

2022: A Year In Review

FOLKESTONE FRINGE

At Folkestone Fringe, the year of 2022 began with the continued collaboration between FF and 2 arts organisations - one based in Leipzig, Germany and the other in Hawick, Scotland under the Platform '**Cultural Bridges**'. With the previous exuberance and tremendous output of energy into the community that defined Folkestone Triennial and our events that surrounded it, this year's beginnings for the organisation were slightly softer, reflective and more internal. In hindsight, it was just the thing that was needed to regain balance and to re-evaluate our ways of working. In addition to ours, seven projects were delivered as part of the Cultural Bridge Pilot Programme, which aims to promote cross-border cooperation between the four UK nations and Germany. FF had been selected alongside Fine Arts Institute Leipzig (FAIL) - Leipzig, & Alchemy Film & Arts - Hawick, to deliver our project entitled BRIDGET 'Building Better Bridges'. Our weekly meetings with both organisations were characterised by connecting with each other through play, candidness and sharing. Instead of producing a



single project together, we instead chose to hone in on our relationship with each other and the things that naturally evolved from it. From this, so many valuable perspectives were expressed, learnt from, challenged and explored through meaningful conversation and activities.

Smaller projects and collaborations also organically arose that we eventually were able to carry out in a way that was defined by the clarity and understanding we had built with each other virtually, both as organisations and individuals. This collaboration continued throughout the year, with the frequency and contexts of our workshops and meetings fluctuating and working around our

individual commitments as organisations. When we finally met each other in the flesh in Leipzig at the end of May, it felt as surreal as ever having only known most of each other in 2D, yet there was simultaneously a knowing that it was always going to come to this - despite the delay the pandemic had granted us. Unsurprisingly, our virtual selves had set the foundation for relations between each other that felt open and easy. However, FAIL's brilliant hosting allowed us to learn so much about one another, and find an even more meaningful connection to each other's work than our online sessions allowed. (You can read a fuller overview of what the trip entailed on our website).

Luckily, we had the opportunity to meet the FAIL team in person just over a month before, for our experimental sound festival, **Profound Sound** in Folkestone, where their performance encapsulated all they stood for and what we had come to learn from them - embracing fear, through engaging the community with music in an explorational way. It fit perfectly into PS, and we were beyond grateful for our Cultural Bridge project to collide so seamlessly with this one, which we had been working towards in the preceding months of the year. Profound Sound 2022 was all about bringing together Folkestone's community to experience the joy of live music and performance in a collective way, it was about giving people the opportunity to

be involved in something a little bit out of their comfort zone, or ordinary routines, allowing oneself to be submerged, together with their community in something bold, different and exciting. Curated in collaboration with Hot Salvation and Phantom Limb, the spring festival weekend saw an array of local and international artists immersing us all. On Friday night, the live drums of Folkestone resident and solo band member of Colossal Squid, Adam Betts wowed everyone with his insane ability. He was accompanied with the Indonesian duo Senyawa and the Berlin-based Frankie and her wildly impressive



cello performance. Saturday night opened with the electronic genius and locally based Cherif Hashizume, followed by Claire Rousay coming all the way from Los Angeles and —__—__ (More Eaze & Seth Graham). These music acts that unfolded at the Creative Folkestone Quarterhouse were also surrounded by performances and screenings along Tontine Street.

DJ sets, experimental film screenings, audio visual trails and performances such as that of FAIL Institute made for the most immersive weekend experience. Looking back, PS 2022 truly felt like it brought the communities around Folkestone together to experience experimental music communally and joyfully.





In the summer of 2022, the 3.5m puppet **Little Amal** came back to Folkestone as part of 'The Walk - New Steps, New Friends', and we worked in collaboration with Origins Untold through Refugee Week to involve the Folkestone community in her return. Amal had begun her journey around the UK in Folkestone last year, and the town's reception of the monumental puppet was extraordinary. This year, she returned to the place where it all started with a strong yet simple message of hope. To mark her arrival in Folkestone, The Walk put forward a simple question; what would you take with you, if you had to leave your home?' To involve children like Amal in Folkestone, FF team put together a Refugee Week lesson plan for children in Years 5 and 6, where this

question was answered by each child, their responses written on strips of ribbon that were later displayed amongst the installation where Little Amal arrived and interacted with Folkestone's residents. On June 27th, Sunny Sands was transformed; the scattered furniture across the beach as the sun set and waves splashed in the backdrop of the scene, immediately brought a sense of empathy and deep reflection upon us. We were grateful to be able to facilitate the space for this much needed reflection and conversation once again.

This spirit of activism through art continued through to July, where we collaborated with Good Chance Theatre for an international Afghanistan kite-flying event called **Fly With Me**. Folkestone Fringe co-curated the event, as well as the kite-making workshops leading up to it, with Creative Folkestone, which engaged children and families around Folkestone as well as the Afghan community in celebrating their culture through the art of kite-making. The event took place in various towns and cities all over the world on Saturday 20th August, marking one year to the day, since the

