

OUR YEAR



2023

Creating healthier and happier communities

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Welcome to our Annual Review for 2023.

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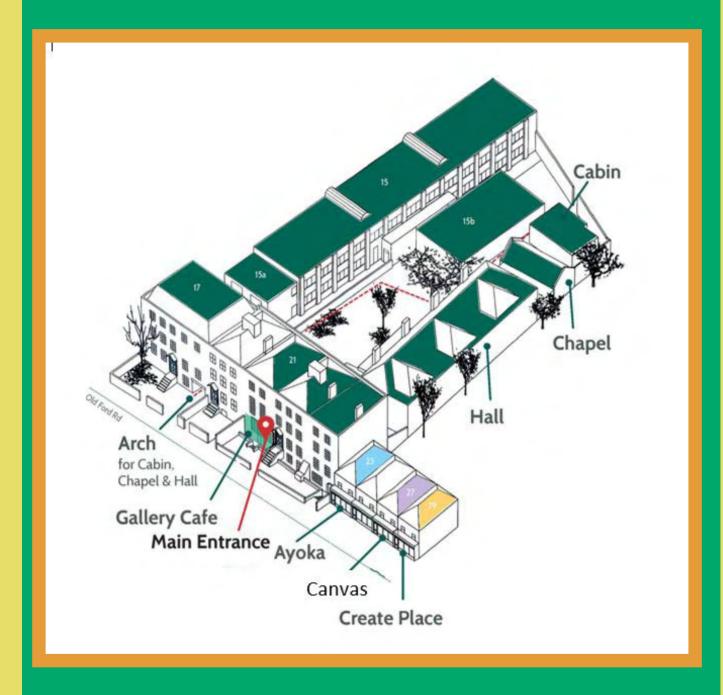
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This year's Annual Review will take you through the year by looking what took place in each of our unique spaces.



The St. Margaret's House Settlement



WELCOME

St. Margaret's House is a unique arts and wellbeing community hub based in Bethnal Green, East London. We work in partnership with local people, artists, and practitioners to create healthier and happier communities by providing welcoming spaces for everyone to learn, create, exercise, relax, play, eat, shop, make friends, and come together.

This year SMH became an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). The National Portfolio is a group of nearly a thousand arts and cultural organisations that get regular funding from ACE, which invests public money for creativity and culture in England.

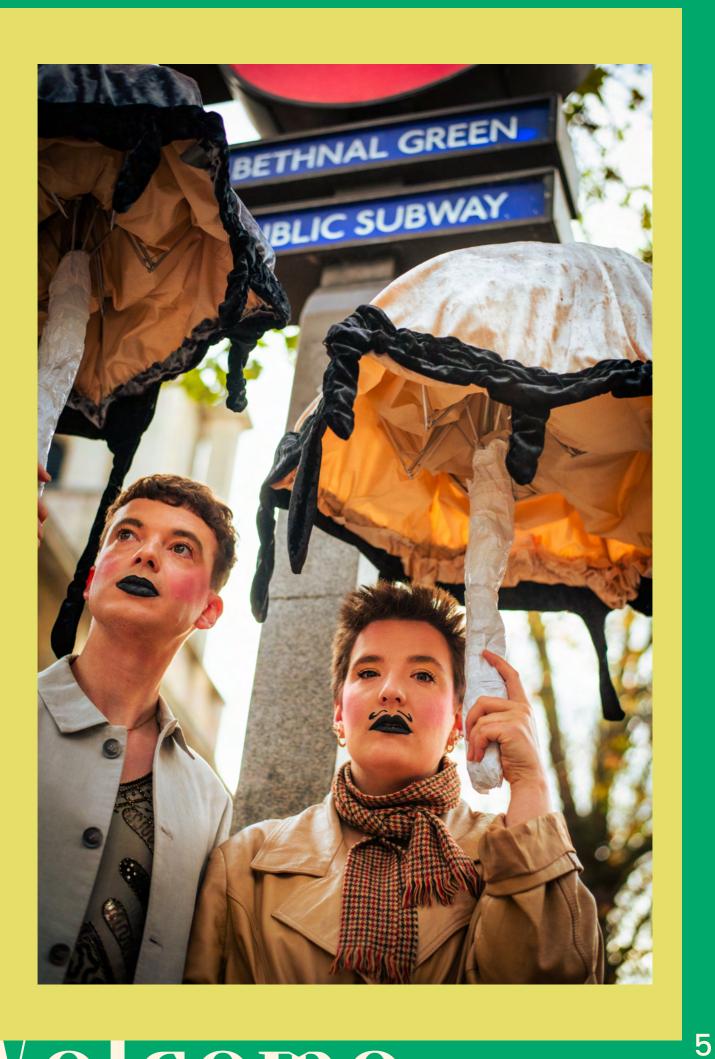
We curate and run a wide-ranging arts and wellbeing programme in our non-traditional arts spaces from the Chapel to the Mulberry Hall, to the Gallery Cafe and our beautiful garden. This year, we have worked with and reached over 45 artists, 23 local community arts groups and audiences of over 4000 people.

