



Platforma 5 : Report & Evaluation

With more than 40 events and a live audience of more than 10,000 people, Platforma 5 in October 2019 was our biggest Platforma festival so far. Everything was done in partnership, and we'd like to thank all those organisations and artists who took part.

“Platforma 5 in Tweets” : <https://www.platforma.org.uk/platforma-5-kent-and-medway/>



Custom Folkestone Community Meal (Bartle Halpin photography)

1. About Platforma

Platforma is a network of organisations and artists across England that has been running since 2010. Managed by Counterpoints Arts, we work with partners of all scale – from community groups and individuals to large venues and producers.

There is a website listing events across the country, a blog for news and feature items, and a directory of relevant artists.

Platforma was created to help address the lack of networking and low profile for work by, about & with refugees and migrants - and though much has changed since the project was set up, those priorities remain.

Every two years we run the Platforma festival in a different part of the country to showcase work, develop networks and bring a people together to discuss practice. For Platforma 5 we worked with artists, organisations and audiences across Kent & Medway and also linked with others across our national and international network.

2. Planning and consultation

As an organisation not based in the region our first priority is to understand the current relevant work that is taking place, the challenges and constraints being experiences and how we might be able to address some of these. Hopefully our perspective from 'the outside' and experience working elsewhere, as well as some of the resources we are able to provide, can bring something new and useful.

As we started to plan our work, we already had a number of strong partnerships, beginning with Kent-based freelance producers Julie Neville and Douglas Noble who have managed Platforma in the South East since 2011. They have run a number of networking events and, in 2016, managed a mentoring programming for emerging artists that culminated in a show at Turner Contemporary in Margate.

With their help we convened three networking meetings in the 18 months leading up to the festival, with artists and organisations we already knew and an open invitation to anyone else interested. The aim was to learn about work already happening and to discuss what new work people would most like to see. We also wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the issues people were facing either as artists from migrant / refugee background or working with people from those backgrounds.

More than 100 people attended these meetings at Gulbenkian (Canterbury), Quarterhouse (Folkestone) and the Huguenot Museum (Rochester). People spoke about their interest in developing networks, connecting with artists and communities from refugee and migrant backgrounds, and making contacts across Kent & Medway.

The festival producer, Tom Green (Counterpoints Arts) also held a number of meetings with artists and organisations to learn more about current work, challenges and aspirations.

We had no pre-conceptions about the format of the festival, other than the central idea of bringing people together to showcase work and share practice (locally, nationally and internationally), and the aims of raising the profile of this work and developing networks.

Even as the programme began to take shape, we tried to remain open to new partners and artists wanting to be involved.

What became clear through this process was that it made sense to work across the region as much as possible. Of course we could not go everywhere, but we wanted to make sure that we did not just go to the places with the best-resourced partners, but also reached communities and artists working with less infrastructure.

Partners also wanted to ensure that there was a broad approach to connecting with audiences from all backgrounds. While the focus was on presenting work by and relating to refugees and migration, in a region where these issues continued to be contentious and divisive, people wanted to use the arts to increase understanding and bring people together.

We were also mindful of the rich history of the arts in this context across the region, and it seemed that it would be important and useful to investigate that in some way.

Finally, we wanted to make connections not just in neighbourhoods and across the region, but with artists and organisations nationally and internationally to share learning and broaden the conversation.

3. Resourcing

In addition to staff time, our core programming budget for Platforma 5 was about £12,000. Funding from other projects run by Counterpoints Arts that were part of the festival, contributed a further £10,000.

We estimate that the combined budget for the festival, taking account of all programming and payments by partners, staff time and venue use, was more than £120,000.

For Platforma 5 we supported four Arts Council bids by artists and small organisations, two of which were successful. Additional funding was also brought in by artists and organisations from a variety of sources.

We were invited to apply to Kent County Council's art fund but our proposal, with all the money going to commissions for diverse artists, was not successful.

The vast majority of our budget was spent on fees for artists and travel costs. We try always to offer travel expenses to meetings and events for people who might otherwise not be able to afford to come.

4. Raising the profile and reaching new audiences

Raising the profile of work by artists in our network helps them develop their careers and reach their potential, and also ensures that their work is reaching new audiences.

Central to this strategy for Platforma 5 was working with two of the biggest venues in Kent: Gulbenkian in Canterbury and Turner Contemporary in Margate.

