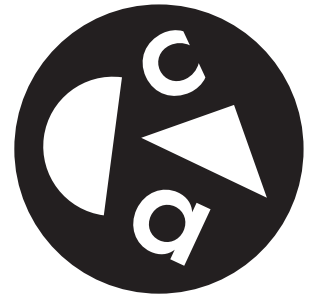


# Exhibition Guide



**Andrew Omoding**

***Welcome to Me, Scarborough. To See and Hold My Work***

**March 19 2021 — June 19 2022**

**Woodend Gallery**

*Welcome to Me, Scarborough. To See and Hold My Work* is an exhibition of new film, sound and sculptural work by artist Andrew Omoding inspired by the historic venue of Woodend and surrounding coastline whilst reflecting on his own identity and memories of his beloved home and life in Uganda.

Andrew has used the archives of Scarborough Museums Trust to draw inspiration from books, photographs, objects and artefacts as sources of inspiration and visited locations around Scarborough including the many architectural highlights, the harbour and arcades. Andrew also drew inspiration from local histories around rope and net making, the herring girls and skipping day.

In the first room, Andrew has made his own fishing marker flags, and the central space uses sculptures to narrate a story of people, animals and objects Andrew met during the developments of the exhibition. These include big fish, lobster pots, a seal pup in the harbour and various seabirds. All the works in the exhibition are made out of recycled, found and reclaimed material, including old fishing gear.

Visitors are encouraged to read the story hanging from the ceiling and press the button on the wall to hear Andrew's call home to Uganda.

Here he is telling his friends and family to come visit, whilst he recalls one his stories of big fish and little fish.

*"And a boy goes fishing and catch a big fish many pounds and big fish eat very much £10, £100, lots of money £2000*

*Went to beach never seen it before it's nice, love it, to make it. Making this for seaside*

*Seaside, went to seaside, dance today have a good time*

*Penguin is saying, I'm saying to you, Scarborough*

*Big big river a lot fishy swimming. Man take away in container*

*Welcome to me, Scarborough. To see and hold my work."*

## Artist Biography

Andrew Omoding is a Ugandan-British artist living in London. His work is intuitive and instinctive. Andrew creates large-scale sculptural forms by exploring his studio for buried treasures and using his tacit knowledge of form, shape, and construction to add and discard elements as he works. Building his creations through systematic layering, wrapping, and attaching, Andrew often uses textiles, patterns, and textures to complete a work.

Andrew Omoding is a studio artist at ActionSpace, a London based visual arts organisation that supports artists with learning disabilities. Andrew joined ActionSpace after leaving education in 2010. His outstanding talent was immediately evident and over the past 12 years he has worked with Artist Facilitator Lisa Brown to develop his practice, growing from strength to strength. In 2016 he was offered a 6-month residency as part of Craftspace and Outside In's Radical Craft touring exhibition. This was documented by anthropologist Prof Trevor Marchand in a series of essays and a film entitled Radical Craft: Explorations in Creativity. In 2017 Andrew won a commission from Outside In and HOUSE Festival to be part of Common Treads a two-person exhibition at Phoenix in Brighton. This was part of HOUSE's Prepared for Crescent Arts Brighton Festival project based around an exhibition at Brighton Museum by the artist Laura Ford. Andrew was employed by Camden Arts Centre for 3 years as a workshop leader on the SEN School Programme. Impressed with Andrew's creativity and work ethic, in 2019 the Centre offered him a 1-month artist residency in the Artist Studio, which was supported by a Developing Your Creative Practice grant from Arts Council England. Andrew used the opportunity to develop an ambitious installation telling the story of his life in Uganda. This was brought to life in a final showcase event which included a costumed procession into the Centre's garden where Andrew lead a session of celebratory dancing and singing. Most recently, Andrew was awarded a 6-week residency with Barbican Arts Group Trust as one of the winners of ArtWorks Open 2020. The residency, supported by a grant from The Elephant Trust, ran over June and July 2021 and provided Andrew with the opportunity to re-engage with his practice after the Covid 19 lockdowns. One of the BAGT studio holders wrote in the comments book for Andrew's Open studios "This is amazing Andrew! The colour, the music, the singing, the dancing. Just wonderful. Thank you for being here, you have enriched our studio."

## About the Partnership

Crescent Arts and Scarborough Museums Trust partnership is an Arts Council England funded initiative that aims to develop Scarborough as a centre for excellence for the visual arts. The partnership reflects both a new strategic priority for Scarborough Museums Trust to support the creative industries in Scarborough, and Crescent Arts' recently revised vision and mission to nurture diverse artistic talent, connect people to art and artists, and make contemporary visual arts publicly accessible.

