

PLAYLAND

PEOPLE PEBBLE A FILM BY JIVKO DARAKCHIEV AND
ARTISTS-LED COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROJECTS

FOREWORD

Christine Gist & Jim Shea

This publication celebrates *Playland*, an artist's film and video commission and a community engagement project which brought together the shared preoccupations of international contemporary film-maker, Jivko Darakchiev, and those of communities living and working in rapidly changing towns on the south coast of England.

Commissioned by Christine Gist and Jim Shea, Darakchiev's film *People Pebble* takes a very personal, contemplative look at life in south east England and northern France, physically separated for millennia by the English Channel, La Manche. Within it, Darakchiev compares people's interaction on either side of this working,

trading waterway, their commonalities and differences. The film was conceived by Darakchiev with Perrine Gamot.

Darakchiev's work in film and videos reflects his strong interest in local and isolated communities that he encounters on his travels. These, often interactive pieces, encourage people to celebrate their lives at work and play and demonstrate the vital contributions that individuals and groups make to creating neighbourhoods and a sense of place in rapidly changing times.

Playland took place in five coastal towns in the south east of England in a mixture of artists-led spaces, a university gallery and a local authority museum. At each venue *People Pebble* was contextualised in exhibitions and installations by paintings, sculpture, film, photographs and memorabilia particular to each town

which were created and sourced by local communities with the involvement of professional artists who lived or worked near each venue. *Playland* provided the first major showing of Darakchiev's work in the UK.

People Pebble was inspired by the striking visual contrast between two major features in the landscapes of South East England and Région Hauts-de France, the white chalk cliffs of the Sussex Heritage Coast in England and the black spoil tips (terrils) of this former industrial region of Northern France. Both landscapes are a constant reminder to the local populations of the passing of time and change. Whilst the English cliffs attract tourists, scientists and conservationists, local inhabitants struggle to find solutions to the constant erosion of the coastline. By contrast, the manmade waste of the terrils, once seen as blots upon the

landscape, are now a permanent feature of the Nord Pas de Calais Mining Basin UNESCO World Heritage Site.

On the south east coast of England, within these chalk formations, communities living in rapidly developing town centres of Folkestone and Margate worked with locally based artists to gather their thoughts on how their home environments were changing and how their senses of community had changed. In St Leonards-on-Sea, refugees who had made their homes in the town reflected on both the difficulties they faced when arriving and how they had forged new friendships through introducing local communities to their own traditions. In Worthing, people with learning disabilities expressed their senses of self and the town they live in by contributing to an exhibition at the local museum and art gallery. In Brighton, young carers reflected on their often isolated lives

and how they adapted to events and changes that their peers may know very little about, or understand.

We hope that by encouraging people to find common ground and expression through working with artists, *Playland* has given insights into how the identities of local communities are fundamental to creating senses of place.

We are indebted to the artists Jivko Darakchiev, Perrine Gamot, Nicholette Goff, Gary Goodman, Sharon Haward, Evlynn Sharp and Nicole Zaaroura, the communities and venue staff who contributed so much to the project and the interest, enthusiasm and humour that was shared in creating this commission and series of exhibitions.

PEOPLE PEBBLE : Jivko Darakchiev

After nearly two years since the birth of the initial idea, the adventure of Playland has arrived at its final stages. It has been an interesting ride the whole way through. I can say with confidence that I've learned a lot, though I'm sure that a few years from now, the longer-lasting effects of the experience will become increasingly apparent. At this moment in time, I can discern the benefits of the experience of the commission on my practice on three fronts: an improved competency in the logistical organisation and management of a project; a refinement of methodology in the creative process that is the conception and production of a film; and an evolution of the critical themes of my creative interests.

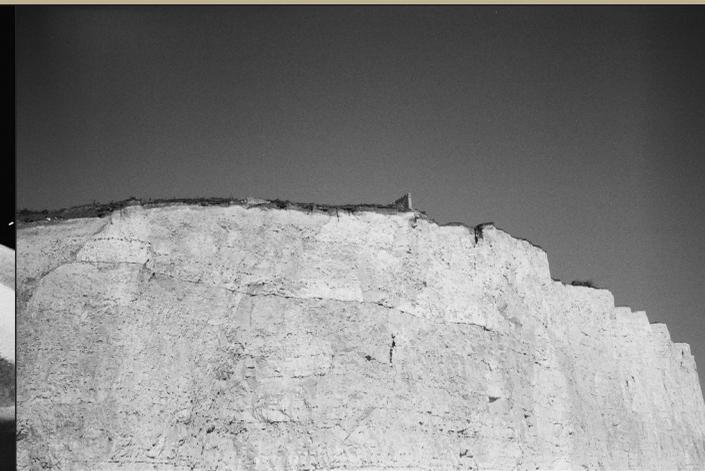
Playland was the second commission I was confronted with, but the first in which I had at my disposition so much creative freedom. This was at once motivating and quite scary, as all 'doors' were potentially open. So what I had to do first and foremost, was make some critical decisions about what was important and what made sense to me and essentially close some doors. It meant being specific – with everything: the larger themes I wanted to approach, the specific locations I was to juxtapose, and more practically, how I was to do it. This how was quite a challenge – producing from start to finish a short film, shot on celluloid and in two countries, and almost entirely independently which was not something with which I felt at ease. Nonetheless, I was up to the challenge.

In a commission, there is an understanding that the artist will produce an artwork that the commissioners have requested, which results in doing something for someone else. And in this case, this artwork was to be supported by public funding. The commissioned artist is thus, in a sense, twice distanced from this artwork he is to produce. Only in this particular case, this was not what happened. From the outset, seeing that the commissioners were allowing me great artistic flexibility, the project rapidly became a much more personal work which I cared deeply about and one that would instil itself directly in my on-going practice. This fact alone was the driving force behind the inevitable administrative tasks of organising a production schedule, managing a budget, ensuring the elaborate filmmaking process went smoothly. Furthermore, the fact that the film was publicly funded made filming on-location and meeting with local communities even more special and intimate. That said, it was imperative that I keep a somewhat distanced viewpoint at the same time to offer a wider perspective on the local. I am proud to say that has shown through with the film having its international premiere at the Cinéma du Réel film festival in the Pompidou Centre where it was seen by a wide audience outside the initial scope of the project.

