

UNLOCKING THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF COLLECTIONS 2008-2016



new
expressions

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BUILDING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN MUSEUMS AND CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

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Artist Clare Twomey working with a Plymouth resident on the development of 'Plymouth Porcelain: A New Collection for Plymouth' (2012). Commissioned by Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery as part of New Expressions 2.

Cover: 'Ghostwriter' (2010) Blast Theory. Commissioned by RAMM, Exeter, as part of New Expressions 2.



PART 1

WHAT IS NEW EXPRESSIONS? ENABLING ARTISTS AND MUSEUMS TO MAKE CREATIVELY CHALLENGING, CRITICALLY AWARE ART WORK IN A WELL-MANAGED PROJECT ENVIRONMENT

At the heart of New Expressions is a series of contemporary artist commissions inspired by museums' collections and historic sites, with embedded audience development projects.

New Expressions sets out to break down boundaries between artists and museums, to provide fresh perspectives on collections and spaces, powerful experiences for visitors, staff and volunteers and to enable artists and museums alike to raise their game.

Sharing learning through doing is our philosophy. Knowledge exchange and network building with a wide professional community lie at the centre of our work.

NEW EXPRESSIONS BRINGS REAL BENEFITS TO PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

For almost a decade New Expressions has attracted numerous museums and artists as partners and persuaded a range of funders to invest in our work.

We analysed the Unique Selling Points (USPs) of New Expressions as part of our research, funded by Arts Council England's Museum Resilience Fund, into the future development of the programme.

We found 10 interlinked factors which contributed to our success:

- 1 Commitment, experience and strategic acumen of the stakeholder Board and central team.
- 2 A distinctive, branded central programme and website.
- 3 An inclusive approach and a determination to share thinking and learning between programme partners and the wider professional community of artists, museums, independent curators and producers.
- 4 Continuous work to build relationships, strengthened as members of the New Expressions family and key associates have been promoted or have moved to new organisations across the country.
- 5 A model which encourages participation by providing opportunities for project funding and mechanisms for learning on the job.
- 6 A determination to provide well-managed, creatively-risky opportunities for artists to respond to collections and historic sites in fresh ways. This has allowed them to stretch their creative practice and push boundaries.
- 7 Encouraging (through signposting and provision of funding) museums and artists to draw on the expertise of independent producers and curators with specialist knowledge and experience of managing artist-museum collaborations.
- 8 New and active approaches to engaging audiences and local communities.
- 9 The introduction of artist-led installations, events and activities to enhance visitor experience, increase dwell time and encourage new and return visitors.
- 10 Embedding evaluation in the programme structure from the outset of New Expressions, creating a model framework which can be shared by other programmes, and providing longitudinal materials which enable the voices and views of museum staff, artists and independent curators to be heard.

NEW EXPRESSIONS 2008-2016 ACHIEVEMENTS IN NUMBERS

OVERALL OUTPUTS 2008-2016

Beneficiaries

Artists: **47**

Creative practitioners: **110**

Participants: **12,549**

Live audience: **1,755,046**

Online, broadcast and publishing audience: **49,083,268***

Artist-museum partnerships: **31**

Museum staff involved in delivery of projects: **842**

Number of people benefiting from the programme: **50,850,178***

RESULTS OF PROGRAMME ACTIVITY

Number of days work in public domain: **2,554**

Number of new products or commissions: **143**

Number of days employment for lead artists: **1,173**

Number of sessions for education, training or participation: **512**

Staff and volunteer involvement

Staff involved in projects and networking events: At least **800**

Volunteers involved in projects and networking events: At least **250**

Total staff and volunteers involved: At least **1050**

*Figures include broadcast and broadsheet audience of 46 million for launch of redeveloped York Art Gallery, which included Philip Eglin's New Expressions 3 commission

FROM SOUTH WEST INITIATIVE TO NATIONAL PATHFINDER

To date there have been 3 phases of New Expressions

NEW EXPRESSIONS 1 2008-9

Led by Museums, Libraries and Archives South West (MLA South West), and supported by Arts Council England South West (ACESW), the first phase of New Expressions worked with **10** museums and **10** artists

NEW EXPRESSIONS 2 2010-12

In 2010, MLA's Renaissance South West 'Hub' museums came together with ACESW support to deliver New Expressions 2 with **6** museums and **9** lead artists

NEW EXPRESSIONS 3 2014-16

In its third phase, New Expressions became an Arts Council England national pathfinder project with a national board. Led by Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. New Expressions 3 worked with **15** museums and **18** lead artists.

Right: 'Window on Bristol' (2011) Andy Council and Acerone. M Shed, Bristol. Commissioned by Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives as part of New Expressions 2.

8 YEARS OF PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING

Bristol

Some of us have arrived,
Some seek refuge,
Some against our will.



"BRISTOL'S ABOUT STREET ART, THIS MUSEUM (M SHED) IS ABOUT BRISTOL, SO WE SHOULD LET MORE ARTISTS DO THEIR WORK THERE".

Young visitor, M Shed, Bristol. M Shed worked with artists Andy Council and Acerone as part of New Expressions 2.

NEW EXPRESSIONS 1 (2008-9)

New Expressions 1 was a loose network of the 10 participating museums and their artists, embarking on their projects simultaneously. The broad range of artist commissions resulted in several art works being acquired for museum collections.

