

The world's first Empathy HQ – a space for empathy, art and community – opens in Bow, London



"What does empathy mean to you?" reads the window at the world's first Empathy HQ in E3, Bow, London. Photo, Enni-Kukka Tuomala.

Empathy HQ, Bow, London
www.empathyheadquarters.com

Enni-Kukka Tuomala Solo Exhibition, Nunnery Gallery, Bow
21 May – 8 August 2021 | bowarts.org/nunnery

In March 2021 artist and designer Enni-Kukka Tuomala opens the world's first "Empathy HQ" at 26 Bromley High Street in Bow, London. The Empathy HQ is a new creative space dedicated to empathy, acting as both a working art studio for Tuomala, as well as an open community space for local people, groups and organisations in the surrounding E3 area.

Taking over an old disused shop front on Bromley High Street, Tuomala has transformed the former beauty salon into a light and airy space filled with art and creativity. The facade of the Empathy HQ is a mirror, reflecting its surrounding environment and people. The mirror plays on the core principle of empathy to adopt different perspectives and points-of-view to better understand one another, and ourselves. By both blending into its context, and standing out and shining brightly in the ever changing London weather, the front to the Empathy HQ captures the attention of everyone passing by. Designed by Tuomala, and produced and installed by local East London Puck Studio, the facade invites passers by to consider their relationship to empathy by asking them "What does empathy mean to you?".

Enni-Kukka Tuomala has said:

"I have been dreaming of opening an HQ dedicated to Empathy for years. Today, it feels more relevant than ever. As an artist my empathy practice is built on collaboration, conversation and exchange, that's why I want to explore what a creative studio space rooted in its surrounding environment and community could be. To launch a dedicated space for empathy in London, hopefully the first of many around the world, at a time when we are redefining what physical closeness means, how we can create meaningful

connections with one another in a post-Covid world, and what public and private space stands for feels important. In the first few months of renovating the space I have already met so many friendly, curious and generous local people. I cannot wait to have the opportunity to work together and get to know one another."

The Empathy HQ project is generously supported by Bow Arts, the Connecting People & Places Fund by the Foundation for Future London and City of London, as well as Poplar HARCA. On 21 May 2021 Bow Arts will also open Tuomala's first solo art exhibition in their Nunnery Gallery, located across the road from the Empathy HQ on Bow Road.

Sophie Hill, Director of Arts & Events, Bow Arts, has said:

"Enni-Kukka Tuomala's empathy-centred practice is more relevant now than ever; her unique approach of exploring and inspiring empathy through the open-reaching arms of art has proven transformative in previous projects – and right now is sorely needed. The pandemic has left many feeling isolated and scared; empathy will be key in bringing communities together once again. Art has a huge role to play – the World Health Organisation just announced a \$15m initiative to support artist-led projects to improve mental, social and environmental health in the wake of the pandemic. After a four-month long closure, we can't wait to reopen the Nunnery Gallery with Tuomala's exhibition, inviting our audiences to experience a physical installation of empathy after many months of feeling apart."

Enni-Kukka Tuomala will be running free empathy related activities and creative workshops throughout the spring and summer. Respecting Government Covid-19 guidelines, all initial activities will take place remotely, and / or outdoors. Please follow #empathyHQ on Twitter and Instagram, as well as www.empathyheadquarters.com for updates.

ENDS

Notes to editors

PRESS ENQUIRIES, IMAGE AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS

Please contact Georgina Walters, Marketing Officer
Email: media@bowarts.com
or Sophie Hill, Director of Arts & Events
Tel: 07764 232 167 | Email: shill@bowarts.com

Enni-Kukka Tuomala Solo Exhibition
21 May – 8 August 2021

Nunnery Gallery, 181 Bow Road, London E3 2SJ
bowarts.org/nunnery

Opening hours: Tues to Sun, 11am – 4pm



Empathy HQ, Photo Enni-Kukka Tuomala.

ARTIST

About Enni-Kukka Tuomala

Enni-Kukka Tuomala is a Finnish Empathy Artist and Designer based in London. Her vision is to transform empathy from an individual feeling to a collective and radical power for positive social change through public interventions, installations, experiences, processes and tools.

Having created artworks and led projects around the world from London and Tokyo, to New York and Helsinki, Tuomala's collaborative and research-based practice builds on understanding and investigating the delicate relationships between empathy, culture, space and systems. Her work aims to break taboos and challenge social, cultural and behavioural norms in order to remove barriers to difficult conversations and bridge the growing divides in our society, whether between humans, or humans and other species. She has worked with the Finnish Parliament since 2018 to bring empathy into politics, collaborating with six Members of Parliament to create Empatia Ele; a collection of empathy tools for politics. Tuomala has also created empathy commissions for the likes of the BBC, Greater London Authority, London Borough of Newham, Imperial College London, Bath University, LIFT, Bow Arts and Virgin, including challenging 50 global Virgin CEOs to a series of empathy exercises as a part of the Embodying Empathy installation and launching the Campaign for Empathy, the world's first community-centered campaign to promote empathy through art and design.

A graduate of the Royal College of Art, before opening her studio Tuomala worked for years as a Strategist in advertising at Saatchi&Saatchi and adam&eveDDB in London. She recently installed her first permanent public artwork in London, and is currently the Designer in Residence 2020-21 at the Design Museum, London, and the Open House Artist in Residence at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge.

www.ennikukka.com | Twitter: @ennikukka | Instagram: @akin.kollektiv

PARTNERS

About Bow Arts

Bow Arts is an arts education charity that provides affordable creative workspaces for over 500 emerging artists. Alongside this, Bow Arts manages one of the country's most exciting

learning programmes, which takes world-class artists into 100 schools to improve the lives and learning of children and young people. Bow Arts runs the Nunnery Gallery, a public gallery that supports a diverse range of high quality exhibitions and events as well as the delivery of a public arts programme. Established in 1995, Bow Arts holds an important place in east London which is fast becoming known as London's Artist Quarter.

bowarts.org | Twitter: @bowarts | Instagram: @bowarts

About Foundation for Future London

Foundation for Future London is an independent charity created to connect communities, the new East Bank and its globally renowned arts, innovation and cultural partners to ensure East Bank is London's must-visit destination and becomes a resilient, thriving, world-class neighbourhood of local and global significance. We're fundraising to expand grant-making opportunities for East Bank communities and partners and facilitating creative placemaking, to support local places, learning, training and employment through arts, education, culture and innovation. Our vision is for a vibrant and inclusive creative East Bank, creating authentic engagement with local people of East London in the boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

www.future.london | Twitter: @FdnFutureLondon | Instagram: @foundationforfuturelondon

About City of London Corporation

The City of London Corporation is the governing body of the Square Mile dedicated to a vibrant and thriving City, supporting a diverse and sustainable London within a globally-successful UK.

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

About Poplar Harca

Poplar HARCA is a housing and regeneration association based in Tower Hamlets, which owns and manages approximately 9000 homes, 100 shops and several community centres and greenspaces. They are also proud landlords of Poplar Works, a home for anyone working or training in fashion and making, in East London.

www.poplarharca.co.uk | Twitter: @PoplarHARCA | Instagram: @poplar.harca