

PRESS RELEASE FROM WE ARE THE MINORIES/VICTOR BATTE-LAY FOUNDATION

NEW APPOINTMENTS AND FOND FAREWELLS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Following the news of the closure on The Minories earlier in the year, the Chair and Trustees of **Victor Batte-Lay Foundation** (VBLF/the Foundation) are delighted that Colchester Institute has done such an excellent job of the renovation and repair of the building in preparation for the handover of their tenancy back to the Foundation. Inevitably the comprehensive building works have uncovered issues that may take a longer to resolve than had been anticipated: We understand that many will be disappointed that we have not been able to reopen the building this year, but the trustees remain hopeful that that day is not too far in the future.

To keep everyone informed, we'd like to let you know that we are in the process of setting up a trading arm for VBLF to be known as **We are the Minorities**. It is this entity which will be undertaking most of our activity, while the tangible assets remain protected by the Foundation. You can find us at www.wearetheminories.org, on Instagram & Facebook @WearetheMinorities and on Twitter @WMinorities. Great new art related to our collection is being posted, produced by our first crop of resident artists, **Deborah Lander, Kayleigh Reed, Heidi Sharp and Shane Wimbledon** who have also commissioned work from **Ella Johnston, Clare Iles, Jess Aldridge, and Judd Druce**.

As part of our progress towards the happy day when we reopen our doors, we have filled two key roles to allow us to begin planning and preparing for the future of the Minories. **Jade Fothergill** has been appointed Operations Manager. Jade has extensive international experience of building, project and team management and strong local connections. Jade tells us, "I am thrilled to be playing a part in the shaping of We are the Minorities, maintaining its important place in the community while creating a new and vibrant path ahead for this much-loved building and collection." **Alex Hugo** is also now in post as Strategy Manager. Alex brings with her a wealth of curating and fundraising experience which will enable her to focus on the long-term future of the Minories. Alex notes, "I look forward to helping secure a stable tomorrow for We are the Minorities, finding fresh and challenging ways of keeping the collection relevant, while championing, and creating opportunities for emerging artists".

There have been changes too at VBLF. Robin Matthews has stepped down as Chair after eight years in the position and **Ben Coode-Adams** has taken over the role. Robin has been an important advocate of the Foundation, ensuring it evolved to fulfil changing social demand while remaining true to its core purpose. Ben says, "I can't thank Robin enough for his commitment to and sustained affection for the Foundation and the Minories over the last 20 years. I am honoured and excited to be assuming the role of Chair of VBLF at this pivotal time in our history. The challenges are huge but not insurmountable. With the support of our friends, allies and benefactors as well as Arts Council: England, and with a management team now in place, we can look to the future of We are the Minorities with renewed hope. We remain extraordinarily grateful to all our friends, so thank you for your continued support".

VBLF must also extend our thanks and best wishes for the future to two former Trustees, Mary Perrins and Tom Fenton, who have also now stepped down. Mary worked tirelessly to encourage and support local artists and has generously left us the parting gift of a painting of a Colchester scene by Lucien Pissarro. Tom spent much of his time finding ways to make the Foundation's collection accessible and relevant to the community and has served as both the Treasurer and Secretary of the Foundation. Tom has kindly donated to the collection a wonderfully accomplished etching by Valerie Thornton and a relief by Jill Desborough. We are immensely grateful for Robin, Mary and Tom's dedication, enthusiasm and expertise.

To stay up to date with our news and progress, please **sign up to our newsletter** at: <https://www.wearetheminories.org/contact>

We do apologise if you receive this missive more than once!



Lion, by **Joyce Pallot**, an important painter and muralist who was a founding member of the Colchester Art Society.

This magnificent work was recently gifted to the Victor Batte-Lay Foundation by Colchester resident **Pauline Thomas**. Our thanks go to her and her sons for their generosity.