We are on an exciting journey looking at health and wellbeing through the lens of art and creativity. This report will focus on what happens in our various buildings.

Enjoy reading about our place-based charity, our year of growth, our community and the events and happenings across our settlement.



Kay Kante



THE CREATE PLACE

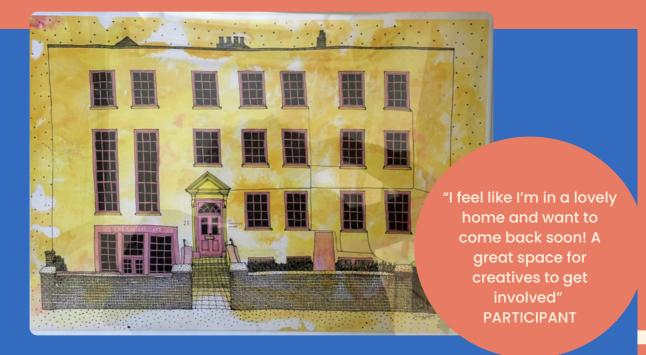
The Create Place is our community arts and crafts space. This year welcomed a variety of new and exciting workshops, with 17 new artists delivering a total of 419 workshops, reaching over 900 local participants – providing a diverse mix of artforms and creative opportunities for our local community.



Our regular workshops; woodwork, crafting, and beading, reach community members who have been coming to St Margaret's House for over 10 years. Over the past year, we welcomed 5 new workshop series to the Visual Arts programme at The Create Place: LGBTQ+ Printmaking, Fix Up Look Sharp, Surrealist Collage Making, Sandpit Arts, and Write Like A Grrrl's creative writing courses.



With thanks to IKEA & the National Lottery Community Fund, and The People's Postcode, we received funding to refurbish our much-loved Create Place building. We transformed an out-dated and unused space into a fit-for-purpose, versatile kitchen. The carpentry expertise of our Woodwork For Wellbeing partners transformed the Create Place's small outdoor space with a custom-made community bench installed to provide space for users to sit, relax, connect and converse.



The Create Place is also home to our Artist in Residence studio – a dedicated space for artists to experiment and push the boundaries of their practice.

In June 2022, North London musician and visual artist Ben Murphie introduced his Battenberg-style living practice to the St Margaret's House community. Over his three months with us, Ben commissioned a Battenberg-style portrait of our building, produced two professional photoshoots, and headlined the 'Haus of Battenberg' event in our Chapel space.

The next residency of the year was over six months from October 22 to March 23. Nina Scott and Dan De la Motte brought their ACE-funded research and development project 'Be More Mushroom' to the SMH community – a raucous, educational, and absurdist musical play for young people and families.





