



COVENTRY CREATES

Coventry Creates

WARWICK
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK



30 PIECES OF
RESEARCH



30 CREATIVE
RESPONSES



TWO YEARS IN
THE MAKING

Coventry Creates unites researchers with local artists to produce art reflecting key issues and themes across the region.

In spring 2020, the City of Culture University Partnership funded 18 local artists to respond to, and work with, researchers from the University of Warwick and Coventry University - resulting in a wide range of innovative artworks presented through a digital exhibition.

From social sciences to arts, to science and medicine, researchers worked with artists to create artistic commissions, resulting in a Digital Exhibition in October 2020. This was updated with 12 new projects in 2021 thanks to funding from both universities and Arts Council England.

The programme was led by Professor Jackie Hodgson (School of Law and Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research) and managed by India Holme Research and Impact Development Manager (Regional) working with project leads and colleagues at Coventry University.

The project was invaluable in building and enhancing relationships between contemporary visual artists in the region and University of Warwick researchers, paving the way for further collaboration in place-based cultural research.

"We were delighted to showcase the work of Coventry artists, who have worked closely with Warwick and Coventry researchers during these difficult and unprecedented times. The works of art highlight salient issues faced by Coventry's residents, and illustrate the strength and resilience of both the artistic and academic communities in a time of uncertainty."

Professor Jackie Hodgson,
Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)

COVENTRY CREATES PROJECTS

2021



'Solitude' Directed by Paul Daly

Furniture of My Imagination - 'Solitude'

Solitude and its impact on our mental and physical health is a major area of concern. How to be alone and what constitutes 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' states of aloneness, remains a topic of debate and discussion in politics, the media and wider popular culture. This has been no more pronounced than during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has radically transformed our understanding of physical and emotional solitude.

The research project

Led by University of Warwick's Dr Naomi Pullin (Department of History), this project addresses the social history of solitude and loneliness in the 17th and 18th centuries.

It explores how time spent alone (and in company) was understood, described, and experienced by early modern men and women living in Britain in their everyday lives. Using diaries, letters, journals and printed texts, the project asks what solitude can tell us about how society and culture were organised in the past. Central to this, is how the writer's gender shaped their perceptions of solitude and the world around them.

The artist

Dr Pullin worked with local photographer and filmmaker Paul Daly, who uses analogue formats in his projects. Paul's inspiration comes from the social documentary work of Shirley Baker, Tish Murtha and Chris Killip alongside the experimental and surreal expressions of Andrei Tarkovsky, Reynold Reynolds and Duane Michals.

The project explored the benefits and struggles that many men and women encountered during moments of voluntary and involuntary solitude at different moments in their lives. Pictured above, a still from the project film.



Dudley Museum, credit John Bernard and Bethany Rex

Lost Museums?

"Lost Museums?" documented the closure of museums by local councils from 2008 onwards. Museum closures are important as a record of the ongoing effects of austerity in the UK and how local government and public services have changed as a result of government policies.

The research project

Led by Dr Bethany Rex from the Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies at Warwick, the project explores the changing role of the public museum. Investigating museum closures can show us how ideas about what constitutes a museum are changing, as are ways of thinking about what museums are for, and what happens inside them.

Dr Rex interviewed decision-makers, former employees, anti-closure campaigners and others with a connection to these museums to build rich accounts of closure. The research explored how decisions about closure are made, what is at stake in these processes and how closures are experienced by different people.

The artist

Dr Rex worked with local poet John Bernard to create a poetry film in response to the research on museum closures.

John's work is an amalgamation of narrative, free verse, and lyric poetry; each form invoked to reflect his experiences, insight, struggles, community and aspirations. Through his collaborative work, he endeavours to inspire and empower his community.



UK Vegetable Genebank

UK Vegetable Genebank and Parchment Scalpel Rock: What's Up, Doc?

Genetic diversity is the total number of heritable differences between individuals. Genetic diversity is the raw material used by plant breeders to develop new crop varieties; a process called crop improvement.

We need crops to be able to cope with a changing environment and all the challenges that come with it, from shifting weather patterns to the impact of existing and new pests and diseases. Genetic diversity in crops is essential in ensuring access to nutritious food - now and in the future.

The research project

Based at the University of Warwick's Wellesbourne Campus, the UK Vegetable Genebank manages an internationally significant collection of thousands of seed samples - conserving genetic diversity in a range of important vegetable crops. Dr Charlotte Allender from the School of Life Sciences is manager of the Warwick Genetic Resources Unit, a facility which house the UK Vegetable Genebank and leads research in this area.

The seeds represent all parts of the crop gene pool, from wild ancestors to traditional and commercial varieties. The work of the genebank is essential in making sure the genetic diversity in the samples remains available, even if the seeds are no longer maintained elsewhere.

The artist

Dr Allender worked with local poet, freelance writer and former Warwick academic George Ttoouli to create an artistic response to UKVG's research entitled 'Parchment Scalpel Rock: What's Up, Doc?'. George has worked extensively with researchers across disciplines at both Warwick and Coventry Universities.



A written accompaniment to the deep listening piece created for the project.

The Impact of Covid-19 on Hospices - 'Things change, Things Changed'

People with life-limiting conditions are some of the most vulnerable to Covid-19.

