



**MAY DAY 2020:
CULTURE AND THE COMMONS
IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS**

NEWCASTLE TRADES COUNCIL

CULTURE MATTERS

Published 2020 by **Culture Matters**.
Culture Matters promotes a socialist and progressive approach to art,
culture and politics. See www.culturematters.org.uk

Edited by Mike Quille
Copyright © the contributors
Cover image: National Hero Service © Laura Moore

Thanks to Theresa Easton, Jonpaul Kirvan, Paul Summers and all the
contributors for artworks, poems and prose.



May Day 2020:

Culture And The Commons
In The Time Of Coronavirus



The past we inherit, the future we build

Contents

Foreword.....	5
Introduction.....	7
May Day 2020: A procession of images, poems and prose.....	9
Appeal.....	30
Newcastle Trades Council Culture Policy.....	32
Contributors.....	36

Foreword

By Martin Levy, President, Newcastle Trades Union Council

The current Covid-19 crisis has had a terrible cost in terms of illness and loss of life in Britain. Newcastle TUC extends deepest sympathies to all those who have lost loved ones, and solidarity with all workers at the front line—health and social care workers, shop workers, delivery drivers, postal workers, teachers, civil servants and many others. We salute the memory of those who have paid the ultimate price in carrying out their daily employment.

These deaths have been tens of thousands of individual tragedies, many of which might have been prevented if only we had had a government which had not run down health service provision and failed to heed the warnings of the 2016 pandemic planning exercise. Boris Johnson and his cronies have been interested far too much in keeping the ‘economy’ going, ie in maintaining favourable circumstances for big business profits, and far too little in protecting the lives of those who really provide society’s wealth—the working class. It has become patently clear who the ‘essential workers’ are, and they are not in the government, nor in the boardrooms of big business and the banks. The front-cover image stands for all those workers at the front line.

Under normal circumstances, such criminal negligence would have been met with mass protests on the street. At the time of writing, and no doubt for several weeks—if not months—ahead, that can’t happen because the social distancing measures remain absolutely necessary. However, it is very convenient for the government that their failed policies cannot be challenged in the normal way.

Had it been possible to hold the 2020 Tyne & Wear May Day march and rally, as in the past, then such points could have been brought out in public. The labour and progressive movement has found little outlet for its views in the daily press—with the exception of the *Morning Star*—and has been obliged to resort to email, social media and video conferencing. That last activity has been a new way of meeting, but it does not substitute for face-to-face contacts and public demonstrations.

Nonetheless, we must try to communicate our ideas, and culture is a very powerful way of doing so. This powerful e-collection of images, poems and prose is a virtual May Day procession, celebrating the core values of the

labour movement around the importance of ‘the commons’—co-operation, collective action, solidarity and the dignity of labour. These values have never been more relevant than they are nowadays, in the midst of this Covid-19 crisis.

So we hope it will reach and strike a chord where bald statements get lost amidst the crisis of everyday living in current circumstances. The collection offers humanity, hope and the perspective of a better world. Our thanks go to all the contributors, and the Culture Matters Co-operative, for making it possible.

Please disseminate it, publicise it, and tell your friends!



Introduction

*By Mike Quille, Convenor, Cultural Subcommittee,
Newcastle Trades Council*

The Culture Subcommittee of Newcastle Trades Council was set up about a year ago. Its purpose is to help take forward one of the constitutional aims of the Trades Council, which is to ‘to help promote suitable cultural, educational, social and sports facilities for all working people’. This is a brief report for the labour movement and others on its work in 2019, and plans for the future.

Trades unions’ interest in cultural developments is twofold. Some of our affiliated unions represent members who work in the creative and cultural industries; and all of our affiliates represent members who in one way or another are cultural ‘users’—consumers, participants and audiences.

Newcastle Trades Council has for many years promoted the incorporation of cultural elements into its activities, e.g. the annual Tyne and Wear May Day march and rally; a project with an artists’ co-operative to work with schools; plans to develop a local labour history museum; and using travelling theatre companies to put on plays relating to local working-class history.

To build on this past work and seek to engage more with relevant outside agencies, the Trades Council has agreed a culture policy (see page 32) and shared it with local agencies. We have also made various submissions to the City Council and others about the need to widen and rebalance cultural provision in Newcastle to make it more accessible, relevant and democratically accountable to local communities of working people.

We have also made links with local artists and discussed plans for a ‘cultural commons’ theme for the Late Shows, and a booklet. The Coronavirus crisis has caused the cancellation of the Late Shows, but we have continued with the booklet idea in electronic format—and this is the result.

