



‘Artists of Change’ take up residence in Lewisham Council as part of the Mayor’s London Borough of Culture 2022

[IMAGERY CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE](#)

Lewisham based, site-specific theatre company **Teatro Vivo** and London-based Arts Curator, **Dima Karout**, have taken up residence at the heart of Lewisham Council, as part of the borough’s tenure as the Mayor’s London Borough of Culture 2022.

As ‘Artists of Change’, they will work directly with people on the frontline of some of today’s most locally and globally pressing issues: Teatro Vivo on the Council’s call to action around the Climate Emergency and Dima with those delivering Lewisham’s vision as the UK’s first Borough of Sanctuary. The programme, which is running in partnership with **Counterpoints Arts**, has been designed to open up two-way conversations between the Council and its diverse communities. It will capture different perspectives and provoke new ways of thinking, highlighting the power of creativity to bring about change. The residencies will culminate in artistic work, co-created with communities and presented in Lewisham to coincide with Refugee Week in June 2022. These outcomes will amplify voices of residents and spark conversations around migration and climate justice.

The ‘Artists of Change’, who have been selected via an open call, will act as provocators, responding to two key themes of Lewisham’s year as London Borough of Culture - the climate emergency and welcome. Working concurrently, they will shadow policy-makers to observe and comment on how decisions are made, with wide-reaching consequences for Lewisham’s communities and beyond. They will test new ways of connecting residents with Council policies; explore the intersections of climate, migration and democracy; and encourage thinking from different perspectives to inform a fairer and more inclusive service.

Working with those delivering Lewisham’s vision as the UK’s first Borough of Sanctuary, both inside and outside the Council, **Dima Karout** will explore existing conversations with its diverse communities, and aim to create new ones. Her residency will open up a creative investigation into places that are meaningful to Lewisham residents; spark borough-wide community conversations about how the places we inhabit contribute to our identity; and reflect on how we create “Places of Sanctuary”. Open to all those that call Lewisham home, printmaking workshops in libraries will bring locals together to reflect on their connection to and experiences within their neighbourhoods. The workshops will encourage new and meaningful connections and gather insights of what a ‘welcome’ to Lewisham means to both those offering and receiving it. Inspired by the results of these conversations, stories and encounters, Dima will design a collective art installation with a public exhibition opening in June 2022, which invites visitors to add their voices to the conversation. At the end of the project, pieces of the final art installation will be offered to local libraries to stay in the borough as a symbol of unity.

Working with the Council's Climate Emergency team, **Teatro Vivo** will attend meetings, run workshops and gain an overview of strategic policies as well as the team's day to day activities. They will also connect with local people and community groups across the borough over spring 2022, bringing The Lewisham Usherettes onto the streets to ask residents about their environmental concerns and hopes for the future. Their findings will feed into the creation of a performance, which will take place on the streets borough-wide over two weeks in June and feature a cast of professional performers working alongside local community groups. The script will also be made available for schools and community groups to perform in their own places of play or work, leaving a lasting legacy.

Dima Karout said "In a world shifting balance constantly, it is important that we ground ourselves within a vision of solidarity and welcome. This collaboration with the Council and communities will shine a light on the voices and actions of different local residents and groups working to make Lewisham a "Place of Sanctuary". Together, we will reflect, exchange knowledge and cultivate our collective intelligence. We will work to adopt and empower a culture of generosity and inclusion."

Mark Stevenson and Kas Darley, Joint Artistic Directors of Teatro Vivo said: "The Climate Emergency can seem overwhelming. Where do we start trying to tackle it as individuals and a community? We want this project to empower the residents of Lewisham to discover what is already being achieved and use the collective knowledge of the Borough to push for more, to share how people can get involved and finally to create a performance that shows local peoples' aspirations and hopes for the future of Lewisham."

Cllr André Bourne, Cabinet Member for Culture, said: "This exciting project will engage our diverse communities, provoke new ways of thinking and help identify creative local solutions to complex global problems. Tackling the Climate Emergency and creating a Borough of Sanctuary for all are both key priorities for the Council and I look forward to seeing how our Artists of Change can work with residents to inform our decision-making in these areas."

Counterpoints Arts said: "We're delighted to be working in partnership with the Lewisham team to consider what change we can imagine when designing a project that brings together artists, neighbourhoods, community organisations and local civic bodies. What we're seeing already is that the Artists of Change programme, led by the work of Teatro Vivo and Dima Karout, has started developing entirely new collaborative approaches and ways of reflecting on how urgent global issues are experienced on a local stage."

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Notes to Editors

The Artists

Dima Karout

[Dima](#) is an arts curator, practitioner and creative director who is passionate about contemporary art and its potential for allowing ideas to grow, take shape in the material world and initiate social change. Her work explores human journeys, the evolution of identity beyond borders, migration, territories and the relation between people and places.