New Expressions 1 culminated in a 'showcase and sharing' event at which the participating artists and museums shared their creative journeys with one another. The lively format of this event proved highly successful, and has been repeated at the end of both New Expressions 2 and New Expressions 3

NEW EXPRESSIONS 2 (2010-12)

DEVELOPING TALENT

New Expressions 2 took the knowledge-sharing aspirations of the first phase and built in an organised series of partner meetings and field visits. It strengthened the idea of a co-ordinated regional project and introduced a branded programme, with a central team and a project board and delivered professional development events for artists and museums.

BUILDING EXPERTISE

Field visits to leading examples of best practice, such as Compton Verney in Warwickshire and the British Art Show 7 in Plymouth, ensured that New Expressions 2 partners had first-hand opportunity to experience high quality commissions together and benefited from skills development, expert advice and guidance.

Unlocking historic collections: Museums

Museum staff said that their New Expressions 2 commissions affected their thinking about the way they could interpret their historic collections in the future.

"We've realised that museum interpretation can be more open-ended. It doesn't have to be just the facts, it can be taking something dry and factual and making it open, creative, emotional"

Rick Lawrence, RAMM, Exeter. RAMM worked with artists' group Blast Theory as part of New Expressions 2

Unlocking historic collections: Artists

Artists appreciated the opportunity to research museum collections and archives.

"I've appreciated how much archives are used for research; it's re-awakened my understanding of how an archive can be used"

Neville Gabie. Neville and Joan Gabie worked with Cheltenham Art Gallery as part of New Expressions 2

Developing artists' practice

Artists said that working with the museum collections and curators stretched their creative practice in new ways.

"I wanted to do something different. The fact that it's at the museum opens up possibilities. I'm trying out something that I want to be good, that I want to bring to my practice. It's an unusual situation that allows an artist to explore things"

Jeremy Millar, artist. Jeremy Millar worked with the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon as part of New Expressions 2

Knowledge exchange: Museums and curators

At the end of the second phase of New Expressions, the museum staff that had taken part felt fully confident about advocating a contemporary art commission to colleagues, they understood how a contemporary art commission might fit into their organisation's objectives and were confident about taking and managing the creative risks involved.

"The field trip to Compton Verney opened my eyes to the way artists could re-interpret and respond to objects"

Helen Fothergill, Plymouth City Council, Arts and Heritage

Knowledge exchange: Artists

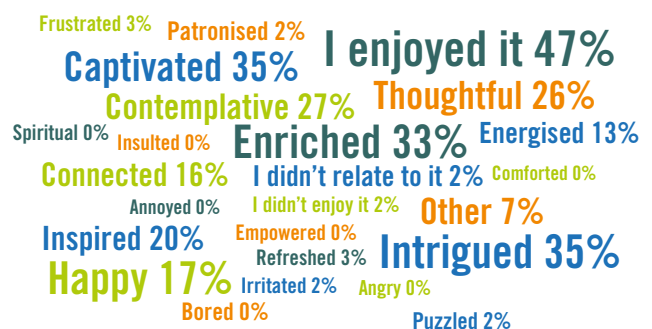
Artists felt confident about working on community engagement and participation with a museum, as well as negotiating differences of professional approach, for example approaches to interpretation.

INTRIGUING AUDIENCES

For audiences, the **36** new artworks created with **9** lead artists offered a range of powerful experiences.

Among surveyed first-time visitors to the museums, **43%** visited the museum specifically to experience the New Expressions commission. **32%** of all visitors surveyed had little or no previous experience of contemporary art. **47%** of surveyed visitors said that the artwork made them feel differently about the museum collection.

What participants said: which three of the following words or phrases best describe your experience of today's activity? How did it make you think or feel?

