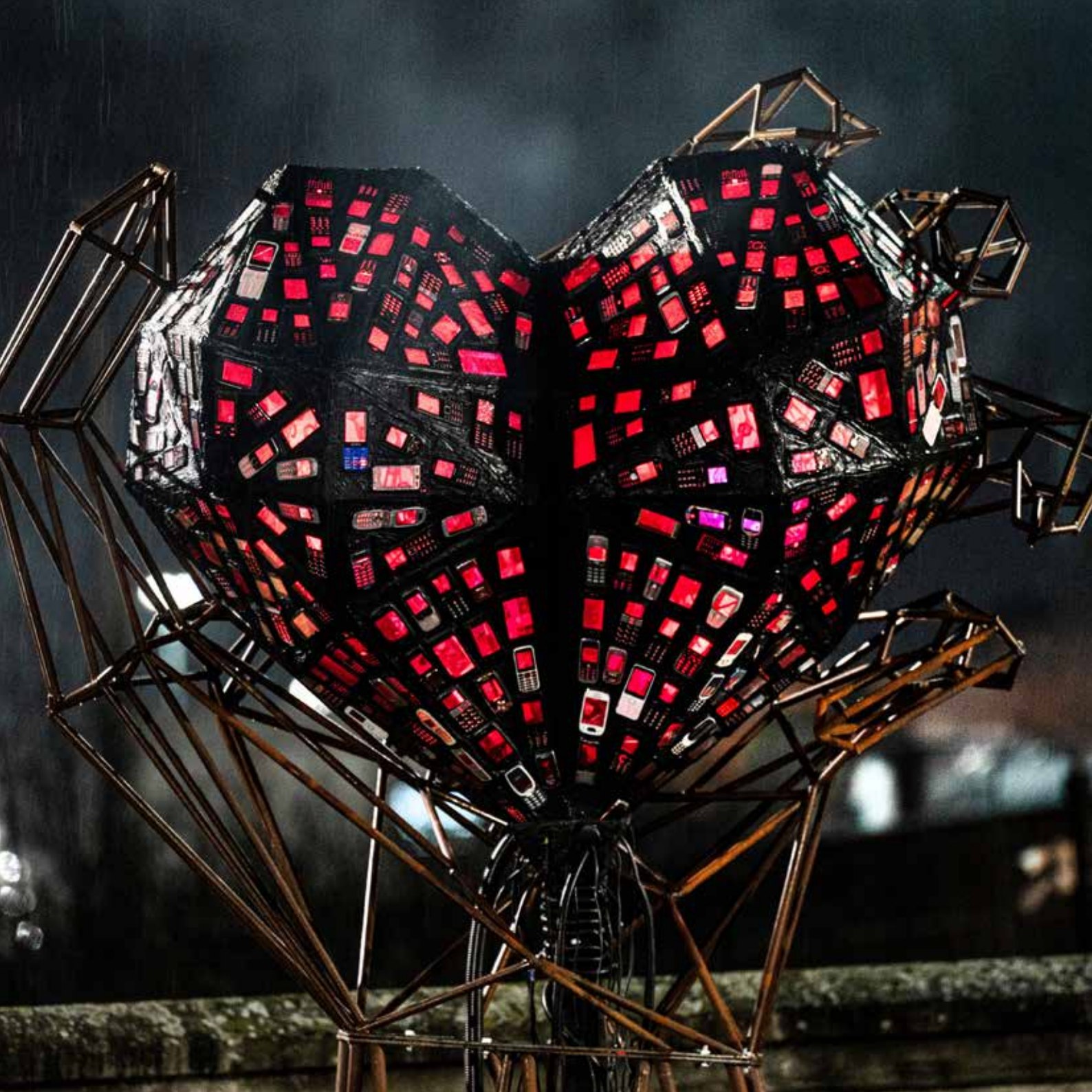
NAVIGATOR NORTH

WE SHALL BE
2024 - 2026

Honky Tonk
BAR AND GRILL

Hi!
MIDDLESBROUGH
REVITALISING YOUR
BIRTHSIT



INTRODUCTION

Navigator North's WE SHALL BE 2024-26, is a groundbreaking community-led commissioning programme, designed to transform public spaces around Middlesbrough Railway Station – a key gateway into the town.

