

HOME ANNUAL REVIEW 2020/21

AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR



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If you would like to make a donation, you can do so via our website or by texting HOMEMCR to 70085.

HOME ANNUAL REVIEW WELCOME

It's a cliché to say this has been an unprecedented year – but it's also true. At the end of 2019/20, HOME was enjoying its most successful year ever. We had nearly 900,000 visits, around 7,000 events taking place and over 20,000 people engaged from our communities.

On 17 March 2020, when we closed our doors ahead of the first national lockdown, that all came to a sudden halt. It was the biggest shock we've experienced, and I don't think anyone would have blamed us for hunkering down for the duration. But that's not the approach we took.

Instead, we doubled down on our commitment to artists, to audiences, to freelancers and to the cultural ecology of our wonderful city of Manchester. We continued to commission new

work, we switched events from live to livestream, took our engagement programme online and we reached out to our partners to see what we could do together to support those who needed us. We changed our commissioning processes to make sure we took into account the time and effort freelancers put into pitching to us, and with the help of everyone who donated to our Response Fund and the Empty Seats campaign we managed to keep investing in programming and artists.

We also took time to reflect on the diversity within our organisation, inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement. We had a lot of important and challenging conversations internally, and committed to being anti-racist and pro-equality through the way we work and the work we make and present.

We even managed to have some amazing moments in the building for the few weeks we were open. It was amazing to experience the ambitious, exciting live programming, and the number of sold out screenings and performances showed just how much people wanted to get back and experience culture in person.

This annual review contains just some of the highlights of a very unusual year – there's so much to be proud of that it was impossible to fit it all in. I'd like to say thank you to every colleague, artist, contractor, audience member, supporter and friend who has made it possible. We couldn't have done it without you.

Dave Moutrey
Director and CEO

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HOMEMAKERS

A NEW TAKE ON ONLINE THEATRE

HOME's series of new lockdown commissions, *Homemakers*, challenges and expands the idea of what online theatre can be, with artists creating films, games, creative prompts and more.

When the country locked down in March 2020, performing arts venues were amongst the first to close their doors. Across the cultural sector, there was an immediate recognition that there were tough times ahead for both venues and artists.

Very quickly, HOME's team realised that to support artists we needed to find a way to commission them to create new work despite the lockdown. And furthermore, we saw an artistic opportunity. Could we use the pandemic and our collective experience of 'locking down' as a creative prompt to redefine the concept of live art, producing works that have a lasting, digital legacy?

The initial release of five fully-funded *Homemakers* commissions for artists to create new works at home, for audiences at home became available to the public in early May, just eight weeks after the lockdown. Works ranged from video performances and interactive games, to handwritten fantasy scenarios and silent gothic horrors, all to be enjoyed and interacted with from home. The series has been extended even further with plans for new works to be released into Summer 2021, and there are now over 30 commissions from artists creating work across the UK and internationally.

Some artists featured in the series are HOME regulars, such as Javaad Alipoor, Bryony Kimmings and Hot Brown Honey, are HOME regulars, while by working with commissioning partners across the country – including Music Theatre Ways and London Sinfonietta, Cambridge Junction, and Chinese Arts Now among others – new artists were brought to a HOME audience.

For some artists, *Homemakers* provided a chance to experiment with new

mediums. Ad Infitum created a triptych of video shorts titled *A Small Gathering*, having never previously worked with film. Using mobile phones, home cameras and torches, the end result was a collection of darkly comic, twisted tales of loneliness that perfectly captured the anxieties of the nation in Spring 2020.

Ad Infitum's Nir Paldi said: "*Homemakers* was such a liberating, quick and inspiring response to the lockdown. It was like a ray of creative light, a blissful break from the horrid work of cancellation and unproducing. It was our first go ever at making a film and taught us so much. There was something about seizing that moment in time that just made you take the leap and get on with doing something you have never done before. The support we received from HOME was incredible, compassionate and generous. The experience changed us: film and digital work - something we had little experience with pre-pandemic - is an exciting new area for Ad Infitum that will definitely feature in our work in the future."

Naomi Sumner Chan, who created the blog series *Wait I'm From Wuhan*, had never worked digitally before, and said: "I wasn't sure what to expect in terms of response. I was worried people wouldn't relate to a fictional character or other adoptees would be annoyed that their stories and experiences were being told by a person who did not really exist. While the first few days were quiet, soon people started to talk back to Jasmine and I saw that her story did resonate and have relevance to people from all over the world."

Audiences were encouraged to actively participate with a number of the

commissions, including Chris Thorpe and Yusra Warsama's game, *Tell Me*. Designed to be played by two or more friends, *Tell Me* explored personal narrative, truth and fictions through a series of prompts. Players chose from a list of questions, then answered on behalf of the person they were playing with, leading to unusual and surprising conversations.

Two commissions, Plaster Cast Theatre's *Homelands* and METIS' *Love Letters to a Liveable Future*, used the postal service to interact with audiences in an analogue way, while Seriol Davies and Matthew Blake's *Actualquest* took the form of a "choose your own adventure game" and David Ellington used the short film medium to his advantage with the poignant and political BSL poem *Liberty*.

Many of the works engaged with the experience of lockdown, from Bryony Kimmings' *I'm falling in love with you and it's making me do stupid things*, a sharply accurate portrayal of the monotony of the first UK lockdown, and reaching out to exes online in an alcohol fuelled fug of loneliness, to Ugly Bucket's *ABC (Anything But Covid)* which questions how far we'll go to oblige the pressures of staying productive in lockdown.

The Guardian said of the series that the works "play with what it means to make theatre remotely, embracing the specificities of online performance. Messing with the usual temporality of theatre, there are pieces that are fleeting... and those that gradually accumulate."

homemcr.org/homemakers

Clockwise from main image: Ugly Bucket's *ABC (Anything But Covid)*, Hot Brown Honey's *Don't Touch My Hair*, Bryony Kimmings' *I'm falling in love with you *and it's making me do stupid things* and David Ellington's *Liberty*.

