



Artists and creative practitioners working with Higher Education: Case Studies, Reflections and Resources

Why work with artists?



Acknowledgements

This publication was conceived, researched and developed by Evelyn Wilson and Dr Sarah Sigal. We owe huge thanks to all those individuals who so generously gave us their time in bringing this report to fruition, sharing the wonderful experiences and expertise that have resulted in the case studies in this report, as well as to all those who so kindly wrote reflections.

Thanks to Professor Penny Hay (Bath Spa University) for writing our Foreword and to our colleagues who provided the reflections in Chapter 3: Sarah Campbell (University of Exeter), Professor Rhiannon Jones (University of Derby), Professor Rowan Bailey (University of Huddersfield), Amy Carter-Gordon (Sheffield Hallam University), Will Cenci (Goldsmiths, University of London) and Jen Wong (Science Gallery, King's College London).

Thanks to our interviewees: Nehal Aamir, Sara Adhitya (Person-Environment-Activity Research Laboratory, University College London), Dan Auluk, Jonathan Bradley (University of Sheffield), Anne-Marie Culhane, Neela Doležalová, Anna Dumitriu, Funmi Adewole Elliott, Bryony Ella, Linda France, John Fulljames (University of Oxford), Monika Gravagno (Fracciose), Owen Griffiths (Ways of Working), Professor David Harradine (Fevered Sleep & Royal Central School of Speech and Drama), Daniel Hawley-Lingham (AA2A), Sue Horth, Ruth Jarman (Semiconductor), Dr Cynthia Johnston (School of Advanced Study, University of London), James Kennaby, Dr Johanna Kieniewicz (Kings College London), Chris Manias (Kings College London), Nela Milic (Buckinghamshire New University), Jamie Perera, Rawz, Nasia Sarwar-Skuse (Swansea University), Nicola Simpson (Norwich University of the Arts) and Claire Thompson.

Thanks to Emily Barrett for desk research on the Research Compendium, Noshin Sultan (NCACE) for editorial support, Dr Mai Musie (NCACE) for her valuable comments on our earlier drafts, Robert Davies for proofing and copy-editing support and Kate Roncoroni for design.

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Spring 2026

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Foreword

This timely publication explores the role of artists and creative practitioners working with researchers, universities, art schools and conservatoires, opening a space for insight, discussion, inspiration, practical action and support. It brings together a deep understanding of the value of working with artists and amplifies the rich range of activities and future potentials these collaborations can generate, not only for research and artistic communities but also for wider social, cultural, environmental and economic benefit.

What stands out is the diversity of ways in which artists work with researchers and universities, and the values and approaches that characterise these relationships. Through literature review, sector engagement, interviews, case studies and reflective writing, the publication examines how collaborations are formed, what they produce and how they generate value across research, teaching, civic engagement and cultural ecosystems. Artist-HEI collaborations enrich research through imaginative, practice-based and socially engaged methods; expand public and community engagement; and open forms of inquiry that embrace ambiguity, embodiment and co-creation.

Collaborations between artists, researchers and universities generate significant value and hold substantial future potential. Although these relationships are often long-standing and wide-ranging, their impact is not always immediately visible. They benefit artists, researchers, students and staff, frequently producing socially and culturally impactful work that inspires, engages and brings people together. At a time when creativity and innovation are recognised as key drivers of systemic change, it is increasingly important to understand and articulate this impact.

Artists contribute to research environments in many interconnected ways. They help students, researchers and academics understand the value of arts engagement and how to work effectively with artists. Working together, they translate transdisciplinary research through original, creative and aesthetic forms, connecting academic communities with high-profile cultural institutions and contributing to international visibility. Their work supports cross-departmental collaboration, engages young people outside higher education and opens public platforms that connect communities with research. Artists and researchers often co-develop processes that combine research, artistic practice and participation, enabling students to explore varied creative responses that challenge assumptions.

Collaborations between artists, researchers and universities generate significant value and hold substantial future potential.

Engaging artists helps researchers to uncover new perspectives, rethink audience engagement and contribute to creative placemaking. Artists pose new and sometimes unexpected questions, approaching inquiry more experimentally. Creating spaces for reflective dialogue builds confidence in both artistic and academic research, strengthening wider creative ecosystems. Artistic outputs emerging from collaborations connect artists, researchers and communities and extend the reach of research. Artists also support collaboration across HEIs and art forms, testing new partnership models and strengthening civic and community relationships.

By linking HEIs with creative and cultural industry networks, artists contribute to research portfolios and help develop pedagogic methods that integrate creative practice. Collaborations with lived experience experts shape research methodologies and coauthored papers, supporting accessibility and participant-driven inquiry. These partnerships often rebalance power dynamics, broadening access while HEIs support artists with materials, disability assistance and facilities. The presence of artists also enhances student employability and creative confidence.

Working with artists enables universities to engage deeply with place, people and possibility. Artists bring distinctive forms of attention and open conversations about practice-based, embodied and socially engaged research. They shape the public realm, contribute to festivals and research translation and animate civic life. Artist-HEI collaborations offer rich landscapes for interdisciplinary inquiry, research translation, community relationships, cultural outputs and new ideas. They expand possibilities for placemaking, create cultural assets and cultivate skills across communities and institutions.

My own personal and professional reflections illuminate how artists invite us to focus on a horizon of possibility articulated through collective imagination and the integration of plural perspectives, positioning artistic practice as a critical site for expanding epistemic range within higher education. Central to this expansion are the habits of mind cultivated by artists, including a sustained valuing of uncertainty and a heightened quality of attention, which together enable modes of inquiry that exceed conventional methodological boundaries. These dispositions support transdisciplinary research creation and affirm the intrinsic value of the arts as a legitimate and generative form of knowledge production. Within this context, innovative pedagogies emerge that are aesthetic, relational, imaginative and embodied, foregrounding forms of learning that are deeply situated and experientially grounded. The creative process, whether manifest as creative practice or as creative activism and resistance, operates as a catalyst for critical reflection, public engagement and transformative insight.

Artists contribute to the integration of multimodal, co-designed research and evaluation, shaping methodological approaches that are participatory, dialogic and responsive to context. Through artistic commissioning, they leverage creative expertise and networks that enrich collaborative work and extend its reach across disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

Artist-HEI collaborations offer rich landscapes for interdisciplinary inquiry, research translation, community relationships, cultural outputs and new ideas

Their engagement enhances public, community and social exchange, facilitating knowledge transfer that is reciprocal rather than extractive. At the same time, artists help to cultivate cultural and creative ecologies through forms of creative placemaking and civic innovation, positioning the arts as an essential component of healthy, adaptive and future facing civic environments. Collectively, these interrelated contributions build social trust, generate social value, extend social impact and support processes of social transformation, demonstrating the significant role that artists play in shaping the intellectual, cultural and civic landscapes of higher education and the wider communities with which they connect and serve.

Artists help to cultivate cultural and creative ecologies through forms of collective placemaking

Dr Penny Hay,
Professor of Imagination, Bath Spa University

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to: explore the role of artists and creative practitioners working with researchers, universities and other higher education institutions such as art schools and conservatoires; highlight the values and benefits arising from these ground-breaking collaborations; create some suggestions for future support; act as a catalyst for further discussion; and provide access to resources about this rich and crucial collaborative landscape.

Approach/Methodology

This work was conducted through an integrated and iterative programme of research, creative conversation and data gathering including:

- Literature review (See [Appendix 1](#) for further details)
- Engagement with the sector through an NCACE Evidence Cafe on the topic ‘Artists working with Universities’
- Twenty-six interviews with artists/creatives, pracademics and researchers, working across diverse art forms and research disciplines
- Eighteen case studies, drawn from the interviews
- Desk research to support the Resources Compendium
- Six invited reflections from university-based arts and culture specialists and commissioners
- The commissioning of a stand-alone reflective essay on building collaborative ecologies in the recent past as a source of complementary reading to this report

The study primarily focuses on activity taking place in the UK over the last five years.

Findings and Insights

As our findings reveal, these collaborations create a great deal of value and much future potential for universities, for artists and for researchers, and support myriad forms of social and cultural engagement with impacts across disciplines, sectors, communities and the wider creative knowledge ecosystem. Our findings, [detailed in Chapter 5](#), are grouped into the following four areas:

- Recurring general themes
- Models of collaboration: How artists work with universities
- Modes of engaging with publics
- Value and benefits of artist/university collaborations.

Key insights

1. Artists and creatives can bring **deep and influential networks and other forms of cultural capital** to research communities and universities more widely.
2. They often play a vital role in **nurturing creativity, innovation, problem-solving and risk-taking**.
3. Collaborations with artists and other creatives **contribute positively to community and place-based development**.
4. Artists tend to **ask unexpected questions** and spot things that researchers may not.
5. **Students also benefit substantially from the presence of artists and creative projects**, building new skills, confidence and networks in the process.
6. Universities are **key actors and developers of cultural infrastructures**.
7. Support infrastructures for collaboration invariably work better when they include vital sources of **people power**. This includes dedicated, knowledgeable staff.
8. Current approaches to collaboration often focus on **exploring questions of common interest and purpose**.
9. Artists and creatives are often adept **navigators of uncertainty**, making them ideal partners in responding to the key challenges of the 21st century.
10. Sustaining this work requires **positive leadership and long-term commitment to funding, support systems and infrastructure**.

Recommendations

We detail key recommendations in [Chapter 6](#). These coalesce around the following three themes.

1. **Funding**: suggestions that we hope may offer some areas of consideration for UKRI and other funders across the creative knowledge ecosystem.
2. **Support systems and infrastructures**: suggestions that may be helpful primarily for higher education institutions to consider – ranging from financial and administrative systems to training and the provision of spaces and opportunities for working and networking – **to build capacity and enable future growth and sustainability**.
3. **Pointers for artists**: suggestions to support, in particular, artists and creatives who may be new to working in collaboration with researchers.

Six key general themes recurred throughout the case studies. Two themes relate to the nature of the work itself. Through the case studies we see a substantial narrative about **interdisciplinary art practices and research** with over a quarter of **artists working with scientists**. Another two significant themes are broadly concerned with ways of working and these included the importance of **shared values** and **long-term partnerships**. The final two themes, concerned with the wider contexts in which the work occurs, are **outreach and engagement** and **connection of work to place**.

Models of collaboration: How artists work with researchers and universities

Three main models in terms of the artist or pracademic's relationship to the academy can be extrapolated from our research. These are:

- freelance artist, or artists working with a researcher or researchers within the HEI
- freelance pracademic
- pracademic working within academic institutions.

Models of engaging with publics

Our findings suggest three key modes of bridging the gap between art, research and the public. These are:

- Arts and research translation;
- Community collaboration and input
- Cultural and educational output.

Not all work produced falls neatly into one of into these categories but will often slide across boundaries.

Values and benefits of artist/university collaborations

Our findings suggest six overarching benefits:

- The generation of **novel ideas, networks and relationships**
- Collaborations bring substantial benefits to artists including access to **libraries, facilities, specialist equipment and research**. They also act as **enablers for experimentation and expansion of projects**, creatively, intellectually and geographically.
- Benefits to researchers include: enabling **research to reach publics; new exposure** outside the university and sometimes in the press; and affording researchers the **opportunity to work alongside arts companies**.
- Benefits for students. Engaging with artists can create opportunities for students to work on **live projects, benefiting their wider education and sometimes employability**. Such work can also give students **new creative tools** for their future lives and work.
- Public engagement and connectivity to **places and local communities**.
- Creation of new artworks and other cultural assets.

1. Introduction

Background

Collaborations between artists/creative practitioners, researchers and universities are no new thing. The histories of such relationships are long and rich. They take place in myriad ways, from relations with individual researchers and/or academic departments to projects, commissions and residencies that connect to other parts of university life. As our work here demonstrates, these relations also produce substantial and wide-ranging impacts and benefits.

Work that has been made through collaborations might be showcased as part of university-based theatres, museums, galleries, festivals and other public engagement programmes. More often than not, however, the outputs of such collaborations flow beyond university campuses, into the arts and culture sectors and wider communities in the UK and indeed internationally. These collaborative outputs can take the form of exhibitions and performances, novels, films, music, engagements with technologies, cultural and educational programmes and community-based activities often co-designed with participants.

As well as the vital benefits that these collaborations bring for both artists and research communities they often also support students, helping them to develop new skills and knowledge, enriching our future generations of creators, creatives, innovators and other vital workers. They are also often an important, and sometimes ground-breaking, source of socially, intellectually and culturally impactful and engaging work, inspiring and bringing people together, in myriad ways.

Artists' work within HEIs is, however, not on the radar amongst funding bodies and academic leaders as much as it should be. The values that derive from such work, and the actors that help bring the work itself to fruition, deserve to be more widely celebrated and narrated. The evidence base for this work, especially when it is digital in origin, can also be prone to fragilities. There is a situation that needs fresh consideration. In our digital age this is critical, not just for future generations of researchers – for whom the lack of future archives will be a potentially serious concern – but also for inspiring greater ambition about the power and potential of these vital cultural initiatives.

At this moment, when place, creativity, technology and innovation are all, if not always simultaneously, recognised as being key drivers of growth, it is particularly timely to create a better understanding of the nature and diversity of this work, its impacts and how it is valued.

Purpose

The purpose of this publication is to explore the role of artists and creative practitioners working with researchers and universities and other higher education institutions such as art schools and conservatoires. We are doing so to deepen the knowledge base about this work and to open a space for learning and insight, discussion, inspiration, practical action and support. We also seek to share understanding and to amplify the rich panoply of activities and future potential that such collaborations can bring about, not only for our research and artistic communities but also for our wider social, cultural, environmental and indeed economic goods.

Audiences

We have undertaken this work as part of NCACE's wider mission to foster better understandings of the nature and impacts of collaborations between higher education and the arts and culture sector. It forms part of the growing evidence base we have been developing since our launch in 2021 and that can be found in the [NCACE Collection](#).

This publication has been prepared to be of particular interest to:

- Individuals working within higher education as researchers, practitioners, cultural professionals, research and knowledge exchange professionals and senior leaders
- Artists, creative practitioners and other individuals working within wider cultural knowledge ecosystems
- Individuals working in funding bodies and associated infrastructure
- Individuals working in local authorities with culture, place, environment and related briefs
- Other arts and policy actors

Objectives

Our research was conducted from autumn 2024 to late 2025 and our key objectives were:

1. To better understand the diversity of ways in which artists are working with researchers and universities and to be able to identify and articulate the key modes and models associated with these relationships
2. To better understand what good practice looks like
3. To understand what kinds of value and impacts are being derived from this work and in what contexts
4. To identify and articulate needs for future support

Approach and methods

We employed a mixed-methods and fluid approach that enabled us to iterate from our original intention to undertake a focused literature review and six or so interviews with artists working with researchers. This process encouraged us to build reflective pauses into the work and to identify opportunities to augment our data gathering and to gain wider insights and perspectives on the values of artists working with universities. In the process, we also collated a

considerable amount of material relating to artist/researcher/university collaborations, and that in turn has enabled us to build the Resources Compendium that forms part of this publication. We see the compendium as a living document that we plan to update on an annual basis. In summary, our methods included the following, each of which we expand upon in Chapter 2:

- Literature review
- Interviews and the development of case studies
- An NCACE Evidence Cafe to share and explore perspectives
- Commissioning a stand-alone long-form reflective essay
- Commissioning six short-form reflections on the value of artists working with universities
- Additional desk research to create the Research Compendium

Structure

This report contains: an account of our approach and method; around twenty detailed case studies based on interviews with artists, pracademics and researchers currently working with and in HEIs around the UK; six reflections from arts professionals working within universities whose roles involve commissioning and working with artists; key findings, insights and recommendations arising; as well as a resources compendium and further reading list. It unfolds as follows:

[Chapter 2: Approach and Methodology >](#)

[Chapter 3: Case Studies >](#)

[Chapter 4: Reflections from Higher Education Professionals >](#)

[Chapter 5: Findings and Insights >](#)

[Chapter 6: Challenges and Recommendations >](#)

[Resources Compendium >](#)

[Appendix 1 Further Readings from the Literature Review >](#)

2. Approaches and Methods

This work was originally conceived as a small-scale, qualitative and explorative study. We anticipated undertaking a focused literature review and conducting a small number of interviews from which we would produce up to eight in-depth case studies profiling some of the ways in which artists and creatives are working with researchers or universities more widely.

However, the richness of our first set of conversations with artists and the stories and experiences they had to share with us drove us to want to hear and know more. As a result, we decided to employ a more fluid approach to allow this work to grow organically and iteratively between late 2024 and early 2026.

Over that time, we employed the following methods and creative approaches:

- Literature review. This comprised a focused review of academic papers, grey literature and other sources. (See [Appendix 1](#) for our Extended Review)
- The curation of an NCACE Evidence Cafe on the topic ‘Artists working with Universities’.
- Twenty-six interviews with artists, pracademics and researchers.
- Eighteen case studies (developed from our interviews and in consultation with our interviewees).
- Ongoing desk research enabling us to build the Resources Compendium.
- Commissioning of six written reflections from university-based arts and culture specialists and commissioners.
- Commissioning of a long-form reflective essay entitled ‘Shaking the Soil off the Roots’ by Dr Bronac Ferran to act as a source of complementary reading to this report.

Literature Review

In order to build on our existing evidence base and previous contributions to the theme of artists working with researchers and universities more broadly – through events, research reports, case studies, toolkits and essays on partnerships between universities and the arts and culture sectors – we conducted a focused literature review to gain a deeper sense of this particular work, identifying what kinds of projects have taken place, where and why, as well as how and why they come about, and the benefits, value and challenges associated with these diverse practices.

The methods involved a process of searching for materials relating to artists working with researchers in HEI settings, the commissioning and making this work, the project outputs and subsequent impact. The materials were then documented in a spreadsheet recording and analysing the nature of the publication (academic article, blog, website, report, brochure, best

practice document, book chapter), subjects covered, geographical location(s) of the project, HEI(s) and arts organisation(s) involved, type of art practice undertaken, purpose of the publication and perspective from which it was written.

Broad search terms included (but were not limited to): Artists + universities; Artists + universities + residencies; Artists + universities + collaboration; Artists + researchers + collaboration; Arts + knowledge exchange; and Arts + universities + commissions.

After a broader search for materials relating to artists working in and with universities, search terms were narrowed down to find writing on and documentation of specific art practices such as visual arts, film, performance and theatre, dance, music, poetry, fiction, sculpture and sound.

The materials cover different models of artists working with researchers within HEIs with outputs that included exhibitions, presentations, events, workshops, conferences, performances and talks. They have provided background research for this report, to help us understand how work is being commissioned, funded and executed and what impact it is having on artists, researchers, HEIs, students, communities, the arts and culture industries and the academy. Materials ranged from the broad to the specific, giving an overview of the field or documenting specific case studies.

There is a considerable amount of academic and non-academic writing about arts and culture-oriented knowledge exchange projects of various kinds, the general field and the social, political, economic and sometimes environmental impacts of these projects. However, there is less written about the specific area of artists' residencies within HEIs, of commissioning artists and pracademics to make work in collaboration with researchers, and the ways in which this can and has worked in the past. There is a significant lack of materials that advocate for the presence of artists within the academy.

In addition to the database of reports and articles already compiled by NCACE, which formed a considerable portion of our literature review, the search was undertaken using Google, Google Scholar, JSTOR, EBSCOhost and Project MUSE. Given the scale of this study, it is important to note that the review does not comprise the entirety of the field of writings around artists working within the academy, but rather a considered selection of materials.

At [Appendix 1](#) you can find a more detailed description of the literature reviewed.

Evidence Cafe

In January 2025, we held an Evidence Cafe event entitled 'Artists working with Universities' which was attended by around 60 people. The [NCACE Evidence Café](#) is an ongoing series of events; in this edition, we brought together a range of presenters showcasing different perspectives on collaborations between universities, researchers and artists. They included:

- Artist Elspeth Billie Penfold and researcher Dr Morag Rose (University of Liverpool), who presented on the Walking Publics/Walking Arts project, funded by AHRC during Covid-19.
- Professor David Harradine (Fevered Sleep and Royal Central School of Speech and Drama). David spoke about the history of his partnership with RCSSD, how it had evolved over time and the benefits to each other.

- Artist and Professor Penny Hay (Bath Spa University) spoke about the many collaborative practices with artists taking place within and/or involving her institution.

The event was designed to stimulate discussion and conversation about the topic and to encourage brief reflective writings via Padlet to provide us with quick and fast responses to the following prompts:

- Tell us about the nature of the collaboration(s) you have been involved in.
- What did you enjoy about the work?
- What challenges have you encountered?
- How might the process be made easier?

Interviews

Prior to and after the Evidence Cafe, we undertook 26 detailed, semi-structured interviews with artists/creatives and a small number of researchers and arts and culture managers. Given the lack of artists' voices and visibility in much of the literature about such partnerships, our key focus with this piece of work was to hear directly and in detail from artists themselves. The interviewees were identified through NCACE's networks, invitations to contribute to the project through our Monthly Bulletin, at the aforementioned Evidence Cafe and through our desk research process.

Interviews were conducted online and took a semi-structured approach, guided by a series of questions we designed to help us to understand how artists are working with researchers, universities and other higher education initiatives as well as the outputs, values and challenges associated with this work.

The questions were designed to increase our understanding of the nature of the work being undertaken, including the artistic disciplines and academic departments involved, the nature of the collaboration itself, who the collaborators were and their roles and level of involvement. We also explored how the project began, how the artists established their relationships with the HEIs and researchers, how and why the work was funded, and whether it was part of a wider institutional strategy or set of initiatives (e.g. feeding into the REF), how the work was documented and/or showcased and what values and impacts were associated with the project. Finally, the interviewees were asked to talk about how they felt about their projects and to give their thoughts on good practices concerning how artists are supported to work within HEIs.

Case Studies

After conducting the interviews, 18 individual case studies were written up. This process has enabled us to draw some important conclusions about the different kinds of work being made, how and why. The case studies were also analysed in order to understand the similarities and differences between the relationships between the HEIs and the artists, as well as artists and the researchers; the ways of working; the ways in which the projects were funded; how the projects were initiated; and outputs, public engagement strategies and documentation. All the case studies revolved around projects, practices and initiatives that have taken place since

2020 and/or are ongoing. They represent various regions around the UK and a variety of practices within the arts and departments within HEIs.

Desk Research

To enable us to provide a snapshot of a wider range of work, beyond the case studies, we undertook additional focused research in autumn 2025 to identify and highlight further examples of research collaboration programmes and other forms of artist/university partnerships, as well as details of artists' residencies programmes, commissions and other relevant initiatives. This work has enabled us to produce a [Resources Compendium](#), as part of this publication. We fully acknowledge that it is indicative rather than comprehensive. To maintain and grow this resource, we will invite contributions about projects as they evolve to enable the compendium to become a living resource, updated annually.

Written Reflections

Finally, we invited six values-focused written reflections from university specialists whose roles involve supporting partnerships between universities, researchers and artists and creative practitioners. We asked these individuals to each contribute a short text of no more than 1,000 words using the following questions as a guide:

- Why work with artists/creatives?
- What sorts of initiatives and collaborations with researchers does your institution support?
- What value and impacts do artists/creatives bring to your institution, your researchers and students and to the wider communities you work with?
- How can such work best be nurtured into the future? (That could be about funding, support systems and/or other infrastructures.)

Long-Form Essay

To complement this work, and to add another overlooked dimension to the evidence base on artists working with universities, we commissioned Dr Bronac Ferran, who served as Director of Interdisciplinary Arts at Arts Council England in the 1990s and 2000s, to write a long-form personal reflection focusing on the evolution of key collaborative initiatives throughout the period 1997–2007: [Shaking the Soil off the Roots: A Personal Reflection on growing Systems of Support for Interdisciplinary Practice and Research, 1997–2007, \(and after\)](#).

Case Studies

Overview

The following case studies derive from our interviews with artists, as well as several pracademics, researchers and arts managers across a spectrum of arts practices, research disciplines, institutions, arts organisations and regions across the UK.

Whilst our interviewees were selected for the quality of their work, we also strove, as much as possible given the relatively small scale of our study, to gain a balanced mix in terms of stages of artistic/academic careers, field of art practice, geographic location and types of partner institutions.

The interviews sought to draw out an overview of the interviewees' careers whilst digging deeply into one project or one umbrella under which several interrelated projects sat, to understand the mechanics of the collaboration, the artistic process and the research.

Focusing on specific, in-depth examples of a single project or series of interconnected projects allowed this report to demonstrate the wide variety of work being made by artists and researchers in HEI contexts. It also enabled us to concretely illustrate the value of these collaborations and to highlight their achievements in terms of artistic excellence, research impact and engagement and communication of academic research to and with the public and other stakeholders.

The length of each case study varies. This is due to several factors, such as the way in which the interviewees discussed their work, how recently the project was undertaken, whether the project was finished or in process, and the complexity of the project in terms of number of partners and participants and stages of development.

Furthermore, this level of engagement has enabled us to identify commonalities and recurring patterns, values, narratives and challenges which are drawn out in the [Key Findings](#).

Locations

We indicate the HEIs at which our interviewees work, both within the UK and internationally, as well as where in the UK our interviewees live.

Figure 1: UK based HEIs with which our interviewees have been working since 2020



Figure 2: International HEIs with which our interviewees have been working since 2020



Figure 3: Artists and pracademics interviewed live in the following locations across the UK



Of those artists and pracademics we've interviewed¹:

Worked only with HEIs outside those areas	14.29%	
Worked only with HEIs in the city or region in which they lived	28.57%	
Worked with HEIs inside and outside those areas	35.3%	
Researchers worked with HEIs in the city or region in which they lived	38.10%	

Arts Sub-Sectors

To get as complete a picture as possible of work being made by artists and researchers within HEIs, the interviewees were chosen to represent a broad cross-section of the arts sector, including artists and pracademics from different backgrounds, geographies and stages of their careers. Our interviewees span the following areas of artistic practice:

Arts subsectors			
Ceramics	Film	Poetry	Theatre
Creative writing	Installation art	Sculpture	Video art
Dance	Music	Sound art	Visual arts
Digital art	Performance		

Of those we interviewed described themselves as:

Working in film and video art	4.76%	
Working in writing (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, playwriting)	4.76%	
Working in music and sound art	9.52%	
Working in performance (live art, theatre, dance)	19.05%	
Working across disciplines	19.05%	
Working in visual arts (installation art, painting, drawing, ceramics, sculpture, digital art)	23.81%	

¹ Although 26 people total were interviewed for this project, 21 were worked up as case studies. However, this excludes Daniel Hawley-Lingham, who neither falls into the category of artist nor researcher.

The majority of the artists and academics interviewed described themselves as working across multiple creative practices, sometimes on the same project (for instance, Rawz working with poetry and music at Oxford). It was equally common for interviewees to be working in visual arts and performance (sometimes both). The next most common areas were film/video art and music/sound art. The least common area of practice within the group of interviewees was creative writing.

The most common practice across HEI artist residencies was the visual arts (inclusive of drawing, painting, sculpture and installations); while other art forms were represented, they featured less prominently. This may be because other art forms such as theatre, music and film tend to be more complex to produce and may necessitate bringing in (and paying) more artists. It may also be because works of visual art lend themselves to modes such as public exhibitions, which tend to take place over longer periods of time.

Research Disciplines

Given the small scale of this study, it is remarkable to note the wide spread of academic disciplines that those interviewed worked with and/or within. It is important to note that this study didn't set out to be comprehensive of all disciplines, although that could form an approach to a larger piece of follow-on research.

Research Disciplines			
AI Studies	Epidemiology	Languages, Cultures and Societies	Modernist Studies
Astronomy	Fine Art	Marine Biology	Music
Business	Genetics	Mathematics	Philosophy
Climate Science	Geography	Metabolism and Systems Science	Physics
Creative Health	History	Microbiology	Psychology
Dance	History of the Book	Modern Languages	Theatre
English Literature	History of Science		Urban Design
Environmental History	Immunology		

71.43% of artists and academics worked with a single department while 23.81% worked across more than one department. This appears to be partly due to the prevalence of commissions and initiatives that sprang from a single research department (for example, Monika Gravagno and Lottie McCarthy working with Sara Adhitya at [UCL's Person-Environment-Activity Research Laboratory](#) (PEARL) as part of their [Trellis](#) initiative).

Some interviewees expressed interest in working cross-departmentally but had faced challenges relating to the administration and coordination required for such a collaboration. However, artists with long-standing relationships with HEIs were better positioned to work across multiple departments, often due to the number of connections they were able to leverage across the institution. The poet Linda France, who worked with Newcastle University, was able, for example, to develop her connections made during the beginning of her residency to bring researchers and students from multiple departments into her Creative Writing Challenge Lab.

Artists and pracademics worked with across more than one departments	23.81%	
Artists and pracademics worked within a single department	71.43%	
Artists and pracademics worked with scientists on their projects	18.57%	

It was most common for our interviewed artists and pracademics to work with researchers in the sciences; at the time of writing, 28.57% of artists and pracademics interviewed had worked with scientists on their projects. Work relating to scientific research also seemed to be better and more consistently funded than work related to the humanities and other disciplines.

Outputs

The artworks, installations, performances, talks, writings, recordings, events, residencies, festivals, workshops and other diverse outputs and experiences that result from these collaborations manifest in many ways, with the following most frequently cited.

- Works of art in and of themselves serving to enrich artistic and creative practice, inspire new research, create new cultural assets and drive curiosity and ambition.
- As a mode of synthesising, translating and disseminating research findings to local, national and sometimes international communities.
- As a means of connecting with, serving and/or eliciting input from those communities, as well as contributing to the act of community building and placemaking in the process.

