

21 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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WELCOME

BY RYAN HUGHES

Welcome to *21 Announcements*. This issue in our ongoing series of communiqués presents the greatest number of announcements about the Coventry Biennial 2021: HYPER-POSSIBLE programme to date.

This issue is released in January 2021, when, had COVID-19 not changed every facet of contemporary life, Coventry's time as UK City of Culture would have been starting. The city would have been throwing its doors (and medieval gates) open to the world.

This communiqué and its related appendices that provide even more detail and context around our activities and our exhibitions' themes, are designed like much of the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme, to reassure our communities that great things will happen again. That after all of our anticipation and hard work, that 2021 will be an exciting, enjoyable, intriguing and enriching year. That even with (what will hopefully be only) the lingering impacts of social distancing and a global pandemic that art, togetherness and joy are

HYPER-POSSIBLE.

We have already announced a lot of innovative projects with artists including:

Ayo Akingbade
Ryan Christopher
Faye Claridge
Laura Dicken
Georgiou & Tolley
Grace Ndiritu
Alan Van Wijgerden
melissandre varin
Duncan Whitley

In this communiqué, we are delighted to be able to make 21 additional announcements of artists that we will be working with, programmes that we will be and have been delivering, and organisations that we will be partnering with during HYPER-POSSIBLE. Further information will follow over the coming months with our final announcements scheduled for release in May, just as the UK City of Culture activities will be starting to take place across the city.

However, for this moment, we hope that these 21 news stories, along with those that we have already released will inspire and reassure.

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MAJOR FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are delighted to be able to share that we have recently secured significant public funding that will support the delivery of Coventry Biennial 2021 and that will, in turn, enable us to support the visual art sector in the city and region.

Following their support of previous Coventry Biennials, Arts Council England have generously awarded us £125,000 from their National Lottery Project Grants programme.

Coventry City of Culture Trust supported our work in 2019 and they then invested again in the research and development that has led to the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme. More recently, they have matched Arts Council England's investment in our work, ensuring that local artists, organisations and citizens can engage with high quality contemporary art.

This communiqué outlines many of the ways that we will use this generous investment to present innovative social, political and critical art in Coventry and Warwickshire.

Before our further announcements, it is a pleasure to be able to hear from Chenine Bhathena, the Creative Director of Coventry City of Culture Trust on the significance and possible impact of this investment:

"Coventry has an extraordinary history, known around the world for the 'movements' that we have started, born out of our diverse international population and the city's grassroots social activism. Whether 2Tone Music, Theatre in Education or the BLK Art Group, working locally and thinking globally has always been central to our ethos for Coventry UK City of Culture 2021. Coventry Biennial echoes all of these aims, and continues to be a hugely important voice in championing the many different visual artists from across the city connecting with live issues, setting the tone and shifting the focus of the narrative in an exciting and dynamic way. The third Coventry Biennial will be truly special and celebrate Coventry's long held position as a City that Moves..."



HYPER-POSSIBLE VENUES

Coventry Biennial 2021 will unfold across a number of venues in Coventry and Warwickshire in the same way that our programmes did in 2017 and 2019.

We're delighted to be returning to the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum to make a large group exhibition that will be the centrepiece of our programme.

We are also pleased to be returning to the nearby Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum where we will make another significant exhibition.

The final venue that we are returning to is the iconic Coventry Cathedral. We have a dedicated announcement about our project in this powerful site of peace and reconciliation later in this communiqué.

In previous years we have also presented large exhibitions in disused or unusual locations. In 2017 we worked in The CET Building, a vast newspaper factory and office building. In 2019 we took over an old NHS rehabilitation clinic. We're excited to announce that we are continuing this approach during HYPER-POSSIBLE.

We will be making a large scale group exhibition in the Grade 1 listed Old Grammar School on Hales Street in the city centre. This building, which dates from 1154, provides a beautiful and historic setting where visitors will be able to engage with contemporary art and a significant part of the city's medieval history.

We are also excited to announce that for the first time, we will be presenting activity at Rugby Art Gallery & Museum, highlighting our ongoing and increased commitment to the nearby county of Warwickshire.

Further details about an additional new venue that will host a part of the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme can be found on the next page of this communiqué.

Finally, it is worth noting that we are also still in conversations with cultural organisations, local authorities, property developers and agents and we expect to be able to announce at least one more exhibition venue soon.



