

Building // Blocks

2023 – 2026

heartofglass

Heart of Glass

Notes on facing artwork:

Groundwork - Artist Rudy Loewe // Shared in public spaces in Liverpool and London in 2021, Groundwork by Rudy Lowe explores what it might look like to centre collective healing in a crisis. Commissioned by Heart of Glass.

CAN WE TAKE TIME TO BREATHE
SLOW DOWN
RELEASE
QUESTION THE STRUCTURES OUR
LIVES ARE BUILT ON
AND GROW SOMETHING NEW
CAN WE REMEMBER THE SYSTEMS
OF COLLECTIVITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES
SHARE RESOURCES
HOLD ONE ANOTHER IN GRIEF
AND CENTRE CARE
CAN WE PRIORITISE REST & HEALING
FEEL THE FEAR OF AN UNKNOWN
FUTURE AND CALL WHAT WE NEED
INTO BEING
CAN WE FIGHT FOR EACH OTHER'S
LIVES AND FUTURES
NOT JUST IN A CRISIS BUT
BECAUSE WE WANT MORE THAN
SURVIVAL FOR ALL

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Groundwork - Artist Rudy Loewe // Shared in public spaces in Liverpool and London in 2021, Groundwork by Rudy Lowe explores what it might look like to centre collective healing in a crisis. Commissioned by Heart of Glass.

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01. Foreword

Heart of Glass was formed in 2014. We began as an action research project, based at the home of St Helens Rugby Football Club and supported by a consortium of partners, with funding support through Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme.

Our organisational development has been atypical, and our *home* today is the space we create together through our work. Our parks, our community spaces, our buildings and our streets.

Our story is best understood by looking at the themes we have explored through our collaborations with artists, communities and partners to date. These projects draw on individual and collective experiences, and are rooted in collaboration. So our organisational timeline is a shared one, that speaks to the experience of the environment we inhabit and the times we live in.

Our geographic remit has expanded over the course of the past nine years. Widening from St Helens to neighbouring Knowsley through our Creative People and Places¹ programme, and wider through our Arts Council England National Portfolio² which funds, develops and supports social and collaborative arts practice nationally and internationally. All our work, no matter what the location or the context, draws from the same pool of values. In 2018 we became a formally constituted organisation and latterly a registered Charity.

As we craft a road map for the future, we recognise our ambitions are not necessarily about targets and milestones. Instead, creating work of depth and relevance that reflects the shared values, attributes and commitment of our team, our communities and the artists we work with. Our focus is

on ensuring everyone has the possibility to flourish fairly, by constantly asking ourselves how we can continue to learn, unlearn, evolve, reform, refine, and remain a space of possibility?

We firmly believe that art holds power to bring us together into a space of sharing experiences. A space where we can unlock... reimagine... ask... forge... unlocking stories together, reimagining public spaces, asking urgent questions and forging new connections.

We value the process of being creative and the shared creative experience and hope to derive rather than prescribe impact, through working towards co-authorship and meaningful collaboration.

This plan outlines some of the foundations from which we hope to grow, recognising the importance of care, challenge, and openness within that process. Presented throughout the document are a series of *building blocks* (see right page) which recognise the constantly evolving nature of our work and our commitment to continuous learning. We've intentionally left some of these pages blank so that we might share and listen with intent and continue to develop a story that is collectively written. A story that places art, artists and communities in direct interaction with all facets of civic life, so that we can understand, reshape and question the world we collectively inhabit, in the hope we can create tomorrow, together.

1. www.artscouncil.org.uk/creative-people-and-places-projects

2. www.artscouncil.org.uk/2023-26-investment-programme/2023-26-investment-programme-making-your-application

Note: Heart of Glass joined the portfolio in 2018

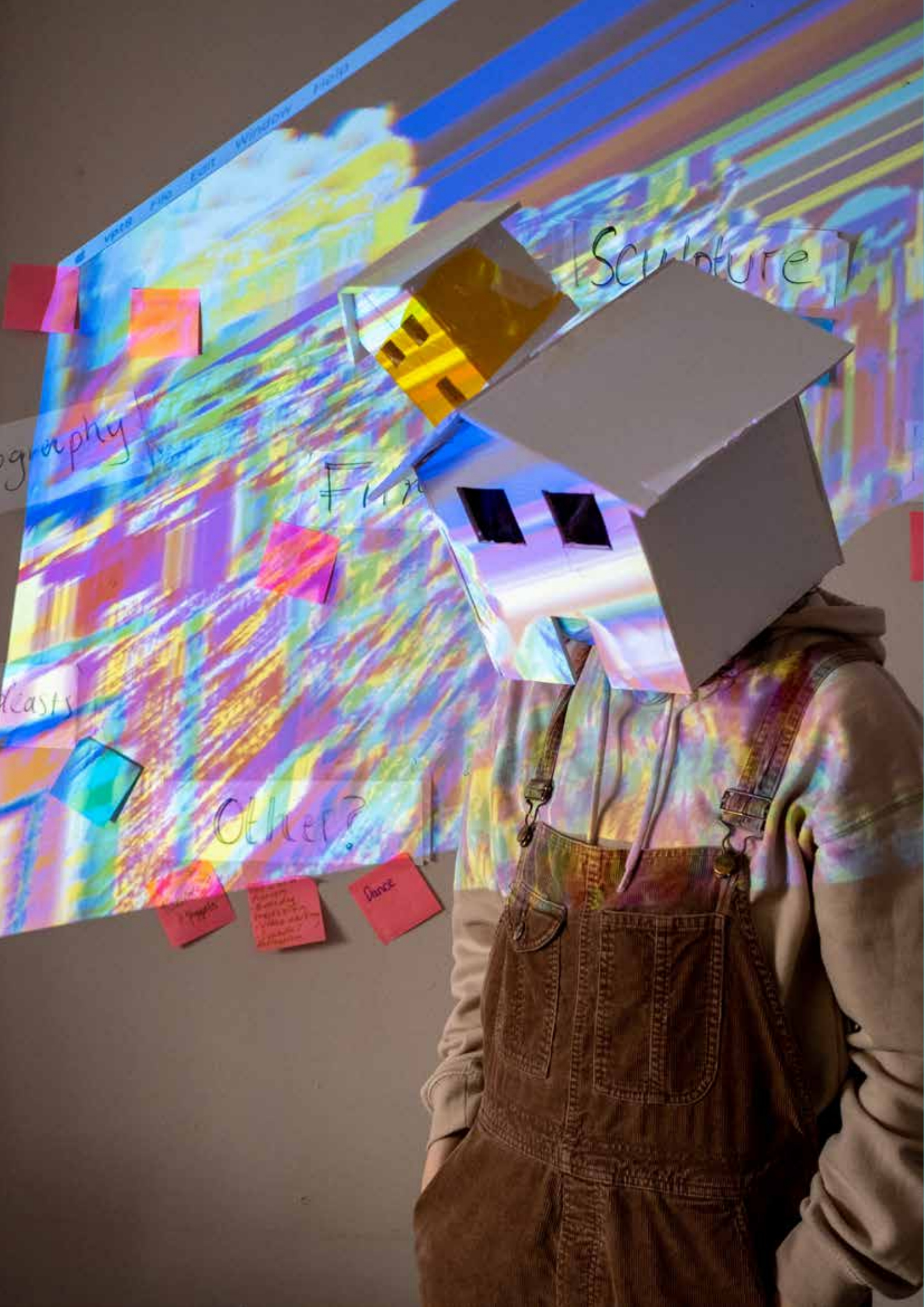
BUILDING BLOCKS

1

We are conscious, as an organisation committed to supporting the work of artists and communities, of the urgent need to support practitioners, create new alliances and map and strengthen support for this practice in a post-pandemic world. While resisting the notion of acquiring or constructing an actual centre (“the centre cannot hold” - W. B. Yeats) for our practice, especially in these times, we are committed to ensuring research, learning and experience, at an international as well as a local level, is shared with our partners and with stakeholders across the arts and cultural sector, and beyond.



COVID-19 created a crisis for work that depends on the possibility of people to be together in the same space. It has also alerted us to what really matters in this practice. It has offered us a unique opportunity to plot new coordinates, re-calibrate our structures and re-visit the principles which drive us forward. With this in mind, we offer a series of ‘building blocks’ that have increasingly informed our own thinking and practice over this period. Each of the blocks is separate and stands alone principle that guides our work, yet they are totally interconnected. We have left a number of blocks empty or unnamed. They are symbolic of those things we might not know right now, or which may reveal themselves over time but remain part of the jigsaw puzzle. Recognising the collective nature of our practice, we acknowledge these blocks are redundant unless connected with our partners and colleagues. We also offer them in the hope of prompting shared conversations.



Sculpture

Photography

Furniture

Leasts

Other?

Dance

People



“

I understand now the importance of art and how it can be a part of our lives. I'd never understood that before. These stories need to be heard.”

Audience Member

02. What do we do and why do we do it

*“We are worldless without one another”
- Judith Butler (Philosopher & Gender Theorist)*

Heart of Glass is a community arts organisation.

We support **the work of artists and communities**. We understand our community as everyone we work with, from artists and communities of interest, place or experience to the audiences we reach, and the ecology of partners and individuals with whom we connect. People, individually and within their communities, are central to both our thinking and our practice.

We champion co-created arts practices and partnership working by supporting a creative process that reflects and responds to contemporary life and creates space for dialogue, research, learning and experimentation. In addition to the development of new work, we also produce specialised projects, professional development opportunities, resources and publications for all those who make, watch, research, study, teach, produce, present, write about and archive collaborative and social arts practice.

Our programme embodies the **principle of partnership**. This involves close collaboration with a range of arts partners as well as cross sector, community and voluntary partners – including local authorities, schools, international festivals and networks, HE partners, community groups, campaigners and businesses.

