

**HERE
AND NOW**



EVALUATION REPORT



25

**Future
Arts
Centres**

HERE & NOW

Evaluation Report

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INTRODUCTION

We are very proud of everything that has been achieved over the last two years of Here and Now, especially given the incredibly challenging and changing circumstances that we have all been working in. More than 2,500 participants have explored their creativity by taking part in projects which have been led by 38 artists, 16 organisations and 453 co-creators. As a result more than 940,000 audience members have experienced culture made by and for their local community.

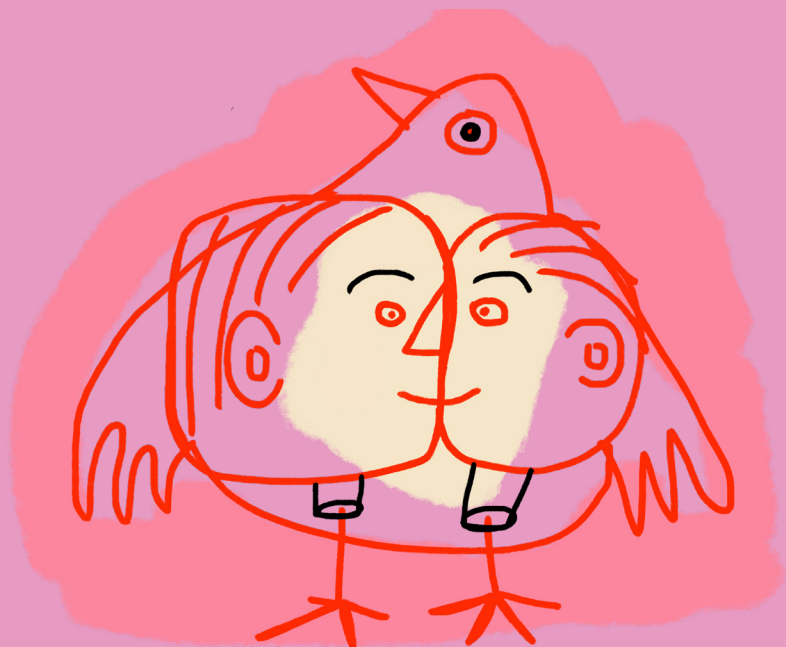
The projects that have made up Here and Now have kept freelance artists in work, helped young people secure long term employment in the arts and even stopped a company from going into administration.

At a time where people are experiencing loneliness and social isolation at unprecedented levels, Here and Now projects have united communities, created space for participants, artists and co-creators to forge new friendships and given everyone involved direction, hope and a sense of community at some of the most challenging moments of their lives.

Taken as a whole, the Here and Now projects feel like a potential blueprint for the future of the arts in England, a future where communities are empowered to take control of their own creativity and are able to play a part in deciding what culture should be available in their local area.

As we move into the new year we are excited to see how the learning from Here and Now is taken forward to inspire future projects which have community and participation at their heart.

Annabel Turpin and Gavin Barlow
Co-leads, Future Arts Centres



HERE AND NOW – 40 PROJECTS TO CELEBRATE 25 YEARS

Here and Now was a national and local celebration of culture within communities, conceived to mark the 25th anniversary of the National Lottery. It gave communities an opportunity to articulate their hopes and dreams, share and bond over the realities that their communities experience and access creativity and culture.

Future Arts Centres invited 40 arts centres across the country from Exeter to South-Shields to take part in the project. Centres ranged in size and location from the large to the small and urban to the rural. Their experience of commissioning in collaboration with their local communities also varied, but what united them was their desire to commit to creating work which placed people at its core.

Each of these centres responded to the same brief, written by a collection of nine artists. The brief invited each centre to select an artist and a community to work with who would challenge them, and who they had not worked with before. In turn, each artist was invited to create a piece of work which would inspire the people who experienced it to connect with one another. Conversation, access and community was at the heart of Here and Now from the very start.



Alongside each of these local projects, Future Arts Centres commissioned a national project which invited four associate writers - Brigitte Aphrodite, Vanessa Kisuule, Nikesh Shukla and Kate Fox, to creatively respond to Here and Now. They were asked to reflect on projects, places, people, hopes and dreams, aspirations and fears, the bigger picture of the role arts centres play in our communities, and the power that participating in the arts can have. Each writer selected a number of projects to visit and travelled up and down the country when restrictions were eased, immersing themselves (and in the case of Brigitte, their entire family) in the activities and the communities that were shaping them. The result is a series of 12, fifteen-minute podcasts which capture the essence of a variety of Here and Now projects and the arts centres that ran them. They celebrate and reflect on the creativity that was expressed, the communities that were formed and supported, and the challenges that were overcome, or are still to be overcome. To listen to the podcasts please visit the Here and Now [website](#).

Each of the Here and Now projects overcame extraordinary odds to take place and this was in no small part down to the sheer determination of the producers who commissioned them and the artists who led them. Projects varied from an intimate exploration of a graveyard and the fauna and flora that lived there, to young people taking a global look at the impact the climate emergency is having on our planet through circus; and the creation of an online secular church which brought together people from Folkestone to Seoul during the depths of lockdown, to a project on a single street in Cambridge which helped neighbours (many of whom had lived next door to each other for years, but remained strangers) get to know one another.



