

COVENTRY BIENNIAL 2021 EVALUATION



EVALUATION SUPPORTED BY:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This document presents a detailed evaluation of the third Coventry Biennial programme, titled HYPER-POSSIBLE, that was presented alongside the Turner Prize and as a part of the UK City of Culture 2021 celebrations.

The programme ran across Coventry and Warwickshire from the 8th October 2021 to 23rd January 2022.

This executive summary page presents significant headline data and testimonials gathered by Earthen Lamp and the Coventry Biennial team.

ARTISTS & SOCIAL IMPACT:

Almost **90%** of artists found working on Coventry Biennial 2021 to be a positive experience.

1/3 of artists reported new opportunities as a result of participating in Coventry Biennial 2021. These opportunities have included:

Works acquired for museum collections

Nominations for internationally significant prizes and awards

Presentations at national festivals

Presentations at international art fairs and festivals

One artist commented:

"It is going to change the direction of my career, and of my life, long-term."

A number of participants are now working in the public and cultural sector in various capacities.

Participants reported feeling inspired and empowered with one person saying:

"It was really inspiring and made me feel less alone as a mother."

AUDIENCES & DIGITAL REACH:

Coventry Biennial 2021 had a total audience of **495,744** people.

112,928 people visited Coventry Biennial 2021 exhibitions.

7,234 people attended Coventry Biennial 2021 events and sessions.

5,582 people engaged with Coventry Biennial 2021 artworks in print and online.

370,000 people saw Coventry Biennial 2021 artworks in a public location.

Coventry Biennial 2021 had a minimum digital reach of **630,126**.

Audiences rated the quality of Coventry Biennial exhibitions and events the most highly (average **4.28** out of 5).

73% of respondents had increased pride in Coventry and the local area up from **61%** in 2019.

One visitor commented:

"The venue itself is incredibly unique and offbeat which largely impacted my experience with the artworks. The placement and space used was incredibly thought-provoking and went against my preconceived expectations."

WORKFORCE & PARTNERS:

90% of the team felt that working on Coventry Biennial 2021 had positively impacted their career path or the development of their practice.

100% of the team learned new skills or gained new experiences.

One team member explained that:

"the most positive thing about the experience of working on Coventry Biennial is the spirit of the whole thing and the people who make it happen - its enthusiastic, enthusing and uplifting. It feels like the Biennial has an anarchic freedom to it."

One partner organisation reported that:

"I've been given the opportunity to work with some fantastic artists and facilitators and the rare opportunity for a charity to exhibit in prestigious spaces and with high-profile artists. Working with Coventry Biennial has created great new opportunities for the charity I work for and the people we support."



Jaguar Land Rover Band
A Fanfare for Coventry Biennial

Made during the co-creation phase of Duncan Whitley's *Phoenix City 2021* and performed at the HYPER-POSSIBLE Grand Opening.

Performance
 2021

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum

Photo: Marcin Sz

A NOTE FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR. RYAN HUGHES:

In 2017 when we founded Coventry Biennial, the year 2021 seemed like some distant future. It was a time that I imagined with utopian enthusiasm and it was a time that we were actively and energetically working towards as the city was bidding to become UK City of Culture.

Writing this, as spring is just beginning in 2022, having just taken down the Biennial exhibitions and with the Turner Prize having just left the city, we are living in a future that has been half a decade in the making, but what has been achieved in this time? This publication attempts to reflect on that question while also looking closely at the third Coventry Biennial programme - the artworks, exhibitions and events that have been HYPER-POSSIBLE.

This third Coventry Biennial took a trio of moments from the city's (art) history as starting points, evidencing that Coventry has always fostered collaborative, innovative and radical artistic practices for everyone. Through the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme we presented a range of new artworks and exhibitions that proved that this is still the case, that showed that artists in this city and region are creating artworks that are ambitious, of the highest quality and that speak to international concerns while also remaining deeply relevant to

local communities.

Of course, it's important to note that this future that we are living in looks and feels nothing at all like we imagined back in 2017.

Covid-19 has touched us all. Its effects are far reaching from personal and public health to the economic and the ideological. We've lost friends and family members, we've watched our loved ones and neighbours struggle with illness as we've put ourselves into quarantine and I want to take a moment to thank the artists that we worked with and my colleagues for their commitment and passion under such difficult circumstances.

In the welcome note that I wrote in this publication's precursor, *Sowing Seeds*, published in 2020 following the second Coventry Biennial, I expressed that:

"When risk and experimentation is fundamental to an endeavour there will always be both successes and failures of different scales"

I believe this as firmly now as I did at the time of writing that, and throughout this publication we attempt to share both successes and failures, learnings and discoveries of all kinds. This deep reflection will inform our work and ways of working for the fourth Coventry Biennial and beyond.