We're using the motto of the town as a provocation to understand what people want Middlesbrough to be, our aspirations for the place and how we might manifest that through this programme of public art commissioning and creative placemaking in the public realm.

WE SHALL BE is the English translation of 'Erimus', Middlesbrough's motto. Through a focus on civic pride and community spirit the resulting site-specific artworks were informed by collaborative thinking, place-based working, and meaningful engagement with local communities.

WE SHALL BE is more than a commissioning programme; it is a movement that places the creativity and voices of Middlesbrough's communities at its core. Together, we aim to shape public spaces that reflect the spirit, pride, and resilience of the town.

Lyrics

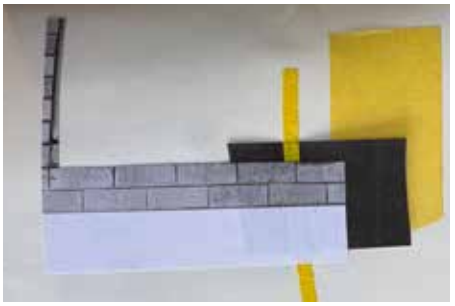
AIMS AND AMBITIONS

- To shift perceptions of the public spaces around Middlesbrough Railway Station, making them feel more welcoming, connected and improve principal sightlines as a gateway to central Middlesbrough.

- To engage residents, artists, local businesses and partners in a community-led commissioning process that builds civic pride and a lasting legacy.

- To support Navigator North's organisational development within public art and placemaking work in the area - increasing skills and experience within our staff, artists and freelancers.

- To capture and share learning about what works in this type of public art and co-creation project and apply it to future programmes and partnerships.