Everyone has their own approach to the actual creative process of filmmaking. Some are more efficient than others... For me, I've been in this field for a certain number of years, but by no means is this process, methodology, let's call it, a rulebook set



in stone. With every project, the methodology changes somewhat, adapts and evolves to new demands. Today in retrospect, I posit that the film *People Pebble* (which resulted from *Playland*) has had one of the most important effects on my practice. This is due to a mix of the above-mentioned factors such as an imposed artistic self-discipline, but also largely due to the medium I used and the rigour it entails. It had been several years since I had last filmed on celluloid, on 16mm, which allows less room for error than 35mm. I was convinced from the beginning that black and white 16mm film was the most appropriate medium. It was an intuition that would become a defining attribute of the final piece that plays an active role in how we apprehend the piece. As a maker, shooting on celluloid is above all a way to organise one's thoughts and ideas and in turn, to structure the film. A film shoot is not always exciting, but is often quite stressful or even boring. The film medium imposes a rigorous discipline on the filmmaker in which they must do a lot of preliminary work before the shooting starts. Unlike the digital medium, one cannot have simply a broad idea of what there is to shoot and allow themselves to "see when they get there" or "shoot anyway and sort it out later". Film is expensive. When you press on the camera's trigger, everyone on set is carried by an immense collaborative concentration that simply does not occur in the same way with digital. Experiencing and remembering all this again, but now that I've progressed as an artist, is priceless. This is not to say that I will refuse to shoot on anything but film – this is not realistic. But I will work to attain the same degree of preparation and concentration while working on digital as I did with film.



I find it important to mention one last development, which is more a hypothesis, but one which I intuitively believe will have a long-lasting impact on my practice. I'm referring to the actual themes studied in this project. People's daily actions and objects were already a recurring theme in my work. But concepts such as the impermanence (the transient state) of humans, objects, rocks and all things is quite new. Certainly, it may appear too large a subject to approach, but perhaps not. The very acknowledgment of the cyclical nature of our own realities and those of our environment has opened a new yet natural fissure in my prior interests that I know will manifest itself again. Here is my final thank you for having given this project a chance, and me an exceptional opportunity to grow as a young artist.



A SEASON IN PLAYLAND

Antonio Guzmán

SITE AND SITUATION

From Kent through East and West Sussex, final stop Brighton and Hove: such was a season in *Playland* – a project, a working protocol and a series of exhibitions, a trip through time and space, a two-way orchestrated exchange of sensitivities and contrasts, progressing by stops and starts, see-sawing between the individual and the group, the self and the other, oneself and other people, the sense of here and of there, the present and the past, repetition and differentiation. A project that finally unfolded in the gap between singular and plural, one film and five group exhibitions, in five venues in five towns along the south-east coast of England over a period of nearly a year, from September 2016 to July 2017, from the end of one summer to the middle of summer the following year.

The project was linked to geographical *sites* and unfolded thematically in the course of these eleven months. Along the Kent and East Sussex coasts, from Folkestone to Margate and on to St Leonards-on-Sea, and then to Worthing and Brighton, the project homed in on a different local theme in each locality, as the respective *Playland* sub-titles indicate:

Re-imagining communities, A sense of place, There and here, People and communities, A time for ourselves. Originally – as if inspired by each *genius loci* or springing from seed sown previously – these five local themes reflected social issues preoccupying each of the different organisations or communities taking part in the project, each collective exhibition being the result of participation and collaboration on the part of a group of volunteers working within the project's operational protocol.

Under the terms of the protocol, members of the public in each different locality were invited to reflect and express their views on their *situation* with regard to the theme chosen for that site, taking an introspective and autobiographical approach. Moving from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete and then back again, the formula was repeated and the public took part in the exercise of individuation at each site. The participants' feelings and thoughts would thus precede their exhibition and the public's feelings and thoughts on viewing the participants' exhibitions. Thus the way *Playland* was structured was essentially reflexive: mirror-like, it reflected

a view of what the participating groups volunteered to display and share with another, wider viewing public, whether familiar or unknown to them, whether a target audience or not.

It is important to stress the role played by the *Playland* commissioners. The operating model they applied was essentially horizontal, a model (social, economic, political or artistic) in which every person's right to expression had equal weight, individually and peer-to-peer, with no hierarchy of value or of added value, apart from the specific place accorded to the film commissioned from Jivko Darakchiev and conceived in collaboration with Perrine Gamot. Having set out a broad framework and left it to the artists with a particular interest in a theme and knowledge of a locality to provide support and ensure that the working protocol was followed, the *Playland* curators deliberately abdicated the role that is often assigned to curators in the world of contemporary arts.

Reticent, reluctant to intervene, mindful of people's rights and cautious about pushing an agenda, they refused the pyramidal model according to which power or expertise or wealth or favour are found at the very top and percolate down through the lower strata and layers to refresh and perhaps enlighten the base of the whole structure. So they stepped aside, literally and metaphorically, whereas

current curatorial practice would be to give the curator a prominent – not to say predominant – major role with top billing in a vertical global star system in which the curator does the thinking for all the others, including the artists, and selects, decides, approves, commissions, creates, writes the scripts and puts his or her name to an exhibition as author, authority, autonomous creator, *primus inter pares*¹. We have all known, and perhaps deplored, exhibitions where the thought processes are spelled out elsewhere: in the catalogue, the brochure, a note, a caption or as entries in a notebook, and where the works themselves are only incidental, as stage props brought in to represent an idea and to illustrate an artistic discourse to which they may not even be relevant.

Discreetly and avoiding all populism, *Playland's* two curators, Christine Gist and Jim Shea, stood aside from that role. Yet the gap that they left was no empty space, since the many productions of the sites and situations represented by the participating public easily filled that space. The curators' tact, reserve and discretion created a clear empty space

1. Cf. for example: Yves Michaud, *L'Artiste et les Commissaires: Quatre essais non pas sur l'art contemporain mais sur ceux qui s'en occupent*, Arles, Ed. Jacqueline Chambon, 1998 (reissued by Fayard/Pluriel, Paris, 2012); Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, Zurich, JRP/Ringier, 2008; Jean-Marc Poinsot, *Quand l'œuvre a lieu: l'art exposé et ses récits autorisés*, Dijon, Les Presses du réel, 2008.

for others to occupy. Even if it meant that the curators only discovered what had been produced, like everyone else, at the end, at the opening of the exhibition.

In this way the *Playland* aesthetic was based largely on popular art, or *outsider art*, as they say nowadays. There was no grandiloquence, no masterly display of expertise that might alienate. The techniques employed were not sophisticated; the media used were not complicated: texts, drawings, watercolours, collage, photographs, displays of ephemera, installations of memorabilia, postcards and bar mats, the bric-a-brac of personal effects and mementos.

