

The Shadowlight Artists LUI/III/OUS

Wendy Belcher
Tom Breach
Mark Hemsworth
Russell Highsmith
Richard Hunt
Lucy Skuce
Danny Smith

Edited by Chris Oakley & Richard Duriez 2021



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Lucy Skuce remote working with Chris Oakley on her installation **Blue Didcot A Power Station** Lucy Skuce, 2020

Introduction Chris Oakley The Shadowlight Artists are an established group of artists with learning disabilities based in Oxfordshire. LUMINOUS is their latest project, continuing the Shadowlight Artist's artistic and professional development. Film Oxford has supported the group since 2009, facilitating projects and group meetings through which the artists are able to achieve self-determination over their work and its exhibition. Partnering with Modern Art Oxford, Arts at the Old Fire Station and Together! 2012, LUMINOUS set out to provide the group with the opportunity to create a new body of work and bring it to audiences both locally and internationally.

LUMINOUS began in late summer 2019 and concluded at the beginning of 2021– a timeframe that was destined to be deeply affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges to the project brought about by the pandemic were far-reaching. People with learning disabilities are a group highly vulnerable to social isolation in normal times; this period has posed huge risks to the wellbeing of the Shadowlight Artists, in addition to the challenges of collaborative artistic production during a lockdown and bringing the resulting artworks to audiences in these circumstances. Against this background, and as a result of forced experimentation in terms of working methods and exhibition strategy, LUMINOUS succeeded. The project culminated with the exhibition of a new body of artistically ambitious new work by the group in November and December 2020, manifested as both physical exhibitions and virtual experiences.

This publication features writing that reflects the diverse perspectives of those that produced the project– those involved in the project's management and production, the professional artists who collaborated with the Shadowlight Artists in the creation of their work and an exhibitor's perspective of reaching audiences during lockdown. There are peer responses to the exhibition itself by disabled writers, and profiles of the Shadowlight Artists themselves and their responses to the lockdown experience.

Supporting the Shadowlight Artists has always been reliant on the efforts of volunteers alongside the professional support offered by Film Oxford's team, and those of the partner organisations Modern Art Oxford, Arts at the Old Fire Station and Together! 2012. Over the past year, the efforts of all those involved have been over and above any reasonable expectations, and the success of LUMINOUS is in no small part owed to all those involved.

The LUMINOUS Virtual Exhibition along with navigable 3D scans of the exhibitions at Modern Art Oxford and Arts at the Old Fire Station will remain available at shadowlightartists.org.uk/luminous-virtual-gallery/ until at least December 2021.

Shadowlight Artists Project Manager: Richard Duriez

Creative Consultant: Chris Oakley



Wendy Belcher and Russell Highsmith in **Portraits** Video still The Shadowlight Artists, 2019



The Friendly GiantMixed media on canvas
Richard Hunt, 2020



Untitled (Head)Acrylic and collage on paper Danny Smith, 2020

LUMINOUS: A Project in Lockdown

Chris Oakley

LUMINOUS started in late summer 2019, and was intended to be the latest in a series of developmental projects for the Shadowlight Artists. The project was conceived to offer the group an opportunity to extend their creative ambitions, deepen creative partnerships, and further their careers. With the group producing work through the period September 2019- September 2020, the project was to culminate in an exhibition across Oxford in winter 2020 with project partner Modern Art Oxford and Arts at the Old Fire Station, and a showcase at the high-profile disability arts festival Together! 2012 in London. In 2019, the timing seemed ideal: the 25th anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act was to fall close to the exhibition period, and the arts world was continuing to show signs of a growing commitment to disability arts. 2017-19 had seen the Shadowlight Artists raise their profile significantly with dialogue developing between the group and others both nationally and internationally, and members of the group having won significant arts awards; films by the group could even be occasionally be caught on daytime television. By the end of 2019, all of the artist's projects were at various stages of development – each Shadowlight Artist had paired with an established professional artist, everyone had a project outline and a plan to produce their work, and some were in active production.

As with any publicly-funded arts project, Film Oxford had to consider risks that could affect delivery as part of the planning process for LUMINOUS; unsurprisingly a global pandemic didn't feature in this risk assessment. Reports of the impact of Covid-19 began to filter through, and by February it became clear that this pandemic was likely to land on our doorsteps, no matter how inconceivable a national lockdown of the UK had seemed a month previously.

When the lockdown was announced on the 16th March 2020, the embryonic contingency plans I had been discussing with Film Oxford's project manager Richard Duriez suddenly looked incredibly fragile. This was not just an existential threat to the project, but also to the organisation. Film Oxford has been committed to supporting the Shadowlight Artists for over a decadewould this now need to go beyond artistic and professional development to step in with day-to-day support if other agencies failed? In the face of these questions, the completion of the project suddenly seemed a far less important consideration.

Ensuring the group's wellbeing became the top priority at this point. This took the form of arranging regular (often daily) welfare calls to the artists, who live in a wide range of circumstances: some quite independently, some with family, and some in supported residence. Some of the group were becoming very socially isolated, and this became an overriding concern. Much of this work was done by Richard Duriez, and

I also scheduled regular contact with some of the group as we began to tentatively think about how we could continue with at least some art production. Initially, Film Oxford arranged for supplies of art materials to be delivered to the artists– in the absence of anything else, this would at least offer some basic means of art production, and hopefully provide a daily focus for the artists.

By late April, plans were in place for most of the artists to continue their projects. Methods of remote collaboration were developed in part though trial and error, taking into account the varying access needs of each artist; some were comfortable and equipped to independently use video calling, others were more comfortable with telephone contact.

I worked with three of the artists (Wendy Belcher, Tom Breach and Lucy Skuce) on their projects, two of which benefitted from being film-based, whilst the third was a complex multimedia installation. I worked with Tom via Skype: we would plan each scene of his animation in a video call, and he would then create the artwork and send it to me via post (which operated at significant delay at that time); I would digitise the artwork and animate the scenes according to his direction, which he would then review and critique via further Skype calls. Normally we would have worked side-by-side at a workstation during this process, but it wasn't a terrible proxy, and Tom retained creative control. Once the lockdown eased in late summer, we were able to have a couple of socially distanced edit sessions to complete the project.

Wendy's film had fortunately been significantly advanced prior to lockdownall of the collaborative elements, having been created in terms of voiceover recording and greenscreen shoot, along with collaborative artwork creation sessions involving many of the Shadowlight Artists.

The film was an editing exercise at this point. Wendy was most comfortable using a smartphone and messaging apps, so I would send digital composites and edited clips via WhatsApp and we would talk these through via phone calls. As with Tom's film, we were ultimately able to arrange a socially-distanced edit session with some simple pick-up shooting in late summer, which gave Wendy the opportunity to make the edits she wanted. Both Wendy and Tom's films had a joyfully rebellious quality (often quite dark in the case of Tom's film) which provided a welcome sense of relief to the monotony of lockdown life. These two projects were also the ones least affected in terms of their artistic outcomes, as they remained very close to their originally scripted forms as written pre-crisis.

Producing Lucy's project during lockdown presented very real logistical and physical challenges to advance during the lockdown. Her project had advanced significantly by January 2019– Lucy had created the concept, and

together we had agreed a final design for an ambitious multimedia installation based on a model railway layout and incorporating live CCTV and steam generators to create a landscape based on the now-demolished Didcot power station and the associated railway. We had built the major structural elements, created three scale models of the iconic cooling towers, and begun work on the railway when the lockdown hit. Complicating matters further, my studio is 160 miles from Film Oxford, and is orientated towards digital and 2D production rather than the fabrication of large-scale 3D work.

I devised a plan to 'modularise' the remaining elements of the piece into a series of small units that would be incorporated into the whole once restrictions allowed me to visit Film Oxford. These units could be created on a tabletop in my studio with Lucy a party to the fabrication via Skype, able to give me feedback and specifications live. I found that using Skype on my smartphone was particularly useful, as I could easily move Lucy's viewpoint around a model and show her close-ups of details as they were worked on. It became increasingly that Lucy would principally engage in production in this way, with me and other workers as remote hands. Lucy was fairly satisfied with this method, which resulted in shorter individual working sessions, but at far greater frequency. Indeed, this practice continued once it was possible to access Film Oxford in the later summer as the piece was drawn to its completion because it was felt to be the most realistic Covidsafe option. Our sessions were also all recorded, which formed the basis for the documentary of Lucy's project and the additional film LUMINOUS: A **Project in Lockdown**, which came into being later.