Not only do these venues have significant reach, they also have expertise and resources to support artists producing high quality work.

We co-programmed with both venues, working with their goals and priorities in mind as well as our own in what we hope was a truly collaborative spirit. For example, for our youth / pop culture retreat at Gulbenkian we worked with them to recruit three participants from an A-level access course at the Medway campus who would not normally be invited to a national event. And at Turner Contemporary, through our partnership with Headway East London, we were also able to make contact with Headway in Thanet and with Turner Contemporary's help and support, bring them into the gallery to participate.

Around 12,000 people attended events, talks, workshops and performances across the two venues.

Another key partner in this regard was Cohesion Plus, based in Gravesend. Their wide-ranging programming takes diverse arts out into the streets for parades and festivals in places where few other arts organisations are working, and we were delighted to collaborate with them and Ideas Test on the Swale Festival of Lights in Sittingbourne. Fourteen schools were involved in their programming across Sittingbourne and Isle of Sheppey. 609 pupils participated in creative workshops in schools and a further 67 children and their parents attended a session at Ideas Test. Two music workshops took place, led by Lucky Moyo and by Bill Singh.

Other organisations we worked with to raise the profile and reach new audiences in local settings. included Mooch in Ramsgate, who had huge coverage for their harbour installation, and Custom Folkestone had a sell-out for their community meal and performance.

Raising the profile of work also depends on its quality across the programme, regardless of venue size or audience reach. For this we work with partners and artists with the aim of focusing on work that seems interesting, relevant and has integrity. We also commissioned and co-commissioned a number of works, performances and talks from artists we knew including Aida Silvestri, Henna Asikainen, Lucky Moyo, Adam Chodzko, Mohammed Yahya, Oliver Seagar.

We understand that venues need to charge for some programming but a central priority for us is to provide a large number of free events to ensure the widest possible access. For Platforma 5 all workshops and events and about 90% of the rest of the programme was free.

5. Developing networks

The development of networks was central to the whole programme for Platforma 5, bringing together people across sectors and across locations to share and consider how they might work together. We worked directly with more than 40 Kent & Medway organisations and artists on the programme, and many more attended and contributed. Organisations and artists from across our national and international network were also involved.

Programming locations included Ramsgate, Margate, Canterbury, Deal, Folkestone, Maidstone, Sittingbourne, Gravesend and Rochester. Connections were also made with Syrian families in Ashford. Venues included street festivals, art centres, galleries, university buildings, cinemas, theatres, harbours and youth centres.

Toward the end of the festival we held a Counterpoints Arts Learning Lab at Turner Contemporary with a range of local and national partners to consider questions around networking, in the light of shared experiences through Platforma and elsewhere.

Key observations included:

- Networks have a better chance of thriving through a ‘commonality’ of experiences rather than through ‘arts’ based networks alone
- Networks are not necessarily about ‘scale’ but about ‘frequency’ and depth of action
- New modes of leadership building are not top-down but reflect the richness of the diversity of the communities
- The importance of mentoring programmes
- Notions of soft networks and community champions – build these up and tap into existing projects as a way to create more robust infrastructures for the work.
- Role of the large arts institution – the space in these places. Who and what are they for? Need to re-think the art gallery as a civic space for the community
- Activities in the bigger institutions should not be ‘tick box’ exercises but tied to genuine support and exhibition of artists in the network.
- Need to move beyond accommodating this work – not merely on the side or margins of an institution’s programme.
- How to utilise the potential of the arts institutions to embed more longitudinal work between community organisations and arts spaces?
- We need to build audiences for work about the everyday reality of diversity and displacement – let the audiences engage with the content and the quality of the work.
- Find new audiences for this work around areas and ‘spaces of connectedness and commonalities’
- Role of policy – how to influence this space rather than simply be a receiver of policy decisions made elsewhere. This is longitudinal work but essential to effect change

- Relevance of young voices in this work – key constituents in developing the work
- How to tap into other channels of funding and support – philanthropic and other funding sources which could fuel the work going forward.

Another key networking event was a two-day Counterpoints Arts retreat for young people (aged 18-30) focused on pop culture, in partnership with Gulbenkian. 35 people attended, looking at the potential for social change relating to displacement in areas including videogaming and hiphop. There was an associated public programme of talks, screenings and performance. With participants drawn via an open call from across the country, this was a fantastic opportunity for young people to make new connections and to feed into the development of Counterpoints Arts pop culture work.