'Would Like to Meet', Scottee and Friends Ltd. – Cambridge Junction



'Void', Company Chameleon – Z-Arts. Image: Joel Chester Fildes

Each of these projects has had a significant impact on the communities they served. They have re-shaped the way the arts centres think about commissioning; they have helped overcome loneliness and isolation at an incredibly challenging time, and have demonstrated the importance of taking risk to learn new things and engage new communities. To read more about each of the projects that have been commissioned as part of Here and Now please visit the [project pages](#) of our website.

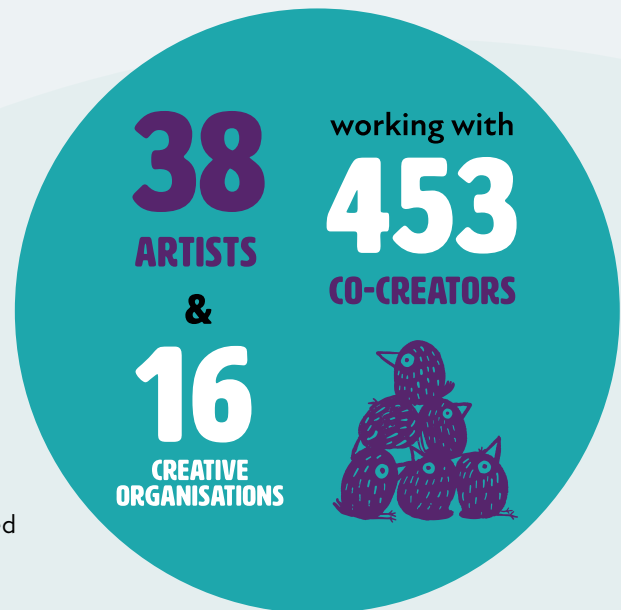
940,584
AUDIENCE MEMBERS
EXPERIENCING CULTURE
made by and for their
LOCAL COMMUNITY



INNOVATION

A new way of commissioning

From the very start of Here and Now we knew we wanted to think about new and innovative ways of commissioning. From the approach we took to setting the brief to the shape of the project outputs, we challenged the expectations and created a new way to engage diverse communities in the development of culture.



A new way to start

We started by rejecting the idea that briefs need to be written by those inside the arts centre. We wanted to bring in new perspectives, experiences and ideas, and who best to tell us what a brief should do and say than those who are most familiar with responding to them. Artists.

During a week-long residency in the autumn of 2019, nine artists - Brigitte Aphrodite, Chris Thorpe, Dawinder Bansal, Debris Stevenson, ESKA, Fabric Lenny, Freddie Opoku-Addaie, Vici Wreford-Sinnott, Victoria Pratt, and the co-leads of Future Arts Centres - Annabel Turpin and Gavin Barlow, came together to explore what the brief for Here and Now should say and how to say it.

For both the Future Arts Centres' leads and the artists the week felt very significant. For the artists, having access to the inner workings of the commissioning process allowed them to examine and critique it, and ultimately present it back to Annabel and Gavin in a new light – allowing them, as artistic directors of their own arts centres, to challenge and reframe their practice. The resulting brief was not what had been expected and allowed artists and arts centres to respond freely and creatively to the invitation.

The artist led approach and the license to try something completely different was very refreshing and gave us the confidence to think bravely and boldly about what we wanted to do.

– Joe Flavin, Director - The Core at Corby Cube

The redistribution of power in the early stages of the project went on to inform how many of the arts centres approached their commissions. From the artists they selected, to the confidence they had to allow the local community to make decisions which would truly shape their projects.

Who makes great culture?

For some organisations who were new to commissioning through a participatory process, Here and Now allowed them to re-imagine what good culture looked like and how it could be created. For Battersea Arts Centre the lack of pressure on engaging large numbers and creating a polished, finished production allowed them to “*re-imagine what live events can look like*” and change the way they approach and value engagement projects. Some arts centres were also enabled to embrace a truly artist led approach for the first time, including Creative Folkestone who said that it meant they had the confidence to trust an “*artist’s vision and embrace imperfection*”.

In addition to this, the line between participant and co-collaborator, and sometimes even artist, became blurred, and organisations and artists found themselves being led by the participants in a more significant way than they had anticipated. Skills were exchanged and participants were invited to make programming decisions. Projects took on a greater and unexpected depth because traditional boundaries were being challenged and hierarchies dismantled. Participants also found themselves taking on work as lead artists in projects outside of Here and Now or securing new employment as a result of participating in the project, the ripple effect of Here and Now on the wider community was significant in many cases. Participants who took part in projects with HOME Manchester, Newbury Corn Exchange, Battersea Arts Centre and Zest Theatre have all secured work as a result of participating in Here and Now.