Key Themes

The projects our interviewees spoke to us about can broadly be understood as falling into at least one of the following five broad categories in terms of content:



In most cases, the projects discussed in the interviews fall into more than one category, as these topics are by no means fixed and often interconnect and intersect with other themes. Similarly, the projects' outputs also regularly demonstrate various elements of different categories. This is because these collaborations routinely represent an intersection of the interests of artists and researchers, as well as the objectives of the commissioning HEI and funding bodies.

Case Studies by Theme

We have aligned each of our 18 case studies to one or more of the themes listed above.

Semiconductor

Semiconductor, artist duo Ruth Jarman and Joe Gerhardt, take a cross-media, research-led, technological approach to artistic interrogation of science research and how it can intersect with human perception. Jarman explained that their work ‘enables people to ask questions of science and technology’ and ‘empowers the audience’.² They have many years of experience of working in university departments, and their work often depends on having access to new research and lab equipment.

This high-profile duo has worked with major global institutions such as CERN, NASA Space Sciences Laboratory and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and their work has been exhibited at galleries, museums and festivals around the world such as Art Basel, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Royal Academy of the Arts, the Tokyo International Film Festival and the Centre Pompidou.

A ground-breaking company, Semiconductor has been teaching students, researchers and university departments how to work with

artists, as well as the value of engaging with the arts. Jarman noted that she and Gerhardt feel it is crucial to draw boundaries and set expectations with university departments and teach other, less established artists how to do so to encourage HEIs to engage artists and thus facilitate future successful collaborations for others. They give a presentation at the beginning of each project so they can demystify their work and process of making, get to know the department and try to get a sense of potential collaborators. Jarman explained that they enjoyed being able to demonstrate the value of this kind of work to researchers who haven’t worked with artists before:

*We can transform their thinking about the role of an artist in an environment like that. [...] We know researchers who are quite adamant that they’re not interested in an artist being there, and that they can’t understand the purpose. Then there is this moment where they realize we’re having more of an impact than just taking stuff from them.*³

In one of their most recent projects, Semiconductor worked in the University of Glasgow’s School of Physics and Astronomy with Professor Daniele Faccio as part of the Extreme Light Group residency on a project called ‘Light-in-Flight’ (2025). The scientific research element of the project asked how quantum light might be used in the future in augmenting medical tools and other scientific processes. In response, Semiconductor produced a series of animations on LED panels, exploring how people perceive time at, or close to, the speed of light. This was

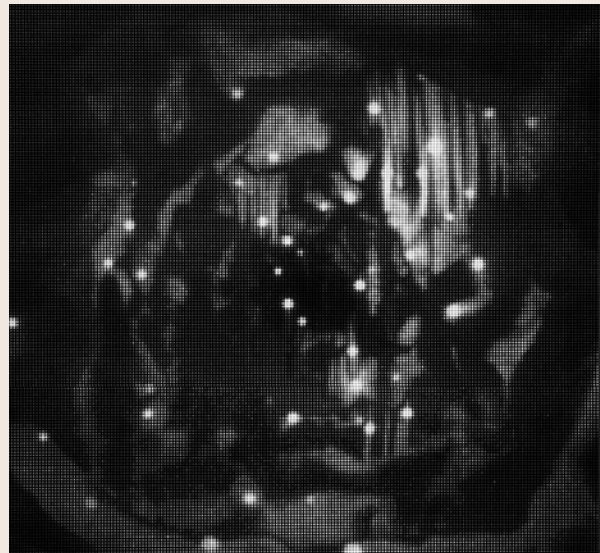


Semiconductor © Ruth Jarman and Joe Gerhardt

² Interview with Ruth Jarman, 15 November 2024.

³ Ibid.

funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)'s Impact Acceleration Account, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the University of Glasgow's Knowledge Exchange Fund.⁴ Each animation revealed a physical space illuminated by photons emitted in pulses by a laser and captured by a camera in different built spaces, creating time-lapse sequences revealing 'light waves' in motion, deconstructing perspectives of time and space. In this way, the project functions as an artwork in and of itself but also expands on the scientific research undertaken by Professor Faccio and disseminates this to the public, first within the context of the University of Glasgow, and later in institutions across the world.



Light in Flight © Ruth Jarman and Joe Gerhardt

Residency curator Sarah Cook – who had worked with Semiconductor before – advised the artists and Professor Faccio and wanted to use that case study as a pilot project for bringing more artists in residence into different areas of the university; she introduced the artists to other researchers across university so they could talk about their work and advocate for future artist programmes. Cook said, 'This kind of cross-disciplinary working is a great example of the kind of collaborations which the ARC was built to foster. It's wonderful to see [Faccio] and Semiconductor [...] working across the University campus.'⁵ 'Light-in-Flight' was exhibited at the ArtScience Museum in Singapore in October 2025 and filmmaker Thomas Riedelsheimer filmed Semiconductor in the lab with the scientists as part of a documentary, *Tracing Light*.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Innovative pedagogy: teaching students, researchers and university departments how to work with artists and value of engaging with arts
- Taking scientific research to publics in novel and creative ways
- Connecting academic communities with high-profile arts institutions and festivals in and beyond the UK
- Creating and maintaining a global profile

⁴ https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/archiveofnews/2024/october/headline_1120940_en.html [Accessed on 15.11.25]

⁵ Ibid.

Anne-Marie Culhane

Anne-Marie Culhane is an interdisciplinary artist working across visual arts, installation, movement, performance, film, writing and podcasting, making participatory work with communities around the south-west of England, with a focus on eco-activism in outdoor spaces. She has also worked in policy, such as for Understanding Memory of UK Treescapes for Better Resilience and Adaptation (MEMBRA) with ‘Walking Forest’ (2018–28), a 10-year public artwork exploring earth activism, forest ecosystems and heritage culminating with the planting of an intentional woodland in 2028.⁶ She has also worked extensively with food and food systems, such as with Loughborough University Arts and the Sustainability and Gardens team at Loughborough on ‘Fruit Routes’ (2012–22), where she curated and designed a long-term campus-based project involving food sustainability.⁷ She is a visiting research fellow at the Global Systems Institute, University of Exeter, a member of the International EcoArt Network and a founder member of Culture Declares Emergency. Culhane explained, ‘I think a lot of what I’m doing is occupying this bridging role [...] linking different bodies that might not have an easy relationship, or that speak different languages, so I’m the translator or conduit.’⁸ She articulates the role of many artists who work with researchers in HEI contexts as finding a way of bridging the gap between research in the academy and the outside world.

‘Tidelines’ is the umbrella under which a number of ongoing, interconnected participatory arts projects have sat since its inception in 2020. It can be categorised as ‘Science and Climate’ because climate science played a crucial role in this project but also ‘History and Place’ because the project is focused on and invested in Exeter and other parts of coastal Devon, as well as



Salmon Run Relay 2025 (photo: Vanessa Miles) a community relay from sea to spawning ground over 43 miles following the path of migrating and critically endangered Atlantic Salmon

engaging with communities in those areas. Culhane was a visiting research fellow at the University of Exeter when the university alerted her to the EU-supported Socially Engaged Universities Fund, to which she then applied to develop a creative response to changes caused by the climate crisis to the Exe estuary and coast, involving the local community. ‘Tidelines’ is a Community Interest Company led by

6 <https://membra.info/organisations/the-walking-forest/> [Accessed on 10.12.25]

7 <https://amculhane.co.uk/project/fruit-routes/> [Accessed on 10.5.12]

8 Interview with Anne-Marie Culhane, 11 November 2024.

Culhane and Jo Salter (alongside an advisory board) and has received funding from the Socially Engaged Universities Fund, East Devon Council, the Marine Biological Association, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter City Council, the Westcountry Rivers Trust and the British Ecological Society and sits within the University of Exeter's Global Systems Institute. Projects involved include: 'Exe Estuary Box' (2020), 'The Sea Around Us' (2020), 'A Body of Water' (2021), 'High Water' (in partnership with the University of Plymouth, 2021), 'Alive, Alive O!' (2022 & 2023), 'Salmon Run' (in partnership with the University of Essex, 2022–5) and 'Assembly of River Beings' (2024).



Alive Alive O! 2022 with biacoustic scientist Sophie Nedelec, fisher Jason Ingham, aquaculturalist Martin Syvret, artists Emma Welton, Sarah Owen and Anne-Marie Culhane

Involving scientific research, arts and activism, these projects provide ways of bringing the University of Exeter's scientific research to the public and the public's questions about the climate to researchers, beginning with a pilot project in 2020–1. In addition to the Institute's research, Tidelines also works with scientists from the Westcountry Rivers Trust.

An example of one of these projects is 'Alive, Alive O!', on which Culhane worked with University of Exeter marine bio-acoustics researcher Sophie Nedelec, composer Emma Welton, singer Sarah Owen and community singers and swimmers to explore underwater sound and song as a restoration cue for the declining blue mussel colonies in the Exe. They also worked with aquaculturalist Martin Syvret and inshore fisherman Jason Ingham to learn about the blue mussels' habitat and their role in the ecosystem. 'Alive, Alive O!' produced talks, singing and small-scale performance events at locations around the estuary. As with Culhane's other projects, her goal was to 'create multiple entry points for people', who may be interested in the arts, history, science or the act of communal singing to increase accessibility.⁹

9 Ibid.

In a situation common to many artists working on long-term collaborations, after the pilot year, Culhane struggled to find enough funding to support the project. While she has been able to establish partnerships and find small grants for individual projects, it has been difficult to find core funding to cover running costs, such as maintaining a physical space and/or bringing on board a producer.

Sometimes I guess I'm the artist, and sometimes I'm the curator and sometimes I'm the coordinator [...] because we never really have funds for a producer. It's quite exhausting sometimes moving between all these different roles – and there are much better producers than me, but we can't afford to pay them.¹⁰

While Exeter hasn't been able to provide as much funding as Culhane has needed to realise the true potential of Tidelines, it has connected her to researchers across the university who have become collaborators, and have helped her to access new modes of research.

It is apparent that the values Culhane embraces in her work are those of creating positive environmental and social change by working with researchers and communities outside the academy. Her work is flexible in terms of the communities with which it engages, how, where, when and why. She and her collaborators find ways of making work that is responsive to the needs, questions and interests of local communities, as well as to the funding and organisational limitations they face. Her projects engage with themes that offer a platform for different creative expressions and new ways of working, while addressing the local community's concerns around climate change, increasing biodiversity loss and damaged ecosystems.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Bringing scientific research to the public to create positive environmental and social change
- Bringing the public's questions and concerns about climate to researchers
- Making large-scale, interactive pieces responding to specific sites, communities and research
- Addressing environmental issues including food sustainability in creative ways

¹⁰ Ibid.

Case Study 3

Science and
Climate

Inclusion and
Participation

Dr Linda France

Dr Linda France FRSL is a poet with ten collections to her name who has won numerous prizes, such as the Poetry Society's National Poetry Competition, the Society of Authors Cholmondeley Award and the Laurel Prize. She has undertaken numerous fellowships and residencies, with her roles including Poet in Residence at Cheeseburn Sculpture, Policy and Enterprise Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Durham University and Teaching Fellow at Leeds University. She has taught on Newcastle's Creative Writing/Poetry MA since its inception.

Between 2020 and 2022 Linda was Climate Writer in Residence for an Arts Council England-funded partnership between New Writing North and Newcastle University and created a three-year programme called 'Writing the Climate'. This project falls into the category of Science and Climate because of its focus on the climate emergency but also Inclusion and Participation because of its engagement with university students and the local community within Newcastle and beyond. At the launch of this residency, Newcastle's Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost Professor Julie Sanders explained that it was a way

for the university to 'find the words and the stories we need for collective sense-making' of the climate emergency and action needed in the lead-up to COP26.¹¹ New Writing North declared a climate emergency in 2019 and their Executive Director (Programme and Impact) Anna Disley echoed Sanders' sentiments.¹²

During her residency, France produced the collective film-poems *Murmuration* (2021, with Kate Sweeney) and *Dawn Chorus* (2021, with Christo Wallers), the podcast 'In Our Element'



Murmuration (Photo: Kate Sweeney)

¹¹ <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/press/articles/archive/2021/03/climatewriter/> [Accessed on 15.11.25.]

¹² Ibid.

(2021) and her collection *Startling* (published by Faber & New Writing North, 2022). This work was featured at Durham Book Festival, Newcastle Poetry Festival and Hexham Book Festival. France has an ongoing relationship with Newcastle University, having been a writer in residence, facilitator and lecturer, working across different departments, over several decades.

The central aims of 'Writing the Climate' were to engage with different communities around climate and ecological change, to initiate various cross-arts collaborations and collective projects and to stimulate new writing, as well as France's own work. Because of the pandemic, she worked largely online in the first year, and with research colleagues, students and participants in person thereafter. She collaborated with students and researchers across the Schools of English and Modern Languages and the Departments of Fine Art and Philosophy, as well as the Alumni Association. Researchers with a shared interest in a humanities approach to climate change action fed into the project with expertise from their various areas.

Connections made during the residency led to France co-leading a Creative Writing Challenge Lab ('Science and Writing: Carbon, Life and the Biosphere') in 2023 alongside Dr Bernhard Malkmus from German Studies, engaging in an interdisciplinary reading and creative response to a climate-related text by Primo Levi. She facilitated written responses in the form of a renga, classical Japanese collaborative poetry where multiple poets build a poem together, around a structured theme.

You end up with a series of haiku-type fragments, authored by the individuals in the group, patchworked together. [...] It becomes something greater than the sum of its parts and can be owned by everybody. The experience of the process is as important as what the group actually produces.¹³

An important focus was a day's workshop with self-selecting students from all levels and disciplines at the University's Dove Marine Laboratory, taking in its coastal setting and research around marine biology and oceanography. Students from the Fine Art Department then made a visual representation of the renga, which was exhibited at a gallery in Newcastle.

Between 2021 and 2024 France also worked with the People's Theatre Young People's Group (supported by two Newcastle PhD students) on broadly ecological themes. Their poetry was showcased in performances at Newcastle Poetry Festival.

Similar to Culhane's work, the value stemming from this project is engaging the public in the work of their local university, as well as facilitating a platform for a creative place-based response to the climate emergency. The poetry commissioned represents not only France's work, but also her collaborations with researchers, students and other young people – arguably



Startling book cover

13 Interview with Linda France, 6 December 2024.

those most impacted by climate change. The residency allowed her to discover new and interdisciplinary ways of working, combining discussions and ideas from artists, young people, students and researchers, as well as facilitating the creation of new performance poetry by young people. France explained that the young writers were able to strengthen their relationships with one another, deepen their writing practice and build their confidence by presenting the work in public.¹⁴ She felt the process of seeing what happens when a diverse group of people respond to a text or research material, outside a curriculum, without expectation, in the spirit of exploration, was powerful and fruitful. They ‘ended up prioritizing and acknowledging the value simply of being together and talking to each other and being connected’, which was ‘another way of addressing the reality of our responses to climate change, the need to be collective and collaborative’.¹⁵ In this way, the artist/university collaborations not only developed new writing that engaged with research coming out of the university but also acted as a community-building exercise for students and other young people.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Cross-departmental projects bringing together researchers and students
- Engaging with young people outside HE to channel creativity and build confidence
- Facilitating a public platform to engage local community with research
- Fostering a creative, place-based approach to climate emergency

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

Jamie Perera

Composer, sound artist and producer **Jamie Perera** has a collaborative, interdisciplinary practice which combines electronic production and contemporary orchestration with field recordings, data, and video in order to make music, performances, installations and workshops. As a composer and sound artist, he has worked on more than 40 films including winners of the SXSW Documentary Jury Award, the Grierson Award and RTS Award, as well as BAFTA and EMMY nominees. He had worked with organisations such as the Serpentine, the Royal College of Art, the Barbican and the European Space Agency.

Perera met King's College London researchers **Dr Catherine Tilley** (Business School) and **Dr Chris Manias** (Department of History) at a networking event hosted by King's Culture, an arts and culture unit working across departments at King's College London which develops knowledge exchange projects between researchers, artists, students and other partners, commissioning and curating work for two different gallery spaces. The event encouraged each participant to give a presentation on their area of research or artistic practice to spark ideas for collaboration. Perera, Tilley and Manias discovered they were all interested in corporate and environmental sustainability and systemic change and had each been involved with similar research/arts-oriented projects. King's Culture facilitated the early conversations, which allowed the three to get to know each other and their interests, and then develop an idea, which King's agreed to fund for six to eight months, without the expectation of them producing anything concrete.

Perera was a resident artist on the King's Culture programme in 2022–3, working with Tilley and Manias on 'Sonifying LSX', a sound installation which aimed to sonify the London Stock Exchange using sounds from organisms in the history of human and animal evolution which are extinct, or in danger of becoming extinct, from the Life Sciences Museum, mapping fluctuations in the FTSE 100 with a variety of sounds.¹⁶ The three looked at Corporate Social Responsibility reports about the top 20 FTSE companies, thinking about each company as a character or an instrument and considering what sort of sounds they would make. Similarly to Culhane and France's projects, 'Sonifying LSX' can be categorised as Science and Climate, because of its focus on the issue of extinction, but also Inclusion and Participation, because of the way in which Perera, Tilley and Manias involved King's students in the making of the work.

They held workshops with Manias's and Tilley's students and medical practitioners at King's, asking them how they felt about corporations, capitalism, the financial world and the stock market. They deconstructed the 'immoveable object' (as Perera called it) of the stock exchange and allowed participants to assign different sounds to data objects, discussing the roles of FTSE 100 companies in the economy, society and climate change, unpacking subjects such as extraction, exploitation and colonialism.¹⁷ Perera commented that 'we were surprised at how fluid we could be when working from a sonic methodology' and described the kinds of

¹⁶ <https://www.jamieperera.com/sonify-lsx> [Accessed on 4.12.25]

¹⁷ Interview with Jamie Perera and Chris Manias, 1 April 2025.

discussions, perspectives and emotions the process instigated, especially empowering students to explore opinions on and fears regarding capitalism, the climate crisis and extinction through sound.¹⁸

The residency was valuable not only because it produced ‘Sonifying LSX’ but also because it helped Perera, Manias and Tilley develop a process for combining research, artistic practice and public input and to strengthen their ways of thinking and working. Perera noted that the workshops and discussions allowed participants to express emotion around these subjects but also to find a

sense of agency in terms of change. Tilley stated that it helped her ‘think about the tensions and assumptions in business sustainability, and the ways in which these can be foregrounded in research and teaching’.¹⁹ One of Tilley’s students in the Business School was about to go work for a bank and was worried that he was going to have to put his values around climate change aside, because he didn’t think they would be compatible with the financial world, but by the end of the workshop he realised that he had the agency to make change in large organisations from within. Manias felt it helped him to find another way of working across departments and with the arts.²⁰ Perera felt it provided a way for all of them to break out of their own ‘silos of conditioning’ in terms of areas of expertise and beliefs.²¹

While the King’s Culture seed funding allowed the team to create a short online recording, as is common with pilot projects, there wasn’t enough money to develop the project further into a publicly accessible sound installation. At the time of the interview, the three were aiming to get enough funding for the next stage of the project, to enable Perera’s programmer to put the full version of the sound installation online, along with a visual element, as well as expanding the public engaged in the workshops to a broader demographic.



Using sonification as both provocateur and reframing device, Jamie Perera, Catherine Tilley and Chris Manias aim to create a framework that sonifies the London Stock Exchange in real time, through mapping changes in an index such as the FTSE 100 to a chosen array of sounds.

The sounds used will be voices, objects and settings that are extinct, or in danger of extinction, spanning the history of human and animal evolution.

The aim of the artistic collaboration is to explore our relationship with intangible things, question structures that have evolved to perpetuate and destroy, reflect on what we value and why, and whether ultimately we are able to find some compromise between material and imagined worlds.

The reclamation and repurposing of this monolith to intangible assets will both amplify endangered voices and challenge us to consider why we seemingly value this and not our tangible relationship with nature.

© Jamie Perera.

18 Ibid.

19 <https://www.jamieperera.com/sonify-lsx> [Accessed on 15.11.25.]

20 Interview with Jamie Perera and Chris Manias, 1 April 2025.

21 Ibid.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Developing a process between artist and researchers to combine research, artistic practice and public input
- Empowering students to explore emotions in response to research through discussions and workshops
- Supporting positive thinking and personal agency in relation to future careers
- Developing novel approaches to corporate responsibility

Case Study 5

Science and
Climate

History
and Place

Health and
Wellbeing

Anna Dumitriu

Anna Dumitriu is an interdisciplinary artist who has worked for many years across multiple residencies and research fellowships with many institutes, hospitals and universities, in the UK and abroad, working with BioArt, sculpture, installation and digital media. She holds visiting research fellowships at the National Institute of Health Research: Leeds Biomedical Research Centre, University of Hertfordshire and Waag Futurelab, as well as artist in residence roles with ‘Modernising Medical Microbiology’ at the University of Oxford, and with the National Collection of Type Cultures at the UK Health Security Agency. Her work brings scientific research to life, telling a story and creating a context for the public, exploring our relationship to infectious diseases, synthetic biology and robotics. Her interests include microbiology, genetics, epidemiology and gene editing; her artistic process entails working between the lab (where she works hands-on) and the studio, ensuring that the art practice and scientific research are in dialogue. Like Semiconductor, Dumitriu is highly experienced in artistic–scientific collaboration and is so well connected internationally, both in the art world and in the academy, that she is often the catalyst for collaborations, connecting people and ideas, with one project leading to another and ideas growing and multiplying. She usually retains ownership of the artworks she produces, which allows her to exhibit them beyond the commissioning institution, thus widening engagement in the work, benefiting all parties.

A recent example of her work, ‘Modernising Medical Microbiology’, is a UK Clinical Research Consortium project at the University of Oxford’s Nuffield Department of Medicine, where Dumitriu has been the artist in residence since 2011, when she received a Leverhulme Trust Award and has since been funded by Arts Council England, the Wellcome Trust and, more recently, Oxford Culture and the European Union. This position has allowed Dumitriu to apply for funding for projects with members of the department on an ongoing basis. This residency, which looks at microbiology, genome mapping of bacteria and bacterial resistance, is the umbrella under which she has undertaken a number of projects, including ‘The MRSA Quilt’ (2011, in partnership with Brighton and Sussex Medical School), ‘The Hypersymbiont Enhancement Salon’ (2013), ‘The Hypersymbiont Dress’ (2013–17), ‘The Romantic Disease’ (2014), ‘The Sequence Project’ (2015), “‘Don’t Try This At Home” (2015, in partnership with the University of Leeds), ‘Superbugs: The Fight for Our Lives’ (2017), ‘Spindle’ (2018) and ‘Susceptible’ (2020).



MRSA Quilt Detail Fabric dyed with pathogenic bacteria and patterned with antibiotics 2012 © Anna Dumitriu



Dont try this at home, artwork exploring human microbiota transplants at Eden Project collaboration with Jane Freeman and Caroline Chilton at the University of Leeds © Anna Dumitriu



Infusoria by Anna Dumitriu (photo: Alex May)

Like many of Dumitriu's other projects, her work with 'Modernising Medical Microbiology' refuses easy categorisation, sitting within and at the intersections of Science and Climate, Health and Wellbeing, and History and Place. Her most recent work, 'Infusoria', examines the spread of antibiotic resistance in water from hospital sinks, which has been sequenced and studied. She relates it to the history of Ignaz Semmelweis's proposal to introduce handwashing into surgical practice in the nineteenth century and the medical community's resistance to and wholesale denial of his discoveries. The project takes into account how different sink designs can contribute to bacterial spread, and how certain bacteria can even become bleach-resistant. Dumitriu has taken nineteenth-century porcelain wash bowls and has augmented them by painting images of the bacteria she has observed and grown in the lab on them, and she also created taps and pipes from 3D modelling and printing that also appear to 'swarm with bacteria, and the nodules on the taps represent transmission networks'.²² She started working with 'Modernising Medical Microbiology' via a collaborator at Brighton and Sussex Medical School who moved on to Public Health England, which became a partner on that project. Dr John Paul brought Dumitriu to work on the public engagement aspect of it, through her art.

Throughout all her academic collaborations, Dumitriu feels her work runs parallel to the research, rather than being secondary or a by-product, and that the researchers are as invested in her art as she is and are working with her for a reason.²³ Her work is included in exhibitions by high-profile, high-impact museums, galleries and festivals where it will be seen by a wide range and large number of people. Dumitriu explained that her collaborators appreciate that she goes deeply into the research and tells the stories behind it 'in a way that brings together the emotional and the aesthetic'.²⁴ She also stated that she brings a new perspective to the

²² Interview with Anna Dumitriu, 17 April 2025.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.



Clean Hands by Anna Dumitriui (photo: Alex May)

research projects and sometimes poses questions the scientists might not think to ask.²⁵ The difficulty for her, as for many of the other artists, is handling bureaucracy and administration on her own, without a producer, which is complex and time-consuming and different for every country she works with. Dumitriu has found that Brexit has made her EU projects more difficult and expensive, as she now needs to fill out extensive paperwork in order to work with European institutions, and to ship her artworks to the EU for temporary exhibitions. Another challenge is that she is sometimes expected to self-fund her projects until the institution reimburses her for travel costs and materials, which can take many months.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Combining working hands-on in lab settings with studio arts practice
- Raising new questions with researchers
- Taking scientific research to publics in aesthetic and emotional ways
- Connecting academic communities with high-profile arts institutions and festivals
- Creating and maintaining a global profile

²⁵ Ibid.

Case Study 6

Science and
Climate

History
and Place

Inclusion and
Participation

Health and
Wellbeing

Diversity and
Decolonisation

Bryony Ella

Bryony Ella studied fine art and began her career as an artist, before transitioning into museum curation and outreach, but feels she has always maintained an artist's mindset, even when she wasn't practising. She worked in curation and engagement strategy for the Women's Library, the Wellcome Collection and the Francis Crick Institute, where she began building relationships with researchers and scientists, working with them to translate their research into exhibitions featuring commissioned artworks created by freelance artists, community groups and designers. These experiences gave her an understanding of how the researcher/artist/public relationship could work and allowed her to find ways of advocating for freelance, commissioned artists so that they would have a certain amount of freedom in the work they made, 'pushing against the inclination to treat artists as illustrators'.²⁶

Ella felt she had become 'a conduit for a kind of cross-disciplinary understanding', 'enjoying the challenge of holding those multiple voices and perspectives and respecting them within the design of the exhibition'.²⁷ At the Francis Crick Institute, she established the first public engagement strategy for exhibitions, bringing in commissioned artists and designers, matchmaking them with scientists for various projects and finding 'different ways to bring in creatives into a space that's not typically used to working with artists' in the spirit of equity and genuine exchange.²⁸

She has been working as a freelance artist for the past five years and has the benefit of being well versed in writing grant applications and engagement strategies in a professional

capacity, putting her in a position of more control than many other artists in terms of co-creating a narrative with collaborator researchers when applying for funding. In terms of her creative practice, her work with HEIs is grounded in research and benefits from dialogue with researchers, but she also feels her freelance, independent art nourishes her HEI commissions.

'Melting Metropolis' (2023–9) is unique as an example of an arts/HEI collaboration within these case studies, as it traverses all our categories: Science and Climate, History and Place, Inclusion and Participation, Health and Wellbeing and also Diversity and Decolonisation, being concerned with the intersection of the human experience of climate change in particular cities and its impact on health. It is a Wellcome Trust-funded collaboration between the University



My Body is a Sundial at Orleans House Gallery (photo: Ewelina Ruminska) 2025

²⁶ Interview with Bryony Ella, 10 June 2025.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.



Stand of the Sun Alberto Romano 2025

of Liverpool and Queens College (New York), involving a team of 14 environmental historians and geographers looking at urban heat across London, Paris, New York and Port of Spain and its impact on the health of those cities' inhabitants since 1945. According to the project's Principal Investigator Prof Chris Pearson (Liverpool), the project explores 'climate justice and injustice because people experience heat differently in cities, whether that's due to their class, gender, race or disabilities'.²⁹

In her role as Research Artist, Ella fed into the funding bid, wrote the community engagement strategy with Pearson and has since been commissioned to make several participatory and public works of art. She is in a unique position as someone who has an art practice but has also worked as a curator and commissioner in institutions. She is able to draft persuasive project funding proposals and plan public participation as well as executing the resulting artwork. Early in the project, in London and New York, she and other researchers held focus groups to workshop ideas around purpose and the role of community and public engagement in the project; since community engagement is embedded in 'Melting Metropolis', they brought on a community engagement lead while Ella works on the public engagement strategy as Research Artist.

In 2023 and 2024, she undertook a residency at Queens College to work on the public engagement strategy with researcher Dr Kara Schlichting, translating research questions and archival materials into a community workshop called 'Drawing Heat'. Ella and Schlichting led participants through New York and facilitated what she calls a 'Wild Drawing' practice, where, amongst other research-inspired activities, they chalked the outline of each other's shadows, which inspired Ella to think about the human body as a sundial, as 'a record of time and solar intensity'.³⁰ She felt it was the perfect intersection of Schlichting's research interests in sensory experiences and invisible phenomena and her own art practice of what she calls 'embodied ecologies'.³¹ The resulting sculpture, 'My Body Is a Sundial', was exhibited at Orleans House

29 <https://www.meltingmetropolis.com/> [Accessed on 17.11.25.]

