

News

Art project is helping to breathe new life into city's grand arcades

CARDIFF'S arcades are a treasured asset of the city, boasting more than 150 years of Welsh retail history housed within beautiful Victorian and Edwardian architecture.

But despite their much-loved status, in the past 12 months the arcades have suffered a devastating three-pronged blow - coronavirus restrictions, changing customer habits and, in some cases, difficulties with landlords.

If you've taken a walk through them recently, you may have noticed lots of empty premises as a result - especially in Castle Arcade and High Street Arcade.

But thankfully a group of seven artists have breathed new life into the historic passageways to help businesses get back on their feet - just in time for the lifting of nearly all coronavirus restrictions and the return of people to the city centre.

Seven pieces of hanging art have so far been unveiled as part of this year's City of Arcades campaign called The Art and Soul of Cardiff, which is run by Bid For Cardiff.

Visitors will be greeted by an eclectic range of artworks - including a 21-foot-long suspended angel, wire figures balancing on tightropes and huge murals of Cardiff castle's famous animal wall.

A collaboration between the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and FOR Cardiff, the project invited seven alumni to create pieces of suspended art to celebrate Cardiff's "distinct and vibrant culture".

The artwork for each arcade centres around a different theme relevant to the capital - take a sneak peek below before visiting them yourself.

Dominions Arcade - Sport

In the centre of the arcade, graphic silhouettes by Brad Caleb Lee celebrate the plethora of sports Cardiff is known for, such as football, cycling and athletics.

Made from upcycled wool, cardboard, paper and coloured vinyl scraps, the bold and vibrant colour palette is inspired by joy of the cheering masses on the sidelines.

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Wyndham Arcade - Fruit and veg

These playful food sculptures - made by Cadi Lane, a Cardiff-based illustrator and maker, using wool, glue and wadding, with the help of a tufting gun - are inspired by the food stalls in Cardiff Market.

Their expressions represent the variety of fun and quirky characters you might run into whilst spending a day in the Welsh capital.

Castle Arcade - History

For this artwork, creative Oliver Harman drew inspiration from Cardiff Castle, apt for the arcade - specifically the famous animal wall that was created in the 1890s for the 3rd Marquess of Bute.

The animal wall was brought to life by architect William Frame, based on sketches by William Burgess.

Duke Street Arcade - Music

Artist Gabrielle Moore sought to represent the organic flowing nature of music and used the form of weeping willows for reference the many different types of music that make up the sounds of Cardiff.

She has used translucent materials to explore patterns and reflections that can be created on the different surfaces in the arcade.