One of the most ambitious *Homemakers* works was James Monaghan's *Let's Spend the Night Together*, an online durational performance running from sunset to sunrise last June. Here the artist talks about how working online challenged him to think about theatre differently.

"Online theatre is not new - think Blast Theory's *Kidnapped* (1998) and *I'd Hide You* (2012) or Gob Squad's *Room Service* (2003/2020). The digital is simply another space in which to perform and in which we do 'perform' through everyday online interactions, just like how we 'perform' in supermarkets, with friends, at weddings or funerals.

"The bonus of online theatre-making is that it challenges us to approach things differently; to dream up new ways of devising that are led by the medium itself, rather than just trying to do what you would do in the theatre - but online. That seems such a waste to me because there's so much potential for exciting discoveries. You could create a long list of the challenges or make the same list again as opportunities. It just depends on how you approach it.

"*Let's Spend The Night Together* was very much born out of its time. The form was shaped by a desire to bring people together in the only way we could (online) to imagine a future at a time when that felt impossible, and to do this together, from the confines of the performers' own homes, using the very real limitations and restrictions to inspire the content.

"To me, the crucial part of online theatre is to keep live, keep it risky and lean into the medium with all its opportunities."





LIVE TO LIVESTREAM

In November 2020, entertainment venues across the UK were forced to close for a second time, in order to combat a rise in the number of Coronavirus cases. For HOME, this meant a quick pivot from performing to socially distanced audiences in the building, to a live stream from Theatre 1 for audiences at home.

Live shows scheduled for the Winter season included the World Premiere of David Hoyle's *A Grand Auction of My Life* and Sh!t Theatre's *Sh!t Actually*.

Fortunately, our technical team were well equipped to deliver a livestreamed offer at short notice, having piloted it on a number of shows over the last few years, including *Gutted* in 2017 and *Swim* in 2019. Developing a live stream offer has always been a long term aim, and the technical team had already done a number of 'as-live' recordings from Theatre 2, including *Future Bodies* in 2018. This was to be shown to

audiences at a later date, and also to be used for archive and training purposes for streaming set-up.

The enforced closure of HOME in March 2020 gave Head of Lighting, Sound and Video, Andy Smith, valuable time to learn more about streaming platforms, buy the kit and equip the organisation for the likely switch to a fully digital programme.

By using remote PTZ cameras, filming could be done at a safe distance in a separate room. The cameras could be operated by a single person and streamed in HD, ensuring that the quality of the filming matched the quality of the work.

Although our artists had started to plan for the shift to livestreamed digital performances, online audience interaction was uncharted territory, which led to innovative and playful outcomes.

David Hoyle's *A Grand Auction of My Life* was based around audiences participating in a live, real-life auction in the performance space. When it became clear that was no longer possible, David and his team proposed using eBay to run a live auction during the show. Audience members could bid on specially curated items, such as a

hand peeled potato or a jam jar of dust. Combining the world's biggest auction site with David's anarchic performance style made for an evening of spontaneity and cutting social commentary.

Many of the moments in Sh!t Theatre's original production of *Sh!t Actually* relied completely on audience participation. As a live audience experience couldn't be replicated, a digital alternative was required to perform important plot functions and generate a sense of community.

WhatsApp proved to be the perfect way to communicate with remote audiences and drive the action forward. In practical terms, it also meant technical issues could be instantly shared, without the need for social media or emails.

Collaboration was at the heart of the success of using WhatsApp, and by working closely with the production team on Javaad Alipoor's *The Believers are But Brothers*, which was the first show in November to switch to livestream, we were able to better understand how to use social media to create a sense of togetherness. Audience feedback was positive, and the addition of the 'make your own goody bag' element allowed further interaction from home.



FUTURE

FROM GALLERY EXHIBITION TO VIRTUAL REALITY

Initially due to open as a physical exhibition in August 2020, *Last Place on Earth* became a mesmerising virtual reality piece, created by HOME's Future 20 Collective in collaboration with Studio Morison.

The Future 20 Collective are a group of ten artists aged 18 to 25 who started to work with HOME in 2019, on a 12 month, cross-art-form training programme. Future 20 specialise in a range of disciplines including filmmaking, poetry, spoken word, photography, visual art, music, theatre and glassmaking.

Taking as its starting point a future eco-catastrophe, *Last Place on Earth* explores what the planet could look like when it is reborn. Inspired by the current climate crisis, Future 20 artist Maisie Pritchard commented: "The whole world is collectively experiencing impacts of climate change and we are threatened by

an increase in choking cities, overheating climates, flooded communities and extreme poverty. If we don't act now, what will happen to our planet? Does *Last Place on Earth* give insight to an uncertain future?"

When the world came to a standstill in Spring 2020, the underlying themes of the work felt more relevant than ever. Working with Studio Morison, Future 20 responded to the coronavirus outbreak by splicing together film and virtual reality to create a new, digital experience where they were no longer constrained by the size and scale of a physical exhibition space.

Digitally recreating the HOME building and Tony Wilson Place, the artists took audiences on a journey through different realms that echoed the five classical elements - Black Light (Light), Bleak Sea (Water), Surface Cloud (Air), Soft Stone (Earth) and Nexus Valley (Aether) - each with its own message and a specially curated soundtrack.

Future 20 produced an alternative place for audiences to reconnect with nature, through the virtual reality lens. A space for people to think carefully about who they are, the impacts of their behaviours and attitudes towards our planet and what actions we must take to create real positive change.

The process of moving from a physical exhibition to the digital realm was guided by artist Ivan Morison, founder of Studio Morison. Ivan said: "*Last Place On Earth* evolved around the central question within the collective: As artists and creatives of all types, how best do we communicate the urgent issues of our time - the environment emergency and the collapse of societal norms and civic responsibility - and through our work how do we bring about meaningful change?"

