

# EXPLORERS – Illuminating the Wilderness: An evaluation at the end of year three

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## Contents

1. The rationale for EXPLORERS – Illuminating the Wilderness	page 2
2. The structure of the programme	page 3
3. The outputs: EXPLORERS in numbers	page 5
4. The partners' activities	page 6
<i>MK Gallery</i>	<i>page 6</i>
<i>Tate Liverpool</i>	<i>page 7</i>
<i>Fabrica</i>	<i>page 10</i>
<i>NIEA/MCA Sydney</i>	<i>page 11</i>
<i>DLWP</i>	<i>page 13</i>
<i>Photoworks</i>	<i>page 14</i>
<i>Autograph</i>	<i>page 15</i>
5. Feedback from the Project Art Works Team	page 17
6. Feedback from the final EXPLORERS conference, 2019	page 19
7. The outcomes	page 21
8. Lessons learned or confirmed	page 25
Appendix A – Publication/Manifesto Call Out	page 28
Appendix B – Images from Explorers Year 3 Events	page 29

# 1. The rationale for EXPLORERS – Illuminating the Wilderness

1.1. EXPLORERS – Illuminating the Wilderness (2017-20) was a three-year programme designed to bring a largely ignored aspect of the discourse on inclusion into the heart of mainstream visual arts programming. Supported by Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence fund and by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, it was a structured opportunity for a group of visual arts organisations to question and respond to the lack of neurodivergent artists, and the wider community of people with complex needs, in publicly funded, visual arts spaces. The programme was conceived and coordinated by Project Arts Works, from its base in Hastings, and developed and delivered in collaboration with six visual arts partners in England, their local social care organisations and care givers, and by the University of New South Wales, working with a national museum/gallery in Sydney, Australia.

1.2. In the four years since the programme was first outlined, the terminology has evolved. We therefore begin with an explanation of the terms used.

**Neurodiversity** describes the diversity of human brains and minds. This term was coined by sociologist Judy Singer in the 1990s, to promote acceptance of and respect for neurological diversity.

**Neurotypical** describes someone whose brain functions and processes information in the ways society generally expects.

**Neurodivergent** is now preferred to **neurodiverse** as a description of someone whose brain functions, and processes information, differently. (Society is neurodiverse; an individual is neurotypical or neurodivergent.) An estimated 15% of people in the UK are neurodivergent, including those with dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorders and autism, as well as those with complex needs.

**Complex needs:** meaning someone who has multiple needs and requires constant, individual support.

1.3. Although the term neurodiversity has been in circulation for more than twenty years, and complex needs for longer, neither has become part the everyday conversation of the UK's cultural sector. Inclusion has and many organisations are working hard to involve more people in their activities, regardless of past or present circumstances. The term 'people with disabilities' commonly features in the list of those whom galleries, museums, theatres, concert halls and other cultural venues want to see more of and hear more from. Yet, while some of these organisations are gradually becoming more inclusive, people with complex needs are rarely seen or heard.

1.4. Project Art Works' ambition was to address this by working, intensively, with a small group of established visual arts organisations to explore what neurodiversity means to them and how they might reflect the neurodiversity of society not only in their audience, but in their programming. The bid to Ambition for Excellence funding included this statement: "At the heart of EXPLORERS and the work of Project Art Works is the reversal of society's cap-in-hand paradigm of disability, positioning, instead, those with complex needs as leaders who, through a three-year programme of holistic, collaborative work will support and deliver six co-commissioned exhibitions and installations to form a festival of cultural inclusion. These artworks will emerge from relevant, creative and meaningful engagement with neurodiverse

communities; they may be about them, made with them, or art by them, placing the discourse on inclusion at the centre of mainstream exhibition spaces and programmes in England and Sydney, Australia.”

This report describes the structure of the programme, the partners’ activities, the outcomes and the lessons learned.

## 2. The structure of the programme

2.1. EXPLORERS was led by Project Art Works, an artist-led organisation that has been making and promoting art as a means of connection with and for people with complex needs, since 1996. EXPLORERS involved the following arts organisations:

- **Autograph**, in the London Borough Hackney, which shares the work of artists who use photography and film to highlight issues of identity, representation, human rights and social justice. (Founded 1988, Autograph moved to its current building in 2007)
- **The De La Warr Pavilion**, in Bexhill-on-Sea, a contemporary arts centre in an art deco building, with large exhibition and performance spaces. (Opened for this purpose in 2005)
- **MK Gallery**, in Milton Keynes, a contemporary art gallery with significant learning and community programmes (1999)
- **Fabrica**, in Brighton, a contemporary art gallery with an educational mission, housed in a deconsecrated 19<sup>th</sup>-century church. (1996)
- **Photoworks**, in Brighton, champions photography for everyone and has an international profile. (1995). It does not have a gallery, so used Phoenix Art Space, in Brighton, for its EXPLORERS exhibition.
- **Tate Liverpool**, a contemporary art museum and part of the Tate family of four galleries. (Tate Liverpool opened in 1988)

In Sydney, Australia, EXPLORERS involved:

- **The National Institute for Experimental Arts** (NIEA) at the University of New South Wales, and (in 2018) the Big Anxiety, a mental health festival initiated by the NIEA; and in 2019, the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (for the screening of *Illuminating the Wilderness* and linked activities).

2.2. EXPLORERS was structured in such a way that, while Project Art Works would be leading the programme and taking responsibility for achieving its objectives, each of the visual arts partners would decide on its own response. These would take into account their individual histories, priorities, approaches and resources. They were different in style and scale and were more or less experienced in working with people with complex support needs.

2.3. Project Art Works provided each of the partners with a grant, as well as organisational resources and other in-kind support. The grants varied in size and each partner was asked to contribute an additional 10%. Project Art Works created two dedicated staff posts (a Project Coordinator and assistant) and allocated time to existing members of the Project Art Works team to work on the programme. It created and managed an EXPLORERS website and developed a communications strategy. There were awareness-raising sessions and encounters (creative workshops with participants with complex needs) for staff, trustees, volunteers and freelancers, to increase their experience and understanding of complex support needs. The Project Coordinator created a map of local social care provision for each partner and accompanied staff to meetings with social care colleagues whom they may or may not have met before.

2.4. In addition to these individually tailored services, Project Art Works brought the partners together, at least twice a year, to share their progress with each other, and towards the end of each year, it organised a publicly accessible conference to disseminate the ideas and lessons emerging from EXPLORERS. These were held at Autograph in year one, at the De La Warr Pavilion in year two and at MK Gallery in year three.

2.5. While Project Art Works' primary relationship was with the arts organisations, local social care organisations and groups were key players in the delivery of this programme. As varied as the arts organisations with which they worked, they introduced artists, arts practitioners and arts managers to their members, participants and students (the term used is shaped by the purpose and culture of each group). The extent of each group's involvement depended on what each arts organisation's project required but, in several cases, there is now a stronger relationship between the arts organisation and its local social care sector.

2.6. While each arts partner shaped its own EXPLORERS project, most activities fell into one of the following categories:

- commissions of new art works by artists with and without complex needs, which challenged perceptions of and attitudes towards neurodivergent artists and people with complex needs, and their right to access the cultural life of their community.
- creative activities involving people with complex needs working with professional arts practitioners, in visual arts venues and in social care and educational settings.
- the exchange of knowledge, skills, experience and ideas within and between organisations.

2.7. In addition to coordinating the programme and providing its partners with the resources and support described above, Project Art Works co-commissioned (with Tate Liverpool and MK Gallery) its Artistic Director and CEO Kate Adams and Creative Director Tim Corrigan to make *Illuminating the Wilderness*, a film to be screened at MK Gallery, Tate Liverpool and MCA in Sydney. The film-making process is described later in this report but, in outlining the structure of EXPLORERS, it is important to explain Project Art Works' different roles as designer and leader of the programme, facilitator of the partners' activities, and commissioner and creator of new work.

### 3. The outputs: EXPLORERS in numbers

<b>Exhibitions, commissions and events</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EXPLORERS generated <b>12</b> public exhibitions of work by, with or about people with complex support needs.</li> <li>There were <b>six</b> commissions. Five were new work and the sixth was a selection and re=presentation of an artist's existing work.</li> <li>There were at least <b>40</b> talks, seminars, showcases and other audience events linked to the commissions</li> </ul>
<b>People with complex needs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The visual arts partners ran at least <b>150</b> creative workshops involving more than <b>950</b> participants with complex needs.</li> <li>At least <b>200</b> support workers and family members took part in EXPLORERS.</li> </ul>
<b>Audiences</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least <b>47,900</b> people visited gallery spaces to see work made during this programme.</li> <li>At least <b>1,300</b> people participated in other EXPLORERS events.</li> <li>Between 1 January 2017 and 31 May 2020 the EXPLORERS website received 2,984 unique visitors, 4,000 visit and 9,950 page views. The numbers grew year on year, peaking in year three.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional and organisational development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least <b>70</b> staff, volunteers, trustees and freelancers working from the partner arts organisations took part in awareness raising workshops run by Project Art Works.</li> <li>At least <b>600</b> artists and other cultural sector professionals attended seminars, conferences and other events, increasing their and the sector's understanding of neurodiversity.</li> <li>Project Art works created <b>three</b> new posts to deliver the programme and to meet the demand generated by it. Some partners also bought in additional staff or freelancers.</li> <li>At least <b>four</b> arts organisations enabled university students to learn from and / or undertake research relating to EXPLORERS.</li> </ul>
<b>Artist development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least <b>30</b> freelance artists and facilitators were employed through EXPLORERS and developed their professional practice as a result.</li> <li><b>Three</b> artists completed 18 months of professional development with Project Art Works, starting as volunteers and going on to be regularly contracted, by Project Art Works, to work as artists.</li> <li><b>16</b> teachers were trained in delivering accessible photography workshops</li> <li><b>12</b> artists and social care practitioners took part in a training/mentoring programme around accessible photography workshops</li> <li><b>Eight</b> Year 2 Fine Art students from Birmingham College of Art at Birmingham City University completed placements with Project Art Works at Tate Liverpool in 2019.</li> </ul>
<b>New partnerships</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The partner organisations developed new relationships with at least <b>33</b> social care organisations.</li> <li>The six original partners (Autograph, Fabrica, MK Gallery, Photoworks, Tate Liverpool and the National Institute of Experimental Arts, University of New South Wales) were joined by De La Warr Pavilion in year two. In year three, Phoenix Art Space in Brighton became the venue for Photoworks' exhibition <i>In Focus</i> and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA) hosted <i>Illuminating the Wilderness</i> and Project Art Works' residency over ten days.</li> </ul>

## 4. The partners' activities

4.1. EXPLORERS has been comprehensively documented, in words and images, on the programme website [www.explorersproject.org](http://www.explorersproject.org) and progress has also been reported on Project Art Works' website <https://projectartworks.org/?s=explorers>. Reports on years one and two have been previously submitted, so this final report focuses on activities in the final year of the programme, with a reminder of background information where necessary. The partners are listed in the order in which their final EXPLORERS exhibition opened.



