

Wales International Festival of Photography  
Gŵyl Ryngwladol Ffotograffiaeth Cymru

**–Diffusion**



[diffusionfestival.org](http://diffusionfestival.org)

**POST-EVENT REPORT  
ON TURNING POINT  
DIFFUSION 2021**

**TURNING**

**POINT**



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru  
Arts Council of Wales

**ARIENNIR GAN  
Y LOTERI  
LOTTERY FUNDED**



**Cymru  
Wales**



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Event Summary

The fifth biennial edition of Diffusion was staged at a moment in time when the arts were emerging from the worse effects of the pandemic, and Ffotogallery's planning needed to factor in contingencies in the event of physical exhibitions and events not being possible. There was an increased emphasis on public realm interventions, particularly in Cardiff and Newport, and fewer physical venues for exhibitions, although many were larger units able to accommodate more artists' work and participatory workshops and events. We had to be inventive in terms of what work we showed, where, and focus on building new partnerships in different communities. Despite those constraints, we were able to present work by over 60 artists from five continents, addressing well our commitment to diversity, inclusion and development of artists and arts practice in Wales.

For this Diffusion, Ffotogallery partnered with a wide range of local, regional and international partners to jointly devise and deliver a season of exhibitions, festival events and public engagement projects bringing together outstanding contemporary photography and lens-based work from around the world and showcasing exciting new bodies of work developed in Wales. With a locus of activities in Cardiff and Newport, Diffusion touring and outreach activities reached Llanelli, St Davids, and the Vale of Glamorgan. Further afield, we presented Michal Iwanowski's Go Home Polish at Fotosommer Stuttgart, as part of the Wales in Germany 2021 initiative.

We achieved 49,508 unique visitors to exhibitions and events (and a further 1.9 million engaging with public realm interventions). We delivered 65 workshops and engagement sessions with 4129 participants.

The festival theme was Turning Point - "a time at which a decisive change in a situation occurs, especially one with beneficial results". Periods of uncertainty often provide the momentum for positive change. Wellbeing, resilience, access and inclusion, social justice, community cohesion and environmental responsibility were the interweaving strands of the project which guided our partnerships and programming decisions.

As well as exhibitions and events celebrating the power of photography and the digital image to reach and engage diverse audiences, Diffusion showcased the latest applications of immersive digital technologies, and built on collaborative links between Welsh artists, media producers and companies who are working internationally in Europe, the Americas, India, Australia and Africa.

Commissions for Welsh and Wales-based artists John Crerar, Hilary Powell, Janire Najera, Gareth Phillips, Abby Poulson, Rhys Webber, Kamila Jarczak, Antonia Osuji, Fez Miah, Dilip Sinha, Justin Teddy Cliffe, Sarah Goodey and Anna Sellen (the Ink Collective) examined contemporary Welsh identity and experience, and we were able to premiere exciting new work by Joao Saramago and Richard Jones, Black Mantis, Huw Davies and Sebastian Bustamante.



We partnered with the Pharmabees project and Greener Cathays to explore ways of cultivating more biodiversity in urban spaces, with the National Museum and Oriel y Parc in exploring improved marine and land management. We worked closely with Iris and the LGBT+ community in Wales, and with schools, universities, community centres and arts groups in Newport, and Cardiff examining issues of environmental responsibility, diversity and identity.

In line with the above themes, we delivered exciting international collaborations with Chennai Photo Biennale, PAWA254 in Kenya, Fotosommer in Germany, the First Nation Australian artist Tim Georgeson and North American artists Mary Farmilant and Lydia Panas. *The More Than a Number* exhibition, curated by Ffotogallery's Creative Producer Cynthia Sitei, featured 12 exceptional photographers from across Africa.

