

AS YOU CHANGE SO DO I

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As You Change, So Do I

A Barbecue of Regrets

An art project for Luton by Tom Hackett

Sat 22 September – Sat 17 November 2018

The Storefront, Bute Street, Luton

Admission free

Barbecue and opening reception Sat 22 September 1-4pm

This autumn a playful, uplifting and thought-provoking exhibition by artist Tom Hackett celebrates the town of Luton through the shared regrets and reflections of its community.

A Barbecue of Regrets is a unique, participatory art project. It invites the people of Luton to share their regrets and then watch them literally go up in smoke in a barbecue at the opening of an exhibition of new work inspired by their conversations with the artist.

Over several weekends in May, Nottingham-based artist, raconteur and self-styled “artist-confessor” Tom Hackett walked the streets of Luton wearing his eye-catching dayglow ‘Conversation Suit’ and pushing a wheelbarrow full of charcoal briquettes. Members of the public were invited to share regretted moments or actions with Tom, and to write them on a post-it note inserted into a hole in the charcoal bricks. At the opening of his new exhibition, the artist will barbecue the regrets, using the post-it note briquettes to cook free burgers for participants and passers-by.

Hackett has used the anonymous regrets as the source material for the exhibition, which features two key new strands of work.

For the walls, Hackett has used the collected words to digitally design and print a series of six padded fabric ‘canvases’. Using a mixture of fonts, undulating text paths and angular blocks of texts, these create a fragmented interplay between one regret and another. As well as their narrative inter-relationships, these works also operate on a level of colour, reflecting the post-it colour range, and as formal compositions.

Occupying the central floor space, a circle of 5 dome-shaped kettle barbecues form a sound sculpture produced in collaboration with Julian Woodcock. Each barbecue contains a sound source. Following Hackett’s walks, Woodcock has recorded the original regrets, re-spoken by a series of voice actors. These are mixed with found sounds and fragments of piano. Collectively these juxtapose to form a sound collage,

evocative, in part, of bizarre group therapy session. The spoken content ranges from the minor and absurd to the deeply personal, poignant and sometimes tragic. All regrets are from Luton, but the age gender and ethnicity of the recorded voices is deliberately disassociated from the identity of the original authors of the regrets.

A Barbecue of Regrets creates a fragmentary snapshot of a shifting moment in time in Luton, evolved through incidental dialogue rather than a documentary process.

Organised by Luton Culture and Departure Lounge, **A Barbecue of Regrets** is the latest project in *As You Change, So Do I*, a three-year programme of public art events funded by Arts Council England's Luton Investment Programme.

Artist Tom Hackett said: "As an artist I'm interested in exploring how regrets and words shape us. My time in Luton was a charged experience. It ranged from uplifting and playful exchanges with passers-by to hearing stories of deep personal loss, saddening consequences and reflections on irreversible actions made. My hope for the conversation stage and subsequent art made, was that in some small way I could explore and connect with Luton as a place and act as a kind of agent for cathartic exchange and moving forward. Both on an artistic and human level it has been of immense and at times humbling value."

Caroline Wallace, As You Change, So Do I Project Co-ordinator at Luton Culture said: Something about the project's insights into/representations of Luton as a community

Matthew Shaul, Director of Departure Lounge, said: "Tom's new project is both uniquely accessible, and theoretically rich, it employs mass participation and reminds us of the quirks and idiosyncrasies of British society that were unearthed by the 'mass observation' projects of the 1930s. Approaching this with a refreshing lack of seriousness, Tom conveys his message with a combination of TV Game Show host and 'emperor of the barbecue'. Why worry about the things you have or haven't done when you could turn them into a delicious snack instead?"

Tom Hackett is an artist, writer and lecturer. He studied Fine Art at Middlesex and Nottingham Trent Universities and has exhibited extensively across the UK. His work has also been included in group exhibitions across Europe and North America.

A Barbecue of Regrets is supported using public funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England. It is part of *As You Change, So Do I* (<https://asyouchange.co.uk/>) which produces up to nine projects each year in which artists are given a platform to make new public works in response to Luton's unique industrial and cultural history. The programme has been curated by Mark Titchner, Matthew Shaul and Andrew Hunt.

Instagram: @asyouchange

www.facebook.com/AsYouChange/

Twitter: @AsYouChange

#AsYouChange #loungeLuton #bbqofregrets

Visitor information

The Storefront, 64 Bute Street, Luton LU1 2EY

Open Thursday – Saturday 1pm– 6pm

Telephone 01582 878100

PRESS ENQUIRIES:

For further information and images please contact Hazel Foxon

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Tom Hackett has exhibited extensively across the UK. His solo exhibitions include: The Collection, Lincoln; PM Gallery, London; firstsite Colchester, BAC London; Aberdeen Art Gallery, Edinburgh College of Art; Chapter, Cardiff; MAC Birmingham; Rugby Art Gallery; UH Galleries, Hatfield; Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, RED Gallery, Hull and 20-21 Visual Arts Centre, Scunthorpe. His work has also been included in group exhibitions across Europe and North America. He studied Fine Art at Middlesex and Nottingham Trent Universities. His projects have received regular support from Arts Council England. He also writes and lectures about art. For more information please visit www.tomhackett.org

As You Change, So Do I is a three-year contemporary public realm arts programme commissioned by Luton Culture. It includes new works for the public realm, including artist residencies, temporary public artworks and outdoor projections to animate Luton's streets and empty buildings. Initially focusing on the Cultural Quarter within Luton, the programme will grow to impact on a wider geography. Luton Culture is working with artist Mark Titchner and curators Matthew Shaul (Departure Lounge) and Andrew Hunt to involve local people and artists in the development of a long-term approach to public realm arts commissioning and audience engagement. *As You Change, So Do I* includes a series of educational activities by a range of artists, curators and writers, and aims to establish ongoing collaborations with international arts institutions, and engage with a wide range of local community groups, schools, local businesses and residents. More information can be found at <https://asyouchange.co.uk/>

Luton Culture is an arts and cultural charity providing exceptional and meaningful engagement with museums, arts centres, libraries and public art for the people of Luton and beyond. Luton Culture aims to deliver exemplary public engagement with arts and culture through its locally relevant and nationally important arts and cultural programmes, whilst actively nurturing creativity and artistic talent. <http://www.lutonculture.com/>

AS YOU CHANGE SO DO I

Departure Lounge, a contemporary art gallery established in Luton in 2010, is collaborating with Luton Culture to provide programming for The Storefront as part of *As You Change, So Do I*. <http://departure-lounge.org.uk/>

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural England through the National Lottery. The Luton Investment Programme aims to enhance the arts and cultural infrastructure of Luton, ensuring the town has a cultural offer with something for everyone. <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>