A NEW CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE IN COVENTRY CITY CENTRE

While listening to the needs of artists and audiences following the previous Coventry Biennials, it became painfully obvious that Coventry needs more high-spec spaces for the production and presentation of contemporary art.

We are delighted to announce that through developing a close and timely partnership with The Empire and renewing our relationship with Coventry Artspace that we are able to create a new gallery space for Coventry city centre.

Temporarily, for the duration of 2021, called *The Hyper-Lab*, this new visual art space will be situated on the top floor of The Empire, a new large capacity music venue being developed in the city centre. This building was previously a cinema and *The Hyper-Lab* will be situated in the old, industrial projection booths above the venue's café and balcony.

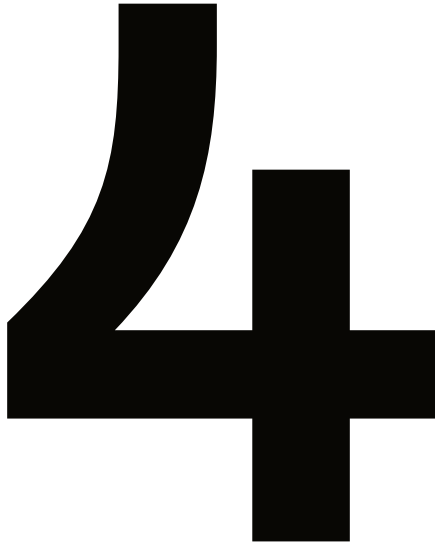
Following our use of this space during Coventry Biennial 2021: HYPER-POSSIBLE, Coventry Artspace will take over the space and will offer studios, exhibitions and other opportunities for local artists.

This model of working with Coventry Artspace is something that we trialled in 2019 and into 2020 with our shared occupancy of The Row, a former NHS building that housed a significant part of the biennial and then became artists' studios, workspace and event space before being sold by the owner.

This new space will host artworks and commissions during HYPER-POSSIBLE, and we will seek to open *The Hyper-Lab* up to the public earlier in the year, enabling audiences to meet artists that we are working with and to get a deeper insight into how artworks are made.

Further details on The Empire can be found at:

COVENTRYEMPIRE.CO.UK



INTRODUCING THE HYPER-POSSIBLE CURATORIAL FORUM

The Coventry Biennial 2021 exhibitions programme has been collaboratively designed by a forum of local curators. This Curatorial Forum is led by an in-house team including our Artistic Director Ryan Hughes and curators Dr Michael Pigott and Anneka French.

The skills and expertise of this in-house team are complimented by support from curators and producers who work in our partner organisations including Rosie Addenbrooke at the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Jane Simpkins from Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum and Cara Pickering from the Coventry UK City of Culture Trust.

Bringing additional expertise into this forum is our 2021 Curatorial Resident Ian Sergeant, an independent curator and PhD candidate at Birmingham City University.

Together, this group has significant experience of organising exhibitions and artists' projects as well as having specific expertise in artists' moving image and sound, writing and publishing. They all maintain a wide range of

local, national and international networks of artists and creative practitioners.

This Curatorial Forum have collaboratively devised the HYPER-POSSIBLE themes and will be working with a wide range of artists to make and present exhibitions, events and activities from October 2021.

These seven local curators have also been supported by a range of academic and independent researchers.

Giorgia Rizzioli, a Midlands 4 Cities AHRC funded PhD candidate who is moving from Venice to be based at Coventry University will soon be undertaking a secondment with this forum.

Dr Sylvia Theuri provided significant input into the development of the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme and we have had additional support from Sophie Clark and Niall Gallen.

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A BRITISH COUNCIL FUNDED RESIDENCY

The British Council have generously funded an opportunity for us to offer an artist or collective from the Americas with the chance to spend time working alongside our Curatorial Forum and local communities to make a new work to be presented during HYPER-POSSIBLE.

An in-depth exchange will take place ahead of the Biennial and the selected practitioner(s) will bring new experience, outlooks, perspectives and practices into our planning and development of Coventry Biennial 2021. Having developed a deeper understanding of the aims of the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme they will be able to develop a new artwork, project or activity.

The artist or collective will also be encouraged to deliver a seminar or workshop with local students and will have the opportunity to contribute to this series of communiqués, ensuring that they are embedded in the city and wider visual art and creative sectors, as well as within our own programme.