All of the other Shadowlight Artists and their collaborators found ways of working through the first lockdown. Mark Hemsworth's project was severely limited by the fact that he was unable to carry out his normal photography walks, and further compounded by the fact that his collaborator, John Blythe, was is a shielding group. A sustained push at the end of the first lockdown brought his project to conclusion in November. Danny Smith's project, the dance for camera piece **Flashback** had fortunately been partially rehearsed with choreographer Anna Watkins prior to the lockdown, but had been conceived as a studio-based piece. In order to comply with social distancing, the location was moved to a country park, with the piece being shot by a minimal crew with Anna supporting Danny with the choreography, Nicola Josse directing at a distance and cinematographer Miguel Mocho. Danny was fortunate to be self-isolating through this period with artist Cait Sweeney, who supported him as he independently produced a large body of collage work alongside a series of casts that formed an installation piece, all exploring the same themes as **Flashback**, which was an unexpected additional outcome.

Sonia Boué's article **Keeping a flame of hope alive** (page 19) details her experiences of working with Richard Hunt, and the significant change in artistic direction that the lockdown imposed. In spite of this Richard produced a very strong body of work. Sonia's film **A song of the Sea** gives a creative insight into their collaboration, and also includes the song recorded by Richard with composer and musician Sarah Lowes as an element of his original plan. Tom and Danny also continued to produce a large quantity of drawings and paintings within their isolation bubbles, in both cases these were related to their filmed projects and form a large part of both the virtual and physical exhibitions.

Whilst we started putting our revised production plans into action, questions remained around the feasibility of the exhibition phase of the project. As soon as a lockdown appeared imminent, we began exploring the potential of online exhibition platforms. Film Oxford has a long history of using online platforms for film and video, but how might a curated exhibition involving works in diverse media work online? Fortunately, this was a problem that others had been considering since before Covid. Research revealed that a number of platforms already existed which were designed to create virtual, interactive gallery spaces, and we decided to adopt one of these as a 'fallback' platform, and also to replace the third 'pop-up' gallery space in Oxford city centre which had originally been intended to host one of the artists' work, in addition to project partner venues Modern Art Oxford and Arts at the Old Fire Station. This meant that even in the worst case scenario. an exhibition could happen, and one that had the potential to reach amuch larger audience than the physcial exhbitions. This virtual space also features a larger selection of the work produced by the group, and has formed a digital 'vault' of the project.

As staff began to return to MAO and AOFS in the summer, we were guite guickly assured that our original exhibition slot would remain open, and that barring further regulatory closure of galleries this would not change. It was clear that both organisations were highly committed to making the exhibition happen. Together! 2012 had by this point moved entirely online, so the participation of the Shadowlights could be facilitated via Zoom. We planned to live-stream an opening event utilising the theatre at AOFS with a very minimal number of invitees and artist O&A, but as events unfolded, this became impossible. By this point it had only been possible to complete one of the two planned group film projects with the broader Shadowlight Associates outreach group. Featuring three artists new to the group, **Portraits** had been completed as one of the first production activities of LUMINOUS. This was a further reason to push ahead with a film based around the experience of working on the project during lockdown, for which we interviewed each of the Shadowlight Artists as restrictions were relaxed toward the end of the summer. To some extent, the resulting film Luminous: A Project in Lockdown became not only a record of the artists response to lockdown, but also served as a proxy for a live Q&A session.

The lockdown inevitably put a significant drag on the production phase, resulting in a very compressed window in which to curate the exhibition and prepare for installation. As the install date approached, the second UK lockdown was announced, leaving our installation and opening dates in the middle of the lockdown. At this point it was decided that exhibition should go ahead, but the possibility remained that it might never open to the public. Both MAO and AOFS made immense additional efforts to support the project, assisting myself and Film Oxford to get the project produced to achieve the highest standards. This was a far higher level of support from both organisations than our previous collaborations had required—it really was a case of all stops pulled out.

MAO had recently started using a photographic 3D scanning service to create hypertext labelled and fully explorable 3D renderings of its exhibitions, and paid to create a scan for both the MAO and AOFS elements of LUMINOUS. This meant that regardless of whether the exhibitions physically opened to the public, they could reach audiences virtually; this would simultaneously serve as the most complete archive of the exhibitions imaginable. The result of this was that the project would provide a wealth of virtual experiencesthe fully virtual gallery, and the two 3D scans of the gallery spaces, embedded variously across multiple websites. We were aware that this was a possible cause of confusion, but also very aware of the potential for these virtual platforms in the future. The launch date of the virtual gallery was brought forward to coincide with the Shadowlight Artists Q&A forming a part of the Making History Together! 2020 Disability History Month. The event was facilitated via Zoom, making it feasible to safely carry out within social distancing guidelines. This event was very successful; it not only provided a highly sympathetic showcase for the artists and their work but also served as a point of celebration for the group

The second UK lockdown ended on 5th December, and MAO and AOFS did indeed open their doors to the public. This came as a great personal relief; the artists had suffered intensely from the psychological impact of lockdown, and the idea that they might never see the result of the past eighteen months of their efforts would have been a bitter pill. Both galleries made additional efforts to accommodate the artists, arranging highly Covid-secure closed viewings. A number of the artists had not seen the final results of their projects except by virtual experience—this was particularly the case for Lucy who had no physical contact with her piece between February and November. Likewise Mark Hemsworth had only seen his digital collages

on a computer screen as he was creating them; his first direct experience of the resultant prints when he saw them hung on the gallery wall. The galleries also made huge efforts to accommodate the technical problems that had inevitably been thrown up by the compressed production window. Similarly the marketing of the exhibition was given exceptional attention by both galleries, as it had extended into both physical and virtual manifestations.

Against the odds the project was completed, broadly as proposed and even with some additional elements. Each of the artists succeeded in producing work of considerable ambition, in some cases very much as conceived pre-pandemic. The change in direction in Richard Hunt's project—from its original concept as an installation piece to re-focus on painting as a result of isolation—yielded strong results as Richard played to his strengths rather than breaking new ground in terms of medium. In spite of the fact that Marks's ability to work was severely impacted by the lockdown, his finished work expands on avenues explored previously, although its scope was hampered. The pandemic doesn't feature as a subject in LUMINOUS, but it deeply informed the working methods employed.

It is the virtual elements of the exhibition that the project is likely to leave its greatest legacy. To some extent the virtual gallery is experimental, and subject to ever evolving technical constraints. It can also never replace the first-had experience of artworks, other than perhaps those created with digital media. In spite of these shortcomings, it has opened up significant new potentials. Already it is apparent that the virtual exhibition allows an exhibition experience to be shared beyond geographical limitations (Leah lones and Deborah Caulfield have based their writing in this publication entirely on these virtual spaces), demonstrating the potential to tap large audiences. This form also has the potential to lift geographical barriers for collaboration between artists- potentially internationally, and with ease. This virtual space also serves as an ideal 'sandbox' testing ground for exhibitions that may subsequently take place in the real world, and even rolling exhibitions which introduce new works and rotate over time become feasible. The virtual gallery had drawn 1660 viewers between its launch and mid January, and will remain available for at least another year.

As the Shadowlight Artists look forward towards their next project and a post-pandemic world, these lessons learned from forced experimentation will inform what comes next; the virtual environment on its own can be an alienating substitute for real-world contact and exchange, but can offer unique possibilities as an augmentation to social activity.



Screengrab of the LUMINOUS Virtual Gallery Film Oxford, 2020



Screengrab of the Modern Art Oxford LUMINOUS Exhibition Film Oxford, 2020



Danny Smith Installing his work at Modern Art Oxford, November 2020

Keeping a flame of hope alive

Sonia Boué

LUMINOUS is my third project as a supporting artist for Shadowlight Artist Richard Hunt, and in the following essay I reflect on the significance of working through the first national lockdown.