## Key outcomes:

- Significant new works by Welsh and Wales-based artists – Richard Jones' *Truth DeQay*, Hilary Powell's *Tin Works*, Abby Poulson's *Between the Trees*, John Crerar's *Lions and Unicorns*, Sebastian Bustamante's *El Otono*, Nik Roche's *It's Hard to report a Stolen Bike*, *Stolen*, Huw Alden Davies' *Xennial*, Kamila Jarczak's *Women of Newport*, Rhys Webber's *Welsh from Everywhere*, Joao Saramago's *The Betrayal Cycle*, Ron McCormick's *A Lockdown Landscape* and Gareth Phillip's *I'm afraid of violence, but I've often submitted to it*.
- the Wales' premiere at CULTVR of *Black Mantis*, an immersive 360 degree film/ live music work by Deri Roberts and 4pi Productions
- Digital installations, video projections and 3D online projects such as *Where's My Space?*, Richard Jones' *Truth DeQay*, Tim Georgeson's *Truth in Fire*, Joao Saramago's *The Betrayal Cycle* and Janire Najera's *Atomic Ed*
- live performances by Zim Voices, Ballet Nimba, Black Mantis, Justin Teddy Cliffe, Joshua Jones and Jo-Jo and the Teeth
- Partnerships with Women of Newport, Friars Walk, Barnabas Art House, the Westgate Hotel, Newport Rising, The Riverfront, Community House, Phyllis Maud Theatre, Gaer Primary School and the Cwtch in Newport, and Iris, CULTVR/4pi, St David's 2, BayArt, Queen's Arcade, Cathays Community Centre, St Monicas, Oasis, RNIB Cymru, UCAN and Cardiff University in Cardiff, with the National Museum Wales and Oriel y Parc in St Davids and with Tata Steel and the Trostre Works in Llanelli.
- International partnerships with artists and organisations in India, Africa, North America, Australia and Germany
- Diversity and inclusion commitment through projects such as *See Differently*, *Where's My Space?*, *More than a Number*, *Motherland*, *Christopher Street*, *You Brought Your Own Light*, *Pop-up Portrait Studio* and *Women of Newport*.
- Excellent web and print material, with strong visual and bi-lingual written content, creating a good web and social media buzz locally and internationally.
- National and international press and media coverage by Aesthetica, Radio Stuttgart, the BBC, Voice, and Buzz
- creative internships, volunteering and curatorial development opportunities



# Turning Point – a unique brand identity for Diffusion 2021

Diffusion 2021's branding, print and online material, programme and accompanying video resources were especially strong for this edition, featuring bilingual English-Welsh rich content with a range of artist, writer and curatorial contributions. Beyond marketing and promotion of the festival to wider audiences, this deepened the audience's engagement with the work and provided an important legacy. As the event present extended to several sites in Newport, as well as Cardiff, St. Davids and Llanelli, the event strapline was changed to *Wales International Festival of Photography*.



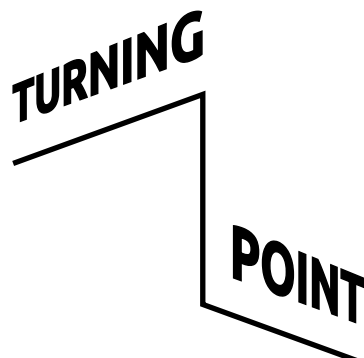
Image: Diffusion 2021 Map



Image: Diffusion 2021 Campaign



Image: Diffusion 2021 Map





We revamped the Diffusion website, creating a simpler and more interactive navigation system and a festival portal on which we presented 3D virtual walkthroughs of exhibitions, artist interviews and features, press reviews and slideshows. We have received universally positive feedback from participating artists, partner venues and peer organisations in the photographic sector, visiting international curators, audiences and in press and media coverage.