Our work occupies spaces in what might be described as non-traditional arts locations - forests, libraries, high streets, youth centres, empty shops, local farms, schools – spaces that we hold and inhabit in common. We believe **every one of us has the right to have our voices heard**; our stories celebrated, and our curiosity piqued.

We do what we do because we believe in the power of art, and the power of people working together.

We are a lighthouse.

We are a partner.

We are a hub.

We are a supporter.

We are a portal.

We are part of the collective experience, that a centre cannot hold.

BUILDING BLOCKS

2

AMBITION & QUALITY

in collaboration and social art practice

We are not concerned with ambition as an abstract concept. We are an organisation whose programme has always been about working with people who, for a variety of social and political reasons, have not been given equal opportunity to be part of the making of work or in the creation of meaning through the work. Creating space for those voices to be folded into the experience, be listened to, and be heard, and be part of an assembly of minds and movements, reaching out to others, internationally, as well as locally is what we understand by **ambition**.



We are committed to being curious about the unknown, to constantly questioning who is not in the room, or who is least likely to be in the room, and then trusting that if we create open and honest conditions people will come. We believe people are, and have always been, endlessly interesting, thoughtful, and creative. **Quality** in this context is about having the building blocks in place to enable them to access this. It comes from active listening, from taking time, from the openness that comes from understanding this work is not a destination but a shared journey. We trust our work will be ambitious and of quality if we create the right space and time for that journey to happen.

03. Our Values

We are COLLABORATIVE

We believe that the story of our communities should be owned by our communities. We believe that we can only do the work we do together.

The artists we work with are a vital link between our communities and our practice. They share our core belief that collaborative and social arts practices can create real change.

That's why our programme will always be participatory, interactive and collaborative by its very nature.

It's why we aim to enshrine accessibility and inclusion, informed by thinking about diversity and difference into everything we do. And it's also why our approach to everything we do is honest, open, democratic and always exciting!

We don't write the rules. We work them out, together.

We CHALLENGE

Our work connects the experience of people living in our community to the forces that shape all of our lives. We leverage the power of art to investigate and address the social issues and struggles of our times.

Through our commitment to conversation and collaboration, we seek to challenge who sets the agenda, who makes the decisions that affect the place we call home, and whose stories get heard.

By giving everyone - young, old, refugees, artists and activists alike - a voice, we hope to throw light on unexpected places, shift the focus and change the perspective.

Our work acts as a catalyst for change to happen.

We CARE

We are committed to be part of the solidarity economy, working towards a just, fair and more caring society for all of us. Because we believe we are all in this together.

We create what we hope are safer spaces to unlock the hopes, fears, dreams and experiences of our community. And that space could be anywhere - our work finds its home in the most unlikely of places because we want to get closer to the real story. We connect with people where they are.

We may be a small organisation, but we love the fact that we are part of something bigger. And we know that we can only make change by listening, connecting and sharing.

We value and respect the experience, insight and participation of all of our community members, staff and artists, because each of us has a story to tell. And, together, the stories we tell today can change the narrative of the place we call home, tomorrow.

BUILDING BLOCKS

3

DYNAMISM & TRUST

**balancing responsiveness
with long-term commitment**

Recent times have made us increasingly aware of our need to be responsive to the more immediate, and different, needs of our artists and communities and of working together to find solutions. We know this will sometimes require speedy interventions. During the past two years it has often felt important to be able to act quickly, share resources and find new ways to connect with our artists and communities. **Dynamism** is about ensuring we have the structures and support in place to enable that to happen.



We have also learned our partnerships can only work if they are sustained by reciprocal trust and openness, within our own team, with our artists and communities, and with the wider network of Heart of Glass' stakeholders, supporters, and funders. We know this level of trust takes time and are committed to balancing our ambition to be as responsive and flexible as the moment demands with a need to move 'at the speed of **trust**' so that we can embed the support necessary to ensure artists, communities and partners are able to take risks and experiment in a safe and secure environment.

“

It wasn't forced and they weren't trying to fit people into a box or meet targets. It was organic and the group decided themselves what they wanted to do. Heart of Glass has a modern, fresh way of doing things. It is not something we'd ever tried before”

Staff member at Sahir House,
part of The Mic Drop





04. Context

We're calling this section context and in doing that, we're thinking about the people we work with, the place we work, and the wider political, and policy context of that work.

People

Heart of Glass is an organisation which is about supporting people, in particular artists and communities, to work together. Those communities might be defined by shared interests, shared experience or geographical proximity. There are many different ways in which community forms. Sometimes the very term community is used as quite a reductive notion of how people cluster or connect. Within our commitment to artists and communities it feels important for us to prioritise those who, for a variety of reasons, have historically been marginalised or underrepresented within the arts and cultural ecology and/or civil society. There are many layered reasons why people experience barriers. What we've tried to do with our programme to date is to upend the notion that the problem sits with those experiencing this. We see it as being similar to the social model of disability where we use the term in the sense of people being disabled by society's inadequate support of their individual needs.

Historically in the arts sector there has been much more of a focus on the outreach model. It suggests that there's a set of resources, knowledge or experience that sits within the sector itself and its role is therefore merely to reach out and share these with people. We think that what we should be talking about is a much more porous sector where different voices, different experiences, and different people are all allowed to be part of the making of art, and the making of meaning through

art and in the places they call home. Our focus has therefore been around a justice and rights-based approach, in response to the broader operating context in which we all exist in the world, informed and shaped by capitalism, neoliberalism, racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism and heteronormativity.

And within that, working to destabilise that monoculture by prioritising those voices who, for many different reasons, have not yet had a chance to be heard in arts and cultural practice or form. The starting point is in recognising that people are more than just a statistic or where they might fit within a particular structure or understanding of the world.

We believe everyone has an inherent worth and knowledge lives everywhere. That means everybody has something to contribute, whether that is a knowledge, experience or expertise acquired through choice or imposed through circumstance. We include ourselves in that and so the ecology of any project is our team, our artists, our community members; a collection of people in a space together who all bring different things to the table. We are always trying to create flatter power structures with each other within that. That means consideration around how we are accountable to one another, what type of behaviour we expect of one another, what type of behaviour can we all agree to challenge in one another? We need to think about access needs.

We need to think about how we level the playing field so that everybody has what they need to be able to operate in a given space at any given time? This means putting a lot of work into creating access riders and mental health riders and thinking about creating supportive frameworks and policies that allow everyone to just be in the space and feel comfortable together. This is a continuous work in progress, but we are committed to continuous learning.

Place

The broader audience or the broader community or broader civil society is no less important in our work. Whoever is going on the creative journey together, whoever is the fulcrum of the project, we know they typically (but not always!) make or produce something, and that could take many forms, anything from a film to a performance to a podcast series. This will then meet a secondary audience. We have then got responsibility for how we mediate that story or communicate that work to that other audience. For Heart of Glass those stories or articulations of a project are typically mediated in what we would probably describe as non-art settings. That means whatever is produced does not have the aesthetic frame of the traditional art world.

What we're looking at is more within the landscape of the commons, the spaces that we all occupy and share together. This requires a different type of mediation and support frame. From how we control the lights, to how we consider access, environmental factors, health and safety etc. We are constantly considering different types of risk assessments, different usages of space, different ways to be a shared space together. This means we also need to think about whose space we might occupy or move into, and who the stakeholders are in that space. Sharing work in a dedicated arts environment means you are partly plugging into the aesthetic of a controlled venue, whereas we aim to constantly build the conditions in which the work can exist. All of these complex factors need to be considered and it's different every time for every different project.



I can talk to you like this because Heart of Glass exists to do work in multiple different ways. It has the capacity to allow this sort of wild work to take place. I've been working for 35 years and I can only do it because I'm supported by well-structured, well-run organisations"

Commissioned Artist

The other context for us is St Helens as a place. It's very much part of our origin story. It's a core part of why we exist. The DNA of the organisation stems from our located, embedded work in St Helens. In more recent times we've expanded into broader geographic locations, from the wider Liverpool City region, to the addition of Knowsley within the Creative People Places programme, and our national portfolio funded programme and other funded programmes of work. We speak about *"our town as an art centre"*, but increasingly we see every space where we exist or congregate together as our home, including international or even digital spaces. They are the contexts in which this work comes to life and meets an audience. Each of these different contexts have different histories, different configurations of communities, different shared experiences, different similarities and varied differences. It is the rich and complex operating context in which we are privileged to work. It makes the work exciting, and considered.

Politics and Policies

And then there is the wider, global context and the different histories we stand on. That might be the history of collaborative and social arts practice which touches on so many different facets of art history. It might be the history of social justice and activism and current action. It might be the history of community development. The history of language. When we speak about being a community arts organisation we do so because we consider every art form to have its history within the community, whether that's the home or the village or the spaces and places people communally live. It makes no sense to speak about high and low art in that context. The other operating context is the fast and changing landscape of the world that we live in, and

the erosion and challenge to so many of the civil rights we once took for granted, to the threat of climate change. Heart of Glass is part of generation austerity. We were born a number of years into an existing austerity programme which we are now 14 years into. Many of the social structures, the social fabrics that we relied on as a part of our everyday experience of the world are no longer there. That changes the game and it changes the operating context. We have to work in a different way because the youth officer we might have worked with before or the community leader who used to run a particular community space are no longer there, or operating under great strain. So many support structures have been removed or significantly eroded.

