

The Observatory – ‘A Place to Look In A Place to Look Out’

Context

The Observatory - www.lookinlookout.org: will create a unique and exciting sculptural and architectural structure, which is directly accessible by the public. It will offer artists the opportunity to engage with a specific place, providing space and shelter to undertake their investigations and share with an audience. It will be an inter-disciplinary project involving artists, other professionals and students providing creative learning opportunities throughout all phases.

Vision:

- A focus for artists and audiences to experience the landscape
- A space for artists and audiences to encounter each other
- A place for artists to work and for audiences to see that work
- A point of interest and a reason for visitors to linger when the artist is not present

The Observatory needs to intrigue people and act as a beacon that draws attention to a place - in this case 4 very special locations along southern England from the South Downs to the River Tamar. The Observatory will need to be movable, flexible and reconfigurable. It will offer opportunities for a variety of artists (working in differing media) to create new work in response to the special locations.

Beginning in November 2014, the two-year programme will facilitate extensive opportunities for audiences to engage with the artists in an informal (non-gallery) setting. It will take art to new audiences in places where they would not normally encounter art, resulting in new encounters between artists, audiences and places. The Observatory will enable 12 artists to undertake close investigation covering geology, geography, heritage, social history, nature and environment, leading to interpretation and a richer perception of place, with the outcome being a piece of work(s) that can be shared with an audience.

At the end of its time in each location (6 months, 3 artists per location) there will be an exhibition in the local area. On culmination of the two year programme there will be a major conference in partnership with a UK University to unpack the shared learning from the programme.

The Observatory will provide significant opportunities for artists and audiences to engage in new places outside conventional galleries and within unique landscapes.

Costs

The capital cost of the Observatory structure will be a maximum of £50,000. This includes all consultant's fees. Planning fees and delivery to site are excluded and will be met from programme funds. The winning project team can, of course, supplement this fixed fee using in-kind support or sponsorship through their own contacts.

The Sites

South Downs – probably on the site of Winchester Science Centre

Lymington Salt Marshes and Sea Wall

South Dorset Ridgeway – exact site to be confirmed

River Tamar (Devon & Cornwall) - potential sites such as Royal William Yard, silted tidal areas and historic mining sites

See the appendices for further information on each location and aerial images of the proposed site locations. Please note that the detailed location of each site is still under-negotiation, therefore the information provided in the appendices is indicative of the type of area we are anticipating locating the structure.

Design Issues

Observatory: a position or building that gives an extensive view.

Latin observatorium, from Latin observat- 'watched', from the verb observare

Observe: notice or perceive (something) and register it as being significant take note of or detect (something) in the course of a scientific study

Latin observare 'to watch', from ob- 'towards' + servare 'attend to, look at'

The Observatory Should:

- Challenge the idea of an 'Observatory'
- Act as a 'beacon' to engage people
- Encourage people to question what can be observed: Micro, Macro, Up, Down
- Explore the concept of 'Look In - Look Out'. What does this mean to the artist and the public?
- Explore the notion of permeability and encourage public engagement with The Observatory, the Artist & their work.

The Observatory Must:

- Touch the ground lightly and ground fixings need to be removable.
- Provide lockable, waterproof storage.
- Fit onto one regular flat bed lorry or trailer in either parts or as a whole. The structure itself could be towable like a trailer from site to site.
- Have the provision for renewable energy to supplement the use of a laptop, camera charger.
- Be robust and with stand the environment and the possibility of vandalism
- Appropriate and flexible working space(s) that can accommodate Artists working in a range of media e.g. writer, sculptor, film maker, painter etc...

Items to Consider:

- Potential for on board non-drinking water or collection
- Be capable of future use, re-use or recycling at the end of the two-year residency program.
- The structure could make use of recycled materials
- The structure needs to withstand potentially extreme weather conditions over two years

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING NOTES:

The Observatory Project only has limited development funding at the time of this brief being made public. Applications are pending with major funders, but it is important to understand that this project will not be built unless additional funding is secured. SPUD Group is confident that funding will be secured, but all entries into the competition must be made with this understanding.

Important: The Observatory structure will remain the property of SPUD Group and all decisions in relation to its sale, reuse or decommissioning will be retained by SPUD. Any funds raised from the sale of the structure post-residencies will be held by SPUD and used for future programme activity. Intellectual copyright of the structure will remain with the project architects/artists and new structures created based on the original design will be in negotiation with the design team and SPUD Group.

Disclaimer: SPUD Group and its partners reserve the right to amend this brief, website content and entry conditions at any time. All decisions regarding entrants and winning designs will be final and at the discretion of SPUD Group and its partners.