate John Askew, whose photographic project *We* was created in Europe's easternmost city, Perm, in Russia – across the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. In the autumn it awarded University of Sunderland lecturer Marjolaine Ryley a retrospective of 20 years of work.

Another highlight was Tim Mitchell's project *Product* which looked at the environmental crisis through an unorthodox lens. Mitchell spent much of the last two decades working with anthropologists and geographers in universities nationwide to track the life-stories of the commodities all around us. Getting a rare backstage all-access pass to Paris Fashion Week, he plotted the 'birth' of clothes and their promotion on the world stage, to their 'death' and rebirth through recycling in India.

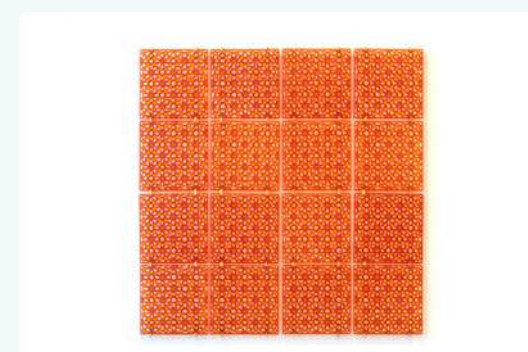
Each of the exhibiting artists generously donated works to the gallery's collection, which now numbers more than 100 works. We undertook research projects around three of these artists that accompany these acquisitions, creating substantial publications with Berlin-based publisher Kerber who have distributed them Europe-wide. Two of these books won international awards as amongst the best photobooks published in 2019. John Askew's project received a ten-minute slot on Russian national television. His work can be seen to exemplify the gallery's own ambition to act locally and think internationally.

## NATIONAL GLASS CENTRE



Above: Colin Rennie *Magnitudo II*, 2017, National Glass Centre Collection. Photograph: David Williams

Right: Jade Tapson *Motif*, 2019, National Glass Centre Collection. Photograph: David Williams



*Two Peacocks* by Rene Lalique, 1920 (designed). Victoria and Albert Museum Collection, London



*Chair and Stool with Glass Legs* by Caroline Broadhead, 2020. Photographer: David Williams



A school participant in DesignLab Nation

National Glass Centre celebrated its 21st anniversary in 2019. The *NGC21* exhibition told the story of the venue and Sunderland's role within the development of the International Studio Glass Movement, presenting work of artists who have worked in Sunderland before and since National Glass Centre's opening.

That included work from the founders and innovators of the Studio Glass Movement including Erwin Eisch from Germany, and Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová from the Czech Republic. The show was brought up to date with newly-commissioned work by Erin Dickson and Jade Tapson, two of our most promising recent graduates.

*NGC21* included more individual artists than any other exhibition presented at National Glass Centre in recent times.

Other highlights of the year included:

Caroline and Maisie Broadhead's *Through the Looking Glass* exhibition which considered how we perceive what we see when we look into, or out of a window.

*Bring to Light*, an exhibition of light sources made by artists and designers who have used glass and ceramics to create beautiful lights. The exhibition consisted of works from National Glass Centre's own collection and loans from the Victoria & Albert Museum's (V&A) collection. The V&A loaned these works to support DesignLab Nation - the V&A's National Schools Programme.

Our *Gifted 19* exhibition gave visitors an opportunity to buy unique, high quality, hand-made gifts made in glass and ceramics. The artists represented were working at various stages of their careers, and while some were local, others were from as far afield as Denmark.

National Glass Centre's collection continued to grow during 2019/20. Works from the collection were featured in *NGC21*, *Bring to Light* and a specific exhibition shown on the Balcony Gallery.

