

WE ARE THRESHOLD STUDIOS AND THIS IS OUR STORY OF 2023



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Images: Electric Egg



WELCOME FROM THRESHOLD'S CHAIR **PROFESSOR HARRIET GROSS**

Welcome to our annual impact report where we look back on an exceptional year against the backdrop of 25 years of Threshold Studios.

And what a year it's been.

We began 2023 continuing our intensive period of fundraising, organisational change and development to drive forward our future ambitions.

In a competitive funding landscape we were delighted that we started the year as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, for which we are immensely grateful to ACE for further investment until 2026.

We were also thrilled to become a key partner in the city of Lincoln's ambitious Town Deal, and we began developing our programme of creative digital placemaking in Lincoln.

We shared our knowledge and expertise with colleagues from arts, education and tourism organisations across the country at a number of conferences and events.

We collaborated with more than 65 creative practitioners and we produced over 50 digital art commissions.

We celebrated the return of our biennial celebration of digital culture: Frequency Festival – an event that sits at the heart of our drive to connect people and place through fantastic digital experiences. And it was our biggest to date.



Since 2013 Frequency has seen daily audiences triple, with over 32,000 taking part for four days in October. And its economic impact has more than doubled – reaching £750,000. Frequency is now considered to be an exemplar of creative digital placemaking in action.

And we ended 2023 saying farewell to Threshold's Co-founder and CEO Uzma Johal MBE while extending congratulations to Samantha Lindley, Threshold's Creative Director who begins her new journey as Chief Executive and Creative Director.

> [Watch the highlights of our year here.](#)

We're Threshold Studios: a nationally leading creative and cultural agency that specialises in Creative Digital Placemaking

Our 25th anniversary year at a glance:



32,000
Frequency Festival
visitors
(Tripling daily audiences
since 2013)

10%
of audiences on
their first visit
to a major
cultural
event

2023

Was an extraordinary
year of achievement
and growth

We created **200**
talent development
opportunities, from
internships to
artist commissions



We turned Lincoln into
a digital playground
during our inclusive
biennial

**Frequency
Festival**

“Digital
innovations in
unlikely
locations.”

£750,000
economic
impact
(Doubling since
2013)



STAGED
OVER
60
CULTURAL
EXPERIENCES



We became
partners with
Destination
Lincolnshire
in the
**Lincoln
Connected**
Project



We connect people and place through shared digital and cultural experiences.

And make creative technologies accessible, so that people feel connected with society, their community and their place in the world.



2023 IN FOCUS PEOPLE

Through commissioning, skills development programmes and sector-led research and debate, we created opportunities for emerging and established talent to develop and thrive.



Meet Natalie Baker

Senior Producer at Maverick Media

University of Lincoln Media Production graduate Natalie Baker has an impressive CV with producing roles at Warner Bros and Disney amongst her credits. And it all began at Frequency...

How did you get involved with Frequency Festival?

I completed a 10-month internship in 2013 assisting the Production Manager in the months leading up to the festival.

During the festival, I would be onsite ensuring the smooth running of installations, working closely with artists and the tech team, and on hand to support the Production Manager throughout.

How did the experience benefit you personally and/or professionally?

It benefitted me hugely. This was my first production role since graduating with a degree in Media Production and I wasn't sure whether I wanted to be an animator, or how to apply my skills to a different role within the creative industry.

I really didn't know what being a Production Assistant meant, or that you could have a job organising creative people, in a creative environment, using your own creativity to help you do this. Discovering this role was a game changer for me, and the internship made me fall in love with production.

How has your experience with Threshold directly impacted on where you are now?

Not only did I realise I wanted a career in production, but it also set the bar extremely high for what to expect from a manager in terms of respect and how to treat your team.

Also, Threshold ensuring that their internships are paid made all the difference. Many graduates miss out on entry level opportunities because they're not able to take unpaid positions.

