

Appendix 1 – Pandemic Online Offer

Compiled by the Collections & Exhibitions team:

As a result of the lockdown in March 2020, the team quickly pivoted to develop our virtual and online presence. This included the gallery's social media output, producing content on a near daily basis on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channels as well as several online exhibitions on the website, for the first time in its history. There was an attempt to cater to a range of audiences with content relating to our collection, exhibitions and educational activities, including families and young people, those with an interest in art history, Southampton residents and artists. Content was produced in a range of formats, with a mixture of image-led posts, videos and in-depth, long form content. Feedback to posts encouraging more interactive engagement has been positive, including polls inviting followers to choose collection works to be reproduced on digital screens in the city and a digital reconstruction of the gallery's Baring Room.



*Installation image of John Hitchens, Aspects of Landscape.
First online exhibition launched May 2020.*

Stats post April 2020 at a glance

On Facebook, the gallery gained a further 1,629 followers during the year. Since April 2020, when more staff were assigned to work on social media content Facebook posts have received a greater number of engagements (been clicked on, liked, shared) than each of the same months the year before. Over this period the gallery's posts have been seen 737,726 times, an increase from 412,029 over the same period in 2019. On the Gallery's Twitter feed from December 2018-19 there have been 164 tweets. This increased in the period December 2019-20 where we published 419 tweets with 379 coming after April. Twitter followers have increased by 437 to 3,677. The average proportion of those seeing tweets to responding ('engagement rate') increased by 0.7%. Our best engaged-with tweets had higher rates than the previous year with the average engagement rate for the most popular

tweet of the month went from 3.5% December 2018-19 to 9.8% December 2019-20. On Instagram we have 645 new followers since the end of April 2020.

Posts on Southampton

Instagram analytics reveal that around 45% of the account's followers are based in Southampton or Hampshire. Regular comments and shares of the Gallery's posts from Twitter and Facebook from members of the local community appear to echo their prominence amongst our digital audiences. Several series of posts across our channels aimed to tap into areas of the Gallery's activity with special relevance to the city. An example, is a collection of short video clips showing transitions between paintings of the local area in the collection and contemporary photographs of the same sites. The first, of the West Gate in the Old Town posted on 7 May performed very well on Instagram receiving 499 views, 149 likes, 5 shares, 5 saves, 4 comments. On Facebook, the same post reached over 1000 accounts and received 56 likes.



*Frank Rawlings Offer, The West Gate, Southampton, 1898, Oil on Canvas SOTAG:
435 'half and half' image as part of social media local places post, April 2020*

On Twitter, a post using Lowry's *The Floating Bridge* marking the anniversary of the last journey of the Woolston Floating Bridge received 60 likes, the highest of any tweet this year and was viewed 780 times. This was an excellent opportunity to direct followers with an interest in the city's history to the Southampton Stories Twitter account (the Museums NPO project) which had created a week-long collection of posts of artefacts and accounts of the bridge. The reaction to the Facebook version of the post included recollection from followers: 'My friend drove the final crossing', 'I remember me & my brother using the floating bridge twice a day for school often taking old bread to throw to the seagulls...we did this for years...'. On

this channel, 39 shares of the post including by several organisations helped it reach 17,000 accounts and achieved 1,600 engagements.

The Gallery has used its social media platforms to mark a number of other anniversaries of particular significance to the community. A post 80 years from the bombing of the Civic Centre on Facebook was shared 30 times. The same post on Instagram provoked reflective comments from followers expressing shock and sorrow and thanking the Gallery for directing them to the memorial in the Civic Centre. On Twitter, the commemoration in April of the Gallery's opening 81 years prior, featuring archive images of the event, was retweeted 14 times.