**199,743**  
visitors

**2732**  
school  
visitors

**4989**  
participants

**1189**  
baubles  
blown

**14**  
exhibitions  
and events

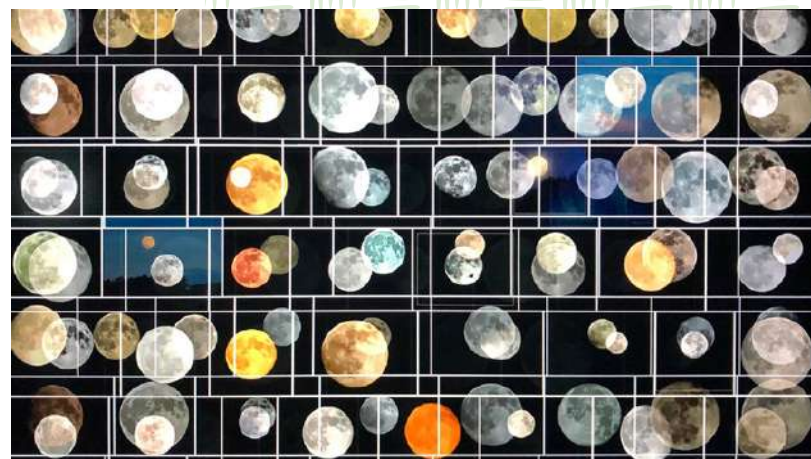


# SUNDERLAND MUSEUM AND WINTER GARDENS



Above: Hudson Road pupils at the *Received Wisdom* exhibition

Right: *Received Wisdom* included work from Amikan Toren



Above: NEPN curated the *Observe, Experiment, Archive* exhibition in our Special Exhibitions Gallery.



Left: Our Arts Champions have helped us develop our programme

In March 2019 Sunderland Culture was chosen as one of only three UK galleries to host artwork from the acclaimed Arts Council Collection, as part of the National Partners Programme (NPP) for 2019-2022.

The focus of NPP is to increase the diversity and number of people experiencing the Arts Council Collection in England. At the start of our NPP programme we brought together a group of Art Champions, a fantastic group of local residents, most with little or no experience of contemporary art, to work with us on the development of the programme over the next three years.

The Arts Council Collection was founded in 1946 and is the most widely circulated national loan collection of modern and contemporary British art in the world.

One of the highlights of our 2019-2020 programme was *Received Wisdom*, an Arts Council Collection NPP exhibition which celebrated lifelong creativity and challenged ideas about what is expected of us at different stages of our lives

Other highlights included:

- North East Photography Network (NEPN) curated the *Observe, Experiment, Archive* exhibition in our Special Exhibitions Gallery. The exhibition considered how contemporary photographic artists respond

to both scientific innovation and historical collections.

- The final events of the memorable *Leonardo da Vinci: A Life in Drawing* exhibition were held in April and May 2019. Twelve drawings from The Royal Collection were displayed at our main gallery as part of a nationwide event to mark the 500th anniversary of the Master's death.
- The Spaghetti Factory's series of exhibitions, *HOT NEW IT*, featuring contemporary Sunderland talent. The exhibitions incorporated artwork from Sunderland Museum's permanent collection, and responded to the *Received Wisdom* exhibition.
- *Journeys Drawn: Illustrations from the Refugee Crisis* – the exhibition humanised the refugee crisis through powerful depictions of refugee journeys. It featured refugee artists as well as reportage illustrators and graphic novelists
- The *Story of Pyrex* was a fascinating exhibition to mark National Glass Centre's 21st birthday. Pyrex glassware was produced in Sunderland between 1922 and 2007.
- 140th Anniversary of Sunderland Museum – a display marked the 140 years of the Borough Road building opening – and of collecting art for the city.

**381,119**  
visitors

**9950**  
school visitors

**9363**  
participants

**73**  
exhibitions,  
performances  
and events

# ARTS CENTRE WASHINGTON



Top: Action Transport Theatre's *Adrift* for school audiences



Above Left: Celebrate Different took over Arts Centre Washington

Above Right: *Guy the Musical*



Above: Shane Shambhu's *Confessions of a Cockney Temple Dancer*



Left: *People's Pyrex* was a popular exhibition

This year boasted a packed programme of performances highlighting some of the very best of small-scale touring artists. Well-known for its programme of work for children, this year the venue featured the likes of Action Transport Theatre's *Adrift* for school audiences and Garlic Theatre's *Billy Goats Gruff* catering for younger children. Full Circle's *In the Middle of our Street* maintained our commitment to working with disabled artists and Bamboozle's work *Pulse* provided a unique experience for children with learning disabilities.