### MK Gallery, *Illuminating the Wilderness*, 16 March – 26 May 2019

[images](#)

4.2. MK Gallery's participation in EXPLORERS coincided with the closure of its building for a delayed programme of remodelling and expansion. When the building reopened on 16 March 2019, the first EXPLORERS commission, a film called *Illuminating the Wilderness*, co-commissioned by MK Gallery, Tate Liverpool and Project Art Works, was part of the gallery's inaugural programme and ran until 26 May. At ten weeks, this was the longest run of any EXPLORERS commission.

4.3. *Illuminating the Wilderness* was made on location in Glen Affric, in the Scottish Highlands, by Kate Adams and Tim Corrigan, with Ben Rivers and Margaret Salmon, six young adults with complex needs (from Project Art Works), family members and carers and a small support team from Project Art Works. The film was shaped by the participants' responses to an extraordinary and unfamiliar landscape and was a powerful piece of work, subsequently seen at Tate Liverpool and at MCA in Sydney. (Participants' responses to the expedition and the film-making process were described in the year two report.)

4.4. The opening exhibition in MK Gallery's main building, *The Lie of the Land*, looked at how the British landscape has been transformed by changes in free time and leisure activities over the centuries and featured work by 85 artists. *Illuminating the Wilderness* was shown in the Project Space. The demands of the reopening on staff meant that this space was not always open at the same time as the main gallery and its location across the courtyard from the main building may account for the relatively low recorded visitor numbers (709), even though it was signposted. Only nine questionnaires were collected from visitors, perhaps because there was no one available to ask them to complete one.



4.5. In the final week of the exhibition, most of the participants in the film travelled from Hastings to MK Gallery to see the film in a gallery setting and to take part in “an afternoon of neurodiverse interventions throughout the gallery, which included film, a collaborative drawing workshop, talks and sensory gallery tour”. This was an important, symbolic event, underlining the right of people with complex needs to access cultural spaces and to have their work seen and heard.

4.6. MK Gallery’s relationship with Project Art Works pre-dated EXPLORERS and some staff had already taken part in awareness raising sessions and encounters in Hastings. The Director, Antony Spira, who had recently created the post of Curator of Inclusion (filled by Bethany Mitchell), saw the programme as a complement to MK Gallery’s regular work with families and children with complex needs. The Curator of Inclusion and six of the associate artists, who run the weekly art club for families and children, took part in awareness raising and Positive Behaviour Support training at Project Art Works and worked alongside artists from Project Art Works during their residency at Tate Liverpool in 2018.

4.7. MK Gallery hosted the final EXPLORERS conference, over two days in November 2019 and (like the De La Warr Pavilion in 2018 and Autograph in 2017) it made extensive preparations with its front of house team to ensure that the building and the event were as accessible as possible to people with complex needs.



## Tate Liverpool, *Illuminating the Wilderness*, 4 – 28 April 2019

[images](#)

4.8. At Tate Liverpool, *Illuminating the Wilderness* was the name, not only of the film, but of Project Art Works takeover of the top floor of the museum. There were three parts to it: at one end of the gallery, in a darkened space, the film was screened on a loop; at the other end, in a studio open to the gallery, pre-booked groups of people with complex needs, mostly from local social care groups, made large-scale drawings and paintings; and in the large gallery space in between, over three weeks, the Project Art Works team created an evolving exhibition of the work produced in the studio. This meant that returning visitors saw something they had not seen before.

4.9. Tate Liverpool was one of the co-commissioners of the film. Following two residencies in Tate Exchange, in 2017 and 2018, EXPLORERS was given the whole of the top floor, as part of a programme called *We Have Your Art Gallery*. This is a partnership between Tate Liverpool

and Birmingham School of Art at Birmingham City University to “promote collaborative practice, experimentation and under-represented voices”. It also provides students (in this case eight of them) with a valuable opportunity to work alongside and learn from the group occupying the space.

4.10. Tate Liverpool generated EXPLORERS’ biggest audience, with 19,394 people coming into the gallery over three weeks. There were five early evening talks, typically attended by fewer than 20 people, but a final celebration, also in the gallery, was full to capacity.

4.11. The studio workshops involved 59 participants from 12 social care organisations and for some of the support workers, who are also artists, these were a significant professional development opportunity. As EXPLORERS drew to a close, a core group of social care organisations, led by Christine Bithell from Options FSL, Becky Waite from the Blue Room and Charlotte Crowder from Mencap Liverpool, started to look at how they build on what had been achieved. They are now working together, as Project Collective, to identify local artists who could take this work forward and involve neurodivergent artists and makers in the process. Tate Liverpool’s Head of Learning, Lindsey Fryer and Alison Jones, Programme Manager: Public & Community Learning have welcomed this initiative. Alison Jones has written: “Project Collective is a group made up of seven social care organisations, advocacy support agencies and arts organisations, who want to put neuro-minorities and people with complex needs at the heart of decision making and cultural life. The group aims to collaborate with neurodiverse artists and people of all ages, many of whom have complex support needs, by facilitating access to inclusive arts and cultural provision.” (When venues were closed due to Covid-19, Tate Liverpool and Project Collective secured some funding to produce an inclusive arts activity pack for people who were isolated at home.)

4.12. Partly as a result of EXPLORERS, Tate built a changing place toilet for visitors, it established a group of neurodiversity champions within the staff team, and with the support of the EXPLORERS Project Coordinator, it re-kindled past relationships with local social care groups and developed new ones.

4.13. Mikhail Karikis, who was co-commissioned by De La Warr Pavilion for EXPLORERS and who, with DLWP curator Rosie Cooper, contributed to one of the discussions during *Illuminating the Wilderness*, is due to work with Birmingham Art School and Tate Liverpool in 2020/21.

### **Audience responses to *Illuminating the Wilderness***

4.14. With the help of the Birmingham City University students, 78 questionnaires were collected from visitors to Tate Liverpool in just over three weeks. Owing a slight variation in one set of forms, only 69 people were asked the same two questions asked in Brighton, Milton Keynes and Bexhill on Sea

4.15. Asked how much does the exhibition at Tate Liverpool increased their awareness of people who are neurodiverse, 80% of people gave a score of between 6 and 10 and 55% gave a score of between 8 and 10. As elsewhere, those who gave a lower score explained that it was because they lived or worked with someone who was neurodivergent, or had complex needs.



4.16. The second question, “How much does this exhibition help you to appreciate that people who are neurodiverse have the same rights as everyone else to take part in cultural activity and to contribute to exhibitions like this?” produced an even stronger response with 97% giving a score of between 6 and 10 and 86% giving a score of between 8 and 10 (50% gave a score of 10). All but five respondents made positive comments about the exhibition. Here are some examples.

“I think it’s fantastic. It shows that everyone is just different and we all have the potential to express ourselves through art.”

“I absolutely love the dynamism of the mark making, the variety of the marks and the whole concept behind it.”

“The hanging drawings are inspirational – a testimony of expression and collaborative art.”

“I thought it was lovely to have collaborative work like this.”

“Beautiful. It’s like a forest. I want one of these drawings. Even the poles you’ve used are like ancient things – tools or weapons.”

“Excellent. I love the forest idea – moving through, with light from above.”

“Different to what you usually see in galleries and it’s nice to see the work being made.”

“It was moving and insightful. It was an open look at how neurodiverse people can bring fresh insight and observations on the world.”

“Absolutely fascinating – the combination of the film in Scotland and the hands-on drawing was excellent. Quite stunning. Mesmeric.”

“Refreshing to see such an ethical consideration foregrounded alongside the aesthetic.”

4.17. The few critical responses were not dismissive; they highlighted a wish to know more about who had made drawings and why. Visitors asked for “More explanation of the exhibition and who made it.” “Notes on who made the drawings.” “More information about the artists.” “More dialogue about the project.” “Audio explanation.” “Wanted some colour.”

Visitors were asked what had challenged them, or made them think.

“It’s nice seeing big stuff. It made me think about drawing. It made me think I should draw. I’d like a large piece of paper in my house.”

“I have to be honest and say I’m not really sure what it represents. I like the scale of the drawings. “

“The sense of community. The emotion that comes across in the work. The workshop – this links everything together and shows how neurodiverse people work as artists.”

“It opened my eyes to different ways of viewing art. I kept trying to find something in the work and then realised that there isn’t always something to find. A mark could just be a mark.”

“I loved the interactive elements. It really pleased all senses. It was eye opening.”

“Watching the video made me feel like being creative.”

“It has raised my awareness of neurodiversity – a term I haven’t heard before, but recognise its meaning.”

4.18. Asked to reflect on the impact of EXPLORERS, Ruby Maddock, Programme Coordinator of Tate’s Clore Hub wrote: “Representation is there in galleries’ learning and engagement programmes. We must extend this to our collections, to the walls of our galleries, to our performance programmes. When we limit representation, we limit people, we limit ourselves. Being involved with the EXPLORERS project has galvanised me. There are far more people than I imagined journeying towards this change. It is already happening and hopefully will become unstoppable in its velocity.”



