



# YOU BELONG HERE

Artists Rediscovering Salford's Green Spaces









**You Belong Here** Installation view Salford Museum and Art Gallery, 2021

## FOREWORD

The exhibition You Belong Here and The Storm Cone app in Peel Park are both part of a city-wide creative project called *Rediscovering Salford*. Using the opening of RHS Garden Bridgewater as a catalyst, the project aims to remind residents and visitors alike about the wealth of green spaces, parks and gardens in Salford.

'You Belong Here' is a phrase coined by commissioned artist Lizzie King, who reminds us that the public parks still truly belong to the people. This is particularly appropriate in relation to Peel Park, one of the first parks in England and the first to paid for by public subscription. The ability for all to access local parks and green spaces during the pandemic has been vital, and reinforces the ethos of Salford City Mayor, Paul Dennett, who actively champions both the green agenda and equality for all. Through working with artists, many of whom are based in the city, these valuable green assets are revisited and explored afresh in the exhibition and the app. Rich stories are unearthed, histories are rediscovered and the seemingly mundane given a completely new and contemporary perspective. The Storm Cone by Laura Daly also celebrates the local, bringing a 'private concert' to the site of the former band stand in Peel Park through augmented reality.

The exhibition and app were originally planned to launch in summer 2020, however the Covid pandemic caused inevitable delays which in turn impacted on how that artists approached and made their work, especially those who work in a collaborative manner. It has been an honour and a joy to work with all the artists and to witness their ingenuity, perseverance, good humour and care for each other, and their collaborators, especially during challenging times. I'm delighted that elements of each of the commissions will be acquired by the University of Salford Art Collection as a legacy of the project. I would like to sincerely thank and applaud Jack Brown, Laura Daly, Cheddar Gorgeous, Hilary Jack and Lizzie King, and all the many people who contributed to making their work. I would particularly like to thank the many colleagues, students and friends from across the University and beyond who were essential in making *The Storm Cone* app possible – from brass band musicians, through sound engineers to games designers.

This publication celebrates these inspirational new commissions, and includes a series of new written works made in response to the artworks, by authors from or based in Greater Manchester. My deepest thanks to each of the writers for their insightful, entertaining and thoughtful contributions. I would also like to thank Sarie Mairs Slee, Head of Salford Culture and Place Partnership, for her unswerving belief and support in the exhibition and app, and her hard work on the wider *Rediscovering* Salford project. Too many individuals, organisations and funders to name check here have made the exhibition and app possible, and are credited at the end of the publication. I'm also delighted to announce two further associated commissions: Circadian Bloom by Anna Ridler and *Leaving (A study of autumn)* by Lowri Evans. Both will launch alongside the exhibition and the programme of events and opportunities to learn, make, connect and celebrate with others.

Finally, I want to express my profound gratitude to my talented colleagues Claire Corrin (Salford Museum and Art Gallery) and Stephanie Fletcher (University of Salford Art Collection). Working mainly remotely they have curated and delivered the *You Belong Here* exhibition, website, events programme and this publication, alongside supporting *The Storm Cone* app and the *Rediscovering Salford* project.

The partners in this project share a deep sense of pride in our city, and understand the importance of investing in local creative talent and places, whilst maintaining a global, forward thinking outlook. This is what makes Salford the most vibrant, curious and interesting place to study, live, work and visit. A place where you want to belong - and feel you do belong.

#### LINDSAY TAYLOR

Curator, University of Salford Art Collection July 2021





You Belong Here Installation view Salford Museum and Art Gallery, 2021

## INTRODUCTION

## **YOU BELONG HERE** ARTISTS REDISCOVERING SALFORD'S GREEN SPACES

From a proud industrial heritage of cotton spinning and weaving, to more contemporary developments such as MediaCityUK, it's easy to think of Salford as a busy, bustling, built-up and urban place. But Salford's name offers a clue to its greener side: it comes from 'Sealhford', meaning a 'ford by the willow trees' - on the banks of the River Irwell

Official figures estimate there are more than 60 parks and green spaces in Salford, and that up to 60% of the wider Salford region is classed as 'green', including wetlands, farmland and wildlife areas as well as managed parks. A 2020 study by the Centre for Thriving Places named Salford as the 'greenest place to live' in the UK, thanks not only to the multitude of open spaces, but to pro-active sustainability initiatives. And at the heart of the city, Peel Park is perhaps best-known as one of the first public parks in England (opened in 1846), part of a Victorian drive to improve physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, which also saw the launch of a number of public museums, galleries and libraries, such as Salford Museum and Art Gallery - free and open to all.

The exhibition You Belong Here is part of the city-wide Rediscovering Salford, which was initially inspired by the launch of RHS Garden Bridgewater, a 154-acre garden that has transformed the historic grounds of Worsley New Hall in Salford. Once a grand house with magnificent landscaped gardens, over the years it fell into disrepair, and like many of the old halls in Salford it was eventually demolished in the 1940s. The reinvention of this site in 2021 - including new and renewed gardens, meadows, an orchard, lakes and visitor centre - has encouraged us to take a closer, deeper look at our green surroundings and rich local history.

In autumn 2020 we invited four Salford-based artists to join us in 'rediscovering Salford'. Jack Brown, Hilary Jack, Cheddar Gorgeous and Lizzie King were selected in partnership with local artist-led studios - the former both based at Paradise Works in Greengate, and the latter part of the creative community at Islington Mill, Ordsall. Each had an open brief to explore, research and respond to our local spaces, histories and archives.

Lizzie King chose to spend time reflecting more closely on a place she knows very well, having visited Peel Park since childhood. Jack Brown decided to explore the city anew, attempting to map out and traverse as many of the 60-plus designated green spaces in the region. Cheddar Gorgeous focussed on human (and ghost) stories; digging deep into local histories, archives and memories, whilst Hilary Jack considered non-human residents; exploring the impact of city development on bird and wildlife populations.

Though the project was planned well before the Covid pandemic, the circumstances undoubtedly increased the resonance and importance of natural, local, green



L.S. Lowry Bandstand, Peel Park, Salford 1925 Pencil on paper The Lowry Collection, Salford environments for our enjoyment and wellbeing. Many local parks reported more than double their usual visitor numbers, as residents sought solace, fresh air and company outdoors; and whilst unable to travel further afield, many of us also found comfort and joy in looking a little more closely at the places we might have overlooked before.