It was great to be able to hand a lot of that over to the young people, who were much more versed in it than us. Their generation is much more digital, so it was great to set them tasks and they would come back with things that we just wouldn’t have considered.

– Keisha Thom, Lead Artist, ‘The Starter Kit’ – Contact



Culture Change

The project exposed the need and benefits of working cross departmentally, where programming, education, community and communications teams are involved in the development of projects from their conception. Organisations that explored this way of working not only found that it was a more inclusive approach, but it also allowed staff to recognise the value and significance of one another's work. This ultimately had a strengthening impact on the wider organisation and allowed hierarchies around programming and education or community departments to dissipate.



'Bluecoat Platform', Simon and Tom Bloor – Bluecoat. Image: FACT Video Production

Case Study:

BLUECOAT PLATFORM

It's the one project of 2021 that makes everyone smile when we talk about it.

– Marie-Anne McQuay, Curator - Bluecoat

Artists Simon and Tom Bloor worked with local school children from Liverpool to design and build 'Bluecoat Platform', a new temporary structure which acted as an event space for Bluecoat's courtyard over the summer of 2021.

'Bluecoat Platform' was inspired by the shapes and structures that the children made in the workshops with Simon and Tom. Resembling a scaled-up model of their designs, the playful sculpture created a physical platform allowing Bluecoat to bring their artistic activities, which were programmed in collaboration with local school children, out of the building for families to enjoy during the summer holidays.

The project has influenced and expanded the Bloors' practice by allowing them to reflect on the approach they take to developing their work and increase their profile as artists. As an organisation Bluecoat had the opportunity to test new ways of working and deepen professional relationships between their programme and participation teams. They have also grown in confidence around delivering participatory commissioning and are even more committed to bringing co-design into all elements of their programme. They hope that this commitment will support new audiences into the building.

A NATIONAL PROJECT – WITH A LOCAL IMPACT

Here and Now was a national project, with a very significant local impact for 40 communities. Having a central brief, which was delivered in unique ways by arts centres across England, was a new way of conceiving a national project. This approach allowed Here and Now to be hyper local and impactful for those who participated in each project, whilst still uniting a national community and telling a bigger story.

The National Story

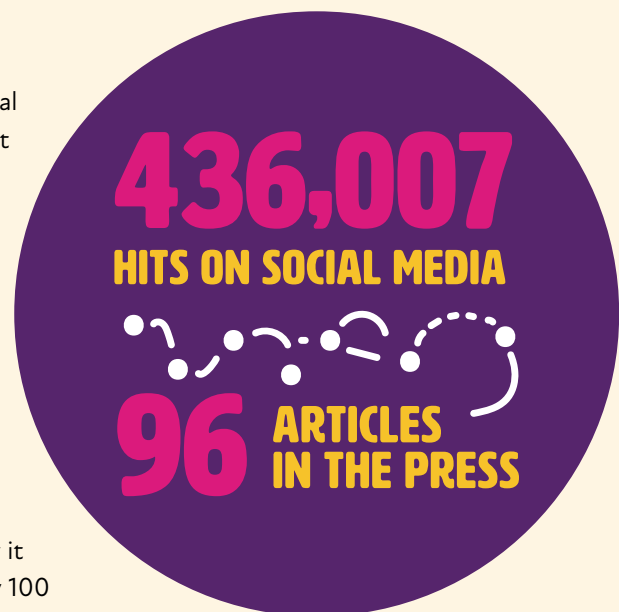
We brought together each local thread into a national story, delivered through our website with the support of 89Up, the PR agency leading on the project, and through a podcast series created by the four associate writers, Brigitte Aphrodite, Vanessa Kisuule, Nikesh Shukla and Kate Fox.

The national story was an opportunity for arts centres to tell and amplify their story through a focused lens. 89Up played a key role in supporting both Future Arts Centres and the participating arts centres to identify the narratives that needed to be told, and also gave them the confidence to say it under the Here and Now umbrella. As a result nearly 100 pieces were published about Here and Now in the national and local press, raising awareness about a new approach to making work, the importance of inclusive programming and the role that arts centres play in our communities.

For Future Arts Centres, overseeing Here and Now while also observing and responding to the huge and damaging impact of the pandemic on arts centres, enabled them to develop their advocacy work for the vital role that arts centres play in our local communities. Combined, the 40 Here and Now projects provided a unique set of case studies that tangibly demonstrated the importance of investing in our country's arts centres and increased their presence and importance in the public psyche.

It was really exciting to be part of a bigger project celebrating the work of arts centres across the country.

– Helen Bonner, Learning and Participation Manager - Newbury Corn Exchange



Hyper local impact

The local element to the project was all the more crucial when considering that as a nation we were facing global trauma due to recurrent lockdowns, which affected each community in a completely different way and subsequently needed a unique response. Despite the fact that the arts centres were responding to the same national brief, it was open enough to allow each local project to be shaped by and respond to the needs of the community they were engaging with. Trowbridge Town Hall's project, led by Jonny and the Baptists and Gavin Osborn, allowed the people of Trowbridge to come together over Zoom to celebrate all that was good about their town and generate a sense of civic pride – which the community felt was lacking. For Havant, the town felt that specific locals needed a special thank you for the contribution they had made to the wider community during the lockdown, which Gobbledegook Theatre facilitated through their 'Signs of Solidarity' project with The Spring. Each of these projects aimed to make the place they were based in a little bit better, but did it in their own unique way, which suited the community they served.