Working inclusively always demands flexibility, but for the LUMINOUS project the global pandemic and subsequent lockdown demanded an urgent refocus, and before we had reached even the halfway mark LUMINOUS shifted on its axis to foreground the mental health needs of the Shadowlight Artists. Arts Council England funding is usually predicated on a culture of creative excellence, but in this dark moment we needed a 'factory reset' to 'look after our people' beyond their usual access requirements.

In my own inclusive project work, I use the latter term to describe the practice of placing individual need above project goals, in precisely the kind of radical inversion of sector norms Covid-19 now implied. In this model of practice, projects change shape to accommodate any kind of participant need that arises while the project is ongoing. Paradoxically, I've found that all else seems to follow, including excellence, as has indeed proved to be the case with LUMINOUS. It's a point worth making when talking about disability arts especially, but one which if applied equally across the sector has the potential to improve conditions in the arts for us all. My hope is that such insights (gained in this moment of collective adversity) can inspire us as a sector to move away from norms which so often ignore how privilege already supports the 'fortunate abled' while leaving disadvantaged and disabled people behind.

For many disabled artists at the beginning of lockdown, there was a sense that global events had simply caught up with our world. Some of us even found remote working improved access, but at the time Richard was unable to access the digital world independently. A recent bereavement left him grieving, and a home relocation before lockdown disrupted his routine. He also bore the significant impact of losing his day care services for the duration. Extraordinarily, Richard's focus on his creative practice was intense throughout it all, and like other artists (most notably Tracy Emin), he used his time to work through the isolation.

At the start of LUMINOUS, we had gathered as a team at Film Oxford to talk through Richard's ideas and arrive at a project plan for a sizeable installation either in a gallery space or somewhere else in the city of Oxford, such as a vacant unit in the Covered Market. Richard's appetite for creative challenge prompts him to deploy an incrementally experimental approach to each new project. His vision for LUMINOUS was to explore musical composition, and populate his installation with figurines, imagery and song. We would conjure the atmosphere of a chapel, a cave, or perhaps an Egyptian tomb. So much possibility lay within our grasp!

It had made sense to work on the sound element early in the project, and Richard recorded his powerful improvised song for LUMINOUS with Sara Lowes just before the lockdown, though the sound file remained sealed in the studio until lockdown eased. We had also completed several large canvases. together, including **Whale of the Spray** and **Dragon of the Ocean**. Months later I felt a sharp pang of nostalgia at our easy pre-pandemic intimacy when I edited Richard's film **Songs of the Sea** using footage from our prelockdown sessions. We sat closely side by side, and at times our pens even touched on the canvas, guite unaware that we would soon be subject to such extreme social distancing measures. I remember these paintings felt like an exciting creative departure for Richard. At my suggestion he began to experiment with more painterly brush strokes, which inspired him to pick out exotic creatures in the swirling traces with a marker pen. "I follow the lines", Richard told me, explaining this newfound method. When we work together our aesthetics harmonise. Richard's instincts for detailed markmaking and pattern are foiled by my more minimalist approach, and while he excels at close-up work I provide distance. In these works fantastical creatures pop out from the canvas rendered in Richard's trademark glitter pens and metallic Sharpies. His innate talent is as remarkable as his creative generosity. There is a characteristic exuberance to these works, but they contain an underlying poignancy, as Richard had begun to express his grief for the loss of his mother

The series we made together also reflects an ongoing conversation between two artists, so what changed when our immediate lines of communication went down? As a body of work Richard's LUMINOUS paintings tell a before and after story, made all the more compelling due to his courage and visual eloquence. Richard's resilience through the lockdown deserves particular notice, as learning disabled people are so very often characterised as being vulnerable in an absolute sense because their support needs can be high. This represents a confusion of terms, and the pandemic has shown us that we can all become vulnerable to circumstance at any time. Richard's LUMINOUS work, alongside that of his fellow Shadowlight Artists, sheds light on the reserves garnered through a lived experience of learning disability.

Richard was unable to make video calls, so we managed with audio. Project manager Richard Duriez was our go-between, taxiing Richard's paintings and facilitating contact. Difficulty hearing (and with working memory) curtailed our ability to communicate in any detail about the paintings he made in isolation, but these calls helped Richard keep in touch and vent about the utter loneliness of lockdown. However bewildered and abandoned Richard felt at times, he took comfort in imagining the reunion we might have in a Chinese restaurant once the virus had gone. Like so many of us, what Richard craved most was company.

I began to see that the creative element of our conversation could be mediated through the work. Covid has shown that five years of collaborative project work have embedded such profound associative impressions that I can now literally feel Richard's presence in his paintings. I hear his voice when I see his hand, so to speak. However, supporting another artist's work is a sensitive job in the best of circumstances and while each line and gesture spoke to me, I sometimes felt I walked a tightrope. Would Richard be happy with my interventions? When we work together there is a perpetual to-and-fro which was now entirely lacking. I decided to step back and take my time as time was what we had.

Works made in isolation were delivered to my door in batches and were naturally quite different from our collaborative paintings. I could now observe how much of the picture-space Richard invites me to share when we work together. In contrast, his solo canvases were replete with imagery; some felt like finished works, others less so. Richard appeared to devote much of his time to what seemed like a creative vigil, keeping a flame of hope alive. I felt these paintings bore witness to Richard banishing his loneliness, and there was little for me to add. In the main my touch was light, sometimes adding just a fraction of contrast or definition.

One such fully resolved painting, **Shadow Light**, contains text and collage elements including a picture of Richard and a candle with the initials R.H. Several works either bore his name or a capital 'R', like **Sparkle of my First Name**, and one entitled **Super Richard!** I imagined him alone in his flat, a Robinson Crusoe marking his name in the sand. Less fancifully, I guessed that Richard was drawing on his Christian faith, which I know to be an important inspiration for his work. Who didn't feel the impulse to mark their existence and gain comfort from familiar rituals during the lockdown? To my mind this particular work serves to highlight the experience of social distancing without digital access. Always a prolific artist, my feeling has been that Richard's isolation at this time fuelled his creativity all the more.

Batman Totem Pole presented a puzzle until Richard told me that it related to **Totem Pole** (2016), his winning submission for the 2017 Shape Open. It provides a good example of the challenge of interpreting Richard's intentions in his absence, without recourse to video calls, as Richard's memory is greatly assisted when he can see the work referred to. Luckily, as we'd worked on **Totem Pole** together I was able to cue in to the image and join up the dots. A Spring-like, sometimes joyful flourishing was apparent in other works, such as **Richard is an Artist**. Remarkably, throughout the project, with both close support and that which was offered remotely, Richard created some of his best ever paintings.

Richard wasn't able to create his installation, but during lockdown I feel he embodied it, by surviving the worst of the terrific sea-storm of Covid-19, communing with his God and his fantastical creatures in the safe harbour of his care home flat.

When I was at last able to visit Richard in the garden of his care home in August, I was astonished to hear him say that he, too, could feel me sitting next to him while he worked on his paintings. Even under circumstances of extreme and prolonged isolation we somehow remained psychically connected.

At the time of writing this reflection, we are now officially entering the third national lockdown. Film Oxford will provide an electronic tablet for Richard in the hope that he will be able to use it to access the digital world.



Sparkle of the Sea Lion Mixed media on canvas Richard Hunt, 2020

Artists and Audiences in Isolation

Dr Ju Gosling FRSA Artistic Director, Together! 2012 CIC As with everyone involved with the arts in 2020, the way in which I work changed dramatically in the first three months. Together! 2012 CIC is led by locally based Disabled artists, working to create a lasting Paralympic Cultural Legacy in the main London 2012 Host Borough of Newham. Newham has one of the lowest adult cultural engagement rates in the UK, and now one of the highest Covid-19 infection and mortality rates too. Together! 2012 CIC delivers a free Disabled-led programme of exhibitions, screenings, performances and other activities for everyone, and became an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation in 2018. We also run a free year-round Clubs programme of creative workshops for Disabled adults, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

In February it was already obvious that our Clubs programme would need to close, and that our annual Disability History Month Festival at the end of the year could not go ahead in its usual form. On 10 March we launched our Join in from Home programme, and my partner Julie Newman, our Chair, moved in with me for the duration. Being in the shielding group, we have not left the house since, nor had any visitors. In April we ran an open competition for digital commissions for the Making History Together! 2020 Disability History Month Festival. In terms of LUMINOUS, we had an existing relationship, having selected films by Shadowlight Artists for our international Together! Disability Film Festival on multiple previous occasions, and supported their recent funding applications.