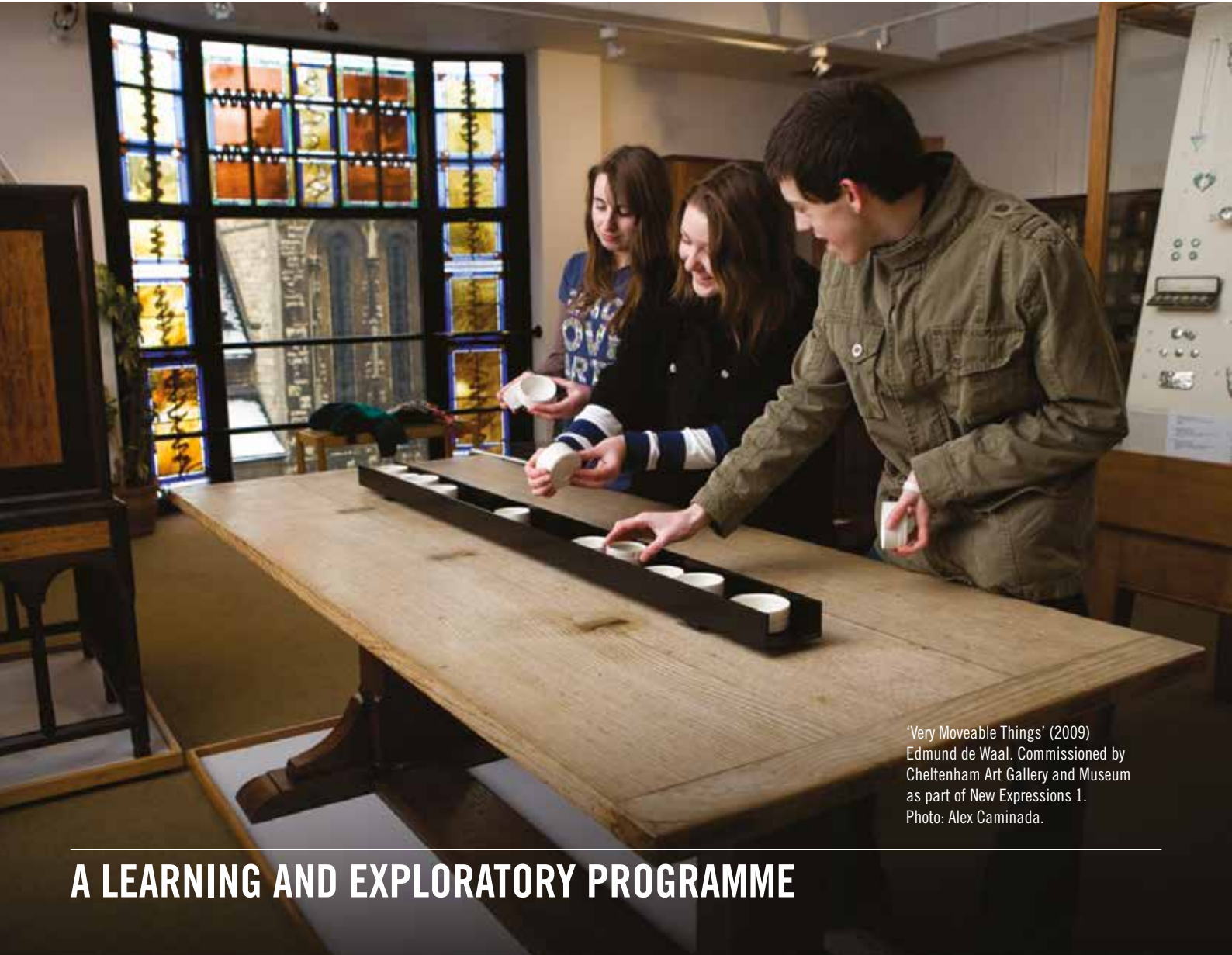




"I DON'T USUALLY MAKE WORK THAT MUSEUMS COLLECT. MY WORK IS NORMALLY TOO BIG OR TOO EPHEMERAL. THIS HAS BEEN A HUGE THING. AND THE FUTURE POTENTIAL FOR DIALOGUE IS HUGE TOO, BECAUSE MY WORK WILL BE ON SHOW AT THE MUSEUM FOR A LONG TIME"

Clare Twomey, artist. Clare Twomey worked with Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery as part of New Expressions 2.

Image: 'Plymouth Porcelain: A New Collection' (2012) Clare Twomey. Commissioned by Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery as part of New Expressions 2.



'Very Moveable Things' (2009)
Edmund de Waal. Commissioned by
Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum
as part of New Expressions 1.
Photo: Alex Caminada.

A LEARNING AND EXPLORATORY PROGRAMME

NEW EXPRESSIONS 1 AND 2 LEARNING TAKEN FORWARD

The first six years of New Expressions gave us the opportunity to evolve our approach and to develop our model. Each new phase enabled us to learn from past experience and to shape the programme of activity to offer greater benefits to the museums and artists. There was increasing evidence of the cumulative impact of New Expressions activity in the South West.

Central support and development

Underpinning the achievements of New Expressions 2 was our central regional programme, offering a recognisable central brand, a dedicated website and a small team. Designed as a professional development process for museum professionals and artists, New Expressions 2 attracted an increasingly large community of professional interest encompassing project partners and staff from museums, artists and independent curators and producers from across the country.

New Expressions 2's central support and development, shared branding and website enabled us to offer significant added value to programme participants.

Evolving a commissioning model

Our support to museum professionals included sharing best practice in artist commissioning, from artist selection processes, to allowing time for research, development and production. We arranged specialist advice and training opportunities alongside knowledge-sharing events and professional networking.

By investing in the support of expert mentors and providing peer-to-peer learning, New Expressions created a uniquely supportive commissioning environment for participating museums. Our framework supported museums to carry out the critical work of selecting the right artist for each commission and helped artists to develop meaningful relationships with all museum staff.

NEW EXPRESSIONS 3 (2014-16): A NATIONAL PATHFINDER

New Expressions 3 built on the commissioning model and momentum achieved by New Expressions 1 and 2 in the South West, taking the programme forward as an Arts Council England national pathfinder with 15 partners across three English regions, and a growing community of professional interest.

Expanding best practice, extending the network

In its third phase, New Expressions linked up with national partners for the first time: Trust New Art (The National Trust's contemporary art programme) and the Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN). These new national partnerships helped to shape New Expressions 3.

We continued our practice-based work with regional partners in the North, Midlands and South West: we worked with 6 Arts Council England Major Partner Museums and 3 National Trust properties, each of which developed new creative collaborations with artists as part of New Expressions 3.

Developing new opportunities for artists

The New Opportunities Award (NOA) scheme, designed in partnership with the Contemporary Visual Arts Network, trialled a new mechanism to enable artists to initiate their own collaborations with museums, and museums with little or no experience of partnership working to take part. NOA supported 6 projects in diverse museum contexts in the North, Midlands and South West.