The projects will also have tangible, longer term impacts for their local communities. For instance, Zest Theatre has shared the information they gathered from young people during their project with local councillors; and Caroline Cardus' project allowed disabled participants and audience members see themselves represented within the cultural offer in their local town, increasing their confidence to demand better access to and representation within the arts for disabled people in the future. These simple acts demonstrate the importance of such localised projects as, even though the projects were short term, their outputs have the potential to positively influence their communities in the years to come.



'Signs of Solidarity', Gobbledegook Theatre – The Spring. Image: Urban Conceptz

To be honest each time I saw [a sign] it brought a lump to my throat, and learning that each [person] had been nominated by other people in my community made them especially relevant. In those bleak grey days of last winter and spring they were a bright and essential reminder of how reliant we are on these special people. A 'shout out' was a very appropriate phrase when we were so distant from so many.

– Valerie Bird, audience member, 'Signs of Solidarity', Gobbledegook Theatre - The Spring



'Find Your Way', Caroline Cardus – Barnsley Civic. Image: Urban Conceptz

I saw the signs outside for The Way Ahead exhibition and I just remember this feeling of being understood sweeping over me. It's not a feeling I've had a lot since becoming disabled but here was someone perfectly showcasing the frustrations and limitations of a social model of disability which means that, in many cases, we are far more limited by the boundaries society sets than by our impairments.

– Donna Brown, audience member, 'The Way Ahead', Caroline Cardus - Barnsley Civic



A community of producers

One of the most significant impacts of the project for people working within the arts centres was having a national community of producers, working on a shared brief, which was still relevant to their local community. Throughout the project there were opportunities for the project leads and all the other staff involved in delivering the project including communications teams, artistic directors etc. to come together to reflect on each other's projects, to access development opportunities and to shape the national programme as it developed.

We were told by many project leads, especially those outside of London, that they have historically felt isolated from a wider creative community, but this project helped them to feel connected and supported. Some arts centres, including Cambridge Junction and Trinity Arts Centre, have even forged new partnerships as a direct result of meeting each other through Here and Now. For Future Arts Centres, we have learnt that this element of our work is vital and going forward we hope to foster connections between our peers to create a more supported and interconnected network of producers, curators and managers who work in arts centres across the UK.



'Lullabies' installation shot, Roxana Vilc – The Trinity Centre. Image: Khali Ackford

I enjoyed the online sessions that Here and Now offered, and I thought these were really useful for meeting other people from arts centres across the UK. The session on access was particularly useful for future planning and programming. It was also nice to hear from artists and associate artists to see what projects people were working on and how these had changed and evolved over time.

– Alice Swatton, Curator - Midlands Arts Centre



'Refresh Lincoln' – Zest Theatre

Case Study:

REFRESH LINCOLN

After years of working away from the city on tour, Refresh has helped us reignite our relationships with schools, communities, and local stakeholders. Zest now has a firmer, more prominent footing within our city – a strong reputation as the 'go to people' for artistic quality, and an influence with the top decision makers in Lincoln.

– Catherine Fowles, Producer - Zest Theatre

For Zest Theatre, Here and Now allowed them to reconnect with their local community. Zest's Refresh Lincoln was a hyper local project which had a huge impact on the local area, the ripple effects of which are now impacting a national audience. As an organisation they had been away from Lincoln touring for several years, but the lockdown forced them to reconsider the role the organisation could play in the city in which they are based. The project was led and delivered by local people. Zest engaged two groups of primary school aged children to be the steering group for the project, worked with four young people as paid co-creators, and nearly all their freelance creative team of 14 people were from the local area, allowing Zest to support the local freelance community at a very difficult time; Organisations from across Lincoln flooded them with offers of in kind help and funding. The project has allowed Zest to re-imagine how and where they work and has given them the opportunity to add visual public realm artwork to their portfolio. They have been approached by the University of Lincoln to collaborate, commissioned by Lincoln Council, to take on a £70k project, and are now fielding requests to deliver 'Refresh' projects in other cities and towns across the U.K.

CARE – THE STORY OF OUR COUNTRY'S ARTS CENTRES

Through the delivery of Here and Now the role that our country's arts centres play has become clear and care, compassion and community is at the centre of their stories. Over the pandemic arts centres learnt about what their communities needed and, in many cases, responded with speed and compassion. From creating physical and digital space for people to come together to connect with other human beings, possibly for the first time in a week, to transforming their buildings into food banks and vaccination centres – arts centres have demonstrated that they are there for the most vulnerable in their communities.

More than a venue

For many arts centres their Here and Now project was the only one that kept going when COVID-19 hit in the spring of 2020 and therefore it took on an even greater significance than when they conceived the project four months earlier. Overnight some projects and the arts centres that were running them became the only connection point for participants and they became increasingly responsible for the people they were working with.