I would like to congratulate everybody that we worked with on this third Coventry Biennial - you've shown what a difference art can make to people's lives and this has been truly inspirational.

It has been amazing to see what artists have achieved since the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme, sometimes using their work with us to leverage opportunity and at other times not. However, particularly noteworthy developments include:

Sin Wai Kin's nomination for the 2022 Turner Prize.

Black Beauty by Grace Ndiritu being nominated for the Jarman Award.

Faye Claridge's We Bear project touring to the Ann Arbour Art Fair (USA).

Duncan Whitley's moving image work Phoenix City 2021 being screened at Flatpack Festival.

Likewise, the communities, groups and individuals that worked with artists during Coventry Biennial 2021 have benefitted and created benefit from the opportunity and platform that Coventry Biennial presented in 2021. There are some significant case studies included in this document.

It is this note on impact that I hope partners will reflect on most

deeply. Without their support, the level of inspiration and change that we have witnessed wouldn't have been possible and I want to take this opportunity to send our deepest thanks for their support.

Finally, I would like to extend this thanks to our audiences, at a time when travel was difficult, entry to buildings was an exercise in bureaucracy and large gatherings reflected a health risk, you have been responsible, kind, understanding and deeply engaged. I hope that you gained as much from visiting HYPER-POSSIBLE as we did from delivering it.

WHAT IS COVENTRY BIENNIAL?:

Coventry Biennial was founded in 2017 as an artist-led, strategic response to the city publishing a 10 year cultural strategy and the bid to become UK City of Culture.

Our vision and mission is to make:

Contemporary art exhibitions, initiatives and collaborations of social relevance

With Coventry, its neighbours and beyond

Activating spaces, exchanges and experiences

We work with artists to respond to the city's complex history, geography, built environment and relationships, retaining an outward-looking perspective, ensuring that our work has broader appeal, significance and impact. This unique context informs our commissioning of new works that are often co-created in response to themes that connect to the local area while also relating to broader developments and trends in contemporary art.

Our programmes occupy local museums, galleries and studios, but distinctively, also make innovative use of disused or non-art spaces as a way to reach new audiences & increase relevance.

Through our long-term partnerships with organisations including Arts Council Collection,

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry University and Crisis UK we are able to offer unique opportunities, connecting us with communities who have not been given the opportunity to engage with contemporary art, enabling us to make impactful projects.

We aim to:

CONNECT people, groups and places in unique and meaningful ways, increasing engagement with contemporary art and the unique context of the local area.

MAKE work with artists and communities that is ambitious, innovative and high quality, building on the city's craft and manufacturing heritage.

DEVELOP the local sector and scene to grow, becoming more diverse, dynamic and sustainable, learning from the city's art history while fostering new talent and initiatives.

To do this we support and present socially, politically and critically engaged art in Coventry and Warwickshire to local, national and international audiences.



Grace Ndiritu
Black Beauty: For a Shamanic Cinema
 Moving Image Installation
 2021

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum

Photo: Garry Jones

ARTIST SATISFACTION AND TESTIMONIALS:

All artists work differently and we are committed to ensuring that participating in Coventry Biennial is a rewarding experience for all artists and creative practitioners. We are sorry that for a few artists this hasn't been the case during Coventry Biennial 2021. We are committed to improving our working practices and methodologies in response to feedback from these artists.

The following data and testimonials are taken from a pair of surveys conducted after the de-installation of the HYPER-POSSIBLE exhibitions.

Earthen Lamp conducted a number of independent and in-depth case studies with a range of artists that we commissioned to make new works for Coventry Biennial 2021.

Additionally, our team sent every artist who participated in Coventry Biennial 2021, whether exhibiting new or existing works, a shorter survey to measure levels of satisfaction.

This approach was designed to ensure a good range of data and the widest possible input from artists.

A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE:

From those that responded to our survey, **88.9%** reported that participating in Coventry Biennial 2021 was, overall, a positive experience for them.

One artist commented that:

"I felt like I had autonomy over the work and was trusted to deliver it"

We will continue to improve in response to feedback that we have received through these surveys and close dialogue with artists.

Another artist said of the Biennial:

"It's a great initiative with a growing reputation. The curatorial programme is excellent and I enjoyed working with the entire Biennial staff."