Following the UK lockdown in March 2020, hospices rapidly changed the way they worked, how they cared for people with life-limiting conditions, and how they supported families. However, little is known about how the pandemic has affected those with life-limiting conditions, or those that care for them.

The research project

This research explores the effects of changes to palliative services in response to Covid-19. Led by Dr John MacArtney from Warwick Medical School, the research team worked with hospices in Coventry and across the West Midlands.

The researchers sought to capture the broad range of experiences of people in the region. The study used existing data and outputs created by the hospices in response to the pandemic, as well as conducting new in-depth interviews with patients, carers, hospice staff, and with people responsible for hospice service design and provision.

The artist

Dr MacArtney worked with local artist Emily Warner. Emily utilises a range of media and processes, drawing heavily upon collaboration and exchange in their work. Emily's work includes digital audio-visual content, text, performance, workshops and live events.

As a result of the pandemic, Emily adapted their approach to accommodate remote working, both online and offline. They have been developing works that address safety and wellbeing, through sound and space, using audio exploration and woodworking."



Navkiran Mann performing her poem Life on a Deadline, credit Stuart Hollis photography.

Care, Caring and Carers

How has Covid-19 impacted caregivers? How did family networks and community groups step in when the world shut down?

The research project

The Care, Caring and Carers research project focuses on the impact of the pandemic on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Families and Communities in Coventry and Leicester. It will examine the issues of care and caring faced by these communities by using an intersectional approach that incorporates race, gender and class.

It examined the effects of Covid-19 on both those who receive care, as well as their paid and unpaid carers. The project also explored how family networks and community groups stepped in when the world shut down.

The project was led by Professor Shirin Rai, Dr Jayanthi Lingham and Dr Shahnaz Akhter from Warwick's Department of Politics and International Studies in collaboration with spoken word artist Navkiran Mann.

The artist

The research team worked closely with Navkiran who produced a very moving spoken word piece called 'Life on a Deadline' which incorporates research and personal lived experience. Working in collaboration with Navkiran, Shahnaz obtained personal human stories from a series of narrative interviews she conducted in Coventry.

"Having these conversations allowed me to see where the research affected both of us as humans as well. Nav and I were both impacted by some of themes that were raised."

Dr Shahnaz Akhter

Despite the difficult subject of end-of-life care, the researchers were able to engage with various marginalised communities and parts of Coventry that aren't always at the forefront of research.



Say My Name recording photo montage.

Say My Name

Our names are entwined with our personal identities, often chosen with care and laden with personal meaning yet people with names that many find unfamiliar report having their names regularly mispronounced or avoided, or being pressured to change their name to fit in. This project explored whether a lack of familiarity with the pronunciation and spellings names creates barriers to teaching and learning, such as in schools, as well as in other interactions.

The research project

The project was undertaken by the Community Values Education Programme (CVEP) team in the Dean of Student's Office at Warwick. Led by Dr Jane Bryan (Warwick Law School and CVEP Academic Lead) and Puja Laporte (CVEP Programme Manager), it explored whether a lack of familiarity with the pronunciation and spellings of people's names creates barriers to teaching and learning and other social interactions.

The project sought to capture the experiences of those encountering names with which they are unfamiliar and the experiences of bearers of names that many find unfamiliar, including those who adapt their names or adopt new names to navigate this issue.

The artist

Dr Jane Bryan and Puja Laporte collaborated with Verity Pabla, singer-songwriter and founder of the Coventry-based music production company I'm Not a Machine.

In recent years, Verity has been involved in artists and repertoire (A&R) for a Rolling Stone Magazine video promo, whereby she sourced and coordinated Coventry rapper DeeLayDee to record at the Coleshill studio.

The collaborative Say My Name Project explored the experiences of staff and students, and the stories around their names. Two tracks, a monologue and poem were created for the project



Illustration by Peter O'Toole for the TOWNSOUNDS project, courtesy Let's Go Yorkshire.

Boliyan: Sounds of Women's Activism

Accounts of historic political mobilisations of South Asian women in Coventry rarely featured in the heritage of the city - even though Coventry has been instrumental in trailblazing South Asian women's activism in Warwickshire.

The research project

Dr Ravi Thiara (Department of Sociology, University of Warwick) and Dr Nirmal Puwar (Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths University of London) have followed the biographies of a small sample of women activists, as well as the structures they have put in place to support and resource change. Operating with the notion of layered political histories, the intersecting networks and tensions, the research has not sought to map the political histories in a totalising closed fashion, but rather to leave it open to plural figures and narratives.

During the course of collecting oral histories, it transpired how both pain and joy combine in political practices. Meetings, demonstrations and the construction of safe houses sat alongside the generation of joyful forms of togetherness and unity. Craft, cooking, song and dance featured in the different ways in which place-based politics in Coventry was woven together.

The artist

Dr Thiara and Dr Puwar collaborated with Preet Grewal, a community activist who has incorporated Punjabi folk arts into her practice. She has pioneered key women's organisations in Coventry and sought to build forms of togetherness to generate joy and reflections together.