Live season 2015

The 15 creative collaborations developed during New Expressions 3 culminated in a 39-week-long Live Season, from Easter to autumn half term 2015, during which more than half a million people experienced the realised artworks during their visits to the project sites. The Live Season was promoted regionally and nationally as part of the central work of the programme.

Peer-to-peer networking and open events

270 museum professionals and artists took part in our programme of free-to-attend field visits across four English regions. Meanwhile, the New Expressions 3 participants themselves shared their experiences and learning with one another at dedicated network events for the New Expressions 3 family.

Adding value

At the end of New Expressions 3, 8 out of 10 museums remained confident that being part of a national initiative had added greater value to their work than they could have achieved by working alone.



'Good Money: A currency competition for Handsworth'
(2015) Poolman and Rowe. Soho House.
Photo: Birmingham Museums Trust.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Unlocking historic collections and spaces

The creative collaborations brought under-visited collections into the public eye, introduced fresh perspectives and opened up new dialogues between the historic and the contemporary.

8 out of 10 participating museums agreed that their New Expressions 3 project helped them to open up their collections and spaces.

"It's hard to tell the story of a structure two miles out to sea. The artist's recent interaction with it gives us a new hook to captivate future visitors"

Nigel Overton, Plymouth City Council, Arts and Heritage

Developing audiences

People are at the heart of museums, and the projects in New Expressions 3 captivated young and old visitors alike.

"The project has left a strong legacy in terms of community engagement. It made it possible to put heritage, art and communities together and – with a spirit of creativity and imagination – mix it all up and allow the magic to happen"

Oliver Buckley, Birmingham Museums Trust

Developing people and organisations

Over the course of New Expressions 3, the percentage of participating museums that felt confident about working with contemporary artists rose from 75% to 90%.

"I found the Folkestone field trip invaluable in terms of hearing about other institutions' experiences of working with contemporary artists"

Hannah Kemp, Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills

Challenging artists

New Expressions 3 and the New Opportunities Award (NOA) scheme challenged artists to work on different scales, with new materials, and to make some of their most imaginative and exciting work.

"It's quite interesting what comes out when you're not working with things that you're usually used to working with – that's sometimes when the most unexpected, surprising and interesting works come out, so it's really pushed me"

Uta Kögelsberger, artist, worked with Cumbria Museum Consortium

Captivating audiences

Contemporary artistic responses to historic buildings and collections added a compelling new reason to visit, or revisit, museums and properties.

'Experiencing the new contemporary art commissions' was visitors' second biggest reason for visiting the New Expressions museums and properties.

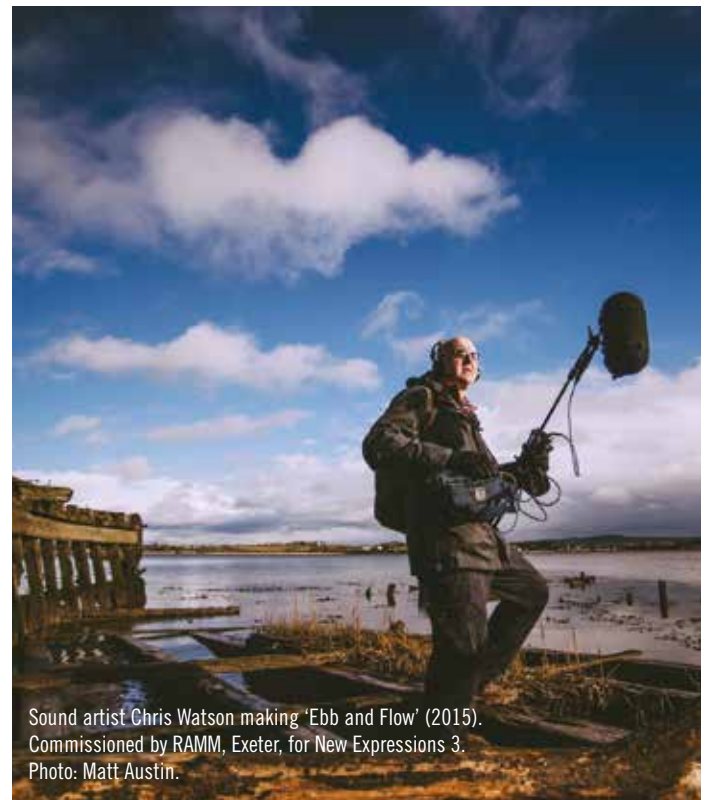
NEW EXPRESSIONS 1, 2 AND 3 BUILDING KNOWLEDGE, MAXIMISING IMPACT

Over our eight years of development, and with the same dedicated central team, New Expressions has established a model of working that maximises impact on museum professionals, artists and audiences.

WWW.NEWEXPRESSIONS.ORG

In addition to building a wealth of expertise through practice and evaluation, New Expressions has built a legacy bank of free-to-use professional resources. These include short films, case studies, useful tips and links. All are available on the New Expressions website.

www.newexpressions.org



Sound artist Chris Watson making 'Ebb and Flow' (2015).
Commissioned by RAMM, Exeter, for New Expressions 3.
Photo: Matt Austin.

PART 2

NEW EXPRESSIONS 3: OUR BROADEST AND MOST DIVERSE PROGRAMME TO DATE

New Expressions 3 involved

- 15 diverse commissions in the North, Midlands and South West of England.
- A range of participating museums based in small towns, rural locations and large municipal settings, all with different types of collections.
- Critically-engaged, contemporary visual artists breaking down barriers of different art forms, including sound, performance, photography and digital media.