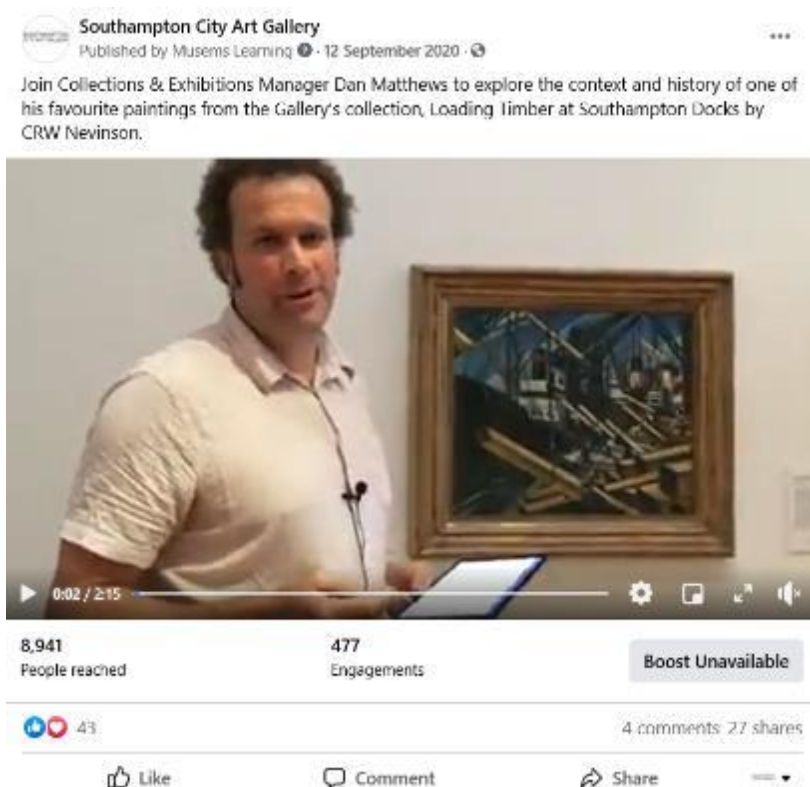
Public Art Instagram post on Kev Munday's Bedford Place road blocks, collaboration with Solent Showcase, funded by GO! Southampton and Southampton City Council, August 2020

Since May, the Gallery accounts have posted frequently on public art works which can be enjoyed whilst out in the city. This has taken an inclusive approach, spanning sculptures, murals, the decoration of street furniture, light installations and pub signs. As well as celebrating the local area, the project aimed to promote the art and visual culture available in spaces which are safe to visit during the pandemic. Response on social media has been positive, suggesting a resonance with those in the city. On Twitter, all public art posts have achieved a level of likes, retweets and comments significantly higher than the average for posts from December 2019 to December 2020. A 10 September Instagram post on Danny Lane's *Child of the Family* sculpture near the Civic Centre reached 823 accounts received positive feedback from the artist and a request for images for their archive. On Facebook, the remembrance Sunday themed public art post on David Benson's *Eve/Grief* sculpture on the

Kingsland Estate was shared 12 times reaching 3,245 accounts and receiving 139 engagements.

Posts on the collection

We have used lockdown to share the collection more widely using social media. Since Spring we have published several video talks written and delivered by staff. A particularly popular one, on CRW Nevinson's *Loading Timber at Southampton Docks* was shared by 27 Facebook accounts, reaching nearly 9000 different users who viewed it for a combined total of over 1000 minutes. From the summer, we have begun regular 'Main Hall Monday' posts giving some background on collection works hanging in the gallery. These have received regular positive feedback from our audiences. A Twitter post on Barry Flanagan's *Leaping Hare* in November was retweeted by a teacher to her A-level art, urging her students to go and visit the work for an upcoming sculpture project. On Instagram, our post on John Singer Sargeant's *Major EC Harrison as a Boy* reached 1,408 accounts, the third highest of the year at that point.



Facebook video of Dan Matthew's discussing CRW Nevinson, Loading Timber at Southampton Docks, 1917, Oil on Canvas, SOTAG: 1962/4, September 2020

Shortly after the pandemic began, the Gallery accounts started a daily series of posts themed on letters of the alphabet. The 'A-Z of the collection' featured a picture of a work with a short text about the work or its maker. This was an excellent way to learn more about the collection, during research for Stephen Conroy's *Self Portrait* (for the letter S) we managed to confirm the hitherto unknown date of the work and identify some of the objects depicted in the background. One particularly successful post was X for X-ray showing the Goldfinch present in the under drawing of Jacob

Jordaens' *The Holy Family*. This was shared 13 times on Facebook, reaching over 2000 accounts. Followers from across different accounts commented with praise for the series 'Bravo for these IG posts...I'm really enjoying them!...' 'I've really enjoyed your alphabet posts, enlivening lock down discovering new pieces and finding out more about familiar ones. Sorry you've reached Z but look forward to the next ones'.

