Crossing Borders to engage People through Art: Education and Outreach at Southampton City Art Gallery, 1974–2008

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Introduction

Southampton City Art Gallery is a much admired place of energy and activity. This article looks particularly at the period from 1974 to 2008, when its innovations in learning were being developed. It aims both to put on record a significant moment in the history of museum education in the UK and to highlight ways of thinking that may be useful for museums and art galleries today as they seek to re-connect audiences with art after a testing and lengthy period of lockdown and non-physical access due to the global pandemic. The following discussion of the ambitious educational provision offered by Southampton's public art gallery for three decades after its first Keeper of Education was appointed in 1974, derives largely from research into the institution's history that was undertaken in preparation for the exhibition *Creating a National Collection: The Partnership between Southampton City Art Gallery and The National Gallery*, hosted at Southampton earlier this year (28 May–5 September 2021), itself an outcome of an Art Fund Curatorial Traineeship which partnered Southampton City Art Gallery with the National Gallery. To explore in greater depth the important work undertaken by museum staff at Southampton, often with assistance from the National Gallery, two public 'In Conversation'-style webinars were organized with former and current curators and conservators from both institutions.[1]

The current article aims to complement that work by focussing on some prime – and often cutting-edge – episodes in Southampton's history concerning

[1] See (i) 'Conservation at Southampton City Art Gallery and the National Gallery', a webinar panel discussion, 23 June 2021, in which Susanna Avery-Quash was in conversation with Tim Craven (ex-Curator, Southampton); Rebecca Moisan (Conservator, Southampton); Ambrose Scott-Moncrieff (ex-Conservation Officer, Southampton); Rachel Billinge (Research Associate, National Gallery); Isabella Kocum (Frame Conservator, National Gallery); Britta New (Conservator, National Gallery) – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHdv8lhScNg&t=4s; and (ii) 'Curators in Conversation', a webinar panel discussion, 29 June 2021, exploring the history of Southampton City Art Gallery, its collection and historical links with the National Gallery, featuring Les Buckingham, Tim Craven, Liz Goodall, Gill Hedley and Clare Mitchell, presented by Susanna Avery Quash and Jemma Craig – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMFmxv7CacI&t=141s. Both webinars were part of the public programme of events accompanying the exhibition, *Creating a National Collection: The Partnership between Southampton City Art Gallery and The National Gallery* (28 May–5 September 2021), and catalogue by Susanna Avery-Quash and Jemma Craig.

education, learning and outreach. We wish to be clear about the challenges as well as successes, hoping ultimately that what is presented about the past may serve as a source of reference and practical ideas which might stimulate fresh thinking in the present. This explains the decision to publish our research in this particular open-access journal believing that what was achieved at Southampton City Art Gallery between 1974 and 2008, as an important part of the history of UK museums, deserves broader critical attention than circulation through a more specialist pedagogical journal would have achieved.

Setting the scene: conservatism in the arts

When Southampton appointed its first Keeper of Education in 1974 with the aim of connecting its art collection with broad audiences this was a significant challenge; visual education was a new concept for the UK and as such not widely understood or appreciated. Although there had been an important Arts Enquiry survey published soon after the end of the 1939–45 war, in 1946, which reached the conclusion that public art galleries should do more to teach art appreciation to young people, the appetite for implementing such change in Britain was not always there. For one thing, although the subsequent introduction of Art History O and A level qualifications was intended to counter the previous dearth of such activity in schools, since the subject was never part of the core curriculum as, say, literature was, it was disdained by many as 'a soft option'. Nor was there much coverage of – and therefore engagement with – ground-breaking initiatives for schoolchildren that were taking place in continental Europe, notably in Florence's Uffizi Gallery or in museums in Cologne, The Netherlands and Belgium.[2] Although often unaware of these well-received education programmes abroad, curators working in UK art galleries did know of established schools services in Britain's multidisciplinary museums and generally did not like what they saw, little thinking how different art gallery education might be.[3]

There was consequently resistance within most UK galleries at that time, where the traditional curatorial opinion held sway that the preservation of works of art was far more important than any sense of obligation to public engagement. The leading Renaissance art historian John Hale was not alone when he remarked: 'I hate the idea of museums being used primarily as teaching aids of any sort.'[4] This attitude was shared by many academic curators who were then in charge of public art collections and 'the tacit belief in the elitism of art' was further 'fostered by the atmosphere of the buildings in which they [were] housed',[5] as well as through the displays. Elizabeth Goodall remembers that the received wisdom in museums was that the artist's image was sacrosanct, displays of art from the past should be

[2] Articles on these pioneering iniatives were published through UNESCO's quarterly review, *Museum*.

[3] See Helen Luckett, 'Ten Years of Gallery Education', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 19:2 (Special Issue: Art Museums and Education), Summer 1985, 129.

[4] Cited in Helen Luckett, 'Education through Art', *Oxford Art Journal*, 2:3, October 1979, 50–51.

[5] Luckett, 'Education', 50.

arranged by place of origin and date of manufacture, and that photographic reproductions should be of the whole image only (details were not to be shown). The natural consequence of thinking that art was only for those with a trained eye and was wasted on anyone else was that 'some gallery directors clearly felt that education was expendable because it was not a curatorial responsibility and had no academic status.'[6]

Even if before the 1970s there were few designated departments of education in art galleries, things started to shift after public discussion in the light of major restructuring and refinancing of local government in 1974. Although after this date regional art galleries were often subsumed under a larger umbrella of 'Leisure Services', they were not lost sight of; in fact, many for the first time received substantial funding, which empowered certain progressive curators to prioritize what they perceived to be the needs of the community over and above those of the collections. In Southampton's case, local government reorganisation enabled its Art Gallery to expand from a professional staff consisting of a curator, a conservator and a part-time designer to a team of eight. Several new posts were created at this time: a Keeper and Assistant Keeper of Art; a Keeper and Assistant Keeper of Education; and an Assistant Conservator.

Forging a new path: Southampton City Art Gallery's education service

Helen Luckett, who was appointed Keeper of Education for Southampton City Art Gallery in 1974, was keen from the outset to connect people with art. She summarizes her team's original aims and some of its most significant early ouputs, as follows:

> The objective in establishing and developing Southampton's Education Service was to provide lively and imaginative programmes for the whole community, working with the permanent collection and with exhibitions, exploiting all possible potential. The Education Service's inaugural event in 1974 was a Christmas extravaganza – an experiential maze designed to intrigue, delight, confuse and entertain children and adults alike. In hindsight, it now seems more of a somewhat ramshackle artwork than an educational activity though its architecture and upside-down rooms, distortions, dislocations, weird light and colour effects all related to works in the collection. It announced the start of a programme of events and activities that included lectures and lunchtime talks; weekend screenings of art films and documentaries; monthly 'Painting and Music' lecture recitals (fig. 1); poetry readings and other live performances; short courses; public discussions; workshops for schools; family events; and outreach work.
>
> All this is now standard gallery education fare, but at that time it was very unusual. It was not only exceptionally wide ranging but also actively involved the public in its creation; many activities, from 'Painting of the Month' displays to specialist talks (on engineering in art, for instance), were

[6] Luckett, 'Ten Years', 129.

devised by regular visitors and occasional mavericks. It was also the case that all gallery events took place in public, for other visitors to witness and enjoy.[7]

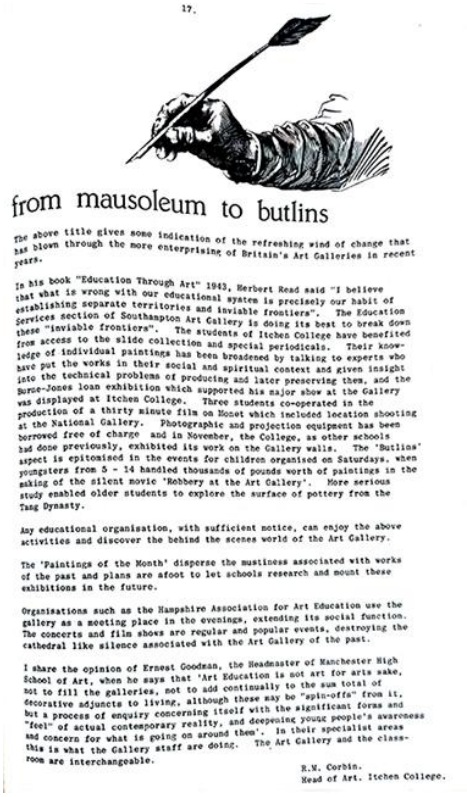
Figure 1: Helen Luckett in the Main Hall, during one of Southampton's 'Painting and Music' lecture recitals, mid-1970s. © Southampton Cultural Services

Just four years later, R.M. Corbin, Head of Art at Itchen Sixth Form College in Bitterne, Southampton, was able to wax lyrical about the range of educational activities on offer not only for his pupils but also for the citizens of Hampshire more generally. In an article, 'From Mausoleum to Butlins', featured in the *Museums & Art Gallery Education Services Newsletter* of Spring 1978 (fig. 2), some of the previous 'inviable frontiers' that Corbin saw being broken down by Southampton's Education Service included working with secondary school pupils (for instance, employing three students to help create a film about the painter Claude Monet, setting up in-gallery object handling sessions for schools, and inviting students to display their own work in the Gallery); with primary school pupils (one group made a silent film in the museum about an art heist!); and with the local Hampshire Association for Art Education, which put on regular concerts and films at the Gallery, thereby 'destroying the cathedral like silence associated with the Art Gallery of the past'.[8]

It is with the recognised pioneering work of the Education Service established by Helen Luckett and her colleagues at Southampton City Art Gallery from 1974, with the fruits of Southampton's partnership working between professional specialisms, and with Luckett's legacy up to the first decade of the millennium that this article is concerned. Case studies and assessments of them have been drawn largely from oral interviews conducted in 2020–21 with Luckett and other colleagues as well as from articles published by Luckett in 1979 and 1985,

[7] Helen Luckett, email to the authors, 7 November 2021.
[8] R.M. Corbin, 'From Mausoleum to Butlins', *Museums & Art Gallery Education Services Newsletter*, Spring 1978.

based on her experience at Southampton.[9] While the focus is on the work undertaken at Southampton, it is important from the outset to acknowledge the achievements of a number of other cutting-edge gallery education departments which were developing at the same time, including at Whitechapel Art Gallery under the leadership of Jenni Lomax; as well as at Tate Liverpool, led by Toby Jackson; Cornerhouse, Manchester, led by Sue Clive; and education work with Arts Council Touring Exhibitions, led initially by Pat Van Pelt.[10]



17.

from mausoleum to butlins

The above title gives some indication of the refreshing wind of change that has blown through the more enterprising of Britain's Art Galleries in recent years.

