

HUMBER STREET GALLERY

EXHIBITION GUIDE

BANANARCHY!

PIPPA HALE

20 JUNE 2025 – 21 SEPTEMBER 2025
SPACE 1 and SPACE 2

Official Partners



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Bananarchy! is an interactive exhibition at Humber Street Gallery created by artist Pippa Hale. Taking place across both of our gallery spaces, audiences of all ages are invited to un-peel the history of Hull's historic Fruit Market in an exhibition which prioritises sociality and play.

As far back as the 16th Century there has been a market located at Hull's marina, but it was throughout the 19th and 20th centuries that Humber Street rose to prominence as the third largest market in the UK importing fruit from all over the world.

Within *Bananarchy!* the artist has transformed the gallery spaces into interactive environments which speak to this significant and hyper-local aspect of Humber Street's history. Downstairs in Space 1, *Bananarchy!* sets out a costumery where visitors can don a series of costumes which imagine colorful characters from the fruit trade. Whilst upstairs in Space 2, the artist presents historical research into the context of 64 Humber Street accompanied by a maze of banana boxes.

The exhibition title *Bananarchy!* is the combination of the words banana and anarchy. Bananas, as they are associated with slapstick humor or 'an explosion of happiness'; and anarchy with a non-hierarchical society.

SPACE 1

Nicknames were commonplace at the fruit market. Mike Freeman in his book *The Humber Street Legacy* recalls a close-knit community:

'Everybody in the fruit trade seemed to have a nickname and this was all part and parcel of an everyday market environment... These names applied to buyers, sellers, bosses and directors... if you were not "christened" with a nickname you were deemed to be inconsequential!'

Mike appears in the exhibition - his nickname was 'Semtex' because of his 'volatile temper'. His Dad Eric Freeman, the Managing Director of Louis Reece (Hull) Ltd also appears as 'Cyclops' - can you spot him? There's also Raggy Tash and Slippery Stan.

The creation of disguises and characters has an interesting historic and contemporary context. In the Medieval Period, masks and costumes were popular at parties. They would hide the identities of revelers, allowing them to transgress social boundaries within a rigid class system. The process of generating characters is also commonplace in the online gaming world where skins, gamer-tags and filters are used to hide or enhance the identities of players in the online public realm.

In this gallery, the artist invites you to create a nickname and illustrate it using the materials provided. You can then model your design and share it with us using the hashtag #Bananarchy!

SPACE 2

Mike's Tour of Humber Street

Mike Freeman worked on Humber Street as a fruit wholesaler. These are his recollections from four decades on the street...

I worked on Humber Street for over 40 years. I have been employed by several companies, I have been made redundant, and I have also been headhunted.

I made my first appearance on the street in the early morning as a 5-year-old in the 1950s with my dad, Eric, who at the time worked for Bert Johnson & Sons. We would park most Saturday mornings in the warehouse which was previously the Auction House of the Central Selling Organisation. We were fed and watered by Mrs Tharratts, another of the strong, no-nonsense women of the period who ran a cafe from her house. I supped on a pint pot of tea and fought with a doorstep of toast which had been hacked off the loaf with a cleaver, stabbed by a fork and then toasted on an

open fire. It was served with the immortal words, “get that down yer!” and we were then ready for the day.

We went down a gaslit alleyway to get on the street. The noise was unbelievable - shouting and bawling as buyers and traders argued over prices with bangings and clattering as the mixture of horses and carts and lorries were handloaded with huge wooden crates. The assault on the senses was completed with a marvelous mixture of smells from apples, pears, bananas and onions.

Ancient Rome had its Forum, ancient Athens had its Ceramica, Hull had its Humber Street! The Forum and the Ceramica were meeting places where trading and wheeling and dealing was fiercely competitive. Humber Street was no different. To me, it was a magical place among the bright lights of the warehouses. I was hooked for life.

It was to prove a tough life but if you could take it, it was a good life too. Most buyers and sellers would see each other more or less every day and it was the nature of the trade that tensions would rise, and fallouts and spats would occur. However, at the end of the trading day, people would go for a pint, offer a lift or walk into town for a bus.

Bunches, Bargains and Boxes!

Industry on Humber Street has always been characterised by its proximity to water. For centuries, the sea has strategically connected Hull to the global movement of goods and people.