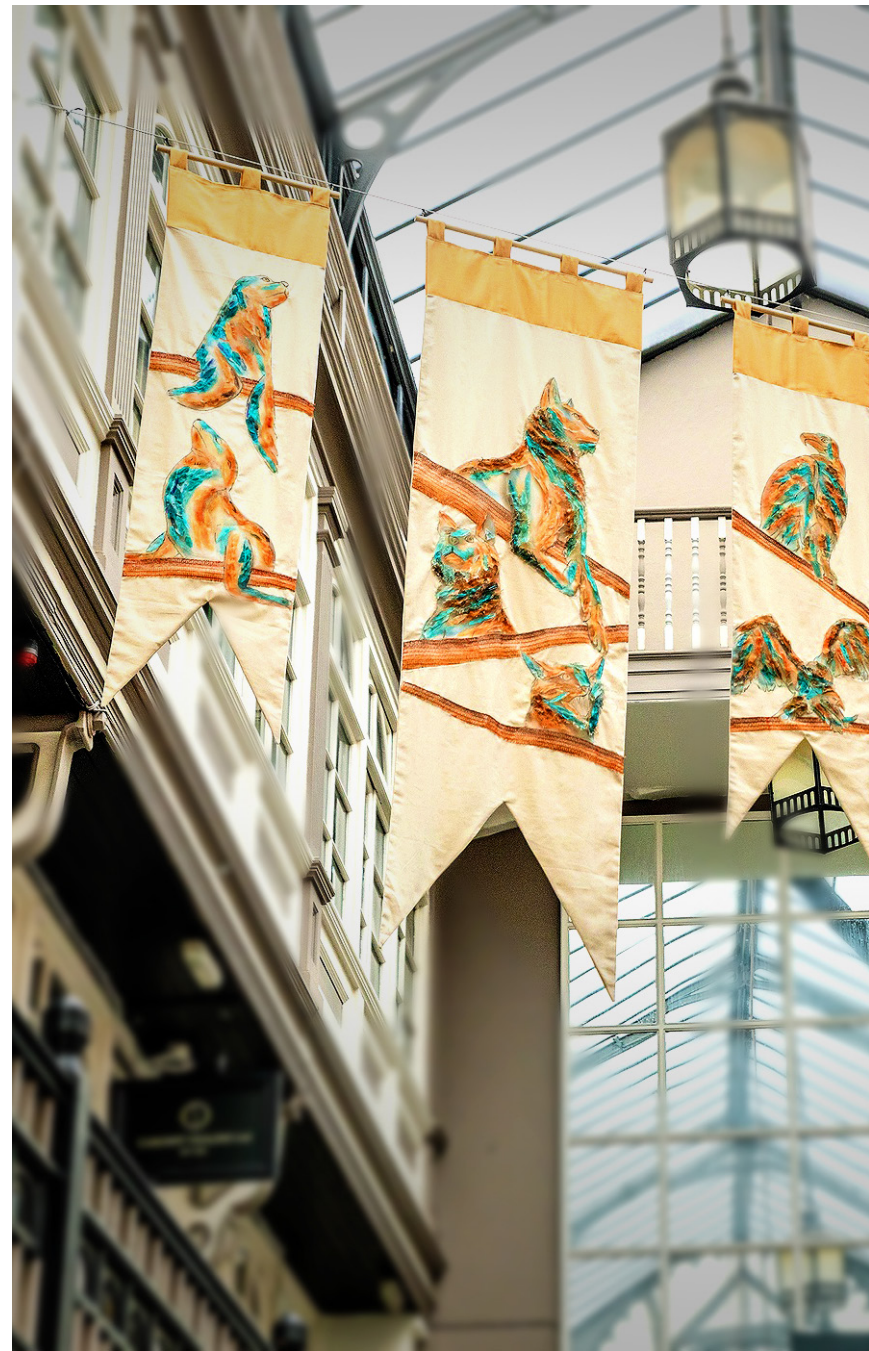
Morgan Arcade - Arts & Theatre

Petros Kourtellaris used recycled fabrics covered in beeswax to create an abstract ethereal figure suspended between the two arches of the arcade, inspired by artefacts from Cardiff Museum.

With dramatic colours, Petros's artwork represents revival after our lives were put on hold by the pandemic.

"What I wanted to create was something that would awaken us.

"It's almost like the figure is giving the community its hand - it's like a



divine intervention, one who comes from above us," he said.

High Street Arcade - Green spaces

Seren Noel has used recycled and natural materials to send an environmental message.

Celebrating Cardiff's green spaces

and wildlife, flowers made from willow and mesh have been suspended from the ceiling - as well as some insects and creatures on the lampshades lining the arcade.

Royal Arcade - Education

Designer Sophie Khan wanted to capture the balancing act that is being a student with her wire figures walking on a tight rope across the arcade.

The electrical cables are also a nod to Cardiff University's lightning lab.

She sourced her wire from a building that was being stripped, and has interspersed it with colourful fabrics that represent the vibrancy and multi-cultural character of the city.

Of the project, Adrian Field, executive director at FOR Cardiff, said: "Cardiff's arcades are one of the capital's strongest assets, and City of Arcades is about putting Welsh culture and Wales' capital city on the map.

"Hanging these vivid pieces of art across the arcades is about making art and culture more accessible, while making Cardiff's city centre a more attractive place for locals and tourists alike."

Rory Fleming, centre manager of the Morgan Quarter, said: "It's fantastic to welcome the return of City of Arcades campaign this year.

"The Morgan and Royal arcades are



Fruit and vegetable sculptures in Wyndham Arcade