

NASA ASTRONAUT LAUNCHES CREATIVE CHALLENGE PROGRAMME

- ***People of all ages in Northern Ireland and across the globe are invited to take part in Our Place in Space creative challenges.***
- ***NASA astronauts, a leading author and an award-winning female engineer are among those setting challenges.***
- ***Learning resources for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 co-developed by leading astrophysicist Professor Stephen Smartt are made available to schools.***

American-born NASA astronaut turned artist Nicole Stott, has launched the first in a series of creative challenges aimed at getting people across NI and around the world thinking about the universe in which we live.

The online programme launched today [13 April] with award-winning artist Oliver Jeffers and the veteran NASA astronaut setting the first of a series of challenges which can be found at www.ourplaceinspace.earth

Nicole, who has taken part in spaceflights, a spacewalk and who lived and worked on board the International Space Station, is just one of several internationally renowned people who will record a challenge as part of a wider line-up of events linked to Our Place in Space, a free 10km sculpture trail recreating the solar system on earth which opens in Derry-Londonderry on the 22 April and will be at various locations across Northern Ireland including Divis Mountain and North Down Coastal path until October 2022.

One of only ten women to ever undertake a spacewalk, Nicole speaks to Oliver about her realisation that humans should take more care of the planet, becoming crewmates and not passengers of spaceship Earth.

Nicole's challenge at the end of her conversation encourages people to bring space and art together to create a postcard design representing our mission to protect Earth.



Designed to inspire participants to think in new ways about our world, each challenge will be led by an expert presenter who will reflect on their life and work before posing a challenge to viewers around something close to their hearts. Other interviewees include astronaut Chris Hadfield, the author and writer Neil Gaiman, Young Woman Engineer of the Year Ella Podmore, with more names to be revealed.

Alongside a creative challenge that will be released every month, Our Place in Space is also developing new STEAM-based learning resources for use at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 to help facilitate learning about the solar system and our place in it. The first Key Stage 2 resources, including 'Planet Earth', 'The Solar System' and 'Climate Change', provide an overview of our unique home and its place in the solar system.

Designed in partnership with Professor Stephen Smartt from Queen's University, Belfast and featuring fun animations and creative tasks for use in the classroom, other resources will be released throughout the year.

Rachel McDermott, Education Manager with Our Place in Space, said: "We've developed a learning programme that will encourage innovative thinking about how we can better share and protect our planet now and in the future. Our challenges are an opportunity for people across the world to have their voices heard and to be creative while new resources will support in-class learning and innovation."

The first creative challenges and resources are now available to view online at www.ourplaceinspace.earth

Our Place in Space is part of UNBOXED, a celebration of creativity taking place across the UK in 2022, designed to reach millions of people.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Our Place in Space is an epic scale model of the solar system designed by artist and children's author Oliver Jeffers, incorporating a 10km three-dimensional sculpture trail in Northern Ireland and Cambridge, an interactive AR app, and major learning and events programmes. From creating a star to writing a symphony for the universe, inventing a new form of transport, building a Minecraft planet or connecting with space watchers around the globe, Our Place in Space invites participants to consider how we might better share and protect our planet in future. It brings our solar system down to Earth and sends us soaring into the stars to find new perspectives and reconsider what it means to live life on Earth.

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is a celebration of creativity taking place across the UK in 2022, designed to reach millions and bring people together. It features free large-scale events, installations and globally accessible digital experiences in the UK's most ambitious showcase of creative collaboration. Produced by some of the brightest minds in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths, UNBOXED features ten major multi-site and digital creative projects that share new ideas and possibilities for the future. Events and activities take place from 1 March to 2 October 2022 – from the Outer Hebrides to Dover and from Omagh to Swansea, and across traditional and online media. UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is funded and supported by the four governments of the UK and is commissioned and delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council, Creative Wales and EventScotland.

Oliver Jeffers is a visual artist and author working in painting, bookmaking, illustration, collage, performance, and sculpture. Curiosity and humour are underlying themes throughout Jeffers' practice as an artist and storyteller. While investigating the ways the human mind understands its world, his work also functions as comic relief in the face of futility. Jeffers' engagements and practice are truly international in scope. His critically acclaimed picture books have been translated into over fifty languages and sold over 14 million copies worldwide. His original artwork has been exhibited at such institutions as the Brooklyn Museum in New York, the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, the National Portrait Gallery in London, and the Palais Auersperg in Vienna. Jeffers has been the recipient of numerous awards, including a New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books Award, Bologna



Rigazzi Award, An Irish Book Award, and a United Kingdom Literary Association Award. Oliver grew up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he currently lives.

The Nerve Centre is Northern Ireland’s leading creative media arts centre with a vision of ‘changing live through creative technologies and the arts’. More than 120,000 people a year benefit from a wide-ranging programme of arts events, innovative projects, creative learning, and production facilities. A successful social enterprise, the Nerve Centre employs 50 staff in Derry~Londonderry and Belfast. At an educational level, the Nerve Centre has developed the Creative Learning Centre model, empowering teachers and community learners to engage with creative technologies to unlock learning in the curriculum.

The Nerve Centre’s artistic output has gained an international reputation with Oscar and BAFTA nominations, and an ongoing collaboration with visual artist Willie Doherty, twice nominated for the Turner Prize.