In contrast to the idea of the curator as author, *Playland* preferred that of the unpretentious amateur. Commitment, the communication of subtle but undramatic feelings, personal sincerity underlying self-reflection, self-determination and self-expression – these were the issues at stake. Naivety, possible awkwardness in execution and non-standard language, rather than surface perfection, were the guarantee of authenticity. As such, the *Playland* operational protocol may have led to outcomes approaching *relational aesthetics*, without actually slipping into the trendy and the patronising arrogance of that high-flown label². The project made no demands: it proposed an alternative point of view, another way of doing things.

THE REAL AND ITS COLOURS

In this context, the film commissioned from Darakchiev is an exception. *People Pebble* affirms its young creator's artistic intention and ambition as expressed visually and clearly from the outset by his decision to work in black and white. It is what strikes one immediately, in an age where colour, available via almost any mobile phone, is the conventional and easy choice.

While avoiding affectation, false nostalgia or undue reverence for the archaic, this initial choice of black and white creates a distancing effect, a sense of spatio-temporal displacement. We are immediately elsewhere, even though we have been transported to this scene by the director's short film. Yet we are still not there, or not quite there, we are not plunged into an immediately perceived reality or its direct and spontaneous recreation. Since we do not normally see the world in black and white, we are aware that we are not experiencing the simple capture of reality and its colours - we can see that the way colour is rendered is already a first level of inscription and interpretation: it is not invisible, transparent, faithful, realistic, natural. This does not have to be spelled out: seeing it is enough. It is evident that the director is seeing things from a different

2. Cf. amongst other titles, Nicolas Bourriaud, *L'Esthétique relationnelle*, Dijon, Les Presses du réel, 1998.

viewpoint, that he is keeping his distance and that his vision is formulated from that point: it is an outsider's vision and it is clear – in black and white – that it is his way of seeing things we are looking at as much as the scenes of daily life that he has filmed.

For *People Pebble* is a film. Another thing, another decision and another anachronism that the eye does not necessarily register but the mind does, is the choice of 16mm film to work in. Using 16mm film is not a neutral or trivial thing, since it runs counter to the current trend towards cheap and easy digital technology, now that cinematography has mainly adopted algorithms. It was still a deliberate and risky choice when it came to method and cost, rarity and technical difficulty, a calculation made with an eye to the quality and depth of the light, to tonal quality, to the granularity of the film and to the diversity of contrasts to be conveyed.

Darakchiev lay the foundations for his reportage on the south-east coast of England and the Hauts de France region on these two decisions. With each decision he is taking a step back, taking a position, rather than expressing resistance. Together, these options are the initial parameters of his study, which is as much about the properties of the medium as it is the investigation into a subject. In doing so, the film-maker is working in the tradition of experimental cinema influenced by video art.

With 16mm film he has his *materia prima*, solid, unforming, from another age, a starting point, perhaps a primary source³. This choice of a physical, material and materiological medium, rather than the simulacrum of virtual reality, was underscored in its turn by another decisive choice, that of projecting the film together with fifteen 35mm photos, produced as 24 x 16 cm prints and hung to form a composite, broken horizon line in black and white. These were taken both before and during the shooting of the film.

To complete the installation, a 60 x 40 cm transparency mounted in a small back-lit lightbox showed the upside-down image of a wet, stony beach at night that could be confused with a starry sky. A dreamlike, moonlit scene, the world turned upside down, with earth and sky transposed, foreground and background simply flipped upside down and back to front.

In all this, there is corroboration in the triple repetition of the black and white theme – perforated cinematographic film, rolls of film, celluloid coated with photosensitive gelatine

³“Material is the *materia prima*, as the alchemists put it. The *materia prima* is what existed before the naming of things: a huge paradox, for human nature is such that man experiences nothing that is not accompanied by a name, the name that other men have given it, stretching back to infinity.” Roland Barthes, *Sagesse de l'art*, in *Cy Twombly*, Paris, Seuil, 2016 p.10 (text reprinted from *Cy Twombly, Paintings and Drawings: 1954-1977*, catalogue of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1979.)

emulsion. Whether with cinema's 24 frames per second or photography's instantaneous stills, with these analogue media Darakchiev accepted all the bother associated with film reels and cans, the constraints, delays and physical slowness of negative-positive processes, templates and revisions, copies and limited prints, and all the expense and time involved in developing, enlarging and projecting photographic film. All this required a written scenario to start with, or at least the clear outline of a synopsis in order to organise ideas and to marshal the images into a narrative line however sketchy and fragmented.

THE FORESHORE, BETWEEN TIDES

In many ways *Playland* worked in two different dimensions. Darakchiev produced images of things he had never seen, people he did not know, areas of the south-east of England and the Hauts de France region that he had not visited beforehand, or which he did not know well, of which he had little experience or recollection. Whereas the others taking part in the collective, topic-based exhibitions felt at home with their location, situation and memories. These participants were involved in the process of self-expression, defining identity, interrelations and a sense of community that verged perhaps on nativism. In their case, and including the refugees and stateless persons carving out a new life

for themselves, *Playland* induced and even encouraged a certain self-awareness, brought out a sense of belonging. As reporter, Darakchiev was an outsider.

In terms of a structural analysis of the project, the approach is a combination of the synchronic and the diachronic.⁴ Five different exhibitions, five different themes, in five different English towns, five dates across eleven months with different contributors and different outputs each time – apart from the same film and the same photos at each venue – led to both repetition and differentiation. The sense of rootedness of some contrasted with the sense of rootlessness of others; the colourful productions of some faced with the black and white work of others; good-hearted volunteers and emerging young artists.

As a transient observer, Darakchiev stayed mainly on the foreshore of the coastlines he was filming. Like many before him, he produced a rapid geographical survey of each stretch of topographical landscape, showing both sides of this very special cross-Channel region.⁵ A project is also what it is not, what it has decided not to be or not

⁴ Cf. amongst other authors, Claude Levi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris, Plon, 1958.

⁵ See the work of the Mission photographique Transmanche from 1988 to 2006 (<http://missionphoto.datar.gouv.fr/fr/content/la-mission-photographique-transmanche>)

to handle. No portraits, then, or very few, no interiors, and no long excursions into the glens on the one side or over the flat fields of the other, apart from the views of the slag heaps of the Nord-Pas de Calais. The film does not linger in the ports or in the seaside resorts; no pictures of sea-bathing, of piers or people strolling along sandy beaches. He stayed on the edge, on the fringe, between high tide and low tide, in an intermediate zone, vague, undeveloped, fluctuating with the to-and-fro of the tides, the coastal strip that appears and disappears, covered and uncovered by the sea, alternately.

