

Action Research - West Bromwich Connections

Artist Brief - December 2011

Introduction

Longhouse is an annual programme of work carried out by community arts organisation, Multistory. Longhouse is dedicated to the professional development of artists working in the public realm and provides knowledge, support and funding to artists to develop their practice.

Action research is a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion as key components of the 'research'. It is a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation or activity that is group (often collaborative) or personally owned and conducted. The linking of the terms 'action' and 'research' highlights the essential features of this method: trying out ideas in practice as a means of increasing knowledge about, or improving areas of, creative methodology and artistic practice.

For more information on previous Action Research programmes please visit:

<http://www.multistory.org.uk/projects/longhouse/summary/>

Project Outline

"The want of a public park at West Bromwich has long been felt and would indeed be a great bon to the hardy sons of toil whose life it is to dwell here."

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Dartmouth Park is located close to a significant regeneration programme that is currently underway across West Bromwich. It is, however, a detached and unwitting observer of this profound transformation – despite currently being the subject of a large restoration project of its own. It was severed from the main commercial and social activity of the town when the A41 Expressway was constructed in the 1970's. Reform Street bridge now provides the main connecting thread to the Park from the epicentre of local change and the Park thus remains a quiet and isolated backdrop.

The showpiece Victorian park sits on the doorstep of West Bromwich town centre and provides visitors and residents with an attractive and high quality green space.

This programme aims to explore how new or existing connections to and from Dartmouth Park to the town centre can be established, highlighted and improved. The project will focus on the public realm, connecting routes and incidental spaces located between Dartmouth Park and West Bromwich town centre including the new Tesco development; the car park/New Street across Reform Street Bridge to the new pedestrian entrance of Dartmouth Park.

The participating artists will explore notions of change and time, movement and rhythm, communication and innovation, people and place across a setting that is currently undergoing profound transformation. Community perception and their associations

(familiar or otherwise) with the patina and narrative of their neighbourhood and locality should, in some way, inform and reinforce the creative outcomes.

This programme of Action Research will therefore invite each artist to explore the context and issues relating to physical and social connectivity to and from the park. Research, exploration and exchange will highlight opportunities for physical change and subsequently inform the development of tangible design ideas, recommendations and proposals for artworks and interventions specifically for the identified routes and spaces.

The emphasis of the creative process is to devise innovative and imaginative ways of reuniting the Park and the town centre. We anticipate that each participating artist will produce a set (or family) of potentially realisable ideas for permanent public works (presented through drawings and models) or a new visual language that identifies, signposts and waymarks routes from the town to the park.

Artists shall note that Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) may decide to use and fabricate one (or more) of these designs following this programme but will be under no obligation to do so.

For further information about Dartmouth Park please visit:

<http://www.friendsofdartmouthpark.org.uk/index.htm>

http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200073/parks_and_open_spaces/729/history_of_dartmouth_park/2

For further information about the regeneration of West Bromwich please visit:

http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/823/regeneration_projects/1122/west_bromwich_regeneration

Purpose

The project has two main objectives:

- To develop a number of innovative and imaginative design ideas and recommendations for bespoke permanent features, which will help define, signpost and navigate new and/or existing routes from West Bromwich town centre to Dartmouth Park.
- In addition artists will be invited to assess future and existing public art practice within the town centre in order to evaluate, analyse and provide recommendations that contribute towards the future arts (and possibly the regeneration) strategy for West Bromwich town centre. This will involve reviewing existing pieces of public art within the town centre and mechanisms for how and where these might be relocated.

Delivery Process

The Action Research project will be delivered via an intensive three-day residency in West Bromwich in February/March 2012. The residency will consist of dialogue and exchange with local stakeholders, creative activity, collaboration, experimentation, ideas development and site-based testing.

Following the residency each artist will have an additional day to produce a short report. It is anticipated that this will comprise both written and visual material gathered throughout the three days and will include draft design ideas, recommendations and indicative visualisations.

Each report and supporting material will contribute towards a final report for the overall programme.

The project will commission 6 artists/creative practitioners as active participants, researchers and collaborators whose individual and collective role will be to actively respond and develop creative interventions within the project area.

We anticipate that the project will attract emerging artists from different backgrounds who currently work within the public realm or have a keen interest in/understanding of related fields including landscape architecture/urban design, regeneration and urban renewal contexts.

The process will be steered and facilitated by a lead artist/mentor in collaboration with Multistory. The project is being run in association with Sandwell MBC.

Project outcomes

- Innovative, distinctive and practical strategy for increasing connectivity between Dartmouth Park and West Bromwich town centre
- Increased opportunity to use local people's knowledge, ideas and aspirations in the future development of the area.

Required residency outputs

A final report (maximum 1000 words) consisting of a draft design(s)/recommendations that should include outline specifications (considering scale, site, orientation, materials selection, vulnerability etc), photographs/sketches/visualisations and stakeholder feedback.

- A three-day action research and development residency including interactive workshops and learning activities
- A minimum of 2 creative interventions in the public realm to test ideas to inform your final design/ideas.
- A written evaluation statement of the process (max 500 words)

Call to Artists

We are currently looking for applications from artists and creative practitioners who wish to undertake this exciting three-day residency in West Bromwich.

There are six short-term residencies available for February/March 2012. The residency will be delivered from 28 February to 1 March 2012. Subsistence and accommodation over the three days will be provided. Please note that travel costs will not be provided.

We are inviting applications from artists/creative practitioners for action research proposals under the umbrella theme of 'connections'. Each of the selected artists will receive support from the Lead Artist/Mentor during their residency, through active learning workshops and group discussions with other participating artists and stakeholders.

All artists can apply but experience of 'urban design', working in the public realm and/or working in a regeneration context would be desirable. All artists applying for the residency must be available to attend all of the dates below:

- 28 February 2012
- 29 February 2012
- 1 March 2012

The final report must be submitted to and signed off by Multistory by no later than 15 March 2012.

Payment Details

The total fee is £800.00 (inclusive of travel expenses and VAT) for 4 days (3 x residency days & 1 day content for report)

Please Note: Accommodation and subsistence during the residency will be provided for by Multistory. A small material budget will be allocated to each artist too as part of the residency.

How To Apply

Applicants are requested to include the following:

- Covering letter with full address and contact details
- Recent CV (no longer than two A4 sides)
- Up to 4 printed or digital images of your work
- Expression of Interest (maximum 500 words)

The Expression of Interest should contain:

- An explanation of your interest in participating in this action research project
- A statement outlining why you are a strong and appropriate candidate
- A summary of any relevant skills, projects and experiences

Deadline for Submissions

Friday 27th January 2012

Both post and email applications will be accepted.

To be sent to:

Karl Greenwood
Multistory
4th Floor, The Public
New Street
West Bromwich
B70 7PG

Or: Email to: karlgreenwood@multistory.org.uk