25
YEARS OF
IMPACT



My experience on Frequency Festival was insane. It was extremely long hours, hectic and chaotic days, and I was exhausted at the end of it, but I hadn't ever felt so satisfied and happy in a job, and coming out of it, I knew I wanted to pursue it as a career.

What advice would you give for anyone considering volunteering or working on the festival?

It's important that you are ready to give it enthusiasm and energy, tasks range all the way from the mundane to the exciting, and you have to want to be involved with all of it, this is what makes it so incredibly rewarding!

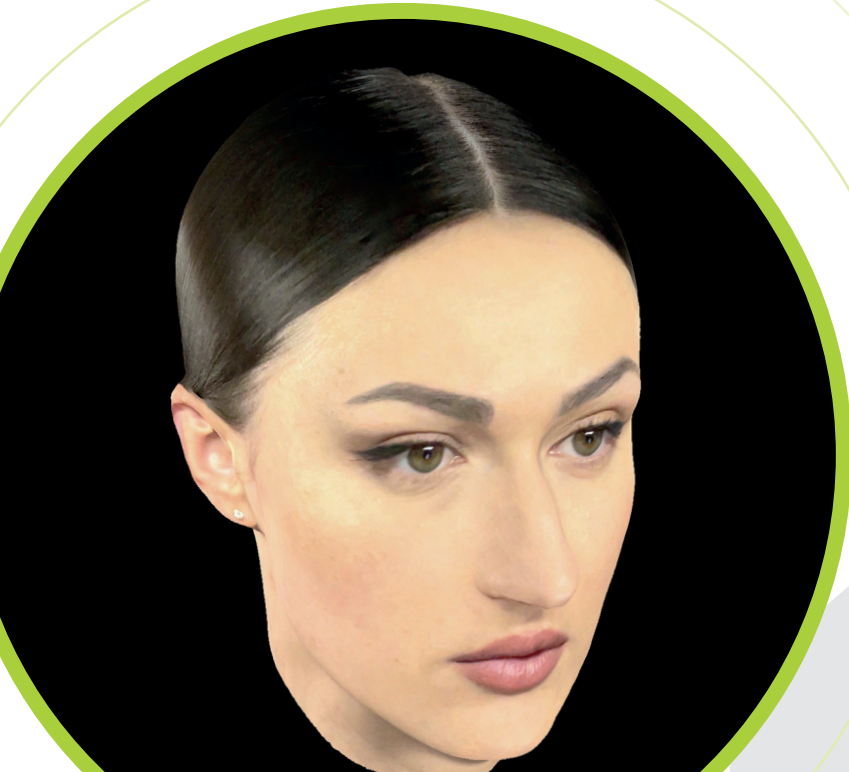
What key things did you learn as a result of your internship?

What a Production Assistant's role was and how it contributes to putting on successful event within a production team.

How to balance professionalism with being friends with the people you work with and finally the importance of respect within a professional team.

Meet Maria Mavropoulou

“Having such a unique space to exhibit my work definitely gave me a different perspective to see this series of works and consider the impact that such a space can have on how the work is perceived by the viewers.”



Hailing from Athens, visual artist Maria's work pushes the boundaries of photography into innovative realms like VR, screen-captured images, GAN, and AI-generated creations. Her work explores digital identity and representation in the post-social media era, algorithmic bias, network culture, power politics between machines and humans, and the multidimensionality of our experiences in our always-online world.

Maria was invited to develop and exhibit A Self-Portrait of an Algorithm at Frequency Festival in 2023. It was exhibited within St Mary Le Wigford Church and explored the remarkable intersection of technology and digital identity.

From the prehistoric marks of hands in cave walls to today's selfies, humans have always created images of themselves as a trace of their existence with any medium available to them. Today a new kind of intelligence, an artificial one, has been able to create images and I felt the need to ask it to portray itself to get to know it better.

Participating in FF23 was a fulfilling experience, enriched by the diverse audience that brought a spectrum of perspectives on the subjects that my work focuses on. The festive mood, the opportunity to meet international artists that work on the same topics, the support of the people who organise it and the beauty of Lincoln made it a truly memorable event.

