



# What Happened, *Exactly?*

## *Festival of Looking // Review*

15-18 Oct 2020

**folkestone**  
**fringe**



Co-funded by the  
Creative Europe Programme  
of the European Union



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Starting to write through lockdown 2.0, I notice that the sun doesn't stick around in my room anymore. The Pilon poses against a dusk sky that looks slightly different to the one weeks before, and groups of starlings push each other to the side for the best bedtime view. As a pigeon feather settled on my windowsill – I put fingers to keyboard, at peace with an ever-changing scene which felt set for me to reflect on the Festival of Looking / third-year Magic Carpets outcomes, in starting to think how to describe it in moments, as a feeling, or an all-enclosing time.

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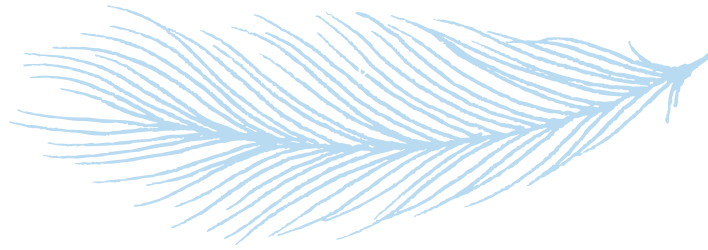
It seemed natural to start from this spot, which came with all sorts of questions visiting at various times – like simply, how did I end up here? Folkestone Fringe, are a leading arts & culture organisation based in Folkestone, Kent, producing events & festivals in and around the Folkestone Triennial. Led by directors Diane & Denice Dever, I have been working with them since 2018 in artist project coordination & communications, alongside a young team also finding their way in the arts. Like many working in the sector, we rose to work – both conceptually & physically – against the tide of original 2020 plans. Those meant for the Folkestone Triennial, and in hosting physical Magic Carpets residencies... to instead initiating projects from ideas which were realised through this change.

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The second iteration of the Festival of Looking, like last year – hosted a programme which acted out the narrative of *now*. Hosted by Urban Room Folkestone - the Tram Road space managed by Diane Dever, Greg Taylor & Christopher Houghton Budd, acts as a place for people to understand, debate & get involved in the past, present & future of where they live, work & play. Produced by the Folkestone Fringe team, the festival adopted an umbrella theme: **What's Happening, *Exactly?*** to be carried through for Fringe's curated strand in the Triennial this year. It has come to pinpoint different directions and landscapes - from Brexit, Trump, the BLM movement, through COVID times – and questioning, where does its focus lay? How does one in fact, set a single landscape for this? And furthermore, what good does *looking* do?

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Yet what I think is important to stress, is that the theme falls to be exactly in tune with where we find ourselves in 2020. It demands to represent the multi-faceted and refuses to not prioritise one scrutiny over another; feeling relevant whenever it's asked, and making sense through a unification of forces



orbiting from across the world. But, how would we bring this into effect here, one may ask? Where do we start? It embodies feelings which many have been experiencing this year politically, socially, environmentally, and civically - by not knowing where to place your agency in a time of momentous change as an individual, a community member, a world citizen – and across a terrain where we've had to develop new relationships with our immediate surroundings within our communities, our environments, and the landscapes we live alongside.

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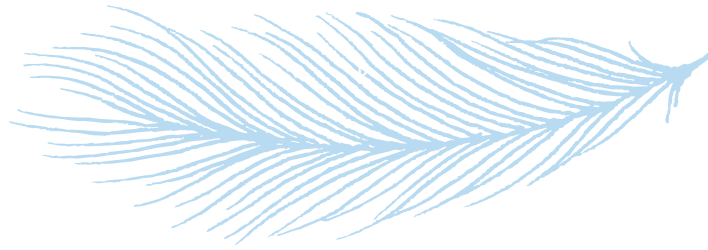
Despite it all, I would say the festival did and still does this in trying to make the BIG, *small*. In trying to bring the world to our town, it brought a sense of comprehension for action, a sense of importance & urgency, in having to think global, when for most, we could only act *local*. Taking this active stance in *looking* seemed like the start in trying to pair these variables in line.

**“We want to take an active stance against our circumstances, locally and globally, and ask: What’s happening, *exactly*?”**

The fest prompted us to look deeper at the state of Folkestone today through a funnelling of world issues & shifts that we're all facing: isolation, the Black Lives Matter movement, environmental & landscape change, an openness and reliance to those around us physically & digitally. We also had to further highlight the intricate networks of those around us who in fact make up our communities, and whom are needed more than ever before. The outcomes came from our Magic Carpets artists & practitioners both locally and remotely, through the development of Fringe's lockdown projects *MySquare* & *Antidiary*, through joining heads, hands & hearts with the awesome programme behind *Black History Month Folkestone*, as well as through taking action for other strands of involvement and opportunity which soothed situations of isolation & feelings towards our individual & collective futures within these times. Largely, the festival laid the groundwork for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year main outcomes of the platform, Magic Carpets; a four-year project led by Kaunas Biennial & funded by Creative Europe. FF this year, worked remotely with Irish artist Mary Conroy, who was nominated by EVA International in Ireland, and local artists Lee Desai, Nico Dunsbee, Craig Gell, Aida Silvestri & Leah Thorn. Folkestone Fringe are a partner within the 15-cultural organisation network, representing the UK within this, from the Union and candidate countries. Magic Carpets are committed to working with emerging artists, curators & practitioners by supporting them to develop new projects together, which are made in response to local situations and with local people through travel exchange. This year, the projects were designed to answer the question “What’s Happening, *Exactly*?” through their own forms of *looking*, whilst further revealing local knowledge, and hidden stories which built up in creating an overriding connection between people and place.

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The combination of influences interweaved together in such a way which felt wholly apt - through a presentation of things which had to be realised & put together quickly, and when travel was limited.