We also held a networking session at Turner Contemporary to explore the archive of arts refugees & migration work produced in Kent over the past 15 years. The presentation from the session is [available online](#) (pdf)

6. Selected post-Festival survey comments from participating artists and organisations

What were the best things about Platforma 5?

“Working with the excellent team; overall quality of the programme”

“The conversations that emerged from the week were both inspiring and productive, helping to establish new networks and partnerships locally and beyond”

“Bringing a wide range of arts activity across Kent”

“The programme was rich and engaging, attracting new and returning audiences”

“Nish Kumar was a brilliant headliner, and I was particularly struck not just by the amount of laughter he got, but also the amount of applause – suggesting he was articulating the political feelings of the audience and that we were very happy that somebody was saying these things.”

“Working with such a supportive partner and the collective ambition for Kent and Medway”

“The overall growth of the Kent network throughout the planning and delivery process”

What would you have liked more of / done differently?

“More time to work with the venues and potential participants which we would still like to do. It has raised our awareness of the barriers people face and sadly of racist attitudes in some potential venues”

“There were last minute programme changes which impacted the information put out on social media. Ideally, the programme would be finalised weeks in advance”

“More educational and outreach work in schools & work places”

“We needed to understand how to publicise it more effectively”

“Time to participate in more events!”

“More time to attend/ longer festival?”

What do you think should be the ongoing focus of this network in Kent/Medway?

“Supporting creatives to share the outcomes of their projects with new audiences”

“From a Thanet perspective: regeneration vs gentrification; ongoing discussion on: integration of minorities, homelessness, inter-generational exchange, issues of isolation, identity crisis, addictions, social class divide.”

“More collaborations , meetings and shows across Kent during Black History Month”

“Working with artists and networks”

“Use of the arts as a catalyst to bring diverse factions of community together”

“Reaching into smaller towns and communities”

“Collaborative creative projects, recognition for locally based artists”

“The lack of the arts in Kent and Medway was a re-occurring conversation. We spoke about joint-funding applications, continuing learning labs and events that promote creativity in areas of need.”

“To bring more of this kind of work to the area at a time of raised social tension and incidence of hate crime. This work is so important and this just feels like the beginning of something”

“Let’s do this wide range of arts activity every October in Kent”

Additional post-Platforma 5 observations from Counterpoints Arts:

Capacity for organisations supporting refugees is very stretched, often making it difficult for them to participate in arts programmes

It is not possible to view the arts or refugees & migration in isolation from other social issues, including poverty, insecurity, the state of public services and funding.

People from refugee and migrant backgrounds can be seen as “hard to reach” - which might reflect a number of issues, including people not feeling welcome (from the arts and broader public life), lack of relevance in arts programming, experiences of racism, experiences of tokenism.

Capacity in the arts seems to be concentrated in relatively few organisations across the region.

Representation, leadership and access to mainstream spaces and support are key for future development.

The arts can be a strongly divisive force, confirming and even exaggerating differences in power, wealth and status.

7. Next steps

We know that there is a demand for more opportunities for artists from refugee and migrant backgrounds, and for refugee and migrant communities. It has also been clear how much people and organisations have benefitted from new connections across sectors and across the region, and a number of new partnerships and collaborations are ongoing.

