

ART^{UK}

Connecting
everyone to art

Impact report 2024

Our success in 2024

5.4 million people enjoyed Art UK last year

Art UK connects everyone to art. Thanks to our digital platform, the UK's extraordinary collection of art in public ownership was enjoyed by 5.4 million users worldwide last year, with audiences ranging from teachers to tourists, historians to pupils, and curators to art enthusiasts. Nearly 3,500 institutions across the Four Nations come together on this shared platform. It is an unparalleled collaboration that supports lifelong learning and research, encourages cultural tourism and inspires creativity.

It gives me great pride to write that 2024 was a transformative year for Art UK. Thanks to the Museum Data Service – our joint initiative with Collections Trust and the University of Leicester – the number of artworks on our site increased sharply in 2024. While in 2023 we added 7,000 new artworks, in 2024 we added 75,000 – with 69,000 of these coming through the MDS in December alone. By the end of February 2025 we will have over 500,000 works on the site, up 60% on a year ago.

Crucially, this is just the beginning. The MDS (see page 7) will eventually bring together over 100 million object records (naturally not just art) from museums big and small, building the most accurate understanding yet of the UK's cultural heritage, opening it up for countless research projects and onward use by organisations such as Art UK. Its impact on Art UK cannot be overstated; it is transforming how we ingest, manage and present artwork records on our platform and will revolutionise access to the UK's national collection of art.

Of course, Art UK is involved in other significant projects. One that I must highlight here is The Superpower of Looking, our flagship learning programme which has now reached 8% of UK primary schools and was a prime feature of our Visual Literacy Week in which we highlighted the importance of this life skill to our broad audience through a series of articles, webinars and events.

From our digitisation project to record and showcase outdoor murals across the UK, to our online shop that provides vital support to museums and galleries, Art UK makes a significant difference to our cultural sector partners – as well as, of course, to the public.

Thanks to an important research project commissioned and published in December by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), we can now put an economic value on our work. For those who use Art UK just in the UK (only 40% of our audience) – whether professionally, for learning or enjoyment – the calculated annual economic value of our work is £71.4 million. I hope you'll agree that when compared to our annual core running cost of £1.5 million, this is a crucial

illustration of the great public value we create.

Our achievements and impact over the past 12 months are outlined in the pages ahead. It remains for me to extend my huge thanks to our committed partners, generous funders, and brilliant trustees and staff for their role in Art UK's success during 2024.

Andrew Ellis
Chief Executive Officer

Cover: *You Are Loved* (detail), 2023, by Mister Samo. Eastney Community Centre, Portsmouth © the artist. Image credit: Mike Parry/Art UK

The Looping Boat, 2024, by Alex Chinneck. Sheffield and Tinsley Canal, near Lock House Road, Sheffield © the artist. Image credit: Jenny Owen/Art UK



Our audiences

The total number of users visiting Art UK was **5.4 million** in 2024, showing growth of **2%** year on year. There were **6.8 million** sessions and **16.4 million** page views. Our weekly newsletter list grew to **30,685** subscribers.

Our top five countries by percentage of total users:

- UK **40%**
- USA **27%**
- Australia **3%**
- Canada **3%**
- Germany **2%**

On social media:

- our total followers reached **188,429** across all platforms, an increase of **9.5%**
- our posts had **4 million** impressions with a reach of **2.6 million** for page

and profile, and **1.4 million** for posts

- we had **39,051** views on YouTube videos

In 2024 we began a groundbreaking audience understanding project, which will provide a new framework for understanding digital only audiences. We look forward to soon making this segmentation available for use by our Partner Collections in 2025.

‘Thank you for the great work you’re doing to document and promote public art’

Michael Corr, artist



Yoxman, 2021, by Laurence Edwards. A12, Yoxford, Saxmunden, Suffolk © the artist.
Image credit: Tracy Jenkins/Art UK

Our learning programme

We believe that our trusted online platform is a powerful tool for democratising access to art and related learning opportunities. Our growing collection of curriculum-linked classroom resources support teaching across both primary and secondary education.

