

Muse: Makers in Museums

Creative craft commissions

There are 8 commissions for artists to make new work in response to an aspect of the special collections to be found in the small local rural museums of Devon and Somerset. The project will showcase contemporary craft: makers, skills, materials and creative thinking.

The participating museums are:

Somerset: Chard and District Museum
Bruton Museum
Wells and Mendip Museum
Axbridge and District Museum in King John's Hunting Lodge

Devon: Kingsbridge Cookworthy Museum
Axminster Museum
Teign Heritage Museum, Teignmouth
Museum of Dartmoor Life, Okehampton

Please see Appendix 1 for more information about the Museums and their collections, and Appendix 2 for the predicted project outcomes.

Context

Muse: Makers in Museums is led by South West Heritage Trust (www.swheritage.org.uk) in partnership with the Museum Development Officer for Devon, Somerset Art Works (www.somersetartworks.org.uk) and Devon Guild of Craftsmen (www.crafts.org.uk).

Muse will support 8 small volunteer-run museums across Somerset and Devon to develop projects with artists which will help them to reach new audiences. It will make historic collections more accessible to artists and create new opportunities for community groups to engage with historic collections.

The theme for *Muse* is 'craft'. The museum collections to be highlighted during the project include those linked to historic craft or rural industries, and the artists will respond with their own craft practice, making a link between contemporary and historic craft.

The Brief

The artist's commission brief is a balance between the making of new work for public presentation and engagement with the local community through participatory activity. We expect that the artwork presented will be of the highest quality and integrity in relation to the artist's own practice and time is budgeted to enable the artist to pursue their own ideas and responses.

We are open as to how the participatory element is conceived. It could be that local individuals, groups, children, young people are involved in collaborative creative research, invited to co-create elements of the artwork, invited to contribute thoughts, ideas and/or content in some way. If workshops are a viable format these would satisfy the participatory element. The museum volunteers should also be involved where possible. The partners will assist with locating networks and contacts with individuals, groups and/or local schools.

The artist will have a role in devising and co-producing (with partners) the final outcome and public sharing of the commission including contributing to blog posts. It is our expectation that the artwork and other supporting material/information will be installed in the host museums for



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Devon Open Studios (9 – 24 September 2017) and Somerset Art Weeks (23 September – 8 October 2017).

From November 2017 to January 2018, the artworks together with objects from the collections that have inspired them will be on show at the Museum of Somerset in Taunton. Whilst this exhibition is on, artists will be asked to join in a project sharing event for all museums, artists and project partners to discuss their experiences of the project.

Timescale

During March 2017 Museum open-days for interested artists will take place (see table 1 below). These days will provide a useful introduction point to the commission and an opportunity to see the Collections and meet the Museum team/volunteers.

Following Short-listing, interviews will take place in late April/early May at each Museum (see table 1 below).

The first site visit will be planned in as soon as possible after the appointment. The commission can take place between the beginning of May and the end of August 2017. We are open to discussion about how the commission might be planned. Final artworks should be ready for display/installation in the host Museum by the end of August 2017. From November 2017 to end January 2018 artworks should be available for a joint show at the Museum of Somerset, Taunton.

Fee

The total value of the commission is £4000 inclusive of vat. The Artist's fee is budgeted at £200 per day for 20 days to include participatory work of 2-3 days and attending group events such as exhibition openings and the joint sharing day in Taunton.

There is a separate materials budget available, please indicate in your proposal the cost of your materials. We also have a small travel budget, again please indicate any likely travel costs you foresee incurring.

Table 1:

Museum	Open days for artists	Interview date
Chard and District Museum	24 th March 10am – 4pm 31 st March 10am – 4pm	28 th April 2017
Bruton Museum	24 th March 1pm – 7pm 31 st March 11am – 1pm	26 th April 2017
Wells and Mendip Museum	20 th March 10am – 4pm 22 nd March 10am – 4pm	24 th April 2017
Axbridge and District Museum in King John's Hunting Lodge	3 rd April 1pm – 4pm 4 th April 1pm – 4pm	27 th April 2017
Kingsbridge Cookworthy Museum	21 st March 9.30am – 12.30pm 22 nd March 2.30 – 4.30pm	27 th April 2017
Axminster Museum	22 nd March 2 – 4.30pm	26 th April 2017
Teign Heritage Museum, Teignmouth	23 rd March 2 – 4.30pm 24 th March 2 – 4.30pm	2 nd May 2017
Museum of Dartmoor Life, Okehampton	22 nd March 12 – 3.15pm 24 th March 12 – 3.15pm	24 th April 2017

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How to apply

Please complete the attached application form and email it to the relevant address by **noon Monday 10 April**.

Applications for Devon Museums to devonguild@crafts.org.uk

Applications for Somerset Museums to info@somersetartworks.org.uk

Please also use these contact emails if you have any questions about the project and we will call or email you back.

You will be informed if you have been shortlisted for interview by Friday 21 April.

Appendix 1

The museum collections: information for the artists' brief

Chard and District Museum: <http://www.chardmuseum.co.uk/>

Chard and District Museum's collections explore the history of the area within a 5 mile radius of the town. The collections are varied and wide-ranging, and include material relating to two nationally significant individuals from the area: John Stringfellow, who was the first person to fly a powered aircraft in 1848 in a discussed lace mill; and James Gillingham, who pioneered the development of artificial limbs. Other collections include those relating to local agriculture, cider-making, blacksmithing, the local Donyatt pottery, costume including local carnival costume, Friendly Society regalia including banners.

