



***“Ruskin in Sheffield has brought together people from diverse communities in Sheffield in remarkable ways and celebrated the creativity in each and every one of us.”***

Participant

*Ruskin in Sheffield* was a programme of events and activities created to revitalise the connection between the Ruskin Collection - John Ruskin’s gift to the Victorian workers of Sheffield - and the people of Sheffield today. It was initiated by the Guild of St George, working with Museums Sheffield, and ran from 2014 - 2019.

The programme set out to directly impact on the local communities it engaged; on interpretation and engagement with the Ruskin Collection, and on the Guild and its international network of Companions (members).

The impact was measured in relation to Ruskin’s key ideas about making lives better:

### **No Wealth but Life**

*Fair and equal enjoyment of the world around us*

### **The Rural Economy**

*Craft, good livelihoods and care of land*

### **Not for Present Use Alone**

*Create and conserve for future generations*

### **Go to Nature**

*Nature as a primary source of beauty, inspiration, education and artistic practice*

These ideas were freely and responsively married together with each community’s interests and needs, inviting people to draw in nature, discuss the wealth that matters, perform the past, protest and make policies for better futures, walk together, make together, or catch images of their local heritage and possible futures projected outdoors in local parks and urban spaces at twilight.

The programme was rooted in socially engaged practice and underpinned by four key events which offered democratic breathing spaces for people to connect with their past, where they live, their creativity, the future, and each other: *Pop-Up Ruskin Museum*; *Ruskin Museum Makeover*; *Ruskin’s Use & Beauty Parlour*, and *The People’s Palace of Possibility*.

Image: *Big Draw on the Manor*, Ruskin in Sheffield, 2017

## Key Impacts

**“I love how Ruskin in Sheffield celebrated kindness and creativity in our community.”**

Meersbrook Participant

- Opened eyes to the relevance of Ruskin’s ideas today, especially in relation to environment and wellbeing.
- Sparked or strengthened social consciousness and agency to act in programme partners.
- Introduced or reinforced the value of creativity and socially engaged practice in engaging with diverse communities.
- Connected or reconnected thousands of people with local nature, their own creativity and each other.
- Engaged diverse audiences with where they live and involved them in their local futures.
- Fostered new community connections to build resilient local networks.
- Liberated new possibilities for interpretation and engagement with the Ruskin Collection.
- Increased the number, diversity and capacity of the Guild’s network of Companions, extending the Guild’s impact and reach.
- Transformed perceptions of John Ruskin from local heritage figure to globally relevant, radical thinker.



These impacts suggest possibilities for a dynamic new era of **creativity, diverse engagement, activism, and collaboration** for the Guild of St George, the Ruskin Collection at Museums Sheffield, and, indeed, Ruskin’s ideas in general.

They encourage all of us to take stock of our approach to collective heritage, to connect with an even wider range of communities, to respond actively to the challenges of climate and social change and to act boldly in the use of our combined resources in helping to create better futures for *everyone*.

Images, from left to right: *Pop-Up Ruskin Museum 2015; Ruskin Museum Makeover 2018; Ruskin's Use & Beauty Parlour 2016*

## Key Figures

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**76**  
events  
&  
activities

A community-led creative programme of participatory pop-up community hubs, festivals, walks, discussions and performances. Events were outdoor-focussed, underpinned by socially engaged practice, with celebratory launches and endings throughout.

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**6**  
key  
communities

The programme wove its way through parks, community centres, markets, rivers, galleries, libraries and street hoardings across Walkley and Meersbrook, former homes to the Ruskin Collection; Totley, home to the Guild's Victorian utopian communal land project at St George's Farm; Manor & Castle, the Millennium Gallery and the City Centre.

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**30**  
community  
& culture  
partners

The programme was rooted in partnership and collaboration. Partners included Museums Sheffield, University of Sheffield, Heeley Trust, Walkley Carnegie Library, Manor & Castle Development Trust, Friends of Meersbrook Hall, Walkley Community Centre, the Bare Project, Opus Independents, The Big Draw, and the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice.

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**150**  
professional  
artists &  
volunteers

Over 50 professional artists and almost 100 volunteers (from age 18 to 70+), including Guild Companions and Museums Sheffield volunteers, facilitated a vital mix of high quality participatory creative activity and space for conversation and reflection with participants and audiences.

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**25,000**  
audiences &  
participants

Adults, teenagers and children enjoyed time and space to try a range of hands-on creative activities, share reflections about where they lived, their local heritage, and possible local futures. Audiences and participants were as often individuals as families and friends.

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**£149K**  
raised towards  
£193K  
programme

The level of programme funding secured in addition to the £44K provided by the Guild meant that almost all events were free. It was funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England, Catalyst Festival of Creativity (Sheffield Hallam University), Sheffield Year of Making, University of Sheffield, Church Burgesses Educational Foundation, Sheffield Grammar School Exhibition Foundation, and Mount Pleasant Educational Foundation.

This Impact Summary is based on the findings of an evaluation of the *Ruskin in Sheffield* programme, overseen by an external consultant, Cara Sutherland, in 2020. The evaluation involved survey feedback from over 100 contributors: partners, the Guild of St George and Museums Sheffield directors and staff and Guild Companions, as well as hundreds of feedback comments from audiences and participants.



Left image: Street quote bearing John Ruskin's maxim *There is no wealth but life*, next to Walkley Carnegie Library, bearing Extinction Rebellion's symbol, Summer 2019. Right image: *Study of a Peacock's Breast Feather* by John Ruskin, Ruskin Collection, Collection of the Guild of St George, courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

A user-friendly handbook sharing the impact, principles and practice of *Ruskin in Sheffield* will be published by the Guild of St George in Autumn 2020, written by Ruth Nutter, Producer of *Ruskin in Sheffield* 2014 - 2019.

***Paradise is Here: Building community around things that matter* will be available at the Guild's online shop from mid-October at [www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk](http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk). To reserve a copy, price £8, please email [admin@guildofstgeorge.org.uk](mailto:admin@guildofstgeorge.org.uk).**



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