



ASSOCIATION OF
**ENGLISH
CATHEDRALS**

Art in Cathedrals

Newsletter

Summer 2025

Cathedrals have always recognised that art in all its forms can transcend language and reveal to us new ways of seeing and thinking thus opening us up to new dialogues in our sacred spaces. And it can touch new generations whose priorities and worldview will often be different from those who traditionally engage with cathedrals.

But promoting art in cathedrals is especially challenging at present when budgets are tight and visitor numbers have been slow in growing back post-pandemic.

This Board was convened to help cathedrals think about the role that art plays in our life and mission, to share good practice, and to support cathedrals to be bolder in their use of art in all its forms.

We have been blessed enormously to get the support of Jacqueline Creswell as our Arts Consultant, with her vast experience and wide-ranging contacts to help us push our artistic boundaries and encourage and promote a programme

of activities and learning to accompany and amplify any artistic installation.

We are already experiencing the fruits of her labour in a number of our cathedrals and we wanted to share some of their experiences with you.

We intend to establish a more formal research project to gather evidence to demonstrate the value of encounters with contemporary art in cathedral settings. We know there are varied audiences to consider, as well as staffing and resource implications, but we are confident that evaluating art events in our cathedrals would provide much needed quantitative and qualitative data that we could use in funding applications, as well as indications for methodologies to develop.

More to come.

The Very Revd Jonathan Greener
Dean of Exeter, chair of the Arts Advisory Board.

The Very Revd David Monteith, Dean of Canterbury

*Cross-Currents an exhibition by Frances Carlile,
curated by Jacqueline which ran from Oct 2024 to
February 2025.*

Latest project Hear Us

“Jacqueline has an innate understanding of the creative possibilities and thoughtful tensions that arise from the communication between historic places of worship and new art; communication which can be exciting and inspiring. She really understands both our opportunities and our constraints, helping us to learn how we can engage more people in fresh ways.

I’ve worked with Jacqueline for many years and continue to be impressed by her ability to work with artists to realise projects that open up conversations, look at difficult things from new points of view, and encourage us to think about our lives in different ways.

Our next collaboration at Canterbury Cathedral perfectly demonstrates this. Jacqueline and poet Alex Vellis

have joined forces with a team of skilled artists to craft ‘Hear Us’, a thought-provoking exhibition delving into the concept of raising a question to God in our contemporary society. A key element of the exhibition is partnering with marginalised communities – including neurodivergent and LGBTQIA+ groups – to collaboratively create handwritten literature responding to the question, “What would you ask God?”

Canterbury has allowed us to share this early version of a work in progress telling the story and impact of their Cross-Currents exhibition. I urge you to watch it.

https://youtu.be/GgpNK_omEY8



Magna Carta in the North – Andrew Usher, Chief Officer: Visitor Experience and Enterprise Durham Cathedral

This year it is the 800th anniversary of the 1225 Magna Carta from our collections so we wanted to mark the occasion by displaying the Magna Cartas in the Museum as we have in previous years but also enhancing the experience to tell the story of these historic documents throughout the cathedral.

The aim of this overarching Magna Carta exhibition was to engage all our visitors with Magna Carta and its legacy, showing how it connects with the Christian faith and the North East in particular. We know there was a core audience who would come to see Magna Carta as it was on display, however we also wanted to encourage audiences who might only know a little about the Magna Carta or have never heard of it before to want to buy a ticket to the Museum to see it because the rest of the cathedral was telling such a compelling story about it.

We knew we wanted to use art to achieve this. Our previous experience of showcasing art installations in the cathedral was by bringing ‘off the shelf’ installations which were already established and successful in other venues,

whereas with Magna Carta we wanted to develop something unique to Durham.

Jacquiline was introduced to us through the AEC and, even though she knew our timescale was tight for what we wanted to achieve, she was very encouraging, positive and supportive. She suggested potential ideas for the exhibition and started making connections with the cathedral and artists who we could work with in creating an exhibition in the timeframe available.

We found Jacqueline to have a very broad range of ideas and past experiences from which we were able to draw inspiration, and her creativity and enthusiasm was infectious. She was very supportive in both following up on the initial ideas and connections and in sharing resources with us.

The final exhibition, Magna Carta and the North, has had excellent response with ticket sales almost doubling our target in the first month. Credit needs to go to Jacqueline in the support she gave us for getting the wheels in motion and connecting us with the right artists for the project.

Magna Carta and the North until November 2025.

Contact Jacqueline Creswell here:
Jacquiline@visualartsadvisor.org
www.visualartsadvisor.org
+44 7748 833 166

