

2-7 June exhibition and talks abt learner-creators

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An exhibition celebrating the power of Adult Learning to transform lives at the Thomas Calton Centre, Alpha Street, off Choumert Rd, London. Press release from the Centre: **Monday 2nd – Saturday 7th June 2014. Mon-Fri 9am-5pm. Sat 10am-4pm. Special viewing 6-9pm on Monday 2nd June with free refreshments.** Charmaine Brown who is a local historian and former Thomas Calton tutor will give a talk at **7.30pm on Monday evening.** You are welcome to come & meet the learner-creators for a question and answer session on **Weds 4th June at 8.15pm.** *Create* is a free, week-long celebration of the learning communities within the Thomas Calton Centre. It is an opportunity for you to see the variety of work produced in Southwark Adult Learning Classes. Featuring African dressmaking, ceramics, painting and sculptural woodcarving, there will be finished artifacts, accounts of work-in-progress and classes will be open to prospective learners. There will also be displays and moving testimonies of the immense value of courses such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), computing courses for employability and functional skills such as maths and literacy for jobseekers.

Looking out over picturesque Choumert Road, where street markets now rub shoulders with upmarket cafes, the Thomas Calton Centre has a fascinating history. Mr Thomas Calton bought Dulwich Manor in 1504 from the intermediaries of Henry the VIII. Calton was a great lover of art and a great philanthropist, often supporting penurious artists. This beautiful Victorian building is much-loved by the local community. Over the years it has hosted impressive talents such as 'The Carl Campbell Dance Company', the UK's leading Caribbean Dance organisation. It has also provided for organisations of social benefit such as the Southwark Vietnamese-Chinese community Mother Tongue School, the South Asian, Muslim and Refugee Women & Children's group and the Community Youth Provision Association's 'Face2Face', which provides education for children other than at school. The centre is ethnically diverse and takes pride in its inclusivity. The Thomas Calton Centre has recently been modernised and provides a huge array of courses catering for all the needs of its community including: FREE family learning courses such as 'One World' where families can learn together. You can 'Help your child with ICT' or 'Picture IT': making a book together using digital photography. There are courses in basic skills and employability such as 'Food safety' and 'Hospitality, travel and tourism.' There are also courses in social care and creative leisure and health such as picture framing, woodwork, upholstery and therapeutic art. A hive of activity, the Thomas Calton Centre has its own fitness and wellbeing 'pod' where classes such as pilates, yoga and zumba vibrate with energy.

But the life – affirming courses it offers are not only for the adults and children of Southwark but also those from far-flung parts of London. Nathan travels by motorbike from Watford to learn Sculptural Woodcarving, taught by Sri Lankan artist and art psychotherapist Malathi Da Silva; whilst Carol journeys all the way from Plumstead to join Peckham local, Kemi, in learning African Dressmaking. This is one of the few African Dressmaking courses in London and is taught by the accomplished Govella Beckerman who says, "Let our voices be heard, education is tantamount to our growth."

Many of the students will be ready and willing to talk about their work and the wonderful way it has enriched their lives. Russell Barr suffers from Aspergers Syndrome and life had become quite impossible. His Social Worker suggested he joined a class at the centre. He had always loved pottery but was not allowed to do it at School, but now there is no stopping him: Russell is in his third term. He says, "It has saved my life, I feel supported, not so lonely and this has improved my acceptance of myself. I've learnt a great skill and it has given me back the hope I had lost."

Sculptural woodcarving student Vicki Towers says, "My son gave me a term of classes in wood carving as a present." This has now paid dividends as her piece is being shown at the Morley Gallery this month, part of the prestigious Victoria & Albert Museum's "Inspired By" exhibition. Thomas Calton would have been proud.

There will be a lively opening with free refreshments on Monday 2nd of June from 6-9pm so We do hope you can share your precious time to join us in celebrating the students, staff and spirit of the Thomas Calton Centre community.