

Media Release

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Remaking Memories at The Bowes Museum



The Bowes Museum is proud to announce *Remaking Memories Together*, an ambitious new exhibition co-produced by a talented cohort of Young Curators in collaboration with artist Dr. Zara Worth and researchers Professor Emma Wood from Leeds Beckett University and Dr. Vicki Pugh from York St John University, along with Eleanor Thirlway, Co-Production Curator at The Bowes Museum.

Remaking Memories Together is a community art project that celebrates special places across County Durham, exploring how shared memories, creativity, and storytelling can strengthen connections between people and place.

The exhibition brings together historic and contemporary works, including a rare 19th-century optique (also known as a paper peepshow or tunnel book) of the Thames Tunnel from The Bowes Museum's collection, a short film by Carl Joyce, and approximately 32 newly created optiques made by community participants. Each

artwork is accompanied by a brief interpretive text that contextualises the personal and cultural significance of the place depicted.

Community Collaboration

The project was developed in partnership with **County Durham Libraries** and **TCR Hub**. Artist Zara Worth worked closely with craft groups from **Coundon Library, Brandon Library** and the **Trashion** group at TCR Hub as key project partners and creative contributors. *Remaking Memories Together* was designed to foster a sense of belonging and wellbeing through place-based creative activity inspired by a historic cultural artefact. Once created as souvenirs of landmarks of the industrial revolution, optiques provided a fitting artform to inspire people in a post-industrial county to take ownership over narratives of place and share where they think deserves to be celebrated today. By offering a sustained and creatively challenging programme, the project also sought to provide meaningful social and artistic activity encouraging a feeling of connectedness to each other, to County Durham, and to the Bowes Museum's collection.

Youth-Led Curation and Learning

Remaking Memories Together marks a significant milestone in the museum's commitment to youth development, moving beyond traditional tours to give young people aged 16– 25 hands-on experiences in exhibition curation and decision-making.

Through in-depth research into the museum's world-class collection, the Young Curators explored the intricate history and craftsmanship of optiques, 18th-century perspective prints, to create a bridge between historic artistry and their own contemporary perspectives.

Artistry Meets Advocacy

Under the mentorship of Eleanor Thirlway, Dr. Zara Worth and Dr. Vicki Pugh, the participants didn't just study history; they made it. Over the course of many weeks, participants took creative control over exhibition design whilst also working on their own original paper artworks for display alongside those created by other project contributors and objects from the museum's collection. Visitors to the exhibition will experience the exhibition layout and design created by the cohort of Young Creators, who also selected the specific objects from the archives that help to contextualise the miniature world of optiques.

Exhibition Experience

Also known as paper peepshows, tunnel books, expanding views, and teleoramas, optiques were popular during the 19th century but have since fallen into relative obscurity. By placing these intricate objects at the heart of the exhibition, *Remaking Memories Together* shines a light on their craftsmanship and storytelling power, drawing meaningful connections between historic visual culture and lived experience today.

On display in **The HIVE**, *Remaking Memories Together* offers an intimate and reflective exhibition experience that foregrounds creativity, care, and shared heritage. Through the celebration of personal stories and special places visitors are asked to share a special place on a map they want to highlight and celebrate. *Remaking Memories Together* deepens connections between individuals, communities, and County Durham, demonstrating the powerful role museums can play in nurturing belonging and wellbeing.

Sadie, a 16-year-old Young Curator, shared her experience:

"I've really enjoyed learning just what curation is - looking at both the historical and the creative. Planning our own exhibition allowed me to make real connections between objects. Looking into a nicher subject like optiques really pertained to my interests, and making our own has been incredibly immersive and fun!"

A Blueprint for the Future

The impact of the programme has been transformative in supporting future education and career pathways.

Evaluations show that 100% of the participants now feel they have a clear understanding of how to access careers in the cultural sector, while 80% reported a significant boost in creative confidence and development of creative skills.

Dr. Zara Worth, Lead Artist, described the project as a career highlight:

"Delivering the Remaking Memories Together project in partnership with The Bowes Museum has been a highlight of my career to date. It represents the most ambitious project that I have led, involving four community groups, with the most expert collaborators and creative contributors that I have worked with on a single project, as well as being the largest grant that I have been awarded so far. As a community art project, it has been an absolute privilege to have a front row seat to witness the personal journeys that project participants have gone on as they learn new skills, challenge themselves creatively, and grow their feelings of confidence and connectedness. Personally, this project has also improved my confidence as a project manager and lead artist, and I am now looking to 2026 determined to pursue more even more ambitious projects. "

Remaking Memories Together stands as a testament to the power of giving young people a voice within the walls of a national institution. All participants have received formal letters of recognition and certificates of achievement to support their future development into the arts.

Visit the Exhibition

The Remaking Memories Together project and the resulting artworks are now available for public viewing in The HIVE at The Bowes Museum.

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Notes to Editors:

PRESS IMAGES can be found [here](#).

www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk

About The Bowes Museum:

The Bowes Museum is a charity managing a Grade 1 listed accredited museum and Grade 2 listed parkland in Barnard Castle. Founded by Joséphine & John Bowes 150+ years ago, this purpose-built museum brings together an extraordinary, designated collection of European fine and decorative art as a cultural resource for the people of Northern England, where today we celebrate artists, designers and makers.

The Bowes Museum receives funding from Durham County Council and, as a National Portfolio Organisation, receives support from Arts Council England. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. artscouncil.org.uk

The Bowes Museum is a member of the Discover Durham partnership of attractions, whose commitment is to promote Durham as an exciting and vibrant group travel destination and to provide the travel trade with a professional and knowledgeable service. discoverdurham.co.uk

Admission to The Bowes Museum is £17.70 for local members (residents of County Durham and Darlington), £20.00 for members (residents elsewhere), £19.50 for a day ticket, £21.45 for a day ticket including gift aid. Under 18s, full time students and carers are free. As a registered charity (number 1079639) The Bowes Museum needs to generate more than half of its income each year to care for the historic collection, buildings and parkland. Your donations are vital to that work. Visit thebowesmuseum.org.uk/support/ for more information.