CANVAS

The Canvas is our wellbeing studio on Old Ford Road. This year, our weekly wellbeing programme included multibed acupuncture, massage, yoga, Pilates, and Tai Chi; with a tiered pricing structure to ensure as many people as possible were able to engage in activities to support their wellbeing. Most of our wellbeing sessions are available to access for free for those who have been referred by a Social Prescriber in Tower Hamlets. Social prescribing enables GPs, nurses and other health and care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services, and seeks to address people's needs in a holistic way.

'The Canvas is a lovely little sanctuary for my yoga and pilates practice and right next to my workplace.'



The Canvas is a fully equipped movement studio that has proved popular for a range of bookings including: private yoga sessions, drama therapy, dance rehearsals, and support groups. Income from a Sport England grant enabled us to upgrade the equipment in the Canvas space, including a bluetooth speaker, new yoga mats, bolsters and other equipment that supports both our programme and our hires. We were also able to repaint the shutters for the space with a mural designed and painted by artist 'Tash Creates', giving the space a fresh new look that aligns with our brand.

Weekly private hires have included a low-cost psychodrama therapy group, private yoga sessions for our tenants, Fevered Sleep, an NHS pregnancy loss support group, supervised family contact sessions, and private dance rehearsals. We have a range of small charities, community groups, local artists and practitioners who hire the space, which reflects the broad community we reach across the organisation.

'I have been regularly attending yoga and pilates classes at The Canvas. I really enjoy these classes; they are a real boost to my wellbeing and a method of coping with the physical and emotional drain of my job'





THE TRAMSHED

We are grateful to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for enabling us to utilise the Tramshed for community events and sessions as part of our programme. It is a local space with a large venue capacity and well-equipped for a range of activities.

In October, we ran the CircUnity project with the National Centre for Circus Arts in the Tramshed. The project engaged children and young people from the Global Majority in developing circus skills, and culminated in a short performance for family and friends.

In January, we were able to start running our Saturday
Circus Club for children aged
2.5 - 7 in the Tramshed thanks
to support from the London
Marathon Charitable Trust.
Participants learn new circus
skills from National Centre for
Circus Arts practitioner Dan
Rose, developing confidence
and communication skills as
part of the sessions.





We have collaborated with a number of charities and community groups in Tower Hamlets to make use of the Tramshed as a local and welcoming space. Groups who have utilised the space include the u3a (University of the Third Age), Toynbee Hall, Young V&A, Punchdrunk and Grand Union Orchestra.

From November to April, we collaborated with Social Action for Health to run a free exercise club for men every Wednesday, followed by a light lunch and friendly conversation. We provided the low-impact exercise session thanks to funding from Sport England, and in partnership with Sportworks. By the conclusion of the programme, 50 men had

In March, we celebrated Social Prescribing
Day by running an event which showcased
the power of social prescribing in Tower
Hamlets. With talks and workshops from
organisations including Social Action for
Health, London Arts and Health, Voicebox,
Outside Edge Theatre and the Tower
Hamlets GP Care Group, the event
showcased key findings from social
prescribing projects in the borough,
including our own men's project funded by
the Healthy London Partnership.

benefitted from these sessions.



AYOKA

Nestled amongst the greenery of Bethnal Green, Ayoka, our boutique charity shop, is a treasure trove of unique finds. With the reopening of the Young V&A nearby, Ayoka has become a buzzing hub of activity, joy, and camaraderie.

"Great charity store
with many
wonderful items
and clothing to
find."

REVIEW

Supported by donations from far and wide, Ayoka is home to a plethora of precious clothes and goodies. Ayoka has been thriving over the past year thanks to donations from the local community, and the valuable hours its volunteers put in each and every week. Run by Nigel and helped by a host of volunteers, Ayoka prides itself on memorable customer service and kindness. Known throughout Bethnal Green and beyond for its loyalty, Ayoka always carries quality items at accessible prices for its customers.