*It wasn't possible for it not be current... it wasn't possible for it not to contain certain elements within its build as a festival in 2020.*

It activated the time from within our own capabilities, from collaborating with others' projects & movements across town, from our developing lockdown projects, and made the best of our current situation through its attempt to building a full picture of state in a microscopic manner. Perhaps this is what made the Fringe team feel something slightly different this time, in curating a programme which *had* to be delivered amid uncertainty, with audience numbers expected to be met through different means, through a less is more strategy, and in a time when the arts & culture sector is heavily under-funded & under-valued, yet has counteractively, proved how essential it is as the whole world has turned to it. It almost felt more important, worthwhile & radical to carry on.

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Now let's re-live some of the programme, and express what you can still get involved in now. Throughout this year, FF have made sure to deliver options – whether through a community engagement lens or if you live elsewhere - to feel part of something, whenever, and from wherever you are. If you have been feeling the strange intensity which can come with Zoom, there were options to get outdoors in COVID-secure ways, chances to get hands-on creatively, and to be part of something bigger with others.

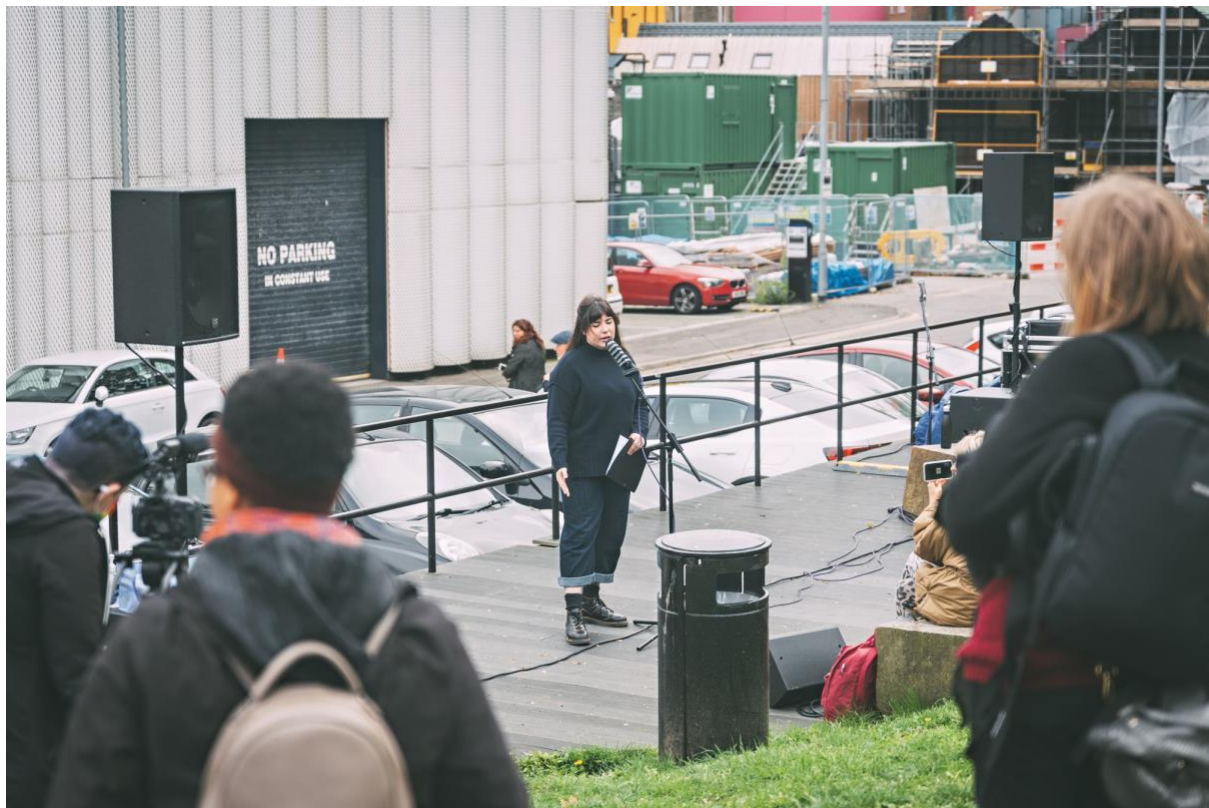
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As projects conceived during lockdown responding to our current situation, changes of plans, and event cancellations - *Antidiary* & *MySquare* came into fruition, and were further developed for the festival. The *Antidiary*, created by FF team member Nico Dunsbee, started as an online blog platform, and invited you to submit a daily diary entry in any form publically – hence the “anti.” The entries could range from one sentence, to a monologue, to a home video – which could be submitted to the forum space to help vent emotion, and which visitors could either read or write towards documenting an archive of our times. With writers' takeovers from *Writelikeagrrrl* founder Kerry Ryan pre-festival, to a festival takeover from *Black History Month Folkestone* poetry & story telling events curator Josie Carter - the *Antidiary* was set to be realised physically for the Festival of Looking. With a writing workshop titled “*Walk Write*”, which took you on a virtual tour of particular spots around Folkestone, to stopping & asking those involved to write from prompts given, and for words to be shared - *Walk Write* allowed one to truly connect with place through a detailed look of our immediate surroundings led with such precision and care. From a remote perspective, it gave room for inspiration to be sparked for festival attendees to perform the exercises outdoors in their own time. Nico was pleased with the turnout, and as other events demonstrated too, the relationship made between those who came, far outweighed the importance placed on the number which has been previously felt, and in a sense, suited the workshop as the experience could be tailored to the participant, and relationships could be reciprocated, giving space for the host to develop her workshop leading skills at a pace she enjoyed. Nico also took over the Performance Plinth, Creative Folkestone's Banksy-inspired initiative, at Payers Park on the Saturday, in which she read from *Antidiary* submissions, both live & live-streamed

on the FF Facebook. The events paid testament to *Antidiary*'s versatile nature by highlighting just its simple existence. In any context, it was met by listening ears and teary eyes. As Nico read 'Race Me'

