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Headway East London: *differently various*

The Curve, Barbican Centre

29 July – 6 August 2023

Free admission

#differentlyvarious @barbicancentre

Supported by the Peter Sowerby Foundation, the Rix-Thompson-Rothenberg Foundation, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England.

Over ten days in summer 2023, members from Haggerston-based charity supporting people affected by brain injury, **Headway East London**, will take over the Barbican's iconic Curve gallery to stage *differently various*, a multifaceted exhibition and a rich public programme that together will create an immersive installation and a space to learn, create, and discuss.



Members in the Submit to Love studio © Leon Foggitt

Replicating Headway East London's centre within the 90-metre space of The Curve, *differently various* will showcase artworks as diverse as Headway's eclectic community of members, celebrating the complexity and creativity of people living with brain injury. Within a radically welcoming and informal setting, visitors will move through zones of **Experience**, **Learning**, **Creativity**, and **Community**, with each section offering a new angle of insight into living with brain injury. Across the journey of the exhibition, visitors will have the chance to listen, learn, watch, experiment and create, as well as speak to Headway East London members about their artwork. The space will provide an opportunity to explore the invaluable work of the charity, learn about brain injury, and take in an astonishing collection of neurodiverse art.

Bringing the installation to life, an extensive public programme will run alongside the exhibition. There will be tours, talks, and workshops, as well as relaxed performances of music, poetry, and film screenings; creating spaces for sharing perspectives about brain injury, as well as challenging received understanding of who gets to be called an artist and present work in institutions like the Barbican. There will also be spaces for relaxation and rest, ensuring everyone feels at ease and supported throughout their visit.

All artwork on display is made by Headway East London in their [Submit to Love](#) studio, with key works including ***Sister Stitch***, a large collaborative piece inspired by drawings from **Sam Jevon** representing the women of Headway East London; ***I All Screwed Up***, a series of large-scale surreal sculptures recreating drawings by **Jason Ferry**, representing some of the emotions and experiences faced by people living with brain injury, from confusion to seizures; ***Neural Reefs***, a series of organic ceramic sculptures inspired by the similarities between the brain and the natural forms found in coral reefs, by **Terrance Barr**; ***Lawrence's Language***, a 15m-long abstract repetitive work by **Lawrence Carroll**, made with coloured crayon on a paper roll; and ***A Handful of Clay***, a project involving all members of the Headway East London community making a miniature sculpture with a handful of terracotta clay, inspired by the motto 'art for everyone, by everyone'.

Terrance Barr, Headway member and ceramic artist featured in the exhibition, said: *"It's very natural for me to think of the human brain and coral reefs in the same way. They're so similar: adaptable, sensitive, resilient, totally wired and with a complexity that has surprised us for centuries. But what also makes them so alike is their beauty. When I work with clay, I feel that beauty in my fingers; it brings a smile to my face."*

This project is the culmination of a collaboration between Headway East London and the Barbican which began in 2019 and it's the first of its kind for both organisations. It also coincides with Headway East London's 25th birthday, marking a quarter-century of changing the lives of people living with brain injury, and an astonishing trajectory from its humble beginnings in the Alfred Health Centre in Homerton on Thursday 12th March 1998, when Headway East London opened its doors for the first time, with just one staff member, a single volunteer and three survivors of brain injury. Over 25 years, the Hackney-based charity has become a leader in delivering innovative, tailor-made services for people living with brain injury.

Chris Miller, Headway member and part of the Steering Group, said: *'We want to share the story of Headway East London, which is 25 this year; we want to give visitors an understanding of what brain injury is and show the journey of people like me who come to Headway East London, our experience there, and how that helps us. Lastly, we want to open a discussion about the fact that many institutions claim to be very open to disabled people, but in practice, that's not always the case. The process we've been on is sometimes difficult, including having hard conversations about how institutions listen to disabled people, not only about physical access but also including disabled people in their decision-making. This isn't a paternalistic exercise by the Barbican; it's a process we're all involved in. As well as making all the art on display, Headway East London members have been involved in key decisions, from design and curation to the public programme through a steering group that has been meeting for over a year.'*

Every year in the UK, 350,000 people are admitted to hospital with an acquired brain injury sustained through illness or injury. That's one every 90 seconds, and the number is rising annually. Today, Headway East London support over 700 survivors of brain injury each year, across 13 London boroughs. Members and their carers and families are offered specialist, holistic services, including a day centre, neurological therapies, community support, and casework. Day-to-day, Headway East London's bustling community centre is awash with life; as well as their Submit to Love studio, they run singing groups and workshops on music and writing, and their daily lunches – prepared by a talented medley of members, staff, and volunteers – are widely renowned. This vibrant space will be recreated within The Curve, allowing visitors a glimpse into the colour, chaos, and creativity which define daily life at Headway East London.