Meet Beccy McCray

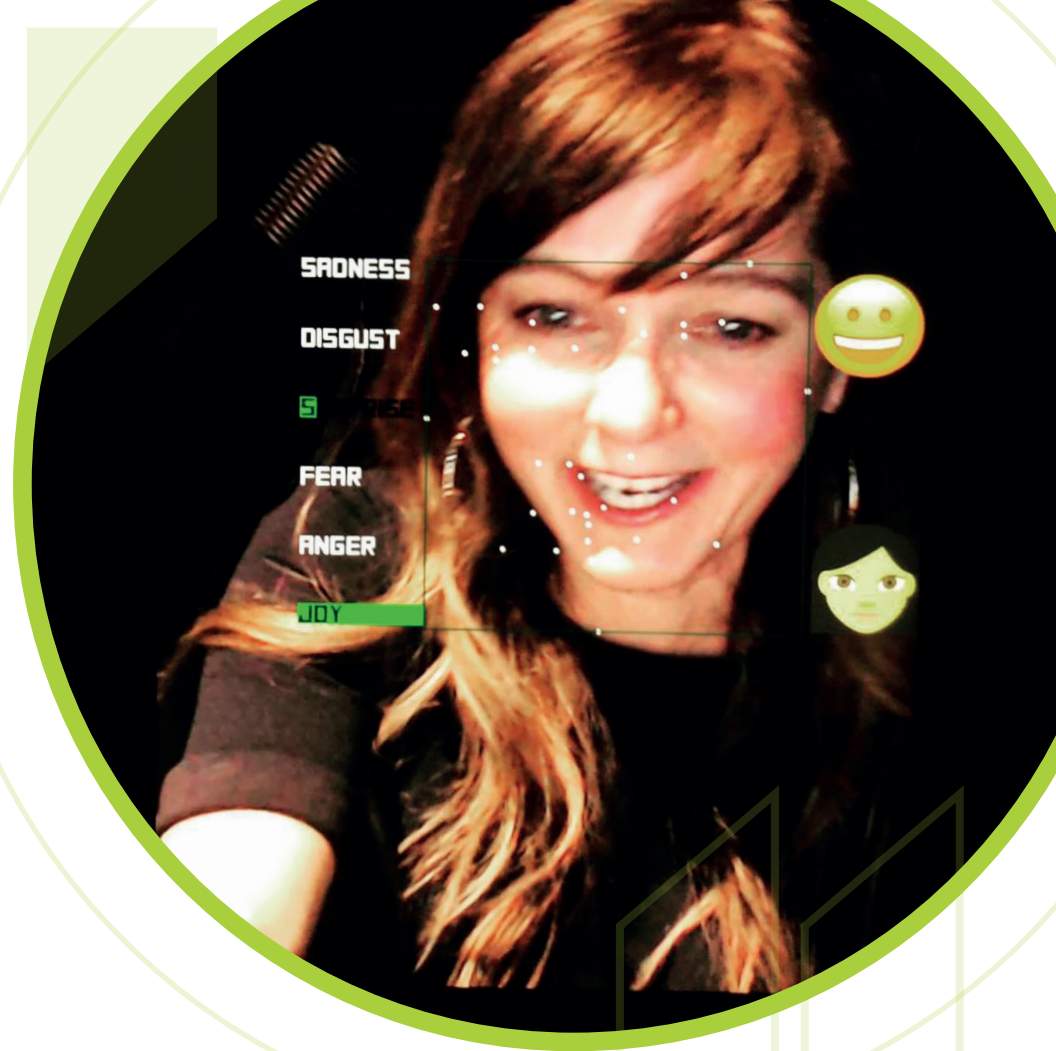
Frequency helps you to see a place through fresh eyes

Sussex-based Beccy McCray explores playful, socially engaged art and design using whatever media necessary to create human moments and imaginative acts of resistance. She seeks to break down boundaries between art, activism, and everyday life.

