

Press Announcement



# S for Southend 2025

20 January to 8 March 2025

Opening Saturday 18 January, 1pm to 5pm



Creative Open Day, "Sweeping Performances: The Art of Domestic Chores", with Kelly O'Brien, 2024. Photo: Amber Merry

Focal Point Gallery is delighted to announce, 'S for Southend 2025', our annual exhibition celebrating the community that has grown with and around us throughout our Learning Programme in 2024. From Children's Art Club and Blank Slate to Contemporary Elders, Schools, and Creative Open Days, this exhibition reflects the relationships, creativity, and connections which are at the heart of what we do.

Our Learning Programme spans ages 7 to 99, offering everyone the chance to get involved and be inspired to try something new. We believe in the transformative power of creativity to foster strong, sustainable communities.

In Gallery 1, we present works made by Contemporary Elders, our 60+ group of creatives, arranged in the configuration of a house. From the living room to the kitchen, we have reimagined and replicated the structures of a home to bring its warmth and intimacy to the gallery spaces. These rooms embody the connections we have built and, in joining us in these spaces, our audience becomes part of the work. All works are pieces created in our learning events, workshops and projects throughout the year. These pieces inhabit the space as living presences, holding the autonomy and energy of the artists who created them and reflect the vibrant

exchange of ideas and creativity that makes this house a home.

In the same Gallery we question "What is your safe space?" and ask you to join this interactive activity by recording your answer by using the telephone provided and leaving us a message.

In Gallery 2, we have partnered with South Essex Homes and have worked with three housing schemes around Southend, to bring you 'Through the Lens'. This project gave residents the opportunity to share their perspective on everyday life, by capturing the moments that make it extraordinary. Participants were invited to pick up a camera and shoot what surrounds them, hoping to challenge stereotypes around social housing.

We have also joined forces with SAVS – Southend's Council for Voluntary Services – to spotlight the incredible lives, stories, and faces behind Southend's grassroots charities. Through showcasing portraits of individuals working with these organisations, from the youngest to the oldest, we aim to celebrate the remarkable people and organisations that are part of our city.

We are bringing the outside in, and have built a space for reflection, conversation and togetherness in Gallery 2. We encourage you to sit around our campfire and be a part of it.

To coincide with 'S for Southend 2025', 'Relay' will run on the Big Screen Southend for a third year! Round 1 showcases the practices of Southend-based creatives **Elle Godfree**, **Cerys Hogg**, and **Dorothy Turner** in the form of a one-minute video. Each participating artist will in turn nominate another Southend-based practitioner to feature in the programme, concluding after three rounds.

With thanks and support from Southend-on-Sea City Council, Arts Council England and the Art Fund.

For more information, please take an exhibition booklet, or scan the QR code.

The next Creative Open Day at Focal Point Gallery takes place on Saturday 15 th February 2025! It is free and for all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. It runs from 11am to 3pm – be sure to come along and spark your creativity in a new and exciting way. Come and be part of the Focal Point Gallery family and see your work feature in our next 'S for Southend' exhibition!

### **About Partners**

SAVS is an independent charity known as a Council for Voluntary Services, or CVS. We work behind the scenes to help local charities and community groups achieve their full potential. We do this, for free, for anyone in the Voluntary, Community, Faith or Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector.

South Essex Homes was formed in 2005. As the Arm's Length Management Organisation for Southend-on-Sea City Council, our initial aims were to provide a high-quality housing service and deliver a large programme of major improvements

to tenants' homes. Within the South Essex Homes Resident Charter, South Essex Homes commits to giving all residents a voice and to listening to it. We pledge to put resident involvement at the centre of how we deliver excellent and aspirational housing service that provides value for money.

### **About Focal Point Gallery**

Focal Point Gallery is South Essex's only public contemporary art gallery, open to all. Offering an exciting and ambitious programme of largely free workshops, talks, outdoor film screenings and offsite projects, we also present four major exhibitions a year featuring both international and local artists. We believe in building a community and a safe space to enjoy art and the creative process, where everyone is valued. Our aim is to inspire curiosity by producing and presenting thought-provoking art made today that explores our locality, sense of self and the importance of communities through investigating current concerns that resonate internationally.

FPG is located on the ground floor of The Forum in Elmer Square, 100 metres from Southend Central Station. We are wheelchair accessible and there are additional materials available to enhance your visit, e.g. large print information sheets, family activity sheets and dedicated quiet times. More information can be found on our website. [fpg.org.uk](http://fpg.org.uk)

Opening hours: Wednesday to Saturday 11am to 5pm.