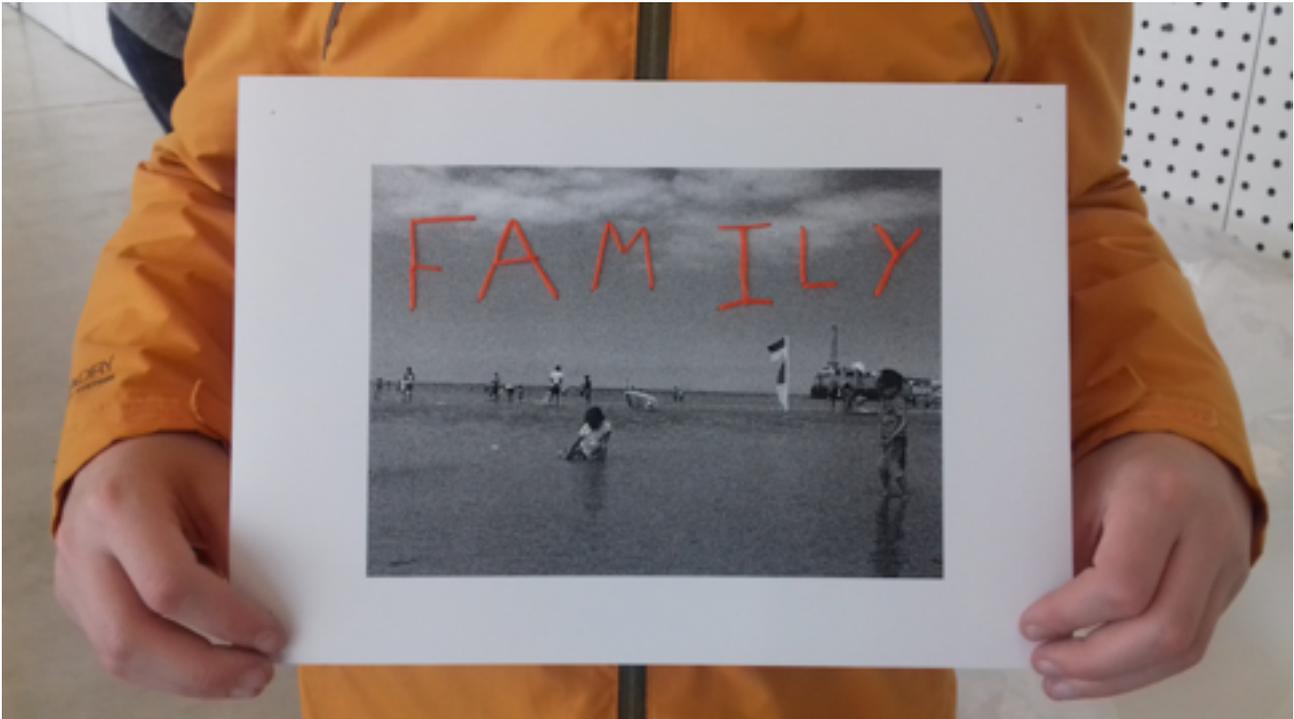
Our focus on Kent & Medway continues for at least the next two years and in the coming months we will be exploring how we can help bring new funding for this work, both from within the region and from national / international sources. There is already a clear interest in connecting up work across the region for Refugee Week and Black History Month.

It will also be important for us to continue building connections between the larger arts organisations with regular funding and the smaller groups and individual artists. The process of developing Platforma 5 has revealed something of the ecology of the arts sector in different places across the region and it is clear that while arts at grassroots level will always persist, it has the potential to really flourish with more mainstream support.

We will continue to explore links with existing networks - both within the arts (eg Diversity Arts Network) and more broadly (University of Kent, [NHS Migrant communities programme](#), [South East Strategic Partnership for Migration](#))

And...Platforma 6 will take place in Yorkshire in 2021

“Why Margate?” workshop by Aida Silvestri, Turner Contemporary



PLATFORMA 5 PROGRAMME

<https://www.platforma.org.uk/platforma-5-kent-and-medway/>

Online: As part of Platforma 5, City of Sanctuary launched their free [Sanctuary in Arts resource pack](#)

September/October 2019: No Direction Home

Stand-up comedy workshops & performances in Gravesend & Sittingbourne – Counterpoints Arts in partnership with Ideas Test, Woodville Theatre, Cohesion Plus. No Direction Home is produced by Counterpoints Arts & Camden People's Theatre.

September/October: Hiphop and spoken word workshops with young people

Led by Oliver Seagar with Pie Factory, Music for Change and Counterpoints Arts.

September-October: Worse Things Happen At Sea, Ramsgate, 10.00-22.00

This art installation by Mooch is a Morse code soundtrack within the Ramsgate lighthouse listing over a thousand names of vessels lost on the Goodwin Sands. Imagine how it feels to be lost in a storm at sea as the Morse distress call reminds you of the perils beyond the harbour walls, over many centuries, to the present day.

14 September-13 October: Home – The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge, Canterbury

An exhibition of artwork created by textile artist Anna Ray and a group of mothers living in Ashford long term residents and recently resettled Syrian women. Over the course of seven months, Anna worked with the group to explore the theme of 'home'. The aim of the commission was to bring a new community together, to discover commonalities and celebrate differences. Through weekly workshops, the participants worked with drawing, painting, print, feltmaking, weaving and stitch. As they made artwork together, the women shared stories of their homelives, speaking of the joys of motherhood and the challenges they face. Since the project drew to a close last year the group have continued to make artwork together as friends, drawing on the skills and confidence gained from this unique project. Home was commissioned by People United, The Diocese of Canterbury and Ashford Borough Council, funded by Arts Council England.