In his book "Education Through Art" 1943, Herbert Read said "I believe that what is wrong with our educational system is precisely our habit of establishing separate territories and inviable frontiers". The Education Services section of Southampton Art Gallery is doing its best to break down these "inviable frontiers". The students of Itchen College have benefited from access to the slide collection and special periodicals. Their knowledge of individual paintings has been broadened by talking to experts who have put the works in their social and spiritual context and given insight into the technical problems of producing and later preserving them, and the Burne-Jones loan exhibition which supported his major show at the Gallery was displayed at Itchen College. Three students co-operated in the production of a thirty minute film on Monet which included location shooting at the National Gallery. Photographic and projection equipment has been borrowed free of charge and in November, the College, as other schools had done previously, exhibited its work on the Gallery walls. The 'Butlins' aspect is epitomised in the events for children organised on Saturdays, when youngsters from 5 - 14 handled thousands of pounds worth of paintings in the making of the silent movie "Robbery at the Art Gallery". More serious study enabled older students to explore the surface of pottery from the Tang Dynasty.

Any educational organisation, with sufficient notice, can enjoy the above activities and discover the behind the scenes world of the Art Gallery.

The 'Paintings of the Month' disperse the mustiness associated with works of the past and plans are afoot to let schools research and mount these exhibitions in the future.

Organisations such as the Hampshire Association for Art Education use the gallery as a meeting place in the evenings, extending its social function. The concerts and film shows are regular and popular events, destroying the cathedral like silence associated with the Art Gallery of the past.

I share the opinion of Ernest Goodman, the Headmaster of Manchester High School of Art, when he says that 'Art Education is not art for arts sake, not to fill the galleries, not to add continually to the sum total of decorative adjuncts to living, although these may be "spin-offs" from it, but a process of enquiry concerning itself with the significant forms and "feel" of actual contemporary reality, and deepening young people's awareness and concern for what is going on around them'. In their specialist areas this is what the Gallery staff are doing. The Art Gallery and the classroom are interchangeable.

R.N. Corbin.
Head of Art. Itchen College.

Figure 2: *Museums & Art Gallery Education Services Newsletter*, Spring 1978.
© Southampton Cultural Services

PART I: PRINCIPLES

Southampton's innovative approach: blurring boundaries
(i) Staffing at Southampton

Before considering particular episodes in more depth, it may be useful to describe and reflect on the *modus operandi* that developed in Southampton which allowed so many fruitful projects to develop. The first element worth noting is its working environment, which from 1974 was characterized by a diverse and talented workforce in terms of gender, age and experience, where less emphasis was placed on hierarchies and more on collaborative working between teams. What might be

[9] Helen Luckett, 'Education through Art' *Oxford Art Journal*, 2:3, October 1979, 50–53; and 'Ten Years of Gallery Education', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 19:2 (Special Issue: Art Museums and Education), Summer 1985, 125–42.
[10] See Felicity Allen, 'Situating Gallery Education', *Tate Encounters*, 2, 2008, 1–12; http://www2.tate.org.uk/tate-encounters/edition-2/tateencounters2_felicity_allen.pdf.

seen perhaps as a daring blurring or pushing of boundaries led to innovation and creative thinking. As a small gallery with few staff, such practices were more likely to happen than in larger, more established institutions, but the point is that those working in education, curation and art practice at Southampton believed they shared common concerns and therefore promoted communal brainstorming over internal competitiveness. For instance, there was none of the commonly experienced division between the curatorial positions being held by men and the gallery education positions being held by women – something Felicity Allen alluded to when recalling becoming the chair of NAGE (National Association of Gallery Education) in 1991, which she compared to 'leading a women's organisation'.[11]

At Southampton's art gallery, thanks to staff appointments made by Anthony Howarth, himself appointed Curator in 1971 and subsequently put in charge of Southampton's city museums in 1974, this was not the case. Responding to the ambition in the City to improve cultural services in the light of the 1974 local government restructuring, Howarth determined to be creative (fig. 3). Two dynamic women applied for the new role of Keeper of Art and keen to hire them both, Howarth offered them the opportunity to choose to be Keeper of Art or Keeper of Education. Elizabeth (Liz) Goodall (then Ogborn) became Keeper of Art,[12] and Helen Luckett was appointed the first Keeper of Education, a post she held for a decade.

Figure 3: The staff of Southampton City Art Gallery including Helen Luckett with her pet dog Cassius, Tony Howarth, Liz Goodall behind Tony, John Hoole, Tim Dicker, Maurice Palmer and Bill Shanly on the right, 1974. © Southampton Cultural Services

[11] Felicity Allen, 'Maintaining a Radical Vision', *Engage*, 35 (Special issue: Twenty-Five Years of Gallery Education), Spring 2015, 20.
[12] Liz Goodall became Director and Assistant Curator of the Museums and Art Gallery Services in 1982, working at the Art Gallery until 1997. She was appointed the first City Arts Manager in 1988, in charge of the wide-ranging 'Arts, Tourism and Community Involvement'. In this role, she was responsible for hiring Margot Heller as Keeper of Art, later Director; Stephen Snoddy, later Director of City Arts in the mid-1990s, as well as Rosy Greenlees and Shân Maclennan.

Luckett has recalled: 'As Keeper of Education (a ridiculous title, but one we were stuck with), I was immensely fortunate in my Education colleagues, including Tim Dicker, who did the initial groundwork with schools; followed by Les Buckingham, an adept and crucial *agent provocateur*, and his museum counterpart Dan Chadwick, who together in the mid-1970s enthusiastically grasped the potential of new technology and ran with it (sometimes illicitly); and later by Michael Cassin, an inspirational communicator, who eventually defected to the National Gallery's Education Department, and his museum counterpart Sîan Jones, an ardent advocate for women and for cultural inclusion who initiated important oral history projects.'[13] An important innovation was the way that this evolving Education Department worked hand-in-glove with the curatorial division; Luckett and Goodall had shared values about enlivening people's experience of visiting the Gallery and reaching out to new audiences. Buckingham, who, as mentioned, started working for Southampton as Art Education Officer in 1975,[14] remembers that '[t]he education and curatorial staff genuinely worked as one unit, which was a rare thing!'[15]

In keeping with the spirit of inclusiveness, Southampton City Art Gallery made a virtue of employing people at different stages in their career, from those with a high profile to those just starting out. John Hoole recalls joining a work force that was young, dynamic and integrated:

> I started working … in Summer 1972 as a student volunteer, seeking some insight into what it would be like to work in a public gallery. Tony [Howarth] greeted me with open arms, let me cat-sit in his house while the family were away on holiday so that I could catalogue all the Vernon Hill collection (my first job); he seemed to welcome young 'talent' to join the Southampton team in spades, so much so that by the time I graduated in 1974 (and he'd held a position open for me to slide into, as Assistant Keeper – how lucky was I?) Tony had appointed two young women, Liz [Goodall] and Helen [Luckett] as Keepers, of Art and for Education … In parallel to my position, I think posts of Assistant Keepers of Education were created for the Gallery and for the Southampton Museums, which was the level where the young men came in! Tim Dicker swiftly followed by Les Buckingham joined the Gallery Education team and Dan Chadwick joined for Museums. … Our youthful energy seemed to rub off on the older staff members; Bill Shanly, in charge of Conservation, had seemed initially prickly but lightened up warmly when he knew you better; the gallery attendants, mostly ex-dockers or police veterans, saw us running about and seemed to get energized.[16]

[13] Helen Luckett, email to the authors, 7 November 2021.
[14] Les Buckingham later became Assistant Keeper of Education, then Keeper of Art; he remains connected to the local art scene.
[15] Les Buckingham, email to the authors, 6 October 2020.
[16] John Hoole, email to the authors, 30 May 2021.