We are also still in the space of the Covid pandemic and clearly still experiencing the ramifications of that. In many ways the pandemic acted as an X-ray of the entire world, and brought firmly into focus the inequalities experienced across our community. Covid-19 was not an equal opportunity offender, it affected, and continues to affect people very differently. There is also the volatility of the current political context we work in, with the surge of right-wing fascist ideologies and growing isolationism, which in the UK has meant pulling up the drawbridge around the country, making it even more difficult for us to be in spaces or places together and operate across borders. All these things inform the thematic making of the work, but they also affect us in terms of how we even begin to conceive or think how we might even go about projects. There are so many, many layers of context. Each of them folding in and on top of one another. We have to create spaces to hold them, to hold each other, to hold the people and places we work with.

BUILDING BLOCKS

4

CARE, CONNECTION & COLLECTIVE ACTION

We are committed to operating in solidarity with our community, working towards a fairer, more just and more caring society for all. Although we are a small organisation, we recognise we are part of something bigger. Our programme only works because we work alongside a wider ecology of people who care at a local and trans-local level. Putting **care, connection, and collective action** at the centre of everything we do, our approach is based on open, transparent, and collaborative practice, recognising, and equally valuing, the contributions of the artists, individuals, communities, producers, and activists we work with to our overall mission and vision, and in their own right.



“

Lookout asks you to view it (St Helens) with imagination and gives even the wildest ideas plausibility, making a different kind of future feel possible.”

Josh Coates, Corridor8 on the project Lookout

If we are talking about care we need to ask what that actually means in terms of how we work together with our communities, our artists and one other. We know we can only make change by listening, connecting, and sharing; striving to explore a social art practice which is one of unexpected surprises, real care, and an interruption of the everyday. We believe the stories we tell today can change the narrative of tomorrow: bringing diverse perspectives together to help bring about a more inclusive, equitable and just society in the future.

05. The Future

When we approached a discussion about the future, it felt in some ways like an impossible task. Working on this strategy with long term associate Chrissie Tiller, who has worked across our entire team and with a wide cross section of our collaborators, we thought it best to consider our aspirations for the future through a conversation between Chrissie and Heart of Glass Chief Executive Patrick Fox (which took place in October 2022). In today's world, a conversation about the future feels more productive than a set of goals.

With Chrissie posing the questions, below is a brief insight into that conversation:

Tell me a little bit more about your goals as an organisation?

I suppose, if we were a more traditional organisation operating within a particular operational landscape or support system, we'd be setting ourselves goals around what we are going to invest in order to get the results or yields we want to see. I think our goals are less about that form of organisational growth and more about organisational learning and reflection in order to generate a depth to the work. It's more about how we work with each other and how we work with others. There are goals about the quality and characteristics of the work, but there are also goals about creating spaces of care, taking shared responsibility, and accountability. We've been working on an accountability agreement recently which sets out what we might expect of each other when we're working together so that we're all on a shared learning journey.

If we are thinking in terms of graphs it might look more like one which shows the rhythm of a heartbeat - a steady line with peaks and troughs. It's a line we're going along together, in tune with the practice itself, reflecting how we support and maintain a rhythm that allows us to be productive members of a broader community or set of considerations. There are organisational objectives and project objectives agreed with funders, but for us they are not simply output driven.

For example, we've recently developed a collaborative board game with artist Michelle Browne which challenges the traditional notion of getting to the finishing line or winning at the expense of other players. Instead, this game is about players working together to deal with the external forces challenging them to achieve collective success. We've been asking ourselves what would happen if we were to apply that collaborative ethos to Heart of Glass as an organisation? What tools, what skills, what knowledge, what people and what qualities would we need in order to be a productive part of a wider ecology within this practice and within the wider sector instead of looking for individual success? This is part the inspiration of the building blocks approach to this forward strategy.

I think for Heart of Glass, and the sector itself, the future has to be about working collaboratively and cooperatively with others and setting ourselves shared goals within those objectives. We want to be an active listening and learning organisation, sharing the resources we have, but also being open to receiving knowledge or resources from others so that we can work together to create something different.

How do you think you might best facilitate that approach?

It feels important if we say we're a listening organisation to keep thinking of ways to fold the new knowledge that comes from that back into every facet of our work. That can then influence our policies or the way we do contracts or the way we understand access requirements for artists or participants, or our thoughts about the qualities we are looking for in partners?

It can help us decide any questions we might have about the kinds of funding we will pursue or indeed take. What are our red lines? What are our responsibilities in that context? What are the things we can control or influence? What are the things we can't? We want to use the listening process to create a baseline of knowledge across the entire team. That might be around practical areas such as compliance, risk assessment, safeguarding, health, and safety processes or first aid training. But equally, it might be around more value-based concerns such as trauma informed practice, anti-racist practices, gender diversity, or the politics of disability or radical feminism. It might mean doing something such as we did recently in changing our *safe space* policy into a *safer space policy* after conversations with the artists we work with, who helped us recognise it is more about creating a social contract with each other and that "safety" was not something we could ever guarantee one another.

It might be about responding practically to the team's concerns about the current cost-of-living (cost of capitalism) crisis. Everyone, whatever role they have in the organisation, is invited to be part of that collective conversation. I suppose it's also about trying to understand what's happening in the world right now, and then seeing what, if anything, we can do to address that. It's a reflective journey where we are continuously reshaping, refreshing, rebuilding, reviewing our practice. Learning and unlearning with those we work with.

It begins with the programme in many ways. We're trying to create a programme where we invite people to bring their different lived experience, knowledge, perspective, views on the world into a shared space of enquiry, in order to understand the world differently together. Communities of place, communities of interest, communities of activism, different generations, each bringing their diverse forms of knowledge, art form experience and understandings of the world into that space. Because we're very much part of the making of the work as producers, commissioners, and supporters we are also part of the creative process, and we benefit from that learning. We're transformed as an organisation by the transformative nature of the experience.

It's also about wanting to be part of the civic life of the place where we live and work as an organisation, not just of the arts sector. We want to be in rooms and in spaces where we're having conversations about the rhythm of life in that place or context. It gives us access to different types of understanding. The Suicide Chronicles feels like a perfect example of that. So many of the interactions we were having with various organisations and community members across a number of years were about the phenomenon of suicide and the impact that was having on people's collective and individual experience of the world. We slowly began to realise that through listening to these voices we could create a space of enquiry where we could look at this collectively. Part of active listening for us is recognising knowledge lives everywhere and whether it's working with associates or artists or having conversations with members of the community we can learn so much more by creating space for different perspectives to be shared. It enriches us as an organisation.

I wonder if you want to say something more about how that affects the curation of the work and how you take care of those involved in sharing their experiences and knowledge?

It's important to us to be there to support and care for our artists, our communities and each other as part of the creative process. We hold each other by working together from beginning to the end of projects. Again, we know we are not perfect, we are always needing to learn. It's about having commissioning and curatorial approaches that centre on notions of hosting. But it's also about us knowing as a team when to host and when to be hosted, when to welcome and when to be welcomed, when to recognise there may be rituals or processes that we need to be invited into. It's as if there's a metaphorical baton that continuously passes back and forth over the duration of a project, between all involved.

In some ways it's about us as an organisation being part of the village. We have something to offer but we also have many things to receive. Of course, there are power imbalances within that at times, which means we need to be explicit about who's leading and who's following at different times but also share as much responsibility as we can, so that power moves and shifts to the collective. It changes with particular projects or conversations or themes or topics but what feels important is that it never sits solely with one person or a small number of people, nor is it given to someone without their conscious consent.

By thinking about our work as a shared enquiry we want to support an exchange of knowledge and thinking and processes. This means whatever we create together is something we work on collectively.

There are a lot of conversations about co-creation and working collectively at the moment. Do you want to say a little more about that?

I think what we need to remind ourselves is that whether we are working with young people or different communities of interest or experience we need to be clear what we can bring and offer and what knowledge, and experience, we lack. Our responsibility is to listen to and be led by the expertise and situated knowledge of those we are working with. We can empathise, we can connect, we can have shared experiences that resonate with us, but we need to recognise the wealth of understanding others bring to the table. We need to continually check our own privilege and our voice and ensure we create as much space to listen as we do to communicate.

You are a national organisation, working internationally too, can we come back, as we speak about the future to what you said earlier about shared resources?

What we've learned from paying attention to the artists we work with, is how important even small offers of financial support or other resources can be. For example, in a recent programme called the Remote Commissions, artists were given what probably seems like fairly small grants in sector terms to develop an idea and then add to that in a way that felt relevant or important to them. It has led to all kinds of wonderful and exciting projects being developed, relationships built and doors opened, and sometimes it was just something that made that particular day a bit easier. From research and feedback, this was largely because people felt they had been given unequivocal support to explore their ideas and take them a step further or develop them in a particular direction if they so wished. We all have things within our gift. It might be an office space for a short time, a piece of equipment or access to a person who can share a particular piece of wisdom. It's not about free labour.

It's about recognising that if you don't have access to certain information or a particular individual or piece of equipment, then it can be a real obstacle. We need to be more transparent and open as organisations about the things that we can offer, in the hope it could help someone else to unlock a potential or realise a new possibility.

We work in a sector, and in a wider world, where we are so often set up in competition with one another. It feels as if the future has to be more about how we work collectively. We're all sharing the same number of finite resources and we have to make them work for everybody. The idea of claiming space or territory or notions like centres of excellence feel like they belong to the past. We don't want to be the centre of anything. We want to be more of a lighthouse, helping people orientate or navigate what C. Wright Mills calls this 'terrible and magnificent' world. We want to be a portal rather than a destination. It feels like a much more exciting space to occupy. It might not be a space every organisation can inhabit, but it's a place we can occupy because we're not building based, we're not confined by those walls and infrastructure. We've spoken elsewhere about the town being our arts centre, about every wall being a potential screen, every street a potential stage, everybody having the right to be part of the making of meaning. It feels as if by sharing resources, we can all be part of a larger choir and amplify that meaning in whatever context it needs to be heard.

What do you think is the greatest resource you can offer people, and be given yourself?

