



# Ort Gallery Annual Report 2018



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# Successes of 2018

This year was the most ambitious and successful year of Ort Gallery's lifespan. In the second year of our Elevate funding we exhibited 5 daring exhibitions, organised 58 events including talks, walks, workshops and performances and attracted 4348 visitors and participants - over a thousand more than last year. We increased our social media following and website hits by over 120%. But alas, we also had some bad news: we were unsuccessful in securing several large bids at the end of the year which led us to the decision of moving out of our gallery space and working remotely over the winter period.

## Team

Our team went through significant changes in 2018. Josephine Reichert returned to work full time as overall Project Manager. Anisa Fazal took on the Diversity Officer role as maternity cover and later took over the post. We worked with Rachael Cox as our Researcher for the Janet Mendelsohn project. Rachael was supported by three students from University of Birmingham as volunteer researchers. We also worked with 26 volunteers to support our large amount of events this year. This year we worked with many more community ambassadors: Salma Zulfiqar, Shaheen Ahmed,



Syeda Shah and Jeremy Hunt. These individuals are artists and active citizens of Birmingham and the West Midlands who form a bridge between the organisation and the community groups we want to work with. These individuals bring with them a breadth of knowledge, expertise, network and cultural understanding. We are delighted to be able to pay them a fair wage to support our work and also to develop their own careers. We became accredited by the Living Wage Campaign this year pledging to pay all our staff and contractors a fair living wage. In 2018 the staff

team of Ikon started mentoring our team and supporting us with the growth of our organisation especially in regards to finance, marketing and fundraising.

## Steering Committee

Our Steering Committee continued to support us through 2018 and it's highs and lows. They supported our fundraising efforts and advised us on difficult issues that our daring exhibitions brought up. Directors Ridhi and Josephine attended Clore Leadership training this year to assess how our governance can be improved and strengthened. As a result we have plans to merge our board of directors with our steering committee in 2019.

# Funding

We were successful in receiving a £10,000 Grant for the Arts for our exhibition project of Janet Mendelsohn's photographs of Balsall Heath in 1968 allowing us to spend more time and resources researching the images and collecting oral histories from local residents that we exhibited alongside the show. Rachael Cox was our researcher for the project. We also received a contribution from Heritage Lottery over £850 towards this project. We were also successful in receiving £2000 from Groundwork/TESCO

Bags for Life towards events aimed at young unemployed people in our locality. We received £250 from the Proceeds of Crime towards our One Day Without Us event and £200 from Near Neighbours for a children's workshop at the same event. Kashif Nadim Chaudry was successful in raising own funds towards his exhibition from Arts Council allowing him to increase the installation's size and ambition.



We ran a Crowdfunder to help us bridge a gap in funding and raised £2450 towards core costs. As mentioned above we were unsuccessful in receiving large bids from several funders to carry on our work at the end of the year and the decision was made by the directors to vacate the gallery premises to save money over the winter and until new funds were raised.

# Access

We hugely improved our thinking around accessibility of our venue and events by running a working group with local experts in the field and putting together a report on where we stand and a plan with short-term and long-term goals. We published our Access Guide on our website in pdf and video format. We started live streaming our events to allow audiences who could not attend to take part from their homes. We also organised a tour of one of our exhibitions that was Autism friendly working with YourIdeas. We became a Disability Confident Employer pledging to make our recruitment process as inclusive as possible.

# Partners

We worked with SHOUT Festival, Still Walking Festival, Flatpack Festival, Arts & Science Festival (University of Birmingham), GAP Arts, Local History Society, BRAP, BrumYODO, Femtinos, Celebrating Sanctuary, Hope Not Hate, Right2Work and many more. The partnerships supported each event we ran throughout the year and ensured that we reached more people through their network, promoted our work further afield and reinvested our funding into the local area and arts industry.

# Feedback

We held an extensive survey with all artists and partners we worked with to assess how well we do. The respondents rated us 8.5/10 on satisfaction with their project, 9/10 on staff expertise and 9.4/10 on whether they'd work with us in the future. "Friendly, professional and approachable" were amongst the most common responses when asked about what people liked about our team. The main issues brought up were to do with the temperature of the space and its physical limitations. One artist wrote: "Ort is an innovative and vital space within a community such as Balsall Heath. It really encourages and supports engagement from the community, which is really refreshing and an important part of artistic development in the area. It also offers a real diversity of exhibitions and workshops which have a real impact on those who attend."

# Membership



Our Membership grew to 78 members in 2018 (54 in 2017). We ran a second open submission exhibition for our Members, social events, professional development opportunities such as a bid writing workshop and a crit club. The members also had the opportunity of exhibiting their work at the Gunmakers Arms pub in Hockley. Our monthly newsletter signposts members to opportunities from our partners.

# Volunteer Scheme

As mentioned above we worked with many more volunteers this year to support our events programme. We also had 5 placements allowing young people to get a first impression of work in the arts industry in Birmingham. We continue to offer regular placements to students from the MA in Television & Media from University of Birmingham and the students create professional documentary films of the exhibition projects which form part of our archive.

# Marketing

We hugely improved the marketing of our organisation: Our new website had over 7700 users in 2018 with over 30,000 page views (compared to 1000 users and 6000 page views in 2017). We now have 1375 facebook followers (1174 in 2017), 2003 twitter followers (1071 in 2017), 1169 Instagram followers (611 in 2017) and 735 individuals signed up to our mailing list (566 in 2017).

# Attendance & Participation

We recorded 4348 visitors last year (3500 in 2017). Over the past 12 months we recorded that 40% of our visitors are from South Birmingham and 30% from other areas of Birmingham and beyond. 40% of visitors were White British and 55% of Non-White background with 23% of Asian heritage. 70% of visitors were female and 37% were under 30 years of age.