Preet is a practitioner in the art of giddha and boliyan, a form of all-female Punjabi dance with storytelling lyrics and sonnets. This is a folk oral lyrical tradition that is often combined with theatre. It constitutes a female space for reflecting on public and private issues, with issues of loss, joy, abuse, sexuality, transitions and politics assembled in these words.

In this collaboration, the experiences from the oral histories were transformed into a non-linear form of storytelling through Preet's expertise in Punjabi female song (boliyan) and dance (giddha).

As this tradition that is slowly disappearing in the UK, Preet will run workshops in order to generate new boliyan reflecting South Asian women's political histories. These boliyan were performed and recorded and made available online.



a photograph created as part of the project, which also included a digital film and poem. Credit - Sherrie Edgar.

Imagine Equality, Create Change

Imagine Equality, Create Change focused on the political participation and civic engagement of women from racialised minorities and barriers to their action/activism.

The research project

Dr Khursheed Wadia is based in the Department of Sociology at Warwick. Her research on women and political participation and civic engagement includes working with local stakeholders to support gender and race equality across the West Midlands and Warwickshire.

In March 2019, she created the 'Doing Politics, Changing Society' programme (in partnership with Muslim Women's Network UK) which provided 15 local women aged 18-35 the opportunity to gain theoretical understanding and empirical knowledge about the West Midlands and wider UK political landscape. Her Coventry Creates project expanded on this earlier work, in order to foster a sense of empowerment and social connection among local women.

The artist

Dr Wadia worked with local Coventry artist Sherrie Edgar - a multidisciplinary artist specialising in artwork that explores human conditions. Fascinated by the moving image, fast youthful graphics, and embracing sounds, Sherrie produces work for the unconventional.

She is a co-founder of COVert Arts, a grassroots art organisation set up to give opportunities for artists to exhibit their work. She is part of the City of Culture 2021 Walking Forest project which highlights the importance of our environment and trees. She is also a photographer for Radford Bubbles, (photographing people in the community for a future City of Culture exhibition), and in 2021 completed a film for Refugee Week.



One of the many images created by Edie's Third Space AI, interactive, non-linear web-based artwork - The AI, The Oracle, & I.

Third Space AI

With artificial intelligence (AI) systems now able to write convincing poetry and philosophy, to generate completely realistic or wildly creative images and ideas, we truly enter an age of post-truth. AI opens up possibilities to address complex problems and imagine new worlds, bringing challenges and tensions as well as opportunities.

The research project

The concept of the 'third space' comes from the ancient Persian philosopher Suhrawardi, who described reality as existing on three parallel planes: the realm of the senses, that of the intellect, and an in-between plane, at once everywhere and nowhere.

The research was led by Dr Kevin Walker from the Centre for Postdigital Cultures at Coventry University. His research takes an ethnographic approach to AI, acknowledging the subjectivity and bias of both humans and machines, but not comparing humans with machines as functionally equivalent. If we consider 'intelligence' to be when a certain level of complexity is reached by a system, whether natural or 'artificial', then perhaps a machine intelligence, as a participant-observer in human cultures, could give us new insights about ourselves.

The artist

Dr Walker worked with Coventry-based artist Edie Jo Murray, whose work invites audiences into imagined worlds where the rules are different and reality is disrupted. Edie is an Artist Fellow at Birmingham Open Media. Recent work includes commissions from the Open Data Institute, Warwick Arts Centre and Meadow Arts. In 2020, she was a recipient of an Arts Council England 'Developing Your Creative Practice' grant, and completed a master's degree in digital media and Culture from the University of Warwick.

Circumstances

"I am a mother, and I was just thinking about what I could do that would allow me to be mom and work, and get paid."



An early storyboard from the project.

In Their Own Words

From photographers to sound engineers, to filmmakers and musicians, creative freelancers are critical to the talent pipelines and sustainability of the arts and culture sector.

However, the freedoms and enjoyment of working as a freelancer can prove highly precarious as a career - with many of the vulnerabilities exposed and exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The research project

In 2020, Warwick and Coventry Universities undertook research on the contribution of creative freelancers to the creative industries for Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC).

Led by Professor Nick Henry from Coventry University, the team researched the contribution of creative freelancers to the creative industries. The research involved interviewing 84 creative freelancers on their freelancing experience and business models pre, during and (thoughts on) post-pandemic. Outputs to date include a national webinar and a paper published for the PEC.

However, there has been little room in these outputs to express the words of the freelancers themselves. In this follow-on project led by research team member Dr Kevin Broughton, the team brought together arts and culture, social science and business and management in a further creative output entitled "Our Words: Creative Freelancing, the Good, the Bad and Shaping the Future."

The artist

The research team collaborated with Frances Yeung (founder of YIKKI Studio), a Coventry-based visual artist who focuses on how cultural exchange can create positive perceptions, and deepen understanding and trust between people from different cultures.

By bringing the stories of creative freelancers to life through collaboration, Frances and the research team worked to enhance awareness of the issues, challenges and opportunities raised by the research findings to broader audiences. In doing so, it is hoped this approach will further influence those who are tasked with supporting the vital work of creative freelancers in the UK economy.



Art and the Urban Commons

How does art, design and architecture enable empathetic and inclusive ways of living together? How do these spatial practices effect public exchange and opinion formation in Europe's urban spaces?

