

National Centre for Writing launches in Norwich, heralding new chapter for literary city

New centre to champion literary translation, artistic experimentation
and collaboration



The National Centre for Writing launches this week in Norwich, following a £2m extension and restoration of historic Dragon Hall. The new centre, backed by patrons including Margaret Atwood, JM Coetzee, Sarah Perry, Elif Shafak and Ali Smith, will be a physical and digital space to explore the artistic and social power of creative writing, and support the creation and enjoyment of world literature.

Based in England's first UNESCO City of Literature, the National Centre for Writing will work with an established network of local, national and international partners, offering a year-round programme of activities including schools outreach, talent development programmes and public events, as well as online courses, new commissions and partnerships.

In its opening week, the National Centre will gather together a global group of writers including Max Porter, Vahni Capildeo and Panashe Chigumadzi to discuss the place of writing in society. Brought together from 10 different countries, the group will respond to Orwell's 1946 essay 'Why I Write' as part of a 3-day symposium organised by the Centre. Other events in the week include a public event with prize-winning author Ali Smith.

Commenting on the launch, Chris Gribble, CEO of the National Centre for Writing said: *"After several years in the planning, we are thrilled to celebrate this new chapter for the Writers' Centre. Norwich has been a literary city for over 900 years: a place of ideas where the power of words has changed lives and transformed literature. At a time when global horizons seem to be shrinking, political ambition reducing and human rights under increasing threat, we believe that sharing stories, helping stories travel and supporting writers and translators has never been more critical. At home in the wonderfully restored and extended Dragon Hall, but alive online and across the globe, we are committed to exploring how the written word can inspire, challenge and change the world we live in, and seeing how far we can push the boundaries of writing and literary translation"*

The National Centre will work with its network of partners to explore the opportunities and challenges faced by the literature sector and, in particular, champion literary translation, artistic experimentation and collaboration between the creative industries. The ambitious opening year programme will include staging a number of specially commissioned immersive theatre and installation projects; hosting a series of conferences with the country's leading poetry journals to discuss their role and future in the country's literary ecology; and realising a national translation project- Invisible Communities- exploring the artistic and social impact of literary translation in the UK.

Building on its achievements as Writers' Centre Norwich, the National Centre will continue to develop relationships with the literature sector internationally, partnering with British Council and ACE on the International Literature Showcase to promote UK writers and literature professionals around the world, facilitating new partnerships, and encouraging the global exchange of ideas between authors and arts organisations. The NCW's opening year will culminate in the UK's first ever gathering of all the UNESCO cities of literature in May 2019 to discuss how place, art and community can work together to improve the social and economic conditions in cities around the world.

Notes to Editors:

The Patrons of the National Centre for Writing are: Margaret Atwood, John Boyne, JM Coetzee, Anthony Horowitz OBE, Jon McGregor, Sarah Perry, Elif Shafak, Ali Smith CBE, Rose Tremain CBE.

To download patron photos or time lapse footage of the build at Dragon Hall, please visit:
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1c2ET79t3S3wovXU_fSX-zHYCkpe79GL

Launch week programme:

- Monday 18th June, 6.30 – 8pm: Topping out Ceremony at Dragon Hall. With speeches from writers Sarah Perry and Luke Wright and civic guests. Invited guests only. Press accreditation available.
- Tuesday 19th- Friday 22nd June: Worlds Symposium. Writers from ten countries come to Dragon Hall. Responding to George Orwell's 1946 essay, the theme will be 'Why We Write' with attending authors including Ali Smith, Vahni Capildeo, Evie Wyld, Max Porter, Panashe Chigumadzi and Eleanor Catton.
- Thursday 21st June, 7:30pm: A midsummer evening with Ali Smith. A special event to mark the opening of the National Centre for Writing with Ali Smith CBE, a Baileys and Goldsmiths prize-winning, Man Booker-shortlisted author and Patron of NCW. Tickets £8/ £6 conc from nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk

Founding Partners: Arts Council England, Norwich City Council, University of East Anglia and Norfolk County Council.

Partners for the launch year programme:

Arts Council England / British Centre for Literary Translation / British Council / British Library / Dead Good Books / European Council of Literary Translators Associations / Frankfurt Book Fair / Galley Beggar Press / International Cities of Refuge Network / London Book Fair / Norwich City Council / Norfolk County Council / Norfolk and Norwich Festival / Norwich Arts Centre / Norwich Cathedral / Salt Publishing / UNESCO City of Literature Network / Schools across the county including seven target schools in areas of deprivation

About the National Centre for Writing:

NCW is a literature development organisation based in Norwich England's first UNESCO City of Literature. The National Centre for Writing at Dragon Hall promotes great literature, inspires communities through the power of writing, reading and literary translation, nurtures literary talent and hosts world-class events. www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk

 www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk  @WritersCentre

About Writers' Centre Norwich

Writers' Centre Norwich was established in 2003 as a pioneering collaboration between the University of East Anglia, Arts Council England, Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council. The aim of the centre was to explore the relationship between writers and local communities and to stimulate debate about literature and its place in society. It exceeded all expectations and became a nationally significant organisation, developing pioneering projects with partners around the world and becoming a driving force behind new ways of working in the literature sector. In 2012 it successfully led the bid to have Norwich named England's first UNESCO City of Literature, building on the city's reputation as a centre for literary excellence.