Howarth is remembered as an amazing leader who 'told [the staff] to do what they could to make [the Art Gallery] a really great place'.[17] For Hoole, Howarth's encouragement demonstrated itself through supporting the staff without micromanaging them, 'trusting in their capabilities and ideas'.[18] When Goodall took over managing the Gallery from Howarth in 1982, she took care to continue to develop those principles of close working both internally and externally. Indeed, she recalls that by 1988, when she established a City Arts Team, she deliberately sought to widen Gallery activities into the community as a strong part of the development of the arts across the city. The culture of joint working too was continued and extended to a new level by Tim Craven, who was appointed Curator from 2002 to 2008. He recalls: 'Due to my experience of working in a brilliantly integrated team from 1980, when I had witnessed the exceptional education initiatives, I purposely invited the Art Gallery Education Officer to join the programming team (temporary exhibition and collection displays) together with myself and the Exhibitions and Marketing Officer. In this regard, I saw education and learning as an essential plank of everything we did.'[19]

(ii) Close working relationships with external partners

A second factor that helped Southampton to remain fresh in its thinking and a leading player in an international context was the powerful relations it forged with external partners, nationally and even internationally. Luckett recalls three particular significant sources of encouragement and practical support, one local, the other two national: 'I was also very fortunate in being given extraordinary opportunities by people like Gordon Cooper, a producer at BBC Radio Solent, who commissioned two series of 'Talking Pictures' programmes featuring works in Southampton's collection, and in being given free rein by the Arts Council, who supported initiatives including *Through Children's Eyes* and its successor project [discussed in more detail below] and a 6th-form production of Kandinsky's experimental theatre piece, *Der Gelbe Klang* (*Yellow Sound*). The National Gallery, in the shape of the Director, Sir Michael Levey, and Head of Education, Alistair Smith, was also a constant support; always interested in what we were doing and keen to share ideas.'[20]

As Luckett notes, one particularly fruitful relationship was with the National Gallery in London. The relationship was long established by 1974 on account of the fact that in the foundation documents of Southampton City Art Gallery – the will of Councillor Robert Chipperfield (d. 1911), who bequeathed his art collection together with money to pay for an art gallery and associated art school and further funding to acquire museum-standard works of art – it had been stipulated that Southampton should have an external art adviser and that that person should ideally be the Director of the National Gallery. The request had been granted and consequently,

[17] Les Buckingham, email to the authors, 6 October 2020.
[18] John Hoole, email to the authors, 30 May 2021.
[19] Tim Craven, email to the authors, 29 October 2021.
[20] Helen Luckett, email to the authors, 7 November 2021.

from 1929, successive National Gallery Directors had been active shapers and encouragers of Southampton's nascent art collection and its staff, having assisted with the recruitment of its first two curators. However, an acquisition in 1975 put the relationship temporarily in question. That year Southampton purchased a painting by the leading French Impressionist Claude Monet, *The Church at Vétheuil*, which seriously depleted the Chipperfield Bequest Fund with the result that Goodall had to consider a new acquisitions policy. Whereas previously, in line with National Gallery thinking, Southampton had purchased across the board, making it one of the most comprehensive regional collections in terms of its geographical and historical spread, Goodall, at this point, made the strategic decision to concentrate henceforth on modern and contemporary British art as this was comparatively more affordable than Old Master paintings. Given that the then Director of the National Gallery, Michael Levey, felt increasingly unable to pass judgement – and therefore approve – the more modern works of art which Goodall wished to discuss with him, the role of art adviser to Southampton passed to David Brown at the Tate Gallery. Although this decision might have signalled the end of Southampton's connections with the National Galley, this did not happen because Levey, Howarth and Goodall were all keen to maintain the unique and fruitful relationship between the two institutions. What therefore happened was that advice and discussions shifted from the topic of acquisitions to the comparatively new area of education in museums. As Goodall recalls: 'Levey was delightful, a fellow spirit in the new changes to museum thinking. He, like those of us in Southampton, was interested in opening up galleries to new audiences and invited me to bring some regional colleagues to meet with him to share ideas and experiences. He was also looking for ways for the National Gallery to offer help and assistance.'

Levey moved things on significantly on that front in London. Although the origins of the National Gallery's Education Department can be traced back as far as 1913, it was formally established by Levey in 1974. Indeed, Levey considered its remit so important that he ensured the department was led by a senior member of curatorial staff, Alistair Smith, who was also given special responsibility for exhibitions. The close relationship between the education teams in London and Southampton affected some of the exhibitions which were mounted at the regional art gallery (of which more below). Another benefit that Luckett has highlighted as deriving from her prestigious ongoing connections with the National Gallery was that she was able to forge significant links with museums abroad, one of the most successful of which was with her counterpart, Renate Friedländer, in Cologne. Southampton benefitted directly from Luckett's meetings and discussions with the German museum educator, whose publications also influenced the initial project with Wildground Junior School, discussed below.[21]

[21] Renate Friedländer, 'Creative encounter with Museums: Experiment of the Cologne Museums Educational Service', *Museum International*, 28:1, 1976, 15–28; https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-0033.1976.tb02068.x.

PART II: IN PRACTICE – Engaging broad audiences

(i) New acquisitions purchased with future displays in mind

As noted, Southampton's acquisition policy had always been coherent thanks to the fact that a strategy had been formulated for it by Sir Kenneth Clark in 1936 (and revised a decade later by the subsequent Director of the National Gallery, Sir Philip Hendy). In Goodall's opinion, the effect was that:

> the Southampton collection has a coherence which is unlike any other – it is in the proper use of the word, unique. The policy was designed to enable the Gallery to reflect the 'story of art' in this country showing important foreign influences. The Gallery can mount really informative exhibitions from its own collections as a result. This is undoubtably Kenneth Clark's major building block for Southampton.[22]

This overarching principle remained in place after the 1975 purchase of the Monet, a period when art prices were rising and the Gallery purchase funds were reducing, factors which would have necessitated recasting the acquisition policy in any case. Thereafter, Southampton focussed increasingly on new British art, whether painting, sculpture or broadly conceptual work, with some backfilling of Surrealist and other earlier modern work where possible. As Goodall explains: 'I decided that the best area to purchase was work by contemporary artists – to seek new talent, likely to be tomorrow's stars. With the right advice based on a deep knowledge of what was being produced, this would build on the existing strength of Southampton's collection.'

As far as any over-riding acquisition principles were concerned, Goodall and Brown determined firstly that quality should be paramount; secondly, that a work of art under discussion should 'speak to you' because, in their opinion, ones that did so would be more likely to have enduring appeal; and thirdly, that art movements would be represented by clusters of work, to make meaningful displays. In relation to the last two principles, which are particularly pertinent for the current discussion, Goodall elucidates: 'I was aware through Helen [Luckett]'s work about the need for displays to inform and challenge and so I purchased works in coherent groups, thinking about how future displays could be shaped.'

Successive Managers of the Gallery steadily continued to build Southampton's contemporary collection with flair and good judgement. This strategy was acknowledged and reflected in an article by Simon Owers entitled 'Daring to be Different', published in 1997 in the *National Art Collections Fund Quarterly*.[23] After 2002, when David Brown's legacy had been received by the

[22] Liz Goodall, 'In Conversation' curatorial webinar, 30 June 2021; https://southamptoncityartgallery.com/resources/.

[23] *NACF Quarterly Winter*, 1997, 36: 'It is rewarding to find a gallery that in design and atmosphere succeeds in encouraging the passer-by to take the time to contemplate some quite startling and challenging images.'

Gallery, Craven was able to bring more focus to some of the other areas of collecting started by Brown and Goodall. He discovered that British Surrealists were still not well known and therefore were affordable so he decided also to target them for purchase. This has resulted in the creation of another significant element of the collection, what is now, as Craven says, 'a large cluster'.[24]

(ii) Making the Gallery a welcoming space

The movement of gallery education from the periphery to the centre had a significant impact on the physical design of Southampton City Art Gallery, as it did on other galleries across the country. Goodall has recalled that when she went for her interview at Southampton City Art Gallery in 1974, she wondered if she really wanted to work there 'because it looked so dingy!' (fig. 4) Her ambition, once in post, was 'to give the collection a worthy home.'[25]

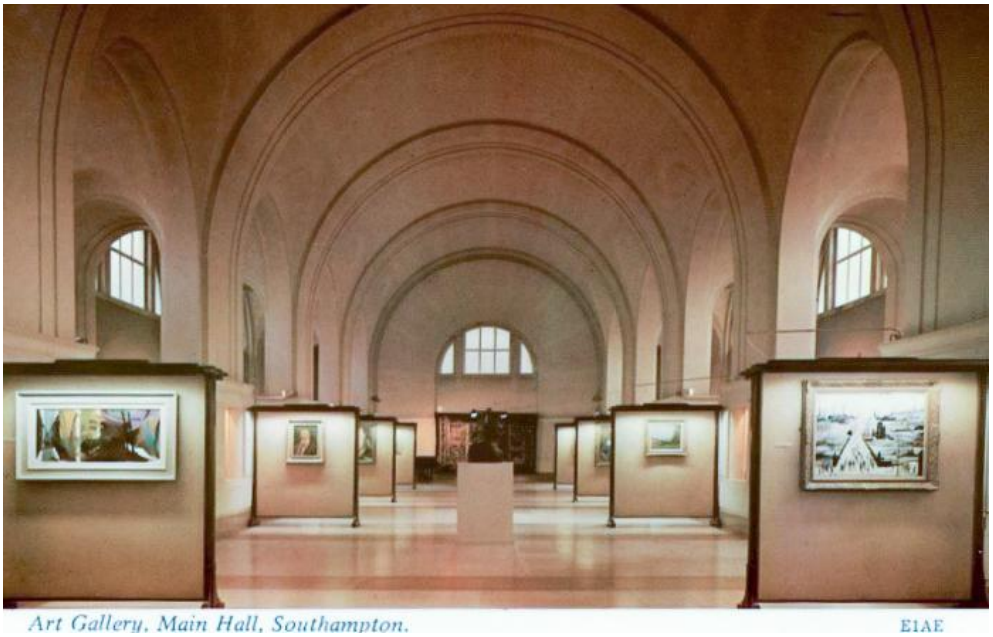


Figure 4: Southampton City Art Gallery's Main Hall during the 1960s before it had been refurbished in the 1990s. Southampton City Archives. © Southampton Cultural Services

After fifteen years of persistent effort, which culminated in a £7 million refurbishment project, she succeeded in injecting new life into the edifice not only by restoring its original and distinctive 1930s spaces but also by increasing available public amenities. The original building had had a beautiful central staircase which had been destroyed during a German bombing raid during the 1939–45 war. During its post-war rebuilding, the original architect, Ernest Berry Webber, was consulted, and it was decided not to replace the staircase but rather to pave over the floor to make a large Sculpture Hall. Although the resulting space was notable from an architectural point of view, it was difficult to mount displays effectively, partly

[24] Tim Craven, email to the authors, 29 October 2021.
[25] Liz Goodall, email to the authors, 15 October 2020.

because the sculpture collection remained small. A larger issue was that there was nothing on arrival at the Civic Centre to indicate the Gallery existed on the first floor given that that area was invisible from the entrance and accessible only by two hidden side stairs.