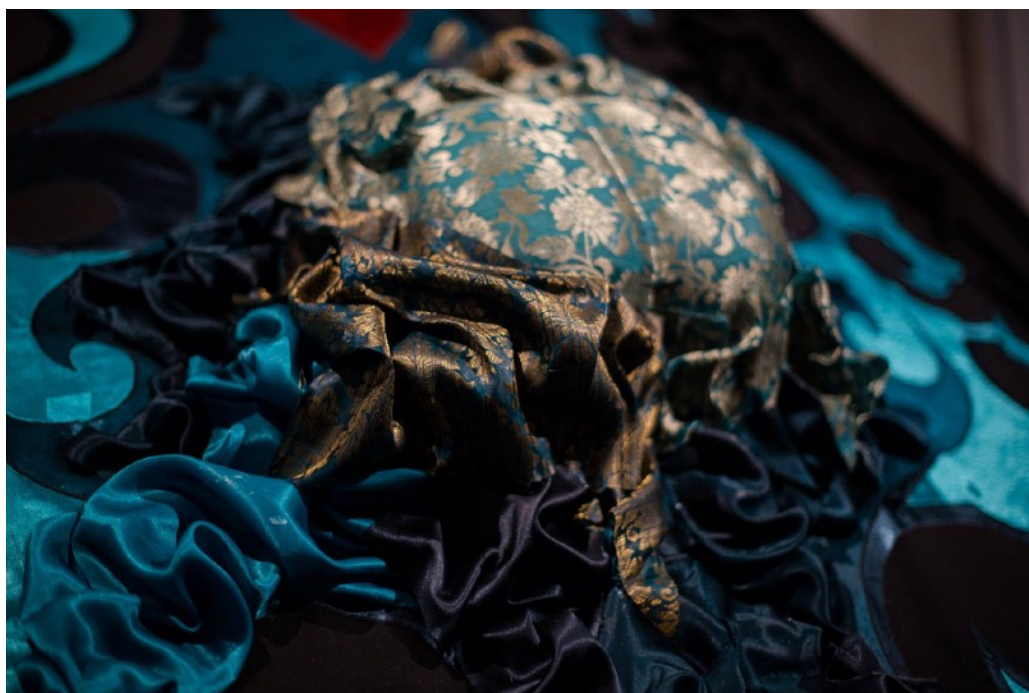
One Day Without Us event, Feb 2018



Karen Mc Lean 'Blue Power' installation shot

# Exhibitions

In 2018 we organised five exhibitions as part of our programme (and 3 more professional development exhibitions). Our first exhibition of the year was a solo show by Trinidadian artist Karen Mc Lean exploring Blue Soap and its connection to religion, mythology and superstition. Her work is concerned with post-colonialism in the Caribbean. During the opening event two singers sang classic Gospel songs giving the event even more gravitas. Next was our highlight of the year, our collaboration with Flatpack Film Festival exhibiting the photography of Janet Mendelsohn. 50 years since Janet visited Balsall Heath the pictures spoke of immigrant housing, community spirit and child poverty. The exhibition questioned how much had changed in the 50 years since Janet's visit and attracted a whopping 2346 visitors across the 8 weeks of exhibition and accompanying events. We then exhibited Charlotte Jarvis who created a cancer using her own DNA with the help of Dutch team of scientists. Her solo show was a beautiful installation that cut the gallery in half. During an inter-faith discussion group we discussed how different faiths and cultures think of and handle a cancer diagnosis and the notion of death. The event was organised with BrumYODO ('You Only Die Once') and proved that no subject is taboo if handled well. Our second open submission exhibition for our Schwarmerei Members took place in sweltering July with a performance by refugee musicians from the Celebrating Sanctuary network at the opening event. The show was bigger and more colourful in it's second iteration. Finally we exhibited Kashif Nadim Chaudry's installation "Beloved". The conical forms took over the entire gallery dwarfing it with their sheer size. The show was based on Chaudry's own experiences of sexuality and questioned LGBTQ+ rights in a traditional Muslim Pakistani family. Through his family's history of tailoring Nadim's handiwork made the huge sculptures beautifully tactile creations. For more details, we have an extensive archive on our new website: [ortgallery.co.uk/exhibitions](http://ortgallery.co.uk/exhibitions)



Kashif Nadim Chaudry 'Beloved' (The Somerset House Conference) Installation shot

# A Plan for 2019

The year 2018 was our most ambitious, successful and memorable year to date. Every exhibition was a success with the Janet Mendelsohn show specifically standing out for its audience and press reach, successful partnership with Flatpack and community engagement. Many audience members travelled from as far as Manchester, London and Blackpool and recognised themselves or family members in the pictures. There were even family reunions after many years in the gallery with the odd tear shed! The resource room (which was 3x as large as the exhibition itself) was very well received and audiences spent on average over 40 minutes in this space. Both Karen Mc Lean's and Kashif Nadim Chaudry's exhibitions were ambitious in their materials and use of space as well as in the questions they brought up. We are proud that we did not shy away from difficult topics but instead found ways to bring these shows to our local audiences and facilitate the debates they brought up.

We believe that this successful programming and the successful delivery of our engagement programmes has increased our reputation in the city and industry. We have shown funders, audiences and partners alike who we are and what we can do. We have stood up for underrepresented voices and shown that programming difficult content makes our organisation stronger. We have supported emerging talent to be more confident and empowered individuals to find work in the city and industry. We want to be role models that show young people growing up in Birmingham today that they can achieve whatever they want to be independent of who they are and where they come from.

Last year's conclusion still rings true: We believe that we fill a gap in our city by exhibiting and working with Black and Brown artists, asking difficult questions about society, migration, sexuality and faith and facilitating dialogue amongst people who would not normally speak to one another.