30 Interview with Bryony Ella, 10 June 2025.

31 Ibid.

Gallery in London through the summer of 2025, as part of the *Cultural Reforesting* exhibition. Ella then wrote and directed a performance called ‘Stand of the Sun’, commissioning dancers and musicians to respond to ‘Melting Metropolis’ research and the sculpture. ‘Stand of the Sun’ offered an embodiment of ‘the human in conversation with the sun, as the sun moves into our cities and through our bodies’.³² Melting Metropolis plans to tour the sculpture and performance to raise awareness and conversations around urban heat.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Collaboration with international HEIs
- Developing outreach elements alongside artworks
- Co-creation through public engagement, with workshops feeding into artworks
- Translating sensory experience research into sensory workshops and artworks

³² Ibid.

Case Study 7

Dan Auluk

Science and
Climate

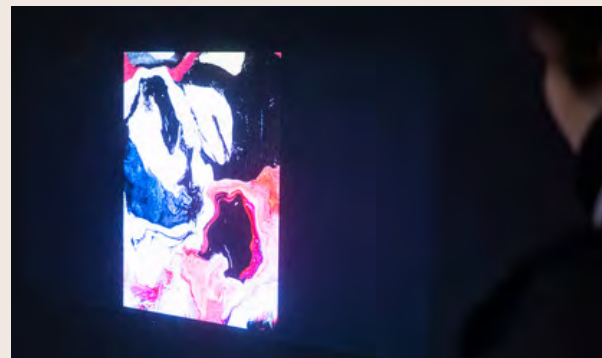
Inclusion and
Participation

Health and
Wellbeing

Diversity and
Decolonisation

Dan Auluk is an artist-curator, writer and filmmaker from a science and arts background who has worked within Health and Wellbeing for 25 years, primarily as a wellbeing worker with and for LGBTQ+ people, in a variety of settings. Auluk's practice explores methods of communication through an internal exploration of his own identity, background, childhood and queer lived experience, as well as collaborations with others. His practice is rooted in conceptual and experimental approaches to drawing, live art performance, digital drawing, text, photography and video, with a focus on research on compassion, emotional health, neuroplasticity and wellbeing. He has most recently been exploring queer joy and grief through experimental digital drawings, paintings and photography and has shown work at museums, galleries and festivals across the UK.

Auluk undertook a six-month residency in 2024-25 at the University of Birmingham via an open call from the Centre for Systems Modelling and Quantitative Biomedicine Artists in Residence programme (2020–5). The residency pairs artists from a variety of backgrounds with 'Seedcorn' projects, which is a research incubator scheme for early-stage biological and healthcare-related research projects, using mathematical and computational approaches. 'SMQB & NCode', the resulting project, spans the four categories of Science and Climate, Inclusion and Participation, Health and Wellbeing and Diversity and Decolonisation. Auluk worked with Principal Investigator Dr Samuel Johnson (School of Mathematics), Dr Maria Dauvermann (School of Psychology) and Dr Catherine Drysdale (Department of Metabolism and Systems Science). The aim of the study was to develop a way of helping clinicians and patients to decide which treatment for depression would be most effective by improving researchers' understanding of how different drugs affect mental states through predictive models, as well as opening new avenues of research for brain imaging to inform psychiatry. It gave Auluk the opportunity to expand his practice of investigating his own past 'of processing grief and accepting my sexuality and reconciling my religion, culture and faith [...] and to utilize creativity as self-care and to see how this may help, in reference to well-being and neuroplasticity'.³³



SMQB UOBX Centrala March 2025 (Photo: Hayley Salter)

33 <https://danauluk.com/artwork/job-residency-2024> [accessed on 25.11.25]

The residency began with some initial familiarisation meetings between Auluk and the researchers as well as an ongoing, internal blog that allowed the artists and researchers to communicate with each other throughout the residency, sharing research, ideas and influences. Auluk noted that he responded to the scientific data abstractly rather than directly, finding conceptual ways of translating it into workshops, commissions and his own creative work.³⁴ He collaborated with Dr Dauvermann to create two workshops for queer Asian men with experiences of depression on how to use creativity to improve wellbeing. Auluk led the participants (all paid to attend) in experimental drawing techniques. The first workshop was focused on drawing whilst in the second the researchers explain their research. This was followed by a creative response activity, after which Auluk created a digital booklet using artwork from participants. This work was publicly exhibited at the end of the residency. He also used part of the budget to give three mini-commissions to artists Dr Sally Bailey, Jamie Cox and Dr Kuljit Bhogal to respond to his work and these pieces were also incorporated into the exhibition. Auluk felt that the residency helped inform and improve his writing and gave him confidence in the realm of academic research, as well as the time to develop work on which he wouldn't otherwise have taken a chance.³⁵

Auluk has maintained an ongoing relationship with the researchers. They have since applied for further funding for the project, albeit unsuccessfully. He noted that the residency was generally a success and well coordinated overall, that he felt supported throughout it but would have liked to have had more time to work on the project and get to know the researchers and their work better. He noted that artist/researcher collaborations are beneficial for artists because they tend to be open to learning something new and incorporating it into their work.³⁶

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Finding conceptual ways of translating research into workshops and artworks
- Ongoing, internal blog allowing artist and researchers to communicate and share ideas
- Residency developing artist's practice and giving him confidence with academic research
- Commissioning other artists on other smaller projects

34 Interview with Dan Auluk, 17 November 2025.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

Case Study 8

History
and Place

Inclusion and
Participation

Diversity and
Decolonisation

Neela Doležalová

Neela Doležalová is a playwright and educator. She has written for the Soho Theatre, the National Youth Theatre, Tamasha Theatre's Schoolwrights scheme and the Vault Festival, among others. The spec script for her TV pilot *GIRLA* was shortlisted for the 2021 BAFTA Rocliffe New Writing Competition for TV Drama and she was a member of the Writers' Attachment Programme at Soho Theatre. Doležalová has taught maths, economics, drama, PSHE and scriptwriting at schools across London. She was first connected with SAS in 2018 for the Being Human Festival when they were looking for an artist and facilitator to undertake creative multilingual work in schools. Doležalová knew, through her teaching networks, that Gearies Primary School in East London was passionate about students maintaining their multilingualism and incorporating it into the curriculum, so she proposed a project and ended up becoming Gearies' artist in residence. Doležalová got funding from a SAS Public Engagement Grant and applied for ACE funding, which became *At Home I Speak*, a verbatim theatre project she made with the students. Between 2021 and 2023, she created two pieces of work with the school for SAS, a pandemic recovery multilingual poetry project and another inspired by *1000 Words for Weather*, a sound installation at Senate House Library.



Poets Gabriel Akamo and Helen Bowell at the poetry book launch at Gants Hill Library © Neela Doležalová

Her most recent and significant project for SAS, and as Gearies' artist in residence, is *1000 Words for Belonging* (2023–5), which was supported by Dr Joseph Ford (Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies). The project was funded by the University of London Knowledge Exchange fund and by ACE and culminated in 60 short plays, a poetry anthology, a series of public mosaics and a podcast. What is unusual about this case study is that she took on several roles (artist, facilitator, producer), encouraging the students to celebrate each other's languages and engage with them positively.

Doležalová worked with 120 Year 6 students across 13 languages to create the 60 short scripts. This aspect of the project allowed the

students to think freely and creatively and enjoy watching their pieces performed in the original languages by professional actors (Gabriel Àkámó, Julie-Yara Atz, Alin Balascan, KC Chan, Bayo Gbadamosi, Jarvey Joel, Anu Kiraha, Hiftu Quasem, Arinder Sadhra, and Andrei Zayats), all co-directed by Doležalová and Talia Randall. The creative free writing and various other playwriting exercises designed to produce the scripts gave the students confidence, as they were instructed not to worry about their spelling or grammar, and learned they could



You Are Welcome Here © Neela Doležalová



At Home © Neela Doležalová

create a great deal of material quickly.³⁷ Doležalová was surprised that the students not only wrote in the languages they spoke, but also incorporated words and phrases from other languages unfamiliar to them: ‘Suddenly they would have a few lines of dialogue in Brazilian Portuguese [...] because their favourite footballer is from Brazil, and they wanted to honour that person, or they would write in the language of one of their friends.’³⁸ The playwriting exercises taught them how creative writing operated but also ended up supporting their technical, formal writing in English.

Doležalová also produced an anthology of the students’ poetry, created from similar free-writing exercises, aided by poet-mentors Randall, Anthony Anaxagorou and Nina Mingya Powles. The poetry writing had a similar impact on the students in terms of confidence to produce work, but she also felt the process of continuous redrafting and editing also helped their learning.³⁹ The school has a policy of inclusivity,³⁹ so students with special educational needs were able to take part.

It would have felt deeply ironic and strange to do a project called *1000 Words for Belonging* and not create it in a way that every child could participate. Does that require, sometimes, more planning? Yes, this project took a huge amount of time and effort [...] But finding out how different children could access it felt really important. So, for some students, realizing that for poetry writing, if they story-boarded and drew a lot first, they could draw scenarios and situations, and then from that, create poetry. And it might be that only works for one child, but knowing that, and getting to the stage where you know that, and then you can resource it, felt amazing.⁴⁰

Not only was the project inclusive, but it also improved the outcomes in the students’ writing compared to previous similar cohorts at the school, especially for students with special

³⁷ Interview with Neela Doležalová, 24 November 2025.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

educational needs, those from low-income families and also those who have English as an additional language.

The project created artistic outputs that connected artists, researchers and community members, but also disseminated studies from University of London researchers in the form of the podcast created by Doležalová. She produced it to create a legacy for the project and interviewed academics across the University of London working with languages and education. It explored the benefits of working multilingually in education settings, as well as challenging ‘damaging assumptions that have become normalised within education settings when it comes to language learning and communication’.⁴¹ This podcast documented the project and allowed Doležalová direct access to researchers and new ideas, which helped her develop her own practice.⁴² Lastly, she commissioned a series of public mosaics by artist Maud Milton called ‘You Belong Here’ which included students’ words and phrases in different languages (their ‘multilingual dictionary of belonging’) and a collective poem; they were installed outside the school, at the entrance to Gants Hill Library and at the Redbridge Institute of Adult Education.

1000 Words for Belonging was made possible by Doležalová’s unique combination of experience in the fields of theatre-making, writing, teaching and grant-writing – which made the ACE funding possible, which, in turn, allowed her to employ other artists and expose the students to their work and different roles.⁴³ Although the project was complex, challenging and involved many people and stages of development, she had an overall positive experience. ‘I wish all students had more access to these types of experiences. [...] The students get so much from them, but also [...] it raises students’ confidence, which then impacts the rest of their learning.’⁴⁴ Doležalová reported that the project, though extensive and complex, ran smoothly, which she attributes to Gearies’ Co-Headteacher Dan Lea’s dedication to the celebration of language and to SAS’s commitment to the project.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Creative writing giving students confidence, supporting formal writing and English-language skills
- Activities supporting students with special needs, from low-income families and speaking English as additional language
- Creating artistic outputs connecting artists, researchers and community members
- Disseminating research studies outside HEI and documenting project as podcast
- Employing outside artists and exposing students to their work

41 <https://www.sas.ac.uk/research-engagement/research-sas/1000-words-belonging> [Accessed on 2.12.25]

42 Interview with Neela Doležalová, 24 November 2025.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

Case Study 9

History
and Place

Inclusion and
Participation

Diversity and
Decolonisation

Dr Cynthia Johnson

Dr Cynthia Johnston, a researcher in the Institute of English Studies at the School of Advanced Studies, facilitated the research process of the 'Infinite Hands' (2024) project for the Festival of Making and the Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery with ceramic artist **Nehal Aamir**.⁴⁵ They were introduced by artist and teacher Jamie Holman (the festival's Chair of the Board at that point), who had worked with Johnston previously and had known Aamir through the Manchester Gallery. Johnston has many years of experience working with museums, galleries and artists, curating exhibitions as part of her research into the history of the book. She was originally drawn to the Blackburn Museum because of its collection of medieval manuscripts and has been working to raise the profile of this collection since 2012. She collaborated with Holman when she gave a paper for at the Manchester Lit & Phil called 'Getting Medieval with *Stranger Things*', looking at Blackburn's collection through the lens of the popular TV show, which they both realised was a good model for public engagement with historical work. Holman invited Aamir to apply for the commission for the 2024 festival, to coincide with the museum's 150th anniversary. Aamir felt that it was a natural coming together of mutual interests, as they were both interested in ways of reaching different communities in and around Blackburn. The artist wanted to explore historic religious art and design (which connected to the medieval collection), and the festival curators felt she would be a good fit in terms of being paired with the local Darwen Terracotta factory. Aamir is, in part, driven by

exploring her identity as a Muslim South Asian woman living in Britain and connecting with Asian communities across the country through her work.

The resulting commission, 'Infinite Hands', falls into multiple categories: History and Place, Inclusion and Participation and Diversity and Decolonisation. It was a contemporary ceramic tapestry celebrating the Darwen Terracotta workers and the pieces they make, taking inspiration from medieval buildings and medieval Christian and Islamic manuscripts; each panel depicts a phase of terracotta making in the European Gothic style. Aamir wanted to celebrate this work, as she felt it was a centrepiece of



Infinite Hands (photo: Jules Lister)

Blackburn's community but also under-appreciated. Johnston and Aamir explored the museum's collections together, with Johnston answering the artist's questions and feeding her

⁴⁵ <https://blackburnmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/infinite-hands/> [Accessed on 10.12.25]



Infinite Hands (photo: Jules Lister)

creative process. Johnston feels that working with artists is compatible with her research process because both involve ‘unexpected outcomes’.⁴⁶ In this case, both parties also share an interest in religious manuscripts (European Gothic, Persian, Mughal) and spent time discussing their differences and similarities in terms of narrative representation and aesthetics.

Aamir spent time in the factory, working on her piece but also getting to know the workers, their processes and tools as well as getting a sense of the complexity of the work. This inspired her to celebrate them and their work and create a step-by-step ‘walk-through in the factory’ within the tiled, ceramic tapestry, using the materials and some of the techniques they employ within the factory, and working alongside them throughout the process.⁴⁷ It was the largest-scale, most complex project on which Aamir has worked to date, and she discovered new approaches to working under the guidance of workers at the factory. There were challenges for her as a freelance artist in terms of working in a large factory with numerous employees, on a project completely disconnected from factory production. To coordinate the elements of the making and installation processes, she had to find ways of communicating with the management and production teams, as well as with her contacts at the museum. Aamir took inspiration from the manuscripts in terms of the flat, 2D perspective, as well as the colours and the halos, and was able to create an aesthetic ‘system’ to provide consistency and clarity to the tapestry.⁴⁸

Johnston and Aamir worked together again with Blackburn Museum towards ‘The Nature of the Gothic’, another exhibition in September 2025 – a result of the success of their

46 Interview with Cynthia Johnston, 7 April 2025.

47 Interview with Nehal Aamir, 8 April 2025.

48 Ibid.

collaboration and a manifestation of their shared values regarding art, research and community engagement. Both were focused on and excited by the prospect of reaching new communities and bringing new audiences into the museum, to see the manuscripts, as well as Aamir’s work. Johnston noted, ‘It was just this incredible sense of connectivity between the past [and] Nehal in terms of what she produced, and in terms of the future for that collection,’ and that she ‘saw that collection being really strongly embraced by a contemporary artist in the heart of the contemporary community’, a reframing and repositioning of the new and archival as something relevant to society today.⁴⁹ Aamir was gratified to see South Asian families coming to the museum for the exhibition: ‘It’s very rare, because it’s quite intimidating in gallery spaces and in museum spaces where you feel like you don’t belong,’ as the work exhibited is generally associated with white, British, middle-to-upper-class collectors and audiences.⁵⁰ She especially appreciated being able to speak to young South Asian girls about her practice and to be able to encourage them in their own art practices.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Researcher and artist working together in archives inspired new work and revealed shared values
- Reframing of new and archival artworks bringing new audiences to the museum
- Celebrating local industry through the new art installation and contributing to placemaking

⁴⁹ Interview with Cynthia Johnston, 7 April 2025.

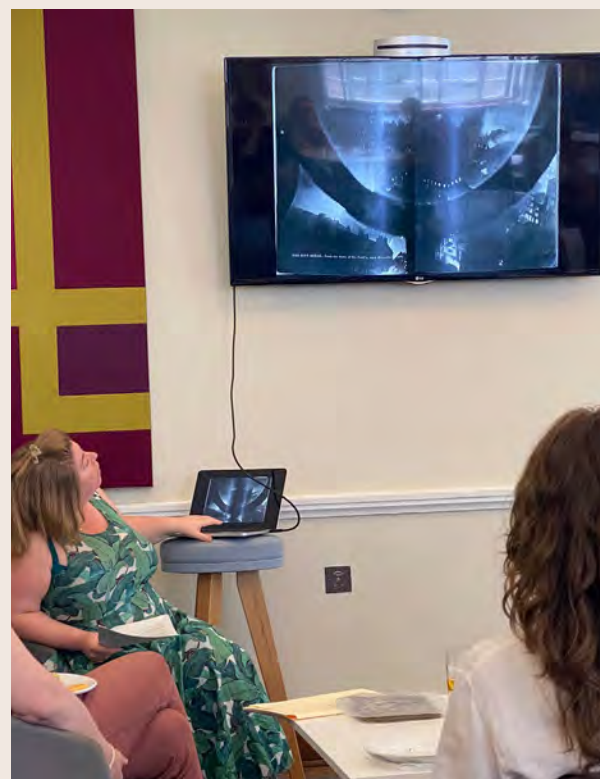
⁵⁰ Interview with Nehal Aamir, 8 April 2025.

Sue Horth

Sue Horth is a BAFTA-winning executive producer for film and TV, having made history-based dramas, factual dramas, documentaries and hybrid scripted/unscripted work, such as *Damilola*, *Our Loved Boy* (2016). In 2022 she was the holder of the Institute for Historical Research's inaugural Practitioner Residency, which is housed within the School of Advanced Study in London and wanted to further develop an exchange between academia and the arts. Professor Claire Langhamer, the IHR Director, was interested in working with a filmmaker, which Horth feels is because television and film comprise 'one of the most direct platforms through which historical knowledge, research and understanding is publicly communicated and creatively practised'.⁵¹ Horth had studied history at university and engages with history in her work on a regular basis, as true stories form 'the core inspiration and primary source material' for her work.⁵² It appealed to Horth to have the freedom to explore the IHR's resources, expertise, community and library. Although she found going in with a 'blank page' a change from her professional habit, she also found it 'liberating and freeing'.⁵³

Bringing together participation of the public and how history can be used in TV and film, this residency encompasses History and Place, but also Inclusion and Participation. It took place over the course of an academic year and was creative and experimental in nature, in that it didn't impose any parameters or expectations on Horth and the IHR was willing to work with her interests and goals. It was productive and a good fit for Horth, who engaged with the IHR

community, library and archives to get inspiration for her next project. 'It gave me a completely new lease on my creative practice.'⁵⁴ She found plenty of inspiration for her practice, made personal and professional connections and still feels like a part of the community. Langhamer made herself available to Horth as a point of contact, as did several other members of the IHR. Horth created several in-person presentations for the IHR and a workshop open to the IHR community, as well as some screenings of her work with online talks and Q&As, all on different



(photo: IHR)

51 Interview with Sue Horth, 10 April 2025.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

aspects of her work and how it might be relevant to historians. Her aim was to help members of the IHR understand how creatives in television and film use history for inspiration and utilise historical research, as well as to encourage thinking about how historians in the academy might be able to work with creativity in their practice, using her work as case studies. Horth also sat in on IHR talks, which gave her an insight into how history is framed and communicated within the academy, and how different that is from the entertainment industry.

Horth found the residency valuable because it allowed her to turn her focus aside from the television business and refresh her historical and creative inspiration between projects giving ‘a kind of creative reset and for inspiration’.⁵⁵ She felt the shared values of ‘curiosity and discovery’ between herself and the IHR helped make it a successful residency, as she tells true stories in order to compel audiences to be moved by ‘the choices and dilemmas and heroism experienced by real people in the past’, which she feels is also the aim of historians.⁵⁶ These values of research and objectivity feel especially significant now, as factual dramas and true crime stories have become increasingly popular in the past ten years, necessitating a high level of detailed research, journalistic rigour, editorial responsibility and fair representation.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Artist helping researchers understand how TV and film use research
- Encouraging researchers to think about working creatively
- Artist engaging with research and researchers to get inspiration for next project

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

Case Study 11

History
and Place

Inclusion
and
Participation

Diversity
and
Decolonisation

James Kennaby

James Kennaby is a Bristol-based music producer, working across youth work, education, podcasting, branding and events. He has partnered with University of Bristol, University of the West of England (UWE) – where he is creating an artist development module at the Centre for Music – and BIMM Music Institute Bristol, where he currently teaches and is doing an MA in Popular Music Practice. He has previous experience of running events that link music and education, largely with young people, such as festivals, talks, workshops and screenings, mixing elements from the world of music production and academic research – for instance, the Amplify Festival at UWE. Kennaby met Bristol’s Professor Justin Williams, an academic studying hip-hop at Bristol, when Williams asked him to be on a panel for an event.

‘Hip-Hop’s Fifth Element’ (2021–5) is a UK–German project instigated by Williams (Department of Music) and European Network of Hip-Hop studies founder and scholar Dr Sina Nitzsche, thematically intersecting with History and Place, Inclusion and Participation and Diversity and Decolonisation. Supported by the AHRC and the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), it aims to investigate the knowledge (the fifth element) produced by and influencing the culture of hip-hop (the other four elements being DJing, emceeing, graffiti and dance). The UK branch of ‘Hip-Hop’s Fifth Element’ consists of several global projects intended to illuminate the role knowledge plays within hip-hop culture: articles, open-access resources, a documentary and events. Williams brought Kennaby on board to help organise ‘An Afternoon of Dilla’ in 2024 (London, Bristol, Manchester), a celebration of the career of US hip-hop producer J Dilla and a test model for artist–scholar collaboration, ‘to think through, test, and refine models for artist scholar collaboration: a) to widen the notion of knowledge within and outside the academy, to value different forms of knowledge and b) to create research impact from those findings’.⁵⁷ It was a fortuitous collaboration, as Kennaby had recently made a J Dilla tribute album (*Dilla: The Timeless Tribute*, 2020) and Bristol PhD student Zach Diaz had been writing a thesis on Dilla. Kennaby also secured partnerships with businesses and charities, providing catering and merchandise and further supporting the event. Kennaby is also working on the documentary, collaborating with Tanzanian hip-hop artists, helping them mix and produce music, and DJing the night of the premiere.

Kennaby explained that this project was the fusing together of non-academic J Dilla events with musicians and DJs. Williams’s goal was to increase the impact of his research on hip-hop outside academia and Kennaby’s own desire was to ‘dig deeper and [...] explore his music’, as well as ‘celebrate it as a community together’.⁵⁸ He values his relationship with Williams and sees numerous possibilities for collaboration if they can find the funding, as they share a mutual respect and a way of working. He and Williams continue to push the Dilla event and are trying to find people interested in hosting it in the future, hoping to capitalise on the growth of hip-hop culture and hip-hop studies globally. Kennaby has been attending international hip-hop

⁵⁷ <https://hiphopknowledge.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/project-outputs/#PRJ8> [Accessed on 15.11.25]

⁵⁸ Interview with James Kennaby, 9 June 2025.



James Kennaby, An Afternoon with Dilla (photo: Chris Beschi)

conferences to make connections, thinking of the event as a brand upon which to build. He spoke about how useful it would be for freelancers like himself to have access to funding for travelling to conferences and other events to build partnerships and develop projects like ‘An Afternoon of Dilla’.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Bridging music and education for young people
- Collaborating internationally between HEIs, working across platforms and art practices
- Testing new model for artist/researcher collaboration, using events to reach public and increase research impact

Case Study 12

History
and Place

Diversity and
Decolonisation

Rawz

Rawz is a multimedia artist with a background in youth education and outreach, working across music, poetry, hip-hop and visual arts, with a focus on decolonisation and public engagement. In 2009, he established a grassroots organisation, the Urban Music Foundation, through which he delivers a range of art and music-based projects to communities across Oxford. He was commissioned by the Old Fire Station for the 2024 Marmalade Festival, won the 2024 Bertha Artivism Award for using art for social change and has had work published by the Poetry Centre at Oxford Brookes and the Oxford University Press. Much of his work with the University of Oxford has been focused on bridging the historical divide between the university and the local communities. He noted, ‘As far as I can tell, I’m the only person who’s from Oxford who’s ever been a resident artist at an Oxford college [in the] almost 1000-year history of the university, [which] gives you some insight into the historic relationship the university has had with the town.’⁵⁹ Rawz was interested in exploring his own relationship with the university, but also in bringing in other artists and members of the community to work on projects.

Rawz first became connected with Oxford in 2021 at a Zoom event, when, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, the university decided to focus more resources on connecting with the local community. His first project was the 2021–2 TORCH-supported ‘Digging Crates’, which used hip-hop as a way of decolonising the Pitt Rivers Museum’s instrument collection, working with the Urban Music Foundation and Inner Peace Records in collaboration with the museum’s Families and Communities Officer Beth McDougall. He thought of this project as a ‘milestone’ in his career in terms of experience and confidence:



Digging Crates (photo: Ben Atiyah)

59 Interview with Rawz, 17 July 2025.

'It got me what I needed to kind of get through that very first stage of being a full-time freelancer.'⁶⁰

He then became Sound Artist in Residence at St John's College in 2022 and the project he developed there served as the basis for what became 'EPOCH' (2022–3), where Rawz worked across the fields of music, AI, immunology and modernist studies. Both this project and 'Digging Crates' fall into the categories of History and Place and also Diversity and Decolonisation. He developed it with TORCH and Oxford Brookes as an exhibition and conceptual hip-hop album, working across five eras from the 1950s onwards, in period-specific recording studios with corresponding technology and production techniques, exploring the evolution of hip-hop and immersing the audience in each era, as well as the hip-hop of the future. 'EPOCH' was documented in a short film by Drop All Words Media and culminated in a short exhibition at the History of Science Museum. The project began with an artist/researcher networking Zoom, where Rawz discussed ideas with academics and established relationships with collaborators. Professor David De Roure (e-Research), Professor Alex Goody (20th-Century Literature and Culture) and Dr Stéphanie Longet (Immunology) who worked with Rawz on the project.

Rawz explained that although the university's complex bureaucratic system was sometimes difficult to navigate, making the logistics of the project challenging, this project allowed him to be able to experiment with and develop his own work as an artist and to collaborate with other artists of his choosing. He was given the time, space and opportunity to work with researchers across different disciplines but also ran a series of workshops to experiment with recording music in different styles with musicians, singers and producers from the hip-hop world. He felt it was valuable for the development of the project and his own practice, as well as those of his collaborators, adding: 'I've since had feedback from more than one person within the college that my residency was kind of the most impactful that they've had in their memory.'⁶¹

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Bridging the historical divide between HEI and local communities
- Using hip-hop to decolonise museum's collection
- Working with researchers across discipline
- Bringing in other artists to contribute to the project

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

Case Study 13

Inclusion and Participation

Health and Wellbeing

Diversity and Decolonisation

Professor David Harradine

Alongside **Sam Butler**, **Professor David Harradine** is the co-Artistic Director of interdisciplinary performance company **Fevered Sleep**. The company is active across theatre, dance, film, digital art and installations and has worked with major cultural institutions including the Young Vic Theatre, Sadler's Wells, Tate Britain, the Whitworth and Sydney Opera House. Their process is rooted in research and participation, engaging performers, researchers from various disciplines, young people and members of the public. Harradine expressed that the company holds a 'deep commitment to equity and inclusion and diversity and fairness and anti-racism'.⁶² They are embedded in the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, although they work with researchers from a wide range of backgrounds and in areas that speak to the topic of whichever performance they are creating (for instance, doctors and scientists for *On Ageing*).

Harradine is Professor of Interdisciplinary Practice on a permanent, fractional contract at Central, which allows the company to sit within the school as an associate artist. Central contributes to Fevered Sleep's running costs with a yearly fee, on a three-year renewable contract, and the relationship enables the company to apply for project grants to which it wouldn't otherwise have access as an independent company. Fevered Sleep is also an ACE NPO. This is an unusual relationship for a theatre/performance company to have with a drama school or university and is productive, mutually beneficial and supports stability for Harradine and the company.



Fevered Sleep, *Time Keeps The Drummer* (photo top: Winnie Yeung photo bottom: Benedict Johnson)

62 Interview with David Harradine, 11 November 2024.

Time Keeps the Drummer (2023–present) is a five-hour-long durational performance piece, where the audience can come and go freely, and falls into the categories of Inclusion and Participation, Health and Wellbeing and Diversity and Decolonisation. It was co-created by Harradine and his co-director Butler with a group of 7–11-year-old children, exploring what it means to experience time without a clock: ‘nonlinear, non-colonial structures of time, preindustrial time, the time of children, planetary time, non-human time, crip time, queer time’ Harradine sees it as an act of resistance against notions of time framed by ‘linear, capitalist activity’, productivity, efficiency and standardisation and says that the piece ‘⁶³’. Harradine and Butler worked with researchers across different to understand alternative conceptions of time and find ‘dramaturgical hooks’ to ‘understand the potential of the piece itself, or its dramaturgy, or its structure’.⁶⁴ The children performed while a professional drummer played on a motion-capture drum kit, improvising percussion, to which the audience listened through headphones.

