

Mottisfont – A Place for Art



<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-mottisfont>

Residency Information and Brief for Artists

Background

The National Trust at Mottisfont secured funding in 2012 for a project entitled 'A Place for Art'. This is part of 'Transforming Mottisfont', a major initiative to build new visitor facilities and reinterpret Mottisfont for future visitors. The project is to deliver a series of six **co-creative** artist residencies, between November 2012 – December 2014. The first three residencies have taken place with works being completed by artists Anna Cady, Hywel Davies and Anna Heinrich & Leon Palmer.

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mottisfont/our-work/projects/>

We now wish to invite artists to submit proposals for a second series of three residencies between April 2014 and December 2014. Each residency will be for a period of three months and they will ideally run consecutively. The resident artists will be expected to work collaboratively with Mottisfont's communities and to produce a piece of work which can be installed on site for 3–6 months (depending on its form and location). Each piece should focus on one or more of our 'stories', as part of our interpretation and engagement strategy.

The precise dates of each three month residency will be negotiated with successful artists, taking into account the ways in which Mottisfont changes with the seasons, the conservation issues that the property manages at different times of year (for example, the 'winter clean') and the fluctuating numbers of visitors and volunteers. Mottisfont is however one of the National Trust properties which is now open all year round, partly as a result of the arts development work that has taken place here.

Our project is focused around Mottisfont, a National Trust historic house and estate situated in the Test Valley near Romsey in Hampshire, rich in histories of people and communities. Its Grade I historic house sits at the heart of a 1,645 acre estate adjacent to Mottisfont village, which includes ancient woodland, rare wildlife and world-status chalk streams, as well as 64 vernacular buildings. The house itself is a unique country mansion with a medieval priory still visible at its heart. It is surrounded by a designed landscape characterised by several phases of planning dating from the mid 18th century and culminating in the works of some of the most prominent garden designers and horticulturalists of the 20th century. Mottisfont also manages around 4,000 acres of the New Forest.

People have come together at Mottisfont for more than a thousand years – its name comes from the 'moots' that the local community held around the 'font' or spring which still emerges from a beautiful pool in the grounds. The origin of this name indicates the importance of water at Mottisfont and is probably the reason that a settlement was sited in this location. The evolution of the landscape is a result of human activity and development which began with the founding of a priory at the site in 1201. The Augustinian monks developed a thriving estate on fertile land by the River Test which remained until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 by Henry VIII. Henry gave the priory to Sir William Sandys, an important figure in his court, who surprisingly did not destroy the church. Instead, he set about converting it into a country home and the priory's medieval architecture became the central framework of this highly unusual domestic residence. The house was further transformed in the 18th Century, but its earliest history is still visible both inside and out.

Many fascinating people have lived, worked and visited Mottisfont during its history, and our archives are rich with stories waiting to be brought to life, from the monastic age, to the children of the Meinertzhagen family who ran wild in the grounds in the 1890s and Frederic Halford, who perfected the art of dry fly fishing on our stretch of the River Test. More recently, Maud Russell (Mottisfont's owner in the early 20th century) brought artists and garden designers to the estate including Rex Whistler, Boris Anrep, Norah Lindsay and Geoffrey Jellicoe.

Mottisfont became a vibrant centre for artists, musicians and writers, who came for long weekend parties and were inspired by Mottisfont's past to make works for its future. Maud's friend Derek Hill later left a significant collection of early 20th-century art to Mottisfont, which includes works by Degas, Seurat, Bonnard, Sutherland and Nicholson.

The National Trust has cared for Mottisfont since 1957, managing the estate and establishing one of the best rose gardens in England, with its national collection of historic old-fashioned roses. It also conserves and makes accessible stunning sections of the River Test and SSSIs, and has re-established wetlands that support an extraordinary range of flora and fauna. Volunteers now lead guided walks around these areas almost every day, talking to visitors about the otters who have now returned to this habitat and the rare barbastelle bats and purple emperor butterflies that fly overhead.

