ARTS ON THE WATERWAYS

Waterways in England and Wales are special places where people, nature and the arts can flourish. Even in a busy city a canal or river is a place to slow down, to dream. They are elegant, contemplative and gritty, gliding through the UK’s most creative cities and outstanding countryside, as well as areas of decline.

Arts on the Waterways has, since 2012, connected the Canal & River Trust and its 2,000 miles of historic waterways, with the contemporary arts.

Backed by strategic agreements with the Arts Councils of England and Wales, the programme allows the Trust and a range of leading arts partners to engage with local communities, often in areas that the arts find difficult to access, to attract new audiences for both the waterways and the arts. The programme offers time and space to artists, producers and curators to create new work and is helping to transform the waterways into the UK’s longest cultural space.
In just five years Arts on the Waterways has grown from an initial pilot of six projects to more than 60 by 2016, covering everything from performance poetry to sound art, brass bands to cinema, and sculpture to digital.

2016 saw the £2.5m Super Slow Way programme gather momentum – with commissions and community-based residencies inspired by the Leeds & Liverpool Canal – together with a series of successful collaborations, and projects in development, particularly on our waterways in Wales and the West Midlands.

We continue to work with the National Trust, Forestry Commission and Audience Agency to research how the contemporary arts can help to grow and engage with new audiences in heritage and outdoor settings. And this year we renewed our strategic agreement with Arts Council England, along with our ambition to release the waterway network’s potential to become the UK’s longest cultural space.

Tim Eastop and Ed Fox, Canal & River Trust
INTERNATIONAL RESIDENCIES

New European artists’ residencies commenced in partnership with the Arts Council of Wales. Nicky Coutts divided her time between Montgomery Canal in Newtown and Emscher river valley in Ruhr Germany. Chapter Arts Centre and Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation hosted Dan Rees who explored the historical inland canals of Cardiff and port link waterways surrounding Venice. Two international artists began their residencies; Cheon Pyo Lee on the Swansea Canal and Mo Abd-Ullla at Trefor Basin.

SUPER SLOW WAY

A proliferation of community-based commissions and residencies took place across Pennine Lancashire. Acclaimed international US artist, Suzanne Lacy worked with Pendle residents over 18 months, culminating in a filmed performance for three days in a former canal-side mill in Brierfield. A powerful mass performance of Ian Stephens’ new choral work *A Rhapsody to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal* with libretto by poet Ian McMillan, marked the canal’s bicentenary and featured local choirs, bands and soloists.
Super Slow Way, Rhapsody to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal
Image: Matthew Savage
CANAL LAUREATE

The Canal & River Trust and the Poetry Society partnership continued with the appointment of second Canal Laureate, Luke Kennard, who was commissioned to write new poems and act as both curious pedestrian and ambassador for the Trust. He has created a regular blog based on his surreal observations while engaging with the buildings, barges, staff and boating communities along the canals. Luke performed at National Poetry Day Live and canal-side locations throughout the UK.

BLACK COUNTRY VOYAGES

Ikon Gallery’s floating art programme for young people, Black Country Voyages, appointed Mahtab Hussain as lead artist for 2016. In collaboration with the Trust, the boat was converted into The Auspicious Journey, a story of mass displacement caused by the Mangla dam in Pakistan in the 1960s that led to new communities around the waterways of The Black Country. The artist worked with clay and traditional photography and invited public participation through regular workshops.
DANCE ON WATER

*Dance on Water*, produced by Matthew Bourne’s acclaimed Re:Bourne company, invited young people from disadvantaged areas of Birmingham and Salford to take part in a series of waterways-inspired dance workshops. Twenty participants were selected for a unique canal journey with dancer-choreographers from Matthew Bourne’s New Adventures, which inspired their new work performed at The Lowry, Salford (as part of the National Youth Dance Festival) and Birmingham Hippodrome.