## **Fabrica, *Putting Ourselves in the Picture*, 13 July – 26 August 2019**

### [Images](#)

4.19. *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* was Fabrica’s co-commission for EXPLORERS and was driven by these questions: Who gets to create art? How is work selected (and thereby validated) for the public consumption in galleries and other spaces? How does access to studio space shape the supply of art and artists? The commission featured a working studio, pre-booked and drop-in sessions in the studio and mini-exhibitions of selections of the work produced. *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* was Fabrica’s summer show for 2019.

4.20. For the six weeks of the ‘show’, Fabrica divided its single space (a former church) into an accessible studio and a smaller gallery space. For two weeks at a time, a different artist-in-residence - Sara Dare (13-26 July), Jo Offer (27 July – 10 August) and Annis Joslin (11-26 August) - ran the studio. Sara Dare used paint and large sheets of canvas to capture gestures and created an environment in which people could work together in groups of different sizes. Jo Offer set up different activities to run concurrently, prompting participants to make choices. Annis Joslin used still life and photography to encourage individual and small-group work.

4.21. Towards the end of each residency, a changing team of curators, each with a well-developed knowledge of and commitment to diversity in creative practice, selected pieces made in the studio to be shown in the gallery space. Kate Adams selected work by makers from Project Art Works while the first residency was underway. After this, the curators were, independent curator Lisa Slominski; from Outside In, directors Marc Steene and Cornelia Marland and artists Luc(e) Raesmith and José Forrest-Tennant; and from Fabrica, Liz Whitehead. Curatorial conversations were live-streamed on Facebook and the decision-making process for each mini exhibition was provided on a text panel.

4.22. The studio hosted workshops for people with complex needs in the morning. Thirty groups made up of 174 individuals. In the afternoon, from Wednesday – Sunday, the whole building was open to the public, who could both use the studio and see the changing exhibitions. In common with all other Fabrica shows there was an events programme (workshops, talks and tours). The total number of visitors was 5,172; and the total number of participants in the events programme was 1,080 (including the 174 cited above).

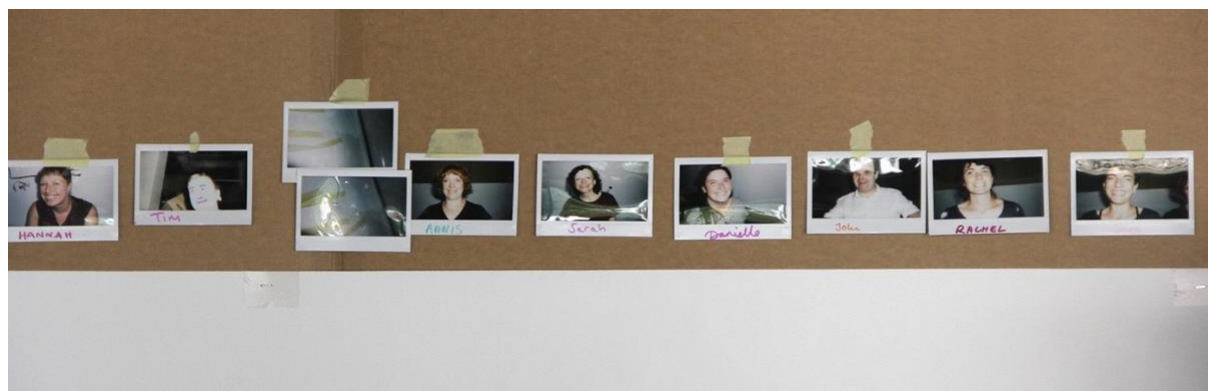
4.23. Fabrica's summer show is usually designed for families and this one was no different, with its opportunities for adults and children to make work together. These comments from visitors confirm the appeal. "It's great to get such an immediately stimulating experience – and watch my grandson become completely involved." "It was a boundary-breaking experience." "Extraordinary experience. Wonderful to see my children captivated and fully absorbed." Visitors interviewed by Project Art Works picked up on the opportunity to "play" that had been created, for visitors of any age.

4.24. Through EXPLORERS, over three years, Fabrica has strengthened its relationship with eight local social care organisations. Christine Howard, from Ambito Care wrote: "I really liked the work at Fabrica in the summer. It was great that they were so keen to follow our push to make a changing space and create spaces where people could have their health and physical needs met. It would have been even better to have not had to bring it up though." Outside In, which works with "artists traditionally excluded from the mainstream art world", is now based in the office at Fabrica. Fabrica's staff and volunteers took part in Project Art Works' awareness raising workshops and encounters and (as reported in year one) piloted the co-commissioning process for EXPLORERS, with Peter Hudson's interactive light work, *In Colour*.

4.25. Fabrica identified the following gains from *Putting Ourselves in the Picture*: "The project felt groundbreaking in terms of its subject matter but also in terms of project management. Running a day in, day out workshop, for the whole exhibition, with three artist changeovers and four mini-exhibition changeovers was not easy. The artists in residence were excellent (as we knew they would be) as was the entire team, in supporting them and the exhibition as a whole. "Because of the increased resources afforded by the EXPLORERS project, we were able to provide a 'quiet room' for visitors and workshop participants, which meant that we were a genuinely inclusive venue for the duration of the exhibition. This needs to be something that we try to achieve for each exhibition (where it is needed) moving forward.

"The exhibition was very stimulating for a lot of Fabrica's volunteers, who were interested in the practical and political aspects of the exhibition. Volunteers were able to get involved, in a very hands-on way, with the morning workshops and the drop-in gallery sessions – and many

did so. Those that did were commended by each of the artists for the way they supported the sessions.” (Programme report, September 2019)



## De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, *I Hear You*, 28 September 2019 – 19 January 2020 [images](#)

4.26. *I Hear You*, was a new work by Mikhail Karikis, co-commissioned by De La Warr Pavilion and Project Art Works. It was five video portraits which focused on the listening and attention present in non-verbal communication between people with complex support needs and those who support them.

4.27. Installed in a darkened first-floor gallery at the top of the stairs and next to the café, and with explanatory text at the entrance, it was ideally placed for visitors to come across it. Each screen focused on the relationship between two people. Mikhail Karikis spent hundreds of hours observing artists and makers who regularly attend Project Art Works’ weekly sessions and got to know them, family members and other carers before making the films in a variety of other settings. In the making of this work, he was also able to draw on the experience of Project Art Works artists, including Magda Patza, Sarah Dunne and Andrew Kotting, who is also a parent and who features in one of the films with his daughter Eden. The exhibition at De La Warr Pavilion included seven gallery tours and other events. Mikhail Karikis has an international profile and the ambition is that this new work will tour, taking the questions raised by EXPLORERS to a larger audience.

4.28. DLWP hosted the second EXPLORERS publicly accessible conference in 2018 and worked hard to make its building as accessible and comfortable as possible for the participants. The day included a tour of the current exhibition led by Project Art Works artist and maker Lucy Walker. For some years, the DLWP has been running the Mercury Club for people with learning disabilities and their carers. The club meets monthly and activities include creative sessions as well as visits to exhibitions and events at DLWP and elsewhere. Since EXPLORERS, members have also been involved in interpretation and leading gallery tours.

### Audience responses to *I Hear You*

4.29. Nineteen visitors to *I Hear You* completed a questionnaire. Asked how much the exhibition had increased their understanding of people who are neurodiverse, 65% gave a

score of 6 or more and 41% gave a score of 8, 9 or 10. There was a much more emphatic response to the question, “How much does this exhibition increase your awareness that everyone has a right to be represented in cultural institutions such as art galleries?” Here, 88% of respondents gave a score of 6 or above; 82% 8, 9 or 10 and 65% gave 10.

#### 4.30. Asked what they had enjoyed most, visitors said:

“I enjoyed the camera’s focus on both the carers and those they are working with. It made the work feel intimate and personal, which is difficult to do in a public space.”

“The filming made me feel I was right in there with these people.”

“Being reminded of the power of communication – verbal and non-verbal.”

“The different forms of communication / engagement in each film.”

“The honesty of these films. They needed no words. It was about relationships.”

“[It was] not really about enjoyment, more about learning.”

#### 4.31. Their open-ended comments provided confirmed the emotional power of the work:

“Excellent.” “Amazing.” “Much needed.” “Very nice.”

“Strange at first. Once [I] got [my] head around it, OK.”

“Very poignant and thought provoking.”

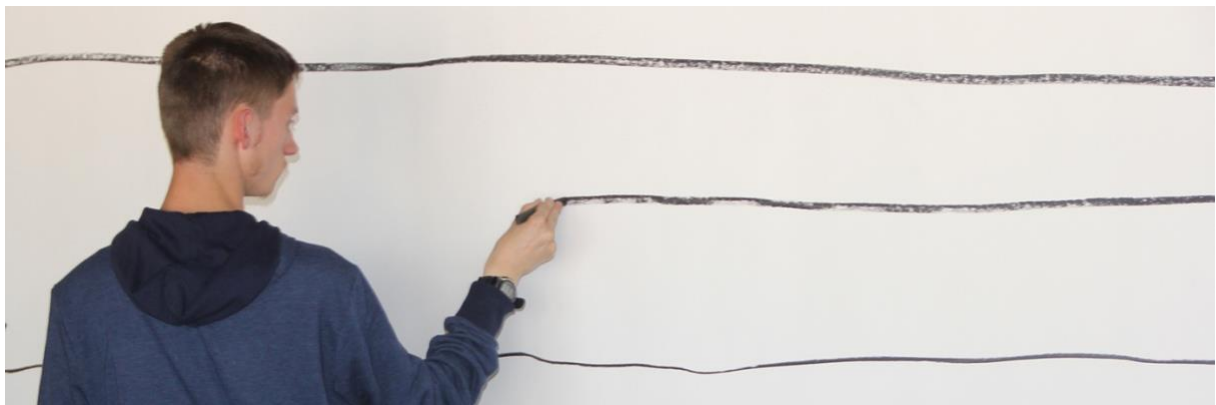
“Powerful, long overdue, refreshing, informative.”

“Tender, sensitive, moving, challenging, confronting.”

“It was very good, a very emotional experience for a carer.”

“Valuable. Made me think, especially about value, skill and kindness of carers.”