The ten featured Future 20 artists are Khizar Ali, Evie Appleson, Elena Brearley, James Desser, Saf Elsenossi, Jahday Ford, Sally Hirst, Connor Milligan, Maisie Pritchard and Melissa Sorrell.

homemcr.org/LPOE



While early Future 20 R&D sessions took place at HOME, the works themselves were transformed into a virtual reality space following the lockdown.

OUR PLAGUE YEAR AND SLOW DIGITAL

A weekly comic series set in a fictionalised version of Eyam brings the art of waiting back to digital experiences.



It can often feel like the digital world is an overwhelmingly fast-moving place, but when it came to commissioning new artwork in lockdown, HOME's Curator Bren O'Callaghan had a markedly different response.

As a self-confessed 'wilful soul,' Bren wanted to (slowly) walk away from the digital noise and commission a piece of work that would intentionally drip-feed the slow-roasted coffee equivalent in an episodic narrative. Inspired by the weekly cartoons in long-redundant Saturday newspaper supplements, or waiting all week for a favourite TV show to air a new episode, audiences would not be in control. They would wait and in return, would receive a treat. Then wait their turn once more.

Created exclusively for HOME by artist and illustrator Nick Burton, *Our Plague Year* is an alternative retelling of life in Eyam during the Great Plague of 1665-66, initially released via the HOME website and an email subscriber list in a weekly comic strip format over a ten-week period in May, and then extended to last for a full year thanks to Arts Council England funding. The villagers of Eyam in Derbyshire are best known for their decision to quarantine themselves during the Great Plague, in order to stop the virus spreading to neighbouring towns and villages. But *Our Plague Year* is no simple historically accurate retelling – it's a fictional piece of work, drawing on contemporary narratives and making a connection between historical pandemics aggravated by misinformation, fear and discrepancy of wealth.

Using a comic strip format, Nick's work explores self-isolation and human behaviour and features a diverse cast of characters that challenge received histories of the period. From non-white British citizens, to deaf and disabled characters, *Our Plague Year* fuses the reactions of today's society to the coronavirus outbreak, and layers them over a similar event from 350 years ago.

From stockpiling vinegar to quack remedies made from toads, onions and treacle, essential needs are re-evaluated in 17th century Eyam by a host of characters with varying moral compasses.

As well as food and medicine, friendship, desire and inequality all come under the spotlight.

Nick's creative process naturally lends itself to 'slow digital,' as each page takes around two days to write, draw, ink and colour. Releasing the comic strip weekly allowed Nick to respond to current events and work those into the finished product, or to make notes for future episodes.

The artist himself admits he would like to be able to binge the entire series at once, but says that the weekly format fits in better with people's busy lives, adding: "We don't always have time to sit down and read a full novel, we dip into it from time to time and read a few pages here and there, perhaps at the end of a day, or at the end of the week."

Bren adds: "To receive an email with original content in cartoon form is comparable in these fast-moving times to receiving a handwritten note."

There are other benefits to breaking down the convention of art being displayed in a "white cube gallery".

"Fine dining isn't only a single scallop in a pool of mango spittle, it's a home-cooked roast, a sloppy taco, a child's attempt at baking," says Bren. "For HOME to present the comic form as a major new visual art commission indicates that we're not restricted by convention, and that it's possible to enjoy art - even laugh at it - instead of feeling humiliated by the looming spectre of secret art knowledge you don't know about."

While the characters of *Our Plague Year* are certainly fictional, Nick has also teamed up with Eyam Museum, in Derbyshire, to look at the museum's collections, and an online Q&A with the museum's curator, Owen Roberts, discussed the parallels between fact and fiction. homemcr.org/plagueyear

THREE MORE "SLOW" EXPERIENCES TO TRY FROM HOME

THE POETRY HEALTH SERVICE

Founded by Manchester-based poet, playwright and performer, Hafsah Aneela Bashir, the PHS champions the importance of art in supporting our mental and emotional health. It is available to access via a dedicated website and phonenumber, and users are gifted a complimentary poem – a poetry panacea – following the completion of a colour-based flowchart.

ABSENT TENSE

Commissioned by Candoco Dance Company, Jo Bannon's *Absent Tense* is an audio essay and accompanying publication which reflects the presence of absence in our lives right now. Inspired by the first 12 weeks of lockdown and experienced over 12 parts, it is an intimate meditation on solitude, faith, loss, breath and time passing.

LOVE LETTERS TO A LIVEABLE FUTURE

Performing arts company METIS take their *Homemakers* commission offline altogether, using old-fashioned snail mail to send audience members a pack of postcards with instructions for improvising alternative futures. Designed to stimulate reflection and conversation amongst households, families and friends, these cards offer participants the dream space to imagine how we would like our world to be different when we re-emerge from lockdown. Participants are also invited to share their visions of a liveable future with the METIS team either by post, online or via a video call.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT HOME AND ONLINE

October 2020 saw a month-long celebration of Black art, film, theatre, music, and live performance.

The programme of activity was curated to question representation and challenge narratives, and to champion Black artists and Black-led organisations in Manchester and the North West.

Assistant Producer Sekeenat Karim, who programmed Black History Month 2020, said: "We really wanted to use our platforms across film, theatre and visual art to encourage discussion and give centre stage to Black artists and organisations, with an aim to continue working with and uplifting Black artistry across the year."

Black History Month was delivered digitally and at HOME, with audiences enjoying socially distanced performances from Manchester's finest spoken word collective, Young Identity.

Working from Home saw Young Identity launch their new book of poetry, with a retrospective of the work produced in their first five years at HOME, as resident artists.

Other highlights in the building included three one-off screenings of films that were specially selected to reflect seminal moments in contemporary UK and US Black history.