TO LET


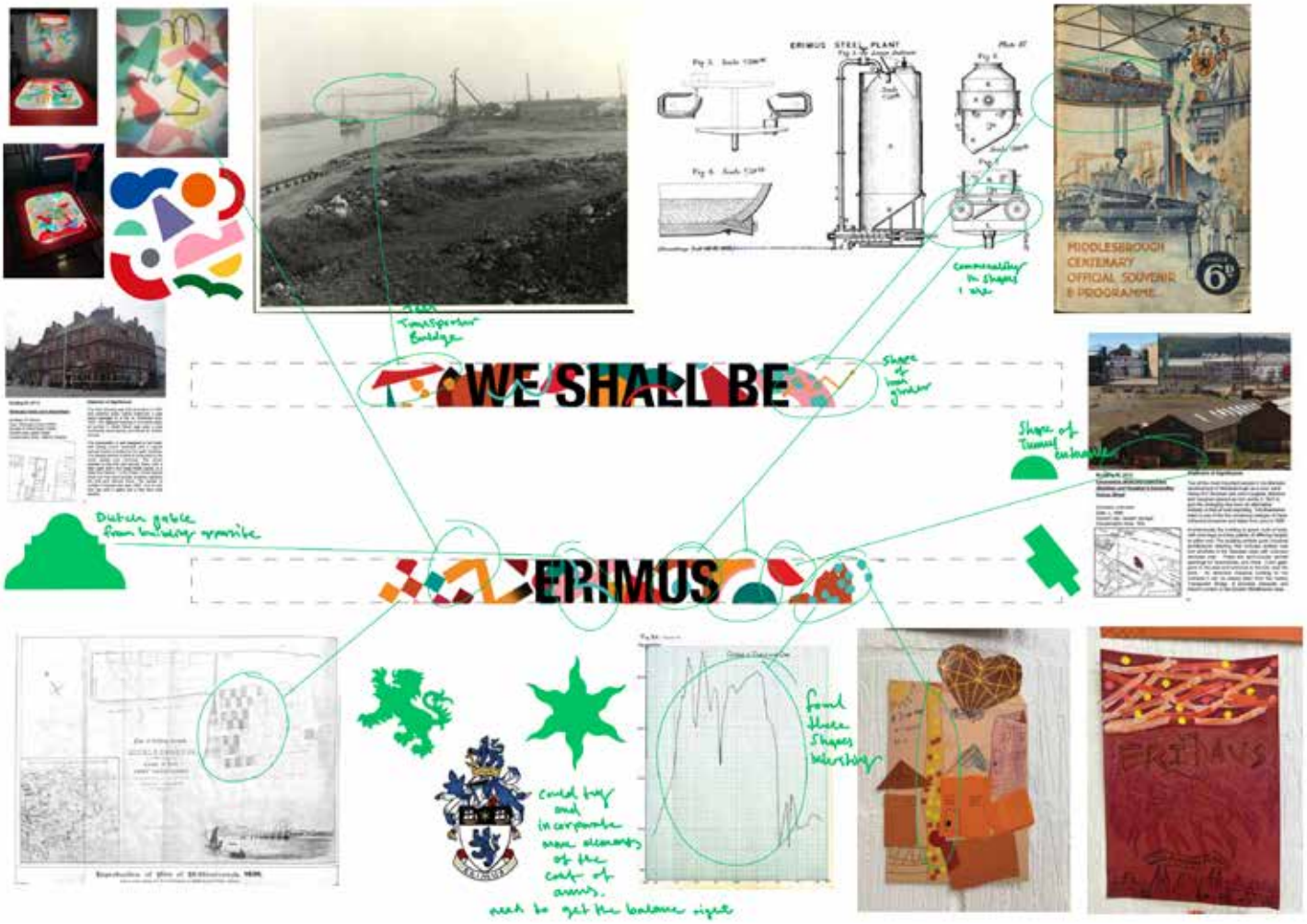
MIDDLESBROUGH
LETS ALL COME
TOGETHER TO
MAKE A BETTER
TOWN

STACK
STACK

ARTISTS, COLLABORATION & PUBLIC ART

Nick Blaney, aka Good Night Vienna, was commissioned to produce large scale murals themed on the motto of Erimus/ We Shall Be on the A66 flyover on Albert Road. Nick has painted these alongside murals designed by Nic Golightly which feature underneath the A66 flyover.

Placing creativity and the voices of Middlesbrough's communities at its core, the murals were created following heritage research at Teesside Archives with local volunteers and visits to Middlesbrough Town Hall. Nic Golightly and Sarah Falconer devised and led a series of creative workshops feeding this research into their sessions, leading to the creation of the final murals.

