

Lizzie Lovejoy 0:15

Hello, everybody, and welcome to the Change of Perspective Podcast. I am your host, Lizzie Lovejoy. And today we are talking to Pat Chapman. How you doing, Pat?

Pat 0:24

I'm fine, Lizzie, how are you? It's been an interesting 18 months or so

Lizzie Lovejoy 0:28

Could you tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do?

Pat 0:31

I'm the Vice Principal for Employability and External Relations at the Northern School of Art, which is a heck of a mouthful. That means that I get to work with students supporting them in their onward career journeys. And also supporting our alumni, working with them to help them either pivot their careers or just keep progressing with their careers all the way through. It means that I get to do mad things like the Festival of Illustration, which we're going to talk a bit about later, and develop our relationships with the creative sector as a whole both locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally as well. And I get involved in amazing projects, such as the development of the new Northern Studios, the film and TV sound stages, that we're going to be opening in the autumn, in Hartlepool, which is a really interesting project. It's been going on for a while, and that, but it's going to be amazing when we realise it.

I have another hat that I wear, which is I'm a council member for the North Area Council of Arts Council England, which means that I can act as a sounding board for decision makers, the executive within Arts Council England, it's very much about feeding back from the sector, and also acting as a voice out from the Arts Council into sector as well. But if anyone ever wants to get a message into Arts Council, and they don't know how to do it, they're very, very welcome to talk to me, and I can help with it. Because I think with the development of the Arts Council's new strategy, Let's Create, it's an interesting time, because that marks a shift away from perhaps a focus on what may some people may have seen as the more traditional art forms. I always used to be very, very strident, where we had to look at creativity in all its senses, and across all genre and artforms. You know, a garage band is just as relevant, just as important, as someone who wants to be an opera singer. We can't, the Arts Council shouldn't, prescribe what art is, what culture is, that has to be defined by the people making it and the people consuming it, not by a group of people like me sitting in a meeting.

Lizzie Lovejoy 2:54

So what kind of thing brought you here? What was your inspiration to moving in this in this direction and working with creativity?

Pat 3:01

I've had a really mad career. I started out many years ago as a civil engineer. So that was all about designing things and building things. That didn't kind of work out for me, I didn't enjoy it so much and I got involved in, more in regeneration projects, and economics and things like that through my work. But right back at school, I was really lucky. My secondary school, we had a cinema, which also was a fully functioning theatre. And we were just enabled to get involved in the arts, particularly the performing arts. So all the way through my school years, I sang, I played instruments, I acted. And I helped out with the cinema. And that just added a whole different side to me, and helped my confidence. A lot of people will say that I never know when to shut up. And I talk an awful lot. And I do and I also think that on that basis, I'm not a shy person. But actually, I started out life cripplingly shy. And it was through all the work I did in theatre and performing that I got over that, so that I can do the - "hi it's Pat" bit. And I saw what that did for me. And I saw what it did for other people. So all the way through my career was always in the background. I know this can work.

And sort of midway through my career, I was, and people might think this is strange, I was lucky enough to be recruited at a quite senior level into the civil service and the Department of Education. And that was at the time when Sir Ken Robinson was just being asked by the Blair government to do his research and proposals around creativity and education, which led to his 1999 report Creativity, Culture and Education, which then led government and the Arts Council to start the initial phases of something called Creative Partnerships in schools. And so I was around working with ministers, working with other officials, when that first kicked off.

And then I got a job as a director in the civil service in the north east of England, where two of the pilots for CP were being established, and that was just so exciting. And seeing how that worked, creating those inspiring partnerships, three way partnerships between children, creative, and teacher, to co create things, to develop things that weren't just about art, but they were about helping individuals that, well, that was inspiring. So that definitely helped me make the choice later on in life, to be here, and to do what I do, it all reinforced my knowledge of the impact that the arts and creativity can have. And I saw the economic impact culture has. So it's important, and we should never, ever underestimate it.