During mental health awareness week in May, the Gallery accounts posted images of works selected by staff as those which bring them peace and solace alongside short personal accounts. These helped to promote the Gallery's *Calm in the Collection* online exhibition hosted on the website (N.B. the exhibition has already been planned to be on display in 2020, but was converted online in response to the pandemic and need to support people's wellbeing). Coming during the first lockdown at a time of heightened anxiety for many people, this appeared to be welcomed by followers. Several organisations retweeted our posts. Arts at the University of Southampton commented 'This from @ArtGallerySoton, sounds like just what we need right now'. The University of Cambridge Institution for Continuing Education's wrote with their retweet "Art can be a source #solace & strength in challenging times" sure can!'. Instagram's analytic show that 36% of the accounts reached on our most popular *Calm in the Collection* post were not existing Gallery followers, demonstrating the reach of the post to new audiences.

The Gallery also offered new perspectives on the collection through a week of posts dedicated to different colours in the rainbow, forming a 'Rainbow of Hope' dedicated to key workers in the pandemic. The posts picked out works with particularly dominant colours discussing associations between these colours, familiar objects, emotions or symbolism. This approach gave a different, potentially more universal way of discussing the collection and on the Gallery's Instagram landing page where all posts appear in a grid, this gave a very rich and untraditional rainbow effect with crops of the works alongside each. On Facebook this series of posts were seen by 7,000 different accounts and on Twitter received over 300 engagements.

Reaction to news of acquisitions over the year was also very strong. Our tweet informing followers that Greg Gilbert's work *Reverie of the Ward* was entering the collection had the best engagement rate of the year at 23% over the first week. On Facebook the news of acquisition of Nahem Shoa's *Gbenga Sitting on the Stairs* received 243 engagements and was greeted with some really positive comments including 'We play a game when going round the Gallery, deciding which painting we'd have if we could. *Gbenga Sitting on the Stairs* was our choice, too!' and 'stunning piece! Love the details in the background!'.



Artist Greg Gilbert retweets the Gallery's post on the acquisition of his drawing Reverie of the Ward, August 2020

Posts on Exhibitions

Despite significant periods of closure over the year, the Gallery has managed to bring exhibitions to our audiences online, uploading images of works, installation views, label text and additional resources to our website. One of the most successful of these was the biennial *Open Exhibition* which opened in August 2020. It invited contributors in the region to submit work themed on *Journeys, Migration and the Sea* inspired by the commemoration of the Mayflower's voyage 400 years ago. As well as contributing to Cultural Service's Mayflower 400 programme of commemorative events and online content, the exhibition also aimed to give a platform to local artists unable to exhibit in the usual way. One artist featured in the show commented on Instagram 'Though it's sad that this isn't in the gallery it made it more accessible to those who are still self isolating. A really good display of local talent and thank you for putting it on despite the difficult circumstances'.



Andrew Mills

Migrant workers – Urumqi, China

Photograph

Twenty percent of the population of China migrate for work leaving their homes for more than six months of the year. These Muslim workers wait outside the main station in Urumqi, Western China. People are allowed to enter the station only when their train is due. Urumqi in Xinjiang province is an area where hundreds of thousands of ethnic Uighur Muslims have been incarcerated in re-education camps.

Andrew Mills, Migrant Workers - Urumqi, China included as part of In Search of a New World, online open exhibition 2020 launched August 2020

Artist and curator Nahem Shoa opened his exhibition *Face of Britain* in September. We focused a lot of our online promotion on video content of him discussing works selected. One of the major themes of the exhibition is race and during Black History Month Nahem was invited to speak by several institutions, including Winchester School of Art, Black History Month South and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter. Content produced for these events was extremely beneficial in helping us forge links wider than our regular audiences. Of particular note was Nahem's panel discussion with Winchester School of Art which attracted over 40 attendees and has since been viewed over 130 times on YouTube. A regular Twitter hashtag the Gallery participates in is the Art UK #OnlineArtExchange where museums share works from UK collections following a set theme. Due to the nationwide participation, our online art exchange posts are regularly seen by more than 2,500 accounts. For the Black History Month themed exchange, we shared artist a painting by Desmond Haughton, whose work is also featured in *Face of Britain* and was an excellent opportunity to promote the exhibition.

Even under difficult circumstances the moving of John Hitchens' retrospective *Aspects of Landscape* was positively received. On Instagram the announcement that it was moving online received 120 likes and 5 comments including 'Thank you for the opportunity to view this fantastic exhibition. It has inspired me to investigate the artist and his work further'. The artist's Q&A event was also moved online and posted on social media, generating over 450 views on Facebook. As part of digital output for this exhibition, the Learning team produced an audio described tour for blind and visually impaired followers which received 800 hits.