To create a sense of arrival, the architect and Goodall agreed to reinstate the central staircase, with space reclaimed for displays in the foyer. The gallery facilities were completely renewed at this juncture, using parts of the building which had once been the art school. The additions comprised a café, a lecture room, an education room suitable for school children, a passenger lift, a new exhibition space downstairs, and a shop area. Behind the scenes a suite of new conservation studios was built as well as refurbished art stores with proper racking and modern storage for safety and access. Goodall was influenced by the National Gallery's ability to store its reserve collection on moveable racking which, importantly, allowed access and opportunities for people to see the reserve collections. She endeavoured to emulate this in Southampton, at least as far as space would allow. The newly refurbished space was enlivened through the innovative commissioning of eleven artists to provide furniture, lighting, signage, and decoration throughout the Gallery and its new café – of which more later.

On completion, in 1995, the Gallery won several national awards: Fine Art Museum of the year, finalist in the European Museum of the Year, and a Jerwood Prize for the inclusion of artists in the project. One of the European Museum of the Year judges, Wim van der Weidon, on presenting the certificate to a full Southampton City Council meeting, explained: 'we were impressed by the Director's [Goodall's] dynamic and practical approach and by the way the Gallery has integrated into the social structure of the city' – another point to which we will return.

Additionally, the Gallery benefitted in terms of beautifying its interior spaces from the commissioning of two site-specific works. In 1987, Richard Long, the most celebrated of the British 'land artists' and Turner Prize winner of 1989, was commissioned to create *Wessex Flint Line* (fig. 5), in which pieces of local white Hampshire flint were carefully placed to form a line 37 feet long by 5 feet wide. His work reflects the local geographical area of Hampshire in a deeply poetic way and the result, a beautiful river of rock, transforms the space of the art gallery. Goodall considers this to have been the most important purchase she ever made for Southampton, and agrees with Brown's prediction that Long will become the most important landscape artist of modern times. Interestingly, the commission proved a happy outcome for an earlier attempt that Brown had made three years before to recommend the acquisition of a driftwood sculpture by the same artist. At that time, because the 'Tate Bricks' controversy was still live in the press, the Chairman of the Leisure Committee had not given the proposal his approval.

The second commission came about a few years later, as part of a scheme to amass a collection of videos and wall drawings, itself an ambition arising from the Contemporary Art Society (CAS)'s Special Collection Scheme, whereby CAS offered matching funds to UK museums to encourage and assist them in augmenting their collections of contemporary art. In 1994, the French conceptual artist Daniel Buren was invited with other artists to create art on the walls of Southampton City Art

Gallery, as part of *Wall to Wall*, a National Touring Exhibition from the South Bank Centre, curated by Maureen Paley and coordinated locally by Godfrey Worsdale, then Southampton's Exhibition Officer.[26] The resulting work, *With the Arcades, three colours* (fig. 6), was custom-made for the space and Buren also worked with local university students to complete the work in situ. This was the first public installation of Buren's work anywhere in the UK and being highly visible it was spotted by the Arts Council with positive consequences for the artist's subsequent career. In an astute move by Margot Heller, Art Gallery Manager at the time, the work was purchased for Southampton. Goodall recalls: 'We both really wanted to acquire it; for my part, I had seen Buren's installation at the State Museum in Amsterdam in 1976 and had wanted to commission a work for Southampton but we had not been able to afford it.' Once again, vision and persistence paid off.

The newly refurbished art gallery retained its appeal. Indeed, the National Lottery Guide of 1997 was able to draw attention to the positive effect that the new look gallery had had on visitors. Jayne Earnscliffe wrote of Southampton City Art Gallery: 'The building has been described as a celebration of art, as well as user friendly. Visitor numbers have risen by nearly a third, to over 100,000 per annum, testimony to the Gallery's success in meeting its primary aim of attracting new audiences.'[27]

Figure 5: Richard Long, *Wessex Flint Line*. Photograph after installation, July 1987, with Gill Hedley.

[26] The CAS scheme partnership with Southampton, initiated through an invitation from CAS to Southampton to participate, was continued by Stephen Snoddy, Godfrey Worsdale and Tim Craven.

[27] 'National Lottery suggestions for Arts Applicants, no 5', Arts Council England, 1977.

Figure 6: Southampton City Art Gallery's Main Hall, showing Daniel Buren's *With the Arcades, three colours*, 2019. © DB - ADAGP Paris and DACS, London 2021. Photo: © Joe Low

(iii) Fresh approaches to displays

During the 1970s, there was an increasing trend in the international art world towards putting on major blockbuster exhibitions, exemplified by *The Treasures of Tutankhamun*, shown in London at the British Museum, in 1972. An alternative vision was simultaneously being pioneered, however, by the National Gallery in terms of small-scale displays that promoted close looking. This approach was born of necessity given that the space for special displays and exhibitions at Trafalgar Square was comparatively limited before the opening of the Sainsbury Wing in 1991, with a designated exhibition suite. The National Gallery's response was a memorable series of free and popular small exhibitions from 1975. These included shows which examined a single painting in depth, others which compared two related pictures, and still others in which an artist was invited to choose a group of paintings from across the Gallery's collection.

The impact of these National Gallery initiatives on thinking and outputs in Southampton is clear. For instance, London's 'Painting in Focus' format informed Southampton's 'Painting of the Month' (fig. 7), a scheme which in both venues concentrated on one work of art at a time, sharing publicly some new aspect of research into its making or meaning. Or, to give another example, in 1983, Levey put on a thought-provoking exhibition in London entitled 'The Neglected National Gallery,' which displayed pictures from the so-called Reserve Collection with labels attached to a barrier rail in such a way that the viewer was not immediately aware of them. Levey intended this as an experiment to encourage audiences to look for an extended period at the paintings on show rather than merely skimming the labels

and quickly passing on to the next picture – or rather, picture label! This was a novel idea given that labels had become a firm fixture of museum pedagogy and former Southampton staff remember how this initiative prompted them to think harder about how best to employ labels in their own future displays.

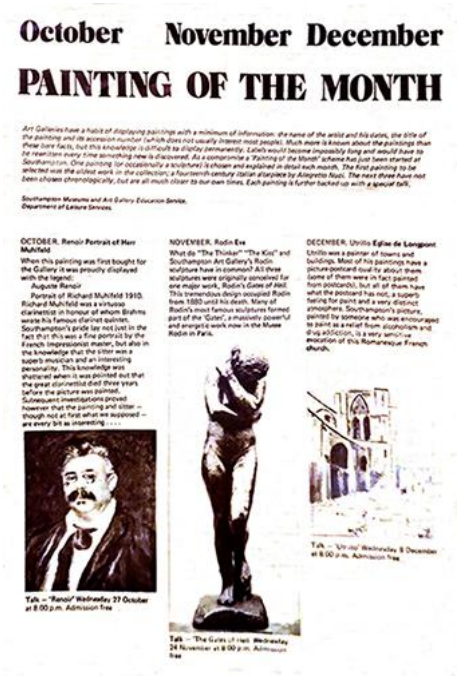


Figure 7: Southampton's 'Painting of the Month', poster from the *Museums & Art Gallery Education Newsletter*. © Southampton Cultural Services

During the 1970s, Southampton likewise concentrated on small-scale displays of its collections intended to encourage close looking, also born of necessity, but also to create an opportunity to show the considerable breadth of the collections and to promote frequent visits to the art gallery. Goodall recalls creating thematic displays, one entitled *Faces*, which showcased portraits through the centuries, describing the changing purpose of portraiture and its social context in simple terms, extra information supplied through an explanatory leaflet. Southampton's curators also worked hard to show new acquisitions with lots of 'breathing space' and alongside older works from the permanent collection in order to encourage visitors to start recognising the riches in the contemporary collection and to value that aspect of the holdings as much as the more traditional and more popular works.

The staff started to hang works from different centuries and countries adjacently or close by to demonstrate that pictures could speak to each other over time and space. In some ways this approach was reminiscent of what Philip Hendy had done at the National Gallery with some of the Old Master pictures, when, immediately post-war, he had deliberately juxtaposed works from different places and eras to explore artistic synergies. Goodall, in a similar vein, on one occasion, showed an abstract painting by Peter Joseph (1929–2020) next to a landscape by Richard Wilson (1713–1782), having been inspired by a comment by Joseph which opened a debate about Classicism. Gill Hedley likewise remembers deliberately

mixing together in Southampton's side galleries contemporary and much older work based on subject matter or other visual links rather than chronology. For instance, she dignified Gilbert & George's recently acquired monumental photographic montage of *Four Knights* by hanging it in a niche of its own but within sight of Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of *Cornet Nehemiah Winter* to make visual connections between two very different, yet equally striking, youthful male portraits. In another imaginative arrangement, Allegretto Nuzi's fourteenth-century triptych of *The Coronation of the Virgin* was displayed at the far end of the Main Hall so that it evoked an altar in an Italian church (fig. 8; an arrangement devised by Luckett for which the 'altar' was constructed not just to provide context but also as a protective barrier that people could lean on, encouraging closer looking) while, at the opposite end, a tower sculpture by Anthony Caro (then on loan) was placed 'just so its top, which functioned as a kind of porthole at the top of an internal staircase, focussed on the Virgin's head'.[28] Caro was so pleased with the resulting effect that he allowed his sculpture to remain on long term loan after the end of the exhibition tour. Arranging works of art in these kinds of interesting juxtapositions against the off-white interiors of Southampton City Art Gallery was, in Hedley's view, 'an unusual (I suspect unique) kind of hang at that time where the new fashion was for a revival of imitations of country house interiors for academy galleries, a style led by Tim Clifford in Manchester. Southampton was a weird hybrid – not Victorian/Edwardian and not a white cube.'[29]

Figure 8: School workshop with Helen Luckett at Southampton City Art Gallery concerning Allegretto Nuzi's *The Coronation of the Virgin*. © Southampton Cultural Services

During the period under review, the windowless ground floor foyer at Southampton's art gallery was also brought into play. Recognising its potential as an event space, the Education section used it for film screenings and lectures. While Howarth had originally designated it for non-art exhibitions, it later became a space

[28] Gill Hedley, email to the authors, 24 May 2021.
[29] Gill Hedley, email to the authors, 24 May 2021.

for focussed displays. Buckingham recalls that his 'main "additions" were the foyer shows that often ran alongside [Goodall]'s brilliant acquisitions displayed upstairs: things like David Nash's drawings or Kim Lim's prints so as to introduce the acquisitions in context.'[30] Today, this space continues to be used sometimes as a self-contained exhibition space for artist shows, displays by local groups or photographers, and winners of the 'Open Exhibition', the latter an event held every four years.