Lizzie Lovejoy 6:17

I had no idea that you started with performance. That's so cool.

Pat 6:23

Well, our school every year, we did a contemporary play. And we also did either a musical or an opera. So I used to get, I often used to get leads in the plays, but I only ever got the sort of character roles in the musicals or the opera. So I was Eliza Doolittle's dad. But I think my favourite piece that we ever did was a Tom Stoppard play, which I took the lead in. And it was quite adventurous for the secondary school to be doing this, but our head teacher was just inspiring. We used to call him biscuit barrel because he had a BSc and a BA, so his nickname was biscuit barrel. But that meant that he supported both the arts and the sciences equally, he had this real appreciation. He used to

translate Anglo Saxon poetry for a hobby for goodness sakes, it was great. We were exposed to professional theatre as well, because we brought to professional theatre into this great theatre, we had in the school, which was also a community resource. So yeah, it was it was just inspiring.

Lizzie Lovejoy 7:27

That's, that's absolutely fantastic to hear. Because I feel like I've talked to so many people who have had such an opposite experience where they were, they were shoved out of Arts at a young age. And it only took until they became adults to get into it, and it feels so nice, that there has been experiences and there has been times like in education, especially when you're - you're brought into it, into this world, because I mean, it's, it's a whole world on its own. This, the creative sector.

Pat 7:52

And I think that's one of the funny things about education, particularly school education in this country. It goes in cycles. So in the 70s, the arts were respected and promoted and valid, perhaps less so through the 80s and into the 90s. Then from the 90s, through the noughties, it was back to, there was a real understanding of the role that creativity played in developing young people. Its economic importance, and the fact that it was a valid career pathway. And then after 2010, that, that did leech away a bit, although it never goes away altogether, because there were always people out there, who were fighting for it. And it is difficult because government policy, certainly in recent years, has not promoted or encouraged the teaching of the arts and school, quite the reverse in many cases. And that's a real challenge. Because as you say, that means we don't have necessarily the experience out there and people aren't getting the experiences to build their personal cultural capital, or to be inspired. And coming back to why am I doing what I do. That's, that's why I do this. I want to be able to be there to support not just our students at The Northern School of Art, but help everyone before that, in this region, to get into the arts.

Lizzie Lovejoy 9:16

We've kind of touched a little bit on what the next question was in the next section, which was talking a bit about the Creative Partnership programme, but also co owning a commercial art gallery and what that experience has been like for you.

Pat 9:28

Well, the gallery, I'll start with the gallery. That was in the noughties. Some friends decided to set up a commercial gallery up in Northumberland where I live, and they asked me to come in with them. I was doing a job as a director in the civil service at the time, so it was on top of the day job, but I leapt at the chance to get involved in it. You know, it was one of those decisions: Do I spend a load of money to go and do an MBA or something like that to develop my career, or do I spend the same amount of money helping set up the business, get involved in the business, develop the business and have fun? And I have to say an element of this was 'oh, I think this is quite fun'. And it was really interesting because it gave me an insight into how freelance artists and artisans were working because we we sell sort of mid mid high end Fine Arts. But we also sold well craft ceramics, but all

artisan based stuff, jewellery, the works. I used to spend weekends working in there, doing a bit of selling and obviously the running of the business side. But the interesting bits were meeting potential artists that we could show and talking to them, and seeing how we could promote their careers as well. Because it's all about generating interest in your stable of artists. So running events to do that, talking to publishers, people like that, it's, it's a fascinating thing to do. I loved doing it.