Ayoka is also a feast for the eyes from afar. With carefully curated window displays and a keen eye for organisation, the people at Ayoka make sure the shop is beautiful as well as functional. Whatever the holiday or occasion, you can be sure to find suitable decorations cascading from the windows outside the shop.



"It's lovely to talk to people of all ages and from all walks of life and I can honestly say that I have learnt a lot" **VOLUNTEER**



The team at Ayoka are also keen to establish the shop as its own brand. By posting regular updates on Instagram, training volunteers in customer service and making friends within the community, Ayoka is a shop that customers visit again and again. Customers know that they are welcome to browse as well as chat, with our loyal volunteers at the heart of the function.

Ayoka has a fabric bin for its thrifty and crafty clientele, encouraging our customers to find new uses for items which no longer fit their original purposes. Many of the workshops we run at SMH involve making or repairing old jewellery and clothes, meaning that Ayoka also benefits from many special handmade donations.

The gem of St. Margaret's House, Ayoka continues to prove itself to be a valuable and reliable part of our community. Something new is put out every day, so ensure you visit Ayoka to find your next hidden treasure!

**** "Tiny lil' charity shop with incredible finds" **REVIEW**



THE GARDEN

Our garden is a beautiful space located to the rear of our Gallery Cafe. As well as being able to enjoy a delicious plant-based meal or drink outdoors, our garden has played host to some fantastic events. This year we have had performances by Grand Union Orchestra and Shkembe Soup, as well some great events including 'Yoga & Breakfast' to celebrate International Yoga Day, and 'Garden Aperitivo' as part of our Summer Solstice celebrations.





THE CABIN

The Cabin is a versatile, light, and accessible venue, with a kitchenette, toilet, and space to accommodate up to 20 people. It is an ideal space for meetings, workshops, and rehearsals. There are typically 3 trestle tables and 20 chairs in the Cabin, and the furniture can be easily configured to suit the needs of the event taking place.

During the week, the Cabin is used by our tenants, the Bangladeshi Parents and Carers Association (BPCA), who run a multi-disability care centre between the Cabin and the Mulberry Hall.

In the evenings and at weekends, the Cabin is hired by a variety of community groups including Tower Hamlets Wheelers and the Balkan Band Community Music.





THE CHAPEL

The Chapel is a versatile venue for a multitude of uses, ranging from live events and exhibitions, private hire, rehearsals, and community-based projects. Our chaplain, Rev Brian Ralph, also leads services for the local community from time to time.

This year, the Chapel provided a space for several of our core community projects: Hilarity Academy, our comedy and drama club for young people, our Extra Second London spoken word events, our artist in residency project 'Be More Mushroom', and both the Mad Women Project (ACE funded), and Skaped's Artivism used the Chapel to celebrate Women's History Month with creative community workshops.

St. Margaret's House is also thankful to be able to offer - at little to no cost - the Chapel space to other like-minded organisations, so that they may continue their good work within our venues. The University of the Third Age used the Chapel throughout the year, with their ping-pong sessions, Tai Chi classes, and poetry writing workshops. The Grand Union Orchestra, Freshwater Theatre, Gigglemug Theatre, Bric-A-Brac Theatre, Dickens Theatre, and Purple Moon Drama all used the Chapel for rehearsals of their respective performances. Our partners, Talitha Arts, regularly use the Chapel for team meetings and training weekends for their practitioners.



In addition to this, the Chapel is also one of our primary venues for our live events and exhibitions programme. From April '22 to March '23, the Chapel was host to three exhibitions and six music gigs, reaching roughly 180 audience members cumulatively. Highlights of Chapel use in the last year include the 'Stories We Tell' exhibition (November 2022) – a celebratory exhibition of photography work derived from a five-week workshop series held in The Create Place – and the 'Haus of Battenberg' event, which brought comedy, drag performance, live music and battenberg bafoonary to sold out audiences.





THE MULBERRY HALL

As the largest venue on the settlement, the Mulberry Hall is home to a variety of larger-scale events including theatre and dance performances, music gigs, and multidisciplinary events.