In 2020/21 we plan to continue with all this work. In particular, we would like to develop closer links with affiliated members, activists and cultural workers in the labour movement. We want to consult more directly on cultural issues, mobilise our resources to help shape and deliver local cultural production, and support relevant unions’ attempts to improve terms and conditions of workers in the creative and cultural industries.

Many thanks are due to Jonpaul Kirvan and all the artists and writers at Commercial Union House and elsewhere, who have contributed creative work at very short notice to this booklet. It is a difficult time for creative and cultural workers in Newcastle, so we hope you will consider making a donation to the Appeal on page 30.

Please contact us if you'd like further information or—even better—want to become involved in our efforts to promote 'the commons' and cultural democracy in Newcastle. My email address is culture@newcastle-tuc.org.uk

And most of all, enjoy the procession!

MAY DAY 2020

A procession of images, poems and prose



come in and see the painters dancing,
come in and see the poets painting scenes of park life ,
come in and see the dancers writing love letters,
come in and see the knitters cueing up the 8 ball,
come in and see the swimmers knitting a scarf for the match,
come in and see a thousand things happening all over the city,
come in and talk and put the kettle on,
come in and post something to amuse your cousin and your friend
come in and sing a hymn to each and every one of us.

by Rob Walton, with image by Theresa Easton

NATIONAL HERO SERVICE



by Laura Moore

I created "National Hero Service" to honour our nation's health workers in gratitude for their heroic commitment to caring for people in this exceptional time of need.

A Protest March

by Catherine Graham

Get out of the road, dogs!

They're coming, marching
but this lot aren't from
the factories, they're too
well dressed, too high
and mighty to carry banners.

They're obviously in ranks,
big knobs first. One or two
women add a token red
to the black and grey prism.

But why my street? Why
not take the scenic route
instead? Scenic my arse.

They just want us to see
power on the move. This
is no protest, more a march.
Not a sound from neighbours
as they stand still and watch.
The men bow their heads,
one man stands erect!

Silly buggers, it's politics
not a bloody funeral march.

This poem is after the painting A Protest March by the artist L. S. Lowry and is taken from my Lowry-inspired pamphlet Like A Fish Out Of Batter, poems that bring Lowry's people to life.

After witnessing the long, dignified queue of people waiting for the local food bank to open, while two miles up the road, four-wheel-drive people grabbed goods off shelves as if in a TV game show, I was reminded that the current crisis is hitting the less well-off that much harder.

Our Shared Creative Commons



Words by Claire Murphy-Morgan and photo by Simon James

Time is our unlimited capital
Space to make, do and mend ourselves
Bread burns in the oven this first time
It's still our bread

Tea towel wafts around the smoke of our
Own creation

Forgotten sewing kits
Pulled from drawers
Coloured crochets are turned into shape

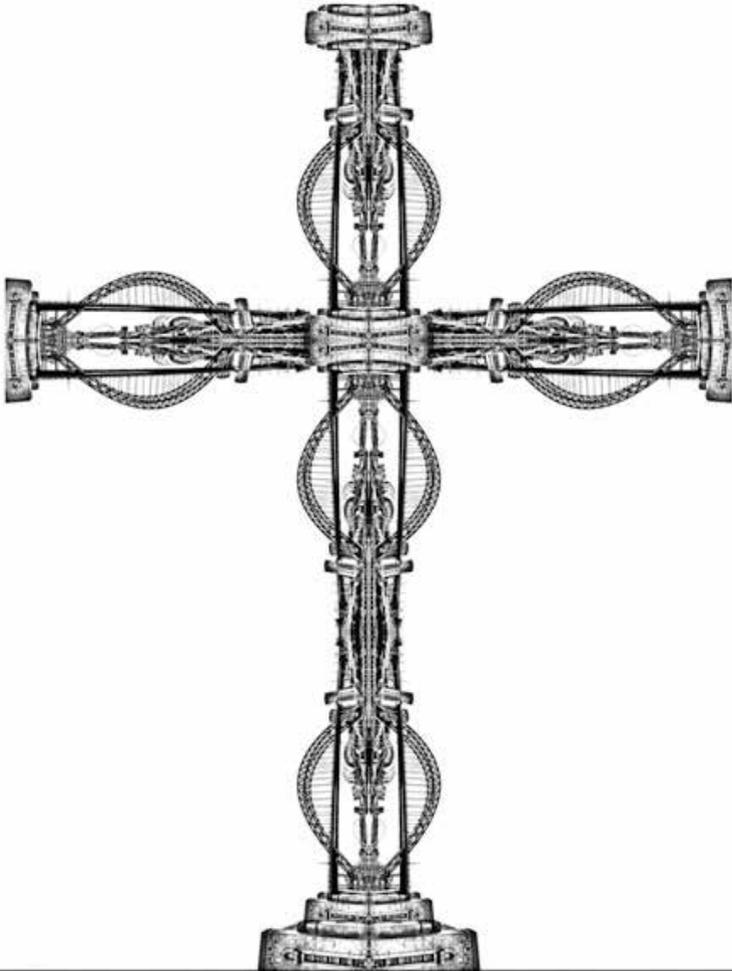
Worn out teddy bears at upstairs windows
Wait patiently for bored children to wave
Nothing is intended for this time
This shared blank calendar