We stopped trade in the late noughties, because that's when the first bits of the recession started hitting. And it's not an easy business to run. But I don't ever regard that as failure. Too often in this country, we think, Oh, well, if it didn't work, it's a failure. It did work for a while. And then we knew when to stop. And I think all of us can take lessons from that. Just because something doesn't work forever, doesn't mean it wasn't worth doing in the first place. You need to be resilient, you need to learn how to change what you do, pivot what you do, move on to something else. And actually, those are key characteristics of creativity. All of those things are part of creativity. So it was great fun. I loved it. I met some wonderful people, many of whom I still know and still occasionally work with. And it gave me a set of skills I could use later on when I was offering some freelance support to start up creative businesses across the region. So for about three years, I was freelancing, doing that, as well as still working in schools and theatres as a freelancer. The gallery was fun, hard work. But fun.

If anyone doesn't know what Creative Partnerships was, it did come out of this work that the amazing Sir Ken Robinson did for the government back in the late 90s. It was all about the notion that if you place an artist or a creative in a school context, to help fix a problem, and that problem might be how do we teach maths, or how do we teach virtually anything using the power of creativity and the arts to redesign how you do teaching. And also critically, involve the voice of the young people in that teaching.

And that's what Creative Partnerships was about. It started really back in 2002. I joined them a lot further down the line, as the National Director, looking after all the programmes in schools right across England. And by that stage, we were working in 2000 plus schools a year, we had a budget of 30 million pounds a year going into those schools, to pay for the projects, to support the work of the artists. And also critically, we did an awful lot of work around the professional development of those artists in educational settings. And I think one of the legacies that came out of Creative Partnerships was several thousand artists who'd had experience, who'd had training, who could then continue that work in some way, shape or form, after Creative Partnerships fully ended in 2012, which was when all the government funding ended for it.

And people might think 'ooh 30 million quid a year. That's an awful lot of money', but not when you think it's thousands of schools each year that benefited and tens of thousands of young people. We were always clear about having research and evidence about how we did things. So we were really strict about project planning and project evaluation, and then having all of the work that we did evaluated. And KPMG - the finance and accountancy consultancy - they did a longitudinal study, and it showed that for every quid that was spent through Creative Partnerships, the long term benefit was something like 15 pounds back. And also educationally, we showed that a lot of the young

people we worked with might not have been fully engaged with education. That might have been one of the issues we were helping to address. It could have been behavioural, it could have been just simply not engaging with normal mainstream education. And the research showed that at every level of education, we improved the educational outcomes across the board for those young people. Not in the arts, but in maths and literacy, in every other subject area. It worked. I hope we never forget the lessons that were learned from that. Well, it was more than an experiment. It was an incredible project and an incredible journey to go on and I am proud to have been a small part of it for a small period of time.

Lizzie Lovejoy 15:22

That's absolutely fantastic to hear. That was really heartwarming. Sorry haha.

Pat 15:28

I was telling a colleague yesterday about one of the projects that we supported in school, it's a really lush one. There was a primary school that needed some more space, but it was in an old Victorian building, typical old school, and there was no way you could build a new building. So we got an old aircraft fuselage. That was, you know, the wings were cut off, the engines gone, things like that. We craned an aircraft fuselage in, working with an architect, working with digital creatives and the school, and turned that into an immersive education space, in a playground, basically. So the floor was a screen. So you could fly over Google Earth and things like this. And it was great. It was the most wonderful teaching space you've ever seen, and just had an incredible impact on the children. And that's all about that partnership you know, the architect understanding what the school needed, what children would engage with, and then digital creatives coming in to support that being, how the hell do you deliver that? Oh it would be lovely if we could do things like that everywhere.

Lizzie Lovejoy 16:32

Yeah, that's, that's brilliant. That's really applying innovative thinking right there.

Pat 16:36

That's what Creative Partnerships was about that. Another one I loved was a project where there were issues about mathematics and geometry and things like that. And actually, carnival artists went into that school, they developed a carnival float of the planets, and the kids had to make all of the items on the float. So they had to use geometry, mathematics, just planning to do it. And that's the key thing. You can use creativity as a lever to get kids to use other skills and develop other skills without even realising they're doing. And that was fun. Because yeah, all of a sudden, they could do trigonometry, they could do geometry, and they didn't even know they were doing maths. That's why I think the word creativity is just as important, if not more important than culture or the arts.