The greatest challenge to our plans was the fact that our core audience members and Clubs programme participants are some of the most digitally excluded in the UK. Language is also an issue, with nearly half of all Newham residents not speaking English at home, and one in eight speaking a language that less than 1% of other residents share, so face-to-face and non-verbal communication have always been critical. Meanwhile I can't make voice calls, only video calls—though that quickly became less of an issue! Increasing cultural literacy has always been Together! 2012 CIC's priority, delivering pop-up experiences on people's doorsteps to start them on a journey, hopefully, to the future offer in the Olympic Park. In addition to extending our offer nationally online, though, we realised that we must offer a digital pathway locally, including providing content, because of the new need to book everything online from Covid tests to event tickets.

I was fortunate in that I have a home studio equipped for digital production, and in fact was the first PhD student in the UK to present my thesis digitally, back in 1997. This was in sharp contrast to the rest of the team, of whom no less than four had to move out of where they were living, while most of the Festival artists had to be very creative indeed when making and performing from home. My overwhelming priority as Artistic Director was to offer a 'live' experience for the Festival, combined with all of the advantages of working online. Looking for parallels with physical events was helpful throughout the production process, from organising technical rehearsals beforehand — in

this case using artists' own equipment and offering advice about lighting and sound etc.— to 'opening the doors' half an hour before events and welcoming in the audience. And of course we had to consider accessibility, introducing live captions as well as BSL interpretation for Festival events.

Producing work online offers much wider geographical access — we had audience members for live events from three continents — as well as the opportunity to extend the time in which the experience is available, and to vary the time spent on it too. For example, audience members could visit the LUMINOUS exhibition at any time of the day or night, and spend however long they wanted there. A further benefit was being able to screen-share — both remotely or in the same space — for a communal viewing experience if desired, but not having to navigate around other visitors in the virtual gallery space. These advantages are particularly beneficial to older and Disabled people and carers, but everyone can appreciate them.

Of course, there is no possibility of replicating the real-life experience of viewing fine art in a gallery online, but then art is very often only seen in reproduction outside of a fortunate minority. Online, at least there is better definition than print can offer, as well as the 3D virtual viewing experience. From both the perspective of the artist and the audience, the ability to create an 'ideal' virtual gallery space, and to try different hangs very easily, helps to optimise the digital viewing experience. In terms of the films, the audience also had control over the playback, impossible in a gallery setting, so could engage far more actively than otherwise.

Many of our Festival events included live performances, but for the exhibitions, including LUMINOUS, we organised artists' talks and presentations, posting recordings online the next day. With all of our live events we offered two viewing options. Either the audience could watch the event live-streamed to YouTube (also embedded on the Festival website), or they could book tickets via Eventbrite and join in on Zoom. These options took account of the fact that YouTube is available on digital television, so was the most accessible way for people who'd been digitally excluded to participate.

In either case, audience members could use the Live Chat facility to engage with the speakers, but the Zoom option offered more of a direct live experience. We used the Zoom Webinar system, which meant that audience members came in without a waiting room and with their cameras and microphones off, but could be switched on as requested to ask questions. Again, the recordings extended the opportunity to view the talks for audience members who were unable to engage with the live event.

One of the challenges of organising the artists' talk for the LUMINOUS exhibition was the number of artists involved; another was their own digital exclusion. However, once these issues had been resolved — most artists. came into separate rooms at Film Oxford and used the equipment there, and staff sprinted around providing support as necessary — the artists were able to relax in familiar surroundings. We have only just begun our evaluation as I am writing this, but I am sure that all of the artists with whom we worked benefited from speaking from their own 'safer space', particularly given the heightened anxiety that many expressed at the start about presenting digitally. As with some of the Shadowlight Artists, I am sure there are other artists too who would simply have found it too difficult to travel to East London, but who were able to participate fully from behind a camera. So I now look forward to a blended future. When we open The David Morris Cultural Centre, our planned new venue in a borough that is currently without any arts centre or gallery space, we will be equipping our spaces with cameras as well as screens. Performances and films will be streamed in and out, and as with the Making History Together! Festival, not all of the artists may be in the same place together anyway. We will create digital editions, not simply documentation, of as many productions as possible, and continue to offer creative ways for audiences to engage online across continents and time. In the meantime, please do visit us at together 2012.org.uk.

Art isn't something we 'do', being artists is who we are

Leah Jones Curator, self-advocate and learning disability activist In normal times, I probably wouldn't have gotten to see this project by the Shadowlight Artists, a group who are based in Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire is far from where I live in the North West. But, in a funny sort of way, although being 'locked down' has stopped me going places in real life, digital opportunities like LUMINOUS have brought me into contact with so much more.

Entering the digital exhibition, the gallery's wall text explains how the pandemic has made things hard for learning disabled people; something I first-hand experience of. Everyone's lives have been upturned by the coronavirus but learning disabled people have had their support hugely disrupted, struggled with getting online as well as long term shielding. I was very interested to see how the artists had dealt with this and continued with their practice.

The first thing I notice is the rich slate-coloured walls of the digital gallery. Using this dark blue/grey colour rather than just a plain white stands out and pulls you in. It feels atmospheric.

There are seven artists in this group exhibition. Each artist has a section of the gallery. Using the tour mode, the first artist I see is Tom Breach. Tom showcases a big selection of artworks which are mainly hand-drawn illustrations. I like the way he uses transportation, numbers, maps and bus routes. As someone who worked in self-advocacy for many years, it reminds me of the power of transport as a form of independence, to me these aren't just bus routes they represent freedom.

Next, is the work of Danny Smith. Straight away, the piece **Fast Forward/Flashback** caught my eye. This mixed media artwork shows men with Down Syndrome set against a yellow and orange ombre background, sort of like a sunset. Collaged onto this background, the figures look like Greek statues like ones you would find in a museum, perhaps taking inspiration from classical art? I wonder if Danny is reimagining gods or mythological characters. As a person with Down Syndrome, seeing people who look like me shown in an art exhibition is powerful and uplifting.

Recreating moments from history is also the theme of the film **Portraits** found later in the exhibition. In this film the Shadowlight Artists wear period costumes and act out scenes against hand painted backdrops. I'm not sure if these are real historic moments or imagined. Either way, there's something awesome about making ourselves visible in history.

Another film is by Wendy Belcher called **Things That Annoy Me**. In the film we go on a journey with Wendy from her home, to work, and back again, learning about all the things which get on her nerves like noisy buses, dirty toilets, queues, and the dreaded leaky bin. The film has a hand-drawn animated

background with Wendy herself acting over it. It blends fiction and reality. I think audiences will find this both funny and relatable! She should have her own TV show

There are so many brilliant pieces to discuss but finally I wanted to mention Richard Hunt's artworks; they are very striking and a real stand-out of the exhibition. My favourites are the two dragon pieces: **Dragon of the Ocean** and **Amazing Dragon Colour**. Both show an other-worldly creature bursting with intense, detailed line and colour. Richard also exhibits a film which shows him creating these works along with a song he sings. The sound is hypnotising.

While it was never supposed to be an online exhibition, LUMINOUS continued online which I think is going to mean more people can see this brilliant work. In one of the films an artist describes how "art connects us to who we are". This is an important reminder to our support networks of why finding ways to continue with our art in these difficult times is important. Art isn't something we 'do', being artists is who we are.