Our initiatives in 2024 included the continued roll-out of The Superpower of Looking visual literacy programme, and a partnership with visual arts charity Autograph that included a learning resource centred on its collection of photographs from Britain's diverse communities.

- The number of active users visiting our learning pages grew by **33%** year on year to **141,810**
- Traffic to our learn and art terms pages was **281,118** users – an increase of **25%**
- There were **66,462** page views for The Superpower of Looking, showing growth of **112%**
- Users of The Superpower of Looking resources grew by **150%** to reach **26,822**
- The Superpower of Looking has been rolled out to **8%** of UK primary schools
- Our free-to-use schools learning resources, which can be filtered by home nation curriculum, grew to **270** curriculum-based activities, a **23%** increase
- There are **2,244** subscribers receiving our schools newsletter, a **158%** increase on 2023



Interior, 1938, by William George Gillies
© Royal Scottish Academy/Bridgeman Images.
Image credit: Royal Scottish Academy of Art & Architecture

'It really has opened up how we teach art within our school'

Mandy Barrett, Superpower Teacher Champion

IN FOCUS: Visual Literacy Week 2024

In October we held a national conversation about the transformative skill of visual literacy. We invited arts organisations, education sector leaders, museums, collections and teachers to discover why we are aiming for visual literacy to be recognised as the fourth pillar of education, driven by our award-winning programme The Superpower of Looking.

Through stories, webinars, social media content and a symposium at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, we explored why visual literacy is a critical skill we all should possess – and why it must be taught in all primary schools.

Over 600 schools took part in a virtual school trip, The Superpower of Looking's Art Adventure, with artist Sarah Graham. In Stoke-on-Trent, home to the Art UK office, we brought people together for a live tagging event. And throughout the week artists, visual literacy experts and advocates including Bob and Roberta Smith, The Singh Twins, Amy Herman, Alison Cole, Michele Gregson and Susan M. Coles shared their thoughts.

During the week there was a 41% increase in downloads of learning resources compared to the previous week and 4,077 views of pages linked to visual literacy.



Attendees at the Visual Literacy Symposium with artist Bob and Roberta Smith.
Image credit: David Lindsay

'Great ideas to take back to the classroom. A great topic as it fits in with curriculum development'

Gem Billson, Symposium attendee

Our innovations

In February we announced a new three-year murals digitisation and engagement programme, which aims to record and photograph **5,000** murals across the UK. The project has got off to a flying start, with over **3,000** murals photographed and **2,000** records added to the site. We will use both digital and physical engagement to raise awareness of murals and street art, and their place in our communities.

We also began a 12-month scoping project to explore adding more ceramics to our platform and telling the story of ceramics in UK collections. We are assessing how Art UK can use the Museum Data Service (see page 7) to bring ceramic objects from UK collections onto our website.

In a landmark partnership with Sotheby's, we brought together artworks from **12** major regional museums to stage a month-long

exhibition celebrating the UK's central role in the creative lives of leading international artists. The free exhibition 'London: An Artistic Crossroads' featured works by a range of artists including Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, Dame Lucie Rie, Magdalene Odundo, André Derain and Piet Mondrian.



Barges on the Thames, 1906, by André Derain.
Image credit: Leeds Museums and Galleries

'We have long admired the work that Art UK do to shine a light on our national art collection worldwide'

Cécile Bernard, Managing Director Europe, Sotheby's



Certain Times 74, 2022, by Lubna Chowdhary © the artist.
Image credit: Rochdale Arts & Heritage Services

'Art UK has long been a pioneer in sharing British collections online. I suspect that in a few years we will look back and wonder how on earth we managed without MDS'

Dame Mary Beard, University of Cambridge

IN FOCUS: Museum Data Service

Art UK has jointly led a transformative moment for the UK's cultural sector, as one of the founding partners of the Museum Data Service. Along with Collections Trust and University of Leicester, it has created a single platform that will bring together over 100 million museum records to build the most accurate understanding yet of what is held in the UK's museums. The initiative will provide an invaluable resource for researchers, educators, curators and content developers, revolutionising access to the UK's cultural heritage.