He told an ancient story of the earth, between island and mainland. It is a story that has been handed down, an inheritance preserved, a story of the chalk-land of the English coast and the spoil heaps from the coalmines of the French coast, of the geological upheavals and landslides, and of France's post-industrial artificial recreational development of ski-lifts, motocross and night-time firework displays. Not a maritime story about the sea that borders the region, though that is what makes Britain an island and not a peninsula. There is no need to try to work out where one is, or to chart which coastline one is looking at: the film's frequent crossings of the Channel straits are all blurred. This story of the earth goes back to the continental drift and the clash of tectonic plates. It is all about the land, a matter of sedimentation, of rifts, of cliffs and fossils, of erosion

and ancient attrition – *once upon a time*. This tale of the earth is historical in the view it takes of the long, slow progress of the geology of the bedrock, that inorganic mineral matter, and of the slow narrative of the earth's formation in veins, strata and layers. It is equally a-historical as regards human events like the Jungle at Calais, which is close by but is passed over in silence, with no pictures taken, a different subject.

ONCE UPON A TIME ALREADY

Since we do not experience this world on our own, and not only with our eyes, and since we are familiar with still and moving images, the film's landscape is also expressed as an original *soundscape* signed by Arno Ledoux. Intercut by snatches of speech, cries of gulls, sounds of hammering, metal on rock, silences or background sound, wind, waves or music composed on a Moog analogue synthesiser, not digitally (another choice made, another anachronistic medium) - all this represents another level of inscription and interpretation and making a coherent sense of the whole, the film's rhythm being underscored by the randomness and time-lag of the non-synchronous recording of the sound with respect to the image.

People Pebble is not short of references, should any be necessary. The brief at the start of the project mentioned Johan van der Keuken and his film *Amsterdam Global Village*

(2006). Dziga Vertov's *L'Homme à la caméra* (1929) was quoted at the film's presentation in March 2017 in the *Cinéma du Réel* festival in Paris. Certain shots, especially those of pithead frames, suggest the geometric, machinist and constructivist forms of Tatlin, Moholy Nagy, Rodchenko and El Lissitsky. Whatever may be the case, the film's title is a simultaneous play on words, an alliteration of high and low vowel-sounds and a breathy consonant, a combination that brings together the many and the individual, a generic plural that is also a collective singular (*people*) together with a simple singular noun (*pebble*). The film ends with an epilogue in which one more horizon line is drawn linking the two shores of the Channel, without frontiers and without nationalism.

As part of the process of individuation, the *Playland* exhibitions aimed at self-awareness, at a personal level, here and now. On the other hand, by its interweaving of scenes and sounds, *People Pebble* invites the viewer to pause, to indulge in a dream where reality is close to fiction; and, using the methods of fiction, to ponder the passage of time, both permanence (relative) and impermanence (transient, inexorable).

Thus *Playland* was based on a loose and flexible working protocol, an ordering of form and content, chronology and geography. There was also the element of *play*, which

was always serious, as Freud pointed out in 1908.⁶ What is more, the project developed along the lines set out by D.W.Winnicott in *Playing and Reality*. It followed his distinction between *game* on the one hand, with its strict rules and regulations, and the openness of the process that is free to move forwards and outwards (*play*) or the verbal noun *playing*, on the other.⁷ And what is even more, it shared with Winnicott and others the importance and the seriousness accorded to imagination and creativity.⁸

Where does the title of *Playland* come from? All those involved agree that it came from Jivko Darakchiev, and refers to *Playtime* and the six sequences of Jacques Tati's film which came out in 1967. Serendipity may sometimes get it just right: *Playtime and Playland* – a time and a place for living.

6. "When children play, they are acting like writers, in so far as they are creating a world as they see it, or rather they are arranging this world in a way that they like... They take play seriously. The opposite of play is not seriousness, but reality." S. Freud quoted by Maud Mannoni, *La théorie comme fiction*, Paris, Seuil, 1979, p.62.

7. "Evidently I am making a clear distinction here between the meaning of the noun "play" and the verbal noun form "playing"." D.W.Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, first published by Tavistock, London, 1971)

8. [ibid. Cf. chapter IV *Playing. Creative Activity and the Search for the Self*. Note too that Winnicott's frequent preference for the gerundive or verbal noun (such as *dreaming, fantasising, being or living*) might also be said to characterise the style of *People Pebble*.





PLAYLAND:
**COMMUNITY
PROJECTS**

Jim Shea

Playland's public engagement programme introduced a range of often marginalised communities to ways in which the preoccupations and skills of contemporary artists can help us reflect on and mark change. Participants were attracted both through partnering organisations which work within the community and by the artists who led the activities.

In Folkestone, Nicholette Goff had been building creative relationships with people who live in the harbour area by developing arts projects and exhibitions in non-gallery spaces. Goff's involvement in Playland was fundamental in accelerating this process, engaging many more people for the first time from the harbour area and revealing community champions who could forge sustainable relationships within the town during and beyond the project.

Margate's town centre is undergoing great change. Once a thriving tourist destination, the town has recently undergone cultural regeneration led by the creation of Turner Contemporary and small creative businesses which have grown up alongside it. Out of town shopping destinations

have created the opportunity to refocus the use of buildings in the town centre. At the local Museum, Sharon Haward brought together long-standing residents of the town to mark this change by sharing memories and stories prompted by objects and photographs from the Museum's collection.

St. Leonards-on Sea has long welcomed new communities to the town where The Links Project, a multi-agency support and advice programme for refugees, asylum seekers and new migrant communities in Hastings & St Leonards, works with the local authority and Hastings Voluntary Action to provide and coordinate services. Nicole Zaaroura had worked on two previous photography projects and exhibitions with Links' clients, and, through Playland, she and Sharon Haward re-kindled this association to engage refugees who had now made their homes in St Leonards to reflect on how their relationships with the town had changed and developed since arriving.

Coastal Enterprises is run by West Sussex County Council and is a day care service provider for people with learning disabilities in West Sussex. It encourages and supports customers to take their places in their own localities, contributing to society and their local environment. Its customers worked with Gary Goodman to express through art their personal relationships with Worthing.

