



## SQUARE PEG EVALUATION REPORT

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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***We are particularly grateful to Kenn Taylor – Director of Artlink – who tolerated our frequent enquiries and who facilitated contact with artists and external partners. Rachel Elm was a great source of support and guidance throughout her tenure at Artlink Hull as were Hannah Holden, Emily Fratson and Jemma Brown. Thank you, too, to staff and students at CASE who made us very welcome and provided us with valuable feedback on workshops delivered by Square Peg's artist in residence.***

***The project documenter and blogger - Jerome Whittingham and Michelle Dee respectively - were also very generous with their time and provided us with much appreciated thoughtful reflections on the Programme as did Sam Hunt, Executive Producer at Hull City of Culture 2017. Fiona Slater and Sandra Ackroyd of SHAPE Arts and HERIB respectively, provided very useful insights into their experiences of working in partnership with Artlink on Square Peg activity.***

***We are very grateful to all of the artists who gave generously of their time to support the evaluation process, submitting to often lengthy interviews. These were: Anita Corbin, John Walter, Sophie Oliveira Barata and Jason Wilsher – Mills.***

***Finally, included in this evaluation are the stories of two people, one of whom was the artist in residence and the other a young woman who participated in his workshops and whose work was later incorporated into his completed exhibition. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Jason Wilsher - Mills and Monique Lock and her Mum, Andrea Lock, for giving so generously of their time to provide us with the material to make their stories.***

## **In the beginning**

Not happy clappy

Jason Wilsher – Mills was engaged on the Square Peg project as its artist in residence. With a training in fine art, Jason describes himself as ‘a reluctant digital artist’ and ‘not a community artist’. Nonetheless, his practice utilises digital creative technologies to make vivid work which bears witness to the experiences and perspectives of marginalised communities and individuals. Asked to characterise his work, he places it ‘somewhere between *I, Daniel Blake* and *The Beano*’.

Jason is preoccupied in his work with giving voice to others and with listening to and interpreting the lives and experiences of those whose voices are seldom heard. Fittingly, he is himself a compelling raconteur; over the course of our hour – long interview with Jason we spoke for no more than a couple of minutes.

In respect of the Square Peg residency, Jason regarded it as an opportunity to focus on working with groups of learning disabled people:

*I've been thinking about how you take on residencies in organisations working with people who don't have a voice. I wanted to do work with people which was difficult, and which asked interesting questions. I wanted to offer opportunities in visual arts – not a happy clappy approach.*

Jason's work is driven by a set of values and ethics and in his application for the artist in residence role, he included a manifesto which set out his approach. Meeting the groups he was to work with over the duration of the residency, he discussed the artistic enquiries at the heart of his work:

*The themes have been user led. About 80% were learning disabled adults and had never touched an iPad. I engaged with people with very low self-esteem. I focused on the abstract things which we all take for granted: What is it about you that's different? Where would you like to be? Who would you like to be?*

### **An easel artist in my head**

Jason's enthusiasm for the work is infectious; the finished article seemed as much of a revelation to him as to gallery visitors,

*The way I make my work I can see the start and the end but not the stuff in the middle. Thematically, it will represent the sketch I've made. I've got a commitment to finishing every piece of work I start even if it's crap – and I have contributed some crap art to the world. I'll hear things; I listen and I watch and I look at the way people move and the way that light hits people's faces. I put it into my filing system for later on.*

He spoke about pragmatism and about making a virtue of necessity:

*I'm reluctantly a digital artist because I'm an easel artist in my head. If you can't do huge paintings in oils, you find other solutions. Because I've embraced that, I can make work in a unique way and if I can do it I can roll it out. My practice is very personal but I give [others] the tools to make art. They stand in my boots but they make them their own. I'm not a community artist; I just give them the tools to express their voice.*

Jason's reluctant to be perceived as a spokesperson for all disabled people or for all disabled artists. When people ask him about his experiences, he reckons they're asking the wrong person:

*I'm often asked about my experience of disability but no one asks [the groups I work with]. Because of their disabilities they may not even appreciate why they are not being asked even though they are the ones who experience the most negative stuff.*

### **Paint your way out of this**

Jason spent much of his adolescence constructing worlds in his head and this perhaps goes some way towards explaining his approach to collaborative work with silenced groups and individuals.

*I'm from a working class family in Wakefield... One of my earliest memories is of me sat in front of the fire as a kid, drawing. When I became disabled as an 11-year-old I was paralysed from the neck down for 5 years. I couldn't even breathe for myself. My parents were incredibly people and they fought for me to live at home. I painted with a brush and pencil in my mouth.*

*I recovered to a certain extent. Though the work's dealing with difficult things – mortality, sexuality – but in a very northern way. I am of the North and I try to make fun of the thing that ails me most.*

*I like this idea of reimagining yourself. As a teenager I imagined what it'd be like to be someone else but the person I wanted to be was me.*

**Be happy, lad**

After finishing school, Jason went on to study fine art at Cardiff. After that, he gained a teaching qualification and became a teacher, spending some time teaching at Leeds Prison. Then things became challenging,

*My condition relapsed and my job prospects were dire.*

Jason was forced to think about what he might do with the rest of his life. He pointed to two pieces of advice which helped him formulate a new future,

*My Dad on his deathbed said, 'Be happy, lad'. A colleague said, 'You're an artist, Jason, you're not a manager. Paint your way out of this.' ... Within four months of that happening I was exhibiting in America. My wife said we'd give it a year and if it didn't work out I'd get a proper job.*

Making art has since become his proper job. The advent of digital creative technologies has provided opportunities for Jason to indulge his love of pop culture and to make work which would be inconceivable using traditional techniques,

*I take what's happening and subvert it. I'm excited by pop culture. There is no limit to what I can do. Now I've finally accepted I'm a digital artist I use every aspect of the pixel to make art: micro bits, 3d printing, light boxes... The tools employed give voice to the patterns inside my head.*

*In my head I'm a painter but I'm actually a digital artist that does everything. As a result, I'm getting a lot of interest from tech companies because the way I work enables them to do things they didn't think they could do. It's an interesting time to be an artist who's not afraid to embrace the pixel.*

### What art's for

In much of the evaluation work that we do, we are asked to specify what it is that engagement with arts and culture can do that other interventions – sports, say, or exercise – can't. When we asked Jason for his thoughts he returned to the theme of voice and voicelessness,

*I'm trying to express something to people when they look at my work [but] once the work's on the wall you've lost it... if a tenth of what I'm trying to say gets through then that's great.*

*The dialogue with these groups has made me think differently – that's a measure of quality. I hoped that there was a chance of that. You put the ingredients in but in the end it's people. As an artist you can be a bit of a father confessor. I can't count the number of times where workers have said, 'I didn't know that about John'. Another young woman had not spoken for six weeks. That's success.*

*There was a girl who was severely disabled and non - verbal. She worked with a support worker and we worked with her to create a piece of work which depicted herself on stage singing. It can have interventions in people's lives that transform them. You come out of sessions like that and think, 'That's why I do it.'*

The work that Jason made was inspired by the groups and individuals he worked with and their contributions to the process were evident in the finished work. In a sense, what was made became an exercise in self representation and self-revelation,

*They think they're having fun - which they are. But they're also sharing the core of who they are through the work they do with me. Incredibly physically disabled guys want to be scoring the winning try for Hull at Wembley. What we do is we take that and turn it into a celebration- a beautiful statement and that is a very powerful thing... Each group has its own chemical make up and the ones that benefit most are the ones that are open and come back. Dialogue through the different groups made me rethink how I might present the work.*

### **A big superhero thing going on**

One of the groups Jason worked with was located at CASE – a long – established education and training organisation for learning disabled people in the city. In the course of our evaluation, we visited CASE and spoke to 5 women and 6 men who had worked with Jason over a number of workshop sessions. The activity involved 3D arts using an iPad. Specifically, individuals took photographs of themselves and then played with the imagery, context and setting.

We wanted to find out how they had experienced their work with Jason. Without exception, participants told us that they had enjoyed the experience and particularly the opportunity it offered to creatively represent themselves in real or imagined settings:

*I did one in a disco. I did myself dancing.*

*I did myself next to Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys.*



*I did myself at Old Trafford.*

One of the workshop participants explained the artistic process to us,

*Jason looked at me and asked what I liked doing and I used paint to colour it in. It took about two or three hours. He said there's going to be an exhibition.*

The people we spoke to told us that they intended to visit the exhibition and that they were excited to see how their work had been represented. Talking to individuals who had participated, there were key themes which they returned to and which seemed to us to have been particularly appreciated. They formed a set of critical success factors and provided for us another set of reflections on what it is about engagement with creativity can deliver for people,

- Doing something different and getting to learn new skills
- Getting to be creative
- Learning what it is possible to do with an iPad
- Getting to work with a professional artist
- Getting good advice from an artist
- Having good fun – Jason cracking jokes

Staff, too, fully participated in and enjoyed the activity. One commented,

*I walked around seeing if they needed help. The second time I did a picture as Wonder Woman – we've got a big superhero thing going on here.*

**If you're not worried as an artist, you're in the wrong job.**

Jason's work as Square Peg's artist in residence was in some ways a daunting experience. At the beginning - he told us – he couldn't be sure if he was doing enough. The task seemed a little amorphous and it was only with time that it began to assume a discernible shape.

*I was concerned that I wasn't doing enough. I wasted a lot of time worrying – it's good to get those things off your chest. The feedback's been great. I've enjoyed the workshops and I'm enjoying it more now we're getting to the business end. But I'm*

*always worried. If you're not worried as an artist you're in the wrong job. I'm doing that thing where you're thinking, 'What's the worst thing that could happen? There's nothing on the walls.'*

Over the course of our interview with Jason, he referenced and quoted lots of people – amongst them a former member of the KKK, Lawrence of Arabia, an unconvincing Elvis impersonator and Billy Connolly. From all of them he'd extracted pearls of wisdom which animated his insights. Jason seemed particularly porous, open to ideas and fascinated by others' experiences and attempts to make sense of the world,

*Grayson Perry said that you go to art college, you work hard, you have a bit of luck. You work harder. You work very hard to get that luck.*

*I want to do my best with this work because they've done their best for me.*

He was anxious not to let people down and to deliver the best he could with the groups he chose to work with. He told us that it was important to him that there was a tangible outcome to the workshops he delivered with groups,

*They get people coming into their lives and promising things and then it doesn't happen. So being able to deliver is very powerful so that they can see that something really did happen. What I do is cathartic – I turn it into a celebration: this is who I am; this is where I've been; and this is where I want to be.*

We left our interview with Jason feeling that he brings his lived experiences to the work he makes (at one point, he mentioned that all work is autobiographical). He seems driven by an imperative to make spaces where individuals can express their needs and wants and dreams,

*As a disabled teenager I always wanted to be someone else. In realty, I just wanted to be me. When I was 16 I could talk but no one listened. I was at an appalling school they'd turn the TV on at 10 and turn it off at 2. They did an IQ test on me and I was off the charts so they had to do something with me.*

*I was very angry – righteously angry. I felt it for other people. I became disabled in the International Year of Disabled People (1980). Ian Dury and The Blockheads' Spasticus Autisticus was banned. He was saying all the things that mattered – the awkward questions. I felt angry and I don't think that's unusual but that anger can make you into the thing that you despise.*

*When I had a relapse in my 30s I was horrible and really angry. There was a Nazi takeover in my body and I had to change that. Hope is the only thing that cures anger. And love. Basically.*

## 1. Square Peg: Context and background

### 1.1 Artlink Hull

Funded through Hull's successful City of Culture programme in 2017 by the Spirit of 2012 Trust, Square Peg was developed, managed and delivered by Artlink Hull. Artlink is a long - established feature of Hull's cultural landscape whose activities and programmes have evolved over time whilst retaining a strong focus on art and community. Since its establishment in 1982, Artlink Hull has been continually involved in the development of community, participatory and socially-engaged art practices, and remains a key organisation in the Humber region within these fields.

