



BALTIC & SAGE GATESHEAD ANNOUNCE ART 50 WEEKENDER IN COLLABORATION WITH SKY ARTS

A debate about our national identity will be explored in a free weekend of performance, music and art at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and Sage Gateshead in February.

The Art 50 Weekender will take place at the two cultural venues on NewcastleGateshead Quayside on **February 23 and 24**. It is part of a national project called Art 50, a scheme commissioned by Sky Arts, working with Barbican, BALTIC, Sage Gateshead and Storyvault.

The groundbreaking project has enabled 50 artistic commissions which examine the question of what it means to be British today, from the varied perspectives of people in cities, town and rural communities across the UK.

On Sunday February 24, **Sage Gateshead** will host the following Art 50 commissions:

Composer Alex Groves and writer/director Rebecca Hanbury put stories and music together using words written by people from schools and community choirs across the UK. They made it into a songbook called **When We Collide**, which will be sung for the first time by choirs from the North up to Scotland in the main concourse area of Sage Gateshead from 1pm.

At 2pm acclaimed collaborators of live music, poetry and visual art – **Lyrinx Organix** – present the premiere of a poetic conversation set to music by Chloe Florence and Laurie Ogden. Supported by Durham Poetry Slam Society, Chloe and Laurie will perform some of their own work before showcasing the new piece created for Art 50.

At 4.30pm provocative and humorous play **And the Band Keeps Marching On** by Edinburgh-based, Northern Irish playwright Martha Barnett takes place in the Barbour Room. Exploring British identity from a Northern Irish Loyalist point of view, this darkly comic study of identity, crisis and redemption explores what Britain and Brexit means to this community. It has been researched through interviews during the Loyalist parade season.

At 6pm **'Backbone of Our Land'** explores the thoughts and ideas of people from and connected to the North on what it means to be Northern. Produced by Folkworks and premiered at Folk on the Tyne, Backbone of Our Land is an hour of music and spoken word. It has been created by poets Degna Stone, Kim Moore and Andrew McMillan and musicians Peter Brewis (of band Field Music), Bella Hardy, Sarah Hayes and Dan Rogers.

At 7.45pm in Northern Rock Foundation Hall DanceXchange presents **This is an Island?** In May 2018 a group of artists went out onto the streets of Birmingham to discuss the referendum and what it means to be British in a city that voted almost 50/50 in the Brexit vote. In this brand new commissioned work, directed by choreographer Gary Clarke, This Is An Island? uses dance, spoken work, installations and film in a no holds barred version of Brexit through the eyes of Birmingham residents.

During the week leading up to February 24 families are invited to Sage Gateshead to play their part in making a creative **Window Wanderland** display. Local community artist Ivelina Goverdovskaya will work with participants to transform some of Sage Gateshead's windows into an illuminated work of art, showcasing the diversity of the region's musical community. The idea is the creation of artist Lucy Reeves Khan and has grown internationally since it began in 2015.

Abigail Pogson, Managing Director at Sage Gateshead, said: *'We live at a time in which our identity is a matter for public and private debate and this is so deeply woven into our cultural lives and how we perceive and project ourselves. Art 50 brings together 50 brand new works around this theme.'*

"We are looking forward to the Art 50 Weekender with our neighbour BALTIC and partners Sky Arts and the Barbican at such a pivotal point in our history."

All events are free but some require a ticket.



On Saturday 23 and Sunday February 24, **BALTIC** will present a series of new commissions in a free entry drop-in weekend, 10am-6pm on both days.

Three of these have seen BALTIC collaborate directly with artists **Barby Asante, Jasleen Kaur and Kuba Ryniewicz** to develop projects which is either site-specific or that has invited participants and collaborators from communities in BALTIC's immediate locality.

Jasleen Kaur investigates cultural inheritance, the slipperiness of culture and forming of identities. Kaur will work together with a small group of second and third generation Sikh's living in London, who use music and rap as a political tool and voice in a new film, screened in Level 1 cinema.

Kuba Ryniewicz is a freelance photographer, curator and researcher based in the North East of England and focuses on the relation between art and nature in diverse historic and sociocultural settings. His work challenges traditional portraiture and travel chronicle to narrate unheard stories in the context of landscape, history, fashion and culture. In this new commission, Ryniewicz will work with intergenerational groups from the region.