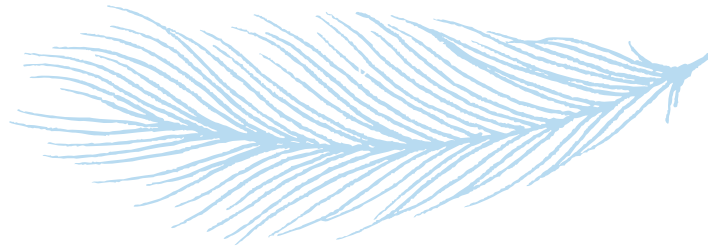
by Josie Carter, a voice was platformed, a writer shone through, yet was similarly listened to... the powerful mechanism that encapsulates what *Antidiary* can achieve from just simply *existing*.

*"as a Black person of mixed heritage, as a queer woman, as a young adult, as a discouraged writer, as a person with mental health struggles..."* Josie Carter



Josh Jordan Photography // Nico Dunsbee at the Performance Plinth, Payers Park



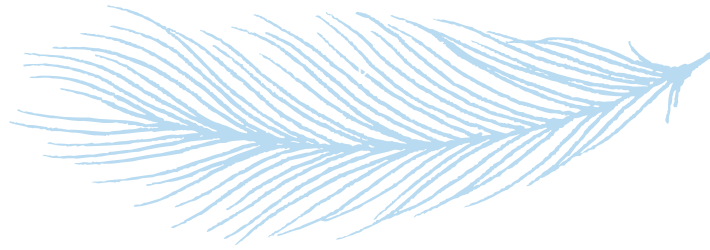


MySquare similarly rose out of lockdown from the brains of Mitchell Bloomfield as a response to conversations FF were having about our own identity, goals & positions considering the ACE Emergency Funding which came with lockdown. As Arts Council had implemented their 2020-2030 strategy which followed the motto “Lets Create” – we asked befitting to wondering what we should do in lockdown – how could you create something accessible for *all*? What could we do to platform all creativity? What was needed during this time?



*Josh Jordan Photography // MySquare Trail*

MySquare simply invites you to use the website/app ‘What 3 Words’ to pick a location of significance to you, and represent the words that are assigned to that location in a creative way. We reach you from either the hashtag you use or through a submission form to document your creation, which is then added to our virtual map that includes all chosen squares. As the map was being populated with submissions from when we launched - it led eventually to the right time to put something on physically. Produced by Hannah Prizeman, on the August Bank Holiday, Folkestone Harbour Arm became the site-host in introducing the platform physically – with particular squares chosen across the arm by us in which local artists responses were installed, as well as the occurrence of two workshops happening at particular sites specialising in clay & paint, which invited anyone passing by to engage with the MySquare process, through which the pieces were documented and collated

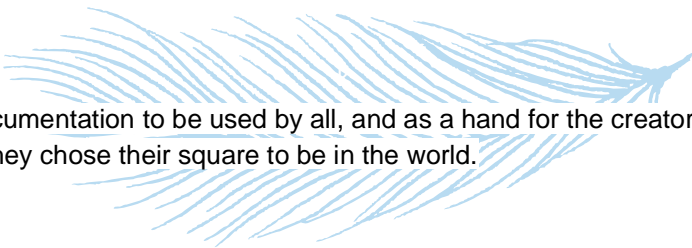


together onto our map. Activity sheets containing instructions were also available to be used at home, or used to guide you if you wished to stay on site. As whispers were heard through the day such as; “think the adults are enjoying it more than the kids”, or, “we should do things like this more often” – people enjoyed the project at different stages throughout the day and for varying reasons, which was driven through their own choice.



*Josh Jordan Photography // MySquare Bank Holiday Day*

Moving forward, for the Festival of Looking, Hannah Prizeman & Mitchell Bloomfield, planned to realise *MySquare* physically once again as winter drew in & perspectives shifted with a suspected second lockdown. As you couldn't meet in a group of more than 6, the aim was to get people engaging with *MySquare* within their own time and with distance. For this, specially designed journals were created giving prompts to respond to, matched with certain squares, in which people could use the specially put together activity pack materials for their work. These were fantastic, and made with such talent. These bags could be picked up through booking, with the choice to follow a specially designed creative trail in which 3mx3m orange squares as response sites could be spotted around town. Geographically aware, visually striking, accessible, fun and suited to any age – the *MySquare* bags were grabbed up quickly. Throughout *MySquare*'s existence, the hashtag #MySquareFolkestone



acted as a tool for documentation to be used by all, and as a hand for the creator to find us & for us to find them, wherever they chose their square to be in the world.

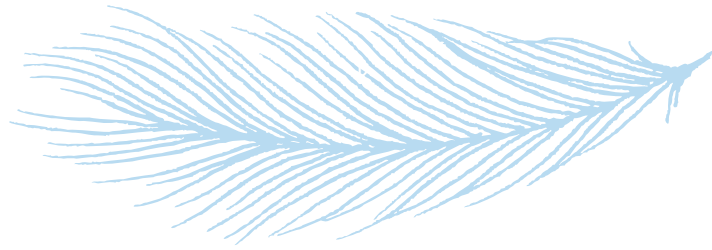
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Both projects made sense for the festival as specifically designed platforms for the time, which gave space to thoroughly platform the local dynamic, and in a sense, for the void of our Magic Carpets residencies in which a travelling artist comes to produce a project here, to be filled. *MySquare & Antidiary* also in a sense acted – and still act - as playing fields for the theme question... as spaces to feel free and expressive under the What's Happening, *Exactly?*, by utilising the outdoors and festival map in a way which opened up new perspectives; growing to become themselves instances of public art, and thus giving an audience the incentive to take part as little or as much as they wish. For this, it feels like we dug deep into Folkestone – setting ourselves up well for what may happen in Magic Carpets Year 4 through trial-and-error, focused study of the environment & space, as well as through what we learnt from change amongst the people here. This year, like *MySquare & Antidiary* are in themselves, feels future-proof. They can happen and exist right now, in the short-term and the long-term, require one to be intuitive, and at the same time... are all round inclusive, simultaneously allowing one to mark their space in the world and knowing others are doing the same. For myself working for these platforms, I would say that the interwoven potential of these projects is possibly the most important quality to them.