The research project

SPACEX was designed to address the problems faced by contemporary urban spaces in Europe, such as:

- The demise of public spaces and public spheres of opinion formation (including the privatisation of parks)
- Cultural policy and gentrification practices (art and culture are often employed as key tools in urban and commercial regeneration schemes, which often leads to displacement of poorer segments of the population.
- The dominance of economic measurements in the assessment of cultural value (cultural institutions are expected to justify their public subsidies by providing evidence-based reports)
- Lack of archival material and the under-utilisation of archives by secondary audiences. Often documents, photographs and recordings provide the only evidence of the complex range of social relations they generate.

Led by Professor Mel Jordan (Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University), SPACEX explored how art, design and architecture can instead be used to help combat these issues, and enable empathetic and inclusive ways of living together. SPACEX now has 27 partners in the form of academic and cultural organisations in nine European countries.

The artist

Professor Jordan collaborated with Coventry artist Duncan Whitley. Duncan works with experimental filmmaking and sound, synthesising cinema, documentary and spatial sound art, often produced through residencies or extended connections with the places in which he works. He has presented his work in galleries, museums, non-gallery spaces and festivals in the UK, Europe and South America.

Together with Professor Jordan, he created an experimental moving-image work exploring Coventry City Centre's built environment in the context of City of Culture 2021, extending from his Coventry Biennial commission entitled Phoenix City 2021. The film's inaugural screening took place in January 2022 at the Centre for Postdigital Cultures at Coventry University. Image - from the project.



A still that accompanies the audio piece.

Humans Not Heroes

How do healthcare workers reflect on their experiences of working through the Covid-19 pandemic?

The research project

Humans not Heroes began in the midst of the first wave of the pandemic, funded by Coventry Creates 2020. The pilot aimed to provide a space for healthcare workers to reflect on their experiences of working through Covid-19. This involved using an online arts workshop approach, whereby healthcare workers could instantiate their experiences using the arts.

Following the pilot project's success, Humans not Heroes was scaled up to allow up to 80 healthcare workers to reflect on their experiences of working through the pandemic, with the creation of new audio art pieces.

The project was led by Dr Sally Pezaro (School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health and Research Centre for Arts, Memory and Communities at Coventry University) and Kerry Wykes (Emergency Nurse, Researcher and Lecturer).

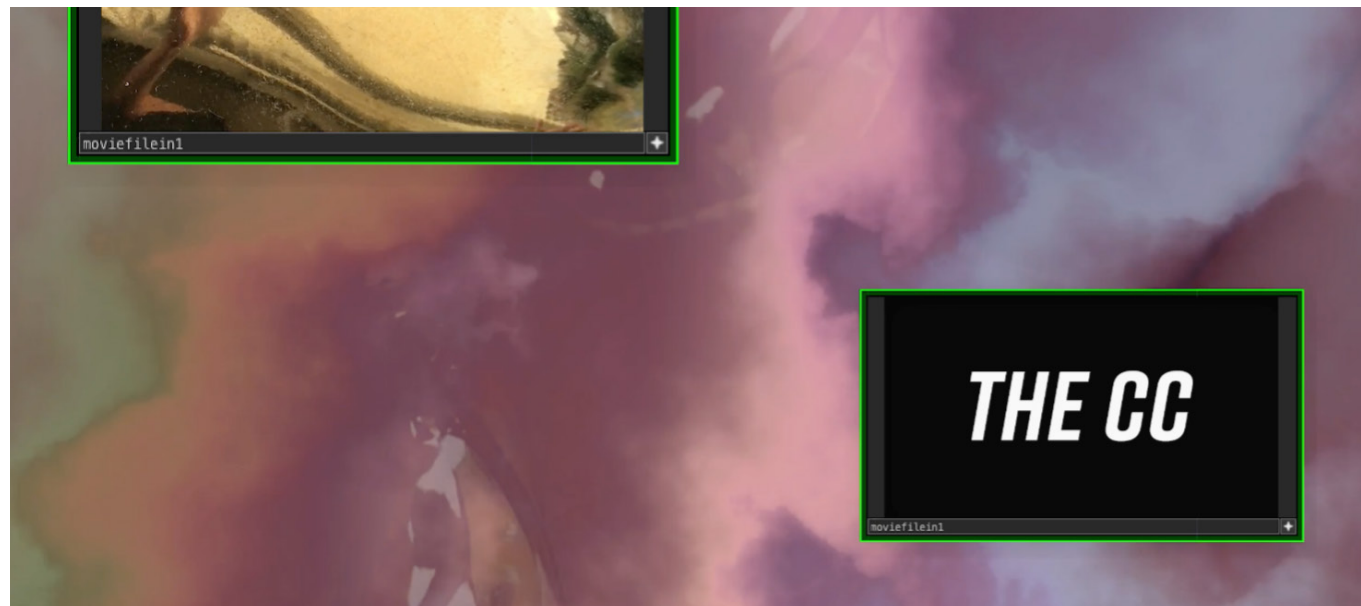
The artist

Dr Pezaro and Kerry Wykes worked with China Plate Theatre - a contemporary theatre production company, whose adventurous and imaginative works with a social purpose has led to its popular appeal in the Midlands. With a portfolio that crosses making, touring and programming shows, artist development and theatre participation, China Plate Theatre showcases UK talent, reaching new audiences and supporting the development of theatre-makers.