Artlink originally began as part of the Shape Network, working across Lincolnshire and Humberside and focusing on disability arts workshops, performances, special projects, training, information and advice. In 1992 the organisation became an Arts Access Agency working across communities and art forms. In 2007 the organisation moved into its current building which includes gallery, learning and events space.

Artlink Hull now supports the creation and exploration of art with, in, and about communities. In particular, it works with individuals and communities experiencing disadvantage to increase the diversity of voices in the arts. It does this by developing art commissions, projects, exhibitions, events, learning programmes, and forums, working with a range of communities.

### 1.2 What did Square Peg seek to achieve?

Square Peg was a year – long diversity and disability arts programme which was launched in February 2017. As will become apparent, over the course of the programme the emphasis shifted a little towards disability arts though other aspects of diversity were explored.

Square Peg's development and delivery was underpinned by a commitment to working in line with a social model of disability which recognises that it is the social world which excludes disabled people and which erects barriers that prevent disabled people from full participation. The social model rejects medical approaches to disability which are preoccupied with fixing disabled people rather than challenging systemic discrimination and inequality.

The central aims of Square Peg were as follows:

- To create opportunities for disabled people to attend and inform art events
- To create opportunities for and to promote the work of disabled and diverse artists
- To raise awareness of barriers faced by disabled people and diverse communities when attending events,
- To bring communities together to create a greater understanding.

### 1.3 What did Square Peg comprise?

Square Peg was an ambitious, varied, cross art form programme delivered both within the Artlink building and in community and other venues across the city. Key areas of activity were development and servicing of a **Disability Arts Network (DAN)**. Though the DAN was developed as part of Square Peg, its activities will continue beyond the end of the programme. Its current priorities are to:

- Act as a discussion forum and feedback group around art and disability
- Help connect audiences, participants and accessible provision - Influence access improvements for disabled people in the arts
- Share information and resources through meetings, webpage and social media
- Connect to potentially isolated individuals
- Showcase good practice and projects
- Encourage peer support
- Promote dialogue around art and disability

- Develop a network to provide feedback to cultural organisations and artists
- Connect artists, organisations, participants and audiences around art and disability
- Promote opportunities and pathways for disabled artists and practitioners

An extensive, eclectic **exhibition programme** of work by disabled and diverse artists. Exhibitions made use of Artlink's own gallery space as well as other venues in the city including a pop-up space in a vacant shop unit. A programme of engagement and participation work accompanied the exhibition programme, including artist talks and participatory workshops.

An **artist in residence** – Jason Wilsher – Mills – was appointed for the duration of the Square Peg Programme. Jason worked with marginalised groups across the city, supporting them in making art and telling their stories. Jason's work with communities informed and was integrated (through augmented reality technologies) into Jason's final exhibition at the Artlink gallery.

**Training and development** opportunities for disabled artists, professionals, activists and others with an interest in equality and diversity issues were integrated into the Square Peg programme.

Artlink became a key partner in the programming of the engage International conference which took place in Hull in November 2017 and whose theme was inclusion, diversity and access to the arts. Specifically:

- Artlink sponsored a number of bursaries for individuals wishing to attend the Conference
- Jason Wilsher – Mills (Square Peg artist in residence) was amongst the conference speakers
- Artlink supported programming of Conference Breakout Sessions including one session delivered by Shape Arts which focused specifically on its disability arts archive
- Following the Conference, Square Peg engaged MESMAC Hull and Pyramid of Arts to deliver training events focusing on trans issues and learning disabled artist – led practice.

## 1.4 The locality

### Hull

- The population of Hull in mid 2016 was 260,240, an increase of 1,245 from 2015 (Kingston upon Hull City Observatory).
- Of 326 local authorities, Hull ranks as the third most deprived under the Index of Multiple Deprivation (ibid).
- 31.7% of children under 16 live in poverty compared to 20.1% nationally (ibid).
- 41% of Hull residents have attained a post 16 Level 3 qualification at age 19 compared to 57% in England as a whole (Hull.gov.uk)
- 89.67% of Hull's population is white British. The largest minority ethnic groups are Other white and Asian British at 4.4% and 2.5% respectively (Hullpublichealth.org).
- **According to the 2011 Census, 19% of Hull residents reported living with a long term illness or disability compared to 17.2% in England.**

Hull's designation as UK City of Culture 2017 has brought about significant, positive impacts in respect of residents' and visitors' perceptions of the city. The University of Hull's evaluation of City of Culture (Cultural Transformations, The Impact of Hull UK City of Culture 2017; Culture, Place and Policy Institute University of Hull, March 2018) highlights the following:

### Some impacts of Hull City of Culture 2017

- Over 2800 events, cultural activities, installations and exhibitions
- 5.3 million audience visits
- 30.6% increase in ticket sales compared to 2015
- 90% of residents engaged in at least one cultural activity
- 75% of visitors to Hull in 2017 said that their visit changed their perception of the city for the better
- At least £300m projected value of tourism in 2017
- Nearly 800 new jobs in the creative and visitor economy over 2013 – 2016
- Over 2400 volunteers involved contributing £5.4m financial value of volunteer hours

## 1.5 A note on methodology

We were appointed as evaluators close to the beginning of the Square Peg programme. This meant that we were able to observe and to walk alongside key delivery staff, participants and artists as Square Peg developed.

The purpose of the evaluation was agreed at the outset. At its most basic, the evaluation was designed to assess the extent to which the project's original aims were met (see 1.2, above). This was to be achieved through a process of:

- **Collation of data, both quantitative and qualitative:** Because Square Peg formed part of the wider Hull City of Culture programme, it benefited from extensive data collection systems and processes. Data arising from the City of Culture office were provided to us on a regular basis along with data derived from Arts Council England's Audience Finder surveys which Artlink- as a NPO - is required to complete . These primarily summarised audience numbers, audience demographic data, and general audience feedback.
- **A series of individual and group meetings with key delivery team members** including Artlink's team the artist in residence and the project blogger and documenter.
- **Case studies** focusing on the project's artist in residence and a participant in one of his workshops.
- **Interviews** with a selection of artists and curators / producers whose exhibitions formed part of the Square Peg programme, namely: Anita Corbin, John Walter, Sophie Oliveira Barata, Fiona Slater (of SHAPE Arts) and Sandra Ackroyd (of HERIB).
- **Attendance** at exhibition launches and a **group conversation** with individuals who took part in a series of workshops delivered by Jason Wilsher – Mills, the programme artist in residence.

#### **This report:**

- Summarises the quantitative data relating to Square Peg, setting out the impact of the project on a range of individuals and groups;
- Summarises the outcomes of Audience Finder and Hull City of Culture audience surveys.
- Sets out the delivery team's initial expectations of the project and the extent to which these were achieved over the project's lifetime;
- Includes a summary of extended interviews with Jason Wilsher – Mills and a participant in one of Jason's workshops whose work is included in the final exhibition.
- Discusses the learning which has emerged from Square Peg and suggests ways in which it might be sustained.

## 2. Summary of achievement of aims

This section briefly summarises the extent to which Square Peg can be seen to have achieved its broad aims. Subsequent sections of the report discuss processes, outcomes and impacts in greater detail.

### **To create opportunities for disabled people to attend and inform art events**

It is inarguable that the Square Peg programme developed a vast and varied range of arts and cultural opportunities which appealed to a range of tastes. The year – long series of events represented a step change for Artlink's programme. The extent to which events were accessed by disabled people varied by event. Thus, if we examine Artlink's Audience Finder return for the period of Square Peg, it indicates that Artlink's disabled audience profile is lower than that of comparator organisations nationally (86% of Artlink visitors identified as not disabled compared to 82% nationally).

However, if we look more closely at Square Peg programming – particularly that which took place outside the gallery space - it is clear that the numbers of disabled people accessing activity rises significantly. This is in no small part due to Jason's Wilsher – Mills' decision to prioritise delivering workshops to marginalised (and – in particular – learning disabled) groups. Similarly, Artlink's partnership with HERIB (a specialist agency working with blind and visually impaired people in Hull and the East Riding) opened up the creative and visual arts to blind and visually impaired people who are very marginalised and often isolated.

One of the outcomes of Jason's work in communities was that the attendance at his exhibition opening felt visibly more diverse than that of other openings we attended.

With regard to disabled people taking the lead and / or informing programme content, we are aware that a number of artists contributing to Square Peg programming are themselves disabled, including the programme artist in residence. Square Peg's partnership with SHAPE also helped to bring a 'user led', social model sensibility to the programme.

We are not aware that disabled people have necessarily been consulted about programme content though the Disability Art Network may in time take more of a role in informing future work.



**To create opportunities for and to promote the work of disabled and diverse artists**

As discussed above, a number of Square Peg's exhibiting artists were disabled including the Programme's artist in residence. Artlink hosted an exhibition of works by artists shortlisted for the Adam Reynolds Memorial Bursary, a prize which is open to mid-career disabled artists in the UK.

The bursaries which Square Peg sponsored for the Engage International Conference in November were particularly focused at disabled and otherwise disadvantaged people in and around Hull. Though not all of the bursaries were taken up, they did nevertheless provide an opportunity for individual disabled artists and others to meet and network with arts professionals from across the UK and beyond.

Aspects of the Square Peg programme focused and shed a light upon other marginalised or overlooked groups. John Walter's exhibition interrogated issues pertaining to LGBTQ+ communities' experiences of HIV and Anita Corbin's Visible girls Revisited brought women's lives into the foreground.

**To raise awareness of barriers faced by disabled people and diverse communities when attending events**

The Disability Arts Network (DAN) met four times over the course of the Square Peg Programme. Attendees included disabled artists, arts professionals and others with an interest in recognising and promoting disability arts in the city. Amongst its many roles, the DAN supported Artlink in developing accessible publicity materials and providing advice and guidance regarding physical and broader access issues. The DAN was also able to advise and influence City of Culture on the wording of its surveys in regard to disability.

It will be for Artlink to consider how best to continue to support the ongoing development of this group if it wishes to be regarded as an exemplar in disability arts in the region. However, its terms of reference (attached at Appendix One) provide a helpful springboard for future work. Suggestions regarding ways in which the DAN can become an exemplar in disability arts in the region are discussed in Section 8 of this report.

**To bring communities together to create a greater understanding**

This is probably the most ambiguously worded of the Programme's aims – though this may be deliberate (and canny). Communities might include communities of interest, of locality and / or of shared experience and it feels as if this aim may be about enabling or providing spaces and opportunities for exchange between communities.

It feels clear that Square Peg provided a number of physical spaces where visitors, workshop participants and DAN members were able to communicate and share with each other and with other communities. The exhibitions which took place outside the gallery space had perhaps most potential to provide a catalyst for unexpected conversations amongst nontraditional arts event attendees. For example, Centre of Attention – an exhibition of bespoke prosthetic limbs and the process behind their creation – was held in a pop-up space in a city centre shopping centre. Similarly, *A Sight to Behold* – a spin off project delivered in partnership with HERIB and involving blind and visually impaired people – resulted in the creation of a tactile sculptural piece at Hull's Eye Hospital.

The broad aim of bringing communities together to bring greater understanding feels like an ongoing pursuit and one which perhaps needs refining.

