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Interview with Sophie Gresswell

By Joanna Bailey

Sophie Gresswell is an original visual artist based in Bedfordshire, passionate about creating art that challenges our perception of identity and space through distortion. She is currently developing her own public space and conveying concepts of perception and community in the region. Her latest Testbeds project blog: testbeds.beds.ac.uk/blog/2017/demo-week-why-the-eye

Are there any upcoming exhibitions you're involved in?

At the moment, I am focusing on creating public artworks to improve local spaces, so no exhibitions at present but I will be holding art walks to show members of the public artworks in their local area so look out for those!

How does this compare to your other commissions and projects?

In my experience, I have found galleries and enclosed exhibitions to be a very strange experience, full of artistic hierarchy, disillusion and social barriers. Galleries are everywhere and of course, they serve a purpose for audiences and can be an excellent platform for artists, but personally, I have found working to bring visual arts to people in a public place much more fulfilling. To know that people who rarely have, or maybe even never had the inclination to set foot in a gallery can



experience the transformative power of visual arts on local, neglected space has forged a new pathway for my art, and I am deeply passionate about it.

What inspires the creation of your work?

My work is inspired by people, identity and place. My personal work focuses mainly on portraying personality and identity through distortion in unconventional portraits. My work in public places looks at connecting people to place through visual artwork along urban sites, inviting people to interact with spaces that otherwise create barriers. ***You have a lot of experience working with community groups on exciting projects - how do you hope to inspire young people in the projects you're involved in?***

I hope to give young people access to different art forms and an insight into how art can transform the world around them. The great thing about involving