

# **Leith School of Art £100,000 Appeal to Help Recovery and Community Growth**

**Broadcaster, Sally Magnusson, and artist and designer, Angie Lewin, are backing a £100,000 fundraising appeal for one of Scotland's leading arts schools.**

The charity-run Leith School of Art Resilience Fund appeal will rebuild its resources after the pandemic, to help expand its work in the community, with schools, and to further develop its unique contribution to art education.

Founded in 1988, and based in the former Norwegian Seamen's Church in North Junction Street, the school is well known for its foundation course that has propelled many young people into high-quality degrees and on to successful careers.

Author and broadcaster Sally Magnusson backed the appeal saying: "Two of my sons benefitted enormously from their time at Leith School of Art, producing a confident and creative start to their separate careers, one in film and one in drawing and producing comics."

Over 100 people registered for the online launch event which featured a Q&A with Angie Lewin. She is renowned for original prints and watercolours of plants in their native landscape, and her St Jude's fabrics and wallpapers.



Pictured in one of the school's main studios are community classes student Gabriel Gonzalez with his companion dog Rico and Leeka Ndure (LSA's outreach and foundation course graduate). PHOTO Colin Hattersley Photography – [www.colinhattersley.com](http://www.colinhattersley.com) –

Angie, who recently moved from Edinburgh to Speyside, said: “I know staff and former students from the Leith School of Art – so I have been aware of its unique atmosphere and qualities for some time. More recently, I have been learning about how much it does in schools and the community.

“It is a wonderful place, giving people the chance to learn and create. And the whole idea of being together in a safe but busy, active space that's dedicated to creativity is going to be so welcome as Covid restrictions are eased.

“The courses are great for so many people – whether it's those who have never had the opportunity to be involved in art before, students leaving school in search of a good foundation course before university, or people returning to art after a break or later in life.”

Among the current students are community student Gabriel Gonzalez who has Asperger's syndrome, bipolar disorder and chronic pain. Gabriel has flourished as a student partly because he feels that: “Leith School of Art is like a family.”

Not long ago Gabriel, who lives in Edinburgh along with his assistance dog Rico, felt his life was in crisis, he was unwell and unable to move forward.



Pictured in one of the school's main studios are (clockwise from top left: Leeka Ndure (LSA's outreach and foundation course graduate), Eve McGlynn (LSA graduate resident), Nick Devison (LSA principal), Lauren Ferguson (LSA graduate resident) and community classes student Gabriel Gonzalez with his companion dog Rico. Photography for Leith School of Art from: Colin Hattersley Photography –

[www.colinhattersley.com](http://www.colinhattersley.com)

Art became an integral part of Gabriel's mental health toolkit and it has become a central part of his recovery for the past two years.

In Leith School of Art's Community Classes, Gabriel has found the right balance between emotional support and artistic progression, in a structured yet challenging environment.

He said: "The classes have surpassed my expectations in terms of artistic growth. My technique has improved loads."

Most importantly, however, he has discovered a sense of community and support and says: "On an emotional level, I have enjoyed a sense of connection and belonging, reliable support, friendship and laughter."

Now he is looking to advance his artistic career further and has enrolled for one of Leith School of Art's short courses, Drawing & Painting the Figure.

Leeka Ndure, who came to Scotland from The Gambia aged 11, was a Craigroyston Community High student who was talent-spotted in the Schools Outreach programme. She went on to take the foundation course and then earn a coveted place studying for a fashion degree at Glasgow School of Art.

Leeka said: "If it wasn't for Leith School of Art, I wouldn't have been able to get into GSA."

After moving to Scotland Leeka found it difficult settling into high school – it was so different to where she came from – and she attended several schools before arriving at Craigroyston Community High. This is where Leeka met art teacher Anne Boyd and began to develop a passion for art. She described Craigroyston as a school where "I would be able to be myself".

Leeka spent her breaks in the art studio and her teacher saw

great promise in her. Anne, who had studied at Leith School of Art herself, recommended that Leeka join the Schools Outreach programme.

While Leeka had always had a talent for art, she only started to think about making it a major part of her future thanks to the Schools Outreach Project. She explains: "It helped me figure out what art is all about, it gave me a chance to try more professional materials in a real studio which was really exciting."

During her year with the outreach project, Leeka showed exceptional talent so Leith School of Art's tutors and Craigroyston's art teachers encouraged and supported her to work towards a career in the arts by applying for LSA's Foundation Course. The commitment she showed, and the standard of work, earned her a fully funded place.

Leeka blossomed on the Foundation Course where she discovered a flair for fashion and sculpture. One of the tutors works in textiles and encouraged her to think about it for her future. She was able to build up the high quality and varied portfolio she needed to apply for a degree in Fashion Design at Glasgow School of Art (GSA).

When Leeka visited the fashion studio at GSA and saw all of the final year students studying there, she was overwhelmed. She said: "I am not usually emotional but something hit me when I was in that studio, it was a moment of realisation and tears just started rolling down my eyes."

If successful the Resilience Fund campaign will allow the art school to extend its outreach and community projects, enhance its curriculum and expand its scheme to give intensive support to talented university post-graduates – with the ultimate aim of developing a post-graduate centre.

Leith School of Art was set up as an independent alternative to mainstream art colleges and has a national and

international reputation for excellence.

Nick Devison, the School's Principal, said: "Throughout the pandemic we maintained the highest possible level of commitment to our students and staff, so the Resilience Fund is partly about replenishing our resources.

"But in addition it is about increasing our engagement with local schools and the community even further.

"The work we do with schools can be absolutely critical in lifting up young people who may not otherwise have had much access to art education, or ever have dreamed of being able to take a degree, and helping them have that life-transforming experience of going to university.

It is also very much about building on our existing courses through an expansion of our curriculum to include new online courses and exciting subject areas.

"I'm also excited about the prospect of increasing our year-long post-graduate residencies that 'hot house' talented emerging artists at that crucial and difficult point when they are trying to make the transition from university to careers as artists."

Donations can be made to the Resilience Fund at [www.donate.leithschoolofart.co.uk](http://www.donate.leithschoolofart.co.uk) and details will soon be revealed of a silent auction featuring work donated by alumni and well-wishers.



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