### 3. Square Peg in numbers

66% of Artlink's audience is aged between 16 and 44 compared to 40% nationally

86% of Artlink gallery visitors stated that they were not disabled compared to 82% nationally.

#### Visitor numbers for Square Peg exhibitions:

Dyslexia Portrait: 1326  
Visible Girls Revisited: 861  
Unexpected Engagement: 784  
Alien Sex Capsule: 468  
Adam Reynolds Phase One: 343  
Portraits Untold: 266  
Adam Reynolds Phase Two: 252  
Centre of Attention: 227  
**TOTAL: 4527**

Average number of visitors per Square Peg exhibition: 565

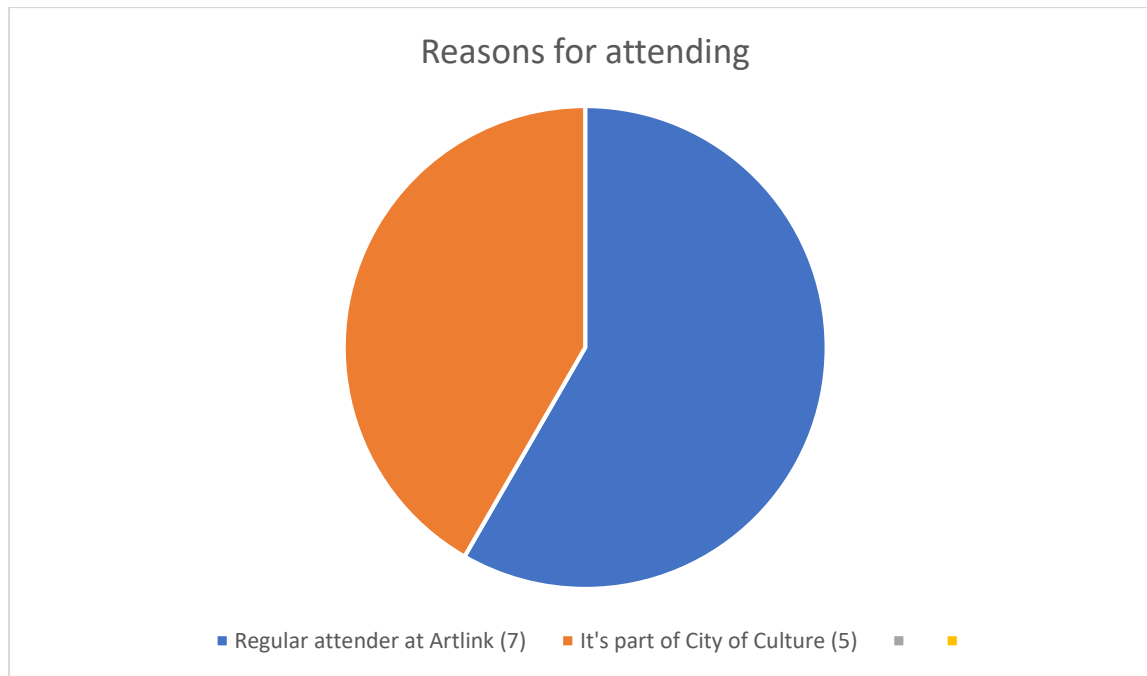
The vast majority of Artlink's audience is white (96%) compared to 85% nationally

According to the 2011 Census 89.7% of Hull residents describe themselves as White British

#### Visitor numbers for Square Peg workshops and artist talks:

Unexpected Engagement: 257  
Jason Wilsher-Mills at Engage: 200  
Dyslexia Portrait: 209  
A Sight to Behold: 145  
Disability Arts Network: 48  
Visible Girls Revisited: 45  
Pyramid of Arts workshops: 46  
Learning Disability Art Forum: 8  
Shape Arts: 20  
Portraits Untold: 38  
MESMAC: 45  
**TOTAL: 1061**

### Visitor feedback: Adam Reynolds Phase One



The figures below are based on responses to surveys by **19** visitors.

**Main reasons for attending:** The most frequently reported reason for attendance was 'Because I am a regular attender of exhibitions or activities hosted by Artlink' (7 respondents) followed by 'Because it's part of Hull UK City of Culture 2017' (5 respondents).

**Demographics:** Of the **19** respondents, **12** were women and all respondents described themselves as English / Welsh White. **12** visitors were employed or self-employed, **4** were retired and one was a carer.

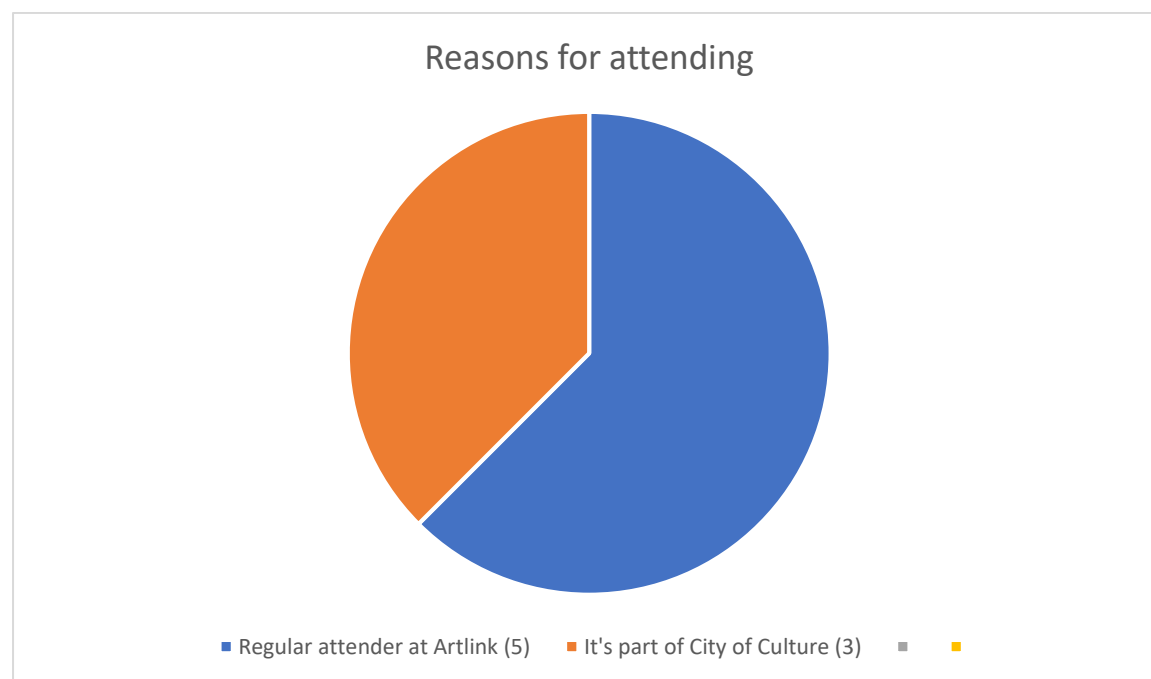
**Below is a summary extracts from the Hull 2017 visitor surveys** for Adam Reynolds Phase I. The following are typical:

*Keep showing more challenging work.*

*Its giving people an opportunity who wouldn't usually get it*

*Looks interesting will visit again*

**Visitor feedback: Adam Reynolds Phase Two**



The figures below are based on responses to surveys by **20** visitors.

**Main reasons for attending:** The most frequently reported reason for attendance was 'Because I am a regular attender of exhibitions or activities hosted by Artlink' (5 respondents) followed by 'Because it's part of Hull UK City of Culture 2017' (3 respondents).

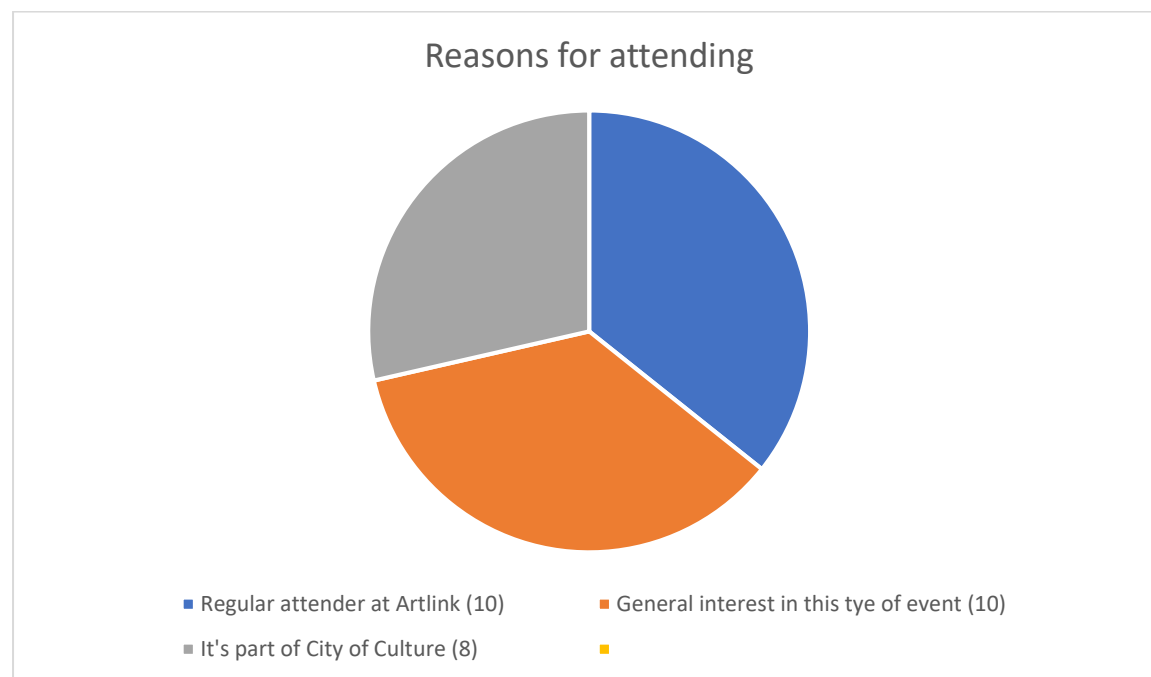
**Demographics:** Of the **20** respondents, **14** were women and all but one respondent (who described themselves as mixed / multiple ethnic) described themselves as English / Welsh White. **11** visitors were employed or self-employed, **5** were retired, one was a student and one was a carer.

**Below is a summary extracts from the Hull 2017 visitor surveys** for Adam Reynolds Phase II. The following are typical:

*Great to see disabled artists showcased through square peg and being represented at Hull 2017.*

*Brilliant opportunity – voice for the people – is a huge catalyst for conversations*

#### Visitor feedback: Anita Corbin



The figures below are based on responses to surveys by **53** visitors.

**Main reasons for attending:** The most frequently reported reasons for attendance were 'Because I am a regular attender of exhibitions or activities hosted by Artlink' (10 respondents); 'General interest in this type of event' (10 respondents) and 'Because it's part of Hull UK City of Culture 2017' (8 respondents).

**Demographics:** Of the **53** respondents, **14** were women and all but one respondent (who described themselves as mixed / multiple ethnic) described themselves as English / Welsh White. **11** visitors were employed or self-employed, **5** were retired, one was a student and one was a carer.

