Right to the Streets, Season Two, Episode Eight: How public arts shift perception in place

**Introduction**

**Cookie Love:** It blends so nicely into the background of where it already is. The trees start to take part of the mural itself. Like people, as we were just piecing the mural together, we're like, wow, that's just taking me out of where I am already. And I think when you're dealing with such a heavy subject, realising the moments, as I say, for healing and contemplation about things that have happened to you, are really quite important. And that's what we really wanted to bring to that mural.

**Eve:** Hello, I'm Eve Holt, Strategic Director for Greater Manchester Moving. Welcome to series two of the Right to the Streets edition of the GM Moving podcast. There are things that we can all do to create safe, joyful and welcoming streets, parks and public spaces where all women and girls feel they belong and are invited to be active.

Together with GM Moving colleagues, I've been working with people and partners in Trafford, Greater Manchester to do just this.

(Three, two, one, action! We live here, our families are here, and we want this to be a safe space for our children to grow up as well.)

**Interview One**

**Eve:** You'll hear from lots of the people and partners involved, including local citizens, community leaders, politicians, commissioners, sports organisations, artists, comms experts, facilitators, performers, and more.

And many others, who've all been playing an active role as part of a whole system approach to women's safety, shifting the dial from fear to freedom.

In this episode, we're looking at the role that public art plays in shifting the perception of a street, park or public space. Art and creativity are key ingredients in the Right to the Streets initiative. We've heard again and again throughout this work, that the way we perceive a place can directly impact on our feelings of safety, belonging and joy.

And when designed well, we feel invited to be active. So why does public art matter? And how can you make it happen with your local community? And can it really shift perceptions in your neighbourhood?

Coming up, I chat with two fantastic local organisations who worked very closely with people in the community to co-design artistic interventions that not only created a safe space for learning skills and experimenting with joyful self-expression, but also brought the streets of North Trafford to life with stunning public art.

Art that has a legacy too, and is now enjoyed by the thousands of people who live, work and play in that area every day. And, as we've heard, has a lasting impact on the people who made it happen. What kind of art? Well, huge murals and accompanying poetry, as co-designed by OT Creative. The community and local artists,

**Lynda:** You know, people were very encouraged to see creativity happening where they live, their area being invested in that way and raising …the profile of it.

**Eve:** Or, fashion-led public displays of expression like Stretford Stride with their colourful purple parade.

**Rosarie:** I feel like the day of the parade, I felt quite overwhelmed at times and emotional to see just the people walking the streets trying to claim the streets trying to say like this is where we live we want it to be safe we want our children to grow here and thrive here and be whatever they want to be because they can if we allow them to be.

**Eve:** But before we get to the how, I want to share why we turned to creativity and public art as an important key ingredient of the Right to the Streets initiative. The physical spaces that we spend time in and move through affect the way that we live and what we think, feel and do. Spaces and places are too often designed without women's experiences in mind.

And by centering women's experiences in their diversity, and resourcing women as placemakers, artists, creatives, we can create safer, more welcoming, and joyful spaces that enable us all to live better. This includes small, low-cost, immediate changes that we can make today, drawing on people's creativity, talent, and imagination.

Our artistic community locally provides a fantastic source and wealth of experience, knowledge and relationships for helping bring ideas into life. Spaces of art and creativity create a way of people exploring difficult issues like violence against women and girls and everyday street harassment with greater ease and joy and with the ability to maybe look at it from a different perspective to go deeper, and to pose questions that would otherwise feel incredibly difficult. So, let's head over to Old Trafford then, shall we, to hear how one of those right to the streets public arts projects went down.

I'm at OT Creative Space. It was an old butcher's that's been renovated into a creative hub by the brilliant Lynda Stirling. Her vision was exciting, but quite simple. She wanted to see a happy and cohesive community in Old Trafford, with lots of opportunities for local residents to get creative. What Lynda has achieved is phenomenal.

Today, OT Creative Space is a thriving arts hub, bringing together the community and socially engaged artists to inspire, support and encourage creative practices through a whole host of projects, including exhibitions, public and visual arts, spoken word and walking tours. You only have to walk minutes from the hub to see some of the striking murals co designed and created by the OT Creative Collective.

I spot a postcard on the wall that says ‘a space for community, a space for meeting, a space for discovery, a space for sharing, a space for art, a space for joy. A space for you.’ That pretty much sums it up really. It really is such a gorgeous, warm and welcoming space that just oozes joy. And here, I'm joined by Lynda herself.