Carers Centre Brighton provides support for young people who spend time caring for family members and as such often find themselves isolated from friends and have limited social lives. Through talking, writing, drawing and photography,

poet and dramatist Evlynn Sharp encouraged young carers to reflect on how they had adapted to events and changes in their lives that friends of their age might know very little about, or understand.

For each interpretation of Playland, the installation was given a subtitle which reflected the nature of its local public engagement project, more details of which can be found in the following pages.

By introducing or re-acquainting participants and audiences with the characteristics of their neighbourhoods through culture and the arts, the public engagement programme provided the opportunity for participants and audiences both to embrace and to challenge their ideas about diversity and cultural difference. By involving participants in experiences that they had not before encountered, but which drew on familiar themes of location and community, we hope that participants came to see creativity as a driver to inspire and empower.

Lead artist Nicholette Goff lives and works in Sandgate, a coastal community adjacent to Folkestone. She targeted people who lived in one of the most deprived wards in Folkestone and one which had experienced significant economic change since the loss of the ferry services, the opening of the Channel Tunnel and the decline of the fishing industry. These local residents did not normally visit arts events or participate in workshops. Neither did they use the new restaurants and shops that have opened in their immediate area of Folkestone Harbour. Goff's aim was to invite people from this community to recount personal memories about changes they had witnessed in Folkestone over the last few decades and present these stories as a local counterpoint, or foil, to Jivko Darakchiev's film *People Pebble*.

PLAYLAND:
**RE-IMAGINING
COMMUNITIES**

Nicholette Goff

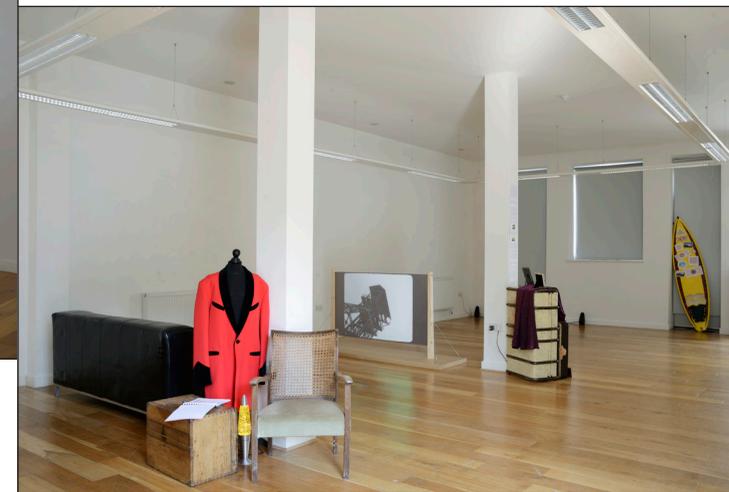
To encourage the participation of this hard to reach community, Goff spoke to the regulars of The True Briton pub in the harbour area, a location she and other artists from North Lane Studios had organised previous exhibitions. Over a period of a month, these initial conversations resulted in 22 recorded interviews covering a very wide

range of opinions and accounts. Three workshops took place to encourage participants to share their stories and draw out interesting elements that could be presented as vignettes or assemblages of objects brought together in an installation juxtaposed with Darakchiev's film at Brewery Tap Gallery. The participants' continuing involvement was encouraged by local resident Cath Mison who became an advocate for the project and an invaluable ambassador for *Playland: Re-imagining communities*. As Mison stated, "We are making a bridge between art and the local community".

Of the 25 people who contributed their stories, photographs and objects for the installation, 18 stated that they would not usually visit an art exhibition and would definitely not expect to be in one. At the launch event, one participant said, "look, it's all real Folkestone People here". As a legacy to mark the importance of the local contribution, a self-published book was produced with some of the stories included and illustrated with photographs by Folkestone Camera Club members.

Participating storytellers: Alan, Billie, Cally, Calvin, Cath, Chris, Cynthia, Danny, Dave, Dick, Fiona, Florence, Helen, Joe Mison, Paul, Surf Dude, The 3 Amigos, Trev, Trevor

Photographers from Folkestone Camera Club: Melanie Chalk, Mary Gerard, Andy Smith





PLAYLAND:
A SENSE
OF
PLACE

Sharon Haward

Artist Sharon Haward led two workshops in Margate under the title of Memory & Souvenir Afternoons. Through a previous project in Margate in 2015, Haward had links with Margate Museum so this venue became both a base and a source of inspiration for the workshops.

The first workshop on 10 September was held during Heritage Open Days weekend and capitalised on the Museum's increased audience. Local people who had seen the online promotional material and random visitors also contributed to the workshop. The second workshop took place on 24 September and in both workshops Haward offered tea and cake in exchange for stories and images. Some participants brought along objects and memorabilia that had some relationship to Margate and these were documented photographically. Other members of the public told stories that reflected their experiences of growing up in Margate or their ongoing relationship with the town. Some people revealed long term family relationships with Margate going back several generations. Through these shared stories, it was evident that dramatic changes had taken place during the last several decades and that Margate's image in the 21st century had been transformed by cultural regeneration.

These stories were paired with related images, either from photographs taken during the workshops or from exhibits at Margate Museum. The images and text were presented as photo panels revealing different aspects of the town and its population. The panels were installed at Limbo Arts project space alongside Darakchiev's work, further developing the narrative of people's relationship with landscape, heritage and community.

A sense of place extended to Margate Station with the installation of Haward's large format photo montages in the waiting room on Platform 1 with other images installed throughout the station. This additional intervention increased access to Haward's work, highlighted the collections at Margate Museum, celebrated Margate residents' knowledge of their town while positioning contemporary art in the public space. Locating the work at Margate station has ensured access to high quality art for both local residents and visitors to Margate.

Workshop participants: Rita Brown, Diana Childs, Ian Dickie, Vaughan Lewis, Clive Morris
Museum Volunteers: Carol and Grace.



Artist Nicole Zaaroura worked with Sharon Haward to develop participation by The Links Project, a weekly drop-in session for refugees, asylum seekers and migrant communities, based in St Leonards-on-Sea. The artists met with people who had participated in previous photo projects at Links with the aim of creating an extension of their previous experience and something that would now fit the ethos and framing of Playland. The previous project had also explored themes around sense of place, border and space so there was a natural connection to this new project. Discussion took place with 4 people from Bulgaria, Estonia and Uganda, 3 people chose to participate.

