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AHRC funding sees launch of creative arts programme and professional exhibition

A PhD student from Northumbria University, Newcastle, has launched a series of events to bring together the region's brightest creative practitioners.

Lucy Livingstone, a doctoral student of Fine Art at Northumbria who is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), will also launch her first professional solo exhibition as part of the programme.

The Nomadic Salon series was created in partnership with student, Suzy O' Hara of the University of Sunderland, to share best practice among the

region's post-graduate and professional practice-led researchers. The programme consists of 3 'salon' events (where the host directs the topic of conversation), an exhibition, a conference and a 'book sprint'. Nomadic Salon launched at Newcastle's Culture Lab on 10 April and travels to Featherstone Castle, Haltwhistle on 30 April, to coincide with the opening of Lucy's exhibition – Journeys Through Space and Time at Whistle Art Stop, Haltwhistle.

The final salon will take place at Thinking Digital Arts in May, while the two-day conference will be hosted by the National Glass Centre in June. The final event, which will see the participants collectively produce a book of their findings, will take place at BALTIC 39 in July.

The events are a product of Northumbria and Sunderland's continued funding success from the AHRC, which recently saw the consortium named as a Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT). The funding aims to support post-graduate studentships that are directly engaged with industry – reinforcing the institutions' existing links with BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and the National Glass Centre.

The recent CDT award, a significant grant of £1.2m, provides funding for students' self-set research projects and training in research skills, while creating opportunities for joint supervision, student events, conferences and peer support networks. Placement opportunities are an additional possibility for those who wish to develop research skills within an industry setting. Lucy, who is studying as an AHRC-funded researcher from the consortium's first funding award, has now created a new research community through the Nomadic Salon, alongside Suzy. The initiative builds on their own professional practice while directly supporting other students, freelancers and creative sector employees.

Lucy said: "Collaboration is the best way to succeed as a professional artist – and both Northumbria and Sunderland provide excellent opportunities for this. My first professional, solo show is a culmination of my AHRC-funded practice-led research, and it's through Northumbria's partnership with BALTIC, where our final event will be held, that we are able to showcase our work to prestigious industry representatives.

"I believe Nomadic Salon will prove highly beneficial for the creative sector to support artistic development, and Suzy and I are already looking into

opportunities to use it as a model to support other organisations in the UK. After all, that's how the artistic sector really grows – through creating communities, conversations and collaborations.”

Godfrey Worsdale, Director, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead said: “I'm delighted to see this initiative emerging at this time. The creative energy in Newcastle Gateshead at the moment is really inspiring and it is great to see the region's academics, artists and creative communities coming together to share knowledge, collaborate and extend their potential to impact within the North East and far beyond. Lucy and Suzy are to be congratulated for their farsightedness and the contribution that this will undoubtedly make.”

The CDT award will see new studentships commencing in September of this year, creating life-changing opportunities for some of the nation's most talented prospective new researchers in arts, design and craft.

David Campbell, Professor of Fine Art, Northumbria University said: “The Nomadic Salon is a great example of how research funding can launch an artist's career. Being prepared to go beyond the boundaries of their own institutions to test research is indicative of the ambition and confidence nurtured within our research community – and Lucy and Suzy are great examples of this. The collaborative culture fostered through AHRC funding is a great bridging mechanism between academia and the creative industries and is truly invigorating for both parties.” For more information about Northumbria University, visit www.northumbria.ac.uk

For more information about the University of Sunderland, visit www.sunderland.ac.uk For more information about Nomadic Salon, including full listings information, visit www.nomadicsalon.co.uk

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