We will seek a socially and

politically active artist or group to undertake this project, further ensuring that we engage with the themes of HYPER-POSSIBLE in a global way.

Reflecting on this opportunity, Artistic Director Ryan Hughes says:

"It's wonderful to have received significant support from the British Council to enable us to work with practitioners from the Americas."

He continues:

"Over recent years we have watched artists from this part of the world make bold and urgent comments about feminism, LGBTQI+ rights and women's rights. Artists from São Paulo to Mexico City are making work about these issues in a context that is very different to the UK and we can't wait to bring some of their direct action to Coventry."



CULTIVATING (more) FLIGHT IN BLUE SKIES: AN OPEN CALL FOR D/DEAF, DISABLED AND NEURODIVERGENT ARTISTS

Following the success of Jazz Moreton's project at Coventry Biennial 2019, we are delighted to announce that we have renewed our partnership with Talking Birds and DASH to offer a residency and commission to a d/Deaf, disabled or neurodivergent artist, who will present a new work or project during HYPER-POSSIBLE.

The successful artist will undertake a developmental residency with Talking Birds, as a part of their ongoing Nest Residencies programme. During this time the artist-in-residence will receive mentoring and critical input from all three partner companies as well as a separate budget for resolving their ideas into a significant new artwork to be presented at Coventry Biennial 2021.

Janet Vaughan, Co-Artistic Director of Talking Birds says:

"We are excited to be collaborating with DASH and Coventry Biennial for a second time. Being able to round out a Nest Residency with additional specialist mentoring, advice and expertise from the wonderful folk at DASH gives the artist a really valuable

opportunity to grow and develop their practice throughout their time with us - while being supported as much (or as little) as needed - and progress confidently into completing their commission for Coventry Biennial."

Coventry-based artist Jazz Morton, who completed the *Cultivating Flight in Blue Skies* project that preceded this initiative explains the impact one year on by saying:

"My biennial residency and commission were a useful and powerful springboard into arts professionalism. One year on, I have become a serious artist with a world of opportunity and a plethora of contacts. I'm now undertaking creative work for the BBC, that I've accessed through the mentoring that was offered alongside my commission."

The full open call document for this opportunity will be released in February 2021.



MOTHERS WHO MAKE x HYPER-POSSIBLE

Mothers Who Make is a fast-growing international initiative aimed at supporting mothers who are artists. Every kind of maker is welcomed and every kind of mother.

For the past two years, the local *Mothers Who Make* hub in Coventry has been co-facilitated by local artist and mother, Adele Mary Reed. Over the past year she has facilitated the hub independently within a strong collective framework.

Following a successful partnership in 2019, during which we supported award-winning Scottish artist Jacqueline Donachie to deliver a workshop with local creative mothers, we are delighted to have renewed that partnership and to announce that we have employed Adele to continue delivering *Mothers Who Make* in the city.

This strategic partnership ensures that a resource and network that is well used and valued continues to flourish in the city, and that we are able to provide some logistical, practical, financial and emotional support to an artist in the city who is working hard to

develop her own practice and support the practices of other artists and mothers.

Throughout 2021, up to and during HYPER-POSSIBLE, Adele will continue to coordinate *Mothers Who Make* in Coventry with the meetings taking place via Zoom, or as restrictions allow back at the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum where the sessions ordinarily take place.

The HYPER-POSSIBLE programme will inform some of the activities that take place within Coventry's *Mothers Who Make* hub and, once the third Coventry Biennial opens, we will offer the *Mothers Who Make* members a customised, critically engaged and child-friendly guided tour of our shows.

Further information about the national *Mothers Who Make* network can be found at:

MOTHERSWHOMAKE.ORG

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ARTIST ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our Curatorial Forum are quickly resolving the HYPER-POSSIBLE exhibitions and in Appendix One, attached to this communiqué we are able to introduce ten artists that we are working with and share a detailed update of a project that we have announced that we are making with Warwickshire-based artist Faye Claridge.

The HYPER-POSSIBLE artist list now includes:

Art & Language

Ayo Akingbade

Leilah Babirye

Ryan Christopher

Faye Claridge

Rupi Dhillon

Laura Dicken

Mark Fisher and Justin Barton

Denzil Forrester

Georgiou & Tolley

Russell Haswell

Matthew Krishanu

Helen Kilby Nelson

Grace Ndiritu

Keith Piper

Alan Van Wijgerden

melissandre varin

Duncan Whitley

John Yeadon

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(un)LEARNING: PROJECTS WITH LOCAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Sarah Jerrard-Dinn has led our work with local educational institutions to give students at a wide range of levels the opportunity to engage with the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme.