What's On

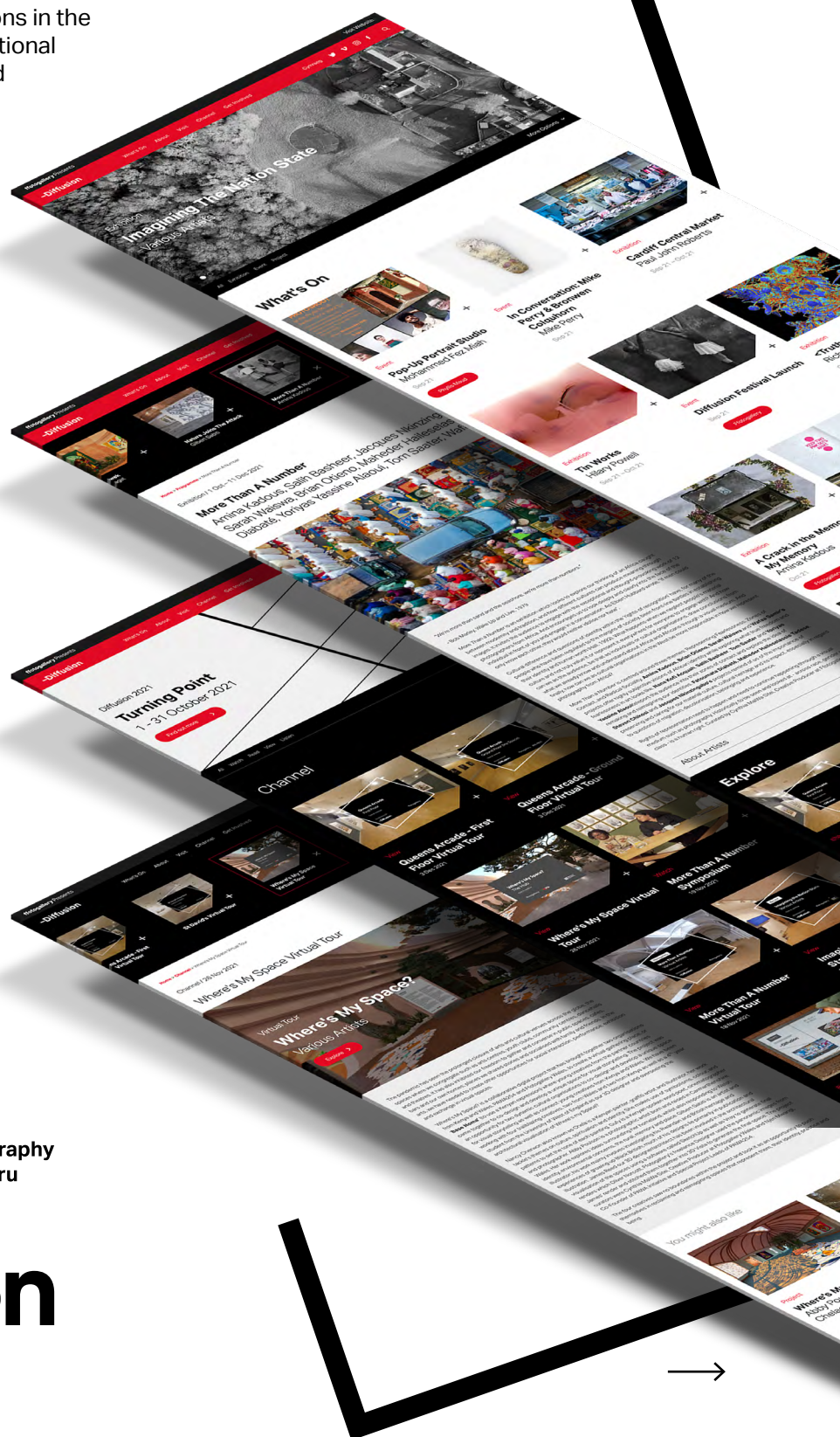
Exhibition

Channel

Virtual Tour

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Of particular importance for this edition was the event's strong public realm presence. In Cardiff, we partnered with Jack Arts and Build Hollywood to create a contemporary street billboard showcase highlighting a number of artists' works across the city. Our outdoor gallery included eight prominent public realm sites and covered the city centre, celebrating the art of photography in the heart of the Welsh capital with impactful takeovers.

In Newport, we partnered with Garrison Barclay Estates to create a 20 metre long public realm gallery exhibition on Commercial Street featuring images and stories from the Women of Newport project.