(iv) Mounting temporary exhibitions and organizing touring exhibitions

Southampton's learning team quickly realized that temporary exhibitions were absolutely essential in developing an art gallery public because they helped people to acclimatize themselves to looking at more 'difficult' modern and especially contemporary art. Hedley recalls that: 'My education colleagues' work complemented that perfectly and encouraged me to experiment. The first in-house exhibitions with which I was involved were locally-focused celebrations – Hampshire's landscape gardens, art and design on the Great Liners, sculptures from the Portland stone quarries – to get new visitors to come in, feel at home with the familiar local material, then see unpredictable displays and pairings from the collection, old and new.'[31]

In addition to these 'home-made' displays, Southampton City Art Gallery started to experiment with hosting hired-in shows, making use of its long-standing relationship with the National Gallery as well as with the Arts Council, mentioned earlier, which sent temporary exhibitions to Southampton from the 1950s. From the mid-1970s, the Arts Council's policy was generally to invite two or three select venues to work with for its most prestigious touring exhibitions, and on several occasions Southampton was chosen. Additionally, the Arts Council offered Southampton some one-off shows, and occasionally asked the Gallery to provide a temporary home for groups of pictures from private collections. One example of the latter was *Sounds of Colour*, an exhibition of Expressionist paintings and sculpture.

In relation to the National Gallery, two particularly significant loan shows to Southampton are worth recording in the current discussion, both of which focussed on Dutch 'Golden Age' (seventeenth-century) works. The first called *The National Gallery Lends: Dutch Genre Painting* saw no fewer than twenty-eight works going to Southampton in June–July 1978, including a memorable picture by Judith Leyster (1609–1660) depicting *A Boy and a Girl with a Cat and an Eel*.[32] The second took place

[30] Les Buckingham, email to the authors, 6 October 2020.
[31] Gill Hedley, interview with the authors, 29 June 2021.
[32] Interestingly, in this loan show more innovative work was done with labelling as Luckett records: 'The presentation of a travelling exhibition of Dutch genre painting, which was accompanied by a number of long explanatory texts, was greatly improved when the lower part of the boards on which these were mounted was raised a few inches from the wall, roughly at the height and angle of a lectern. What had previously been difficult to read suddenly became accessible simply because it was displayed at a more comfortable reading angle. But attempts by various curators in other galleries to repeat the success of these labels have not worked so well, proving that there is no definitive formula for the provision or

some two decades later, in April–June 1999; *Great Dutch Paintings on Tour from the National Gallery* saw a consignment of eighteen works to Southampton, with no repeats from the earlier exhibition.[33] The latter collaboration was planned as the high point of a year of celebrations for the Southampton City Art Gallery's sixtieth anniversary in 1999. Portraits, still life paintings, landscapes, townscapes and marine paintings by Rembrandt, Vermeer, de Hooch, Hals, Ruisdael and Hobbema from London were hung among representative paintings from Southampton's Dutch seventeenth-century collection, including a large landscape by Philips Koninck (1619–1688). The official report which Worsdale, by then Art Gallery Manager at Southampton, submitted to the funding body, spoke warmly of Southampton's relationship with the National Gallery. It noted that there were 'no problems or even gaps for improvement and collaborations at all levels were smooth running, effective and informative'.[34] The conclusion stated: 'The resounding message which this collaboration sends out is a great ratification of this new policy of access to collections. It seems clear that this success is one that we should all strive to build upon.' This opinion was backed up by visitor numbers; it was reported that 22,100 people visited the gallery, compared to 12,400 at the same period the previous year.[35]

Not only did Southampton receive important loans and exhibitions from partner institutions, but it also shared works from its permanent collection with other UK galleries. It had a track record of loaning a few works to other regional galleries from the 1950s, but from the 1980s it had gained enough standing to arrange a complete and important touring exhibition in 1987: *One City A Patron: British Art of the 20th Century from the Collections of Southampton Art Gallery*. Organised by the Scottish Arts Council in 1987, this touring exhibition involved forty-five works of art being sent to venues in Glasgow, Dundee, Perth, Ayr and Edinburgh. The initiative afforded new audiences in Scotland the opportunity to enjoy and study modern art they might otherwise not have had the chance to see at the same time showcasing the riches of Southampton's permanent collection. Southampton's first (and most ambitious) international collaboration took place in 1997 when Stephen Snoddy masterminded Southampton sending an exhibition of sixty-one of its modern British paintings, *Modern British Painting from Reynolds to Nicholson*, to the Bilbao Museum in Spain and received an exhibition of Basque art in return.[36]

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presentation of information and suggesting that the display of texts for each exhibition should be considered and designed on an individual basis.' See Luckett, 'Ten Years', 133.

[33] See letter from Mary Hersov to Godfrey Worsdale, 12 February 1999; National Gallery Archives (hereafter NGA): Southampton City Art Gallery correspondence file.

[34] Godfrey Worsdale's report, NGA: Southampton City Art Gallery correspondence file.

[35] Note from Esta Jones to Mary Hersov, 18 June 1999, NGA: Southampton City Art Gallery correspondence file.

[36] In exchange, twenty-seven Basque paintings from Bilbao's collection went on display in Southampton for an exhibition titled *Tradition and Modernity in Basque Paintings, 1880–1939*. This display told, for the first time in the UK, the story of this regional school of modern Spanish painting.

(v) Introducing new voices to help interpret the collection: artists, children and adults

We have seen that Southampton could boast much modern and contemporary art, all of it, as Luckett pointed out in a 1981 review article, 'of obvious high quality' – at least to 'the initiated few'. The difficulty was that the emphasis on such art caused 'infinite bafflement to the ordinary visitor', such that '[i]nterpreters, translators, "front-men" were badly needed if the Gallery and its contents was to mean anything at all to the local community beyond what it saw as a conspicuous drain on its rates.'[37] This explains why educational initiatives, alongside the introduction of important loans which spoke to individual works or part of the permanent collection in exciting ways or the packing up of parts of the collection as self-contained and coherent loan shows, became such a key element in Southampton's thinking during the timeframe under review. It also helps to explain the notably high level of integration and imaginative interaction between educators, curators, practicing artists and other novel voices.

In relation to its work with artists, Southampton may originally have been inspired by two artist-related schemes at the National Gallery, both of which promoted engagement of the general public with contemporary art through interventions by artists – the aims being to reduce the often apparent lack of sympathy between artists and the public, to challenge conservatism, and validate the role of contemporary artists. In 1976, conversations between National Gallery Director Michael Levey and the sculptor Anthony Caro resulted in Caro curating the following year the first of a new series of annual exhibitions called *The Artist's Eye*, in which a chosen artist selected a number of paintings from the collection to display alongside one of their own works of art. In total, five artists took part in the scheme with David Hockney rounding the initiative off in 1981 – although its success meant that it would be revived a few years later, in 1985.

A second new development with contemporary art started at the National Gallery in 1980. Supported by the Arts Council, Levey launched the National Gallery's Artist-in-Residence scheme, which enabled practising artists to interact both with the collection and the public. Provided with studio space at Trafalgar Square, the artists held open days throughout their residency and then, at the end of it, put on an exhibition of the works they had created during it. Maggi Hambling was the first postholder and eight more artists followed. Hambling has spoken of the positive experience of taking groups of people to visit pictures in the galleries that she felt she could talk about before inviting the public back up to her studio to ask her any questions they liked – apparently 'they poured forth lots of questions.'[38] In 1989, the National Gallery adapted the scheme into one which employed an Associate Artist, who was invited to create works directly related to the Gallery's paintings. This led on to the appointment of the first Associate Artist in 1990. The first postholder was Paula Rego and in her exhibition the following year she

[37] Helen Luckett, 'Art Gallery Education in Southampton', *Southern Arts Magazine*, 10, September/October 1981.
[38] Luckett, 'Ten Years', 138.

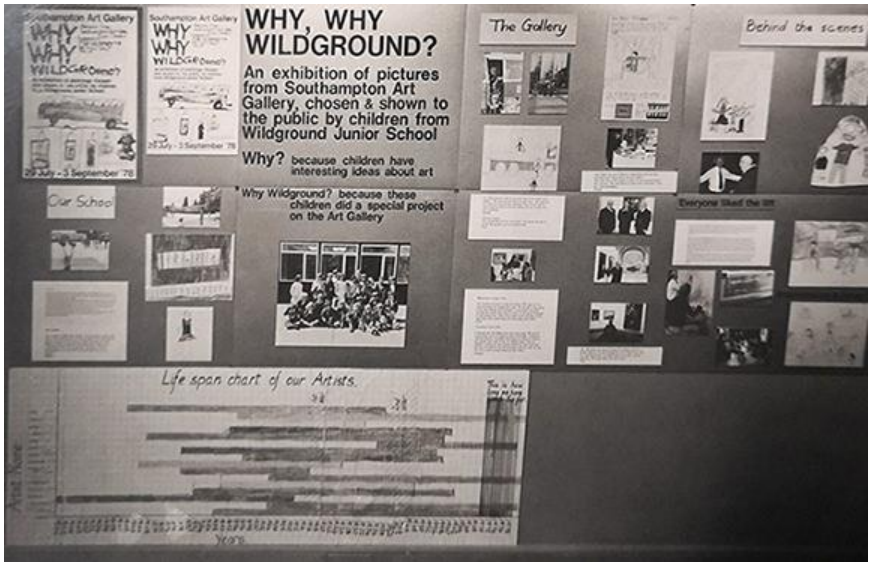
displayed paintings inspired by works in the permanent collection including Philippe de Champaigne's *The Dream of Saint Joseph* and Antonello da Messina's *Saint Jerome in his Study*.

