

Middlesbrough Mela

2020 Report

2020 was our 30^h year of delivering Middlesbrough Mela, creating a high quality festival which invites audiences of all ages, backgrounds, cultures and beliefs to join to together and celebrate all the diversity and vibrancy within our communities. This year due to covid restrictions the festival was taken mainly online.

We have been working hard to build a year round presence, working with artists and engaging communities in creating bespoke commissions designed to tell the story behind Mela. This year a socially distanced engagement project was produced. Creating a series of digital works, physical packs and a bespoke storybook commission.

We worked with a host of old and new partners, including Middlesbrough Council, Arts Council England, Unison Northern and Tees Valley Community Foundation to help bring Middlesbrough Mela 2020 to life.

The Middlesbrough Mela committee would like to extend a huge thank you to all our supporters, stakeholders, participants, online audiences, artists and volunteers who joined us this year and on our journey in creating a creative and high quality presence in 2020 regardless of the challenges faced.

Regards,

Middlesbrough Mela Committee

What happened in 2020

Middlesbrough Mela Committee were committed to providing high quality diverse arts and engagement to our communities in Middlesbrough and the wider Tees Valley, ensuring that Middlesbrough Mela continues to champion, inspire and collaborate during challenging times.

We used time in lockdown to support our communities in creative responses which allowed us to deliver high quality, accessible, fun, digital and physical, participation programmes that encouraged moments of joy, galvanised a sense of community connectivity and pride of place via participation, and celebrated and championed the role creativity plays in promoting wellbeing and happiness

The new programme was held over a four week period in August.

Sara Storytelling and Book Commission

A creative narrative was developed with performer and writer Umar Butt. The story was turned into 3 online videos in English, Urdu and British sign language. The story was animated using illustrations by local artist Becki Harper. The story was turned into a digital book and 1000 copies were printed.



Online workshops and Videos

A series of online workshops were produced with local artists, linking with the storytelling narrative as an overall theme. Workshops included:

- Mask making
- Mela Yoga
- Music making
- Printing
- Mela Mandalas
- Storytelling

- Illustration
- Arts and crafts



Art Packs and activity

4 different art packs were created using the story and the online workshops as inspiration. In total 400 packs were created. 100 x mandala packs designed for adults, 100 windsock packs designed for 5 – 9 years, 100 printmaking packs were designed for 3 years plus and 100 mask making packs were designed for 7 years plus. Packs were distributed throughout the whole of the Tees Valley with 60% going to groups and individuals in Middlesbrough, 33% to groups and individuals in Redcar and Cleveland and the remaining 7% going to the rest of the Tees Valley area.



Two competitions were created in which professional creative content would be produced from young people's designs.

6 giant windsocks have been produced using designs created by young people, using inspiration from the story. A professional artist created the work that will then be showcased in 2021.

A costume competition was also undertaken, with young people designing the wings of one of the main characters in the story.

All content created will be collected in and created into professional costumes and site design ready for Mela 2021 when we can celebrate not only the festival but provide the chance for our communities to come together again in the Middlesbrough Mela parade.



Economic impact

Middlesbrough Mela is proud to be able to make a positive impact on the economy. As one of the biggest diverse festivals in the North East. This year there will be a huge reduction on the impact the event has had on town centre spend due to the fact that the majority of the festival has been online, but we have ensured that local North East creatives were employed.

Middlesbrough Mela employed 13 staff over the course of the festival and its development. This employment included artists, community facilitators, project managers, performers, editors and designers covering a total of 90 days of employment combined.

Social Impact

Middlesbrough Mela believed it was really important to continue to engage with its audiences during the pandemic. We felt that creativity helps to keep communities engaged and has many positive impacts including helping with mindfulness, reduction of isolation and offers opportunities of families to take part in positive activities during stressful and challenging times.

Shouting about Mela

Middlesbrough Mela's marketing campaign was solely digital this year, focusing on tried and tested mechanisms. Working with Middlesbrough Council allowed the event to communicate via a variety of portals including Middlesbrough Mela, Love Middlesbrough and Middlesbrough Council social networks.

A new Mela Website was created this year, which has provided a fantastic new avenue for information sharing.

Middlesbrough Mela Socials

Facebook

- We have 3,850 page book page likes, 94% of our page fans are from the UK with 51% from Middleborough with the majority from the Tees Valley.
- We have a decent international following with 70 active followers from Pakistan, 24 form India, 12 from the USA, 6 in Brazil and even 1 in Mozambique.
- Overall reach on facebook for the festival reached 107,977
- Total engagement reached 3112

Facebook responses

Scott Kyle 'Congratulations, amazing achievement

Donna Stokes 'This is fab'

Amy Walton 'Brought a tear to my eye. A beautiful story, beautifully illustrated story, beautifully told. Very special indeed well done everyone.'

Divya Vijayan 'Such a heartwarming story. The 4 year old loves it'

Broadcast media coverage

- BBC Tees

Press and on- media coverage

- Evening Gazette
- Northern Echo
- The Primary Times
- Independent Teesside
- Enjoy Tees Valley
- The National Mela Partnership

2021 and beyond

Middlesbrough Mela strive to increase their programming of cultural, diverse and exciting work, pushing the boundaries of traditional Mela's and previous offerings.

Middlesbrough Mela are very aware that there is a lack of knowledge of what covid and 2021 will look like. This will have a severe impact on the ability to plan and fundraise for the next festival. We have 3 event delivery options available:

- A) Normal Mela 2 day large scale event
- B) Small scale events, activities with extended engagement opportunities programmed over a longer period of time
- C) Largely digital focussed

Whilst continuing to be one of the largest diverse festival in the North East we have the vision and impetus to continue to grow and develop and to become more strategically significant both regionally and nationally.

We will continue to work hard to build new relationships both regionally, nationally and internationally to share our commitment in developing high quality, diverse arts for our vibrant communities.