The resulting artworks offer unique, playful and thoughtful outlooks on the inspiring stories and meanings to be found in our immediate surroundings. And together with the historic works and archive materials included in the display, they encourage us to consider the ways in which we belong in - and to - our local public spaces.

#### **STEPHANIE FLETCHER**

Assistant Curator, University of Salford Art Collection

#### L.S. Lowry Peel Park, Salford

1927 Oil on board The Lowry Collection, Salford

# **JACK BROWN**

Jack Brown makes work about "the overlooked, things that should be given more than a passing glance, and moments that would benefit from magnification". For *You Belong Here*, Jack sought out evidence of the hidden behaviours in public parks by exploring as many of the 60-plus parks and green spaces across the city as he could. Seeking to avoid busier areas, Jack followed 'desire lines' - the unofficial paths and tracks made by people and animals in open spaces. His explorations led him to the peripheries, under brambles, into bushes, and through holes in fences, investigating the more playful, mischievous or deviant narratives of public spaces.

During these encounters with secret dens, animal tracks, rope swings and dead ends throughout the city, Jack "Over the course of this commission. I've explored collected both found objects and video/audio recordings numerous green spaces across Salford, Covid forced me away from other people, and looking back at the to create his three artworks. Bottletops, wallets, keyrings, litter, rocks, twigs, and other personal items found their work I've made I think that absence, distance, or maybe way into his pockets - each hinting at former human a sense of isolation cuts through each work. The rope (or animal) activity. These items were pressed into swings are still and unused, and the actual objects that large tiled sheets of floral foam, leaving indents and I collected and pushed into floral foam, are absent from impressions in the installation Green space floral foams. the final work, only an impression is left. Hidden activity These insignificant items take on a new persona and feels and sounds like a struggle, a person lost, in the invite speculation: was the destroyed wallet dropped by wrong place... accident, or on purpose after a theft? What are the more abstracted and unrecognisable forms - a tool, weapon, I hope these works lead others off the beaten track, and device, an important memento or something more out of the ordinary." innocuous? Together they offer a time capsule of some of the current everyday behaviours in parks.

Alongside, *Hidden activity* invites us to follow part of the artist's journey. The recording captures the bumps, scrapes, shuffles and footsteps of the artist as he crouches and climbs through the parks' boundaries, hedges and edges. The old TV monitor rests unassumingly in the corner of the gallery, almost as if it was hiding, resting, avoiding the public. The screen is nearly out of view, perhaps asking us to hunker down for a moment with it.



Jack Brown Rope swing (knotted down) 2021 Still from reanimated stereograph video The video triptych *Rope swing* offers a more nostalgic and playful memory of public space. The gently animated digital video references the stereoscope - a Victorian analogue device which allowed the viewer to observe a pair of images at once, creating an illusion of a single 3D image, known as a stereograph. Jack was inspired by a stereoscopic image c.1860 that he found in Salford Museum and Art Gallery's collection. It shows the Markendale family who lived at Ordsall Hall in Salford in the 19th century. Creating a digital homage to the stereograph, Jack draws a connecting path to the Victorian origins of many of our local parks and museums.

Jack Brown (b.1979) is based at Paradise Works studios, Salford. Working across a range of mediums and methodologies, his practice can be seen as "an investigation into ways of making, and how those made objects or moments interact with the world around them". In addition to his varied art practice he collaborates with others through teaching, facilitating, and leading public realm projects. He has held group and solo shows across the UK and has work in several private collections.

#### jackbrown.me.uk

## JACK BROWN - REDISCOVERING SALFORD

BY CAROLE O'REILLY

The local environment continues to fascinate and excite people. Public parks are a much-loved element of the urban landscape and it is no surprise that so many of us have positive memories of childhoods spent in these locations.

There are several thematic possibilities inspired by my research into the history of Salford's green spaces and Jack Brown's artwork on the public realm. The first is ideas about freedom and open space. Clearly, public parks were designed as a response to overcrowded and polluted environments. The area around Peel Park was especially badly affected by the number of factories in the vicinity so it was important to have access to open green spaces for the many workers who lived in that district. That may explain why so many gave so willingly when collections were made in the local factories to support the purchase of land for the park.

People associated parks with fresh air, trees, flowers and valued leisure time with their families. Children especially come to mind when looking at the images of the rope swings - they remind us of the inventiveness of childhood, especially for those who did not have access to expensive toys. Parks often had special areas set aside for children's play but these were not always used by children who often preferred to make their own entertainment in the locations in the park that appealed to them. The freedoms they experienced in their local park were a stark contrast to their small and crowded homes and strict school days and were all the more valued for that. In that sense, the rope swings represent a degree of spontaneous interpretation of the space of the park - their locations changed and were shared as part of the secret knowledge of the park space and the ability to adopt the space as one's own.

Jack's work on 'desire lines' - hidden areas in parks and the boundaries of hedges and fences connects with my findings about the importance of the created environment in the park. Many parks had hidden dells and pockets of bushes and small trees which offered the opportunity for park visitors to conceal themselves from the public gaze. This seems quite ironic as public parks were supposed to be open and airy and were often designed around ideas of public spectacle - many people visited their local park to be seen wearing their best clothes and strolling with their families. This resonates with one of the original inspirations for this project, the nineteenth century stereographs of the Markendale family of Salford. People carefully curated their self-image based on where and how they wished to be seen (we continue this behaviour in contemporary social media).

Some people preferred to take advantage of these liminal spaces as an opportunity to be concealed, courting couples, for example. Most would have had little or no privacy at home so the chance to spend intimate time with a loved one was rare indeed. This is echoed in the increasing use of park spaces during recent lockdowns, when people sought an alternative space to their homes in a public space, that gave them the opportunity to mingle with others but with the ability to socially distance more easily.

The idea of a boundary was important in a park – these were usually represented by a wall or railings with gates at the entrances. People needed to know where the park began and ended and it was important to the park authorities to be able to regulate behaviour within the park. However, people often ignored the park rules and indeed, the boundaries of the park altogether, and climbed the walls and railings to gain entry out of hours. People were determined to make these spaces their own and to challenge the park authorities when they could.