I suppose time is the greatest thing. Heart of Glass is nine years old next year. We're coming up to our first decade, yet it still seems incredibly new. It feels quite radical to be allowed to be part of a longitudinal journey. Having the time to be able to invest in people and place, in the practices, in different kinds of enquiry has been so important. It's been a gift in some ways, but it's also something we've fought for as a team and has been hard earned. It's about being able to think we are still on a journey with no definite beginning, middle or end. Of course, practical things like workshop space or office space, or new equipment or resources for a particular project or production are important, but without the space and time to be able to generate the relationships that underpin everything we do they wouldn't be of the same value. And so, time, to trust the process, to explore different possibilities, to step into the unknown together has to be the biggest gift and resource. It can be quite terrifying sometimes to take those first steps, but if we can take them collectively, collaboratively and in cooperation with each other, it feels like the future can be something we can jointly face.

BUILDING BLOCKS

5

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The recent crisis further highlighted the neo-liberal, ableist, heteronormative, patriarchal, and racist structures that grip tightly onto our experience of contemporary society. We appreciate the need for a holistic and intersectional approach to creating meaningful change, placing **diversity** and **inclusion** at the centre of our thinking. Making work against the backdrop of the effects of social, political, and other injustices, we have sought to imagine new and more inclusive ways of being and highlight the many and varied deficits experienced across our communities. Our programme and delivery are underpinned equally by an unapologetic rejection of the narrow pigeonholing that too often takes place within accepted norms, and a passion to create diverse audiences experiencing diverse art forms in diverse settings. This has also meant committing to paying our artists and recognising their time fairly.



We have been, and remain inspired by disability politics, in particular the social model which takes disability out of the person and locates it instead within capitalist society as a form of oppression. According to the social model, disability is created by structures that exclude and marginalise people whose differences either lead directly to or are associated with lower productivity in the workplace. Social movement thinkers and activists have increasingly examined how political intersectionality helps reveal and explain whose issues and interests are marginalised or privileged within particular activist spaces and discourses. Our work and practice is a form of intersectional analysis into social movements which interrogates questions of sameness, difference and power in relation to feminist, anti-racist and queer organising. Our plan is to build upon our knowledge of social movements and intersectionality by exploring the perceptions and experiences of different forms of activism and thinking through our collaborations.



“

The message from artists and teachers is clear: creative experiences will be essential to our society's recovery. Giving artists space to work sensitively and in depth with schools and their children will make all the difference.”

Sarah Bailey, writing about HoG's schools programme in Arts Professional



06. Programme Overview (2023 - 2026)

Our programme focus for 2023 – 2026 is based on the following activities, interventions and supports:

- Developing a curated series of long-term opportunities for artists and communities to create meaningful works through processes which provide genuine space for collaboration and exchange.
- Supporting critical thinking and informal *research in action* across the field of social and collaborative arts practice, placing particular value on the knowledge that exists in the contexts we work in.
- Building strong partnerships with the communities and individuals we collaborate with.
- Reaching new and diverse audiences for our work across Liverpool City Region, as well as nationally and internationally.
- Finding and/or creating platforms to share artworks, outside traditional art spaces.
- Place that are relevant to the works produced, the contexts they emerge from and the communities they speak to.
- Delivering vital, appropriate and equitable opportunities for professional development, networking and skills exchange for artists, producers, commissions and collaborators working in this field of practice.
- Creating platforms for debate, critical discourse, and exchange in order to champion wider engagement in the arts and inform future arts and cultural policy at a national level.
- Recognising and querying the limitations of traditional artistic evaluation and using collaborative practice philosophies to develop new ways to reflect and honour the practice.



They're learning about my creative practice and they're incorporating it within their creative growth. They put their money where their mouth is. They've taken [the implications of Black Lives Matter] seriously. They're supporting Black artists and opening up their platform for permanent change to show things they haven't focused on before. They don't just put up black squares. They're growing and I'm growing with them. Their support is outstanding."

Commissioned Artist

BUILDING BLOCKS

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COLLABORATION, CO-CREATION & CO-PRODUCTION

We are committed to working in **collaboration** and co-operation with our artists and communities to create a programme that engages the widest possible range of people in the co-design and co-production of art. We believe art opens up spaces for thinking, sharing ideas and unsettling the status quo. Seeking to challenge who sets the agenda, who makes the decisions and whose stories get heard, we work to connect the experience of those living in our communities to the forces that shape all our lives.



By building communities of inquiry, and respecting different skills, experience, and knowledge, we believe we can create possibilities for dialogue and critique and begin to collectively imagine different futures and new ways of being. Creativity matters to our civic life. We see artists and communities engaged with **co-creation** and working in **co-production** as a key to imagining a shared future. When we co-create, we make, and making is a powerful indicator of the possibility for change. Through conversation and collaboration with partners, colleagues and communities grappling with the impacts of austerity and democratic deficits, we are determined to leverage the power of art to uncover and address social issues and struggles.

“

I loved working with HoG. This commission got me out of the haze and mud of early days of parenthood as well as lockdown and provided me with much needed perspective, breathing space and purpose. I had a wobble, and thought that becoming a parent would immediately lead to cutting off my creative arm, making me a feeding machine, a caring machine. HoG support helped me navigate the huge change in my life, and making this work is helping me remain whole. Thank you for that!”

Commissioned Artist



07. Our Offer

Current models of art production mean that artists rarely have the opportunity or resources to work in a secure structure with consistent long-term support and committed resources.

We will develop a series of collaborative commissions and in doing so will explore models of long-term embedded artistic partnership between artists, community collaborators and ourselves. Each of these models will look different across our programme, as defined by the needs of the partnerships and projects.

We will collaborate with members of society whose lives, experience and knowledge is often not prioritised or fully acknowledged, by either the art world or society at large. We do this to create an organisational programme which entirely centres work with, for and about these communities. Our collaborations will form part of key research strands for the organisation, building our knowledge, experience, networks and community. We will explore new ways of sharing and making public, because we want to provide different access points to experience art which prioritise the needs of the artwork, those who have created it, and accessibility in the broadest sense.

Alongside, we will offer smaller (in resource) opportunities to artists to support thinking and development. Our aim is to provide space and support the essential work that is often overlooked by commissioning opportunities outside residency models - a space to speculate, test and explore, or conduct.

In summary our offer is to make every effort to support spaces of possibility.

08. Our Methodology

Creating spaces of enquiry through collaborative and social arts practice methodologies and opportunities for communities, practitioners and audiences.

We will explore the shared and multi-layered struggles and experiences of contemporary society by examining themes including Climate Justice, Criminal Justice, Disability Justice, Movement and Migration Justice, Children's Rights and Mental Health.

Central to this will be a continued commitment to unique partnerships, co-authorship, and the development of our 'Producer' approach to developing work. This means we are actively part of the creative process, and the creation of dynamic creative spaces where new work can be created and presented.

Our projects and programme will sit under the umbrella theme of SPECULATIVE FUTURES, acknowledging the role artists, communities and this practice can play in shaping new possibilities and alternative futures.

09. Programme Aims

A central aim across all of our programmes is to think, experiment and better understand the world.

We have set ambitious and achievable targets through consultation with our extensive partnership network and with the support of audience insights. We will continue to measure outcomes through a mix of qualitative and quantitative and dialogic approaches, reviewing with our team, Board and wider stakeholders and community.

Each element of our work is co-designed **WITH** our community, **FOR** a range of beneficiaries and audiences and **ABOUT** issues and themes important to their lives (communities) and practice (artists/creatives). As a learning organisation, the work we undertake will continue to inform the development of our own capacity as an organisation through specialised training and development programmes. We will work closely with our knowledgeable Board, ensuring our programme, organisation and approach reflects our core values.

Our current three-year plan focuses on communities accessing the power of creative engagement has 'to help shift our sense of what is possible, to unleash our radical imaginations, to model and experiment with new ways of being in the world, to enact social change'. (Open Engagement 2017).

We will do this by enabling those we work with to share their different knowledge and experience of this world. Together we will create spaces to wonder collectively how we might unlearn or undo those things that have brought us to where we are, and then find creative ways to imagine different futures.

Each strand of work is informed by nine years of relationship building with different communities, partners and artists. This has helped us understand a shared need to know or look at the world differently. By recognising different experiences of being in this world and thinking collectively about a safer, fairer and more environmentally secure future.



*It was really intense.
My mind was blown."*

Kate, Mush participant (Takeover 2022)

BUILDING BLOCKS

7

ALLYSHIP ACROSS and BEYOND BORDERS

Through recognising, exploring, and uncovering new and different forms of cultural and social capital and developing comradeship and solidarity across sectors, we hope to build new forms of **allyship**. The blurring of the **borders** between 'art' and 'activism' has been increasingly present across our WithForAbout conference series. Many of the artists who responded to the open call for WFA2020 were activists: standing up for and speaking out against, being an ally. Many of the activists used creative responses. WFA2020 offered a rich source of creative methodologies and approaches where tactics, strategies and intended political and/or social outcomes mattered as much as creative production. COVID 19 blurred these boundaries even further. The shrinking of public debate and public space has further underlined the urgency to create places to confront dominant narratives and advocate for change.

By actively learning and unlearning through exchanging thinking with the more marginalised migrant, working class, black, disabled, LGBTQ+ communities and artists we work with, alongside hosting and sharing important global conversations, we are resolved to bring these different knowledges and the lived experiences of such groups 'in from the margins'.



THE BOOKS

While post-industrial chimneys
fill the air with smoke and gas,
The people's spirit shines bright and clear
like it were forged from molten glass.



STOP *'s here*

This is a rally cry for the future.
to build up and not lose sight.
For, if we mine untapped potential -
From the ground, comes light!