A third artist, reflecting on working with us during the Covid-19 lockdowns, explained that they received:

"Excellent support from all members of the team. An opportunity to make work in a brand new way. Very much boosted my confidence during the pandemic and gave me chance to develop my creative practice as part of a team/community."

USEFUL FOR DEVELOPING:

From those that responded to our survey, **88.9%** reported that participating in Coventry Biennial 2021 was, overall, useful for developing their creative practice.

One international artist that we commissioned explained:

"It forced me to focus on seeing quite an ambitious and unwieldy project through. I also had to engage with an engineer to complete it. Witnessing the piece in the cathedral was also significant and will inform future sound installations."

Of course, reflection on developing creative practice during the Covid-19 lockdowns was important and one artist commented:

"It helped me pivot to working remotely during the pandemic and also develop my confidence in experimenting with moving image and projection."

A number of artists commented on the negative impact of Covid-19, particularly in relation to developing their work and building new networks. We did have a number of developmental and networking sessions scheduled but had to cancel these due to Covid-19 restrictions. We will re-institute these events for the fourth Coventry Biennial.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES:

From those that responded to our survey, **33.3%** reported that participating in Coventry Biennial 2021 has created new opportunities for them. Although one artist did usefully note that:

"It is too soon to evaluate this. Sometimes opportunities come immediately but more often these take time."

And indeed, a further **33.3%** of survey respondents reported that they were unsure whether participating in the Biennial had created new opportunities for them or not.

We will check-in again with artists in January 2023, twelve months after the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme ended, to ask them this question again.

One artist told Earthen Lamp that Coventry Biennial has:

"Given me a new platform, a new audience and I also got another commission through the Biennial. It has very positively impacted my career. It has changed my practice, and I have gained more opportunities and also built relationships with the team."

Following the return of these surveys a number of artists informally let us know that they have gained new opportunities,

focused around their works that we commissioned for Coventry Biennial 2021.

As mentioned earlier, one artwork has been selected for inclusion in Flatpack Film Festival and another artist has received funding from Arts Council England to tour their project to the USA.

Likewise, one project that we commissioned that was not presented as intended during Coventry Biennial 2021 has now been publicly exhibited and activated in a high-profile, city centre location with support from Coventry City of Culture Trust.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS:

As a social Biennial, it is important to us that artists are able to grow their personal and professional networks.

In previous years we have been able to host group site visits, lunches and meetings. This wasn't possible in 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions, however, from those that responded to our survey, **77.8%** reported that participating in Coventry Biennial 2021 has been useful for developing their network of peers.

Comments ranged from the informal, anecdotal and playful with artists saying:

"I gained a few followers on social media after sharing posts about Cov Biennial."

and

"I met some folks"

to more formal reflections, with one international respondent sharing that:

"It was useful for me to connect with other artists and arts professionals in the UK, many whom I am still in touch with."



Jeffrey Charles Henry Peacock
Exposition
Installation
Various Dates (2021)

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum

Photo: Garry Jones

SOCIAL IMPACT:

As a social Biennial, many of our activities are designed to deliver some kind of social, personal or professional impact for the participants and co-creators that we work with. Although we did not formally measure these outcomes, there is a range of very interesting anecdotal evidence for the value of this work.

HAUNT (CRISIS UK AND UNDERGROUND LIGHTS):

Following a project with people who have experienced homelessness and mental ill health, Benedict Davenport, Arts Coordinator at Crisis UK, interviewed participants and asked what they have done since the project ended.

He shared a case study that showed increased employment opportunity and a higher level of engagement with the arts:

"One person told me that they had taken part in a mural co-creation project with West Midlands Police. This will be the first commissioned piece of street art to be put on a police station, and the themes have been co-created by a team of PCSOs and people with lived experience of homelessness. They have also started working with Coventry City Council focusing on improving the city's housing support services."

WE BEAR (NOVUS AND MICHIGAN PRISONS CREATIVE ARTS PROJECT):

Following a project with inmates from across the UK and USA, their support tutors and family members shared the following feedback via email with Faye Claridge, the artist who devised the innovative *We Bear* project:

"The regular check-ins and written feedback was excellent, personalised communication from the outside, the learner having someone speak to him that was positive, brought hope, motivation and encouragement."

Another person shared:

"I know he felt cut off in a single cell in lockdown and the project provided an opportunity for him to feel connected to me and you. It really helped his confidence... to achieve this was a big deal for him."

A third person explained:

"I so respect the care and thought given to your exhibits and all the artists involved. I have witnessed direct examples of this care - in your personal email messages with artists' Mothers where they were moved to tears of joy and happiness, your groups' critique letters to artists, pretty much everything."