In the 15th Century, Humber Street was known as The Ropery, a manufacturing site supplying ships with rope to keep their sails high. It was in the latter part of the 19th Century that a wholesale fruit and vegetable market was established on Humber Street, when vessels carrying mixed cargoes of continental fruit first arrived in the city.

At the outbreak of the First World War virtually all of the premises on Humber Street housed fruit merchants handling these newly

imported products.

By the mid 1950s, bananas had been imported to the UK for over 200 years and had gone from being a luxury item to a fastly growing household essential. In 1956, fruit wholesaler T.J. Poupart built on bomb-damaged land, transforming the site which is now Humber Street Gallery into one of the largest fruit warehouses in the market. The second floor of this building was allocated as banana ripening stores where, in small rooms, bunches of bananas hung vertically where atmospheric conditions were intricately designed to optimize their ripeness.

The Fruit trade on Humber Street hit its peak in the 1960s. Alongside the fishing industry, it was a critical part of the local economy, employing hundreds of staff. In 1967 alone, 194,000 tons of produce were imported to the street, the equivalent of over 1.8 billion bananas! Today we eat over 5 billion bananas a year in the UK, contributing to them being the most consumed fruit worldwide.

In the late 1990s trade on Humber Street steadily began to decline. This was caused by a myriad of factors including a major social shift in shopping habits which went from favoring grocers to supermarkets.

Bananas and Ethical Trade

The global banana trade, much like coffee and cocoa, is rooted in a colonial legacy. European companies established vast plantations in Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean, often stretching over 5,000 hectares. These monoculture farms prioritized exports over sustainability, and their practices still shape today's industry.

In 2021, global banana production reached 125 million tons, with India, China, and Indonesia leading as top producers, but Latin America continuing to be the largest exporting region. However, behind this booming industry lies a stark reality. There are reports that banana workers continue to face exploitation, low wages, and unsafe working conditions. Small-scale growers often struggle to

earn enough to cover basic needs. The intensive use of pesticides and fertilizers has also led to serious environmental harm, including water pollution, habitat destruction, and adverse health impacts on plantation workers.

In response to increasing public concern over labour abuses, the 1990s saw the rise of the ethical trade movement. Organizations like Fairtrade and the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) emerged to promote fairer practices and better working conditions across global supply chains. The ETI, a UK-based coalition of companies, NGOs, and trade unions, represents over £166 billion in business and promotes the ETI Base Code as a standard, which covers issues like freely chosen employment, safe working conditions, the prohibition of child labour, and the payment of living wages.

Today, all major UK supermarkets—Aldi, Sainsbury's, Co-op, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, and Waitrose—actively monitor working conditions for high-risk crops, including bananas. Many also support Fairtrade-certified bananas, sourced from small-scale farmers and plantation workers.

As of 2025, Fairtrade works with over 10,000 banana farmers and more than 26,000 plantation workers through 119 certified cooperatives and 139 plantations. Fairtrade guarantees a minimum price and provides a social premium per kilogram sold, which supports community development and empowers producers to invest in a more sustainable future.