Leah Jones Image courtesy Leah Jones



A response to LUMINOUS

Deborah Caulfield Artist, writer and a disabled person I was very sad at not being able to visit the LUMINOUS exhibitions in person, but I was glad and grateful to be able to see them online. Together with the YouTube videos, these amazing digital spaces offered this home-bound reviewer and Shadowlight fan an opportunity to spend literally hours looking at the artworks in comfort and warmth

Seen as a whole, LUMINOUS demonstrates the leaps and bounds with which the Shadowlight Artists have progressed since the Creative Bridges exhibition, which is when I first got to know their work. There was always strong artistic talent, but the work has definitely matured. The subjects are more serious but no less personal, positive, and relevant. The different styles of individual artists are instantly recognisable, and while it's great to see how they have all taken off, I love that they've retained the collective aspect, collaborating and assisting on other artists' pieces — for example, the wonderful Portraits film and Wendy Belcher's brilliant animation.

Lucy Skuce's work always makes a deep impression on me, and although I missed being able to get close to the work, the awesomeness and impact of her **Blue Didcot A Power Station** installation comes across just as strongly when seen in the virtual galleries.

Blue is also the colour of melancholy, and there is this quality about the installation, along with a slightly wistful and almost post-apocalyptic feel. Perhaps I am reading too much into it, affected too much by current Covid-19 concerns. Yet one can't ignore or gloss over the feelings of loss that this pandemic has caused. At the same time, knowing how the work was co-created, via video link-up on mobile phones, gives Lucy's sculpture extra poignancy; the video of the piece under construction is an essential and integral part of the story.

Ultimately, the sheer scale and strength of the idea (Lucy's obsession and vision) behind **Blue Didcot A Power Station**, and the amazing realisation of it, give tremendous encouragement and optimism for the future. Such is the power of art.

One of the keys to the success of the Shadowlights' project is that, as well as being supported to develop their skills and styles, they are able to pursue their individual passions and ideas, to find their own creative voices, and to express how they feel about what matters to them.

Obsession and repetition are used to excellent effect in Mark Hemsworth's large, multi-grid assemblages. These works brilliantly express the joyousness of his passion and love of everything outdoors. This on top of his technical photographic skills.

Mark's glorious **Sunset Spectrum** is one of the highlights of LUMINOUS. I can imagine it on my wall — I'd never get bored and I'd never get any work done. I could easily spend the rest of my life noticing the tiny differences between the individual frames or disappear into the vastness of the whole.



The Shadowlight Artists and Chris Oakley

L to R: Tom Breach, Mark Hemsworth, Wendy Belcher, Chris Oakley, Russell Highsmith, Danny Smith, Richard Hunt, Lucy Skuce August 2019

About the Artists



Still from **Things That Annoy Me** Wendy Belcher, 2020



Still from **Things That Annoy Me** Wendy Belcher, 2020

Wendy Belcher

Wendy has been an associate member of the group for several years, and joined the core group to produce her first solo project for LUMINOUS, building on her experiences of performing for greenscreen in previous group projects like **Smallville**, **Undersea Adventure** and **L.R.R.H**. In **Things that Annoy Me**, Wendy builds a series of comical narratives around the petty, day-to-day irritations she experiences in the workplace and the city.

Wendy created the script for the film by making audio recordings of herself ad-libbing anecdotes around a list of situations she finds annoying. These were then edited to create both the soundtrack and 'script' for the film. This script was then broken down into a series of digital compositions which were created using artwork work created by members of the group and assisted by Danny Breach, a regular collaborator with the group. Russell Highsmith also contributed to the direction of the greenscreen shoot, and makes a cameo appearance.

Much of the material required to complete Wendy's film had been produced and recorded prior to the advent of lockdown, and editing was principally completed during the lockdown by Chris Oakley, sharing clips of the work in progress with Wendy in order that she could exercise artistic control of the project.

"When the project started, everything was fine. Then lockdown. I had to just wait-weeks, months. If it wasn't for lockdown, I could have done things quickly- all of it. Done.

It's hard. I've just been bored. Staying home, nothing to do. You can't go to the shops– it's difficult because I've got autism, and everything keeps changing. I've got used to wearing a mask, but it's annoying.

[The Shadowlight Artists] haven't been able to sit together. Sometimes I ring Richard Hunt. I message Danny, ring Tom. I really want to see Russell. I watch Danny's Facebook show at 7 o'clock on Thursdays. He does what he can–dancing, singing. I still see his pictures on Facebook. I like to see what people are doing on Facebook and Twitter.

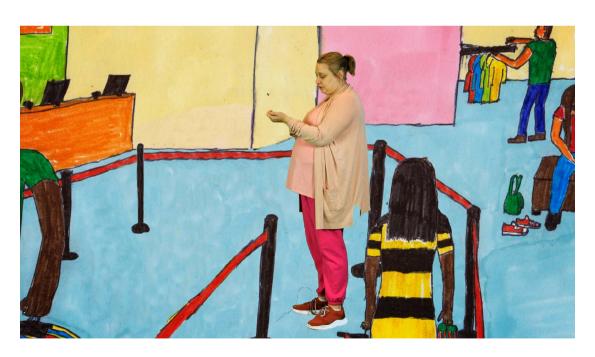
Danny, Tom, Mark, Danny Breach- we all drew together. They are really good. I liked acting with Russell, and editing on the screen.

I'm looking forward to people seeing my project. It's my first one. It think it'll make them laugh. My favourite bit is at the bus stop, and on the bus as well. The pants are disgusting— who'd leave their pants on the floor! Everything in the film is real life.

I'm doing things I want to do."



Still from **Things That Annoy Me** Wendy Belcher, 2020



Still from **Things That Annoy Me** Wendy Belcher, 2020



Still from **Shoebox Bay** Tom Breach, 2020

Tom Breach

Tom Breach is 26, lives in Oxford and has Asperger's. His drawings create strange scenarios where morality and social norms are suspended. Following on from his first project with the group, **Revenge of the Penguin**, his new film **Shoebox Bay** explores gender identity issues alongside the misadventures of individuals adrift in an uncaring world, all approached through black humour. The dark comedy in his work often draws on personal experience and reflects his views of injustices in society. The writing of **Shoebox Bay** was completed by February 2020, but most of the production took place during the UK's national lockdown, with Tom collaborating with editor Chris Oakley via Skype and exchanging production drawings via the post. Animated sections were then shared online and discussed via Skype, allowing Tom to remotely retain artistic control of the project.

"I have a shoe fetish, so I enjoy wearing women's shoes around the home. I don't wear them out in public, because Covid or no Covid, homophobic people will bully the heck out of a man in women's clothing. Traditionalists pick on people who are not adhering to their gender stereotypes.

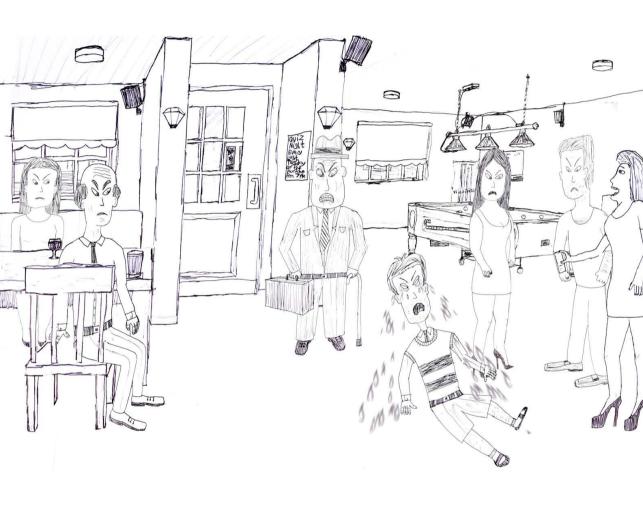
Maybe the idea of making a film about shoe fetish is partially to raise awareness, and hopefully people will understand it's ok to have a shoe fetish. Even with Covid gone, prejudice, the rich/poor divide, capitalism, corruption, they will still be here. Bullies will still be in the world.

We would chat on Skype, then I drew whatever we needed for the project, and then sent them via post. It took a week or two to get there, then it was edited and rendered. Without lockdown, the ideas of the film would have been similar, but it wasn't done in person.

