



Sun Pier House CIC

PRESS RELEASE

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MESS ROOM Open Arts at Sun Pier House

Sun Pier House is delighted to announce that Sun Pier House CIC have been awarded Arts Council National Lottery Project Grant Funding, to deliver their Open Arts Project with MESS ROOM artists Wendy Daws BEM and Christopher Sacre. The project is also supported by Ideas Test.

The 'Open Arts Project' is specifically aimed at blind and visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing people, young people and their families. The project aims to investigate the value of socially engaged practice, looking at improving wellbeing and engagement with those people at risk of social isolation. The theme and identity of the project is 'My Self'.

Participants will create work in workshops, in the new accessible art studio MESS ROOM, situated at Sun Pier House in Chatham. The MESS ROOM artists will also be running workshops for pupils at Danecourt Community School and All Faiths Children's Academy.

The 'Open Arts Project' will culminate in a curated exhibition in The Gallery at Sun Pier House, Chatham (May 2019), and a second exhibition at No34, Sittingbourne (date tbc 2019).

Wendy Daws and Christopher Sacre, co-founders of MESS ROOM, say:

'We relish the opportunity to work in partnership with Sun Pier House CIC as part of the 'Open Arts Project'. Open Arts will provide a platform to explore identities and showcase the amazing creativity of blind, visually-impaired, deaf and hard of hearing people. We feel this is a huge vote of confidence in MESS ROOM.'

From members of the sight loss art group;

'We are delighted that the 'Open Arts Project' has been funded and can go ahead. This means a great deal to us as a group because we can get to meet on a regular basis. People need people, and especially with our sight loss, we need to work together and help each other. Being at home alone is so isolating and you can lose the will to do anything at all. We've all experienced a sense of hopelessness and opportunities like this give meaning to our lives and show that we still have something to offer.'

From Katherine Barr, Head of Client Services, Kent Association for the Blind;

'Kent Association for the Blind (KAB) is delighted to support the 'Open Arts Project' which will hugely benefit our local service users in Kent and Medway. It's especially exciting that this project is designed for people with both hearing and sight impairments, opening up creative opportunities for people who can be some of the most isolated in our communities, including those with dual sensory loss. The involvement of families and all age groups will provide some brilliant opportunities for peer support and positive examples of what can be achieved

regardless of sensory loss. The resulting exhibitions will also help raise awareness of sight and hearing impairments.'

Notes for Editors:

- Sun Pier House CIC (SPH) was formed in 2013 to support Medway's creative industries. It provides a base for a community of artists and start-up creative businesses and was Winner of Best Visitor Attraction 2015 at the Medway Design, Culture & Tourism Awards. Split over three floors, SPH is home to a gallery, a characterful tearoom, stage area, events spaces, hire rooms and studios. There are 12 studios housing 18 resident artists and 5 businesses - www.sunpierhouse.co.uk
- MESS ROOM was founded by SPH resident artists Wendy Daws and Christopher Sacre in 2017. This innovative, creative, community hub on the ground floor at SPH in Chatham has facilitated a number of pilot sessions with community groups to test the idea and inform its work - www.messroom.org.uk
- Open Arts is a research and development project between Sun Pier House and MESS ROOM, with support from Ideas Test. It is underpinned by a consortium approach to working with community, arts and health partners. The project will establish a longer-term accessible programme at SPH, facilitated by MESS ROOM, to deliver a community residency, outreach schools programme, activity at No34, research and evaluation. Open Arts will enable SPH and MESS ROOM to acquire the appropriate skills to grow and diversify audiences, nurture dynamic curation and management skills, contribute to organisational development, and take MESS ROOM to the next stage of its development. MESS ROOM will become a fully accessible creative space, by refurbishing existing facilities and upgrading the interior to accommodate this project and making it fit for purpose for participants, audiences, artists and visitors who benefit from it. SPH and MESS ROOM will benefit from mentoring and wrap around support from Ideas Test to help people get more involved in Open Arts as audiences, participants and community organisations, and artists and creatives working with our communities.
- Wendy Daws BEM - Wendy designs, creates and delivers sustainable projects for marginalised groups, specialising in identifying opportunities for large scale participatory art projects. She has extensive experience working with all abilities and generations. Wendy works across sectors - Arts, Heritage, Public Health, Local Authority and Education, and collaborates with many arts organisations, always with the emphasis to empower others. Wendy believes that art is for all, regardless of age, ability or background. Her dissertation 'The Value of Touch – Blind Alphabet C and Museum Approaches to Visually Impaired Visitors' feeds directly into her art practice and she volunteers with the Kent Association for the Blind, establishing and running art groups for blind and partially sighted residents in Medway, Gravesend and Canterbury (in collaboration with the Beaney). She was commissioned by Rochester Cathedral to create a bronze tactile interpretation of their Baptismal Fresco by Sergei Fyodorov and recently created bronze tactile interpretation panels of the Queen Victoria statue in Gravesham's Borough Market. Wendy was awarded a British Empire Medal in the 2017 New Years Honour List for Voluntary Service to Visually Impaired People in North Kent. www.wendydaws.co.uk
- Christopher Sacre is a Deaf artist based in Rochester who communicates in fluent British Sign language (BSL) and spoken English. Christopher works in various museums, galleries and organisations such as the Tate Modern and the National Portrait Gallery, as an artist, artist educator with deaf and hearing children by leading and assisting regular workshops and activities. Christopher has exhibited work in solo and groups exhibitions and has developed his practice in the public realm. He was awarded a public art commission for Aperture Project - IN-SITE Public Art Commission, Rochester Riverside, Kent in 2015, funded by Arts Council England and Medway Council. – christophersacre.com
- Ideas Test is an Arts Council England, Creative People and Places funded Action Research programme, it has developed substantial experience of developing and managing creative

participatory projects and programmes that engage wide audiences across the Swale and Medway area. Ideas Test will bring its experience of working within a consortium and its commissioned projects such as Out of the Ordinary People & Places, where it works with target communities and local residents to develop and create work for wider audiences. - www.ideastest.org.uk

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