The relationship between Fevered Sleep and Central is unusual in its nature, longevity and reciprocity. Harradine works closely with practitioner-artist colleagues to help them think through their practice as research. His own research through Fevered Sleep connects Central to multiple industry networks and partners and contributes to Central’s research portfolio. He also supervises PhD students and is a member of the research leadership team. Harradine explains that there is no trade-off for the security and stability the relationship provides: ‘Maybe this is increasingly the solution to help save arts companies, to embed them within universities.’⁶⁵

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Supporting stability for both company and artist through ongoing embedded artistic associateship with HEI
- Connecting HEI to performance industry networks and partners and contributing to research portfolio
- Working with researchers interdisciplinarily and understanding the potential of subject for performance
- Working with professional artists, members of the public and children together

63 Interview with David Harradine, 11 November 2024, email exchange with David Harradine, 10 December 2025.

64 Interview with David Harradine, 11 November 2024.

65 Ibid.

Dr Funmi Adewole Elliott

Dr Funmi Adewole Elliott is a freelance performer, dramaturg and researcher, developing approaches to making work, pedagogy and public engagement. She was a senior lecturer at De Montfort University, teaching in the Dance Department for eight years before returning to industry. She is the recipient of the 2019 Dance of the African Diaspora Lifetime Achievement Award, an honorary fellow of the Centre of Dance Research (C-DaRE) at the University of Coventry and a committee member with the Society of Dance Research (SDR). Her research investigates the Black dance practitioner's work context. For example, her work in creative health began with a Knowledge Exchange project with the Pathways House Collective, funded by De Montfort University. The Pathways House Collective is a group of mid-career –to senior artists from African diasporic backgrounds who run a 'Creative Spa' day for other mid-career artists, providing opportunities to share practice, stay in touch with the arts sector and prioritise self-care. She was also a curator for the MA Dance: Participation, Communities, Activism at the London Contemporary Dance School from 2023 to 2025 and is a regular guest lecturer on the MA Creative Practice: Dance Professionals led by Trinity Laban in partnership with Independent Dance and Siobhan Davies Studios. She has taught for dance organisations and conservations internationally such as Dance Immersion, Canada, Ecole des Sables, Senegal, Pan-African Creative Exchange, South Africa/UK/Nigeria, AHK in the Netherlands and PARTS in Belgium.

Adewole Elliott's creative practice sits at the intersection of dance and storytelling, and her research relates to her own practice and experiences, as well as those of other African diasporic dancers and choreographers. She also theorises transnationalism as a space where various artistic practices of different cultural backgrounds and discourses intersect. She feels that a critical context for professional practice is important because it is 'the place that supports the development of choreographic method, pedagogy and philosophy' and that the inventive nature of African diasporic dance and dance pedagogy in the UK is in danger of being lost without this documentation.⁶⁶

She notes that her 'practice draws on African dance drama, from being in the role of a narrator' and from working as a storyteller in



FAE Blindsight (photo: Pete Martin)

⁶⁶ Interview with Funmi Adewole Elliott, 2 December 2024.

schools for several years. She is presently developing a pedagogic methodology that combines choreography, dramaturgy and storytelling.⁶⁷ When teaching, she rethinks dance theory with a decolonising, activist mindset to generate a discourse that will support dance students drawing from non-Western forms in articulating their creative processes.⁶⁸ Enact Arts CIC is her Community



Lagos Fringe workshop (photo: Dreamhowzpictures)

Interest Company which she set up with the aim of running projects in creative health, dance of the African diaspora and transnational arts.

Additionally, Adewole Elliott is an NCACE Fellow, working to develop the new Independent Researchers Network (IRN), an initiative designed to provide recognition, visibility and support for researchers who work outside formal institutional structures.⁶⁹ She is working with NCACE on the leadership and development of this cross-sectoral network and associated research and publications, drawing from her own experience as an independent pracademic and understanding of its attendant challenges.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Developing pedagogic methodology combining choreography, dramaturgy, and storytelling
- Helping establish African diasporic dance as academic field
- Using a decolonising, activist lens to generate new discourse
- Working with NCACE on leadership and development of cross-sectoral network, research and publications

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ <https://ncace.ac.uk/2025/09/01/building-connections-creating-opportunities-the-potential-of-the-ncace-independent-researchers-network/> [Accessed on 4.12.25]

Nicola Simpson

Nicola Simpson is a curator and Research Impact Fellow at Norwich University of the Arts, supporting the development of practice-based research and contributing to the evolution and implementation of the university's Research Impact Strategy. She collaborates with practice-based researchers in art and design and media, helping them use Research Impact models, toolkits and methodologies to document and enhance the impact of their research. Her specialism is the work of the Benedictine monk and artist Dom Sylvester Houédard and Tibetan Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism and its associated performance rituals, as well as, more broadly, the influence of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism on global avant-garde art movements. Artist Tim A. Shaw and curator Niamh White founded Hospital Rooms (which is now an ACE National Portfolio Organisation) in 2016 after they visited a friend in a mental health hospital and saw the impact the spare, clinical aesthetic had on her. They decided to transform secure hospital wards with large-scale art installations, made by commissioned artists, working with patients and staff.

As Hospital Rooms had an existing relationship with the university, in 2020, Simpson became a Research Associate for the organisation, looking at the impact and legacy of some of its completed projects, large art installations in secure NHS wards. Simpson subsequently became a Research Fellow,



Exhibition installation shot, Shape Shift Converse Rework, Hungate Medieval Art, July 2025 (photo: Damien Griffiths)

working alongside the organisation, which allowed her to develop her own creative research methodologies for assessing impact for arts interventions. Hospital Rooms commissions professional artists to run a series of workshops with hospital staff and service users; the material developed in the workshops, as well as service user feedback, then informs the large-scale, immersive artworks they create. On the project 'Northside House' (2021–2),⁷⁰ Simpson became a Research Fellow for Hospital Rooms and discovered that it was difficult to access data from the NHS and then make a case for causality between implementation of the art installation and a decrease in conflict on the ward, so she had to rely on anecdotal information.⁷¹ However, she was able to use different creative methodologies and qualitative methods to tell the story about the Hospital Rooms intervention and the impact it had on the service users, and commented that working directly with artists 'had given a real sense of value

⁷⁰ Northside House is a medium secure unit for men in the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, providing care to those who with a severe and enduring mental health diagnosis and have had experiences with the criminal justice system. 'This dual element often means that service users experience disproportionate stigma and, as a consequence, face a series of barriers to meaningful engagement with arts and culture.' <https://www.newexhibitions.com/e/58628> [Accessed on 3 December 2025]

⁷¹ Interview with Nicola Simpson, 6 November 2025.

to the project. There were some big names involved in that project [who] brought a sense of validation to the communities of service users.⁷² Simpson was able to work directly with patients using creative research methods in order to tell the story of the impact of Hospital Rooms' work on their experience on the ward, as well as to consider how to work with service users in recovery as co-researchers on future projects.

In 2022, Hospital Rooms worked on a project at Hellesdon Hospital (also part of Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust) involving 15 artists running 70 workshops across in-patient wards as well as partner venues at Norwich University of the Arts, Sainsbury Centre and Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery for community members who have used in-patient mental health services.⁷³ Simpson recruited a team of 'lived experience experts' (people who had recovered from their hospital experiences) to work with her as co-researchers, to evaluate the spaces and their impact on service users and staff – who would later go on to co-write papers and attend conferences with her.

I think it's making people feel empowered by [the fact] that their knowledge isn't going to be taken by the university, they will use that knowledge in the way that they feel is most useful in the project, and they will have a lot of agency in how that shapes the research design, how that reshapes what data's collected, how that shapes the dissemination. [...] It's making sure those recruits at the beginning really felt that, that they weren't joining a project that had already gone through ethics approval.⁷⁴



An example of Cyanovoice as Research Method, Lived Experience Artist Co-Researcher Team with artist Holly Sandiford, Shape Shift (photo: Damien Griffiths)

With her team, Simpson went into the disused Victorian locked wards at Hellesdon with cameras to conduct a 'photo voice project' to document those spaces through the perspective of people who have been service users in the hospital. One of the team members, artist and musician Mark Jennings, suggested getting mics in order to record sound as well, and recorded their conversations. They found an abandoned, padlocked piano, on which Jennings played and recorded a few notes. Jennings then created a whole album out of those notes and recordings from the site visit called *Empty spaces with people and pianos* (2025). The album was later played from inside the piano as an installation as part of an exhibition curated by Hospital Rooms in 2025 called *Shape Shift: Reflections on Art in Mental Health Settings* at Fitzrovia Chapel in London (supported by Norwich and the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust).

72 Ibid.

73 <https://hospital-rooms.com/project/hellesdon-norwich/> [Accessed on 4 December 2025]

74 Interview with Nicola Simpson, 6 November 2025.

The most difficult part of the project was navigating the complex system of the NHS and attaining approval for stages of the projects, especially managing NHS staff turnover and changes in points of contact. Simpson also expressed a sentiment that has come up in other case studies, namely that small arts organisations often work on a shorter, more flexible timescale than larger, more bureaucratic institutions like hospitals and universities which require more paperwork, ethics committees and stages of approval to realise a project; because of the vulnerable nature of the service users, it takes a long time to get the artwork approved by the NHS.

However, Simpson feels the benefits of engaging artists, NHS staff, service users and former service users in these projects – as workshop participants and co-researchers – greatly outweigh the challenges. She now has a core group of established co-researchers and has aimed to make them part of the university community, in an effort to make those relationships as non-hierarchical and non-extractive as possible. Simpson explained that the projects have been so successful and her co-researchers continue to generate ‘such brilliant ideas for research’ that she has continued to return to the institute director to ask for more funding to keep running the project.⁷⁵ What began as a method of evaluating the impact of Hospital Rooms’ work has developed into a new area of investigation:

how authentic coproduction can work with communities, how community artists can be brought into a university as equitable co researchers, and working with them on developing policies around that as well that the university can implement for lots of other projects, also looking at how practice-led research in a creative arts institution can work as well. How, in creative health, for example, how you can have much more improvisatory creative methods in creative health.⁷⁶

Simpson was inspired by the non-hierarchical ways in which Hospital Rooms works with artists, service users and staff, how artists incorporated creative responses that emerged from the workshops into their installations and how that ultimately shifted the culture in those spaces. The power of collaborative, creative art practice helped to soften the hierarchies on those wards over time and inspired her to bring community co-researchers into her process.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Developing new creative research methodologies for assessing impact
- Working with artists, service users and staff to incorporate workshop responses into art installations
- Improving ward culture and atmosphere through workshops and art installations
- Collaborating with team of lived experience experts to co-design research methodologies and co-write papers
- Research as means of working with community members, resisting extractive practices and hierarchies

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Case Study 16

History
and Place

Inclusion and
Participation

Health and
Wellbeing

Monika Gravago, Dr Sara Adhitya, Lottie McCarthy

Over the past five years, the Trellis programme has connected UCL researchers to East London-based artists. UCL researcher **Dr Sara Adhitya** is the Arts-Science Programme Director at UCL Person-Environment-Activity Research Laboratory (PEARL), a life-sized environmental simulation laboratory that studies the senses, and is a pracademic, with a background in design and music, as well as participation and public engagement. **Monika Gravago** is the Artistic Director of Faccicose, performance maker, social designer and interdisciplinary researcher. She works as Climate Justice Educational Developer at University of the Arts London (UAL).



Performing future neurodivergent vision of Tate at PEARL PH (Photo: Sara Adhitya)

Lottie McCarthy is a neurodivergent designer and artist working on social impact projects, including a redesign of the Tate Institute, a community facility and social club dating back to the late nineteenth century, abandoned until recently and slated for refurbishment by Newham Council⁷⁷ Each responded to Trellis's callout for artists

and researchers and they met at a digital matchmaking event. They were committed to working together as they all had backgrounds that crossed design and public engagement, even though the project's budget would only allow for two participants and there would be less money for them to be paid for their time. They worked on the project from July 2024 until March 2025. What was unusual about this application process was that Trellis paid a certain number of applicants to refine their proposal and resend it during the second selection round.

The Trellis's A Place of Our Making, 'Acceptance of Difference (Here?)' (2025) project can be categorised as History and Place, Inclusion and Participation as well as Health and Wellbeing, exploring as it does the intersection of neurodivergence, community and place. The project experimented with co-redesigning the Tate Institute collaboratively between Adhitya, Gravago and McCarthy, with workshops and feedback from neurodivergent participants to make it a more accessible space, as understood within the social model of disability. The project had three phases: canvassing opinions from the participants on what makes public spaces accessible, workshoping those ideas into the version of the Tate Institute that they recreated at PEARL and then trying them out at the Tate (both with the participants). At the

⁷⁷ <https://www.royaldocks.london/articles/new-life-for-the-tate-institute-locally-listed-building-to-be-transformed-into-a-thriving-community-space> [Accessed on 3.12.25]

end, there was an exhibition of the installation at the Tate, along with a talk and a showing of the documentary that they commissioned of the process. In this way, Adhitya, Gravagno and McCarthy allowed the participants to drive the direction of the experiments. Gravagno led one group, McCarthy led another, and Adhitya worked between them and acted as a liaison with the staff at PEARL.



Analysing Tate Institute workshop 1 (Photo: Monika Gravagno)

When they implemented ideas developed at PEARL and in discussion at the Tate, participants were asked to carry on with various activities as the space was changed around them, to see which changes were most effective in terms of facilitating mental focus. Adhitya, Gravagno and McCarthy created a new environment that could be altered, depending on the needs of the people, the activities taking place and what time of the day or night it was. Adhitya noted that ‘it was all about agency, empowerment and flexibility’, and that ‘just because we have this space doesn’t mean we have to use it the way it might conventionally be used’.⁷⁸

The inclusion of neurodivergent participants necessitated a good deal of planning, particularly around accessibility issues. Adhitya and Gravagno noted that it was challenging to engage in such an ambitious a project so collaboratively, with limited time and means, with a group of 15 participants, as well as finding a way to meet everyone’s needs and incorporate their feedback. Adhitya commented that there is a ‘fine line between planning and not planning, the flexibility you get from not planning, but then the stability you get from planning, but then the stress you get from planning and then not being able to stick to your plan’.⁷⁹ Gravagno noted that much time was spent finding and altering methodologies that would help balance the power dynamics between the three of them, the institutions and the participants, to maintain the ethics that underpinned the project.⁸⁰ She also explained the importance of working and learning ‘from a place of not knowing’ and not making assumptions, as well as understanding and reconciling the different ways that people and institutions worked.⁸¹

‘Acceptance of Difference’ was experimental and ambitious in terms of both content and methodology, bringing together different fields and attempting something as a result of access to the PEARL facility. Adhitya noted that the challenge of trail-blazing, interdisciplinary research like this was finding points of reference to explain it to institutions, funding bodies

78 Interview with Sara Adhitya, 1 April 2025.

79 Ibid.

80 Interview with Monika Gravagno, 4 April 2025.

81 Ibid.

and the public.⁸² She felt that both the arts and the sciences are ‘absolutely necessary for each other in order to have an integrated, holistic understanding of the world’, as it allows science research to be exposed to different perspectives the arts can bring, and the sciences can facilitate growth within the arts in terms of accessibility’.⁸³

Adhitya also noted that as they participated in the fifth and final year of the Trellis programme, they benefited from previous years of trial and error, as well as the feedback other participants had given UCL.⁸⁴ Gravagno commented on how useful the continuous development of practice within the programme was, where UCL gave the team training on collaboration, creative evaluation and storytelling, as well as the support they had from their contact at Trellis, who was also their exhibition coordinator, with whom they met every few months for check-ins.⁸⁵ They both felt they accomplished a considerable amount with the project, both in terms of the outcome and in terms of the methodologies they tested; however, they also felt it was overly ambitious in terms of the time and funding allocated to them.

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Experimenting with spatial redesign, working with workshop participants towards accessibility
- Allowing the participants to drive direction of experiments
- Creating changeable environment response to people’s needs, activities and time of day, using social model of disability
- Altering research methodologies to balance power dynamics between the artist, researcher and participants

82 Interview with Sara Adhitya, 1 April 2025.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 Interview with Monika Gravagno, 4 April 2025.

The final two case studies differ from the previous ones as they don't follow the model of a freelance or institutional artist or pracademic working with an HEI but are nonetheless worth examining given the light they shed on artist/research collaborations in HEI settings.

Case Study 17

History
and Place

Inclusion and
Participation

Diversity and
Decolonisation

Nasia Sarwar-Skuse

Nasia Sarwar-Skuse is an editor, writer, artist and creative facilitator studying for a PhD in Creative and Critical Writing at Swansea University, funded by the Swansea University Research Excellence Scholarship. Her research focuses on the colonisation of India/Pakistan, decolonisation, migration, and how these themes intersect with memory and gender.⁸⁶ She has exhibited work at St Fagans National Museum of History, Manchester Museum and Glynn Vivian



Perspective(s) exhibition at St Fagans © Nasia Sarwar-Skuse

Gallery and has been published in numerous books and journals. **Owen Griffiths** is an artist, curator, workshop leader and facilitator with a socially engaged practice that 'explores the possibilities of art to create new frameworks, resources and systems'.⁸⁷ He has made work for the Whitworth Gallery and the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, among other institutions and organisations, working across site-specific and environmental projects, rituals, food and communities. He is the founder and Director of Ways of Working; established in 2020, the company engages and builds relationships with the local community in Swansea through arts and culture in order to create lasting change regarding anti-racist practice, equity, decolonisation and environmental sustainability.⁸⁸

Ways of Working applied for Arts Council Wales funding which was part of an initiative to decolonise museum collections across Wales (and a part of the government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan), to work with National Museum Wales and then put out a call for an artist/writer/

86 <https://nasiaarwarskuse.com/> [Accessed on 5.12.25]

87 <https://www.owengriffiths.work/about> [Accessed on 5.12.25]

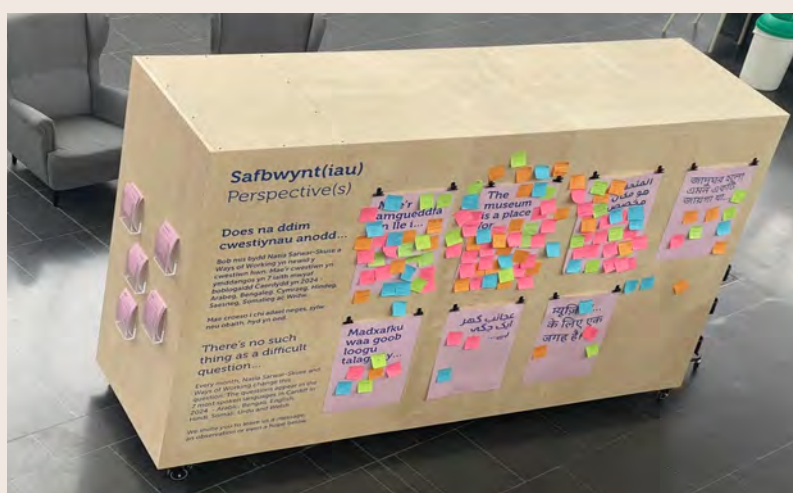
88 <https://www.waysofworking.org/about> [Accessed on 5.12.25]

researcher with whom they could collaborate.⁸⁹ They then commissioned Sarwar-Skuse and partnered with St Fagan's National Museum of History (as Griffiths had a pre-existing relationship with them), which became their *Perspective(s)*:

Decolonising Heritage (2023–4) project. Griffiths noted, 'We realised quite early on that we had a kind of fluency and a way of working

together.'⁹⁰ Sarwar-Skuse commented on how she and Griffiths had aligned values and developed a close relationship quickly and easily and that the commission was perfectly timed for her, as she was in the midst of researching social justice, community engagement and decolonial art practices for her PhD.⁹¹

The conversations with St Fagan's around decolonisation and what it meant to everyone involved in the project were complex and necessitated time to establish trust, as well as examples from other processes of decolonising arts institutions. Griffiths noted that in Wales, 'there was a reluctance to link some of these histories and heritages to a kind of more complex global heritage' and that the country is 'particular in its understanding of cultural heritage and its connection to colonialism and empire' in the sense that people from Wales 'identify as having been colonised' but also having been 'part of the empire and part of the colonial project'.⁹² They found they needed to keep what Griffiths called a 'critical lens' focused on the conversations with the museum's curators in order to come to an understanding around its relation to Britain's colonial history and which artefacts in the museum were a product of it.⁹³ They also brought in what Nasia called 'critical friends' to discuss their knowledge and experience of decolonising collections in other institutions, such as Corinne Fowler (Professor of Colonialism and Heritage at Leicester University) and Nusrat Ahmed (Lead Curator, South Asia Gallery, Manchester Museum). These discussions focused on new ways of understanding St Fagan's collection through the lens of decolonialisation and co-curation with the community. Griffiths and Sarwar-Skuse also engaged the Cardiff-based Aurora Trinity Collective (an all-female, artist-led group working with textiles in community settings) as another critical friend in these conversations, which then led to the collective becoming their community partner on the project.⁹⁴ This led to further conversations with the collective about which members of the



Perspective(s) exhibition at St Fagans © Nasia Sarwar-Skuse

89 <https://museumsandheritage.com/advisor/posts/4-5m-anti-racist-wales-action-plan-supports-museums-heritage-sector/> [Accessed on 8.12.25]

90 Interview with Nasia Sarwar-Skuse and Owen Griffiths, 17 November 2025.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 <https://artemundi.org/collaborations/aurora-trinity-collective/> [Accessed on 8.12.25]

Cardiff community have been to the museum before, if they were able to access it and their feelings about museums in general.

The first installation Sarwar-Skuse and Griffiths created was a wall in the museum's entrance with questions about the museum, its collection and colonialism in eight different languages and paper and pens for people to leave their responses; this allowed them to understand how people from different communities across Cardiff experienced the museum and felt about their place in it. According to Sarwar-Skuse, it gave them 'a visual representation of how people do engage when they can relate to something in the museum' in order to understand who is and isn't seen.⁹⁵

The second installation they created juxtaposed a sofa owned by Robert Clive (aka Clive of India), the first British colonial governor in India in the eighteenth century, with a late twentieth-century South Asian living room in Britain, recreated from Sarwar-Skuse's childhood memories.⁹⁶ She felt that while the museum aimed to represent Welsh history and culture, her family and the South Asian community's story was absent and wanted to rectify that.

The third installation, *Khawaab Mahal (Dream Palace)*, reimaged the tent of Tipū Sultān (ruler of the state of Mysore), looted by Clive's son, now housed at Powis Castle, for St Fagan's Castle (which is part of the National Museum of Wales). They printed digital images of the original tent and printed it on fabric, as well as extracts from Tipū's dream journal, enabling visitors to 'immerse themselves in Tipū's world, surrounded by soundscapes and dreams, reclaiming a space once taken through force.'⁹⁷

The fourth installation was Sarwar-Skuse's film *Absent Presence*, a film shot on the grounds of St Fagan's Castle featuring the dancer Sanea Singh, reflecting on the castle's colonial connections and the South Asian community in Wales.

Lastly, Sarwar-Skuse and Griffiths commissioned the Aurora Trinity Collective 'to make a series of commissions in response to the themes of the project and their own histories and their love of textiles and embroidery', which are now on permanent display in the museum.⁹⁸

Although it was initially difficult to navigate the museum and arrange communication and meetings with their staff, the producer Carys⁹⁹ facilitated that process and established a weekly meeting, allowing all parties to have a chance to cover what had taken place the week before and what the plans were for the coming week. This echoes what other interviewees have noted, that producers and facilitators played an important role in their projects, and underscores the statements from those who didn't have the budget for a producer but felt they would have benefited from working with one. Both Sarwar-Skuse and Griffiths felt the project was significant in terms of their own work, the development of their relationship and encouraging museums not only to take steps towards looking at their curation and collections through a

95 Interview with Nasia Sarwar-Skuse and Owen Griffiths, 17 November 2025.

96 St Fagan's Castle is connected to Clive through a family marriage and inherited wealth, acquired from Clive's colonial incursions in India. <https://museum.wales/blog/2664/Reclaiming-Narratives-Through-Creative-Interventions-at-St-Fagans-National-History-Museum/?ref=nasiasarwarskuse.com> [Accessed on 8.12.25]

97 Ibid.

98 Interview with Nasia Sarwar-Skuse and Owen Griffiths, 17 November 2025.

99 Ibid.

decolonising lens, but also to work collectively, across the country, to undertake this as a national project. Sarwar-Skuse noted that Professor Fowler had explained that the project of decolonising would be a ‘a multi-generational work’ and they were only at the beginning. The artist explained it was important to convey to St Fagan’s ‘that we’re in it together. We’re not here to kind of tear down your structures. We’re here to inquire how we can change the ways of working, even if it’s a small change that we can make.’¹⁰⁰

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Bringing in experts to a museum to discuss decolonising process and co-curate with local community
- Bringing in a community arts collective led to work becoming part of the permanent collection
- Bringing in new audiences who had previously not been to the museum through new modes of inclusion
- Encouraging museums to work collectively to undertake decolonising and anti-racist activism

100 Ibid.

AA2A

AA2A is an Arts Council England-funded Investment Principle Support Organisation (IPSO) run by Executive Director **Daniel Hawley-Lingham** that facilitates artists' residencies, placing fine and visual artists in HEIs.¹⁰¹ Unlike the other case studies in this report, AA2A is placement – rather than project-oriented, having placed more than 2,000 residents across 70 institutions since 1999. The organisation is unique because it functions as an agency within the world of arts/HEI collaborations, advocating for and connecting artists to HEIs, as well as raising the profile of freelance artists within the world of the academy.

While the artists are unpaid, they receive some funding for materials and disability support and are able to access and use the HEI's specialist equipment and facilities while developing new work, as well as have a chance to develop their teaching practice by working with students, giving talks and running workshops. Through an open call, AA2A provides a pool of pre-selected applicants from which partner HEIs can choose, based on their own criteria and facilities on their campus, choosing four to six artists each. The HEI then pays £1,995 per year to run all the residencies.

Current partners include: Anglia Ruskin University, Blackpool School of Arts, Buckinghamshire New University, University of Chester, Gloucestershire College, University of Lancashire, Leeds Beckett University, Loughborough University, New City College, Nottingham Trent University, University of Sunderland and York St John University.¹⁰²

There is a coordinator within each HEI to administer the residency who takes the administrative burden off the HEI and makes sure the residency runs smoothly. This element of the programme addresses a common issue with arts/HEI collaborations, namely that it helps the process greatly if someone acts as a producer, administrator and/or facilitator and can be detrimental if the administrative load is shared by the artists and researchers involved, who generally already have heavy workloads.

An important element of AA2A's residencies is Creative Futures, 'a comprehensive suite of resources designed to support the employability and professional development of students and alumni from creative disciplines at AA2A host institutions' which provides 'tools and insights into the world of self-employment and creative careers through a variety of formats including videos, seminars, talks, and guides'.¹⁰³ This includes a YouTube library with videos where artists provide students with advice across a range of topics, a four-part seminar series where panels of experts discuss self-employment in the arts, a talk on employability tailored to the students at each institution, a guide to help students plan their careers in the arts and the newly introduced student ambassador programme, focusing on mentoring from arts professionals. Hawley-Lingham explains that the residencies the organisation provides differ from typical alumni programmes where HEIs offer a residency to recent graduate in that the

101 <https://aa2a.org/> [Accessed on 8.12.25]

102 <https://aa2a.org/hosts/> [Accessed on 8.12.25]

103 <https://aa2a.org/creative-futures/> [Accessed on 8.12.25]

artists in residence are experienced in their field and can work with students to better understand their future profession: ‘We provide that uplift for the students in terms of what how they might perceive their future within creative industries through these artist residents.’¹⁰⁴

AA2A doubled the number of artists applying for these residencies in the past year, which Hawley-Lingham attributes to the success of the programmes but also to the fact that arts facilities are

becoming ‘more and more scarce, more and more difficult to access, especially as universities are squeezing out a lot of fine art facilities’.¹⁰⁵ He notes that although it can be a daunting prospect for an HEI to agree to take on this programme, ‘Once we’re on board, they see the value of it and really appreciate the whole program,’ as it can help their statistics regarding student employability and national student surveys.¹⁰⁶ It is common that artists who have taken part in one of the residencies then recommend the programme for a university for which they go on to work. Hawley-Lingham hopes to be able to develop the organisation further and to devise new pathways such as those for artists working outside the visual arts, cross-disciplinarily or with research, as well as expanding into other parts of the UK.



Angela Hull AA2A Resident 2023.24 Staffordshire University (Image courtesy the artist)

Approaches and Ways of Working

- Connecting artists to HEIs while advocating for arts/HEI collaborations
- Artists receiving funding for materials and disability support, accessing HEIs’ facilities, developing teaching practice
- Supporting employability and professional development of students and alumni
- Improving HEIs’ statistics regarding student employability and national student survey responses

104 Interview with Daniel Hawley-Lingham, 11 March 2025.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

Reflections from Higher Education Professionals

This chapter comprises six values-focused written reflections from university specialists whose roles involve supporting partnerships between universities, researchers and artists and creative practitioners. We asked these individuals to contribute a short text using the following questions as a starting point for their reflection:

- Why work with artists/creatives?
- What sorts of initiatives and collaborations with researchers does your institution support?
- What value and impacts do artists/creatives bring to your institution, your researchers and students and the wider communities you work with?
- How can such work best be nurtured into the future?