**Lynda:** Hi, I'm Lynda Stirling. I'm an artist and also creative director here at OT Creative

**Eve:** Space. And Cookie Love. Cookie is the artist who worked with the local community and OT Creative to create the huge murals as part of the Right to the Streets initiative.

**Cookie Love:** Hi, I'm Cookie Love, artist, muralist and poet and yeah, general jobs body. Yes.

**Eve:** Awesome person. Yeah, underselling yourself there.

OT Creative responded to a call we put out inviting community organisations to get involved in Right to the Streets for Creative Public Arts brief. I asked Lynda why she responded to the call out with OT Creative in mind.

**Lynda:** Well, I think, I mean, I, I saw it and people forward it to, to me as well, and I was just like, wow, this is, it felt like written for us in a sense of what we want to achieve here at OT Creative Space in terms of connecting people with the spaces that they live, work, go through using art as a tool for that and just, how art can transform physical spaces and then in turn people's own responses, well being, everything, everything with that. So it seemed like a great project and one that we really wanted to be involved in. We had been working on actually connecting people within the community, representing the diverse community of Old Trafford and working with people to create art.

So we'd already done a number of murals and that had been really well received and worked with a number of different people and groups within the community and people wanted more and, we could see the benefits of it. So, and then with this project specifically looking at the rights of women and girls, and we work with a lot of women and girls as well. It felt like a good step to take that we could contribute to that.

**Eve:** So could you first talk us through a little bit, I guess, around what you did?

**Lynda:** So from previous projects, we had some locations that people had said, Oh, we'd really love to have something happen here. And in terms of this project, they were quite key locations that linked in well up on Stetford Road in a car park by Hullard Park, maybe places that would have felt a little bit, maybe unsafe is too strong a word, but, but not necessarily comfortable spaces and just requests from the public, really, that they wanted something creative to happen there. So we had all these little conversations with different people all scattered around, and then it was bringing them together really, and very much wanting the artists to be involved right from the beginning, because all those little conversations with people in workshops and, and all sorts. So with the residents of the houses that we would be painting on, that was all really important. We were very clear that we wanted to gather information, have conversations with different people around what would make them feel safer. What do they enjoy about being outside? But in the end, actually all that, images created, it would then be down to the artists, so to Cookie, for them to create the piece of art that would encapsulate and represent all of that.

**Eve:** So what point did you get involved, Cookie?

**Cookie Love:** Well, Lynda approached me with a prospective brief via email and I was like, absolutely would love to get involved with this project. It's something I feel really strongly about in terms of highlighting serious issues, but in a manner that means that conversations brought about them. And then we started with two different workshops for age groups.

We did, was it eleven, eleven to sixteen group? And then we did a women's group who kind of meet here in the space to create art and then just expand the use of the English language, around different forms of creativity. So it was quite good to have really wide and broad conversations about what the elements of like safety, strength, confidence and strength meant to them in different forms.

And that the same conversation with the eleven to sixteens as well. And then we took it out to the streets with, I can open call for people to come meet me and talk about what they want to see on the wall. And then we painted the murals.

**Eve:** Are there any particular themes, I guess, in those diverse, wide-ranging conversations?

**Cookie Love:** In terms of talking about colour theory, and colours that meant safety and confidence and strength to people, like green and black were really, really common themes, people wanting to see elements of nature, that was a really consistent throughout. And yeah, family in a sense of just wholeness, like people, we had this long conversation about flags.

In the workshops, people talking about what made them feel safe was quite a beautiful conversation, different spaces that made them feel safe and like leveraged everything from like libraries to going out shopping because it made them feel confident or whichever. But yeah, tying in more, obviously like there's quite a lot of green spaces around here, but they wanted more.

Through the poetry workshop, actually I came as a participant to just experience it because as a poet myself, I really enjoyed the fact that the poetry was going to be incorporated into the artwork. But then I really wanted the inspiration from the words that came out of the poetry workshop to help me with piecing together the picture.

But talking about how going into green spaces and parks and spaces like that, like provide us with safety, but then also there's an element of unsafety within those spaces as well and how to combat this. And it's quite difficult because there's something about the spareness of feeling alone in a wide space that's green space, which makes you feel strong and confident.

And then at the same split moment, you can suddenly feel unsafe, but the unsafe is coming from the other people who are making it unsafe rather than the space itself. So that's why educating people in terms of what's right and what's wrong, having that as a constant rhetoric needs to need to occur because it's not the grass or the trees that are unsafe to be around. It's the people that may be lurking amongst them that have ill intentions.