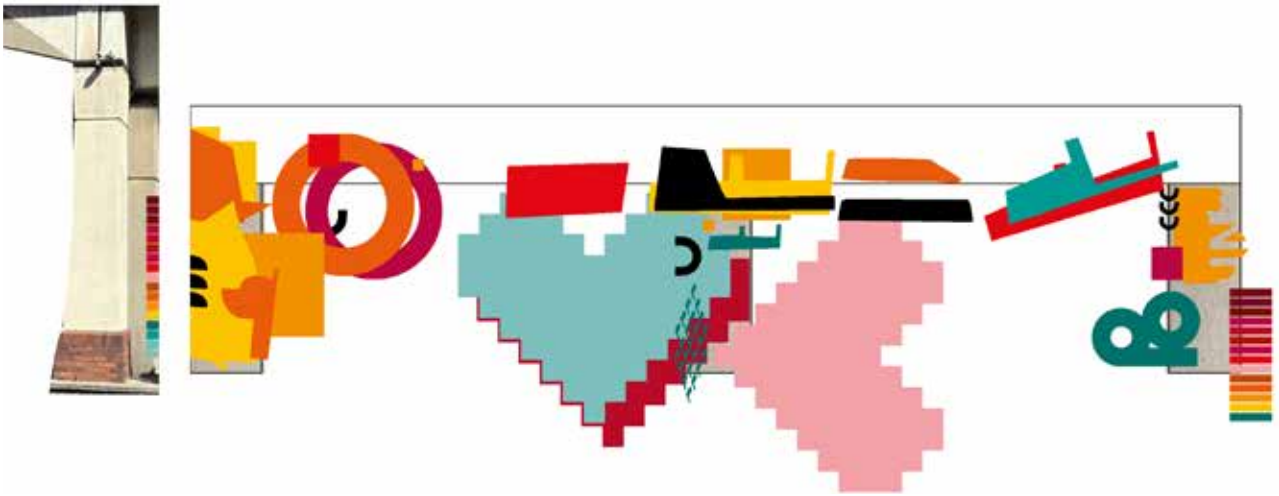


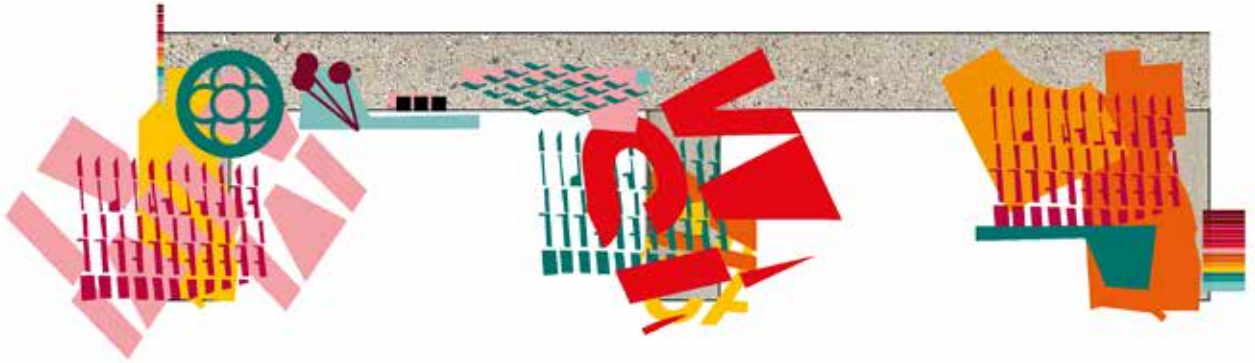
ERIMUS/WE SHALL BE design research, Nick Blaney

‘It (WE SHALL BE) makes me see how beneficial it is for the area, Middlesbrough is being redeveloped through art, the public realm is being improved especially around the station and on the route into the town centre. I want to see more of this happening, and I also want to see key stakeholders in the town take responsibility and help pay for these improvements.’

Participant feedback

Listen to Nick Blaney talk about his work.