Image: Jack Arts Takeover

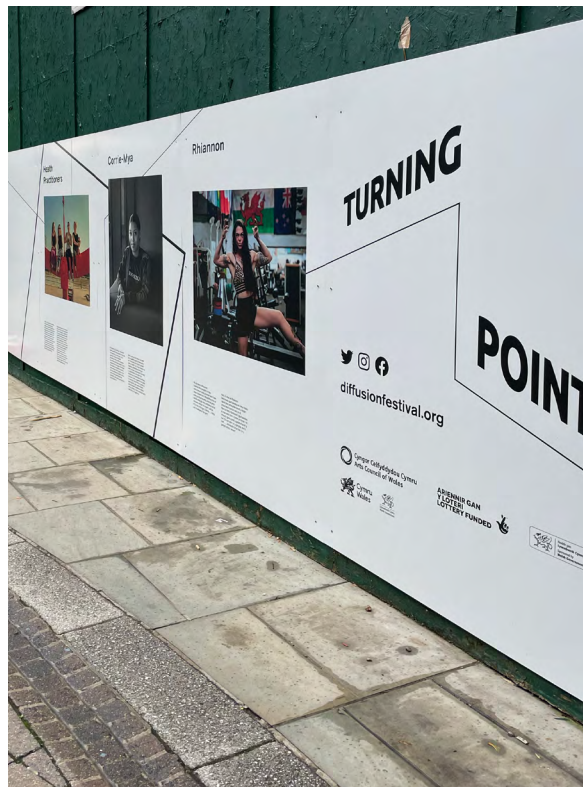


Image: Kamila Jarczak's *Women of Newport*



Image: Jack Arts Takeover



# Impact

The Festival achieved 99,016 recorded attendances (49,508 unique visitors, assuming an average of two exhibition venues were visited per visitor). An estimated 1.9 million people engaged with public realm presentations. (Jack Arts Figures) The online audience included 47,500 unique website visitors and 82,650 engagements across various social media platforms. We delivered 65 workshops and engagement sessions with 4129 participants, including 38 sessions taking place outside Cardiff - in Newport, St. Davids, Llanelli and the Vale of Glamorgan.

Diffusion's audience profile spanned seven key segments;

- Established and up and coming photographers and artists
- Online audiences
- Welsh and locally based arts audiences,
- Visitors and participants from outside Wales
- Locally based audiences who participate in activities or attend events, but may not be recognised as a regular arts attenders
- Disadvantaged and hard to reach audiences, including those relating to the nine protected characteristics
- Schools and HE students from around the UK with an interest in photography and contemporary art



## Other achievements:

- In programming and event staging terms, Diffusion 2021 delivered both excellent content and imaginative new partnerships, some striking new commissions and international exhibitions, and strong online and print outputs.
- We further strengthened Diffusion's status and industry credentials as a major international festival and over five editions we have built up strong partnerships across five continents
- We secured funding from the Arts Council of Wales, British Council, Weston Jerwood and Welsh Government, along with significant investment from Creative and Cultural Skills, and commercial sponsorship through partnerships with St. Davids 2, Queens Arcade, Garrison Barclay Estates, Jack Arts and others.
- The project delivered a consistently high quality of work, and careful curatorial matching of work to different venues/ contexts
- Good spread of exhibitions and events between the city centre, Butetown and Cathays in Cardiff, the Newport city centre and Pill, Maindee, Stow Hill and the Gaer Estate, Llanelli and St. Davids.
- Diffusion's International Opening and Closing Weekends, along with the Iris festival week, were very successful focal events with an excellent programme including exhibition launches, live performances, symposia, a zine fair and film screenings .
- Oliver Norcott Design created a strong brand which transferred well to advertising, venue design, print and online content, including the innovative Turning Point sub-brand. James Reed, a final year architectural student, was recruited as our 3D designer/architect to build the Where's My Space? virtual rooms using a software called Sketchup and then using Vray to generate the final renders.
- We recruited from within Wales - Cynthia Sitei, Creative Producer, Ellen Moon, Newport Coordinator, six Kickstart six month creative internships and two further internships, various freelance technicians, interns, printers and media producers worked well as part of the expanded Ffotogallery team planning and delivering Diffusion 2021
- The 'Turning Point' theme was timely and worked well at many levels in terms of the selection of work, presentation, digital engagement, cross-media collaborations, discussions and writing/reviews
- The web content was strong, including video content, 3D walk throughs, artist interviews, and instagram takeovers
- We recruited 42 volunteers and 8 paid interns, benefiting from the UK Government's Kickstart programme.







