

Over 40 contemporary artists supported by Government Art Collection response to Covid-19 pandemic

- £230,000 acquisition project supported artists throughout the Covid-19 pandemic
- 90 pieces by 45 contemporary visual artists celebrate and support diversity of creativity across the UK
- Works will be displayed in Government buildings around the country, and internationally in British Embassies and Residences

In response to Covid-19, the Government Art Collection (GAC) has acquired works by 45 contemporary visual artists from across the UK. The X-UK project celebrates the diversity of creativity around the country, and has supported artists directly during the pandemic.

Government Art Collection collaborated with national networks in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland on the £230,000 acquisition project which was organised in response to the impact of the pandemic on the visual arts sector.

Visual arts networks from across the UK were asked to nominate outstanding artists in their area to take part in the project which has supported 45 artists and resulted in over 90 works entering the Government Art Collection.

The newly-acquired pieces will join the 14,500 other works in the Government Art Collection which are displayed in Government buildings across the UK, including in No.10 and No.11 Downing Street, and internationally in British Embassies and Residences in a total of 130 countries around the world.

Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage said:

The past year has been challenging for the UK's many brilliant artists. I am grateful that the Government Art Collection has been able to support a diverse range of artists from every corner of the country.

Northern Ireland Secretary Brandon Lewis said:

This is a fabulous initiative and I am delighted that four artists from Northern Ireland, and their work, are among those to be supported by the Government Art Collection. This is a tremendous boost for the industry as we continue to move out of the pandemic, allowing artistic talent from across the UK to be showcased to a wider audience.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

The past year has been extremely difficult for the creative community, so we're delighted to support these four outstanding Scottish artists by acquiring their works for the UK Government Art Collection. The pieces provide a creative snapshot of the times we're living through, reflecting a rich variety of voices from right across the UK.

The UK Government has worked hard to support Scotland's arts and culture sector throughout the pandemic, providing the Scottish Government with £97 million to sustain the country's arts organisations and backing the Edinburgh Festivals with £1 million of funding.

Leslie Thompson, an artist based in Manchester and supported by charity Venture Arts supporting people with learning difficulties, is one artist whose work has now been acquired by the Government Art Collection. Conflating personal memories with wildlife documentaries, his ink drawing *Animals from Memory* is based on a trip he took to the zoo with his late mother in his childhood.

A constructed box titled *The Kiss* by Northern Irish artist Graham Gingles has also been bought by the Government Art Collection. Gingles has works displayed in major collections, such as The Ulster Museum and The Arts Council of Northern Ireland and is well known for his constructed boxes, which he's been making since 1969. Like miniature theatre sets, these intricate constructions incorporate objects made by the artist.

Four works by Nilupa Yasmin, a visiting lecturer at Coventry University, will also join the Government Art Collection. Yasmin uses photographs which she cuts by hand and then weaves together to create her *Where can I find this?* series which has been acquired as part of Government Art Collection X-UK. In this series, Nilupa Yasmin engaged with market communities across Sandwell, celebrating how the markets bring people together. The pieces are colourful and complex, patterned images that reflect people, and the products for sale in the markets.

Additional quotes

Sir David Verey, Chair, Advisory Committee to the Government Art Collection, said:

There is no better way to support artists in this terrible time than to buy their art. The Advisory Committee of the Government Art Collection is very proud to have been part of this effort.

Paula Orrell, National Director, Contemporary Visual Art Network, said:

The Government Art Collection partnership has enabled an incredible opportunity for artists across England. Our nine regions from Cornwall to Cumbria put forward artists that perhaps are not well represented by major collections and institutions. It has been an honour that CVAN could provide this platform and work with GAC to support artists during such a critical time.

Alfredo Cramerotti, Visual Arts Group Wales and Director, Mostyn contemporary art gallery, said:

Working with the Government Art Collection to identify the next Wales-based artists to enter the collection was a pivotal moment for our devolved nation. The acquisition comes at a key moment in the career of Adéqlá Dewis, Rabab Ghazoul, Jake Grewal and Gareth Griffith enabling them to further their practice and maximise the impact of their work with audiences and professionals alike. The partnership with GAC has established an important precedent for the Welsh visual arts and cultural sector and VAGW fully supports such endeavour.

Moira Jeffery, Director, Scottish Contemporary Art Network, said:

We're so proud to have played our part in a scheme that will share the work of brilliant artists from Scotland, Atelier E.B, Rabiya Choudhry, Jamie Crewe and Alberta Whittle, with audiences across the world. This Government Art Collection initiative is supporting artists through the pandemic and telling a richer story about who is making art today, where, how and why.