Faye also maintained a close dialogue directly with participants who, following the exhibition, explained the impact that the project had for them:

"Visiting the exhibition was so positive and inspirational for me in so many ways. Being part of it and to talk about it, from where I was when I was making it, is unbelievable and I thank you again for making this possible."

Another said:

"Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this project. It has been fun and inspiring. I am especially pleased and grateful for the feedback of my artwork from Brian Scholes and Ryan Hughes"

A third participant shared:

"I never thought when my art tutor asked me would I like to contribute, and encouraged me to participate, that I, a prisoner in lockdown would be in this position - UNBELIEVABLE. And I am sure many involved feel this way, I was at the time losing focus and struggling mentally, these types of projects catch prisoners from falling and raise them again. THANK YOU."

MOTHERS WHO MAKE X COVENTRY BIENNIAL 2021:

Following a successful partnership with Mothers Who Make Coventry in 2019, we renewed our partnership, offering the local hub of this innovative, national network a budget to cover basic staff costs and a small activity budget, enabling a step change in their programming.

Adele Mary Reed, a local artist and the coordinator of the Coventry Mothers Who Make hub maintains a close relationship with the people who use the hub, and they have sent her a significant amount of informal feedback, comments and ideas for further development.

One regular participant commented on:

"how powerful it was to be in a space where it was ok to give voice to the 'not okayness' of mothering. Only one child was present in the space (that I was aware of) and he was welcomed by the group and engaged with in a warm way, yet mum was still kept at the focus of the group's attention and held by the group."

One artist, who contributed to a Mothers Who Make session, posted a short note of thanks to the network and its participants, saying:

"Thanks to @motherswhomakecov"



Mothers Who Make Members and Jo Gane
Cyanotype Workshop

Hosted ahead of Coventry Biennial 2021 as a part of our support for the local Mothers Who Make Hub.

Workshop Documentation
2021

Coventry War Memorial Park

Photo: Adele Mary Reed

and @covbiennial for hosting this collaborative talk I delivered tonight with the wonderful @hmr_art . Such an honest, open space was created around a difficult subject. It was the first time I have spoken about these pieces in a public arena, so thanks also to our wonderfully thoughtful and engaged audience."

Participants also shared many message of thanks, highlighting the significance that this network has as a space that enables safe, judgement-free relationship building and access to space and expertise. One participant commented:

"Thanks so much Adele that was so needed. It was really inspiring and made me feel less alone as a mother. I walked a little taller when out with my children this afternoon and allowed him and I to be our full selves, making a conscious decision to occupy space! So much to think about and reflect on."

FURTHER PROJECTS:

During Coventry Biennial 2021, our team and the artists that we worked with also delivered educational and impactful projects with school children, youth club members, arts societies and clubs, refugees, migrants and students at a range of stages.

Some of the organisations and

groups that we worked with include:

Coventry College

Coventry University

Coventry Boys and Girls Club

Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre

UK City of Culture's Community Connectors

Escape Arts

Warwickshire County Council
Syrian Vulnerable Persons
Resettlement Scheme

Jaguar Land Rover Band

Royal Leamington Spa Bach
Choir

**“I’VE BEEN VERY
IMPRESSED TO SEE
THE WORK THAT THEY
HAVE GONE ON TO DO,
MAKING IMPORTANT
CONTRIBUTIONS TO
THE CREATIVE AND
POLITICAL
ATMOSPHERE OF
THEIR CITY”**



Crisis and Underground Lights Member
Photography Workshop

Hosted ahead of Coventry Biennial 2021 as a part of our partnership with Crisis and Underground Lights. The resulting images were exhibited as a part of Coventry Biennial.

Workshop Documentation
2021

Coventry City Centre

Photo: Tara Johnston-Comerford

**DURING COVENTRY
BIENNIAL 2021:**

**112,928 PEOPLE
VISITED OUR
EXHIBITIONS**

**7,234 PEOPLE
ATTENDED EVENTS
AND SESSIONS**

**5,582 PEOPLE
ENGAGED WITH
ARTWORKS IN PRINT
AND ONLINE**

**A FURTHER 370,000
PEOPLE SAW AN
ARTWORK IN A PUBLIC
LOCATION**

AUDIENCE BREAKDOWN AND TESTIMONIALS:

Since 2017 we have closely monitored our audiences, ensuring that we know who is visiting our exhibitions, events and activities and that we understand why they are visiting, with the aim of developing programmes that are deeply relevant.

The following data and feedback was gathered through paper and online surveys that were conducted and compiled by Earthen Lamp.