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Expanding on this, a project which grounds similar method to the above working pre-festival and across it was, #WhatAreYouMadeOfFolkestone, an initiative led by artist Mary Conroy - who was put forward by our friends at EVA International, in Limerick Ireland, and in particular - by creative producer, Niamh Brown, for our third-year instalment within the Magic Carpets platform. As Mary was unable to travel to Folkestone this year due to the pandemic, she got to know our town through other means. What are you made of, Folkestone? is a project that explores the physical materials that combine to make up the town of Folkestone as it is today. This project asks Folkestone's inhabitants to share an image of a material that they think is meaningful to the town, which have then been collected to become part of a unique visual library; from the natural world - rock, water, trees and plants, to the built environment - Victorian red bricks, medieval stone, contemporary glass and steel, neon, timber, iron. For the Festival of Looking especially, we spread the hashtag in windows with vinyl stickers across town, and gave out postcards which were designed remotely between Mary's expertise & the team. You could pick up a postcard from the festival venues, and send on a part of our town accompanied by your own message - as a gesture within itself to encourage everyone & anyone who came across them to take part. Opening around October, you can *still* take part. The beauty about this project is just this - it's ability to *feel* always open, for anybody to use their eye on how they see Folkestone and to pass knowledge on this way; as well as within the ease which comes with collecting this open-sourced information through simply searching the hashtag. It has the innate trigger to be passed on and adopted across borders, embodying a call for inspiration to start your own #WhatAreYouMadeOf hashtag from wherever you are in the world. It also came as a blessing to lay this foundation in anticipation for Mary's physical visit in 2021, through unexpected and engaging means, giving time to project & practitioner development with getting to know a place through process, and fitting with the festival philosophy - through the simple means of *looking*.





*Josh Jordan Photography // #WhatAreYouMadeOfFolkestone Sticker*

In re-living the festival so far, the projects capture the time through their channelling of what the theme attempts to present – of what can start locally, yet at the same time highlight the inability to not be influenced by world forces – and in their path, unearth the places where strength lies within them through their timeless flexibility in having this global reach. In light of the projects containing an overriding feeling that they were indeed happening at exactly the right time, came a programme in which the festival would not have been the same without - *Black History Month Folkestone*. The programme came and was inspired in honour of Folkestone legend Arike who passed earlier this year. He was the founder of Black History Month Folkestone, a voice who invested many decades of his life raising awareness of the notion that 'Black Men Are Good', and a force who worked tirelessly to highlight the Black presence in Folkestone through his origins projects, BLM and the celebration of Black History Month. The programme *Black History Month Folkestone 2020* was a collaborative piece & collectively put together by a diverse group of people to primarily celebrate Black men in honour of Arike – a group which included our Magic Carpets local line-up this year. The programme saw the Brewery TAP – UCA Project Space transform into a space which could be visited throughout, and



which was impossible to not take a glance at on your walk along Tontine Street... as outside the gallery stood eye-height frames containing portraits of a selection of local men by photographer

whose work challenges the status quo of stigma, prejudice, and social injustice/inequality by highlighting issues of migration race, class, identity, and health - Aida Silvestri.



Josh Jordan Photography // "I AM Fully Human"

*Ethereal, omnipresent, direct, and striking...*

As an action of re-framing towards the stereotypical images of Black men which have been obscured for centuries, these portraits stood as fashion shoots - iconic in valour - and which froze to reclaim the space & time for the eye of the beholder – in capturing these men as monuments, protest placards, and artworks, they marked a historical statement arising out of unrepresented achievements and real experience against the distorted narratives produced by the media, racial & class inequalities, and systematic discrimination. These portraits presented the men being exactly

themselves in a Warhol-like image play as they arose from saturation, captured in the moment of their eyes meeting the street. Around the edge, the portraits were accompanied by the voices of Diane Mae Bundy, Rachel Lilly, Jes Phillips, Leah Thorn and Sjoukje Gummels; women who are in committed relationships with Black men of African heritage. As a collaborative soundscape reflecting on themes of White privilege, it felt right to have an audio which paired with the portraits in a way of

adding a personal spoken narrative – to bring, take up & give space to topic exposure like that of “privacy, shame and defensiveness, being mothers of Black sons, [and] the impact of racism on relationships” into the sentimental – highlighting to the audience the work that still needs to be done by White women, and ourselves, both in the public & private. This soundscape was met with another film in the gallery of a pre-recorded conversation titled ‘Black Men Are...’, hosted by Magic Carpets practitioner & Dr.Legumes co-founder Lee Desai, which explored experiences of the Black male in the United Kingdom today. By maintaining a focus on “Assimilation to western European lifestyle and its influence on experiences / lifestyles in modern Britain” and the “Appropriation of Black culture to create narratives around Black masculinity” - the conversation between a group of Black men living in Folkestone set to gain an understanding of how the identity of the Black male has been moulded by predetermined roles and stereotypes, placed on them by a broader society. Based on anecdotal experiences of these men within our community of Folkestone, the conversation was expanded through a Q&A session which took place on Saturday evening via Zoom, creating an environment in which together thought was set. It felt tangible, undeniably real, and again, future-proofing through its very own act of *looking*, reclaiming time by looking at what exists and further, what can be done for change.