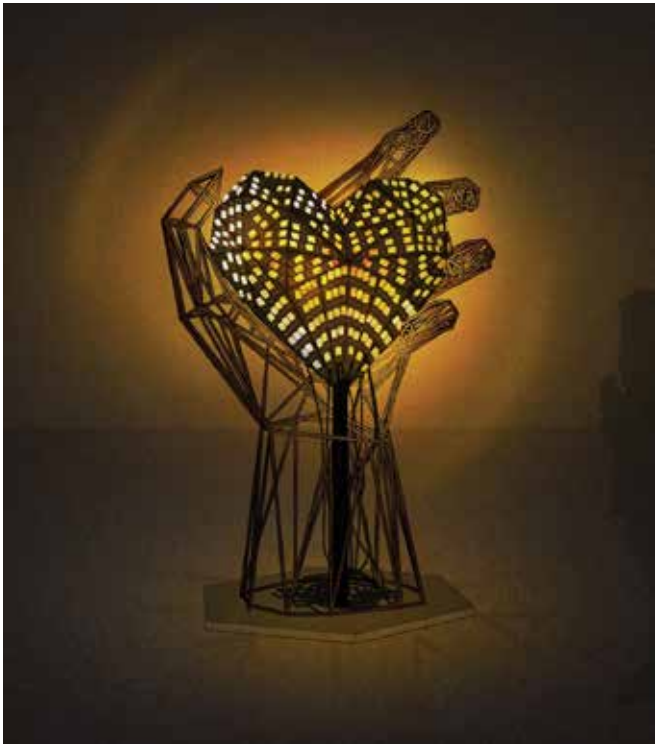


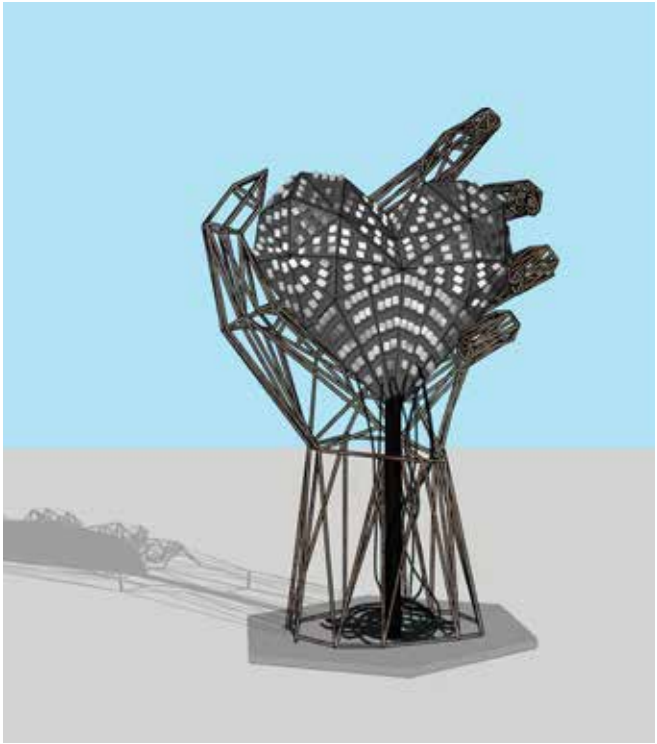
WE SHALL BE collaborative mural designs, Nic Golightly

‘Our staff noticed it immediately. Brightened up the area. Visitors have commented on it. We have had comments about it feeling safer - even though nothing to do with safety has been done, just artwork. It has had an instant positive impact.’

Local business feedback

Listen to Nic Golightly talk about her work.





'hold me and show me you love me', digitial drawings - Stuart Langley
Left - night time presentation with sequenced lighting array inside heart
Right - day time presentation with heart clad in mirrored reflective phone screens

Acclaimed Tees Valley artist Stuart Langley was commissioned to create a striking new public artwork installed at Middlesbrough Railway Station. Titled ***hold me and show me you love me***, this ambitious piece incorporates donated old mobile phones as a core component of its design and collaboration with the public. This sculpture is a co-commission through FORGED.

Inspired by and fabricated in the once thriving steel making heartland of Teesside, it explores how shifting industries and technology has formed the foundation of human activity and continues to drive lives, dreams and delusions.

"It's an honour to be able to present such a meaningful and ambitious work in the heart of Middlesbrough. Thanks to the ongoing efforts of Navigator North, this collaborative work will further cement the town's cutting edge creative reputation and ignite much needed conversations about lives beyond the screen."

Stuart Langley

Listen to Stuart Langley talk about his work.

up
the BORO

Malone's

‘It looks much better, I love the sculpture and the mobile phones are a slice of glorious history I lived through.’

Participant feedback

‘It’s good seeing creativity used in a space that people actually pass through every day.’

Station user feedback

BEFORE

DURING

AFTER

COMMUNITY

The WE SHALL BE programme isn't just about creating new artworks – it's also about taking action to improve how Middlesbrough looks and feels.

The Community Action Days brought people together to refresh the Historic Quarter. Volunteers filled bags of rubbish, cleaned and weeded planters in Exchange Square, along Zetland Road and on Bridge Street West. We worked alongside Middlesbrough Council, STACK and TransPennine Express, to clean and repaint public spaces. These collective efforts transformed how the area looked and reminded everyone that this is a place worth taking pride in.

Each refreshed planter, repainted railing and cleaned footpath is a visible sign that we care about our town. Small, practical changes like these completely shift how people experience Middlesbrough the moment they arrive – making it more welcoming for visitors and helping residents feel proud of where they live.

This hands-on work complements the new public artworks appearing across the town. Together, they raise the standard of Middlesbrough's public spaces and build a shared belief that the town can keep getting better. By working together, we can continue to build momentum and keep improving Middlesbrough's gateways and public spaces for everyone.

errea
ERIMUS

ERIMUS AND THE MIDDLESBROUGH COAT OF ARMS

Research by Paul Andrew Boden at Teesside Archives.

Middlesbrough was made a municipal borough in 1853. By the provisions of its Charter, the Corporation was authorised to have a Common Seal, which could also be used as a Coat of Arms and its design was entrusted to W Hylton Longstaffe, the Town Clerk of Gateshead.

There can be little doubt that he was the author who wrote "The History and Antiquities of Darlington", which was published in 1854 and the artist who sketched and described the remains of the Middlesbrough Priory which came to light in 1846 with the demolition of the Middlesbrough Farm House.

As the basis of the Borough Seal, Longstaffe borrowed the blue lion from the arms of Robert de Brus of Skelton, the 12th century founder of the Middlesbrough Priory. To this, he added ships and anchors to highlight the town's importance as a seaport, while his use of black in certain details was to denote the significance of coal in relation to its industries.