Our membership of the REACH partnership saw us bring Shane Shambhu's hilarious *Confessions of a Cockney Temple Dancer* and LGBTQ+ show *Guy: The Musical*. REACH is a strategic partnership of nine performance venues in the north east, aiming to bring some of the most exciting companies and artists to the region. Our ongoing partnership with new writing company Paines Plough included *I Wanna Be Yours* and we were also able to support performances by several emerging theatre makers such as Jake Jarratt who brought his show *Blakes Fellas Geezas*. Dance company Old Kent Road brought

their stunning tap dance show *Oscillate* and new to Arts Centre Washington was the Halle Orchestra's *Halle Magic*, a series of children's workshops given by members of this renowned orchestra.

Highlights of the exhibition programme included *People's Pyrex*, which was a celebration of our city's close relationship to Pyrex glass to coincide with National Glass Centre's 21st birthday – members of the public were invited to bring along their own pieces of Pyrex for display in the exhibition as well as sharing stories and memories with us about lifelong friendships made on the factory floor. *Women: a Cartography* saw artists Rachel Cochrane and Maggie Hickman Smith bring together arts and science in a creative response to the cellular pathology from their hysterectomy and mastectomy operations.

Sunderland Culture's Young Ambassador Team took over our venue to *Celebrate Different*. This free event, created for young people by young people, explored the themes of body positivity and identity through specially commissioned artworks made by professional artists, performances, music and an exhibition.

**198,200**  
visitors

**1904**  
school visitors

**46,241**  
participants

**171**  
exhibitions,  
performances  
and events



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Bare Toed Dance Company performed a spectacular circus workshop for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) at Columbia Grange Primary School



Top Left - Maxwell Golden, London-based writer, performer and theatre maker teaches rap and lyrical performance to pupils from Biddick Academy.

Bottom Left - Pupils from Usworth Colliery Primary take part in a creative careers taster event.

Right - Autistic pupils from Columbia Grange Primary take part in physical circus workshops alongside professionals.

Our ambition is to improve life for everyone in Sunderland through culture, and we work hard to ensure existing audiences can experience more of our programme and encourage new audiences to discover what's on offer. Some of this year's highlights include:

### Schools

Our venues offer an exciting programme for schools. From National Glass Centre and Sunderland Museum's comprehensive cross-curricular offer, to Art Centre Washington's innovative Art Zine programme, we have engaged with thousands of school children through our ongoing offer this year.

At Sunderland Museum, 321 pupils from Key Stages 1– 4 took part in our schools' programme between February and May 2019. Schools were offered a variety of guided introductions, creative enquiry tasks, art and science workshops and outreach assemblies. Across the programme activities were planned that promoted STEAM (Science, Technology, English, Art and Maths) and helped develop pupils' teamwork, problem solving and creative enquiry skills.

In November, 42 Year 8 Pupils from St Aidan's Catholic Academy took part in a National Careers Week event at the Museum, learning how to become a curator by exploring the *Observe Experiment Archive* exhibition with Sunderland Culture's Exhibitions Officer, and taking part in a team exercise to redisplay and interpret some of the featured artworks.

Year 10 art pupils from Sandhill View Academy took part in an exhibition visit and research day with Museum and school staff, and a follow-up skills share session delivering activities for Hudson Road Primary Year 5 pupils as part of their *Received Wisdom* Bronze Arts Award project. The artwork produced by pupils was displayed alongside the Art Room project work in an exhibition and sharing session in the Learning Space in March.

Our DesignLab Nation partnership with V&A Museum continued. In the academic year 2019/20 National Glass

Centre worked with students attending Castle View Enterprise Academy, Oxclose Community Academy and Sandhill View Academy. The young people took part in workshops at National Glass Centre making desk sculptures inspired by the Memphis design movement.

