

## Press Release

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Contact [press@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:press@southbankcentre.co.uk) or [alexandra.corneanu@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:alexandra.corneanu@southbankcentre.co.uk)

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### Arts Council Collection National Partners Programme 2019-22, concludes with a series of exhibitions at Firstsite, Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange and Sunderland Culture



IMAGE CREDITS IN NOTES TO EDITORS

Over the last three years, **Firstsite**, **Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange** and **Sunderland Culture** have delivered a total of 30 exhibitions, projects and events thanks to the National Lottery through the **Arts Council Collection National Partners Programme**. From working with children and young people, to inviting local groups to curate exhibitions for their galleries, all three venues have embraced a community-centred approach to exhibition-making, something that has created a lasting legacy for their future programming.

The National Partners Programme launched in 2016 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Arts Council Collection with the aim of reaching new audiences through building a network of galleries and museums across England. 2019-22 National Partners **Firstsite**, **Sunderland Culture** and **Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange** will present a final series of exhibitions and collaborations which reflect, support and champion the voices of their local communities as the programme concludes. Using works from the **Arts Council Collection** as their focus, these exhibitions explore themes of race and class, as well as offering inspiration and hope for the future.

**Firstsite** conclude their Partnership programming with *Keep Being Amazing*, an exhibition influenced by their Holiday Fun programme which celebrates family, togetherness and overcoming adversity. For the past five years, Firstsite's Holiday Fun programme has been celebrating the positive impact that creativity has on self-worth, while also inspiring problem-solving and mental wellbeing. Run during every school holiday, it welcomes local children and their families to Firstsite and its satellite site in Harwich to enjoy outdoor sports, artist-designed creative activities, a freshly cooked hot meal and the sense of safety and community generated by the gallery. Since the launch of the programme, Firstsite has

delivered over 12,000 meals to families in Colchester and Harwich, with over 7,000 delivered since the start of the pandemic.

**Sally Shaw MBE, Director, Firstsite,** says: *“Through the Arts Council Collection National Partners Programme we have explored a completely new way to make exhibitions by inviting members of our community to contribute to the process. They have helped us reshape everything we do, how we do it, who it is for and the creative impact we might have. This way of working has made space for lots of different perspectives to be reflected throughout our exhibition programme and amplified the voices of people which are often underrepresented or unheard.*

*“Our exhibitions have gained on a whole new level of relevance and meaning because their content has emerged from the communities that Firstsite is here to serve. This has also transformed the audiences coming to Firstsite as people see their own experiences, shared connections and challenges explored through these exhibitions. This process is now fully embedded into Firstsite and will shape all our future programming – we will continue to collaborate with people where, together, we can have the most impact – sharing the benefits of art and creativity with everyone and inspiring real and positive change.”*

**Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange** continue their *New Voices* strand of programming with exhibitions *Captured Beauty* and *Simple Truths* which will mark the end of the National Partners Programme. These displays provide a platform to members of the community not often heard by offering them the opportunity to curate works selected from the Arts Council Collection.

*Captured Beauty* is curated by Abi Hutchinson, Artistic Director of Black Voices Cornwall, an organisation that exists to enable Cornwall to become an anti-racist county. The exhibition aims to create a space in which ethnically diverse visitors can feel represented by the works on display. It also hopes to provide the white community with an insight into what it feels like to be a person of colour in the 21st century, and intends to inspire visitors to actively engage in the fight against racism.

*Simple Truths* is the culmination of a project working with dads from the WILD Young Parents Project, a charity that provides whole-family services for young parents and their children. The artworks for *Simple Truths* have been chosen from the Arts Council Collection over the course of several months, with dads working on the selection alongside The Exchange since March 2021, from their allotment in Pengegon, Camborne. They often provided the starting point for personal reflections around mental health or what was happening in the lives of the dads at that moment in time.

**James Green, Director, Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange,** says: *“The National Partners Programme has brought new resources and fresh ideas, and fed our ambition to set the agenda around the civic and societal role of galleries. We have learnt so much, developing new approaches to programming that have enabled us to welcome new people to our spaces, and to expand our digital content. We’ve gained confidence in our ideas and our ability to achieve real change for people in our communities. And this, above anything else, will drive all of our work in the months and years ahead.”*

**Sunderland Culture** round up their National Partners programming with three final exhibitions exploring local heritage, class and societal change.