The project, which has been made possible by Bloomberg Philanthropies and the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), launched in September. Arts Minister Sir Chris Bryant MP said: 'Museums are changing. They have always showcased the stories of how we came to be who we are today. But the Museum Data Service is another leap forward in museums' digital capabilities, expanding opportunities for research and collaboration, and preserving the rich history that our museums hold.'

Since the launch over 4 million object records from 49 collection datasets have already been made available to search, including data from 94 accredited museums. In December alone, 69,000 of these were added to Art UK, representing a transformation in how we ingest artwork records.

Telling the stories behind art

Storytelling is an important part of Art UK's mission to share the UK national art collection worldwide and we are committed to providing trustworthy and accessible content.

Over the past 12 months we have continued our funded programme of commissioning story content, with dedicated staff working across our artwork database, both geographically and thematically.

- We published **313** stories last year, covering a range of themes and topics, with our writers representing a wide cross-section of society
- The number of stories on Art UK grew to **2,398** during 2024, a growth of **15%** on the previous year
- **1.1 million** people read one of our stories
- There were **1.3 million** sessions, and **1.7 million** page views

- We launched a translation feature on our stories page and over **70** stories are now available in Welsh
- Our most viewed story published in 2024 was 'Bruegel or Brueghel? The painting dynasty explained'

Sleeping Giant with Telescope, 2024, by Phlegm. Headford/Milton Street, Sheffield © the artist.
Image credit: Jenny Owen/Art UK



IN FOCUS: Content strands in 2024

In 2024 we published over 300 stories on a wide range of themes thanks to generous grants from Creative Scotland, the PF Trust, the Bridget Riley Art Foundation, the Welsh government, Jerwood Foundation, and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. These were largely focused on Scottish and Welsh art and artists, pre-nineteenth century European art, twentieth- and twenty-first-century British art, and drawings as a medium.

We've also continued to publish stories supporting the work of our partner collections. We've covered hundreds of artists – from the Bruegels to Claudette Johnson, John Gibson to Mabel Pakenham-Walsh, and John Lavery to Claudia Williams. Plus we've explored why artists draw in red chalk or on blue paper – and even how drawing affects brain chemistry!

Our engagement tools

Art UK is committed to providing innovative ways for digital audiences to engage with the UK's national collection of art. Our Tagger and Curations tools provide the public with enjoyable ways to discover and interact with the diverse artworks on our site.

Tagger, our easy-to-use crowdsourcing tool that allows anyone to add tags to artworks, saw a **178%** increase in active users to **138,222**

- There was a **163%** increase in Tagger sessions, with **146,376**
- This led to **149,162** tags being added to **20,000** artworks

This brought the total number of tags to **374,954** and tagged artworks to **49,376**

Our Curations tool allows anyone to create a digital exhibition, and last year **437** new Curations were created

- There were **124,554** Curations users, a year-on-year increase of **38%**
- The total number of Curations sessions over the year was **150,778**, an increase of **33%**



Community volunteering event at Hanley Park, Stoke-on-Trent.
Image credit: Katey Goodwin/Art UK

IN FOCUS: Community Volunteering Programme

Over the past year we have expanded our audience engagement with a new programme of community volunteering. We ran 18 in-person community sessions focused on our crowdsourcing Tagger tool, with 16 taking place in Stoke-on-Trent, where Art UK has an office, and two in South Wales. These have included activities for children in Stoke-on-Trent parks, local history photo walks, drop-in sessions in libraries and Tagger training for museum staff and volunteers.

Altogether, 338 people participated, with attendees reporting an improvement in their skills and confidence in art, and a sense of purpose. Participant Ali Lias said: 'I'm disabled and in a wheelchair full-time. This project got me out and working my brain.'

Supporting artists

Art UK unites artists' works in public collections and actively promotes their works at a global level. Artists benefit from this extensive visibility on an unparalleled platform for engagement and recognition.

