



Being Human festival: 10–19 November 2022

Further Information about the theme

Breakthroughs

In 2022 Being Human will be thinking about 'Breakthroughs'. Returning for our ninth year, this year's festival will continue to explore the ways in which the humanities enable us to interpret the past, understand the present and imagine the future. What breakthroughs can we imagine, rediscover, and celebrate through humanities research?

From breaking actual ground in archaeology to radical new thinking in literature and art; from socio-political breakthroughs and breakdowns (revolutions, rebellions and rebuildings) to religious revelations and epiphanies, humanities research is shaped by endless fascinating breakthroughs.

2022 marks the centenary of several milestone breakthroughs, including the first BBC radio broadcast, the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun (a literal as well as figurative breakthrough), and the creation of the Irish Free State. There are darker centenaries as well, such as the century since Mussolini's fascists took power in Rome. It is also the 100th anniversary of two breakthrough publications of literary modernism in English, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. And it makes some far longer histories, including the 1900th anniversary of the building of Hadrian's Wall.

Breaking new ground

We are not only interested in historic breakthroughs, however. After more than two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, we are all acutely conscious of the importance of scientific and medical breakthroughs – while also trying to break through the social, cultural, economic and psychological barriers it has created.

From global healthcare to space exploration, many scientific and technological breakthroughs can transform the way we live, but the humanities help us to ask who benefits from such breakthroughs, and why?

Breakthroughs could also be considered through methods and formats of public engagement. Can we break through to new inclusive practices, or new experimental methods through this year's festival? Can we make ground-breaking connections and partnerships that mark a collaborative step forward?

We invite researchers to explore the impact of breakthroughs – broadly conceived – in this year's festival. Breaking new ground, and breaking down barriers is at the heart of what Being Human is all about, and fundamentally we're on the lookout for fun, creative and innovative activities that open up the humanities for all to enjoy!