Previously living and working in Damascus, Paris and Montreal before relocating to London, Dima has over 15 years' multicultural experience designing and implementing art projects within institutions, curating exhibitions, publications and cultural events as well as lecturing and developing alternative learning programmes specialising in contemporary art and its contribution to education and social engagement. Interested in understanding and challenging the societies we create and inhabit, her latest art projects investigate the dynamic between artist, artwork and spectator. They focus on the interactive aspects of art, and how it can positively influence research and learning.

Teatro Vivo

Some theatre companies transform spaces to create experiences. [Teatro Vivo](#) create experiences which change spaces forever. Lewisham based Teatro Vivo is a critically acclaimed site-specific theatre company making playful, exciting yet thought provoking immersive shows in unusual places, bringing Shakespeare to Supermarkets, exploring The Odyssey on the streets of Deptford, and discussing the British arms trade in public squares.

Led by Joint Artistic Directors Mark Stevenson and Kas Darley, the company works in a unique way: High quality professional performers perform alongside community participants, with both rehearsals and performances in public spaces where anyone can access what they are doing – enabling communities to be part of the process throughout

Project Partners

Counterpoints Arts

[Counterpoints Arts](#) is a leading national organisation in the field of arts, migration and cultural change. Its mission is to support and produce the arts by and about migrants and refugees, seeking to ensure that their contributions are recognised and welcomed within British arts, history and culture. Since being set up in 2012, Counterpoints Arts has developed a trusted network of partners and collaborators from across different sectors, and has supported hundreds of artists, organisations and communities to develop new work, skills and connections.

Refugee Week

[Refugee Week](#) is a UK-wide festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary. Founded in 1998 and held every year around World Refugee Day on the 20 June, Refugee Week is also a growing global movement.

Through a programme of arts, cultural, sports and educational events alongside media and creative campaigns, Refugee Week enables people from different backgrounds to connect beyond labels. It also encourages understanding of why people are displaced, and the challenges faced when seeking safety. Refugee Week is a platform for people who have sought safety in the UK to share experiences and creative work on their own terms. Its vision is for refugees and asylum seekers to be able to live safely within inclusive and resilient communities, where they can continue to make a valuable contribution.



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Refugee Week is an umbrella festival, and anyone can get involved by holding or joining an event or activity. Events happen in all kinds of spaces and range from arts festivals, exhibitions, film screenings and museum tours to football tournaments, public talks and activities in schools.

Refugee Week is a partnership project coordinated and managed by Counterpoints Arts.

About London Borough of Culture 2022

We Are Lewisham

Lewisham is the Mayor's London Borough of Culture 2022. The year-long cultural programme, [We Are Lewisham](#), is a whole borough celebration, with hundreds of events happening across venues, parks and street corners. Inspired by the borough's history of activism and standing up for equality, it celebrates Lewisham's rich diversity and its trailblazers past and present, amplifying less heard voices and highlighting the power of culture to create change. Jointly led by Lewisham Council and the Albany, We Are Lewisham will bring together all of the borough's neighbourhoods, communities and stories.

The Mayor's London Borough of Culture award

[London Borough of Culture](#) is a Mayor of London initiative, launched in June 2017. The award puts culture at the heart of local communities, where it belongs. It shines a light on the character and diversity of London's boroughs and brings culture to everyone, so that all Londoners have the chance to be part of something extraordinary.

Lewisham Council

Lewisham is a vibrant and culturally diverse borough. This reflected in all aspects of daily life, from the response to the pandemic where the community rallied to support our most vulnerable residents, to the 170 languages spoken in our homes, schools and businesses. We have a rich history of welcoming people from all over the world and are proud to be recognised as the UK's first Borough of Sanctuary, for our work in championing the rights of refugees and migrants.

We are committed to tackling inequalities so that everybody has the opportunity to succeed. The pandemic has shone a light on the disparities experienced by those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds in all areas of their lives. In November, Lewisham became the first local authority to commission a headcount study of high streets to better support our BAME independent retailers through Covid 19 recovery and to champion the diversity of town centres.

As we plan ahead, we are working towards a fairer, greener, healthier and more economically sound future for all in Lewisham. This means continuing our efforts to tackle climate change for generations to come; ensuring that good health and wellbeing is equally accessible to everyone; and safeguarding local jobs and upskilling residents with tools they need to succeed. Building on the community spirit and activism that has helped us through the pandemic, we are committed to creating a Future Lewisham we can all have a part in.

We are grateful for the support of:

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation was established by Paul Hamlyn in 1987. Upon his death in 2001, he left most of his estate to the Foundation, creating one of the largest independent



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grant-making foundations in the UK. Their mission is to help people overcome disadvantage and lack of opportunity, so that they can realise their potential and enjoy fulfilling and creative lives. They have an interest in supporting young people and a strong belief in the importance of the arts. phf.org.uk



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The programme for London Borough of Culture 2022, *We Are Lewisham*, is presented by Lewisham Council in partnership with the Albany.

London Borough of Culture is a Mayor of London initiative



MAYOR OF LONDON