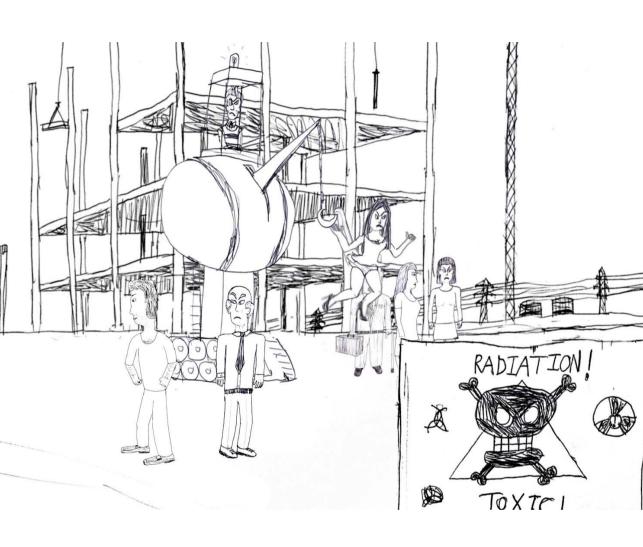
I have spoken to some people from Film Oxford, people have been in touch, but because of what happened from March I haven't been in the mood to talk to pretty much anyone.

So many places I used to go to that were fun and enjoyable to go to, I'm not able to go to them any more. Covid has made things that were fun and enjoyable bland basic and boring and beyond stupid. Having to book appointment to go places—it's made me mad.

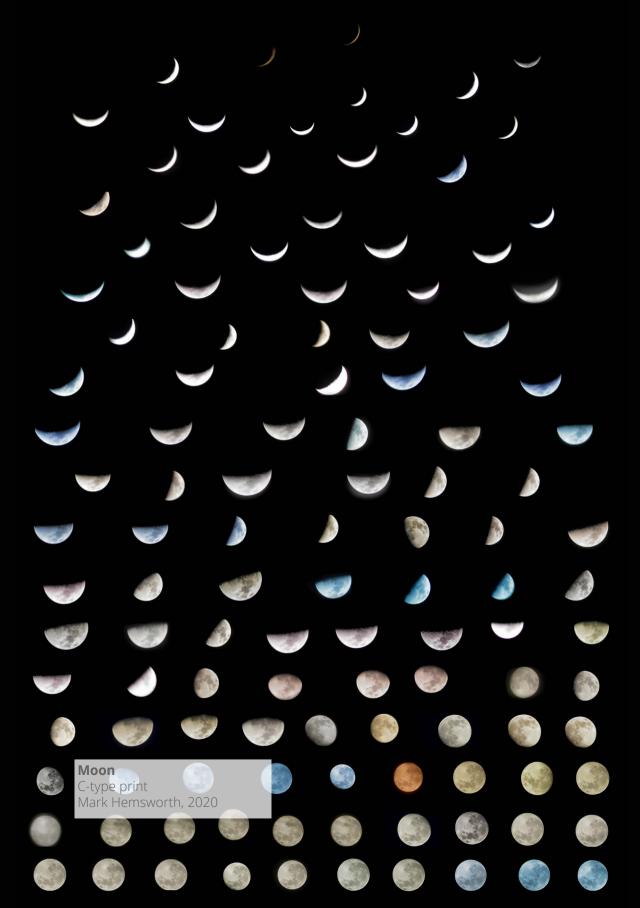
There used to be distance between people before, but now there's even more distance. I prefer to choose to distance myself from people, but now then government is forcing us to distance from others. We're being forced to distance from friends and family, and that's what's unacceptable."



Still from **Shoebox Bay** Tom Breach, 2020



Still from **Shoebox Bay** Tom Breach, 2020



Mark Hemsworth

Mark is an obsessive photographer, taking thousands of images annually on his photography walks. He is particularly interested in nature and landscape, aviation, and large-scale events. During the previous Shadowlight project RISING, Mark began to experiment with the potential of collaging large numbers of photographs into large-scale digital prints, which he continued to explore during LUMINOUS.

Mark teamed up with a new collaborator, photographer and lecturer John Blythe for LUMINOUS. Mark had planned to travel to more remote locations to create series of images to combine into composite digital images showing the changes in lighting conditions across most of a daylight period, and create a film about his working process. The advent of the pandemic made this original plan impossible, due to the need for isolation and limitations of travel.

Mark modified his plan and decided to focus on amassing large collections of themed images, which he carried out independently. These were then assembled in collage grids, organising the images according to colour and composition to create overarching compositions across the grid.

"I found it difficult, particularly at the start, in March and April. I still managed to get out for walks and cycle rides. It was more difficult to get to distant places, for the longer walks.

My photography, I'm doing mainly sunset photographs, and collaging them to get the colours to run together.

My project changed a lot. We weren't able to do so much of the filming, it was mainly photography. The original plan was to go somewhere a long way away for a walk, but with Covid I haven't been able to do that. I've been working with John Blythe to make collages over Skype. Originally I had planned to take photographs as the light changed through the day, but that wasn't possible. It's made me feel not so happy. I miss not being able to do the original plans, but I hope to do it when it's all over, when Covid has gone.

We're organising my sunsets into a collage, putting them into a pattern, organising the ones with buildings in the foreground and the ones which are just sky.

We used to have a meeting every month, but that's stopped because of lockdown. I haven't done as much as I usually do because of lockdown, and I've been taking photographs from home and my garden instead of on walks.

I've got a lot of new photos from walking around a lake near my house. Lots of nature and birds. I can use them in the future. I moved house just before lockdown, and it made the lockdown easier than it would have been otherwise. It's got a nice sized garden. I'm still sorting out my stuff getting rid of stuff I don't need.

We've got the exhibition coming up. It'll be the first time I've been into the centre of Oxford in ages."

John Blythe

"I am an artist and educator based in Oxfordshire. My practice is situated in and beyond the realm of light and time based image making. My interest is as much in process as it is in subject.

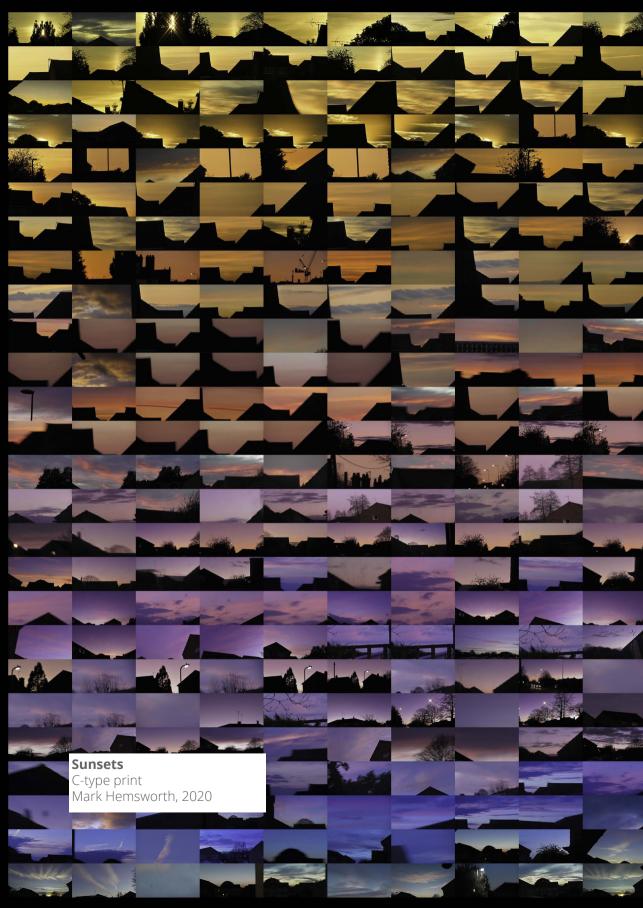
My current art practice is an experimental exploration into the space between photography and painting, playing with the boundaries of the photographic in an intermedia space. This work joins the long standing dialogue exploring photography about photography, raising questions around the 'thingness' of photographic materials. Working with obsolete colour photographic paper and film, I am interested in the possibilities that exist within, in the absence of the imposition of light. I am "practicing photography [painting] by other means" Richter), playing with the boundaries of the 'photographic' with the aim of transmutation. To transform them into something new, not through any sense of nostalgia, rather a desire to breathe new life into them.