**Eve:** Yeah, that's a really important point because I think so often we haven't focused on actually what's the underlying behaviour and it's gender-based violence. It's the harassment which is why the active bystander intervention has become such a key part of this became so clear that.

Lots of people, one, aren't aware of how their own behaviours, the impact they have and how that all adds up and creates that sense of fear and takes away yeah. Joy in our green spaces and streets, and also how many people feel powerless because they either experience or they witness behaviour that they know isn't right, but they don't know what to do about it.

So yeah, the strength and the confidence to be in a space, but also to then, yeah, intervene and, and see it as somewhere that you're part of a community and you've a role to play in part of that community, which I think the murals really helped to create. So we've got these two and they are absolutely stunning murals on, on these two big walls and they are, I think the size and the scale of them in itself is phenomenal.

So one of them, I guess, for people listening. So one, in particular, it's got a fox. Tell us a little bit about the fox. So the fox features in the poem and it features in the wall.

**Cookie Love:** So the fox, that mural is called Fortitude, representing strength.

When I was here in the poetry workshop, actually. We were writing about our experiences of walking around green spaces or walking around spaces that felt comfortable to us. And that's when I started writing about home spaces that felt comfortable. And then by the end of the poem, it had evolved into me wanting to feel as comfortable as a fox walking out onto a street.

Because within urban landscapes, especially, like, foxes do not care about what other humans are doing. They're just making their own path. They're doing their own thing and they're taking back the streets. I mean, I spoke to the resident of the property that we're painting on the wall and she has wonderful flowers in her garden, is really keen on like flora.

And also, as I say, the theme of nature popped up and I was quite keen to paint some flowers. So I chose echinacea and chamomile as a healing, calming flowers also to represent what the what the wall meant in terms of. Having the strength to continue but also to heal what's happening and sage as well as a matter of protection So yeah, that was the fox mural and then Open, Open was quite an interesting one because I had my friend Ed Hicks, the wonderful, amazing Ed Hicks, my mentor in life in many ways and best friend and absolute honour in my life, honestly.

He's a wonderful man. He creates these wonderful landscapes which just take you away from wherever you are. At the current moment he's been painting quite a lot of like, dark chasms. And I was like, do you remember your fairy tale era? I've got a vision of something that I want to create. So I sent him some pictures of, from the top of like Rivington Pike, looking into Manchester.

I wanted it to experience it from a forest view looking into Manchester and he's drawing all these mock-ups and we're editing them together and then yeah, so open is actually a view from the outside looking into Manchester as a escape. I didn't want to be too literal because I felt through the poem and through what I'd already painted with the fortitude mural that open could just be a moment of contemplation for the viewer and then and for the local residents and it blends so nicely into the background of where it already is.

The trees that take part of the mural itself, like people, as we were just piecing them all together, we're like, wow, that's just taking me out of where I am already. And I think when you're dealing with such a heavy subject, realising the moments, as I say, for healing and contemplation about things that have happened to you, really quite important. And that's what we really wanted to bring to that mural.

**Eve:** Wow. And it really comes across. It's got a real sense of invitation. It really invites you in to imagine this space that is open, that's been created. So when I stood next to it, it's just a real sense of how things could be. How would it feel, if we did have that complete sense of freedom in our streets and public spaces and that, yeah, real invitation to reimagine those spaces.

And I love the fact that it, again, the scale and perspective. So you can see it from quite a distance. Can't you? And you can come closer and then they're married with the poem that goes alongside them as well, which we're going to come back to in a moment.

At this point in our chats, we get a visitor. I told you this place was thriving. Hi, welcome. Gulnaz is a local resident who's just nipped in before the school run, and she's involved in running and participating in creative projects here at OT Creative.

**Gulnaz:** My name is Gulnaz and, I live here in Old Trafford, I think past five years. And I really enjoyed here. We have really, really good, vast community. I worked here as well as a creative artist, in a creative space.

**Eve:** It would be rude not to invite her to sit down for a chat too, and ask her how she and her group are involved with the Right to the Streets mural and poetry work.

**Gulnaz:** We have a creative conversation group, it's on Thursdays, so we are working on, English, like language, the people who's coming, English is not their first language, so we will talk, and create. So we really enjoy it because they are from different ethnicities. They have our hidden talent. Like, yeah, so I really enjoyed and they really enjoyed and we work together like a family and we worked regarding Cookie did one workshop regarding her mural. People feel they are safe on the streets and how peaceful the people around here.