White Riot charts the formation of Rock Against Racism in the 1970s, while Steve McQueen's *Mangrove* focuses on the notorious prosecution of activists

associated with the Mangrove restaurant, that exposed police harassment of Black Britons. Spike Lee's 1989 drama *Do the Right Thing* completed the trio of films.

In the Granada Foundation Gallery, artist Christian Asare exhibited *Love Flows*, a diptych in oils created during lockdown to celebrate the creative contributions of the trailblazing QTIBPOC collective, House of Noir.

Digitally, audiences aged 15 to 25 were treated to poetry workshops with Young Identity. Aimed specifically at young people from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse backgrounds, the workshops explored the Black British diaspora, and the concept of 'home.'

Families enjoyed *Celina and the Spider*, a series of three storytelling sessions by emerging writer Ella McLeod, specially commissioned by HOME. Featuring renowned trickster Anansi the Spider, *Celina and the Spider* creatively explored mortality through handmade puppetry and mythical West African and Caribbean gods.

Panel discussions were recorded at venues across Manchester and hosted online.

The Black Mirror – Representations of Race in Horror Film featured a lively discussion between host, podcaster and intersectionality consultant Esther Lisk-Carew, film programmer Liz Chege and film curator Adam Murray.

Representation and space were the key themes of *The Future Minority Majority Wonders – Where Are Our Spaces?*, hosted by Cheryl Martin, artist and Co-Artistic Director of Black Gold Arts Festival.

Cheryl's theatre work *One Woman* was also available to watch online - a hypnotic dreamscape following one woman's wrestle with her identity.

And on Instagram Stories, the HOME Sound Sessions presented exclusive performances by Dorcas Sebuyange, Berry Blacc and Tolu x Aden.



PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

Some unusual new works have grown from the lockdown, but one of the most experimental was always intended to be presented digitally – a boundary-pushing narrative game exploring grief and extremism.

Part of HOME's annual Push celebration of the North West's creative talents – which has been extended from a festival to a strand for one year only, to allow both online and live works to feature – *Closed Hands* is an unflinching work of interactive fiction exploring the long-ranging complex effects of extremism on a range of cultures and communities. The sprawling 130,000-word story is presented through bold interactive narrative across five core characters and dozens of additional viewpoints and perspectives.

Closed Hands was developed by Manchester indie games studio Passenger, formed and directed by artist and writer Dan Hett, recent winner of the New Media Writing Prize 2021. The game was made with support from Arts Council England.

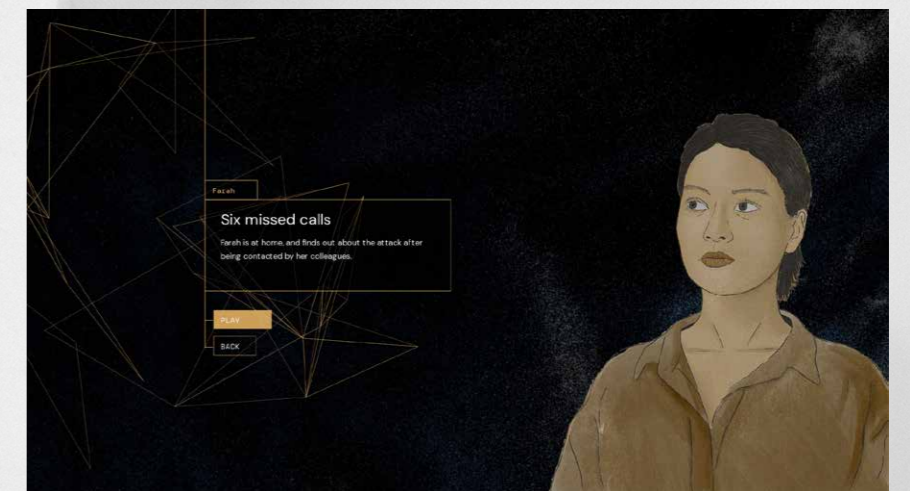
The gameplay is a free-form fragmented narrative, allowing the player to weave their own paths through the story: both forward and backward in time. The story is told through interactive textual fiction, and the player can also engage more deeply in the narrative by exploring the desktops of the characters. This includes reading emails, exploring files, replaying conversations, finding secrets. Presented as an interactive digital story, the game will also challenge wider preconceptions users have about video game storytelling.

Dan Hett said: "We're really excited to present *Closed Hands* to new



audiences, and we really hope that it helps push forward the idea that games should, and can, boldly hold up a mirror to our reality in new and interesting ways. The story is deep and complex, and presented in a way that we hope can be explored by both games audiences and those outside it, too."

Closed Hands is the studio's first work which builds upon the experimental games series developed by Dan exploring his personal experience of losing his brother Martyn Hett in the Manchester terror attack in 2017. The studio's next project will be *The Long Night*, a commissioned reworking of Ernst Israel Bornstein's famous holocaust account.



A MOMENT OF JOY



HOME's Executive Director Jon Gilchrist talks about the planning that went into HOME's September reopening following the first lockdown.

When HOME closed its doors to the public in March, we didn't know how long it would be for. But it's safe to say that at that point no one anticipated the gravity of the COVID-19 crisis, and the impact it would have on arts and culture in the UK.

HOME was created as a social space, and in its first five years it has triumphed as such. In 2019/20 we had a record-breaking 900,000 visits to HOME. This is testament to the incredible team, our supporters, funders and trustees. But now we had to reconcile ourselves with an entirely new challenge: with COVID-19 an ongoing reality, how do we create a social space in a socially distanced world?

We worked hard to look at expert advice, to make sure our visitors, staff and artists were safe – and we spoke to colleagues across the UK and analysed examples from across the world to find best practice.

We're lucky that our design and architecture make it possible to open with social distancing in place – for example our large open space on entry, wide central staircase and toilets on every level. Alongside our catering operator Wardleys, we've worked tirelessly to introduce new measures to make HOME safe and welcoming.