Jack's work on lost and discarded items from the park is especially engaging. People often left their own marks on the spaces by deliberately leaving objects there or by dropping or losing their possessions in the course of their visits. Thus, they left behind something of themselves as a mark on the space. Parks were often referred to as 'people's parks' so even the act of dropping a personal item changed the nature of the place. Meetings held in parks resulted in litter in the form of discarded literature and religious tracts which caused concern for the parkkeepers who were responsible for keeping the parks clean and tidy. People reacted badly to heavily littered parks and political groups were often asked to clean up after themselves. Some of the objects found by Jack included small spirit bottles, an empty wallet and a burst football, signalling that people have continued to use parks as spaces for transgressive behaviours.

People's responses to public parks have been as diverse as themselves. Parks have always challenged our ideas about public and private and have driven people to explore the familiar and the unfamiliar. They mix broad expanses of public open space with tightly-cramped peripheral regions and hidden, intimate boundaries. People behaved in ways that defied the expectations of the local authorities and developed new kinds of normative behaviours appropriate



Jack Brown Green space floral foams 2021 Floral foam board, varnish, metal sub-frame



Jack Brown *Hidden activity* 2021 Video and monitor

for these new kinds of public space. Different social classes mingled uneasily together and had to learn or re-learn how to conduct themselves in public. Parks were supposed to provide an alternative form of leisure to the pub or the street, but many people simply imported those behaviours into the park, showing that they adapted the park to their own needs.

Thinking about and assessing the contributions made to our cities by public parks is an important part of our continual attempts to reinvent these spaces. Seeing them as landscapes of rediscovery can encourage us to explore new ways of experiencing the spaces and see them with fresh eyes and insights. Jack's work reminds us not just of the importance of these green spaces, but of their unique ability to serve many different purposes simultaneously.

**Dr Carole O'Reilly** is Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Salford. Her areas of specialism include the history of urban journalism, social and cultural history, and the history of leisure and recreation. Her most recent book 'The Greening of the City: Urban Parks and Public Leisure, 1840-1939' was published by Routledge in 2019.



Cheddar Gorgeous Untitled 2021 Digital photograph Photography by Lee Baxter Costume made in collaboration with Natalie Linney, Liquorice Black, Mr Joe King and Moderate Realism

## **CHEDDAR GORGEOUS**

IN COLLABORATION WITH LIQUORICE BLACK, MR JOE KING, NATALIE LINNEY, MODERATE REALISM, LEE BAXTER AND FAKE TRASH.

Drag artist Cheddar Gorgeous uses makeup, costume Cheddar's project raises questions about the ways in and performance to create living spectacles and tell which we record, share and remember the histories of stories inspired by everything from historical figures to our local surroundings. Though factual records - such as environmental issues. For You Belong Here, Cheddar the old Hall plans and Madam Mort's will - can build up was drawn to the historic site of Wicheaves Hall and an important picture, our local history is also embodied neighbouring Madam's Wood (later the site of Peel in memories, rumours, myths, imaginings, and personal Hall) in Little Hulton, north west Salford. Drawing upon stories passed on through generations. It is also recorded archives and local history, Cheddar began to explore and through the earth itself, in the silver birches and bluebells imagine the life of the Hall's former resident, Catherine that still remain in the area. Drag, which at its core is Mort. Living alone at the Hall after being widowed in a form of storytelling, allows us to reconnect with and 1723, Madam Mort (as she was known) ordered that a rediscover the past in new and unexpected ways. woodland, chiefly comprising of birch trees and bluebells, "Salford is rich in wonderful stories and amazing was planted, and named in her honour. To this day, local characters. I was spoiled for choice in terms of legend has it that Madam Mort still roams the area as inspiration when working on the project. It was a a ghostly apparition, known as the 'grey lady' or 'white pleasure to create something that remembered a lady' of the woods. largely forgotten local icon and allow her to have her moment in the spotlight. Long live the lady of Reaching out to local residents, Cheddar collected Little Hulton!"

Reaching out to local residents, Cheddar collected memories and ghost stories to help bring Madam Mort back to life through the art of drag. Working in close collaboration with artists Liquorice Black, Mr Joe King, Natalie Linney, Moderate Realism, Lee Baxter and Fake Trash, Cheddar created an elegant costume, complete with jewellery, headdress and accessories. The textiles were dyed using locally foraged plant materials, memories of ghost sightings were printed onto the fabric, and the ethereal colours and patterns inspired by the silver birch trees of the site. Wearing the outfit and embodying Madam Mort for a photo shoot on site, Cheddar creates a new contemporary 'haunting' or spectacle, allowing Madam Mort to roam Little Hulton once more.

**Cheddar Gorgeous** (b.1983) is a drag, boylesque, performance and transformation artist, based at Islington Mill, Salford. Cheddar has performed in cabarets, festivals and galleries from Hong Kong to California and was also featured on Channel 4's Drag SOS. Cheddar worked with Manchester Museum as part of their LGBTQ+ programme, which included a 'family friendly digital drag show' Queer Tales: Myths and Monsters (2020), and most recently with Manchester International Festival for their MIF Remote Residency programme during the Covid pandemic. **instagram.com/cheddar\_gorgeous** 

## **REDISCOVERING SALFORD WITH** DRAG ARTIST CHEDDAR GORGEOUS

BY GREG THORPE

### MADAM MORT

Madam Mort is the gloriously gothic and irresistibly alliterative title given to Mrs Catherine Mort of Wicheaves Hall, wife of Richard Mort, who left her a widow in 1723. Madam Mort found herself in the somewhat rare position of being an independently wealthy and propertied eighteenthcentury woman. The property in guestion, Wicheaves Hall, was one of several houses that stood on the Little Hulton site over many centuries, the last being the famous Peel Hall, built in 1840 and demolished in the 1990s.

During her lifetime, Madam Mort enjoyed the reputation of being "an unusually intelligent woman." During her solitary tenure of the stately home she commissioned the planting of a mixed woodland to the front of the house. consisting mainly of birch and oak, which she christened 'Madam's Wood'. She had the floors of her little forest strewn with the bulbs of bluebells which would sprout forth with their vivid little trumpet flowers every springtime.