## Diffusion's Aims and Objectives are:

- to successfully deliver a biennial international festival of photography in a digital age
- to bring together outstanding contemporary work from all over the world, as well as showcasing exciting new bodies of work developed in Wales
- to deliver an event that enhances Cardiff and Wales' international reputation as a centre for contemporary art, media and design
- to set new standards in the use of photography and creative technology to reach and engage diverse audiences in innovative ways
- to act as a catalyst for long-term collaboration between artists, designers and other creative producers, presenting and producing companies, museums and galleries, the education sector, media and creative industries
- to create a strong platform in Wales for local, national and international collaboration
- to develop the reach and impact of Ffotogallery's work encouraging artist mobility, intercultural exchange and the development of new markets for photography and digital imaging

**We believe that all of these objectives were met well in 2021. As well as the quality of the work and its presentation, the festival created new work opportunities for artists as learners, web and print designers, video producers, technicians, printers, framers, photo labs, musicians, writers and curators.**



## Partnerships

Local partnerships with Women of Newport, Friars Walk, Barnabas Art House, the Westgate Hotel, Newport Rising, The Riverfront, Community House, Phyllis Maud Theatre, Gaer Primary School and the Cwtch in Newport, and Iris, CULTVR/4pi, St David's 2, BayArt, Queen's Arcade, Cathays Community Centre, St Monicas, Oasis, RNIB Cymru, UCAN and Cardiff University in Cardiff, were important in terms of extending the reach and impact of the festival and engaging new, diverse audiences. Likewise, with the National Museum Wales and presentation of Land/Sea at Oriel y Parc in St Davids and with Tata Steel and the Trostre Works in terms of the Hilary Powell residency.

For Diffusion, commissioning emergent artists, freelancers, paid internships and volunteering is an essential means by which artists and photographers in Wales are able to develop their professional practice. Our partnership with the national agency Creative and Cultural Skills enabled us to recruit locally in South Wales six Kickstart paid internships in such roles as exhibitions and events assistant, technical assistant, digital producer, admin assistant and marketing assistant. We created two more paid internships and recruited 42 volunteers. We worked with many freelance artists and creatives such as Simon Regan, Gilbert Sabiti, Zim Voices, Ballet Nimba, Oliver Norcott and James Reed, as well as trusted technicians Alan Moss and Paul Hill.



Image: Tin Archives



Image: Hilary Powell



Within the constraints of a limited lead-in time, we were able to form a wide range of new partnerships in Newport, Cardiff and Llanelli, as stated above. This enabled us to reach and engage broad and culturally diverse audiences including visually impaired photographers, individuals from African, Middle Eastern, Kurdish/Romani and Asian communities, refugees and asylum seekers, LGBT+ artists and audiences, young people with learning difficulties and families and school age children.

Having built up our partnership working with Iris over four Diffusions, we shared a Cardiff city centre venue for Diffusion/Iris events and presented Sunil Gupta's *Christopher Street 1976*, Allie Crewe's *You Brought Your Own Light* and a Best of Iris Films selection. During the Iris festival we hosted daily 'cocktail hour' events with speakers and live music.

The partnership with the Westgate Hotel and Newport Rising was another highlight, culminating in a Zine/Photobook Fair, 'Newport City of Subculture' publication and panel discussion, poetry, zine making workshops, film screenings and live music.



Image: More Than A Number

Locally based Zim Voices and Ballet Nimba provided music, dance and song to our Africa Day and the Diffusion launch event, the perfect accompaniment to the *More Than a Number* exhibition and launch of the *Where's My Space?* digital platform developed in partnership with PAWA254 in Kenya.

The projects which had a longer gestation, like the *Imagining the Nation State* commissions with Chennai Photo Biennale, our Wales in Germany 2021 work with Fotosommer in Stuttgart, *Where's My Space?*, Hilary Powell's *Tin Works* residency project at Tata Trostre and *More Than a Number* proved to be artistically successful and offered increased levels of learning and engagement. The key learning gained is that Diffusion benefits from longer lead-in times and sustained collaboration allowing for the scoping out and creative process to be conducted without pressure of delivering immediate outcomes.



Image: Iris Event





# Learning and Engagement

There was an extensive accompanying learning and public engagement programme that included artist-led workshops, artist residencies, online and physical talks and events, guided tours for school and college groups and various family orientated participatory events, with accompanying bilingual Welsh-English publications and learning resources.