Lead artist on 'Humans Not Heroes', Nick Walker is a writer, producer and director. He founded the theatre company Talking Birds, and has worked with some of the country's leading new work theatre companies.

COV
EN
TRY
CRE
ATES
PROJECTS

2020



A still image from the project.

The CC

How can we support the health and wellbeing of carers? This project focuses on the 'Care Companion' – a resource developed by Warwick Medical School to support family carers through a digital platform.

The research project

Led by Professor Jeremy Dale (Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick), the Care Companion (CC) is an online tool providing support to friends and family members in care roles. It provides a personalised experience for people looking for help, advice and support, and is freely available to those in Coventry and Warwickshire.

The Covid-19 pandemic saw carers facing added feelings of isolation and loneliness in lockdown, where some have been shielding to avoid putting the ones they care for at higher risk.

The artist

Professor Dale worked with local artists Lucy Hutchinson and Emily Warner to create a video exploring how we can understand the role of care and support in society. The project was informed by workshops and conversations with unpaid carers and Warwick researchers. Through experimenting with sound, video and performance the team explored how research can be interpreted in alternative ways by creating new stories.

It became clear to the team that the perception and understanding of what care is, and who administers and receives that care, is fluid and evolving – almost indefinable. Identifying the parameters and boundaries of the care roles that people find themselves in, is equally unclear and entirely unique from person to person, species to species.

Collaborating with the artists opened the project out in new ways. The team had discussions about the challenges carers face, delving deeper into how they could communicate their experiences in a way that positively engages with their health and wellbeing.

It allowed them to reflect on the CC through emotion – considering how it might feel, sound or look helped the team to think deeper about how the public can be engaged with research. The insights they obtained from discussions and workshops with Lucy and Emily will influence future research, and how the CC is presented to the public – whether they are in need of it now, or at a later point in their life.



Cov Made Me

How does the city influence Coventry's creative community? This is a collaborative artistic research project exploring the relationship between Coventry as a place, and the identity of the city's artists and creatives.

The research project

A collaborative artistic research project, Cov Made Me explores the relationship between Coventry as a place, and the identity of artists and creatives in the city.

Led by Dr Vishalakshi Roy (Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies, University of Warwick) and Dr Victoria Barker (Centre for Business in Society, Coventry University), the team connected regularly during the (very short) project window, developing ways to understand the impact of the city on the identities of Coventry creatives. A description of the research cannot be separated from the process of collaboration – these two strands of work were woven together during the project.

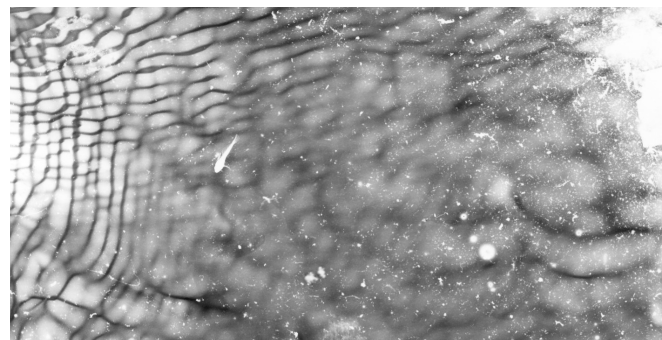
The research began with an online survey asking artists and creatives, both amateur and professional, about ways in which Coventry and specific locations in the city had influenced their creative identities. Questions were developed by the researchers and piloted with Mary to ensure they were tailored to the audience.

The artist

Dr Roy worked with artist and poet Mary Courtney, and multimedia producer Dana Chis. Mary is an award-winning poet and artist from Coventry. She collaborates with filmmakers, animators, academics, schools, and members of the public – to create art together. Dana is a multi-media producer working in Coventry. She makes short films and animations, and has had work featured in festivals around the world.

Mary's artwork explored parts of the survey directly with several Coventry artists, and the researchers have been able to use this as an alternative and additional data set.

After analysing the survey response data, the team used the film work as an additional data set to further explore place and identity issues. The emerging themes from this analysis suggest that Coventry has had a marked impact on the identity and creativity of respondents. Many physical locations and iconic buildings in the city appear to have found their way into the work of creatives. Some also noted that Coventry has given them qualities like strength and resilience, pride in the city, and a sense of community and belonging which has influenced their personal lives, as well as their creative work.



A photogram from the project, credit Jo Gane.

Flow, Fauna and Flora

This project explores the flow, flora and fauna of the River Sherbourne, at the point in Spon End where it slips beneath the city.

The research project

Led by Professor Joanne Garde Hansen (Centre for Cultural & Media Policy Studies, University of Warwick) And Dr Jana Fried (Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University) the research focused on capturing the river in ways that will generate conversation and conservation?

The artist

The researchers worked with local artist Jo Gane to explore the flow, flora and fauna of the River Sherbourne, just at the point in Spon End where it goes underneath the city of Coventry.