As far as a motto was concerned, he took further inspiration from the de Brus family, whose own motto was, in Latin, "Fuimus" ("We have been"), denoting their former glory. Looking positively to the future, Longstaffe opted for the Latin "Erimus" ("We shall be").

1853 -1974

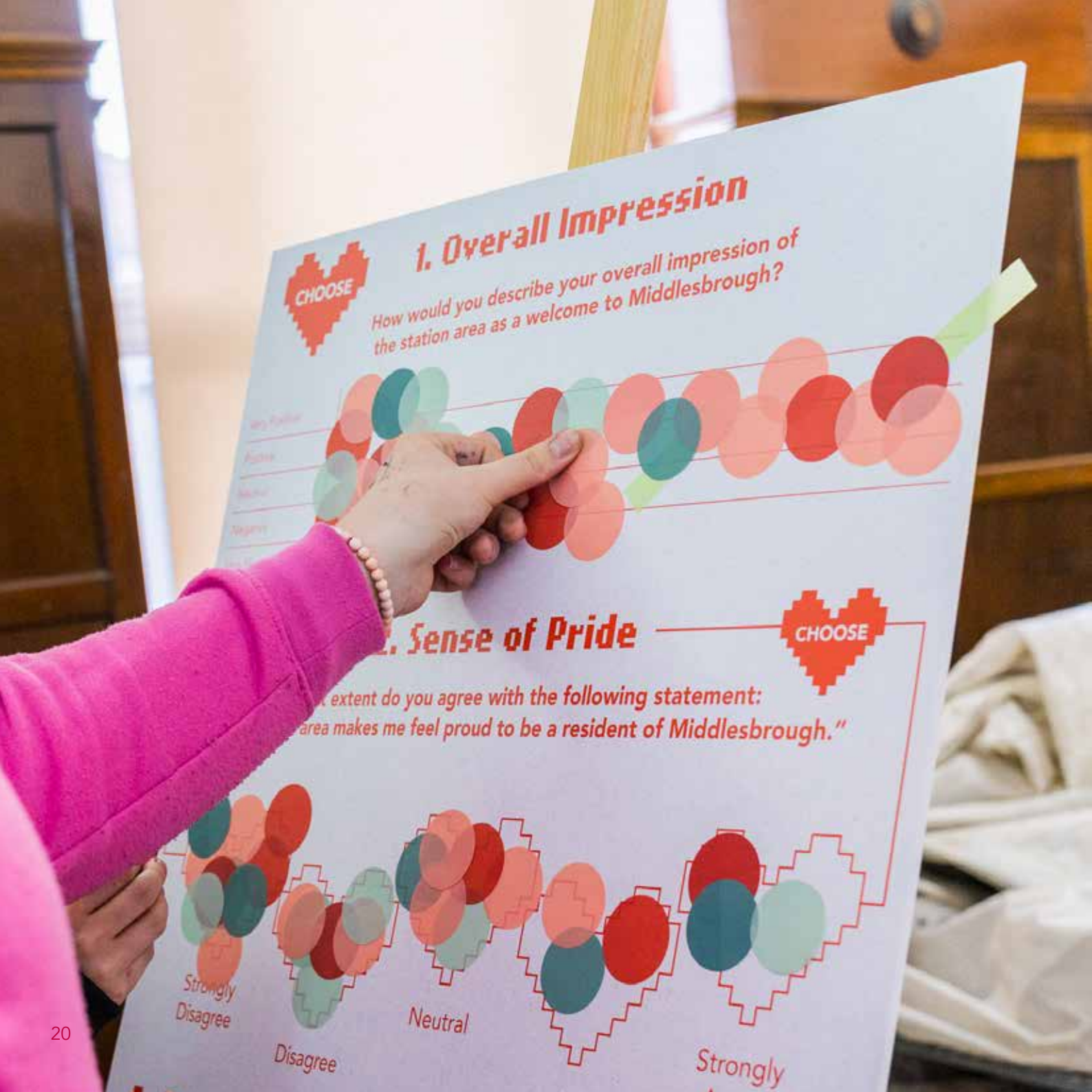
1974 onwards

The first mayor was Mr. Henry William Ferdinand Bolckow, one of the two men (the other being Mr John Vaughan) who had contributed so largely towards the prosperity of the town. The corporation took as its motto 'Erimus' and the subsequent record of Middlesbrough has been one of almost unchecked expansion. That Coat of Arms, Crest and Motto we still possess, although it was not until 1911 that Sir Hugh Bell, Bart, when he was acting as Mayor after the death of Sir Samuel A. Sadler, obtained the Grant of Arms from the Court of Heralds.

