

Edinburgh Art Festival launches new Community Wellbeing project in Wester Hailes

Set to launch in Wester Hailes in the west of Edinburgh is a major new commission as part of the 2022 Edinburgh Art Festival, as it celebrates its 18th edition. A group of people living and working in the community and its surrounding areas– who have formed the Community Wellbeing Collective (C.W.C.) – will present Watch this Space – a space for all to develop together and to experience what community wellbeing is and could be. The commission is produced by Edinburgh Art Festival, in partnership with WHALE Arts.

A programme of events will take place in a former off-licence at Westside Plaza Shopping Centre from 30 July – 28 August, hosting activities and events led by C.W.C members, with gatherings and workshops led by invited guests. Across five weekends, the space hosts a number of talks,

performances and workshops under thematic areas devised by members.





Eunice Olumide MBE, Scottish actress and model – Community Wellbeing Project, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, 13th Aug

The third weekend (Sat/Sun 13th/14th Aug) – Healing Collective Trauma Through Creativity begins with a canal boat journey. Music, Joy and Resistance (Saturday 13 August) will see C.W.C. members set sail on a voyage from the Lochrin Basin to Wester Hailes, which will be followed by a concert on Westside Plaza. The Plaza performance will feature music from Gallo Rojo, The day will round off with hip hop in Sounds of the Schemes.

The event featured musical performances from local bands and musicians hosted by Eunice Olumide MBE, Scottish actress and model. The outdoor stage was erected in front of Community Wellbeing Collective's unit in Westside Plaza.

There were performances from Gallo Rojo, Violet Stevensen, The Katuns and L.O.T.O.S





Gallo Rojo – Community Wellbeing Project, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, 13th Aug 2022 © 2022 J.L. Preece

The group was initiated by Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk. In 2020, Edinburgh Art Festival invited Van Heeswijk to research the possibilities of a commission to be co-produced with people in Wester Hailes. As part of the artist's research, she presented her 14th Public Faculty, a four-day event and consultation held at Westside Plaza Shopping Centre. This ongoing body of work – which has been held across the globe – encourages people to re-think, re-define and re-enter public space through collective cultural action.

From this research conversation the artist identified key

themes and concerns centered on the need to counter significant challenges of poverty, poor health and mental health, and to find means to create a better and healthier place to live, and how this might be achieved both for individuals and as a community.

From many conversations and connections, a group from Wester Hailes and connected areas began to crystallize around questions of wellbeing. A group of individuals from Wester Hailes and surrounding communities formed the C.W.C. to explore and expand on these ideas: Ayọ̀ Akínwándé, Lorna Baxter, Raymond Collins, Rungano Chigovanyika, Federica Cologna, Elizabeth Ann Day, Jj Fadaka, Alan Gordon, Jeanne van Heeswijk, Eoghan Howard, Devi A Kousalya, Eunice Main, Ruvimbo Heather Marufu, Fabien Merville, Tiki Muir, Ema-Sayuru Nyx, Seona O'Flaherty, Susi O'Rourke, Sindy Santos, Jogob Sarr, Bobby Sayers, Josie Tothill, Rumilla Uddin, and Holly Yeoman.



J.L.Preece



Violet Stevenson – Community Wellbeing Project, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, 13th Aug 2022 © 2022 J.L. Preece

Over 9 months, the group – cooking together, eating together, spending time together, stretching and walking, playing and crafting, listening, writing, building, painting, reading, growing together. Through their regular meetings, the group has been relating to each other by sharing memories and questions, skills, needs, fears, and desires. Collectively, through dedication, creating space for practicing collective wellbeing, which is reflected in 'Watch this Space' and its activities and events programme, hosted by some C.W.C. members and invited likeminded guests.

The events programme opened with a ceremony of affirmations for the space, followed by a film screening of members' wellbeing practices and a DJ set. Across the weekend, events will include: The Mad Jammers Open Mic, an open mic group by and for people with experience of mental health issues; music performed by Gallo Rojo; a poetry show curated by Spit It Out Project, a collective of creatives bringing to light topics

that are not afforded attention due to structural inequalities in society.

The programme includes talks by Dorothy Gould of Liberation – a grass roots group led by people with experience of mental distress and trauma – and Jim Slaven, co-founder of Edinburgh-based charity, Helping Hands, which challenges social and economic inequality in the city.





The Katuns – Community Wellbeing Project, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, 13th Aug 2022 © 2022 J.L. Preece

It will feature workshops from Support@Work and Edinburgh Living Rent, in addition to a panel hosted by local care workers and Care and Support Workers ORGANISE!, a network of care workers and trade unionists fighting for better pay and conditions in the healthcare sector. Along the way, visitors can also take a herbal foraging ramble with Edinburgh and Glasgow based Grass Roots Remedies to explore ideas of natural remedies.

In her original proposal arising from her research project, 14th Public Faculty in Wester Hailes, Jeanne van Heeswijk notes; "How can we imagine a future in common together?"

“We will work collaboratively with community members, listening to many voices to create a space to common uncertainties that can hold an imagined future, one that can be inhabited – a time capsule.”