Reflection 1

Sarah Campbell,

Associate Director, Arts and Culture, University of Exeter



Left: All That Glitters, Arts and Culture Arts Commission 2022/23. Theatre maker, Tom Jackson Greaves, collaborated with researchers, academics, communities and other creatives to explore the world of critical minerals. (Photo: Steve Tanner)

Right: Challacombe Chronicled, Leaside Arts Commissions 2024/25. Richard Chappell Dance Company and poet Saili Katebe were awarded one of two commissions, funded by Natural England, to explore Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Richard and Saili responded to Challacombe Farm on Dartmoor. (Photo: Steven Haywood)

Why work with artists?

Artists process information in interesting ways, and I mean ‘information’ in its broadest sense – declarative and non-declarative knowledge, sensory data, environmental and social contexts, the more-than-human, emotions, memories, etc. They don’t latch onto the first or most obvious idea but dig deeper to glean alternative perspectives; they take problems into metaphorical parallels to see what comes up and remain open to surprises and the unexpected. After all this gathering work, artists resurface, recombining and reshaping ideas into formats that others can engage with, stretching our thinking in new directions. It is a very specific skillset and a hugely inspiring way of working. When I collaborate with artists, I particularly enjoy following their creative processes, especially the mix of structured professionalism, playful questioning and original thinking, all resulting in creative outputs that are new to the world.

In the context of higher education, **the potential inherent in working with artists is supercharged**, because you are bringing their processes and worldviews into direct contact with a whole other realm of ideas and research. **When you introduce bright, curious people with different ways of getting stuff done, the results can be electric.** This is not without its challenges in academia, with its highly pressurised workloads, countless jostling priorities and entrenched methodological channels. However, the push for interdisciplinarity, driven by academics, funders and government alike, is encouraging. I think it is in those spaces of change that artists can make a real difference to research and teaching practices, to the benefit of everyone.

What sorts of initiatives and collaborations with researchers does your institution support?

The University of Exeter has an [Arts and Culture Strategy](#) (current iteration 2022–7), and a small team of four core staff (3 FTE) dedicated to its delivery. Our aim is to support creativity across the institution, based on four sites in Devon and Cornwall, and to provide a conduit between the university and the surrounding cultural sector and creative industries. We have our own digital communications channels so we can tell a concentrated narrative about creativity at Exeter, and our work is a balance of structured programming devised by us and responsive programming supporting our colleagues' initiatives. We map thematic areas of work to priorities set out in the University's [Strategy 2030](#), aiming to make the world '[greener, healthier, fairer](#)'.

Examples of recurring programmes include our annual Arts Commissions, where we work with creative practitioners over an extended period (10–18 months) to develop new work that connects into university activity, and our shorter four- to five-week Creative Fellowships, a placement that embeds an artist in a research group with no requirement for an output; the focus is on mutually beneficial dialogue. The university's Penryn campus is shared with Falmouth University, creating the opportunity for site-specific programming that pairs Exeter and Falmouth academics on short-term collaborations (FX Creative Exchange). The success of this offer has led to a sister programme, pairing Exeter and Falmouth students (FX Creative Together).

As well as providing the structures and resources that enable these programmes, we are also helping to 'move the dial' on how working with artists is understood. Both parties (artists and academics) can slip into quite fixed and clichéd understandings of the other. We want to move away from 'wacky' and 'boffin' stereotyping and, instead, promote the importance of taking time to build purposeful working relationships and focus on the process of exploring questions of common interest. With this goal in mind, we have developed an [online toolkit](#) to help colleagues plan creative projects. Collaboration is a fundamental principle shared by the arts and academia, making it a good starting point.

What values and impacts do they bring to your institution, your researchers and students and to the wider communities you work with?

There are so many benefits to working with artists, and most people wouldn't be surprised by the list: inspiration and engagement; new ways of working, looking, thinking and doing; reaching new audiences; supporting interdisciplinary partnerships, etc.

While these macro gains need to be promoted and reported on, it is the myriad micro gains that I find most exciting. Every single project is bespoke, made up of so many intangible moments with unanticipated outcomes, rippling out in benefits that I might never get to see or hear about. Working in this way, I can sense the shift when good work is happening, but it is also fiendishly difficult to capture.

I like to position the value and impact of this work as an exchange. There are all sorts of threshold barriers when entering the domain of academia, and it is not helpful to set up an 'us and them' dynamic where staff and students are divorced from their roles as members of

communities outside the university campuses. Similarly, while I have huge admiration for the forms of creativity that artists specialise in, these are not the only forms that creativity takes. Plenty of work has been done to promote a broader understanding of creativity, taking a post-humanist approach (Chappell et al., 2024) and exploring how it is manifest in different practices (Randles & Burnard, 2023; Crilly, 2024). **Consequently, I see this way of working as deeply relational – it isn't about bringing people in, so much as bringing people together.**

How can such work best be nurtured into the future? (That could be about funding or other support systems and infrastructures etc.)

When talking about bringing artists into academia, it is worth noting that **many academics are also artists**. The Arts and Culture team is based in the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, and we have many colleagues who work creatively inside and outside academia. Similarly, **many practising artists in the cultural sector also hold doctorates and are fluent in the expectations of HEIs**. At the risk of having my cake and eating it too, I respect the depth of knowledge that comes from working within disciplines *and* I love the fuzziness and awkwardness that comes from crawling out of these trenches and challenging research norms by working across disciplines. While the tertiary education sector, over several decades, has incorporated non-traditional outputs, practice research and creative research methods, I do believe there is more to be done. Creativity thrives on constraints, but this is only true up to a point – many barriers remain to these research practices, and **a greater understanding of process-driven, open-ended approaches in research grant applications and assessments would help smooth the path.**

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Chappell, K., Turner, C., and Wren, H. (2024). *Creative Ruptions for Emergent Educational Futures*. Springer Nature. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-52973-3

Crilly, N. (2024). *Design Thinking and Other Approaches: How Different Disciplines See, Think and Act*. Cambridge Elements. ISBN-10 : 1009498665

Randles, C., and Burnard, P. (2023). *The Routledge Companion to Creativities in Music Education*. Routledge. ISBN 9781032163628

Reflection 2

Professor Rhiannon Jones, Head of Civic and Communities, University of Derby



Left: DesigningDialogueCic SHED Right: Derby Theatre, artist engagement facilitation (Photo Chris Webb)

What Happens When You Let Artists In?

Everything.

Why work with artists?

The University of Derby works with artists because artists bring a distinct attention to place, people and possibility. Their ways of working cut across disciplinary boundaries, inviting forms of engagement that universities alone cannot achieve. In a civic context, **artists act as connectors between institutions and communities**, creating spaces for dialogue that are open, participatory and imaginative. **For a university committed to public good, this relationship-building is essential: artists surface locally relevant questions, amplify under-represented voices and strengthen trust between the institution and its city.**

Artists also contribute to research in ways that challenge conventional academic norms. Practice-based and socially engaged methods open alternative forms of inquiry that embrace ambiguity, embodiment, storytelling and co-creation. This enriches the university's research culture across social sciences, health, technology and heritage. By collaborating with artists, the university supports approaches that are iterative and experimental, often leading to insights traditional methods overlook.

Within the university, **artists nurture creativity, innovation and risk-taking**. Their ability to frame problems differently, experiment without fear of failure and work with ideas in open-ended ways shifts how students and staff engage with uncertainty. Artists encourage thinking that is less linear and more adaptable – qualities increasingly necessary in a rapidly changing world. Students particularly benefit: learning alongside artists builds confidence, criticality and a readiness to navigate the unknown.

Beyond the campus, artists contribute to Derby's cultural life and identity. They shape the public realm, participate in festivals and collaborative projects and support the city's cultural regeneration. **Working with artists strengthens the university's role as an anchor institution** – one that educates but also helps shape the civic and cultural landscape. This aligns with ambitions for wellbeing, inclusion and social connection, recognising creativity as a force for resilience at individual and community scales.

Ultimately, the University of Derby works with artists because they expand what a university can be. They help the institution remain porous, responsive and imaginative, sustaining forms of conversation and collaboration that keep civic engagement meaningful. Through creative practice, the university models a culture that values experimentation, process and the transformative potential of risk and creative inquiry.

What sorts of initiatives and collaborations with researchers does your institution support?

The University of Derby supports a diverse ecosystem of initiatives and collaborations that connect researchers with creatives, communities and cultural partners. Our civic flagships provide fertile ground for interdisciplinary inquiry, with Derby Theatre – our nationally recognised Learning Theatre – offering researchers a unique environment where artistic practice, performance, community engagement and knowledge exchange intersect. Because of a deep commitment to home-grown talent, programmes such as Derby Makes and Departure Lounge by In Good Company create opportunities for researchers to collaborate with local artists, emerging practitioners and professional companies, enabling practice-based and socially engaged research to flourish. Within the university staff and students work as artist-researchers, embedding creative methods across disciplines and contributing to a vibrant culture of experimentation, critical inquiry and co-creation. Together, these initiatives cultivate a research environment in which creativity drives innovation, supports civic impact and strengthens the university's role within Derby's cultural ecology.

The university also supports artists through Banks Mill, its arts incubation space and long-standing home for early-stage creative practice, providing studio space, peer networks and enterprise support that enable artists to grow both their practice and their businesses over time.

What values and impacts do they bring to your institution, your researchers and students and the wider communities you work with?

The impact of this creative ecosystem is felt deeply within the University of Derby. Partnerships with Derby Theatre and the creative sector open rich terrain for practice-based inquiry, socially engaged research and interdisciplinary collaboration. Working alongside artists enables researchers to explore methodologies grounded in dialogue, material exploration and lived experience – approaches that surface insights traditional methods may miss. Students benefit equally: **the Learning Theatre offers a living laboratory to test ideas, build confidence, take creative risks and engage directly with professionals, communities and contemporary challenges**. Through Banks Mill, students also work with professional artists via guest lectures, live briefs and mentoring, with clear pathways for creative graduates to transition into professional practice. These experiences cultivate adaptability, critical thinking and a readiness to navigate uncertainty – qualities essential for shaping resilient futures.

CivicLAB builds on this foundation as a hub for creative civic practice across the university. Its partnerships with artists, designers, performers and socially engaged practitioners reinforce a culture of experimentation and co-creation. CivicLAB has enabled over 15,100 researchers to work with creative methodologies foregrounding conversation, participation and community knowledge, opening opportunities for meaningful engagement with place and public life. For students, this strengthens understanding of how creative practice drives social and cultural change. By championing creative approaches to civic engagement, CivicLAB enhances the university's role within Derby's cultural ecology and contributes to a shared vision of a more connected and equitable city.

This commitment is reinforced through the university's Civic and Community Seed Funding, which supports creative innovation from individuals, grassroots groups and community organisations. By resourcing ideas early, the scheme amplifies community-led creativity and enables new partnerships to emerge. Many funded projects evolve into collaborative research, student learning experiences and civic initiatives that feed directly back into the university's ecosystem. In doing so, the scheme extends the realm of possibilities for innovation, teaching, knowledge exchange and place-based impact.

This creative ethos is also reflected in S.H.E.D, the National Saturday Club (Society & Change) and Civic Curiosity EBikes, each driven by creative practice and co-creation. S.H.E.D provides a playful, mobile space for public conversation; to date, it has enabled more than 43,000 researchers and community members to meet on equal terms and shape inquiry. The National Saturday Club supports young people to explore society, identity and change through creative experimentation, nurturing agency and critical thinking. Civic Curiosity EBikes extend this ethos into neighbourhoods, enabling practitioners and researchers to gather stories, spark encounters and meet people where they are. Across these programmes, creative thinking underpins engagement and inquiry.

Derby Theatre, as a pioneering Learning Theatre, intertwines creative practice, education and civic engagement. **As a cultural anchor, it works with a wide network of creatives and partners to cultivate curiosity and participation.** Derby CAN, a place-based participatory arts project, empowered local artists, communities and organisations to shape culture and decision-making. It fostered collaborations, skills development and creative partnerships, and its living manifesto continues to inspire new creative businesses and careers. Across the project, 31,523 people experienced commissioned work, with 6,607 participatory moments, 48 commissions and 85 training opportunities.

Such programmes strengthen Derby's cultural infrastructure by supporting innovation, talent development and pathways into creative careers. These partnerships widen cultural opportunity and embed creativity in the city's long-term social and economic development. They align with Derby's identity as a UNESCO Learning City, where lifelong learning and civic wellbeing guide local ambition. Banks Mill contributes by anchoring artists in the city, supporting sustained practice, peer networks and enterprise that bolster Derby's creative identity and economy.

Derby's Cultural Education Partnership (DCEP) is a long-term partnership, working to deliver innovative and targeted cultural programmes through artistic engagement to meet the needs of

young people in both formal and informal settings. DCEP's vision is to ensure that children, young people and students from all walks of life will thrive in our city and has raised over £3.5 million in investment for this endeavour. The work of DCEP is most noted for its impact in helping to shape the widest possible variety of cultural engagement, developing young persons' skills, increasing their life chances and enabling them to fulfil their highest ambitions.

As part of **Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme** – which empowers communities to shape the creative and cultural activity they want – Make/Shift brings significant value to the University of Derby and its civic mission. Rooted in Amber Valley and hosted by the university, **Make/Shift centres community agency, co-creation and creative empowerment, shifting power and resources into the hands of local residents to make decisions and generate positive change**. This community-led model enriches the university's creative environment by offering researchers a real-world testbed for participatory and action research. It also provides opportunities to engage with makers, community groups, cultural partners and socially engaged practitioners, enabling learning through lived experience and authentic collaboration. For the wider community, Make/Shift fuels local creativity, strengthens networks of makers and connectors, and nurtures conditions in which everyday creativity becomes a catalyst for belonging, agency and collective problem-solving. In turn, these values flow back into the university – broadening perspectives, deepening civic impact and demonstrating how creativity drives social innovation, community wellbeing and cultural resilience.

Together, these partnerships, programmes and funding structures highlight the transformative value that creatives bring to our institution, our researchers, our students and the wider communities we serve. They deepen our civic impact, expand our understanding of what research can be, and ensure that creativity remains a driving force in shaping Derby's social, cultural and economic life. Ultimately, they enable us to model a university that is porous, responsive and rooted in place – one that embraces experimentation, invites collaboration and recognises creativity as essential to thriving communities.

How can such work best be nurtured into the future? (That could be about funding or other support systems and infrastructures etc).

The University of Derby supports a wide range of initiatives and collaborations that bring researchers into direct partnership with communities, creatives, cultural organisations and public bodies. Its flagship programmes (described above) offer researchers real-world environments for participatory, practice-based and place-based inquiry, while expanding access to creativity across Derbyshire. The university also supports interdisciplinary research collaboration through CivicLAB, which has created opportunities for more than 15,000 participants and convenes academics, creatives and community partners to share insights, test ideas and build capacity for civic and cultural research across six academic themes. In addition, the Derby Impact, Collaboration and Engagement (DICE) Network offers bespoke training, knowledge exchange and support for researchers working with external partners, including public engagement, policy development and impact evaluation. Together, these initiatives create a rich ecosystem where researchers can collaborate across disciplines and sectors – driving innovation, strengthening civic impact, enriching student learning, and generating tangible benefits for communities across the city and wider region.

Investment in people and place is critical.

Sustaining this work requires long-term commitment to the funding, support systems and infrastructure that enable creativity and civic practice to flourish. The dark art of balancing the books – securing match funding, in-kind contributions and financial support – remains a constant juggling act, yet the return on investment is consistently profound. When institutions invest in creative and community-led programmes, the benefits ripple widely: individuals gain confidence, skills and new opportunities; researchers access rich spaces for participatory inquiry; and communities experience meaningful cultural, social and economic uplift. Long-term creative infrastructure such as Banks Mill enables artists to test ideas safely, build resilient livelihoods and remain embedded contributors to local communities. Funding and support mechanisms for creative civic work produce outcomes that are significant – and often life-changing. **To nurture this work into the future, institutions must champion flexible, accessible funding streams; build infrastructures that value co-creation; and embed creative practice as a core driver of research, teaching and civic impact.** Only sustained financial, cultural and structural investment will allow this work to evolve and deliver lasting change.

So what happens when you let artists in? Everything.

Working with artists is not an optional enhancement to university practice; it is a catalyst for widening perspective, deepening civic engagement and opening new routes to discovery. Artists bring methodologies grounded in curiosity, experimentation and co-creation that complement, strengthen and expand academic research cultures. When universities collaborate with artists, they unlock fresh approaches to complex challenges and create space for ideas that might otherwise remain unseen. This work is most effective when artists are supported not only through collaboration, but also through long-term environments that allow creative practice, experimentation and professional progression to develop over time. Far from disrupting stability, artists help institutions evolve with confidence, imagination and purpose. In partnering with artists, universities affirm their role as places where creativity and inquiry meet – and where meaningful social change can begin.

Special thanks to Sarah Brigham, CEO and Artistic Director, Derby Theatre; Callum Bate, Operations Officer, University of Derby; Samantha Deakin-Hill, Head of Enterprise, University of Derby; and Karen Birch, Strategic Operations, Make/Shift.

Links:

<https://www.derby.ac.uk/civic/civic-lab/>

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

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

<https://www.derby.ac.uk/civic/>

<https://www.banksmill.co.uk/>

<https://www.wearemakeshift.uk/>

<https://www.igcmidlands.com/>

Reflection 3

Professor Rowan Bailey,
Director of the Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art, Design and
Architecture, University of Huddersfield



© Laura Mateescu

The Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art, Design, and Architecture (CEADA) at the University of Huddersfield is committed to supporting artists and creative practitioners in ways that foreground knowledge production, cultural exchange and the development of place.

As Director of the Centre, I was adamant about developing a programme that could, as a piece of action research, genuinely explore what knowledge and cultural exchange might look like in the wider context of place-based cultural development. This also includes the kinds of capabilities that might be enabled through public realm programmes. This ethos underpinning the *Cultures of _* initiative is about creating space for collaboration between artists, researchers, students and communities. See: <https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/ceada/cultures-of/>

Artists and the Value of Making

Working with artists and creative practitioners allows us to engage with what Tim Ingold describes as *wayfaring* – a process of knowledge acquisition through skill, technique, and attunement developed in and through acts of ‘creative improvisation’. Artists bring expertise across a broad spectrum of practices, from composing music or crafting texts to designing spaces or facilitating community-led projects. These activities are not simply exercises in technical skill; they produce knowledge that is embodied, emergent and socially engaged. In this way, acts of making are both cultural and epistemological tools, offering new perspectives on existing traditions and generating innovative forms that reflect our current circumstances and lived experiences.

Place-Based Cultural Development: Cultures of Making and the Making of Place

The Centre for Cultural Ecologies' work is informed by the dual frameworks of *Cultures of Making* and *Cultures of Place*. In place-based cultural development, making manifests in two interrelated ways:

- **Making culture** involves the production of new forms, ideas and engagements through creative processes. It allows artists and communities to see inherited conventions anew and to respond creatively to social, environmental and material conditions.
- **Making place**, as theorised by Doreen Massey, recognises that places are not static but are constituted through 'throwntogetherness': temporal, social and spatial interactions that are continuously evolving. Artists act as navigators of these processes, mediating between cultural inheritance and contemporary transformation, fostering dialogue across disciplines and communities.

See the introduction to *Cultures of Place* for this curatorial framework (pp. 9–15): <https://unipress.hud.ac.uk/plug-ins/books/31/>

Artists, therefore, are central to understanding and facilitating both the making of culture and the making of place, helping to explore how knowledge, creativity and community intersect in specific places and spaces.

Cultures of _: Seed-Funded Projects, Residencies and Collaborations

The **Cultures of _** programme provides seed funding, institutional support and public platforms for artist-led and artist-researcher collaborations. Between 2022 and 2025

- 95 projects supported
- 8,800 public attendees and participants

Across the programme thus far (from 2022 to 2025), activity has been structured to support **multiple stages of practice**, from experimentation and research through to public presentation and exchange. This has enabled a diverse yet connected body of work that combines visibility, dialogue and sustained development. **Forty-one exhibitions** have formed the public backbone of the programme, providing creative practitioners with platforms to present resolved and in-process work, testing ideas in real-world contexts, and engaging audiences in critical and creative conversations. These have been complemented by **39 talks**, creating space for artists to articulate their methods, share research trajectories and situate their practices within wider cultural, social and theoretical debates. Live and embodied practices have included **15 performances**, supporting practitioners working with sound, movement, time-based media and improvisation. These events also emphasise process, presence and encounter, reinforcing the programme's commitment to making as a form of knowledge making in action. To deepen skills, relationships and participation, the programme has also delivered **17 workshops**, enabling hands-on engagement with creative methods across community, student and professional contexts. These workshops function as sites of shared learning, where technical skills, lived experience and local knowledge can and do intersect. Thus far, **9 embedded residencies** have provided sustained time, space and institutional support for artists to develop research-led work, often in dialogue with archives, collections,

academic researchers and local communities. Residencies act as important catalysts for place-based making. They have seeded longer-term collaborations, exhibitions and public-facing connections with the Cultures of _ programme. Alongside this, **10 Knowledge and Cultural Exchange (KE) projects** have explicitly connected artistic and creative practice to civic, health, heritage and cultural partners. These projects have translated creative inquiry into applied contexts, demonstrating how artists contribute to problem-solving, wellbeing and place-based development beyond traditional cultural settings. Together, this mix of project types has helped to create a **balanced cultural ecology**, one that values depth as much as reach, process as much as product and positions artists and creative practitioners as active agents in research, public life and the making of place.

For more on our initiatives in Kirklees, see [Place-Based Cultural Development in Kirklees](#). For our publications, see the Arts & Humanities Imprint: <https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/ceada/arts-humanities-imprint/>.

Value and Impacts

Supporting artists through these initiatives produces measurable and intangible benefits:

- **For the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Huddersfield:** Staff have become more proactive in external partnerships, embedding collaborative working practices and increased engagements with our AHRC Impact Acceleration Account through co-creation and proof of concept initiatives. See: <https://research.hud.ac.uk/impact-acceleration-accounts/>
- **For researchers and students more broadly:** Collaboration across the Cultures of _ programme fosters skills in interdisciplinary research, iterative problem-solving and creative public engagement. Working with artists and creative practitioners offers exposure to new forms of embodied knowing and improvisational methodologies, enhancing collective critical and creative thinking. See: <https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/ceada/cultures-of/>
- **For artists and creative communities:** Place-based projects have helped us to develop ideas around capabilities including lifelong learning, health and vitality, volunteering, relationship-building and social connection. Large-scale regional projects, such as work with West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) on the Creative Health System, demonstrate the wider social and civic impact of these collaborations. Our National Creative Health Hub has been working with a consortium of partners across the West Yorkshire region to make creative health more readily accessible in local neighbourhoods. See: <https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/ceada/creative-health-hub/>
- More recently our **Cultures FOR Capabilities evaluation** work has emphasised the role of culture in shaping new capabilities in people's lives and lived experiences, ensuring that creative participation contributes to social and community development. This work is helping organisations, networks and practitioners to better curate their activities in line with a Capabilities Framework to show the impactful evidence of culture in people's lives.

Nurturing Place-Based Cultural Development into the Future

Currently, the centre is exploring new ways to embed place-based cultural development into Kirklees. Research initiatives within the *Cultures of Film* programme includes the co-creation of Kirklees Cultural Strategy, demonstrating how partnerships, networks and creative tools can inform strategic and collaborative planning for the future. Our recent exhibition *Stories in Motion* has already included more than **70 film** contributions from cultural organisations and creatives across Kirklees, providing both engagement and an evidence base for policy and funding advocacy.

An **AHRC Creative Communities Award** has enabled the appointment of a [Community Innovation Practitioner](#) (Claire Tymon) to work with us and communities through *Culture Labs*, generating evidence and developing delivery actions for community-led cultural projects. Focus areas include lifelong learning on the high street, creative health, and inclusivity in heritage settings.

As a civic university, the University of Huddersfield recognises the importance of hyperlocal investment and the role of arts and culture in responding to new societal priorities, including health, wellbeing and creative skills development. The Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art, Design and Architecture will continue to sustain and expand on this work.

Reflection 4

Will Cenci,

Public Engagement Manager, Goldsmiths, University of London



Left: ILM TiBT Pavilion © Goldsmiths, University of London Right: ILM Street Waders sculpture (Photo: Ollie Hammick)

Artists working with HEIs: the case for public engagement through culture

When I joined Goldsmiths in late 2014, I was keenly aware of its well-established reputation as a creative powerhouse. Its notable graduates read like a who's who of late twentieth-century culture. From John Cale to Vivienne Westwood, the YBAs to Steve McQueen, Goldsmiths has nurtured ground-breaking and experimental artists across creative disciplines who continue to shape culture on a national and international level.

Despite its position in the popular imagination as an 'art school', in reality Goldsmiths encompasses academic disciplines across the arts, humanities, social sciences and computing. However, there is a sense in which the art school ethos permeates the culture of the institution, with a marked tendency towards creative and applied approaches to research and teaching, whose roots can perhaps be traced even further back to its beginnings as a 'recreative institute'.

Goldsmiths is also well known as a site of radical politics and direct action. These factors provide a fertile if at times challenging environment in which to support public engagement and creative collaborations.

As a practising contemporary artist who spent many of my formative years in Lewisham where Goldsmiths is based, arriving at the college felt like a homecoming. The sense of potential for public engagement with research and creative practice was immense, and I was determined to make my mark not just as a competent administrator and communicator, but as a creative with strong ties to the borough.

At that time, my own developing understanding of the public engagement landscape was much informed by the important work of the NCCPE, but I noticed that while ‘sci-arts’ collaborations were commonly referenced, the centrality of creativity to public engagement in general was less emphasised. And when creativity was present, it often felt as though artists were bolted on, employed to illustrate and adorn rather than fundamentally shape. Moreover, the role of the public engagement professional never appeared to encompass creative practice – the domains of ideas and culture were not to be transgressed upon by administrators.

Fortunately, this was not the case at Goldsmiths, where the role of artists and creative practitioners was well understood and robustly articulated. There was also a strong sense of inter- and trans-disciplinarity, so working with artists in the broadest sense was something that happened within Goldsmiths, as well as through external partnerships and collaborations. Moreover, many academics at Goldsmiths would describe themselves as practice researchers, breaking down the distinction between artist and researcher entirely.

This approach was mirrored in my desire to hybridise the process-driven methodologies of the NCCPE with my own creative practice. One initial challenge was to grasp how the established public engagement lexicon could feel alienating to practice researchers working within long-established methodologies such as interaction design, applied theatre or socially engaged art.

These creative, participatory methods demonstrated that the deep, dialogic engagement approaches championed by the NCCPE were just as present in the arts as their much-touted intrinsic tendency to reach beyond the university and into the world. All of this is to say that art, creativity and engagement are a fundamental part of Goldsmiths’ DNA, shaping the academic and public culture to such an extent that public engagement *through* culture has become our default approach.

Across the past decade, we’ve witnessed public engagement practice on a national level adapt to an evolving policy landscape: from the impact agenda to civic and place-based approaches, to a focus on ethical collaboration and co-production with marginalised communities. At Goldsmiths, we’ve often been ahead of the curve, drawing on our strong public culture, commitment to social justice and creative ethos. Concurrently, we’ve had to adapt to ever-increasing financial pressures, doing more with less, raising external funds to support our work, and flexing to contribute to institutional priorities in times of stress. These forces can be read in the different initiatives we’ve supported, bringing together researchers, creative practitioners, grassroots community organisations, local anchor institutions and diverse publics.

Perhaps the most relevant example is the In Living Memory programme, Goldsmiths’ primary contribution as Heritage Partner to Lewisham’s year as London Borough of Culture in 2022. I co-led In Living Memory, which was the culmination of seven years of collaborating on creative, place-based public history initiatives with People’s Historian Dr John Price. This ambitious programme of co-produced heritage and cultural activities supported diverse communities in Lewisham to tell their own stories by exploring hidden histories, preserving memories and creating lasting cultural legacies.

Supported by funding from the Mayor of London and Heritage Lottery Fund, six community-

led projects were funded and assisted by Goldsmiths to explore different aspects of the Borough of Lewisham's social history, from Windrush-era migration, to the Black-led self-build movement, to LGBTQ+ pubs, bars and meeting places, to the 1968 floods that saw much of the borough submerged under water.

With advice from academics from across Goldsmiths creative disciplines, research resources and access to training, the community projects recorded oral histories, gathered memories, and preserved photographs, documents and ephemera to build new understandings of often forgotten or marginalised histories. The projects then responded to and shared their research through a series of cultural activities and events in creative and impactful ways, produced with support from Goldsmiths creatives and Lewisham's culture team.

Across festivals, pop-ups, exhibitions, screenings and public art, In Living Memory reached more than 3,000 people at in-person events, and hundreds of thousands more via digital outputs and exhibitions. It led to four new large-scale public artworks, which are all on permanent display across the borough and culminated in a year-long exhibition in Lewisham Shopping Centre, reaching hundreds of thousands of local people.

In Living Memory also informed guidance published by the National Archives for large cultural infrastructure projects and is the basis for six new education packs designed with and for teachers to use in the classroom. It engaged students through placements, artist commissions and interactive memory-gathering activities with community groups at local festivals and on Lewisham's high streets.

In Living Memory exemplifies how universities can empower often marginalised publics by activating the expertise of academic researchers, practitioners, talented students and civic partnerships large and small, bringing benefits to all. But it also demonstrates what can be achieved when public engagement professionals aren't just recognised as competent project managers who understand the basic tenants of engagement, but are empowered as designers, creative producers, curators and artists.

It is important to note that In Living Memory is just one example of how artists and creative practitioners more generally are intrinsic to how Goldsmiths engages with the world beyond academia. It is also an example of what can be achieved with external funding and support from both the institution and partners, without which it would not have been possible.

