

green lens

ecobirmingham & Ampersand Projects 2018





Green Lens is organised by ecobirmingham in collaboration with Ampersand Projects

ecobirmingham want to help create a sustainable city, inspire positive change and build stronger communities. Whether it's learning to ride a bike, gaining skills in food growing, raising awareness of local issues or contributing to debate in the city – we will help you along your journey.

www.ecobirmingham.com

Ampersand Projects collaborate with communities and artists across Birmingham and the Black Country with the goal of building meaningful connections between people and public spaces. We work to empower communities and individuals to be more creative, collaborative, build skills and share stories.

www.ampersandprojects.org



green lens



Green Lens was a project during Summer 2018 that invited young people across Birmingham to voice the green issues that matter to them, locally or globally, through the medium of photography and film. Environmental issues have a greater sense of urgency than ever, and young people stand to inherit a world that could be radically different to the one we currently live in.

The impact of global warming, effects of excess consumption, poor air quality, food poverty and lack of access to green spaces highlight these immediate and pressing threats to the future of humanity. Yet there are also glimpses of hope and of positive changes we can all enact, including the reduction of food waste, recycling and the tenacity of nature to thrive in our post-industrial city.

The project invited young people to explore the green issues that are important to them at open workshops, while learning new skills from three of Birmingham's leading photographers, Kate Green, Andrew Jackson and Stephen Burke. Groups and organisations took part in photography workshops in green spaces such as Cannon Hill Park, Kings Heath Park and Edgbaston Reservoir.

An open call for photographs and films took place, collected through an open, Birmingham-wide submission process. Eight artists were chosen to have their work exhibited at an exhibition at Midlands Art Centre which highlighted the issues that concern them most, the environmental changes they are witnessing on their own doorsteps and those that affect people and wildlife internationally. The photographs were accompanied by their own words and the stories behind the work.

Image: Kate Green

WHO TOOK PART & WHERE?

191 ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS – AGED 16 – 25 YEARS

120+ PARTICIPANTS IN EXHIBITION ACTIVITY

185K+ VISITORS TO GREEN LENS EXHIBITION

ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS

The project set out to encourage young people to use mobile technology to explore green issues that are vital to their collective future. An open call for photographs and films took place, collected through a new Green Lens website and Instagram.

The project created new partnerships with organisations in order to deliver skills building workshops with a diverse range of young people.

Organisations included Impact Hub Birmingham, Deaf Cultural Centre, Groundworks Youth Programme, Northfield Arts Forum and Birmingham Vocational College (for students with moderate to severe autism).

GREEN & CREATIVE SPACES

Activities took place at locations where we were able to purposefully and mindfully connect with green and outdoor spaces, nature and to immediately use these experiences to inspire discussion around environmental issues.

Activity took place at:

Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston
MAC Birmingham, Edgbaston
Kings Heath Park
Edgbaston Reservoir
Northfield Town Centre
Impact Hub
Deaf Cultural Centre

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The project was an opportunity to consult with a wide variety of people on which green issues mattered to them, locally and globally.

A consultation meeting took place with young photography students at the beginning to help shape the project's messaging and activities.

Two consultation sessions took place at MAC and Impact Hub with young leaders to discuss green change on a local and global level.

A new film was commissioned by artist Steven Burke which asked the question *'What does a greener future look like to you?'*

WHAT HAPPENED? CREATIVE PARTICIPATION

PHOTOGRAPHY & FILM COMPETITION

The Green Lens competition was opportunity for young people voice the green issues that matter to them and the chance to have their work exhibited in a prominent Birmingham gallery. The competition was open to total beginners, students or aspiring professionals ages 16 - 25 years.

The **141 entries** were judged on how they communicated their environmental message on any green issue that our affects our world or the communities we live in.

No film entries were submitted so the competition and exhibition moved forward with still images only.



PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

A series of **10 free workshops** took place across the city with three of Birmingham's leading photographers, Kate Green, Andrew Jackson and Steven Burke in order to build skills, give creative opportunities and spark discussion around green issues with a diverse audience of **113** young people.

The most successful workshops for attendance and skill development were developed with existing groups, this has also allowed ecobirmingham to develop long term relationships. Less successful in terms of attendance were workshops which relied on 'pre-booking' which were both marketing resource heavy and less successful in building long term relationships. This will be taken into consideration when planning future projects.

Image above: Kate Green





'We found working with the Green Lens project really inspiring, from the approach of the workshop leader to the response of our young participants.'

