

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Press Release

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Press images: [HERE](#)

Over 600 pieces of artwork created in lockdown will form new nationwide exhibition to highlight the power of art on health and wellbeing



Art by Post participants. Credits (L-R): Kate Elliott; Kate Elliott; Eoin Carey.

- *Art by Post: Unlocking creativity for our wellbeing* launches at the Southbank Centre this September before touring nationwide for five months
- Creative responses from over 4,500 *Art by Post* participants have been selected and carefully curated for this one-of-a-kind exhibition
- The ambitious project is delivered in partnership with the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) and supported by leading international health bodies, including the World Health Organisation, as well as 13 delivery partners and over 150 domestic referral partners
- The announcement comes as the Southbank Centre makes the continued case for enhanced community access to art for health and wellbeing

The UK's largest multi-arts centre, the Southbank Centre in London, today announces a five-month touring exhibition, which will bring over 600 pieces of artwork created during lockdown out of the shadows and into major UK venues to showcase the power of art on health & wellbeing during the pandemic.

The ambitious project is the culmination of the Southbank Centre's landmark Covid-19 initiative, *Art by Post* which since it started in May 2020 has provided over 4,500 people at risk from social isolation, loneliness and digital exclusion with free cultural activities.

Art by Post: Unlocking creativity for our wellbeing will celebrate the power and potential of the role of creativity in people's lives, their health and wellbeing. It will open on 20 September 2021 before touring the length of the country.

It comes as the Southbank Centre announces its ongoing strategic partnership with the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP). This relationship began in June 2019 when the body was formally launched at the Southbank Centre by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. By the end of the year the body will be based at the site, enabling it to carry out urgent work in this area – the need for which has been exposed by the pandemic.

The Academy aims to champion the value of social prescribing by demonstrating the power of the arts, culture, sports, leisure and the natural environment in connecting people and communities. Working with its Thriving Communities programme, online masterclasses for community groups will be held across the country, showing how *Art by Post* can be emulated by community groups elsewhere, and build local momentum for social prescribing.

The new exhibition is being supported by 13 strategic partners and a further 156 delivery groups nationwide. Touring sites include: Banbury Museum & Gallery, The Mill Arts Centre (Banbury), Arts Centre Washington, HOME Manchester with two further venues to be announced. Additional strategic partners include organisations in the health and social care arena; they will help sustain deep community engagement as the project continues to be rolled out to participants. These are Age UK Oxfordshire & Camden, artsdepot, Beacon Arts, Dulwich Picture Gallery, NAPA Arts in Care Homes, Nightingale Hammerson, Philharmonia Orchestra, HOME, Platform, Kings College Hospital Trust, Sunderland Culture and The Barn.

An online exhibition will launch at the same time to showcase the poignant creative responses to *Art by Post*, connecting those who are continuing to shield, or who are unable to travel, to the regional touring sites. Meanwhile, pop-ups at major NHS Hospital Trusts and care settings nationwide will bring the exhibition back to local communities.

Curated by Persilia Caton, the exhibition will showcase creative responses to the commissioned activity booklets organised by themes such as: nature, hope, sound and movement. Shaped by the isolating experience of lockdown, together the artworks celebrate creativity and resilience.

The success of *Art by Post* marks a major milestone in the Southbank Centre's ambitious Arts and Wellbeing programme, formally launched at the venue's Creative Health Conference in June 2019 which brought together artists, practitioners, funds and policy makers in the arts and health sectors. Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Rebecca Pow, then Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism and Simon Stevens CEO of NHS England were all speakers.

The Southbank Centre will continue to make the case for arts-on-prescription, building on growing clinical evidence of the benefits that arts can bring to health and wellbeing. It remains committed to presenting an annual conference around Arts and Health as well as delivering a year round Arts and Wellbeing programme offer - further updates will be given soon.