Quality of exhibition and events was the most highly rated aspect of Coventry Biennial 2021. This was closely followed by the diversity of artists and artwork and the quality of the venues and facilities.

Supporting our position as the UK's Social Biennial, visitors reported that they were highly likely to recommend Coventry Biennial and in fact, when asked how they heard about Coventry Biennial, **21%** reported that a friend or family member had told them. Likewise, most people visited Coventry Biennial 2021 with other people, **79%** of visitors attended with friends, family, colleagues or in a group.

The Coventry Biennial 2021 audience was highly engaged, **45%** reported attending to be intellectually stimulated, **39%** reported that they attended to be inspired and **36%** said that visual

arts is an important part of who they are.

In addition to being highly engaged, our audience recognised the educational benefit of our work with **38%** reporting that they attended to learn something, **16%** attended for academic reasons and **18%** of visitors said that they are currently students.

77% of our visitors had attended neither Coventry Biennial 2017 or 2019 and of 2021 visitors, **30%** were Coventry residents (CV1 - CV6) and a further **24%** visited from elsewhere in the Midlands. **73%** of visitors reported that Coventry Biennial 2021 had increased their pride in Coventry and the local area and a further **67%** of visitors reported that visiting Coventry Biennial had a positive impact on their perception of Coventry.

56% of visitors identified as womxn, **4%** preferred not to answer and 3 respondents identified as non-binary.

11% of respondents reported that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or disability lasting (or expected to last) at least 12 months.

Respondents were fairly evenly distributed across five-year age groups, with only those aged 75 or older being represented in

significantly lower numbers. Other age groups went from a minimum of **4%** of respondents (ages 65-69) to a maximum of **11%** (ages 30-34).

Those attending Coventry Biennial 2021 closely reflected the ethnic diversity of Coventry and Warwickshire. **68%** were White British and a further **6%** indicated another White background.

14% of our audience identified as Black, Asian or of mixed ethnicity, which is lower than we would expect if our work were only taking place in Coventry, but our work in Warwickshire, which has a much less ethnically diverse population has impacted on this data. However, as we continue to produce activities we will develop new strategies for connecting with the region's Black and Asian communities.

Visitors to Coventry Biennial 2021 had the following to say about their experiences of our exhibitions, events and activities:

"The event's amazing and there's a bit of history to pick up. Thanks"

"Coventry Biennial brilliantly showcased the art history and contemporary art of the region. A great balance of media (not too much video!) and choice of locations. I can't wait for the next Biennial and the direction this takes for research, education,

artistic and curatorial practice."

"I liked it and it made me think and question the world today. Where are we now? The journey of life."

"Great to visit Coventry (for the first time!), brought here by the Biennial. I was pleased to see so much work across the range of venues and also that the work was not "over-produced". Some of the simple installs allowed the content of the work to prove itself."

"A brilliant display of exhibitions, looking forward to visiting in 2023!"

"Fantastic and thought provoking. Loved the range in diversity and the different mediums used. Will be back!"

"Fascinating to see artists' work whom I might not otherwise know!"

Many visitors reflected on a need for increased signposting, way finding and general visibility around Coventry and Warwickshire which we recognise and will act upon ahead of Coventry Biennial 2023.



sirencrossing
becoming fungi, becoming forest
Performance and Public Artwork
2021

Coventry City Centre

Photo: Adele Mary Reed

PRESS BREAKDOWN:

The third Coventry Biennial took place as a part of UK City of Culture and alongside the Turner Prize, creating a very different proposition to previous editions of Coventry Biennial, and as such our press coverage has changed significantly.

We saw a much greater number of mentions in the press, across a much wider range of media and outlets, but noticed that the coverage that we received was not as deep or critically reflective as in previous years.

While this was fantastic for ensuring the widest possible reach of the Biennial, we believe it was less useful for the artists who participated in our exhibitions, events and activities, for whom exhibition reviews are a valuable tool for self-evaluation and reflection.

