

COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITIES

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For 20 years UP Projects have been engaging broad public audiences in the process of creating public art projects. This means creating opportunities for communities to work collaboratively with artists to actively shape public artworks in their neighbourhoods and beyond. From involving local people in the creation of site-specific community and culture strategies, to sharing power equitably and co-creating works together with local people, we believe that social value is created through this process-driven approach. This enables opportunities for learning and skills development and allows places to be shaped together with the people who inhabit them.

UP Projects takes a best practice approach to collaborating with communities that centres on taking the time and care required to build trust and lasting relationships. Core to this approach is ensuring transparency and being clear on where power and influence can be shared.

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GUT FEELINGS MERI JAAN BY JASLEEN KAUR

Rochdale, Greater Manchester

2021 - 2022

In 2019, UP Projects worked with Turner prize shortlisted artist, Jasleen Kaur on a multi-faceted collaborative project commissioned in partnership with Touchstones Rochdale. Created in response to the local history archives held at Touchstones, *Gut Feelings Meri Jaan* forefronted the historically marginalised voices of migrant communities within the social history of Rochdale. Kaur worked with a group of women and gender non-conforming people from Rochdale's Pakistani, Bengali and Punjabi communities to reflect on the archives, asking "what do we find when we go looking for ourselves in the archive... how can we alter the course of history through a new script?"

The group worked together on a series of films to re-mix customs, performing them at local sites bound up in histories of empire and migration. This collaborative process resulted in a series of films which meddle with traditional archival approaches.

NEWHAM TRACKSIDE WALL BY DAME SONIA BOYCE OBE

Newham, East London

2021 - Ongoing

Curated by UP Projects and commissioned by Crossrail, Newham Trackside Wall by Dame Sonia Boyce OBE runs through the London Borough of Newham. The 1.9km long artwork is a walking collection of local stories and is one of the longest ever commissioned in the UK. UP Projects worked alongside a steering panel of community representatives to develop this major artwork by Sonia Boyce, one of the leading figures in the contemporary British Art Scene.

Sonia Boyce and UP Projects delivered a community engagement process with residents who lived locally to inform the artist's designs. This approach was taken to understand and consider the communities' aspirations, concerns and ambitions for the artwork. Boyce then worked extensively with local people of all ages and backgrounds to gather personal testimonies and stories, over 170 of which feature in the artwork alongside documentary photography. Their contributions draw out the rich cultural history of the area.





ROTHERHITHE PUBLIC LIVING ROOM BY PUBLIC WORKS

Rotherhithe, South London

2019 - 2020

UP Projects worked with Telford Homes and SGN Place to curate and implement an artist-led public engagement project at the pre-planning phases relating to a proposed new development at Rotherhithe Holder Station, London. The project followed a two-phased engagement process which involved one-to-one meetings and workshops with local stakeholders and community leaders. These meetings created space for dialogue, listening and exchange between the artists, UP Projects and members of the local communities, building trust to support the development of meaningful relationships.

UP Projects then commissioned art and architecture collective public works to design and build the *Rotherhithe Public Living Room*. Functioning as a temporary onsite space, the *Rotherhithe Public Living Room* extended the engagement activity to the wider residential community. It ran a bespoke programme of workshops, events and drop-in days to give people the chance to learn more about the development and contribute to ideas for the onsite community and culture offer.

BEST PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS

1 Be transparent and set expectations around collaboration from the start

Be clear about the difference between creative engagement and co-creation, being transparent about the agency afforded to participating communities. Creative engagement activities such as workshops enable participants to inform the artistic output of the project, whereas co-creation is a collaborative partnership where all participants contribute equitably to the creative process. Co-creation doesn't necessarily imply that each party plays the same role, however the community members, creative practitioners and organisations involved in co-creation all have an equal stake in the decision-making process.

2 Collaboration moves at the speed of trust

Create structures that allow time for trust and care-based processes to develop. When setting out the time frame and milestones for a project it is important to place emphasis on the amount of time needed to develop trusting relationships between the various collaborators taking part, and to encourage understanding by all project stakeholders of this need.

3 Communities are not homogeneous

Understanding the different identities and intersectionality within communities can create a better understanding of needs. An initial mapping exercise into a local area can help identify common issues, needs, and interests among the groups involved. A subsequent finer grain approach can help connect with communities in ways that are responsive to local issues, ensuring intersectionality is considered and that opportunities are equitably distributed.

4 Listen

Create space for communities to explore and define their aspirations. Be mindful not to exercise selective hearing; editing out perspectives that may challenge preconceptions of what the project should and could be, and instead employ the tools of active listening; engaging with silence and listening behind the words and between the words for deeper understanding.

WORK WITH UP PROJECTS

UP Projects is the UK's leading public art organisation specialising in socially engaged public art commissioning. We bring world class artists out of the gallery and into public spaces to create new work with communities across the UK and beyond. We develop arts and cultural strategies, commission artists and activate public places through creative projects, programmes and events.

Should you wish to find our more about how UP Projects can help you commission ambitious and impactful public art projects that empower communities and bring about social change please get in touch.

OUR EXPERTISE

Collaborating with Communities

We have over 20 years experience of working with communities and understand how to build trusting and empowering relationships.

Reflecting Diversity in the Public Realm

Our public realm should reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. We can help create projects that make public spaces more inclusive.

Addressing the Climate Emergency

Considering the environment and working against climate change is central to all of the work that we do. We champion the role artists and art can play in advocating for action.

Placeshaping Through Public Art

We can help harness the power of artists and art to tell stories and reveal narratives about a place.

Working with Children & Young People

We can curate bespoke projects and programmes that empower and involve young people.

Contact Us

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