We took a three-phase approach to our reopening, that would allow us to move back and forwards between phases as we needed to – which proved useful in November when we had to close once again.

The first phase, HOME from Home, involved delivering as much work online as possible to fulfil our audiences' needs for the "HOME experience", and create as much work for freelance artists as possible. Second came HOME Soon,

where we consulted with audience members, staff and artists about our plans for reopening. We set up a panel to help inform our programming, and it was so successful that we've now built these in-depth conversations with people outside our venue into our ongoing strategy.

Finally – and most joyfully – Welcome HOME saw us reopen with Mr Wilson's Second Liners performing an afternoon set outdoors and Mr Scruff playing an evening DJ set. We didn't really publicise either – we wanted to create a real feeling of serendipity around the event. We also created the most "HOME" safety video we could – a vogue-through of the building and our additional measures, starring Darren Pritchard, Mother of the House of Ghetto.

As I write this, HOME is once again closed. But we're busy planning our reopening events again, and we can guarantee we'll be HOME soon.



Safety measures included contactless ticketing, PPE for staff, a one-way system and social distancing throughout the building

After all the uncertainty, HOME's reopening weekend was a moment of joy in the city. We made full use of the outdoor space to allow for social distancing, with Mr Wilson's Second Liners playing a raucous, open-air set, and later in the evening DJ Mr Scruff made a surprise appearance.



A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

HOME's Response Fund was launched on 18 March 2020, after the closure of theatres and cinemas across the country posed a very real threat to the future of the arts and culture industry.

At HOME, up to 50% of our income relies on our building being open to the public and we knew that the economic impact of closing for even two weeks would be huge. Little did we know that we would be facing months of closure, with no clear roadmap for reopening.

Promoted through our social media channels and our email subscriber list, our message was simple. We asked our audiences and supporters to donate so that we could continue to be a beacon of creativity and actively support our independent artists, despite having a closed building.

When we launched our online series of work, *Homemakers* in April 2020, we also used this as an opportunity to promote giving to the Response Fund. Proceeds from the Fund went directly into commissioning additional work from artists, and by weaving this message into the communications campaign, we were able to maximise donations from audiences.

In addition, some of the proceeds from our pay-what-you-can tickets went back into the Response Fund, funding further work for artists in Greater Manchester.

The response to the campaign was overwhelmingly positive, with many messages of support and amazing philanthropy.

Reasons for giving were varied, from those missing watching a film or having drinks with friends after work, to frequent donors who once again demonstrated their loyalty and generosity.

One Response Fund donor said: "HOME was always the place I would go to after a bad day to catch a film, see a show or simply get a pint. It's a wonderful place with excellent staff and I'm happy to support it as much as possible during this difficult time."

Another said: "I was very happy to contribute to the fund and am glad that it allows you guys to continue the great work you do and support your staff and artists. I look forward to visiting HOME again as soon as possible when it's open and things are safe again."

Gratifyingly, we also welcomed new supporters during this period. Many of these new benefactors had never visited HOME, but wanted to support the creative ecology of the city.

We were bowled over by the generosity shown to HOME in our time of need, and raised £51,177 for the Response Fund.

HOW HOME SUPPORTED FREELANCERS DURING THE PANDEMIC

At HOME, we have always been proud to work with some of the very best freelancers across Greater Manchester and beyond, to deliver our internationally renowned creative programme.

Throughout this unusual year, HOME's commitment to supporting freelancers has remained a core part of our mission.

Without freelancers, the arts and culture sector could not function, but it doesn't end there, as Dave Moutrey, our Director and CEO, who is also Director of Culture for Manchester City Council, explained.

He said: "Freelance artists, creatives, technicians, security, and a host of other advisors and workers are vital to the health and creativity, not only of the cultural sector, but also of our economy, communities and city because they are an essential source of the ideas, challenges, skills and insights that make inspirational projects happen."

In April 2020 we launched our Response Fund to supplement lost revenue and raised over £50,000 with generous donations from our audiences, existing supporters and

those who hadn't previously engaged with HOME, but wanted to support the creative ecology of the city. A significant proportion of this went directly into commissioning more work from freelance artists.