It was important that the group chose a location that held meaning for them and Alexandra Park was chosen. This was a place that they frequented, a place that held memories and that had become a location for meetings. *There and here* began with an expedition to Alexandra Park, exploring paths, mapping movements and new approaches to the familiar. The connections proved interesting and provided the participants with a diverse map to explore, rooted in relationship, location and personal shifts.

Workshop participants:
Victoria Crystal, Lyudmila Georgieva, Igor Palmik

PLAYLAND:
**THERE
AND HERE**

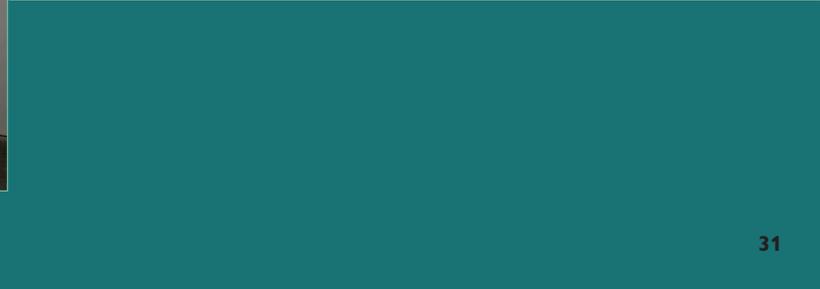
Nicole Zaaroura
& Sharon Haward

The group took numerous photographs in Alexandra Park and with Zaaroura each of them selected a small number for printing. Alongside the photographs, Haward filmed the participants as they explored the park, recording their interactions with objects, pathways and each other. The group said that they felt that the experience of taking photographs connected them in a different way to this familiar location and they wanted to return to produce more photographs as part of their own community group's activities. Through conversations with the group, the artists learned about Bulgarian culture and had a better understanding of the migrant communities. An added dimension for the group was in knowing that the artist Jivko Darakchiev was Bulgarian and that their contribution to *Playland* had equal value as his film.

At *Playland's* opening, one participant gave a passionate speech about the power of art within local communities and another participant said that his involvement in the project made him want to find opportunities to exhibit his own work. Two participants, sisters, made traditional Bulgarian cakes and there was a genuine sense of ownership for the project.

The artists discovered that by remaining open to participants' ideas and interpretations, a balance was maintained in the relationship between the group and the artists/organisers which optimised a high level of engagement.





PLAYLAND:
**PEOPLE AND
 COMMUNITIES**

Gary Goodman

Lead artist Gary Goodman lives and works in Worthing. He is a painter and poet who exhibits in the UK and internationally. He was invited to work with people who attend West Sussex County Council's Coastal Enterprises Day Centre in Worthing. The organisation provides services for people with learning disabilities in West Sussex.

Through meetings and discussion with Anthony Griffiths, Community Connector at Coastal Enterprises and a group of the Centre's customers, it was decided that the 4 half day workshops would focus on visual art. In order to create works which celebrated identity and a sense of place, it was decided to concentrate on self-portraits using acrylic paints and townscapes using simple monoprint techniques.

Six customers from Coastal Enterprises took part in the October and November workshops. The 1st session explored self-portraits using paint on cut-out cardboard geometric shapes which were joined together to create self-portrait figures. In the 2nd and 3rd sessions, Goodman and the customers created 2D self-portraits and paintings of their favourite possessions and/or places in Worthing.

For the final part of the project, the customers chose to concentrate on Worthing architecture, selecting buildings they felt were iconic to the town or were especially liked by the customers. The selected buildings were photographed by Goodman which were used as references for the customers' mono-prints. In addition, the customers helped to select several black and white prints from Worthing Museum's collection which could be presented alongside their own work for *Playland* at Worthing Museum & Art Gallery.

All of the participants were very enthusiastic about the project. They felt that each work they attempted was a task to be completed and as such, they gave careful consideration to composition, colour and line. This resulted in images that were joyous and uplifting, celebrating self and place through sophisticated use and juxtaposition of colour and subtle mark making.

Self portraits and monoprints:

Louise Buckley
 Matthew Cook
 Ann Ellis
 James Gibson
 Stephen Moore
 Simon Watts

*Selectors of prints from the
 Museum's permanent collection:*

Richard Bedwell
 Anthony Griffiths
 Steve Hill
 Christine Samuel
 Clive Smith
 Simon Watts





Evlynn Sharp, Brighton based performance poet, dramatist and creative arts facilitator worked with young carers and their support worker from The Carers Centre in Brighton. Over two workshop sessions the participants reflected on how they had adapted to events and changes in their lives that friends may know very little about or understand.

The 2 six hour workshop sessions took place on 15 & 17 April 2017, the 1st was held at Phoenix Brighton and the 2nd at St Luke's Church Hall, Queens Park, Brighton. Sharp led discussions about how the young carers could use drawing and writing to express their ideas about themselves. Topics of discussion included the people the young carers cared for, other family members, friends, hopes and fears, favourite places and possessions.

Initially the young carers chose to focus on drawing and to expand their conceptual and practical skills, Sharp introduced ideas on shapes, abstraction and collage combined with words. Some images were created that were essentially text. At the end of the session, Sharp discussed the ways in which the young carers might express themselves through simple poems or prose. The group was interested to develop this further and began with short non-rhyming poetry. They worked through themes such as 'Who am I?', 'How do I feel most of the time?', 'Love'.

The 2nd workshop at St Luke's Church Hall also allowed access to St Luke's Church which the group found intriguing and they produced some architectural sketches. Most of the

session was spent on developing ideas of self, relationships and place through poetry. Imagining techniques were used to think about talking to others about ourselves, how the young carers would tell things they had never shared with others, thinking that no one would ever read the poems and imagining their poems would be broadcast to the public. Through this methodology, the session produced some intricate detailed poems.

An additional experience for the young carers was the St Luke's organist playing some pieces for them and agreeing to one young carer recording the music on her mobile phone. The young carers said they really enjoyed working at St Luke's, using the spaces and hearing the organist.

At the conclusion of the workshops, Sharp noted that the young carers found it easier to produce emotion packed poetry than create drawings to give insights into their young lives. The small number of participants allowed Sharp to give individual attention which resulted in better poetry. The young carers felt that through participating in the project they had been made to feel important and listened to, especially as their work would be included in *Playland*.

Workshop participants: Amira, Maggie, Tammy (support worker)

PLAYLAND:
**TIME FOR
OURSELVES**

Evlynn Sharp

HERE Amira

Here is the smell of fresh paint and wood chips,
And here is the echo of footsteps.