Crescent Arts recently moved to join the 120 creative tenants at Woodend Creative Workspace, which merged with Scarborough Art Gallery and The Rotunda Museum to join the Scarborough Museums Trust portfolio. The partnership is rooted in Woodend Gallery, the historic heart of literature in Scarborough and home to the Sitwell Library. Woodend Creative Workspace houses Scarborough Museum Trust's archive as well as a café space and a two-story Victorian glasshouse, the site for the new programme of partnership exhibitions.

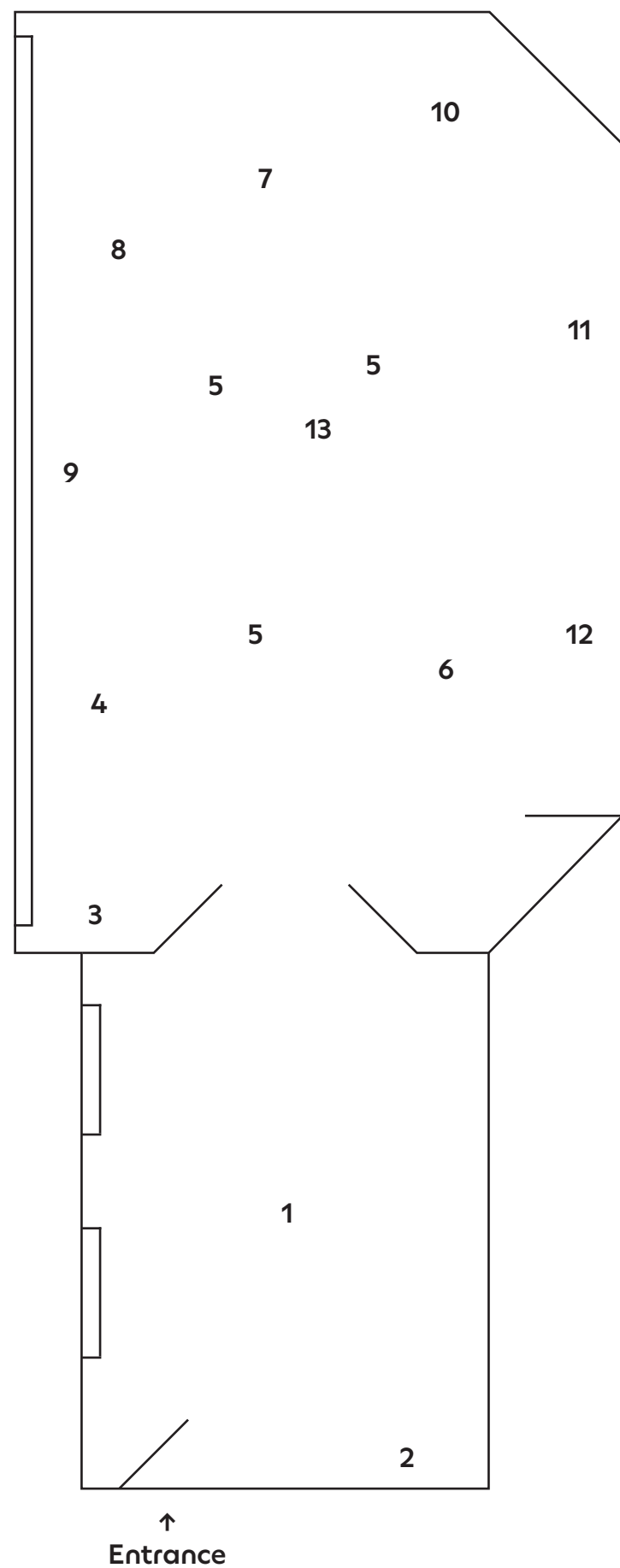
*Welcome to Me, Scarborough. To See and Hold My Work* is supported by Crescent Arts, Scarborough Museums Trust, Arts Council England and ActionSpace.

## About ActionSpace

ActionSpace is London's leading development agency for artists with learning disabilities. They are an exceptional visual arts organisation with big ambitions for all the artists that they work with. They support, advocate and promote diversity within the contemporary visual arts sector. All of their work is focused towards enabling artists with learning disabilities to have a professional career in the arts.