Arts Centre Washington welcomed school groups from across the region to see shows including *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, *Bird's Nest Billy*, *Adrift*, *Pulse* and their Christmas production *Jack Frost*. The centre also hosted weekly arts sessions with pupils from Usworth Colliery Primary culminating in an exhibition at the Arts Centre called *Living Things* featuring drawings, painting and sculptures inspired by the natural world.

We worked with Biddick Academy, delivering a creative careers event using artists from all artforms. This led to a series of creative career breakfast talks to develop pupils' understanding of creative industries.

### Children and young people

We worked regularly in weekly sessions with Sunderland Young Carers from the Coalfields, developing new skills of enterprise and resilience through arts practice. These sessions included printmaking workshops and shaping an artist's commission for the Hetton Carnival. The Young Carers also worked on a project based around the *Leonardo da Vinci: A Life in Drawing* exhibition at Sunderland Museum.

The Celebrate Different Collective is a group of young people from across Wearside, who meet weekly, supported by Sunderland Culture. The Collective's members are aged between 13 and 25 and co-produce and run their own events as well as working with artists and learning new practical skills. It was set up in June 2019 and its members are united on a mission to get their voices heard and to inspire other young people across Sunderland.

Working together, the Celebrate Different Collective:

- Participated in Helix Art's *Make it Happen* course - learning leadership and arts project management skills.





Far Left: Marion, age 95 from Primrose Care Home, Hetton, trying her hand at suspended aerial hanging at an Ageing Well Connectedness event

Left top: Dancing together as part of the *Who Do You Want to Meet?* project

Left bottom: Members of the Celebrate Different Collective with staff from Sunderland Culture and Helix Arts

- Took over Arts Centre Washington for the *Celebrate Different* free event that explored themes of body positivity and identity through specially-commissioned artworks, performances, music and an exhibition.
- Curated Arts Centre Washington's annual Youth Arts Exhibition *Bright Lights*.
- Held a roundtable conversation with Arts Council Collection's Director and Arts Council England's Deputy Chief Executive - exploring questions important to them as young people and gaining insights for their exhibition project.

#### Connecting generations

A Coalfields Connectedness event united the generations through a circus project run by Bare Toed Theatre Company, who took aerial rigs and circus equipment into care homes. Meanwhile, *Age of Creativity Festival* activity included exploring the innovative work of The Little Onion Club, a Community Interest Company which runs a programme of intergenerational programmes in Washington. The club worked with care home residents on an Intergenerational Arts Award linked to the *Received Wisdom* exhibition and exploring themes such as change and human lifespans.

#### Connecting communities

Our Great Place Unify programme aims to tackle issues around social cohesion, with cultural projects that link disconnected communities and support them to develop creative leadership skills.

*Who Do You Want To Meet?* was a project that brought together community groups in Sunderland to connect in a new way and create new artwork together. The project ran over two strands, the first being focused around connecting with people with different social and cultural backgrounds and the second focused around connecting groups with different needs and abilities.

During the first round there were three projects. The first saw a collaboration between *Falling on your Feet*, an over

65s dance group, and FODI, an asylum seeker support group. Participants of these groups, a collection of local women over the age of 65 and a group of single mothers seeking asylum, worked together to create a piece of dance that explored connection and separation. Another group connected writers based in Hendon with young, asylum-seeking men. They worked together to create writing about shared lived experience.

The third group from this strand brought together residents living in Gentoo housing with young adults from the Young Asian Voices youth groups. This project explored sharing cultural differences from board games to dance styles, sharing stories and personal experiences.

There were two projects in the second strand of *Who Do You Want To Meet?* The first brought together a watercolour painting group from Grindon with a mental health support group from the wider city. They worked together to create a beautifully illustrated leaflet exploring different ways of coping with mental health problems.

Finally, the last project brought together the Click Click Club (a photography club for deaf photographers) with the over 50s users of the Sunderland Deaf Centre. Together they created a beautiful book containing portraits and personal stories of the deaf community and their life in Sunderland.