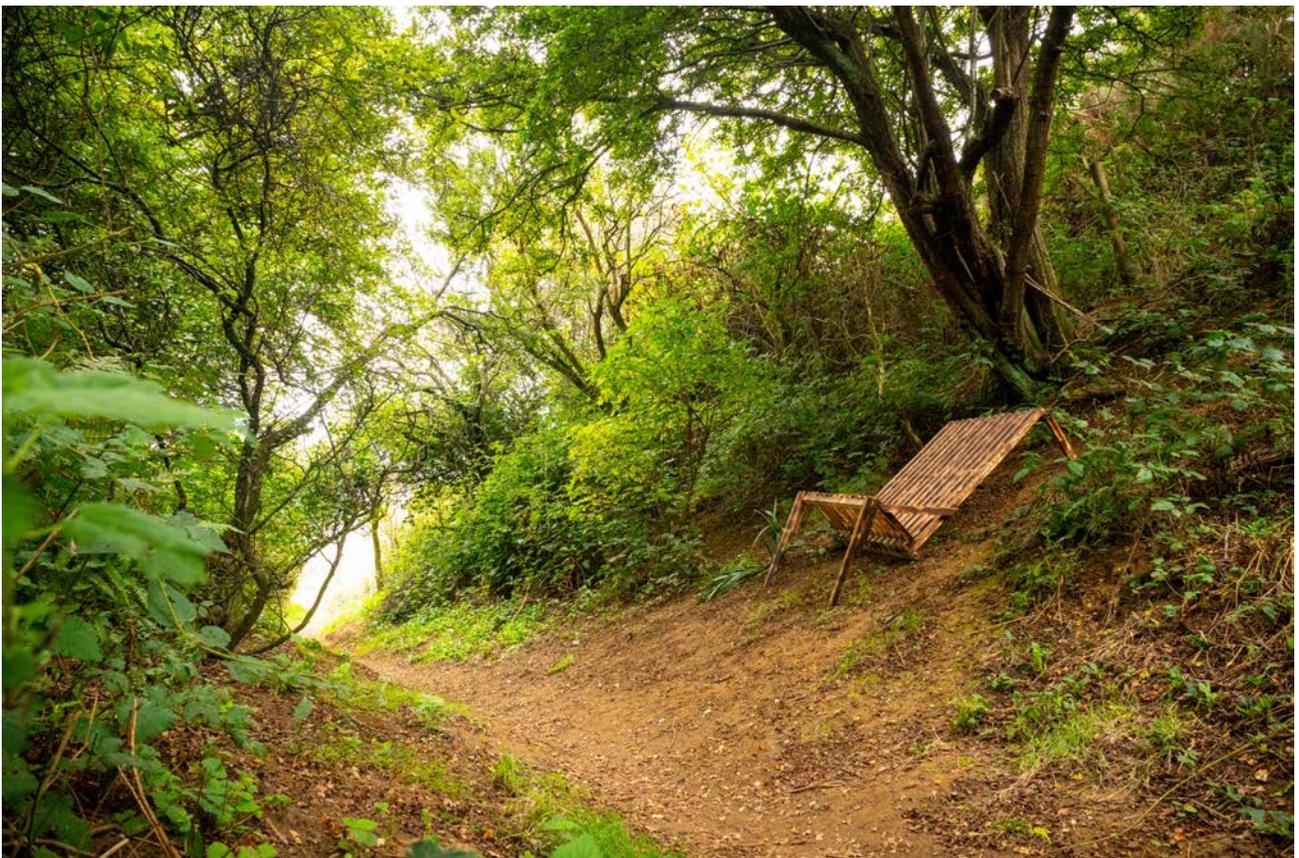


Taliban fell. We were also lucky enough to host 2 Afghan sisters, Jamila and Halima together with their families in Folkestone, who provided storytelling and guidance throughout the workshops and the grand kite-flying event with such charisma - it was equally a privilege to listen to their own stories and experiences as individuals, and spend time with the sisters in the ways the festival allowed for.

As the summer days began fading away, the FF team honed in on preparing for **SALT + EARTH: Festival of Landscape, Seascape & The Environment** curated in collaboration with Creative Folkestone, to bring more awareness and a keenness to explore the diversity of the Kent Downs AONB. The festival that unfolded at the end of September, involved a weekend of artworks, walks, workshops, community gatherings and so much more, brought about by local artists, who were commissioned for their interaction and engagement with the Kent Downs, in the production of their work. The ways that artists were able to illustrate and demonstrate dis/connections to our environment and landscapes we live so closely amongst was immensely inspiring and thought provoking, something we continue to reflect on now, as well as the ways this festival can continue to instigate consideration alongside much needed action in the future.



An additional project that ran alongside and within SALT + EARTH Festival was incorporated within our partnership with **"MagiC Carpets"** - an EU "Creative Europe" platform uniting 20 European cultural organisations that create opportunities for emerging artists to embark on journeys to unknown lands and to create, together with local artists and local communities, new works. We were beyond delighted to learn that we would be included in this 3 year partnership once again, having been invited to be a part of the last one. It allowed us to welcome a new member to our team, Jacob Bray who's first project involved the curation of the work of Aaron Kopp, an Austrian based artist. In developing his work around the landscapes of Folkestone, he held a residency with Folkestone Fringe at various weeks at a time within the summer months, as well as throughout the festival weekend. A brilliant account of his work is documented on our website, in a write up produced by Chloe Robinson, entitled, 'Magic and Myths in Liminal Lands'. We look forward to the developments of our partnership with the Magic Carpets platform in the coming years...



As the year draws to a close, the FF team is both reflective of all that was accomplished this year, and full of energy for all that is to come in the year ahead. There are an abundance of moments beyond what has been highlighted, which we look back on with so much joy; new connections and relationships were ignited, present ones were nurtured, and

we're immensely grateful for all of it. We continue to be motivated and inspired by the ways we can create space for, and witness good art - which engages and immerses the communities it exists within in a meaningful way.

Here's to a dazzling year had, and an even more phenomenal one to come!