The Thoughtcast Collective, a group of 20 artists, musicians, poets, and performers, ran their interactive live performance to a sold-out crowd in May. In November, the Ura Matsuri Collective – a group of mainly Japanese female-identifying artists performed an incredible array of music, performance art, and more to celebrate Japanese/East Asian immigrant culture in the UK. In December, Hilarity Academy had their end of term performance and celebration for participants.

In January, as part of our 'Veganuary' celebrations, 25 participants attended a yoga and sound bath session in the Hall, followed by a delicious vegan breakfast in the Gallery Cafe. In February, contemporary flamenco dance company Dotdotdot Dance performed their new piece 'Blue Ghost' for local audiences. The company also produced a sensory version of the show for our BPCA service users.

In March, Artists in Residence Nina Scott and Dan de la Motte put on their play 'Be More Mushroom', a theatre piece for children made in collaboration with performers, artists, and musicians, that celebrates the connection between mycology and queer identity.





"It's wonderful to see the dynamic of the group evolve over time, there is so much focus and investment from the participants and the BPCA staff"

Arji (Guest Artist)

The Mulberry hall is a key space for the Ghyama Arts project: it is where we host the majority of our workshops for the BPCA. The main artforms explored in the space have been theatre, film, circus, dance, fine arts and crafts. The space aids our workshops through the projector screen, colourful lights, curtains and there is space for a stage if needed. At the end of each term, we host a public sharing celebration in the hall of what the participants have explored across the term.

The Mulberry hall is decorated with artworks the participants have created and occasionally, the work we make in our Ghyama Arts sessions makes it onto the walls.

Whilst we host our workshops, the hall continues to function as a multifunctional space for the BPCA's users. A few users who aren't participants of Ghyama Arts! tend to play dominoes at one end of the hall, joined by their support workers. There is also a sensory room and an IT room for BPCA users.





OUR FRIENDS

BUILDINGS 15, 15A & 15B OLD FORD ROAD

Buildings 15, 15a, and 15b are where twelve of our thirty charity and CIC tenants have their offices.

15a is the office of Fevered Sleep and building 15 has several offices, where tenants IWGB, Afasic, Expressions Community Arts, Solace Women's Aid, Wish, Fifth Column Films, City & East London Bereavement Service, and Consortium for Street Children are based.

Building 15b has three office spaces, where Grand Union Orchestra (pictured below), Community Psychotherapy Network, and Routes Collective operate.

All of these tenants provide a range of services and help make the St. Margaret's House settlement a welcoming and diverse community hub, providing support, opportunities, and experiences.



BUILDING 17 & 21 OLD FORD ROAD



Beautiful, tiled fireplace in London Arts & Health's office, where you can utilise their hot-desking and creative health library facilities. [Credit to London Arts and Health]

Buildings 17 and 21 are where eighteen of our thirty charity and CIC tenants have their offices. They are Georgian townhouses located along Old Ford Road. 21 has a rich history, including being a house for women and students; the offices along the main corridor are still reminiscent of the bedrooms – some have sinks and fireplaces with beautiful, tiled surrounds.

17 is where Quaker Social Action operate from and 21 is where most of our tenants have their offices, including Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours, Graham Gerrans, Reality Shift, Bodywise, ARSP, London Arts & Health, The Daneford Trust, Freshwater Theatre, Globe Community Project, Swadhinata Trust, Inner City Centre, Christ Mercy Gospel Church, NMC Recordings, Noémie Solomon & Adrian Heathfield, Encounter Terrain, Arboreal Architecture, and the BPCA.

The St. Margaret's House settlement is a community hub as a direct result of the charities based here; their services ensure the community is provided and cared for.