- Ellen Oatomeywo

ver



10. Programme Strands

Our proposed programme breaks down into five core strands:

Commissions

We will develop new collaboratively commissions with communities, supported by a range of arts and cross sector partners manifesting in a range of community locations, locally, nationally and internationally, prioritising audiences and areas of low arts engagement.

Public Programmes

We will create opportunities developed in collaboration with our partners, creatives and communities, exploring themes across our programme. This will take the form of talks, screenings, events and activities in community settings regionally, creating pathways for audiences to engage with our work.

Remote Commissions/ Artist Development

We will develop spaces and places for artists, producers and others we work with to develop new work and community partnerships. We will do this through shorter-term commission/research opportunities annually, offering a uniquely supported space for practice development and time to foster new relationships between artists and their collaborators. We will prioritise working with practitioners from diverse backgrounds and working in areas of low arts engagement.

Learning

We will build upon our track record of supporting a culture of learning and sharing, informed by our own practice and trends in the sector. This will include new specially produced learning resources for schools (inspired by broader programme themes) and a comprehensive programme of networking and professional development opportunities, including our annual conference, publishing and research programmes. We are committed to learning in public and focussing on practices of care.

Creative People and Place St Helens and Knowsley

We have run a dynamic Creative People and Places programme since 2014. Through this programme, which has continued funding until 2025, we will support a co-created programme of place based activity reaching large audiences across St Helens, and from 2022, neighbouring Knowsley. We will continue to support the development of community and social arts practices by creating opportunities for engagement between artists and diverse communities. We will continue to broaden opportunities for engagement with audiences and communities from both locations.

BUILDING BLOCKS

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POSSIBILITY & THE RADICAL IMAGINATION

We intend all our projects to have the potential to be **radical spaces of imagination** and action, exploring new forms of knowledge and building what tomorrow might look like - together. As an organisation committed to social justice, we have recognised that the ongoing growth and development of Heart of Glass, the arts 'ecology', and civil society as a whole can only be achieved by a process of creative exchange, critical reflection, and a willingness to take risks and address new challenges. By actively seeking out new ways of being together, new ideas, partnerships and collaborations while working across borders and barriers, we seek to support work which is purposeful and relevant and leads to energy, growth, and **possibilities**.



This involves reaching out internationally to colleagues who challenge us, who inspire us and who enable us to learn. Conversations with peers such as Art Asia Activism, A Blade of Grass in the USA and long-term partners such as Create Ireland have been central to the development of our thinking. As a committed partner in the field of social art practice, we want to create the possibility to make alliances across borders, connect across territories and learn from one another for all engaged in this practice.

“

Brought a tear to my eye'

Audience member about Ella Otomewo's
Poem at the Book Stop (Takeover 2022).

11. Our Collaborators

Community, Artists, Contexts and Audiences

Children and Young People

Our future work with Children & Young People (including schools) will explore who and what impacts young people's lives it will try to understand how each of these elements impact on their physical and mental health and well-being.

It will mean working creatively with our young people and the adults who work with them to understand how best we empower them to speak out about the issues they care about, but more importantly to ensure their voices are listened to and actively heard.

The theme of Speculative Futures will drive through these three years, focusing on: A Social Justice and Rights based approach, to enabling children and young people to contribute to the world they are/will be growing up into and, in particular exploring issues identified by our children and young people themselves, including the environment. We will do this by building on the experience of past projects, the Book of St Helens, the School for Invisible Urbanists and Running on Fumes, which all addressed young people's concerns and dreams for our region. We will also explore different ways in which artist-led approaches can contribute to supporting creativity and critical thinking across the curriculum. We will continue to work with artists and teachers to develop Continuous Professional Development opportunities and creative resources and deliver a programme of Arts Award Activities across our Liverpool City Region schools network.

Communities

Our work with communities will focus on three key intersecting long-term lines of enquiry which have emerged through relationship building with communities, and will look at:

Grief. Stemming from our longstanding work around suicide and increasingly encompassing a wider range of experiences, from loss of homeland and ecological grief, we will explore grief as an active site of community solidarity, activism, and to reimage futures. This will include further stages of the Suicide Chronicles with Mark Storer, working with communities in Tallaght, in Dublin and focusing on young people (Yr 1). Working with farming communities in Anglesey, while also exploring international contacts in terms of what it means to lose your land and the changes that have happened in the UK through Brexit. Parallel to this will be a new project with Larry Achiampong, A Letter, A Pledge, A Funeral exploring themes of mental health and love, but examining that experience from the particular circumstances of young black men and how migration histories play into that experience.

Movement. Flowing from our deep-rooted collaboration with communities with migration experiences we will explore human migration in its context of historical and present colonial politics, conflict and climate emergency as well as a wider exploration of the act and process of movement. This will include the commission *The Bite of the Emperor*, working with Artist Youngsook Choi to develop her research around ecological grief and spaces of solidarity and action, linking into histories of land and post-industrial landscapes like St Helens.

Voice. Emerging from long-term work with disability justice artists, activists and communities and exploring questions of whose voices are heard, listened to, valued and acted upon in this work will focus on who has the agency to make meaning, whose stories are archived and who manages this creation of history?

Cultural Practitioners

Alongside this we will continue to seek to build on our local, national and international partnerships to create opportunities for shared and collective learning for creative and cultural practitioners. We believe we are firmly established as a national exemplar in this area and uniquely placed within the Arts Council's portfolio to support creative and cultural communities and share our learning to support the development of a more creative country. A place where art, artists and communities articulate their diverse experiences and shape our collective future.

Creative People & Cultural Communities

We seek to expand upon our successful methodology 'Town As Art Centre'. With the support of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and following extensive research conducted by external consultants we wish to be more tactical in our support of activities in neighbouring boroughs including Halton, Sefton, Knowsley and Wirral. We will do this by creating more opportunities for communities in these boroughs to develop their creativity and by supporting local communities and artists to collaborate on new projects. This will involve setting up partnerships in each location with community partners, from which to build new engagement opportunities through the development of a series of 'town as art centre' projects. This programme of work will be tailored to develop creative pathways for underserved communities of place and interest in each of these locations, working with us to design briefs, and develop a new series of co-created commissions and reach new audiences in each locale. We see ourselves as a bridge for this work, bringing community knowledge, arts practice and place-making into productive dialogue. We see this work as having significance in our region, but also nationally. It will also provide an opportunity for us to leverage a broader funding spectrum from a range of cross sector partners.

A Creative & Cultural Country: Building & Connecting

We recognise there is a gap in the sector nationally in terms of wider understanding and support of collaborative and social arts practices. The growing groundswell of work in the arena of art and civil society in recent years has asked us to transform our understanding of the potential role of art and artists across the full spectrum of civic life. This has also highlighted significant skills gaps. Artists working in social and community settings are often isolated, and lack key support. This is something that has been highlighted through various widely published reports and through our own continuous research and participation in this field of practice.

Following a period of scoping supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation we feel uniquely placed to address this need and create the foundation for a more supported and professional cultural sector in the arena of collaborative and social arts practice. Our programme over the next three years will seek to support artists, collaborators, producers and commissioners. We will develop a package of development support for the key constituents of collaborative and social arts practice and amplify the reach of our already oversubscribed programmes of support.

International

As a founding partner of a four-year Creative Europe programme we have built a substantial international network. This has been further enhanced by our work with Liverpool and Manchester Combined Authorities to establish a cultural corridor between Ireland and the NW of England. Following the establishment of a new Irish Consulate to the NW of England, both Metro-Mayors engaged Heart of Glass to convene and establish a strategy to support cultural connections across the Irish Sea between artists and communities.

This work has significant potential to create opportunities for shared learning, networking and exchange. It is of particular significance given the re-framing of our international relationships in a post-Brexit world. Our overarching ambition in this area of work is to develop an international network of partners, organisations, communities and creative practitioners who can connect and explore themes of creative engagement, civic participation, place-making and research. We feel uniquely placed to build upon our track record to date in this area and feel more than ever that connecting cross border collaboration and rooted local knowledge offers unlimited possibilities.

St Helens and Knowsley

As a member of the Creative People and Places programme since 2014, we will continue to develop work with and by communities across Knowsley and St Helens. This programme of work is supported by Arts Council England, with confirmed support extending to 2025 currently. Our programme, shaped and supported by a diverse consortium of partners focuses on four interlinked programmes of work, focused on creating opportunities for artists and communities to develop new work across both locations, to support the arts and community sector to shape the future of the places they call home, to create pathways for diverse publics to engage with work through a number of different ways, and to consider practice support, to develop the possibility and capacity for socially engaged practices in our boroughs. Our place based work generates opportunities for hyper local practices, communal moments where we can come together, and interventions within community asset spaces.