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LIMELIGHT

Arts Alive Wales and the Trust hosted artists Rob Smith and Charles Danby for a residency to research the question ‘What would happen if we reactivated an industrial lime kiln?’ The artists investigated the legacy of Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal and its working landscape of canals, quarries, tramways and kilns. NESTA and the BBC supported the digital streaming of live illuminations of heated quicklime into Cardiff Contemporary and the city centre’s Castle Arcade.

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*Dance on Water*
Image: Danilo Moroni

*Peak /Copa, Limelight Illumination, 2016*
Image: Charles Danby and Rob Smith
ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE WALES 2016
Partners    Glandŵr Cymru, Arts Council of Wales; Addo; Oriel Davies Gallery; Chapter Arts Centre; Belivacqua La Masa Foundation; Emscherkünst, Essen, Germany
Lead Artists Cheon Pyo Lee; Mo Ad-Ulla; Nicky Coutts; Dan Rees
Waterways Swansea Canal; Trefor Basin; Montgomery Canal; Emscher River; inland waterways surrounding Venice

BLACK COUNTRY VOYAGES:
THE AUSPICIOUS JOURNEY
Partners    Ikon Gallery
Lead Artists Mahtab Hussain
Waterways New Main Line; Stourbridge Canal; Walsall Canal; Titford Canal; Wednesbury Old Canal; Wyrley & Essington Canal; Dudley Canal

CANAL LAUREATE
Partners    Poetry Society
Lead Artists Luke Kennard
Waterways Various

CANALS & WATERWAYS (PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES)
Partners    Hole and Corner: 09 Movement Issue
Lead Artists Toby Glanville
Waterways Sheffield and South Yorkshire Canal

DANCE ON WATER
Partners    New Adventures Re:Bourne; National Youth Dance Festival; Birmingham Hippodrome; The Lowry (Salford)
Lead Artists Various
Waterways Shropshire Union Canal; Trent & Mersey; Bridgewater Canal; Main Line/Manchester Ship Canal

FLOATING CINEMA: ANOTHER COUNTRY
Partners    UP Projects; British Film Institute; Arts Council England; Peabody; King’s Cross Central; Film London; Foundation for FutureLondon
Lead Artists Hari Kunzru
Waterways Regent’s Canal; Hackney Cut

IF BOATS COULD TALK
Partners    Light Up Lancaster; Dallas Road Primary School
Lead Artists Anna Read; Shane Johnstone
Waterways Lancaster Canal

LIMELIGHT
Partners    Arts Alive Wales; NESTA; BBC; Glandŵr Cymru, Arts Council of Wales
Lead Artists Rob Smith; Charles Danby
Waterways Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal

PHD RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP
Partners    Bethany Whalley; King’s College London
Lead Artists Various
Waterways Various

SUPER SLOW WAY
Partners    Arts Council England; Arts Partners in Pennine Lancashire; Newground (Groundwork Trust); Pendle Borough Council; Burnley Borough Council; Hyndburn Borough Council; Blackburn with Darwen Council
Lead Artists Suzanne Lacy; Ian Stephens; Ian McMillan; Stephen Turner; Anthony Schrag; Idle Women
Waterways Leeds & Liverpool Canal

THE LINE
Partners    The Line
Lead Artists Abigail Fallis; Martin Creed; Eduardo Paolozzi; Damien Hirst; Piotr Uklanski; Gary Hume; Michael Craig-Martin
Waterways Lee Navigation; River Thames; Royal Docks; River Lea

THE RING
Partners    Cathy Mager; Arts Council England; Bransford Trust; Elmey Foundation; Rowlands Trust
Lead Artists Various
Waterways Worcester & Birmingham Canal; River Severn; Droitwich Canals

WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE
Partners    Profile Books
Lead Artists Jasper Winn
Waterways Various
The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation’s third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites. The Arts on the Waterways programme was initiated by the Trust in 2012 in partnership with Arts Council, and more recently with strategic support from the Arts Council of Wales. We work with talented artists and leading arts institutions to inspire more people to experience and appreciate our waterways.

To learn more about the Canal & River Trust and how to donate please visit canalrivertrust.org.uk