

GRAND UNION

For immediate release

GRAND UNION CONFIRMS £542,000 FUNDING FROM ARTS COUNCIL NATIONAL PORTFOLIO STATUS AND ESMÉE FAIRBAIRN FOUNDATION

- Arts Council confirms 4 year investment of £392,000, securing Grand Union's future until 2022
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation invest £150,000 for 3 years organisational development

Grand Union is delighted to announce that it has been included in Arts Council England's National Portfolio 2018–2022. The investment, worth £392,000, secures the organisation to deliver an ambitious programme of exhibitions and support for contemporary artists and curators.

Arts Council England have shown support for Birmingham's arts economy by welcoming many new organisations into the portfolio in this round including Centrala, Friction Arts, Capsule, Flatpack Festival, Vivid Projects and Birmingham Open Media.

Peter Knott, Area Director, Arts Council England, said: "We're delighted to be welcoming Grand Union to the portfolio over the next four years. It'll be great to see them continue to provide emerging visual artists with the opportunity to create and showcase their work in the heart of Birmingham."

The investment comes on the back of exciting news from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, who have awarded Grand Union £150,000 towards organisational development and capacity building. This will enable the organisation to push forward plans to create a new venue with better access, more studio provision and a higher profile in the city.

Director Cheryl Jones said, "We are so delighted with this news. Arts Council England have been investing in our development since we started as a small collective of artists and curators in 2010. This award, coupled with major investment from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, enables us to keep pushing the organisation to become secure long term, connect with more people and support more artists and curators to produce great work. We are really excited to see so many new organisations joining the portfolio in Birmingham, it's an incredible time for culture in the city."

Programme Director Kim McAleese said, "This funding gives us the space to plan longer term and to deliver projects with an added level of ambition. We will continue with our gallery programme, but be much more visible in the city with the partnerships we are developing, including SHOUT Festival of Queer Art, Fierce Festival, Birmingham Open Media and Crisis."

Grand Union was founded in 2010 when a group of artists and curators decided to create a new kind of organisation, one which both provided affordable, good quality artists' studios – of which there are very few in Birmingham – alongside a forward-thinking exhibition programme. Unusually, Grand Union also provides support for emerging curatorial practice, including employment opportunities and an educational programme.

Cheryl Jones explains: "There are few places in the UK, let alone Birmingham, where young curators get the chance to try out new ideas in a professional gallery setting."

Tim Dixon, now Gallery Manager at Matt's Gallery, London, who was an Associate Curator with Grand Union from 2011–2013, says "Working as Associate Curator at Grand Union was truly formative. The time, experience and opportunities that they gave me over two years allowed me to try things out, take risks, build my networks and establish myself. I probably wouldn't be where I am now without them."

Grand Union is expanding its studio provision to include Modern Clay, a new ceramics studio run by artist Mark Essen, a residency space for Birmingham City University art and design graduates, and four more affordable spaces for independent artists. These new studios will launch at Digbeth First Friday in September 2017.

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For more details, contact Cheryl Jones, Director, Grand Union

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See www.grand-union.org.uk for information on studio holders, upcoming events and an archive of previous exhibitions.

Notes to Editors:

Grand Union supports and presents innovative artistic and curatorial practice. We believe that a strong artistic community is an essential part of an integrated city.

We provide support by:

- working with artists, curators and writers, placing an emphasis on commissioning new art, supporting career development and encouraging experimentation.
- engaging the public with this work through an ambitious programme of exhibitions, talks and events in our Gallery and elsewhere.
- providing contemporary visual artists in the city with affordable, purpose-built studio space.
- developing curatorial talent through a programme of employment, mentoring and toolkits.

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