

The Big Draw

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PRESS RELEASE

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New Director of The Big Draw Reveals STEAM Powered Agenda

Under the leadership of Kate Mason, arts education charity The Big Draw, creator and driving force behind the world's largest drawing festival, has revealed its STEAM powered agenda.

Kate Mason joined The Big Draw in 2013 as deputy director with a remit to secure the long-term sustainability of the charity. She was appointed Director of the charity on 1 July 2015, following the long-planned career change of the founder, Sue Grayson Ford MBE, who is training to be a London Blue Badge Guide.

Since taking the helm of the charity in an increasingly challenging financial climate, Kate Mason has secured Arts Council England funding and instigated a culture change informed by long-term strategic goals. In addition, she has enlisted support from new trustees and ambassadors and relocated the charity's office base to Trinity Buoy Wharf in East London – the Docklands' quarter for the arts and creative industries.

Kate Mason's belief in the role and value of arts within education and her support of the STEAM agenda was revealed with the announcement of the theme for the charity's annual international drawing festival, which takes place from 1-31 October. The 2016 theme, The STEAM Powered Big Draw Festival 2016, is part of the charity's campaign to give the arts parity with Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, so that STEM becomes STEAM.

Kate Mason, director of The Big Draw, commented:

“Reading and writing are key and help shape us – but it is drawing which helps us see and explore. There are many languages but only drawing is truly universal.

Visual Literacy is a mode of thinking that helps us understand and navigate the world around us and is a vital tool in an increasingly visual and digital age. This ‘mode’ deserves greater recognition and currency – I hope in time even the term ‘visual literacy’ itself will become more firmly embedded in the mainstream lexicon.

I am looking forward to working with a fantastic team of staff and trustees to help spread the word that drawing changes lives!"

Prior to joining The Big Draw, Kate Mason gained 20 years of experience across the arts, heritage, cultural and creative sectors. A skilled strategist and cultural broker, she brings with her extensive leadership experience in public advocacy, organisational change, and partnership development.

Chair of The Big Draw, Christopher Goodhart commented:

"Kate Mason comes to The Big Draw with an extraordinary background in arts management, and has already demonstrated during her time as deputy director the tenacity and vision which will help her guide the organisation to ever greater achievements. The trustees and I are delighted to have her leading The Big Draw as we enter this next exciting phase of our development."

Sue Grayson Ford founded the Campaign for Drawing - now The Big Draw - in 2000 on behalf of the Guild of St George, the small charity which celebrates John Ruskin's legacy, and steered its transition into an independent arts education charity in 2006. Having developed the campaign, The Big Draw festival and its international reputation over sixteen years, Sue commented:

"The work of The Big Draw has never been more essential than now given the increasing threats to arts subjects within a scientifically-biased national curriculum. I could not have hoped for a successor – better equipped by both exemplary experience and powerful commitment than Kate Mason – to lead the battle to demonstrate that children and adults need drawing and visual literacy to meet the current and future demands of our society."

Peter Heslip, director of visual arts and London at Arts Council England commented:

"We are pleased to be able to support The Big Draw as it seeks to reach more people across England and encourage them to participate in drawing, particularly through The Big Draw Festival. For the last sixteen years The Big Draw (formally The Campaign for Drawing) has sought to epitomise John Ruskin's philosophy that art is intrinsic to society. The charity's work around the STEAM agenda will play an important role in raising awareness of how visual literacy is an essential part of the cultural education that children and young people should have access to."

This year has already seen The Big Draw host a major fund-raising event at Christie's auction house in London, and The John Ruskin Prize exhibition open at the New Art Gallery Walsall and Trinity Buoy Wharf, London, but it will be full steam ahead as the charity prepares for a digital arts conference at the Baltic from 9-10 September, The Big Draw Festival from 1-31 October, and an organisational re-launch in early 2017.

Find out more about The Big Draw charity and its work at www.thebigdraw.org.

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Notes to Editors

The Big Draw

Founded in 2000, **The Big Draw** (formally The Campaign for Drawing) is an arts education charity that promotes visual literacy and the universal language of drawing as a tool for learning, expression and invention. Through a diversified programme encompassing advocacy, empowerment and engagement, the charity runs events such as The Big Draw Festival, educational conferences and collaborative research projects, awards and competitions. www.thebigdraw.org

The Big Draw Festival

Launched in 2000, **The Big Draw Festival** has encouraged over three million people back to the drawing board. It has notched up two world records – for the longest drawing in the world (one kilometre) and the greatest number of people drawing simultaneously (over 7,000). The Big Draw has transformed national museums, Trafalgar Square, and even the South Kensington underground tunnel into dynamic creative spaces enjoyed by thousands of people for a day.

Every year, The Big Draw Festival includes hundreds of drawing activities in schools, galleries, museums, libraries, heritage sites, village halls and town squares. In 2015, the festival launch took place in 10 leading cultural institutions across Oxford. There were events by more than **1000 organisers** on **seven continents**, engaging around **400,000 people**. The 2016 theme, The STEAM powered Big Draw Festival 2016, is part of the charity's campaign to give the arts subjects parity with Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, so that STEM becomes STEAM. www.thebigdraw.org.