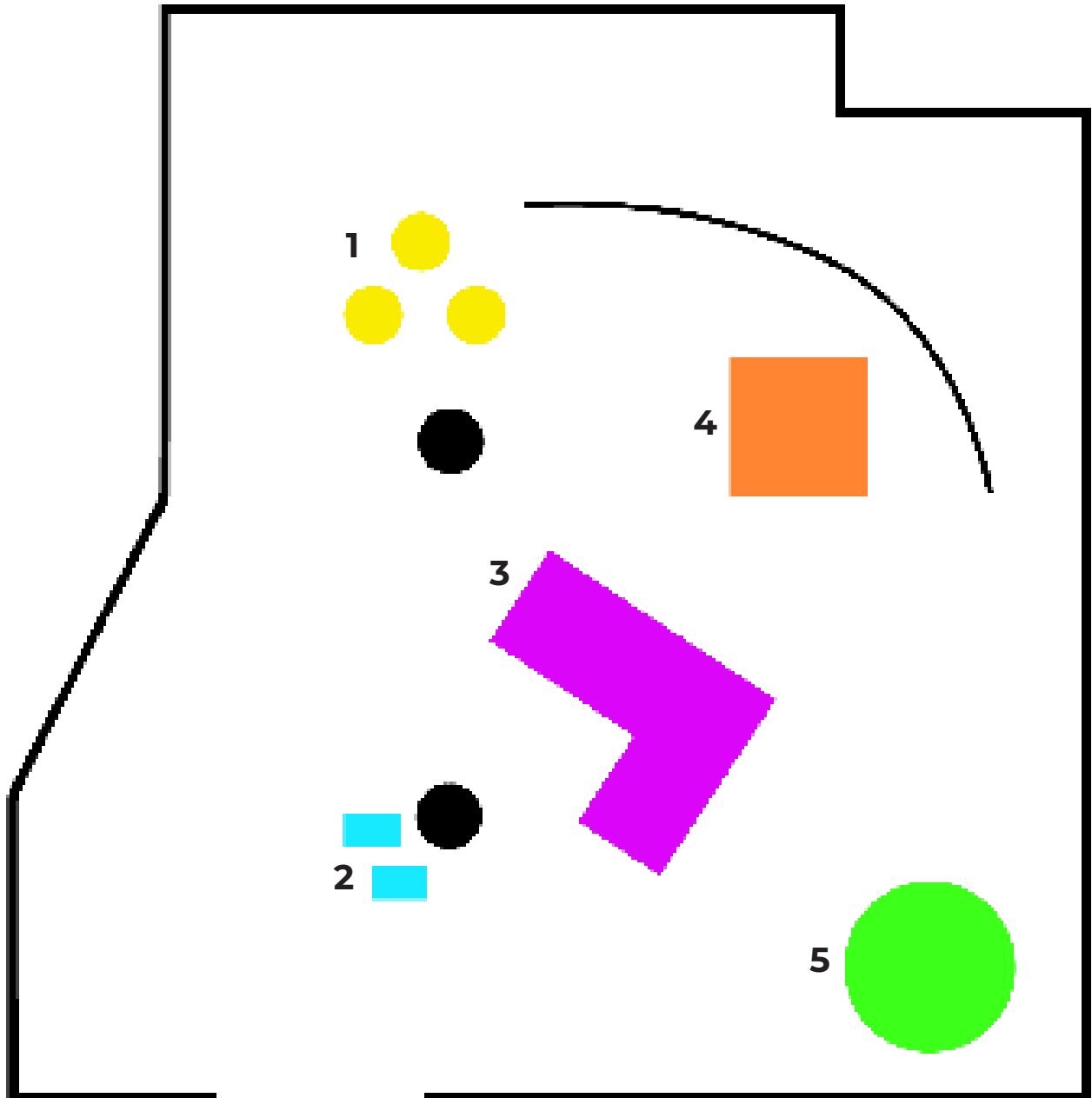
Words by Cristina Talens, Director of Modern Slavery Risk Assessments/ Head of Business Risk Assessment Services

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Pippa Hale is a contemporary artist based in Leeds. Her practice centres around social history, geography and play. Pippa has previously been commissioned by BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, York Railway Museum, Leeds City Council and more.