Looking ahead, we are **working with local partners** to explore how the approaches crystallised by In Living Memory can contribute **to shaping the public realm** in Lewisham at a time of significant change – enriching its public spaces through community-informed public art, engagement and consultation. If it comes to pass, this work will embed artists and co-production methodologies at every stage, leading to a strong sense of shared endeavour and public ownership: producing public art that is for communities and by communities. **It won't be about adornment, decoration or tokenistic gestures, it will seek to critically intervene and create action around some of the most critical issues of our time: anti-racism, the climate crisis, and social and economic justice.** However, it will require a diverse group of partners and publics with sometimes divergent perspectives to work together to create art that honours the past, while catalysing futures.

Goldsmiths is a place where the arts and culture are centred, alongside a commitment to civic impact, social justice and rigorous theoretical criticality. It's a unique, potent mix, which time and again has delivered striking, nuanced creative interventions that seek to empower communities to make change, all of which is reflected in our [KEF narrative](#) statement. **The role of artists in this work is crucial, not as distant, inscrutable auteurs, but as agents of connection and care, and champions of the imaginal and the possible.**

Reflection 5

Amy Carter-Gordon,
Associate Director: Innovation (Culture & Curation),
Sheffield Hallam University



Left: Mythical Living Data By Noemie Soula at No Bounds Festival 2022 Curator and Producer: Amy Carter Gordon (Photo: Matt Bell)
Right: BIDE by David Cotterrell for faethm exhibition, River Don Project (2025). Curated by Amy Carter Gordon and produced by Lauren McConnell

Dimensional partnerships – artists, universities and creative exchange

Building on 130 years of place-based creative partnerships

Sheffield Creative Industries Institute (SCII) is based at Sheffield Hallam University, one of the UK's long-standing institutions for art and design. Its continuous history of teaching, learning, research and innovation in the arts can be traced as far back as 1843 to the Sheffield School of Design, established to provide industry with creative designers and evolving into a centre of innovation that is rooted in communities of place and creative practice.

Co-creation with local partners

Today, artist-researchers and senior leaders from disciplines as diverse as creative writing, fine art, graphic design, theatre-making, film-making, design for health, games and motion design enrich regional cultural life. **Partnerships include multiple and multi-year projects with Sheffield City Council, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, the Culture Collective and anchor arts organisations as Hallam has helped to shape the Culture Strategy for the city and CreaTech policy for the region.** Long-term partnerships with internationally renowned [Docfest](#) support the wider cultural ecosystem with student placements, academic/industry networking and knowledge exchange in cross-platform media. A multi-year embedded partnership with [No Bounds Festival](#) of art, music and technology (curated programmes in 2022, 2024, 2025) has delivered strongly collaborative outcomes for audience development and opportunities to showcase practice-based art in venues as diverse as an [electrical substation](#) and [Sheffield Cathedral](#).

Hallam also strategically recognises that curation can catalyse non-academic partnerships and engage publics, creating and resourcing curatorial roles within its organisation as part of a commitment to exploring creativity as a driver for societal change. These resources place artist-researchers at the heart of interdisciplinary, community-based initiatives such as [The River Don Project](#), led by Opus Independents, a Sheffield-based worker-owned social enterprise for systemic, creative and civic projects addressing ecological and social challenges and via place-inspired curation of public art and exhibition-making at *faethm*.

The [faethm](#) exhibition (2025), curated with the River Dôn Project, featured artist-researchers' responses to urgent issues: sovereignty of the more-than-human, the rights of nature and the River Don and its catchment. A public art installation, *BIDE* (2025), by artist Professor David Cotterrell, sited a traditional Yorkshire coble boat at the Kelham Island weir, rising and falling in response to data from the river to draw public attention to its vulnerability. The exhibition, curated at Kelham Island Museum – a venue celebrating the industrial history in the region – also showcased Joanna Rucklidge's experimental prints and drawings exploring river wildlife and plastic pollution, while Joanne Lee's visual essays considered the river's cyclical processes through found materials. Dr Rose Butler (and collaborator Rob Gawthrop) captured traces of the river's ecology and cultural histories using photography and through the film [Ground Truths](#).

Responding to and prompting civic debate

At *faethm*, three further activities were curated alongside art exhibits: a live water-quality testing lab by bioscientists at Hallam encouraged participants to test samples of river water from tributaries of the River Don; an interactive platform by the River Don Project visualised the interdependent ecosystems that make up the water catchment; and a 'slow radio' podcast by partners Wild Medicine x CiviCast (National Civic Impact Accelerator) offered a sonically soothing ambient experience to encourage a sense of connectedness to the River Don through spoken word, field recordings and organic textures for mental wellbeing.

Curating these programmes places artists at the heart of ethical, social and political debate to provide alternative lenses with which to view complex societal challenges. **Artists inhabit a rare space that can hold institutions to account, resisting the desire for premature solutions and focusing on provocation, framing new questions and articulating alternative narratives.**

Partnerships with businesses in the creative industries to celebrate place

Sheffield Hallam's 2024 collaboration with No Bounds festival, *Entanglement, Commons and Cultural Mycelium*, was instrumental in expanding the festival's offering by developing a walkable tour of six arts and community venues around the city. This was extended in 2025 by introducing a new long-term collaboration between Hallam Artist Collective and London-based multidisciplinary creative practice Treatment Studio, specialising in immersive visual design for live performance, architecture and experiential projects. This partnership was catalysed through a co-production, *Switch Room*. The *Switch Room* art and tech exhibit at Castle House presented immersive, site-specific work to reflect on the local environment, history and community of Castlegate, Sheffield. Media artworks, created by practitioners from Treatment Studio and Hallam sharing media assets in a 'call and response' collaborative process,

transformed the basement of an historic department store into a layered exploration of the city's industrial past and its ongoing regeneration.

Archival footage of Sheffield's architectural heritage was reanimated in interactive projections and sculptural environments that echoed the grit of urban change. Installations such as *GRIT: Germinate and Reclaim Industrial Terrain* (Professor Jane Prophet, 2025) celebrated the resilience of plant life in post-industrial spaces and pointed to ecological renewal emerging from decay. Other works used archival imagery of lost landmarks such as the iconic Tinsley Cooling Towers, to evoke collective memory and identity. In doing so, artists connected with a need in communities to see the history, sentiment and beauty of place, reflected and reimagined through creative endeavour.

Curating art for spaces beyond the gallery

In keeping with the broader mission to curate for social and community inclusion, all the exhibitions described in *fæthm* and *Switch Room* used spaces not typically associated with art. *Switch Room* populated a disused department store site chosen for its proximity to the Hole in the Road, a near-mythical traffic roundabout built in the 1960s and demolished in the 1990s with a network of pedestrian walkways below ground. Audiences with a keen interest in the history of Castle House, Sheffield Castle (a Norman motte and bailey fortress) and the city's rapid gentrification came to *Switch Room* to relive memories of shopping, working and even meeting their partners there.

Connecting with Sheffield's dynamic music industry

No Bounds Festival has its roots firmly embedded in bleep culture, the bass-heavy electronic music that began in the 1980s influenced by Sheffield's industrial soundscape. The curatorial strategy for *Switch Room* was shaped by the basement raves of the 1990s by commissioning *Underground Genius (Roof of Sky)* by Sheffield-based electronic musicians Curtain Twitcher, blending archival audio recordings of interviews with local people discussing the Hole in the Road into an electronic sound installation that encapsulated the great affection that citizens had for its bold, brutalist architecture. This became the sound of *Switch Room*, key to one of the huge projections created by Damian Hale (Treatment Studio) and central to the energy surrounding all the installations. Curtain Twitcher, as freelance producers, brought a deep knowledge of the local area, a commitment to deep listening in their engagement with Treatment Studio and a desire to delve into the lore of local history of place, architecture and community.

An immersive critical engagement with local industrial heritage

These practice-based installations provided opportunity for critical review, valuing the city's heritage and alternative cultural assets. Motivated by curiosity, artists innovate, test and rework ideas, technology and frameworks to a point where they can be 'broken' and rediscovered. Hallam is part of the South Yorkshire Institute of Technology (IoT) established to provide high-level technical education to close skills gaps in engineering, construction and healthcare. Curatorial and artistic experimentation in the Igloo 360 immersive environment

within the IoT produced a programme of immersive content for No Bounds Festival 2025 to explore themes of grit, graft, regeneration, community, environment and industrial history.

The creative techniques employed – documentary poem, motion design, VR content and storytelling – pushed the boundaries of what is possible in the space, utilising the Igloo not just for teaching and knowledge exchange but also as a gallery and live exhibition space. The IoT has six Igloos in its network, enabling this new cultural content to be shared with Barnsley College and Northern College. These restagings reached new audiences of different ages and demographics, presenting possibilities for future collaboration.

Looking to the future, we know that places thrive when universities, the creative industries and artists join forces. Investing in artists' contributions and in wider cultural, creative and civic ecologies pays dividends for student recruitment, graduate retention, stakeholder and public engagement and cultural vibrancy.

Universities can play an integral role in supporting freelance artists by recognising that the potential of their contributions reaches far beyond piecemeal commissioning and championing artists' individual talents and perspectives by bringing artists into embedded models of governance, master planning and policy engagement. By developing co-investment frameworks with local and mayoral combined authorities, universities can assist in both the local cultural strategy and the delivery mechanisms for longer-term sustainability of the sector.

Reflection 6

Jen Wong,

Head of Programming, Science Gallery London



Left: Cat Royale (2023) by Blast Theory. (Photo: Stephen Daly) Right: Cat Royale (2023) by Blast Theory. (Photo: RULER)

Why should universities work with artists?

Science Gallery London is a place to grow new ideas across art, science and health. It is a dedicated public space within King's College London, bringing curious minds together to connect, exchange and create through its free public programme. The gallery is a member of an international network of Science Galleries spanning London, Melbourne, Bangalore and Monterrey, and part of King's Culture, a specialist unit that facilitates cultural collaborations and knowledge exchange for the university.

Artists form one of the gallery's four 'constituent groups' alongside researchers and students at King's College London, and local 18–25s who live, work or study in the London boroughs of Southwark and Lambeth. The programme convenes creative and interdisciplinary collaborations between the gallery's constituent groups, showcasing collaborative outcomes in its public-facing exhibitions, events and longer-term residencies.

Artists are an essential part of the fabric of Science Gallery London's community and its public programme. They contribute existing or newly commissioned work towards the gallery's public exhibitions, often devised in collaboration with university researchers, students or local young people; they come 'into residence' at the gallery, undertaking periods of R&D and knowledge exchange in dialogue with those within the university or local communities; and they contribute their expertise and wisdom as speakers, performers, provocateurs, facilitators and thought leaders as part of the gallery's event programme.

The public programme at Science Gallery London focuses on asking questions about the future, exploring twenty-first-century challenges facing humanity in thematic and interdisciplinary

ways. For example, **how might we live well with emerging technologies? How do we grapple with living through an unfolding climate and nature crisis? In this context, artists are key partners who can articulate and foster new ways of thinking, feeling and doing.** This might happen through co-production or speculative design to imagine alternative futures, or another element of their artistic practice. The following commissions were part of Science Gallery London's 2024–5 season *Vital Signs: another world is possible*.

- Artist Emma Critchley convened a group of indigenous Pacific-based experts, marine scientists, legal researchers and students to co-write an open letter documenting our relationship with the deep sea, and the need to protect this in the context of deep-sea mining for rare earth minerals needed to power sustainable energy technologies. The resulting [Rights of the Deep](#) text became part of ongoing touring artistic work at John Hansard Gallery and Tate St Ives. The text was read by delegates at the [International Seabed Authority \(ISA\) meeting](#) in 2025 as an exhortation to propose a more equitable pathway to ocean governance that puts nature first.
- For the [Hopeful Futures project](#) artist Angela YT Chan worked with King's researchers to design and deliver workshops within a deliberative setting. Using speculative fiction and lived experience, Londoners from Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Islington imagined a London of 2050 that was well adapted to climate change. Their conversation was captured in a riso-printed publication [Feeling the Heat](#) by artist Joanna Brinton of Good Studio and exhibited in the Vital Signs exhibition.

Evaluation of the *Vital Signs* season shows how creative practice and the outcomes of artist-led or artist-facilitated work bring huge inspirational value to both fellow collaborators and gallery visitors encountering their creative outputs in exhibitions or events. Their impact is seen in these examples as landing beyond the gallery itself, for example at international ocean governance meetings and at the level of London boroughs.

Previous Science Gallery seasons also show how artists enable audiences to encounter abstract concepts and questions in playful ways, inviting engagement, understanding, empathy and critical thinking. One example by artist collective Blast Theory is their recent work [Cat Royale](#), co-commissioned by Science Gallery London and Queensland Museum for World Science Festival Brisbane 2023 and featured in Science Gallery's [AI: Who's Looking After Me? season](#) (2023–4), which explored AI through the lens of care. The video installation showed a 'cat utopia' in which three cats lived in a custom-built environment with a robot arm offering activity to make the cats happier, whilst a computer vision system and human observers measured their happiness, learning about their individual preferences over time. The work asked us to consider whether we should task AI with making us happier and was accompanied by a research survey exploring how visitors felt about the use of AI for care in domestic settings.

Artists' work allows university researchers, students and wider gallery audiences to find pathways to connect with intangible ideas and concepts in a tangible way. The gallery's [Quantum Untangled season](#) fuses art, science and extraordinary interdisciplinary research to consider big quantum questions and show the power quantum possesses to transform our futures. Artists are fundamental to making quantum ideas apparent, as one of our season advisors has said:

We believe in the power of quantum science to change our everyday lives. It's a topic that is often clouded in mystery. Quantum Untangled cuts through that haze, partnering with artists to illuminate the unseen, navigating the jargon and confusion to present a compelling vision of our quantum future.

Professor James Millen, Director of King's Quantum

This type of work requires infrastructure. This could be in the form of adequate funding, dedicated spaces like Science Gallery London, formats or structures like residencies, and most importantly, the right kind of people: those who can effectively broker relationships and hold the right kind of space for artists to be able to successfully interface with university structures, as well as understanding and effectively communicating the value of art and working with artists within universities. More collaboration with and between institutions could foster valuable work with the potential for wider impact. For example, the ongoing [Making Time artist residency](#) is a partnership between Artangel, Science Gallery London at King's College London, Stanley Picker Gallery at Kingston University, Mead Gallery at the University of Warwick and Radar at the University of Loughborough. Participating artists are supported by gallery and academic partners to further develop their ideas for new material possibilities, environmental sustainability and behavioural change. The residency structure stimulates the emergence of new ideas originating from encounters between university research and artistic practice, and embodies the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge and collaboration in the face of the climate emergency.

Ultimately this kind of work requires an appreciation of the intrinsic value and importance of the arts and artists. They are not as something to be instrumentalised, but instead should be understood as key navigators of uncertain times, partners who can bring fresh, innovative skills and perspectives, and collaborators who can help those within the institution birth new and compelling visions of the future. With artists on board, universities can become more than the sum of their parts, with profound benefits for their research and researchers, students and local communities.

Findings and Insights

Through the case studies, we have highlighted a wide variety of practices. These indicate the interdisciplinary, interdepartmental nature of many of these projects and the hybridity of many of the artists involved. This chapter focuses on the key findings from our case studies and then goes on to draw out some key insights, where we draw on the case studies in Chapter 3 as well as our reflections from HEI professionals in Chapter 4.

Findings

Our findings are grouped into the following four areas:

- **Recurring general themes**
- **Models of collaboration: How artists work with universities**
- **Modes of engaging with publics**
- **Value and benefits of artist/university collaborations**

Recurring general themes

Across our interviews, six common themes emerged. The first two relate to the nature of the work itself. These are: **Interdisciplinary art practices and research** and **Artists working with scientists**. The next two themes focus on issues broadly concerned with ways of working – **Shared values** and **Long-term partnerships** – whilst the final two, concerned with the wider contexts in which the work occur, are **Outreach and engagement** and **Connection of work to place**.

1. Interdisciplinary art practices and research was a prominent theme throughout this study; most of the artists worked across different areas and the projects they undertook reflected this. The work often bridged different departments within the same HEI.

For example, in ‘Stand of the Sun’ for the *Melting Metropolis* project, Ella created a large-scale, outdoor art installation and worked with choreographer and dancer Antoine Marc to create a dance piece, to be performed in and around the installation. Some collaborations have produced a combination of performances, events, texts, exhibitions and/or podcasts out of a single project, which means that the research has more impact and longevity. Both France and Doležalová produced a podcast alongside their publications and performances, documenting the project and discussing the research within it.

Auluk worked across multiple departments at Birmingham for ‘SMQB & NCode’, namely the Schools of Mathematics and Psychology and the Department of Metabolism and Systems Science. Perera’s ‘Sonifying LSX’ was a project where an artist not only reached into different

departments for information and inspiration, but also collaborated closely with two researchers, Manias and Tilley, from two different departments, History and the Business School, respectively.

2. Roughly half of the case studies involved some element of **scientific research**, representing numerous areas of scientific fields.

Semiconductor and Dumitriu have worked extensively with scientists and in science labs, often reinterpreting and reimagining the findings in their work. Auluk and Simpson worked with studies around mental health. Within this category, **climate science** emerges as a key area where engagement with artists is proving to be valuable; some, like Culhane and France, worked directly with climate scientists, while others, like Perera, approached this field through other lenses, namely business and history.

3. Shared values in helping bring a project along also came across clearly in the interviews.

Shared and clearly expressed values helped complex projects with multiple stages function but were also important for those in an experimental pilot stage. Artists have expressed the importance of HEIs recognising the value of the art projects and artistic practices in and of themselves, as well as of being open-minded about the outcome. Kennaby, for example, explained that he and Williams were able to work closely on ‘An Afternoon with Dilla’ for ‘Hip-Hop’s Fifth Element’ because of their shared passion for hip-hop and a desire to bring historical and current practices to the public.

4. The importance of **long-term partnerships** between artists and academics and HEIs was a constant throughout the interviews.

HEIs help to provide a wealth of opportunities and resources to their artists in residence, whether they are embedded in a permanent way, such as Harradine and his company Fevered Sleep at the Central School of Speech and Drama, or in an impermanent but ongoing way, such as France at Newcastle. The case studies show that they were able to provide direct funding, as well as access to funding for which artists wouldn’t otherwise be able to apply, space, facilities, equipment, archives, possibilities for teaching and introductions to individual researchers and entire departments. AA2A provides an unusual example of an arts organisation that has multiple, ongoing relationships with HEIs. Similarly, Hospital Rooms has an ongoing relationship with Norwich University of the Arts, which led to the establishment of their collaboration with Simpson.

5. Outreach and engagement activities were clearly articulated in most of the interviews, with interviewees frequently engaging and sometimes also directly collaborating with communities outside the HEI.

Some artists collaborated closely with community groups – like Sarwar-Skuse and the Aurora Trinity Collective – while the work of others helped the public understand the research undertaken through installations and exhibitions, as with Semiconductor. Other artists – like Aamir – translated archival materials into something new, to bridge different traditions, histories, cultures and communities. Some, like Horth, imparted knowledge from the industries within which they had been working to students and/or members of the public. Still others bridged disparate organisations and institutions for the purpose of obtaining funding and other

resources but also to bring together different researchers (inside and external to HEIs), practitioners and communities, like Ella. The different modes of outreach are further detailed in the section below ('Bringing work to the public').

6. Given recent and current government policy focus on place, coupled with the growth of the civic university agenda and the increased spotlight on the value of public engagement activities, it is not surprising that **connection of work to place** has emerged as another common theme.

In some cases, place is significant with respect to the artist's identity, such as Rawz, a long-time resident of the Oxford area, while in others, place is directly linked to the artistic work and research, especially if the work is centred on the climate crisis, as with Culhane and her 'Tidelines' project. For an artist like Doležalová, place was significant because of her ongoing work with Gearies Primary School and what it represents in terms of a multilingual, multicultural school in the Greater London area. Still others were researching a specific location and the ways in which people could interact with it, as was the case with Gravagno, McCarthy and Adhitya's work with the Tate Institute. There were also instances of multiple places as points of comparison within an area of study, as with Ella's 'Melting Metropolis'. We expand on this theme in our **Engaging with Publics** section below.

Models of collaboration: How artists work with universities

Three central models in terms of the artist or pracademic's relationship to the academy can be extrapolated from our research. The most common model is that of a freelance artist, or artists, working with a researcher or researchers within the HEI. The second most common model is that of the freelance pracademic and the third tends to be pracademics working within academic institutions.

1. Freelance artist(s) working with researchers

This model is the most common amongst the interviewees, though there are numerous variations. The basic principle is that a freelance artist, external to the HEI, is commissioned to work with the institution and produce work that will be available to the public. Some artists work with a range of universities and a range of different departments, using a similar model each time, as does Semiconductor. Others work with different universities and departments and vary their approach to these collaborations depending on the project, as does Dumitriu. In some cases, the artistic output is directly connected to the research (as with Perera) and in others it is more loosely inspired by it (as with Rawz and Aamir). This model can also involve community engagement within the project, as Ella, Auluk, Horth and Doležalová's did. In other cases, some artists work with the same HEI repeatedly, sometimes with the same department and at other times across different departments, like France and Culhane. Some of these relationships were born from initiatives within the HEI (like McCarthy, working under the UCL Trellis programme), while others were products of commissions for events (Kennaby), exhibitions, artistic programmes and/or festivals (Aamir).

2. Freelance pracademic(s)

This model is similar to the first, but here the freelance artists involved are also involved in the

academy in terms of teaching and/or research and so may be considered pracademics. Freelance pracademics vary greatly in terms of the balance of artistic and academic-oriented practices and commitments and their relationships to the institutions that employ them. Some pracademics may have an artistic practice and also teach. Others have a practice and conduct research, such as Gravagno. Others engage in all three areas of work, such as Adewole Elliott. While Sarwar-Skuse and Griffith's case study doesn't strictly fit the mould for HEI/artist collaborations, as there was no HEI formally attached to the project, Sarwar-Skuse collaborated with Ways of Working on the project while undertaking a PhD at Swansea University, and incorporated her research into the project; in this sense, she can be considered a freelance pracademic.

3. Pracademic(s) employed within an HEI

This third model differs from the previous one in that the pracademic in question is rooted within an institution. Some internal pracademics are employed on fixed-term contracts and others are on permanent ones. Some are on part-time or fractional contracts, like Harradine, and others on full-time ones, like Adhitya. Some pracademics can be external to one HEI on a particular project while also being employed part-time at another institution. Some can be internal while completing graduate work at a particular HEI and then become external as soon as they finish that degree. Yet others might be internal as part of an artistic company housed within the HEI. The pracademic in question might work with researchers internal to their HEI or those at other institutions. Although Simpson primarily considers herself a researcher, she has a curatorial background, having worked with galleries before coming to Norwich University of the Arts. She also devises creative research methodologies, and thus can be considered a kind of hybrid researcher/pracademic.

Engaging with publics

Our findings suggest **three key modes of bridging the gap between art, research and the public**. These are: **arts and research translation; community collaboration and input;** and **cultural and educational output**. Not all work produced falls neatly into one of into these categories but will often slide across boundaries.

1. Arts and research translation

This first model of engagement can be understood as a kind of translation of academic research for the public by the artists involved. The artistic work commissioned by the HEI is designed to stand alone and be understood outside of an academic context but is also helpful in translating the research in question for the public, be it local, national or international.

Some artists and companies translate academic research done for the public using their art practice, building on the research to produce artworks, performances, exhibitions, performances and so on. This work can enable researchers to see their research in a new light, asking new questions and considering new possibilities. Some artists engage with this translation and bridge building to connect various organisations and HEIs in new collaborations, often building on previous projects. Other artists' work engages with and

translates archival material and/or museum collections, in addition to new research, to reach communities.

Semiconductor's 'Light-in-Flight' was an installation involving animations that represent human perception of time at the speed of light. Perera's 'Sonifying LSX' was a digital, sonic representation of the London Stock Exchange, using sounds from endangered and extinct organisms. Dumitriu's 'Modernising Medical Microbiology' projects create a visual and sometimes historical context for microbiological research.

2. Community collaboration and input

In the second model we see the public directly being incorporated into the work, with artists engaging with specific communities, and/or students at the institutions with which they are working, sometimes to feed into the work and in other cases to make the work itself. The ways in which the public is included in the process can vary widely. In some cases, participants are involved in focus groups and discussions or events that feed into the final art piece; in others, the public is involved in the execution or performance of the final event. Some projects bridge various HEIs, arts organisations, institutions and communities, pulling them all together towards a shared goal. Others might start from questions, comments and concerns of the local community regarding a particular topic, then develop the project to address them, sometimes as a method of advocacy. Projects incorporate public engagement at different stages: towards the beginning, middle or end of the process, depending on the goals of the artists and researchers and resources available.

Culhane's 'Tidelines' project involved community members and groups engaging in public performances and installations about climate science, as well as feeding that community's questions back to climate researchers. France's 'Write the Climate' supported young people to write in response to the climate crisis and that work was subsequently performed and published. Fevered Sleep's 'Time Keeps the Drummer' was a durational performance piece made with young people on ways of experiencing time without a clock.

3. Cultural and educational output

The third model focuses on creating public events, talks and workshops around the artists' work as makers and producers. Some artists help to bridge the gap between their field of practice and the academy to advocate for specific kinds of cultural activities within HEIs. Some produce events, exhibitions, performances and festivals for the public that aim to platform new artists and educate the public about an area of artistic practice. Others might give talks and workshops in the service of new academic fields that incorporate the arts, while yet other artists might do the same to bridge their industry and the academy.

Horth's residency at the Institute of Historical Research produced a series of public talks exploring the intersection of history studies and TV production. Kennaby's 'An Afternoon of Dilla' was an academic/music hybrid event with talks and DJ sets celebrating hip-hop as an art and a study. Adewole Elliott's 'Creative Spa' involved workshops for performers on handling racism and its impact on the mind and body through creative, dance-oriented means.

Value and Benefits

Collaborations undertaken between artists and researchers working within an HEI setting are unique and the benefits of working in this way are numerous. In the following section, we outline a number of key values and benefits that emerged through the interviews and the case studies.

1. Generation of novel ideas and relationships. Artist/HEI collaborations often provide the **platforms for vital and often unexpected relationships** to develop, enabling artists, pracademics and researchers to network and **co-develop ideas**.

Multi-year initiatives such as Trellis at UCL, King's Culture at King's College and SMQB at Birmingham provided opportunities for artists to meet researchers and find ways of **experimenting with new ideas and practices**. In this way, Auluk was able to build on his previous work around the lived experience of people in the LGBTQ community and mental health by accessing the research of those working with prescription medication for depression and brain imaging.

2. Initiatives such as residencies bring **substantial benefits to artists**. Often there is a process of commissioning to undertake a project that includes **introductions to collaborators** from specialised fields, as well as **access to libraries, facilities and specialist equipment**. Working in a research environment introduces artists to **new research** that can feed into their processes and ways of thinking, enriching and expanding their knowledge of a particular area.

In some cases – as in those of Semiconductor and Dumitriu – the HEI environment actively **enables artists own experimentations**, as well as experts to guide their investigations. In other cases, it **enables artists to expand the scope of their projects, working across different cities and regions of the UK** and sometimes, as in the case of Ella, **internationally**.

In cases such as Harradine and Fevered Sleep's, HEIs can sometimes provide **long-term stability, access to funding** and support in kind of artistic projects. For pracademics like Adewole Elliott, working across creative practice and research within HEI settings also affords them the **opportunity to develop fields for less documented areas of expertise**.

3. Artists can also bring substantial benefits to researchers. They can help researchers to look at their research questions and findings in a new light and potentially ask questions that help them move forward in their thinking in different ways than they might have expected.

By working in collaboration, artists **make work that allows the research to reach publics**, including specific communities that might particularly benefit from being exposed to, or contribute to, the research. Artists' commissions can give research **new exposure outside the university and sometimes in the press**, as was the case with Williams and Kennaby and the events they curated to expose new audiences to hip-hop research.

In some cases, it **affords researchers the opportunity to work alongside arts companies**, as was the case with Simpson's work with Hospital Rooms, which gave her the **space and time to experiment with new research models** that incorporated lived experience co-researchers.

For Manias and Tilley, working with Perera as part of their King's Culture project was an opportunity not only to **view their research through a creative lens** but also to work **interdepartmentally**.

4. Benefits for students. These frameworks can also allow for artists to engage with students to **develop ideas and methods of working and feed into projects, which in turn benefits their education and sometimes employability**.

France worked with students across departments at Newcastle to explore creative, written, collaborative responses to climate science, giving **the students new creative tools with which to work in future** but also gave the researchers in the group an opportunity to work with students outside a strictly pedagogic setting.

AA2A consistently finds that placing artists in HEIs and creating a framework around those residencies contributes to **students' experiences and satisfaction, helping them navigate the arts sector and learn skills for managing their freelance careers**.

5. Public engagement and connecting to local communities. For artists, researchers and HEIs, this kind of work affords artists and researchers **a means of connecting to local communities**, communicating their research and artworks, getting feedback from them and sometimes incorporating their voices, experiences and ideas.

Arts/research collaborations can **enable the production of activities designed to introduce new audiences to the artistic work and research, and also to cultural spaces**, as Aamir and Johnston were able to do with their project in Blackburn for the Festival of Making.

The connection with communities allows researchers and artists to **expand possibilities for their work, gain local insights and contribute to placemaking**, as with Culhane when she worked with communities in and around Exeter to harness their questions and feelings about the ways in which climate change was impacting their coastline.