Refugee and migrant women and children, hunting for easter eggs, as part of the Touching Safe Ground project, run by tenant and local charity, Globe Community Project

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REVIEW

GALLERY CAFE

It has been a great twelve months at the Gallery Cafe! With unwavering dedication, hard work, innovative ideas, and a dynamic young team, we are thrilled that the cafe is undoubtedly better than ever.

We have welcomed our new head chef, Alex, whose culinary expertise has breathed new life into our menu. The cafe's ever-evolving menu features daily specials and timeless classics like the Full English Breakfast. We are committed to using seasonal, fresh ingredients and have not only awakened our customers' taste buds but also their passion for wholesome, plant-based cuisine.

At the Gallery Cafe, our commitment to environmental sustainability is unwavering. We've embraced recycling and have forged partnerships with local suppliers who share our green philosophy. The result is a cafe that not only nourishes the soul but also nurtures the planet.



'This is such a great
vegan spot, perfect for
a brunch with outdoor
and indoor seating,
prices are reasonable
and the service is fast!'
REVIEW



In our pursuit of fostering a vibrant community, the Gallery Cafe has evolved into a hub for culture and expression. We've been thrilled to host an array of music and art events, from Drag Queen shows to collaborations with Italian Sounds in London and Baroquestock Festival to album launches and art and poetry workshops. By supporting emerging and young artists, we've created a space for individuals to convey their messages through their art.

The future is bright, and we're excited to continue this journey with our community, staff, and customers. Together, we will make the Gallery Cafe not just a place to eat and drink but a sanctuary for inspiration, connection, and positive change. Thank you for your ongoing support, and here's to a better and brighter year ahead.



'It has a community feel and is very embedded in the local landscape'

EXHIBITIONS

The Gallery Cafe is host to multiple exhibitions a year, showcasing the fantastic talents of local artists in our community.



Mae Shummo produced four exhibitions across 2022, the first being 'When I Paint, I Feel No Pain' by The Phantomat, followed by the '75 years of Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours' exhibition celebrating one of the charities based in the SMH settlement. Over the summer, Mae curated 'Junctures', a 12-week exhibition that featured the oil paintings of Orsina Pasargiklian, and the sculptural work of Eleanor Bedlow. Mae finished her curatorship with 'In the Frame' an exhibition from Kay Kante and Rebecca Francesca.

Within April 22 to March 23, our Mendoza Mania project brought two exhibitions into the Gallery Cafe, both curated by Virginia Orr. 'Mendoza Through the Ages' was built around interviews with 12 people whose lives and experiences related to those of Mendoza; and the second exhibition, 'Bags of HOPE' celebrated the work of the Hackney Red Cross Women's Support Group.



Eliza Stone (curator from January 2023 to December 2024) started the year with the 'Learn, Share & Make' exhibition, a celebration of queer artistry from The Create Place visual arts programme. The exhibition combined the work of the 'Be More Mushroom' resident artists Nina Scott and Dan Da le Mott, the printmaking talents of Gemma Curtis of LGBTQ+ printmaking, and the eclectic creations of Helene Corr from Fix Up, Look Sharp!



THE ANSON ROOM

The Anson Room has been restored to reflect the Georgian interior design aesthetic of the era, with wooden floorboards, William Morris wallpaper, a beautiful wooden oval table, upholstered chairs, and a piano.

Thanks to the bright interior and large conference table, the Anson Room is well suited for meetings, workshops, and small-scale events including photo shoots, poetry recitals, and auditions/interviews. It is one of our most hired spaces with organisations regularly hiring it for repeat events, including: River of Soul, Young V&A, local NHS trusts strategy meetings, and our tenants for their board meetings.

This image depicts
Jo Levin of Encounter
Terrain running a
game of Dungeons
and Dragons in the
Anson Room; this
session created the
story of the diorama
build for the Young
V&A, situated across
the road from SMH
and where you can
see the diorama on
display.





FUTURE PLANS

The coming year is an exciting one for all of us involved with St. Margaret's House: we have been awarded National Portfolio Organisation status by Arts Council England (ACE).