Time is our unlimited capital
Never going back
Our new shared fiscal interest

This piece from Monkfish Productions seeks to celebrate creativity as something that we all share, especially in this strange historical moment and in looking towards what the future holds for us all.



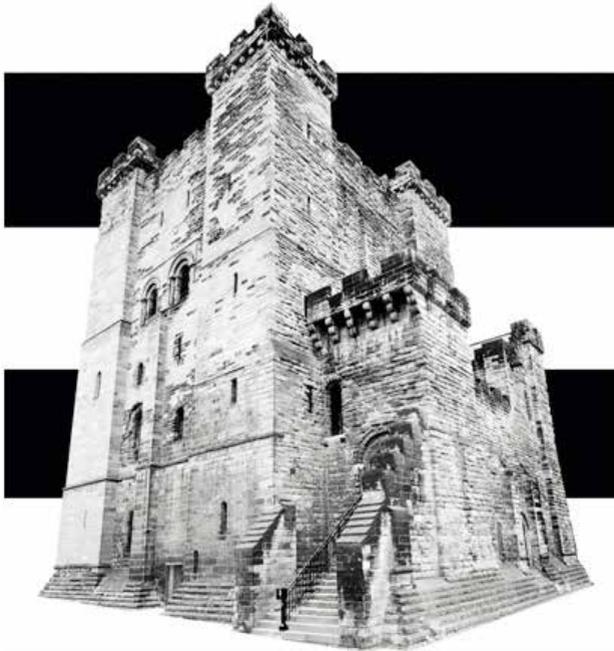
THE COMMONS TRIPTYCH



CULTURAL DEMOCRACY



COMMUNITY, HERITAGE & CULTURE



THE VALUE & DIGNITY OF LABOUR

by Jonpaul Kirvan and Feliks Culpa

The Commons Triptych (Cultural Democracy; Community, Heritage and Culture; and The Value and Dignity of Labour) are artworks created in direct response of the current CV crisis that is impacting hard on working people, particularly those in health and social care jobs, and on less well-off people across the city.

The crisis has also shown the importance of solidarity and a greater awareness of the value and dignity of labour, which are core beliefs of the labour movement. Each artwork has a different title but together they bind these core values into an artistic triptych.

a new castle

by Rob Walton

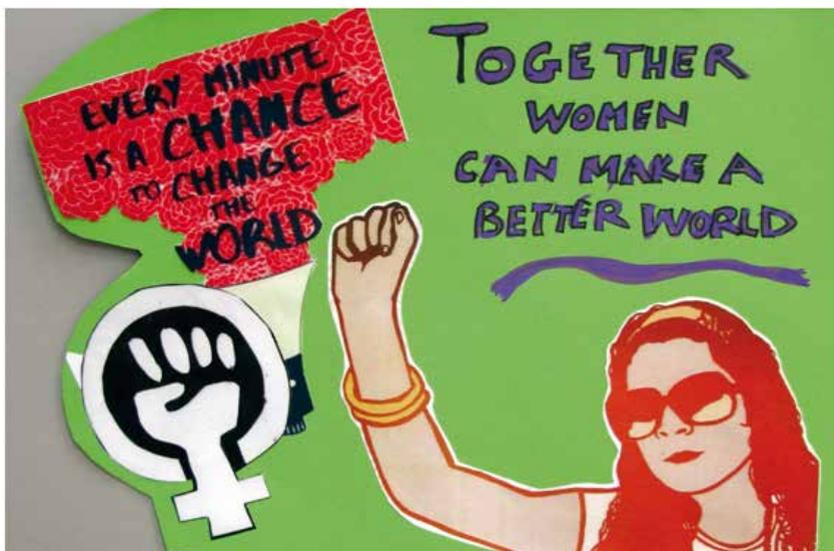
It's early days but I've been
to the council's planning portal
and submitted my application
to build a new castle
away from the hustle
and bustle and commerce of the city centre

and we're going to use Throckley bricks
and the great feature
the u s bloody p
will be the gateway
which will weirdly be bigger than the rest
of the castle put together

and it will be big enough for everyone
yes everyone who wants to get in
can get in without ID or passes or lanyards
and the only stipulation is when they get in
they take it all apart
and help to build something a bit less castlely

I see the current global health crisis as further evidence for the need to act together for the greater good, and to fight against those seeking to make profit from basic social needs. I want to live in a world which is held in common, where the invention and skills of people sewing scrubs and masks, and using 3-D printers to make visors are celebrated, along with the communities of people singing from their doorsteps to support each other.

