



PRESS RELEASE

AGNES DENES RAISES FLAG ABOVE TATE BRITAIN AS CULTURAL CALL TO ACTION IN RESPONSE TO PLANETARY HEALTH CRISIS

PIONEERING ENVIRONMENTAL ARTIST UNVEILS NEW ARTWORK, 'THE FUTURE IS FRAGILE, HANDLE WITH CARE' TO LAUNCH *HEALING ARTS* 2021 CAMPAIGN IN COLLABORATION WITH THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)



The 90-year-old American environmental artist [Agnes Denes](#), who planted a wheat field against the backdrop of New York's Twin Towers in 1982, has raised a flag, "The Future is Fragile, Handle with Care," on the roof of Tate Britain as a cultural call to action in response to the dual crisis of COVID-19 and climate change. The installation marks the conclusion of [Healing Arts London](#) and the launch of a global campaign, under the auspices of the World Health Organization, to support improved mental, social and environmental health in the wake of the pandemic.

The installation above one of the UK's most iconic museums also represents the launch of *The Future is Unwritten Artist Response Fund*, established to support artist-led projects which address the global health crisis. Among the projects being supported are two programmes in Iraq, in partnership with Community Jameel, documenting and sustaining traditional cultural practices to address mental health needs among the Marsh Arabs and Yazidi communities; the London-based Hospital Rooms charity which commissions artworks in secure psychiatric units; and a community arts programme in the Navajo Nation, Arizona, which had among the highest per capita COVID-19 infection rate in the United States.

Denes's flag calls out for the urgency of a global response not only to COVID 19 but also to climate change (as she has been doing through artworks created over the past fifty years). With leading UN environmental agencies describing the virus as nature's first "warning shot" to civilizations playing with fire, it is a stark reminder of the need for cooperation across borders and generations. It symbolizes the need for a collective response to these crises and how that can be transformed into a paradigm shift with all sectors of society contributing to a new vision of the world in the coming decade. According to the artist, "Global dialogue and action are more crucial now than ever."

Healing Arts was established in 2020 by CULTURUNNERS, World Council of Peoples for the United Nations, the WHO Foundation and the WHO's Arts & Health Program as part of the UN's 75th Anniversary Program. It brings together a cultural coalition of partners including the WHO Foundation, Christie's, The Art Newspaper, Community Jameel, and Vivobarefoot alongside a growing community of UN agencies, museums, universities, hospitals, foundations and private companies to champion the role of art and culture in community healing and improved mental wellbeing in the aftermath of COVID 19.

An ongoing series of charity auctions by Christie's (which has realised over \$500,000 to date) supports the WHO Foundation's response to the Covid-19 mental health crisis, and artist-led projects on the frontline of the pandemic. Healing Arts auctions will continue through December 2021.

The flag was installed in partnership with Vivobarefoot and Special Global Projects and will remain on the masthead above Tate Britain through May 2021. Following London, Healing Arts will travel to Venice in May for the Venice Architecture Biennale, Paris in June, then Aspen and New York in September to coincide with the UN General Assembly.

[Link](#) to full Healing Arts London programme.

Press Images and Film on request.

Stephen Stapleton: +1 (713) 569 7675 - stephen@culturunners.com

For enquiries about the flag and further information about Agnes Denes, please contact her representative Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects: info@tonkonow.com; www.tonkonow.com

Healing Arts London Programme

Frame of Mind:

A Conversation about Art and Healing

No part of the world has been untouched by the pandemic, which has not only affected the health of millions and caused massive social and economic disruption but has taken a silent toll, through the isolation, anxiety, financial hardship and grief it has inflicted on every community. In this event, TV and movie actor Gillian Anderson and Christopher Bailey, the World Health Organization's arts and health lead, discuss personal stories of how art can help comfort, confront difficult social problems and build community. They also talk to special guests, Antony Gormley, and WHO director general Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus.

<https://www.culturunners.com/events/day-1>

Artists' House Calls:

Videos of Creation in Confinement

Visit rarely seen places of creation with leading artists, architects and frontline workers to hear firsthand how they know that practicing art can heal, especially during this period of global confinement. how murals can improve the healing environment for patient and care givers. Hosted by Ben Luke (The Art Newspaper Podcast), with William Kentridge and Phala Phala (The Center for the Less Good Idea); Ragnar Kjartansson; Susie Hamilton (Hospital Rooms); Hani Rashid (Asymptote Architecture) in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist; and Jonathan Aitken (chaplain at HMP Pentonville) and Dan Brown (prison reform advocate).

<https://www.culturunners.com/events/day-2>

Does Art Heal?

What is the Evidence? What should the Policy be?

The WHO and UCL co-host this discussion between researchers, practitioners and policy makers to ask the question: what is the verifiable evidence that art heals? What does that mean? What are the implications for health care and the arts community? Lord Vaizey, Dr Daisy Fancourt and other specialists explore what is currently known about the health benefits of the arts and how society can best take advantage of them. Moderated by Dr Alexander Van Tulleken, British doctor and TV presenter, with Helen Chatterjee, professor of biology at University College London (UCL); Dr Daisy Fancourt, associate professor, psychobiology and epidemiology, UCL; Harold Offeh, artist and participant in the Hospital Rooms; Christopher Bailey, art and health lead, World Health Organization (WHO); Dévora Kestel, director, department of mental health and substance use, WHO; Lord Vaizey, former UK Minister of Culture; and Alexandra Coulter, acting director, National Centre for Creative Health.