Here is the sound of laughter
Squeezed into a too-small room.

Here is five of us sitting in a room made for three
But still all belonging.

Here is the laughter and the memories.

Here is the endless sheet music
Falling off music stands like autumn leaves.

Here is picking it back up for the fifth time.

Here is cold but we keep each other warm
With baking and hugs.

Here is too hot but we keep each other cool
With fresh water bottles and wide open windows.

Here is tuning for half an hour.

Here is breaking strings and breaking hearts.
Here is mending guitars and mending friendships.



WORD OF ME

Maggie

Sad in my mind;
Sad,

Sad,
Sad,

At night,
I don't know,

Sad in my room;
Sad in my body;

Sad in my feet;
No other clues.



THE WOMAN I AM

Tammy

**The woman who draws
Who paints
And makes shapes**

**Who is strong
Who does handstands
Knows the plants**

**Grows flowers
Always swimming in the sea
And singing**



ARTISTS & CURATORS

Jivko Darakchiev (born in Bulgaria 1986) is a visual artist currently based in Paris. He lived in New York for 17 years where he finished his studies in film direction and cinematography at New York University's Tisch School for the Arts. He then worked in the Brooklyn-based production company Dawn of Man. In 2013, he completed his post diploma at Le Fresnoy Studio National des arts contemporains in northern France. In parallel to his practice, he organises creative workshops in schools. His work has been presented in numerous international film festivals and galleries and was broadcast on ARTE (the French-German arts and culture TV channel). Darakchiev is a 2015 laureate of the French Institut's 'Hors les Murs' programme for his ethnofiction film *Popfolktales*. Darakchiev's work, may it take the form of film, photography or multimedia installation, tends to the basic aspects of human behaviour, our syndromes of being and of doing, the objects we use – as much those specific to a certain place and time as those universal to everyone. These daily gestures

are orchestrated so as to establish among them unexpected relationships, often absurd, sometimes humorous. Through patient attention and the re-appropriation of the everyday, what is familiar can be interpreted anew.
www.jivko.org

Perrine Gamot is a photographer and visual artist currently based in Paris. She studied art and photography at Grenoble's Fine Art school, Famu – photography and TV school in Prague and graduated from the University of Rennes. Since 2009, she has collaborated as an art director and advisor with various cultural venues such as the art-science department of CNES (France's space agency) or Laboratoire de la creation, to create various curatorial projects. As of 2012, she has worked together with artist and filmmaker Jivko Darakchiev in writing and directing documentary and experimental films.

Christine Gist lives and works in Hastings/ St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex. She is an artist, curator and visual arts project manager with extensive experience of

working with artists, public agencies and private organisations across the South East region and mainland Europe. As both an artist and curator, Gist's practice is concerned with temporary interventions which utilise redundant sites, animating these anonymous locations to create alternative narratives. Since 2013 she has initiated and delivered a series of visual arts projects at The SPACE in St Leonards-on-Sea, a disused outdoor site owned by Network Rail. These interventions and community events are frequently inspired by the context of the town and its architectural heritage. Gist has recently initiated 'cabinet/armoire', a satellite venue for artists' projects at Médiathèque de Moule, a commune close to the French town Saint-Omer.
<http://christinegist.wordpress.com>

Nichollette Goff lives and works in Sandgate, Kent and is a founder member of North Lane Studios. She has a BA (Hons) Fine Art and an MA in Art Criticism & Theory. Her work is based in the natural environment, exploring both the concepts and the living realities of change and loss

in the landscape. Her activity is making imprints on paper and small plaster casts of wild plants that are critically endangered or under threat of extinction. Goff has been 'Artist in Residence' on a number of protected sites around the UK – Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), privately owned gardens, wild forests and designated Nature Reserves. In the process she has become drawn into the complex questions posed by those who are the managers and protectors of the landscape. In 2005, Goff was in residence on the nature reserve of Veranka, Hungary where she made prints of rare plants growing in the 8km x 5km reserve. Two of the pieces she made during the residency are now in the collection of the Cifrapolata museum in Kecskemet, Hungary. In 2011/12, Goff undertook year-long residency based on the Romney Marshes and Dungeness Peninsula. She set up a 'Field Laboratory' – a tent to provide shelter while she worked, but also a place where passers-by could drop in to ask questions, tell their own stories and make their own prints. Her most memorable moments are: printing a plant in the mud on the banks of the Danube; printing 18th

century plants with a garden roller at Gainsborough's House; and commissioning the DNA profile of the last wild Stinking Hawk's beard in the UK. www.nicholletgoff.co.uk

Gary Goodman lives and works in Worthing, West Sussex. He is a painter and poet, often producing his best work when he's at a loose end. He has exhibited in numerous places internationally and teaches at various colleges and universities. He runs workshops in drawing, painting, printmaking and poetry. Goodman performs his poems live and sometimes records them with a variety of musicians. He likes animals, thunderstorms and many other things which are often included in his paintings and writing. <https://garygoodman.wordpress.com>

Antonio Guzmán is a contemporary art critic and art historian and has been published throughout Europe and in Canada. Colombian by origin, he studied at New York University and the Universidad de Madrid and later graduated from the School for Advanced Studies in the Social

Sciences (EHESS, Paris). During the 1980s he was Director of the Franco-American Institute and taught at the Arts Training and Research Unit (UFR) at the Université de Rennes 2 and curated the University's gallery Art et Essai. He was Director at the School of Fine Arts in Valenciennes from 1991 until 2003, where he founded l'Aquarium art gallery and les éditions de l'Aquarium agnostique. He was Director of the National School of Fine Arts of Nancy, from 2004 until 2010, where he founded the galerie Nancy thermal and les éditions du Parc. From 2010 to 2016, He was professor of methodology and research at the National School of Fine Arts of Bourges.