Barby Asante is a London-based artist, curator, educator and occasional DJ. Her work creates situations and spaces for conversation, collective thinking, ritual and re-enactment. Her projects are centred in performative actions, research and togetherness to think about contemporary geographies, race, gender and social justice; to articulate perspectives that critically reflect on the legacies of slavery and colonialism and to discuss how histories also inform the present.

The *Declaration of Independence* is a performative forum, mirroring conference and assembly spaces used to negotiate treaties of independence, coalitions, trade deals, manifestos and policies. Asante's associated performance on Sunday 24 February, also entitled *The Declaration of Independence*, on Level 2 will invite the public to make individual declarations and takes throughout BALTIC's gallery and non-gallery spaces.

Asante said: *"I am bringing together groups of women of colour to reflect on how the political affects the personal and how cultural implications of historic declarations, policies and legislations impact on their lives; to consider the possibilities for collective actions for the future and to rethink our understanding of monumental moments in world history such as declarations of independence."*

Alongside these pieces, BALTIC will present the following Art 50 commissions on Level 1:

Common Vision: *Brand Identities for Millennial Britain*

Common Vision have worked with millennials from around the UK to create witty products that re-brand today's Britain by addressing questions such as 'what does it mean to be British?' 'Does a cohesive British identity exist?' 'If we had to market our Britishness what would it look like?'

Matty Crawford and Joe Argent: *His England*

Matty Crawford is a writer/director and 2018 Sundance Ignite Fellow. His short films have screened internationally and across the UK at BAFTA recognised festivals, whilst going on to collect a number of awards. *His England* explores the story of a young Asian British kid questioning his home and identity, whilst proudly wearing his England football shirt - unaware of the political shifting landscapes around him.

Simon Wade: *Huntington Gardens*

Huntington Gardens is a short comedy that centres around three families; the Morris', Rogers' and Amin's, living on the same suburban street, and their daily war over who gets the best parking spaces. Filmmaker Wade wanted to try and find the humour hidden in amongst the absurd mess. *Huntington Gardens* and its inhabitants will act as a perfect microcosm of Post-Brexit Britain, because what could be more British than getting angry about parking spaces?"

Simon Armitage: *The Brink*

In the new film *The Brink*, specifically created for Art 50, poet and playwright Simon Armitage explores post-Brexit British identity and meditates on the relationship between Britain and Europe. As the dial on an old Bakelite radio moves from city to city - Brussels, Prague, Lyon - we tune into an impressionistic and imagistic film that combines the poet-presenter along with sights and sounds associated with each nation, mixed with sections of the poem, providing a corresponding narration.

Boy Blue: *R.E.B.E.L*

R.E.B.E.L. is a film project by Boy Blue co-funded with the Barbican, featuring and created with young people from London who weren't able to vote in the EU referendum, capturing their voices, opinions, hopes and fears. It aims to fuel the rebels of the future.

Animations: *School Britannia*

Five poems from the School Britannia scheme that most capture a sense of place will be made into animations by up and coming artists Oliver Pendle, Katherine Hearst, Nick Black, Sophie Johnson-Hill and Flora Martyr.

Naqqash Khalid: *Stock*

Stock is a genre-bending short film from director Naqqash Khalid, set in the Manchester Warehouse district. The story follows a wholesaler, newly living in the UK, who becomes caught up in an unwanted conflict with the authorities. An absurd, Post-Brexit fairy tale that plays with language and miscommunication.

Gadzooks: *Mad Dogs*

Gadzooks Animation's quirky and absurd, light-hearted short stop motion animated film is inspired by kitsch paintings of dogs playing pool as seen in pubs around the country. It features unscripted conversations of people from around the UK on the subject of being British in the post Brexit era. The British – a nation of dog lovers – discuss the quintessentials of British Culture, also manifested in their accents and as regional breeds of dogs.

Gulliver Moore: *Small Town Politics*

Small Town Politics is an online sitcom consisting of three short episodes. Inspired by a real life story, it features a young female mayor in post-Brexit Britain, set in a quaint British town. It's a brave new Britain and this is an optimistic view from a rural community, full of different types of characters, arguably unrepresented until now.