Art UK actively engages with artists, artists' estates, licensing bodies and collections to seek reproduction consent, ensuring appropriate copyright protection where applicable, while fostering broader access to artists' works by promoting them through storytelling, social media marketing and learning resources. We also enhance their visibility through dedicated profile pages.

- There are **55,400** artists shown on Art UK
- **60%** of artists remain in copyright, accounting for **41%** of works on Art UK
- Art UK conducted extensive research and outreach in 2024, with **1,900**

artists/estates sought out to request their permission to reproduce their work on Art UK

- **500** mural artists were newly added, increasing the visibility of the UK's outdoor art
- **3,000** further artist biographies were added to dedicated profile pages

By showcasing works through storytelling and making them easily discoverable with tagging and dedicated profiles, we continue to connect a global audience to engage with the vibrant and diverse creativity of artists across the UK.

'This is a fantastic project and amazing to see so many murals documented. I'm very happy to have my artwork included'

Ricky Also, artist

Segmented Face, 2023, by Medianeras.
Fleming Way, Swindon © the artist.
Image credit: Jane Roblin/Art UK



Supporting public collections

Art UK is, we believe, the largest ever institutional arts partnership put together in the UK. There are now **3,481** venues on Art UK, with **403** of these being paying Partner Collections.

- In 2024 we added **29** new paying Partner Collections
- We ran **30** webinars to support our Partner Collections and help them make the most out of their partnership with Art UK
- We were delighted to help launch **46** Bloomberg Connects guides, bringing our total to nearly **100** guides, with many more in progress
- **75,000** artwork records were added to Art UK taking the total to **383,000**
- We collaborated with **32** Partner Collections on themed content for the Online Art Exchange, our social media engagement campaign, promoting exhibitions, anniversaries and openings

- We hosted **11** Art Unlocked talks, connecting online audiences with collections as part of our popular webinar series

Shop product featuring a framed print, *Still Life* by Vanessa Bell © estate of Vanessa Bell. All rights reserved, DACS 2025.
Image credit: Sheffield Museums/Art UK



IN FOCUS: Art UK Shop

The Art UK Shop offers a vital marketplace service to 160 Partner Collections, giving them the opportunity to generate vital revenue through print on demand and product sales. Our average transaction value in 2024 was £67 and the best-selling product category was custom prints, with a total of 2,637 sales across 1,600 different artworks. Of these, 32% were framed, with all products produced by our supplier Heritage Digital.

The best selling print by quantity and revenue was 'Gentleman Looking at Something' by L. S. Lowry from The Lowry Collection, Salford. 93% of our customers are based in the UK, with the largest share of visitors and customers coming from the 25–34 year old age group.

'Following the success of our range of purchasable prints on the Art UK Shop, we launched our first products in November 2024,' said Esmee Thompson-Smith, Team Leader – Heritage & Arts, East Dunbartonshire Collections. 'Working with Art UK is integral to promoting and widening the access of our Collections.'

IN FOCUS: Bloomberg Connects

Bloomberg Connects is the brilliant free mobile app that allows cultural institutions to reach new digital audiences with curated guides.

Last year, Art UK supported Bloomberg by launching 46 new Connects guides, bringing the total to 89. This includes a new guide for our learning programme The Superpower of Looking. During the year we worked with Bloomberg Philanthropies to host four institutional recruitment events Edinburgh, Liverpool and Bath/Bristol.

Joining the app can bring significant rewards for collections. In the first six months following their launch in June 2024, Kettle's Yard have had 3,413 users, with engaging audio tours and collection insights that accompany visitors around the house. Surgeons' Hall Museums have taken advantage of Google Translate to achieve 1,329 users in the last quarter of 2024, with languages including French, German, Spanish, Italian and Mandarin.

Audio continues to be an important feature on Connects, and partners can take advantage of a free kit to create an engaging and well-rounded guide. Hollie Gaze, Visitor Services Officer, Swansea Museum, said: 'Thank you for all your help. We are really thrilled to be part of the Bloomberg Connects app. It is allowing us to share more content with our visitors and share our collection with people around the world.'