BUILDING BLOCKS

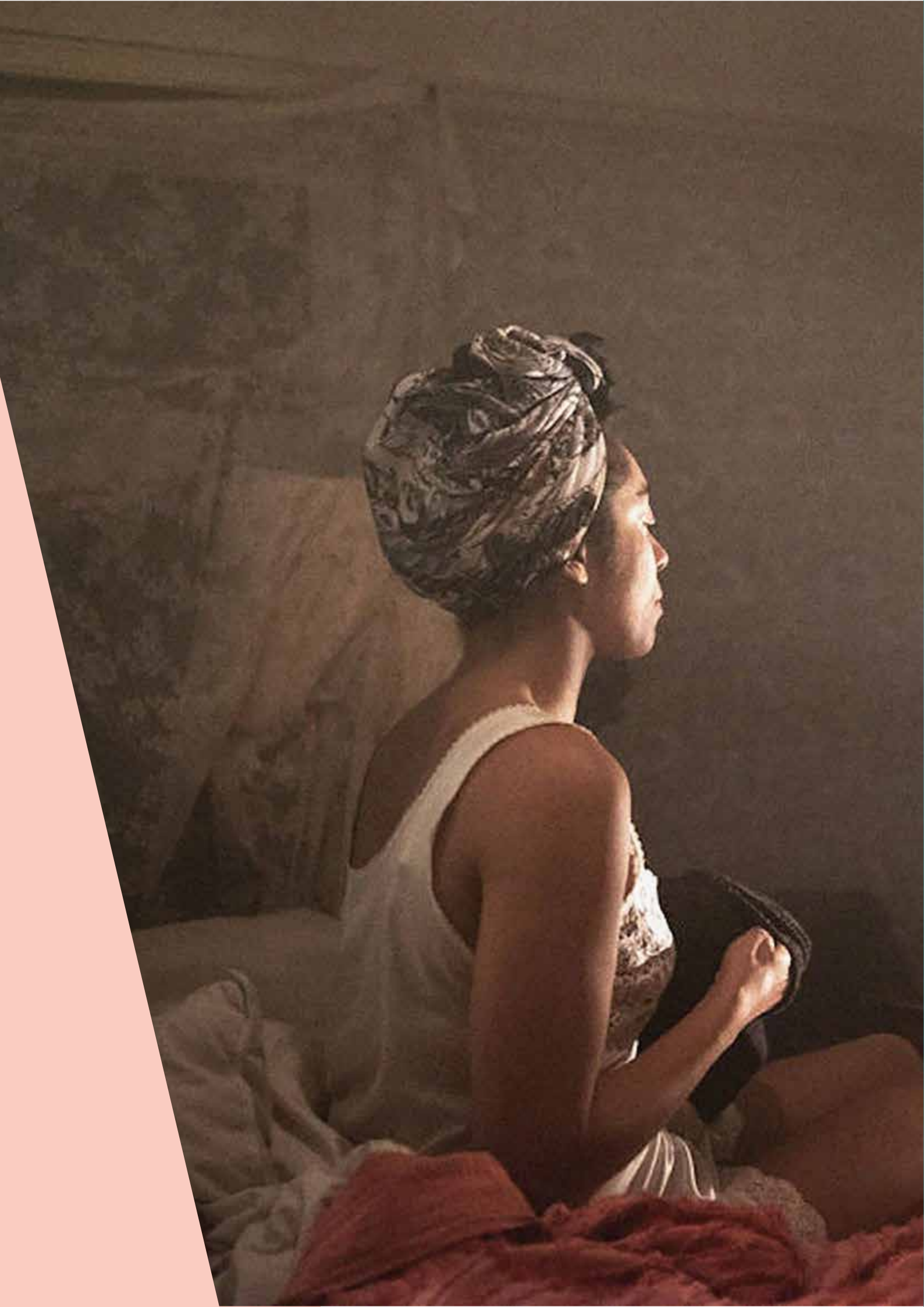
9

LEARNING & UNLEARNING

More and more artists and arts organisations are being asked to engage in social art practice. However there is currently a lack of support structures and understanding of this practice within the arts ecology and the funding and policy landscape. As a learning organisation, we feel the imperative to not only challenge inequalities and injustices, in the arts and in the wider community, but also to offer new insights, new models, new structures to help bring about change at a systemic level. We call this **learning in public**. We see all of our work as action research, and seek to create spaces to learn and **unlearn** together; considering ways of countering injustice, that does not seek to shame or judge.



Through the process of archiving and learning in public, we hope to create a rich bank of resources which we as and the sector as a whole, can draw upon as we move forward. Alongside that, we plan to further explore our town as art centre approach and the idea of us being a custodian, or one of a number of custodians of this field of practice in terms of archives and shared learning, supporting the practice as a nationally focused organisation. This will involve listening, acting, and considering what we can offer through our own experience and resources. In particular over the coming years we're interested in supporting a practice of care, and not a practice of resilience, as a driver for our learning programmes. We hope by focusing on the sustainability and maintenance of care practices, we might also contribute to a practical understanding of care in a sector that is overwhelmed by theoretical dialogues – or in simple terms, put the theory of care into practice.





“

*Here is a show that inspires its audience to
listen, respond and act with kindness”*

Guardian 4 star review of TORCH

12. Our Team

TRUSTEES

Chair: Joanna Rowlands

Joanna is an experienced marketing and communications professional with a broad range of in-house and agency experience and is currently Assistant Director (Marketing & Communications) at ACC, Liverpool.

Vice-Chair: Gordon Pennington (He/Him)

Gordon currently volunteers running A Warm Welcome, a service for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in St Helens. He is a member of the Steering group for the Creative People and Places programme and was instrumental in the initiation of Heart of Glass.

Treasurer: Augusta Uzomah-Uwalaka

A strategic analyst, critical thinker, and problem solver with more than 12 years' experience in business analysis, project management, finance operations, internal auditing, banking, and community development, Augusta was born and raised in Northern Nigeria. She has first-hand experience seeing the challenges children and young people face daily to access social amenities such as good quality education, health services and clean water. This experience has inspired her continued work in community development and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Hannah Firth

Hannah is Director of Programme at Chapter (Cardiff), leading the teams in Visual Art, Film, Performance and Learning to develop and deliver an adventurous multi-artform programme.

Jesse Jones

Jesse is a Dublin-based artist. Her practice crosses the media of film, performance and installation. Often working through collaborative structures, she explores how historical instances of communal culture may hold resonance in our current social and political experiences. Jesse has been a Trustee since xxxx and is a member of the Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Trustee subgroup.

John Whaling

John leads on all aspects of the Liverpool City Region's innovation agenda in his role of Innovation Lead, Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority.

Doreen Foster

Doreen is a 2005/06 Clore Fellow and Director at Warwick Arts Centre, a role she started in September 2018. Between April 2013 and June 2018 she was deputy director at Black Cultural Archives.

Julia Carruthers

Julia is currently Programme Director at Warwick Arts Centre on the University of Warwick campus. She was formerly Head of Dance & Performance at Southbank Centre 2000-2008, and Director of the Dublin Dance Festival (2012-2015).

Paul Hogan

Paul previously worked as a Director at the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham for a ten-year period with responsibility for libraries, arts and events, museums and heritage, parks and sport and physical activity. In that time, he was borough lead for the 2012 Olympics. Paul is formerly the first Director of the Citadel Arts Centre in St. Helens.

Julia Samuels

Passionate about equality, diversity and inclusion, Julia Samuels is a theatre/film director, writer, producer and facilitator. Previously Co-Artistic Director at the fabulous 20 Stories High, Julia brings a wealth of experience in the arts. Julia has been a Trustee since 2022 and is a member of the Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Trustee subgroup.

Hetal Hathiwala

Hetal is an Associate & Solicitor in Jackson Lees' Court of Protection team, based in Liverpool. As Head of the firm's Diversity Committee, Hetal is committed to pushing for more diverse, understanding and forward-thinking spaces. Hetal has been a Trustee since 2022 and is a member of the Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Trustee subgroup.

Bisi Osundeko

Bisi joined our Board after serving as a key member of our Creative People and Places consortium. A community activist, author and trainer, she is one of the three local councillors for Parr in St Helens, and an Executive Member of Labour Women's Network. Bisi has been a Trustee since 2022.

Nanette Mellor

Nanette has dedicated her career to working for disabled people for over twenty years and has experience in the field spanning the public, private and third sector. As the Brain Charity's CEO Nanette has responsibility for the strategic direction, business development and financial sustainability of the organisation.

Barbra Carlisle

Barbra has worked for and with charities, local authorities, private start-ups, global corporates and for government agencies influencing, persuading and changing systems and processes, habits and behaviours. Her goal has remained consistent throughout – to create change for good to improve equity of opportunity, promote fairness and respect and give those who are often unheard a voice.



This podcast is the reality of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers. Some were a little bit down but now in Season Two we see other sides of the coin. For example, in Season Two some of us are now refugees. You can see the difference between being an asylum seeker and a refugee. And now we have a taste of freedom. You can see that journey through the podcast. We have started to explore other things. We have a gaming episode. You might think: asylum seekers and gaming? We also have hobbies and that's important. We suffer and are traumatised, but we are also people who love and enjoy other things".

Participant, *The Mic Drop*

12. Our Team

Staff Team

Amy Cummings (She/Her)

Marketing and Communications Assistant
(Apprenticeship)

Angy (Angharad) Williams (She/Her)

Head of Programme, CPP

Anna Kronenburg (She/Her)

Producer, CPP

Arthur Britney Joestar (They/Them)

Programme Assistant, NPO

Emily Gee (She/They)

Senior Producer, NPO

Emma Curd (She/Her)

Learning Producer, NPO

Kate Houlton (She/Her)

Children & Young People's Producer, NPO

Lucie Davies (She/Her)

Head of Marketing and Communications

Nat (Natalie) Hughes (She/Her)

Producer, NPO

Patrick Fox (He/Him)

Chief Executive

Rhyannon Parry (She/Her)

Producer, CPP

Richard Grimes (He/Him)

Finance and Operations Manager

Sinéad Nunes (She/Her)

Marketing and Audience Development
Manager

Associates

Chrissie Tiller

Independent Chair / Creative People and
Places

Hugh Ortega

Research Associate / University of Central
Lancashire

Radka Dolinska

Documentation & Photography

Rachel Gnagniko

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Consultant

Jane Howard

Human Resources Support

Kat (Kathryn) Dempsey (She/Her)

Development and Strategy Associate



“

It helps to open up the world about what children can do. The children can see career pathways now that they couldn't see before. They ask more questions.”

