

**Notes of art and design in the public realm training session:
Discover what artists need to know about how to become commission ready
20 November 2013**

These notes are adapted from an interactive seminar and training session held in November 2013. Wiltshire Council commissioned trainer Diana Hatton of Diana Hatton Consultancy to run this seminar. It contained much discussion and question and answer, and also some interrogation of sample briefs etc. Therefore these notes, compiled by Diana Hatton, are merely an extract and a distillation of the 'headlines' experienced on that day.

A PowerPoint presentation accompanied the seminar and should be viewed alongside these notes.

Firstly we looked at a number of examples of art and design in the public realm covering:

- Monumental
- Temporary
- Lighting
- Integrated within paving
- Small interventions
- Street furniture
- Artist led
- Community engagement

We had a discussion about ways of working, public art and design practice and re-emphasised the difference between a gallery artist and a public artist.

A public artist creates work to a brief, for a particular place or community and for the people who will use that place or space.

We discussed the delegates own work within the context of public art commissioning.

Preparing for opportunities:

You should see this as a challenge to develop your skills and expertise and expect to make many applications and bids in order to get work.

You will need to think about:

- Sources of information
- Who knows what
- Understanding how opportunities arise
- Developments and trends

You will need to consider whether you are set up to:

- Record ideas and possibilities
- Develop opportunities
- Reflect on your past projects
- Build relationships
- Keep records of useful contacts

There was a wide ranging discussion about where to find opportunities especially in Wiltshire. Meril Morgan, arts development officer outlined the process and mechanisms for commissioning in Wiltshire in line with Wiltshire's Guidance Note for Art and Design in the Public Realm. Diana talked about who commissioners may be or who the organisation or individual issuing the commission brief might be. These include:

- Developers
- House Builders
- Commission Agencies
- Neighbourhood Partnerships e.g. Community Campus
- Local Authority Arts Officers
- Freelance curators or project managers

Analysing potential opportunities:

What are the benefits of working in the public realm?

- Money?
- Profile
- Collaboration
- Others?

Feasibility:

You will need to consider the following:

- Is the commission consistent with your aims?
- Does it fit with your work schedule?
- Does it suit your way of working?
- Any disadvantages?
- Where are you prepared to work?
- Do you have a bottom line?

Aspects of you and your work:

You need to get to know yourself, the way you respond and fit with potential commissions.

Analyse and take some time to sketch out how much time you take/spend on the following: Making, teaching, group and studio work, shows and exhibits, research, documentation, experimentation, research, management and overall co-ordination.

- Is the balance right?
- What do you earn?
- How to pitch your fees and daily rate? You have to balance your skills and experience against the going rate and also against your expenses and needs.
- Might you charge different amounts for different commissions? Why?

Following a ruling from the Office of Fair Trading, Arts Council England no longer offer advice on daily rates for artists although the artists information company (formally artists newsletter) has some good toolkits for artists and has a matrix where you can plot information to arrive at a daily rate for your services. www.a-n.co.uk

Unpacking a brief:

You have to train yourself to really understand a brief and your response to it.

We split into three groups and each group analysed the same set of artists' briefs. This was a useful exercise to gauge different responses and approaches to a brief. The groups analysed a particular brief and discussed:

- Good and bad aspects.
- What attracted artists and why
- How they would put together a response
- There are also some practical and technical aspects to briefs, which can seem off-putting including, insurance, procurement needs and technical knowledge or access to it (Makers and artist's authorship fabrication).

You should practise reading and analysing briefs and making draft applications.

You can get commission briefs from the internet e.g. Public Art Online Wiltshire Council will use its database, [website](#) and [blog](#) to promote opportunities in public art and design. To register for the database, email arts@wiltshire.gov.uk

Applications and tenders:

As well as the commissioner needing to see your work, and give you the context in which you will work and the aims and expectations of the commission, you will need to demonstrate through your application that you are:

- Confident and capable
- Knowledgeable and skilled
- Aware of the background and have researched the context for the commission and the commissioner
- Good at planning and time management
- Have clarity of vision.

What will you select to show and highlight from your previous experience and why?

How much are you prepared to put in?

- Site visit
- Research
- Analysis of the brief
- What type of commission and context do you think you will be working in
- Stages of an application – Expression of interest images and response to the brief/approach shortlist site visit presentation. Then sometimes a design phase.

Enthusiasm, research, know your end user and panel, attention to detail, time keeping and balance in pitch, well rounded ideas, choose images carefully, don't make assumptions, Marquette's, fully formed ideas.

Practising artist shared experiences

Wiltshire based artist, Rebecca Churchill, described her recent experiences of taking up a mentoring opportunity on a public art and design project in Westbury. She had wanted to develop her skills in this area and had attended Wiltshire Council's public art symposium and artist training session the previous year. She successfully applied for the mentoring opportunity, which gave Rebecca the chance to contribute to an evolving and multifaceted public arts project. Key tasks included

participating in a school's residency alongside the Lead Artist, Scott Farlow, and assisting with the wider creative and public engagement activities for the Westbury project. Rebecca's particular interest in socially-engaged practice including creative experimentation, action research and a willingness to stretch the boundaries of her current areas of focus enabled her to play an active role in the delivery process of the project. Rebecca's PowerPoint presentation should be viewed alongside these notes.

Let's say you have got the commission or even good things to cover at presentation/interview:

There are now a host of aspects, which you will find yourself dealing with. Take these one by one and look at the skills and knowledge you may already have or how to negotiate your way through the tasks. Remember if you have done your pre-work then none of this will be a surprise!

- Your role and where you fit
- Your status
- The timings
- Collaborations
- Mechanisms
- Understanding the contract
- Technical, contractor, permissions, CRB
- Maintenance issues
- Deadlines
- Consultation, engagement and presentations
- Documentation

Finally to remind ourselves again of the singularity and difference of public art collaboration for a specific place or community of interest