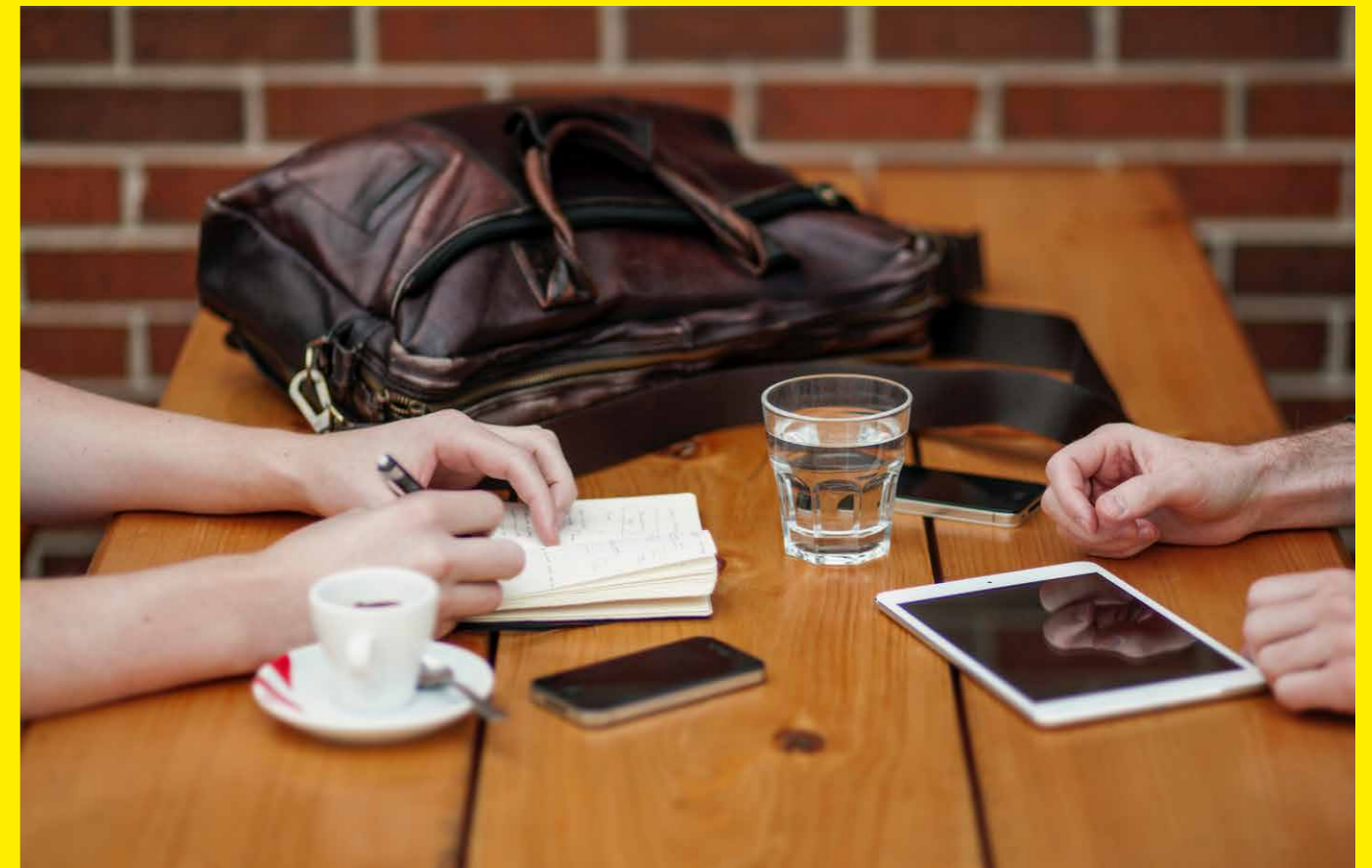
We also worked with cultural organisations across Greater Manchester to form the GM Artists Hub. The project was conceived to support the independent performers, artists and companies that make up Greater Manchester's vibrant artistic community by offering free, practical advice sessions with artist development producers and directors. The hub was also a vital source of peer-to-peer support to a number of freelancers who were feeling isolated as a result of losing work due to the pandemic.

We also signed up to the Freelance Task Force in May 2020. A national initiative of over 100 performing arts organisations and led by Fuel Theatre,

the aim of the Freelance Task Force is to strengthen the influence of the self-employed theatre and performance community.

Using an open call process, we appointed performer and theatre maker Darren Pritchard as our representative at national level. A native Mancunian, Darren is a director, producer, choreographer, and vogue house mother. Darren has 20 years of experience in the fashion, theatre, television and performing arts industries. In addition to his leadership in the infamous House of Ghetto and pioneering efforts in Black Pride MCR, Darren is also the co-artistic director for the Manchester-based arts organisation Black Gold Arts.

The Task Force has created ongoing points of connection between freelancers, organisations, funders and government. The initiative seeks to amplify the voices of the self-



employed around managing the response to, and recovery from, the coronavirus crisis in the performing arts sector. Darren's presence on the Task Force will ensure that voices usually left out of the bigger conversations are amplified and heard with special attention paid to QTPOC voices.

And in January 2021, we launched a £500,000 hardship fund for freelancers in Manchester, working in partnership with Manchester City Council and made possible by a generous gift from the Savannah Wisdom Foundation. The fund was part of ongoing efforts to support the freelance population of Manchester's vibrant arts and culture sector, and to prevent the loss of a generation of talented artists and creative practitioners.

The Savannah Wisdom Foundation is an independent foundation committed to social change for a better world. They created the discretionary fund to support freelancers working in the creative and cultural sectors and grants of up to £1,500 were made available to individual freelancers.

The fund was specifically aimed towards those who were ineligible for, or were unsuccessful in applying for, the Government Self Employment Income Support Scheme. Financial assistance was targeted at those who had reduced demand for, or capacity to deliver, their services. Freelancers who worked in parts of the sector that were unable to trade as a result of coronavirus were also encouraged to apply.

From setting up a dedicated helpline to answering queries on social media, our team were there every step of the way to help freelancers through the application process. The response to the hardship fund was overwhelmingly positive, with support coming from both freelancers and venues across the region, and beyond.

Jon Gilchrist, Executive Director of HOME, said: "The impact of the pandemic on culture has been extraordinary, but it's in the freelance ecology within our sector where the damage has been most visible. The closure of venues and the subsequent cancellation of projects has left thousands of skilled professionals without work, and risks seeing the arts industry haemorrhage a generation

of artists, technicians and creative practitioners.

"Over the past 12 months, HOME has worked with partners across the city to support freelancers in a number of ways. We've continued to commission new work, including the innovative Homemakers digital projects, and expanded the Push commissions for regional artists. We've worked with colleagues across the city region on developing the GM Artist Hub. And, thanks to an incredible donation from the Savannah Wisdom Foundation, we've worked with Manchester City Council to deliver a £500k hardship fund for freelancers who have not been able to receive support elsewhere.

"In 2021 we want to do even more, and we're committed to placing the needs and skills of freelancers at the forefront of our thinking as we play our role in the cultural recovery of Manchester and the UK."