They shared these images and stories with those who live right on the edge of the river in the high-rise flats and social housing. The researchers' previous research on the river found that it generated conversations, public engagement and a desire to improve the water quality and surrounding landscape. Jo Gane used a unique process to capture the river and the resulting images revealed hidden elements (such as fish), as well as visualising flow and pollution in the space.

The parallels between the location and creative process established a theme; the hidden nature of the river Sherbourne as it flows under the city, and the hidden patterns captured artistically within the river.

The new prints were shared as artwork online, and postcards to local residents in order to direct them to their online presence. The project encouraged residents to share their 'hidden' images and stories of this space. The importance of local outdoor areas has risen during the current public health crisis, and seeing the River Sherbourne from a different perspective was very timely.



Found Sound

Found Sound explores cultural memory and heritage through sound. This project brought together a researcher, sound designer and digital practitioner to create an immersive experience using 'found sound' in the Cathedral's archive.

The research project

Led by Professor Jonathan Heron (Director of the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning, University of Warwick), the research asks, "How does sound create memory, and how does memory sound?"

The artist

Professor Heron collaborated with sound designer Kieran Lucas and web developer James Ball. Kieran is a sound designer, sound artist and theatre-maker. He is a founding member of Barrel Organ theatre company and associate artist at Coney. James is a production manager, technician, and occasional web developer. He works primarily in theatre, live music and outdoor art although his specialisation is in sound.

An ever-changing composition, Found Sound explores embodied cultural memory and intangible cultural heritage through sound installation. The funding from Coventry Creates enabled the creation of an immersive sound experience for people at home. This was made from 'found sound' in the Cathedral archive. The first Found Sound installation was attended by more than 450 people over two days in September 2019, with the project moving online in 2020-2021 due to the pandemic.



Mapping Women's Suffrage

Can we identify and map as many Women's Suffrage campaigners as possible? This project was designed to gather information about the 'Votes for Women' campaigners in English towns, cities and villages in 1911.

The research project

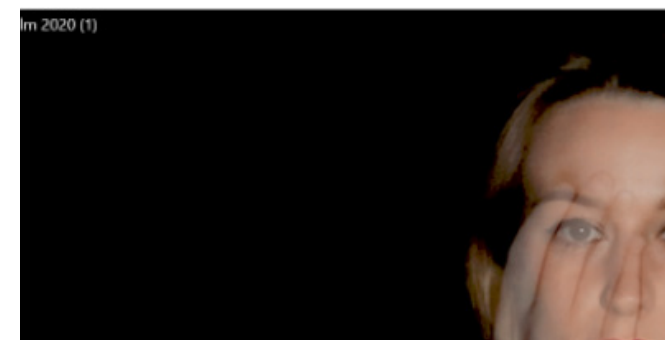
Led By Professor Sarah Richardson (Department of History, University of Warwick), the project aimed to identify and map as many Women's Suffrage campaigners as possible. The project sought to pinpoint and gather materials and information about the 'Votes for Women' campaigners in towns, cities and villages across England in 1911.

The artist

Professor Richardson worked with Verity Pabla (Singer-songwriter and founder of I'm Not a Machine music) and local Coventry band The Pips.

The artists created a song inspired by Mapping Women's Suffrage. The music was designed to complement the wider work being done to raise awareness about the research, as well as be used as a 'standalone' song in its own right.

The project is an ongoing and ever-growing piece of work, visualised geographically on an interactive map. From the map, key details about campaigner's lives are brought together in one place, including photographs, letters and official documents, right down to which suffrage society they supported at the time.



A still from the project film.

Mental Perspective

The Mental Health and Productivity Pilot (MHPP) is a study examining the importance of supporting and improving workplace mental health.

The research project

The research project was led by Professor Caroline Meyer (Department of Psychology, University of Warwick), Dr Lukasz Walasek (Department of Psychology, University of Warwick), Dr Anne Coufopoulos (Associate Dean - Enterprise and Innovation), Faculty of Health & Life Sciences, Coventry University), Professor Guy Daly (Deputy Vice-Chancellor - Education and Students), Coventry University and Sean Russell (Wellbeing Director, West Midlands Combined Authority

The Mental Health and Productivity Pilot (MHPP) examines the importance of supporting and improving mental health in the workplace across the Midlands. The programme's aims are to break down the barriers people may have accessing mental health care, whilst also increasing productivity in companies.

The artist

Using MHPP data, local artist Sherrie Edgar wrote a poem and recorded a film of a dance, depicting the meaning and impact of the pilot. Sherrie explores the findings from a large-scale survey commissioned by the Mental Health and Productivity Pilot and conducted by the Enterprise Research Centre.

Sherrie explored the findings from a large-scale survey commissioned by the Mental Health and Productivity Pilot and conducted by the Enterprise Research Centre and worked with the researchers to create a poem and short film.



An image from the production, credit STAMP theatre.

Mind the Cracks

How can a creative production help us understand psychosis? This project focuses on early psychosis, psychological distress, self-harm and associated health services.

The research project

Led by Swaran Singh, Professor of Social and Community Psychiatry at Warwick Medical School, the research revolves around mental health services, focusing on early psychosis, somatisation, and deliberate self-harm, as well as cultural and ethnic factors in mental illness, mental health law, transitions and medical education.

