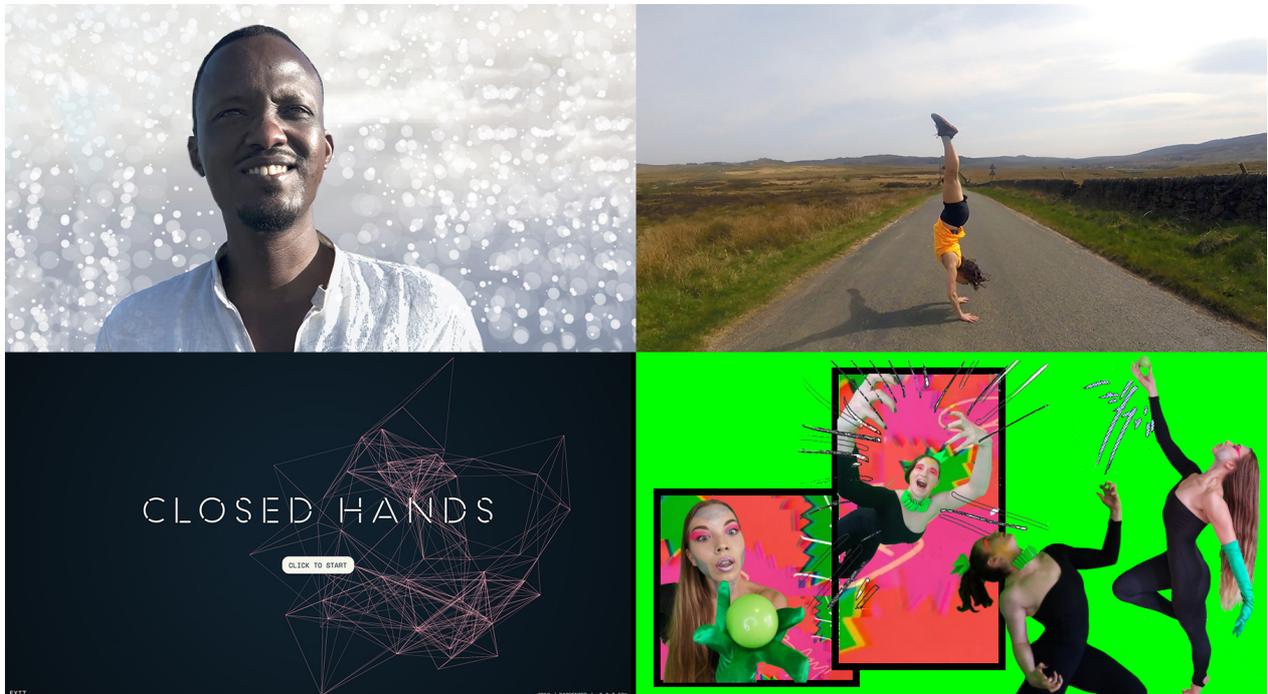


PRESS RELEASE

27 Jan 2021

HOME's Push festival returns with brand-new commissions and a groundbreaking experimental video game



From top left: Emmanuel Bajijji's Candy Floss; Jenni Jackson's Endurance, Closed Hands by Passenger Games and Holly Rush's Superhero Alter Ego

- Festival will be spread across 2021 to allow work to be seen both live and digitally despite coronavirus
 - First works to be announced include six brand-new commissions and an experimental video game
 - More works will be announced throughout 2021

HOME

[Images can be downloaded by clicking here](#)

This year's Push Festival at HOME will feature six brand-new commissions and – for the first time – an experimental video game, exploring extremism via digital narratives.

Push is HOME's annual celebration of the North West's creative talents, and this year has been reimagined to become a strand across the whole year, allowing work to be seen both live and digitally, despite the coronavirus pandemic which is currently keeping theatres and arts venues closed.

In response to work carried out with the Freelance Task Force, HOME changed the commissioning process for Push this year. The six new commissions were chosen via a process which took into account the extra pressure the pandemic has placed onto freelance artists, requiring only a brief initial expression of interest for the first stage, and with shortlisted applicants given financial and administrative support from HOME's Talent Development team. The final works were chosen by an independent panel of artists who were paid for their time, and all shortlisted applicants received detailed feedback from the panel.