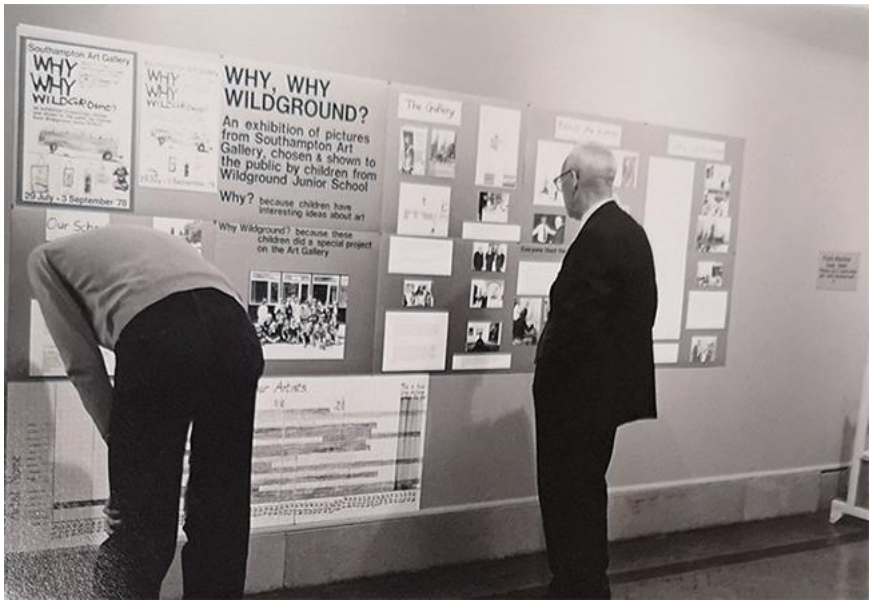
Southampton City Art Gallery found an even more radical way to generate local interest and knowledge in its art collection. In addition to employing practising artists to help interpret its pictures, it also invited school-aged children to do so, for the benefit not only of their peers but also of adults, whether their parents or strangers. Southampton's gallery staff realized how invaluable the spaces of their gallery might become if they were allowed to be a place for questioning and thinking in new ways through the help of the works of art on display.

Equally innovative was the fact that Southampton's staff, along with certain peers like Mike Tooby at the National Museum of Wales, were keen to evaluate the success of school visits and other types of engagement aimed at an adult audience too on something other than numbers-based evidence. Such pioneering thinkers dug their heels in against a general attitude that footfall was what counted most and argued against the crude assumption that numbers of visitors necessarily always equated with positive experiences inside a gallery. They also promoted a different approach from the one so often then employed of rolling out worksheets for children to fill in; instead, they encouraged lively and spontaneous interaction that came about when smaller and more intimate groups of school children were taken through the galleries on longer visits. Through such experimentation Southampton City Art Gallery evolved its unique and inspiring work with schools. Luckett appointed a gifted Schools' Officer, Fran Naylor, who became renowned for gently drawing her school groups into pictures, discussing where they might hide in Monet's garden at Giverny, for example, or what it would feel like to run across the bridge over his pond. Naylor continued to delight and inspire children and adults who visited the Gallery for many years.

Luckett herself went further still by extending an invitation to children to make their own selections of works of art for an exhibition. She was the first museum educator to do this and this challenged the rigid views about 'specialist only' approaches, promoting something akin to what we would call today 'co-curation'. It also introduced fun for the audience. The most extraordinary and cutting-edge results at Southampton emerged from Luckett's extended liaison with Wildground, a local junior school in Dibden Purlieu, on the edge of Hampshire's New Forest. This partnership ended up being a radical three-stage initiative which lasted over a decade. The partnership began in 1977–78 with an exhibition called *Why, Why Wildground?*, which was curated by a set of eight-year olds (figs 9 and 10). This initiative resulted from a visit that pupils from Wildground Junior School had made to the gallery for a follow-up session after some classroom-teaching but, disappointed by what they found, had boldly suggested lots of changes. Southampton's gallery staff responded in an equally adventurous fashion by challenging them to create their own exhibition. After months of preparation, the children opened an exhibition at Southampton City Art Gallery for which they chose mostly early twentieth-century paintings from the permanent collection, including works by Ginner, Gore, Gaudier-Brzeska, Grant, Stanley Spencer, Bevan, Piper and Sutherland, which they hung at child height and explained through

picture labels (which often included their own drawings and diagrams) and through a picture book (their take on a traditional exhibition catalogue).[39] Interestingly, in their acknowledgements the young authors cited two books that they had found particularly inspirational, one of which was Alistair Smith's *The Looking, Drawing and Sitting Still Book*, published in 1974 – a pioneering publication for the National Gallery in terms of its provision for children.[40] One impact of this initiative was that it inspired several schools in Yorkshire to undertake similar projects with their local art galleries.





Figures 9 and 10: *Why, Why, Wildground?* exhibition, 1978: two photographs of the display © Southampton Cultural Services

[39] See the first Wildground exhibition catalogue, *Picture Book 1*, 1978.
[40] Interestingly, the Wallraf-Richartz Museum published its own pioneering children's guide in the same year: Renate Friedländer, *Mein Museusmbuch* (1974).

A second project, *Through Children's Eyes* (fig. 11), involved a different set of children from Wildground Junior School – two classes of 7–8 year olds – but the same two teachers.[41] On this occasion, the resulting show became an Arts Council touring exhibition. It focused on fourteen paintings made by artists during the pupils' lifetimes (some from Southampton City Art Gallery's permanent collection, some from the Arts Council's collection, and a couple of loans) which the children did not choose. As Luckett explained, the aim of this second experiment was to find out whether children 'would respond to the works in a fresh, untrammelled way which adults would find more engaging and more enlightening than the expert voice'.[42] The children's challenge, now that they were regularly spending up to an hour getting to know a particular work of art, was to encourage adults and their peers not to walk away from such pictures after only a few seconds of looking. One novel idea to hold the viewer's attention in front of a work of art was to provide a bag full of things to help them to enjoy their visit, including a mat to kneel on to look at sculpture from a different level and maps to take them on interesting routes around works in different galleries. This second exhibition toured to other cities including Edinburgh, gathering a lot of press coverage on the way. It certainly had a lasting impact on the children involved, many of whom were keen to participate in a follow-up project.

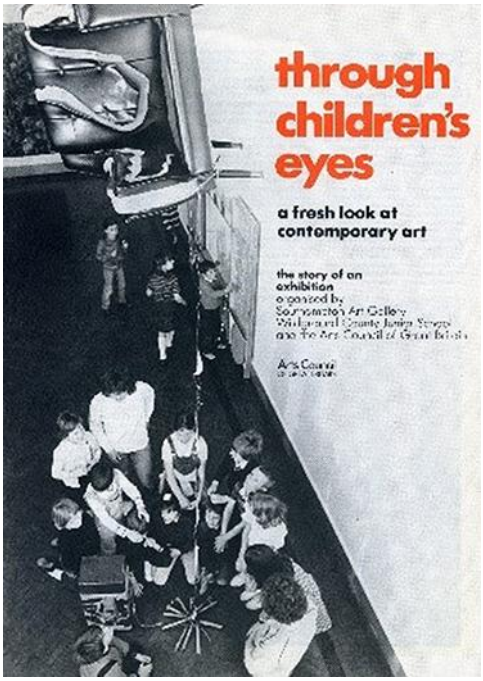


Figure 11: *Through Children's Eyes*, 1982, front cover of the exhibition catalogue. Photo: Paul Carter. © Southampton Cultural Services

The concluding element of the series was initiated five years later as a sequel to the second exhibition. It was something that Luckett worked on after she had moved to work for the Arts Council. It involved the same teachers and as many of

[41] Wendy Hedge (Class 1H) and Jennie Clasby (Class 1C).
[42] Luckett, 'Ten Years', 134–35.

the children from the second project as could then be traced given that the latter were now teenagers scattered across different secondary educational institutions in Hampshire. The result was *Changing Minds*, an exhibition curated by the young adults, which included eight works from Southampton, thirteen Arts Council Collection works, and one artist's loan. Once more, the Arts Council took an interest, and the resulting show became a South Bank Touring exhibition in 1988. The participants whose lives were changed positively by this deep ongoing engagement with their local art collection, were aware just how distinctive the situation was at Southampton. At the end of a preliminary brainstorming session, they 'practically demanded to do some more work with the Gallery "because you don't work like this anywhere else with pictures".'[43]

Despite all that Luckett had done to promote connections between children and art, in her article published in 1985, she warned galleries and their education departments 'against investing too much in their school audiences and neglecting their adult audiences, both extant and potential.'[44] She went on to note positively that, by contrast, 'Some galleries are beginning to discover and cultivate a new public, individuals and groups of people who do not fit into the traditional pattern of gallery visitors and who require galleries to reconsider their priorities and their attitudes both to art and to the public.'[45] It was certainly the later 1980s that paved the way for local government initiatives of the 1990s which really set about targeting those groups perceived as excluded and on the margins. A big change came after 1997, when the UK government made huge investments in infrastructure for the arts and culture, with a commitment to developing new audiences. Although it remains hard to measure tangible social benefits arising from such ventures in relation to ameliorating economic and political inequalities in the long term, local councils imagined certain benefits to arise from getting together diverse ethnic groups in front of works of art. In this new push, Luckett's innovative approach, which had been valued and extended by her successors in Southampton, was recognised and hailed publicly as pioneering. For instance, the European Museum of the Year Award publication of 1997 noted of Southampton that 'great importance is attached to developing a large programme of public activities … The Gallery's *Community Choice* project has attracted considerable attention. This allows different groups in Southampton, a youth club or the staff of a large department store, for instance, to make their own selection from the storage area and to display the works in their own way.'[46]