[www.actionspace.org](http://www.actionspace.org)

# Woodend Gallery Map



# Artworks

## Room One

1. *Flag 1–7, Flag 5 with Squirrel*  
fabric, ribbons recycled materials
- Unique responses to fishing marker flags that Andrew came across down at the Harbour. These sculptures feature found materials, and colourful African fabrics, and have been transformed into performative instruments, which can be played as shown in the accompanying film.
2. *Film* (3 min, 32 secs)  
A film showing Andrew performing with one of the flags on Scarborough beach and at the harbour, he is responding to what he sees and the landscape down by the sea.
3. *Penguin/Hat*  
beads, fabric, yarn, ribbons, recycled materials  
This hat can be seen worn in Andrew's film, displayed in the first room. The shape of the hat was inspired by the statue of a penguin found along the seafront.
4. *Hat*  
yarn, fabric, wool  
Costume is really important to Andrew and this is one of two hats that feature within the exhibition.
5. *Lobster Pots*  
wood, wheels, wire, cable, ribbon  
Three lobster pots of different sizes are chasing the fish which are dotted around the room. The inspiration for this came from the tall stacks of lobster pots down on the harbour edge.
6. *Big Fish 1*  
cardboard, fabric, gloves, yarn, recycled materials  
Three fish escaping from the lobster pots, you can listen to their story on the phone and read about them on the hanging material version.

7. *Big Fish 2*
8. *Small Fish 3*
9. *Bird*  
fabric, string, plastic, badges  
This bird stares out towards the sea and valley gardens. Made from an array of material, it was inspired by some of the taxidermied birds within the Scarborough Museums Trust collection.
10. *Story*  
material, curtains, rope  
The story tells the tale of the big fish, birds and lobster pots, on the left side and on the right recounts Andrew's time in Scarborough what he saw and did and an invite to friends to come and see his work.
11. *Bird*  
fabric, ribbons, plastic, string  
Down at Scarborough Harbour, Andrew came across a lot of the local seabirds from Herring Gulls to Kittiwakes, all of which helped inspire this work.
12. *Telephone*  
phone, yarn, beads, bells, buttons, jewellery, recycled materials  
Press the button to hear various stories of the big and small fish and a call home to friends and family in Uganda to come and see his work here at Woodend Gallery.
13. *Shoes*  
ribbon, fabric, found materials, shoes  
This work is of a person diving into the water, with their hair all hanging down into the sea.
- Entrance Hall (outside the gallery space)**
14. *Sea*  
fabric, ribbons  
A sculpture which mimics the movements of the waves when shaken from side to side.

## Exhibition Essay

Throughout history and across cultures, workers have matched words and music to the rhythms, repetition and the physical demands of their work – whether domestic, agricultural, industrial or maritime. Cloth workers in Northern Britain created, complex, repetitive songs that were driven by the beat and pace of their spinning and weaving machines; their voices singing in unison to outdo the loud whirring of the bobbins and the back-and-forth clickety-clack of the looms. In a sea faring town such as Scarborough, the sailors and fishermen who worked the sailing ships had their own work songs that helped the crew to all pull together in heavy seas and high winds. Sea shanties, as they became known, to tell stories of the drama of the ocean; of danger and survival, of tragedy and hope. The timing and phrasing of these nautical ballads have a synchronicity with the rise and fall of the waves as well as beating time to the hauling and pulling, scrubbing and swabbing that were part of the strenuous routine of life on board ship.

Andrew Omoding makes art in the constant company of music and song. His sculptures, installations and wall hangings have been brought into being to the sound of Rhianna, Michael Jackson or a Ugandan band of drummers. His extensive arsenal of working methods includes those of a skilful artisan; weaving, sewing, binding and splicing. In the same way as those cloth workers and seafarers, he works to the rhythm and energy of the music, singing along – often changing the lyrics to ones he has composed to tell the story of the object he is making.

It is no wonder, given Andrew's love of music and way of working, that on his first visit to Scarborough he was drawn to the busy quayside, a place bustling with industry as well as having the colourful trappings of a seaside resort. It was here by the water's edge that he learnt about the sea shanties and recognised an affinity with the crafts of the fisherfolk. How they weave lobster pots, mend their nets and re-purpose their ropes and plastic containers is so much akin to the way he himself makes things.

What form a work will take and what technique might be used to make it, is determined by the nature of the materials he has gathered and has brought to hand. When it comes to stuff, Omoding is a master at acquiring it from sources others might ignore. His artist eye sees potential in unlikely things discarded by factories and workshops, found in skips or left abandoned by the roadside. His workspace is a treasure trove, full of colour and texture; here, scraps of wood, metal cables and wire, fabrics and yarns, old furniture and domestic gadgets await transformation. For Andrew, every scrap of fabric, cardboard tubing, packing tape, ribbon or length of timber holds the promise of becoming something more. When he chooses things to be joined together, they become something else entirely. With his improbable materials he forges unlikely allegiances. Instinctively, he pieces together different elements, adding and subtracting as he goes along, until a form emerges that he recognises as having a purpose and identity all of its own.