#### Older people

In 2019, the Museum was supported by Arts Council England to set up a Creative Age group to help those living with dementia, and their carers, take part in arts activities.

The Museum group worked with artists in weekly sessions to explore the Museum's collections through different art forms including textiles, clay modelling, resin casting and printing.

Creative Age groups had previously been established at Arts Centre Washington in 2016. There are two groups, the Have-a-Goers and Singing in the Rain.



Left: This interactive game was part of a 'sharing' event for the *Who Do You Want to Meet?* project

Right: Trying out a swing as part of our Ageing Well Connectedness Event

Professional artists have led the groups' sessions and they have explored a range of different mediums such as drawing, textile, glass making, animation, singing and performance. Artwork created by Creative Age participants is showcased in exhibitions and events at Arts Centre Washington.

#### Ethnically diverse communities

We continue to work closely with culturally diverse networks such as Sunderland BME Network, Young Asian Voices, Friends of the Drop In for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, International Community Organisation of Sunderland and Sangini.

*Journeys Drawn: Illustration* provided a rare opportunity to see the UK's first exhibition to explore the refugee crisis through illustration. The exhibition, at Sunderland Museum, featured 40 multi-media works by 12 contemporary artists, two of whom were themselves refugees. The exhibition also included war zone reportage by George Butler from Syria, Olivier Kugler's digital portraits of refugees arriving on the Greek Island of Kos, and Kate Evans' graphic novel that recounts her experience of volunteering in the Calais Jungle.

In February the city's Chinese New Year celebrations were once again hosted at Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens. The celebrations, delivered in partnership with Sunderland Business Improvement District, were attended by more than 1,500 people, included music, food stalls, dragon and lion dances and children's crafts.

#### People with additional needs and/or autism

Through our Uncover programme, and with the support of Sunderland City Council's Social Investment Business (SIB) funding, we introduced specialist, creative physical theatre opportunities for Special Education Needs (SEN) pupils. In March 2019, we delivered an arts carousel in Columbia Grange Primary School where aerial artists Bare Toed Dance delivered an inclusive circus experience for all pupils. Each child in the school had the opportunity to take part. Also on offer was multisensory story telling sessions

lead by professional SEN storytellers and a silent disco where students had freedom and autonomy to use space creatively, to choose their own music tracks and control the volume of their headsets while moving or dancing around the space.

Our work with children and young people also saw us commission an autism consultant to create and support the composition of social stories and pre-visit tours for SEN audiences which are now available in all of our venues.

In spring 2019 we collaborated with Bamboozle Theatre Company and 11 students from Columbia Grange Primary School at Arts Centre Washington. Accompanied by four actors, the young people went on a theatrical adventure which was co-designed with their teachers.

#### Social prescribing

During the year we undertook a social prescribing pilot project as part of our Unleash programme working in the Coalfields area. The pilot programme explored the impact the arts can play in health improvement. This involved an analysis of the current creative offer in the Coalfields community and developing ten artistic commissions that addressed specific health issues, some of which were:

- COPD
- mental health
- social isolation
- dementia
- trips and falls
- anxiety
- mental health for young people

The project also involved supporting the creation of a community allotment, developing a constituted community group to look at programme legacy and connecting with city-wide health and wellbeing networks.

As in previous years, we were involved in Hetton Carnival as part of the Unleash initiative.



## GROWING OUR CREATIVE ECONOMY



Dancer and Choreographer Patrick Ziza brought *Dandyism* to Sunderland through our Unlock programme, during Black History Month. *Dandyism* is inspired by the Dandies of the Congo.



Left: Through our Unlock programme, we awarded 14 Creative Development Fellowships to support Sunderland artists in developing their practice.

Artist Padma Rao at Mackie's Workshop during FODI's residency for National Refugee Week

Above: the Rebel Women of Sunderland project celebrated inspiring women from the city

Our Unlock the City programme aims to increase confidence and facilitate a more diverse, sustainable and profitable creative sector within Sunderland.

One of the Unlock initiatives was Sunderland Stages Writer's Project. This gave Sunderland-based writers, either published, emerging or novice, the opportunity to write for the stage.