PARTICIPATING MUSEUMS AND LEAD ARTISTS

- 1 Cumbria Museum Consortium – Uta Kögelsberger
- 2 York Museums Trust – Philip Eglin
- 3 Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills – David Bridges
- 4 Touchstones Rochdale – Hannah Leighton-Boyce
- 5 Lyme Park and Gardens (National Trust), Cheshire – Sean Griffiths
- 6 Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire – Tristram Aver
- 7 The Workhouse (National Trust), Southwell, Nottinghamshire – Tim Shore
- 8 Birmingham Museums Trust, Soho House – Poolman & Rowe
- 9 Upton House and Gardens (National Trust), Warwickshire – Yelena Popova
- 10 Tyntesfield (National Trust), Bristol – Emma Smith
- 11 Bristol City Museums, Galleries and Archives – Wood & Harrison
- 12 Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery (RAMM), Exeter – Chris Watson
- 13 Bridport Museum, Dorset – Nancy J Clemance
- 14 Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery – Keith Harrison
- 15 Penryn Museum, Cornwall – Matthew Benington and Richard Baines



MUSEUMS ARTISTS AUDIENCES

SELECTED PROJECTS FROM NEW EXPRESSIONS 3

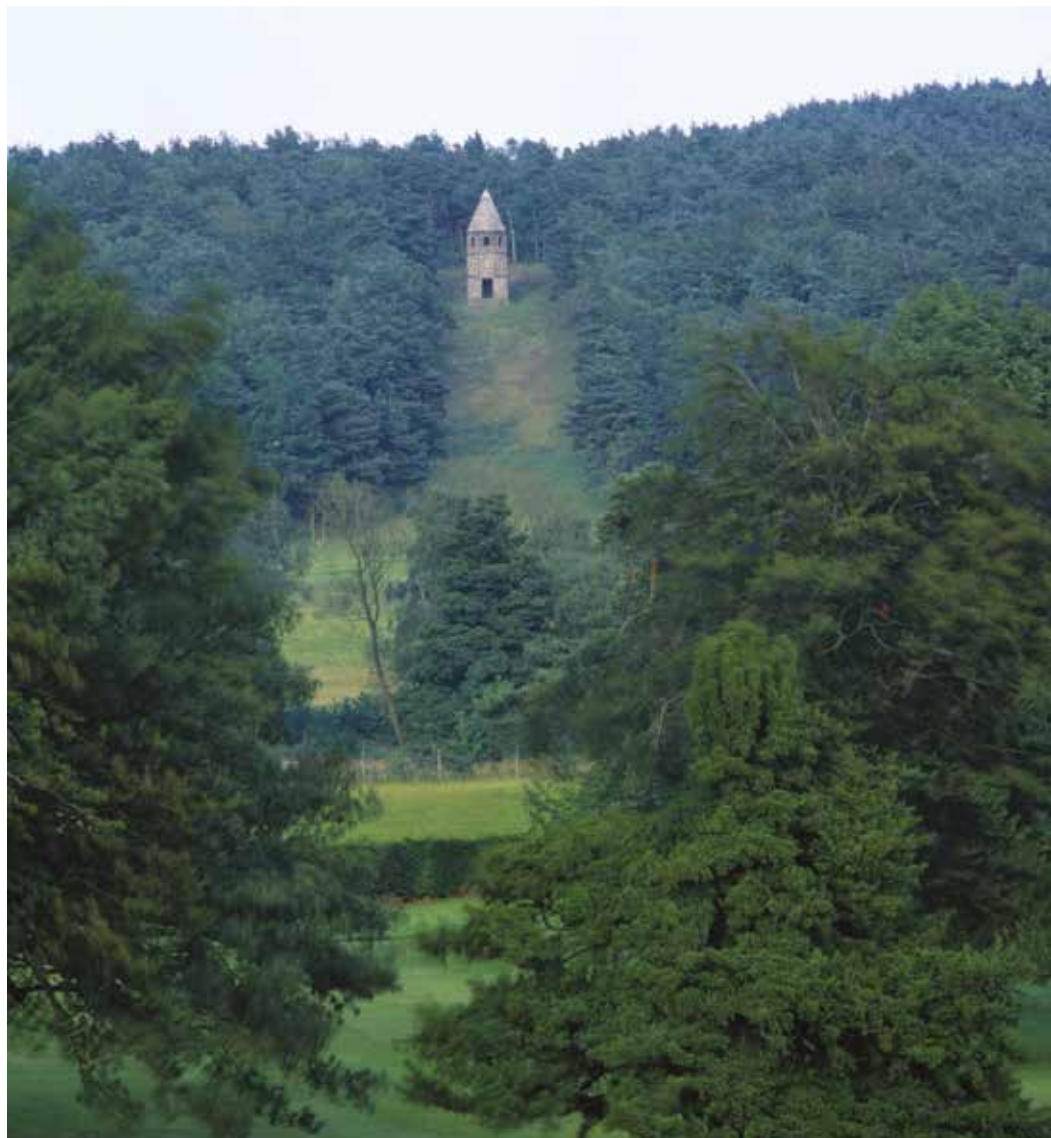
Distant Drumbeat by Sean Griffiths: A first venture into contemporary visual art for Lyme Park (National Trust)

This groundbreaking, interactive artwork was located in the grounds of Lyme Park, near Stockport. Offering a sound and light experience in an ancient landscape, the project invited visitors to 'play the landscape'; striking a drum to cause the distant Belvedere lantern across the valley to light up according to the rhythm of the striker. Distant Drumbeat was an imaginative, technically challenging art and architecture project supported by New Expressions mentor Judith King.