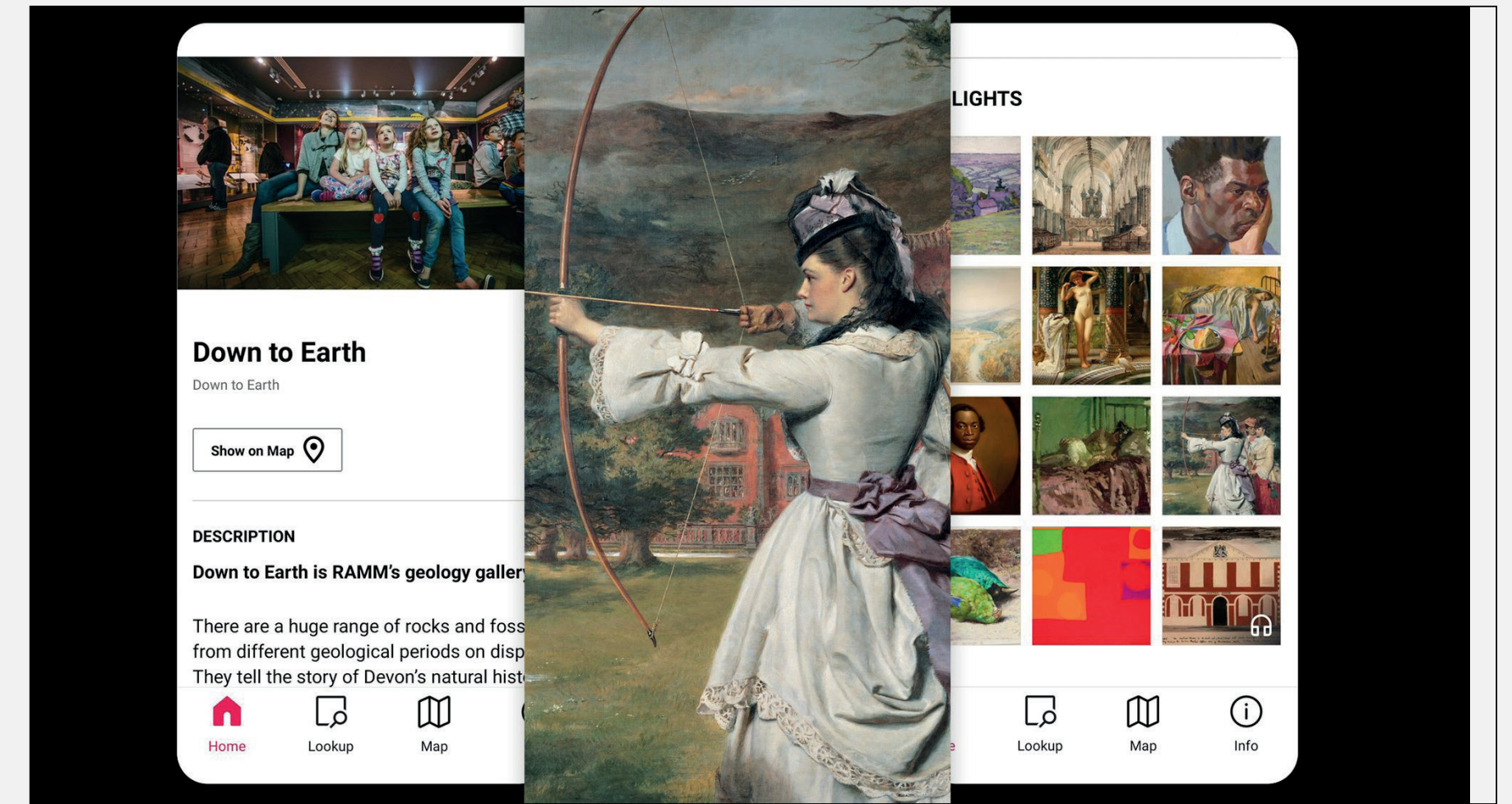


Image credit: Bloomberg Philanthropies/Royal Albert Memorial Museum

'It's been a really excellent process to get to this point. Thank you so much for your support and guidance'

Robyn Eveson, Digital Media Officer, Royal Albert Memorial Museum

Our organisation

We believe that Art UK punches above its weight, achieving huge reach with a small and highly dedicated team of staff, supported by a committed board of Trustees. Our workforce is spread across the UK, with a centrally located office in Stoke-on-Trent.