Madam Mort died in 1737. the last of the Mort's of Wicheaves. Her deathly family moniker seems to have predisposed her to a life beyond the grave, and sure enough ghostly sightings and close encounters with a

grey or white lady would emerge from the buildings and from Madam's Wood throughout the years. One fantastic story suggests Catherine was not the last clever woman to reside in the area. In the 1920s, Peel Hall operated as a tuberculosis hospital in which a young residential nurse experienced a chilling sighting of Madam Mort, passing along the panelled corridor. "She was misty and I could see the panels through her," she recalled.

This same nurse had the terrifying task of walking the hospital matron's much-despised dog around the dark pathways of the grounds each night. One evening, sitting in the first floor nurse's guarters with the hated hound at her feet, the beast began behaving strangely, responding to some unseen energy in the room. "The hair round its neck stood up like a ruff," recounted the nurse. In sudden terror, the animal dashed off the veranda and fell to its death. Moments later a fellow resident burst through the door having "just seen the ghost" in the next door room. "It was the ghost that killed the dog," insisted the nurse, and there were no more creepy night walks for her.

### CHEDDAR GORGEOUS AND MADAM'S WOOD

Cheddar Gorgeous is the founder of The Family Gorgeous, a collective of drag artists based at The Drag Lab in Salford's Islington Mill. Cheddar is also one of the co-founders of the Manchester drag performance night, Cha Cha Boudoir, which helped to propel its artists to worldwide attention and staked a claim for Greater Manchester as a home to cutting-edge drag. Online, the #ManchesterQueens hashtag became a cornucopia of innovative exploration in costume, makeup, performance, politics and style.

Drag as an art form has a rich and complex history, emerging from gueer communities globally as entertainment, expression and resistance. Drag artists have often operated as a kind of queer court jester, allowing costumed performers to express outrageous truths from society's margins. Drag is a powerful tool that enables artists of all genders to explore many other modes of being. Transgender and non-binary people sometimes find their first true self-expressions in drag, but gender is only one of many boundaries drag is able to joyfully transgress.

### DRAG AS CURATION AND CREATION

Cheddar's work is literally and intentionally spectacular imagery. Artist Moderate Realism screen-printed these textual trees onto fabric, with hauntingly beautiful results. in nature. Their complex appearance includes costume, or sometimes nudity, makeup and performance. It may Accessory and prop maker, Joe King, constructed intricate latex casts taken from real silver birch tree bark. also involve installation, projection, text, music and more, The finished look incorporates Cheddar's own crafted depending on the context of presentation. Their drag looks operate as "living spectacles" which variously evoke head pieces, along with haunting inky contact lenses and themes of ecology, science fiction, Shakespeare, horror, other-worldly make-up. and more. Their drag personae include reimagined The accompanying photographic imagery includes embodiments of Elizabeth I. extra-terrestrial life forms. atmospheric portraiture by Fake Trash Studios, and David Bowie, and many other fantastical creatures. location photography by Lee Baxter. Explains Cheddar:

Cheddar's You Belong Here commission focuses on the intriguing figure of Madam Mort, particularly her connection to the vanished idyll of Madam's Wood and her place in local imagination. The resultant costume is a collaborative work, a palimpsest of materials, skills, timelines and references. Textile artist Natalie Linney has hand-printed silk using fragments of flora gathered from the Little Hulton area. The plants leave behind both colour and shape on the delicate fabric, a ghostly imprint commemorating Catherine's beloved woodland, and her persistent spirit.

Seamstress extraordinaire, Liquorice Black, constructed Cheddar's dress based on contemporary eighteenthcentury silhouettes, with an added drag flourish of course. Participants from Salford contributed their own memories and legends during Cheddar's research, which became words inscribed onto silhouetted branch

### SOURCES

The Halls of Little Hulton and their Ghosts, Ann Monaghan (2006, Little Hulton One Stop Shop), accessed at http://worsleycivictrust.org/

The History of the County Palatine and the Duchy of Lancaster: Volume III, Edward Baines (Cornell University Library) https://archive.org/details/cu31924024699286/page/n81/mode/2up

Greg Thorpe is a writer, artist, curator and creative producer. His writing includes fiction, journalism, and reflections on contemporary art. He is Creative Director of Superbia, the year-round programme of arts and culture from Manchester Pride and he also works for Islington Mill, the artist community based in Ordsall, Salford. gregthorpe.eu

"One of the really fun parts of the project was being able to continue Madam Mort's legacy by literally creating new sightings of a grey lady on Madam's Wood Road. There is also a portrait by Fake Trash which I had done because no pictures exist of Madam Mort. The project was an opportunity to bring her story, and the legend that persisted from it. to life."

Cheddar's complex collaboration has produced an image of a spirit forever wandering in its wooded afterlife, sombre but somehow celebratory. It is both a regal and ethereal evocation. Legend has it that during its final incarnation as a hospital, the earth around Peel Hall still held within it the bulbs of Madam Mort's original bluebells. Like Cheddar's exquisite costume, history resides in layers that might sometimes be unearthed with the mere plucking of a flower.

#### MortFamily.net www.mortfamilv.net

# HILARY JACK

Hilary Jack works across media in "research-based projects, site referential artworks, sculptural installations and interventions". Her work often responds to the politics of place, socio-political issues, and the impact of human activities on our planet.

Working with Salford based creative fabricators M3 Industries, Hilary has designed and produced a series of Unsettled Ground began with research into the 'lost' grand wooden bird boxes which borrow their form and shapes halls and estates of Salford, such as Worsley New Hall, the from the 'lost' architecture of the city. Mills, houses, site of the new RHS Garden Bridgewater. This led on to towerblocks and mansions cluster together in a new wider explorations of the changing architecture of the city imagined skyline of buildings past and present. Acting as as a whole, from historic mansions and mills to modern and both sculpture and functional bird boxes, the installation contemporary tower-blocks and terraces. Salford's skyline, is first displayed in the gallery but later will be re-homed often depicted in historic works by LS Lowry, is rapidly outdoors, offering new accommodation for local species. changing. New buildings rise up to accommodate the need Perhaps a common house sparrow will choose to nest in a for more housing, rubbing shoulders with historic buildings grand hall; perhaps rarer species will co-habit in a birdhouse such as Islington Mill, a former textile factory turned artist of multiple occupancy; perhaps new fledglings will take their studios. In Salford Quays, the bustling docklands is replaced first flights from the hollowed out windows of a derelict mill by MediaCityUK - the largest regeneration project in the once again. Hilary hopes her work will encourage people to UK - and the University's Peel Park campus presents new think about the environment, and how we can help habitats for birds and other wildlife in the future. (and increasingly eco-friendly) buildings as it adapts to and predicts the needs of 21st century students.