Lizzie Lovejoy 17:28

Because the actual, the actual learning becomes subconscious. That's fascinating

Pat 17:33

In education, academics, there's long been this big argument about big C culture and creativity, and little c culture and creativity. Which is which, which should you teach, which can you teach? And how can you teach it? And exploring some of those arguments is really important. If anyone's interested in stuff like this, more recently, there was the Durham Commission on Culture and Education has produced a couple of really interesting reports. And alongside that are colleagues, notably Professor Pat Thompson, from Nottingham University, they've done research into cultural capital, are we encouraging it? What actually does it mean? And how do you engender that within, within a schools based setting. Pat's one of the most amazing academics in this field, in my view, at the moment, she's been working in it for a long time, she's been a head teacher herself, she frames the right questions for research, and then gives you such clarity about how you can move forward with things. So yeah, the research on cultural capital tactic was really exciting. That was published a couple of years ago. I've lost track of time with the pandemic, it's like, oh, let's just subtract 18 months from everything we've done recently.

Lizzie Lovejoy 18:52

So the next question that I was gonna ask, which we've kind of been touching on already again, is what is your favourite project that you've worked on and been part of? And if it's too hard to pick just one or anything - what's, maybe, what's your favourite stage in a project? Like your favourite point where you think yeah, this is this is good. This is what you what you work for?

Pat 19:12

Ooh, that's an interesting one. Because yeah, I'm not going to name my favourite project, because they're all different in different ways. And I've liked so many things that I've worked on differently. But yeah, so when I'm thinking about projects, I always start with the end, what do we want to achieve? It's kind of called logic modelling. So working from that functional perspective of what you want to achieve, and then working back through how do you achieve that? In many projects, there's a point that will come where normally working - nearly always working with somebody else or other people, there'll be that point of synergy, where ideas come together, and you go, oh, yeah, that's what we're gonna do. Because that presses all the right buttons, and it's gonna be fun. So in a way... I'm sorry, I'm going to move into a bit of the Festival, the Festival of illustration that's going to happen this autumn has a really, has what some people might think is a bit light hearted, a bit silly, maybe, element which is monkey sculptures in Hartlepool, all around the town. And I've been wanting to do that for a long, long time, but couldn't find the reason why it would be a good idea. And I'm in discussions with colleagues here about how do we get going for this, in the midst of a pandemic? Then it suddenly came. Well, actually, this is the time for the Monkey Trail, because we want people to be out there. We want people to be on the streets, we want people to be using local businesses. So what better way to do it, than get everybody involved in a project that's fun, that's relatable, that isn't about some of the negative connotations that have been there with the monkey story. It's actually about celebrating a whole community and taking back ownership of the monkey.

So yeah, it's that point in a project where you go, yes, that's going to work. That's how we do that. And that can apply at big level, small level, anything.

Lizzie Lovejoy 21:16

That's a good response. Yeah, cause I feel like I completely agree with that. I often end up working on my own when I'm producing something creatively. But there's always that discussion and that debate and getting to talk to - either its funding partners, or it's just my mum and dad, when we're just going over, okay, what is this thing going to be? And there's that point where someone says something, and your brain lights up, because you're like, oh, I get that. Okay, I get where this is going now. And I think, I feel like that's the same thing. Even though it's not necessarily on a big creative project. It's just a conversation with me, my mum and my dad.

Pat 21:50

That's it. And I think it's one of the most important things that creatives have to recognise, yes, you can create on your own. But actually, sometimes some of the best creativity comes from that synergy with other people. Loneliness is a big issue for creatives, especially over the last 18 months. Let's try not to let everyone get lonely. We'll talk about some of this later on. But it's really important to network, to stay in touch with people, to engage with people who are creatives or are not creatives, but with other creatives, you're going to get that feedback, which is so positive and so helpful, not just in terms of your creativity, but just in terms of 'Yeah, this is life at the moment. And don't worry, we're all the same', that kind of thing. Supportive environments are really important for creatives, yeah, it's too easy to go and sit in a small room and beaver away and become very disconnected.