(vi) Moving visitors experience beyond the gallery's walls

Part of putting the local community at the centre of critical debate meant experimenting with sharing works of art beyond a gallery's own walls. One of the first galleries to take up the challenge of working face-to-face with the intimate and

[43] *Changing Minds: Looking at Art through Older Children's Eyes*, exhibition catalogue, South Bank Centre, 1988.
[44] Luckett, 'Ten Years', 140.
[45] Luckett, 'Ten Years', 140.
[46] The European Museum of the Year Award, 55.

the local was Southampton City Art Gallery. This genuine commitment to building new audiences fitted into its by now well-established and well-respected history of being willing to improvise, change direction, and follow unorthodox pathways. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Gallery went outside its walls to develop creativity among people in the city and in this way Southampton's art gallery was put at the centre of art activity throughout the municipality. In the 1980s, Sue Sangway pioneered the use of bringing in community artists to work with local groups. One example of what was thereby achieved was a new look for Gallery publicity, produced by the artist Charlie Hackett working with community groups and developing children's and adults' ideas to create a banner (fig. 12) and a postcard. Both resulting items were then utilized to draw wider public attention to the presence of the Gallery and its collections.

Figure 12: Curatorial and Learning teams in the Main Hall holding the banner produced with help from Charlie Hackett, c. 1987. Southampton City Archives. © Charlie Hackett, artist & lecturer, Grays School of Art, Scotland

As an article in Southampton's *City News* explained in 1991 (fig. 13), its Arts Outreach team's work fell into two categories: 'taking the arts out of the city's galleries and concert halls and bringing them to Southampton's people on their "home turf"; and working to open up the city's many arts facilities to a wider audience and promoting a diverse range of activities, often in unlikely places'.[47]

[47] 'Culture out on the Road', *City New*, January 1991.

CULTURE OUT ON THE ROAD

MEET the Arts Outreach Team who will be takin culture out onto the road this year, with an excitin programme of events for 1991.

The work of the team (left to right), June McGee (Admin istration), Georgia Ward (Assistant Arts Outreach Office and Shân MacLennan (Arts Outreach Officer), falls into tw broad categories: taking the arts out of the city's gallerie and concert halls and bringing them to Southampton peopl on their 'home turf'; and working to open up the city's mar arts facilities to a wider audience and promoting a divers range of arts activities, often in unlikely places.

Projects for the year ahead include: education pr grammes for schoolchildren; regular afternoon art classe for adults; monthly lectures on temporary exhibitions at th Art Gallery; exhibition-related workshops; occasional eve ing entertainment.

Audio-visual facilities will be introduced to the Art Ga lery: taped guides will enhance enjoyment of the exhib tions for all visitors; and a video introducing the city collection or individual exhibitions will be shown.

Provision will also be made for visually impaired art lo ers after the refurbishment of the Art Gallery.

The Outreach team is looking at a number of schemes take Art Gallery activities around the city. These include Arts Bus, a touring exhibition funded by Pirelli and Octop Arts, a scheme which will encourage disabled and abl bodied people to work together in a life drawing class at t Gantry.

CITY NEWS JAN 1991

Figure 13: 'Culture out on the Road', *City News* article of January 1991, showing Shân Maclennan with two colleagues from Southampton's Arts Outreach Team. © Southampton Cultural Services

When the Gallery closed in July 1991 for the twenty-month refurbishment described earlier, the Arts Outreach team created an exciting programme of activites designed to take art out even deeper into the community to build up completely new audiences. Pirelli was a major funder of the programme, winning an ABSA award for its efforts, although the programme was additionally supported by funding from twenty-eight local businesses. Arts Outreach Officer Shân Maclennan and her deputy, Georgia Ward, devised an imaginative and innovative programme and, equally unusually at the time, took care to gather feedback and evaluate the results. For example, a touring exhibition called *Altered Estates*, which utilized works selected from the permanent collection featuring local landmarks past and present,

went to twelve venues across the city, starting with Southampton General Hospital. As part of the offer, Maclennan and Ward organized a complete programme of onsite activities at each venue, tailored to local preferences. These included providing an artist in residence at Tannersbrook First School, an educational establishment that had been studying 'Journeys' as a topic. As a result, the artist Edwina Fitzpatrick spent five days at the school, using the exhibition as a starting point to explore the topic further, each activity tailored to the age of the children. One of the resulting novelties was a 'Grandparents' Open Evening' when the children could share the art works they had created with families and friends and hear stories of the past. Maclennan's work was complemented by that of Margot Heller, who arranged temporary galleries in the busy Waterfront area of the city to display treasures from Southampton City Art Gallery's collection in a year long series of exhibitions given the attractive title of *Art on the Waterfront*.

(vii) Public art commissions

Maclennan's work was also accompanied by and integrated with activities initiated by her colleague Rosy Greenlees, who was appointed as Southampton's first Public Art Officer. The latter brought with her experience of having been Visual Arts Co-ordinator at Plymouth Arts Centre and having led on major public art projects in that city and on Dartmoor. Having joined the organisation, Greenlees took on the role of Policy Officer for the whole team to give it a coherent approach and strategy in relation to the ambition to bring artists to work in the City. She has recorded:

> It is important to acknowledge the Labour led City Council and in particular Councillor Eddie Read, who led on the arts. His and the Council's ambitions for the City recognised the role that the arts could play in setting Southampton apart from other regional towns and cities. The public art programme built on the existing reputation the Art Gallery had for its high quality and cutting-edge acquisitions and exhibitions. The programme was focused on two aspects – permanent public art commissions as part of a percent for art policy the Council adopted and, secondly, temporary public art projects. Significant funds were raised for this programme through the percent for art scheme and sponsorship from local companies.[48]

Greenlees led on two important temporary art projects. The first was the *Pirelli Cables Project*. Pirelli occupied a huge, 35-acre site in the centre of Southampton and had been a major employer in the city since the 1914–18 war, manufacturing cables. The company was vacating the site, which is now a shopping and leisure centre, and the project was in part funded by Pirelli to mark this significant step in the company and city's history. Greenlees explains: 'There were two elements to the public art project. A temporary site-specific art installation commissioned from artist Darrell Viner (fig. 14) and documentation of the Pirelli factory commissioned from documentary photographer Ian Beesley and which were

[48] Rosy Greenlees, email to the authors, 25 August 2021.

added to the City Art Gallery Collection. An education programme around the *Pirelli Cables Project* was delivered with the City Arts team.'[49]

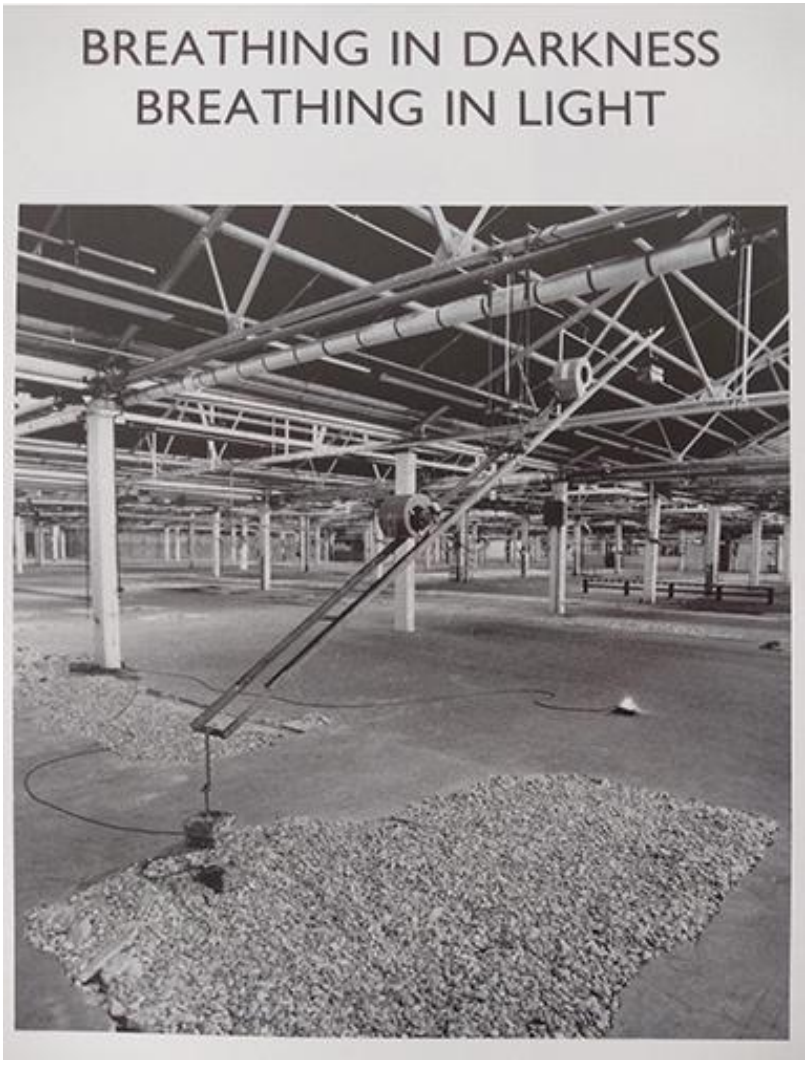


Figure 14: Photograph of Darrell Viner's sculpture which formed part of the *Pirelli Cables Project*, November 1991, from Gallery publicity. © Southampton Cultural Services