So we work here together and it's very helpful for them and me myself as well, because I feel I improved a lot. Like I get more confident. So we are here. Talk with each other, work with each other.

**Eve:** And it's interesting because one of the key learnings from the work so far has been how the process and the people participating and the conversations and being part of it in itself is part of the change because people in those moments create a sense of family and belonging and create a sense of freedom around our places and ownership of our places. And having spaces like this that bring people together and then creative arts as a way that help quite often with difficult conversations to like have stuff in your hands and stuff to wrestle with. It's just such a powerful way of, of having those conversations.

**Gulnaz:** I think they can talk freely. They can express themselves freely and they can do whatever they want. So when they come here and when we are doing something like, some paintings, like crafting, so they are expressing their selves and it's very good for their mental health as well.

**Lynda:** Well, yeah, I think what you're saying is people feeling connected with one another and able to share their experiences, make things together, contribute, but that connection both with each other. And then I guess with space.

**Gulnaz:** So, and they are feel comfortable here and they are talk with us, share their problems. So I think it works.

**Eve:** Well, just that piece of their calm. The impact on your mental health, having spaces, yeah, the word comfortable, I guess what you've created here is a space in which people feel comfortable and confident and they can self express through their creativity in here and then it's like how do we make sure that then they can take that out and they can do that.

In public spaces as well as freely and that's so powerful. So thank you for being part of, yeah, that journey and how it flows out of these doors and out onto the streets and everywhere. So we've talked about some of the visual arts. I'm going to come to the poetry.

So I don't know, Lynda, if you would tell us a little bit, first of all, about, I guess, the poetry workshops and

**Lynda:** Yeah, so we were quite keen in terms of with the mural that there would be some spoken word poetry, something that goes alongside it. So, we worked with Maya Chowdhury from Young Identity. She came and did poetry workshop with our young people again. So the eleven to sixteen year olds, and then also another one which Cookie came along to as well and some of the local residents came along to too.

But it was giving everybody a voice, something to contribute to it that Maya then could in turn take and, create that poem. And what's lovely as well as that, if you're at the mural, you can scan the code, you can actually listen to it while. looking at the mural, experiencing it, hearing all the sounds around you as well as those words, too, which I think make for a powerful impact.

**Eve:** Yeah, really powerful. And the combination of the two and the way they speak to each other, you can tell that they've, yeah, have not happened in isolation.

**Poem:** Walking I pass the parks, pass the churches, pass the schools. The wind whistles as wheelie bins come alive in the night time, rolling across the road, on their way to say hi to their friends on the other side.

Light illuminates the street, casting shadows. I know that my hand is held by light. She protects me as I walk in the dark, leaving me no longer needing to look over my shoulder anymore, knowing I'm safer. Knowing we're safer. Walking down Ayers Road, I pass Dean's, pass Creators Space, pass my eyebrow lady, pass the Polsky Sklep.

Day turns to night, darkness and moonlight, as the foxes come out to play. Light illuminates the streets, casting shadows. The hollers of harassment have lessened, leaving my heart less heavy, throat no longer filling up with emotion as words are spat at me. Hopefully the hollers are to be eradicated to nothing. We're reclaiming our rights, taking back our ability to roam and walk freely.

**Eve:** So anybody that you know, or any particular stories of the impact that's had for people locally?

**Lynda:** There's a fun one for Fortitude. The fox was great when Cookie was painting the mural. There was a local resident and he was like, great, I don't need to tell people where I live now. I'll just say I live by the fox. It gave them that put on the map and recognition. It's not, oh, it's not just like a forgotten bit, people were very encouraged to see creativity happening where they live, their area being invested in that way. And raising the profile of it.

And as well, yesterday we did a walk around some of the murals. So, Fortitude and Open were on that and being with people who were from Old Trafford. But hadn't seen them yet. And for them to see it and experience it the first time, they were blown away really. And by, yeah, I mean the scale, the beauty, but also how it can change an area particularly.

I mean, I think open is a really strong example of that where it was just a big brick wall, nothing really. And you wouldn't necessarily have any reason to go there, but suddenly it's done. Wow. I want to bring people I know here. I want to walk past this, on my daily walk or run or anything, actually suddenly it's created a space where I want to come and see and be part of it and be transported.

I mean, people were very much, oh, you just want to dive into it. Yeah. escape almost, but that hope, that looking forward.