<https://www.culturunners.com/events/day-3>

Patterns in the Fog:

A panel discussion on Dementia and the Arts

As the global population ages and life expectancy increases, cases of dementia are on the rise. For those who have this condition and those who care for them, the journey into dementia can be harrowing at the best of times, but it is particularly heartbreaking during the current pandemic as the feelings of isolation common with the condition are aggravated by social distancing. In this discussion, hosted by University College London's (UCL) school of pharmacy, caregivers, patients, pharmacists and neurologists share current treatment and understanding of the neurology of types of dementia, and how art can be used as a therapy to ease the condition for patient and caregiver alike.

Introduced by Dr Sara Garfield, co-chair of the UCL school of pharmacy equality, diversity and inclusion public engagement group and moderated by Christopher Bailey, art and health lead, World Health Organization, with Dr Claudia Manzoni, lecturer in translational neuroscience, UCL school of pharmacy; Anne Child, consultant pharmacist for older people; Keith Oliver, person living with dementia together with friend Jen Holland; Diane Waller, arts therapy professor emeritus, Goldsmiths, University of London; and Veronica Franklin Gould, president, Arts 4 Dementia.

<https://www.culturunners.com/events/day-3>

Healing Arts Auction

Christie's Post-War and Contemporary Art Sales

Dirk Boll, President of Christie's, Europe, Middle East, Russia and India, introduces the Healing Arts section of Christie's Post-War and Contemporary London sale, featuring contemporary masters including Antony Gormley, William Kentridge, Martin Creed, Ragnar Kjartansson and Yoshitomo Nara. Proceeds benefit the WHO Foundation and The Future is Unwritten Artists' Response Fund to support the mental health response to the pandemic through the arts.

<https://www.culturunners.com/events/day-4>

Artists on the Frontline

Art's Role in Community Healing

This pandemic is making us question everything from our economic systems to the role of the state, and the purpose of art is no exception. What are artists doing to help and what is their responsibility? The pandemic has affected everyone everywhere from all walks of life, but hardest hit are those communities living at the edges of society, suffering social, economic or conflict-driven hardship. This panel will discuss how artists are working on the frontlines of the current crisis and how the pandemic might change the art-world systems and values of the past decades. Panel discussion chaired by Anna Somers Cocks, founder editor, The Art Newspaper; Dr Cara Courage, Head of Tate Exchange, Tate Museums; Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, co-founder, UK Black Pride; and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, director, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin.

<https://www.culturunners.com/events/day-5>

About Agnes Denes

A primary figure among the concept-based artists who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, the American artist Agnes Denes is internationally known for works created in a wide range of mediums. Investigating science, philosophy, linguistics, psychology, poetry, history, and music, Denes's artistic practice is distinctive in terms of its aesthetics and engagement with socio-political ideas. Born in Hungary in 1931, Agnes Denes was raised in Sweden and educated in the US. She has participated in more than 600 exhibitions at galleries and museums throughout the world and has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards.

<http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/>

<http://www.tonkonow.com/denes.html>

About The Future is Unwritten Healing Arts Initiative

The Future is Unwritten facilitates urgent cooperation between the international arts sector and United Nations Agencies in order to accelerate implementation of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Future is Unwritten established the Healing Arts initiative in November 2020 under the auspices of the WHO Organization Arts & Health Program and in partnership with the World Council of Peoples for the United Nations, WHO Foundation and Christie's.

www.thefutureisunwritten.org

About the World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization works with 194 Member States across six regions and from more than 150 offices to achieve better health for everyone, everywhere. WHO's Arts & Health Programme looks at the research agenda around the health benefits of the arts, in everyday life as well as an instrument in the field.

www.who.int

About the WHO Foundation

The WHO Foundation is an independent grant-making foundation based in Geneva that sets out to protect the health and well-being of everyone in every part of the world, working alongside the World Health Organization and the global health community. It aims to support donors, scientists, experts, implementing partners, and advocates around the world in rapidly finding new and better solutions to the most pressing global health challenges of today and tomorrow. The Foundation targets evidence-based initiatives that support WHO in delivering Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 (To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all). It is focused on reducing health risks, averting pandemics, better managing diseases, and creating stronger health systems. It tackles these areas by building awareness and supporting its partners, including WHO, so that every life is invested in and the world is ready for any health emergency that may arise.

www.who.foundation

About Community Jameel

Community Jameel is an international organisation tackling some of the world's most urgent issues and challenges, using a pioneering approach grounded in evidence, science, data and technology in the fields of education, health and climate.

About CULTURUNNERS

CULTURUNNERS is as an independent platform for cross-cultural campaigns, exhibitions, films and live events - promoting pluralism, peace-building and sustainable development through art. Launched at MIT in 2014, CULTURUNNERS prioritises artists-led projects that transform communities, societies and systems and foster greater empathy across ideological and geographical borders.

www.culturrunners.com