This included storytelling workshops 'Breathing in Darkness, Breathing in Light' with arts storyteller Pomme Clayton for primary pupils; music workshops with Julian Harrow, the local community artist and musician for First and Middle school pupils; and A level/B Tech critical studies workshops with the artist and art historian Christine Wilkinson. In her evaluation, Clayton wrote: 'I think the project was very unique in that it allowed this kind of experience to occur in such an unusual space where everything was on such a grand scale. The carefull [sic] and thoughtful preparation by both Southampton City Arts Team and The Pirelli Factory enabled

[49] Rosy Greenlees, email to the authors, 25 August 2021.

staff and children to feel safe and yet give the children a wider sense of freedom and expand their understanding of both literature and art.'[50]

The second ambitious temporary public art project of the time was *The Citybus Project*. Its aim was to document and explore life on the buses in Southampton. Again, artists were commissioned to produce new work for a site-specific location. According to Greenlees: 'Photographer Nancy Honey documented the travellers while poet Carol Ann Duffy composed a series of poems and haikus about travelling on the bus. The images and poems were displayed on the advertising spaces which ran along the inside of the buses and on the back of the seats.'[51] It clearly had a lasting impact for sixteen years later, in 2017, a small arts organisation in Southampton, the K6 Gallery, who had read about the initiative, organised a talk and a small exhibition in their premises to commemorate the earlier project.

In terms of public art commissions, arguably the most important one that Greenlees oversaw was the creation of a flagship project for the authority's percent for art policy as part of the major redevelopment of the Gallery, mentioned earlier. This enabled Greenlees 'to commission furniture, lighting and signage as well as Sally Greaves Lord, who was commissioned to work with the architects to design and select the furniture, glass screens and overall look of the café (figs 15 and 16). The range of commissions was extensive and exploited all opportunities to use the existing budgets for public art.'[52]

Figure 15: Banners and furniture, commissioned by Southampton City Art Gallery, and made by Lilly Lee and Toby Winterington, 1995, from Gallery publicity. Photo: © Joe Low

[50] Pomme Clayton, Evaluation Report for the Storytelling Workshops, part of the *Pirelli Cables Project*: 'Breathing in Darkness Breathing in Light', published by Southampton City Council, 1991, 4.
[51] Rosy Greenlees, email to the authors, 25 August 2021.
[52] Rosy Greenlees, email to the authors, 25 August 2021.

Figure 16: Fountains Café, Southampton Art Gallery, 1995, from Gallery publicity. Photo: © Joe Low

In addition, Lea Andrews, an artist based in London, was commissioned to make a temporary work for the hoardings surrounding the building whilst the construction work was underway. It was designed to showcase Southampton City Art Gallery's permanent collection and so individual members of the City Arts team were photographed, each with a selected artwork. Finally, a poignant and beautiful work was commissioned in collaboration with the Southampton City Council Oral History team to commemorate those who died when a bomb hit the building during the 1939–45 war. Drawing on quotations from people who had been directly involved in the tragedy and recorded by the Oral History team, the letterer Richard Kindersley was commissioned to make a work. The finished piece was placed in a light well above the lift lobby, where it remains today. Greenlees has told us that this is the work she is most proud to have been responsible for.

Greenlees and Maclennan jointly led 'a massively supported festival of activities when the Gallery reopened.'[53] On that day of celebration, 15 April 1993, Southampton City Art Gallery was filled with crowds, and in the following week a series of activites was put on to celebrate the visual arts, literature, dance, theatre, film and music, all of which were fully subscribed. This demonstrated, if more evidence were needed, that there was an appetite in the city for participating in arts-related activities and that energy and enthusiasm were there in the population ready to be tapped. It was believed by the evaluators that in particular the children's experience would remain with them as a positive memory for the rest of their lives. In subsequent years up to 2008, the Gallery continued with imaginative learning programmes, its *Community Choice* initiative, which encouraged personal choice and

[53] Rosy Greenlees, email to the authors, 25 August 2021.

inspiration, becoming a much valued fixture (fig. 17). Public commissions likewise have continued, enhancing the cityscape with increasing numbers of works of art.

Figure 17: 'Patients' Choice' exhibition, part of the ongoing *Community Choice* programme, in this case a partnership with the Elderly Care Unit, Southampton General Hospital, 1994. © Southampton Cultural Services

Lasting impact of Southampton's work

Given the increasing widescale acceptance of learning as a core activity within UK art galleries, and a growing acknowledgement nationally of the important and central work that gallery education departments had so often been undertaking, it is not surprising to learn that several notable accolades came Southampton's way, signalling the esteem in which its constant and pioneering efforts were held. For one thing, its work was acknowledged when the Arts Council conference which proposed the idea of the National Association for Gallery Education (NAGE) as a national body was hosted at Southampton City Art Gallery in 1988. Jane Sillis, now Director of *Engage* (as the Association soon became known) has written, 'Southampton City Art Gallery was a very fitting location for the meeting, as Helen Luckett had undertaken famous gallery education work with artists there since the late 1970s.'[54]

It was also in 1988 that the 'National Museum Registration' scheme was inaugurated, a scheme that was revised in the 1990s before a third system of 'Accreditation' was introduced in 2004. The purpose behind this initiative, introduced by the Museums & Galleries Commission, was to raise standards within UK museums. Museums seeking this public endorsement were required to demonstrate that they fulfilled certain key requirements. In addition to having to prove that they were financially viable concerns, complied with legal and planning

[54] Jane Sillis, 'Gallery Education: A Co-operative Community', *Engage*, 35 (Special issue: Twenty-Five Years of Gallery Education), Spring 2015, 16.

requirements, had an acceptable collection management policy and had access to professional curatorial advice, they also had to show that they were able to provide appropriate public services. Heller, during her time as Keeper of Art, achieved the first award of registration under the initial scheme, then, in 1998, in Snoddy's time, the scheme was reviewed and the contemporary collection was awarded the designation of being an outstanding collection. This subsequently earned Southampton City Art Gallery the status of a national collection, which was an important achievement because it meant that it remained eligible for funding and for subsidized services from various sources.

The outstanding calibre of the staff who worked at Southampton during the critical timeframe under review is clear from the fact that many went on to become leading figures in the field in other UK art insitutions, all of them carrying on supporting Southampton in various ways. For example, Shân Maclennan went on to work at South Bank Centre with an innovative programme of audience and community engagement that had its beginnings in her work in Southampton; Rosy Greenlees, OBE, later joined the Eastern Arts Board as Director of Visual and Media Art and is currently Executive Director of the Crafts Council, a national charity promoting the value of craft and making to society; Margot Heller, OBE, is currently Director of the South London Gallery; and Helen Luckett left to work for the Arts Council and then the Hayward Gallery. It is there that Karen Eslea, Head of Learning and National Programmes at the National Gallery, first encountered Luckett as a colleague. Eslea recalls: 'My abiding memory is of the rigour of Helen's research, teamed with her passion for access and inclusion. A formidable figure, an occasional glint in her eye suggested the playfulness that must have been central to those child-led projects in Southampton.'[55]

Luckett's and her colleagues' extraordinary work at Southampton has had lasting impact in many quarters. One example of the many possible legacies that could be cited is the work currently undertaken for children at the National Gallery, which is fundamentally inspired by and a continuation of work started in the mid-1970s at Southampton. As Eslea explains:

> Ground-breaking work taking place in galleries across the UK, including Southampton City Art Gallery led by Helen Luckett, lit a touch paper which is still burning strongly today. … Nearly forty years after *Through Children's Eyes* took place, I have found myself reflecting on its radical nature, and how working in partnership with children in a deeply respectful and creative way is still not common practice in museums and galleries, or indeed in society more generally. … The new Learning strategy at The National Gallery supports children and young people's skills and agency and harnesses their huge creativity, empowering them to inspire other people of all ages, and really bring the collection alive. There is a direct connection in this work to the inclusive programmes of the 1970s and 80s, not least to the work which was forging its own path before its time, at Southampton City Art Gallery.[56]

[55] Karen Eslea, email to the authors, 27 August 2021.
[56] Karen Eslea, email to the authors, 27 August 2021.

It seems from Eslea's observation that the work achieved at Southampton deserves to be even better known so that it can continue to inspire new creative ways to engage new audiences with art. Surely more than ever today museum and gallery leaders should take heed and continue to support imaginative Gallery Education programmes, particularly post pandemic when people across the country are struggling with well-being, poverty is growing, and there is ever less art provision in schools, and when now, more than ever, important evidence is available that engagement with the arts makes a real difference to people's lives and sense of well-being.

Certainly, there are several lessons that the story of Southampton's educational provision offers around the theme of innovation and crossing boundaries. Rich in episodes of leadership, vision, collaboration and imagination, it provides serious food for thought on the value of true leadership at all levels and what kinds of truly life-enhancing results in terms of public engagement with art are possible when freedom to experiment is actively encouraged and facilitated and there is a willingness to share ideas and work together. The article also demonstrates that cross team working, with audiences at its heart, is where the best projects develop. The more closely that Educators and Curators collaborate with each other, with other colleagues and external partners, the more likelihood there is of innovative ideas being generated that can truly connect large audiences to artists' work, and make a different to people's lives. The evidence adduced here makes a strong case for breaking down silos while respecting expertise.

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portfolio in the late 80s and Heritage and Entertainments in the 90s. Her arts legacy to Southampton includes the initial formation of the contemporary collection and the award winning refurbishment of the Gallery, as well as the new build and creation of the Harbour Lights Cinema on the City's waterfront. In 2000 she chaired a national study on how to develop leadership skills in museums and in 2003 became the first woman Council Chief Executive in Dorset. She believes strongly in the importance of access to high quality learning and in community empowerment.

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