**Eve:** Everybody benefits of that, don't they? So like, okay, we start off with a sense of women and girls not feeling safe on our streets. Everybody then benefits when a place feels like you're on the map.

It's invested, it's cared for. And it's, yeah, there's things that you want to go and see. You want to be there. Amazing.

**Lynda:** I love going past the Fox, I give it a little wave. Running past it in the dark. Because it's lit by a street lamp as well.

**Lynda:** Like we couldn't find it. But it's lit and I love it. It's like, it's something for me. And I know other people do that as well. They're like, oh, I want to make sure I go past.

**Gulnaz:** One of my daughter's friends, she told to my daughter, you live in Old Trafford. There is lots of painting on walls. So my daughter said, yeah, yeah, I live here in Old Trafford, which have a lots of paintings on walls. So it's a great. great feeling. Yeah.

**Eve:** Any differences, I guess, across the age, life course or, did you have different responses or is it generally a quite a common similarity in how people respond to the work?

**Lynda:** Yeah. I mean, I would say generally probably like ninety eight percent of people are really positive about it and view it as art.

I mean, there is always that question with murals. Is it art? Is it graffiti? Generally, if you've got permission, it's art. I mean, I view graffiti as art in here. It's probably a different conversation.

But no, yeah, all, all ages. It's really just loving to see something, something beautiful and something that sparks conversation as well.

And actually if you're an older person just walking on your own and there's somebody else there looking, like it connects you together, no matter what your age, background, everything. Actually you can both experience the art together and it's connecting.

**Eve:** It's again, those people in these places that we go to that create a sense of safety and belonging, and you can pitch that be, you know, going past OT creative space again, somewhere that you feel safe, that you know that you can walk on the street and there'll be people there and there's a sense of a doors open if you need it and how important then we think about kind of what kind of businesses and spaces and places we have on our streets.

**Lynda:** And familiarity as well. I think with spaces, which I think then creating the murals that becomes then a familiar space that becomes a location that actually, okay, yeah, I feel safe there. That's somewhere that can be included on where I go.

**Eve:** Really powerful. So, yeah, I guess anything else for you in terms of the, so what? So anything for you individually about the impacts of being in part of this work and also your thoughts on what next, what would you love to see happen.

**Cookie Love:** Personally, I think it needs to be an open, continuous conversation. I don't want it to just be a campaign. I don't want this to become another, please mind the gap sticker. It needs to be something that is incorporated into education from young to begin with in terms of the way that people treat each other. I know it's a gender based issue, but it impacts many genders, impacts many people in different walks of life.

And I think, yeah, starting the education of a young will make a massive wave and change into what we see because we're mainly suffering from the impacts of a serious lack of education about these topics. So yeah, I'm hoping that they're being so prominent in communities like this that we're willing to take up massive wall spaces to keep this conversation going. We'll hopefully continue on.

**Lynda:** It’s the start, the conversation that actually these need to happen and keep happening. It's not just, oh, we've done that. Tick the box. Actually, no, this is just the start of something and, on going and pushing that forward and keeping, not being afraid to discuss, difficult topics, difficult subjects, actually having that as that, that starting that opening tool to be able to keep doing that and education with it. And obviously I would love to see lots more murals as well, more art all around. That would be great.

**Gulnaz:** Perfect. It's a great thing and it's keep going. And I would suggest that like Cookie did a workshop here. So I'm hoping in the future, so we can do some workshops regarding, before painting, so we can educate others as well. Not the kids. Females, Males, every sexuality, like, Cookie said. So we have to educate them. So, yeah, that's a good idea.

**Eve:** Fabulous. And I love, yeah, I just love the way that you've woven it into everything. It's woven into the urban landscape. It's woven into your conversations here. And I guess that's the difference. between that creative weaving into everything and, with all the healing that that process then brings as opposed to a sticker campaign out there that tells people to do stuff, but doesn't take a sense of ownership or participation.

**Gulnaz:** Thank you for your time as well.

**Lynda:** Yeah, thanks.

**Eve:** Now you can enjoy some biscuits.

Lynda Cookie and their brilliant OT creative community have created something really special with the mural's Open and Fortitude, the poem and the whole creative hub. This really is a space you don't want to leave. I just think how different the world would feel if every neighbourhood had spaces like these, and people facilitating these conversations and creativity within a place. It really would be wonderful.

The poem you heard there is by Maya Chowdhury and Young Identity.