RIVERSIDE'S INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION





by Theresa Easton

To mark IWD, Riverside Community Health Project and the Angelou Centre came together in the spirit of creativity and activism just days before the Covid-19 lockdown. As an Artists' Union England member I led a political poster-making workshop celebrating women's activism.

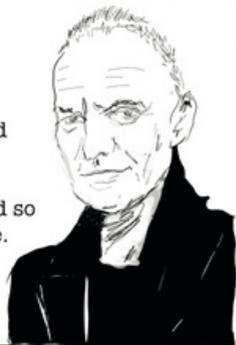
Initiated through the work of Newcastle Trades Council Culture Subcommittee, the workshop incorporated screen-printed flag making inspired by May Day celebrations.

Six Decrees of Separation

By: Feliks Culpa, 2020

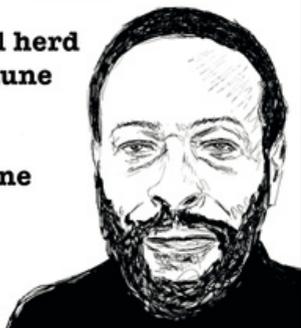
The images depict the singers or songwriters associated with the lyrics that I've parodied in the name of light relief during the pandemic :

Don't stand so,
Don't stand so,
Don't stand so close to me.

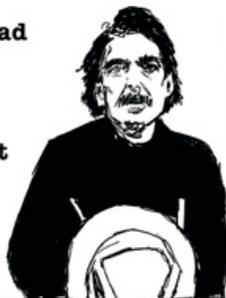


we'll herd immune

like bovine

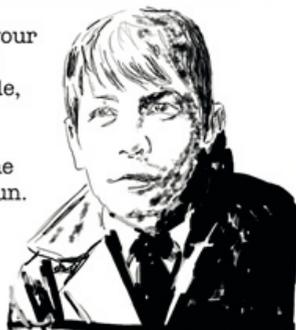


Your head is your only house unless it rains



Stay in your house in Newcastle,

They've closed the Rising Sun.



If you keep on doing what you're doing, You're going to get leprosy

Stuck inside with mobile

with the furlough blues

'Til when?



Sting - Don't Stand so Close to Me

Captain Beefheart - My head is my only house, unless it rains

Bob Dylan - Stuck inside a mobile with the Memphis blues again

Eric Burdon - House of the rising sun

Marvin Gaye - Heard it through the grapevine

Bo Diddley - You're gonna get next to me

UNDER TYNE BRIDGE



by Bernard Quinn

This is my emotional response to the incredible statement of achievement of the people who built the Quayside. The incredible iron structure of the Tyne Bridge speaks loudly of the bravery, the skill and the coming together of huge ranks of labourers who built it.

It is a breathtaking corner of Newcastle which is probably one of the boldest statements of the value and dignity of labour you will find anywhere.

William Blake in the Bridge Hotel

by Keith Armstrong

A few pints of Deuchars and my spirit is soaring.
The child dances out of me,
goes running down to the Tyne,
while the little man in me wrestles with a lass
and William Blake beams all his innocence in my glass.
And the old experience sweats from a castle's bricks
as another local prophet takes a jump off the bridge.

It's the spirit of Pat Foley and the ancient brigade
on the loose down the Quayside stairs
in a futile search,
just a step in the past,
for one last revolutionary song.

All the jars we have supped
in the hope of a change;
all the flirting and courting and chancing downstream;
all the words in the air and the luck pissed away.
It seems we oldies are running back
screaming to the Bewick days,
when a man could down a politicised quip
and craft a civilised chat
before he fed the birds
in the Churchyard.

The cultural ships are fair steaming in
but it's all stripped of meaning —
the Councillors wade
in the shallow end.

O Blake! buy me a pint in the Bridge again,
let it shiver with sunlight
through all the stained windows,
make my wit sparkle
and my knees buckle.

Set me free of this stifling age
when the bland are back in charge.
Let us grow our golden hair wild once more
and roar like Tygers
down Dog Leap Stairs.

In this poem I'm trying to combine my core community and local values around 'the commons' with a radical, internationalist and universal vision. As well as being inspired by Blake, it also links local heroes such as Thomas Spence and Thomas Bewick with the politics of today.