Participating Teacher about our
Schools' Artist in Residence programme

13. Our Partners and Supporters

Cross sector and transnational partnership is a key to our work. This includes collaborations across local authorities and schools in Liverpool City Region and with a vast array of community and voluntary organisations locally and nationally, as well as a range of International partners. Some are listed here:

20 Stories High
Acorn Farm
Age UK Victoria Park
APEX
Apex Trust
Army Reserves St Helens and surrounding area
Art Asia Activism
Autism & Asperger Group
Autism Friendship Group
Autism Friendship Club
BuzzHub / St Helens Coalition of Disabled People
Cassandras
CGL Change Grow Live
Chain Lane Community Centre
Chrysalis Centre
Citadel Arts Centre
Crafty Crafty Carers
Create Ireland
Creative Alternatives
Deafness Resource Centre
Derbyshire Hill Family Centre
Dungeons and Dragons group Momos
Esme Fairbairn Trust
Foundation for Art and Creative Technology
Female Carmel College Performance Students
Female St Helens College Performance Students
Fire Cadets
Former miners and employees of Pilkingtons and Beechams
Friends Meeting House
Friends Meeting House – Quaker House
Granada Foundation
Haydock Band
Haydock Library / Craft Ladies
Heald Farm Court Residents
Healthy Living Coffee and Chat

Helena/Torus Refuge	Shakespeare North
Hope Centre	St Augustines
Hope House	St Cuthberts School
Homotopia	St Helens Baptist Church
Incredible Edible	St Helens Carers Centre
Junior Park Run	St Helens Central Library
KDC Stockbridge	St Helens Clubland Revellers
Knit and Natter Newton Le Willows	St Helens Council
Knowsley Council	St Helens Gospel Choir
Knowsley Safari Park	St Helens Historic Society
Lansbury Bridge School and Sports College	St Helens & Knowsley College
Liverpool Cultural Education Partnership	St Helens Mind
Lucem House Community Cinema	St Helens Parish Church
Men Cap	St Helens Police
Merseycare	St Helens Young Carers Centre
Mersey Forest	St Mary's Primary Newton Le Willows
Mill Green	St Peter's C of E Primary School Newton Le
Mini Police	Willows Tear Drops Supporting Homeless
Momos Coffee Shop	Thatto Heath Library
Newton Le Willows Knit and Natter	The Book Stop
Newtown Boys and Girls club	The Bluecoat
NW Army Reserve Units	The Chinese Buffet
Open Eye Gallery	The Hardshaw Centre
Over the Rainbow – LGBTQ+	The Running Horses
Parr Mount Court Residents	The Welcome Cafe
Papyrus	The World of Glass
Patricia Court Residents	Time for Tea / Torus
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	Trapwood Community Centre
Perth – F.A.N.S (Friends and Neighbours)	U3A
Phoenix Plant Based Eatery	UC Crew
Platform Arts	United Reform Church
Portico Nursery	Vox Voices
Public Health St Helens	Warm Welcome
Queens Park Health & Fitness	Wildcard ABC Amateur Boxing Gym
Raglan Court Residents	Wonder Arts
Rainford Band	YMCA St Helens
Rainford High School	Your Voice Your Choice
Reeve Court Residents	
Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)	
Sahir House	



“

I was sad when it was over. It was such a joy to give birth to this piece...With the pandemic, this gave me something to invest in... It's been good to be able to reflect on it and talk about it”.

Commissioned Artist

BUILDING BLOCKS

10

ETHICS & ENVIRONMENT

We believe resolutely that we have a responsibility to care for and protect the **environment** in which we operate. We are making a strategic effort to embed environmental subjects and methods throughout the outputs, structures and networks of our organisation. We are driven by an **ethics of commoning**, which commits us to concerning ourselves with the environmental and organisational ecologies we operate within.



“The commons are the things that we inherit and create jointly, and that will (hopefully) last for generations to come. The commons consists of gifts of nature such as air, oceans and wildlife as well as shared social creations such as libraries, public spaces, scientific research and creative works”¹.

The commoning approach to climate action invites people to participate in the transition, to have a stake, not just a say, and shape the response. We see our role in the ‘possibility space’ for action - developing cooperative community-based action through our projects - and exploring climate justice through our project themes. We encourage our partners and members of the wider community to join us in owning environmentalism as a practice, approach and ethical driver through which we work cooperatively to make change.

14. Our Engine

Heart of Glass is a Registered Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee. We have a Board of Trustees and a number of Trustee sub-groups. Our Board of Trustees meets a minimum of four times per year with at least one annual staff and Board development day. Our Board has established sub-groups for Finance and Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion who have set Terms of Reference and meet four times per year before each Board meeting to review progress in detail with the staff team and make recommendations to the wider Board. We also have Board “leads” in the areas of Safeguarding, Health and Safety, and Environmental Sustainability. These Board members provide a level of greater supervision and support for the staff in their respective areas of expertise.

In 2021 the Board reviewed our Memorandum and Articles of Association, reflecting on the charitable objectives which were considered still appropriate given our organisational mission. We made several changes to Board membership clauses, adding in fixed length of term to enable us to retire Board members after 4 years. We also set up a Board succession committee made up of the Chair and 3 other Trustees who worked with consultant Rachel Gnagniko and Executive Director to develop a succession plan for 2021- 2023 with a review of our recruitment processes, an updated skills audit template and focus on widening the diversity of the Board.

Our Board is made up of a minimum of 12 individuals who have been appointed to the Board for their skills, experience and expertise relevant to the organisation. It is a Board that is representative of our community and appropriately skilled and fit for purpose for our organisation. We carry out an annual skills and expertise review. Since 2021 we have recruited 6 new trustees through an open recruitment process. We matched new Board members to skills gaps in order to grow the relevance of the Board to our community, and bring on board a wider set of lived experiences.

Our new Trustees undertake a full induction process which includes reviewing all policies, meeting the staff team, having a “board buddy” and meetings with the Chair and Chief Executive.

We have a leadership team of Chief Executive and Executive Director. The Chair provides management of the Chief Executive, having regular meetings and continuous performance management against set objectives. We have a clear line management structure throughout the organisation and we practice continuous performance management. We have clear organisational timelines, a policy review timeline with excellent policies, and regular working groups and all staff meetings that offer opportunity for review and reflection of progress against our objectives and reflection of feedback from both within and outside of the organisation.



Thank you so much for the screening and the warm welcome, a thought-provoking film.”

Chrissy, attendee of community film programme at Lucem House.

We provide reports for the Board before each meeting. These reports are based upon our organisational objectives, key funding plans, our Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, Fundraising Plan and our Environmental Action Plan.

We are committed to reducing the negative environmental impacts of our activities, in particular those relating to (but not limited to):

- Our office including use of resources (mainly paper, inks and stationery),
- Where we operate including energy use, water use and waste business travel
- Our energy use including communications materials:
- Use of resources (mainly paper and inks)
- Our procurement decisions.

We are committed to understanding, measuring, improving and communicating our environmental performance. In order to change our working practices and decrease our environmental impact we will assess our organisational activities and identify areas where we can minimise impacts; minimise waste through careful and efficient use of all materials and energy, purchase sustainable products wherever feasible [e.g. recycled, FSC or low environmental impact products and energy from renewable sources, publicise our environmental position, train employees in good environmental practice and encourage employee involvement in environmental action; reduce risks from environmental, health or safety hazards for employees and others in the vicinity of our operations; and consider environmental and ethical issues in investment decisions by not accepting any funding from companies directly involved in activities that run contrary to our overall charitable objectives / vision / aims for example companies involved with animal testing; genetic engineering; human rights abuses; intensive farming; manufacture of environmentally hazardous products or chemicals; military contracts; mining; nuclear power; third world debt; third world marketing; the manufacture of tobacco; and water pollution.

In late 2021 we also set up a Board Slack, which included the ability to set up sub-group forums, share documents and share information outside of Board meetings. We use this to support dialogue between the Leadership team and Board members in between meetings. This includes sub-group working, information sharing such as recent press or invitations to events, publishing draft policies for review and comment in order to reduce the time spent on policy feedback in meetings and enable meeting time spent on monitoring targets and planning.

We have a set of Conflict of Interest policies, one for trustees and one for staff. These policies are accompanied by a Conflict of Interest declaration that is completed annually, and as appropriate when a potential conflict arises. Our Company Handbook is reviewed annually and new policy areas are developed beyond legal compliance on a continuous basis to shape our thinking and consider how best to enshrine our values into every facet of our operation.

We are well run and alongside our Board we have a strong workforce and support an inclusive working culture with leadership coming from across the entire organisation through working groups and staff away days, all staff research and reflection, and a commitment to staff care and well-being.

We have efficient systems and procedures in place and work with specialist associates in Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Health and Safety and Human Resources.

Our engine is the supportive structure of our work, and is continuously reviewed based on the experience of our delivery.



15. Our Stats

Since our inception we have supported the creation of dynamic art works co-created with communities that reach diverse audiences. We are recognised as a national and international contributor to the field of collaborative and social arts practice.

We have supported over 750 artists across different career stages to work with 60000+ participants to reach audiences in excess of 250000.

As part of our commitment to Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI), we set targets to work with practitioners from protected characteristic groups. Typically we've exceeded those targets annually (90% on average).

In 2019 we were awarded Arts Organisation of the Year as part of the Liverpool City Region Culture Awards and in 2022 Best Creativity in Schools.

Here are some examples of past projects:

The Book of St Helens

National Portfolio Children and Young People's (CYP) Programme

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/tbosh

In 2021, we commissioned artists Andy Field and Beckie Darlington to work with 146 Primary School Children to imagine a new vision for St Helens. The Book of St Helens, is a guidebook created by children for adults with a particular focus on decision makers and those who have influence on the town. It invites the reader to consider the town through the imagination and perspectives of its young people, highlighting the places the children love, what they wish could be better and the changes they would make if they were in charge.

The Faculty North

In partnership with In Situ Learning Programme / NPO

www.heartofglass.org.uk/news-and-resources/resources/the-faculty-north-resources

In 2021 we teamed up with In-Situ to deliver The Faculty North. This artist development programme provided 35 people with the opportunity to explore the practice of socially engaged art in a collaborative setting. The Faculty North was led by Chrissie Tiller (Power Up) and Kerry Morrison (In Situ co-founder and artist) and delivered online due to Covid-19. All the sessions were recorded and have now been edited into resources for everyone to use, which you can find here or by searching Faculty North Resources on our website.

Textbook

National Portfolio CYP Programme

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/textbook

In 2021, Learner in Residence, Sarah Bailey undertook a 12-month action research project with ten teachers from a variety of social and educational contexts across England. They came together during a global pandemic to explore the most fundamental questions about schools and imagine alternatives the future of education. These conversations were captured within a publication (Textbook) and shared with academics, artists, thinkers, educators and cultural practitioners, along with an invitation to be part of a developing conversation and collective imagining of an alternative future for our schools.

Takeover 2015-present

Creative People and Places (CPP) Annual Programme

www.heartofglass.org.uk/project-and-events/events/take-over-2022

Our annual Take Over festival programme is a core strand of our Creative People and Places Programme. This year's programme (2022) was co-curated with artist Lowri Evans, and took the form of events, exhibitions, films, participatory performances and more in unexpected spaces and venues across St Helens and Knowsley. Past editions of Take Over have been developed with Scottee (who originated the original concept), vacuum cleaner and Frank Cottrell Boyce and has included contributions from practitioners such as Jess Thom, Marisa Carnesky, La Gateau Chocolat, Turntable Theatre, Michelle Browne, Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw, Sonia Hughes and Eggs Collective.

Running on Fumes

National Portfolio CYP Programme

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/running-on-fumes

Running On Fumes, a short film created by Caroline Smith in collaboration with ten young people in St Helens exploring high street through the voices and perspectives of young people. It explores how COVID has impacted their community and what are their hopes for the future.

With For About 2015-present

National Portfolio Learning Programme

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/with-for-about

With For About is our conference series which began in 2015. Subsequent episodes of the conference have taken place in person and online. They are designed to respond to fierce and urgent questions in the field of social and collaborative arts practice, and aimed at artists, producers, commissioners, collaborators and researchers. Past themes have included Art & Activism, Art & Democracy and Care & Crisis, and drawn on a range of experienced practitioners, thinkers and activists locally, nationally and internationally.

Follow The Light / Keep Growing Keep Going

CPP Commissions

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/nomad-clan

In 2021 we brought together residents in Parr, St Helens and internationally acclaimed street art duo Nomad Clan to design two murals, reflecting their area's rich industrial heritage and its strong community spirit. The designs for the project were developed through workshops with local residents. These workshops were led by Nomad Clan and Heart of Glass artist-in-residence, Michelle Wren, with funding and support from the Torus Foundation. Two murals were produced in a period of collaborative research and story gathering. Both filmic and dreamlike, one mural depicts an illuminated lantern, a nod to the area's industrial heritage, with moths all around. Opposite, a second mural depicts the head of a young person surrounded by a cloud of colourful motifs.

Torch as part of HELEN

National Portfolio Commissions

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/torch

In November 2018 ANU, the multi-award winning multidisciplinary company heralded by The Irish Times as making the "most searing works of the past decade", developed an explosive new site-responsive performance in St Helens. Simultaneously uplifting and unsettling, TORCH blurred the edges between the real and imagined, tearing through private and public spaces and taking audiences on a high octane, unrelenting journey. The outcome of a two year research phase between ANU and women from St Helens, this brand new all female production delved into historical and contemporary events, bringing the voices of communities and untold stories to the fore. Highlighted as a show of the year by both the Stage and Guardian, the work was part of a long term collaboration with idle women, titled Helen, a programme of work creating opportunities for women with a range of experiences and confidence to get involved; from conversation to performance, plumbing to demolition, decorating to stage management.

The Pip Tapes

National Portfolio Commissions

The PIP Tapes is a collaborative project led by sound artist Gemma Nash. It explores the journey of disability rights, the role of the cassette tape in crip culture and its use as a tool of resistance and record. When you hear the word PIP, you might think of Charles Dickens and the dark lives of the underprivileged during the Victorian era. But this piece is not about Victorian England and its poverty, squalor and inequality; it's about modern day disability rights, crip culture, cassette tapes and the introduction of Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The PIP Tapes is on display as part of an exhibition exploring disabled people's activism at People's History Museum: Nothing About Us Without Us from November 2022 - October 2023.

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/the-pip-tapes

Remote Commissions / A Compendium of Care

(National Portfolio) Artist Research and Development

A series of projects / commissions supporting artist research and action, collected and presented as a compendium of care and published online. Following the creation of 51 commission opportunities during a period of national lockdown, the works created by diverse artists and connecting with community partners collectively explored themes of care and acts of solidarity.

www.heartofglass.org.uk/news-and-resources/thoughts/the-care-compendium-chapter-one

The Suicide Chronicles

National Portfolio Commissions

The Suicide Chronicles is an ongoing project emerging from Baa Baa Baric: Have You Any Pull? by Mark Storor with the communities of St Helens. It is a long-term artistic questioning of civilisation as our most brutal act of barbarism. St Helens, which has one of the highest rates of suicide in the UK, is a town emblematic of a devastating national trend. But it could also be the town which is prepared to collectively take this on, to find a language and a model of practice that doesn't exist in British society at the moment so that we may together address what is happening to our communities. Each Chronicle takes focus on one individual story or one particular aspect of suicide ensuring that the work is sharp, vivid and truthful. In coming together, the collective Chronicles work in dialogue with each other, giving form to the infinitely complex and multi-layered nature of suicide.

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/the-suicide-chronicles

'The Talk' Learning Resource **National Portfolio Children &** **Young People / Learning**

This project was created by artist Marjorie H Morgan and support you to start and continue conversations about racism and prejudice with young people across all key stages and areas of the curriculum. A set of learning resources (including a teacher's pack, films and flash cards) celebrating the achievements (sometimes overlooked or ignored) of 20 Black British individuals, including Michaela Coel, Lilian Bader, Professor Nira Chamberlain, and Marcus Rashford. The Talk Learning Resource (TTLR) aims to equip teachers with the starting points for wider structured discussions around race and racism, especially in the UK, and to support the vital work needed to increase learning and understanding of racial literacy.

www.heartofglass.org.uk/news-and-resources/resources/the-talk-learning-resource

BUILDING BLOCKS

ONGOING

Holding space for new knowledge, experience and learning...

“

Lots of arts organisations deliver the work and talk about it but... a lot of social practice is linked to the social and political agenda and lots of arts organisations are not really investing energy and resources into talking about the problem's links to the artwork. It was nice that they opened up the capacity of their support”.

Artist, Remote Commissions 2021

16. Credits & Appendices

This document was developed through combined research across our team, and with partners, communities, artists and through our projects and project evaluations. It was edited by Chrissie Tiller and Patrick Fox in 2022.

Image Credits:
Radka Dolinska and Stephen King

Design: Dave Darcy

With thanks to all of our collaborators past, present and future....

You can find out more about Heart of Glass by visiting our website www.heartofglass.org.uk or by following us on social media Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, or by signing up to our newsletter by emailing info@heartofglass.org.uk

We'd also like to draw your attention to the following publications and podcasts we've developed or been involved with (full credits available in the links) which provide additional insight into our practice and thinking:

heartofglass



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



phf Paul Hamlyn
Foundation



Made possible with
**Heritage
Fund**



**Esmée
Fairbairn**
FOUNDATION

17. Publications & Podcast

In Print / Online

Considering Co-Creation

Commissioned by Arts Council England, and produced by Heart of Glass and Battersea Arts Centre with varied contributors. This is a resource document considering 'co-creation'.

www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/considering-co-creation

Power Up

Produced by Heart of Glass Associate Chrissie Tiller as part of research commissioned by the Creative People and Places peer learning network. This research reevaluates what we mean by offering people access to culture.

www.artworksalliance.org.uk/awa-resource/power-up/

Praxis Volume One and Volume Two

Publications produced by Heart of Glass and co-published with Live Art Development Agency, both volumes invite a range of artists and thinkers to reflect on social and collaborative arts practice and contexts.

www.thisisunbound.co.uk/products/praxis-vols-1-2-special-offer

Developing Collaborative and Social Arts Practice: The Heart of Glass Research Partnership (2014-2017)

A research study focussed on the work of Heart of Glass between 2014-2017, produced by University of Central Lancashire.

<https://clou.uclan.ac.uk/24082/1/Ally%20Roy%20HoG.pdf>

Young Hearts Resources

Two recorded conversations between Fox Irving and Women Working Class Network Artists exploring the challenges faced by young working class women accessing creative and cultural opportunities.

www.heartofglass.org.uk/news-and-resources/resources/young-hearts-resources

Podcasts / Audio

Conversations Over A Brew

Our podcast series of intimate recorded conversations exploring the stories of the people we make art with.

<https://www.heartofglass.org.uk/news-and-resources/podcasts>

The Mic Drop

A collaborative podcast with the sole purpose of creating a space 'for migrants by migrants' exercising agency and exchange through a shared space of collective thinking, storytelling and debate'. It is created through a long-term collaboration between members of Many Hands One Heart and Larry Achiampong - Produced by Heart of Glass.

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/the-mic-drop

The Suicide Chronicles: Conversations

These conversations are hosted by Angela Samata and create a space for reflecting upon the processes and journeys behind the The Suicide Chronicles, a long term artistic project led by Mark Storor produced by Heart of Glass, exploring how we might collectively create a language to share our experiences of suicide.

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/the-suicide-chronicles-conversations



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ONGOING

Holding space for new knowledge, experience and learning...



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Art everywhere
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