"New Expressions 3 has absolutely started a chain reaction for us in terms of working with artists and programming regular and thought provoking installations"

Ceinwen Paynton, General Manager, Lyme Park

Distant Drumbeat (2015) Sean Griffiths. Commissioned by Lyme Park (National Trust) as part of New Expressions 3.



Magister Dixit (The Power of the Spoken Word) by Emma Smith: sculpture and performance at Tyntesfield (National Trust)

Artist Emma Smith's Magister Dixit was inspired by the history of performance, ritual and service at Tyntesfield. Emma worked with National Trust volunteers to research and develop an interdisciplinary, site-specific work.

Magister Dixit (2015) Emma Smith. Commissioned by Tyntesfield as part of New Expressions 3 and Trust New Art, a National Trust initiative to explore the spirit of place through creative programming. Image courtesy The National Trust.





**New work by Philip Eglin
Re-interpreting Old Master
Paintings at York Art Gallery
(York Museums Trust)**

Philip Eglin studied Old Master paintings, portraits and religious works as well as historic ceramics from around the world. Drawing is central to his practice and, inspired by the enjoyment his own children got from drawing alongside him when they were young, he worked with local primary and secondary school children to produce drawings as the source material for his contemporary ceramics creations.

York Museums Trust's New Expressions project was developed as part of a major capital redevelopment of York Art Gallery, which involved several artist commissions and the opening of the new Centre for Ceramic Art (CoCA).

This project was nominated for the Museum of the Year award 2016.

'Virgin and Child' (2015) Philip Eglin. Installed at York Art Gallery. Commissioned by York Museums Trust as part of New Expressions 3. Photo: Peter Heaton.



**Good Money – A Currency
Competition for Handsworth
by Poolman & Rowe: working
creatively with Soho House
(Birmingham Museums Trust)**

Good Money was inspired by Soho House, the former Birmingham home of industrialist and entrepreneur Matthew Boulton, who founded the Soho Mint.

Handsworth is a 'super diverse' community in inner city Birmingham. Artists Poolman & Rowe's socially-engaged, celebratory project involved a competition to select which members of the community should be featured on a set of new coinage.

Good Money: A Currency Competition for Handsworth (2015) Poolman and Rowe. Commissioned by Soho House (Birmingham Museums Trust) as part of New Expressions 3.

Instruments of Industry by Hannah Leighton-Boyce: a response to offsite collections at Touchstones, Rochdale

New Opportunities Award beneficiary Hannah Leighton-Boyce devised a sound based work inspired by her research into the industrial history collections and archive at Touchstones, Rochdale. Instruments of Industry explored the resonance of now silent handtools, injecting new life and fresh levels of interpretation into the collection.

Instruments of Industry (2016) Hannah Leighton-Boyce. Commissioned by Touchstones Rochdale as part of a New Expressions 3 New Opportunities Award. Photo: John Lynch.



Memoria: Memories of Light (2015) David Bridges. Commissioned by Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills as part of a New Expressions 3 New Opportunities Award.

Memoria – Memories of Light by David Bridges: unlocking the story of a mill-working community at Leeds Industrial Museum

David Bridges, a New Opportunities Award beneficiary, developed a series of lit porcelain sculptures inspired by the stories of former mill workers. Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills used to be a working mill and David exhibited his sculptures in unlit areas of the historic mill building, including in places that had never been seen before by the visiting public.

The project enabled the museum to develop new relationships with local people as well as with the family of the former mill owners, helping to form a new archive for the museum.

“Using art and light to unlock some of the untold stories behind the city’s fascinating industrial heritage”
Visitor, Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills

PART 3

CASE STUDY: BUILDING PLYMOUTH'S CAPACITY

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery is one of three organisations involved in each phase of New Expressions (along with Bristol Museums and Galleries and RAMM in Exeter). Over the course of the three programmes, Plymouth developed creative collaborations with artists Dail Behannah, Clare Twomey and Keith Harrison.

For Plymouth, the experience of taking part in, and since 2010 leading, New Expressions, is informing a major new stage in the city's cultural development: Plymouth History Centre (working title). The Plymouth History Centre project, due to open in 2020, embeds the New Expressions philosophy into its development and programmes.

Plymouth's story, shared here by the museum, demonstrates the impact of New Expressions and its ethos on one of the original partner museums.

Labelled by Dail Behannah (New Expressions 1)

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery's art department had an ambition to commission to acquire work for the collection by established contemporary makers and had developed a shortlist in 2008 that included Dail Behannah and Clare Twomey.

In focusing on craft practice, the museum hoped to emphasise the way in which materiality connects the breadth of its own collections, as well as reflecting the past success of visitors' engagement with craft exhibitions and the region's particular strengths in this field. It also aimed to provide craft with a continuous presence within the city's visual arts provision: as a source of enjoyment and stimulation, and an active element in public participation and engagement.

Plymouth College of Art was keen to be involved in the commissions from the outset and this marked the beginning of a very productive and ongoing relationship with staff and students.