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

113 onsite Full Time Equivalents (FTEs). FTEs for GM residents **52** induced FTEs. Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)
£12.3m Total annual Gross Value Added (GVA) from direct and induced FTEs

A GREATER MANCHESTER VISITOR ATTRACTION

£19.7m visitor spend in the local economy **£11.2m** Annual GVA from visitor spend in the local economy

LOCAL SUPPLIERS

£2.4m spend in the local supply chain **£1.4m** Annual GVA from spend in the local supply chain

320 FTEs **£24.9m** Total impact in the Greater Manchester Economy

PROVIDING VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

8,149 volunteer hours delivered by **285** volunteers **£77,600** of social capital generated as a result of volunteering at HOME

HEALTH AND WELLBING

343,000 visitors to visual arts projects and exhibitions, cinema screenings and theatre performances
£1.0m Health and Wellbeing NHS cost savings from engaging in the arts as an audience member

£1.1m Total Social Value

Report completed by Ekosgen, August 2020. Assessment draws on multiple information sources, including information held by HOME and Wardley Ltd, 2019/20 visitor surveys, official ONS datasets, HCA's latest additionality guidance and sector specific reports by Cebra and Oxford Economics. The resulting findings reflect both facility specific intelligence and the application of recognised assumptions and benchmarks to allow the gross impacts of HOME in the Greater Manchester economy to be recognised.

HOME'S £26 MILLION ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MANCHESTER

HOME had an economic impact to the city of £26 million in 2019/20 according to a new assessment, including £1 million in health and wellbeing cost savings for the NHS.

On the day we were planning to reopen in December 2020, HOME released a report detailing the economic and health benefits of arts venues like ours to Manchester.

The planned reopening was called off when Manchester remained in Tier 3 following the second national lockdown, and Dave Moutrey, our Director and CEO, said: "At a time when it feels more important than ever for arts organisations to show their worth, this assessment proves that not only does HOME play a vital role in the arts ecology of Greater Manchester, it plays a crucial part in the region's financial success as well.

"We're exceptionally proud of the results of this assessment. The fact that these figures are so high despite the impact of Covid-19 starting to be felt in February and March shows how devastating the loss of arts venues would be to the city.

"Without arts organisations cities are poorer not just metaphorically – but literally."

The assessment was carried out by economic research and consultancy

firm Ekosgen and took into account HOME's role as a provider of local employment, as a driver of visitors to the city and the organisation's purchasing power within local supply chains.

Through direct employment at HOME and our catering partner Wardley plus induced employment – jobs in the city that are supported by the spending of employees at HOME – the assessment calculated a Gross Value Added (GVA) figure of HOME as an employer of £12.3 million per year.

Additionally, the report shows just what a huge percentage of employees at HOME live in the local area – with four-fifths of our staff Greater Manchester residents while among those working for Wardley, HOME's catering partner who run our bar and restaurant operation, that figure rose to 100 per cent.

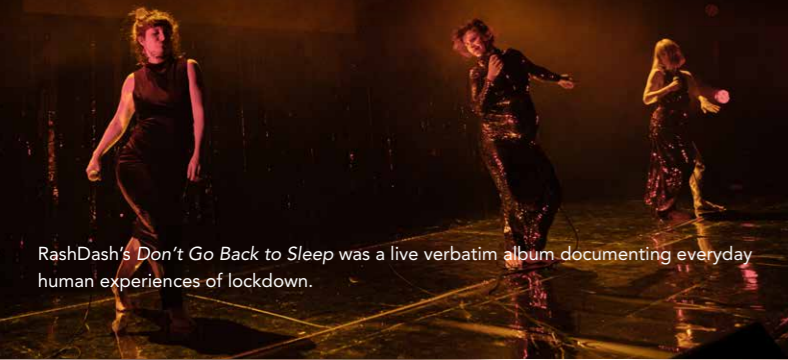
As a visitor attraction, Ekosgen calculated that HOME added £11.2 million to the local economy in visitor spending, and almost £1.5 million added to the local economy through purchasing goods and services in the local supply chain.

The social value was calculated by looking at the value of volunteering hours delivered by the organisation, and using research which highlights the social benefits arising from engagement in arts and culture.

In addition to drawing audiences for our three artforms – film, theatre and visual art – HOME runs an extensive engagement programme which in 2019/20 worked in partnership with 124 schools and colleges, and supported three paid internships, four apprenticeships, 364 work experience participants and 2,795 talent development opportunities. Over the course of the year, the team delivered 3,528 sessions engaging 21,910 active participants.

Using research by Simetrica and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) which identified engagement with the arts as reducing GP visits and the use of mental health services, the report calculates that HOME generated a cost saving of £1 million per year for the NHS.

HOME IN PICTURES



RashDash's *Don't Go Back to Sleep* was a live verbatim album documenting everyday human experiences of lockdown.



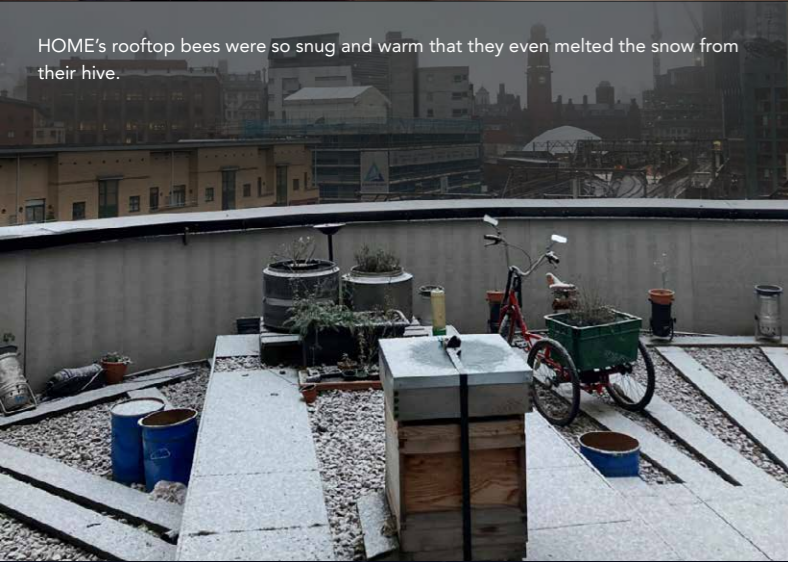
HOME's Director of Film and Culture Jason Wood replaces the film posters outside the building ahead of our September reopening.