Peter Richards, Chair, Belfast Visual Art Network, said:

The BVAf was delighted to be invited by the UK Government Art Collection to join with Contemporary Visual Art Network regions across England, Scottish Contemporary Art Network, and Visual Arts Group Wales to introduce artists from Northern Ireland for consideration for its 2020 collection acquisitions. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to share examples of the breadth and quality of work being undertaken by contemporary artists here at this time.

Notes to editors

The Government Art Collection has an annual acquisitions budget and the Advisory Committee on the Government Art Collection meets three times a year to view potential acquisitions and agree which works enter the Collection.

[More information about the the X-UK pieces](#)

List of artists

- Bruce Asbestos (CVAN East Midlands)
- Simon Bayliss (CVAN South West)
- Rabiya Choudhry (Scottish Contemporary Art Network)
- Donna Coleman (Yorkshire and Humber Visual Arts Network)
- Jamie Crewe (Scottish Contemporary Art Network)
- Paul Crook (New Art West Midlands)
- Adéplá Dewis (Visual Art Group Wales)
- Lisa Fielding-Smith (Yorkshire and Humber Visual Arts Network)
- Michael Forbes (CVAN East Midlands)
- Naomi Frears (CVAN South West)
- Atelier E.B (Scottish Contemporary Art Network)
- Kathryn Elkin (CVAN North East)
- Leo Fitzmaurice (CVAN North West)
- Joy Gerrard (Belfast Visual Arts Network)
- Rabab Ghazoul (Visual Art Group Wales)
- Graham Gingles (Belfast Visual Arts Network)
- Jake Grewal (Visual Art Group Wales)
- Gareth Griffiths (Visual Art Group Wales)
- Sunil Gupta (CVAN London)
- Manish Harijan (Yorkshire and Humber Visual Arts Network)
- Joey Holder (CVAN East Midlands)
- Mahtab Hussain (CVAN South East)
- Elsa James (East CVAN)
- Samson Kambalu (CVAN South East)
- Jasleen Kaur (CVAN London)
- Susan MacWilliam (Belfast Visual Arts Network)
- Lindsey Mendick (CVAN London)
- Jade Montserrat (Yorkshire and Humber Visual Arts Network)
- Harold Offeh (East CVAN)
- John Rainey (Belfast Visual Arts Network)
- Antonio Roberts (New Art West Midlands)
- Freddie Robins (East CVAN)
- Christopher Samuel (CVAN East Midlands)
- Lindsay Seers (CVAN South East)
- Libita Sibungu (CVAN South West)
- Nicola Singh (CVAN North East)
- Emily Speed (CVAN North West)
- Lucy Stein (CVAN South West)
- Matt Stokes (CVAN North East)
- Leslie Thompson (CVAN North West)
- Romily Alice Walden (CVAN London)
- Alberta Whittle (Scottish Contemporary Art Network)
- Aaron Williamson (CVAN South East)
- Everton Wright (East CVAN)
- Nilupa Yasmin (New Art West Midlands)

Works of art from the Government Art Collection (GAC) are displayed in UK Government buildings in nearly every capital city, making it the most dispersed collection of British art in the world. The role of the Collection is to promote British art while contributing to cultural diplomacy. Dating from 1899, the Collection has expanded over the years and now contains over 14,000 works of art from the 16th century to the present day by British artists, in a broad range of media.

Works are displayed in varied environments: Government buildings in the UK including No10 and No11 Downing Street, and British Embassies and Residences internationally. The Collection is accessible to the public through loans to exhibitions, collaborative programmes, tours and digital platforms.

Regional Networks

[Contemporary Visual Art Network](#)

Operating across nine regions of England, the Contemporary Visual Art Network is a sector support and advocacy organisation, working regionally and nationally since 2012. A network that advocates for and represents a diverse community of artists, creative practitioners, arts organisations, institutions and art galleries across the whole of England's visual arts sector. www.cvan.art

[Scottish Contemporary Art Network](#)

Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) connects and champions Scotland's contemporary art community. Our 297 organisational and individual members work at the heart of communities from Shetland to the Scottish Borders and from East Lothian to the Western Isles. They include Scotland's leading galleries, artists' studios, workshops and production facilities and a highly skilled workforce of artists, art workers and creative thinkers. They sustain a network of free at the point of access galleries and venues, responsive and flexible institutions that anchor local communities and open their doors to their neighbours and visitors alike.

Belfast Visual Art Forum in Northern Ireland

The Belfast Visual Arts Forum was established in 2014 to promote and celebrate Belfast as "a city where visual arts can be embraced and enjoyed by all". The Forum currently has over 70 members with a broad range of interests plus key stakeholders, including us, Audiences NI and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

[Visual Arts Group Wales](#)

Visual Arts Group Wales (VAGW) is an independent, voluntary network that exists to strengthen the contemporary visual arts sector in Wales through partnership, advocacy and training.