FLOORPLAN

SPACE 1



1. Costume stands

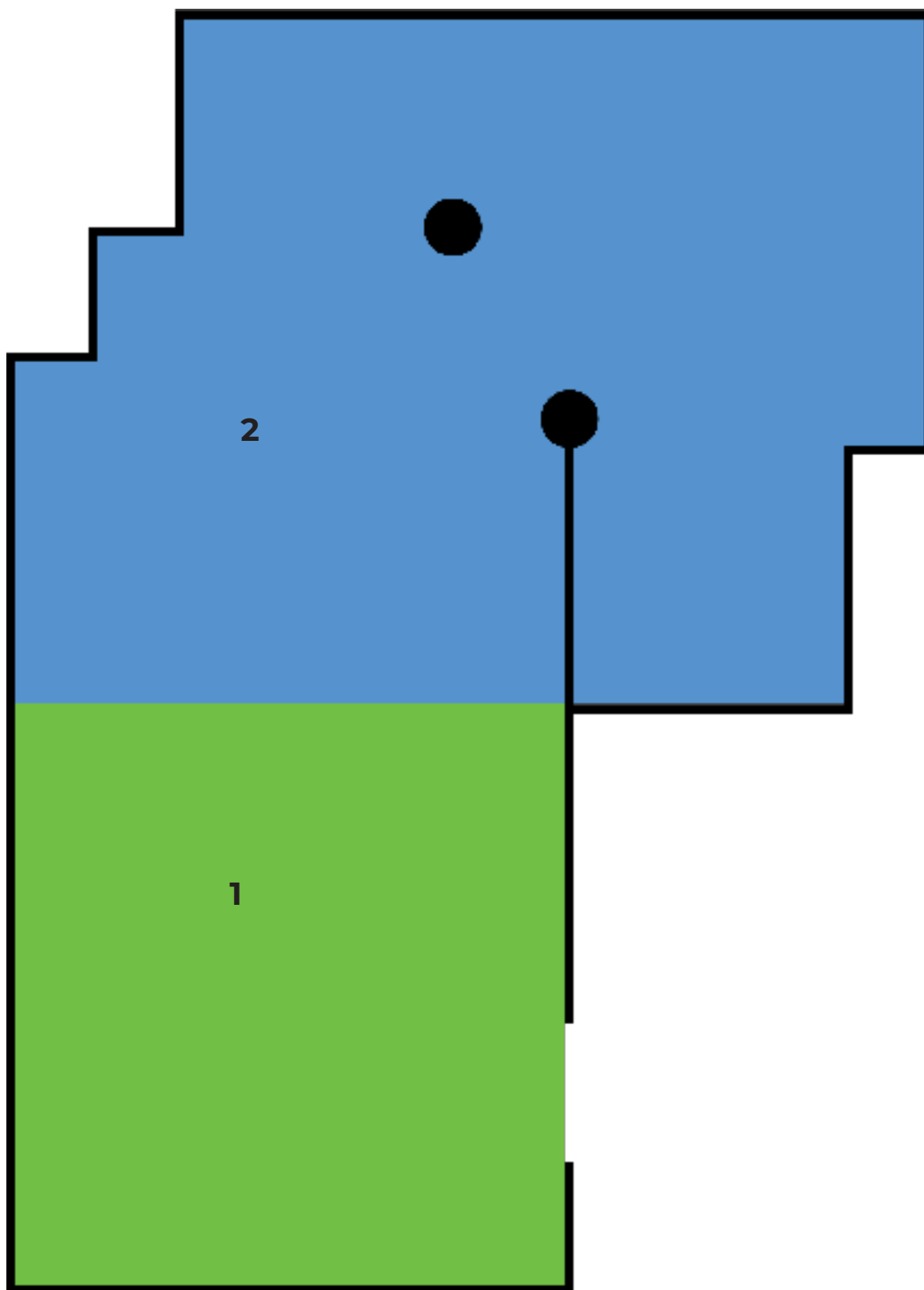
2. Props

3. Making tables

4. Photography podium

5. Playmat

SPACE 2



1. History room

2. Banana box maze

RELATED ACTIVITY

PAUL SCHOFIELD – A SURPRISING HISTORY OF HUMBER STREET.

THURSDAY 17 JULY 2025

5 - 9PM

HUMBER STREET GALLERY

TICKETED, FREE

Plus the relaunch of Mike Freeman and John Riley's book 'The Humber Street Legacy'.

Head on the world premiere of a brand new tour of Humber Street and the surrounding area led by award-winning tour guide Paul Schofield. Starting at Humber Street Gallery, it's time to find out more about the rich history of this corner of the city.

From its origins along the Humber where ropes were made to its growth into a major street, Humber Street has a surprising history. It was once a thriving hub of pubs, theatres and chapels before developing into the North's biggest wholesale fruit market. Recently it has grown into a renowned hotbed of independent businesses and creative spaces. A unique place in the city's landscape.

Paul Schofield is a fully qualified, freelance English Heritage Accredited guide. After receiving a degree from Warwick University he returned to Hull in 1982. He completed a guiding course at Hull University, and has been conducting tours of Hull and Beverley since 1988. He has established strong links with the City Council who have awarded him the inaugural Tourism Enterprise Award and the "extra mile" certificate. He regularly works on behalf of Visit Hull and East Yorkshire, and was delighted to win the REYTA Ambassador Award, 2010. Paul also gives numerous illustrated talks on topics of local history, and has co-authored a book on Hull Kingston Rovers.

FRIDAY BANANACTIVITY!