Probably the visit which first brought Middlesbrough to the notice of the outside world was that of Mr. W. E. Gladstone, M.P. on Thursday, 9th October 1862. His visit was marked by the impressive speech he made and the phrases he uttered which have become part of history, particularly that one when he designated the town "This remarkable place; the youngest child of England's Enterprise." At a Banquet held in the Station Hotel, Mr. Gladstone said,

"Middlesbrough, although it has become a great community, yet is, I confess, in my belief, but an infant compared with what it is destined to be. It is an infant, Gentlemen, but it is an Infant Hercules and that motto "Erimus" pointing to the future, which you have so judiciously chosen as your ensign, full of meaning and significance for every portion of this country, can nowhere be more full of meaning and force than in its relation to your own."

The village of Marton and birthplace of Captain James Cook did not come under the jurisdiction of Middlesbrough Council until the 1st April 1974. This was when the County of Cleveland was founded. To recognise Captain James Cook the Middlesbrough Coat of Arms was changed slightly. The centre ship was removed and a star (Estoile) was put in its place. This star was taken from Captain James Cook's own Coat of Arms.


CHOOSE
1. Overall Impression
How would you describe your overall impression of the station area as a welcome to Middlesbrough?
CHOOSE
extent do you agree with the following statement:
area makes me feel proud to be a resident of Middlesbrough."
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Strongly

IMPACT

Feedback collected from a wide variety of groups and settings, prior and post WE SHALL BE artwork installation, aimed to understand people's perceptions of the station area using interactive voting panels and online surveys. From this we can measure shifts in perception once the artworks were sited.

This data shows a clear/significant positive shift in how the station area is perceived, showing the impact of the changes made through the programme -

"Very positive" perceptions increased more than 400%

Negative perceptions reduced by 85%

55627 VISITORS

337 PARTICIPANTS

69 VOLUNTEERS

7 ARTISTS

Before the artworks, what people valued was almost entirely the architecture and history:

"the station itself is quite beautiful… historic buildings…"

But that was often paired with frustration:

"history but it's run down"

For some, the space barely registered at all:

"it gets me places"

After the artworks, that changes. People still talk about the buildings, but now they're talking about creativity, identity and first impressions:

"There's more colour and interest now, before it felt quite grey and overlooked"

"The artwork gives a strong first impression and makes the town feel creative"

The space has shifted from something people pass through to something they actually notice:

"It's a better first impression than before"

The biggest change is in how it feels. Before, responses were often mixed — pride in the town, but frustration with the space:

"Proud of our history… [but] a reminder of things not being as good as they could be"

"A sense of Pride. I live here. And it's cool!"

After the artworks, that shifts much more toward pride and optimism:

"It feels like a place that's trying to change and invest in itself"

"more positive now because of the artworks"

People are also recognising that the work is locally rooted:

"The involvement of local artists gives it authenticity"

"It feels more human, like local voices are present in the space now"

At the same time, people are clear it's not finished:

"It's improved, but still feels like a work in progress"

"It needs more than art, it needs investment in the basics"

Overall, the station has shifted from a space defined by history but held back by condition, to one that feels more visible, more cared for, and more representative of Middlesbrough now.

The data shows an improvement in perception, but also people are describing the space differently as more welcoming, creative and moving in the right direction.

2026

Today.
A Public Art Action Plan
2026

NOT LEFT OUT

TASTE OF HOME

LEGACY

Over the lifetime of the WE SHALL BE programme a number of additional, connected and aligned outcomes have either been delivered or continue to evolve beyond the initial programme.

Navigator North secured further funding through Historic England and the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund in 2025 to incorporate the WE SHALL BE heritage research into an additional strand of activity on Bridge Street West. Further connecting communities to the area around the station through a series of painted benches. These incorporate the programmes colour palette and are informed by the heritage of a nearby well known venue – Club Bongo, which has a rich international heritage story.