These kinds of projects can help **flow resources to overlooked, marginalised and/or underserved communities**, as was the case with Adhitya, Gravagno and McCarthy, when they worked with neurodiverse participants at the Tate Institute through UCL's Trellis programme.

In the case of Rawz, his residencies not only gave him the opportunity to get his freelance career as an artist off the ground but also created a **much-needed bridge between the university and the city** of Oxford.

6. The creation of new artworks and cultural assets. In virtually all of our case studies we can find evidence of all kinds of new artworks. Some of these result in exhibitions that are **shown locally, nationally and in some instances internationally**. In other instances, the work is performative with pieces being developed that are often co-created, thereby enabling and **supporting new skills development in creative subjects**.

7. Arts/research collaborations often create new opportunities to apply for funding. In the case of Doležalová and Ford, a combination of a SAS Public Engagement Grant and ACE funding allowed them to execute an ambitious, multi-stage project involving a primary school and numerous freelance writers, actors and artists.

Top Ten Insights

So, what insights can we detect about the value of these collaborations and the benefits they bring? Here we outline ten of the insights emerging from our findings and our reflections by HEI staff. It is likely that readers will arrive at additional or connected insights, observations or light-bulb moments based on the perspectives and knowledges they bring to this work. In that sense, we very much hope that this snapshot of insights can be used as a springboard for further discussion, exploration and training/staff development.

Key insights

1. Artists and creatives can be powerful connectors, bringing **deep and influential networks and other forms of cultural capital** to research communities and universities more widely
2. The presence of artists within the university plays a vital role in **nurturing creativity, innovation, problem-solving and risk-taking**.
3. Collaborations with artists and other creatives contribute positively to **place-based development, wellbeing and other major challenge and priority areas**. They can powerfully support university civic missions and foster new connections with communities.
4. Working together can lead to fresh insights that more traditional research methods can miss as **artists tend to ask unexpected questions and spot things that researchers may not**. This is one of the important benefits that researchers can derive from working with artists and creatives.
5. **Students also benefit substantially from the presence of artists** and creative projects, gaining opportunities to work on public engagement activities, often building new skills, confidence and networks in the process. This empowerment for future creative generations can support the long-term sustainability of the creative industries, which are currently growing faster than other areas of the economy.
6. **Universities** can and often do play a key role in supporting artists and creatives, offering access to facilities, libraries and sometimes to co-working and other such spaces. Their **role as key actors and developers of cultural infrastructures needs to be better understood and amplified**.
7. Support infrastructures for collaboration invariably work better when they include vital sources of **people power**. This includes dedicated staff, many of whom bring deep expertise and experience from the culture, GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) and heritage sectors, who are skilled at supporting, producing and curating major cultural initiatives, public engagement activities and creative research collaborations and who can help freelance artists to navigate often complex university systems.
8. Current approaches to collaboration often encourage a shift away from the old stereotypes of the artist and the academic to focus on exploring questions of **common interest and purpose**. This shift offers real opportunities to bring artists and researchers into planning and policy spheres.

9. **Artists and creatives are often adept navigators of uncertainty** and often operate and thrive in challenging operating environments, **making them ideal partners** for universities, funders, policymakers, health professionals, educationalists and other sectors **in responding to the key challenges of the twenty-first century.**
10. There is much evidence to suggest that collaborations with artists and creative practitioners can be powerful capacity builders and enablers across a wide range of indicators but **sustaining this work, requires long-term commitment to funding, support systems and cultural and learning infrastructures.**

Challenges and Recommendations

This chapter outlines the key challenges that have emerged, principally through our interviews and case studies. It goes on to suggest a number of key recommendations that can translate into practical actions.

Challenges

While overall the collaborations covered in the case studies were enormously productive and beneficial to all parties involved, **four key challenges** were raised throughout the interviews. They spanned numerous areas that can shape the nature of collaborations and their outcomes.

1. Throughout the interviews, **funding and project support** was mentioned most frequently as a common challenge for artists and researchers. Generally, there just wasn't enough funding for each project. In several cases, the funding may have been sufficient for the pilot project, but when the artists and researchers tried to take projects to the next stage, they faced obstacles. Lack of follow-on funding was cited as a problem. In some cases, the funding available for the pilot project was inflexible and only sufficient to accommodate one artist, even when participants expressed the necessity of working with more than one person. While long-term partnerships between artists and HEIs are generally beneficial, some artists expressed concern about the implications of future funding policy shifts. Concerns around the need for other kinds of project support (in addition to funding) were also cited, including onerous paperwork, burdensome administration and support for the making of the artworks themselves. Some suggested that HEIs could do more to properly resource and promote the work to boost attendances (including, in some cases, among specific communities) and generate media coverage.

2. Some interviewees brought up the challenge of **discrepancies, inequalities and/or inequities between artists and researchers**. For freelance artists and academics, there is often a very marked difference between them and salaried researchers in terms of job stability, role within the institution (and thus, in some cases, control over the project), amount and regularity of payment for work and access to funding. Funding for travel and accommodation for conferences and events are generally only available to salaried academic staff, not contracted freelance artists, which limits their ability to travel, network and potentially develop projects.

3. Linking to our first challenge, any interviewees mentioned that most **HEIs have bureaucratic, complex and sometimes quite inflexible administrative systems** which can: impede projects by creating an excess of paperwork for artists and researchers; slow down the processes necessary for the collaboration to proceed; create difficulty in terms of defining the role of the freelancer within the institution; and complicate the payment process for already cash-strapped artists.

4. Some artists expressed concerns around the overall **programming and commissioning processes**. Commissioning processes, whilst welcomed and valuable, tend to focus on serving certain programming goals. This has the potential to limit who can propose ideas or apply for opportunities. In contrast, approaches such as open calls for residencies or seed commissions or networking events with researchers can enable artists to present ideas or co-develop new ideas with research or other education partners. Some artists are concerned that the demise of this latter, more ‘open’ approach could result in fewer opportunities. While this wasn’t a commonly mentioned occurrence, some interviewees commented that there was sometimes a **mismatch between artists and researchers** when collaborations were arranged by the HEI.

Recommendations

The benefits that arise from artists working with researchers and universities are truly rich and palpable and they flow across all spheres of knowledge ecologies, from students to research, to culture, place and communities, science and the environment. They are as inspiring as they are diverse. However, this work needs to be better recognised, supported, championed and narrated to realise its future potential. Whilst several institutions have established commendable and exemplary support systems, others are less experienced in recognising the benefits that can arise from working with artists and creatives. Our recommendations below are broadly grouped into three overarching areas:

- **Funding:** Here we make suggestions that may offer areas of consideration for UKRI and other funders across the creative knowledge ecosystem.
- **Support systems and infrastructures:** Here we make some suggestions that may be helpful primarily for higher education institutions to consider – ranging from financial and administrative systems to training and the provision of spaces and opportunities for working and networking – **to build capacity and enable future growth and sustainability**.
- **Suggestions for artists:** Here we draw out some suggestions that may be valuable for artists wishing to work with researchers and/or universities.

Funding

- There may be a number of ways in which UKRI could more directly encourage support for creative collaborations between artists, creatives and researchers to support research impact, knowledge exchange and public engagement as well as wider efforts to address current government priorities including creative industries, place and the growth agenda. These could include: ongoing support for Impact Accelerators with a renewed focus on supporting collaborative endeavours; ensuring that mechanisms that inform HEIF allocations recognise the values of collaborative practices; clearer funding allocations for public engagement activities; and more transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaborative research opportunities.
- New funds for curiosity-driven R&D that centres creative and challenge-led collaboration, e.g. cross-disciplinary test beds connected to a range of thematic Grand Challenge areas and other current priorities.
- Reintroduction of models such as AHRC Artists Fellowship scheme.

- Support to further enable universities and small specialists to develop and grow creative hubs, studios and other such support structures to enable space for networking, creative experimentation and novel approaches to creating better places and engaging communities.
- Bring artists/creatives into policy and funding arenas to co-develop new opportunities and generate fresh perspectives.
- These initiatives could also inspire, engage and help catalyse new thinking for other areas of the economy and the public sector where connectivity with both research and creativity is most needed.
- Often creative collaborative projects are funded in the pilot stage but not beyond. Clearer pathways to **follow-on funding** would enable nascent projects to take the next step in their development and thus generate greater impact and further innovate as appropriate.
- A better pipeline of support structures for artists and creative graduates would enable future capacities and more joined-up thinking and working – e.g. mechanisms to support new collaborative enterprises and encourage diverse types of spinouts.

Support systems and infrastructures

- Universities might consider reviewing their systems to be more user-friendly for artists and freelance academics. Suggested actions include: speeding up payment processes; streamlining administrative processes; embedding good modes of communication to better support collaborative work as it develops; and ensuring that there are appropriate support mechanisms in place to ensure the effective production, delivery and communication of creative projects.
- Training for administrative staff and researchers could help to enhance understanding of how to best incorporate artists and creatives into university payment systems, and of collaboration and the implementation of good practices, taking into consideration notions of inequity and power imbalances. A suggested action could include the establishment of an institutional Codes of Collaborative Practice that could be shared with new staff and PhD students as part of their training and development programmes.
- As part of their civic and wider innovation agendas, some HEIs provide support for artists and creatives through building-based initiatives, including creative hubs. Embracing and implementing such models of good practice could provide valuable support for artists and creatives on a longer-term basis. A suggested action to enable stability is for HEIs to offer, where feasible, access to physical co-working or studio space and to create opportunities for future networking, new relationships and access to funding.
- Providing stipends for freelance artists and academics would enable them to attend events and conferences with researchers to support new ideas generation and networks.
- HEIs could also explore options for researchers, similar to a sabbatical model, to enable them to dedicate sufficient focus and energy to collaborations and provide support, guidance and mentoring for collaborating teams.
- There is a need for better networking opportunities for artists, academics and researchers interested in collaborating. This could be through a dedicated online space, or more likely

spaces, where opportunities can be listed, mechanisms to find collaborative partners can be supported and models of good practice and case studies can be shared.

- Many artists are also researchers and therefore structures to better recognise and support artist-practitioners' research are needed.
- Clearer lines of connection and joined-up thinking between HEIs, arts organisations, artists/creatives and local authorities could enable possibilities to develop mutually beneficial projects, and pool funds and resources for the benefit of wider communities. This has great potential especially in terms of projects related to placemaking.
- A media outlet, akin to 'The Conversation', to support wider media coverage and engagement.
- The importance of the relationship and the relational within collaborations is key, therefore encouraging all those involved in new collaborative projects to undertake preparation and training is to be encouraged. This could be complemented by using guides to collaboration such as those produced by NCCPE, as well as others listed in the Resources Compendium (below) and within the [NCACE Collection](#).

Suggestions for artists

- Don't be afraid to approach researchers directly with a proposal and invite them to have a conversation, even if the ideas aren't fully formed. Researchers will bring their own ideas and perspectives to the table that can help build a project proposal.
- If you have an idea that you think might benefit from a research collaboration, you could also approach the Research and Knowledge Exchange office at your local university. The staff will know which projects are already happening within the university, what money, if any, is available and who might be looking to partner with artists.
- Look at materials relating to other collaborative projects to get inspiration for how to pitch, structure and execute your project, as well as possibilities for public engagement.
- Talk to other artists who have already undertaken such work.
- Consider arts organisations with whom you already have a connection. Approach them while you're speaking to HEIs and researchers about your project and see if there might be a possibility for partnership. It's worth keeping in mind that while many organisations have limited funding for commissioning, they might be able to give you support in kind, such as space, facilities, feedback on the work, producing advice and/or marketing support.
- When drawing up a schedule of work with your research partner(s), be realistic in estimating how time will need. Collaborative projects, especially if the partnership is a new one, can be time-consuming and administration heavy.
- Attend networking events and showcasing events to hear from others who are supporting or delivering collaborative projects. Similarly, join mailing lists to keep abreast of new commissioning and related opportunities.

Areas for future research

This relatively small-scale study provides a valuable body of evidence about the current state of artists/university collaborations and the values that such arrangements bring to artists, researchers, students, universities and communities. Furthermore, it indicates that such work supports innovative thinking, new knowledge creation and cultural production and co-design and across a diverse range of spheres. It also acts as a springboard from which we can identify the need for further investigation:

- A deeper dive into each region in the UK could enable the identification of both ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ spots as well as a better understanding of the characteristics of these.
- A wider mapping exercise on how this work is being supported across the UK, to better understand what research councils and other funding bodies have been supporting, both directly and indirectly.
- Further map the impacts of this work across the domains we have identified through this research (including: health, education, place, environment, social justice, technology and wider innovation and growth).
- Assess the attitudes, appetite and ambitions for this work at senior leadership level within HEIs and funding bodies, as demonstrated through, for example, institutional strategic plans and mission statements.
- Highlighting the economics of collaboration and its impacts through datasets such as REF Impact Case Studies could also help identify areas of existing strength and areas where there is potential for greater engagement.
- University-affiliated cultural infrastructure such as museums, arts centres and collaborative working spaces is an important yet quiet actor, and its role in supporting collaborative practices and innovations needs further research.
- The digital assets associated with collaborations and their proneness to vulnerabilities need futureproofing.

Resources Compendium

To add to our detailed case studies, we undertook brief and focused desk research to enable us to curate a wider selection of recent and current collaborations taking place between artists and universities in the UK, as well as some examples from Ireland. We have used the material to produce this accompanying **Artists Working with Universities Resources Compendium** which will also be made available as a standalone resource. It is intended to be viewed as an indication of the span of resources rather than as comprehensive. We hope it provides a valuable and inspiring set of examples in the following areas:

- Research collaboration programmes and projects
- Artists' residency initiatives
- Invitations and commissions
- Exhibitions and events
- Guides and toolkits
- Blogs and news articles
- Case studies

It is designed to be of interest to the following groups of people: artists; researchers across all disciplines who are interested in working with the arts and/or in related fields of research; arts professionals working within arts and university contexts; knowledge exchange, public engagement and research impact professionals; senior academic leaders; funding bodies; third-sector organisations; and other businesses and organisations that engage with research and the arts in their work, or are seeking to do so. We are conceiving the compendium as a living document to be updated each year. We welcome examples for inclusion in any of the above categories.

Research Collaboration Programmes and Projects

The [FX Creative Exchange](#) is a transdisciplinary incubator programme supporting collaborations between early-career researchers across the University of Exeter and Falmouth University, and while the page mentions engagement with creative practitioners and industry, the examples highlighted focus primarily on academic- and researcher-led collaborations.

[Queen Mary Conversations](#) – interdisciplinary conversations between artists and academics. In 2020, Arts and Culture at Queen Mary University of London invited UK-based artists to converse with academics from across the university. A dentist spoke to a sculptor. A mathematician to a choreographer. A film producer to a social anthropologist. You can explore the 'conversations' and collaborations [here](#).

[The UNESCO Chair](#) hosted within the School of Education at the University of Glasgow undertakes a programme of work focused on multilingual knowledge exchange in refugee and humanitarian protection, with a focus on fostering integration through creative and cultural expressions. They also work with artists, public and third-sector organisations, NGOs, migrants and refugees; one way this is facilitated is through their [UNESCO RIELA Affiliate Artist](#) network. You can find a list of their affiliate artist collaborations [here](#).

[CO-CREATE: Art and Design Research Network for Inclusive Futures](#) is led by the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) in partnership with Belfast School of Art at Ulster University. The project will enable researchers to work with partners to establish initiatives that advance the role of art and design in engaging the creativity of diverse communities in research.

[South East Technological University \(Ireland\) has a collaboration with a community-based arts initiative, Creative Places Enniscorthy](#), to demonstrate how education, art and community engagement can work together to create impact. The partnership has brought together residents, artists, community groups, schools and SETU students and staff to co-create cultural projects.

Collaborations: Collection of Examples

Cabot Institute for the Environment at the University of Bristol has a [page of artists who have collaborated with them](#). Each project page has further information, some with videos, and the site includes a broad range of artists and methodologies. The projects all have a focus on environment/climate change.

[Mathematical & Physical Sciences at University College London page](#) showcases a collection of Sci-Art collaborations from over the years, including residencies, commissions, exhibitions and partnerships with poets, printmakers and more.

[The University of Warwick's Artist-Researcher Collaborations page](#) highlights projects connecting researchers with local artists, showcasing collaborations that explore societal themes from cultural memory and heritage to sustainability, community experiences and the impacts of Covid-19.

[The Leverhulme Centre for Anthropocene Biodiversity \(University of York\) page](#) showcases a wide range of artist collaborations, from residencies and sound installations to public trails, including the [Art of Politics Trail](#), which presents artworks emerging from academic-artistic partnerships exploring themes such as climate change, social justice and human rights.

King's College London provides a [dedicated page of artist collaborations](#), spanning projects in areas such as quantum technologies, AI, mathematics, design and robotics. These illustrate the breadth of creative partnerships taking place across the university.

[University College London Art Museum](#) has a short list of collaborative project examples covering commissions, residencies and curatorial collaborations, with outputs ranging from performances, installations, exhibitions, talks and screenings.

There is a collection of Sci-Art collaborations on the Biomedical Imaging Unit, University of Southampton website. The examples include multimedia installations and interventions, traditional drawing and painting, as well as more experimental work that incorporates scientific materials and methods, such as microscopy images and medical sample visualisations, for public engagement.

Collaborations: Individual examples

In 2020 Luciana Rosado was 'artist-researcher collaborator' at Newnham College, Cambridge, an annual scheme that nurtures the collaboration between art and academia, with the aim of establishing links of mutual support and meaningful conversations between artists and

researchers. You can read about the finished project on the artist's website here and an introduction to the project when it started on the college website [here](#).

A collaboration between Imperial College London and neighbouring organisations including the Science Museum, the Natural History Museum and the V&A, Paint Lab is an annual science-art project where local London artists join forces with Imperial scientists to transform a space into a giant live art studio. The artist's work takes inspiration from academic research, exploring topics such as predicting weather in space, equipping plants to save themselves and the planet, detecting early signs of Parkinson's and creating human connection during cancer treatment. Read more about this year's project and festival [here](#).

A mural created by academics, students and artists at the University of Plymouth, to tell the story of the university's net-zero ambitions. The mural was designed by graduate Eleanor Croker, who won a competition that was open to students from across the university. She worked with mural artist Dr Kate Crawford to bring the piece to life, assisted by another graduate. The piece was later transformed into an augmented reality experience by two Game Arts and Design students. Read more about the project [here](#).

Artist residencies

- [The Arts Council-funded artist in residence programmes across Ireland](#)

The Arts Council of Ireland has awarded nine artist residencies across six universities for 2025, primarily to writers, alongside one traditional artist and one film artist.

Location: Ireland, Methods: Mixed, Funding: Arts Council of Ireland

- [University of Galway, Art X Residency – Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology at Virginia Tech](#): the Digital Artist in Residence Exchange involves a two-week residency in Galway for a US-based artist and a two-week residency at Virginia Tech for an Irish-based artist.

Location: Ireland/USA, Methods: Any, Funding: Galway Culture Company, Centre for Creative Technologies at University of Galway and Institute for Creativity, Arts and Technology at Virginia Tech.

In addition to the example listed above, the University of Galway has a number of other artist residencies (including further international ones) [listed on their website](#).

Location: Ireland/International, Methods: Mixed,

- [Collaboration between artist Janetka Plantun and Dr David Mills from the School of Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, and Artist Residency at Barts Pathology Museum.](#)

Location: London, Methods: Sculpture, Funding: QM Centre for Creative Collaboration

- [Iman Dato Artist Residency at the University of Exeter's Environment and Sustainability Institute \(ESI\) and the Eden Project.](#)

Location: Cornwall, Methods: Mixed, Funding: Collaboration Fund as part of the (internal) Open Innovation Platform which is funded by Research England's Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF).

- [The AMATA Arts Centre at Falmouth University artist/company residency.](#)

Location: Cornwall, Methods: Music, sound and performing arts practitioners.

The University Art Collection, University of Reading is currently recruiting an Artist in Residence to respond to drawings in the Collection and run workshops with local secondary school pupils at Maiden Erlegh School, Reading. Although this isn't part of a formal, regular scheme, they have facilitated several artist residencies alongside [The Museum of English Rural Life](#) (MERL) and the University of Reading. The MERL (at the University of Reading) also has a list of past residencies on [its website](#) that include poets, musicians, writers and photographers, supported by a range of different partners (e.g. English Folk Dance and Song Society) and funders (AHRC/Wellcome Trust).

Location: Reading, Methods: Mixed, Funding: Mixture of funders.

- [Centre for Postcolonial Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London Artists-in-Residence, for artists working on postcolonial and decolonial subjects.](#)

Location: London, Methods: Mixed (with a key theme of performance/installation work).

- OFFSHOOT Artist in Residence programme is a partnership between University of Salford Art Collection, RHS Garden Bridgewater and Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool. Current artists in residence include photographers [Dr Yan Wang Preston \(supported by National Lottery funding\)](#) and [Anoosh Ariamehr and Fiona Robinson \(supported by Arts Council England Funding\)](#).

Location: Manchester, Methods: Photography, Funding: National Lottery and Arts Council England.

- Artists [Mishka Henner](#) and [Emily Speed](#), at the University of Salford, exploring themes of the climate crisis, net zero research and the future of housing.

Location: Manchester, Methods: Drawing, sculpture, installation, photography, moving image and performance, Funding: [Friends of Energy House 2.0 Community](#) (an internal project). In partnership with Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool and Castlefield Gallery, Manchester.

- [University of the West of England \(UWE\) Artist in Residence project, hosted at Bower Ashton Library.](#)

Location: Bristol, Methods: Mixed.

- [Loughborough University](#) On their artist residencies and commissions page, Loughborough has a list of previous artist residencies and commissions, including handicraft, digital and performance artists.

Location: Leicestershire, Methods: Mixed.

- [Durham University Artists in residence.](#) Durham regularly forms partnerships with artists and has an artists residency scheme. Some recent artists in residence include [Sarah Calavera](#), a graphic artist and printmaker, and [Jasper Turnbull](#), costume and set designer.

Location: Durham, Methods: Mixed.

- [Each academic year the craft programme at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, hosts an artist in residence.](#)

Location: Surrey, Methods: Mixed.

- [Leeds Arts University, Creatives in Residence Scheme for recent graduates.](#) The Creatives in Residence scheme at Leeds Arts University aims to provide a platform for recent graduates to realise their ambitions to develop and work on a specific project within a secure environment.

Location: Leeds, Methods: Mixed.

- [Centre for Systems Modelling and Quantitative Biomedicine, at the University of Birmingham, has an artists in residence programme that was established in 2020.](#) The website includes details on the current artists in residence who work with one of their '[Seedcorn](#)' projects, a list of past groups and a link to [blogs](#) by artists.

Location: Birmingham, Methods: Mixed, Funding: This seems to be part of, and supported by, the university's internal [Seedcorn initiative](#) that supports new and emerging interdisciplinary research collaborations in its Research Incubator scheme.

- [St John's College, Oxford currently has Heather Agyepong as artist in residence, and a list of almost yearly artist residents on their website, going back 25 years.](#)

Location: Oxford, Methods: Heather is a visual artist, performer/actor and maker, and there is a mixture of other types of artist in their list of residencies.

- [A repository of case studies of current and past artist residencies at King's College London, spanning the past 15 years.](#) These case studies span different faculties across the institution from law to social science and even dentistry, but the majority of these have been in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

Location: London, Methods: Mixed.

- [Ella Miodownik, at the Good Science Project, Imperial College London.](#)

Location: London, Methods: Tapestry and textiles, Funding: The Good Science Project is a collaboration between the Office of the Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise) and the Science Communication Unit, and is funded by Research England.

- [Gemma Anderson in the Department of Mathematics, Imperial College London.](#)

Location: London, Methods: Drawing and model making, Funding: Leverhulme Trust Artist in Residence Award (2012).

- [Multiple artists at the University of Leicester.](#)

Location: [Leicester](#), Methods: Mixed, Funding: [Public Engagement Scheme of the Institutional Strategic Support Fund](#) and the [Leverhulme Trust](#).

- [Anna Heinrich and Leon Palmer, at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton.](#)

Location: Southampton, Methods: Multi-media installations.

- [Professor Kathleen Rogers, within Medicine at the University of Southampton.](#)

Location: Southampton, Methods: Interdisciplinary projects that integrate art, biological science and technology, Funding: Ongoing collaboration between the University for the Creative Arts, based in Kent and Surrey, and Medicine at the University of Southampton.

- [European Centre for Environment and Human Health, University of Exeter Medical School with artist Jonty Lees.](#)

Location: Cornwall, Methods: Performance art, sculpture, video and installation, Funding: Leverhulme Trust.

- [The University of Edinburgh Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies with the artist Catriona Taylor.](#)

Location: Scotland, Methods: Printing, film-making and sound installation, Funding: Leverhulme Trust.

Further artist residencies can be found on [the Leverhulme Trust website](#) under ‘former schemes’ and the [Biomedical Imaging Unit, University of Southampton website](#).

Invitations and commissions for artists to collaborate with the university

A number of university pages include a call to action for artists who might be interested in collaboration to contact the university. Some examples include:

- [Loughborough University](#), with reference to artist residency opportunities (also included under residencies), artist commissions and research collaborations.
- [Durham University](#), with reference to artist residencies (also included below) under residencies and partnership working.
- Imperial College London commissioned students and alumni from the Royal College of Art to create and display works representing the Imperial community as part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Portrait Prize. These were exhibited before being absorbed into Imperial’s collection. Read more [here](#).
- Arts and Culture, University of Exeter commissioned artist Georgia Gendall and creative producers Field Notes to bring together staff, students and artists at the University of Exeter’s Cornwall Penryn campus, to curate and develop a programme of creative activity exploring a sense of belonging to place. Read more [here](#).

Exhibitions and events

Exhibitions, events and performances have become a popular method of collaboration between universities, artists and art organisations. They provide innovative, flexible and engaging ways to connect with audiences both internal (students and staff) and external (local, national, and international communities), as well as the professional art world.

The examples below demonstrate how research-led or partnership-based projects have translated into public-facing outcomes and paved the way for new forms of co-operation and knowledge exchange between students, academics, artists, curators and the wider art community.

- Events and workshops with artists ran alongside the Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize 2021 exhibition at Cooper Gallery – for example [Drawing as Collaboration](#), an online panel presentation with drawing prompts. Whilst this was the only example that surfaced in the research of artist–university collaborations, this type of collaborative or co-curated event is fairly common within institutions, particularly those with their own galleries.
- In 2020 **Queen Mary University of London** invited UK-based artists to converse with academics on several topics including climate change, racism, childcare, mental health and wellbeing. Each of the conversations between artists and researchers in the [Queen Mary Conversations](#) project resulted in a commissioned artwork. The project was funded through the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF).
- Through its UNESCO Chair Programme, which focuses on multilingual knowledge exchange in the areas of refugee and humanitarian protection, the **University of Glasgow** runs a number of exhibitions, performances and events designed to foster integration through creative and cultural expressions. These include:
 - The inaugural [Spring School](#), a 3–4 day knowledge exchange festival of events blending artistic and academic modes of presentation, with exhibitions, networking and food and drink.
 - The [Solas](#) festival, where the UNESCO team has been involved in curating parts of the festival, to engage attendees with research projects. This collaboration was shortlisted for a Knowledge Exchange and Public Engagement Award for Best Collaboration (Arts & Culture) in 2017.
 - The [UNESCO RILA virtual art exhibition](#) (2021) that showcased more than 70 pieces from their Affiliate Artist Network.
 - The university has also partnered with GRAMNet on their annual [Film Series](#), contributed to permanent Exhibits at Glasgow Museums, had affiliate artists go on to contribute work made to other festivals, exhibitions and events, and more. In addition to artist residency opportunities, artist commissions and research collaborations, [Loughborough University](#) also runs [Radar](#), a contemporary arts research programme. This includes inviting artists to create new work in response to and as part of research at Loughborough, and a programme of events with/featuring artists that often takes place in the public arena.

- As part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Portrait Prize, **Imperial College London** in collaboration with the **Royal College of Art** commissioned six students and alumni to create and display works of art that would address the lack of diversity in the art displayed on the College's campuses. The artworks [first went on display in the Blythe Gallery](#), before being added to the collection at Imperial.
- Based at the **University of Exeter**, the project [Tender Acts](#) was a programme of creative activity exploring a sense of belonging to place, developed by artist Georgia Gendall and creative producers Field Notes in collaboration with students and staff from the university. This included performances, creative activities, interventions and installations across the campus. In addition, the [Learn from a bird exhibition](#) showcased collaborations between artists, researchers, students and staff.
- [Coventry Creates](#) is a digital exhibition featuring a diverse range of creative work by local artists, each responding to academic research from **Coventry University** and the **University of Warwick** through practices such as photography, film, dance, theatre, poetry, sound and sculpture.
- **Cabot Institute for the Environment**, University of Bristol [Art Trail](#): showcases commissioned artwork that represents some of the institute's research. Inspired by the 2021 '[Cabot Conversations](#)' and '[Voices of COP26](#)', the Art Trail is designed to lead explorers through aspects of the changing environment and its impact on social equity and ecological justice. The institute's list of artist collaborations offers a myriad projects that included or led to events, exhibitions – including [one across Bristol](#) – and performances.
- Since 2019 the **University of Warwick** has been collaborating with the [Coventry Biennial](#), bringing together researchers, artists and the local community to create research-informed exhibition and associated events.
- [The Leverhulme Centre for Anthropocene Biodiversity](#) at the **University of York** presented artworks emerging from academic-artistic partnerships in an [Art of Politics Trail](#). Through photography, painting, poetry, short films, textile art and sculpture, researchers and artists explored and engaged with themes of social change, human rights, injustice, inequality and development.
- The [University College London Art Museum](#) collaborative project examples include a range of outputs from performances, installations, exhibitions, talks and screenings. You can find a list of their past exhibitions as part of their public art programme [here](#).
- [Paint Lab](#) is an annual science-art festival where local London artists join forces with **Imperial College London** scientists to create a giant live art studio.
- The artist residency and collaboration between [artist Janetka Plantun and Dr David Mills](#) at **Queen Mary University of London** led to a public exhibition at Bart's Pathology Museum called [On the Art of Teeth](#) in December 2025.
- As part of a partnership with University of Salford, Dr Yan Wang Preston's artist residency programme at RHS Garden Bridgewater has led to the creation of new work that will culminate in an exhibition in Salford in 2026. Keep up to date [here](#). In addition, there will be the *LOOK Climate Lab* exhibition, exploring how photography can be an effective way to talk about climate change. The exhibition, where the gallery will be transformed into a lab, will bring together

researchers, activists and artists, including those participating in the artist in residence programme ([OFFSHOOT](#)).