*“Do we as a society continue to uphold these stereotypes or do we move forward by giving Black men the space to spearhead their own narrative?”*



Other events, which all worked impeccably through the groups online hosting, such as Leah Thorn's - local Magic Carpets practitioner, a:dress founder & Arike's partner in crime - "White Noise"; a writing workshop for White women which through writing / flow activities explored methods of dismantling privilege in facets of White identity, as well as other story-telling / poetry events, film screenings, food & music events, art, and exploration on subjects such as motherhood, ally-ship & family, also featured in the programme. The content was celebratory, with a paired vision to end racism. Chiming to the death of George Floyd which sparked the Black Lives Matter protests, this collaboration which united the artists involved as well as the bringing different audiences together who met, felt timely and integral by positioning action in Folkestone through a global lens, and through this, highlighting what work still needs to be done here, albeit the wonderful multi-cultural town of mixed heritages it is becoming to be. In having both a blend of attended events, and instances which made statements through their public-ness, worked to create a real sense of felt movement happening in the town. Over that weekend, it felt Folkestone came alive with a sense of connecting people with place, as the welcoming party for the refugees staying at the Folkestone Barracks took place with welcome signs & open arms from 200+ people including some of our team. The Festival unified the different experiences of time through its collaborations, production and reach to solidify, bring to light, and equalise the quest we're all on here, through which the What's Happening, *Exactly?* made real.

*We're all on journey's. They're just different from one another in being unique findings towards where our individual identity can flourish and rest. And what better way to do that than by calling somewhere your home. And in 2020 - it is home to us all.*





Refugee Welcome Party // Sat 15 Oct // cred. [Folkestone & Hythe Against Racism](#). Image: Carly Jeffrey



*Josh Jordan Photography // Festival of Looking Launch Night*

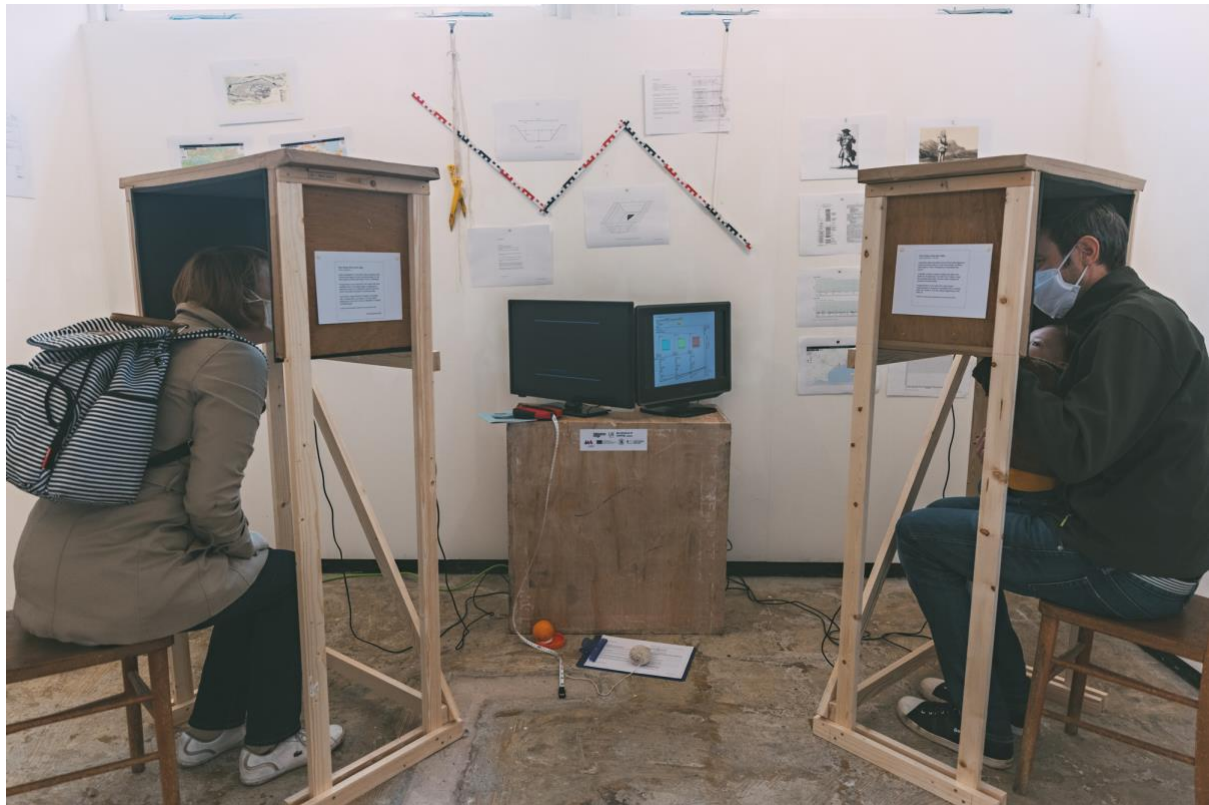
The launch of the festival was set at the Folkestone Harbour Arm Station as dusk turned to dark, and saw an incredible turnout, with plenty of room to social distance, and a welcome drink of warm cider served to attendees. The LED screen we used for the event illuminated a pink glow amongst the renovated station railway, blanketed with the smell of cinnamon, as the rain could be heard on the rooftops and the Grand Burstin poked out of the top of the curve. It was quite a sight. The introductory speeches commenced from Diane Dever & FF Magic Carpets curator Georgie Scott in introducing the festival, which led onto a reading from his work - *Rare Albion, Too - The Story of Folkstown* by local economic historian Christopher Houghton Budd, in which he looked like quite the story-teller amongst the ambience. The work offered newly discovered details of “Folkestone's place in the universe”, “combined into an allegorical tale written in Folkestone during lockdown”, to an audience who were fixated by this clever piece, and in some way comforted in knowing that dreams and future-thinking still exist when we've been left to be more solitude with our minds. The tale set the scene for the film screening to follow – Fiona Macdonald's (Feral Practice) - *Sum Tyms Bytin Sum Tyms Bit*. Through our current horizon of Climate crisis, global disease vectors, species extinction, and postcolonial extraction, *Sum Tyms Bytin Sum Tyms Bit* landed especially for our Festival of Looking programme; drawing resonance between themes of power, fragility and exploitation in Kent's landscapes through a reworking of Russell Hoban's cult 1980 novel *Riddley Walker* in a post-apocalyptic world setting. For our live audience, the film demanded a silence, as the piece transitioned across depictions of a