Stylishly masked visitors attend the preview night of our gallery reopening, featuring three simultaneous solo exhibitions from Nick Burton, Joy Yamusangie, and MSR FCJ. The exhibition was later moved online when we had to close again.



MP Alex Sobel, Shadow Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, visits HOME during lockdown.



HOME's rooftop bees were so snug and warm that they even melted the snow from their hive.



Oliver Cross performs at a virtual House Party as part of AMP (Accessible Music Productions), HOME's project for music lovers, makers and shakers aged 18-25 with different abilities and additional needs.



Despite the huge challenges of running a filmmaking project throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we recruited 18 talented young filmmakers to take part in our ninth BFI Film Academy.



HOME Resident Artists Young Identity were the first live performance in Theatre 1 after the first lockdown, when they launched their new book, *Working From HOME*.

¡VIVA!

A FESTIVAL OF TWO HALVES

The 2020 ¡Viva! Spanish and Latin American Festival was unique in that it spanned the lockdown – with the first half taking place under normal conditions, and the second with social distancing.



La Hija de un ladrón



Cholitas

At the halfway point of the ¡Viva! 2020 lineup, we were all set for a record-breaking year, with audiences flocking to a film programme that included a special focus on Latin American indigenous filmmakers and 15 UK Premieres.

The festival is curated by a team led by HOME's Head of Film, Rachel Hayward, alongside ¡Viva! Festival Coordinator Jessie Gibbs and the University of Salford's Professor of Film Studies, Andy Willis.

Jessie said: "We couldn't have been prouder of our ¡Viva! 2020 line-up, and the Box Office stats at the halfway point showed we were all set for a record-breaking year. Our inaugural film, *La Hija de un ladrón*, a Barcelona-set family drama with a heavy emotional punch, was hugely popular, and it was an absolute pleasure to welcome new director Belén Funes to Manchester on our packed-out opening night.

"Audiences were clearly in the mood for some feel-good fun too, and the

Argentinian comedy *La Odisea de los giles* was a very close second in runaway ticket sales."

But on 17 March, just after the start of the pandemic, HOME had to close its doors, with the festival unfinished.

Rachel Hayward said: "We were devastated when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, forcing us to close our doors slap bang in the middle of the festival, but there was never any question that the safety of audiences, guests and staff had to come first. The news that we could reopen the building in September was nerve-wracking but so exciting, with our greater appreciation of the face-to-face celebration of culture that we had so dearly missed. We're hugely grateful to the colleagues, festival partners and loyal audiences who made it possible to bring back the vast majority of ¡Viva! 2020 film screenings to HOME last autumn."

Finishing the festival felt truly special under the circumstances, as Jessie adds: "To see as many people as we



La Odisea de los giles

could safely welcome back into our largest cinema screen, all smiling behind their face masks, was a truly joyful moment; it reinforced just how special and unique a cultural offering we bring to Manchester, and how important the festival is to our loyal audience members, some of whom have been attending the festival since it first launched at the much-loved Cornerhouse building 26 years ago."

homemcr.org/Viva2020

Satirical and subversive with a colourful staging, musicals were a new genre for both Bourgeois and Maurice, aka George Heyworth and Liv Morris, and for HOME. Based on fiction, inspired by facts and written in lipstick, *Insane Animals* was an outrageous, time-travelling musical comedy in which two hyper-glam aliens arrive from a faraway galaxy to rescue present day earth from impending political, environmental, and social doom.

Sound familiar? Little were we to know that *Insane Animals* would be one of the last shows we would stage with a full run and audiences sat next to each other, before our own impending disaster.

Directed by Dublin based playwright and director Philip McMahon, this

high energy, gloriously camp show was inspired by themes of survival and immortality in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the oldest story ever written.

The tale features a relationship between Gilgamesh, a cruel and tyrannical kin, and Enkidu, a gentle wild man. The gods tells Gilgamesh to love Enkidu 'like a wife,' arguably making this the world's first queer love story. When Enkidu is killed by the gods, Gilgamesh goes on a quest to defeat death and find the secret to eternal life.

Bourgeois and Maurice translated these themes for current audiences, taking tech and transhumanism as their inspiration to create a hilarious retelling of the story. Audiences were thrilled by the outrageously camp, uplifting and occasionally

dark performances in *Insane Animals*, as the extra terrestrials sent to help the human species survive sought to figure out what makes humans human.

Packed with songs that were sharp and salty, notable earworms included part ballad, part Europop anthem *Gay for You* and the electro homage to transhumanism, *Meat Machine*. Never before has Mother Nature been referred to as a basic bitch. The recently-released cast recording has been streamed over 5,000 times.

The Stage called it "a screamingly camp, epic space opera", while Upstaged Manchester said it was "a camp cult classic in the making."

A year on from the show, George Heyworth said: "I'm sitting here with Liv now and we both agree the most amazing thing we remember was in the second week, standing on stage and seeing audience members singing along, doing the dance routines and holding pride flags. That's when we realised people were coming to see the show multiple times and that it was starting to take on a life of its own. It really felt like a shared experience."

Insane Animals boasted an impressive creative team, including award winning composer, performer and multi-instrumentalist Victoria Falconer as musical director, Sydney Theatre Award winning set designer Michael Hankin, lighting designer Sinéad McKenna, twice an Irish Times Theatre Awards winner and costume designer Julian Smith, a long-time collaborator of Bourgeois and Maurice and designer for Beth Ditto.

Directed by Dublin based playwright and director Philip McMahon, this high energy, gloriously camp show was inspired by themes of survival and immortality in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the oldest story ever written.


homemcr.org/insaneanimals

INSANE ANIMALS: A YEAR ON

Before we locked down, we were thrilled to stage the world premiere of cult cabaret duo Bourgeois and Maurice's *Insane Animals* from 28 February to 14 March.



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