During the period immediately before and during *Shadows and Light's* run, we were pleased to publish several images from installation and profiles of artists whose work was on display. On Instagram, a post over Christmas on David Batchelor's *Festival* received several good comments from visitors with children including 'My Son (7) loved this piece!. He dragged me away from the Mona Hatoum because I just HAD to see it!', 'Absolutely LOVED the Shadows and Light exhibition. This work in particular made us all ridiculously happy', 'Excellent baby sensory experience!'



Nahem Shoa discusses his exhibition Face of Britain as part of an online panel discussion with Winchester School of Art for Black History Month, October 2020

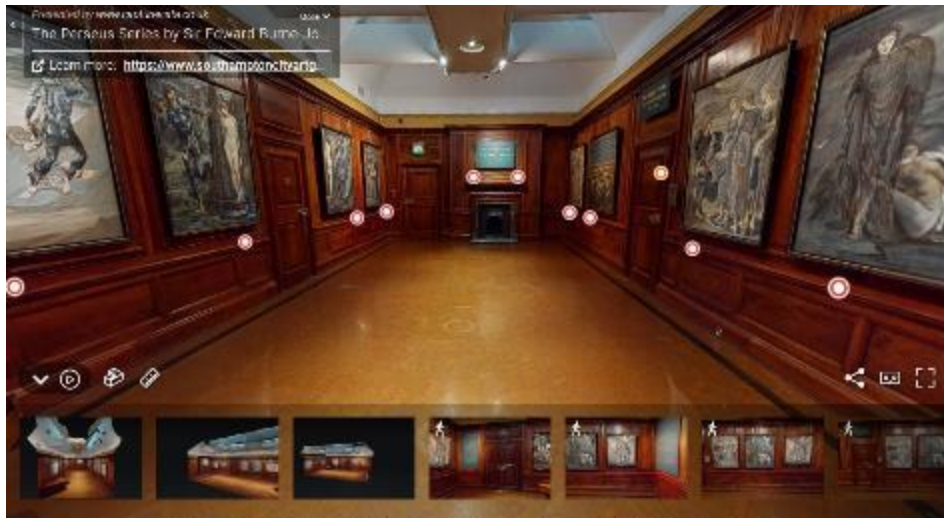
Posts on Learning

Our social media content on the collection, exhibitions and local area has served an educational function stimulating questions and discussion. These posts have also been helpful in directing followers to learning resources on our website, including art and craft activity sheets made for children at home during lockdown themed on works in the collection. On Facebook and Twitter, a weekly jigsaw post has encouraged audiences to look closely at works in the collection. The Gallery's jigsaw on *Fishermen on a Lee-Shore in Squally Weather* by JMW Turner was attempted by 100 different users the first time it was posted. One participant commented "This is amazing. Never done an electronic puzzle before. Took me a while to get the hang of clicking pieces in place. Loved it."

Between April and June, we published eight videos on Facebook instructing followers on craft activities with materials found around the house which received over 6000 views between them. We have also posted three tours of the collections and exhibitions by Learning staff on YouTube. These have been successful when shared to other channels too - the Facebook posting of our tour of Edward Burne-Jones' *Perseus Series* received 3,900 views. This paved the way for an interactive virtual Baring Room launched in December on the Gallery's website and which was successfully promoted via social media. On Twitter, the announcement of the virtual Baring Room was retweeted 19 times, which resulted in 14 link clicks through to the website. On Facebook, the equivalent post was seen by 1,700 accounts and gained 201 engagements.

The counterpart to the *Open Exhibition*, the online *Young People's Open*, gave a platform for artwork by schools in the city, focusing on the work of the learning team with pupils in the local area. The most successful of these on Facebook reached 2884 accounts and received 757 reactions. Another notable piece of Mayflower 400 related content was the announcement of the display of Deborah Goatley-Birch's *All About the Sea* made with pupils from Maytree Infant School in our Community Gallery space. This was posted on the Community Gallery page on our website and

featured a stop motion video of the making of the work. On Instagram, this was liked 119 times and, on Twitter, was retweeted 13 times.



Virtual Baring Room Edward Burne-Jones interactive online tour, launched December 2020