

BRUNSWICK ARTS IS CELEBRATING AN IMPORTANT milestone this year: our 20th anniversary. We were founded in 2001 when the great mentor, teacher and communications executive Helen Scott Lidgett persuaded Brunswick founder and Chairman Alan Parker that an arts component had potential to bring great value to the group's corporate advisory practice.

Our celebration has inevitably been overshadowed by the events of the last year, a period of challenge that feels like 20 years all by itself. The pandemic turned the world's culture-presenting community on its ear, a disruption borne out in a survey Brunswick Arts conducted recently of 59 leading global arts institutions: Over half were reconsidering the basic foundation of their mission. Nearly 30% of the respondents said their critical reassessment was the result of the events of the past year, while another 24% said such a reassessment was under way even before the pandemic. Well over 70% pointed to is-

On the 20th anniversary of Brunswick Arts' founding by **HELEN SCOTT LIDGETT**, Managing Partner **PETER DILLON** regards her legacy and the road ahead.

"Helen had a wonderful spirit that was as infectious as her enthusiasm," recalls Brunswick founder and Chairman Sir Alan Parker. "She combined this with the talent of seeing the possible in everything and everyone. She was part of the original spark that lit up Brunswick Arts and we always hope to live up to her best expectations."

By the time she came to Brunswick, Helen had already had an intense and exciting career in the arts. A graduate of St. Martin's School of Art, she ran a shop in the 1970s of her own fabrics and wedding dress designs out of Camden Market and was later head of art at London's Camden School for Girls. In the 1990s, she joined art publishers Thames & Hudson as head of publicity. From there, she moved to Hobsbawm Macaulay, the PR firm run by Sarah Macaulay, who became Prime Minister Gordon Brown's wife.

In the wake of a new era of free entry to many UK museums, Helen and Sarah persuaded Alan of the value a cultural network could bring, recognizing the potential the arts might also gain from a firm steeped in the knowledge and workings of major businesses. Over the next 10 years, Helen established Brunswick as a leading consultancy in the arts, where her commitment to education and open ac-

Brunswick Arts Celebrates Culture on a Mission

cesses of digital engagement and diversity as their top two concerns, with aspects of their funding model coming in third. Simultaneously, climate change, social justice and restitution are rocking the foundations of most of these institutions.

So it is that we celebrate the tremendous spirit and growth of our past in the shadow of crises that threaten to overwhelm the future. I joined Brunswick Arts as its Managing Partner only last year, but I can see that despite these new challenges, our long game will be very much what it has always been—helping our clients navigate critical issues related to the arts, highlighting the ability of culture to bring people together in increasingly divided times and finding meaningful ways for organizations and business in the sector to connect to their communities. These were borne from a fortuitous combination of the circumstances in which we were established, and the creative style and particular world view of our founder, Helen.

cess to the arts were hallmarks of her leadership. It was Helen who first connected Brunswick Arts and the British Museum—a relationship that lasts to the present day. At her suggestion, composer Michael Nyman created a piece for the opening of the V&A's new British Galleries, a coup topped only by her informal request to then Poet Laureate Andrew Motion that he also might like to pen a "few words." She also set the course for our international reputation, from a regular presence at the Venice Biennale to the French government's Paris Calling initiative, promoting French art in Britain. For the latter, she was awarded the French Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2008. Before succumbing to cancer at the young age of 63, she served as a cultural advisor to Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Helen's instincts allowed her to lift up talent wherever she saw it—talent that otherwise might have gone unrecognized, as noted by Dr. Gus Casely-Hayford, the Director of V&A East in London

and a former Director at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington, DC. “Helen was one of my great mentors,” he recalled. “I spent years—years—out in the wilderness as a Black curator with absolutely what felt like no options, when it would have been easier to give up rather than continue. And one of the few people who continued to invest in me, continued to encourage me despite it all, was Helen Scott Lidgett.”

Brunswick Arts Director Claire Walsh recalls the stamp of Helen’s eccentricity—a flamboyant sense of style that simultaneously embraced diamonds, hair extensions and flip-flops—a spirit unquenched even in the last year of her life, as she was battling the cancer. “There was definitely a point where Brunswick Arts was defined by Helen’s personality,” Claire says. “Clients absolutely loved her and she was a great mentor.”

With her colleague Ben Rawlingson Plant, now Deputy Director, Global Public Affairs and Communications at the Guggenheim, Helen oversaw Brunswick Arts’ expansion to Europe and the Gulf. After her death, Ben ensured a strong foothold in Asia and the US, a presence that is now global. We supported Christie’s 250th Anniversary and major solo shows in Europe for Ai Wei Wei, Marina Abramović and Bill Viola; launched the Institut Giacometti and the Louvre’s Islamic galleries; opened the Louvre Abu Dhabi; worked with the Brooklyn and Jewish museums in New York and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco; and launched the He Art Museum in Shunde, Guangdong. We also work closely with corporations such as Facebook, Credit Suisse and Intesa Sanpaolo on their roles in the arts.

The arts now face new challenges. In the last two years, with the momentous rise of movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, the lack of equal representation in institutions has snapped clearly into focus, pushing diversity and inclusion to the forefront. At a recent webinar marking Brunswick Arts’ 20th Anniversary, journalist Charlotte Burns summarized research she has done with Julie Halperin of Artnet News. “In 2018, we examined the

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Brunswick Arts founder Helen Scott Lidgett and her daughter, Holly, were the models for “Golders Hill Girl” (1991), a public sculpture in Golders Hill Park created by Helen’s mother, artist Patricia Finch.

presence of African American artists in 30 US museums, as well as the international art market, over the previous decade. In 2019, we similarly examined the presence of female-identifying artists,” she said. “In both cases, we found that, to the institutions’ surprise, they were failing to meet the moment.” Such critical measurement is new and challenges the art world to reassess its efforts to grow diversity and shrink inequality.

We have seen that museum and gallery leaders we support aspire to the very qualities that informed Helen’s approach: to be more visionary in their outlook for the arts as essential in society, more practical in steps they must take to reach those that can benefit from their content, more persuasive in expressing their concerns.

The last year and a half has also been a trial by fire of digital readiness and funding security. In addition to providing welcoming and relevant arts for audiences, navigating these rough waters has required a head-on, creative determination and compelling communications across all channels and markets.

We are excited and optimistic for the future, while acknowledging the many challenges and uncertainties it will bring. Helen quickly established Brunswick Arts as a force in the UK cultural sector, her dynamism and belief in those she hired setting a course for unrivaled knowledge and advice across our international network, spearheading an informed, passionate team,

where we now advise museums, corporates and private foundations from Europe and the Gulf to China and the US. Her legacy is central to our mission: to bring art and culture to the world, to bring down the barriers that prevent it from reaching audiences, and to help our clients realize their own mission in a dynamic and complex world. We are on fire, as she was, to carry out that mission. ♦

PETER DILLON is a Managing Partner and Head of Brunswick Arts’ international practice. He has 20 years’ experience in communications and branding with previous roles with Swiss bank UBS and global real estate firm Tishman Speyer.