“I thought it was a very gentle exhibition, the screens and sound were at a nice size. It was not too overwhelming and each story was separate from each other.”



## National Institute for Experimental Arts at the University of New South Wales and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA) in Sydney, *Illuminating the Wilderness*, 28 September – 7 October 2019

### [images](#)

4.32. This was the shortest run of any of the EXPLORERS projects. *Illuminating the Wilderness* was screened in the National Centre for Creative Learning at the MCA, as part of The Big Anxiety 2019 – a festival for artists, scientists and communities interested in reimagining the state of mental health in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

4.33. Project Art Works had first been invited to The Big Anxiety in 2017 by its director, Jill Bennett, who is also the founding director of the National Institute for Experimental Arts (NIEA) at the University of New South Wales. That year, an estimated 2,000 people had seen Kate Adams' film *The Not Knowing of Another* and three members of Project Art Works had taken part in a discussion entitled *Diversity of Perception: a seminar on radical inclusiveness*. They began to learn about the language and perceptions of neurodiversity in Australia and about the country's social care sector and had exploratory discussions with potential partners (including Studio A, NSW Council for Intellectual Disability, Participate Australia, Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association, Down Syndrome NSW, Carriageworks, Art Gallery NSW, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia).

4.34. The screening of *Illuminating the Wilderness* coincided with the MCA's Art for Everyone Weekend and ran for the next ten days. That first weekend, Tim Corrigan and Patrician Finnegan (Project Art Works) hosted collaborative drawing workshops for some 60 visitors of all ages. The following week, over four days, the same team ran workshops for pre-booked groups of people with complex needs and the results were exhibited, as an installation, for the last three days of the film's screening (5-7 October). A total of 612 saw the film and 133 people took part in drawing workshops. The whole process was supported by MCA artist educator Sarah Milgate and access coordinator Susannah Thorne.

4.35. One evening, Project Art Works hosted a Long Table discussion, billed as Art\*People\*Care. For two hours, in front of an audience, a small group of speakers were joined at the table by any member of the audience who wanted to contribute to the discussion. The guests included artists Thom and Angelmouse (aka Thom Roberts and Harriet Body), Sam Kerr (DADAA, Perth), Judy Singer (who introduced the term neurodiversity to the language more than 30 years ago) and Jeremy Smith (Australia Council for the Arts), as well as Kate Adams, Patricia Finnegan and Tim Corrigan from Project Artworks.

4.36. Project Art Works asked the MCA to collect visitor feedback on the different elements of the programme, but none was provided and the small Project Art Works team in Sydney did not have the capacity to collect feedback itself. Nevertheless the MCA and Project Arts Works are talking about how they might collaborate again. Shortly after the residency, Annie Doyle, CEO, Civic Disability Services, reflected: "It's events like this that break down barriers as we strive for a more inclusive society. I hope our two organisations can work together in the future on similar projects." Later, Susannah Thorne wrote: "Collaborating with the

[Project Art Works] team was an enriching experience, with lots of occasion to think about the kind of support and opportunities we offer at the MCA. It has made me think about future international collaborations and how, together, we can further extend the creative platform for artists with complex needs.”

4.37. The NIEA’s participation in EXPLORERS has been useful to its research and one of its research associates (Chloe Watfern) spent time with Project Art Works in England, learning more about how British cultural organisations are working with people with complex needs.



### **Photoworks, *In Focus: This gives you a score of 0*, 18 October – 3 November 2019 at Phoenix Art Space [images](#)**

4.38. *In Focus* was the brand Photoworks used for all of its EXPLORERS activity. This included the exhibition at Phoenix Art Space, in Brighton, featuring its co-commission from Anna Farley, *This gives you a score of 0* and an installation of work made by members of three photography clubs, in three local social care settings, in collaboration with three artists.

4.39. *This gives you a score of 0* was an interactive installation of fidget cubes illustrated with thousands of photographic images. It was inspired by the artist’s first-hand experience of the complex and personally intrusive process of applying for Personal Independence Payment. A graduate of Wimbledon School of Art who self identifies as an autistic artist, Anna Farley answered Photoworks’ first open call specifically designed to remove possible barriers to artists with complex needs. It created documents with easy to read and speech functionalities, visited shortlisted artists in their own space and appointed a neurodiverse selection panel.

4.40. The photography clubs for people with complex needs were another development for Photoworks. The organisation has been running clubs for years, but never with people with complex needs. Following awareness raising and encounter workshops for the whole staff team and discussion with Project Art Works, Photoworks identified three local social care providers - the Grace Eyre Foundation and Ambito Care and Education in Brighton and the St Nicholas Centre in Lewes – that would welcome three artists - Bill Leslie, Lynn Weddle and Alejandra Carles-Tolrá – to run lens-based workshops over several months. Across the three groups, 23 people took part and a selection of their work featured in the exhibition. The curator’s time was partly funded from the EXPLORERS budget. Photoworks is committed to continuing to work with these and other social care settings and to encouraging and



promoting neurodiverse artistic practice. Reflecting on her organisation's involvement in EXPLORERS Sarah Hamlett from Ambito Care wrote: "It has impacted us as a service – staff and participants in the activities alike. It has created connections with Project Art Works, Photoworks and Fabrica that were not there before."

4.41. The exhibition attracted around 1500 visitors in the space of two weeks. *This gives you a score of 0* was very positively received and may have a future as a touring piece. There were seven linked events, including an opportunity to talk with the artist and two workshops on making a PIP application. Anna Farley has since agreed to become a trustee of Project Art Works.

### **Audience responses to *In Focus***

4.42. Photoworks went to great efforts to collect feedback from visitors to the exhibition during its short run and secured 68 responses. Using the same system of scoring 1- 10, with 1 meaning low and 10 meaning high, visitors were asked to what extent the exhibition had increased their awareness of people who are neurodiverse. A total of 81% of visitors gave a score of between 6 and 10 and 60% gave a score of between 8 and 10. Most of those who said their awareness had not increased explained that they were either a teacher, a support worker or a relative of someone who is neurodiverse. A small number of respondents described themselves as neurodiverse or as having complex needs.

4.43. Asked how much the exhibition had helped them to "appreciate that people who are neurodiverse have the same rights as everyone else to take part in cultural activity and to contribute to exhibitions like this", 80% of respondents gave a score of between 6 and 10 and 61% gave a score of between 8 and 10, with almost half of all respondents giving 10.

4.44. The visitors to this show used a rich selection of words to try to describe their responses. These can be roughly organised into six groups. Using only the four most commonly used words in each case, this exhibition was described as:

Interesting, Engaging, Thought provoking, Insightful

Inspiring, Informative, Diverse, Eye-opening

Fun, Playful, Good, Joyful

Inclusive, Open, Comforting, Warm

Tactile, Interactive, Immersive, Big

Unique, Different, Unusual, Original



## Autograph, London, Have You Ever Had, 28 February – 23 May 2020

### [images](#)

4.45. *Have You Ever Had*, Autograph's co-commissioned, solo exhibition of painting, photography and film works, by and with Sharif Persaud, was curtailed by the closure of the gallery, due to Covid-19, just three weeks into the run. Scheduled to last twelve weeks, it would have been EXPLORERS longest-running exhibition. Sharif Persaud has worked with Project Art Works for many years and his films have often been screened at events, but this was his first solo exhibition. It was described by Autograph as "a ground-breaking exhibition of work by someone who recognises their autism but does not necessarily identify as an artist, whose work looks in a unique way at the hopes, fears and experiences of a person with complex support needs". Kate Adams said it was "unequivocally what we set out to do with EXPLORERS – to ensure that art with, by and for neuro-minorities is represented in mainstream culture."

4.46. Visitors who preferred a quieter environment, including adults and children with complex needs, their families and carers, could choose to visit *Have You Ever Had* on a 'Relaxed Wednesday'. There was a free family drop-in on a Saturday afternoon, early in the exhibition and Autograph's regular Family Workshops for children with special educational needs and disabilities were scheduled to continue throughout the run. At the time of writing the hope is that the exhibition will tour.

4.47. Partly inspired by *Have You Ever Had*, a group of young artists with autism worked with the youth media organisation Mouth That Roars to make an exhibition called *A Different Way of Seeing*. It was due to open the day that Autograph had to close, but it was reworked and put online.

4.48. The decision to commission Sharif Persaud was the result of a thorough process. In 2017, Autograph hosted the first of the annual EXPLORERS seminars and conference. It was a sell-out event, with 77 attendees. The presenters and contributors from the floor highlighted the very wide range of issues and life experiences encompassed by the term neurodiverse (or, more accurately, neurodivergent). Autograph invested considerable time and effort in researching the issues, thinking and terminology associated with neurodivergence and complex needs and concluded that EXPLORERS sat comfortably within a rights-based agenda. It had already set up the Rights in Focus Network "to explore how social justice agendas can inform the challenges, practice and discourse of arts engagement" and in April 2018, Kate Adams was asked to take part in a two-day exchange, *Exploring the Politics of Engagement*. Three months later, as part of the EXPLORERS programme, she hosted an evening's discussion which asked, *How Are We Caring for People?* which attracted 80 participants.

4.49. Through EXPLORERS, Autograph has built good relationships with a small number of social care groups, including Create Day Centre, Headway East London and Apasen. In August 2018, artists from these three groups created a temporary installation at Autograph. Called *Stretch, Shape, Shift*, it incorporated fabric, tape, sculpture, projection, painting and drawing. Autograph then opened the gallery to the public for one evening (6pm-9pm) when they experience the installation and the two current exhibitions (Omar Victor Diop's *Liberty / Diaspora* and Arpita Shah's *Purdah – The Sacred Cloth*) as well as free food and music.

4.50. Headway runs the Submit to Love Studios for its members, most of whom have acquired a brain injury through illness or an accident. In March 2019, four of these artists showed and talked about their work for one evening at Autograph.