Bruton Museum: <http://www.somersetroutes.co.uk/site/bruton-museum/21>

Bruton Museum has an eclectic, locally discovered collection, including ammonites, Roman and Saxon antiquities, militaria from many periods, household objects and personal treasures from the 1930s, 40s and 50s, as well as the desk used by the American writer John Steinbeck. There is a fine cabinet of works by Ernst Blensdorf, a German sculptor who escaped the Nazis and settled here. We maintain the Bruton Oral History programme, in which long-term residents record their memories of living in or near the town, and which we are keen to expand. We hope the Muse project will enable us to develop these assets to attract new audiences ranging from local children to the many thousands of visitors that come to Bruton for the Hauser & Wirth gallery at Durslade Farm.

Wells and Mendip Museum: <http://www.wellsmuseum.org.uk/>

Wells & Mendip Museum is situated on the Cathedral Green in Wells. The collections include an important spelaeology collection relating to caving on the Mendip Hills, archaeological material dating from the Palaeolithic to the Medieval period, Mendip minerology and palaeontology, a social history collection, decorative arts including a significant sampler collection, and the Wells City Archives.

Axbridge and District Museum in King John's Hunting Lodge:

<http://www.kingjohnshuntinglodge.co.uk/>

The Axbridge and District Museum is housed inside King John's Hunting Lodge, a beautiful timber-framed medieval house in the centre of Axbridge, now in the care of the National Trust. The social history collections of the museum focus on the documents and regalia of the ancient Borough of Axbridge, early schooling in the town, the Union Workhouse and local tradesmen and shopkeepers. The archaeology collection comprises material from excavations and finds

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from the Mendip Hills area. A significant part of this collection is from the Roman site at Wint Hill, and human remains from Hay Wood Cave. There is also an important pottery collection. The geology collection includes material from the Banwell Caves.

Teign Heritage Museum: www.teignheritage.org.uk

The museum is situated in Teignmouth, Devon on the estuary of the river Teign. It holds an important maritime heritage collection for the area including swords, cannon and finds from the 16th century Church Rock wreck and two boats, archive and plans from the famous local Morgan Giles shipbuilders. The museum also holds a local social history collection, including Teignmouth and Shaldon's seaside holiday story, plus an extensive archive, photographs and oral histories.

Kingsbridge Cookworthy Museum: www.kingsbridgemuuseum.org.uk

This museum is housed in the atmospheric old Grammar School, built in 1670 and in use as a school until the 1960s. The museum celebrates the interesting and important history of the local area and its people. The social history collection includes a large agricultural display. There is a large photographic collection of over 16,500 images of local people and places. The museum is named after Kingsbridge's most famous resident, William Cookworthy, born in 1705 and the first person to make hard paste English porcelain in his Plymouth factory.

Axminster Heritage: <http://axminsterheritage.org/>

The museum tells the story of Axminster and its surrounding villages from pre-history, through Roman times to the modern age. Wool has featured prominently in the town's history and exhibits feature weaving, spinning and dyeing. In a town famous for its carpet making there is a special focus on its carpet industry founded by Thomas Whitty. The centre is housed in the original carpet factory. Other local manufacturing businesses on display include personal care brushes and feathers.

The Museum of Dartmoor Life: www.museumofdartmoorlife.org.uk

The museum is situated in a Victorian granary in the centre of Okehampton. Its collections reflect 5000 years of Dartmoor's archaeology and social history. Exhibits range from a reconstructed Bronze Age hut to 19th and 20th century crafts and historic moorland industries such as tin mining, quarrying and farming to explore the lives and work of Dartmoor's people.

Appendix 2

Project outcomes

For museums

- Enhanced interpretation, of the collection, the building, the locality.
- Increased audience engagement with and understanding of local heritage
- Attract new and diverse audiences
- Develop closer links with the community through participatory projects
- Engage with schools and colleges
- Develop new working partnerships with arts organisations
- Broaden horizons, develop new perspectives and ways of working
- Provide opportunities to recruit new and diverse volunteers through working with the community and new audiences

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- Improve skills including the ability to commission artists (and how to reach them) and to develop / deliver an arts project, marketing and promotion
- Build confidence to do new things

Many of these outcomes will hopefully provide long term sustainable benefits enabling museums to:

- Appreciate the value of and continue to try new things
- Extend work with education providers
- Explore and develop charging models to fund future projects and activities
- Broaden the pool of potential volunteers

For artists

- Accessing collections/ be able to explore in depth/ gain inspiration by exposure to little known and unique collections
- Linking traditional crafts/industry to contemporary practice
- Delivering arts participation projects with school groups and/or other communities in partnership with a museum
- Developing/extending an audience through workshops/exhibition linked to bigger events (Devon Open Studios and Somerset Art Weeks)
- Extending practice and learning new, or developing existing, skills along the way. As above this could include teaching, workshop planning, research and presentation skills.
- Producing new work which might involve
 - engaging with and/or investigating new materials
 - using heritage and history to inform practice
 - exploring new directions
- Interaction with community groups
- Making contacts in a new field
- Understanding how to work with volunteers
- Developing CV/experience
- Developing on-going relationships with a local arts organisation, a museum and community possibly leading to further activity

For communities

- Increased engagement with museum collections/staff/volunteers furthering understanding of and appreciation of local history/heritage
- Working with an artist to make something relating to locality, traditional craft/industry, social history and culture
- Contact with locality and sense of identity – thinking about conservation/preservation
- Engagement with local knowledge
- Social benefit/ meet new people/ trying something new
- Exploring museum collections interactively/with a creative angle
- Opportunity for community groups to access free workshop activities