This means for the next three years we have regular funding to support our Creative Health Tree ambitions. The funding will help us continue to raise the quality of our arts and wellbeing programme, whilst also increasing our reach through communications and making the organisation robust with rigorous governance and reporting processes.

In the first year, we will establish our Creative Health Zone in Tower Hamlets, continue to work with partners to prove the impact of arts and wellbeing activities on health outcomes for all and see our reach spread as we do more work in Newham. As part of our commitment to the Arts Council's Let's Create strategy, we will also be weaving the four ACE Investment Principles into everything we do: Ambition and Quality, Inclusivity and Relevance, Dynamism and Environmental Responsibility. This focus will be seen in how we manage our buildings, work with all our tenants and deliver our programme.

We are really excited about the future work of our hub which includes:

A retrofit of our Resource Centre. We will be adding a floor to the current building, paving the way for the creation of a new Arts & Wellness centre, named 'The Health Tree'.

The retrofit of the Resource Centre will create a hub of activity where arts and wellbeing will physically merge, where collaborations between artists and practitioners will thrive and where our community will reap the benefits.

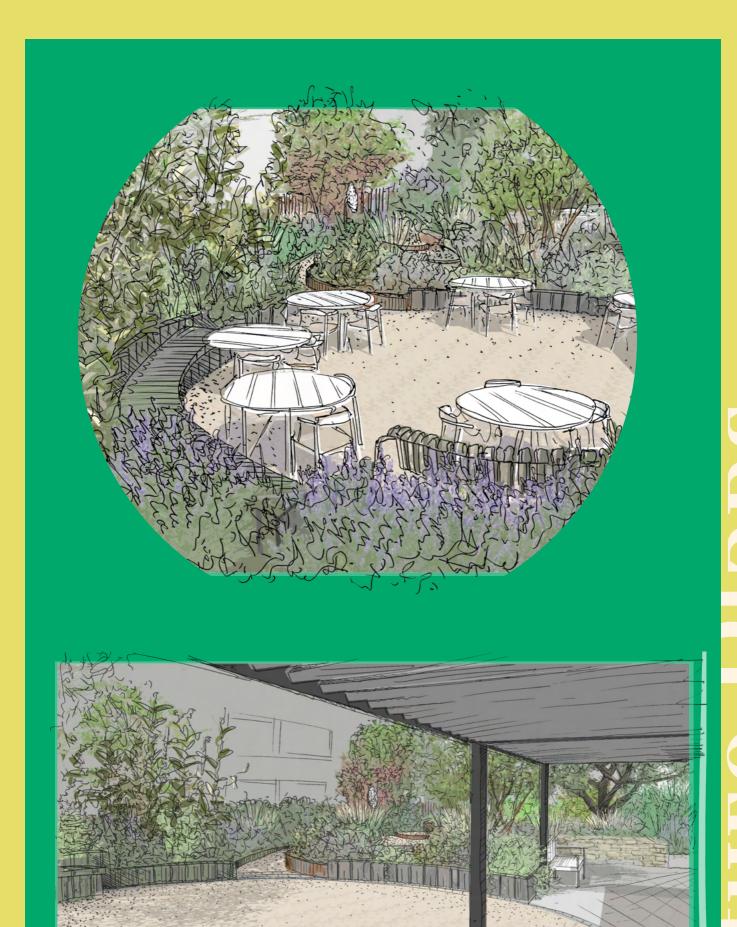


THE GARDEN

Since May 2022, the three-phase redevelopment plan of the garden at SMH has been progressing. June 2023 saw the installation of the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, gold medal winning 'Talitha Arts Garden'; this was phase I and designed by Joe and Laura Carey of Carey Garden Design Studio, who have designed a beautiful concept for phases 2 & 3, that will fulfil our ultimate aims of making the garden fully accessible, biodiverse, and community focused.