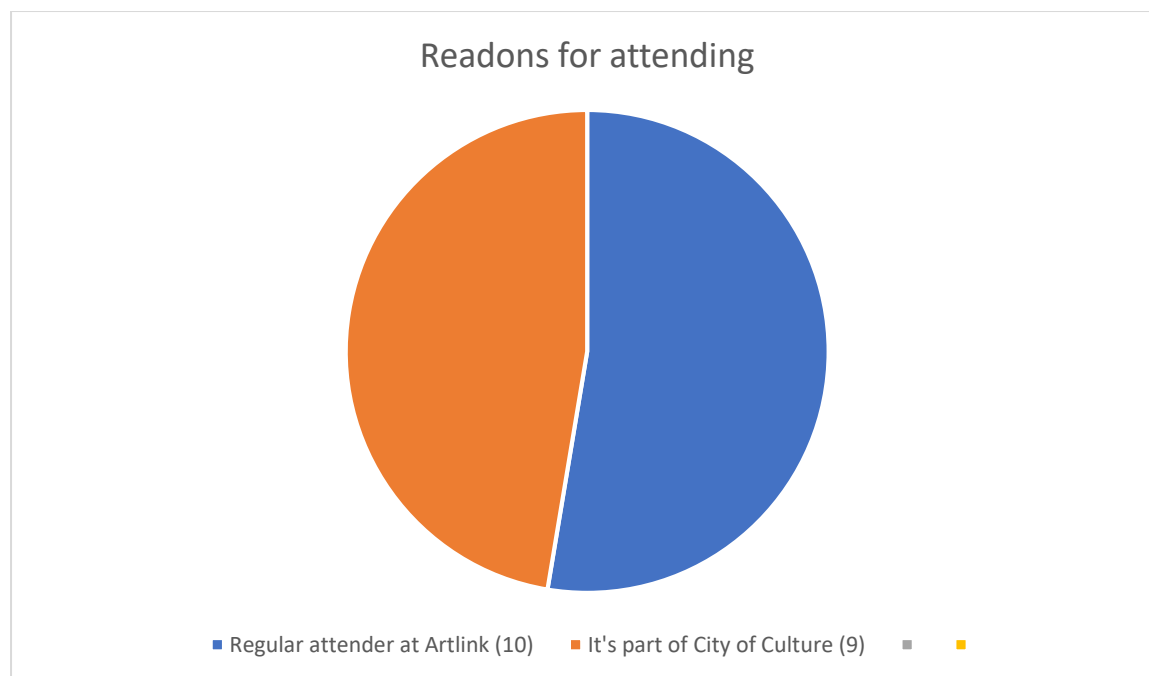
**Below is a summary of extracts from the Hull 2017 visitor surveys.** The following are typical:

*The exhibition was a happy reminder of the 80's. Loved the photographs*

*It would have been nice to see the photos of the girls side by side, older with younger.*

*Social history / photography / women's sub culture*

**Visitor feedback: John Walter**



The figures below are based on responses to surveys by **33** visitors.

**Main reasons for attending:** The most frequently reported reason for attendance were 'Because I'm a regular attender of exhibitions or activities hosted by Artlink' (10 respondents) and 'Because it's part of Hull UK City of Culture 2017 (9 respondents).

**Demographics:** Of the **33** respondents, **3** were women and **28** respondents described themselves as White and 3 were of Black, Asian or mixed ethnicity. **5** visitors were employed or self-employed, **2** were retired, one was unable to work.

The following are typical:

**Below is a summary of extracts from the Hull 2017 visitor surveys.** The following are typical:

*Helped to encourage understanding of HIV and relationships*

*I've never seen these issues explained in such a creative and colourful way.*

*A really good little, local gallery doing really interesting work.*

*Great team and highly professionally put together exhibition.*

### Visitor feedback: Jason Wilsher - Mills

The figures below are based on responses to surveys by **8** visitors.

Please note that despite Jason's being amongst the most visited exhibitions, much of it took place after City of Culture had ended its collection of surveys.

**Main reasons for attending:** The most frequently reported reason for attendance was 'Specific interest in the artist involved' (2 respondents)

**Demographics:** Of the **8** respondents, **3** were women and all respondents described themselves as White. **5** visitors were employed or self-employed, **2** were retired, one was unable to work.

**Below is a summary of extracts from the Hull 2017 visitor surveys** for Unexpected Engagement. The following are typical:

*Excellent exhibition very thought provoking.*

*Inspire me to keep working towards my own goal of being a practicing / exhibition artist*

*Drew a heart shape*

*It lets us be who we are*

### Tanya Raabe Webber: Portraits Untold

Please note that Tanya Raabe Webber's exhibition of portraits also formed part of the Square Peg programme. However, the show took place before City of Culture visitor feedback forms were in place, so we are unable to extract reasons for visits and visitors' opinions of the exhibition.

We do know, however, that the exhibition attracted 260 visitors. Tanya also made work with individuals in the gallery.

## 4. Delivery team's experiences of Square Peg

### 4.1 Defining terms

We extracted from the evaluation brief and background information what we felt were the key principles which underpinned the Square Peg programme. These were:

- User – led
- Diversity
- Social model of disability



At a preliminary evaluation meeting in April 2017, we asked delivery team members (Square Peg Director and Coordinator, artist in residence, project blogger and project documenter) to consider the terms and to come to a joint understanding of what the meant and how they would be operationalised over the course of the Programme. At the next meeting in August 2017, we asked the group to self-evaluate the extent to which the terms had been exemplified in the delivery of the programme to date. The table below summarises the outcome of these exercises.

Term	Delivery team's definition	Team evaluation
<b>User – led</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Led by disabled / diverse people /artists where work is the focus and is of high quality</i></li> <li>- <i>Workshop participants determine content</i></li> <li>- <i>Ensuring participants have a voice</i></li> </ul>	<b>3/5</b>
<b>Diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Any person who experiences barriers to accessing arts and culture</i></li> <li>- <i>Applying learning from the social model to other marginalised groups</i></li> <li>- <i>The work is the focus and of high quality</i></li> </ul>	<b>2/5</b>
<b>The social model of disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Changes spaces and attitudes to enable access</i></li> <li>- <i>Accessibility of opportunity, ensuring that all can participate</i></li> <li>- <b>Not</b> <i>the medical model</i></li> <li>- <i>Language and how we communicate</i></li> <li>- <i>The work is the focus and of high quality</i></li> </ul>	<b>3/5</b>

**Observations:** It felt clear in light of the above exercise that from the outset, that the Square Peg delivery team retained its focus on disability and other aspects of diversity across the programme. The team, however, self – assessed as delivering most effectively to the social model of disability.

Looking at how the delivery team scored its performance against these foundational operating principles, it feels clear that the team is self – aware enough to acknowledge that it has not (certainly at that point in the Programme's development) yet fully operationalised its commitment to user leadership. This may partly be about the pressure to deliver a hugely ambitious project: sometimes the imperative to do and to deliver can take precedence over everything else.

## 4.2 Delivery team's aspirations

At each of the three evaluation meetings we held over the duration of Square Peg, we asked the delivery team to reflect on their aspirations for the Programme. The table below summarises the outcomes of this exercise in April and August 2017, highlighting where and if aspirations have changed over time:

April 2017	August 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do stuff that hasn't been done before</li> <li>• To have been a series of interesting, impactful arts projects</li> <li>• To enjoy creativity as participant – both creator and audience</li> <li>• Create amazing art</li> <li>• To improve awareness and dialogues around disability</li> <li>• Create an open platform to identify and discuss issues around access. If the city could be wheelchair accessible, it would be a start.</li> <li>• To increase participation in the arts from people with disability and from diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>• Promote new and existing talent within Hull's disability community</li> <li>• Increase knowledge of disability arts in Hull</li> <li>• Promote new and existing talent within Hull's disability community</li> <li>• Work with those who don't have a voice</li> <li>• Push forward my professional practice</li> <li>• Make friends</li> <li>• Meet people</li> <li>• To be an action learning process in this field</li> <li>• Create a specialism for Artlink and a disability arts producer</li> <li>• Introduce Artlink to my creative partners</li> <li>• Give Artlink an idea of future directions for programmes based around art and disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of programming around disability but with greater autonomy and more self - governance</li> <li>• Greater depth of conversation</li> <li>• Greater depth locally</li> <li>• Deeper links with communities: change how we work whilst maintaining standards</li> <li>• Larger scale but fewer exhibitions</li> <li>• Disabled people to have more ownership of programme</li> <li>• Legacy: ongoing projects; telling what worked and focusing on it</li> </ul>

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase audience numbers and number of people accessing Artlink events</li> <li>• More footfall from diverse groups to exhibitions</li> </ul> |  |
|---|--|

## Observations

Comparing and contrasting the aspirations expressed in April and August, the former seems to be more ambitious and gung ho. It is our experience that this is not unusual at the outset of a programme of work when there can be a sense that everything seems possible. Ambitions level as time goes on and become more grounded in the experience of actual delivery.

As we can see, by the time of the second evaluation meeting in August 2017, delivery team members' aspirations have shifted from *what* they intend or want to achieve to *how* they want to achieve outcomes. By August, there is an apparent shift in emphasis from breadth to depth.

### 4.3 How did it feel?

We held a final evaluation meeting on 5 April 2018 where we asked the team to look again at the thoughts they'd expressed in the earlier evaluation meetings and to think about how and whether their ambitions had been achieved. The team's reflections can be summarised as follows:

**Doing new things in different ways:** For two of the Artlink staff team, Square Peg had presented opportunities to '*do quite radical projects in different ways that were quite interesting. We felt the programme was interesting, challenging, radical and engaged people.*'

The Programme strengthened the staff team's view that Artlink should continue to work to develop its reputation as a space for high quality disability arts in the city.

**Tiny champions:** On the other hand, it was felt that the responsibility for advocating for disability arts should not rest solely with Artlink,

*We push [disability] as an agenda but people need to get on board. People that are more powerful than us need to help us. We are tiny champions for disability.*

**Making good art focused at communities:** Jason Wilsher – Mills (Square Peg artist in residence) felt that many of his original ambitions for the residency had been met. He discussed what he felt had been the key strengths of the engagement work he had carried out with communities in the city,

*I'm not a community artist; I'm an artist who makes good art focused at community groups - I want to work with those who need their stories telling.*

**Artlink as a supportive facilitator:** Jason highlighted the importance of the support he received from Kenn Taylor (Director of Artlink) and Jemma Brown (Artlink Creative Producer). Though communications had taken a little while to fully establish, he felt that Kenn and Jemma had worked tirelessly to support his work for the exhibition and in communities.

He did not feel, however, that Square Peg worked particularly well as a project title. In his view, If Artlink is seeking to heighten its profile as an exemplar for disability arts, it should use its own name to market both its products and its gallery.

**Taking Artlink out of the building:** Anecdotally – and on the basis of the direct feedback we received from workshop participants – Jason's workshops in communities were a particularly successful feature of the Square Peg programme. On the basis of our observations of attendees at Square Peg opening nights, it was clear that Jason's had attracted by far the most diverse audience, many of whom had engaged in workshop activity with him. At the April 2018 evaluation meeting Jason made the point that,

*If you are a disabled artist, you should be getting your hands dirty; you should be in the trenches; you should be doing stuff and be willing to work with the most vulnerable people in society. I was definitely able to do this through Square Peg.*

What this illustrates to us is that new audiences – particularly those whose life experiences are typified by barriers and exclusionary practices – may be unlikely to take the risk of visiting a place unknown to them unless they can feel assured that they will be welcomed and that their experiences will be represented. The disabled visitors, their friends and families who attended Jason's opening had previously met him and liked him and were curious to see what the outcomes of their engagement with him would be and how they would be represented. A next step might be to revisit some of the groups Jason worked with to find out how and whether they might wish to continue the relationship with the wider Artlink programme, perhaps checking if they would consider attending events in the building itself.

#### 4.4 Critical reflection

As two key members of the delivery team, we asked Kenn Taylor (Director of Artlink) and Jason Wilsher – Mills (artist in residence) to critically reflect on their experiences of the Square Peg programme, identifying what went well, what might have been done differently and to specify the impact that engagement with the Programme is likely to have on their future practice. The key themes which emerged from this exercise are summarised below.