Sarah Maple: *Empire*

Sarah Maple is creating a series of paintings that explore the complex role of the British Empire in the construction of Modern British culture and identity. Sarah's work often draws on her own mixed background and in this piece, she is particularly interested in looking at her family's history of migrating to Britain as a result of colonialism.

Connor Coulston: *Me, Nan and Oldham*

Me, My Nan and Oldham is a witty re-imagining of Connor Coulston's Nan's front room. Aiming to provoke a sense of nostalgia in his audience, the artist's work reflects on the memories and ideologies of the white working class of Oldham. It aims to entertain whilst also highlighting the problems faced by those who feel forgotten and left behind in 'The Most Deprived Town in the UK'.

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

About the Arts 50 team:

About Sky Arts

Sky Arts is the UK's only dedicated channel for the arts. It offers something for everyone, whatever their passion, with entertaining programmes showcasing the best of classical and popular music, theatre, opera, dance and the visual arts, as well as original drama and comedy. Sky Arts is broadcast 24 hours a day and has over 1,000 hours available on catch-up TV, including flagship programmes such as Portrait Artist of The Year, Landscape Artist of the Year and The South Bank Show. The channel is committed to supporting the arts by investing in the best talent, both on and off screen, as well as through exclusive partnerships with major UK and European cultural institutions, including National Theatre Live, Tate and The British Library.

About Art 50

THE CREATIVE SPIRIT OF BRITAIN TODAY

Sky Arts has commissioned 50 exciting new projects examining what it means to be British in the post- Brexit world.

The impetus for Art 50 came after the outcome of the Brexit referendum stimulated a widespread debate about our national identity, with many people looking to express how they feel about our nation as we approach a future outside the EU.

Art 50 was launched in March 2017 to invite artists of all kinds, from all walks of life, from all artistic genres, and parts of the UK, to create a piece of work looking at what it means to be British in the wake of Brexit. Over two years it received over 1000 applications from which 50 were chosen - including major new works from established names like Nitin Sawhney, John Godber, Simon Armitage, Lemn Sissay and AL Kennedy along with up and coming artists such as Sarah Maple, Lucy Reeves-Khan, Abigail Conway, Martha Barnett and Connor Coulston.

15 of these projects were commissioned with our partner organizations; the Barbican, Sage Gateshead and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art. They will be hosting a festival featuring a selection of the Art 50 commissions in February 2019. The Art 50 projects will also be filmed for television by Storyvault and showcased on Sky Arts in Spring 2019

About Storyvault Films

Storyvault Films make high quality documentaries and arts programmes for Sky Arts, BBC, ITV, and Channel 4. Long-standing series include Portrait and Landscape Artist of the Year for Sky Arts. They have been running the Art 50 project for Sky Arts, since its inception, in March 2017. Storyvault are making an evening of programmes, featuring contributions from all the participating artists and showcasing the best of the projects, on the night we are schedule to leave the EU. 'Brexit Night: This is Britain' will broadcast from 7 00 pm to 12 00 pm on March 29th, 2019.

About Sage Gateshead is an international music centre and renowned conference and event venue located in the North East of England. It is for artists, for audiences and for the North.

Every year it welcomes more than two million visitors. More than 400 concerts featuring all kinds of local, regional and international music, take place all year round. Music-making and learning activity takes place not only in the building but across the region, with 190,000 people of all ages taking part in over 10,000 music classes and workshops.

The iconic building, designed by renowned architects Foster + Partners, is home to Royal Northern Sinfonia and is a place where emerging artists are nurtured through dedicated programmes and festivals.

As a charity, the support it receives helps to ensure everyone in the community can experience the joys of music.

More information on Sage Gateshead artists:

Chloe Florence as an artist she uses her work to give a voice to the voiceless in society. Her poetry is described as 'bold, raw, authentic, honest & unapologetically angry'. She started writing when her mental health & living situation deteriorated and has since performed her words across various platforms & stages, drawing upon her own personal life experiences in her work. She's a founding member of SHUTDOWN Collective, Roundhouse Resident Artist & Poetry Collective alongside being a Roundhouse Poetry Slam Finalist 2018, Longlisted for the Outspoken Poetry Prize & Vault Festival New Writers Award Winner.

Laurie Ogden is a writer and performer from Merseyside. She is a Barbican Young Poet and was the recipient of the Outspoken Performance Poetry Prize (2016). She was selected as a Jerwood/Arvon Playwriting mentee (2017-18) and has written several plays including TWIX **** 'A new writing triumph' (A Younger theatre) and Colder Water *****. Laurie is currently active with 'Victoria's Knickers' and 'Consensual' at the Soho Theatre, as a part of the 2018 National Youth Theatre REP company.

Martha Barnett is a playwright, based in Edinburgh, but originally from Belfast. Her debut full-length play, 'The Shift', was shortlisted for the Theatre 503 Playwriting Award and her second, 'At a Stop', has been developed through Progressive Playwrights at The Tron Theatre, Glasgow and the Lyric Belfast's New Playwrights Programme. She has also had readings and short plays produced at the 503, The Traverse and by Sky or the Bird. Work for screen includes Scot Squad season 5 and comedy horror short, 'Derek vs The Evil Halloween Pigeon' for iPlayer.

Ivelina Goverdovskaya - Born and raised in the Ukraine Ivelina Goverdovskaya is an artist who is living and working in Newcastle & Gateshead, UK. Her practice incorporates ritualistic performance, sound and visual abstract art. She has been featured in MoMA exhibit in 2018.

Lucy Reeves Khan's long career as designer ended abruptly after an accident left her disabled. During rehabilitative walks at night she noticed that the light from houses with curtains left open made her feel better. This led to 'Window Wanderland'. It has grown internationally over 4 years and 47 events.

Gary Clarke is the winner of a UK Theatre Award for Achievement in Dance, A Critics Circle National Dance Award, A Herald Angel Award and the 1998 Brian Glover Memorial Award. Gary is currently regarded as one of the UK's leading contemporary dance artists and has received great appreciation for his work as an independent Choreographer, Director, Performer, Mentor, Teacher and Facilitator.

Alex Groves is a London-based composer working across both acoustic and electronic music. His music has been commissioned by The Union Chapel, V&A, Royal Opera House and English Touring Opera. Alex and Rebecca Hanbury having been working together since 2010. Rebecca Hanbury is a Stage Director and resident artist at Snape Maltings (as is Alex). Along with Alex, their work has been showcased at Spitalfields Music, The National Theatre and Bristol Old Vic.

About BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art is a major international gallery situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England and has welcomed over seven million visitors since 2002 and 262,000 participants in learning activities last year alone. BALTIC presents outstanding, experimental and inspiring world-class contemporary art across 2600 square metres, making it the Europe's largest dedicated contemporary art institution.

Boasting free entry, BALTIC's distinctive and ambitious programme of changing exhibitions and events has included the work of over 450 artists from 60 nationalities in 222 exhibitions including Michael Dean, Lubaina Himid, Heather Phillipson and Rasheed Araeen.

BALTIC runs a major commissioning programme of international exhibitions annually delivering up to twelve exhibitions at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, five at BALTIC 39; a performance programme; residency and associate artist initiatives including *CONTINUOUS*, a new four-year dance partnership with Siobhan Davies Dance. In 2017, BALTIC launched the biennial *BALTIC Artists Award*, a new model for supporting emerging artists with over £120,000 being awarded for the production of new work.

BALTIC has a significant programme in its local communities including B.Local - a new model for collaboration within the heart of some of North East England's most disadvantaged communities. BALTIC's strategic partnership with Northumbria University, the BxNU Institute is led by BALTIC Professor and Director of the Institute Andrea Phillips, who joined the team in 2017.

BALTIC is a registered charity and its mission is to create greater understanding of the world through outstanding, experimental and inspiring contemporary art which has power, relevance and meaning for individuals and communities.

www.baltic.art

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the Barbican pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over 1.1 million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 staff work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas 1, 2 and 3, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery the Curve, foyers and public spaces, a library, Lakeside Terrace, a glasshouse conservatory, conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra; Associate Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra; Associate Ensembles the Academy of Ancient Music and Britten Sinfonia, Associate Producer Serious, and Artistic Partner Create. Our Artistic Associates include Boy Blue, Cheek by Jowl, Deborah Warner, Drum Works and Michael Clark Company. The Los Angeles Philharmonic are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the Australian Chamber Orchestra are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court and Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra are International Associate Ensemble.