

**Filmmaker Brief for Participatory Arts and Civic Engagement Project**

Art in the Park and The Sir Bernard Crick Centre for the Public Understanding of Politics (http://www.crickcentre.org) have recently been awarded a major research grant. The 'Participatory Arts and Active Citizenship' project will examine the potential of participatory arts in the promotion of political engagement amongst young people. The research is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of its broader Cultural Value Programme.

As part of this project Art in the Park will be commissioning a documentary filmmaker to record and artistically respond to the research. The documentary will be a key output of this research and the filmmakers will play an active role in project from beginning to end.

We are seeking a filmmaker or filmmaking collective with a track record of ambitious and inspirational projects rooted in a documentary style. A background in working with diverse partners (eg. artists, academics and young people) is preferable.

**About the Participatory Arts and Civic Engagement Project**

If the twentieth century witnessed 'the triumph of democracy' then the twenty-first century appears wedded to 'the failure of democracy' as citizens around the world (setting recent developments in North Africa and the Middle East aside for the moment) appear to have become distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions, and disillusioned about the capacity of democratic politics to resolve pressing social concerns. Even the most cursory glance along the spines of the books on the library shelves reveal a set of post-millennium titles that hardly engender confidence that all is well.

It is in this context that this project examines the capacity and value of socially focussed arts projects to re-engage disconnected individuals and social groups. Put slightly differently, does arts practice have a social value in terms of a potential capacity to close the gap between the governors and the governed?

The project is divided into three strands:

*Strand 1 – Desk Research/Critical Review*

The aim of this section is to assess the current research base on the link between cultural activities and political/civic/democratic engagement. The aim of this stage of the project is to assess ‘What do we know?’ and ‘How do we know it?’ It is therefore concerned with exploring not just the civic value of artistic and cultural activities but also the knottier question of how we *demonstrate or prove* that value.

As part of this strand the filmmaker(s) will be invited to discuss and exchange ideas with the researchers on past projects and theoretical literature.

*Strand 2 – ‘Our Corner’*

‘There is certainly a need for fresh scholarly investigations of the different forms that participation and engagement in the arts can take’ Belfiore argues ‘and also for an examination of different artistic and cultural forms and the different values that might be attached to them, both in an aesthetic sense, but also in terms of the kind of values that they promote’.

Using the findings, insights and conclusions of strand 1, this second strand will deliver a ‘fresh scholarly investigation’ by running a participatory arts project in collaboration with a Sheffield-based charity called ‘Art in the Park’ the project is called ‘Our Corner’ and aims to encourage civic and political engagement with 16 to 24 year olds living in social housing in identified deprived wards of Sheffield where electoral turnout is 34% or less. ‘Our Corner’ will be structured around a series workshops that bring together fifteen young people aged 16-24 who are predominantly not in education, employment or training (and therefore statistically likely to be politically and socially disengaged) to work with professional artists and poets. The workshops will explore the history of ‘voices and choices’ in Sheffield with participants being encouraged to use visual arts and creative writing as both a form of expression and engagement.

As part of this strand, the filmmaker(s) will be invited to attend and record these workshops and conduct interviews of their own.

The aim of this strand is to assess the link between artistic engagement and the development of social skills (confidence, communication, etc.) that are critical components of civic engagement.

*Strand 3 – Analysis and Dissemination*

The final stage will focus on analysing and writing-up the findings of both the critical review and also the case study project based around inter-generational workshops. This strand will also include a Learning Workshop in London with the RSA, The House of Commons and specialists in the field, as well as participants, filmmaker and artists from the project to discuss the findings from the previous two strands. The outcomes from this project will be included in the final report.

It is also hoped that the documentary will be premiered at the International Documentary Festival that takes places each year in Sheffield [http://sheffdocfest.com/] 2015.

**This research will be conducted between February and July 2014.**

**Filmmaker’s Brief**

The filmmaker’s involvement in this project will be primarily concerned with strand 2 of this project. However, input and active engagement within into the other two strands will also be expected and the findings of strands 1 and 3 will play a role in the documentary. The role of the filmmaker is not only to record the project, but also to critically engage with the research and respond to it as an artist in their own right. It is important to the project as a whole that the filmmaker is not an external observer, but an observant participant. It is important that the filmmaker is immersed in the project in order to add an alternative perspective to the findings, as well as aiding in the collection of footage.

The film to be produced should be **under 30 minutes in length** (to adhere to the ‘short film submissions’ requirements of the Sheffield DocFest). The deadline for the first edit will be September 2014, when feedback and discussion will be given from the research team and Art in the Park. **The final deadline for the final edit will be November/December 2014.**

The filmmaker’s role will therefore include:

* A distinct relationship with the participants and practitioner’s working on the Our Corner strand.
* Working with researchers to support the critical review strands, as well as allowing these strands to influence the documentary itself.
* Collecting and editing footage, interviewing relevant partners, and conducting independent background research.

**Personal Specification**

As commissioners we welcome the following:

* Significant experience of documentary filmmaking.
* Experience in working with diverse partners including artists, academics and young people.
* An ethical and sensitive approach to collecting footage.
* An interest in political and civic engagement.
* Experience of, or interest in, community arts practice and participatory arts.
* An interest and knowledge of the cultural value debate.

**Fee: £5000 to include all wages and production costs.**

**How to Apply**

Please send cover letter (no more than 2 sides A4) outlining interest in this brief, along with CV and an example(s) of past work (as link to webpage) to: malaika.cunningham@hotmail.co.uk. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call us at 0114 222 1680.

**Deadline for submissions is 12pm (noon) on Monday the 10th March, interviews to be held in the week beginning 17th March in Sheffield.**