The opening of the New Expressions scheme in 2008 provided the ideal opportunity for match funding with an Arts Council England Grants for the Arts application for the first two selected commissions.

The South West based maker, Dail Behannah was selected for New Expressions 1 as her proposal responded to the theme of the Darwin 200 commemorations in 2009 and Plymouth's natural history collection.

This was a learning curve for both museum staff and the artist, as it involved staff unfamiliar with working with a contemporary artist, and the artist chose to work in enamel, a new material for her practice.

The timing allowed for a short period of research into the natural history collection and the production of the work at University of West England (UWE) in Bristol with the support of students on the contemporary crafts course at Plymouth College of Art.

Through effective project management, focussed communication and a good working relationship based on mutual respect, the commission was produced and installed to time and on budget.

The project stretched and extended the artist's practice and had a clear impact on her career development; building her confidence in a new material (enamel), and as an artist responding to a commission in a museum environment. It enabled Dail to develop a new line of thinking and practice and she went on to make two further enamelled works about conservation and extinction.

"This is the first piece of work I have made in which I felt I was an artist as well as a craftsman, because in this work the idea rather than the material was paramount . . . I have found a new skill, a new material, and thousands of new ideas..."

Dail Behannah

The project also affirmed the artist's view of the value of working with a museum: the relationship with the curator or keeper is highly valuable as they have an intimate knowledge of their collection and have their own ideas about which aspects can be addressed through art.

The direct relationship of the work to the collections was in keeping with the museum's approach to contemporary art at the time. The installation had a clear relationship to Darwin and the theory of evolution and was thought provoking. The use of enamel labels taken from labels in the natural history collection meant the artwork both fitted within and commented on the museum environment.

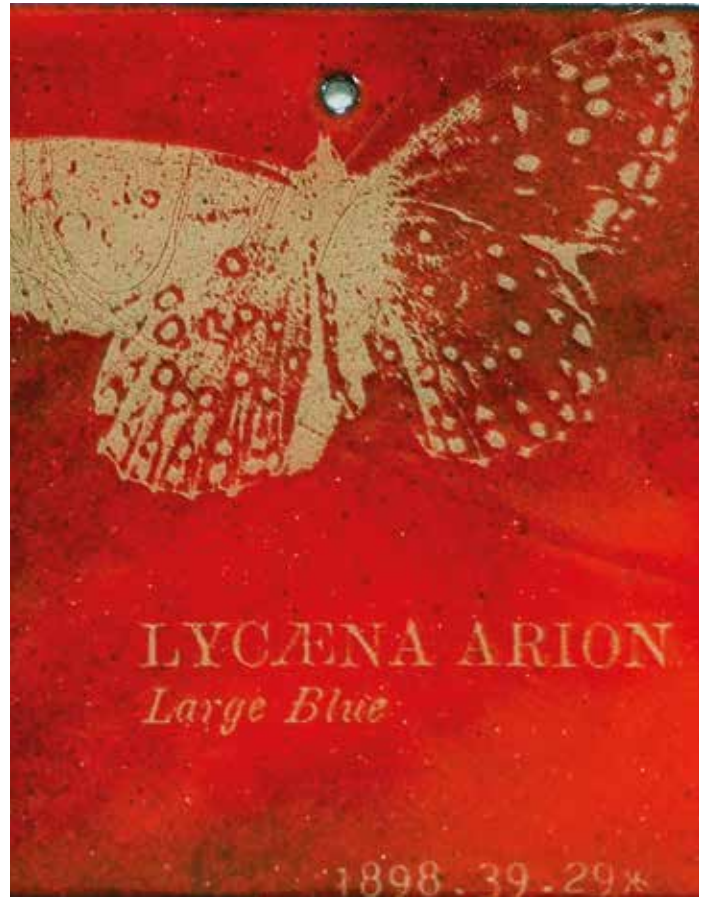
The museum's staff had some initial concern that Plymouth's audiences would not find it easy to engage with or understand the work. However, the evaluation, which involved visitor questionnaires and interviews, demonstrated that the majority of visitors welcomed the artwork and felt it was appropriate that this type of contemporary artwork was on show in the museum.

For this project, the audience engagement programme focused on workshops for schools and artist talks, as part of the regular public offer.

The cross-departmental project team approach to delivery of the commission and the wording of the specially devised artist's contract have formed the basis of subsequent New Expressions and other artists' commissions at Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery.



'Labelled' (installation view) (2009) Dail Behennah.
Commissioned as part of New Expressions 1.



Detail of 'Labelled' (2009) Dail Behennah.
Commissioned as part of New Expressions 1.

Plymouth Porcelain – A New Collection for Plymouth by Clare Twomey (New Expressions 2)

For New Expressions 2, Plymouth commissioned the established maker, Clare Twomey, who had been shortlisted for an acquisition at the earlier selection process.

This was a major commission, structured in response to the nationally important collection of Plymouth Porcelain and has resulted in the artist's first semi-permanent installation of her work (pictured on page 7).

Clare has a track record of working in heritage contexts and personal experience of the opportunities and challenges presented by this type of project. This helped to build the confidence of the internal museum project team. They worked with her to develop ideas around engaging audiences with both the production and the finished artwork.

The commission developed Clare's artistic practice as she involved the local community in the production of the work. A number of local residents, students and museum staff visited her in her studio during her period as ceramic artist-in-residence at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

The project built on established links with the Higher Education sector in Plymouth and developed community outreach by actively engaging with the local community.