In Kate Fox's third podcast, which explores the theme of care through ARC Stockton's project with Invisible Flock and Umar Butt, we hear one older person saying that visiting ARC allowed them to escape home, or as he puts it 'prison', and feel connected to others and his local community. Loneliness and social isolation became a chronic issue during the pandemic with millions of us feeling it even more intensely than before. The Here and Now projects, for those participating in them, went some way to reduce this and reinforced the fact that arts centres are spaces of support, compassion and community as well as great art.

The project has been key in keeping activity going and keeping audiences engaged throughout COVID. It is a fantastic example of how our organisation can be more than just a venue and that the links and relationships we make in the community back up everything that we do.

– Sophie Fullerlove, Director & Chief Executive - The Spring



New Relationships

Thousands of new mutually supportive relationships have formed as a result of Here and Now, be they professional, personal, or somewhere between the two.

Arts centres have developed new and strengthened existing relationships with some of the more vulnerable members of their community by running focused projects which engaged specific groups and which responded to their needs. In many cases, including Gulbenkian, Z-Arts and Barnsley Civic, the arts centre was taken out of the building into the community. Not only did these projects successfully engage people who wouldn't normally visit their centres, but through a participant and artist centred approach, allowed those involved to shape the culture available in their local area.

The main way this project has helped our organisation is by giving us an opportunity to engage in a much deeper way with the community centre on a local estate and genuinely engaging with participants we never normally would in our own venue.

– Becky Lees, Programme & Creative Engagement Manager - Gulbenkian

Many of these relationships have continued after projects have ended, including those developed through artsdepot's project with take stock exchange 'You, Me, the World and Barnet', where young people from Barnet Young Carers involved in the project have gone on to undertake work experience with artsdepot. Similarly, disabled artists participating in HOME Manchester's project 'Home is Where the Art is' with Nickie Miles-Wildin, will continue to shape and advise on the organisation's programming, despite the fact that their Here and Now project has now ended.

Building personal friendships has also been a significant part of Here and Now. We heard from Z-Arts, Gulbenkian and several others how young people had made new friends through participating in their projects.

Cambridge Junction, Trowbridge Town Hall and Customs House also told us how participants had said they felt more connected to their community as a result of participating. In the case of Lawrence Batley Theatre's project, new intergenerational friendships were formed when older and young people found they had more in common than either group anticipated.



'Walk in My Shoes', Hoot Creative Arts – Lawrence Batley Theatre



The most significant difference the project has made is that I no longer walk past those houses and think of the people inside as strangers, I love that I know something about who they are.

– Participant, 'Would Like To Know', Cambridge Junction – Scottee and Friends.



'Tera - A Star', Nilupa Yasmin – Midlands Arts Centre. Image: Kate Green

What do you need?

The pandemic gave us all a chance to pause. 'How are you doing?' and 'are you safe?' took on a new level of importance, and stopped being rhetorical questions. The entire world was given an opportunity to rethink the way it worked and arts centres grabbed this opportunity by pausing to reflect on and ask communities what they needed and artists how they wanted to work.

Combined with the community centred approach established at the start of the project, arts centres with the support of the artists and communities, became confident to change project plans if they no longer served a purpose, and reject the idea of working towards a fixed outcome or output. In practice for Colchester Arts Centre this looked like completely reshaping their project, and for Newbury Corn Exchange rescoping the needs of the community and moving online. The result was a portfolio of projects which truly respond to the needs of the people who were involved in them, be they participant, artist or producer.

In addition to this, making reasonable adjustments to ensure people could participate fully became mainstream and part of everyone's awareness. For some disabled artists including Caroline Cardus, who led Barnsley Civic's project, it has revolutionised their practice. Caroline now has the confidence to ask organisations to work in ways that will keep her and the people they are working with safe.

It has given our organisation a greater understanding of the needs of our wider disabled community. And this will now feed into all future engagement planning.

– Jason White, Community Engagement – The Civic

Case Study:

HOME

Without the project these networks would not have happened, friendships would not have developed, and we would not have seen work or found that emotional support throughout the pandemic. We all value one another's support. Without HIWTAI we would have been more isolated.



- Nickie Miles-Wildin, lead artist, 'HOME is Where the Art is' - HOME Manchester.

'Home is Where the Art is' was a collective of disabled and neurodivergent artists, led by Nickie Miles-Wildin. The group met weekly online to discuss HOME's programming, considering it from the perspective of a disabled and neurodivergent audience, with the aim of influencing the organisation's future and inspiring their own creative practice.

Recommendations made on digital programming were able to be implemented immediately. On a longer term basis, HOME are reimagining their outside programme to ensure it is more accessible and have committed to giving Deaf and disabled artists more roles that are not just linked to their disability.

For the participants, having a disabled artist leading the sessions was an inspiring and unique experience, which significantly increased their confidence as disabled artist's themselves.