Art by Post project participant, said: *"Since starting the Art by Post and putting words down on paper, especially the poems, it seems to be much easier, you have brought out a part of me that has laid hidden for virtually all my life, so for that alone, I thank you."*

Alexandra Brierley, Director of Creative Learning, Southbank Centre, said: *"Here at the Southbank Centre we're incredibly proud of Art by Post and its reach this past year, bringing free cultural activities to over 4,500 people nationwide to ease isolation, loneliness and digital exclusion. Now, alongside 13 delivery partners and over 150 referral partners, we're bringing over 600 pieces of artwork from our project participants to venues nationwide and an online exhibition to showcase the vital power of art on health and wellbeing. We are hugely grateful to the support of our key partner, the National Academy for Social Prescribing as we put on this ambitious programme. We will use this moment to make the continued case for enhanced community access to art for health and wellbeing."*

James Sanderson, Chief Executive of the National Academy for Social Prescribing, said: *"The hugely successful Art by Post project has clearly demonstrated the positive benefit that art can have on people's wellbeing. Connecting people to art projects like this is one way that social prescribing link workers can support people, alongside their existing health plans. We're delighted to be working with the Southbank Centre on this exhibit, demonstrating the power of art and enabling more people and communities to connect to art for their health and wellbeing."*

Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage, said: *"This work is testament to the powerful role art can play in improving our health and wellbeing. I'm delighted that the Southbank Centre is taking this wonderful exhibition on tour and championing it online so it can be enjoyed and appreciated by as many people as possible."*

The programme will be supplemented by a six-month international campaign to showcase the Southbank Centre's role in delivering game-changing arts and cultural initiatives that promote positive health and wellbeing outcomes. This includes: a physical presentation of *Art by Post* at the World Health Organisation's upcoming International Arts and Well-being exhibition in Geneva, 'VERSUS' exploring the theme of resilience (7-25 June 2021); a UK-wide poster and bus stop campaign showcasing *Art by Post* participants via specially commissioned portrait photography alongside project poetry (September 2021); a special commission as part of National Day of Arts in Care Homes to be announced (September 2021); and continued activity as part of the Mayor of London's Dementia Friendly Venues Charter.

Isabelle Wachsmuth, World Health Organization, said: *"Art is a universal language. Art has no borders and promotes diversity in unity. It responds to our need to share, inspire, and transform. It transcends our perceptions and senses to reveal our infinite potential."*

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization, said: *"As a science-based organization, WHO puts a lot of emphasis on evidence and data. At the same time, we must acknowledge that art has the power to inspire and communicate in ways that guidelines, graphs and charts don't. To achieve our goals, we must use every tool at our disposal to change behaviors and drive impact."*

Conceived at the 1951 Festival of Britain - at the time seen as a tonic for the nation's wellbeing - through to the present day, the Southbank Centre has long been an advocate of the role of the arts and culture in improving the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Please visit www.southbankcentre.co.uk/artbypost for more information.

- ENDS -

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press@southbankcentre.co.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

Many of our Art by Post participants are vulnerable adults with long term physical and mental health conditions. Therefore, to safeguard our participants and protect their identity, we have made the decision not to publicly name them. We will be finding many other ways to celebrate their vital contributions and artistic and creative achievements in Art by Post throughout the year.

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to four Resident Orchestras (London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and four Associate Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain).

About Creative Health Conference

The conference - which took place for the first time at the Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall on Monday 10 June 2019 - brought together artists, practitioners, funders and policy-makers in the arts and health sectors to discuss the progress that has been made since the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing released its report *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* in 2017. The conference particularly focussed on innovation and social isolation and loneliness. Through keynote speeches from leading figures in policy-making and delivery, and panels and breakout sessions with experts in the field, delegates explored how to work together in the future to expand on the invaluable cross-sector work that is being done. The conference was presented in association with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, London Arts in Health Forum, Arts Council England, and the Centre for Performance Science (Royal College of Music and Imperial College London). The Southbank Centre remains committed to presenting an annual conference around Arts & Health.

About the National Academy for Social Prescribing

The National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) is an organisation dedicated to the advancement of social prescribing through promotion, collaboration and innovation. We work to create partnerships, across the arts, health, sports, leisure, and the natural environment, alongside other aspects of our lives, to promote health and wellbeing at a national and local level. We will champion social prescribing and the work of local communities in connecting people for wellbeing.

Our objectives are to

- Make some noise – raising the profile of social prescribing
- Find resources – develop innovative funding partnerships
- Build relationships – broker and build relationships across all sectors
- Improve the evidence – shape and share the evidence base
- Spread what works – promote learning on social prescribing

Website: socialprescribingacademy.org.uk

Twitter: [@NASPTweets](https://twitter.com/NASPTweets)

Instagram: [@NASP_Insta](https://www.instagram.com/NASP_Insta)