

Subway Art



History

Subways can be dark, gloomy, enclosed spaces. Particularly nasty ones are susceptible to graffiti and poorly kept, giving a bad impression of the area and creating uneasy experiences for local people. By making the subways brighter and a more pleasant environment, this can help reduce the fear of crime.

The first subway to be painted in 2004 was the Barracks Road subway outside Jubilee Pool. Artist Grega Greaves worked with young people and residents from the Beth Johnson Housing Association for 10 days and together they produced an impressive timeline depicting Newcastle scenes from the 1950's to the present day.

In 2005, the Grosvenor Roundabout subway was chosen and artist Anthony Hammond worked with young people from the borough councils Youth Inclusion Programme on a lively and colourful design that shows Newcastle's past industries.

During the summer 2006, 'B Arts' worked with young people from the borough to transform the Pool Dam subway. The vibrant and dynamic design was inspired by Maxim's, a nearby nightclub. Although it is now closed down Maxim's is part of Newcastle's history and many people will have fond memories of the club from their youth.

Nelson Street Subway Mosaics: 2008-2009



This subway art project was devised to allow young people to have a real impact on their surroundings; to brighten up the subways and make them a more attractive 'gateway' into the town centre and to hopefully help prevent / deter graffiti on the walls. In doing so, it empowering the young participants through full involvement in the creation of the mosaics, at all stages, was integral to creating a sense of ownership and pride in the new-look subways. Many of the schools teachers and participant's wider families have been involved and aware of the project and through the multiple mosaic tiles produced, it has guaranteed that there is a tile publicly on display by everyone involved – creating an outdoor exhibition of everyone's hard work and creativity.

The theme of 'Our Town' enabled all of the young people to work with a professional artist, a unique opportunity in its own right, to discuss and learn more about their own and their peers perspective on where they live, what they like about where they live and themselves personally, collectively producing artworks reflecting a young persons perspective on Newcastle. They used local terminology, landmarks and symbols to represent this, whilst developing drawing, mark-making and communication skills more generally.

"Working with the seventy young people and teachers of St Giles and St Georges and Hassell St Primary Schools was a delight. It was really good to celebrate Newcastle under Lyme as 'Our Town'. Very rarely do young people get the opportunity to change their environment and town in such a positive way. Full marks to the Council and Newcastle Under Lyme Museum Arts Team for having the vision to commission such a innovative art work with young citizens of the future."

Phil Hardacre, joint commissioned artist

Who was involved?



Artists Philip Hardacre and Denise O'Sullivan were contracted to create the mosaics, with the design and creation process underpinned through working with two local schools each. Each Artist spent approximately 3 days with each school, over an approximate period of 4 months.

Schools involved in the design and creation of the tiles were:

- St Giles and St Georges School (Philip)
- Hassell Street Primary School (Philip)
- Blackfriars Special School (Denise)
- St John Fishers Catholic high school (Denise)

The arts and education aspect to this project has actively engaged over 100 local school children and young people since the practical workshops began in the Autumn of 2008.

Support



The project received excellent professional support from Staffordshire County Council's Highways department in the preparation

and installation of the two mosaics, working alongside both artists to ensure they had adequate support and supervision at all times during the final stages.

There has been noticeably less graffiti on the subway walls of those used in previous projects since 2004. They have also proved to be popular with the general public, proving the positive effect creative interventions and public art can have within the local environment.

- Formal Unveiling took place on Friday 24th April between at 11am