The Green Lens workshop enabled young people to learn on many different level; some mentioned the they learnt how technical photography is and others found it enhanced their connection to the environment in a way they hadn't experienced before - it really focused our discussion on how we can connect more people to their local environment and how we communicate the issues we care about to different audiences'

Stephanie Lynch, Young Green Leaders Programme Officer
Groundwork UK

'Thank you for coming to deliver the workshop. All the participants really enjoyed themselves and it was lovely to see that they were so happy. The workshop matched the needs of the group and adjusted to the different skills levels, and backgrounds of the participants. It was completely accessible.'

The subject of green issues was also really interesting and the I think this was really thought provoking for the participants. We really enjoyed working with you to deliver it and hope that we can work together again in future.'

Adam Breeze Team Leader and Employer Liaison Officer
Deaf Cultural Centre



Image: Kate Green

WHAT HAPPENED? GREEN LENS EXHIBITION



An exhibition took place at the Community Gallery at Midlands Arts Centre over a two month period curated by Ampersand Projects. The exhibition presented new works created by eight young artists ages 16 - 25 years.

Visitors were invited to discover the project through photographs, stories and the new film by artist Steven Burke which asked the question *'What does a greener future look like to you?'* to young activists and community leaders. The film acted as a prompt for visitors to include their own thoughts and ideas, which had over **120** submissions which will be used in the future by ecobirmingham when advocating for change.

ARCHIVE & GREEN LENS ON TOUR

An online archive was developed to outline activity and showcase the work submitted by young artists. The website will remain online as a tool for ecobirmingham to use in future Green Lens activities.

Following the exhibition at MAC, two touring packages have been developed which will allow Green Lens to have an extended reach beyond the initial project in 2018.

The first is a lightweight exhibition using pop-up banners which can be used at events and small venues, and the second, a full exhibition package which will allow the works to be re mounted for longer term shows.

Images: Stephen Burke





'I was absolutely delighted to be chosen for the Green Lens exhibition and to be part of ecobirmingham. It was a great opportunity for new and aspiring photographers to showcase their responses to the set brief while learning of the local and global related issues. It was a great project to not only give something back to the community but also gain knowledge and awareness of issues and organisations.'

It has given me much needed confidence in photographer and I have now began taken classes and investing in the hobby to make it a skill. Since then I and friends have began learning to cycle with ecobirmingham and aim to volunteer with them soon!'

Maniba Zariat - Green Lens exhibited artist

'I just wanted to say thank you for the opportunity to exhibit my work and being invited to an inspiring event. I have struggled a great deal to access and be accepted on art opportunities so this was very appreciated.'

Thank you to Ampersand Projects and ecobirmingham for such a project and I wish you the best of luck.'

Jed Choudry - Green Lens exhibited artist





Green Lens could not have been a more timely project. With the recent report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warning that we heading for environmental catastrophe in the near future, these issues are at the forefront of concern to young people.

Through this project young people have been able to express their concerns across a range of issues while at the same time learning and seeing how creativity can also be a form of activism and political expression.

As always Ampersand Projects ran a flawless project, bringing together very different work into a cohesive exhibition which looked amazing in our gallery space.

This project also contributed towards MAC's annual 'Eco Fest', a day where we open our building to organisations across the region to talk and show all things eco.

This was the first year we had an exhibition on site that also talked to eco issues and it provided a valuable focus. It was so successful that we are considering running another exhibition project in 2019 that will also link to Eco Fest.

Jessica Litherland - Producer Visual Arts

mac
Midlands Arts Centre

Images: Stephen Burke & Kate Green



GREEN LENS

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Green Lens has enabled ecobirmingham to develop our artistic practice and to undertake a creative consultation with people across the city from particular under-engaged, under-resourced or under-represented groups. We have managed to engage 16-25 year olds including those from the deaf community in artistic practice around environmental issues.

ecobirmingham have also been exposed to new ways of engaging audiences and the power of art to provide means of expression, consultation and influence. We have seen the value of the artistic process and how it has helped nurture the voice, confidence and artistic practice of young people who haven't always felt they had a platform express themselves both artistically and environmentally.

The project has helped us embed new ways of working with partner organisations and how we engage with the public. It has also helped us understand how we might work in the future and has definitely influenced the development of our new strategic plan. We are now plans to engage artists in residencies over a longer period of time and to use the arts to continue engaging various groups across the city.

The Green Lens project has generated a lot of interest from other non-arts organisations as to how they might work in partnership with artists or ourselves in future in order to engage people through the arts. We are also exploring possible ways to tour the exhibition to non-arts spaces in the future.

Image: Participant from Birmingham Vocational College



Report by Ampersand Projects
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Image above: Laura Chen



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