FORGED - a Tees Valley Combined Authority funded partnership between Navigator North and Middlesbrough Art Week 2023-26. Harnessing the origins of creative innovation in the Tees Valley to deliver vibrant public art across the UK, FORGED aimed to establish the region as a national hub for public art. Stuart Langley's work 'hold me and show me you love me' became a co-commission across both programmes. This work is now secured to remain insitu up until 2030 at Middlesbrough Railway Station where it has quickly become a much loved feature and talking point for locals and visitors passing through the station.

WE SHALL BE Phase II Designs for Wilson Street, Nick Blaney, 2026

The FORGED Public Art Action Plan & Directory draws upon learning and research resulting from WE SHALL BE and is available as an online and printed resource for commissioners, local authorities, artists and arts organisations.

WE SHALL BE helped secure additional investment to the town through the Pride in Place Impact Fund to deliver 'Creative Places'. This is a connected programme of interventions that improve key routes, gateways and public spaces across Middlesbrough - helping reshape perceptions of Central Middlesbrough piece by piece. As a result of this, the murals created for WE SHALL BE now extend beyond the original funded scope of works along Wilson Street.

WE SHALL BE has been a pivotal milestone in the development of Navigator North in terms of the organisations profile, reputation and demonstrable experience.

"We're proud to support the clean-up and creative improvements in the area around the station. By working with Navigator North, we're helping to make the space more welcoming and attractive for everyone, while encouraging a real sense of pride in the community. Together, this award-winning context positions Navigator North as a trusted strategic partner for arts, business and public sector collaboration; a leader in public realm and place-based cultural commissioning; and an organisation delivering measurable impact aligned with regeneration, transport and civic pride."

Andrew McClements, Customer Experience &
Transformation Director for TransPennine Express

ME&SH
CK
STACK

CONTRIBUTORS

Artists

Stuart Langley, Nick Blaney (Good Night Vienna), Nic Golightly – Public Art Commissions
Sarah Falconer, Will Hughes – Community Engagement
Rob Hutchinson, Colin Langley, Beth Hinde – Artist Assistants

Production

'hold me and show me you love me' -
- Dave O'Donnell – Metal Fabricator (hand)
- Tom Springett – Metal Fabricator (base & heart)
- Multi Coat NE Ltd – Powder coating (base & heart)
- J M Engineering Consultants Ltd – Structural Engineers
- Artistic Solutions – Install/technical support
- Sawdust – Production space

Trendsetters – Print & graphic reproduction

Documentation & Photography

Rachel Deakin, Ayodeji Faturoti, Jo Copely, Vicky Holbrough, Bobbie Bailey, Nic Golightly

Design & Marketing

Nic Golightly – Designer, Cara Pringle - Marketing

Project Partners

Vicky Holbrough – Project Manager and Director, Navigator North
Dr Bobbie Bailey – Creative Placemaking Lead, Navigator North
Cori Dales – Volunteer Co-ordinator, Navigator North
Mike Drewery – Area Customer Experience Manager, TransPennine Express
Christine Huntington – Facilities Manager, Commerce Chambers
Mayor Chris Cooke and Deputy Mayor Phillipa Storey
Middlesbrough Council – Regeneration, Culture, Town Centre and Area Care teams
Liam Slevin – Artistic Director, The Auxiliary & Middlesbrough Art Week / FORGED
Edel O Reilly – Executive Director, The Auxiliary & Middlesbrough Art Week / FORGED
Maddie Maughan & Dianne Bowell – FORGED Project Managers
Beam – FORGED Public Art Action Plan, Research & Writing
Teesside Archives

Special thanks to our volunteers, participants and supporters

Navigator North's WE SHALL BE is a groundbreaking community-led Public Art commissioning programme, 2024-26, designed to transform overlooked public spaces around Middlesbrough Railway Station as a key gateway into the town.

WE SHALL BE is the English translation of 'Erimus'- the town's motto.

The programme explores what this means to people of Middlesbrough and reflects themes of identity, pride and collective ambition.

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

NAVIGATOR NORTH

FORGED A new platform for public art.

MIDDLESBROUGH ART WEEK

Middlesbrough moving forward

TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS