

Each individual project has its own story and in many cases the story of collaboration between artist and researcher has only just begun. The City of Culture University Partnership between the University of Warwick and Coventry University is keen to see what else emerges. This is the story of how Coventry Creates came about.

The University Partnership has funded over 30 research and creative projects since 2018. In the fastest growing city in the UK, a city which speaks over 120 languages, has two world class universities and a rich history of innovation and inclusivity, our researchers have been working with a myriad of groups. They've worked with a lot of different communities, including parents of autistic children, Syrian refugees, politically marginalised groups, Muslim women and mothers, young people experiencing homelessness, asylum seekers, refugee communities and African and Caribbean communities. In total, 56 Coventry organisations have been involved in these projects, encompassing a remarkable array of activities. Over the last couple of years we've had film screenings, canal boat festivals, literacy workshops, photography, dance and cookery... well actually there has been so much activity it's probably best you go and see for yourself.

As we went into full lockdown, the University Partnership were concerned, that some of the projects we had funded for 2019/20 would be really hard, if not impossible, to deliver. These projects all centre upon connecting people – physically connecting people – getting people together to grow food or transform urban spaces, discuss challenges and share knowledge. As it turns out our researchers are all such innovative thinkers that most projects adapted and continued! But as we discussed what kinds of projects could (theoretically) be delivered in lockdown, we became increasingly concerned about the disastrous impact lockdown could have upon local artists. With headlines of self-employed people falling through the gaps, we really wanted to deliver a project that could provide support and open doors for our local creative sector. We were also keen to provide an opportunity for researchers from any discipline to do something a little different and extend their networks.

The University Partnership decided to pool any funds that we could, support as many artists as we could and launch Coventry Creates as fast as we could. When we combine people and ideas that wouldn't usually interact, truly amazing things can happen. This exhibition is evidence of that. It's not often you get a song that's been written, performed and produced based on university research!

We would like to say thank you, once again, to all the talented and dedicated artists that have helped make this exhibition happen. Thank you to the researchers that have shared their work and for being open minded and excited to do so in new ways. We hope that it inspires others to reach out and work in new ways with new people and new ideas.

The City of Culture University Partnership Team

**'Though global in their reach, the two universities are rooted in the local community, and this exciting exhibition is an inspiring example of that engagement.'**

Professor Neil Forbes

The City of Culture University Partnership team is made up of a number of academics and professional services staff. The City of Culture Research strand is led by Professor Neil Forbes (Coventry University) and Professor Jackie Hodgson (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), University of Warwick). Coventry Creates is a collaborative project across both universities and coordinated by India Foster (University of Warwick) and Peta Murphy (Coventry University) with the support of Samima Hussain (Coventry University).

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Thank you to the rest of the University Partnership team, panel members, funders and multiple colleagues across both universities who have helped to make this project happen.

**"Coventry Creates demonstrates the commitment of both universities to playing our part in Coventry City of Culture and working with our local creative sector in exciting new ways."**

Professor Jackie Hodgson