### **Cohesion and communication**

Whilst both Kenn and Jason agreed that the Programme had delivered significant positive impacts, both felt that communications could have been improved in the early days. For Jason, this was a source of some concern to start off with, but the issue was resolved relatively quickly,

*Communication wasn't great at the outset, but this was resolved very quickly by Kenn and Jemma coming on board. I was anxious because I wanted to be engaging with as many people as I could... I love working with Artlink; they are a great team.*

For Kenn, there was initially a feeling of fragmentation perhaps partly due to the rapid turnaround from receiving project go ahead (in late October 2016) to beginning programming in January 2017. To add to the pressure of launching an ambitious new programme, the beginning of Square Peg coincided almost exactly with Kenn's appointment as director.

*So, whilst the team engaged with it heavily, it wasn't always clear who was responsible for what and I had to work hard to sort all of this out upon my appointment as Director. I'm not sure how well all the different elements held together as a cohesive programme, but in terms of them working individually and tackling art and diversity and disability on a big scale in a range of ways, I think we did well.*

### **The challenges and benefits of a diverse, multi layered programme**

As discussed previously, Square peg marked a step change for Square Peg in terms of scale, ambition and the opportunity to work with a range of accomplished artists. Whilst daunting at times, the variety inherent in the programme meant that people were able to engage where and when suited them. In Kenn's words,

*All together I feel the different projects within it engaged with different people in different ways – from in depth participants to casual visitors in different settings and everything in between. It really helped Artlink up its game in a range of ways – from exhibitions to commissions to events. I think we connected with diverse audiences and artists in different ways.*

### Hitting the ground walking rather than running

On appointment, Kenn had been unaware of how much planning was left to be done on the project. His impression was that its content had been largely nailed down but this turned out not to be entirely the case. In our experience, this is not uncommon particularly in regard to projects which form part of a much larger programme of activity. By its very nature, Hull City of Culture required that activity took place within a specified 12-month period and Square Peg – though undoubtedly highly valued by the City of culture team – was one of many programmes of work undertaken.

Despite the acute pressures of time, however, Kenn reflects on some positive outcomes which emerged from the necessity to deliver a large programme of work within pressing timescales, not least the opportunity to evaluate at close quarters what worked well and what worked less well,

*If I could do it again, we'd have done a programme with [fewer] projects overall but having the smaller number of projects with deeper engagement with outcomes on show for longer. It was, however, a great action learning process in trying different things and seeing; what had impact; what was needed; what was popular and what worked within the different things we did, and this will really help shape what Artlink focuses on in future.*

Kenn adds that an unexpected positive side effect of having to deliver an ambitious programme was that,

*On the flipside, this meant we could further develop aspects of the programme in response to what we learned as we went through the programme.*

### Reinforcing practice

For Jason, the artist in residence opportunity reaffirmed his commitment to work with marginalised communities,

*I now know more than ever that I want to engage with those who don't have a voice and try my utmost to make beautiful, authentic art, which will give them a voice.*

We understand that Jason has made plans which are already underway to develop ongoing legacy work with some of the groups he engaged with over the course of the residency.

For Kenn, too, Jason's residency felt particularly impactful and will help to shape Artlink's future approach to residencies.

*The residency, by Jason Wilsher-Mills, was one of the projects that had the most impact and was the most powerful I think. Having long term residencies of artists working with communities is definitely something we want to do more of though we'll need to find significant resource for that. We want to develop deeper and further links with disability specialist organisations and connect with the wider disabled community through developing the Disability Arts Network.*

Looking forward, Kenn aims to further develop the Disability Arts Network as a vehicle through which an ongoing programme of disability focused work can be developed.

## 5. Interlude

### 5.1 Short stories

It is our experience that the impact of projects can sometimes be told in the stories which emerge from them. These are oftentimes unexpected, always unscripted and rarely appear in the outcomes and outputs sections of funding bids. We asked delivery team members to each tell us a story about an impactful moment that had particularly resonated with them. These are reproduced verbatim below.

#### **An electrician's critique of Unexpected Engagement by Jason Wilsher - Mills**

*So, we had an electrician in doing some work for us the other day; this was due to some lighting problems. We'd not met him before but he was kind of doing a good job for us. There was some work on the wall and [the finance officer who was in the gallery at the time] said, 'Are you interested in art?'. He said, 'This is really interesting – what's it about?' so we explained, and he said, 'I usually think art is shit but I like that because I had to wear callipers as a kid. You never see that – you never see it represented – and it was horrible. I used to get bullied. I'm really glad that it's art, that it's up on the wall'.*

*Then he went back to getting on with his work. This is it – someone who does not engage with art talking about an experience in their past that feels represented; someone who came here to do a job managed to connect on an emotional level.*

### Holy Moses

*This is to do with the John Walters exhibition [Alien Sex Capsule]. So, Emily works on the reception desk predominantly. We were both quite cautious about what people's reactions would be and I think on a whole, people's reactions were really good and not many negative comments. But I think my perception of what their reactions were going to be was bigger than what they actually were. One situation that highlighted this was an older couple came in and I think they'd come to look in the shop to see if we had any cards and they'd wandered into the video room and I just heard this, 'Ooh gosh!' and I definitely heard a 'Holy Moses!'. I was thinking 'What they are going to say when they come out?'*

*When they both came out they were kind of smiling and then he winked at me and said, 'That was very colourful, wasn't it?' and strolled off.*

*And for me, it was...you can't judge people's reactions by your impression of them and actually humour goes a long way.*

### Jason Wilsher – Mills is in the play - offs

*It's about perceptions and how experience can change perceptions about me as an artist.*

*I got an email from 20121 Gallery and they said they'd like me to exhibit there: they'd met Kenn; they'd seen the work and they really loved it. They've got Grayson Perry showing at the same time and they think my work really complements his. And that is the best kind of compliment you can give me, really.*

*And that's not all. There's the other example of when Billy went down to The Tate. Billy's also going to Eureka – it's developed a whole new lease of life. I was putting Billy in storage for the rest of the year and he's now going to be on show until the end of October because of a change of perception.*

*This programme – the residency – changed perceptions of what my work is, of who I am. And suddenly I've got into the play- offs of the lower **divisions**. I'm not playing at Ossett Town anymore; I'm playing at Farsley Celtic, so it's been incredible.*

### Sculpture at The Eye Hospital

*I was the artist on that project which was quite an experience, I guess, because we had five different [blind and visually impaired] societies working together to create one piece. It was good for them to meet and form new friendships. As a result of that project, there are different art clubs that have set up because they all enjoyed working together. And then all of them came to The Eye Hospital to see the opening.*

*And then Martin Green said that this project had been one of the ones that he remembered due to the stories from the people who had taken part in it... And it kind of changed perceptions for me as an artist thinking about ways in which I planned for inclusivity when delivering. In terms of personal ways, it's made me think differently in the way I work to make it accessible for people.*



### **Proud**

*A visitor [ to John Walter's Alien Sex Capsule exhibition] came in on Saturday and spent a lot of time going around the exhibition. He came to speak to me on reception and said he had an emotional response to the exhibition because he was himself HIV+ and was happy that we were coming to a point where people with HIV were not being ostracised and isolated in the way they were when he was first diagnosed. He said it was great to see science and art come together to present a more human and positive experience of people who live with the diagnosis.*

*I felt proud to work in a place that could bring this type of issue forward in a positive and even fun way. I learned that even as the world is advancing in science and awareness, there are still certain issues that have a way to go, and also to really think of the people behind a diagnosis.*

### **A Visible Girl**

*Martin Green attended the preview evening [for Visible girls Revisited] before going on to attend another event on the same night. While at the second event, he mentioned to a volunteer that he should attend Visible Girls Revisited. The next day, that volunteer and his wife came to see the show and realised his wife was one of the unidentified women in a portrait. They live just a few streets over from Artlink having moved to Hull just a few years before. The photo was taken in London.*

*Anita [Corbin, the artist] met up and had a discussion about the project and it was like in London in the 80s.*

*I was excited because it was the first day of the exhibition and it really was fun to see this woman revisit her late teens – she had never seen the photo before. It just gave a lot of buzz to the thought that we might connect Anita to more people. I learned that the world is a smaller place than you think and people want to feel connected.*

### **A focal point**

*All the relationship stuff has gone really well, when people meet people from different areas – whether it's geographical or areas of interest...We had two people who had no sight at all: one from Sheffield and one from Hull.*

*They got chatting, they had a common interest and they now regularly communicate and interestingly, they both had visually impaired partners who had no sight at all – so there's four people there with no sight – and they now regularly meet up and go on holiday together. So, all those things are what it's all about and everything that comes from that: the confidence, the motivation, the self - esteem. All of those things that can result from being involved in Society. And ultimately the art work – it's great to have a focal point that's in the Eye Hospital.*

## 6. Artists' experiences of Square Peg

### 6.1 How have artists experienced Square Peg?

Over the course of Square Peg, we interviewed the following exhibiting artists:

- Jason Wilsher Mills: Unexpected Engagement
- Anita Corbin: Visible Girls Revisited
- John Walter: Alien Sex Capsule
- Sophie Oliveira Barata: Centre of Attention

In addition, we interviewed the following individuals who were curators / producers or commissioners of Square Peg main programme or ancillary activities:

- Sandra Ackroyd: Chief Executive of HERIB and initiator of City of Culture funded A Sight to behold. HERIB contracted with Artlink to develop and deliver the creative content of this project which culminated in the production and installation of a sculptural piece at the city's Eye Hospital.
- Fiona Slater: Fiona worked for SHAPE Arts and amongst her roles, she oversees the Adam Reynolds Memorial Bursary which was hosted by Artlink as part of Square Peg

We were keen to learn how they had experienced the Square Peg programme. This section of the report summarises the key themes which emerged from these discussions.

**The commissioning relationship:** The terms of engagement were different for each artist. Anita had separately fundraised for *Visible Girls Revisited* and – following conversations with Rachel Elm of the Artlink team and one of the *Visible Girls* who was resident in Hull – decided to launch *Visible Girls Revisited* in the city. It was felt that there was a good fit with the City of Culture programme and plans began in 2016. Anita described the relationship with Artlink and with Hull as serendipitous; it meant that the new exhibition could be launched in a city which had a very real connection – through one of the portraits – to the original *Visible Girls* project.

The relationship between Anita and Artlink felt very collaborative; Anita did not charge Artlink a fee and Artlink did not charge a commission for merchandise sales.

The arrangement with John Walter, on the other hand, felt more like a traditional commission. However, according to John it was not without its problems. The commission was initiated through a cold call from Kate (formerly of Artlink) who had visited John's exhibition in Liverpool in 2015. Kate approached John asking him if he would be interested in making a version of the exhibition for Artlink.

An unusual feature of the commission, from John's point of view was that as commissioner, Artlink did not place any expectations on him as the artist.

*They could have driven it in multiple directions but they let me lead on it when they're the commissioner. This also resulted in mistakes...the contract had some problems; there was no payment schedule and they were going to give me all the money in one go.*

For Fiona Slater of SHAPE, the commissioning process seemed smooth and initial contact was proactively initiated by Artlink,

*Katy and Rachel came to SHAPE and had a meeting with us initially. The gallery in Hull was part of the SHAPE family at one time. Through the theme of Roots and Routes [a programme strand of Hull City of Culture] they initiated a conversation with us. They selected what they felt would work well in the space.*

For Fiona, it felt like a great opportunity to connect with City of Culture,

*I hadn't been to Hull before and it was a great opportunity to connect with the Hull City of Culture. They'd done the research and they reached out to us and it felt like it fitted in with their programme in a thoughtful way. It felt meaningful.*

For Sophie Oliveira Barata, *Centre of Attention* represented a first opportunity to exhibit her work in a contemporary arts setting and to have access to a budget which enabled her to animate her designs. She was particularly grateful for the freedom and flexibility allowed within the commissioning process,

*I've only had one other project where I've had electronics – this one has a major electronics dimension. It was exciting to be able to go to town on it.*

Again, the project was the result of a direct approach from Rachel Elm of the Artlink team.