- The **University of Birmingham** has hosted three exhibitions over the years from their artist in residence programme. This includes [Encoded Realities](#) (2024), a [Virtual exhibition](#) in 2021 and the first exhibition, [Lore + \(Dis\)order](#).
- The artist residency with [Ella Miodownik](#) at **Imperial College London** culminated in a pop-up exhibition, *Experiment*. The exhibition brought together people working in a variety of roles within science research, from scientists and students to technicians and communicators in exploring the diverse experiences of science.
- The artist residency with [Jonty Lees](#) at European Centre for Environment and Human Health, **University of Exeter Medical School**, led to a participatory exhibition at the Newlyn Art Gallery. It also resulted in several short films interpreting research, which have since been used by academics at international conferences.
- The [Artists on Research series by the Paul Mellon Centre](#) brought artists, curators, writers, academics and more together to explore research-based practice through talks, performances, conversations and workshops.
- Led by the **School of Advanced Study** at the University of London, the [Being Human festival](#) is the UK's national festival of the humanities and invites researchers to collaborate with local community, artists and cultural partners to create engaging events and projects to share. The festival is run to support humanities public engagement across the UK, through a partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the British Academy.
- The [Festival of Social Science](#) is an annual celebration of research and knowledge about humans and society. Like the Being Human Festival, it is run to support public engagement in the social sciences across the UK. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, researchers from UK universities are encouraged to collaborate with cultural partners and artists to create engaging events and projects to share with the local community.
- [The Illuminate Festival](#), which ran annually from 2017 to 2021, was part of a long-standing collaboration between **Arts University Plymouth** (previously Plymouth College of Art), the Real Ideas organisation, **University of Plymouth** and Plymouth Culture. The festival previously featured work from artists, students and staff, and included a large display of light-based art installations and projections across the city.
- [The Culture and Creativity Research Institute at Sheffield Hallam University \(SHU\)](#) has an ongoing partnership with the [No Bounds Festival](#), an independent festival in Sheffield, often showcasing research across the city as part of the festival, through installations, performances, film and more. In October 2025 the [university partnered with Treatment Studio](#) to create new installations from artist–researcher collaborations between Sheffield Hallam University and Treatment Studio, London.
- In August 2025 the **University of Edinburgh** hosted two exhibitions as part of the Edinburgh Art Festival and Edinburgh Festival Fringe. [Both offered perspectives on artificial intelligence](#) and are examples of artist–university collaboration. These include:
 - *Tipping Point: Artist Responses to AI* was an exhibition at the university's Inspace Gallery, featuring seven UK-based artists commissioned through Bridging Responsible AI Divides

(BRAID) – a national research programme led by the university in partnership with the BBC and the Ada Lovelace Institute, and funded by the AHRC.

- *Authenticity Unmasked: Unveiling AI-Driven Realities through Art*, showcasing the work of three artists, was developed in collaboration with Adobe and the Content Authenticity Initiative and is part of CREA-TEC, a research project led by Dr Caterina Moruzzi at the University of Edinburgh. The **University of Dundee** runs the Festival of the Future that celebrates and enhances collaboration between science, art and culture, and includes collaborations with artists. The [2024 festival](#) featured collaborations with 27 cultural partners and artists.
- [Art Beats Festival](#) is a collaboration between Lancaster University and Sunway University in Malaysia. The first edition took place at Sunway University, supported by funding from the Global Advancement Fund at Lancaster University, an internal fund for projects aimed at growing international collaborations. In 2024 the festival took place at Lancaster University in partnership with [Lancaster Arts](#). As well as including a range of events, exhibitions and workshops, and creating opportunities for collaboration between staff and students, the festival accepts artist submissions from across the world around specific themes and hosts an online exhibition where international artists can share their work.
- Now in its sixth year, [SparkFest](#), led by Bath Spa University, showcases performances by Music and Performing Arts graduates, alumni and industry collaborators, highlighting how emerging talent engages with the region’s artistic community.
- AI Arts Festival 2024 was led by the Web Science Institute at the University of Southampton in collaboration with the Winchester School of Art and the Southampton Institute for Arts and Humanities. The interactive event brought together artists and musicians from across the University of Southampton and internationally, showcasing how the convergence of AI and the arts is being used to explore critical questions about emerging technologies.
- [The British Science Festival](#) is typically hosted in partnership with a university; in 2025 it was [hosted by the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University](#), and in 2026 it will be hosted in partnership with the University of Southampton. The festival often features a wide range of science–art and artist–researcher collaborations.

University-based museums and galleries present a unique space for artist–researcher collaborations. As places of cultural heritage, they act as key gateways of learning between universities and the public. From ancient artefacts to digital records, from historical objects to contemporary items, these university-based cultural institutions often run programmes of exhibitions and events that examine their collections by showcasing artists, including work developed through artist–researcher collaborations.

Their public programmes, in particular, frequently present collaborative projects or are delivered in partnership between artists and researchers. For example, the [Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art](#) (MIMA) is an art gallery, part of **Teesside University**, that runs changing seasonal exhibitions, collection displays, learning activities and community events involving artistic collaborators from the local, national and international scene.

Some institutions more actively support artist–researcher collaborations within their programmes, often with backing from initiatives such as the [UKRI Participatory Research Fund](#). For example, **Oxford University’s** Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) have used this funding to support [a range of projects](#) that connect artists and audiences with collections, including collaborative work on exhibitions.

The Warwick Arts Centre at the **University of Warwick** facilitates artist–university collaborations through a range of projects. These include working with the Coventry Biennial to showcase collaborative projects, and running [the Classroom of Creativity](#), which brings together artists, teachers, pupils and educators to design engaging activities for schools. The centre also supports broader artist–researcher collaborations, examples of which can be found [here](#).

Further artist–researcher collaborations

Through our desk research we have identified further artist–researcher collaborations and partnerships, which range from large-scale international projects to locally focused initiatives. These include AHRC- and SPF-funded projects, cross-council programmes such as Connected Communities, and EU-supported initiatives. We recognise that alongside these examples many more artist–researcher collaborations are likely to exist and could be explored further.

- [The Royal Shakespeare Company programme of artist-centred feasibility work, funded by AHRC](#). This project includes a number of [Fellowships](#) and wider work, aimed at creating inclusive opportunities for interdisciplinary practice, co-creation and research and development.
- The [CREATE project](#) (2022–6, University of Leeds), funded by the [Shared Prosperity Fund \(SPF\)](#), brings young people, artists and scientists together to develop arts-based approaches to adolescent mental health, addressing research barriers and creating resources for transdisciplinary learning.
- The [Cultural Leadership and the Place of the Artist project](#) (Robert Gordon University), funded by AHRC, explores cultural leadership among artists and policy makers to inform long-term development of leadership training in the sector.
- The [Connected Communities programme](#), a cross-council initiative, involved artists in a variety of roles, including as facilitators, workshop leaders and researchers. The [University of Sheffield](#) explored this further in a project examining the legacy of co-production, focusing on the role of artists in stimulating change within Connected Communities projects.
- [Artsadmin \(UK\) was one of 15 arts and research organisations involved in Create to Connect](#), a collaborative project that aimed ‘to create powerful and long-lasting connections between artists, cultural operators, researchers and audiences’. The project was funded through the EU’s Creative Europe programme in 2018. While the project website is no longer live, and the [examples on Artsadmin’s website](#) do not explicitly reference artist–researcher collaborations, it is reasonable to infer that a partnership of this scale and intent is likely to have generated collaborative relationships between artists and researchers.

- Likewise, the Imagine 2020 network, which also has an inactive website and of which [Artsadmin was a founding member, ran a series of Summer Labs between 2011 and 2019](#). These brought together artists, scientists, policymakers and others to explore how art, science and activism might address climate change.
- European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Fostering knowledge valorisation through the arts and cultural institutions, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/377987>. The study highlights a range of inspiring approaches to involving arts and cultural organisations in knowledge valorisation, alongside eight in-depth case studies.

Guides and toolkits

[A NCCPE guide exploring how researchers and artists are working together to engage the public with research.](#)

[Artist-Researcher Collaborations with Coventry Creates: sharing knowledge and inspiring innovation, by Professor Jackie Hodgson and Emily Dunford.](#)

[Arts-based engagement with research: A guide for community groups, practitioners and researchers \(2021\)](#)

[NCACE Examples of collaborations between universities and the arts..](#)

[NCACE Guidance for developing collaborative projects.](#)

[NCACE Working with universities.](#)

[NCACE Collaborating with HEIs: How to generate valuable outcomes and positive impacts.](#)

Blogs, articles and reports

Reflecting on ‘Impact’ in Artist–Academic Collaborations in Times of Conflict by Sara Wong: <https://www.manchesterhive.com/view/journals/jha/4/2/article-p32.xml>.

Make a difference: collaboration and participation in arts-led research by Loraine Leeson, Middlesex University: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/make-difference-collaboration-and-participation-artsled-research>.

University of Birmingham Artists in Residence blog posts 2024: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/systems-modelling-and-quantitative-biomedicine/blog-posts>.

Exploring portraiture at University College London Art Museum – guest blog by artist Nadine Mahoney: <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/museums/2012/06/07/exploring-portraiture-at-ucl-art-museum-guest-blog-by-artist-nadine-mahoney/>.

Artists and researchers – the art of successful collaboration by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE): <https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/whats-happening/blog/artists-and-researchers-art-successful-collaboration>.

University and art collaborations ‘the new normal’, on the Times Higher Education website: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/university-and-art-collaborations-new-normal>

[Honour the university library as a creative space with an artist residency, on the Times Higher Education website: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/honour-university-library-creative-space-artist-residency](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/honour-university-library-creative-space-artist-residency)

University of Exeter news piece on an exhibition showcasing ‘the unique creative collaborations taking place between artists, researchers, students, and staff, from the University of Exeter and Falmouth University at the Penryn Campus’: <https://news.exeter.ac.uk/research/arts-culture/new-exhibition-showcases-the-power-of-cross-disciplinary-creative-collaborations-at-the-penryn-campus/>

King’s College London – Six new collaborations launched as part of King’s Artists programme (2023): <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/launch-of-kings-artists-2023>

Collaborations between arts and academia benefit all, on Arts Professional <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/collaborations-between-arts-and-academia-benefit-all>

University celebrates collaboration between art and research on University of Bath website: <https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/university-celebrates-collaboration-between-art-and-research/>

Arts Council puts culture and climate in the spotlight at Queen’s: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/News/Allnews/2025/arts-council-culture-climate-in-spotlight-at-queens.html>

[University of Leeds: Creative collaboration between science and art inspires new approaches.](#)

About a project pairing professional artists with researchers at the University’s Bragg Centre for Materials Research, which included ten partnerships between researchers from a variety of academic schools, including physics, computing, engineering and design; and professional artists including poets, sculptors, theatre producers, sonic artists and visual event creators.

[Cultural Relations in Action: A research study on the British Council’s International Collaboration Grants programme, April 2024.](#)

Funding organisations

A wide range of funders and grant programmes supports this type of collaboration. The list below is not a comprehensive overview of all funding available for artist–university collaborations but reflects the organisations and schemes that appeared in this research.

[Arts Council England](#): ACE is the national development agency for creativity and culture. See the University of Salford project and partnership detailed above as an example.

[Arts Council Wales](#): The official body that funds and develops the arts in Wales.

[Arts and Humanities Research Council](#): AHRC is the UK’s largest provider of response-led and strategic funding, advanced skills training and career development across the whole range of arts and humanities.

[British Council International Collaboration Grants](#): Supporting UK and overseas organisations to make connections and create new work around the world. Their current grant page features

a list of projects awarded funding this year, including a collaboration between Falmouth University (Centre for Heritage, Culture & Society) and Fundalares (Venezuela), which includes a traditional folk musician. They also share a recent research study, [Cultural Relations in Action](#), which presents case studies and explores collaboration formed as a result of previous International Collaboration Grants and contains useful insights and learnings for our 2024 cohort of grantees. (This is also featured above, under reports.)

[Creative Europe fund \(EU\)](#) for collaborative cultural projects with European partners.

[The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council \(EPSRC\): The Impact Acceleration Account](#): The UKRI's Impact Acceleration Account (IAAs) are strategic awards providing funding to research organisations to use creatively for a wide range of impact activities. These are formed from six research councils (EPSRC, AHRC, ESRC, BBSRC, MRC, STFC).

[EU-supported Socially Engaged Universities Fund](#) looks at how universities can work more inclusively and effectively with their local communities.

[European Union](#): The EU provides funding for a range of projects and programmes to its member states and non-EU partners.

[German Research Foundation \(Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft\)](#): DFG is the largest research funding organisation for the sciences and humanities in Germany.

The [Horizon Europe Cluster 2 call](#), which supports culture, creativity and an inclusive society, received 1,331 proposals, including 456 single-stage and two-stage applications focused on European cultural heritage and the creative industries. Given the scope of the call, it is likely that some of these applications involved artist–researcher collaborations.

[The Leverhulme Trust](#): The Leverhulme Trust used to have an ‘Artist in Residence’ grant, which was suspended in 2017 due to changing funding priorities. Whilst the specific grant scheme no longer runs, the trust does still fund artist collaborations and residencies, some of which are included in the above list of projects.

[The National Heritage Lottery Fund](#) (the largest funder for UK heritage) and [Art Fund](#) (the national charity for art), which frequently support exhibitions.

National Lottery (through Arts Council England): [OFFSHOOT Artist in Residence programme](#) (listed above under artist residencies) is a partnership between University of Salford Art Collection, RHS Garden Bridgewater and Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, and is supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

[North-South Research Programme \(NSRP\), administered by the Higher Education Authority \(HEA\)](#).

[Research England – Participatory Research Fund](#): Supports projects where researchers and non-academic partners (such as artists) work together, sharing power and responsibility to co-create knowledge and strengthen research outcomes. This approach lends itself to artist–researcher collaborations, as artists frequently bring expertise in working with communities and audiences in ethical and inclusive ways.

[The Royal Academy of Engineering](#): A national charity delivering public benefit through engineering and technological innovation.

[UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\) Higher Education Innovation Fund](#): Through the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HIEF) UKRI provides universities funding to support and develop knowledge exchange programmes between academia and non-academic organisations, which results in benefits to the economy and society.

[UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#): the UKSPF provides local authorities funding for communities, places, businesses, people and skills. This fund also supports the arts, culture and heritage sectors as part of its ‘community and place’ initiative, for example by funding festivals, workshops and projects.

[Wellcome](#), along with science/research organisations such as the [British Science Festival](#) (supporting art–science research collaborations in particular).

[Wellcome – Institutional Strategic Support Fund](#): This is not specific to artist collaborations, but has funded projects in this space, including the mathematicians and artists collaboration at the University of Leicester (listed above).

In our desk research we have also identified several further UKRI funding opportunities from recent years that may have supported artist–researcher collaborations due to their focus and themes. Some examples include:

- [The 2021 ‘arts-based public engagement with climate change’ funding opportunity, funded by the Natural Environment Research Council \(NERC\)](#), which supported new partnerships to engage the public with climate research. The call required projects to take an arts-based approach to engagement and to include an artist or creative practitioner as part of the project team.
- [The EPSRC-funded ‘Engage the public with impacts of digital economy research’ 2021 call](#), which included the expectation that projects would ‘engage the public in a creative and interactive way’.
- [The NERC 2023 call for ‘Growing roots: environmental science public engagement 2023–24’](#), which invited applications from a range of backgrounds, including researchers and community groups.

In addition to national and international research funders, several of our case studies (Chapter 3) were supported through internal funding within HEIs, particularly public engagement, knowledge exchange and ‘seed funding’ schemes – for example, the Oxford Research Centre for Humanities (TORCH), based in Oxford University. In some cases, internal funding was combined with Arts Council England support to enable residencies, exhibitions and other collaborative projects. A small number of projects were also funded by local authorities, typically as part of wider partnerships involving cultural organisations, charities, universities and research institutes, with examples including support from city and county councils alongside museums, environmental organisations and learned societies. Occasionally some institutions may employ artists on fractional contracts and/or allow the individual to otherwise operate within the institution.

Together, these examples highlight the breadth of funding approaches that support artists working with universities, from small-scale internal and partnership funding to more formal, embedded arrangements that enable longer-term collaboration and access to external grants.

Organisations, partnerships and networks

We have identified a number of organisations, partnerships and networks that support, facilitate and host artist–university collaborations. As shown in the artist residency section (and elsewhere), many of these projects are delivered through local partnerships spanning HEIs and arts and culture organisations. The list below is a selection of examples of such initiatives.

[AA2A](#) is an Arts Council England (ACE) Investment Principle Support Organisation (IPSO) that has been facilitating artists' residencies since 1999. They help foster collaboration between FE and HE institutions and artists, while supporting students as they transition from study to employment in the arts.

[Art Sci Lab Research Group](#), at the University of Hertfordshire, was established in 2021 to lead on research in the domain of art and science collaboration. Its remit is to reassert art as a knowledge-forming discipline in its own right and in doing so to take a leading role in art–science collaborations.

The [Attenborough Arts Centre](#) works with the University of Leicester to create collaborations between artists, academics, students and communities to stimulate creativity and creative thinking across disciplines. The work of Attenborough Arts Centre started in the late 1970s when a group of local artists started running art classes in rooms at the University of Leicester.

[AA2A](#) is an Arts Council England (ACE) Investment Principle Support Organisation (IPSO) that has been facilitating artists residencies since 1999. They help foster collaboration between further and higher education institutions and artists while supporting students as they transition from study to employment in the arts.

[The Binks Hub](#) at the University of Edinburgh is a partnership between communities, artists and academic staff, conducting arts-based, participatory research at the university.

[Wales Arts Health & Well-being Network](#) is the national sector support body for arts, health and wellbeing in Wales. Their work is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Welsh NHS Confederation and Arts Council Wales, and they have a membership of more than 1,000 arts and health professionals, representing the arts, health and HE sectors working across the full range of art form practice in health, arts and other community settings.

About NCACE

National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange (NCACE) was launched in 2021 with support from Research England. Our mission is to support and facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange between higher education institutions (HEIs) and the arts and cultural sectors with a particular focus on evidencing the social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts and implications of such collaborations.

Since launching, we have curated and hosted 75 events broadly concerned with the collaboration between universities and the arts and cultural sectors. Much of this material is publicly available on our [Soundcloud](#) channel. We have an active Blog Platform containing almost 90 blogs.

A core part of work is the development of an evidence base for cultural knowledge exchange in the widest sense. This means we also publish on topics including [REE](#), [KEF](#) and produce publications on topics such as: [Care and Ethics](#), and Relations between [Universities and Local Authorities](#) on culture-related initiatives. We produce detailed case studies, guides and toolkits, think-pieces and long-form essays. This material is all located within the [NCACE Collection](#).

NCACE is part of [SAS](#) (School of Advanced Study)

Appendix 1

Further Readings from the Literature Review

NCACE

Since this research is intended to build on NCACE's portfolio of publications on arts and culture in the academy, the literature review search began with [the NCACE Collection](#), selecting work that could inform this report.

Some papers from the collection take **an overview of the field**, such as Evelyn Wilson, Emily Hopkins and Dr Federica Rossi's 'Collaborating with Higher Education Institutions: Findings from NCACE Survey with Arts Professional' (2021), which draws conclusions from the findings from their survey aimed at those who have engaged in arts/research collaborations. Dr Rebekka Kill's 'Narrating Cultural Knowledge Exchange: Stories and Perspectives from Knowledge Exchange Professionals Working in Higher Education in the UK' (2022) documents and contextualises a series of interviews with people running knowledge exchange programmes across the country, discussing their experiences in the field. Dr Sarah Sigal's 'Knowledge Exchange, HEIs and the Arts and Culture Sector: A systematic review of literature in the field' (2022) is a literature review that surveyed and analysed materials relating to the field of knowledge exchange between universities and arts organisations and practitioners in order to contribute to NCACE's emerging Evidencing and Impact activities. Most recently, 'Universities, Local Authorities and Culture-Based Partnerships: Case studies, reflections and evidence from REF impact case studies' (2025) is a collection of papers edited by Wilson, following on from the 2023 Evidence Cafe that examined the ways in which universities and local authorities work together on cultural partnerships and projects, highlighting different models of practice and case studies from across the country.

Others look at **particular case studies** to understand the ways in which the HEI artist residency has operated.

Wilson's 'Artists in the Academy' (2023) blog documented an in-conversation event for NCACE's inaugural Festival of Cultural Knowledge Exchange (2022) that she chaired with artists Anne-Marie Culhane and Ruth Jarman (from the artist duo Semiconductor) to share their expertise, reflect on their practices and illuminate how they have engaged with researchers, research institutes and universities.

There are also **toolkits and guides** for arts/HEI collaborations in the collection. Sigal and Wilson's 'A Short Guide for Developing Collaborative Projects between Universities and the Arts' (2023) is a toolkit designed to provide guidelines and questions for artists and researchers embarking on a collaboration. Their 'Examples of Collaborations between Universities and the Arts' (2023) built on Sigal's initial NCACE literature review, extrapolating case studies to understand commonalities regarding good practice with respect to arts/HEI collaborations. Published the same year was Rossi and Dr Thanasis Spyriadis's 'Collaboration: Generating valuable outcomes and positive impacts' (2023), a toolkit which outlined the types of outcomes and impacts that collaborations might produce. It also provided a planning checklist indicating key factors to consider before starting a project.

Materials on Artists Working with universities

The literature review search was then expanded to [the NCACE Evidence Repository](#), which is a gateway to online, publicly available resources relating to knowledge exchange and collaborations between academia and the arts and cultural sectors. The repository was especially useful for this phase of the research because it is divided into categories such as: NCACE Publications, General Knowledge Exchange, Toolkits and Skills and Environment, creating a jumping-off point for a general search online that followed.

Much of the publicly available documentation around artists working within HEIs consists of three main types of material:

- Short blogs and write-ups on websites of universities summarising the artists with whom they are currently working or have previously worked.
- Critical writing generally in the form of articles, papers and book chapters.
- Guides to collaboration and other toolkit-type materials.

Most of the research drew conclusions, either from a number of projects or from individual case studies, as well as of the field as a whole. For the purposes of this work, we reviewed materials that:

- Gave an overview of practice of artists working with HEIs.
- More widely addressed notions of indication collaborative practice.
- Focused on longer-term partnerships.
- Explored models of working, value and impacts.
- Were produced to act as guides/toolkit-type materials.

The following articles give an overview of the practice of artists working within HEIs.

‘From knowledge sharing to co-creation: Paths and spaces for engagement between higher education and the creative and cultural industries’ (2014) by Dr Roberta Comunian and Dr Abigail Gilmore documented the different dynamics of and drivers for the various relationships between universities, the creative and cultural industries and their local communities across the UK, and how policy can shape this; they concluded that the values emerging from these projects and the power relationships playing out within them need to be better understood.

‘The value in science–art partnerships for science education and science communication’ (2020) by Dr Cristian Zaelzer detailed a number of collaborations between neuroscientists, graphic designers and fine artists at universities across Canada in order to demonstrate the ways in which artists can help scientists to make their findings accessible to the general public through emotionality.

‘Taking the long view: A residency about residencies’ (2024), a blog published by TransArtists, documents the work of the Residencies Research Group, a collective of researchers, artists, curators and academics investigating arts residencies at HEIs across Europe to understand the ways in which these residencies have been conceptualised and framed, how they have changed over time and how they might continue into the future, especially with respect to the challenges of geopolitical borders.

Similar materials focus on hubs of arts/research collaboration:

‘Rethinking “knowledge exchange”: New approaches to collaborative work in the arts and humanities’ (2015) by Dr Simon Moreton considers the commodification of the knowledge economy by analysing the work of REACT (one of four Knowledge Exchange/Creative Economy hubs funded by the AHRC) as well as the consequences of that work.

Materials that focused on **the nature of long-term partnerships** include **‘Cultivating research: Articulating value in arts and academic collaborations’** (2009) by Sarah Thelwall. This analyses the benefits, challenges and importance of long-term arts/HEI partnerships by presenting three UK-based case studies of arts companies Proboscis, SCAN and Blast Theory, coming to an understanding about the models they might offer to other organisations and institutions, as well as the recognition of these models by funding bodies.

Research that focused on individual case studies or initiatives ranged from small to large-scale, looking at models and processes of working, impact and value of arts/HEI collaborations. The following three pieces analysed existing and possible **models of working** within particular case studies.

‘Artists-in-residence to foster more reflective modelling practices’ (2025) by Dr Lisette van Beek aimed to better understand the potential of artists in residence to stimulate reflexive modelling practices that encourage participants to challenge and rethink their ways of working (especially the mindset of artists as merely tools for communicating scientific research), by reporting on a project in the Netherlands involving two artists in residence, a social scientist and an Integrated Assessment Models modelling group working on climate and sustainability.

‘Exploring artist residencies for academic libraries’ (2023) by Jenne M. Klotz, a librarian at James Madison University, documents her research leave, which explored the concept of artist residencies in academic libraries, advocating for residencies at her home institution.

‘Artists residencies, challenges and opportunities for communities’ empowerment and heritage regeneration’ (2020) by Dr Maria Rita Pinto, Professor Serena Viola, Dr Anna Onesti and Dr Francesca Ciampa analyses research carried out by the Department of Architecture of the University of Naples as part of the Creative Europe 2018 Artists in Architecture, Re-activating modern European houses programme, which investigated artists’ residencies as a means of working towards social sustainability and regeneration.

The following materials looked at individual case studies with respect to their value and impact

‘Art, science and organisational interactions: Exploring the value of artist residencies on campus’ (2018) by Dr Boram Lee, Professor Ian Fillis and Dr Kim Lehman is a UK-based case study that examines an artist’s residency at an aquaculture institute within a university. It discusses how the work adds aesthetic, emotional, environmental, educational and social value to the research landscape and campus life. The article also draws attention to the challenges of arts/HEI collaborations while advocating for further residencies.

‘Without the filmmaking there is no research: Establishing the Sound/Image Cinema

Lab via a REF2021 impact case study and exploring the impact of its engagement with UK film production' (2022) by Professor Neil Fox discusses the culture of professional film production at Falmouth University's School of Film & Television and its involvement in the Mark Jenkin film *Bait* (2019), which led to the establishment of the Sound/Image Cinema Lab, as well as the subsequent impact of the lab on the university and independent film-making in Cornwall.

'How to design an art-science program? Self-reported benefits for artists and scientists in the VI4 artist-in-residence program' (2022) by Skylar Cuevas, Qi (Kathy) Liu, Helen Qian, Dr Max E. Joffe, Karisa Calvitti, Megan Schladt, Dr Eric P. Skaar and Dr Kendra H. Oliver documents the Vanderbilt Institute for Infection, Immunology, and Inflammation artist in residence programme, a virtual residency involving 80 artists who were matched with 50 scientists from institutions across the US with a goal of creating visual science communication content and analyses the participants' responses, focusing on the benefits of the residency, as well as how it and programmes like it can be improved in future.

'Surprising benefits of an artist in residence program' (2022) by Dwight Owens, Dr Dennis Gupa, Colton Hash, Professor Kim Juniper, Dr Allana Lindgren, Jol Thoms, John Threlfall, and Dr Anthony Vickery is the publication resulting from a conference presentation which also serves as a portfolio of the work discussed (with images and links), focusing on the science of oceanic degradation and how that can and has been communicated by artists engaging with the research, looking specifically at Oceans Network Canada's artist in residence programme.

Guides, such as 'Arts-based engagement with research: A guide for community groups, practitioners and researchers' (2021) by Helen Gardner, Joann Leeding, Eleanor Stanley, Dr Sarah Ball, Brandi Leach, Jennifer Bousfield, Pamina Smith and Sonja Marjanovic details different approaches to executing arts knowledge exchange involving public engagement, presenting case studies and different public engagement frameworks from the UK.

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement has produced a valuable and detailed [What works guide: Artist and Researcher Collaborations](#) offering practical guidance to help researchers and artists develop effective collaborations. It follows the typical process of forming a collaboration, developing work together and reviewing the partnership. It ends by exploring some of the 'tough stuff' that you may confront as you develop your collaboration. Each section includes practical considerations and tips.

[DOI:10.82593/xn4r-ry36](https://doi.org/10.82593/xn4r-ry36)

A publication by The National Centre
for Academic and Cultural Exchange

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