As the topography rises, falls and changes – so too do the activities, behaviours, populations, and classes of inhabitants. Hilary's research on the city's growth began to focus on the impact on wildlife – in particular on bird species and populations. Cycles of decline in bird life have been noted since the Industrial Revolution, initially due to the huge increase in pollution with the growth of mills and factories. When industry started to decline, wildlife was granted a temporary reprive as plants and animals set up home in derelict and abandoned mills, which inevitably were subsequently demolished. The RSPB has noted a continuing decline in many bird species in recent decades, often due to changes in available habitat, although a glimmer of hope lies in very recent years with more urban homeowners feeding birds in their gardens. How can we



Hilary Jack Unsettled Ground 2021 Mixed media installation keep protecting and encouraging natural habitats, for flora and fauna, amid the quickly growing human demand for urban development?

"The title of my work is Unsettled Ground - I hope it suggests something topographical as well as hierarchical - an uneven playing field, the unfairness of society - for humans and nature/the environment. I'm interested in how cities change, what is saved and what is lost, how buildings fall in and out of fashion and how communities are affected."

Hilary Jack (b. 1968) is a co-founder and director of Paradise Works, an artist-led studio community in Salford. She works across a range of media and research based projects, and has exhibited across the UK and internationally. Her work is held in a number of public and private collections, including the Government Art Collection. She is represented by Division of Labour. hilaryjack.com

### A PARTIAL ORNITHOLOGICAL **TREASURY OF SALFORD**

BY MORAG ROSE

Two little dickie birds sitting on a wall

#### Concrake, lapwing, tree pippet\*

Nora Street, Norway Street, David Street\*\*

Magpies are magical birds deserving of a special salute, well that's what my Auntie used to say. She told me sparrows are lucky, owls are wise and the blackbird is talking to us; we need to listen hard to decode their message. She always fed the birds, said we had a duty of care. She had a special love for rock doves, admiring their plumage and adaptability and getting cross at anyone who dared to call pigeons vermin. If the city was a bird that is what it would be she said. dull, grey, drab at first but the closer you look the more you see the iridescent brilliance, the audacity, the very particular charms of it.

#### Goosey, goosey gander, where shall I wander?

#### Golden oriole, starling, skylark\*

Gold Street, Short Street, Strong Street

Kingfishers have been spotted on the Irwell, amazing when you consider how polluted it was. Still you have to be lucky to glimpse a flash of that brilliant blue. Is their nest on the Salford or Manchester side? Does it matter? Birds don't follow our maps, they have their own power lines. The river has always been a boundary, a division, betwixt and between but so much a part of who we are. The waterways are the lifeblood of our cities, flowing in and out, gifting so much but occasionally turning treacherous to remind us of our place in things.

#### Seven for a secret never to be told

#### House sparrow, mistle thrush, nightingale

Union Street, Woodbine Street, Zebra Street

I saw traffic stop so a family of geese could cross the road safely. The adults are fiercely protective of their young, as anyone encountering a gaggle on the towpath knows. Rumours those powerful wings break bones. The goose that laid the golden egg is a clumsy metaphor for how greed is destroying us but beware anthropomorphism, speciesism and editing avian stories to suit us. I wish the wildlife documentaries of my youth told me over 150 species of birds display LGBT behaviour. There is nothing unnatural about gueer love. Thomas the bisexual goose has a commemorative plaque in Canada - hooray - but we still don't know their real, chosen name.

She brings us good tidings and tells us no lies

#### Ringed plover, herring gull, puffin

Garden Wall Street, Oldfield Road, Sussex Street

The murmuration enchants the skies, a kaleidoscope of starlings swooping and whirling and wheeling and diving together in a hypnotic dance of protection. The mass defends individuals against predators, creates warmth, enables communication across thousands of birds. This is the kind of co-operation which inspired anarchist philosopher Peter Kropotkin to challenge Darwinism and the survival of the fittest because, he said, "Wherever I saw animal life in abundance. I saw mutual aid and mutual support". There is no evidence whatsoever Kropotkin witnessed a murmuration on Chat Moss or anywhere else in Salford, but if his ghost walked through Broughton or Eccles or Weaste he'd find plenty of signs of solidarity, community and resistance.

#### When the pie was opened the birds began to sing

#### Dotterel, wimbrel, curlew

Falcon Street, Greengate Lawns, Pear Street

There were kestrels in Crusader Mill, keeping watch over the Rogue artists (or more than likely barely even focusing on the humans using their land for whatever nonsense humans do). Hilary told me about them whilst we discussed the endless cycle of re/de/regeneration, despairing at how a few get richer whilst communities and flocks alike are displaced whenever, wherever, developers move in. It was ever thus of course; the mills flourished through exploitation and hard labour. It's unclear where the birds flew but the artists rebuilt their nests in Paradise Works. Now they are part of a constellation of creativity across Salford: Islington Mill, The Arts Theatre, Hot Bed Press, The White Hotel and many more. "Progress" isn't a natural process but something shaped by a complex web of politics, policies, histories, cultures and ideologies. Decisions are made about who, what and where is most valued; how do we steer a better, fairer course?