We have continued Mottisfont's artistic traditions by opening a previously empty part of our house as an art gallery, in which we mount a programme of five exhibitions every year. This includes a major 'open' show for local artists and a programme of artists' residencies with a remit to work with our communities.

However, regular visitor feedback and audience development research (with both visitors and non-visitors) has shown that people struggle to unpick the complex history and significance of our landscape and buildings. Some non-visitors have assumed that somewhere like Mottisfont is not for them – but have then loved coming here and exploring the property. We want to reinterpret our site so that we make its unique heritage far more engaging and accessible, and we'd like to do it with both artists and a wide range of new volunteers from our community so that we can start to remove the perceived barriers that currently stop some of those audiences from enjoying Mottisfont.

Water and creativity are key metaphors for Mottisfont as a place of refreshment, an oasis. The spring within the grounds continually refreshes Mottisfont physically as Maud Russell refreshed the place creatively through the artists she invited there to rest, relax, talk, to enjoy the house and gardens and create new work.

By 2020, our ambition is for Mottisfont and its estate to be known in the central south coast region as *the* destination for a lively, interesting and approachable take on the contemporary visual arts and crafts in the context of an important heritage site.

Developing the arts at Mottisfont is increasing local impact and community engagement, including existing arts groups, schools and local community organizations, enhancing the 'arts offer' for the Southern Area of the Test Valley.

The programme builds on the 20th-century history of Mottisfont and its established theme of Modernist and decorative arts (with the Derek Hill collection of 95 paintings, which includes early works by leading landscape artists of the 20th century), to develop vibrant contemporary arts activity, which will bring life to the arts at Mottisfont again in the 21st Century.

We are aiming to develop a new audience for contemporary art at Mottisfont while encouraging and developing the existing audience to engage with contemporary art

Co-creation

Building on our pilot artists' residency scheme, we want to bring Mottisfont to life through working co-creatively with outstanding artists, bringing them together with diverse communities to produce and experience high quality art.

By co-creation, we mean a deep level of collaborative practice where staff, volunteers, members of our communities and artists are engaged together in the creation of new, high quality works of art that bring Mottisfont's stories to life. Engagement may take different forms, but will centre on a series of facilitated workshops designed to build participants' confidence and skills so that they can become active partners in the creative conversations that unfold during each residency. This is innovative work that aims to establish a model for deep collaborative practice that can be shared with the National Trust and with other cultural organizations, particularly within the visual arts.

The artists will take the lead during this process: the project is fundamentally about them producing new high quality work in an extraordinary setting for a large audience. However, as they develop their work, the artists will be profoundly connecting with, learning from and inspiring groups of National Trust staff (from curators to gardeners), volunteers, and groups from our local community. Each artist will work with a different collective of participants during their residency, so that we can offer a range of community groups and volunteers the chance to be involved. Core property team staff will work with all of the artists in residence.

A Community Facilitator will work with the artists to identify appropriate community groups for each artist to work with, through our existing knowledge of those groups and with help from supportive arts organizations, key community partners and local authority contacts. The Community Facilitator will also work with Mottisfont staff and the artists on creating a framework for co-creative workshops, a model of practice that will enable us to involve community groups in gradually

becoming more confident contributors to the creative process. The Community Facilitator will support the selected artists through the process of developing and delivering a co-creative project. Workshops are at the heart of this process and **we will expect a minimum of 6 co-creative workshops to be undertaken during each residency.**

The intention is not that this should be 'community art', where collective physical contribution to the final work is more important than the quality of the work produced. This project offers an opportunity for artists to become rooted within a National Trust property to develop a way of exploring and creating that opens up their practice to make high quality art out of deep engagement and collaboration with Mottisfont's community.

One of our aims is to refine the model of co-creative practice as the residencies progress, so that it can be shared with other National Trust properties and visual arts organisations, contributing to the legacy of the Trust New Art project

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/big-issues/art-and-heritage/view-page/item336869/>

The Brief

Artists from all disciplines (including craft, writing, dance and performance) are invited to submit proposals to undertake one of three co-creative residencies at Mottisfont between April 2014 and December 2014.