The commissioned artists are Graham Arnefield, Emmanuel Bajijji, Katherine Hollinson, Jenni Jackson, Holly Rush, and Hope Strickland & Jessica El Mal. Their works encompass a vast range of styles, experiences and perspectives on the world in which we live.

Jenni McCusker, Head of Talent Development at HOME, said: "Our Push commissioned artists for 2021 are so exciting and look set to take audiences on a journey of re-looking and re-examining the world around through a variety of performance styles. We are so excited to be working with them to bring their projects to life and can't wait to see how they develop.

"During the pandemic with countless lockdowns and restrictions the freelance artistic community has been devastated so we continue our commitment to support artists at all levels and make as many opportunities available as we can for artists to make and present work in these very challenging times."

Gaming included in festival for the first time



In addition to the new commissions, the strand will start with the online computer game *Closed Hands*, created by Manchester indie games studio [Passenger](#), formed by artist and activist Dan Hett.

The game examines the lead-up and aftermath of a terror attack in a fictional UK city, through the lens of five core characters and dozens of other lives brought together by the same event - the attack itself is intentionally never depicted, leaving the game to draw a complex picture of the reasons why it occurred, and long-last effects it had on people, communities, and the city itself.

Closed Hands is the studio's first work which builds upon the experimental games series developed by Dan Hett, exploring his personal experience of losing his brother Martyn Hett in the Manchester terror attack in 2017.

Dan said: "We're really excited to present *Closed Hands* to new audiences, and we really hope that it helps push forward the idea that games should, and can, boldly hold up a mirror to our reality in new and interesting ways. The story is deep and complex, and presented in a way that we hope can be explored by both games audiences and those outside it, too."

Closed Hands will be available via the HOME website from 5 March.

Six new commissions currently in development

The new commissions will be presented across the year, with more details to be announced via HOME's website and social media channels as each work develops. Audiences can also read about the artists' practice on the HOME website.

The six new works are:

- **Graham Arnefield: *The White Ship* (Artist Film)**

The film is a collaborative historical re-enactment of the 1112AD "White Ship Disaster" from the perspective of the Hastings townspeople subcontracted to wait for the King Henry I's White Ship - a ship that never arrived. The film highlights the care, solidarity and humour transmitted between precarious workers while working exploitive jobs, especially at times of great upheaval.

Graeme Arnfield is an artist filmmaker & curator who produces sensory essay films from found, often viscerally embodied, networked imagery. His films use methods of investigative storytelling to explore issues of circulation, spectatorship and history.

- **Emmanuel Bajiji: *Candy Floss* (Live Theatre)**



Candy Floss is a charming storytelling piece charting one man's journey as he reflects on life in Oldham, his new town, in a new country, on a new continent.

Emmanuel Bajijji has worked as a writer and performer in varied settings including theatre, healthcare, and education, facilitating creative writing workshops and storytelling in schools, universities, community organisations, and businesses. In the past he has worked with Contact, Community Arts Northwest, Oldham Theatre, Z Arts, Action Factory, Global Link, Sheba Arts and HOME as a storyteller.

- **Jenni Jackson: *Endurance* (Live Theatre)**

This multidisciplinary work explores how we can observe a woman wilfully push herself to the limit, how complicit the audience is with that experience, and how this destruction of the female body echoes through time.

Jenni is a Latinx British/Bolivian theatre-maker, movement director and actor who creates work that interrogates the female body in performance, her relationship with the UK, and the duality of living between races and cultures.

- **Katherine Hollinson: *Would you care to...* (Digital)**

Katherine is creating a digital work with her sister, Gemma, that looks at Gemma's life living with disabilities through the lens of their sisterly relationship.

Katherine is a performer, maker and teacher from Manchester. A common thread running through her practice is the need to challenge notions of who can and can't dance, and to minimise the barriers to accessing dance as a watcher or mover. A graduate of Central Ballet School, London, she has worked with choreographers including Simone Forti, Lucy Hind, Dan Watson and Liz Aggiss.

- **Holly Rush: *Superhero Alter Ego* (Digital)**

Superhero Alter Ego takes the idea of social media and digital comic books and satirises superhero archetypes to create a surreal, escapist narrative.

Holly is an interdisciplinary dance practitioner who trained in Contemporary Dance at Trinity Laban and since then has honed a unique style of fusing elements of dance, physical theatre, performance art, poetry, Commedia dell'arte and clowning.

