

New community-focused public art project for Southampton: Co-Creating the Public Realm



Skate Southampton's SLAMMA 3, 2019. Photo Sean Black

#CoCreatingSoton
#CPRS025

John Hansard Gallery, part of the University of Southampton, is pleased to announce *Co-Creating the Public Realm*, a nationally significant project principally funded by Arts Council England, University of Southampton, Southampton City Council and with support from GO! Southampton. *Co-Creating the Public Realm* invites communities from Southampton to develop major art commissions, created in conjunction with leading international artists. These new public artworks will be launched as part of major festivals and community celebrations in Southampton and beyond.

This project, which starts in April 2022 and runs over two years, will see John Hansard Gallery and a range of city-wide partners working with local and international artists, including: Mary Evans, Oozing Gloop and NewfrontEars, Rich Holland, Grace Lau, and other artists TBA. These artists will work in partnership with multiple community groups and organisations, including: Art Asia and Southampton Mela, The Mela Partnership, Black History Month South, Chinese Arts Southampton, Chinese Association of Southampton, Confucius Institute, Kingston Creative Jamaica, Skate Southampton, Southampton Black Archives, Southampton Pride, SPUD, The Stage Door, UP Projects, and videoclub.

Co-Creating the Public Realm aims to empower communities to reimagine how public space is used in their cities. In addition to five significant public art commissions, Southampton will host a national conference about public art and co-develop a new public art strategy for the city. *Co-Creating the Public Realm* will explore new thoughts around creativity and public space in relation to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, ability, access, health and wellbeing.

Co-Creating the Public Realm will support artists, producers and the cultural sector in Southampton, the South West and nationally, bolstering the city's social and creative recovery following COVID-19. A number of new roles and artist opportunities will be created as a result of this project that will be led by John Hansard Gallery, in collaboration with UP Projects and Visual Arts South West.

Southampton is bidding to be UK City of Culture in 2025 and John Hansard Gallery is fully committed to being a programme partner for Southampton 2025. Designation as UK City of Culture would be a catalyst for much needed social, cultural and

economic transformation for the city and its inhabitants. *Co-Creating the Public Realm* will nurture creative and cultural communities, building skills, capacity and participation in support of Southampton's ambition to be UK City of Culture.

Artists and project partners

- Mary Evans working with Black History Month South, Southampton Black Archives and Kingston Creative, Jamaica.
- Oozing Gloop and NewfrontEars working with Southampton Pride, The Stage Door and videoclub.
- Rich Holland working with Skate Southampton and SPUD.
- Art Asia, Southampton Mela and The Mela Partnership working with artists TBA.
- Grace Lau working with Chinese Arts Southampton, Chinese Association of Southampton, and the Confucius Institute.

Dahlia Jamil, Chief Executive, Art Asia said:

'Our work at Art Asia and particularly with the Southampton Mela Festival is committed to developing traditional, contemporary and experimental practice of artists in the UK and abroad by commissioning and showcasing the best, the unexpected and the unknown. We are delighted to partner with John Hansard Gallery in this exciting project that will build a lasting legacy for Southampton, not only in regard to improving its public space but recognizing the thriving diverse communities that live and create those social stories that connect us all.'

Lou Taylor, Director, Black History Month South said:

'Black History Month South are constantly looking for ways to highlight the hidden histories and to celebrate the art and culture of the diverse communities in our home city of Southampton. *Co-Creating the Public Realm* is an exciting opportunity to do just that, and collaborating with such a distinguished artist as Mary Evans will open opportunities for members of the community to express themselves on a much wider and more inclusive platform.'

Claire Whitaker OBE, Bid Director, Southampton 2025 UK City of Culture, said:

'On behalf of the Southampton 2025 team, I am delighted that this significant community-focused public art project is moving ahead with the support of Arts Council England, University of Southampton, Southampton City Council and GO! Southampton. This is a brilliant example of the partnership and collaboration which is central to Southampton's UK City of Culture bid and this initiative demonstrates the dynamism of Southampton's cultural organisations and our creative community, working together to transform the city.'

All projects will be developed and delivered in close partnership with GO! Southampton, Southampton City Council, University of Southampton, UP Projects and Visual Arts South West.