Beccy has partnered with many diverse groups and for more than a decade she has been working to inspire positive change at grass roots level, helping to create a more joyful and just future for both people and planet. For Frequency 23 she exhibited COEXISTENCE within our Campus Zone.

“What makes Frequency so unique and interesting is the way it makes digital culture really accessible. It manages to be cutting edge yet totally accessible – no mean feat! I’ve seen all ages engaging with my artwork and it’s been busy the whole time. It’s quite an unexpected audience to see interacting with digital works that has quite a powerful message behind it as well. I think having artwork in public spaces like this democratises art because so many people don’t feel welcome in those white cube spaces, like a lot of art feels very exclusive. So it’s great to make work and to be able to exhibit in such an inclusive and participatory way. It’s also great to see a festival such as this happening outside of London.

Art can change the way that people look at their own city and own spaces. I think it helps you to see a place through fresh eyes. Local pride is a really important thing. Especially in the time that we’re living in right now, I think national pride is kind of irrelevant these days, but local pride is so important, and especially for climate and nature. Having that sense of local pride is really important. Anything that fosters that is a good thing.”



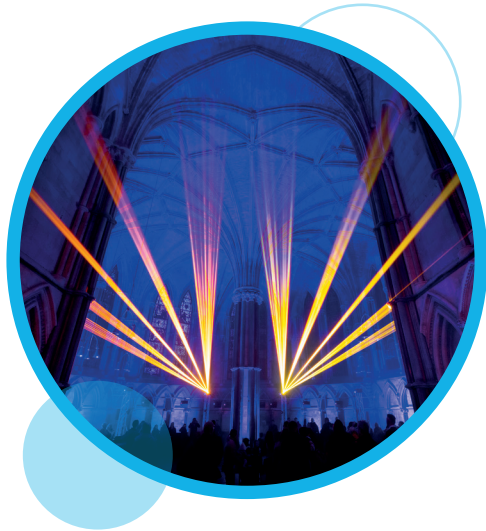
PROJECTS

Throughout the year we ran a series of public-facing digital experiences that connect people and place. But it was our biennial festival of digital culture that took centre stage, once again transforming the historic city of Lincoln into a future-facing digital playground!



FREQUENCY

We hosted more than 60 events across four days featuring the work of place-based local, national and international artists.



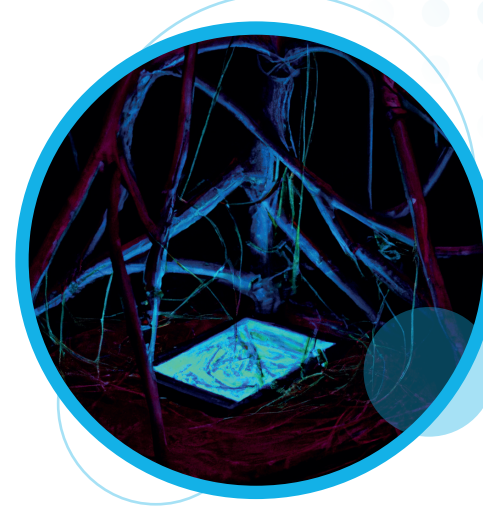
The Twilight Zone

Our Digital after Dark activity brought giant inflatable monsters, and spectacles of light and sound to Lincoln's visitor attractions. A highlight being Polaris: a dazzling laser light display inside Lincoln Cathedral's Chapter House, as part of the Lincoln Connected project.



The Discovery Zone

Lincoln's busy high street and surrounding venues become festival hotspots where you could interact with artificial intelligence, immerse yourself in nature and swing through the sky in a Leonardo da Vinci inspired virtual flying machine!