4.51. Autograph has taken every opportunity available to staff and freelancers to develop the knowledge and skills they need, not only to deliver EXPLORERS but to take this work forward. Director Mark Sealy and Deputy Director Holly Tebbutt have enabled their two part-time Public Programme Managers, Ali Eisa and Lucy Keany, to set aside other activities to create the necessary space. Project Art Works' mapping of the local social care and education sector provided a wealth of new information about provision and need which informed Autograph's decision to prioritise families with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

4.52. In May 2019 Autograph began to offer monthly, two-hour, artist-led workshops for families, on Saturdays. These are free, but have to be booked in advance, to ensure that each family has the space it needs. These workshops were scheduled to take place three times during *Have You Ever Had* and on a different Saturday afternoon, there was a free, four-hour, creative drop-in for any family group.

4.53. Autograph hosted two EXPLORERS partner meetings (its building being the most geographically convenient for all partners) and provided speakers for all three EXPLORERS annual conferences. The first two of these have been reported on previously. Feedback from the third annual event is provided overleaf.

## 5. Feedback from the Project Art Works team

5.1. Ten members of Project Art Works, who helped to deliver EXPLORERS, were asked to score the extent to which the programme achieved its aims. They used a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 meaning low and 10 high. All ten respondents gave the programme a score of more than 6 and eight gave it a score of between 7.3 and 10.

5.2. The first table, below, shows who they thought gained most from EXPLORERS. People with complex support needs, cultural organisations and Project Art Works were thought to have benefited equally, with each being awarded 8 points for strong benefit and 2 for moderate benefit. Families, support workers and other care givers were not far behind with 7 points for strong benefit and 3 for moderate.

5.3. Statutory social care organisations were thought to have benefited least, receiving 2 points for strong benefit, 4 for moderate and 3 for slight benefit. Under the same headings, social care support organisations received scores of 3, 5 and 2.

***How much does the PAW team think these different groups benefited from EXPLORERS?***

Group	Strong benefit	Moderate benefit	Slight benefit
People with complex support needs	8	2	0
Families, support workers and other care givers	7	3	0
Artists	6	4	0
Cultural organisations	8	2	0
Statutory Social Care Organisations (NHS, CCG, Social Services)	2	4	3
Social Care Support Organisations (charities, advocacy and community groups etc)	3	5	2
Project Art Works	8	2	0

5.4. Asked how much they thought might have changed for their visual arts partners, as a result of EXPLORERS, Project Art Works' team members allocated 59% of their points, overall, to 'some change' (59%) and 41% to 'considerable change', but it is worth looking at the different types of change in the table below. The area of greatest change was thought to be 'partnerships with the social care sector' which was awarded 6 points for considerable change and 4 for some. The area of least change, in the view of the PAW team, was in 'access to the arts for people with complex needs' and 'opportunities for new artists', both of which scored just 2 points for considerable change, but 8 points for some change.

***How much does the team think has changed for the arts partners as a result of EXPLORERS?***

Types of change	Considerable change	Some change
Inclusiveness and diversity within the organisations	5	5
Understanding of diversity within the disabilities sector	5	5
Access to the arts for people with complex needs	2	8
Audience awareness of what 'complex needs' means	4	6
Partnerships with the social care sector	6	4
Opportunities for new artists	2	8
Artists' and art professionals' skills development	5	5
New art works	4	6
Totals	33 (41%)	47 (59%)

5.5. Members of the Project Art Works team well aware of the time it takes to change thinking and practices. Asked to describe the challenges they faced in delivering EXPLORERS, one wrote: "The entrenched thinking about neurodiverse individuals and the continuing perception that the work these [arts] organisations do is "noble", rather than something that should be the norm within society."

5.6. A colleague wrote about trying "to get support workers to change their approach, to realise there are ways other than *their way*. Similarly, getting artists from other organisations to allow themselves the freedom *to work in the moment*."

5.7. Another was more concerned about “how to answer groups’ questions about what might happen next and whether there would be future opportunities of the kind they had experienced as part of EXPLORERS”.

5.8. The directness of the team’s responses, drawing on years of experience, in most cases, is helpful. This is a selection of their comments on what EXPLORERS achieved. Those with single quotation marks have been paraphrased.

‘EXPLORERS brought neurodivergent and neurotypical people together. It gave value to neurodivergent people and their work.’

“It made connections with mainstream arts organisation and care settings. Many care settings we worked with had never been to the gallery spaces as a group before.”

‘Visual arts organisations have done more and better work in and with the community.’

“It has been epic. Everywhere I worked, without exception, individuals told me it had changed them or the organisations they worked for, and participants who attended had very often never experienced anything like the way PAW works.”

‘The programme maintained its original objectives and continued to deliver over and above, even when things have changed, e.g. delivering two weeks’ worth of content in two days.’

“It strengthened support networks and began a conversation that will bring about real change within the cultural sector. I expect it will take a long while, but PAW is helping to change the future.”

‘There will be a lasting legacy, for example, the new commissioning model developed by Photoworks. It is changing the way that art organisations approach programming.’



## 6. Feedback from the final EXPLORERS Conference, 2019

### [images](#)

6.1. The final EXPLORERS conference, *Art, Rights and Representation* took place at MK Gallery on 20 and 21 November 2019. Aimed at an audience of people active in culture, education, health, rights or social care, the conference was an opportunity to share the experience of EXPLORERS and to look at what its legacy might be. Advertising the conference, Kate Adams

explained: “It will provide insights and understanding between people. It will provide practical guidance and different ways of addressing representations in art and culture. It will cover communication, behaviour, perception and empathy and new ways of seeing and exploring art. People with complex needs are rarely given a platform to show what they can contribute to art and culture. We hope primarily to change attitudes to neurodiverse artists and makers and to how they are positioned in society and in cultural programming.”

6.2. The conference was fully booked, with people attending for one or both days. Of the 36 participants who returned an evaluation form, 20 attended for day and 16 for both. Just over two thirds (67%) of this sample said they worked for an arts organisation and 39% were artists; 19% worked for a social care organisation or a statutory body and 11% were parents, carers or support workers. For these participants, the conference was a very positive experience. Asked to rate six questions with a score of 1 – 10, with 1 meaning low and 10 high, at least 75% of people rated every question 8, 9 or 10. The table below shows the combined results. No question was given a rating of less than 5.

Questions to be rated 1 – 10, with 1 meaning low & 10 high	% of respondents giving rating of 8, 9 or 10
1. How good was the conference overall?	89%
2. How well were people with complex support needs included in the conference?	75%
3. How accessible was the conference, especially for people with complex support needs	79%
4. How did the conference rate in terms of experiencing art?	76%
5. How did the conference rate in terms of exploring rights, in relation to artistic practice or otherwise?	76%
6. How did the conference rate in terms of exploring the issue of representation in art and culture?	82%

6.3. The ‘best parts’ of the conference, cited by several respondents, were the opportunities to hear from, and see the work of, artists, many of whom were neurodivergent and / or had complex support needs. Artists showed and talked about their work in MK Gallery’s Sky Room (a lecture theatre), led sessions in other spaces and contributed as audience members. Delegates also valued hearing from those who facilitate the creativity and communication of neurodivergent artists.

6.4. Their comments about the programme illustrate the point:

“My highlight was the workshop with Anna Farley. The insight she gave on her experiences was really eye opening and she provided a wealth of advice on how to improve accessibility and inclusivity.”

“Forgive me, I can’t remember their names and I don’t have reference to hand, but the father-daughter art project on Wednesday. Absolutely amazing.”

“Sensory tours from individuals with disabilities. This made the usual gallery experience more vibrant, friendly and sociable.”

“The prominence given to artists and makers.”

“Participation in sessions, lots of different voices being listened to and feeling supported to speak up.”

6.5. The conference was designed to enable people to learn from each other, whatever their starting point. One respondent said she had enjoyed meeting “specialists leading their fields, whereas I am just starting the journey.” Another referred to two speakers who had “such great knowledge and energy - based in experience”. Contributors’ “directness” and “honesty” was mentioned. “Discussion was not shied away from.” These comments confirm the authenticity of the speakers and the experiences they were sharing.

6.6. Delegates’ suggested changes for future events fell into three groups:

- Better access for delegates with physical disabilities.
- More participatory, small group activity, because it is more accessible to all than the lecture theatre sessions and panel discussions.
- More time, or smaller panels, so that every panel member has the opportunity to contribute and there is time for audience Q&A; more time to get from session to session; more time during breaks, for networking.

6.7. Delegates were also invited to suggest what they would like to see at future events, or to contribute themselves. Their responses included some acute observations and questions. These have been paraphrased:

- How can smaller organisations, without specialist staff, incorporate inclusive practice?
- Are there international examples to share?
- Look at how support work in adult social care can be a creative role and how recruitment might reflect this.
- Include neurodivergent artists who do not have complex needs. “This is where many of the gaps in the sector occur.”
- Use live action drawing to connect and illustrate what the speakers and other contributors are saying.
- An informal, long-table discussion, perhaps on the evening of the first day.
- A link with educational pathways
- A set of actions to bring about change.





## 7. The outcomes

7.1. This statement of the outcomes of EXPLORERS – Illuminating the Wilderness and the lessons learned that follow in section 8 are based on the contributions, over three years, of the visual arts partners, including Project Art Works, the social care providers, care givers and artists with whom they worked and on the audience feedback described above. We stress that these are outcomes *to date*. The suspension of much activity in March, due to Covid 19, means that a few activities are outstanding. Project Art Works will continue to collate subsequent findings and add them to this report, as appropriate.

7.2. The EXPLORERS programme was well named. Explorers are people who travel, in search of knowledge and experience. They set off with different levels of familiarity with the territory they are entering and return with different finds. What they have in common is a hunger to learn and a willingness to take risks in order to do so.

7.3. When Project Art Works drew up its plan for EXPLORERS, its ambition was that everyone involved would learn something significant from it. The five intended outcomes therefore all involved a process of learning.

- i. The visual arts partners will have a deeper knowledge of neurodiversity and how it might inform their programming and other aspects of their operation;
- ii. Curators, programmers and the public audience for the visual arts will have a clearer understanding of the creative case for diversity;
- iii. The visual arts organisations and their local partners in social care, health and education will have learned from each other and increased their capability and their capacity to work together;
- iv. People with complex needs, their families and support workers will feel more welcome in cultural venues and be more likely to use them;
- v. Project Art Works will have more evidence of the impact of relevant and empathetic cultural activity on people with complex needs.