FRIDAY 25 JULY, 1 AUGUST, 8 AUGUST, 15 AUGUST, 22 AUGUST, 29 AUGUST 2025

10:30AM - 12:30PM

HUMBER STREET GALLERY

TICKETED, FREE

Pippa Hale's exhibition *Bananarchy!* offers families a free and welcoming space at Humber Street Gallery to come together, be creative and play. Join us every Friday morning during the summer holidays for an informal exhibition tour followed by a craft activity. *Friday Bananactivity! Sessions* are free and designed for families with children aged 4-11 years.

THURSDAY LATES: BARRY SYKES, NOT LAUGHING NOW! THURSDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2025

7 - 9PM

HUMBER STREET GALLERY

TICKETED, FREE

In this special event devised to accompany Pippa Hale's current exhibition *Bananarchy!*, artist Barry Sykes will present a performance lecture on the ridiculous strategies, absurd games and various experiments in human connection and social taboos that have made up his artist practice in recent years. Taking this opportunity to talk candidly about his motivations and the experiences the work has led to, together with the audience we will use various metrics to evaluate his practice's potentials, pitfalls and pleasures.

His current roster of projects involve life drawing, fancy dress, sauna culture, stroke rehabilitation, bad poetry, quick portraits and rain water. Each of them in their own way exploring how making, play and embracing fallibility could lead to a deeper understanding of the world and each other. He will also discuss how his own Autism diagnosis and his daughter's Down Syndrome have reframed his practice and priorities.

Barry will also be dressed as a make-shift clown for the duration of the evening and it will culminate in him leading a short introductory class in Laughter Yoga.

Barry Sykes (born Essex 1976, lives and works in London) uses drawing, sculpture and performance to investigate the overlooked details of social interactions. Working at the edges of value, skill and acceptable behaviour, recent activity has looked at how we channel these concerns through our bodies, in experiments with laughter, stillness, exercise and relaxation. Often acting as a host, guide or teacher, recent projects this year have been developed for various organisations including Whipps Cross University Hospital; Focal Point Gallery, Southend; Netley Primary School and Autism Unit; Goldsmith's College, London and Shoreditch & Soul social wellness space.

**IN CONVERSATION WITH PIPPA HALE & CRISTINA
TALENS
THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2025
7 - 9PM
HUMBER STREET GALLERY
TICKETED, FREE**

Bananarchy! artist Pippa Hale in conversation with the University of Hull's Cristina Talens.

Cristina has more than 20 years' experience in ethical trading, sustainability and supply chains. She has worked with migrant workers on modern slavery issues in the UK, France and Italy. In 2000, she joined the UN Global Programme Against Trafficking and Smuggling of Human Beings, to develop international programmes tackling organised crime, smuggling and trafficking. Thereafter she joined the private sector to advise businesses on their supply chains. Today she regularly conducts social audit assignments and risk assessments on behalf of major UK supermarkets and supports them on the requirements of the

Modern Slavery Act.

Cristina is the University of Hull's Director of Modern Slavery Risk Assessments and Head of Business Risk Assessment Services.

THANK YOUS

David Priestman

Steve Potter

Steve at Powells Packaging

Hull Daily Mail Image Archive

Hull History Centre

Donald Innes Image Archive

Mike Freeman

Pam Hawes

Christina Talens

If you, or anyone you know has a connection to the fruit trade on Humber Street, we would love to hear from you. If you have stories to tell please get in touch with info@absoluetlycultured.co.uk

ABOUT US

Humber Street Gallery is an Absolutely Cultured project.

Originally established in 2017 as part of the City of Culture programme, it has developed into a vibrant, high-quality contemporary visual art space for Hull. It is now a significant contributor to the contemporary visual arts offer in the north.

Our ambition for Humber Street Gallery is to further develop the venue into a multi-artform and multifunctional creative centre, showcasing a wide range of art and activities providing something for everyone from visual art, dance, music to spoken word. Increasingly the space will be used to showcase more work by local as well as national and international practitioners.

We also aim to develop more visual art programming that happens outside of the gallery in the city's public spaces, in underused buildings and in local neighbourhoods.

CONTACT US

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If you would like to support our work, you can do so at absolutelycultured.co.uk



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OPENING TIMES

Wednesday: 10:30am - 5pm

Thursday: 12pm - 7pm

Friday: 10:30am - 5pm

Saturday: 10:30am - 5pm

Sunday: 10:30am - 5pm