- **Hope Strickland and Jessica El Mal: *If I could name you myself (I would hold you forever)* (Artist Film)**

If I could name you myself (I would hold you forever) engages with notions of Black resistance and feminist ecologies through the lens of trauma, memory and the visual conceit of the cotton flower.



Hope Strickland is a visual anthropologist from Manchester, UK. Her forthcoming projects are concerned with an experimental approach to exploring avenues for black agency within audio-visual media.

Jessica El Mal engages in a multidisciplinary practice through social interaction, critical and historical research, and speculative future imaginaries. Often centred around collaboration, co-curation and collective knowledge systems, her projects usually include research, workshops and artwork intended to have a lasting effect.

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Notes to editors

For interviews, additional images or review tickets/links, please contact Kat Harrison-Dibbits, Head of Communications at HOME, on 07833523295 or email kat.harrison-dibbits@homemcr.org.

Additional quotes

Jenni Jackson:

"I am thrilled to be part of the Push Festival with *Endurance*. I initially tested the idea at Propel in 2019, so to be able to see the work come to fruition here is really special. As an artist based in Manchester, it's so important to be able to make your work where you live, and I feel really proud to be presenting alongside other artist from the area."

"I make work that is about what it's like to straddle two cultures, and I love the liveness of the sports spectacle. I want the piece to feel like an event, with the sensation of speed and a racing heart. I hope the audience will go on a journey of transformation with me, that we can suspend time together for a while."

Holly Rush:

"The selection has been a big confidence booster. It has encouraged me to see this as a new opportunity to really focus and to push my form, in new ways that I never would have thought about just a few months ago; a time to experiment and get back to my creative ways. Delving into new research, new ideas and honing more into my own interests and values which will benefit me in the years to come."

Katherine Hollinson

It's a really exciting opportunity for me to work with a local venue that I have long admired. It is my first digital commission and I'm really looking forward to exploring and developing this aspect of my practice. This commission is the culmination of a long research period with my sister and we're so happy to be presenting the final work in our

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home city. It's a project that is really close to our hearts so to be supported by HOME means a lot to us.

Emmanuel Bajiji

I hope the audience will be excited to see the world through my eyes. Feel less fear of the other, more empathy and compassion. I also hope that they will never look at snow or candy floss the same way again. I hope they will see it more as a metaphor. I hope the audience will leave the show with realisation and awareness of their real individual identity that is a part of the shared identity of all of us who make the fabric of our diverse society.

Hope Strickland and Jessica El Mal

Common media narratives on slavery and marginalised histories are often glossy, Hollywood-esque dramas of denigration, violence and trauma told through or for a white gaze. With our film we really wanted to emphasise the stories less heard that are valuable in redefining a rich, powerful collective history, made with and for the community it serves through a practice of co-curation. If I Could Name You Myself (I Would Hold You Forever) highlights the small, every-day rebellions of black women in the face of a terrible system - it should highlight these as acts of hope and resistance which we the audience can honour and respect.

Graeme Arnefeld

It was important to us to make a film about some kind of class solidarity, of realising who you should be fighting, of seeing your struggles in the struggles of others, seeing theirs in yours and holding yourself and each other to your common purpose, not only of managing loss but re-building a better future together – in this way I hope the audience can trace the connections between the uncertain future that is unfolding in real time for our 12th century workers and our own precarious futures in the age of ecological collapse... or at least enjoy listening and watching the sea for 10 minutes.

FUNDED BY:



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NOTES TO EDITORS

HOME is Manchester's centre for international contemporary culture. Since opening in May 2015, HOME has welcomed over two million visitors to its two theatres, five cinemas, art gallery, book shop and restaurants. HOME works with international and UK artists to produce extraordinary theatrical experiences, producing an exciting mix of thought-provoking drama, dance and festivals, with a strong focus on international work, new commissions and talent development.

HOME's ambition is to push the boundaries of form and technology, to experiment, have fun, take risks and share great new art with the widest possible audience. The patrons of HOME are Danny Boyle, actress Suranne Jones, playwright and poet Jackie Kay CBE, artists Rosa Barba and Phil Collins, filmmaker Asif Kapadia, and actress and author Meera Syal CBE. www.homemcr.org
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Did you know that HOME is a charity? We need your support to bring the best film, theatre and art to Manchester and inspire the next generation. Get involved at www.homemcr.org/support