In addition to the key role they played in shaping the future of programming at HOME, the relationships built within the group quickly developed and participants started connecting professionally and personally outside of the sessions. The group are now working together in other organisations, performing at each other's events and meeting as friends.



CHANGE – A SPACE TO TRY NEW THINGS WITH NEW PEOPLE

We wanted to encourage participating arts centres to take risks in their projects, from working with communities and artists they didn't know, to assuring them that it was okay if their predicted outputs were not met. There are many ways to create work with a community and encouraging risk would allow arts centres to find the way that worked for them, the artist they were working with and the communities they were serving.

“If some things aren't failing, then we aren't taking enough risks.”

– Annabel Turpin, Co-lead – Future Arts Centres

Addressing Diversity

It was essential that the project reflected the diversity of the Nation and that we challenged both ourselves and the partner organisations to ensure that we brought as full a spectrum of voices as possible into the programme.

As we have already heard, the first way in which we encouraged and supported this was by inviting a diverse range of artists to write the brief for the commissions. The language that was used, the way in which it was presented and the people it subsequently represented was one way of ensuring that the brief would not just be attractive to artists, but would also feel inclusive and welcoming to artists so often excluded from similar projects.

The major challenge we faced in terms of diversity, was when the 40 arts centres came together to present their initial ideas for their projects as it became clear that collectively they did not accurately represent the Nation. With a certain amount of trepidation this issue was raised by the Co-Leads of Future Arts Centres – but the nerves were unnecessary as the conversation was overwhelmingly positively received by the project leads. Collectively the group of 40 or so producers decided how they were going to address this, and chose a route that was not the easiest, but that would lead to the overall project being significantly more inclusive and a much more accurate representation of the nation. The collective action the group took to address this issue gave them an increased sense of ownership over the project and we hope the sense of agency they developed to take positive action in the recruitment of artists will be taken forward into other projects.

Going forwards Future Arts Centres have a greater sense of confidence to challenge issues around diversity and to not shy away from conversations which could be conceived of as difficult. We are aware that there is a significant lack of diversity at leadership level in arts centres and we have a long way to go before the sector is truly representative. However, we hope that in many ways Here and Now has inspired the next generation of artists, cultural consumers, producers and CEO's to realise that a career in the arts is possible and therefore has contributed to the long-term diversification of the arts.

Flexibility

One of the key structures that led to the success of Here and Now was the flexibility that was built into the project from the start. This was reaffirmed by the impacts of the pandemic, which gave people further permission to do things differently. The brief was incredibly open; outputs and outcomes were not fixed and we acknowledged with the arts centres that some things would need to change and some things wouldn't work. Recognising this allowed them to be more relaxed and build in risk to their project plans that might, and did, result in incredible projects.

When the pandemic hit, we knew that we needed to take the pressure off individual arts centres and allow them to work even more flexibly to ensure they could create truly meaningful work for their local community. Some of the arts centres paused their project until the groups could meet in person, some managed a blended approach of online and offline and some went fully digital.



'One of the Lads', Hit the Ground Running – Customs House

The impact of going online for some meant their project became much more inclusive and engaged a far wider audience than anticipated. This was especially the case for Creative Folkestone, whose 'Church of the Latter Day Sinners' project, led by Stacy Makishi, went global and brought together a community from across the world. Each weekend during lockdown the people of Folkestone would commune with people as far away as South Korea and Brazil. In contrast to this Barnsley Civic's project 'The Way Ahead' took place offline and remotely as both participants and Caroline Cardus, the lead artist, were shielding. Delivering the project digitally would have prohibited some participants from taking part due to learning disabilities and digital poverty. Therefore the project was facilitated through interactive paper zines made by Caroline and sent out via post, allowing the group to work on a collective project which did not rely on digital technology or being physically together.

Well-resourced projects result in great work

For many of the arts centres participating in Here and Now, their project was an exciting opportunity to deliver something new. The £10,000 commission was enough to do something significant and allowed them to take risks, with purpose, but without the fear and weight which might come with a project with a larger budget. It also gave them the opportunity to support an artist or organisation in a meaningful way, to try something new without a heavy list of obligations on the artist's part. This resulted in many of the lead artists and organisations progressing their careers and trying new things as a direct result of participating in Here and Now. This included Zest Theatre whose project allowed them to enter the world of visual arts and Z-Arts who explored, and are now committed, to an entirely new way of choreographing professional dance.

In addition to this, the support network which surrounded Here and Now - of peers responding to the same brief and an external producer from Future Arts Centres who project producers could reflect on their project with - gave a sense of support and safety, which enabled everyone to do something different.

It was fantastic to be able to give artists a reasonable amount of money for a very broad project, giving them freedom to imagine and create something without any rules or limitations. We were able to take a risk on them, they had the safety of knowing they would be paid and could make brave and bold choices.

– Charlotte Beaver, Public Programming Administrator - Attenborough Arts Centre



'Walk 0.3 Miles in My Boots', Next Door Dance – Attenborough Arts Centre



Stacy Makishi, 'Church of the Latter Day Sinners' - Creative Folkestone. Image: Stacy Makishi

Case Study:

CREATIVE FOLKESTONE

We recognised perfectionism as the killer of creativity. It makes starting, persisting and finishing impossible.