We were featured in the following publications, online and in-print and were included in the following broadcasts on radio and television.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

We were featured in the following magazines and newspapers in a total of 14 separate features:

The Art Newspaper

Museums Journal

Metro

The Times

The Observer

The Guardian

Art Monthly

Coventry Telegraph

Leamington Observer

RADIO AND TELEVISION:

We were featured on the following television shows in 3 separate features:

BBC Coventry and Warwickshire

Sky Arts Inside Arts

We were featured on the following local radio stations in 9 separate features:

BBC Coventry and Warwickshire

Hillz FM

SELECTED ONLINE:

We were featured in a large number of online blogs, websites and listings in more than 220 separate features. Publishers included:

National Geographic

Visit Britain

Season for Change

Alt-Africa

New Art West Midlands

Biennial Foundation

International Biennial Association

Arts Connect

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Hollybush Gardens

Soft Opening London

Tate

Flatpack Festival

University of Warwick

Coventry University

University of the Arts London

CV Life

Coventry Society

Royal Leamington Spa Bach Choir

A Place Called Space

You Smart Thing

Coventry City Council

C&W LEP

Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce

CW Growth Hub

C&W Champions

Invest West Midlands

The Culture Diary

ArtLyst

Contemporary Lynx

Fad Magazine

Axisweb

PRESS SUPPORT:

Many thanks go to Sutton who were our principle PR agent throughout Coventry Biennial 2021.

Thanks also to Bolton & Quinn and Four Communications who we worked with through our partnerships with the Coventry City of Culture Trust and the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum.

"THE QUESTION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE THROUGH THE ANTHROPOCENE IS ONE THAT PREOCCUPIES THIS BIENNIAL, GRAPPLING, LARGELY SUCCESSFULLY, WITH THE TENSION BETWEEN THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCALISED"

Denise Coureoux
Art Critic at Art Monthly (UK)



Janek Schafer
Imagine Our World
Installation Shot (detail)
2021

The Old Grammar School

Photo: Tegen Kimbley

DIGITAL REACH:

We use our social media channels and website for a range of purposes including advertising, sharing important information with visitors and hosting artwork and other creative content that has been created specifically for online distribution.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

We are active on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

We do have accounts on other platforms but we use these much less often. The following data is captured from the three platforms that we used the most between May 2020 and April 2021:

New Followers: 546
Reach / Impressions: 245,180
Profile Visits: 6,449
Mentions / Shares: 464
Likes: 3,109

WEBSITE VISITORS: 90,031

With so many artists, partners and stakeholders involved in Coventry Biennial 2021, it would be impossible for us to track our total digital reach, however, we have monitored a selection of our major partners for posts about our work.

COVENTRY UK CITY OF CULTURE TRUST:

Facebook Posts: 11
Instagram Posts: 12
Twitter Posts: 21

HERBERT ART GALLERY & MUSEUM:

Facebook Posts: 22
Instagram Posts: 16
Twitter Posts: 3

Other partners including New Art West Midlands, Coventry Artspace, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum, International Biennial Association and Coventry Cathedral made a combined total of 68 posts about us on Facebook.

We have also monitored the use of #CovBiennial2021 and #HYPERPOSSIBLE across the following platforms:

Facebook: 66
Instagram: 612
Twitter: 57

MINIMUM TOTAL DIGITAL REACH: 630,126

VENUE SATISFACTION AND TESTIMONIALS:

Coventry Biennial 2021 presented exhibitions in 6 principle locations:

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum

Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum

Rugby Art Gallery & Museum

Coventry Cathedral

The Hyper-Lab

The Old Grammar School

In most cases, our work with the 6 exhibition venues was very closely involved and unfolded over a significant period of time, with some exhibition installation periods starting as early as May 2021 and in most cases we didn't vacate exhibition venues until February 2022.

We were responsible for managing a number of these venues ourselves, however, where employees of the venue were significantly involved in working with us to plan, develop or deliver the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme, Earthen Lamp conducted interviews with them to discover more about the collaboration.

Earthen Lamp interviewed staff members at Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum and Coventry Cathedral and found that all three venues

praised the content of their Coventry Biennial exhibitions.

Colleagues reported that the experience allowed them to see their spaces used in a new way, by experimenting with new mediums or new themes. The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum and Coventry Cathedral also reported a positive impact on their teams' skills development from a curatorial and front of house perspective. Francis Nielsen, the (now former) Cultural & Creative Director of Culture Coventry commented:

"The additional capacity and agility offered by the partnership with the Biennial has meant that Herbert has been able to diversify it's programme, leading to step changes in our contemporary collecting, audience engagement and staff development."

From the point of view of audience engagement, feedback differed between the Coventry venues and Rugby Art Gallery & Museum. The former listed several positive outcomes of their Coventry Biennial exhibition, including active engagement, increased visitor numbers, and reaching new audiences. Francis Nielsen commented:

"Our audiences demographic always shifts during the Biennial to be more reflective of a younger and more diverse visitor."



