



Bradford Producing Hub and Leeds Cultural Institute £3k follow-on fund awarded to innovative art-science collaboration

4 November 2024, Bradford UK

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Bradford artist [Sue Walpole](#) and University of Leeds PhD candidate, [Morgan Thomas](#) have been awarded the Leeds Cultural Institute Follow-on Fund for their project, *Illuminating Minds: Neuron Puppets in Light*. This £3,000 fund is a continuation of the [Leeds Creative Labs collaboration project with Bradford Producing Hub](#) (BPH) and is designed to advance promising projects to the next stage of their development. The initiative supports participants as they test ideas, develop proof of concept, and build strategic partnerships.

Illuminating Minds merges cutting-edge research in glioblastoma—a form of brain cancer—with artistic puppetry, creating an interactive experience that makes complex neural processes accessible to the public. Morgan Thomas, a glioblastoma researcher, and Sue

Walpole, an artist specialising in lantern puppetry, collaborated initially as part of the [Leeds Creative Labs](#) programme. Now, with the Follow-on Fund, they aim to refine their innovative neuron puppets, which use proximity sensors and LED lighting programmed to mimic the activity of brain cells.

"The BPH and Leeds Cultural Institute Follow-on Fund is enabling us to take a crucial step forward in making brain research both tangible and engaging," said Sue Walpole. "Through our neuron puppets, we're not only illustrating scientific ideas but also inviting people to interact with them in a way that's hands-on and memorable."

The duo's objective is to bridge art and science in ways that deepen public understanding of neurological functions, particularly focusing on glioblastoma research. In addition to refining the puppet designs, the project will develop engagement workshops for audiences of all ages in settings such as schools, exhibitions, and public light festivals.

Sue and Morgan will work closely with key mentors, including experts from the [University of Leeds School of Electronics and Engineering](#), [Dave Lynch](#) from Immersive Networks and sound artist [Duncan Chapman](#). Each collaborator brings essential skills and knowledge to enhance the technical and creative dimensions of *Illuminating Minds*, contributing to its mechanical, sensory, and immersive components.

As part of the next stage, the project team will conduct field research at events such as [Light Up North](#) and [Light Night Leeds](#) to observe audience engagement with similar installations. This experience will help shape *Illuminating Minds*' public engagement strategy and ensure it resonates with diverse audiences.

The project's main goals are to advance the collaboration between academic research and creative practice, finalise a prototype design of neuron-inspired puppets, and implement a showcase workshop event. A highlight will be the *Illuminating Minds* workshop scheduled for March 2025, where the team will invite public participants to engage with the neuron puppets and provide feedback on their experience. Following this period of research and development, the pair will seek additional funding for further project development and performance.

"We are thrilled by the opportunity to continue our project with the support of the Follow-on Fund," said Morgan Thomas. "By merging scientific research and art, we're fostering a deeper connection with science for audiences who may not typically engage with it. This project symbolises how art and science can illuminate each other."

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Editors notes

For press and media enquiries contact Frances Murphy at Bradford Producing Hub at frances@bdproducinghub.co.uk

Images can be downloaded from - [Follow-on Fund Announcement](#)

About the Fund

The Follow-on Fund by Bradford Producing Hub and Leeds Cultural Institute offers funding to kick-start innovative projects emerging from the Leeds Creative Labs programme. Through this award, *Illuminating Minds* will benefit from a period of research and development, test their ideas and reach new audiences to showcase how art and science can together, inspire learning, curiosity and engagement with complex subjects.

About Bradford Producing Hub

Founded in 2019, Bradford Producing Hub (BPH) is an arts development organisation that tests radical new approaches to producing work, supporting talent, developing a local arts workforce, and partnering with communities across Bradford to reimagine the city as a thriving creative hub.

BPH supports artists, producers, and small companies through funding, grants, mentoring, training, development, and networking opportunities to establish Bradford as a city that nurtures homegrown talent.

In 2023, Bradford Producing Hub was appointed as the Cultural Capacity Partner of Bradford 2025, UK City of Culture.

bdproducinghub.co.uk

About Leeds Creative Labs

This ground-breaking programme pairs creative professionals with researchers from the University. Leeds Creative Labs provides funding, inspiration, opportunities and above all, the co-creative space to share ideas and experiences without deadlines and targets.

The match is made by an expert panel, based not only on the participants' professional interests but also on their shared sense of curiosity and ambition to explore ideas without limits.

Bradford Producing Hub

Assembly Bradford
20 North Parade
Bradford
BD1 3HT

hello@bdproducinghub.co.uk
bdproducinghub.co.uk
Company number: 14734568

Participants are not expected to respond to a specific brief. Instead, both academic and creative partners enter into the experience on an equal footing and have the rare opportunity of a supported but open-ended space in which to explore and create ideas together without an agenda. With no expectation of an output, the process allows partners to establish the focus of their engagement with each other from the outset.

spotlight.leeds.ac.uk/leeds-creative-labs/



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