In Newport, we were able to deliver a range of participatory projects such as Justin Teddy Cliffe's Tourist in Between, the Pop-up Portrait Studio, the Coffee and Laughs series with Antonia Osuji and Maryam Wahid, Women of Newport, and the Newport Lab. This latter project was led by eight alumni from the Newport Documentary Photography course 2021-2016, Sebastian Bruno, Clementine Schneidermann, Lua and Bandia Ribeira, Michael Allberry, Daragh Soden, Fergus Thomas and Isaac Blease, and showcased for the first time Newport-themed work they produced as students. During the exhibition, the artists returned to Newport and worked with members of the local community to create new photographic works which were presented alongside the older images.



Image: Diffusion Zine Fair



# Diffusion's Legacy

After five successful biennial editions, Diffusion - Wales International Festival of Photography has now established itself as a major signature event contributing to and developing the vision for 'Wales to be recognised as a consistently outstanding destination for major events'. A key part of its legacy is making a significant positive and enduring contribution across the seven goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, being:

- **A Prosperous Wales** – An innovative, productive and low-carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately, which develops a skilled and well educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities
- **A Resilient Wales** - A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change)
- **A Healthier Wales** - A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood
- **A More Equal Wales** - A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socioeconomic background and circumstances).
- **A Wales of Cohesive Communities** - Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities
- **A Wales of Thriving Culture and Welsh Language** - A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.



Diffusion is both internationally focused and firmly rooted in the vibrant and exciting photography and media scene in Wales. Diffusion projects a strong and confident view of Wales as a focus for creativity and innovation, drawing on the immense pool of artistic and technical talent we have here. Diffusion shows the world that Wales is a centre for contemporary art, design and media, alongside showcasing the nation's distinctive culture, traditions and identity.

Diffusion is a transnational project relating to the creative industries and the knowledge economy and delivered in partnership with European and other international organisations. Diffusion offers new ways to animate venues and empty sites in multiple locations, enhancing cultural tourism and the reputation of Wales' capital city as an international centre for arts, culture and entertainment.

Diffusion also makes a significant contribution to the Welsh Government's new Cultural Contract in developing new and strengthened relationships with and between organisations and to promote inclusive growth. This includes widening the diversity of those enjoying, taking part and working in the arts. It also includes increasing the availability of appropriately paid employment (fair work) and environmental sustainability and fully committing to the principles of collaboration and social responsibility.

In summary, Diffusion achieves the above legacy through:

- the creation and presentation of high quality arts activities
- promoting diversity and inclusion at all levels
- working with young people, particularly those from low-income backgrounds or who face barriers to accessing your work
- innovative programming and strategic audience development initiatives in areas of high deprivation
- targeted programmes for young people, families on low incomes and workless households
- presenting artistic work outside of the UK
- innovative digital research and development projects
- engagement with networks, events, showcases or conferences that have an international dimension

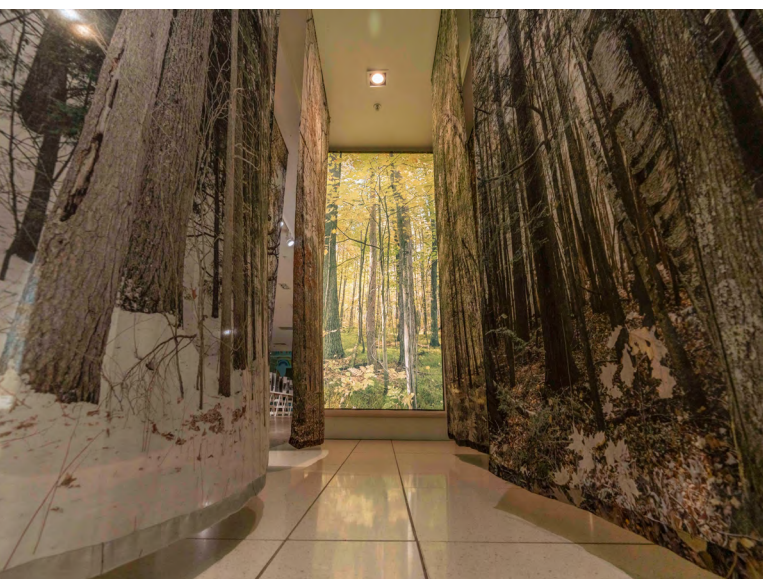


Image: Mary Farmilant's Natura Consonat at Diffusion  
© Simon Regan

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**Compiled by:**  
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January 2022

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