- \* These birds are amongst those on the RSPBs red list meaning they're under severe threat in the UK and urgent conservation action is required https://www.rspb.org.uk/
- \*\* Up to a thousand streets have been demolished in Salford in the past sixty years. These names are recorded in The Salford Street Museum http://www.streetsmuseum.co.uk/Streets Museum/Streetsmuseum.html
- \*\*\* My favourite bird themed lesson is a folk song, authors unknown, resonating still since it was first shared sometime in the 1700s:

The law locks up the man or woman

Who steals the goose from off the common

Morag Rose is an artist, activist, academic and anarchoflanuse. In 2006 she founded Manchester psychogeographical collective the Loiterers Resistance Movement (LRM), and has performed, presented and exhibited widely. She is a parttime lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Liverpool, and Co-Investigator on Walking Publics/ Walking Arts exploring walking, wellbeing and community during Covid-19. Her interests include protecting and promoting public space, spatial justice, creative mischief-making. @thelrm www.thelrm.org

- But leaves the greater villain loose
- Who steals the common from off the goose



#### Lizzie King Belonging (detail) 2021 C-Type print of 42 individual silver gelatin prints

## **LIZZIE KING**

Lizzie King uses analogue and digital printmaking and photography techniques to explore the "narratives of our human centred universe". For this new commission she chose to focus on Peel Park, a place that she knows well and has visited since childhood. Revisiting a familiar place with a new focus, the artist has explored the importance of free and open 'parks for the people' through focussing on two elements: the park bench, and the 'park postcard'.

Demand for public green spaces traces its roots to the Victorian era. Peel Park is widely recognised as one of the first ever public parks, and was also the first to be paid for by public subscription following a seven year campaign supported by the park's namesake Sir Robert Peel. "This park was bought by the people for the enjoyment of the people and is committed to the people for protection" is inscribed at the entrance today. The park opened in 1846 and was free and open for all to use. This was particularly important for local working families who lived in cramped housing, worked in polluted mills, and had previously been largely excluded from privately owned green spaces. Now there was space to meet, rest, relax, court, play, holiday and belong. In following years, the park attracted visitors to a number of features - the bandstand, flowerbed displays, a bowling green, a skittles alley, playgrounds, pavilions, outdoor gymnasiums and sports facilities, and even a lake which became an ice-rink when it froze over in winter - as well as numerous benches to sit and watch the world go by.

Visiting the park and browsing archival images, the park bench became an important symbol of inclusivity, rest, relaxation and reflection in Lizzie's research.

Lizzie's large format print, *Belonging*, turns one of the park benches into the 'sitter' of a 'portrait'. Using an elaborate process of photography, engraving, enlarging and digitally combining 42 images into one composition, the process of making the work itself becomes a meditative and reflective process, capturing a contemplative moment in time.

Her second work, *Rooted*, invites us to take part in this moment of reflection. Comprised of a print and set of postcards featuring views of, and from, the benches, the work brings back the tradition of the 'Peel Park postcard'. Through her archival research, Lizzie uncovered a number of historic postcards dating back to over 100 years ago - the personal inscriptions highlighting the park as a popular holiday destination. With travel limitations in place since 2020, and local green spaces taking on a renewed resonance for many of us, Lizzie invites us to reconnect with our local surroundings, pick up a postcard, and share a written memory of time well spent in the park. After the exhibition, it is intended that the cards will be sent out to local care communities.

#### "Peel Park is a place for the people of Salford to belong, and I hope the artwork can help people think about how they relate to the park."

**Lizzie King** (b.1993) lives and works in Salford. She graduated with a BA (Hons) Visual Arts from the University in 2014 and was one of the first recipients of the University of Salford Art Collection Graduate Scholarship scheme, in partnership with Castlefield Gallery and Islington Mill. She has exhibited in the UK and internationally.

cargocollective.com/lizzieking

## **MUSINGS FROM A PARK BENCH**

BY SARA JASPAN

One of the many 'lessons of the pandemic' has been a reminder of the vital importance of parks and green spaces in cities. During a year when many of us were cooped up indoors, they became essential not only to our physical but mental and emotional wellbeing. A lifeline, as such. An amenity that everyone should have access to. Yet it takes some effort to appreciate just how radical the concept of a public park once was.

By the 19th century, England's unenclosed commons had all but disappeared, while most parklands belonged to private estates and public access was restricted. In northern industrial cities like Salford and Manchester, many people lived in squalid, overcrowded houses directly neighbouring the factories where they worked. The air was filled with soot and smog emitted by towering chimneys of the kind that can be seen encircling Peel Park in early photographs and artworks. Located just outside of Salford Museum and Art Gallery, this was one of the first publicly owned open-access parks in Britain. It opened in 1846 following a major public campaign (backed by Sir Robert Peel) and was paid for entirely by public subscription.

In an age when the lives of working-class people were treated as negligible, here was a space carved out by the people for the people. A place where anyone had a right to be and to access the benefits of physical health and 'mental and moral improvement' (as described by the Peel Park organising committee). With no precedent to draw upon, a competition was held to determine the design. The winner, a pioneering landscape gardener from Leeds named Joshua Major, emphasised the need for a variety of pleasure grounds, attractive plants, a spacious promenade and an appealing layout (still reflected in the park's distinctively-shaped path network). This inaugural park for the people was steeped in grandeur from the outset. It was a destination; a place to be seen. Though it's hard to imagine now, people dressed up to go. They even sent postcards describing their visit.

This love for Peel Park continued throughout the first half of the 20th century, captured in LS Lowry's numerous drawings and paintings featuring great crowds enjoying the space. The high levels of post-industrial and economic decline that afflicted Salford during the post-war years, however, led many residents to move away from the area. As the local connection to the park gradually dwindled and it fell into a state of disrepair, the collective memory of its radical past and the pride associated with this also faded.

With *Rediscovering Salford's* ambition to highlight the city's green spaces and the forgotten or overlooked stories associated with them, artist Lizzie King decided to focus her contribution to the programme on Peel Park; a place she visited often as a child, where she remembers learning to ride a bike, and where the free public gallery nourished her early interest in art. Yet it was Peel Park's significance as one of the first public parks and a space that belongs to the people of Salford – where anyone can go and feel welcome – that drew her to it.

At the core of her interest is the idea of inclusivity; a theme she chose to explore in relation to the park bench. Benches are one of the earliest forms of purpose-built seating and fundamentally designed to seat multiple people at once. As such, they symbolise community, collectivity and civic society. They offer one of the few remaining spaces within modern cities where a person can dwell unhampered by the demand to consume, and which acknowledge our need for rest. They are also what distinguish parks from other types of green space. In King's words, 'The bench is an infrastructure that says, 'you belong here'. It roots the people to the place and gives us a way of connecting to the nature around us. The bench doesn't ask us to do anything, it just asks us to be.'