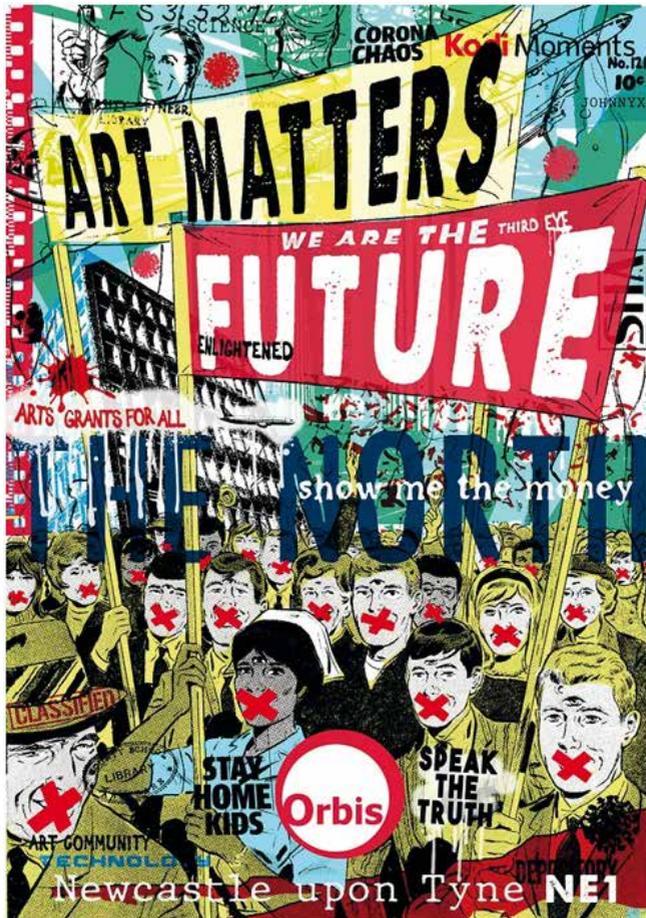
MAGICAL NURSE



by Katie Marshall

A simple concept inspired by the recent news of Tokyo Mew Mew's rerelease being in the making. During this time NHS workers in the UK are the most valuable members of our society and should be praised as such. Displaying a nurse in a magic girl pose but keeping her uniform realistic because she doesn't need a special outfit or quirky mascot to save the world as we know it. In her scrubs she is powerful and a valuable asset to us! Save our NHS!

WE ARE THE FUTURE



by Johnnyx

Art Matters. Especially in the North, where individual creative practice is underfunded, under-represented and generally under supported. Art can change everything. We need to find our voice, enlighten people and ultimately celebrate our wonderful, diverse artist community. Support Orbis and Commercial Union House. Let the creatives speak. This is not a protest, we are the Future!

COMMON GROUND



This must be the beginning of change. The idea of the commons has always been a key tenet of the labour movement. Now, more than ever, its significance is vital as we look to rebuild our societies in the wake of Covid-19.

When I reach the edge of the Town Moor, the gate closes behind me with a heavy, metallic sound. Here there are no cars, no closed-up cafes or small shops with printed statements pinned to their doors. Here there are none of the houses of surrounding affluent Gosforth, each of them a display of wealth and security. The vast expanse of the moor

—larger, Wikipedia tells me, than both Hyde Park and Hampstead Heath combined—opens up around me, flat, parallel, the pages of a book cracked open. On the horizon, the buildings of the city are held at a distance: the lone chimney of the RVI, the pale skeleton of St James' Park.

The Town Moor is—and has been, since it hosted the horse races of the 1700s—a highly accessible place for the people of Newcastle to visit.

The importance of this cannot be overstated. By contrast, the countryside can often feel like a distant and alien place to many of us without our own means of transport. A DEFRA review, in 2019, highlighted that the National Parks were failing to attract people from working-class and minority ethnic backgrounds. And yet the obvious benefits of access to the outdoors have been thrown into sharp relief by this crisis. The 'right' to air and exercise was enshrined in law in the Law of Property Act 1925. We have to do more to make these spaces work for everyone. School trips should encourage children to think of our National Parks as their own to explore. The benefits of the rural environment need to continue into our city centres, too: as the impact of the closures of our urban centres seems likely to topple the already precarious High Street, we have to rethink what we use our cities for, and come up with ways to make them greener.