The Campus Zone

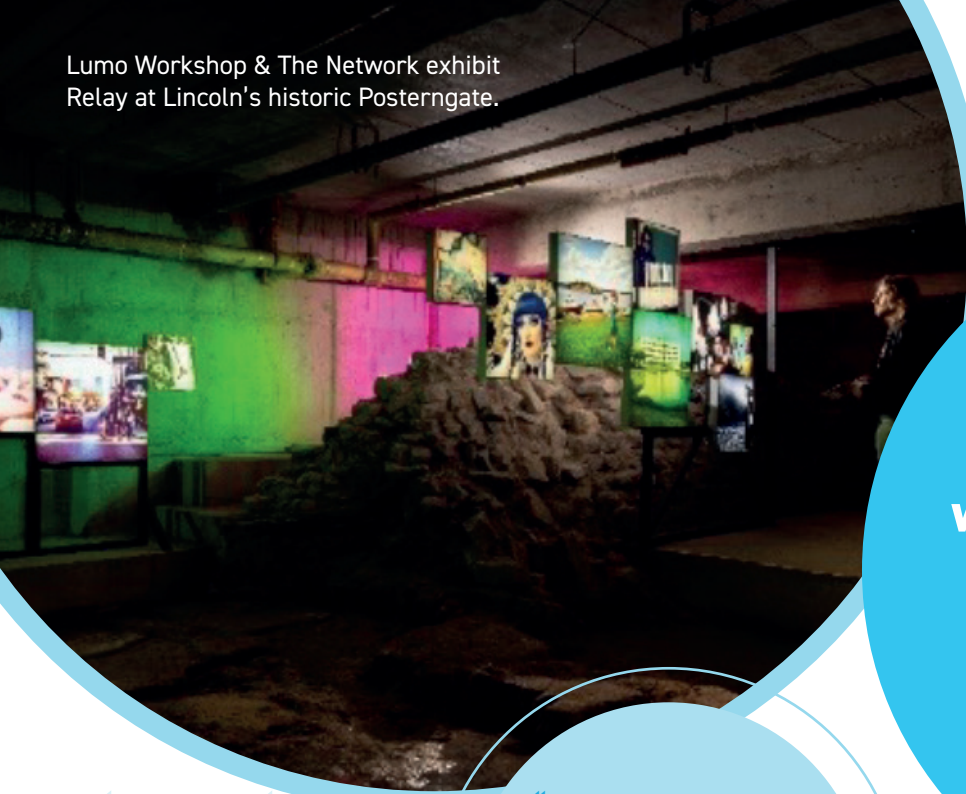
Our festival partner the University of Lincoln opened up its Brayford Campus and invited visitors to explore a world of digital interaction, with live & exclusive performances and interactive virtual theatre.

Digital innovations in unlikely locations

"Frequency Festival is, for me, about possibility and about innovation and excitement. It's future facing, but it's here in the present. And it also is about Lincoln as well. I think there's something very special about this city. You've got an amazing set of heritage buildings, but you've also got new buildings and I love that juxtaposition of the old and the new that Frequency Festival brings"

Darren Henley CBE,
Chief Executive Arts Council England

Lumo Workshop & The Network exhibit Relay at Lincoln's historic Posterngate.



“Brilliant to be back again in the city of Lincoln. The streets and buildings are being animated by art at every turn”

“Lincoln as a city just lends itself really well to exhibitions and installations. Having access to arts and culture is putting it on the map!”

“The festival was a great addition to a week's visit to Lincoln, very well organised and we will certainly be looking to attend again in 2025”

“It was an exciting, thoughtful and playful programme this year. I'm always left wanting more and can't believe how accessible it was!”

“It just breathes fresh life into somewhere that is quite familiar”

“Amazing night at Lincoln Cathedral for Frequency Festival. Polaris in the cathedral Chapter House was incredible and had my child engrossed”



Maria Mavropoulou's A Self Portrait of an Algorithm at St Mary Le Wigford Church



VOLO: Dreams of Flight
by Studio Go Go on Cornhill.

“What an excellent experience. Installations in the church was so cool”

“(It is)...my first time at the festival. I hadn't heard of it until this year but will definitely come again”.