– Stacy Makishi, lead artist, 'Church of the Latter Day Sinners' - Creative Folkestone

Creative Folkestone's project 'Church of the Latter Day Sinners', led by Stacy Makishi, was originally planned to take place in person, and was targeted at the people of Folkestone. When the first lockdown came in, the team decided to take the project online to ensure they could respond to the dire need people were expressing to foster community and connectivity at such a lonely time. However, producing digital, interactive work wasn't a skill set the team had, so they had to learn how to deliver each element of the project as it happened – which meant taking risks, exposing themselves to things not going as planned and responding on the spot!

As a result of going online, twice as many people were able to engage with the project as had been predicted, and the audience was international as well as local. Each weekend throughout the lockdowns, Folkestone communed with Vancouver, Sao Paulo, New York, Mexico City and Seoul and seasoned performance artists gave space to the people of Folkestone, and the people of Folkestone gave space to seasoned performance artists from across the world. As a result, the group discovered that real connection happened when they dropped their armour and 'showed up' as imperfect, messy and raw.

For Creative Folkestone the process of working so closely with an artist was transformative, and has given them the skill and confidence to commission and produce more work in house. The constantly changing plans, due to recurrent lockdowns, allowed them to let go of the idea of perfection and realise that the 'Church of the Latter Day Sinners' audience was more interested in and grateful for an authentic and meaningful experience than a polished performance.

WHAT NEXT?

The results of Here and Now have been wide ranging and unexpected, and have crucially demonstrated that communities can be involved in shaping incredible and relevant culture through exploring their own creativity. Here and Now has challenged the canon of commissioning and empowered arts centres and their staff to take a critical look at their historical working practices, allowing them to approach commissions, work with artists, and engage communities in a new way.

It is clear from arts centres individual evaluation reports that their experience of participating in Here and Now will influence their practice going forward, and has increased their confidence to engage their local community in the development of their programmes. Many have made explicit commitments to continuing to explore the role that participatory commissioning and handing over control to those who have traditionally been outside the arts centre can play, both in diversifying audiences and in creating high quality and relevant work for everyone to enjoy. But providing a sense of financial stability, peer to peer support and space for reflection is essential if we are going to continue to reframe what culture and creativity means for those participating in it.

We hope that arts centres will hold on to the permission that Here and Now and the recurrent lockdowns and changing restrictions gave to change project plans. Responding to the moment, rather than feeling restricted by a static plan will ensure their future projects will meet the needs of their community and arts centres will remain useful, co-ordinated with and connected to their local areas.



THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAS HELPED SHAPE HERE AND NOW

Residency Artists

Chris Thorpe, Vici Wreford-Sinnott,
Debris Stevenson, Victoria Pratt, Brigitte
Aphrodite, Freddie Opoku-Addaie,
Dawinder Bansal, ESKA and Fabric Lenny

Associate Artists

Brigitte Aphrodite, Kate Fox, Nikesh Shukla,
Ryan Harston of Urban Conceptz and
Vanessa Kisuule

Lead Artists and Organisations

Abby Z and the New Utility, Al Heighton
and Chinwe Russell, Alice Kettle,
Caroline Cardus, Caroline Horton,
Company Chameleon, Contact Young
Company, Tammy Reynolds, Amy Vreeke,
Javaad Alipoor and Keisha Thompson,
Davy and Kristin McGuire, Dawinder Bansal,
Dominic from Luton, Field Music and Paul
Summers, Gobbledegook Theatre, Hit
the Ground Running, Hoot Creative Arts,
Imitating the Dog, Invisible Flock and
Umar Butt, Jo Fong, Jonny and the Baptists
and Gavin Osborn, Lisa Wesley, Martin
Richman and Luxx, Mella Faye and Pecho
Mama, Next Door Dance, Nickie Miles-
Wildin, Nigel and Louise, Nilupa Yasmin,
Paines Plough and Andrew Muir, Piers
Harrison-Reid, Roxana Vilks, Scarabeus
Aerial Theatre, Scottee and Friends Ltd.,
Simon and Tom Bloor, Sprankenstein and
Tom Andrews, Stacey McKnight, Stacy
Makishi, Steppaz, take stock exchange,
Wassail Theatre Company, Zest Theatre,
154 Collective

Arts Centres

ARC – Stockton Arts Centre, Arts Centre
Washington, artsdepot, Attenborough Arts
Centre, Battersea Arts Centre, Bernie Grant
Arts Centre, Brewery Arts Centre, Cambridge
Junction, Cast, Colchester Arts Centre,
Contact, Customs House, Creative Folkestone,
Exeter Phoenix, Farnham Maltings, Gulbenkian
Theatre, HOME Manchester, Jacksons Lane,
Lawrence Batley Theatre, Lighthouse Poole,
Lincoln Drill Hall, Midlands Arts Centre,
Newbury Corn Exchange, Norwich Arts Centre,
Queens Hall Arts Centre, Rich Mix, The Albany,
Bluecoat, The Civic Barnsley, The Core at Corby
Cube, The Spring Arts and Heritage Centre,
The Trinity Centre, Trowbridge Town Hall,
Watermans Arts Centre, Waterside, Z-Arts