King is exhibiting two works as part of *You Belong Here*. The first she describes as a 'portrait' of one of the benches in the park. This she created through an elaborate process of first photographing her 'sitter', then digitally engraving the image onto a photographic plate to create a blackand-white negative. She then enlarged and developed the picture in 42 parts that were digitally stitched together and printed to form the final piece, which measures 48 inches square. While the pandemic hopefully continues to ease, King's contribution of *You Belong Here* urges us not to forget the vital role that public parks have, and can, play within people's lives – and to be proud of Salford's part in their creation. These are spaces to be cherished and protected; their value inestimable, yet perfectly emblematised by the humble park bench.

The drawn-out method has a slow and meditative quality that echoes the kind of experiences that parks and especially park benches invite. The etched and slightly fragmentary end-result also counteracts the blunt immediacy of a standard photograph, speaking more to the feeling of being in the park than of looking at it. The image seems to murmur with the gentle sound of wind and shift with the changing rhythms of natural light. Depicted in this way, the bench feels more subject than object; a living connector to the park and an active counterpart to the experiences of those who sit upon it.

King's second contribution - a series of six vintagestyle postcards - responds to the many Victorian and Edwardian-era postcards bearing holiday messages from Peel Park that she found within the museum's archives. She recalls her initial surprise upon encountering these - 'I never thought people would send postcards from Salford!' - and how she liked that people shared their experiences of the park in this way. Of the six, three are based on photographs King took of benches in the park, while the other three show the view from each of the benches. 'There is the 'being' and there is the 'seeing',' King explains. The complete series is presented within the exhibition alongside a stack of free copies for visitors to take into the park and write their own messages on. The combined reflective space of the postcard and the bench becomes an opportunity to slow down and connect with the natural surroundings - something we don't always do in our busy, purpose-driven lives.

King was shielding whilst working on the commission and Peel Park was one of the few places she visited during this time. She recalls how, in the midst of the pandemic, 'Sitting and looking and being in parks became more important to people's wellbeing than ever.' Though she is an ambulatory wheelchair user and does not use benches herself, for her they remain 'highly significant of that connection and the fact that we belong in this space'. Sara Jaspan is a writer and editor based in Manchester.

The above text is an abridged version of a longer essay that was originally published by The Fourdrinier – an online magazine that focuses on artists who work with paper. The full piece can be found at: www.thefourdrinier.com/lizzieking-rediscovering-salford-musings-from-a-park-bench.



Lizzie King Rooted (detail) 2021 Giclèe print



#### Laura Daly The Storm Cone 2021 Augmented reality app

## LAURA DALY

As part of the wider *Rediscovering Salford* project, we also commissioned Laura Daly to make *The Storm Cone* (with music composed by Lucy Pankhurst) for Peel Park.

*The Storm Cone* is an ambitious new, immersive artwork that unearths lost bandstands and their buried past. At its centre is a journey through music and sound that considers our relationship with the past, while charting the fading away of a brass band during the interwar years (1918 - 1939). The title of the work comes from a Rudyard Kipling poem from 1932 which forewarned of World War II. Serving as a warning shot, *The Storm Cone* contemplates the residual impact of the interwar period and the cyclical nature of history in terms of current events, including the economic downturn and the rise of populism, extremism, racism and antisemitism; problems seemingly exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The resulting artwork is imbued with a sense of both loss and celebration underlining human strength and fragility.

Anyone can experience *The Storm Cone* via the free Prairie Brass of Illinois, the BBC Free Thinking Festival app, available on the App Store and Google Play. Using a and the Ageas International Salisbury Arts Festival. smartphone or tablet (and preferably headphones), the lucypankhurst.moonfruit.com first encounter will be with the band performing as a full The Storm Cone was commissioned by University of Salford Art ensemble. You will then be able to move amongst the Collection and Metal in collaboration with Salford Culture and absent musicians, before exploring their journeys in eight Place Partnership on the occasion of Rediscovering Salford. spatial sound works. Or you can visit the project website Generously supported using public funding by the National for an offsite experience and additional information: Lottery through Arts Council England. Also supported by PN thestormcone.com. The Storm Cone is located on the site of the original bandstand in Peel Park and is Daly Ltd and Zinc and Copper Roofing. concurrently presented in Chalkwell Park, Southend.

Laura Daly (b.1969, Bury) is a multi-award-winning artist who creates site specific and site related artworks that range significantly in scale. She exhumes the past and teases out fragments of the forgotten using a variety of media, including sound, drawings, mapping, video and material objects. This archaeology of lost time is rooted in in-depth research, where evidence, trace or suggestion generate a haunted exposition of our surroundings. She has exhibited nationally and internationally and was the winner of The Engine Room International Sound Art competition and New Contemporaries. **lauradaly.com** 

Award winning composer, **Lucy Pankhurst** (b.1981, Liverpool) has received many accolades for her work. She became the first female composer to receive a British Composer Award in the Brass/Wind Band category for her piece 'In Pitch Black' (2011), which was also the first brass band work to win a BCA. Her music is premiered and commissioned the world over including the IWBC Philadelphia/Seraph Brass, the Brass Band Aid Project/ Prairie Brass of Illinois, the BBC Free Thinking Festival and the Ageas International Salisbury Arts Festival. **Iucypankhurst.moonfruit.com** 

The app was developed and the music recorded, performed and sound engineered by students, colleagues and friends of the University of Salford.

## LAURA DALY, THE STORM CONE

BY NICHOLAS BLINCOE

I was trying to describe Laura Daly's new work. The Storm Cone, to a friend and told her that it was a ghost symphony for brass. The music is haunting, as brass music can be haunting - low and soulful and keening. It begins with a ten minute overture which contains all of the work's themes, followed by a twenty minute breakdown of these themes which introduce voices, snatches of songs like "Jerusalem", men and women humming and singing, as well as archival elements, such as fragments of speeches. Taken together, this ghost symphony evokes a working class history of the years between the wars. The 1920s and 1930s were a time of peace, and we think about the excitement of flappers, the age of jazz, of Cubism and Art Deco, Chanel and Surrealism, and above all, perhaps, the birth of Hollywood. But all this excitement feels like a fever dream: something worse was happening, if not out in the open, then somewhere deep beneath the surface.