Lizzie Lovejoy 22:48

I think leading from that it might be a good time to talk about your role at the Northern School of Art, and what you do there. Because everyone in this podcast at this point knows that I'm a very proud alumni! And I have personally found a lot of connection with the Northern School of Art since graduating, avoiding that loneliness, and that feeling isolated, the university has really provided that for me, for the ability to connect with other creative people. And obviously, like yourself in your role, you are connecting current students and alumni with creative pathways. So I'd like to know a little bit more about what you're doing and what you enjoy about it.

Pat 23:23

Well, the enjoy bit... that goes back to what we were talking about earlier, in terms of the reason I do this is so that I can support people to... it sounds cheesy, but yeah, achieve their dreams, achieve that potential. I genuinely believe in that. So the reason I joined the School eight years ago or so, and the reason I particularly stay engaged with, personally with students and alumni, is so that, well we don't do a Careers Service, I always say this, it's not about careers, it's not about finding a folder with a load of jobs - it's about helping people to understand what they've got to offer. So there's an element of developing mentoring relationships with students and alumni, a little bit of coaching

involved there as well on a one to one basis, and just actually bringing out of each individual, all the skills, all the talents and behaviours that they've got inside themselves, that sometimes they don't realise they've got and it's very much about those behavioural ones and understanding where their experience is relevant. And that's hard for people who have not, as yet, really engaged in the cultural world, the creative sector, you know, because they've been in education all of their lives. I try and help people pull things out of their own brains, their own being, and realise that they've got these attributes and that they can use them in these ways. And also to help them develop them because no one's fully formed, we all learn all the way through our lives we all develop. And so it's it's supporting that.

And then last 18 months, it's been harder to do the networking stuff. And we have worked. I worked alongside Annabel Turpin from ARC and others in response to COVID with, the amazing response, it has to be said, from Ben Houchen the Mayor, and the money that Tees Valley Combined Authority put behind culture, which I think they were probably the first in the country during the pandemic, to say, right, have this wodge of cash, we need to respond. So developing the response there did enable us to look at networking support, particularly for very young emerging graduates and the like. But that's what we've done all the way through me being here, we've had events, we've brought major players in to do talks, to engage and to create work with our students and use those events, particularly the get together ones, to foster those relationships between creatives, whether it's, as you say, an alumni and a graduate, and a student, or just student to student. We kind of managed to keep doing that through lockdown with a series of online events. I really enjoyed the Patrick Grant interview that we did during lockdown. Astonishingly, we found that we could do an awful lot of live stuff, which did engage people, and it did give them the support. But I'm really keen to move back into physical networking. And we will be doing that as much as we possibly can in the new academic year. Because it addresses those issues of isolation and loneliness, and I want to make sure that we do that. So yeah. Does that answer the question? I'm not sure.

Lizzie Lovejoy 26:46

I think that answers the question. I guess it's time to move on to the big thing that we're all looking forward to, which is the Festival of Illustration Tell us a bit about what we can expect from that.

Pat 26:58

Okay, it's gonna look different this year. The first three iterations were much more about one or two big exhibitions, a weekend of talks and master classes. But yeah, the exhibition, which lasted along, two or three months, over the summer normally, and which we really looked to bring in international level illustrative talent, and talent from all across the range of illustration whether or not it was product design and surface design, all the way through to comics, whatever. This year that just didn't feel right. So this year, it's very much, I've called it hyperlocal, yet global. The global bit comes in because we have for the second time run the Northern Illustration Prize. So that is in association with the Association of Illustrators. It's a prize with two £1000 cash prizes, one for best emerging illustrator, one for best established illustrator. So we've had hundreds of entries for that. We have a shortlist of 10 in each of those categories. And yet we had entries from across the globe, four different continents. I was a bit sad, because the first time we did it, we had entries from six

different continents. And I was I was kind of hoping someone would get on the plane and go to Antarctica and make it seven, this time round.