“We visit Frequency every time, we love it!”

“We've loved exploring electronic, digital and hybrid art in our beloved city of Lincoln”

“Really vibrant and cool addition to Lincoln's cultural ecology”

“Thank you Frequency, absolutely loved the Twilight Zone tonight, Polaris was amazing”

“I think it is a great event and it really enriches Lincoln city centre”.



Seb Lee Delilse's Polaris in
Lincoln Cathedral's Chapter House

FREQUENCY FESTIVAL 2023 IMPACTS

Frequency Festival in Lincoln is a triumph of community and virtual placemaking

Stirworld Magazine





32,000
DIGITAL EXPLORERS

84% MOTIVATED TO RETURN TO CULTURAL EVENTS IN THE CITY

MORE THAN **60** PUBLIC-FACING ★★★
CULTURAL EXPERIENCES



£1.3M GROSS VISITOR SPEND FROM DAY AND OVERNIGHT VISITORS

14,000
CLIMB STEEP HILL TO ENTER THE TWILIGHT ZONE

95.7% 
VISITORS RATE FREQUENCY FESTIVAL
VERY GOOD/GOOD



TALENT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES GENERATED

1500
TICKETS SOLD FOR POLARIS

78 LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PLACE-BASED ARTISTS

72% STATED THE FESTIVAL HAD EITHER EXTREMELY OR VERY MUCH IMPROVED THEIR EXPERIENCE OF VISITING LINCOLN


ALMOST **3000**
TAKE A FLIGHT OF FANCY ON OUR VR SWING 



PIECES OF REGIONAL, NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE



41M GLOBAL REACH FOR FREQUENCY FESTIVAL MEDIA



Frequency Festival turned Lincoln into a hub of artistic experimentation. It brought the city to life with a vibrant tapestry of digital experiences: from shopping malls to the university campus, from Lincoln Cathedral to the kiosk and public squares, the organisers presented artworks in familiar places, exploring new ideas in unexpected ways. In a world where digital is the common language, the festival successfully demonstrated that art, technology, and the community can foster connections, spark dialogues, and shape the cultural landscape for years to come.

Contemporary Lynx

Frequency Festival in the News

Bella magazine

Banged up
Piper Perabo stars in a women's prison. Her prison mate (Kerry Washington) is a former FBI agent and a former FBI agent and an internationally renowned...
26 October, BBC

DIFFERENT TIMES
We return to the tumultuous American Civil War with the new historical drama 'Different Times'...
26 October, BBC

AUSSIE APPARITIONS
Jack Osborne is looking for paranormal activity down Under in a Tasmanian Asylum...
26 October, BBC

NEW THIS WEEK
Five Nights at Freddy's
When Freddy Fazbear's animatronic friends start appearing in abandoned Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria, it's a terrifying and deadly game of hide-and-seek...
26 October, BBC

EVENT
Frequency Festival
Lincoln's free international festival for digital culture returns from 26-29 October...
26 October, BBC

BOOK
Murder on the Dance Floor by Agatha Christie
A girl's school is the scene of a murder...
26 October, BBC

BOOK
Shirley Ballas by Sarah Waters
A woman's secret life is revealed...
26 October, BBC

BOOK
Heroine Point's Silent Night by Sophie Hannah
A Christmas mystery...
26 October, BBC

ITV Calendar
26 October at 07:26

- ◆ Hello, here are your early regional Good Morning Britain headlines. Today
- ◆ Fight to protect children from abusive parents
- ◆ River Witham in danger of bursting its banks
- ◆ Frequency Festival
- ◆ Plastic free Poppies

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18/10/2023

EVENT

Frequency Festival
Lincoln's free international festival for digital culture returns from 26-29 October. Artists will exhibit their work around the historic city with installations and immersive experiences. Timely topics include the impact of AI, genetic selection and how humans can co-exist with nature. Find out more at Frequency.org.uk.