Daly took her title from a poem by Rudyard Kipling. It was written in 1932 and is full of the presentiment of a war that Kipling is certain is on its way. The poem now seems spookily prescient, but Kipling was not psychic. In 1932, Europe had been at peace for thirteen years, and was to enjoy another seven years before the hell of the Second World War. Why didn't it feel like a peace? A couple of the titles of the individual pieces that make up *The Storm Cone* are drawn from Kipling's poem: Dawn is Very Far, Twixt Blast and Blast. Daly worked with composer Lucy Pankhurst, who developed musical themes for Daly's narrative of this interregnum, from the armistice, the demobilisation of the men, and the return to the factories. The factory and colliery bands, which are such a feature of Britain's industrial cities, reached a peak in these years with 20,000 registered brass bands. *The Storm Cone* goes on to evoke the General Strike, the Hunger marches, leading finally to the new war. When Daly described the piece, she told me it was a description of the edge around an absence. I wondered, is this what Kipling felt? Did he feel the building pressure as the edge of something? Something he knew was coming? A dark future?

Kipling's poem reminds me of W B Yeats's 1920 poem, The Second Coming. "Turning and turning in the widening gyre / The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, / The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned." Like Daly, Yeats is describing an edge, whether the edge of a tide or of a circling flight path. The future lies beyond this limit; the dark unknown.

Is this also what Wittgenstein was trying to say, in the first and the last words of his post-war philosophy book, The Tractatus (1919)? "The world is all that is the case ... whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." Which is to say, science can describe everything, but the idea of "everything" already feels like an edge, beyond which there is an awful silence. Wittgenstein was broken by the First World War. He spent the 1920s and 30s in revolt from his 1919 book, experimenting with new ways to describe the edges of what could be said, and perhaps delimit the space beyond.

Laura Daly's *The Storm Cone* might be a ghost symphony, the demobbed veterans of the war, nor the industrial brass but it is also an experience. The app leads you to a ghost bands and hunger marchers. I am not haunted by their bandstand, where ghost musicians have set up their music ghosts. I am haunted by the same thing that haunted all of stands. As I explored *The Storm Cone* during a Beta test, them: the unearthly feeling of a nothingness just beyond I was stopped by a man taking pieces of scaffolding from the limit. the back of his lorry. The way I was holding my phone made him think I was filming him, perhaps as a health and Nicholas Blincoe is a novelist, filmmaker and historian. safety exposé of his business. I had to show him what I was He wrote an award-winning trilogy of crime books seeing: a spectral image of a bandstand that stood beyond about Manchester, describing the way that the city's his truck. He got it immediately. I continued walking underground clubs and nightlife fed its post-war revival. around and around, lost in time. Perhaps, I thought, it is His most recent book is a history of football in Palestine wrong to call it a ghost symphony. The app is really the and Israel, showing how closely sports and politics are case: I am really seeing a real digital bandstand, as I listen intertwined. Blincoe was born in Rochdale, and lives in to real music. I am not circling the ghosts of Kipling, nor London



Laura Daly *The Storm Cone, Graphic Score (complete work)* 2021 Watercolour on paper

## WIDER PROGRAMME



Anna Ridler *Circadian Bloom (California Poppy)* Work in progress (2021)

### **ANNA RIDLER**

#### Circadian Bloom

Anna works with AI (artificial intelligence) to explore the ways in which we understand, categorise and interpret the world around us. Inspired by the botanist Carl Linnaeus, known as the 'father of modern taxonomy' for his work on naming plants, Anna has developed a new screen-based digital work on his concept of the 'flower clock'. In his research, Linnaeus noticed that certain flowers open and close at different times of day, which hypothetically would allow us to tell the time of day using knowledge of these species. Using complex algorithms and a machine that can keep time to an atomic level, Anna aims to make the 'flower clock' a reality. Through exploring a non-human way of marking time, Anna's work also reflects on the re-connection with the natural world that many of us have experienced during lockdown. The work launches at Salford Museum and Art Gallery, before appearing across the city and internationally.

*Circadian Bloom* is commissioned by University of Salford Art Collection. Anna was one of two artists commissioned to make new work for the Collection following the *Peer to Peer* exhibition, curated by Lindsay Taylor (with Thomas Dukes and Serein Liu) and organised and presented by Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool, and toured to Shanghai Centre for Photography in 2019.

Anna Ridler (b.1985) is an artist and researcher who works with information, data, photography and AI. A core element of her work lies in the creation of 'datasets' through a laborious process of selecting and classifying images and text. By creating her own datasets, Ridler is able to uncover and expose underlying themes and concepts while also inverting the usual process of constructing large databases. Her interests are in drawing, machine learning, data collection, storytelling and technology. annaridler.com

### **LOWRI EVANS**

#### Leaving (a study of Autumn)

I saw frosts thaw, skies change, birds sing.

I saw seasons come and go and I hardly went anywhere at all.

What can we learn from nature? As the leaves fall in autumn 2021, artist Lowri Evans will turn her attention to trees around Salford and explore what it means to let go. Using science and personal stories you can expect cathartic rituals, curious studies and gentle encounters with trees and the people that know them.

*Leaving* is a continuation of *Fragile Handle with Care*, a pre-pandemic project that saw people in Salford invite the artist into their homes, destroy a treasured possession and talk about it; photos, texts and fragments of which were exhibited at The Lowry and will become part of the University of Salford Art Collection. Now, instead of domestic spaces, Lowri will be out in the elements exploring the cycles of life and death and life again.

Lowri Evans (b.1983) studied art at Manchester Metropolitan University and now makes art in Greater Manchester and São Paulo. She says, "I make intimate art projects in unusual places with complete strangers. Art is my way of saying 'Sometimes I feel like this, do you?'" In 2015 she won a Manchester Theatre Award for The Shrine of Everyday Things with Renato Bolelli Rebouças, Rodolfo Amorim and Contact Young Company. She is an associate artist with Eggs Collective and the international producer for Coletiva Ocupação. She also plays in the band Hotpants Romance. www.thelowri.com



Lowri Evans Writing on Leaves 2003

Keep up to date with our wider programme of commissions, talks and activities at:

you-belong-here.salford.ac.uk

## CREDITS

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