*Rachel got in touch and said that I'd been on Artlink's radar for a while which was nice because I've always wanted to do more exhibition work. It created a great opportunity to make something for someone who wouldn't have to pay. I was able to approach Kelly, who's a model but is also a disability activist. We also had a good budget when you consider one piece – though it didn't turn out to be so good when I decided to make three pieces with one of them including electronics.*

HERIB had previously worked with Artlink on an arts project which had gone very well. As that drew to a close, Hull City of Culture was beginning so Sandra Ackroyd (CEO of HERIB) took the opportunity to bid for funds from City of Culture to deliver what went on to become *A Sight to Behold*. She then approached Artlink as delivery partner for the work. The budget was modest and this meant that communications and relationships had to be particularly strong. According to Sandra,

*It was about communication between the groups and strong communications with the main artist and learning about compromise and teamwork and working with other people – all those things. I think that was a really important part of the project.*

#### **Community engagement:**

For Anita, community engagement is central to her practice:

*Because the series is about reunion and rekindling and keeping your mates and looking to the past, I suppose it felt important that the people of Hull should feel part of the process. One way of connecting with this was to do with the workshop and artist talk and pop up event – I've got a writer who I work with and we went out for 36 hours in Hull and met up with people and photographed them. We got their spin on what it was like to live in Hull...art can feel elusive and exclusive so having that engagement is what it's about.*

For John Walter, it did not necessarily feel as if community engagement had been given a high priority – or at least that it was not clearly directed by Artlink. For example, he only learned of MESMAC's proposal to introduce HIV testing in the space on the night of the opening. Though he was very positive about this, he felt that with more notice it could have been arranged more efficiently and effectively.

As we have seen in previous sections of this report, Jason Wilsher – Mills' residency and subsequent exhibition had engagement and participation at their heart. Jason was clear about the groups he wished to work with – those most marginalised and seldom heard – and worked with Artlink to facilitate access to these. The work that Jason carried out with the groups was explicitly

referenced in his final exhibition and – through the use of augmented reality – the work which workshop participants made peppered exhibits.

In what on the face of it should have been a very accessible exhibition at a city centre shopping centre, Sophie Oliveira Barata's *Centre of Attention* attracted rather disappointing visitor numbers. This was in part due to the shopping centre changing the venue on Artlink at the last minute and the cost of staffing a pop up space containing expensive artworks. However, it feels a shame that an exhibition in a non-arts venue which could have appealed to a non-traditional visual arts audience did not attract more visitors.

Sandra Ackroyd of HERIB told us that community engagement was at the core of *A Sight to Behold*. Hull is relatively well – resourced compared to similar societies across the region and Sandra was keen to ensure that individuals living in localities which were less well – resourced should have the opportunity to benefit from the project. In order to support engagement, she felt that it was imperative that the project culminated in a tactile artwork which all workshop attendees had contributed to,

*The finished sculpture had parts from each society so they could touch it and know that they had done this or that. Jemma [the Artlink lead artist] created the artwork from the information that participants had provided. Alongside the final artwork we had plaques...that were very tactile and done in clay and resin and that was each individual's. They were displayed under each society heading and then Jemma took key bits from each of those and put them in to the final sculpture.*

The completed artwork is on display at Hull Eye Hospital which has annual patient numbers of in the region of 50,000, all of whom will encounter – and can choose to interact with - the sculpture.

**Ambition and scale:** John Walter's view is that some of the exhibitions which have formed part of the Square Peg programme – notably Anita Corbin, himself and Brian Griffiths - are perhaps of a scale that is unfamiliar to Artlink and that the organisation has perhaps struggled with the infrastructural support needed.

It is worth noting that Anita Corbin brought with her significant marketing, PR and communications infrastructure and that this proved highly successful in raising awareness about the exhibition.

The success of Jason Wilsher – Mills' exhibition was undoubtedly aided by the strong links he had made with communities across Hull in the several months that preceded it.

Though HERIB was not initiated by Artlink, it strongly complemented Square Peg activity and was itself a Hull City of Culture programme. It was an ambitious project which was based in Hull but which attracted blind and visually impaired participants from across the Yorkshire region with logistics such as transport centrally coordinated by HERIB.

**Hosting:** Again, artists had contrasting views about the ways in which their work was hosted by Artlink. Anita was fulsome in her praise for Artlink staff; she felt that they were knowledgeable about the work and were able to answer questions posed by visitors. *The staff were great on the desk – ready to talk to people. The space was not intimidating and people feel confident enough to make comments whereas if they were in The Ferens they're not likely to go up to someone and say, 'Don't you think you should have put that next to there?'*

Though John was impressed by the way in which Artlink transformed the space and exhibited his work, he was less satisfied with some other aspects of hosting:

*The role of the host is something that I'm sensitive to...approach people before they come to you. Learn about the work. It's the difference between something being ok and something being amazing.*

John's experience contrasts with that of Fiona Slater and – reportedly – of the artists whose work was represented in the Adam Reynolds Memorial Bursary exhibition,

*They were friendly towards the artists and conscientious. We felt very supported and we felt we had a team behind us though they were a bit stretched. The exhibition was significantly bigger than anything they'd done before but I felt that they were all really invested in it.*

**Press and marketing:** Anita discussed the crucial role of her team in marketing and profiling the exhibition both prior to its arrival in Hull and during the exhibition. Her press and marketing support was impressive and effective:

*I had a dedicated marketing team and broadsheet coverage. I had a good PR woman and a good team of young women who are really connected. The curator and the designer are both very connected.*

Again, John's experience felt somewhat different. He told us that he had recommended people to write copy about the exhibition but felt that staff seemed to lack the confidence to progress his suggestions. Further,

*When they tagged people in posts, they don't tag me in social media. They seem to have a lack of confidence. They can deliver social engagement and deliver high end art exhibitions.*

Fiona Slater felt that Square Peg's status as a City of Culture programme brought additional marketing support, though the downside of this was that timescales for marketing and promotional copy were often very tight. Fiona was very appreciative of the constructive critiques which the Programme blogger produced,

*I liked the in - house blogger – Michelle – who spoke to the artists and was at the events. It was great to have that. It felt like she was really responding to the work because you want review and critique and I appreciated the time she put into that.*

Marketing was not a huge issue for Sandra at HERIB. She was very clear about the constituency she was seeking to attract: blind and visually impaired people from across the Yorkshire region. Since she is well networked to societies across the region, she worked through them to attract around 40 participants. She also negotiated exhibition space at Hull Eye Hospital which effectively guaranteed an annual visitor footfall of 50,000 plus staff.

#### **What was learned from the process?**

As discussed previously, for Sophie Oliveira Barata, Square Peg was a first for her. Amongst the learning which emerged was a harsh lesson about budgeting. In the course of our conversation, she told us that what had appeared to be a generous budget was stretched thinly when she decided to make three - rather than the contracted one – limbs!

On reflection, she also felt that she should have built in more time for testing prototypes, particularly given the prominence of electronics in the finished pieces.

For Sandra, *A Sight to Behold* opened up HERIB to people who had not previously accessed the organisation's offer.

*I think it's brought new people in and that's got to be a good thing – and I don't just mean for our numbers. I think it's good that people who have a visual impairment have found something that's the right thing for them. We do some things really well but we have gaps in provision and it helped us plug a gap and do it in a really positive way...I know that Selby which was one of the groups that participated, their group thought it was absolutely fantastic and they formed an art group that they'd never had before.*



Sandra considers the project to have been a huge success and she has since met with Kenn Taylor at Artlink to think about ways in which the two organisations can continue to work together. A key piece of learning which has emerged from *A Sight to Behold* and which Sandra would like to continue to explore, is that people seem to appreciate and benefit from working with others from outside their immediate locality,

*There was a real benefit from coming together with people from other places; friendships form within the societies and between the societies.*

Opportunities also opened up for friendships within localities,

*A couple from our art group – two single ladies of 50+ who both have a visual impairment have formed a really strong bond and one of them said she'd never had a sleepover and they had one. They stayed up till 4 in the morning. Perhaps we could open work up to other disabled people so they can share experiences.*

Sandra also told us that a further key piece of learning for her has been in learning to trust in a process without necessarily knowing precisely what its artistic outcome will be,

*I was thinking, I hope it is going to be professional and all those things because at the end of the day it's our organisation's name at stake. It was a matter of becoming comfortable in allowing something to develop.*

## 7. A commissioner's perspective

As discussed previously, Square Peg was funded by Hull City of Culture to deliver to its ambitious artistic, cultural and heritage programme which took place in venues across Hull in 2017. The thinking behind the city's bid to become City of Culture 2017 is neatly summarised in The University of Hull's preliminary evaluation of impacts of Hull 2017 as follows:

The Hull bid story was of "a city coming out of the shadows", presenting the event as a unique chance to shed its image as a declining and deprived port city at the edge of the country and to build a new profile as a vibrant cultural city.

The judging panel particularly praised Hull's bid for the extent of its community engagement, the role of the private sector, and its focus on legacy.



From a baseline of low level cultural engagement, a poor cultural and visitor economy, and a poor external image of the city, the project's initial ambitions, set out in the bid, were to deliver the following four step changes:

1. Raising aspirations and skills through increased participation and learning
2. Growing the size and strength of the cultural and visitor economy
3. Placing cultural regeneration at the heart of the city's future
4. Transforming attitudes and perceptions of Hull locally, nationally and internationally

The bid was led by Hull City Council and was delivered through a partnership model with representatives of key sectors including culture, tourism, education, voluntary organisations and local business.

*(Cultural Transformations, The Impact of Hull UK City of culture 2017; Culture, Place and Policy Institute University of Hull, March 2018)*

We spoke to Sam Hunt – one of the City of Culture Executive Producers – to find out from him what he felt that Square Peg had contributed to the overall 2017 programme. The interview is summarised below:

#### **How did the Square Peg programme come about?**

Sam explained that the City of Culture team was going through a process of examining what strategic gaps could be filled within the wider programme and at the role of Artlink within the City of Culture programme and the wider city arts ecology:

*And then how we could use 2017 to be a catalyst year for whatever change Artlink were looking to make, especially in terms of the role of advocacy in terms of disability arts and commissioning new work. So that's kind of how Square Peg came about. We gave quite an open brief to the then Director to have a look at a programme of new work based around the commissioning of disability arts and it was as open as that. Then we asked Artlink to come back with a proposal and their proposal blew my mind.*

#### **What was so impressive about the proposal?**

Sam spoke to us about the paucity of visual arts spaces in the city which had led to the opening of a new visual arts space at Humber Street. The lack of space had meant that ambitions had been blunted somewhat and he was therefore pleased and surprised by the evident ambition of Artlink's proposed Square Peg programme.

*It seemed to be a lot more ambitious than anything we'd seen Artlink do to that point I suppose. The list of artists they were talking to were kind of on our long-list but we never got round to. We never had the place to do it especially around visual arts in the city...So you start looking at the visual arts in the city where Artlink was not usually factored into these conversations, where it became that destination point. Its helped the whole city raise its game.*

### **What went well?**

Sam was particularly impressed by Jason Wilsher – Mills' exhibition. It seemed to him to exemplify the ways in which it is possible to make 'deeply profound work' which engages and is informed by the lived experiences of the city's most marginalised communities.