7.4. As described and explained above, the partner organisations chose their own routes through the landscape of neurodiversity and art. They made some of the same discoveries and some that were unique to them. Each is now deciding what to do with the knowledge and experience it has acquired. Some of the outcomes of EXPLORERS and the programme's impact on the cultural sector, on neurodivergent artists and on the wider population of people with complex needs, their families and support workers, may not be evident for some time, but all of the five outcomes listed above have already been achieved to some extent.

7.5. As a pioneer of inclusive visual arts practice, Project Art Works has had the opportunity to work closely with six visual arts organisations in England (five with gallery spaces) and with the Big Anxiety Festival and MCA in Sydney and has learned what becoming more inclusive of neurodivergent artists and audiences means and involves for each of them. As a result,

Project Art Works has a more detailed understanding of different approaches to programming and audience development, and greater awareness of the operational issues (space, staffing, finance) that influence organisations' responses to opportunities. (Outcome iii.)

7.6. By getting to know and working more closely with some of their local social care organisations, by creating opportunities to make and show work, and by sharing their experience with each other, **six English visual arts organisations have a much clearer understanding of what it takes to become a neurodiverse organisation.** They are all in a stronger position to decide how much further they want to go, taking into account their organisational priorities and resources. (Outcomes i and ii.)

7.7. As a result of the local social care mapping undertaken and supported by Project Art Works and the connections that the mapping process promoted, **the visual arts organisations have a better knowledge of and relationship with their local social care sector** and some of the individuals and families supported by it. They are in a stronger position to develop a new audience. (Outcomes iii and iv.)

7.8. **Exhibition programmes have been enriched and audiences have seen new work.** Work by neurodivergent artists has been shown at Phoenix Art Space (Anna Farley's *This gives you a score of 0*, co-commissioned with Photoworks) and at Autograph (*Have You Ever Had*, a selection of work by Sharif Persaud, February 2020). In response to Sharif Persaud's work, the youth media organisation Mouth That Roars worked with young artists with autism to create their own exhibition, *A Different Way of Seeing*. This was due to open the day that Autograph was closed by Covid-19, but it was reworked and put online. This mean it could be seen by a wider audience through, among others, Whitechapel Gallery's online version of its First Thursday Bus Tour <https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/first-thursdays/>, Artrabbit.com and Disability Arts Online. (Outcomes i, ii and iv.)

7.9. **Three new works, by professional artists, in collaboration with neurodivergent participants, families and support workers have been shown at four venues.** The first of these (Peter Hudson's *In Colour*) was separately funded, by Project Art Works and Fabrica, as a pilot for the EXPLORERS co-commissions. Premiered at Fabrica in 2017, it was subsequently exhibited during Project Art Works' residency at Tate Liverpool in 2019. *Illuminating the Wilderness* by Kate Adams and Tim Corrigan (in collaboration with Ben Rivers, Margaret Salmon and Project Art Works) was shown at Tate Liverpool, MK Gallery and MCA Sydney (2019); and *I Hear You* by Mikhail Karikis, a co-commission with the De La Warr Pavilion premiered in October 2019. (Outcomes i, ii and iv.)

7.10. EXPLORERS did generate some **media coverage**, but it proved hard to attract the attention of the art press. Sharif Persaud's *Have You Ever Had* was reviewed in the *Hackney Citizen*, *Hastings Online Times* and the *Morning Star* and was due to be reviewed in the *Daily Telegraph*. The exhibition opening featured on BBC South East Today. The same programme covered Fabrica's *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* and *Engage Journal* ran a piece on disability-led arts programming, based on *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* and *In Colour*. Tate Liverpool's press release on *EXPLORERS: Illuminating the Wilderness* was picked up by Disability Arts Online and ArtRabbit as well as local outlets. Mikhail Karikis' co-commission, *I Hear You*, at the De La Warr Pavilion was covered in an interview with Elizabeth Fullerton for

*Studio International*, in which she wrote: “These works propose a re-evaluation of our narrow, “abled” definition of communication.”

([www.studiointernational.com/index.php/mikhail-karikis-interview-i-hear-you-de-la-warr-pavilion-bexhill-have-never-cried-during-filming-until-this-project](http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/mikhail-karikis-interview-i-hear-you-de-la-warr-pavilion-bexhill-have-never-cried-during-filming-until-this-project)). The opening of the exhibition was covered by BBC News and the De La Warr Pavilion filmed an interview with the artist which is still available on Vimeo and YouTube. *I Hear You* features prominently on Mikhail Karikis’ own website, [www.mikhailkarikis.com](http://www.mikhailkarikis.com) and coincided with him being shortlisted for the Film London Jarman Award 2019. (Outcomes ii, iv and v.)

**7.11. People with complex needs have seen their work on display in a professional gallery setting.** Exhibitions of work by participants in creative workshops, at the gallery, have taken place at Tate Liverpool (facilitated by Project Art Works in the Exchange space in 2018 and the fourth-floor gallery in 2019); at Fabrica, where selections from the workshops became the gallery’s summer exhibition, *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* (2019); and at MCA Sydney (2019). Photoworks, which has no permanent gallery, contracted artists Bill Leslie, Lynn Weddle and Alejandra Carles-Tolrá each to run a series of lens-based workshops in a local social care setting (the Grace Eyre Foundation and Ambito Care in Brighton and the St Nicholas Centre in Lewes). The resulting work was shown as part of Photoworks’ exhibition *In Focus*, at Phoenix Art Space, alongside Anna Farley’s *This gives you a score of 0*. (Outcomes iv and v.)

**7.12. EXPLORERS has enabled a cluster of visual arts and social care organisations, senior staff, artists and arts practitioners to increase their skills and confidence** to the extent that they can continue on this journey, with less intensive support from Project Art Works. Those organisations and individuals (from both sectors) that have been most galvanised by EXPLORERS (including Project Art Works) are now making plans for a second phase of work together. (Outcomes i and ii.)

**7.13. EXPLORERS has reinforced the importance of induction, training and professional development** in enabling everyone, with or without first-hand experience of people with complex support needs, to contribute fully to such a programme. From initial awareness raising and encounters to partners’ meetings and seminars, and with access to advice from Project Art Works at any time, the provision of what has been described by one partner as “inspirational” training and professional development greatly increased the organisations’ ability to deliver. (Outcomes i, ii and iii)

**7.14. EXPLORERS has demonstrated the value to organisations of learning together.** Project Art Works has had a bilateral relationship with the Australian partners (the National Institute for Experimental Arts at the UNSW, the Big Anxiety and MCA in Sydney) but the English partners have shared their experience on a regular basis. (Outcome i and iii.)

**7.15. Individual artists and arts practitioners have got to know people employed and volunteering in a variety of roles in the visual arts and social care sectors and have increased their operational knowledge and understanding of both.** They are more aware of the constraints on, and opportunities available to, these colleagues and can identify what organisations need to be in place if they are to take this work forward, notably, the visible commitment and involvement of the leadership of the organisation and careful assessment of the human and financial resources needed. (Outcome iii.)

7.16. The EXPLORERS website, social media platforms, three annual conferences looking at different aspects of neurodiversity and the arts and reporting on the progress of EXPLORERS, and partners' contributions to meetings and publications have all helped to create **a larger audience for the questions that EXPLORERS has been asking**. No matter how long or hard an organisation has been working in and with its local community, this kind of activity is often overlooked and undervalued. As a multi-venue, three-year programme, financed by Arts Council England and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, **EXPLORERS has helped to raise the profile and status of inclusive arts practice**. (Outcomes i, ii, iv)

7.17. **EXPLORERS has revealed that lasting change needs to come from within the organisation. It cannot be achieved in light-touch or half-hearted way**. Where change is happening within an organisation and looks likely to continue, it is because of the actions of staff who, through EXPLORERS, have significant first-hand experience of inclusive practice. The leadership of the organisation sees inclusion as a right, they value the creative case for diversity and they recognise that inclusion demands resources, even if they do not yet know where the resources will be coming from. (Outcomes i and iv.)

7.18. **As a result of EXPLORERS, neurodivergent artists and makers and their work are more visible**. Most of the exhibitions and events have some record online, ensuring they continue to be accessible to future audiences and can be followed up with the organisations that commissioned or programmed the work. Individual artists, their families and support workers have reported feelings of validation. They have felt included, visible, seen and listened to. Some may have begun to feel part of a wider community of artists, beyond their familiar local group or network. It mattered that this was a three-year national (and international) programme that took place in public cultural spaces. (Outcomes ii, iv and v)

7.19. **Project Art Works' artists and makers have made new contacts as a result of EXPLORERS**: there have been more visitors to the studios and more opportunities to travel to others' spaces for EXPLORERS-related exhibitions and events. (Outcomes iv and v.)

7.20. Covid-19 may have disrupted the final weeks of EXPLORERS, but **the partners are keeping up the momentum**. Anna Farley has become a trustee of Project Art Works. Sharif Persaud's exhibition for Autograph is expected to tour. The public screening of *Illuminating the Wilderness* at the BFI will be re-scheduled and Project Art Works has begun to explore longer-term partnerships with both the BFI and MCA. A group comprising Project Art Works, Photoworks, Autograph, MK Gallery, Intoart and ActionSpace are discussing future co-commissions. Project Art Works is making new connections with organisations and individuals working with people with complex needs, including Helen Ralli at Hart Club in London, Bethlem Gallery, also in London, Shadowlight Artists in Oxford, and Amanda Sutton at Venture Arts, in Manchester. (Outcomes ii and iii).

7.21. **EXPLORERS has confirmed Project Art Works as a national leader in this field**. Through this programme, it has helped the visual arts sector to deepen its knowledge of neurodiversity and to consider the creative case for diversity from a different angle. In March 2020, at the Arts Council's request, Kate Adams accompanied a curators' tour on inclusive practice, alongside Action Space and Intoart, introducing many of the questions raised and answered by EXPLORERS to a new audience. (Outcome ii.)