Now, public art doesn't need to be static, on a wall or on a plinth. It can be performance, like spoken word as we just heard with the OT Creative. or temporary installations like shows, music or fashion and parades. And this is the approach that Stretford Stride took when they answered our call for art projects as part of Right to the Streets.

Stretford Stride is a fabulous collaborative community project that transforms Stretford's urban environment through joyous, active and public celebrations of female identity. Working with local residents, young and old, they repair, reuse and recycle fabrics, materials and garments to create new pieces of fashion, but fashion that explores issues faced by women and girls.

Our producer Vic caught up with the project in their studio at Stretford Public Hall to hear more about how they brought the streets of North Trafford alive for the Right To The Streets.

**Interview Two**

**Rosarie:** My name is Rosarie Walsh, I'm from Stretford and I'm a Creative Arts Practitioner.

**Becky:** I'm Becky DeLacy, I'm also from Stretford, I'm the Creative Director for Stretford Stride.

**Vic:** And so tell us how you've been involved in Right To The Streets, what have you been up to?

**Rosarie:** So Becky and I know each other through an organisation called SAC32, which is an arts collective here at Stratford Public Hall. But Becky and I also run our own organisation. So I run Emerald Lens, which is the CIC. And Becky has …

**Becky:** Stratford Street Art Club.

**Rosarie:** And during lockdown, Becky did loads of projects about putting artwork in the windows to get people out looking at different art. And so that's kind of how we know each other. And then when there came up the opportunity to write a little bit. We got connected and we were like, oh, we'll write something.

We'll create a project. And then Becky came up with a lot of the ideas for creating a purple parade and using garments as ways of being active and creative activism in the community.

**Becky:** So Rosarie and I put together a proposal, sent that off to GM Moving and we were successful in our application, received some funding, which has made this all possible.

And also it's made it possible for the whole vision to come. Into reality, basically, um, the purple parade was the result of a series of workshops. So I suppose we work backwards from our end goal, which was the parade, which was much more about being seen on the street, having these messages that we've built and co designed with our community.

So we worked back from that to devise what the workshops needed to be, but it was definitely about using. fashion, garments, skills such as sewing, mending, dyeing, and having those conversations and using those things to allow people to create these outfits that expressed their thoughts and feelings on things like safety, belonging, and the active lifestyles and the sometimes the barriers to what that can be.

So yeah, it's quite a complex project. There's lots of different elements, but the end goal was a purple parade. So we had that to work from. And we also put on a women and girls disco didn't we, as part of the event.

**Rosarie:** Yeah, so we did the parade from the Stretford Public Hall. People came, they could wear some of our t-shirts.

We asked them to wear purple. So purple and yellow was the scheme that we kind of went with. And the branding was very clear all the way across, which was lovely, and that was done by Liz. And it was actually really slick and really amazing, and it engaged quite a lot of people. So we met here, had the parade, we walked down Stretford, through the mall, so we were really seen by people, through the shops, and then we walked around through some of the neighbourhoods and into Stretford, Victoria Park.

And then at Victoria Park we had a picnic, so there was loads of families and adults that walked with us. We had the picnic there, and then we walked back to the public hall. But then we put on a women and girls disco for ages eleven plus, because we feel like there's never enough spaces for women and girls to be and to be able to just dance and be free.

And it was amazing just to see, like, the camaraderie of like older women and girls, like a lot of them going into year seven, which is a big transition and them just all coming together, really together at the end. And the last song we were all dancing with a tunnel and everyone. channel down the tunnel.

It was like someone getting married, but it just felt really, really empowering. And it was very moving because we live here, our families are here, and we want this to be a safe space for our children to grow up as well.

**Becky:** Yeah, we made the decision not to share any imagery or video from the, the women and girls disco because we feel that girls, teenage girls have so much pressure on them with social media and we wanted a private safe space for them to enjoy. So I think that was really special and it kept it really special to the people that were there and it was like a really memorable moment, wasn't it that we all had.

**Vic:** So just describe, either one of you, some of the outfits there, some of the purple parade outfits, and what were the slogans on the front?

**Becky:** So, there was two creative tools that we used, so one of them was using slogan tees, so, wearing a message, it's something that's been used in fashion, you know, famously Katherine Hamnett, she started it off obviously in the eighties. That was one of the creative tools, so that we'd use slogans, but also, we'd use elements such as bows and ruffles, so they were easily adornable onto garments. So it's more of a style in exercising using embellishment onto garments. So we had a set of slogan t shirts that we had ten in total. They developed and came out of the workshops. One of our favourite one is, where is the toilet?