Andy Sargent
Hidden Monster
 Painting
 2017

The Old Grammar School

Photo: Tegen Kimbley



John Yeadon
Englandia (Duckhouse)
 Painting
 2013

The HYPER-LAB (above HMV Empire, Coventry)

Photo: Tegen Kimbley

WORKFORCE SATISFACTION AND TESTIMONIALS:

Our team are a particularly young (**81.8%** are under 40 years old) group of creative practitioners and artists who are based across the West Midlands.

We are committed to offering significant opportunities to our team, supporting their personal and professional development and by extension, further developing the region's cultural workforce. Following the delivery of the HYPER-POSSIBLE programme we asked our team to complete a short survey and conducted 1-2-1 appraisals, gaining a range of insights. One member of the team shared:

"I've thoroughly enjoyed working for the Biennial as it's like a family. I've been given a lot of opportunities and gained a lot of experience and skills which will allow me to improve and grow my professional career."

Everyone who completed the survey shared that working with Coventry Biennial was a positive experience for them, and **90%** of respondents explained that working on Coventry Biennial has positively impacted on their career path or the development of their practice.

Again, **100%** of respondents explained that working on Coventry Biennial has allowed them to improve, or learn new skills. Examples given include:

Growing network or peers (30%)

Developing managerial skills (30%)

Developing curatorial or creative skills (70%)

Developing communication skills (40%)

Despite this generally positive experience, the team did highlight some areas that could benefit from further development or amendments to processes.

Several people (**30%**) highlighted the negative impact that Covid-19 had on programme delivery and the ability to work more closely with colleagues, artists and communities. Additionally, a number of team members (**30%**) highlighted that timelines for delivering particular pieces of work were too short.

We asked team members to share what they might change about working at Coventry Biennial and responses included:

Increased funding, specifically enabling advanced planning (30%)

Developing routine (40%)

Developing stronger internal comms (40%)

Although, one respondent who has worked for Coventry Biennial over a number of years was quick to highlight that:

"I think organisation is improving!"

During our 1-2-1 conversations with team members following the de-installation of Coventry Biennial 2021, one colleague explained that they thought:

"the most positive thing about the experience of working on Coventry Biennial is the spirit of the whole thing and the people who make it happen - it's enthusiastic, enthusing and uplifting. It feels like the Biennial has an anarchic freedom to it."

Several members of our Front of House team reflected warmly on their time working with us, on this Biennial and in previous years, and they especially highlighted how audiences behave and how our organisation has developed:

"I have developed a sense of pride in what we had in the show and have fond memories of groups visiting"

Another highlighted how:

"In the crypt - so many people came to see the space and stayed for ages to see the work"

"It was the 3rd year that I've done it - it's always a bit more

organised each time. I like working for the Biennial, it's always interesting."

Many team members reflected on the role of the Biennial and one of our technicians explained that he thought that:

"You could call this Biennial, a Biennial for the people!"

Another member of the team said that they believed that:

"The biennial reflects the personality of the city"

Cycle Dance Company
Installation shot with various works
Archival Materials
1974 - 1982 (2021)

Rugby Art Gallery and Museum

Photo: Tegen Kimbley



The Studio

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EARTHEN LAMP:

The Biennial in 2021 appears to have had a greater positive impact on Coventry's profile and perception when compared to previous events.

Although it is not possible to clearly determine the reasons for this, this may relate to the quality of the work, the artist and venues involved, and the marketing and PR generated by the event in 2021/2022.

It is encouraging to note that a larger percentage of Coventry residents engaged with the event than in previous years. Some visitors also combined their visits to the exhibitions alongside other cultural activities in the city and this offer may be something that can be developed in the future.

In future the community engagement activities delivered by the Biennial needs more focussed evaluation to understand what works and which areas could be improved.

There is evidence to show that the event attracts a largely visual arts engaged audience and the Biennial had a higher percentage of returning visitors.

This indicates that the event's core audience base is growing which offers opportunities for future Biennials related to membership or ambassador schemes and more diverse marketing opportunities.

Interestingly the exhibitions attracted some unaccompanied visitors with just over a quarter of visitors indicating that they were visiting by themselves. There may be an opportunity to develop an offer for individual visitors to encourage longer dwell time.

The need for more information was strongly highlighted by visitors and learning from this event about the paucity of information could be used in planning further events.

Some artists noted a missed opportunity of generating interactions between international artists and local artists that took part in this Biennial.

In future some networking, mentoring or development activities could bring together exhibiting artists across levels of experience, locations, and media as happened during Coventry Biennials in 2017 and 2019.

Other recommendations offered by artists related to better expectation setting, need for more consistent and timely communication with the festival team and a better level of logistical support.

Recommendations also related to the crucial need for standardising processes and documentation offered to artists.