dystopia set across our very own surroundings... forcing us all to look inward at our own realities as mortal, responsible animals of the land. The night allowed those who came to be transported to some place, time & perspective different and otherworldly.

*Yet, it was a night which chimed in tune with our exact time & place, propelling us all to attempt to envision what our futures hold and what could be done for what for many of us, keeps us sane, purposeful, alive.*

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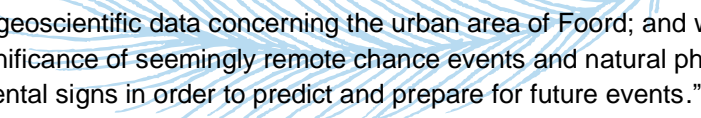
Issued to both a live audience and a live-streamed audience - it was disappointing that we experienced some technical difficulties with this due to the torrential rain. Perhaps as a future note, this additionally highlights how we as a team could more thoroughly decipher what events would be best live-streamed and best not as well as to make sure we have alternative plans for technical faults going forward, in order to ensure a similar experience is felt for those at home – which has grown to be integral in delivery this year.



*Josh Jordan Photography // Pent Happenings*

Another environmental strand within the festival was Craig Gell's "*Pent Happenings*" which was open in the Urban Room across the Festival, as well as online. Gell devised a series of audio-visual works





which had reacted to geoscientific data concerning the urban area of Foord; and within this, “investigat[ed] the significance of seemingly remote chance events and natural phenomena, and how we interpret the elemental signs in order to predict and prepare for future events.” The work explored “alternative methods of accessing nature and, through interpretation of live and historic data into sound and image, considered how we might facilitate this connection in the digital age” - inviting passers-by to engage with the exhibition in a COVID-secure fashion with individual viewing pods. Another opportunity which Craig hosted was titled “Flow Rate” – in which 5 people were invited to take part in a participant-led field study task, to gather data measuring the flow rate of water in the Pent stream. An event score (which can also be downloaded online) contains instructions for performing the task using the traditional ‘float method’, for the data to then be digitised and programmed to create a sonic representation of the findings which we listened to at our closing event. Hot Salvation Records main man George Clift & his two young sons were the takers. Again, although two tickets were dropped before the event – it worked again in the favour of creating a tailored experience of what the whole purpose of a workshop should, I argue, emit – the chance for people to closely come together, to learn from one another, for memorable experiences to be produced, and in this special case, be something which appeals to various aged people. The findings from “*Pent Happenings*” was presented at our closing event at East Yard, Folkestone Harbour Arm, on the Sunday. Again, to be set up with equipment which would secure the live stream to happen in offering the same experience for those people at home would have been preferred despite the sound quality being good – yet, the content, delivery, findings, setting and overall experience – made the event to be the perfect close to the festival. Craig talked about the process with diagrams & representations, played the sonic representation found with George & his sons watching in the crowd, which for me, highlighted the rewarding cyclical experience which had been generated throughout the festival itself, found via the learning, to the doing, to the outcome.



*Josh Jordan Photography // Closing Event*

Craig is committed to channelling his work through what lives instinctively around us. It feels like he could go anywhere, and invent a mechanism for the people that live there to look differently at what is around them.

### *He gets back to basics by composing it...*

The culmination of his work together added a focus to our programme and response to the What's Happening, *Exactly?* by taking active consideration to our waterways, a process which follows the intricacy of our environment by making it digestible, presenting what civilisation has been built from, and through this, allowing you to know what needs to be cherished. Throughout the festivals we have put on, Craig has always played a big part within our programmes – with positive feedback from major Arts Council associates – he has similarly told us how much his portfolio has developed as an individual aided from this representation over time.



Josh Jordan Photography // Urban Archive: Folkestone

Another artist who has worked with us across a development of their own projects is Daniel Tollady, who's work could be visited in Customs House at the Harbour Arm across the weekend. *Urban Archive: Folkestone* saw a continuation of what was started last year for the first festival iteration, with a purpose of celebrating and unearthing the intricacies of our communities – with emphasis on the plural. In doing this, the archive attempts to unite as many people as possible through the sharing of stories and unique souvenirs specific to the town of Folkestone, including pieces of ballast from the Harbour branch line railway tracks. To take part, all you needed to do was write a memory for the archive, bring along a souvenir & have your polaroid taken, which was exchanged for your own ballast piece & space in the archive.