The semi-permanent installation of the artwork was a bold intervention in the museum's Atrium Gallery. The installation was on display in its initial form until 2016, offering visitors a powerful experience of the contemporary visual arts until its de-installation in advance of a major capital redevelopment.



'Heavy Rock' (2015) Keith Harrison. Commissioned as part of New Expressions 3.



Will Gregory's score for 'Heavy Rock, Plymouth Sound' (2015) Keith Harrison. Commissioned as part of New Expressions 3.

Heavy Rock, Plymouth Sound by Keith Harrison. Featuring a new score by Will Gregory (New Expressions 3)

Plymouth approached Keith Harrison about the New Expressions 3 commission as he lives and works in the city and has a renowned national profile for his exciting creative practice.

The project highlighted the high quality contemporary artwork being produced in the city and showed that Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery is increasingly able to take on and manage creative risk. The project team was led by Plymouth City Council's Public Art Officer as part of the Arts and Heritage Service, bringing her specialist professional expertise into the museum context for the first time, in another significant step forward in the museum's commissioning journey.

The commissioning brief was made deliberately open, enabling Keith to research the museum and archive collections with the support of curatorial staff. Allowing the time needed to develop a meaningful relationship with museum staff and to explore the collections was essential to the development of the project. It enabled Keith to explore, discuss and reject several different possibilities before starting to consider the maritime paintings collection. He found the flotilla of boats depicted in George Barrett the Younger's 1812 celebratory oil painting entitled 'Laying Foundation Stone of Plymouth Breakwater' inspiring.

The artist discovered that 100 tonne 'wave breaker' blocks are placed on the Plymouth Breakwater each year as part of the ongoing defence of this historic structure, Plymouth Sound and the city itself. Keith decided to intervene in the casting process of these giant 'wave breaker' concrete blocks, by placing hydrophone technology inside one of them and impressing the initials of the people responsible for its production on the outside. Keith's intervention celebrates the breakwater and makes a hidden industrial process public.

The facilitation of the artist's intervention involved the museum building valuable new partnerships with a range of organisations in the city, including the Royal Navy and the marine engineers, Babcock International.

A live outdoor event was planned to celebrate the laying of the block, in a contemporary equivalent to the scene pictured in Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery's painting.

The location of the proposed event a mile out from the harbour in Plymouth Sound, and the need to co-ordinate it with a weather and tide dependent industrial process out at sea, proved even more difficult than anticipated. Dangerous swell meant that the event was planned, cancelled and re-planned three times and finally the 'wave breaker' block had to be dropped into position on the breakwater without ceremony in August 2015.

Undeterred, the project team and artist planned alternative public platforms and organised performances at short notice. The audience engagement activity was delivered in the context of an ever-changing project plan. This was challenging, but learning and marketing staff had been fully engaged in the project from the start and were determined to ensure that the high level of audience engagement and anticipation envisaged by the artist was achieved, despite the logistical setbacks.

It was agreed that KARST, an artist-led studio and gallery space in Plymouth, would host a related exhibition featuring a life-sized wooden replica of the giant mould used to cast the wave breaker and Keith's powerful developmental drawings. Keith has a studio at KARST and KARST's involvement in the New Expressions project has forged new working relations between the museum and the visual arts community in the city.

Three brand new musical scores commissioned by Keith and inspired by the breakwater were performed by 24 members of Her Majesty's Royal Marine Band, Plymouth during a celebratory event at KARST. The scores were written by Will Gregory from Goldfrapp and orchestrated by Ian Gardiner.

Keith's project has achieved mythical status in the minds of everyone who was aware of the ambition to hold the outdoor event.





NEW EXPRESSIONS IMPACT: A CULTURAL SHIFT

Their engagement in New Expressions has convinced Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery that working with artists is an exciting way to develop curatorial practice. It provides opportunities for artists, brings collections to life and engages audiences.

The City Museum and Art Gallery has become recognised as a leader in the contemporary visual arts, offering artists innovative creative opportunities and willing to take creative risks.

The organisation is committed to taking this activity further. Plymouth's new History Centre, scheduled to open in 2020, will embed the New Expressions philosophy of working with contemporary artists to unlock collections, histories and spaces into its policies, fabric and public programmes.

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery has undergone a cultural shift. Over the eight years of New Expressions, by taking gentle steps in New Expressions 1 and 2, it has changed from an organisation unfamiliar with commissioning artists to one capable of offering an open brief to an artist known to push the boundaries of creative practice.

The framework of New Expressions and emphasis on peer-to-peer skills and knowledge exchange has enabled the museum staff to gain experience and confidence in a safe environment, and to develop the skills to take working with artists to another level of ambition.

'Heavy Rock, Plymouth Sound' KARST (2015) Keith Harrison.
Commissioned as part of New Expressions 3. Photo: Guy Channing.



'Egg Paintings' (2015) Uta Kögelsberger. Abbot Hall Art Gallery.
Commissioned by Cumbria Museum Consortium for New Expressions 3.
Photo: New Expressions © Jane Hobson.

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New Expressions is led by Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery and delivered with its partners: the network of Arts Council Major Partner Museums, the National Trust and the Contemporary Visual Arts Network. Its activity and legacy are managed by the New Expressions programme board.

New Expressions was founded by Museums, Libraries and Archives South West and supported by Arts Council England South West.

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