//

Near the foot of the largest of these hills—the imaginatively named 'Cow Hill'—I stop and take a swig of water from the bottle in my backpack. There's a chilling moment as I realise where I'm standing: I've been reading about the history of the moor, and have learnt that in the thickness of these trees, still circled by a fence, there was once an isolation hospital for Small Pox. Grainy black and white photos on Google from 1898 show a man lying in a hospital bed in a dark room, and the horse drawn ambulance cart that would have taken patients there. It's difficult to believe that this is the site. The buildings were demolished in 1958 and there is nothing to commemorate it. No plaque, no statue: only the trees. I stand there for a while, thinking about that hospital, thinking about those people.

Then I begin to climb the hill.

It's hard to know how to write about this time. Online, people scramble to make sense of a crisis of global proportions unseen in our lifetimes. There are videos and lists, hints and tips and tricks and hashtags. We are a world that cannot stop talking. And yet how should we navigate discussion around a time of so much pain and suffering?

The city stretches out around me. Chimneys and trees and distant high rises. The Byker Wall squats like an alien spaceship. Rows of miniscule terraces branch away, their windows glinting in the morning sun. In every one of those buildings, a person.

//

There will be time and space for us to come together again. I know this, standing on the top of the hill, overlooking the city. The Town Moor invites us to think about it: about space and community, about the past and the future, about the things that are possible and the things that have been.

This must be the beginning of change. Whenever we reach the other side of this crisis—whenever and whatever that might look like—we must begin to plan immediately for a better future. We must count the dead and hold those to account who failed them. And we must stand together and say: enough. Things cannot be allowed to return to the way that they were. The way that they were was the problem.

We must remember the people who worked tirelessly when so many of us stayed indoors: the checkout workers, the nurses, the refuse collectors, the teachers, the doctors, the librarians, the postal workers and delivery drivers. These are the people that we should value the most. These are the people who should be honoured, and whose salaries should reflect our gratitude.

We have lived in a culture of endless greed: of belligerent hedge fund managers, grubby-fingered billionaires and sneering, public schoolboy politicians. Though we dress it in the lineaments of modernity, beneath our filters and slick user interfaces is the same system: moth-eaten, broken, old.

The way that things were was the problem. This must be the beginning of change.

Few could dispute that we must all stay at home as much as possible and do our part in slowing the transmission of Covid-19. But the existing conditions in which so many people now find themselves prisoner cannot be allowed to go unaddressed.

In the coming months and years, as we attempt to rebuild our societies across the world, we must make this a priority. 'Home' should not be a word that means safety for some, danger for others. Home should be a place of solace for everyone.

by Lyndsey Ayre

with image of embroidery by Melanie Kyles

*A longer version of this piece is on the **Culture Matters** website*



APPEAL



Commercial Union House

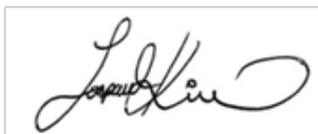
Orbis, a not-for-profit company holds the lease for eight floors of Commercial Union House, 39 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle City Centre. Over the past nine years, Orbis has established itself firmly at the heart of the North East's cultural, social and creative networks and has created a platform that provides an accessible route to set up businesses, build careers and pursue creative and learning opportunities.

Orbis and their creative community's work does not just affect people who are directly linked to us. By providing these nurturing and accessible spaces for businesses, community groups and creative practitioners to meet and work, we have a wider, ripple effect on the economy, strength and diversity of both the local community and the wider region.

The challenges posed by the Coronavirus crisis are wide-ranging and long-lasting for us all. Many of our floor runners, studio holders, charities and businesses are facing unprecedented challenges in the coming weeks and months. All of the organisations which have hired out our rooms and workspaces for several years are now in limbo while the crisis continues. Without financial support, the future of our community is uncertain. If we're to continue providing support to the community, we need urgent financial help.

We are currently ineligible to access any of the government support offered to businesses at this time and the future of Orbis is now at risk. So we need your help to support our creative community, and I am writing to ask for your help and support to ensure the continuation of Orbis, Commercial Union House and the work that we do within our

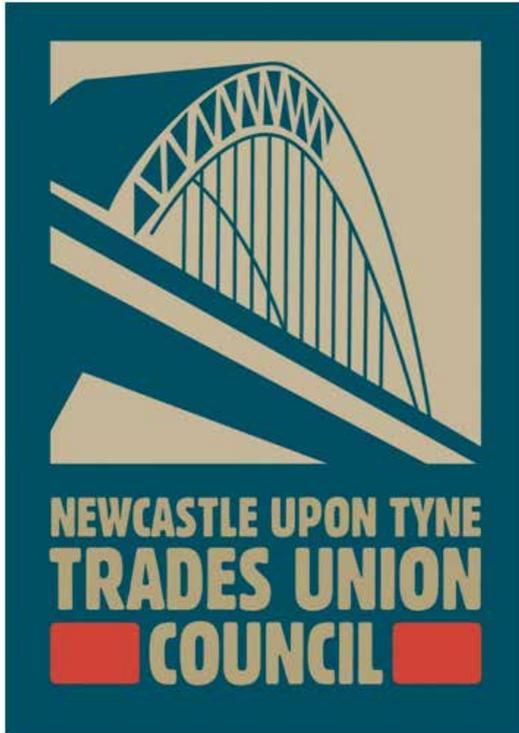
region. Please go to www.orbis.one/save-our-community and make a donation.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Jonpaul Kirvan'.

