

SITE GALLERY

Press Release / 12 March 2021

SITE GALLERY RELEASES PENALTY OF OUR PARADOX: A NEW FILM ABOUT SHEFFIELD'S HIGH STREETS

- **New short film *Penalty of our Paradox* launched online this morning (12 March), which explores Sheffield's High Streets through the eyes of local young people**
- **It was made by Sheffield-based filmmaker Smart Banda, featuring an original poem by Sheffield poet Otis Mensah and Site Gallery's young people's group the Society of Explorers, an original soundtrack by Mensah and photography by Peter Martin**
- **Produced as part of Historic England's Future of the High Streets film series**
- **Site Gallery was one of only ten regional arts organisations across the country chosen to take part in this commission**

Today, Site Gallery is delighted to announce the launch of new short film *Penalty of our Paradox*, which explores Sheffield high street as seen through the perspective of young people and their experiences of public spaces.

The film, made by Sheffield-based filmmaker Smart Banda and featuring an original poem by local poet Otis Mensah and Site Gallery's young people's group the Society of Explorers, is part of the *Future of the High Streets* film series, organised by Historic England as part of the High Streets Heritage Action Zones Cultural Programme.



Photos: *Penalty of our Paradox*, image still (c) Peter Martin

Using the score as a starting point, filmmaker Smart Banda developed a comprehensive visual concept for Mensah's work. This informed a series of 35mm black and white images captured by photographer Peter Martin, taken of high streets around Sheffield.

FUTURE OF THE HIGH STREET SHORT FILM SERIES

The Future of the High Street series of ten new films are being released throughout March. They have been organised by Site Gallery and nine other major regional UK arts organisations, and have been created by local filmmakers and young creatives. Each film explores what the future of the high street could be, posing hopeful questions at a time when these communal spaces have been hit hardest.

The film series is part of the government-funded High Streets Heritage Action Zones Cultural Programme, in which Historic England are working with artists and creative organisations across the country to celebrate our nation's high streets.

The nine other arts organisations involved includes: Focal Point Gallery (Southend-on-Sea), Beacon Films (Newcastle), Turf Projects (Croydon), Heart of Glass (St Helen's), Living Memory Archive (Stirchley High Street), New Art Exchange (Nottingham), Lighthouse (Brighton), The Photographers' Gallery (London), Newlyn Art Gallery (Penzance).

Ellen Harrison, Head of Creative Programmes and Campaigns at Historic England, said: "The films in our Future of The High Street series are a compelling snapshot of the thoughts, hopes and fears of young people and creatives as they re-examine what our high streets mean to them. We're so delighted that this important work can be a part of the High Streets Cultural Programme."

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For more information, images or interviews please contact Rosie Thompson at Site Gallery on rosie.thompson@sitegallery.org.

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About Site Gallery

Site Gallery is Sheffield's contemporary art space specialising in new media, moving image and performance. Pioneering emerging art practices and ideas, Site works in partnership with local, regional and international collaborators to nurture artistic talent and support the development of contemporary art.

Site Gallery is an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation with revenue funding from Sheffield City Council.

www.sitegallery.org

About High Streets Heritage Action Zones

The High Streets Heritage Action Zones is a £95 million government-funded initiative led by Historic England and designed to secure lasting improvements to our historic high streets for the communities who use them.

www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/HighStreets

About the Cultural Programme

The High Streets Heritage Action Zone scheme includes £7.4 million to fund four years of cultural activities across the country to engage communities with their local high streets, from 2020-2024. Historic England is leading the Cultural Programme in partnership with Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Its aim is to help make high streets more attractive, engaging and vibrant places for people to live, work and spend time.

Other national commissions include a large-scale outdoor celebration of the high street, happening across multiple regions and high streets in summer 2023, and a four-year photography project to creatively document the changing face of the nation's high street, coming to a conclusion in 2024.