3-5 October: Music After Detention: Dover Residency

Music in Detention (MiD), in collaboration with musician Oliver Seagar are running a 3 day residency in Dover, with musicians they worked with whilst incarcerated in the UK's Immigration Detention System. Until 2015 there was an Immigration Removal Centre in Dover, sited in Dover's Western Heights Nature Reserve. Some of MiD's musicians were held there. Includes: 5 October Music After Detention Gig @ The Lighthouse in Deal 20:30 – 23:00

3-6 October: Custom Folkestone presents: Something Held in the Mouth

A four day festival bringing together artists and creative practitioners to present a diverse programme of art, events, workshops and talks about the poetics of food, the politics of its migrations and the ways in which our bodies hold these stories. The festival convenes dialogues around the way food crosses boundaries and creates connections across the world, as well as exploring the intersections between art, food and local markets to forge new alliances through geopolitical conversations. Events include, 6 October, Community Meal with menu designed by Lucky Moyo + music from Lucky & friends.

7 October: Platforma 5 Launch event at Kent County Council, Maidstone 17.00-18.30

A special event in partnership with Kent County Council for the official launch of Platforma 5.

9 October: No Direction Home at Woodville Theatre 19.00-20.15

Stand-up performance featuring local people who have attended the workshops, plus special guest headliners. From Counterpoints Arts in partnership with Cohesion Plus & Woodville Theatre.

11 October: Building Partnerships, Huguenot Museum, Rochester 13.00-16.00 – How can museums and heritage organisations engage sustainably with refugees and migrants?

A free seminar from Counterpoints Arts in partnership with the Huguenot Museum and The Migration Museum Project.

11 October: Swale Festival of Light in Sittingbourne, with Cohesion Plus & Ideas Test

Following workshops local schools to create lanterns around core values of respect, excellence, friendship and equality led by artists commissioned for Platforma 5, a parade as part of a colourful community festival.

15-30 October: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Art Project, Sittingbourne Library

Young refugees and asylum seekers have created an art exhibition inspired by their journeys to Kent and hopes for the future.

16-27 October: Why Folkestone? by Aida Silvestri, Brewery Tap, Folkestone

A new exhibition for Platforma 5 by the internationally-exhibited photographer Aida Silvestri. Presented alongside her previous work Even This Will Pass.

18-25 October: Lilacs In Bloom by Joy C Martindale, Jarman Building – University of Kent

A participatory artwork made in collaboration with survivors of modern-day slavery and human trafficking.

8 October – 8 November: Platforma 5 @ 101 Social Club, Margate

As part of their Autumn/Winter programme, 101 Social Club in Margate presents a series of installations, screenings and talks

21-25 October Platforma 5 takeover at Turner Contemporary & 101 Social, Margate

A week-long programme of artist-led engagement & talks linked to 2019 Turner Prize exhibition. Co-commissioned and co-curated by Counterpoints Arts and Turner Contemporary.

Programming includes:

Rich Wiles, Ongoing Journeys – an intimate, collaborative photographic exhibition and accompanying interactive multi-media web platform. It explores the idea of ‘family’ through the story of Rami, Ruba and their children as they attempt to rebuild their lives in Yorkshire following their displacement from Syria.

Aida Silvestri, Why Margate? Workshop (Photography & Embroidery) – Why did you choose Margate as your home?

Anna Ray and People United, Home (Crafting Workshop) – inspired by work with Syrian families in Ashford.

Sawt of the Earth, Sawt of Margate (Field Sound Recording Workshop) – in collaboration with sound artist, Mark Gergis.

Adam Chodzko, A Hostile Environment 2019 – Internationally renowned Kent based artist, Adam Chodzko, presents his past and current work engaging with questions of displacement, belonging and citizenship.

Local Network: Creating an Archive – (Networking event, open to public) – Exploring the history of arts, refugee and migration projects in Kent. How might we work collectively to bring this archive to life? (View Kent archive presentation – pdf)

Farhad Berahman, Memory, Slow Portraiture and the Afghan Camera Box – Workshop

Umama Hamido, On Akka's Shore – Performance and Screening

Jillian Edelstein, Transitional Portraits, Photography and Displacement – Artist talk and photographic workshop

Henna Asikainen, 'Omens' Walk – from Turner Contemporary to 101 Social.