In terms of engagement and in terms of the people he was engaging, it's something which despite all of our best efforts with the Land of Green Ginger programme or with the Unlimited Education Programme, Jason seemed to find the genuinely least engaged in the city and celebrated it not in bolt-on or virtue signalling way or anything like that but created some deeply profound works through that engagement. And I thought that was a really good microcosm of an expression of what the ambitions for Square Peg were. It did really well.

### **What went less well?**

As also mentioned by some of the artists and by Kenn Taylor, Sam felt that marketing and communications could have been improved. There was, in his view, a slight feeling that Square Peg existed in a vacuum outside the main programme. In his view, City of /culture could perhaps have made more of the exhibitions:

*Especially the individual launches where each exhibition had that opportunity within the cultural calendar to have the spotlight on them. I don't think we necessarily got the level of press or the level of interest we could have got. Although going back to Jason's show the people who showed up for that launch felt very different, a very different audience for a launch. That's in keeping with Jason's practice as well.*

Sam questioned the necessity and efficacy of exhibition launches in general,

*We've been reviewing the whole process around private views and the role of launches etc. the idea of getting away from them all together feels like a nice thing. Throwing the exhibition open to the city instead of having the art glitterati – there was a launch every couple of days last year. It's the same group of people being invited. So, what do you want to achieve with these things? Maybe each of the exhibitions is focused on a different constituency or different audience. Maybe there is another way of doing this and Jason's launch was kind of like that.*

#### **Looking back, is there anything that could have been done differently?**

Sam's response to this question brings to mind some of Kenn's learning from the Square Peg programme, in particular highlighting the inevitable consequences of having to work nimbly and without extensive planning time:

*The quality was up there with Ferens and Humber Street Gallery... But because we were kind of doing it on the fly we didn't have time for the strategic approach [though] during the year we did start to build those links up. There's a visual arts strategy that is being written by Hull City Council and these things show the weaknesses were exposed and now they're all being brought together so now there are going to be positive outcomes from it.*

#### **What are the opportunities going forward for legacy?**

Sam's response to this question is encouraging for Artlink and seems again to be at least partly informed by his experiences of viewing Jason Wilsher Mills' exhibition:

*Artlink have very important role to play in terms of advocacy for disability arts in the city. I think they have a really important role to play as a commissioner for new work. And also, the evolution of Artlink outside of just a building-based organisation working out into the community of the least engaged strengthened by Jason's work. The ambition is there, they just need to get it on a firm footing*

## **8. Observations and learning points**

### **8.1 Importance of developing and communicating a shared understanding of key concepts at the outset**

Square Peg represented an attempt on the part of Artlink to place its commitment to diversity – and more specifically, disability – front and centre. It struck us at the beginning of the process that there seemed to be a slight lack of clarity about where diversity ended and where disability began; or indeed whether they were discrete terms. We came to understand that part of this ambiguity

arose from the requirements of the funder that the programme was more widely diversity focused. However, as an external observer it felt that the project would have benefited from greater clarity and confidence about what it was (and what it wasn't). In the event, Square Peg felt as if it was a primarily disability arts focused programme which included programming that focused on other marginalised groups.

This is perhaps particularly important with regard to a diversity focused programme which should – by definition – be inclusive. If a programme is badged as a diversity programme, there is a not unreasonable expectation that it will address a multiplicity of issues. We would argue that there is a strength in specificity; if a programme has a particular focus this should be made clear from the outset.

In terms of **learning**, it may be that in developing programmes of this type in future, careful consideration should be given to what Artlink's working definitions of disability and diversity are (It may well be that these are contained within the business plan that the organisation will have prepared as part of the NPO process).

If – as feels to be the case – Artlink goes on to establish a niche for disability arts, the team should consider the inherent intersectionality of disabled people and communities: a disabled person may also be a woman or person experiencing economic exclusion or of a minority ethnic group. With all of this in mind, we would suggest a nuanced approach to programming which takes account of the multiplicity of identities which one person might embody.

**To underpin its aspiration to be a specialist in disability arts in the city, we suggest that all staff undertake customised equalities / diversity training to increase confidence and ensure a consistent approach across the organisation.**

## **8.2 Artlink as an advocate for disability arts in the city**

Square Peg has helped to re-establish Artlink as a home for high quality disability arts in the city. Similarly, the Disability Arts Network potentially provides a forum for artists, activities and others to advocate for and push forward a disability arts agenda.

A slightly disappointing element of Square Peg was that it did not appear to fully deliver to its ambitions in respect of increasing disabled audiences in the gallery (although as previously observed, participation and engagement by disabled people was far greater in community settings). It will be important that this remains a key priority for Artlink and for the Disability Arts Network.

We are aware that Artlink has recently reviewed the DAN's terms of reference and that these clarify its meeting cycle, its broad aims and current priorities.

With regard to **learning**, we would suggest that consideration be given to finding ways of enabling the Disability Arts Network to on the one hand become more autonomous and on the other to enable it to feed more directly into programming.

We recommend that Artlink regularly reviews its terms of reference of the DAN, building into them an expectation of greater autonomy so that the DAN becomes the natural vehicle for co-production.

### 8.3 Enacting co production through a new approach to residencies

Jason Wilsher – Mills' approach to his residency seemed to us to exemplify a particular iteration of co-production, where the contribution of workshop participants was clear and was made manifest in the final artwork. *A Sight to Behold*, too, seemed influenced by a commitment to co-production in that blind and visually impaired people defined the parameters of the work and - in a sense – the artist was a facilitator of the process.

If Artlink is to become a key advocate for disability arts in the city, it will be important to continue to be vigilant in ensuring that disabled people are not simply the subjects of work but co-creators and co commissioners.

With regard to **learning**, the Jason Wilsher – Mills residency could prove a useful template for future residencies. To our mind, the critical success factors appeared to be:

- Jason's manifesto which set out his approach to engagement from the outset;
- Engaging an artist with a genuine commitment to the engagement of those most seldom heard;
- The existence of a clear outcome for workshop participants was embedded in the workshop design and this meant that participants had an interest in visiting the final exhibition;
- Engaging an artist with the personal and social skills to quickly develop trusting, strong and meaningful relationships with marginalised groups and individuals;
- Engaging an artist who produces high quality artwork which also engages and represents people whose stories and experiences are frequently overlooked.

It is worth noting that an important legacy of the Square Peg programme has been the establishment of a Square Peg Bursary for a disabled artist in residence. The first recipient of the Bursary is Skye Shadowlight, a West Yorkshire based graduate of the Leeds School of Art, Architecture and Design.

On receipt of the Bursary, Skye commented,

“I have always been a square peg. I struggled at school and found it very hard to make any friends or even understand how people interacted in a way to make connections like that. I struggled as a young adult with addiction and self-medicating for the PTSD, severe anxiety disorder, panic disorder and attention deficit disorder that I am diagnosed with.

It was a difficult decision to apply for this bursary for disabled artists as I usually always put non-disabled on these forms. I don't feel like I am disabled, I feel like it's the system that's disabled. The great British Sculptor, Tony Heaton, OBE once said to me. “We do not get paid for being disabled, we get compensated for living in a disabling world”. I am so proud to have been selected and to be working with such great people at Artlink Hull.”

**We recommend that priority is given to seeking investment which enables the long - term residency template to become a mainstay of the Artlink offer.**

#### **8.4 Hosting**

Though concerns about hosting were explicitly raised by only one artist, his observations highlight possible areas for improvement.

In terms of **learning**, it feels important that there is a consistent approach to ensuring that artists receive high quality care and support which includes:

- Clearly stating the artist brief
- Demonstrating an understanding of the artist's work
- Meeting and greeting (for example, meeting out of town artists at the railway station)
- Consistently ensuring that artists have the opportunity to proof marketing materials

**We therefore recommend that Artlink revisits its artist liaison protocols and that these are clearly communicated to all staff.**

#### **8.5 What and who are openings for?**

We were struck by Sam Hunt's comments about openings and his observation that Jason Wilsher – Mills' stood out as attracting an atypical crowd. This reflects our observations at the time.

Sam suggests that a critical assessment of what and who opening are for along with consideration of whether they are necessary, his concern being that audiences are largely recycled across all exhibition openings and that they largely comprise what he refers to as the 'art glitterati'.

In terms of **learning**, it seems likely that without a radical shift in practice, Artlink will continue to attract a traditional arts audience to its openings. Given the under representation of disabled audiences at Artlink, this could be a real concern if the organisation chooses to position itself as the disability arts specialist in the city. On the positive side, however, Jason's opening clearly demonstrates that it is possible to nurture and attract a much more diverse audience to openings.

**We recommend that in consultation with Jason, consideration is given to incorporating elements of his manifesto into Artlink's engagement strategies with seldom heard communities. Further, we suggest that Artlink thinks carefully about what it wants its audience to look like and proactively reaches out to have conversations with those groups about the Artlink offer.**

**Working with the DAN and the Learning Disabilities Art Forum, Artlink should be able to identify barriers that exclude disabled and other minoritised groups.**

**Consideration should also be given to developing light touch audience evaluation tools which are accessible to (for example) learning disabled people, individuals with sensory impairments and people for whom English is an additional language.**

## **8.6 Marketing and branding**

We appreciate that Artlink's website has recently been revamped and meets recognised accessibility standards. Alongside this, Artlink has developed new branding and signage and is developing a quarterly brochure which clearly sets out programming and events. However, during the Programme it felt difficult to locate information about the totality of the Square Peg programme either online or using the Programme brochure. From our perspective, it took us a long time to ascertain when the Programme started and finished and a complete schedule of Square Peg branded activity.

It was our experience that artists and people outside the organisation did not refer to Square Peg at all, but rather to Artlink. This would suggest that the programme title did not achieve resonance with its intended audiences.

In terms of **learning**, Square Peg felt like quite a difficult programme to learn about. Though Michelle Dee (the programme blogger) produced some high-quality copy about the Programme, it felt a little tangential to the main programme and could have been treated as a creative and critical outcome of the year long programme. The images produced by Jerome Whittingham – the programme documenter – could also have been prominently featured as an artistic outcome of Square Peg.

We recommend that as Artlink reviews its marketing and branding strategies and techniques, particular attention is paid to how it consistently and clearly expresses its commitment to leading, developing and advocating for disability arts in the city.

### 8.7 Organisational readiness

There clearly exists an opportunity for Artlink to work towards positioning itself as the specialist disability arts organisation in the city. We understand that a significant proportion of the organisation's trustees are disabled. However, to become an exemplar disability – led arts organisation, it will need to carefully consider whether it has an adequate level of competence cross all functions – from the Board right through to front of house, caretaking etc.

In terms of **learning**, establishing the organisation as a disability arts specialist requires a cultural shift as well as a shift in programming.

Our recommendation is that in order to make manifest its commitment, Artlink should ensure that anyone who encounters its provision is left with a clear impression of where the organisation's heart lies. This will require interventions such as: Board briefings; appropriate inductions for new staff, trustees and volunteers; and a necessary degree of autonomy for the DAN. A key function of the DAN may be to act as a critical friend to the organisation.

We would further suggest that all artist in residence opportunities be open exclusively to disabled artists.



## In the end

### An unexpected introduction

We met Monique and Andrea at the opening of Jason Wilsher – Mills' exhibition at Artlink. The space was full, and it felt to us to be the most diverse audience of any of the openings we'd attended over the course of the Square Peg project. We wondered whether this was at least in part because many of the visitors would see their lives represented in the work that hung on the walls or in the sculptures and 3D prints that combined to make for an eclectic, immersive and vibrant exhibition.

