

## MEDIA RELEASE

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**New exhibition celebrates Thamesmead's one-of-a-kind hot air balloon**

A new exhibition celebrating Thamesmead's spectacular *Fields of EveryWhen* hot air balloon launched last weekend (Saturday 17 June) at the newly opened Nest Community Building and Library in Cygnet Square, South Thamesmead.

Tapestried with more than 200 art pieces that tell stories about Thamesmead and its people, the 25m high, artist-designed balloon first rose to the skies in August 2022. An unforgettable sight, the flying artwork not only wowed hundreds of local people, but also made national and international news headlines.

The exhibition will offer people the chance to see up close many of the original artworks that featured on the balloon, which was voted as the winner of Peabody's ['Thamesmead Open'](#) competition in 2020. As part of its long-term regeneration of Thamesmead, Peabody is committed to making culture part of everyday life in the town, with places to go and things to see all year round.

The balloon is a collaborative artwork by artists Musson + Retallick and the Thamesmead community, who shared their stories and experiences of local life with the creative duo over the course of two years. Each of the stories was then interpreted into art pieces by residents, community groups, artists and degree students from the Royal School of Needlework.

At the exhibition launch, the balloon was inflated on its side, giving onlookers the unique opportunity to walk inside it and see the artworks in their full glory. Residents who contributed stories to the balloon spoke about their connection to the project to an audience which included people who contributed stories and artwork to the balloon, people from the wider community and Peabody colleagues.

Before the inflation Musson + Rettalick presented the local community with a large leather-bound tome containing 470 pages of stories. This was received by local resident and project participant Jerusha Ujanga (pictured), whose late grandmother's tapestries are featured on the balloon and shown as part of the exhibition. Speaking about the exhibition launch, she said: "It felt very therapeutic to highlight my grandmother's life and show everyone her amazing characteristics and part of her life story. At the exhibition I was able to explain to people what certain pieces meant because I remembered the moments when she was creating them. I felt like I could finally be at peace when I got handed the tome."

The tome is now being looked after by the library and is available for the public to view. Those who visit the exhibition will also get to see the original artworks hung up against the floor to ceiling windows of the new library building, creating a stunning stained glass effect. The artworks are also dotted around the library's walls, pillars and bamboo branches.

Musson + Rettalick said: "This is a chance for everybody to see the love and dedication that went into all the embroideries and the artworks that were displayed on the balloon. People spent hours embroidering, stitching, painting and drawing the artwork, so seeing the pieces in person makes the stories feel much more intimate."

Adriana Marques, Peabody's Head of Thamesmead Cultural Strategy, said: "The exhibition showcases the stories that made the balloon what it is, and for the first time people get to appreciate the original artworks up close. *Fields of EveryWhen* is a perfect example of what it is that makes Thamesmead so special, which is the people who live here and the community they've built, so it's incredibly exciting that we get to celebrate the balloon again this summer."

**The *Fields of EveryWhen* exhibition is open until Saturday 29 July.**

Find out more about Fields of EveryWhen [here](#).

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