The design will increase the useability of the garden year-round and enable us to have a fully inclusive programme in the garden, where disabled performers, participants, and audience members can access all areas. The overall garden redevelopment has been planned to benefit microbes to humankind, featuring biodiverse planting, sustainable materials, and utilising technology such as ground screws, that reduce soil disturbance and impact on existing ecosystems. It will be a place where people can enjoy events surrounded by nature.





THANK YOU

This year has seen us expand who we work with and we are now a family of more than 220 employees, volunteers and collaborators – people from all over the world who share the same desire to be useful to the community and make a difference, however big or small.

OUR TEAM

Beccy Allen

Deputy CEO and Arts & Wellbeing Director (From April 2023)

Simone Bandini

Sous Chef

Sam Bettridge

Arts & Wellbeing Producer

Zoey Cama

Barista

Martina Canullo

Ayoka Supervisor (From September 2023)

Neelam Chhara

Ghyama Arts! Project Coordinator (From March 2023)

Christine Chua

Barista

Stuart Cox

Arts & Wellbeing Director & Deputy CEO (Until January 2023)

Simone Di Stefano

Gallery Cafe Manager

Marcus Dutra

Chef de Partie

Laura Furner

Arts and Wellbeing Producer

Jose Gama

Finance Manager

Kat Gill

Ghyama Arts! Project Coordinator (Until February 2023)

Tony Hardie

CEO and Company Secretary

Niamh Heffernan

Communications Manager (From July 2023)

Alexander Ingham

Head Chef

Nachrul Islam Mazi

Kitchen Porter

Emily Jones

Operations Manager

Abdul Latif

Kitchen Porter

Nigel McMillan

Ayoka Manager

Mohammed Sulaman Miah Akandho

Kitchen Porter

Honey Mounce

Gallery Cafe Supervisor

Oliver Norman

Barista

Virginia Orr

Exhibitions Co-ordinator (From

November 2023)

George Paris

Programme Manager (Until October 2022)

Mae Shummo

Volunteer Art Curator Jan-Dec 2022

Aayush Singh

Barista & Communications Intern

Lydia Stanley

Administrator (Until September 2023)

Eliza Stone

Volunteer Art Curator Jan-Dec 2023

Luisa Tempia

Administrator (From October 2023)

Thompson Urhiofe

Administrator (Until July 2023)

Alex Ward-Robinson

Barista

THANK YOU

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Sapna Ajwani

Shamimara Choudhury

Lara El Gibaly - Appointed 21 July 2023

Fr Alan Green - Chair - Resigned 17 November 2022

Tracy Karkut-Law

Eugene Lowrie - Chair - Appointed 17 November 2022

Annie Maddock - Hon. Sec. from 17 November 2022

Mana Mahil - Treasurer

Raluca-Simina Neagu - Appointed 21 July 2023

Barbara Perrott - Hon.Sec. to 17 November 2022

Rev Brian Charles Ralph

OUR FRIENDS & TENANTS

IWGB

East London Cares

Afasic

Expressions Community Arts

Fifth Column Films

Solace Woman's Aid

Wish

The Cares Family

Consortium for Street Children

City & East London Bereavement Service

Sylvia Morgado (Visual Artist)

Fevered Sleep

Grand Union Orchestra

Routes Collective

Community Psychotherapy Network

Quakers Social Action

Tower Hamlets Friends and Neighbours

Graham Gerrans

Reality Shift

Bodywise

Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP)

Community Psychotherapy Network

London Arts & Health

The Daneford Trust

Freshwater Theatre Company

Globe Community Project

Swadhinata Trust

Christ Mercy Gospel Church

Encounter Terrain

NMC Recordings

Inner City Centre

Arboreal Architecture

Common Knowledge

Right to Remain

Noémie Solomon & Adrian Heathfield

BPCA

THANK YOU

We are so grateful to our supporters below for their massive contribution to our work.



























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All information contained in this publication is correct at time of press. St Margaret's House is a member of Locality, a nationwide network

for community-led organisations.