The project included talks and workshops by a range of established theatre writers, such as Ishy Din and Laura Lindow, accompanied by visits to various theatre performances. The project culminated in a live brief to write a short script taking an artefact, gallery or character featured in Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens. Five short plays were chosen to be staged collectively as *Museum Pieces* performed site-specifically in the Museum by a professional cast.

We continued to programme pop-up galleries Mackie's Corner and Mackie's Workshop through 2019, providing space and support for 37 artists, collectives and organisations in the city to show their work and hold workshops and events.

The pop up galleries hosted seven exhibitions by organisations as diverse as Unfolding Theatre, who used the space to hold their *Multiverse Arcade*, to local community group FODI, who used the space to celebrate National Refugee Week. Mackie's Corner also hosted end of year exhibitions by Fine Art Students from University of Sunderland.

We also continued to support other developments in the city's Heritage Action Zone, supporting capital redevelopments by Breeze Creatives in the Athenaeum Building on Fawcett Street and Pop Recs Ltd on High Street West.

Working with Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust and Open Heritage, and using High Street West as a base, we celebrated Heritage Open Day 2019 by commissioning two artists, illustrator Kathryn Robertson and writer Jessica Andrews to celebrate the stories of the *Rebel Women of Sunderland*. This involved rediscovering the stories of inspiring women from Sunderland's past and present. The resulting exhibition toured local community venues and was used to mark International Women's Day at Hope Street Exchange in March 2020.

Through the Unlock programme, we awarded 14 Creative Development Fellowships to support Sunderland artists in developing their practice, and supported 13 residencies and commissions. We helped individual practitioners successfully apply for more than £125,000 of additional funding. Together with Sunderland BME Network, Digital Catapult and North East Business Innovation Centre, we launched a programme of cultural industries support, including workshops, training, mentoring and advice surgeries, and reached more than 560 participants and 52 businesses.

We worked with University of Sunderland to offer advice surgeries to students on professional practice, mentoring, supported lectures on routes into the creative industries and attended careers events. We offered 11 paid internships, offering roles inside Sunderland Culture and with partners such as Sunderland Music Hub and NEPN, aimed at supporting people to get their first roles in the creative sector.

**37**  
artists and  
organisations  
resident in  
Mackie's

**14**  
Creative  
Development  
Fellowships

**13**  
residencies  
and  
commissions

Supported  
artists to raise  
**125k**  
in funding

**560**  
participants  
in support  
sessions

**52**  
creative  
businesses  
supported



# A BIG THANK YOU

At Sunderland Culture we were incredibly lucky to work with many inspirational artists and organisations during 2019 -20, so I want to say a huge thank you to all of those who helped deliver our creative programme.

The year started with Royal Collection Trust bringing 14 exquisite drawings by Leonardo Da Vinci to Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, as part of their phenomenally ambitious *Leonardo da Vinci: A Life in Drawing* project. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity to see the Trust's collection in Sunderland and it attracted more than 35,000 people.

National Glass Centre turned 21 in 2019. The birthday proved a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the artists who have shaped National Glass Centre, over the past 21 years. The *NGC21* exhibition featured the work of over 50 artists from 12 different countries and provided the opportunity to offer special new commissions to two exceptionally talented recent graduates of the University of Sunderland's Glass and Ceramics courses, Erin Dickson and Jade Tapson.

*People's Pyrex* at Arts Centre Washington shone a light on the Pyrex produced by James A. Jobling & Co. Ltd. at the Wear Glass Works, which was shipped from Sunderland to be sold across the world. The exhibition featured one hundred loans of pieces of Pyrex from the kitchen cupboards of Sunderland residents and was packed with both heart-warming memories and joyfully brightly coloured 70's patterns.

Meanwhile, thanks to our colleagues from University of Sunderland's North East Photography Network, Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens and NGCA, we were able to present two fascinating exhibitions about the relationship between photography and scientific method, as part of *Observe, Experiment, Archive*.