(The outcome of each residency will need to be in a form that can be presented to an audience for a period of 3-6 months. Live performances could form part of the outcome but thought would need to be given to recording or documentation that could be made available beyond the duration of the performance itself.)

The total fee for each residency is **£9,000** to cover:

- A commitment of approximately **45** working days over the period of the residency.
- Engagement in at least 6 participatory workshops during the residency period
- All travel and personal expenses.
- Production and Installation of a final piece of work.

(In addition there is a separate budget for materials and production costs of the final work of up to **£2,500** per residency.)

Ideally, the residency will take place over a 12-week period sometime between April 2014 and December 2015. However, the total number of days and the period over which the days are worked can be negotiated with each artist.

The residency offers the artist an opportunity to spend time in the surroundings of Mottisfont to:

- Explore the house, grounds and estate, its history and current context as a site of education, recreation and conservation.
- Understand the potential for engagement with our community of staff, volunteers and visitors.
- Work with an identified group or community to develop a new piece of work in response to a unique place.

- Gain hands on experience in co-creative practice in a supportive environment.

A recently refurbished workshop/studio space is available just outside the main site, which can offer 24-hour access if required.



The space is approximately 7 metres x 5 metres, equipped with plenty of power sockets, hot and cold water, toilet facilities (on the first floor) and heating. Artists should note however that there is no telephone line in the studio and mobile reception at Mottisfont can be sporadic. Land-lines and broadband are however available in the Mottisfont estate offices which are relatively close by.

(The residency is open to artists or makers working in any medium, visual arts, crafts, writing, performing arts, film, video or digital media but the studio space may not be suitable for all of these activities. We will endeavour to provide appropriate workspace for selected artists.)

Overnight accommodation (free to the artist) may be made available by agreement.

Any works proposed for installation in the house, gardens, or estate, need to take into account the conservation requirements of Mottisfont. Staff at Mottisfont will be able to advise on this.

The first three residencies resulted in works to be installed in the house and associated buildings such as the stable block. Therefore, we are particularly interested in proposals that may have their outcomes in the gardens or wider estate, or result in outputs such as writing or poetry.

Expected Outcomes

Mottisfont received over 230,000 visitors in 2013 and the developing arts programme at Mottisfont is aimed at increasing both the scale and range of interests of that group.

It is important to Mottisfont that the contemporary arts programme relates strongly to its unique sense of place. A major element of 'A Place for Art' is to build confidence and interest in our audience/community to engage with contemporary art and artists.

The outcomes of the residency are likely to be many and varied but it is important that the artists' work should be firmly based in a response to place with a tangible outcome that can be presented to an audience. **To this end, a key outcome of each residency should be a new piece of work capable of being exhibited on-site for a minimum period of 3 months following completion of the residency.**

Process and Timeline

Proposals should include:

1. Your curriculum vitae / artist's statement
2. Up to 10 images of previous work. It is preferable for works to be submitted on CD/DVD. Please do not submit ORIGINAL artworks.
3. An outline proposal (max 2 sides of A4) to include:
 - an explanation of why you would like to undertake this residency
 - how a residency would contribute to developing your practice
 - how you would aim to use your time at Mottisfont
 - why you are interested in engaging with a co-creative approach
 - what your work might offer to Mottisfont and its visitors
4. Names and contact details of two referees.

The selected artists need not have experience in co-creation or extensive experience in working with communities. We are however, looking for artists with an established and clear direction in their personal practice, with the courage and generosity to open up their creative process to in-depth collaboration with an identified group from within our broad community.

Ideally, selected artists will be CRB checked and have Public Liability insurance.

Proposals to arrive no later than 5:00pm on Friday 17th of January 2014.

Interviews will take place on Friday 14th of February 2014.

If you would like any visual materials or disks to be returned, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope covering the cost of return postage.

(Due to the high level of interest we have experienced in the residencies we are unfortunately not able to reply to every applicant, so if you do not hear from us please assume your application has not been successful on this occasion.)

Please send your proposals to:

Abi Morris
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Mottisfont
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Hampshire SO51 0LP