

## ***'Mansions of The Future', Lincoln, 2017-2020***

### **WHAT**

[\*Mansions of the Future\*](#) was a three-year (MotF) Ambitions for Excellence funded arts and cultural hub in Lincoln City Centre (UK), brought to life through a free public programme of national and international artistic commissions, exhibitions, communal lunches, conferences, talks workshops and family activities over the course of three years (2017-2020). The programme worked with artists and local communities and was dedicated to social, site-specific and collaborative ways of working. Situated in Lincoln, an ancient city that holds manuscripts of the Magna Carta and Charter of the Forest, key texts in the articulation of human rights, the project addresses the relationship between art, culture and democracy.

### **COMMISSIONS**

The MotF cultural offer was two-stranded, comprising a curated public programme and a Takeover Programme. The Takeover Programme was key to *Culture is a Verb*, Kathrin Böhm's vision for how the space could be put to public use. As part of her intervention in the space, Böhm, who was MotF's Inaugural Artist in Residence, designed an architectural structure and invited the local community to hold social, cultural or educational activity inside MotF for free. Over 60 groups held regular activities including events by Disability Theatre and the YMCA, women's wellness classes, supper clubs and inclusive crafting. *Culture is a Verb* was commissioned by Thirteen Ways.

The curated public programme unfolded in three seasons: *Lincoln Live*, *Urban Form* and *Stories of Rights & Protest*. Each consisted of public realm commissions, communal lunches, talks, workshops, exhibitions and family activities.



*Culture is a Verb Commission: Commons Room, Mansions of the Future, 2018. Photo by Fiona Allen.*

[\*'Lincoln Live,' March - November 2020\*](#), featured interdisciplinary performance-based commissions including a new film work by Haich Ber Na, a 12-mile walk from Lincoln Castle (Lincoln's Victorian Prison) to Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre led by Natasha Davis, an environmentally-focused performance and talks programme by Linda Rocco, a radio play by Ruth Beale, a site-specific performance by Laura Wilson, and *Lincoln - a Story About Home*, a series of community led sessions exploring contemporary experiences of immigration by Lincoln-based Moldovan playwright and theatre director Olga Macrinici.

[\*'Urban Form: Social Architecture & The Commons,' November 2019 - February 2020\*](#), engaged artists, architects, academics, students and local citizens in debate around Lincoln's civic life and built environment. In Lincoln's Ermine Estate, Berlin-based interdisciplinary design studio ON/OFF developed collaboratively-built architecture with residents and their community action group, architect Sam Scorer's drone footage of the estate provided new perspectives on civic-minded architecture, a walking tour was led by Andrew Jackson, and for MotF's monthly lunch programme, collaborative artist duo Sophie Chapman and Kerri Jefferis shared their research around spatial justice, around a purpose-built dining table.

## 'Stories of Rights & Protest,' November 2018 - October 2019,

held conversations around culture, power and democracy through commissions programmed by Clare Cumberlidge & Co. These included Ruth Beale's *The Free and the Unfree*, public and private exchanges around definitions of freedom and culminating in a radio play, eco-conscious study of plants *Wild City* by Liz Davis, and Bahia Shehab's inaugural street art commission *We Will Not Repent...* Three-day event and exhibition *There's No Place Like Home* addressed the relationship between migration, detention and the arts, in partnership with the Justice, Arts & Migration Network, and *Represented: Platforms not compromise* was a programme of talks, workshops, screenings and talks highlighting an urgency for equality in representation.

## WHERE

*Mansions of the Future* was situated inside a former Co-op in Lincoln city centre and designed as an accessible and collaboratively-built space for public use containing a gallery, public reading room, pantry and kitchen, commons room, office and artist studios. Inaugural Artist in Residence Kathrin Böhm produced this concept through her commission *Culture is a Verb*, designing a civic place that evolves over time and through usage.

## WHY

*Mansions of the Future* was conceived by creative and cultural agency Thirteen Ways as a 3-year programme (2018 - 2020) exploring power and democracy within Lincoln. The project provided an open public space for creative practice, collaboration and social gathering, and instigated a critical conversation around curating and co-authorship and the civic potential of arts and cultural organisations.

## HOW

*Mansions of the Future* was supported by Arts Council England's Ambitions for Excellence fund and the Lincoln Cultural and Arts Partnership. The project was instigated in 2018 and has just published its concluding publication: [\*Mansions of the Future: A Public Programme\*](#).

## IMPACT

Artistic Director [Kerry Campbell](#) who joined *Mansions of the Future* in 2019, wrote a Legacy Agenda into the project's programming. Key outcomes included a Redistribution Initiative which saw all of the building's resources from office and exhibition furniture to art materials, AV Equipment, research books, kitchen utensils and white goods equitably redistributed to local community groups and Black-led social and cultural initiatives.

The Legacy Agenda included a publication titled *Mansions of the Future: A Public Programme*, published by Chateau International in January 2021, which captures the project's impact and learning with contributions from community members, volunteers, staff, artists, architects and curators.

Finally the [Innovation in Engagement Conference](#) scheduled to take place online in June 2021 will share the project's successes and challenges within a wider programme committed to cross-organisational learning and profiling radically inclusive social, cultural and community practices.

## IMPACT INDICATORS

- Commissioned Artists: 50
- Community groups engaged in the Takeover Programme: 60
- Studio artists and creative businesses in residence: 10
- Audience reached: 4500

*"Everything in the programme came from the local reality: thinking about who we were representing and serving, how to respond to a place and its citizens and not parachute in"*

- KERRY CAMPBELL