A member of several French and international committees, including the International Association of Art Critics (IACA), the French National Committee for the Equivalence of Diplomas, the Consulting Committee for the Visual Arts of Canada, the Acquisitions Committee of the Nord/Pas de Calais Contemporary Regional Art Fund (FRAC), he was photography assessor for the fund for the encouragement of creativity (FIACRE,

Ministère de la Culture). Guzmán's writings are widely documented and the majority of his texts can be found at Institut national de l'histoire de l'art (INHA), Paris. www.archivesdelacritiquedart.org/outils_documentaires/critiques_d_art/451

Sharon Haward is based in Hastings and works in site responsive ways in the UK and Europe. Working in new and unknown places provides a stimulus for new discoveries and ways of thinking about the relationship between the artist, location and local narratives. Haward's projects often include a site-specific element and depend on a multi-disciplinary approach. Interventions range from single objects forging a relationship to the site or an assemblage of objects and ideas presented through a range of media such as projection, structure, sound, photography. Haward's work often creates an environment that enables audiences to have an embodied experience of space and expands the usual reading of a site. The creation of installations and interventions is informed by a range of sources including Pallasmaa's critiques on contemporary architecture and its often

indifference to a human experience of space and the built environment. There is also evidence of a phenomenological approach whereby materials and sensory experiences are highlighted and recent interests include research into the contributions women have made to the evolution of modernism. Working with artists and curators from Europe and UK, Haward has produced installations in abandoned, empty and public spaces in the UK, Belgium, France and Norway, including a chalet, an electrical substation, a Victorian fort, a de-commissioned fire station and a railway station. Projects and collaborations realised over the last ten years include those created for established galleries – Art Gene, Towner, Sassoon Gallery and artist-run spaces. Haward completed a Fine art degree at Newcastle University and recently graduated with distinction from the University of Brighton with an MA in Digital Media Arts. www.sharonhaward.com

Evlynn Sharp lives in Brighton and is a Glasgow-born poet, dramatist and creative arts facilitator. She has a deep

appreciation of people and places and her project with artist Sally Booth, *Edges and Extremes – Shetland and Cornwall: people, place, industry* led to exhibitions and poetry performances at Tate Modern, the Scottish Parliament, Shetland Museum and Archives and Geevor Tin Mine. The BBC has recorded and broadcast Sharp's poems and translations of the mystical poetry of Rumi and Hafez with Afghan writer Karim Haidari. Her poems have also been broadcast on other radio stations including Riverside fm at Riverside Studios. As a visiting lecturer, she has taught creative writing and has had numerous residencies in prisons, hospitals and colleges. She has worked with female survivors of domestic violence, refugees, unpaid carers and marginalised young people. Her projects have developed from partnerships with various institutions including The National Archives, Kew Gardens, MIND, The Metropolitan Police Service, Art on the Underground, Whitechapel Gallery and Tate Britain. Sharp's writing has included *Breaking the Silence* from a project with Exiled Writers Ink! and Somali women, culminating in performances at the Soho

Theatre and Birmingham Repertory Theatre. She is a published poet and her works have featured in magazines, are held in collections and on CD. Sharp is also a photographer and her images have been included in *Crossover Voices*, whispers, shouts, echoes – words from homeless people... She believes we can all find a voice for self-expression, exploring our life journeys and our relationship to each other in the mirror of ourselves.

<https://www.newwritingsouth.com/creative-learning-team?item=31>

Jim Shea develops arts and cultural projects that embed curiosity, imagination and critical awareness. He has created and toured contemporary visual arts exhibitions and commissioned public art projects. Shea's work advocates the artistic and creative benefits of the arts and cultural activities alongside their broader social and economic impacts. He believes that the arts contribute strongly to uplifting, inviting and inspiring environments and that these experiences can be embedded by deepening people's understanding and appreciation of what it's like to make and

share work and by broadening audiences' experiences of artists' processes. Recent projects include *Reading the South*, a collaboration of public library services in the south of England which encouraged new ways to engage people in reading and creative writing by engaging local communities directly with contemporary published writers and visual artists in libraries.

www.jamesheare.co.uk

Nicole Zaaroura is a UK artist based in St Leonards-on-Sea, working across installation, photography, sound, text, moving image and performance in public, private locations and 'borrowed spaces'. She studied at St Martins – BA Fine Art and Northumbria University – MA Fine Art and has exhibited in a range of gallery and non gallery spaces. Her practice, process led, includes singular projects, residencies, collaborations and focuses on an investigation of encounter, trespass and parameter, and the echoes of intimacy within private and public 'spaces'. She has worked site specifically across the UK, Canada and Finland. More recently she

has initiated solo projects to explore the processes and translations of performing site responsive work, and *A Film in my Pocket...* took her through the Balkans, where she performed a chain of site responsive untethered projections via a mobile phone projector within the cities of Mostar, Sarajevo, Tirana and Athens. (Images and Q&A published in *Philosophy of Photography* – Intellect Books). As part of a current collaborative partnership research project, 'Residency 365' with artist Louise Kenward, ongoing research has formed a structure of residencies and temporal interventions that have taken place between the UK, Belgium and northern France. As an artist, Zaaroura has worked extensively with groups of refugees, asylum seekers and BME groups at The Links Project, creating and delivering responsive, experimental photography workshops and exhibitions.

<https://residency365.wordpress.com>

PARTICIPATING VENUES

We should like to extend our thanks to the people associated with the wide range of gallery and community engagement organisations and spaces involved in *Playland*:

Playland: Re-imagining communities

The Brewery Tap, 53 Tontine Street, Folkestone CT20 1JR 08-25 September 2016

Dr Terry Perk, Associate Head of School: Fine Art & Photography, Reader in Fine Art and Course Leader MA Fine Art and MA Curatorial Practice, University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury

Playland: A sense of place

Limbo Arts, 2 Bilton Square, High Street, Margate CT9 1EE 06-23 October 2016

Paul Hazelton, artist and founder/former Director, Limbo Arts

Ian Dickie,

Margate Museum, Market Place, Margate CT9 1ER

Playland: There and here

Electro Studios Project Space (ESPS), Seaside Road St. Leonards-on-Sea TN38 0AL

03-20 November 2016

Colin Booth, artist and coordinator

The Links Project

Concordia Hall, Church Road, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex, TN37 6HB
Marc Turczanski, Coordinator

Playland: People and communities

Worthing Museum and Art Gallery, Chapel Road, Worthing BN11 1HP
17 December 2016-22 April 2017

Emma Walder, Curator, Art

Coastal Enterprises

Brougham Road, Worthing. BN11 2NU
Anthony Griffiths, Community Connector

Playland: Time for ourselves

Gallery Lock In, Little Western Street, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 2PU
27 June -2 July 2017

Bethan Troakes, Curator

The Carers Centre for Brighton & Hove

18 Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT
Elizabeth Freeman, Young Carers Team Manager

Phoenix Brighton

10-14 Waterloo Place, Brighton BN2 9NB
Sarah Davies, Interim Executive Director

St Luke's Church Hall

Queen's Park Road, Brighton BN2 9ZB
Deacon Julie Newson

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