The theme for the prize this year is, as you rightly said, renaissance. And that's kind of a theme running under the surface of everything. It's that sense of rebirth, of coming back, different, stronger, after COVID. And that's why the local bit's important. So in terms of the exhibitions, this time, there's going to be four small exhibitions. They're going to involve the shortlisted artists from the prize, but they're actually going to be focused on the graduates from 2020 and the graduates from 2021, showing either final major project work or work that they've developed since. Because they had a stop put on their career, they lacked the opportunities that we would normally have at the start of a career as an illustrator with anyone. So for me, it's so important to actually provide them with a showcase and also to provide them with opportunity to get some paid work.

So another element of the Festival is the open call put out for newly commissioned illustrations for three artists and residents, which had to be Class of 2020/2021. And then facilitators, artist facilitators to help with the other strand of activity, which is the Monkey Trail that I talked about earlier.

That's the third bit, to get people out onto the streets, to get them going into local businesses seeing each other, re engaging with both culture and commerce and just life. We've got our 35 monkey sculptures made by the amazing Billy Cessford. They're out with Bloomin Art, Emma and Rachel, who are working with us to facilitate community workshops where the community gets to decorate the monkeys. And that can be in a celebratory way, it can be a forward looking way, it can be a story looking, storytelling kind of decoration, or it can be a thank you and a commemoration. I'm not going to tell you the story behind one of them, but one of them is going to be In memoriam of a very special person, special to many people in this town. But I'm equally hopeful that, you know, we might get something daft like, well not daft, yeah, we might get a monkey done up in a Hartlepool strip given that they got promotion. Anything like that, but it's all about the community. Then they're going to be distributed around businesses and community points around Hartlepool so people can visit them, follow them around the town, and then go into those businesses, go into those places, and hopefully get everything moving again, and feeling a bit more normal.

So for me, as you can probably tell, all of it's exciting, but I'm loving the monkeys, and I'm loving the notion of the Monkey Trail. And I'm really loving the fact that we're using an arts festival to support our town, to help our town in any way that we can. This is the way we know how to do things. So this is what our offer is to Hartlepool to help it come back. I know it is gonna come back. And I kind of think this, this autumn might be marking the start of something special.

Lizzie Lovejoy 31:39

Wow you're just full of this heartwarming stuff today. At the end of every question, you end it and I'm just like, oh, that's, that's really inspiring. That's really hopeful.

Pat 31:51

It's how I feel

Lizzie Lovejoy 31:53

I guess I'd like to ask a little bit about creativity and Hartlepool because obviously, I don't currently live in Hartlepool, but I spent a long time there. And it's a place that I will always consider my home. You know, every time I go back that I will always get that feeling. When I'm walking through Church Square, it will feel like home. And it feels like even though it's a relatively small town, there's always so much creatively happening. So I guess I'd like to know, know a bit, just a bit more about your your take on that, in general.

Pat 32:24

I couldn't agree more with what you've just said. It's a small town, it's 96,000 people in all of Hartlepool and its associated villages and local towns. That's not a lot. That's one of the smallest local authorities in the country. But there is so much talent. Obviously, the School itself can help, and does help provide some of that, but actually, it's what's going on in the community as well. There's always been a thriving local community arts environment, the Hartlepool art club, things like that, it's always been a place that seems to actually enable people to draw on inspiration of where they live.