*“The outcome of this analytical cross-section representative of the town and its inhabitants, sees a database of narratives that form a bridge of familiarity between the different people that form the town of Folkestone” – all with different profiles, yet part of something together.*





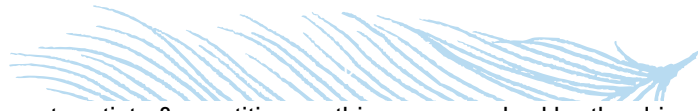
With many visitors throughout the weekend, some from following the programme map and others who came by it randomly – it was a point of curiosity and intrigue for all. Our young festival assistant, George Everett Button, was especially great at engaging with visitors, feeding back to us about how accessible the project felt for them as well as for himself. Daniel's work, from being a travelling artist to Prague in our Magic Carpets Year 1 response, to programme curator with Georgie last year – stands out in the sense of encapsulating the movements of people in times when it feels most telling... when the centre of Prague was noticeably no longer inhabited due to the tide of tourism, to now, when community is so relied upon, yet feels so far off. It brings to light things we know exist – but don't take the time to truly look at – by his way of pausing history through exchanges.

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And lastly, as Fringe are a partner year on year within LADA DIY – Live Art Development Agency's DIY platform, the usual plans of a live artist / practitioner coming to Folkestone to carry out a workshop process which we assist with the hosting and marketing of – had to shift, but persisted amongst it all. FF created a strong relationship with Ben Walters, aka. Dr Duckie throughout this year. Ben, who claims to be “not really an artist but knows a lot of them”, specialises in the study of queer, cabaret & moving image as a writer, producer, programmer & critic. Ben's doctoral research with Duckie framed the queer collective's community projects with 'homemade mutant hope machines' - pragmatic grassroots projects that help marginalised people make better worlds on their own terms. In collaborating with us, Walters hosted a 6-week online workshop process, in which 6 local individuals in a group setting developed their own idea of what their hope machine may be, and what this thinking might do for Folkestone. The event took place via Facebook live stream / Zoom, and between Diane Dever and himself – which for this particular event, worked well as a remote conversation, as well as for engagement purposes being it a free source of content still to this day – a technical mechanism in which team member Dan Johannsen developed to learn for the delivery of our online events. The talk felt intimate, and thoroughly summarised the process across the development from the conceptual to the practical, as well as from what was found about what could turn out to be physical hope-projects for Folkestone – from a graffiti project, to the building of a queer safe space. Again, aligning another fringed project into the Festival programme, alongside other Magic Carpets outcomes – made the What's Happening, *Exactly?* highlight another process in trying to make sense of it all... the process of hope...and what it represents during these times. If one puts the time into it, the tangibility of the future becomes somewhat softer and closer which happened not only for these individuals, but could for you too.

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I would note here that Ben's work feels like the natural juncture to pause, reflect & think as to what has been said in this writing so far, and where we go from here. In response to the What's Happening, *Exactly?* the presentation of the Magic Carpets project outcomes in partnership with what else was happening across the town, as well as what felt important – it is the *exactly?* which directed the programme's content. With thanks to Georgie Scott our curator for putting together the programme, it has brought me to write in this moment, in only being able to focus on the *now*... something which felt and still feels so profound. As a team, pushed by an overriding sense of duty to deliver, we understood the capacities in which we were working in - which in fact allowed us to widen the local



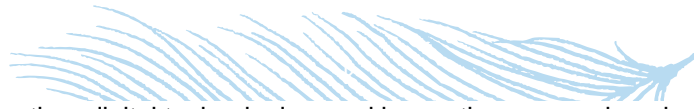
scope of the Magic Carpets artists & practitioners this year - pushed by the drive of everybody getting up to do *their bit*, and do what they *could*. And within this, despite the sense of urgency, timeliness & potential changeability which came with the project outcomes, the very fact of using this year to strip the calendar back, experiment, work with less quantity, learn new skills which wouldn't have taken priority during what this year would have originally set for us to produce – allowed the outcomes to feel not *final*. *Something which 2020, I will say, fundamentally requires*. In its multi-faceted being, every part of this programme happened in order to be future proof, carried, prompt inspiration, and contain the potential to be realised further under other circumstances. The projects had to highlight their individual processes in order to happen – whether within the festival progression itself, from something developed over time & then presented, from their inspiration from world movements this year, or whether they were left open-ended for the future to decide their destiny. I'd like to include a quote from Ben Walters here, which was extracted when planning his talk, and which now, indirectly sums this way of working up;

*“The process is the goal. We need to find new ways to meet new worlds, so the approach is to practice the way rather than fetishise arrival at a fixed destination. It's not about making products but exploring how we make – with what values, to what ends? And observing what emerges without racing to determine what kind of exchange commodity it can be shaped into. The way we do the thing is the thing” ... Ben Walters*

Perhaps then it was not a time, moment or feeling as I first questioned – but an ever-developing work giving flesh to instances of all three. Instead of feeling festival fatigue – we looked at what we had in front of us, played with how to deliver it, and used the festival as a chance to develop what we had been producing within these times. This lifted a new, revised light on what work still needs to be done, what action needs to be taken, and how we can develop this when the right time comes around. And within such curation, there was room for experimentation with audience engagement, as well as largely, a space for wider inclusivity with what else had to be addressed within the programme. Furthermore, despite not being able to travel to physically meet / reunite with our friends across Europe, we met the Magic Carpets ethos in a new way. This third-year instalment in a sense deepened first and foremost the relationship before delivery with our selected artist – Mary Conroy; through more detailed, considered time, and through using how the circumstances stood at this time to work together through a mutual understanding towards what could be achieved co-creatively. It felt remotely strong. Upon her arrival next year, which will also see the Folkestone Triennial take off and the festival findings & content re-produced, re-realised and developed, Conroy can now use this work as a focused tool which revealed knowledge & stories, alongside an allowance for the imagination to gear up for the times which lay ahead of us.

...

As we continue to evaluate this year in anticipation for 2021 & other funding bids, which will be led by team member Greg Taylor, we must reflect on ourselves too. The work done has similarly deepened personal growth within the team, and worked to develop our skills across new uses of



information, communication, digital technologies, and innovative approaches, individually and as part of a team – which gave approachable room to know what areas are needed to be improved upon. It also made us learn more about our own sense of place, and what it means to live in Folkestone right now; a beautiful and hard place, full of possibility – but tied between progressiveness, and divisions that persist between young and old, if you're 'from' here or not, when you moved here and made yourself known, or if you've left & come back etc.

