



INHABIT: *Vacant spaces to vibrant places*

Overview

Inhabit is part of the *Empty Spaces* initiative. It's a programme of activity part funded by DCLG to re-invigorate local high streets and raise community confidence in local spaces. It aims to support local areas during the economic downturn, reviving shopping centres by transforming vacant spaces into vibrant places. As a result of further funding from Arts Council England, we are able to offer further commissions.

Our approach is to provide a pleasant place for people to meet, have a cup of tea, enjoy taking part in creative workshops or simply talk and share stories about what the local high street used to be like and how it *could be* in the future. The activities will take place throughout 2010 and across Birmingham in Erdington, Hodge Hill, Ladywood, Perry Barr and bringing everything together at the Pavilions in the city centre.

Artists Commissions

As part of **Inhabit** there are a small number of artist's commissions available. We have transformed the first empty shop at 173 Hagley Road, Ladywood, into a local tearoom. Tea has shaped England's national identity, but was first brought to the country from India and China. Newer communities have very different relationships to tea, and to the manner and space in which it is, and isn't, drunk. We believe that this provides us with a route to draw individuals and communities out of their houses and into the local tearoom. The tearooms recognise this curiously English tradition but also its global roots.

The commissions should therefore pick upon but not be constrained by the notion of transforming space, community engagement and participatory led activity. At the core of the work should be a strong concept but one that is easily communicated to those unfamiliar with the arts sector and who may not have engaged with the arts in any depth. We expect artists to be committed to and interested in how the arts can work as a catalyst towards social and community development.

All artists commissioned must regularly contribute to Hybrid's forum/ blog on this subject.

Artists will be required to work across two shops, or for the inter-disciplinary commission collate materials from all shops, with the final display taking place in the city centre shop at the Pavilions.

Each of the commissions (apart from the Open Brief commissions) has a budget attached to enable 'Mentoring Connections'. We will therefore work with you to identify routes for development to explore how you can further your professional and creative development.

The commissions:

Promenade

(Fee £7, 500 to include all expenses, Up to £1, 000 mentoring connection)

Taking each empty High Street space as a starting point, we wish to commission a promenade performance that propels participants through the history and culture of the local High Street. This could involve using drama, theatre or audience engaged in exploration to see more of the High Street. This may include other shops, local buildings such as places of worship, public art in the vicinity as well as activities and work in our Inhabit unit. We want to surprise the participants, make them stop and think and in essence encourage them to revisit the High Street after we have gone. Ideally this promenade would be aimed at a mix of age ranges, we don't want to exclude people who haven't previously engaged in promenade style work, the work must be accessible and consider how to draw people on a learning journey – both about art and their local High Street.

We are interested in talking to artists who are excited at the possibilities that this commission presents. We would seek to have a promenade performance in at least two High Streets, with the potential of applying the promenade to other areas. This may mean having a template that is then adapted to each area. To complement the promenade we would like a 'trail' created that could be taken by families on their own (similar to those created by heritage sites or museums) as those who are able to access the performed promenade are likely to be limited in number.

Word based

(Fee £5, 000 to include all expenses, up to £1, 000 mentoring connection)

We are interested in exploring the possibility of drawing upon words/ text in the spaces. We are including within this text/ language/ literature/ spoken word/ calligraphy/ typography. This commission needs to incorporate community/ participant involvement. We would like to add to the atmosphere of the tearooms, and develop its theme by exploring the possibility of a commission that considers the written and spoken word. The thinking behind this commission are the conversations that were and are held in tearooms, what are the topics of conversation today, what themes could or should be encouraged?

We are interested in hearing from performers/ writers/ visual artists who have created contemporary work and have an interest in developing their practice in new ways, keeping word/ text at the heart and working across languages. If you work in one area, you may wish to collaborate with another artist to deliver this element.

Reminiscence/ Film / Animation/ Drama

(Fee £7, 500 to include all expenses, up to £1, 000 mentoring connection)

We are looking for an artist, partnership, collaboration or group to deliver an inter-disciplinary arts commission. The commission will pick upon local residents' stories and produce an audience experience that draws together stories (could be verbatim), images, sound and music that produces considerable texture. The work may take inspiration from the stories that are collected

within the programme, producing new work, or it may be verbatim. The work produced should connect with the overall theme and consider past, present and future in its content.

There should be a strong digital media presence, with at least some of the work web based, for example through work in progress on youtube. The final work should also be uploaded onto vimeo or similar.

We would expect the chosen artist to engage with participants, residents and audiences in all four wards but for the final work to be shown in the city centre. The commissioned artist will be responsible for installation and technical maintenance as well as all technical/ production needs.

Open Brief

For the Open Brief, we are open to and interested in new ideas and art forms, particularly those that are not covered elsewhere in the artists' commissions. We are especially interested in arts forms or ways of engaging that are accessible to communities and individuals who haven't previously engaged with the arts.

There are no guidelines for this commission beyond the information that is available in the programme overview. This is deliberately open as we wish to encourage artist's own thinking and ideas on engagement. We do, however, expect the ideas to tie in with the overall vision of the programme and to have a strong sense of how the work will engage audiences and inspire interaction. We are looking for artists who can engage with the space to profile their own arts practice and alongside this, deliver a few participatory sessions.

The commissions provide a small number of artist's opportunities to:

- Display/ produce work
- Hold performances
- Run participatory workshops
- Drop in sessions
- Demonstrations
- Show or develop work in progress
- Use the space for meetings

At the core of your work should be a clear concept but one that is easily communicated to those unfamiliar with the arts sector. We expect artists to be committed to and interested in how the arts can work as a catalyst towards social and community development. We are especially interested in arts forms or ways of engaging that are accessible to communities and individuals who haven't previously engaged with the arts.

The fee for these commissions is between £500 and £1500, however, you will need to be responsible for:

- Transport
- Insurance
- Technical Needs

We will be accepting applications for this element through till February 2011.

However, the longer you leave it, the greater the competition is likely to be

How to apply

Please send us the following information:

- An outline of how you would respond to **Inhabit** (max 500 words)
- A loose budget
- An up to date CV
- Images/ CD featuring your work
- How you would recruit and engage local residents (max 500 words)
- How much time you would spend working in the tearoom (max 200 words)

BY 5pm, MONDAY 20th SEPTEMBER

Feel free to ask questions first.

We may have an open day for artists, please let us know if this would be of interest to you.

TO

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Short-listed applicants will be asked to attend 'Ladywood – Inhabited'
on Wednesday 6th October 2010 from 4 – 6.30pm.