Jonpaul Kirvan
Co-director, Orbis & Ampersand Inventions April 2020
Email: info@cuhouse.org.uk
Or contact@ampersandinventions.com



NEWCASTLE TRADES COUNCIL CULTURE POLICY



Introduction

Newcastle Trades Council is the link between the trade union movement and the wider community, in the city of Newcastle. It has established a sub-committee to take forward one of its constitutional aims, which is 'to help promote suitable cultural, educational, social and sports facilities for all working people.'

This policy document sets out our approach to culture issues. It is a working document, developed to promote and guide discussions with relevant local agencies, individuals and partnerships. Similar initiatives are being taken by the labour movement in other areas of the country.

We seek support, endorsement and implementation of these principles by local and regional authorities; employers, owners, managers, and trustees of cultural institutions of all kinds; and politicians in office or standing for office.

What is culture and why is it important?

Raymond Williams said: *“Culture is ordinary: that is where we must start”*. This means that culture includes all those learned human activities which give life purpose, meaning and value, and which human beings engage in for enjoyment, entertainment and enlightenment.

Culture therefore includes sport, TV and the media generally, eating and drinking, fashion and clothing, education, religion and many other popular activities. Fundamentally, human cultural activities can be social, unifying and egalitarian. They can express and assert our common humanity and solidarity against divisions of class, gender, race and other social divisions.

Taking part in cultural activities is not some optional extra for us. It sustains our health, well-being and happiness, and is essential to our development and flourishing as human beings.

So trade union members and working people generally who are connected with any of these cultural activities, as employees or as consumers, have a strong interest in how they are organised, resourced and delivered in our society. The policies and practices of social, political and cultural institutions and agencies which in their various ways own, control and deliver cultural activities are vital to working people, as employees and as consumers.

As the UN Declaration of Human Rights (Article 27) says: *‘Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community.’*

Equal and free participation in culture

How should that basic human right be realized, in Newcastle? Below are some general principles for implementation, with some examples of policies to improve the situation which could be considered by local authorities and cultural institutions.

Participation via access and content—measures to improve the access of working and poorer people to culture

- Promote cheap or free access to cultural institutions and events

- Review relevance and accessibility of the content of cultural activities to all social classes and aim to increase the benefit of cultural institutions and events to local workers and local communities

Participation via funding—measures to improve the amount, balance and distribution of public funding

- Review amount of provision with reference to amount of public spending via taxation and Lottery tickets and seek to rebalance provision accordingly

- Review take-up of publicly funded cultural activities by social class, ethnic background and other measures, and seek to rebalance provision accordingly

- Ensure funding opportunities are available to smaller, grassroots organisations

Participation via ownership—measures to improve shared ownership of culture

- Review ownership arrangements and develop ways of sharing ownership of cultural institutions with users, employees, local authorities and local communities

Participation via control—measures to improve democratic management and control of culture

- Review arrangements for oversight and control of cultural institutions and develop ways of increasing representation of users, employees, local authorities and local communities

Participation via employment—measures to improve wages, terms

and condition, diversity, job security, etc.

— Uphold employment legislation, implement trade union agreements to provide adequate remuneration to employees, recognise and encourage trade union membership, maintain health and safety standards

— Review employment policies and practices with reference to diversity and job security, and improve employment and career opportunities for working-class applicants

Conclusion

Newcastle TUC believes that the quality of life for people in the Newcastle area, especially working people and the less well off, could be significantly improved by the acceptance and implementation of the kind of measures outlined above. We therefore urge regional and local authorities, cultural institutions and all agencies and businesses relevant to our cultural life to consider, discuss and incorporate them in their constitutions, policies and practices.