Because we had all these conversations about as a woman or a mother with children, it was very important to us that we don't have the right facilities as women moving and going outdoors and actually that could be a massive barrier.

**Rosarie:** We had look after her or look at her. So we turned the after and we highlighted the eighties.

So look at her. But actually want to be people looking after each other instead, which is really important to us because it's not your clothes. It's like, it's not about what you're wearing. You should be able to wear what you want to wear. That we should just look at people as being people. I just have a freedom for that.

**Becky:** Yeah, and there's dark spaces need friendly faces, so that relates to the active bystander where as women, just being noticed and seen and someone smiling at you can actually reassure and make you feel safe on the streets. There was make space for me. A lot of the messages had double meaning, lots of meanings.

The make space for me was about women owning the space, about public realm design, about being based around women. And also that women can feel overpowered on the streets. It's can be quite aggressive when you're driving a car or walking around. So there were quite complex and lots of different meanings behind the slogans.

So yeah, we've got a series of ten. We're hoping to sell them. So we're going to do it kind of as a donation. So that we can put the funds back into another workshop or rent some more space out. The more embellished pieces, they were to kind of create impact and drama. So that if people weren't comfortable wearing certain slogans, we had tops that people could wear to make an impact.

And that to me is another form of street art, taking it out, being seen on the streets. And it was really quite nice because we did a workshop with mainly women and children, which is very much about styling. We did really rapid styling exercises where people to throw bows…

**Rosarie:** It was amazing.

**Becky:** So good. It was so much fun. And then the second workshop was with a group of Older women who were part of a bigger embroidery group who lacked space within Stretford to come together. So they just wanted a project to work on and actually they were like an older set of women. It was a completely different dynamic.

They were like, why can't we do more of this? We've only just heard about this. So it tapped into quite a different age range of the workshops we did.

**Vic:** You mentioned there that you've got ten t shirts ready to go, and like you'd like to sell them. Can you explain if there's been any other changes within your organisation as a result of the Right to Streets project?

**Rosarie:** Well, Becky and I had never worked together before and we feel like that's worked really quite well And that we'd like to do something else again together So possibly I feel like we'd like to do something possibly for International Women's Day in March Something that's really important to me, always has been, every year.

And last year we did a women's only disco here, and it sold out. It was one hundred and eighty tickets, which was amazing. But, there wasn't anything else around that, so we were thinking maybe possibly we could do something again linked to Stretford Stride and the Purple Parade. Using what we've already learned from the different workshops about what works and what timings work and when it's best to get people and maybe create something then.

And maybe the money from selling the t-shirts would go towards renting a space for that or getting more stuff to create things.

**Becky:** We're trying to create a more circular model so we had donated materials, we dyed our own stuff, we bought things second hand. So we're trying to create a system where we can work together but put things back.

And we use and recycle and we would sell potentially the t-shirts as a donation. But that money would then provide a space for people to come together and do more art activities. But the Stretford Stride was designed in a way that it could be rolled out in other areas. So we might do it again.

But you could have a Stockport Stride or a Salford Stride. And it could be around topics that are affecting women and girls in those communities. So yeah, it's been created and devised with the longevity, if possible in mind. But it's the blueprint for something and it might not be us doing it.

But we've got all the, the tools and resources to share if someone wants to pick it up and take, take it to roll somewhere else.

**Vic:** Amazing. That sounds so exciting. But the places have got to begin with an S. Yeah, because otherwise it wouldn't work.

**Becky:** It's better if it is an S. But I mean that would limit us.

**Vic:** You’ve got Southampton, Sheffield, I mean, look…

**Becky:** Stoke.

**Vic:** I think globally. San Francisco, look, I'm thinking beyond.

So go on then, what's your favourite memory? What was the moment where you were like, bloody hell, this is amazing.

**Rosarie:** I mean, a couple of the workshops were amazing, but I feel like the day of the parade, I felt quite overwhelmed at times and emotional to see.

Just the people walking the streets, trying to claim the streets, trying to say, like, this is where we live, we want it to be safe, we want our children to grow here and thrive here and be whatever they want to be, because they can if we allow them to be. And it was just beautiful, every part of that, as well as the disco, I was saying we went down the train, when all the girls went down the train, just to see, like, we're trying to empower these young people, these young women who are now going into, like, secondary school. Which is quite daunting to just take this happy memory and, be part of a community. So I think there was lots.