The artist

Professor Singh worked with Theatre and Media Productions CIC and STAMP (a theatre and media production company, specialising in creating performance, films and multi-media events inspired by research) to create a film based on real experiences that explores the early stages of psychosis (pictured).

The 10-minute film includes an introduction to what psychosis is, and explains how the research captures the stories of people and their families experiencing it first-hand. Including short excerpts from the play, some of which are verbatim text from interviews.



Reem and Paul.

Reintegrate

How can drama benefit refugee and asylum-seeking communities? This project captures refugees and local community's voices through interviews, questionnaires, self-produced text, visual materials and performance, and illuminates questions of integration in times of uncertainty.

The research project

The project was led by Dr Reem Doukmak (Early Career Fellow, Institute of Advanced Study, University of Warwick). Reem, who came to the UK as a Syrian refugee, set up STAR Conversation Club, which teaches refugees and asylum seekers English and life skills, helping them integrate into the community. She was awarded the Outstanding Student Contribution Award to recognise her contribution to student and community life.

Reem also works in Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre in the Integration Project where she helps provide opportunities to newly arrived refugees to unlock their potentials and to establish connections with the local community through arts and social activities.

The artist

Reem worked with Paul O'Donnell (theatre maker, co-founder and producer of Shoot Festival). Together, they created three videos that illustrates data from Reem's research.

By capturing refugees and local community's voices through interviews, questionnaires, self-produced text and visual materials and performance, the projects gives insights into what it is like to undertake research during the pandemic and to bring to light questions of integration at times of uncertainties for refugee and their host communities.



The City is a Virus

What would Coventry feel like if it were human? This project produced a short poetry film 'The City is a Virus' to document and archive the extraordinary and unprecedented new world environment of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The research project

Every generation has its milestone moments, and the 2020 pandemic was one of the most challenging in recent years. For this project, the artist created a short poetry film to capture this moment in time, connecting the 'great pause' with the Black Lives Matter protests, encouraging a wave of reckoning and self-reflection.

The artist

Siana Bangura wrote, produced and performed the piece, working with Coventry-based artists Chloe Deakin to create the visuals and Justine Luaba on the soundscape.



Dancing bodies

How does the body of the city co-exist with the dancing body? This multimedia project tells the story of dance the city - celebrating the amazing variety of performances in Coventry.

The research project

Led by Doctor Rosa Cisneros and Dr Marie-Louise Crawley (Centre for Dance Researcher, Coventry University), this project aimed to explore how the body of the city co-exists with the dancing body. For this multi-media project, films and podcasts were created to capture the range of performance taking place in in the city.

The artist

Marius Mates, a creative dancer, worked with the academic researchers with the aim to make breakdancing a more recognised art form. He said: "Breakdancing is not an academic-taught dance, but it is a style that can adapt and can bring dynamicity." This project helped breakdancing shine together with other forms of dance, and provided dance groups, artists and schools with a platform to share their stories and create an archive to celebrate the legacy of dance for the city.



The Make and Look Lockdown Book

This project uses narrative and poetic devices to immerse the reader as a book's main character. The resulting book allows readers to engage with the research in a physical way - quite literally creating the meaning of the project.

The research project

Led by Matt Johnston (Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Coventry University), this project examined the role of the reader in constructing meaning from visual and photobooks. For this project, 178 photobook readers from around the world were interviewed and surveyed in order to chart the relationship with a book from before it's started to well after it's put down.

The artist

Author and artist Lucie Felix writes experimental books that are inspired by games and childhood, using narrative and poetic devices to immerse the reader. For this project, she created the Make and Look Lockdown book, a participative artist's book for children and adults.



Quiet Coventry

What happens to public spaces when no one is there? This project led to the production of a virtual reality film exploring people's emotions in public spaces and where crowds form. It raises questions about perceptions of space, reality and the wider world we inhabit.

The research project

Led by Gavin Sullivan (Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University), this project explored crowd behaviour, collective emotion and social psychology.

The artist

Digital artist Edie Jo Murray collaborated on this project to create a virtual representation of the city in a deserted state. Using web-based virtual reality, the project allows viewers to explore the empty, alien version of Coventry.



Wake

How do we produce a film remotely? Investigating remote methods of production, this project explores the use of online collaboration tools to run a mini-series by Coventry-based theatre group Highly Sprung.

The research project

Led by Sanna Wicks (Assistant Professor in Film Production, Coventry University) and Clifton Stewart (Assistant Professor in Media Production, Coventry University), this project used online production to create a series of films. Everything was managed virtually, from development to casting, rehearsals, direction and production management.

The artist

Highly Sprung are a Coventry-based theatre and performance company, creating productions for and with young people.

Their productions use movement, dance and more to tell stories about the world in all its complexity.

For this project, they produced a four-part drama, entitled Wake, inspired by John Wyndham's novel The Chrysalids.



Worldwide Window

How can we communicate with film projections? Comprising a series of city-wide projections, World Wide Window took over windows and shopfronts in Coventry, prompting conversations about the role of art in everyday life.