There's been things happening over the last few years. I think the ongoing development of a kind of festival scene, you know, they may not be big festivals, but we have what, four or five festivals now each year in Hartlepool, whether it's folk music, whether or not it's Wintertide, the Waterfront, Festival of Illustration, that's quite a lot of activity. And that's growing, that's giving some heart to people locally, to be able to keep re engaging and keep developing ideas. And I'm seeing more and more local creatives develop projects. I'm seeing more crossover, you know, where it might be people like Amanda White working with the heritage project in Church Street, which will be workshops this this summer. But there's lots of things like that where artists are feeling enabled. And yeah, our graduates have been enabled, they're documenting what happens in the town.

I think a bit sadly, like yourself, I'm seeing creatives that are taking up opportunities in other parts of the Tees Valley and outside. That's inevitably always going to happen. But I want them... I want to start really creating the environment where they feel they can stay based here and do what they want to do. I think as I say, that shifting, that's changing across all art forms. There's a responsibility on people like me, but others in the area who are gatekeepers and managers within our society to actually support that cultural ecosystem. We've done our little bit, and we do what we can around that within the School. And we'll do more once COVID's over, but that's where we need to continue to support the artists. We need to continue to support them in providing opportunities and spaces to do things in. I think that's quite critical. It's not always about money, it's sometimes about the

other help you can give people. And we're getting there with stuff like that. It's not perfect, but well, in short, but we're getting there.

And I look at people like Emma and Rachel at Bloomin Art and the work that they do, and it's the focus because it's the focus of the activity, yeah it's creatively led, creativity and art is intrinsic in it, but it's all about social change, and empowering communities. And that is really important. And that's really where I'm seeing such growth, and still growth potential for the role of culture and the arts in the town. It's exciting. And let's be honest, there's a lot of money coming in for projects into the town now and in the next couple of years, whether or not it's the Council spending 3 million pounds on the refurbishment and redevelopment of the Borough Hall on the Headland, which is going to be exciting, great performance space, but lots of other spaces in there.

Somebody from the Council the other day told me, there's a hundred and three rooms in there, what are we going to do with them? How do we make this exciting do something here? So again, really, really useful asset that we just need to get right, how we open it up to people and I would say this, there's there's the film studios. For me all along the film studios, great outcome in itself, but, for me the bigger outcome is, yeah, but hopefully, that will create a cluster of screen industries related small businesses, whether it's a costumier, a production designer, a prop maker, a post production person, anything like that, I think we get this right, that kind of cluster of people coming together in the town will happen. And that will be equally exciting. So yeah, that's my take on Hartlepool at the moment.

I love working here.

Lizzie Lovejoy 37:08

How long have you worked in Hartlepool out of interest?

Pat 37:11

Eight years now, yep. Joined the School back in 2013.

Lizzie Lovejoy 37:20

So you've really seen that development, then because over the past, I'd say over the past five years, especially there's been so much development, around Hartlepool.

Pat 37:28

The School's played a part in that, you know, our expansion, our new campus. But having a campus at each end of Church Street helps create a bit of a buzz around place, it helps us bring in more students into the town, which is more money. But it's it's starting to have the effect. With my

background, I've done a lot of work around economic development and regeneration. My Masters is actually an economics based Masters. And so I've seen and even studied regeneration projects and economic development in cycles over the last hundred or more years. And the one thing I've always taken away from my experience, and my learning there is, it's not about the buildings, it's about the people.

And you really have to engage the people, and almost have people there waiting for something to be built before you build something and say, 'Oh come and see something I've built' that's pointless, because they might not want it. Whereas if you create a buzz and a demand, then then you can follow that up with the building. And that's one of the reasons why we first started the Festival of Illustration back in 2015 actually. It was a, it was just a, can we prove that you can develop an audience for an arts project like this? Because Hartlepool's historically had lower levels of engagement. And yes you can, what a surprise. And people loved it. And that's why we've kept coming back with it. And that's why more than 100,000 people have visited Festival events over the last three outings of the Festival. So it's got to be people focused.

Lizzie Lovejoy 39:28

There's something quite anthropological about that, about just understanding culture and vibe and people's attitudes and atmospheres.