*Where There's Space to Grow*, curated by Celebrate Different Collective, a group of young people living in Sunderland, is currently on show at **Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens**. The exhibition reflects on the industrial decline of the 1980s in North East England, while looking ahead to a shared progressive future.

This is the third and final of a series of exhibitions curated by young people across the National Partners Programme. Firstsite presented *House Share* curated by Young Art Kommunity (YAK) from June to September 2021, and Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange opened their exhibition, *SEEN* co-curated by young LGBTQIA+ people from Cornwall, from October 2021 until January 2022.

In April, **Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens** will present *Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences*, the large-scale tapestry series which follows the fictional Sunderland-born character Tim Rakewell, as he advances through the British social class system. The work, which was originally shown in Sunderland in 2013, returns to the city to mark the tenth anniversary of the tapestry series and the accompanying television programme, *All in the Best Possible Taste*.

Sunderland Culture's programme concludes with *Island*, which explores the coastal experience in the North East and wider nationally. The exhibition draws together documentary photography from 1945 to present day, painting, film and artist-led community projects to investigate the realities of life by the sea, juxtaposing often romanticised ideals with lived experiences.

**Rebecca Ball, Chief Executive, Sunderland Culture, says:**

*"We are really grateful that we have been able to be part of this exciting national programme. It has been a chance for Sunderland Culture to share knowledge, collaborate and learn from the inspiring teams at Firstsite, Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange, and the Arts Council Collection too. There has been a key shared ambition among the partners – to find new ways of working which enable the Collection to reach as many people as possible across the country. We are proud of what has been achieved through our projects like Field for the British Isles, Paint the Town in Sound, Where We are Now and Where There's Space to Grow. The whole experience has felt genuinely creative and supportive."*

Highlights from the second round of the **National Partners Programme** have included *Art for Life* at Firstsite, an exhibition curated by local NHS key workers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic; *Go On Being So* at Newlyn Art Gallery, which was curated by students from local school, Mounts Bay Academy; and the presentation of Antony Gormley's *Field for the British Isles* at the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art – a work which was selected and installed by Sunderland Culture's Art Champions, a group of local people, aged 7 to 70, who became ambassadors for the venue, the Arts Council Collection and the National Partners Programme. Funded by the National Lottery, the National Partner venues have put

people at the heart of all their activities, using collaboration and co-production to ensure that their programmes reflect the needs and concerns of their local communities.

**Deborah Smith, Director, Arts Council Collection, says:** “*The National Partners Programme has provided the perfect platform to extend the reach of the Arts Council Collection. Through this time, we’ve been privileged to work with partners to develop innovative approaches to their programming across the broadest range of engagement, resulting in expanded and increasingly diverse audiences.*”

*“In spite of the challenges to working practices that we’ve all experienced over the past couple of years, partner teams have used their imagination and resilience to deliver truly inspirational projects. The commitment that everyone has brought to the National Partners Programme has been key to its success. Thank you, everyone, for contributing to the programme which has given voice to the art and artists in the Arts Council Collection.”*

### **National Partners Programme Exhibition Listings**

#### **Firstsite:**

##### ***Keep Being Amazing*, 22 January - 5 June 2022**

Featuring artworks from the Arts Council Collection by artists including Tracey Emin, Paula Rego, Kenneth Armitage and John Walter, along with other loans of works by artists including Uli Westphal and Harold Offeh, *Keep Being Amazing* explores themes of family, overcoming adversity and coming together, all of which emerged from conversations with families attending Firstsite’s *Holiday Fun* programme.

#### **Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange:**

##### ***Captured Beauty* (Newlyn Art Gallery), 19 February - 18 June 2022**

*Captured Beauty* has been curated by Abi Hutchinson, Artistic Director of Black Voices Cornwall. The ambition for the exhibition is for ethnically diverse visitors to feel seen through the artworks on display. It is also an opportunity for the white community to have an insight to how it feels to be a person of colour in the 21st century, and to come away from the exhibition with a determination to finally end racism. *Captured Beauty* includes works from the Arts Council Collection by Vanley Burke, Denzil Forrester, Mowbray Odonkor, Ifeoma Onyefulu and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye. Ore Ahmeed, Leona Campbell, Sigourney Hutchinson, and Catherine Lucktaylor, as well as drawings of migrants from Africa and Asia on their way into Europe, by Nectarios Stamatopoulos.