7.22. In July 2020, Project Art Works was one of six UK-based artist film makers to be shortlisted for the 2020 Jarman Award. The news was reported in the *Guardian* on 2 July and the result will be announced on 24 November 2020. Project Art Works' nomination includes *Illuminating the Wilderness* and Sharif Persaud's *The Mask*. This recognition of Project Art Works as a creator of work, as well as a facilitator of the work of others, is significant and has the potential to create a larger audience for neurodivergent artists. So too does the selection of an edited short from *Illuminating the Wilderness* for Earth Photo, an exhibition organised by Forestry England and the Royal Geographical Society. The film will be screened in different locations between October 2020 and February 2021.

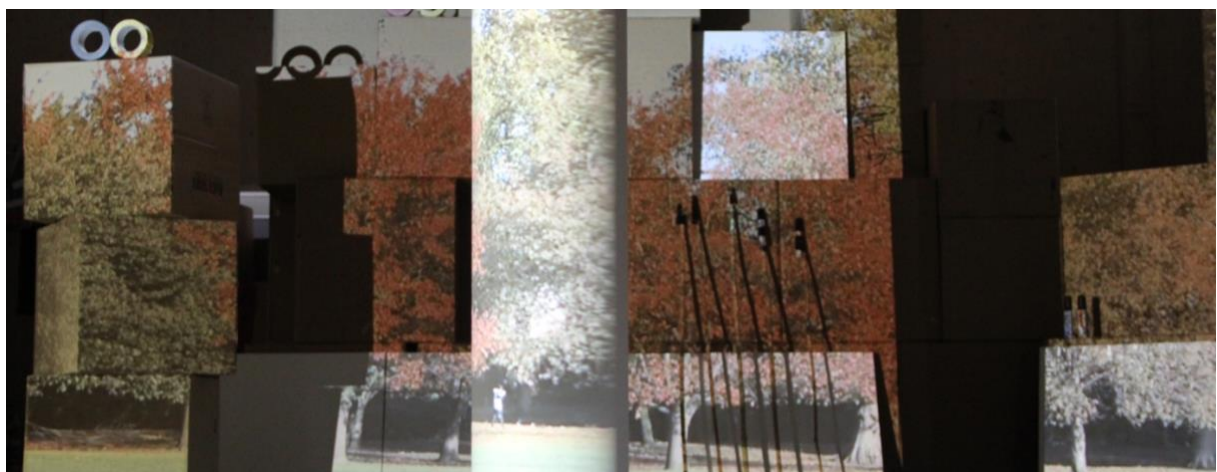
Film link: <https://vimeo.com/396919506> (restricted access, password required - Password: ITW)

7.23. As EXPLORERS drew to a close the Project Art Works team who had been most closely involved came to the conclusion that a short, forward-looking, action-oriented document would be of greater value to the arts and social care sectors and to neurodivergent artists, their families and support workers than a more traditional report on the programme. The partners also liked the idea of a manifesto of thoughts and ideas and a call to action for rights and representation in art and culture. The next step was to invite ideas. Everyone who had played any part in EXPLORERS was invited to consider four questions:

- Is representation in art and life important to you if so why?
- How do you take part in society and culture? Is this working for you? If not why?
- Do you think about the future and your place in it? If so, what do you see? • Has your involvement with EXPLORERS impacted your thinking? If so, how?

The invitation to potential contributors explained: "These questions are for everyone but perhaps most pressing for neuro-minorities. We need to question ourselves in all ways to make progress. So we are asking everyone to use the above as a start point for reflection.

"We would like you to respond in whatever way you feel is appropriate – this may be through written texts, visual or any other medium that can be applied to print and/or referenced in print. We cannot guarantee to include everything, but will curate a collection of reflections that document the aspirations of people at this moment in time."



## 8. Lessons learned or confirmed

8.1. In a partnership of organisations with established visions and highly experienced staff, 'leading alongside' is an effective approach for the coordinating organisation to take.

8.2. The coordinating organisation needs to earn its partners' trust. Project Art Works did this with its visual arts partners in three ways: by discussing possible commissions, exhibitions and related activities in terms they understood; through the expert delivery of awareness-raising sessions and encounters, designed to increase partners' confidence; and through the quality of its project management.

8.3. In an arts and social care partnership programme, the social care organisations that have been invited to take part need to be confident that the arts organisations and artists with whom they will be working have the necessary expertise. While there were some existing relationships between the arts partners and their local social care organisations, the Project Coordinator invested considerable time visiting social care colleagues to explain what was involved.

8.4. The partners in any programme have many other demands on their time and make decisions and take action in different ways and at different speeds, influenced in part by their operating structures and priorities. This reality was one of the greatest challenges for the coordination of the project. It meant that, some of the time, with some of the partners, communication was not as good as Project Art Works had expected it to be. The partnership agreement, in each case, included provision for marketing, documentation and data collection, but the partners varied in their approach to these commitments. It is important to spend time learning about partners' day-to-day operations and resources, so that opportunities can be identified and challenges understood. The quality of the relationships Project Art Works built with its fellow explorers meant that when issues arose, they were managed without negative consequences for the programme as a whole. In year one, the partners jointly identified some of the challenges they might face and consequently, they were prepared.

8.5. Whatever their scale, organisations' circumstances can change and their approach to a partnership programme may also change. The programme needs to be flexible enough to accommodate this.

8.6. Once the shared objectives of the programme have been agreed, inviting the partners to decide, for themselves, how best to respond to the opportunity helps to ensure that each feels responsible for their own success.

8.7. In a three-year programme that is partly about organisational change, it is important that more than one senior member of staff in each partner organisation is actively involved. This makes it more likely that the organisation will learn from the experience and ensures that if a key person moves on, there will be no loss of commitment or momentum. Across any organisation, some members of staff and volunteers will be more interested and more engaged than others, but the commitment of the senior management team is essential.

8.8. A creatively ambitious programme involving multiple partners and activities, in different parts of England (and one in Australia), over three years, requires dedicated staff. The part-time roles of Project Coordinator (filled by Martin Swan) and Administrative Assistant (Anne-Marie Watson) supported by other members of the Project Art Works team, were essential to the delivery of the EXPLORERS.

8.9. To avoid the coordinating organisation becoming overstretched, every effort needs to be made to avoid clashes between significant events in the programme. (This happened in year three, with the final exhibitions in Liverpool and Milton Keynes in the spring and in Brighton and Sydney in the autumn.) When a team is overstretched, communication is all the more important, but it can become one of the casualties.

8.10. Work commissioned from artists cannot be accurately described until it has been completed. This programme demonstrated that whether neurodivergent or neurotypical, artists change their minds about the work they want to make and show.

8.11. A communications strategy and plan for a partnership programme need to be agreed as early as possible in the process to ensure maximum coverage for the programme. The EXPLORERS communications strategy helped to ensure consistency in the way the programme was described and explained in gallery-based materials, online and on social media platforms.

8.12. The documentation of EXPLORERS, using photography, film and words, provided the partners with a reminder of what they were individually and collectively achieving. The one-to-one meetings between Project Art Works, the arts partners, social care organisations and care givers, the regular meetings involving all partners, the three publicly accessible conferences and within Project Art Works, regular feedback from the core team of artists who worked on EXPLORERS, confirmed the importance of discussion and reflection in achieving the programme's aims.

8.13. A programme-specific website, which describes (in this case) each partnership and co-commission as it develops, and then freely shares the resources used (guidance, checklists, consent forms, questionnaires and other reading material) serves both as a living archive and as an inspiration to others. In Project Art Works' view, the EXPLORERS website and social media platforms did not achieve their potential. The ambition had been that the partners would engage in a public exchange of thoughts, plans and actions taken, so that the website and social media platforms would become a rich and widely used resource. Time is, once again, an issue, but it may also be that it has this amount of time for all parties to see the value of such a resource and to feel sufficiently confident in their ideas and practice to use it.



## APPENDIX A – Publication/Manifesto - Invitation to Contribute



In this extraordinary moment that holds many uncertainties, we must also try to see and take opportunities where they present themselves. Perhaps for some of us, isolation and distance may provide a chance to take stock, re-evaluate and start to make plans for the future, however obscure this may be just now.

**For this reason, we are inviting you to contribute your thoughts to the way forward for neuro-minorities within life and culture**

### WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD

#### — A MANIFESTO

The end of EXPLORERS is also a beginning. To mark this moment we will publish a manifesto of thoughts and ideas and a call to action for rights and representation in art and culture. We hope this will also reflect the ethos of EXPLORERS and the voices of all those involved that have created powerful works and a movement of change.

We would like you to respond to these four questions, and tell us anything else you feel is important:

- Is representation in art and life important to you if so why?
- How do you take part in society and culture? Is this working for you? If not why?
- Do you think about the future and your place in it? If so, what do you see?
- Has your involvement with EXPLORERS impacted your thinking? If so, how?

These questions are for everyone but perhaps most pressing for neuro-minorities. We need to question ourselves in all ways to make progress. So we are asking everyone to use the above as a start point for reflection.