### *“an art school with a border force” – Ben Walters*

But the work produced this year through its very existence made sure to start on the connective tissue between these divisions, by platforming what's happening around us right now through a global push and local action under a unifying force, a call to action, and a starting point to be carried into the future under the What's Happening, *Exactly?* ... And as another pigeon feather returns to my window-sill as a wishful thought, it feels like the start of what's to come for the world represented in Folkestone.

...

We need more time to look. We need more action, appreciation, time, experimentation, fair visibility, a care for the intricacies & networks which make up our communities, a rule of diversity, a wonder & awe, yet sense of urgency felt for our environment. We need to continue with an awareness to what would help those in dark places rise out of them. We need to love, and be loved. We need to feel family, friendship, ally-ship, solidarity - in whatever form that may be for you. We need to have the right to generate hope for ourselves. And we need to make our town always feel like home for those that find, choose, or travel here to us... perhaps the most valuable of them all.

**... By Olivia Franklin | Communications & Artist Project Coordinator**

**Edited by Hannah Prizeman & Georgie Scott**

**For more information:** <https://folkestonefringe.com/> or <https://urbanroomfolkestone.net/>

***This project, hosted by Folkestone Fringe, is part of the “Magic Carpets” Platform co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union. This project has generously been supported by Arts Council England.***  
**Josh Jordan Photography Website:** <https://www.joshjordanphotography.co.uk/intro>

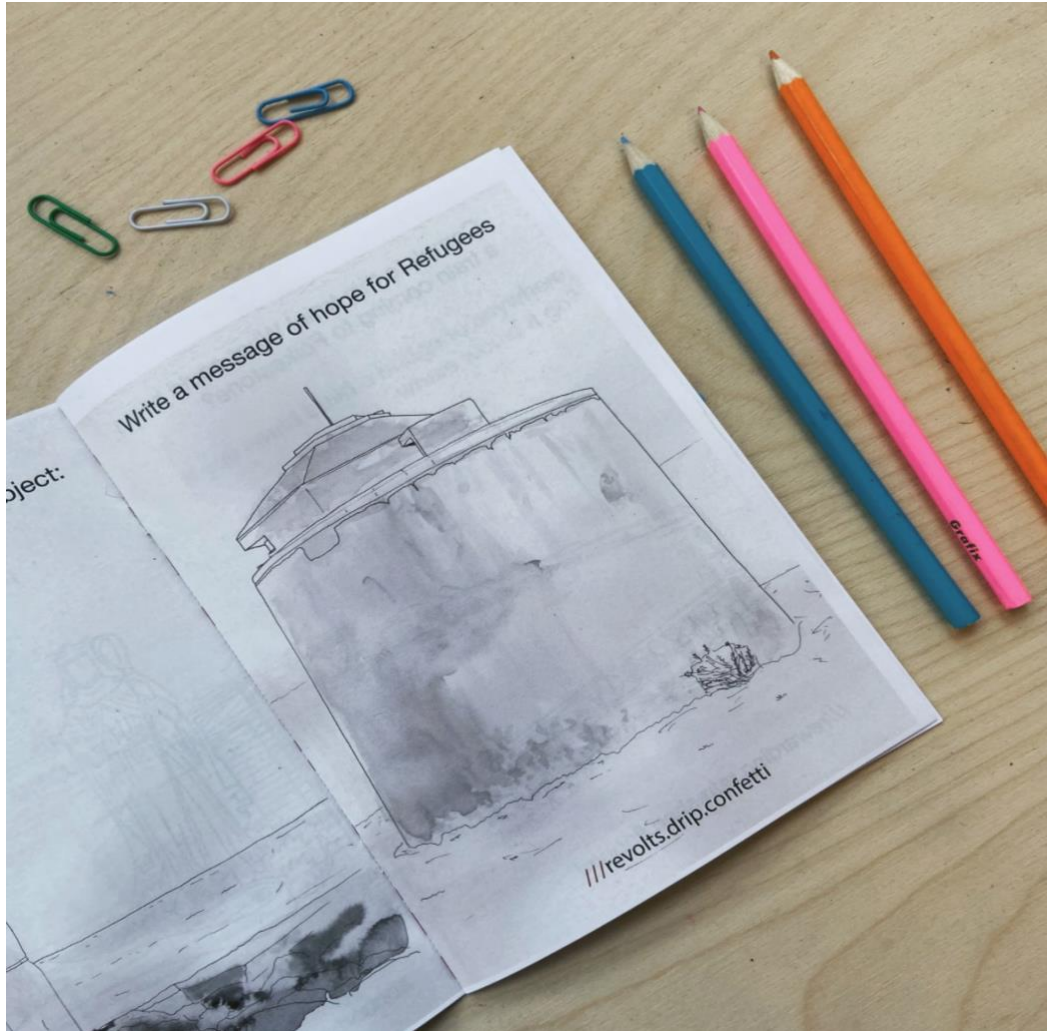
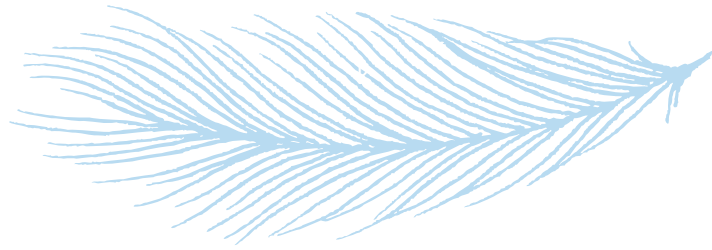
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Creative Europe Programme  
of the European Union







*Hannah Prizeman // MySquare Journal*