Once assembled, these hybrid forms become part of a sculptural language that will be used and translated in whatever way he chooses for a particular place or circumstance. Entangled within all Andrew's intriguing assemblages are tales of his Ugandan homeland and happy childhood, together with stories gathered from his more recent urban, London life and visits to unfamiliar places. He is story teller at heart — a spinner of yarns — who's narratives have been expanded and embellished by his experience of Scarborough. Learning about sea shanties and Herring Girls, discovering the amusing artifacts of the leisure arcades, seeing the fishing boats with their rigging, marker-buoy's, pendants and other nautical paraphernalia, are experiences that have been reimagined in the work he has made for Woodend Gallery.

Despite, or perhaps because of being born in a land locked country, Andrew appears to have a natural affinity with the sea and the coastline. The sights and sounds of Scarborough have entered his imagination, alongside all the shapes and images that have been kept stored in his mind since he was born. The history and architectural features of the Gallery – housed in what was the home of the Sitwell's, have been an inspiration too. In particular, the beautiful oak panelling and fascinating collection of books in the Sitwell Library have fired his imagination. His exhibition here is a conversation with the place.

A massive, fabric collage is threaded with rope and hangs like a sail. It divides into two, like open pages of a giant atlas. Each side has a background of boldly patterned African cloth onto which Andrew has appliquéd panels of handwritten text that tell some of his stories of life by the sea. Elsewhere, objects made from wooden sticks, colourful ropes and synthetic twines are placed on the walls and across corners; activating the rooms in a way that invites exploration. Tall, floor-standing structures bear resemblance to flags that may be marking out territory, indicating allegiance or communicating in code.

Sculptures in the shapes of big fish and little fish dart here and there. Some are formed from scrapped wood, lollipop sticks, gold and silver lame fabric and brightly coloured threads. These are accompanied by others who's wooden 'bodies' have been adorned, armoured or captured by twists of metal tubing and curling wires. *"I can swim...I'm happy"* sings the little fish, to the backing of a Ugandan beat. *"Don't eat me"* it cries. *"The big fish are yummy"* – *"Oh no! Big fish as eaten it."* So go the words of one of Andrew's songs, a mischievous ode to his piscatorial constructions, recorded as he made the sculptures in his studio. The sound of his rhythmic fusions of sea shanties, pop-songs and contemporary dance music from Uganda, can be heard in the Woodend Gallery, bringing with it all the energy and variations of Andrew's methods of making, and creating an illusion of movement in time to the beat.

There is nothing static about Andrew's work, his installations have a nomadic quality and a magical allure, as if a travelling theatre has turned up and pitched camp. This sense of possible migration is heightened by the provisional nature of his workaday materials and his expedient means of construction; performance plays an important part too. Procession and pageantry is anticipated in many of his assemblages. Fringed and tasselled constructions, hung at head-height on a wall, could quite readily act as a headdress or a ceremonial canopy, while stitched, cloth hangings might well double as robes or act as banners to be waved. Tubular sculptures with a capacity for sound, lean in wait for an uptake of breath, together with rigid hollow forms that suggest they may be struck in a way that marks time.

Andrew's performative productions, whether live or on film, are largely improvised and usually involve procession, dancing and song, all of which demand participation. It is hard to resist this call to action when the artworks themselves are so enticingly suffused with rhythm and energy. His work is full of life. Its vibrancy is fuelled by his experience, curiosity and the joy he has in making things. In another of Andrew's studio recordings he sings about Scarborough: *"...I'm happy...In the beach, in the beaches...welcome to see my work...to sing my song"*. Andrew Omoding's world of art is a rich and generous one. A place where everything is possible and everyone is welcome.

**Jenni Lomax, March 2022**

# About Jenni Lomax

Jenni Lomax is a curator and writer. From 1990 to 2017 she was the Director of Camden Arts Centre, London where she established an influential and forward-thinking programme of international exhibitions, artists, residencies and education projects, all of which have artists and their ideas at the core. She led the organisation through a major building refurbishment scheme which was completed in early 2004. She was awarded the Order of the Polar Star in 2017, Chevalier dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2007, and received an OBE for her services to the Visual Arts in 2009.