**We would like you to respond in whatever way you feel is appropriate – this may be through written texts, visual or any other medium that can be applied to print and/or referenced in print. We cannot guarantee to include everything, but will curate a collection of reflections that document the aspirations of people at this moment in time.**



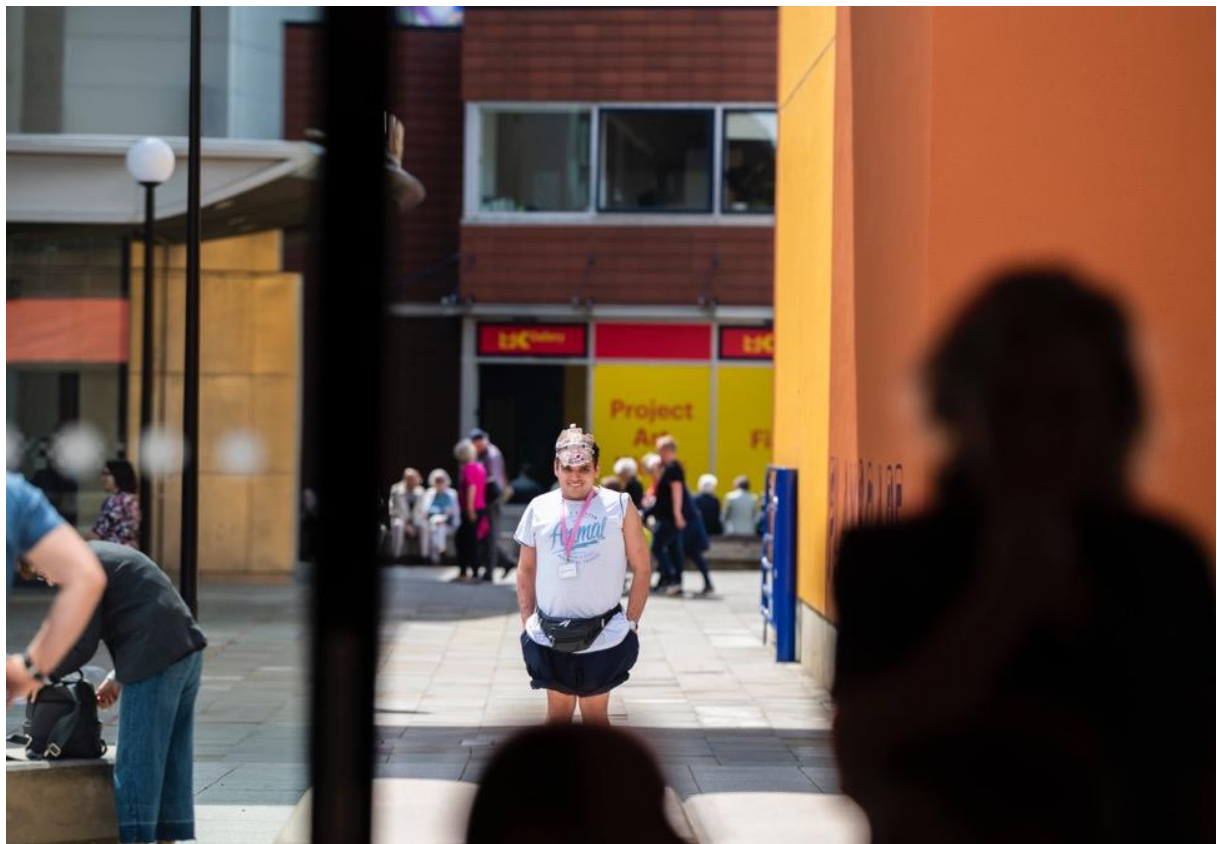
## *APPENDIX B – Images from Year Three (In chronological order)*

Milton Keynes Gallery Co-commission – Illuminating the Wilderness Film Installation  
March – May 2019







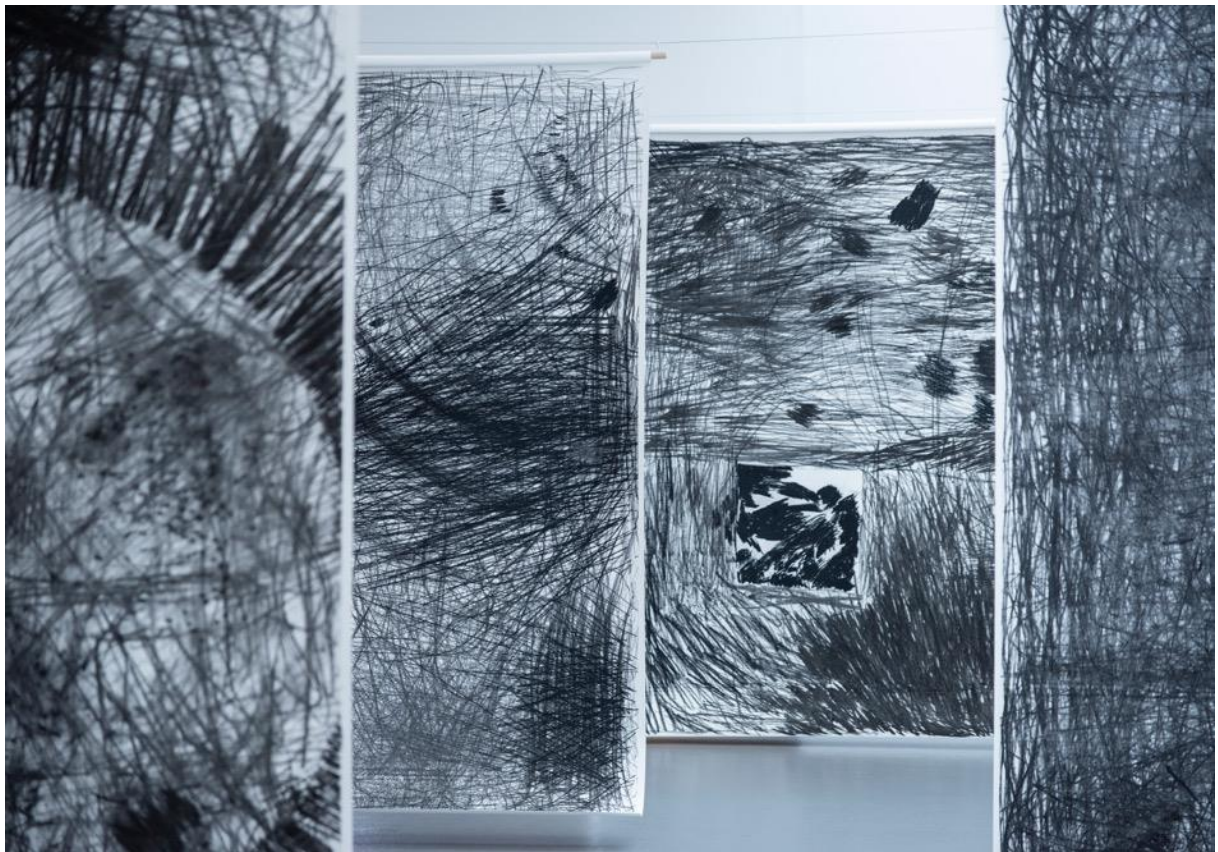


Tate Liverpool Co-commission - Illuminating the Wilderness Film Installation and Workshops  
April 2019













Fabrica Co-commission – Putting Ourselves In The Picture Exhibition  
July – August 2019











DLWP Co-commission – I Hear You Exhibition by Mikhail Karikis  
September 2019 – January 2020











UNSW/NIEA Co-commission – Illuminating the Wilderness Film Installation and Workshops at MCA Australia, September – October 2019







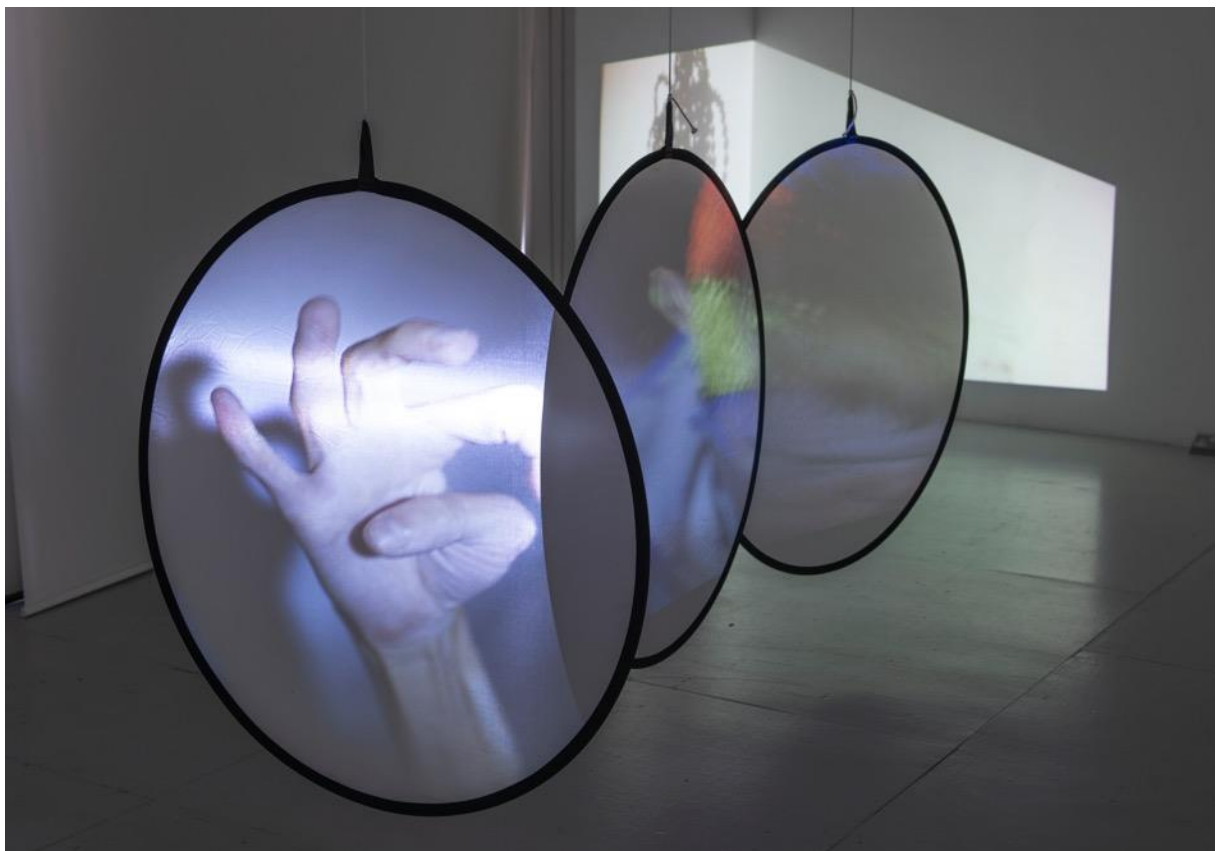


Photoworks Co-commission – In Focus Exhibition at Phoenix Gallery, with Anna Farley  
October - November 2019











EXPLORERS National Conference – Art; Rights and Representation, at Milton Keynes Gallery  
November 2020













Autograph Co-commission – Have You Ever Had, by Sharif Persaud  
February – May 2020