Steering Group

Chris Kirkwood, Deborah Kermode, Deborah Rees,
Doreen Foster, Elspeth McBain, Hannah Azieb
Pool, Joe Flavin, Matt Fenton, Oliver Carruthers,
Tarek Iskander, Tracey Cooper, Tania Wilmer

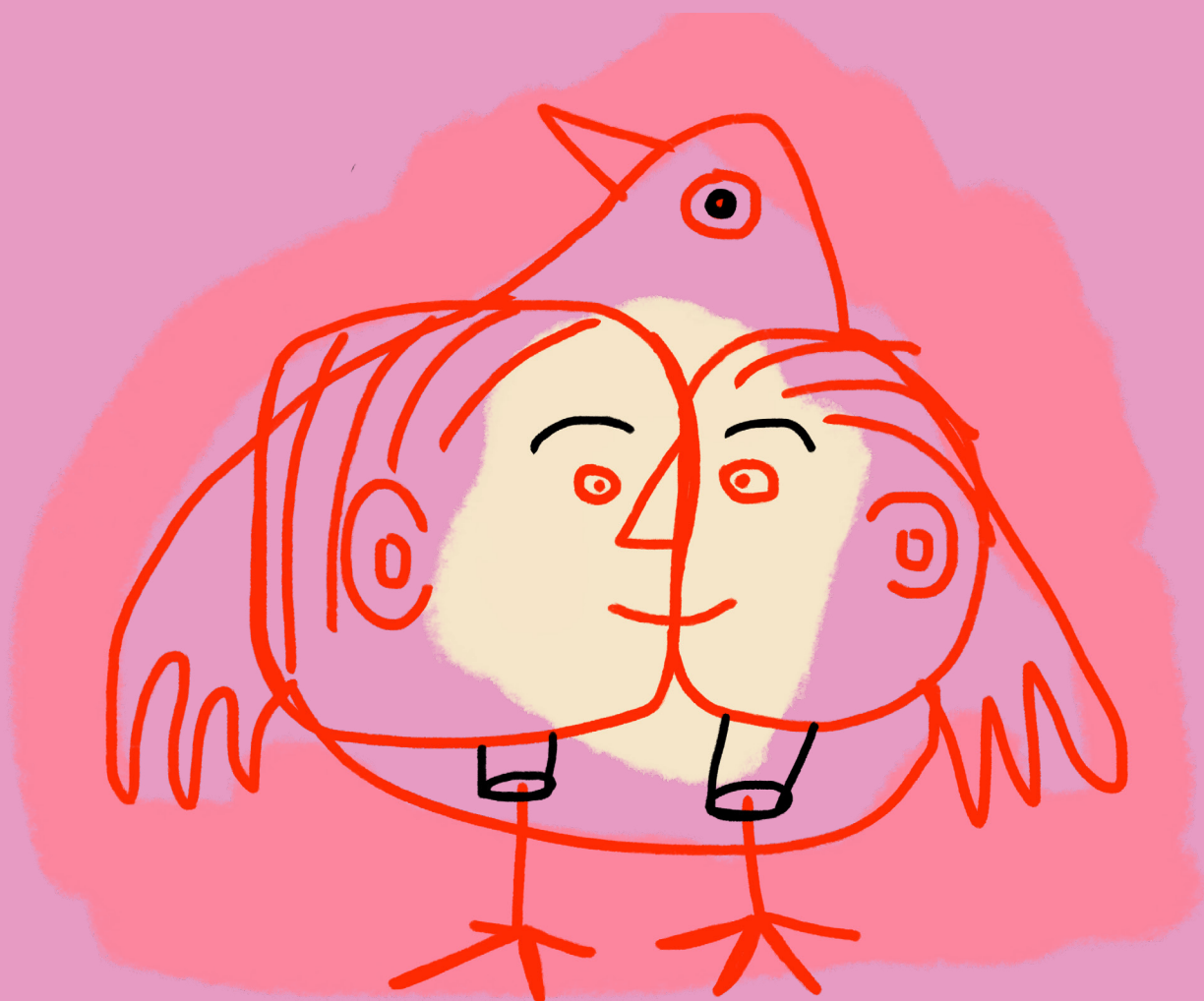
Here and Now Team

Alison Hamilton, Annabel Turpin, Caroline
Moore, Eeshita Azad, Gavin Barlow, Linda
Bloomfield, Mark Blay, Mary Nri, Simi Kumar

Website and design: Tim Jukes

PR and digital: 89Up

This report was written by Caroline Moore
Illustrations by Fabric Lenny



40 PROJECTS ARTS CENTRES

Here and Now: 40 new projects taking place in and around 40 arts centres as part of a national and local celebration of culture within communities.



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