Will Gompertz, Artistic Director of the Barbican, said: *“Two years ago, [Headway East London member] Chris Miller asked me whether the Barbican would stage an exhibition of artwork made by members in the charity’s Submit to Love studio. The question was posed as part of a wider event interrogating who gets to be an artist, and Chris wanted to know why the Barbican wouldn’t commit their gallery space to the artists at Headway East London, and what that said about who the institution valued as an “artist”. differently various – a project two years in the making, building on the foundation of a long-term partnership – is the answer to that question, and we are incredibly proud to exhibit their work in the Barbican’s iconic Curve gallery.”*

Headway East London have previously staged exhibitions at Rich Mix (2022), Autograph Gallery (2021), Hart Club (2019) and the Southbank Centre (2017), and held events at Francis Crick, Wellcome Collection, and the Science Museum. Their Submit to Love art studio hosts biannual open studios and produces a range of merchandise that has included collaborations with French Connection and Everpress.

Original artwork and a Barbican merchandise range will be available to buy during the exhibition run, with all proceeds going to support the artists and charity.

Further information about workshops and events taking place throughout the run will be available on the exhibition page of the Barbican [website](#).

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Press information

For more information, please contact:

Georgia Holmes – Communications Assistant, Visual Arts, Barbican
georgia.holmes@barbican.org.uk
020 3834 1182

Ariane Oiticica – Senior Programming Communications Manager, Barbican
ariane.oiticica@barbican.org.uk
020 3834 1181 | 079 1719 0584

For information about Headway East London

Claire Stone, Public Engagement & Comms Manager
claire.stone@headwayeastlondon.org
020 7749 7790 | Ext: 7810

Press images available online from the Barbican Press room

A link to the image sheets can be found in the ‘Downloads’ box on the top right-hand side of the page [here](#).

Barbican Press Room

All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Press team’s contact details are listed on our website at <https://www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room>

Public Information

The Curve, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London, EC2Y 8DS, barbican.org.uk

Radical Welcome

Radical welcome as expressed here is a way of being that goes beyond simple tolerance or acceptance. It is a commitment to actively welcoming and embracing all people, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or any other factor that might make them feel different or excluded. Radical welcome is not always easy. It requires us to be open-minded and willing to learn about people who are different from us. It also requires us to be willing to challenge our own assumptions and biases.

About Headway East London

Headway East London is a charity supporting people living with brain injury. Working across 13 London boroughs, Headway East London provide specialist support and services for over 700 survivors, family, friends, and carers in the local area each week. They provide therapies, advocacy, family support and community support work alongside a day service at their centre in Haggerston, where members can make the most of their abilities and interests. Headway East London promotes awareness and understanding of brain injury by running creative projects that bring their members and the public together, offering training to professionals and businesses, and acting as an educational resource for universities. At Headway East London, people living with brain injury and their families are empowered to imagine new possibilities and to explore their creativity, embracing diversity and new opportunities, and backed by specialist support. Their vision is to create a world which is open and accessible to brain injury survivors, and in which they are valued and celebrated.

The Barbican believes in creating space for people and ideas to connect through its international arts programme, community events and learning activity. To keep its programme accessible to everyone, and to keep investing in the artists it works with, the Barbican needs to raise more than 60% of its income through ticket sales, commercial activities and fundraising every year. Donations can be made here:

www.barbican.org.uk/join-support/support-us/for-individuals/make-a-donation

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the Barbican pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over a million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 700 staff work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas 1, 2 and 3, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, public spaces, a library, the Lakeside Terrace, a glasshouse conservatory, conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra; Associate Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra; Associate Ensembles the Academy of Ancient Music and Britten Sinfonia, Associate Producer Serious, and Artistic Partner Create. Our Artistic Associates include Boy Blue, Cheek by Jowl, Deborah Warner, Drum Works and Michael Clark. The Los Angeles Philharmonic are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, and Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra are International Associate Ensemble.

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