

Be part of the art as Lowry painting comes to life

An iconic Lowry painting will come to life in Manchester and Salford on Saturday 12 November, thanks to members of the public and some stunning digital technology brought together to celebrate the opening of the University of Salford's new MediaCityUK building.

Manchester artists Alastair Eilbeck and James Bailey have created *Lowry to Life*, a unique art installation combining LS Lowry's 1954 painting *Piccadilly Gardens* with cutting-edge technology and digital projection. The installation is part of the University's *Believe* free multimedia event opening the doors of its MediaCityUK facility to the local community.

Visitors to Piccadilly Gardens in Manchester city centre and Salford's MediaCityUK can literally become part of the art as cameras and motion capture technology transfer their movements to specially-illustrated characters taken from Lowry paintings which will appear in a giant projection of the original Lowry work at MediaCityUK.

With deep roots in Salford and Manchester and his position as one of Britain's pre-eminent painters of life in the industrial North of England, Lowry was an obvious choice for former University of Salford student Alastair, who now works for marketing and technology company Amaze, on which to base the installation. "I'm very interested in art in public spaces," he said, "and much of Lowry's art depicted people in public scenes, so there was a common link from the start.

"During my research into Lowry and his work it became clear that he was very interested in the characters in his paintings, and in fact many of the figures in group scenes were identifiable as real people he knew.

“It made me think that, if we could somehow use members of the public to animate Lowry figures in a painting, it would be an appropriate way to celebrate his work and bring it to a new audience.”

Having received the blessing of the Lowry estate, and working with creative software developer Ben Blundell, Alastair developed *Lowry to Life*, an extremely ambitious art installation involving motion capture, skeleton mapping, projection and networking across sites in Manchester and Salford. He chose *Piccadilly Gardens*, one of Manchester Art Gallery’s collection of Lowry works, as the basis for the piece as it depicted a street scene which for the most part still exists in Manchester city centre today.

Motion sensor cameras set up in front of canvases in Piccadilly Gardens and at MediaCityUK will film members of the public moving and, in real time, will reproduce their movements in a digital Lowry figure. In Piccadilly Gardens, the Gardens themselves will be the backdrop to the moving figures while over at MediaCityUK, characters from Piccadilly Gardens and MediaCityUK will be combined and integrated into a digital projection of Lowry’s *Piccadilly Gardens* painting on a screen at the University’s new facility.

The end result will be a reimagining of Lowry’s artwork with moving characters walking through the painted version of Piccadilly Gardens. And each of the animated figures will be based on actual people from some of Lowry’s most famous paintings, including *The Lying Man*, *The Cripples* and *A Day Out at the Prom*, all produced by Lowry around the similar period to *Piccadilly Gardens*. Wirral illustrator Maria Pearson has painted each of the characters from four different views so they can be shown from differing angles on screen when reacting to the movements of visitors.

“The effect of the moving figures in the painting will be similar to split tin puppets,” said Alastair, “which I think will capture the spirit of Lowry and I hope it’s an interpretation of his work of which he would have approved.”

Alexandra King, Piccadilly Partnership Director at CityCo, Manchester’s city centre management company which is supporting the event, said: “It’s great to be involved with this innovative project which brings a much-loved painting of a familiar public space to life. We hope visitors will take part and have the image of themselves in the modern day

gardens beamed over to the Salford screen. Working with the University of Salford and Metrolink, we'll be able to demonstrate just how close Piccadilly is to MediaCityUK."

Lowry to Life is just one of many exciting experiences on offer at the University of Salford's *Believe* event at its MediaCityUK site. From being filmed with creatures from BBC's *Dinosaur Planet* to playing video games on huge iPad-like touchscreen tables, there will be a wide range of digital showcases and entertainment for visitors to enjoy.

Believe is free of charge for visitors and is also supported by BBC Radio Manchester. And thanks to Metrolink, Transport for Greater Manchester and Salford City Council, there will be free tram travel from Piccadilly Gardens and Eccles to the event, plus a free Salford QuaysLink bus service from Salford Crescent railway station and Salford Shopping City.

Believe is open from 10.30am-5.30pm on Saturday 12 November at the University of Salford, MediaCityUK, Salford, M50 2HE. Visit www.salford.ac.uk/believe for more information.

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Notes to editors:

- View our promotional *Believe* video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3j1B7sJAQg>
- To keep up with the latest developments from the University of Salford at MediaCityUK:
 - follow us on Twitter <http://twitter.com/#!/UOSMediaCity>
 - like us on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/SalfordUniversityatMediaCityUK>
 - or visit the University of Salford at MediaCityUK website at <http://www.salford.ac.uk/mediacityuk>
- To get all the latest news from Salford subscribe to our **RSS feed**: <http://www.salford.ac.uk/home-page/news/rss-feeds>
- Our latest events listings are at: <http://www.salford.ac.uk/home-page/events>
- *Believe* supporters Piccadilly Partnership and CityCo work in partnership to manage and market city centre Manchester. They are independent, not-for-profit, companies funded by both public and private sector.
- The BBC station for Greater Manchester, BBC Radio Manchester broadcasts from its new home at MediaCityUK on 95.1FM.
- Salford City Council, Metrolink and Transport for Greater Manchester are kindly supporting free tram and bus travel to the event.
- For further information about Amaze, please visit www.amaze.com

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