The Art House

Dr Victoria Claire
The Sense of Sculpture

18 October to 1 November 2025

A Ground-breaking Multi-Sensory Sculpture Experience in The Dark Comes to Wakefield



Image © the artist

This autumn, The Art House, Wakefield presents **The Sense of Sculpture** by Dr Victoria Claire, a pioneering sculptor who is Registered Blind. The exhibition invites visitors to experience sculpture not through sight, but through touch, sound, and spatial awareness in a completely darkened gallery.

A pioneering project led by Claire, it seeks to support, inspire, and advocate for blind and visually impaired individuals through accessible engagement with sculpture and sensory art. By shifting the cultural experience of sculpture from something seen to something deeply felt, the project opens up new ways of understanding art for everyone.

This project is driven by the idea that sculpture should be accessible to all, regardless of visual ability, and that sculptural works should not just be seen but felt, touched, and emotionally engaged with. Designed for all audiences, but particularly powerful for sighted visitors, the exhibition will place people in an environment where vision cannot be relied on, compelling them to connect through other senses. In a contemporary art world dominated by visual experiences, Claire's sculptures, with their sweeping, flowing, tactile forms, are ideally suited to this sensory approach.



Claire, who was diagnosed at 19 with Retinitis Pigmentosa and now retains no functional sight, has built a 30-year career creating sweeping, tactile forms in bronze and wood. She first staged an exhibition in complete darkness in 2018 – the first of its kind in the UK. At the time, she shared her own journey of learning to accept and embrace blindness. Today, she returns once again to showcase a new body of sculpture, this time inviting audiences to engage with all of their other senses. In a world where around 80% of our experience is dominated by vision, Claire believes we are missing out when we rely on sight alone.

Echoing Wakefield-born sculptor Henry Moore's belief that "tactile experience is very important as an aesthetic dimension in sculpture", Claire's practice redefines how sculpture can be encountered. Visitors will enter the pitch-black gallery guided by a tactile path and rope, gently discovering eight sculptures with trained guides on hand.

Dr Victoria Claire explains: **"I no longer fear the dark; I prefer it. Through this project, I want to share the calm, trust, and connection that comes from experiencing sculpture beyond vision."**

This exhibition celebrates a journey of personal acceptance, staged in Wakefield – leaving a lasting legacy in the 'City of Sculpture' – and marks Claire's transition from a career in contemporary sculpture toward a new role as an arts advocate, educator, and support provider for the visually impaired community. Alongside the exhibition, The Art House will host free family activities and sensory sculpture workshops throughout October, marking Blindness Awareness Month.

Damon Jackson-Waldock, Co-Executive Director at The Art House, said: **"This is more than an exhibition – it's a cultural shift. Victoria's work dissolves barriers and challenges us to imagine art not as something we only look at, but as an experience we feel, hear and know with our whole body."**

The Sense of Sculpture is more than an exhibition – it is an invitation to rethink how we connect with art, each other, and the world around us. This exhibition is not to be missed.

Accessible interpretation will be available in Audio, Braille, Easy-Read and Dyslexia-friendly formats, and the gallery is fully guide-dog friendly. Quiet, private viewings can also be arranged for visitors with specific needs.

The project is supported by the Henry Moore Foundation.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Press Contact: Damon Jackson-Waldock / damon@the-arthouse.org.uk / 01924 312002

The Art House

Drury Lane, Wakefield, WF1 2TE

01924 312 000

Social

Twitter: @TheArtHouseUK

Facebook: /thearthouse.wakefield

Opening Times

Monday: 09:30 – 16:00

Tuesday: 09:30 – 16:00

Wednesday: 09:30 – 16:00

Thursday: 09:30 - 16:00

Friday: 09:30 - 16:00

Saturday: 09:30 - 16:00



About The Artist

Dr Victoria Claire is an experienced arts practitioner and sculptor, recognised with an Honorary Doctorate of Arts from the University of Bolton for her outstanding contribution to public art.

Her creative journey began at 19, when she was diagnosed with the rare degenerative eye condition Retinitis Pigmentosa. Turning to sculpture as a form of therapy, she discovered a lifelong passion for working with tactile materials and exploring form through touch.

Over the past three decades, Claire has created hundreds of sculptures and taught widely, establishing a reputation for work that is both deeply personal and universally resonant. As her sight declined to complete loss of functional vision, she embraced this transformation as a catalyst to expand her practice.

Today, Claire's focus is on advocacy, accessibility, and empowerment for the visually impaired community. Through exhibitions, public speaking, workshops, podcasts, and community programmes, she works to dissolve barriers in the arts and to inspire others to discover new ways of experiencing creativity beyond the visual.

About The Art House

The Art House provides time, space and support for artists, makers and creative businesses to develop their practice. It is a place where artists and audiences of all kinds are welcome to experience contemporary visual art and learn about the practice of being an artist through a year-round programme of exhibitions and events.

Established in 1994 by a group of disabled and non-disabled artists, The Art House is a visual art gallery that offers a free year-round programme of exhibtions, mentoring, residencies and commissions, The Art House develops a range of projects designed to engage audiences in the artistic process and contribute to an essential discourse around diversity in contemporary visual arts practice.

The Art House is the recipient of The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's second annual Award for Civic Arts Organisations 2022. It is the UK's first Studio of Sanctuary, a role which sees them engage Wakefield's Asylum Seeker, Refugee, and Settled communities in creative projects, and was awarded Gallery of Sanctuaryin 2023.