Public libraries prioritising 'trans books'

Gender-critical works treated like Hitler's 'Mein Kampf'

The Standard

Snap! Evening Standard: Best Photos of the Day from around the world

See the best images of the day from around the world.

Photography from fashion and wildlife to art and the environment, the Snap! Evening Standard pictures of the day show the biggest stories and must-see photographs from London and around the world.

If you want to see more of the day's best pictures then follow our [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/eveningstandard) for all the latest skylines, sunsets and news photos.



PLACE

Putting creative
digital placemaking
at the heart of the
visitor economy



Lincoln Connected:

In 2023 Threshold embarked on a new partnership with Visit Lincoln to deliver Lincoln Connected: a BE Lincoln Town Deal Project to reimagine Lincoln's High Street using digital technology to connect people to the City's heritage, culture, retail, and leisure offer.

As well as "lighting up Lincoln" through an exciting programme of world-class digital and cultural experiences, digital technologies will provide new ways of discovering and interpreting the city.



Simon Walters,
Director for Communities and Environment,
City of Lincoln Council.

“The City Council has enjoyed an extremely positive relationship with the organisers of Frequency Festival over many years. The festival brings vibrancy to the city centre both in terms of animating public areas but also attracting an increased footfall as visitors from near and far come to experience the unique installations on offer.

At a time when we are all experiencing the impact of an increased cost of living, the opportunity Frequency Festival brings through both free to enter and low cost events, is very welcome and opens up the digital cultural offer to the widest possible range of people.

Looking forward, we see Frequency Festival continuing as one of the core events in the city and so it very much forms part of our strategy for maintaining the economic vitality of our city centre”

Charlotte Goy,
Chief Executive Visit Lincoln

“We are delighted to be partnering with Threshold. Lincoln Connected brings together experts in digital placemaking and the visitor economy – it's the first partnership between an NPO and LVEP within a Town Deal Programme which is pretty innovative. We've tracked the visitor journey and will deliver technological advances in our destination marketing in a way that is fun and attractive to visitors through arts and culture”.



Samantha Lindley

Chief Executive and Creative Director

Since joining Threshold in 2003, I've seen the organisation go through many changes, many celebrations, and many challenges, so many of which will be familiar to arts and cultural organisations up and down the country. Pre and post pandemic, significant challenges across multiples sectors continue to be felt both within and beyond arts and culture.

Collaboration and partnership have always been a foundation of how we operate, and we're grateful to Arts Council England, our partners and stakeholders in the region and beyond for the positive working relationships and the genuine commitment to place.

2020 to present has been a period of significant and fundamental change for us, our core principles remain the same, but as we enter 2024, we look much different as an organisation. With the departure of the two Co-founders, we genuinely thank them for their vision, commitment and above all perseverance that was the cornerstone of us having a 25-year legacy and we are ready to take the organisation forward to its new iteration.

From starting as a media development organisation, we now focus on those public and shared spaces, working to make sure that access to opportunity and inclusion starts in the places that we all share.

2024 will see us continue to work closely with Visit Lincoln as part of the Town Deal funded Lincoln Connected project, partnering to develop new visitor digital services and animate those with stories and experiences that amplify the DNA, heritage, and stories of Lincoln. We're thrilled to have recently launched the third commission in partnership with the new Lincoln Festival of History, with more commissions coming up throughout the year.

We'll also be working towards the next exciting iteration of Frequency Festival in October 2025 and are keen to seek out new collaborations with those developing new experiences and impact in outdoor and public spaces, as well as organisations and creatives working with the environmental agenda and towards a more inclusive sector.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to making 2023 such a memorable year. Our board, team, all the artists, collaborators, partners, stakeholders and most of all the audiences who bring it all to life.

Follow us throughout 2024 as we continue to pioneer creative digital placemaking that puts people at its heart to make a positive impact and change.



Thanks for being part of our year



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 **Threshold** **25**
YEARS
PIONEERING TALENT, TECHNOLOGY & CHANGE

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