Pat 39:37

And, and you're spot on with that. Because if you look at where cultural posts have developed in cities across the world, but let's say in, in in the UK, they don't happen in the places where money men have spent fortunes, building shiny buildings and things like that. They happen at the edges. You know whether or not that's Digbeth in Birmingham, where the custard factory building became a heart of a creative area, whether or not it's the Ouseburn in Newcastle, which no one can take credit for the regeneration of the Ouseburn other than the creatives and artists who originally moved into the semi-derelict buildings down there, and started creating something different. So all of that was led from the bottom up. And that's, that's kind of what gets exciting about cultural spaces, creative quarters. Again, you can't designate, ooh this is going to be the creative quarter, because you'll almost undoubtedly fail. Unless you work alongside the creatives themselves, and the creatives want to be there.

Lizzie Lovejoy 41:00

So I guess we're, we're coming to the end of this now. So I suppose I would like to ask a bit maybe how can people get involved with the Festival? How can people around Hartlepool get involved with creativity in Hartlepool or any other final comments that you have?

Pat 41:13

Cool. Gosh. Well, in terms of the Festival, it's going to be kicking off from September the 18th, and running through until the end of November, when we'll join forces with Wintertide Festival on the Headland. There will be a special event on that weekend involving nearly all of the monkeys. I can't tell you any more about that yet, but it's something that people might want to come and see once we can actually do, get press notices out there about that. And again, whilst it will be fun, and hopefully quite good to look at, it's about the community. The exhibition is going to be spread, it's going to be, as I say, four almost micro exhibitions, mainly focused around Church Street, the Bis, at the School itself, but also on the Headland. So people can just drop into those venues during the Festival.

There are going to be some online sessions delivered throughout September, October, November. And just go on to the Festival website or social media. And as we get the details of those, the booking links will be embedded in those. So there's more to announce around that. But we always like drip feeding things. I never, I never go with, this is everything now, because people forget. But yeah, and actually just walk around and look at the monkeys. That's one way to get involved in this because A) you never know who you'll meet wandering around. And B) you can buy a beer or a coffee in one of the places, and that's all it was doing our bit for coming out of this.

I think people, certainly creatives, just be keeping an eye on the socials that are going around. There is a Hartlepool based social network. There's obviously things like NE:UK Creatives, always keep an eye on those, and yeah, there'll be opportunities. I'm hopeful, I think I'm hopeful for Hartlepool and Tees Valley, because I think the conditions are currently right for culture, creativity and the arts to really keep flourishing. There's a good understanding that many people worked to develop with the decision makers and the money holders that this is important. And I think the recognition is out there.

So conclusion, it's a good time. It may not feel like it right now. But it is a good time to be here, to be a creative, and push your ideas out there. And I think, as ever, we're creatives. So my conclusion is, don't be afraid to experiment. Never, ever be afraid to experiment with an idea. As I said about my experience with the gallery, an end isn't a failure. An end means you've had a successful experiment and you've grown and developed and moved on to something new. And all of us need to keep doing that.

Lizzie Lovejoy 44:27

Well, that's fantastic advice. You're full of all this, like, wisdom.

Pat 44:34

Or it could be my experience haha

Lizzie Lovejoy 44:38

Well, that brings us to the end of this episode of 'A Change of Perspective.' Thank you so much Pat for being here. It's been a pleasure to have you.

Pat 44:46

Lizzie, it's been so lovely talking to you. And you know, I want to pay tribute to you. You said earlier you were proud to be one of our graduates. Well, I tell you what, we're proud to have helped you on that journey, because what you've been doing over the last couple of years is nothing short of amazing. The range of art forms you've covered off is fabulous, as is the work that you've produced. So I'm flattered to be asked to be on this podcast by you. Thank you.

Lizzie Lovejoy 45:18

Thank you so much. Oh, that means so much.

Take care everybody. See you next time. Bye

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai> and edited by Lizzie Lovejoy