- We had **33.5** full time equivalent staff at the end of 2024
- Our total property bill was **£3,700** for the whole year
- We created **10** new staff roles to support principally new, funded project work
- We have **85** wonderful public art digitisation volunteers and **4** Collection Research volunteers
- Our annual staff survey showed that **89%** would recommend Art UK as a place to work

Art UK is committed to delivering value, and our total costs (including one-off funded projects) came to a total of **£2,057,956** in our financial year to March 2024

- Percentage spent on offices and utilities **0.7%**
- Percentage spent on raising funds **5%**
- Costs spread across all collections (based on core running costs) **£431** per collection

‘The murals and street art collection is a great idea, as it changes so much over time. I’m very keen for work to be available and accessible’

Louise McVey, artist

Honey I Shrank the Kids, 2012, by Smug. Mitchell Street, Glasgow
© the artist.
Image credit: Gordon Baird/Art UK



IN FOCUS: Economic Value Report

We were delighted to have become the subject of an in-depth case study around the economic value of digital culture published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, as part of its Culture and Heritage Capital (CHC) programme, in partnership with the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre.

It was found that the calculated annual economic value of Art UK is estimated at £71.4 million. This compares to Art UK’s annual core running cost of £1.5 million. However, this value is based on only our UK audience (40% of total).

Trustees

Interim Chair: Thomas Davies, CEO, Machroes Holdings and active investor

Hasan Bakhshi, Centre Director, Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, NESTA

Carola Boehm, Professor, School of Digital, Technologies and Arts, Staffordshire University

Caroline Campbell, Director of the National Gallery of Ireland

Jago Cooper, Executive Director of the Sainsbury Centre and Professor of Art and Archaeology at the University of East Anglia

Sarah Hayden, Product Marketing Lead at Apple in London

Catherine Holden, Scotland-based independent culture and heritage consultant

Thomas Marks, Strategic consultant and former Editor of *Apollo* magazine

Avril Martindale, Intellectual Property Lawyer

Sherece Rainford, Founder and Creative Director of Gallery OCA, which specialises in contemporary Caribbean art

John Stack, Director of Digital Innovation and Technology, The National Gallery

Lisa Wong, Finance Director at Glyndebourne Productions



Striped Heads, 1994, by Gurminder Sikand
© the artist's estate.
Image credit: Nottingham City Museums & Galleries

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The above gave at least £1,000 to Art UK in 2024

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Peter Bogle Copyright and Licensing Officer

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Alec Mackenzie Collections Database Manager

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Lizzie Simms CRM Officer

Camilla Stewart Director of Partnerships and Collection Support

Jennifer Thomas Audience Data Analyst

Jennie Thornber Learning Coordinator (SPoL)

Esther White Collections Content and Liaison

Officer

Natalie Willatt Community Volunteer Manager



Garden of St Hugh's College, Oxford, 1985, by Christopher Hall © the artist's estate.
Image credit: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

The above staff were in role as of December 2024, with some roles part-time



Art in Superpower Schools event at
St Gregory's Catholic Academy, Stoke-on-Trent.
Image credit: Natalie Willatt/Art UK

**'Your charity has a lovely,
and important, mission'**

Ailbhe Barrett, artist

ART^{UK}

Can you help us inspire
creativity and learning?

If you would like to discuss supporting the
vital work of Art UK, please contact our
Chief Executive, Andrew Ellis
andrew.ellis@artuk.org