My practice is informed and supported through the integration of my artist-teacher identities.

I am committed to the value art brings to both individuals and communities, not just engagement with works of art but more so, the practice of art. I am particularly interested in the role art practice can play in developing analytical thinking, critical discourse, political awareness and shared experiences in the wider community."

johnblythe.co.uk/







Mark Hemsworth in an online editing session with John Blythe August 2020

Russell Highsmith

Russell Highsmith is the UK's only playwright with a learning disability. He is currently developing a new play, and has contributed both to Wendy Belcher's film **Things that Annoy Me** and also the group productions **Portraits** during LUMINOUS.

Given the resources required to produce a play, it was decided that Russell's ambitions would be best served if he was supported to apply for funding for his project independently of the LUMINOUS project. The pandemic has delayed plans to move his project into production given the impacts on theatre. However, Film Oxford has been able to provide funding and support for Russell to continue his work with playwright and theatre director Mark Ralph-Bowman, who collaborated with Russell on his previous productions **The Big Shock** and **Singles Night**. Russell hopes to be able to move his new work into production during 2021.



Russell Highsmith in lockdown December 2020



Wendy Belcher and Russell Highsmith in **Portraits** Shadowlight Artists, 2019



Wendy Belcher and Russell Highsmith in $\bf Things\ That\ Annoy\ Me$ Wendy Belcher, 2020



Richard Hunt

At the start of LUMINOUS, Richard had planned to created an installation which was to have been an enclosed space influenced by Egyptian temple and tomb design, with wall friezes created using digital enlargements of his paintings. Richard had already begun working towards this goal with long-time collaborator Sonia Boué when the pandemic hit. As a result, Richard changed direction to focus on the paintings which he carried out largely independently with remote support from Sonia. This project is detailed at length in Sonia's article **Keeping a flame of hope alive** (page 19).

Richard's project is the one which was most impacted in artistic terms by the onset of lockdown, but as a result of his re-focusing on painting he produced a strong and cohesive body of work that has built on many of the strongest areas of his past work, with some parallels to the work with which he won the 2017 Shape Open Award.

"I like all of the paintings. It's one of my strong points now. **Ocean of the Dragon** is one of my favourites. I like the ocean. Anything to do with water is still my favourite thing. It keeps my spirit going, it keeps my blood going.

It's a bit different working on my own. I thought I couldn't cope at first, but I could quite happily do it on my own. It's nice to have a bit of company sometimes.

It's the best work so far. It's nice to do my own work, I've got my confidence back. I miss my day centre. I'm looking forward to going back next year. I'm missing my new girlfriend.

I was so happy to talk to Wendy. It made me feel special again. It's nice hear a friendly voice. I'm missing everyone. I find it very hard at the moment. I wanted to hug my sister, but she said no to that. I don't know why."

Sonia Boué

Sonia Boué is an artist. Her multiform work explores home and the domestic as metaphors for exile and displacement. Sonia has a significant body of postmemory work. She is also a writer on autism and art, and a leading consultant for neurodiversity in the arts.

Sonia is concerned with objects, identity and location. Rooted in a fascination with family archives, material memory, and the themes of forced migration and inherited trauma, her work has been exhibited internationally and is held in digital form at Tate Britain, the BBC, and Bodleian Library in Oxford. She has performed in the UK, Ireland, and Spain.

Her postmemory work places her at the forefront of contemporary artists responding to the Spanish Civil War in the UK.

Sonia also creates and leads Arts Council England funded projects which pioneer inclusive models of practice. She participates in a variety of community arts projects and carries out visual research in academic contexts.

She is a Board member for a-n The Artists Information Company and Artist Member for CVAN SE.

soniaboue.co.uk



Richard Hunt and Sonia Boué working at Film Oxford, February 2020



Amazing Colour DragonMixed media on canvas

Richard Hunt, 2020



Dragon of the Ocean Mixed media on canvas Richard Hunt, 2020



Blue Didcot A Power StationLucy Skuce, 2020
Installation at Modern Art Oxford, November 2020

Lucy Skuce

Lucy Skuce was born in 1981 in Banbury, Oxfordshire, and grew up in Worcestershire. She lives in Didcot, Oxfordshire.

Lucy is an artist and filmmaker who was born with profound and multiple disabilities. She bought her first VHS camcorder as a young woman and started to film her life, including the objects and places she identifies as important. Her work in film has been screened both within the UK and internationally, including at Liberty Festival (National Film Theatre BFI Southbank), and Abilities Festival (Toronto).

Since working as part of the Shadowlight group, her interests have expanded to working in media other than film, and in recent years Lucy has increasingly embraced sculpture and installation. Lucy's project for LUMINOUS returned to a recurrent theme in her work, the now-demolished Didcot power station, which dominated the landscape of her home town for decades. **Blue Didcot A Power Station** is her most ambitious project to date, incorporating a model railway, CCTV and sound systems alongside a scale recreation of the iconic cooling towers, rendered in a uniform blue colour. The piece had to be completed during lockdown, which necessitated some modifications. New working methods were devised allowing Lucy to remotely oversee the fabrication of the installation in close-up via Skype.

Lucy said of working on her project in lockdown:

"It's been fantastic. [Working on Skype] has been cool– it's good. I made my 50Hz hum soundtrack at home.

Last year I went out in the car- before the lockdown. I went to the visit the cooling towers and saw them come down. The cooling towers are gone now. I visited the turbine hall before it was shut down as well. It was noisy. I had to wear ear defenders."

Chris Oakley

Chris Oakley works with video, digital media and installation, and exhibits internationally. He has worked with the Shadowlight Artists since their formation in 2009, and has collaborated with Lucy on a series of installations including her latest project, **Blue Didcot A Power Station**.

"This project is Lucy's most ambitious to date. It always seemed like a fascinating idea to take the concept of model railway and push it in such a surreal direction, completely overpowered by the immensity of cooling towers modelled to scale. The fact that the installation features no representations of people and yet features electronic surveillance reflected that fact that Didcot power station is now absent from the landscape."

chrisoakley.com



Blue Didcot A Power Station

Lucy Skuce, 2020 Detail view



Blue Didcot A Power Station

Lucy Skuce, 2020 Detail view of live CCTV Monitor



Lucy Skuce working on **Blue Didcot A Power Station,** February 2020



Danny Smith (R) and Miguel Mocho shooting **Flashback** Danny Smith, 2020

Danny Smith

Danny Smith has diverse and long-standing interests in performance, film, photography, and painting and drawing. Danny has clear artistic intentions: to show independence and demonstrate emotions associated with change and personal empowerment. Danny identifies pride in being a role model for other disabled people seeking an independent life. His work in painting, photography and video has been exhibited within the UK and internationally.

For LUMINOUS, Danny wanted to produce another dance for camera film exploring memories in comparison to his current circumstances. In part, he wanted to explore some of his past experiences of being bullied as a result of having Downs Syndrome. Danny chose to collaborate with choreographer Anna Watkins to create the dance piece, alongside filmmaker Nicola Josse. **Flashback** was originally developed as a studio-based production involving a small ensemble, but this had to be adapted as a solo piece in the light of Covid restrictions.

In December 2020, **Flashback** won Best Dance Film at the Together! 2020 Disability Film Festival.

During the lockdown, Danny produced a large quantity of collage work and an installation piece supported by Cait Sweeney. Danny said of lockdown:

"I quite like it, actually. I like to work indoors in the lockdown– it helps keep your mind fresh, there is peace and quiet. It's more concentrated.

I quite enjoyed rehearsing outside. It helped me explore different feelings. I think it changed my life– it made me feel more strongly what I am. This lockdown has made me focused on what I am.

I enjoyed going to Swindon. [Anna] was calm and gentle- I think I picked the right lady.

I missed all my socialising. I missed going around the town. I find it hard to be stuck indoors. I like trying to be more social.