Monique uses a wheelchair and she was accompanied by a young woman who looked a little older than her and by a woman whom we took to be her mother. There was a strong family resemblance between the three of them. That they were black also drew our attention as we had not come across many black people in the city as a whole or at the exhibition openings we'd attended.

Monique was holding a print of one of the works in the exhibition and she asked us if we would take a photograph of her and her family in front of one of the large-scale artworks. She told us that one of Jason's pieces – *Brave Boy Billy* - incorporated her own drawings and a phrase which has become a mantra for her: *Improvise, adapt, overcome*. It was at this point that Monique told us that she, her Mum and her sister, Rhiannon, had travelled up from London for the opening. We were intrigued and arranged to have a longer chat with Monique outside the slightly hectic atmosphere of the opening.

### A few setbacks

In the event, Monique was interviewed with her Mum, Andrea. We were curious to know how a young woman who lives in London had ended up contributing to an artwork which formed part of an exhibition funded by Hull City of Culture.

Andrea explained to us that Monique had attended a three-day art workshop organised through the Global Disability Innovation Hub at Queen Elizabeth Park in London. At the time Monique had been having quite a hard time of it, and Andrea decided to delay telling Monique about the workshop until the last minute, a decision which Monique told us she had some sympathy with,

*I wasn't in a very good place at the time. I'd had a few setbacks and I'm still kind of recovering from that so telling me beforehand would have probably caused me more anxiety.*

Monique lives with a number of challenges which she and Andrea summarised as including a genetic disorder (2q37 deletion), ataxic cerebral palsy, some specific learning difficulties and a diagnosis of autism. Monique attended school until she was 13 and thereafter was schooled at home by Andrea.

Now 21, Monique lives at home with Andrea and it feels very much as if both are committed to developing new and varied learning and life experiences for Monique, amongst them creative writing, acting and Equestrian dressage. Monique told us that she hopes to compete in dressage at the Paralympics. She also writes a blog which reflects on her experiences and varied activities. When she's not doing that, she's often thinking about how best to construct a piece of writing she's working on; she feels the skills she learned at Jason's workshop may enable her to illustrate the work. Monique is able and ambitious. Pinning her ambitions down can feel difficult because - in her words – 'I want to try everything.'

Taking on a full time caring role meant that Andrea had to give up paid work. Talking to Andrea, it felt clear that she had put a great deal of time and thought in to developing a varied and stimulating curriculum – something which Monique appreciated a great deal. Reflecting on her experience of home schooling, she told us that,

*It was quite fun actually - a bit difficult in the beginning because I didn't know what to expect but now it's actually better because you can kind of learn things at your own pace. You can learn anything you want.*

Andrea in turn reflected on how she had experienced home schooling,

*It was hard at first... it was a big adjustment for both of us. It was difficult to make that adjustment from having the regular school day to having to then be able to think outside of the box and it's been quite an eye opener...It was a big learning curve but for us it works. I know that it doesn't always work for everybody.*

### Signposting

We were interested to learn how Monique had heard about Jason's workshop; it can be difficult to find out about what's going on. It turned out that Andrea had learned about the opportunity through the family's involvement with Whizz Kidz – a national charity which supports children to become confident and independent by providing equipment, life skills and opportunities for social networks and support. Andrea explained that Monique has both benefited from Whizz Kidz support and raised money for the charity,

*We got an email from Whizz Kidz telling us about lots of things that were going on and they were asking people to go on them so that's how I found it. I didn't intentionally go looking for it – it found us.  
They do a lot of stuff. They've managed to get Monique up and down the country and they have ambassador groups, do holiday clubs... lots of stuff.*

*Monique did the first Parallel London Run for them the year before last.*

Monique has since gone on to become a young ambassador for Parallel London,

*It's a voluntary role so you don't get paid for it. The main role is to kind of spread the word about Parallel London and inclusivity. And bringing other organisations in to it to participate in the fun runs.*

### **A kindred spirit**

Prior to attending the workshop, Monique had limited experience of visual arts; it felt like a very new thing for her – not least because she'd only learned that she was attending a few hours before the first workshop started. One of the things that put her at ease was Jason's introduction to the workshop and his openness about his life experiences. As Andrea explained,

*We don't know many people who are disabled around us. Monique isn't seen differently at all. She is just seen as Monique so she doesn't feel any different. It was great to meet someone who shared the experience of being in hospital, understanding all of that and how it feels and everything else.*

Monique interjected,

*And having setbacks of his own as well and coming back from that. He was interested in me and he was talking about himself. That honesty and openness was one thing that I liked about him because he wasn't kind of shy or afraid to share.*

Andrea told us that it felt good to be able to have a grown-up conversation about all of these things. Monique told us that the fact that the workshop was specifically for disabled people helped,

*There was lots of togetherness and I think it's really great for people with disabilities to see that basically there are no limits. You can have whatever you want. You can do the same things as everyone else and you can do it with everyone else. Not just restricted to all the wheelchairs together - it's everybody together.*

### **Perspective and proportion**

Andrea contrasted the workshop with Monique's experience of visual arts in a formal school setting,

*This is always something that Monique wanted to do and one of the things that was very frustrating at school was when she was in her art lessons, they were restricted to certain mediums. They tend to be very small places that really aren't wheelchair friendly so it was very difficult. It has always been something that Monique has been interested in and able to do. It's about perspective and proportion – it was very difficult to translate with her condition and things like just generally being able to hold the materials and manipulating the materials because you need to know what you are doing and Monique's spatial awareness is not the best.*

Jason's creative use of digital technologies opened up artistic possibilities to Monique,

*Art was always something a little out of her reach. The way that Jason has done things through the use of technology that isn't available to them has made it so within her reach. It's helped her to realise a dream that she can illustrate her own books and make that what she wants, what she's always wanted to do.*

Both Monique and Andrea have become accustomed to encountering barriers; describing a recent trip to the cinema, Andrea referred obliquely to 'the usual issues'. Similarly, what should have been an enjoyable creative writing workshop turned out to be inaccessible for a wheelchair user. Monique feels that there should be more opportunities for disabled people to participate,

*There should be more. It could and would be a lot better. I would like it if people made more of an effort to include people.*

Monique's work with Jason has sustained beyond the workshop. Andrea told us,

*Jason has been emailing and is very open to share work with him providing honesty and feedback and he's always interested in what you're doing. He's a humble and unique human being who comes from humble beginnings – not privileged or anything and I think that he's quite an inspiration.*

Closing the conversation, we asked Monique what she knows now that she didn't know before the workshop,

*I'm more open to talking about myself. There are ways to show myself without having to explain everything, if that makes sense. I think that I'm a different person but for the better, really.*

Andrea and Monique talked quietly between themselves for a few seconds. It seemed that there was something that Monique wanted to say but she wasn't certain if she should. Andrea told her that she should say what was on her mind.

*I've got something to say. I think that I've kind of risen from the ashes like a phoenix. I've become something new.*

## APPENDIX ONE: MONIQUE LOCK'S BLOG

Wednesday 31st May

Today we continued with our work, and I put on some finishing touches, adding a background and colour to my body, as well as a quiver full of arrows.

Today Jason made another big reveal. In addition to contributing to Jason's giant 3-D masterpiece, an official certificate with our names on from Trinity College London, and as an extra reward, Jason has asked a friend of his, Jonathan, to make a 3-D print of our heads to go on LEGO figures so we can be whoever we want to be, symbolising someone or something that is important to us.



After lunch, Jason interviewed me today. Luckily, mum had prepared me for this eventuality by making me an album full of pictures relating to my life, so that I could talk freely about myself and also be able to answer any questions that Jason asked. I was quite anxious about the interview as I never really know what to say about myself, and this is something I have difficulties with, but that is how you **improvise, adapt, and overcome**. I was surprised that the interview went really well and Jason got quite emotional at the end as when he asked what I feel about how disabled people would fit into society today I replied with the answer that we, (disabled people) are brave - not cowardly or afraid of our disabilities and don't worry whether others are as it is their issue.



One of the photos in my album is of chromosomes and I used this image as my part of my background artistically to show part of who I am, representing my rare chromosome disorder, 2q37 deletion. As a coincidence, the way that I used the chromosome image duplicated to look like dragonflies, is similar to how Jason always uses butterflies in his work to represent part of who he is and further added to our fellow iPad artistry bond.



Thursday 1st June

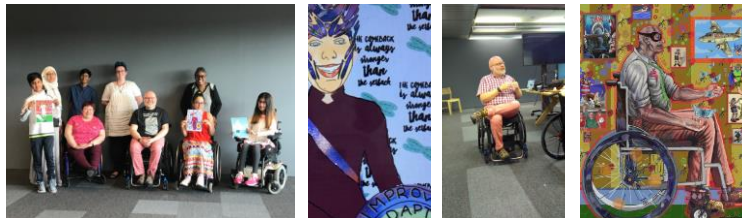
Today was the last day of Jason's workshop, I joined everyone for a fantastic brunch at the BT sports café where we met Giulia who was visiting the team. I felt really positive and was further uplifted by fact that I had my first taste experience of a Chicken Shawarma. I felt like a proper Superhero now (in reference to the film *Avengers Assemble*).

I carried on this feeling into my artwork once we were back upstairs. I worked on refining my background in creating a galaxy for my new bow strap and bow with Laura which was thoroughly enjoyable and much fun was had by both of us trying to get the proportions and colours just right so they matched.

Throughout the afternoon, Jason conducted interviews with the other attendees and even had time to be interviewed himself by Aziz. When it came time to print our masterpieces some of us had some last minute finishing to do (i.e. me) My mum helped me out in outlining a trace stencil of Loki's helmet to fit my galaxy design into it.

It was really great to see all the hard work that everyone had put into their final designs as seen by watching their personal time lapse videos. Giulia was really impressed with all our artwork which she called amazing and quite rightly so.

The end of the day was bittersweet as we took a group photo which included my sister who came at the end of the afternoon and is hopefully going to be a volunteer at the Summit in July when the grand unveiling will take place. This whole experience has been a wonderful turnaround for me; considering how nervous I was at the beginning of the workshop. Now I have a new perspective on life as well as faith and confidence in my own artistic abilities that I never had before. Although I was sad to leave, I made lots of new friends and I'm super excited to see Jason's completed artwork and be reunited with everyone again.



## APPENDIX TWO: DAN TERMS OF REFERENCE

### **Terms of Reference Disability Arts Network:**

Using art as a vehicle for social impact and cultural change

Is an informal forum around art and disability organised by Artlink Hull and meets at least bi-monthly

Is open for anyone with an interest in disability and arts to attend

Is interested in promoting and advocating for opportunities for disabled people the arts in the region

Wants to influence the improvement of access to the arts for disabled people in the region

Is interested in all artforms

Uses a web portal and social media to share information around this subject area

Wants to connect arts organisations and artists with the wider disabled community and disability specialist groups and organisations

The Disability Arts Network is not an officially constituted group and has no direct funding, but it aims to have impact through people working together



The current priorities of the Disability Arts Network are:

- Act as a discussion forum and feedback group around art and disability
- Help connect audiences, participants and accessible provision - Influence access improvements for disabled people in the arts
- Share information and resources through meetings, webpage and social media
- Connect to potentially isolated individuals
- Showcase good practice and projects
- Encourage peer support
- Promote dialogue around art and disability
- Develop a network to provide feedback to cultural organisations and artists
- Connect artists, organisations, participants and audiences around art and disability
- Promote opportunities and pathways for disabled artists and practitioners