Learning and insight from *Co-Creating the Public Realm* will inform the creation of a new Public Art Strategy for Southampton and Cultural Strategy for Guildhall Square. This new strategy will be influenced and informed by the project's community engagement and aligned with Arts Council England's *Let's Create* strategy for culture and creativity in England over the next ten years. Importantly the strategy will reflect Southampton's diverse cultural communities, and will be shared nationally, placing communities at the centre of public realm debate. A series of talks and the conference will disseminate the outcomes of *Co-Creating the Public Realm*, engaging national and international audiences, with the ambition of informing policy and planning nationwide.

Follow #CoCreatingSoton #CPRSO25 on social media for updates and the latest on the project.

Woodrow Kernohan, Director, John Hansard Gallery said:

'John Hansard Gallery strives to be a porous organisation – we proactively reach out into communities as well as inviting everyone to engage with the Gallery. Since moving into Southampton city centre in 2018, we have forged links with our neighbouring communities, groups and festivals. Co-Creating the Public Realm is the result of these conversations and collaborations. This is an incredible opportunity for us to work together to reactivate and reimagine how public space is used in the city. Each of the five projects has been developed in dialogue with community partners and will bring artists and communities together with the ambition of creating positive change.'

Professor Mark Spearing, Vice President, Research and Enterprise, University of Southampton said:

'As Southampton celebrates being shortlisted as the latest milestone on the journey to be the next UK City of Culture in 2025, this is a fantastic project that exemplifies how culture can bring people together and help them define their own sense of place. We as the University of Southampton are working to strengthen our civic role, to ensure that we are truly The University of Southampton rather than simply a University in Southampton. This is exactly the kind of project that shows the impact we can have, not just by acting on our own estate and as a major employer in the city but as an anchor and a catalyst for the people of Southampton to shape and change our city.'

Carolyn Abel, Head of Culture and Tourism, Southampton City Council said:

'As a key partner working across a number of Council teams, we're delighted that Southampton has secured this national funding for a city-wide programme around developing our public realm led by the University of Southampton's John Hansard Gallery. This follows the timely announcement that Southampton has been shortlisted to the final four in the competition to become the next UK City of Culture in 2025. This is precisely the type of collaborative, co-creative ambition that we are seeking to achieve in Southampton, working closely with our communities, artists and wider partners to bring about transformational change in a city that has a great many needs.'

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Notes to Editors

John Hansard Gallery

John Hansard Gallery is a locally engaged and internationally recognised contemporary art gallery in Southampton. Being part of the University of Southampton, the Gallery aims to create extraordinary encounters with the rich diversity of contemporary art that inspire people and communities to change the world for the better. To realise this, the Gallery creates innovative and critically acclaimed contemporary art exhibitions, events, engagement and research projects that excite, challenge, represent and reach the widest possible public audience. Learning and engagement are at the heart of the Gallery and underpin all its activities. The innovative education and public programme is accompanied by special community-focused projects, including activities for all ages and levels of experience. John Hansard Gallery was established in 1979 and is a National Portfolio Organisation supported by Arts Council England.
www.jhg.art

Mary Evans is an artist who creates evocative site-specific installations that reflect on the impact of tragic and brutal moments in history. She uses brown paper as her main material and her iconic cut-out silhouettes build on the classical tradition of portraiture to question ideas around representation, cultural change and globalisation.
www.mary-evans.com

Oozing Gloop describes themselves as the world's leading green autistic drag queen. Their practice relates primarily to the interplay of trash and transmutation over the body. He/she/it re-stages folkloric encounters to isolate the universal elements in our shared political landscape.
www.instagram.com/oozing_gloop

NewfrontEars is an enigmatic artistic body that offers a new level of cinematic live-streaming at the cutting edge of technology and art. Founded by artists Alex Large and Liane Sommers, NewfrontEars is a creative realm for collaborations with humans, animals and AI. They aim to develop meaningful friendships by nurturing projects with care.
www.newfrontears.com