I do find it hard. I go online lots and see what people have been up to. I had an online party, it was nice.

The thing about being distant is you've got to be careful, you can't go up to people, it's how you pick up germs. Some people don't see it that way. You couldn't work in a big group. I love working with other people."



Video still from **Flashback** Danny Smith, 2020



Video still from **Flashback** Danny Smith, 2020

Anna Watkins

British dancer and choreographer Anna, trained at the Rambert School. Anna was a company dancer for Tavaziva Dance for 10 years, and was appointed additional roles within the company such as Rehearsal Assistant, Project Leader/Project Manager/Choreographer for Tavaziva Male & Female youth programme & ZIVA Youth Dance. She has worked with Whoweare - Academy Films, Jamiel Laurence (FundFreelanceDance), Phoenix Dance Theatre (CC Lab), Film Oxford, Thea Barnes, Harriet Macauley, Shobana Jeyasingh, Motionhouse (World Premiere UK tour), Neville Campbell and more.

Alongside her career as a dancer, she formed her own company, Watkins Dance Company in 2011, receiving funding from Arts Council England for various projects and collaborations. Her work has been toured across the UK and Internationally.

Anna has been commissioned by several organisations and dance companies for her choreographic work for prestige youth & training dancers such as: Phoenix Dance Theatre, Tavaziva Dance, English National Ballet (including creatingENBYouthCo based on Akram Khan's *Giselle*), Balletboyz, Rambert School, Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Dance City, SYDCo, Third Row Dance Company, New College Swindon, Suffolk Youth Company, CAT Scheme all over the UK, Rambert Dance Youth Company (Quicksilver), international students (Italy) and youth dance companies all over the UK. Anna has led various professional classes around the UK including at The Place London and for companies, including Rambert Dance Company and Tavaziva Dance.

In 2017 - 2018 she was Associate Artist at Swindon Dance, awarded Arts Council England funding for Spring 2018 Tour including a short dance film in collaboration with Film Oxford. In 2018 Anna was selected as one of the four choreographers for the Cohan Collective mentoring residency with Robert Cohan, and continued with Cohan Collective for the Development stage in August 2019 at Pavilion Dance South West.

Anna was also one of three artists commissioned by Film Oxford to create a new short dance film for their project FLUX– bringing together dance, film and music. The film MORTELLE, and performance filming of new duet REPEL, were screened at various film festivals in summer 2019, including: Dancin' Oxford, Leeds Festival 2019 and Reading Festival 2019. In 2020 MORTELLE was nominated for Best Musical or Experimental Film, Oxford International Short Film Festival 2020.



Danny Smith (R) rehearsing with Anna Watkins, Swindon 2020

The Shadowlight Associates

The Shadowlight Associates were formed to offer artistic opportunities to a broader group. They work with the Shadowlight Artists on group productions, supporting the Associates who wish to explore or extend their skills whilst benefiting the core group who work in a mentoring role. The Associates are individuals who have been identified by the core group as having artistic potential, or who are already accomplished in a specific artform and wish to experiment with a new medium. The Associates are also seen as a recruitment pool for the core group, and it is hoped that Associates will go on to become full members of the group; Wendy Belcher and Tom Breach were inducted into the group in this way.

Due to the pandemic and the limitation imposed on group working, it has only been possible to produce one of the intended two group productions during LUMINOUS. **Portraits** is inspired by Old Master portrait paintings, bringing them to life with a contemporary and comedic edge. Terry Varney, a friend of Lucy Skuce, and Shane Butler and Shakeel Marham of Oxford's INK Group were invited to take part in the production, developing the Shadowlight Artist's partnership with INK. Running weekly workshop with professional artists, INK Oxford aims to empower young people with disabilities to develop artistic talent and to learn professional skills.



Tom Breach (L) and Shane Butler (R) in **Portraits** Shadowlight Artists, 2019



Terry Varney in **Portraits** Shadowlight Artists, 2019



Danny Smith channels Thomas Cromwell in **Portraits** Shadowlight Artists, 2019



Lucy Skuce in **Portraits** Shadowlight Artists, 2019

Shadowlight Collaborators

The Shadowlight Artists' projects have benefitted from the regular input of volunteers from the outset, but the role of these individuals has become particularly important during the year of the pandemic.

Danny Breach

Danny has provided creative and technical support on the Shadowlight group project **Portraits**, in addition to supporting the production of some of the individual artists' work. Danny is Shadowlight Artist Tom Breach's father, and has supported Tom extensively in the production of **Shoebox Bay**, and also contributed to Wendy's film **Things That Annoy Me**.

"As an artist and filmmaker I enjoy any opportunity to help others learn and explore creative processes. Having health issues that restrict my ability to work full-time, it is rewarding to volunteer utilising the skills and knowledge I have gained over time. When people like the Shadowlight Artists get the chance to show their combined and individual talents, it is especially rewarding to be a part of the team helping the artists to make and showcase their work.

Having over the years studied creative forms of music technology, drama and theatre skills, fine art and film making along with screenwriting and song writing, I am open to future collaborations and paid or volunteer opportunities, especially if they give others with some form of disadvantage the chance to explore abilities they may not have realised they had. It is great to help others to discover more within themselves that may give them a sense of pride and achievement and to help show the creative industries that we all have talents.

Tom's been carrying on with his project over Skype, supported by myself and Chris [Oakley]. Sometimes he's had moments where the Covid situation has got on top of him, and he's felt like packing the project in. But he's kept with it, and got to the point where he's going to have a finished film, and I think it's a greater achievement to have got here under these difficult circumstances than in normal circumstances. Although he feels low, and it affects his self esteem, he should take time to realise how much he's achieved, and how proud we all are of him that he's managed to carry on. I'm proud of him."

Cait Sweeney

"Danny and I are housemates; so collaborating with him on his creative practice through a global pandemic and various lockdowns has been easier than it might have been otherwise.

Due to the constraints of social distancing some aspects of his project changed. **Flashback**, his auto-biographical dance film, was initially intended as an ensemble piece to be filmed in a studio. Instead it became a solo performance, shot on location in the countryside, and won an award!

Having been very busy, the first lockdown gave us the opportunity for some much needed rest and find creative ways to occupy our time. As both of us are artists whose work embraces a broad spectrum of disciplines, we have a lot to choose from.

For the LUMINOUS exhibition Danny worked on a series of drawings inspired by the artist Hundertwasser and **Flashback/Fast Forward**— a mixed media diptych to accompany his film. We made plaster casts of his feet, hands and face, which was a new process for Danny, and put together a small collection of his childhood photographs, stones and crystals. It was great to see the different elements of his project come together creating a cohesive whole and painting a vivid reflection of himself.

Danny and I love singing, dancing, dressing up, having fun and making people laugh. We were missing this a lot in lockdown so we started **Danny and Cait's Karaoke Cabaret Shows**. This was a live stream show that ran weekly from April-October last year. This year it will be running from Danny's YouTube channel on the first Thursday of every month:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXOKfwQrn59jY2q6vniNLJg."

Evie Sherry-Starmer

"I joined Film Oxford in 2016, towards the conclusion of the Shadowlight Artists' Creative Bridges project, and have since had the great pleasure of supporting them in their work on both RISING and LUMINOUS. My professional background is in higher education administration, but I grew up immersed in Oxford's vibrant and inclusive community arts scene which instilled in me a passionate belief that the arts are for everyone; I have come to know that those facing the greatest barriers to access often have the most to gain from being included and can offer profound and unique insight. As someone with multiple intersecting marginal identities I have a personal awareness of the difficulties and frustrations that result from these obstacles, and so seek wherever possible to leverage my own privileges to remove barriers for others, amplify marginalised voices and support self-direction.

Over the last year the Shadowlight Artists have each made huge adjustments to their working practice – as necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic – and seeing them take it all in their stride despite the extremely challenging context has been remarkable. I am so excited to see where they go next."



Wendy Belcher and Lucy Skuce at the LUMINOUS Exhibition Modern Art Oxford, December 2020



Richard Hunt at the LUMINOUS Exhibition Modern Art Oxford, December 2020

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For more information visit: shadowlightartists.org.uk

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