Logistical challenges of varying degrees were noted by all venues that contributed information to this evaluation.

Some were more significant than others and these findings can be used for planning work with venues in the future e.g. location of artwork in areas that may need to be closed off to the public.

Capacity of the team continues to be highlighted as a key weakness of the Biennial operation and this factor needs focussed attention for future events especially in relation to the scale and ambition of the event.

HYPER-POSSIBLE TEAM, ARTISTS AND SUPPORTERS:

Delivering a project of this scale takes a huge amount of energy, expertise and generosity. Coventry Biennial 2021 wouldn't have been possible without the support of the following individuals and organisations.

CB BOARD:

Paula Orrell, Jim Alimpertis, Craig Ashley, Helen Cuthill, Evie Kissack, Derek Lawrence, Helen Kilby Nelson, Lara Ratnaraja, Deborah Smith, Kate Stoddart.

CB21 TEAM:

Annabel Clarke, Anneka French, Emily Gardner, Kurt Hickson, Ryan Hughes, Verity Jackson, Tara Johnston-Comerford, Tegen Kimbley, Sevven Kucuk, Dr Michael Pigott, Adele Mary Reed, Tara Rutledge, Giorgia Rizzioli, Dr Ian Sergeant.

CB21 BUILDING SUPERVISORS:

Mark Cook, Rachel Doughty, Georgia Kelly, Tegen Kimbley, Tony McClure, Janet Tryner

With additional thanks to the UK City of Culture City Hosts.

CB21 TECH TEAM:

Christopher Jackson, Tegen Kimbley, Tony McClure, Mark Rhodes, Stephen Rubacki, Lee Stowers.

Thanks also go to the in-house technicians at our partner venues and the recent graduates of Coventry's Tech School who worked on our exhibitions.

CB21 DOCUMENTATION TEAM:

Garry Jones, Tegen Kimbley, Mind Rot Productions, Adele Mary Reed, Tara Rutledge, Marcin Sz, John Whitmore.

CB21 WEB DEVELOPMENT:

Sebastian Lenton

CB21 WORK PLACEMENTS:

Dylan Marshall, Evelyn Wenman.

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Earthen Lamp, Sutton.

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FUNDERS:

Art Fund, British Council, Coventry City Council, University of Warwick, Coventry University.

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ARTISTS:

...kruse, Ayo Akingbade, Art & Language, Terry Atkinson, Leilah Babirye, Sarah Badr, Nuotama Bodomo, Vanley Burke, Kate Carr, Ryan Christopher, Faye Claridge, Cycles Dance Company, Ravi Deepres, Jeremy Deller, The Department of Energy, Laura Dicken, Roo Dhissou, Lamin Fofana, Laura Grace Ford, Denzil Forrester, Rosa Francesca, Georgiou & Tolley, Rob Hamp, Russell Haswell, Amelia Hawk and Helen Kilby Nelson, Jeffery Charles Henry Peacock, Claudette Johnson, AM Kanngieser, KMRU, Matthew Krishanu, Mamba Negra Collective, Mark Fisher and Justin Barton, Rie Nakajima, Grace Ndiritu, Helen Kilby Nelson, Chris Ofili, The Otolith Group, Keith Piper, Ben Rivers, Luke Routledge, Andy Sargent, Janek Schafer, Simon Scott, Sin Wai Kin, sirencrossing, Alan Van Wijgerden, melissandre varin, Paul Walde, Duncan Whitley, Jana Winderen, John Yeadon

Thanks also go to the wide range of artists, curators, creative practitioners, researchers and academics that contributed to our programme of talks, workshops, screenings and symposiums.

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Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Culture Coventry, Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum, Warwick District Council, Coventry Cathedral, HMV Empire Coventry, Coventry Artspace, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum, Rugby Borough Council.

EXHIBITION AND COMMISSION PARTNERS:

Art Fund, British Council, University of Warwick, Coventry University, Novus, Michigan Prisons Creative Arts Programme, Chisenhale Dance Space, Midlands 4 Cities, Art and Humanities Research Council, DASH, Talking Birds, Nottingham Contemporary, Kunstencentrum Vooruit, Coventry Artspace, CineCov / Flatpack Projects, You Smart Thing, Electric Zoo.

GALLERIES, COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES:

Tate, Arts Council Collection, British Council, Compton Verney, New York Folk Art Museum, Stephen Friedman Gallery, Soft Opening, The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum, Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, LUX, BBC, Abingdon Studios, Folkestone Triennial, Turner Contemporary.



COVENTRY
BIENNIAL
2021



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