**Becky:** It was an emotional roller coaster through the months that we did it. But that day, we had men, boys, girls, women of all ages, a lady with the cast on her foot, walking around.

**Rosarie:** Buggies.

**Becky:** And seeing it on your own doorstep. And actually, you know, you never quite know who's going to turn up because not everyone signs up to your event brides. And then When you've got a street full of people, and it's your vision, and we've made it happen, I'm gonna start crapping up. You know, it's just, it's magical. It's really good, and it makes you think, you know what, all that was totally worth it, and let's do it again.

**Vic:** So Right to the Streets, one year project, that window of time for you to get funding was even tinier. What would you like to see happen next? How would you like to see the ethos and the values and the loveliness of Right to the Streets continue in Stretford? Because you're both local girls.

**Rosarie:** I don't know, it's hard. I always find this with funding. It’s like you kind of sweep in a little bit and then it goes. I think there's enough people on the ground to keep things going. But that's, again, sometimes what irritates me is that a lot of it is volunteer led, and that's really hard for people. You can't always rely on those people having the time because, their time has to be valued.

So I think the government needs to put more money into this. I think it's needed. I mean, we have some amazing spaces around here that need to be utilised.

**Becky:** I think a lot of the work that groups do, though, this has been great. But it's the visibility and showing people what we're capable of as a community.

Even between our group, we've got professionals on board that are doing this because they want to improve the area. But it's getting the message out and sharing with people what we've done. We took our t shirts out and just did a little fun photo shoot. We got more traction with people asking us what was going on because we did something weird.

But I think there needs to be more visibility that this is what people are capable of within their community, more funding to allow us to drive it, because actually it's our connections because we live in this area that we pull the people who care around us and realistically, only the people on the ground can do that successfully.

We'd like to get more groups involved, a wider reach, people outside of our own circles involved, but you need to pay people. and value that creativity and time and effort because it is about improving where you live and that shouldn't always be up to the people on the street doing it. But we also need to show people what happens when you give us funding, what amazing things we can do.

And for me, it's about measuring the impact of what we've done, some help. measuring that would be great, because we've had feedback and conversations and it's made memories and, connected people, united people, and we've come up with these statements, but actually, I think there's quite a lot of impact that we've made, but for us to maybe get funding or a bigger pot of funding, it's shown what that impact has made in those terms to the people who are giving you the money, not the creative people who can see the instant value in it.

**Eve:** And when those t-shirts go on sale, please let me know, I'll be first in line.

What a great example of how a small little pot of funding can enable community arts groups to test ideas and create a blueprint for further initiatives and impact in their local neighbourhood and beyond. Just brilliant.

OT Creative and Stretford Stride are just two of the arts organisations that got involved in Right to the Streets. Over seven different local arts organisations came together. to collectively co-design and deliver over sixty-four different workshops and events over the last year engaging with over seven hundred and fifty people ranging from ages two to ninety three years old in creative arts approaches to right to the streets.

Through this work, the arts organisations both strengthened and grew their relationships in the community and with each other. We also brought in other organisations like Manchester School of Architecture, whose students got stuck in and got involved in thinking about some of the artistic ways that they too could help make changes on local streets.

So, from outdoor community workshops and alleyways, from photography, to poetry, to arts trails, to parades, to workshops and streets and in OT creative, to giant murals. Over the last year, we really have seen the local area come alive with arts and creativity and the energy it creates is phenomenal. I'd really encourage you to go and have a look for yourself.

Do the OT trail and see those beautiful murals dotted around the place. I'll have a think about what you could do in your local area. Lots of this is low cost. There's always going to be people in any community who have those creative talent and skills and gifts that can help bring these ideas to life.

**Outro**

So that's it for this episode. A huge thanks for listening as ever.

We'd love to hear from you. So, how have you used arts and creative interventions or seen others use the arts in that way to shift the way that people perceive and experience our public spaces? Can you share any examples of how small pots of funding, when used creatively, have enabled long-lasting ripple effects, building trust in communities, helping people to engage, listening to what matters to people?

And bringing that to life on our streets in the way that's co created and exciting. We'd love to hear from you about the things you've done or the things you've been inspired by others and things that you'd like to see happen in your local community.

Whatever it is, let us know and we'll share your thoughts on future episodes of this podcast.

We've got a few ways to get in touch. You can tell us on LinkedIn and Twitter. simply search GM Moving or you can drop us an email. Just head to our website at gmmoving.co.uk and hit the contact button.

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