



## Silk River Press Release

For Immediate Release  
14<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018

### Southend-on-Sea exhibition of Silk River scrolls

Having journeyed hundreds of miles down the Thames and Hooghly rivers, the beautiful silk scrolls painted for Kinetika's Silk River will be on display at the Beecroft Gallery in Southend-on-Sea from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. The 22 scrolls have just returned from India where they were exhibited at the spectacular Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata.

In total 192 artists, based along the Thames and Hooghly rivers, collaborated to create these colourful scrolls, each providing a unique perspective and view of the locations. Southend has its very own scroll, made by local artists, which features images of Old Leigh Studios, a cockle fisherman, the Endeavour, Chalkwell Hall and includes references to the Hindu Association, the Kursaal, cricket and of course the sea, amongst other things. Tilbury and East Tilbury also have their own scrolls, along with Dartford, Gravesend, Purfleet and areas further into London such as Barking & Dagenham and Tower Hamlets.

The silk used to make the banners even has a story all of its own – it is a special high grade of hand woven cloth that, under the guidance of Crafts Council of West Bengal, was woven on looms that had not been used in recent memory. The silk thread originates from an area north of Kolkata called Murshidabad and is not mixed with yarn from other parts of India or indeed the world. This is a unique opportunity to see this precious silk up close and examine the beautiful design work from the many artists that took part.

Alan Gemmell, Director British Council India said: *“Silk River has threaded communities and craftsmanship along the rivers Hooghly and the Thames, creating curiosity about the rivers, the people and their culture – achieving exactly what the Year of Culture between UK and India set out to do. The project connects, inspires and celebrates the two countries in a unique way”*

Each of the areas that took part in the UK had an Indian location that it was twinned with for the project. Southend was matched with Krishnanagar for example, because they both host large communities of artists. Come to the exhibition to see for yourself the similarities and differences between all the different places.

The exhibition is organised by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and thanks to funding from '125 Projects', entry is free.

Venue: Beecroft Gallery, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6EX

Open 2-31 March, Tues - Sat 10am - 5pm

Free entry

Ends.

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## Notes to the Editor

### About Silk River

[www.silkriver.co.uk](http://www.silkriver.co.uk)

### #SilkRiver

Silk River has been an ambitious project which explored the unique relationship between London and Kolkata through artistic exchange between communities along the Thames Estuary and India's Hooghly River. Kinetika's Artistic Director Ali Pretty, with associate Artistic Directors Korak Ghosh and Ruchira Das (Think Arts, India) and an international team of artists, writers and photographers, captured and interpreted the experience of journeying along these two mighty rivers.

Working in 20 locations from Murshidabad to Batanagar (Hooghly) and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew to Southend (Thames) to reinterpret a shared heritage, Kinetika's Silk River raised cultural awareness of the Indo-British relationship through engaging diaspora communities who live alongside both rivers.

Silk River culminated along the Thames between 15-24 Sept and the Silk River India walk took place along the Hooghly 6-16 Dec 2017. During the walks, the stories of the 20 locations were revealed to local, national and international audiences through the showing of the 20 giant hand-painted Bengali silk scrolls and accompanying performances.

**Ali Pretty, Kinetika's Artistic Director** said: "It was my first visit to India in 1984 that inspired me to work in the arts, using them as a tool for social change and community development. Silk River builds on my experience over the last 30 years, bringing together communities from the UK and India for a meaningful exchange of stories and ideas. By sharing and celebrating the similar histories and narratives between the River Thames and India's Hooghly River, the Silk River Project encourages the celebration of rich local history, and engages communities to take part in re-imagining the river."

**Ruchira Das, Artistic Director, ThinkArts** said "Silk River has provided all of us at ThinkArts, an opportunity to engage with children, work with artists, and discover stories of our heritage – each of these being elements of our core philosophy. We have particularly enjoyed working with school students along the river. Silk River has enabled them to rediscover their own town, heritage, culture and their connection to the river, they are eager to share their responses with people during the walk in December."

### Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/silkriverkinetika/>

### Twitter

<https://twitter.com/SilkRiver2017>

### Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/kinetikapeople>



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YEAR OF  
CULTURE  
2017





## About Kinetika

[www.kinetikaonline.co.uk](http://www.kinetikaonline.co.uk)

Kinetika is an internationally renowned company with an 18-year track record of combining world-class design with community projects to produce spectacular outdoor events that engage diverse audiences wherever they work. Founded by artist Ali Pretty in 1997, and inspired by her training in carnival arts in Trinidad and India, Kinetika now has an unrivalled reputation for working with local communities on projects that change the way people feel about where they live. From local community events in shopping centres, ceremonial boulevards and local high streets, to the Great Wall of China and the heart of Kolkata.

The charitable arm, Kinetika People, is known for its high quality community engagement work, running participatory programmes, workshops and artist training schemes, which aim to nurture new artistic talent and engage communities, raising aspirations and building a sense of place. The commercial arm, Kinetika Design Studio, has been commissioned to create work for ceremonies at high profile events including FIFA World Cup 2009, the London Paralympic games/Team GB Parade in 2012 and the European Games 2015.

## About UK/India 2017

[www.britishcouncil.in](http://www.britishcouncil.in)

UK/India2017 is a year-long celebration of the long-standing relationship between India and the UK, which will see a vast programme of cultural exchange and activity take place in cities across both countries.

Silk River is part of the UK/India 2017 programme. Working with a huge number of partners and institutions, the British Council is developing a programme of cultural activity which will connect and inspire people in both countries; and strengthen and celebrate the UK and India's cultural ties. For more information on UK/India 2017 please visit [www.britishcouncil.in](http://www.britishcouncil.in)



**Silk River**  
2 - 31 March 2018



Victoria Avenue  
Southend-on-Sea  
Essex SS2 6EX  
Open Tues - Sat 10am - 5pm  
Admission Free

Having journeyed down the Thames and Hooghly Rivers this spectacular exhibition of 22 hand painted silk scrolls, just returned from India, tells the stories of 20 communities along the two rivers.

Made for Silk River with the help of artists and communities from Southend, twinned with Krishnanagar for the project.



Silk River was funded by Arts Council England as well as many regional partners and is a participant in the UK/India 2017 Year of Culture curated by the British Council.