##### ***Simple Truths* (The Exchange), 19 February - 4 June 2022**

The artworks for *Simple Truths* have been chosen by dads from the WILD Young Parents Project, from their allotment in Pengegon, Camborne. On each visit to the plot the dads were asked to select a piece of work that they related to in some way, and which they’d mark with a Post It note and a comment. Their selections were printed and pinned to the shed walls and over the weeks that followed, were discussed and whittled down to the selection seen in the exhibition, including works by David Batchelor, Maeve Brennan, Shezad Dawood, Laura

Ford, Seamus Nicolson, Richard Patterson, Liv Preston, Bob Robinson, Caroline Walker, and Bedwyr Williams.

### **Sunderland Culture:**

***Where There's Space to Grow*** (Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens), 15 January - 12 March 2022

*Where There's Space to Grow* is an exhibition curated by Celebrate Different Collective, a group of young people living in Sunderland, which creatively reflects on the industrial decline of the 1980s in North East England, while looking ahead to a shared progressive future. Arts Council Collection artworks sit alongside new works created by local Sunderland residents which reveal stories that encourage us to dig deep. Championing diversity in a shifting cultural and physical landscape, this exhibition asks: *how can we create space for all of us to grow?*

***Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences*** (Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens), 9 April - 5 June 2022

Grayson Perry's series of large colourful tapestries depicting the life of fictional Sunderland born character Tim Rakewell returns to the city for the tenth anniversary of the work. In the work you follow Tim's story through the British class system from his working-class roots to becoming a computer software millionaire. Produced alongside the television series *All in the Best Possible Taste* the tapestries document a variety of British tastes and lifestyles. Britishness is also the focus of Perry's monumental tapestry *Comfort Blanket*, shown in the North East for the first time and described by the artist as "a portrait of Britain to wrap yourself up in, a giant banknote; things we love, and love to hate."

***Island*** (Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art), 21 May - 11 September 2022

This exhibition brings together a broad selection of artists to explore the notion of 'Island' life in Britain since 1945. *Island* explores current debates central to the coastal experience. Romantic seascapes by Ken Baird, Christine Pearcey and Chris Locke are paired with works that challenge this idealised view of Island life. John Blakemore's exquisite studies of sand erosions read differently in light of the colossal threat posed by global climate change and rapidly rising sea levels. Artists featured include Martin Parr, Tony Ray-Jones, Chris Killip, Graham Smith and L. S. Lowry, while artworks by Ingrid Pollard, Alberta Whittle and Rhea Storr challenge the visibility of Black bodies in rural and coastal locations.

### **For press enquiries about the Arts Council Collection and National Partners**

#### **Programme please contact:**

Rachel Willcocks, Press Officer, Southbank Centre, [rachel.willcocks@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:rachel.willcocks@southbankcentre.co.uk) or [press@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:press@southbankcentre.co.uk)

Alexandra Corneanu, Marketing & Communications Officer, Arts Council Collection [alexandra.corneanu@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:alexandra.corneanu@southbankcentre.co.uk)

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Images: Downloadable from [HERE](#)

## Image credits

From left to right: 1. 'Keep Being Amazing' exhibition installation at Firstsite, Colchester. Photo: Anna Lukala © artists and estates 2022; 'Simple Truths' exhibition installation at The Exchange, Penzance. Photo: Steve Tanner © artists and estates 2022; 'Where There's Space to Grow' exhibition installation at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens. Photo: Colin Davidson © artists and estates 2022



## [Arts Council Collection](https://artscouncilcollection.org.uk)

The Arts Council Collection was founded in 1946 and is a widely circulated national loan collection of modern and contemporary British art, spanning paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, performance and moving image. It supports and promotes British art and includes a diverse range of work from artists such as Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Lubaina Himid and Grayson Perry. With more than 8,000 works and over 1,000 loans made to venues a year, the Arts Council Collection is seen by audiences in public spaces from galleries and museums to hospitals, libraries and universities. Arts Council Collection is managed by the Southbank Centre on behalf of Arts Council England.

<https://artscouncilcollection.org.uk>

Twitter: @A\_C\_Collection Facebook: @artscouncilcollection Instagram: @artscouncilcollection

## [National Partners Programme](#)

The National Partners Programme was launched in 2016 to mark the 70th anniversary of the Arts Council Collection by creating a network of regional galleries and museums to present and curate exhibitions drawn from the Arts Council Collection. The first four National Partner museums and galleries were: Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne; the Birmingham Museums Trust; the Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool; and the Collection's existing partner, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

The second round of National Partners for 2019-22 are Firstsite in Essex; Sunderland Culture in Tyne and Wear and The Newlyn Art Gallery and The Exchange in Cornwall.

Funded by the National Lottery, the programme aims to build a deeper relationship with regional audiences by building a UK-wide network across regional partners, connecting local visitors to their national collection.

# Firstsite

## [Firstsite](#)

Firstsite is a public contemporary art gallery in Colchester, making and showing exceptional art and culture that celebrates the diverse and radical people of East Anglia in order to empower all communities to be creative together and lead healthier and happier lives. In 2021, Firstsite celebrated the 10th anniversary of its spectacular crescent-shaped building, designed by award-winning Uruguayan architect Rafael Viñoly. Over the last ten years, Firstsite has gained a strong, critical reputation, presenting ambitious work to be enjoyed by all in a fun and inclusive environment- culminating in it being named the prestigious 'Art Fund Museum of the Year' in 2021. Firstsite is a partner of Plus Tate, which uses Tate's resources to contribute to a network of art organisations across the country, and to increase public access. Firstsite's exhibitions are free and open to anyone.

<https://firstsite.uk/>

Twitter: @firstsite Facebook: @firstsite Instagram: @firstsitecolchester

## NEWLYN ART GALLERY & THE EXCHANGE

### [Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange](#)

For more than 125 years, Newlyn Art Gallery has been bringing the best in contemporary art to audiences in the south west. In 2007 the gallery was redeveloped and we opened a second venue, The Exchange in Penzance. Increasingly, in recent years, our programmes have reached beyond our galleries into other settings, including care homes, schools and other public spaces, from beaches to places of worship, in order to realise our commitment to reach the broadest and largest audiences we can.

Newlyn Art Gallery was founded in 1895 by John Passmore Edwards, the philanthropist and social reformer. He was committed to improving people's lives and felt that art had an important role to play. This vision has inspired us to think more ambitiously about our work with communities and how we might involve them more actively in shaping and leading our work. We are particularly interested in how the gallery might embrace its civic role and become relevant and important to more people, for example challenging and supporting schools to embrace a broader curriculum that positions creativity at its heart. All the data shows that in spite of art organisations' best intentions, those shaping the exhibitions and learning programmes galleries present fail to reflect the diversity of the UK population. We'd like to change that. We plan to deliver a programme curated by people never before given this opportunity, offering them a platform to share their perspectives in new ways, and making the Arts Council Collection, the 'people's collection'.

<https://newlynartgallery.co.uk/>

Twitter: @newlynexchange Facebook: @newlynexchange Instagram: @newlynexchange



### [Sunderland Culture](#)

Sunderland Culture was set up in 2016 to bring together the cultural programmes of Sunderland City Council, University of Sunderland and Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust into a single, independent, resilient delivery model and realise the ambition of a city brimming with creative potential. Sunderland Culture works in National Glass Centre and Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, Arts Centre Washington, The Fire Station and delivers programmes of cultural engagement and events across the whole city. It works across the city to ensure the power of great art, culture and creativity is harnessed for the benefit of Sunderland, its residents and visitors. Sunderland Culture's mission is to improve life for everyone in Sunderland through culture. Sunderland Culture is a registered charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.sunderlandmuseum.org.uk](http://www.sunderlandmuseum.org.uk)

Twitter: @SundMuseum Facebook: @SunderlandMuseum Instagram: @SunderlandMuseum

[www.northerngalleryforcontemporaryart.org.uk](http://www.northerngalleryforcontemporaryart.org.uk)

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### **Arts Council England**

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. 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 everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from the government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help deliver this vision.

Following the Covid-19 crisis, Arts Council England has developed a £160 million emergency response package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. Find out more at [www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19)

NATIONAL  
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PROGRAMME



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