

# COMPUTALA

LCB Depot's exhibition & events programme highlights work from different creative practices every month.

This month the focus is on digital art with [@newmediaartclub](https://twitter.com/newmediaartclub)'s computala exploring art with the internet, with work from established professionals and emerging creatives. Exhibitions and events run from **13<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025**

Find out more [@lcbdepot](https://twitter.com/lcbdepot) or at [lcbdepot.co.uk/event/computala/](http://lcbdepot.co.uk/event/computala/)



## ***Through The Opening Citizens Eye***

John Coster - collaboration with Jas Singh (Bio to follow separately)

Citizens Eye – Pioneering Community Media in the Digital Age

The rapid growth of internet technology and social media in 2008 presented a transformative opportunity for community storytelling. I founded Citizens Eye in Leicester to harness these tools, creating a framework for a community news agency that empowered local voices across Leicester and Leicestershire.

Our approach combined digital connectivity with grassroots journalism to foster inclusivity and engagement:

- **Social Media as a Newsroom:** Platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter enabled real-time collaboration, connecting diverse communities to share stories and address local concerns.
- **Accessible Media Creation:** By offering free training in photography, video production, and social media, Citizens Eye lowered barriers to participation. Participants included marginalized groups, charities, and individuals who wanted to contribute to local narratives.
- **Engaging Community Events:** Through initiatives like Community Media Cafés, we provided a collaborative space for people to explore emerging technologies, share ideas, and develop hyper-local projects.

Over its seven-year run, Citizens Eye produced an extensive archive of community-driven content, including 1,200+ films on YouTube, 15,000+ images on Flickr, and numerous audio interviews. These archives document Leicester's rich cultural fabric and demonstrate how technology can amplify underrepresented voices.

### An Immersive Exhibition for COMPUTALA

To celebrate Citizens Eye's legacy, I propose an immersive exhibition that highlights how we used internet connectivity and social media to revolutionize local storytelling. The exhibit will include:

1. **Interactive Archives:** Visitors will use QR codes to access curated content, including newsletters, images, and films from our 216-film YouTube playlist, Community Media providing an on-demand, immersive experience.
2. **Dynamic Digital Storytelling:** I will collaborate with Leicester-based digital artist Jas Singh to create moving image content inspired by the Citizens Eye archives. Jas will also produce live digital art during an open event, adding an interactive and performative element to the exhibit.

This exhibition will demonstrate how Citizens Eye established a blueprint for modern hyper-local journalism, recognised as the first Beacon Hub of Citizens Journalism by the Media Trust. It will not only reflect on the past but also

showcase how emerging technologies can continue to support inclusive, community-driven media practices.

## **Artist Bio**

John Coster is an independent journalist working at the intersection of documentary media and solutions journalism. He is a community media innovator who established Citizens Eye in 2008, as one of the early community news projects that used community engagement techniques to facilitate the grass-roots production of news and media content, through the use of emerging social media platforms. All community generated content is archived in the Museum of Community Media.

John now promotes documentary media - film, photography, audio and new media - as a vehicle for the sustainable development of community communication practices via the Documentary Media Centre in Leicester, that is an independent museum, archive and library. He completed six years teaching as an 'industry practitioner' at De Montfort University's Leicester Media School on the Communication Arts BA (Hons) and Media Production BSc (Hons) courses in 2022.

With extensive experience leading cross-community events and training workshops, John maintains networks and links with independent journalists and documentary makers around the world via his Parallel Lives Archive. He has strong links with social action groups globally and provides regular support and advice for social sector and advocacy groups, who seek to make their inclusivity approaches more responsive to the needs of people from many different communities. He has a particular interest in media within the context of conflict, post conflict rehabilitation, and fragile states via his Conflict Memory Education Centre, an independent museum.

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