We are already delighted by the energy and excitement of these young creatives and are sure that over the coming year they will continue to surprise us with their interpretations of the HYPER-POSSIBLE.

As an example of these projects, current post-graduate Graphic Design students at Coventry University were assigned a module in their first semester where they had to develop innovative, new publicity campaigns for print and digital that clearly communicates our underlying themes of publishing, activism, self-organisation and networks.

Lecturer in Graphic Design, Dr John Hammersley explains:

"The HYPER-POSSIBLE themes are timely, very useful from an educational perspective and ironically feel a bit overdue in the context of current art education."

He continues, highlighting the impact of the project:

"The students went through some interesting layers of thinking. Many of them were influenced by the BLK Art Group and the Black Lives Matter intersection."

"It's been interesting to see how the current students respond to the Biennial's themes, and perhaps the similarities that they have with some fine art students, in seeing how to get beyond the idea that their work is a thing that is all about themselves."

Examples of work that these students have produced can be found in Appendix Two, with special thanks to Dr John Hammersley and Lisa Webb at Coventry University.

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LISTENING TO THE ANTHROPOCENE: INTERNATIONAL SOUND ART IN COVENTRY CATHEDRAL

Listening to the Anthropocene is an exhibition that borrows its title from AM Kanngieser's 2015 project of the same name, and their ongoing research into sound and the environment.

The exhibition will be an immersive presentation of sound artworks by international practitioners who have been affected by, and who respond to, concerns around the impact that humans are having on the earth.

Devised as a kind of *"environmental album"*, this immersive grouping of sound artworks will fill the Cathedral at carefully scheduled times throughout HYPER-POSSIBLE.

Curator at Coventry Biennial, Dr Michael Pigott asks:

"How can we perceive and comprehend changes that are occurring on a planetary scale, and at a pace that can be glacially slow but is sometimes surprisingly fast?"

And adds that:

"Timothy Morton describes global warming as a 'hyperobject' – something that

is so 'massively distributed in time and space relative to humans' that we cannot directly perceive it or easily comprehend it."

This exhibition will use the idea of the hyperobject as an organising principle. The exhibition will be distributed across the time of the biennial and the vast space of Coventry Cathedral.

Excitingly, this exhibition continues our long-standing relationship with Coventry Cathedral. During Coventry Biennial 2019 we worked with Artangel to present Šejla Kamberić's *1395 Days without Red* and shortly after our initial announcements about HYPER-POSSIBLE, we returned to the Cathedral with Arts Council Collection to present The Otolith Group's ground breaking moving image work *Otolith 1*.

More information about this exhibition will follow over the coming months. In Appendix Four, attached to this communiqué, we share a recent, related text by AM Kanngieser called *Ecofascism and Nature is Healing*.

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POTLUCK LUNCHES AT HYPER-POSSIBLE WITH THE SOCIAL ART NETWORK

In the past we have hosted a wide range of Potluck Lunches where artists, visitors to the city and a wide range of community members have met and discussed ideas related to art, culture and the city while sharing an informal meal.

Social Art Network are a UK wide artist-led initiative developed to support creative professionals working with and dedicated to community-led projects. They describe the network as:

“unapologetically political and unreservedly radical in our approach and practice.”

Social Art Network is currently made up of 10 regionally based hubs who run regular meet-ups that are:

“Artist-led spaces for creative practitioners to come together, share work, discuss challenges, explore new methods, and share ways of working.”

We are excited to announce that the *Social Art Network* will be taking over our Potluck Lunches during HYPER-POSSIBLE, creating a friendly space to grow networks, to

discuss ideas, to natter and to eat freshly baked bread, homemade hummus, chips and gravy and whatever else visitors might bring along to share with the group.

This partnership, like the *Social Art Network* itself, is based on the model of mutual aid where the two organisations are supporting each other to create an environment that supports artists and the communities that they work with.

Further information about the national *Social Art Network* can be found at:

SOCIALARTNETWORK.ORG

Coventry Biennial is a social, political and critical platform for contemporary art. In recent years our exhibitions, events and activities in galleries and more unusual locations have attracted over half a million visitors including local residents, artists and art professionals from across the UK, and cultural tourists from around the world.

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