Picture taken in 2019 by David Allan.

Work on the Fire Station Auditorium continued, led by Sunderland MAC Trust, and we look forward to delivering an incredible performance programme for Sunderland and the wider region. Meanwhile, Dance City and Live Theatre continued to deliver dance and schools' engagement programmes in The Fire Station.

Alongside our creative partners, we were proud to collaborate with many magnificent organisations from across Sunderland on our engagement, learning, arts and health and artists development programmes. For example, *Who Would You Like to Meet?* partners; Friends of the Drop In, Young Asian Voices, Sunderland Deaf Club and Impact NE and our *Unlock* partners; NE BIC, Sunderland Software City, Sunderland City Council and the Sunderland BME Network.

Finally, at the end of the year, we were thrilled, thanks to support from Arts Council England, to launch our newest partnership. Through the Arts Council Collection National Partners Programme, we will be working to bring some of the exceptional 8000 works of modern and contemporary art from the Collection to Sunderland over the next three years.

Sunderland Culture was created by a partnership between Sunderland City Council, University of Sunderland and Sunderland MAC Trust, so it has been wonderful this year to see so many creative projects grow and flourish thanks to new partnerships both in Sunderland and across the UK. I am looking forward to seeing what these and even more new creative collaborations might bring to the cultural life of the city in the future.

Rebecca Ball  
Creative Director



# COVID AND BEYOND

2019-20 was another brilliant year for Sunderland Culture as we delivered the life-changing benefits of arts, culture and heritage to the communities of Sunderland. However, as the year drew to a close it became very clear that all of us were about to enter an unprecedented time of turmoil and change as we began to understand the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

How Sunderland Culture has been able to adapt, innovate and respond to the needs of our communities, support artists and build our own resilience will no doubt be fully set out in our next Annual Review. The closure of our venues was a necessary step but a huge blow meaning that amazing exhibitions would suddenly become on-line only experiences, performances cancelled and community groups and classes no longer able to meet in person. Yet, within weeks, our dedicated team had found new ways to connect with audiences, deliver creative experiences and be useful in supporting people locked-down at home.

Our own team has had to get to grips with working from home or being placed on furlough leave and our finances have taken a huge blow and yet with the support of our partners and funders we have remained a strong presence in the city delivering creative activities, supporting artists and reopening when allowed.

Aside from the current crisis, the organisation is actively changing and accelerating how we reflect the diversity of our communities within our creative programme, staff team and audiences, challenging inequalities and breaking down barriers.

I am hugely proud of the way that Sunderland Culture is responding to the current challenges and excited by the things that we are still able to do. I am constantly in awe of the creativity, dedication and capability of our staff, trustees and volunteers and those that we work with in the City Council, University, MAC Trust and creative community of the city.

On a personal level I am now moving on to a new role and will be leaving Sunderland Culture. I do so in the certain knowledge that the work we are doing is more important than ever in supporting people's mental health, contributing to the economic and social recovery of the city, championing diverse voices and ultimately improving life for everyone in Sunderland through Culture.



Keith Merrin





## THANK YOU TO OUR FOUNDING PARTNERS FOR THEIR VISION AND SUPPORT IN ESTABLISHING SUNDERLAND CULTURE



**University of  
Sunderland**



We are hugely grateful to all funders, partners and supporters for their generosity, help and collaboration during the year. Thank you for your support, it enables everyone who lives, works or visits Sunderland to experience and enjoy world-class art and culture.



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ENGLAND**



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DCMS Wolfson Museums and Galleries Fund  
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Helix Arts  
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NEXUS  
Royal Collection Trust  
Sir James Knott Trust  
Sunderland City Council – Washington Area Committee  
Sunderland BID  
The Arts Society  
Victoria and Albert Museum

There are lots of ways you can help more people experience great art and culture, by making a donation, leaving a legacy, sponsoring an activity or volunteering your time.

For more information on how to make an incredible difference, please visit:  
[www.sunderlandculture.org.uk/about-us/support-us](http://www.sunderlandculture.org.uk/about-us/support-us)

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