

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

PRESS RELEASE

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Inaugural Chair announced for the new management organisation responsible for the Arts Council Collection

Cultural leader Sukhy Johal MBE has been appointed as the inaugural Chair of a new organisation which will care for and share the Arts Council Collection once it has moved to Coventry.

Sukhy is an accomplished Chair, Director and Executive known for leading large-scale cultural organisations and transformative programmes across public, charitable, commercial, educational and independent sectors. He started his career volunteering across the third sector and was the founding co-chair of the New Art Exchange. Now, Sukhy is completing his term as Arts Council England Member of National Council and Chair of the Midlands Area to bring his expertise in working with local authorities and placemaking initiatives into his new role. Grounded in his working-class immigrant background, his civic-minded leadership champions equity and amplifies marginalised voices.

Established in 1946, the [Arts Council Collection](#) is one of the largest and most important national collections of modern and contemporary British art in the world. The Collection includes more than 8,500 works of art by more than 2,200 artists. It reaches more than one million people each year through loans and exhibitions.

The Southbank Centre has managed the Collection since 1986. However, due to the Collection moving to a new flagship location within the Coventry City Centre Cultural Gateway (CCCCG), the city's former IKEA building, the decision was made to establish a new organisation to manage the Collection in its new home in Coventry. The organisation will continue to focus on high quality collection care and management, the ongoing development of the Collection through acquisitions and increasing its reach through its programmes.

The CCCCCG is part of a multi-million-pound investment in the West Midlands region. The building will be a fitting legacy of Coventry City of Culture 2021 and will house both the Arts Council Collection and the British Council Collection alongside the Coventry Transport Museum's Collection. It will create employment opportunities and

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sustain partnerships between the Collection and local, national and international organisations.

Now in post, Sukhy will lead the set up and development of the new organisation and will be recruiting for trustees in the coming months.

Sukhy Johal MBE, inaugural Chair of the Arts Council Collection said:

"I'm honoured to take on the role of Chair of the Arts Council Collection at this hugely exciting and pivotal time. As we transition to becoming an independent organisation, we are laying the foundations for a bold new future - one that celebrates our rich heritage while embracing fresh opportunities for public engagement and growth.

We are especially excited about the upcoming relocation to Coventry, where we will be part of the ambitious City Centre Cultural Gateway. This move marks a historic milestone: for the first time, the entire Collection will be housed together under one roof. Our new state-of-the-art Collection centre, set to open in early 2027, will create unprecedented opportunities for access, learning, and collaboration.

This is more than a move - it's a transformation. I look forward to working with our partners, supporters, and the wider community as we shape a vibrant future for the Collection."

Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair of Arts Council Collection's Acquisitions

Committee, and of Arts Council England, said: "We're pleased to welcome Sukhy Johal MBE as the inaugural Chair of the new management organisation for the Arts Council Collection. Sukhy has vast experience in senior leadership and trustee roles across the cultural sector, including most recently as Midlands Area Chair for Arts Council England. This appointment marks an exciting new chapter for the Collection, and for our aim to bring art closer to communities across the UK.

I'm confident that, under Sukhy's leadership, the Collection will continue to inspire, engage, and connect people from all walks of life. I would also like to express our heartfelt thanks to the Southbank Centre for their expert care and stewardship of the Collection over the past four decades."

Mark Ball, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre, said: "We warmly welcome Sukhy Johal MBE as the inaugural Chair of the Arts Council Collection. His wealth of expertise within the cultural sector and commitment to working with local communities will greatly inform the Collection at such a pivotal time in its story.

The Southbank Centre will ensure a smooth handover to the new organisation when it is fully operational. Until then, we continue to oversee all activities

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related to the Collection, including preparing for, and managing, its move to Coventry.

I want to extend my deepest thanks to all of the Arts Council Collection staff that have done a tremendous job in caring for and developing the Collection. I have no doubt that the new organisation will continue to build upon these nationwide efforts from its new home in the West Midlands.”

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Notes for Editors:

About Sukhy Johal MBE

Sukhy Johal is Chair, Director and Executive who is known for his leadership across public, commercial, charitable, educational and independent sector organisations. He has over 15 years of experience in working for Local Authorities, including as Director of Culture, Economic Development and Planning, developing new policy including pioneering one of the first Cultural Strategies in the UK and delivering structural transformation.

He is currently in the process of completing his term as Arts Council England Member of National Council and Chair of the Midlands Area. Previously he led Culture East Midlands, the DCMS sponsored Regional Cultural Consortium, driving cultural innovation across public policy and major programmes including the Regions Cultural Olympiad. He was also the inaugural Director of the Centre of Culture and Creativity, University of Lincoln (June 2016 - July 2025) and has been awarded an MBE for Services to the Cultural Sector in the 2007 Queens New Year’s Honours.

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Our vision, set out in our strategy *Let’s Create*, is that by 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2023 and 2026 we will have invested over £467 million of public money from Government, alongside an estimated £250 million each year from The National Lottery, to help ensure that people in every part of the country have access to culture and creativity in the places where they live. Until Autumn 2025, the National Lottery is celebrating its 30th anniversary of supporting good causes in the United Kingdom: since the first draw was held in 1994, it has raised £49 billion and awarded more than 690,000 individual grants. Visit [our website](#) to learn more about our work.

About the Arts Council Collection

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The Arts Council Collection is the most widely circulated national loan collection of modern and contemporary British art. Founded in 1946, the Collection reaches the broadest possible audience through [long loans](#) to public institutions, [exhibition loans](#), touring exhibitions, as well as digital and print [publications](#). The Collection supports artists in the UK through the [acquisition](#) and display of their work, and safeguards it for future generations, using the highest possible standards of collection care. The Collection will be looked after by a new management organisation, formed of expert and leaders from the museums, collections and cultural sector and based at Coventry City Centre Cultural Gateway (CCCCG).

About the Coventry City Centre Cultural Gateway (CCCCG).

The CCCCCG is part of a multi-million-pound investment in the West Midlands region. The building will be a fitting legacy of Coventry City of Culture 2021 and will house both the Arts Council Collection and the British Council Collection alongside the Coventry Transport Museum's Collection. It will create employment opportunities and sustain partnerships between the Collection and local, national and international organisations.

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest multi-arts centre and engages the most diverse audiences of any performing arts organisation in the UK. Our biggest venue, the Royal Festival Hall (2,700 seats) is the lasting legacy of the 1951 Festival of Britain and the ambition and values of that project – that arts, ideas, innovation and culture can heal communities and should be available and accessible to everyone – are still our guiding principles today. The Southbank Centre is uniquely able to offer a wide-ranging, inclusive and world-class artistic programme spanning contemporary visual arts, music, dance, performance, literature, comedy and spoken word across the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, the Hayward Gallery and our free spaces. We are also home to the National Poetry Library, the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP), two resident organisations (Kinetika Bloco and Tomorrow's Warriors) and six resident orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra).

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