The research project

This research project was led by Glenn Noble (Coventry University School of Media & Performing Arts), Adrian Palka (Centre for Dance Research, Coventry University) and Richard Wallace (Assistant Professor in Film and Television Studies, University of Warwick).

It explored how we can use film projections to communicate in cities, created a series of projections of live and recorded footage around Coventry. The project aimed to start a conversation about experiencing art as part of every day life.

This project was adapted in light of the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure there was no physical point of contact between artists and audience, providing an unusual artistic context to deal with the pandemic.

The artist

This project was created in collaboration with Theatre Absolute. A Coventry-based, multi-award winning theatre company, their work is driven by a relationship to the contemporary and the urban.

The Coventry Creates 2020 exhibition received funding from multiple sources across Warwick and Coventry Universities, including the University of Warwick ESRC Impact Acceleration Account ES/T502054/1.

The Coventry Creates 2021 projects received funding from Arts Council England.

Coventry Creates Evaluation

To assess the project’s success, Professor Jacqueline Hodgson was awarded an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account grant to fund an evaluation of Coventry Creates during both programmes in 2020 and 2021. The results of this analysis, together with a round table event involving artists and researchers, also led to the production of a Knowledge Sharing PDF to support future researcher-artist collaborations.

Impact and evaluation

To evaluate the success of artist-researcher collaboration on artist participants, a series of interviews were carried out. Feedback forms were gathered from artists and researchers, providing additional insights into participants’ experiences of Coventry Creates.

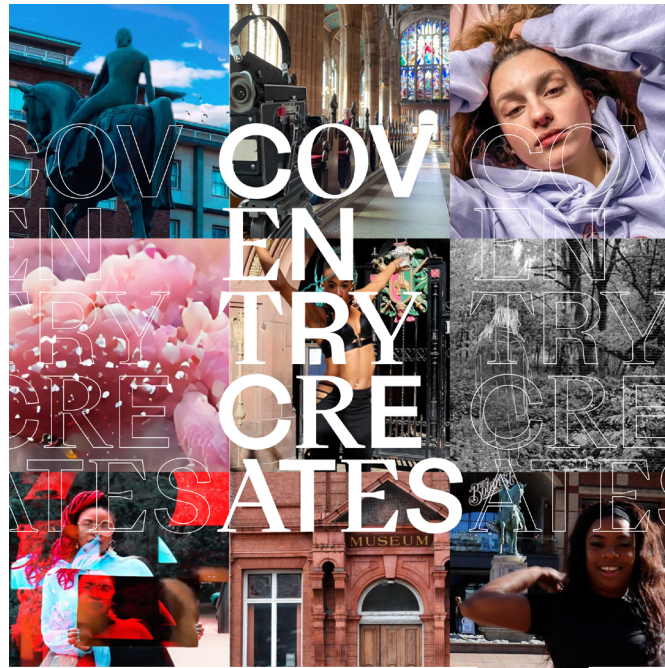
Overall, interviewees expressed a positive sentiment towards Coventry Creates and gave fascinating insights into the impacts of the programme - from providing new opportunities to present their work, to the development of new skills and practices for artists and researchers.

Participants successfully supported one another to develop their communications for new audiences and contexts.

Whilst initially conceived as project to strengthen the impact of researchers’ work, it quickly transpired that impact was being created in both directions. Artists appreciated the profiling of their work to new audiences, as well as the project’s contribution to arts and culture more broadly.

Researchers gained new insights into the significance of their work and how it may be presented and experienced in unexpected ways.

The full evaluation and knowledge sharing document can be found on the University of Warwick Coventry Creates webpages.



Coventry Creates 2: the impact of artist-researcher collaboration in Coventry UK City of Culture

WARWICK
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Emily Dunford & Jacqueline S. Hodgson, University of Warwick*

The evaluation of Coventry Creates was made possible thanks to funding from the University of Warwick’s ESRC Impact Acceleration Account ES/T502054/1.



Economic and Social Research Council

Coventry Creates Showcase

During the Resonate Festival in April 2022, we invited all Coventry Creates artists, researchers, team members, together with other local arts and cultural organisations, creatives and interested researchers to join us in celebrating the Coventry Creates Digital Exhibition.

We heard directly from team members about how the projects worked and what they meant to them. Sherrie Edgar and Navkiran Mann performed their poetry, Life on a Deadline and Imagine Equality Create Change.

For many project partners, this was the first time they had met in person, as the project was launched in response to the first UK lockdown in Spring 2020. Coming together after all this time resulted in a vibrant event full of energy, connections, and knowledge exchange.



Some of the artists who contributed to Coventry Creates, credit Stuart Hollis Photography



Left to Right: Jane Bryan and Verity Pabla present on their collaborative project Say My Name, credit Stuart Hollis Photography.



Sherrie Edgar discusses her role in the project Imagine Equality Create Change, credit Stuart Hollis Photography.



Professor Jackie Hodgson (Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor, Research) who led the City of Culture programme speaks at the event, credit Stuart Hollis Photography.



A mosaic comprising images captured at the Coventry Creates Celebratory Event, April 2022. Photography and mosaic design by Stuart Hollis

All imagery copyright Hollis Photography (www.hollisphotography.uk)



#COVENTRYCREATES