Born in London of Chinese parentage, **Grace Lau** is a practicing photographer, artist, writer and lecturer. She has a MA in Photography & Culture from UAL. Published books include *Adults in Wonderland* (Serpents Tail UK, 1997); *Picturing the Chinese: Early Western Photographs and Postcards of China* (Joint Publishing HongKong, 2008). In 2005, she was awarded an Arts Council of England grant to carry out her major portrait project and recreate a Victorian-era portrait studio with a Chinese context. Over 400 portraits of visitors and residents to Hastings were collected and selected for subsequent exhibitions in London Tate Britain, Wales Aberystwyth Arts Centre, and in 2019, at Turner Contemporary's exhibition *Seaside Photographed*. In April 2019, her book of portraits of '21st Century Types' entitled *Portraits In A Chinese Studio* was published by the new Parakeet Books, UK, and distributed by Cornerhouse Publications. Her work is in the collections of the National Portrait Gallery, the Wilson Photography Collection, Sarah and David Kowitz, and Asia Culture Institute, Gwangju, South Korea.
www.gracelau.co.uk

Rich Holland is an architectural designer, artist and skateboarder who is renowned for his skateable installations and skate parks. He created the original *Moving Units* skateable sculptures in 2004 and is an active advocate for Long Live Southbank and the Undercroft skateboarding area at the Southbank Centre London. Most recently he designed the skate landscape that has rejuvenated the Nike European Headquarters in the Netherlands.
www.floda31.com

Arts Council England

Arts Council England believes that great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. They champion, develop and invest in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. They support activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Between 2018 and 2022, Arts Council England will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country.
www.artscouncil.org.uk

Southampton 2025

Southampton is bidding to become UK City of Culture 2025. Southampton's bid is an exciting prospect for the city to shout about all that it has to offer and create new opportunities. The bid provides an opportunity to rebuild and support the city in its economic and social recovery, building a better future for all.

www.southampton2025.co.uk

GO! Southampton

GO! Southampton is the Business Improvement District for Southampton City Centre.

Their mission is to continuously improve the city centre by delivering relevant services, providing a voice for our businesses, influencing strategy and being a catalyst for positive change. The BID represents over 630 BID levy payers made up of business representatives from a myriad of sectors across the city.

www.gosouthampton.co.uk

Southampton City Council

Southampton City Council is the local authority of the city of Southampton. It is a unitary authority, having the powers of a non-metropolitan county and district council combined. It provides a full range of local government services including council tax billing, libraries, social services, processing planning applications, waste collection and disposal, and it is a local education authority.

www.southampton.gov.uk

University of Southampton

The University of Southampton is one of the UK's leading teaching and research institutions, with a global reputation for research and scholarship across a wide range of subjects. The University combines academic excellence with an innovative and entrepreneurial approach to research, supporting a culture that engages and challenges students and staff in their pursuit of learning.

www.southampton.ac.uk

Art Asia – Southampton Mela Festival

Art Asia has a long and respected reputation for delivering engaging, exciting South Asian Arts across the South East region of the UK. Their work includes: the annual Southampton Mela Festival; classes in South Asian music and dance; music, dance and drama performances featuring the best local, national and international artists; music and dance workshops, demonstrations and performances for schools and community groups; and projects that bring South Asian Arts to the forefront.

www.artasia.org.uk

Black History Month South

The aim of Black History Month South is to recognise the contributions and influence that Black cultures have made in the past and here in the present. This will be achieved by sharing the stories of our history and engaging all communities through events including art exhibitions, music, theatre and lectures, demonstrating the essential and legitimate links to our collective world history and highlighting significant moments in time that have shaped that history.

www.blackhistorymonthsouth.com

UP Projects

UP Projects curates and commissions public art. The organisation was founded in 2002 with a mission to support artists to make new work that has social relevance, engages communities, encourages learning and enriches the public sphere. They work collaboratively with artists, communities and partners to create extraordinary projects. Their outlook is international, activating spaces across the globe and in the digital domain. Their work explores the multitude of ways in which people can encounter and connect with contemporary art in unexpected places.

UP Projects reaches millions of people through ambitious public commissions by a diverse selection of artists, informal learning activities, artist-led community engagement and events.

www.upprojects.com