Headway East London, Submit to Love Studios – Gallery talks, sound installation and workshop

Juan del Gado: Drifting Narratives – Screening of Fleches Sans Corps

A Counterpoints Arts' Learning Lab in partnership with Plymouth College of Art – The Art of Networking and the Platforma Festival

21-26 October: Platforma 5 at Gulbenkian, in partnership with Counterpoints Arts

21-22 October: Pop culture / Young People / Migration & Social Change – retreat, Gulbenkian

Pop Culture and Social Change is a pioneering project from Counterpoints Arts exploring how the power of pop culture can be harnessed to shift the way we talk, think and feel about migration and displacement. (Invitation only)

21 October: Pop culture, arts & activism – Gulbenkian 18.00-19.00:

A free session open to all, linked to our pop culture retreat.

Followed by: 19.30pm Matangi/Maya/M.I.A. – film screening, Gulbenkian

A 2018 biographical documentary film about English rapper, artist & activist M.I.A.. Directed by Steve Loveridge

22 October: Popjustice scratch!, Gulbenkian 17.00:

A free performance, open to all, by participants in the pop culture retreat.

24 October: No Direction Home stand-up comedy – featuring Nish Kumar, Gulbenkian

After a sell-out gig at the Southbank Centre in London, No Direction Home bring a hilarious line-up of comedians from refugee & migrant backgrounds to Canterbury for this one-off gig in partnership with University of Kent. Hosted by Tom Parry with special guest headliner Nish Kumar (The Mash Report). Featuring Abdulwahab Tahhan and Usman Khalid, PLUS Gulbenkian stand-up students Daria Roland, Victor Pang & Alf White. Q&A with Nish Kumar at 6pm.

25 October: The Last Tree, Gulbenkian

A new feature film, written & directed by Shola Amoo. Presented as part of Black History Month by Kent University Union.

26 October: Platforma Family Day, Gulbenkian, from 10.00

Artist and performer-led workshops, performances and fun for the whole family, around themes of home, identity and migration.

26 October: Rafiki Jazz – Up Close!, Gulbenkian, 20.00

Celebrating unity in diversity with their 4th CD release ‘Saraba Sufiyana’ (Mystic Utopia) Rafiki Jazz music is ‘a love-letter to this intricate world in all its beauty and complexity’ and features at its heart the compelling vocal quartet of Sufi Sarah Yaseen, Hebrew-Hindi singer-songwriter Avital Raz, Egyptian master-musician Mina Salama and Senegalese griot Kadialy Kouyate. Featuring guest Gaelic vocalist Kaitlin Ross & post-show Q&A hosted by Emily Zaraa.

25 October: The Ship Swallower, Ramsgate, drop in anytime 19.00-21.00

An immersive installation, the latest of Mooch’s explorations of the notorious “ship swallowing” Goodwin Sands and site of countless deaths at sea.

26 October: They Came In Crowded Boats, Tom Thumb Theatre, Margate, 13.30

The Margate Film Festival presents a selection of short films that explore the motivations, challenges and perceptions of global migration and refugee stories.

26 October: Shiva Nova presents Romany Diamonds, Quarterhouse Folkestone, 19.30

Three generations of one traditional Gypsy Roma family playing acoustic magic with fire and soul; amazing audiences with back-to-front violin playing and soul-searching ballads followed by musical Gypsy mayhem. Plus: The World in a Tent Roma exhibition will be in the foyer all day hosting workshops in Roma music from 4pm-5pm and dance from 5pm-6pm for everyone to join in!

27 October: Platforma 5 : Four Artists, Quarterhouse, Folkestone, 11.00

Presentations from Henna Asikainen, Aida Silvestri, Rich Wiles, & Mooch – plus discussions and questions & the launch of the Migrants In Culture survey.

See Henna’s presentation: <https://www.platforma.org.uk/henna-asikainen-finding-a-way-home/>

27 October: Re-imagining of The Landing of the Belgian Refugees, Folkestone Harbour, 13.00

Everybody is invited to join in an historic recreation of Folkestone’s favourite painting The Landing of the Belgian Refugees by Fredo Franzoni. Plus Belgian Waterzooi (fish stew made with Belgian beer!) on the main menu at Custom Folkestone and a free vegan version for the participants.