

Newham Trackside Wall - Introduction to the project and Sonia Boyce Transcript

Jack Newbury 0:05

Hi, I'm Jack Newbury, and I am Project Assistant at UP Projects. UP Projects is a charity that curates and commissions contemporary art for public places. We support artists to make work that has social relevance, encourages learning, transforms places and activates the public realm. We have worked with Crossrail and the artist Sonia Boyce on the public art commission *Newham Trackside Wall*. I'm going to tell you a bit about Sonia and her artwork. You can find out more in our learning guide for primary schools on our website. So, Sonia Boyce OBE RA is a British Afro-Caribbean visual artist who lives and works in London and is celebrated in the art world both in the UK and internationally. She leads the project *Black Artists and Modernism*, exploring the fundamental contribution of black British artists to modern art history. She's also been commissioned by the British Council to represent Great Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2022. Sonia uses various materials and methods to develop her creative ideas, including drawing with pastels, collaging with photographs, using film and photography, and working with performers and using audio recordings to create live events. Her work has explored how cultural identity and gender are represented and discussed in everyday life and in the media, and how cultural differences are expressed and examined in group situations. In 2017, Sonia Boyce was commissioned by Crossrail to create a new permanent public artwork to run along the trackside wall next to a stretch of the Elizabeth Line in the London Borough of Newham. Sonia worked with hundreds of residents of the neighbourhoods of North Woolwich, Silvertown and Custom House to draw out the unique and rich cultural history of the area. The resulting artwork, which is called *Newham Trackside Wall*, is a large-scale colour print on composite panels that includes: over 170 text boxes featuring personal testimonies contributed by local residents on the coloured backgrounds, as well as historical facts about the neighbourhood, which you can see on the white backgrounds; photographs of the buildings opposite the wall where the artwork is located, showing the area as it looked in 2018; a repeat pattern featuring plants and flowers from the surrounding area, and words and pictures by local school children. The artwork is 1.9km long, which makes it one of the longest artworks in the UK! To develop the content of the artwork, Sonia worked with the local community in Newham, including primary school children some of whose work you can see in the artwork itself. It takes a lot of skills and people to create such an ambitious artwork. For example, engineers advised on how to make the artwork resistant to anything from sunlight to graffiti, and printers based in Nottingham cut

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and printed the approximately 1500 individual panels that make up that artwork. If you'd like to visit the artwork, you can find a map of its location and information about how to get there in our learning guide. The learning guide also contains a range of activities to support children to engage creatively with a range of National Curriculum Programmes of Study through a variety of art forms inspired by the themes in Sonia's artwork. You can also use it to support children to achieve Arts Award Discover or Explore. I hope you've enjoyed this brief introduction to *Newham Trainside Wall* and the artist Sonia Boyce. Thank you.