CONTRIBUTORS

Bernard Quinn, BA (Hons), Cert Ed, MifL, QTLS, IOSH, is an artist based at Ampersand Inventions Studios, Commercial Union House. Contact: visit <http://bernardquinn.blogspot.com/> and to see his project work visit: <http://hi-vis.org/>
Contact: <https://www.johnnyx.co.uk/>

Catherine Graham grew up in Newcastle where she still lives. Her poetry has been published in the UK, USA and Ireland. Catherine takes huge pride in her working-class roots and the fact that despite having no university degree or such, her hard work and her love of poetry has seen her being awarded a number of poetry awards including The Jo Cox Poetry Award and the Northern Voices Poetry Award.
Contact: <https://www.indigodreams.co.uk/catherine-graham/4593256234> Follow: @CGrahamPoetUK

Johnnyx is an artist/print maker based in Newcastle upon Tyne. His designs are usually multi layered, often experimental and explore modern cultural and political themes through space, shape, colour & texture. Ideas are presented using drawings and found imagery from carefully selected out of copyright and free to use sources referencing popular culture, advertising and general ephemera. Ideas are broadly researched and developed using a 'pop art' approach to working. Imagery is obfuscated and re-purposed/reworked into original Johnnyx designs suitable for his screenprinting technique.

All works are printed by the artist, as this is another creative opportunity in the print process. Pieces usually include late stage interventions—making each piece an individual.

Jonpaul Kirvan is a practising artist of over twenty years, in his practice he develops drawings and prints that are complex and multi-layered. Taking as his starting point diagrammatic images of complex machines or building diagrams, he creates successive overlays of information: algebraic equations, geometrical forms, and planetary orbits. Through this layering the aim is to create a complex web of interconnections and arcane, elusive messages.

Katie Marshall is a Newcastle based illustrator working as part of Loose Tooth Studios in association with Ampersand Inventions. She goes by the alias *NosticArt* when displaying art publicly and online.

Katie tends to work on illustrations that have meaning (obvious or hidden), identifying as a social artist because of this. Recently her art has revolved around mental health and awareness of such but has also expressed LGBTQ+ rights and diversity (body shapes, skin tones, complexion, etc).

Contact: www.nosticart.com

Keith Armstrong has worked as a community development worker, poet, librarian and publisher. He is coordinator of the Northern Voices

Community Projects creative writing and community publishing enterprise which specialises in recording the experiences of people in the North East of England. His commitment to working in the local community remains very strong and has involved him in a multitude of community publications and in working with many locally based writers' groups and on several community festivals.

Laura Moore was born and raised in Tynemouth, Laura is a Geordie Freelance Illustrator, Graphic Designer and contemporary Artist.

Laura's work is heavily influenced by her early love of Western and Japanese animation, garnered with a touch of art nouveaux. Her work explores and celebrates femininity in all its aspects.

Contact: <http://lauramoon.co.uk/>

Lyndsey Ayre grew up in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear. In 2019, she won New Writing North's inaugural Sid Chaplin award for Working

Class Writers. She has an interest in challenging stereotypical perceptions of working-class communities and culture and in writing about walking in urban and rural spaces.

Contact: [@lyndsey_ayre](https://twitter.com/lyndsey_ayre)

Martin McAloon (Feliks Culpa) works at the fault line of figuration, appropriation and conceptualism, in charcoal and ink. His drawings are "Data Events" dictated and themed by abstract parameters—date, time, geo-location co-ordinates, musical notation, feast days, film footage and facial recognition programs. Using only black and white, avoiding colour and choice, his drawings attempt to capture, notate, locate and navigate time.

Contact: <https://www.facebook.com/FeliksCulpaArt/>

Melanie Kyles lives in Gateshead and takes what are usually regarded as gender-specific materials, such as fabrics and crystal to subvert notions of economy and practicality traditionally associated with the 'decorative' arts. Her creative practice explores themes of feminism, workmanship, heritage and politics, blurring the boundaries between art and fashion.

Monkfish Productions: nurtures artists through creative happenings in new and unusual spaces, and works with a wide range of communities and individuals to unlock creative potential wherever they go.

Contact: www.monkfishproductions.org)

Rob Walton is from Scunthorpe, and lives in Whitley Bay. He divides his time between writing poetry and short fiction, and working in a primary school in Newcastle. His work has appeared in various anthologies and magazines in the UK, USA and New Zealand, and he also collated the text for the New Hartley Memorial Pathway. His debut collection is due out from Culture Matters later this year.

Theresa Easton is a printmaker and activist working with artist's books, based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Printmaking and artist's books provide a platform for Easton's interpretation of social history and cultural commentary. As an artist with a socially engaged practice, Easton enjoys a collaborative approach to making artwork and developing ideas alongside participants. Community participation features as a driving force in her work. One of the co-founders of the trade union, Artists' Union England (AUE), Easton's practice is steeped in her activism and community values.

<https://theresaeaston.wordpress.com/>

theresa@artistsunionengland.org.uk

Instagram: [theresameaston](https://www.instagram.com/theresameaston)

**TOGETHER WE ARE
STRONG!**

by Theresa Easton