News release

15 September 2024

**Bristol-based arts organisation Spectroscope awarded £127,000 for major international arts programme and new artist collective**

A significant funding award from Arts Council England will help Bristol-based Spectroscope expand its collective of exceptional artists and producers and deliver a ground-breaking, two-year programme of immersive artworks and installations around the world.

Conceived and founded by acclaimed deaf curator Cathy Mager in 2022, Spectroscope has announced the appointment of Cat Roberts as its new head of programme & production to support its expansion. Cat is known as ‘a powerhouse of the music events sector’; her 15-years experience includes managing Bristol’s largest and critically acclaimed event spaces and venues, management and production roles for Glastonbury Festival, Boomtoom Fair, Forwards Festival and Love Saves the Day, and production manager for the award-winning film led by Cathy Mager, BBC *Sign Night.*

Joining Cathy and Cat as part of the wider associate team are some of the most exciting artists emerging from Bristol, including Ngaio Anyia, whose colourful portfolio career includes artist, singer, DJ, writer, broadcaster, and inclusion & diversity consultant. Ngaio has worked with the likes of Boomtown Festival, Shambala and Artspace Lifespace, and previously collaborated with Cathy and Spectroscope on the Lantern Project as part of Bristol Beacon’s venue transformation.

The six-figure investment from Arts Council England, underpinned by further awards from a number of other partner organisations, will enable Spectroscope to deliver a programme of major new artworks between 2024-26, including in the UK, Australia, US, and China. It will also support Spectroscope’s longer-term ambition to establish a foundry in the next five years that brings together artists and makers of different disciplines to support creative development and the making of innovative artworks by disabled artists.

Founder Cathy Mager is known for her daring public art works that tell stories about hidden histories that are often led by deaf and disabled artists. Spectroscope brings together art, history, cutting-edge technology to deliver awe-inspiring, time-travelling artworks and compelling heritage installations that transform public spaces. A disabled-led organisation, it collaborates with an international network of diverse artists, performers and digital innovators to achieve unique and complex artworks that create spectacle and bring heritage to life.

Upcoming projects from Spectroscope to look out for in the next few months include an extraordinary world-first. *Night Bloom* sees a series of giant projections taking on the themes of sustainability and the role of the deaf community in supporting it, through the story of a mystical garden’s fight for survival where plants grow and blossom from the fingertips of those that live there. *Night Bloom* will be a touring artwork brought to life in cities across the world, starting with London and Shanghai.

The team will also be creating a workshop programme, *Hand in Hand*, in partnership with Elmfield School for Deaf Children in Bristol. Led by deaf and disabled artists, the workshops will explore shadow play, projection and sign language with the primary school children and will culminate in the creation of a timber tree sculpture. It is the first commissioned installation at the school and the first opportunity the children have had to be involved in a significant and permanent artwork.

Cathy says: “This major funding award from Arts Council England is a pivotal moment for Spectroscope and real recognition of our organisation’s mission and contribution to the sector. This, along with other partner investment secured, will allow us to be even more ambitious with our work, collaborate with other brilliant artists and organisations, and bring our unique immersive storytelling to an international stage. Our mission is to create artworks that reflect the experiences of people who have historically been left out of the narrative, while pushing the boundaries of what public art can be.

“We are thrilled to have Cat Roberts joining, who we know will bring a new dimension and experience to our already talented, diverse and exciting team of associate artists, and we can’t wait to start bringing some of the projects we’ve been developing for the last few months to fruition.”

Phil Gibby, Area Director, South West, Arts Council England, said: “We are incredibly proud to award a National Lottery Project Grant to Spectroscope.  I’m clear that Cathy Mager’s national and international ambitions for a “foundry” of talent led by disabled artists will prove to be one of the most significant cultural developments to emerge from the south west in recent times, and delighted that funding from the National Lottery has enabled us to support it.”

Cat Roberts says: “I’m honoured and excited to undertake my new role with Spectroscope. I look forward to supporting and contributing towards the portfolio of inspiring creative upcoming projects. I’m dedicated to championing the arts, inclusivity and diversity, and passionate about delivering cultural and artistic experiences that bring communities together and inspire change. I’m delighted to be collaborating with a team that values creativity and making the arts accessible and meaningful for everyone.”

Spectroscope is extremely grateful to National Lottery players, who enable publicly funded arts and culture to happen.

**ENDS**

Photos available for download here: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/b72tgkfivfhwjwd13vpv7/AGFXcYK-J9YuS3tIajOPSOE?rlkey=7nwa9uhas4sqkrczpqp9xfj2z&st=bprz5vhj&dl=0>

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**About Spectroscope**

Spectroscope takes inspiration from the long-forgotten travelling illusionists of the 1800s who assembled mechanical contraptions called aetherscopes, phantoscopes and spectroscopes, to project panoramic images of faraway lands in music halls and theatres. Spectroscope’s own installations tell stories that shine a light on the people that are not ‘chosen’, and of displaced and oppressed communities, breaking taboos and presenting visions of a different future through its immersive dreamscapes.

Spectroscope’s debut artwork installation was a pioneering large-scale projection installation at Arnolfini, Bristol. Part of Bristol Light Festival in 2022, *Sign Night* was a a poetic conversation in sign language between two star-crossed lovers, with the two deaf performers’ dreams for the future projected across buildings. It was inspired by the balcony performers of Wuhan and Lombardy, this time using British Sign Language, accompanied by a powerful soundscape that played out across the harbour. It was part of the Filmed in Lockdown series of works commissioned for Culture in Quarantine by the BBC, Unlimited and The Space and attracted an audience of around 180,000 over the course of one week.

<https://spectroscope.co.uk>

**About Cathy Mager**

Cathy has overseen the delivery of large-scale artworks, festivals and event programmes for London’s Southbank Centre, Historic Royal Palaces, Bristol Beacon, Art on the Underground and Forestry England and most recently has worked as consultant curator for the Wellcome Trust.

<https://www.cathymager.com>

**About Arts Council England**

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let’s Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £467 million of public money from Government and an estimated £250 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision.

 [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

